INTRODUCTION

The Turungs constitute a small but distinct Tai community in the State of Assam of the Union of India. By religion they are Buddhists of the Theravada school and speak the Singpho dialect heavily mixed with Tai words. Formerly their houses were built on piles but now live in ground-floored houses like their neighbours. They are lowland valley-dwellers and wet-rice cultivators. They still don very colourful dress made by themselves. The style of wearing and fashion of their dress make them distinctive. Till a few years back they remained quite isolated in interior areas due to the lack of good road to their villages.

There are altogether six Turung villages which are spread over three districts of Golaghat, Jorhat and Karbi Anglong. These are Balipathar in Karbi Anglong District, Bosapathar and Rajapukhuri Turung villages in Golaghat District, Pahukatia, Patharshyam and Tipomiya villages at Titabar in Jorhat District. In addition five Turung families live at Gaharichowa, a place near Pahukatia village of Titabar

1 Writer's field visit.
NORTH EAST INDIA
SHOWING THE DISTRICTS
IN WHICH
TURUNGS INHABIT

40 0 40 80 KM

1. GOLAGHAT
2. JORHAT
3. KARBI ANGLONG

BOUNDARIES
INTERNATIONAL
STATE
DISTRICT

FIG.
Location:

BALIPATHAR: Situated at a distance of 54 km. south from Golaghat town, the headquarters of Golaghat District and 72 km. east from Diphu, the headquarters of Karbi Anglong District, it lies at a distance of 2 km. from Balipathar by the Balipathar-Naojan Road which bifurcates from the National Highway No.39. Significantly the Turungs in this village live side by side with the Aitons, another small Tai group. The village is skirted on the east by Neperpetti village populated by Nepalis, Garos and Bengalis, on the west by Balipathar bazar, on the north by Dilaojan village inhabited by Garos, Bengalis and Karbis, on the south by Baghjan peopled by tea-garden labourers who are mostly Christians.

The village has two Buddhist monasteries, one for the Turungs and the other for the Aitons each having its own monk. Out of 108 households, the Turungs have 49 and the rest are Aitons. The Turung population in this village is \(216^2\). The village primary school lies almost at the centre of the village.

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2 Based on writer's own field survey conducted on 16.10.92.
The villagers are mainly agriculturists. The economic condition of the villagers is comparatively well-off. There is hardly any family which does not own land. Rather every household owns sufficient land both for agriculture and homestead. According to information given by the villagers, the village was established in 1898 after the devastating earthquake on 12 June, 1897\(^3\) which has been well-recorded by E.A.Gait\(^4\).

**BOSAPATHAR** : Also known as Abhangpathar, it lies by the side of the Jamuguri Road at a distance of 20 km. south-east of Golaghat Town and 16 km. from Sarupathar Township. This village was established in the year 1935\(^5\). It is bordered on the east by the Daiyang River and a Nepali village, on the west by Dapathar village, on the north by Amguri village and on the south by Dighali Miri village.

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3 Information collected from Sri Aichu Shyam aged 68 years and Sri Phuleswar Gohain aged 65 years on 9.5.92.


5 Information collected from Sri Phanidhar Shyam of Bosapathar on 14.4.92.
The number of household is 26 with a total population of 262. The Buddhist vihar founded in 1947, lies at the centre of the village. It has a lower primary school. The economic condition of the village is not prosperous.

PAHUKATIA: Situated at a distance of 16 km. from Jorhat Town, it lies by the side of the Bagadia Shyam Village Road which bifurcates from the Titabar-Borhula road at Bagadia. It is a small village having 28 families with 262 persons. According to an informant the village was established in the year 1925. The village is skirted on the east by Rajabari Tea Estate, on the north by Tipomiya Shyam village and on the south Kapauhuwa village and on the west Na Ali and Rajabahar.

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6 Data collected from Sri Lilawati Shyam aged 45 of Bosapathar on 14.4.92.

7 The figure is based on my personal survey made on 13.1.91.

8 Information collected from Sri Yen Shyam of Pahukatia.
The economic condition of this village is not good. The monastery is located at the entrance of the village. The condition of the monastery is also poor. It has a Lower Primary School.

**PATHARSHYAM**: This village is situated at a distance of 20 km. to the east of Jorhat Town and 4 km. from Titabar Town. The road which connects Patharshyam village with Jorhat is known as Garh Ali. As informed by the village elders, it was established in the year 1834. It is the oldest of all the Turung village. It is surrounded by Gopalpur village on the north, Silikhabari village on the south, Deogharia village on the west and Gobinpur village on the east.

The total number of household is 57 with 468 souls. It is a big and prosperous village. Each family possesses its own land. The vihar is located at one end of the village by the side of a big paddy field. The monastery complex is beautiful. An iron gate is fixed at the entrance of the temple. The village has a Lower Primary School and one High English School.

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9 Informed by Sri Muhidhar Shyam aged 62 of Patharshyam village on 17.2.92.
RAJAPUKHURI TURUNG VILLAGE: This village, also known as Bheleng Turung village, is situated at a distance of 8 km. from Sarupathar Township, the headquarters of Dhansiri Sub-division, and is reached by Sarupathar-Turung Ali (road). It is bounded on the east by a Nepali village, on the west by Chukia Pathar village, on the south by an Orang village and on the north by an Ahom village.

Established in 1978, the village has 42 families with a population of 302.

Its vihar is named "Asoka Vihar". The present one of brick and mortar was constructed in 1957 at the place of an old one which was made of bamboo and wood. The main Buddha image of the vihar had been brought from Patharshyam village. Dr. Dharmma Vongsa, the noted monk of the monastery brought another image of Buddha to the vihar from Thailand. The vihar library has books on religion, and a few religious manuscripts written in Tai have been preserved.

10 Information given by Sri Lecham Turung of Rajapukhuri Turung Village on 3.5.90; Abani Shyam, "No 1 Rajapukhuri Turung gawar aru Buddha Viharar Chamu Itibritta", Dharmma Rath, a Souvenir, 1984, p.10.
11 Writer's field visit.
12 Abani Shyam, op.cit., pp. 11-12.
This village has a Lower Primary and a Middle English School. Educationally it is advanced than the other Turung villages of Assam.

TIPOMIYA: It is situated at a distance at 14 km. from Titabar Town and 26 km. from Jorhat, and can be reached by the Bagadia Shyam village road which bifurcates from the Titabar-Barhula road at Bagadia. It is bounded on the east by Tipomiya Tea Estate, on the west by Na Ali and Bagadia, a small township, on the north by Tipomiya river and on the south by Rajabahar Tea Estate. This village was established in the year 1910.13

The total number of household is 35 with about 362 souls. It is not a prosperous village. The economic condition of the villagers is not good. The Buddhist temple is in the middle of the village. Amongst the educational institutions, there are one Lower Primary, and one Middle English School. One High School has recently been established to cater to the educational needs of the villagers.

13 Information gathered from Sri Dhaneswar Shyam of Tipomiya village, on 27.10.92.
14 Data collected from writer's field visit.
### DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of establishment</th>
<th>No. of houses</th>
<th>No. of population</th>
<th>Distance from district headquarters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balipathar, Karbi Anglong</td>
<td>1898</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosapathar, Golaghat</td>
<td>1935</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pahukatia, Jorhat</td>
<td>1925</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patharshyam, Jorhat</td>
<td>1836</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajapukhuri, Golaghat</td>
<td>1918</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tipomiya, Jorhat</td>
<td>1910</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>362</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total | 237 | 1872 |

Source: Data collected by the writer in the early part of 1992.