

Abstract

This propose of dissertation is to understand the ideology and operation regarding to the process of cultural revival of Tai Ahom, the largest population in Upper Assam, North East India. Ahom abandoned Tai language two century ago and currently use Assamese language as the mother tongue. Now all of them perform some sort of Hindu Vaisanavism.

Since 19th century after British colonial time until the Indian independence the movement for the cultural revival of Tai Ahom based on the historical consciousness and socio-political status. The Ahom elites established many organizations to direct and stimulate a separate ethnic identity for Tai Ahom in Assamese dominated society. The goal of organizations is to change their relatively status from being Other Backward Classes to the Scheduled Tribe status to qualify for economical and social support given for some minority groups by Indian government.

The three main organizations involved in the cultural revival are Eastern Tai Literary Association or Ban Ok Pup Lik Mioung Tai, All Assam Phuralung Association and All Assam Mohan-Deodhai-Bailung Association.

The movement for the cultural revival of Tai Ahom tries to use ethno-historical conscious as well as language and culture such as Ahom-Buranji, Ahom historical hero, Tai museum, Ahom language training program, literature and journals to intensify the Ahom self identity separated from the Assamese.

Patsaku community situating in Sibsagar district is the center for organizing traditional Ahom rituals, seminar and social gathering to stress on being Ahomness to intensify the Ahom cohesion. Me-Dam-Me-Phi, Ahom ritual and Bihu, a popular festival in Assam are performed to solidify Ahom ethnic identity at Patsaku where Ahom people from all over Assam come to join these important gatherings.

Ahom leaders are behind the public gatherings in order to evaluate the success or problem of their performance and plan for future action.

Thus the cultural revival of Tai Ahom are closely connected with political and social movement to improve socio-economic position of Tai Ahom in Assam. The Ahom leaders try to gather support from other minority groups as well as Hindu in Assam state.

The cultural revival of Tai Ahom can be seen as a politics of ethnic identity of Ahom to bargain for more share of power and for socio-economic status of their group under the contact of Assamese economic, social, political and culture in India. The movement utilize old cultural symbols to promote their cause at both personal and public level. This movement is unfinished operation, but complex sets of rituals and customs as cultural invention, re-invented tradition which are applied to suit the changing situations in Assam and India.