2.1 THE LAND

2.1.1 Location and Area

Karbi Anglong district with its Headquarter at Diphu, represents one of the hill districts of Assam. The district lies between latitudes 25° 30’ to 26°36' N and longitudes 92° 90’ to 93°54’ E covering a geographical area of 10,434 sq km. It is bounded by Nagaland in the east, Meghalaya in the west, Golaghat and Nagaon districts in the north and North Cachar Hills (N.C. Hills) district in the south. As per 2001 Census the district recorded a population of 8,12,320 (Male:4,22,599; Female:3,89,721) and a density of 78 persons per sq km. The district comprises of two detached parts – the Western part also referred as Hamren subdivision with its Headquarter at Hamren and the eastern part comprising of Diphu and Bokajan subdivisions with their respective Headquaters at Diphu and Bokajan (Map 1).
2.1.2 Early history (Dutt, 1979; Phangcho, 2001): Detailed accounts of history of the present Karbi Anglong district may not be complete as information is scattered and not exhaustive. Any attempts to describe history of the district has to take into consideration two aspects- i) historical accounts of Karbi Anglong cannot be narrated in isolation without incorporating the history of present North Cachar Hills (N. C. Hills) and Jaintia Hills districts, and ii) it is difficult to state in conformity the history of migration of various tribes inhabiting the present Karbi Anglong district in particular and the North Eastern Region in general due to dearth of written records. Both records and historical remains testify that the combined Karbi Anglong and N. C. Hills districts region at different was ruled by different dynasties such as Varmans, Palas, Kacharis (Dimasas), Ahoms and then lastly British. Apart from this, some part of the region was ruled by the Karbis and the Pnars (erstwhile Jaintias). After the Varmans and the Palas, the Kacharis became the dominant tribe who established their capital at Dimapur at least for four and a half centuries until it finally fell under the Ahoms in the later part of the first half of the 16th century. As a result of Ahom subjugation the Kacharis shifted their capital from Dimapur to Maibong in the heart of present N. C. Hills and finally to Khaspur in the south. It is said that, ever since the Kacharis left Dimapur and took permanent settlement in the hills of North Cachar called themselves as Dimasa (i.e. sons of the great river). Some scholars are of the opinion that the Karbis, at least the first batch- the Amri section who migrated through the southern part of Nagaland from Burma, were the preceding tribe to inhabit around Maibong and the Kopili river valley on the west before the Kacharis came to establish their capital at Maibong after the fall of Dimapur. However, a good number of Karbi localities in the Kopili valley as well as in other parts of N. C. Hills inhabited by later Karbi migrants from southern Nagaland, came under the Kachari administration. But their relation was not cordial; ill treatment by the Kacharis forced many Karbis to vacate N. C. Hills and inhabit the lower slopes of Jaintia Hills on the west of the Kopili river. The Karbis were largely concentrated in the vast area of the north eastern Jaintia Hills and established their kingdom called Rongkhang. But the Karbis could not maintain healthy relation with the Jaintias for long, and thence batches of them migrated to the Nagaon plain during the Ahoms reign and further east towards Golaghat/Dhansiri valley during the British period.

The Burmesse invasion that created panic and havoc in the whole of Assam valley during the third decade of the 19th century also affected the eastern part of Karbi Anglong. Many local tribals including the Karbis had to completely abandon their earlier settlements, and establish new ones in the more interior places for safety. On the other
hand, good number of Assamese people also left their villages in the plain districts of Upper Assam and established new settlements in the interior of eastern Karbi Anglong to avoid horrible atrocities of the Burmese soldiers. The western part of Karbi Anglong as well as the N. C. Hills district, however, did not directly experience such bitterness except in some sporadic places where the affected people came and opened new lands for cultivation.

During the British period certain significant political developments took place concerning the region and its principal tribes. The Mikirpar Mahal, a hill tract (of present eastern Karbi Anglong) comprising practically the entire area predominantly inhabited by the Mikirs (Karbis), that was given a special status by the Ahoms, was now given the name ‘Mikir Hills Tract’ by the British Administration. This was kept within the administrative boundary of Nagaon district constituted under a notification of the Assam Frontier Tracts Regulations. In 1893 a part of this was transferred to Sibsagar district. Both the parts of Mikir Hills Tract were Partially Excluded Areas. Thus, the Mikir Hills Tract was administered partially by Nagaon district and partially by the Sibsagar district. The Rongkhang area earlier administered by the district of United Khasi and Jaintia Hills was known as Excluded Area. These two areas i.e., the Mikir Hills Tract and Rongkhang area now constitute practically the entire district of Karbi Anglong.

On the other hand, the N. C. Hills formerly was a part of the district of Cachar; the latter occupies a major part of the Barak plain in the south of present Assam state. N. C. Hills was a subdivision of the Cachar district since 1853. Prior to this the area was ruled by Tularam Snapati, a Kachari chief. This hilly area was called ‘Excluded Area’, and was always administered by the Governor till the time of India’s independence. Before independence the Karbi and Dimasa leaders under the leadership of Late Semson Sing Engti demanded creation of a separate district for the Karbis and the Dimasas as well as their neighbouring hill tribes in order to provide them with modern facilities necessary for development.

After the country’s freedom the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district was formed under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution on 17th November 1951 vide Government Notifications TAD/R/31/50/204 Dated 27-08-1951; TAD/R/31/50/204 Dated 03-12-1951 and TAD/R/31/50/205 Dated 08-12-1951. At the time of creation of the United district, the Mikir Hills Tract was kept as the major part to which is added the entire hilly subdivision of North Cachar (Excluded Area), parts of United Khasi and Jaintia Hills (Excluded Area), Nagaon and Sibsagar districts (Mikir Hills Tract or Partially Excluded Area). To Karbi Anglong, the then Mikir Hills subdivision was added
4,421 sq. km from Nagaon district, 4,382 sq. km from erstwhile Sibsagar district and 1,543 sq. km from the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills district. In the united district Mikir Hills and N. C. Hills were separate subdivisions. Then on 2nd February 1970, N.C. Hills subdivision was declared a separate district with its Headquarter at Haflong and subsequently the Mikir Hills subdivision was also constituted into Mikir Hills district with its Headquarter at Diphu. Both the districts were brought under the separate District Councils of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The Mikir Hills district was renamed as Karbi Anglong in 1976 vide Government Notification TAD/R/115/74/47/ Dated 14-10-1976. The two districts now enjoy the status of Autonomous District Councils under Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Again on 1st April the Union Government granted more powers to the District Councils. The two councils are administered by an Executive Body comprising of elected members known as Members of Autonomous Council (MAC) while the Executive is headed by Chief Executive Member (CEM). The region has five Assembly Constituencies (four in Karbi Anglong and one in N.C. Hills) but the two districts combined is represented to the parliament by a single member.

2.1.3 Topography (Phangcho, 2001)

Most part of the district is covered by hills except the narrow strips of flat lands along the banks of Jamuna, Kopili and Karbi Lankpi (Barapani) rivers. The whole of eastern part of Karbi Anglong is called Nilip, excepting the area covered by Jamunapar Mouza, which is called Lumbajong. The eastern part of the district is mostly covered with hills which end on the North at the plains of the Brahmaputra, and on the East and West on the plains of the Dhansiri and Jamuna valleys respectively. They rise sharply from the narrow valleys with which they are intersected and are covered with dense forests, except in places where they have been cleared for Shifting Cultivation locally referred as Jhum, by the tribal populace. The upper reaches of Dhansiri and Kaliani rivers are covered with dense tree forests which constitutes among the diversity hotspots of the district. The district consists of a mass of serrated ridges, whose steeply sloping sides are green with creepers smothered trees and bamboo forests that springs up on the sides of the following Jhum. The outer ranges are not more than 456 meters (m) but there are hills whose summits are 1200m and more above sea level. The western part of Karbi Anglong, except the narrow strips of flat lands along major rivers, is also covered by hills whose elevation varies from 150m to near about 1219.20m above the sea level.
These hills however, have less forest than the hills of the eastern part due to intense jhum practice and grazing by cattle.

Of the plains portions, the Jamuna valley is by far the most thickly populated area of the district. This portion was previously covered by dense forests, but after independence there was a heavy rush of immigrants from both hills and plains to this area in search of fertile land and consequently the whole area has practically been cleared and occupied. The Kopili valley including the plains of Karbi Lankpi river is also fast being depleted of the forests cover due to human settlements. The Dhansiri is much narrower than those mentioned above, the area from Dhansiri to Borpathar has long been cleared of forest that once covered it and settled villages are in existence here time immemorial.

The altitude of Karbi Anglong varies from 600m in the North and range to 900m in south, while that of the valley area ranges from 75m to 150m. The outer ranges of the district have an average elevation of about 450m whereas in the central portion of the district the average elevation of the range is around 1000m. The highest altitude is the Singhasan peak, locally called Dambukso with 1358m.

2.1.3 Drainage System (Phangcho, 2001)

The drainage system within Karbi Anglong, which also encompasses interdistrict areas, broadly are of two types- a) the Kopili system and b) the Dhansiri system.

The Kopili with its vast catchment and basin areas is one of the longest tributary systems of the Brahmaputra. It main drainage originates from the eastern part of the Jaintia Hills and passes through, forming the boundary between west Karbi Anglong and N. C. Hills and west Karbi Anglong and Nagaon districts. The important tributaries originating from the high plateau of the Khasi Hills are the Umkhen and Umiam. The rivers flow from south-west to north-east and almost parallel in accordance with the general slope of the relief. The Umkhen and Umiam meet the Kopili in Nagaon district. The term Umkhem is used only in Khasi and Jaintia Hills while within Karbi Anglong it is known as Langpi or Barapani. The Kopili and the Langpi pass through gentle slopes except in limited number of places where they have formed narrow and deep valleys and rapids, cascades and low water falls.

From the south and south-western flanks of east Karbi Anglong there originate two important tributaries namely Jamuna and Dikharu whose courses originate from an altitude of about 1,219.51m. Both the tributaries meet the Kopili near Jamunamukh in
Nagaon district. The main course of the Dhansiri river originates from the Thingtubung peak, 1,868.30m which lies between Karbi Anglong and Golaghat districts and finally joins the Brahmaputra at Dhansirimukh. The Kaliani river that originates from a height of about 1050m and runs eastward is the only big tributary to Dhansiri within east Karbi Anglong region. Other tributaries are tiny like Nambar Nadi, Diagurung, Deopani, Laijan, Sarihajan, Bokajan, etc.

Along the northern flank of east Karbi Anglong there is no significant river system. Only a few tiny streams such as Deopani, Kaipani and Diphu originating at an altitude of about 600m and somewhat steep gradient, quickly run down to Nagaon and Golaghat plains, and meet the Brahmaputra river at a few kilometres distance in the north.

It may be mentioned that practically the entire Karbi Anglong as well as North Cachar Hills region is drained by the tributaried to the Brahmaputra with Kopili and its tributaries draining much of the area. Kopili, Langpi, Dhansiri, etc., often cause considerable inundation in the plains.

2.1.4 Geology and Minerals (Dutt, 1979; Phangcho, 2001)

2.1.3.1 Geology

Geologically Karbi Anglong and N. C. Hills are closely associated. Geology of the region is closely related with the Meghalaya plateau (Archaean origin) and the Purbanchal hills i.e., the Southern part of the Eastern Himalayas (Tertiary origin). The entire area had undergone tremendous tertiary disturbances especially in the south-east causing superimposition of tertiary rocks over the Pre-Cambrian basement and the lots of metamorphism, folding and faulting had taken place. Broadly speaking, the region can be divided into three distinct geological units.

1) Part of Hamren sub-division i.e., West Karbi Anglong lying north of Mynriang and Amring rivers. Granite, gneisses and the Shillong group of rocks predominate in this unit.

2) Part of Diphu sub-division i.e., East Karbi Anglong lying North of the Jamuna river forms a distinct unit (separated from the previous by the Nagaon plains) with predominantly gneissic rocks and Shillong group of rocks along the Western margin.

3) The whole of N. C. Hills area covering parts of Hamren and Diphu subdivisions form a separate unit with upper Tertiary rocks comprising Barail, Surma and Tipam series with number of faults, folds, thrusts and unconformities. This unit practically do not have any alluvial deposits except for a limited area flanking the Nagaon plains.
The Archaean neissic complex is the oldest group of rocks in Karbi Anglong and N. C. Hills in the North-Western fringe as isolated patches and as inliers. In Karbi Anglong rock types show a variation from coarse-grained porphyritic to foliated biotite granites associated with fine grained, strongly banded and foliated gneisses, schists and dykes also occur. In Koilajan and Miji areas pyroxene-granulites resembling charnockites occur within the Archaean.

The Jurassic rocks unconformably overlie the Archaean. The common rock types are quartzites, quartz-biotite-schists, quartz-sericites, schists, slate and phyllites. They mainly occur in Nongrirong, Khanduli, Umbaso and Umisora areas. Isolated patches of Sylhet Traps occur around Myntdu, Arterangso and the Disobai Nala areas. Over the Trap is an irregular bed of white clay.

The Tertiary rocks, starting from the Jaintia sires, unconformably overlie the Jurriasics. The Tertiary fringes the Archaean on the Southern and South-Eastern side. The Jaintia series extends along North-Western side of N. C. Hills towards Silvetta of Karbi Anglong where it gives workable coal and limestone. The Sylhet Limestone Stage of the series is more thick and widespread and has the best exposure along the Kopili and the Umrang valleys in the N. C. Hills. Isolated patches of it occur in the Nambor areas of Dhansiri valley. The Kopi stage which overlies the Sylhet Limestone Stage occurs as a continuous narrow belt along the Eastern side of the Kopili valley but continuous as detached patches into the Jamuna valley. Greyish ferruginous shale with interbedded sandstone and calcareous marl are the main rocks.

The Barail series, comprising Laisang, Jenum and Benji formations, occupies the major portion lying north of the Haflong-Disang thrust of North Cachar. Greyish sandstone, sandy shale and hard sandstone, etc., are the main types of rock associated with the Barail series.

The Surma series overlies the Barails with an unconformity. It occurs mainly in the Lumding-Diphu area extending up to Boropathar and Nambor of the Dhansiri valley. In the N. C. Hills the rock belonging to the series are exposed in the Karem-Maibong-Mupa tract.

The Tipam series overlies the Surmas with no marked unconformity occupies a wide area on the North-Western flank of the Barail range consisting of fairly coarse to gritty, false bedded, ferruginous sandstone interbedded with shale, clay and conglomerate.
The Quaternary deposits comprising alluvium and laterites are found overlying earlier formations at places. Vast tract of alluvium are found along the borders of Karbi Anglong falling in the valley areas of Kopili, Dikharu and Dhansiri rivers.

2.1.3.2 Minerals

The mineral of Karbi Anglong falls under two groups of rocks namely, the Archaean Gneissic Complex and the Jaintia series which extends even up to the N. C. Hills. Coal, limestone and clays are the chief economic minerals from the rocks of the Jaintia series, while minor occurrences of mica, beryl, etc., are in the Archaean gneissis.

**Coal:** Coal seams occur in the Lower Sylhet sandstone formation of Jaintia Group, the Surma series of Karbi Anglong and in the Barail series in the N. C. Hills. The reported coal seams are thin. Coal seams have been discovered in Koilajan with estimated reserve of 6,37,000 tones about 28 km West-North-West of Dimapur. Silvetta also shows the occurrence of coal having a reserve of 1,57,808.55 tones. Khonbamon hill area shows similar occurrence of coal having a reserve of one million tonnes. Some other places located along the Jaintia Group of rocks and the Barails have also been reported to have coal seams, yet to be properly investigated. The total estimated of coal occurring in the region is four million tonnes.

**Limestone:** Limestone of high grade occurs in a more or less continuous horizon from Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya up to the N. C. Hills and eastern Karbi Anglong. Among all the occurrences that of the Koilajan is the largest with deposits extending over an area of 12 sq km and having five different limestone bands. The inferred reserve is about 31 million tonnes. Saini Lankso, Sarihajan, Bor Sarihajan, Lumbha and some other places of Kopili and Kharkhor rivers have also been reported to have limestone bands. The total limestone of the whole region is estimated at 154 million tonnes.
Apart from these, feldspar occurs in the Archaean Gneissic Complex. Muscovite mica occurs in thin veins of pegmatite along with feldspar, tourmaline and glassy and smoky quartz in Naga Lankso and Mukjan hill areas along the Kaliani river. China clay i.e., kaolin the basic raw material for pottery industry is reported to have occurred in Silvetta area. Hard granite or gneissis extremely good stone for making road boulders, metals, chips, etc., as well as sands for concrete works extensively occur in Hamren subdivision particularly in Baithalangso-Dongkamukam areas. Such building materials are of common occurrence in many parts of Karbi Anglong and N. C. Hills.

The occurrence of oil and natural gas has been reported from near Koilajan but details of the feasibility of exploration are yet to be investigated. The Oil and Natural Gas Commission (ONGC) has also made survey of oil and gas deposits in Dhansiri areas. Geological Survey of India also gives information about occurrence of atomic minerals and high grade sillimanite in some places of Karbi Anglong. However, details are yet to known.

2.1.4 Soils

The plains region of the district are composed of new alluviums which are somewhat sandy, medium in porosity due to fine texture and presence of some amount of clay, grey in colour and excellent from the agricultural point of view. They are often acidic and support well evergreen vegetation. Old alluviums are found along the northern portion of the Hamren plateau and are mainly composed of coarse gravel usually found above the flood level. Its texture varies from coarse to clayey loam with a varying degree of nitrogen. There is low percentage of phosphate but considerable amount of potash. These soils are used for the cultivation of rice, fruits, vegetables and tea in the Diphu subdivision adjoining the Nagaon and Golaghat districts.

Laterites formation occurs generally in sandstone areas under high rainfall condition. It is an end product of decomposition, found in areas of heavy rainfall, the rocks having being completely leached out and leaving high portion of iron and aluminium residue. It is, therefore, a ferruginous aluminous rock. It is soft and sticky when wet but hard like brick when dry. Less important for cereals and other crops, laterite soil is considerably favourable for cashew and tapioca cultivation. It has got reddish or yellowish red colour. Eastern part of Hamren and the entire N. C. Hills come under this soil belt.
Red loam and lateric soils derived from granites, gneissis, charnockites, etc., are relatively richer in clay-forming minerals and poorer silica. The texture of these soils varies from loams to silty-clay and clay-loam. Sometimes these soils facilitate lime concentrations in the form of nodules or thick veins. The red loam and lateric belt occupies the major parts of Diphu subdivision. The soils are rich in acidity, organic matter and nitrogen. They are good for the cultivation of fruits, potatoes and rice in the hill slopes and terraces.

2.1.5 Climate

Broadly speaking, the climate of the region is controlled by the same factors that apply to other parts of Assam as well as Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland, etc. But the most important factor that gives slightly different climatic phenomenon from other parts of Assam is Orography. Also due to wide variation of topography, the district experiences different climatic conditions at different places.

The Cherra-Dwaki escarpment of Meghalaya, Barail range and the Western border hills of Manipur obstruct easy access of the South-West monsoon winds into the heart of the region. This condition gives a rain-shadow effect to the central portion of Dimasa plateau as well as the bordering areas of the region around Lanka and Lumding. Moreover, due to the peculiar shape of the region and the alignment of the hills the common weather and climatic phenomenon of the Brahmaputra valley are rarely experienced except for the border areas which come under its direct influence.

The average annual rainfall gradually decreases towards the central portion from above 1,300 milimeters (mm) to below 1,100mm, with Karbi Anglong area recording an approximate average rainfall at 1,200mm. This phenomenon may be attributed to the rain-shadow effect. The rainfall is high in Western Karbi Anglong as in the Southern part of N. C. Hills lying south of the Barail range. Rainfall also gradually decreases towards the Dhansiri valley of Eastern Karbi Anglong. Mailoo, Hawaipur, Doyangmukh and the entire Howraghat plain experience semi-dry condition during April-May and continue even up to June in some years. Though the district falls within the temperate zone, during summer the atmosphere becomes very sultry due to its location very near to the Tropic of Cancer and the influence of the soil. The average maximum and minimum temperature of the district are 30°C and 18°C respectively. High altitude places like Haflong, Hamren, Singhason, etc., however, enjoy somewhat a healthy climate even during summer monsoon time. Places lying in low altitude record as high as 36°C that creates
rather an unbearable condition. The winter is dry and comfortable with the days being foggy, cold and dry.

Karbi Anglong district is the largest district of Assam in terms of landmass. The district has precious treasure of flora, fauna and microbes encompassed in its vast tract of forest cover of 4,296.75 sq km that accounts for about 41% of the total geographic area of the district (i.e., 10,434 sq km). The extent of forest cover of Karbi Anglong as per 1999-2000 survey is 33,1624 Hectares which accounts for 32% of total geographical area of the district. The vegetation types include semi-evergreen, deciduous, grasslands, bamboo stands, epiphytes, etc., and with varied habitats. A sizable area of forest is under teak (Tectona grandis) plantations in both forest and private lands while rubber, bamboo, Citrus spp. and Aquillaria malacense plantations are undertaken in private lands (Plates 1, 2 & 3).

For the ease of administration of the forest, the district is divided into three Divisions namely, Karbi Anglong (East) Forest, Karbi Anglong (West) Forest and Hamren Forest Divisions each headed by a Divisional Forest Officer (DFO). Besides these, there are Working Plan, Silviculture and Afforestation Divisions also headed by DFOs. The Conservator of Forests (CF) which has recently being upgraded into Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF) is at the helm of affairs of the forest department in the district now christened as Department of Forest and Environment.

The forest area of Karbi Anglong district includes 14 State Reserved Forests, 17 District Council Reserved Forest and District Council Proposed Reserved Forest (Tables 1, 2 and 3).

**I State Reserved Forests:** These Forests are declared under the Assam Forest Regulation VIII, 1891 and the Karbi Anglong Forest Act, 1957. There are 14 Reserved Forests covering an area of 1,469.71 sq km.

**II District Council Reserved Forests:** The Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) has constituted 17 Reserved Forests under the Karbi Anglong Forests Act, 1957 which are known as District Council Reserved Forests (DCRF). The total area under this category of forest is 737.58 sq km.

**III District Council Proposed Reserved Forest:** The Autonomous Council had also proposed some forest areas to be constituted as Reserved Forests which form the District Council Proposed Reserved Forest. This category of forest covers 1277.60 sq km.
Further, considering the importance of biodiversity (plants, animals and microbes) and their conservation the Autonomous Council has created five Wildlife Sanctuaries covering an area of 811.86 sq km (Table 4). Some important wild animals are Asiatic elephant, Leopard, host of primates and colourful birds and pheasants.

**Forest types**: As per revised classification of Champion and Seth (1968) the following types of forests are found in Karbi Anglong district.

1) 2BC/1b: Moist Semi-Evergreen Forests
2) 3C/C36: Moist Mixed deciduous Forests
3) 2/E1: Cane Brakes
4) 1/E2: Wet Bamboo Brakes
5) 2/E3: Secondary Bamboo Brakes
6) 9/C2: Assam Sub-Tropical Pine Forests
7) 3/S Secondary Highland Savana Forest

Besides the above, two distinct sub-types of moist mixed deciduous forests namely, Bamboo Mixed with Tree and Tree Mixed with Bamboo are also available in Karbi Anglong district. Forest which are classified on the basis of local criteria are also found namely, Jamuna Alluvium Type Forest, River Type Forest (West Division), Kurkani type, Alluvial type and Hill type.

**Table 1. State Reserved Forest**

Table 1a. Karbi Anglong (East) Forest Division

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No.</th>
<th>Reserved Forest</th>
<th>Area (sq km)</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mikir Hills RF</td>
<td>770.38</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kaliyani RF</td>
<td>123.32</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Nambor RF (N Block)</td>
<td>112.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Nambor RF (S Block)</td>
<td>121.49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chelabor RF</td>
<td>33.54</td>
<td>Completely encroached</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sildharampur RF</td>
<td>15.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Jungthung RF</td>
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### Table 1b. Karbi Anglong (West) Forest Division

<table>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Dhansiri RF</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Daldali RF</td>
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<td>Disama RF</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Kaki 1st Addition RF</td>
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### Table 1c. Hamren Forest Division

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<td>Amreng RF (Addition)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Jakota RF</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rongkhang RF</td>
<td>33.39</td>
<td>Completely encroached</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2. District Council Reserved Forests (DCRF)

#### Table 2a. Karbi Anglong (East) Forest Division

<table>
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<th>Sl No.</th>
<th>DCRF</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Longnit DCRF</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Patradisa DCRF</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Hidipi DCRF</td>
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<td>Jamuna DCRF</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Mahamaya DCRF</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Khonbamon DCRF</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Haithapathar DCRF</td>
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#### Table 2b. Karbi Anglong (West) Forest Division

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<td>1</td>
<td>Miyungdisa DCRF</td>
<td>56.94</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tamulbari DCRF</td>
<td>12.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Inglonkiri DCRF</td>
<td>33.39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Borlangpher DCRF</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Matipung DCRF</td>
<td>33.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Langsoli-et DCRF</td>
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Table 2c Hamren Forest Division

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<th>Sl No.</th>
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<th>Area (sq km)</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<td>Kolonga DCRF</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Amreng 1st Addition DCRF</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Amreng 2nd Addition DCRF</td>
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<td>Completely encroached</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Charchim DCRF</td>
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</table>

Table 3. Wildlife Sanctuaries of Karbi Anglong district

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No</th>
<th>WL Sanctuary</th>
<th>Area (sq km)</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
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<td>Garampani WL Sanctuary</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>East Karbi Anglong WL Sanctuary</td>
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<td>Nambor WL Sanctuary</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Marat Longri WL Sanctuary</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>North Karbi Anglong WL Sanctuary</td>
<td>96.00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

1) Moist Semi Evergreen Forest (2BC/1b)

i) East Forest Division: This type of forest is found all over the forest tract of the district where rainfall is high. A few patches of such forest occur in Nambor Reserve Forest (RF), Mikir Hill RF and Kaliyani RF which are situated in high rainfall zone. The important species of plants include-

a) Top storey: *Michelia champaca, Phoebe* sp., *Terminalia* spp., *Mangifera sylvatica, Tetrameles nudiflora, Cinnamomum camphora, Gmelina arborea, Albizzia* spp., *Chitrassia tabularis*, etc., are found.

b) Middle storey: *Syzygium* spp., *Amoora wallichii, Dillenia pentgyna, Cephalanthus occidentalis* L. (Pani Badam), etc., interspersed with bamboo forest.

c) Lower storey: *Hydnocarpus kurzii, Holarrhena antidysenterica, Polyalthia* sp., *Albizzia lucida*, etc. are found
d) Ground layer: ferns, *Alpinia allughas*, *Phrynium pubinerve* Blume, etc. predominate.

**ii) West Forest Division:** The Moist semi-evergreen formations under the West Division are usually found in Dhansiri RF, parts of Doldoli RF and parts of Tammulbari DCRF. In general the forest is dense-storied high forest, 24-36 meters high in which the evergreen species predominates in the lower storey. However, major proportion of the canopy is dominated by deciduous species and thus, becomes leafless for some period of the year, the deciduous character being more prominent in the hilly region. In general bamboos are insignificant, but canes at places are common especially along water courses.

a) Top storey: *Stereospermum personatum*, *Sterculia alata*, *S. villosa*, *Dillenia indica*, *Premna latifolia*, *Schima wallichii*, *Adina cordifolia*, *Terminalia belerica*, *Bombax ceiba*, *Bauhinia variegata*, *Castanopsis* spp., *Albizzia procera*, *Pterospermum acerifolium*, *Anhokocephalus cadamba*, *Holarrhena antidysenterica*, *Parkia roxburghii*, *Duabanga sonneratioides*, etc.

b) Middle storey: *Trewia nudiflora*, *Emblica officinalis*, *Kydia calycina*, *Oroxylum indicum*, *Premna bengalensis*, *Careya arborea*, *Albizzia lucida*, *Syzygium cumini*, etc.


However, it is seen that the condition of the vegetation consisting of large trees of *Michelia* spp., *Dipterocarpus macrocarpus* Vesque. (Hollong), *Morus laevigata* Wall. (Bhola), *Phoebe goalparensis* Hutch. (Bonsum), etc., is poor due to selective felling of these species in large number earlier, and presently some of these species could be seen only in some plantations.

**iii) Hamren Forest Division:** The Moist semi-evergreen forest under this Division is found in patches particularly along the depressions and along the streams of Amreng RF.

a) Top Storey: *Adina cordifolia*, *Terminalia belerica*, *Bombax ceiba*, *Schima wallichii*, *Dillenia* spp., *Sterculia alata* and *Albizzia procera*.

b) Middle Storey: *Careya arborea*, *Callicarpa arborea* Roxb., *Trewia nudiflora*, *Premna latifolia* Roxb., *Albizzia lucida*, etc.

c) Lower Storey: *Alstonia scholaris*, *Buahinia vareigata*, *Holarrhena antidysenterica*, *Syzygium cumini*, *Vitex trifolia* (Tinpati), etc.
2 Moist Mixed Deciduous Forest (3/C3b)

This type of forest predominate the entire forest cover of Karbi Anglong district

i) East Forest Division: This is the most predominant type of forest found in all other RFs, DCRFs, PRFs, etc. The vegetation in this forest shows distinct three storied formation.

a) Top storey: *Adina cordifolia*, *Terminalia belerica*, *Bombax ceiba*, *Schima wallichii*, *Dillenia* spp., *Sterculia alata*, *Albizia* sp.

b) Middle storey: *Careya arborea*, *Callicarpa arborea*, *Trewia nudiflora*, *Premna nudiflora*, *Albizia lucida*, etc.

c) Lower storey: *Alstonia scholaris*, *Bauhinia* spp., *Vitex trifolia*, *Holarrhena antidysenterica*, *Syzygium* sp.

d) Ground layer: *Lantana* sp. and other bushy species.

ii) West Forest Division: The forest formations are mainly found in parts of Tamulbari and Borlangfer DCRFs. These forests are closed type with tall trees. The individual trees often measures to very large size. The various species occurring are well mixed in small groups. In these formations there are shrubby undergrowths and the presence of grasses is significant. These forests are presumed to be in transitory successional stage towards attaining semi-evergreen nature in due course having little biotic interferences. A typical three storied nature of forests is seen in these formations.

a) Top storey: *Stereospermum personatum*, *Sterculia alata*, *Dillenia indica*, *Holarrhena antidysenterica*, *Premna latifolia*, *Adina cordifolia*, *Schima wallichii*, *Lagerstroemia parviflora*, *Terminalia belerica*, *Sterculia villosa*, *Bauhinia variegata*, *Castanopsis* spp., *Albizia procera*, *Pterospermum acerifolium*, *Anthocephalus cadamba*, etc.

b) Middle storey: *Trewia nudiflora*, *Emblica officinalis*, *Kydia calycina*, *Oroxylum indicum*, *Premna bengalensis*, *Syzygium cumini*, *Albizia lucida*, *Careya arborea*.

c) Lower storey: *Eupatorium* spp., *Lantana camara*, *Flemingia* spp., *Zizyphus* spp., *Alpinia allughas*, *Clerodendrum* spp., *Croton sparsiflorus*, *Parthenium hysterphorous*, *Murraya koenogii*, etc. *Mikania* spp., is the predominant climber. Others include *Dioscorea* spp., *Mucuna pruriens*, *Clematis* sp., *Entada pursaetha*, *Dillenia* spp., *Acacia* spp., *Vitis latifolia*, etc. Due to selection felling in this formation, the availability of larger girth trees of valuable species is very less and the condition of the crop is poor.
iii) Hamren Forest Division: The forest formation of this division is also dominated by deciduous vegetation.
   a) Top storey: *Adina cordifolia*, *Terminalia belerica*, *Bombax ceiba*, *Schima wallichii*, *Dillenia* spp., *Sterculia alata*, *Albizia procera*, etc.
   b) Middle storey: *Careya arborea*, *Callicarpa arborea*, *Trewia nudiflora*, *Premna latifolia*, *Albizia lucida*.
   c) Lower storey: *Alstonia scholaris*, *Bauhinia* spp., *Vitex trifoliai*, *Holarrhena antidysenterica*, *Syzygium* sp., etc.
   d) Ground storey: Plants like *Lantana* sp. and other plants with herbs' and under shrubs habit are found in this stratum.

3 Cane Brakes (2/E1)
Cane stands form impenetrable thorny thicket and are found growing outwards to various distances with or without few tall trees in Karbi Anglong East Forest Division. The wettest sites along streams are found occupied by cane brakes. In Hamren Forest Division cane brakes are found in small patches in swamp areas. Important species of canes (rattans) available in Karbi Anglong are Jati/Hill Jati (*Calamus tenuis*), Raidang (*C. flagellum*), Lejai (*C. floribundus*), Jeng (*C. erectus*), Huka (*C. latifolius*)

4 Bamboo Brakes: Bamboo forests are significant in Karbi Anglong East and Hamren Divisions. Bamboo forest of the district may be grouped under two categories.

i) Wet Bamboo Brakes (1/E2): This type of bamboo forest is prominent in East Forest Division mostly along streams or valleys more or less displacing the trees. The brakes hold tenaciously to ground. Under a closed bamboo groves the floor is usually devoid of trees but scattered shrubs and grasses may occur. *Dendrocalamus hamiltonii* and *D. arundinacea* prefer low level areas, river and streams, banks and moist sites.

ii) Secondary Moist Bamboo Brakes (2/E3): The Secondary Bamboo Brakes are mostly found on the slope of hills of East and Hamren Forest Divisions. Bamboo stands generally occur mixed with trees or in pure patches. These bamboo forested areas are often cleared for *jhum*. Due to biotic interferences the natural process of succession is hampered and creates favourable condition for secondary growth and in such patches bamboo comes up. *Melocana* sp. occurs up on hilly slopes which are well drained as the
plant cannot withstand water logged condition. *Dendrocalamus* sp. occupies flat and wet areas and in lower hills. *D. strictus* also prefers well drained hill slopes.

Some important bamboo species available in Karbi Anglong are *Bambusa arundinacea*, *B. balcooa*, *B. pallida*, *B. khasiana*, *B. tulda*, *B. vulgaris*, *Dendrocalamus hamiltonii*, *Melocana baccifera*, etc. Besides these species some other bamboo species like Dulu (*Neohouzeana dullooa*) are found with limited occurrence in the forests which determines this land as the initial or end point of distribution of such species.

5 Assam Sub-Tropical Pine Forest (9/C2): This type of forest occurs in the Hamren Forest Division adjacent to the Jaintia Hills district. *Pinus kesiya* is the most dominant species in this forest in association with *Schima wallichii* and species of *Eleocarpus*, *Quercus*, *Cinnamomum*, *Ternstroemia* together with shrubs like *Symlocos* spp., *Rosa* spp., *Eurya* spp., etc. Species of *Dendrobium*, *Vanda*, *Phaius*, *Cymbidium*, etc., are common orchids. However, these forests have been completely destroyed by human and presently pine plantation was taken up in the area.

6 Secondary Highland Savana Forest: This type of forest is found in Hamren forest Division. The tip of each hill/hillock is characterised by flat ground giving the formation of a mini plateau. Such areas are covered by highland savana comprising of grasses like *Naranga perphyracema*, *Imperata cylindrica*, *Athicria gigantea*, *Panicum assamicum*, etc. Fire hardy flora includes shrubs like *Camillia* spp., *Grewia sapida*, *Premna latifolia*.

Forest types based on local criteria

a) Jamuna Alluvium forest: Jamuna is an important perennial fresh water stream that passes through forest West Divisional area. It plays significant role in the formation of vegetation by alluvial deposition. The soil is sandy loam or heavy alluvium of clayey soil in situ. It is usually red or yellow. The forest composition of this formation is represented by species like *Bombax ceiba* (Simul), *Stereospermum chelonoides* DC. (Paroli), *Dillenia indica*, *Cedrella ciliata*, *Bischofia javanica* Blume (Uriam), *Zizyphus* spp., *Dysoxylum binecariferum* Hook.f. (Banderdima), *Trewia nudiflora* L., *Syzygium* spp., *Albizia procera* Benth., etc.

Alluvial forest type is also found under East Forest Division and the best timber stands are found in this forest. It occurs in all the RFs and occupies the better drained localities in the plain portion up to the valleys and lower slopes of the hills.
Among the several species that occur in this type of forest is Bonsum (*Phoebe goalparensis* Hutch.). The plant prefers moist and well drained soil not far away from rivers and in valleys containing good depth of soil. But, gradual decline of this species is noticed in the RFs. Three canopy layers can be easily distinguished in this forest. Bhelu (*Tetrameles nudiflora*) rises over the rest in the top canopy along with species like *Chakrassia tabularis* Andr. Juss (Bogipoma), *Phoebe goalparensis* Huth. (Bonsum), *Dipterocarpus macrocarpus* Vessque. (Hollong), *Artocarpus lacucha* Buch.-Ham (Sam) and specis of *Talauma* and *Michelia*. In the middle storey, which is evergreen in character like *Dillenia indica*, *Walsura robusta* Roxb., etc., are found. Lower canopy is composed of several shrubs like *Clerodendrum*, *Mallotus*, *Litsea*, etc., with ground cover consisting of several herbaceous species and ferns.

Regeneration is found only in limited extent. Shade loving species like *Phoebe goalparensis* and *Amoora wallichii* can withstand suppression for sometime and struggle but light demanders like *Dipterocarpus macrocarpus* Vessque. find it extremely difficult to get through the heavy undergrowth prevalent in these forests. Incidence of climbers is heavy like *Acacias*, *Bauhinias*, *Entada* sp., etc.

**b) River Type:** Forests of this formation is usually occurs near the banks of streams and nallahs with alluvial of more recent origin under West Forest Division. There are scattered trees of *Bombax ceiba*, *Albizia procera*, *Dillenia indica*, *Bischofia javanica*, etc., but the growth is poor. Some of the grass species found in these formations include *Erianthes* sp., *Phragmites karka*, *Saccharum spontaneum*, etc. Such forests form an ideal habitat for herbivores.

**c) Kurkani Type:** This type of forest is confined to low lying areas of Namber RF under East Forest Division. Trees grow in the Kurkani mounds and climbers are heavy. *Lagerstroemia flos-reginae* Retz. (Ajhar), *Terminalia tomentosa* W & A (Amari), *Artocarpus lacucha*, *B. javanica* are some of the important species that grow to a limited extent in these forests and form top canopy. Middle storey is monopolised by *Dillenia indica* which occur along with *sterculia* sp., *Castanopsis* spp., *Dysoxylum binectariferum*, etc. The regeneration of vegetation is poor as the ground cover is thick. Regeneration is restricted to the space around the mother tree. Climbers such as *Acacias*, *Bauhinias*, *Dillenia scrabella* Roxb., *Entada pursaetha* DC. are common. Many species of canes are also found in this forest.
**d) Hill Type:** This local forest type occurs in Nambor RF (South Block) and is characterised by high composition of deciduous species. The soil is shallow and poor. The composition of top canopy is essentially of mixed character. Many of the species occurring in Kurkani and River types are also found in this forest. None of the species have any tendency to form any large gregarious patches. Climbers are less profuse and regeneration of important timber yielding plants is rather scarce. Open areas are covered with *Eupatorium* spp. or dense growth of coarse grass.

The general composition of plants in all the notified forests has witnessed a great change. The Semi-Evergreen type of forest once predominant in some RFs has been reduced to degraded scrub forests. The natural regeneration is also not satisfactory. The main causes of changes are due to over exploitation of timber by some unscrupulous traders and also encroachment and *jhum* activities.

### 2.2 THE PEOPLE

Karbi Anglong being a hilly region has a distinct geographical entity. More than 68% population of the district are indigenous tribal, thus reflecting ethnic and cultural diversity of the region. As per 2001 Census the district recorded a population of 8,12,320 (Male:4,22,599; Female:3,89,721) and a density of 78 persons per sq km. Prominent tribes of the district includes Karbi, Dimasa, Rengma Naga, Kuki, Garo, Lalung(Tiwa), Pnar (Jaintia) and a few and non-tribal groups. Tiwas, Garos and Pnars practice Matrilineal system of family system while other tribes follow the patrilineal system. Ethnic communities practice traditional religions which reflects one or the other form of Hinduism and propagate a common belief of immortality of souls and life hereafter. Today, however, many have embraced Christianity. An account of a few prominent tribal groups of the district is given below.

**a) THE KARBIS:** The Karbis represents the prominent tribe of Karbi Anglong district who are ethnically Mongoloid and linguistically belong to Tibeto-Burman and more particularly the Kuki-Chin sub-group of languages. They have settlements in all the sister states of north east India as well as in Bangladesh, particularly the Chittagong Hill tracts. Due to lack of written history not much is known about the origin of the Karbis. However, they are believed to have migrated from the Kuki-Chin area in and around the Chindwin river valley in Western Myanmar (Lyall, 1908; Dutt, 1979; Bhattacharjee, 1986; Phangcho, 2001). This view is widely supported by learned persons as well as the rich folklores existing among the people. The Karbis often refer themselves as *Arleng*
which literally means ‘Man’. Traditionally houses are built on raised platform (Plate 4a) probably to escape from wild animals.

**Socio-Culture:** The Karbis follow patriarchal system of family structure and as such the father is head of the family. Every Karbi village is headed by a *Rong Sarthe* (village headman) and his assistants. The Hamren subdivisional area is traditionally divided into three territorial regions referred as *Rongbong* namely, *Rongkhang*, *Chinthong* and *Amri rongbong* following the *Khels* or groups into which the Karbi people are divided. Each *rongbong* has a traditional institution comprising of selected social dignitaries called *Pinpo* and headed by the Chiefs, the *Lindokpo* (Plate 4b). The institution is the apex body of the Karbis relating to traditions and culture. *Rongkhang Rongbong* has four *Lindokpo*, *Chinthong* has three and *Amri* has two *Lindokpo*. For historical reasons *Ronghang Lindokpo* of *Rongkhang Rongbong* is superior over other *Lindokpos* and enjoys the honour of a *Recho* or king. Traditions and culture of the Karbis of respective *rongbong* are looked after by the *pinpo* and their subordinates as per Customary Laws. For these reasons Hamren subdivision is still considered as the seat of Karbi culture. Selection of *pinpo* is hierarchical. Marriage is solemnized through traditional system called *Adam Asar*, between a boy and a girl belonging to different clans (i.e. clan exogamy). Intraclan marriage is a taboo and violation of this customary law often leads to excommunication.

**Dress and Ornaments:** Weaving, among the Karbis is an exclusive occupation of women who have been weaving dresses for men and for themselves. Further, expertise on weaving is considered as a qualification to become a bride and also status in the society. Clothing needs of all types are weaved on back strap loin looms (Plate 4c). A Karbi man generally remains bare-bodied but his head is usually covered with white or red *poho* (turban). His dress includes a loin cloth but for a formal dress he wears *sator* (Dhoti). Woman wears a piece of dark and thick loin cloth called *pini* down to the knee. *Vamkok*, a belt of white thick artistically decorated cloth is tied around the waist. The upper part of her body is covered with another decorated piece of cloth called *Jiso*. Another cloth called *pekok* is worn by fastening two ends so as to hang from the right shoulder thus, covering the chest and breast. Endi silk and cotton are the main sources of fibres or yams. Often fibres are dyed with various colour (black, red, and yellow) which are extracted from plant, animal and other sources. A typical Karbi man keeps long hair while woman usually tattoo her face with black dye from forehead up to chin (Plate 4d).
Both men and women wear ornaments made of bamboo, wood, silver and gold. *Jangsai* (Earrings) of silver or gold in case of the Karbi Recho and other social dignitaries were used. Women use *jangsai*, *lek* (necklace), *roi* (bracelets), and *arnan* (ring) around finger. A special ear ornament called *Nothengpi* is used by aged women during social occasions (Plate 4c). *Lek* is usually made out of silver coins each having denominations of either 50 paisa or 25 paisa.

**Occupation and Food habit:** The Karbis are mainly agriculturists and *Jhum* often referred as shifting cultivation, is the main agriculture, at least in the hills. They grow multiple crops of which paddy is the main crop besides pumpkin, maize, yams, sesames, barley, brinjal, chilies, arums and many more. Men are known for their expertise in wood and bamboo crafts. Various useful items such as baskets, mats, granary, sieves, etc., are made out of bamboo and canes. Utensils, mortar and pestle, artifacts are some valuable items made from wood. Women are expert weavers and make quality garments with beautiful indigenous designs for themselves as well as for the family. Rice is the staple food supported by wild plants- tubers, roots, leaves, flowers, and fruits. Oil is seldom used in cooking; dish prepared from locally prepared alkali solution called *pholo* and dried fish is usually preferred. They are not habituated to taking milk but instead prefer red tea with jugger. Rice beer or *horlank* is a common soft drink and consumed during social occasions and even in day-to-day life; *hor* is also used during ritual and offered to deities. *Horlank* is prepared by fermenting rice using locally prepared yeast cake called *Thap*.

**Terangk (Bechelors’ Dormitory):** In the good old days, each village is said to have a bachelor dormitory called *Terangk*. *Risomar* (bachelors) of the village stay in the *terank*. It is not meant only recreation but is a center of learning where boys learn about their traditions and culture and also get training in various craftsmanship. Members of Bachelors’ working group or *Jirkedan* practiced in the past stay in the *terank* till completion of the term. However, this practice has long been abandoned because most boys leave their villages in the hills for the plains to pursue education.

**Religion:** Karbis practice animism which reflects one or the other form of Hinduism. They believe in multiple Gods and each God/deity is believed to be associated with a disease. Often animals are sacrificed to appease the deities to avert or cure illness or for favour of rich harvest. During such rituals many plants are also used which is claimed to
be directly or indirectly associated with the concerned deity (s). Idol worship of any form, however, is not known. Many witches use charms to cure minor ailments such as wounds, cough, eye sore, etc., though plants or its products are used for curing ailments.

**Festivals:** The Karbis observe many festivals that have been handed down through generations. *Ok kepru* (annual fishing festival) includes poisoning water bodies with *hiru* or ichthyotoxic plants to stupefy fishes; *pinpo* or members of traditional institutions play important role in the festival. *Hacha Kekan* (annual harvesting festival) is performed to mark the end of harvesting. *Rongker* (community festival) is performed annually for the safety and well being of the village. Animals are scarified while many plants are also used during *Chomangkan* (religious festival for purification of deceased souls). It is the most popular and expensive festival of the Karbis. During the occasion the traditional craft of the Karbis or *Jambili Athon* is exhibited (Plate 4f).

**b) THE DIMASAS:** Though the Dimasas are scattered throughout Assam, within Karbi Anglong prominent settlements are observed in Tumpreng, Dhansiri, Mohendijua and Diphu. Ethnically, the Dimasa belongs to Mongoloid stock and linguistically to the Tibeto-Burman family of languages. They were originally a part of the Bodo Kachari who once ruled the entire Brahmaputra Valley with its capital at Dimapur until the middle of the 10th century when the Ahoms invaded and destroyed the capital Dimapur (now in Nagaland). Following this, they shifted their capital to Maibong in North Cachar Hills. Ahoms attacked Maibong as well, resulting in the final shifting of the capital to Khaspur in present Cachar district. Dimasa literally means ‘sons of the big river’ obviously referring to the Brahmaputra (*Di*: water; *ma*: big; *sai*: sons).

**Socio-cultural life:** The Dimasas follow the patriarchal system of family and as such the father is the head of the family. They have 40 male clans called *Sengphong* and 42 female clans called *Zuluk*. The *Sengphongs* and *Zulaks* are exogamous and violation of the rules of exogamy leads to excommunication.

Dimasa women are expert weavers. They make dresses usually adorned with attractive designs for themselves as well as for men out of cotton and eri silk. Very often yarns or garments are dyed with various colours extracted from plants. In olden days an old man generally wear silver ear ring called *Kharih*. Ornaments used by women includes *Poal* (a kind of necklace), *Khammortai* (golden ear ring), *Chandrawal* (silver necklace), and *Khadu* (heavy silver bracelets).
**Occupation and Food habit:** Rice is the staple food of the Dimasas supplemented by wild vegetables. They practice *jhum* as well as wet cultivation. Besides these, they practice livestock rearing, weaving, eri and muga rearing, crafts, etc. Men are expert artisans and make baskets, mats, artifacts, etc., with beautiful designs out of bamboo and cane. Among the beverages rice beer called *Zou* is consumed a lot during rituals and social occasions and even in day-to-day life.

**Religion:** The ancestral Gods of the Dimasas are referred as *Madai.* Dimasas believe that diseases, calamities and sufferings are caused by evil spirits. These spirits are worshipped to appease them which often involve sacrifice of animals and birds. A Dimasa priest is called *Zontaizao* and the head priest is called *Gisia.* Dimasas also use many plants during social occasions like marriage, death ceremony, etc.

c) **RENGMA NAGAS:** The Rengma Naga represents one of the sixteen major Naga tribes. They are believed to have migrated to Karbi Anglong from the erstwhile Naga Hills (present Nagaland) during the last decade of the eighteenth century. At present the Rengmas are settled in a vast area of hilly region between Borpathar on the south and Chokihola on the north. The area is popularly known as Rengma Hills.

**Socio-cultural Life:** Rengma Nagas practice the patriarchal system of family and hence the line of decent is traced through the male members only. The Rengmas are divided into eight exogamous clans and marriage between boys and girls of the same clan is a taboo. They follow monogamy though there is no bar to polygamy.

**Religion:** The Rengmas of Karbi Anglong follow Christianity. Before conversion they were animists and believe in multiplicity of Gods. *Terunyu* is the highest god and worshipped annually by sacrificing pigs, fowls and oxen. Among the household gods and goddesses are *Vichargyn* (god of wealth) and *Nichargyi* (goddess of wealth). Rengmas do not have priests but during socio-religious festivals the advice of oldest member of the different clans is always sought. They believe in magic and witchcraft. The medicineman is called *Pethinyu.* The Rengmas bury their dead and believe in immortality of the souls and life here-after.
Dress and Ornaments: Rnegma women are expert weavers and make dresses for men and themselves. Yams are often dyed with different colours extracted from plant and animal sources. An old man still wears *Nzanyan* – a loin cloth and a head gear called *Pihu*. Young men use scarf called *Phehong* while the scarf used by old man is called *Judu*. The women put on *Ginhu* (a plain cloth) and *Pherhe* (a decorated cloth) just like shirts. For covering the upper part of the body women put on a decorated piece of cloth called *Phehong*.

Both men and women Rengmas wear ornaments. Men often use bracelets called *Khajanchi* and armlets made of cane. *Phapan* is a cane made artistic anklet. *Tabinyu* is a silver ornament for both men and women. Men also use nickel ear ring called *Sam-emben*. Women also wear necklace made from costly sea shells called *Teharou*; necklace made from ordinary sea shells is called *Tesang*. Bracelet used by women is called *Ten* and zinc armlet is called *Bepnkhejansenpi*.

Occupation and economy: Agriculture is the main occupation of the Rengmas which is practiced through slash and burn i.e. *jhum*. Wet cultivation is also practiced wherever suitable plot is available. Besides growing common crops (paddy, maize, pumpkins, barley, chilies, cotton, ginger, castor, etc.) in *jhum* fields they also grow oranges and pineapples as horticultural crops. Women are expert spinners and weavers. Men are good in blacksmithy and cane and bamboo crafts. These are important cottage industries of the Rengma Nagas.

Festivals: Rengma Nagas perform a number of community festivals that are connected with their cultivation.

**Ngada (Nyada)** is celebrated in the early part of Penpho (December) and marks the end of the agricultural year. The festival is continued for eight days during which rice is brewed and served on the graves of their forefathers; young boys and girls collect food for the feast; men go to gather thatch for their houses. On the eighth day a feast is arranged during which people make merry and drink rice beer.

**Pi-pe** is celebrated at the beginning of the month of Thugi (January). The festival is continued for three days which is performed to get rid of all evils of the preceding year. Only after the observance of the Pi-pe new jungle are cleared for *jhum*.

**Lotsung Nga** is connected with the clearing of burnt wood from *jhum* land. The plant debris is burnt in the month of Kero (March). Before the observance of Lotsung Nga, the Rengmas observe three days *Genna* during which the whole village refrains from work.
and head of the family offer rice beer to the spirit of crops so that the yield is better than the previous year. The clearing of burnt woods from the field starts from the sixth day.

**Khong Kepang Kennu** is one of the most important festival connected with agriculture and is celebrated with the first harvesting of paddy. An old woman offer food items and rice beer to the spirits of the crops. Then she cuts down some rice ears and carries them to the village in a basket. At night she cooks the rice and consumes it. The villagers start harvesting paddy from the next day.

**Bachelors’ Dormitory:** Bachelors’ Dormitory called *Rengseh* is very popular among the Rengmas. Bachelors sleep in the *Rensi* till they get married. During their stay in the *rengseh* the youths learn traditional art and crafts, agriculture and even social manners and customs.

d) **KUKIS:** The Kukis which includes a number of sub-tribes such as *Jansen, Haokip, Guite, Khelma, Thado,* etc., are a major tribe who predominantly lived in the north-western and western part of Myanmar. In Assam they are largely concentrated in the N. C. Hills while in Karbi Anglong they have settlements in and around the Singhasan Hills. They are often called Kuki-Chin which obviously reflects their ethnic affiliation to the Mongoloid stock. Migration of various Kuki sub-tribes into Karbi Anglong, however, is only a recent phenomenon.

**Socio-Cultural life:** The Kukis practice patrilineal system of family life. Each village has a grand annual assembly called *Inpi* headed by the chief and *Semang* (cabinet). In such assembly the Chief and his *Semang* and *Pachong* (cabinet members and auxiliary of *Inpi*) and all the household heads of the village congregate to discuss and resolve matters relating to the village and the community. Traditionally polygamy is not practiced. Capital punishment were never in practice and maximum penalty is *bultuh* (stockade in which the guilty was kept outside the village and provided food until death).

**Dresses and Ornaments:** A Kuki man usually keeps long hair in the form of *Tucha* (long hair rolled up in bunch at the nape). His clothing consisted of *Boitong-Sangkhol* (a half sleeve jacket) and a *Pheichawm* (short lungi). Women traditionally arrange their hair in two plaits braided around the head; they wear a *Nih-San* (a red slip) underneath a *Ponve* (a wrap-around) which is worn around the chest. Garments often are decorated with beautiful indigenous designs. The ornaments include *Biba* (ear ring), *Hah le Chao*
(bracelets and bangles), *Khi* (necklace) and occasionally *Bilkam* (a type of ring-shaped ear ring worn to stretch the earlobes).

**Economy and Occupation:** Rice is the staple food of the Kukis. Slash and burn (*Jhum*) is the principal mode of cultivation. Kukis also domesticate a number of animals; *Sel* (mithun) is the most prized possession, while dog is considered as a faithful animal. Men usually get engaged in hunting, fishing and other activities like cane and bamboo crafts, house building, blacksmithing and carpentry. Pounding and winnowing grains (paddy), cloth weaving and tending domestic animals are some of the daily chores of womenfolk.

**Fairs and Festivals:** The Kukis celebrate a number of festivals which is usually accompanied by traditional dances and music. Important ones are *Sel Neh* (a celebration of young people after season’s work is over), *Chang Kut* (completion of paddy harvest), *Min Kut* (related to maize harvest), *Sai-Ai* (successful big game hunt of big animals), *Chang-Ai* (after bounteous rice harvest), *Hun* (an age old worship), *Chawn le Han* (feasting and holding of sports events) and *Kangkap* (a game in which a disc-shaped seed is rolled) besides many others. Musical instruments consisted of *Khongpi* (big drum), *Khong-cha* (small drum), *Dah-pi* (gong), *Pengkul* (trumpet), *Gosem* (bag pipe), *Theile* (flute), *Selki* (horn) and *Lhemehei* (a peculiar mouth instrument).

**Community centers and clubs:** Sawm is the community center for boys. It is a center of learning in which *Sawn-upa* (an elder) did the teaching while *Sawm-nu* took care of chores, such as combing the boys’ hair, washing of the garments and making the beds. The best students were recommended to the to the king’s or chief’s service and eventually would become as *Semang* or *Pachong* (ministers) in the courts or *Gal-Lamkai* (generals) in the army.

*Lawm* is a traditional youth club in which boys and girls engage in social activities for the individual development as well as benefit of the community. Every *Lawm* has *Lawm-upa* (a senior member), *Tollai-pao* (overseer or superintendent), and *Lawm-tangvo* (assistant superintendent). Besides being a center of traditional learning, *Lawm* is also useful in imparting technical and practical knowledge to its members, especially with regard to farming methods, hunting, fishing and sporting activities such as *Kung-kal* (high jump, particularly over the choice mithun), *Kang-kap*, *Kangchoi-kap* (top game), *Suhtumkhaw* (javelin throw using the heavy wooden pestle) and *Songre* (shot-put).
Lawm is also a center where young people learn discipline and social manners. A religious feast is celebrated in the Lawm co-inciding with completion of harvest. People sing and dance, and drink rice beer on the occasion which often continues for many days and nights.

e) TIWAS (Lalungs): The Lalungs, also commonly referred as Tiwas have large concentration in the Hamren sub-division, particularly the hilly regions adjacent to Neli town (Nagaon district). Their original home is believed to be in the Tibet region, but their migration to the plains is shrouded by mystery. They followed the course of the Brahmaputra and in the plains introduced themselves as ‘Tiwa’. The name ‘Lalung’, they opined was given by non-Laungs. However, there are many legends/theories relating to the origin of the word ‘Lalung’. A typical Tiwa house is constructed on the ground and the length is more than double the width with a door at one end.

Socio-cultural settings: The Lalungs follow matrilineal system of family system and hence the line of decent is trace through the mother. But clan exogamy is strictly adhered during marriage. The religion of the Tiwas is based on belief on some deities. Except the Vaisnava converts, the Tiwas are the followers of ‘Sakta religion’ but their images in the Thans (place of worship) and puja paraphernalia are not the same as those used by other non-Lalungs Sakta. Lord Mahadeo is their supreme god. Tiwas bury as well as cremate the dead body. Hill Tiwas however, prefer burial which they call Sepat.

Economy: The Tiwas are primarily agriculturists; those in the hills practice jhum while their plain counterparts practice wet cultivation. Rice is the staple food; meat (i.e. chicken, pork, etc) is often consumed. The Tiwas set out for work very early in the morning and settles for the night early (Plate 5a). Locally brewed rice beer called Zu is consumed in their day to day life.

Tiwa women are expert in weaving clothes for both men and themselves; garments are weaved on looms which is directly placed on the ground (Plate 5b). Knowledge of weaving is considered as a qualification for become bride. A Tiwa man puts on a narrow strip of cloth called Lengti and wears a shirt prepared locally with specially designed threads at the lower end called Dahi (Plate 5c). Womenfolk use Mekhelas over the chest; a chadar is also used over the body (Plate 5d). The plains Tiwas however, wear dresses similar to the rural Assamese. Garments are often decorated with floral and geometrical
designs. Tiwas are expert in bamboo, cane and wood works. Further, there is enough
evidence to suggest that the Tiwas have excelled in blacksmithy in olden days.

**Festivals:** Tiwas have elaborate festivals which are closely linked with worship of
different deities and songs and dances form an important part of their festivals. Important
festivals are **Bihu, Barat, Sagra Misawa, Wanchoa, Jon Bila Mela**, etc. Tiwas are lovers
of music and dance and observe various festivals where traditional musical instruments
are played. These are **Khrams** (drums), flutes, **Kali** (pipe), **Tandrang** (violin), **Thogaril** (a
string instrument) and other musical instruments.

**f) GAROS:** The Garos are one of the Scheduled Tribes of Karbi Anglong district.
Ethnically they are Mongoloid and belong to the Tibeto-Burmese families of Bodo
linguistic group. The original habitat of the Garos is believed to be in western China.
They believe that they have settled in Coochbihar for a few centuries and later spread up
to Mymensing district of present Bangladesh before they were compelled to migrate to
the undivided Assam during partition of the country. The Garos call themselves **Achik
Mande** which literally means Hill Man (**Achik**: Hills; **Mande**: Man).

**Socio-cultural life:** The Garos follow the matrilineal family system but strictly practice
the rules of exogamy during marriage. The most prominent feature of Garo family life is
the **Nokrom** system in which the son-in law has to reside in the house of the parent-in
law. By this he becomes a **Nokrom** which means a kind of representative of his father’s
clan in the family of his mother-in law. The traditional village chief is called **Nokma**. He
is considered to be the custodian of all lands in the village but people are free to cultivate
any part of land he chooses within the jurisdiction of the chief.

Majority of Garo families practice Christianity but they still remember their
traditional beliefs and practices. According to the traditional religious beliefs there is a
Supreme Being and also numerous deities – benevolent as well as malevolent. Some of
the important deities or spirits are **Tatara-Rabuga** (Chief deity), **Saljong** (Sun god),
**Nostu-Nopantu** and **Machu, Geora** (God of Lightning and Thunder), **Kalkane** (The
Protector), **Susime** (God of Wealth). Dead of a person is mourned by the entire
community and elaborate rituals are held. Dead body is cremated but the Christian Garos
burry them.
Dress and Ornaments: The traditional attire of a man is a piece of woven cloth and a turban. Women used to wear a piece of cloth around their waists and puts on a blouse or vest. On social occasions, the Garos irrespective of their gender wear head dresses with rows of beads stuck with feathers of horn-bill. Both males and females wear ornaments. These are Nadongbinr Sisha (ear ring of brass), Nadirong (brass ring), Natapsi (string of beads), Jaksan (silver as well as brass bangles), Ripok (necklace), Jaksil (elbow ring), Seng'ki (waist band of women), Pilne (head ornament of women).

Foods and Drinks: Rice is the staple food of the Garos supported by maize, millet and tapioca and wild plants. Dried fishes called Nakham and bamboo shoots are among the favourite delicacies. Practically all types of animal foods are taken. Rice beer called Chu is the favourite soft drink for the Garos which is prepared locally by brewing rice.

Festivals: The most important festival of the Garos is the harvesting festival called Wangla, otherwise known as the festival of the hundred drums. Other social occasions include installation of new Nokmas, Dead ceremony, annual community rituals, inauguration of Bachelors' Dormitory, etc. During such occasions both men and women sing and dance to the rhythmic beatings of traditional musical instruments.

Bachelors' Dormitory: The institution of Bachelors' Dormitory called Nokpante is still vibrant in Garo villages. In the Nokpante young people stay and live together till they are married. In fact it serves as an institution of informal education where members receive training on crafts, music, weapons, agriculture, customary laws, etc.

g) PNARS (JAIINTIAS): The Pnars also referred as Jaintias are also a scheduled tribe in Karbi Anglong district whose presence is largely found in Hamren sub-division particularly bordering Meghalaya. They are also referred as Khasi-Pnars while many scholars believe that the term Jaintia is synonymous to Synteng. They are, however, undoubtedly Mongoloid and speak a language belonging to the Mon-Kher linguistic family. Pnars built their house on the ground similar to the Tiwas (Plate 5e).

Social and cultural life: The Pnars, like the Khasis and Garos, have matriarchal system of family structure. Pnar family is strictly exogamous, and marriage between boys and girls of the same Kur or clan is prohibited. According to traditional religion dead persons are cremated. In case of married male, the last rites of the latter are required to be
performed at the residence of his mother. Pnars practice their traditional religion of Hinduism, and believe in life hereafter, rebirth, heaven and hell. They worship spirits of natural objects which are benevolent and malevolent. They also worship spirits of their ancestors which in fact is the characteristic of the Pnar religion; this practice is also observed among Karbis.

Pnars have a strongly knitted village administration. Each village has a village council which manages the affairs of the village. During the reign of the Jaintia kings, there were regional chiefs called Doloi who is elected by the people. He is assisted by other dignitaries such as Pators, Dans (tax collector), Basans, Sangot and others. The village crier is called Chutiya. Though the Doloi's responsibilities and functions have been curtailed after the emergence of Autonomous District Council, nevertheless, in a Pnar society Doloiship still play an important role as far as traditional practices are concerned.

**Dress and Ornaments:** Pnars women are expert weaves and garments of all types are weaved looms which is a modified back strap loom (Plate 5f). The traditional dress of male Pnar consists of three apparels- Dhoti, a selective coat called Jymphong or Piran, and Pangri (turban) (Plate 6a). In the bygone days common male use loin cloth only; during winter he puts on eri cloth to keep the body warm (Plate 6b). The wearing of turban by a Doloi is a must. Pnar women put on home woven sari. They also wear another piece of cloth called Ka Jainkup, which is tied around the neck that extends down up to the ankles like a gown (Plate 6a). At home women wear a locally weaved yellow-red stripe lower garment called Randiastem (Plate 6c). These elaborate dresses give the body of a Pnar woman a cylindrical shape.

The Pnars use ornaments like ear rings (Cha-skhor Bei) and necklace made of beads. During festive occasions women wear a crown of silver or gold on the head, with a spike or peak fixed to the back of the crown. Men wear crown of feathers on the head.

**Economic life:** Pnars are mainly agriculturists and practice jhum in the hills and wet cultivation where suitable plot of land is available. They are very good horticulturists as well and produce large quantities of pineapples and oranges. They also do terrace cultivation by irrigating the land with stream water. Women take active role in cultivation (Plate d). Bamboo and cane crafts, livestock rearing, etc., are their subsidiary occupation.
Foods and Drinks: Like other hill tribes of north east, rice is the staple food of the Pnars along with wild vegetables. Among meat items pork is their favourite while rice beer is the common soft drink.

Fairs and Festivals: Beh Deinkhlam is the most important socio-religious festival of the Pnars which is performed annually in the month of July. The festival literally means 'driving away evil spirits with wooden sticks'. People in traditional attires participate in this festival, but women cannot participate in the dance performed during the occasion. On the last day chariots called 'Rot' made of long bamboo poles and variously decorated with coloured papers are drawn and pulled by the participants and immersed in a pool of water called Aitnar. People make merry and dance to the tune of traditional music. Another important dance is the 'Lano' dance which is performed annually and where young boys and girls in their traditional dress and ornaments participate. In this dance a girl is placed between two boys belonging to clans outside that of the girl.

Pnars are also lover of sports. They have many indigenous sports, including archery. Hunting, fishing, wrestling and dancing are their favourite pastimes.

In the present study the ethnobotany of the Karbis, Pnars and Tiwas were considered for investigations. Though Karbis practice patrilineal while the Pnars and Tiwas practice matrilineal systems of family there are strong grounds for study of ethnobotany of these tribes as far as intertribes transmission of knowledge is concerned. First, the Karbis have been under the reign of erstwhile Jaintia king and therefore many practices might have been imposed on the Karbis; second, long history of cohabitation between the Karbis, Tiwas and Pnars and there are instances of intertribe marriages leading to exchange of knowledge; and third, semblances in cultural practices and religion of the three tribes.

Concept of Disease and Traditional Treatment among the ethnic groups

All ethnic tribes of Karbi Anglong practice traditional religion though many have now embraced Christianity spearheaded by Missionaries. The concept of good and evil is highly vibrant in aboriginal societies and is based on religious practice of the people. Common belief is good refers to God and evil as devil or demon and consider both entities as possessing divinity and unseen power. While gods are sympathetic and helpful to human in general, devil inflict harm or bring sorrow without any provocations. While many tribes worship monoliths of their ancestors or built temple or shrine to profess their religion; some do not have idols, temples or shrines and practice aimism (Lyall, 1908; Bhattacharjee, 1986). Probably, forest environment played prominent role in the origin
and evolution of their religion. One important semblance among the people is the belief in multiplicity of gods and their specific duties towards human. Further, objects with fearsome or peculiar appearance are believed to possess divinity. Thus, people worship rivers, mountains, waterfall, rock, sacred groves, etc., in addition to their traditional gods. Traditional gods or household gods are regularly propitiated by sacrificing fowls and pigs or goats or cattle annually or after a few years for well being and protection of the family members and for favour of rich harvest (Lyall, 1908; Bhattacahrjee, 1986). Propitiation of other gods or non household gods is performed when a person falls ill having encountered an image/spirit while passing through sacred groves (cremation ground, river, rock, tree, pond, etc). After death the body is cremated but believe in rebirth and immortality of the soul. Deceased members are considered equivalent to god and it is believed that they influence living members in smooth functioning of the family. Many tribes even propitiate deceased members by sacrificing fowls, pig, etc., and also offer rice beer on occasions of important rituals, marriage and sometimes owning of new properties (cows, buffaloes, cars, etc.), in the family. Traditional religions also preach that all creatures on this earth is created by god and profess a sustainable ethics of ‘live and let live’ in utilization of forest resources.

Another significant semblance among traditional religions is diseases are the manifestation of gods and evil spirits. The common causes include non propitiation of gods in time, violation of taboos, violation of customary laws, disrespect to deceased members, etc. Therefore, they propitiate them by offering beer and sacrifice animals to appease them for recovery of the patient. Further, it is believed that diseases caused by gods are not cured by modem medicines or herbs and can be cured only by the concerned god. When the cause of the disease could not be ascertained, a wise man is summoned to ascertain the cause of the disease. With his divinity, he conducts a trail and error method, identifies the god or cause responsible for the ailment and accordingly advise the family to observe rituals for recovery of the patient. This practice however, varies from tribe to tribe. This practice is invoked even is case of loss of property including whereabouts of human and cattle. Use of charms to cure ailments is commonly practised among ethnic communities. Ethnic tribes also use wide array of plant and animal parts or their products for curing various ailments. Long association with forests have enabled these communities to gather enormous knowledge of plants and its uses including medicinal plants. Village elders, both men and women have knowledge of medicinal plants but medicine men (Ojha) are considered more knowledgeable. They do not rely much on modern medicines as they do on traditional medicines indigenous
herbs: patient goes to hospital only when local medicine man fails to cure the disease. Knowledge pertaining to traditional practices, medicinal plants and animals, etc., are orally passed from father to son, to grandson and so forth, but with gradual dilution at each level of transfer.

Traditional medical practices among various communities of Karbi Anglong district falls into any of the classes.

Magico-religious practices: Many communities believe diseases are manifestation of evil spirits and worship or propitiation of the spirits will cure the patient. When a person falls ill a learned person is consulted who by his divine power identify the spirits and suggests religious rites or rituals to be performed for recovery of the patient. Such rituals usually involve sacrificing pigs, goats and fowls and also use a number of plants whose use is strictly based on flegends.

Topical or local application: This practice involves local application of plant products in the form of solution or paste. Problems such as injury, sprains, skin diseases, headache, ear and eye diseases, bone fracture, snake, dog and pig-bites, bee stinging, etc., are treated through these practices.

Oral application: Diseases such as gastrointestinal diseases, fever, bronchial complaints, urinary trouble, body ache, antidotes, etc., are treated through oral administration of plant products. For treatment of such diseases the dose may be a solution, paste (tablet) or powder. The quantity and number of doses depend on the severity of the ailment as advised by the medicine man.

Aroma Therapy: Aroma therapy is commonly practiced for infants and children and in certain cases for adults also. Plants or animal parts are tied to the body or made into beads and tied around neck. For example, among the Karbis and Tiwas scales of pangolin or cocoons of an insect Ingki laimok is tied to the neck of children to control sialorrhea or continuous salivation (Plate 6e). Root bark of Re-etso (Aristolochia indica) is also used to cure the same. Further, it is believed that the latter practice reduces many infant diseases. Aroma therapy for curing jaundice is often practiced among all tribes of the district (Plate 6f).Leaves or rhizome of Acorus calamus (sweet flag) is tied to the waist to relieve constipation in children and adults. In case of disturbed sleep, a piece of cloth or cocoons of eri is burnt and the smoke is acclaimed to drive away evil spirits.
cause disturbance; twigs of *Hi-i aripak* (*Heptapleurum venulossum*) is also used for the same purpose.

**Bathing:** Bathing patients with plant-treated water is practiced for diseases such as small pox. Among the Karbis paste of leaves *Aristolochia indica* is rubbed on the head of infants and then thoroughly bathed. Such practice is believed to cure infant disease locally referred as *Ahop*, characterised by symptoms of frequent mild fever with greenish black stool.

**Charms:** Charms is practised by select learned persons who are believed to have mastered in secret verses or mantras associated with a deity. Aliments such as wounds and injuries, dog bite, snake bite, headache (*mor*), sprains, stomach ache (*buti*), spider bite, itches caused by caterpillars, ear and eye diseases, antidotes, etc., are treated by this method. The medicine man utter secret verses pertaining to the ailment; in case of wounds spit is applied to dry the wound and reduce pain. For, headache leaves of *Ricinus communis* and *Amphenuron opulentum* is beaten on the head of the patient while the medicine man utter charms; for eye sore charms is followed by blowing of air into the eyes of the patient.

**Bachelors’ Dormitory**

Culture of Bachelors’ Dormitory is observed among almost all tribes of north east India. It is known by different names among different tribes such as *Terank* (Karbis), *Rengseh* (Nagas), *Samadi* (Tiwas), *Nokpante* (Garos), *Som inn* (Kukis) and *Changukum* (Miris or Mishings) (Plate 7a-b). The practice not only reflects their cultural identity but is recognised as seat of learning where participants acquire non-formal education through observation and practice. Boys learn their culture and traditions, crafts, music, trade and other knowledge required for a man to lead independent life. Sanctioned by the village headman and lead by group leader, inmates have to follow strict rules and regulations of the Dormitory and often get penalised with cash and kinds and even expulsion in case of serious case. Such expelled bachelors is considered as having low morale while a successful inmate is honoured by the society and considered as having high morale. Today the practice of Bachelors’ Dormitory is fast losing its ground. The fact that it is hardly practiced in urban villages, the onus of preserving the culture of the whole community is left to village folk who, in recent times have found it very difficult to run such institution. First, most parents send their children to schools and after acquiring formal education do not show an inkling for traditional practices. Secondly, to run Bachelors’ Dormitory a group of village elders is involved other then the inmates. Such
elders sacrifice their valuable time and energy without any monetary benefits and at the
cost of their families, thus, discouraging the elders. Lastly, with spread of education and
government hardly showing any interest to support, the practice has met its fate. Among
the tribes (Karbi, Tiwa and Pnar) studied for the present report, a sound practice of
Bachelors’ Dormitory have been observed among Tiwas only. The maturity of tenure of
one bachelors’ group is celebrated with high fervour that is associated with their most
important cultural festival called *Wanchoa*. Among the Karbis existence of such
institutions is reflected only during special occasions in the form of exhibition. Christianity is one of the potent factors for the decline of not only bachelors’ dormitory
but also other traditional and socio-religio-cultural practices, which they consider as non-
scientific and superstitious.

**Interrelationships of Karbis with other tribes**

Both records and historical remains testify that the people now inhabiting the
geographical and administrative units of United Mikir and N. C. Hills district had a long
history of their own. The Neolithic and Megalithic finds and monuments support the
view that both the Karbis and the hill Kacharis, who were the authors of some of these
antiquities, settled in and around the present districts (i.e. Karbi angling and N. C. Hills).
Historical accounts suggest that Karbis have not established any dynasty or kingdom
probably because they have been migrating frequently from one place to another.
Though they do have a chief he is only a social chief and so do not have army and
soldiers at his disposal. Instead they have been loyal subjects under various kings at
different times of history. Main reasons for their frequent migration are discontent with
their rulers and attack by other warring tribes. The long history undisputedly reflects
Karbis are peace lovers and do not confront aggressive party, instead avoid them by
moving to other places.

Karbis’ relation with the Kacharis was not cordial. Karbis are reported to have
suffered atrocities of various forms particularly under the Kachari king Govinda. The
relationship, if any ended after a Karbi woman warrior Runja Rongpharpi popularly
referred today as *Rongpharpi Rongbe* killed the soldiers of the king who went to collect
breast milk for the king’s tiger calf. According to a legend, to torture the Karbis, the
Kachari king intentionally reared a tiger calf and Karbi women were ordered to provide
breast milk for the baby tiger. Other women obeyed the order of the king till the day
when it was the turn of Runja Rongpharpi to provide milk. One morning as usual,
soldiers of the king reached the house of Rongpharpi and found here cutting fire wood
with axe. When the soldiers were holding out container for her milk she strike back with
the axe and killed all of them on the spot. Expecting more torture for the act, she
immediately organised other Kabis and vacated the place the very same night, crossed
the Kopili river and took refuge on the bank of Amreng river which was then under
administration of the Jaintia king. Probably there was no exchange of knowledge of any
form which is evident from the fact that there is no similarity whatsoever in social,
religious and cultural practices between the Karbis and Dimasas. Any similarity what so
ever, is of recent origin.

The Karbis maintained cordail relation with the Pnars, after all the Karbis have
decided to remain as general subjects of the Jaintia king whose capital was at Nartiang.
Further, many Karbi dignitaries and Nokbe (i.e., warrior) are reported to have worked in
the court of the Jaintia king. Long years of coexistence have seen the influenced by
political and social practices of Jaintias some of which are still prevalent toady among
the Karbis. Some Karbis’ Nokbe includes Waisong, Thong, etc., among which Thong
Nokbe is the most popular. Thong Nokbe or simply Thong is recognised for his
intelligence, valour and physique and is reported to have fought the Ahoms, Kacharis
and Jaintias. He was reported to have objected to mistreatment to Karbis by the Jaintia
soldiers and killed them at a place called Khatve (Plate 7c), near Umbaso in Hamren
subdivision. A megalith was erected to honour Thong for his bravery which stands by the
side of Hamren-Khanduli road (Plate d). One Late Homi Milik of Umkhyrmi narrated
that Pnars refers Thong as Marphaw Longki; he was said to be well built and strong and
often leaves a trail of his movement by brushing against roadside plants. Many beautiful
Pnar girls were ready to marry him with the belief that their offspring will be brave like
him. His bravery and intelligence won the heart of the then Jaintia king and appointed
him as his guard which Thong continued till his death. This act of the king had infuriated
other Pnar hatch a conspiracy that led to the death of Thong Nokbe. Thong Nokbe was
borne to Aon Teron and Karik Kropi. The legend of Thong is still vibrant among Karbis
as well as Pnars. The latter even pay annual tributes to Thong at Nartiang (now in Jaintia
Hills), the site of his death and at Nongjerong in Hamren sub-division.

Cordial relationship of the Karbis with Pnars is evident in similarities in socio-
religio-policaltical system between the two hill tribes. Karbis are reported to have
inherited sizable knowledge of social practices and political system that are prevalent in
present Karbi society. The Traditional Institutions and its structure among Karbis are
reported to have been inherited from the Pnars. A significant observation of Karbis-Pnars
relationship is respect for human rights; because Karbis were allowed to practice their

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own patriarchal system of family (though Pnars practice Matrilineal family system) and traditional religion (i.e. animism) even under the reign the Jaintia king.

Karbis have maintained friendly relationship with Tiwas (Lalungs) throughout history. There is no evidence to suggest the Karbis living under the Tiwa king or ruler but there is strong evidence both tribes have been coexisting since several years. Neither matrilineal society had influenced patrilineal Karbi society and vice versa. There is indeed intertribe marriage and exchange of knowledge relating to agriculture, material life (textiles and dyes, crafts, etc.) and day-to-day activities. There are more instances of intertribe marriages between the Karbis and the Tiwas and between the Karbis and the Pnars. However, the Karbis living in the plains of Nagaon, Kamrup and Morigoan districts have inherited certain practices from the Tiwa and Assemese people.