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EDITORIAL NOTE

This is the first annual issue of the Bulletin of the Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati. Although this was supposed to be brought out as a mouth-piece of the Tribal Research Institute at the beginning of the year 1983, it could not be done so due to some practical difficulties.

Altogether 9 (nine) articles are incorporated in this issue covering various aspects of life and culture of the tribal people of Assam covering both hills and plains. Besides the articles of the Faculty Members of the Tribal Research Institute, articles of three scholars, namely, Shri Mohini Mohan Brahma, Dr. Tarun Chandra Sarmah and Dr. P. Bhattacharjee have also been incorporated here. I express my sincere gratitude to Shri Brahma, Dr. Sarmah and Dr. Bhattacharjee for helping us with their contribution to make our first venture a worthwhile one.

This Bulletin to be published annually for the present is very likely to remove a long-standing felt need for a reservoir of knowledge and ideas to understand the problems of the tribal communities of Assam who differ each other linguistically, ethnically and culturally in their proper perspectives.

In our future issues the findings of our action oriented research and evaluation studies will suitably be incorporated so that machinery for tribal development both at planning and execution levels could draw up, modify suitably and execute the programmes on the basis of these findings. This would ensure to a reasonable extent percolating the benefits to the target groups.

In this maiden venture I have received considerable help from Dr. G. C. Sharma Thakur, Joint Director and Shri M. C. Saikia, Deputy Director, Tribal Research Institute and I am indebted to them for their help and co-operation.

B. N. BORDOLOI,

EDITOR,

Bulletin of the Tribal Research Institute, Assam,
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A BRIEF NOTE ON THE
TRIBAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE
ASSAM

INTRODUCTION

Situated in the north-east corner of India and blended with hills and plains, Assam presents a unique panorama with as many as 23 Nos. of tribes having different distinctive cultures, languages, etc. and at various stages of development socially, educationally and economically. As per 1971 Census the total scheduled tribes population of Assam was 16,06,648 and they constituted 10.99 percent of the total population of the State. The scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Amendment) Act 1976 specifies 14 tribes in the two Autonomous Hills Districts, namely, Karbi Anglong and the North Cachar Hills, and 9 tribes in fourteen plains districts of Assam. The fourteen tribes which are scheduled in the hill areas are (1) Chakma, (2) Dimasá Kachari, (3) Garo, (4) Hajong, (5) Hmar, (6) Khasi, Jaintiya, Synteng, War, Bhoi, Lyngngam, (7) any Kuki Tribes, (8) Lakher, (9) Man (Tai speaking), (10) any Mizo (Lushai) Tribes, (11) Mikir, (12) Any Naga Tribes, (13) Pawi and (14) Synteng. The nine tribes scheduled in the plains of Assam are, (1) Barmaans in Cachar, (2) Boro, Boro-Kachari, (3) Deori,

(4) Hojai, (5) Kachari, Sonowal, (5) Lalung,
(7) Mech, (8) Miri and (9) Rabha.

The tribes of Assam who belong to the Mongoloid racial stock and speak Sino-Tibetan and Tibeto-Burman family of languages, dominated and largely moulded the socio-cultural life of Assam in the hoary past. The multi-ethnicity of the indigenous people of Assam had attracted the then British Administrators so much so that persons like Gait, Hutton, Mills, Shakespeare, Gordon, Dalton, etc. had devoted a greater part of their life making research investigations into the life and culture of the tribal people and writing them in form of research papers and books.

In fact these writings acted as superstructure upon which later eminent anthropologists and social workers like Verrier Elwin, Von Furrer Haimendorf, D. N. Mazumdar, Sachin Ray, to name only a few, had built ethnic cultural monuments. But all said and done, there remain a lot of works to be done for the tribals of this region. Research was done mainly to satiate the administrative needs of the then administrators.

After Independence, however, the need for an extensive research on various tribes of India

was urgently felt so that the planners could evolve suitable plans and programmes for the all round development of the tribes. With that end in view Tribal Research Institutes had been established in various states of India. In Assam the decision to set up a Tribal Research Institute was taken up in 1961 as per the scheme drawn up by Dr. Verrier Elwin which contained five well demarcated wings, viz. ; (1) Planning and Evaluation, (2) Economy, (3) Cultural Anthropology, (4) Language and (5) Training. At the initial stage the first named wing, i.e. Planning and Evaluation, was started in the early part of 1963 by appointing six District Research Officers having their head-quarters in the tribal inhabited areas of Assam. In order to co-ordinate the activities of the six District Research Officers and offer necessary guidance, one Deputy Director of Evaluation and Planning was appointed in 1965. In the meantime considerable base work had been done by constructing one Tribal Research Institute Building Complex at Mawlai, Shillong. But before a full fledged Directorate of Tribal Research Institute, Assam, could take a definite shape, a setback came along with the creation of Meghalaya as a separate state. In view of handing over almost all assets and liabilities of the Headquarters at Mawlai to Government of Meghalaya in March, 1973, and as a consequence of transferring the District Research Officer, Aizawl, to the Union Territory of Mizoram, stagnancy and some deadlock appeared before the three District Research Officers of Assam with Headquarters at Gauhati, Diphu and Dibrugarh. Undaunted with the uncertainties lurking ahead, the three District Research Officers did not lose heart and they completed a good number of research studies on the Assam tribes-both Hills and

Plains. In this connection it may be pointed out that plains tribes of Assam having a sizable population of 13,44,020 according to 1971 Census, are lesser known tribes and not much systematic study about these tribes was made nor these tribes are known outside Assam. On the other hand these tribes play a significant role in the broad socio-cultural framework of the state and upliftment of these tribes, majority of whom are in abject poverty, is imperative. Besides them there are many big and small tribes in the two hill districts of Assam, namely, Karbi Anglong and N.C. Hills, about whom very little research work has so far been done. Thus the need for a Tribal Research Institute, Assam, was urgently felt and after a gap of about four years the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, agreed to set up a Tribal Research Institute for Assam which has been functioning since 1977 with headquarters at Gauhati.

It is clear that this nascent Tribal Research Institute, requires nurturing and considering the terrain and peculiar topography of this region research work among the tribes is a strenuous affair. Bereft of a full fledged Director and Research Staff and other research paraphernalia the District Research Officers of Dibrugarh and Gauhati had to be shifted to the headquarters in the same year when the Directorate was created. A full time Director was only appointed in July, 1981 and it is hoped that the Tribal Research Institute, Assam, will march forward to achieve its desired goal.

FUNCTIONS

1. To conduct studies, surveys, research etc. in order to facilitate drawing up development schemes for the welfare of the scheduled tribes, scheduled castes and backward classes.

2. Evaluation of development works executed by Government and Government controlled agencies for scheduled tribes, scheduled castes and other backward classes.

3. Preparation and publication of monographs, research papers, etc. on the scheduled tribes, scheduled castes and other backward classes and other related subjects.

4. To take up research project on any specific subject pertaining to the scheduled tribes, scheduled castes and other backward classes that may be assigned to the Institute by the Government.

5. Research on rural crafts and industries which will be of immediate value for the economic development of the scheduled tribes and scheduled castes by utilising their skill and indigenous resources.

6. Research on tribal language, culture and history, collection of tribal folklore and folksongs.

7. Collection and display of tribal artifacts in the Institute by setting up a museum.

8. Formulation of Tribal Sub-Plan, Scheduled Castes Component Plans, preparation of Project Reports for Integrated Tribal Development Projects, etc.

9. To function as a nucleus in organising training and orientation courses for those persons/officials who are working in the tribal areas and areas inhabited by scheduled castes and other backward classes.

Besides, the Institute has also been associated with award of research fellowships to deserving candidates for Doctoral Degree and Post-Doctoral research on Various Aspects of Tribal Development.

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

It has already been mentioned that the Tribal Research Institute, Assam, had to

surpass many odds in its organisational venture and inspite of the constraints the three District Research Officers have been in a position to complete 85 research studies out of which 20 have already been published (4 in book form).

The Tribal Research Institute, Assam, has been associated with the preparation of Integrated Tribal Development Project Reports and besides associating itself in the preparation of sixteen Integrated Tribal Development Projects Reports, the Institute itself prepared 3 Nos. of Integrated Tribal Development Project Reports.

The Institute conducted a study on the Socio-Economic Condition of the Nishi Community living in Darrang and Lakhimpur districts of Assam and submitted a report to the Government. Another report on field study entitled 'The Transfer and Alienation of Tribal Land in Assam' was submitted to the Government in the last part of 1978. The Tribal Research Institute, Assam, has also completed a study on the 'Impact of Enforcing Liquor Prohibition on the Boro Kacharis in a Rural Setting' and the report was submitted to the Government in the middle of 1981.

The Tribal Research Institute had also conducted research studies on 20 communities to find out whether they can be recommended for inclusion in the list of scheduled Tribes.

SEMINAR

The Tribal Research Institute, Assam, successfully conducted a Seminar on 'Contribution of Assam-Tribes towards the Cultural Heritage of Assam and India and Their Socio-Economic Problems' during April, 1981. The Seminar was sponsored by the Directorate of Welfare of Plains Tribes and Backward Classes. It may be mentioned that the Seminar was

organised in a predominantly tribal inhabited area (Boko, 63 Kms. from Gauhati) and the local tribals took active interest in the Seminar which may be treated as a deviation from other such Seminars which are concentrated mainly among the academicians and elites.

A National Seminar on an important socio-economic Tribal problem is proposed to be organised and conducted by the Tribal Research Institute at Gauhati during 1983-84.

TRAINING

The Tribal Research Institute, Assam, had successfully conducted a Ten Days' Tribal Orientation Training Course for the district level officers of the two hill districts of Assam at Diphu, the Headquarters of the Karbi Anglong District during October, 1981. Altogether 33 officers participated in the training course.

An Eight Days' Tribal Orientation Training Programme for the Project Officers and Inspectors of Statistics of Integrated Tribal Development Projects, Sub-Divisional Welfare Officers and the Block Development Officers of Tribal Development Blocks was organised and conducted by the Tribal Research Institute at Dispur during the month of May, 1982. 28 officers participated in the training programme. A similar training course was organised and conducted by the Institute for another batch of aforesaid officers from 3rd to 11th January 1983 at Dispur where 19 officers participated.

The Tribal Research Institute had also successfully conducted a Nine Days' Tribal Orientation Training Programme for the Officers of the Development Departments working in the two Hill Districts of Assam at

Haflong, the Headquarters of the North Cachar Hills District, during the month of September 1982. Altogether 39 officers participated in this training programme.

The Faculty Members of the Tribal Research Institute, had also delivered a series of lectures for three days from 22nd June '83 to 24th June, 1983 on the tribal life and culture, tribal welfare programmes and the roles to be played by the law and order enforcing authority to maintain peace and harmony among the different tribal communities to 120 Nos. of police personnel undergoing training at the Police Training College, Dergaon.

The Tribal Research Institute had also conducted another Tribal Orientation Training Programme for the Development Officers working in the Hamren Sub-Division of the Karbi-Anglong District from 10th August, 1983 to 18th August, 1983 at Hamren where 24 officers participated.

During the later part of the year 1983-84, the Tribal Research Institute has proposed to conduct 3 more such Tribal Orientation Training Programmes for the District and Sub-Divisional level officers implementing Tribal Sub-Plan Schemes in the Integrated Tribal Development Projects.

PLANS AND PROGRAMMES

The Tribal Research Institute, Assam, has already completed the Studies on the Workings of the Gaon Panchayat Level Samabai Samitees in the Tribal Sub-Plan Area and the LAMPS in the Hill Areas of Assam and the Report is expected to be out very soon.

Collection of field data in respect of the studies on the Displacement of Tribals due to Installation of Irrigational and Industrial Complexes and the Evaluation Studies of

the Kokrajhar Integrated Tribal Development Project are going on.

It may be mentioned here that research studies on the problems of the Scheduled Castes have been made compulsory by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, from the year 1983-84 for all the Tribal Research Institutes in India. In pursuance of this decision the Tribal Research Institute has taken up a research study on the Socio-Economic Conditions of the Kaibartas of Assam and the preliminary steps for the collection of field data have already been initiated.

The fourth publication of the Tribal Research Institute, Assam, entitled "The Chomangkan"—the Death Ceremonies observed by the Karbis—had come out of the press in July, 1982. The revised and enlarged second edition of the monograph on the Dimas Kacharis is now in press.

Another monograph on the Tiwas (Lalungs) is proposed to be published within the current financial year.

LIBRARY

Steps have been taken to equip the Institute with a good resourceful library. About one thousand important reference books have already been acquired for the library. Important national journals numbering 25 required for research works have also been subscribed. Recently reading room facilities are also made

available for the benefit of the researchers and research scholars.

MUSEUM

A good beginning has already been made in respect of opening a Museum for Tribal Research Institute. Some rare tribal artifacts belonging to the major tribals of Assam both hills and plains have been collected and kept for display.

A detailed scheme for the strengthening and restructuring of the Institute has already been submitted to the Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, through the Government of Assam, for their approval. It is expected that with the blessings of the Government of India the Tribal Research Institute will be a fullfledged one in near future and it will be able to serve the purposes for which it is set up.

BUILDING COMPLEX

The Government of Assam is kind enough to have agreed in principle to the construction of the Institute Building Complex which will contain inter-alia the Administrative-Cum-Library-Cum-Museum Building, Training Cell with class rooms, and hostel facilities for trainees in a phased manner. The Public Works Department, Government of Assam, has been entrusted with the task of constructing the Tribal Research Institute Building Complex at Gauhati.

MORUNG SYSTEM AMONG THE ZEMI NAGAS OF THE NORTH CACHAR HILLS DISTRICT OF ASSAM

* B. N. BORDOLOI

The Zemi Nagas of the present North Cachar Hills District of Assam whose habitats are mostly confined into the north-eastern part of the district originally migrated from the Naga Hills (present Nagaland) via Manipur. They are still leading their own traditional social life and modern civilization has practically left them untouched. They have got a Morung system which is unique by its own nature and perhaps it is the most outstanding aspect of the Zemi Social life. Morung is a common term used by all the Naga tribes to denote the traditional Youth Clubs of unmarried boys and girls. In Zemi dialect the boys' dormitory is called HANGSEUKI, while the girls' dormitory is called LEOSEUKI. HANGSEUKI is derived from the term RAHANGMI which means a boy. LEOSEUKI is derived from the term HELOMI which means a girl.

Each Zemi village visited by me is found to have two to three Morungs for boys and an equal number of Morungs for girls. While Laisong, Kepailo, and Boroneonglo village have three Morungs for boys and three Morungs for girls in each, Hajaichak, Natun Neonglo, Hajailo and Chota Laisong villages

have only two Morungs for boys and two Morungs for girls in each. In those villages where there are three Morungs for boys, the first Morung is called INGKANGKIENGA (Lower HANGSEUKI), the second Morung is called HANGSEOBAIKIENGA (Middle HANGSEUKI) and the third one is called SUNGKIENGA (Upper HANGSEUKI). Similarly the first Morung of the girls is called INGKANGKELEONA (Lower Morung), the Second Morung is called HANGSEOBALKELEONA (Middle Morung) and the third one is called SUNGKELEONA (Upper Morung). In those villages where there are only two Morungs for boys, the Lower Morung is called INGKANGKIENGA and the Upper Morung is called SUNGKIENG and the corresponding Morungs for girls are called INGKANGKELEONA and SUNGKELEONA respectively. From the standpoint of status all the Morungs of a village are equal and lower, middle and upper Morungs simply refer to the locations of these clubs. As a customary rule as soon as a boy or a girl crosses the age of eight he or she has to sleep in his or her dormitory at night and is never allowed to spend the night

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at home. As one Morung is not sufficient to accommodate all the youths of the village, that is why each Zemi village is found to have more than one Morung. But, INGKA-NGKIENGA (Lower Morung for boys) is the oldest Morung of each village. Its site is at the lower portion of the village where the approach road to the village meets the main village street. The girls' Morungs are not attached but allied to the boys' Morungs and they have quite separate entitles. As for example, the Lower Morung of the girls is not attached to the Lower Morung of the boys but it is allied to the Lower Morung of the boys.

The Zemi term KIENGA refers to all the members of a HANGSEUKI collectively. Similarly KELEONA refers to all the members of LEOSEUKI collectively.

A child becomes the member of this or that Morung of the village as soon as it is born. The method by which the membership to a particular Morung of a new-born child is determined is very interesting. In case the new born child is a male, groups of young boys from the different HANGSEUKIS, each group carrying an egg, approach the parents of the new-born baby to claim it for their HANGSEUKIS. The child automatically becomes the member of that particular HANGSEUKI from which the approach is made first. The egg offered by the group of boys of the particular HANGSEUKI who comes first is only accepted by the parents and the other groups have to go back. In case the new-born child is a female, the child will automatically become the member of that particular LEOSEUKI from which a group of girls with an egg approaches the parents first to claim the child. This choosing is really an unusual feature and that is why

there are no Morungs among the Zemi Nagas on the basis of clans. Among the Zemis it is commonly found that the sons and daughters of the same parents belong to different Morungs. It is also very interesting to note that among the Zemi Nagas, the first loyalty of the youths is always towards their Morungs. Their loyalty to their family and clans is of secondary importance. Hence it can very well be said that the determination of the membership of the Morungs cuts across the family and clan loyalties.

The boys' Morungs present a very spectacular sight and they are the most beautiful and gorgeous buildings in the village. The front porch of the boys' Morungs of a village is always visible even from a distance. It is already mentioned that the Lower Morung of the Boys (INGKANGKIENGA) in each village is the biggest one. Generally the height of a HANGSEUKI at the front porch is about 35 to 40 feet and on the back porch the height is about 6 feet only. The length of a HANGSEUKI varies from 40 to 60 feet corresponding with the height of the front porch. The breadth is about 30 feet. In the back portion the owner who is also the caretaker of the Morung lives with his family. On one side of the Morung there is a big hearth and during winter it is kept lighted throughout the whole night to minimize wintry cold. All around the four walls there are raised planks for the boys to sleep at night. The boys use wooden pillows. In the front wall there are two windows one on each side of the door. The Morungs have thatched roofs and very high quality wooden posts are used for their supper-structure. They have bamboo walls. The construction of the HANGSEUKIS is so superb that one's mind is bound to be filled with awe and admiration



Inside view of a Zemi boys' Morung. Designs of the thatched roofs are a feast for eyes.

at such indigenous skills. The wooden posts of the Morung are decorated with the heads of Mathons, buffaloes, deer, boars, etc.. There are fixed places for keeping the spears, daos and the weapons of war of the Zemi bucks in the Morung. A piece of wood split at one end which is used for lighting the ceremonial fire (the fire is made by rubbing a kind of dry thatch through the cleft portion of the piece of wood) is kept inside the roof as it is considered sacred. From the way when the ceremonial fire is lighted the experienced old man of the village can determine whether the bucks of the Morung could find a deer for hunting in the near future. The boys keep their dresses and personal belongings inside their HANGSEUKIS. The hold of the Morung on the boys is very deep. They spend the whole of their leisure time in the Morung and go homes only for their meals and when seriously ill. The girls on the other hand use their dormitories (LANGSEUKIS) only at night.

It has been mentioned earlier that there is an owner-cum-caretaker for each of the boys' Morungs. The owner-cum-caretaker of the Morung must necessarily be a leading villager capable of commanding and guiding the bucks on all occasions. He teaches them the arts of wrestling, fighting war, hunting, dancing, singing and making handicrafts, etc. with the help of precepts and examples as well. In bygone days he had to lead the youths to war and head-hunting expeditions. The ownership of the boys' Morung is based on hereditary system. In this connection it may be mentioned here that among the Zemis it is customary for a son to build a separate house and to live there as soon as he gets married. But the youngest son has to remain with his parents even after his marriage. From

this fact it becomes obvious that the youngest son of the owner of the boys' Morung succeeds his father. The youngest son might not necessarily be a member of the Morung of which his father is the owner. As for example Shri Deisuba, who is the present owner of the lower Morung of Laisong, is the youngest son of Shri Ramjuiwangba, former owner of the Morung. But Deisuba belongs to the middle Morung. It would also be worthwhile to mention that among the Zemis one's membership to a HANGSEUKI does not cease as soon as he gets married. After marriage although a youth ceases to be an active member of the Morung, he still owes loyalty and allegiance to his Morung. This is indeed a peculiar feature for the Morung system of the Zemi Nagas. Here the question in regard to the material gains for the services rendered by the owner of the Morung may arise. The owner of the Morung does not receive any material benefits for the valuable services rendered by him. His services are honorary and what he receives in return is not any material benefit but a high social status. He is held in high esteem not only by the members of the Morung but by all the people of the village. For the Zemis a high social status is much superior to that of any material gains. Besides, the owner of the Morung receives a leg of any eatable animal killed by any buck of his Morung as a mark of respect. As a reward he has to offer rice beer to the killer of the animal.

In case of quarrel, membership from one Morung to the other Morung can be changed with the consent of the village council. Inter-disputes among the members of the Morung of a village is settled by the village council. In case of a quarrel or a dispute among the members of the same Morung the decision

of the owner of the concerned Morung is final and binding on both parties. If the parties are found to be disobedient and do not abide by the decision of the owner, the matter will be referred to the village council of elders and there is no escape from the verdict of the council.

LEOSEUKIS (girls' dormitories) are not constructed like the HANGSEUKIS. The girls may select any house constructed by any person for their dormitory. They generally select a house of an old couple as their dormitory. The girls may also change the house if they do not like it for this reason or that. The big front room of the house is used by the girls as their Morung. The owner of the Morung lives in the back portion of the house with his family. Except raised wooden planks for sleeping, the girls' Morung does not have anything inside. The girls work in their fields and at homes during the day time and use their dormitory only at night. The planks on which they sleep at night are tied together so that all the members can sleep together. The owner of the Morung and his wife act as the guardians of the girls at night only. Unlike the boys' Morung the owner of the girls' Morung does not have such a hold on the girls. The owner of the girls' Morung does not get any benefit except getting some eatables on the day of the festival celebrated by the girls of his Morung.

In the girls' Morung there is a head-girl who is selected by the members of the Morung. She obtains this position by virtue of her qualities. She has to be an accomplished girl with all the qualities and must be capable of guiding her fellow sisters.

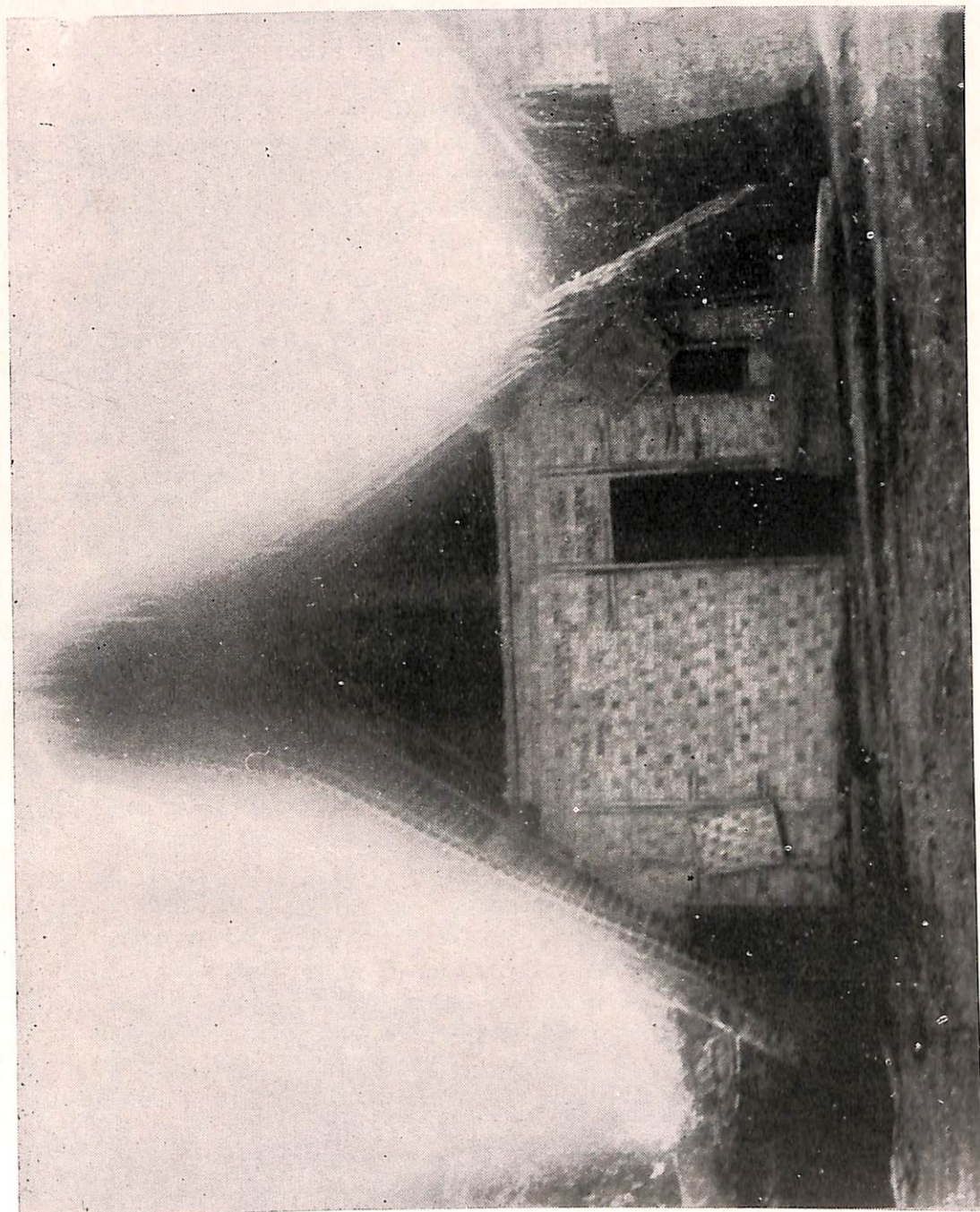
THE LEOSEUKI is the training ground for the Zemi girls in the arts of singing, dancing, spinning and weaving. These are taught to the members of the Morung by the head-girl. On

occasions, the girls of the Morung entertain the distinguished visitors and guests with dancing and singing in the evening. These are strictly proper and public parties to which the headman of the village and other village elders might drop in, in a fatherly way. No boys can visit the girls' Morung in the evening when the weaving, spinning, or dancing sessions are going on. But at midnight youngmen can stealthily enter the girls' Morung by easing the door open and feeling along the wooden planks for their particular sweethearts, exchange their hearts with whispering words and make love with impunity. The Zemis do not regard it as a crime or sin but regard it as a natural act which ultimately results in marriage of the lovers. If on the other hand, a youngman approaches a girl at night in the girls' Morung, without her prior approval or consent, it is regarded as a serious crime the punishment of which may be death or banishment. Anyway, premarital relation in the Zemi society is neither a crime nor a taboo.

After the owner, the next important man of the boys' Morung is the head-youth who is called HEULIATEPA in Zemi. He is also the treasurer of the Morung. He is selected by the members of his Morung for his many-fold qualities. Like the owner of the Morung, his command also must be obeyed by the boys of the Morung.

Another important official of the boys' Morung is HEDATEUPEU-the Morung priest. Each HANGSEUKI has a priest of its own. He is selected by the members of his Morung from among themselves. He has to perform all religious rites in connection with the celebration of religious festivals organised by the Morung.

The members of the Morung decide and fix the date on which a boy or a girl should come



Outside view of a Zemi boys' Morung.

to sleep in the Morung for the first time. The boy or the girl must go to the concerned dormitory for sleeping at night on the fixed date. An unwilling member will be forced to do so not only by the members of the concerned Morung but by his or her parents also. Because it is contrary to all Zemi notions of decency that the boys and girls attaining the age of eight or so should remain and sleep any longer at night in the same house as their parents. Thus begins the influence of the Morungs in their lives.

The influence of the Morung is of great importance and significance specially on the life of the Zemi boys. The disciplinary influence of the father is replaced by the discipline of a communal life where the opinions of members of the Morung play a great role. He is now responsible to a corporate body of which he is an active and indispensable member. The meaning of co-operation and collective responsibility begins to dawn on him and their horizon expands before him along with the passing of time. Each small boy has a patron. The small boys work for their elders, keep the Morung clean, wash clothes of their patrons, carry firewood and run errands whenever occasions arise. In case of disobedience and misbehaviour, the elders do not hesitate to inflict corporeal punishment.

The boys' Morung is the best school for the practical life of the Zemi boys. The Morung life makes them self-reliant, disciplined and improve their commonsense. An understanding of mutual rights and duties is the essence of the Morung life. Besides, their loyalty and a sense of service to a corporate body are fully developed.

The older boys of the Morung have to act as the village guards. Like all other Naga tribes, the Zemis were also, once, head hunters.

I was told that on occasions they were raided by the Angami Nagas from across the boarder and under such conditions all the older boys of the Morungs of the village had to unite and act together. They were assisted on such occasions by the married youngmen of the village also. Similarly all the able-bodied Zemi youths of the Morungs went together when they undertook headhunting expedition by raiding the Angami villages across the boarder.

A Zemi youth ceases to sleep in the Morung as soon as he gets married. In bygone days of course when there were frequent raids, a married man had to sleep in the Morung so that all able-bodied persons might stand together in case of a raid. During the day married men uses the Morung according to his convenience. The life of the Morung still lures him.

The big hall of the boys' Morung serves as the premises for village dances, feasts, informal meetings of the village council and as guest-house for the travellers.

As a corporate body a HANGSEUKI performs a good number of social works. They make and maintain the village pipelines, make new reserviors for water by carving out big pieces of wood, clear the village path of jungles, and so on and so forth.

The members of the boys' Morung can be hired by a rich individual for purposes like carrying the harvest from the field, building a house, etc. On such occasions all the members of the Morung irrespective of age have to participate. The earnings from these sources are deposited into the Morung's fund and are utilised for the holding of feasts.

The girls of the allied dormitory also participate when the boys' Morung celebrates great festivals accompanied by feasts. They

perform more or less the act of waitresses, serving the men at work.

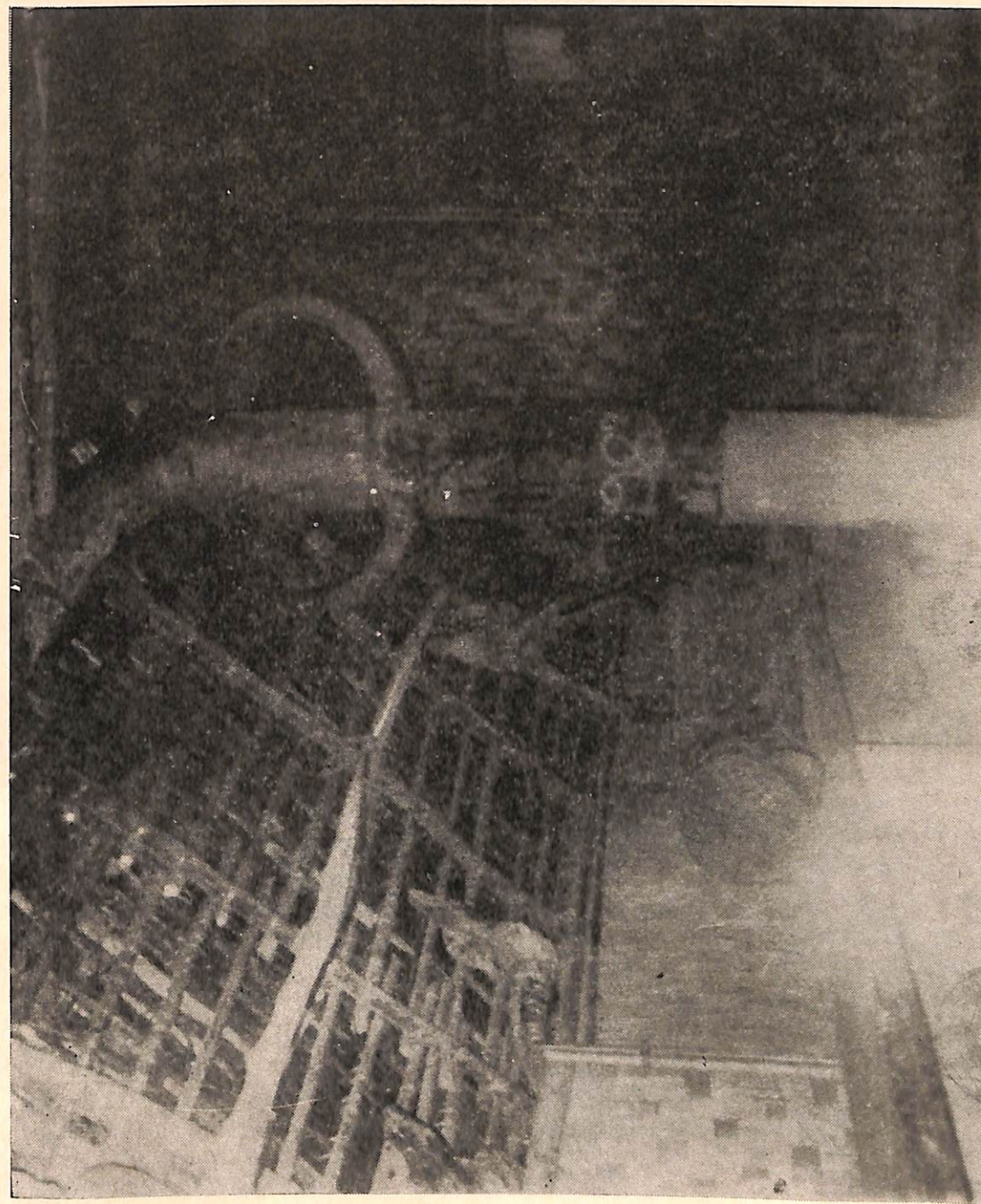
It is very interesting to note that the married Zemi women do not enter the main hall of the boys' Morung. Although it is not a taboo, it is considered most immodest.

One of the most interesting things that has been brought to my notice is the fact that all the boys' Morungs of a village have a great responsibility towards a girl married to another village. When a Zemi girl is married to a Zemi of another village, all the youths of her village irrespective of Morungs have to go to the village of her husband and work in the Jhum of her husband for one season

from the beginning of cutting jungle to harvest.

This is done because a girl is considered to be the daughter of all the families of the village. In return the husband of the girl has to offer rice beer and a pig to the youths. If he is rich enough he has to offer a Mathon for a feast.

Thus the Morung system of the Zemi Nagas plays the most important role in their socio-cultural life. As a tribal community organisation it is unique in character and its influence is so great that a Zemi life cannot be thought of without the Morung system.



Another view of the inside of a Zemi boys' Morung. The open door leads to the room where the caretaker of the Morung stays with his family.

A CULTURAL PROFILE OF A LESSER KNOWN TRIBE—THE LALUNGS

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Origin of the word Lalung :

Opinions differ in respect of the origin of the word Lalung, a scheduled tribe (plains) of Assam, found mostly in the district of Nowgong. The Karbis called those people as Lalungs who were living on the south bank of the river Brahmaputra. ('La' means Water and 'Lung' means rescued). The river Brahmaputra gave shelter to those Bohemian people and hence they were known as Lalungs. It is assumed that there was a branch of the river Daiyang in the Karbi Anglong called 'Nilalung'. During the reign of the Kamata Kings, the Lalungs had to leave their original habitat and pitched their tents on the banks of the river Nilalung. Later on the people living on the bank of this river were known as Lalungs.

Mythical Origin :

There is a popular legend behind the word Lalung. Originally the Lalungs were ruled

by the demon king Bali who was a faithful devotee of Lord Vishnu. The king wanted that all his subjects should follow the royal religion. A section of the Lalungs refused to accept that religious system and as a result the king's fury fell heavily upon them. As a punishment they had to bear a red imprint ('Lal' in Assamese) on their forehead and were turned out of the country. Later on those bearers of red mark on their forehead came to be known as Lalungs.

There is another popular mythological story behind the origin of the word Lalung. Once Lord Mahadev was heavily intoxicated with rice beer and while he was lying unconscious in a road, a stream of saliva ('Lal') came out from the mouth of Lord Mahadev. The Lord created two human beings out of his saliva and they came to be known as Lalungs (human beings created out of Lord's 'Lal').

A similar story with some slight variation is also prevalent among the Lalungs. Once upon a time Lord Mahadev and his consort

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Parvati were enjoying the scenic beauty of the Manassarowar Lake. The soothing beauty of the lake area enchanted the Lord so much that he soon fell asleep on the bank of the lake. As he woke up he saw five drops of saliva at the place where he was resting. The Lord created five human beings out of these five drops of saliva. As these five human beings were created out of the divine saliva ('lal') they came to be known as Lalungs. These five original Lalungs had the unique privilege of seeing the creator in the form of human being and therefore the Lalungs call Lord Mahadev as 'Manus' Mahadev.

Origin of the word Tiwa :

The Lalungs prefer to call themselves as Tiwa. The name Lalung, they opine, was given by non Tiwas and hence the preference. But in the official records and in the list of Assam Scheduled Tribes (plains), we find only Lalung and therefore in the next paragraphs we will use the word Lalung. According to the Lalungs 'Ti' means water and 'Wa' means superior. As the Lalungs landed on the plains of Assam following the course of the holy river Brahmaputra, they might have introduced themselves as Tiwa to the inquisitive non Tiwas. The legends prevalent among the Lalungs of Nowgong reveal that 'Ti' means water and 'Wa' means pig. The Lalungs believe that originally the earth was lying under a vast sheet of water. Then god appeared in the form of a pig and lifted the earth from that expanse of water. The Lalungs thus believe themselves to be descendants of the pig in the shape of almighty god. But the general opinion among the Lalungs is that this legendary origin has no

basis as they kill pigs and eat pork in their socio-religious ceremonies.

Probably the acceptable hypothesis regarding the origin of the word 'Tiwa' is this. After their appearance in the Assam Plains, the local Assamese inhabitants called them as 'Tibbatias' meaning, people hailing from Tibet. In course of time this Tibbatia might have changed into Tiwa.

Original abode :

When asked about their original abode, a few octogenerian Lalungs of Nowgong district expressed that originally the Lalungs belonged to the Hillali kingdom. The boundaries of this kingdom extended the whole of present Nowgong and eastern Darrang districts. At first they were residing on the northern bank of the river Brahmaputra but later on their habitation spread to the other bank also. As time passed the people preferred to call themselves as subjects of 'Lali', an abbreviated form of Hillali. On the northern side of Nowgong district there is a dead branch of the river Brahmaputra called Lali. Probably the capital of the Hillali kingdom was on the north-western side of present Nowgong district. Reference of Hillali can be traced in their folksongs which are sung in their various socio-religious occasions.

Due to the invasions of Kamrup and Kamata kings, the people of Hillali fled away to the southern hilly tracts. They pitched their tents on the foothills extending up to Kandali, Bamuni and Kathiatoli. Thus Laopani, Jokkata, Amsi, Singimari, Sahari lying on both sides of the Kapili were the original typical lalung villages. A section of the Lalungs proceeded towards Rongkhloi, Langkoi, Amsi, Marjong lying on the boundary of the

Jayantia hills. During the Kachari rule these Lalungs were compelled to proceed towards Gobha, Dimaria, Khaplang Khunchi of Jayantia hills and Nelli, Khola, Ouguri, Sonaikuchi, Kamarkuchi and Balikuchi under Nowgong district. Later on they came back to the foothills of western Nowgong district, extending upto Laopani and Jokkata. As the Lalungs preferred to live in the secluded foothill areas, the contemporary Ahom officials called them as 'Dantiyalia'.

During the reign of Swargadeo, *Jayadhwaj Singha* one independent Panchorajya (five principalities) was established under the Raha Administrative Circle. The Ahom administrative policy was to live and let live. They wanted to establish good neighbourly relations with the indigenous people. Thus the Lalungs under the benign protection of the Ahom king returned to the plains and established five principalities namely Topakuchia, Barapujia, Mikir Gonya, Phulaguria and Khaigoria. Later on some more Lalung villages were established on the south-eastern part of Nowgong district. During the reign of Swargadeo *Rajeswar Singha* 'Sato Rajya' (seven principalities) was established under the Jagi Administrative circle. These were Kumoi, Tarani, Baghara, Tetelia, Kacharigonya, Sukknaggiya and Ghagua. Later on the Chiefs of these principalities were designated as 'Powali Raja' (Mini Kings). As a result of the privilege, these Powali Rajas' paid nominal taxes to the Ahom King.

Various scholars and even elderly Lalungs try to locate the original abode of the Lalungs in the 'Joyta Khairam' of Jayantia hills under present day Meghalaya. They point out to one distinct socio-cultural trait of the Lalungs i.e. the prevalence of matriarchal system. But the educated section of the Lalungs do not contri-

bute to this line of thinking. During Kachari rule, a large section of the Lalungs had to leave their abode on the plains and fled away towards the Jayantia hills. As the Lalungs lived in the Jayantia kingdom and as the Jayantia king became a titular head under the powerful Ahom king and was obliged to supply serfs to the latter, the Jayantia king tried to utilise the Lalungs for that purpose and knowing the evil intention of the king, the Lalungs fled away towards plains bordering Gobha. After arriving on the plains, they sacrificed one gourd (Komora) symbolising their cutting off the relation with the Jayantias for all time to come. Since then the place assumed its name *Komorakata*. Even today people of a particular clan among the Lalungs do not eat this vegetable.

Another legend describes them as originally inhabiting in the Jayantia hills, who moved into the plains of Nowgong district because they disliked the principle laid down by the Jayantias that all property should descend through the female line.

According to another tradition, the Lalungs were originally settled near Dimapur but they moved into the hills to escape the disagreeable duty of providing the Kachari Raja with a daily ration of six seers of human milk, an article of diet for which the king had an unreasonable craving. This peculiar craving for human milk has been corroborated by the historians too. In the history of the Kachari Rajas compiled by Dimarua Raja in 1772 A.D. it is recorded that when Pratappur, a city on the north bank of the Brahmaputra was captured by Arimatta, a large number of inhabitants fled to Demera, a fertile region in the country of the Kachari Raja. This Raja was in the habit of drinking human milk, a habit which earned for him the dislike of his subjects. One

day two of the king's messengers entered the house of a Mikir woman and found her nursing her baby. One messenger remained in-charge of the infant, while the other attempted to milk the mother, who, furious with indignation, struck him dead at her feet with a blow from a hoe. The Demera Raja feared that the Kachari Raja would punish him for this murder as it occurred within his territory. He therefore migrated northwards to Dimarua with all his people.

The Lalungs belong to the great *Bodo tribe* into which tribes like Bodo Kachari, Chutia, Deori, Rabha, Mech, Tippera or Tifra, Garo etc. included. In his 'Kachari Buranji' Dr. S. K. Bhuyan opines "The Kacharis are believed to be very closely allied to the Koches and also so far at least as language in concerned to the Chutias, Lalungs, Morans of the Brahmaputra valley and to the Garos and Tipperas of the southern hills." Mr. Endle in his ethnography on 'The Kacharis' has claimed the following tribes of Assam within the fold of the great Bodo race. They are Rabha, Mech, Dimal, Koch, Solanimiyas, Mahaliyas, Phulguriyas, Saraniyas, Dimasas, Hojais, Lalungs, Garos and Hajongs.

In ancient times the three great divisions of the Bodos namely *Tifra*, *Tiwa* and *Dimasa* lived along the banks of a lake near *Tibbet*. In course of time they entered Assam through the north east passes. The local people could not pronounce Tifra and thus Tifra became Tippera. The Tiwa had a complete new nomenclature and it was replaced by Lalung, while the Dimasa got a suffix to its original name and it came to be known as Dimasa Kachari. Traditionally Tipperas, Lalungs and Dimasa Kacharis have close affinities. The Tipperas use 'Ti' for water and 'Frā' for father. The Lalungs too use 'Frā' for father. The

Lalungs of Nowgong district address their lord as 'Pā Mahadev'. Again both the Lalungs and the Kacharis worship Siva as their supreme god. The Synonyms for rice and water in their respective languages are 'Māi' and 'Di' or 'Ti'.

At present large concentration of the Lalungs are found in Kapili, Mayang, Bhurbandha, Kathiatoli and Kampur development Block areas of Nowgong district and the Nartiang Elaka of the Jowai Sub-Division of Jaintia district of Meghalaya. There are four Lalung villages under the Dhemaji Development Block areas of Lakhimpur district.

Demography :

As per 1961 census the total population of the Lalungs was 61315. The figure rose to 95609 in 1971 census. Thus the decennial growth rate among the Lalungs during 1961-71 is 36%, against the all Assam scheduled tribes growth rate of 40.98%. The total tribal population of Nowgong district as per 1961 census was 87538 and out of that Lalungs alone constituted 63%. Similarly in the census of 1971 out of a total tribal population of 125115 in the Nowgong district 95609 i.e. 76.4% returned as Lalung. Their percentage to total scheduled tribes population of Assam is 7.11. Thus it is seen that bulk of the Lalungs concentrate in the Nowgong district. Another characteristic feature of their demography is that while maintaining their distinctive tribal identities, the Lalungs are trying to assimilate with the Assamese language and culture. In 1891 Dr. Grierson (Linguistic Survey of India) found 40000 Lalung language speakers in Assam but the figure came down to 10576 in 1961 census.

The percentage of literacy among the tribals of Assam as per 1971 census is 26.03 (males 34.62% and females 17.16%) against the all India figures of 17.63% for male tribals and 4.85% for female tribals. The percentage of literacy among the Lalungs as per 1971 census is 21.5 (for male 31.5% and for female 11.2%). Out of a total Lalung population of 95609 (1971 census) as many as 75118 i.e. 78.5% are illiterates.

Village Life :

The Lalung villages like all other plains tribal villages are important units in the organisation of their socio-religious life. Though a plains tribe, their houses are almost similar to those of their Assamese brethren. The villages are surrounded either by paddy fields and jungles or by a rivulet on one side and paddy fields and jungles on the other. The number of houses in a village may vary from 20 to 100. 'Borghars', 'Namghars' and 'Thans' (all public congregational halls) are essential features of Lalung villages. The Namghars, however, are popular among the followers of the Mahapurushia cult only.

The Lalungs have had a proud tradition, of well managed dormitory system called 'Deka Chang'. Of late this important institution has lost much of its pristine glory. The institution exists in a few Lalung villages as a prestigious traditional institution of the days gone by. The 'Deka Chang' imparts training to the unmarried youths and it acts, by and large, as a welfare institution which is responsible for the welfare of the villagers in various aspects.

Village Structure :

Among the Lalungs a single village does not form the lowest administrative unit, which,

however, is a 'Buni' constituting of one or more than one village. For the smooth functioning of each 'Buni' there are different office bearers such as Lorok, Forongai, Pator, Changmaji, Koroimaji, Deori, Barik, Hatari and Randhani.

Before the advent of the British and consequent annexation of the Lalung principalities, the Lalungs had their own 'Rajas' whom they called 'Deo Raja.' One of the important principalities of the Lalungs was Gobha and under Gobha there were twelve small Rajas called 'Sato Raja' and 'Pancho Raja.' There were several 'Bunis' under the administrative control of each Raja. The Raja was assisted by a host of officers like Bordoloi, Konwar, Patra, Borbarua, Dhulia, Dalia, Kalia and Paik. All these ranks were hereditary.

To-day considerable changes in respect of the traditional village structure have taken place. Besides the Gaonbura (village headman) each village has a Pathek, Barika, Medhi, Gayan and Bharali who have to perform various assigned roles in the socio-religious functions. Politically the villages are administered under the Panchayati Raj system.

Agriculture and Food Habits :

The Lalungs are primarily agriculturists. The outturn of the fields is the chief means of their livelihood. Sali, Bao and Ahu are their major crops. Jute, mustard and matikalai are also produced. Winter and summer vegetables of several varieties are grown for household consumption only. In all the agricultural activities co-operation among all the villagers is a salient feature. Besides weaving clothes and preparing meals, the women folk take active part in the agricultural activities.

Rice is the staple food of the Lalungs. Their two major meals consist of rice and vegetables. Foul and pork are their special delicacies. Previously home made rice-beer was an essential item in their menu but now-a-days due to the poor economic condition consumption of rice-beer is restricted.

Clan Organisation :

The Lalungs are divided into a number of exogamous clans called 'Nane' or 'Kul'. The major clans are—Macharang, Machereng, Magor, Madur, Ladur, Puru, Sagara, Maloi, Fangsong, Puma, Dafoi, Mithi, Longfoi, Sukai, Khorai, Aagara, Chanchara, Kasa, Cholong, Muni, Melang, Kakhor, Darfong, Farpang, Damlong, Amsong, Amchi, Khalar, Loron etc. Originally they had only twelve clans but later on these main clans have been further sub-divided into a number of sub-clans, called 'Dhan Bangah.' These sub-clans are :

Clan	Sub-Clan
1. Macharang	Machereng, Magor.
2. Madur	Ladur, Puru, Sagara.
3. Maloi	Fangsong, Pumba (Puma)
4. Dafor	Mithi, Lomfoi, Morong.
5. Sukai	Khara.
6. Amfli	Agara, Chanchar.
7. Kasa	Mithi.
8. Chalong	Muni, Melang.
9. Amchong	Amchi.
10. Kakhor	Aagari.
11. Darnong	Damlong, Khalar.
12. Lorom	

It may be noted that the figure twelve has certain socio-political significance. "It seems to have been the practice in this part of India for kings to appoint twelve advisers or

governors. King Naranarayan had twelve ministers of state. Twelve chiefs of Doloi administered the hilly portion of the Raja of Jayantia's dominions and there were twelve state councillors in Nepal. The number may thus have become connected in the minds of the people with all dignitaries ranking next to a Raja and so have come to be used in a purely conventional sense". (History of Assam by E.A. Gait).

The Lalungs have a 'Khuta' system of social grouping which can also be called extension of a family. Following the genealogy, each family of a certain clan forms a social grouping called 'Bangsha' or 'Khuta'. A 'Khel' (clan) consists of several such 'Khutas'. A single 'Khuta' cannot form a 'Khel'. In a single village there may be one or more than one clan. It may be noted that no family in a village can thrive without affiliating itself to a 'Khuta'. Whether solemnising a marriage ceremony or observing death rites, the 'Khuta' plays an important role for the family.

A Lalung 'Khel' selects the 'Giyati' (priest) to preside over the socio-religious occasions like 'Karam' (purificatory ceremony after death) and allied ceremonies. The 'Zela (mediator) play's a major role in Lalung marriage and he must be selected by a 'Khel'. It may be noted that 'Giyati' and 'Zela' must not belong to the 'Khuta' in which the ceremonies are observed.

The Lalungs maintain a clan superiority. Thus 'Bara Bhani', Na Bhani, 'Sat Bhani' divisions are noticed in their society. Inter 'Bhani' marriages are allowed. The 'Bara Bhani' clans are mostly found among the Karbis while the Lalungs have 'Na Bhani' and 'Sat Bhani'. The clan belonging to 'Na Bhani' are considered as superior clan. It may be noted that this clan superiority does not create

any social imbalance or vertical mobility among the people of various clans. The members belonging to 'Na Bhani' clan have to adhere to figure nine whenever any question of figure arises in their socio-religious ceremonies. Same practice is followed by clan members belonging to 'Sat Bhani' or 'Panch Bhani'. They use a number of titles, which formerly indicated social hierarchy. The titles commonly found among them are Deo Raja, Dekha Raja, Pator, Senapati, Konwar, Bordoloi, Doloi, Kakati, Mahanta, Deori, Bharali, etc.

Family :

Family can be regarded as one of the universal and permanent institutions of mankind. The origin of the family can be traced as a reproductive and biological association what Lowie calls "Socially approved form of sex relation". In course of time this institution became the prominent social institution of mankind. Among the Lalungs the family is a closely knit unit which is the basis for well co-ordinated social system. "The Family is a social group characterised by common residence, economic co-operation and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain socially approved sexual relationship and one or more children, own or adopted, of the socially co-habiting adults" (Murdock, George Peter, social Structure, 1965). The Lalung family extends to a 'Khuta' (described elsewhere) and thus plays a major role in determining social behaviour among the members of a 'Khuta'. Family is the training institute for the minors. Here they learn all do's and don'ts. Thus a family teaches how one's wife should maintain avoidance with her husband's mother's brother. The Lalungs believe that the husband's mother's

brother must not touch the nephew's wife even if she is going to meet her watery grave in an accident.

They have both primary and joint family systems. Besides a father his wife and unmarried children, the same homestead may also be occupied by the married sons. Father is the headman of the family and all the members obey him.

Position of women :

The Lalung women command high respect from their menfolk and their social position is equal, if not high. The elderly male members are respected highly and the women members of a family leave all the responsibility of management of the household affairs to their men. There is close co-operation between male and female in their daily walk of life.

Kinship :

Due to their long association with the Jayantias, the Lalungs had to adopt some of the socio-cultural traits of the Jayantias. Scholars therefore make an effort to include the Lalungs in the group of matriarchal people. In fact the Lalungs had followed the matriarchal system of inheritance but of late the practice has been done away with due mainly to the efforts of the educated sections of the people.

The Kinship terminology prevalent among them may be termed as descriptive. But the use of certain classificatory kinship terminology cannot be overlooked. Thus 'Magara Ayung' is used to address the father's elder sister as well as mother's elder sister. Similarly 'Ma-aa-Aying' denotes the father's elder brother as well as mother's elder sister's husband.

Inheritance :

It was reported by the elderly Lalungs that the Lalung society had followed a matrilineal system of inheritance in the past decades which, however, is not practised now-a-days. Instead, they practice a loosely knit matrilineal system of inheritance. The Lalungs of the hilly region still follow the matrilineal system of inheritance. Even among the plains Lalungs of Nowgong district matriliney is practiced by those limited few who keep 'Ghar Jiya' or 'Gabhia' i.e. the son-in-law cuts off all connections with his own family and lives with his wife in her house. In such cases the property goes from mother to daughter. Under the prevailing patrilineal system of the Lalungs, the daughters are not eligible to share the property. Apart from the jointly owned family property, the individual members can acquire personal property which is confined to the personal requirements of the individual.

Marriage :

All the traditional societies have faced a universal phenomenon of reconciling to the need of regulating the sexual behaviour. As a result they devised some cultural modes and morals, taboos, traditions and permissions. Among the Lalungs marriage is the accepted form of union between a man and a woman. Illegal unions especially incestuous relations are very much dreaded and under no circumstances social recognition can be given to such unions. Marriages are solemnised after the attainment of puberty. Boys usually marry between the ages of twenty two to twenty eight and girls between fifteen and twenty five. Clan exogamy is the general rule and monogamy is the socially and

legally recognised type of marriage. Polygyny is avoided. Preferential marriages (both FSD and MBD) types are not in vogue in their society. Levirate is not practised while sororate is resorted to by a few.

Widow remarriage is in vogue in the Lalung society. Cases of divorce are very rare and there is harmonious relation between husband and wife.

They have two forms of marriage, namely formal marriage or marriage by negotiation (Khoja) and informal marriage or 'Gandharba' marriage.

Formal Marriage :

The literate and well-to-do Lalungs prefer this type of marriage which entails considerable expenditure and long drawn formalities. It is solemnised with much pomp and grandeur. In this type of marriage the guardians of the prospective couple take the initiative. 'Zelas' i.e. between of both sides have to play important roles in such marriage. The prospective groom's father along with two or three elderly men of the village proceed to the girl's house and offer the proposal to the girl's parents. The party brings one earthen pot of 'Zu' (rice beer), some betel leaves and nuts and some rice cakes. This ceremony is called 'Bata Bhaga.' If the girl's parents accept the proposal, other formalities like 'Choa Chui', 'Kharu Mani Pindhoa Bhar', 'Bor Bhar', 'Khatira Bhar', and finally 'Biya', will follow. On the 'Biya' day the groom accompanied by friends and relatives proceeds to the bride's house. The party is taken inside a 'Rabha' where elderly relatives assemble. The bride is taken out and seated just beside the groom. The elderly villagers bless the couple to remain as 'Ek Swami Ek Bharjya'

(like one merging their separate identities). Earlier the 'Zela' discusses about the bride price and generally Rs. 60.00 to 100.00 are paid as bride price in the formal marriages (previously bride price was not charged in their marriages). A big feast is arranged with which the villagers are entertained.

Informal Marriage :

The second form i.e. 'Gandharba' marriage is the most widely prevalent form of marriage among the Lalungs. It is a love marriage in which the lover takes away his beloved on a stipulated night. Next morning the lover's relatives approach the girl's parents and if terms and conditions laid by the parents of the girl are agreeable to the parents of the boy, then the parents of the girl give consent to the marriage. In such marriages the bride price is nominal (for 'Panch Bhani' = Rs. 5.00 for 'Sat Bhani' = Rs. 7.00 and for 'Na Bhani' = Rs. 9.00 Rupee one goes to the common fund of the village, while the remainder owns by the girl's parents). The boy's parents entertain the villagers with a feast.

Marriage by Force :

In the truest sense of the term this type of marriage cannot be called a marriage at all because in such marriages, the girl hardly lives one night with the boy who takes her away without her consent. As soon as the matter is known to the parents and relatives of the girl, they rush to the boy's house and demand the girl. If the boy's family does not hand over the girl, then the girl's relatives invite an assembly of the village elders and a formal complaint is placed before it. Generally the judgement goes against the boy. As a punishment, the boy's family has to pay a fine

ranging from Rs. 100.00 to Rs. 150.00 along with rice beer jar, rice, betel leaves and nuts.

'Joron Biya' :

Generally poorer sections resort to this type of marriage. The boy goes to the girl's house with some friends and carries one rice beer jar, one basket full of rice/rice cakes, two gourds and some betel leaves and nuts. After the refreshment the boy takes away the girl with him to his house. After three or five days the couple visits the girl's house with some friends. They carry one 'Bhar' (two basketful of rice, betel leaves and nuts etc.) and five fowls. 'Zelas' of both sides are invited. The invited elderly people formally recognise the couple on this day.

Political Institution :

Once the Lalungs had their own 'Kings' and the contemporary history testifies to this. We had already mentioned about 'Pancho Raja' and 'Sato Raja'. Rajmohan Nath in his famous book, 'The Background of Assamese Culture' had mentioned about Gobha Raja. "They (Lalungs) appear to have been all along associated with the Jaintias living on the north eastern slope of the Khasi hills on the border land of the plains districts of Kamarupa and Nowgong. During the Ahom rule some Lahing chiefs near Raha were alienated by the Ahom chief stationed at Raha from the suzerainty of Jaintia. In 1834 Chatra Singha, the ruler of Gobha alleged to have sacrificed several persons of Kamarupa before the goddess Kali and this made the British interfere and ultimately resulted in the annexation of Jaintia and there by the Lalung states to the British Empire".

Henceforth the village administration was directly under the control of the district administration. The district authority, however, entrusted the village Gaonbura to assist him in the day to day administration and thus the Gaonbura yielded sufficient political power. Even today he decides ordinary cases of local nature in a meeting of village elders. He is assisted by one official called 'Barika' whose duty is to inform the villagers about the meeting and such other occasions. Appeals against a Gaonbura's decision rests in a meeting of chiefs of a 'Bangsha'. Cases of serious nature are decided by a meeting of big officials such as 'Doloi', 'Changmaji', 'Deoraja', 'Dekaraja', 'Pator', 'Senapati', 'Deori', 'Forongai' etc.

Today all the Lalung villages are administered under the Panchayati Raj system.

Language and Literature :

The Lalung language is a member of the famous Bodo group of languages and forms a link between the Bodo or the Kachari spoken in the submontane tracts of the Kamrup and Darrang districts and the Dimasa spoken in the N. C. Hills district. Majority of the Lalungs living in the plains of Assam, particularly the younger section cannot speak their language and for education as well as for day to day exchange of thoughts the people use the Assamese language. The Lalungs residing in the hilly regions, however, are maintaining their language in tact. Of late an effort has been made to acquaint the younger sections with their traditional language. With a view to popularise their language, issues of the annual magazine, the 'Ring Chang' (Echo) have been brought into light. The script used in the above mentioned publication is

Assamese and most of the articles are written in Assamese language.

Except Reverend M. Balwan's work, which was written in Roman script no Tiwa grammar written in Assamese script has yet been published. Thus, Rev. Balwan's Tiwa grammar becomes a milestone for the Tiwa language. It is learnt that Shri Mahiram Bordoloi, a Lalung gentleman, is preparing a Tiwa grammar in Assamese script which will go a long way in fulfilling the long felt need the Lalungs. The undermentioned specimen amply demonstrates certain characteristics of the tribal language.

To indicate singular and plural there are specific words.

Singular	Plural
Aang(I) —	Ching(We)
Naa(You) —	Nageda(You)
Be(He) —	Begeda(They)

Similarly application of tense in the language should also be noted :- Thus :

Aang Ma Chang—	(I take rice)
Aang Mai Chaidom—	(I took rice)
Aang Mai Changme—	(I will take rice)

The All Assam Tiwa Yuba Chatra Sammilan has tried to revive the decaying Lalung language and culture and the response of the Lalungs to this venture is encouraging. Like all other plains tribes the Lalungs are also very rich in folktales and folksongs. Folksongs regarding their original abode, place names, gods and goddesses and origin of the clans are very popular among the Lalungs. For example 'Hukhaiwali-Ne-Khorong' (Story of the origin of the Sukaiclan), 'Karai Tawa Nawaria' (Story of a weeping boatman) 'Kumjeluka are Harinar Kingbadanti,' (Story of a snail and a deer) are recited by the elderly people before their grandsons.

Religion :

The religion of Lalungs is based on a belief in deities, Lord Mahadev is considered as the supreme God. He is a benevolent god who showers blessings upon those who worship him with devotion. He is the creator, protector and destroyer of all. The 'Mantra' chanted by the priest invokes Him as 'Fa Mahadev Jelaguru Arambhanire Sristini Garaki, Bhumini Garaki, Srajanata, Palanta, Rakhanta Dekhanta, Guru, Nala, Nila, Uran, Buran, Charimuthi Jivar Garaki, Nali Rakhanta Puli Rakhanta, Go Rakhanta, Po Rakhanta, Khawon Data, Bhog Data, Byadhi Byapar Duri Karti'. The Lalungs consider this Mantra as the 'Gayatri'. The Lalung deities should be regularly propitiated by offerings and sacrifices. Mahadev, Ganesh, Parameswar, Badarmaji and Baolakong are their chief gods while Ai Gosani, Lakhami, Padumi, Kalika, Kamakhyā, Saru Ai, Bor Ai, Aakari, Jagatjuri, Kani Adheli are the important goddesses.

The place of worship for each clan is called Borghar. Generally it is constructed in a central place of the village, Near the main post towards east, contains the 'Mindaine Thuna' (post of God). An altar is made before this 'Thuna'. One auspicious arrow called 'Jela' and one 'Lang Khui' (sacrificial dao) are placed in the 'Borghars'. The head priest of 'Borghar' is called 'Gharburā' or 'Bor Jela'. He is a respectable person of the clan. To assist the 'Gharburā' there is a 'Saru Burā' in each 'Borghar'. This 'Saru Burā' cannot rise to the position of a 'Gharburā' as male members of the 'Gharburā' can only attain the coveted position. Besides the above noted priests there is a 'Hāri Kunwari' attached to each 'Borghar'. She must be a woman of the same clan

where the 'Borghar' exists. She cannot change her residence even after marriage.

'Thāns' (Public worshipping place) are established in each village or a group of villages. A 'Thān' is a big hall erected generally in an out of the way place near the forest. Public worships are performed in such 'Thān'. There may be various 'Thāns' for different gods and goddesses. Thus 'Thāns' are found in the names of 'Mahadev', 'Kesāikhāiti Devi', 'Bhāgawati', 'Sani', 'Mālthakur' etc. Previously 'Jangkang' (god of agriculture) was also worshipped in the 'Thān'. But now-a-days 'Jangkang' Puja is not worshipped in all the villages. Sacrifices were must items of 'Thān Puja'. Thus a tortoise was sacrificed before the goddess 'Kālikā' and a buffalo or a black goat before 'Kasāikhāiti'. Today considerable changes have taken place in the mode of 'Thān' worship. Sacrifices are hardly resorted to. 'Mah Prasad' (Mug, gram, banana etc) is offered as 'Naibedya' before their gods and goddesses. This is happening due to the influence of Mahapurushia Vaisnav cult which is gaining a tangible ground in the Lalung villages. In fact in the decades back a good number of Lalungs were converted to Vaisnavism. They do not have 'Borghars' and do not take pork and rice beer. They worship Hindu deities in their 'Namghars'. 'In short they are leaving many of their traditional Pujas. Instead of worshipping 'Maldakā' and 'Sanidakā' by offering sacrifices, the Lalungs prefer to propitiate these deities by reading the 'Sani Charit' in the 'Namghars'. Although there is no reference for a 'Namghar' in the Lalung traditional religion, yet due to the spread of Vaisnava religion among the Lalungs, the institution of Namghar occupies an important place in the religious system

of present day Lalungs" (Ringchang, 2nd year, vol II, 1976 by Shri Sradhananda Duara). Another reason for the change towards Vaisnavism may be the expensive and irksome formalities of the traditional worships. The educated sections, by and large, do not participate in the traditional worships. Thus today there are two broad religious divisions among the Lalungs—the traditionalists and the Vaisnavites (followers of the Vaisnavism). The latter section has organised themselves under the "All Nowgong district tribal Sarania Sangha." They are mobilising to bring the traditionalists into their fold while the traditionalists are putting resistance. A few Sarnias are going one step forward by establishing 'Bhagawatiā' system of worship under the guidance of Sankari Sangha. They do not follow the 'Hom Jajaya' and a Brahmin priest is not employed in their religious ceremonies. They are also known as 'Nām Kirtaniā' or 'Hari Dhwanīā'. It may be noted that although there are three sections of Lalungs in respect of their religious beliefs and practices, yet an outsider hardly notices the rift. When occasion arises all the Lalungs irrespective of religious beliefs come under one banner. Thus a unity in diversity is maintained.

Festivals :

The Lalungs villages are mostly surrounded by non Lalung concentrations and as such inter caste characteristics are noticed in their mode of living. They observe the three Assamese Bihu festivals namely Bohag Bihu, Magh Bihu and Kati Bihu, with some modifications. Their main festivals, however, are 'Gobha Raja's Mela' 'Jon Bila Bazar' and 'Kharbila Bazar' which they solemnise

with much pomp and grandeur. These 'melas' are held a few days after the Assamese Magh Bihu and Bohag Bihu and they contain tangible traditional socio-cultural significance. These are venues of get together for all the Lalungs, thus enhancing the cohesiveness among the populations. Inter tribal and inter caste exchanges in the barter system take place in these melas.

Death and Disposal of the Dead :

The Lalungs practise both cremation and burial depending upon age of the deceased, position held during life time and manner of death. Generally dead bodies of minors, pregnant women, epidemic cases etc. are buried. Previously dead bodies of wealthy and respectable persons only were cremated but now-a-days cremation is the general rule. Before carrying a dead body to the cremation ground, the relatives must come to pay their last respect. A dead body is ceremonially washed and symbolical offering of cooked food is made to it by the relatives. There are clan wise cremation ground in a village and dead bodies of a particular clan can be cremated in the cremation ground earmarked for that clan only.

Among the Lalungs, relatives of the deceased have to play very important role in the death rites. Both male and female can participate in the last rites. After returning from the cremation ground the participants have to purify themselves by taking a dip in the river. They are also required to touch fire and holy water.

The main purificatory ceremony is observed on the seventh day when the co villagers are entertained in a big feast. For the non converts pork and rice beer are inevitable items in

this feast where as the followers of Vaisnavism do not use these items. The feast may be deferred to a convenient date and it may be held even after a year or so. The feast may be held jointly if there are deferred cases in the same village within that period.

Trends of Change :

The Lalung society has undergone some tangible changes in the recent years, because in the fast moving world no society can remain static. We had already mentioned about the changes that took place in the field of religion. In order to maintain the peculiar ethnic characteristics, the traditional societies must have economic self-sufficiency. The economic condition of the Lalungs is very much deplorable. They lack sufficient agricultural lands. The original lands owned by each family is fast disappearing. Formerly one big pot of 'Zoo' was all that a villager had to spend for constructing a house. A formal invitation for the purpose was necessary. But now-a-days that co-operative attitude is hardly seen. Preparation of a pot of 'Zoo' is a costly affair. No more 'Zoo' is an item to entertain guests. Young boys are staging a 'Dharna' for petty jobs. Whenever a political party worker decides to put pressure upon the authorities he does not find it difficult to collect rural picketers belonging to both the sexes. What is needed is an assurance to provide the villagers with land and other amenities. Today they have to walk the distance of about 2/3 kilometers to collect one piece of dhoti at controlled price

from the co-operative society, that too after remaining in the queue for hours together. Individualism has penetrated into the hitherto unaffected Lalung society. They run after bank loans to sustain their economy. The scheduled banks demand periodic patta lands in lieu of the loan, but majority of the Lalungs do not possess pattas for their lands. If one visits any Lalung village he will be stupified when he is informed that a good number of house holds borrow money from local money lenders at 10% monthly interest. Thus indebtedness which is the chronic pecuniary disease among the rural masses of India eats into the vitals of the Lalung economy also.

The society has been badly shaken by the prevailing economy. Due to spread of education and culture contact with the urban people, the mode of dress, particularly among the younger section, changes. In order to meet the growing demands of their wards the parents or guardians are borrowing money at exorbitant rates of interest.

Although the people are maintaining many of their traditional socio-cultural traits, yet modernism has penetrated into their culture. Traditional manners and customs are left to the care of the aged people while the upto date ideas are implemented by the educated and younger section. But it may be noted that new ideas are introduced into their culture without destroying the very fabric of the traditional ideologies. A selective assimilation rather than merging of identities is preferred by all sections of the Lalung.

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THE RABHAS : A PEEP INTO THEIR ACCULTURATION PROCESS

M. C. SAIKIA*

Culture contact or acculturation has come to be a recent phenomenon in the social structure of the Indian society. The dimension and the sprit of acculturation have been gaining momentum with the increasing tempo of development in the spheres of education and economic situations. The greater degree of social mobility and the development of a psycho-analytical mind have also accelerated the acculturation process. The recent trend of urbanisation and the emergence of various religious sects or preachings in the neighbourhood have also thrown their impacts on this trend. Under this backdrop, let us look into the social changes that have taken place in recent years in the Rabha social structure. The Rabhas of Assam are distributed throughout the state of Assam. The Districts of Goalpara, Kamrup and Darrang are the major concentrated area in order of their numerical strength followed by Nowgong.

Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar and Cachar. Besides Assam, their distribution spreads over Meghalaya, Bangladesh, Nepal, West Bengal, Manipur etc. Numerically the tribe had made an improvement by about 30,600 over the 1961 census figure which was 1,08,029. In other words the decennial growth rate of the tribe was about 28.33%. In 1971, the Rabhas constituted 8.63% of the total plains tribal population and 0.63% of the total state population of Assam. Their literacy had also shown an upward trend at 22.24% placing them at fourth place among the Scheduled tribes of Assam.

Major playfair indicated that the Rabhas had come down to Assam from Tibetan regions and settled first at Garo Hills from where they subsequently came over to Assam plains. Dr. B. M. Das in his "Ethnic Affinities of the Rabha" says "..... it seems probable that Mongoloid peoples came

† Goalpara	68,219	Lakhimpur	345
Kamrup	55,057	Dibrugarh	330
Darrang	13,711	Sibsagar	117
Nowgong	781	Cachar	70
		Grand Total	4,38,630

(Source—Statistical Hand book, Assam 1980, Page—36-43. Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam.)

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in successive waves from the north and north-eastern region. They have partly or wholly absorbed the autochthonous Australoid and later on formed various tribes like the Rabha, the Garo etc. (page 117). In this context the observation of Major Playfair that there are some linguistic and cultural similarities between the Garos and the Rabhas may also be pointed out. Hodson's remark that the Rabhas constitute a Major segment of the Bodo Linguistic group also goes to testify their affinities along with other constituents of the Bodo group like Garo, Kachari, Mech, Hazong, Koch etc. who belong to the Mongoloid stock.

The endogamous divisions of the Rabha tribe consist of Rangdania, Pati, Maitori, Totla, Dahuri, Baitlia, Shunga, Hana etc. (B. M. Das). Although Rev. Endle had shown eight subdivisions among the Rabhas, the major constituents in the tribe were described to be Rangdania, Pati and the Maitori. Gait and Friend Pereira had also assigned a similar place to these constituents.

The Paties are concentrating mainly on the southern bank of the river Brahmaputra right from Gauhati in Kamrup to Dudhnoi in Goalpara district. The other two groups the Rangdaniyas and the Maitories are mainly found in Goalpara district. While the Rangdaniyas are seen in Nadiapara and Bardamal areas, the Maitories are seen in areas around Lakhipur, Jairamkuchi, Chaibari etc. The Totla Rabhas another segment of the Rabha tribe are seen around Rangiya-Tamulpur belt of Kamrup district and Tangla areas of Darrang district.

Acculturation as a distinct feature is noticeable among the Paties, Totlas and Maitories in order of their intensity. The Paties of Dudhnoi and Boko area have become

Hinduised and have practically abandoned their traditional animistic beliefs. Of course it will be too sweeping to say that traits of animistic belief have totally been forgotten by these constituents. The Langapuja and Tukuria Puja of the Pati Rabhas bear testimony to their attachment to animistic belief in spite of their coming over to the greater fold of Hinduism. The Maitories who have also come under the spell of acculturation to a greater extent still observe Khoksi Puja in a modified form where traditional rituals have gradually been replaced by community feasting and merry-making.

In discussing about the acculturation process of the Rabhas, the first attention is drawn by the change over from matriliney to patriliney though it can not be said that cent percent changeover has already taken place. In tracing the origin of matriliney, J. E. Friend Pereira in his ethnographic notes on the Rabhas (incorporated in the Census Report of 1911) said— "It is an interesting fact that the Rabhas seem to be in a state of transition from the matriarchal to the patriarchal form of family life. Descent is always traced in the female line and the children of a marriage always belong to the mother's barai..... That at some remote period of time the matriarchate was in full vigour appears from the story of Dadan in the sections of traditions and history where Dadan the leader of the people is really the maternal uncle and natural guardian of Toba Rani the chieftainess or queen of the tribe". It is thus seen that the matriarchate which had its glorious past has gradually lost its grip over the tribe through culture contact with other adjoining tribes. The present tendency of inheritance is through male line though the older generation specially members of the Rangdani

section still cherish the brighter memory of their womenfolk inheriting through female line. But larger sections in each of the divisions of the tribe have now dispensed with the matrilineal inheritance in preference to the patrilineal inheritance. Due mainly to this reason the residence after marriage in most of the cases is becoming patrilocal. This is also a clear indication of the closer culture contact with the neighbouring people. Another deviation from their original culture is in the field of exogamy. In the past strict adherence to exogamous marriages were followed but sufficient laxity has been allowed now in these days in this matter. The knowledge of one's father or mother's clan as a criteria for settlement of marriage has been relegated to background. On the other hand importance has been laid on the degree of relationship with the father or the mother. The minimum degree of prohibition with the father's side is usually kept at seven degrees similar in line with most of the caste Hindu communities of the state. Further the saying that "*Mamar Beti Kalai Sak*" which implies a greater degree of likeness to the daughter of the maternal uncle, no longer attracts the educated section of the Rabha community though MBD type of marriage is socially recognised amongst them. This dislike for the MBD type of marriage is due to the closeness of relationship which the educated or socially conscious section of the Rabhas do not like to perpetrate. Another reason for disliking this type of marriage is that after the marriage the maternal uncle's family tend to exercise a greater amount of influence in the domestic affairs of the new couple which the growing generation feels to be atrocious psychologically. Thus the deviation from the tradi-

tional norms of the Rabha society appears to be a direct impact of the culture contact with other sanskritised section of the plains people of Assam.

The impact of acculturation has gone even in the forms of marriages of the Rabha society. Formerly elopement as a means of securing brides was widely prevalent but with the spread of education and higher degree of social awareness, elopement has practically ceased to be a form of marriage though it had the sanction of customary laws. Similarly the procurement of brides by means of rendering manual service at the prospective father-in-law's house is also equally coming to be looked down upon as an act of the lower strata of the society. The acceptance of brideprice which had its hey day in the Rabha society till about 50 years back, has since been abandoned. This is specially so with regard to the Pati Rabhas of Dudhnoi area though demand for bride-price among the Rangdaniyas is still prevalent which is of course paid through the liberal supply of rice-beer to the bridal party as per their terms.

Another incidence of acculturation has been noticed in recent years. The Pati Rabhas residing in and around Dudhnoi area abstain from ploughing on the Full Moon and New Moon days and also consult astrology for performing any auspicious event. The institution of 'Hom-Yajna' as a marital rite in accordance with the vedic prescription has come to be practised in recent years in a few households of this area which also reflects a distinct departure from their traditional marital rites. The induction to the different religious faiths by members of the Rabha community themselves further testify the fact that acculturation has come to be accepted as an inevitable phenomenon of a living community. The Chaityn-

apanthi Vaishnavite villages in and around Dwarka, Bardamal, Chaibari and Baida area (among Rangdani and Maitori Rabhas), the Satsangi villages near Rongjuli and Boko (among Pati-Rabhas) and villages following Sankarite Vaishnavism at Boko and Dudhnoi area (among Pati Rabha) and Christian Pati-Rabha villages at Bagulamari and Topolakhowa (near Dudhnoi) may be shown as instances of the gradual process of acculturation that has taken place in the mental horizon of the community as a whole. In this context reference may also be made of the few Rabha households of Salpara and Chotamatiya area who have gone to the fold of 'Brahmo Samaj' and have since been celebrating 'Maghi Utsab' on the 14th of Magh in preference to their own traditional rituals. These tendencies of acquiring culture through contact may have their side effects on the parent social system of a community. In this context we may quote Becher's (1957) observation as elaborated by B. Kuppaswamy

in his book 'Social change in India' (1972, Reprint 1977, Page 7) wherein it is said "... a society may run the risk of extinguishing itself by preventing change or, on the contrary, may extinguish itself in pursuit of change. In other words both maximum reluctance to change and maximum readiness to change are suicidal, no society can survive under either condition. Survival depends upon some flexible approach which takes into account the situation which arises when factors inducing or necessitating change are operating. Such change-inducing factors may arise from within or from without". How far the 'maximum reluctance to change and maximum readiness to change' will react on the Rabha social system will more clearly be known after a time gap say about 20 years hence. So there comes the need of an indepth study on this point after allowing this time-gap which may reveal some interesting facts of social change in the Rabha society which is now in a transitional phase.

THE PLAINS TRIBES OF ASSAM SPATIAL PATTERN OF CLUSTERING AND CONCENTRATION

DR. G. C. SHARMA THAKUR

INTRODUCTION :

According to 1971 Census 1344020 persons were enumerated as members of the Scheduled Tribes (Plains) of Assam. These tribes belong to different ethnolinguistic groups, possess diverse socio-religious characteristics and are at various levels of economic development. Peculiarly extended along the entire spectrum-ranging from the far more Hinduised section of the Sonowal Kacharis living extensively in the plains areas of Dibrugarh district, the Miris (Mishings) and the Deoris of the riverine areas of the Brahmaputra valley with their traditional socio-cultural life being unimpaired by the widespread contact with non tribals, to the far more advanced section of the Bodo Kacharis of Kamrup and Goalpara districts, the tribal communities constitute an important segment of the Assam population. The spatial distribution of the entire plains tribal population is characterised by a traditional tribal tendency to cluster generally in a pocket within an environmental setting which is, by and large, far from the madding crowd. The pattern of concentration is such that even cognate tribes like the Boro Kacharis do not have socio-cultural interaction with the Sonowals, which for all practical purposes once belonged to the same ethnic complex. Further the typical ethnic clustering and concentration has contributed significantly to the lack of sufficient interaction between plains tribes and the non-tribal component population. Thus the process of change within the ethnic groups has operated at a low key enabling the tribals to perpetuate their modes and morals far beyond This aloofness results in socio-economic stagnation.

Before penetrating deep into the clustering trend of the plains tribes in the far flung areas of the districts, some demographic information of the plains tribes, perhaps will not be out of relevance which are shown below in Tables 1 to 3.

TABLE-1
SCHEDULED TRIBES (PLAINS) POPULATION
(CENSUS 1971)

SL. NO.	Name of the Tribe	Total population	Male	Female	P. C. of S.T. population (Plains)	P. C. to total plains and Hills tribes population	P. C. to total State population
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Boro-Boro Kachari.	610459	308768	301691	45.41	37.99	4.17
2.	Miri (Mishing)	259551	131764	127787	19.31	16.15	1.77
3.	Kachari including Sonowal.	198619	102547	96072	14.77	12.36	1.36
4.	Rabha	138630	71497	67133	10.31	8.63	0.95
5.	Lalung (Tiwa).	95609	48397	47212	7.11	5.95	0.65
6.	Deori	23080	11901	11179	1.72	1.44	0.16
7.	Barmans of cachar.	13210	6761	6449	0.98	0.82	0.09
8.	Mech....	2570	1276	1294	0.19	0.16	0.02
9.	Hojai ...	2298	1135	1163	0.17	0.14	0.02
10.	Hajong	387	228	159	0.03	0.02	0.00
TOTAL		1344413	684274	660139	—	—	9.19

TABLE-2
PERCENTAGE OF LITERACY AMONG THE PLAINS TRIBES (CENSUS 1971)

SL. NO.	Name of the tribe.	Total P. C. of literacy.	P. C. of male literacy.	P. C. of female literacy.
1	2	3	4	5
1.	Boro-Boro Kachari	20.51	29.73	11.06
2.	Miri (Mishing)	18.20	28.54	7.54
3.	Kachari including Sonowal	27.33	35.36	18.77
4.	Rabha	22.24	31.23	12.66
5.	Lalung	21.43	31.47	11.14
6.	Deori	27.72	39.58	15.10
7.	Barmans of Cachar	30.45	37.97	22.56
8.	Mech	30.57	39.65	21.63
9.	Hojai	27.72	36.56	19.08
10.	Hajong	10.88	14.98	5.03

TABLE-3
DISTRICT WISE BREAK-UP OF SCHEDULED TRIBES POPULATION OF ASSAM
AS PER CENSUS 1971

SL. No.	Name of District	Total Population	Total ST/Population	Percentage of S/T population to total population
1	2	3	4	5
1.	Lakhimpur	711600	204811	28.78
2.	Dibrugarh	1411119	81489	5.77
3.	Sibsagar	1837389	125311	6.82
4.	Nowgong	1680895	125115	7.44
5.	Goalpara	2231103	308287	13.85
6.	Kamrup	2854183	298090	10.44
7.	Darrang	1736188	185640	10.69
8.	Cachar	1713318	15283	0.89
9.	Karbi			
	Anglong	379310	210039	55.37
10.	N. C. Hills	76047	52583	69.15
Total of the State (Assam)		14625152	1606648	10.98

The Table I above shows the population of various plains tribes as per Census 1971 (1981 Census was not conducted in Assam) along with the percentage of tribal population to state's total population. The Table No. 2 indicates the tribe wise percentage of literacy.

The analysis of Table I shows that the plains tribes constitute 13.44 lakhs i.e. 9.1 p.c. of the total state population. Out of these population 62% concentrate in Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang and Lakhimpur districts and rest 38% in southern part of the river Brahmaputra i. e. parts of Goalpara, parts of Kamrup, Nowgong, Sibsaigar and Dibrugarh districts (Table-3). It may be mentioned that the Boro Kacharis form the largest group among the plains tribes and their main concentrations are the Kamrup, Goalpara and

Darrang districts. While the Boro Kacharis are more predominant in the northern bank of the river Brahmaputra, the Rabhas are fairly wide-spread in the southern belt. The concentration of rest of the tribes Viz, Miri, (Mishing), Deori, Lalung, Sonowal Kachari and Barmans of Cachar in the above mentioned three districts is insignificant. Kachugaon, Gambaribil, Binnyakhata, Jaleswari, Sapkata, Saraibil, Bhumka, Gasaigaon, Tulsibil, Serfangguri, Ramfalbil, Saktiashram, Datama, Fakiragram, Titaguri, Salakati, Bhatgaon, Balajan, Patgaon, Amteka-Anguri, Patabari, Runikhata Santipur, Bengtal, Kajalgaon, Sidli, Tilakgaon, Bidyapur, Borabazar, Malipara, Ulubari, Bishnupur, Bijni, Dakhin Bijni, and Goroimari Gaon Panchayat areas of Kokrajhar Sub-Division of Goalpara district; Parbat Jowar, Rongamati, Salkocha, Bahalpur G.P.

areas of Dhubri Sub-Division of Goalpara district ; Jakhili, Dudhnoi, Darrangiri, Rangjuli, Bikali, Dhanubhanga, Bordamal, Balijana, Badhapur, Dadan, Joyramkuchi G.P. areas of Goalpara Sub-Division of Goalpara district, Uttar Bijni, Dakhin Bijni, Hastinapur, Koklabari Chapaguri, Manikpur, Kharija, Bijni, Uttar Gobardhana, Pub Gobardhana, Howli, Gopinath, G.P. areas of Borpeta Sub-Division of Kamrup district ; Barama, Pachim Baska, Uttar Baska No. 1, Uttar Baska No. 2, Madhya Baska No. 1, Madhya Baska, No. 2, Madhya Baska No. 3, Dakhin Baska, Dakhin Kumarikata, Pachim Kumarikata, Dakhin Defeli, Pub Defeli, Pachim Defeli, Pub Tamulpur, Pachim Tamulpur G.P. areas of Nalbari Sub-Division of Kamrup district ; Goreswar, Maharipar, Kaurbaha G.P. areas of Gauhati Sub-Division of Kamrup district ; Ambagaon, Borchilajhar ; Lalpul, Dalgaon, Sonai, Rowta, Odalguri, Paneri, Dakua, Harsinga, Mazikuchi, Sekhar, Cheuni, Suklai, Khairabari, Chinakona, Kalaigaon, Silpota, Lakhimpur, Pukhuripar, Tengabari, Bhakapara and Chapai G.P. areas of Mangaldoi Sub-Division of Darrang district are the main abode of the Boro Kacharis. While out of the 1,38,630 souls of the Rabhas, the overwhelming chunk of the population is mainly concentrated in the districts of Kamrup, Goalpara and Darrang districts.

In respect of population, the Miris, also known as Mishings, constitute the second highest tribal group with a population of 2, 59,551 (1971 census). They are a riverine tribe and are mainly found in the flood prone areas of Lakhimpur, Sibsagar and Darrang districts. Their G. P. wise concentrations are Kherkata Dangdhara, East Dhakuakhana, East Machkhola, Mingmang, Gogamukh, South Gohaingaon, Ghilamara, Jiadhal, Narayanpur,

Pachim Dhemaji, Dhemaji, Maridhal, Bordoloni, Sissi Tangani, Sissi Borgaon, Pachim Jonai, Jonai, Kulajan, Muktiar, Subansiri, Kadam, Panigaon, Baginadi Ukhamti, Telahi, Ranganadi, Bangalmara, Dhalpur and Bihpuria of Lakhimpur district ; Gezera, Jengrai, Karatipara Ahotguri, Kamalabari, Nitai, Pub Konwarpur, Jakaichuk, Parbatia, Mahura, Kuruabahi, Rongamati, Brahmaputra of Sibsagar district ; Lohitmukh, Kolongpar, Gohpur, Kolabari, Rangajan of Darrang district.

The Sonowal Kacharis, originally scheduled under the nomenclature 'Kachari including Sonowal, were, however, renamed as 'Kachari Sonowal' in the revised list of scheduled castes and Scheduled tribes order (Amendment) Act 1976. Their population as per 1971 census is 198619 and they are mainly concentrated in the district of Dibrugarh. In Dibrugarh district Na Khat, Khawang, Haldhibari, Kheremia, Tengakhat, Sachoni, Tinkhong, Larua, Mankata, Jamira, Rajgarh, Salaguri, Ouphalia, Nigam, Joypur, Tipling Phakial, Naoholia Bakulani Chariali, Madarkhat, Bogdong, Dangari, Kakapathar, Tangana, Talap, Buridihing, Hapjan, Borbil and Saikhoa G.P. areas are the main abode of the Sonowals. Besides, Sonowal Kacharis are also concentrated in Doomdooma, Borbhagia Borchala, Sirajuli, Omiyapur, Borgaon, Naharbari, Bihaguri, Ghoramari, Bahbari and Charduar Gaon Panchayat areas of Darrang district.

The Lalungs (the people prefer to be called as Tiwas) are exclusively found in the district of Nowgong. A few Lalung villages are also found in the Dhemaji Sub-Division of Lakhimpur district. The non Lalungs of Dhemaji refer to the Lalungs of Dhemaji area as Lalung Kachari. In Nowgong district they are concentrated in Ghaguamanipur, Barangabari, Bhurbandha, Silpukhuri, Mikirbhetta,

Habi Barangabari, Kohtali, Baralimari, Jagi, Bhakatgaon, Baghja, Baghara, Jagiroad, Pub Uttarkhola Tetelia, Silchang, Sahari, Charabahi, Barapujia and Raha G. P. areas.

The Deoris are a riverine plains tribe of Assam with their exclusive concentrations in the Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh and Sibsagar districts. The Miris and the Deoris live in contiguous areas. The Gaon Panchayat areas of Hazari Baligaon under Jorhat Sub-Division and Jengrai Sub-Division of Sibsagar district, Nakhat G. P. areas of Dibrugarh Sub-Division, Borbil, Uttar Sadiya, Pachim Sadiya and Pub Sadiya G.P. areas of Tinsukia Sub-

Division of Dibrugarh district, Narayanpur, Bihpuria and Bangalmara G.P. areas of North Lakhimpur Sub-Division of Lakhimpur district are the largely concentrated areas of the Deoris.

The Barmans of Cachar, as the name indicates, are found exclusively in the district of Cachar. They are almost completely detached from the mainstream of their cognate brethren of the plains of Brahmaputra valley and not much research is done in respect of their socio-cultural life. They are mainly found in the Joypur, Harinagar and Jiri Fulertal G.P. areas of Silchar Sub-Division of Cachar district.

TABLE—4
I.T.D.P. WISE TRIBAL POPULATION (Census 1971)

I.T.D.P. No.	Name of the I.T.D.P.	Name of the sub-division	No. of G.P. covered	Total Population	Tribal Population	Major Tribes inhabiting the project
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Kokrajhar	Goalpara	34	387197	196029	Boro Kachari
2.	Dhubri	Dhubri	4	32788	16893	Boro Kachari, Rabha
3.	Goalpara	Goalpara	11	141126	73618	Boro Kachari, Rabha
4.	Borpeta	Borpeta	11	126487	64482	Boro Kachari, Rabha
5.	Nalbari	Nalbari	15	148518	76375	Boro Kachari, Rabha
6.	Gauhati	Gauhati	3	190487	99782	Boro Kachari, Rabha
7.	Gauhati	Gauhati	14	136297	68401	Lalung
8.	Marigaon	Marigaon	18	204690	107487	Boro Kachari, Rabha
9.	Mangaldoi	Mangaldoi	22	25594	18480	Boro Kachari, Rabha
10.	Tezpur	Tezpur	15			Rabha, Kachari Sonowal
11.	Jorhat	Jorhat	4	54968	34042	Mishings, Deoris
12.	Jorhat	Jorhat	5	29546	15354	Kacharis Sonowal
13.	Golaghat	Golaghat	6	27626	16787	Mishings, Deoris
14.	Sibsagar	Sibsagar	4	18595	11377	Thengal, Mishings
15.	Dibrugarh	Dibrugarh	18	95529	48561	Kachari Sonowal, Mishings, Deoris
16.	Tinsukia	Tinsukia	11	28489	14264	Kacharis Sonowal
17.	North Lakhimpur	North Lakhimpur	15	100202	63968	Mishings, Deoris
18.	Dhemaji	Dhemaji	19	214836	129948	Mishings, Deoris
19.	Silchar	Silchar	3	13490	7083	Barmans of Cachar
				1976465	1062931	

Table 4 shows the Integrated Tribal Development Project (I.T.D.P.) wise dispersal of plains tribal population. It may be noted that these pockets having 50% or more tribals are not exclusive tribal areas. Nor these projects are exclusively inhabited by a single ethnic group. Thus various ethnic collaboration inside a project is inevitable, at least so far as day to day economic transactions are concerned. Further within the project area these different tribal groups maintain their typical traditions and adherence to their own socio-religious cultural pattern does not hamper in any way the formulation and implementation of the special development schemes of the tribals. Again there are I.T.D.Ps where a certain ethnic group is dominant. For example Kokrajhar, Dhemaji, Morigaon and Silchar I.T.D.Ps, where the major tribal groups are Boro Kacharis, Miris (Mishing), Lalungs (Tiwas), and Barmans respectively.

Rest of the nineteen I.T.D.Ps have multi-ethnic character. For example Mangaldoi I.T.D.P. has both Boro Kacharis and Rabhas, Tezpur I.T.D.P. has Boro Kacharis, Miris

(Mishings), Sonowal Kacharis, and Deoris; Tinsukia I.T.D.P. has Sonowal Kacharis, Miris (Mishings), Deoris; Gauhati I.T.D.P. No. 6 has Boro Kacharis, Rabhas and Lalungs and so on.

Land alienation and indebtedness are the chronic problems of the tribals and unless some ameliorative and protective measures are adopted, the tribals will in course of time be relegated to the landless depressed section of the people. Thus in order to preserve the tribal tradition and culture, the exclusive pockets of the tribals were identified by the Government and restrictions have been imposed on surreptitious handing over of tribal lands to the non tribals. These pockets known as tribal belts and blocks are spread in six districts of Assam namely Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh and Nowgong. Table No. 5 indicates the sub-division wise and circle wise clustering of such tribal pockets. It may be mentioned that the belts and blocks mentioned in table 5 are not exclusively inhabited by a single ethnic group, rather in each belt/block people of two or more tribes are traced.

TABLE-5

SHOWING TRIBAL BELTS AND BLOCKS IN THE PLAINS DISTRICTS OF ASSAM WITH THE MAJOR TRIBES LIVING IN EACH TRIBAL BELT/BLOCK.

Name of the District	Name of the Sub-Division	Name of the Belt/Block	Name of the revenue circle	Area	Major plains tribe within the Belt/Block
1	2	3	4	5	6
Goalpara	Kokrajhar	1. Sidli Tribal Belt	1. Gossaigaon.	B—K—L 27,322—4—7	Boro Kachari —Do— —Do—
			2. Kokrajhar	1,77,872—2—16	
			3. Sidli	2,61,065—2—13	
		2. Bijni Tribal Block	1. Bijni	2,28,405—4—4	—Do—

Contd.

Name of district	Name of the Sub Division	Names of the Belt/Block	Name of the revenue circle	Area	Major plains tribe within the Belt/Block
1	2	3	4	5	6
Kamrup	Gauhati	B-K-L			
		1. South Kamrup (Chaygaon) Tribal Belt	Chaygaon	2,37,716-3-14	Rabha
		2. South Kamrup (Gauhati) Tribal Belt	1. Palasbari	1,36,736-3-0	Rabha
			2. Sonapur	3,78,762-0-0	Rabha, Lalung
		Gauhati and Nalbari Tribal Belt	1. Rangia	1,43,09-0-0	Boro Kachari
			2. Tamulpur	350740-0-0	-Do-
		Nalbari Baska Tribal Belt	Tihu	3,48,118-1-7	-Do-
		Borpeta Chapaguri Tribal Belt	1. Bojali	1,22,182-1-18	-Do-
			2. Sarupeta	42,078-3-13	-Do-
		1. Kharija Bijni Tribal Block	Barnagar		-Do-
		2. Bajegaon Tribal Block		72,416-0-0	-Do-
		3. Gobardhana Tribal Block			-Do-
Darrang	Tezpur	1. Gohpur Tribal Block	Helem	16,999-0-0	Miri
		2. Balipara Tribal Belt	Tezpur Sadar	110545-2-16	Boro-Kachari
Darrang	Mangaldoi	1. Teteli Bhanguria Tribal Block	Mangaldoi Sadar	49,211-3-9	Boro-Kachari
		2. Kacharipara Tribal Block			

Contd.

Name of the District	Name of the sub-division	Names of the Belt/Block	Name of the revenue circle	Area	Major plains tribe within the Belt/Block
1	2	3	4	5	6
B-K-L					
Lakhimpur	North Lakhimpur and Dhemaji Sub-Div.	3. Dalgaon Tribal Block	Kolaigaon	11,87,352-1-10	-Do-
		1. Lalai Tribal Belt			
		2. Tezial Tribal Block			
Lakhimpur	North Lakhimpur and Dhemaji Sub-Div.	3. Bhuiankhat Tribal Block	Jonai	Area under resettlement	-Do-
		1. North Lakhimpur (Sub-Mountain) Tribal Belt			
		2. Murkongselek Jonai Tribal Belt			
Dibrugarh	Tinsukia	1. N. Lakhimpur Tribal Block	1. Bihpuria	2,67,313-0-0	Miri, Deori
			2. Subansiri	1,57,016-0-0	Miri
		Abor Mishmi Tirap Tribal Belt	1. Sadia	14,23,896-0-0	Miri, Deori
Nowgong	Nowgong		2. Tinsukia (B)	3,83,528-0-0	Sonowal Kachari
		Boro Kachari Tribal Block	Nowgong Sadar	22,090-0-0	Lalung
		Amguri Chang Phulguri Chang Tribal Block	Kaliabar	4594-0-1	Lalung
Nowgong	Nowgong	Bardalong Tribal Block	Lanka	23,336-0-18	Lalung
		Lanka Bheta Tribal Block	Raha	67,000-0-6	Lalung
		1. Bagariguri T. Block			
Nowgong	Nowgong	2. Amchoi T. Block			
		3. Boronchila T. Block			
		Borpathar T. Block	Kampur	17,006-0-0	Lalung

Contd.

Name of the District	Name of the Sub-Division	Names of the belt/Block	Name of the revenue circle	Area	Major plains tribe within the Belt/Block
1	2	3	4	5	6
B-K-L					
Nowgong	Marigaon	1. Jamadari T. Block	Laharighat	29,813-4-0	Lalung
		2. Borongoni Pathar T. Block			
		1. Bhalukjari T. Block			
Nowgong	Marigaon	2. Changana T. Block	Marigaon	1,24,974-3-4	Lalung -Do-
		3. Tetelia T. Block			
		4. Gobha T. Block			
Nowgong	Marigaon	5. Phulaguri T. Block	Marigaon	1,24,974-3-4	Lalung -Do-
		6. Bagariguri T. Block			

It is clear from Table 5 that the Boro Kachari belts/blocks are concentrated in Kokrajhar, Gauhati, Nalbari and Borpeta Sub-Divisions where as Miri (Mishing) belts/blocks are located in Tezpur, North Lakhimpur, Dhemaji and Tinsukia Sub-Divisions. The Lalungs on the other hand are spread in the tribal belts/blocks of Nowgong and Marigaon Sub-Divisions while the Sonowal Kacharis are concentrated within the tribal belts/blocks of Dibrugarh and Tinsukia Sub-Divisions. It may be noted that all the plains tribal people of Assam are not concentrated within tribal belts/blocks mentioned in the said table. Sizable sections of the plains tribals are either found in the periphery of the belts/blocks or spread in the general areas interspersed with non tribal habitations.

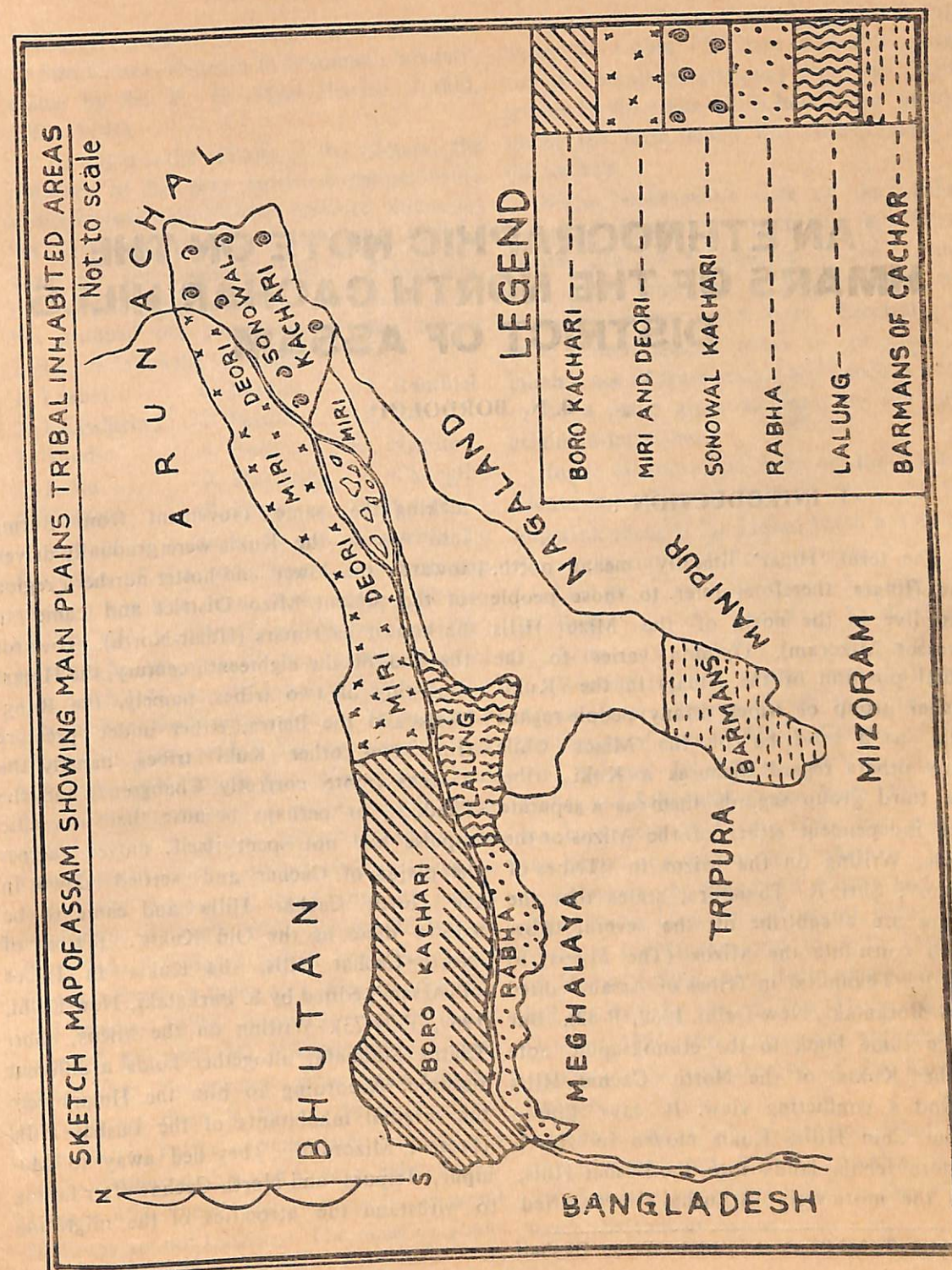
Thus the clustering pattern of the plains tribes is characterised by :

1. a tendency to cluster generally in a pocket.
2. non exclusiveness of the habitations,
3. clustering of one or more tribes in a pocket or belt/block.
4. clustering amidst non tribal habitations while maintaining most of the tribal traditional characteristics.
5. a preference of riverine areas by certain tribes (Miris, Deoris) while avoidance of such areas by rest of the ethnic groups.
6. Cohesiveness among the non tribal populations.
7. Unity in diversity in as much as all the plains tribes have a common socio-cultural forum.

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AN ETHNOGRAPHIC NOTE ON THE HMARS OF THE NORTH CACHAR HILLS DISTRICT OF ASSAM

B. N. BORDOLOI*

1. INTRODUCTION :

The term 'Hmar' literally means north. The Hmars, therefore, refer to those people who live in the north of the Mizo Hills (Present Mizoram). Opinion varies to the actual position of the Hmars in the Kuki-Lushai group of tribes. Many people regard them as a sub-tribe of the Mizos while many others regard them as a Kuki tribe. The third group regards them as a separate tribe independent either of the Mizos or the Kukis. Writing on the Mizos in "Tribes of Assam", Shri R. Thanhlira, states that the Hmars are a subtribe of the several tribes which constitute the Mizos (The Mizos, by Shri R. Thanhlira, in Tribes of Assam, edited by S. Borkataki, New-Delhi, 1969, P-82). But in the same book in the ethnographic note on the Kukis of the North Cachar Hills we find a conflicting view. It says thus— "From Chin Hills, Kukis moved in search of more fertile lands into the Lushai Hills, when the more vigorous Lushai tribes started

making the same movement from Burma into Assam, the Kukis were gradually driven towards the lower and hotter northern region of the present Mizo District and came to be known as Hmars (Hmar-North). Towards the end of the eighteenth century, the Hmars consisting of two tribes, namely, the Rangkhols and the Beites, either under pressure from two other Kuki tribes, namely, the Jansens (more correctly Changsens) and the Thadous, or perhaps because their nomadic impulse had not spent itself, moved across the plains of Cachar and settled down in the North Cachar Hills and came to be known there as the 'Old Kukis'. (Tribes of North Cachar Hills, 'the Kukis' in 'Tribes of Assam', edited by S. Borkataki, New Delhi, 1969, P-72,73). Writing on the Mizos, Shri Chitra Mahanta, altogether holds a different opinion. According to him the Hmars were the original inhabitants of the Lushai Hills (Present Mizoram). They fled away to Manipur, Tripura and North Cachar after failing to withstand the atrocities of the migrating

Lushais from the Chin Hills of Burma. ('Mizo'— by Shri Chitra Mahanta in 'Asomar. Janajati', edited by Sri P. C. Bhattacharjee, Jorhat, 1962, P-141).

As regards the affinity of the Hmars, the opinions of the then British Superintendents of the Lushai Hills District (Present Mizoram) are found to be quite interesting. Writing note on the Lushais, Major Shakespear, the then Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, has grouped the population of the district under the following 15 heads :

- | | | |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| 1. Lushei | 6. Lakher | 11. Renthlei |
| 2. Khawlhing | 7. Paithe | 12. Poi |
| 3. Thado | 8. Roite | 13. Ngente |
| 4. Ralte | 9. Darlong | 14. Chongthu |
| 5. Kiangte | 10. Pante | 15. Hmar |

According to Major Shakespear, with the exception of Poi and Hmar, the remaining thirteen are true clan names only. He also further adds :—"Hmar, which means 'north', is used by the rest of the inhabitants of the district to denote immigrants into the district from the Manipur State. These mostly belong to clans which are very closely allied together, speak much the same dialect, but I was unable to find a more suitable name under which to group them." (Reprint on the Castes and Tribes of Assam from Chapter XI of the Report of the Census of Assam in Census of India 1961, volume-III, Assam, Part V-A, Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, Reprints from Old Census Reports and Special Table, Page-113). In the same page of the note Mr. Shakespear has also stated that the amount of variation between the different clans is by no means constant. The Ralte, Paithe, Thado and Lakher are easily distinguishable and a very brief acquaintance with them would make it apparent that they are not Lusheis. The same is appli-

cable to the clans which have been grouped under the names of Hmar and Poi. At the end of the note he mentions that the dialects spoken by the clans which have been grouped under the term Hmar are unintelligible to the Lusheis.

Major Shakespear's note on the Lushais, therefore, clearly points to the fact that the Hmars are not a sub-tribe of the Lushais and they constitute a separate tribe with their own dialect or dialects. Secondly, the term 'Hmar' simply refers to the place of inhabitation of these people and hence it seems to be a name given to them by the other neighbouring tribes.

In his ethnographic note on the Lushais, Lieutenant Colonel H.W.G. Gob, the then Superintendent of the Lushai Hills, has divided the people into the following 9 clans :

- | | | |
|------------|----------|-----------|
| 1. Lushais | 4. Hmar | 7. Fan-ai |
| 2. Ralte | 5. Thado | 8. Lakher |
| 3. Paithe | 6. Poi | 9. Sailo |

(Reprint on the Castes and Tribes of Assam from Chapter-XI of the report of the Census of Assam 1911 in Census of India 1961, volume—III, Assam, Part V-A, Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes, Page-123). Thus we have seen that Mr. Gob, has regarded the Hmars as a clan of the Lushais.

However, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Lists (Modification) order, 1956, issued by the Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, vide their notification No. S.R.O. 2477-A, dated New Delhi, the 29th October 1956, the Hmars are regarded as a separate tribe independent of the Kukis or Lushais.

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Amendment) Act, 1976, has also enlisted the Hmars as a separate tribe in the Autonomous Districts of Assam.

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2. MIGRATION :

In their traditional songs and folklores reference has been made to the Sinlung civilization of the Hmar people. It can, therefore, be inferred that the original home of the Hmars was Sinlung, somewhere in the Central Asia. (The Education of the Hmar people by Rochunga Paudaite, Sielmat, 1963, Page-21). The Hmars were compelled to leave Sinlung and pushed to the south by the superior Chinese immigrants. In their southward journey when they come to the Himalayas, they turned eastward as they could not cross the great mountains. It is believed that in their eastward journey they settled among the Mishimis for about a generation or so and then moved further until they came to the Irrwawady. By following the course of this river, they entered into the Shan State where they faced strong opposition from the Shans or the Tais. But the Hmars forced their way into it and settled there in peace and prosperity. The prosperity which flourished in the Shan state was followed by a great famine which compelled the whole Hmar tribe to move north and northwest in search of food and better habitable lands. The clans moved separately each following a particular route. They entered into the hitherto unoccupied areas on the Indo-Burmese frontiers and built many villages associating them with their clans' names. The Lushai and the Kukis tribes who have very strong affinities with the Hmars also moved closely with them. The Hmars were, of course, moving slightly ahead of the Kukis and the Lushais and were constantly at war with these two tribes for territorial occupations. Anyway, as these three tribes had moved closely, at one time the anthropologists regarded them as a single tribe known as the Kuki-Chins. To the Kukis and the Lushais

the Hmars were known as Khawthlang which means westerner. This means that the movement of the Hmars to the west was earlier than that of the Kukis and the Lushais. The Hmars established their settlements in the Mizo Hills (present Mizoram), Cachar and North Cachar Hills' districts of Assam, Tripura and Manipur States which are still in existence.

3. DOMESTIC LIFE :

THE VILLAGE

A Hmar village is generally built on a hill top which commands a better position from the point of view of defence. It is surrounded by a bamboo fencing all around. Some villages have fencing made of logs of woods. At the entrance there is a strong gate which is kept closed at night so that no outsiders can enter into the village at night. This also serves the purpose of protecting the village from the stray cattle and wild beasts.

In the North Cachar Hills a Hmar village is found to have about twenty to forty houses clustered together in regular rows. In those villages which have spacious sites, houses are built in two rows facing each other leaving an open space in the front. Each family has a nice kitchen garden at the back of the house where essential vegetables needed for daily domestic consumption are grown.

HOUSES :

The Hmar houses are generally built on wooden planks raising the floors one to two feet above the ground. They use wooden posts in constructing their houses and thatch is used for roofing purpose. Houses with C. I. Sheet roofs are very rare. Each family

has a single house the length of which is more than three times of the breadth. The house consists mainly of four parts. The open porch, called SAWNGKA, is used for dyeing clothes and as a place of evening gossip and relaxation. The second part or the enclosed verandah of the house is called SUMPHUK. It is used for husking paddy, storing of firewood and for other household activities such as making of handicrafts, household articles, etc. It may be mentioned here that all families do not have enclosed verandahs. The third part of the house is the main room which has two doors—one at the front and another at the back. While some families have windows on the walls of the main room, others have none. By the side of the front door there are beds made either of wooden planks or bamboo mats for the children of the family and visitors. In the middle of the room there is a big hearth called TAP in which meals are cooked. During winter season the hearth is kept burning throughout the whole night to keep the room warm. Next to the hearth is the bed for the head of the family which is called KH-UMPMVI. Beyond this are the beds meant for the other family members. Household tools and equipments are generally kept hung on the walls of the main room. The fourth and last part of the house is the back porch which is called NAMTHLAK.

MANUFACTURING OF HOUSEHOLD EQUIPMENTS AND TOOLS :

The Hmars manufacture themselves most of the household equipments and tools which are in day to day use in their own homes. The household equipments are mainly made of bamboos and canes. A brief description

of the equipments made of bamboos and canes are given below:—

PAIKONG : It is a basket made of split bamboo strips used for carrying goods. A woven cane strap is fixed to it at the time of carrying goods in the PAIKONG. The PAIKONG is carried on the back by fixing the cane strap on the head of the carrier. The cane strap is called FAIBONG.

RAEL : It is a basket like a box used for keeping the valuable articles of the household, such as, ornaments, valuable clothes, etc. It has two layers—the inner layer is made of cane strips while the outer layer is made of bamboo strips. It has a cover also.

LEIKHOR : It is a basket made of cane used for storing or keeping paddy.

KOKTE : It is a small bamboo basket used for keeping dried chillies.

DAN : It is a bamboo basket used for measuring paddy. A full Dan of paddy weighs about 4½ kilograms.

KONGHONG : It is a small sized cane made basket used by women at the time of sowing paddy seeds in the Jhums. After filling the KONGHONG with paddy seeds and tying it around the waist the woman, broadcasts the paddy seeds from it.

PAIKUL: It is a small bag made of cane strips used for carrying small articles.

LUKHUM: It is a cane box used for keeping BONGPOI-a brass made musical disc.

SARCHINI: It is a funnel made of very fine bamboo strips used especially at brewing of rice-beer.

HAIFIEN: It is a large bamboo spoon.

The Hmars have very good carpenters and blacksmiths among them and most of the occupational implements and tools are manufactured by the local carpenters and blacksmiths. A brief description of the occupational tools and implements produced by the local carpenters and blacksmiths is given below:

MUI: It is an indigenous spinning machine. The spinning wheel is supported on the deer horns.

THEIOT: The cotton ginning machine is called THEIOT.

PUNKOL: It is the indigenous loom unit with all its accessories.

WONGKHLEN: It is a very big dish made from one piece of timber from which at least 10 persons can partake meals at a time.

THISLO: The indigenous hoe used in Jhum cultivation is called THISLO.

CHEM: It is a Dao having sharpness on both sides.

HAIE: The indigenous axe used for felling trees in Jhums is called HAIE.

KAITE: The locally produced sickle is called KAITE.

FAI: The Hmar hunting spear is called FAI.

THAL: The bow and arrow used by the Hmars in their hunting are called THAL as a unit. While the pointed iron head of the arrow is made by the local blacksmith, the other parts of the bow and arrow are made by the people themselves.

Among the other articles mention may be made of DOMBELL, the brass made artistic tobacco pipe. The DOMBELL has a very lovely artistic design and it is quite costly. It is generally used by men only. The Hmars also manufacture ordinary tobacco pipe from bamboo knots. These ordinary tobacco pipes called TUIBUR are meant for women only.

It is very interesting to note here that the Hmar women are expert in pottery making. One of the conditions for the selection of a village site is, therefore, the availability of clay suitable for making pottery in the vicinity of the village. Earthen cooking pots for rice and curry, covering plates, eating plates, rice-beer pots, smoking pipes are produced by the women at home. The pots are meant for domestic use only and they are not so fine as those available in the markets. The entire work is done by hand and a girl starts learning this trade since her childhood days. We know that the pottery making is the trade followed by a particular community of the people whom we call potters and it requires special technique. Considered from this point of view, the Hmar women are really praiseworthy.

DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS :

The Hmars have their traditional dresses and ornaments. But in the North Cachar Hills, at present, the use of traditional dresses and ornaments is confined practically to the womenfolk only. Male members have almost given up their use. Of course a few old male Hmars still use their traditional dresses and ornaments.

A description of their traditional dresses and ornaments is given below :

DRESSES :

DARKAI : The traditional Dhuti used by male Hmars is called DARKAI.

PAIHAR : It is a white Chadar used by males only.

PONDOM : It is a striped Chadar used by males only.

LUKAM : It is the artistic turban used by men only.

The Hmars have also very artistically designed headgear consisting of four parts, namely, (I) TUIFRIEL, (II) JAUCHAL, (III) TUKTHUN and (IV) TAMLAIRANG. This headgear is not meant for ordinary use. It is used by a Hmar warrior after defeating his enemy. Its use is, therefore, associated with victory.

TANLAUPON : It is a coloured, striped Chadar used by young girls and young women.

PONKERNE : It is a piece of artistically designed cloth tied by the women around their breasts.

THARLAUJOM : It is a coloured shirt for women.

KUNLAISEN : It is a very costly Chadar used by the women of rich families.

ORNAMENTS :

THRIFANG : It is a pair of very costly sea-shell put on by men in their ear-lobes.

THRIWAL : It is a necklace made of very costly beads used by men only.

CHANGENG : It is a pair of bracelet made of brass used by women.

HARBAN : It is a pair of armlet made of Zinc used by women.

NABE : It is a pair of very big-sized ear-ring made of silver used by women only.

THRIPAL : It is a necklace made of very costly beads and is used by the women of rich families generally.

THIRDOM : It is a necklace made of ordinary beads used by women only.

FOOD AND DRINK :

Like the other tribes of the North eastern India, the staple food of the Hmars is rice. The principal meal consists of cooked rice, salt and hot chillies. Vegetables and meats are taken whenever they are found available. Meats of fowls and pigs are very favourite with women. The Hmars collect wild roots and other vegetables from forests when they find vegetables from their kitchen gardens and Jhums are quite insufficient. They go to the forests very often for hunting wild animals to supplement their food supply. They take

three principal meals in a day-in the morning, at noon and at nightfall.

A Hmar is not a habitual drinker. He drinks ZU (rice-beer) only when he is in leisure and when he has to entertain his friends. Besides, he drinks ZU during the celebration of community festivals and to celebrate the successful hunting expeditions. Tea is very rarely drunk and no milk is added to tea. Taking of cow's or buffalo's milk is rather an exception than a rule.

DANCE & MUSIC :

The Hmars have their traditional dance and music. Dances are performed by the young boys and girls in their leisure time and at the time of celebration of community festivals in accompaniment of tunes played in their indigenous musical instruments. A brief description of the musical instruments of the Hmars is given below :-

KHONG : Only one type of big and heavy drum is used by the Hmars and it is called KHONG.

JAMLUNG : It is a very big and heavy brass-metal gong. It makes very loud but majestic sound.

BONPOLBO : It is a musical instrument consisting of three brass metal discs.

DALAIPONG, LAIPONBO and CHONGRELBO : They are a set of very heavy gongs made of brass metal. Each gong of this set produces a different sound. This set of gongs is the costliest musical instrument of the Hmars.

TUMDA : It is a very peculiar flute consisting of seven parts.

TINGTANG : It is the only piece of string instrument of the Hmars. It is just like an one stringed Veen. TINGTANG'S string is made of fine spilt cane and it is played with a bow.

4. SOCIAL LIFE :

BUONZAWL OR SIER :

Like the Zemi Nagas, Morungs, BUONZAWL or the bachelors' dormitory is the most important social organisation of the Hmar youths. But while the Zemi Nagas of the North Cachar Hills have dormitories for young unmarried girls, the Hmars of the North Cachar Hills do not have any dormitories for unmarried girls. BUONZAWL is the biggest house in a Hmar village. It is constructed at the uphill end and it has a single door only.

Like the Zemi Nagas' Morung, BUONZAWL is the training ground for all the youths of a Hmar village. All unmarried young boys who are above 15 years or so have to sleep compulsorily in the BUONZAWL at night. The boys who are less than 15 years old are exempted from sleeping in the BUONZAWL at night but they have to supply the entire stock of firewood required at the BUONZAWL for day to day use. Each youth is allotted a number of bundles of firewood which have to be supplied every month. The defaulters are punished heavily so that he might not do the same in future. As soon as the boys reach the age of adolescent, they are freed from the task of supplying firewood and at the same time

they have to leave their parents' homes and to become active members of the BUONZAWL.

I have already mentioned that the BUONZAWL is the training ground of the Hmar youths. The official who is responsible for the training of the youths in various types of activities including games and sports is called VALUPA which means Commandant of the youths. An accomplished youth capable to maintain discipline among the members of the BUONZAWL is elected to the post of VALUPA by the village council consisting of the village elders. All the youths of the village learn the art of warfare, wrestling, handicrafts making, singing and dancing, and indigenous sports in the BUONZAWL under the direct supervision of VALUPA. Any one found breaking the discipline of the bachelors' dormitory is severely punished.

Like other Hmar houses the BUONZAWL is also constructed on wooden platform. It has a single entrance in the front wall which can be reached by a rough wooden ladder. At the middle of the floor there is a big hearth where the fire is kept burning day and night. There are sleeping platforms on the three sides of the walls where the boys sleep at night. They use wooden pillows. Male guests who happen to visit the village have to sleep at BUONZAWL at night. The aged male visitors may, of course, spend the night in their relatives' houses. But it is a matter of great regret to find that such a form of community organisation is almost in a dying state in the Hmar villages of the North Cachar Hills.

THE FAMILY:

Unlike the other tribes, the Hmars have the joint family system. Therefore, when a

son gets married he does not live in a separate house but lives with his parents. He lives in the house of parents till he begets several children. Then he moves into a new house constructed with the help of other family members. The Hmars consider such a family system to be congenial to the growth of fellow-feeling, mutual help and co-operation and a corporate life.

The Hmars follow the patriarchal system of family structure. The father is the head of the family and he must be obeyed by every family member whether young or aged. His words are final and decisive. In other words he is the supreme authority in the household. Being patriarchal the line of descent is traced through the father only. The chief duties of the wife of the head of the family are to raise children, prepare meals for the family, to look after the birds and pigs, to fetch water from the nearby stream or river and to look after the other household duties. Children show great respect to their parents.

According to the customary law of inheritance it is the youngest son who inherits the father's property at his death and the other sons have no claims on the paternal property. But this law is not followed by all the Hmar clans. In some clans reverse is the custom. That is to say, at the death of the father, only the eldest son inherits the father's property and the other sons get nothing. If the man does not leave any male issue, his property will be inherited by the nearest male relative, but not by his wife or daughters. A man who does not have any male issue may adopt a son if he so desires and at his death the adopted son will inherit the property of his foster father.

THE CLANS :

The Hmars of the North Cachar Hills are divided into following twelve clans :

1. Pangamte 2. Rengsate 3. Pazamate
4. Phenate 5. Khawbung 6. Lungthraule
7. Lungtau 8. Leiri 9. Zote 10. Ngurte
11. Khelte 12. Khawhring

These clans have sub clans also. It is very interesting to note that many Hmar villages are named after their clans.

THE MARRIAGE :

The most peculiar thing about the Hmars is that they do not follow exogamy rigidly. A man can marry a girl belonging to his clan although such a marriage is not so favourite with them. That is to say, there is no bar to marriage between a boy and a girl belonging to the same clan. Cross-cousin marriage is always favoured.

Monogamy is the prevailing rule among the Hmars of the North Cachar Hills although there is no bar to polygamy.

Formerly bride price was paid in terms of goods and animals. But now-a-days it is paid in cash which varies from a minimum of Rs. 200/- to a maximum of Rs. 500/-. It is very interesting to note here that the bride price for the youngest daughter is always the highest. The bride price is shared by several relatives of the bride besides her parents. It is rather a peculiar custom. The lion's share of the bride price, of course, goes to the father of the bride. The remaining amount is shared by the maternal uncle, maternal aunt, elder sisters and the nephews and nieces of the bride.

The Hmars have provisions for divorce in their customary law. These provisions are not rigid at all. A woman can get divorce

provided she is capable of persuading her parents to return the bride-price. The refund of bride price by a wife seeking divorce from her husband is called SUMINSUO in Hmar. Similarly a man can divorce his wife provided he pays a lump sum to his wife and thereafter leaves her in her parents' home. This payment is called MAKMAN. The divorcees can remarry according to their choice. If the divorce takes place after mutual agreement between the couple, no payment has to be made from either side.

Widow remarriage is prevalent. The minimum marriageable age for the girls is sixteen while for a boy it is twenty or so.

Marriage by negotiation is the prevailing practice. Under the traditional marriage system when a boy wishes to marry a girl of his choice or liking, he sends his relatives to the parents of the girls with a piece of cloth having blue and white colour, a hoe and a pot of rice-beer. The acceptance of the articles by the parents of the girl signifies the fact that they are agreeable to the marriage. The refusal, on the other hand, signifies the fact that the parents do not approve the marriage. In case of acceptance of the articles, the actual marriage takes place at a later date fixed by the two concerned families according to their convenience. On the day of marriage the parents of the bride entertain the parents and other relatives of the bridegroom with a feast. When the feast is over, the girl is taken to the boy's house where celebration of the actual marriage takes place. After the celebration of actual marriage the boy and the girl live as husband and wife.

BIRTH :

The birth of a child is an occasion for rejoice for the whole family. The most

important ceremony connected with the birth of a child is the name-giving ceremony. In this ceremony the maternal uncle of the new-born baby occupies an important place. The name giving ceremony is performed by the parents by offering a feast to the village elders. The maternal uncle is specially invited to this ceremony to give a name to the child. Although the other people might suggest names for the new born baby, the name given by the maternal uncle will only be accepted.

DEATH :

The Hmars dispose of the dead bodies by burying them in the graves. Death ceremony is performed within one year after the death to release the spirit of the deceased person from the bondage of this earth so that it might go to the heaven which is called VANRAM by the Hmars. When the death ceremony is performed, specially cooked meals are to be offered to the departed one at his grave. The priest also performs the last rite of the deceased person by hanging some colourful clothes and birds' feathers on the grave.

5. RELIGIOUS LIFE :

Like other tribes the traditional religion of the Hmars is also animism. They worship animate and inanimate objects of nature. According to their religious belief each object of nature is possessed by a spirit. Some of these spirits possessed by the natural objects are benevolent while some of them are harmful. These harmful spirits are attributed to every illness and misfortune. To propitiate these spirits they sacrifice birds and animals. The village priest finds out which spirit is

responsible for the illness or the trouble and accordingly suggests what form of sacrifice would satisfy the spirit. Even human sacrifices were also made in the olden days to appease the evil spirit.

Besides believing in the innumerable spirits, the Hmars also believe in the existence of a Supreme Being whom they call PATHIEN. PATHIEN is believed to be the creator of every object of this universe-inanimate or animate. Although PATHIEN is worshipped by them, he is believed to play very little role in their day to day life.

The Hmars believe in the immortality of the soul and life hereafter. They believe in the existence of three heavenly abodes to which the spirits of the dead go after death. These three abodes are MITHIKHUO, PIELRAL and VANRAM. The spirits go to these three places according to their merit which is determined by their actions in this world.

The spirits of those persons who did not lead a virtuous life while they were alive in this world are supposed to go to MITHIKHUO. Here they have to work for their living and it is not a place of bliss.

The second heavenly abode called PIELRAL is better than MITHIKHUO. The spirits of those persons who neither led a virtuous life nor a sinful life while they were alive are supposed to go to PIELRAL. Although it is not an abode of perfect bliss, nevertheless, the spirits who find their place in PIELRAL, can lead a very happy life here because they need not have to work for their living. They are supposed to be fed by fair maidens with good food and wine forever.

The third heavenly abode VANRAM is the real heaven in the true sense of the term. Here perfect bliss, peace and prosperity

reign supreme forever. The holy, virtuous souls are expected to go to VANRAM and live in perfect bliss forever. The spirit spending considerable time in MITHIKUO and PIELRAL may also finally go to VANRAM. Those spirits who find place in VANRAM enjoy equal rights and status irrespective of the kind of life they led in this world while they were alive.

Now most of the Hmars in the North Cachar Hills are found to be Christian converts. They have Churches in their villages where prayers are held regularly in the Christian way. The number of Hmar people who still follow their traditional religion is found to be negligible in the North Cachar Hills district.

6. POLITICAL LIFE :

Every society whether primitive or modern has a system of government of its own. As far as the primitive societies are concerned we can rather call them socio-political organisations.

The traditional village organisation of the Hmars is headed by the village chief who is called LAL. He is assisted in the village administration by the KHAWNBAWL UPA (Chief Assistant) and the KHAWNBAWLS (Assistants). The LAL selects the KHAWNBAWLS from among the village people in consultation with the village elders. Out of the selected KHAWNBAWLS the LAL then selects the KHAWNBAWL UPA. The Hmar village council thus consists of the LAL (Chief), the KHAWNBAWL UPA (the Chief Assistant), the KHAWNBAWLS (the Assistants) and the village elders. The LAL presides over the village council and the council decides all matters connected

with the village affairs. The village council serves the purpose of a village court also as it tries all cases and settles all disputes. For trying cases, the council has to be paid a fee of a pig and this fee is called SALAM. Every member of the council gets a share of the SALAM. Besides, the plaintiff has to entertain the members of the village council with rice beer prior to lending their ears to the complaints of the plaintiff. If the plaintiff wins the case, the cost of rice-beer has to be paid by the party which loses. Although the Chief (LAL) exercises great powers he does not act like a dictator. He rather acts like the head of a democratic government giving sufficient weight to the opinions expressed by the members of the village council and other people.

Another important village official is the crier called TLANGSAM in Hmar. The duty of the TLANGSAM is to proclaim the orders of the village chief and his Assistants in the village so that all people of the village might know what the orders are. Besides he has also to look after the construction of the chief's house, the BUONZWAL, village streets, etc. As a reward for his work, he is exempted from doing any community labour.

Till the Hmars came under the British suzerainty, they fought many wars with the neighbouring tribes for their own existence. They raided the villages of their enemy very often at night and returned to their own villages after capturing as many captives as possible. They also looted the raided villages, and carried the booties with them. It is very interesting to note that they did not attack women and children in their raiding expeditions. They made surprise

attacks on the enemies giving very little time to get themselves ready to meet the raids. Even there were feuds among the Hmar clans themselves. The victorious Hmar warriors received great ovation when they returned to their villages. The ovation was marked by throwing a grand feast by the village people in the honour of the victorious warriors. The warriors put on special headgears having four parts namely, TUIFRIEL, JAUCHAL, TUKTHUN and TAMLAIRANG, as a sign of defeating their enemies. To such headgears the girls tied plaits of red and black cotton to signify the heroism of the warriors. Like the Nagas the Hmar also once practised headhunting.

Till the end of the nineteenth century, slavery was very much rampant among the Hmar people. There were various ways of obtaining serfdom. The widows and orphans who could not support themselves sought food and shelter in the chief's house. In exchange for food and shelter, they had to work for the chief according to their ability. In case of marriage of an orphan girl or the remarriage in case of a widow under the protection of the chief, the bride price would be received by him. This type of serfdom is called INPUI SUOK.

Sometimes the criminals for fear of their lives took refuge in the house of the chief. Because it was only the chief who could protect the offenders from the vengeance of the aggrieved parties. Thus the criminals or the offenders would become the slaves of the chief. This type of serfdom is called CHEMSEN SUOK. The chief would give them no protection as soon as the offenders left the house of the chief by discarding their status as slaves. If the offence of a particular slave was homicide his safety

area would be limited to the chief's house. The aggrieved family might do away with his life outside the premises of the chief's house.

During the famine those families who could not manage food sought food and shelter in the house of the chief. During war or feuds between tribes or clans, the weak families who could not defend themselves might also seek the protection of the village chief. Under such circumstances, the chief gave them protection, food and shelter and the protected and sheltered ones automatically became the slaves of the chief and they had to work for the chief. This type of serfdom is called TUTLUT SUOK. When the war, feud or the famine was over, the chief could, of course, release the persons of such families from the bondage of serfdom if he wished to do so.

The last type of serfdom is known as SAL. The persons who were captured in the tribal wars were given the status of bond slaves. The bond slaves were regarded as inferior human beings having no social status at all. The other Hmars did not allow them to have food in the same place. They could be bought and sold in accordance with the wills of their masters. The children born of the bond slaves would automatically become slaves of their parents' masters.

7. ECONOMIC LIFE :

The principal occupation of the Hmars of the North Cachar Hills is agriculture. Like other hill tribes they also practise Jhum cultivation in the neighbouring hills. The land belongs to the whole community and it is the business of the village council to see that each family is allotted sufficient land for Jhum

cultivation. The allotment of Jhum land to a particular family does not give its ownership right forever. The allotted piece of land will remain under its possession so long the family uses it. The village council allots land to the families of the village at the beginning of the month of January. After the allotment each family will clear the land of the jungles by cutting the trees, bamboos and undergrowth and by burning them later on. When the land is thus prepared, little holes are dug with THISLO (Jhum hoe) and a few grains of paddy are dropped in each hole. In sowing seeds the whole village works as a corporate body finishing sowing in a number of fields in a single day. They sing as they sow making the labour joyful. It is to be mentioned here that sowing is done when the rain is expected to set in.

Although they mainly cultivate rice in their Jhums, they also cultivate other crops and vegetables like maize, castor, cucumber, water-melon, sweet gourd, beans, potatoes, etc. in the Jhums. Thus they raise mixed crops in their Jhums. Weeding is done according to needs. An average family cultivates 2 to 2½ acres of land in a year. A piece of Jhum land can be cultivated only for two years and the new plots are to be selected again. If the rain comes in time they can reap a good harvest. In case of failure of rain the crops also fail and the people remain half-starved. As the soil is not properly prepared, the yield is not so productive. They do wet-land cultivation also wherever water logging low lying lands in between the ridges are available. But the patches of such land are very few. The Hmars of the N.C. Hills are found to be very good horticulturists. They cultivate fruit trees like pineapple, orange, lemons, etc., by terracing the gentle hill slopes.

They sell these articles in the weekly markets and in the nearby railway stations. But the price they get for their products is not reasonable at all. The Hmars—both male and female—are very laborious and economically they are better off than the neighbouring Dimasa Kacharis and the Zemi Nagas.

Weaving is an important household industry in every Hmar family. Every Hmar woman is an expert weaver and the most of the domestic requirements of cloths are met from the family looms which are, of course, loin looms. Their skill in weaving is so superb that they can even weave cloths of artistic designs with ease. Formerly they grew cotton from which yarns were spun. But now-a-days in most cases yarns are purchased from the markets.

Besides weaving, manufacturing of cane and bamboo goods required for domestic use is also another important cottage industry of the Hmars. Most of the products, of course, are meant for domestic use. As has already been mentioned, pottery making is an exclusive trade of the Hmar women. Carpentry and blacksmithy are the two other trades followed by some Hmar people of the North Cachar Hills.

However, the economic conditions of an average Hmar with his primitive tools and implements and age-olds methods of cultivation are far from satisfactory.

8. EPILOGUE :

The Hmars living in the North Cachar Hills district of Assam are a colourful tribe having a distinct entity. Racially they belong to the Mongoloid group. Physically they are sturdy, strong and stout. Although they are generally short, they have a muscular body.

They have a broad and round face with high and prominent cheek bone. Their skin is yellow and sun-tan. They have flat noses and small eyes. The women wear hair plaits on the head instead of leaving them on the back.

The Hmars of the North Cachar Hills are adapting themselves to the rapid social changes brought about by the modern civilization. The institution of chieftainship has crumbled

down. Acceptance of Christianity has brought them to the touch of modern education which in its turn helps them to broaden their outlook. They have almost given up the traditional customs and religion associated with so many superstitions. They are gradually learning the modern methods of cultivation. To say in a word, they are now trying their best to adapt themselves to the new values of life brought about by modern civilization.

GLOSSARY :

SINLUNG—	The original place of habitation of the Hmars.	Charchini—	Funnel made of fine bamboo strips
Khawthlang—	Westerner	Hai-fien—	Bamboo spoon
Sawngka—	The open porch of a Hmar house.	Mui—	Spinning machine
Sumphuk—	The enclosed varandah of a Hmar house.	Theiot—	Ginning machine
Tap—	Hearth	Punkol—	Loin loom
Khumpui—	The bed meant for the head of a Hmar family.	Wengkhlen—	Big wooden dish
Namthlak—	The back porch of a Hmar house.	Thislo—	Hoe for Jhum
Paikong—	Basket for carrying goods	Chem—	Dao
Faibong—	Cane strap	Hai—	Axe for Jhum
Rael—	Basket for keeping valuables	Kaite—	Sickle
Leikhor—	Basket meant for storing paddy	Fai—	Hunting spear
Kokte—	Basket for keeping dried chillies.	Thal—	Bow and arrow
Dan—	Bamboo basket for measuring paddy.	Dombell—	Brass made tobacco pipe
Konghong—	Small cane basket used by women at the time of sowing seeds.	Tuibur—	Ordinary tobacco pipe
Paikul—	Small bag made of cane strips.	Darkai—	Dhuti
Lukhum—	Cane hat	Paihar—	Chadar (White)
Darkok—	Cane box meant for keeping Bongpoi, a musical disc	Pondom—	Striped Chadar
		Lukam—	Turban
		Tuifriel Janchal, Tukthum, Tamlairang }	Ornaments for headgear
		Tanlaupon—	Coloured and striped Chadar
		Ponkerne—	Breast cloth for woman
		Tharlaijom—	Coloured shirt for woman
		Kunlaisen—	Costly Chadar for woman
		Thrifang—	Costly sea-shell
		Thriwal—	Necklace of costly beads meant for man

Changfeng—	Brass made bracelet	Buonzawl—	Bachelors' dormitory
Harban—	Zinc made armlet	Valupa—	Youth Commander
Nabe—	Silver ear-ring	Suminsno—	A type of divorce
Thripal—	Necklace of costly beads meant for woman	Makman—	Return of bride price
Thirdom—	Necklace of ordinary beads	Vanram—	Actual heaven
Zu—	Rice-beer	Pathien—	Supreme God
Khong—	Drum	Mithikhno—	Lower heaven (a kind of hell)
Jamlung—	Brass-metal gong	Pielral—	Upper heaven
Bonpolbo—	Amusical instruments having three brass-metal discs	Lal—	Village Chief
		Khawnbawl	
		Upa—	Principal Assistant to the Hmar Chief
Dalaipong	{ A set of heavy gongs made of brass-metal	Khawnbawl—	Assistant to the chief
Laiponbo		Salam—	Court fee of the village council
Chongrelbo		Input Suok—	Ordinary serfdom
Tumda—	Flute	Chemsen Suok—	Slavery granted to criminals
Tingtang—	One stringed musical instru- ment	Tutlut Suok—	Bond slaves

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THE BODO-KACHARIS OF ASSAM —A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

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The Bodoes who belong to Tibeto-Burman speaking Indo-Mongoloid tribe form an important section of the non-Aryan people of Assam. They migrated from their original abode in Tibet and Western China to Assam long anterior to birth of Jesus Christ. By dint of their intrepidity and political genius they had been able to exercise their sovereignty in Assam for a considerable period extending up to the quarter part of 19th Century A.D. The names of places, rivers and mountains of Assam still bear testimony to their dominance. Their habitation was not limited in Assam only, but extended up to the then Bangladesh which included the present Bangladesh and West Bengal, then North Behar, Tripura and lower region of Nepal.

The Bodos are identified in various names in different parts of the country. In West Bengal and Nepal they are known as Meches. In the Western part of Assam they identify themselves as Boro, and in other parts of Assam as Kachari. The Bodos of North Cachar Hills are called Dimasa. Most of the aborigines of Tripura belong to the Bodo

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stock and they identify themselves as Borok—equivalent to Boro.

The great Bodo group includes several classes namely, Boro, Kachari, Koch, Rabha, Garo, Lalung, Dimasa, Tipra, Chutiya, Deuri, Moran and Miri. In the Mahabharata as well as in the Puranas, the Bodos are designated as Kiratas, Mlechas and Asuras. A large section of the Bodos embraced Hinduism since the time of remote past. The Hinduised Bodos abandoned their ancestral language, religion and culture, instead they adopted Hindu names, surnames along with Hindu religion, custom and culture.

The Clans :

The unconverted Bodos have been retaining their distinctive culture, language and tradition. They have also retained their own clans or Gotras. In spite of different clans they have no class distinction in the social affairs and no bar in inter-marriage and inter dining. The clan is termed Ari by themselves. Their Aries are :- 1. Swargiari, 2. Basumatary, 3.

Mosari, 4. Khangkhari, 5. Doimari, 6. Marzari, 7. Goyari, 8. Mahilari, 9. Ouari, 10. Hojoari, 11. Islari, 12. Lahari, 13. Sibingari, 14. Bibiziari/Bibaiari, 15. Bing-Singari, 16. Ganjlerari, 17. Fadangari, 18. Samphrangari, 19. Mao-marari, 20. Ramsari, 21. Kherkatari, 22. Thaletari and 23. Borgaoari.

The Bodos of Jalpaiguri and Cooh Behar districts in West Bengal have twelve Clans—such as—1. Bamoda, 2. Basumata, 3. Chongphtang, 4. Chongpharang, 5. Israri, 6. Kutajari, 7. Masari, 8. Narzinari, 9. Nobaiyari, 10. Phadangari, 11. Sabayari, and 12. Sibingari.

They write their surnames after their own clans. Some write Boro while some others write Brahma according to their religions. The Dimasa Kacharis have their own clans—Sengphong and Zuluk for male and female folks separately. The male Dimasas have 40 clans and the female clans are 42.

Social Structure :

The Bodos have a democratic outlook in social structure. Although they belong to different clans, there is neither classification nor inequality of the status among them. Every clan has equal right and position in the society. Irrespective of clans and religions they live together in a village with a co-operative spirit. In every village there is a headman called Gaonbura who is selected unanimously by the villagers. He is the supreme in all the matters within the village. A person beyond Gaonbura is also selected by the villagers. He is called Halmaji, the village chowkidar. He is given a considerable amount of remuneration in the form of paddy from the village fund. A nominal fee is given to the Gaonbura for settlement of a dispute by any complainant. For a

marriage in the village, a fee of one rupee is also given to him by the guardian of the boy or the girl. This fee is called "Bārihāga".

Besides the village committees, a bigger organisation is formed mouza wise. This sort of organisation is also formed at sub-divisional level. Constitution of the society is framed by this organisation. An executive body is constituted with several members who are elected in a general meeting. All the matters that can not be tackled by the village committee are brought to the notice of the President of the Mouza committee. Any offender or accused violating or disobeying the verdict given by the committee is excommunicated from the society.

Family Structure and heredity :

The Bodos follow the patriarchal system and as such father is the head of the family. The entire property moveable and immoveable appertain to the father who is responsible for maintaining the family. As per social custom paternal property is inherited by sons. If a man is polygamist all the sons by his wives have the equal hereditary rights on the paternal property. Generally the eldest son enjoys the lion's share of it. At the event of death of a sonless father the close male relatives may claim the property of the deceased even at the existence of widow and married daughters. The adopted son also loses no right to inherit his foster father's property. Generally it is seen that separation of a son occurs after his marriage.

Religion :

Saivism is the prominent feature of religion among the Bodos. Siva is worshipped

with rice-beer and flesh as their ancestral Chief deity. They believe in super power of Siva who is popularly called by them—"Bāthou Borai" or "Khorā Borai Maharaja". He is represented by a euphorbia plant called Sizu. Māinao, who is also called "Buli Buri" is worshipped as second to Siva. She is worshipped as goddess of wealth. The Bodos like other Hindus appear to be polytheist. Besides Bathou Borai and Mainao they worship many other gods and goddesses such as Agrang, Khoila, Khaji, Rajkhandra, Rajputtur, Bura ali, Ali Bura, Asu Mainao, Sali Mainao, Bagraja, Basumati and Choudri. Deities are called Modai by the Bodos who believe them as originators of illness, famine, misfortune and natural calamities. Therefore to propitiate the gods and goddesses they worship them by offering rice, wine, bananas, pigs, goats, poultry etc. Unlike other Hindus the Bodos do not appear to be idolaters. They have neither temple nor any fixed place and time for worship.

In between May and June while new water comes in volume the villagers gather in a place outside the village and sacrifice animals and poultry and offer wine, bananas, betel nuts and leaves in the names of different gods and goddesses. They also place a goat's head or a pair of living pigeon in a raft and set afloat on a river to propitiate the river god. This is called "Phojaonai" or Bhāsāni.

The religious rites are mainly performed by Oja (Priest) who is assisted by Douri. Oja recites Mantras (spells) and Douri offers oblation and sacrifices animals and birds. All these customs refer to the traditional religion only. In modern time a large section of the Bodos have adopted a vedic religion termed "Brahma" while another section is converted into Christianity. The traditional religious rites

are no longer in vogue among the Brahmas and the Christians of the Bodo Community.

The Bodo deities are generally classified into two categories-viz. (1) House-hold deities and (2) Village deities. The household deities are : (I) Bathou Borai, (II) Mainao otherwise called Buli Buri or Bhulli Buri, (III) Asu mainao, (IV) Sali mainao, (V) Song Raja, (VI) Song Buri, (VII) Kumari, (VIII) Bhandari etc.

The village deities are : (I) Mahadeo, (II) Jōmōn Buroi, (III) Jōmōn Borai, (IV) Bōrai Raja, (V) Alāi Khungri, (VI) Bilai Khungri, (VII) Bis Khungri, (VIII) Iskhungri, (IX) Bira, (X) Kubir, (XI) Bura Ailong, (XII) Khaji, (XIII) Ablā Khumgr, (XIV) Agrang, (XV) Khōila, (XVI) Rajkhandra, (XVII) Basumati, (XVIII) Choudri etc.

Festival :

Kherai is the greatest religious festival of the Bodos. It is performed in the form of worship in conjunction with dance and songs with a view to propitiating Siva, Mainao and other deities for their good harvest and for their protection from misfortune. The Oja (priest) recites Mantras and Doudini (Deodhani) speaks oracles in Kherai. Revellers sing and dance around the Bathou (alter) to the accompaniment of drums and Siphung (flute) for the whole night. Sacrifices of birds and oblation of fruits, rice and wine are imperative in Kherai.

The new year festival which is termed "Boisāgu" is observed by the Bodos with grandeur. On the last day of Chaitra, the Bodo women sweep clean and rub with cowdung the houses and the yards. Cows are smeared with a black substance prepared from a mixture of mustard oil and carbon that sticks

to the cooking pots. After smearing the horns and hoofs with the mixture of mustard oil and turmeric juice, the cows are washed and let loose in the field. On the first day of the new year, sons and daughters in the early part of the morning touch the feet of parents who bless them in return. Daughters present newly woven towels to their fathers and brothers. Having finished this job all the members of the family bow down before Bathou and offer chicken and rice beer to him (Bathou Borai). The worship being over, all start drinking their national beverage. During festival they collect donations by singing and dancing from door to door till the festival concludes with a community feast on the seventh day of the new year.

Domasi—the Bhogali Bihu is observed in a simple manner. The young boys appear to be more interested than others in this festival. They collect eggs, rice and cakes singing and dancing in groups from house to house. They erect a number of "Belagurs" (Meji) with paddy straws in an open field and burn them at the dawn of Pousa Sankranti.

Kātrigāchā is popularly known as Kati Bihu or Kongali Bihu in Assamese. On the last day of Ahin, a pair of earthen lamps are lit in the paddy field and some paddy plants are smeared with mustard oil with the help of a long bamboo stick. At home clay lamps are lit in Bathou in front of main dwelling house, granary and cowshed and also at the main gate of the home-stead. Moho-honai or Ori-honai : At the night of full moon of Aghon, village cowherds collect donations in the form of rice and pice. They strike the ground with sticks to the accompaniment of song and dance while collecting donations. In the olden days they built a stack of paddy obtained from the

first thrash and two boys in the make up of old man and women danced around the stack. This might refer perhaps to Siva and Parbati.

Marriage :

Although the impact of new civilization has brought many alterations in the social life of the Bodos, yet some of the old custom and traditions do not appear to have been obsolete among them. In regard to marriage, bride price is still prevailing among them in some places. It is ranging from Rs. 25/- to Rupees 300/-. Gorjia system also can not be said to be totally absent. The prospective bridegroom stays and renders manual labour in his would be father-in-law's house for one or two years which may be extended up to four years in some families. Marriage is granted only after probationary period and that also depends upon satisfaction of the guardian.

Widow marriage is in vogue. Levirate marriage is also still admissible. Senior levirate of course cannot be said a custom. It is prohibited while junior levirate is allowed by the society. Sororate is a custom even now. But cross-cousin marriage is strictly prohibited while parallel cousin marriage is not out of vogue.

Originally the Bodos might have been endogamous. But in modern time they appear to be exogamous. The question of hypergamy does not arise among the Bodos. Because they have neither classification nor difference in status. All are of equal status irrespective of clans.

As a rule the Bodos are monogamous. Polygamy is not encouraged. The women section of the society are protesting against this custom by passing resolutions in the meetings but

have not been valued. Polyandry is totally absent. It is not known whether it was prevalent in the past. Inter marriage was absolutely forbidden. But now-a-days it is occurring though not looked upon with favour by the society. Marriage by kidnapping a girl prevalent in the past has now been strictly prohibited. But the "Kharsonnāy" system is still in vogue. In this system a marriageable girl goes herself without knowledge of her parents to the house of her beloved one and surrenders herself for marriage. This is also recognised by the society.

Philosophy about death : The Bodos believe that human beings cannot escape destiny. Destiny is subject to Karma (deed). They also believe in transmigration of soul. The soul of a dead person may enter into any body according to the Karma done in previous birth.

To ascertain the rebirth of a dead person a small part of the yard is rubbed with soft clay and covered with a winnowing fan while the dead body is being carried away to the cremation ground. When all return home from the cremation ground the winnowing fan is removed to see what foot print is there on the clay. If it is of a cat, it is presumed that the deceased will take rebirth in a cat family. Their another belief is that the soul of a dead person stays near the house till the shradhā ceremony (funeral feast) is held.

Daily life :

The Bodos live on agriculture. The cultivation is done with plough and bullocks. In olden times they practised shifting cultivation when land was available in plenty. This practice is no longer seen among them. All the adult members of the family remain busy with their daily works. In busy sowing season both male and female work in the field for the day. In this season they use to take meals three times a day. During winter the women folk engage themselves in spinning and weaving. They abandon themselves to mirth by singing and dancing under the influence of their national beverage at leisures. Their mode of living is very simple. They know how to enjoy happy and peaceful life.

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THE INDO-MONGOLOIDS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CULTURE AND CIVILIZATION OF INDIA

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INTRODUCTION

The term 'Indo-Mongoloid' is applied to a large group of people living in Eastern India. In their physical features and linguistic affinities, they belong to the Tibeto-Chinese branch. They are sturdy people with short and medium stature, flat face and nose, narrow and slanting eyes with epicanthic fold and scanty hair on the face and body. They are believed to have entered into India through the mountain passes in the Northeast from the Mongolian world in eastern Tibet and south-western China possibly in the New Stone Age about 4000 B. C. They brought into N. E. India, the technique of food production by plant cultivation and domestication of animals. They are in all likelihood the first cultivators of rice in India. They had introduced for the first time in India the art of rearing silk-worm as well as spinning and weaving of silk cloths.

Assam—The Reservoir of Kiratas or the Indo-Mongoloids.

Assam, according to Prof. S. K. Chatterji

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(1970 : 9-10), served as the reservoir of the Indo-Mongoloids who are known as *Kirātas* throughout *Aryāvarta* since the Mahabharata's time. Different branches of the great Sino-Tibetan speaking people which had their original homes near the headwaters of the Yang-tsze-kiang and the Huang Ho rivers pushed on towards the south and the west during the Late Neolithic period when there developed a population expansion in southwest China as a sequel to the introduction of food-producing technology in human society. Large groups of people equipped with the knowledge of food-producing technology from this region in China began to infiltrate into Northeast India through the mountain passes over the Eastern Himalayas and the Patkai ranges. In India they came to be known as Bodos (Bod, being referred to Tibet). The Bodos in course of time became the most widespread and dominant race not only in the Brahmaputra valley, but also in north Bengal. The Mongoloid tribes in the Eastern Himalayas, now organised as a centrally administered state under the name Arunachal Pradesh, appear to have infiltrated

into India in a later period. The latest arrivals of the Mongoloids in the Brahmaputra valley is a branch of the Thai people, known as Ahoms, who belong to the Siamese-Chinese linguistic families. Probably preceding the Bodos were various Himalayan tribes of the Sino-Tibetan family who spread into Nepal and were to be found as far west as the East Punjab plains, some of whom actually settled in the sub-Himalayan tracts of the Ganga valley. There is also evidence of their having penetrated as far west as Sind and as far south as the Bastar state.

Hinduisation of the Indo-Mongoloids

The Mongoloid peoples of Assam known as *kirātas* to the Vedic Aryans were well known throughout north India during the Vedic Age. The first kingdom in Eastern India was known to have established by the Bodos. The Bodo ruling family appears to have come under the influence of Hindu India since its very inception. The ruling family was given the status of *Kshatriyas* by the Hindu missionaries of north India by connecting the origin of the Bodo ruling family to the great divinity of Hinduism—the Vishnu. The Sanskritised name of the Bodo kingdom, Pragjyotisha further suggests Hindu influence over the non-Aryan tribes of the Brahmaputra valley from very early times. This could be looked upon as the greatness of the Bodos through which the Indo-Mongoloid ruling family of Assam was able to make a great contribution to the synthesis of culture and fusion of races that took place in the formation of the composite Indian nation.

It was accepted by the Bodos that the ruling house of Pragjyotisha and of later Kamarupa was descended from Vishnu. The

son of Vishnu and the Earth goddess was Naraka and his son was Bhagadatta. Bhagadatta was regarded as the most powerful ruler in the east during the time of Mahabharata (C. 800 B.C.). There is considerable amount of positive information about Pragjyotisha, its people, its products and its king in the *Sabha-Parvan* of Mahabharata.

Several oriental scholars, who gave authoritative interpretations of Pragjyotisha in *Sabha-Parvan*, are of opinion that the country of Pragjyotisha is represented by Assam and some parts of north Bengal. It extended from the Himalayas to the coast of the Bay of Bengal. Bhagadatta took part in the *Kurukshetra* war as an ally of *Kauravas* with his Army of *Kiratas*, *Cinas* and the sea-coast dwellers. He presented to Yudisthira fleet of horses and vessels made of semiprecious stone or jadeite, the latter object established beyond doubt that the Bodo-kings of Assam had also maintained trade connections with China. Bhagadatta's other presents were swords with handles of pure ivory, horns of rhinoceros, buffalo and bamboo roots and wood.

Bhagadatta could, therefore, be regarded as a significant symbol of Indian cultural unity. His association with the ruling houses of northern India brought the Bodo tribes of eastern India in an easy and incredible process of integration of the entire non-Aryan population of the Brahmaputra valley within the ever expanding Hindu India. The ruling monarchs of Kamarupa who called themselves the Lord of Pragjyotisha took pride in tracing their descent from Naraka.

The Advent of the Siamese-Chinese Speaking Ahoms

The migration of the Bodos into the Brahmaputra valley is a prehistoric event.

We have also full account of the migration of a very powerful group of Mongoloid people into the valley during the late medieval period. This group of Mongoloid people who are regarded as the first cousins of the Bodos, is known as Ahom. The advent of the Ahoms into India formed a part of a general movement of the Thai people from South China which was going on during the second half of the first millennium A.D. in Southeast Asia. This human movement from South China led to the settlement of Laos in Indo-China, of the Thai or Siamese in northern Thailand, and of the Shans in northern Burma. The Ahoms belong to the Shan tribe of northern Burma. Linguistically, physically as well as culturally, the Shans or the Ahoms are regarded as the first cousins of the Bodos and other Tibeto-Burman groups already established in Assam and India. The first Ahom invaders consisted of 9000 men, women and children. As the bulk of the invaders were adult males, they were to be provided with wives from among the local Bodo tribes. In this way miscegenation among these two branches of Indo-Mongoloids started early. The Ahom conquered and ruled over the Brahmaputra valley for six centuries and they allowed to be absorbed into their Hindu Assamese-speaking subject of the Caucasoid Aryan race who came to Assam from the Middle Ganga Valley during the Early Historic and the Medieval Periods.

Assam has thus to meet the movements of People from the East as well as the West since the Prehistoric times involving the advent into India the Tibeto-Chinese speaking Mongoloids and the Indo-European speaking Aryans. Assam thus played a vital role in Indianisation of the diverse cultural and racial elements which helped very largely in the absorption of

the Indo-Mongoloid Kirata element in the formation of the composite character of the great Indian nation.

The Ahoms were endowed with a rare gift, that is their literary tradition in their own Thai script. The Ahom ruling race of Assam kept up the literary tradition alive upto 17th century A.D. and built up a remarkable historical literature in it, the *Buranji* literature. But gradually the Ahom culture, language and literature succumbed to the ever-growing influence of the Aryan Assamese, and this process brought about the final linguistic extinction of the Ahoms by the middle of the last century.

The Bodo Kingdom in Eastern India :

The Hinduised Bodo race of the Brahmaputra Valley, which was able to give to the valley its first monarchical kingdom since the Mahabharata's time, rose to the height of power as one of the most powerful and civilized kingdom in Northeastern India during seventh century A.D. when Kumar Bhaskara Varman was on the throne of Kamarupa. Bhaskara Varman was a contemporary of Emperor Harsha-Vardhana, who is regarded as one of the most powerful and enlightened rulers of Northern India at that time. During his time, the dominion of the Bodo-Kingdom extended not only over the entire Brahmaputra Valley but also over a greater part of North Bengal and also over a part of Bangladesh (i.e. Sylhet or the former Srihatta where a copper-plate inscription of Kumar Bhaskara Varman has been found). Kumar Bhaskara Varman was not only a mere provincial ruler of a distant frontier kingdom, but also a great patron of Indian culture, religion and language. In 644 A.D. he visited Harsha-Vardhana in his own kingdom in northern India and fully

participated in the cultural and intellectual life of Hindu India of his time. He was the host to Hiuen T'sang whom he invited to his court in Kamarupa, when the great Chinese scholar was staying and studying at Nalanda. After Bhagadatta, Bhaskara Varman played the most vital role in bringing about the cultural

synthesis in the Brahmaputra valley which brought the Mongoloid kingdom of the eastern frontier into the mainstream of Hindu India.

Indirect influence of the Kirata people in the evolution of the late vedic and Brahmanical Hindu rituals can also be postulated in this way.

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SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ASPECTS IN THE TRIBAL PREDOMINATED AREAS OF ASSAM PLAINS :

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The tribal social setup of Assam plains is a heterogeneous one with diversified cultural heritage of each component units. The social behaviour, customary traditions, superstitions etc. vary from community to community. Therefore, these social forces require analytical approach so that the socio-economic constraints inherent in them may be brought out to the surface and a sponteneity created among the tribal communities for their participation in the developmental efforts meant for them.

Sufficient literatures have already been published bearing on the problems of development of tribal economy as such our observations in this context will primarily be confined to the socio-economic constraints seen to have been emerging at the field level.

The characteristic feature of the tribal economy prevailing in the plains tribal areas of Assam is that although agriculture is the primary occupation of the majority of tribal people† it has been taken as a way of life and there is explicit lack of seriousness to treat it as an industry. Secondly, there is a tendency to transfer and alienate cultivable land holdings causing depletion in the already depleted land holding positions of the tribal families which give rise to underemployment or disguised employment to the available working force and the consequential lesser output.

Thirdly, the preponderance of unscientific elements in agricultural operations and lack of persuasion or motivation for the use of scientific inputs induce to cause loss of productivity though tribal areas are not

† The income pattern of an agricultural family of Assam has been found to be as under on the basis of a survey conducted in 5 composite tribal and non-tribal villages of Assam plains by the Agro-Economic Research centre for N.E. India, Jorhat from 1961 to 1968.

1. Cultivation—	38%
2. Service—	29%
3. Agricultural labour—	3%
4. Livestock, horticulture etc.—	5%
5. Trade & commerce—	11%
6. Others	14%

(Quoted by K. Gogoi & I. Ali in their article appeared in 'Poyobhara'—5th year, 16th issue, 1st Nov. 1974, P. 4—5).

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altogether nil in resorting to intensive scientific cultivation. Fourthly, there is the imbalance of expenditure over income giving rise to weaker deposit base, very slow or nil capital formation and the consequential indebtedness of the rural masses. Fifthly, it is seen that there is a natural nourishment of an attitude of indifference towards resorting to activities relating to trade, industries, business or commerce though a gradual dilation of this negative approach has of late begun. Sixthly, the prolonged socio-religious rituals very often tell upon the efficiency of the working force in the form of loss of man-days.

The above problems are interlinked and multi-dimensional as such a collective approach is necessary for striking a balance in the marginal or subsistence economy of the tribal people. A proper motivation of the tribal cultivators will also go a long way in making the economic base market oriented.

The greatest problem of tribal economy is centering round the availability of agricultural land for deriving a stable livelihood of an unit of family. There is therefore ample scope for discussing the question of land holding when 93% of the tribal cultivators in the plains areas are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. In this connection the distribution of the number of households (ST/SC/Others) according to the size class of land possessed in the ITDP No. 5 (Integrated Tribal Development Project, Nalbari) has been quoted here as a representative picture obtaining in the tribal predominated areas of the State of Assam.* Though these figures donot exclusively speak about the tribal households, nonetheless the tribal population constitute 53.06% of the total project area population (Block-wise, Baska-

54.52%, Tihu-Barama 51.96% and Tamulpur 51.83%). It is therefore presumed that the appended table will reflect the size class of land possessed by majority of the tribal households in the project area.

TABLE-I

Size class of land possessed (in hectares)	No. of households	Percentage to total
1. Below 1.0	12,188	43
2. 1.0 to 5.0	15,222	54
3. 5 to 10 & above	856	3
Total	28,266	100

It can be inferred from the above Table that if 2 hectares are taken to be the minimum required for an economic holding, then only 12,188 families out of 28,266 or 43% of the total families of the Project area are not at all economically viable from cultivation as a source of living. The percentage will go up further if the 1 acre land holders included in the 1.0 to 5.0 acre group are added to it. With the addition of this percentage, the non-economic holding group may exceed 50% which leads to the general conclusion that agricultural occupation in tribal pockets at least to the extent of 50% is a losing venture. The Bench Mark survey data relating to other I.T.D.P. areas also go to corroborate this observation.

Having taken a stand on this survey it can convincingly be summarised that if the trend of productivity of the tribal communities is to be accelerated, the problem of agricultural land in tribal pockets must be attended to on a priority basis. Otherwise economic growth of tribal areas will continue to be stagnant. In this context it requires to be explained that although land holdings per unit of family

will go down with the emergence of new generations and sharing of family property, yet individual households are also responsible for transferring and alienating whatever land remains after sharing with other family members. The tendency to transfer or alienate land gets upper hand at the slightest hammering of financial stringency or through the provocations of the middlemen, who offer some fabulous prices unexpected by them. By way of a reference it may be stated here that an investigation was carried out in september, 1973 in Dispur village within the Gauhati revenue circle. The investigation showed that out of 42 households living in this village, 19 households had disposed of their land amounting to 98 Bighas 5 Lessas covered by periodic Patta to such persons who were outsiders and non-tribal. Another investigation in Jatia village near Dispur was carried out at the same time which showed that out of the 54 tribal households of this village, 12 families had already transferred 24 Bighas 7 Lessas of periodic patta land and the ownership had gone to the non-resident outsiders. One important aspect of these transfers was that although both the villages were covered by tribal belt restrictions with effect from 3.9.55 to 30.7.67 * major part of the transfers had taken place, during this period as per verbal evidence given to us by the inhabitants of the village. It was also quite surprising to see that there were 23 households in Jatia village who were totally landless, but no body of these landless families could purchase an iota of land so transferred to outsiders. This was perhaps an indication of the deplorable state of the pecuniary condition of the tribal households around a growing city like Gauhati.

Further, the same investigation carried out at the Turukpara village under Boko circle had revealed that out of the 61 households of this village, 20 households or about 33% of the total households had mortgaged their lands and the land so mortgaged accounted for 38.8% of the total periodic patta land of the village. The classification of the mortgazees were as follows :

- (a) Insider Tribal mortgaze (local) — 10Nos
- (b) Outsider Tribal mortgaze — 4 "
- (c) Outsider Non-Tribal — 7 "
- (d) Insider Non-tribal — 2 "

An interesting feature of these pledgement was that there were no written documents and no time limit was specified. Had there been a time limit, the mortgagor would have tried to redeem their lands by this or that means before the expiry of the stipulated period. But neither the mortgaze nor the mortgagor prefer a time limit ostensibly to perpetuate the mortgaze for mutual advantage but the likelihood of the mortgaze becoming the first beneficiary in such a non-extant stipulation was the greatest.

It was also revealed in the study that although major portions of the mortgazes were done out of dire necessity for obtaining agricultural inputs in absence of easily available agricultural finance, there were also occasions when mortgazes were effected for meeting socio-religious rituals of petty nature. In this way the process of alienation of tribal land had been intensified primarily due to very slow rate of growth of capital formation which was the direct consequential effect of weaker deposit base of the tribal households.

For augmenting the weaker deposit base, the question of balanced budget comes. But this appears to be a far cry specially in the

* Source—'Tribal Bench Mark Survey, 1978' conducted by the Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Govt. of Assam.

* South Kamrup (Gauhati) Tribal Belt (Ref. Govt. Notification No. RSD-26/64/Pt-I/33 dt. 30.7.69)

budgetary pattern of the people of Assam both tribal and non-tribal. In this context reference may be made of the findings of a survey on household budget conducted from 1961 to 1968 (already referred to at page 61). The survey reveals that the average yearly income of an agricultural family is Rs. 1700 but the expenditure is Rs. 1800 which clearly reflects a deficit trend of the household budget. About the pattern of expenditure, it has been said that an agricultural family spends on average 71% of the total income in foodstuff alone. The Table below gives a detailed picture of the expenditure pattern.

TABLE—II

Sl. No. of items.	Head of expenditure	Percentage of average expenditure.
1.	Foodstuff —	71.3
2.	Drinks and intoxicants—	5.1
3.	Education—	1.7
4.	Medical—	2.7
5.	Social obligation and reception.—	4.8
6.	Dress & costume—	5.9
7.	Luxurious items—	1.3
8.	Others—	7.2
		100.00

Although by the measuring rod of time the above statistics have become sufficiently old, yet it gives some insight on the domestic budgetary trend of the average households both tribal and non-tribal. It is surprising to see the investment in education which is lower than what is spent in dress and costume. When educational investment is low the mental receptivity is bound to be low. Again expenditure on education and Medical together is lower than the expenditure on drinks and intoxicants. Of course with the rising cost

in the recent years, some deviations in the expenditure pattern may be possible. But there is no scope to think that the deficit trend of household budget in respect of the tribal household has by this time been reversed. Due to the operation of this deficit trend, the intensity of rural indebtedness has made much headway, specially in areas where education and communication are relatively poor.

In an investigation conducted in February, 1981 in the eastern part of Darrang District a comparatively backward area inhabited by Mishing and Boro-Kacharis, it has been noticed that in this part of the country, the rate of interest for one crop season (say 8 or 9 months) is 100 percent. Over and above this, such customary practices like 'Aagmukhchoya' (i.e. advance payment of rent at fixed rate on leased out land obtained by mortgage), 'Darkata-protha', (Prefixation of the sale price of a crop irrespective of price-fluctuation at the time of harvest), 'Agdhandiya' (sale of crop before harvesting and in some cases before plantation) are also prevailing with equal vigour. These customary practices prevailing in the tribal predominated areas act upon the socio-economic fabric of the society in such a way that if land reform Acts are not efficiently enforced, the economic fluidity will continue to be at the same stage as at present. In this context a few case studies may be referred to—

In the Lohitmukh area of Darrang district, one tribal gentleman took a loan of 2 qtl. of paddy (5 mds) on the 1st. week of February, 1981 under the 'Darkata' system at Rs. 50/- per 40 kg. (1 md). It was agreed that payment of the loan would begin on and from 22 February of the same year in terms of 100kg (1 qtl) of mustard seeds. The 200 kgs (5 mds) of paddy would cost Rs. 250/- @ Rs. 50/- per

40 kg. (1 md) and the cost of one qtl. of mustard seed was Rs. 450 at the minimum. Therefore the interest of Rs. 250/- for a period of 15 days amounted to Rs. 200 (450-250).

In the Bhalukaguri village of the same area one tribal cultivator owed some amount to another tribal 'Mahajan' from 3/4 years back. On the first part of 1981 the Mahajan had reminded him that his dues had swelled up to Rs. 4000/-. In response to this, the indebted cultivator immediately made payment with 4½ full bags (one bag usually contains 90 kgs.) of mustard seeds. But the Mahajan gave him no categorical indication as to how much his debt had come down and how much remained as outstanding. Perhaps the Mahajan preferred to maintain silence on this point ostensibly to keep alive the flow of his income and to perpetuate the hold over his prey.

In the Bhogpur village within Helem gaon Panchayat area, the tribal cultivators were found to be living mostly on borrowing. On enquiry it was learnt that the villagers usually pay 7 mds. of paddy (1 md=40 kgs as customarily accepted) towards principal and interest for a 9 month period loan (mid April to mid January next) of Rs. 100/-. In terms of money, the price of 7 mds. of paddy came to Rs. 350 @ 50/- per md. Out of Rs. 350/- the principal amounted to Rs. 100/- and the balance interest. In other words the rate of interest stood at 250% for a period of 9 months.

There are multiplicity of instances of transactions in tribal villages where most exacting terms are borne by the indebted families. Although the village Mahajans have some positive role in the socio-economic growth of tribal villages by mitigating the immediate financial needs of the tribal cultivators, the exploitations perpetrated by the Afgan nationals specially in the north Kamrup and

north Goalpara areas perhaps defy description. Along with them, the Bhutanese money lenders (lenders of woolen garments to be more precise) are also not lagging behind.

The intensity of the rural indebtedness may to a greater extent be diluted by revitalising the village granary system usually seen in the tribal villages. As for example, the village granary of Belguri village in Masalpur area of Kamrup district may be referred to. The produce of the 24 Bighas of land under possession of the village community is deposited in the village granary and out of this, loan in kind is given at the time of distress to the members of the village @25% of interest which is also to be paid in kind. Out of the interest so collected a separate educational fund has been created from which loans are extended to the needy college going students at the rate of Rs. 200 per students for a period of 3 months but without interest. In case of school students the amount advanced is Rs. 50/- per students for the same period and without charging any interest. Thus considerable help has been extended by this village granary in respect of education and a good deal of resistance to indebtedness has been made possible. Over and above this, the Managing committee of the village cultural organisation (Kristi Bikas Sangha) has created a separate Fund named 'ANCHUMAI AFAT' for investment in the village itself. Loans are advanced to the local villagers @1md. (40 kg.) of interest per year for a principal of Rs. 100/-. If the cost of 1 md. (40 kg.) of paddy is calculated @ Rs. 50/-, the interest rate comes to 50% per annum which is quite reasonable in the context of exorbitant rates charged by the village Mahajans and

unscrupulous traders. We hope, that the village granaries in the line of Belguri should sprung up in every tribal village so as to counteract the growing tendency of exploitation by unscrupulous money lenders and traders. Simultaneously, there should be a social vigilance not to give undue advantage to money lenders. Along with this social consciousness, the tribal youths should also step into the tertiary and secondary sector of avocations, so as to widen the deposit base of the tribal cultivators. There is the plains Tribal Development Corporation to help the tribal youths for providing working capital to all ventures of trade and industry including commerce and business. With this end in view, the Corporation has already opened no less than 18 local offices and till 15th December, 1979, it has extended consumption loan to the tune of 21.29 lakhs and financial loan against specific schemes to the tune of Rs. 29.06 lakhs, (Assam Tribune dt. 20.2.80). It is hoped that with the expansion of the Assam plains Tribes Development Corporation Ltd. the tribal youths will step in where their forefathers feared to land. Enterprising tribal youths should also be shown the working of Forest Labour Co-operative Societies of Gujrat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh; Grain Golas of Bihar, Orissa, and West Bengal; Agricultural Farming Co-operative Society of Tentola in Madhya Pradesh; Scheduled Tribes Co-operative Finance and Development Corporation of Andhra Pradesh; Assam Horticultural Crop Development Corporation for Coffee and Rubber and the LAMP Societies of Assam Hill districts.

While speaking about the need of raising the status of capital formation in the tribal villages, we like to point out one aspect of

weaving and sericulture which are traditionally associated with their livelihood as a secondary source of earning. On the basis of research conducted by the Sericulture and Weaving Department, it may be pointed out that if the tribal households switch over to mulberry plantation, rather than endi culture, there will be more economic outturn on the comparatively lesser amount of investment. It has been ascertained by the above Department that mulberry plantation in $1\frac{1}{2}$ Bighas of land is sufficient for 400 cocoons to produce about 120 kg. of green mulberry cocoons which will yield an income of about Rs. 1800/- at the minimum. But endi plantation if carried out in the same amount of land (i. e. $1\frac{1}{2}$ Bighas) will utmost yield not more than Rupees one thousand. Further mulberry plantation if started once will continue for years with intermediary pruning in between. But endi plantation requires yearly operation anew thus it involves recurring expenditure. It is therefore seen that mulberry plantation where possible should be carried out extensively replacing endi plantation if it is taken as a secondary source of living.

In conclusion it would be proper to suggest that the loss of man-days in unproductive engagements require to be minimised including those socio-religious rituals whose undue spread-overs tend to make adverse reflection on productivity. Along with it the unproductive borrowings should be avoided as far as practicable by each tribal households. In a survey conducted among 100 households (tribal and non-tribal) of Kamrup district it was found that 87%* of loans were incurred on unproductive purposes. This shows the magnanimity of uncalled for liability of debts incurred in rural areas, which are avoidable.†

*Agro-Economic Research Centre for N. E. India, Jorhat, 15.1.75—article by Khagendra Nath Bordoloi.
† Condensed form of a Paper in Assamese read in the seminar held at Boko during 4-5 April 1981 on the subject 'Contribution of Assam Tribes to the cultural heritage of Assam and India—and their socio-economic problems'.

BORO AND DIMASA : A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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0.0 Boro (*Barà*) and Dimasa (*Di:ma:sa:*) are two of the many hitherto spoken, more or less cultivated as well as developing Sino-Tibetan Languages of *Asom* (Assam) within North Eastern India of the South East Asian region. The former has been described in some details in my research publication, *A Descriptive Analysis of the Boro Language* (1977, Gauhati University), while Dimasa has been partly and casually read by me on the basis of the written records of Indian and foreign scholars and not so much descriptively with the help of representative informants during the preparation of my study on Boro (1952-64). As such a comparative study of these two Sino-Tibetan living speeches spoken by the so-called *Kirā:ta* (Kirata) or Indo-Mongoloid people of this part of N.E. India (*Purvottariya Bha:rat*) 'forming a solid bloc', in the words of S. K. Chatterji (*Kirāta-Jana-Kṛti*, 1951, Calcutta), in the context of past history of pre-Ahom period extending to 1200 A.D. (c) is attempted here. Hodgson, Endle,

Anderson, Gait, Grierson, Wolfenden, Shafer Chatterji, Fr. Hermanns (1954) and others have noted the Boro and cognate languages and their speakers from different angles of view under the Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese (*Baric/Barish*) speech-model giving them 'Indo-Mongoloid' (*Kirāta*) or 'Indo-Tibetan' nomenclature of apparently anthropological and ethnic nature. Boro, as a form, means an ethnic male or a man differing from *Harsa*, (Non-Boro) i.e. other than Boro as the speakers explain this term, *Boro* which is related to Tipra from, *borok*, means man.

1.0 Dimasa, as a Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese living speech, is spoken by the people living now in some portions of Cachar (*Ka:ch:r*) District as well as in the compact area of North Cachar Hills District of southern Assam forming a historically eventful sector of North Eastern India. The term *di:ma:sa:* means *di:ma:niphisa*, sons of the great river, i.e. Brahmaputra or laodi/laodōi, long river or the sons of Dhansri (*dhonsri*) also known as *di:ma:* as had been attributed

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by some foreign scholars of the British period. The folktales as well as folkloristic legends and traditions support the separation of the Dimasa from the Boros in some period of history. Both these speakers usually called Kacharis (*Kosa:ri*) by the Assamese (*Asomiya:*) and Bengali (*Bangala:*) speakers meaning border-dwellers, Kosi-river dwellers, Kocha-clans etc. equalised to a Sanskrit from, *Kaksa-vāta* (*Kachāda, Kāchār*) (Chatterji : *Kirata-Jana-Kṛti*, 1951 Calcutta) which appears to be varied forms, but somehow, imaginative coinages towards socio-linguistic interpretations of migratory peoples of mostly Austro-Dravido-Mongloid origin speaking their own primitive speeches and side-by-side bi-lingually or tri-lingually Indo-Aryan or Indic Asamiya:, Bangala:, Hindi, English, Urdu etc. as the cases may be in their day-to-day life-pursuits for food, shelter (rest), fear, cohabitation as well as religious sentiments persisting in their mind which are distinctive features of mankind differing from animals. Dimasa was studied and analysed by Dundas (1880), Grierson (1903), Sopitt, Manicharan Barman, Upendra Chandra Guha (c. 1921) Nirupama Hagjer (1972), Nagnendra Nath Barua and others from their own backgrounds and field-materials with knowledge available at the particular period directly or through interpreters which requires now and onwards, further intensive and descriptive analysis to arrive at the features of phonology, morphology and syntax. Apart from the full technical consideration of the tones, stress, contour as well as features of glottalization, nasalization etc., the grammar and vocabulary, sentence specimens, folkloristic materials hitherto-gathered will be able to establish the genetic relationship of Boro-Dimasa languages. Similarly Boro-Garo, Boro-Tipra, Boro-

Rabha, Boro-Tiwa, Boro-Karbi, Boro-Mishing relations in the Bodo (Boro)—Naga group of Tibeto-Barman branch of the Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese Languages of North Eastern India will be established. These will surely supplement the efforts of Robert Shafer (1953), Paul K. Benedict (1972), Robbins Burling (1956), R. K. Sprigg, E. J. A. Henderson etc. and the efforts achieved under the auspices of the Central Institute of Indian Languages through the Linguistic Society of India established in 1928 A.D. in Calcutta and flourished in Pune since 1954. Since 1980, a registered society with the Govt. of Assam under the name 'North Eastern Language Society' is imparting preliminary language teaching of Boro, Mishing, Karbi etc. with Indic Assamese (*Asamiya:*) on the basis of a three months' certificate Course with a view to M.I.L. Deptt. of University of Gauhati which is prescribing nine months or one year's Diploma Course in Tamil, Assamese (*Asamiya:*) as well as Boro etc.; the syllabus was originally designed in the Schools of Linguistics, Deccan College, Pune, in 1954-55 A.D.

1.1 The compilation of a properly new type of Linguistic Survey in Indian Union with special reference to the less developing languages of *Kirata* or Indo-Mongoloid (Indo-Tibetan) people, such as Boro, Dimasa, Mishing Rabha, Lalung (Tiwa), Deori Chutiya of Assam, Garo, Synteng (Jayantia), Khasi of Meghalaya, Meithei, Kabui Naga, Tangkhul Naga etc. of Manipur and similar languages of Arunachal, Nagaland, Mizoram and Tripura will present various problems of collection of materials, classification, identification and description as known to our research students and scholars.

I had the experiences of coming across a number of Sino-Tibetan languages speakers who are bilingual or tri-lingual and sometimes

multilingual, who did not really like to give their primitive linguistic materials usually to foreign or outside scholars due to socio-psychological behaviours related to their ethnic identity which emerged into certain cultural-cum-political aspirations. From a lexicostatistic or glottochronological analysis based on the methods promulgated by Morris Swadesh and others of U.S.A., Robbins Burling and myself (Bhattacharya) found in 1956 that Boro and Garo separated from each other about two thousand years ago from an ancestral common language.

1.2 On the basis of the available records and linguistic materials, a lexicostatistic count of one hundred basic vocables furnished by Shri N.N. Barua in Dimasa and by Shri B. Narzi in Boro was made during 1962-63 and a time span of roughly one thousand years was determined on the basis of the formula propounded by the American School of Linguists, such as Morris Swadesh and R.B. Lees etc. (vide *I.J. A.L.*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 1955) in the name of glottochronology (vide, also my paper on Kamrupi and Bhojpuri : *Gavesana* 29-30, 30-35, 1977, CIH, Agra).

2.0 On the basis of new materials found and gathered during 1963-1981, I have the list of phonemic data of Boro and Dimasa transcribed according to the modified I.P.A. alphabet with some reservation in respect of Dimasa in the matters of tone, stress as well as features of glottalisation, nasalisation etc. which will require further systematic study on descriptive level. For Boro, the method of descriptive linguistics adopted in my *D.A.B.L.* (1977, G.U.) holds good, more or less, in the context of the reviews of R.K. Sprigg in (*B.S.O.A.S.* 1979) and of P. K. Benedict (Private communication) which differs from D.N.S. Bhat (1968, Pune) whom this author owed nothing.

2.1 There are hundred basic vocables or lexical items of everyday life as equivalent to English words which are compared and contrasted between Boro and Dimasa as cognates and non-cognates as well as doubtful cases to determine their genetic relation and dating of separation.

The basic vocables in English are :—, all, ashes, bark (of tree), belly, big, bird, bite, black, blood, bone, breast, burn, claw, cloud, cold, come, die, dog, drink, dry, ear, earth, eat, egg, eye, fat (grease), feather, fire, fish, fly, foot (leg) full, give, good, green, hair, hand, head, hear, heat, horn, I, kill, knee, know, leaf, lie (fall), liver, long, louse, many, man, meat (flesh), moon, mountain, mouth, name, neck, new, night, nose, not, one, person, rain, red, road, root, round, sand, say, see, seed, sit, skin, sleep, small, smoke, stand, star, stone, sun, swim, tail, that, this, thou, tongue, tooth, tree, two, walk, warm, water, we, what, while, who, woman and yellow.

The Boro equivalents are given here as :— gasōybō, hathophla, bigur, udōy, geder, daw, or, gōsōm, thōy, begeng, abo, kham, asugur, zōmōy, gusu, phōy, thōy, sōyma, lōng, gōran khōma, ha, za, dawdōy, megon, thaw, gang, or/od, na, bir, atheng, gubung, hō, gaham, gōthang, khanay, akhay khoro, khōna, gadung, gong, ang, gawthar, hanthu, mithi, bilay, gogloy, bikha, gōlaw, gōbang, mansi, thikha, bedor, okhaphōr, hazō, khuga, mung, gōdna, gōdan, hor, gonthong, nonga, se, sa, okha, gōza, lama, gudi, giding, habala, bung, nu, begor, zo, bigur, undu, undōy, ukhundōy, gosong, hathorkhi, onthay, san, sansri, lanzay, bōy, be, nōng, salay, hathay, biphang, nōy, thabay, gudung, dōy, zōng, ma, zebra, sōr, hinzaw, and gōmō.

The Dimasa equivalents of the basic vocables are represented as :—khr̥ip, thapla, bungur.

boho', gede, dau, wai, gisim, thi, begrong, abo, saoba, yasugur, jimi, gachain, phai, thii, chima, ling, garai, khamao, ha, ji, daudi, muthay, buphlam, bikhiimii, way, na, giphin, yega, gophao, ri, hamba, gakhrang, khanai, yau, khorokhna, dungbi, bogorongang, gaothiba, yastu, mithiba, lay, golai, bukhung, galang, gabang, subung, thikhu, mogong, dain, hajik, bukhu, bumu, godoh, gadain, hor, bugung, niya, —si, sao, hadi, gajao, lama, yader, giding, hajik, thi, nai, bogrong, kham, chaugur, thuba, khacheba, waikhudi, chongba, chathrai, longthai, chaiing, riyaoba, bermay, hoy, ibo, ning, slay, hathay, bondo/bungphang, gni, dawai, gidung, di, jung, chumo, yekhali, chere, machainji and gurmū.

2.2 The above comparative list of Boro and Dimasa is based on variant forms of dialects which will not agree either with the entries in the Linguistic Survey of India or in the work of W.C.M. Dundas in toto. For example, the sentence, what is your name? has the Boro forms ; nangni naoa ma?/nōngni munga ma? The Dimasa forms will be, ninii bumu chumu/nini bumo: chu:mo? The Dimasa language has a number of dialects. I attested the above specimens with the help of

Shri Nalendra Khargipsa. The phonology, morphology and syntax of Boro and Dimasa have many a parallel. During the years 1952-55, Boro Sahitya Sabha had common platform of mutual communications as well as the common magazine for Boro and Dimasa.

3.0 With due consideration of the linguistic variations as well as dialect changes, we have 66 cognates and 34 non-cognates in respect of Boro and Dimasa vocables as shown in the above specimens. Applying the lexicostatistic formula with the help of a logarithmic table on the basis of the retention index of 73% for modern languages in a time-span for 1000 years, we arrive at a time element of one thousand two hundred years approximately. The frequent contacts of these two language-speakers may have some effects in arriving at the actual time of linguistic separation when Proto-Boro-Dimasa tended to separation as two languages. But from the point of history, tradition, legend and culture, there exists a large number of common characteristics and links, which should be studied further on the basis of direct field-work and research.