

**THE JAMATIYAS
OF
TRIPURA**

By

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GOVERNMENT OF TRIPURA.

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FOREWORD

This monograph on "The Jamatiyas" is another addition to our publications. The Directorate of Research have earlier published monographs on the Kukis, the Noatias, the Kalais, the Kaipemgs, the Uchais and the Reangs etc.

2. This monograph contains not only a very detailed analysis of social life and community organisation but also an intensive study of some of the Jamatiya villages. There being very few studies on the Jamatiyas earlier, it is hoped that this will be very useful for various purposes both for the Government and for the people, who are interested to know about the customs and manners, rites and rituals and various aspects of the ways of life of the Jamatiyas. In this context, the monograph prepared by Shri Prodip Nath Bhattacharjee will meet a long felt demand.

3. Shri Prodip Nath Bhattacharjee deserves gratitude of the Government for his valuable contribution.

Agartala,
1-2-1984.

S. R. Nandy,
Director of Research,
Government of Tripura.

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P R E F A C E

For a long time I worked as a teacher in the neighbourhood of the localities inhabited by the Kolois and the Jamatiyas. I have already written a sort of introductory book on the Kolois entitled 'Lokobritter Alope Kolo Sampraday' (Published by the Directorate of Research, Government of Tripura in 1980). Lokobritter Alope Kolo Sampraday (Kolvis in the light of Peoples history) is my humble attempt to depict the social life of the Kolois a sub-tribe of Tripura.

During this period the community life of the Jamatiyas, their traditional pattern of administration and their religious, rites and functions etc. also used to interest me constantly. My association with the Jamatiyas infused in me a sense of appreciation for their customs and manners. I came to believe that no welfare activities can succeed if they are not in consonance with the existing social, economic and political milieu of the people they aims at. This demands a scientific study of the people involved. Leaving apart the question of a scientific study on the Jamatiyas, not even an ordinary book about them is in existence.

I began to collect the materials of this book to fulfil the want of an introductory book on the Jamatiyas. This has no claim for a Scientific study on the Jamatiyas.

This book was written within the time limit (six months) set by the Director of Research and is therefore, not an exhaustive and adequate account of the Jamatiyas. It attempts to give a general account of the Jamatiyas briefly touching the Social political and religious fringe of their life. A sociological study of some Jamatiya villages has been included in this book to show the changes that have come over their economic, social and political life in recent years.

This book is mainly based on the primary data collected during the field studies under taken by me. The socio-religious activities described in this book is an out cutcome of the year-round calendar type studies done by me in the Jamatiya villages.

I have received a lot of help, encouragement and suggestions from many persons in writing this book. I regret my inability to acknowledge my debt to all of them individually.

(ii)

I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Shri K. R. Bhattacharjee, Director of Research whose active interest in all research undertakings regarding the tribes of Tripura has been a constant source of inspiration to me.

I can never hope to measure in words my indebtedness to Professor Bela Dutta Gupta of the Calcutta University for her keen interest in my work.

I am also very grateful to Shri Jitendrajit Singh, of Dhaleswar who has gone through the manuscript.

In my field study I was actively helped by Shri Naba Kishore Jamatiya and Shri Chaitanyahari Jamatiya of Burburia, Shri Brajamohan Jamatiya of Karaimura, Shri Siddhi Pada Jamatiya, Shri Lalit Jamatiya and Shri Rebati Jamatiya of Silighati, Shri Madhuprem Jamatiya of Nagrai, Shri Nirodhan Jamatiya of Twibaklay and Shri Ganesh Kalai Singha of Jantranapara. I am deeply indebted to them for their sincere co-operation in my work.

I would also like to offer my thanks to Shri Khagendra Jamatiya of Khamarbari and Shri Krishnadhan Jamatiya of Hatay-Kusuk who helped me by providing information on various aspects of the Jamatiya culture.

I am specially thankful to Shri Debapriya Deb Barma, Linguistic Officer to the Directorate of Research for his co-operation at all times.

I would like to offer my thanks to Shri M. Ram Gopal Singh, Shri Ramaprasad Dutta (Paltuda), Shri Ratan Krishna Acharyya, Shri Amarendra Deb Barma, Shri Sambhu Deb Barma, Shri Dharendra Deb Barma, Shri Nagendra Jamatiya, Shri Debbrata Chakraborty, Shri Prodip Roy, and Dhrubojoyti Dutta for the help and encouragement I received from them in writing this book.

I shall consider my labour amply rewarded if this book is found helpful in any manner to the researchers in this field.

Agartala,
3.9.83.

Prodip Nath Bhattacharjee.

A KEY TO PRONUNCIATION OF NON-ENGLISH WORDS :

The letters with certain marks above them in some cases are pronounced as shown below :

O, o sounds like 'O' as in English 'hot'

A, a	„	„	„	'a'	„	„	„	„	'art'
I, i	„	„	„	'i'	„	„	„	„	'bit'
u	„	„	„	'oo'	„	„	„	„	'book'
e	„	„	„	'e'	„	„	„	„	'bed'
ay	„	„	„	'y'	„	„	„	„	'my'

Yng sounds some what like ng as in English sing.

W „ „ „ 'a' as in English 'account'

Uw „ „ „ 'o' „ „ „ 'go'

N after 'a' vowel generally stands for nasalization.

Signs and Symbols :

+ Joining of two words or syllables.

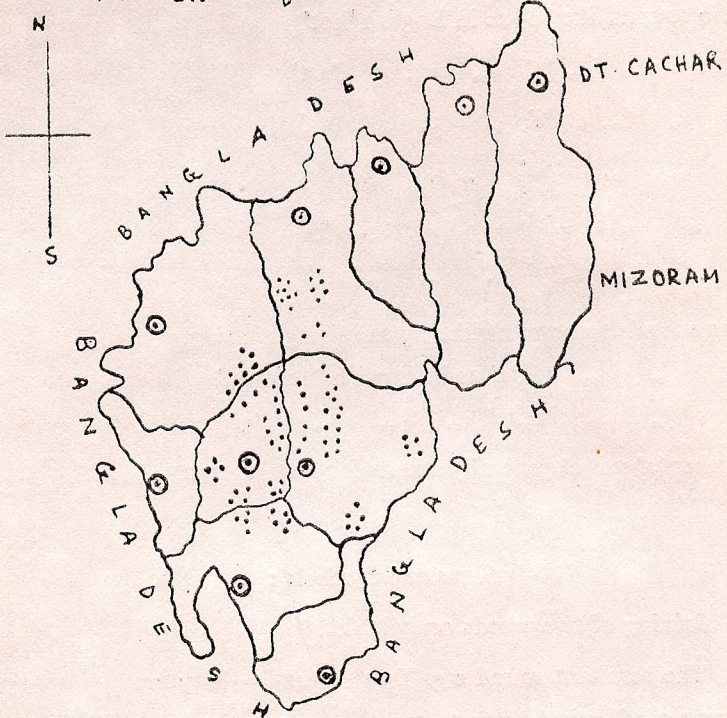
= The resultant sound e.g. Twy + tum = Twytum

/ or e.g. *Chamwrwy tisamanni|Chamwrwy tisamwng.*


Chamwrwy tisamanni or *Chamwrwy tisamwng*


TRIPURA

PRINCIPAL JAMATIYA HABITATIONS



REFERENCES

Sub-Divisional H.Q. : 

Jamatiya Villages : 

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Jamatiyas, one of the nineteen tribes of Tripura live largely in Udaipur and Amarpur Sub-Divisions of South Tripura District, and Khowai of West Tripura District. A few numbers of them are also found in the Sadar Sub-division of West Tripura district. They hold the third position in respect of numerical strength among the 19 tribes of Tripura.

According to the Census Report of 1971, the total population of the Jamatiyas in Tripura is 34,192 which is 7.59% of the total tribal population of the state.

The Survey Report of Hill Tipperah of 1874-75 by W.W. Hunter also shows that the Jamatiya tribe was holding the third position in respect of numerical strength. The following table indicates numerical position of the Jamatiya tribe in comparison with other tribes of Tripura.

Table-I
1874-75

Name of the Tribe	Numerical strength :
1. Tipperah	27,148
2. Jamatiyas	3,000
3. Nowatias	2,144
4. Riangs	2,435
5. Halams	5,577

According to the Census Report of 1901, 1911 and 1961 the total population of the Jamatiya tribe was :

TABLE-II

Persons during the Census Year :		
1901	1911	1961
490	178	24,359

According to the Census Report of Tripura of 1931 the total population of the Jamatiyas was 11,090. The following table of 1931 shows the settlement of the Jamatiyas in various Sub-Divisions of Tripura.

TABLE-III

Centre	Total Population	Male	Female
1	2	3	4
Agartala	1 (0.01%)	1 (100%)	
Sadar	613 (5.53%)	323 (52.69%)	290 (47.31%)
Sonamura	877 (7.91%)	438 (49.94%)	439 (50.06%)
Udaipur	5,028 (45.34%)	2,514 (50%)	2,514 (50%)
Amarpur	3,091 (27.87%)	1,587 (51.34%)	1,508 (48.79%)
Khowai	1,452 (13.09%)	756 (52.07%)	696 (47.93%)
Kailashahar	2 (0.02%)	1 (50%)	1 (50%)
Dharmanagar	26 (0.23%)	14 (53.85%)	12 (46.15%)
Sabroom			
Belonia			
Total :	11,090 (100%)	5,634 (50.80%)	5,456 (49.20%)

The above table shows that Udaipur Sub-Division tops the list and next to Udaipur come Amarpur, Khowai, Sonamura and Sadar Sub-Divisions in that order.

In the census Report of 1971, it is found that South Tripura District has the largest Jamatiya population, with 27,337 and next to it comes, West Tripura District with 6,644 while North Tripura District has only 171.

Nomenclature :

There are controversies regarding the origin of the term Jamatiya. It is mentioned in the book "Tribes of Tripura" that from the etymology 'Jamat'—

which in Bengali/Urdu means assemblage, the tribe name Jamatiya is supposed to have been derived. Some believe that the Jamatiyas were recruited in the army which was called Jamat and subsequently came to be known as Jamatiyas.

In this connection the views of Somendra Chandra Deb Barma and Omesh Saigal are worth mentioning here. In the book entitled 'Tripura Rajaer Census Bibarani' 1931, Somendra Deb Barma states that"

"The Jamatiyas in the past served in the army of Tripura. The word Jamat means a group or a congregation of people. The army which was formed by them was called jamat. Since then they have been known as Jamatiyas".

Omesh Saigal holds the view that 'Jamat in Urdu means an assemblage of persons. The former rulers of Tripura used to recruit his army from a class of Tribals who were not only warriors but also has proved their loyalty to him. A fair proportion of his (sic) armed forces were drawn from amongst the Jamatiyas who formed a group in his (sic) army, and it was from this fact that they derived their clan name.

In the opinion of others, the term jamatiya is derived from the word 'Jama' which means tax and *twiya* meaning not to bear the burden of. They hold the opinion that as the Jamatiyas were serving in the army, they were allowed to enjoy these privileges.

The above mentioned view is also supported by the statement of W.W. Hunter. He asserts that "the Jamatiyas are the fighting caste of Tipperahs and are well fitted for jungle warfare. They are exempted from all forced coolie labour, a privilege of which they are very tenacious and the infringement of which was the cause of a sanguinary rebellion some years ago".

Yet another group of elder persons of the Jamatiya community are of the opinion that when *Pub Narayan* (a legendary hero of the Jamatiya community) brought the image of *Biyagwang Goriya* (one of the popular deities of the Jamatiyas) from the land of Kukis by exhibiting great valour and presented it to the king, the king ordered him to worship the deity in a jamayet i.e. in an assemblage and since then those persons who are worshipping the image of *Goriya* in a group came to be known as Jamatiyas.

One is apt to find contradiction in these seemingly opposite views. But the words *Joma*, *Jomat* and *jomayet* came from the same language, that is Arabic and are related to military service rendered by the Jamatiyas. So the three opinions as mentioned above form a paradox which itself is a pointer to the fact that the term jamatiya is not an ancient one and so also the Tribe. The influence of Arabic became prominent in this region during the rule of the Nawabs of Bengal only. The continuous fighting between the kings of Tripura and the Muslim rulers of Bengal paved gradually the way for this Arabic language to penetrate to Tripura thus casting its influence to a great extent.

Ethnic origin of the Jamatiyas :

According to suhash chottopadhay, a noted linguist, the following eight tribes namely, the Tipra, Ring, Jamatiya, Noatiya, Rupini, Koloï, Ulchoi and Murasing belong to a one and undivided group. Their spoken language is *Kagbarak*. *Kagbarak* belongs to the Bodo branch of the Tibeto-Burman language group.

Regarding the ethnic origin of the Jamatiyas, the earlier authors have described them as a branch of the Tripuri tribe in their classification of the Tripuris.

R. H. Sneyed Hutchinson is of the opinion that "The Tippera in the Chiittagong Hill Tracts number 23,341 and are scattered through-out the district. This tribe is also called Tripura and is divided into two classes, the Purna or Tippera proper and the Jamatiyas.

In the Census Report of 1901 E.A. Gait states that the Tipperas are divided into Purn or Tipra proper and the Jamatiyas.'

In the classification of the Tipperahs, Edward Tuite Dalton states that 'The tribes of Tipperahs are four in number—Rajbangsi, Nowatyahs, Jomatias (sic) and Reyanges.

In describing the origin of the Jamatiyas—Kailash Chandra Singha holds the view that 'they are a pure branch of the Tripuris. They were the main army of Tripura during the ancient period.

In this context E.A. Gait is of the opinion that 'From them the Tipra kings formally recruited their fighting men.'

Omesh Saigal holds the view that 'They were given a special position amongst the tribals and were exempted from *Ghar Chuktis* (House tax) and given settlement mainly in the Udaipur division. As a result of this, the Jamatiyas, though they once belonged to the Tripuri Tribe, managed to evolve a political system of their own and developed economically and socially.'

Regarding the origing of the Jamatiya tribe, Kailash Chandra Singha also holds the view that, the Jamatiya tribe is a branch of the Tripuri tribe. In his Rajmala he has mentioned that 'the Tripiras or Twipras are chiefly divided into forur branches e.g., (1) Tipra, (2) Jamatiya, (3) Noatiya and (4) Riang. These branches are further sub-divided into various branches.

The view of Thakur Nagendra Chandra Deb Barma is worth mentioning here. He points it out that

It is known from the investigation of the history of Tripura that when Udaipur was the capital of Tripura, tribal people were given permanent residence round the capital for doing various duties of the State. The system of paying monthly salaries to the soldiers did not exist at that time. Instead,

they were given land settlement around the capital. This assemblage of the community gradually established matrimonial alliance and blood relationship among themselves and ultimately developed into a separate endogamous community.

In this context it should be noted here that till to-day the Jamatiyas are concentrated mainly in the Amarpur and Udaipur Sub-Division which were erstwhile capitals of Tripura. Amarpur was the capital of Tripura for a short period during the reign of Amar Manikya and Rangamati which was later named as Udaipur during the reign of Udai Manikya was the capital of Tripura for a long time.

In this context, the view of Somendra Chandra Deb Barma in the Census Report of 1931 is worth mentioning. He holds the view that 'The Tripuri Khatriyas are divided into five groups (1) Puran Tripura (2) Deshi Tripura (3) Jamatiya (4) Riag and (5) Noatiya. These five groups belong to the Khatriya Varna.

Ethnologically, the Jamatiyas are akin to the Tripuris and their physical characteristics also resemble those of the Tripuris. Their language is also the same. They speak Tripuri in a drawl tone.

The above mentioned views indicate that the Jamatiya tribe is supposed to have originated from the defence personnels of Tripura. As the armed forces of the previous rulers of Tripura consisted of the different tribes e.g. Tripuris, Noatiyas and the Rinags there is every chance of the admixture of various tribes in the formation of the Jamatiya tribe. There is also a little trace of the Kukis in this tribe as *Kherpang* lineage of the *Biyagwnang Goriya* came from Kuki land along with the image of *Biyagwang Goriya*. Besides this, to speak more precisely, as the Tripuris held a predominant position in the armed forces of Tripura, they played vital part in the formation of the Jamatiya tribe.

The matrimonial relationship among the families of the defence personnels played an important role as a melting pot in the first stage of its development.

Later on the neighbouring tribals who were attracted by their settled cultivation, disciplined life, administrative pattern and unity entered this community by matrimonial relationship.

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