

Society and Economy in North-East India

Volume 2

Editor
FOZAIL AHMAD QADRI

Thirteenth to Eighteenth centuries constitute a very crucial phase of the history of North East India. Many significant developments took place during this period and, hence deserve the attention of historians to a great degree. Unfortunately, several consequential areas have remained unattended. Most of the studies done so far center around and focus on political and cultural developments. The Department of History, North-Eastern Hill University has always considered the socio-economic context in which various institutions emerged and developed as a *desideratum* of it's thrust area for research activities.

In the present volume, scholars of the region as well as outside it have tried to focus their attention on society and economy for an integrated view of the socio-economic, cultural and political history of the region. Each theme covered by the essays can be developed in full length studies in course of time by the contributors themselves or other scholars, for which the sources and the methods of enquiry and analysis have been indicated by the respective scholars.

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IN NORTH-EAST INDIA

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SOCIETY AND ECONOMY IN NORTH-EAST INDIA

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Editor

Fozail Ahmad Qadri



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Foreword

The period from 13th to 18th century A.D. was crucial in the precolonial phase of the history of North East India due to the emergence of states within the regions and the attempts of the Turko-Afghan and Mughal rulers of Bengal and Delhi to extend sway over the region. The Koch, Jaintia, Dimasa, Tripuri and the Meitei states emerged from the indigenous social base. Most of these included both plains and hills inhabited by different ethnic groups, while the Ahoms established a state in the Brahmaputra Valley by conquest. The origins of the Meitei (Manipuri) and the Tripuri states are dated much earlier than the 13th century, but they bloomed into the statehood in this period. Similar is the case with the Jaintia state. The Dimasas had experienced the rudiments of state formation processes in the Sadiya region of the Brahmaputra Valley, but the state under them was more or less confined to the Dhansiri Valley, with the headquarters at Dimapur, in the 13th-14th century when they came into contacts, and eventually conflicts, with the Ahoms. The Koch state also began to emerge in about 13th century A.D. after the decline of Kamarupa. All these states were monarchies or kingdoms in nature. They generated socio-economic influences for the societies within the states, and the areas outside the states were also directly or indirectly influenced by those factors that caused the rise, consolidation and growth of the states. The chieftaincies — outside the states, also internalized some of these changes. The Khasi *hima* or syiemships were political organizations of their own type; in fact, unique in many respects, but the state formation processes were certainly on-going within the type till the colonial interventions. The Mizo chiefships also showed tendencies towards state formations. The impact was equally clear in cases of the Nagas and the Arunachali tribes in the hills bordering the Brahmaputra

Valley. Some of these non-state polities also could have perhaps eventually emerged as states had the indigenous polity formation processes not been artificially arrested by the British colonial interventions in the beginning of the 19th century.

The society and economy experienced major changes in this period — the Mughal Rule in Bengal and Lower Assam and then the rise of the authority of the English East India Company in Bengal in the 18th century were also important contributing factors, besides the formations of states and polities at the local levels. The Srihattarajya in the Barak-Surma Valley eclipsed in this period; the lower part of the valley passed under the successive rule of the Turgo-Afgans and then Mughals, and finally, the East India Company, with the rest of Bengal, while only the upper portion of the valley, namely, the Cachar plains, formed part of the Tripuri state, Khaspur state and the Dimasa state in rapid succession before the British annexation. These factors generated indirect motivation and specific influences in matters of administrative and institutional changes within the region. The Bhakti-Sufi impact on the society in the plains was significant in many respects; the universal appeal of love and brotherhood associated with the rise of neo-vaishnavite movement of Srimanata Sankaradeva in the Brahmaputra Valley and the Gauriya Vaisnavism of Srichaitanya Mahaprabhu in the Barak-Surma Valley, and the influence of Azan Fakir in Brahmaputra Valley and of Hajarat Shah Jalal in the Barak-Surma Valley, and the works of many other Sufi saints were wonderful factors of humane social development. The long and short distance trade, particularly the hills-plains economic relationship through trade for which strings of markets emerged in the foothills and the borders between political formations, is another important area of historical interest. In fact, trade and trade-routes across the region and with the neighbouring countries had evoked British interest in the region in 18th century, which ultimately resulted in the colonization of North East in the 19th century.

A national seminar organized by the department of History, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, on 'society and economy in North East India during 13th to 18th Century', on March 3-5, 2003, addressed the issues outlined above by involving the in-house scholars of NEHU and selected experts from other institutions and Universities in the country. The seminar was in

continuation of the one held in March 2002 on the same theme for the period ending roughly in 13th century A.D., the proceedings of which have already been published as *Society and Economy in North-East India, Volume 1*, edited by Professor Mignonette Momin and Dr. Cecile A. Mawlong. We are now introducing *Society and Economy in North-East India, Volume 2*, of the same series, and contains revised versions of the selected papers that were presented in the second seminar. Our colleague, Professor F.A. Qadri, who was the convenor of that seminar, has edited the volume with remarkable affection and care. We expect this volume also to be appreciated by a wide circle of readership, like our earlier publications, and to inspire further research in the history of North East India. It is my pleasure to inform that Volume 3 (19th–20th century) of series, which emerges out of our third national seminar on the theme held in March 2004, is also almost ready. We look forward to the responses and comments of the experts on our volumes on *Society and Economy in North-East India*, which is a thrust area for us under the Special Assistance Programme (DRS) of the University Grants Commission.



(J.B. Bhattacharjee)

Coordinator

SAP-DRS (UGC)

Department of History

North-Eastern Hill University

NEHU, Shillong
25th March, 2005

Editors' Note

The vastness and variety of source material for the history of Pre-Colonial Northeast India is by now acknowledged. The Persian chronicles along with *Firman*, *Akhbarat*, etc. for the study of the Sultans of Bengal and the Mughals *vis-à-vis* Northeast India, *Buranjis* for the Ahoms and some other neighbouring groups, *Manipuri Puias*, including *Cheitarol Khumbaba* and *Laitarol Lumbaba* for Manipur, *Rajmala* for Tripura and a variety of epigraphic and numismatic evidences which constitute the chief source of information for constructing the history of the period, there is non-political literature of different type: folk-tales, folk-songs, sufi *Maktubat* (epistles) and *Malfuzat* (collection of conversations) including hagiographies, besides these there are also travel accounts in foreign languages like French, Dutch and Portuguese. There are scores of surviving oral traditions in a variety of language in the length and breadth of the region which are now being used by historians, anthropologists, sociologists and other social scientists. With the changes that have taken place in the historiographical concepts, it has become imperative for a modern historian to tap and utilize as many as varied sources of information for the study as it is possible. In the present volume readers and scholars are going to encounter a fair combination of all these sources of information.

The essays in this volume are the revised version of papers that were presented in a National Seminar held in March 2003 that covered society and economy in the region 13th-18th centuries. It was a part of a series of seminars organized by the Department of History, North-Eastern Hill University under the ongoing UGC-SAP-DRS programme. The present volume is second in the series of publications on Society and Economy in North-East India. In her essay, 'Trends, Possibilities and Problems in

History Writing in North East India: Economy and Society in 13th–18th Centuries', Manorama Sharma has made an attempt to focus on the works which are representative of the historiographic trends. She, however, maintains that most of these works are in imperialistic or nationalistic traditions and stresses the need to examine and write history from people's perspective drawing from other contemporary sources reflective of the socio-economic conditions. Mignonette Momin in her, 'Socio-economic Linkages in the Decline of Pragjyotisha-Kamarupa', ascribes the decline of the state to the lack of political acumen of the individual rulers, expanding agrarian economy with various tribal groups, their political assertion leading to the emergence of new ruling families in the Lauhitya region like the Chutiyas, Bhuiyas and the Koches. She has examined the emergence of these kingdoms and the parallel decline of Kamarupa-Pragjyotisha. J.B. Bhattacharjee in his essay on 'Economic Dimension of Meitei State Formation in Manipur' delves into the theoretical formulations on the role of economy in state formation and situates the factors in the context of state formations in Northeast India contending that surplus generation, extraction and redistribution was a common factor in state formation in almost all cases. He contends that despite the paucity of sources, a careful analysis of the recorded data reveals that the process in Manipur was not different from the pan-Indian model of state formation. J.B. Ganguly's essay, 'Economic Aspects of State Formation Process in Medieval Tripura' highlights the state formation in Tripura under the chiefs belonging to the Tripuri tribe and examines the transition from the primitive communal mode of production to a tribute paying mode, according to the author was as the most crucial in the process.

T. Gurung in her essay, 'Emergence of Ahom Monarchy in Upper Assam' examines the role of the three principal ideological influences i.e. kinship, caste and the neo-vaishnavite ideology in the functioning of the Ahom monarchy and concludes that the neo-vaishnavite ideology finally proved to be the alternative to two other ideologies as the Ahom monarch patronized the Satras as the focal point of social organization. 'Agrarian Dynamics and Technology in the Ahom State' by Sanjeeb Kakoty traces the surplus generation of the Ahom state to their unique technology as found in the study of plough used for cultivation of rice, which is the staple grown principally by the people.

C.L. Imchen in, 'Historical Reconstruction of the Relations Between the Nagas and the Valley Kingdoms' has made an attempt to reconstruct the Naga socio-political systems that developed in tandem with the formation of kingdoms in the neighbouring valley. By using oral and ethnographical data on the basis of a comparative analysis with the tribes of Africa, which he concludes more or less have many resemblances. S.K. Bose in 'Ao Naga and Their Medium of Exchange' examines the status of Naga economy and the medium of exchange prevailing in the Naga economic organization. A.K. Thakur's, 'Aspects of Socio-Political Formations in Pre-Colonial Arunachal Pradesh' examines the role of technology in the evolution of pre-colonial socio-economic and political formations with particular reference to the technology of defense and agricultural technology.

Caroline R. Marak in 'Pre-Colonial Economy and Society of the Garos' outlines the self-sufficient economy of the Garos and their later dependence on outside world and provides glimpses of their social life. Sangkima's 'Economy and Society of Pre-Colonial Mizoram,' is based on British records and the non-conventional alternative folklore materials. He contends that the economy was based on shifting cultivation and the life was migratory. Kamaluddin Ahmed attempts to reconstruct the social and economic life of the area in, 'Society and Economy in Medieval Barak-Surma Valley.' He also highlights the socio-economic forces, production relations and the political super-structure which created distinct nature and levels of social formations resulting in the division of the valley into two social patterns in the upper and the lower valleys. V. Ruata Rengsi has attempted an analysis of the problem of the surplus generation and technology in primitive societies and contends that in the Mizo society the nature of technology and ecology under normal conditions generally afforded a certain amount of surplus food in his essay, 'Surplus Appropriation and Power Structure in Mizo Social Formation.' Sahabuddin Ahmed defines the linguistic status of the area in his, 'Literary and Cultural Traditions of Medieval Barak-Surma Valley' in the context of Northeast and examines how far the literary traditions of the area was influenced by the geographical proximity with Bengal. He also surveys major Sanskrit and Bengali works by the local scholars and highlights the impact of Arabic and Persian traditions noticeable in the local writings.

Imtiaz Ahmad's 'Some Aspects of Economy and Society in Medieval Assam' makes a brief survey of two Persian sources not sufficiently interpreted and fully utilized by historians. He maintains that these sources are not free from bias and indicate some amount of arrogance on the part of the authors but provide invaluable information about which the local sources are silent. S.Z.H. Jafri's 'Agrarian Society and Local Administration in Cooch Behar and Assam During 17th-18th Century' examines the society and economy of the region on the basis of Persian sources. It also examines the management of the Mughal occupied areas in the region through local officials. Jahnabi Gogoi Nath in her essay on, 'Temple Girls of Assam: Their Role in the Society' discusses the kinds of temples in Assam which maintained temple girls and their role in the society. Drawing from a number of epigraphic evidences, the author traces the evolution of the system in Assam in context of social patterns and values in the region. Punyadhar Gogoi in 'Sericulture in Assam: A Historical Perspective' explains the socio-economic conditions of the silk growers, patronage of the Ahom kings and variety of silk worms and social categories engaged in the process of silk-worm rearing.

D.R. Syiemlieh is concerned with the role of markets in polity formations among the Khasi-Jaintia people and the geographical locations of the markets facilitating the control of markets and trade routes which were crucial in the process in his essay, 'Control of Foothills: Khasi-Jaintia Trade And Markets in late 18th Century'. S.N. Pandey's essay, 'Manipur in the Eighteenth Century' explains how the adoption of Vaishnavism was important for the Meitei rulers to get an ideology legitimizing the rule of Garib Nawaz, whose claim to the throne was contested by others. It also explains that the new Meitei society based on principles of caste and hierarchy assimilated and preserved some of the traditional Meitei customs. F.A. Qadri in his essay, 'Sufis and the Process of Islamisation in Pre-Colonial North East India' highlights the role of the Sufis, their philosophy of union, belief in non-violence and rejection of worldly needs in the process of Islamisation in the region. He argues that the immigrant Muslims played a significant social role in Bengal and Assam during pre-Colonial times, as it provided some binding force of authority, stability and assurance to people, who remained for long, 'sheep without a spiritual

shepherd.' Sufi traditions syncretised with local traditions and the Sufis adopted local language as the medium of interaction.

There were many more papers presented in the seminar which are not included in the present volume as we did not receive the revised version within the extended time. Most of the contributors are professional historians. While few are members of the History faculty, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, others are colleagues from other Universities and colleges and two of them are friends from related discipline. I extend my thanks to them for meeting the methodical requirements and submitting the papers within the stipulated deadline. Professor D.R. Syiemlieh, Head of the Department of History, NEHU, took the trouble of maintaining communication with the publishers at every stage of preparation of this volume. I am thankful to him and other members of the editorial board — Professors J.B. Bhattacharjee, Mignonette Momin and Manorama Sharma for their valuable advice in the course of editing this volume. All credit goes to them for the publication and I extend my gratitude to them. Errors in the editing, if any are my making. A special word of thanks to Mr. Abraham Nongbet for excellent typing of the manuscript of this volume.

The financial assistance for the publication of this volume has been provided by the Department of History, NEHU, Shillong, from the funds of UGC-SAP-DRS. I wish to put this debt on record. I am also thankful to Regency Publications, New Delhi, for bringing out this volume so promptly.

F.A. Qadri

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Aspects of Socio-Political Formations in Pre-Colonial Arunachal Pradesh

Amrendra Kumar Thakur

The people of Arunachal Pradesh like all other prehistoric people might have been at a point of time hunters and gatherers moving in bands among whom lineage or clan organization was not developed. In their long struggle against nature developed the clan organization. At this stage, the whole community did hunting and the prey was distributed almost equitably among all the members of the community. The system of leadership might have originated at this juncture to regulate the hunting and gathering activities and proper distribution of the fruits of labour. The insecurity of gains from hunting and food gathering in the rugged hilly terrains compelled the people to take up domestication and breeding of animals. So the animals became the item of property. Initially these were held communally but gradually these became the exclusive possessions of individual families. Therefore, powerful tribes started predation of their territories as an extension of hunting and gathering activities as well as for capturing animals. Such condition can simply be deduced from the brief study of the pre-historic finds from Arunachal Pradesh.

There is an important collection of Stone tools from Arunachal Pradesh, which have been preserved in the Pitt River's Museum, Oxford. J.P. Mills and J.H. Grace collected these during 1933-35. A.H. Dani made the first scientific report of this collection in 1960.

In 1966, T.C. Sharma also studied the collection and pointed out that 10 specimens out of 16 are made on varieties of locally available rocks such as, sand stone, basalt, gneiss, schist and talcose. The rest of the implements are made on jadeite, which is not locally available, and thus these implements, according to him, reached Arunachal Pradesh either from North Burma or China. Technologically, these are chipped and edged ground tools. Some implements of jadeite were initially shaped by sawing technique. Typologically, there are two dominant types in this collection, viz. stone axes with lenticular cross-section and quadrangular type with rectangular cross-section. The minor types are hog-backed type of celt and slender chisels of jadeite. Later also, neoliths have been collected and reported from almost all parts of Arunachal Pradesh. As regards period, nothing could be definitely said. Yet, on typological grounds it could be surmised that the Neolithic stage could have started in Arunachal Pradesh by about 2000 B.C.¹ Here it is important to mention about a solitary megalithic site in Arunachal, at Jamiri in the West Kameng district. The area is inhabited by the Akas. Here, the mention of some important pre-historic artifacts found in Arunachal Pradesh will not be out of context:²

1. In 1870 E.H. Steel noticed a few neoliths made of jade in the villages of the "Namsang Nagas" i.e. Noctes of Tirap district.
2. By the end of the 19th century Capt. Gregory found one curvilinear rounded butt axe from Mishmi Hills.
3. By 1917 Healy of Geological Survey of India collected one curvilinear faceted tool made of streaked and mottled jadeite. Through the actual find spot has not been recorded, typologically it appears to have come from the Sadiya Frontier Zone.
4. About 1925-26 R.D. Banerji noticed an adze in Padam Abar (Adi) Village.
5. In 1933 J.P. Mills found one curvilinear faceted tool and three rounded butt axe from Ningru, north of Noa Dihing river in Tirap district.
6. In 1935 J.H. Crace collected from Sadiya Frontier Zone three faceted tools, three rounded butt axe and two miscellaneous type long implements, one made of gneiss and another of jadeite. The last one found from Ningru, north of Noa Dihing river.

7. In 1937 J.P. Mills found a rounded butt axe from Tigra (Minyong) Abor (Adi) hills.
8. One more curvilinear faceted tool made of dolerite and a rounded butt axe made of gneiss found from Sadiya Frontier Zone have been preserved in Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford.
9. Between 1962–64 N. Sarkar noticed two triangular and two shouldered axes in possession of villagers in Singpho and Aka areas. Apart from these he collected three chisels, ten complete axes and four broken pieces of axes from different parts of Arunachal Pradesh.
10. One polished chisel found from Bokar area in Siang by 1960 was in District Museum, Along. It was later transferred to the Central Museum, Shillong.
11. In 1968 M.C. Goswami of Gauhati University collected three Neolithic Celts from Rupa in Kameng district. (Now in the collection of Anthropology Department, Gauhati University).
12. In 1969–70, in the excavation at Bhishmaknagar, Y.A. Raikar found four neoliths but without stratigraphic context. Three were triangular ground axes and one was a bar type polished broken celt. These are now in the Central Museum, Shillong.
13. In 1969–70 B.P. Bopardikar found, in course of an expedition in Daphabuiti area of Lohit district, the following artifacts: one unifacial and one bifacial choppers from Alubari near Chowkham; a board rectangular flake with one side serrated near Chamba; a few cleavers, ovates and one neolith (chisel) from Kale; a proto-hand axe, a few cores, flakes and points from around Teehum; one ovate, cleaver, scraper, flakes and neoliths (a shouldered and a triangular splayed axes) near Glow; stone age tools including a side scraper near Chakhro; one unifacial chopper and a flake from Tawling near Hayuliang.
14. In 1971 Y.A. Raikar collected chips of semi-precious stones like chalcedony, jasper etc. from Vijaynagar. (This indicates possibility of getting more microliths in the valley of the Dyun, i.e. Noa Dihing river).
15. In 1979 D.K. Duarah reported three Neolithic Celts found from Damin circle of Subansiri District. Two of these are ground axes and one is a working part of an axe.

This is not the complete list of the neolith finds. However, it is representing their extent. They are from all parts of Arunachal

Pradesh. Though these are significant pointer towards the historical study, they are yet to be thoroughly recorded, collected and reported by professional archaeologists of Arunachal Pradesh.

Social Transition

The first great social division took place between pastoral communities and communities living in hunting stage, when privatization of possession began. Cattle, especially the *Mithun* (*bos frontalis*) acquired use value as well as exchange value and become highly prized. The *Mithun* has been the most important semi-domesticated animals and of great socio-economic importance among most of the hill tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The role of cow, yak, pig etc. has also been important in the society. The *Mithun* was important as a medium of exchange measure of value in the society. Being perishable, it was subject to reduction in the value through aging and highly coveted consumable item for ritual feast and ceremonies. The *Mithun*, *Jalong* with other animals could not be a dependable means of surplus accumulation for long. Persons with notable skill; either in maintaining the peace and solidarity of community or animistic rites and rituals became influential and acquired large number of cattle. This section had already started monopolizing its share in the prey by reserving the portions from head and chest. And having large cattle in its hand this influential section mustered labour force from within the clan by providing them with food (whose essential and larger ingredient was the much relished meat of *Mithun*) and local drinks. With this the rudimentary beginning of differentiation and thereby stratification in loose sense may be observed which set forces in motion to effect changes. At the initial stage, there is very little indication of private ownership of land. More than land, pastures provided free access to all. In the earliest society, close kin groups based on lineage were engaged in cattle rearing, agriculture and war.³

Gradually, some changes in the society ushered in due to some signs of change in tenancy rights over arable land. Influential persons of the community began to exercise their influence by pressing their choice upon more suitable plots within the community land weaker section had to be satisfied either with whatever plots were left out to extend their cultivation in no man's

zone. In some cases, either under the pressure of population over the community *jhum* land or in search for more suitable plots, group of families (kinship group) used to migrate to virgin areas from which the beginning of entrepreneurship may be traced. Here it is pertinent to note that the change in tenancy rights was preceded by the change in ownership of cattle wealth. Consequently, the rudimentary beginning of differentiation and thereby stratification in loose sense may be observed which set forces in motion to effect changes. Here occasional voluntary tributes given by clans men and defeated clans along with retaining greater share from communal assets have significantly contributed to the evolution of the agrarian system in Arunachal Pradesh. However, it is interesting to observe that some of the vestiges of olden days are still in practice-taking unanimous decision by the whole community under the influence of village headman and priests, distribution of some items of bride price or presents received during the marriage of the daughter within kinship group, construction of house for village headman or wealthy man by the community service etc.⁴

Slavery

The transition of society from semi-nomadic pastoralism to an agro-pastoral economy necessitated immense use of human labour in cultivation as well as the cattle breeding. The growth of the number of animals necessitated ever growing human labour. Thus, the institution of slavery originated out of the socio-economic and political interests of the dominant groups of society. It is also because the agricultural yield was proportionate to the quantum of human labour put on the fields. Since there was no facility for hiring labour in the society, the only way to procure extra hands was the slave hands and some other un-free/bonded labourers through any means. Subsequently and consequently the slave-owning system not only became part and parcel of most of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh but also received recognition from laws and customs of the society, tribal eschatology and sanction from the conventional religion.⁵ Here it appears that transition from communism to the beginning of private ownership, both of which occurred simultaneously at the revolutionary moment of historical evolution, had much to do with the slave-owning system. Thus,

after communal form slave-owing system appears to be the first mode of production and slave as the basic productive force in Arunachal Pradesh. Here 'mode of production' has not been used in strict sense of the Classical Marxism.⁶ In case of Arunachal Pradesh besides the slave labour, the utilisation of natural resources and community service can also be found. It is important to mention that it was not entirely the mental superiority but also stronger physical might of the owning classes, which made them to enslave the weaker sections.

Owing to the labour-intensive nature of agricultural activities in rugged hilly terrain servitude formed an essential component in the production process for accumulation of surplus in the hands of the slave-masters.

The institutions of slavery in Arunachal Pradesh have also influenced the mechanism of trade. Verrier Elwin has rightly expressed that "The institution of Slavery is largely a business matter, with its investments in human lives, its dividends in human toil. The result of this is that some of the tribes, as I have said, are very keen traders."⁷ It is evident and important to mention that some of the Nishi villages had made the capturing of men and *mithun* their profession before the British penetration in part. It is a common knowledge of scholars dealing with the theme of slavery that the Nishis of Daporijo area have been constantly a rich source of slave supply to the Akas also received slaves from the neighbouring Nishis is also confirmed during my field studies. During the pre-colonial period, the Singphos and the Khamptis raided in Assam frequently and the number of captives carried off amounted to many thousands. Of these the great parts were sold to the hill Singphos, Khampti, Shans, etc.⁸ The continuance of the Pre-colonial practice is also highlighted by a number of visitors of this area during 19th century.⁹ The Government Record even of post-independence period suggests the survival of the Pre-colonial practice of slave trade with Tibet.¹⁰ All were possible because the trade of Arunachal Pradesh had has been continuing with neighbouring countries during pre-colonial days. Besides the inland trade of slaves, the slaves were sold to neighbouring countries, mainly Burma and Tibet. Here it is important to mention that the role of the institution of slavery of Arunachal Pradesh in the pre-colonial trade with neighbouring countries was very important on two counts. Firstly, they were themselves the items of trade and secondly, the slaves served as the load carriers.¹¹

During medieval period surprised raids into the plains of Assam to capture people as slaves were also heard.¹² In fact, the Ahoms were never quite successful in their attempts to reduce the Nishis to complete submission. When king Udayadita Singha (1670–72) wanted to send a force to punish the Nishis for having taken away from the plains a number of men, women and children, his celebrated Prime Minister Atan Buragohain said that it was impossible to capture the Nishis. The Nishis in their inaccessible hill abodes were invincible indeed. The *Buranjis* refer several Ahom expeditions into the Nishi country. The first was directed against the western Nishis in 1614, which ended in a total defeat of the Ahoms. In order to resist the Nishis, king Pratap Singha (1603–41) constructed a fort called Dafala-garh in the Darrang District, which was known as Rajgarh (i.e. royal fortification). He also granted the Nishis right of *posa*, that is the right to receive payments from certain specified villages in the foothills, provided they paid annual tribute to the king. Katakis were appointed for this purpose. A number of *Paiks* were engaged in the duar's or passes to supply the Nishis with the necessaries of life. These *Paiks*, who were actually 'agricultural labourers' working under an officer called Dafalaparia Phukan, came to be known as 'Dafala-bahatias'. This was a privilege enjoyed by the *Nishis* in addition to *Posa*.¹³

The archaeological source of pre-colonial period also informs us about the slavery among the Mishmis. The pillar bears an inscription in the Ahom language, and cannot be earlier than the first quarter of the 15th century, The text of the inscription is as follows:—"I, the Dihingia Bargohain, do engrave on the stone pillar and the copper plates these writings (with the strength of which) the Mishmis are to dwell on the hills near the Dibang river with their females, children, attendants and followers. They will occupy all the hills. They will give four basketfuls of poison and other things as tribute and keep watch on the body of the fat Gohain (Sadia Khowa Gohain), If anybody happens to be in possession of and wishes to remain on all sides (of the hills), he is prohibited from encroachment. If anybody would dwell by the side of the hills, he would surely become a slave" (of the Mishmis).¹⁴

Exactly the practice of slavery in the Singpho and the Khampti societies is not a point of controversy among the scholars of North East India; the problem is with the colonial historiography and its influence over the Indian scholars and is related to the migration of these two tribes to Arunachal Pradesh or Assam. M.L. Bose and

host of others, basing their writings on the colonial records and accounts are of the view that the Khamptis began to migrate to Assam from Khampti-long from north of Burma, somewhere in the 18th century. The Singphos followed them from north Burma much later. During the decay of the Ahom kingdom Singphos crossed the Patkai *circa* 1793, entered into Assam, and capturing Assamese slaves settled down on this side of the Patkai range.¹⁵

The word Khomong is a missing link between two classes of peoples: the slaves and their masters, The Khomong is a Shan word for slave country. Kha = slave, mong or mung = country or place. It was once upon a time a colony of the slaves, said to have been possessed by the Khamtis, if not by the Singphos of the four factions (Bisa, Duffa, Luttora and Latta), that Lt. Neufville had released in 1825. The Khamtis had come by five routes: first, the Namkiu-Lati river-Kamlang or tangapati-Chankham; secondly, the Namkiu-Hpungan-Namdapha-Diyun-Chankam; thirdly, the Namkiu-Chaukan or Chaukan-Khomong-Diyun-Tengapati or Chankham; fourthly, Hukawang valley-Khomong-Diyun-Noa-Dihing to its right bank area; fifthly, Hakawang valley and Chindwin basin-Pangsao-Nampongand Manmao-Lekhapani-Dirak spreading in the bank of the latter and the left bank of the Noa-Dihing much before 18th century. In *Buranjis* names of Thaomung and Thaomunglung Chankham, i.e. Chankham Gohain and Chankham Borgohain respectively and Chankham Ghar Sandikoi, son of latter are found. They were sent against the Chutias during the latter's inroad to Dikowmukh, Namruk and Kheram in A.D. 1522; then against the Tablugia Nagas in A.D. 1536; then against the Kacharies and subsequent revolts of the Chutias etc. The Chankham Borgohain's victory over the Chutias earned him the name Phrascengmung. He was then positioned at Sadiya with three elephants, two horses and 300 men. All the events took place in the reign of Dihingia Raja, A.D. 1497-1539. It is an established fact that Chankham is related to the Khamtis. Had there been no Khamtis at Chankham at that the territory, in the line of Thaomung or Thaomunglung Khamjong or Khamjangia Gohain or Borgohain in charge of territory, Thaomung Khamteng or Khamjangia Gohain in charge of Khamteng, Thaomung Shenba or Mahangia Gohain in charge of Mahang, Thamung Klukhen or Barhatiapungia Gohain in charge of Barhat salt well, Thaomung Saring or Saringia Gohain in charge of Saring and so on, could not

have come into existence. This, therefore were allowed to settle there at Chankham a Gohain or Borgohain and a Ghar Sandikoi were appointed by the Ahom monarch to govern the territory. The Ahom (Shan) Kingdom in Assam existed from 1228 until the end of the 18th century. The Ahom kings continued to recognise their relationship with the principles of other Shan states, notably those of 'Kingdom of Nora' (Mogaung) and it is evident that throughout this period routes from Hkanti long to Assam and from Mogaung to Assam via the Hukawang valley were regularly used. The inhabitants of the northern part of the Kachin Hills Area were thus in closer touch with India and China than they were during the period of British domination. In 1824 the Burmese clashed with the British in Assam. One outcome of the brief war that followed closing of the frontier between Assam and Burma.¹⁶

Serfdom

To begin with the servitude, a central question in the context of feudal relations of production so far as the socio-economic formation of Arunachal Pradesh is concerned, is very important. Within the theory of modes of production, servitude can be analysed in terms of the specific form of the property connection between the labourer and non-labourer elements in a feudal system of production. That is to say property of the condition of labour here are such that while labourer possesses the means of his labour, he himself is part of the condition of production for the non-labourer, in this case the lord, i.e. to be labourer is a part of the landlord's property. This defines the labourer's servitude and a part of his labour (or its production) is appropriated by the feudal lord as rent whatever the specific or appropriation. The lord's right to rent is thus a function of his rights of property in the labourer's person (exclusive of course of his means of labour). That is to say these are rights amounting to the "appropriation of an alien will", i.e. rights extending into the "life process" of the labourer as distinct from the "labour process".¹⁷ The last qualification is what distinguishes servitude from slavery, because in the latter the master's right of property in the slave's person include his means of labour as well as the slave is property less. These rights have their basic in the relation of political domination by the feudal lord over his subjects.

In case of Arunachal Pradesh the aspects of servitude as analysed above is not very well defined and developed; nevertheless, we have the evidence of socio-economic formations on feudal lines. Some traces of this pre colonial institution can still be found in the western part of Arunachal Pradesh.¹⁸ On the lands of the traditional chiefs of Thembang (*Bapus*) about 12 families are cultivating for a long period near villages Lachong and Dass. These families are originally from the near by villages — Jirigaon and others; and are comparatively new settlers on alien land (*Kakpa Chhakpen*). The scarcity of cultivable land in their native areas and increase of their population have forced them to this condition. Earlier the nobles used to collect rent after every three years recently annual collection of rent has been decided by the *Bapus*. Here we do not find the harsh treatment of the cultivators by the *Bapus*. Though the rate of the rent has never been fixed, it is almost certain on the bases of the consultation and personal observation that the rate is very liberal. The collection is in kinds, mainly the produce from the field. The cultivators arrange for good food and lodging of the *Bapus*, when the latter visit the areas for the collection of the rent (*khrei*). In lieu of the service rendered, the *Bapus* generally give some amount of money as a token of gift (*wakpason*) to the cultivators. The grains collected are not only distributed among the rajas but also among their retinue families (*gilas*). This may be an element of some importance in the study of agrarian system of Arunachal Pradesh for the scholars of peasant economics using non-Marxian methods in the agrarian system.

More discernible was the servile status of the *Chhaws* attached to the lands of the lords of Rupa and Shergaon (*Thongs*). The villages where still some traces of the system can be found are Mingmachur, Mukhothing, Chilipam, Diksipam, and a few other small centres. Here it is important to mention that the *Chhaws* were also traditional owners of land but with the passage of time, mainly due to fine imposed by the *Thongs*, the latter grabbed the land and the *Chhaws* were reduced to the servile status. It happened so also because the *Akas* demanded tributes from Rupa and Shergaon areas, sometimes in form of oxen, cows, brass vessels etc. and these were mostly met by the *Thongs* also on behalf of the *Chhaws* of the village. Consequent upon they had no other way than to accept a servile status under their masters. Earlier the *Chhaws* were the main manual labourers supported by the *Boguns* and the inhabitants of

Boot, Khoina, Khoitam and Rahung villages. The *Boguns* (also addressed as *Sulung* by the then *Thongs*) and the villages of Boot, Khoina, Khoitam, and Rahung were mostly working for the *Thongs* on payment. It was in kinds, mainly the goods of daily need- salt, cloth, sweet potato, maize etc. However, no such practice of payment ever existed between the *Thongs* and the *Chhaws*. The *Chhaws* attached to the land used to consume most of the produce from the field and the control of the lords over the land and *Chhaws* is clear from the mild rent collected from the area. In the domain of relationship between the *Thongs* and the *Chhaws* we see, to some extent, the absence of a straightforward theory of exploitation.

In the study of the socio-economic formations of Arunachal Pradesh we find that the nobles of Seppa, mainly the Bangnis/ Nishis of Chayangtajo, Bameng, Khenewa, Pipu, Lada and other areas have a sizeable number of others who served for them. The life condition of this section, the Sulungs now being addressed as the Puroiks, urgently require special attention from all sections of society to improve their lot. The mostly reside away from the villages of their masters. As and when required they be brought by their lords to work for them. Their main means of livelihood happens to be food gathering, hunting and the produce from shifting cultivation. Most of the time they are left uncared by their lords but they have to share with their masters 50% of their produce, have to work as load carriers and are to be engaged in hunting and fishing. In a recently conducted survey by the Government of Arunachal Pradesh the *Puroiks* have been identified, as bonded labourers under various *Nishi* masters and the cases of such labourers are more than 3500. These bonded labourers are expert in traditional jhum cultivation; however, the method of cultivation is on declining trend. With the changing agricultural pattern (gradual shift towards wet rice cultivation, *Essi Rak*) in this part of Arunachal Pradesh another servile class under the *Nishi* masters is developing. This new class is known as the *halua.*, the members are mostly engaged in plough cultivation, and during the lean period, they have to perform domestic works. Most of the members of this class are recruited from the poverty-stricken families of the plains of Assam.

So far as the origin of *Puroiks* as serfs are concerned, *The Report of the Ministerial Committee on the Resettlement of Puroik Families* has rightly explained the process. It states: The *Nishis* somehow

entered their area and made friendship with them and brought them into close contact by persuasion and by offering salt, beads, clothings, daos, local beer etc. Gradually, they made the Sulung work in their agriculture fields and thus, by and by, the Nishis exploited the *Puroiks* and brought them under their full control. Since then, the Sulungs have had a number of obligations to the Nishis and, in fact, were virtual serfs of the Nishis.¹⁹

Another social group under servitude was the group of *Khowas*, called *Buguns*. The *Buguns* for generations had endured a kind of servitude to the *Akas*.²⁰ In this regard, my field studies suggest that the *Buguns* are scattered in small villages, with scanty population and for generations were opposed by their neighbours (the *Akas*, *Mijis* and *Shertukpens*).

In addition to *Posa*, the practice of noble or master's village and some villages under their control is also indicative of the traces of socio-political complexities during the period on feudal line, significant enough to be discussed here. Some of these villages were providing manual labour wherever required as well as paying tax/tributes to the nobles. We also have the evidence of occasional feuds between nobles for the control over villages and cultivable land as well as for the collection of tributes from them.²¹

In the Tawang area the relationship of lord's village, the tax/tribute receiver (*Khrei-Dhekpa*) and that of payer (*Khrei-Beghan*) though based on very liberal rate, totally around 5% annually fixed and collected on the basis of animal wealth and produce from the field, was clearly defined. Some traces of such dominance can still be witnessed. The relationship between Paikhar, Daramkang, Khartoth, and Youbu with Khinmey; Khartoth and Gyankhar with Ngyongmadong and Changbu; Bomba, Bumteg with Lebrang and Daingin are of lord's villages and the villages of taxpayers.

The nobles of Thembang (*Bapus*) had two types of villages under their control. The first category of village is of those villagers, who were the main source of extra labourers and the other was that the taxpayers. the first category *Khoina*, *Khoitam*, *Rahung* and *Boot* (now called as *Jirigaon*) were there. The *Bapus* addressed to the male and female inhabitants of these villages as the *Yokbu* and *Yokmu* respectively. Their services were utilized for agricultural works, carrying of loads, construction or repairing of houses and the wall of the fort surrounding the village Thembang. The villages such as: *Thimbu*, *Nmago*, *Lungkothang*,

Mandalafundung, Nyakmadung, Sangejung, Lis, Chuk, Namsu (before migration of one section of noble at Namsu) in Arunachal Pradesh and Nawamati, Jargoan, Majbat, Udalguri, Chongsa, Dhekiajuli in Assam were the taxpayer villages. It has been reported to me during field studies that sheeps, yak, ghee, and cheese as well as the silver commemorative coins of Tibet (*Betang*) were levied as tax from the villages of Arunachal Pradesh. There was no fixed rate of tax and the food grains were also not collected but the annual tax collection of above-mentioned kinds and *Betang* were annually collected even after 1947. This mode of collection is an indication of the continuance of the system from the pastoral days. It is also an evidence of the mode of resource utilisation. Some of these villages are situated on the very high ridge of the mountains; so unsuitable for cultivation and quite useful for animal breeding. Some of these villages were also commercial centres during pre-colonial days between Tibet and Assam. From the villages in Assam they received *Posa* from individual ryots. From the study of the engraved *Bhoti* scripts of some stone plates fixed with the *maneis* (commemorative and defence wall) it seems that the Thembang rajas were quite successful during the 18th century and before. The year of the construction of one of the *maneis* is written as "*ke naamalo gyelapo mena lo*" (A.D. 1768) and on the other "*naamlo gyelpo sarno langlo lock*" (A.D. 1760). It was reported to me during my field studies that the site of the village is the new one, there are about a dozen *maneis* in the village in very depleted condition, and they urgently require restoration and studies for the reconstruction of the history of Arunachal Pradesh.

The Chiefs of Rupa and Shergaon areas (Thongs) trace their origin from forefather Ashu Japtang who happened to be the king of Boot and Khoina area before defeating the headman of Rupa, Sawangangan; and established their dominance from Boot and Khoina to Rupa and Shergaon in the West Kameng area of Arunachal Pradesh. Their control over Singchung and Kaspri villages remained only the constant source of supplier of manual labour; on the other hand the villages Boot and Khoina were the supplier of manual labour as well as tax prayers. The *Thongs* also claimed their control over Rahung, Khoitam and Jirigaon in Arunachal Pradesh and some other areas in Assam, which were also claimed by the *Bapus* of Thembang. It was the problem in connection with the control over these villages of Arunachal

Pradesh and Assam that developed into constant feud between Thembang and Rupa and once a serious battle between the two, took place in which the military commander of Rupa, Perna Japu was killed.

The *Chhikak* system of Rupa village is also very important to be studied here. Earlier four groups of twenty-five people comprising both the *Thongs* and *Chhaws* used to work for (mainly in agriculture) the real *Thong* ten days in a year. The produce was even utilized by the real *Thong* for his personal gains and for the general welfare of the villages. Nowadays, though there are seven *Thongs* and the system continue, but now the produce is used only for the welfare activities. In the Seppa area too the Bangni masters and nobles had the system to control other villages of the area mostly for manual labour. Some traces of the practice can still be seen in Chyang Tajo, Sameng, Khenewa, Pipu, Lada and other areas. The relationship of lord's village and the controlled villages are to be arranged in the following way: Kaku Kaw and Patha; Miri and Miri Sollung; Sario, Saria, Gompu, Lanchu, Dao and Jomoh, Jokho, Lamio, Beu, (Beu village has mixed population of nobles and general people) Venya; Tawe or Namta, Yangpho and Yakali respectively. The controlled villages had to work for the lord's villages. However, between these villages individual affiliations between nobles and their dependents can also be witnessed. In lieu of the services rendered they were generally provided with food and local drinks (rice beer). Exactly the tax collection was not the part of their relation but the controlled villages had to share their prey as well as their produce with their respective lords.

Almost similar development had taken place in the eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh during pre-colonial period. A Nocte chief was responsible for peace and prosperity of the village and it was his duty to ensure protection or safety of the village against any external threat. For any action, offensive or defensive, the chief was the only and final authority. He was the supreme commander in wars, though he himself did not actually lead any operation. At the higher level of political formation, the paramount chiefs of Namsang and Borduria performed the same functions as their subordinate chiefs in the group of villages under them and the village chiefs in their respective villages.

There has been a system of compulsory labour called *Pokat* by the subordinate villages, which accepted it after subjugation, by a powerful chief. Under the *Pokat* system the villagers of Doidam, Soha, Turet, Makat, Dongrong, Kenon and Longkhong used to perform compulsory labour for the chief of Namsang. In addition to the *Pokat* these villages also paid annual tribute to the chief. Similarly, the chief of Borduria used to enjoy compulsory labour from Lothong village. The subordinate villages also rendered any services or assistance demanded by the respective paramount chiefs. These villages were also required to surrender to the chief all human heads collected by them, the heads of big animals hunted by them and the captives of war.²²

All the Nocte villages have been paying the annual tribute called *khe*, *se*, or *soksa* in kind to their respective overlords (both subordinate and paramount chiefs). According to Parul Dutta, "The probable date (of the system of tribute paying) may be from the time the authority of a chief was acknowledged and accepted by the people. The system continued unchanged to the present day."²³ From the data supplied by him it becomes clear that 14 villages were under the direct control of the paramount chief of Namsang since these paid fixed tributes to that chief only. On the other hand six villages under the subordinate chief of Khela, three villages under the subordinate chief of Laju and one village under the subordinate chief of Dadom paid their annual tributes to their respective chiefs as well as to the paramount chief of Namsang. Laho village paid its fixed amount of annual tribute earmarked for the two subordinate chiefs of Dadom and Laju and also to the paramount chief of Namsang. Similarly, 11 villages paid their fixed respective amounts of annual tributes only to the paramount chief of Borduria while another seven villages paid their tributes both to the subordinate chief of Dadom and the paramount chief of Borduria. In the same way, 11 villages paid their annual tributes only to the paramount chief of Tut or Tutnu. There were also five villages, which paid their earmarked portion of annual tribute to both the paramount chiefs of Namsang and Tut separately. The annual tributes were paid after the harvest of millet or paddy. For payment of tribute almost all the villages used to clear the paths leading to the villages of their respective paramount chiefs. From the preceding discussion, it is evident that the system of paying

tribute to more than one chief was a complex political adjustment having feudal overtone. The system of payment of tribute regularised the relations among the village chiefs, subordinate chiefs of Khela, Laju and Doidam and the paramount chiefs of Namsang, Borduria and Tut depending upon their respective subordination and jurisdiction.²⁴

The above discussion of the Nocte political set-up indicates the crystallisation of the territorial state of the Nocte with its different essential features and structures. It may also be summarised here that the body politic of the Nocte was quite developed when they first interacted with Sukapha and his men, forcing their way in Assam amidst the resistance of the Nocte and others in the early decades of the 13th century.²⁵ The *Buranjis* testify this fact as these inform the advance of the Ahoms during their incursion in Assam. Ultimately the Ahoms become victorious and at least from the time of Supimpha (A.D. 1493–1497) the Noctes were in the habit of paying their annual tribute in kind to the Ahom kings.²⁶ In other words, by the end of the 15th century the Nocte chiefs had become feudatories of the Ahoms. In the reign of king Suhungmung, Dihingia Raja (A.D. 1497–1539) the political ascendancy of the Noctes was given due recognition when a Nocte Chief named Kancheng was included in the topmost advisory body of the Ahom king by creating a new post of Barpatra Gohain for him.²⁷ The *Assam Buranji* gives a different picture for the creation of the post of the Barpatra Gohain, However, "the question of occupancy over the salt wells seems to be the main determinant of this political adjustment. Needless to say that the salt springs and wells of the Noctes were a source of constant friction between them and the Ahoms and one such major clash took place in Mohong (near Namsang)s in A.D. 1536."²⁸

Later on during the reign of Ahom king Susengpha alias Pratap Singha (A.D. 1603–41) a rampart called the Nagagarh was constructed and the estates (*Khats*) were granted to Nagas (Noctes) alongwith *Paiks* to cultivate them²⁹ In return, these chiefs were obliged to pay annual tribute to the Ahom king in the shape of mithun, elephant tusk, goat's hair, cane slips coloured in red, salt and various other articles produced in their areas.³⁰ These estates were called the *Naga Khat* and were managed by the Assamese Agents called the *Naga Katakis* and products of those lands were used to supply the tribes with foodstuffs. The measure of Pratap

Singha seems a definite attempt at extending Ahom suzerainty gradually over the Noctes and Wanchos and thereby ensuring the regular and increased supply of salt

A.D. 1692 the Namsangia Noctes cut 23 persons at the salt mine. The king Gadadhar sent an expedition against them in which many Noctes including their Raja were made captives. According to the *Tungkhungia Buranji* all of them were beheaded and the brother of the Namsangia Nocte Raja, Latha Khunbao was made Raja.³¹ Later on, Latha Khunbao and his men joined the Vaishnava faith between 1699 and 1745 under the influence of Sri Ramdeva, the Vaishnava saint of the Bali Satra in Naharkatia. After his initiation Latha was given the name Narottama and surprisingly enough, we do not hear any raid of the Noctes after that until the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Ahom kingdom had already begun to decline. While reporting in early 1838, Captain Jenkins frankly admitted, "the Naga country about Borhat was comparatively well peopled and their cultivation is rough in many instances close down to the plains with the inhabitants of which the Nagas freely mix", and they were therefore "not the uncivilised beings like their counterparts further to the westward."³²

Evidently, the trading centres in the vicinity of salt mines became the arsenals of socio-cultural contacts between the plains and the hills. Assamese developed as the *lingua franca* among the Noctes and served as the trading language too. Many of the Noctes accepted Assamese manners and accepted initiation by the Assamese Vaishnava saints (*Gohains*). Thus in the interest of regular salt production and trade the Ahom rulers took good care to maintain close relations with the Noctes which was further facilitated by the trade networks. They not infrequently interfered in the internal feuds of the Namsang and Borduria Noctes so that the salt production might not suffer. Purandar Singha, the Ahom monarch asserted his rights over the salt wells very successfully.

Role of Culture and Ideology

In the socio-economic formations of Arunachal Pradesh the role of culture and ideologies has also played an important role. by Redfield that in a relatively stable state formation the notions of authority, legitimacy, jurisdiction, resistance and rebellion must

be seen as incorporated within a unified and apparently consistent system of beliefs representing the dominant social ideology. Normally such ideologies are always to provide legitimacy to existing structures of domination. In large and well-developed kingdoms and empire, this takes on the elaborate cultural form of the state wise religion tying peasant communities, towns and state into a single great tradition.³³ Yet the process of legitimation itself contains within it in myth, rituals, ceremonies, customary practices, cultural institutions, literary and aesthetic ideals and in the garb of such values the signs of feudal dominion coming to terms in relatively stable balance of forces with the world of peasants. This element can be explained with the role and position of the Government of Lhasa in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam.

So far as the structural organization of the government of Lhasa in Arunachal Pradesh is concerned it was a form of state wise religion-tying peasants.³⁴ For administrative convenience, the whole area under Tawang Deo Raja or Deo Abott was divided into *dzongs* (politico-religious centres). Though every *dzongs* was under a *Dzongpen* but the *Galong* (an officer under a *dzongpen*) was mainly responsible for the collection of taxes and tributes and performing religious rituals in the area. The Lamas assisted him, at the village level. There also existed many private estates of the Tibetans in the Tawang area as well as land grants from the monastery land (*Dhasaa*) to individuals for residential and agrarian purposes. The term *zakpa* frequently used for the Tibetans, meaning plunderers, is very important to indicate even the exploitative functions of the feudal set up. The three to four storied buildings of the *dzong* at Gyankhar (near Tawang) and Dirang sometimes served the purpose of the Jail to punish the defiant of the order.

The traditional control of Lhasa was not only confined to the areas of Arunachal Pradesh but also to that of Assam. It has rightly been mentioned. The "Bhutias of the Kuriapara *Duar*, which lies east of Bhutan proper and extends from the Doishan to the Rota river, the dependent upon Tawang Raja, who is himself an official subject to the Government of Lhasa. The Chiefs of this *Duar* called the Sat Rajas used to levy dues from the inhabitants of the adjoining plains."³⁵ The arrangement of *Posa* was also made with the Tawang Raja like some other chiefs of Arunachal Pradesh. It is reported with the subsequent proceedings with these people.... all claims

to the Kooreeah-para *Duar* was resigned by the Booteahs, on condition of their receiving and an annual sum of 5,000 Rupees, in lieu of the demand.³⁶

Trade

The position of traditional chiefs was also quite important in the pre-colonial trade pattern of Arunachal Pradesh. Consequently, the study of socio-economic formations would remain incomplete without the discussion on the trade practices. Apart from collecting tribute from the people of Mago area, the Bapus of Thembang and Namshu had a considerable amount of trade with them. There was almost no cultivation whatever at Mago and the people lived by a reverse trade in salt and to some extent by exchanging the surplus produce of livestock, consisting of herds of yak and sheep for grains, chillis, madder dye and skins of wild game with the Bapus and common people of Thembang Namshu and also with a few Lamai (Mijis) of the Dinam and Pachuk valley. They received every year a considerable quantity of salt from Tibet in exchange for some of the articles they obtain from the Thembang, Namshu and Miji areas. It was clearly stated that Chillies and madder dye, which did not grow in Tibet, were in great demand there and the amount of chillies and madder dye that found its way annually to Tibet via Mago was something colossal.³⁷ As per the arrangement, the tribute paying houses of Mago areas had been grouped and allotted to each of the seven recipients (4 from Thembang and 3 from Namshu). Each house had to pay annually one yak or 13 *tankas* alternatively to the recipient, to whom it had been allotted and in return received 60 *bres* of chillies of 6 *tankas* from the payee. In addition, the whole villages of Thembang and Namshu received tributes annually from the Mago and Lungthang areas. The tribute was paid two years to Thembang and every third year to Namshu. In return, recipients present chillies as follows:

- (a) 400 *bre* chillies for each bull yak
- (b) 320 *bre* of chillies for each cow yak
- (c) 200 *bre* of chillies for each yak under two
- (d) 120 *bre* of chillies for each yak under one
- (e) 80 *bre* of chillies for a bull grown sheep
- (f) 60 *bre* of chillies for a medium grown sheep

- (g) 40 *bre* of chillies for a small grown sheep
- (h) 80 *bre* of chillies for a *tonga* (blanket)

Sometimes instead of chillies, skins are paid at the following rates:

- 1 Sambhar skin for 40 *bre* of chillies
- 1 Barking deer or Sarao skin for 20 *bre* of chillies

Like the relationship between the chiefs of Thembang and Nmshu and the villages of Mago area, the villages of Phudung area (Phudung, Bamrok and Khelong) depended upon the *Thongs* of Rupa and Shergaon. The villagers of the Phudung area used to come to Doimara via Domkho and Senthui during the winter months to exchange chillies and jabarang (a kind of spice for making curry), for paddy, salt and Endi cloth with the *Thongs* and also to carry leads for the latter on payment in kinds in the form of grain and salt. Here it is important to mention that in spite of their village being situated on the main Dirang Dzung-Amaratulla-Udalguri road and although subject to Talung-dzungpens, they hardly go to Amaratalla and Udalguri and depend upon the goods from the *thongs*. The report on tributes also confirms the trade relation among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh related with the payment of tributes. It states, "of course it will be equally necessary to take every step to restore legitimate trade between the tribes, which had now come to stalemate. Owing to stoppage of tribute and I am confident that with the extension of control it would be possible."³⁸

It has also been gathered that the Aka chief used to get tributes from the *Thongs* of Rupa Shergaon areas. Nevertheless, trade also played a significant role in their relation. As per the tradition, the Aka chief Neymachongdi paid a visit to *Thong* village to renew his friendship with Gyaptang (the founder of the Thong chiefdom). The Aka chief grew jealous of him having seen Gyaptang prosper out of the trade he had with the plains. Gyaptang was clever enough to win over the Aka chief by making him a present of full-grown bullock, a large Endi cloth and a sheep and promised to pay this every five years. The Aka chief was pleased and in return, he assured that Akas would cause no trouble while Gyaptang was away in the plains. In return, Gyaptang also received some dried fish, dried venison, potatoes and taroes from the Aka chief Neymachongdi.

It is not universal that all the chiefs who received tributes traded themselves. It was reported during the field studies that Tibetan Government used to grant the monopoly over sale of salt to a contractor (*Dekangpa*) in Tawang. He sold the salt to every villager, most of whom paid in kind. He also enjoyed some privileges in getting free labour from the villages. In addition to the salt monopoly, the contractor had also been empowered alone to trade in rice. No person was allowed to buy rice from anybody unless he had exchanged it with the *Dekangpa* for salt, not was he allowed to eat rice unless he had grown it himself. The violators, if caught, were punished.³⁹ It is also reported that people of the Dirang area were almost entirely dependent on the salt imported from Tsona by the official traders of Tawang monastery and the representatives of the Tsona Dzongpens who visited the villages in this area periodically to collect tribute and exchange salt for grains. Salt was rather expensive as the villagers had to part with 10 *tres* (also known as *bre*) of grain for 1 *tre* of salt. *Tre* was a Tibetan measure weighing about 3 lbs. Some salt was also obtained from Mago. It was also informed that some Mijis also got their salt from Mago exchanging with their paddy, deerskin and musk. The Bhutanese from Tashidzong area used to visit Mago for trade. The Monpas living to the east of Dirang got a considerable amount of paddy, some millet, corn, dyes and deer skins from the Mijis, and in return the latter received Tibetan salt, blanket and some Tibetan necklace. Very few of the Rahung and Kudam villagers came down to the plains for trade, as known from Boot (now known as Jirigaon) and Khoina. Those few who came down took the Doimara route *via* Rupa.

The influence of the pre-colonial political powers in trade continued even during the 20th century. The *Tour Diary of Political Officer, Balipara Frontier Tract* clearly mentions, "They (Dirangdzong) had also lent the use of an excellent commodious house to store the rations. The house is generally used by the Talung dzongpons and their traders on their way to and back from Amratulla.⁴⁰ In addition to facilitating trade the Dzongpens used to be engaged in trade either themselves or through their representatives. However, the trade was done on behalf of the monastery. They brought Tibetan salt, blankets and ornaments, which they exchange for grains. Trade was always in favour of the Dzongpens. All the grains collected whether by way of

monastic tribute or obtained in trade had to be carried free by the villagers.

During pre-colonial period, besides favourable trade, the political powers used to collect taxes from the traders as toll tax too. The matter has been reported in the tour diary. It mentions that "At Amratulla I saw the toll gate of the Dzongpens in which tolls (*Chug*) have to be paid by every trader going down to Udalguri in cash or kind and on return again everyone has to bring paddy from the plains (Assam). I saw some paddy thus collected being husked into rice and a good stock of it ready for despatch to Tawang."⁴¹ The jurisdiction for this toll was the right of passage given to the traders through the route from Tawang to Amratulla, which they claim as theirs. There were also trade blocks at Rupa and Shergaon and they too collected tolls from traders using their route while coming down to Doimara. The Sherdukpen chiefs (*Thongs*) also want to justify this toll saying that they have to bear a good deal of trouble in clearing the paths from Rupa and Shergaon to Doimara every year and people using it must pay something.

Role of Technology

At the outset of the discussion on the role of technology in the formation of pre-colonial socio-political complexities, it is important to mention that we have the evidences of the distortion of facts⁴² as well as neglect in the studies on various tribes of their technologies⁴³ and planned destruction of centuries old archaeological features of defence technology of various tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The British officially planned the destruction because the fortification was regarded as the symbol of resistance to colonialism. Hence for the reconstruction of technological base we have used literary and archaeological evidences, as far as available, either to corroborate each other or to fill up the lacuna; to get a really satisfying complete picture in serving the cause of history. Besides some equally important technologies of the people of Arunachal Pradesh, which are to be seriously inquired separately, such as: building construction, paper making, sericulture, weaving and printing of cloth, indigenous poison, windmills, handlooms and handicrafts etc. we have analysed here the defence and agrarian technology. It is mainly because the two

factors: conquest/defence and irrigation/agriculture are very important in the process of the evolution of socio-political complexities leading to state formation.⁴⁴

The defence technology in Arunachal Pradesh had some sort of advancement during the ages. During the periods of internal feuds the pace of development would not have been much because of almost the same level of technological advancement of both the sides. But, during the period of aggressions of outsiders necessities made the indigenous techniques more effective in respect of defence technology; it was also so because of exposure to the neighbouring world and consequently the response. Here, it is important to mention that Arunachal Pradesh, bounded by Tibet and China in the north, Assam in the south, Myanmar in the east and Bhutan in the west; provides today the best example of a cultural continuity that has survived a long and diversified history in which changes have occurred, old images of life have been altered and new elements and influences have been absorbed and amalgamated, enriching and variegating the cultural strands, without, however, mutilating them; because it lies at the tri-junction of the Indo-Chinese, Indo-Myanmar and the Indian sub-regions.

In the geo-political, socio-cultural and economic arena of Arunachal Pradesh, tribal feuds and other aggressions had been regular phenomena, which had naturally given birth to and made to develop the defence as well as offence technology. The defence technology is evident from the making and placing of stockades, *panjies*, stone booby traps as well as selection of sites for establishing village etc. Here all these have been combined into one term — the fortification technology, because of their combined and effective use for the defence of village against any external surprise attack or planned aggression. The selection of site for establishing a village was an important aspect of the defence technique of most of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The approaches to the villages were often up through tortuous narrow covered ways or lanes, high banks on either sides, sometimes through a steep ravine and bed of an old torrent. The unpublished and the published archival materials as well as diaries, memoirs, reports etc. of the British period are very important source materials for the reconstruction of the defence technology and its role in the evolution of socio-political complexities of pre-colonial Arunachal Pradesh. In the

warfare suitable to this terrain the importance of the native weapon was even seriously felt by the British. The proposal of 1840 elaborates.

I would beg to recommend that Khampti *Dhaos* (hatchet) be purchased for the whole of the sepoys at an estimated expense of 1350 rupees as proposed by Captain Vetch... that the *Dhaos* should always be kept up complete hereafter and be mustered as a part of regular equipment of the Regiment

I would also urge the great advantage, may necessity for adding Khampti *Dhaos* to the equipment of the corps as in the jungle warfare in the Frontier, the men are in a measure helpless without some instrument of the kind, either for cutting into an enemy's stockade, or in erecting one for themselves... and calculate the average price of each at Rupees 2.8 it would require an expenditure of Rupees 1350 to complete the equipment for the whole regiment but as these *Dhaos* are brought from a great distance it would probably be a year or two before enough would be procured if my suggestions are approved.⁴⁵

The control over iron by the Khamptis in their hills and the technology evolved by them for the *Dhaos* and other war weapons and the settled agriculture in the Dihing river valleys⁴⁶ must have positively contributed to the formation and expansion of the pre-colonial complexities of this part of Arunachal Pradesh.⁴⁷ The permanent place of Khampti chief in the "Great Council" of Ahoms is also indicative of the power and privileges enjoyed by them. Even the British continued their privilege after the occupation of Assam⁴⁸ and were proposing to procure the Khampti *Dhaos* for the British soldiers stationed in the area.⁴⁹

Like many uncommon traits among various tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, their defence technology is also different. It has rightly been reported that among the Daflas (Nishis or Nishings) tribes of Arunachal Pradesh there was neither any attempt to fortify their village nor were the village sites selected with a view to facilitate defence.⁵⁰ The Daflas tended to migrate, dispersal was its defence and it was impossible for a raiding force to surround the whole village. Their security lay in their number. Besides, the institution of *gingdung* assured the settlement of their own feuds and strong clan affiliation made possible combination against forces. In addition to the strategic analysis of the Daflas,

their indigenous genius has come to light through our discussion during my field studies.⁵¹ They justify their scattered village establishment techniques to cater to demand against sudden attack of planned aggression. In such a case with just sort of a call for emergency preparedness people from all the houses from every direction could come rushing thereby leaving the attackers in confusion and bewilderment, consequently compelling them to flee for their own self-defence.

In the discussion on the role of technology in the evolution of socio-political complexities the analysis of the remains of the forts/fortress are also important. It is important to mention that after independence much of the energies and resources of the Department of Research, Government of Arunachal Pradesh were channelised in the ethnographic studies of different tribes and the studies of Itafort and the forts of Bishmakhnagar and Rukmininagar.⁵² The remains of forts/fortress of Bhalukpong and Thembang could not catch the attention of earlier scholars practically. Though the forts of Arunachal Pradesh cannot be compared with the Muslim, Maratha or Rajput forts in their structural ideology, the forts of Arunachal Pradesh would have been best suited to the nature of terrain and to the warfare of those days.

Regarding the study of technology of Bhalukpong fort very pathetic scene emerges on account of non-existence of over the ground remains today. It is shocking to see that a road (connecting three districts of Arunachal Pradesh with Assam) passes through the fort complex and its bricks were used for construction purposes. And the entire area was leveled mainly for the construction of the government buildings and also for the private purposes. However, recent archaeological find⁵³ of 248 silver coins of mainly two types (small and big) of Muslim rulers of Bengal encourages us to look afresh on the aspects of the fort. The fort was situated on a hillock about 300 high at the debouch point of the Kameng or Bhareli river. Three sides were surrounded by a brick wall and on the fourth the fortifications carried across to an adjoining hillock that sloped gradually to the plain. Hewn stones remains of plinths within ramparts and a steep pathway paved with stones leading to the eastern face of the hills also existed.

During field studies, I came across the fact that the treasury of the king was in the northwestern side of the complex. A very thick (3 to 4 feet) boundary wall, almost touching the treasury was

constructed over a rivulet (50–60 ft deep) perhaps for the protection of the fort in general and treasury in particular. Alternative source of water was obtained in the fort complex by digging two wells — one in the southeast and the other in the southwest parts of the complex. The whole complex is about three sq. kms. and provides ample scope for archaeological excavations and studies by experts.

An Aka legend initially reported by R.S. Kennedy and confirmed during my field studies is a significant pointer towards the Bhalukpong fort. It mentions "Long-long ago, all men descended from heaven to earth by means of a ladder. The Assamese and Akas of the royal blood came down by a golden ladder, the remaining Akas had a silver ladder; The Tibetans and Monpas were given a ladder of iron; The Daflas and Abors had to be satisfied with the bamboo ladder; Whilst the Cacharis and Khoas shared a plantain ladder. All these men came to earth on the Longkapur Hills in the Lohit Valley, whence they scattered in search of land...The Akas spent so much time in resting and drinking beer that the others got the best land and they had to accept what was left... They first settled near Bhalukpong... built their respective capitals..."⁵⁵ In a slightly different way it has also been reported, "At Bhalukpong in the gorge of the Bhareli...are the ruins of a fort, which is said to have been the capital of Bana's grandson, Bhaluka, for whom the Akas trace their descent."⁵⁶

The fort (*Durğa*) and treasury (*Kosa*), which are the important elements of state as described by Kautilya, are also significant in case of Arunachal Pradesh.⁵⁷ The forts lie along the foothills, connected with rivers and were constructed actually on strategic spots, intelligently fortified for defence purposes. A position of geographic vantage, water supply, sufficient land to support the population inside, secret routes for escape, the expected direction enemy's attack, and communication with Brahmaputra Valley have been the major considerations in building the Bhalukpong fort and others. Similar in most of these features except for its location in the foothills and sufficient land to support the population inside is another important fort in Arunachal Pradesh, which provides great potentials to be discussed in our studies on the technological base to pre-colonial states of Arunachal Pradesh. A brief description of the findings of my field study of this fort, not studied by any scholar so far, is worth mentioning in this regard.

The fort of the village Thembang, under the Dirang Circle of West Kameng District (Bomdila as the headquarters), is yet to be fully connected by pitched road. The Buddhists inhabit Thembang and the villagers have separate identity as 'Thembang Monpa.'⁵⁸ The village was fortified after shifting the village from the plain land to the slope of a hill mainly because of persistent pressure from Rupa, Rurang and Sangti villages of the area. The fortified area about 400 mts east-west and 200 mts north-south of the village surrounded the compact houses of the kings (Bapus) and their dependents (Gilas). In the eastern and western sides of the village, two heavily built gates were constructed of stone pieces of irregular sizes with the provision to close them during night. Though the gates exist, the 8 to 10 feet high boundary wall of the village (as reported by the villagers) is almost non-existent.

The fortification was possible mainly with the manual labour of the villagers of Khoina, Boot (now Jirigaon), Khoitam and Rahung as well as the *Gilas*. Their services were also utilized for seed sowing (*ungyangben*), plantation of tree (*ungashing cheewn*), carrying goods (*rongbanghen*), construction of houses (*phijangben*), and the most important here is construction of fortification wall (*Jangri*), adopting the method of *tchikpen* (putting the stone pieces one above the other) etc. They also had to help the *Bapus* while on attack or being attacked. The villagers of Khoitam beheaded the military commander of Rupa village while he was returning from an attack from Thembang. They sent the head of the commander to their kings (*Bapus*) and body to Rupa (the Shertukpen rajas, *Thongs*). From the incident, the people of Rupa area call the villagers of Khoitam the *songa-sha-benkenba* (divider of human flesh). The forts provided the kings of Thembang (better known as the Thebengia Bhutias in the British Records) upper hand in the area and to some extent also upon their neighbouring counterparts. The Tibetan gun/rifle under the possession of the *Bapus* was another advantage, which the others lacked.⁵⁹ These two elements combined with high agricultural production and a fairly large tax base extending up to modern Assam, significantly contributed not only to the establishment of their authority in the area but also successfully resisted the expansion of the Monastic Order in their areas.⁶⁰

The Monastic Order of Tibet established its initial control in Tawang area of Arunachal Pradesh and for administrative reasons

divided the area into a number of territorial units (Tsozum): (a) the *Pangchen-Ding-Drug* (Whole of Zimithang area), (b) The *Dakpo-tso-gye* (below Zimithang area), (c) The *Shar-ngima-tso-sum* (proper Tawang and nearby area up to Sela Pass), (d) *Drangnang-chu-gye* (below Sela Pass, i.e. present Dirang Circle, Bomdila and (e) *Hrongnang-toe-me* (present Kalaktang Circle, Bomdila). However, even before the establishment of the Order, the social formation had already taken place in this area and the Tawang area was already divided into three territorial units: (a) the area from Tawang to Kipti as *Shar-tso*, (b) the *Lhou rea* as *Lhou-tso* and (c) The *Jung* area as *Sher-tso* (also known as *Jung-tso*).⁶¹ Our field studies provides us clues to suggest that the control over the area provided the initial material base for establishment and subsequent expansion of the Order in Arunachal Pradesh. An important network of communications along with a large bureaucracy provided it with the necessary condition to achieve this. The existence of a common script (the Tibetan /Bhoti) must have helped the process. An attempt at bringing about homogenmiety is reflected at the ideational level in the form of the policy of Lhamaism and construction of the *Gonpas* all over the area of influence. It was sought to be a vehicle of persuasive assimilation, not the military confrontation, in which conforming to the broad ethical ideas of Lhamaism was central. The three to four storied buildings of the *Dzong* at Gyangher (near Tawang) and Dirang sometimes also served the purpose of jails to punish the defiant of the Order.⁶²

For the success of the state, the mining and forging of iron (*Leh Cheme Rong*) near Tawang Monastery for building a bridge, connecting Kitpi and Mukto with Tawang also contributed significantly to better communication for effective control. The Monastery controlled over the iron mines and the same was also utilized fro weapons etc. Subsequently it became the symbol of power and control in the area. Among the weapons spear (*Dung*) and sword (*Podung*) are most common and the gun from Tibet a rare one. Iron remained under the exclusive control of the Monastery and its use in the plough was never promoted.

The tribes of Arunachal Pradesh practiced agriculture and crafts of various descriptions for which they had indigenously developed tools and equipment. The tools and the methods of *Jhum* cultivation (slash and burn) had technology of an incipient type,

whereas the use of plough was an improvement, which was a revolution in agrarian technology and agricultural production. They used knives (daos) and hoes made of bamboo or iron. The use of iron became popular only after the British colonization in the area, except the Khamptis, as principal tools for agricultural operations. Though the dao and the hoe had some variations and differences in shape and size, the basics of these are almost similar among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. Abstaining from any attempt towards parochial glorification of the technological past of Arunachal Pradesh, we are concentrating here on the plough technology. It is important to mention here that like the absence of uniformity in the polity formation and defence technology among the people of Arunachal Pradesh, the plough technology had also not been in practice uniformly. For example, among the Apatanis, Akas and Mijis the plough cultivation is yet to start whereas among the Nishis it is hardly 20 to 25 years old. The ploughs in practice in Arunachal Pradesh is the outcome of exposure to the neighbouring world and consequent response and also of indigenous origin.

In Arunachal Pradesh with its average density of 13 persons per sq. km. it seems worthless to talk of a shortage of land. However, in the agrarian social formations and changes for every practical purpose, the larger part of the area of Arunachal Pradesh has nothing to contribute because of high mountainous zone. These days the scarcity of cultivable land, the exhaustion and erosion of some tracks of land are clearly visible all over. All these have contributed to the change in *Jhum* cultivation, shifting from *jhum* to the wet rice cultivation with the help of animal drawn plough. In the Seppa area, the use of plough in agriculture is hardly 20 to 25 years old and it has nothing to do with the indigenous agrarian technology. Neighboring Assam is the main source of the introduction of plough technology in the area. With this introduction, an agrarian class is developing fast in the area as the *halua* (ploughman). The *haluas* are almost unfree labourers working for their masters who have facilitated their migration from Assam to Arunachal Pradesh on monthly wage or in some cases negotiated with their parents for some years of fixed payments. The plough technology seems to have been the outcome of the contact of the people of Arunachal Pradesh with neighbouring Assam or Tibet and China. However, this is not the case of some parts of the West Kameng and Tawang districts. As claimed by the natives the

plough technology has its indigenous origin and is much older than even the establishment of the Monastic Order in the area. Neither the Monastic State was involved to encourage and support the specialists' technicians nor it provided the necessary materials, especially iron for the same.

The economy of the Nishi and the Aka Masters like that of most other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, largely depended upon their slaves and slavery appears to be one of the reasons why the agrarian technology of the former tribes was never quite advanced in comparison to the neighbouring tribes the Monpas and the Shertukpens. The availability of the slaves largely influenced the changes and innovation in agrarian technology. Out of my field studies, it is observed that at one hand the plough cultivation is yet to start in case of the Akas, on the other the use of plough for wet rice cultivation (*Essi Rak*) is 20–25 years old among the Nishis of Seppa area. More interesting is the fact that use of animal bone as an agrarian tool is still in practice in the Seppa area. Once a *mithun* is sacrificed, the priest (*Nyibu*) gets the right side's thigh and the family as the agricultural implement known as the *Longda* uses the other. Moreover, it is not a fact that the slave labour was the matter of the past. In a survey more than 3500 individuals have been identified as the bonded labours under the Nishis masters of Seppa area recently.⁶³

Forging discussion on the role of technology in the evolution of socio-political and economic complexities in pre-colonial Arunachal Pradesh reinforces the crude truth that the tools and techniques developed and used here were largely the products of indigenous materials and native genius used suitably in the varied ecological niches. That is why each and every tribe under discussion had technological levels of its own and often different from those marveled by others. Hence any attempt at generalization by superficial survey at macro-level by armed-chair historians and outside scholars will be grossly misleading and biased. In case of Arunachal Pradesh neither the role of iron in transforming the agrarian and war technologies seems to bear much significance nor any irrigation technology in the shape of watermill etc. has much bearing. Thus, one may surmise that only an in depth study dealing with cognitive and non-cognitive domain of cultures of various tribes may provide us information about stimulants and barriers behind continuity and change in technical

process leading to material complexities which formed the technological base in the state formation processes.

Conclusion

By a study of agrarian system, role of culture and ideologies, trade practices and the technological influences of the pre-colonial period on various widely practiced models and paradigms, a single economic rationale cannot be formulated as having universal applicability to the socio-political complexities of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. So far studied in space and time; however, a continuous dominance of traditional tribal chiefs can be suggested. The traditional chieftains landowners and later on political and economic elite of the history. The process explains that in the custom determined exchange and gift in the early phases might have been an insignificant proportion of total production in a subsistence economy, but these small amounts has become significant in latter differentiation in the society. It is in this perspective that we see the vestiges of some feudal rites still in practice in socio-economic life of the people of Arunachal Pradesh. As the outcome of the discussion it can also be suggested that with loss of their traditional professions the general people were in fact left with no other alternative. However, what is too easily forgotten is that these tribals were traders and suppliers of grain and other forest produces in remote areas of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Tibet and Burma. The popularisation of trade fairs in Assam, promotion of sale of finished goods from plains into the hills of Arunachal Pradesh, the payment of *Posa* in cash, the exchange of gifts during the fairs, the participation of the British, Bengali and Marwari traders and Nepalese colliers etc. displaced them from trade and contributed towards the drain of wealth from Arunachal Pradesh. Initially the anti-slavery measures by the colonial masters were certainly a blow to the socio-economic and political status of the people of Arunachal Pradesh; because control over slave was also regarded as a symbol of sovereignty. Subsequently, due to the British forest policies, the natives of Arunachal Pradesh no longer remained the sole masters of the forest resources. The misery of the people of Arunachal Pradesh further aggravated due to the changed exchange rate of the Tibetan *tanka*. It is reported, "The Tibetans have raised the exchange value of their *tanka* in terms of

the Indian rupee since last year." Previously the ratio was 8 *tankas* to 1 rupee, but now it is 4 *tankas* to a rupee.⁶⁴ The new situation adversely affected the interest of the people of Arunachal Pradesh in trade and it seems that it completely ruined their already diminishing economic prospects, which heavily depended upon the trans-border trade in the past.⁶⁵ The people of eastern part lost the monopoly over preparation and trade of salt and encroachment of their land for colonial and plantation works adversely affected their socio-economic and political interests.⁶⁶

END NOTES

1. A.A. Ashraf, *Prehistoric Arunachal: A Study on Prehistory and Ethno Archaeology of Kamla Valley*, Itanagar, 1990, pp. 3–5.
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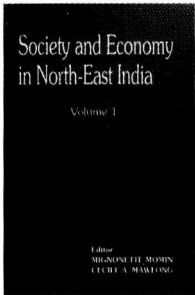
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 18. The subsequent discussions on servitude and tax/tribute relationship etc. are the outcome of my field studies. Hereafter, unnecessary repetitions of notes and references have been avoided. These are an abridged but updated version of my papers "State Formation in Arunachal Pradesh" *NEHU Journal of Social Science and Humanities*, Vol. I, No. 1, 1998, pp. 73–87; "Peasantisation and State Formation in Early Arunachal Pradesh", *PIHC Bangalore Session*, 1997, pp. 303–312; "Social Transition in Pre-colonial Arunachal Pradesh: Servitude as Prime Mover" *PIHC Calicut Session*, 1999, pp. 391–403; and "The Agrarian System of Arunachal Pradesh and Role of Youth: A Probe", op. cit.
 19. The Committee, comprised of 7 members with Sri R.K. Khrimy as the Chairman, submitted its Report to the Government of Arunachal Pradesh on 24 June, 1994.
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 24. For details see, Parul Dutta, *The Noctes*, op. cit., pp. 215–224. Some more information can also be obtained from the articles of Wang-Pha Lowang, "Nocte Chieftainship of Tirap" *NEFA Information*, September 1968; S. Tangdong "Some Admirable Customs of the Nocte Society" *Arunachal News*, Nov. 1980; S. Wangno, "The Chief System in Nocte Society", *Arunachal News*, July, 1981 and B.N. Jha in Uma Dutta (ed.), op. cit. In his article, B.N. Jha objectively analyses the aspect of transition in the Nocte society.
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 28. Kashinath Tamuli Phukan, *Assam Buranji*, p. 20, Harkanta Barua, *Assam Buranji*, p. 25.

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38. *Ibid.*, For some other information see, File No. Tribal 43/44— Administrative Office of the Advisor to the Governor of Assam, Confidential.
39. Field studies and for some other information File No. 1–37, Tribal 'A', Governor's Secretariat 1941.
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41. *Ibid.*
42. S.N. Mishra writes "...the single most important common feature of all the region is their living by shifting agriculture. It did not involve animal drawn-plough and was." solely based of human energy in "Private Property Formations Among the Highland Tribal Communities of North-East India" *Social Science Probings*, IV, 4, 1987, pp. 384–85.
43. For details see, the study made by Ajit K. Danda, *Tribal Ethnography*. ICSSR, New Delhi, 1996. He writes, "Sense of aesthetics, crafts, arts, including fine arts, for which tribal people enjoy a distinction have received practically no mention..." (p. 33) The neglect of the technological aspects of tribal people was also because the main concern of the contemporary writers, administrators as well as anthropologist was the study of existing socio-cultural structure that regulated the daily life of tribals. Unfortunately, the studies of post independence period on various tribes of Arunachal Pradesh are also on the same line and the aspects of technology are not taken into much consideration. The absence of technological aspects in the studies of tribal people is mainly because of the success of the industrial revolution in

Europe and the consequent political hegemony that followed. It brought the Europeans face to face with people who being somewhat archaic in terms of technology had remained tied up with distinct ways of life. To European eyes tribal people were nothing but queer and exotic.

44. For details of these two variables see, J.H. Steward, *Theory of Cultural Change*, Urbana, 1955; Karl A. Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism: A Comparative Study of the Total Power*, New Haven, 1956; H.J.M. Clahssen and Peter Skalnik, *The Early State*, Hague, 1978; J.B. Bhattacharjee, "technology, Social Formation and Historical Inquiry", Presidential Address, History, Archaeology and Cultural Section, Indian Social Science Congress, Bangalore, 1993.; R. Buragohain, "Tai Ahom State Formation: Role of Conquest and Irrigation in the Origin of the Tai Ahom State", *Proceedings of NEIHA*, Aizawl Session, 1984 and A. Guha, "The Ahom Political System: An Inquiry into the State Formation Process in Medieval Assam, 1228-1714", *Social Scientist*, Vol. II, Dec. 1984; R.S. Sharma, *The State and Varna Formations in Mid Ganga Plains*, New Delhi, 1996.
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47. For details of the areas of the possessions, military force maintained by the chiefs, populations etc. see Foreign Dept. Political Branch, K.W. File, 7 Jan. 1833, No. 82. This file is not only important for the pre-colonial chiefs of Arunachal Pradesh but also for most other chiefs of North-East India.
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50. For details of the Dafla defence see, John F. Michell, *Report on The North East Frontier of India*, Calcutta, 1883 (Dafla section); U.G. Bower, *The Hidden Land*, London, 1953, (the fifth chapter); C.F. Haimendorf: *Highlanders of Arunachal Pradesh*, New Delhi, 1982, pp. 30-36 (passim) and A.C. Talukdar, "Political Evolution of Arunachal Pradesh", *PNEIHA*, Pasighat Session, 1987.
51. Some of the approaches of the earlier researchers on Dafla defence have been seriously contested on the basis of my findings of the field studies and other sources in my paper on Rural Technology of Arunachal Pradesh in *Science, Technology and Medicine in Indian History: Essays in Honour of Dr. D.K. Singh*, Vijay Kumar Thakur and K.K. Mandai (eds.), Patna, 2000.
52. For details see, Y.A. Raiker, *Itafort*, Itanagar, 1990 (1976); L.N. Chakravarty, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-121; Y.A. Raiker and S. Chatterjee, *Archaeology in Arunachal Pradesh*, Itanagar, 1980, pp. 24-34 and A.K. Thakur, "Defence Mechanism in Arunachal Pradesh: A Study of Fortification and Forts", 3rd World Archaeological Congress, New Delhi, 1994 (under the theme papers *State City and Society*).
53. The coins were sent to the Director, Department of Research, Government of Arunachal Pradesh, vide letter No. BPG/DEV/B/10/98 dated, 24-8-98. This was unearthed while making a toilet pit for the residential quarters in the fort complex, presently a complex of the GREF.
54. Though good number of Government records provides information regarding the fort, they are mostly in slipshod manner. For some other details of the

- fort see, the relevant parts in B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Vol. V, Darrang*, Allahabad, 1905, B.C. Allen et al., *Gazetteer of Bengal and North East India*, Delhi, 1979 (first reprint).
55. For details see, A.K. Thakur, "Peasantisation and State Formation", "State Formation", Supra no. 16 and R.S. Kennedy, *Ethnological Report on the Akas, Khoas and Mijis and Membas of Tawang*, 1914.
 56. B.C. Allen et al., op. cit, p. 549.
 57. For details see, A.K. Thakur, "State Formation".
 58. The Buddhists of Western Arunachal Pradesh are of the two socio-cultural groups viz. the Shertukpens, and the Monpas (the Thembang — Namsu Monpa, the Dirang Monpa, the Kalaktang Monpa, the Tawang Monpa etc.)
 59. The gun/rifle is preserved in the *Chhorten* of the Thembang Gompa and is not open to any researchers to exactly determine its features.
 60. For details see, A.K. Thakur, "State Formation and "Peasantisation and State Formation".
 61. The book by N. Sarkar, *Tawang Monastery*, Shillong, 1981, though discusses some aspects of the monastic order in the area, is unable to analyse the role of iron, communication network, role of surplus accumulation etc. For a comprehensive picture, see the forthcoming book of A.K. Thakur and B.N. Jha on Pre-colonial States of Arunachal Pradesh.
 62. Here it is worth-mentioning that the Monpas have resented the exaction of tributes and forced labour by the Tibetan Government to the British. The extension of the British rule in the areas of Buddhist influence was smooth unlike the other areas of Arunachal Pradesh because people had in their minds that the British rule would not be so harsh and exploitative in nature as of the Tibetans. For the same reasons the Tibetans are called *Zakpas* in Dirang area meaning the plunderers. For some more details see, Robert Reid, *History of the Frontier Areas bordering on Assam*, Shillong, 1942, pp. 288-89; J.N. Chaudhury, *Arunachal Through the Ages*, Shillong, 1982. For the Tibetan oppression in Sikkim and Bhutan see, J. Ware Edgar, *Report on a Visit to Sikkim and the Tibetan Frontier in October, November and December 1873*, Calcutta, 1874 pp. 23-24.
 63. For details see, the tables and the chapter on the abolition of slavery in A.K. Thakur's book *Slavery in Arunachal Pradesh*, op. cit.
 64. Governor's Secretariat, Assam, Tribal—'A', Nos. 1-41, March 1941.
 65. The discovery of about 250 coins of different sizes and denominations belonging most probably to the rulers of the Shah dynasty of Bengal (official report yet to be published) from a ruined fort complex at B. Alukpong, the gateway of Bomdila and Tawang can also be an important pointer in this regard. Most likely it served as the central place of contact between traders of Bengal and Assam on the one hand and Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet on the other. For details see the Letter No. BPG/DEV/B/98 dated, 24-8-98 from the E.A.C. Bhalukpong to the Director of Research, Itanagar.
 66. Sudatta Sikdar, "Tribalism versus Colonialism: British Capitalist Intervention and the Transformation of Primitive Economy of Arunachal Pradesh in the Nineteenth Century", *Social Scientist*, No. 115, December, 1982; and for other details see, A.K. Thakur, "Social Transition in Pre-Colonial Arunachal Pradesh", op. cit.

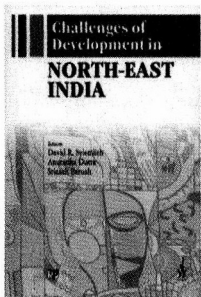


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