

INTRODUCTION

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Historical (short history) background:
Origin and present shape of Tripura State

Tripura is among the most ancient States of India. The name of Tripura has a halo of mystery around it. Different persons and scholars expressed various opinions at various times regarding geonomy of Tripura. The original name of Tripura cannot be conclusively traced back to any recorded source of history. Common belief is that the name Tripura has originated from the goddess "Tripura Sundari". But this is not correct, because the country had been known as Tripura even before the installation of the deity which took place at the time of Maharaja "Dhanyamanikya" in the first half of the sixteenth century. Others treat Tripura as a derivative from "Tripuram" meaning end of three cities. There is also a popular belief that a mythical king called 'Tripur' named his Kingdom 'Tripuras' after his own name. Analysing the name etymologically, some researchers have found it to be a combination from two tribal (Tripuri) words 'twi' and 'pra' which mean a "Land adjoining water" so, it is very much difficult to ascertain the real reason behind the State's name. The ruling time of Tripura Raja can be divided into three periods:

(1) Ancient period (2) Medieval period (3) Modern period.

About 184 Kings ruled in Tripura upto 1947. Past history and old map of Tripura (Map Nos. 1, 2, 3) shows that present shape of the State has changed much from the ancient period. The present shape is derived from several ruling periods. The State has no

authentic Map before "Rennell's map of Bengal, 1772. This map shows boundaries of princely State of Tripura clearly. Ancient geographical position of Tripura in India fully depended on ancient history. The following are some antiquities, which tries to establish the existence of Tripura.

"Tripura State has through numerous vicissitudes of time been able to maintain its individuality and integrity upto the present time. The 'Mahabharata' and 'Puranas' show that this State was established 3000 years before Christ. 'Rajamala' the historical chronicle of the later kings of Tripura says that the kings of this State took up arms on behalf of Duryyadhana against the Pandovas at the famous battle "Kurukshetra". Sanskrit Rajamala says that at the 'Rajshuya' ceremony of emperor "Judhithir", the king of Tripura was present and was accorded a high place of honour by Judhithir. The Kirats were present at Rajashuya ceremony. The kings of Tripura had long, before this, conquered the Kirat country. Bhaishya Purana (Brahma Khands) a very ancient authority also makes mention of Tripura State. In Pithmala Tantra, Tripura has been mentioned as a place where fell the right Leg of 'Sati' (wife of Shiva) and because of this, the presiding deity of the land is called "Tripura Sundari". Huen-Shang says that he came to India at the beginning of the 7th century. At that time he says Tripura was extended upto the sea coast. Kailash Chandra Sinha says in his Rajamala "The stone inscriptions of Samudra Gupta show that the ruler of Tripura paid taxes along with the rulers of Bengal, Kamrup and Nepal", but the Gupta inscriptions which have been reclaimed by R.C. Dutt and published in facsimile in his book

"Ancient India" - mentions Tripura a "Kartipura". There is no historical record of any State of that name having ever existed. The inevitable conclusion therefore is that 'Kartipura' was a substitution for Tripura. Somudra Gupta reigned in the 4th century A.D."¹ According to Rajmala, Tripura State was founded by Druhya a son of emperor Jajati of Lunar dynasty. "Rajmala edited by Pandit Kaliprasanna Sen contains a map of places occupied by the sons of Jajati which was prepared by Mahamehopadhyaya Pandit Panchanan Tarkaratna (but now this map is not available). This map shows that Druhya went eastwards and his state extended from the 'Sundarbans' as far as Burmah'. Sanskrit Rajamala and Raja Ratnakar describe that after leaving his capital "Prathisthanpur" he proceeded along with the bank of the Ganges towards the sea and came across a beautiful island named "Sagar", just at the confluence of the "Bhagirathi" and the sea where he set up his suzerainty"².

"In ancient times there on the Sagar island a famous Tol (Sanskrit College) and a shrine of Shiva was erected by the Rajas, when their dominions spread far more westward than they do now"³.

During the reign of 24 Kings from Druhya upto the time of Satrujit's son Pratardan conquered the Kirat country and established the second capital of Tripura on the bank of the river Kapile

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1. A.C. Bhattacharyya, Progressive Tripura, pages 4-5.
 2. A.C. Bhattacharyya, Progressive Tripura, pages 5-6.
 3. Playne Samersset F.R.G.S. in Bengal & Assam, Behar and Orissa, page 463.

(Kapili river is in Nowgang district, adjacent to Cachar). The name of the new capital was 'Tribeg'. But in that period, the whole country from Sagar to new capital used to be called 'Tribeg'. Pratandas's grandson Kalinda used to live alternately in Sagar and in the new capital.

The well known historian Raja Manindra Deva Ray had shown in his article (on the researches into the antiquity of Hooghly district) that "Tribeni within Hooghly district was a part of the Tripura State and that rulers would from time to time come there on temporary sojourn".

All these historical facts prove that present shape of Tripura was not founded in the ancient period. But "it is impossible to define at any given period, the limits of the ancient kingdom of Tipperah but at various times throughout its conquests and possessions, Tipperah spread from the Sundarbans in the west to Barmah in the east and from Kamrup in the north to Barmah in the south"⁴.

In pre-Rajamala period, we saw king Barru. The son of Druhya was a good ruler and extended his kingdom beyond the boundaries of Bengal. He conquered the countries upto river Baitharani in Orissa, added a portion of Barmah to his vast kingdom and brought the sea (Bay of Bengal) under his control.

Kaliprasanna Sen's Rajmala has it that king Pratardhan conquered the entire tract of land which is bounded on the north by the Brahmaputra on the south by Rangamati (Chittagong Hills),

4. Hunter, Statistical account of Bengal, Vol. page 465.

on the east by Manipur and west by Cooch Behar.

The 47th ruler "Trilochan" is historically very important, because he set up the images of fourteen gods and goddesses. Now these can be found at old Agartala. Trilochan also brought under subjugation, the Kaifang, Chakma, Khulong, Lengai, Tonen, Taiyeng, Riang Thanangeti and other hill tribes.

After Trilochan, Tripura kingdom was divided into twelve portions amongst his eleven sons. His second son Dakshimin kept two portions for himself. But his eldest brother Heramba attacked his capital and defeated him. King Dakshin fled away with his other brothers and set up his new capital at a place called Khalongma. During the 118th king "Hamta Fa's" ruling time, old capital at Khalongma was left unearned for as the king built new capital at "Ranganati".

According to Rajmala the entire tract of land lying between 'Fani' and Mohuri river on the one side and Laksha river on the other was brought in his time under the subjugation of Tripura"⁵.

The 149th king Dharma Manikya (1431-1462 A.D.) excavated famous tanks 'Dharma Sagar' and 'Nanjar Dighi' in the city of Comilla (Now Bangladesh). During 151th king Dhanya Manikya's ruling period, Kukees attacked the eastern boundary of Tripura and occupied deep forest "Thenangchi" lying to east of Tripura and west of the Lushai Hills. The expedition extended upto the

5. A.C. Bhattacharyya, Progressive Tripura, page 15.

frontiers of Burmah.

Bijoy Manikya (155th) ruled Tripura from 1528 to 1570 A.D. with much power and good deeds for the benefit of his people and he also defeated the peoples of Sylhet, Khasia and Jayantia hills and drive away the Mussalmans from Chittagong by a battle.

The ruler Udai Manikya changed his capital from Rangamati to Udaipur.

The king Amar Manikya (159th) built a new palace in 1597 A.D. to the east of Udaipur, on the bank of Gumati and named it Amarpur after his name.

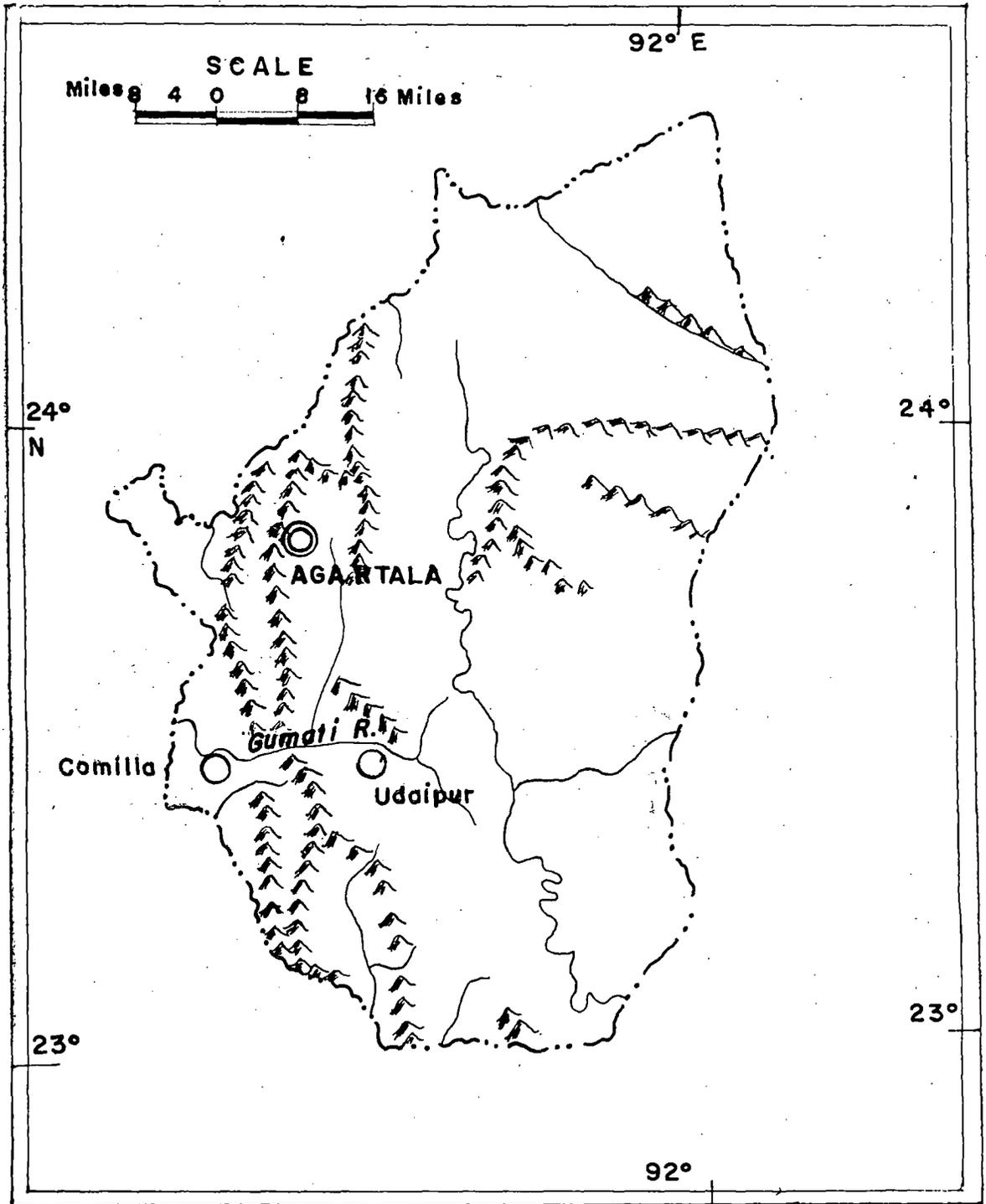
Gobinda Manikya was symbol of saint king. The famous temple 'Chandranath' (on the embankment of Gumati) and 'Suja Mosque' of Comilla were built by him. How great, good and tolerant he was, is, described, in a novel 'Rajashri' and drama 'Bisarjan' by poet Rabindra Nath Tagore.

After Gobinda Manikya, there ruled six rulers upto 1747. During 1714-29 Nawab Sujauddin of Murshidabad granted Dharma Manikya II, the Zamindari right of the Parganah of Roshnabad on a yearly rent of Rs. 500/- only. Since then, the kings of Tripura had been in possession of Roshnabad as zamindari (now in the Comilla district of Bangladesh) till the partition of India. Samser Ghazi, zamindar of Meherkul defeated "Krishnamoni" the king of Tripura and occupied Udaipur. He was a most interesting episode in the history of Medieval Tripura. He was an efficient ruler of Tripura for twelve years.

After the fall of 'Shamsar Gazi' from 1760 to 1783 A.D., Krishna Manikya ruled Tripura. He could not stand against the Mughal Fouj and the English, two great enemies at same time. So he came to an agreement with them with submission. Thus the English flag was hoisted over the plains of Tripura. In the British period some officials were eager to occupy Tripura but it was opposed by others. However, in 1761 Ralph Leak was appointed^{as} the first Resident of Tripura and thus Tripura was reduced to a state of obedience to the British. Before 1782 some dispute arose between Mr. Leak and Tipperahking for the right or power on "Chakla Roshanabad (situated in the plains of the district of Tipperah). In 1782 this dispute was settled under the instruction of Govt. of Bengal and took the zamindari of Chakla Rosanabad into khas or direct management for ten years. 1792 finally, zamindari right was transferred to "Maharaj Rajdhar Manikya" and territory was turned into the district of Rosanabad Tripura.

In this ruling time called modern period we get a well known document furnishing evidence on the point is 'Major Rennell's map of Bengal, (the earliest Govt. Revenue map for Eastern Provinces of India) published in 1779 by order of the Court of directors which shows the area and position of Tripura State under kings. At that time Tripura was located between $22^{\circ}55'$ and $24^{\circ}33'$ north latitudes and was bounded on the north, west, south and east by Syllhet, Daccah, Chittagong and Dominions of Ava (Burma),(Map No. 1). Thornton's Gazetteer (1857) gives Burma as the eastern boundary and measured the total area of Tripura as 7632 sq. miles. But no less than half the territory as surveyed in 1781, had gradually

TRIPURA IN RENNELL'S TIME (1773)



Map No - I

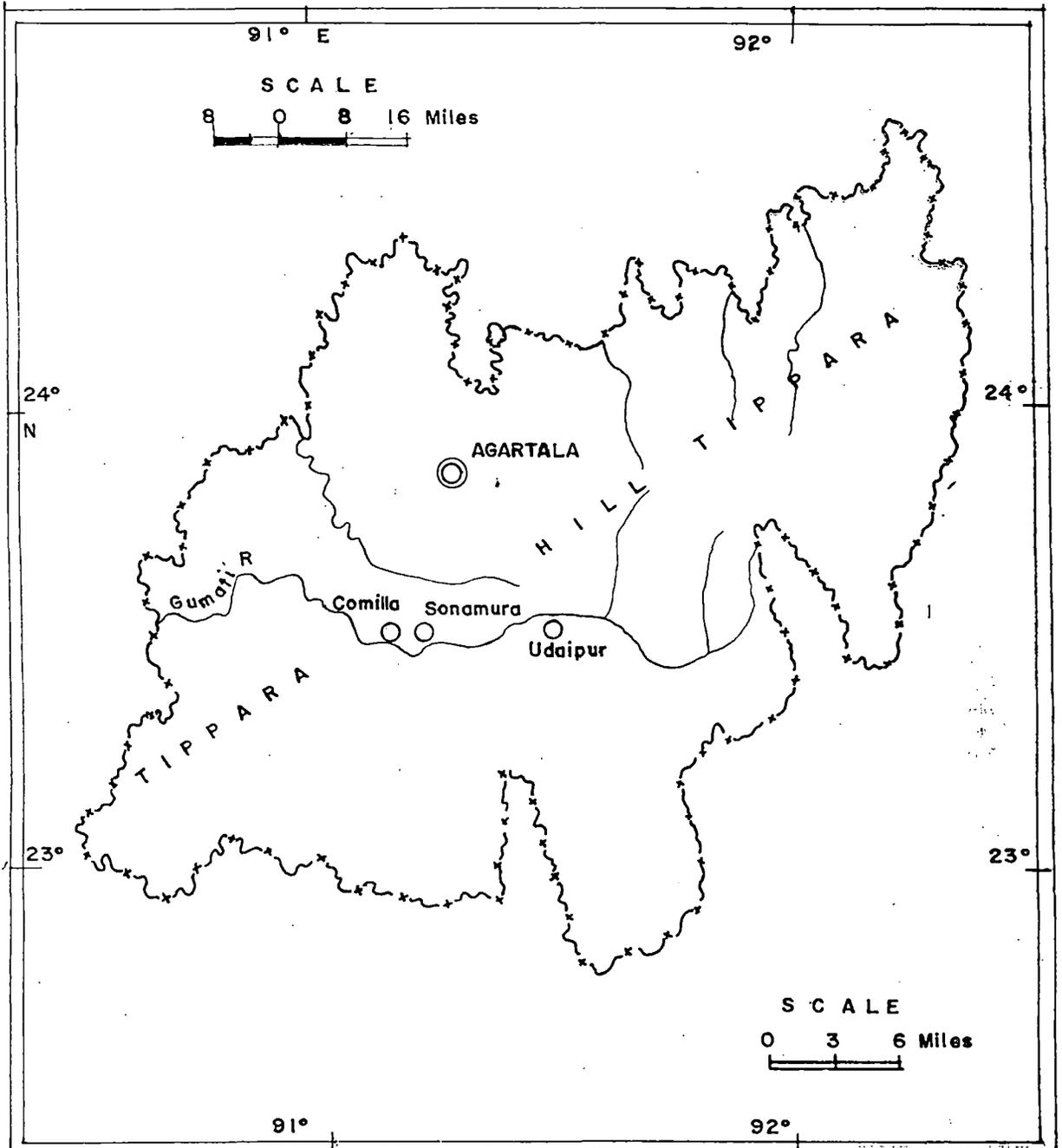
been in British India [Thus the total area lost was 3516 sq. miles (7632 sq. miles - 4116 sq. miles = 3516 sq. miles⁶). It is true that boundaries are often altered for historical reasons. The greater part of the present Lushai Hill district was controlled by the Tipperah Raja of that State. "When in 1765 the district of Tipperah came under the control of the East Indian Company, more than one fifth of the present area was under the immediate rule of the Raja of Hill Tipperah, who merely paid a tribute of Ivory and elephants"⁷.

In 1872, published revenue map of 'Cachar' shows that the southern boundary of that district was independent Tripura and also shows the Suddashur narrow hilly tract running down between Hill 'Trippera' and Manipur and represented some part of Cachar district under the control of Hill Tippera.

"Thornton's Gazetteer, 1857 another authorised publication compiled chiefly from Governments papers shows Tripura as an extensive tract of mountainous country bounded on the north by the British districts of Sylhet and Cachar on the east by the territory of Barmah on the south by Burmah and Chittagang and on the west by the British district of Tippera. It is 130 miles in length from east to west and 80 miles in breath and contains an area of 7632 sq. miles"⁸.

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6. Mahadev Chakraborty (Article) Boundary disputes between the princely State and British Govt. Journal-North East, page 37.
 7. Hunter, A Statistical Account of Bengal Vol. VI, page 465.
 8. Thornton E, Gazetteer of Territories under Govt. of the East India Company and native States 1857, page 99.

TRIPURA ACCORDING TO HUNTER'S SURVEY (1875)



Map No-2

According to 1875 Surveyor General's map of Hill Tipperah by Hunter, it was situated between $22^{\circ}59'$ and $24^{\circ}31'$ north latitude and between $91^{\circ}12'$ and $92^{\circ}24'$ east longitude. It contained an area of approximately 3867 sq. miles (shows map No. 2).

"Hill Tipperah was bounded on the north by Assam, district of Sylhet on the south by the district of Noakhali and Chittagang, on the east by Lushai country and Chittagang Hill tracts country and on the west by the district Tipperah and Noakhali. The western boundary of the State where it adjoins the Regulation district of Tipperah was defined in the year 1854. According to the award of two arbitrations, Mr. Leycester acted on the part of British Govt. and Mr. Campbell on the part of the Raja of Hill Tipperah"⁹.

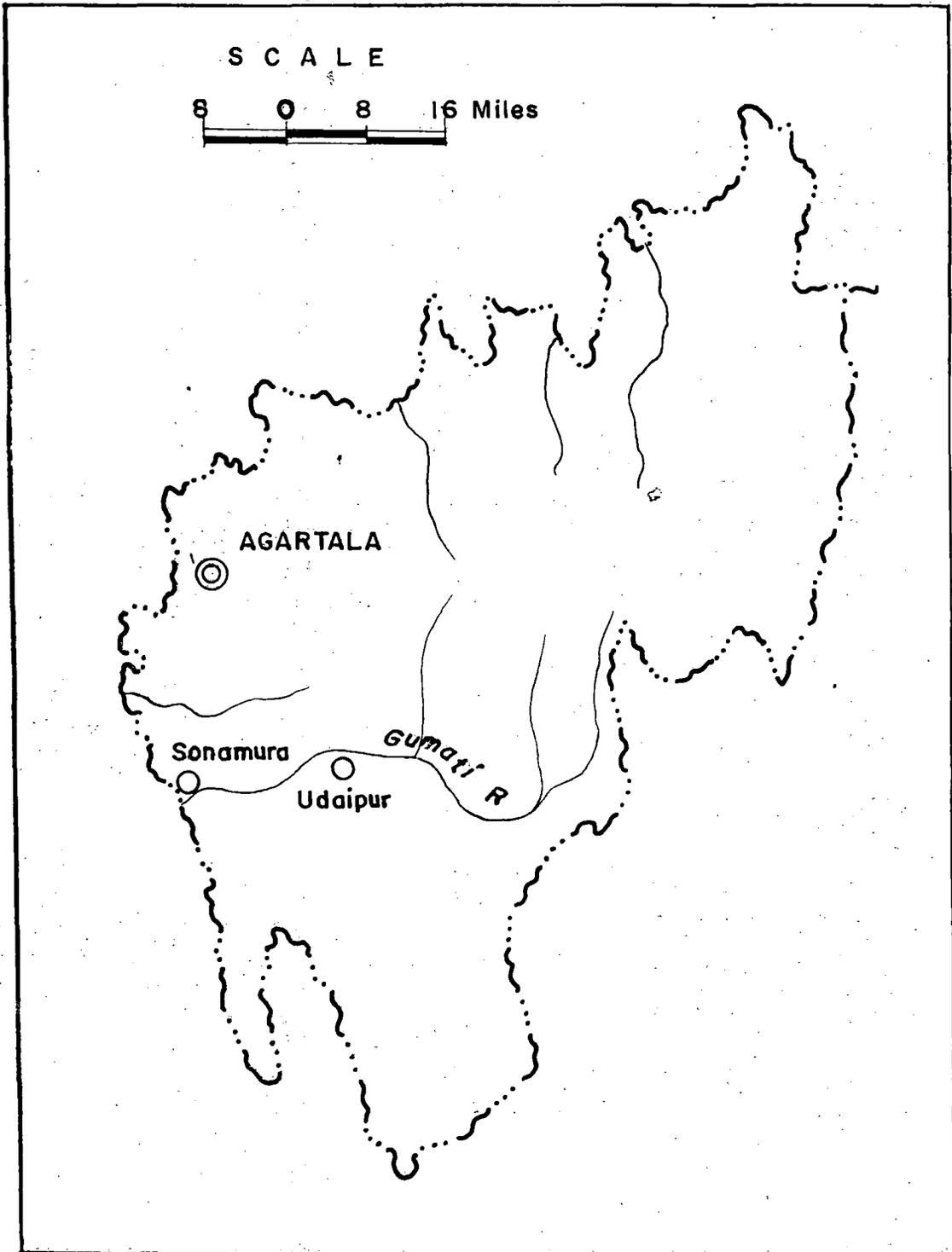
Tripura became an independent administrative unit under Maharaja even during the British rule.

The possession of Chakla Roshanabad (now in Comilla district of Bangladesh) had gone to East Pakistan from Raja after independence of India.

During the closing stage of last ruler of Tripura, Maharaja Birbikram Kishore Manikya (1923-47) Indian's struggle for independence reached decisive phase. The Maharaja had expressed intention of casting the lot of his kingdom with Indian Union a decision which had the backing of large masses of people irrespective of castes and communities.

9. Thornton E, Gazetteer of Territories under Govt. of the East India Company and native States 1857, page 997.

TRIPURA PRESENT SHAPE SINCE 1947



Map No-3

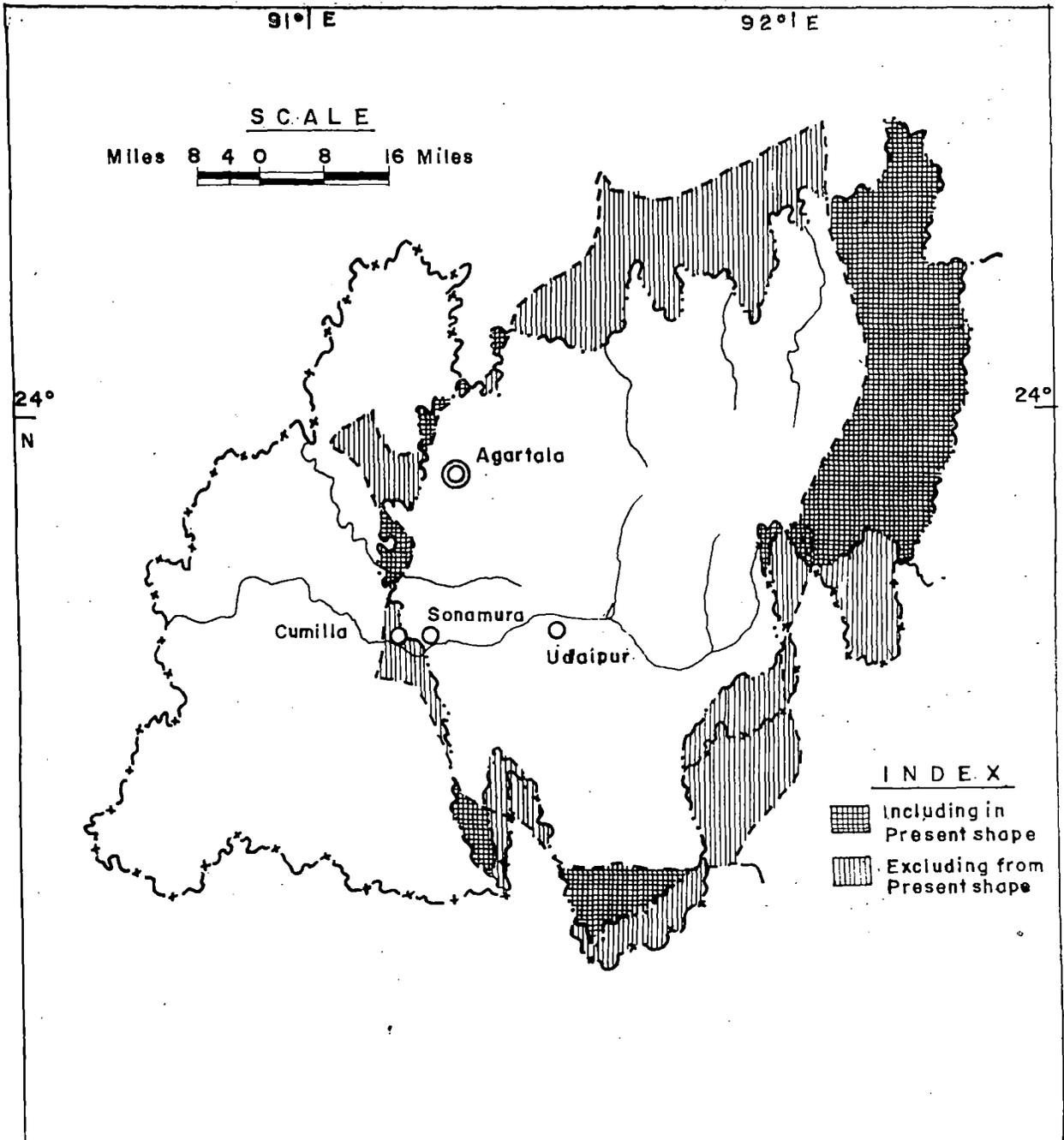
After the death of Birbikram Kishore Manikya on May 1947 a Council of Regency under the leadership of his widowed wife Maharani Kanchanprava Devi took over charge of administration on behalf of the Prince Kirit Bikram. The Regent's rule continued for more than two years when as a part of the Indian policy of State's integration, Tripura too merged with the Indian Union, due to popular pressure. The Agreement of merger was signed by 'Maharani' on 15th October 1947. Tripura was taken over as a part 'C' State administered by a Chief Commissioner. Tripura became a Union Territory on November 1, 1956. The territorial Council was formed on August 15, 1959. Finally Tripura became a full-fledged State in January 1972.

The previous history shows that the present shape and area of Tripura State took place after many historical changes in past.

The present Tripura lies approximately between $22^{\circ}56'$ and $24^{\circ}32'$ North latitudes and between $91^{\circ}0'$ and $92^{\circ}21'$ East longitudes. It is bounded on the north, west, south and south east by international boundary, Bangladesh, districts of Sylhet, Comilla, Noakhali, Chittagang and Chittagang Hill tracts. In the east it has a common boundary with Cachar district of Assam and Mizoram. According to the Survey of India it has an area of 10,477 sq. kms (shows map No. 3).

The accompanying map (Map No. 4) shows the changing shape of Tripura and compares with the present Tripura. But it is not possible to justify these changes with maps in different ruling periods, because ancient Tripura has no authentic map before 1779 A.D. The author has presented here 1779 map by Rennel, 1875 map

COMPOSITE MAP OF TRIPURA RENNELL'S TIME, HUNTER'S SURVEY AND PRESENT SHAPE SINCE 1947



Map No-4

by Hunter and present Survey of India map in 1947 in map No. 4 and also compared three maps showing excluded and included portions of Tripura. For this, the author has mainly depended on previous history of Tripura.

Geo-Economic bases of the State

A State's or country's economic and cultural development mostly depends on its geographical position, resources and communication etc. So Tripura's economic condition have close connection with prevailing geographical position. Tripura is a land locked State in India. Three sides of this State is bounded by Bangladesh and only one side is connected with Assam by National High Way No. 44.

The State Capital Agartala is connected with Calcutta, a distance of 317 Km (197 miles) by air and 1050 miles (1690.5 kms) by road via Assam rail link. The lack of adequate transport and communication facilities is a serious obstacle for economic development in Tripura. The major difficulties in the way of road construction are uneven surface crossed by numerous small streams, non availability of building materials, excessive rains and floods causing damage to roads and creating muddy surfaces over them at many places and lack of technical personnel. During the rainy period, hilly areas remain closed by landslides and flood water. In such condition Agartala is completely cut off from the rest of India. Sometimes except for air, there is no communication between Tripura and the rest of India. This transport problem^{has} become more acute after partition, because before partition Tripura was linked with Calcutta and other places by road and railway via East Pakistan.

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"Nearly 50 railway stations which were in the districts of East Bengal within a stone's throw distance, some of the sub-divisional headquarters of Tripura fell into Bangladesh. The people of Tripura were benefitted by railway services. After partition of India geographical situation of Tripura was changed and these facilities were also withdrawn. Tripura has only 14 kms of metergauge railway line between Dharmanagar in north Tripura and Patharkandi in Assam. The railway headquarter is about 200 kms away from the capital so this railway transport does not play an important role in economy of this State. The Railway Board has undertaken to extend the railway line upto Kumarghat. The State has some problems in bringing more areas under railway systems as most of the land are undulating and rugged terrain.

Tripura's internal communication system were extremely underdeveloped at time of its merger with India. Different five year plans have taken road development programme in Tripura. In the first three plan periods many roads were constructed for linkage with very thickly populated areas. After next plan period, some roads and village roads were constructed to connect hill and backward areas with market centres and other important centres. But till now external and internal transport and communication facilities are extremely poor.

Daily air service between Agartala and Calcutta is the only redeeming feature. Agartala is 317 kms away from Calcutta through Bangladesh air space. Kamalpur and Kailashar towns of Tripura are also linked with Calcutta by Bayudut Services. But it is not a regular service like Indian Airlines Service.

The commodities moving from Calcutta consist of cloth, stationery goods, books, medicine, tobacco, powdered milk, oil, steel machinery and motor parts and other essential goods. From Agartala, cotton, mustard seeds, tea, handicrafts goods (mainly produced from Bamboo and Cane), Tin fruit, green vegetables and fruits are supplied. So the prices of such commodities are soaring day by day for the lack of cheap communication. Essential commodities and materials cannot be procured in time. Transport cost is also high so it is necessary to build up a transportation net work immediately for solving the communication problems.

The various resources are the basic wealth of a State and these resources help directly and indirectly to the economic development of the State.

Land, water and forest are the main natural resources. Other resources are minerals, agricultural and industrial products, human resources and their culture.

Agriculture forms the most important sector of Tripura's economy. But the cultivable land is limited and large portion of population is engaged in agriculture pressing heavily on this meagre resource. Physiographically the land surface can be divided into hilly terrain and low and flat valley plains. The Agriculture is a gift of the monsoon.

Broadly two types of cultivation are practised in Tripura, namely:

(1) Shifting cultivation practised by hill tribes on hill slopes and

(II) The settled cultivation practised by the people on plain land.

Aus, aman and boro paddy, sugar cane, jute, potato, mustard seed are the main agricultural crops produced in this State. These are mainly cultivated in the flat river basins. West Tripura is occupied by large river valleys. So these are the most densely populated and intensively cultivated areas. The largest portion of cultivated land is under rice cultivation on upland of normal slope of 15° . The aus paddy, mesta, sugar cane, groundnut, chillis and kharif vegetables can be raised and more than 20° land slopes are suitable for horticultural and forest plantation. The flat river basin is agriculturally most resourceful and prosperous. Jute and mesta production are concentrated in the west and south districts which are gaining importance with growing demand from jute mill near Agartala.

The technique of jhum cultivation is primitive, wasteful and uneconomic. Tradition and ignorance have led the continuance of jhuming. Publicity, education, increasing contacts with better methods of cultivation and living would be needed to impress upon the tribals and the advantage of a settled agriculture.

Tea plants of Tripura are very old. But the quality of tea manufactured is much below standard and cost of production is relatively high. So tea industry is not significant in the economy of Tripura.

The horticultural crops of Tripura include varieties of fruits namely oranges, jack fruits, pine apple, olive, guava

and mangoes. The sweet variety orange (locally called Jumpai) is grown in the Jumpai hill of Dharmanagar and Kailashar sub-divisions. Pine apples are grown all over Tripura, specially in Udaipur and Sonamura sub-divisions. About 6 lakhs pine apples are sold yearly in Calcutta market.

Tripura has ideal agro-climatic condition for growing rubber plants. Tripura also produces one of the best varieties of rubber in the State. The present production level is about 200 tons. The yield is likely to go up to 4000 tons per year by 1994-95. So there is quite good scope for rubber based industries in the State.

Land is one of the important resource of the State. But till now land has been under heavy erosion on account of practice of shifting cultivation on hill slopes. Even the plain land like river banks are affected by flood and heavy rainfall.

So proper soil conservation schemes are necessary to save soil erosion and plans for proper utilization and management of lands.

Tripura has a number of rivers and hilly streams which provide perennial water resource for fishing purpose. "Tripura requires annually 9600 metric tons of fish. Of these, the need for only 3600 metric tons of fish is met locally. Demand for fish is high everywhere in the State and is met at present by import. Total areas under pisciculture in Tripura is below 500 acres. An additional area of 12000 acres would be added to this after totally completion

of the Gumati reservoir¹⁰.

It is estimated that roughly 0.70 million hecto-metres of rain water flows out of the State annually and only .10 million hecto meter of water in the dry weather discharge. Arrangement for tapping ground water have been made in many places of the State to cater to the needs of irrigation and consumption for industries.

The livestock wealth is of little importance contributing to the total sectoral income. The animal husbandry is only a subsidiary occupation of the people. The main livestock are cattle, buffaloes, goats, rams, ducks, pigs, fowls, pigeons etc. Pig keeping is popular among the tribal people, but it is not popular with majority of the people because of religious and other social customs.

Forests are renewable resources. Forest cover about 56.4% of the total geographical areas of the State. There are about 200 species of which 64 varieties are of commercial importance like sal, simul, garjan, karai, teak, sundi, chamal, champs, gamal kanak etc. Bamboo also grows abundantly in Tripura. But Tripura's economy is not properly benefitted from the forest resources. Long neglect of the forest wealth and poor quality of forest produce in Tripura are the reasons for such situation.

The greatest injury to the forest has come from the jhum cultivation. But the jhumias are still carrying on this practice.

10. Tripura Profile, S.N.Chatterjee, page 36.

The practice of jhuming is not the only cause of deforestation, but the increasing demand for fuel wood is also a main point for deforestation. The poor villagers are unsystematic in cutting down trees for their need and also in selling fire woods in the local market. The indiscriminate felling and over use of forest trees is a social problem of the State.

Large varieties of bamboo are grown in Tripura. Bamboos are utilised for construction of houses, fencing, umbrella handles and also as an important raw materials for bamboo cane industries. The recent satellite survey of forest resource in the State shows that there is good scope for pulp and paper mill industry in the State.

A look into the road map of Tripura clearly show the vast forest area in all three districts which lie away from the road. So the lack of communication and transport is a great obstacle to developing and properly utilising the forest resources. The timber trade and trade in other forest products dwindled to almost nothing after partition.

Forestry contributes at present not much to the State's income but its potentials are large.

Lastly the climatic condition is suitable for forest crops and it also indicates that forestry besides agricultural crops will have to serve as an important source of income and also will be the base of industrial programme.

The mineral resources of Tripura are very poor. Minerals include clay, limestone, lignite, coal. The quality and reserve of

these minerals are very poor for commercial utilisation.

The Oil and Natural Gas Commission of India in Geological and Geophysical Surveys in different parts have found a huge reserves of natural gas in Tripura. Prospects of getting oil in Tripura is bright. "The present availability of gas is 1 million cubic metres per day which will be raised to 3 million cubic metres per day very soon. Apart from this, there are deposits of glass limestone and plastic clay suitable for commercial exploration"¹¹.

Hydro and Thermal power in Tripura are very scanty. The Gumati river is the only source of hydro-electricity in the State. The Gumati hydro electric project and power cum flood control scheme completed in 1976, has a capacity of 12 M.W. and draws another 6 M.W. from the Assam State Electricity Board. There are also stand by diesel generating sets installed in all important places of the State. Besides these, a 10 M.W. gas fired Thermal Power Plant at Baramurah at a distance of 135 kms from Agartala has been installed. A 75 M.W. gas fired power plant is also likely to come up soon. Another 500 M.W.¹² plant is being taken up in the central sector, in the North Eastern region which also provide power for Tripura".

Tripura has a large quantity of man power resources. Population estimates in Tripura are subject to changes by the continuous influx of immigrants. Tripura's population is mixed with good

11. Tripura Industries scope incentives, page 5.

12. Tripura Industries Directorate, page 4.

amount of tribal elements, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are generally behind others in literacy and education. Tripura is predominantly rural. Majority of the man power is engaged in agriculture and allied occupation. Unemployment and under employment are acute because of high pressure of population on land.

At present, the rate of literacy stands at 42%. The State has an Engineering College, a Polytechnic Institute and three industrial training institutes situated in three districts which are making about 500 technical hands per year. The percentage of workers to the total population in Tripura is lower than the country as a whole which is an indication of under utilisation of human resources even by Indian standard.

Tripura is a land of older culture and has potentials for future excellence in both cultural and technical spheres with proper orientation of human resources.