

**CONCEPTUALIZING COLONIAL MODE OF  
PRODUCTION:  
A CASE STUDY OF NORTHEAST INDIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

The present paper will address the issue of mode of production debate in the context of Northeastern India. The debate of mode of production has been focused on the main stream Indian society and analyzes the impact of colonial economy on Indian society. In this context the present paper argues that the British also extended their power in the tribal areas of Northeast India. The scholars who participated in the debate of mode of production failed to address the institutional changes that effected tribal society and their mode of production in Northeast India. In this paper we will apply the Marxist perspective of mode of production debate in understanding of tribal society and find out how Marxist theory of Mode of production is suit to the tribal mode of production during colonial period. This paper can be divided into two parts. The first part discusses about the nature of colonial mode of production in India in general and tribal mode of production in tribal regions of Northeast India.

**Key Words:** Mode of Production, Northeast India, Colonial Economy, *Zhum Cultivation*

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**Introduction:**

In the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that is, during the pre colonial period, the Northeastern region of India, excluding Assam, Manipur and Tripura plains, was predominately inhabited by tribal communities bearing different names. They mostly migrated into this area from different parts of South-Asia<sup>1</sup>. Contrary to the claims of the colonial administrators and writers the people of the region, including tribals, were not fossilized lot in the cultural, political and economic spheres of life, waiting for the colonial rulers to bring dynamism into their socio-cultural and economic life. Transition from shifting to settled cultivation had been taking place in some parts of the region already. Higher technology of production than that entailing the primitive form of shifting cultivation was being adopted by most of the tribes as manifested in the construction works, running of water mills, manuring of fields, terracing of hill slopes for farming practices, diversification and specialization in the field of productive activities and so on. The indigenous population in Khasi and Jantiya hills and the plains of Assam and between Assam and Bhutan, between Tibet, Burma, and even China, brought forth opportunities for producing more and also new goods for exchanging with the goods needed by the tribes<sup>2</sup>. People of the region- tribals and non-tribals alike- were also getting familiarized with the system of exchange economy.

The debate of mode of production<sup>3</sup> is focused on the main stream Indian society and its nature of colonial economy in India. In this context the paper argue that the British also extended their power in the tribal areas of Northeast India. The authors failed to find out the institutional changes that effected tribal areas and their mode of production in Northeast India. In this paper we will apply the Marxist perspective of mode of production debate and find out how Marxist theory of Mode of production is suit to the tribal mode of production in Northeast India during colonial period. The paper divided into two parts. The first part discusses about the nature of colonial mode of production in India in general and tribal mode of production in tribal belts of Northeast India.

## I. Nature of Colonial Mode of Production:

The debate on the mode of production has generated doubts regarding whether Indian society is characterized by one or several modes of production. It would therefore be useful to examine what constitutes the mode of production.

The debate started with a report published by Ashok Rudra<sup>4</sup> in the Punjab region. His argument based on the sample survey in Indian agriculture. His main objective was to identify the trends emerging in Indian agriculture. The survey was conducted during 1968-69. Ashok Rudra says that the Indian rural society is characterized by the capitalist mode of production. He suggests following five criteria for identifying capitalist mode of production: The capitalist 1) tend to cultivate his land himself rather than to give it out on lease; 2) tend to use hired labour in a much greater proportion than family labour; 3) tend to use farm machinery; 4) delivers to market an important share of his produce; and 5) so organize the production as to yield a high rate of return on his investments.

According to Utsa Patnaik<sup>5</sup>, since India is an ex-colonial country, it is characterized by a limited and distorted development of capitalism which has not revolutionized the mode of production. She counters the proposition of Ashok Rudra by stating that the capitalist development in agriculture in India rests neither on the employment of hired labour nor on production for the market. Utsa Patnaik's contention that there is limited and distorted development of capitalism is further elaborated in her empirical study. She maintains that the imperialistic design of the British regime was the root cause of pauperization and proletarianisation of the peasantry. The use of cheap labour to be hired was based on the circumstantial factors such as their availability in a particular locality at a particular time. According to her the capitalist development in agriculture can be recognized when there is accumulation and reinvestment of surplus value so as to generate more surpluses on an ever-expanding scale.

Paresh Chattopadhyaya, while taking part in this debate, cited Lenin's definition of capitalism according to which capitalism, "was the highest stage of commodity production where labour power itself becomes a commodity". Commenting on Utsa Patnaik's argument he suggested that Lenin's definition of capitalism was wide enough to accommodate her emphasis

on the criteria such as accumulation and reinvestment of surplus value. Responding to Chattopadhyaya's comment, Patnaik once again clarified that Chattopadhyaya had not tried to make a fair distinction between capital in the sphere of exchange and capital in the sphere of production.

According to Amit Bhaduri<sup>6</sup> there are four prominent features of the semi-feudal type of agriculture and characterized them as:

1) share cropping, 2) perpetual indebtedness of the small peasants, 3) concentration of two modes of exploitation, namely, usury and land ownership in the hands of some economic class, and 4) the lack of accessibility for small tenants to the market.

However, a few scholars have criticized the conception of the semi-feudal mode of production as the dominant mode. On the grounds of its internal logic and on the ground that the political power of the landlords does not rest on the debt bondage alone, they contest the semi-feudal mode of production in the agriculture. Apart from the economists' characterization of a particular type of mode of production, the historians have also expressed their views about the mode of production in a wider context.

Hamza Alavi, in his influential article on the colonial mode of production, begins by postulating that neither 'feudalism in colonial India nor contemporary 'rural capitalism' can be theoretically grasped except in the world wide structure of imperialism into which India was, and is, articulated.<sup>7</sup> Further Alavi observes<sup>8</sup> that the term 'mode of production' designates the coherent structures within the social formations, *i.e.*, societies conceived of as systematically structured entities. It designates social relations of production and identifies fundamental classes that are embedded in them, *i.e.*, for each mode of production a class of exploited producers and a corresponding class of exploiting non-producers. Other auxiliary classes in social formations derive their significance from their relationship with either the pre-existing fundamental classes or new ascendant classes in a social formation in which a mode of production develops.

According to Eric Hobsbawm<sup>9</sup>, the mode of production constitutes the structures which determine what form the growth of productive forces and distribution of surplus will take and how, at suitable moments, the transition to another mode of production can take place. It also establishes the range of the super-structural possibilities. Therefore, it is the base for

understanding variety of human societies and their interactions as well as of their historical dynamics.

On the basis of a distinctive relations of exploitation and relations of production and rejection of co-existing modes of production, Jairus Banaji<sup>10</sup> argues for the recognition of a specific entity, the colonial mode of production. The distinguishing characteristics of colonial modes of production were their subordination to metropolitan accumulation and pre-dominance of semi-feudal relations of exploitation in agriculture. Banaji stresses the recognition of colonial mode of production but sees it as induced through metropolitan accumulation. For Banaji, this metropolitan accumulative capitalism led to the predominance of semi-feudal relations in the agriculture. Another historian, Bipan Chandra,<sup>11</sup> has examined the role of colonialism in modernization and development process of Indian economy. He considers the impact of colonialism to be vital and, therefore, it may be regarded as, well structured whole which intervened in the process of India's passage from the semi- feudal to the capitalist stage of development.

A.K Bagchi<sup>12</sup> thinks that the colonial period was marked by the de-industrialization and de-commercialization of agriculture. In fact he is of the view that complete disappearance of pre-capitalist relations has not taken place even in contemporary times. Therefore, he talks about a symbiotic relationship between pre capitalist and capitalist mode of exploitation. Over population and low rate of capital accumulation, according to him, have accounted for this continuity. Therefore, according to him, any label such as semi feudalism, semi- capitalism, neither feudalism nor capitalism, with the exception of colonial mode of production could be possible so long as the basic laws of motion of society are correctly understood.

The economists and the historians, whose studies have been referred here, have not only raised theoretical issues but also marshaled data from field research. Sociologists and Social Anthropologists too have not remained indifferent to the issues raised on mode of production. However, the concern assumed importance after 1975 and during 1980s it became predominant among those who analyzed the Indian situation.<sup>13</sup>

Kathleen Gough<sup>14</sup> conducted a study on social structures and political economy of Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu and identified several modes of production over time. She observed:

“I choose to refer to three modes of production - Asiatic, Feudal, and Capitalist - because it did seem to me that they hit upon essential difference between the states of Kerala and Thanjavaur in the 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries and between them and the modern period.” She stated that the social organization of Thanjavaur district reflected the characteristic features of Asiatic mode of production where the exploitative mechanism and its operational dimension rested on the mode of surplus appropriation which existed both in kind and in the form of labour. Similarly, according to her, Kerala state was feudal in character because land was privately owned and serfdom and service tenures of households were the basis of production relations in village. As per her observation, the contemporary situation reflected the pre-dominant characteristic features of the capitalist mode of production as it is integrated with the world market having commodity production by wage labour. She stated the evolutionary changes in the mode of production in India.

Colonial exposure caused infrastructural changes resulting in the emergence of an elite group, that is, national bourgeoisie, which was interested in capital growth. Therefore, the post-independent period saw a new class contradiction leading to the polarization of peasantry on the one hand and immiserisation of working class groups on the other. She also acknowledged the continuation of pre-capitalist features in production relations in agriculture. Along with the pre-capitalist features in India, the close links between Indian political economy and colonialism before independence and now the neo-colonial set up have all put India on capitalist path.

Gail Omvedt<sup>15</sup> thinks that such contacts with capitalist economy have reinforced the feudal arrangements with some modifications. While studying agrarian structure in the context of social movements of the Dalit Panthers in Maharashtra and Jharkanad Mukti Morcha in south Bihar, she found closer links between class and caste identities. Class identities have not crystallized independent of caste identities. Therefore, the class-based exploitation has found its expression through the feudal structures. In the Indian situation class based exploitation is complicated by caste oppression. Mobilization of the oppressed caste groups alone can bring about revolutionary transformation.

Some sociologists and social anthropologists, (while analyzing social structures by using the concepts of mode of production), have included class among the bases of their analysis.

Joan Mencher's<sup>16</sup> "Problems in Analyzing Rural Class Structure" study of class analysis and its social formation in analyzing the contradictory features of South Indian society provide a good example. After having compared the development of peasant organization and movements in the Tahanjavaur district of Tamil Nadu and Kuttandad in Kerala with the Chingelput district in Tamil Nadu, she found out the middle peasants as the critical group who took key roles in activating peasant uprisings. Like Eric Wolf's<sup>17</sup> hypotheses (that middle peasant has a crucial role in activating peasant uprising), she tried to work out a classification of groups in order to identify the class structure. Her six fold classification included: the landless; poor peasant; middle peasant; rich farmers; capitalist farmers and traditional landlord and an intermediate class of large landlords. Joan Mencher's classification comes closer to the three-fold classification of occupational groups by Ramkrishan Mukherjee<sup>18</sup> viz., the landholders and supervisory farmers; the self-sufficient peasantry (viz., the cultivators including the artisans and traders) and the sharecroppers, agricultural labourers, service holders etc. He found a close relation between the economic structure (i.e., class-based hierarchy) and the caste based hierarchy and therefore, concluded that caste hierarchy had dovetailed itself into the economic structure. Joan Mencher's study concluded that caste loyalties penetrate and subjugate class loyalties and that the caste and class hierarchies overlap. That means the affluent sections of the society come from the higher caste groups whereas the poor and underprivileged groups largely come from the lower caste groups. The tribal communities belong to this category, as they share the misery of the low caste people.

P.K. Bose<sup>19</sup> in his study of four villages from Birbhum and Purulia districts of West Bengal has provided a five-fold classification of rural classes: the landlords; the rich peasants; the middle peasants; the poor peasants and the agricultural labourers. While formulating the structure of classes he considered the relations, the modes of production and the levels of class-consciousness. He also noticed that the upper classes belonging to the upper caste groups enjoy powerful positions in the villages despite increasing opposition from the lower classes. The agrarian structure and the modes of production evident in villages testify to the continuation of pre-capitalist characteristics which are neither capitalist nor feudal in pure form.

T.K. Oommen<sup>20</sup> states that the entire debate is about the nature and directionality of social transformation in India and in a meaningful discussion of the process of social

transformation three points, i.e., the point of departure, the prices of displacement and the point of destination must be kept in mind. So far as the displacement of any mode of production is concerned that has not yet occurred. The point of destination cannot be analyzed unless one understands the participants' (the oppressed sections of society) involvement and goal in the process of social transformation.

Non Marxist perspective on the mode of production in Indian agriculture is represented by Andre Beteille, K.C. Alexander and Gunnar Myrdal. They prefer to avoid analysis of production relations with the help of 'feudal' or 'capital or 'progressive' modes of production, which are locally found in Thanjavur district.<sup>21</sup> In fact, these are not modes of production as such, but forms of tenancy. On the basis of these tenancies, Beteille mentions a number of social categories such as landlords, owner- cultivators, tenants, sharecroppers and agricultural labours. In fact, Beteilli is not concerned with the modes of production thesis. His main concern is a crude hierarchy of agrarian structure and class relations between landlord, tenant and wage-labourer.

An Anthropological approach will have to be based on (1) some kind of ' Functional Approach and (2) 'the technological process have to be studied in their concrete and detailed operation.'<sup>22</sup> Division of work, according to age and sex, social strata, and the nature of work, is the most important factor in the anthropological approach. Beteille refers to a multiplicity of factors responsible for changes in agrarian social structure. The present situation is a result of the general differentiation of social structure in India.

K.C. Alexander states that the theoretical section of his paper is based on Talcott Parson's paper 'A Revised Analytical Approach to the Theory of Social Stratification'. The agricultural groups are; landlord, owner-cultivators, tenant cultivators, free and tied agricultural labourers. These groups are ranked in a hierarchical order on the basis of a common value system. Barrington Moore Junior also takes a 'functional view' of agrarian class structure. He writes: "Although class relationships in the countryside are very important, they fail to make sense until they are set against a larger background. Agrarian conditions, especially in India, cannot be separated from caste and religion as they all together formed a single institutional complex."<sup>23</sup>



The application of mode of production approach to identify the structures of exploitation actually leads one to examine the social formation in colonial India. Those involved in the debate have tried to produce empirical proofs in support of the domination of capitalist, semi-feudal or colonial mode of production. There are others who have found co-existence of capitalist and feudal modes of production as well. Since the position taken by various scholars on this issue pertains to the contingent (or, context-specific) social formation, it is not possible to generalize their contentions either in favour of dominant mode of production identified by them or rejected by them.

An analysis of the mode of production debate help in locating the multiple dimensions of domination, exploitation and marginalization of a particular class engaged in organization of productive activities. The major arguments on the debate about the mode of production fell into multiple dichotomies and analyses. The major characterizations of the mode of production in agriculture were weaved around semi-feudal, semi-capitalist, feudal and capitalist. But, as a whole, these differences in characterization were endorsed to the specific social formation, which came to be significantly stressed as the 'colonial economy'. Thus the next level of arguments had to concern various ways in which this colonial economy had to be understood and thereby explained.

The major ways of explaining the colonial mode of production came to be stressed in a spectrum:

1. First, the center-periphery analysis which underlined the metropolitan accumulation as the basis of semi-feudal nature of agriculture;
2. Second, the symbiosis or mutual reinforcement of colonized and colonizer in sustaining the social formation of the colonial economy; and,
3. Third, the intermingling of caste and class on the one hand, and the persistence of kinship structures on the other in the colonial social formation.

## II. Nature of Tribal Mode of Production in Northeast India:

The mode of production of Northeast India during the colonial period was far from being an expanding market economy. Material life as exemplified in the structures of everyday life and economic life as it evolved along with the institutional changes in Northeast India needs to be analyzed while writing their mode of production. The present study mainly applies the

mainstream discourse of mode of production in tribal society in northeast region. Before applying the mode of production theory let us identify the nature of mode of production among the tribal communities in Northeast India. As the colonial power consolidated its rule over the plains of the Assam in 1826, it had also to deal with the border tribes like Garos, Khasis, Nagas, Mizos, Kukis, North-Cacharis and also tribes of the North-Eastern Hills who had economic and other kinds of transaction with the plainsmen.<sup>24</sup> The British took upon themselves the task of maintaining law and order and protection of life and property within the territory under their administrative control.

The tribals practicing shifting cultivation were unable to attain self-sufficiency in food production on a sustained basis. They exchanged some of their non-food surplus farm and forest products to procure from the plains the food grains, salt and sundry other commodities they required. There was also demand from the plainsmen for the hillmen's surplus products. Therefore markets for exchanging goods produced by the hillmen as well as by the plainsmen were set up in the foothill areas by the rulers of the different political units. Despite such trade relations, periodically the hillmen raided the villages in the nearby foothill areas and looted food stocks and other materials they found in the villages and even took away men and women as captives to use them as their slaves.

Some of the highlanders claimed that the foothill villages fell within their jurisdiction and hence they had the right to collect some sort of a royalty of the products grown there by the plain people. To restrain the hillmen from plundering the villages in the plains the Ahom rulers sometimes closed the passes used by the hillmen for coming down to the markets in the plains. These kinds of steps could not stop completely such raids from the hills. Therefore, to protect the villagers the Ahom rulers introduced the system of payment of some compensation in kind called '*Posa*' to the chiefs of border tribes in the North Eastern Hills to ensure that no such plundering raids were committed by them anymore<sup>25</sup>.

The traditional tribal systems were based on the concept of nature in general and land in particular as community sustenance that has come down from the ancestors and has to be preserved for posterity. Because of this close link between the identity of their community and land and other natural resources, they have for centuries managed the resources according to

their unwritten customary laws that treat them as renewable. The community that was the legitimizing factor in their land use and management systems built a culture and an economy based on their sustainable use<sup>26</sup>. Land, in this system was a resource which is an asset that is meant to be used according to their need and not destroyed or exploited for profit.

The tribal traditions of land use in India in general, and in the Northeast in particular, were based on a culture that had three main traits. The first is the sustainable or renewable use of their resource composed of forests, land and water sources that were also their sustenance. Basic to them being renewable was Community Property Resources and community ownership. They did not reject individual ownership completely but combined it with community control. In the Northeast, for example, like the Community Property Resources dependent Aka tribe of Arunachal Pradesh lacked the very concept of individual ownership and had collective rights over the Community Property Resources. In the *jhum* season every family cultivated as much land as it required for its sustenance. After the harvest or the three-year cycle that plot reverted to the community.<sup>27</sup> Others like the Angami of Nagaland combined individual with clan and village ownership but all of it was within a community ethos. A family managed its assets according to the tribe's community-based customary law.<sup>28</sup>

These as well as other tribes, the community included not merely the present but also the past and the future generations. That goes with the second feature of the resource being renewable. That too is linked to the community. The belief that guided the resource management for a renewable sustenance was that it had been handed over to them by their ancestors. They had, therefore, to be used according to present needs and environmental imperatives and preserved for posterity.<sup>29</sup> That belief itself emanated from the basic principle of sharing and intra and inter-generational equity. Within each generation, their customary law ensured that every family had enough to eat according to its need. The Aka custom of land reverting to the community after using it for *jhum* is one of its examples. Such control ensured that the resource was used according to need and preserved for posterity. That was inter-generational equity.<sup>30</sup>

The working of all these principles is visible in the tribal land ownership and management systems, especially in *jhum* cultivation on which 90 percent in the Northeast sustain themselves. Equity is seen in its decision-making process. Traditionally the village council decided which plot to cultivate in a given year, determined the amount of land to be allotted to each family according to the number of mouths to feed and decided which family with an excess

of adults would assist which one with a deficit of workers. After it the man of the house chose the plot his family would cultivate and performed religious rites to mark the beginning of *jhum*. At this stage the woman took charge of cultivation and organised work. As a result, the division of work was more gender friendly in *jhum* than in settled agriculture.<sup>31</sup>

The economic system relating to shifting cultivation was not totally non-surplus generating economy. The shifting cultivation raised surplus crops like oilseeds, cotton, and vegetable for exchange. Trade was a source of income for them. It is a myth that this system of forest farming is destructive of natural resources just as it is myth that the shifting cultivators had no concept of ownership of land by individual households. These myths have gone against the interest of slash and burn agriculturalists and enabled people with certain vested interests to grab their lands for private gain. The colonial rulers too took advantages of these myths in depriving these cultivators of free access to lands and forests. More fundamentally, as pointed out by Michael R. Dove, 'these myths have generally facilitated the intention of external administration and exploitation into the territories of the swidden agriculturalists and hence can perhaps best be explained as reflection of the political economy of the greater societies in which they dwell'.<sup>32</sup>

The upshots of these factual details of the tribal people's economic pursuits is that studies in economic history of North-East region by explaining the past performances of the people of this region, when a large scale segment of population is categorized as tribal is quite in order. In fact, there exist several scholarly works on the mode of production of the primitive people. Raymond Firth in his famous work, Primitive Polynesian Economy has referred to the problem of the existence of market conditions in the economists' sense. He has noted that market conditions are regulated by prices and that there is no price system in the Tikopia community, a fact that forms the subject of his study. The price system brings about the adjustment between wants and scarce resources having alternative users. For Tikopia 'it is relevant to enquire what processes of exchange exist, what notions of value there are, what party play in the economic system, and whether there are any objects the functions of which approximate to that of money. If there are not, how is production organized and how are the wants of consumers met, since the rationale of an economic system is to satisfy wants by the production of consumer goods?'<sup>33</sup>

Such inquiries have been made by H.N.C Stevenston of the Burma Frontier services, in respect of the Central Chin Tribes located in Burma on the India-Burma border adjoining the Mizo hills.<sup>34</sup> Following the suggestion of Raymond Firth, Stevenson has methodically analyzed, supported by factual evidence, the dominant technique of production, the system of exchange, the price system, the control of the means of production, the system of regulation of consumer's choices and the ties between participants in the economic process. Besides, he has also very appropriately dealt with the facts about accumulation of capital to improve production. His finding is that the process of capital formation does not exist among the Chin tribes. For these tribes there does not exist any scope for application of capital goods in production in the given nature of physical background. But "there is scope for profitable investment in improved methods of carriage, threshing and storage of grain, and it is to these aspects of agriculture that we should turn in our efforts to teach the Chin tribe the benefits of technique".<sup>35</sup> For capital accumulation is a vital propellant of economic growth and hence an important criterion of assessing performance of an economy. In the extremely primitive society capital formation is generally unknown. In this context, one can find that tribal social formation is based on kinship relationship, ancestral relations and traditional customs (laws) etc. The communal mode of production plays a significant role in the shaping of tribal society which is marked by the absence of private property and division of classes in Northeast region during colonial period.

#### Tribal Mode of Production in Northeast India

S.No.	Subsistence Type	Subsistence Nature
1	Gathering	Major dependency on food gathering
2	Hunting and Gathering	Hunting and gathering
3	Simple Agriculture	Without animal husbandry
4	Simple Agriculture	With animal husbandry
5	Horticulture with Fishing	Tree cultivation with animal husbandry & Fishing.

The theoretical and conceptual issues bring into focus the nature of contradictions that are built into the structure of a social system. Its comprehensive mapping in economic, socio-cultural

and political domains overtime would require a great number of subjects with a variety of methods.

### **Conclusion:**

To sum up from the above explanation, the concept of mode of production is found to be a useful tool to study scientifically the social groups which are at different levels of development in terms of civilizations. The Marxist apparatus of 'Historical Dialectical Materialism' contributed much to the epistemology of human originations and their progression from simple to complex societies in a given historical frame. For Marx and Engles the analytical tool, 'Historical Dialectical Materialism' showed the path from primitive communism to full blown communism for the welfare of all sections of society wherein the 'state' and 'class' withers away leaving all resources to be shared by all in utmost egalitarian manner. The 'Base and Superstructure model' as well 'Two-class theory model' propounded by Marx and Engles has become the foundation for understanding social formation of a given stage of cultural advancement of a society.

In the above debate, one can find that a straightaway application of Marxist's Mode of Production in tribal society would not hold since their society is based on kinship relationship, ancestral relations and traditional customs (laws) etc. The communal mode of production plays a significant role in the shaping of tribal society which is marked by the absence of private property and division of classes. In this light, it is important to appreciate the fact that, though Marxist mode of production cannot be the sole theoretical frame to capture the tribal society, yet we cannot overlook the location/situatedness of the tribal social formation within the overall colonial economy. This raises the need to combine Marxist mode of production with the communal mode of production formation to understand the holistic and historical interaction between tribal social formation and colonial social formation.

The primacy of Marxist mode of production in this context lies in its theoretical use to understand the contradictions brought in by colonial socio-economic structure into the indigenous tribal societies for example their exploitation of labour and forest produce towards the accumulative appetite. On the other hand, the tribal social formation would offer insights into the self-sufficient and kinship-oriented tribal social economy and their various ways of encounter

with the colonial accumulative economy. Therefore, though not 'class' and 'capital', but 'labour' and 'accumulation' as the conceptual frames in Marxist mode of production can be useful in our understanding of the ways in which colonial economy aggressively attempted to appropriate the tribal mode of production. At the same time, 'community' and 'kinship' as the major concepts of tribal social formation offered the tribal society a space to negotiate with the colonial economy.

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<sup>2</sup> Jalad Baran Ganguly., (2006). An Economic History of North-East India, Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi, p.8.

<sup>3</sup> Mode of production may be briefly defined as a systemic combine of forces and relations of production presupposing given labour processes institutional forms of appropriation. Broadly, it means a combination of structures of levels or instances such as the economic, juridico-political, ideological and theoretical, determined in the last instance by the economic. The theory of mode of production presupposes three things: the economic base, the juridical-political superstructure, and the ideological super-structure. The economic encompasses the social strategies of subsistence and survival, and the ideological, the entire gamut of cultural aspects including religion. Base-superstructure correlation and the schema of sequential stages, often made undeservedly rigid, the former to the extent of mistaking the analogy and the latter, and the illustration, for theory. (See relevant extracts in Barry Hindess and Paul Q. Hirst., (1975). Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London )

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