

THE RIANGS OF TRIPURA

By

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CONTENTS

				PAGE
	PREFACE	i
	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
CHAPTER				
I	THE ENVIRONMENTS	1
II	INTRODUCING THE RIANGS	...	...	5
III	ECONOMIC LIFE	...	...	16
IV	SOCIAL LIFE	...	...	34
V	RELIGIOUS BELIEFS & PRACTICES	...	...	66
VI	ADMINISTRATION & POLITICS	...	...	75
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	...	...	80
	LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	...	...	87
	PLATES	...	...	88

FOREWORD

In Tripura there are a large number of tribal communities who have a rich cultural heritage. With the onward march of history, the ways of life of the tribal communities are fast changing, as in the case of all other sections of the population.

2. The information about the customs and manners, rites and rituals and various aspects of the ways of life is still not adequate. In fact, it is to be remembered that the ways of life of the tribals are indeed very progressive as evidenced by absence of social hierarchy and large measures of equality and liberty.

3. Preparation of monograph of each on the tribal communities on a systematic and scientific basis is, therefore, very necessary for any modern administration. In this context, the monograph prepared by Dr. Gan Chowdhuri meets a long felt demand. The monograph covers all aspects of life of the Reang Community of Tripura and analyses their past and present.

4. The book will be of immense help to the administration and to the community alike. It is hoped that it will be studied carefully by all those concerned with administration and tribal life.

5. Dr. Jagadish Gan Chowdhuri deserves the gratitude of the Government for his valuable contribution.

S. R. Sankaran
Chief Secretary,
Government of Tripura.

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P R E F A C E

Tripura is a tiny and hilly State in the north-east corner of India. Its population is heterogenous. Diverse ethnic elements can be traced in it. The Bengalees and the Tripuris are the two major communities. The greater Tripuri community consists of a number of tribes, such as Tipra, Rieng, Jamatia, Noatia, Uchai, Halam, Kuki, Lushai, Garo, Mog, Chakma etc. Whereas the Bengalees immigrated from the west, the Tripuris immigrated from the north-east in various waves and in different times.

The Tipras are the largest tribe who ruled Tripura for several centuries. The Riengs are the second largest tribe. Historically the relation between these two major tribes is one of both conflict and co-operation. They all have a rich cultural heritage. There are both similarities and differences between the Tipra and the Rieng cultural patterns. Their life patterns are now in a state of transition owing to acculturation and other factors.

While a comprehensive study about the Tipra culture and history has already been made by the present author, no such work has yet been done on the Riengs. There are, of course, casual references to the Riengs in the Gazetteers, Census Reports, Administrative Reports, memoirs, and the *Rajmala*. Popular writings in the forms of monographs, booklets, school text books journals and magazines also contain inadequate description of the Rieng life. Thus something has been said, but vast remains unrecorded. This dissertation is an humble attempt at faithfully presenting the Rieng culture and history as systematically as has been possible.

The methods adopted are participation, observation, seeking answers to questionnaire, preliminary knowledge of their language, field survey not only among the Rieng but also among the cognate communities and consultation of books, journals, records and reports.

The mass of data thus collected have been compiled in six Chapters. Chapter I contains a brief description of the natural and social environment within which the Rieng culture operates. The Riengs have been introduced in Chapter II. The history of their migration and movement, their numerical strength and distribution, their ethnic identity and language are all dealt with in this Chapter. The third Chapter is on economic activities right from gat-

hering, hunting, fishing, *jooming* to plough cultivation and white-collar jobs. The fourth Chapter narrates their social life, settlement pattern and housing, food and drink, marriage and kinship, dress and ornaments, dormitory, dance and folklore. Their religious beliefs and practices, animism, fertility rites, magic and worship of deities are included in the fifth Chapter. The sixth Chapter describes the composition and functions of the ancient village council. No epilogue or concluding Chapter has been added because at the end of almost all the Chapters summaries and observations of the respective Chapter have been noted. In spite of all possible care, it is not unlikely for mistakes and errors to creep in. In such cases, the author offers apology in advance and assures immediate correction whenever attention is drawn to.

J. Gan-Chaudhuri

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