

## ANTHROPOLOGY OF COMMUNICATION AND ITS ROLE IN ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION: A STUDY ON KARBI ANGLONG, ASSAM

*Somenath Bhattacharjee\**, *Jushna Beypi\*\** and *Rengmini Tokbipi\*\*\**

**Abstract:** Assam is the zone of rich ethnic and cultural diversity. In this regard the district of Karbi Anglong has its own resemblance. It is the zone of diversified natural resources and multicultural tradition. Different locally available floral and faunal resources are immensely important in their traditional food habit and playing a vital role in the traditional economic organization. In different parts of Karbi Anglong district the Karbi people organized their traditional markets or hats. In most of the cases it was conducted weekly, in some cases it was once on tenth day and fortnightly as well. It was a platform for the rural dwellers to marketize their local production and generated a scope of earning for themselves. Meanwhile such markets or Hats used to play vital role for the cultural interaction in between different ethnic groups. Even in many such Hats the barter exchange method could also be noticed, instead of monetary transaction or profit motive as well as involvement of any other agencies. In such cases the traditional number systems and measurements of the concerned people were primarily being practiced. Often people from other neighborhood districts or different ethnic groups were regularly participating in such markets. As a result it became the place of their frequent cultural interaction, which brought them closer to one another and could frame a possible way to settle down many unresolved issues of the studied region.

**Key words:** Natural resources, Economy, Hats, Number system, Cultural interaction.

### INTRODUCTION

The anthropological study of economic organization is a focal point for discovering the relationship between material and non material aspects of the environment and human behaviour as well as the social system within which it is exchanged and redistributed as cultural goods and services. The economic organization is treated as a link between the material base to culture and social structure. Economic order in one form or another is a functional prerequisite to societal survival and continuity (Hoebel-Frost:: 1976: 247). From the anthropological point of view economy is believed as a system of managing the production,

---

\* Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, Assam University, Diphu Campus, Diphu, Karbi Anglong, Assam.

\*\* Ph D scholar and RGNF, Department of Anthropology, Assam University, Diphu Campus, Diphu, Karbi Anglong, Assam.

\*\*\* M.Phil scholar, Department of Anthropology, Assam University, Diphu Campus, Diphu, Karbi Anglong, Assam.

distribution and consumption of goods and services in a society. There is also stress on the fact to the motivations for producing, exchanging and consuming goods and services which are shaped by cultural traditions (Dash::2004:123). Piddington (1952) says “economic system is designated to satisfy material wants of the people to organise production, to control distribution and to determine the rights and claims of ownership within the community (see Dash::2004:123).” Every society has access to natural resources-land, water, plants, animals, minerals and every society has cultural rules for determining who has access to particular resources and what can be done with them (Ember::2002:286). The natural environment is the origin of all the resources people use to secure the material needs and desires. However, societies have only limited access of resources offered by nature. These limitations are imposed by where the people live, who they trade with and the technology at their disposal. Moreover, no society uses all available elements in the environment. All groups are selective choosing to utilize certain resources and to ignore others (Hunter-Whitten::1976:237). All societies have customs specifying access to natural resources; customary ways of transforming or converting those resources through labour into necessities and other desired goods and services; and customs for distributing and perhaps exchanging goods and services (Ember::2002:305). In this regard every society makes use of a technology, which includes tools, constructions and required skills. The technology and material culture of a people are so intertwined with their economic life that they can be treated as separate only conceptually (Clifton::1968:187).

Each local economic system represents a more or less unique aggregation of experience built up partly through progressive innovation by the people themselves as they have adjusted to their local setting. Actually, the economic system of any people quickly reveals that behaviours relating to production, exchange, property and consumption all tie in functionally with social organization and with the political, legal, religious and aesthetic behaviours (Kessing::1958:223). The economic behaviour of the people lies in their own cultural terms, focusing on the substantive social and technological processes through which human interact with one another and with the environment to meet their subsistence needs (Hunter-Whitten::1976:251). The study of the relations between cultural patterns and physical conditions is of the greatest importance for an understanding of human society and it is intimately co-related with the economic organization of the concerned society.

The economic organization and the co-related job sectors can broadly be categorized into two sections viz. the organized sector or the formal sector and the unorganized sector or informal sector. In organized sector workers are distinguished by relatively regular salaries, jobs with well defined terms and conditions of employment, clear cut rights and obligations and fairly comprehensive social security protection. The unorganized sector, on the other hand, has no such clear cut employer-employee relationships and lacks most of social protection (Jhabvala- Subrahmanya::2000:17). The informal sector is becoming increasingly recognized as an important segment of labour market in many countries, specially in developing countries. In countries with high rate of population growth and urbanization the informal sector tends to absorb most of the growing labour force in the urban areas. The term informal sector was first initiated by Keith Hart (1973).

The unorganized sector workers have no fixed employer. The workers are mainly casual, contractual, migrant, home based own account workers who attempt to earn a living from whatever meager assets and skills they possess. This sector is not a homogenous category and the employment relations vary considerably (Jhabvala- Subrahmanya::2000:19).

## **STUDIED AREA AND THE PEOPLE**

The present study has been done in the Karbi Anglong district of Assam. Karbi Anglong is one of the two hill districts of Assam, has two parts that is East and West Karbi Anglong. It is situated in the central part of Assam. It is bounded by Golaghat district in the east, Meghalaya and Morigaon district in the west, Nagaon and Golaghat district in the north and N.C. Hills district and Nagaland in the south. The district with dense tropical forest covered hills and flat plains is situated between 25°33'N to 26°35'N Latitude and 92°10' to 93°50' E Longitude. It is the Largest district of Assam with a total geographical area of 10, 434 Sq. Kilometer (Karbi Anglong Autonomous council:: 2016). The Karbis were the earliest settlers and numerically dominant Tribal group of the said region. Different other Tribal groups like Dimasa, Bodo, Naga, Hmar, Khasi, Kuki, Hajong, Man(Tai) etc. and different other communities were also dwelling in the studied region. The present study has been conducted in different traditional tribal markets or *Hats* organized in different places of Karbi Anglong district.

The study was conducted during the period of January 2016 to December 2016. There were four divisions of the total field work.

**Division-1:** Fore mostly, the traditional markets or *hats* in different sub divisions and villages were visited. Exchange of different products were observed and interaction was done with the people of different ethnic groups who assimilated there.

**Division-2:** Case studies were taken on the concerned people associated with the selling of different products in the traditional markets or *hats*. It was focused to know about their traditional number systems as practiced in their traditional markets.

**Division-3:** Detailed open structured interviews were taken from the key informants and from the people of different ethnic groups who were the regular dependants on their traditional markets, for the sustenance of their livelihood. It focused to find out the socio-economic and socio-cultural relevance of traditional markets or *hats*.

**Division-4:** Data were collected about the barter system of the studied people and the significance of the traditional number system in it.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE PRESENT STUDY**

The present study is primarily focused –

1. To know about the conduction of different traditional weekly markets in the studied areas.

2. To know about the traditional number system of the Karbis.
3. To know about the importance of traditional number systems as practiced in the *hats* by the concerned people.
4. To know the socio-economic and socio-cultural relevance of traditional markets or *hats* in the studied areas.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### (a) Traditional Weekly Markets or Rural *Hats* of East Karbi Anglong

East Karbi Anglong is the major district of Assam and Diphu is the Head quarter of it. Through the National Highways 36NH and 39NH; railway station Diphu is well connected with several other districts of Assam like Silchar, Guwahati, Nagaon, Tezpur, Golaghat, Jorhat, etc and other states like Nagaland and Meghalaya. A number of traditional weekly markets or *hats* were found within Diphu town at *Larulangso* and in several other places like at *Manja, Delai, Desobai, Bakulia, Phuloni, Langhin, Dokmuka, Dangoan, Parokhua* market. These weekly traditional markets were communicated through NH-36. On the other hand, NH-39 was connecting the traditional weekly markets or *hats* conducted at *Upper-Deopani, Deopani, Khatkoti, Sarihojan, Silonijan, Japrajan, Balipathar, Daithor*. People of different tribal groups like Karbi, Dimasa, Boro, Rengma Naga and other communities like caste Hindu groups, Muslims, Nepalese were regularly coming to those traditional weekly markets from different places and purchasing different organic resources for daily livelihood in cheaper prices from local people. It was observed that in between the Karbi people even barter exchange method was being practiced. In certain cases barter exchange has been noticed in between the Karbi people with the Boro and Dimasa people as well. However, with the caste Hindu people and Muslims always the monetary exchange has been practiced. It was observed that, particularly the caste Hindu and Muslim people used to come to such traditional markets from outside areas with different products like second hand clothes, spices, some attractive items etc. The local people had a scope to purchase them within their close vicinity, which used to save their cost of transportation instead of going to the markets of town as well as the prices of such objects were much lesser in the *Hats*, if compared with the regular markets of the town. Here the communication and transportation used to play a vital role in cultural interaction.

**Different Economic Resources:** It can be noted that the traditional occupation of the Karbi people was shifting hill or Jhum cultivation and on the other hand they used to collect forest resources for consumption and selling. Along with that they were associated with traditional weaving, handicrafts, kitchen gardening and animal husbandry. The traditional occupation of the Dimasa people was also the shifting hill or Jhum cultivation. Along with that they practiced traditional weaving, kitchen gardening etc. The Bodos were the settled agriculturist mainly. The Nagas were traditionally associated with Terrace and Jhum cultivation. It can be noted that, geographically Karbi Anglong is recognized as

a hill district and fertile soil is less prevalent in the studied area. On the other hand it comes under rain shadow region. Thus the level or quantity of agricultural production was quite lesser. In this regard the Karbi people mostly produced paddy, potato, maize through jhum cultivation; the Nagas were the prime producers of paddy, pineapple, potato through jhum and terrace cultivation; the Bodos were the producers of paddy through settled cultivation and the Dimasas were primarily engaged with jhum cultivation to produce ginger, paddy. Different vegetables, leafy vegetables and fruits were primarily produced through kitchen garden. Fishes and other water bodies were collected by them through local streams only. However being the rain shadow region, particularly during summer and winter, the level of water used to get much decreased. In the studied region although different types of productions were available, but the lesser quantity of such produces, could hardly satisfy the different requirements for the individual families, related to their food and other essential livelihood needful. In this regard, ultimately they had to depend and share the productions of each other for their sustenance; in such cases the traditional weekly markets were the prime platform.

The local Karbi people came down from the hills to sell their organic resources in different traditional weekly markets. They used to carry various local produces, vegetables and natural forest resources. Those were like pumpkin, yam leaf, yam, banana, sugarcane, papaya, chilli, beetle nut, beetle leaf, banana flower, bringal, bamboo shoot, mashroom, pumpkin leaf different local leafy vegetables like *Hanrisang*, *Hansangbi*, *Hanbipo*, *Torbob*, *Dumkek*, *Tara*, *Hanjang*, *Hanthu*, *Theso-kumbong*, *Theso-keho*, *Aantimi*, *Jokaan*, *Hendonngdar*, *Hanserong*, *Pherklung*, *Chushot*, *Hantharvo*, *Hanche*, etc.

**Table 1**  
**Traditional Weekly Markets to Be Communicated through NH-39**

<i>Name of the traditional markets</i>	<i>People coming from</i>	<i>Conducted on</i>	<i>Language or dialect communicated</i>
Balipathar market	Dimapur, Bokajan, Borpathar, Sorupathar	Every Monday	Karbi, Assamese, Nagamese, Nepali
Upper Deopani market	Bokajan, Borpathar, Silonijan, Golaghat district, Jorhat	Every Wednesday	Karbi, Assamese
Deopani, Khotkhoti market	Dimapur, Bakajan, Golaghat district, Jorhat, Tinsokia, Borpathar	Every Thursday	Karbi, Assamese, Nagamese, Nepali
Sarihojan, Silonijan market	Bokajan, Dimapur, Manipur, Golaghat district, Jorhat, Tinsokia	Every Friday	Karbi, Assamese, Nagamese,
Japrajan market	Bokajan, Deithor, Borpathar, Sorupathar, Golaghat district	Every Saturday	Karbi, Assamese

*Source:* Field Study

**Table 2**  
**Traditional Weekly Markets To Be Communicated Through NH-36**

<i>Name of the traditional markets</i>	<i>People coming from</i>	<i>Conducted on</i>	<i>Language or dialect communicated</i>
Langhin market	Nogaon, Doboka	Every Sunday	Karbi, Bodo, Assamese, Hindi
Center market	Hawraghat, Bakalia	Every Monday	Karbi, Assamese, Bodo
Bakulia, Dangaon market	Nagaon, Doboka, Dokmuka, Kothiatuli	Every Tuesday	Karbi, Assamese
Dokmoka market	Doboka	Every Wednesday	Karbi, Assamese, Bodo
Phuloni market	Dokmuka, Bakulia	Every Thursday	Karbi, Assamese, Bodo
Manja market	Dimapur, Diphu	Every Friday	Karbi, Kuki, Assamese, Nagamese, Hindi
Dilal, Parokhua market	Dimapur, Kothiatuli, Kampur, Nogaon, Doboka	Every Saturday	Karbi, Assamese, Nagamese

*Source:* Field Study

Further it was noticed that in the traditional *Hats*, different vegetables, leaves and fruits were sold by the females whereas, the males were dealing with paddy, fire wood, fishes. The barter exchange was primarily done in between the Karbi people and it was done on the basis of their traditional number system; along with that monetary exchange was also noticed. However, barter exchange was also noticed in between the Karbi people with the Bodos, Dimasas and Nagas as well as in the between the Nagas, Dimasas and Bodos. In such cases balanced reciprocity could be noticed among them.

### **(b) Traditional Weekly Markets or Rural *Hats* of West Karbi Anglong**

The West Karbi Anglong district is a new proposed district formed out of the existing Karbi Anglong District of Assam in 2016. Hamren is the headquarter of the newly formed district. The district is a part of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council and it is administered according to the Sixth Scheduled of the Indian Constitution. Karbi dialect is widely spoken in the district. English, Assamese and Hindi are the other languages that are spoken in the district. The district is inhabited by many tribes, Karbi being the majority, along with Tiwa, Garo, Bodo, Dimasa tribal groups and caste Hindu, Muslim communities.

The district headquarter is connected by road. Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council Transport buses play at regular interval from the district headquarters to important places like Guwahati, Diphu, Lanka and Hojai. Also one Meghalaya Transport runs regularly to and from Hamren to Jowai. The nearest railway station is at Hojai, which is around 47 km from Hamren. In the studied areas the traditional economic organizations were highly practiced. In those areas traditional weekly markets or *hats* were conducted which made an

opportunity for the multi-ethnic cultural and economic interaction, between the concerned people who used to come to such markets from different places.

**Different Economic Resources:** The tribal communities of the studied region were interacting frequently in terms of economy, various goods and services, in their traditional weekly markets. Many of the tribal and non-tribal communities could be seen to interact in their traditional markets during the marketization of different productive goods. West Karbi Anglong was the rich zone for the cultivation of various organic resources. The Karbis of those region cultivated organic ginger; broom grass, pineapple, pumpkin, sugarcane to produce jaggery, pear and organic chilies of different kinds. Apart from this the Karbi women collected organic herbs and ferns to sell in the traditional weekly markets. Along with that, they used to sell ferns and other natural resources of such as bamboo shoot, and different local vegetables like *Inglong-a-bobok*, *inglong-a-behendi*, *dungkek*, *bonghom arvo*, *langdung*, *tara*, *henru*, *hanserong*, *hippi*, *hen-up*, *ru pharkong*, *plimplam*, *thichi*, *ginger*, *ahan-a-lothe*, *kolmuk*, *lang-a-churu*, *ingki ok*, *pijo alang*, *hen dongdar*, *chosot*, *hanthu*, *papaya*, *birik man*, *birik losa*, *birik jangkek*, *dido*, *mula arvo*, *musi*, *jok-an*, *Pharklung*, *hantharvo*, *hen soksu*, *henjor*, *hen kove*, *inglong kenong ahen*, *mu-plakplak*, *mu-arnan*, *murik*, *mu-plong*, *henru*, *nempo arvo*, *mora arvo*, *phi-kangnek*, *bonghom arvo*, *mehek*, *churu*, *langdun*, *kove* (battle nut), *bikron* (battle leave), *phinu* (banana), *ahan a lothe* (banana used for cooking) etc. Moreover different handicrafts like *tar* (mat made up of bamboo), *beleng*, *hoton* (a kind of basket made up of bamboo and cane) were also sold. *Theng* (firewood) was usually sold by male.

Tumpreng, Donkamokam, Hamren, Kolonga, Jengkha, Kheroni and Baithalangso were the prime markets where most cultural interaction used to take place. Yeats were mainly sold in Donkamokam weekly market; broom grass and organic ginger were the main source of market in Hamren; in Tumpreng market other than selling of various vegetables and market product, animals like cow, piglet, goats, duck and hen and cocks were the main sources of marketization. While in the weekly market of Kolonga, Jengkha and Kheroni, organic ginger, organic chili, broom grass, pineapple, pear and jaggery are the main sources. However such sources became variable according to seasonal production. Mostly different organic products are being supplied from the nearby hilly areas of Jirikindeng.

In those weekly markets traditional ethnic food stalls could also be noticed, mostly ran by the Karbi women, in those food stalls traditional country liquor like Hor-arak, Hor-lang and Hor-po were also available. In some of the places like Kheroni and Tumpreng, a few food stalls were run by the non Karbi women with other food items. The people of other ethnic groups coming from the neighboring districts and state, used to bring different objects like utensils, dry fish, different vegetables like potato, tomato, onions, garlic, etc. cloths, different kinds of iron implements like knives, variety of spices, variety of colourful yarns etc.

The traditional weekly markets of the studied areas were the prime place of interaction between different ethnic groups like Bodo, Garo, Karbi, Mizo, Khasi, Hmar, Panar, Kuki,

Manipuri, Dimasa and other ethnic groups like Bengali, Assamese, Bihari and Muslims. Such interaction played a vital role in their economic life as well as social life.

**Table 3**  
**Traditional Weekly Markets to Be Communicated through NH-27**

<i>Name of the traditional markets</i>	<i>People coming from</i>	<i>Conducted on</i>	<i>Language or dialect communicated</i>
Tumpreng	Hojai	Every Monday	Karbi, Garo, Dimasa, Assamese, Bengali
Baithalangso	Hojai, Donkamokam, Hamren.	Every Tuesday	Karbi, Garo, Dimasa, Assamese, Bengali
Jengkha	Lanka, Hojai, Jirikindeng	Every Wednesday	Karbi, Garo, Dimasa, Bodo, Assamese, Bengali
Dongkamokam	Hojai, Tumpreng, Baithalangso, Hamren, Kolonga	Every Thursday	Karbi, Garo, Dimasa, Bodo, Assamese, Bengali, Garo
Kheroni	Hojai, Lanka	Every Friday	Karbi, Assamese, Bengali
Hamren	Liumphung, Linchika, Rumphung, Rongmandu, Socheng, Taradubi, Umcherra, Hojai	Every Saturday	Karbi, Khasi, Mizo, Bodo, Hmar, Panar, Kuki, Manipuri, Assamese, Bengali
Borthol/Kolonga	Hamren, Donkamokam, Tumpreng, Baithalangso, Hojai	Every Sunday	Karbi, Dimasa, Assamese, Bengali.

*Source:* Field Study

It can be noted that, almost every day of the week, in different parts of the district, the traditional weekly markets of the Karbi people used to take place. It used to play the role of lifeline for the daily livelihood requirements of the concerned people. In this regard their traditional number system plays a very vital role.

**The Traditional Number System:** The main units of number system of the Karbis are a simple decimal system. The basic units are the tenth and the multiplications follows with hundredth, thousandth and even further multiplication of thousandth. An in-depth view can generalize the fact that the traditional numbering method of the Karbis represents a unique form till the unit six. Thereafter it represents an addition over six or subtraction from the base of ten. These are as follows-

$1 = \text{Isi}$ ;  $2 = \text{Hini}$ ;  $3 = \text{Kethom}$ ;  $4 = \text{Phili or Phli}$ ;  $5 = \text{Pho or Phongo}$ ;  $6 = \text{Throk}$ ;  $7 = \text{Throksi} = \text{Throk} + \text{Isi} = 6 + 1 = 7$ ;  $8 = \text{Nirkep} = \text{Ni r Kep} = \text{Kep} - \text{Hini} = 10 - 2 = 8$ ;  $9 = \text{Sirkep} = \text{Isi r Kep} = \text{Kep} - \text{Isi} = 10 - 1 = 9$ ;  $10 = \text{Kep}$  [Here the 'r' represents the subtraction as per the original Karbi dialect].

In the feature of compound numbers, the unit three is represented in a shorten form. A particular term 'kre' is prefixed with the unit from 11 to 19 to represent the compound



number feature, so the form will be Kre+ unit= Compound number. Thus, the compound numbers are –

11= *Kre-isi*; 12= *Kre-hini*; 13= *Kre-thom*; 14= *Kre-phli*; 15= *Kre-pho*; 16= *Kre-throk*; 17= *Kre-throksi*; 18= *Kre-nirkep*; 19= *Kre-sirkep*.

The multiple of tenth in the compound form represents a significant feature-

Barring 20= *Ingkoi*, 80 and 90, the rest of the multiplication of 10 are formed in the following format: Unit+ Ten, thus-

30= *Thom-kep*; 40= *Phli-kep*; 50= *Pho-kep*; 60= *Throk-kep*; 70= *Throksi-kep*. Meanwhile, in case of the unit 8 (*Nirkep*) and 9 (*Sirkep*), 10 (*Kep*), the 'Kep' is already present as a suffix. In such cases the traditional number system of the Karbi people, have taken the help of 6 (*throk*) by prefixing it to the unit of eight and nine to mean 80 and 90. This means-

80= *Throk-nirkep*; 90= *Throk-sirkep*.

The compound numbers from 21 and beyond is termed by having an insertion of 'ra', which may be synonymous with and. It is placed between the tenth unit and the unit. It is represented as-

21= *Ingkoi-ra-isi*; 22= *Ingkoi-ra-hini*; 23= *Ingkoi-ra-thom*;..... 91= *Thorksirkep-ra-isi*; 92= *Throksirkep-ra-hini*; 99= *Throksirkep-ra-sirkep*.

Regarding the multiplication of 100, it can be noted that the Karbis consider 100 as 'Pharo', thus the multiple of 100 is the form of Hundred+Unit. It can be represented as-

100= *Pharo-isi*; 200= *Pharo-hini*; 300= *Pharo-thom*;.....900= *Pharo-sirkep*. Further, in Karbi dialect thousand is termed as 'Suri', the multiple of thousand is the form of Thousand+Unit. It can be represented as-

1000 = *Suri-isi*; 2000 = *Suri-hini*; ..... 9000 = *Suri-sirkep*; 10,000 = *Suri-kep*; 50,000 = *Suri-Phokep* etc. It is to be mentioned here that, expressing any number above 20 is represented by inserting a term 'ra' in between thousandth, hundredth, tenth and the unit. If the number is 6539 then it will be = *Suri-Throk ra pharo-pho ra thom-kep ra sirkep*. This rule is practised by a large number of Tibeto-Burman tribal group.

Further, when the number system is associated with any object either living or non living (i.e animal or human etc.) or the shape of the object can be taken into consideration, then such number becomes associated with a clarifier. Here the language structure of the said number system will be-

Object+ Number + Clarifier (when the object is singular) and

Object + Clarifier + Number (When the object is plural). In this aspect,

One egg = Egg + One + Clarifier = *Voti-I-Pum* (*Voti* =Egg, *I* = One, *Pum* =Clarifier).

Four eggs = Egg + Four + Clarifier = *Voti- Pum- Phli* (*Voti* =Egg, *Phli* = Four, *Pum* =Clarifier).

It is to be mentioned here that, the clarifiers varies according to the shape of the object. If the object is round in shape or spherical then '*Pum*' is termed as the clarifier. If the object is a human being then '*Bang*' is used as a clarifier for singular and '*Nut*' is used as a clarifier if the object is plural. So A man is termed as 'Monit-I- Nut' and Two men are termed as 'Monit-bang-Hini'. It is to be mentioned here that, if the object is a non living being then in case of two or three irrespective of 'Hini' and 'Kethom' only 'Ni' and 'Thom' are applied. However in case of living being this rule is not followed. Further, the clarifier associated with flora is 'Romg' means the plant. Thus one mango tree is termed as *Tharve-I- Rong*, four guava trees as *Menduram-Rong-Phli*. Meanwhile, when the objects are in pair the 'chor' is termed as the clarifier. So, Six pair of shoes will be Keng-op-chor-throk. It can be noted here that the common clarifiers are Pak = Flat object, Jon =Fauna, Hum = Household, Run = Room, Hong = Elongated object, Bong = Bottle or cylindrical object etc.

(Source: Field study and Teron, 2012: 28-33).

**Amount / Grains etc:** Some amount of grain is measured by.

1. Chekip isi . . . a Handfull...
2. Chepu isi . . . Two hands joined ('palms wide open') .
3. Edang . . . . . 20 kgs
4. Mon . . . . . Maund, 40 kgs.

Karbi people usually used different size of 'Ton' or Basket to measure the amount of grain.

Any Karbi family used to remain associated with a particular or more than one occupational pursuit both primarily and secondarily. However, in the remote villages presence of regular market could not be noticed. In such cases, the regular common minimum livelihood requisites were managed by the village dwellers from the traditional weekly markets or hats. Often it was maintained through the barter system. The quantity of the productions and the required amount was based upon the traditional number system among the Karbi people; whereas along with the other ethnic groups western mathematical weight system or monetary exchange used to take place.

**Scope of Greater Cultural Interaction:** It can be noted that due to several factors socio-political differences were quite noticeable in the district of Karbi Anglong, particularly with the nieghbourhod states of Nagaland and Meghalaya. Along with that, even within the district there were many unsettled political issues with the other tribal groups like Dimasa, Bodo etc. But poverty and hunger could hardly recognize such differences of opinion. In the common minimum livelihood of the unlettered rural ethnic people, the question of survival under several inconveniences was the prime question. In the studied traditional markets, there was much wider scope, where through economic exchange, people of different ethnic groups and distinctive cultural practices could come closer. It had widen up their scope to share each other's day to day problems and culturally interact with each other. Although the concerned people were of different ethnic groups and cultural practices, but the problems

related to their daily livelihood sustenance were quite similar. They had a very clear idea that, only their inter community level interaction and sharing of each other resources could meet up with their common minimum livelihood requirements, at least to some extent. Several settlements of the district were much isolated and remote from the highway communication. In such cases neither they had the scope of regular market nor did they have the regular accessibility to the district headquarter of Diphu town. In such cases the traditional weekly markets or the rural hats were the only option left for them. There different products were well available and their sell and purchase provided the livelihood requirements of the concerned people of different ethnic groups.

In this regard the following case studies can be mentioned-

*Case Study-1:* Sri. Budhoram Tisso aged 81 years was the eldest male among the studied people. He had a six membered family in Socheng and he was primarily associated with jhum cultivation. His son was also associated with the same. In spite of his age Sri. Budhoram regularly used to go to his nearest weekly markets of Socheng and Umcherra. According to him most of the rural Karbi people were dealing their livelihood under immense poverty. Geographically the district used to come under the rain shadow region and the cultivable land were not covered with irrigation facilities. Thus the level of production was not as much sufficient, which could satisfy their requirement of food as well as to accumulate other livelihood requirements by selling the productions in market. Even most of their settlements were quite far from the access of regular markets. He stated that, traditional weekly markets were the only options to accumulate the common minimum livelihood for his family members as well as for the other families of the settlement. He stated that for the sake of survival, they had to depend on and share each others productions. According to him, the socio-political situation or difference of opinion in between different ethnic groups were beyond their common level of understanding. They were struggling for a fold of rice and were least interested by such issues. Poverty, economic needs and livelihood security had integrated them through the traditional weekly markets. Even such markets could play a vital role to settle down many of such issues through frequent cultural interaction.

*Case study-2:* Phudang Kropi aged 82 years was the eldest female among the studied families. Her husband passed away quite at an early age and during the study she was living alone after the marriage of her daughters. Although her son was settled in Diphu town, but she was reluctant to leave her ancestral settlement of in- laws. Her age was not favourable to get involved with jhum or settled cultivation. She was involved with kitchen garden and animal husbandry. Every week with such household products she used to attend in two weekly markets of Kheroni and Donkamokam. Through barter exchange against her products, she used to collect rice and other requirements, from those markets. She stated that, due to her age, it was not possible for her to go to the regular market of Hamren or other places. The local weekly markets and indigenous economic organization had actually saved her life. In the traditional markets, sometime she used to sell her products against cash money and against that she used to purchase other livelihood requirements from the people of other

ethnic groups. She stated that in the life of unlettered villages communities like them, hardly there existed any interest to know about the issues of ethnic differences and conflicts. She felt that, poverty and livelihood requirements had reduced their cultural differences. Question of survival had brought them much closer to one another and in this regard their traditional weekly market had played a vital role.

### **OBSERVATION AND REMARKS**

The cultural tradition of the tribal people has its own unique feature. It is mostly oral in nature and has its own significance as the little tradition in Indian civilization. Among them the traditional method of communication and the traditional number system bears a special resemblance. It is recognised that language is the vehicle of culture. Among the tribal societies in most of the cases the local communication is based upon their oral dialect. It is enculturated and transmitted through them generation wise. In the context of the present study, the Karbi people had their local dialect and traditional method of communication. Although in certain cases they are multilingual but within their own communication and particularly in the interior rural areas, the local dialect is the basic communicating medium. It is associated with an unique traditional number system. It has a descriptive method specifying about the shape and quantity of the object. The traditional Karbi society has its own ancestral economic practices. The local produces are generated on the basis of their indigenous knowledge. In the village areas the barter method is practised to a large extent to meet up with the common minimum livelihood requisites at the local level. This system is entirely conducted on the basis of the local numerical system. Thus it can be stated that, the traditional communication system of the Karbis' is a core part of their culture and it is the fundamental aspect of their traditional economic organization. In this context, their traditional weekly markets or *hats* were very significant. Such places were the platform for inter tribal interaction among the economically downtrodden people. Thus, natural resources and traditional weekly markets were significantly sustaining their livelihood.

### **References**

- Clifton, J. A. (1968), *Introduction to Cultural Anthropology*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Dash, K. N. (2004), *Invitation to Social and Cultural Anthropology*. New Delhi, Atlantic Publishers.
- Ember, C. M. Ember and P. N. Peregrine (2002), *Anthropology*. New Delhi, Pearson Education Asia.
- Hoebel, E. A. and E. L. Frost (1976), *Cultural and Social Anthropology*. New York, MacGraw Hill Book Company.
- Hunter, D. E. and P. Whitten (1976), *The Study of Anthropology*. New York, Harper and Row.
- Jhabvala, R. and R. K. A. Subrahmanya (2000), *The Unorganized sector Work security and Social Protection*. New Delhi, Sage publications.
- Kessing, F. M. (1958), *Cultural Anthropology: The Science of Custom*. New York, Holt Rinehart Official Records of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, 2016. Diphu, Karbi Anglong. Publishers.
- Teron, D. (2012), *The Karbi Studies*. Guwahati, Assam Book Hive.

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.win2pdf.com>.  
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.  
This page will not be added after purchasing Win2PDF.