PREFACE

The endi silk is indigenous to the state of Assam. The endi or eri as is locally known derives its name from the ara (Ricinicius communis L.) plant, which constitutes its principal food. Among all the silk producing states of India, Assam occupies 5th position, producing 5 per cent of the world's raw silk. The importance of the endi silk production in the state can be gauged from the fact that 60 per cent of the world's endi production comes from India and 90 per cent of endi production in India comes from Assam. Handloom weaving is one of the most important industries in the state and occupies 2nd position after agriculture. Spinning and weaving is a widespread economic activity in Assam transcending caste and economic borders. It is a women centric craft, and is signified by the term sipini denoting a female weaver. The women of Assam are accustomed to spinning and weaving, and this craft is an integral part of the culture of this region. Around seventy per cent of the total families in the state are engaged in endi culture. This industry is primarily dependent on the labour of women. Women have been predominant in the rearing and weaving of endi textiles. In addition to their daily household activities the women use their leisure time to produce beautiful endi products.

Rampur is the largest and major endi producing area of the state as a whole. Majority of the households in this region have taken up spinning and weaving as one
of the sources of income. The study on Women and Endi Silk Production in a Village of Kamrup District, Assam, is an attempt to study the weavers and the endi silk production in Rampur village of Kamrup district, Assam. The research work was confined to the study of endi production in the villages with an emphasis on the role and participation of women in this activity. The objective of the study was to assess the socio-economic status of the women practicing the craft. The study was carried out under the Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University in pursuit of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. I was immensely helped by a number of individuals to complete this study and I would like to acknowledge my deep sense of gratitude to them.

At the very beginning I would like to offer my sincere gratitude and thanks to Professor Birinchi K. Medhi who was my supervisor for this research study. It was due to his constant support and encouragement over the years which have made it possible for me to complete my work. I shall remain deeply in debt to him. I am also very grateful to all the teachers of the Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University for their valuable advice and encouragement. I also would like to express my thanks to the staff of the Department of Anthropology, Gauhati University for their assistance.

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