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Historical Perspective of Trade Relation Between the Nyishi and Tibetan

YAB RAJIV CAMDER ¹ DR PHILIP MODY ² TOK KUMAR³

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, Rajiv Gandhi University

² Sr. Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Rajiv Gandhi University

³ Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce, Dera Natung Government College

Abstract

Trade is one of the main sources of development of any region. It is an essential part of every human civilization. Times out of mind, the Nyishi tribe is known to have been maintaining trade relation with Tibetan counterpart. It is believed that Nincgh Yayi were the first people who had started Nyeme Pudung Rongnaam which means 'marching toward Tibet especially for trade'. During those Nyeme Pudung, Nyishi people faced lots of hurdles during their journey to Tibet (China) to carry out trading activities. Fascinatingly, those hurdles became folk tales. Subsequently, in famous folk tales like Aachi Aachiya Rupche (Dimum Ren), Aach Yashi, Hadu Daachar etc, of Nyishi community came into existence. Further, the Nyishi and Tibetans had barter trading in which goods were exchanged for other goods. In the course of trading, Nyishi people had exported skins, testis, teeth, claw of many wild animals, Pud Ejeh etc. Likewise, Nyishis had been importing Mapu Aalu (salt), Ruar Aryu (sword), Sangte & Sangter Tasang (beads), Maji (kinds of bell), Talu (brass plate) etc from Tibetans. With this background, the paper makes an attempt to provide a historical account of economy of the Nyishi community. Also, it shall provide a historical perspective of trade relation between Nyishi and Tibetans.

Keywords : Arunachal Pradesh, Nyeme Pudung, Nyishi, and Tibet

INTRODUCTION

Arunachal Pradesh, the land of rising sun is the homeland of around 26 major tribes and more than 200 sub-tribes/groups. The Nyishi tribe is one of the major tribe among them with major population in the state. The word Nyi refers to "a man" and the word Shi denotes "a being", which collectively means a civilized human being. They are spread across six districts of Arunachal Pradesh viz., Papum Pare, part of Lower Subansiri, Kurung Kumey, East Kameng, parts of Upper Subansiri, the recently created district Kra Dadi and are also found in the Sonitpur and North Lakhimpur districts of the neighboring state of Assam. The Nyishi tribe also did trade which is locally called as Pudung Rongnaam. The term "trading" simply means "exchanging one item for another". Trade is the main source of development in any region. It makes accessible to some goods and services which are not produced and avail in the region. Thus, trading is the essential part of human civilization. The Nyishi tribe had a trade relation with Tibetan/Chinese. Nyishi people believed that Mr. Tok Chohi and his wife Smt. Balo Yaniyo with their son-in-law Mr. Nincgh Yayi were first people who had started Pudung Rongnaam towards Nyeme (Tibet/China). This Pudung Rongnaam is called Nyem Pudung. In this Nyem Pu-

dung, Nyishi people faced lots of hurdles during their journey to Tibet (China) and that hurdles became folk tales. There are lots of folk tales. Some of the famous folk tales are Aachi Aachiya Rupche (Dimum Ren), Aach Yashi, Hadu Daachar etc.

This paper is an attempt to study the trade (Nyeme Pudung Rongnaam) relation between the Nyishi and Tibetan (Chinese) during pre-colonial era of Arunachal Pradesh.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To provide an overview of Pre-colonial Economy of Nyishi tribe.
2. To Give an Account on the Historical Perspective of Trade Relation between Nyishi tribe and Tibetan (Chinese counterpart).
3. To Identify the Trade Items between Nyishi and Tibetan/Chinese.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Method and Tools

The present study is purely based on field study. During field study renowned and knowledgeable persons of Nyishi tribe have been personally interacted and interviewed. Also internet, social networking, telephonic contact methods have been used for collection of data. Structured schedules, digital camera, telephone, internet and other stationaries were widely used to collect field data during the interview.

Source of data

In this study an effort is made to make the study a historical perspective. The present study is mostly based on primary data. However, some secondary data has also been used for better analysis. For primary data, personal interview method has been applied over 10 respondents. As regard to secondary data, various published books, research papers and articles on Nyishi tribe have used for better understanding of the research problem.

Sampling Techniques & Size

For the present study, snowball sampling under non-probability sampling technique has been used. Altogether, 10 respondents from the study area are selected for the present study to represent the historical perspective on this study.

Study Area

The present study is carried in Papum Pare district especially in Tarasso circle, Sangduopota (Beser Nello) circle and in and around Itanagar, the capital of Arunachal Pradesh.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

PRE-COLONIAL ECONOMY OF NYISHI TRIBE

The Nyishi tribe is nature friendly. In ancient days, their life was mostly dependent on nature by hunting and fishing. Nature has also endowed abundant quantity of food items like

Tachee, Tasse, Hussey, Tabbee (kind of three flour), Kullung Kupa (wild banana), Enging (tuber), Gurya (sweet potato), etc. to Nyishi people. They were agriculturist and practiced Jhum cultivation also known as slash, trace and shifting cultivation. Their main crops are Aam (paddy), Tamee (finger millet), Tupu (maize), Tanic (corn), Taya (barley), Enging (tuber), Tappeh (pumpkin), Yamdik (chilly), Takee (ginger), Mekung (cucumber), Mebia (kind of cucumber), etc.

Their richness is known from how much quantity/numbers of Tasang (beads) like Taduk, Dugli, Chungree, Sangmee, Maji (kind of bell), Taalu (brass plate), etc they have. And most importantly how much Sabbeh (mithun) they have. Sabbeh was functioning as the main medium of exchange (like money in modern days) in Nyishi community. Therefore, it has revealed that the economy of Nyishi tribe was very primitive and backward. They totally dependent on nature but they have skills in hunting and fishing. They have lots of wild animals' skins, testis, teeth, claws, etc. which was mostly demanded for medicine as well as cloths materials in Tibet (China).

In this way the trading between the Nyishi tribe and the Tibetan started.

TRADE RELATION BETWEEN NYISHI AND TIBETAN:

Nyishi people have strong conviction that their origin has began from Donyi Naamchang somewhere in Tibet. So, before leaving that place they were producing ornaments like Tasang, Maji, Taalu, etc. they were also expert in making Rour Aryu (special swords) and weapons like Nangkio (spear), Murto (iron spike fixed at arrow head), etc. After one month of field study, it is found that due to some forces or circumstances they started migrating from that place. Today, they don't know what were the main reasons of migration from Donyi Naamchang were. However, some of the reasons for migration are reported as: -

1. War
2. Natural Hazard
3. Plague
4. Scare Resources– food, etc.

After leaving Donyi Naamchang, they became as wanderer and started living in forest. Therefore, they had lost their techniques and skills of making things or maybe they had no resources like iron, copper, etc to make the things. As a consequence, all these Tasang, Tallu, Maji, etc were imported from Tibet/China in olden days through Nyeme Pudung (trading towards Tibet/China). Mr. Tok Chohi, his wife Smt. Balo Yanyiyo and their son-in-law Mr. Ninugh Yayi were believed to be the first three people who have started Nyeme Pudung after leaving from the Donyi Naamchang. In this Nyeme Pudung they have to travel a week long via densely covered forest area to reach the Nyeme (Tibet/China) place for marketing.

Moreover, it has also found that so many untoward incidents had happened with Nyishi people during Nyeme Pudung. Untoward incident like –Aachi Aachiya Rupche (DimumRen),

Aach Yashi, Hadu Dachaar, etc had became renowned folk tales of Nyishi community. Due to this factor also they had discontinued Nyeme Pudung Rongnaam. But the main reason is that due to Maane Pudung(trading towards south or Assam) which is easily accessible in comparison to Nyeme Pudung. However, Maane Pudung Rongnaam is of recent origin. It has started in between 16th and 17th Century A.D.

TRADE ITEMS IN BETWEEN NYISHI AND TIBETAN:

The trade between Nyishi and Tibetan communities were conducted on Barter System i.e. exchange of goods to another goods. It is reported during the present study that Nyishi people have exported wild animal skins, testis, teeth, claw, etc. (which have some essential medicinal value) to the Tibetan/Chinese counterpart. The most well-known items which Nyishi people were used to exported are as follows:

Table 1: Items Traded (Export) to Tibetan

Sl./No.	Name of Items	
	Local Name	English Name
1.	<i>Sudom Apin</i>	Dear Skin
2.	<i>Sebi Apin</i>	Monkey Skin
3.	<i>Seram Apin</i>	Otter Skin
4.	<i>Pate Apin</i>	Tiger Skin
5.	<i>Hogiya Apin</i>	Leopard Skin
6.	<i>Sukung Apin</i>	Kind of Squirrel
7.	<i>Pud Ejeh</i>	Kind of cloths which were worn by Nyishi people

Source: Field Study, 2015

In exchange of Sudom Apin, Sebi Apin, Seram Apin, Pate Apin, Hogiya, Apin, Sukung Apin, Pud Ejeh, etc. they brought Mapu Aalu, Ruar Auryu, Shaya Ejeh, various kinds of Tasang like– (Sangte, Sangter, Sangmi, Sangu, etc), Maji, Talu, Yuder (Iron), etc. from the Tibetan counterpart. These items are clearly shown in table 2. There were many items apart from items given in the Table 1 and the Table 2.

Table 2: Items Traded (Import) from Tibetan

Sl./No.	Name of Items	
	Local Name	English Name
1.	<i>Mapu Aalu</i>	Kind of salt
2.	<i>Ruar Auryu</i>	Special sword of Nyishi
3.	<i>Shaya Ejeh</i>	Kind of cloth
4.	<i>Sangte Tasang</i> (white beads)	Kinds of beads

5.	<i>Sangter Tasang</i>	Kinds of beads
6.	<i>Maji</i>	Kinds of bell
7.	<i>Talu</i>	Kinds of brass plate
8.	<i>Yuder</i>	Iron

Source: Field Study, 2015

Furthermore, it is also found that the Nyeme Pudung Rongnaam was very difficult for Nyishi tribe as they have to travel very huge distance through up and down hills covered by dense forest. Also through rivers, lake, etc. and many folk tales have been known today which took place during Nyeme Pudung Rongnaam time. Due to this reasons, only some people of Nyishi community performed Nyeme Pudung. Infact, these people were regarded and recognized in the history of Nyishi tribe as legends.

CONCLUSION

Since the ancient time, Nyishi tribe and Tibetan counterpart were engaging in active trading which is locally called as Nyeme Pudung Rongnaam. However, the trade history still remains as hidden and silent. It is mainly because of complete lack of written records. Oral history remains as only source of information to reconstruct the past in context of the Nyishi and Tibetan trade relation. Nevertheless, oral histories provide depth, texture, flavor, nuance, color and variety to draw picturesque of past and helps in deep analysis. Surely, it also enriches or embellishes, substantiates or contradicts and potentially corrects the available official records too. To great dismay, the trade relation had to take place amidst various predicaments. It took many days for traders to travel into others hills. Infact, mountains made travel extremely difficult. Gradually, the trade relation led to exchanges beyond products. Likewise, trading had been a catalyst of social changes among the people of the Nyishi tribe that brought about revolutionary changes.

In the recent times, trading activities between Nyishi tribe and Tibetan counterpart has discontinued after Nyishi people have Assam as a better trading place which is locally known as Mane Pudung Rongnaam.

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