

## Book Review

**Joydeep Pal, *The Untold history of the Princely State of Cooch Behar*, Sopan Publisher , Kolkata , 2015 , pp. 156, Rs.250 ( Hard copy)**

In the recent past and till date there has been a plethora of writings on different aspects of the Koch Kingdom or the Princely State of Cooch Behar; and apparently it seems that there is no dearth of scholarship and dedication on the part of researchers. Books, articles, monographs and anthologies are moving in the stalls of book fairs and book shops; yet, serious work of thematic novelty revealing anything worth-reading and knowing is seldom detected. In the midst of traditional academic ambience of thematic redundancy in the pursuit of research and writing, the book entitled '*The Untold History of the Princely State of Cooch Behar*', authored by Joydeep Pal is an exception as the book contains such chapters as least explored so far in other books published in recent times.

The present work has dealt entirely with the least investigated documents pertaining to Koch-Mughal relations and the economic history of the princely state of Cooch Behar from the sixteenth century to the middle of the last century when the kingdom became a part of free India on the basis of the acceptance of the *Instrument of Accession* by Jagaddipendranarayan Bhup Bahadur, the last king of the Koch Dynasty. There is a chapter on the literary activities by the royal family members and creative writings by other litterateurs of the kingdom. Thus, this book has well reflected, aside the achievement of the royal family, the socio-political, economic and cultural life of the people of Cooch Behar.

The notable features of the book's narrative spread in the sections of different chapters are conducive to mark a distinction. The chapter one deals with the polity of the Koch Kingdom and its relations with the paramount Mughal power. The nearly invincible armies of the Mughals faced stiff resistance in this part of the country; though they were able in the long run to remove all sorts of impediments on the way of expanding Mughal power in eastern India. This chapter accounts for the discomfiture of the Koch kings in sequence since the period of Lakshinarayan as well as their acumen in retaining their hold on the throne of Cooch Behar in spite of repeated invasions. There is a detail analysis why the kingdom failed to withstand the rush of the Mughals to the consequence of the kingdom being further reduced in size following the partition of it in the fag-end of the reign of King Naranarayan.

The chapter two delineates the financial system of the state including earning and spending; collection of revenue-resources and royal administrative expenditure. As the financial strength of a royal power ascertains the regime's stability and continuity, this book has explored cogently the basics of the Koch kingdom's income in different fields including agriculture, industry, trade and commerce. The third chapter explains the trading system of the state, import and export, the use of ports and land routes and the involvement of the traders.

The chapter four focuses on the subject of crops and condition of the people of Cooch Behar; and thus, it provides a dynamic picture of the social atmosphere of the time. The fifth or the final chapter depicts a picture of the literary achievements of the Maharajas and their queens.

The author is too young to be criticized as obviously there are so many things to suggest for his future up-gradation in thematic planning and composition. Drawbacks are glaring; therefore, the writer himself will soon be able to detect them for correction to the effect of future improvement. All readers and book lovers, nevertheless, will find the book as a source of new information, factual concatenation and interpretation.

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