

THE MONPAS OF



Kalaktang :

ARUNACHAL PRADESH



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D. K. DUTTA

**THE
MONPAS
OF
KALAKTANG :
ARUNACHAL PRADESH**

Arunachal Pradesh : The land of dawn-lit mountain is the homeland of some 25 tribes belonging to the Indo-Mongoloid racial stock. They have their own culture, customs and languages.

The **Monpas** are one of the Buddhist tribes inhabited the western part of the state. They have a rich culture, literature and tradition. Influence of the religion in every aspects of their life style is remarkable. The three group of Monpas viz., **Tawang, Dirang and Kalaktang** are named after the places of their habitation.

The **Kalaktang** is an administrative H.Q. of the West Kameng district. The Monpas inhabited the area have developed some new cultural traits practically for their adjustment with their neighbours, ecology, environment and topography of the inhabitation.

The monograph is the first scientific study among them prepared through intensive field study and dwelt with all the aspects of the life style in detail and described in five chapters with illustrations and Photographs, so as to get a first hand idea on the people.

The book would be helpful to the local people as well as to the academic and researchers in particular and the readers in general.

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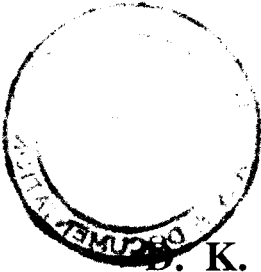
THE AUTHOR

Sri D. K. Dutta (B. 1950) joined in the Directorate of Research in 1978 after completion of the Post-Graduate degree in Anthropology from the Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh, Assam. During his two decades in the service he has conducted research among the Nocte, Wancho, and the Adis and produced numbers of reports and articles which were published in the scientific Journals and books. The present book entitled '**The Monpas of Kalaktang : A. P.**' is his first venture. Presently, he is working as the District Research Officer, West Siang District, Along.

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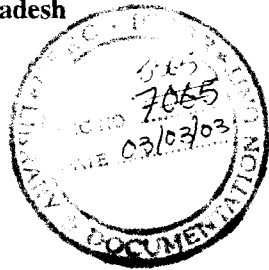
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CHAPTER : ONE

LAND AND PEOPLE

I. THE LAND :

The State Arunachal Pradesh, at the extreme North East of India occupies an area of about 83,743 sq. km. It is bounded on the North by Tibet and China, on the West by Bhutan, on the South by the State of Assam and on the East by Burma and Nagaland. The area falls between 26°28' and 29°30' North latitude and 91°30' and 97°30' East longitude. There are thirteen districts in the State viz.

- | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| 1. Tawang | 6. Upper Subansiri | 11. Lohit |
| 2. West Kameng | 7. West Siang | 12. Changlang |
| 3. East Kameng | 8. East Siang | 13. Tirap |
| 4. Papum-Pare | 9. Upper Siang | |
| 5. Lower Subansiri | 10. Dibang Valley. | |

The State is basically a tribal State. The tribals constitute 63.66 p.c. of the total population of the State. The density of population is only 10 per sq. km. The Monpas are one of the tribal groups namely Khowas (Bugun), Sulugsn, Tagins, Membas, Khamptis, Noctes, Mijis, Sherdukpens, Apatanis, Khambas, Singphos, Wanchos, Akas, Nyishing, Hill Miris, Adis, Tangsa, Mishmis etc. of the State. The Monpas are the inhabitants of Tawang, Dirang and Kalaktang area of the Tawang and the West Kameng district's of Arunachal Pradesh. The altitude of the Tawang area varies from 3400 metres to 2176 meters and it gradually comes down to 1497 metres at Dirang and 1133 metres at Kalaktang area. Alongwith the variation of the altitudes, the climatic conditions of the locations are also found varied. Not only that the Monpas are differentiated mainly on the basis of their dialectical variations, locations and climatic conditions.

The West Kameng District was formed only on 1st June 1980. Till 1980 the district was combined with East Kameng District and called Kameng District. Again, on 6th October, 1984 the West Kameng District was bifurcated and curving out the area of Tawang Sub-division and Tawang District was formed. The West Kameng District is lying approximately between 91°30' to 92°40' East longitudes and 26°54' to 28°01' North latitudes. The district is surrounded by Tawang and East Kameng Districts on the North, Bhutan on the West, Sonitpur District of Assam on the South and East Kameng District on the East.

Kalaktang is one of the Circle Headquarters of West Kameng District. It is connected with the district headquarters Bomdila by a zigzag road. There are several link roads from different villages of the circle to Kalaktang. The whole area consists of cluster of large hills and is clad by evergreen forest in which blue pine and chin pine grow in abundance besides cupressus, sapa, hollock, poma, dhuna, oak, bonsum. Various species of bamboos and cane grow in the forest. Various herbs and shrubs grow in the hills, some of which are edible. Various species of orchids are also found in the area.

The forest of this area is the home of leopards, jungle cats, barking deers, Indian wild boars, deers, monkeys, flying squirrels. Among the birds the hornbill is famous.

"In Kameng District sand and stones and shales of tertiary origin around Bhalukpong, Carbonaceous shales and sand stones with coral seems at Sessa Schists and quartzites around Bomdila upto Dirang and also around Rupa, Sissni and Kalaktang, granites and the along Sela pass and Tawang area have been recorded by the Geological Survey of India."

The climate of the Kameng region comprising the East Kameng and West Kameng districts is influenced by mountainous terrain. The region is as low as Zero metres at the southern border but it rises steeply towards North four to six kilometres or so.

Meteorological data for longer periods are not found for this region. Even then, it reveals that the winter season starts with effect from November and it lasts long till the month of March. The temperature increases to certain degrees from April and

remains upto October. On the other hand, the annual rainfall on the Southern part of the region is higher than the elevated parts of Northern parts.

II. THE PEOPLE

A) HISTORY AND ORIGIN :

The term Monpa means 'Man of the lower country (Mon=lower region, Pa=man). Man of lower region' is a broad term, it includes all the people that are living in the low land. But all communities of the low area do not introduce themselves as Monpa. The term, Monpa includes the inhabitants found on the south of Tibet. Our study is mainly restricted only to the Monpas of Kalaktang area, West Kameng Dist. Arunachal Pradesh. The Monpas of the area re described as TSANGIA by the Monpas of Tawang. SHERCHOKPA by the Bhutanese (Dhar, 1982) and BHUTIS in some history because of similarities of language, customs and religion with Bhutias of Eastern Bhutan. But they identify themselves as HRANGNANGPA. In general, the most common and popular term Monpa is used to indicate the Monpa of West Kameng, Dirang and Tawang area.

They were practically controlled by the Tibetan agents till 1950 or so though the area already came under the administrative jurisdiction of the Govt. of India as the people say. "In 1936 it was discovered that Assam Government was not aware of the Indo-Tibetan Boundary and the administration of the Tawang area was actually being carried on by Tibetan officials who extended, their activities as far as Kalaktang nearly, 150 miles to South of Tawang." It was in 1951 that the area Tawang was brought under regular administration of the Govt. of India.

The villagers of Kalaktang area had to pay monastic tribute in kinds to the present Tawang Monastery through Talung Dzongpons situated at Morshing area. Once they were so oppressed by the monastic officials that most of the villages have dwindled in size. Many people migrated to Bhutan. Now, there is no more compulsory system of paying monastic tribute.

There are two different views prevailing among the Monpas of Kalaktang, regarding their migration that they came down originally from Tibet to present habitat via Tawang and had to

settle in the eastern part of Bhutan to avoid the trouble given by the monastic officials and Tibetan agents from time to time. Another way was chosen via Bhutan. some families of Bhutias accompanied them while migrating from Bhutan. Capt. Kannedy expressed the view that the Monpas of Kalaktang area showed "distinct traces of admixture with, if not actual descent from a primitive eastern Himalayan hill tribe."

Some of the villagers of the following villages Komalangchan, Shamphong and Brakpalangchen claim that their forefathers migrated from eastern Bhutan and got assimilated with the Monpas of this region. Shri R. N. Bagchi in his article 'Socio-culture profile of the Monpas of Kalatang area,' has indicated that Warangpam and Samdrung are two villages of the Bhutias who have settled down there only a few decades ago.

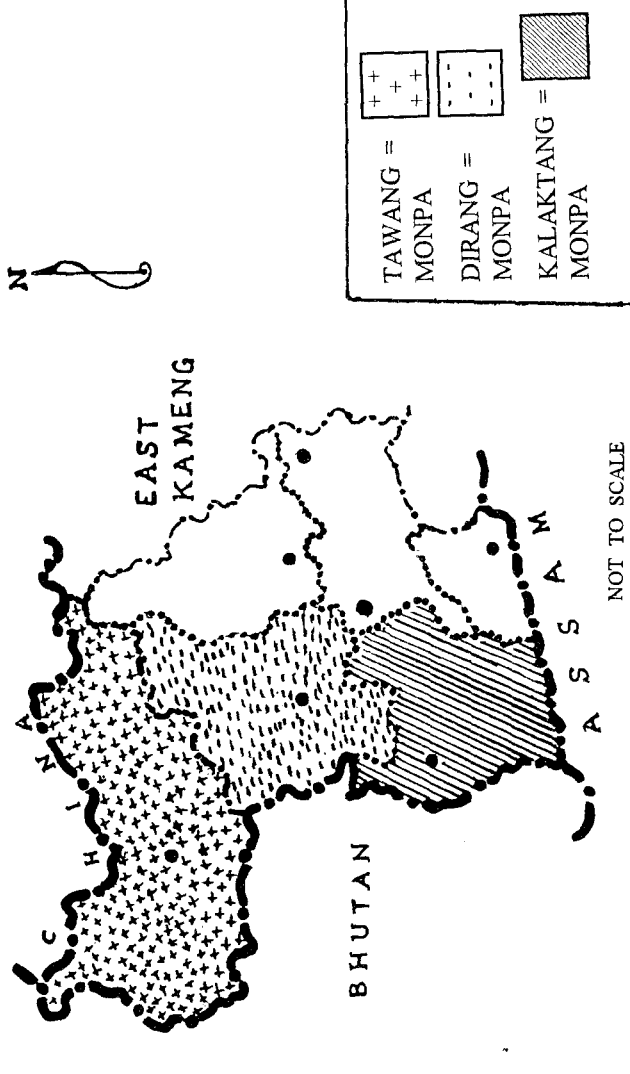
A note on the relationship between the people of Assam and the Monpas of this region is found in the remark in the book British policy in the North-East Frontier Agency by A. L. Bose at P-15 that "..... the father of the Monpas tribe. Rupati of Kameng, had migrated to its present home in the hills from the plains of the Brahmaputra married the daughter of a prince of Kamrup."

It is fact that the Monpas of this region have many Kachari friends in Assam.

B) PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTIC :

The Monpas are in general mesocephalic, hypsicephalic and mesoprosopic head, mesorrhine type of nose and mesoprosopic face. The upper face is of orange type, and below medium in stature. The Kalaktang Monpas are not much deviated from these characteristic. The people are mostly short stature (44.3. p.c.), and mesocephalic type of head, (55.00 p.c.), mesorrhine type of nose (48.13. p.c.) and euryane type of face (5.00 p.c.) Most of the people are with medium built body and average weight of 55.16 ± 48 kg. The people are of fair complexion. (Dr. Duarah, 1990).

Map showing the Distribution of Monpa Community



The statistical constants of the some-metric measurements and indices of the Kalaktang Monpas (Male) are as shown below :-

Measurements	Range in CM	Mean \pm S.E.
Stature	148.5 - 174.0	158.87 \pm .47
Sitting height vertex	75.0 - 94.7	84.86 \pm .31
Head length	17.4 - 20.4	18.73 \pm .05
Head breadth	14.0 - 16.4	15.42 \pm .04
Head height	9.3 - 14.3	11.97 \pm .09
Hor. Circe. of head	52.0 - 61.0	55.66 \pm .12
Min. Frontal breadth	9.5 - 12.3	10.78 \pm .04
Byzygomatic breadth	12.5 - 14.8	13.53 \pm .04
Bigonial breadth	9.2 - 12.5	10.72 \pm .04
Nasal height	4.0 - 5.8	4.78 \pm .03
Nasal breadth	4.0 - 4.5	3.67 \pm .03
Total facial height	10.4 - 12.8	11.64 \pm .05
Upper facial height	5.4 - 7.6	6.41 \pm 0.4
Girth of Thorax	81.0 - 101.0	90.15 + .38
Foot length	20.1 - 26.2	23.44 \pm .09
Foot breadth	8.2 - 11.5	9.96 \pm .05
Weight (in kg.)	42.0 - 69.0	55.16 \pm .48

Indices	Range in CM	Mean S.E.
Cephalic	72.54 - 88.51	79.98 \pm .29
Breadth height	62.99 - 97.26	79.57 \pm .59
Length height	42.43 - 75.66	64.34 \pm .48
Total facial	76.39 - 100.00	86.08 \pm .40
Upper facial	38.89 - 60.40	47.45 \pm .31
Nasal	54.60 - 97.62	75.41 \pm .77

(Source - The Monpas of A.P. Dr. D.K. Duarah 1990. Page 34)

In respect of the genetical traits, mainly in blood group, the Monpas as a whole show the highest frequency of 'A' followed by 'O', 'B' and 'AB' respectively. In case of Kalaktang Monpa, the same trend is observed viz., 'A' 40.98 p.c., 'O' 25.08 p.c., 'B' 19.88 p.c. and 'AB' 14.06 p.c. Dr. Duarah (1990).

C. NEIGHBOUR AND RELATIONSHIP :

The Monpas of Kalaktang area are surrounded by Mijis,

Akas, Sherdukepns, Kacharies and Bhuties. Except Bhuties, the other tribes have more or less trade relationship with the Monpas. As the culture of the Sherdukpens has some similarity with the Monpas, the Sherdukpens become the best neighbour of the Monpas. Not only that there is marital relationship between the Sherdukpens and the Monpas.

The Monpas of Kalaktang area have a good trade relationship with the Kacharis of Assam on their South. They encamp at Udalguri and many other places on way to Kachari area. They carry honey, chillies, vegetables, potatoes, skin, cane etc. and bring back Eri, Cotton and Woollen clothes, Metalic utensils, Implements, Cows etc., They used to stay with the Kacharies for one or two months during the winter season for trading purpose.

Trade is also maintained with the Mijis and Sherdukpens mainly on woollen clothes, Cane and Bamboo articles, Vegetables, Mithuns, Horse and Essential Commodities.

The international boundary line runs through the West side of the Kalaktang area. The Bhuties are living beyond the boundary line. The Monpas had an intimate relationship with them. There was a matrimonial relationship with the Bhuties of Bhutan. Monpa area and Bhutan are presently found to be blocked due to landslide and security purpose. There were some routes from Bhutan to the territory of Kalaktang area.

- 1) RISO-LAM via PHUDUNG village to BHUTAN area.
- 2) LHAGYALA-LAM via MORSHING villlage to BHUTAN area.
- 3) ZANGTHI-LAM via CHINGI village to BHUTAN area.
- 4) KAKPU-LAM via ANKALING village to BHUTAN area. These are the local names given by the Monpas recognised unofficially.

Business and other relations in between these two tribes of Monpas and Bhuties are no longer in existence.

D. LANGUAGE :

The languages have classified the vast number of language in India into four language families or groups namely, the Austric, the Drividian, the Indo-European and the Tibeto-Chinese.

Of the Tibeto-Chinese family of language only Tibeto-Burman subfamily are found in India which include as many as

51 languages that are distributed mainly in the North-Eastern fringers of India.

In the Garrison's survey all the dialects of Arunachal Pradesh have been classified under the North Assam or Assam Burma group of the Tibeto-Burman family of language (Das Gupta 1977). So, the dialect spoken by the Monpas came under the group Tibeto-Burman sub-family.

It is said that the dialects of the areas is found to be influenced of Dirang Monpas in the North, Bhutanese in the West. Sherdukpen in the East and Kacharis in the South side.

Besides the language of their own they speak Hindi, English and Assamese. Assamese the language of the neighbouring state is understood by most of them.

A few words of Kalaktang Monpa have been given below :

Able	:- rei	Clan	:- Tshan
Abolish	:- genkho	Cloth	:- Khaug
Aborigin	:- tsuwa	Cold season	:- ton
Absent	:- ma-tshang-khan	Damage	:- ngan-phei
Afternoon	:- ngam-gongzha	Dao	:- Chowang
Almirah	:- Choi-shyam	Dark	:- lak-sup
Baby	:- nunu	Day	:- ngam
Bamboo	:- shi	Death	:- Shi-Khan
Banana	:- lesi	Empty	:- tongpa
Barber	:- tsham-rek-khan	End	:- Chum
Bead	:- phre-nga	Engage	:- laka-zhot
Beautiful	:- Liekpu	Equipment	:- Zo-Chas
Betel leave	:- pan	Family	:- Za-Tshang
Book	:- pecha	Female	:- nyiza
Chain	:- per-shong	Field	:- shot
Chair	:- kang-thri	Fisherman	:- ngapa
Cheerful	:- gra-na	Girl	:- zamin
Chicken	:- gra-za	Go	:- din

E. POPULATION :

The total workedout population of the Monpas as per 1991 census was 38,862 and in the Kalaktang Administrative Circle, their population is around ten thousand. The number of household and population of some of prominent Monpa villages of Kalaktang area as per 1991 census are given below :-

SL.No.	Name of villages	No. of households.	Total Population
1.	Dengzi	91	394
2.	Boha	69	481
3.	Ankaling	33	180
4.	Painaktang	26	136
5.	Balemu	26	128
6.	Domkho	44	181
7.	Morshing	68	291
8.	Lazala Gompa	1	21
9.	Sanglam	19	80
10.	Kamalanchen	50	202
11.	Samphung	31	127
12.	Kalaktang Villages	44	203
13.	Lungdur	35	183