

Historical Background of Administrative Development in Apatani Valley of Lower Subansiri District, Arunachal Pradesh

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Abstract—The Apatanis are one of the major tribe of Arunachal Pradesh dwelling in the Ziro valley, headquarter of Lower Subansiri District. The administrative development in the valley started with British contact with frontier tribe in the early 20th century. The traditional political institution was replaced by Goan Buras, Kotokis and regular govt. administration. The paper throws light on circumstances that led to the gradual establishment of administrative setup

Index Terms—Apatani, Kure Chambyo, Goan Bura, Kotoki, Panchayat

The Apatani Valley which is a part of Lower Subansiri district, Arunachal Pradesh originally consisted of seven large villages names – *Hong, Hari, Bulla (Reru, Tajang and Kalung), Dutta, Hija, Mudang-Tage and Michi-Bamin*, But due to rapid growth of population, which has reached around 35,000 people. The Apatani Valley remained long in isolation from rest of the world till tenth century. The colonization of the tribe came late in compared to the foothill tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The first contact with the British administration started with armed expedition against the tribe for the kidnapping and murder of the British subjects at the foothill. When the expedition reached the Apatani Valley, both the British officials under the leadership of R.B Macabe along with his political interpreter and the eminent Apatanis of Hari Village negotiated in the outskirts of Hong village called Buri on 15th February 1897 for the release of the captives. The British were satisfied with the agreements of the Apatanis in the negotiation. The Apatanis were not punished but got their captives released. After 1897, the tribe did not give further disturbance to the colonial administration and further contact with the British did not arise.

During the Miri Mission of 1911-12, the Britisher's again explored the country east to Apatani Plateau. In early 1930's the plateau was twice visited by the political officer of the Balipara Frontier Tract based at Charduar. In December 1944, Captain E.A.G Davy, Additional Political Officer of the Balipara Frontier Tract who had the charge of Subansiri area accomplished the task of exploring the feasibility of establishing friendship with the tribe for firm administrative and political control. Besides, his visit also aimed to setup administrative headquarters at Apatani plateau and to develop infrastructure in this regard. He surveyed the present airfield at Ziro and initiated for its construction with the help of prominent Apatanis who supplied the requisite labour required for the construction in 1944.

In the post second world war, Captain Davy wanted to transform the Apatani Plateau into a model administration. To him building of roads and good governance need not necessarily destroy the traditional tribal life. The policy should be one of the intelligent and sympathetic development rather than rapid and violent change. Due to his popularity amongst the tribe he was called as Taki Shahib.

In the same year, C.V.F Haimondrof and his wife Elizabeth Barnado (Betty) visited the Apatani country and stayed till May 1945. From 1944 to 1945 he was appointed as special officer and Assistant Political Officer to North East Frontier Agency and was permitted to carry out anthropological field works amongst the Apatanis. He established good relation with the tribe through his anthropological investigation. It was because of his endless works on the tribe that made Apatanis recognized by outsiders. During his visit he was able to achieve his political ambition of establishing a government outpost in Apatani country. The outpost helped in negotiating

the warring groups under government supervision. C.V.F Haimandrof and his survey team during his stay at Apatani plateau was lead by Captain Davy with 5th Assam Rifle. Permanent survey camps were established at Kure to survey the Nyishi villages and Dutta Papii to survey the Apatani villages. Under the provision of Assam Frontier Administrative Act of 1945, C.V.F Haimandrof and Captain Davy appointed Padi Lailyang of Reru, Kago Bida of Hija, Chiging Nyime of Dutta, Punyo Tamer of Hong, Gyati Tadu of Hari as the first batch of goan buras in 1944-45. The roles of these goan buras were to assist the government agencies in their administration.

After the departure of C.V.F Haimandrof, the country was visited by J.P Mills, the adviser to the government of Assam for tribal areas accompanied by 25th Assam Rifles and Major C.R Stoner, an agricultural officer and botanist. J.P Mills was satisfied with the feasibility of bifurcation of Balipara Frontier Division into two administrative divisions. Accordingly, Sela Sub Agency and Subansiri Area was created with its headquarter at Charduar and north Lakhimpur respectively.

Col. F.N Betts, a military officer was appointed as the political officer of the newly created Subansiri Area in 1946. He set up administrative outpost at the Kure and Dutta Papii. The flag of Union Jack was hoisted at Kure on 25th December 1946. Besides, Kimin was made the permanent base camp with the assistance of prominent Nyishi kotokis named Bath Hali and Apatani kotokis.

C.V.F Haimandrof revisited the Apatani Valley just before the departure of in 1948. C.V.F Haimandrof and Col. F.N Betts appointed Koj Karu, Kago Tajo, Nada Rika, Hage Tara and Tinyo Bida as the first batch of Apatani kotokis. These kotokis acted as translator of the local dialect for the administrator.

After Col. F.N Betts, R.G Menzies, Indian Civil Servant who was the political officer of Sela Division was also given the additional charge of Subansiri area in late May 1948. In 1951, he was given the full charge of Subansiri Area and remained in the same position till 1955. During his stay, he established two shopping centre and schools at Kure and Dutta Papii respectively. The rapid administrative development started after the Kure Chambyo (Kure War) of 1949.

The causes of the Kure war were the interference of government administration in the internal disputes. The indigenous population wanted to solve their

disputes according to the customary laws. Moreover, the corrupt practices of the government agencies like Goan Buras and Kotokis (Govt. Interpreter) created hatred for the government. These agencies squeezed bribes from the common people to manipulate the cases. The common people also silently complied with the corrupt practice due to fear of false implication in a case and punishment from the government thereof. The Apatanis are extremely scared to be inflicted with govt. punishment since they have to perform a purification rite that involves heavy punishment.

The people of entire villages negotiated for a raid to eliminate the administration at Kure and Duta Papii. Excepting the Hija village, the rest of the villages accepted the proposal. On the appointed day of June 1949, the warrior burnt down the inspection bungalow and the school at the camp. The other party dismantled the suspension bridge at Ranga Nadi to prohibit the escape route of government sepoy. In the raid the Apatani warrior could not withstand before the sophisticated weapon of government. The Apatanis suffered few casualties and the campaign was abandoned. The offending village were burnt down and punished to provide labour for transportation of the government goods and developmental activities.

The outcome of the war was that it boosted the socio-economic and political development of the Apatani Plateau. The administrative headquarter was shifted from North Lakimpur to Kimin in February 1950 and in 25th march 1952, headquarter was finally shifted to Ziro the heart of Apatani Plateau. Besides, cooperative stores were opened for the sale of essential commodities. The medical facilities, education, transport and communications were gradually established in the area.

The locals were employed as peons, chowkidars, ALCs and political interpreter. Besides, Gaon Buras, Kotokis were appointed by the government for arbitrating the settlement of local cases. They were allowed to arbitrate both civil and criminal cases according to the provision of customary laws that doesn't contradict the criminal procedure code by virtue of Assam Frontier administrative act 1945.

For strengthening and smooth functioning of the self-governing tribal institution, Panchayati Raj Institution has been introduced under regulation 3 of NEFA Regulation, 1967. The regulation envisage and

provides three tier local self-governing bodies in the district, namely Gram Panchayat at village level, Anchal Samiti in Block level and Zila Parishad in the district level. These self-governing bodies are empowered with certain developmental and welfare schemes.

During the agency council Late Danyi Kunya of Hija Village became the first agency councilor from the Apatani Community. When the agency council was elevated to Pradesh council in 1971 Late Padi Yubey became the first elected member of the council. In the first general election held on 25th January 1978, Shri Padi Yubbey from Janata Dal was again elected as member of legislative assembly from 10 Ziro Assembly Constituency. After full pledged statehood of the state in 20th February 1987, the members in the legislative assembly of the state increased to 60. The name of the constituency was renamed as 17 Ziro-Hapoli Constituency. The Lower Subansiri district gradually expanded administrative establishment with up gradation of circle headquarters into Extra Assistant Commissioner, Additional Deputy Commissioner under Deputy Commissioner.

As discussed above the political development of the Apatani Valley was gradual and steady. The Goan Buras after independence are inducted into the main stream of administration and were instrumental in settling the civil and minor criminal cases. The political maturity was evolved with the people's participation in electing members of elected representatives in legislative Assembly till date.

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