

NORTH-EAST INDIA

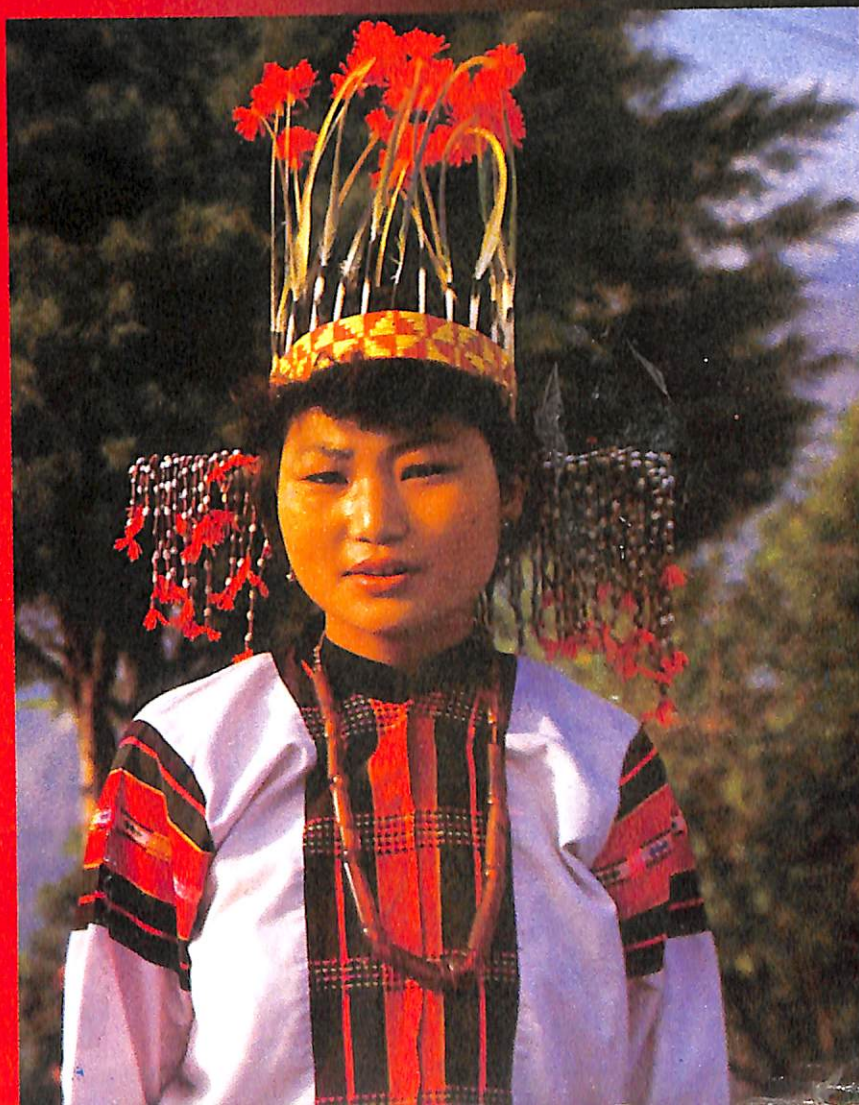
THE HUMAN INTERFACE

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NORTH-EAST INDIA: The Human Interface



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GYAN PUBLISHING HOUSE

NEW DELHI-110002

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North-East India: The Human Interface
(*Anthropology, Sociology, Behavioural Sciences, Regional Studies*)

ISBN : 81-212-0573-5

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&
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Published in 2008 in India by
Gyan Publishing House
5, Ansari Road
New Delhi 110 002

Laser Typeset at Akshar, Delhi
Printed at Vishal Kaushik Printers Delhi

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Foreword

North-East India, with its picturesque landscape has attracted the attention of people since time immemorial. As a result waves after waves of people came to this region from different point of time beginning from the prehistoric era. Ecologically this region is somewhat unique in comparison to other parts of India. High mountain, snow bound region, deep forest, undulated terrain, network of rivers and rivulets, plateau and plain land with high rainfall moist weather have given this region a unique feature. People, living here, belong to different ethnic groups with different bio-genetic make up. They bear different livelihood patterns, different social organisations, different methods of social control, and different world view. They profess different religions, speak in different languages, and love to live in different types of settlements. Their peculiar dress and ornaments, their dances and music and their festivities have made their lives very colourful. The ethnic and cultural diversities have marked their life unique since prehistoric age. Though diversity is the basic feature among the people of North-East India, yet an undercurrent of unity and similarity is found if one goes deep into their culture.

The present book has incorporated some of the basic characteristics of the people of this region. It contains twenty-three articles of different types, from creation myths and prehistoric culture to the contemporary environmental, ethnic, bio-genetic and cultural situation in North-East India. The book is divided into two parts. Part-one contains nine articles depicting overall situation of the area as a whole, and covers creation myths, constitutional provisions, Pandit Nehru's idea and policy, prehistoric culture, environmental conditions, and bio-genetical

conditions among the people, etc. On the other hand, Part-Two includes fourteen articles of varied nature. In this part articles have been arranged themewise and statewise (alphabetically). Articles here deal with bio-genetic characters of particular ethnic groups or analyses of different cultural traits, ethnicity and various other problems. By incorporating diverse types of articles in this book, the editors have clearly highlighted different aspects of life of the people of North-East India, their past and present conditions and also the environment they live in. It is this aspect which has made this book unique. The readers will get a very clear and unbiased picture about the North-East India and its residents. I have no doubt that this book will get a very high and important place among all the publications on this region. I hope that the scholars and academicians will welcome this book. For this, the credit definitely goes to the authors of the articles as well as to the editors who have put hard and strenuous labour to make this book a standard and important one.

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19th April, 1997

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Introduction

May all creatures, all living things, all beings, all persons, all individuals, all males, all females, all Aryans, all non-Aryans, all gods, all mankind, all spirits be free from enmity, and from oppression! May they all live happily! May they all be free from trouble and adversity! May they all enjoy prosperity! May they all help themselves through the Kamma.

—The Khamti Buddhists' dissemination of Love

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister and builder of Modern India, had in his dream an India that would have in her culture both traditional and modern values. The India which was in his dream, was the same India which the wisemen of ancient India thought of. Nehru (1936) realised that:

India with all her poverty and degradation had enough of nobility and greatness about her, . . . Behind and within her battered body one can still glimpse a majestic soul. Through long ages she had travelled and gathered much wisdom on the way, and trafficked with strangers and added them to her own big family, and witnessed days of glory and of decay . . . she had clung to her immemorial culture, drawn strength and vitality from it and shared it with other lands . . . (Gangte 1993: 249)

This picture of India, which Pandit Nehru dreamt in his dream, is possibly the ideal picture engraved in the heart of every

Indian soul. The majesty of Indian culture, the strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passion, the abundant beauties in her nature and inspiration and teachings from her wisest children, made India magnanimous.

India is a vast country. She shows diversity in every sphere. In her geographical features, her ethnic situations, her culture and traditions, her economy, her religions, her languages, her eating habits, her world views, —everywhere the point of diversity is visible.

The diversity of India is tremendous, it is obvious, it lies on the surface and anybody can see it. It concerns itself with the physical appearances as well as certain mental habits and traits (Nehru 1986:61)

Yet with all these diversities there lies an undercurrent of unity in every sphere, and this thread of unity, no doubt, has tied every Indian into oneness, be he (she) lives in the north or in south, in the west or in the east or even in the north-eastern part of our country. Realising that this obvious heritage of unity in diversity is the focal theme of Indian culture and tradition, Indira Gandhi rightly pointed out that "the unity of the country with its diversity of religion, race and language became a reality, and democracy was born and grew roots" (Singh 1993:238).

Undoubtedly, India is a country of strong heterogeneity of language, ethnicity, religion and ideology. Any one who travels from Kashmir to Kanniyakumari or from Ran of Kutch in the west to Arunachal Pradesh in the north-east extremity, one realises it fully. One part of India may not look alike with other part. Every part of India has its own characteristics which have made it distinct. The north-eastern part of India also has some features for which this part of India has become somewhat different from other parts and thereby become distinct.

The north-eastern part of India, which is constituted of seven states, namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, is popularly known as *Sat Bahin* (Seven Sisters). This region is bounded in the north by the Eastern Himalayan ranges, which also guard eastern boundaries of this region. The southern boundary is guarded by the Chittagong Hill Tracts and the Chin Hills and in the west is situated the western

mountains which have arose from Bangladesh (Gangte 1993 :1).

This land locked region covers

'255,082 square kilometres of uneven surface, supports a population of 31.4 million (1991), which accounts for 7.7 per cent of the total land surface and 3.72 per cent of the total population of the country, respectively (Hazarika 1996:1).

The physiography of this region shows that 'all the three major types of land forms, viz., the Archaean plateau, the young folded mountain of Tertiary origin and recently built up alluvial plains, are found in this region' (*ibid*:14).

The picturesque situation of the North-East region has attracted the attention of the people since time immemorial. As a result this cauldron faced waves of migration since prehistoric age. This region is believed to have 'one of the greatest migration routes of mankind' (Taher n.d. cf Hazarika 1996:40).

The North-East India, which consists of the seven states, has housed a total of 31,547,314 people, according to 1991 census, covering 3.75 per cent of the total population (838,583,988) of India. The population of this region includes 16,387,229 males and 15,160,085 females. Of these population Arunachal Pradesh in its 83,743.00 sq. km. area, covers 2.74 per cent, Assam (78,438.00 sq. km.) 71.05 per cent, Manipur (22,327.00 sq. km.) 5.82 per cent, Meghalaya (22,429.00 sq. km.) 5.63 per cent, Mizoram (21,327.00 sq. km.) 2.19 per cent, Nagaland (16,579.00 sq. km.) 3.83 per cent and Tripura with its 10,486.00 sq. km. area has given shelter to 8.74 per cent of the total population of North-East India.

In this region a total of 81,42,624 Scheduled Tribes live with 4,129,111 males and 4,013,513 females according to 1991 census. They are distributed in all these seven states in varied members. While Assam has the highest number of the Scheduled Tribe population (35.30 per cent), Meghalaya shares the next higher number (18.64 per cent) followed by Nagaland (13.03 per cent). Next to Nagaland comes Tripura (10.48 per cent) followed by Mizoram (8.03 per cent), Manipur (7.76 per cent) and Arunachal Pradesh, the latter has the lowest number of the Scheduled Tribe population (6.76 per cent).

Again a total of 2,161,448 Scheduled Caste people live in the

region covered by North-East India with 1,123,008 males and 1,038,440 females. Of these Scheduled Caste population the highest number (76.77 per cent) live in Assam followed by Tripura where 20.87 per cent of the Scheduled Castes live. Manipur (1.72 per cent) comes next. Both Meghalaya (0.42 per cent) and Arunachal Pradesh (0.19 per cent) have very low concentration of the Scheduled Castes. Mizoram shares the lowest strength of the Scheduled Castes (0.03 per cent) whereas Nagaland has the distinction of not having any Scheduled Caste at all.

In North-East India a large number of ethnic groups live. They belong to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other ethnic groups. There are 103 Scheduled Castes and 99 Scheduled Tribes live in this region. All these ethnic groups differ from one another

‘in their socio-political structure, as well as their economic activities. Their activities are conditioned by the traditions, customs, norms, values, etc., and their economic activities are inseparably linked with certain social systems . . . (Buragohain 1990:8).

As already said North-East India and the people live there, have their own peculiar characteristic features. Different ecological conditions present in different parts of this region have added environmental diversities to this region. Deep forests, difficult hills and mountains, large rivers, plateau, plains, high rainfall, high altitude regions, etc., all have increased the attraction. Ethnic heterogeneity and different bio-genetical make up of the people, are the characteristic feature of the population formed by the indigenous and immigrant groups. They have established different types of settlements in different geographic situations, like the hill slopes, plateau and the plains, in the forest or on the bank of the rivers or other water sources. Their material culture also presents variety and depicts clear cultural impressions. Economic life also highlights clear diversities. Slash-and-burn, terrace or settled agriculture is found to be practised in different parts. Of course shifting cultivation and terrace cultivation are restricted in the hilly region only. Besides, labour, business, service, weaving, etc. have also been accepted by many people as the sources of earning and livelihood. Tea gardens have accommodated a large number

of people also. People here have adopted different types of social systems. Both matriarchal and patriarchal forms of societies have been adopted by the people of this region. While some of the societies have simple social structure, a few have more complicated one with such divisions like moity, phratry, etc. Both totemic and non-totemic clans are present. Descent is reckoned through male or female or both lines in specific societies. Monogamy and polygyny are normally present but in some cases some sort of polyandry or cisisbeism is found. Different methods of acquiring mates have also been practised by them. Different types of family, both matrilineal and patrilineal with varied sizes and compositions are found. Method of social control is also different in different societies. While in some areas Buddhism is dominant, in some other areas Christianity reigns supreme. Hinduism is practised by a large number of people. Animism or tribal religion is also prevalent in many tribal societies.

It is thus seen a bio-genetic and cultural mosaic has been evolved through mutually contrived endeavours of the people of North-East India.

During colonial rule not much of development works took place in this region, and as a result this region did not progress too much. The British administration preferred to keep this region isolated. They did not like much progress of this region and also did not allow people from other parts to enter in this region. The reasons are best known to them. But one perhaps believes that one of the reasons was that the British Government did not like the liberating force of the freedom movement could reach the people of this region and make these people stand united against the foreign rule.

After independence the Government has taken much initiative to improve upon the lot of the people. A good number of development programmes have been executed and marked changes have taken place. Sparks of modernity are clearly visible. Tradition and modernity are moving hand-in-hand in this region. People here have accepted modern traits and values but simultaneously they also adore their own traditional customs, manners and values.

The interesting feature of the people of this region is that

they keep a strong attachment with villages they live. "The old system of social organization still survives in surprisingly original manner in spite of the present day changes in the political administration", (*ibid*).

Man is essentially a social being and therefore,

'mankind has got a custodial responsibility about the totality of nature... In North-East India most of the tribal as well as the peasantry have retained this perspective in varying degrees and it is reflected in the traditional political economy of the region' (Roy Burman 1994: 1).

The region is marked with diversity in the economic pursuits. But geopolitical hindrances have prevented the area to develop economically at par with many other parts of the country. This is one of the main reasons for backwardness of the area. But there may be some other important reasons too.

The problem of regional imbalance is thus a multidimensional process that reflects imbalance in capitalist development *per se* rather than purely spatial or local problems. The structural linkage between development of certain regions and undevelopment of some others has been found inherent in the process of capitalist development (Frank 1975 : 43 ff).

This imbalance in the development of the region and some politico-social turmoil and in certain cases identity crisis, led to the restlessness among some people which ultimately gave birth to various separatist movements in the area. The result of these movements is clearly visible. Approval of the objectives of these movements in certain cases has further deteriorated the situation, and as a result sense of integration with the national stream faced a serious setback. That is why it is felt that

The region is heading towards a paradoxical state of external integration and internal disintegration and thereby frustrating the developmental efforts (Das 1994:103).

And this paradoxical situation that lies in our North-East region is possibly due to the

'disharmony between the institutional arrangements

that regulate the lives of the peoples on the one hand and the ethos that serve as the motive force, in the social living of the peoples on the other (Roy Burman 1994:2).

Even then there lies the basic similarity of ideology and sentiments between the people of the north-eastern part of India and those of any other part of India when all of them think themselves as Indians.

The people of North-East India are undoubtedly very colourful, simple and trustworthy people. Possibly the very environment they live, are responsible for these features of the people.

The natural geographical compactness coupled with the economic contact under compelling circumstances contributed in no small measures to the evolution of such a colourful mosaic whose beauty lies in its diversity alone (Gangte 1993:5).

But Saikia feels that

A cultural mosaic is evolved and maintained through concerted efforts of the different culture groups and the history of the region has all through been a history of unmitigated efforts towards assimilation (1976:31).

Every ethnic group of any region, state or village has its own peculiarities and characteristic features. These distinctions are clearly visible in environment, material life, language, social organisations, life cycle, economy, system of social control, religion and even in their world view. May be some differences also lie in the biological make up of the people. These differences between the areas or amongst the people are obvious. But these differences do never prove that people are all different. They are one and the same, the same citizens of India. The national feelings always get hurt when one differentiates groups by caste, creed or by religion or so on. A folk song from one of the areas of North-East India, clearly expresses the sentiments of the people; people, not only of North-East India but also of all of us.

Pagai tathangdi tathak

Bukukh hani Kok-tama raonao

Chini burahasha Attarmura

*Aachgai tanghu puba - a
Attarmura Comatituima
Trabasbu-malai tangkhu
Jokh by Jakh mili
Himdri, gapri backkha
Sedi Khabu thancha angdi*

[O dear friends, don't forget the country, the Mother.
The old Attarmura (mountain) still standing on the east.
The Gomti (river) is still flowing from the Attarmura
Let us unite with one another.
And have hand in hand, walk together
Be a united soul and mind,
Think for the country, the Mother] (Das 1994: 18).

Since the end of the last century people of North-East India came to limelight through the writings of the foreigners mostly. The colonial administrators started studying the socio-cultural life of different ethnic groups of this region and publishing monographs not merely for understanding the people, but more for implementing colonial policy and administration in the area, and also for injecting colonial ideology among the people (Ghurye 1963; Raha and Das 1982; Raha 1989: Introduction). No doubt a number of good monographs were written between last quarters of last century and say first quarters of this century, but most of these were written by the British administrators. Very few social scientists or physical anthropologists did venture during this period. Truly speaking Indian social scientists, physical anthropologists and human biologists took up North-East India as place for their study mainly after Independence, and contrary to the earlier period very few administrators showed much interest to study the socio-cultural life of the people of North-East India during the post-Independence period. After independence a good number of articles and books have been published on different people of this region. Studies have also been published on different aspects of this region.

The present volume is no doubt, is an addition to the many books on North-East India. But it definitely has an edge over many such edited books as this book has covered various aspects of the people of North-East India and their environment. This

book has the distinction of including articles on policy matters and constitutional provisions, paleoanthropology, human ecology, bio-genetical features and socio-cultural life of the people of this region. Out of twenty-three articles included on this region, one on Pandit Nehru's thinking towards north-east region, one on constitutional framework, one on the prehistoric archaeological aspect of the region, two articles on environmental issues, three cover demography and genetical aspects and the rest can be grouped under the broad category of socio-cultural life of the people including ethnicity. One of the articles of the last category deals with the creation myth from North-East India while another deals with necessity for the study of the tribal people in the North-East India for varied reasons.

In this book we have distributed the articles into two distinct parts on the basis of the theme of the articles and the area covered. We have grouped in Part One those articles, which are general in nature and cover almost all the states of the North-East India, and those which are specific in nature dealing with one or more communities of a state or discussing some aspects of a state, have been covered under Part Two.

In our book we have included nine articles of general nature under Part-One and the rest of the articles (fourteen in number) dealing with specific issues, have been grouped under Part Two. Again in both Part- One and Part-Two articles have been arranged both themewise and statewise.

When the statewise distribution of the articles are examined, it is found that out of twenty-three articles nine are of general nature covering most areas of North-East India. But out of the remaining fourteen articles, one from Arunachal Pradesh, five from Assam, one from Manipur, three from Meghalaya, one from Mizoram, one from Nagaland and finally two from Tripura. Again five out of fourteen articles under Part-Two are general in nature giving a vivid picture of the concerned state while the remaining nine articles deal with some specific ethnic group.

In Part-Two we have included nine articles of general nature covering most part of North-East India, as already stated.

The first article of Part-One is by Prof. Ajit K. Danda and Pratibha Mandal who have contributed on the creation myths

from North-East India. The article gives an idea about the cosmological queries, environmental and socio-cultural reflections, and nature of sharing across cultures.

Prof. B.K. Roy Burman's article deals with the constitutional provisions for the exercise of autonomy by the tribal communities in North-East India and the implication of the Sixth Schedule on this region. Prof. Roy Burman has also dealt with the seventy-third Amendment of the Constitution, Bodo and Jharkhand Accords, etc.

The third article of Part-One is on Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's thinking and policy towards different states of North-East India written by Dr. Manis Kumar Raha.

The next article under this part is one the *Prehistoric Cultural Heritage of North-East India*. The authors of this article, Prof. H.C. Sharma and Dr. H.C. Mahanta have tried to give a comprehensive panorama by reviewing the prehistoric studies undertaken by a number of scholars in this region.

The next article of this book is by Dr. Dhruvad Choudhury who has highlighted the linkages between the indigenous knowledge system and sustainable development in the North-East India. He has also stated that 'anthropological approaches complimented with biological sciences, particularly ecology, have a significant role to play in ensuring global sustainability'.

Dr. Debendra Kumar Nayak has, through his article, discussed about the geographical background of the tribal people of North-East India. He has also highlighted process of peopling and spatial distribution of the tribal population in this region.

Through his article Dr. Sarthak Sengupta has summed up and analysed the finger and palmar dermaloglyphic studies in North-East India. The ethnic diversities on the basis of the results of these studies are clearly visible. Distinct pattern of finger and palmar dermaloglyphic traits are the core features for the population of each region. Sex differentiation is also noticed.

The article contributed by Dr. C.L. Imchen, illustrates the relation of the tribal people of India, particularly of North-East India, with the nation-state. It also deals with the dilemma in the relationship between the collective rights of the minorities including the tribals with political rights based on principle of majority rule.

The tribal people have an important place in North-East India. For taking any measure for the upliftment of their condition the basic life-style of these people must be known. Dr. Rajat Kanti Das has emphasised through his article that more dynamic approach is required to be taken to study the tribals of this region in order to plan and implement proper development measures.

In Part-Two we have included fourteen articles, which depict different processes of life in different North-East Indian states or deal with some aspects of the life of some people of some states.

The first article of this part belongs to Dr. R. Khongsdier and Prof. A.K. Ghosh. It is a review article on the growth studies so far undertaken in Assam by different scholars in different period of time to 'understand the processes of human evolution and the causes of human variations'.

The next article is on the genetic demography of the Kampti presently settled in some areas of Lakhimpur District of Assam written jointly by Dr. Soumitra Barua, N.C. Sarkar and R. Th. Varte. Through this article the authors have tried to demonstrate genetic consequences of fragmentation because of various factors.

The position of women everywhere in India is quite low, while it is absolutely true in the caste oriented societies, it is likewise true in the predominantly tribal areas. Dr. (Mrs) Dipali G. Danda has highlighted gender discrimination and inequality in some Arunachal societies. Even with the technological advancement the female members in these societies are discriminated against.

Dr. Gurudas Das through his article has tried to give some sort of analytical understanding of social tension in Assam through facts and figures. The author has tried to focus different dimensions of socio-economic problems of the region linked with the single politico-socio-economic process of incorporation of the region into the national mainstream.

Ethnicity and nationality questions have been very important issues in socio-political development processes of North-East India. These issues in Assam have been critically discussed in the next article on politics of ethnicity by Dr. Nitul Kumar Gogoi.

A complex social formation and agrarian situation of Assam existed during pre-colonial period. A critical analysis on these

conditions, crisis generated and changes therein, have been made by Dr. Bhupen Sarmah in his article.

The age-set system is a unique system present in some tribal societies in some areas of North-East India. Prof. R.K. Kar has attempted a discussion on such age-set system among the Mishing of Assam (Youth association) and the Chote of Manipur (village council).

The Garo are an important tribe in North-East India. They are also found across the border, i.e., in Mymensingh district of Bangladesh. Though international border has divided this tribe still cultural continuity is visible. Prof. Rabbins Burling through his article has shown the difference and similarities in the life-style of the Garo of these two areas.

Development, an irreversible process and ongoing phenomenon, is often contested by ethnicity itself. These often compete with each other, and Dr. T.B. Subba has worked on this theme in his article on the Dalus, a little known community of Meghalaya.

The agrarian situation in a Hajong village in the West Garo Hills has been critically discussed by Mr. Sarit Chaudhuri in the next article. The Hajong are basically settled agriculturists having intimate connection with land for production of crop.

After attaining the status of a state when the political climate of Mizoram got settled, many new avenues for the socio-economic development opened up. Dr. Horst F. Rolly in his article, has discussed the nature and extent of decentralisation of development and role of the voluntary organisation in the development processes.

The Naga which has emerged as a regional community, has several segments. Through his article, Dr. N.K. Das elucidates processes of cultural differentiation, perception of self-identity, segmentation, stratification and question of tribeship among different segments of the Naga.

In Tripura a good number of tribes live. In the next article Prof. J.B. Ganguly has tried to show the transitional facets of life and culture of the indigenous tribes of Tripura.

The state of Tripura has always faced some sort of crisis since its emergence as a state. Dr. Anup Datta through his article on

Tripura, has made an attempt 'to locate and identify the roots of uneven regional development' and has shown an endless struggle between regionalisation and 'regionalism' over economic, political and cultural issues.

Through the above twenty-three articles we have tried to focus some coinstitutional, prehistoric, bio-genetical, environmental and cultural issues of North-East India. No doubt it is an impossible task to cover in details, all aspects of the life and activities of a large number of people of varied ethnicity and bio-genetical make-up living in the vast areas like North-East India. Even then we have tried to show, within our limited scope, various aspects of life and environment of the people of the Seven Sisters, though of course, there may be some gaps for which, we believe, our readers will forgive us. Even then any research work is important for the contemporary and future research scholars, academicians, planners, administrators and others.

For preparing this volume we have got a good cooperation and moral support from many persons. We express our deep sense of gratitude to all of them. First and foremost come the learned contributors of this book. Without their academic cooperation it was impossible for us even to take up this project. We are really indebted to all of them. We are also highly grateful to Prof. B. Pakhem, Vice-Chancellor, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong who has so kindly written the Foreword of this book. We are also very much thankful to the Directors and Editors of M/s. Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi for publishing this book. Thanks also go to all others who directly or indirectly helped us to finalise this book.

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Creation Myths from North-East India

Ajit K. Danda *and* Pratibha Mandal

All human societies of the world, irrespective of whether they are at the hunting-gathering stage of technology or have such evolved as to represent the supersonic jet age, commonly share a curiosity to know the origin of the world and various life forms, including man. The result of such enquiry has led to the development of numerous creation myths which are culture-specific though, have certain common attributes. The present study is an attempt to have an idea about (1) the cosmological queries, (2) the kind of environmental and socio-cultural reflections and (3) the nature of sharing across cultures. For this purpose, we shall draw illustrations from selected tribes of North-East India.

METHODOLOGY

1. Collection of Data

The data-base of this study constitutes (a) creation myths and (b) ethnographies of the tribes whose creation myths have been dealt with here. For ethnographic data, the present researchers have by and large depended on relevant published materials. For creation myths, however, first-hand field-survey data as well as published materials have been used. The ethnographies will provide the perspectives in which the creation myths manifest.

2. Selection of States and Peoples

Five, out of seven states of the north-east region, viz., Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura have been represented in this essay. The other two states, viz., Manipur and Mizoram have been left out apparently for desperate reasons. From Mizoram we could not elicit adequate information (i.e., creation myths, etc.) to represent the people of that state. In case of Manipur, neither is there any major tribe that is not found elsewhere in North-East India nor adequate representative data are readily available for due incorporation.

For this study, tribes have been selected from various states primarily on the consideration of (1) numerical strength in the concern states and (2) characteristic attributes. Thus the Miji and Sherdukpen have been selected from Arunachal Pradesh, the Dimasa and Karbi represent Assam, the Garo and the Naga have been chosen from Meghalaya and Nagaland respectively and the Riang the Tripuri have been selected from Tripura.

3. Methods of Analysis

Content analysis with respect to cosmological queries, environmental and cultural contents have been resorted to for meeting the desired objectives.

THE PEOPLES

State: Arunachal Pradesh

Tribe: Miji, Dhammai, Sajalong

The Maji, Dhammai, Sajalong tribes live in the West Kameng District of Arunachal Pradesh. They inhabit the hilly and forested region. According to Census of India, 1981 their population strength is 4085. Sajalong's language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman sub-family of Sino-Tibetan language family. In physical features the Sajalong belong to the Mongoloid group. Their major livelihood is jhuming or shifting cultivation. Maize is their staple food which, to a certain extent, is supplemented by rice, millet, and pulses.

The community is divided into a number of exogamous patrilineal clans and sub-clans. Though the tribe tend to follow tribal endogamy, they have been practising matrimony with the

neighbouring Aka since long. Adult marriage and monogamy are the usual practices. Nevertheless, polygyny is also permitted. Payment of bride-price is in vogue among them. Levirate and sororate, both junior or senior type, are also prevalent. Only the husband has the right to seek divorce on grounds of maladjustment and adultery. Remarriage is allowed for widows, widowers and divorcees. Politics is the men's domain.

The Miji are the worshippers of spirits and natural forces. The Census of India 1981 records 72.95 per cent as the followers of "other religions", 1.4 per cent as Hindus, 1.15 per cent as Buddhists and 0.07 per cent as Christians.

Tribe: Sherdukpen

The Sherdukpen live in West Kameng District. The Census of India 1981 recorded their population as 2,096. Their language is Sherdukpen or Ngnok which belongs to the Tibeto-Burman sub-family. In physical features they are Mongoloids. The tribe practise both shifting cultivation and settled agriculture. They also practise hunting to supplement their livelihood. Rice and maize are the main cereals they consume. The people divide themselves into two endogamous moieties each of which consists of a large number of exogamous patrilineal clans. Monogamy is the usual practice though polygyny is also permitted. Levirate, sororate and cross-cousin marriages are in vogue among them. Bride-price is an essential item of a marriage. Divorce is not frequent but practised. The village-head is always a male. The Sherdukpen belong to the Lamaistic sect of Tibetan Buddhism of the Mahayana school. Nevertheless, their Buddhism is blended with local beliefs as well as Shamanism. The Census of India 1981 records 99.57 per cent of the Sherdukpen as followers of Buddhism. A very small section declares them as Hindus or followers of other religions.

State: Assam

Tribe: Dimasa

The Dimasa are mostly distributed in the North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong districts of Assam. According to Census of India 1971 the Dimasas were 39,344 strong. They speak of dialect belonging to Tibeto-Burman sub-family. Their traditional primary

occupation is shifting cultivation. The Dimasa descent is counted through both the parents—a unique feature scarcely reported from anywhere else. The Dimasa are usually monogamous. Custom of paying bride-price is prevalent among them. Divorce and remarriage are allowed. Marriages are mostly settled by negotiation. No priest is usually appointed to solemnise a marriage. The Dimasa cremate their deads. The family of a deceased person observes a pollution period for seven days. Despite inclination toward animism, most of the Dimasa return themselves as Hindus. According to Census of India 1971, 84.54 per cent of the Dimasa belonged to Hinduism and 15.46 per cent were Christians. The main Dimasa festival is called Busu.

Tribe: Karbi

The concentration of the Karbi is in the Karbi Anglong District of Assam. As per Census of India 1971 they numbered 177,195 in the state. Their language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman sub-family. The traditional occupation of the people is shifting cultivation.

The Karbi are a patrilineal community having extended family type. Each Karbi village has a village council presided over by a village-head. The village council is composed of all male adult householders. Nearly 92 per cent reported them as Hindus.

Usual form of marriage is monogamy. Divorce is permissible but rare. Widow-marriage is practised. No priest is appointed to solemnise a marriage. The Karbi cremate the dead. Their funeral ceremony, named *Chomangkön*, is very elaborate, costly and most important among all ceremonies. The main Karbi festival, however, is Rongker.

State: Meghalaya

Tribe: Garo

The major concentration of the Garo is in the two Garo Hills districts of Meghalaya. Census of India 1981 reported 405,449 Garo in the state. Their dialect belongs to the Tibeto-Burman sub-family. Traditional occupation of the people is shifting cultivation. They are the only people in our study sample who count descent through mother. However, the social control is exercised by the males. The majority of them (68.64 per cent) have been converted

into Christianity. Nevertheless, their dependence on animistic faith is considerable. The people still believe in reincarnation.

Usual form of marriage is monogamy but polygyny is also in practise. Divorce is rare and remarriage of widow or widower is allowed. Religious rites are almost negligible in a Garo marriage. Neither bride-price nor dowry is paid by the members of the tribe. The deceased is cremated traditionally. About two months after the cremation ceremony, the post-funeral ceremony is performed.

State: Nagaland

Tribe: Naga

Naga is a generic name given to a number of tribes inhabiting in Nagaland and the neighbouring states. The Angami, Ao, Rengma, Sema, Zemi, and others are important among them. The largest Naga population is found in Nagaland, which according to Census of India 1981 was 630,973. Language of the Naga tribes belongs to the Tibeto-Burman sub-family. In physical features, the Naga are Mongoloids. As reported in the Census of India 1981, 92.97 per cent of the Naga population of Nagaland is followers of Christianity. Before conversion into or/and adoption of other religions all Naga tribes were animist.

The people practise shifting as well as terrace cultivations. Rice is their staple food which is supplemented by corns, vegetables, fruits, etc. Hunting is still in practice there.

All Nagas have patrilineal clans. Families are usually nuclear and adult marriage is the usage. It will be worthwhile to make a reference particularly to the Angami and Sema Naga here as they constitute the major populations in that state.

Angami Naga

The Angami Naga constitute one of the dominant communities of Nagaland. According to Census of India 1981, their population was 62,555. The tribe divides itself into moieties. Monogamy is in vogue and marriage is fixed by negotiation. Rule of residence is patrilocal as well as neolocal. Bride-price is prevalent among them. Divorce and remarriage are allowed. Angami women shave their head hair before marriage. All sons equally inherit landed property of the family but either the eldest or the youngest

receives the father's personal property. The Angami Naga are identifiable by their special designs in the shawls. They bury their deads.

Sema Naga

The Sema Naga is a semi-nomadic people found scattered all over the state. According to Census of India 1981, their population was 95,312. Marriage is fixed by negotiation among them. Bride-price is in vogue. Residence is both patrilocal and neolocal. Though polygyny was formerly the common form of marriage, at present the Christian Sema practise monogamy. Divorce and remarriage are allowed among them.

Their family is by and large nuclear. All sons inherit the father's property. The eldest son succeeds his father's authority.

In the past the Sema Naga used to practise head-hunting. Now this has gone into disuse.

The Sema Naga too are recognizable by their special designs on shawls. They bury their deads.

State: Tripura

Tribe: Riang

The Riang are mostly distributed in Tripura. According to Census of India 1981, they returned 84,004 strong in the state. The Riang language belongs to Tibeto-Burman sub-family. The 1981 census had recorded 94 per cent of the Riang as Christian. Animism being their traditional belief, their dependence on that faith is still considerable. They were, until recently, shifting cultivators. Now many of them have to be settled to agriculture.

They are a patrilineal tribe divided into phratries. Usual form of the Riang marriage is monogamy. Parallel cousin marriage is preferred but cross-cousin marriage is also in vogue. Bride-price is practised by them. Divorce is permitted. The go-between plays an important role in a marriage negotiation. A tribal priest performs the ceremony of marriage. The corpse of a deceased person is cremated. Their pollution period varies according to the wish of the sons of the deceased. The important festivals of the Riang include Ker, Ganga Puja, and Garia.

Tribe: Tripuri

The Tripuri are the largest tribe of Tripura. Their main concentration is in the West Tripura District. According to Census of India 1981, they numbered 330,872 in the state. The main occupation of the Tripuri is cultivation. Shifting cultivation being the traditional occupation is still practised in the hills. The Tripuri language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman sub-family.

The tribe is patrilineal. Usual form of marriage is monogamy. Practice of dowry is in vogue. Formerly the tribe had the custom of paying bride-price. Divorce is allowed and remarriage of the divorcees, widows and widowers is permitted. The Tripuri have a village-head for each village. The 1981 Census recorded 99.63 per cent of the Tripuri as followers of Hinduism. They cremate their deads and observe a pollution period for twelve days.

THE CREATION MYTHS

State: Arunachal Pradesh

Tribe: Mijil

"At first there was neither earth nor sky. Shuzanghu and his wife Zumiang-Nui lived above. One day Shuzanghu said to his wife, 'How long must we live without a place to rest our feet?' Zumiang-Nui said, 'What can I say to you? You always live apart from me and don't love me. But if you truly love me and will stay with me, I will tell you what to do'. So Shuzanghu went to his wife and she conceived.

In due time Zumiang-Nui gave birth to a baby girl, Subbu-Khai-Thung, who is the Earth and to a baby boy, Jongsuli-Young-Jongbu, who is the Sky. But there was no place for them. So they fell down, down to where Phangnalomong the Worm and his wife were living, and the Worm swallowed them both.

Zumiang-Nui tried to find her children and asked her husband, "What has happened to them? Where have they gone?" But he could not tell her. Then she said, "Next time I have a child, make a clear flat place where I can keep him safely and set traps all round it". Shuzanghu made such a place and when his wife was delivered of her next child, there was somewhere for him to stay. And now when Phangnalomang came to devour the child he

was caught in one of the traps. Shuzanghu found him there and split his body open. The two children were still in his belly and the lower part of his body became the Earth and the upper the Sky.

Now Earth and Sky started living together. The Sky went to his wife, the Earth, and she gave birth to a son, Subjang-Gnoi-Rise and a daughter, Jubbu-Jang-Sangne. These were gods but they had the shape of mountains. After they were born Earth and Sky separated and as they were parting Earth gave birth to two other children, a boy, Lujjuphu, and a girl named Jassuju, who had the form of frogs. They mated and from them a boy and a girl in human form, Abugupham-Bumo and Anoi-Diggan-Juje, were born. They were human but were covered with hair. They married each other and in time had three sons, Lubukhandung, Sango-Dungso and Kimku-Sangtung" (Elwin 1957:13-14).

Tribe: Sherdukpen²

"Before the Earth was made everything was water. There were two brothers who were supreme in the Sky. The elder was Lopong-Rimbuche and the younger one was Chom-Dande. One day they said to each other, "When men are created, how will they live if there is nothing but water in the world?" There was a lotus flower growing in the Sky. The brothers threw this down and immediately the water was covered with flowers. Then they called the winds from the four quarters. The east wind brought white dust and scattered it on the flowers. The west wind blew yellow dust, the south wind blew red dust and the north wind blew black dust. The wind blew the dust round and round and mixed it up together until the Earth was formed. This is why the Earth is of different colours."

"The wind scattered the dust unevenly and the two brothers levelled it with their hands, piling it up here and making a hole there, with the result that today there are hills and valleys on the face of the Earth". (Elwin 1957 : 19).

State: Assam

Tribe: Dimasa³

In the beginning the present world was a great vacuum. In the heaven there lived Banglaraja, the original father and his wife

Arikhidima, the original mother. When Arikhidima had conceived, the golden eagle was sent out to search for a suitable place for the delivery of the baby. After a long search it found one at the confluence of the Sangriba and the Dalaobra. Arikhidima laid seven eggs at the confluence and hatched six of them. As a result, the gods Shivrai—the Creator of mankind and Aluraja, Naikhuraja, Woaraja, Gunyung Braiyung and Hamiadao were born. The seventh egg did not hatch in time. Lastly, naughty Hamiadao broke it and at once thousands of evil spirits and devils emerged. Noble Shivrai allocated to them the hills and the rivers as places for their abode. Thus, the hills and the rivers have become the abode of the spirits Diphuraja, Disimraja, etc., and of the demons.

Tribe: Karbi⁴

“Long ago the gods Hemphu and Mukrang took counsel together for the creation of this world. They marked the limits of their work, setting up four great posts to fix the boundaries of things, and fastened them immovably with the six of their mother’s hairs. Then they looked for seed to produce the earth, but found none. Then they consulted a hundred other gods, with their wives, making with themselves and their wives two hundred and four in all. It was decided to send one of the wives to beg for some earth from the god Hajong, and Bamon’s wife was sent on this errand. But Hajong refused to give any earth from his world from which a rival world might be fashioned, and sent the Goddess Bamonpi away empty-handed. But as she returned she noticed the worm-casts on the road, and carried off one and hid it in her bosom. But even with this piece of warm earth nothing could be done, until the God sent for Helong Recho, the King of the Earthworms, who came and worked up the piece of earth, till in one day it became a heap many feet in diameter; so he continued, still eventually it became this earth of ours. But it was still soft moist earth, on which no one could travel. So they called Kaprang the blacksmith, who with his bellows produced a wind which dried the mud to solid earth. Then the God said, “We must cause plants to grow on it”. They searched everywhere for seed, and at last sent to Rekbepi in the west, by the great post that marked the place of the setting sun, to ask for seed. Rekbepi came, and herself brought seed and

sowed it. (Another version states that Rekbepi and Rek-kropi, wives of two gods, went to Kana, beyond the boundaries of this world, and obtained from him the various seeds of trees and plants. As they were returning, the sindm, or head-strap, which held the baskets on their heads broke, and the wind scattered the seeds on the surface of the earth. This occurred on the bank of the river Kallang, in the south-eastern part of Nowgong. But all the bamboos that grew from these seeds were jointless, and therefore weak; strong winds would break down the entire crop in a single storm. So the goddesses who brought the seed tied round the stems pieces of thread to strengthen them; the threads made scars, until at last all the bamboos we have now are marked with scars at the joints.)

Next came the creation of animals, Hemphu and Mukrang were the leaders, but they were helped by Pithe and Pothe (great mother and great father). The elephant was first created to be servant to man. Then the tiger was made, and bidden to eat the wicked.

Then a great council was held, and it was decided to create a being called 'man'. The first man's name was Bamôn-po, and he created for him two wives, one a Mikir and other an Assamese. But no offspring was born to the man for a long time. At last the Assamese wife sent Bamonpo to her elder brother, who understood the secrets of nature. He sent Bamonpo into his garden, and bade him pick an orange for each of his wives, and gave it to her to eat. Bamonpo did so, and went homewards with his two oranges. On the way, becoming hot, he stopped at a river to bathe. While he was in the water, a crow came and carried away one of the oranges. Bamonpo sadly returned to his home, and gave the one orange left to his Assamese wife, who ate it. "But the Mikir wife picked up a piece of the peel and ate it, and in process of time she had a son, whom she named Ram. The Assamese wife also had a son, whom she called Chaputi. He, however, was weak and puny, while Ram was strong and valiant. Ram could pull up trees by the roots, and break them down as he pleased. He could fight and conquer any demon who attacked him, and any man whom he met. But he had no wife. One day while out hunting he became thirsty, and climbed a tree to look for water. He saw a pool at which he quenched his

thirst. As he did so, he noticed in the grass a white thing, which he put in his basket and carried home. It was a large egg. For some days he forgot to look at it, and later on, when he went to see it, he found the egg was broken, and a beautiful woman had come forth from it. The demons tried to seize her and carry her off, but Ram vanquished them all, and made her his wife. She was very beautiful, and her children multiplied until they were numbered by thousands. Ram's fame spread throughout the world, till at last he disappeared, and was deified by a race of his descendants, called Hindus. They were a mighty race of men, and in course of time, becoming dissatisfied with the mastery of the earth, they determined to conquer heaven and began to build a tower to reach up to the skies. Higher and higher rose the building, till at last the gods and demons feared lest these giants should become the masters of heaven, as they already were of earth. So they confounded their speech, and scattered them to the four corners of the earth. Hence arose all the various tongues of men" (Lyall 1908: 70-72)

State: Meghalaya

Tribe: Garo

Version (a)⁵

Tatara-Rabuga created the earth from the dirt of his body. At first he made it as tiny as a speck in the eye. Afterwards, he went on adding more and more to it until it reached the desired present size.

At the beginning Tatara-Rabuga made it as fluid on which even a fly could not seat. He then decided to solidify it. He asked the wind to do the needful. The wind was unable to do so. Then he entrusted the sun with the job who with his heat, was able to solidify the fluid earth. Tatara-Rabuga then found that the levelled and naked earth did not look beautiful. He, therefore, ordered Aningko Brara Chiningko Jubapa to make hills, mounds, streams and rivers. Tatara-Rabuga then collected seeds and sow them on the hard rocks of the hills. But the seeds did not germinate and grow. Tatara-Rabuga felt that they must be sown in some other place. He sow them in the soft soils near the streams and rivers. He was satisfied to see them grew then abundantly. Thus, the whole earth was clothed with vegetation.

The creation of the earth covered seven worrying days and nights of Tatara-Rabuga.

Version(b)⁶

In the beginning the Earth was a vast watery plain. There was no land, and darkness prevailed over everything. Tatara-Rabuga decided to create the present Earth. So, he sent Nostu-Nopantu in the shape of a woman, to carry out his will. There was no dry place for her to set foot on, so she took up her abode in a spider's web which was stretched over the water. Tatara-Rabuga gave her for material a handful of sand, but starting her task she found that she was unable to make the particles stick together. Then she sent the big crab, the small crab and the beetle one after another to fetch clay from down under the water, the first two creatures being unsuccessful. Finally she created the Earth with clay and the sand.

When the creation of the earth was over, Tatara-Rabuga created human beings. The first man and woman were Sani and Muni, whose children, Gangcheng and Dujong, were the parents of Noro and Mande, who were the progenitors of the Garo race.

The first human beings had no rice to eat, and had to satisfy their hunger with roots and fruits of the forest. Two dwarfs—a man and his wife—cultivated the soil for the first time. Tatara-Rabuga, to whom the dwarf couple made an offering of pumpkins, rewarded their industry by causing rice to grow.

State: Nagaland

Tribe: Naga

Version (a)⁷

In "the beginning the earth was covered by a vast sheet of water, towered over by a hill where lived the God Sibrai. One night, a giant bat kept flying round to find a spot to land. Finally, it flew to God Sibrai and told him that he came from another world which had got overpopulated and to look for new land to relieve its congestion. (The bat was, in reality, a god who had assumed the bat's form to be able to fly around.) Thereupon Sibrai created land, trees, grass and the wind to blow. Crows scraped the earth and made rivers flow through the land. Then birds, animals

and finally man were placed on this land" (Chattopadhaya 1978 : 84).

Version (b)⁸

"Lijaba created the world. At first he worked slowly and carefully, making broad, even valleys and level plains. But, as he started work on Nagaland, a giant cockroach appeared and told him that some enemies were coming to attack him. Lijaba quickly put together a jumble of hills and valleys, not taking time to level and smooth them in his haste to finish his work. This is why today Nagaland consists of steep mountains and cliffs, unlike the broad, smooth plain of the Brahmaputra valley" (Beck, Clans et. al. 1989 : 273).

State: Tripura

Tribe: Riang⁹

In the beginning there was nothing but absolute darkness and water. But once God created light, days and nights appear in the universe in succession. Then He created the earth and its plants and animals. Now there was everything except human beings. One day He created an angel out of His own soul and named him Achu Sibrai. God gave Achu Sibrai two pebbles and asked him to keep them carefully because human beings would be born from those two pebbles. Achu Sibrai kept the stones under a *chamthai* plants and ordered the bird Bihangama to hatch them. Bihangama hatched the stones for a long time and then two human babies, one male and the other female, were born. The male baby, Devatarani was older than the female baby Devalaksmi. Bihangama reared them up for three or four years and then she fluttered away in the sky.

Seeing the two children left helpless in the forest, God created a large orchard for them and asking them not to eat the fruit *thaioha* He departed. The children followed the God's advice till they were grown up.

Achu Sibrai, in the meantime, desired to become the lord of heaven himself in stead of God. So, he invited God to a duel in which the latter emerged victorious. God then exiled him from heaven. Seeing no hope of fulfilling his wishes, Sibrai planned a

retaliation whereby he could establish his authority over the human world. By then Devatarani and Devalaksmi were grown up. Achu Sibrai assuming the appearance of a snake went and asked them how they procured their goods. The boy and the girl said, "The God has given this rich orchard to us and we eat the fruits of it whenever we wish". Achu Sibrai asked them, "But are you allowed to eat all the fruits of this orchard?" The boy and the girl pondered a little and then said, "No, we are not, the God has forbidden us to take one variety". Achu Sibrai said, "That is the most tasty fruit! 'Eh?' Besides, eating it gives a person wisdom. The God is a selfish fellow, and does not want to see you intelligent and free". So saying Achu Sibrai began eating that fruit. Following him Devatarani and Devalaksmi also plucked one each and found it most delicious of all the fruits they had tasted before. And as soon as they started eating that fruit, Achu Sibrai disappeared.

After some time the God visited the orchard and called the boy and the girl. But they could not come to Him out of a consciousness of guilt that they had disobeyed Him. The God became very angry with them and ordered, "Get out of My orchard".

Seeing the boy and the girl ousted from God's orchard Achu Sibrai again appeared before them. Devatarani and Devalaksmi now had a hard life. They prayed to Achu Sibrai to help them in procuring food. Achu Sibrai consoled them. He asked the rat to get Devatarani and Devalaksmi seeds of paddy, vegetables and fruits from the store of the Rakhsases and ordered the cock and the spider to help the rat in its safe return. Thus, when the rat successfully brought the seeds, Achu Sibrai taught the man and woman the techniques of cultivation. He also managed to get them married for ensuring the increase of the human species. Thus, in due time Devalaksmi bore a male child. They named the child Bruha. Bruha is considered to be the oldest ancestor of the Riang.

Tribe: Tripuri

Version (a)¹⁰

In the beginning there were only water and the sky with the sun, the moon and the stars. Once God took some dirt from His body, wrapped it in a banyan leaf and threw it into the water. The earth was formed out of that dirt. Then the God made an earthen

rat and gave it life. Then He made a man and woman of clay and gave life to them too. The man and the woman, to procure their food, gathered fruits and edible roots and hunted beasts in the forests. In due time the man and the woman had two offspring—a male and a female.

Once the first man requested God to grant them the procurement of an year round supply of food at comparative ease. God then told them that they should collect corn seeds from Gandharva queen in Heaven and start cultivation. God also told them how to procure the seeds. Thus, being helped by the rat the man with his wife and children succeeded to steal the corn seeds and started cultivation. And then on humanity have had an year—round supply of food from cultivation.

Version (b)¹¹

In the beginning it was all dark and God lived on water. To get rid of His loneliness He created His consort with the dirt from His body. They united sexually and consequently the gods Brahma, Vishnu and Maheswara were born. Brahma created human beings. In course of time they grew in number and formed the society. The formation of society led them to learn *Jhum*.

ANALYSIS

Content analysis with respect to cosmological queries:

The span of coverage by the creation myths under study ranges from a pre-existing 'another world' to the origins of cultivation and multiplicity of human languages. Table—1 gives a picture of the findings to 33 relevant creational queries at a glance among the eight tribes under study. (The points of cultivation and multiplicity of language have been excluded here as they have not been depicted in the myths as the results of Creation.) The relevant queries have been put in the first column and the findings have been put in the following eleven columns allotted to the tribes and states under study.

The findings on query-1 show that all the tribes under study believe in a beginning of the world as we see it today. It is hard to resolve to what extent this belief is native thus exclusive or borrowed from either Hinduism or Christianity or some other

faiths due to contact with them.

Unlike those on query-1 the findings on query-2 are not exactly identical.

The Dimasa case is dubious. The creation myth of the Dimasa starts with the phrase "In the beginning the present world was a great vacuum". The word "world" undoubtedly means "the earth", as the very next sentence makes it clear that the heaven had been existing there with "original parents". But what is meant by the term 'vacuum'? Usual meaning of the term is 'a space entirely devoid of matter' (*The Random House Dictionary* 1968:1451). Now, a reading of the whole myth makes it clear that the term 'vacuum' is used here to mean 'devoid of lesser spirits and human beings' and that the earth was already present with its hills and rivers.

The query-3 is not a 'yes/no' type query and has to be answered by enlisting the related contents of the myths. The creation myth of each tribe, therefore, elicits plural responses. Of those the idea of pre-existing 'another world' with its own deities' is found among the Karbi and the Naga version (a). Among all the civilised religions this idea occurs in Hinduism. But while the Karbi are a Hinduised tribe (91.61 per cent are Hindus) the Naga are Christianised (93.97 per cent are Christians). Hence, the idea of pre-existing 'another world' is perhaps fairly common among a section of Tibeto-Burman speaking tribes.

The findings at the next level onward on query-3 are 'original parents-cum-creators', 'great parents', 'God-creator' and 'Joint creators'. Out of them the 'original parents-cum-creators' are found among the Miji and the Dimasa; 'great parents' among the Karbi; 'God-creator' among the Garo, Naga, Riang and the Tripuri and 'joint creators' among the Sherdukpen and the Karbi. Prevalence of the concept of 'original parents' among the Riangs has been recorded in a Bengali monograph 'Riang' by Chakravarty and Bandopadhyaya (1988 : 38). The absence of the idea in the version of the Riang creation myth dealt here is then a definite result of the Biblical influence on its teller because the influence is obvious on the version.

A question may be asked as to why two different lineal systems—i.e., patridescent (Miji, Karbi and Riang) and double-descent (Dimasa)—have been given equal importance? Attributing

this equality to both the sexes fits to the lineage system of the Dimasa as they count descent through both the sexes. But what about the other three tribes who are patrilineal? Two possible alternative answers can be put forward: (1) the idea has diffused from the Dimasa and (2) the idea came from a source common to all these four tribes. The possibility of the second alternative seems to be greater if the theory propounded by the educated section of the Dimasa regarding the origin of the matri-clans is taken into account. According to this theory, the matri-clans were introduced after 1500 A.D. when the tribe had their capital in Maibong (Danda 1978: 6, 49).

The 'original parents' in both the Miji and Dimasa creation myths have been shown as original creators. The 'great parents' have not been shown as such. God—creator has been recorded in the myths of the Garo, Naga, Riang and Tripuri. God's existence prior to the origin of the earth is present in both Hinduism and Christianity. Hence, it is likely that the Hinduised tribes have borrowed it from the Hindus while the Christianised ones through Christian education. But it is not unlikely that the tribes had developed the concept of their own as because the concept is found to be present among some of the most primitive North American Indian tribes (*Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend* 1949 : 260).

The findings 'heaven' and 'sky' have been put in the same hierarchical position against query-3 as because they have similar status in the myths of the tribes concerned, the 'sky' being present in the myths of the Sherdukpen and the Tripuri while the 'heaven' being present among the Dimasa. The 'sky' in the Tripuri myth appears to have been used interchangeably with the 'heaven'.

The simultaneous occurrence of primeval darkness and primeval waters prior to the existence of the world is found in version (b) of the Garo creation myth, in the Riang creation myth and in version (b) of the Tripuri creation myth. The Sherdukpen creation myth, version (9) of the Naga creation myth and version (a) of the Tripuri creation myths refer to primeval waters only. In both Christianity and Hinduism simultaneous occurrence of darkness and waters have been mentioned to be present 'at the beginning'. In the perspectives of the myths under discussion, the

Christian influence can clearly be detected in cases of the Garo, and the Riang (though the latter is a Hinduised tribe) while, that of the Hinduism is obvious in the Tripuri version (b). In the cases of the Naga (Christianised) and the Sherdukpen (Buddhist) the motif may or may not be indigenous.

The celestial bodies are referred to as existing prior to the creation of the earth in the version (a) of the Garo and the version (b) of the Tripuri. Neither Christianity nor Hinduism possess this feature.

The wind has been recorded to be existing since before the creation of the earth in version (a) of the Garo and among the Sherdukpen. Existence of the lesser deities prior to the creation of the earth has been mentioned in the cases of the Garo and the Karbi. This occurrence is, perhaps, indigenous.

Abyss has been recorded only among the Miji. Lesser spirits have been found among the Garo and the Karbi. Creator's enemy has been mentioned among the Naga. Dusts have been recorded to be existing prior to the origin of the earth in case of the Sherdukpen. In version (b) of the Garo creation myth clay and sand have been mentioned to have existed prior to the earth. Among plants, lotus in case of the Sherdukpen and banyan tree in case of Tripuri version (a) have been mentioned as to be existing prior to the creation of the earth. There is no discussion on plants either in *The Standard Dictionary of Folklore...* or in the *Motif Index*.

In the Garo version (b) beetle, crabs and spider have been mentioned to be existing prior to the earth. Of them beetle and crabs have been described as earth divers. This idea of insects as earth divers has been found in the creation myth of the Mishmi of Arunachal (Elwin 1957 : 21). Now, whether the idea is a parallel invention in the north-east region, or it has diffused from elsewhere cannot be instantly decided. The history of the missionary works in this region reveals that in 1838 the American Baptists took hold of Assam after the withdrawal of the English Baptist the previous year. The American Baptists came to Sadiy'a in 1836 and gradually extended their work among the tribes of the Naga Hills, Garo Hills, Manipur and the then Cachar District and Assam Valley (Quarishi 1987 : 20). Hence, it is quite possible that the idea might have diffused from elsewhere.

In the field of animals, the Dimasa creation myth refers to (golden) eagle, and the Karbi creation myth refers to earthworm to be existing prior to the Earth. The eagle is associated with Zeus and lightning in Roman mythology; in the Aveste it is described to live on the mythical all-healing tree; in the *Rig-Veda* it is credited to bring the sacred *soma* to Man (*Funk and Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore* 1949:333). It is most likely that the Hinduised Dimasa have borrowed the mythical treatment of the bird from Hinduism. *Worm as creator* is found in several parts of India excluding Hinduism and Buddhist myth (Thompson 1948 : 67).

One more entry has been made in the Karbi myth against the query - 3, i.e., blacksmith who solidified the moist Earth. Blacksmith playing this role has not been recorded for any other community yet. But *god as blacksmith* has been recorded for India in the *Motif Index* by Thompson (1948 : 86).

Findings on query-4 show that the creation myths of the Miji, Dimasa and the version (b) of the Tripuri creation myth have plural sets of creators in sequence. Coming to the queries 5 and 6 it is seen that both the versions of the Garo creation myth, both the versions of the Naga creation myth, the version recorded from the Riang and the version (a) of the Tripuri show belief in the existence of a single male creator. This belief fits to the social structure and present religious affiliation of the Naga, the Riang and the Tripuri. These three tribes count their lineage along male line. But the picture of the Garo is striking, because the tribe is matrilineal. It is, perhaps, result of Christianisation. But it may not be so either. In that case a feasible explanation is the tribe's experience of administration within their own social organisation. Though lineage is counted through female line, political power is enjoyed by the males: plans and programmes of social life are designed and controlled by the males. Idea of creation should, thus, be attributed to the males.

The essence of query-7 is a Christian idea and is shared by the Christianised Garo as well as the Hinduised Riang and the Tripuri. The theme of query-8 is neither Hindu nor Christian and most probably indigenous. This is shared by the Karbi of Assam and the Garo of Meghalaya.

The Tripuri findings on queries 9 and 10 are Hindu features. According to the *Brihadaranyak Upanishada*, the Supreme Being

who was of male sex, bisected His body to create consort for getting pleasure of companionship (sloka 40: 4th Brahmana: 1st chapter). Query-11 is related to query-9 and the corresponding finding seems to be tribal in nature and most probably indigenous of the region.

The theme of query-12 is a Biblical element (verse 3, ch I) and is present only among the Riang of Tripura. The finding on query-13 is common to the Miji, Dimasa, Riang and the Tripuri. The question has also been dealt within Hindu scriptures (sloka 43, 4th Brahmana, 1st ch., *Brihadaranyak Upanishad*).

The findings on query-14 are positive for the Miji, Dimasa and the Tripuri and negative for the Riang but not applicable for the Sherdukpen, Karbi, Garo and the Naga. According to the *Brihadaranyak Upanishad*, the humanity was born of the sexual union between the supreme soul and His consort (sloka 40, 1st ch., 4th Brahmana). Only two of the three tribes believing in the positive role of sex in the creation of lesser deities, etc., are Hindu (Dimasa, Tripuri) while the Miji are animistic. Hence, the belief is most probably indigenous in character.

The theme of query-15 may be an adapted form of Hindu idea of cosmic egg—the inexhaustible seed of all things and creatures (slokas 45 and 46, Adiparva, *Mahabharata*)—or may be a parallel invention, as the concept of 'cosmic egg' is also present among the Howaiians, Maori and in Africa as well as among the Finnish, Esthonians, Hindu and the Society Island. But as the Dimasa—among whom only the feature is found—are Hinduised and the version collected from them is free from the Christian influence, it is quite likely that the idea came to them through Hinduism.

The themes of queries 13, 16, 19 and 23 and the tribe-wise findings on queries 17 and 20 are neither Christian nor Hindu. For query-16 the Karbi alone have the answer "Yes" and the Miji, Sherdukpen, Garo, Naga, Riang and the Tripuri version (a) have distinctively negative answer. As regards query-17, the general category "clay" is shared by four states, viz., Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura. However, specific category 'creator's body dirt' is shared by Meghalaya and Tripura, and at the tribal level, by the Garo and the Tripuri, the former being Christianised and the latter Hinduised. The queries 18 and the 19 are shared, at the

tribe-level, by the Garo and the Karbi, and at the state level by Assam and Meghalaya. The feature that an agent was required to dry up the moist Earth (query-20) is shared by the Karbi and Garo, the former being a Christianised and the latter being a Hinduised tribes. At the state level, it is shared by Assam and Meghalaya. But the particular findings are different at both the tribal and the state levels.

The findings on queries 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 29, 30, 32 and 33 are influenced by the Christian creation-tale. The themes of the queries 24 and 31 are fully Christian. The theme of 24 is shared by all the tribes excepting the Miji and the Naga. The theme of 31 is present only among the Riang, i.e., only in Tripura.

Content analysis with respect to Environmental and Cultural Queries:

State: Arunachal Pradesh

Tribe: Miji

A. Environment

Kind of habitat: mountainous

Fauna: worms, frogs

B. Culture

Marriage form: monogamy

Beliefs:

1. There is the Original Couple there.
2. Earth and Sky originated as issues of the Original Couple.
3. Earth is female while Sky is male.
4. Sexual pairs of mountains were born as results of union between Earth and Sky.
5. Male and female frogs were born as results of union between Earth and Sky.
6. The human beings were born of union between the first frog couple.
7. The first human couple were covered with hair.

Tribe: Sherdukpen

A. Environment

Kind of habitat: hilly

Flora: lotus

B. Culture

Beliefs:

1. There are joint creators there.
2. There have been water, sky, a celestial lotus, winds of four directions and dusts of four colours since before the creation of the Earth.
3. Creation of the Earth was accomplished jointly by two creators.
4. The Earth is made of dusts brought by the winds of four directions.
5. The Earth is of different colours as because the dusts (of which the Earth is made) were of different colours.
6. The hills and valleys are the results of the creators' piling the dusts "up here and making a hole there".

State: Assam

Tribe: Dimasa

A. Environment

Kind of habitat: hilly

Fauna: eagle

Kind of water source: river

B. Culture

Beliefs:

1. There are original parents there.
2. There is a heaven there.
3. Lesser gods exist.
4. Devils exist.
5. The lesser gods and the devils are the offspring of the original parents.
6. The lesser gods, etc., were not directly delivered from the womb of the 'Original Mother' but born from the eggs laid and hatched by her.

Tribe: Karbi

A. Environment

Flora: bamboo, grass, orange

Fauna: crow, earthworm, elephant, tiger

Kind of water source: pool, river.

B. Culture

Economic activities: basket-making, hunting, smithery

Marriage form: monogamy, polygyny

Beliefs:

1. There has been another world there since before the origin of the world.
2. There are Great Parents there.
3. There are Joint Creators there.
4. Lesser spirits/gods exist.
5. Another world, joint creators, lesser spirits and earthworms have been existing since before the origin of the Earth.
6. Demons exist.
7. At its early state the Earth was moist.
8. Like the human beings (Karbi), the deities also have a council.
9. The earthworms also have a king of their own.
10. The human beings were created after the creation of the Earth.
11. The creation was accomplished in the manner of step-wise development.

State: Meghalaya

Tribe: Garo

Version (a)

A. Environment

Kind of water-source: river, stream

B. Culture

Beliefs:

1. There is God there.
2. Lesser spirits/gods exist.
3. God, lesser spirits, wind, sun have been existing since before the origin of the Earth.
4. Earth has been created by God.
5. The material used for creating the Earth is the dirt of the God's body.
6. The Earth was tiny at the beginning and gradually developed into the present size.
7. At the beginning the Earth was moist.

8. God entrusted the wind first and then the sun with the job of solidifying the moist Earth, the sun being successful.
9. God sow seeds of plants to cover the bare Earth.
10. The creation was accomplished in the manner of step-wise development.
11. Seven days were required to complete the creation.

Version (b)

A. Environment

Kind of habitat: forest

Flora: pumpkin, rice

Fauna: beetle, crab, spider

B. Culture

Economic activities: gathering, shifting cultivation

Beliefs:

1. God exists.
2. Lesser spirits exist.
3. In the beginning there were water, darkness, God, lesser spirits, beetle, crab, spider, clay and sand.
4. The world was created at the command of God.
5. The materials used to create the Earth were clay and sand.
6. The first man and woman were created after the creation of the Earth.
7. The creation was accomplished in the manner of step-wise development.

State: Nagaland

Tribe: Naga

Version (a)

A. Environment

Kind of habitat: hilly

Kind of water-source: river

Flora: grass, trees

Fauna: bat, crow

B. Culture

Beliefs:

1. There was another world there prior to the origin of this world.

2. There is God there.
3. In the beginning the Earth was covered by a vast sheet of water with a tower-like hill.
4. The world (land, trees, grass and wind) was created.
5. Prior to the creation of this world God lived on the single hill rising above the primeval water.
6. Gods assume appearances as necessary in creation situations.
7. God created this world at the request of a god from another world.
8. Birds, animals and human beings of this world are the excess population of another world.
9. The rivers are results of scraping of the Earth by crows.

Version (b)

A. Environment

Kind of habitat: Mountains

Fauna: Cockroach

B. Culture

Beliefs:

1. Creator created the world.
2. Cockroach existed prior to the creation of the world.
3. Broad and even valleys and level plains are the results of Creator's careful working.
4. Creator also is afraid of his enemies.
5. Steeply mountainous Nagaland is the result of Creator's hurry in making it.

State: Tripura

Tribe: Riang

A. Environment

Kind of habitat: forest

Flora: chamthai, thaioha, paddy

Fauna: cock, rat, snake, spider

B. Culture

Food articles: fruits, rice, vegetables

Conflict: duel between two males

Marriage form: monogamy

Beliefs:

1. There is God there.
2. In the beginning there were only darkness and water.
3. God created light.
4. The human beings were born of pebbles hatched by a bird.
5. The Creation was accomplished in the manner of step-wise development.
6. There is a heaven there.
7. Angel exists.
8. The culture-hero has taught the human beings the techniques of cultivation.

Tribe: TRIPURI**Version (a)**

A. Environment

Kind of habitat: forest*Flora:* banyan*Fauna:* rat

B. Culture

Economic activities: gathering, hunting, shifting cultivation*Food articles:* animal flesh, corns, edible roots, fruits*Marriage form:* monogamy*Family types:* nuclear*Beliefs:*

1. There is God there.
2. There is heaven there.
3. In the beginning there were only water and the sky with luminating bodies apart from God.
4. The Earth was created by God.
5. The Earth was created from the dirt of the body of God.
6. The creatures were made of clay and then vivified.
7. There are the Gandharvas in heaven.
8. The first corn seeds were stolen from heaven.
9. The creation was accomplished in the manner of step-wise development.

Version (b)

A. Environment

Kind of habitat: hills and forests

B. Culture

Family types: nuclear

Marriage form: monogamy

Beliefs:

1. There is God there.
2. In the beginning there were only darkness, water and God.
3. God lived on water in the beginning.
4. God created His consort.
5. God used the dirt of His body to create His consort.
6. There are lesser deities there.
7. The lesser deities were born of sexual union between God and His consort.
8. One of the lesser Gods created the humanity.
9. Knowledge of shifting cultivation was achieved through the formation of society which in its turn originated as a result of the increasing number of the human beings.

TABLE 1. Selected Findings in the Creation Myths of the Tribes Under Study

Index

✓ = Yes, x = No, -- = Not stated, + = Positive, d = dubious, N.A. = Not applicable,
 M = Male, F = Female, Y = Yes, as is obvious through reading between the lines

States and Tribes	Assam		Meghalaya		Nagaland		Tripura				
	Arumachal Pradesh	Assam	Meghalaya	Nagaland	Riang	Tripura					
Queries	Miji	Dimasa	Kabri	Garo	Naga	Riang	Tripura				
	Sherdukpen			(a)	(b)	(a)	(b)	(a)			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. If there was a beginning of the world we see	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. If the world was created	✓	d	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3. Things and beings existing prior to the creation of the earth			1. Another world with its own deities				1. Another world with its deities and creatures				

Table 1 (Contd.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	1. Original parents-cum-creators	Joint creators	1. Original parents-cum-creators 2. Heaven	2. Great parents, joint creators	1. God-Creator	1. God-Creator 2. Darkness 3. Watery plain in Earth's place	2. God-Creator 3. Earth covered by primordial water	1. God-Creator 2. Creator's enemies	1. God-Creator 2. Darkness 3. Water	1. God-Creator 2. Sky 3. Water 4. Sun, Moon, Stars 5. Banyan tree	1. God-Creator 2. Darkness 3. Water
	2. Abyss	4. Wind 5. Dusts 6. Lotus		3. Lesser deities	2. Sun 3. Wind 4. Lesser deities	4. Lesser deities 5. Clay, Sand	4. Hill				

Table 1 (Contd.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	3. Male and female worms		3. Golden eagle	4. Earth-worm		6. Beetle, crabs, spider	5. Birds and animals	3. Giant cockroach			
4. Sets of creators in sequence	3 sets	N.A.	2 sets	5. Blacksmith	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	2 sets
5. Existence of a single creator	x	x	x	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
6. Sex of the creators (including creators at any level)	M, F	M	M, F M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
7. The creator(s) himself (themselves) made/pro-created the earth	✓	✓	--	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
8. The creator(s) entrusted the job of making the Earth to lesser deities/spirits	x	x	N.A.	✓	x	✓	x	x	x	x	N.A.

Table 1 (Contd.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
9. Creation of consort by the (male) creator	x	N.A.	x	x	x	x	N.A.	N.A.	x	x	✓
10. Reason(s) for creating consort	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	Getting rid of loneliness
11. Material used in creating consort	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	Creator's body-dirt
12. Creation of light by the creator	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	--	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	--
13. Creation of lesser deities, demons, angels, etc.	✓	N.A.	✓	x	--	x	N.A.	N.A.	✓	--	✓
14. Role of sex in the creation of lesser deities, etc.	+	N.A.	+	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	x	--	+
15. Origin of deities etc. from eggs (laid by the Original Mother) hatched	x	N.A.	✓	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	x	--	x
16. Search for seed for producing the Earth	x	x	N.A.	✓	x	x	x	N.A.	x	x	N.A.

Table 1 (Contd.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
9. Creation of consort by the (male) creator	x	N.A.	x	x	x	x	N.A.	N.A.	x	x	✓
10. Reason(s) for creating consort	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	Getting rid of lo-neliness
11. Material used in creating consort	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	Creator's body-dirt
12. Creation of light by the creator	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	--	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	--
13. Creation of lesser deities, demons, angels, etc.	✓	N.A.	✓	x	--	x	N.A.	N.A.	✓	--	✓
14. Role of sex in the creation of lesser deities, etc.	+	N.A.	+	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	x	--	+
15. Origin of deities etc. from eggs (laid by the Original Mother) hatched	x	N.A.	✓	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	x	--	x
16. Search for seed for producing the Earth	x	x	N.A.	✓	x	x	x	N.A.	x	x	N.A.

Table 1 (Contd.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
17. Material(s) used in the asexual creation of the Earth	N.A.	Lotus, dusts of white, yellow, red and black colours	N.A.	Worm-casts (=clay)	Creator's body-dirt (=clay)	Sand and clay	--	--	N.A.	Creator's body-dirt (=clay)	N.A.
18. Gradual creation of the Earth from a tiny stage to its present size	x	x	N.A.	✓	✓	Y	x	x	x	--	--
19. Moist state of the Earth at its first stage	X	--	N.A.	✓	✓	--	N.A.	--	--	--	N.A.
20. Agent(s) who dried up the Earth	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	Blacksmith	Sun	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
21. Use of seeds to cover the Earth with plants	N.A.	N.A.	--	✓	✓	--	x	N.A.	--	--	--
22. Material used in the asexual creation of animals	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	--	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	--	Clay	N.A.

Table 1 (Contd.) :

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
23. Materials used in the asexual creation of the human beings:	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	x	N.A.	--	N.A.	N.A.	Pebbles	Clay	--
24. Creation of the humanity was done by God or other deities :	x	Y	✓	✓	N.A.	✓	x	N.A.	Y	✓	
25. Human beings were procreated by animals :	✓	x	x	x	N.A.	x	x	N.A.	x	x	x
26. Creation of the humanity was done last of all:	✓	Y	--	✓	--	Y	N.A.	N.A.	✓	Y	--
27. Number of human beings created initially :	2	--	--	1	N.A.	2	N.A.	N.A.	2	2	--
28. Sex of the human beings created initially:	M, F	N.A.	N.A.	M	N.A.	M, F	N.A.	N.A.	M, F	M, F	N.A.
29. Woman was created by man :	x	--	x	✓	N.A.	x	--	N.A.	x	x	N.A.
30. Number of consort of the first-man:	1	N.A.	N.A.	2	N.A.	1	N.A.	N.A.	1	1	N.A.

Table 1 (Contd.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
31. Initial lack of knowledge of sexuality of the first man and woman:	x	N.A.	--	x	N.A.	--	N.A.	N.A.		--	--
32. Time taken in creation :	--	--	--	--	7 days	--	--	--	--	--	--
33. Salient steps in the creational history :	1. Earth, Sky 2. Mountains 3. Frogs 4. Humanity	1. Earth with uneven surface 2. Hills and valleys	1. Lesser gods, spirits, devils 2. Humanity	1. Moist Earth 2. Solid Earth 3. Plants 4. Animals 5. Humanity	1. Moist Earth 2. Solid Earth 3. Hills and streams 4. Plants	1. Earth 2. Humanity	1. Land, trees, grass, wind 2. Rivers	1. Broad, even valleys, level plains 2. Nagaland with its steep mountains	1. Light 2. Earth 3. Plants and animals 4. Angel 5. Humanity	1. Earth 2. Animals 3. Humanity	1. God's consent 2. Lesser Gods (Hindu Trinity) 3. Humanity

TABLE 2. Environment in Creation Myths

States and Tribes Environmental Categories	Arunachal Pradesh		Assam		Meghalaya	Nagaland	Tripura	
	Miji	Sherdukpen	Dimasa	Karbi	Garo	Naga	Riang	Tripuri
Kind of habitat	mountains	hills	hills	—	hills and forest	hills	forest	hills and forest
Kind of water source	—	—	river	pool, river	river	river	—	—
Flora	—	lotus	—	bamboo, grass, orange	pumpkin, rice	grass, tree	chamthai, paddy, thaiola	banyan
Fauna	worm frog	—	eagle	crow, earthworm	beetle, spider, crab	bat, crow cockroach	cock, spider, rat, snake	rat

TABLE 3. Material Culture Reflected in Creation Myths

States and Tribes Cultural Categories	Arunachal Pradesh		Assam		Meghalaya	Nagaland	Tripura	
	Miji	Sherdukpen	Dimasa	Karbi	Garo	Naga	Riang	Tripuri
Economic activities	—	—	—	Basketry Hunting Smithery	Gathering	—	Cultivation Gathering	Cultivation Gathering Hunting
Food articles and drinks	—	—	—	—	Pumpkin Rice	—	Fruits (including <i>thaiola</i>) Rice Vegetables	Animal flesh Cornis Edible roots Fruits

TABLE 4. Social Facts in Creation Myths

States and Tribes	Arunachal Pradesh		Assam		Meghalaya	Nagaland	Tripura	
	Miji	Sherdukpen	Dimasa	Karbi	Garo	Naga	Riang	Tripuri
Marriage form	monogamy	—	monogamy	monogamy polygyny	—	—	monogamy	monogamy
Conflict	—	—	—	—	—	report of approaching enemies of God	duel between two males	—

TABLE 5. Beliefs in Creation Myths

Arunachal Pradesh		Assam		Meghalaya		Nagaland		Tripura	
Miji	Sherdukpen	Dimasa	Karbi	Caro	Naga	Riang	Tripuri		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
1. There are original couple there	1. There are joint creators there	1. There are original parents there	1. There has been another world there since before the origin of the world	1. There is God there	1. There has been another world there since before the origin of the world	1. There is God there	1. There is God there	1. There is God there	1. There is God there
2. Earth and sky originated as issues of the 'original Couple'.	2. There have been water, sky, a celestial lotus, winds of four directions and dusts of four colours since before the creation of the earth.	2. There is a heaven there	2. There are great parents there	2. Lesser spirits/gods exist.	2. There is creator God there	2. There is a heaven there	2. There is a heaven there	2. There is a heaven there	2. There is a heaven there
3. Earth is a female while sky is a male	3. Earth was created by joint creators	3. Lesser spirits/Gods exist	3. There are joint creators there	3. God, lesser spirits, wind, darkness, water have	3. water, a tower like hill, gods of another	3. God, darkness and water have been existing	3. Lesser Gods exist.	3. Lesser Gods exist.	3. Lesser Gods exist.

Table 5 (Contd.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<p>4. Male and female mountains were born as result of union between Earth and sky</p>	<p>4. The Earth is made of dusts brought by the winds of four directions</p>	<p>4. Devils exist</p>	<p>4. Lesser spirits/gods exist.</p>	<p>4. Earth was created at the command of God/Earth was created by God</p>	<p>4. The gods assume appearances as necessary in certain situations.</p>	<p>4. Angel exists</p>	<p>4. God, darkness, water have been existing since before the creation of the Earth/water, sky with luminating bodies have been existing since before the creation of</p>
				<p>been existing since before the origin of the Earth/God, sun, beetle, crab, ban-yan tree have been existing since before the creation of the earth</p>	<p>world, birds, animals (bat, cockroach have been existing since before the creation of the earth</p>	<p>since the beginning</p>	

Table 5 (Contd.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
5. Male-female frogs were born as result of union between Earth and sky	5. The Earth is of different colours as because the dusts (of which the Earth is made) were of different colours.	5. The lesser gods and the devils are the offsprings of the original parents	5. Joint creators, another world, lesser spirits and earth worms have been existing since before the origins of the Earth	5. The Earth was created of the dirt of the God's body/The materials used in creating the Earth were clay and sand	5. Creator (= God) also is afraid of his enemy	5. World was created by God	5. God lived on water in the beginning
6. The human beings were born of union between the first frog couple.	6. The hills and valleys are the results of the creator's piling the dusts up here and making a hole there	6. The lesser gods, etc., were not directly delivered from the womb of the 'Original Mother' but born from the eggs laid and hatched by her	6. Demons exist	6. The Earth was tiny at the beginning and gradually developed into the present size	6. God created this world at the request of a god from another world/The world was created by creator	6. Light was created first of all	6. God created his consort

Table 5 (Contd.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
7. The first human couple were covered with hair			7. At its early state the Earth was moist	7. At the early state the Earth was moist	7. The rivers are results of scraping the Earth by crows/Broad and even valleys and plains are the results of creator's careful working	7. The human beings were born of pebbles haunted by a bird.	7. God used dirt of his body to create his consort
			8. Like the Karbi the deities also have a council	8. The sun solidified the moist Earth	8. Birds, animals and man of this world are the excess population of another world	8. The creation was accomplished in the manner of step-wise development	8. Lesser gods exist.
			9. Earthworms also have a king of their own	9. God sowed seeds of plants to cover the bare Earth	9. Steeply mountainous Nagaland is the result of creator's hurry in making it	9. The culture hero (sibra) has taught the humanity the techniques of cultivation	9. The lesser gods are the offspring of God and His consort

Table 5 (Contd.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
			<p>10. The hum- anbeings were created after the creation of the Earth</p> <p>11. The creat- ion of things was accomp- lished in the manner of step-wise development</p>	<p>10. The whole creation was accomplished in the step- wise deve- lopment</p> <p>11. Seven days were requi- red to com- plete the creation</p>			<p>10. Earth was created by God</p> <p>11. The Earth was created from the dirt of the body of God</p> <p>12. The creatu- res were made of clay and then vivified</p> <p>13. The creation was accomp- lished in the manner of step-wise development.</p> <p>14. The first corn seeds were sto- len from heaven</p>

In order to facilitate the discussion on the findings related to environmental and cultural queries, they have been organised in four tables (Tables 2,3,4 and 5). All four relevant environmental categories have been shown in Table 2; findings related to material culture appear in Table 3; findings in social facts have been given in Table 4 and findings related to beliefs appear in Table 5.

Table 2 shows that the creation myths of each state and all tribes excepting one reflect the hilly nature of the area under study. However, the range of the geographical zones of the peoples can not be recognised from the findings on the queries related to water resource, flora and fauna. Extensive data may provide some reflections in this respect. Simultaneous exercise on intensive and extensive data is likely to give identification to what extent findings of the present data are in parity with the reality.

Table 3 shows the findings related to material culture. The creation myths dealt with for Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland do not contain any related reference. Of the two tribes of Assam dealt with here, the Dimasa do not contain my such reference either. The kinds of economic activities enlisted for the rest of the tribes are basketry, gathering, hunting, shifting cultivation and smithery - all of which are in in practice among the peoples under study. The findings regarding food articles and drinks also throw similar picture.

Table 4 provides a picture of social facts. Only two kinds of social facts, viz., marriage form and conflict have been dealt with in the present samples. The recorded high frequency of monogamy in the myths under study is nearly the exact reflection of the reality. Reference of conflict, even in such small sample size is to be noted. The eastern most parts of the north - east region were notorious for inter-tribal warfare till the British occupation. among all the tribes under study, the Naga were reported as one of the most warlike tribes Thus, the imagination of even God's enemy is very much in parity with the frequent Naga experience of warfare.

Table 5 gives a picture of the beliefs of the eight tribes of the north-eastern region at a glance. Since the entries in this table have all been listed in some way or other in Table-1 further interpretation of it will involve unnecessary repletion. We, there fore, avoid the same here.

List of Motifs Identified in The Creation Myths under Study*State:* ARUNACHAL*Tribe:* MIJI

- i) A 111 Parents of the gods.
- ii) A 111.1. Mother of the gods.
- iii) A 111.2. Father of the gods.
- iv) A 112.1. God from incestuous union.
- v) A 112.2. Male and female creators beget gods.
- vi) A 610.1. All things created in paris (heaven and earth etc.)
- vii) A 701. Creation of the sky.
- viii) A 702.5 Marriage of earth and sky.

Tribe: SHERDUKPEN

- i) A 15.2. Brothers as creators.
- ii) A 37. Joint Creators.
- iii) A 810. Prineval water.
- iv) A 830. Creation of earth by creator.

State: ASSAM*Tribe:* DIMASA

- i) A 27. Creator born from egg.
- ii) A 111. Parents of the gods.
- iii) A 111.1. Mother of the gods.
- iv) A 111.2. Father of the gods.
- v) A 661. Heaven, A blissful upper world.
- vi) A 661.1.2. Eagle as god's bird.
- vii) A 1210. Creation of man by creator.
- viii) F 413. Original of spirits.

Tribe: KARBI

- i) A 13.4.2. Worm as creator.
- ii) A 37. Joint creators.
- iii) A 142.0.1. God as blacksmith.
- iv) A 167. Assembly of gods.
- v) A 167.1. Council of the gods.
- vi) A 838.1. Earth excreted by worm.
- vii) A 853. Making the earth larger. Gradually extended during creation.

- viii) A 856.1. Primeval earth hardened by wind.
- ix) A 1218. Man created by co-operation of the gods.
- x) A 1275. Creation of first man's (woman's) mate.
- xi) A 1702. Creation of animals by creator.
- xii) A 1705. Animals created to serve man.
- xiii) B 801. Elephants in folk tales.

State: MEGHALAYA

Tribe: GARO

(of two versions together)

- i) A 101. Supreme god : one god chief of all other gods.
- ii) A 101.1. Supreme god as creator.
- iii) A 605.1. Primeval darkness.
- iv) A 611. Fiat creation. Universe is created at command of creator.
- v) A 810. Primeval water.
- vi) A 830. Creation of earth by creator.
- vii) A 853. Making the earth larger. Gradually extended during creation.
- viii) A 856. Hardening of the earth. At first it is soft but is hardened by sun's ray.
- ix) A 1210. Creation of man by creator.

State: NAGALAND

Tribe: NAGA

(Of two versions together)

- i) A 101. Supreme god.
- ii) A 101.1. Supreme god as creator.
- iii) A 151.0.1. Home of god where he is the only living one.
- iv) A 151.1. Home of gods on high mountain.
- v) A 171.2. God files in bird plumage.
- vi) A 810. Primeval water.
- vii) A 830. Creation of earth by creator.

State: TRIPURA

Tribe: RIANG

- i) A 52. Creation of angles.
- ii) A 52.0.1. Angels created to execute God's will.
- iii) A 101.1. Supreme God as creator.

- iv) A 106.2. Revolt of evil angles against God.
- v) A 605.1. Primeval darkness.
- vi) A 610. Creation of Universe by creator. The creator is existing before all things.
- vii) A 711.4. Originally no sun.
- viii) A 810. Primeval water.
- ix) A 830. Creation of earth by creator.
- x) A 1330. Beginning of trouble for man.
- xi) A 1331. Paradise lost. Originally happy state forfeited because of one sin.
- xii) A 1331.1. Paradise lost because of forbidden fruit.
- xiii) A 1441. Acquisition of agriculture.
- xiv) A 1701. Creation of animals by God.
- xv) A 1702. Creation of animals by creator.

Tribe: TRIPURI

(Of two version together)

- i) A 1.4. Brahma as creator.
- ii) A 73. Lonely creator. The creator is tired of solitude and therefore inaugurates the creation.
- iii) A 101.1. Supreme god as creator.
- iv) A 605.1. Primeval darkness.
- v) A 661. Heaven.
- vi) A 810. Primeval water.
- vii) A 830. Creation of earth by creator.
- viii) A 832. Creation because of creator's lone Isomeness. Dissatisfied at being alone in centre of primeval water, God creates the earth.
- ix) A 1241. Man made from clay image and vivified.
- x) A 12. Man made from clay (earth).
- xi) A 1270. Primeval human pair.
- xii) A 1420. Acquisition of food supply for human race.
- xiii) A 1441. Acquisition of agriculture
- xiv) A 1714.3. Animals created from earth.

Conclusion

The creation myths of no two tribes under study are alike. The Miji, Sherdukpen, Garo (Version-b), and the Naga (Version-b)

creation myths do not possess any idea from Buddhist, Christian and Hindu scriptures. The tribes which have been either Christianized or Hinduized have retained in their creation myths the traditional tribal ideas to an appreciable extent. The Hindu ideas are found in the Dimasa, Karbi, Naga (Version-a) and the Tripuri (Version-b)) creation myths in various degrees. Since all these three tribes are Hinduized it is rather natural. The Christian ideas are found among the Karbi, Garo and the Rieng creation myths, and they are conspicuous among the Rieng. The reason for the presence of biblical elements among the two Hinduized tribes is fairly obvious: the tellers' personal affiliations and contact. In the case of the Karbi Myth which has been adopted from Lyall (1909), the teller has been referred to as a converted Christian (Lyall 1909 : 44,70). In the case of the Rieng, the religious affiliation of the teller though has not been maintained in the source book (Niyogi 1983), the rich presence of the biblical elements strongly suggests the Christian affiliation of the teller. It is also discernible here that while some concepts of Hinduism and Christianity have been borrowed intact, some have been adapted with considerable modifications.

From the given details it is rather conspicuous that defined ethnic boundary does not make an exact fit with cultural boundary. It needs to be remembered in this context that neither the cultural identity nor the ethnic identity represents stands to reflect perfect boundary delineation. Since an element of notional identity is fairly conspicuous, it is only likely that they would represent interpenetrating nature in varying degrees. It is only natural that exposures dilute exclusiveness.

Notes

1. The Miji creation myth has been taken from Elwin (1957: 13:14).
2. The Sherdukpen creation myth has been taken from Elwin (1957:19).
3. The Dimasa creation myth has been taken with some editing from Danda (1978: 137)
4. The Karbi creation myth has been taken with some editing from Lyall (1908: 70-72)
5. The Version-a of the Garo creation myth has been collected by P. Mandal (one of the authors in 1987 from East Garo Hills District.
6. The version-b of the Garo creation myth has been taken with some editing from playfair (1909: 82-84).

7. The version-a of the Naga creation myth has been taken from Chattopadhyaya (1978: 84)
8. The version-b of the Naga creation myth has been taken from Beck, Claus et. al. (1989: 273).
9. The Riang creation myth has been taken with some editing from Niyogi (1983: 51-53).
10. The version-a of the Tripuri creation myth has been taken with some editing from Niyogi (1983: 600-61).
11. The version-b of the Tripuri creation myth has been taken with some editing from Niyogi (1983: 18).

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