

Introduction

The Barman of Barak valley of Assam is only major plain tribe of North East zone. Although, they had been a part of greater Dimasa-Kachari society but in Barak valley they have a distinct identity. Their culture is largely influenced by the Hindu Bengali culture. The Dimasa-Kachari people had to shift from N.C. Hills to Cachar in 1750's due to some historical reasons where they developed a distinct culture and identified themselves as Barman. The Barman of Barak valley perform both Hindu and traditional Dimasa rites and rituals. Therefore, the present study is aimed to analyze the process of social change among the Barman of Barak valley.

The thesis is divided into nine chapters: The first chapter deals with the framework of the study. It includes the concepts and approaches used to analyze the process of social change in India in the existing literature, meaning, definition and characteristics of the tribe, the setting of tribal population in India, classifications of tribal population in India, major trends of tribal research in India including North East, objectives of the study and methodology; The second chapter deals with the origin and history of the Barman tribe. In the third chapter, the locale of the present study is introduced. The region, namely, Brahmaputra Valley, Barak Valley and Cachar district are discussed in this chapter; The fourth chapter deals with social structure as a process and analyzes the size and type of the family, descent, origin and order of clans, genetic root of the clans, marriage patterns,

patriclan exogamy, matriclan exogamy, village exogamy, remarriage and divorce and kinship terminology. The fifth chapter deals with economic system of the Barman in terms of the patterns of cultivation, land ownership, land use pattern, sources of irrigation, use of seeds and fertilizers, consumption patterns and patterns of occupational mobility. In the sixth chapter, an attempt is made to analyze the patterns of education and communication among the Barman. The educational patterns are analyzed in terms of literacy rate and level of education; the communication system is, however, analyzed in terms of interpersonal communication and mass-media communication. The chapter seven deals with the ritual structure of the Barman society. It includes ritual of their life cycle, religion in diseases and difficulties, beliefs in God and deities, the religious year and their material culture. The chapter eight deals with dynamics of power structure among the Barman. It includes authority structure during the period of king, the patterns of authority structure in contemporary Barman society. In the last chapter, major findings of the study are summarized and the bearings of the present study on the concept of social change are discussed.