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RESEARCH ARTICLE

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE OF SALT-MAKING AMONG THE NOCTE: INTEGRATING LOCAL ECONOMIES, LORES, AND CULTURAL NARRATIVES

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Abstract

The Nocte tribe of Arunachal Pradesh in India possesses a rich repository of natural resources intricately embedded in its ecological setting and cultural life. Among these, the brine springs locally known as sum phong occupy a central position in the historical economy and socio-cultural heritage of the community. During the rule of the Ahom kingdom in Assam, salt produced in the low hills of Tirap and adjoining Sadiya region was a highly demanded commodity across the Brahmaputra plains. The springs were popularly referred to as Nimok Pung (salt wells), reflecting their economic importance in regional trade networks. Drawing upon historical chronicles such as the Buranjis and colonial records, this study examines inter-tribal and hill-plains interactions shaped by control over these vital resources. Frequent conflicts between the Noctes and the Ahoms emphasize the strategic value of the salt springs amid widespread scarcity of salt in the plains. The paper further explores indigenous knowledge systems associated with salt extraction, including traditional techniques of well construction, methods of evaporation and processing, and the policies and rituals associated with local salt. It also documents the rituals, oral narratives, folktales, and folk songs intertwined with salt-making practices. By situating salt springs as both ecological assets and cultural symbols, the study highlights their enduring impact on the economic history, social organization, and intangible heritage of the Nocte community, even as the traditional salt-making industry has declined in contemporary times.

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Introduction:-

Arunachal Pradesh, a north-eastern state of the Indian sub-continent, is located in the foot hills of the Great Himalayas. It is well known for its rich floral and faunal diversity and has earned the designation of one of the 18 bio-diversity hot spots of the world. The varied climatic conditions have given a congenial environment for the life forms to flourish in the region. Besides this, the specific location of the state at the junction of Indo-Malayan, palaearctic and Indo-Chinese bio-geographic belt has contributed much in the proliferation of the wealth of diverse life forms in it. The socio-cultural heritage and the accounts of the history of the various ethnic tribes throw sufficient light on the Man-Nature symbiotic co-existence for ages together. Tirap is one of the oldest districts of the state, and is bounded by the Tirap River in the East, the Tisa River in the West, the Patkai hills in the South

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and the state of Assam in the North. Inhabited by the Nocte, a major tribe of the state, and some minor tribes as the Tutsa and the Olo, the district covers an area of 2,362 sq.km. It is a natural storehouse of wide varieties of flora and fauna which are intricately interwoven with the lives and traditions of the people. The vegetation of the area is tropical evergreen, rain forest type and semi-evergreen depending on the soil condition and the variation in altitude. In addition to the natural resources of innumerable exotic plants and animals, the Noctes are in possession of numerous salt- springs, locally known as sum phong, which played a major role in shaping the economy of the tribe and in developing commercial and cultural ties with the people of the plains in their earlier days. Salt/brine- springs occur in the areas where there are underground deposits of rock- salt which, often in association with other substances, percolates brine water. During Ahom rule in Assam, the locally manufactured salt from the brine- springs in the low hills of the Nocte area and Sadiya region was a much demanded commodity in the entire plains of the North East. Such areas were also popularly known as Nimok Pung (an Assamese derivation meaning- nimok- salt, pung- well). Salt springs were located at Namsang, Borduria, Laptang, Kaimai, Paniduria, Kapo, Noksa, Laho, Soha, Doidam, Turet, Subang and many other villages. Each salt spring was under the control of the respective village chiefs. The villagers could use the salt for domestic use at any time without taking prior permission from the chief. But an outsider had to pay some tax to the chief for taking salt from it. However, salt- extraction or salt- preparation was done collectively.

Objectives:-

The objective of this study is to understand the indigenous knowledge of salt-making of the Nocte tribe; the early methods of extraction and manufacturing of salt from the brine- springs; materials used for the construction of salt- wells; rites and rituals associated with the practice of salt-making; the main locations of the brine- springs; its depth, circumference and vice versa. The study also focuses on the importance of the salt- springs as a unique natural resource and its impact on the local economy as well as in the social and religious lives of the Noctes in the earlier days and today. It is interesting to note that salt and salt-springs form an integral part of the oral narratives and history of the tribe, and have been the subject of many stories, myths and folktales.

Methodology:-

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to examine the historical and socio-economic significance of locally manufactured salt derived from the salt springs of the Tirap region. Data collection was carried out through multiple complementary methods, including systematic field observations, in-depth interviews, and the analysis of both visual and textual materials. This multi-method approach allowed for a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the subject across its various dimensions. Primary data was gathered through extensive interviews conducted with village elders and expert narrators, whose oral accounts provided valuable insights into the cultural memory and lived experiences of the community. These interviews served as a critical resource for exploring the role of salt in oral narratives, folklore, and folksongs that collectively shape the socio-cultural fabric of the community. Secondary data was sourced from library archives and internet-based resources to contextualize findings within the broader historical framework of salt trade, inter-community disputes, and conflicts associated with salt production and distribution. These materials further aided in assessing the wider impact of salt on the socio-cultural and economic life of the region. Additionally, the study sought to document and evaluate the initiatives undertaken by local communities, non-governmental organizations, and government agencies in preserving and promoting this traditional practice, with the aim of informing future conservation and developmental efforts in the region. This study employs a qualitative research methodology to examine the historical and socio-economic significance of locally manufactured salt derived from the salt springs of the Tirap region. Data collection was carried out through multiple complementary methods, including systematic field observations, in-depth interviews, and the analysis of both visual and textual materials. This multi-method approach allowed for a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the subject across its various dimensions. Primary data was gathered through extensive interviews conducted with village elders and expert narrators, whose oral accounts provided valuable insights into the cultural memory and lived experiences of the community. These interviews served as a critical resource for exploring the role of salt in oral narratives, folklore, and folksongs that collectively shape the socio-cultural fabric of the community. Secondary data was sourced from library archives and internet-based resources to contextualize findings within the broader historical framework of salt trade, inter-community disputes, and conflicts associated with salt production and distribution. These materials further aided in assessing the wider impact of salt on the socio-cultural and economic life of the region. Additionally, the study sought to document and evaluate the initiatives undertaken by local communities, non-governmental organizations, and government agencies in preserving and promoting this traditional practice, with the aim of informing future conservation and developmental efforts in the region.

Role of salt in the socio- economic life:-The Nocte had close relations with the plains of Assam mainly for trading purpose. During the reign of Ahom kingdom in Assam for six centuries from A.D. 1228 to 1826, the whole North East and Southern part of Assam had commercial relation with the Nocte. As there was scarcity of salt in Assam, the people of the entire Brahmaputra valley had to depend on the supply of local salt of the Naga Hills and of Sadiya region. The Nocte were in an advantageous position because of the availability of numerous salt- springs in their area. Salt was of crucial importance economically in the lives of the tribes of the northeast as they had used a system of barter instead of money. They used to barter items like salt, bamboo articles, ivory, animal skin, etc. for other important items like cloth, tea, fowls, utensils, etc. from the traders of the plains. The people of the main villages like Namsang, Borduria, Paniduria, Laptang and many other small villages lived mainly by manufacturing salt from the salt-wells which they would retail to the Ahom traders in large quantities. The Ahom government had imposed a nominal tax on the salt brought for sale by the Noctes.



Kandhtuli salt spring of Laptang



Moran salt spring of Subang

A popular commercial centre in the hills in the earlier days was Kandhtuli (an Assamese term meaning kandh- shoulder; tuli- to carry; traders used to carry the goods in their shoulders). The Nocte traders and the merchants from the plains met at this trading point to barter goods- where both parties needed exactly what the other was offering. The Kandhtuli bazaar was located in the bank of the Chatjo river. Sometimes the Nocte traders would go down to the plains for trading in places like Margherita, Namrup, Naharkatiya, Joipur, etc. Such system of barter was prevalent in many other parts of world. A far- flung trade in ancient Greece involving exchange of salt for slaves gave rise to the expression, 'not worth his salt'. Even today, the history of salt touches our daily lives. The word 'salary' was derived from the word 'salt'. Special salt rations given to early Roman soldiers were known as 'salarium argentum', the forerunner of the English word 'salary'. Salt was highly valued and its production was legally restricted in ancient times, so it was historically used as a method of trade and currency. It was an important trading commodity carried by explorers. Undeniably, the history of salt is both broad ranging and unique, leaving its indelible mark in cultures across the globe. Role of salt in the religious life: The Noctes showed a great reverence for the salt-springs and had attached religious value to it. They believed that the salt- springs were the gifts of God, the almighty Rang –O.

They held that each of the salt-springs was dwelled in by some spirit called jo jauba or jok. Prior to the extraction/ production of salt from the springs, they had to appease these spirits by performing some rites, especially, by offering rice beer and by sacrificing animal or fowls. The surroundings of the salt-wells were always kept clean and tidy. The path or track leading to the salt-spring was cleaned and the jungle around it was cleared off. The village priest called Chimtey Lowang by the Khappa Noctes along with the some elder folks who were supposed to be the experts performed the special ritual of appeasing the spirit and praising Rang –O before using the salt wells. Pousum salt spring of Pullong is the most famous salt springs in the district. People performed some rituals annually for extracting salt for trading and domestic consumption. They had to offer betel leaf and areca nut called tamul- paan which symbolizes purity, along with two hens- one black and one white to propitiate the salt Goddess called Chim Thoa Yangchha and her maid. The white hen was offered in the name of the Goddess, while the black one was supposedly for the maid of the Goddess. In fact salt has played a vital part in religious ritual in many cultures symbolizing immutable, incorruptible purity. There are more than 30 references to salt in the Bible, using expressions like "salt of the earth". There are also many other literary and religious references to salt, including use of salt on alters representing purity, and the use of "holy salt" by the Unification Church. Greek worshippers consecrated salt in their rituals. In Buddhist tradition, salt repels evil spirits. That's why it is customary to throw salt over your shoulder before entering your house after a funeral: it scares off any evil spirits that may be clinging to one's back.



Brine and mud of Pousum salt spring at Pullong

Role of salt- springs in warfare:-

Salt served as money at various times and places, and it had been the cause of bitter warfare. The historical chronicles of the Ahoms known as Buranjis and the British records give us some information about late medieval history of Tirap district. In the beginning, there were constant clashes between the various tribal groups of the hills and the Ahoms over territorial possessions and over the possession of the salt- springs. Some horrific accounts of such warfare have been given in the earlier British and Ahom chronicles. The conflict over salt wells between the Ahom polity and the Nagas, particularly the Namsangia Noctes, reveals a crucial axis of historical tension in the region. During the reign of King Suhungmung, the Ahoms captured the salt wells at Mohang in 1536 and established their exclusive control over this vital resource. Given that Mohang lay at a strategic location between Barhat and Namsang, the loss of access to the salt wells dealt a severe blow to the economic lifelines of the Noctes, disrupting their traditional patterns of salt making, trade, and subsistence. Yet the balance of power shifted in 1576 when the Nagas, having achieved a notable military success, negotiated a distinctive arrangement with the Ahoms, permitting shared usage of the Longpong salt springs during stipulated periods—an early instance of negotiated coexistence around a contested resource. This fragile cooperation broke down in 1692, during the reign of Gadadhar Singha (1681–1696). In that year the Namsangia Noctes launched an attack on an Ahom salt mine, reportedly killing around twenty three Ahom sepoys.

The Ahom court responded with a punitive expedition that inflicted severe reprisals on the Noctes, deepening the rift between the two sides. A similar pattern unfolded in 1701 when the Noctes attacked a salt mine at Barhat, with both sides suffering casualties before Rudra Singha (1696–1714) managed to subdue them. In the subsequent rapprochement, the Noctes compromised and the king rewarded their submission with presents, effectively stabilizing relations. No major recorded uprisings against the Ahoms occurred among the Noctes for the remainder of the eighteenth century, indicating a period of relative consolidation of Ahom authority. However, discontent resurfaced between 1818 and 1821, when the Noctes expressed their dissatisfaction with the policies promulgated by the later Ahom ruler Purandhar Singha (1818–1838) regarding the manufacture and regulation of salt wells. These episodes highlight the enduring strategic value of salt and the intricate web of political, economic, and social relations binding different communities in the region. The problem of salt scarcity began to ease only after the westward expansion of the Ahom kingdom, which enabled the establishment of trade links with Bengal and the regular import of substantial quantities of salt from the Bengal region. In this shifting scenario, Tirap emerged as one of the principal indigenous sources of salt for the people of Assam prior to the time when British associated Company merchants began to supply salt through Bengal based trade networks.

Role of salt in myths and folktales:-

The fact is that throughout history, salt- called sodium chloride by chemists- has been such an important element of life that it has been the subject of many stories, fables and folktales and is frequently referenced in fairy tales. The Noctes have in their stock numerous stories and tales about salt- springs. A very popular tale on the origin of salt-springs in their area goes like this- Long ago, in a quiet village nestled in the upper reaches of the Nocte hills, there lived a beautiful young couple. They were blessed with a son, and for a time their home was filled with warmth and simple joy. But the father's life was cut short, leaving behind his young wife and their little child. The widow toiled from dawn till dusk to feed her son, never letting hardship steal the love she poured into their daily meals. She cooked with great care, preparing delicious vegetable soups and curries that were said to have a unique, savoury taste. The secret nobody knew was that she would blend her own saliva into the vegetable broth as she cooked, not out of carelessness, but as an unconscious expression of her deep love and sacrifice for her child. As the boy grew into adolescence, he took immense pride in his mother's cooking. He would proudly tell everyone that his mother made the most delicious salted soup and curry, and that no one else could match her skill. The story spread, and people grew curious. One day, a group of villagers decided to observe the woman secretly while she was cooking. To their shock, they saw her spitting into the pot. They were horrified, interpreting the act as something crude and unacceptable. They rushed to the boy and told him everything, mocking him and shaming his mother.

Humiliated and confused, the son resolved to see for himself. The next morning, he watched his mother closely as she prepared the meal. When he saw with his own eyes what she had done, he flew into a rage. He struck her in anger and, overwhelmed by shame, drove her out of the house and from the village. Before leaving, the mother spat on a broad palm leaf, wrapped it tightly, and hung it on the bamboo wall. With a gentle voice, she asked her son to keep it lovingly. Then, heartbroken, she walked away into the unknown. When she had gone, the boy opened the palm leaf and was astonished to find a chunk of white salt inside. At that moment he realized that his beloved mother was none other than the Salt Goddess herself, whose very body had nourished him. Stricken with remorse,

he rushed into the forest to find her. He ran from tree to tree, from plant to plant, asking every living thing if they had seen his mother. Each replied that she had passed those way only moments ago, urging him to hurry on. But no matter how far he went, he could not catch up with her. The Salt Goddess wandered across the entire Nocte region resting beside springs and streams, and wherever she paused and spat beside the water, the earth began to seep out salt laden water. Where she rested but did not spit, the springs remained less salty, giving only lighter brine.

The boy searched endlessly, but he never saw his mother again. As the sun set and darkness closed in, he grew weary and despairing. He turned back, cursing the trees and plants for not truly helping him. As he walked, he sang a mournful song, lamenting his loss and his foolishness. Eventually, he vanished into the wilderness, never seen by his people again. To this day, it is believed that the Salt Goddess spat most abundantly beside the springs of Pousum, Moran, and Sumchuan. That is why the Pousum spring, the Moran spring, and the Sumchuan spring continue to ooze out large volumes of strongly salted water. It is also said that the Salt Goddess breathed her last near the Sumchuan spring, and that the salt water flows from a natural earth formation shaped like a woman's figure—believed to be the very body of the goddess herself. Because of this sacred association, young boys and unmarried girls are traditionally not allowed to visit the Sumchuan salt spring. Similar tales are deeply rooted in Chinese folklore as well, where salt production has been central to society for over two millennia. Chinese legends too speak of the miraculous discovery of salt, weaving mortal longing and divine gifts into stories that echo the Nocte narrative of love, loss, and the sacredness of salt.



Image 1



Image 11

1. Source of Sumchuan salt spring in Notun Kheti
2. A sculpture of a female figure believed to be lying half buried under the earth.

A Folk song on Salt:

This is a Tutsa folksong sung in praise of their ancestors who taught them the knowledge of Salt extraction and production of salt-

Ku-kang apho tohpong

Ku-kang apho kompong

Tohpong ara jongli

Kompong ali jongli

Ka rey ba khet li ley tah

Bi bar ba khet li ley tah

Wen tak an rey tah

Sum tak an rey tah

Kar bar be bin rey hon tah

Kar bar be bin khet ley hon tah

Long dan atom dan nga

Si dan atom dan nga

Ku-kang apho kompong
Ku-kang apho tohpong
Tohpong ara jongli
Kompong ali jongli
Kar bar ney nun ney tah
Bi bar ney nun ney tah
Hong dan au dan tah
Si dan au dan tah
Kar bar bar khey rey tah
Bi bar bar khey rey tah
Kar bar ro-rang rah
Bi bar ro-rang rah

English translation:

Kohpong is the oldest man,
Kompong is the oldest man,
Under Tohpong and Kompong
Salt extraction flourished.
They made fire,
They made salt,
They taught us how to extract salt
from the salt springs.
Kompong is the earliest man,
Tohpong is the earliest man,
After Kompong and Tohpong
Salt extraction started.
They taught us good things,
Before making salt
They saluted 'Rang' (the Almighty).
We salute them for
Giving us knowledge and wisdom.



Tutsa folk song singer -Winlom Halang

The traditional songs and folk melodies of the Nocte people abound with rich and evocative references to the salt goddess and the age-old salt-making tradition. Through these songs, the community preserves not only the technical wisdom of producing and trading salt, but also a deep spiritual reverence for the salt goddess who embodies the source of sustenance and prosperity. The lyrics often function as living archives of collective memory, expressing profound gratitude towards ancestors who transmitted the knowledge and skills of salt-making across generations. In praising the wisdom of forbearers, the Nocte affirm continuity between past and present, reinforcing community ide4ntity and interdependence. Thus, the traditional songs do more than recount history; they celebrate the resilience of indigenous knowledge, the centrality of salt in local economy and spirituality, and the enduring bond between the Nocte people, their ancestors, and the4 natural world.

Medicinal value of the salt- springs:-Consumption of salt water from the brine- springs prevented formation of goitre. The early Nocte people didn't suffer from goitre. The salt water was also a natural remedy for gastritis. It was also used to cure throat infection. A piece of ginger was added to the salt water and the mixture was used to clean a sore throat. The salt water was used to clean and disinfect cuts and wounds. A mixture of salt solution and green tea was used for bathing and cleaning wounds and infections. Even today, many families of some villages still use the spring salt to get relief from stomach ache, constipation and indigestion.



Village women carrying salt water in bamboo tubes

Method of salt- well construction:-A well was constructed by digging the ground deep in the lower area of the brine spring that percolated salt water. The depth of the well varied from 20 to 24 feet and the circumference varied from 6 feet to 9 feet approximately at different places. After that, a naturally hollow log or a man- made hollow log was inserted vertically into the well. It was necessary to use a hard and tough wood for the purpose to provide durability of the well. They would then tie long bamboo sticks together into a bundle and burn one end of it till the ashes were of 2 to 3 inches. The bundle was wrapped in huge palm leaves called ko- paat. The burnt up end of the bamboo was placed at the source of the salt spring and the other end was projected into the mouth of the well. It is said that the ashes absorbed salt water, filtered it and then drained it into the well constructed below. The wells overflowed with large quantity of salt water.



Image 1



Image 2

1. Kandhtuli salt well
2. The village head measuring the circumference of possum salt well

Materials used for the construction of salt- wells:The salt- wells were made up of huge logs which were hollowed out in the middle vertically. Seasoned timber was used for the purpose as it couldn't be replaced frequently. Bamboo, cane ropes and palm leaves were used to channel the salt water to the well.

Method of extraction of salt:-Salt was prepared in big bamboo tubes by boiling and evaporation method. The bamboo vessels were filled with salt water and it was heated till it vaporised. The vessels were refilled with salt water till it evaporated completely. The process continued until the tubes were filled with solidified salt. Around fifty to hundred tubes of salt could be produced at a time. Each tube weighed around one to three kilos. The quantity of production of salt depended on the availability of salt water in the wells. The water was not taken out directly from the wells for boiling. It was first poured into a big wooden vessel called sum khoan kho allowing other

particles in the water to sediment at the bottom. Later on, the water from sum khoan kho was carefully emptied into the tubes for boiling.



Baboo tubes filled salt-water after proper sedimentation. (PC:Abo Arangham)

Salt was prepared continuously, day and night, in a process that demanded substantial labour and resources. This process is called Sumkoakin, which means “to extract salt”. A large quantity of firewood was required to sustain the prolonged heating, and a special fire hearth was constructed near each salt well, designed to accommodate hundreds of bamboo tubes that could be heated simultaneously. The duration of salt preparation depended on the volume and salinity of the water in the respective springs. In highly saline springs such as Pousum in Pullung village and Sumchuan in Wasathong village, salt could be produced within three to four days. In less saline springs, the process typically took about a week to ten days. The work was extremely labour intensive, requiring strength, endurance, and patience, and was therefore carried out exclusively by male members of the community. A key component of the process was the addition of a special ingredient called hum kha tee (known by variant names in different villages), prepared from salt water, soil, ash from the oven, and residue from a previous batch. This mixture functioned in practice like a chemical agent, facilitating the crystallization of salt. After the salt water had been sufficiently concentrated by the heat from the fire beneath, the crystallized salt was scraped out from the bamboo tubes and carefully packed into neatly folded palm leaves known as sum doap nyap. The resulting product—compact salt packets locally referred to as sum—represented the culmination of a physically demanding cycle of extraction, concentration, and packaging. These salt packets were then transported to local markets for sale. Given the high demand for bamboo tubes, numerous bamboo trees were planted in and around the salt springs to ensure a steady supply. Over time, bamboo has grown abundantly at these sites, and the landscape surrounding the springs continues to feature dense stands of bamboo, a material testament to the scale and continuity of this traditional salt making practice.



Heating and evaporation of brine water into salt (PC:Abo Arangham)



Bamboo plantation at Kandhtuli bazaar

Salt springs today: In the present time, the salt springs are not used properly by the community due to easy availability of factory- packed salt from the plains. The traditional method of salt extraction appears to be lengthy and tiresome and hence practised hardly. Unfortunately most of the springs are in a deteriorating condition due to lack of maintenance. Another important reason for its deterioration is the access of wild animals to it. Wild elephants have destroyed most of the springs as they are fond of salt. They come to bathe and to drink water from salt springs in a herd very frequently.



Moran salt spring destroyed by elephants

Conclusion:-

However, in recent years, along with economic development, government sponsored urbanisation, technological development, and the penetration of market have led to the growing deterioration of the salt- springs which are an invaluable natural resource of the community. There is a need to understand how far the present society can play a synchronised role in keeping the traditional way of extracting salt from the salt- springs alive with the modern developmental changes. In some remote villages, people still use the salt water for domestic consumption in case they run out of market-salt in home. The Nocte community feel that the salt springs should be honoured and preserved although traditional salt- making is no more in practice now a days. Some feel that the fore father's method of salt-making and the medicinal utility of the brine should be reviewed as it is percolating from under the ground in large volume till date. The older folks revere the salt springs as gifts of God to them. They want the new generation to honour it as it had been their source of livelihood once upon a time. It is still mandatory to clean the spring sites and footpaths leading to spring at least once in year, especially during their festival time.

People opine that government can take some action for preserving the salt wells by constructing concrete wells and platform around it. Concrete footpaths should be constructed up to the salt springs for easy to and fro movement of the common people. Government authorities, researchers and scientists, and NGOs can carry out some research

work to understand and develop the medicinal utility value of the brine salt to generate the economy of the tribe. It has been scientifically proven in many countries that natural brine and mud are used to cure a wide range of diseases: orthopaedic disorders, spinal aches, bone and muscle aches, and diseases of peripheral and central nervous system, blood vessels, skin and gynaecology diseases. This natural healing agent is superior to other medication and it has no side effects. Brine baths and salt inhalations were effective in antiquity, they still are today. The Nocte's long neglected salt heritage came into sharp focus during a three day heritage tour organized from 15 to 18 January, 2026 under the leadership of Wangki Lowang, Hon'ble Minister for Geology, Mining and Minerals of Arunachal Pradesh, and guided by Padma Shri awardee and eminent historian Jogendra Nath Phukan. The tour sought to re-examine and document the region's traditional salt making landscape, situating it within the broader historical narrative of eastern Assam and the Nocte Ahom frontier. On 17 January, the team conducted a detailed inspection of rare inscribed earthen pots (locally known as Ngolo/Kolo) at Namsang village.

One of the inscriptions was successfully deciphered as Mohong, meaning "salt" in the Tai Ahom language, thereby affirming their association with traditional salt storage or production. Although these objects had been recorded earlier, the inscriptions were interpreted for the first time during this visit, lending fresh epigraphic evidence to the material culture of salt use in the region. The delegation also visited the historic salt well Moran Sum at Subang village, a site that accentuates the significance of Nocte salt in regional trade networks as well as in past political and military conflicts. This particular episode is situated within the broader sequence of Ahom Naga salt well disputes, which subsided during the reign of Ahom king Rudra Singha (1696–1714), when a more stable political accommodation was achieved. The Minister pledged that the sites would be subjected to systematic archaeological assessment, raising the prospect of developing Tirap's ancient salt legacy into a structured heritage and tourism circuit grounded in historical and material evidence. Nocte society, in truth, cannot be discussed without referring to the salt springs and local salt. The Noctes consider it as an important part of their history, culture, tribal folklore and their indigenous knowledge system.

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