

CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The nature of the data required for the present study is predominantly qualitative. To study about the revivalism process among the studied population it is necessary to look at the Tai Khamyang community in a comprehensive way. It was thus necessary to collect data not only on the specific issues like revivalism, assimilation and identity but also on the different socio - cultural aspects of the community as a whole. Thus the nature of data collected from both the villages selected as micro field focused on the following-

- History of migration and settlement of the studied population. Since the secondary data related to the Tai Khamyang population is very less, oral accounts and traditions were given importance.
- Socio - cultural life of the studied population e.g. society, beliefs, customs etcetera.
- Demographic profile of both the studied villages in details.
- Relevant data to study the assimilation process and changes within the community.
- Relevant data to study the process of cultural revivalism within the community. Perception and response of people with regards to the issues of assimilation, ethnicity, identity and revivalism.

2.1 SELECTION OF MICRO FIELD

The general nature of the study is descriptive and empirical. Data has been generated from the field. Both the villages selected as micro field come under Charaideo district of Assam. Charaideo district has the highest number of Tai Khamyang villages (5) in Assam. Field work was carried out in the two villages for about three years in phases from the year 2016 to 2019.

Chalapather Shyam Gaon

- i. Chalapather Shyam Gaon is one of the most culturally active Tai Khamyang villages of Assam. The Tai Khamyang socio-cultural organization ‘Phung Lai Khamyang’ is in Chalapather Shyam Gaon.
- ii. Chalapather Shyam Gaon is the highest populated Tai Khamyang village of Assam and the population is homogenous.
- iii. Chalapather Shyam Gaon is surrounded by villages having considerable Assamese speaking population and other communities such as the tea tribes.

Rohon Shyam Gaon

- i. Rohon Shyam Gaon is one of the lowest populated Tai Khamyang villages in Assam.
- ii. The Tai Khamyang population is considerably clustered and homogenous in Rohon Shyam Gaon, though they are also surrounded by few Assamese speaking villages along with the tea tribes and Nepali speaking population.
- iii. Rohon Shyam Gaon is located at a relatively isolated area with not up to the mark transport and communication facilities. Nagaland is not very far from the village.

2.2 TECHNIQUES OF DATA COLLECTION

The study is based on both primary and secondary data. Primary source basically comprises of observation and interviews of the people belonging to the Tai Khamyang community. Ethnographic interviews were taken which were mainly unstructured in nature. The information elicited through the interviews was counter-checked by the use of observation method which was mainly non participant in nature. Observation of different rituals (both indigenous and Buddhist) and different socio - cultural practices have been recorded in details. People of different age groups belonging to both the genders and different socio - economic strata were interviewed to get an idea about their perspective relating to different issues related to the community. Buddhist monks (Bhante) were interviewed to gather information about their religion. The researcher stayed in the Chalapather Buddhist monastery during the field study. Since the study is also ethno historic in nature and the secondary data related to the community is very less, the use of source materials like oral tradition, site exploration, archeological materials, folklores, music, customs and language is done extensively. The researcher was present in the many of community and religious festivals of the studied population. To gain larger details about the community and to understand certain issues case study method has also been employed. Cases were selected specifically keeping in mind the objectives of the research.

Demographic data was collected from all the houses of the two surveyed villages i.e. Chalapather and Rohon Shyam Gaon of Charaideo district of Assam with the help of a household survey schedule. The survey schedule was duly pre tested. One hundred and fifty two households were taken up for this study. It is to be mentioned that the Tai Khamyangs of Assam are not enumerated as a separate community in the Census of India. They are included in the Man Tai speaking population and are enumerated along with other microscopic Tai Buddhist communities like Tai Aiton, Tai Phake and Tai Turung etcetera. Hence the survey method was adopted to enumerate the population of the two villages, number of households, socio economic data etcetera. The primary sources also include archival records such as

Buranjis (Ahom Historical Chronicles), official records, correspondences, census records and gazetteers in the state archives.

Before visiting the field various libraries were visited for collection of secondary data like Omeo Kumar Das Institute of Social Change, Guwahati, Gauhati University library, Dibrugarh University library, North East Hill University library, Shillong, Assam Institute of Research for Tribal's and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati. Visits were also made to Institute of Tai Studies and Research Moran and Assam State Archives, Guwahati. To understand the Tai culture from an international perspective the researcher visited Thailand in the year 2017. The researcher also attended and presented a paper in the thirteenth international conference on Thai Studies in Chiang Mai, Thailand in the same year. The secondary sources include books and articles, magazines and journals, newspapers, myth and interpretation of folklore and legends, published and unpublished monographs, thesis and dissertations.