



STATE FORMATION AMONG THE TIWAS OF ASSAM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SATO RAJYA AND PASO RAJYA

History

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ABSTRACT

The study of state formation and its development is an important discourse among the social scientist and scholars. Various theories have been put forwarded by prominent scholars regarding the formation and evolution of states. Theories on state formation in the medieval, early modern and modern periods often highlight the roles of warfare, trade, social contracts, and cultural exchange in establishing the state as the dominant organizational structure. The term state formation generally refers to the process by which a centralized government structure is established within a given territory. Over time, it has become a significant area of study across various social science disciplines. It is difficult to form a definite theory of state formation in case of the Tiwas of North East India. The Tiwas are one of the ethnic tribe of the region having their own language, culture, traditions and other social customs and way of life. In the past they had their own smaller independent kingdom in the central part of present Assam. Among the smaller Tiwa kingdoms Gobha occupies the main place as it was larger in size compare to other smaller kingdom like the Paso Rajyo (five principalities) and Sato Rajyo (seven principalities) of the Tiwas. It is very important to study the process of state formation among these smaller states of the Tiwas. An attempt has been made in this paper to study the process of state formation among the Tiwa tribe of North East India with special reference to the Stao Rajyo and Paso Rajyo.

KEYWORDS

Kingdom, Sato Rajyo, Paso Rajyo, principality, formation, state.

INTRODUCTION:

This research aims to explore the process of state formation among the Tiwa tribe in Assam with special reference to the 'Sato Rajyo' and 'Paso Rajyo' which are the smaller twelve principalities of the Tiwas. The Tiwas belong to the great Bodo race into which tribes like the Baro kachari, Chutiya, Deori, Rabha, Mech, Tippera, Garo, Sonowal etc. are included. In the medieval period the several smaller kingdoms of the Tiwa tribe existed in the central part of Assam. Along with the kingdom of Gobha, Nellie, Khola and Chohori there existed other twelve principalities which was known as sato rajyo and paso rajya. During the reign of Swargadeo Jaydhvaj Singha one dependent *Pancharajya* was established under the Raha administrative circle. The Ahom administrative policy was to live and let live. They wanted good neighborly relations with the tribes. The Tiwas under the benign protection of the Ahom king returned to the plains and established villages. During the reign of Rajeswar Singha "*Sato Rajya*" (seven principalities) were established under the Jagi administrative circle. The "*Sato Rajya*" were Tetelia, Kumoi, Sakango, Kalbari, Baghara, Ghagua and Kachari gaon. The "*Paso Rajya*" (five Principalities) were Tapakuchi, Barapujia, Mikir Gaon, Phulguri and Khaigarh.

Review of Literature:

Not much research has been done on the political aspects of the Tiwas of North East India. However, some research works have dwelt on the socio-cultural aspects of the Tiwas which helps us to study the process of state formation among the Tiwa tribe of Assam with special reference to 'Sato Rajyo' and 'Paso Rajyo'.

G.C. Sarma Thakur in his book, *The Lalungs (Tiwas)*, Guwahati, (1985) has stressed on the socio-cultural condition of the Tiwa People. He has made an attempt to study the people systematically on a scientific basis covering their various aspects of life, culture, economy etc. He had also discussed the religious practices of the Tiwa tribes of Assam. The book though provide information on Tiwa socio-economic and religious condition but there is no discussion on the political aspect of the Tiwa tribe.

Narayan Kumar Radu Kakoty in his book entitled '*Tiwa Rajyar Buranji*' which has written in Assamese language mainly deal with the history of the four Tiwa kingdoms- Gobha, Nellie, Khola and Sahari. The book gives some glimpses on the Sato Rajya and Paso Rajya of the Tiwas in central part of Assam. The book also highlights the socio-cultural practices of the Tiwas.

Birendra kumar Gohain in his book, *The Hills Lalungs*, Guwahati (1993) published by the Anandaram Borooah Institute of Language, Art and Culture, Assam has written on the socio- religious and economic life of the Tiwa people of Karbi Anglong district. Origin and history of Hills Lalungs are discussed. He has also describe the language, literature and folklore of the Tiwas.

'Tiwa Sanskritir Rehrup' edited by Krishnaram Mili is a useful work to

study the cultural aspect of the Tiwa tribe. Various articles and papers relating to Tiwa kingdom, origin of the Tiwa tribe, socio-cultural aspect and language of Tiwa people can be study by studying the book. References are there regarding the existence of 'Sato Rajyo' and 'Paso Rajyo'. The book also highlights the significance of Gobha and Dimoria kingdom.

'Monikonwar Akhyan' written by Laksmansing Deka is a useful source to study the vassal kingdom or the smaller kingdoms of the Tiwa tribe in Assam. By intensive field study and interview taken with the members of the royal family of the 'Sato Rajyo' and 'Paso Rajyo' he has published the book.

In 'Deodhai Asom Buranji' edited by Dr. Surya Kumar Bhuyan also provides some information smaller kingdoms of the Tiwas. The establishment of three kingship among the 'paso rjajo' by Ahom king Joydhaj Singh and initiative taken by Rajeswar Singh for the reorganization of 'sato rajyo' are mentioned in the Ahom chronicle.

Methodology:

The study will be mainly based on both primary as well as the secondary sources. Field study and interview with Tiwa people of central part of Assam is used as primary sources. The secondary sources are mainly the books, newspapers, journals and other available data on state formation of Tiwa tribe. E-resources and online papers are also consulted in preparing the research paper. So, the principal source material for the research work is primary in nature and secondary sources are the supplementary one.

DISCUSSION:

The Tiwa smaller kingdoms are mostly found in central part of Assam. These kingdoms are ruled by various Tiwa *rajyas* and they are divided into three main groups. They were- 1. *Datialia rajya* (frontier principalities) 2. *Pacho rajya* (five principalities) and 3. *Sato rajya* (seven principalities). The term *Datialia* generally refers to the people who live in the border area of a state. The Ahom chronicles use the term '*Datial*' to denote the people that live in the border areas of Ahom territory. In Assamese the term '*Dati*' means side or margin. Thus the people reside in the *dati* are called datial or *Datialia*. In *Datialia* group of kingdoms among the Tiwas we have found four smaller kingdoms. These are Gobha, Nellie, Khola and Chahari kingdom or principalities. Among these *Datialia* group Gobha *Rajya* (kingdom) is the strongest and most prominent. It covered a vast area comprising the Kalang and Kapili valleys in the entire South-West part of present Nagaon and some parts of present Morigaon, Karbi Anglong of Assam and some parts of Khasi Jaintia hills of Meghalaya. The twelve small principalities consist of the *Sato rajyas* (seven kings) and the *Pacho rajyas* (five kings). The *Sato rajyas* were (i) Tetelia, (ii) Kumoi, (iii) Sukhnag, (iv) Kalbari, (v) Baghara, (vi) Ghaghua, and (vii) Kumoi Kachari gaon. The *Pacho rajyas* were (i) Topakuchi, (ii) Barapujia, (iii) Mikir gaon, (iv) Phulguri and (v) Khaigarh.

During the time of the Ahoms these smaller kingdoms of the Tiwas ruled in the south bank of Brahmaputra. The smaller kingdoms like the Nelly, Gobha, Topakuchi, Mayang, Dhing, Tetelia, Rani, Dimoria and Beltola etc. were independent to certain extent. Of these, Gobha, Nellie, Khola and Chahari were under Tiwa rulers and these smaller kingdoms are called as *Dantiyalia* kingdom. The Lalung king of Gobha who initially was under the dominion of the Jayantia king later on acknowledged the sovereignty of the Ahom kings. The Ahom ruler appointed Jagial Gohain and Rahial Boruah to supervise the Tiwa states. Though the kingdoms of Gobha, Nellie, Khola and Mayang were independent, these Tiwa states were weak and could not offer resistance to the Ahom invasion. The Ahom king Siva Singh launched an expedition against the Tiwa states. Before the expedition, Dhanseng Konwar and Nagaina Konwar of Gobha expressed their loyalty to the Ahom king and these Tiwa states become tributary states of the Ahoms. The land settlement report of 1851/52 of the colonial rulers clearly noted the existence of several kingdoms in northern Jayantia territory. In Tiwa society, the kings were known as *Deoraja*, who performed some rituals and religious functions along political functions in the society. According to Tiwa tradition, there were three *Rajas* who ruled the Tiwas in the past. They were *Sotonga Raja*, *Mallowa Raja* and *Lampha Raja*. The Tiwas had only one *Rajanemathi* (kingdom), known as Gobha. The *Gobha Raja* was the administrative and judicial head of the entire Tiwa habitations. The centre of the Tiwa traditional organization was located at Marjong hill Tiwa village presently in west Karbi Anglong. Later on, it was shifted to the foothill area of present Gobha and then to the Nakhola Tiwa village. From Gobha kingdom the other states originate by making territorial subdivisions. The Nellie, Khola, Chohori were the main subdivisions of it which were later come to known as *Datitalia* kingdoms in the historical accounts of Ahoms. The Jayantias made an expedition over great Gobha kingdom in time and established their suzerainty over all foothill smaller kingdoms which were under Gobha. Later on, the Ahom delegated the administration of the sub-mountain belts and passes to these smaller kingdoms. Many historians note that during medieval period the southern part of the river Brahmaputra of middle Assam was dotted with small kingdoms.

Due to the lack of historical records, it is uncertain to know the exact time period when the Tiwa kingdoms come into existence. The History written tradition in the region started only after coming of the Ahoms in Assam. The Ahom chronicles and Jayantia *Buranjis*, throw lights about the past tradition and administration of the Tiwas. It has been revealed by the sources that the Tiwas both in the hills and plains were organized into different *Rajanemathi* or *Rajya* (kingdoms). These kingdoms were territorially demarcated, acted for administration of the Tiwa people for peace and security and protecting the state from the attack of outsiders. The rulers authority and responsibilities were defined through territorial divisions, which led to the formation and subdivision of multiple kingdoms.

The *Pachorajya* and *Satorajya* were the twelve clustering principalities of territorial subdivisions. So the multiple tradition of *Rajanemathi* were evolved among the Tiwas, each covered and controlled a number of villages which are known as *Shong* and *Krais* to the Tiwas.

Before the Jayantia and Ahoms, and the colonial rule of the British, Tiwa peoples had effectively independent kingdoms of good governance, where the *Rajas* had enjoyed and exercised political powers freely. During the Jayantia and Ahoms also, the suzerain power did not interfered the traditional system. The *Rajas* were got topmost position in the traditional system of governance and administration. The administrative units of governance were expanded to the grass root village units. In the system a number of villages were under one administration of a kingdom.

Customary laws played a key role in governing control among the Tiwas, specially during the time of conflict between various groups. So some considerations were put in selection of leaders or office bearers though hereditary elements played significant role. The prosperity, harmony and security to own state and people were major considerations in the selection of office bearers' different units of administration. Thus, the office bearers or the leaders usually comprised of individuals who were knowledgeable about customs and traditions. The generosity, bravery and physical strength indeed was qualities of the leaders.

Kingship of Pachorajya and Satorajya

The Ahom kings established *Pacho-rajya* and *Sato-rajya* under the Raha and Jagi administrative circle. The Ahom administrative policy was to live and let live. They wanted good neighbourly relations with the tribes. The *Pacho rajyas* were (i) Topakuchia, (ii) Barapujia, (iii) Mikir gaon, (iv) Phulaguri and (v) Khaigarh. The *Sato Rajyas* consist of (i) Tetelia, (ii) Kumoi, (iii) Sukhnagog, (iv) Kalbari, (v) Baghara, (vi) Ghaghua, and (vii) Kumoi Kachari gaon.

Tupakushia

The known kings of the Tupakushia Rajya were (i) Rudrasing, (ii) Kaliasing, (iii) Bengasing, (iv) Puwalising, (v) Bhugsing, (vi) Rupamuwa, (vii) Sunamuwa Upojonsing, (viii) Arjasing, (ix) Ronsing and (x) Ghansing.

Baropujia

The kings of the Baropujia Rajya were (i) Debersing (ii) Bhebersing (iii) Purnasing (iv) Rup Ray (v) Yur Dhaj (vi) Tamradhaj (vii) Lothora (viii) Subhasing (ix) Kirtonsing (x) Horensing and (xi) Bhagiroti.

Mikirgonya

The known kings of Mikirgonya were (i) Kelengpu BuraRaja (ii) Chetuwa (iii) Aphuwa (iii) Ronsing (iv) Pahusing (v) Simbhu (Bangikhuwa) (vi) Borua Deka (Pasi Borua) etc. Besides this Lukeswar Gogoi mentioned the names of other kings: (i) Moharam (ii) Arjosing (iii) Kusharam (iv) Padma (v) Nandi (vi) Rammohan (vii) Ramprasad (viii) Syamalendu (ix) Nayanjyoti (x) Rupjyoti (xi) Dipjyoti (xii) Asinta and (xiii) Jagadish Gurukripal.

Phulaguri

It was known from the sources that due to the lack of any son or daughter the Phulaguri King Norsing the people of the principality could not install any king after his death. Latter another person Bhadra Deka also demanded as the family member of the Raja of Phulaguri Rajya. He had two sons-Bijoy Raja and Ajoy Raja. The official known to be from Phulaguri Rajya was Jolaram Dekaraja.

Khaigarh

The kings of Khaigarh were (i) Mothousing (ii) Mohansing (iii) Bhda (iv) Bhodoram etc. Last king of Khaigarh was Mela Dekaraja. After his death there were no king installed in the Khaigarh. But one Arup Dekaraja demand himself as the present Raja of Khaigarh.

Kumoi

The kings who ruled the kingdom Kumoi were (i) Rupangod, (ii) Sontomoni (iii) Dhanumoti (iv) Devajana, (v) Devadutta (vi) Sukumar (vii) Rup Narayan (viii) Jokhyati (ix) Rudrasingha (x) Nil Singha (xi) Purna Singha (xii) Godo Sing (xiii) Indrajeet (xiv) Porobeshi (xv) Shimbhu (xvi) Sukaranga (xvii) Rishyashringa (xviii) Basundhara (xix) Devananda (xx) Arupananda (xxi) Chandrawali etc. Sources reveal that Basundhara and Ratnawali were the two women, who became the queen of Kumoi.

Torani-Kolbari

The kings ruled the Torani-kolbari kingdom were: (i) Garurdhaj, (ii) Pioli Singha, (iii) Athitsingha (iv) Bhakat Singha (v) Koro Singha, (vi) Sobha Singha, (vii) Poowali Singha alias Rongamuwa (viii) Madhusingha (ix) Ranjit Singha (x) Rajen (xi) Noro Deka (xii) Syamdhan (xiii) Mahidhan and (xiv) Bholowraj.³⁷

Boghara

After the death of king Mriganka alias Ratnasinha his son Sukarango was the nominal king of Boidogarh till the year 1400. Once he came to Baghora and become the king there. During the time the king of Ahom was Suhanpha (1488- 1493). The last king of Baghora was Uttar Singha Deka.

Tetelia

The histories of the kingdoms were found only after the king Ronsidha Konwor of the Tetelia kingdom. From the sources the kings ruled the Tetelia kingdom were RonSidha Konwar, Khorgosing, Tamsing, Dorposing, Lotising, Kesoti Madoi (Rojoni), Dhanusing, Norosing, Surjasing, Noronath, Krishna Raja etc. The kingdom was situated in the south east of present Tetelia hills.

Kacharigaonya

The data found from many writings on the Kacharigonya kingdom provide the informations about the kings who ruled the state were: Rudra Singha, Madhav Singha, Chakradhaj Singha, Shiva Singha,

Bulan Singha, Jugendra, Mahendra, Sudhin Singha, Dambaru Deka etc.

Sukhnagog

The kings ruled the Sukhnagog kingdom were- Supradhaj, Ramsingha, Hori Singha, Pooali Singha, Bir Singha, Anuram, Madhu Singha, Bhongora, Nidhiram, Khohuwa, Kachiram, Hogura, Kolia Singha, Rudra Singha, Nirol, Kulamoni, Bhugram, Bhobong, Rotiram, Jogot Singha etc.

Ghaguwa

Pothotsing was the first king of this Ghagua kingdom. The other king of it known are- Hajar Singha, Sulia Singha, Borgola Kolisuk, Kolimon, Topkon Deka etc. It is very difficult to study in details about the Ghogua kingdom due to lack of proper records. Most of the records of the kingdom are lost in natural disaster.

CONCLUSION

It is very important to study the hidden aspects of the 'sato rajyo and paso rajyo' of the Tiwa tribe in central part of Assam. Most of the king of these smaller kingdoms were under the dominance of the Jayantia king and later came under the dominance of the Ahom power. These smaller kingdoms ruled a vast area in central part of Asam and they had distinct socio-cultural and traditions. Various historical remains of these smaller kingdoms are found which helps to study the existence of these kingdoms during medieval period.

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