CHAPTER II.

GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND.
1. **General Geographical Feature:**

Assam, the easternmost state of India, extends from latitude 22° 19' to 28° 16' N. and longitude 89° 42' to 96° 30' E. It is located between the foothills of the eastern Himalayas and the Patkai and the Naga Ranges, covering roughly a triangular area of 1,21,973 sq. kms. Assam is connected with the rest of India by a narrow corridor in West Bengal, which runs a distance of 56 kms below the foothills of Sikkim and Bhutan.

The State of Assam can broadly be divided into two river valleys: The Brahmaputra Valley and the Surma Valley. One part of the state is plain, and the other is covered with hills. The plains comprise the districts of Goalpara, Kamārupa, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar, North Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh and Cachar. The hilly region comprises the districts of Garo hills, United Khasi and Jaintia hills, Mikir Hills, North Cachar Hills and Mizo Hills. Recently the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills have been separated from the State of Assam, and now form a new State, called Meghālaya.

Central Assam includes the districts of Darrang, Nowgong, Mikir Hills and North Cachar Hills, covering approximately an area of 29,679 sq. kms. The total population
of Central Assam is 38,53,773 according to the figures of the 1971 Census.

Central Assam is situated between 24° 55' and 27° 08' N. latitude and 91° 42' and 93° 53' E. longitude. On the north it is bounded by the Kameng Frontier Division of NEFA (now Arunachal) and a part of the Bhutan State; on the east by the districts of North Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, part of the State of Nagaland and Manipur; on the south by the district of Cachar and part of Manipur State, and on the east by the district of Kamrup and the new State of Meghālaya.

The lower and Central Assam range, known as the Shillong plateau, is formed by the ancient rock types of the region. It includes Meghālaya and the outlying Mikir hills and in reality is a plateau or table-land. Located south of the Brahmaputra valley, this plateau forms a part of the Indian Peninsular Shield, from which it is now separated by the superficial cover of Ganga-Brahmaputra alluvium of Bānglā Desh. The length of this hill is about 400 kms. and the average width is about 40 kms. Normal height of the plateau ranges between 900 and 1300 meters.

The lofty Barail ranges, also known as the North Cachar Hills, are separated from the Shillong Plateau on the north-west by a system of narrow valleys. This valley
runs from the north-east near the Naga Hills and curves round in a westerly direction through Haflong. Tectonically, the Barails form a south-westerly extension of the mountain chain of Nagaland and western Burma. The chain of the mountains meets the Himalayas at the eastern extremity of the Upper Assam Valley. The highest level of the Barails is located near Haflong (ht. 1,736 meters). The general height of the Barails in the North Cachar ranges in between 300 to 900 meters.

The alluvial plains of Assam consist of (a) the valley of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries and (b) the Surma valley.

The Brahmaputra valley is the eastern continuation of the great Indo-Gangetic plains of Indian sub-continent. It separates the sub-Himalayan foot hills from the Shillong plateau and the Patkai Naga hill ranges. Extending from the eastern part of Assam to the west of Dhubri (a stretch of 724 kms), the valley of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries cover approximately an area of 56,274 sq. kms.

The Mizo hills and the Barail ranges die out towards the west and south-west into the plains of Cachar which form part of the Surma Valley. This valley, forming a broad triangle-south of the Shillong plateau, is bounded on the east by the Mizo hills and on the south by the hills of Tripura. Only a part of the valley now remains in India.
The average height of the south-western portion of the valley is lower than 7 meters, but the level gradually rises towards Assam.

**Physical Features:**

Central Assam can broadly be divided into plains and hills. The major part of the districts of Darrang and Nowgong are alluvial plains. The district of Darrang consists of a strip of flat land along the northern bank of the Brahmaputra, 257 kms. from east to west, and an average width of about 40 kms from north to south. A range of small hills, under 152 meters in height, runs parallel and close to the Brahmaputra. The eastern end of the district is comparatively sparsely populated. Near the Brahmaputra there is a belt of marshy land, three or four kms. in width. On the north the level rises, and the country lying at the foot hills is covered with dense evergreen forests. The Biswanath plain, west of Behali, is an elevated region, which is of older geological formation than the other parts of the district. A portion of this tract is covered with tea plantations, and the lower land is green with waving paddy fields.

The western part of the district near the Brahmaputra is covered with forests. There are strips, on which crops of
rice, pulses and mustard are grown. Further inland, as the level rises, there is a rich expanse of paddy land dotted with groves of bamboos and palm trees.

The Nowgong district is fringed with two hillocks, intersected by numerous rivers and water courses. The whole district is dotted over with beels and marshes. It may roughly be described as an alluvial plain. The plain near the south bank of the Brahmaputra is a low-lying land covered with tall grass, jungle or weeds. In the rainy season the whole area, fringing on the Brahmaputra, is liable to floods. Along the greater part of its course, there are numerous densely populated villages on both the banks of the river Kolong. Across the centre of this plain stretches a belt of cultivated land from Silghat on the north-east to Jagi on the south-east. But on either side of this belt, cultivation falls off, and there are wide expanses of grassy lands to the north and the west, while forests and hillocks are found to the south and the east. The Kapili valley is a thinly populated area, its settlers being mostly tribals. The belt is low-lying land. The area beyond Jamunamukh is very sparsely populated. A part of this tract is marshy and the rest is covered with grass or low vegetation. Further east, the valley is covered with dense forest. South of the Kapili, the belt lying between Dharamtul and the hills is below the flood level; it is covered with tall
grass and swamps. The level does not rise continuously from the Brahmaputra to meet the hills which form the southern boundary of the district, but rather slopes towards the west, following the general inclinations of the Assam Valley.

The Mikir Hills lie between the Assam Range and the Dhansiri river to the east, divided by the Kapili Valley. Hills and valleys alike are covered with dense tree forest except in places where they have been cleared for the shifting cultivation of the Mikir tribe. The country roughly has a northerly slope with the outer ranges of the Mikir Hills, having an average elevation of about 450 meters above sea level. In the central portion, east of Kapili, the average elevation of the ranges is about 1,000 meters. The northern range, with an average elevation of about 600 meters, extends from Daboka in the south-west to Bokakhat in the north-west. The people of this region grow dry rice, vegetables and cotton on the slopes of the hills. The southern range with an average elevation of about 900 meters, extends from Bakulighat in the south-west to Barpather in the south-east.

The combined Kapili, Jamuna and the Dhansiri valleys between Lumding, Hojai and Diphu form an undulating plain having an elevation ranging from 75 to 250 meters. This low land is wedged in between the Mikir Hills on the north, the Barail range on the south-east and the north Cachar hills on the south.
The North Cachar Hills form a rugged hilly country constituting the eastern flanks of the Jaintia hills and the northern flanks of the Barail range. The elevation of the range varies from 1,000 to 1,200 meters above the sea level.

Mountains:

There are no mountains in Darrang. The only elevated tracts consist of a range of low hills, between 60 and 155 meters high, clothed with grass and forest trees. These hillocks are estimated to cover an area of about 65 sq. kms. The most remarkable range in this district is a small spur projecting from the Himalayas into the north Balipara, containing two low hills, namely Bhalukpung and Gosainloga. A small range of low hills, with heights from about 90 to 140 meters near Tezpur town, run parallel to the Brahmaputra. The names of the hills are Amguri, Parbat, Dhenukhana, Bamuni hills, Bhairabi, Manikata, Bhomuraguri and Rudrapad hill. To the south east of the Barchola Mauza is the Singri hill; and near the Brahmaputra there are Patharughat and some other low hills.

The two mountain systems of the Nowgong district are the Mikir hills on the north and the east, while on the south and the west are the outlying spurs which project from the
Assam range into the Brahmaputra valley. The western spurs of the Mikir hills from Kuthari to Daboka stretch into the Nowgong district. They rise steeply from the narrow valleys with which they are intersected; the hill and valley alike are covered with dense forests. Along with these hills, there are many small hillocks. The height of these hills ranges between 272 and 553 meters. The Mayang and the Buğâ Mayang hills near the western boundary have a height of about 458 meters. The summit of Jagi Road Hills, known as Teteliasur Parbat rises to a height of 272 meters. On the north-east are the Hatimur (186.5 meters) and the Kamakhya hill (244 meters) near Silghat, which overlooks the Brahmaputra. There are a few other minor hillocks, known as Madhpur, Bashundhari, Deo-sal.

The main peaks of the Mikir hills are: Basundhari Parbat (774 meters), Kud Parbat (626 meters), Mokrang Parbat (470 meters), Mehekongthu (638 mts), Raisang (737 mts). on the northern range, which extends from Daboka in the south-west to Bhokakhat in the north-west. The southern range, extends from Bagulghat in the south-west to the Barpathar in the north-east, having the following peaks Changhetison (1279 meters), Matikhal Parbat (841 meters), warek-Mushak (1050 meters), Bhaluk Parbat (1094 mts.) Cheniabirshon (915 mts), Hunghi Parbat (831 mts) and Khunbaman Parbat.
The high peaks along the range of North Cachar are Jhingtubum (1867 mts.), Nairakula (1422 mts), Heemolowa (1375 mts), Mahadeo Kaukaha (1460 mts), Kolombat (1316 mts), Shupai (1656 mts), Kalangtom (1322 mts), Longmai, Laikarang, Daojali Parbat and Sarkahading and other NE-SW trending low ranges flanking the northern slopes of the Barail range, constituting the Langting-Mupa reserve forest. The eastern flanks of the Jaintia Hills consist of Saipung and Kurunming hills along the eastern side of the Kapili valley and Sunngut (715 mts), Buā Ingli (321 mts.) hills on the north-west side of the Kapili river. The general elevation of these hills varies from 600 to 900 meters and the main peaks are: Kalimukh (1290 mts), Thangnanship (995 mts) Marpung (965 mts), Khurungima (961 mts), Konglong (559 mts), Rongkhong (656 mts) and Tirkim (686 mts).

Near Haflong, the junction of Shillong and the hill-country is very sharply marked.

**River System:**

Due to heavy rainfall in the Himalayan and other water-sheds of the north-eastern region, Assam is endowed with an extensive river system. The details of the chief rivers are given below:
Brahmaputra:

The Brahmaputra originates at Tamchok Khambab Chorten in the Chemayung glacier, approximately at 31° 31' N : 82° 0' E, near the source of the Karnali and the Sutlej. From its source the river, which is called Tsang-Po in Tibet, flows nearly 1600 kms. in Tibet before it enters the Central Himalayas at Namcha Barwa. It has three tributaries above Shamsang, viz., Kubi Tsang-Po, Chema Yungdung and Mayum Chu. All the three take their rise in the watershed separating the Tsang-Po basin from Lake Manasarowar. Several other minor tributaries join it further east.

The Tsang-Po, under the name of Dihong, swollen with silt, emerges into the alluvial plains of upper Assam. The Dibong and the Lohit meet the Dihong from the east near Sadiya. From their confluence at 'Brahma Kund', the combined waters take the name of Brahmaputra, which flows in the western direction through the valley for a length of about 725 kms before it enters the present Bāṅglā Desh. Thereafter it takes a southern course, meeting the Ganga at Goalando (Bāṅglā Desh), and finally falls in the Bay of Bengal. The total length of the Brahmaputra from its source to the mouth in the Bay of Bengal is 2898 kms.

The mighty river is known by two names: Lauhitya¹ and

1. Brahmapura, Ch. 64; Baghu Vamsa, IV, 31; Yoginitantra, 2.2.119.
Brahmaputra. Lauhitya is evidently a sanskritized form of the Tibeto-Burman name Lohit. The word Lauhitya gives a good enough meaning in sanskrit as 'the Red River', but it is probably just a sanskritisation of the Pre-Aryan, Sino-Tibetan name. It is noticed that the river takes this colour during the rainy season, when it cuts through the red soil in the adjoining embankments. There is a mythological interpretation also, given as to the origin of the name. It is connected with Parasurama, one of the ten incarnations of Visnu. According to the tradition, it was in the upper reaches of the river at Parasuramakunda or Brahmakunda, that the great saint, Parasurama washed off his blood stains after killing his mother, and regained his saint-hood. Hence the water of the river is said to have turned red.

The Brahmaputra means 'son of Brahma'. It has been mentioned in the Yoginītantra.\(^1\) The Ahoms called the river 'Nam-Do-Phi', meaning the 'river of the star god'.

The Kalikā Purāṇa\(^2\) contains a legendary account of the origin of the Brahmaputra. It is stated therein that the Brahmaputra is situated between four mountains, of which the Kailasa and Gandhamadana stand to the north and south respectively.\(^3\)

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1. *Yoginītantra* (Jivananda Vidyasagar Ed.), 1/11, P. 60; 2.4, PP. 128-29.
2. *Kalikāpurāṇa*, Ch. 82.
3. *Ibid.*, chp. 36; Ch. 82.
The Brahmaputra has numerous tributaries. It is the river (supreme) of the State of Assam. This is also the principal river of Central Assam, flowing from east to west, forming the boundary of Nowgong and Darrang districts in the central part. Practically the whole of the drainage of Central Assam ultimately finds its way to the Brahmaputra.

**Bharali:**

This is a tributary of the Brahmaputra. It rises in the Kameng frontier division (in Arunāchal) and enters the Darrang district just north of Bhalukpong. From its source, it flows east, then runs sharply to the south and finally follows a tortuous course to the Brahmaputra, which it joins about 11 kms. east of Tezpur town. On its course through the plains of Darrang, this river frequently overtops its banks. The river is navigable throughout the year from Buragaon Bogicha to its confluence with the Brahmaputra, the total distance being about 64 kms. Its principal tributaries on the left bank are the Upper Khasi and Bar Dikral and on the right bank the upper and lower Sonai and the Dhansiri.

Other rivers of the Darrang district, having different lengths, carry the drainage of the hills into the Brahmaputra. All the rivers have southerly courses. They are mostly fed by numerous minor streams rising in various parts of the district.
Dubia:

One of the bigger streams, is the Dubia or Kharo, which flows a southerly and westerly course down to the Brahmaputra. Its largest tributary is the Balijan. The Behali mauza is watered by the rivers Burai and Burang; and between the two there is a large number of small streams or Jāns which fall into the Brahmaputra. West of Tezpur town, the drainage of the south hills is collected in a small stream called the Dipota; then come the Gabharu, the Dhansiri and Mangaldai rivers, with Noanadi as its big tributary. On the extreme west, the river Branadi, for a considerable part of its course, forms the boundary between Darrang and Kamrup. In Sootia, there are only the largest streams, namely the Sadharu, the Ghiladhari and the Dirai.

Diphu and other rivers:

The north-east corner of the districts Nowgong and Mikir Hills are drained by the Diphu, the Gatonga and its tributary, the Deopani. About 13 kms. north-east of Silghat, the Kalang takes off from the Brahmaputra and, after flowing a tortuous course through the Centre of the district, it passes through Kaliabor, Nowgong town, Raha and Jagi, and rejoins the present stream at Kajalimukh about
24 kms. above Gauhati. The upper portion of the river is joined by the Misa, the Diju and the Nanoi (Hari), contributing to the drainage of the north-west slopes of the Mikir Hills. It is connected by a channel with the Kapili, which brings to it the drainage of North Cachar and the eastern slopes of the Jaintia hills. The main stream, the Kapili, then turns to the west and after receiving the Barapani and the Umiam or Killing, falls into the Kolong at Jagi. A little to the west of Jagi, the Kolong forms the boundary between the districts of Kamrup and Nowgong and, not far from its junction with the parent stream, it receives the Digaru on its left bank. The Kolong acts as a receiver for the Brahmaputra and occupies a very important place in the drainage system of the district.

Kapili:

Another important river is the Kapili. It has its source in the Jaintia hills, flows north-east between Jaintia and North Cachar hills, and enters the Nowgong district near, Kharikhana. It takes a north-westerly course, forming a part of the southern boundary, till a little below its confluence with the Jamuna (near Jamunamukh) it takes its course turning to the west, and finally falls into the Kolong.
at Jagi, after a course of 262 kms. The principal tributaries of the Kapili are the Dikishu, the Wohkynriam, the Umpung, the Kharkor - the Umrong, the Myntang, the Amring, Doiang, the Lankajan and the Jamuna, the Kolong, the Barapani and the Umiam or Killing. The river is largely used as a trade route for the southern part of the district.

The Dhansiri river forms the natural boundary between the district of Mikir hills, Nagaland and Silsagar district. It rises from the northern flank of Thingtubum peak of the Barail range, flows north-east through Dimapur and Bokajan and enters Golaghat. Almost the entire portion of its drainage is received from several streams on the north-western flanks of the Naga hills and the Barail range.

The Diyung rises from the northern flank of the Barail range, and flows in a northerly direction and enters the plains a few miles to the west of Lumding, from where it flows west to join the Kapili. Its main tributaries are: the Longloi, the Langeon, the Mahur, the Mupa, the Langting, the Lumding, the Langlao, the Disa and the Bora Langpher river.

Jamuna:

The Jamuna river forms the main drainage basin along the southern foot of Mikir hills. It rises on eastern flank of
the Khumbaman range, flows south-west and enters the plains north of Jarapgaon and then flows west and north-west, joining the Kapili at Jamunamukh. Its main tributaries are: the Dikharu, the Dikak, the Patra Disa, the Disobai Nala, the Longhit, the Dillai, and the Diphu Nala, the Disama Nala, the Pakiangso Nala, the Keyang Disa Nala and others.

Minor streams:

In the Mikir hills proper, apart from the Jamuna, another important river is the Kaliani, which flows in the east-north-east direction across the hills in the north-east part. The Diphu stream flows in the northern slopes near Bokakhat; the Deopani and the Kalpani Nalas on the north-west slopes; the Langkhangtang and tributaries of Nanai on the western slopes and the Bar Dikharu, Horanghati and Chalabar Nala on the south-west slopes.

Flora:

The forests of central Assam cover an area of approximately 3,130 sq. kms. The forests fall into two classes: Reserve Forest and Unclassed State Forest. Botanically the forests can roughly be divided into two types: The tropical evergreen forests and the miscellaneous forests.
The most valuable timber trees are Amari (Amoora Wallichii), Sam (Artocarpus chaplasha), Jutuli (Altingia excelsa), Borpat (Ailanthus grandis), Kadam (Anthocephalus cadamba), Urium (Bischofia javanica), Gandhsarai (cinnamomum sp.), Dhuna (Canarium sp.), Khokan (Duabanga sonneratiodes), Sopa (Magnoliaceae sp.), Silikha (Terminalia chebula), Bhomora (Terminalia beberica), Nahor (Masua ferrea), Kendu (Diospyrostoposia), Agaru (Acquilaria agallocha), Jam (Eugenia sp.), Gomari (Gamelina arboaria), Tita Sopa (Michelia champaca), Khair or Khaira (Acacia Catechu), Sissoo (Dalbergia), Bogori (Zizyphus sp.), Sal (Shorea robusta), Gunserai (Cinnamomum glanduliferum), Makai (Shorea assamica), Hollock (Terminalia biolorate), Simul (Bomox malabaricum), Poma (cedrela toona), Siris (Albizzia sp.), Gendhelipoma (Dysoxylum hamiltonie), Jalpari (Elacocarpus sp.) and Thekeratenga (garcina sp.). Hollong (Dipterocarpus marcrocarpus), Nahor (Mesua ferrea), and Mekahi (Shorea assamica) are the common trees in the forests of Darrang and Nowgong. Bamboo and canes occur all over Central Assam.

The vegetation of Central Assam comprises plants, shrubs, climbers and trees which thrive in high humidity, high rainfall and in a temperature range without extreme heat or cold. Those forms of vegetation are absent in Central Assam which are characteristic of regions with pronounced and prolonged dry periods, such as deciduous forests which
become completely leafless during the dry months, or scrub forests which reflect a very low rainfall climate.

The outstanding feature of Assam flora is the occurrence of a very great number of species and their luxuriant growth.

Fauna:

Central Assam is rich in fauna. The primates commonly found in Central Assam are - Hollock (white-browed gibbon), Bandar (Rhesus Macaque), Assamese Macaque (Macaca assamensis), common langur (Hanuman bandar), capped langur (Trachypithecus hileatus) and slow loris.

Tiger, leopard (or panther), clouded leopard, sloth bear, Himalayan black bear, bison, buffaloes, antelopes, wild goat (locally known as Deo-chagal) and different varieties of deer such as swamp deer, sambar, hog deer, barking deer, musk deer, chital or spotted deer, different varieties of wild cats, such as marbled cat, golden cat, leopard cat, fishing cat and jungle cat are found in Central Assam.

Elephants, hyenas, wild dogs, otters, various types of weasels, hedgehogs, moles, shrews, pigs and pangolins and rhinoceros are found. Wild elephants are still quite common in Central Assam.
Assam is world famous for its rhinoceros. Its chief variety, the Rhinoceros unicorns, is found only in Assam and nowhere else.

The main species of birds found in Central Assam, are, Sarus crane, peacock, mynas, peafowl, pink headed duck, white-winged wood duck, nukta duck, common teal, cotton teal, barheaded goose, brahmini duck (chokai chakoa), blue-winged teal, pintail duck, spotbill duck, shoveller and pochard. Dabchick, which is common, is not a duck though similar in appearance. Most of the ducks are migratory and are found in winter. Other aquatic, semi-aquatic or fish-eating birds commonly seen in Assam are pelicans, herons, storks, ibises, egrets and flamingos.

The important game birds, viz., the pheasants, jungle fowls, and partridges are quite common. A very rare bird is the masked finfoot (Heliopais personata) found in Assam. Other birds such as green pigeons (Haitha), imperial pigeons (Porghuma), hornbill (Dhanesh), Kingfisher, larks, swallows, martins, orioles, mynas, crows, bulbuls, wrens, sparrows, weaver birds, vultures, hawks, kites, buzzards, parrots, owls, cuckoos, nightjars and swifts are also found in Central Assam.

Fishes and reptiles, such as crocodiles, tortoises, and turtles and snakes, are found in quite large numbers.
Geology:

Archaean gneiss forms the base of the Darrang district, and the low hills near the Brahmaputra are an extension of the Pre-Cambrian shield of the Mikir hills. The first hill north of Tezpur forms a low ridge on the south bank of the Bharali river, rising to 245 or 275 meters above the plain of Balipara. The ridge consists essentially of an unstratified drift of well-rolled boulders and pebbles of gneiss and granite, undoubtedly of pleistocene age. The plain is made up of alluvium consisting of clay and in varying proportions, ranging from pure sand near the Brahmaputra to stiff clay. The alluvium is believed to be underlain by younger tertiary rocks belonging to the oligocene-pliocene period over the gneissic basement. Structurally the Brahmaputra valley is known as a ramp valley. It would seem that the basement starts to sink from about here eastward till it reaches a depth of 6,400 meters.

In the Nowgong district, only three periods of the geological history are represented in the outcropping surface, namely, the Quarternary, the Tertiary and the Pre-Cambrian. The Quarternary is represented by the recent alluvium of the Brahmaputra, its many tributaries and its branch, the Kolong. The plain is covered by alluvial soil which is mostly loamy,
and consists of a mixture of clay and sand in varying proportions ranging to a pure sand on the bank of the Brahmaputra.

Rocks belonging to the Tertiaries are exposed near Lumding. These belong to the Jaintia, the Barail and the Surma series. Structurally the Lumding and the Jamuna valley merit consideration. These lie between the Shillong plateau on the west and its detached portion to the east.

The Archaean gneissic complex is the oldest group of rocks occupying mainly the Mikir hills and the north-west fringe of the North Cachar hills. The Archaean are unconformally overlain by the Shillong Series consisting of quartzites, quartz-biotite-schists, quartz-sericite-schists, slates and phyllites.

The Jaintia series unconformably overlie the earlier formation at different places. It fringes the archaeans on the southern and south-eastern side in a semi-circular outcrop. The Sylhet limestone stage, the next higher one, is more widespread and thick. The main exposures more or less continue along the Kapili and Umang valley in North Cachar hills as isolated patches along the eastern flank of the Mikir hills as far as Garampani. The Kapili stage which overlies the Sylhet limestone stage, occurs as a continuous narrow belt along the eastern side of the Kapili valley but continues in the form of detached patches into the Jamuna valley until it slices out in the Dhansiri valley.
The Barail series overlies the Jaintia series occupying a larger area north of Haflong-Dieng-Thrust. It fringes the Jaintia series to the north-west and occupies an area of many hundred sq. kms. This wide belt extends from the Barail foot hills upto the Dhansiri reserved forest, and finally disappears in the Dhansiri basin. The Surma series overlies the Barails with an unconformity, and is developed south of the Barails in the Surma valley. It mainly occupies an east-west belt south of the Haflong-Disang Thrust boundary. The Tipam series, overlying the Surmas, occupies a wide area on the north-west flank of the Barail range that extends north-east along the Dhansiri valley upto Barpathar.

Laterite and lateritic soil of recent age covers the earlier formation at places.

**Climate, Rainfall and Temperature:**

The climate of Central Assam does not differ much from that of the rest of Assam. It enjoys a cold winter and a cool and pleasant spring. The climate is also characterised by a highly humid atmosphere and abundant rains. From the middle of November, the cold weather of winter starts and continues till the end of February. From March, the temperature begins to rise. The south-west monsoon sets in about the
beginning of June and ceases in October. In the period between May and September, the rainfall is fairly heavy.

The average annual rainfall in the Darrang district during 1951-1961 was 2,334.07 mm; and in North Cachar and Mikir hills was 2,525.97 mm. Nowgong is to some extent sheltered from the monsoon by the Khasi-Jaintia and other hills, and the annual rainfall over the greater part of the district is below 1,500 mm. On the eastern part, however, rainfall varies between 1500 mm. to 2000 mm. a year.

The minimum temperature of Central Assam comes down to 11° Centigrade in the month of January, and the highest daily average maximum temperature does not rise over 35° Centigrade in the month of July.

The Mikir hills district is a malarial region and unhealthy for unacclimatised persons. It has a moist climate. The North Cachar Hills area has a salubrious climate and is very healthy.

Economic Development:

Agriculture:

Economically, the Darrang and Nowgong districts are in a fairly good position. More than 75 percent of the
population depend upon agriculture. Both the districts are agro-industrial. The soil and the climate help the growth of agricultural crops and vegetables. Water is always available in plenty for use in cultivation which brings a good harvest every year. The low lands are used mainly for the cultivation of rice, whereas the river sides are covered with pulses and vegetables. The Darrang district plays a vital role in the economic development of the state for its tea plantation. The main cultivations of both the districts are rice, maize, wheat, other cereals and millets, pulses, sugarcane, jute and fruits and vegetables.

The people of Mikir hills and North Cachar hills districts practise Jhumming or shifting cultivation on the slopes of the hills. Paddy being the staple food is cultivated in large areas. Along with paddy, chillies, pumpkins, Jinger, cotton, millet, castor-seeds, maize are also grown.

**Minerals:**

Limestones are found in Barnadi, Panimir and near the Jamuna river, Garanpani, Koilajan, Manjali, Selvatta, Mayong, Disa and Longlai areas. Mikir hills and North Cachar Hills are mineral areas with deposits of coal, limestone and lithomargic clay. Coal is found at Longlai, Kherni, Selvalta, Disoboi nala, Khumoaman range, and also near Garampani in the
Kapili valley. However, the coal is of poor quality and scattered in small patches. In Darrang district also, poor quality of coal is found. Brick clays occur in abundance, and the gneissic rocks are used for road metal and railway ballast. There are traces of petroleum in the neighbourhood of Lumding.

The lithomarge formed in the Mikir hills in association with the coal-measure may easily yield both pottery clay and fire clay. Clays also occur at Kaliani, Kidimitipa and the Disobai Nola.

Industrially Central Assam is backward. There are only a few industries in the region such as sericulture and weaving, cane and bamboo work, gold and silver smithy, pottery, blacksmithy, brass and bell metal works. Recently flour mills, steel work, cotton yarn mill and spun silk mill have been established.

Trade Routes:

We do not have adequate knowledge about the land routes, which passed between India and Burma. Sir Arthur Phayre observes that traditions among the Burmese, the present remains and names of the cities, render it probable that easy communication existed between Gangetic India and Tangaung, and trade was carried on through Eastern Bengal and Manipur.¹ The existence of such routes in the second

¹. Phayre, History of Burma, P. 15.
century B.C. has been hinted at by Pelliot. According to
him, there was a regular trade route by land between Eastern
India and China through upper Burma and Yunnan.¹ Through
this route Indians came and established their political power
in upper Burma and the mountainous regions of the upper valleys
of Irawadi, the Salween, the Mekong and the Red River as far
as Yunnan.²

The oldest land route between India and China was
probably through Assam, upper Burma and Yunnan. Chinese cotton
and bamboo were carried through this route from China to
Bactria via India.³

It was mainly through this route that Chinese silk
came to Bharukaccha (Barygaza), which later on was imported by
the emporiums of Seleucia and Alexandria.⁴ P.C. Bagchi says
that this Assam-Burma route to China started from Pataliputra
passed through Campā (Bhagalpur), Kajañgal (Kajmahal) and
Puñdravardhana (north Bengal) and went to Kāmarūpa (Gauhati).
From Assam three routes went to Burma; one through the valley
of Brahmaputra upto Pātkoi range and then through its passes

¹ Bulletinde i' École Francaise De' Extreme Orient, 1904,
² Champā, PP. 13-14.
³ Bagchi, P.C., India and China, PP. 5,16.
⁴ Periplus, 48. 64; Greeks in Bactria and India, P. 364.
upto upper Burma; the second through Manipur upto the Chindwin valley; and the third through the Arakan upto Irawadi valley. These three routes met on the frontier of Burma near Bhamo, and then proceeded over mountains and across river valleys to Yunnan fu i.e. Kunming, in the southern province of China. According to Phayre in early times contact between Gangetic India and Tagaung lay through Manipur. An itinerary preserved in Kiatan of the 8th century A.D. described in detail the latter route of Assam-Burma.

From very early times Assam was noted for her textiles and various valuable forest and mineral products. These were exported to the neighbouring provinces. The trade with the neighbouring provinces was chiefly carried on by river transport. The main route from Kāmarūpa to Bengal, Bihar and Orissa was by the river Brahmaputra and Gangās. Hiuen-Tsang in the 7th Century A.D. went to Assam from Magadha, passed by Campā (modern Bhagalpur), Kajāṅgala (Rājmahal) and Puṇḍravardhana (Rangpur) and turned eastward and reached Kāmarūpa. This must have been the usual route from Magadha. Bhāskaravarman also followed this route to meet Harṣa on the bank of the

1. India and China, P. 17.
3. India and China, PP. 7 f.; 16 f.
Gangās near Kajurgira - (Kurikjal, Rājmahal).\(^1\) It is true that there was a regular route to Kāmarūpa from Nālandā and Orissa.

Beal, in his introduction to the life of Hiuen Tsang, mentions that Bhāskaravarman and the former rulers of Kāmarūpa had the sea-route to China under their special protection.\(^2\) Besides this water-way, there were also land routes to China through the northern mountains of Assam.

Though the Gobi routes were China's only means of contact with India and the west, it is clear that neither the sea-routes nor the Assam-Burma routes can be neglected.

McCosh refers to no less than five roads leading from Sadiya, the frontier station of the Brahmaputra valley into Tibet or China proper.\(^3\) They are: (i) The pass of the Dihong, (ii) the Mishmi route, (iii) the Phungan pass to Munchee and China (iv) the route by Manipur to the Irawadi, and (v) the Patkai pass to Bhamo on the Irawadi. The most important and easy route was on the north-eastern side over the Patkai to the upper districts of Burma and thence to China. Through this route Shan invaders entered the Brahmaputra valley.

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1. Life of Hiuen Tsang, P. 86.
2. Ibid., Intro., XXVI.
Numerous passes and ways, known as Duars, still exist between Assam and Bhutan. The route to Tibet runs across the Himalayan parallel with the course of Brahmaputra. There are thirtyfive mountain passes between Kāmarūpa and Tibet, through which horses are brought to Lakhnauti. Through Bhutan, along the mountains, was also a trade route to Kabul. Tavernier mentions that in his time merchants travelled through Bhutan to Kabul to avoid paying the duty that was levied on merchandise passing into India via Gorakhpur. The journey was very tedious and troublesome. The merchandise brought from Assam to Bactria was purchased there by merchants who were proceeding or who were on their way to India, and who afterwards sailed down the Indus to Gujarat, where they took ship for the Red Sea.

People:

The earliest inhabitants of Assam, referred to as Mlecchas and Asuras in some early texts, were the Kirātas, Čīnas and other primitive tribes. The Kirātas or Mongoloid people were well known to the Vedic Aryans. We find mention of them in the Yajur and Atharva Vedas. The Rāmāyana describes them as wearing thick top knots with conical heads,

golden in appearance, fair looking and fierce. The Mahābhārata refers to them as Mlecchas. It is mentioned that the army of Bhagadatta composed of Cīna and Kirāta soldiers, who were yellowish of complexion, dwelling in the marshy regions near the sea-shore. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa mentions the Kirātas as dwelling in marshy land. The Kālikā Purāṇa describes the earliest inhabitants of Assam as Kirātas with Shaven heads and yellow skins. They were strong, ferocious, ignorant and were addicted to meat and liquor.

According to the Samhitās, the name Kirāta was applied to a people living in the mountain-caves. Kirātas are designated as 'foresters', 'barbarians', 'mountaineers' in the Purāṇas. Most of the sources agree that an important section of the Kirātas inhabiting the south-east Bengal and western Assam areas were Mongolians. The early settlement of these people in Assam and their contribution to the culture of Eastern India is admitted by scholars.

1. Kīśkindhyā Kāṇḍa, XI.
2. Sabhā Parvan, Ch. 30, verses - 26-27.
3. Mahābhārata, Udyoga Parvan (XVIII), The Sabhā Parvan (XXVI-XXVII) and the Karna Parvans.
4. Ṛk. II, III.
5. Ch. 38; 39, 104.
7. Dalton, Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal, P. 103 f.
From the early proto-historic period, Assam has served as the highway connecting the rest of India with south east Asia, through which many people of diverse ethnic groups, having different cultural entities and speaking various languages passed. These people migrated to Assam at different times through different routes. The possible routes of migrations are: the northern passes of Bhutan, Tibet and Nepal; Assam-Burma routes on the eastern side; the valleys of the western side formed by the Brahmaputra-Gangetic plains; and the sea route, by Bay of Bengal via Bengal and Burma.

The present day population of Assam may be divided into tribal and caste-groups. The caste group or non-tribal group inhabiting the rich alluvial plains of the Brahmaputra, are Caucasian in origin, having fine physical features and scopic characters comparable to those of the Caucasian people of some parts of northern India. Among them is observed a plano-occipital brachycephalic type, known as the Dinaric. Representatives of the long-headed leptorrhine or Mediterranean type are also seen among this group. These elements are present among the Brahmins, the Kayasthas, the Kalitas, the Keots, etc. Of these, the Kalitas are said to be the earliest

immigrants, and were the Aryan colonists of Assam.¹ Waddell thinks that they were "the mixed descendants of the Indian Kayasthas".² Robinson makes them the spiritual guides of the Koch, whose position is believed to have been degraded by the advent of the Brāhmaṇas; he supports Waddell's theory of the Kāyastha origin of the Kalitās.³

The actual period of the Aryan entry into Assam is not known. It may, however, be stated that the Aryans came to Assam at an early period, either through invasion or by means of peaceful penetration. The Vedic literature speaks of eastern India as a Mleccha country.⁴ The Mahābhārata refers to it as a Mleccha kingdom. Ray Choudhury,⁵ whiles, giving the description of the kingdom of Kosala in the age of the great Janaka, that the river Sadānirā (in Bihar) was

for a time the limit of the Aryan world in that direction and beyond it was a marshy region, not frequented by the Brāhmanaś. R.C. Majumdar¹ says that a gradually increasing number of high class Aryans poured into Bengal from the Middle of India in the early centuries of the Christian era, either in the wake of military campaigns or for more peaceful pursuits. Assam's early contact with Aryan India is revealed by the references in the Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata. Kautilya's reference to Aryanised placenames in Kāmarūpa shows that during the Mauryan period an Aryan wave entered the land.² The reference in Brhatasmhītā³ to Prāgjyotisā and the Lauhitya, is important in relation to the entry of the Aryans. The sources from the Raghuvamśa, Hsien Tsang's accounts and the Purāṇas indicate that the Aryans in Assam, at least in the Brahmaputra valley, had settled there in the 4th-5th Century A.D.

The Kālikā Purāṇa (38) states that Naraka was responsible for the early settlement of the Aryans in the land. Dikshitar writes that, after Naraka's death, Prāgjyotiṣa was regarded as a part of Aryanvartha from the time of the Epics.

¹. History of Bengal, P. 564.
³. Kern, Intro. to the Brhatasmhītā, P. 32.
and it resulted in the fusion of Pre-Aryan and Aryan cultures in the land. 1 D.R. Mankad 2 takes Naraka as the first Aryan ruler of Assam. The Hara-Gauri Samvāda associates Bhagadatta with the settlement of hundreds of Brāhmans in Kāmarupa.

The asuras (non-Aryans), the earliest occupation of the land, who are referred to in the Vedic and the Brāhmaṇical literature, are said by Banerji-shastri, 3 to have migrated from Assyria to India earlier than the Aryans. They had conflicts with the Aryan people in later period, and they were pushed down by the Aryans, to the east and to the south. "Jarāsandha at Rajgir and Bhagadatta in Prāgjyotisa attest Asura individuality through Epic days and later" and that closing point in the history of individual Asura chiefs centres round Bhagadatta of Assam and North Bengal (Prāgjyotisa) and Jarāsandha of Magadha. 4 From the excavation at Saradhkel and Kunjla in Bihar, it is proved that the culture represented by these so called Asura sites was an iron-using one, and did not represent in any of its phases a completely stone or copper assemblage. 5 It is reasonable to infer that the

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4. Ibid.
culture may belong to a period earlier than 200 A.D., and that the Aryan might have started penetrating into Assam slowly.

Again, a work named 'Hastāyurveda' of Pālakapyā assumed to have been composed prior to c. 3rd century B.C., which according to M. Sastri, influenced Aryan culture and spread Sanskrit language and literature in Assam.¹ This also prove that the Aryans must have penetrated into Assam during the early centuries of the Christian era or little earlier.

In the early centuries of the Christian era high-class Aryans, such as Brāhmaṇs, Kāyasthas and Kalitās came and settled in Assam. The Nidhānpur copper plate grant also records that King Bhutivarman (6th A.D.) granted a special Agrabhara to more than two hundred Brāhmaṇs of various gotras and vedāsākhās for promotion of vedic religion and culture. From the account of Huen-Tsang, we know that Kāmarūpa became an important centre of Brāhmaṇical learning and Kāmarūpa Brāhmaṇs were honoured with donation of lands outside the kingdom. A good number of rulers contributed to the Aryanisation of the valley, and were responsible for the Hinduisation of some tribes.

¹ 'Purani Asamat Bhāratia Darśan Šastrār Charchā', Pravandha Saurabha, P. 17.
From the beginning of the 6th century A.D., it became customary on the part of the rulers of Assam to create agrahara settlements for the Brāhmaṇs, and this royal policy was largely responsible for the settlement of the Brāhmaṇs and some other high class Aryans (inferior to Brāhmaṇs) in the land. The system of settling Brāhmaṇs from Bengal and other parts of India was continued right upto the Ahom period. The same practice was in vogue in Bengal which imported Brāhmaṇs from various corners of middle India during the period between the 6th and 12th centuries A.D. ¹

Sanskrit became the popular language in the plains of Assam during this period and it became the court language during the historical period and it became also the medium of expression for poets, dramatists and others. As a result, by 12th century A.D., modern Assamese had developed as an Aryan speech out of Sanskrit. ²

The Aryan speakers migrated to Assam mostly from Madhyadesa or Mid-India. A succession of influences, ideas and cultures entered Assam down to the mediaeval period. The

¹ Majumdar, Op.cit., PP. 563-65
Brahmans and the Kāyasthas came to Assam from Videha (Mithila) and Kanauj.¹

Tribal groups - The tribal groups consisted of the people other than Aryans. They came to Assam in different periods in various waves from different directions. G.A. Grierson deals in detail with those tribes from the linguistic point of view.² These tribes are basically from three sub-families:

(1) Austro-Asiatic
(2) Tibeto-Burman, and
(3) Siamese-Chinese.

The second and the third come from one family i.e. the Tibeto-Chinese family:

The Austric, or Austro-Asiatics, who are in their primitive form, are represented by the Kol or Munda peoples of India as well as by the Khasis and the Nicobarese.

The Mongoloid peoples speaking dialects of the sub-Himalayan regions are also in North Bihar and East Bengal, and above all in Assam.

¹ Barua, B.K., Cultural History of Assam, PP. 5-10.
³ Chatterji, S.K., Balts and Aryans, PP. 1-3.
Austro-Asiatic

The Austro-Asiatic sub-family is much more strongly represented in India. There is first the great Mon-Khmer Branch spoken in South-East Asia, of which there are three representatives in Burma in the shape of Môn; Khmër and a number of other minor forms of speech belonging to Indo-China; and Nicobarese belong to this branch and seems to form the connecting link between the Munḍā languages and Môn.

From Indonesia, in the south, came the Mon-Khmers who occupied a large part of further India, including Assam. A Mon-Khmer language is spoken in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills of Meghālaya. Khasi is more or less isolated alike from its cousins of Burma and from those of India, and has struck out on somewhat independent lines apart from Môn, Nicobarese and Munḍā, which are mutually more closely connected than any of them is with Khasi. Khasi forms an island of Mon-Khmer speech, left untouched in the midst of an ocean of Tibetan-Burman language.

Ethnologically the Khasis are different from the other hill tribes of Assam. The Mons or Palaungs still remain as

the survivals of the matriarchal society which is so characteristic of the Khasis. In respect of some cultural traits also they show strong affinity with the Mon-Khmer speakers of south-east Asia. For instance, serpent worship, which still survives amongst these people in the form of Thlen superstition, finds an important place in the ancient religion of the Mons and Khmers. In the cultural sphere, the Khasis are related to the Mundsas particularly, the megalithic culture which was prevalent among the Khasis and similar customs were practised by the Hos and Mundsas too. 1

The Austro-Asiatic Mon-Khmer speaking Khasis are said to be the earliest inhabitants of Assam. The next wave which entered Assam was the Tibeto-Chinese family.

The Tibeto-Chinese Family 2:

Tradition and comparative philology agree in pointing to North-Western China between the upper course of the Yang-tse and of the Hoang-ho as the original home of the Tibeto-Chinese race. South-east Asia and Assam have been populated by successive waves of the Tibeto-Chinese invaders, each advancing in turn, down the courses of one

1. Ibid; Barua, B.K., A Cultural History of Assam, PP. 5-10; Kakati, B.K., An Aspects of Early Assamese literature, PP. 1-16; Assamese, its Formation & Development, PP. 33-47.
or more of the principal streams, the Brahmaputra, the Chindwin, the Irrawaddy, the Salwin, the Me-nam, and the Mekong. They drove out their predecessors nearer to the sea-coast, or into the mountain fastness which overlooks the valleys. Philology also indicates that the earliest Tibeto-Chinese immigrants must have found other races settled there. Amongst these were certainly the Mon-Khmers, and possibly also the ancestors of the Karens and of the wild tribes of Indo-China.

The Tibeto-Chinese family is divided into two sub-families, which are: the Tibeto-Burman and the Siamese-Chinese.

The Tibeto-Burmans appear to have first migrated from their original seat on the upper courses of the Yang-tse and Hoang-ho towards the head-waters of the Irrawaddy and of the Chindwin. Hence, it is believed, some people followed the upper course of the Brahmaputra, the Sanpo, north of the Himalays, and occupied Tibet. Some of these crossed the watershed and occupied the hills on the southern side of the Himalayan range right along from Assam, in the east, to the Punjab in the west. At the Assam end, they met and mingled with others of the same family who had wandered along the lower Brahmaputra through the Assam valley. At the great bend of the river near the present town of Dhubri, they followed it to the south, and occupied first the Garo Hills,
and then Tippera (Tripura). Some of them appear to have ascended the valley of the Kapili and the neighbouring streams into the hill country of the North Cachar, but the mountainous tract between it and the Garo hills, the Khasi and the Jaintia hills, they failed to occupy, and it still remains the home of the ancient Mon-Khmer people. Other members of this Tibeto-Burman horde halted at the head of the Assam valley and turned south. They took possession of the Naga Hills. Some of these probably entered the eastern Naga country directly, but others entered the western Naga country from the south, via Manipur.

Philologists have divided the Tibeto-Burman sub-family into two main branches - the Tibeto Himalay\footnote{Ibid, Vol. III, I.} and the Assam-Burmese.\footnote{Ibid, Vol. III, II.} There is another branch, which is the north Assam branch.\footnote{Ibid, Vol. III, I.} It occupied the hills, north of Brahmaputra. These people are known as the Akās, the Daflās, the Ābor-Miris and the Mishmi tribes.

The Assam-Burmese branch is further divided into the following groups: The Boḍo, the Nāgā, the Kachin, the Kukichin, the Burma, the Lobo-Moso and the Sak or Lūi. The

\begin{itemize}
  \item \footnote{Ibid, Vol. III, I.} \item \footnote{Ibid, Vol. III, II.}\item \footnote{Ibid, Vol. III, I.}
\end{itemize}
group of tribes known as Bodo or Bara forms the most numerous and important section of the Non-Aryan tribes of Assam. Linguistic evidence shows that at one time they extended over the whole of Assam, west of Manipur and Naga Hills, excepting Khasi and Jaintia.

The Siamese-Chinese:

The next great invasion took place in 1128 A.D. by the speakers of the Siamese-Chinese languages. These are represented in India by one group viz. the Tāi.

The Tais first appear in history in Yün-nan. From there they migrated into upper Burma, into the valley of the Shweli and the adjacent regions. From the Shweli, the Tāi or Shām, or (as the Burmese call them) Shān, spread south-east over the present Shān states, north into the present Khāmti region, and, west of the Irrawaddy, into all the country lying between it, the Chindwin and Assam. In the 13th Century, one of their tribes, the Ahoms, overran and conquered the region of Assam, giving their name to the country.

Among the tribal population of Assam, Dr. B.S. Guha has observed three main elements, namely Negrito, Proto-Australoid and Mongoloid. On the basis of hair form and

some aspects of material culture, authors like Guha, Hutton\(^1\) and Mills\(^2\) pointed to the existence of a Negrito strain in Assam, more particularly among some of the Naga tribes. But the presence of a Negrito racial strain in India has become a disputed subject. The recent works of Dr. S.S. Sarkar reveal that the Kadar of Kerala, who were considered to possess an essentially Negrito character, belong to the Veddia of Australoid ethnic stock. Without a complete and thorough study of the Naga tribes, the Negrito racial strain cannot be asserted.\(^3\)

The Mongoloid elements invariably predominate among the tribal populations. The Mongoloid (Tibeto-Burman groups) tribes may conveniently be grouped under several heads, like the Bo\(\)do, the N\(\)āgā, the Mizo-Kuki and others. Among the Tibeto-Burman groups, the most important is that of the Bo\(\)do tribes. The term Bo\(\)do is used to denote a large number of people who speak Bo\(\)do languages and thus there is a common affinity amongst the different members of this group. The Bo\(\)do occupied the entire Brahma\(\)putra valley and proved

themselves to be a powerful race in the earliest time. They even extended their area of occupation to north Bengal. To the south they not only occupied the Garo Hills, but also spread over northern Maimansing area. From Nowgong district - their territory extended to North Cachar and into Sylhet (now Bāṅglā-Desh). From these places, they further extended towards south to Tripura.

According to some anthropologists like Keane, some caucasic elements are believed to have been brought to Assam, through Burma by a section of Mongoloid people, which they received as a result of admixture with the caucasic people.

The Bodos, who occupied a sufficiently larger area suffered much from external pressure of the Ahoms from the east, of the Koch from the west. They were also invaded from the south. They were pressed forward by their co-tribesmen beyond there; the Kuki hordes left the Lushai and Chin hills and migrated from south, getting Manipur, the Cachar plains and particularly the hill of North Cachar, where the population is now mixed, partly Bodo and partly Kuki.

The most important invasion was that of Aryans from the west. The Brahmaputra valley was almost completely

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Aryanised. The old Boôô languages are gradually dying out. The non-Aryan tribes were also gradually converted into Hinduism.

**Language and Dialects:**

Assamese is the major language in Assam. It is not only spoken in the Brahmaputra valley, but also in Arunachal by people inhabiting the border areas adjacent to the plains. Besides, Assamese is used as the lingua franca by all the tribal people who are inhabitants of Assam, Arunachal and Nagaland.

Assamese is the mother tongue of 57 percent of the total population of Assam. Another 15 percent of the population use a second or subsidiary language.

There are innumerable dialects in Assam spoken by the different groups of people. These dialects are Boôô or Boro, Mundriunse, Kachâri, Miri, Oran, Dimasha, Kuki, Naga, Khasi, Garos. A total of 192 languages and dialects including 31 non-Indian languages have been recorded in Assam in the Census of India, 1961. These languages and dialects belong to the following five language families: (i) Indo-European, (ii) Sino-Tibetan, (iii) Thai-Kadai, (iv) Austro-Asiatic, and (v) Dravidian.

Assamese, which was not fully developed in the early period, is now the only Indo-Aryan language; but the Austro-
and the Tibeto-Burman elements have contributed largely both to the language and to the culture of Assam. Assam is a land of heterogeneous racial strains with linguistic divergences, but the modern Assamese language has occupied the place of a vehicle of expression of a composite Assamese civilisation.¹

The different ethnic stocks with different cultural groups of people settled in Assam from the earliest time contributed their respective shares in building up a composite Assamese people and culture.