CHAPTER II

THE PEOPLE AND THEIR LAND OF HABITATION;
SOCIETY AND ECONOMY

The Boros are one of the ethno-linguistic aborigines of the Assam state of the North-Eastern India. Scholars trace their generic origin to the Indo-Mongoloids and their language to the Tibeto-Burman language family. They are mostly concentrated in Assam, but are scattered over a large area of the region; including in the neighboring countries of Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh. Linguistically, the Boros include a large number of cognate tribes like the Dimasas, Garos, Boroks of Tripura, Lalungs, Sonowals, Deuris; Chutiyas etc. in the present day Assam, the Boros form one of the Major constituent communities of the state population.

A. THE PEOPLE

(I) Origin:

The fact that the Boros belong to the Mongoloid origin, has been confirmed by the recent researches, done on the population of Assam. The of ABO blood group, Glucose-6 Phosphate Dehydrogenises and Hemoglobin type, done on the blood samples of the Boro-Kacharis conforms to population synthesis of Mongoloid population. The population of India, in general, has higher incidence of B then A gene. But the tribals of North-Eastern India have higher frequency of A gene, showing affinities with the Mongoloid populations. The blood sample taken from a Mech-Kachari village called Katuba, located under Barbaruah Primary Health Centre of Dirugarh district
showed the same gene consistency, proving their Mongoloid origin. In this regard, Dr. R. S. Balgir also observes that "The population of the same ancestral origin display hemoglobin E gene with varying frequencies, especially belonging to Mongoloid ethnic stock, for example, the Boro-Kachari, Sonowal-Kachari and Mech-Kachari." Similarly, scholars like Dr. B M Das and others observe that the analysis done on the blood samples of the Boro-Kacharis "show a negligible frequency of Rh negative like other Mongoloid population. The ABO blood group system exhibits a higher value of gene B (41 per cent) then gene A (23.5 per cent), a trend closer to some Mongoloid groups." The scholars also refer to the physical characteristics of the Boros with their below medium structure, round-shaped head, a round or broad face and mostly broad nasal structure. These findings, establishing Indo-Mongoloid origin of the Boros, have also become indicative of their migration from their original abodes of the Mongoloid group of people. Having known this, the next immediate question arises is as to how and when the Mongoloid group of the people migrated to their part of the Indian sub-continent. This is another area of studies where scholars are largely divided. However, a large group of scholars like S. K. Chattargee, A. G. Grieson, E. J. Robson, B.C. Allen and E. A. Gait, who are considered authorities of this subject, have come to this conclusion that the original home land of the Sino-Tibetan speaking tribes or people of the Mongoloid race was North Western China, which was the Ancient Tibet. They spread from the upper reaches of the Yan-Tse-Kiang and Hwang-Ho rivers in different directions. They infiltrated into India partly from Tibet down the Valley of Brahmaputra River and partly from China through Burma. Gradually they spread into different parts of Assam, Bengal, and the

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Sub-Himalayan tract of Nepal and down the Ganges valley. Some of these early Tibeto-Burmans had penetrated within the frontier of India either along the Southern slopes of the Himalayas through Assam or by way of Tibet and further crossing the Himalayan barrier; they established themselves in Nepal and Garhwalkumoun. The Date of their migration, to this part of the world is also obscure and widely debated. According to S. K. Chattarjee the original Sino-Tibetan speech, which was the ultimate source of ancient Chinese and its variant forms Tibetan Burmese developed at least 3000 years before Christ. The speakers of this group of language started pushing South and West probably from 2000 B.C. onwards. Further, their movements towards the East might have been as old as that of Aryan in the West as some period before 1000 B.C. Dr. G. P. Singh, who has done extensive work attempting to identify the Kiratas, observes that the migration of the tribes of Sino-Tibetan and Tibeto-Burman towards India commenced from the early centuries of the Christian era onwards. In his opinion the Mongoloids of the North-Eastern India settled at different times. The settlements of the Nagas took place in the upper Paleolithic age as well as in the Neolithic age which have already been proved by the discovery of caves, rock shelters, stone tools and memorial stones in the hilly areas of the present Nagaland and Manipur. The Khasis, Jaintias and the Garos also settled in the Neolithic, which is proved by the remains of stone Celts and different kinds of megaliths. The Kacharis (Boros) were the Settlers of the

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72 S. K. Chattarjee, Place of Assam in the History and Civilisation of India, Calcutta. Pp. 9


late Neolithic period. The Mongoloids of present Tripura also settled at later age.\textsuperscript{75}

Despite controversy however majority scholars agree that the mongoloids settled in the North-Eastern part of our country much before the Aryans.\textsuperscript{76} They identify the Kiratas of the Ancient Assam, who took part in the Mahabharata war, under King Bhagadatta, with the Boros.\textsuperscript{77} Sanskrit literatures of the ‘Epic Era’ have repeatedly mentioned about the ‘Eastern Kiratases’ particularly, about the Kingdom of Tripura in the North-Eastern, known as ‘Kiratadesa’ in ancient times, from Pre-Yudhisthira period to the advent of Muslim rule.\textsuperscript{78} This became a pointer to the fact that the Boro group of Mongoloids, as the Boroks of Tripura are a branch of the great Boro race, established powerful Kingdom even in the 6\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} centuries B.C., at the time when the Aryans were confined to the Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and part of Bihar. Extension of Aryan culture and their settlement in the Brahmaputra region began only in the first decade of the Christian era.\textsuperscript{79}

(II) ‘Bodo’ or ‘Boro’:

The people of this community take pride in calling themselves as the Boros. They identify themselves as the ‘Bārā-fhisa’, meaning a son of Bārās they also use it to distinguish himself from a Sim-sa that is a Bhotiya, or Chin-phisa, a son of China.\textsuperscript{80} Bryan Hudgson however, for the first time used the term ‘Bodo’ as the generic name for the people of this language

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{75} Ibid, Pp. 93-93.
\item \textsuperscript{76} Sir E. A. Gait, \textit{A History of Assam}, Gauhati 1981, P, 247.
\item \textsuperscript{78} G. P. Singh, op cit. Pp. 48.
\item \textsuperscript{79} G. C. Basumatari, ‘Aryanisation and Hinduisation in Assam’ in the \textit{Souvenir} of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, Kokrajhar, 1984, Pp. 16-17.
\end{itemize}
Thereafter, authors of the later years have used this term liberally for both generic and community name. Bryan Hudgson himself gave no reason for the use of this term. Whatever was his basis, use of the term ‘Bodo’ has created confusions and controversies among the scholars and common people alike. Particularly, scholars, dealing on the Boros found themselves divided over the use of the terms ‘Boro’ and “Bodo.”

Going by Bryan Hudgson’s option, R. M. Nath has drawn a hypothetical theory, which traces the origin of the term ‘Bodo’ in the Tibetan word ‘Bod’ used for their country in the ancient times. A. G. Grierson writes that in the early days, the Tibetan called their country ‘Bodyut’, their language ‘Bodskad’ and a Tibetan man ‘Bodpa’. E. T. Atkinson and John Bowie have the similar view. Their opinion suggests ‘Bod’ as the source of the word ‘Bodpa’. Drawing a simile, they observe that if the Boros migrated from the North-Western China, which compromised the ancient Tibet, known as ‘Bod’, they too might have derived their name from the word ‘Bod’.

Contrary to their observations, scholars who are considered authorities on the Boros, argue for the use of the term ‘Boro’ for both community and generic names. For instance, the monumental work of A. G. Grierson, dealing with the people of this language group begins “The generic name Bodo was first applied by Hudgson to this group of languages. The extract sound is better represented by spelling it Bādā or Bārā. Bodo or Bārā is the name by which the Mech or the Mes and Kacharis call themselves. Like other tribal names in Assam, the name probably once

meant a male member of the tribe. In the closely allied Tippera or Tripura language Bārā (k) still means a ‘man’ and a Kachari or Mech will call himself a Bārā-fisa, a son of Bārās, to distinguish him from e.g. A Sim-sa that is a Bhotiya, or Chin-fisa, a son of China.”

Rev. Sidney Endle, who came to Assam in 1864 and worked among the Kacharis (Boros) since 1869, is another authority who did extensive studies on the people. He, while introducing this group of speakers in the census report of 1881, notes that the people of this tribe were proud of calling themselves as the Bara or as Baraphisa (children of the Baras). The same author, in his monograph, *The Kacharis*, published in 1911, observes that the people of this community were known as Kacharis to others and Baḍa or Bara to themselves.

J. D. Anderson, in his introductory chapter, incorporated in Rev. Endel’s monograph writes, “Their own name for their race is Boro or Bodo (the o has the sound of the English o in ‘hot’).” The argument of these scholars is that even if the letter-‘d’ is used in place of-‘r’, a dot (.) has to be put below it to produce the exact sound of the word. Going by this argument, it would perhaps be the most proximate inference to assume ‘Bodo’ to be a case of misspelling of the term ‘Boro’, in which the letter-‘r’ has to be pronounced with a strong sound. There are a number of examples showing how the Britishers often use the letter-‘d’ to produce an equivalent sound in English for the letter-‘r’ containing in an Indian word. One of the common examples is, the term ‘Bidi’ used by the Britishers for the word ‘Biri’ (locally produced cigar)’ or, the term ‘Kanada’ for the Indian word ‘Kanara’.

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88 J. D. Anderson, ‘Introduction’ chapter in Rev. S. Endle’s *The Kacharis*. 
The argument that doted-‘d’ (дж) or doted-‘r’ (рыв) may be used for exact transliteration of the word ‘Boro’ into English, brings the matter to the proximity of the existing use of the word. While ‘Bod’ or ‘Bodo’ do not bear any meaning and have no existing use whatsoever, its use either for generic or community becomes somewhat super imposition. As stated by Grierson, Anderson or Rev. Endle, Bāḏā, Bāṛā or Bārā is the name by which they call themselves and this is the term in which they take pride in calling themselves. E T Dalton has come closer to a conclusion when he observes “Boro means the great people.” 89 This is the kind of meaning attached to the term Boro by the members of this community. In their emotive sayings like “Boro hari gedet hari” (Boro people great people) or “Borosa derhasa” (Boros the victors), they have venerated the Boros into a great race. The closely allied Tripuri community also identify themselves as ‘Borok’, K being a suffix used for almost every noun. In their language ‘Borok’ means man. Like in other tribal languages, even in Boro, the logical meaning of the term ‘Boro’ is man. It is therefore a matter of fitness that the term which is still used in the society and has proximity to the meaning given by the community themselves is considered as the most appropriate nationality name for the language group of people under our review.

B. THE LAND OF THEIR HABITAT:

A. G. Grierson has identified a large group of tribes belonging to the Boro language group of people. He and also Rev. Endle have identified the places of their habitation, which are located almost in all the parts of the North-Eastern Indian region. Referring to the physical evidences

89 E T Dalton, Tribal History of Eastern India, (Formerly known as Descriptive ethnology of Bengal), rpt., Delhi, 1973, P. 89.
particularly, the names of the rivers of the province. Many of the chief rivers of the province, such as Diputa, Dihong, Dibong, Dibru, Dihing, Disang, Dikhou, Dikhrang, Diphu, Digaru etc. still bear the marks of once Boro domination over all this areas.

In his monograph, Rev S Endle wrote that there "seems to be good reason for believing that the Kachari (Bodo) race is a much more widely distributed one than it was at on time supposed to be. They are undoubtedly found well outside the limits of modern (political) Assam, i.e. in North-East Bengal Koch-Behar, &c., and also in Hill Tippera, where language of the people gives decisive evidence that they are of the Bodo stock. But apart from these outlying members of the race, there are within the Assam itself at least 1000000 souls, probably many more who belong to the Kachari race; though many of the members have of late years become more or less Hinduised, and have lost the use of their mother tongue." On the whole he divided the Boro speaking people into two (1) Northern an (2) Southern groups taking Brhmaputra as the dividing line. In the Northern group he included (a) the Bara(Kacharis) living in the western Darrang, Kachari Duars and in Kamrup, (b) Rabhas (Totalas ) living in Goalpara, (c) Mech living in Goalpara (d) Dhimal of the North-east Bengal, (e) Koches living between Jalpaiguri of Bengal to North-West Darrang and (f) Mahaliyas and Saraniyas living in Western Darrang. In the Southern group he has included the (i) Dimasas living in North Cachar Hills, (ii) Lalungs settled in Nowgaong and adjoining districts, (iii) Garos inhabiting the Garo Hills, (iv) Hajongs settling on the southern slope of Garo Hills and (v) the Hill Tippera people settling in the Hill Tippera. To these he added two smaller

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communities that is, the Morans and the Chutiyas in upper Assam, whose language though dying out, proves to be closely akin to the Boro race.  

Rev. S Endle, following the migration and settlement pattern, recorded the Koch kingdom and the rulers of the ‘Kachari Duars’ as the powerful representatives of the Northern group of Boros. But the Eastern branch of the Kacharis (Boros), under the name of Chutiyas, established the first powerful kingdom which had its capital at or near the modern Sdiya. However, they came under attack from the Ahoms, who crossed Patkai Hills in about AD 1228. But the Ahoms drove them further forcing them to take refuge at the foot of the Naga Hills, with Dimapur as the seat of the Government. There they settled for a considerable period which is evident from the material remains of the Kacharis (Boros). But their ancient enemies followed them up and in the Sixteenth century, sacked and captured the capital Dimapur itself. The Kachari king then removed his court to Maibong, meaning much paddy, where the dynasty maintained itself for about two centuries. But they had to once again move from Maibong to Khaspur in Cachar in about 1750 A D, fearing an attack from the Jaintia King. Rev. Endle has mentioned over and again about a Kachari character of being strongly clannish, which he believed, influenced them to withdraw to less favored terrains where their conquerors did not care to follow them up. He argues that this very clannish and hard-pressed by the Ahoms; the Southern group of Kacharis (Boros) might have withdrawn themselves to the Garo Hills, North Cachar Hills and to the Hill Tippera.  

The movement of the Kacharis (Boros) was however confined to the kings and his members of the court alone. Large body of his subjects stayed back and settled under their conquerors. This happened all through their
prolonged struggle with the Ahoms, whether it was in upper Assam Sadiya, Dimapur, Maibong or Khaspur. The Boro-Kachari population found in all these areas till date stands to prove this argument. In many of these settlements, the Boro-Kacharis, for instance, the Chutiyas are completely hinduisked, their language and culture lost. In short, the Eastern Boro-Kacharis established powerful kingdom in and around present Sadiya of Upper Assam, where a sizeable Chutiya-Kachari population is found till date. The Southern Boro-Kacharis made their way into the Garo Hills, North Cachar and Hill Tippera, in their attempt to withdraw from the invaders. These areas are under their settlement till this day. The Northern group of the Boro-Kacharis made their abode in the broad belt at the foot of Bhutan Hills, which forms the majority Boro populated area in the present day Assam.

This study will however focus solely on the Boros of present Assam for whom recently the Bodoland Territorial Council, comprising four districts of majority Boro populated areas has been created. Though generically Boro group of people include a large number of tribes and are settled in different districts and states of the North-Eastern India, this study will be confined to the Boros, which in the context of the present day meaning, refers to the Boros living in the North bank of the Brahmaputra, and a few thousand Boros living in Karbi-Anglong, in the southern bank.

C. POPULATION:

The population of the Boros has also been a matter of controversy till the recent years. The Census Report of 1971 recorded the total plains
tribal population at 16 lakhs souls, out of which, 6, 10,459 were Boros. This figure of the Census report has however been challenged by Boro socio-political organizations. In their opinion, the total population figure furnished therein is too small to represent even the Boro community alone. In 1981, census was not conducted in Assam due to the adverse situation arising out of the foreign national agitation, launched by the All Assam Students’ Union. But following the general trend of population growth of the state, the Department of Welfare of Plains Tribals and Backward Classes recorded that the “projected population in the year 1981 is estimated to be 199.03 lakhs as on the first March 1981, and would be 241.37 lakhs on the first October 1987. Accordingly, the projected population plains tribal population would be around 18.29 lakhs and 22.18 lakhs as on the first March 1981 and 1st October 1987.” But the Boro leaders reject the census of 1971 saying it to be “as vague and far from truth.” They claim their population to be nearing twenty lakhs and estimate the total plains tribal population to be more than 37 lakhs by 1981. They worked these figures out basing the population figure furnished by the Census of 1901 and multiplying it with a decadal population growth rate for the last eighty years. In the opinion of the student activists, in 1986, the total population of Assam was estimated to be 2, 25, 00,000 out of which 64, 00,000 were plain tribals. The estimate also projects break-ups of tribal and Boro population from the distributive and community angles. According to their projection, the total Boro population was estimated to be 40, 00,000, while

96. Memorandum to Mr. Hiteshwar Saikia, the Chief Minister, by the Plains Tribals Council of Assam (Progressive), Dispur, Dated April 4, 1984.
Boros inclusive of the cognate tribes to be 51, 00,000. It is needless to say that the population figure, stipulated by the Boro organizations also can not be accepted without cross examinations for obvious reasons. However, the claim of the Boro organizations becomes a pointer to the discrepancies crept into the Census report, which gave the Boros reason for suspicion on a document, otherwise considered so genuine. These discrepancies believed to have crept in due to deliberate doctoring of some census officials. The census, conducted ones in every ten years, presented the Boro Hindu converts as Assamese, resulting into inclusion of a large number of hinduised Boros into the Assamese fold. Referring to this duplicity of the census officials who were mostly Assamese, one census official associated with the census of 1881 observed, “the separation of Hindus as an ethnological class is open to objection that it includes a large number who are not Aryans.” He also observed that “the increase I Kamrup and Darrang is so great as to suggest the suspicion that a large number of Koches have returned themselves as Kalitas.” The Koches were the Hinduised Boros who were elevated to the Kalita caste of the Assamese Hindu hierarchy. The infringement of presenting non-Aryan converts as Assamese, irrespective of their tribes, continued till the recent years. The impact of this phenomenon reflected itself in the inconsistent population figures presented in the successive census report. For instance, in 1881, the Boro population inclusive of all cognate tribes was 8, 94,885, in 1891, it rose to 10, 58, 496. But it fell to 6, 17,989 in 1901. In 1961, their population figured at 12, 28,450, while in 1971, it fell to 11, 66,901. Such fluctuation in the population figure can not be analyzed by the natural law of demography. Likewise in 1951 Census, only 1.47 lakhs returned as the Boro speakers as

against 6.82 lakhs given in the 1911 Census report. Contrarily, till 1950s, there had been rapid growth in the number of Assamese speaking Hindus. This led to questioning of the 1951 census figure from certain quarters. Such malpractice of presenting Boro converts as Assamese makes it difficult to know the exact population of this community. At the same time, the claim of the Boro socio-political organizations that their population had risen to 35,00000 by 1990, also can not be accepted without cross examination. Hence, the exact population of the Boro community will remain elusive until and unless a free and fair census is conducted by the Government of India.

D. SOCIETY AND RELIGION:

(I). SOCIETY:

The Boro society is patriarchal, father being the fountain head, solely authority and the owner of the family property. However, the mother and other female members are also not neglected. In fact, the patriarchy of Boro society is intrinsically interwoven with matriarchal traits in it. For instance, in the household concern, the mother has so complete control that the father or the husbandman has practically no say. This lineage is further manifested in at least two types of marriages, in which, the man comes to live with the woman in her establishment. In other word, the Boro society has an egalitarian character, so far as, sharing of property, access to education and other developmental opportunities are concerned.

The Boro society is divided into a number of Mahris or clans based on their profession totemic beliefs. According to traditions, originally, there had been altogether twelve Maharis or clans in the Boro society. The twelve clans still exist even till date. These clans are Basumataroi, Mosaharoi,
Daimaroi, Borgoaroii, Hajoaroii, Narjiaroii, Sorgiaroi, Sampramaroi, Lahroii, Kerktaroii, Khakhlaroi and Laharoi. The Boro clan system, as stated above, developed from their totemic beliefs on the professions they were attached to. For instance, the Sorgarois were priestly group of people who devoted themselves to the priestly activities. The Basumatarois were the owners of lands; whereas the Daimaris were the river-folk who took up fishing as the profession for their livelihood. The Mosaharoici clan, on the other hand, was the tiger-folk, who claimed themselves to be kindred with the tiger. Therefore, it was their tradition to mourn over the dead of a tiger. The Narzaroii were the jute clan, which held jute in special honour and on occasion of religious ceremonies; its members were bound to chew certain quantity of jute. The khangkhalroi were the ‘Khangkhla-folk’, members of which used a jungle shrub as vegetable at religious ceremonials and at festive gatherings. However in the present day Boro society, those clannish titles signify only the surnames of a group of people. The members of the clans, no longer engage themselves in those professions of ancient times. The clan system has otherwise no other implication on their inter-marriage, inter-dinning and other social activities. It has no caste implication of the Hinduism.

Various forms of marriages are prevalent among the Boros. The most common one is the swngna hai haba or marriage through negotiation, in which, the guardians of both the parties negotiate for the marriage. In another form of marriage, known as the kharsonnai haba, the bride herself willingly goes to the house of the groom she loves, who is later on socially married to the person. The ghwrjia thanai haba is another form of marriage in which the man goes to live in the house of the woman and remains there till he is

100 Bhoben Narzi, Boro Kacharir Somaj aru Sanskriti, p. 131.
financially sound enough to begin a new establishment of his own. The marriage by capture is also prevalent, though more commonly, among the Boros belonging to the Hindu society. Widow re-marriage is socially permitted. A widow can re-marry her late husband’s younger brother, but not the elder one. Similarly, a widower can re-marry his deceased wife’s younger sister, but not the elder. In the dongkha habnai haba, another form of marriage, the widower goes and stays at the house of the widow where the marriage is performed. According to the traditional custom, marriage is performed in front of the Bathou altar, erected in the yard of the homestead. Both the bride and the groom are made to seat in front of the altar, while the priest recites mwnthwr or verses, invoking the Bathou Bwrai, the supreme god of the Boros. Thereafter, he declares them to be wedded, entitled to co-habit as the husband and wife.

The Boros observe a number of socio-religious festivals, of which the Kherai is the most significant one. The word Kherai is collectively used for as many as 30 forms of Boro daces which are performed in the months of October-November to worship the Bathou Bwrai and the Mainao Burwi. They worship the couple praying them for bumper crops and for the welfare of the village. Along with the Bathou Bwrai and Mainao Burwi, other village deities are also worshipped in the Kherai festival. The observation usually takes place at night, performing Kherai dances throughout to please the Gods and Goddesses, with an expectation of abundant grains and welfare. A female priest, known as the Doudini plays the key role through whom oblations are offered to their deities. She becomes an oracle and advises the villagers to live righteous life. In this regard P. C. Battacharjee observes, “The function of the Male Oracle (Oza) and the Female Oracle (Doudini) as priestly dancers at the time of Bathou worship and Kherai festival is an essential requisite. Kherai is their national festival which also
provides with ancestral and hero worship.”

The Bwisagw is another socio-religious festival which is observed with great jubilation by the Boros to celebrate the advent of the new year. It is observed from the first day of the Bengali month Baisakh for about one week. From the first day to the seventh of Baisakh, Bros irrespective of their age and sex celebrate Bwisagw with gaiety. They drink Zou (rice beer), sing and dance to their heart's content. At the end of the celebration, the whole village population partakes in a community feast. Once the Bwisagw celebration is over, it is once again time for them to prepare themselves for the year’s cultivation.

(II) RELIGION:

The opinion of the European writers that the religion of the Boros was animistic appears to be a case either of misconception or their limited access to the related sources. It is likely that the European writers either overlooked or had no knowledge about the existence of a religious philosophy, constituting the main tenets of the Boro religion Bathouism. It is also possible that the philosophy of the Bathouism was a later development. The Bathouism has its own concept of creation. According to it, before the creation of the Universe, there was simply a great void, in which the supreme God Aham Guru, Anan Binan Gosai or Obonglaori, existed formlessly. The supreme God Aham Guru became tired of living a formless existence and desired to live in flesh and blood. He descended on this great void with all human characteristics. Thereafter, he created the Universe. Aham Guru at his first appearance in this Universe called himself Shri

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102 P. C. Battacharjee, A Descriptive Analysis of the Boro Language, Guwahati, 1977, P. 17.
Bwrai, Jiw Bwrai or Siw Bwrai; then he created Dari Muba and Singri Doba, a couple for the propagation of the human population on the Earth.¹⁰⁵

Jiw Bwrai or Siw Bwrai is also popularly known as the Bathou Bwrai among the people of this community. The Bathou Bwrai is thus the supreme God of the Boros, and the religion they follow is known as the Bathouism, after the name of their God Bathou. Besides, there are number of minor gods, who function under the umbrella of Bathou Bwrai. They are broadly divided into household gods and village gods. The household gods are worshiped in the homestead, while the later, by the whole village collectively outside in a selected place called Thansali.

Bathouism is based on five moral and spiritual messages, namely (i) messages on holy realization, (ii) messages on holy practices, (iii) messages on love and (iv) messages on hatred etc. The messages on holy realization includes realization of Bathou as the supreme God, the realization of one’s own soul as the part of Bathou, and realization of the need of good work in this world. The realization of holy practices emphasizes on the meditation for God, conversation on religious and spiritual matters and charitable donations to the poor. The message on love includes love for God, love for fellow being, love for family and love for living beings. The messages on the hatred urges one to abstain from committing sins like murder, stealing, telling lies, adultery and bad company.²⁰⁶ Bathouism has philosophical expositions on still other aspects of a religion, but this should suffice our attempt of giving a brief introduction to the religion of this community.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, p.11.
¹⁰⁶ Ramdas Basumatari, 'Some ideas on Bathou' in Bodosa, Souvenir of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, 1980, p. 27.
The Gods and Goddesses of the Boros are largely divided into two categories namely, (a) the household deities and (b) the village deities. The Bathou Bwrai and his consort Mainao or Bhulli Burwi belong to the group of household deities. Apart from them, Asu Mainao, Sali Mainao, Song Raja, Song Bwrai and Bura Bagh Raja etc are some of the household deities worshipped in the homestead. Of all, Bathou is pre-eminent and considered to be guardian of family interests and family honour. “He is never represented in idol form, but is well in evidence through his living symbol, the siju (hiju) tree (Euphorbia splendens), which is often to be seen in the Kachari homestead surrounded by a circular fence of split bamboo. Among the Meches of Goalpara, almost every home, it is said, has its Bathou (siju), though in Darrang it is frequently met with.”¹⁰⁷ Song Raja appears to be another eminent household deity. A raised altar is erected inside the house in his honour and offerings are made. However, all offerings made to Song Raja are finally brought outside the house and laid at the foot of Bathou, affirming his supremacy. The village deities appeared to have been adopted mostly from the Hindu Gods. Rev. Endle observes, “There would seem to be little need to dwell much on the village deities; for no small proportion of them have evidently been adopted from the Hindu Pantheon, as will be obvious from the names given below.”¹⁰⁸ He motions as many as 10 village deities most of whom are Hindu gods, while others are historical figures of pre-eminence. For instance, Kuber mentioned in the list of the village deities of the Boros is a Hindu god, while Bura Gossain and Sila Rai are the historical figures. In the present day Boro society however these village deities have lost their importance. They are hardly worshipped as they were done in the past. Besides this, in the olden days, the Boros said to have observed three great annual phujas, which were directly connected with the

¹⁰⁷ Rev. S. Endle, op. cit., p. 36.
ingathering of the three chief rice crops of the year, that is, *Asu, Pharma and Sali crops*. The dates for these annual *phujas* were not rigidly fixed, but decided by the village elders according to the convenience of the villagers. There was no prescribed form of religious worship; whole gathering was rather of the nature of a village merry-making than a religious ceremony. There was invariably a large consumption of rice beer, which is the national beverage of this community, at all these gatherings. There is no priestly caste among the Boros. Religious ceremonies are usually performed by the Male Oracle known as *Oza* or *Deodai*. But in times of emergency, like plague, pestilence and famine etc., the services of the possessed woman known as *Doudini*, are called into action. A large scale *phuja* is organized by the affected village community, where the *doudini*, “a somewhat weird-looking figure, with disheveled hair, and vermilion-stained forehead, wearing a long petticoat, dances up and down to and fro before these figures, keeping time roughly with the music of cymbals and tom-toms played by four or five men, who act as her assistants.”¹⁰⁹ The ceremony is a prolonged one; often extending over many hours. The *Doudini*, as she begins her prayer, gradually attains the state of excitement and frenzy, who now cuts off the head of a goat and offers the blood to the *modai* (deity). It is at this stage of the ceremony that the *doudini* is said to be possessed, enabling her to know the name of the offended deity who has caused the plague, pestilence and famine etc. Thereafter, the offended deity is pacified by making offerings of goat, pigs and fowls etc. The expenses of such ceremonies are usually met by the contributions of the whole village community.

(III) HINDUISM AND THE BORO SOCIETY:

The Boro society underwent centuries of assimilation, often termed as 'Aryanization' and 'Hinduization', which, in Assam meant conversion of non-Aryan tribes into Assamese speaking Hindus. The people of this community came into contact with the Hindus of neighboring regions since the time of the kings. Particularly, with the advent of the Aryan culture kin 7th century A D, the Boro kings themselves were converted into Hinduism. Then followed the conversion of the masses, which was followed by assimilation of the converts into Indo-Aryan fold, through the ladder of caste hierarchy. During the Ahom rule, conversion of the Boros was extensively undertaken by the Gossains. The process of conversion which started in the 7th century A.D. completed in the 16th century when a caste called 'Koch' was formed out of the Hiduised Boros. The Koches gave up their culture and tradition and adapted themselves to the Assamese culture. In the caste hierarchy, the Koches occupied the highest strata among the converts, while Saranya, Madhahi and Totila formed the first stage of the conversion. The process of conversion continued with considerable momentum during the colonial rule too. The Census report of 1881 showed three categories of tribals in Assam plains. They were tribals influenced by Hinduism numbering 3, 23,303, tribals in the process of conversion numbering 82,889 and tribals wholly converted numbering 3, 95,002. The Census report also recorded a sudden rise in the number of Kalitas between the periods of 1872-1881. In 1872, the population of Kalitas was 99,226 in the Kamrup district, which increased to 1, 40,923 in 1881. Likewise the

number of Kalitas in Darrang district rose to 24,460 in 1881, as against 16,998 in 1872.\textsuperscript{114} The sudden increase in the number of Kalitas and subsequent decrease in the Boro population in those districts mentioned, suggested their conversion into higher caste of Hinduism. In this regard, the census official observed, "The increase in Kamrup and Darrang is so great as to suggest the suspicion that a large number of Koch have returned themselves as Kalitas."\textsuperscript{115} The Boros thus underwent a process of conversion in a hierarchical manner. They were first converted to Saranya, Madhahi or Totila, who were later on elevated to Koch.\textsuperscript{116} In Assam, the process of conversion was accompanied by the transformation of the non-Assamese converts into Assamese speaking Hindus. The new converts gave up their culture and tradition and adapted themselves to the Assamese culture.

The process of conversion and subsequent transformation of the converts into Assamese speaking community had adverse effects of the socio-political life of the Boros. Many of the converts however could not rise higher in the Hindu caste ladder, nor could they go back to their original fold. Caught in a dubious situation and encouraged by the divisive forces, they constituted themselves into new communities, independent of the Boros. The Rabhas, Koches, Sonowals, Saranyas, which have independent entity now, were the outcome of Hinduization and Assamyization process. It is evident from the above discussion that the process of conversion disintegrated the Boros into smaller communities. It not only destroyed their cultural homogeneity or economic and commercial viability, but also reduced them into ineffective political minority. On the contrary, rapid increase in the Assamese population helped them establish their cultural and

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid, p. 30.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid, p.30.
\textsuperscript{116} S.K. Mukharjee, op. cit., p.1.
linguistic suzerainty over the other communities, particularly, on the non-Aryan tribals.

Though the Boros suffered bruises of assimilation, only a small portion of the body-population could be assimilated. Some of the population, though influenced and professed Hinduism, lived with their customs and traditions, without undergoing formal conversion. While the larger group remained outside the sphere of Hinduism and live with their traditional customs, religion and language intact. Then began the spread of western education in the early decade of the 20th century, inculcating western ideas of human values and individualism, helping regeneration of the community. Spread of Christianity, confined among a very small group though, added to the spread of ideas of rationalism and individualism among the Boros. Thus awareness had begun among the educated Boros, which ultimately aroused socio-political consciousness among the Boro intellectuals.\(^{117}\) Already spread of Brahma religion had given partial check to the process of assimilation. As modernization and mobilization began, Boro intellectuals adopted remedial measures giving check to the process of conversion. The subjective self-consciousness acquired in the process of modernization and mobilization, which manifested in their search for a separate identity, fell on the religion too. Since the 70s, there has been a rigorous attempt to revive and re-organize their ancestral religion Bathism.

E. ECONOMY:

About 99 per cent of the Boro population lives in the country-side villages and therefore agriculture is the main stay of their economy. The plot of land they hold is indispensable to them for their livelihood. With

little inclination towards trade and business, they remain solely dependent on the plot of land they hold.

The Boro populated areas, covering almost all the districts of Himalayan foot-hills, apart from being the rice bowl of the state, are immensely endowed with natural resources. It has vast forest areas, water resources tape able for electricity, fishing, irrigation and other possibilities. However, these resources have been taped till this date. Of the total 780 tea gardens in Assam, as many as 400 gardens are located in the Boro area. Though most of the employees, particularly, the laborers had been brought from outside, a few Boros have also been taken in the recent years. New small tea gardens, owned by the Boros themselves, numbering around fifty in total are also coming up of late. Besides, the soil in the Himalayan foothills is suitable for rubber plantation as well. The experimental rubber plantation, done in those areas has shown good progress, though large scale plantations, under the Government initiatives, are not forth-coming. The landmass inhabited by the Boros is fertile and capable of producing all kinds of crops, which can be increased manifold by adopting scientific methods.

(1) PROBLEM OF LAND ALIENATION:

The Boros are essentially agriculturists and hence land is of supreme importance for them. So much so that even in the early days of their awakening, giving protection to their land became the prime concern of the Boro intellectuals. The first of such examples traces far back as 1939, when the Tribal League, the lone political organization of the plains tribals of Assam, entered into an agreement with the Assam Prodesh Congress.

118 Data furnished by the All Bodo Students' Union and Bodo Peoples' Action Committee in the Memorandum to the Three Member Expert Committee dated Kokrajhar, April 8, 1991.
Committee, whereby imaginary lines were drawn dividing the areas occupied by the tribals from the other non-tribal areas. The agreement also debarred the East-Bengal immigrants from settling in tribal areas inside the line. This is how the line system came into existence in Assam plains. But situation changed when the Congress leaders including the Chief Minister Gopinath Borodoloi, were put behind the bar for their participation in the Quit India Movement of 1942. The Assam Muslim League sought the help of the tribal leaders agreeing to abide by the line system and other conditions put forward by the Tribal League and thus formed the League ministry in 1940. The Tribal League made yet another agreement with the Assam Congress Committee in 1946, prior to the pre-Independence election, whereby the later agreed to make amend the Chapter X of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation of 1886, to provide adequate protection to the tribal lands if they returned to the power. The Congress returned with majority and formed the Government. Abiding by the terms of the agreement, the Congress amended the aforesaid Land Regulation and created 33 Tribal Belts and Blocks covering 5,704 sq miles (1,09,73,673 Bighas) in area. These Tribal belts and Blocks spread over five districts of then Assam namely, Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Lakhimpur and Nowgoan of then Assam.

A few important clauses of the amended act of the Chapter X of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1886, also known as the Assam Act XV of 1947, have been mentioned hereunder.
160. (1) Notwithstanding anything hereinbefore contained, the (State) Government may adopt such measures as it deems fit for the protection of those classes who on account of their primitive condition and lack of education or material advantage are incapable of looking after their welfare in so far as such welfare depends upon their having sufficient land for their maintenance.

(2) The (State) Government may, by notification in the official Gazette, specify the classes of people whom it considers entitled to protection by such measures as aforesaid.

161. (1) The protective measures may include the constitution of compact areas, in region predominantly peopled by the classes of people notified under the provisions of sub-section (2) of section 160, into belts and blocks. The boundaries of the areas so constituted shall as far as possible coincide with mauza boundaries or be otherwise easily distinguishable.

162. (2) Notwithstanding anything in the contrary in any law, usage, contract or agreement no person shall acquire or possess by transfer, exchange, lease, agreement or settlement any land in any area or areas constituted into belts and blocks in contravention of the provisions of sub-section (1).

(3) From and after the commencement of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation (Amendment) Act, 1947 no document evidencing any transaction for acquisition or possession of any land by way of transfer, exchange, lease, agreement or settlement shall be registered under the Indian Registration Act of 1908 if it appears to be registering authority that the transaction has been effected in contravention of the provisions of sub-section (2).

122. The Chapter X of the Assam Land Revenue Regulation, 1886, added by the Assam Land and (Amendment)
On the basis of these provisions of the amended act of the Chapter X of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1886 (Assam Act XV of 1947) the above mentioned 33 Tribal Belts and Blocks were created for the protection of the tribals of Assam plains.

But the creation of the Tribal Belts and Blocks did not serve the purpose mainly due to the slackness of the authorities involved. As a result, despite the Regulation, illegal occupation and transfer of tribal lands continued unabated. The alienation tribal lands which started since the early decades of the 20th century, assumed an alarming proportion in the 50s of the same century. In addition to the settlers from the main-land India, the tea plantation laborers, non-tribal traders, business and money lenders began occupying large areas of tribal lands taking advantage of their simplicity and honesty. The note of protest against the illegal possession of tribal lands by the non-bonafied encroachers first appeared in the Resolution no 3 of the Tribal Sangha, in 1965. The Resolution no 3, passed in its 15th Annual Conference of 1965 recorded;

Since they were constituted in 1947, many glaring difficulties have arisen in these two belts and blocks (that is Sidli Tribal Belt and Bijni Tribal block in matters of giving land settlement to the Tribal people and the people belonging to the backward community and from the year 1950, all these difficulties turned more acute as a consequence of which several thousands of bighas of land in these belts and blocks have been transferred into the hands of the non-bonafied encroachers. The District Tribal Sangha has observed with grave concern that in May of 1952, the Government alienated an area of 4087 bighas of cultivable land from the Bijni Tribal Block.
constituted in 1947 and included it in the Panbari Reserved Forest; and in 1961 an area of 1000 bighas of cultivable land of the said block was included in the Bishnupur Colony which has been created to accommodate the refugees from Pakistan, thus making the land problems of the landless tribals within the tribal block more dangerous. Therefore the District Tribal Sangha urges upon the Government to publish immediately the Report of Tribal Belts and Blocks Inquiry Sub-Committee, and maintain the status of the tribal belts and blocks in accordance with the recommendations and suggestions advanced by it.\textsuperscript{123}

The Central Committee of the Assam Tribal Sangha passed the Resolution no-1 by which “getting pattas and registrations of lands by illegal occupation without any restriction within the Tribal Belts and Blocks” was strongly opposed. The Resolution also demanded “complete eviction of the non-bonafied occupants from the Tribal Belts and Blocks at least within the month of August, 1966.”\textsuperscript{124} In the 1970s, the land alienation problem became alarmingly acute. This may be inferred from the degree of emphasis given in the Plains Tribal Council of Assam’s first memorandum itself. The memorandum submitted to the President of India in 1967, recorded a long list of the “non-bonafied outsiders and the non-outsiders bonafieds” occupants some of whom were already granted pattas. In the memorandum, the Plains Tribal Council of Assam recorded; “the total area within Bijni Tribal Block vide the Government Notification No. RD. 69/46/20 dated 5-12-47 was 302545 Bighas 0 kotha 0 lecha out of which an area measuring

\textsuperscript{123} Minutes of the 15\textsuperscript{th} Annual Conference of the Kokrajhar District Tribal Sangha, held of 25\textsuperscript{th} and 26 March, 1965 at Gurubhasa, in Goalpara District.

\textsuperscript{124} Minutes of the Central Committee of the Assam Tribal Sangha, held in Gauhati on May 21 and 22 1966.
Since 1952, large scale reconstitution of Tribal Belts and Blocks was carried out which reduced the areas of the Belts and Blocks to 2,35,758 Bighas, 3 Kothas and 9 lechas by the year 1967. The problem of land alienation was taken up seriously by the Plains Tribals Council of Assam (Progressive), which, in its memorandum to the Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, termed the amended land Regulation as a “farce legislation being unable to protect the Tribal lands from the illegal encroachers.” Mr. Khungkhra Narzari, the General Secretary of the aforesaid Council has given a detail list of the lands alienated by different agencies. He writes; “It should be clearly stated that the Tribal Belts and Blocks so composed to protect the tribal lands were later deconstituted one after another by the Assam Government for various purposes.”

In 1974, the Government of Assam constituted a 12 member sub-committee called the Sub-Committee of Advisory Council for Welfare of Scheduled Tribes (Plains) on Settlement of Land in Tribal Belts and Blocks and the Forest Land. The Sub-Committee was constituted by the following members;

1. Mr. Mal Chandra Pegue, M. L. A.  
2. Mr. Khirod Chandra Saikia, M. L. A.  
3. Mr. Bahadur Basumatari, M. L. A.  
4. Mr. Ramesh Mahan Kohli, M. L. A.  
5. Mr. Ambarish Chandra Lahri, M. L. A.

Chairman
Member
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125 Memorandum to the President of India, op. cit. Appendix E.
126 Memorandum to the Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi, by the Plains Tribals Council of Assam (Progressive), New Delhi, dated April 22, 1983.
The Sub-Committee visited almost all the districts, sub-divisions and circles to make physical assessment of the extent of land alienation. The records available show that the Sub-Committee made spot enquiry in the following Districts, Sub-Divisions and Circles:

(1) Kokrajhar Sub-division from 23rd July to 27th July, 1975,
(2) Kamrup district and South Gauhati Sub-Division from 13th November to 25th November, 1975,
(3) Dibrugarh and Lakhimpur Districts, Jonai area of Dhemaji Sub-Division from 21st November to 26th November, 1975.
(4) Nowgong District, from 8th December to 12th December, 1975.
(5) Dibrugarh District, Tinsukia Sub-Division (Chapakhowa Sadiya area) from 2nd April to 5th April, 1976.
(6) Kamrup District, North Gauhati, Nalbari and Barpeta Sub-Divisions from 27th May to 29th May, 1976.
(7) Darrang District, Mongaldoi and Tezpur Sub-Divisions from 18th July 1976.

After having completed spot visits, it prepared a report on August 23rd, 1976. The report was placed before the Advisory Council on August 24, 1976. The 12 member Sub-Committee found out that such large scale land alienation was possible primarily due the slackness of the Assam Government itself. The Government officials themselves were found
becoming agents of legal and illegal transfer of tribal lands. The Sub-
Committee after having visited “almost all the circle officers” found that;

“………the provisions of the Chapter X of Assam Land and Revenue
Regulation Act have nowhere been sincerely implemented. On the
other hand, it appears to the Committee that the officials responsible
for the implementation of the said provisions have, instead of
guarding the interests of the Tribal people within such Belts and
Blocks for whom these are meant, frequently infringed the provisions
by themselves by way not only conniving the encroachers in Sarkari
Land but also allowing illegal land alienations that have taken place
from tribal to non-eligible non-tribal and thereby, giving indulgence to
those illegible persons to infiltrate into the Belts and Blocks. Many of
such infiltrators have been able to get either settlement or mutation of
land and also registration of sale deeds etc. through the collaboration
of some of these officials. For instance, although there are hundreds of
encroachment cases in each Belt and Blocks, none of these
encroachers have till this day, been ejected from the Belts and Blocks
except carrying out eviction of a few encroachers here and there by
way of demolishing houses and sale of crops and likewise, the large
number of un-authorized occupants in the patta land occupied by
making illegal transactions have not been taken any action as provided
under section 165 (3) of the said Chapter X of the Assam Land and
Revenue Regulation in any circle, within this long period of 25 years
or so, since the creation of some of the Tribal Belts and Block. As a
result, it has posed to be a serious problem now to eject those un-
authorized encroachers from the Belts and Blocks, but this has got to
be done in the interest of the Tribal people.” The Sub-Committee made two point recommendations of “(i) the first and foremost duty of the revenue administration should be to eject all those ineligible encroachments form both Sarkari as well as patta land within all the Tribal Belts and Blocks within a time-bound programme as effectively as has been done in the case of encroachments in Reserved Forest Lands in letter and spirit of the Chapter X of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation. (ii) All such lands made free from encroachments should be simultaneously handed over possession to eligible landless persons of the Belts and Blocks. For that purpose, police squadrons shall have to be posted if necessary, to maintain peace and order in such areas.

The sub-Committee, after having made spot enquiry found large scale encroachment of land within the Tribal Belts and Blocks. Following examples are the extracts taken from the report of the Sub-Committee.

(1). 66,786 Bighas of lands were deconstituted under different Govt. orders from the total 302545 Bighas, 0 Kotha and 0 Lecha of the Bijni Tribal Blocks, in the Goalpara District under the Sub-Division of Kokrajhar which the tribal Block was originally constituted by Govt. order RD. 69/46/20 dated 5-12-47 and RD. 69/46/29 dated 30-8-48.

(2) 1, 29,202 Bighas, 0 Kotha and 0 Lecha lands deconstituted under Govt. order No RD. 226/64/PI/38 dated 30-7-69 from the total 7, 27, 45,548 Bighas ) Kotha ) Lecha of South Kamrup (Gauhati) Tribal Belts which was originally constituted by Govt. RD. 74/46/172 dated

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129. Ibid, p. 52.
27-2-50 (this deconstituted areas is the present site of the temporary capital complex of Dispur and at present no belt area at Gauhati Sadar circle after this deconstitution).

(3). 47, 157 Bighas, 0 Kotha and 0 Lecha land deconstituted (Govt. order not available from 4, 62,637 Bighas, 0 Kothas and 0 Lecha of Tamulpur Tribal Belt (Gauhati & Nalbari Sub-division of Kamrup District) which was originally constituted by Govt. order RD. 74/46/161, dated 22-8-49.

(4). 37,862 Bighas land deconstituted vide Govt. order No. 63/49/15 dated 22-11-49 (Tihu circle) from 3, 77,572 Bighas, 0 Kotha and 0 Lecha of Baska Tribal Belt, originally created vide Govt. order No. RD. 74/46/16, dated 22-8-49.

(5). 23 villages of North Lakhimpur town have been excluded under Govt. order (not available) in 1969 from 6, 00,160 Bighas, 0 Kotha and 0 Lecha of North Lakhimpur (Sub-Division) Tribal Belt, constituted vide Govt. No. RD. 92/46/34 dated 28-4-48.130

Between the year of 1847 and 1964, there had been similar kind of encroachments into the Bijni Tribal Block. Most of these encroachments were initiated by the Government of Assam itself, which may be mentioned as under on the basis of the Government notification.

(1). The total areas within Bijni Tribal Block vide the Govt. Notification No. RD. 69/46/20, dated 5-12-47 was 302545 Bighas, out of which an area measuring 66786 Bighas -1 Kiths and 11 lechas have been excluded from the operation.

(2). An area measuring 44691 Bighas- 4 Kothas and 9 Lechas was taken away from the Bijni Tribal Block for the constitution of Panbari and Kuklung reserved forest vide Govt. Notification No. AFR 73/51, dated 21-5-52.

130 Ibid.
(3). An area measuring 3489 Bighas and 14 Lechas was excluded from the same block vide Govt. Notification No. RSD.28/51/4, dated 4-3-58.

(4). Lastly, an area of 11253 Bighas was excluded vide Govt. Notification No. RSD. 3/59/147, dated 29-7-64, for the rehabilitation of refugees in Binsupur colony.\textsuperscript{131}

By 1967, the year in which the Plains Tribals Council of Assam submitted its memorandum, the area of the Bijni Tribal Block was reduced to 235758 Bighas, 3 Kothas and 9 Lechas.\textsuperscript{132}

One of the inherent drawbacks of the amended Act of Chapter X was perhaps its deficient constitutional status, making it a part of the State Act. The Sections 166 and 167 have kept the Act of Chapter X outside the jurisdiction of the civil court, and thus gave the officials concern free hands to do or undo the provisions of the Act. Its execution was solely left in the hands of the Revenue Minister, District and Sub-divisional officers. As a result, the land alienation went on unabated, year after year, under the successive Assam Governments. The Clauses 166 and 167 of the Act, 1947 read:

166. No suit shall lie against any public servant for anything done by him in good faith under this Chapter.

167. No civil court shall exercise jurisdiction in any of the matters covered by this Chapter.\textsuperscript{133}

\textsuperscript{131} Memo No. 1079 (B), dated 22-10-64 of the Sub-Deputy Collector of the Bijni circle addressed to the Sub- Divisional Officer, Kokrajhar, in connection with the Assembly question no. 7, asked by Mr. Raja Ajit Narayan Dev, M. L. A.

\textsuperscript{132} Memorandum to the President of India, By the Plains Tribals’ Council of Assam, Kokrajhar, Assam, dated May 20, 1967.

\textsuperscript{133} The amended Assam land act, op. cit.
Though these clauses were incorporated into the Act with positive intention, they, by keeping the District and Sub-Divisional authorities above the law of the land, gave the later upper hand to misuse the Act according to their needs and convenience.

The Assam Government, on its part, did not take any follow-up action on the recommendations of the Advisory Council, made in 1976, allowing the problem to aggravate to a serious proportion. The large scale Muslim immigration between 1950 to 1971, immensely added to the seriousness of the equation. Many of them illegally settled in the Tribal Belts and Blocks. Also came the Bengali immigrants, the tea-garden laborers, and people from the Indian main-land and the Assamese themselves to join the scramble for land within the Tribal Belts and Blocks. Various Boro socio-political organizations repeatedly protested and sought legal protection of their lands. But the State Government gave no heed to their demand. On the contrary, in 1980, the Assam Government, by the Bill of Assam Land and Revenue Regulation (Amendment), amended the original regulation of Chapter X, 1886. The Bill was promulgated by the President in 1981, which gave recognition to Scheduled caste group and Bengali immigrants already settled in Tribal Belts and Blocks, as the legal owners of the land under their occupation. This provision of the 1981 Regulation has been carried on to the present administrative structure of the Bodoland Territorial Council, whereby the large number of non-tribals, who are already settled within the Council, are given ownership on land. Thus continues the alienation of the Tribal lands in Assam plains, though its scale is expected to lessen with the formation of the Territorial Council, on the amended provisions of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.