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CONTENTS

1. A Brief study of relationship based on blood and Marriage : Kinship System among the Jamatias of Tripura
- Ananda Chandra Nath.
Bandana (Devi) Das. P 1
2. Tribal unrest in Bihar and Measures to tackle it - Prof. K.S. Subramanian. P 12
3. Riag Customary laws and Practices (Right to Property). A Socio-Legal Study
- B.K. Kilikdar. P 26
4. Problems and prospects of Kokborok literature - N.C. Debbarma. P 46
5. Ranglongs and the History of their settlement in Tripura - Dr. D.N. Goswami. P 52
6. The Religious history of the Tripuris on the Background of Chaturdasa Devata Puja
- Priyabrata Bhattacharjee. P 54
7. Tripura Scheduled Tribes Co-operative Development Corporation Ltd. A review
- M. L. Das. P 62
8. Tui, Vol-II - A Review.
- Mahadev Chakravarti P 65
9. Letter to the Editor
- C. M. Debbarma - TFS-I P 70
10. The Kukis - With special reference to the Kukis of Tripura - S. Sailo. P 72
11. Mass exodus of Chakmas reason behind from anciant to present line
- Mrs. A. Dewan P 86
12. The Uchai people as one sees them
- Suren Debbarma. P 95

be cared for and educated, so that they can become functioning members of their society. In most human societies inheritance (the transfer of property) and succession (the transfer of social position) take place within kin groups.

Second, in most societies, however, kin groups that include relatives beyond this minimum are very important. It is undoubtedly the adaptiveness of social groups larger than the elementary family that account for the fact that expanded kin groups which define a universe of others on whom an individual can depend on for aid in a variety of ways.

THE PEOPLE:

The paper aims to study the kinship terminology among the Jamatia of Tripura. Udaipur, Dharmanagar and Khowai subdivisions were the areas of field investigation which are predominantly inhabited by the people 'Jamatia'. The term Jamatia is derived from 'Jamat' etymologically 'Jamat' a Bengalee/Urdu word which means assemblage. Some believe that the Jamatias were recruited in the Army which was called 'Jamat' and subsequently came to be known as Jamatias. They were considered as a brave and spirited people.

Previously, they were mainly found in Sonamura and Udaipur subdivisions of the State but now they have scattered almost all over the State of Tripura.

The Jamatias are one of the major ethnic group among the five major groups of Tripura, namely, Tripuri/Tippera/Debbarma, Riang, Halam, Noatia and Jamatia. They are again divided into a number of sub-tribes.

Jamatias speak a dialect known as 'Kokborok'. According to the Gazetteer of India vol.I, 1909, chapter-VII, the dialect of the Jamatia is known as 'Mrung' which belongs to the Tibeto-Burman groups.

Economically, they are more advanced than the other tribal

peoples of Tripura, Prior to their adoption of settled cultivation they were dependant on Jhum cultivation. At present, they are accustomed to settled cultivation and some of them practise various business in keeping with current trends to eke out their livelihood.

They were originally Hindu by religion but very recently some of them have adopted Christianity too.

FIELD TECHNIQUE AND MATERIAL:

Data have been collected by personal interview and random sampling method. The important aspects are collected firstly, the terms of address and reference and secondly, concerning behaviour pattern between relatives. Geneological tables are also collected through male as well as female informants. The reliability of the data was ensured by cross checking from different informants. The data were collected during the period of January to April, 1980, in the subdivisions of Udaipur, Dharmanagar and Agartala of Tripura.

DISCUSSION : KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY :

It has been noted that the intensity of interpersonal relationship depends upon the spatial proximity or remoteness of kinship relationship. Members of a family are more intimately related than the affinal relatives in this respect.

The study of Jamatia kinship system brought out the following points: kinship is bilateral and consanguinity is of primary importance, while affinity is also taken into account. Kinship terms generally indicate certain categories of prohibited relationship from marriage point of view.

In the Jamatia kinship terminology some of the principal relatives are denoted by a denotative term while others are addressed and designated by classificatory terms.

In the first ascending generation 'baba' is a denotative term

to designate father and 'ama' to mother. Father's elder brothers and younger brothers are addressed as 'eyong kotor' and 'kaka' respectively, and their spouses are addressed as 'eyongbroi' and 'kaki' respectively. The word 'kaka' and 'kaki' is a recent development and is influenced by Bengalee terminology as Tripura is dominated by the Bengalee people. As the social role dictates that the father's brother stands next to father in case of one's father's death, the son looks for help, protection and guidance from his father's brother.

Sister is addressed as 'eyongbroi' and their spouses are denoted by 'peeai' and 'eyongchowla' respectively.

In the same generation mother's elder brothers and younger brothers are termed as 'eyong' and 'mama' respectively and their spouses are termed as 'eyongbroi' and 'mami' respectively. Mother's elder sisters and younger sisters are termed as 'eyongbroi' and 'totoi' respectively, and their spouses are addressed as 'eyongbroi' and 'mama' respectively. Terminologically, these words, viz. 'eyongbroi', 'eyongchowla' and 'mama' are all classificatory terms as the work 'eyongbroi' classed together - the relatives such as father's elder brother's wife, mother's elder brother's wife, father's elder sister and mother's elder sister, 'eyongchowla' classed together father's elder sister's husband and mother's elder sister's husband, and 'mama' classed together mother's younger brother as well as mother's younger sister's husband.

Besides these, the affinal kins that is a man's wife's parents or a woman's husband's parents are referred to as 'bokrajwak' for mother and 'bokra' for father. So far as the behaviour pattern is concerned there is a terminological harmonious relationship between parent-in-law and the parents - as a man or woman respect their parents-in-law in the same way as they regards their own parents.

In the second ascending or in grand parental generation the range of terms are wide enough to include also the siblings, thus father's father and his brothers are addressed as 'chocho' and

father's mother and father's sister as 'nai'. The relationships with the grand parents are marked by a sort of privileged familiarity. Reciprocally all the grand children are termed by a single term "busuk" irrespective of sex.

In the ego's generation, the term 'bohoi/ broi/ boroi' is used to refer to one's wife and 'bosai' to husband. These are purely terms of reference, and there is no term of address either for wife or husband. As regards siblings, cousins-parallel as well cross in the same generation, - no distinction is made. By ignoring the criteria of collaterally and bifurcation the sibling terms are extended horizontally and bilaterally to designate both parallel and cross-cousin. The elder siblings and cousins are, however, differentiated from the younger ones, and on the basis of sex. The kinship terminology not only for siblings and cousin is the same but also the spouses of cousin are designated by the same term as used for the spouses of siblings. "Buta Aukra" means elder brother for elder male siblings or elder parallel or cross-cousin or the ego. 'Bai kotor' means elder sister for elder female siblings or elder female parallel or cross-cousin of the ego. 'Bofaiung kuchu' means younger brother for younger male siblings or younger parallel or cross-cousin of the ego. 'Bahanakjuk kuchu' means younger sister for younger female siblings or younger parallel or cross-cousin of the ego. And further correspondingly the spouses of 'Buta Aukra', 'bai kotor' 'bofaiung kuchu' and 'bahanakjuk kuchu' are referred to as 'bachoi aukra', 'kumoi kotor', 'bowaijwak' and 'bowai' respectively.

In the same generation both husband or wife develop relationship from both sides and both use similar terms to refer to their siblings. As term 'dasong' is used to refer to both husband's or wife's elder brother, 'boprangrong' for younger brother, 'bowaijwak' or 'bai' for elder sister, 'boprangrongjwak' for younger sister, and their spouses are addressed as 'bachoi' 'boprangrongjwak', 'kumoi' and 'boprangrong' respectively.

In the first descending generation one's own children and those of a sibling of the same sex are classed together and are distinguished from those of a sibling of the opposite sex. Sons of

the same generation, own, elder brothers or younger brothers are all known as 'bowchala' but one's elder brother's son will be referred to as 'dadaktanibowchala'. Ego's daughter is referred to as 'bowchajwak' and elder brother's daughter is referred to as 'dadaktani bowchajwak' and their spouses as 'hanjwaksa' that is son's wife and 'chamroicha' daughter's husband respectively. Younger sister's daughter or son are classed together and referred as 'iyongcha' or 'eung' making no distinction for sex. But now -a-days they are newly termed as 'babu' for male and 'mayo' for female, and their spouses as 'chamroicha' for sister's daughter's husband and 'hanjwaksä' for sister's son's wife.

In the second descending generation as in the second ascending one, no distinction is made between the agnatic and affinal relatives, so that son's son and son's daughter and daughter's son, daughter's daughter and their spouses are classed together and referred to as 'boshok'.

The important kinship terms or the Jamatias which have already been discussed and mentioned above is appended hereunder:

Relationship	Kinship term	Term of address		Term of reference.	
		Male speaking	Female speaking	Male speaking	Female speaking
Fa	Baba	y	y	y	y
Mo	Ama	y	y	y	y
Fa Yo Br	Kaka	y	y	y	y
FaYoBrWi	Kaki	Y	Y	Y	Y
FaElBr	Eyongkotor	Y	Y	Y	Y
FaElBrWi	Eyongbori	Y	Y	Y	Y
Fa YoSi	Pee	Y	Y	Y	Y
FaYoSiHu	Peeai	Y	Y	Y	Y
FaElSi	Eyongbroi	Y	Y	Y	Y
FaElSiHu	Eyongchowla	Y	Y	Y	Y
MoElBr	Eyong	Y	Y	Y	Y
MoElBrWi	Eyongbroi	Y	Y	Y	Y

MoYoBr	Mama	Y	Y	Y	Y
MoYoBrWi	Mami	Y	Y	Y	Y
MoYoSi	Totoi	Y	Y	Y	Y
MoyoSiHu	Mama	Y	Y	Y	Y
MoElsi	Eyongbroi	Y	Y	Y	Y
MoElsiHu	Eyongchowla	Y	Y	Y	Y
WiFa	Bokra	-	-	Y	-
Hufa	Bokra	-	-	-	Y
WiMo	Bokrajwak	-	-	Y	-
HuMo	Bokrajwak	-	-	-	Y
FaFa	Chocho	Y	Y	Y	Y
FaMo	Nai	Y	Y	Y	Y
FaFaBr	Chocho	Y	Y	Y	Y
FaFa Si	Noi	Y	Y	Y	Y
Wi	Bohoi/ Broi/				
	Boroi	-	-	Y	-
Hu	Bosai	-	-	-	Y
ElBr	Bota aukra	-	-	Y	Y
ElBrWi	Bochoi aukra	-	-	Y	Y
Fa ElBrSo	Bota	-	-	Y	Y
(FaElBrElSo	Bota aukra	Y	Y	Y	(Y)
FaYoBrSo	Bota	-	-	Y	Y
FaYoBrElDa	Bai	Y	Y	Y	Y
FaYoBrYoDa					
	Bahana	-	-	Y	Y
ElSi	Bai kotor	-	-	Y	Y
ElsiHu	Kumoi kotor	-	-	Y	Y
YoBr	Bofaiung				
	kuchu	-	-	Y	Y
YoBrWi	Bowaijwak	-	-	Y	Y
YoSi	Bahana kuchu	-	-	Y	Y
YoSiHu	Bowai	-	-	Y	Y
WiElBrWi	Bachoi	Y	-	-	-
HuElBrWi	Bachoi	-	Y	-	-
WiElSi	Bowaijwak/				
	Bai	Y	-	-	-
WiElSiHu	Kumoi	Y	-	-	-
HuElSi	Bowaijwak/				

	Bai	-	Y	-	-
HuElSiHu	Kumoi	-	Y	-	-
WiElBr	Dasong	-	-	Y	-
HuElBr	Dasong	-	-	-	Y
WiYoBr	Boprangrong	-	-	Y	-
HuYoBr	Boprangrong	-	-	-	Y
WiYoBrWi	Boprangron- gjawak	-	-	Y	-
HuYoBrWi	Boprangron- gjawak	-	-	-	Y
WiYoSi	Boprangron- gjawak	-	-	Y	-
HuYoSi	Boprangron- gjawak	-	-	-	Y
WiYoSiHu	Boprangrong	-	-	Y	-
HuYoSiHu	Boprangrong	-	-	-	Y
So	Bowchala	-	-	Y	Y
ElBrElSo	Dadaktani bochala aukra	-	-	Y	Y
ElBrYoSo	Dadaktani bochala kuchu	-	-	Y	Y
ElBrElDa	Dadaktani bochajwak aukra	-	-	Y	Y
ElBrYoDa	Dadaktani boc hajwak kuchu	-	-	Y	Y
BrDaHu	Chamurwicha/ Chamroicha	Y	Y	Y	Y
BrSoWi	Hanjwakcha	Y	Y	Y	Y
ElBrSo	Dadaktani bochala	-	-	Y	Y
Da	Bowchajwak	-	-	Y	Y
ElBrDa	Dadaktani bowchajwak	-	-	Y	Y
ElSo	Bowchala aukra	-	-	Y	Y
ElSoWi	Hanjwaksa kotor	-	-	Y	Y
YoSo	Bochala	-	-	-	-

	kuchu	-	-	Y	Y
YoSoWi	Hanjwaksa				
	kuchu	-	-	Y	Y
EIDa	Bochajwak				
	aukra	-	-	Y	Y
EIDaHu	Chamroicha				
	kotor	-	-	Y	Y
YoDa	Bochajwak				
	kuchu	-	-	Y	Y
YoDaHu	Chamroicha				
	kuchu	-	-	Y	Y
SoWi	Hanjwaksa	-	-	Y	Y
DaHu	Chamroicha	-	-	Y	Y
YoSiDa	Iyongcha/ Eung/Mayo	Y	Y	Y	Y
YoSiSo	Iyongcha/ Eung/Babu	Y	Y	Y	Y
YoSiDaHu	Chamroicha	Y	Y	Y	Y
YoSiSoWi	Hanjwaksa	Y	Y	Y	Y
SoSo	Boshok	-	-	Y	Y
SoSoWi	Boshok	-	-	Y	Y
DaSo	Boshok	-	-	Y	Y
DaSoWi	Boshok	-	-	Y	Y
SoDa	Boshok	-	-	Y	Y
SoDaHu	Boshok	-	-	Y	Y
DaDa	Boshok	-	-	Y	Y
DaHu	Boshok	-	-	Y	Y

CONCLUSION :

On the basis of the kinds of kin groups anthropologist have identified six systems of kinship terminology; Hawaiiin, Eskimo, Iroquois, Omaha, Crow and Sudanese. Each of the type of classification described above, emphasizes the most important kinship groupings and relationships in the societies in which they are found. Thus, Omaha and Crow system, found in unilineal societies, emphasize the importance of lineage and clan, just as the

TRIBAL UNREST IN BIHAR AND MEASURES TO TACKLE IT

Prof. K.S. Subramanian*

INTRODUCTION

During my tenure in the Government of India a few years ago, I had the opportunity to study the problem of tribal unrest in Bihar and prepare an agenda for action. This paper is based on my experiences and observations. Since the problem of tribal unrest in Bihar and elsewhere is still with us and the administrative, managerial and policy challenges remain more or less the same, the paper may still be relevant for an understanding of the problem not only in Bihar but in other parts of the country as well.

During my study tour of Bihar, I visited Patna and the districts of Santhal Parganas, Ranchi and Singhbhum. I had discussions with a number of officials as well as nonofficials including members of voluntary agencies at Patna, Dumka, Ranchi and Chaibasa. Earlier at Delhi I had had discussions with some MPs belonging to this region. As a result, I was able to form a general but fairly clear idea of the various aspects of the situation in the tribal region of Bihar and the measures necessary to tackle the growing unrest.

In this paper, I shall first set out my impressions and observations in regard to the situation as I saw it together with a concluding part containing an over-all analysis based on my discussions with knowledgeable people and a brief study of some available reports on the subject. Thereafter, I shall outline a package of measures that appear to me to be necessary to deal with

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the situation.

IMPRESSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

The major impression I gained from my visit to the tribal areas in Bihar and discussions with officials and non-officials was that the tribal situation in the State is growing steadily worse and may well become explosive if adequate measures are not taken to attend to the social compulsions behind the unrest and not merely look at it from the purely law and order angle.

The unhappy situation in Bihar appears to be mainly due to the fact that the tribal areas in the State have been victims of mal-administration resulting in the systematic deterioration of the socio-economic conditions of the tribal people over the years. Some of the aspects of the mal-administration are, briefly, lack of realism in the formulation of policies for the economic betterment of the tribals, uncritical pursuit of the same pattern of development in the tribal areas as in the non-tribal areas, the failure of the schemes at operational level due to bad administration, poor co-ordination etc., avoidable red-tape, cornering of the benefits of tribal development by non-tribal rural and urban vested interest and so on. Thus, the policies of the Government do not appear to have helped the tribal people either with regard to economic and educational benefits or in terms of employment in the State and Central Government agencies and public sector undertakings. There are abundant factual data to substantiate these points.

Although the deterioration socio-economic conditions of the tribal people in Bihar are thus leading to the growth of endemic tribal unrest, in the Chhota Nagpur plateau and Santhal Parganas, it seems that there is an unfortunate-tendency at the policy-making levels to view the problem from an exclusively law and order angle and to talk in terms of induction of para-military and police personnel, logistics, wireless sets and so on. This was revealed in discussions at the State as well as district headquarters at Dumka and Chaibasa. In other words, there appears to be a lack of sensitive and perceptive awareness of the need for a reappraisal and re-assessment of programmes and policies for tribal develop-

ment, removal of bottlenecks at the implementation level, determined attack on rural vested interests, posting of suitable officers, better co-ordination etc., which is being sharply underlined by on going developments in the tribal areas. On the other hand, there is even a tendency to be positively anti-tribal in terms of attitudes and perceptions at both the State and district headquarters which can only have negative consequences in the present situation. The gulf between the tribals' perception of their own problems and predominantly non-tribal oriented administration's attitude to them appears to be widening steadily. Some of the tribals, especially tribal Christian officers to whom I spoke laboured under the feeling that they were suspected by their non-tribal colleagues and superiors of being sympathetic to the Jharkhand movement which was seen as a threat to the integrity of the State. Some of the non tribals but sympathetic and sensitive officers gave the impression that they felt isolated, mistrusted and even hounded on account of their zeal for tribal development. They even felt that there is a case for massive Central intervention to reverse the rapidly deteriorating situation in relation to problems of tribal development in the State.

There appears to be a corresponding tendency at State headquarters in Patna to play down the seriousness of the situation in tribal areas and even a some what complacent attitude in regard to the ability of the administration to handle any eventuality and a sensitivity over Central Government's concern about developments in the tribal region of the State. It was pointed out to me that frequent visit by Central officers to tribal areas tended to aggravate the situation, that often enough the Centre was inclined to feed exaggerated reports to the State Government regarding developments in the State which did not turn out to be accurate and that the State Government was in fact accurately posted with all developments of the tribal front. I politely pointed out that the Central Government has a special responsibility for the welfare and economic development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and that the developments in the North-East have to be viewed as a warning to State administrations that unless a sympathetic and sensitive handling of tribal situation problems was forthcoming, the likelihood of a tragic outcome

involving a major tribal uprising against non-tribals in areas such as the Jharkhand region in Bihar cannot be ruled out.

Similarly at district headquarters in Dumka (Santhal parganas) the administration appeared to take pride in its ability to open fire on restive tribal mobs in some cases recently in contrast to what was regarded as the "weak" attitude of the previous district administration. It was also stated that the problems arose mainly on account of selfish politicians who are out to 'exploit' tribal problems for their own end. It did not appear to be clear to the district administration that it has to move promptly to redress genuine grievances and difficulties on the part of the tribal people well before the politician stepped in the "exploit" them. In other words, it seems clear that many of the officers currently posted in sensitive tribal areas stand in need of a complete reorientation of their attitudes and perceptions, before they can be expected to effectively handle the problems of developmental administration for sensitive and backward minority communities.

By contrast, the administration at Ranchi and Chaibasa appeared to be much more sensitive and responsive to the needs and requirements of the tribal situation although it did not seem to possess the administrative will and organisational capacity to ensure effective functioning of the delivery system. A specially created Branch Secretariat for tribal development with a Regional Development Commissioner at its head has been functioning for some time at Ranchi but it does not seem to have made any dent on the problem as informally admitted by the officers themselves for various reasons including political factors, lack of co-ordination, purposive and result-oriented implementation of programmes and projects and so on.

The movement of indiscriminate felling of trees in the forest region of Singhbhum district now going on appears to be a serious one threatening to assume serious proportions. However, the administration is neither fully posted with accurate details and contours of the developing situation nor in possession of a package of policy measures to deal with it. There is a marked lack of co-

ordination between the Forest Department on the one hand and the civil administration on the other regarding the very nature of the problem and the ways of handling it, although in this case the Forest Deptt. appears to be more culpable than the civil administration. There is an unhealthy tendency on its part to take advantage of the worsening situation to blame the civil administration even while refusing or unwilling to recognise the failings and limitations of the Forest staff posted in distant areas. In other words, the situation in the Singbhum district appears to be steadily deteriorating without any mutually agreed perceptions and co-ordinated plan of action on the part of the Forest Deptt. and the civil administration. This is leading to indiscriminate destruction of public property in the shape of forest resources which can eventually culminate in precipitate law and order steps against poor tribals who are being instigated into cutting trees by various vested interests including perhaps forest contractors. What appears certain is that the tribals out of their poverty and helplessness are being led to indiscriminate forest felling by various interests leading to loss of crores of rupees worth of Govt. property. No firm steps have yet been formulated to deal with these vested interests and to wean away the poor tribals by chalking out socio-economic measures to provide them assured livelihood. Unless this is done immediately, the situation may well become explosive in the Singbhum areas and may spark off similar unrest elsewhere in the Chhota Nagpur plateau and Santhal parganas. The Principal Secretary (Welfare), Govt. of Bihar was among those officers who showed a sensitive awareness of the needs of the developing situation but he expressed his helplessness in the present context and pleaded for a strong and major Central initiative. He stated that the Forest portfolio is no longer with him and so he can not take any initiative in forest matters. He made the following interesting and important points :-

(i) Basically, it would be correct to say that the non-tribal people as a whole do not wish the tribals to develop and come up.

(ii) The Forest Deptt. is not functioning in the required manner and needs to be handled firmly. The tribal people living in the reserve forest areas are the most backward and can not be

developed without the assistance of the Forest Deptt. The Forest Deptt. must become a welfare agency and take part in developmental activities in a serious manner.

(iii) The present process of development far from helping the tribals is reducing them to nomads and destitutes. The situation has to be changed by determined efforts. Complete rehabilitation of displaced tribals should be a charge on every industrial project in the tribal areas. Unless this is done, the tribal situation is bound to get worse.

(iv) A very serious tribal movement took place in 1978 and there may be a repetition unless effective measures are taken.

(v) There are missionaries and missionaries and all of them cannot be put in the same basket. Many missionaries have done excellent work and cannot be branded as secessionists. He found the Catholic missionaries hundred percent patriotic while the activities of other Missionaries needed to be watched. A good deal of money was coming from abroad and the missions could be required to furnish reports of expenditure to the district authorities in addition to the Reserve Bank of India.

(vi) The tribals are being gradually destroyed. However, the lesson of history is that no people can be completely destroyed. We have to take a lesson from history and modify our priorities and policies.

In a way, the above assessment was confirmed by the former Chief Secretary of Bihar who made the following additional points :-

(i) A separate tribal development agency comprising Chhota Nagpur and Santhal parganas may be created. It may not be independent of the State Government but should possess relative autonomy with a direct Central role.

(ii) A perspective plan for the development of the region based on a macro economic survey should be worked out and

implemented.

(iii) Specially selected officers answerable to Central Government should be posted for carrying out the developmental programmes in tribal areas.

The regional Development Commissioner and the Development Commissioner, Ranchi made the following important points :-

(i) The impact of tribal development programmes has been practically nil because of the non-existence of right type of personnel.

(ii) The centralisation of postings of BDOs and Circle Officers at Patna has reduced the ability of the Commissioner to organise work of tribal development according to the requirements of the field situation. As a result, in one of the blocks in Ranchi there has been no BDO for a considerable period.

(iii) As recruitments to the various departments have been centralised at Patna and only the reservation quota as applicable to the State as whole was being observed, the higher reservation quota fixed for predominantly tribal areas are not being followed which has led to considerable discontent among the tribal people and was seen as discriminatory in intent.

(v) Personnel from South and North Bihar posted in tribal areas do not want to stay. There should be total delegation to the Regional Directors of the various departments in regard to recruitment on the basis of reservation quotas fixed for the various districts in the chhota Nagpur area.

(v) The felling of trees in the Singhbhum area is being financed by the Forest contractors. D.F.O.s who continue for too long have themselves unofficially become forest contractors.

(vi) The migration of destitute tribals from Bihar to other States has been causing concern. Effective measures to check their

exploitation by vested interests in other States should be chalked out.

(vii) The co-operative bodies have not been able to make a dent and money-lending is still a major problem.

(viii) The functioning of 474 LAMPS in the area has been unsatisfactory because they are faced with a number of problems.

(ix) The problems of the area are deep-seated, numerous and woven into several aspects of life. The political and administrative aspects are inter-related. Something concrete needs to be done immediately.

(x) A special machinery for monitoring and evaluation of the tribal sub-plan is necessary.

(xi) The area-oriented approach should be given up in favour of target group oriented approach.

Since voluntary agencies have done useful work in providing essential services to tribal populations in different parts of the country, I took opportunity to meet a few Christian missionaries and members of the Rama Krishna Mission at Dumka and Ranchi to find out their views. From my discussion with them the following important points emerged:-

(i) An element of cultural superiority and even arrogance was a feature among Government officers and others in the tribal areas. Most of the Government officers do not know the tribal languages, do not like them or feel for them. This was a serious handicap in bringing the Government closer to the tribal people.

(ii) Two major "Sanakritising" influences among the tribals have been the Hindu and the Muslim influences. Both are seen by the tribals as destroying their tribal identity and leading to their "incorporation" in the main culture. However, the tribals see the Christian missionaries as trying to maintain, preserve and enrich tribal identity and do not see their activity as an alienating influ-

ence. The missionaries also possess a spirit of dedication and felt for the people and spoke their language and sincerely work for them. This brought them closer to the people.

(iii) The Government's developmental effort misses the point because it seeks to deal with the physical aspect "(area development)" to the neglect of the human and social aspect.

(iv) The kind of people that the Government sends to tribal areas do not have the will to do things although they may possess the know-how.

(v) The Christian missionary work in tribal areas is centred on building up people's consciousness and organisation to enable them to take advantage of the Government's programmes and projects meant for them and to prevent vested interests from cornering the benefits. It may take many years to build up peoples' consciousness and organisation. The physical aspect can start only after that.

(vi) Rural vested interests oppose the building up of consciousness of tribal people because this comes in the way of their cornering and reaping the benefits of tribal development administration. Government agencies are also prone to misunderstand Christian missionaries' effort in that direction.

(vii) An example of the futility of Government effort at tribal development is that the "demonstration farms" set up by it are usually in the first class lands whereas most of the lands in tribal areas are third class lands which require a different treatment altogether.

I also took the opportunity to speak to some Members of Parliament elected from this area. They also expressed their disillusionment about Government's developmental effort in tribal areas of Bihar and made the following important points :-

(i) Whatever the success of the Government's effort for the economic development of tribal areas the political demand for the

creation of a separate Jharkhand was likely to continue.

(ii) Most of the officers posted in tribal areas are unsuitable for their task. There is scope for the creation of a separate cadre of IAS and IPS officers for the development of tribal areas by the Central Government with not less than five years tenure in each case and direct answerability to the Central Government.

(iii) The state Government which is dominated by non-tribal officers and politicians with anti-tribal attitudes and perceptions have failed to take stock of tribal problems in the correct perspective and evolved suitable programmes. The Centre has to intervene directly if a major conflagration in the tribal areas of Bihar is to be prevented.

(iv) The Central Government should start a crash programme of minor irrigation, afforestation, soil conservation, fostering of tribal culture, posting of right type of officers, adequate representation of tribal people in the Central and State Government services and public sector undertakings, complete rehabilitation of the tribal people uprooted by the process of industrialisation urbanisation etc., major attitudinal reorientation of Government employees posted in tribal areas, training of educated tribal youths in the legal profession to fight the many civil and criminal cases in which tribals are involved. Posting of tribal teachers in schools in tribal areas, serious attempt to check atrocities on tribal people and prevent sexual exploitation of tribal women by Government Servants, contractors and others.

(v) While most of the atrocities on Scheduled Castes are committed by land-lords and other vested rural interests, it was noteworthy that atrocities on Scheduled Tribes are committed mostly by Government agencies. This deserves special attention and speedy remedial steps.

(vi) There was a major case of atrocities on Scheduled Tribes in 1978-79 in the Godda sub-division of Santhal Parganas district in which no serious attempt was made by the State Government to take an impartial view and help the tribals involved. A report on

this subject was submitted by an officer of the Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The finding of this officer should be implemented.

(vii) As most of the repressive measures against tribals are taken by the police, CRF etc., it may be useful to raise police battalions consisting of tribal people.

(viii) Developmental programmes should be evolved by talking to the tribal people involved and knowledgeable officials and nonofficials.

CONCLUSIONS

The tribal unrest in Bihar is not a new phenomenon. During British regime also tribal people rebelled against an inequitable agrarian set up and won certain safeguards against the cunning neo-settlers. However, these measures have by and large failed to protect the tribals against usurpation of their lands and denial to them of the return from their produce by unscrupulous money-lenders, traders and other non-tribals. Various Government reports have expressed concern over these developments and have recommended a package of protective and developmental measures to give social and economic justice to the tribals. The most comprehensive account of Government policy towards tribals appears in the so-called Dhebar Commission report of 1961. A shorter version appeared in "A New Deal for Tribal India" edited by Verrier Elwin (Ministry of Home Affairs, 1963). The annual reports of the Commissioner for scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes also contain an assessment of Governmental policies and programmes in this regard, from time to time.

In 1975 a Central Team was set up under the Chairmanship of Shri S. Hamid, the then Joint Secretary to visit Bihar and

(a) make an assessment of the tribal situation in Chhota Nagpur and Santhal Parganas particularly with reference to the growing unrest among the tribals arising mainly from their exploitation by money lenders, fraudulent alienation of their land and

the slow pace of development in that area

(b) assess the functioning of Chhota Nagpur & Santhal Parganas Autonomus Development Authority;

(c) make recommendations for speedy development of this region.

The committee prepared a detailed report in this connection examining the various aspect of the tribal economy in the area including land alienation, forest policy, excise policy, indebtedness, developmental programmes etc., and recommended a number of administrative and developmental steps to deal with the situtation. These recommendations still remain valid and relevant.

Since independence special developmental programmes have been taken up for tribal areas. However, increasing development of tribal areas have been accompanied by marked deterioration of the condition of the poor tribals who are now waging a grim battle for survival. It is generally not appreciated that the developmental process itself has also contributed to the present situation. It is, therefore, necessary to have a critical look at our development strategy towards the tribal people. This cannot be done in the present note but would require a much larger study by a number of competent people.

We may briefly mention the following main points in regard to the reason for the failure to bring about much positive improvement in the condition of the poorer tribals :-

(i) The laws and programmes appear to be unable to overcome the resistance of powerful non-tribal land-lords, money-lenders and traders who control the tribal economy and local panchayats. These groups in alliance with non-tribal Government servants at different levels are able to circumvent the laws and regulations and divert development funds intended for tribals to their own use.

(ii) The development programmes are often transferred without modification from the culturally and environmentally different plains areas and their implementation is left to poorly trained and culturally prejudiced non-tribal people.

(iii) The programmes do not involve the tribals in their own development. Development appears to be a process brought out among tribals by non-tribals and not a process in which the tribals are actively involved.

(iv) The funds allotted for tribal development are also inadequate for the enormous task of providing the necessary infrastructure and inputs.

Vigorous efforts have to be mounted to identify bottlenecks in tribal development under various heads such as planning, execution and social structure and to deal with them and remove them. Serious efforts are also necessary to inculcate social consciousness, awareness and education among tribal people and organise them to effectively avail themselves of the developmental programmes and benefits intended for them and chalked out for them by the Government.

A process of 'conscientisation' of Government servants, voluntary agencies and others engaged in the task of tribal development has to be met in motion. To some extent, this is being done by the Christian missionary agencies and voluntary agencies such as Rama Krishna Mission but this task cannot be left to voluntary agencies alone because in a poor under-developed country the task of development necessarily devolves upon the governmental agency which has to perform almost a revolutionary role. However, as presently constituted the governmental agencies do not appear to possess the necessary dynamism, enthusiasm and missionary zeal and selflessness.

The militancy among the poor tribals of Chhota Nagpur and Santhal parganas appear to be primarily the result of poor administration and a symptom of the signs of awakening and social consciousness generated among them by post-indepen-

dence political, economic and social processes. Further, the delivery system in tribal areas is dealing with a target population which is totally unorganised.

Traditional structures in tribal areas are breaking down at an alarming pace and a process of what has been called "colonisation" and "incorporation" is under way. The monetary system, the agrarian system, the judicial system, the market system, the educational system, the establishment of community development blocks, forest administration, concept of tribal welfare etc., are all new to tribal people and undermine their existing modes perception, understanding and living. Large numbers of tribal population are being uprooted from their hearth and home and forced to seek shelter and live in urban areas as destitutes and proletarians. These processes have been amply documented in various Government reports as well as in scholarly publications.

These processes are leading the tribal people to rise in revolt against what they perceive and experience as acts of injustice and against the paternalism, elitism and centralisation involved in Governmental planning efforts.

The current unrest in the tribal areas of Bihar should not cause undue worry to governmental agencies provided proper steps are taken to work out suitable strategies of intervention. A nervous or panicky reaction or a misreading of the symptoms and causes of the unrest may lead to exclusive reliance on law and order measures which can, however, be counter productive.

(To be continued)

RIANG CUSTOMARY LAWS AND PRACTICES

(Right to Property)

A SOCIO - LEGAL STUDY

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CONCEPT OF PROPERTY AS PREVALENT IN RIANG SOCIETY :

LAND ('KHET') RIGHTS

The word property is a term of broad and extensive application and is also a term of large import. It is employed at different times to express many varying ideas, and its meaning is not and can-not be fixed and unchanging. The term may have different meanings depending on the connection in which, and the purpose for which, it is used as indicating the intention of the parties, or the proper construction or application of constitutional or statutory provisions. The meaning of the word must be gathered from the then prevailing concept as reflected by contemporaneous construction. It may have a meaning sometimes broad and some time restricted.¹

The term property denotes both movable and immovable. Movable property includes ornaments, livestock, artisan tools, wearing apperals etc., whereas immovable property particularly meaning landed property. According to Riang customary laws and usages the title of all land ('Khet') was originally vested in the chief ('Kaskau'). The customary laws of the Lushai and some other Tribes appear to be similar with that of the Riang in this regard. Consequent on the Riang's submission to the ruling dynasty of

Tripura, namely the Maharaja of Tripura, the ultimate title to the land in the Riang areas passed on to the Maharaja. This state of affairs was recognised by the Maharaja and now by his successor in authority, the Government of Tripura.²

The right of an individual over his holding is in the nature of a possessory title which he enjoys in perpetuity in case of land under permanent cultivation whereas in case of Jum land ('hoo'), the right of user is only for one year. He can dispose of his land under permanent cultivation in any manner he likes. In case of Jum land, he can transfer the standing crops only. House site ('nohthai') can also be transferred by sale or otherwise. Originally the Riang people were nomads, but subsequently they settled down permanently. In short, the individual right over land except Jum land ('Hoo') is transferable by sale, lease, mortgage or otherwise. The right is heritable according to the customary law of the Riang.³

The boundary of the individual holdings is demarcated by stones, earthen bounds, trees, stream-lets and the like. These boundary lines are usual sources of dispute among them. Such and other dispute concerning land in the olden days used to be settled by the 'Sardars' at the first instance. Failing settlement by the 'Sardars' the dispute was brought before the 'Rai'. If the 'Rai' also failed to resolve the dispute to the satisfaction of the parties concerned, the case used to be submitted to the Court of Maharaja. Now-a-days such a dispute is first of all brought before the 'Choudhury' of the village ('Para') concerned and failing settlement by the 'Choudhury', the dispute is brought before the regular court of law for adjudication.⁴

There are no religious links between individuals or lineages and particular pieces of land.⁵

For individual holding of Jum land, an amount of Rs. 5/- used to be paid annually to the Maharaja of Tripura. For land under permanent cultivation, annual rent was paid @ 12 annas per 'kani' (40 X 48 yards).⁶

incidence of possession of property. A person is under an obligation to maintain his wife, minor sons, unmarried daughters and aged parents whether he possess property or not. Such obligation is personal in character and arises from the existence of the relation between the parties. The conduct of the Riangs of Tripura, relating to maintenance, is guided in some form or other by those general principle.

Section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 provides that if a person having sufficient means neglects or refuses to maintain his wife, minor children father or mother who are unable to maintain themselves and upon proof of such neglect or refusal, a Magistrate of the first class may order such person to make a monthly allowance for the maintenance of his wife or such child, father or mother at such monthly rate not exceeding five hundred rupees in the whole.³

In the light of the above, let us now see the prevailing Riang customary practice relating to maintenance. The head of the Riang family is under an obligation to maintain all the male and female members of the family. In the event of death of any male member of the family, it is obligatory on the part of the head of the family to maintain the widow and children of the deceased member. This obligation arises from the family bond. But Shri Bajuban Riang and some others opined that there is no obligation to maintain wife, children or parents nevertheless every Riang person feels it his moral duty and no one fails to obey such duty.⁴

One who inherits his father's property is bound to maintain his sisters till they get married, his widowed mother and the other members of the family who were dependent on his father during his life time for maintenance. Shri Tarani Riang of Birchandra Manu, being the eldest son inherited the property of his deceased father Birbahu Riang. He had to maintain his widowed mother, minor brother and three minor sisters. Besides he had to arrange for the marriage of his sisters in co-operation with his mother and younger brother.⁵

A step son inheriting the adoptive father's property is also

responsible for the maintenance of all the members of the adoptive family. A father-in-law is under obligation to maintain his destitute daughter-in-law until she remarries or willingly goes back to her parents' house. It is obligatory on the part of a father to maintain his minor sons, unmarried daughters and his wife and on his death they are entitled to be maintained out of his estate. A grand father who survives his son, is under a moral obligation to maintain his grandchildren after the death of his son till the grandsons attain adulthood and the grand-daughters get married.

Generally a son feels it his moral duty to maintain his old parents, if they are unable to maintain themselves. The Riangs are having a patriarchal society and although it is obligatory on the part of wife to submit herself to her husbands authority and to remain under his roof and protection, nevertheless she can claim separate residence and maintenance by her husband in certain special circumstances, e.g., desertion for a long period, cruelty, virulent type of contagious diseases like leprosy, venereal disease, continuous unsoundness of mind, habitual sexual intercourse with any other woman and the like. If a wife resides separately on any of the aforesaid ground, the wife is entitled to maintenance from her husband and the amount of maintenance is fixed by mutual agreement between the husband and the wife.⁶

In conformity with the statutory provisions it is prevalent in the Riang society that if a person having sufficient means, neglects or refuses to maintain his wife who is unable to maintain herself or his minor children or parents unable to maintain themselves, the village authority may, taking into consideration the standard of living in the family and assets and liabilities of the person, compel him to maintain his wife or parents or children whatever the case may be.

1. Nanak Chand Banarsi Das V. Chandra Kishore, A.I.R. 1969 Delhi, 235 at P.245.

1. Law Research Institute, Eastern Region, Gauhati High Court, Guwahati, 1990: A study of the Land System of Tripura. page-50

2. Interview with Shri Bajuban Rieng, Ex-member of Parliament and present Minister of Tripura, Agartala, Tripura West on 12.7.92, Shri Gitya Kumar Rieng, Teacher; Ram Krishna Sikshya Pratistan, Kailashahar, Tripura North on 12.12.92 and some others.

2. Sir Hari Sing Gours Transfer of Property Act, 8th Edn. 1971, Vol. I, P.358.

3. D. Surys Rao's Code of Criminal Procedure, Law Book company, 1983, pp. 44-45.

4. Interview with Shri Bajuban Riang, Op. Cit.

5. Interview with Shri Ramadhar Riang of Birchandra Manu on 30.9.92.

6. Interview with Shri Gitya Kumar Riang, Shri Dasta Ram Riang and some others.

GIFT (MOKMOI)

The Riang society is patrilineal. Gift 'inter vivos' is recognised in the Riang society. According to the Riang Customary Laws and practices, the father being the head of the family, is the real owner of the property. The father during his life time being absolute owner of all the family property, whether self acquired or encesstral or acquired by any other member of the family and added to the family property, possess unrestricted right to dispose of all or any such property by way of gift or otherwise. One Agarrai Riang of Laxmicherra under Belonia Sub-division, South Tripura out of his total land measuring 44.80 acres gifted land measuring 8.40 acres in favour of his three sons and three daughters.¹

Any other male mamber of the family may dispose of such portion of his separate self acquired property as is not put in the common family property, by gift or otherwise. A female member of the Riang family is also competent to make a gift of her personal property, namely, personal ornaments, received from her parents at the time of her marriage or afterwards but except those received from the husband's side at the time of her marriage even without the consent of her husband.²

3. Dwivedi, the Hon'ble Mr. Justice S. N., S. Row's Transfer of Property Act, Vol-2, 1992 (Act IV of 1982) page-1934 ; Law Book Co., Sardar Patel Marg, Allahabad-I.

The essential elements of a gift under the provisions of the Transfer of Property Act, 1882 are not essential for a valid gift under the Riang customary laws and usages as under those of many other tribes of the North Eastern Region of India. Here it is better to cast our glance at the legal position for the time being in force, as regards gift.

Section 122 of the Transfer of Property Act, 1882 provides that the essential elements of a valid gift are :

1. A transfer of a certain existing movable and immovable property;
2. Made voluntarily ;
3. Without consideration ;
4. By any person, called the donor ;
5. To another person, called the donee ;
6. Acceptance by or on behalf of the donee ; and
7. Made during the life time of the donor and while he is still capable of giving.

If the donee dies before acceptance, the gift is void.³

Interview with many Riang persons brought to light the fact that most of the essential elements of a valid gift remain apparently present while making a gift of any movable or immovable property under the Riang Customary Laws and usages. But mere acceptance is not enough, physical delivery of possession/ corpus of the gifted articles or property is necessary to constitute a valid gift under the prevailing customs. Another variation from the statutory provisions may be noted that under the Customary Laws gift once made can- not be revoked whereas Section 126 of the Transfer of Property Act provides that under certain special circumstances gift may be revoked or suspended. However, in

4. Interview with Shri Bajuban Riang and others, op. cit.

conformity with the statutory provision, in Riang Customary Laws, a minor is not competent to make a valid gift of anything worth value.

There is, however, a difference between the legal position in this respect in the Tribal areas of Tripura and that existing in other Tribal areas of North Eastern Region. In the other Tribals areas of the region e.g. Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland and Meahalaya, the Transfer of Property Act, 1882 is not holding the field whereas it has been extended to the whole of Tripura including the Tribal areas thereof. So in the former, the Tribal Customary Laws and usages in respect of Transfer of Property including gift have full play but in case of the Tribal communities of Tripura, the customary Laws and usages of the tribes have more or less, been replaced in actual practice by the provisions of the Act and as such a gift by a Riang is now-a-days regulated by the statutory provisions instead of by the procedure under local customs of the olden days. In any case, the essence of the gift appears to be almost the same in both the situation.

During interview with many Riang people including big wigs of the community, it is detected that the modern Riang are more inclined to have resort to the Court of Law so as to enforce gift etc.⁴

It will be clear from the case law cited below :

IN THE COURT OF MUNSIFF, BELONIA SOUTH TRIPURA.

TITLE SUIT NO. 25(2) OF 1979 A.D.

1. Shri Hasula Riang (minor).
2. Shri Kabaljoy Riang (minor), both S/O. Shri Uday Ram Riang, resident of Bagafa, P.s. Belonia under South Tripura District.

5. Gauhati High Court, Agartala Bench, Second Appeal No. 1 of 1983 (un reported).

Aforesaid minor plaintiffs are represented by their natural guardian, mother, Smt. Hadaiti Riang, W/O. Shri Uday Ram Riang, resident of Bagafa, P.S. Belonia, District - South Tripura.

..... PLAINTIFFS.

-VERSUS-

1. Shri Amulla Mohan Roy, S/O. Lt. Nema Chandra Roy,
2. Shri Sushil Chandra Roy, S/O. Shri Amulla Mohan Roy, resident of Bagafa, P.S. Belonia, District - South Tripura.

.....PRINCIPLE DEFENDANT.

3. Shri Uday Ram Riang, S/O. Shri Bhakti Ram Riang, resident of Bagafa, P.S. Belonia, District - South Tripura.

.....Proforma Defendant.

This suit was instituted by Smt. Hadaiti Riang as a natural guardian of the plaintiff, her minor sons. The case of the plaintiff was that their father Uday Ram Riang was the absolute owner and possessor of the land measuring 3.79 acres and he gifted 7 kanis of land out of the same land appertaining to Khatian No.589 C.S. Plot Nos. 1405 and 1406 by a registered deed of gifted executed on 10.7.67 A.D. But as their father was living separately from their mother Smt. Hadaati Riang took possession of the land and continued to possess for and on behalf of her two minor sons (as the minors were living with their mother). She was dispossessed on 28.3.79 A.D. by the principal defendant and thereafter filed the suit for declaration of title and recovery of khas possession.

The trial court decided the suit in favour of the plaintiffs and decreed the suit with cost. An appeal was preferred bearing No. Title Appeal No. 26 of 1982 A.D. against the Judgment and Decree and Learned Additional District Judge, South Tripura being the

Appellate Authority affirmed the Judgment and Decree of the trial court. Thereafter the second appeal was filed before the Gauhati High Court at Agartala Bench. The Hon'ble High Court dismissed the appeal and affirmed the Judgment and Decree of the lower Court vide Judgment, dated 2.6.1992 A.D. ⁵

MORTGAGE (BANJA)

Act of mortgaging or pledging of property is not a traditional institution of the Riang. But in course of time due to modern education, spread of literacy, urbanisation, changes in occupational structure and intermingling with non-tribals etc. the concept of mortgage or pledge has been introduced by the Riangs in their society.

Section 58 of the Transfer of property Act provides that a mortgage is the transfer of an interest in specific immovable property for the purpose of securing the payment of money advanced or to be advanced by way of loan, and existing on future debt, or the performance of an agreement which may give rise to a pecuniary liability. The essentials of a valid mortgage are :

- a. there must be a contract, express or implied;
- b. the property must be identified :
- c) the amount and the terms of the loan must be fixed; ¹

Mortgage is restored to where there is an element of doubt as to the reliability of the debtor. But in case of an unsophisticated tribal particularly a Riang, such element of doubt can hardly be traced out. It is noticed that generally tribal never disown his liability and usually confesses his liability to repay but never tell a lie.

According to Riang customary laws, any property except a gun can be mortgaged, pledged. Possession of the mortgaged property is delivered by the mortgagor to the mortgagee. A mortgage/pledge is executed in the presence of one or two wit-

nesses. If the mortgager fails to pay off his debt within the specified period, in that event the mortgagee can cause the mortgaged property to be sold for satisfaction of his demand or can retain possession thereof permanently. In somewhat variation with the statutory provisions, according to Riang customary practice, a mortgaged land or house can also be leased out by the mortgagee to another persons.²

In this connection reference may be made to the case records of Title Suit No. 29 of 1982, in the Court of Munsiff, Dharmanagar, North Tripura which was dismissed on contest on 30.4.83 by the Ld. Munsiff, Dharmanagar and the order of Ld. Munsiff was affirmed by the Ld. District Judge, North Tripura on 22.5.84 in Title Appeal No.6 of 1983. It appears that one Manikya Krishna Chakma, S/O. Late Chandrakanta Chakma of Kanchanpur mortgaged his lands to one Harimani Riang, S.O, Late Kalachand Riang of Debicharra (Satnala) under Kanchanpur police station by executing a sale deed with consideration money amounting to Rs. 3000/- without taking any 'ekranama' (deed of agreement to resale). But Harimani Riang being the mortgagee having declined to return the mortgaged land, Manikya kishore Chakma filed a petition on 9.1.81 to the S.D.O. , Dharmanagar under the provisions of the Tripura Agricultural Indebtedness Reliefs Act, 1980, and obtained an order in his favour in c/w/ A.I.R. case No. 9 of 1981. Thereafter Harimani Riang and another filed the above suit.³

1. S. Raw's Transfer of Property Act, op. cit. pp 727,733.
2. Interview with Shri Gitya Kumar Riang, Op.cit. and interview with some other persons of the Riang community.
3. Title Suit No. 29 of 1982 in the Court of Munsiff, Dharmanagar, North Tripura, District Record Room, Agartala.

LEASE

The traditional methods of temporary transfer of property has under gone changes with social changes from time to time as

² Interview with Shri Bajuban Riang, op.cit.

³ Law Research Institute, Eastern Region Gauhati, op.cit page-50.

a result of which a person may acquire right in supersession of the traditional right of other person or persons. Such changes have also taken place in the Riang areas of Tripura.

The various essentials of a lease under the provisional of the statutory law are not necessary or requirements under the tribal customary Laws and usages for analogous transaction in a tribal society. The essentials of a lease as provided under Section 105 of the Transfer of Property Act, 1882 may now be reproduced for better appreciation of the traditional and prevailing system of lease in the Riang community of Tripura.

The essential elements of lease are :

1. Two parties, the lessor and the lessee both competent to contract, except where they act through a person competent to act on their behalf ;

2. The subject matter of lease, that is a certain immovable property, which is capable of being demised;

3. The transfer of a right to enjoy such property, accompanied with requisite formalities ;

4. The term or period, expressed or implied, or in perpetuity, which must be sufficiently defined ;

5. The consideration, whether a price, or a share of crops or service or anything of value to be rendered, periodically or on specified occasions, to the transferor by the transferee.

6. Acceptance of transfer by the lessee on such term.¹

In the Riang community of Tripura, owners of land/house premises allow others to occupy or use temporarily or for an indefinite period there land/house for cultivation and residential or other purposes by agreement which is accompanied by deliv-

1. Venkataramaiya's Law Lexicon, Vol. II, 1971.
Delhi Law House, Allahabad -1 p 1861.
2. Interview with Shri Bajuban Riang.

ery of physical possession of the land or house as the case may be by the owner. The person or persons occupying the land/house pay therefore such cash or crops or render service to the owner as may be agreed upon by and between the parties. Generally a lease for cultivable land is seasonal while that for house premises may be periodical or perpetual. The lessee is not allowed to transfer his lease hold to another person by way of sub-lease or mortgage or otherwise. He may, however, do so in special cases with the permission of the lessor.²

Although various essential of a lease under the provisions of the statutory law are not necessary so as to constitute a lease under Riang customary laws and practices but it appears that the system of lease prevailing in the Riang community is almost in conformity with the statutory provisions excepting the aspect of requirement of conveyance. In most of the occasions a lease is performed through a verbal agreement between the lessor and the lessee.

No litigation relating to the matter of lease, instituted by any Riang person, could be traced out. However, in village Baikhura, under Belonia Sub-division one mangtaha Riang holding '89 acres of raiyati land has leased out some lands and established one talent under him.³

WILL

In legal parlance will is defined as a disposition or declaration by which the person making it (who is called the testator) provides for the distribution or administration of property after his death. It does not take effect until the testator's death and is always revocable by him.

"The word 'WILL' extends to a testament, and to a codicil, and to an appointment by will or by writing in the nature of a Will in exercise of a power, and to a disposition by will and testament or devise of the custody and tuition of any child, by virtue of the statute 1660, 12 Car. 2, C 24 and to any other testamentary disposition (Wills Act, 1837, Sec.1)."¹

Transfer of property by a deed of will was not the practice of the Riang in the traditional past. But in the modern Riang Society it is in practice.

Now-a-days due to acculturation in the Riang Society, sometimes property is bequeathed by a Deed of Will, particularly among the educated section of the people.²

Any adult Riang person who is owning any property may make a Will in respect of the whole of his property or any part thereof in favour of any other person male or female. In old days, Will used to be executed verbally but at present the educated section of the Riang are inclined to a written one. A female also can bequeath her self-acquired or personal property by Will even without the consent of her husband, if living. A Will can be revoked or altered by the testator at any time during his life time. There is a practice among the Riang to bequeath land with standing crops to the son-in-law which is called 'KHLONBAKMI'.

The concept of Will prevailing in the present Riang Society was not in vogue in the traditional Riang customary practice. But the modern Riangs are inclined to be guided by the statutory provisions of Law of the land. In fact there is no variation in the prevailing customary practice relating to Will from the statutory provisions.

SALE (FAMI)

Statutory connotation regarding sale applies 'mutatis mutandis' under the tribal customs and usages of the Riangs. Let us first cast our glance to the statutory provisions regarding sale.

Section 54 of the transfer of property Act, 1882 provides some ingredients so as to constitute a valid sale particularly in connection with immovable property. The essential ingredients are:

1. there must be at least two partners, the seller and the buyer ;
2. the seller must be competent to transfer ;
3. the buyer must be a person who is not disqualified to be a transferee ;
4. the subject matter of the sale must be transferable immovable property ;
5. there must be a price in money, paid or promised ;
6. the sale must result in a transfer of ownership of the property sold from the seller to the buyer.¹

A transfer by sale may, in all cases be made by a registered instrument. It is only in the case of a sale of tangible immovable property of the value of less than one hundred rupees that the sale may be made by delivery of possession. In all other cases, a registered deed of conveyance is compulsory and essential.

On the other hand, sale of goods Act deals with the sale of movable property. Section 4 provides :

- 1) In a contract of sale of goods, the seller transfers or agrees to transfer the property in goods to the buyer for a price;
- 2) A contract of Sale may be absolute or conditional;
- 3) Where under a contract of sale, the property in the goods is transferred from the seller to the buyer, the contract is called a Sale, but where the transfer of the property in the goods is to take place at a future time or subject to some conditions thereafter to be fulfilled, the contract is called an agreement to sell.
- 4) An agreement to sell becomes a sale when the time elapses or the conditions are fulfilled subject to which the property in the goods is to be transferred.²

Under the customs and usages of the Riangs, any property can be sold by its rightful owner to anybody whether he is a Riang or not. Physical possession of the object of sale is a pre-requisite for a valid Sale. One or two witnesses are also necessary. From the sale receipt issued by one Ananda Rieng, S/O Late Shalukroy Rieng of Ramkrishnapur colony under Teliamura police station of Khowai Sub-division Tripura West, it appears that Annanda Rieng sold out his two bulls and one pregnant cow to one Kanailal Das S/O. Kshetramohan Das under Teliamura police station, for Rs.300/- only. One Abhiram Rieng choudhury of Atharamura and another Sudhanshu Chudhury put their signatures on the sale receipt being the witnesses of the sale transaction.³

As regards sale of immovable property, one Smt. Khandabati Rieng, W/O Dhanchandra Rieng of Kanchanpur Sub-division, North Tripura sold out her lands measuring 3 kanis 10 gandas that appertained to khatian No.587, dag No.2068/2140 under Kanchanpur Tahasil, to one Kumud Ch. Kapali of Kanchanpur.⁴

The head of the family is competent to sell any family property strictly in conformity with the statutory provisions, a minor in Rieng community is not competent to sell property. Any family member can sell movable ordinary property such as radio set, watch and the like. A female member of the family can also sell any small article which is her personal property. A sale can be effected by making payment either in cash or in kind or in both as may be agreed upon by and between the seller and the buyer. Price is generally determined by negotiation between the seller and the buyer. However, a third person may also act as a go-between. Only the owner but no other person, can sell any property. A partner cannot have a preferential claim to purchase a co-sharer's property.⁵

1. S.Raw's Transfer of Property Act, 3rd edition, 1971, Vol.I Dwivedi.S.N. Law Book Co., Allahabad, P.605.

2. The A.I.R. MANUAL Civil & Criminal (Fourth addition) MANOHAR, V.R. & CHITALEY, W.W., All India Reporters Ltd. Nagpur, P.491.

3. Sale receipt, copy of adopted with the index.

4. Suit No. T.S.4 of 1972, in the court of Munsiff, Dharmanagar, The suit was decreed on compromise on 3.3.72, District Record Room, Agartala, Tripura West.

5. Interview with Shri Bajuban Riang, op.cit.,

Interview with Shri Nilehandra Riang, present Choudhury, of Jogendra Riang Choudhury para (East Betcharra) under Fatickroy P.S. North Tripura on 8.7.93 and interview with many others.

DEBT(LAKAI)

A debt is that which is due from one person to another, whether money, goods or services, that which one person is bound to pay to another or to perform for his benefit, things owned ; obligation, liability (Webster's Dictionary).¹

The essential requisition of a valid debt are :

1. an ascertained or readily calculable amount;
2. an absolute unqualified and present liability in regard to that amount with the obligation to pay forthwith or in future within a time certain; and
3. the obligation must have accrued and must be subsisting and should not be that which is merely accruing.²

In the light of the statutory provisions now let us cast our glance to the Riang customary laws and practices relating to debt. In the Riang society, it is a pious obligation of an heir to pay the debts of the ancestor. It is the common belief of the Riangs that it is a moral duty on the part of the heir to make repayment of debt of the ancestor, so as to receive blessings of them. They also believe that failure to redoom the debts and liabilities of an ancestor may entail evil consequences on the heir and his family. Under the statutory provisions the legal heir is held liable to repay the debt

if the property of the deceased ancestor devolves upon him. But to the Riangs it has no relation to the quantum of assets/property the heir has inherited or not from the ancestor in question. Such obligation continues from generation to generation till it is fully discharged.

If the heir who has inherited property/assets sufficient to any liability of deceased ancestor in cash or in kind and willfully avails repayment of debt of his deceased ancestor, in that event the matter may be moved before the village elders by the creditor or by anybody for and on behalf of the creditor. The village elders after proper enquiry being satisfied about the genuineness of the claim, may compel the heir or heirs to liquidate the debt and if necessary by taking coereive measures like taking away the assets inherited from the deceased ancestor in question for satisfaction of the demand of the creditor.

Generally the liability of the heir-apparent to pay the debts of the ancestor arises only after the death of the ancestor. But the Riang customs enjoin the heir apparent that he may, even during the life time of the ancestor, pay the debt on behalf of the debtor. There is no customary rule which permits automatic liquidation of the ancestral debt with passing of a particular generation after lapse of time and as such law of limitation has no application in Riang customary practice. The daughters of a deceased person have get no liability to pay the debts of their parents. But a widow is under moral obligation to pay the debts of her deceased husband during the minority of the children. Such liability devolves upon the male child if any as soon as he attains his majority.

Now-a-days, the modern educated Riangs are more inclined to take resort to the court of law for the purpose of liquidation of debts etc. Smt. Santirung Riang of Kukinala under Dharmanagar Sub-division applied for granting a Succession Certificate on behalf of her minor sons and daughters and herself being the legal heirs of her deceased husband late Mongaljoy Riang, before the Ld. Munsiff, Dharmanagar. The schedule of the debt given in the prayer is as follows :-

"Reinvestment certificate in the name of Mangoljoy Rieng Choudhury in Tripura Gramin Bank, Panisagar Branch, P.O. Panisagar, Sub-division-Dharmanagar, Dist-North Tripura. Certificate No. A 001089, Account No. RIP-36 for Rs.9,000/- (Rupees nine thousand) only with upto date interest, if any, the amount deposited by Mongaljoy Rieng choudhury.3

Ref:- 1. Venkataramaiya's Law Lexicon. Vol.II.1971. Op. cit. P. 302.

2. In commissioner of Welth Tax, Madras V. Pierce Loslie & Co. Ltd., AIR 1963 Mad.356 at P.357.

3. Case No. Misc.10 of 1989 (Succession certificate) in the court of Munsiff, Dharmanagar, District Record Room, Agartala, Tripura West.

PROBLEMS AND PROSPECT OF KOKBOROK LITERATURE

N. C. DEBBARMA *

At the outset I am very much tempted to quote a few words from the speech of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru delivered in the open session of a conference on Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Areas held in New Delhi in June, 1952.

"We should have a receptive attitude to the tribal people. There is a great deal we can learn from them, particularly, in the frontier areas, and having learnt, we must try to help and cooperate. They are an extremely disciplined people, often a great deal more democratic than most others in India. Even though they have no constitution, they are able to function democratically and carry out the decisions made by elders or representatives. Above all, they are a people who sing and dance and try to enjoy life, not people who sit in stock exchanges, shout at each other and think themselves civilized."

The states of North-Eastern Region, very recently known as the land of seven sister are predominantly inhabited by the aboriginal tribal people. Anthropologically they belong to Mongoloid race, the earliest inhabitants of North-East Region. According to the epics, and Puranas, Nisadas, Kiratas, Cinas and other tribes were commonly designated "mlecchas" and "Asuras". Linguistic and ethnographic evidences including some ancient place-names of North-East indicate that the earliest inhabitants of this region spoke an Indo-Chinese language, which is a branch of the Austric family of languages. The period of migration of austric

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speakers in NE Region yet to be confirmed but it must have occurred several hundred years B.C. and definitely long before the advent of Aryans from the west.

The next migration followed by Mon-Khamer are the Tibeto-Burman language family. The original abode of this population was the land near the Yang-tse-kiang and the Hwang-ho river basins in North-West China. From there they went down the course of Bhramaputra and its other Tributaries extending up to Burma (Myanmar) on the east and Bay of Bengal on the south. Of the Tibeto-Burman races who settled in NE India the Bodos are at one point of time the largest and the most important Non-Aryan strata. This group includes, Koch, Kachari, Lalung, Dimasa, Garo, Rabha, Tripuri, Chutia, Morang etc. etc.

Linguistic evidence shows that at one time the Bodo people occupied the whole of North East India. The ancient names of places and rivers of North East are the testimony of this historical facts. This has also reaffirmed from the accounts of Hieun-Tsang, the great Chinese pilgrim who visited this North-East India in 7th century on the invitation of Maharaja Bhaskar Varmana.

In the great epic by Yajurveda, the Mongoloid people mentioned as Kiratas, the Yogini tantra is also vocal over the language and culture of this mongoloid race in NE India. Alike Yogini tantra, the glorious era of mongoloid people was also very prominently placed in 'Mahabharata'.

It is needless to educe many more proofs that the Bodo was a dominant language for a couple of centuries in NE India.

The culture and the traditions are the basic elements of self identity and self promotion of a people of which language is the most important. The Bodo-group of language was weakened in course of time by the various factors, the main of which was the tacit policy of the Brahmins of the Hindu-Aryan society to transform and aryanise the non-Aryan people of the Non-Aryan Tribe through acculturation. The two epics which were purposely designed had also a great instance upon the non-Aryan people and had largely contributed in the process of progressive aryanisation.

Almost all the non-Aryan people were the victims of this policy and the Bodo speaking population were no exception. When the language become weak to serve them to maintain their self identity, the Bodos began to confuse with their own self existence as a race which resulted in their conversion into Hinduism. This threatened the very existence of the Bodos as a race, and the great Bodos race at length remained only in skeleton, awaiting to total transformation, a very dreadful time indeed for the entire Bodo race.

Through the passage of time and during a couple of last centuries this transformation took place and still continuing even in this modern era. As a result, the great Bodo race has fragmented and scattered in different groups and sub-groups and living almost isolation in different geographical areas of N.E. and Eastern India.

The tribals of Tripura state specially the Mongoloid stock are the splinter of the great Bodo race and were exposed to the highest risk of transformation due to a series of historical reasons, once the rulers of this region are now ruled out and subjected to the exploitation to the highest extent. Due to inter and intra migration of population, the aborigines have turned to almost microscopic minority, as a result, they are are facing crisis of their identity in terms of language, culture and social heritage.

It is heartening to note that at the advent of twentieth century, a handful of educated tribal youth put their heads together and constituted a forum aiming to illuminate the light of education among tribal mass. This forum commonly known as Jana Siksha Samity was constituted in 1945 AD i.e. 11th Paush of 1355 Tripura Era. On the other hand, on the same motto specially to save their own language and culture, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha emerged out in 1952 in the Bodo dominate areas of Assam.

'Kwtal Kothoma' - the most pioneering monthly magazine came up in the early fifties, which was the land-mark for the restoration of language and culture of the Tribal communities of Tripura state. The Jana Siksha Samity within the shortest span

have set up a few hundred primary schools in far flung tribal helmets and most of the schools subsequently recognised by Tripura Government, needless to mention that the present educated youth are the outcome of the Jana Siksha Samity movement.

In-conformity with the spirit of Jana Siksha Samity, a few socio-literary and cultural forums came up in seventies and eighties. Among them Tripura State Kok-Borok Sahitya Sabha (1968), the Tripura Kok-borok Sanskriti Samsad are most actively dedicating towards development of language, literature and culture in Tripura state.

During the recent decades, the above Literary and Cultural organisations and many more individuals are devoting themselves for creative literature in Kok-borok but till to-day the published books, journals and other forms of literature are still limited and only around 100 titles recorded so far.

But at the same breath, it is noteworthy to mention that the unwritten "oral" literature is equally rich in this Kok-borok. The folk lore of Kok-borok which is being preserved and transmitted orally from one generation to another is still awaiting for preservation and nourishment in written form. In the folk lore, tales and tradition, songs, riddle, proverbs, saying, charms, seasonal observance, hunting and agricultural observance, cure of diseases, superstitious beliefs and so on are the treasure of Kok-borok language.

The following may be considered as the main barriers towards development of Kok-borok language and literature :-

1. Non-standardisation of Kok-borok words. In the kok-borok speaking population there are differences in pronunciation of words from one community to another and even from one region to another in the same community too, therefore, standardisation of Kok-borok words for the common use of all Kok-borok speaking population is absolutely necessary.

2. Controversy on the Kok-borok script. There are contro-

versy over the selection of script of different tribal dialect and Kok-borok is not also an exception on this pertinent issue, unless and untill a general consensus arrived at the selection of script, there will be lot of problems in the development of the Kok-borok.

3. At present Kok-borok though one of the recognised official languages is not being used in day to day transaction of official business and even no bilingual sign boards exist in most of the State Government Departments/Establishments. Furthermore, medium of instruction in Kok-borok is uptill now upto the primary school level. This should also be introduced in secondary level to college level gradually.

4. One Central Institution i.e. Kok-borok Academy should be set up at state capital-Agartala in order to carry out research activities.

5. Tripura State Government and other governmental agencies should extend support to the Kok-borok writers for publication of their creative works.

6. In recognition of the best creative works in Kok-borok there should be a provision of Annual Awards for the Kok-borok literary works.

7. Uptill now, Central Sahitya Academy have not recognised the creative works neither in Bodos nor in Kok-Borok. Sahitya Academy should be approached for inclusion of Bodo and Kok-borok for all purposes.

8. To facilitate printing and publication of Kok-borok books, a forum like publishers' guild should be constituted under the active guidance and assistance of the state government.

9. Tripura state government should fix up a norm for purchase of Kok-borok titles by different departments during the annual book fair(s).

10. An expert committee is required to be constituted for writing history of Kok-borok language and literature associating important personalities of the concerned discipline.

11. There should be a methodical training scheme exclusive for the Kok-borok teacher and the recruitment rules of Kok-borok teachers and their pay scale should be amended for attracting talents.

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RANGLONGS AND THE HISTORY OF THEIR SETTLEMENT IN TRIPURA

Dr. D. N. Goswami *

Ranglongs claim themselves as one of the clans of the greater Halam Tribe. There are difference of opinions about the numbers of clans of the Halam Tribe. Mr. K.C. Singha, the famous historian of Tripura mentioned that these are 13 clans among the Halam and these are Molsom, Rankhol, Kalai, Rupini, Bongcher, Kaipeng, Langai, Dub, Cadai, Karbong, Machbong and Mutilangla.¹ Sri S.B.K. Devvarma opines that there are 17 clans in the Halam tribe and these are Kalai, Kulu or Khulong, Karbong, Kaipeng, Kaireng, cadai, Dub, Sakhachep, Thangachep, Nabin, Bongcher or Bongchel, Morchum or Molsom, Sardakheng or Mudasingh, Rankhol, Rupini, Langai and Long lung,² The census report of 1340 TE mentions 18 clans of Halam and these are Kalai, Kulu, Karbong, Kaipeng, Kaireng, cadai, Dub, Sakhachep, Thangachep, Nabin, Bongcher Chaimal, Morcham, Mudasingh, Rangkhal, Rupini, Langai and Langlu.³ Later the editor deletes the clans of chaimal and Mudasingh from the list of the Halam.⁴ Anyhow from the above lists we do not come across any name like Ranglong in the Halam tribe. But the presence of Ranglong people in the Dharmanagar Sub-Division of North Tripura district can not be ignored. They may not be included in the books by the experts but the fact is that they are here in our State. They mainly reside in the following villages of Dharmanagar, namely, Thanglong, Joytong, Jarul muda, Duiganga, Kathua chada, Chandpur-Mujinanpada, Ujan thangnong, Nayagang, Chankhalla, Mokantilla, Dalubadi, Kheuri, Bhalluk cada, Danganga Padmabil Saraspur and Jainel.

S. B. K. Devvarma mentions that the ancient settlement of the Halams was the hilly terrai Kharpaitabhum situated in the

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west of Manipur. ⁵ Due to scarcity of food in that area they gradually immigrated to the territory of Tripura. Later they recognised the mastery of the kings of Tripura and began to reside here permanently. The census report of 1340 T.E. also narrates Halam as the son of Lord Shiva who previously resided in Khurpuitabhum area of Manipur. From there they entered Tripura and became subjects of Tripura after paying proper allegiance. These Halams are termed as Melakuki. ⁶ If these opinions are taken as true about the migration and settlement of Halams in Tripura, then we can assume that the Ranglongs too came and settled here due to same cause and followed the same route of migration. It is very likely that the Mutilangla mentioned by K.C. Singha and Langlung mentioned by S.B.K. Devvarma and Langlu mentioned in census report of 1340 T.E. are wrongly recorded in place of Ranglong.

Mr. Neitungring Halam, an old Ranglong of Mukan Tilla, Dharmanagar, who is more than eighty years old opines that the Ranglongs engaged themselves in a bloody conflict with the Mizos about 200 years ago. They were completely defeated by the Mizos and they fled and took shelter in the Hill tract of Chittagang and Tripura. They travelled through Cachar and entered Tripura. At present also there are some clans of Halam people with good population who are settled in the Cachar district of Assam. Some of them entered Tripura and settled in the hilly area of Dharmanagar sub-Division bordering Cachar and Mizoram. Thus when the Folk tales confirm the views of S.B.K. Devvarman, it may be safely presumed that the Ranglongs migrated from their previous settlement in Manipur in the later part of 17th century and settled in Tripura.

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3. Debbarma : S.C., Census Biharani 1340 T.E. p.81.
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THE RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF THE TRIPURIS ON THE BACKGROUND OF CHATURDASA DEVATA PUJA

Priyabrata Bhattacharjee *

Tripura is a small state of the Indian Union in the North Eastern region with a population of 2757205 of whom 8,53,345 belong to the tribal communities. The Tripuris constitute a remarkable percentage of the total scheduled tribe population of the state. It is generally believed that the Tripuris are the earliest inhabitants of the state.

Subsequently, people from the plains belonging mostly to different Brahmanical sects started taking refuge in the hilly regions of Tripura. The plain people from the reign of Maharaja Ratna Manikya¹ have been living side by side with the Tripuri communities resulting in cultural exchanges. Through the centuries many of the Tripuris along with the rulers have, without doubt, been drawn into the main-stream of Brahmanical way of life along with its pantheon of Gods and Goddesses, in which because of the dominance of Sanskrit as the language of the intellectual elite and of improved methods of agriculture as the most important mode of production, perhaps also because of superior so-called religion and culture, the Bengali speaking Hindus had come to enjoy an advantage. It was their sacred scriptures, their epics and purans and their socio-religious system which came to find their acceptance in the Tripuris of Tripura. But one may not forget that many Tripuris have also been forced by history to seek retreat into the relatively more in-accessible regions of forests, hills and hill slopes where they are still maintaining their indigenous tribal behavioural patterns.

As yet, the traditional religious way of the life of the

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Tripuris differ from caste Hindus in case of some religious ceremonies and form of worship. That from very early times, Animism flourished in different parts of Tripura, has been testified by a few archaeological materials which have been brought to light by the scholars.

The fourteen head-images of CHATURDASA DEVATAS are worshipped in a temple at old Agartala during KHARCHI PUJA. Looking at these head-images, it makes one wonder how they have attained the status of the state palladium under the patronage of the Brahmanical Royal House of Tripura. Among the head-images, as many as thirteen are made of brass, while one is made of silver only. They are equal in size in appearance measuring probably 22cm in height. Indeed, curious and interesting but equally significant are their two horns which are exhibited on both sides of the crown. Besides, the identification of the head-images is not possible even in the field of gender also.

The head-images bear no attributes according to the Brahmanical iconography so that they can be identified as the Brahmanical Gods and Goddesses. Moreover, it is a fact that the broken head-images may not be supported by the Brahmanical iconography as the objects of rituals.

With the arrival of the plain people, Brahmanism, including its sectarian beliefs and practices, got a firm hold in Tripura for which we have the Brahmanical names of the Fourteen head-images. Rev. James Long rightly pointed out that "the Brahmins exercised as arbitrary sway over the minds of the hill chieftains as ever did Druid on the customs of our celtic ancestors. "It is not unlikely that the Rajmala or Chronicles of the Kings of Tripura are compiled by the Brahman-s of the court of Tripura who seem to have been intelligent historians. A. Mackenzie is of the opinion that "Tripur, from whom the Raj took name, and who is excreated by the Brahmin historian as the opponent of Siva worship, which was then alluring the imaginations and exciting the passions of the people. " It is said that Tripura was extremely inimical and crude who was killed by Lord Siva for his irreligious habits. It was Trilochana, successor of Tripur, who was believed to have brought

the fourteen deities from an island accompanied by the Chantai (chief priest of Tripuris) and Deodais (helpers of the priest). On the holy day of Kharchi Puja the Fourteen head-images, i.e. Siva, Uma, Vishnu, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartikeya, Ganesha, Prithvi, brahma, Samudra, Ganga, Agni, Kamadeva and Himalaya are worshipped.

Unfortunately, none of these head-images has any archaeological bearings of Brahmanism. But in this connection, I would like to draw attention of our readers to "some additions and corrections and notes" in S.K. Chatterjees's Kirat-Jana ! Kirti. Sree Vasanta Choudhuri and Parimal Roy have sought to prove that "the fourteen deities have been identified with Brahmanical names and thus the absorption of the Tribal religion by Hinduism was complete." What is rather important to bear in mind is that Animism is the highest factor including various cults in the religion of tribal people and the Tripuris are not exception. Therefore, though the Tripuris belong to Hinduism, owning certain obscurantist beliefs and practices existing among them they are to be bracked with the animists or worshipper of Nature deities and ancestors as far as their Kharchi Puja is concerned.

Dr. Jagadish Gan Choudhuri in his work "The Tipras of Tripura" has suggested the tribal names of the Fourteen deities. The pantheon of fourteen deities according to Dr. Gan Choudhuri consist of MATAI KATAR, MATAI KATARMA, MAILOOMA, KHOOLOOMA, AKHATRA, BIKHITRA, TUIMA, SANGRAN, KALIA, GARIA, NACHU MATAI, BICHUKMA, SIRIJAMDU, and THOOMNAIRAK. In the priestly Brahmanical pantheon the names of the fourteen Gods and Goddesses are not classified as Laukika or sanctioned by the practices and conventions of the common flock. What is significant to note is that Dr. Gan Choudhuri's opinion that the way in which these fourteen deities of Tripuris have been identified with the great deities of brahmanical pantheon is "mostly imaginary"

The Tripuris recognize one Super Natural supreme God called MATAI KATAR (means greatest God) who is believed to be the creator of universe. The Supreme Being MATAI KATAR with his wife MATAI KATARMA are supposed to control all other

deities like the other tribal religions of the North Eastern India. Judging by their religious beliefs, the Tripuris have to be called the worshippers of natural deities in case of Kharchi Puja as well as day to day life. The other deities whom the Tripuris pay reverence during the Kharchi Puja are the following : MAILOOMA (Goddess of Earth), KHOOLOOMA (Goddess of Cotton Tree): AKHATRA (God of Sea), BIKHITRA (God of sky), TUIMA(Goddess of water), SANGRAN (God of Mountain), KALIA(Spirit of Ancestor Deity), GARIA (God of wealth and war), NAKCHU MATAI (Tutelary spirit of the families), BICHUKMA (Goddess of Forest), SIRIJMDU(Spirit of barrenness of the woman), THOOMNAIRAK(God of Death). Similar to Brahmanical Hinduism, there is a duality of God and Goddess in the religion of Tripuris and each of these Gods and Goddesses has a qualifying term of address of Fa and Ma which means Father and Mother respectively. It is good to remind ourselves that the sea, the sky and the mountain seem to be the man Gods and the earth water, cotton tree become the woman Goddesses and so on.

A very important fact to notice in the religious connection of the Tripuris is that "in most of the cases the structure of the deities are made with bamboo poles. The alter of the deity is made with two bamboo poles which are created on the ground. The length of bamboo poles varies from one and half cubits to three cubits approximately as per category of the deity. Along with these two planted bamboo poles two other bamboo poles are tied to each other horizontally for specific deities. To make the structure of the deities only the specific green bamboo called Mulli varieties is needed."

It is generally believed that the head-images of the fourteen deities are not isolated from those of Tripuri Gods and Goddesses. Though the Chantai along with his assistants were obliged to succumb to accept the Brahmanical names of the Fourteen deities the practice of planting bamboo poles to make structure of a deity is also prevalent in the religious ceremonies of Kharchi Puja. For a reader it is possible to find out a pole of bamboo which is planted on the ground behind each of the head-image as the representation of tribal God or Goddess.

It appears that the bamboo pole is the main object of most of their worship and veneration. E.T. Dalton holds the same view, he remarks " a trace of their old faith is to be found in their present practice of sticking a bamboo on the ground during one of their religious festivals and worshipping it."

Thus, the above description of the religious beliefs and practices of Tripuri of Tripura brings out that the worship of Fourteen head-images is a secondary formation, a later degradation of the more primitive worship of Gods and Goddesses.

An archaeological evidence in support of the animistic representation of Fourteen deities on a coin of Ratna Manikya-I may be given due importance. With regard to the representation of Chaturdasa Devata on the coin, the following observation of Vasanta Choudhuri and Parimal Roy is worth noticing.

Coin of Ratna Manikya-I: "Obverse : within horizontal line almost dividing the obverse into two semi-circles. The upper semi-circle contains a number of vertical lines overlapped by another concave curve. This motif apparently bears a close resemblance to tughra style of Arabic writing on the coins of Sultans of Bengal. But at the lower semi-circle of the reverse, there is a legend in Bengali characters which reads : SRI CHATURDASA DE/VA ! CHARANA-PARA/ SAKA 1386".

While the vertical lines are fourteen in number, we presume, therefore, that these fourteen vertical lines are stylized representations of the fourteen Gods and Goddesses of Tripura, i.e. the CHATURDASA DEVATAS.

I would like to say that the antiquities of the tribal religion of Tripura, is incontestably confirmed by the coin of Ratna Manikya-I. As regards CHATURDASA DEVATA, no certain animistic representation of them appear on coin before the time of Ratna Manikya-I. It is interesting to note that the word CHATURDASA DEVA is met with for the first time on the coin of Ratna Manikya-I and the name does not seem to have been ever in use prior to the reign of the said king. Besides, from the study of the said coin, it is known that the king issued this type of coin which became an

unique bearing of the Brahmanical Sanskritised name CHATURDASA DEVA associated with the animistic symbols of Fourteen deities of Tripuris.

It is proposed by the authors like Vasanta Choudhuri and Parimal Roy that "the use of the head alone in lieu of full images in only something very unusual in the Hindu-iconographic system". This view, however, has been corroborated by S.K. Chatterjee. After making a critical analysis of the remarks of Sri Choudhuri and Sri Roy, S.K. Chatterjee comments, "it would appear that we had first vertical columns or obelisks in place of full standing images, 'vertical Men' and then only the head were substituted in their place." In this connection S.K. Chatterjee also pointed out that "thus a piece of numismatic and epigraphic evidence of the highest value, indicating the final transformation of the Mongoloid (Bodo) pantheon of an important section of the Indo-Mongoloids into the orthodox Hindu pantheon of the Puranas."

In the aforesaid statement, the scholars mentioned above have tried to prove that the Fourteen vertical columns are substituted in place of full standing images, 'vertical Men'. But it should be noted that the worship of the bamboo poles as the representation of the deities is the characteristic manifestation of animistic belief of the Tripuris even to day. Thus I would like to indicate that these fourteen so called 'columns' or 'obelisks' are nothing but the bamboo poles portrayed stylistically in a realistic manner. These bamboo symbols fully prove in the presence of worship of Supernatural Deities among the Tripuris.

Subsequently S.K. Chatterjee makes the interesting remarks about the representation of the head-images that they are also substituted in place of full standing images, 'vertical Men'. In any case, we have no grounds for supporting S.K. Chatterjee's assumption that they are substituted for full standing images. If these head-images prove any thing, they prove that they are symbolical fourteen deities of rather fourteen aspects of Supernatural powers and forces. It is not likely that the head images are all supposed to be concretised visual symbols of abstract concept or ideas for each one of which there is a Dhyana according to the

scriptures of Brahmanical Shastras. It is likely that they are strongly associated with the animism as the object of rituals.

It appears that there are the different forms of Supernatural worship among the Tripuris. One in which the bamboo itself is worshipped in its natural form, the other in which the bamboo deity is personified and endowed with human head shape. There can be no doubt that the head-images and the bamboo poles are all eventually merged with the stream of Kharchi Puja.

It is important to note that I came in close contact with the chief priest Chantai during Kharchi Puja and found that he has his own animistic religious beliefs and customs and rites and rituals of which the most important seems to have been the sacrifice of animal or eggs to his Gods and Goddesses. It deserves here mentioning that the Chantai offers nothing to the deities according to ARYACHARA PADDHATI, but he sprinkles the water and wine to the deities from the two pipes (bamboo made) and sacrifices the animals and eggs along with his assistants as per instruction of his fore-fathers. It has also been observed that the Chantai performs his ritualistic activities with the help of high necked brass pot locally called JHARI. It is characteristic of the Brahmin priest engaged in the temple of the Fourteen deities that he does nothing but recites SREE SREE CHANDI regularly outside the GRABHAGRIHA in which the head images are placed on the alter. The Chantai and his assistants are still dogmatic to follow their conventional tribal rites and rituals and beliefs and practices.

Incidentally, it is evident that the Hindu king of Tripura influenced the Kharchi Puja more than the Bengali-speaking general Hindus. It is not without significant, to my mind that by about the 15th century A.D. the Brahmanical Hindu king of Tripura dynasty had come to establish and to act as the spear-head of Brahmanical religion and society. The fact is well known that Hinduism has not been a proselytizing religion. The Chantai consciously accepted the Brahmanical faith and practices with that of animism.

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TRIPURA SCHEDULED TRIBES COOPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD. A REVIEW

M. L. Das *

A number of constitutional provisions exist for protection and promotion of the interests of the weaker sections including the Sch. Tribes. Giving bank loan with subsidy and at a cheaper interest rate Sch. Tribes. Corp.Dev. Corpn. Lt. started functioning in the year 1982. At the beginning the share capital of the Corporation was Rs. 5.00 crores which is now Rs.20.00 crores. This Corporation act as a catalytic agent in getting bank loans by the Sch. Tribes. Originally this loan had three components: a) Subsidy 50% of the total project cost subjected to a maximum of Rs. 5,000/- (at present) b) Margin Money Loan 25% of the loan amount at 4% rate of interest per annum. c) Bank's loan as per the normal rate of the Banks. From the year 1988-89 as per decision of the Government of India, the amount of Margin Money has been restricted up to the amount of Rs. 10,000/- for the schemes in farm-sector, Rs.25,000/- for the schemes under non-farm sector, 35,000/- in composit schemes. Normally the amount of loan under the schemes is limited up to Rs 35,000/-. The financing under Margin Money Loan Programme can be extended for any economic activities which a family can take up for its economic development like Duckery, Milch cows, Piggery, Poultry, Orchard, Small Business and Pisciculture etc.

As per the scheme there is provision for giving 2nd dose to the beneficiaries subjected to payment of subsidy up to the higher

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ceiling limit. A borrower can get fresh loan if the loan taken earlier limit. A borrower can get fresh loan if the loan taken earlier is refunded. Up to the year 1992-93 the Corporation sanctioned an amount of Rs. 100.90 lakhs as Margin Money.

This Corporation introduced schemes of unit costs more than Rs. 35,000/- under the collaboration of National Sch. Castes & Sch. Tribes Finance and Dev. Corporation, New Delhi from the year 1991-92. Under this programme there is no limit of higher unit cost. As per the pattern 50% of the project cost financed by the National Corporation.

25% by Tripura Sch. Tribes Coop. Dev. Corporation, 20% by Banks and the rest 5% by the beneficiaries. The Corpn. extended finance for purchases of auto rickshaws, jeeps, mini buses, mini trucks etc. However, considering to cover a larger numbers of beneficiaries with limited resource, the National Corporation nowadays is not interested to finance schemes having unit cost more than Rs. 50,000-. However, if suitable beneficiaries are available with proper scheme, this limit may not be a bar. Under this programme, this Corporation has so far disbursed a total amount of Rs. 30.97 lakhs for purchase of 8 nos. of Auto - rickshaws, 6 nos Jeeps, 2 nos Mini buses, 3 nos Mini trucks etc. So far out of an amount of 30.97 lacks due, the beneficiaries refunded an amount of Rs. 1.11 lakhs resulting outstanding of an amount of Rs. 29.86 lakhs with interest.

This Corporation implements another set of schemes in collaboration with Tribal Welfare Department which may be called "Tag of Scheme". Land Purchase scheme and Broiler Chicken scheme for settlement of Sch. Tribe families are at present implemented under this sector. Under the Land Purchase scheme, so far this Corporation extended loan to 231 S.T. families for an amount of Rs. 15.35 lakhs but the recovery is only for an amount of Rs. 0.01 lakh. As per the scheme the Tribal Welfare Deptt. sanctions an amount of Rs. 25,000/- per family as grant and the Corporation sanctions a maximum amount of Rs. 8,500 as loan. The Broiler Chicken scheme, of course, is supposed to be implemented from this year i.e. 1993-94. As per the scheme, the Deptt of S.T. Welfare

will sanction a grant of Rs. 11,500/- per family as grant and the Corpn. will sanction an amount of Rs. 5,000/- as loan.

In the current financial year the Corporation has decided to cover 2,500 S.T. families through-out the State under the Margin Money Loan Programme. This target has already been distributed to all the Blocks. Selection of beneficiaries in the Field level is almost over by this time. But it may not be possible to extend finance to all the targeted families, since it is difficult to get families for getting loan who have not taken loan earlier from any of the poverty alleviation Programme.

Through the aim of the Corporation is to extend finance to the poor S.T. families on their need, there is a big gap between the expectation and the achievement.

Due to the stoppage of lending credit by Tripura Gramin Bank and even by scheduled commercial banks due to poor recovery position, large area of Tripura are not covered under MMMP. After the appeal made for repayment of Bank loans by Hon'ble Chief Minister and Concerted efforts by the State administration and Bank officials the recovery position has shown a marked improvement.

The situation has been changed very recently and we hope that the hurdless would be over-come and the Corpn. will be in a position to work without hinrance for economic development for the poor tribals of Tripura.

TUI, Vol. II - A Review

Mahadev Chakravarti *

So much is written now-a-days about Tripura and yet so little is known about various aspects of tribal life and culture. Apparently only a beginning has been made by TUI to show it from various angles and this is the 2nd number only. There are 15 articles in the present journal and it is encouraging to see that most of the papers are written by the administrators and officers of various departments of the Government of Tripura, and one each by a linguist, a staff of the Tribal Research Institute and a staff of S.T. Cooperative Development Corporation. The present volume is interesting for various reasons and each paper needs some description.

Language is a great vehicle through which we may delve deep into the hoary past - particularly to trace the lost pages of the first chapter of tribal history. Among many interpretations about the origin of the name 'Tripura', the most acceptable interpretation is that the word has been coined from two words: 'Tui' (water) and 'pra' (near) - meaning a land adjoining the water. This 'Tuipra' has subsequently been transformed into 'Tipra' and 'Tripura'. It would become evident from Kumud Kundu Choudhury's research paper why the name of the present journal was very rightly selected. From the linguistic stand point, Choudhury has very aptly proved how almost all tribes of Tripura and of the North-East and almost all Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Burmese group of languages have a common word 'Tui' (meaning 'water') with slight variation somewhere. Tracing the antiquity of the word 'Tui', Choudhury thinks that the Sanskrit word 'Toya' (meaning 'water') is a loan-word from the Sino-Tibetan group of languages. According to Choudhury, the Aryan speech community came close to the Sino-Tibetan speech community during the pre-Christian days and at that time possibly 'Tui' entered into Sanskrit vocabulary as 'Toya' such type of scholarly paper is thought-provoking and offers a

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good insight into the problem.

The SAARC countries have dedicated the last decade (90's) of the present century as 'Girl-Child Decade'. Women education is to be given top priority because education is an instrument of progress and determines aspirations, productivity, vertical and horizontal mobility. It was so long believed that the march of literacy failed to keep pace with the growth of population; but the experience in Tripura is otherwise. Alok Kumar Deb in his article "Incentive in the role of Education of Tribal Girl Children" has shown that in between 1984-85 and 1992-93, whereas the increase of population was 4.6% per year on average, the increase of enrolment of S.T. Girl student was rather 6% per year on average. Deb has shown, with the aid of a number of impressive tables, charts, and diagram, how the enrolment of S.T. Girl students in schools had been increased during 1981-91, how the drop-out had been reduced, how there are more official incentives for the S.T. Girl students compared to Boy students - although there is much left to be done.

In the population front, Tripura has far surpassed the all-India level. S.Sailo in his article "The Growth of Tribal Population as revealed in 1991" has pointed out how the apprehension about the decrease of the percentage of tribal population compared to total population of Tripura was belied. The tribal population in Tripura has increased from 5,83,920 in 1981 census to 8,53,345 in 1991 census and in terms of percentage to total population it has gone up from 28.44% in 1981 to 30.95% in 1991 (including the tribal refugees). According to Sailo, it is the turning point. Population studies are always interesting and Sailo in a scholarly way explains the reasons for the upward trend of tribal population in Tripura. Sailo has contributed a lot to make this journal attractive. In the 'Duration of eternity' (p.32) and 'How much is a billion' (p.58) under the caption "Reminiscence of Boyhood Stories", Sailo has drawn a picturesque sketch of simple tribal life. Environmental studies have two-fold dimensions, viz, : the limit to the natural resources and the pollution or erosion that results from the exploitation of these resources. Ecological control also deals with both these aspects. P.K.Paul ("Ecology Management through improvised shifting cultivation practices") outlines the reasons for soil erosion in the peanut shaped hilly Tripura and

highlights the soil conservation principles along with agro-horti practices among the jhumias, water conservation etc.

The devastation effect of jhum on ecology is well-known. But the jhumias, for historic reasons and by their age-old tradition, have a life and death relationship with hilly terrains and forests. Jhum is not simply the economy, it is also the culture. Hence, jhum can not be stopped overnight. Regarding settlement of the jhumias, we have two case studies : one by P.N. Bhattacharjee and the other by R.K.Acharyya. Both the writers think that appropriate measures are urgently needed to wean away the jhumias from their age-old jhum habit and both the scholars have suggested some alternative or subsidiary occupations to the likings of the jhumias. In both Kanchani and Khupilong colonies of the Jhumias, we have the Jamatia people although at Khupilong the Molsums are also settled on the northern side of the settlement colony. Such micro-level field surveys illuminate the readers about the real state of things in the so-called model colonies.

Ratan Ghosh in his article has outlined the agony of all the North-Eastern States. With the limited availability of cultivable land, poor infra-structure for industrial development low per capita income and poor central investment and assistance, the total deficit of all the North-Eastern States has reached to a staggering level of Rs. 1,550 crores. Ghosh pin-points popular dissatisfaction against poor allocation of central grant and concludes that the problems of economic backwardness must be urgently addressed as problems like extremism or insurgency in the North-East are directly related to the backwardness of the region.

In the face of the widespread deforestation throughout the world, Satyesh Chandra Deb narrates the story of a banyan tree at Champak-nagar and upholds tree-plantation movement through planting tree by one whose memory one likes to preserve and to name it as 'Smritiban' or memorial garden.

From the angle of administration, Dibakar Chakraborty regrets the yawning gap between the objectives of Directorate and the field level implementations as the objectives are not clearly perceived. Chakraborty thinks that the field level implementations are to be subjected to regular evaluation.

Shyamalima Banerjee traces the history of tribal development schemes in Tripura since the First Five Year Plan period and points out how the Tribal Welfare Department is coordinating the anti-poverty programmes of different Departments of the Government to bring the S.T. people above the poverty line. Regarding inhuman atrocity towards any member of S.T., Tripura, according to Ms. Banerjee, is incidence-free.

Satya Siva Sundar and Balabhadra Prasad Mishra in their paper highlight how the land-man ratio in Tripura is quite unfavourable for attaining self-sufficiency in food. As there is no wide scope to bring further are under cultivation, the scope for extensive cultivation in large field is nil; hence, intensive cultivation by adopting modern means is the only alternative.

There is no doubt that Ram Gopal Singh has raised some important issues in his discussion on the impact of financial crisis on tribal life; but the high hopes raised by the title are only partially fulfilled. The study could have been enriched by field surveys and case studies. In fact, a wish lingers that the aspects probed could have been elucidated a bit better.

Surendra Kumar Debbarma has gives a detailed note on the folk dances of Tripura tribes, viz, : Garia, Lebung Boomani, Mashak, Maimita dance of the Tripuris, Biju dance of the Chakmas, Hwi Hak dance of the Halam-Kuki community, various dances of the Garo community - e.g., Gana, Ran-Nritya, Dokru Doa, Ambre Rurua, Kilpua etc., Hojagiri dance of the Riangs, various dances of the Lushai community - e.g., Cheraw, Khuallam, Solakia, Pawnto, Tlang-lam etc. Without photo or sketch, such elaborate discussion on dance becomes dull. What is needed is the analysis and not mere description. As almost all the festivals and dances etc. of the tribal people are jhum-based, as there is a slow transition and change now-a-days from jhum to other occupations, it would have its inevitable impact on culture. It would have been really a very interesting paper if attempts were made to evaluate the tribal dances from the angle of 'continuity and change' or 'tradition and modernity' because the forms of dances are not the same today as it was before.

Letthuama intorduces the Darlongs as a branch of a big Mizo-Kuki family tree. Geeta Hranghawl gives a picture of the

marriage custom of her tribe which, according to her, is neither rigid nor too flexible and there is no customary law preventing marriage of a widow or a widower.

As the above discussion indicates, some important issues have been raised by the scholars in the present journal, and, on the whole, the collection is a valuable one. Problem areas need greater attention and a scientific analysis is needed to make the journal impressive. There are lot of typographic errors and one cannot avoid mentioning the poor editing of some articles which gives the impression that it was perhaps done in haste. However, these lapses should not distract attention from the merits of such excellent journal. The reviewer wishes the sincere attempts of the Tripura State Tribal Culture Research Institute and Museum a grand success.

Letter to the Editor

Sir,

The article published by you in vol.III titled "Emotional Integrity and Common identity of Tribal people of Tripura-An overview", written by Sri N.C. DebBarma, Dy. Secy. Assembly Sectt., prompts me to invite more articles on this topics in next issues. Sri Deb Barma had contributed very significant and valuable descriptions conducive to give rise now Tripura National. It will definitely help understanding "Social Transformation", assimilation of tribal people in common footings and laying precious foundation Stone towards reforming new Tripura Nation. It is obviously the concern of all researchers, Govt. and workers that tribal people must be developed, uplifted and brought in the level of National mainstream. Unless social conditions are improved and an integrated Tribal culture towards formation of "greater Tripura Nation" is emerged; all attempts to bring fruitful acheivement by only jhumia schemes and various development schemes will be futile where the Tribals at present live isolated in segregated conditions and dacoits, antisocials or buglers take advantage of weak and illiterate Society; bringing disturbance and instability.

As such, a common acceptable form emerging by way of assimilation from all Tribals of Tripura on the basis of common language, Socio-cultural & traditional systems may be evolved for the entire Tribal development in Tripura. The new Tribal generations will boost themselves of introducing them as "TRIPURA NATION" in refering to Historic declaration of Tripura vide circular 9 dt. 15 Ashwina 1340 Tring and circular 10 of 1350 Tring

In the light of historic circulars/records, the Government can issue "Scheduled Tribe" certificates without writing/specifying name of communities/clans.

I would like to bring information to carry out more concentrated endeavour to focus "Solidarity of all the Tribal Nationalities". The Rajmala gives the accounts as, Trilochan's (Raja Subrai) twelve sons had formed twelve huts/villages and there-after separated/migrated. Each of the sons gave rise one clan/community. It is, therefore, clear that all tribals of Tripura were originated from one Family and there will no difficulties to assimilate towards emerging unified "TRIPURA NATION."

Yours Sincerely

C. M. Debbarma. TFS-I,
Principal Officer(Forests),
T.T.A.A.D.C.

THE KUKIS - WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE KUKIS OF TRIPURA

S. SAILO *

The Kuki is too familiar hill-tribe in the North-East but too less known. As much as the origin of the word "Kuki" is still in a guess work, the people for whom the word stands is still undemarcable and in utter confusion. The word itself is vague inviting vexed question and amalgamating varieties of tribes. The word appears to have been coined for the wild and savage tribes, and perhaps it will not survive long following rapid civilization of the so-called Kuki tribes from whom this word still gets remnant supply of life saving drug. In Manipur, the word does not find a place in the existing list of Scheduled Tribes. The word was born with confused breed and will probably die with the same breed.

William Shaw states in his book "Notes on The Thadou Kukis" first published in 1929 - "The origin of this word is not known, but it first appears in Beangal, Rawlins writing of the "Cucis or Mountaineers of Tipra" in Asiatic Researches (ii,xii) in 1792'. Here specific reference is made to mountaineers of Tipra(Tripura) and it is worth to be noted. The record of Edward Tuite Dalton slightly differs from that of William Shaw. Dalton in his book on Tribal History of Eastern India, first published in 1872, states - "The first notice of this tribe appeared in the "Asiatic Researches". Volume VII, in a paper from the pen of Surgeon McCrea, dated 24th January, 1799'.

In fact, the existence of this wild tribe was noticed much earlier as revealed in other old record. One interesting letter has been incorporated in the Bangladesh District Records edited by Sirajul Islam, University of Dacca (published in 1978). This is a letter written by Francis Law, Chief of Chittagong addressed to Captain Edward Ellesker, Commander of the 22nd Battalion at Chittagong.

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The letter reads as follows :-

Having occasion to cut Timbers in the cotton woods at a place called Ranganeah for the Repair of the Company's Casernies. I shall be obliged to you to order an Escort of 20 Seapoys & a Jemidder for this purpose, the Coolies being afraid to vent me without a Guard, there being arrived a terrible misfortune to them lately 8 or 10 being cut off by the Cokoos or Natives of the place.

I am Sir

Yours Most Obedt. Servant

F.L.

Chief.

Islamabad
the 24th April, 1776.

(Islamabad is the earlier name of Chittagong Factory. Islamabad is found in the old map of Bengal & Bihar prepared during the time of Warren Hastings, Governor-General).

This letter has a special significance. Given the the fact that the so-called Kukis (including Mizos/Lushais) used to cut off the heads of their victims and the severed heads brought home as war trophies, the mentioning of "8 or 10 being cut off by the Cokoos or Natives of the place" has a relevance to the Kukis, though the spelling used was slightly incongruous.

Yet there is another interesting mention of Kukis in the book written by Capt. T.H. Lewin titled "Wild Races of South-Eastern India" first published in 1870. The mentioning goes like this -

"When, in dying, a Cucis leaves three sons, the eldest and the youngest share the inheritance; the second has nothing. If he leaves no sons, his goods fall to his brothers and if he has no brothers, they revert to the Chief of the tribe. In the spring of 1776 many Cucis visited Mr. Charles Croftes, who was the commandant for the English East India Company at Jafferabad. They appeared very satisfied with their reception, executed their dances, and promised to return after the harvest."

This record has prompted us to think that knowledge about the existence of Kukis took place prior to 1776. The reason being

that the Kukis, at least during that time, could not be expected to find out a chance, all on a sudden to encounter an English Saheb. So, an inference can be drawn that Cokoos, Cucis, Kookies and Kukis refer to the same groups of people, whose existence were first noticed in Chittagong District and then among the hill-tribes of Tipra (Tripura) and later on in other parts of the North-East.

A pertinent question that arises is who all are those people brought under the nomenclature of Kukis. Here lies the crux of the problem. In the North-East Frontier of India written by A. Mackenzie (published in 1884), the Pioneer, dated 23rd April, 1873 was appended, There are few sentences in this appendix which give us an interesting reading -

"But Dalhousie had pronounced the Assam Frontier a bore. Our officers were to mind their mouzahs and leave the hillmen alone, and we gradually shifted into ignorance even of their tribal names. We lumped together as Nagas all the tribes from Patkoi to the Kopili, and dubbed all hillmen Kookies, from North Cachar to Arracan. In 1866 Sir Cecil Beadon who, for all his misfortunes, had the instincts of a statesman, undertook to change all this."

This is a definite indication that the Britishers had gradually come to know that such generalised grouping of hill-tribes under Kukis and Nagas was far from reality. In 1887, C.A. Soppitt had to confess - 'The designation "Kuki" is unknown to the tribes now so-called by the plains people' (A short Account of the Kuki-Lushai Tribes on the North-East Frontier - Chapter I). Lt. Colonel J. Shakespear also states in his book "The Lushai Kuki clans" that the term Kuki is not recognised by the people to whom it is applied. The Kukis were also divided into two groups, namely, Old Kukis and New Kukis. The earlier settlers in North Cachar and Manipur were distinguished as Old Kukis while the groups which entered into these places at a later stage were known as New Kukis. The distinction was based on time factor and might not have much difference as to the tribes related.

According to Suniti Kr. Chatterjee, the Kuki-Chin Tribes are Indo-Mongoloids and are known to Assamese and Bengalees as

Kukis, and to the Burmese as Chins (written Khyin), and the Kuki-Chin has been adopted as a composite and inclusive name for them. Some people say that the Burmese called the Kukis "Chin or Khyan" implying they were basket carrying people because they were always found carrying bamboo baskets of their back for fetching water, fire-wood and jhum produces. It is said that in Burmese word Khyan means basket. The word Kuki is now considered as derogatory. So, many Kuki-Chin tribes do not like to identify themselves as Kukis and in fact, have discarded this appellation by adopting their respective original tribes' names. The point now is who are the left-overs still known as Kukis. We are yet in deep confusions. Before I deal with this, I would like to side-step to another small but thought provoking point.

Why and how the Bengalees invented the word Kuki for these hill men? Will it be absolutely new innovation or coinage by corrupting and allied word? One thing is clear. To them Kukis mean wild and savage tribes. The Tripuris who were the then neighbours of the Kukis, called them "Sikam" which means wild, savage and ugly people. The sound of the word itself was terrible enough to silent the child's crying forthwith. Can this word be a by-product of the word 'Kirat'? In Bengali, the word Kirat means hunter. According to Suniti Kr. Chattarjee, this word is used disparagingly of a man who is abnormally, miserly or close fisted, cruel or heartless. Another remark made by him is worth noting - "It is the consensus of opinion among Indologists that in Sanskrit the term Kirata indicated the wild non-Aryan tribes living in the mountains particularly in the Himalayas and in the North-Eastern areas of India, who were Mongoloid in origin". It may not be wrong to say that the people considered to be Kukis were one of the many wild hill tribes conglomerated as Kirat even if the origin of the word Kuki is not the offshoot of the word Kirat. Some people think that the term Kuki was derived from the Baluchistan word 'Kuchi' which means nomadic or wandering. The relevancy of this claim cannot be proved. In one Bengali dictionary "Bangla Viswa Kosh" IV Vol. edited by Nagendranath Basu (first published in 1886-1911), one word has been found which may be relative word of Kuki. The word is "Kukil" the meaning of which is given as 'Parbat'. The equivalent English word is hill or mountain. Kukil

word is not only closely related to the word Kuki, the meaning also has closed affinity. In the earlier record, Kuki was stated as Cucis or mountaineers. Therefore, it may not be an improbable hypothesis to suppose that the word "Kuki" was derived from Bengali word Kukil to refer to the hill men or mountaineers. This particular Bengali word is no longer commonly used. Probability is that the Britishers had mistakenly spelt the word Kukil as Cokoos, Cucis, Kookies and Kukis. There are a number of instances of this nature, i.e., wrong spellings used for names of places, persons and communities in the earlier writings of the Britishers. Some wrong recordings are so serious that the correct names could not be made out. There is, therefore, a reasonable reason to think that the word Kuki was derived from the Bengali word Kukil.

Now, let us go back to our earlier point in regard to identification of the people belonging to Kuki tribe in the North-Eastern States. The Kukis are found in all the North-Eastern States excepting in Arunachal Pradesh, of course, no mention of Kuki is found in the Scheduled Tribe's list of Manipur also. Surprisingly, the tribes' list of Kuki of Assam, Meghalaya & Mizoram are absolutely same. Perhaps, the Kuki tribes' list of Assam was leisurely adopted in Meghalaya and Mizoram without verifying their presence in the States. On analysis of the tribes and sub-tribes of the Kuki as recorded in the Government notifications, not only rampant discrepancies and in-consistences are found but are also devoid of reality.

My simple understanding is that while preparing the list of Scheduled Tribes in any States, only the tribes who are actually residing in a particular State are taken into account. As far as possible, there should also be uniformity in the manner they are recorded in various States if at all they belong to the same tribe.

Let us now see how the Kukis are officially recorded in various States of North-East. As per the Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 1976 and the North-Eastern Areas (Re-organisation) Act, 1971, the Kuki tribes and Sub-tribes of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram & Tripura are recorded as shown below :-

Assam, Meghalaya & Mizoram

7. Any Kuki Tribe, including :

- i) Biate, Biete
- ii) Changsan
- iii) Chonglei
- iv) Doungel
- v) Gamalou
- vi) Gangte
- vii) Guite
- viii) Hanneng
- ix) Haokip, Haupit
- x) Haolai
- xi) Hengna
- xii) Hongsungh
- xiii) Hrangkhwal, Rangkhoh
- xiv) Jongbe
- xv) Khawchung
- xvi) Khawathlang, Khothalong
- xvii) Khelma
- xviii) Kholhou
- xix) Kipgen
- xx) Kuki
- xxi) Lengthang
- xxii) Lhangum
- xxiii) Lhaujem
- xxiv) Lhouvun
- xxv) Lupheng
- xxvi) Mangjel
- xxvii) Misao
- xxviii) Riang
- xxix) Sairhem
- xxx) Selnam
- xxxi) Singson
- xxxii) Sitlhou
- xxxiii) Sukte
- xxxiv) Thado

Tripura.

9. Kuki including the following sub-tribes:-

- i) Balte
- ii) Belalhut
- iii) Chhalya
- iv) Fun
- v) Hajango
- vi) Jangtei
- vii) Khareng
- viii) Khephong
- ix) Kuntei
- x) Laifang
- xi) Lentei
- xii) Mizel
- xiii) Namte
- xiv) Paitu, Paite
- xv) Rangchan
- xvi) Rangkhohle
- xvii) Thangluya

xxxv) Thangngeu

xxxvi) Uibuh

xxxvii) Vaiphei

Interesting enough that Manipur, which is considered to have the largest Kuki population among the North-Eastern States, does not have Kuki tribe in its Scheduled Tribes list. These days Manipur is very much in the limelight because of the Kuki-Naga clash. Who are those Kukis then ? To facilitate better analysis, let's glance over the Scheduled Tribes' list of Manipur as per the Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 1976.

Part x - Manipur.

- | | |
|---------------|------------------------------|
| 1) Aimol | 16) Maring |
| 2) Anal | 17) Any Mizo (Lushai) tribes |
| 3) Angami | 18) Monsang |
| 4) Chiru | 19) Moyon |
| 5) Chothe | 20) Paite |
| 6) Gangte | 21) Purum |
| 7) Hmar | 22) Ralte |
| 8) Kabui | 23) Sema |
| 9) Kacha Naga | 24) Simte |
| 10) Koirao | 25) Suhte |
| 11) Koireng | 26) Tangkhul |
| 12) Kon | 27) Thadou |
| 13) Lamgang | 28) Vaiphei |
| 14) Mao | 29) Zou |
| 15) Maram | |

The Scheduled Tribes' list of Nagaland, however, includes Kuki. The Nagaland Scheduled Tribes list contains five tribes only but they have wide coverage. Perhaps better sense prevails in having such concise list avoiding all irrelevant and complicated names of tribes and sub-tribes. The list of Scheduled Tribes of Nagaland are

- | | |
|------------|----------|
| 1) Garo | 4) Mikir |
| 2) Kachari | 5) Naga |
| 3) Kuki | |

They have done rightly by mentioning single names of tribes like Kuki, Naga. It is not really necessary to say Any Naga tribes including Ao, Sema, Angami, Lotha etc. By mentioning the word Kuki only, they could escape from unnecessary details. On the other hand, this will affect the interest of none. Any tribal person is supposed to know to which tribe he belongs to. If he does not know it should be presumed that there is something wrong with the person or in the list of Scheduled Tribe.

On a closer look at the Kuki tribes and sub-tribes of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura and the Scheduled Tribes list of Manipur, we can easily find out many discrepancies, inconsistencies and overlappings. If one undertakes field studies, a lot more will be found out. Let's point at some of the salient incongruities and incoherences.

1) Many tribes are included as Kuki tribe in the list of Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram without any sub-tribe whereas as many as 17 Kuki sub-tribes are found in the list of Tripura and at the same time names of many Kuki tribes of Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram are similar with the names of Kuki sub-tribes of Tripura, of course, in some cases with slight variations in the spellings. The question is why a Kuki tribe of one State should be a Kuki sub-tribe in the neighbouring State. Will it not be possible to keep an uniformity?

2) While identifying Kuki tribe, Kuki is again separately mentioned as one of the Kuki tribes in the list of Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram. It simply creates confusion.

3) Riang is included in the Kuki tribe in Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram. The fact is that Riang belongs to Bodo group and has no relation with Kuki-Chin group in any aspect. Riang is one of the major tribes in Tripura.

4) Selnam which appears to mean Sielhnam is included as Kuki tribe of Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram. This is one of the clans of Hmars and not Kukis.

5) Most of the Kuki sub-tribes mentioned in the list of

Tripura are not found at least at present. The same will be the case with the list of Assam, Meghalaya and Mizoram, if detailed studies are conducted.

6) In Tripura, the Rangkhols (Hrangkhawls) claim to be one of the sub-tribes of Halam while they are included in the sub-tribe list of Kuki. So they obtain Scheduled Tribe Certificate as Halam or Kuki according to their convenience.

7) As already stated, in Manipur there is no Kuki according to the Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 1976. However, some people claim there are. At the present fluid situation in Manipur, it is risky to pass any comments on who is Kuki and who is not. In the letter of the General Secretary, Kuki National Convention, Manipur published in SAKEIBAKNEI, Bi-weekly Magazine dated 1.2.1994. from Aizawl, it has been alleged that the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Muivah) are butchering the people belonging to Hangsin, Chowngthu, Chiingson and Fanai communities irrespective of women and children, identifying them as Kukis. In the Scheduled Tribes list of Manipur, there is no Kuki, no doubt but are there Kukis in Manipur outside the official list? It appears from the above allegation that Thadous are the main Kukis in Manipur now.

8) One of the Kuki sub-tribes of Tripura, namely Khoreng appears to be synonym of Koireng tribe of Manipur. So, it is a Kuki sub-tribe in Tripura whereas it is a separate tribe in Manipur. Again, Paitu or Paite is a Kuki sub-tribe in Tripura while Paite is a separate tribe in Manipur.

Now, let's have a closer look into the Kuki tribes and sub-tribes of Tripura. Many writers have often attempted to present Kuki of Tripura as one tribe but this is far from reality. As already stated, there are as many as 17 sub-tribes of Kuki in Tripura in the official list. However, names of Kuki tribes are not specified. There are lot of confusions in the sub-tribes list. Some of the names of Kuki sub-tribes appear to have relations with the names of some of the Darlong clans.

Names of Kuki sub-tribes. Probable relative clans names of

Darlong.

Darlong.

Balte	Bawlte
Chhalya	Chawnnel
Hajango	Hawlzang
Jangte	Zawngte
Khareng	Khawhreng
Lentei	Lawnte
Namte	Hnamte
Paitu/Paite	Paitu
Rangchan	Rante

Another sub-tribe's name Khephong may be the corrupted form of Kaipeng. But Kaipeng is very much under Halam. Rangkhole and Hrangkhawl are same. In fact, Hrangkhawl villagers pronounce it as Rangkhoh. When I asked some Hrangkhawl intellectuals on why they used Hrangkhawl in-stead of Rangkhoh, they said that Mr. B.K. Hrangkhawl advocated the use of Hrangkhawl and they obliged to it. When I contacted Mr. B. K. Hrangkhawl to confirm this, he said that Rangkhoh is derogatory. The reason is that their neighbouring tribes understand it as Rang Khang meaning collecting money. On the other hand, Hrang has quite a different meaning ^{as is} ~~horrifying or terrifying~~ brave. So, to Mr. B. K. Hrangkhawl the spelling of Hrangkhawl is correct has made sense. Rangkhoh is one of the Halam tribes and very much included in the so-called Baro Halams. 1931 Census also clearly categorised them as Halams. The likely correct spellings of the remaining names of Kuki sub-tribes and also the tribes they may relate to cannot be made out.

I have visited quite a number of Kuki and Darlong villages to find out more details about the Kukis of Tripura. My finding is that there are broadly three groupes under Kuki. The dominant group is Darlong. Their present population is estimated to be 5,500 in 22 villages and mostly confining in Kailashahar Sub-Division. There are few Darlong population in Kamalpur and Dharmanagar Sub-Divisions also. The Darlongs used to call themselves "Hriam" earlier which means man. There were three sub-groups under Hriam, namely, Chungtlang, Awmhroi and Fatlei.

When I interviewed Zatuadinga Darlong at Deoracherra on 23.11.1993 (93 years old in that year) he said that before 1929, they identified themselves as Hriam, Mizos called them Darlongs and others knew them as Kukis. In 1929, Hnela, Neihliana and Nobosam Singh (private teacher at Talan village) went to Agartala and met Minister of the Maharaja demanding recognition of the tribe as Darlong. Minister expressed difficulty in doing so, as they had been recorded as Kukis but at the same time informed them his no objection if they used it among themselves only. In the year 1929 itself, there was a Christian Conference at Zawngkhawtlang, said to be located on and around the tilla on which the Kumarghat Block Office stands now. In that meeting, Hnela, Neihliana and Nobosam Singh placed the proposal for changing the name of the tribe to Darlong. The proposal could not be pushed through as the Christian leaders were slightly hesitant. However, all the Christians used to identify themselves as Darlongs and as soon as the entire community turned into Christianity the process of change of the Community's name into Darlong had also been completed. The reason why they liked to change the nomenclature of their tribe's name was that they considered it ignominious as others understood Kukis as savage and barbarous people. In that way the Darlongs brought a change to their Community's name. The above statement is corroborated by 1931 Census. The first mention of Darlong in the State official document is found in the 1931 Census.

But the first mention of Darlong appears to have been made by W.W. Hunter in his book - A Statistical Account of Bengal (First published in 1876). He states - "Most of the Kukis in Hill Tipperah live in the northern portion of the hills, and the tribe is there known by the name of Dalang". It is more or less certain that Dalang here is no other than Darlong. This will not contradict the conclusion made above regarding emergence of the nomenclature of this community as Darlong. The reason being that Hunter based his record on the earlier findings of Capt. Lewin who had well contacts with the Mizos (Lushais). The Mizos called the people of this Community as Darlong claiming that once they had resided in the Darlawng Tlang (hill) of Mizoram and the Community got its name after the name of that hill. So, in all probability, Capt.

Lewin came to know of the existence of Darlongs in the northern parts of Tripura from the Mizos (then Lushais) dwelling to the eastern side of Chittagong Hills Tracts.

The second group of Kuki is formed by Ruankhum, Betu and Pautu clans. Tumbok having few families at Tuichakma and Awmro residing near Kamlacherra are also said to belong to Kuki under this group. Field verification has not yet been done to confirm this. The Darlongs claim that Awmro, called by them "Awmhroi" forms part of the Darlong Community. Tlangasuan is said to be the clan under Awhroi. Ruankhum has now been considered to have originated from Rokhum and, therefore, is increasingly used in place of Ruankhum. Rokhum, Betlu and Pautu clans are also found among the Mizos. Kukis under this group are found at Kamlacherra, Hawaibari, Dakmura, Duptoli (3 families) and at Darchoi (2 families). The population of this group is 502 when I recently surveyed.

The third group is Kozai. The Kozai village is near Duptoli and just falls within Sonamura Sub-Division. The Kukis of Duptoli also belong to this group barring three families. The clan structure of Kozai is quite different from the Darlongs and the other Kuki group, which we have distinguished as the second group. The population of the Kozai group is 235 as in January, 1994.

The present approximate Kuki population, is, therefore, 6237. The tribe-wise population of 1991 Census is yet to be released, with which when released, may be compared to this estimated figure.

The Kuki population of Tripura as found in the Tripura Census Biharani and other Census Records are as follows :-

Year/Census Year	Kuki Population
1872	4,005
1881	-
1891	3,824
1901	7,547
1911	2,327 (excluding 5,611 Kuki-Halam)

1921	4,005
1931	1,479 (excluding 2175 Lushais)
1941	1,737
1951	2,721
1961	5,531
1971	7,775
1981	5,502
1991	Yet to be released.

Lots of ups and downs will be noticed in the above Kuki Population figures. A spontaneous query that comes is why the population has shown such irregular vibration. There can be no other reason than the same confusion that entangled the very term "Kuki" and the people appellated as Kukis. For instance, in 1931 Census, there were two tribes shown as Kukis, namely, Darlongs and Lushais. Other Kukis were left out while at the same time the Lushai constituted a separate tribe. As such it will not be a mere assumption to say that the tribes enumerated as Kukis differ from one Census to another Census, thereby causing abnormal population fluctuations. When the word Kuki saw the light of the world, the people dubbed as Kukis were branded as terrible creatures and the inhabitants of Bengal dared to make a bird's eye view only. Few selected braves of the British Empire, perhaps after subscribing to the Life Insurance Corporation, came near to them and from safe distance looked out through their sunglasses, to protect their eyes from the sun-rays of the East, and after staring from various angles with their both hands raised to the foreheads to double shade their eyes, described the kukis in the same manner as the Blind Men described the Elephant.

The saddest part is that long past half gathered information, of course, not without risky ventures, have not been added much even after 47 years of 1947. It is time that we apply the latest invented technologies to scan the Kukis to find out their ins and outs, to detect who they really are. Because half knowledge is sometimes a dangerous thing.

When I asked leading Kuki personalities of Kozai village, Duptoli, Kamlacherra and Hawaibari on how they identified

themselves, the replies were same - Kuki to others and "Zo" to themselves. Recently, Mr. L. L. Rokhum, former Headmaster, St. Paul's School and I had a chat, he vividly recollected that when they resided in the nearby tilla of Hawaibari, they knew themselves by the name of "Zo". But the moment they shifted down to the plain of Hawaibari, Bengalis, Rupinis and Kolois lost no time to entice them as Kukis and sikam respectively. With the passage of time, they have been ordained as Kukis. Once accepted, it is not easy to undo it, specially after having sealed by the Administration. The tribals find it hard to emancipate themselves in such a situation. It is for the Administration to break the seal before it breaks by the pressure to avoid casualty and wounds otherwise nourished healing touch will have to be applied afterwards. Even a hen does not wait a chick to break the egg by itself, rather it helps breaking of the egg with its strong beak, surely for the safe deliverance of the chick's tender body.

Back to our subject. It may not be out of place to mention that in Rajmala, both the Mizo and Darlong chiefs were recorded as Kuki rajas. The chiefs of the Darlongs were no other than the descendants of Thangura who was the grandfather of Sailova, progenitor of Mizo Chiefs(Sailos). Other Kuki groups claim that their chiefs actually belong to Rivung, which is another Mizo chief clan. Rivunga was brother of Thangura. Another interesting thing is that the Kukis of Kamlacherra and Hawaibari treat the Hrangkhawls as their father (guardian). In every important occasion, presence of the the Hrangkhawls is necessary. Till they had embraced Christianity, intermarriage between them was prohibited on the universal concept that there cannot be a marriage between a father and a daughter. Father (guardian) of the Kukis of Duptoli are Molsoms where as Rupinis are for the Tumboks. It should also not be not be missed to mention here that the Kukis of Tripura do not have any kind of relations with the Kukis of the other North-Eastern States.

Huh, what sort of tamasha is this? Confusions after confusions all along. Yes, confusion begets another confusion.

Mass exodus of Chakmas reason behind — from ancient to present time

Mrs. Anjali Dewan. *

The chakmas are the inhabitants of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, from very ancient time. Chakma ballad singers who are known as Gengkhuli, described through their songs how brave and good warrior were the Chakmas. Another fascinating Chakma ballad is "Radhamon and Dhanpati" where there are also description on how and why Chakmas left their home-land and entered Bengal. The movement of the Chakma to Bengal, therefore, is a historical event.

It is evident from Indian and Chinese historical records that mass exodus of the Mongolian people of different races from Central Asia settled in Burma. The Tibeto-Burmans are the first race of people who moved from Central Asia and entered India, through the North-Eastern passages. The progenitors of this tribe are known as Thek or Shak. The Chakmas belong to a tribal clan of the Tibeto-Burman race. This racial clan moved to the Central India and were living there much before the birth of Lord Goutom Buddha.

A branch of Shek or Thek tribe moved gradually and reached the Central India. They established their Kingdom and ruled in the foot hill areas of the Himalayan ranges. History also records the repatriation of the people from Central India to Burma. Because Sakyas were massacred many times by their enemies. History has recorded how and why the sakyas of Kapilavastu was massacred. The ancient historical incident is as follows -

Prasenjit was the King of Kossala. He was a great admirer of Lord Buddha. In ancient India there were many Sakya states or colonies. Among these states the name of Kapilavastu, Brijji or Barji, Debdaha, Saket, Kalaha are most important and remarkable. King Prasenjit wanted to establish a close Kinship with the Sakyas through matrimonial relationship. So, the king wished to get a daughter of a Sakya chief as his wife. But the Sakyas were too proud of their race. They did not agree to give any Sakya daughter to an inferior race but did not want to refuse the King's request. So, they took a trick. They passed a slave girl in disguise of a princess(daughter) of a Sakya Chief to him. Naturally, king Prasenjit married her. By this marriage a son was born. His name was Vidudabha. After being grown up when the prince paid a visit to his maternal grandfather's house at Kapilavastu, the secret of the origin of his mother came to light.

Obviously it created a great sensation to the prince. King Prasenjit with great intensity of sorrows rejected defiantly both the queen and his son. At that time, sage Buddha gave consolation. He told that whatever happened about the origin of the queen; the son also belonged to the close to his father and on his advice King kept and restored both the queen and the son to favour.

After the death of king Prasenjit Prince, Vidudabha succeeded the throne of Kossola. It was the best time of rejuvenation for him. He wished to take a revenge against the mock which he received from the Sakyas. So, he carried out a massacre with great revenge against the people of Sakya of Kapilavastu without regard to men, women and children. As a result the King of Kapilavastu Dhaja Raja had to flee with his followers. Again he established his new Kingdom at Male in Burma. Consequently, the Sakya people were bound to flee in various places by this cruel attack.

On the other hand, the ancient Sakya clan in which the great sage Buddha was born earlier emigrated from Central India to Arakan (north Burma), because a Sakya prince-Abhiraja by name of Kapilavastu, entered in Burma with his army about 260 years ago before the birth of Lord Buddha. Abhiraja was the first Sakya

Prince who established for the first time his new Kingdom in Burma. It was old Pagan city. Now it is lying in ruinous condition on the bank of Irrawady river. Thus, the Sakya clan of rulers from Kapilavastu again continued to thrive at Arakan. Thus the establishment of a Sakya Kingdom in North Arakan, before the birth of Goutom Buddha is confirmed by the historical records. Therefore, all the Kings who succeeded in the line of kings of Arakan were the descendants of the Sakya clan. Another branch of Sakya Mongolian race swamped over Chittagong from their ancestral home in Arakan and made the Chittagong Hill Tracts as homeland of Chakmas (1052 A.D. on-wards). There is clear evidence and historical records to prove that Chakmas ruled many hundred years in Chittagong Hill Tracts. There is also dynastic Chronology of the Chakma Kings in Chittagong hill Tracts.

There is a historical record that Lord Buddha tried his best to stop the attack of Vidudabha. But during Buddha's long absence (he went to Takhashila to preach) King Vidudabha mounted this ruthless, cruel sudden attack. This horrible event or destruction had occurred before the mahaparinirban (death) of Buddha. (Approximately 20 years ago of Buddha's death) As a result the Sakyas were bound to leave their homeland and come to Kamrup (known as Pragjyotishpur). On the other hand some Sakyas took shelter in North-East side that is Comilla, Mainamati, Syllet and Chittagong. Most probably Brijj, Licchabe and Chatuma of Shaky branches entered these places. Naturally there is no wrong to think that this Chatuma was known as Chakma in later period. "Chittagong Chara pala" is a most fascinating ballad of Chakmas. From very ancient time this ballad is known to every Chakma. Once Chakmas left Chittagong during the reign of Raja Sermatya in 1200 A.D. they lamented for their mother land at the time of fleeing away. Based on this incident, this ballad was composed with great sorrows. Even the names which are narrated in this ballad, we find the same name of these places in Syllet, Comilla, and in Tripura. The river Meghna is narrated in this ballad. Chakma legend, episode indicate that this ethnic Indian Buddhist tribe embarrassed Indian culture from very ancient age and they have been living in Chittagong Hill Tracts; in the adjoining part of Arakan and Bengal since very ancient time.

Dr. Ramesh Chandra Majumder in his book *Banglar Itihas* admitted that after the Nisad Period (Non Aryan) a race of Tibeto-Burman Buddhist people lived in this area.

Eminent Linguist Dr Suniti Kumar Chatterjee expressed his views that - Buddhadeb belongs to Mongoloid Sakya clan. To discuss the language of Mongoloid he said —

“The Tibeto-Burmans and others, who settled in Tibet and the southern slopes of Himalayas as well as Assam and North East Bengal in comparatively recent times seems not to have moved much further to the east of their primitive home round about the sources of the young-tsze-Kiang at the time of Aryan penetration into India (1500 B.C). When the Tibeto-Burmans, forming one branch of the Himalayas to Nepal and North Bihar, Bengal and Assam they possibly mingled with the Kol and Dravidian peoples already established there, and this amalgam rapidly became Aryanised in contact with gangatic culture.”

They were massacred for the second time in Buddhist period :-

The Sakyas were massacred second time when Buddha was alive. At that time Magadha was full of glory and wealth. Bimbisara was the famous king of Magadha. So it had paramount importance. Other contemporary states looked at Magadha with highest esteem. Moreover there was a good relation between Buddha and Emperor Bimbisara. Often, the king used to take advice from Buddha.

After the death of Bimbisara, his son Ajatasatru succeeded the throne of Magadha. The tremendous destruction and massacre was inflicted by him. King Ajatasatru had no good terms with the Brijis and Licchavis due to his high demand of revenue from them for the Patliputra port.

Brijis and Licchavis were the branches of Sakya clan. At that time almost all kings used to take advice from Buddha. Ajatasatru also wanted his advice. Lord Buddha, the pioneer of peace,

advised him not to go in any fight. But the King after discussing with his brahman ministers made a conspiracy. He sent his brahman ministers to make a conspiracy. He sent his brahman advisors to Briji in disguise. They created there social disturbance, chaos and rivalry among the inhabitants of Briji. King Ajatasatru took this advantage. He carried out a great destruction in Briji and Licchabi by sudden attack. At that time all the Sakya sates jointly resisted. But they were defeated to the King. This massacre also happened before the death of Lord Buddha.

Following this massacre the Sakya people were scattered from their homeland and moved to and fro in North-East side. By this sarcasm event Chamuas or chatumas entered in Assam and Kamrup with the Brijis, Licchabis and other Sakya clans. Later, this chamuas or Chatumas were settled at Kala bagha in Syllet. Some scholars believe that in course of time this Chautma has been known as Sawngma or Chakuma. It is quite probable that Sakyas Koliyas, Brijis & other Sakyas descended from Mongoloid stock.

The third massacre occurred in Muslim Period :- The Muslim rule in Bengal covered roughly a period of 400 years (1200-1500 A.D.) and probably Chittagong was first conquered by Muhammadans during this period. It is very certain that the Muslim rulers who came from outside of India could not tolerate Buddhism. There was also historical record that the Muslim rulers wanted to ruin the ancient glorious Buddhist culture from India. They were also very tyrant to this ethnic tribal buddhists.

Mahamad-Bin-Baktiaruddin with great revenge destroyed Magadha, Bihar and other Buddhist centres. He killed the buddhist people and ruined Buddhist Math, temples and other educational institutions. It is not very unusual to them to think of these educational institutions as fort. They killed many Budhist monks. They threw into fire many valuable books on Buddhism. The people who were alive left the place taking their valuable books and manuscripts. Some Buddhist priests also left the place taking the valuable books with them. They were known as Ruri or Luri. These monks brought with them their old religious books. These books are known as 'Agartara'. The word 'Agar' means old era

and the word 'Tara' means religion. So the word 'Agartara' means old religion. Some buddhist monks went to Tibet, Cylon and Nepal with their old religious books. They protected these valuable books with great care. The chakmas were the great followers of Buddhism with their high esteem. But by their "ahimsha niti" (not jealous) they have lost their strength to protect their existence. Thus Chatumas or Chakmas kept their light existence of traditional life in very coherent way under the other Sakya branches.

4th time massacre from Bangladesh :-

It can be easily said that the Chakmas are the oldest Buddhist people of India. At the time of partition the tribal Buddhist claimed to be included in India, because in their religion they were very close to the Hindus but not to the Muslims. The British rulers did not take seriously the claim of these unfortunate Indian Buddhist Tribal community. From their prior sarcastic experience they were aware of their fate. There is historical record that from Bhayestha Khan, an independent kingdom was ruled by the Chakmas. There are historical records which can prove that - Chakma chief or Chakma raja ruled for many hundred years. There is dynastic chronology of the Chakma Kings from 1400 A.D. onwards. Marekyaja was the Chakma King in 1400 A.D. We can know the Chakma history from 'Rajnama'. During the period of East India company the Chakma chief was Raja Dharam Baksh Khan. The Chakma rulers used the title Khan in Muslim period. But there was no traces of Muhammadanism. Buddhism appears always to be their religion. Later the title Roy was conferred by the Mughals. Again in British period the coveted title Raja was conferred on Chakma Chief. Dharam Baksh Khan ruled his subjects from 1812 to 1832. After his death the illustrious and very witty Chakma queen and the widow of Raja Dharam Baksh Khan ruled over her subjects when the British monarch took over the control of the Indian administration from the East-India company. The British Government recognised her succession to the Chakma throne and her rule as she had no issue throughout her life. She ruled for forty (40) years with great ability. She was very capable ruler and ruled from 1832-1873. So Kalindi Rani was the last independent ruler of the Chakmas. During her long reign she had

to face many obstacles. Some noble subjects revolted against her. The queen managed the situation with great skill. As a result some people emigrated to neighbouring Tripura Kingdom. Therefore, there are many traces of the ethnic Buddhist Chakma inhabitants of Chittagong Hill Tract. After partition in 1947 the Pakistan leaders lost no time to take the homeland of ethnic tribal people of Chittagong Hill tracts in Pakistan. Any Buddhist tribe who stood up against the Government policy were very ruthlessly tortured. As a result many ethnic tribal people had to cross border into India and Burma. Pakistan Government took a plan to drive the old Chakma tribe from the Chittagong Hill Tracts by setting up a Hydro-Electric Project on the river-Cornaphuli. This project was completed in 1960. This project increased muslim population in large number into Chittagong Hill Tracts under a well-planned Government policy. It is a historical event that in 1971 a civil war broke out between the Bengali Muslim people of East Pakistan and Pakistan Government. In 1971 the erstwhile East-Pakistan emerged as an independent country as Bangladesh.

It is very well-known, recent historical event, before the fall of East Pakistan Government Chakma Raja, Tridip Roy was banished to west Pakistan and has been living there since then without returning to homeland. The ethnic tribal inhabitants of Chittagong hill tracts were tortured by Bangladesh armed forces. The great influx of non-tribal muslim people took place in tribal areas under a well-planned policy. Bengali Muslims occupied the tribal villages and houses. There were no job-opportunities for the tribes in the factories and industries. The vast Chakma inhabited area turned into vast sheet of water by the Hydro-Electric-Project. Naturally Government did not take any re-settlement programme for the tribals. Thousands of Chakma families were uprooted. Bangladesh army set ablaze village after village. Muslims occupied their lands. The tribal women children also were tortured brutally by the Bangladesh armed forces. As a result the tribals were bound to take shelter in India as refugee in 1987. Twenty thousand crossed over and settled down in the hills of Arakan. In 1884 during the reign of Kalindi Rani a major exodus of Chakmas into Tripura occurred. About 4,000 chakmas crossed over into Tripura through the hill track and river routes. At that time some nobles made

conspiracy against her. A noble man openly revolted against the queen with few subjects. Due to her long reign she had to face many oppositions from her community. Then the queen had to seek the help of the Kukis, to crush the revolt. Due to these internal disturbances some people emigrated to neighbouring Tripura Kingdom. The Kukis killed many subjects of Tripura and Chittagong Hill Tracts. The British administrators called this event the "great Kuki Invasion".

Again in the early 1600 A.D. the King of Arakan and Tripura appeared in a fight for getting supremacy over Chittagong. At that time Satua was the Chakma king. In Chakma history this king is known as Pagla Raja, because he did many inhuman treatments to his subjects. Chakma history recorded that this king became insane. Finding such a tyranic regime, his subjects revolted against the king and ultimately killed him. There is Pagla Raja episode in Chakma history. After the death of the king, his widow with her two daughters and some followers temporarily fled away to Tripura. There one of the daughters was married into an aristocrat Tripura family. So there are many historical traces of the Chakmas in Tripura and from that time people in batches emigrated in Tripura in search of jhum land.

In 1964, nearly 40,000 Chakmas crossed over into India and entered into Arunachal Pradesh (former N.E.F.A) and Mizoram. The hilly tracts and river route are adjoining Tripura, Mizoram and Chittagong Hill Tracts even to day. So the Chakmas came to Tripura with the hope and motive of living with their ethnic brothers who had earlier settled here. But India Government did not want to accept these refugees in Tripura. So the Chakmas were sent to Arunachal Pradesh. But the Chakmas who came to Tripura had no idea or knowledge about NEFA. But when the Chakmas came to live with their brothers happily in Tripura, due to irony of fate, they were bound to leave Tripura and were sent to NEFA. Another group was sent to Dandakaranya in Bihar.

It is remarkable that after partition in 1947 there was no major exodus of Chakma refugees in Tripura. But in 1986, June

about 1900 tribal refugees entered into Demagri in Mizoram. In 1987 March more than 50 thousand buddhist tribes crossed over to Tripura from Bangladesh because just then the tribes and the Muslims again reached a culminate point. Military operation occured against the tribes. Military forces burnt many tribal houses and villages. They took their properties and shot at men and women. Young women and girls were physically tortured by the military forces. Buddhist monks were tortured and many were killed. Buddhist temples were destroyed. Thus military operation brought in-human massacre to the tribals.

Eventually India Government assumed full responsibility for meeting the expenditures on the refugees in Tripura. The refugees were living at the camps. Bangladesh Govt. wanted to take back the tribal refugees after many discussions. But it could not solve the problem. The refugees were also very eager to go back to their homeland. When the condition was in a favourable position in 1987, again more than 50 thousand Buddhist tribals crossed over into Tripura. This influx of tribals brought the worst situation than 1964, when 52,000 Buddhist tribals migrated in India from their ancestral home land. Now the question of human rights is risen from many countries of the world. Recently the attention of the U.N. has been drawn on the withering away of human rights in Chittagong Hill Tracts.

Thus ended the Buddhistic ruling line of the old Chakmas kinship of Chittagong Hill Tracts. Therefore, the history of the Chakmas in migration in India is a tale of disaster in their life. But, it is irony of fate that historical events and various circumstances compelled them to migrate from one place to another; and again come back to the same place. Actually, partition has ruined their future. They are scattered now and living in Assam, Tripura, Mizoram & Arunachal Pradesh. We eagerly wait for their better future. Somebody are calling them 'out-sideris or 'foreigners' in their own country. It is really irony of fate. Once they were in majority race. Now they are known as minority tribe. Thus, the Chakma Sakya clan were massacred many times from era to era, from past to present.

THE UCHAI PEOPLE AS ONE SEES THEM

SUREN DEBBARMA *

"The sub-continent of India has been likened to a deep net into which various races and people of Asia have drifted and been caught. It is composed of all sorts of different elements of great diversity, of different creeds, different customs and even different colours. All these varied people have been enabled to live together in conditions of comparative stability and forming what may be described as a multiple society linked together by customs having developed as a sort of organic response to the requirements of the particular age." (Hutton-cust in India, 1946,p.1)

Such was the history of the Bodos who migrated into India through Patkoi Hills between India and Burma and gradually spread themselves into the whole of modern Assam, North Bengal, parts of Bangladesh specially Chittagong Hill Tracts and Tripura. The greater Bodo group split into a variety of ethnic nomenclature inhabiting different regions. It is probable that they marched towards different directions and took their ethnic names after the places wherein they settled down. A few instances are the Cacharis, the Cooches, the Garos, the Boros, the Tripuris and

Advent of the Tripuris in Tripura.

It is very difficult to assign the date of penetration of the Tripuris from North Eastern region to Tripura. However, the State chronicle 'Samala' let us know that a part of the greater Boro family entered into Tripura leaving their previous successive dwelling places situated on the bank of river Brahmaputra, Garo Hills, Nowgong and North Cachar Hills in Assam and Sylhet in Bangladesh. At first they made a halt at Dharmanagar, the Assam-Tripura border subdivision and established capital on the bank of river Juri. It

was from Dharmanagar they proceeded to the south-westward and dispersed all over the State. The Tripuris are claimed as being the oldest residents of this State. Hence the name of the State took after the ethnic name of the Tripuris. The Tripuris have therefore claimed to enter the State long before the establishment of Muslim rule in Bengal.

The origin of the Uchai and their old and present habitat.

The origin of the Uchais is not known. It was Lewin who for the first time (1869) made a reference to the Uchais. Mr. Lewin observed: "There are four clans of the Tripura Tribe resident in the Chittagong hill tracts as following: the Pooran, the Nowattea, the Osuie and the Rieng." The Uchai people also admit that in ancient days they were an offshoot of the Tripuris. They also claim that Duapathar, a hilly place in the north-east corner of the Chittagong Hill Tracts was their homeland. But so far their cultural, linguistic and physical traits are concerned the Uchais are closely related to the Tripuris, the Noatias, the Jamatias and the Riengs etc. who fall under the Bodo-group of the Indo-Mongoloids. Both Rev. Endle and the great polymath Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee endorsed this opinion. But it is very interesting to observe that in the olden days the Uchais settled in the Chittagong Hill Tracts not in Tripura. It is probable that the Uchais when they were in the state of semi-momadic jhum cultivators were not allowed to settle down in Tripura due to inter-tribal clash and were forced to move southward to the Chittagong Hill Tracts. But after a lapse of long long years the Uchais again entered the land of Tripura and settled down in the southeastern areas of Tripura alongside with Noatias, Chakmas and the Mogs who also came from Chittagong Hill Tracts. It is said that the Uchais moved towards Tripura from Chittagong Hills following the footsteps of their chief Ramananda by name. This took place in the first quarter of the 19th century at the time of Maharaja Birendra Kishore Manikya (1909-1923). At first they concentrated at 'Charakbai' near Jolaibari of Belonia Sub-division, thereafter they spread to Muhuripur and Ratanpur in search of fertile land for jhum cultivation. In the latter period

they dispersed in different areas of the State. At present the Uchais are found to live at Tirthamukh, Jatanbari, Sangharam para, Santinagar, Rangachhara, Kalachhara, Chellagang and Dasda.

Racial and Linguistic Affinities.

Ethnically, the Uchais are close to Tripuris and other cognate co-tribes such as Riangs, Jamatias etc. The physical appearance is close to Mongoloid. Their round and flat face, square set dark eyes sometimes with epicanthic fold, flat nose, scanty facial hair etc. bear witness of belonging to Mongoloid stock. Linguistically, they belong to Kok-Borok speaking group (Tripuri community). The Kok-Borok is originated from Bodo-language belonging to Tibeto-Burma linguistic Sub-family. Some basic words used by the Uchais have been studied and found identical with Tripuris and Riangs.

English	Tripuri	Uchai	Riang
One	sa	ha	ha
Two	Nwi	Nwi	Nwi
Three	Tham	Than	Than
Four	Bwrwi	Bwrwi	Bwrwi
Five	Ba	Ba	Ba
Sit	Achuk	Achuk	Achuk
Stand	Bacha	Bacha	Bacha
Eat	Cha	Cha	Cha
Cry	Kapa	Kapa	Kapa
Drink	Nwng	Nwng	Nwng
Go	Thang	Thang	Thang
Come	Phaya	Phaya	Phaya
See	Nuk	Nuk	Nuk
Catch/Hold	Rwm	Rwm	Rwm
Play on	Tam	Tam	Tam

The following table of Bodo and allied speeches is given to understand the origin and the relations with other speeches.

Dafas or septs or Gotras

Although the Uchais have become mixed with other peoples due to social contact with different tribes of different places in Tripura and Chittagong Hill Tracts in the hoary past they have retained their distinctive septs or clans. The Uchais are divided into twelve septs. The nomenclature of the septs appears to be associated with both human and objects indicating the remnants of some form of totemism as probably practised in the early days of the Uchais. In spite of different septs they have no caste distinction in their social matters and there is no bar intermarriage and interdining.

The Septs are as follows:

1. Panjit-Katarma 2. Oakchu 3. Jalai 4. Champrai 5. Kaisni 6. Oarem Katar 7. Oarem Kasm 8. Takma Yakcha 9. Paitkrai 10. Charkhi 11. Raiksa 12. Jatna. Some of these groups like champrai, Charkhi, Raiksa and Oarem are common to the Riangs also. Many of the Uchais are of opinion that only 3 to 4 septs are found to live in the State of Tripura. The rest may exist else-where in Chittagong Hills Tracts. The Uchai groups like the Riangs are a consanguineal Kin group based on the rule of patrilineal descent. Their group do not regulate the rules of marriage, ownership and chieftainship. They enjoy wide scope in choosing the partners of marriage. Marriage within or outside a group is not illegal. But marriage within definite blood relations such as siplings or parallel and cross-cousins, is incestuous.

Influence of outsiders : Effect on acculturation.

Coming to the contact with the Bengalees, the Uchais have undergone a great change from the point of society and culture. Thus a good amount of culture fashion among the Uchais is conspicuous in the field of economic and social life. Many of the primitive moorings have been broken off; taboos for plough cultivation have lost their meaning; semi-nomadic way of life has been shaken off. They have now realised that the adoption of plough cultivation can ensure a steady and sufficient supply of food-grains. They no longer fear or believe that sufficient growth of orchard gives

shelter to evil spirit. They are gradually discarding their own superstitions, old practices and started believing in real facts.

Education

The fast changes of social, political and economic condition of the State made the Uchais to feel inclined that without education they will not be able to achieve self-sufficiency in this competitive market. So the Uchais are much attentive to give proper education to their children. Among the Uchais, though very few, educated employees are not rare. Political consciousness has also instilled into their mind and participating in the State Assembly election.

Manners, Social ways and Customs

The Uchais are innocent type of men. They are shy and introvert, but quite cheerful, hospitable and friendly to outsiders. They treat their wives, sons and daughters respectfully. On meeting elderly a young man bows down at the feet of the former.

At present they have adopted many manners and customs of others. The ladies have careful involvement with the household affairs.

Character

The Uchais are amiable, docile, honest and truthful. They are peaceful and void of all violence towards their own people and their neighbours. They are free from arrogance, revenge and cruelty. They are hospitable to their people and never averse to strangers. Due to influence of modern life they have adhered to modern society following which their eminent virtues are getting loose gradually. The adoption of Christianity have brought great change among a section of the Uchais. The Christian Uchais have almost discarded their old customs and habits and instead accepted the Christian way of life. In fact the transition from tribal life to modern age and the impact of industrialisation have left definite imprint on their present character.

Jokes

The Uchais are very much fond of jest and jokes but within a limit. Jokes with wife's younger sister, elder brother's wife, younger brother-in-law, grand-mother, grand-father are allowed. On the other the younger brother's wife must not touch elder brother of her husband. It is a social custom. But it is getting loose day by day.

Agriculture.

Jhum-cultivation is the mainstay of the Uchais. It is slash and burn method of cultivation. During winter a plot of deep forest is selected for cultivation. Formerly they used to observe some rituals for site selection. If the plot was up to their choice they used to drive in a piece of bamboo in the earth with cross sign on the upper end. After selection is made a dream is consulted. If the dream is indicative of auspicious sign then they go ahead with cutting and felling the forest. After jungle cutting, they leave it for about a month to dry. Just before the rains set in, the dry jungle are set on fire. Afterward they clear the burnt forest and then gangs of men and women dig holes in the ground with a stroke of billhook and put a mixture of seeds in the holes and cover them with second stroke. The seeds sprout after the rains. Seeds of paddy, melon, brinjal, cucumber, bean, gourd, ginger, turmeric, pepper, pumpkin, yam, Jute, cotton all these are sowed in the jhum field. Thus, the jhum cultivation supplies all most all the varieties of food articles. Though harvesting of different crops begins at different times, harvesting finally ends in autumn. Then they leave it fallowed for a few years for recuperation of fertility by natural processes.

Economic Activities.

Alike other co-tribal brethren of North-Eastern region, the Uchais are also destined to live in the midst of natural habitat. And naturally the forest plays a great role in building up their economy. They gather food from the jungle they cultivate jhum in the forest. They rear domestic animals, produce crops and collect

raw materials for cottage industry from the forest. Basketry of the Uchais deserves special mention because of its craftsmanship, durability and variety. Basketry is done by man; women do not intrude in this craft. Spinning and weaving are, however, exclusively done by women. They can weave all the essential garments for the family. Though weaving and spinning are of less variety but the basketry is of great variety in respect of designs and sizes. The Uchai houses are studded with baskets and bamboo boxes of different patterns, shapes and sizes. Baskets are used for fishing, winnowing, food collection, cooking and washing, marketing, weighing, rituals and worship. To supplement their daily dish, the Uchais go out hunting to the forest. Usually the Uchais use spear to kill the prey. Bows and arrows are also used to hunt the games. Fish is another popular food of the Uchais. They catch fish in the river and pools in a body. Poultry and husbandry are also more or less common to the Uchais. The hen, pig, goat, cow and buffaloes are reared by them.

Mother earth and agriculture.

Like other ethnic groups the Uchais view the mother earth as human mother. In Bengal it is believed by agriculturists that at the first fall of rain mother earth menstruates in order to prepare herself for fertilising work. This is the primitive belief that led to fertility customs of agriculture. And this belief prompted them to engage women for sowing first. The Uchais call jhum as hook.

Food & Drink.

Food has significant place in Uchai's physical and social existence. Uchais are primarily a food-gatherer. The food of the Uchai consists of boiled rice, vegetable curry, rice, rice beer, fish and the meat of fowl, goat, Beer, buffalo, pig and a number of birds. Various roots, tubers and leaves and kurul (bamboo saplings) are their common food. Dry fish and oily rotten fish (verma) is used in all curries. They hardly use mustard oil and so-called spices used by plain peoples. Country liquor made of boiled rice mixed with a bark of particular trees is used alcoholic drink. It is prepared by

the process of fermentation and distillation. Tobacco is also smoked by all irrespective of age and sex. The main method of preparing meals are boiling, broiling and roasting.

Economic Situation

Like other tribal brethren, the Uchais live on a variety of occupations to eke out its subsistence and combine hunting fishing, honey gathering, shifting cultivation, minor cottage industry etc. As the Uchais possess, like other tribal colleagues marginal culture of economy, nothing important part they have to play in the state economy. In the olden days when plenty of forest was available, the Uchais were self-sufficient. At the time their wants were few and therefore the crops they grew were enough to meet their requirements. But after the economic devastation following the explosion of population following influx of refugees from the erstwhile East Bengal the forest area began to shrink. The shrinkage of the virgin forest has rendered the Uchais to be poor jhumias. However, the economic condition is not so deplorable as they are taking to plough cultivation or scientific method of cultivation keeping pace with plain dwellers.

Marriage and allied customs

There are four forms of marriage prevalent in the Uchai society. They are marriage by elopement (Twewi Kharw), marriage by abduction (Hamjuk Tisaw) marriage by service (Chamari Kaw). When a boy and a girl come to understanding, they elope at a convenient time at night. The matter is however, settled by the guardians of the groom and the bride. The head of the village mediates in the settlement. Negotiated marriage is commonly desired and practised in the Uchai society. Bride-price is paid both in cash and manual labour. Generally Rs. 60/- is paid for the mother's milk she drank. In addition the prospective bride-groom is required to stay with the bride's family as a probationer for a year or two before the solemnisation of marriage. During this probational period, the bridegroom has to attend to all sorts of duties mostly connected with jhuming. The sole purpose of this

probation is to see the efficiency and sincerity of the groom and to observe mental adjustment between the prospective spouses. If they fail to adjust each other and if the bride dislikes him, she puts a charcoal inside the ready dish of cooked food and serves him. If this negative symbol does not alarm him, one day his bed and clothes are thrown out from the room and kept outside. Then he silently leaves the bride's house.

Monogamy-Usual

Among the Uchais, monogamy is the usual form of marital status. Polyandry is not vogue in their society. Polygamy is allowed but rare, levy rate is tabooed; soro rate is permissible. Divorce is very easy to obtain. Either of the spouses can initiate it on each ground as laziness, barrenness, incurable disease and non-adjustment. Childless couples sometimes adopt a child.

Family

The family structure of the Uchais is joint or extended. The joint family comprises father, mother, son, daughter, daughter-in-law, grand children etc. Separation is done by the head of the family according to necessity. Father and mother have absolute authority over their children. Father gives training to his sons regarding subsistence activities. Mother trained her daughters on household duties, weaving and spinning etc. The whole family works together in all domestic affairs. The father looks after and supervises all activities of the family. He takes the lead to all responsible affairs. When the father retires from active participation in the household duties due to age the son takes over the charge. Usually the Uchais live together up to three generations - but nowadays the family bond is getting loose. The joint family are now splitting into a small family unit consisting of only husband, wife and their children.

Inheritance

In a Uchai family only sons inherit the father's property. Daugh-

ters have no right to the property. This practice is in vogue among almost of the tribal society. Widowed mother and unmarried daughters get their maintenance. Girls after marriage go to her husband's house to live in.

Religious notion and cults

Like all primitive tribes the idea of god developed upon the conception of supernatural power. The Uchais feel themselves constantly threatened by imaginary demons, human, witches and invisible spirits who, they apprehend sometimes bring disaster to them thereby causing crop failure, drought, heavy shower, illness and death. They worship memorious gods and deities, each ruling over forest, water, path, jhum field, homestead, village, vine, cotton and rice. Besides animistic religion the Uchais profess Buddhism, Hinduism and also christianity. The Uchais believe in re-birth. They also believe that no one can be reborn as human being unless pious deeds are done in previous life. Some animistic deities worshipped commonly by other tribes colleagues like Tripuris, Riangs, Jamatias, Kolois etc. may be mentioned as Rantak puja (worship of a pitcher a symbol of goddess of crops) Kerpuja (a god of well being), Twima puja (ganga puja) and Naksa Motai (a household god or deity). The Uchais also worship all these deities for their welfare, good crop, good health and prosperity.

Now-a-days due to cultural contact with Hindu people the Uchais observe Laxmi puja, Saraswati Puja, Dol purnima, Rus festival etc. The Buddhist and christian converts observe festivals according to their respective religious dogmas.

Idol worship:

Like Tripuris and Riangs the Uchais have no idols. They worship their deities or gods in an iconic form represented by the pieces of bamboo. This iconic form is called 'Lampra wathop' by all Kok-Borok speaking communities. But lately they have started worshipping idol of Hindu gods under the influence of modern Tripuri and Bengali Hindu culture.

The myths :

The Uchais have some absorbing mythical accounts interwoven with their mental world. In the Uchai Society Subrai (Mahadev) and his consort Motai Katarma (Kali or Durga) are held in high esteem. Subrai is the supreme god who is believed to have created this Universe and all customs and Laws in their society. This notion is in vogue in Tripuri society as well. Hence the name of Subrai is pronounced at the time of uttering mantra in worship. A legend has it that the ancient king Trilochana was actually Subrai. It is therefore very interesting from the point of history as well as legend the same person sometimes appears to be either as supreme deity or ancient king in the history of the State.

Secondly, to the Uchais the rainbow is a great serpent who can never find out its tail and in search of it constantly rotates. But after a futile rapid rotation it gets tired and burst out a loud cry. The roaring of cloud is, to them, the Loud cry of the great serpent.

Thirdly, the 'top' of the Chethuang tree (*Alstonia scholaris*) is believed by them to be broken by a girl who had been chased by her brother for illicit purpose. The girl broke the top of the tree after climbing up to heaven. The brother was sacrificed beneath the tree and later born as chameleon. The illegitimate desire of the brother caused his death. For this reason, they believe, the head of the Chameleon becomes 'red' in rage as soon as it sees anybody.

Folk-Administration of justice

The social life of the Uchai people is well-disciplined. Each Uchai village is a mini-state ruled over by headman assisted by a number of village officials. While they were in the chittagong Hill Tracts, the British Government recognised the village leader as 'headman'. The headman decides disputes, settles problems, gives solace in sorrow, helps in distress. He is the symbol of unity. In theory he is an autocrat but in practice he is their friend, philosopher and guide. Besides the village council, public opinion, criticism, ridicule, condemnation etc. work as informal agency of social control.

Stories about the origin of the Uchais

The origin of the generic name of this smaller ethnic group is not definitely known. The readers may come across some theory behind the emergence of the word Uchai- but all are mere hypothesis. Some are of opinion that the word Uchai originated from the word Ulchhai. Ulchhai was a title given by the Maraju to the group belonging to Uchai Community. It is also said that the word Ulchai is a Tripuri word meaning the late comer. This Ulchai has been transformed in-to Uchai. According to other school of opinion the Uchais are descendants of a section of Tribe named Uchhar. But all these theories have got no historic base.

Material culture and Selection of site for making homestead.

The Uchais follow the customary practice of the Tripuris in the matter of selecting of site for homestead. No ritual is observed for the purpose. The method they apply for the purpose is that a wooden post fastened with an arrow and bow on the top is fixed at one corner of the site. After a few days they start construction work of the house.

House

A house is called Nok (house). All kok-Borok speakers call the house Nok. The average family possesses only one Nok. The house is constructed in such a way that it serves all essential purposes. The house is constructed on a raised platform about 7ft. high supported by stakes and stilts of bamboo and wood. The space of under platform provides for pigs, cattle, Cock, hen and firewood. The houses of the Uchais are rectangular in ground plan. The floor and walls are made of split bamboos. Mostly houses are of two slope roofs. The roof-trellis is made of bamboos of requisite length arranged at intervals and tied between bamboo slivers with qarook (bamboo strips). The roof is covered by chhan (thatching grass). Generally two doors are kept. One climbs up the house by means of yakhli (a notched log of wood). At present well-

to-do Uchais have built modern houses as that of plain dwellers.

Making a fire

They have an indigenous method of making fire. It is by friction. A dry bamboo is sawed with a dao. Then two fresh bamboos are brought. One of them is placed on the ground with sand and kept fixed while the other is taken in hand and rubbed against the former. After a few minutes, the dust is ignited by the heat produced by the rapid friction. The practice is now hardly followed. Because the Uchais are no longer accustomed to adhere to the primitive style of living.

Furniture & Household belongings.

The poor Uchais living on shifting cultivation with semi-nomadic livelihood do not have the so called modern furniture. So no question of bed-sheet crops up in this context. They simply sleep on the floor of bamboo slit. The well-to-do men have modern furniture to sleep, sit and to keep articles.

The household belongings of an Uchai family are few. Their cultivating and weaving implements, baskets, mats, hukka, mortar and pestle, fishing traps, clothes, cooking utensils are mostly of earthenware. However utensils of aluminium and silver are increasingly coming to use.

Dress.

The Uchais are very simple in dress. The infants hardly wear clothes except when it becomes unavoidable in the winter and rainy days. The children put on a loin cloth. The working dress of an adult Uchai consists of a loin cloth and a turban, while at the time outing he puts on a napkin or a dhoti and a kamchili (a shirt). The working dress of an Uchai woman consists of three pieces of cloth. She covers her lower part with a larger piece of cloth (55" x 35") called rignai and risa (breast cover) which usually are fifty six inches long and nine inches broad. They also use pagri (turban) on head while working in the jhum field. They use blouse of their own made.

Personal decoration.

The Uchai woman is not devoid of aesthetic sense. They are fanciful to adorn their physical appearance by way of possessing long black hair, by hair-do, putting flower and ornament on the chignon (kaju). They also use combs and ornaments made of bamboo strips and animal bone or horn. But these are being replaced by metal combs, chudi brass and silver and gold ornaments. The ornaments commonly used by the Uchai women are string of beads and silver coins in the neck; bangle in the wrist, and a variety of ear-ornaments and iron clip in the chignon.

Village Pattern

The village, kami or pam as they call, of the Uchais is of different character and composition from that of Bengali ones. The Uchai village have a number of distinctive features. Their village is generally situated on a flat hill top and by the side of a rivulet. It consists of about fifty households. It is named after the first headman of the village or sometimes it goes by the name of the stream (chhera) or rivulet by the side of which the village stands. The Uchai village is compact and homogeneous. Though there are more than one clan living in a village, the villagers do not differ from one another in appearance, dress, livelihood, food habits, beliefs and customs, training, household belongings and home-stead pattern. Every village is administered by a council of elders.

The changing pattern of the Uchais typical life.

Changes in the material culture have brought about changes in social, political and religious aspects of the Uchais. Marriage by abduction or by the initiative of the girls has disappeared long ago. Marriage by elopment and by service is fast disappearing. The young man is becoming reluctant to serve the bride's family on pre-condition of marital recognition. Instead, he now pays money for bride. In cases where the boy is literate and government employee, the parents of the bride do not question the bride price rather they offer the groom substantial presents. In the past, a boy's skill in basketry and girl's skill in weaving were valued as

the criteria for suitability in marriage. This is no longer deemed an essential qualification. It has also been observed that recently the rate of divorce has appreciably gone down. They are abandoning the practice of erecting houses on raised platforms and are constructing their houses on the model of the plain dwellers. The Uchais no longer select high hill-tops as sites for their villages. They prefer plains and low-level grounds near marshy lands as these facilitate plough cultivation. The size of the villages have been expanded by the Government for administrative purposes. Thus the small Kami has been absorbed by the larger revenue villages of the government.

The administrative responsibility of the village has been shifted from the headman to three state agencies namely, police, statutory Panchayet and Block Development officer. The village is losing its integrity and homogeneity. The headman has lost much of his authority. The young men dare to deny the headman. The condition of the villages where it is divided into Hindus and Christian is complex. Once it also happened to become a Uchai Hindu headmen of the village where majority of the villagers were Christian converts. The converted Christian Uchais have dropped Garaya dances and other festivals. The Uchais have lost his traditional profession and importance.

The Uchais first came in contact with the alien culture of the Moghs and Chakmas, while they were in the hill tracts of chittagong. At this stage, minor changes came in the construction pattern of their dwellings, language, funeral practices, beliefs and customs.

Conclusion.

The Uchais, like other progressive tribes are to-day caught in the vortex of socio-cultural mingling due to contact with different ethnic groups from in and outside the State.

Now-a-days the Uchais are in the habit of using a good number of modern articles and gadgets like Radio, Bicycle and wrist watch etc. The random habit of taking country liquor is falling off gradually. Specially among them who are vaisnabs and Christian converts never touch the wine. Their day-to-day used articles, the

process of cooking, house construction, food habit all are in the process of changing. The very process of changing will help onward the Uchais to thrive and catch up with other advanced tribal brethren.

We accept articles for publications in the TUI Quarterly under the following conditions :

1. The contents of the articles would be dealing with the tribal life and culture of Tripura.
2. The manuscript would be not above 2000 words.
3. The manuscript would be typed in double space on single side of F.C size paper.
4. The intending persons may send their articles stating their names, full address, along with a short bibliographical note of an articles.

The articles should be sent to the undersigned.

Director,
Tribal Research Institute,
Govt. of Tripura,
NEHRU COMPLEX, Agartala.