PREFACE

This little thesis has come into being as a result of field study on the temples of Assam with special reference to the temples at Hajo. Here a brief note is given on the formation and architectural features of the temples of Assam. Because it is not possible to cover all the temples of Assam within a stipulated time, I have taken the temples at Hajo to understand the functional nature of this similar temples of past and present. Hajo is located in the Kamrup district of Assam.

It appears from the survey that the temples at Hajo have not undergone major changes. The people of this area have supported and helped to perpetuate this temple in its traditional way. There are five temples in Hajo of which the Hayagriva Madhava temple is brought under systematic study. This temple deserves special attention because other temples at Hajo centre round the Hayagriva Madhava temple.

Through this study an attempt has been made to understand the function and nature of the similar past temples with reference to the temple, Hayagriva Madhava. Because here the past enters into present and vibrates in the same body (i.e. temple itself). Its forms and contents have not undergone major changes. Because some abstract values and symbols condition the development and continuity of the culture of this area. Virtually the forms and contents of the temple continue uninterrupted because ‘classical code’ wants that, it is neither young nor old.
Importance is given in studying the Hayagriva Madhava temple of Hajo as a case of living archaeology to throw some light on the past temple. And for this I have viewed this problem by following the method of 'reverse chronology'. First an attempt has been made to examine the position of the Hayagriva Madhav temple in relation to the temples of Assam. Secondly, I have examined the temple's organisation of the past with the help of present.

The problem I am dealing with both ethnographical and archaeological. For this it is viewed against anthropological and archaeological perspectives. When the temples are looked against the background of time, it appears to be a static or frozen form of ancient tradition.

The temples at Hajo have their own cultural ecology, it creates cultural niche of the past in the present. This has become evident from the relation between service/occupational groups and temples. The relation is based on materials but the material culture does not exist without its symbolic or non-material counterparts. This counterpart is classical code. This has been acting as a cementing force between temple and cultural groups who form the base since an unknown past.

A kind of socio-economic system developed here between temple and service/occupational groups. That relation was not based on monetization. The relation was maintained through allotment of temple land by the king. Thus the economic life of the service/occupational groups got interlocked with the temple. When the temple land
was taken over by the Government, temple loosens its grip over its service/occupational groups. But the system has not collapsed as the same groups continue to remain as a functional unit of the temple. This has been analysed through this study in detail.

In the first chapter, general view of the study is given. In the second chapter, an attempt has been made to give a theoretical background of the present study. Geographical background of the Hajo area, a brief description and distribution of the temples of Assam, a brief description of the other temples of this area of my study and lastly the pivotal role of the Hayagriva Madhava temple are included in the third chapter.

How the activities of the temple regulate daily and monthly are studied in the fourth chapter. How the service/occupational groups came into being; their services to the temple and their relation with the temple have been analysed in the fifth chapter. In the sixth chapter an attempt has been made to analyse the socio-economic and socio-religious relation of these groups with the temple.

A description of material cultural items and their relation with the temple and service/occupational groups is given in the seventh chapter. The eighth chapter examines the relationship of temple with the society and material cultures over time.

The chapter nine ends with drawing up the summary and conclusion of the study conducted.

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