CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Section –A

The South Kamrup Tribal Belt is situated on the southern bank of the river Brahmaputra in the Kamrup district. Kamrup district in Assam is named after Kamarupa a name by which Assam was known in ancient times. It is situated between 25° 46' and 26° 49' North latitude and between 90° 48' and 91° 50' East longitude. It occupies an area of 4345 sq.km (1678 sq.miles). The district is surrounded by Morigoan district in the east, Goalpara in the west, Bhutan on the north and the state of Meghalaya in the south. To its northeast and northwest lie the districts of Darrang and Nalbari respectively. The mighty river Brahmaputra passes through the district bifurcating it into two, namely the north bank and south bank. The major river in the north bank starting in the hills of Bhutan is the Puthimari that falls into the Brahmaputra. The rivulets in the south bank are Boko, Kulsi, Singra, Bharalu and Digaru rising from the Shillong Plateau in Meghalaya and drain water at the Brahmaputra. After 2001 census the district has been divided between Kamrup Metropolitan district and Kamrup district. The former includes the metropolitan city of Guwahati and the latter includes the rest of the district. The South Kamrup Tribal Belt is situated on the southern borders of Guwahati city that lies on the south bank of

1 www.indianetzone.com/55/kamrup_district.htm, accessed on 23 April 2013 2.12 p.m.
3 www.assaminfo.com/districts/14/kamrup.htm, accessed on 3 January 2013 1.45 p.m.
the Brahmaputra. The South Kamrup Tribal Belt in this work refers to the area designated as the South Kamrup (Guwahati) Tribal Belt in the Government of Assam order No.RD. 74/46/172.

The South Kamrup Tribal Belt is inhabited both by tribal as well as non-tribal people. Concentration of tribes is seen more under the Sonapur revenue circle of the belt. The prominent tribes residing in the study area are Bodo, Karbi, Rabha, Garo, Tiwa and some Tea garden labourers who are descendants of tribes that migrated to the area in the colonial period. Besides, the area is also inhabited by non-tribals like the Nepali and Koch, the latter being a sub group of the Bodo locally known as Dehen. The rank of the Koch is recruited from the aboriginal tribes and there are tribal elements in their religious and social life. Interestingly it is said that the inhabitants of a few villages driven out by the Mān (Burmese invaders) to the hills were converted into Karbis.

The tribes of Assam belong to the Mongoloid stock. Each of the tribes has its own importance and unique heritage. The term tribe is derived from the old French Tribu or Latin Tribus (singular or plural) perhaps related to tri (three) and referring to the three divisions of the early people of Rome. Different scholars have attempted to define the term tribe. A tribe is viewed, historically as a social group existing before

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4 www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/tribe, accessed on 1 April 2012, 12.03 p.m.
the development states. Many anthropologists used the term tribe to denote a society organized largely on the basis of kinship, especially corporate descent groups.\(^5\)

According to the Imperial Gazetteer of India “A tribe is a collection of families bearing same name, speaking a common dialect, occupying or professing to occupy a common territory and not usually endogamous though originally it might have been so”.\(^6\) The International Labour Organisation has classified tribes as “indigenous people”.\(^7\) The Oxford Dictionary has defined tribe as a social division in a traditional society consisting of families or communities linked by social, economic, religious, or blood ties with common culture and dialect, typically having a recognized leader. While according to the *Reader’s Digest Universal Dictionary* “a tribe is a unit of social organization, especially among primitive peoples but also surviving in some modern societies, consisting of group of people claiming a common ancestry, usually sharing a common culture and originally living together under a chief or headman”.\(^8\)

India also has been the homeland of many tribes since the remote past. Tribes in the Indian context are normally referred to in the language of the constitution as Scheduled Tribes. Listing of tribes in India dates back to 1833 with the establishment of Non-Regulated area. A list of communities that was not directly accessible to the British administration was drawn up in 1870 and in the following decade “Schedule of

\(^5\) www.wikipedia.org/wiki/tribe, accessed on 12 October 2012, 10.10 p.m.  
\(^6\) nsdl.nicair.res.in/bitstream/1/7188/123456789/518/1/12.2PDFTribe and caste.pdf, accessed on 10 February 2013 1.12 p.m.  
\(^7\) Encyclopedia Of North East India Volume 2 books.google.co.in, accessed on 12 April 2013 12.34 p.m.  
\(^8\) *Reader’s Digest Universal Dictionary*, Published By Reader’s Digest Association, London. 1987 p1606
Tribes". It was B.R. Ambedkar, the chairman of the drafting committee of the constitution who preferred the concept of scheduled tribes to the word Adivasis, meaning earliest settlers or residents. In Indian society particularly, the tribal population has special significance because after Africa India has the second largest tribal population. India is marked by multi-ethnicity. 8.20% (8.6% according to 2011 census) of the total population belongs to the tribal groups according to census 2001 and there are a total 577 such groups. They are scattered in almost all the corners of the country. Regions with predominant tribal settlement have been categorized by B.K. Roy Barman into five territorial groups, viz- Himalayan region (North-Eastern, Central, North-Western region), Middle India region, Western India region, South India region and Island region. The tribal mostly dwell in forest, hills and naturally isolated regions. Their economic life, daily livelihood and cultural traditions are mostly depended on the environment surrounding them. Each tribe has a unique history, language and culture. Their diversified economic and social formation coupled with various ethos and lifestyles have attracted various scholars to study their history.

The study of tribes has a long history in India. Its study can be traced from the time of the foundation of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784 by Sir William Jones to study "nature and man". During this period a number of individuals wrote about the

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9 Encyclopedia Of North East India Volume 11, in books.google.co., accessed on 12 February 2013 11.57 a.m.
tribes which were mainly published in the journals of Asiatic society of Bengal. However these studies were carried out with different purposes and conducted in different styles. Moreover scholars conducting such studies were mainly the colonial administrators, causal visitors, travellers or missionaries who went to tribal areas not with the purpose of writing about them but codifying their customs and tradition. Moreover British government was much disturbed by the turbulence of certain tribes and thus wanted to pacify them. This required some firsthand information of their ethos and value system. Thus the early studies were stirred by the need to generalize a base line data which would be helpful in the maintenance of law and order and in ensuing smooth administration. In the early part of the 20th century tribal studies underwent a major shift when scholars at home started conducting field work among Indian tribes with various emphases. Considerable attention was paid to the study and development process and there was a consequent change in the focus of tribal studies. Attempts were made by different social scientists to define a tribe.

According to D.N. Majumdar “A tribe is a collection of families or groups bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed a well accessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligation. A tribe is ordinarily an endogamous unit, is a political unit in the sense that a tribal

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11 dspace.nehu.ac.in/bitsteam/l/7188/Revisiting Palyfair's The Garos pdf, accessed on 12 April 2013 7.05 p.m.
society owns a political organization".\textsuperscript{12} According to Dubey "the tribe generally refers to territorial communities living in the relative isolation of hills and forests. Their comparative isolation in some ways, has kept them apart from the mainstream of society in the country. Partly because of isolation and partly because of their limited world view, characterized by lack of historical depth (resulting in early merging of history into mythology) and an overall tradition orientation they are integrated in terms of certain themes rooted in the past. These integrative themes and a special cultural focus gave them a separate culture identity and they often possess latent or manifest value-attitude and motivational system which are remarkably different from those of the other peoples".\textsuperscript{13} Majumdar and Dubey are both Indian social scientist while American scholar Mandelbaun has also studied Indian society and has defined tribe as "the social unit larger than the local group with which the families of a local community almost always have a sense of belonging".\textsuperscript{14} While according to R.N. Mukherjee, a tribe is that territorial human group which is bound together by commonness in respect to locality, language, social codes and economic pursuits.\textsuperscript{15}

Thus different social scientists have listed different traits for defining a tribe. The traits that most of the tribe exhibit are a group of people who have a habitat in a hilly or hill clad areas and forest clad areas; isolated or semi isolated from wider community; having economic self-sufficiency i.e. subsistence economy with no

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{12} D.N.Majundar, \textit{Races And Cultures Of India}, cited in B.B.Kumar, \textit{The Tribal Studies}, Omsons Publications, New Delhi. 1998 p 3
\item \textsuperscript{13} S.C.Dubey, \textit{Approaches To The Tribal Problem In India}, cited in B.B.Kumar, \textit{op.cit.}, p 3
\item \textsuperscript{14} D.G.Mandelbaun, \textit{Groupings in ‘Man’ Culture and Society}, cited in B.B.Kumar, \textit{op.cit.}, p 11
\item \textsuperscript{15} \textit{Ibid} pp 3-4
\end{itemize}
surplus production; backward technology; lack of division of labour; having mechanical cohesion; economic exchange based on reciprocity or on barter; political autonomy; egalitarianism; having their own religious faith in animism, naturism, totemism, or magic and witch craft and a sense of belongingness to the community.

The term "schedule tribe" first appeared in the Constitution of India in article 366(25) which defines scheduled tribes as "such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as deemed under article 342 to be schedule for the purpose of the constitution." Article 342 prescribes the procedure to be followed in the manner of scheduled tribes:

"The President may, with respect to any state or Union territory and where it is a state after consultation with the Governor thereof by public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities which shall, for the purposes of this constitution, be deemed to be scheduled tribes in relation to that state or Union territory as the case may be. Parliament may by law include in or exclude from the list of schedule tribes specified in a notification issued under clause (1) any tribe or tribal community or part of or group within any tribe or tribal community, but same as aforesaid, a notification issued under the said clause shall not be varied by any subsequent notification." Thus, the first specification of Scheduled tribes in relation to a particular State/Union territory is by a notified order of the President, after consultation with the state government.

16 www.tribal.nic.in/Content/DefinitionProfile.aspx, accessed on 21 October 2012 8.00 p.m.
17 www.tribal.nic.in/Content/DefinitionProfile.aspx, accessed on 21 October 2012 8.00 p.m.
concerned. These orders can be modified subsequently only through an Act of Parliament. The above article also provides for listing of schedule tribes States/Union territory wise and not on all India basis.

The criterion followed for the specification of a community, as scheduled tribes are indications of primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with community at large and backwardness. This criterion is not spelt out in the constitution but has become well established. It includes the definitions contained in 1931 census, the reports of the first backward classes commission 1955; the advisory committee (Kalekar) on Revision of SC/ST lists (Lokur Committee), 1965 and the Joint Committee of Parliament on the schedule castes and schedule Tribes orders (Amendment) Bill 1967 (Chanda Committee) 1969.  

For the study of the tribes of the north east the closest definition could be the one as treated by the anthropological convention. For them the tribe as a whole is a completely organized society having within its boundaries all resources necessary for continued maintenance. It is a whole culture. Each of the tribe has a territory to signify that they are patrilocaly autonomous. It also has its own language and dialect to mark the distinctiveness of its culture. In terms of language, tribes of India are categorized into four categories, namely Austro-Asiatic, Tibeto-Burman, Indo-Aryan and Dravidian. Two of them, the Indo-Aryan and Dravidian are shared by the rest of the

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18 www.tribal.nic.in, / Content/DefinitionProfiles.aspx, accessed on 21 October 2012 8.00 p.m.
19 A. Beteille, cited in A Study Of Mortuary Practices Of The Plains Karbis Of Assam, a Report prepared by Upala Barua, Yasmin Saikia, Navakanta Barua Foundation, Funded by Assam Institute For Research For The Tribes And Schedule Castes, Guwahati. pp13-14
Indian population as well while Austric and Tibeto-Burman languages are primarily spoken by tribal people. In physical and racial terms the tribes of India are classified under Negrito, Austroloid and Mongoloid.

Assam is also the homeland of several tribes like the Rabha, Bodo, Garo, Mishing (Miri), Karbi, Tiwa (Lalung) etc. Each of these tribes has some unique characteristics of their own. It is beyond doubt that the tribes of the north east India are basically Mongoloid. The Mongoloid tribes according to S.K. Chatterji correspond to at least three distinct physical types - the primitive long headed Mongoloids who are found in the sub-Himalayan tracts in Nepal and mostly in Assam, the less primitive and the more advanced.20 The Mongoloid people entered into this region through various routes and at different periods of time. They differ from each other in the respect of certain traits of physical features, culture and language. The ones that are found in India are the speakers of languages and dialects belonging to the Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese speech family. Linguistically the Sino-Tibeto languages of the present day have been classified into two groups or branches and they are a) Tibeto-Burman and b) Siamese Chinese.21

The Tibeto-Burman group is divided into two main branches: North Assam and Assam Burmese. The North Assam branch is formed by the various Arunachal tribes: Abors/Galo, Aka/Husro, Dafla (Nyishi), Miris (Mishings) and Mishmis. The Assam Burmese group includes three groups that is, the Bodos, Nagas and Kuki Chins. The

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21 Ibid p 22
term Bodo is used to denote a large number a large number of people- Mech, Rabha, Garo, Kachari, Koch, Hajong, Lalung(Tiwa)and few more belong who speak the Bodo language.22

So far as the characteristics of the Mongoloid are concerned W.C. Smith, a Christian missionary and a sociologist from America has given thirteen outstanding characteristics of the Tibeto-Burman tribes of Assam, who he attaches racially to the Indonesians that is the peoples of Malaya and the islands of Indonesia. They are head hunting, common sleeping houses, dwelling houses built on the post and piles, disposal of the dead on raised platform, a sort of trial marriage or great freedom of inter course between the sexes before marriage, betel chewing, dislike to milk as an article of diet, tattooing by pricking, absence of any powerful organization, the double cylinder vertical forge, the simple loom for weaving cloth, a large quadrangular or hexagonal shield, residence in hilly regions with crude form of agriculture.23 All these traits are of course not found among all the Indo-Mongoloid (whether Bengal or Assam) but there is proof to show that these were at one time spread or current among most or all of the tribes. Some of these traits appear to be of Mongoloid origin like the common club and sleeping houses for the bachelors and betel chewing.24

22 B.M.Das, Ethnological Background in H.K.Barpujari (edited), The Comprehensive History Of Assam Volume I Ancient Period From The Pre-Historic Times To The Twelfth Century AD, Publication Board, Assam. 1990 p17
24 Suniti Kumar Chatterji, op.cit., p 47
It is well established that the tribes of North East are essentially of Mongoloid origin. Reference has been made in the *Yajurveda* (xxx.16) of a people called *Kirata*. For the performance of *Purushamedha* sacrifice, along with other articles a *Kirata* was necessary, as revealed by the following verse. “A *Kirata* for the caves; a *Jambaka* (long toothed man?) for the slopes; a *Kimpurusa* (an ugly man, a wild man, an ape?) for the mountain”, (*Guhabhyah Kiratam: sanubhya Jambhaka parvatebhyah Kimpurusam*). In the *Atharveda* (X, 4-14) it is mentioned that “The young maid of *Kirata* race, a little damsel, digsthe drug: Dig it with shovels wrought of gold on the ridges of the hills.”(*Kairatika Kumarika saka khanate bhesajam: hiranyayibhir ridges of the hilly*). The *Kirata* were considered to be cave dwellers; in all probability they lived in hills and forests. The girl was digging soil on the ridges of the hills which suggests that they were gatherers and that they had some knowledge of herbal medicine. The mention of the *Kirata* in the Vedas means that around tenth century B.C. when the Vedas were supposed to have been compiled they were occupying the slopes of the Himalayas and other regions. In the *Mahabharata* reference is made to the army of Bhagadatta, the king of Pragjoytisha being composed of the *Kiratas* and the *Cinas* who appeared to be shining like gold (*tasya Cinaih Kiratadasca Kancanairiva samvrtam babhau balam*) which means they were yellowed skinned. They had been described as “shining in gold” is also described in the *Ramayana*. In the *Kalika Purana* too reference has been made of the *Kiratas* as yellowed skinned, 

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25 B.M.Das, Ethnological Background, in H.K.Barpujari (edited) *The Comprehensive History Of Assam Volume 1 Ancient Period From The Pre-Historic Times To The Twelfth Century AD*, op.cit p 18
26 Ibid p 18
strong, ferocious and addicted to meat and drink (Rukmastambhanibhamstatha) 
Kiratan jnanavarjitan anarthaminditan madyamsasnaikatatparan). 27

As regards the geographical distribution of the Kiratas, some idea can be 
formed from the Visnu Purana wherein it is stated that “(India), is in the middle, 
according to the division (of the world), with Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and to 
the east (of India) are Kiratas and to the west are the Yavanas” (purve Kirata yasya 
syuḥ Pascime Yavana sthitah; Brahmah Kṣatriyah-Vaisya Madhya Sudra ca 
bhagash). 28 In the Periplus Of The Erythrean Sea, a Greek work of the first century 
C.E., mention has been made of Kirrahadae in the hills of Assam and Burma, which is 
no other than the Kirata who extended their territory as far as Bengal and Orissa. If 
traditional accounts are to be believed Mahiranga, the earliest danava or non- Aryan 
ruler of Assam is said to have ruled over Kirata subjects. Thus in the words of 
Chatterjee it can be said that the: “Kirata were known to the Hindu world as a group 
of peoples whose home was in the Himalayan slopes and in the mountains of the east 
in Assam, particularly who were yellow colour and presented a distinct type of culture. 
They have spread all over the plains of Bengal up to the sea”. 29 In the writings of the 
late medieval period also the inhabitants of Eastern India have been referred to as the 
Kiratas. For instance in the Rajamala chronicle of the Tripura kings (16th 
century.C.E.) and in the Yoginitantra (same period) we come across the term Kirata.

27 Ibid p 18
28 Ibid p 18
29 Ibid p 19
It is a confirmed fact as mentioned above that a great number of the tribes of north east India are basically Mongoloid. So far as their migration is concerned they came to this part of the country in successive waves at different times from different routes like the north, north east and south east. Some groups became limited to certain small geographical areas while others were spread over larger regions. Some of them were more or less in complete isolation preserving their ethno, biological, identity while had admixture with the non-Mongoloid population to varying extents. The Mongoloid tribes of India are referred to as the Indo- Mongoloid.\textsuperscript{30}

Assam is a blend of hills and plains. Assam maintains two scheduled tribe lists, one for the autonomous district of North Cachar and Karbi Anglong called the Hill Tribes and another for the Plain Tribes. There are nine scheduled tribes in the plains and fourteen schedule tribes in the hills area. The scheduled tribes (Plains) are Barmans in Cachar, Bodo Kachari, Deori, Hojai, Kachari Sonowal, Lalung (Tiwa), Mech, Miri (Mishing) and Rabha. The schedule tribes (Hills) are the Chakma, Dimasa Kachari, Garo, Hajong, Hmar, Khasi, Jaintia, Synteng, Pnar, War, Bhoi, Lyngngam, any Kuki Tribes (37 groups), Lakhar, Man (Tai speakers), any Mizo (Lushai) tribes, Mikir (Karbi), any Naga tribe, Pawi and Syntheng.\textsuperscript{31}

In terms of population, the total population of the tribes as referred above 8.6\% of the population of India according to 2011 census.\textsuperscript{32} Concentration of tribes is seen in Assam. The tribes of Assam are distributed into various belts and blocks. The

\textsuperscript{30}ibid pp 37-38
\textsuperscript{31}www.censusindia.govt.in/Tables, accessed on 21 February 2012 1.05 p.m.
\textsuperscript{32}www.indianexpress.com/news/...population...census-2011.../1109988/, accessed on 2 June 2013 11.02 p.m.
provision of Section 160 (1) of Assam Land Revenue Regulation Amendment Act 1947 provided for the constitution of compact areas in regions predominantly peopled by classes of people notified under 160(2) of the above act (to be referred as protected class henceforth). These regions were to be divided into various Tribal Blocks and Belts. While belts were constituted for larger areas blocks were for smaller areas depending upon the boundaries of the mouzas (Revenue units). In accordance with the above section there are altogether 14 Tribal Belts and 35 Blocks in Assam. The belts and blocks cover an area of 1,25,46,557 bighas or 16,72,873 hectares of land encompassing 3571 number of villages.

Review of Literature

Till date no micro study has been undertaken focusing upon the socio-economic life of the tribes residing in the area of South Kamrup Tribal Belt. The studies undertaken have focused on the study of the society and economy of the tribes as a whole for North East India. For instance Tribes Of Assam in three volumes by B.N.Bordoloi, G.C.Sharma Thakur and M.C.Saikia contains a broad outline of different tribes of Assam where society and economy are briefly dealt with. Similarly Kameswar Boro’s A Study Of The Socio-Religious Beliefs And Practices And Ceremonies Of The Boro deals with the socio religious rites of the Bodos right from the rite of birth till the death rites as well as the religious life of the Bodos. Premalata Devi’s Social And Religious Institution Of The Bodos begins with geographical location of the study area. It provides a brief account of the Bodos speakers in the Brahmaputra valley. The book also explains the traditional and religious institutions of
the Bodos from philosophical point of view. Man, society ethics and Gods as believed by the Bodos are discussed in detail in this book but not the other tribes of the Brahmaputra valley and Bijoya Lakshmi Choudhury work *Bodos (Kacharis) At A Glance*, traces some aspects of the Bodo Kacharies who were known to be the earliest settlers of the North Eastern region of India. It also includes the social, religious and cultural life of the Bodos. It also deals with political issues like All Bodo Students Union and Bodoland movement, Bodo Accord, Memorandum etc. The work also does not take into account the influence of the non-tribes upon the society of the Bodos.

Parimal Chandra Kar’s *The Garos In Transition* analyses the socio-economic changes in the life of the Garos completely ignoring their economic life. *The Garos By Major A. Playfair With A New Introduction* by Parimal Chandra Kar is a systematic account of the Garos, further enriched by Parimal Chandra Kar. It deals with only one tribe. Manish Kumar Raha’s *Matriliny To Patriliny: A Study Of The Rabha Society* discusses about the Rabhas of Jalpaiguri, Cooch Behar and West Bengal. The work highlights the changes in the fundamental structure and functions of the Rabha society under the impact of various factors. It does not touch the lives of other tribes. Similarly Nirmal Kumar Bose *Tribal Life Of India*, Sarthek Sengupta’s *Tribal Situation In North East India* and *Tribal Studies In North East India*, all deal with the tribes of north east as a whole and these works are more in the nature of a broad survey. Similarly, *Peoples of North East India: Anthropological Perspectives* edited by Sarthek Sengupta contains eighteen well researched articles on tribes of the region. It throws light on some of the important facets of anthropology like ethnic elements,
human growth, tribal institutions, and process of Sanskritisation etc. It does not however deal with the study of the tribes residing in the South Kamrup Tribal Belt. A.L. Waddel’s *The Tribes Of The Brahmaputra Valley* discusses about thirty five different tribes along with their physical characteristics. This work gives insight for the first time of the exact details of the tribes of Assam and the Brahmaputra Valley along with a systematic record of the colour of their skin and eyes. This work too is in the nature of a broad survey and focused upon physical characteristics of the tribes. Sir Charles Lyall’s *The Karbis* covers all the aspects of Karbi life origin, dress, weapons, laws, customs, religion etc., but not the other tribes. A similar work is Tanmay Bhattarcharjee’s *The Sociology Of The Karbis* which covers the different aspects of the lives of the Karbis only. Sekhar Brahma’s *Religion Of The Boros And Their Socio-Cultural Transition: A Historical Perspective* is a work dealing with the transitional phase of the Boro tribe. *History And Archaeology Of North East India* by Paromita Das is a work which looks into the history of Guwahati city as revealed by the material remains and briefly dealt with the topographical features.

Many books and articles have also been written on the tribes of Assam in the Assamese language. *Axamar Janajatiya Sanskriti* is a collection of selected articles relating to various aspects on the folk culture of the various tribes of North East India in general and Brahmaputra Valley in particular written by Upen Rabha Hakasam. But it does not deal with the tribes of the surveyed belt in particular. *Asamar Janajati* is also a collection of essays on different social and cultural aspects of the various tribes of Assam and North East Frontier of Assam and Nagaland written by different
scholars of Assam and North East edited by Promod Chandra Bhattacharya and G.C.Kakati but it does not touches the life and people of the surveyed belt. *Purbanchalar Bhasa Sahitya Aru Sanskriti* edited by Jagadish Patgiri contains critical essays on language, literature and culture of northeast India but nowhere does it discuss the life and people of the surveyed belt in particular. Nalini Deka Sarania’s *Sarania Kachari Samaj Aru Sanskriti Abha* is a work dealing with the religious aspects of the tribes who had taken refuge in Hinduism and nowhere thus it deals with the other aspects of the tribal life. *Sangkshipta Chahkosh* is a short encyclopedia on tea thereby touching a little about the lives of the tea tribes. *Tiwa Aru Karbi Luka–Sonskritir Leseri Butoli* (Assamese) by Murulidhar Das is a collection of articles on various folklore of Tiwas and Karbis. *Axamar Chah Janagustir Samaj aru Sanskriti* by Luhit Kumar Bora deals with the social lives of the tea in general and not the economic aspects.

*The Lalungs(Tiwas)* a monograph on one of the major plains tribes of Assam the Tiwas written by G.C.Sharma Thakur deals with the Tiwas alone. Similar is the work of Shailendra Kumar Agnihotri *The Lalungs* which deals with lives of the Tiwas and not the other tribes. Another work on the Tiwas alone is by Anil Kumar Baruah. *Tribal Women And Development* edited by N.A. Hazarika contains papers on tribal women and development dealing only about the lives of tribal women and not other aspects. *Glimpses Of Northeast India Archaeology* by Dhritiman Sharma describes the history and archaeology of Northeast from 2nd century to the recent times The cultural link between North East and South East is also described here. The book gives an
account of the numerous archaeological findings including ancient sites of stone tools, megaliths, monuments and their historical background, its extinct and continuing rituals etc. *Ahom Tribal Relations (Political Study)* by Lakhmi Devi is a book dealing about the relations of the Ahom with different tribal people both plains and hills in the light of indigenous *Buranjis* or the chronicles of the Ahom rulers during the medieval times. It does not deal with the contemporary lives of the tribes. *Oral Folklore Of Dimoria* by Jogen Kalita is a book on the findings and analysis of oral folk-literature of the tribes of Dimoria touches only one block of surveyed belt thereby ignoring the other two blocks. Moreover, all aspects of society and economy are not discussed.

*Tribal Development In North-East India* edited by Girindra Nath Das contains papers presented in the seminars on Problems and prospects of Tribal development in North East India. It contains articles of developmental issues of the tribes thereby ignoring the social lives of the tribes. *The Ex Tea Garden Labour Population in Assam (A Socio -Economic Study)* by Umanand Phukan deals with the lives of the erstwhile tea garden labourers' but not with the lives of the other tribes. *Tribes And Tribal Life (Volume 111) Approaches To Development In Tribal* edited by Anil Kumar Singh deals with the developmental approaches of the tribes and not touching social life of the tribes. *The Tribes of North East India* edited by Sebastian Karotemprel is a series of essays dealing with the lives of the tribes of North East in general and not any particular tribe. *Identity Of Adivasis In Assam* edited by Thomas Pullopollil speaks of the section of Tea tribes brought to Assam from Chottanagpur of Bihar. It attempts to introduce the history and culture of the Tea Tribes thereby not dealing with any other
Tribe. *Tribal Women In Assam A Social Geographic Perspective* by Madhushree Das is a work dealing with the lives of the tribal women in general.

*Kirata Jana Kriti, the Indo Mongoloids* by Suniti Kumar Chatterji summarises in a clear methodical manner about the origin of the Mongoloids their migration and their contribution upon the history of India which is more or less generalized description of the Mongoloids thereby not touching the modern aspects. *The Tribal Societies Of India* by B.B. Kumar discusses the tribal societies and their characteristics of India in general. *The peoples of Assam* by B. M. Das discusses the racial traits of the people belonging to various ethnic communities of Assam. *The Kacharies (Bodo)* by Sidney Endle is a monograph treating that branch of the Kachari race which lives in North Bengal and Assam. Their fascinating customs, local religion, and religious tradition are dealt with in detail. Thus the work deals with only one tribe. *The History and Culture of the Garos* by Milton Sangma is also a work on the Garos, their migration and their social lives. It restricts its study with the lives of Garos only. *History Of The American Baptist Mission In North East Volume 1* another work by Milton Sangma deals with the origin of the Baptist Church and its spread to all parts of the world resulting in the formation of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society in North East India with passing reference to the spread of Christianity in Kamrup district in general.

Besides Edward’s Gait *History Of Assam* deals with the history of Assam in general with passing reference of the tribes. K.L.Barua’s *Early History of Kamarupa* is a work dealing with the history of early Kamrupa with little reference on the tribes.
The Comprehensive History Of Assam Volume I edited by H.K. Barpujari with a few reference to the racial elements of the various ethnic groups. Comprehensive History Of Assam Volume IV describes the slow penetration of the British rule in the hills districts of Assam.

Deveelopmental Programmes And Social Change Among The Tribals by K. Somasekhar is a work on the developmental programmes initiated by the Government of India and the consequent changes they have brought over in the lives of the tribes in other corners of India. Thus no reference has been made about the developmental programmes undertaken in Assam in particular. Alienation Of Tribal Land And Indebtedness edited by B.N. Bordoloi takes into account the prevailing land alienation situations in the country in general. Tribal Life Of North Eastern India Habitat Economy, Customs, Traditions by S.T. Das is a work on the life and culture of the tribes of north east India in general. Descriptive Ethnology Of Bengal by Edward Tuite Dalton is a work on the tribal history of Bengal in general. The Rabhas by Rajen Rabha is a work on the Rabhas especially residing in the present Goalpara district of Assam.

Thus it is evident that till date no focused study on the society and economy of the South Kamrup has been done. Such a study it is believed will enable us to understand the various socio-cultural and economic aspects of the tribes residing in the particular area. It will also help us to know the impact of non tribal society upon the tribal society. The work will also focus upon the development programmes undertaken
in the area. This will enable us to understand the tools of assimilation and differentiation in the social structure of Assam.

Objectives

It is proposed

- to trace the emergence of the South Kamrup Tribal Belt and study its population profile and geographical extension;
- to study the social structure and related aspects of the society.
- to examine the economy of the study area.
- to understand the impact of developmental programmes initiated by the government.

Scope of study

The study will focus upon the different aspects of society and economy of South Kamrup Tribal Belt. The period will include the time from the notification of the area as a Tribal belt till the 2001 census. The territorial limit will be confined to the area falling under the South Kamrup Tribal Belt. The South Kamrup (Choygaon) Tribal Belt will not fall under the purview of this study.

Hypothesis

- In spite of its close proximity to the Guwahati city the area is still economically underdeveloped.
• The socio cultural beliefs and practices of the tribes have been influenced by the non-tribal people.

Methodology

The work is primarily based on field work. To get the background of the area both primary and secondary source were consulted. The primary sources include the census report, reports on land alienation and reports from revenue circles and block development offices. Published works of scholars like books, articles in journals and seminar proceedings were also consulted.

The work was conducted on a government notified tribal belt where more than fifty percent of the population are tribal as required by law. To give variation in the tribes the three revenue circles were selected which were Palashbari/Azara (at present bifurcated into Azara and Palashbari/Azara), Chandrapur and Sonapur respectively. Palashbari/Azara revenue circle is situated in the western part of the belt, while Chandrapur is situated in the eastern part of the belt and Sonapur is situated towards the southern part of the belt.

To select the study villages the method of simple random sampling was used. The random sampling method was used in order to afford every individual of the population the same chance of being selected. In order to select the villages the lottery method was used. In this method the names of the individual villages were written on slips of paper and put inside a box. Then the slips were mixed thoroughly and the required numbers of slips was picked from the box and were taken up for sampling.
The surveyed villages were Shakura Basti, Woolni, Bherokuchi, Diksak, Luri, Goumaria, Kendubam, Khalaibari, Bahupara, Batabari, Jobe, Rangapara, Sajjanpara, Andherjuli, Moirapur, Rajapanichanda, Hohora, Thakurkuchi, Topatali, Tepesia, Rewa, Dhamai, Nortap, Dakhin Dimoria, Marakdola, Missamari, Borkhat, Kamarkuchi, Digaru and Bezani. The family was the unit of survey in order to test the hypothesis. From the Goanburha, i.e. the village headman, the total number of households in each of the village was taken. Every fifth house hold was surveyed.

Data was collected through administration of a structured interview schedule among the respondents as well as through observation. Questions were a combination of both open ended as well as close ended. In the open ended structured interview schedule the respondents were free to answer more spontaneously. In the close ended structure there were various possible answers, pre-written responses categories and the respondents were asked to choose from among them. It consisted of queries relating to the society, types of family, their clan system, inheritance, their social organizations, language spoken etc. The various festivals and ceremonies celebrated and observed by the people of the study area were also observed. It was non participant in nature. Besides, data was also taken about the occupational pursuits, present economic pursuits, and source of drinking water types of crops cultivated. It also consisted of questions on the Government schemes and their application etc. Further, social awareness among the concerned people and their accessibility to modern amenities was also taken into account. The data thus elicited was tabulated and analyzed and arranged under the following heads:
The first chapter, i.e. the **Introduction** has been divided into two sections, **A** and **B**. Section **A** consists of origin of the tribes, their migration to the north east, their racial traits, review of literature and methodology; Section **B** consists of the genesis of the South Kamrup Tribal Belt and its population profile.

The second chapter **Society** includes a discussion of the structure of the society and family, the line of inheritance, the clan system, the rituals connected with birth, marriage and death, the educational profile, as well as a detailed account of religious beliefs which includes the traditional rites and rituals. Food habits, leisure time activities and the place of dance and music in their lives with the accompanying musical instruments were also taken into account. It will also include the influence of non tribal communities upon the tribes.

The third chapter discusses the **Economy** of the tribes in the belt. This chapter includes details of the source of livelihood, the nature of the climate and soil determining the economy, the role of women in the economy, fragmentation of land holdings, cultivation of different crops, the income level of the respondents, source of drinking water, ration cards determining the poverty line, the various developmental projects and the beneficiaries and the awareness level of the tribes regarding development schemes.

The last chapter i.e. the **Conclusion** includes a summary of the findings and observations of the foregoing chapters. The work also has an **Appendix** that contains
the Government of Assam’s notification of the area under survey as a tribal belt and a
copy of the interview schedule.

Section B

A Tribal Belt generally refers to the areas pre-dominated by indigenous and other
backward communities notified under Chapter X of the Assam Land and revenue
Regulation Act of 1886 that was amended in 1947. It was notified with the aim of
protecting the land from illegal occupation of other advanced groups.

The genesis of Belts and Blocks dates back to the British rule. It is an established
fact that the British had encouraged migration of expert cultivators from the than East
Bengal (later East Pakistan) now Bangladesh to Assam with the sole motive of
increased production and revenue. This eventually had an impact on the ethnic and
social milieu of Assam. The problem of land alienation posed a serious problem.
Large scale migration and their settlement in the tribal areas had adversely affected the
tribes and their control over their traditional land holdings. This large scale migration
of the outsiders affected the economy of the tribes. It also dislocated the socio-
economic and political condition of the tribal areas. Besides the non- tribal traders,
businessman and money lenders grabbed a large area of the land belonging to the
tribal population. This alarming situation was foreseen in the colonial period by the
Colonial Government itself and the leaders of Assam. Mr. Lloyd, in the Census Report
of 1921 described the immigration of the outsiders to Assam in this manner: “In 1911,
few cultivators from eastern Bengal had gone to Goalpara....In the last decade (1911-
21) the movement had extended far up the valley and the colonists now form an appreciable element in the population of all the four lower and central districts. In Goalpara 20% of the population is made up the settlers. The next favourite district is Nogoan where they form 14% of the whole population. In Kamrup, wastelands are taken up rapidly, especially in the Barpeta sub division. In Darrang exploration and settlement by the colonists are in an earlier stage. They have not yet penetrated far from the banks of the Brahmaputra. Almost every train and steamer brings parties of these settlers, and it seems likely that their march will extend further up the Brahmaputra valley and away from the river before long. The words of Mr. Lloyd came true in the subsequent years as data's on migration revealed.

Table 1.1 The following table reveals the migration of the Mymensingh to Assam.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Immigration to Assam</th>
<th>MS- Mymensingh</th>
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The British administrators in order to protect the land from further alienation devised a means and put it into practice in the Nagoan District and the Barpeta subdivision of the then Kamrup District as early as 1920. According to this device a line was drawn on the village map taking into consideration of the people inhabiting the village and no occupation of land by the immigrants beyond that line, in the land was allowed. This later came to be known as the Line system. Under the Line system villages were divided into three categories, namely “open villages”, “closed villages” “and “mixed villages”. In the “open villages” the immigrants might settle freely. In “closed village” the immigrants would not be allowed to settle under any circumstances. In “mixed villages” however, the immigrants might settle on one side

34 Report On The Survey Of Alienation Of Tribal Land In Assam, Assam Institute Of Research For Schedule Tribe And Schedule Castes, 1999 p 5
of the line drawn in the map. The line system devised by the British administrators with so much good purpose could not, however, solve the problems of illegal occupation and infringement of land by the immigrants. Even the closed villages were also found to have been encroached.\textsuperscript{35}

In order to the ease the problem of land alienation and to find a solution of permanent nature the Government of Assam constituted a committee to review the workings of the Line system. This committee so constituted came to be known as the Line-system committee. It was headed by Mr.F.W. Hockenhull as the chairman. The members who constituted the committee were Abdul Matin Chodhury, Syed Abdur Rouf, Sayidur Rahman, Rabi Chandra Kachari, Mahendra Nath Saikia, Sarbeswar Barua, Kameswar Das and A.G.Paton. The Line system committee recommended that instead of a line dividing the area of a village, a larger unit of restriction should be adopted such as \textit{Mouzas} or Blocks of \textit{Mouzas} which were to be protected from the encroachers and that the colonization schemes should be continued, extended or introduced with the view to regulating settlement of land with immigrants and containing them in specified localities.\textsuperscript{36}

It was brought to the notice of the Line System Committee that the tribal villages were the worst victims of unregulated encroachment of vacant land by the aggressive immigrants from the Mymensingh resulting in disappearance of many tribal villages. The tribal inhabitants moved further into sub-montane zone. In November 1939 the

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Ibid} p 5-6

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Ibid} p 6
Congress coalition Government in Assam headed by Late Gopinath Bordoloi adopted a resolution on the report of the Line System Committee and for the first time the conception of tribal belts and blocks in their elementary form was imagined. Below is quoted paragraph 4 of the resolution:

“The resolution constituting the so called Line system which has been in existence in the province for 10 years past were primarily intended against the unending flow of Bengal immigrant cultivators and took the form of constituting certain areas in which settlement of land with such immigrants was prohibited. Government agrees with the committee that in future the unit for such restriction or prohibition should, where possible, be larger. They consider that in sub-montane areas it should be possible to constitute whole Mouzas or compact parts of Mouzas inhabited predominantly by backward and tribal classes into “prohibited areas”. Elsewhere where the whole villages or a larger compact area is predominantly peopled by backward or tribal classes, such village or areas as constituted, immigrant cultivators shall not be allowed land either by settlement or by transfer of annual pattas (deeds), and any immigrants as taking up land or squatting shall be evicted”.37

But the Bordoloi ministry could not materialize the resolution since it had to resign with the launching the Quit India movement. But when the coalition ministry headed by Muhammad Sadulla came to power in 1939, the land policy of Bordoloi was reversed. The Line system Committee’s report was kept in cold storage. Sadulla

37 Ibid p 6-7
rather initiated a development scheme much against the will of the native people according to which all waste lands are to be divided into blocks and allotted to different communities including immigrants on payment of a premium of Rs 5 per bigha (5 Kathas or 14400 sq.feet). This measure of Sadulla instead of solving the problem further aggravated the situation since it opened the way for the immigrants to settle in those places in which the tribals predominated.

However the Sadulla Ministry fell in the last month of the year 1941 and Sir Robert Reid, the Governor of the province of Assam took over the charge of the administration of Assam. He immediately scrapped the “Development Scheme” of the Sadulla Ministry considering the fact that such a scheme would lead to the clash of interest between the immigrants and the local people and the immigration problem itself appeared as big and troublesome problem to the internal life and territory of the local people. The Governor further observed that the sub-montane areas predominantly inhabited by people belonging to tribal and backward classes. Apprehensions were entertained that the introduction of foreign, advanced and pushing elements, if permitted into the sub-montane would spell the disaster upon the indigenous people.38

The Governor fully supported the Line system and directed the Deputy Commissioners to observe it so that the immigrants could not settle on land without right indiscriminately all over the province. He also fully supported the findings of the Line-System Committee. Sir Reid himself observed that the immigrant was considered

38 Ibid p 8
as an unwelcome neighbour. The tribal people never welcomed the close approach of East Bengal Immigrants to their villages. In the interest of peace and good government the fresh settlements of immigrants must be kept in close to their old settlements so that their presence in the tribal areas might be avoided.

In the meanwhile the period after the outbreak of the Second World War witnessed a terrible political turmoil. Japan as a member of the Axis group was advancing against the Allied forces in the South East Asia. The Governor of Assam during that time was Sir Andrew Cole. He approached different political parties for help in the war efforts. This gave an opportunity to Md Sadulla to get benefit from the situation to regain power. He personally contributed a sum of Rs 1 lakh towards the war efforts. And accordingly Sadulla was invited to form a ministry in August 1942. But the return of Sadulla again to power in August 1942 took a new turn. It was a Muslim League majority ministry. He revoked section 93 of the Government of India Act, 1935 and revived the “Development Scheme”. In the name of “grow more food” campaign, he encouraged more fresh settlements of the immigrants even in sub-montane places especially in those places inhabited by the tribes. But the new policy faced severe criticism throughout the Assam valley. Lord Wavell in his capacity of Viceroy remarked on the actions of the Sadulla Ministry, “the problem is the desire of the Muslim ministers to increase this immigration into uncultivated government lands under the slogans of “grow more food”, but what was really after is grow more
Sadulla thus was compelled to modify the land reforms. In the mean time the Muslim League failed and a coalition ministry headed by Sadulla again formed the government in March 1945. This coalition ministry completely superseded all previous resolutions on land settlement and restated its policy in more clear terms. This policy statement had four objectives such as (a) Planned settlement of waste land; (b) Recognition of landless immigrants from other provinces who came to Assam before 1st 1938 January as being equally entitled with landless indigenous persons to wasteland settlement. (c) Protection of tribal classes in areas predominantly occupied by them against aggressive elements which are pertinent to endanger the normal economic, natural and social basis of village life. (d) Maintenance of grassing and other reserves by evicting the encroachers.

The main concern is with object (c) which provides protection of tribal people. Paragraph six of the resolution runs as follows:

“At the same time as statistics are being compiled of area of cultivable waste, additional information will be collected of all the villages in Assam in which the percentages of persons of the tribal classes (as defined in the Census Instruction 1940) exceed 50 per cent and of the areas in those villages occupied by the tribals and others. These villages will be marked on maps, and when the enquiries have been completed, a tribal belt or belts in the sub-montane areas will be notified, boundaries being

39Luke Daimary, *Land Alienation And Tribal Condition In Assam With Special Reference To The Bodos*, in Grindra Das (edited) *Tribal Development In North East India* op.cit., p 137
fixed with regard either to easily recognizable geographical feature or following the boundaries of Mouzas. Within this area reservation which will not be less than the areas occupied by the tribal people plus the stipulated reservation for general future expansion will be made for safeguarding the tribals and others at present living there, and no further settlement will be made for creation of tribal blocks side by side with the blocks of other communities in the Planned Settlements Areas where Tribal people have their villages and home."\(^{40}\)

For the purpose of segregation of the areas inhabited mostly by the Tribal a special Officer was appointed. The coalition government of Sadulla ministry had to resign and the assembly was dissolved for the ensuing general election in 1946. So the government of Sadulla could not carry out the provision of the resolution. In the election held the Congress won with absolute majority and Lokopriya Gopinath Bordoloi formed the ministry. The ministry after assuming power started taking steps to constitute belts and blocks for the tribals and backward classes. The special officer appointed physically went round the areas occupied predominantly by the tribals and backward classes and prepared a guide map by identifying the villages having population of tribal and backward classes more than 50 percent and above.

The survey was conducted by Shri Hem Borah; special officer appointed for this purpose revealed that the identified villages did not everywhere form a compact area. In order to keep the compactness and continuity of the proposed belts and blocks

\(^{40}\) Ibid p137
even non-tribal majority villages had also to be included. As such non-tribals livings in the proposed belts and blocks on the date/dates of their creation were to be treated on the same footing with the tribals in regard to future settlement of waste-land and transfer of *patta* (deed) land. But after the creation of belts and blocks none other the tribals and other specified classes could get settlement of land within the tribal belts and blocks.

Incorporating these provisions the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act 1886 was amended in 1947 by adding another chapter that is chapter X with the view to protect those classes who on account of their primordial condition and lack of education or material advantages are incapable of looking after their welfare in so far as much depends upon their having sufficient land for their maintenance. Under the provision of Section 161 of the chapter X of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Amendment Act 1947, the state Government has constituted 47 protected belts and blocks, popularly called tribal Belts and Blocks. Belts were constituted for larger areas, the Blocks had smaller areas considering with the boundaries of the *Mouzas*. In accordance with the above section altogether 35 (thirty five) Belts and Blocks, 11(eleven) Belts and 24(twenty four) Blocks were created in Assam till 1964. In this connection it may be noted here that the Assam Land and Revenue Act 1947 simply refers to the identified areas as Belts and Blocks only. However, as these Belts and Blocks were created primarily to safeguard the interest of the tribal classes on land, they later on came to be known as Tribal Belts and Blocks.
These Belts and Blocks covers 3112 numbers of villages with a total area of 1,1825 Bighas or 15,76778 hectares. However in order to facilitate the construction of the capital at Dispur, the government vide its Notification No.RSD.26/64/PT/38, dated 30/7/69 had deconstituted an area of 1,29,202 Bighas of and from the total area of 7,72,454 Bighas under the South Kamrup (Guwahati) Tribal Belt. Hence the total area of the tribal belts and blocks created up to 1964 was 1, 16,96,640 Bighas or 15,59,551 hectares. Subsequently 10(ten) more Tribal belt and Blocks was created after 1964.\(^{41}\) Totalling the number of Tribal Belts and Block to 45 out of which are Belts and the remaining 31 are Blocks. These Belts and Blocks cover an area of 1,25,46,557 Bighas or 16,72,873 Hectares and encompasses 3571 number of villages.

It was under such circumstances that the South Kamrup Tribal Belt was formed. The South Kamrup Tribal Belt as mentioned earlier, is located to the south of the river Brahmaputra. It is included within the administrative revenue circles of Chandrapur, Palashbari/Azara and Sonapur. The South Kamrup Tribal Belt was constituted on 27\(^{th}\) February, 1950 (Vide Notification number RD74/46/172). It initially comprised of the mouzas of Dakhin Rani, Ransarani (excluding Bharalumukh village, Fatasil N.C, Kamakhya, Maligoan. Garpandu, Kumarpura, Maj Jhalukbari and Uttar Jhalukbari),Beltola, Panbari (excluding Bharalumukh town, Guwahatii town, Sarania town and village, Ulubari town, Ulubari village, Bamunimaidam, Nunmati, Latasil, Kharghuli, Independence Garden, Hill Garden, Chunsali Tea Garden, Fatasil

\(^{41}\) Report On The Survey Of Alienation Of Tribal Land In Assam, Assam Institute Of Research For Schedule Tribe And Schedule Castes, Guwahati,1999 p14
N.C. and Clearence garden), Sonapur, Dimoria (excluding villages two miles North Railway line) and bounded as follows.


East-Nagoan district boundary

South- Bholagaon mouza of Chaygaon and Khasi and Jaintia Hill district boundary.

West-Chayani mouza

In order to facilitate the construction of the temporary capital at Dispur an area of 1,29,202 bighas of land was de-constituted out of an area of 7,72,454 bighas of land. The areas excluded are as follows:

All villages falling within the Greater Guwahati namely, the Fatasil new town, Fatasil Baraspara, Dhalbama, Odalbakra, Dakhingoan, Jutkuchi, Betkuchi, Saokuchi, Barsajai, Latbama, Hatigoan, Basistha grant No 2, Basistha maidam, Khanapara, Bormataria, Sarumataria, Rukhmanigoan, Darandha, Hengrabari, Dispur, Jatia, Kahilipara, Bhagargoan grant, Japorigog, Noonmati, No.1 Madgharia, No2. Madgharia, Satgoan, Bagharbari, Jarisimalu, Kalita Kuchi, Birkuchi, Bonda,
Villages under Sonapur circle falling outside the area of Greater Guwahati namely: Khangkar, Khangar N.C, Amsang village, Amsang N.C including Dumduma grant, Amerigog NC (village), Bajara village and Bajara NC, Barchabari (Hajobari), Hajobari NC, Kamarkuchi N.C.

Villages under Palashbari/Azara circle falling outside the area of greater Guwahatii namely-Mikirpur, Chakrarado, Azara, Goral, Mirzapur, Pamahi, Gog, Lakhara, Kahikuchi, Dharapur, Gog NC, Lakhara NC, Kendukuchi NC. 42

At present, the South Kamrup Tribal Belt includes the three revenue circles of Sonapur, Palashbari/Azara now bifurcated into, Palashbari/Azara and Azara revenue circle, and Chandrapur. The villages under the Palashbari/Azara circle are Pasonipara, Jogipara, Borjhar, Agchiya, Patgoan, Jobe, Kamargoan, Deurili, Jogulipara,

42Report on *Land Administration in Protected Belts and Blocks, Assam*. 1990 p 96

Dimoria, Dakhin Dimoria, Dharbam, Talani N.C., Killing N.C., Kahikuchi goan, Topatali goan, Niberia, Bherakuchi goan, Bherakuchi pathar, Bherakuchi N.C., Niberia N.C., Tapotali N.C.


Thus, to sum up the preceding discussion, a tribe can be defined as a group living in hills and forests; to some, it signifies a people famous for their dance and song; to an administrator it means a group of citizens who are the special responsibilities of the President of India; to an anthropologist it indicates a special field for study of a social phenomenon. In their own way all the definitions are correct. No standard term has been accepted to define the people who are classified as of tribal origin. They entered into the north east in different waves of migration thereby becoming the first to settle in this land. In early records they were known as Kirata.

The need for protecting the tribes from the land hungry immigrants (from present Bangladesh) during the colonial days led to the creation of a “Line system” by the British. The British restrained the land hungry immigrants by delimiting certain areas as “closed” to the immigrants. As imaginary lines were drawn to delimit these areas the system popularly came to be known as “Line system”. In 1936 the government formed a committee to enquire into the working of the “Line system”.

39
The committee recommended the expulsion of all the unauthorized occupants from the “closed” villages and also enlargement of the prohibited areas for the protection of the backward and tribal communities. The government considered the recommendations of the Line system committee and decided that the whole Mouzas or the compact areas predominantly inhabited by the tribals and the backward classes should be constituted as protected areas. In 1945 the British government decided to make special provision for the tribal and other backward classes of people. And in pursuance of the above resolution the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1886 was amended in 1947 by adding chapter X to create Belts and Blocks. It was under such circumstances that South Kamrup Tribal Belt was constituted. A major part of the Belt was denotified on July 30th 1969.