Chapter One: Introduction

1.1   Introduction

Tai Studies has been initiated since colonial period and it is being studied till the contemporary period. Tai Studies emerges with the arriving of colonialism, when the demarcation of self and other has been described through the power of ruler and colony. According to John D. Brewer, ethnography emerged because the British Empire needed to understand the cultures and the ethnic groups for seeking to rule and assimilate those groups in the British family of nations. Later on, this power faded away. The nation-building ideology came along with the consciousness of self-identification among post-colonies and ethnic groups (Brewer, 2000: 2). So, it can be seen that the change in socio-political forces has also affected the content of Tai Studies.

Tai Studies has been included as a subject matter in the study of history. It describes about the historical background and the stories of Tai people. Afterwards, Tai Studies is in hands of Tais in the late 1980s. The concept of ethnicity becomes an emblem of representing their ethnic groups. When the indigenous people started to study about themselves in the 1990s, those ethnic groups became a subject of study. Therefore, Tai Studies has never been static rather it has been dynamically studied since from the time the book "*The Tai Race: Elder Brother of the Chinese*" (1923) written by W.C. Dodd was published. It describes about Tai Race in the early 1900 A.D. Some western scholars were influenced by this study then Tai Scholars in present days.

The dynamics of Tai culture and society has been presented in purposes which are related to political issues, socio-cultural issues, global issues etc. For instance, Tai studies, at first, focused on the history and their culture more than the interaction with Tai groups and other groups due to colonization. Then, it had changed by socio-political influences after the twentieth century. From being an object of study, Tais shifted their position into subject (researchers) who have voice to speak about themselves.

This research focuses on the sense of the revival of 'Tainess' and their ethnicity with an ethnographic approach. It studies about Tai Aitons of Banlung Mantai community,

Karbi Anglong Dist., Assam, India and Tai Yais of Ban Pangmoo community, Meahongson Province, Thailand. Explanation of the dynamics of Tai culture and society is also essential for this study. Therefore, the researcher uses a comparative study to highlight the cultural similarities among Tai Aiton community of Assam, India and Tai Yai community of Maehongson, Thailand by using anthropological methods.

1.2   Who are the Tais?

The word 'Tai' describes a particular group of people belonging to Mongoloid race who are scattered all over Asia. They live in the southern part of China and Southeast Asia which include Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Burma, and also to some extent in some parts of North-East India. This has been mentioned by W.C. Dodd's in his book *The Tai Race: Elder Brother of the Chinese* (1923) which explored the location of the Tai race from the southern part of China, South East Asia to India. However, the present study locates and selects two precise zones for comparative study specifically from India and Thailand as mentioned above. Ethnographic study of those two zones is the main application concern of the study.

Tai people usually call themselves with a combined word that begins with 'Tai' which is then followed with the specific difference of their own groups like 'Aiton' or 'Yai' etc. and hence providing a recognition as 'Tai Aiton' or 'Tai Yai'. There are six groups of Tai people in Assam, India, and they can be summarily named as Tai Ahom, Tai Phake, Tai Turung, Tai Aiton, Tai Kamyang, and Tai Khamti. Tai Ahom is the first group who conquered some indigenous communities of the Brahmaputra Valley and started living in Assam since the twelfth century A.D. (Gait, 1926 as cited in *Luangvijitvatakarn*, 1970). With the authority, the great kingdom of Tai Ahom provides numerous evidences with reliable historical records. Work such as *Ahom-Buranji* (1930) is the collection of Ahom script which is also a kind of historical source. The document presents the history of '*Sue-Ka-Pha*', the great king of Tai, with the history of migration, the history of Tai Ahom kingdom and the beliefs of the Tais.

After *Ahom-Buranji* was published, the elite Thai scholar, Phraya Anumarnrajton (1940) published *The Story of Thai Race* ('*Reung Chon Chat Thai*') translating some part of *Ahom-Buranji*. It was the first book on Tai studies in Thailand. Tai studies have again come into being in 1954 with the publication of the book *Visiting Thai-Ahom, Our Relatives* (*Yeim Thai-Ahom Saileud Kong Rao*) by Sarnat or *Sang Pattanotai*, a politician

of Thailand who visited Assam and wrote it after returning to Thailand. In 1960-80s, Tai Studies seem to influence more and more of Thai scholars, and, in 1955, Banjop Panthumetta wrote *'Ga Le Man Tai'* (in Tai Khamti language meaning Visiting Tai Village). She wrote the book as a travel document and also tried to explain about Tai lexicon with a linguistics approach. In 1976, Chit Phumisak published his book with an effort to find the genealogy of the word 'Tai, Siam, Shan, Ahom or Assam'. It was an explanation and elaboration of the root of the word, its use and thereby academic significance for further research was shown.

After 1980, Barend Jan Terwiel, a Dutch Scholar, who became very much interested in Tai Ahom community, published many works about Tai Ahom rituals and ceremonies and also the facets of Tai culture and society. According to Chattip Naksupa and Ranu Wichasil (1996), actually Tai people in Assam tried to revive their own language and culture since 1954 at Sibsagar by forming a committee to revive the Tai language first then Tai culture. In 1981 'The Tai Historical and Cultural Society of Assam' was formed thus by the initiative of enthusiastic scholars like Jogendra Nath Phukan (1973) and Indira Barua (1978).

The fact is the people are studying about Tai race/ethnic group since nineteenth and twentieth century. Most of the works on Tai are produced by the western scholars in colonial period; and then in twentieth century, the indigenous scholars started to have a conversation with their own culture in academic forums. The historiography about Tai has been studied again by many scholars who combined many approaches in their works. As we know, sometimes history acts as a tool of nation-building project, many books about Tai people were produced in different contexts in Thailand and in India. These represent that in Thailand the story about Tai comes up with the question of construction of 'Tai-ness' along with the process of nation-building (Laungaramsri, 2003:157). In India, Tai studies represents about the diversity of Assam region and the collective identity of Tai people. Therefore, it can be argued that, concerning space, Tai people who live in Thailand are the minority who got excluded from the Thai people and Tai Yais became Thai later on and how they still maintain their identity among Thais and other minority groups.

Many works (mentioned in chapter 2) of Tai studies in Thailand try to find out the spatiality as well as the temporality regarding the problem of this "Thai-ness" that expels or tries to expel a certain "Tai-ness". These studies evoke a kind of a romanticized idea about Tai race and Thai people who had their own history and great kingdoms. In this situation, Chit Pumisak (1976) explanation about the root of Thai word (Tai) that means

'the freemen' can be re-thought. In the context of the post-war time, Thailand is the only country in South East Asia which was free from colonization and this historical uniqueness paves way to many ideas about the Tai or Thai nationalism. On the contrary, in Assam, many books have been written about the history of Tai Ahom kingdom, the way of life which seems to establish a regional parameter at the face of the Indian Nationhood. Ahom-Buranji and The Tai Dictionary reflect that Tai culture is one of the elements of Assamese culture.

Ethnographically to be mentioned, one has to be in the place to recognize and evaluate some of the intricacies of such kind of problems. Why the revival of a Tai-ness should be an important issue to be examined can be understood perhaps only with an ethnographic description. The research question with the problem of "Tai-ness" was thus a result of a recent field survey of the so-called mentioned village in Assam. The consequence of the study reveals that the researcher was never tickled enough to think of this identity question India, Assam and Thailand. This means only one thing that with the appeal or struggle to bear a Tai-ness, the village people of Bunlung Mantai are constructing perhaps a different angle that may affect the issue of identity, nation-hood or ethnicity. This must be examined thoroughly and from a point of view which is outside the so-called main-stream hegemonic study. Hence, another important question may be migration that asks for a kind of historical analysis circling round the issue of time and space that establishes a recognizable introduction.

The researcher had conducted fieldwork at Sibsagar, the old historical city of Tai Ahom kingdom, Tai Kamyang village, Tai Aiton of Banlung Mantai village and Tai Yai community of Thailand. While examining ethnographically, these places evoked certain questions regarding 'Tai-ness' as well as space/place. Moreover, as the researcher herself does not belong to any Tai communities in Thailand and though she has a Thai identity, hence the following problems become the problem of etic and emic. One of the problems thus became appropriate to question about itself as to how to understand every facet of Tai culture and society. This methodological set up highlights the question of the revival of Tai-ness in Assam in a particular way and for the researcher it must be an ethnographic description. Therefore, the research investigation is an attempt to do comparative study and fulfill the objective of understanding about Tai-ness and have access to the extent of knowledge about ethnicity. Moreover, the researcher tries to review Tai literature in Assam context and Thailand context to understand how the Tai historiography becomes a tool of revival of Tai-ness.

A researcher, who is also a subject of a particular study, bears the traits of being a subject. A subject who reads and does certain fieldwork also focuses on 'the subject' while conducting a fieldwork and these illuminates certain angles of the research. A subject who can act, represent and more specifically really want something, may go against some established issues and bring forth or confront contradictory desires. The space/place can be described as having two meanings. One is, space and place that we use in everyday life, such as environment, region, location, area, landscape etc. This is geographical. The other is that which offers a subject an identity. This is conceptual and constructive. This construction becomes a necessity for a subject or a community.

A researcher who has a direct identity of being a Thai, but not having a Tai one encounters a subjective question within the objective question of the "Revival of Tai-ness". The subjective inquiry which must accompany the objective research consolidates the research itself with an ethnographic quality. Anthony D. Mitchell (2000) argues on the one hand in favor of the humanistic sense of place which is imminent in different settings. This may be understood as an objective one though not necessarily. On the other hand, those of Marxist and materialist accounts that explore the relation of domination and resistance played out across different spaces (cite in Atkinson et al. 2005) concern the subjective enquiry. The proposal for the research argues for a blend of both in such a way that an ethnographic exploration will account for not only the objective validity of the "Tai-ness" as an attempt of enquiry, but also the subjective proposition of understanding that examines the exploration of the meaning of multiple identities.

The term 'ethnicity' is related with the word like 'Ethnic' which gets derivation from Greek word 'ethnos' meaning the 'nation'; 'non-Israelish' or 'Gentile' nation and pertaining to race and the race of the nation. (Eriksen, 1994: 2-3) Ethnic has the sense of nation and the same race but later the word 'ethnic' emerged in English language in fifteenth century with the meaning of 'the others' who belong to a different religion (pagan or heathen). During sixteenth-eighteenth centuries span of time, 'ethnic' and breeding got related.

During nineteenth century, the term 'race' and 'ethnic' got mixed with unclear meanings. Actually, the word 'race' is related to the biology, physical body more than the 'ethnic'. At that time biology as a subject was famous and in nineteenth century the idea of racial superiority got concerned along with the territory. Again, in the twentieth century, the concept of ethnicity has been adopted mostly as a substitute for the minority groups within a larger society of the nation-state (Schermerhorn, 1970 cited in Malesevic, 2004:

1). Ethnic group means the group of people who share the idea/sense of oneness and know the difference of the other by the descent, the language, heritage or the historical memory, customs and practices, practices of endogamy, ideology etc. These are the beginning of the ethno genesis (Wikipedia, 2016). The term 'ethnicity' refers also to relationships between groups whose members consider themselves as distinctive, and these groups are often ranked hierarchically within a society. (Eriksen, 1994: 10) Ethnicity became a serious issue around 1950s, when the globalization and transnational spread around the world. By that time, ethnicity remained no longer confined to only sociological research as it extended to many fields like political science, geography, and cultural studies.

Ethnic identity generally is related with the emotional satisfaction of belonging to a group; a shared belief in the origin and history (factual as well as mythical) of the group; and the acceptance of the social relations within the group as 'sacred' and as including not merely the living but also the dead (Rex, 1995 cite in Ganguly and Phadnis, 2001:23). There are two main schools of thought viz. the primordialist school and the constructivist school. The primodialist school believes that ethnic identity is biologically 'given' (Ganguly and Phadnis, 2001:23) and the constructivist approach agues on the primordialist that the ethnic identity is not only about the historical given, but it is the highly adaptive and malleable phenomenon and, hence, fluid. However, in addition to this, Thomas Hylland Eriksen (1994) adds that the argument on both school lead to the instrumentalist school, as ethnic identity becomes just a tool for the interest groups.

Ethnic identity can be presented from social interaction and cultural expression. According to Charles F. Keys (1979), cultural expression depends on the situation especially for the productive resources or the benefits so that the collective identity becomes the 'structural opposition' between the others ethnic groups.

Coming back to main question of Tai-ness, Tai studies emerged around twentieth century both in India and Thailand because of Tai identity and search for identity beyond national boundaries. After the colonial period, India and Thailand got concerned into the context of nationalism and the state-formation. It remains a research enquiry whether the initial effort of establishing and finding a national identity in case of Thailand gave birth to the so-called revival. In India, the history of the Tai Ahom is the main work among the other five Tai groups within the Assamese culture. In Thailand carrying the pride of being a non-colonized country, the centralized government promoted the element of Thai-nation membership which is comprised of '*Chart*' (meaning nation), '*Satsana*' (meaning Buddhism), and '*Krasat*' (meaning the King). Along with this the government also

promoted 'Thai' as the official language. The centralization policy in Thailand excludes some interest of some communities who have now become the so-called 'others'. Not being within the same elements of the Thai-nationhood they remained as the marginalized. Although, globalization and democracy have sprung up in Thailand as well as in India, the context for both the country is different and this pleads a timely proper investigation.

The present study, along this line of thought investigates the matter of the Revival of Tai-ness by conducting an ethnographic study in detail in the above-mentioned areas from Assam and Thailand and locating particularly the Tai Aiton community and Tai Yai community in a larger picture of identity discourse.

1.3   Literature reviews

The literature review on this topic is concerned of two types: firstly literatures about the ethno-history and secondly the academic writings on the ethnicity.

1.3.1   The ethno-history of Tai Aitons and Tai Yais

The work of Chit Phumisak (1981) "*Khwampenma Khong Kam Siam, Thai, Lao Lae Laksana Thangkansangkhom Khong Chuechat*' (Etymology of the Terms Siam, Thai, Lao and The Social Charateristics of Ethnonyms)" is the first research document that differentiates the words "Tai", "Thai" and "Siam" from each other. He explained that the word "Tai" in Thai context means commonly the people in the society of those areas. Then, it was used for describing the freemen until nineteen centuries. The word "Tai" was then sidelined by the upcoming nation-state ideology and the use of the word "Thai" instead of "Tai" or "Siam" was adopted. So, "Thai" becomes the word by which Thai people would introduce themselves after the Thai nation state has been formed. The word "Thai" is derived from Bali (Pali) and Sanskrit words which means freedom. "Siam" hereafter becomes is the word to be used by the others' reference to Tai people. Chit Phumisak says that "Siam" is derived from the word of "Shan" (Shan state in Myanmar) where Tai people live by. By the words "Tai", "Thai" and "Siam", therefore we can describe the location as well as the people somehow related to Thailand in general. Also, these words have a hidden meaning about the origin of Tais and some writers use the historiography as a tool for constructing the meaning of the modern Thai state. The researcher used the idea of looking into etymology for understand the difference between Tai, and Thai.

Before doing a fieldwork in Assam, India, and the researcher reviewed the book of Bunjob Phanthuymetha, she published her book *Gale Mantai* (Travelling Tai Villages) in 1960s. During that time, she visited Assam and did research about the Tai community in Assam. With the linguistic-anthropological idea to explore what is the similarity between Tai and Thai people, she did an excellent work for basic knowledge about Tai people who lived in Assam. Since 1960 till 1980, the works of Tai studies, hence, are in the hands of linguists and anthropologists. Then 1990 onwards up to the present time of 2016, Tai studies has developed new areas of search and research which have as many approaches as they have been widely studied.

After going through the works of Tai studies in Assam as well as the Tai Studies in Thailand, it is found that many initiatives have been taken up for the new Tai study and its contextualization. For instance, the Eastern Tai literary organization was formed in 1981 which had the purpose of reviving Tai culture and society. However, the studies of Tai people in India have been started long back. For example, *Ahom-Assamese-English Dictionary* was published in 1920 which was compiled by Rai Sahib Golap Chandra Burua, he worked on Tai Ahom words as it is the extinct language. The work of Golap Chandra Burua reflects that to collect all Tai Ahom words is a kind of revival of Tai-ness. Along with that Chandra Barua's *Ahom- Buranji* was also published in 1930. *Ahom Buranjis* are written in Tai Ahom language, he translated the historical chronicles during the time of Ahom kingdoms. Ahom Buranji talks about how the Tai Ahom people migrated from their origin place in the southern part of China and later on from Burma to Assam, India.

Sir Edward Gait who wrote the book named *A history of Assam* in 1926 where he explained the whereabouts of Tai people in Assam. In this book, Gait used the historical chronicles of Ahom kingdom with the help of Ahom Buranji which was translated by Golap Chandra Barua. The story of Tais started in Buranji in the year of 568 A.D. and migrated to Assam, India in 1228 A.D. until the coming of British colonial in the 19th century. Gait also used the other records from Muhammadan writers and including the Ahoms coins, copper-plates, inscriptions etc. that had been found in Assam during Ahom period for writing the history of Assam.

Nomal Gogoi published another book naming *Dictionary of Assamese-English-Tai* in 1987. Nomal Gogoi tried to expand the knowledge of Tai language for Tai people who live in Assam by making a dictionary that includes three languages; Assamese, English and Tai.

Puspadhar Gogoi's *Tai of North-East India* in 1996 is also a very worthy mention where he has extensively discussed about the history and culture of the different Tai groups inhabiting in the North-Eastern, India-Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. These definitely throw some light about the study. And during the span 1990-2016, ample Tai studies have been done and they are not only about Tai-Ahom but also about the other 6 groups of Tai in Assam and Arunachal to some extent.

Damrongphon Inchan (2002) studied on *A Cultural Revival of Tai Ahom in Assam, India*. In his thesis focuses about the Tai Ahom people in Assam and how they revived Tai Ahom culture through the political movements, Tai literature and Tai Ahom tradition and culture. In this research found that Tai Ahom people have many associations for revival of their identity such as Eastern Tai Literary Association, All Assam Phruraluang Association and All assam Mohan Deodhai Bailung Association and small associations also need to be mentioned such as All Tai Ahom Student Union, Tai Ahom Parishad and Institute of Tai Studies and Research.

The master's degree thesis in History Department at Chiangmai University, Thailand on Tai Yai of Maehongson from That Srirattanaban (2010) "*Mae Hong Son Thai Yai: The Creation of Thai Yai-ness Through the Interaction Between the Old and New Thai Yai Migrants from 1977-2007*" studies about how Thai Yai people interact with each others. Because Thai Yais who live in Mae Hong Son can be divided into two groups; the old Thai Yais who lived here since the 18th century and the new Thai Yais who just recently settled down here since the 1970s. This study shows how Thai Yais link their Buddhist culture and ethnic ceremony and the custom to revive their ethnic identity. And the old Thai yais group and the Thai Yai migrants build up their Thai Yai-ness through the Buddhist culture and ceremony.

Girin Phukon wrote *Tais of Northeast India and Southeast Asia: A Study of Ethno-Cultural Linkage* in 2019. This recent research on the cultural linkage provides many aspects about Tai people who nowadays live in Southern China, Southeast Asia, and Northeast India. Girin Phukon focuses on many cultural traits among the Tais such as The *Muong Baan* social system, Muong means a feudal administrative and Baan means village. Tai people still use these two words to name their village as it represents that Tai village has it owns political system and belief system. Phukon notices that Tais don't share the same root but have similar culture such as the belief in *Khwan* and *Dam*, using Tai language for speaking, Wet-rice culture, Na culture and Muong Baan organization, textile,

food habits, *Pi-nong* bonding, manuscript culture. This research helps the researcher to gain more about the information of Tais in China, Southeast Asia and Northeast India.

1.3.2   The academic writing on ethnicity and ethnic Identity

In the field of Ethnicity Studies, Rajat Ganguly's book *'Understanding Ethnic conflict: The International Dimension'* gives a conceptual understanding on the issue of ethnicity. The concept of ethnicity is related with many things like; the ethnic group which means a group of people who share a common language, food habits, dress, culture, customs and practices, religion and beliefs, the racial similarities and a common history. Ethnic groups can be of two distinct types; the first one is the homelands society which means societies with long time occupants with a particular territory and thereby with the exclusive claim of having moral rights to rule over it. The second is the ethnic Diasporas of community, who are caused by migrated population, induced mainly by oppression in their home state or by the attraction of better economic prospects and opportunities. (Ganguly and Taras as cited in Phadnis and Ganguly 2001:19). Thus, the aspiration to understand the meaning of ethnic group leads one to explore more about the context of ethnicity in South Asia and the terminological problematic in the field of ethnic politics.

In addition to this, Urmila Phadnis and Rajat Ganguly wrote a book called *Ethnicity and Nation-building in South Asia* (2001) to provide the various approaches on ethnicity and nation-building. This book explains the dynamics of ethnic identities and movements in South Asian states in comparative framework. It is the story similar to the language movement in Assam which established Assamese as the official language in the states by the enactment of the Assam Official Language Bill in 1961. But, this bill evoked a violent reaction in the hill districts, though the bill reflected a kind of regional-building process. The multi-ethnic states in South Asia represent the conflict and the harmony in a similar fashion to some extent. Groups maintain their separateness without jeopardizing this harmony and the mutual tolerance of each other's beliefs, this book reveals, and the value system remains the cornerstone of such a cordiality (Phadnis and Ganguly 2001:7) Moreover, this book adds the understanding on ethno-nationalism, which means that an ethnic nation that expresses sentiments of loyalty towards the nation can be said to demonstrate the spirit of ethno-nationalism which includes a commonness in ethno-history, ancestry and language. It is for a nationalism that consists of both the political and emotional nature.

Fredrik Barth's (1969) "Introduction" to the *Ethnic Group and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference,* throws some light on the meaning and concept of 'ethnic identity' and 'ethic boundary'. It argues that an ethnic group;

a. Is largely biologically self-perpetuating,

b. Shares fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms,

c. Makes up a field of communication and interaction, and

d. Has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order. (Barth, 1969: 10-11)

His work presents that actors use ethnic identities to categorize themselves and the others for purposes of interaction, forming ethnic groups in the organizational sense (Barth, 1969: 13-14). The concept of ethnic boundary comes from the category of oneself separated from the other. He explains that the ethnic boundary canalizes social life which means the ethnic group should share the overt signal or signs like dress, language or the style of the house etc. and they should share the basic value like customs, norms etc.

Here Charles F. Keyes's "Introduction" to '*Ethnic Adaptation and Identity: The Karen on the Thai frontier with Burma'* (1979) can also be important. His work focuses in the cultural expression of the origin and background of the ethnic group and the presentation of ethnic identity; and how the ethnic identity of such a manner becomes a fluid identity. Keyes uses the constructivist approach to understand the descent. He says, people have two types of descent, first, it is the social descent referring to the self-selection that depends on situation, and, second is the genetic descent referring to the genetic inheritance. Keyes points out that ethnic identity comes from the social descent and self-selection of identity is the adaptive strategies that depend on the social experiences.

'Political System of Highland Burma' by Edmund Leach (1954), which is another worthy mention, studies about Tai people and Kachin people in Kachin hill area in Myanmar. Leach presents the ethnographic study among Tai people in Kachin area saying that even though Tai people use different languages among their own communities they can understand the language of each groups and thereby can communicate. Leach determines that Tai people share three main common cultural denominators as: they are Buddhist, they are agriculturalist especially having the rice as their main product as well as food (because of what they settle in the place nearby any river), and they follow Tai political system which is somewhat a feudal system.

For understanding about the ethnic movement, Makiko Kimura (2004) studied on '*The emergence of ethnic movement in Assam: Issue of language, Migration and identity*'. In her thesis focused on the ethnic movement which emerged during the 1960s and the 1970. The context of Assam's political situation had been analyzed with the anti-foreigners movement and the linguistic movements. Thus, the Assamese nationality movement was set the boundary between Assamese people and non-Assamese or tribal or Bangladesh. Kimura points out that ethnic conflict in Assam is the result of the gap between the middle class and the rural peasants. Hence, the anti- foreigners movement were the movement leaders who were the Hindu middle-class and the plain tribes. Later on, it failed because this movement created the discourse on the genuineness and indigenousness to differentiate people. Thus, the ethnic movement not only leads to integration but also to differentiation.

The understanding of the term as Ethnicity and Ethnic Identity from Richard Harvey Brown on *Cultural Representation and State Formation: Discourse of Ethnicity, Nationality and Political Community* in 1996 says a lot about if one tries to understand ethnicity and nationality, one must have to understand his/her own identification and identity. Thus, the ethnic identification and ethnic identity are about a person who uses the ethnic group to identify himself and classify him and others and that person needs to get ethnic orientation and sense of belonging from his community or group.

1.4 Theoretical Perspectives

1.4.1 Ethnicity

Thomas Hylland Eriksen (1993) wrote "Ethnicity and Nationalism: Anthropological Persppectives". And he noticed that the words such as ethnic group, ethnicity and ethnic conflict have been using since 1950. In the late 1960s ethnicity has been a main preoccupation in social and cultural anthropology until today. Anthony D. Smith (2006) also said that ethnicity was a new term during 1950-1960. Ethnicity is an approach of study about ethic group, tribe and communities in nation state. Contemporary ethnicity theory draws attention to ethnicity in relation to nationalism and modernization. Thus, the nationalistic and modernizing projects shape ethnic identifications. At the same time, ethnic categories in both countries represent the process of negotiation and the ethnic identity.

Ethnicity as an issue emerged in the work of some post-colonial Anthropologists or Ethnologists. During the period tried to study about tribe or the primitive society through the impactful insight of functionalism and structuralism. But the weakness of this approach is that these tribal societies were looked down as inferior as well as primitive and hence could not account for the understanding of 'as-it-is'. The fact is, we cannot understand the other societies as the 'non-civilized'. The 'tribe' asks for the trace back into the primitive time of course for the proper understanding of the root, and an inferior look already prepared cannot justify this. Modern people must classify society since the evolution of culture. Then the cultural relativism helps the anthropologist and ethnologist by providing the ethnographic data and the cross-cultural comparison for making an objective way on the ethnological writings.

Later in the twentieth century, due to globalization and the rapid change of socio-cultural aspects in many societies with the issues of diaspora, immigration, transnationalism, and consumerism the problem of ethnicity and its dynamic got affected in various directions. The study of ethnicity remained not only to be the question of self-determination, but it also got related with the ethnic network and association that encourage the sense of belonging. Ethno-history which uses the sense of solidarity for the invention of problems can be an example. The making sense of historical consciousness among Tai people, which not only happened in India but also in Thailand, can be articulated this way. In different context, the studies on Tai people will try to know about Tai root and also the Tai's history, whereas the ethnographic study is does not pay much attention to these aspects. The ethnographic writing can reflect more on every facet of society and culture, but the most important of all is the fieldwork reflections. With the type of reflection tries to find the meaning of ethnic-identity itself which is linked with a particular community's past, present, and also the future in the sense of the adaptation and the negotiation with the mainstream culture.

1.4.2 Ethnic Identity

Anthony D. Smith (2010) wrote "Ethnicity has something to do with the classification of people and group relationships. (Smith, 2010:5) In the context of India, the nation building project has been created since 1947 and in Thailand, Thai state formation created in 1900. It is observed that nationalism and ethnicity were created hand in hand. Nationalism also created ethnic formation, (exclusion/inclusion) for example, Thai government and Assam government give a space for Tai people as one of the group of

people who form the state or country as the important group in the history. At the same time, ethnic identity in Tai Yais of Thailand is managed by Thai government policy in aestheticization and commodification. And in Assam state, Tai Aiton ethnic identity grows up along with the other five Tai groups who reside in Northeastern part of India and share ethno-history with six Tai groups as the state formation history. Ethnic identity concept will help the researcher to understand about ethnic maintenance and how the Tais maintain their ethnic identity through language, festival, wet-rice cultivation culture, etc.

The researcher wants to understand the concept of Tai-ness through the act of revival of Tai-ness or the Tai ethnic identity. The researcher concludes that ethnicity is combined with two concepts; firstly, consciousness of the ethnic group that needs to interaction with another ethic groups, then the ethic group or the members of the ethnic groups will realize that they are different or same with another and then the feeling of ethnic consciousness develops within that context. And secondly, ethnic identity will appear after the ethnic consciousness in the form of cultural activities, dress, food, festival, norm, belief system, etc.

1.4.3 The Migration Theory

Human migration is a movement of human beings for million years ago and the movement of people comes with the wide spreading of many groups of people. Hein de Haas (2021) wrote an article "A Theory of Migration: The Aspirations-capabilities Framework"(DOI:https://comparativemigrationstudies.springeropen.com/articles/10.118 6/s40878-020-00210-4)

De Haas wrote that there are many migration studies long back since 1960s until the present days. The migration studies focus on understanding of human migration phenomena, and it is now in the hands of anthropologists and sociologists from 1980s until 2000. The scope of human migration from anthropologists and sociologists focuses on transnational, multicultural, diaspora, the lives of migrants and identities etc. For Haas, migration theories have emerged in social-science, so it needs two main paradigms to look at the theories; firstly functionalist and secondly historical-structural theory. These two paradigms help to see how the migration happens, the migration systems, migrant network and the structural economic and power inequalities in the societies.

Veronica Pala and Ibalari Phylla Khongjoh wrote "Trends and Patterns of Migration in the North Eastern Region of India" in the book names *Human Migration in South Asia* (2016) edited by Kwilly Nongrum and A. Phidarihun Warjri, explains that through the

economic theories of human migration views, there are three approaches to study of human migration; first, "pull-push" theories which show the interaction of factors that attract migrants to their destination with factors that repel them from their origin; second, the human capital approach interprets migration as the investment, the migrants will decide and evaluate the destination and third, the selectivity approach proposes that migrants are the most enterprising members of a community who respond to labour market didequilibria by migrants. (Pala and Khongjoh, 2016:21) In order to understand the Tai migration, the researcher must study the cause and effect of the migration and it is important to review the history of migration in Tai Aiton community and Tai Yai community.

1.5   Statement of the problem

"*Revivalism has a strong association in the literature, with fundamentalist,*

(Hannigan, 1993: 2)

Alan Robert Lopez (2016) explains that academic uses the term "revivalist" to refer the reactions of the fundamentalist to globalization, modernism and secularism. This thesis tries to explain how a revival movement can emerge to in the context of Assam (India) and Thailand and looked at how identity is projected maintaining 'Tai' culture among 'others'.

The word "revival" stems from the word "revive". It gives many meanings such as to restore, to live or to become conscious, to regain life or give new strength, or to improve the position etc. The origin of this word has the root from Latin word, which can be divided into two words, - *re* means back and - *vivere* means live. Thus, the word "revival" means to bring something back to life, health, existence. Revivalist writings mostly are related to fundamentalists (especially in religious movement) and social movements. All kinds of movements point out to the root of the word '*re*' which reflects to cause and effect of a particular revival-issue in contemporary period.

Furthermore, Alan Robert Lopez argues that "revivalism is not necessarily social conservatism". (Lopez, 2016: 4) Lopez gives examples in the case of the revival of Buddhist movements of Thai Forest Movement and Ch'an/Zen as a continuation/restoration of the essence of Dharma/Dhamma which is a form of distorted Buddhism. Thai Forest Movement shows that Buddhist Revivalist movement is contrasted to institutional Buddhism. But forest monks can establish the social movement along with their own practice especially in the rural area. On the other hand, Ch'an/Zen talked of the reformers who want to revive Zen after the stagnant period, by going back to China and

India to find the roots of Buddhism. This kind of revivalist project brings about the essential practice. According to Lopez, this stereological project has selected some part of Buddhist philosophy merging with the idea of freedom from marginalized people as their defining feature. Thus, revival process can be thought of the germinating a dynamic. (Lopez, 2016: 4-5)

Lopez's (2016) idea of the revivalism has thrown some light in this study, particularly regarding idea of Tai-ness in both cases of the ethnic groups, Tai Aitons and Tai Yais. The word 'Tai' describes a particular race of Mongoloid people who are scattered all over Asia. They live not only in the southern part of China, or Southeast Asia which include Vietnam, Laos, Thailand and Burma, but also to a certain extent in the North-East of India. This can have a support by W.C. Dodd's book The Tai Race: Elder Brother of the Chinese, published in 1923, which tries to explore the location of the Tai race from the southern part of China, South East Asia to India.

The present study proposes the statement of the problem in the form of four initial issues. They are:

a. There must be a reason why this Tai-ness has sprung up within a main hegemonic culture.

b. What does this "revival" speak about a margin and a main-stream culture and how can the confrontation between small and big culture be measured?

c. How is this revivalism different from the original cultural traits and practices?

d. How has the idea of ethnicity and ideologies revolve round the issues of identity, nationality in Tai Aiton community, Assam, India and Tai Yai community, Maehongson, Thailand.

1.6 Aims and objectives of the study

This study aims to present a comparative ethnographic study of Tai Aiton community of Assam and Tai Yai community of Thailand. The presentation of 'Tai-ness' attempts to reflect on the dynamics of revivalist movement and the maintenance of ethnic-identity among Tai Aiton people as well as Tai Yai people with the following objectives.

• To explore the present context of Tai-ness in Tai Aiton community of Assam and Tai Yai community of Thailand.

- To study the use of history of Tais in revival of Taieness among Tai Aitons and Tai Yais.
- To study the ethnic identity by doing comparative ethnographic study.
- To analyze 'Tai-ness' and situate it in the larger canvas of Ethnicity
- To explain the revival of 'Tai-ness' and the negotiation with the mainstream culture.

1.7   Background of the study

The present study locates and selects only two precise zones for comparative study. Ethnography is the main approach of the study. Tai people usually call themselves with a combined word that begins with 'Tai' which is then followed with the specific difference of their own groups like 'Aiton' or 'Yai' etc. and consequently provides a recognition as 'Tai Aiton' or 'Tai Yai'. There are six groups of Tai people in Assam, India. They are Tai Ahom, Tai Phake, Tai Turung, Tai Aiton, Tai Kamyang, and Tai Khamti. Tai Ahom is the first group who conquered some indigenous communities of the Brahmaputra Valley and begun to live in Assam since the twelfth century A.D. (Gait, 1926 as cited in Luangvijitvatakarn, 1970). With the authority, the great kingdom of Tai Ahom provides numerous evidence with reliable historical records. Work such as *Ahom-Buranji* (1930) is the collection of Ahom script which is also a kind of historical source. Thus, the Ahom document presents the history of '*Sue-Ka-Pha*', the great king of Tai, along with the history of migration, the history of Tai Ahom kingdom and the beliefs of the Tais.

Joachim Shliesinger has mentioned that there are 30 Tai groups in Thailand, viz.- Tai Kaleung, Khorat Tai, Lao, Lao Ga, Lao Grang, Lao Isan, Lao Lom or Tai Loei, Lao Ngaw, Lao Song, Lao Ti, Tai Lue, Tai Phuan, Phu Tai, Seak, Southern Thai, Tai Bueng, Tai Dam, Tai Gapong, Tai Kheon, Tai Mao, Tai Wang, Tai Ya, Tai Yai or Tai Luang, Tai Yong, Tai Yor, Tak Bai Thai, Thai, Yoy, Tai Yuan (Shliesinger, 2001: 87-88). Tai ethnic groups are living in Thailand. Some of the members of the group still preserve their own culture and language.

1.7.1   Tai Aiton community at Banlung Mantai

Puspadhar Gogoi (1996) tracing the history about Tai Aiton community argues that Tais came to Assam with the Tai Ahom community around the thirteenth century. Tai Aitons call themselves as 'Tai Aiton' while Assamese people call them as '*Aitonia*'. The word 'Aiton' comes from two Tai words; Ai meaning 'brother' and Ton meaning 'high'.

But, Padmeswar Gogoi (1968) said that the name 'Aiton' comes from the place '*Mueng Aiton*' in Chindwin Myanmar. However, the etymological meaning to some extent sustains as coming from a particular place does not dispel the preceding possibility. So, 'brother of high hill' or 'high spirited brother' remains for the Tai Aitons. As the Tai Aitons were staying with the Tai Ahoms, so the pre-history about Tai Aitons can be taken as the same as the Tai Ahoms.

According to Dibya Dhar Shyam, a Ban Lung Mantai resident, Tai Aiton people live mainly in two districts in Assam; in Golaghat they live in 3 villages called as Dooboroni, Bohula and Tengani and in Karbi Anglong in 6 villages which have the names as;1. Ban Hin 2. Ban Sai 3. Banlung Mantai 4. Chowkihola 5. Kalioni and 6.Balipathar. It is known that some of them live in Arunachal Pradesh too. Ban Lung Mantai is located in Karbi Anglong District of Assam which is a semi- hilly place. The village is located nearby the Dhansiri river or '*Nam Lung*' (the big river). Basically, Tai Aiton people at Banlung maintain an agriculturalist life. According to Jiseng Thoumoung, another Banlung Mantai resident, Tai Aiton people are Buddhist, and they follow Theravada Buddhism but also keep faith both in Ancestor spirits and along with the Buddha.

The national festival of Tai Aiton people is known as Poi Sangken. Poi Sangken or the water festival is a religious-cultural festival celebrated by the Tais residing in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Research between 2016-2019 has observed that the festival attracts toursists from other ethnic groups of Assam such as Karbi or Mising. Tai festivals such as Poi Sangken plays an importance role in promoting the ethnic identity of Tai Aitons as well as adding to the cultural diversity of Assam. Interestingly, Poi Sangken festival is recommended on the website www.tourism.assam.gov.in as one of the recommended festivals of Assam that held in the month of April by the Tais who live in Assam. While there may be many activities (events, festivals, programmes) that are organized by the community and the state, not all of these may be seen as being strictly limited to tourism alone. In many ways the aim is to not only to promote tourism but also to develop a more holistic appreciation of the tradition and culture of the community.

1.7.2   Tai Yai community in Maehongson

Tai Yai people live in the northern part of Thailand, mainly in Chiang-mai, Maehongson and Naan. Sometimes, Thai people call them as Tai Yai and Thai people call them as Tai Luang, the word 'Luang' means 'big' as well as 'Yai'. Tai Yai people migrated from Myanmar when the war between Myanmar government and Tai people in Shan state

started in 1940s. Facing enormous struggle of war and insurgency, it can be estimated, Tai Yai people migrated to Thailand's border. However, Tai Yai in Maehongsorn somehow preserved their own identity and culture. Moreover, Tai Yai people could promote their own identity as the product of the ethnic group through cultural tourism since 1990. In 1990 the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) promoted Thailand internationally as tourist attraction, and, thus, they could, not only preserve the ethnic identity but also live and stay in Thailand as the presenter of cultural diversity.

1.8   Research methodology

The thesis studies broadly the life of Tai Aitons and Tai Yais from Banlung Mantai of Assam, India and Ban Pangmoo, Maehongson, Thailand. Hence, in Thailand Tai Luang and Tai Yai use to refer the same group of Tai people, but the researcher uses "Tai Yai" as Tai people in Ban Pangmoo call themselves as Tai Yai more than using the word Tai Luang that refers to Tai people who live in Shan State, Burma.

The analysis focuses on the life of both of Tai groups and revivalist movement that emerges in both communities through the fieldwork and Tai historiography. Moreover, in investigating of Tai Aiton cultural practices and Tai Yai cultural practices, the thesis examines the construction of Tai-ness and the re-affirmed identity through both groups. Thus, text-bound, such as history and secondary data are also used for analyzing ethno-history and the revivalist movement in particular context.

### 1.8.1   Primary data collection: Field Area

The research has been conducted in two countries, India and Thailand. Banlung Mantai, Karbi Anglong of Assam, India is located in the north-eastern of Assam state. (Figure 1.1) Another field is in Ban Pangmoo, Muang District, Maehongson Province, Thailand which is located in the north-western part of Thailand. (Figure 1.3) The research explores the location of two villages where both the groups migrated from Myanmar and settled in Assam and Thailand. The root of origin is same, which are located not too far from Shan state of Myanmar.

Map 1: Karbi Anglong District of Assam. Banlung

Mantai village is located in Barpathar and it is not too far

from Diphu.

(Source: Map of India, Assam District Map, retrieved on 22

September 2017 from

https://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/assam/assam-district.htm)
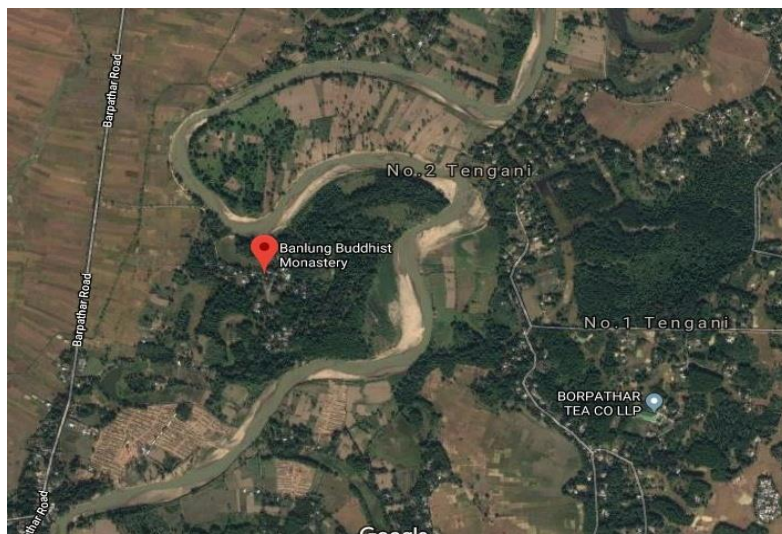
Map 2: Banlung Mantai or Bargaon (in Assamese),
Karbi Anglong District, Assam, India.

(Source: Google map, Banlung, retrived on 22 September 2019 from

https://www.google.com/maps/@26.3071001,93.8768449,14z)
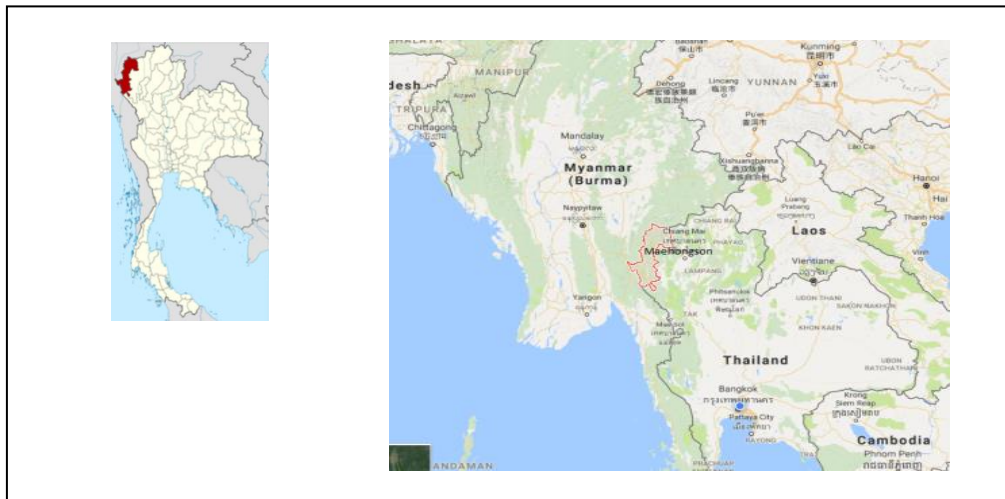
Map 3: Maehonson Province of Thailand. Ban Pangmoo is located nearby Maehongson town.

Retrieved on 22 September 2019 from Source:
https://www.google.co.th/maps/place/Mae+Hong+Son)
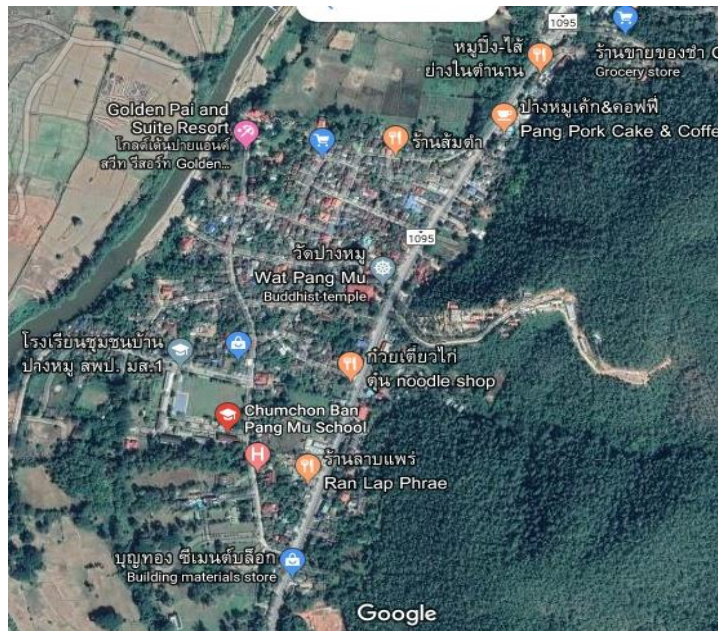
Map 4: Ban Pangmoo Village, Mae Hongsorn Province, Thailand.

Source: Google map, BanPangmoo, retrieved on 22 September 2019 from https://www.google.com/maps/search/ban+pangmoo+ maehongsorn/@19.3556281,97.9594046,16z

1.8.2   Research Methods: Fieldworks and Ethnographic Description

The thesis is an outcome of ethnographic research. Doing fieldwork combined with reviewing literatures about Tai Aitons and Tai Yais is the main focus. According to George E. Marcus and Michael M.J. Fisher (1999) mentioned that ethnography as a written product of fieldwork. (Marcus and Fischer, 1999: 20)

1.8.2.1   *Methodologies: Ethnographic Description and Its Problems in Methodology*

"The ethnographer, as a positioned subject, grasps certain human phenomena better than others. He or she occupies a position or structural location and observes with a particular angle of vision."

(Rosaldo, 1993:19)

Anthropology emerged in the nineteenth century. At the beginning, anthropology had a prominent point in methodology. Before that during the eighteenth century, ethnology[1] which is close to anthropology grew up alongside the natural science and humanities. (Pratt, 1992:64) After Portuguese could arrange their expedition and discovered new lands, new plants and new men in the sixteenth century, it seems that travel writings are the only one record about people. Thus, travellers and missionaries were initially ethnographers. According to Pratt (2003), the travel writings are the starting point of dichotomy of self/other. Pratt explained that at the beginning of discovery period in the eighteenth century comes with the arrival of the enlightenment era in Europe. Pratt analyzed travel writings of European expeditors for understanding the emergence of Euro-centricism.

At that time, the word "race" was written to highlight new men who lived in the new lands in the same planet whom the expeditors found them. Pratt explained that European people who were travelers, traders, missionaries, imperialists etc. already started to think of their own position (in this planet) by understanding others. This according to him is known as "Planetary consciousness". After knowing through the empirical investigation and then put the staff in forms of writings, European would rethink of their own society through comparative interpretation, in such a way that they want to understand the gap between a rural society which is different from the urban society, they would trace back the understanding of primitive society. Thus, Eurocentric ideology emerged with the

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[1]Ethnology derives from Greek word "ethnos" which means nation and "logia" means a speaking, discourse, treatise, doctrine, theory, science.

idea of evolutionism and the word like race, ethnology means the scientific study of mankind and human species.

Ethnologists in those days studied about human species and primitive cultures and societies. Those works usually illustrated, their understanding of individual is the root of society or primitive society. It marks that empiricism, natural science and ethnology had given the idea of evolutionism in social sciences. Later on, Chicago school started to use this method to study in urban society such as the work of Everette Hughes (1943) who used ethnographic writing to describe the life of French people in Canada. The works of Louis Wirth (1938) contribute a lot of new understanding on city life by using participant observation method.

The word "ethnography" itself refers to empirical accounts of the culture and social organization of particular human populations. (Ellen, 1984: 7) An ethnographic account identifies the record of living people which is different from historical accounts. Thus, using this term indicates a set of research procedures. Until the arrival of anthropology, ethnographic approach became the heart of anthropological method. Ethnography is a written product of fieldwork. (Marcus and Fischer, 1999: 20). Anthropologists used the word 'ethnology' as an euphemistic term instead of using the word 'race' by seeking at the native's point of view (Malinowski, 2002:17)

However, it needs to be pointed out here that there are two forms of criticism of ethnography; the natural science and the post-modern forms. Historically, ethnography comes since the legacy of its past is the pejorative common-sense stereotype that it deals with the foreign, strange and exotic. (Brewer, 2006: 11) Later on, the works of Franz Boas (1911) and Bronislaw Malinowski (1922) became the prominent anthropological methods. Boas has been called the father of cultural anthropology which already developed in USA. Besides, Malinowski was the father of social anthropology in Europe. Boas introduced holistic approach and relativism for going against the racist and evolutionists. Malinowski opened the smooth path to understand the native's mind by doing participant observation. But James Clifford and George Marcus (1986) criticized that the writings of classic anthropologists have been represented an impartiality, at the same way the rhetoric of writing and the power of language in the writing itself is the tool of bias. Moreover, the power relationship of the author and reader had never been equal.

On the other hand, ethnography in post-modern form deals with the problematic of ethnographical method such as the representation of the fields, the thick description, the

reliability of its data and the construction of the ethnographic text. The truth now is the goal of ethnographic study.

Many anthropologists have discussed so much about the methodological anthropology. This proves that the problem was seen from various angles time after time. At the beginning, ethnology and ethnography were the study of human races and the descriptive account of communities and cultures. Anthropologists, who produced their works during the nineteenth-century, took ethnography as the core of anthropological work for understanding socio-cultural phenomena. After that in the twentieth century hermeneutic tradition came into the area of ethnography. The culture was written by the anthropologists and its method, now it has been questioning by philosophical hermeneutics.

1.8.2.2 *Methods: Field research*

When the anthropologist thinks of ethnography, it seems that ethnographic writing is the output of the research and at the same time it is the method. Anthropologists paid attention to the role of anthropologists and the anthropological writings. The hope to eliminate racism in those days[2] has changed into investigation of the truth in reflexive writings. Therefore, ethnographic writing consists of theoretical ideas and methodological approaches. It has been since Boas and Malinowski introduced holistic approach and participant observation. The method of doing fieldwork thus becomes through a mixture of data collection, participant observation, interviewing and collecting documents. According to John D. Brewer (2000), methods are merely technical rules. Methods are central to research practice because they lay down the procedural rules to follow for obtaining certifiably objective and reliable knowledge.

Clifford Geertz (1973) disagrees with the rapport, finding key-informant, records of the family tree, drawing the map, writing diary etc. All these method for him is "thin description". Then, he introduced 'thick description" because he agreed with Max Weber that culture is full of structure of significance. Meaning is hidden in the significance. Geertz gave an example about the winker if somebody is winking to his friend by accident or he is tending to send the winking to his friend with the meaning. For Geertz, winking is the sign that represents many meanings. In this case, thin description is like a camera.

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[2]Ethnography began in twentieth century, there are two kinds of intellectual developments, one is in Britain like Malinowski, Boas, RC Brown etc. Its origins were tied to the needs of the British Empire to understand the cultures and groups in their colonies. On the other hand, American anthropology is in North America like, in Chicago school in sociology, which used observational techniques to explore groups on the margins of urban industrial societies in US in 1920s and 1930s.

Camera cannot tell the truth, but it can represent some aspects. On the contrary, thick description explains all the meanings in the structure of significance. According to Clifford Geertz, the role of anthropologists starts while working on giving assumption then doing fieldwork and prove whether the assumptions are true or false. With the useful anthropological method, anthropologist would go to the field and read secondary data, and then write. And anthropologist's role is to find the meaning and interpret it. (Geertz, 2000: 12)

This topic mainly focuses on the concept of ethnicity which also provides many ideas about and triggers questions around the issues of state, nation, and identity. Tais and Thais believe that they are relatives by shared language and culture, and this belief justifies exploration on the views through an ethnographic description on both Tai Aitons and Tai Yais. Thus, the ethnographic description will be adopted exclusively to write on the 'Tai-ness' of culture and society of these areas. Extensive fieldwork has been done along with the visual ethnography. Investigation will be carried out by collecting primary data which would include observation and interview method. Qualitative methods like in-depth interview and field observation and the group discussion if necessary has been conducted. Secondary data has been collected from secondary sources like existing literatures, reports, and the records as well as the manuscripts.

Organizing fieldwork that boosts self-experience and personal perception and then the literature review, which are required for getting an awareness of already executed work on the area has been adopted for the present study. The discussion made on the literature review illustrate that, the academic writings have their own authority and sometimes construct some ideology, whereas the ethnographic study is the way to study about the subject. The present study proposes writing with self-experience in Tai communities both in Assam and Thailand. The fact is that the ethnographic fieldwork is not only the partly true explanation about the other cultures, because the manner it is conducted, it can reflect on the ontology and epistemology of a particular community and their culture. Richard Jenkins (2008) argues in favor of fieldwork and anthropological research to be remained as typically 'local'. Hence to bring out the important distinguishing features of the discipline and the work empirically (as well as ontologically), the data collection is done firsthand. (Jenkins, 2008: 5-6)

Commenting on Dresch and James's research (Dresch and James 2000:2 cite in Jenkins, 2008:5), Jenkins argues that "*the ethnographic writing has inclined the discipline towards a focus on the details of face-to-face life.*" (Jenkins, 2008:5) The reason may be

that the big pictures may many a times be elusive. The comparative ethnographic description on Tai Aiton community and Tai Yai community mainly focuses on fieldwork as the primary data and a combination of the data from secondary sources has been incorporated. This thesis uses not only fieldwork method such as in-depth interview and participant observation but also comparative study methods.

1.9   Relevance of the study

Ethnicity as an issue emerged in the work of some post-colonial Anthropologists or Ethnologists. These scholars during this period tried to study about tribe or the primitive society through the impactful insight of functionalism and structuralism. But the weakness of this approach is that these tribal societies were looked down as inferior as well as primitive and hence could not account for the understanding of 'as-it-is'. The fact is, we cannot understand the other societies as the 'non-civilized'. The 'tribe' asks for the trace back into the primitive time of course for the proper understanding of the root, and an inferior look already prepared cannot justify this. Modern people must classify society since the evolution of culture. Then the cultural relativism helps the anthropologist and ethnologist by providing the ethnographic data and the cross-cultural comparison for making an objective way on the ethnological writings.

Later in twentieth century, due to the emergence of globalization and the rapid change of socio-cultural aspects in many societies with the issues of Diaspora, immigration, trans-nationalism, tourism and consumerism, the problem of ethnicity and its dynamic got affected in various directions. The study of ethnicity remained not only to be the question of self-determination, but it also got related with the ethnic network and association that encourage the sense of belonging. Ethno-history which uses the sense of solidarity for the invention of problems can be an example. The making sense of historical consciousness among Tai people, which not only happened in India but also in Thailand, can be articulated this way. In different context, the studies on Tai people will try to know about Tai root and also the Tai's history, whereas the ethnographic study does not pay much attention to these aspects. The ethnographic study can reflect more on every facet of society and culture, but the most important of all is the fieldwork reflections. With this type of reflection, it has been attempted to find out the meaning of ethnic-identity itself which is linked with a particular community's past, present, and also the future in the sense of the adaptation and the negotiation with the mainstream culture.

The emergence of globalization comes along with the state financed policies in many countries especially tourism. The idea of tourism arose in late 19th century with imperial expansion. Thus, the idea of 'going there' combined with the new world exploration, the others and the primitive. Tourism met the anthropology in the late of 1950s, the toursists especially the westerners wanted to learn more about the primitive culture, so the tourism policy in the third world had to show the picture of the pasts through national heritage that shaped by nation or regional identity. Until 1980s was the era of 'Heritage boom'. UNESCO held the 1972 World Heritage Convention, the purposes of the meeting were to preserve tangible and intangible cultural heritage and to ensure their sustainability for future (Ullrich, K. et al., 2020:2) reflects that the coming of toursists all over the world had ruined the heritage.

In the 1980s people noticed that there is the classification system in tourism such as the tourist gaze (the toursists/the hosts, the western/non-western, subject/object) while the distance between the toursists and the hosts or the west and non-west draw the boundary between self and other. And what is the tourism authenticity or tourism inauthenticity? This question needs to look back into the subject/object in tourism. Toursim is for the westerners to explore the other countries, so the tourism authenticity is the process of reflection of otherness which means the other culture and environment that differ from the western's culture and environment will show the sense of authenticity. The otherness and authenticity are united in a desire to ensure that culture and ethnicity are preserved and aestheticized (White, M., C.: 2007:26). Later on, sustainable tourism emerged in 2003-2004 and it is defined by the UN Environment Program and UN Wolrd Tourism Organization that "tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environment impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities" and moreover it refers to "the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability" (UNEP and WTO, 2005:11-12). In this study tries to understand the ethnicity in both of Tai groups and how the Tai ethnic identity negotiates with the globalization including the tourism because tourism has an impact on the identity building through cultural events or festivals.

1.10 Limitation of the study

Adopting an ethnographic approach for this study needs more time to spend with the key-informants for grasping the language as the researcher is not Tai, so doing fieldwork becomes hard. The researcher would remain aware of the possibility of any lack and misinterpretations thereby; however, the researcher tries to bring out the best out of this research. Limitation of the study is fieldwork. Fieldwork would be more but due to covid-19 pandemic, it was limited and contacted the informants over the phone calls during that period.

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