

PREFACE

Arunachal Pradesh is a myriad of tribes generally unknown to the outside world because of their long isolation from the main land due to the difficult terrain, hostile weather and nearly non-existent communication of the state. The effect of this isolation was felt by me too when on a sudden order, I was sent through helicopters with my guns to survive on nature's bounty. My ration-less 45 days, brought me in very close contact with these people, who turned out to be extremely friendly and generous, allaying my all fears of ignominy, isolation and hunger. This crucial contact developed into a deep attachment with these people and the country, and my regular stay in Arunachal from 1985 to 1987 became a memorable experience which I longed to share with the outside world.

The most glaring point, which had hurt me, was the lack of knowledge in main land India about the land and the people of Arunachal Pradesh, and these people were generally described as wild, junglee, primitive etc. The government records about them too were confusing. No detailed research on them was available. Even the number of officially listed tribes was misleading in which the number of tribes rose from 11 to 1956 to 110 in 1971, exactly 10 times within 15 years. At a mere glance on the names recorded and the population tables of these tribes, one could find mind-boggling anomalies; in six cases a single person got an

individual tribe-name, 28 tribes were shown having a population less than 15, 14 tribes got enumerated under more than two different tribe-names, and the like. These anomalies were due to lack of serious effort to identify them and this aspect needed a detailed research by qualified researchers.

A detailed study into the officially designated 110 tribes is a tremendous tasks and needs a team of researchers. But eager to clarify the puzzle individually, I was in the process of evolving a via media when my contact with Dr. B.P. Misra, the then Director, Centre for Himalayan Studies turned out to be a boon. As an experienced ethnologist, he had a vast experience and expertise in this field. Having discussed the problem, he gave me the honour to be his student and not only helped me in narrowing down the choice to Aka and Miji tribes and defining the subject, but also guided me with his light of wisdom through the path of near darkness.

As the work progressed, the staff of North Bengal University Library provided me the needed printed material while Shri S.M.S Chowdhury and Shri A. Chowdhury, D.Cs of West Kameng and East Kameng Districts and Dr. B.B. Pandey and Dr. Shruti Kher, District Research officers of the two districts helped me in arranging the informers and provided guides, transport and accommodation which lessened my difficulties during the field study.

During collection of the data Shri Wanjaw Ramdasow, District Election Officer, Bomdila (the only Hrusso graduate and gazetted officer), Shri A.Bora, Extra Assistant Commissioner Thirizino, and Principals of Government Degree College, Bomdila and Govt. Higher Secondary School, Bhalukpong, provided me both guidance and assistance in the form of informers.

The continuous encouragement and assistance in the form of directions to the officials to assist me by Shri A.Tayeng Director Research Arunachal Pradesh, eased my most of the tensions.

Achambu Aka the Political Interpreter attached to me for the duration of the field work and Shri Panku Sidisow, an energetic and upcoming youth leader, deserve my special thanks for arranging informers and interpreting and filling up gaps in information. I am also indebted to the Hruссос, Dhammais and Pichangs in general who came out with the much needed information and accepted to become informers.

For drafting, Havildars S.P.Sharma, Mukhtiar Singh, C.K.Das and R.K.Shukla deserve my thanks while for final typing I am grateful to Shri Chanchal Kumar Pal, Surath Kundu and Manoj Chakraborty. Dr. D.P.Boot and Naik Sham Singh's drawing work and Shri Ajit Ray's computer work need special mention. I am also indebted to L/NK Subramani who drove me

for years without caring for any rest. Col. D.S.Kang and Col. P.S.Bhan by sparing me for crucial hours of research made the work possible to be completed in a shorter time. My gratitude is to Lt. Col. Bali who organised my flying over the area of study and made me reach the remotest of these people, and also to Col. Gill and Maj. Sandhu who provided me a base to work upon.

I will be failing in my duty if I do not thank my father, my wife Gurcharan and sons Navtej and Gurtej, who not only have born my long neglect calmly but also cheerfully assisted me in compilation and reading through the various drafts.

This work is a result of the assistance of all the above and many others, and once again I thank them all.

I am sure this study will help in providing answers to some of the anomalies in tribal identities and will be of some worth for future study.

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