



Historical Researches
into some Aspects of the
Culture and Civilization of
North-East India

G.P. Singh

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OF NORTH-EAST INDIA



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Preface

This volume is a collection of my papers, published in various journals and books, and unpublished, relating to some of the aspects of culture and civilization of North-East India. Some of the papers written in early 1980's have been thoroughly revised and enlarged in the light of further study and research in the subject. I have put them together in one volume for the readers' easy accessibility to all the materials embodied in it. I believe they will be of some use to them.

I crave the readers' indulgence for any errors of omission and commission, which may be discovered by the discerning eye, although no pains have been spared to make the account lucid, accurate and comprehensive. The subject dealt with here is vast and complicated. I am, however, conscious of limitation of my knowledge of it.

G.P. Singh

Abbreviations

ABORI	<i>Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Poona.</i>
AQ	<i>Assam Quarterly, Gauhati.</i>
ARASI	<i>Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India.</i>
AR or As. Res.	<i>Asiatic Researches</i> (Comprising History and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences, Ethnology and Literature and Asia), Calcutta, New Reprint, Delhi.
ASB	Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta.
BPP	<i>Bengal Past and Present</i> (Journal of the Calcutta Historical Society).
CR	<i>Calcutta Review, Calcutta.</i>
DAB	<i>Deodhai Assam Buranji.</i>
DEB	<i>Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal.</i>
DHAS	Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Gauhati.
EHK	<i>Early History of Kāmarūpā .</i>
EI	<i>Epigraphia Indica, Delhi.</i>
HCPA	<i>History of Civilization of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century AD.</i>
IA	<i>Indian Antiquary</i> (Journal of Oriental Research in Archaeology, History, Literature, Language, Folklore, etc.), Bombay.
IGI	<i>Imperial Gazetteer of India.</i>
IHQ	<i>Indian Historical Quarterly, Calcutta, New Reprint, Delhi.</i>

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JARS	<i>Journal of the Assam Research Society, Kāmarūpā Anusandhān Samiti, Gauhati.</i>
JASB	<i>Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta.</i>
JBORS	<i>Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society, Patna.</i>
JBRS	<i>Journal of the Bihar Research Society, Patna.</i>
JIH	<i>Journal of Indian History, Trivandrum.</i>
JPASB	<i>Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta.</i>
JRAI	<i>Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, London.</i>
MASB	<i>Memoirs of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta.</i>
MASI	<i>Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India.</i>
MI	<i>Man in India (A Quarterly Anthropological Journal), Ranchi.</i>
PAHCI	<i>Place of Assam in the History and Civilization of India.</i>
PASB	<i>Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta.</i>
PNEIHA	<i>Proceedings of North East India History Association.</i>
RATA	<i>Report of the Archaeological Tour in Assam.</i>
SAA	<i>Statistical Account of Assam.</i>
SAB	<i>Statistical Account of Bengal.</i>
SHK	<i>Social History of Kāmarūpā .</i>

1

Some Newly Discovered Sources on the History and Culture of North-East India

In the arena of research, the presentation and delineation of subject-matter concerned presupposes a critical evaluation of all the sources at our disposal. An investigation should not only be confined to those sources which have been adequately churned and copiously used rather repeated attempts should be made for discovering some new sources in the hope of bringing some new ideas, facts and data into focus. Every research should aim at reconstruction and not reproduction. Most of the researches of today are regrettably merely repetitive, not qualitative or productive. The historical validity of all the conventional explanations should be fully and fairly tested before blindly supporting and quoting them. There should be an honest attempt to collect, as far as practicable, source-material available in different languages. Language, whichever it may be, should not be allowed to stand as a barrier in the way of discoverer of truth and seeker of knowledge. On the combined testimony of various sources containing variegated mosaic of information we can expect better result than the absolute dependence on isolated or fragmentary source-material. The present paper is nothing more than a discovery of some of those sources which have not yet attracted the serious attention of scholars engaged in study or investigations of various aspects of history and culture of north-east India. The sources highlighted here, if properly exploited, will definitely go a long way in filling up some existing gaps in our knowledge about the subject concerned.

Hindi

Jaychandra Vidyalkar's *Bhāratabhūmi aurā uske Nivāsi* (Bombay, 1925), which can be fairly considered as one of the valuable antiquarian records, provides a graphic picture of the origins, migration, settlements, antiquity, etc. of primitive Himalayan and Sub-Himalayan tribes of north-east India with little reference to their relations with contemporary rulers of various kingdoms roughly upto the seventh century A.D. Equally important is *Prāchin Bhāratiya Paramaparā aurā Itihāsa* by Dr. R. Raghava (Delhi, 1953), which deals, to a considerable degree, with ethnological, socio-economic, religious and cultural aspects of various tribes of this region in pre-historic, proto-historic and historic times. *Bhārata Kā Mukti Saṅgrāma* by Ayodhya Sing (2 vols.) is of inestimable value from the standpoint of exhaustive description which it provides about the anti-British Resistance movements and liberation struggles of the Khasis, Jaintias, Garos, Nagas, Lushais, Singphos, Akas and other tribes during eighteenth, nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. *Sanskriti Ke Chār Adhāyāya*, (Delhi 1956) one of the monumental works of the National poet Ramdhari Singh Dinkar is a very dependable source for tracing out the various stages in the contribution of the non-Āryans of this region to the evolution of Indian religion, culture and philosophy.

Travellers' Accounts

Ibn Battuta¹ a celebrated Arabian traveller who visited India in the 14th century has left behind an interesting account about the subject concerned based on his personal experience. While dealing with Indian Archipelago, Bengal, China and Thubbat (Tibet) he has made a passing reference to the origins of Indo-Chinese population of this region with Monogolian characteristics as well as the religious and magical practices of the people of 'Kamaru' corresponding to Kamrupa or modern Assam. For further verification, corroboration and examination of the correctness of this statement the graphic description of Sir Henry Yule² (a popular authority on the Travels of Marco Polo, a Venetian

traveller who visited India during 13th century), can be safely and profitably relied upon.

The rare and curious narratives of European travellers are also worthy of attention for our purpose. Ralph Fitch³, the first English traveller, who came to India on political mission in 1584 during Akbar's reign, fifteen years before the East India Company procured the first Charter from Queen Elizabeth of blessed memory, and remained here upto 1590-91, has shed considerable light on Tripura's war with the Mughals in the 16th Century. Rev. Samuel Purchas (1575-1626) who published in the year 1626 first famous collection of voyages and travels undertaken by various English travellers under the caption *Samuel purchas's pilgrimage*⁴, has also made incidental references to Tippara's War with Mogors (Mughals) in the 16th and 17th centuries within a reasonable compass. His *pilgrimage*—a trustworthy historical document - also records the brief political history of Cooch Behar, Bengal, Tipperah, Bhutan, etc.

Remonstrantie or Report of Francisco pel-Saert⁵ a faithful Dutch record based on his seven years' (1620-27) experiences in India is also of some value from the point of view of little light it throws on the developments in north-east India during Jehangir's time. The narratives of another Dutch Sailor Glanius⁶ definitely merits our attention for the description it provides about Mirjumla's War in Assam during the reign of Aurangzeb. The Accounts of two Portuguese travellers Father Stephen Cacella and Father John Cabral⁷, who visited Assam between 1626 and 1630, are important only for trade relations of Assam with South Bihar. *Six voyages en persect Aux Indes* pub. in 1676 by J. B. Tavernier, a 17th century French traveller provides a glimpse into trade relations of Tripura with contemporary Eastern Kingdoms.

Portuguese Sources

The Map of Bengal compiled in 1660 by Mattheus Vanden Broucke⁸, governor of Choromandal (1658-1664) and *History of the most memorable things that took place in the East Indies and the countries discovered by the Portuguese*

written by Portuguese Father Pierre du Jarric⁹ based on the account of Father Monserrates Relacam "de Equebar Roi des Mogares" (1580) can also be of some help for Mughal relations with Tripura during 16th and 17th centuries.

Classical (Graeco-Roman) Sources

Ammianus Mercellinus' *Resgestae*¹⁰, "Remark on the Sequel to the periplus of the Erythraean sea and on the Country of the Seres as discovered by Ammianus Marcellinus" by James Tylor (Calcutta 1847), *Le periple de la Mer Erythec*¹¹ and *Arriani utferture periplus Maris Erythraei* by anonymous writer translated into another text *Geographi Grocoi Minores*¹² are some of those dependable classical records which can be of great help regarding the origins, identifications, ethnography, arts and crafts and other economic institutions of the tribal people of north-east India, only when we use them in all seriousness and with meticulous regards for the truth.

French

Sylvain Levi's *Le Nepal etude historique d'um Royaume Hindou*¹³ characterised by all its precision and accuracy can definitely be taken as reliable treatise on the origins of Indo-Mongoloid tribes of the Himalayan region of north-east India, their migrations to Nepal in post-Bharata War period invasion of Nepal by the Kirātas of Assam of great antiquity, their political and cultural triumphs over indigenous Austro-Asiatic tribes and Indo-Āryans of Nepal in ancient times anterior to 6th century BC etc.

German

W. Schmidt's *Die Monkhmer Volker*, (1906) and *Die Gliederung der austrdlischen sprachen* (1919) also contain some kernel of historical truth about the origin of the Khasis based on the comparative analysis of linguistic structures.

Notes and References

1. H. A. R. Gibb, *Ibn-Battuta's Travel in Asia and Africa, 1325-1354*, London, 1929.

2

Researches into the Origins, Antiquity, Nature and Functions of the Pre-Historic Megalithic Cultures of the Hill People of North-East India

The primary object of this paper is to throw new light on various aspects of the megalithic cultures of North East India in the Pre-historic Age. It is indeed an undeniable truth that the subject under review has attracted the attention of various ethnographers, archaeologists, antiquarians and other noted scholars like Mortimer Wheeler, Haimendorf, J. H. Hutton, J. P. Mills, R. T. Bloch, J. D. Hooker, H. Yule, C. B. Clarke, Godwin Austin, H. D. Sankalia, H. C. Dasgupta and P. R. T. Gurdon¹, but the picture which emerges out of their researches is neither graphic nor complete. Their accounts are more of descriptive nature than analytical. Moreover, several broken chains have been noticed in their accounts which need not only restoration but also fresh evaluation and interpretation. Further more, no systematic survey of the prehistoric relics and monuments of unknown antiquity of the aboriginals of North-East has been conducted so far nor has any extensive archaeological exploration been undertaken. However, in order to obtain a clearer picture of the subject reliance has been placed on the available archaeological Reports, Census Report, imperial records, indigenous sources, personal tour diary, contemporary accounts and other standard historical texts.

The duty of a historian is not only to investigate higher civilization but also the primitive civilization, for the latter constitutes the bedrock of the former. In historical

reconstruction of the early history of mankind the sober method of research should follow.²

The master key to the investigation of primitive culture of primaeval antiquity is the monumental evidence of the Stone Age. The pre-historic remains and relics not only testify to the living condition of the people in different ecological settings, but also provide some clues for determining the stages and extent of progress in the realm of civilisation. Voltaire had reasonably insisted on making enquiry into the various steps by which men passed from barbarism to civilization. These monuments also cast reflections to a considerable degree on the knowledge, beliefs, arts, technology, customs etc. of the primitive people of hoary past. The Megalithic structures of Asia, Europe, Africa and Australia are the legacy of the races of mysterious past.

These Megalithic monuments have served as a Museum of early history and culture.³ Prof. Nilsson in 1843 had affirmed that the antiquities of the human race of by-gone age are the "fragments of a progressive series of civilization"⁴. While adopting more or less the same line of enquiry Will Durant⁵ had observed that the surviving records of the Stone Age are highly impressive. The people of the Neolithic Age laid another foundation of civilization.

The term Megalithic⁶ are applied to structures or monuments of rudimentary character consisting of huge rough undressed stones as well as elaborately dressed stones of sophisticated kind popularly known as Menhirs, Dolmens, Cromlechs, Stone Circles, Stonehinge, etc.

The beliefs of the tribal people concerned in the doctrine of transmigration of soul or life after death and their socio-religious practices, ceremonies and customs constituted the basis and further promoted the growth of Megalithic cultures. The Megalithic monuments used to fulfil the three - fold functions, funerary, commemorative and religious.

The statement made by B. C. Alien, E. Gait, G. H. Alien and H. F. Howard⁷ that "Assam is somewhat destitute of archaeological remains" is not tenable. An archaeological characteristic of Assam of world-wide fame is its wealth of Megaliths comprising sepulchral monuments like cairns, dolmens, menhirs, cromiechs, upright stones, flat and horizontal stones, male stones, female stones and some stones depicting carving and Jesigns on them.⁸

One of the most prominent and striking aspects of the history and culture of the Khasis, the Jaintias, the Nagas and the Cacharis is the age-old practice of erecting various kinds of monumental stones which are scattered generally on every ways in side. These are mysterious, solitary and clustered monuments of remote antiquity. These remarkable monuments abounding in this region are similar to that found in Europe and western Asia. Some of them are puzzling and delightful for antiquarians. The megalithic stones were erected at different periods of history. But historically this practice can be traced back to pre-historic age.

We find traces of wide spread megalithic culture in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. The tall upright stones, known as menhirs representing Mao Shinrang or male stones are always uneven numbers varying from three to nine. The highest one is placed in the centre and the lower one on each side. The highest pillar which is the centre-monolith is occasionally crowned with a circular disk or covered with a round flat stone and to right and left they gradually diminish. In front of each set of three stones is placed one flat horizontal stone called by the English antiquarian "Cromlech" which rests on three or four small upright stones. This represents Mao kynthai or female stones, sometimes five menhirs and two dolmens have been found. The dolmens associated with human remains erected by a clan to commemorate member of the clan represent Mothers. This is for commemorative purposes. Memorial stones of considerable significance were classified into two categories:

(a) Stones erected by the family or Kur in accordance with the Khasi custom of ancestor worship, and (b) Stones which are erected by children in honour of the deceased parents. Both classes of stones are merely Cenotaphs or Masoleums of ancestors.

According to indigenous sources¹⁰ after cremation the charred bones were collected in an earthen pot and eventually placed in the common sepulchre of the clan. Bones were placed under the cover of flat stones. Large upright stone groups were erected in honour of the dead. The philosophy behind the practice of erecting commemorative stones was that their spirits will be gratified by these memorials and their souls will be in eternal peace without being affected by supernatural forces. The installation of memorial stones preceded the performance of dance and music. This practice was based on certain social and religious norms. The erection of monoliths was associated with sacrifices of oxes, pigs, etc. Edward Gait while corroborating the account in his Census Report¹¹ pointed out that similar monuments are found amongst the Hos, the Mundas, the Kiratas and the Naga tribes. Gurdon¹² found a striking similarity between these monuments and those of England, Brittany, Denmark and Scandinavia.

C. Von Purer Haimendorf¹³ has rightly observed that the Khasis and the Nagas alike erect single standing stone (menhirs) or alignments of stone in honour of the dead who are thereby encouraged to help their living kinsmen. The setting up of menhirs dolmens and stone circles links the Khasis and the Nagas with the Gonds of Bastar, the Mundas of Chotanagpur and Orissa tribes. The Khasis indeed approach more nearly to the dominant Megalithic custom of Peninsular India in that they collect periodically the bones of clan members and deposit them in a free standing cist as big as small house, built of enormous single slabs.

The Imperial records¹⁴ bear witness to the truth that some inscribed memorial stones were found at Mawphlang

in 1918-19. The memorial stones at Laileucote has been considered by the British antiquarians as the great work of archaeological interest. Several Megalithic monuments have been found near Cherra, Jowai, Nartiang and Laitlyngkote in pair menhirs or dolmen circles and other forms.

The eye-witness account of Lt. H. Yule¹⁵ who visited the Khasi and Jaintia hills between 1838 and 1844 reveals the truth that the tallest pillar was in the market place of Nartiang in the Jaintia hills. The biggest menhir which still stands there measured 26 feet in height. A flat table stone or cromlech near the village of Sailankot elevated five feet from the earth measured thirtytwo feet by 15 and two feet in thickness. In other instance the monuments is a square sarcophagus composed of four large slabs-resting on their edges and well fitted together and roofed in by a fifth placed horizontally. The sarcophagus is often found in the form of a large slab accurately circular resting on the heads of many little rough pillars closely planted together through whose chinks one may descry certain earthen pots containing the ashes of a family. In Mausmai deep in the forest he saw great collection of such circular Cinerairies so close that one may step from slab to slab for many yards. A simple Cairn or a pyramid some twenty feet in height as seen by him sometimes remind us of the common notion of the Tower of Babel or pyramid of Saccara in Egypt. He further observes that in Bell's Circassia a drawing of ancient monument existing in that country which is an exact representation of the thousand such in the Khasi Hills and nearly as exact a description of referring to the relics on the eastern bank of Jordan may be read in Irby and Mangles's Syrian travellers.

J. H. Hutton¹⁶ while visiting the Jaintia Hills in 1925 saw some dolmens as reminiscence of Manipur. At Nartiang Bazar he saw single highest monolith twenty six and half feet long raised from the ground level to the top six feet to six inch in breadth and 2 ft. to 8 inch in thickness and enormous flat stones in the form of dolmens at its bases. The Nartiang Bazar is wonderful collection of manhirs or

dolmens. Near Laitlyng he noticed dolmens in which bones of the dead were buried. These memorial stones represented the males in the right side and female to the left. He also witnessed quite a good number of menhirs and dolmens at Malynghang near Jawdaija and a stone circle like an Angami Tehuba Cromlech. Further near Mosniang he saw burial cist flanked by a menhir and broken dolmens.

Suniti Kumar Chatterjee¹⁷ also refers to this popular custom of the Austric Khasis.

The Mon-khmer speaking people of North-East no doubt made a distinctive cultural contribution to the evolution of the Megalithic culture.

Equally significant is the Megalithic culture of the Nagas. A good deal of varieties are to be observed among the Naga tribes in their use of Monoliths. Some are of considerable size and others massive set up from time immemorial for commemorating the death, raids, hunting, conceptional valour or prowess and other utilitarian and ceremonial purposes. The Angamis, the Aos, the Semas, the Lothas, the Rengmas and the Konyak Naga tribes erect the memorial stones of great architectural merit. The Angami Monoliths are without carving or ornamentation, whereas on the other hand the Lothas ornament their monoliths with rough designs. The Sema Nagas perpetuate the memory by shallow circles of flat stones set in the ground. The Kacha Nagas build similar circles for the same purpose. The Ao Nagas also used to erect upright stones (Menhirs) like the Dusums of Borneo and Tinguian of Philippines. The purpose of setting up stones by Rengma Nagas is purely commemorative like that of Madagascar. Dr. T. Bloch¹⁸ during his archaeological tour in the Naga Hills found striking similarity between 'V' shaped pillars and memorials used by the Naga tribes.

L. W. Shakespear¹⁹ presents a very authentic account of the Megalithic cultures of the Nagas. The Angamis and Maramis have been in the habit of setting up huge stones

right from the early days. The Nagas of Maram in Manipur territory set up in the past the largest and the most remarkable "Stonehenge". The gigantic Monoliths at Togwema has been referred to by him and by Hutton in 1923. The Konyak Naga erect small Monoliths for ceremonial purposes.

J. H. Hutton²⁰ suggests that the Angamis' Tehuba Cromlech bears resemblance to the stone circles of the Jaintias. The Angami Nagas always put the big end of the stone in the earth. The Kacha Nagas followed the Khasi plan and installed prominent large stones at Lakema. He also refers to carved stones at Kigwema in the Naga Hills associated with fertility symbols like that of Khonoma. J. P. Mills²¹ refers to stones of Kacha Naga village of peisa with a carved female figure associated with a cult of fertility. The popular tradition and the actual practice of erecting the monoliths point to a highly developed stone cultures of the Naga tribes.

Both commemorative and funeral stones roughly fall into three groups i.e. ossuary pillar, Dolmen stone circles and ritual stones. Memorial stones can be broadly classified into two categories - Quadrilateral and Verticalar.²²

The stone monuments of the Naga tribes of Manipur consisting of Monoliths not as large as that of the Khasis and Jaintia were found either singly or arranged symmetrically in rows, avenues circle or ovals, cairns or heaps of stones, single smaller stones or flat stones. The huge stone Monoliths or 'Y' shaped structures found in Mao and Maram areas really appear as architectural monuments. The sepulchral monument erected by some of the minor Kuki tribes in honour of rich women after her death are also interesting architectural objects.²³

Significantly enough, the Megalithic monuments at Salangthel near Moirang in Manipur engraved with the symbol of genital organs of female and some flat horizontal

stones bearing the engravings of foot prints are of great architectural interest.²⁴

The hallowed monoliths of North Cachar Hills were used for depositing ashes of the dead as a proto-type of the Khasis. J. H. Hutton and J. P. Mills both noticed solid and hollow monoliths in North Cachar hills in 1929.

While comparing the pre-historic dolmens, cromlechs and other monuments of the Khasis and Nagas with Gadabas, Bondus of Orissa and Gonds of Bastar and tribes of the Decan, Haimendorf²⁵ was not struck by any resemblance. More important are the differences in function and meaning of the monuments. The Megaliths of the tribal folks of today are with comparatively few exception, memorials connected with graves or burning ground. But those of pre-historic times are closely associated with graves.

One of the noteworthy features of the megalithic culture of North East India is that it represents a living tradition of entirely unknown antiquity, whereas the South Indian Megaliths came to an end in the first century A.D.

It is worthwhile to note that all these monuments of N. E. India were brought under the Ancient Monuments Preservation Act, VII of 1904 passed by Lord Curzon.²⁶

One of the curious features to be noted here is that these Neolithic stone Monuments are associated with the cult of fertility, ancestor worship, theory of sacrifice, and worship of Phallus-Linga and Yoni, later personified as the mother Goddess and Siva principles of Saktism. G. Bertrand has emphatically asserted that "the Khasi Monoliths comprising memorial stones, menhirs and dolmens like those of Western Europe, Northern Africa and Western Asia are doubtless the emblems of that phallic cult of standing stones which were so spread in ancient times. These monoliths in the shape of Linga found in India are associated with the worship of Siva".²⁷

One remarkable fact which has not yet been acknowledged by many competent authorities is that the

tribal notion of life after death and idea of the plurality of souls gave a new line of speculation to the Vedic Aryans and Brahmanical thinkers who had no acquaintance with the doctrine before. Sir Mortimer Wheeler, a celebrated archaeologist has correctly stated that "The Buddhists, Jains and Hindus imitated free-standing structures in cutting their cave temples and monasteries ..."²⁸

It remains to be examined whether the megalithic culture of North East India represent Northern Black Polished (N.B.P) ware associated with Iron objects or painted Grey ware associated with copper or Bronze implements. Since the black and red ware associated with iron objects or other metals like copper and bronze like that of Central and Southern India have not been discovered in the megalithic burials of the North-East, it can be fairly admitted that this region had not reached the level of distinctive ware culture.

In North Eastern India the Khasis were the only tribes who acquired the knowledge of Iron ore. This is very puzzling question whether their megalithic monuments of the neolithic age was associated with iron object or copper. It can be fairly stated that they acquired, the knowledge of iron in post Neolithic age. S K Chatterjee²⁹ attempted to prove that the Khasi or Mon-Khmer group of Austro-Asiatic were in the neolithic stage of culture and, learned, the use of copper and Iron. Lt. H. Yule³⁰ observed, that the Khasi Iron ore is two thousand years old. But this is a plausible hypothesis not correct discovery. Pliny³¹ in his *Natural History* ascribes its antiquity to the first century A.D. The tradition also confirms the remote antiquity of the Iron technology of the Khasis. It can be positively affirmed, that their megalithic culture began in the Neolithic Age but comparatively at later stage it became associated with the Copper, Iron phase of culture.

The questions relating to the origins and antiquities of the megalithic cultures still remain unsolved. The divergent

views and many hypothetical theories have made the confusion worth confounded. The closer links and affinities of the tribal megaliths of N. E. India with those of the megalithic monuments of South-western coastal strip of India, South-East Asia, Philippines, Formosa, Megagascar, Africa, Iran, Mediterranean world and pacific world, Asia minor, Western Asia, France, Britain, Scandinavia and Denmark in respect of method and purpose, of course, stir our imagination. But they can never represent a single cultural phase as supposed by Mr. Peet. Prof. Panchanan Mitra suggested that there arose Indo-Erythraean culture complex and in the north-east strong culture stream came by sea-board which later passed over to another zone. This is a fanciful notion.³²

Dr. J. H. Hutton³³ while delivering a lecture in the Indian Museum at Calcutta in 1923 observed that its origin was from Indonesia and the Mon-Khmer speaking Khasi tribe or Australoid or Austro Asiatic or Pre-Mediterranean Khasis introduced this culture.

S. C. Roy³⁴ and Haimendorf³⁵ are inclined to recognise that Megalithic builders were proto-Dravidians. A. H. Dani³⁶ dates back this culture to simply pre-historic age. He has made a futile attempt to associate this culture with the stone tools of Neolithic Age. It reached its highwater marks comparatively at later stage.

As a matter of fact, the Megalithic culture of the North-East is an essence of both indigenous and foreign elements. It would be absolutely wrong on our part to trace its origin and growth only under the external influence. The identity of custom and striking similarities between the various practices do not always necessarily hint at their common origin. The contemporary geographical factors and natural environments in the different countries conditions the evolution of the Megalithic culture in different ways. The antiquity of this culture may tentatively be ascribed to the Neolithic Age (7000-4000 B.C.). Thus pre-historic times of

pre-Aryan period proved to be a cultural watershed in the early tribal history of N. E. India.

Haimendorf³⁷ as a protagonist of the theory of its foreign origin observed that "they belong essentially to South-Eastern Asia-Indonesia, Oceania, the Philippines & Formosa". Whatever be the truth underlying this statement, it is almost certain that this culture was introduced in N. E. India by Austro-Asiatic immigrants (the Khasis) as clearly stated by M. Wheeler.³⁸

Notes and References

1. Wheeler, (1947, 147-310; 1968, 150-53); Haimendorf (1945, 73-86); Hutton (1926, 133, 333-46); Mills (1930, 34-35); Bloch, (Report on the Archaeological Tour in Assam, 1905); Hooker (1854, 66ff); Yule (1844, 617-18); Clarks (1874); Austen (1874 1-6); Sankalia (1962, 100-2); Dasgupta (1931,1-96); Gurdon (1914, 145f; 1904, 64-65)- all have dealt with the Megalithic cultures of North East India without solving the problems relating to their origins and antiquity.
2. Henry Maine strongly advocated the cause of sover research for proper understanding of the Primitive culture (Lowie, 1949, 423).
3. Tylor (1903, 38f, 61f) suggests that the megalithic structures of Asia minor, Egypt, Palestine, China, England, France, Algeria and indigenous tribes of India are of great antiquarian interest.
4. Prof. Nilsson emphasised the need of understanding the significance of the antiquities of the past (Ref. to Tylor, 1903, 61-62).
5. Durant (1954, 97f) has rightly pointed out that the Neolithic Age marked the second foundation of civilization.
6. The term Megalith is derived from the Greek words Megas i.e. great and lithos, i.e. stones. This term was "originally introduced by antiquarians to describe easily definable class of monuments in Western and Northern Europe." (*Ancient India*, 1947-48 No. IV, p. 5)

7. (1879, 40) In both the valleys and hills of Assam large number of remains of archaeological interests have been discovered.
8. *Journal of the Assam Research Society* (J. R. A. S), April 1933, Vol. I pp. 4-5; J. E. A. S. April 1939, Vol. VII, pp. 10-18.
9. Allen, 1905-8, 53-54, 124; Gurdon, 1904, 64-65; *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1879, Vol. VIII, 133-137; Yule, 1868, *Calcutta Review*, Vol. 274; K. L. Barua, 1939, 4-12, 35-40. All these sources throw considerable light on the Megaliths of the Khasis.
10. G. Costa (1937, Ch. XX, 63-72) deals with the customs of thirty Khasi Kings.
11. Gait (1891, 261)
12. Gurdon (1914, 145f)—some of his observations are subject to further verification.
13. Haimendorf (1945, 73-86). See his comparative analysis.
14. Pol. Dept. B. Progs Jan. 1919 N. 479-87 File o. Ill, M-15 of 1918. The Report is based on the Tour Diary of D. C. K & J Hills; Letters Issued to Govt. Vol 35. 1867-68. Both these records are very important from archaeological point of view.
15. Yule (1844, 617-18) presents an exhaustive account of the subject. See also his *Calcutta Review*, 1868, Vol. XXXVIII, 274f.
16. Hutton (1926, 333-461) presents a trust worthy account of the Meghaliths of the Jaintias. I had the opportunity to see quite a good number of Megalithic monuments in Khasi and Jaintia Hills.
17. S. K. Chatterjee (1969, 37-38) makes an incidental reference to the megaliths of the Khasis.
18. Bloch (1905, Report on the Archaeological Tour in Assam) presents a very valuable and reliable account. See also *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 1908, 586.
19. L. W. Shakespear (1929, 260-62) extensively traversed through the Hills of the North East and obtained the

- first hand information of the subject. See also *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (J.R.A. I) 1965, Vol. 95,28.
20. Hutton (1926, 333-46); See also his account in J. R. A. I. LVI, 7 If. and *Man in India*, 1926, 74.
 21. Mills (1930, *Man in India*, 34-35).
 22. Bareh (1970 67-68) has made a very scientific analysis of the subject.
 23. Hodson (1974 86ff) gives a clear description of the Megaliths of the Naga tribes of Manipur. See also *Geographical Society* 1904, 31-32 and *Journal of the Society of Arts*. Vol. LXXX, 559.
 24. I visited this site in June, 1985.
 25. Haimendorf (1945, 73-86) has drawn his conclusion on the basis of a comparative study of the subject.
 26. Proceedings of the Hon'ble Lt. Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam, June 1910, Arch. Deptt.
 27. G. P. Singh (1981, 25-26) ; Bertrand (1958, 134-35). The historical authenticity of the statement has been carefully examined.
 28. Wheeler (1968, 158-59); G. P. Singh (1981, 25), The Contribution of the tribal people to the evolution of the philosophical thoughts of the Hindus, Buddhists and Jains has not yet received the serious attention of the scholars.
 29. S. K. Chatterjee (1969, 37).
 30. Yule (*Calcutta Review* 1868, Vol. XXXVIII, 278). See also *Imperial Gazetteer of India* Vol. VI, 73; Vol. XV, 262-63; *U Nongpynim*, Naiwang Nov. 1937, 3-5; *U Khasi Mynta*, Risaw Oct. 1902; J. A. S. B. 1832, Vol. I, 150ff; Hooker (1854, Vol. II 66ff) Yule, J. A. S. B., 1842, Vol. XI, 853. All these sources are important for the detailed study of the knowledge of the Khasis about Iron Technology.
 31. Taylor (J. A. S. B. 1847, Vol. I 68-69, 73). On the authority of Pliny he tried to prove that the Khasi iron is not earlier than the 1st century A.D.
 32. For detailed study see K. L. Barua, 1939, J. A. R. S. Vol.-VIII, April, 1939, No. I, 1-18; *Ibid.*, July 1939, 35-40.

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33. Cf. Bagchi (1929, Introd. XVII, XVIII). He has focussed on this matter on the basis of the extracts of J. H Button's speech.
34. Barua (J. A. R. S. July 1939, 35) has discussed the views of various scholars without striking any balance between them. Nor has he drawn any plausible conclusion.
35. Haimendorf (1953, New aspects of the Dravidian problem, Tamil culture -II)
36. Dani (1960, 41) has mainly discussed the problems associated with Neolithic Stone tools, not the Megaliths.
37. Haimendorf (1945, 73-86).
38. Wheeler (1968, 150). Both Haimendorf and Wheeler, no doubt made sincere attempt to understand the problems associated with the subject, but some of the ideas as presented by them need further investigation.

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