

# THE KUKIS OF TRIPURA

A SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVEY

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## FOREWORD

In every developmental effort of tribals special attention needs to be paid to the study of people as a whole especially of the tribes, their ethnic groups, culture, social structure, economy and political organisation. These studies in the form of monographs on individual tribe, their modes and mores, socio-cultural milieu, provide an invaluable temporal record which should serve as important indicators of changes and progress made in any subsequent evaluation.

2. The topicality of such studies is more relevant in Tripura where within a small geographical tract of 10,477 Sq. K.Ms. we have as many as 19 assortment of tribes, with distinct ethnic stocks such as those of Tripuris, Reangs and Kukis. In a plural society such as that of ours immigrants and autochthons, becomes intermingled with time, the more so where there is greater social mobility. "Assimilation is a process of interpretation and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments and attitudes of other persons of groups, and by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a cultural life" (R.E. Part & E.W. Burgess—Introduction to the science of Sociology).

3. Kukis are one of the autochthonous tribes. Shri Ramgopal Singh, who works in the Directorate of Research Department of Tribal Welfare, Govt. of Tirpura has painstakingly brought out the socio-cultural milieu of Kukis, who are known in various names in different regions and who have got a number of sub-tribes, of which some have been included within the Schedule for Tripura. He had made an interesting study of their changing habitats, has found that demographic characteristics especially growth rate of population, rate of growth of literacy, their religious affiliations and has made an areawise study of the variation in these important indicators trying to establish a causal relationship. On the social side also his effort touches the social customs, village institutions, rituals and religious beliefs. He has made studies of about 10% of the Kuki families residing in Tripura, by taking a sample of 115 families in a total Kuki population of 7,775 persons (i.e. around 1,000 families) as per 1971 Census.

4. The monograph gives in a short compass the various factors of this important tribal group in Tripura, tries to establish a correlation on various primary data collated from field studies and helps all to have basic idea about this important component of State population. We are thankful to Shri R. Singh for having completed the study in addition to his own duties in the Research Directorate, that is at once informative and interesting.

S. L. Chatterji

Secretary to the Government,  
Tribal Welfare Department, Tripura.

## PREFACE

The Kukis are one of the autochthonous tribes of Tripura. According to the 1971 Census, the Kuki population in Tripura is only 7,775 persons. It is tenth in numerical position among the 19 scheduled Tribes of Tripura. They do not call themselves as Kukis. They call themselves as Hre-em. They are known as Kukis to the Bengalees and other plain living people. The Cacharis called them "Lushais". The manipuris called them "Khongjais". In the early Sanskritik texts they have been recorded as "Kirats". In the Chin Hills and generally on the Burma border all their clans are called "Chins". The Kukis are also known as "Darlongs" in Tripura. The Tripuris called them "Sikam".

2. The Kukis of Tripura may broadly be divided into two major groups like "Darlong Kukis" and "Rokhum Kukis". According to them the Darlong Kukis are "Mar-Mi" means "men of north" while the Rokhum Kukis are "Sim-Mi" which means "men of the south".

3. The Kukis probably belonged to the Mongoloid racial stock. They are a short, study race of men with a goodly development of muscle. Their language has been classified as belonging to the Austro-Asiatic group of Tibeto-Burman family.

4. The exact origin of this tribe is very difficult to trace out after so long distance of time. It is believed that probably they have come in the present area of Tripura in different waves in different times. The first wave which came into this land have become a faithful subjects of Tripura Rajahs and named as "Halams". So the Halams are known as "Mila-Kuki" in this State. Still now some clans of the Halam groups claim themselves to be as Kukis. The latter wave of them are probably the "Darlong" and the Lushais. In spite of some differences existing between the Kukis and the Lushais, they are practically the same group of people with common racial stock and do not actually signify two different tribes.

5. The Kukis are mainly inhabited in the Lushai Hills of Mizoram (Assam), a part of north-eastern Tripura, a part of southern Manipur, eastern range of Chittagong and a part of Western Burma. The main concentration of the Kukis in Tripura is in Kailashahar, Dharmanagar, Khowai, Udaipur, Kamalpur, Amarpur and Sadar Sub-Divisions. The Kukis are 7,775 persons out of total tribal population of 4,50,544 in Tripura according to the 1971 Census. It is only 1.72% of the total tribal population of this territory.

6. The highest concentration of the Kukis is found in the North Tripura District. They are 3,227 souls. Among the sub-divisions, Kailashahar is the highest number of Kukis having 2,404 persons.

7. The life of the Kukis in the early days was very simple. They somehow eke out their living by means of jhum cultivation and preliminary method of economy. They usually purchased only salt and dry fish from the nearby market and sold jhum products. Usually they were

not habituated in settled cultivation. In 1931 Census Report, no Kuki family was found to carry on cultivation (wet cultivation) as their primary or secondary occupation.

8. As the Kukis belong to the most minority tribal group of Tripura and are most backward in education as well as very weak in their economy, is felt necessary to study this community as a whole. This monograph deals with the Kukis. What follows is divided into seven Chapters. The first Chapter describes the habitat of the Kukis, the second Chapter traces the history and origin of the tribe; the next Chapter analyses their economic activities, while the fourth Chapter explains the social customs and institutions of this Community. The fifth Chapter sketches the village administrative pattern; the sixth Chapter outlines the religious beliefs and practices of the Kukis. Finally, concluding remarks have been added.

9. The present survey was completed within a short period of three months. Within such short period it is not possible to present an all round information of a particular tribe or clan. So, there might be some sort of incomplete or deficiency of information which occurred unwillingly and may be excused. However, it is my belief that this monograph will throw some light to the future students of anthropology and sociology who are interested to deal with this particular tribe.

10. I convey my sincere gratitude to the Director of Research, Government of Tripura who have permitted me to conduct the field survey work of this monograph and writing this report. I am also thankful to the Linguistic Officer, Directorate of Research who had constantly been a source of inspiration. I am also thankful to the Department of Welfare for Sch. Castes & Sch. Tribes, Govt. of Tripura for having permitted me to continue this work. My sincerest gratitude is also to Shri J. Gan Choudhury, Lecturer of B. B. Evening College, Agartala for his kind guidance and reviewing this report.

11. I am also thankful to the Block Development Officers, Tribal Supervisors, Gaon Pradhans, Tribal Extension Officers, other office personnels and the informants without whose help this survey work could not have been completed.

12. In fine, I owe to my colleagues of Directorate of Research for their valuable Co-operation and help in completing this report.

RAM GOPAL SINGH.

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