

The book cover features a white grid pattern on a light-colored background. A large, irregular red shape, resembling a torn piece of paper, is positioned in the upper left quadrant. The title 'PEOPLES OF NORTH EAST INDIA' is printed in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across this red area. The text is arranged in two lines: 'PEOPLES OF' on the top line and 'NORTH EAST INDIA' on the bottom line. The red shape has jagged, torn edges, particularly on the left and bottom sides. The overall design is simple and graphic.

**PEOPLES OF
NORTH EAST INDIA**

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PEOPLES OF NORTH EAST INDIA

Anthropological Perspectives

Editor

SARTHAK SENGUPTA



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The seven sister States of north east region of India is the homeland of large number of castes, tribes and communities who lives in valleys, inaccessible and difficult hills, forests and other terrains; speaks various languages; have different socio-cultural heritages and show variation in physical features. It is indeed deplorable that till date we have very scanty information about the people of north east India. A modest effort has therefore been made through the present treatise to give a first hand systematic anthropological informations on these little known peoples of the region who are living in relative isolation.

The canvas of the present compilation on *Peoples of North East India* is indeed multi-disciplinary and trans-sectoral in nature and combines indepth studies and analysis of distinguished and dedicated team of anthropologists of India.

The volume contain eighteen well researched articles and their thematic analysis which cover an astonishing array of subjects and throw light on some of the important facets of anthropology like ethnic elements, inter-group variability, human growth, bio-social aspects, colourful cultural life, tribal institutions, process of sanskritization, forms of political system, identity dynamics etc., among a small segments of vast and varried types of people of north east India with special emphasis on tribal inhabitants, muslim immigrants and immigrants of tea gardens.

The book being comprehensive and painstaking research based work, would be one of the basic reference books and will be of extremely stimulus and useful to anthropologists, demographers, various social, biological and medical scientists as well as administrators, planners, policy makers and indeed anyone with a concern about the people of north east India.

Rs. 410/

Dr. Sarthak Sengupta (b. 1955) currently teaches Anthropology at the Dibrugarh University. He was awarded Ph.D. degree in Anthropology by Gauhati University in 1983. He also worked with the Anthropological Survey of India and conducted field studies among diverse tribes and castes in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, and Uttar Pradesh. He has to his credit three books on tribes of north east India and about one hundred original research articles published in reputed national and international journals.

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PEOPLES OF NORTH EAST INDIA
Anthropological Perspectives
(Anthropology, Tribal Studies, Demography)

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Dedicated to
the sacred memory of my elder brother
Late Samir Sengupta

Preface

North East India, the erstwhile greater Assam, presently the land of seven sister States is very often called an 'anthropological museum' for her providing shelter to numerous populations of various ethnic affiliation, having different social structure and cultural heritages.

North East India's diversified culture and people has attracted the attention of many anthropologists from different parts of the globe. History of anthropological research in North East India started more than one hundred years back from today. During the formative period a number of studies in the sphere of social anthropology in this region was published by a good number of British Administrators and Civil Servants besides reports of travellers and missionaries with main emphasis to know the indigenous people, especially the tribal ones, primarily for administrative purpose. Physical anthropology was also casually dealt with in those monographs in terms of anthropometric characters to understand racial affinity of the constituent population. However, most of these studies suffer from personal bias and other methodological flaws. After India's Independence, a few scholars from India and abroad had taken up ethnographic as well as morphogenetic studies with dedication, and had done commendable works in broadening the horizon of anthropology of the region.

Despite the early start of anthropological research activities in the North East, till today, however, whatever has been done on the life and style of the people of this easternmost remote corner of the country has not been adequate enough compared to its vast and numerous unexplored areas. Further, it has also been

realized that, anthropological literature on non-tribal population, which is considered to be a major tool for development of the people and the region, is too scanty, sporadic and sketchy to mention its worthiness as a well-planned research. There has, therefore, been the great need of precise documentation of the reliable information on the people of North East India that needs to be obtained through serious scientific studies by the present day anthropologists. The present volume has been compiled with a view to filling in the lacunae through the writings of a distinguished and dedicated team of anthropologists. The work is expected to provide a glimpse of anthropological perspectives of the People of North East India to all concerned. The scholars who have contributed the articles have longstanding field experience with the people of North East India. The articles dealing with rich empirical data reflect a multidisciplinary approach and have covered a wide range of anthropological panorama. They range from biological issues to social concern.

The volume contains a collection of eighteen articles pertaining to some important facets of anthropology like studies on ethnic elements, inter-group variability, human growth, bio-social and medical anthropological aspects, colourful cultural life, tribal institutions, process of Sanskritization, forms of political system, identity dynamics etc. among the vast and varied types of People of North East India. The volume specially covers the tribal inhabitants, muslim and tea-garden immigrants of the region. The volume, however, in no way can claim to have projected a thorough picture of the multifarious people of the region, but a good cross-section of man, society and culture of North East region is here reflected.

My endeavour will be well rewarded if this treatise proves to be informative, useful and thought provoking to the scholars and researchers as well as administrators, planners and policy makers.

Dibrugarh University
Dibrugarh

Sarthak Sengupta

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I owe a deep debt of gratitude to all those scholarly contributors for their academic co-operation, patience and forbearance and in making my effort a reality.

My thanks are also due to my friend Mr. Mohendra N. Dutta who helped me in more than one way. I am also thankful to Mrs. Neelanjana Barua for her long hours spent in typing the manuscript meticulously.

It is impossible to forget my sons-Sushruta and Samrat and my wife Kaveeta, as they have suffered the most during my preoccupations. Without their tolerance and encouragement, this book might not have seen the light of the day. I have no words to thank them, but I thrust this small mention atleast records the depth of gratitude.

Last but not the least, my special thanks to M/s Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi for ensuring a prompt and flawless production of this volume.

Dibrugarh University

Sarthak Sengupta

List of Tables, Figures and Charts

TABLES

- 2.1 Mean values and standard error of anthropometric measurements and indices among the Tai population.
- 2.2 Values of test for comparison in respect of anthropometric traits among the Tai populations.
- 2.3 Percentage frequencies of finger patterns among the Tai populations.
- 2.4 Chi-square values for comparison among the Tai populations in respect of finger pattern types.
- 2.5 Percentage frequencies of Wilder's three main line formulae among the Tai populations.
- 2.6 Chi-square values for comparison among the Tai populations in respect of Wilder's three main line formulae.
- 2.7 Gene frequencies of two loci among the Tai populations.
- 2.8 Gene differentiation at two loci among the Tai populations.
- 2.9 Values of genetic distance.
- 3.1 Statistical constants of height vertex of Assamese boys.
- 3.1a Statistical constants of height vertex of Rajasthani boys.
- 3.2 Statistical constants of sitting height vertex of Assamese boys.
- 3.2a Statistical constants of sitting height vertex of Rajasthani boys.
- 3.3 Statistical constants of lower extremity of Assamese boys.

- 3.3a Statistical constants of lower extremity of Rajasthani boys.
- 3.4 Statistical constants of biacromial diameter of Assamese boys.
- 3.4a Statistical constants of biacromial diameter of Rajasthani boys.
- 3.5 Statistical constants of bicristal diameter of Assamese boys.
- 3.5a Statistical constants of bicristal diameter of Rajasthani boys.
- 3.6 Statistical constants of chest circumference of Assamese boys.
- 3.6a Statistical constants of chest circumference of Rajasthani boys.
- 3.7 Statistical constants of weist girst of Assamese boys.
- 3.7a Statistical constants of weist girth of Rajasthani boys.
- 3.8 Statistical constants of weight of Assamese boys.
- 3.8a Statistical constants of weight of Rajasthani boys.
- 4.1 Fertility record of evermarried Garia Muslim women.
- 4.2 Number of children ever born to mothers of all ages.
- 4.3 Post natal deaths among offsprings.
- 4.4 Sex ratio of offspring.
- 4.5 Parameter used in calculating the index of opportunity for selection.
- 4.6 Parameters used in calculating the rate of contribution to the next generation gene pool.
- 4.7 Indices of selection potential.
- 5.1 Parameter used in calculating the total selection intensity in Sonowal.
- 5.2 Indices of selection intensity : The Sonowal and other population groups of North East India.
- 6.1 Number of menstruating girl at different age groups.
- 6.2 Body height of menstruating and non-menstruating girls.
- 6.3 Body weight of menstruating and non-menstruating girls.

- 6.4 Height-weight index of menstruating and non-menstruating girls.
- 7.1 Distribution of sero-genetic markers in tea garden population of Dibrugarh district, Assam.
- 7.2 Distribution of sickle cell hemoglobinopathy in different tea gardens of Dibrugarh district, Assam.
- 7.3 Distribution of Sickle cell hemoglobinopathy in different tea garden population groups of Dibrugarh district.
- 8.1 Mean and standard deviation of anthropometric characters of the Khasi population.
- 8.2 Mean of anthropometric characters of four Khasi groups in terms of pooled standard deviation unit.
- 8.3 Difference between measurements and derived distance between any two Khasi population.
- 8.4 Values of size distance between any two Khasi populations.
- 8.5 Values of shape distance between any two Khasi populations.
- 8.6 Values of D^2_p between any two Khasi populations arranged in increasing order of magnitude.
- 8.7 Intra and Intra-cluster average D^2_p .
- 8.8 Computational scheme for finding cluster.
- 9.1 Distribution of somatometric measurements among the Muslims of Manipur valley.
- 9.2 Test of significance : Somatometric characters.
- 9.3 Distribution of somatometric indices among the Muslims of Manipur valley.
- 9.4 Test of Significance : Somatometric indices.
- 9.5 Values of T^2 and their respective square roots for final values of overall distance.
- 10.1 Mean age at menarche among various populations of North East India.

FIGURES AND CHARTS

- 2.1 Genetic distance among the Tai populations based on G value of two loci.
 - 3.1 Distance curve : Height vertex.
 - 3.1a Velocity curve : Height vertex.
 - 3.2 Distance curve : Sitting height vertex.
 - 3.2a Velocity curve : Sitting height vertex.
 - 3.3 Distance curve : Lower extremity.
 - 3.3a Velocity curve : Lower extremity.
 - 3.4 Distance curve : Biacromial diameter.
 - 3.4a Velocity curve : Biacromial diameter.
 - 3.5 Distance curve : Bicristal diameter.
 - 3.5a Velocity curve : Bicristal diameter.
 - 3.6 Distance curve : Chest circumference.
 - 3.6a Velocity curve : Chest circumference.
 - 3.7 Velocity curve : Weist girth.
 - 3.7a Distance curve : Weist girth.
 - 3.8 Distance curve : Weight.
 - 3.8a Distance curve : Weight.
 - 3.8 Velocity curve : Weight.
- 7.1 Map showing seven sister states of North Eastern Region of India.
 - 8.1 Clusters and their inter-relationships.
 - 9.1 Migration pattern of Manipur Muslims.
 - 9.2 Diagramatic representation of distance configuration based on morphological distance.
 - 16.1 The Ronkhang Alongri : The Structure.
 - 17.1a Iroquois kinship system.
 - 17.1b Tarao kinship system.
 - 17.2 Tarao kinship system.

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Contents

<i>Preface</i>	(vii)
<i>Acknowledgement</i>	(ix)
<i>List of Tables and Figures</i>	(xi)
<i>List of Contributors</i>	(xv)
1. Ethnic Elements in North East India — <i>B.M. Das</i>	1
2. Intergroup Variability of the Tai People of Assam — <i>T. Shyamacharan Singh</i>	13
3. A Study on Growth Among the Assamese and Rajasthani Boys — <i>A.K. Das</i>	30
4. The Garias of Assam: A Biodemographic Study — <i>P.M. Buzarbarua and S.H.M. Rizvi</i>	62
5. Selection Intensity Among the Sonowals of Assam — <i>Sarthak Sengupta and Mondira Kalita</i>	73
6. Body Build and Menarcheal Age in Rural Assamese Women — <i>Bandana Das</i>	81
7. Biomedical Anthropological Approaches in North Eastern India : A Synthesis of the Tea Garden Population of Assam — <i>R.S. Balgir</i>	91
8. Numerical Taxonomy and Group Divergence of the Khasi Population Groups — <i>Pratap C. Dutta; Dipesh Choudhury and Dipak Kumar Adak</i>	105

9. Biological Distances Among the Three Muslim Populations of Manipur — <i>M.L. Shah</i>	117
10. Menarche and its Trend in North East India — <i>Sarthak Sengupta</i>	129
11. Development of Traditional Democratic Institution in Arunachal Pradesh — <i>P.C. Dutta</i>	140
12. Enforced Change Resulting a Break in Highland Trade : A Study on the Tawang Monpas of Arunachal Pradesh — <i>Bibhash Dhar</i>	151
13. Vaishnavism Among the Noctes : An Ethnographic Study — <i>K.C. Mahanta</i>	156
14. Religious Trends and Identity Crisis : A Cross - Cultural Study Among Three Plain Tribes of Assam — <i>Chandra Jyoti Sonowal</i>	174
15. The Assamese Sikhs : The Samurais of Assam — <i>Birinchi Kumar Medhi</i>	191
16. Traditional Political System : A Case Study of the Karbis of Assam — <i>R.P. Athparia</i>	199
17. The Tarao : A Dwindling Tribe of Manipur — <i>Mutum Bokul Singh</i>	221
18. The Chothes of Manipur : An Appraisal of Socio-Political Tradition and Development — <i>R.K. Kar</i>	240
<i>Index</i>	251

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