Western Orissa provides an opportunity to study the history of interaction between tribal peoples and their socio-cultural environment, including the tribal-nontribal encounter, over a long historical period. Living in close proximity, several tribal groups have interacted with each other as well as with non-tribals, influencing their respective ways of life.

Each tribal group functions in a particular environmental niche and reacts to changing circumstances accordingly. When non-tribals made inroads into the tribal region of western Orissa, the reaction of each tribal group differed according to its ecology and its particular economic base. Even within each tribal group, different sections reacted differently. Some tried to achieve caste status through 'Kshatriisation' and 'Rajputisation', others sought to preserve tribal culture. Several questions arise here: Which group among the tribals tried to achieve caste status and why? What are the processes through which they proceeded? Which group refused to be absorbed in the caste society and why? How were they able to preserve tribal culture under such great pressure from non-tribals?

Nearly fifty tribal groups may be identified in western Orissa. Out of them we have selected five for our study: Gonds are numerically the largest, Kandhs and Binjhal used to participate in the coronation ceremony of Kalahandi and Patna estates and were very active during the tribal movement of 19th Century in western Orissa, and Bhunjias and Paharias are amongst those few tribes of India who still persist with their traditional lifestyle. So let us introduce these tribal groups.

GOND

The Gonds have been judged to be numerically as well as historically one of the important tribal groups of India. According to Grierson\(^2\) their language Gondi is a Dravidian language. The Gonds of western Orissa speak Kosali or Sambalpuri and have totally forgotten their Gondi language. Many of them describe themselves as Raj Gonds as do the Gonds of many areas of Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh also. Anthropologists have explained this trend amongst the Gonds in various ways. Grigson,\(^3\) emphasising the social aspects, suggested that such names as Raj Gond arose when local primitive groups were gradually Hinduised and accepted by Hindus under new names. Russell\(^4\) supporting the

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suggestion of Forsyth says that Raj Gonds are the progeny of inter-marriages between Rajput and Gond. Furer-Haimendorf\textsuperscript{5} says of Adilabad that here the Raj Gonds do not form a ruling class or even a class of privileged economic status, but an entire tribal group comprising all strata of society from the feudal chiefs down to the poorest labourer. Originally, it referred only to royal and noble Gond families; later its reference came to include their followers too.

In western Orissa, only they claim to be Raj Gonds who were once allies of ruling groups and have enjoyed privileged economic status, Zamindars, gahatia, gartia or gaotia. Their poor relatives and neighbours do not claim this name or rather are not conscious of the possibility of doing so. So in the area of our study the name Raj Gond can be seen as advanced by the self-conscious and economically superior Gonds who enjoy, or aspire to, high social status. The economically poor Gonds are known as Dhur (or Dharua) Gond; dhur means 'dust' indicating lowly or ordinary Gond.

In western Orissa the first specific reference to Gond is from medieval period. The Bonai plate refers to the Tunga ruler Vinitatunga as ashtādaśa-Gōṇḍamādhipatti, that is the lord of

\textsuperscript{5} C.von Furer Haimendorf, 1979, \textit{The Gonds of Andhra Pradesh}, Vikas, New Delhi, p.4.
eighteen tribes known as Gonds.6 The charter of Sulki ruler Kalastambhadeva addresses himself as Sakalagongamadhinatha or Lord of all Gonds.7 A.P.Sah suggests that in medieval period the Gond were quite widespread in western Orissa. According to literary sources the Gond, with the help of other tribals, Kandh and Binjhal, and a Brāhmaṇa were able to form an oligarchy around 14th century and later one of the groups could form a kingdom at Patnagarh and claimed Chauhan Rajput status (see chapter I).

Into the earlier territorial distribution of Gond people, new nodes in the form of garh associated with Rajput polity emerged around this period. The leaders or heads of the territorial group (garh) of Gond were recognised as chieftains of twelve villages or 'Barhons'. It also helped in the emergence of the Atțargarh system in western Orissa. C.U.Wills, a British administrator, who served in various capacities in the different Zamindaris of Chhatisgarh, posited three stages in the rise of Atțargarh system.8 In the first stage, around 14th Century, a dominant tribal group gradually adopted a Rajput political model (see chapter I). In this Rajput order each tribe possessed a


7. Ibid.

distinct territory, presided over by a chief or head of the tribe, and the tribe had several branches, each living in a village with one headman or chief. In the second stage, a few tribal chiefs within the dominant tribal group formed an oligarchic government. In the third stage, the dominant group sought to fashion a state in terms of the Rajput model. Tribal territories were defined and subordinate chiefs were recognised by the dominant group — which thus became the rulers of a larger area. According to Wills, this led to a regular system of territorial organisation in Garhjat state of western Orissa and continued even up to the coming of the British.

Wills observed the territorial organisation of the Garhjat state of western Orissa as follows: (i) there were initially two kingdoms in the area, i.e., Patna and Sambalpur, and (ii) each kingdom was sub-divided into garhs or forts, conventionally eighteen in number, so the kingdom was termed as Aţţargarh. (Although, the word garh means a fort, the territorial unit called garh did not always have a fort, contrary to what the British settlement officers presumed). The word Aţţargarh, eighteen forts, came to stand more generally for a powerful king, with many chiefs under him. It is derived from the territorial system of the Gonds.

In Sambalpur, during the 19th Century, fourteen garhs had Gond chiefs and four had others; in Patna, all except the Central
garh had either Gond or Kandh chiefs. According to Wills, the Rajput system was 'superimposed on a tribal base', but, it seems that because of the vast numbers of tribals, the so-called Chauhan Rajputs had only a nominal position, and that they accepted it.

The Gonds occupied high positions in the estates of western Orissa. During the rule of Jayant Sai, in the 1780's, the Gond chief of Sarangarh was the dewan of Sambalpur estate. Most Gond Zamindars of western Orissa held their Zamindari on military tenure, i.e., they did not pay any revenue or tribute to their overlord but had to extend help with men and money at times of emergency. This gave a special position to the powerful Gond chiefs.

Gond dominance has not been confined to western Orissa only. Between the fourteenth and the sixteenth centuries, four Gond kingdoms arose in Central India. Amongst them the kingdom of Garha was most powerful. The ruler of the kingdom Sangram Shah managed to arrange the marriage of his son Dalpat with Durgabati, the daughter of a Chandela Rajput (Raja of Mahoba) in c.1550.

This can be taken as evidence of Gond aspiration to Rajput

9. Ibid, p.255
10. Jayachandrika, VI.
12. Ibid.
status, an aspiration expressed also in their patronage of Brāhmaṇism.¹³

In contrast to them, the Raj Gonds of western Orissa never patronised Brāhmaṇa even though these Gonds put on the sacred thread and took Brāhmaṇa gōtra names for themselves. Rather, they considered the Brāhmaṇas to be their enemies. According to their tradition, once upon a time they were the rulers of Orissa and were ousted by the conspiracy of the Brāhmaṇas. This attitude of Gonds might have arisen when the rulers of western Orissa granted lands and villages to Brāhmaṇas at the cost of the tribals. Between 1781 and 1849, 51 villages were granted to Brāhmaṇas and temples as māufi or rent-free by the rulers of Sambalpur;¹⁴ the number of land grants is not clearly known.

The Gonds saw the Brāhmaṇas as responsible for the loss of their traditional cultivable area. This antagonism was hardened by the cultural differences between the tribals and Brāhmaṇas, including the latter's dietary restrictions. The Gonds came to characterise Brāhmaṇa as dhōblā bōkā or white he-goat and would not touch food cooked by one. They used to sacrifice a Brāhmaṇa boy to their deity.¹⁵ According to local information, upto the


²⁰. R.V.Russell, op.cit., p.70.
1950's, they used to bring at least one Brāhmaṇa boy from outside, at an interval of 12 years, and sacrifice him to their deity, Budha Raja.

The transfer of control over tribal lands and villages to non-tribals was one basis for the rise of the tribal-peasant movement in western Orissa in the 1830's and 1840's. In this movement the Gonds played the most prominent role. They were successful insofar as nine Gond Zamindars, who had lost their Zamindaris, had these restored to them in 1840's by the Raja of Sambalpur. Gond Zamindars were in a dominant position even up to the beginning of 20th Century: out of 17 Zamindars in Sambalpur district, 11 were Gond.16

The Gonds are now quite wide-spread, living both in plains and hills at various levels of acculturation and economic development. Most Raj Gonds are settled cultivators. All of them persist in their aspiration to achieve Hindu status, which had its beginning from medieval period; but they treat the Brāhmaṇas as enemies. Nevertheless, the influence of the latter can be observed in the Gond tradition: Lingo, the legendary hero who saved his twelve Gond brothers and taught them different techniques to survive in this world, is said to be the son of Śiva and Parvati. This clearly was a Hindu interpolation in the

Gond society is based on localised clans which tend to cluster as sākhās or phratries. The phratries are the main pillars of their social structure. In western Orissa, there are eight exogamous patrilineal phratries (aṣṭasākhā) but they are not separate entities and believe in common mythical historical traditions. It can be called the ritual and social unit to regulate the internal working of Gond society.

Their tradition traces the origin of clans "to the incidental occurrence of a certain number of sons and grandsons in the family of a prominent member of the phratry and the names of their sons perpetuated from them." All members of the clan consider themselves as agnatically linked kinsmen. They worship a totemic clan deity. A Gond man cannot change his clan. In case of migration, a person or group remembers the original clan territory or the territorial unit garh. Stephen Fuchs has observed that gradually with the increase of population the clan dispersed; but the territorial affiliation (original place, garh) is remembered during the funeral ceremony wherever they might have migrated.

18. Furer-Haimendorf, op.cit., p.79.
19. Ibid.
The Gonds in our area recall some places of Bastar, Mandla and Chhatisgarh during their funeral ceremony, suggesting that they have migrated to their present area from the south-east part of present Madhya Pradesh. Their Budha Raja myth and folk songs also support the migration hypothesized above. The myth depicts in detail the routes through which they entered western Orissa. The myth goes like this: The Gond God Budha Raja killed the demons of the sea, and the bones of these demons became the mountains on earth. Then he collected a bamboo stick from the forest and climbed the Guda Parbat or Guda mountain (the mountain range is situated on the border of Orissa with Madhya Pradesh, i.e., south-east of Raipur district, Madhya Pradesh, and to the west of Kalahandi district of Orissa). There he settled four villages, i.e., Mangurbeda, Changurbeda, Rupabeda and Sunabeda, and initiated cultivation (the above villages are in the plateau of Guda mountain, Nawapara Sub-division). The God Budha Raja gave paddy to men for cultivation and for their livelihood. Then Budha Raja came down to Sakhtora (a village on the foothills of Guda mountain in Kalahandi district). There he sacrificed a goat, and he married Dharni Devi, a goddess, at Babbir and Darlipada (two villages of Nawapara sub-division, Kalahandi district). He sacrificed a cock on this occasion and gave a feast; he took rest.

at Panripani (another village of this area). Later he proceeded towards Aampani, a village on the borders of Kalahandi and Koraput district. There he met the Kutia Kandhs of Kalahandi and settled them. Khamkhaidebta (Khambeswari) was worshipped there. From there he proceeded to Keushinga (Kesinga; present Kesinga is a town on the borders of Kalahandi, Bolangir and Phulbani), from there he proceeded towards river Ganga, that is towards north, through Sambalpur, Bolangir and Phulbani. From the Ganga, he returned back on chanocha duitiya (meaning not clear, possibly a tithī or date) and finally was worshipped by the people of this area.

The above myth indicates the route of migration of Gonds to western Orissa and their gradual settlement in different villages. It also indicates the worship of Dharni Devi or earth goddess with the beginning of settled cultivation and the beginning of goat and cock sacrifice and an associated feast. It coincides with settled cultivation and surplus generation. It also indicates interaction between Gond and Kutia Kandh and the worship of the Kandh deity, Khambeswari, by the Gonds.

A Gond folk song indicates that they came to western Orissa first, followed by the Kandhs. The Gond claim themselves as

22. Gand jere aage chalichha  
   Kandh jega pachhe chalichhe.

   Prathame Gand O ttar pachhe pachhe  
   Kandh gaa basti stapan kala.
   * (Gond is in the front followed by Kandhas  
      Gonds first settled the villages followed by Kandhas)
having been the first settlers of this area and owners of the land and as having accepted the Raja as the overlord of the rājya.

"Gandar je bhui Rajarje raej"

(The Gonds are the owners of the land, and the Raja is ruler of the Kingdom.)

KANDH

The Kandh of western Orissa are also called Kond in Telegu, Kandha in Oriya and Khond in English. According to Grierson, their language Kui is Dravidian.23 The Kandhs consider themselves Kuiloka or the people who speak Kui. The word Kui is derived from Telugu word Ko or Ku24 (mountain). In western Orissa, the Kandhs speak both Kui and Kosali (the local language).

There are three main divisions among them: (1) Desia or plain dwelling Kandh; (2) Kutia, meaning one who breaks or smashes, so called because they break the skull of the animal when they kill one for food;25 and (3) Dongria Kandh, or hill Kandh. The Kutia and Dongria Kandh call the Desia Kandh as Khachria or mixed ones because the Desia or plains Kandh have adopted some customs of the non-tribals. The Kutia and Dogria Kandh do not marry with Desia Kandh though they consider them as their own tribesmen.

24. Ibid.
According to their tradition twelve Kandh brothers cleared the forest and settled the villages and started Dharni puja or worship of earth goddess. From twelve brothers emerged thirty exogamous clans. Each clan or group of families took possession of a separate territory which was called a desh, and was named after the clan holding it. There were thirty two desh in the former Kalahandi estate, thirty-two in the former Patna estate also, but the exact number for the former Sambalpur estate is not known. In Sambalpur estate the main concentration of Kandh population was in Bamra ex-Zamindari and Barghar area. The tract inhabited by Kandhs was called Kandhan. Each desh had one Kandh chief called Umrao. In 18th century, the Umrao excercised full control over the distribution of land and over all tribal matters in his desh or circle of villages. Each village had one elderman or mukhia or headman. They were known by many names, Majhi being the most common.

Adjoining the Kalahandi and Patna estates in the 19th century were the districts of Phulbani and Ganjam, which were under Madras presidency. There the Kandh called their headman as grampolis or gram mukhia, and the clan territory as mutha

26. FDP (Pol-A), July 1882, From V.B.Luci-Smith, Commissioner Chhatisgarh to the Secretary to Chief Commissioner, Central Provinces, no.523/26, NAI, New Delhi.

27. Ibid.

28. Jaganatha Pathy, 1988, Underdevelopment and Destitution, Inter India, New Delhi, p.133.
and the head of the mutha was known as Sirdar.29 The head was either an Oriya (Bissoi/Behera/Dalai) or a Gond (Patro/Dal Behera), or a Pana (Digal) or Sabara (Mandala/Gamango) or Kandh (Majhi/Malick)30 but in western Orissa the head of the desh was always a Kandh and was called Umrao. In Phulbani the colonial rulers converted these muthas into fifty administrative divisions with minor changes. The name of the new administrative unit was retained as mutha; and the head of the mutha came to be known as muthahead or Sirdar.31 This became famous as the muthadari system. But in western Orissa, the feudatory ruler of Kalahandi abolished the post of Umrao and the desh system in 1844.32 Later the colonial rulers refused to revive these.33 This contributed to the outbreak Kandh meli of 1882 in Kalahandi.34

Kandh society is a clan-based society and each clan is further sub-divided into numerous sub-clans; according to


32. FDP(Pol) July 1882.

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid. See chapter V.
Kandhs, the sub-clans are as many as the stars in the sky. The names of sub-clans are totemic in nature, being derived from animal, plant and natural objects: for example, konjaka, monkey; bachha, calf; hikoka, horse; chhatra, umbrella; mandinga, an earthen pot; bagh, tiger etc. There is no strict endogamy within the Kandh tribe.35

The Umraos who are usually landowners claim to be Raj Kandhs. They claim to be superior Kandhs and refuse to accept brides from poorer Kandhs. A Raj Kandh is relegated to his wife's division if he marries into one lower than his own.36 This practice is perhaps a recent one. Earlier, the mode of production was communal and everybody was equal; but with the demarcation of clan territory, there was a need for a chief who would lead the people of his territory against outsiders. This may have brought some socio-economic privileges to the chief, i.e., some personal land, annual gift, free labour etc. The descendents of these chiefs later became the dominant political section of the community and landed proprietors. This superior socio-economic status prompted them to claim the superior status of Raj Kandh, above the poor Kandh.

There are other associated groups besides. One is called Dal Kandh. Interestingly, there are Gaudia Kandh, who are graziers;

and also a caste group called Kandharla Gaud. This is probably a part of the tribe incorporated into the caste order. They participated in the Kandh meli of 1882 in Kalahandi.

Each Kandh village has one jani or jhankar or priest. He usually has the position of honour in the village. Above the jani, there is a patjani at the desh level. Each village also has a deiri or desari. They have their specialised functions during jatras or parab or festivals of Kandhs. Prior to 1860's the 'meriah' or human sacrifice to their Darni Devi was quite widespread in western Orissa. They offered a human victim to their Goddess 'Tari Penu', earth goddess, for good crop, seasons and health. This practice was for the first time reported by G.E.Russell, a senior member of Madras Board, in 1836 basing upon the evidence of Captain Millar and Captain Stevenson of 43rd Regiment of Madras Native Force during their campaign against the Raja of Ghumsar. According to the report, Kandh offered a human victim of any age, and of any social background except from Kandh and Brāhmaṇa group. They purchased the human victims from the Panos or Doms in exchange for grain or cattle. In July 1845, the Government of India decided to establish an Agency called Meriah Agency in the hill tract of Orissa to suppress both


38. Foreign Department Proceedings(Pol) 1836, no.29-36 NAI, New Delhi.

39. Ibid.
human sacrifice and female infanticide. The headquarters for this agency was named Russellkonda.40

Campbell, Macpherson, Frye and MacVicar served as agents of Meriah Agency from time to time. Between 1836 and 1854, 1260 human victims were saved.41 It was due to the conciliatory and persuasive policy of Campbell that the Kandhs gradually began to offer a beast instead of a human being.42 By 1861, the incidents of human sacrifice were greatly reduced, and the agency was withdrawn. Now the Kandhs offer sheep, buffalo, and goat instead of human being, and it is variously known as Toki parab in Dharamgarh sub-division of Kalahandi, Podh puja in parts of Kalahandi, Bolangir and Sambalpur, and Salia Jatra in Titlagarh sub-division of Bolangir. There is a misconception among the scholars of Orissa regarding Toki Parab.43 'Toki' means girl in Oriya, so the Oriya scholars interpret it as sacrifice of girls; but toki means ram in Kandh language. The Kandh sacrifice a ram to their goddess Teri Pennu instead of a human being, and it is called Toki parab.

40. Konda means hillock.


42. Ibid.

Macpherson has recorded the meriah rituals in detail.\textsuperscript{44} Some of the ritual dialogue and prayers reveal the philosophy of Kandhs behind the ritual sacrifice. Just before the sacrifice the priest prays to the earth goddess:

\begin{quote}
We cultivate you earth: We defiled (polluted) you!
Take this flesh and eat it
Make our crop grow!
Do not bring sickness! \textsuperscript{45}
\end{quote}

Perhaps the fear of defiling the earth started when the food gatherers and hunters initiated slash and burn cultivation. So they made an offering in compensation to the earth goddess and at the same time prayed to it for good crop and health.

Secondly, the Kandhs were aware of the loss of life in a meriah sacrifice, but at the same time they felt that it was necessary for the fertility and well-being of their people. They would tell the victim before the sacrifice, "Blame the person who sold you to us. We paid the full price for you, so the guilt is not ours". This reflects the Kandh psychology. They were justifying their killing by saying that they had paid the price for it. They felt indebted to the earth goddess for good crop and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[45] Barbara M. Boal, 1984, "Centuries of Hill-Khond Folk Religion and its interaction with the Orissan Plains", \textit{Folk Culture}, V, p.34.
\end{footnotes}
prosperity; at the same time they were afraid of her wrath for defying her by the practice of slash and burn. Mahapatra observes:

The Kandhs are strictly an agricultural people and the salient points of their religious belief all have reference to the fertilisation of the earth.

Under pressure and persuasion the Kandhs gradually began sacrificing a buffalo or a ram or a goat; but they were still afraid of their earth goddess for the substitution, and accordingly they blamed the Sahibs (Britishers) for the change. This was reflected in their meriah ritual songs:

(i) At present through fear of the sahibs sons (Europeans)
From thy shoulder we take the flesh;
Through fear of the pathan sons
(North Indian Muslim soldiers)
From thy cheek we take the flesh.
In the country of former times
We used to bury a human being.
Do not cry out to me, O beautiful buffalo,
Do not cry out to me, O curved-horn buffalo,
As the tears stream from thine eyes,
So may the rain pour down in Asar
(season of gentle rain);
As the mucus trickles from thy nostrils
So may it drizzle at intervals;
As the blood gushes forth
So may the vegetation sprout;
As the gore falls in drops
So may the grains of rice form.

46. Ibid.


(ii) Do not be angry with us O goddess
For giving you the blood of beasts
instead of human blood.
Vent your anger on this gentleman (Campbell)
who is well able to bear it
We are guiltless.49

The above discussion and the meriah songs reflect the Kandhs' worldview and understanding. They did not give up their age old belief easily. The colonial rulers had to follow both persuasion and coercion for suppressing meriah sacrifice. This attempt of the colonial rulers to stop meriah sacrifice also contributed to the Kandh revolts of 1840's and 50's in Ghumsar, Phulbani and Patna. During this movement, its leaders promised to revive the right of meriah sacrifice and to drive the Sahibs out from their territory (see chapter V).

The Kandhs of western Orissa have revolted from time to time against exploitation and against encroachment on their rights to land, forest and faith. In the 1830's they revolted against the local rajas who had encroached upon their lands (see chapter IV); in 1840's the Kandh of Patna revolted against the cruel Zamindar (see chapter V); in 1881 there is a revolt against Brahmanism and against the restrictions imposed on the tribals and untouchables against their entering the Puri temple50 which

we shall consider below; in 1882, the Kandhs of Kalahandi revolted against the encroachment of their land by the Raja's men (see chapter V).

A Kandh poet, Bhima Bhoi, of Kandhara (Rairakhol of today), in Sambalpur district, popularised the Mahima Dharma in western Orissa. Mahima Dharma is an autochthonous Hindu reform movement that turned against the Jagannath worship in particular. It is believed that Bhima Bhoi was blind from birth. He met Mahima Swami, the founder of Mahima Dharma, in 1862 at the age of 13 and was converted to Mahima Dharma. Later, Bhima Bhoi founded an Ashram at Khaliapala in 1877 to preach Mahima Dharma. He brought a radical change in the Mahima sect by allowing women to enter the sect. He lived in the Ashram with his followers, male and female. It was one of his followers, Dasaram, who led a group of twelve men and three women to the Puri temple in 1881 in order to enter the temple, and to try to burn the Jagannath statue. They could reach the bhoga mandap and from there, were driven back by the Pandas of Puri. The Deputy Magistrate of Puri sentenced the former to two months rigorous imprisonment for rioting and for committing trespass into a

52. Ibid.
A follower of this sect believes that its founder was a pure incarnation of the *mahimā* (glory) of *Alekha Brahma* (indescribable God). He came to this earth in the Himalayas and later came to Kapilas mountain of Dhenkanal, Orissa, the holiest land of India. God Jagannath left his temple of Puri, took human form and became a disciple of Mahima Swami. The latter named Him Vasudeva. Both of them travelled through the country preaching *Mahima Dharma*.56

The above Dharma characterised the God, *Sunya Anadi Brahma*, with the concepts of *alekha* (indescribable), *nirakara* (formless), *anādi* (eternal), *niranjana* (without support), *nirguna* (without attributes), and *mahimā* (glory). These concepts were not new to Orissa. A group of five poets commonly known as *Panchasakha* flourished between 15th and 16th century.57 Their individual differences apart, they broadly believed that idol worship, pilgrimage, and external rites can not give *mokṣa* or salvation but *Nirguna Bhakti* (meditation, Yoga) can. They developed their theory of *Pinda-Brahmanḍa* or the union of soul and God

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55. *Ibid*, p.385.
comprehended with the union of microcosm of the body and the macrocosm of the universe. The union is possible through Atma Bhakti or Nirguna Bhakti, this needs the authority neither of scripture nor of the Guru. The real Guru is Alekha Parambrahma or Sunya Brahma and He resides in every human being. It needs realisation to know this Swarupa (real form). In this way they negated the authority of the Vedas and the Brähmaṇas and the caste system.

Through their writings, known as mālikas the Panchasakhās criticised the ruling orthodoxy. They predicted the end of Kaḷiyuga whereupon God Jagannath would leave his temple and manifest Himself in a new form. And the new manifestation would stand higher than all His previous manifestations. He would bring about a final conquest of Vedas and the general abolition of caste system. According to them this incarnation would not be Kalki, the expected tenth avtar of Hindu belief, but an Avadhuta or a wandering ascetic wearing only a kaupina or loin’cloth.

The above concept that the final manifestation, a sanyasi, would be more powerful than the earlier ones must have been well known in Orissa in 19th century. The founder of Mahima Dharma was approximately what the Panchasakhā school had predicted as the final manifestation of God.

Bhima Bhoi and his followers refer to the above tradition

in their works. They preached that the final deliverer had already appeared. Their interpretation went beyond the earlier interpretation of Panchasakhā. Panchasakhā had criticised the orthodox tradition with caution. Under Mahima Dharma this criticism was formalised. A follower of Mahima sect are prohibited from worshipping idols, and from taking part in traditional rituals. They preached equality of human beings because they believed in the uniform presence of God in every human being. Therefore, they rejected caste differences. They saw the Brāhmaṇa as responsible for the miseries of the low caste people, and Lord Jagannatha as the protector of these Brāhmaṇas; and in order to counteract this situation, they turned the weapon of Brāhmaṇa around, i.e., they declared the Brāhmaṇas to be untouchables. The followers of this sect are forbidden from accepting food from Brāhmaṇas.

This was the background for the attempt to burn the idol of Jagannath by the followers of the above sect. It seems an open attack on the orthodox tradition, on the Brāhmanical restriction upon the entry of untouchables into Jagannath temple, and on idol worship.

In 19th century, two Kandh poets of western Orissa contributed to Oriya literature. One was Yog Das, his famous work is Nrushímha Charita; the other was Bhima Bhoi (supra), his famous work is Nirveda Sadhana. One of his poems reflects his
philosophy of a high order:

Mo jibana pachhe narke padi thau
jagat uddhara pau.

(Let my life suffer in hell but let the whole world be rescued)

So like the Gonds the Kandhs are also quite widespread, living in plains as well as on the hills at various levels of acculturation and economic development. The Kandhs settled on the plains and valleys are more acculturated due to their long, close historical interaction with the plainsmen; on the other hand the Kandhs who stay on in the hills had very limited interaction with plainsmen. So they are in a less acculturated stage. They feel superior to the plains Kandh and consider themselves to be pure. Although they accept the economic superiority of the plains Kandh, they consider them to be khachria or impure and refuse to inter-marry with them. The Kutia Kandh and Dongria Kandh or hill Kandh have been able to preserve their traditional institutions and self-image.

The relationship between the Kandhs and the Raja of Kalahandi was reflected in the coronation ceremony and in the marriage relationship of the Raja of Kalahandi (see chapter V). In the process the Kandh accepted the Raja as their "son-in-law", and the Raja acknowledged the Kandhs as the owners of the soil.59

59. FDP (Pol-A), July 1882, no 523/26 NAI, New Delhi.
BINJHAL

A Hinduised tribe of western Orissa, they are called Binjhwar in Madhya Pradesh. Russell believed that the Binjhwar were an offshoot of the Baiga of northern Chhatisgarh. Like the Raj Gonds among the Gonds the Binjhwar are the landowning stratum of the Baigas.

The Zamindars of Borasambar-Padampur, Ghess and Rampur of Sambalpur district belonged to this tribe. Other than these Zamindars there were 276 Binjhal gartia or gaotia in Sambalpur district in the last decade of 19th century.

The Binjhals of Padampur and Ghess, associated with Zamindars there, claim Kshatriya status; but the ordinary Binjal admit that they are offshoots of Baigas and accept that they are also known as Binjhwar. They suggest that their name Binjal might have been derived from Vindhyavasini, their deity. They also believe that they originally belonged to Vindhya hills.

The Zamindar of Padampur in order to support his claim to

61. Ibid.
be Kshatriya of ancient origin prepared a genealogy going back 34 generations and composed a mahātmya, Nṛushimha Mahātmya, in early 20th century and got it published in 1908. According to the myth recorded in the mahātmya the original ancestors were bārah bhāi beṭkar or the twelve brother archers. They were all pure Kshatriya and settled down near Gandhagiri, present Gandhamandan hills near Padampur (see chapter III). They became the rulers of Gandhagiri area and Lampagarh was their capital.

Once the eldest brother saw an unusual happening: a wild boar and a rabbit playing together. He wanted to kill them. The latter, seeing the hunter, entered the forest. Following them the eldest brother reached upto Manida forest of Sambalpur district. The remaining eleven brothers followed him. The eldest brother saw the boar and the rabbit resting under a tree, and he tried to kill the boar with his bows and arrows. But the arrow pierced the body of the rabbit and proceeded towards east. The boar also fled towards the east.

The twelve brothers followed them. On the way, some Padhiāries or Pandas of Puri saw them and, from a distance, they could judge from their appearance that the twelve brothers must be from a ruling family. So, to get some reward, the Pandas approached the brothers and came to know that the latter were the rulers of Gandhagiri. The brothers enquired about the boar and

65. R.S.Bariha, 1927 (2nd ed.), Nṛushimha Mahatmya, I (1908, place of publication not known)
the arrow. One of the Pandas was an astrologer, and he could tell that the arrow and the boar were proceeding east.

In the meantime some of these Pandas collected an arrow secretly and proceeded towards Puri in advance and cleverly struck the arrow in the main door of the Puri Gajapati’s palace in the night. In the morning, the Gajapati ordered the removal of the arrow, but surprisingly nobody could remove it. In the meantime the twelve brothers in search of the boar and the arrow reached Puri. From their appearance they were recognised as Kshatriyas by the people of Puri. The Gajapati was informed and the latter immediately invited the twelve brothers to his durbar. The brothers introduced themselves as the Kshatriyas of Gandhagiri. The Gajapati asked them to remove the arrow from the door to test their Kshatriyahood. The brothers gladly accepted the challenge and easily removed the arrow from the door.

The Gajapati admitted them as true Kshatriya heroes. Pleased with their act, he wanted to give them something. The brothers asked him to give them Manida forest in which to settle. Gajapati gladly gave them the Manida forest area and wanted to tie a pāt or turban on the head of the eldest brother to signify the conferral of landownership. The twelve brothers replied that they were joint rulers, and in their system everybody was equal. So the Gajapati gave the pāt to them all and declared them as joint owners. The brothers decided to tie the pāt on the arrow
because it was due to the arrow, directed at the barah or boar, that they could get the darshan of Lord Jagannath and the recognition from the Gajapati of Puri. So they decided to adopt the title of Bariha from that day to remember the barah or boar.

They took leave of the Gajapati and started their return journey. On their way back they faced a storm, and there was no shelter for them except a cottage of a Luhura or blacksmith. Finally, they took shelter in that cottage. They were thirsty and hungry. The blacksmith recognising them refused to give them water and food because he was from a low caste. But the brothers insisted that a hungry man knows no caste bar. At last the blacksmith agreed to give them food on condition that the eldest of them should marry his daughter. The brothers agreed because Kshatriya is known by his karma or deed and simply marrying a girl from a low caste does not affect his Kshatriya status. The eldest of them married the girl, and the next day they proceeded towards Manida forest.

There, they cleared the forest, settled villages and built a garh. The brothers were capable of great strain and hard labour without care for sweating so their descendants are also known as Binjhal (bin, without + jhal, sweat).87

Once the twelve brothers went to Nrushimhanāth for a

66. Ibid. p.4.
67. Ibid. p.6.
pilgrimage. After taking bath in the holy stream they were resting in a place. They saw a bōṭā or python swallowing a sambar or sambur. They killed both and built a new garh there and named the place Bodasambar. They finally shifted their capital to this new place and named it Rajbodasambar.68

One of the brothers settled at Ramud on the borders of Patna estate and built a garh there. Once a pregnant queen whose husband had been killed took shelter in the house of the Bariha of Ramud and later gave birth to a boy. He was named Ramai (see chapter II). With the help of the Bariha chief, Ramai became the ruler of Patna estate; and at the coronation ceremony, the Bariha chief took Ramai on his lap and tied the pāt or turban, which they had received from the Puri Gajapati, on the head of Ramai. From that day Ramai declared that he and his descendants will respect the Barihas of Padampur as maternal uncles because of the help and the shelter they had given to his mother.69

The author narrates the achievements of the rulers of Bodasambar Padampur and gives a genealogy of them up to 34 generations back. He also mentions the Marhatta attack during the rule of Nilachala Bariha, the 28th ruler, and how the latter finally agreed to give 50 cartloads of bamboo annually as tribute to the former. He also narrates the conflict between Borasambar

68. Ibid, p.6.
69. Ibid, II,p.8
and Patna estate over the possession of Agalpur, Belpada and Ghasianpati, and how the British Commander Rafshal (Roughsedge) intervened and settled the matter, recognised Borasambar as a Garhjat state and fixed Rs. 160/- as takoli or tribute. The twentyninth ruler of Bodasambar was loyal to the British Government and captured the rebels of 1857 and handed them over to the British. The author claims himself to be the 34th Raja of Borasambar to sit on the gaddi.

The myth in the above mahātmya about the twelve brothers — their encounter with the Pandas of Puri, the incidents in Puri and later — clearly indicates the author's bid for Kshatriya status.

Secondly, the elements of the pregnant queen and the installation of Ramai as the ruler of Patna, seek to account for the tradition in Patna estate concerning the coronation ceremony for a new ruler.

Thirdly, there are the contemporary happenings which can be tested against historical evidence. It was around 1798 that the Bhonsalas of Nagpur captured western Orissa, and the then Zamindar of Borasambar agreed to pay 50 cartloads of bamboo annually as tribute. 70

Like the Kandhs and Gonds, the Binjhal of western Orissa also believe that twelve brothers first settled the villages.

70. NBB, I, pp. 88-89. MPRR, Nagpur.
From them several exogamous clans emerged, each occupying a specific territory called dibiri which became their clan territory. Initially, there was one chief for one barag or clan, and he was also head of a village.\textsuperscript{71} There was also a jhankar or priest for a village. The clan head protected them from outsiders and solved their internal disputes; and for this service he was supposed to receive presents from the people of his dibiri after the first harvest, and a portion of meat from any animal sacrifice.\textsuperscript{72} There were many such dibiris occupied by various exogamous ban\'as or clans, such as Amari, Dudka, Kamati, Mahaling, Bagha, Endja, Bentkar, Khussal etc.

Of these clans, the ecological setting in which the Amari clan was living enabled it to generate a substantial surplus. Perennial streams of Gandhamardan hill and a tributary of river Mahanadi provided favourable conditions for cultivation and agricultural surplus. Due to this surplus, they could organise the great Binjhal council to which a member of each clan of the locality was invited. They also organised the Bad Karma, the most important festival of the Binjhals. These were expensive events, and only those clans could organise them who had a sufficient surplus. The Amari clan members also donated some grain at harvest time to the Thuti Budhi, a local deity. The


\textsuperscript{72.} Ibid.
Amari Clan chief and Jhanker became the custodians, who collected the grain. From this stock, people of the locality took loans during emergencies. This system created a situation through which economic power and religious initiative got concentrated in the hands of the Amari chief, clearing the way for him to become the Chief of all Binjhals. This influence grew in non-Amari clan areas also. Within their clan area, they patronised the sacred spot of Nṛshimhanāth which further enhanced their status as the protectors of the shrine. Subsequently, the Zamindar of Padampur, Chief of the Amari clan, sought to strengthen his position further by claiming ancient origin (supra).

The colonial rulers recognised the Chief of Padampur as a Zamindar. This further legitimised his position. Now non-Amari clan members consider the Amari clan as superior.

The main occupation of Binjhal is cultivation. On the plains, they engage in wet and settled cultivation. The Binjhals living in the hill areas and in the jungle tract carry on podu.

They observe almost all important Hindu festivals along with their own traditional festivals. Mulen Devi and Dula Deota are their domestic deities. They offer a goat in sacrifice to

73. Ibid, pp 68-69.
74. Ibid. p.69.
75. J.K.Das, op.cit. p.35.
their deity Mulen Devi. They also worship Khambeswari and Dongar Debta at the village level.76

The Binjhal Chief of Ghess revolted against the British and supported Surendra Sai of Sambalpur during the revolt of 1857.

BHUNJIA

Nawapara sub-division, in Kalahandi, district in western Orissa, is considered as the home of Bhunjia as 75 per cent of the total Bhunjia population of Orissa lives there. Other Bhunjia live in adjoining areas of Madhya Pradesh. In both areas they speak Halabi, a mixture of Oriya, Marathi and Chhattisgarhi77.

Bhunjia are broadly divided into two categories, i.e., Chinda Bhunjia and Chaukhutia Bhunjia.78 Chinda Bhunjia generally live in the plains, have close contacts with Hindu neighbours, and are in a comparatively advanced stage of acculturation. The Chaukhutia stay closer to tribal culture and practices, and live in the interior hills and forest in ecologically secluded areas; and it is a mark of the distance they maintain from outsiders that they do not allow the latter, not even their married

76. Ibid p.36.
daughters, to touch their cooking hut.\textsuperscript{79}

Bhunjia society is clan-based. A clan is a closely integrated unit, and all its members share the consciousness of a common mythical history, and this helps in clan solidarity. Land is jointly owned by the members of the clan. In case of increase of population and shortage of cultivable land in a particular area, a section of the clan shifts to a new place of settlement but its members continue to maintain their previous relationships. A member's relationship with other members of his clan is thought to be unalterable. Individual migration is not permissible in Chaukhutia Bhunjia society. They do not allow outsiders to enter their clan, nor their own married daughters to return to their clan.

According to Russell,\textsuperscript{80} "the term Bhunjia may perhaps signify one who lives on the soil" (bhum, the earth + jia, dependent on). The local origin myth of Bhunjia says that the earlier name of Bhunjia was 'matia', (mat, soil + ia or came from or origin).

However, Dubey analysing the myth and oral tradition of Chhattisgarh considers the Bhunjia as a branch of Halbas of Bastar

\textsuperscript{79} \textit{Ibid}, p. 325, "If any man not of his own caste touches the hut where a Chaukhutia cooks his food, it is entirely abandoned and a fresh one built. At the time of census they threatened to kill the enumerator if he touched their huts to affix the census number. Pegs had therefore to be planted in the ground at a little distance in front of the huts and marked with their numbers".

\textsuperscript{80} R.V. Russell, \textit{op.cit.}, II, p. 324.
who fled from Bastar due to their quarrel with Dhakars. They came to Bindranawagarh, concealed their identity, and introduced themselves as Chindas. After sometime Gonds came to this area and settled down. Chindas did not like the Gond intrusion and killed the Gond chief. The pregnant wife of the chief took shelter in Khariar. There she gave birth to a boy who was named Kachna Dhurwa. When Kachna grew up, he took revenge over his father's death. A number of Chindas were burned to death by him in a cave. A few could escape and run away, and they were called Bhunjia or 'the roasted one'.

The above myth shares an element with the Chauhan origin myth, i.e., the escape of a pregnant wife. Perhaps, it was created later to justify Gond rule in Bindranawagarh. It clearly indicates the conflict between Gonds and Bhunjias. The Gond myth did not trace the ancestor of Gonds to any great race or mythological figure but to a person Kachna Dharua. Narendra Dharua, the ruler of Chhura, was 51 years old in 1951. He was the fifth descendant from Kachna Dharua. So the origin of the name Bhunjia seems to be relatively recent. Secondly, there is no reference to Bhunjia in inscriptions or Hindu literature and myths. So it is very difficult to accept them as indigenous

82. Ibid, p.52.
83. Ibid, p.50.
people of this area. British records for the first time show the Bhunjia as a distinct tribe.

The Bhunjia live in close proximity to Gond and have adopted many of the Gods and Goddesses of the latter as their own. The two groups worship a God and a Goddess common to the locality, i.e., Budha Raja, Suna Dei. Bhunjia considers themselves as a pure and real tribe.84

The Bhunjia are poor due to their confinement, economically to primitive agriculture, food gathering and hunting.85 They have resisted overall change and are in many ways persevering with their way of life.

In the 19th century the Bhunjia were the gaotias, i.e., the headmen of village, and thekedars, i.e., lease holders of villages.86 In many cases the gaotia and the thekedar was one and the same person. He was responsible for revenue collection in his village, and for that he enjoyed some bhogra or revenue free lands, generally the best land of the village. These men then were the lease holders and must have enjoyed superior position and influence in their locality. But later in the colonial period

84. S.C. Dube, 1950, 'Inter-Tribal Relations', Man in India, XXX, 2, p. 76.
85. Ibid, pp. 74-75.
86. Wasib-ul-Urz, 1891, Sambalpur University Archive, Acc no. 23, Burla.
they lost their position and influence though some of them were given protected status. In 1888, the British government passed a law and gave some of the thekedars, especially tribal thekedar who could prove their long possession, protected status, i.e., protected thekedars were not liable to ejectment for mere non-payment of revenue. Their tenure was made inheritable but not transferable. Nevertheless, they gradually lost their position of thekedars and even their lands to the non-tribals except in the interior and inaccessible areas. The unprotected tribal gaotias in general lost their lands; and in some cases even the protected gaotias, unable to cope with the pressures from outsiders, abandoned their lands and withdrew into the interior. Unable to retain their land, the Bhunjia withdrew to the deep forest later, in the beginning of twentieth century.

PAHARIA

Our fifth group is the Paharia. While ethnologically they are a tribal society without any doubt, they are not yet included in the official tribal list of Orissa, and so the census does not enumerate them. Paharias were known as 'Kamar' in Central Provinces, but in Oriya Language, Kamar means blacksmiths, and blacksmiths are not tribals. Perhaps because of this confusion


the Kamar were not included in the tribal list.

Prior to 1936, Khariar Zamindari, or present Nawapara sub-division of Kalahandi district, was in Raipur district of the Central Provinces. While reporting on the Kamar, Russell\(^89\) identified the areas of Kamar concentration as Bindranawagarh and Khariar Zamindari. Khariar Zamindari was transferred to Orissa on 1st April 1936, under Sambalpur district, and made into Khariar sub-division, with headquarters at Nawapara. Later, Khariar sub-division was named as Nawapara sub-division, following the name of its headquarters.

In Orissa, the Paharia or Kamar live only in Nawapara sub-division. Numerically there are very few, probably not more than two thousand. Politically they are insignificant; they are also not conscious enough to put forward their claim to be tribals. Living in an inaccessible area of Orissa, they have not yet attracted the attention of the Government of Orissa.

A majority of the Paharias live by food gathering and hunting. They consider themselves as the true autochthones of the country. They maintain tribal solidarity and a distinctive culture.\(^90\)

\(^89\) R.V.Russell, \textit{op.cit.}, III, p.323.

Their mode of cultivation is slash and burn, locally known as podu\textsuperscript{91}, burning patches of forest and scattering the seed there later. They generally burn the forest during March and April and sow the seed during May and June. In the hilly areas they generally live in an area for a few months and then abandon it after they have taken the produce from the land. So, for the rest of the year they depend upon food gathering and hunting and thus have a nomadic life for nearly eight months in the year, i.e., till the beginning of the next season. The produce of the land through podu cultivation does not provide them food for even six months. Next year they prefer a new patch of forest for cultivation. In this way the rotation of land goes on.

They live in small groups; indeed their semi-permanent way of life is not suitable for large population clusters. Some of them, who have settled down, are gradually abandoning 'podu' cultivation and taking to basket-making.

Wherever they have settled down their huts are dispersed in the jungle in groups of two or three, separated from one another by a furlong or so.\textsuperscript{92} They live not more than five to six families at a place, and within this cluster their

\textsuperscript{91} R.V.Russell, \textit{op.cit.}, III, p.329, who mentions it as 'Dahya'.

relationships are very close and strong. They also live near villages of other castes and tribes located near the forest, but do not mix with them easily and prefer to construct their huts outside the village boundary. In each cluster they own a tract of land jointly, and they jointly hunt collect and cultivate on that area. Their society is based on equalitarian rights though one of them would serve as leader. The leader is the eldest male member. There is no concept of private property amongst the Paharias.

Like the Bhunjias there was no reference to Paharia in ancient and medieval literature. It is again in the British records that we come across the 'Kamar' (Paharia) for the first time. V. Ball\(^94\) reporting on the life of the Kamar wrote in 1876, "Proceeding along the bed of the valley I came upon two colonies of a wild race of people called Kamars by their neighbours. They are regular Troglodytes in habits, dwelling in caves and existing chiefly on roots and fish".

Interestingly, their myth claims that a Kamar was the original ruler of Bindranawagarh. Their myth too, to some extent, resembles the origin myth of Chauhans of western Orissa. Their myth goes like this: They (the Paharia) were the rulers but a

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93. Ibid, p.142.

Kamar one day killed the bhimraj bird which had been reared by a foreigner from Delhi. He demanded compensation, and when Kamars refused, he went to Delhi and brought with him man-eating soldiers. The latter ate up all the Kamars except one pregnant woman. She escaped to Patna and took shelter in a Brähmana’s hut and later gave birth to a son. She threw the boy on a dung heap for fear of scandal as she was a widow at the time. The boy was discovered by some people, and as they found the boy on a dung heap, he was named Kachra (rubbish). When he grew up, he showed extraordinary strength and divine power. He once severed the head of a goat made of iron with a stick of bamboo. He later killed the cannibal soldiers of Bindranawagarh.95

The escape of the pregnant woman is a common motif; it permits claims to exalted antecedents when positive evidence to that effect is lacking. Furthermore, in a patrilineal society, the woman is only the carrier; it is the son who continues the line. Even the Gond myth of Bindranawagarh suggests an escape of pregnant wife to Khariar (supra). In case of Kamar she escaped to Patna and took shelter in a Brähmana’s hut. The Chauhan myth also has a similar escape story. In case of Kamar it is the man-eating soldiers of Delhi and in case of Chauhans it was Ala-ud-din of North India who killed the husband of the widow. In both cases the widow gave birth to boys who later showed extraordinary and supernatural power.

One may suggest that this element in the myth came to the tribal oral tradition from above. But it is difficult to understand how the origin myth of the Chauhans, which the inhabitants of Patna, Bolangir, Sambalpur, Sonepur and Khariar hardly know could enter the Kamar oral tradition. It may be that the element of the pregnant woman had been there in the Kamar tradition already, independently of the Chauhan myth.

WHERE THE FIVE TRIBES MEET

So far we have discussed the five tribal groups of western Orissa separately. Now we have to consider them in relation to other communities of the region with whom they interact. Living and interacting in close proximity, each community undergoes changes and makes adjustments according to the pressure the other communities impose on it, knowingly or unknowingly.

In western Orissa, these tribal groups as well as non-tribals live in close proximity; and though they remain socially distinctive, they influence one another and develop forms of mutual adjustment. One cultural area where Dube has studied inter-tribal relations is the area of Bindranawagarh Zamindari in Madhya Pradesh, adjoining western Orissa, where three tribal groups — Gond, Bhunjia and Kamar live in close proximity. Each tribal group maintains distance from the others


and has a separate Panchayat; but in many events they participate together, e.g., while tying up the tiger spirit or hunting the witches or facing a cholera epidemic. In their day-to-day life they accord a higher place to the Gond; but at the same time the Bhunjia have a feeling of tribal superiority. The Chaukhutia Bhunjia especially think of themselves as 'Chokh' or pure as they perform pre-puberty marriage and secondly they do not allow other than their clan members to touch the cooking hut where their deities are lodged. Dube explains that though the Kamar and Bhunjia have considerable feeling of tribal superiority, they accept Gond as superior, for the Gond are economically better off and socially influential. This type of status ranking among tribals can be explained in terms of the influence of the social order among non-tribal Hindus on them. N.S.Reddy has observed that the highly developed caste system of the plains had its impact on the tribal areas; under its influence, the tribals create caste-like social arrangements according to their own understanding of the caste order. He found in Kummari, a village in Andhra Pradesh, several groups like Bagatha, Kotia, Mukadora, Ozulu, Valmini and Ghansi, which live together and have accepted a mutual status-ranking. The belief in tribal pollution and practice of endogamy has given rise to commensal restrictions and occupational specialisation amongst the above groups. So Reddy

98. Ibid. p.74.

Reddy has concluded that caste-like arrangements can evolve at any place given the necessary conditions.

Mandelbaum\(^{100}\) had earlier reported caste-like interaction among four tribes, i.e., Toda, Kota, Badaga and Kurumba in Nilgiri hills. When non-tribals (European and Hindus) made their inroads into the Nilgiri hills each tribal group reacted differently. Kota were influenced by the Europeans and Badagas by the Hindus. He also observed functional specialisation amongst Kota artisans and musicians, Badaga agriculturists, Toda Pastoralists and Kurumba medicine men and sorcerers. Saileswar Prasad\(^{101}\) in his study of a micro region of Bihar where the tribal and non-tribal interact, notes that social adjustment and interrelationships lead to mutual cultural borrowing. The Hindu model has played an important role in enabling the three tribal groups, i.e., Maler, Mal-Paharia and Santhal, to establish mutual relationships. Mal-Paharia have come closest to the Hindu model, the Santhal less so, and the Maler very little. Correspondingly, there has arisen a caste like hierarchy amongst the three tribes.\(^{102}\)

In western Orissa the Gond, the Kandh, the Binjhal, the Bhunjia and the Paharia are separate and exclusive groups but


\(^{102}\) Ibid. p.149.
have accepted the leadership and superiority of Gonds in Sambalpur and Khariar area, of Binjhalas in Padampur area and of Kandhs in Kalahandi and in part of Bolangir area. Within each tribal group the economically superior section claims higher status: the Raj Gonds among the Gonds, the Raj Kandhs among the Kandh, the Amari clan among the Binjhal and the Chaukhutia among the Bhunjias; no such claim has emerged among the Paharias. They claim higher rank than the low caste Hindus. The acceptance of food and drink from them by the Hindus (other than Brāhmaṇa) has further strengthened their claim to rank above the untouchables. It shows that the caste model of the Hindus influences them even though they refuse to accept the overall ideology of the caste system. We have further seen that, within each tribal group, the fact of economic differentiation is acknowledged, e.g., the Kutia Kandh accept the Desia Kandh as economically superior; but this superiority is achieved through association with a society seen as alien, namely the Hindus, and therefore, the group is also seen as being impure, "Khachdia".

We have observed in the earlier chapters how the tribals and non-tribals have influenced each other in the social, economic, political and religious sectors of their lives. Apart from mutual borrowing, the tribals and non-tribals have also undergone the processes of competition, conflict and compromise — which we shall consider in the next chapter.