

# TRIBAL CULTURE FAITH HISTORY AND LITERATURE

Narayan Singh Rao



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### THE AUTHOR

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Renowned social scientist and Senior Fellow of the Ministry of Culture, Union Government of India, **NARAYAN SINGH RAO**, M.A., M.Phil. and Ph.D. (J.N.U.), was born and brought up in Udaipur, Mewar (Rajasthan). He has great expertise on Economic History of Medieval India and tribal culture and history of North-East India. He started his career from the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi as researcher at the Centre For Historical Studies and Centre for the Study of Regional Development in the School of Social Sciences and got opportunities to work with National Labour Institute, Noida, South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude, Department of Higher Education, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, Mewar Institute of Management, Ghaziabad and a host of academic as well as development organizations. He was awarded Doctoral and Post-Doctoral Fellowships by the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), New Delhi. He successfully executed several major research and action-oriented projects supported by the government and non-government organizations. He organized and attended a number of national and international seminars. A large number of research papers authored by him have been published in reputed national and international journals. Besides this volume his major research work is entitled *Rural Economy and Society*. He is also member of Indian History Congress, North-East India History Association and the Board of Under-graduate Studies, Arunachal University, Itanagar.

The main areas of his interests are socio-economic and cultural history of Medieval Rajasthan and the tribes of North-East India. He is also pursuing further research studies on the history and culture of the North East India as well as the South-East Asian countries.

# **TRIBAL CULTURE, FAITH, HISTORY AND LITERATURE**

**—Tangsas of Arunachal Pradesh**

**NARAYAN SINGH RAO**



**MITTAL PUBLICATIONS**

**NEW DELHI (INDIA)**

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**NARAYAN SINGH RAO**

## PREFACE

---

In 1996-97 I visited several Tangsa and Tutsa villages and found the tradition and socio-cultural life of the Tangsas fascinating. Every Tangsa village's unique way of life and cultural practices no doubt ably attracted me. I participated in several Tangsa festivals and other socio-cultural events availing the opportunities coming my way during this period. In this process I got gradually motivated to further study the Tangsa history and culture. On studying the available (published and unpublished both) literature, authored by several Eupropean scholars, it was easy to notice existing gaps on majority of the communities inhabiting present day Changlang and Tirap districts; and whatever information exists is too little. Consequently, I strongly felt the need to collect detail information on various facets of the Tangsa culture and history. In February 1998 I convened a seminar on "Society, Culture and History of the Tribes of Tirap and Changlang districts of Arunachal Pradesh" About 25 research papers were presented covering different aspects of the central theme of this seminar. The seminar thus helped in collection of plenty of material on the tribes of east Arunachal Pradesh.

Prof.. J. N. Phukan, an eminent historian of north-east (NE) India and special invitee to the seminar, generously suggested me to use the *Ahom Buranjis*. He has been kind to guide me on the use of Ahom Buranjis and other relevant materials for the construction of the socio- economic-cultural and political history of the present Changlang and Tirap districts. During the last three-four years, I devoted myself to understand history of NE India by undergoing a series of orientation programmes. In the same line, mention must be made of Thakur Ram Singh, an eminent scholar and former president of the *Akhil Bharatiya Itihas Sankalan Yojana*, who was generous to suggest me to study the history of south-east (SE) Asia to understand the kshatriya communities of NE India.

The present work has evolved from a research project proposal entitled "Popular Culture, Indigenous Faiths and Oral Historical Literature of the Tangsas" which was conceived in 1998 by me.

Accordingly, a proposal was prepared and later submitted to the Department of Culture, Government of India, for financial support. The Government of India accorded sanction and approval to the proposal in 1999 and the formal working on this project began in October 1999.

Objectives and scope of the present study revolve around the concern to broaden present understanding on sociocultural life of the Tangsas and their history as enshrined in their oral tradition and literature and depicted in the *Ahom Buranjis*, the British records and the modern works too. It covers political history of the Tangsas from earliest times to the present; history of Changlang district; the Tangsa mythological belief on cosmic creation; origin and migration of (other) tribes of Changlang; the Tangsa economy, village society, popular culture & religion, festivals, and pantheon; and the working of various socio-cultural and political institutions. An attempt is also made to present comparative description of the socio-cultural life of tribes of Changlang district and communities living in rest of India and SE Asia as well. Effort is made to give due space to the nature of relationship that existed between the Tangsas, the Ahoms and other tribes of the Brahmaputra valley and the Patkai hills, and the British. However, the central theme of this study is of course various aspects of the Tangsa life, as indicated earlier.

Lower mark of the chronological limits of this study goes to the pre-Ramayana and Mahabharata age when migration of Indian communities started towards SE Asian region through the Patkai passes. The present area of Changlang district was then referred as part and parcel of *Lauhitya Pradesh* (also mentioned as *Sri Lohit* in the Taishan chronicles). However, the Tangsas migrated to Arunachal Pradesh in c. 1200 CE and hence the emphasis is on the period between 1200 CE- 2000 CE. Oral historical literature of the Tangsas, the *Ahom Buranjis* and the British records provide plenty of information of this period for construction of socio- cultural and political history of this region. This period is remarkably significant as it witnessed migration of the Tangsas, the Ahoms, the Singphoes, the Khamtis and a host of other clans and communities from SE Asia to East Arunachal Pradesh. Later on, the British penetrated into the hills and annexed this area consequent upon the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826 CE. Till the end of British Raj, migration of the Tangsas from across the border to India continued and in this process some of them moved up to the plains of Brahmaputra valley and a few even up to the northern India. However majority of them returned to the

Patkai hills and decided to make Changlang their permanent home. The period after independence too is significant in view of the relocation of Tangsa villages. With the accelerated pace of development process, the Tangsas started shifting their villages in the proximity of river banks or plains with earnest desire to improve standard and quality of life. These developments had bearings on socio-cultural life of this community well reflected in the present work.

Changlang district, home of the Tangsas, is the area covered under this study. This district is comprised of twelve circles Changlang, Namtok, Miao, Manmao, Jairampur, Nampong, Kharsang, Bordumsa, Diyun, Yatdam, Khimyong and Vijoynagar. It is located in the southeastern part of Arunachal Pradesh surrounded by plains of Assam in west and Myanmar in east and south. The Patkai hills arching over the district run SW-NE, along Indo-Myanmar international border, have enhanced its geo-political and geostrategic importance. The mountain range has got numerous passes which facilitated migration of the Hindus, the Buddhists and other communities to SE Asia in ancient times. In medieval and later medieval period the Taishans, the Tangsas, the Tutsas, the Signpohoes, the Khamtis and a host of communities used these passes to enter into the Indian territory to make this land their permanent home. Thus Changlang today is home to several tribes and communities who add varying colours and beauty to our culture and heritage.

The present study is based on oral historical literature recorded by conducting survey in Tangsa villages. The collection of required information was made through interview, small workshops, and meetings. To sort out contentious issues and the difference of opinion on relevant matters, community level meetings and group discussions, a traditional way to resolve disputes of every kind, attended by elderly and responsible community leaders and oral literature experts were held. Some handwritten unpublished materials, by Tangsa individuals who maintain their family or clan related documents since the recent past, were also collected. The papers presented during a seminar on the Tangsas at Changlang, organized by the Vivekananda Kendra Institute of Culture (Guwahati), my private collections, tour diaries, materials collected from several Circle Officers and government record offices, etc. have been used generously. The oral information and unpublished materials collected from *Gaon Burrahs* ('village headmen') too have been consulted.

Materials such as songs and details on festivals collected from eminent Tangsa literary figures, priests, *Gaon Burrahs*, etc. have been recorded through audiography, videography and photography in the course of present work. Besides the oral literature, the *Ahom Buranjis* (English versions), the British records, published/unpublished works compiled by the European scholars (during the British period), modern research works, gazetteers, etc. have widely been consulted.

For clearer understanding of the Tangsa culture, society and history, the technical terms and terminology obtained from oral literary sources and records are used on large scale; nevertheless respective English equivalents are provided where possible. A glossary of select terms is placed at the end of this volume.

I hope the present work would broaden the general understanding of popular culture, social structure, religion, philosophy, and history of the migration of various communities, particularly the Tangsas, from SE Asia to Arunachal Pradesh and to some extent even the Brahmaputra valley. The learned readers would find detail description on tribal economy, agricultural festivals, socio-cultural and religious institutions and their functioning, the Tangsa performing art and culture, sacraments (*sanskaras*) and many other aspects of life. I shall consider myself fortunate if this study is able to attract attention of researchers and academics to take up further studies on Arunachal Pradesh. Comments of learned readers are welcome and at the end I must admit that the sole responsibility of presentation of opinions, and conclusions drawn lies with me.

**NARAYAN SINGH RAO**

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# 1

## INTRODUCTION

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Changlang district<sup>1</sup> the abode of Tangsa, the Tutsa, the Singpho and host of other tribal communities, is located in the south-eastern corner (between the latitudes 26°40'N and 27°40'N and the longitudes 95°11'E and 97°10'E) of Arunachal Pradesh. This district shares international boundary with Myanmar (Brahmadesha) in the east. Lohit and Tirap districts of Arunachal Pradesh are located in north and south respectively. To the north-west of Changlang lies plains of Assam.<sup>2</sup> The area corresponding with Changlang district is referred in Puranic and epic literature as part of Lauhitya region, ruled by Raja Bhagdutta of Pragjyotishpur.<sup>3</sup> It is also referred as Sri Lohit,<sup>4</sup> and Mong-kula<sup>5</sup> by Ahom and Taishan chronicles. At present the district comprises of 12 circles viz. Changlang khimiyong, Namtok, Nampong, Manmao, Jairampur, Miao, Kharsang, Vijoynagar, Bordumsa, Diyun<sup>6</sup> and Yatadam.<sup>7</sup> The total population of the district was recorded as 95530 persons (1991) and the total area of the district is stated to be 4662 sq. Km.<sup>8</sup> The district is largely in the Great Patkai Mountain ranges (with the altitude of 200-1800 metres from the msl). The average annual rainfall is above 2000 mm. The minimum and maximum temperature ranges between 8.6° to 31°.<sup>9</sup> The larger parts of this district are rugged and mountainous covered by evergreen thick forest. There is a narrow strip of the plains of Nao Dihing and Burhi Dihing, the tributaries of Brahmaputra river, in the north and eastern part wherein Miao, Jairampur, Nampong, Kharsang and Bordumsa circles are located.<sup>10</sup>

The Patkai hills mainly forms eastern and southern heights of this district. The water sheds of Patkai *Kandemarcates* international boundary between India and Myanmar. Numerous passes and important highways located in these ranges, falling in this district, considerably enhance geo-political and strategic importance of Changlang district.<sup>11</sup> These passes also contributed significantly

towards the promotion of trade and commerce between south-east (SE) Asia and India. The Hindus and Buddhist missionaries too moved eastward via Patkai hills to propagate Indian religion, philosophy and culture in SE Asia and the Far East. Kshatriya Warriors also went to SE Asia to found Hindu kingdoms there later.<sup>12</sup> In medieval period, the Taishans (Ahoms),<sup>13</sup> the Khamti,<sup>14</sup> and the Singphos<sup>15</sup>, invaded plains of Assam. They first crossed Patkai ranges and then advanced into the *Lauhitya* and plains of Assam. Again during the first half of 19th century, Burmese rulers organised a series of military expeditions, which resulted in Anglo-Burmese conflict, and annexation of Assam by the British Government.<sup>16</sup> The Ahoms and the British always tried to keep the patkai hills under their control to take advantage of its strategic and geo-political importance.

The natural resources, scenic beauty, evergreen thick forest cover and the large number of rivers and rivulets cascading from the hills with melodious songs have added to the charms and beauty of this region. Because of the natural bounties and blessings of Lord Lengdon (Indra), the kshatriyas from northern India, the Taishans Ahoms, the Singphos, the Khamti, the Burmese, the Thais and even the Europeans were attracted towards this district. Many warrior tribes and kshatriya clans of SE Asia moved to Changlang *Kans* and proceeded up to Dibrugarh. But they did not like climate and local conditions of the plains; and returned to Patkai hills and made this area as their home. Possibly the presence of Lord Indra and Brahma in the close proximity of this district has added to charm and attractions of this region. The migration of Tangsas to this region with a very attractive and highly developed culture, customs and traditions, art and crafts, and colourful costumes had further enriched the cultural heritage of our great country. The waters of Tirap and Namchik rivers are as pure as the waters of Ganga and Yamuna. Therefore, in the catchment areas of these two rivers Indian culture and tradition with a blend of SE Asian variant of Buddhism and Hinduism flourished and added to the beautiful colours and beauty of our tradition. Normally, the rivers originate from the Patkai hills flowing in east to north-westerly direction or from south-west to north and finally effecting junction with mighty river called 'Lauhitya Sagara' or Brahmaputra flowing in the plains of Assam. These rivers include (i) Nao-Dihing, originating from Patkai ranges in Vijoynagar circle and by following north-westerly direction in the Miao, Kharsang Bordumsa and Diyun and finally joins Lohit river at Namsai, (ii) Burhi- Dihing it flows in the north-western part of Changlang (i.e. Miao and Kharsang circles) and meets Brahmaputra at Borgohaingaon in Assam, and (iii) Tirap which originates in district, somewhere

between Laju and Wakka circles of Tirap district. It enters into Changlang between Panlom and Phungsa, Changra villages, north of Khimyong. Among the Tutsas this river is known as Barap; whereas the Mukloms, the Longchangs and the Juglis call it Tirap. After flowing for about 90 km in Changlang district, the river turns north ward to join Buri-Dihing near Ledo town of Assam. On either sides of Tirap river, several villages have sprang up and concentration of population is greater as compared to other areas. The river has provided plenty of water for irrigation and drinking purposes. The Tangsa cultivators who earlier depended on shifting cultivation, had shifted their villages closer to the river banks. They have also adopted the practice of wet rice cultivation in a big way. Agricultural production has also undergone positive changes. It shows that Tirap river in Changlang has played crucial role in shaping the progress of the local inhabitants at various stages of their history. (iv) Namchik is also an equally important river originating from a place south of Khimyong circle. The river descends from hills to enter Manmao circle between Ranghill and Rangloom villages. On the banks of this river, the Mossang Tangsas have settled down in Manmao area. The melodious sound of cascading springs and fountains, the natural scenic beauty, together with the combination of Muklom, Jugli, Mossang costumes put up by Tangsa girls add to the charm and attraction of Namchik valley. This river enters plains of Assam crossing hills and joins Buri-Dihing in the plains of Miao-Jairampur area. The other tributaries and rivers include Namphuk, Namphai, Namdapha, Namdang, Tisa, etc. These originate from hills in the south and flow towards north to join Buri-Dihing and Nao Dihing at different locations. The rocky river beds with shallow waters make these rivers unfit for navigation. The Tangsas make use of bamboo raft and suspension bridges to facilitate smooth crossing of river from one side to the other. Remarkable hydrographic feature of this district is the availability of shallow lakes caused by shifting of the rivers. These lakes, with fresh water and natural fisheries, are fully exploited by the people; of course for domestic consumption. Number of springs and streams draining down the hills ensure adequate supply of fresh drinking water to the people. Multitude of rivers of different order have great potentials to generate hydroelectricity. If proper hydrographic survey is conducted and need based micro power plants are setup along the major river waters, this area would no longer depend upon the neighbouring states for power supply.<sup>17</sup>

Another significant hydrographic feature of the area is the availability of innumerable brine springs and salt-wells along the

banks of Tirap, Namphuk, and other major streams. In olden times the Noctes, the Tangsas and the Tutsas used to manufacture salt by processing salty water procured from these wells. The manufacturing and marketing of such salt, black in colour, was an important economic activity in the Tangsa and the Tutsa dominated areas.<sup>18</sup> That salt was sold in plains of Assam and in Myanmar. It was one of the most precious commodity in medieval ages.

The Ahom rulers tried their best to exercise control over these salt-wells. On the other hand the local tribal chieftains were determined to keep control over them. It led to a series of military conflict between the tribes of Tirap valley and the Ahoms. Though the Ahoms, possessing superior military power, occupied salt producing areas of Borhat and Mohong<sup>19</sup> in present Tirap district; due to geographical difficulties and variety of other reasons they could not penetrate in the Tangsa and the Tutsa areas. The Tutsa oral literature do suggests that the Ahom and Mutock *Lungwangs* ('kings') tried to occupy salt wells but they failed in this enterprise. During the British period the Tangsa, the Tutsa and the Nocte tribal chiefs were allowed to manufacture and market salt in the towns and bazars located in the Assam plain.<sup>20</sup> But a (20 per cent) duty was imposed on sale and purchase of salt. Subsequently, most of the saltwells were abandoned in the wake of introduction of a cheap variety of salt by the British processed from sea waters.<sup>21</sup>

Geologically, the area is formed by thick of sediments, predominantly of tertiary sequence. In 1886 CE Mr. La Touche, while exploring the area from Nao- Dihing valley to Chaukan pass via Miao, noticed the coal seams and seepages of petroleum. Later on, Assam Oil Company and Eastern Coalfields Ltd. started exploitation of petroleum, natural gas, and coal respectively. These days oil and coal is commercially produced at several places in Changlang district. The state government is taking keen interest in exploitation of the mineral resources available in the district.

The Patkai ranges starting from south-west in Tirap district continue in the entire southern sector of the district. While in the north- eastern sector the Lohit frontier ranges touch the Vijoyanagar area. In Miao, the Manabum hills rise on an appendage of the north-east physiographic trend and extend towards the Upper Assam and plains of Lohitya Sagara (Red Sea) where it gradually loses its identity. As regards metamorphites, it is indicated by few traverses that quartzites, slaty phylites and mica schist continue south-eastward from outer ranges of Lohit up to Vijoyanagar. In the east, these rocks

are bounded by north-west south-east trending Mishimi thrust which continues south-eastward from Lohit. Unlike the concealed configuration of the Mishimi thrust in many parts of Lohit district, this tectonic plain is seen to be posed against Naga thrust and other tectonic lines within the territory of Changlang and Upper Assam. However, in the further south-east the tertiary formations and tectonic lines show a gentle deflection in trend which approximates, parallelism to the Mishimi thrust.

The tertiary formations are characterised as (a) alluvium with high level of terraces (b) Rocks of Dissang series, in which brine/saline wells and springs are located, (c) Brail series of rocks are characterised by the presence of coal seams and fresh deltaic depositions, wherein important oilfields of Assam and a few saltwells and springs are found, (d) Tipam series of rocks are noticed in the form of elongated wedges in which coarse grained massive and compact sandstones and clays constituting major lithounits and these structures have exposed coal bearing Barail rocks, (e) Namsang Beds are found in certain areas of Changlang, bordering Tirap district and the portion of Namsang and Dihing valleys contains mottled clays sandstones with pebbles of coal, minor lignitic lenses constitutes Namsang beds, (f) Dihing series are the uppermost formations in tertiary rock sequence in Changlang district noticed in northern tract of Kuwen Bum, comprised of boulder bed composed of pebbles and boulders of quartzites and gneisses embedded in matrix of loose sand and clay and rocks with very soft greenish and bluish clay bands. Carbonised wood fragments and small lenses of lignite are quite frequently seen in the sequence.

Changlang district is very rich with regard to the availability of mineral resources. There are two major coal fields in the area (i) Namchik-Namphuk coal field and (ii) Miao-Bum coal field.<sup>22</sup> Recently, oil-fields are explored by a French company and systematic exploitation of oil and natural gas has started in the area. Oily content noticed in the streams originating from mountainous tract of Nampong and Jairampur area especially in Machum, Tikhak Rima, Tikhak Putok, Wintong Matongsa, Longchong and adjoining villages. During the tour to Tikhak villages, it was noticed by the researcher that in Longchong people extract kerosene oil from nearby streams and springs and make use of it for domestic purposes.<sup>23</sup> In olden times, gold too was extracted from sands of Burhi Dihing and other rivers with the help of Burmese gold washers. Mention of salt making, is already made, from saline springs and wells especially in the Tangsa,

the Tutsa and the Nocte dominated areas. Locally the salt was known as *sum* or *sim*. Salt manufactured by these people was marketed in the plains of Assam and also in Myanmar.<sup>24</sup>

### Climate and Vegetation

The evergreen thick cover, plenty of rainfall, high altitude of Patkai ranges in Changlang has rendered climate of the area very pleasant and enjoyable. Rise in temperature is checked by frequent showers, thunder storms and heavy rainfall throughout the year except for a period of 3-4 months during the winter season. The district is blessed by Lord Lengdon (Indra) as time and again moisture laden winds from Bay of Bengal visit this area on regular basis and it rains almost throughout the year. The climate is hot and humid. Even during the winter months frequent rainfall is recorded. Heavy downpour does not cause flood like situation in the area, as rainwater quickly drains out into the plains of Assam.

The Patkai hills are thickly wooded with coniferous and non-coniferous trees and variety of shrubs. These include bamboo, grass, creeper plants and trees like hollong, mekai, hollock, champa, sam, gandh-soroi, nahar jutuli, lali kadam, barpat, khokon, uriam, rubber, markai-sal, cinnamon, agar, pine simolu, onyenga, pipul, sal mugra, poma, amra, banson, and many others. All of these are useful as veneer and saw timbers and pulp wood. Several species of plants and trees are useful to manufacture medicinal, perfumery and incense items.

Consequent upon the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India's intervention the enmass felling of trees has stopped and several mills are closed. Now, the people of Changlang have started taking interest in tea plantations. Several tea estates have sprung up in the district. Thickly wooded forest cover is being gradually replaced by tea plantations.

In olden times, the jungles in Patkai were storehouse of biodiversity. Tigers, leopard, black panther, clouded leopard, cat, civet cat, elephant, rhinoceros, buffalo, mithun, black bear, red bear, boar, jackal, wild dog, swamp deer spotted deer antelope, barking deer, musk deer, porcupine, terrapin otter, langur, drill ape, monkey, flying squirrel etc. were in plenty. However, in the recent past with the growth of population, depletion of forests, ecological imbalances, unplanned hunting, killing of animals and shifting cultivation together drastically reduced population of all these animals. Variety of birds e.g. great Indian hornbill, tragopan, ducks, teals Asiatic goosander, Imperial

pigeon, parrot, parakeet, doves, mynah bhimraj, shrike, sunbird, snipe kingfisher, woodpecker, ravan, blackbird, fowl, bird of paradise, highjar, goshawk, etc. are widely noticed in the area.

Waters of all rivers contain variety of fishes. Fish is an important ingredient of the Tangsa diet. The Tangsas organise fishing expeditions at community as well as individual level. Community fishing expeditions are headed by village Lungwang on special occasions. Namchik, Tirap, Rima Namphai, Nao- Dihing, and Buri-Dihing rivers are rich in fishes. Important species of fish include golden masheer, thick lipped masheer, dark scaled or blue masheer, trout, tope, etc.

The Changlang district has Namdapha wild life sanctuary of repute set up in Miao circle. The sanctuary is visited by foreign as well as local tourist on large scale.

### Agriculture

The soil in Changlang district is highly fertile. Both food as well as cash crops can be raised on large scale. The soil can be divided in the following broader categories: (i) alluvial plains, (ii) river valleys, (iii) sedimentary hills, and (iv) metamorphites. The colour of the soil is black and red with sandy loam in the river valleys' downside. The soil on the hill slopes and tops is mixed with soft clay, stones, shales and slaty type of rocks. Soil is rich in organic matter and nitrogen at all levels, and hence, it is suitable to all type of cultivations. In olden times, shifting or jhoom cultivation was one of the major agricultural practice among the tribes of Changlang district. However these days the acreage under wet rice cultivation is increasing. Of course jhoom cultivation is practiced on side by side. In the plains of Nao Dihing, Buri Dihing and other adjoining areas in Miao, Nampong, Bordumsa wet as well as dry cultivation is practiced. Major crops raised by farmers in the area include rice, maize, *kochu*, (*arum*), *bankhe*, chillies, watermelon, vegetables and mustard. Jhoom Agricultural season starts in February-March, with clearing and burning jungle. The sowing of seeds is completed by the month of May and the harvesting is done in October- November every year. Whereas the process of wet rice cultivation begins in May-June. Transplantation of paddy seedlings and related work is completed by the end of July and the rice crop is harvested in November and December.<sup>25</sup>

Thus it is clear from the above discussion that Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh is well gifted by the nature. There is no dearth of natural resources. The district enjoys strategic importance being part of the Indian corridor SE Asia, China and the Far- East. This

route facilitated the migration of kshastriya warriors, towards the SE Asia and China, who founded there Hindu kingdoms in ancient times. The knowledge of Vedas, teachings of Buddha, and information on Indian science, religion and philosophy got disseminated in the countries located in the east through this district. This region also witnessed migration of the Tangsas, the Tutsas, the Ahoms, the Singphoes the Khamtis and the Burmese into Patkai hills and Brahmaputra valley. Several clans and communities moved into Changlang district from west and east during the course of their migration. Economically, strategically and geo-politically Changlang district of Arunachal Pradesh is of great significance for our country.

However, so far, no systematic study on society, culture, history and economy of this area was conducted before. The present work is a project sponsored by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, Government of India. It aims at highlighting the Changlang district on historico-cultural map of our Great Motherland, the Bharat. It is an attempt to unearth hidden treasure of knowledge contained in folk lores, tales, oral literature and other categories of sources and to reaffirm that culturally India and South East Asia and to a great extent even China were one at same point of time in the past. We share common culture, descent, heritage and tradition. Changlang was a meeting point of three great river valley civilisations of the world, i.e. Brahmaputra valley of India, Yang-tse-kiang and Howng-Ho river valley civilisation of China and Irrawaddy and Mekong civilisation of SE Asia.

### Notes and References

1. Tapan Senapati *District Census Handbook Changlang Series-3* Arunachal Pradesh Calcutta.1991, p. 6

The district derived its name from the Tangsa word Changlang changkan. meaning a hill top where people discovered the poisonous herb which is used for poisoning fish in the waters of river.

2. K. Mamai *Statistical Handbook of Changlang District, 2000* (unpublished), office of the Deputy Commissioner Changlang, Arunachal Pradesh, p.p. 1-3
3. D.C. Sircar *Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India*, Calcutta 1971. pp. 159-166 The Mahabharata mentions Bhagadutta of Pragjyotishpur as *purva-sagaravasin* (inhabitant of the eastern sea). He was also leader of the Cinas, Kirtas Malecchas and Sagararupavasins. Kalika Purana locates the sea to the east or to the south east of Pragjyotishpur (Kamrupa). Similarly P. N.

Bhattacharya opines that boundaries of Bhagadutta's Kingdom extended up to south China sea. On the basis of these evidences we may safely conclude that changlang district constituted as part and parcel of the kingdom of Pragjyotishpur.

The concentration of Hindu population in Yun-nan (Gandhara) province of China. Sri Lohit area between Yun-nan and Upper Assam, and in 'Mongkula' i.e. the area located in north-east of Chindwin river supports the view that Bhagadutta ruled over the area between Kartoya in West to South China sea in the east.

R.K. Kanchan Hindu kingdoms of South-East Asia, New Delhi. 1990, pp. 19-26.

4. Padmeshwar Gogoi, *The Tai and the Tai Kingdoms*, Gauhati. 1999, pp. 130-131.
5. *Ibid.*, p.134.

Mong kula comprised the area from bank of Chindwin to Eastern Assam and river Dihing folwing in the area. It is mentioned that the legendary Taishan Prince Hkun-Long divided this empire among his sons. His fifth son Hkun- La was assigned the country of Mong-Kula to rule. In Mong-Kula at that time Hindus constituted majority of the population. The Taishans of Nan-Chao (Yun-nan also known as Gandhara and Shans of Mao kingdoms exercised sovereignty over the eastern Assam and the area of northern Myanmar. Changlang was possibly part of Tai kingdom for a brief period at that time. It is also stated in the Tai manuscripts that Namtilao or Lohit was the western boundary of Hkun- La's kingdom . If so it is not impossible to conclude that his state comprised an area which was dominated by Hindus and it's former rulers belonged to a Hindu dynasty.

6. K Mamai, *op. cit.*
7. Yatdam Circle headquarter at Yangkang was inaugurated on 11.04.2001, by Honourable Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh and gazette notification about creation of New circle is issued to that effect. The new circle headquarter is created to speedup the socio-economic development of Tutsa villages in Changlang district.
8. Tapan Senapati, *op. cit.* p.6
9. S. Dutta Choudhury (ed) *Gazetteer of India, India, Arunachal Pradesh, Tirap District, Shillong* (1980), pp.1-3.
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20. Based on Oral narratives collected through an Interview with Sri Wangju Kungkho, Hangkap Songthing, Wangram Kungkho, Nokjan Pongte, Janglam Kungkho, Somangak Songthing, Tesam Pongte and others in Yangkang village on November 16, 97.
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23. Based on oral information supplied by Sri Semai Tikhak, Ngamla Tikhak, Samthai Tikhak, Kambu Tikhak and others on December 24, 2000. in Longchong village.
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25. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-24.

This book will play a pioneering role towards construction of a systematic history of the various Tribes of northeast India. The study is based on oral historical literature and other sources collected by conducting a massive survey in more than one hundred villages located on India-Myanmar Boarder and the entire tract constituting the meeting point of the three great civilizations of India, China and the South-East Asia. The location of strategic Pangsau Pass in the region which facilitated the migration of the *Kshatriya* Tribes of India towards the South East Asia, and China and also the migration of the Tai Ahoms, Tangsas, the Tutsas, the Noctes, etc. towards Indian mainland from Southeast Asian region further adds to the significance of this work.

The present work is divided in ten sections. The sections I and II give a comprehensive account on the geography, and political history of the Tirap Valley and the Patkai region. The third section gives an account of Tribal Mythologies and Cosmogony. The fourth section discusses the history of the migration of Indians to South-East Asia from the age of *Bhagwan Parshurama* to the 600 CE and the migration of Kshatriya Tribes of South-East Asia, China and Mangolia to India from the early Medieval period and onwards. The fifth section deals with villages and the village society, its structure and the village administration. The sixth section discusses the tribal (the Tangsa) economy *i.e.* agricultural production and the seasons, farm technology, cropping pattern, etc. The seventh section discusses various stages in the life of an individual *i.e.* Birth, Marriage, Divorce, Death etc. and the ceremonies and rituals. Section VIII is devoted to tribal culture and religion whereas Section IX gives a detailed account of the Tangsa Pantheon along with the gods/goddesses worshipped by the Tangsas and the whole study is summarized in Section X.

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Renowned social scientist and Senior Fellow of the Ministry of Culture, Union Government of India, Narayan Singh Rao, M.A., M.Phil. and Ph.D. (J.N.U.), was born and brought up in Udaipur, Mewar (Rajasthan). He has great expertise on Economic History of Medieval India and tribal culture and history of North-East India. He started his career from the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi as researcher at the Centre For Historical Studies and Centre for the Study of Regional Development in the School of Social Sciences and got opportunities to work with National Labour Institute, Noida, South Asian Coalition on Child Servitude, Department of Higher Education, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, Mewar Institute of Management, Ghaziabad and a host of academic as well as development organizations. He was awarded Doctoral and Post-Doctoral Fellowships by the Indian Council of Historical Research (ICHR), New Delhi. He successfully executed several major research and action-oriented projects supported by the government and non-government organizations. He organized and attended a number of national and international seminars. A large number of research papers authored by him have been published in reputed national and international journals. Besides this volume his major research work is entitled *Rural Economy and Society*. He is also member of Indian History Congress, North-East India History Association and the Board of Under-graduate Studies, Arunachal University, Itanagar.

The main areas of his interests are socio-economic and cultural history of Medieval Rajasthan and the tribes of North-East India. He is also pursuing further research studies on the history and culture of the North East India as well as the South-East Asian countries.

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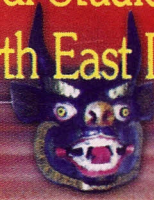
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