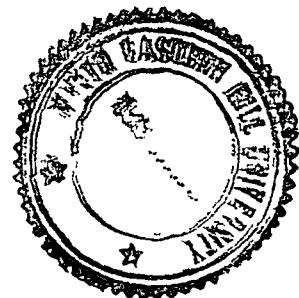


**PERIODIC MARKETS IN TRIBAL AREAS :**  
**( A CASE STUDY OF MEGHALAYA )**

**MANJULA BORTHAKUR**

SUBMITTED  
IN  
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT OF THE DEGREE OF  
**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN GEOGRAPHY**

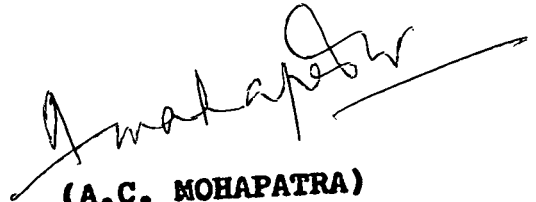


DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY  
SCHOOL OF ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES  
**NORTH-EASTERN HILL UNIVERSITY**  
SHILLONG

**CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled "Periodic Markets in Tribal Areas: A Case Study of Meghalaya" submitted by Ms Manjula Borthakur, in partial requirement of the Degree of Master of Philosophy (M.Phil) in Geography, is a bonafide study to the best of my knowledge and belief. Works of other authors have been duly cited and referred to.

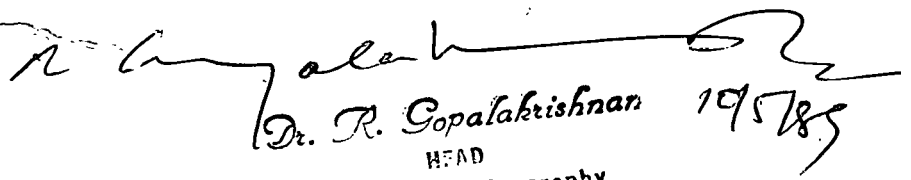
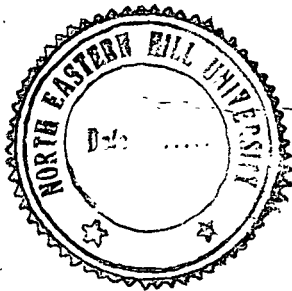
The study may, now be placed before the examiners for due evaluation.



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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

On the completion of this dissertation I feel immense pleasure in expressing my sincere thanks and deepest sense of gratitude to my Supervisor, Dr. A.C. Mohapatra, Reader, Department of Geography, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong. The completion of the study would have been impossible without his ready help and guidance.

I am also thankful to Dr. R. Gopalakrishnan, Head, Department of Geography, NEHU, Shillong, for his constant encouragement during this study.

I am thankful to Professor R.K. Rai, Dean, School of Environmental Science, NEHU, for his encouragement.

I am thankful to Professor J.B. Bhattacharjee, Dean, School of Social Sciences, NEHU, for his valuable suggestions in connection with certain sections of the study.

I am thankful to my colleague, Sri S. Borthakur, Lecturer, Mariani College, for his constant encouragement without which it might not have been complete.

I am also thankful to Sri S. Sharma, Miss S. Biswas, Mrs M. Agarwal, Mr. M. Konwar, Department of Geography, NEHU, Shillong. Mr. H. Saikia, Mr. U. Dewarah, Miss R. Boruah of Mariani College, Mariani, who were my greatest source of strength and inspiration for the whole period of this study.

(11)

I owe my deep sense of gratitude to my brothers and sisters for their pleasant encouragement at different stages of work.

I am thankful to Mr. Joseph F. Khongbuh, Stenographer, Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Regional Centre, Shillong, for his help in typing the dissertation.

DATED SHILLONG  
THE 10th MAY, 1989.

Manjula Borthakur,  
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**CHAPTER - I**

**INTRODUCTION**

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

✓ Periodic markets are the points through which the surplus produce of the rural areas are exchanged and some of the produce gets on its way to the urban centres and the manufactured products from urban centres get distributed in the rural areas. The exchange system of the periodic market operates in two ways, viz. vertical and horizontal. In the exchange system the rural agricultural and artisan products are distributed and exchanged within the surrounding areas and the exchange operates at the level of the hierarchy of settlement i.e., from rural to urban centres and vice-versa.

The traditional periodic market system, probably originated in the late Neolithic Age along with the emergence of the agro-pastoral revolution which generated surplus produce for exchange. In the initial stages) when the self-sustained village economy was in vogue, (the mutual exchange of goods and services was carried out within the respective villages, but with the development of transport facilities)(particularly, the riverine and marine). (The scope for exchange of goods widened and periodic markets catering to the surrounding areas originated. With industrial and technological progress, increasing specialisation, supply of goods and services on a larger scale and socio-economic development, market centres of different hierarchical orders and periodicity developed and ultimately

the national economy was integrated into one market and further with the international exchange system and the "world market".) This view finds support in Berry<sup>1</sup> (1967) who has theorised the emergence of periodic markets in system of local trade and the establishment of fairs along long distance trade routes. He pleads for a three stages sequence:

"The first involves 'socially administered exchange'. The next 'barter' and later money provided and standard of value permitting market place transactions in peasant societies. Finally the peasant dualism between subsistence and trade has been replaced in some parts of the world by the specialisation of modern economy and periodic markets and fairs by highly articulated array of market centres".<sup>2</sup>

(Periodic markets in their varied forms have been common in the Indian sub-continent for about past 4,500 years, i.e. from the time of Harappan civilization. It also reflects the relative maturity of a sedentary agricultural civilization. There must be some agricultural and artisan surplus, crop specialization and at least quasi-monetization of the economy.) In the context of the long history of peasant farming in India, (periodic markets in the Indian subcontinent is as old as the farming system itself.)

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1. B.J.L. Berry (1967). Geography of Market Centres and Retail Distribution, Prentice Hall, New York.

2. Ibid., pp. 106-107.

✓ As stated earlier, periodic markets are characteristic feature of all 'peasant societies'. By 'peasant society' we mean overwhelming dependence of the economy on agriculture, food production in agriculture, excessive land dependence, small holding sizes, petty commodity production and limited level of monetization of the economy. Therefore, in such societies the periodic market symbolises the 'direct contact between the producer and the consumer' characterised by traditional norms of exchange like barter, measurement by number or volume of goods, petty transactions, but also as a 'social gathering' where information related to daily lives of the surrounding settlements (villages), the vital functions (birth, death & marriage), transaction of 'usury' loans, marriage negotiation, dispensation of judicial functions by Panchayats (in Indian condition), transactions on domestic animals etc. are carried out. In a nutshell the periodic market in a traditional (peasant) society plays an all integrative role, economic and social, for the surrounding villages. ✓

The present study relates to the genesis, morphology and functions of (periodic markets in the tribal areas of the North East India, specifically in the State of Meghalaya. Tribal societies being relatively subsistence based, have a low surplus base. In fact, many tribes may not have any

periodic markets (specially, in Nagaland) while they might participate in some markets.

But, in Meghalaya there are a number of periodic markets which play a vital role in the lives of the people.) The case study relates to the Khasi Scheduled Tribes (Nongpoh P.S., East Khasi Hills District).<sup>3</sup> Some of the notable significance of the periodic markets in the study area are the following:

1. The periodic markets are of relatively of recent origin in the area due to the quasi-peasant and quasi-gathering type of the economy.
2. High female participation in the market.
3. The (special) local calendar of eight day cycle is used for the determination of the market day etc.

Periodic markets have been frequently studied in the context of peasant societies in India and elsewhere, but in the tribal locale there are few studies and thus, it will be interesting to study the tribal periodic market as well as it will help in understanding the modus operandi of transaction in the tribal situation.

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3. See Map 1.2.

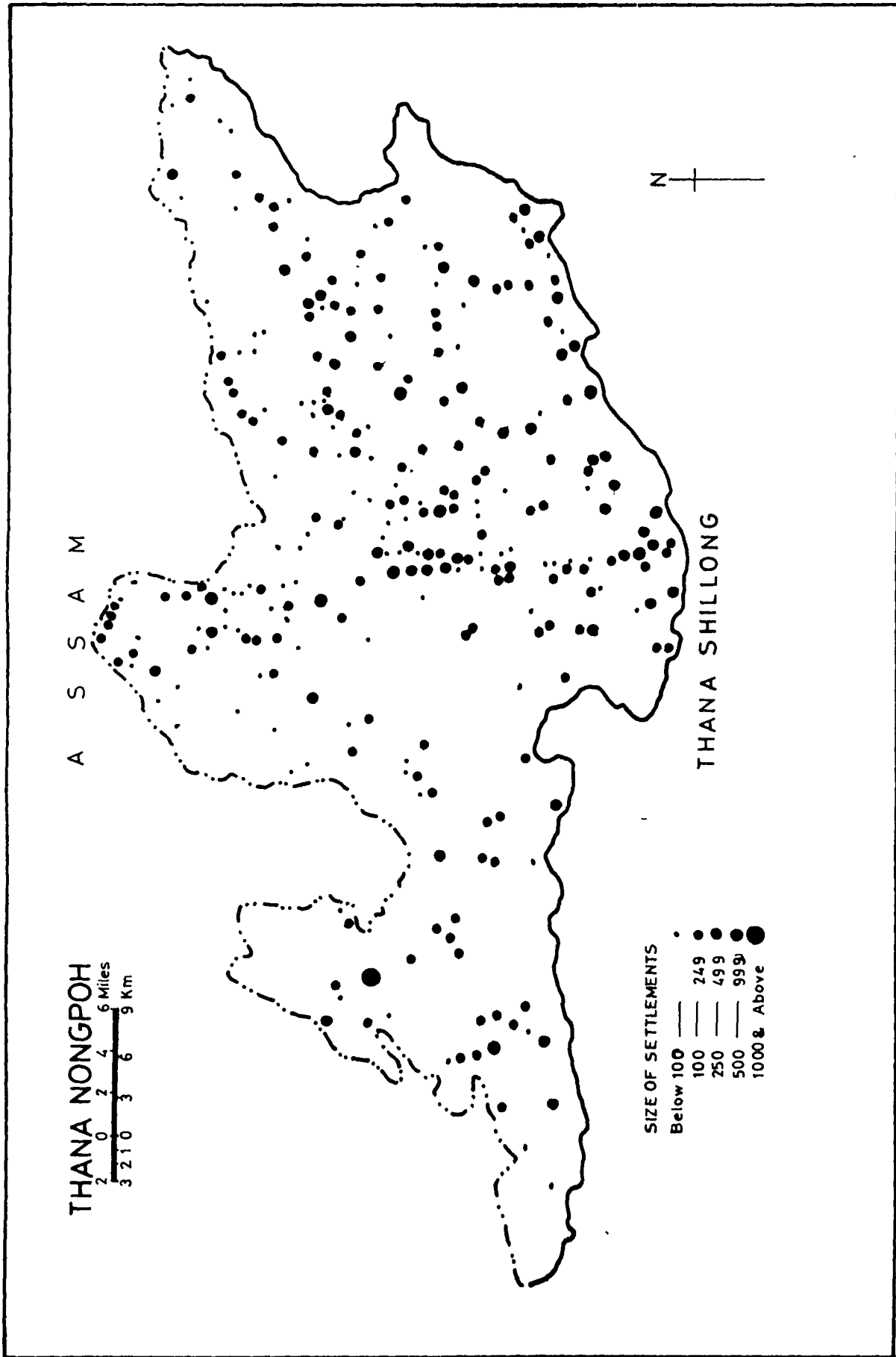
However, once one moves out from the peasant agricultural system to the tribal economy, all the logics of the genesis of the periodic markets get upturned. In a strict sociological sense the tribal economy is a subsistence economy, whether sedentary or not (whether agricultural or nomadic) where the role of surplus (to be exchanged) is extremely limited except for the purpose of gift, social status and rituals. They are also non-monetised. However, such a purely sociological category of tribal society is a rarity in modern times. In India, the nomenclature is the Scheduled Tribes, which at present we are dealing with. In many scheduled tribe areas one thus, finds periodic markets. In some cases the history of those markets is recent and in some cases old. The pattern and extent of these markets in tribal communities depended on to a great extent on their social history, particularly on the proximity and type of interaction with the neighbouring peasant societies.

The morphological structure of these markets, the commodities exchanged, the modalities of exchange and the overall impact of these markets on these communities provide a fascinating realm of possibilities worth exploring. It is with this picture in mind that the present study is conducted on the predominantly Scheduled Tribe State of Meghalaya.

The market centre being the point of diffusion and spread need to be adequately investigated for the ultimate objective of using the periodic markets as nodes (catalysts) in the process of rural transformation in the region.

## 1.2. Introduction to the Study Area

The State of Meghalaya comprising the Garo, Khasi and Jaintia Hills District which previously formed part of Assam, came into existence on 19th January 1972. The total area of the state is 22,429 sq.km. After the inauguration of the State, administrative changes were introduced gradually by the end of 1976. Meghalaya had five districts, namely Jaintia Hills District (3,819 sq.km.), East Khasi Hills district (5,196 sq.km.), West Khasi Hills district (5,247 sq.km), East Garo Hills district (2,603 sq.km.) and West Garo Hills district (5,564 sq.km.). Meghalaya is bordered to its northwest, north, east and southeast by the State of Assam and to the south and southwest by Bangladesh (Map 1.1). The population of Meghalaya was 13,27,874 in 1981 out of which 6,78,883 are males and 6,48,991 are females. Meghalaya constitutes 0.19% of the total population of India. In Meghalaya ranging in elevations from 150 m to 1950 m above Mean Sea Level (MSL). The State presents a picturesque landscape of plateau, ravines, brooks, rivulets, lakes and waterfalls, besides the magnificent gorges exceeding



Map 1.2

600 m in depth in southern Khasi Hills. Shillong, the capital of the State, is located at an elevation of 1800 m in the central part of the Khasi Hills.

The region experiences tropical monsoon climate; the summer temperature recording as high as 25°C and the mean winter temperature falling down to 9°C with periodic deviation to below the freezing point, marked by appearance of ground frost at night and morning over the higher elevations. The average annual rainfall of the State is around 205 cm, the maximum annual average of 1143 cm being recorded around Cherrapunji and Mawsynram, the world rainiest spots.

### 1.3. Objective

Periodic markets have been in existence since long under different geographical and social environment. They have great potential for being used as centres of socio-economic transformation of the rural masses. Although there are numerous studies on periodic markets elsewhere, there is practically no systematic study on the North East in general and the tribal areas in specific.

Therefore, the main objectives of the study are:

1. To study the historical context of the emergence of periodic markets in tribal areas of North East in

general and Meghalaya in particular. This include three phases:

- (a) Phase when markets developed at the spatial interface (border) of the tribal 'culture areas' and neighbouring peasant societies.
- (b) Market development due to direct intervention of the market economies (colonial) into tribal territories which also affected the pattern of production; and
- (c) the modern phase when these forces have been further consolidated and given a special spatial expression.

2. To study the morphology of periodic markets (as a sample case), the commodity mix and modalities of exchange etc.
3. To study the impact of the periodic markets on the socio-economic conditions of the hinterland of the markets.

#### **1.4. Hypothesis**

There are two major hypotheses which have been investigated in the present study:

1. That the long history of periodic markets in the State of Meghalaya owes its origin to the long standing contact with the peasant communities to both south and the north at the geographical interface between the hills and

the plains and this structure got further replicated when the entire plateau itself turned into an interface between the two valley cultures, namely the Brahmaputra and the Surma valleys.

2. That the periodic market integrates the space economy of the otherwise dispersed village economies of the hinterland and forms the first contact point (on space) of the rural economy with the overall economic system.

There are a number of explorative research questions in the study.

1. What is the nature of participant and commodity composition in a tribal periodic market?
2. What are the specific spatial structures of the market?
3. What is the spatial pattern of participation in the market and its interaction with the hinterland?
4. Finally, is any way the (tribal) periodic markets of the region different from such markets in the plain areas?

#### 1.5. Data

Data have been collected from three sources, i.e. Historical documents, governmental statistics and field

data has been collected in two ways, i.e. schedules and study of the morphology of the markets.

Major part of the data is first hand. This requires study of historical records of the Khasi and Garo Hills, prior to the coming of the British. The main sources of historical data are, F. Hamilton "An Account of Assam", W.W. Hunter's "Statistical Accounts of Assam" and many other records of the early British occupation of Khasi and Garo Hills. The most authentic historical records (medieval) on the N.E. India are found in the Ahom Buranji's which highlight the nature of trade between Ahoms and the hill tribes. Information have been collected from R.Reid "History of Frontier Areas bordering on Assam", Shillong (1942). Other relevant sources have been consulted also. Records of the British period are fairly well documented and a study of the internal and external trade of Meghalaya is traceable in these records.

Secondary sources like information from the reports of decadal censuses, district statistical handbooks and other governmental publications have been used.

Apart from historical documents and secondary sources, primary survey of two periodic market was carried out, to understand the structure and morphology of the periodic

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markets in a tribal area on the basis of a structured schedule and stratified random sampling. The study of morphology of the markets has been carried out largely by sketches of the relevant markets.

### 1.6. Methodology

The study has been conceptualised at two levels: (1) at the level of evolution (therefore, historical) of periodic market (in general), in the North-East Region and specifically the plateau of Meghalaya and the Khasi Cultural area. (2) At the second level, the study is articulated on the contemporary periodic market system in the said culture area and attempts to study the structure, morphology and economic significance of the periodic markets to the hinterland.

The evolutionary approach to the study of periodic markets in the North East Region demands historical data on the location, nature and volume of transactions of the periodic markets during the pre-British and British period of the region. From a theoretical point of view, the emergence of periodic markets has been viewed on two hypothesis; (a) the endogenous, evolutionary route, and (b) the external, contactual genesis route (these have been dealt in detail in Chapter II). Both these models, however, need not be

exclusive while within a dominant peasant society periodic market may emerge as a point of exchange of surplus product in a gradually specialising agriculture, the external contact with another society at the interface of the two may lead to emergence of another set of periodic markets. Possibly, in the case of North-East Region, both are true. At the regional interface of the peasant valley culture and the non-surplus hill culture, met specifically at the interface of these 'culture areas'. The foothills bordering the Arunachal Himalaya, the south bank of Brahmaputra bordering the Naga Hills and border areas north and south of the Meghalaya plateau were dotted with a number of such markets, even before and during the British regime in the area. This aspect of the study is dealt with data from historical sources as outlined earlier.

The second part of the study deals with the structure, Morphology and economic significance of periodic markets in the study area as is in the present time. Since, no systematic data exists on these markets, except their periodicity and location etc, relevant information have been collected through field study of two periodic markets, namely Nongpoh and Umsning in the East Khasi Hills district of Meghalaya. Three aspects of the markets have been studied.

- (1) The economic base of the market and its structure which

includes the participants of the market, the modes of exchange, the volume of exchange etc. (ii) The second aspect deals with the physical morphology of the market, including layout, location of various sectors of the market and space relations between them etc. (iii) Finally, the interrelationship between the market and the hinterland has been studied, particularly the distances of interaction, periodicity of participants and economic integration of the hinterland brought about by the presence of the market.

The study of the participants in the market has been done with the help of a schedule. Five types of participants have been observed (by visiting the market) and schedule has been structured accordingly. The part A of the schedule deals with general information about all the participants. However, the other part deals specifically with the type of participants. The five types of participants have been grouped first into two categories - (a) Sellers, (b) Buyers. The sellers have been classified into two groups. (a)(i) the sellers of non-rural products, and (a)(ii) sellers of village produce. The buyers have been classified into 3 types: (b)(i) buyers of the rural produce to be transacted elsewhere by the middlemen, (b)(ii) buyers of manufactured produce and (b)(iii) buyers of rural produce for final con-

sumption. Since the buyers are more numerous than the sellers, an approximate ratio of buyers and sellers was adopted to be appropriately representative. The total number of samples was 100, split between the two markets into 50 each. In each market the distribution of the schedules (for interviewed) was in the following manner: a(1) : 5, a(ii) : 10, b(1) : 5, b(ii) : 15 and b(iii) : 15. The distribution of the schedules among the various groups of participant was thought to be representative.

Since no layout map of the market was available, sketches of the respective markets were thought adequate for the purpose of describing the physical morphology of the market.

The interaction of the market with the hinterland (of surrounding villages) was studied through the participant schedule, in terms of the distance covered, the mode of transport, the type of transaction, the frequency of visits etc. The essence of information collection was through interview method.

There are no sophisticated model building nor statistical analysis of data. Most of the data (from the field work) have been represented in simple forms in percentages. A number of theoretical models, maps, sketches have been provided depending on the requirement of the situation.

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**CHAPTER - II**

**LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUALISATION**

## LITERATURE AND CONCEPTUALISATION

### 2.1. Survey of Literature

Over the last decade or so, Geography of Marketing has emerged as a subfield of geography in its own right. Markets emerge as a specific and locational feature in space in response to the level and nature of the economy. Therefore, the characteristics of markets are indicative of the level and pattern of interaction in the given economic space.

The need for a geography of marketing has been discussed by William Appalebam.<sup>1</sup> He argued that the study of marketing has been generally neglected by geographers in spite of the fact that a large section of the working population is engaged in marketing functions and large part of the landscape is devoted to structures of wholesale, and retail trade and the complex channel of distribution leading from the producer to consumer.

Broadly the field of Geography of marketing can be classified into two on the basis of their location, i.e. the urban and the rural markets. Studies related to the location, retail markets and their structure in urban areas are within the scope of urban market studies. Studies related

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1. Appalebam, W. (1954) "Marketing Geography", American Geography: Inventory and Prospects, (Syracuse University) pp. 245-51.



to periodic markets and distribution of retail outlets in the rural area forms the other group.

B.J.L. Berry<sup>2</sup> (1966) was one of the pioneers in the study of markets in space. Berry's work is mainly related to urban markets which is one of the pioneering studies in this field. Moreover, his discussions on the Central Place theory provide immense scope to study rural markets as central places.

Bromley and Simansky (1974)<sup>3</sup> and Good (1975)<sup>4</sup> have developed models and believe that periodic markets result from and persist because of the need of producers, the organization of time inertia and comparative advantage. They also believe that socio-cultural factors are also responsible for development of periodic markets.

Stine (1962)<sup>5</sup> explains the nature of periodic markets in a Christallerian scheme. His work is mainly concerned with the mobile marketing system.

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2. B.J.L. Berry, op.cit., pp. 1-139.

3. R.J. Bromley and R. Symansky (1973). "Market Development and Ecological Complex", Professional Geographer, Vol.26, pp. 382-388.

4. G.M. Good (1970). "Periodic Markets and Travelling Traders in Uganda", Geographical Review, Vol. 45, pp. 49-72.

5. J.H. Stine (1962). "Temporal Aspects of Tertiary Production, Elements in Korea", in F.R. Pitts (Ed.) Urban Systems and Economic Development, University of Oregon (Eugene).

Traders are as important as consumers in the periodic market system. The study of their behaviour is very important in any marketing system. An extensive literature is found on periodic markets explaining some of the characteristics of traders, specially their location, their cost of trading and pattern of their spatial behaviour. In addition contribution of Hay (1977)<sup>6</sup> and Webber and Symanski (1973)<sup>7</sup> are also very important.

Skinner (1964-65)<sup>8</sup> made an extensive study of exchange system of rural China in the pre-communist take over period. He gave a great deal of attention to the central place theory of Christaller and tried to apply the basic principles of the theory to his analysis of rural market of China.

Symanski (1973)<sup>9</sup> in his study of internal and external organisation of periodic markets hypothesised that

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6. A.M. Hay. "Some Alternatives in Economic Analysis of Periodic Marketing", Geographical Analysis, vol. 9, pp. 72-79.
  7. M.J. Webber & R. Symanski (1973). "Periodic Markets: An Economic Location Analysis", Economic Geography, Vol. 49, pp. 213-237.
  8. G.W. Skinner (1964-65). "Marketing and Social Structure in China", Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. 24, pp.3-45, 195-228.
  9. R. Symanski (1973): "God, Food and Consumer in Periodic Market System", Proceedings Associations of American Geographers, Vol. 5, pp. 262-266.

periodic markets meet more than once during an interval, then it will exhibit a 'Major Market Day' and 'Minor Market Day'. He further hypothesised that within a market interval the 'Minor Market Day' is located as to be midway between two 'Major Market Day'. At least two attempts have been made to test his hypothesis by Thorpe (1974)<sup>10</sup> in the Caspian Littoral and Bromley (1975)<sup>11</sup> in Equador, but could partially confirm them.

Periodic market in Europe and North America seem to rely on a seven day market interval, there are some parts of Asia and Africa where different lengths of market interval have also been noted (Skinner 1964-65<sup>12</sup> and Hodder<sup>13</sup> 1961, 1965). The frequency of the days on which the market meet can show whether or not any particular day within a market interval is favoured as the most convenient day for meeting. Some studies of the periodic market seem to be convinced that the frequency of the choice of the market day is a

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10. K.J. Thorpe (1974). "Cyclic Markets and Central Place System the Changing Temporal and Locational Spacing of Markets in the Caspian Littoral of Iran", I.B.G. Study Group on Developing Areas.
  11. R.J. Bromley (1975). "Periodic and Dairy Markets in High Land Ecuador", University of Cambridge.
  12. Skinner (1964-65). Op. cit., pp. 3-45, 195-228.
  13. B.W. Hodder (1961-65). "Rural Periodic Day Markets in a Part of Yorubaland", Transaction and Papers, IBG, Vol. 29, pp. 149-159.

sufficient factor by itself in explaining the basic structure of periodic markets in a region (Hill and Smith,<sup>14</sup> 1972, Thorpe<sup>15</sup> (1974).

However, works of Good (1970),<sup>16</sup> Jane Pyle (1971),<sup>17</sup> Murdi (1965)<sup>18</sup> are also equally important in the study of periodic markets.

Studies on rural markets by Indian geographers is of only recent origin. S. Singh's (1965)<sup>19</sup> contribution on a central place approach to rural market is notable, Saxena's (1984)<sup>20</sup> geography of marketing is a recent addition to this literature.

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14. Hill and Smith (1972). "The Spatial and Temporal Synchronisation of Periodic Markets", Evidence from four Emirates of Northern Nigeria, Economic Geography, Vol.48, pp. 345-355.
  15. K.J. Thorpe (1974). Op.cit., pp. 150-159.
  16. C.M. Good (1970). "Rural Markets and Trade in East Africa", Department of Geography, University of Chicago.
  17. Jane, Payle (1971). "Farmers Markets in the United States, Functional Anachronism", The Geographical Review, Vol. LXI, No.2, p. 171.
  18. A.R. Mundi (1965). "Cultural Diffusion in Consumers Travel", Economic Geography, Vol. 41, No.1, p.211.
  19. S.M. Singh (1965). "The Stability Theory of Rural Central Place Development", National Geographical Journal of India, Vol. 4, pp. 13-21.
  20. H.M. Saxena (1984). "Geography of Marketing", (Delhi).

Tamaskar (1984)<sup>21</sup> emphasized the importance of rural markets as centres of spatial diffusion. The work of Wanmali (1981)<sup>22</sup> on periodic markets within a system of distribution of goods and service is noteworthy. He also suggests improvements on the existing system of distribution of goods and services in the rural areas.

A study by Borthakur (1986)<sup>23</sup> on the rural markets of Assam is a welcome addition.

Singh's<sup>24</sup> work on rural market is also worth mentioning.

Bromley<sup>25</sup> classified all traders into eight categories on the basis of type of goods traded and time spent in the periodic market. Similarly, Wanamali<sup>26</sup> and Borthakur<sup>27</sup>

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21. B.G. Tamaskar (1984). "The Role of Periodic Market Places as Centre of Diffusion", The Deccan Geographer, Vol. XXII, No. 3, pp. 520-525.
  22. S. Wanmali (1981). Periodic Markets, Rural Development in India, (New Delhi).
  23. S. Borthakur (1986). "Rural Market of Plain Area: A Case Study of Jorhat District". Unpublished M.Phil Dissertation.
  24. L.R. Singh (1983). "Spatial Planning of Rural Markets in India", National Geographer, Vol. XVIII, No. 2, p.194.
  25. Bromley (1973). Op.cit., pp. 382-392.
  26. Wanamali (1981). Op.cit., p. 57.
  27. S. Borthakur (1986). Op.cit., pp. 101-150.

who studied traders behaviour in the periodic markets of Singhbhum area and rural markets of Jorhat district identified two major types of traders. They however subdivided into major traders group into few other groups. Wanamali's and Borthakur's work was carried out in an Indian situation and therefore have some relevance with the traders of the study area.

## **2.2. Genesis of Periodic Markets: View Through a Model**

The periodic markets spontaneously evolved perhaps during the late Neolithic Age with the agro-pastoral revolution, which brought surplus production as well as stability to the economy. The barter system was the starting point of the traditional exchange system, developed within the self-content village and later enlarged to inter-village exchange system. Along with the introduction of division of labour and specialisation in the economy and invention of the wheel and animal ... transport facilities improved considerably: Gradually, money economy emerged and the volume and complexity of the market increased substantially.

On the genesis of periodic markets there are two contrasting views. The Orthodox Theory approaches the problem from an 'evolutionary' point of view. In a isotrophic situation, with emergence of social surplus and some level of

crop specialisation, low level of economic exchange may start within a peasant society. A group of few villages may operate such a market periodically, either through barter or quasi-monetised exchange system.

As observed throughout the world, all peasant societies had some form of periodic market arrangement, whether in medieval Europe, South America, Africa or the great peasant traditions of China and India. Gradually, there is a horizontal spread of the marketing network as well as the vertical integration to the overall economic system, including the levels of monetisation, market specialisation, commodity diversification and other complexities and hierarchies.

The second hypothesis can be termed as 'contactual' genesis of periodic markets, particularly the early exchange systems between two neighbouring societies of contrasting structural parameters of the economy, say for example, between a peasant society and a tribal society or a nomadic society.

Hodder,<sup>28</sup> assumes that market begins with small scale or horizontal exchange<sup>29</sup> in between two groups of

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28. B.W. Hodder (1974). "Some Comments on Origin of Traditional Markets in Africa, South of Sahara", Transactions and Paper, IBG, Vol. 36.

29. Pale, Jane (1971). "Farmers Market in the United States: Functional Anachronism", The Geographical Review, Vol. LXI, No.2, p. 171.

people belonging to the contrasting environment. But along with the growth of population density and specialisation in economic activities culminates in international trade.

The second set of Orthodox theory follows the idea of Polanyi (1957)<sup>30</sup> and Pince (1936) and gives stress on population density, effective political administration to maintain physical security, and long distance line of external contact specially good trunk road, for origin and development of market, Berry (1967)<sup>31</sup> who is a supporter of this group, pleaded for three stages of sequences. (i) The first involves socially administrated exchange. (ii) In the second stage barter and later money provided the standard of value, permitting market place transactions in peasant societies. (iii) Finally, the peasant dualism between subsistence and trade has been replaced in some parts of the world by the specialisation of modern economies and periodic markets and fairs by the highly articulated array of market centres.

From the above formulations it can be derived that the genesis of the market system lies in the given socio-

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30. K. Polanyi (1957) and Pince (1967). "Trade and Market in the Early Empire". Illinois.

31. B.J.L. Berry. Op.cit., p. 106.

political and economic order of the society. Markets, it can be observed, emerged out of the necessity of exchange between surplus communities/areas and deficit community/areas at fixed location and times. This location could be either the surplus area or the deficit area or any other suitable location.

### **2.3. Sequential Development of Markets**

Two sequence of development of periodic marketing system are identified by social scientists - the standard sequence and non-standard sequence.

The 'standard sequence' traces the development of market system from simple peasant, local exchange to a complex regional commercial exchange system. 'Non-standard sequence' means that the market place does not emerge first from a peasant exchange system, but is rather a consequence of contrasting culture brought together by long distance trade. The idea is further substantified by Hodder.<sup>32</sup>

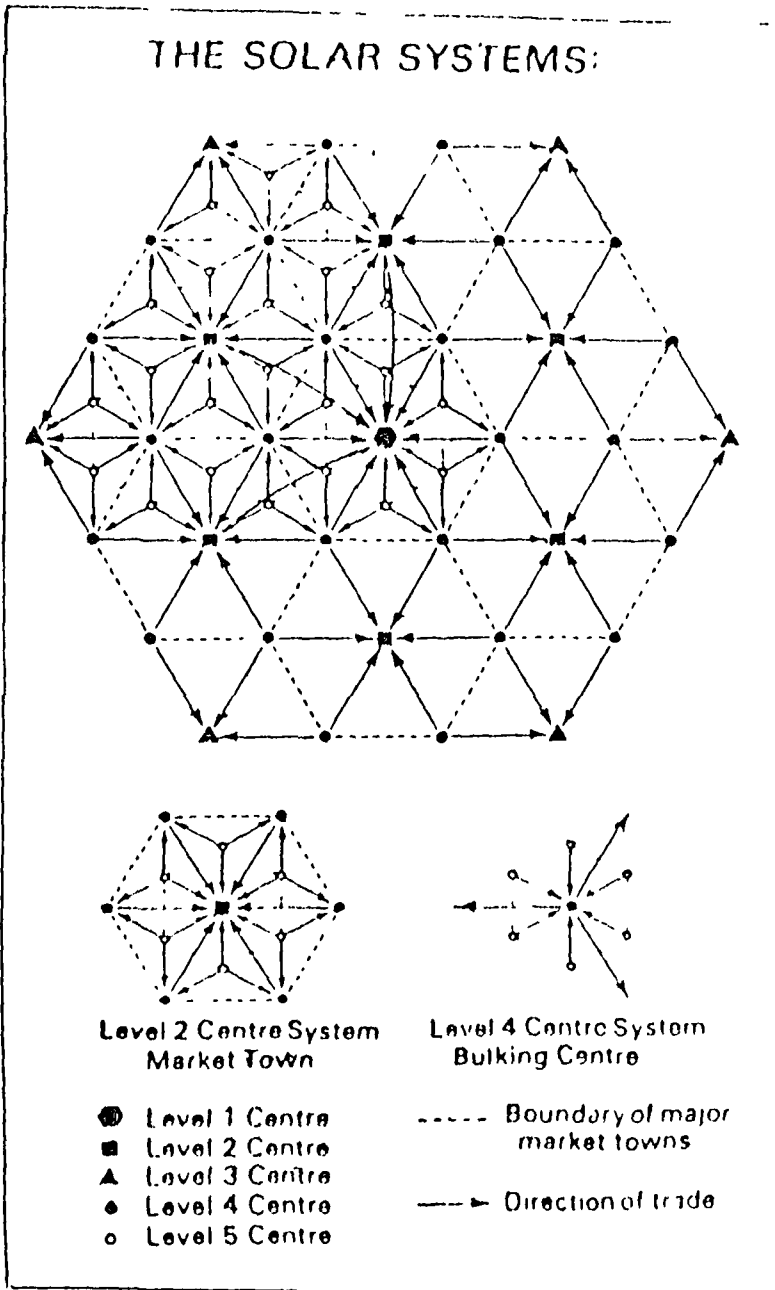
### **2.4. Spatial Structure System of Periodic Markets**

The periodic markets have definite spatial structure. the systematic analysis of periodic market system mainly

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32. Hodder, B.W. "Some Comment on the Origins of the Traditional Markets in Africa, South of Sahara", Transactions and Paper, IBG Vol. 36, pp. 97-105.

Fig 21



Source: Carol A. Smith (1972 b)

comes from the social scientist like social anthropologist, economist, historian and geographers. The three different structures of periodic markets have been suggested so far by different social scientists, i.e. (a) Solar System, (b) Dendritic System, (c) Intermeshed Marketing System.

(a) The idea of 'solar system' is primary a concept of social anthropologist who worked in the field of marketing particularly in Nigeria, Mexico, and Guatemala (Smith, Carol 1972).<sup>33</sup> The analogy of solar system reflects both hierarchical arrangement as well as functional specialisation of periodic markets. The main basis of this system is the natural law of the solar system. As moon revolves round the 'Sun' the trading activity revolves around hierarchically arranged system of markets. Here, 'Sun' is the regional administrative centre. (Fig. II.1).

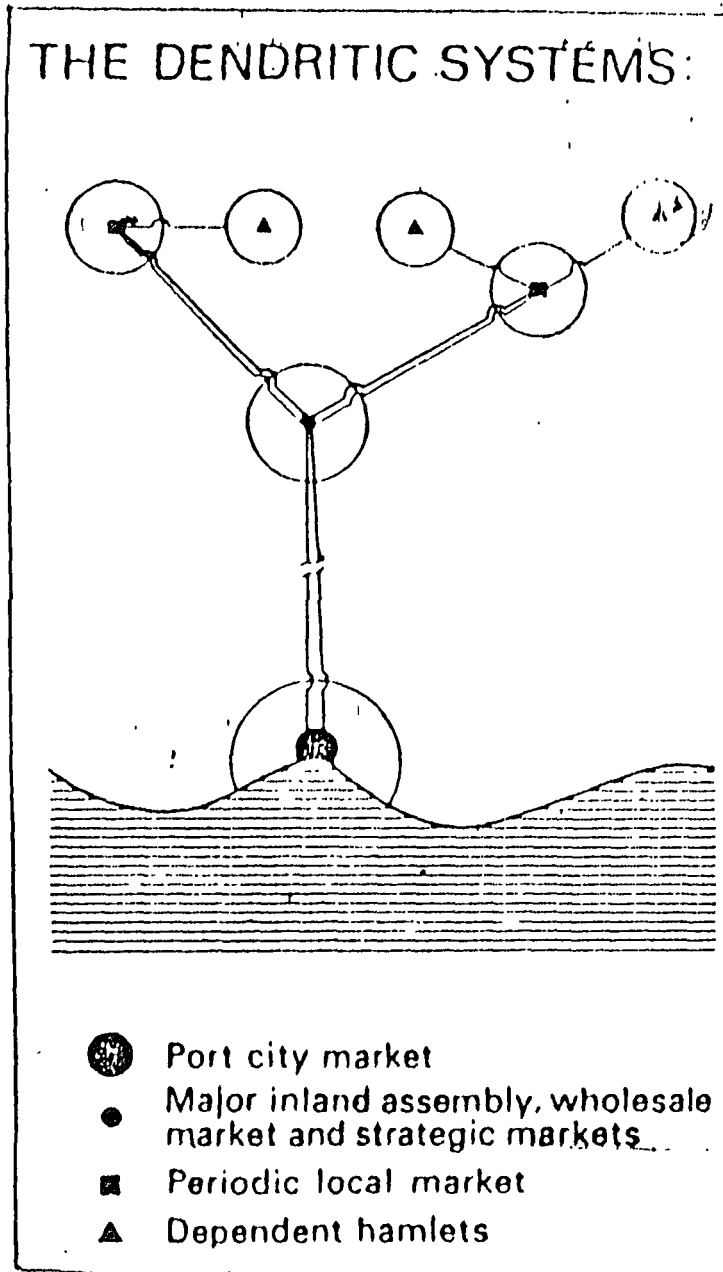
(b) The 'Dendritic System' is a simple one in which, Johnson<sup>34</sup> shows that the spatial arrangement of market is such that, lower order markets are linked a single highest order market through a few intermediary markets. Johnson,

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33. Smith, Carol A. "Economics of Marketing System: Models from Economic Geography", Annual Review of Anthropology, Vol. 3, pp. 167-201.

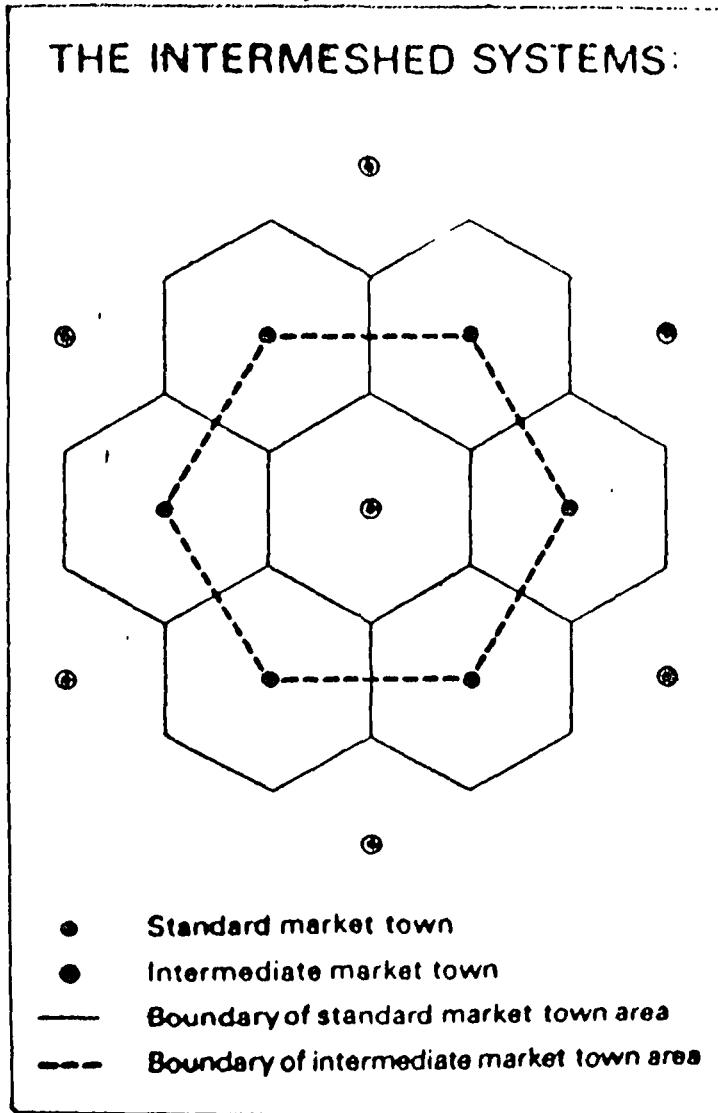
34. E.A.J. Johnson (1965). "Market Towns and Spatial Development in India". NCAER, New Delhi, pp. 44-51.

Fig. 2.2



Source : E.A.J. Johnson (1970)

Fig. 2.3



Source: G.W.Skinner(1964-65)

on the basis of his study of Mitz, Haitian markets suggested that higher order markets are both export-import point and centre of regional consumption and distribution. The intermediate 'Strategic' markets are interwoven with the highest order market by some form of quick transport. These points are so located, that it can make convenient for bulking export of rural product and breaking point of urban consumer's goods for distribution to rural areas, through rural order markets. (Fig. II.2).

c) 'The Intermashed Marketing System' is suggested by 'Skinner'<sup>35</sup> during his study of rural market in China. There, he "identified a system of three-tier exchange which is temporarily interlocking". The smallest unit being the standard rural market, there are two other units located above it are 'Intermediate market', and a 'central market'. Skinner observed that, (a) there is a direct relationship between the levels of marketing activity and the size of population of a market. (b) His another important observation is that, raw materials in the marketing system moves up the level of the hierarchy, whereas the consumer goods move down from the urban centre. The 'standard market' is the point, where upward movement starts and downward movement terminates. (Fig. II.3).

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35. G.W. Skinner (1964-65). "Marketing and Social Structure in China", Journal of Asian Studies, Vol. 24, pp.3-45.

**CHAPTER - III**

**EVOLUTION OF PERIODIC MARKETS IN**  
**NORTH EAST INDIA**

## EVOLUTION OF PERIODIC MARKETS IN

### NORTH EAST INDIA

#### 3.1. Emergence of Periodic Markets in the N.E. Region

(The genesis and development of periodic market is a long drawn process and involves interplay of a complexity of factors, historical, economic and social.) As outlined earlier, there are two theoretical positions regarding the origin of periodic markets, i.e. (a) the 'evolutionary model' and (b) the 'contactual origin model'. (The evolutionary model, deals with the gradual emergence of surplus and crop specialisation in a peasant society leading to emergence of 'economic exchange'. The mode of exchange initially, could be in form of barter and later, money economy. The 'contactual origin' model proposes the emergence of periodic markets as a product of periodic contact between two societies with different levels of economic development and societal evolution and basic parameters governing their economies.) The essential logic in the system is that under a given socio-economic system, say the peasant formations, the subsistence requirements are met within the system and demand on additional goods and services are limited to the given level of knowledge and information. For example, there was no demands for firearms by the American Indians prior to the Europeans introduced them. It is at the contact points between different cultures, that new products and

technologies are shown and demand for them are generated in cultures not producing them. And thus, trading operates between the two cultures, initially irregularly but later on a regular basis at fixed locations. There exist ample historical evidences, world over, to prove this position.

(The North Eastern Region of India provides a classic situation for study of the 'contactual origin' model due to the historical co-existence of a number of valley based peasant societies and the hunting-gathering and quasi-agriculture based tribal societies surrounding these valleys. Moreover, international trade in this area was also common due to the 'relative accessibility' of the Great Himalayas and evidences of long trade relations between Tibet, Burma and Thailand with the region are available.)

(In the North Eastern Region, there are four valley areas, i.e. Brahmaputra valley, Barak valley, Imphal valley and the Tripura plains.) The total plain and valley areas account for about one-third of the total geographical area of the region. The rest are hills and plateaus. For the past one thousand years or so, the valleys were dominated by peasant societies, practising wet paddy cultivation, but at a subsistence level. Due to the dense jungle, inhospitable climate and inaccessibility, the rivers, (particularly the great Brahmaputra provided possibly the only route

of contact between the peasants of the valleys and also to some extent with the hill tribes. The level of surplus generation was low and so also the level of monetisation. The valley societies were also frequently subjected to loot and pillage by many hill tribes and invaders from outside.) This had led to instability in the population situation and level of production, although fertile land was available in abundance. Therefore, (emergence of trade within and between the peasant societies was little and if, at all occasional.)

In the Middle Ages, some semblance of political stability, as was provided by the Ahom rulers, led to some prosperity of the peasants. On the other hand, (the valleys which were earlier inhabited by various tribes of Indo-Tibetan, Indo-Burmese and Shan groups and were peasants, came under distinct Indo-Aryan cultural influences from the east as was seen later by the conversion of the Ahom Kings into Hinduism.) This also led to introduction of trade and money economy as was prevalent in the Pan-Indian peasant cultures elsewhere. (The Kings encouraged trade, since a portion of trade profits came to them too.) (Some international trade with the region, particularly by the Lamas from Tibet was going on.) With coming of the Ahoms and the consequent political stability in the valleys, came gradual

economic prosperity, generation of surplus and development of social institutions, townships, taxation and trade. However, apart for sporadic conflicts, the hill tribes surrounding the valleys remained more or less in autarchy. These were simple societies under a transition from 'hunting-gathering stage' to sedentary farming (mostly shifting agriculture) and being essentially subsistence societies had little to trade. (Hill Tribes They could occasionally trade with forest produce like ivory or animal hides with the plains people in exchange for animals (meat) or salt and iron, which was gradually getting currency among the tribals in uses in arms and hand tools.) (This stage, from the point of view of development periodic markets may be called the first stage.)

(With the growing stability in the Brahmaputra valley under the Ahoms and therefore, prosperity in the volume of internal trade increased and along with that the degree of monetisation in the economy (Silver was frequently used as a medium of exchange). The social evolution within the tribals and their gradual exposure to the riches of the Ahoms and discovery of salt and limestone mines along borders of Ahom and Naga territories led to demands of various types within the tribal societies, particularly those of animals for meat and iron implements. Thus, at the geogra-

interface of these cultures started regulated and periodic transactions, later taking form of periodic markets. This may be called the second phase of the evolution of periodic market in the region.) In fact, some historical data is available on this stage and rightfully, anything for sure can be said from this period onwards.

However, all the tribal communities in the region were neither at the same stage of social evolution nor lived in similar environment conditions nor the technological level. For example, (the tribes of Meghalaya, especially the Khasis being located in an easily accessible plateau in the interface of two great riverine - peasant societies, ~~those of the Brahmaputra valley~~ and the Surma valley (to the south) were long exposed to other valley cultures, technologies and trade, the Khasis being the contact men between the two valley civilizations. They emerged as a substantial trading community. In fact, due to availability of iron ore (low grade) and charcoal from the plentiful wood, iron and steel became one of the chief export items of Khasi Hills to the entire region.)

(In the third phase market development in the North Eastern Region began the (metropolitan) market economies into the region which also affected the patterns of the production, degree of monetisation and the nature of the

space economy. In this phase many commercial crops were introduced in the region (like potato) plantation agriculture, the most modern form of agriculture which made inroads in a big way. Introduction of railways, increase in river transport and trading, opening of new road connections, stationing of British troops and development of garrison towns and emergence of a network of towns in the region led to increasing demand on the rural produce and thus, development of a network of rural periodic markets in the region. With the consolidation of the British Rule in the region, and political stability due to extension of the colonial administration, trade flourished.

In the fourth and the final phase, markets were further consolidated after Independence. Though the colonial economic exploitation of the region was temporarily stemmed, the partition affected a large number of trading points and market along the Indo-Bangladesh (erstwhile, East Pakistan) particularly affecting the farmers of the neighbouring areas. Meghalaya (erstwhile districts of Khasi-Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills) was specifically affected. Moreover, the colonial economic formation continued unabated. For example, the economics of a frontier economy, as was the case with Assam continued despite the political independence. The import dependence on manufactured products from the rest

of the country and export dependence of essentially primary produce like forest products, mineral oil, coal etc. continued.)

### ✓ 3.2. Origin of Periodic Markets in Meghalaya

Meghalaya was best known for her forest, cotton and mineral products from the ancient days. There are evidences of good trade relations between Burma, Sylhet, Calcutta and Assam with Meghalaya. Different mountain passes or duars were the main route for commercial relations. (Fig.3.3).

The early trade relations offer a hazy picture, partly because of low density of population, quasi-nomadism and shifting cultivation. Tribal people preserved nomadism till early part of the fifteenth century. Trade and commerce continued by local barter activities.<sup>1</sup>

The principal items of daily necessities, rice and salt were scarce in the hills, because it was not produced locally and hence the tribes were entirely dependent on the trade with the plains and from where alone the supplies of those articles could be obtained. The forest

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1. W.W. Hunter (1879). "A Statistical Account of Assam", B.R. Publishing Corporation, Delhi, Vol. II, pp.205-220.

products had no local market and hence of very insignificant value in the hills, but in the plains they had demand.

(Establishment of markets for exchange of articles was felt, therefore, necessary. Incipient trading emerged at the foothills of the plateau, both to the south of the plateau, both to the south of the plateau as well as along the Brahmaputra valley to the north. These markets were called 'hats' to which hill products were transported in basket, slung on human backs.)

A.B. Lish observed that Khasi 'Merchant Kings' used to take up their residence in the villages near the frontier of Sylhet to take full advantage of trade with the plains. Such were the cases the Chiefs or the Rajas of Jaintia and Khyrim, the largest of the Khasi states.<sup>2</sup> (The principal hats in the plains of Sylhet to which the Khasis and Syntengs resorted for trade were Pandu, Punatit in the Lower Pargana and Jaintiapur. In the eighteenth century Pandu at the foot of the Khasi Hills was fast growing into a market for trade with the Khasis. On the Assam side of Khasi Jaintia Hills the traditional market for trade with the hillmen were Burdwar, Rani and Sonapura.)

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2. Promatha Nath Dutta. Impact of the West on the Khasi and Jaintias, pp. 13-15.

(At those hats and bazars, a brisk barter trade used to be carried on between the plains and hills. Currency was not totally unknown. On the Sylhet frontier, cowri-chells was used as currency and employed as a medium of exchange.)

But the Raja of Jaintia issued some debased money called 'Kattrataka' (sword rupees) which was however, in very limited circulation. The bulk of the trade was therefore carried on by barter.<sup>3</sup>

The foregoing narrative of the Khasi Jayantia economy revealed that it was in the simplest stage, scarcely on the subsistence level. The Jaintias were probably slightly better because of their comparatively advanced agriculture, but Khasis had fewer opportunities.

(It is not known when coins were for the first time used as a medium of exchange in north-east India. In early times, when the value of an article was measured in terms of commodities, all business transactions were carried out by a system of barter, and as in other parts of India (as shown by early literature), animals like cattle, animal skins, garments, rice, cowries, etc. were used for barter.

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3. Promatha Nath Dutta, Op.cit., pp. 21-23.

The evidence of trading relations through barter was the only medium of exchange. The people of the plains also were accustomed to carry on their commercial transactions with the help of barter even long after the circulation of coins.)

The interior of the hills, the Garo clans were independent of one another and of any outside control; but those in the border areas were under the nominal control of the zamindars in the plains. The important estates bordering the Garo Hills were Karaibari, Kalumalupara, Mechapara and Habraghat in Rongpur and Susung and Sherpur in Mymensing districts of Bengal. Besides, there was Bijni in the Eastern Duars.

(Cotton was the staple produce of the Garo Hills and the most important article of internal trade in Eastern India.) The zamindars and the 'Bengalee' merchants carried on a lucrative cotton trade with the Garos.<sup>4</sup>

(The interest of the zamindars was mainly economic. They established markets in the low lands.) The trade in cotton, agar, elephants, timber and other indigenous articles was so lucrative that the zamindars had pitched a string of hats at the hill passes in their respective estates.

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4. J.B. Bhattacharjee. The Garos and the English, pp.18-21.

Besides, periodic fairs were held to attract the hillmen as well as the 'Bengalee' traders. While the traders paid the tax in cash and kind, the Garos paid the duty only in kind.

(Due to illiteracy, absence of trading centres in the hills, difficulties of communication etc., the Garos continued to be dependent on the hats in the plains. They bartered the produces of their hills for daily necesscities with the merchants of Bengal at the frontier hats. The important markets were located at Nibari, Luckichar, Jerrch, Singimiri, Damrah, Rangjuli, Rajaballa, Bengalkhatta, Tikri, Salmara, Mankachar, Bahadur Khatta, Putimari and Parakhaslana in Goalpara and Kakripara, Mahendraganj, Baigunbari, Nalitbari, Haluaghat, Phulbari, Dalu, Ghosegaon, Durgapur and Nashipur in Mymensing.<sup>5)</sup>)

(The principal articles for export were cotton and lac. Besides birds, monkeys, chillies, ginger and honey were also exported in limited quantities.)

(Markets played vital role in affecting the growth of the economy. They formed strong and stable centres for transactions and exchanges of goods. They had other cultural

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5. J.B. Bhattacharjee, op.cit., pp. 205-207.

functions also. Many markets sprang up since time immemorial.) On the border such as Borkhat, Khoroh, Moolagul, Majai or Bholaganj, Phali, Moheskhal, Balat, Ranikor, Nolikhat became the entrepots, while on the north, markets were situated at Gobha, Raha, Sonapur, Ranikudam, Lookie, Pantan, Bordwar, Boko and other places. (They were either weekly or bi-weekly marketing centres where plain traders visited them to supply goods to the hillmen while the latter, on their other part, disposed of their goods which again were to be transacted near and far.)

(The most important markets located outside Shillong are - Mairang, Laitryngew, Borkhat, Mawhati, Rymbai, Mawsynram, Jowai, Laitlyngkot, Mynose, Muktapur, Nongjri, Nongstoin, Shella, Nartiang, Lyngkyrdem, Mawkyrwat, Mawryngkneng, Rilang, Rangblang, Sutnga, Umden, Nongpoh, Mawdon, Shangpung, Pynursla, Smit, Tyrsad, Wahiajer, Lawbah, Laitkynsew, Iplem, Khuri, Langkhat, Rambrai, Markasa, Byrni, Dawki, Mawngap and Kynshi.) (Fig. 3.2).

### 3.3. Development of Marketing during the Colonial Period

The major impact of the Mughals on the north east generated extensive trade with Bengal. The commercial treaty concluded by Captain Welsh with Gaurinath Singh in February 1793 was the confirmation of existing Mughal trade system

by deploying Company's troops in the strategic commercial outposts of Assam.<sup>6</sup>

Among the frontier people, Khasis also maintained trade connections with Bengal through its southern borders. Unlike the Garos, the markets were under the control of Khasi Syiems or rulers whose territories extended into Mughal Sylhet of Bengal Subah. Further, the trading profession was carried both by males and females alike. Jayantia-pur the erstwhile capital of Jayantia rulers was the seat of distributon of all merchandise. Another commercial spot was Pandua in the Surma valley, close to the foothills of southern slope of the Khasi highlands. Agricultural products both from Jayantia kingdom and Khyrim state were carried partly by porters and then by country boats to many river ports. The Khasis were also probably tempted to utilise the river port of Laur that lay in the north-western part of Sarkar of Sylhet. Laur was visited by the traders of northern India too. The entire southern foothills of Jaintia and Khasi Hills and Garo Hills were capped with innumerable markets of which Bholaganj, Chattak, Bonatit (Laur), Malagul, Jagirpara, Halloghat etc., considered to be prominent.

The limestone and iron ore were the principal minerals that the Khasi-Jaintia hills possessed and traded

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6. Sushil Chandra Dutta. The North, East and the Mughals, pp. 168-176.

extensively an iron & steel and cotton of Garo Hills supplied to the neighbouring areas. The traders in Bengal imported those profit earning items. The Mughal authorities took active interest in limestone quarries and in course of time, assumed the monopoly of lime trade. Private traders of different European nationalities - English, Greek, Dutch, Portuguese, French and the Americans - crowded Sylhet to take advantage of the lucrative trade with Khasi-Jaintias and Khasi Hills also had a big market in medieval Assam. The merchants of European nationalities as well as of Mughal India were engaged in trade with Khasi-Jaintia Hills and took the advantage of the market at Jaintiapur for trading with the adjoining territories.<sup>7</sup>

Goalpara on the south bank and the Jagigopoha and Rangamati on the north, were the three eastern outposts of Bengal from where its merchants would transact their trade with the frontier officers of Assam. However, the Ahoms were always suspicious of foreign traders and as such no undue privileges were accorded to the trading agents of the Mughals. These trading centres were also visited by the European traders mainly the Portuguese.

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7. Op.cit., pp. 181-183.

A liaison officer of the Ahom government, called Duaria Barua was posted at the Assam Choky (Khandhar Choky) which was situated at the mouth of Manas river. He was empowered with special rights and discretionary powers in regulating trade with Bengal Subahs.<sup>8</sup>

Cachar had trade relations with Mughal. Bengal through Sarkar Sylhet as the main trading route to that port town which passed through Mughal area, a few miles south-east of Jayantiapur. When the capital town was shifted from Maibang to Khaspur during the early decades of the eighteenth century volume of trade was augmented through the river routes of Barak valley. The country was commercially important as the traders of Manipur, Mizos (Lushai) and Kukis would barter their respective products through the brokers of Cachar and the main venue of transaction was Jirighat and Sealtek.<sup>9</sup>

There was brisk trade between Sylhet and Manipur through Cachar in wax, ivory, silk and cotton and duties were levied by the Raja on the merchandise at the ghats. In the northern frontier there was extensive trade with Assam and the Nagas.<sup>10</sup>

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8. Ibid., pp. 184-185.

9. Ibid., pp. 186-187.

10. Ibid., pp. 189-191.

The trade activities of north-east India were significantly increased during the Mughal period. The 'merchandise trade surplus was generally in favour of Mughal India' and salt accounted for larger part of the imports into Ahom state.<sup>11</sup>

The East India Company had made its appearance in India as a trading concern. Taking the advantage of the disturbed political situation in the country, the Company departed from the pacifist policy laid down by Sir Thomas Roe, the English ambassador in the Mughal Court and manipulated influence in the Indian states.<sup>12</sup>

During the early years of British administration in Bengal, the authorities in Fort William were more interested in the promotion of commerce than in territorial acquisitions. The north eastern frontier was immensely rich in timber, gold, tuskers, ivory, wax, eri and muga, while the people in this region were dependent on Bengal for the supply of salt, copper and some other commodities. Goalpara on the south bank and Jogighopa on the north, were the eastern commercial station of Bengal where the Bengalee merchants carried on trade with their counterparts in Assam.

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11. Ibid., pp. 193-196.

12. J.B. Bhattacharjee, op.cit., pp. 24-26.

Col. James Ostend of the East India Company was the first European to trade with Assam. In 1755, the French East India Company undertook trade with Assam.

William Ford in May 1765, issued orders prohibiting the Company's servants indulging themselves in private trade. He also established a society of trade to deal in salt, betelnut and tobacco, the profits from which would be distributed among the Governor, Councillors and senior civil and military officers. However, in 1767, the Company relinquished its trade in betelnut and tobacco and confined itself to the salt trade. The Bengal salt had great demand in Assam and adjoining hill areas. A large number of European businessmen, visited 'hats' for the collection of cotton, and money economy slowly began to replace the barter system. The prices of the commodities rose steadily, zamindars wanted a monopoly of the whole volume of trade through bulk purchase from the Garos and then disposing of the collection to the non-Garo traders in the frontier. To keep the Garos away from the merchants some of the zamindars had also to take upon themselves the supply of the essential commodities to the Garo consumers by marketing purchases from businessmen in Bengal.<sup>13</sup>

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13. Ibid., pp. 26-28.

The prospects of the cultivation of cotton in the Garo Hills had in the mean time aroused some interest of the authorities in Mymensing. They were anxious to come to terms with the Garos to obtain the supply of these articles of the East India trade. In addition, the hills were rich in mineral deposits and forest products. But since the zamindars were actual collector, the government could have only a portion of cotton through the Sezwal. Not satisfied with the minor share, the local authorities wanted that the zamindars should be removed and the Sezwal should collect the public revenue of Garo Hills directly from the Chiefs. Accordingly, in the beginning of 1788, under instructions from the Governor General in Council, the collection of share or miscellaneous cesses were made illegal in Mymensing frontier. But, the government did not collect the dues from the hats, although the authorities had earlier demanded the Sezwal should collect the duties directly from the Garos. Consequently, the zamindars never ceased to collect the cesses, and in addition, they, levied Radhari or transit duties on every article of trade at all the passes leading to the hats and markets of Mymensing.

For the protection of the adjacent plains from the predatory raids, check posts were established in all the passes to the hills and a frontier in all the passes to

the hills and a frontier militia was raised from the tribesmen themselves. At the same time, several hats were established at the lowlands to promote intercourse between the people of the hills and plains.<sup>14</sup>

Cotton which was in larger demand in England, the government took upon itself the administration of the hats and regulation of the border trade. Several cotton marts were established at the passes where Garos would sell and barter cotton under strict supervision of Mahurir appointed by the government.

The government took advantage of the Garo cotton for supply to England, ever since the annexation of Garo Hills there could be no difficulty on the part of the government to encourage increase cultivation and to regulate the transactions through a well meaning - procurement policy. On the other hand, supply of cotton from the Garo Hills reduced in the later years. The export of lac was rather optimum in the seventies of 19th century, although the cultivation of lac was introduced by Williamson on an economic basis. The trade of lac was confined to markets at Damrah, Jeerah and Nibari.

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14. Ibid., pp. 35-48.

The township of Tura gradually increased in size and development as an important centre of trade in the hills. The bazar was capable of supplying the demands of the station and the adjoining villages. The dealers hailed from Dacca, Mymensing, Rangpur, Cooch-Bihar and Goalpara, and they occupied the better class of shops. The rest of the shopkeepers were the Nepalese and carried on a good trade in rice, dried fish, pig etc. The Garos of the higher ranges of the hills gradually stopped frequently the hats in the plains. A few hats also emerged in the lower hills and notable of them were at Bahadurkata, Bakla, and Sarramphang. The importance of frontier hats could, however, never be depreciated.<sup>15</sup>

The British contacts with the Khasis started with the accession to the Diwani of Bengal in 1765. Living as they did in comparative isolation in their mountain strongholds, little is known of them by outside world. However, the end of the 18th century saw raids and aggressions of these hillmen & harried the plains on the north and south of the district. Necessities of commerce arising from the Khasi monopoly of the lime quarries, attracted European enterprise of Khasi Hills.<sup>16</sup> These ultimately led to contacts

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15. B.C. Allen. Imperial Gazetteer, Eastern Bengal of Assam, p. 481.

16. W.W. Hunter, A Statistical Account of Assam, Vol. II, pp.205-206.

of the Khasis with the English East India Company which resulted in a more active British interest in these hills. Goodwill and friendship were soon cultivated between the British and the Khasis as the commercial intercourse was found to be mutually convenient. This was further, necessitated by the involvement of the British in the Burmese of 1824,<sup>17</sup> in which British needed the cooperation of the Khasi states. By the end of the first quarter of the 19th century, Assam had become an integral part of the East India Company's territories.<sup>18</sup> Though trade transactions and conquests, the Khasi settlements had extended to the plains of Assam and Sylhet.<sup>19</sup> The Khasi Syiems exercised control over Duars, and some of the Khasi states covered extensive lands in the plains. By this time David Scott, the British Political Agent of the north-east province was impressed by the coolm and healthy climate of the hills. He also soon found out that the hills are suitable for the cultivation of many European crops like potatoes, turnips, beet roots,

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17. P.C. Chowdhury, The History of Civilization of Assam to the Twelfth Century, pp. 368-380.

18. S.K. Bhuyan, Early British Relation with Assam, p.28.

19. A.J.M. Mills, Report on the Province of Assam, 1854, see letter from Lt. Col. Jenkins to A.J.M. Mills, No. 309 of 1853, Part II, pp. CXX and CXXI.

wheat etc. But most important of all, David Scott felt the need of a proper road through the hills which will connect the two important British headquarters - Gauhati and Sylhet - for the smooth running of the British administration. Thus, he eventually concluded a treaty with Tiroi Singh, the Syiem of Nongkhlaw in 1826, the first treaty with a Khasi Chief, by which he obtained permission for the construction of this road through Tiroi Singh's territory.

#### **3.4. Expansion and Consolidation of Markets in the Modern Phase**

Trade incentives have considerably dwindled after the British occupation of Assam, more or so, after the inception of Shillong as the provincial headquarters, for since then, the new trade patterns have come to emerge and stayed on. Thus the new landmarks were caused which emerged also from a network of buildings that came into existence. The principal economic pattern became drastically changed since the bulk of supplies was to be drawn from outside in respect of those not available locally. With these came into picture the new food habits, new styles of buildings, new furnitures and household goods, new groceries and utensils, new dress patterns, use of textile products, other things of wide range in which some of the old values became discarded to make room for new ones. A convergence of trade patterns, modern and traditional occurred in which this

new capital attracted and housed streams of trading communities who were more skilled in operating inter-district trade whereas a bulk of the local trade survived side by side. Thus, new factors of production and mode of distribution came into picture. The situation was that some local products enroute to Shillong were transacted outside by a trading community whereas towards the south, local traders themselves (with a few exceptions) reached bulk of goods into the plain markets.

The system as it had come on to stay had not entirely squeezed out the local or traditional modes of production and distribution. To a new entrepot at Shillong headquarters came batches of local traders from all nooks and corners of this country to dispose of their products and crops for both district and inter-district trade, in the shape of timber, baskets and village crafts (implements, tools, accessories) fish, meat, turmeric, garlic, ricecakes, lac, various fruits and vegetables other several hill products, and drew supply of things such as textile goods, groceries, utensils, foodstuffs, medicines, building materials, stationeries and others from Barabazar and Police Bazar, the local products at the same time being channelised for distribution through the various agencies. This occurred more on weekly market days. We see that principal products inclu-

ding potato, broomsticks, 'tez' leaf and timber are daily deposited into the Shillong godowns and the other merchants transact them in town. These business transactions were accumulating force and reflected the new dimensions also.

3.5. The foregoing discussions indicate the nature of genesis and evolution of periodic markets and market system of Meghalaya. The paucity of written records and historical data on the Khasi trading system in medieval and colonial India makes it difficult to conclude anything positively the nature and extent of trade. But, there are indications enough, to hold on to the 'contactual genesis' model of market development in the region. In summarising, few points need mention:

1. In the initial stages periodic markets emerged at the spatial interface of the two culture areas, the hills and the valley societies, both to the north and the south of the Meghalaya plateau.

2. Once the initial trading system got consolidated, the entire plateau became the interface between two great valley cultures, between the Brahmaputra valley & the Surma valley cultures. Therefore, the pattern of trading changed to a 'passage system' between the two valleys.

3. During the colonial period, the hill was opened up and new products and crops were introduced, but many of the older products disappeared like the iron making by the Khasis, due to cheap availability of the British steel. Trade was considerably internised and monetised. This led to integration of the traditional tribal society with the larger world economy.

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**CHAPTER - IV**

**STRUCTURE OF THE PERIODIC MARKET**