CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION: THEORITICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

1.1 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework of the Study:

The Greek word ‘ethnicus’ means ‘nation’ and the word ‘ethnicity’ is derived from it\(^1\). Trimble and Dickson combine the meanings of both the terms, ‘Ethnic and Identity’ and introduce the term ‘Ethnic Identity’ denoting and meaning the sameness of a band or nation of people who share common customs, traditions, historical experiences, and in some instances geographical residence.\(^2\) It is defined as a collectivity of people of a distinct nature in terms of race, descent and culture. An ethnic group is a social collectivity having a certain shared historicity and common attributes, such as race, tribe, language, religion, dress, diet, etc.\(^3\) Ethnicity is a sense of feeling of continuity with the past, a feeling that is maintained as an essential part of one’s self-definition. According to the Oxford Dictionary ‘ethnic’ is a social group having common national, ancestral, tribal and cultural tradition,\(^4\) and in all probability the term ethnicity is of 20\(^{th}\) century coinage attested from the end of two world wars. The Encyclopedia of Anthropology explains, the term ‘ethnicity’ in its broader sense

\(^1\) www.dictionary.com, Time of access 29\(^{th}\) August, 9.19 pm, 2017
\(^3\) Falguni Rajkumar: Rainbow People, Reinventing North East India, Manas Publication, New Delhi, 2011, p.24, The author also convincingly examines this theory in case of the tribes of north east India. It seems that the same theory also suitably matched with the Sonowāl Kachāris of Assam.
\(^4\) K.L. Sharma: Indian Social Structure and Change, Rawat publication, New Delhi, 2007, P.9

and refers to the identification of a group based on a perceived cultural distinctiveness that makes the group into a ‘people’.\(^5\) Thus distinctness of a social group with its own identity-mark ultimately creates social distance between itself and others. Ethnicity may be explained as a reaction against the homogenizing influences working on an economically, socially and culturally heterogeneous mass of people. Walter Fernandez\(^6\) remarks that ‘the ethnic consciousness grows from the encounter with the dominant cultures leading to identity expansion’. H. Jha also upholds Walter Fernandez’s point when he says that the concept of ethnicity refers to the identification and labelling of a group of people. The criteria may be linguistic, racial or cultural.\(^7\) Political scientist Walker Connor, who is a pioneer in the field of ethnonationalism and wrote many articles and books on the topic, is of the view that ethnonationalism denotes both the loyalty to a nation deprived of its own state and the loyalty to an ethnic group embodied in a specific state, particularly where the later is conceived as a ‘nation-state’.\(^8\) Ethnonationalism is a term that refers to a wide range of political phenomena including what may be called nationalism, separatism, secessionism, sub-nationalism, ethnic insurgency, ethnic militancy, or sometimes simply regionalism. It is best thought of as ‘a heterogeneous set of ‘nation’ oriented idioms, practices, and possibilities that are continuously available or ‘endemic’ in modern cultural and political life’.\(^9\) In simple words ethnonationalism promotes and

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\(^{5}\) www.britannica.com , Time of access 18\(^{th}\) May, 7.p.m, 2014

\(^{6}\) A senior fellow (Professor) at North Eastern Social Research Center, Guwahati

\(^{7}\) H. Jha: ‘Decline Of Village and Rise of negative ethnicity in inter –caste relations’ in K.S Singh(ed) : Ethnicity, Caste and People, Anthropological Survey of India, New Delhi, 1992, p.84


\(^{9}\) In this context details may be found in Rogers Brubaker: Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p.10
projects the primary idea that an ethnic community can claim or has the right over the political, social and economic affairs of the community within a state or a country and therefore has the absolute power of self-determination.

Ethnic identity is formed by tangible characteristics like a shared culture or race, which contributes to a group or groups developing feelings of identity, solidarity and uniqueness. A scholar like A.D Smith however believes that ethnicity is based upon some intangible factors. He argues that a particular belief and its relevant practices create a sense of solidarity among its followers to exclude those who are not members. Thus ethnic identity is an expression of socio-cultural societal formation. Such ethnic formations are visible in most of the third world countries during the phases of decolonization after the 1st and 2nd World Wars. Most of the countries of Europe-Asia and Middle East also noticed the emergence of new ethnic communities who sought their identity and new socio-cultural formation with political rights.

A number of factors influence the adoption of ethnonationalistic views and beliefs. It seems to be a general inclination of all the members of a group of people having same or similar behavioral pattern. It is first expressed as parochialism, then tribalism, and finally as ethnonationalism. It is seen that people who are under the influence of ethnonationalistic views and beliefs are readily prepared to act aggressively.

In the post cold war period, ethnic nationalism gained momentum and recognition. Taking the advantages of present day science and technology even the smallest of ethnic communities are trying to magnify their cause by raising the issue of violation

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12 ibid, p.130
of human rights in the place of their habitation.\textsuperscript{13} It is seen more prominently in the Balkan Peninsula during the Second World War of 1939-1945. The Serbs, Greeks, Bulgarians, Croats, Czechs and Slovaks, and also the Austrians and Hungarians in central Europe demanded their own country on grounds of their own language, religion and cultural affinity. Ethnic identity is traced through biological traits and memories of the same part of lands. In such ethnonationalistic movements an ethnic group demands either separate statehood or autonomy.

There are certain similarities among the ethnonationalistic movements in the context of the other parts of the globe and the Indian sub-continent. In India, the objective factors like religion, language, tribe, caste, and culture work as a catalyst for ethnic identity, where the subjective factors help in a collective action for ethnonationalistic movement. Among them language and religion play the most decisive role in the growth of ethnonationalism. The linguistic province commission of 1948 and State Reorganization bill of 1956 were passed for the reorganizing of the Indian states on the basis of language.\textsuperscript{14} In Europe, also most of the ethnonationalistic movements have its origin in religious and linguistic policies of the government, as in the case of Spain, where oppressive measures against the Basque language and culture during the Franco regime and abolition of previous autonomy arrangements led to the development of ethnonationalism among the Basque minorities.\textsuperscript{15}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{13} www.ukessys.com O.N Mehrotra: Ethno-Nationalism in the Contemporary World, Time of access : 26\textsuperscript{th} April 2016, 9.36 a.m
  \item \textsuperscript{14} In 1960 the state of Bombay was divided into two parts as Bombay with the Marathi speakers and Gujrat with the Gujrati speakers. Vide, Kanti Bajpai: Diversity, Democracy and Devolution in India in Sanjib Baruah (ed), op.cit, pp.46-47
\end{itemize}
There are three particular approaches to the study of ethnonationalism. These are primordialist, instrumentalist and ethno-symbolist approaches. According to the primordial view, culture is one of the signifying tools to understand one’s ethnic identity. Culture includes all the things relating to day to day life. This is made up of customs, socio-religious and cultural practices, song-dances, dress and food habits, language and religion. Accordingly, instrumentalists are of the view that ethnicity and identity are situational and conditional. They mainly stress on the politics of elites on ethnicity and nationalism. Here the central role is played by the elites of the community. The third school, ethno-symbolism is a synthesis between the two approaches. It focuses on the exploration of the relationship between culture and politics, pre-modern and modern nations, myths and legends, customs and realities, symbols and values. All these elements play the most vital role in ethnonationalistic movements and their development in different parts of the world. To control and suppress the ethnonationalistic movements the government followed different strategies such as adoption of an authoritarian attitude and sometimes a population-centric attitude; occasionally, it enters into ceasefire and peace deals with the insurgent groups who demand either statehood or autonomy.

Enlightened with the above background and theories, for the present study the term ‘ethnic’ may be use for the Sonowāl Kachāris. They constitute one of the major ethnic groups of the greater Assamese community. They retain some basic characteristics of a ‘tribal ethnic group’. Their long cherished demand for distinct

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16 It is an approach that aims to destroy ethnonationalistic movements through the use of oppressive measures and gives punishment to the supporters of it.

17 It is an approach to win over the support of the majority of population through conciliatory methods of appeasement after control over the ethnonationalistic movements.

18 The government of Assam followed this policy to tackle the ethnic movements in Assam. Here most of the tribal ethnic communities demand autonomy with territorial boundary.

19 Paul R Brass, Kanti Bajpai and Gurharpal Singh cited in their articles in Sanjib Baruah (ed), op.cit, that Ethnicity means social identity based on ascribed qualities such as race, religion tribe, language and region. And these are very common among the Sonowāl Kachāris.
identity with political autonomy bears similarities with an ethnonationlistic movement. The government of Assam followed a policy of appeasement with a population centric attitude to settle the autonomy question of the Sonowāl Kachāris of Assam. However, it is to be noted here that at the same time, the Sonowāl Kachāris unlike the Bodos of Assam have not denied being a part of the greater Assamese community. The gradual growth of such a limited ethnic consciousness gives a new dimension to the socio-political life of the sub-community. Medini Choudhary, an ethnic historian of repute of North-east India said that the Sonowāl Kachāri community came forward to form a political platform under the name of the ‘Tribal league’ of Assam. The leaders including Heramba Nath Borah, Rajanikanta Hazarika, Bidhan Borah, Jogendra Nath Hazarika, Dandidhar Phatuwali, Mitharam Borah and others played a leading role in the ‘league politics’ at that time. It was the first non-political social organization among the greater Kachāri community of Assam, where the Sonowāl Kachāris played a decisive role. Their activities were institutionally carried forward from the period 1921 to 2005. Therefore this study has concentrated on this period of time.

1.2 Ethnonationalism in the global context:

Ethnonationalism assumed prominence to carve out some new countries under certain sections of the Paris Peace Treaty of 1919. It increased the expectations of many other ethnic groups to achieve their cherished goal of the establishment of a new


21 The Paris Peace Treaty signed in 1919 after the First World War. The fall of the big four empires, the Bolshevick revolution in Russia, Wilson’s principle of self determination etc. gave a new vent to the question of nationalism, and everywhere oppressed races demanded national states of their own. Therefore the Paris Peace Conference felt the necessity of creating some new states like Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, etc. out of the territories of Turkey, Russia, Austria and Hungary by applying the principle of self-determination. Vide A.C Roy: International Relations Since 1919, The World Press Private Limited, Kolkata, 2010, p.12
country on the basis of ethnic identity. The upsurge of ethnonationalism, in the past few decades, has been infiltrated to such a micro level that scholars have begun to question if nationalism as an ideology will remain acceptable as it seems to be losing its grip over the diverse populations. Ethno-nationalism has a sweeping appeal across continents and modern developed nations like Canada, Burundi and Rwanda, the democratic United Kingdom and Belgium and the authoritarian Iraq and Democratic Republic of Congo. Fernand de Varennes examines the root causes of the ethnic conflict and ethnonationalistic movements in the global context and gives a list of the countries accordingly with causes. These countries are Indonesia, Kyrgyzstan, Maldova, Niger, Pakistan, Philippines, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Turkey, United Kingdom, and Yugoslavia. The bifurcation of the socialist democratic country of Czechoslovakia into two parts viz Czech and Slovak is also a result of such ethnonationalistic movements in Europe. The example of Yugoslavia is also important from that point of view. The outcome of two new nation states from the heart of Yugoslavia is significant in the sense that both the countries of Bosnia and Herzegovina were declared as independent states subsequently. The Serbs and Croats of that country interestingly belong to the Southern Salve and both speak the same language i.e. Serb-Croatian. And the Serbs, who constituted 31.3 percent of the population in Bosnia, boycotted the referendum declared by the Bosnian President.

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22 www.idsa.india.org; O.N Mehrotra: Ethno-Nationalism in the Contemporary World, Time of Access: 26th April 2016, 9.36 a.m
23 Gurnam Singh(ed), op.cit, P.xv
24 He is the one of the world leading experts and special rapporteur of UN, on the human rights of minorities and has focused particularly on the issues surrounding languages. www.linkedin.com, Time of access 8.56 pm, 29th August, 2017
25 A.S Narang, op.cit, PP.40-44
26 www.liverpool.ac.uk, Time of access: 8.58 pm, 29th August, 2017. In January 1992, the Badinter Arbitration commission attached to the European commission peace conference recommended that a referendum should take place before any further consideration could be given to according recognition to Bosnia Herzegovina. On February 29th March 1, 1992, Bosnia was declared as an independent state from Yugoslavia.
Alija Izetbegovic. Thus a number of ethnic groups have emerged who achieved independence and sovereign status or at least gained regional autonomy. In this way the perceived form of ethnonationalism led to the birth of a number of new nation states in world, which influenced and encouraged other countries.

1.3 In the context of India:

In India, the origin of ethnonationalism can be seen from the flag-end of colonial rule; it became distinct in the post Independence period. Here ethnicity has worked as a major tool of socio-political movements. Further, it has paved the way for reallocation and redistribution of resources and a share in and access to political powers in the state. The direct intervention of India in resolving the ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka was enshrined in an agreement signed by Rajiv Gandhi and Junius Jayewardene on July 29, 1987. But the Indian Armed forces were not successful in resolving the ethnic crisis in Sri Lanka as they were in the former East Pakistan.27 Within the Indian democracy, similar movements are seen particularly in the case of Punjab, where a section of people under the leadership of one Bhindranwale attempted to organize Sikhs with the demand of an independent state namely Khalistan; this was the best example of ethnonationalism in India.28 Sanjib Baruah is of the view that although the Sikh movement came to focus on linguistic issues in the 1950s the roots of the problem in Punjab were religious differences, compounded by

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27 India was divided into two, viz India and Pakistan at the time of her independence in 1947. The Eastern part and western part of Pakistan remained in the same country on the religious point of view. But the same religion i.e. Islam could not keep them united and on the question of language (Bengali vs Urdu) and on the plea of economic exploitation, East Pakistan declared war against West Pakistan and for her interest on the border problems India extended all possible help to East Pakistan and thus helped to a large extent in winning her Independence in 1971.

Gurnam Singh (ed).: op.cit, pp.247-301;

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the Sikh community’s attachment to the land and its desire to dominate the region in political terms. Similarly the formation of Bombay and Gujarat in 1960 was also an outcome of ethnonationalism based on linguistic issues. The problem of Kashmir has its basis in religion and appears as a threat to the Indian territories. Taking the advantage of the Indian Government’s promise on certain autonomy given long ago in 1947, a section of people under the patronage of the Pakistani Government has begun raising their demands for Independence. This secessionist group thinks and believes itself to be Pakistani and threatens the local pundits, while the other is for more autonomy. The Indian government follows a similar policy towards Punjab and Kashmir stressing upon ‘resistance to autonomy demands, cautious negotiations and mild repression, the use of force to tire out the militants and finally return to normal political life’. In the North-eastern part of the Indian sub-continent the Nagas under the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN formed in 1980 and NSCN-Khaplang formed in 1988), the Mizos under the Mizo National Front (MNF formed in 1966), a section of Manipuris and also the militant groups of the Assam United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA formed 1979), National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB formed in 1986) demand a separate sovereign political identity for their cultural, linguistic, racial, regional and geo-political uniqueness. Likewise, the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF formed in 1980) in Darjeeling also demands separate states from West Bengal. Recently the formation of the new states of Jharkhand and Telengana is a result of ethnonationalism in India.

29 Sanjib Baruah(ed), op.cit, p.54
30 ibid, pp.48-54, Very often it is ignored the sufferings of the Kasmiri Pandits who were compelled to leave their own land in afraid of their lives and properties at the hands of a major section of Islamic followers.
31 ibid, p.57
32 Telengana emerged as an independent state in 2013 and Jharkhand in 2000. The formations of these new states are also based on ethnonationalism.
1.4 Ethnonationalism in the context of North-East India:

In the debate on the positive and negative connotation of the ‘national’ and ‘global’ we are to face in North-East India the forces of ‘sub-national’ or ethno-national. The so called ‘nation-state’ system is threatened from above by the forces of globalization and from below by the ethnic forces which question the power, authority and even the very existence of the concept of nation-state.\(^{33}\) The north-eastern region is also a complex zone where we witness the multi ethnic movements either for autonomy or for independence. A sense of deprivation and a threat to culture have induced the ethnic groups of this region to identify their interest in ethnic terms. All of the states of North-East India have had movements more or less ‘that sought political independence or greater autonomy and that have turned violent’\(^ {34}\) in some cases\(^ {35}\). Here the question of ethnic identity has acquired prominence on various grounds such as ethnic history, geography, culture, religion and finally the behaviour of the Indian state that has been striving to a large extent to find a military solution to the problem of ethnic conflicts. Therefore in this region ethnonationalism refers to the

\(^{33}\) Mahadev Chakravarti: *H.L Gupta Endowment Lecture (4) Social change in North East India, Partition, Ethnicity, Revivalism, Globalization*, NEIHA, Shillong, 2008, p.4

\(^{34}\) Sanjib Baruah(ed), op.cit, p.59

For details please consult V. Venkata Rao: *A Century of Tribal Politics in North East India, 1874-1974*, S Chand & Company Ltd, New Delhi, 1975

\(^{35}\) The birth of Mizoram, Meghalaya, and Nagaland is the best example in North-East India. The secessionist tendencies of the *Karbi*, *Dimäśä* and *Bodos* of Assam also experienced the violent events that created tension in Assam. It has further developed as the outcome of autonomy demand movements of different plains tribes of Assam including the *Sonowâl Kachâris* and other. Recently six communities including the *Ahoms*, *Moran*, *Matak*, *Konch Rajbongshi*, *Tea tribes*, and *Chutiâ* have also moved along the same track of other autonomy movements.

For details please read: P.S Dutta: *Autonomy movement in Assam (Documents)*, Omsons publications, Delhi, 1993.

phenomenon of political movements launched by the different ethnic groups for establishing their ethnic identity. Ethnic identity assertion has taken many forms, including agitations for getting economic benefits and jobs, movement for share in political power and autonomy, demand for recognition of language and religion and to some extent equal social status. There are five different parameters of identity consolidation and formation namely, tribe, caste, language, territory, and religion. Ethnic assertion literally means a movement to assert identity as well as the standpoint of a physically and culturally tied ethnic group. It is a way to provide a stand to a group of people having their own culture and thought or feeling to describe themselves as they are within a similar cultural identity. When a minority ethnic group demands for more rights or creation of autonomous area or administrative unit or recognition of its language as national or official, it should not be considered as a move toward the weakening of the state’s authority or a move toward its secession from the common identity.\(^{36}\) However, it happened in Assam when the Bodos demanded that their language be a medium of instruction, declaring they were no longer Assamese in the real sense. In the North-Eastern States the Indian Government signed Accords with different states; ones which ‘contain specific provisions relating to ending the insurgencies and rehabilitant militants and agitators’\(^ {37}\) including all protection of ethnic identity with the formation of autonomous councils.

1.5 In the context of Assam:

In Assam too the ethnic conflict and ethnic consciousness contain the seeds of insurgency and secessionist movements like the other parts of the world in general

\(^{36}\) www.ukessys.com, O.N Mehrotra, op.cit, Time of access: 8 p.m, 26 May, 2015

\(^{37}\) Sanjib Baruah (ed), op.cit, p.60
and India in particular. In the context of regional tensions prevailing in Assam it can be divided into two broad categories viz (a) Assamese vs Bengali and (b) Plains vs Hills. The causes of tension are historical. The ethnic Assamese have to fight with the Bengali for language and territory whereas the tribal ethnic communities have to fight for their identity and autonomy against the ethnic Assamese. So here, we find a critical scene of ethnonationalism in different forms. It is observed by Sanjib Baruah and argued that the term little nationalism or sub-nationalism can be applied to the Assamese nationalism that has grown during the anti-foreigner agitation in Assam.

The Assamese–Bengali ethnic conflict cannot be separated from the process of the development of the Assamese nationality. The formation of various tribal ethnic socio-political organizations in the first half of the twentieth century led to the rise of secessionist movements in Assam which the Assamese leadership failed to perceive.

38 Here we may mention the different militant groups demanding territories from India and a sovereign status. Some of these groups are the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), the National Democratic Front of Bodo (NDFB) and the Karbi National Liberation Front (KNLF). However these groups do not get the full support from the inhabitants of the territory.

39 File no: CMS, 256/62, Subject: National Integration and Regionalism, 2nd Meeting of the Committee held at Madras.

40 Sanjib Baruah used the term ‘Sub-nationalism’ first in M. Crawford Young’s sense, to refer to a pattern of politicization and mobilization that meets some of the criteria of nationalism, but is not committed firmly to the end of separate statehood.

41 The Bengali-Assamese conflict in Assam can be traced back to the days of the British in Assam. At the dawn of the British rule, the Bengali ‘Babu’ became successful in misleading the administration in displacing the Assamese language from the official use and as the medium of instruction in 1836C.E. However through the initiatives of the Christian missionaries, the Assamese language regained its old place. The conflict was reopened in other forms when the State Language Act of 1960 was passed. A section of Bengali speaking people lost no opportunity to enter into the stage and attempted to create an atmosphere of mistrust an adversarial attitude between the Assamese speaking people and all other tribal people of Assam. Likewise in the illegal migrant deportation movement (1979-1985 C.E), a section of Bengali people attempted to humiliate the Assamese. Very recently the attempt of the central government of India and Assam government to rehabilitate the Bengali Hindus who immigrated illegally to Assam is vehemently protested by the Nationalist groups of Assam.
With its new found chauvinism, the Assamese nationality not only ignored the grievances of such groups, it even brushed aside their cultural aspirations. According to P.R Brass, in a community the number of ethnic groups may increase even in modern times. But an ethnic group may not emerge as another separate ethnic group unless it has developed a ‘subjective self-consciousness, a claim to status and recognition, either as a superior group or as a group at least equal to other groups. Ethnicity is to ethnic category what class consciousness is to class. Therefore in Assam a number of tribal ethnic groups tried to reestablish themselves separately within the greater Assamese community due to various causes. And perhaps Assam presents the most complex ethnic problems some of which were solved through reorganization of the states in the region and autonomy given to them. A larger group of Hindu Assamese who are also politically dominant became suspicious towards Muslim and Hindu Bengalis. The former are also represented by the Bodo, Karbis, Mishings and other plains tribes. On the other hand the non-Bodo tribes of the Bodo dominated areas are also living there without being able to breathe freely. Sajal Nag also expressed his view regarding the rise and growth of tribal ethnic movements in Assam, opining that the major secessionist movement in Assam was launched by the Bodos. They declared themselves as a full-fledged nationality, demanding complete autonomy by dividing Assam ‘fifty-fifty’ and launched a violent movement for self rule. The Bodos are followed by the other branches of greater Kachāri tribe including Sonowāl Kachāris, Mishings, Tiwās, Rabhās, Kārbis, and Dimāsās to attain

44 Sanjib Baruah (ed), op.cit, p.58
autonomy respectively. Later on the arrogance and chauvinistic attitude of the caste Hindu Assamese and a need for ethnic identity and political autonomy led the Ahoms to break away from the greater Assamese community.\(^{45}\) They are followed by the Chutiās, Kocḥ –Rajbanshis, Morān-Mataks and Adivashis or Tea-tribes all demanding ethnic identity with autonomy.

With this background, the autonomy movement of the Sonowāl Kachāris of Tinsukia district may be studied.

**1.6 Brief Introduction of Tinsukia District:**

Tinsukia is the 23\(^{rd}\) district of Assam created in 1989 C.E. It is located at latitude 27.23’ to 27.48 N; longitude 95.22’ to 95.38E Situated in the extreme east of Assam and on the south bank of the River Brahmaputra, the Tinsukia district shares borders with the districts of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam in the following ways: Lohit district in the East, Dibrugarh district in the West, East Siang & Lower Dibang Valley in the North and Changlang district in the South. The district occupies an area of 3790\(^{46}\) square k.m. It is the 8\(^{th}\) largest district of Assam with a population of 11,50,062.\(^{47}\)

The area under study was known by different names at different times. It was Bengmorā during the time of Matak king Sarbananda Singh.\(^{48}\) Before that it was

\(^{45}\) Sajal Nag, op.cit, p.259

\(^{46}\) Anil Baruah (ed): Asamar Zīlasamuh,(In Assamese) Assamese Language and Software Development, Guwahati, 4\(^{th}\) edition 2014, pp.7-11

Sipra Sen: Tribes and Caste of Assam, Gyan Publishing House, New Delhi, 1999, p.116

www.tin.nic.com, Time of access: 7.30 p.m, 4\(^{th}\) January, 2015.

\(^{47}\) Report of 2001 census, Assam, series-19

\(^{48}\) S.L Baruah: Last days of Ahom monarchy ( A history of Assam from 1769 to 1826), Munshiram Manoharlal publications, Delhi, 1993, pp.162-163

Sarbananda Singh was the founder of Mattack Rajya at Bengmara; he was a Chutiā by caste. He issued coins dated 1794 and 1795 where he assumed the title ‘Swargadev’. According to APB (Asamar Padya Buranji) he was an Ahom. Padmanath Nath Gohain Barua says that he was a Morān. But Lankeswar Gohain,a direct descendent of Sarbananda Singh claims that they are Chutiās of the Buruk clan. Although imitating the Ahoms they adopted the title ‘Gohain’
known as *Changmāi pathār* and *Bosā pathār*. The district has become one of the most important areas of trade and commerce from the time of colonial rule. Prior to that on the eve of the coming of the Ahoms the area was mostly covered with thick forest and the inhabitants were mostly *Morān, Borāhi, Chutiā* and *Kachāri*. During the early days of Ahoms, the first Ahom king *Sukapha* tactfully and carefully handled these aboriginal people and included them in his kingdom. Thus the Ahom army was strengthened with elephants supplied by the *Morāns* of this locality. *Morāns* were also appointed in some important posts of the Ahom army. The *Morāns* have a *khel* known as ‘*Hātisungi*’ who captured elephants and the office of *Hātibaruah* was created in the erstwhile Ahom administration. With the outbreak of the *Moāmoriyā* rebellion in 1769, the Ahom-Morān relation deteriorated and as a

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50 Sukapha entered Assam in the 13th century AD, from southern China via Myanmar, and established his capital on Charaideo hill in the Sibsagarh district of Assam in 1228. He won over the *Morān* and *Barāhis* by a twofold policy of arms and conciliation. And thus he founded the Ahom kingdom to rule Assam for about six hundred years. For details please consult Edward. Gait: *A History of Assam*, EBH publishers, Guwahati, Indian reprint 2008.

51 Rajmohan Nath opines that the *Morāns* were very likely a remnant of the ancient Austric Moriya clan intermixed with the Bodos. For details please consult R.M Nath: *The Background of Assamese Culture*, Dutta Baruah & Co, Gauhati, 1st edition 1948.

Sristidhar Dutta: presidential address, 27th Session of NEIHA, Mizoram University, Aizawal, Proceeding volume, 2006, p.9. He had mentioned that they are expert catchers and trainers of wild elephants.

52 Francis Hamilton: *An Account of Assam*, Department of Historical and Antiquarian studies, Guwahati, 1963,p.23

53 Moamariya rebellion was one of the culminating event in the history of Assam under the Ahom.Details may be found in E.Gait,op.cit, pp.195-229 And S.L Baruah, op.cit, pp.46-83 and S.Dutta: *The Mataks, the Morans and the Moamoria rebellion*, Omsons publication, New Delhi, 1996. And Amaledu Guha: *Vaisnabbadar para Mayamoriya Bidroholi*, (In Assamese), Students stores, Guwahati, 1993and M.Neog: *Socio-Political Events in Assam Leading to the Militancy of the Mayamariya Vaishnavas*, Center for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 1982 pp,72-73
result in the year 1788, Sarbananda Singha founded the Mattock kingdom with its capital at Rangāgarā. Later on he had his capital transferred to Bengmārā in the year 1791. From then onwards, the territory has come to be known as Muttock Rājya. Following the orders of Sarbananda Singha his minister Gopinath Barbarouah dug a triangular pond in Bengmārā which is known as Tinkunia Pukhuri. In the year 1805, there was again a fresh uprising of the Morān Moamoria east of the Dibru river, whose chief, Matibor son of Sarbananda Singha had established himself at Bengmara and ‘had assumed the title of Borsenapati’. Then kuboolyut or Sanad was signed between Matibor Borsenapati and British through which the Muttock Raja agreed to followed the Company rule.

The British Government made certain administrative and territorial reconstructions in upper Assam with the aim of exploiting the natural resources of this area. As a result a part of the Muttock territory was annexed by the British in 1839 and included with the erstwhile Lakhimpur district. In 1842 on the death of Borsenapati the remaining part was also annexed. This territory became one of the important zones of British Administration after the discovery of tea, coal and oil. The British authority

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54 Sarat kumar phukan: Opoja Mati, (In Assamese), published by Supriti Phukan, Guwahati, 1st publication 2007 and second publication 2010, p.436s
55 Ibid p. 436
56 The location of Mattack is described as ‘A tract of land lying between the Brahmaputra and the Buri Dihing , and bounded as the east by an imaginary line drawn due south from Sadiya’ Vide, Imperial Gazetteer of India, vol-16, p.120
57 Edward Gait, op.cit, p.228,
59 S.Dutta, op.cit, p.23
60 Imperial Gazetteer of India, vol-16,p.121
established their district headquarters at Dibrumukh. Later on this ‘Dibrumukh was christened as Dibrugarh on the creation of a garh or fort in 1841 as a protective measure against the refractory Muttaks’. Dibrugarh was a sub-division of Lakhimpur district up to the year 1971. In the year 1884 the Dibru Sadiya Rail line was constructed and a station was set up near the Tinkunia pukhuri and named after the pukhuri. Since then the town was popularly known as Tinsukia. In the year 1989, on September 29th, a separate district with five assembly constituencies’ viz., Tinsukia, Digboi, Margherita, Doomdooma and Sadiya was formed and named as Tinsukia.

The district Headquarters from the state capital is 492 kilometers away. The two Lok Sabha constituencies viz., Dibrugarh and Lakhimpur fall under the district. The district consists of three sub-divisions and four revenue circles and seven Development blocks. There are total 1146 villages. Of them 78 are fully inhabited by Sonowal Kachari tribes. The district is enriched with a number of industries like Oil, Tea and Coal and with some private industries like the personal product factory of Hindustan Lever Ltd. in Doomdooma, Digboi Carbon factory and Bharat Ferrus

61 Chidananda Baruah, op.cit, p.54
63 www.dibrugarhonline.in: Time of access.12.45 pm, 3rd January, 2015. Dibrugrh served as the primary military base and a transit camp for the evacuees from Burma during the World War II. Dibrugarh was a part of Tinsukia district and in 1971 it became a full-fledged district of Assam. Chidananda Baruah, op.cit, pp.40-67 and pp.86-119
64 According to the satellite division of Sonowal Kachari autonomous council, there are 78 villages of Sonowal Kachari in the district. But it is found to be 85 in the list of District Statistical department of Tinsukia. The difference is one is for the political division of the council and the other is the administrative division of the government. Moreover the autonomous council proposed the entry of new villages within the jurisdiction of the Sonowal Kachari Autonomous Council.
industries Ltd. Like the state, the district is also a bouquet of beautiful tribal communities, such as the Singphoes\textsuperscript{65}, Tea tribes\textsuperscript{66}, Missing\textsuperscript{67}, Deori\textsuperscript{68}, Naga\textsuperscript{69}, and Khamti. Besides these the district have a concentration of a large number of Ahom\textsuperscript{70} and Morān-Muttack\textsuperscript{71} people. Moreover Chutía\textsuperscript{72}, Kalita, Bengalis, Biharis, Marwaris, live in the district. Religiously most of them are the followers of Hinduism while some others follow Christianity and Islam. Generally in Assam and particularly in Tinsukia, we have seen a multi-tribe, multi-caste, multi-cultural, and multi-lingual society although the Sonowāl Kachāri tribe and their culture play a dominative role over all the others.

1.7 Statement of the problem:

As has been discussed elsewhere that ethnonationalism is a phenomenon of the 20\textsuperscript{th} century. The feeling of deprivation and discrimination along with the aspiration of


\textsuperscript{66} For details please consult: Sushil Kurmi: \textit{Chāh Gasar Māje Māje}, Kiran prakashan, Dhemaji, 2008

Deben Tasa: \textit{Asamar Chāh Janagusthi: Ek porichoi}, in Basanta Kumar Doley (ed): Asamar Janajati, Reception committee, 70\textsuperscript{th} session Asam Sahitya Sabha, Dhemaji, 2009, p.99-148


\textsuperscript{68} For details please consult: B.N Bordoloi, G.C Sharma Thakur, M.C Saikia: \textit{Tribes of Assam, part-I}, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, first edition 1987, pp.22-35

Sasidhar Deori: \textit{Deori Janagusthi āru Jiban dhārā} in Basanata kumar Doley, op.cit, pp.185-209

\textsuperscript{69} Details may be found in B.B Kumar: \textit{Naga Identity}, Concept publishing company, New Delhi, 2005.

\textsuperscript{70} Edward Gait, op.cit, 2008


political share in the state or country pushed the tribal\textsuperscript{73} ethnic communities to promote and project a movement for their own ethnic identity with territory. Further the socio-political and economic consciousness of the tribal ethnic communities helps them in the projection of ethnic-nationalism, which is also termed as ethnonationalism. In search of the roots of ethnicity and ethnonationalism among the Sonowāl Kachāris, the study of traditional socio-economic and cultural life is also important because these are the primordial elements of the community.

In the development of ethnic consciousness in Assam, the Sonowāl Kachāris of Tinsukia district played a vital role. In fact, Tinsukia district was one of the epicenters of ethnic consciousness in Assam. They have contributed a lot to the formation of Assamese society through their socio-economic and political activities. The youths of the community feel that they are lagging behind in the expected state of economic

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
    \item According to ‘The Compact edition of the Oxford Dictionary, Tribe means ‘A group of persons forming a community and claiming descent from a common ancestor; or a particular race of recognized ancestry; a family’. Vol-ii, Oxford University Press, 1971, p.3400
    
    S.L Doshi & P.C Jain: Social Anthropology, Rawat publications, Jaipur, 2011, pp.359-368
    
    Actually the notion does not have its origin in India. It is in all respects, a colonial construct. The term tribe is used in a different context in Europe. It is associated with a territory, a language or a common name.
    
    The term is derived from a Latin root, and the Middle East term is tribuz.
    
    According to social anthropologist Morgan ‘A tribe is a completely organized society, therefore, a form of social organization capable of reproducing itself’ And according to Marshall Sahlins ‘A tribe is of the order of a large collection of bands but it is not simply a collection of bands….there is a kingdom also which coordinates economic, social and religious activities and redistributed a large part of the production of local community’
    
    The official definition of tribe: ‘Article 366(25) of the Constitution of India has defined Scheduled Tribes as ‘such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purpose of this Constitution’ By the Scheduled Tribes Order, 1950, issued by the President in exercise of the powers conferred by Clause (1) of Article 232 of the Constitution of the India, 312 tribes have been declared to be Scheduled Tribes. Under this order the Sonowāl Kachāris of Assam is also declared as Scheduled tribe.
    
    Also see Census report of 1951 & The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes lists Modification Order of 1956
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
development; while the elderly people are of the view that their social institutions including the social and family life have deviated from that of their traditional one. Hence, they are in a great confusion, feeling that the Sonowäl Kachāris are losing their own identity. This leads them to adopt such measures to revive their ethnicity with the help of various socio-political and cultural organizations. The various socio-political organizations of the community help in the growth of ethnic consciousness which later develops into a sense of ethnonationalism. It is also noticed that the Kachāri tribes of Assam have undergone significant socio-cultural and politico-economic changes during the period of our study. The projected period from the year 1921 to 2005 is marked by a gradual progress of ethnic identity and organizational development among the various tribal ethnic communities of Assam in general. Certainly, these organizational developments influenced and pushed forward the Sonowäl Kachāris of Assam with their goal of attaining autonomy which they obtained in the year 2005. Therefore, the study will try to highlight the growth and development of ethnonationalistic attitudes with special references to some major issues among the Sonowäl Kachāris of Assam in general and Tinsukia district in particular.

1.8 A brief introduction to the Sonowäl Kachāris of Assam:

The Sonowäl Kachāris of Tinsukia district are a branch of the greater Kachāri74 people. The early references of the Kachāri people are found in many ancient

74 In a number of Copperplate grant inscriptions issued by the Ahom rulers in different times to different religious and charitable institutions, the term ‘Kachāri’ is found to be mentioned. For instance we may refer to the grant issued by Laxmi Singha to the Begena-āti-satrā in 1699 saka and Chandrakanta Singha to the Āmiāti-satra in 1742 saka, plate no 82 & -153 respectively. In this context details may be found in Maheswar Neog (ed): Prāchya-Sāsanāvali, Publication board of Assam, Guwahati, 1974, pp. 65-67 & p.146.
The Kachāris belong to the Indo-Mongoloid stock. They are also known in various terms and ways in Assam viz the Kiratas, the melechas, the ‘Kachāris’ etc. The Kachāris in Assam are also known with a prefix indicating their sub-branch viz the Bodo Kachāri, Dimāsā Kachāri, Mech Kachāri, Sonowāl Kachāri, Tiwā Kachāri, Rābhā Kachāri, Thengāl Kachāri, Saraniā Kachāri, and so on. By whatever name these people are called, no doubt they are people sprouting from the same ethnic root. Among them, the Sonowāl Kachāri is one of the major ethnic groups of Assam. They are scattered in seven districts of upper Assam, viz Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Dhemaji and Lakhimpur.

The Indo-Mongoloid group of people who spoke Tibetan, Chinese and Burmese are divided into the following groups, viz Tibetan branch, Himalayan branch, Assam-Burmese branch and North-Assam branch. And the Kachāris of Assam belongs to the ‘ Tibeto-Burmese linguistic group. And the Bodo group included Bara or Bodo, Mech, Lālung, Dimāsā, Hojāi, Gāro, Rābhā, Tripura, Konch, Chutiā, Morāns of Assam. Vide, G.A Grierson: ‘Linguistic survey of India’ vol: iii, Tibeto-Burman Family, part-ii, Low price publication, Delhi, 1st publication 1903, Reproduced 1990, 1994

Nandeswar Kachāri: Sonowāl Kachāri Samājam–Sanskriti Āru Bhāsār Parishay, Tribal research department, Sonowāl Kachāri Autonomous Council, Moranhat, 2011, p.15

The census report of 2001 is as follows, Vide, Report of 2001 census, Assam, series-19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total population of Assam</th>
<th>Total population of Tinsukia district</th>
<th>Total ST population of Assam</th>
<th>Total ST population of Tinsukia district</th>
<th>Total Sonowāl Kachāri population of Tinsukia district</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26,655,528</td>
<td>11,50,062</td>
<td>3,308,570</td>
<td>67,234</td>
<td>25,964</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Sonowāl Kachāri population of Assam: Collected from census reports of India.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>46,758 9 (As Kachāri)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>3,42,297 (As Kachāri)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>4,28,733 (As Kachāri)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>2,71,524 (As Kachāri in Brahmaputra Valley and N.C Hills)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>2,35,192 Kachāri including Sonowāl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>1,98,619 Kachāri including Sonowāl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Not Found (Census was not conducted due to Assam movement)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>2,51,727 Kachāri including Sonowāl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2,35,881 Kachāri including Sonowāl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>253,344 Kachāri including Sonowāl</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the *Mahabharata* a reference is made to the army of Bhagadutta, king of *Pragjyotishpur* being comprised of *Kiratas*... who are distinguished by their small stature and are of yellow complexion. The *Mahabharata* mentions that *Kiratas* lived on the edge of the Himalaya. In the *Ramayana*, the *Kiratas* had been described as shining in gold. S.K Chatterji mentions that the *Kirara* is for the first time found in the *Yajur Veda*, then in *Atharva Veda.* Further, he said that when the epics were taking shape, in between 500B.C to 400 A.D, particularly in the pre-Christian centuries, the *Kiratas* had occupied the southern tracts of the Himalayas and the whole North-eastern India. Quoting the *Yajur Veda*, B.M Das writes “The *Kiratas* were considered to be cave dwellers; in all probability they lived in hills and forest, while in the *Atharva Veda* there is a mention of a young *Kirata* girl digging on the high ridges of the hills with shovels wrought of gold which suggests that they had some knowledge of herbal medicine and use of gold. The *Kalika Purana* also describes that the word *Kirata* stands for the modern names *Kirati* and *Kiranti*, which means ‘a native of Kirantdes or mountainous country lying between the Dud-Kosi and

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Also see, S.K Chatterji: *Kirata Jana Kirti*, Asiatic Society, Calcutta, 1974, p.33


80 N.N Basu and B.M Das also agree with the remarks of Ramayana. For details please see N.N Basu: *Social history of Kamarupa*, Calcutta, 1922, p.92 And H.K Barpujari(ed), op.cit, p.18

81 S.k Chaterji, op.cit,p.27

82 H.K Barpujari(ed), op.cit, p.18
the Kaski river in Nepal.\(^{83}\) The Kurma Puran also says that ‘all the non-Aryan tribes of eastern India were referred to under a group of domination as Kiratas and those in western India as Yavanas…in the present context the word appears to denote all the races with the Burmese type of features along the eastern limits of India’.\(^{84}\)

The Periplus of Erythean Sea, a Greek work of the first century A.D refers to ‘a Kirrhadae in the hills of Assam and Burma, which are in all probability the Kiratas, who extended their territory as far as Bengal and Orissa’.\(^{85}\) If traditional accounts are to be believed’ Mahiranga, the earliest Danava or non Aryan ruler (of Pragiyotisha Kamarupa) is said to have ruled over Kiratas subjects’.\(^{86}\) R.M Nath summarized ‘the Kiratas therefore in a general term referring to the people of Mongolian origin and it refers specially to the Bodos’ a branch of the greater Kachāris.\(^{87}\) S.K Chaterji in this context concludes “The Kiratas are known to the Hindu world as a group of peoples whose original home was in the Himalayan slopes and in the mountain of the east, in Assam particularly ,who were yellow in colour and presented a distinct type of culture. They had spread all over the plains of Bengal up to the sea”.\(^{88}\) G.P Singh adheres to this view while contradicting some views of S.K Chatterji, declaring that all the propositions as made by S.K Chatterji are misleading to the studies of Kiratas in ancient India.\(^{89}\) R.M Nath and Bhaben Narzi opine that the Kiratas came to be

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83 Baikanta Kakati: The Mother Goddess Kamakhya, Publication Board Of Assam, Guwahati, 2004, p.8
84 ibid: p.9
85 ibid: pp.18-19,S.K.Chatterji, op.cit,pp.34-35;
86 S.K Bhuyan: Kachāri Buranjī, Department of Historical and antiquarian studies, Gauhati, 2010, p.1
87 R.M Nath, op.cit, pp.13-15; He wrote that the author of the Periplus makes no mention of the present Assam area in particular, but before reaching the Ganget delta, the Greek navigator met with flat nosed Kirrhades and other tribal mans.
88 S.K Chatterji, op.cit, p.35
89 He is of the view that the Kiratas tribes having the pre-Aryan settlements were the original inhabitants of India…Most of the Kirata tribes of northern and eastern India, are of Indian origin. Vide G.P Singh: Kiratas in Ancient India, The Historical Perspective, Gian Publishing House, New Delhi, 1990, p.84
known as *Kachāri* in subsequent times. Bishnu Prasad Rabha cultural doyen of Assam advanced a theory that the *Kachāris* were the most bitter enemy of the *Koches*, so they were proud to call themselves enemy of the *Koches* (*Koch –Ari*-meaning enemy). R.M Nath demurs with it saying that the *Koches* are not, but the *Ahoms* were known as bitter enemies of the *Kachāris*.

The words *Kirata* and *Kachāris* are almost synonymous, perhaps that may be the reason of using the two names by Sankardeva in ‘Srimadbhagavata’.

Gait however says that the *Mech* people of Assam came to be known as *Khasari* or *Kachāri* from their original habitat at *Kāchār* region which is identified with Nepal Terai stretching between the *Brahamaputra* and *Koshi* rivers. According to him the word *Khasār* is derived from a Sanskrit word meaning a ‘bordering region’. But when the *Kiratas* came to be known as *Kachāris* is not known. In fact the word *Kachāri* as community is found mentioned in the *Buranjis* with the coming of the *Ahoms* under the leadership of *Sukapha* in the early 13th century A.D. In the *Deodhai Asam Buranji* a legend is found regarding the origin and birth of the *Kachāri* which is also prevalent among the *Sonowāl Kachāris* as well as among the *Chutiās*. The significance of the story

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90 Bhaben Narzi: *Boro Kachārir Samāj āru Sanskrīti*, (In Assamese) Bina Library, Guwahati, 1985, pp. 1-6. In his book he Deals with the origin of the *Kirates* in the Indian background based on myths and legends prevailed among them about the origin and creation of mankind. And also see R.M Nath, op.cit, pp.13-15

91 R.M Nath, op.cit, pp.13-15

92 Sankardeva was the great saint and socio-religious reformer and founder of neo-vaishnavism, Assam. He wrote in *Srimadbhagavata*, second skandha, verse, 474,P.38, that

‘*Kirāta-Kachāri* Khāsi-Gāro Miri
Yāvana Kanaka Gowāla
Asama muluka Dhoba ye Turaka
Kabācha Mleccha Chandāla.’

93 Edward. Gait, op.cit, p.299

indicates the same origin. S.K Bhuyan also raises the question of where the Chutiaś were when the Kachāris exercised their domination at Sadiya.\textsuperscript{95} Thus, we can form an opinion regarding the origin of the Kachāri agreeing with S.K.Chatterji, that the name ‘Kirata is a Sanskritization of some Sino-Tibetan tribal names and can be identified with the names of the Kirantis, a Tibeto-Burman people living in East Nepal, which is quite possible\textsuperscript{96}.

Thus, it is found from the above discussion that the Sonowāl Kachāris are one of the sub-tribes of the Bodo Kachāri group of people. They were regarded as one of the major tribes of modern Assam. As a branch of the greater Kachāri group; it is natural that the origin of the Sonowāl Kachāri people also lies in obscurity. Hence to trace their origins we have to depend to a large extent upon the myths, legends and folk-tales of the community.

According to an ancient tradition, the earliest Kachāris of Sadiya came down from the Northern mountains through snowy terrain and settled down in the foothills between the Dihang and the Dijao or Di-ju (literally, the Red river-the Louhitya). It is said that these Kachāris carried with them mainly smoked beef which they buried under the snow at different places all along the trail, hoping to subsist on the stored food during a probable return journey to their northern homeland.

Later a kingdom was founded by one Manik, the youngest of four brothers who is said to have met the divine ancestor and ancestress of the tribe-Chi Brāi (first old man) and Chi-Brui (first old women); called Brai-Brui or Burūburi dimunitively, in a hut at

\textsuperscript{95} S.K Bhuyan: Kachāri Buranji, Department of Historical and Antiquarian studies Gauhati, 4th edition 2010, p.viii.
\textsuperscript{96} S.K Chatterji,op.cit, p.28
a remote forest beyond mountains and rivers which they had to reverse in search of
the twin deities. As the story goes, Burāburi kept the brothers in their woody hut with
love and care, instructing them in spiritual as well as worldly matters. While the three
erlder brothers failed to go through the discourse at the fireplace at night, falling
asleep, the youngest Manik sat awake to receive the teaching. Pleased with him,
Burāburi ordained Manik as the king –cum-preceptor of the Kachāris as ‘Bāithou’ or
‘Rājāguru’, as Manik’s descendents succeeding him on the hallowed seat, regarded as
his re-incarnation, would be called ever afterwards. The present Bāithou (Rājguru),
one of Manik’s progeny (of the Bāithou clan), is installed through a coronation
ceremony (Pātot Bahowā), and is the tradition of the first day of Bāithou puja.97

There is another tradition prevalent among the Kachāris which is also believed to be a
tradition of the Sonowāl Kachāris. This tradition speaks of the ‘prolonged struggle
between the Chutiā Kachāris and the Ahoms’ which had separated the Northern and
Southern sections of the Kachāri race. The story is as follows: ‘Long, ago the Dimāsā
fought against a very powerful tribe (the Ahom), and being beaten in a great pitched
battle, the king with all his forces retreated. But presently further retreat was barred by
a wide and deep river, which could in no way be crossed. The Raja, being thus
stopped by a river in front and an enemy behind, resolved to fight once more the next
day, unless the problem of crossing the river could be solved. With this determination
he went to sleep and had a dream in which a god appeared before him and promised
to help him. The god said that early next morning the king with all his people must
boldly enter the river at a spot where he would see a heron standing in the water, and

97 Santanu Das Borhazowal: The Sonowāl Kachāris: A brief note based on traditions, in Basanta
Sonowāl(ed): Souvenir,( In Assamese), Sonowāl Kachāri Cultural Festival, published by Sonowāl
Kachāri Autonomous Council, Dibrugarh, 2010, p.45. Interview with Promod Sonowāl (present
Majinder of Bāitho Temple), on 7th July, 2014, Tarun Sonowāl (present Rajaguru of the Bāitho
Temple). On 7th July, 2014, Both of them belong to the Barpather village of Tinsukia district.
walk straight across the river, but no one must look back. Next morning a heron was found, sure enough, standing in the water near the bank; and the king, remembering his dream, led his people to the spot and went into the water, which they found was shallow enough to form a ford and allow them to wade across. In this way he crossed with a great part of his people. But still all had not crossed. There were some on the other bank and some in the middle of the river, when a man among the latter wondering whether his son was following him, looked back, with the result that the water at once got deep and every one had to save himself as best he could; while the men on the other bank, having no chance of crossing, dispersed. They who were caught in the middle of the river had to swim for their lives, and were washed down to different places. Some saved themselves by catching hold of Khāgris (rushes) growing on the bank, and are to this day called Khāgarbaria. Others caught nals (or reed) and are thus called Nalbariās. The Dimāsās are the people who crossed in safety. And the remainder of those who could not cross the river was the Sonowāls.

A similar story is also found in the oral tradition of the Dimāsa Kachāri and Sonowāl Kachāri. The story is also cited by UC Guha, but the difference is that he had mentioned that due to repeated attacks by the hill tribes, the Kachāri Raja desired to shift his kingdom from the south bank of the Brahmaputra.

Another legend prevalent among the Sonowāl Kachāris of Assam has similarities with that of the rise of the Chutiās. According to it, a settlement of twelve Kachāri families lived in the vicinity of Sadiya. Manik Kachāri’s wife gave birth to a black cat through the intervention of a Sanyasi, who had met her while bathing after the usual days of monthly impurity. After a month the black cat became the lord of the whole territory.

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99 U.C Guha: *Kachcharer Itibitta*, Guwahati, Publication Board of Assam, 1971, pp.41-42
from Sadiya to Dikhoumukh. Manik’s daughter was married to Mukuta who received a golden cat as a present from his father- in- law along with the inheritance of the kingdom. Mukuta then became the Kachārī king.100

S. K. Bhuyan further mentioned another traditional story of the southern branch of the Kachāris101 which is known as ‘Bārir Putekor Rājya Lābh’.102 The story speaks about the founder of the kings of Cachar. It has been mentioned that Ghototkach was the founder of the Kachārī kingdom. He was the son of the second Pandav Bhima, through Heramba Rakshasi; hence the Raja was called Herambeswar.

Apart from these popular traditions, another folk-tale is popular among the Sonowāl Kachārī regarding the origin of the term ‘Sonowāl’ that is attached to them. According to the tale, those Kachāris who offered ‘Gold’ or ‘Son’ for conversion to Vaishnava and became the disciples of Kesab Dev103, were regarded as Sonowāl Kachāris.104

The Sonowāl Kachārī nostalgically traces their relationship with the Barman of Cachar district, Bodo Kachāris of lower Assam district and Dimāsās of North Cachar Hill district. S. Endel classified the following tribes of Assam within the fold of the great Kachārī race: the Bodos, the Rābhās, the Mech, the Dhimāls, the Konch, the Solanīmiyas, the Mahaliyas, as the northern group and the Dimasas, the Hojāis, the

100 S.K Bhuyan: Deodhai Asom Buranjī, (In Assamese), Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Gauhati, 1962.p.xxi
101 ibid: pp. xxi-xxii
102 S.K Bhuyan, op.cit, pp3-6, And S.K Bhuyan, op.cit, pp xxi-xxii
103 He was the Satradhikar of Auniati Satra of Majuli and fled to Sadiya to escape from Gadadhar Singha. He was also famous as absconding Gosain. For details see Edward Gait, op.cit, pp.173-174
For details please see Tirthanath Sharma: Auniati Satrar Buranjī, (In Assamese), Auniati Satra, Asam, 1975
104 This tale was popular among the Sonowāl Kachārī from the late 20th century only. It was first propagated by Gagan Sonowāl, who worked with Promod ch.Bhattacharya, and a prominent researcher, social worker, and teacher, of the community, but his view is not accepted by the Sonowāl Kachārī researcher.
Lālungs, the Gāros, the Hājongs and the Hill Tipperas. E. Gait says that the Kachāris are identical with the people called Mech in Goalpara and North Bengal. These are the names given to them by the outsiders. In the Brahmaputra Valley the Kachāri call themselves Bodo or Bodo Fisa (sons of Bodo). In the North Cachar hill they call themselves Dimasa.105

The folk-tale related to the conversion of Sonowāl Kachāri is not acceptable as it is not mentioned in the book ‘Āoniāti Satrar Buranji’ and also not supported by the district Gazetteer of India, Sibsagar district. It is stated there that Kesab Dev, the Āuniati Gosain, was in exile at Sadiya; it was through the Satradhikar’s special virtue and power that many of the tribal people specially the ‘Sonowāls’ came under the fold of Hinduism.106 If the surname Sonowāl was attached to them after their initiation to Neo-Vaishnavism then the term ‘Sonowāl’ should not be used to indicate the Kachāris of Sadiya by the writer. Thus, Sonowāl Kachāris existed prior to the coming of the Satradhikar Kesab Dev. Moreover, a section of Sonowāls do not accept the theory that the term Sonowāl is related to gold washing. To them Sonowāl Kachāris were not a professional community. If this were true then the other communities such as Bihia, Konch, Keot must also be termed as Sonowāl. But it is not, as they were not Kachāri Sonowāl, therefore they retain their original titles and identity.

Some of the elderly people of the community believe that the Sonowāl Kachāris are the kith and kin of the Sanowār community who presently live in the lower Nepal and frontier areas of India. It is assumed by them that Sanowar and Sonowāl belong to the same stock. To substantiate their claims they even dare to quote Ptolemys’

105 S.Endle, op.cit, p.5
According to Rajani Hazarika, the term Sonowāl is not a word in the modern Assamese language. It originated from the Tibeto-Burmese word 
\( \text{Sunubār} > \text{sunuwāl} > \text{Sonowāl} \) meaning Brightness\(^{108}\). According to another theory put forward by a scholar of the community the term Sonowāl has its origin in the word \( \text{Bādu} – \text{Sono} – \text{Liyo} \)\(^{109}\) which is one of the twelve families of the Kachāri people. Bādu means powerful, Sono means male child, Liyo means community. Hence Sonowāl is stated to mean a powerful or heroic community.\(^{110}\) Upholding the view another scholar of the community Santanu das Borhazual, is of the view that there was a hero named Lāpet living in Sadiya and he had continual fights with the Ahoms and Shingphoes.’ It can be conceded that this hero’s family is now known as Lāpeti Hans and they have settled near Dibrugarh and the place of the name came to be known as Lapetkota which does not match the view of Sarat Phukan\(^{111}\). And it might be possible

\(^{107}\) Surendra Nath Mazumdar Sastrī: *Cunnigham’s Ancient Geography*, Chuckervery, Chatterjee & co.ltd, Calcutta, 1924, pp.xxv-xxvi. It is mentioned that Ptolemys Geography is not a work of descriptive geography like that of Strabo, but exclusively a mathematical or cosmic one…and the shape of India is utterly distorted in his map. Therefore our own view about the reference of the names of the tribal communities is doubtful to some extent.


The Kachāris have twelve clan, these are as follows 1: Domos-yo, 2: Bodo-yo, 3: Juhulo-yo, 4) Badohoz-yo, 5) Bodo-suno-liyo, 6) Rabhakirati- yo, 7) Intorar-yo, 8) Intohujoi-yo, 9) Intomesoi-yo, 10) Daona-yo, 11) Intominkho-yo, 12) Kusoi- yo. This important information has collected by the president of *All Sonowāl Kachāri kailyān Sangha* Sri Subha Baruah and Sri Jugal Farmal, in the year 1986, from one important figure belong Dimāsā tribe known as Hambang Batheri; And also see Rajani Hazarika: *Mongol Kachāri Gupta Itihāsh*, (In Assamese), Dayal Saikia, Tinsukia, 1985, pp.84-84

\(^{110}\) Interview: with Santanu Das Borhazual, retired Principal of Dangari High School, Social worker, researcher of the Sonowāl Kachāri, Executive member of Sonowāl Kachāri Autonomous Council, on 6\(^{th}\) July 2013. But his information is confronted with that of Sarat Phukan, where he mentions that the name Lapetkota is imposed due to an incident of cutting down of a brave Ahom soldier ‘Lāpet’ by a Kachāri. Details may be found in. Citra Barua(ed): ‘Dibrugarh’, *A book on the Cultural & Socio-Economic History of Dibrugarh District, vol-1*. (In Assamese), Published by Dibrugarh Jilla Sahitya Sabha, Duliajan, 2012, p.20

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because when the Mongoloid people immigrated into Assam the Bādu-Sono-liyo people bifurcated along two parths, one westward and the other eastward. The eastern group entered Sadiya and they came to be known as Sadiyal Kachāri, whom we believed to be the present day Sonowāl Kachāri.

But interestingly, there are some families (Hans) within the community who clearly assert that they were associated with gold washing. For example, the people belonging to the Dhāknari hansh are those who deal with lid in gold extraction process. Dhāvali are those who wash the raw gold in gold extraction. The people of Barbari village at Borhola, Titabor in Jorhat, which is located at a distance away from the Subansiri river, informed that a Sonowāl family of their village possessed some instruments related to gold washing. Moreover, the people of Halakbari village at Gogamukh in Dhemaji district and the people of Boginodi Senchowa village located at Lakhimpur district both situated in the southern and northern banks of the Subansiri river where the Sonowāls were believed to have washed gold, proudly said that once their forefathers had washed gold in Subansiri.

Different scholars offer different opinions about the prefix Sonowāl attached to this branch of the Kachāris. L.A Waddel remarks “The Sonowāl or Sadiyals are mostly gold washers of the Lakhimpur district of Assam.” And the gold washers of Sadiya always displayed superior ability in gold collection. According to Gait “Gold

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112 Rajani Hazarika: op.cit, 84-85. He mentioned about the twelve clan of Kachāri, which has resemble with the name mention by Ptolemi in his ‘Geography’
113 ibid,p.88
114 Raju Sonowāl: Sonowāl Kachāri Sakalar Pariyāl Parichoy, (In Assamese), Koustav Prakashan, Dibrugarh, 2007,pp.3-5
115 Interview with Tilu Sonowāl, Jorhat, on 6th July 2013. Interview with Raju Sonowāl, Dibrugarh, on 11th July, 2013 Interview with Kesab Sonowāl of Lakhimpur, on 20th July, 2013
116 L.A Waddel: Tribes of Brahmaputra valley, Logos press, Guwahati, 1900, p.38
117 Rajen Saikia: Social and Economic history of Assam 1853-1921, Manohar Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 2000, p.59
washing was done by a guild known as Sonowāl khel.118 Hiteswar Barbarua emphasizes ‘A khel of people was engaged for washing gold. They were called Sonowāls. But he further says there are a few communities within the Sonowāl khel like Kachāri, Bihia, Konchs, and Keot…..But unfortunately, now-a-days the term Sonowāl is used to call all Kachāris.119 The Tarikh-e-Aasham also speaks about the gold washing profession in Assam. It says that around ten to twelve thousand men were engaged in gold washing. Each of the workers had to deposit one tolā of gold annually to the treasury of the raja.120 S.L Baruah supports this view and says that ‘In the prime of the Ahom power in the middle of 18th century, about sixteen thousand Sonowāls or gold washers were engaged by the Ahom government in washing for ten thousand tolas of gold annually’.121 In the report of Franchis Hamilton it has been found that gold dust was collected from the rivers of Brahmaputra and Donsiri. The gold mine produced for the royal treasury a 15,000 rupees weight of gold dust. After adulterated and formed into small balls, they were sold in Goalpara, for 18,000 sicca rupees a year. But he did not mention any professional community.122

It is, therefore, seen that the whole community was not engaged in the profession of gold washing and might have taken to other professions like agriculture, manufacturing of bamboo products etc. The gold-giving story of the Kachāris living at Sadiya, who were to said to be the disciples of a Gosain of Āuniāti Satra, seems to be unconvincing. It is stated in the Āuniāti Buranji that with other tribes the Sonowāl Kachāris also took saran under the Satradhikar. This is the indication of social change through religion. It is after the initiation into the Neo-Vaishnavism Sonowāl

118 Edward Gait, op.cit, p.272
119 Hiteswar Barbarua: Ahomar Din, Publication Board of Assam, Guwahati, 2013, p. 573
120 Shehabuddin Talesh: Tarikh-e-Aasham, translated by Dr Mazahar Asif, Dept. of Historical & Antiquarian Studies with collaboration with The Raushana ra education foundation, Guwahati, 2009, p.51
121 S.L Baruah : op.cit, p.6
122 Francis Hamilton: op.cit, P.49
Kachāris that they have split into two groups viz. Henduriā (Hinduised) and Behāri (partly detribalized). Only the theory that the term Sonowāl is derived from the words Bādu-Sono-Liyo meaning powerful or heroic community, seems to be nearest to the truth. We have found that the reference to Hogrāveer\textsuperscript{123} and Lāpet in the traditional Bihu songs, religious songs and hymns are popular in the community; it also mention the Sonowāl Kachāri as an aboriginal people of Assam. In these songs they talk of the Manik, Mukuta, and the stories of war with neighboring tribes and the Ahom. In the Bihu songs known as Hāidāng geet of the Sonowāl Kachāris, they remember their ancestral king ‘Boli Raja’ and also recite the names of old kingdoms as Hemāli Lālow, lālow, lālow, loyā, Sadiyā Rājāre Latharā Dekāti, Bhāngile Āamāre Gānge Kinā, Abujan Kachāri Abujan Kachāri Nubujil Ekuke, Gojāi Gurudeve Kole Ki Buli... (Oh my glorious kingdom, how bright, how bright, how bright thou art. The young Latharā hero broke our villages...Innocent Kachāris don’t understand the teachings of Gojāi guru...)\textsuperscript{124}.

In search of the answer to an interesting question\textsuperscript{125} some observations and assumptions may be made about the origin of the Sonowāl Kachāris and the Chutiā. According to Hem Barua that the Kachāris are allied in point of ethnology to the

\textsuperscript{123} The relevant stanzas of Hogrā dance song runs thus: Hātote Kārfai lā herow dadāi mār oi Bāli sarāi ... Rangedoi sāparit Rajāi Pahu māre mār oi bāli sarāi... Means take the bow and arrows to kill the Bali bird... the king hunting the deer at Rongdoi field... vide: Benu Borah et.al (ed) Gagan Chandra Sonowāl Rachana Sambhar, (In Assamese), SKAC, Dibrugarh, 2013, p.287


\textsuperscript{125} S.K Bhuyan, op.cit, p. viii, He raised a question that where were the Chutiās when the Kachāris exercised their domination at Sadiya? S.K Barpujari(ed): History of the Dimasas (From earliest times to 1896 A.D), Autonomous Council, N.C Hills District, Haflong, 1997, p.31 He remarks that it is therefore, a matter before the scholars to ponder over whether the Sadiyal branch of the Kachāris are identical with the Chutiās of Sadiya. There are evidences to show that they are the same people, and the Chutiā and Dimasa kingdoms in eastern India are identical.
Koches was a matter of fact no longer holds water. As far linguistic affinities are concerned these people are allied more to the Chutiās, the Lālungs and the Morāns than to any other groups of people’. Grierson also put the Chutiā and Morāns in the same Assam-Burmese linguistic group under the Tibeto-Burmese group. Remarks of noted historian and academicians in this regard are also important. Laxmi Devi, Rajmohan Nath, B.M Das, D, Nath, S.Dutta, support the view of S.K Chatterjee and S. Endle about the Chutiās. B.S Guha asserts that the Chutiās are a sub-tribe of the Kachāris. Then, Colonel Hannay is of the view that the early home of the Chutiā in Assam was the Suwansiri River or near passes of the hills. W.B Brown put forth similar remarks that physical affinities exist among Chutiās and Kachāris. These are sufficient remarks which make us rethink the relationship between these two communities.

Most of the scholars opined that the title Chutiā is attached to them as they migrated from a valley known as Swat of Kashmir. But S.L Barua remarks that the Swatī river or lack or Setwagiri hill is located near the Subansiri river, where it is supposed to be believed that the Chutiās lived. She further stated that they adopted this title after separating from the main stream. No group had entered into Assam with the name of Chutiā. Therefore, she summarized that those people living in the river valley or lack or hill Swat or Setwagiri in course of time came to be known as Chutiā according to the name of the place. Bishnu Prasad Rabha is of the view that Gi or Dī

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126 B.N Bordoloi, op.cit, pp.3-4.
127 Please see G.A Grierson: Linguistic Survey of India, Low Price Publication, Delhi, 1994, And also B.M Das, op.cit pp.85-88
128 S.K Barpujari, op.cit, p.31
129 S.L.Baruah, op.cit, P.57,
130 S.N.Mazumdar Sastri, op.cit, pp.93-96
131 S.L.Baruah, op.cit, p.80
132 By the term main stream or Mool Huti the writer pointed towards the greater group of Kachāris.
or Ti means water or river, Chu or Su means holy; therefore a group of people of a holy river valley, means the Chutiā.\textsuperscript{133}

We can come to a conclusion with the following remarks of noted historian S.L. Baruah that Kachāri and Chutiā are descendents of the same branch of Bodo people. They lived together for a long period and later on the Kachāris came towards the Dikhow river and expanded to the Dhansiri valley. The other branch remained in the same place and later came to be known as Sadiyal Kachāri or Sonowāl Kachāri. There are similarities between the Sonowāl and Chutiā in their traditional rites and rituals.\textsuperscript{134} It is also noticed that the legend related to the rise of Sonowāl Kachāri and Chutiā kingdom was almost same, that is the reference of a ‘golden cat’ as a mark of totems for both communities\textsuperscript{135}. The Totemic beliefs and practices and initiation of ceremonies are regarded as Austroloid culture\textsuperscript{136} It is found that the Chutiās are expert in ‘tantric cult’\textsuperscript{137} and interestingly the Sonowāl Kachāris used those hymns as a blessings during a religious function\textsuperscript{138}.

\textsuperscript{133} Joges Das & Dr Sarbeswar Bora(ed): \textit{Bishnu Rabhar Rachanavali, part I}, (In Assamese), \textit{Rabha Rachanavali Prakashan Sangha}, Jyoti Prakashan, Guwahati, 2008, pp.336-337
\textsuperscript{134} ibid: pp.63-64.
\textsuperscript{135} ibid p.73, we can consider it as a mark of Totemism. As it explain by Prasanta Kumral, in \textit{Sonowāl Kachāri :Tatwa āru Bishlesan}, ( In Assamese), published by \textit{Sonowāl Kachāri Autonomous Council}, Dibrugarh, 2013, pp.106-109.
Also see, \textit{International Encyclopedia of Tribal Religion, vol-1}, Cosmo publications, New Delhi, 2000,
For details please see: D.D Kosambi: \textit{Bhāratar Itihāsh translated} by Birendra kumar Bhattacharya, Publication Board of Assam, Guwahati, 2006, pp.27-28.
\textsuperscript{136} B.M Das: \textit{Anthropological Identity}, in Basanta Deka (ed): \textit{Assam ,land and People}, K.C Das Commerce College, Guwahati, 2009, p.86
\textsuperscript{137} S.L Baruah, op.cit p.28
\textsuperscript{138} Interview with Khiteswar Bowlery \textit{Medhi of Namghar, Namaithong} village, Tinsukia district, on 8\textsuperscript{th} July, 2013
The observations made by S.L Baruah seem to be more convincing, although some of the evidence found in the political history of both the communities lead us to confusion. If we believe the traditional story quoted by Gait and Guha, then it was neither the hill tribes nor the Ahoms, for whom the Kachāris left their place. It was mainly due to the mutual differences of both groups that they left the place. To a little extent we can also rely on the comments put forward by Dharmeswar Sonowāl, Director of State Archive, Guwahati, Assam, and also Bishnu Rabha that Chutiās are the last of the twelfth clan’ Chatial clan\textsuperscript{139} of the Sonowāl Kachāri community and when this clan rose into power, they named themselves as ‘Chutiā’. Accordingly the religious priest belonged to the Raja’s clan and therefore we have come across the belief that Chutiās are the followers of Kesaikhati, Burā-Buri Thān, Boliā Bābā Thān. On the other hand one prominent writer of the Chutiā community said that ‘Sonowāls are a branch of Chutia\textsuperscript{140}, which cannot be acceptable from any angle. \textbf{In fact Sonowāls are not Chutiā but some Chutiās are definitely Sonowāl.} We have found the reference of different communities engaged in gold washing during the reign of the Ahom. They might have a very close relation with the Chutiās of Assam. If the early researches of ‘noted historian\textsuperscript{141} accepted the term’ Hālāli and its meaning’ then the term Bādu-Son-Liyo must be accepted. Probably the term Sonowāl is a

\textsuperscript{139} Interview with Dharmeswar Sonowāl, Director, State Archive, Dispur, on 23\textsuperscript{rd} July, 2013 , Also details may be found in Joges Das & Dr. Sarbeswar Bora(ed): op.cit, pp.1124-1127 Gagan Chandra Sonowāl: Sāhitya Sanskriti Bichitrā, (In Assamese) Tinsukia district sahitya sabha, Tinsukia, 2004, p.167

\textsuperscript{140} Purendra Prasad Saikia: Chutiār Itihāsh āru Sanskriti, ( In Assamese), Kiran Prakashan, Dhemaj, 2011,p.126

\textsuperscript{141} As U.C Guha in his work Kacharer Itibitta, (In Bengali), Publication Board Of Assam, Guwahati, 1971 and J.B. Bhattacharjee in his work Kachāri Rājyar Uthān āru Patan, ( In Assamese), Asom Sahitya Sabha, Jorhat, 1993, both the noted historians accepted the term and meaning of Hālāli.
translated and well-versed form of the original word ‘Bādu-Son-Liyo’ and was attached to them in later period by the early historians during the Ahom period.

It has been found from the above analysis that ethnically the Sonowāls are a group of the greater Kachārī people. The Kachārīs are Mongoloid which is evidently an Asiatic race. They entered into Assam prior to the coming of the Aryans and settled in the river valleys. The Mongoloid contributes a lot to the population of North-Eastern India and Eastern India, comprising of Assam, North and East Bengal, northern part of Bihar, and Nepal….the Mongoloid peoples speak Sino-Tibetian or Tibeto Chinese language or dialect.

K.L. Barua says that the present day Kachārī, the Konches, the Rābhās, etc are the representatives of the Tibeto-Burman family of Indo–Chinese group of the later Mongolians who passed through the North east of India. Among these tribes the Bodo speaking people have occupied the plains of Assam for a long time and no doubt they are the Kiratas and Mlechhas of the Mahabharata. S. Endel includes the following tribes of Assam within the fold of the great Kachārī race, the Rābhās, the Mech, the Dhimāls, the Konch, the Solanimiyās, the Mahaliyās, the Hojāi and the Hājong with the great Kachārī race. Edward Gait says that the Kachārīs are identical with the people called Mech in Goalpara and North Bengal. These are the names given to them by the outsiders. In the

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142 James Edgar Swain: *A History of World Civilization*, Eurasia Publishing House,(P)ltd, New Delhi, Second Indian reprint 1970.P.29. The author says that obviously, there are no pure races, but there are four main classifications: viz, Australoid, Mongoloid, Negroid, and Caucasian...The Mongoloids are mainly Asiatic and are round headed, yellow skinned, short in stature, and have straight hair.

143 Edward Gait, op.cit, pp.4-5

144 K.L Barua, op.cit, pp.34-35

145 S.K Chatterji, op.cit, p.37,The author mention that when the Mahabharata and the Ramayana were taking shape , between 500 B.C to 400 A.D, particularly in the pre-Christian centuries , they had occupied the southern tracts of the Himalayas and the whole of North-Eastern India,

146 S. Endle, op.cit, pp.5-6
Brahmaputra Valley the Kachāri call themselves Bodo or Bodo Fisā (sons of Bodo). In the North Cachar hill they call themselves Dimāsā, a corruption of Dima fisā or “sons of the great river.”

It is truly remarked by B. Kakati that ‘the province of Assam and its people are very insufficiently known abroad’. The historians, anthropologists and social scientists are of the view that Kachāris are the aboriginal people of Assam. The study about the tribes of North-East India including Assam had started with the coming of the British in Assam. Prior to that references about the tribes of Assam was found only in the Ahom Buranjis. The physical features and general appearance of Kachāris are same with that of mongoloid people of ‘Tibet and China’.

The origin of the word Kachāri is difficult to trace, but it may be mentioned that, ‘According to the Limbu legend of creation given by Risely in the ‘Tribes and Caste of Bengal’ one of the two progenitors of the human race settled in the Khachar country, where lived…Koch, Mech and Dhimal tribes’. According to B. Narzi the term Kachāri was given to them by the neighboring Hindus in subsequent times.

U.C Guha also suggests a list of the distribution of the Kachāri race that inhabited different parts of medieval Assam.

According to S. Endle ‘the origin of the Kachāri race is still very largely a matter of conjecture and inference, in the absence of anything entitled to be regarded as

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147 Edward Gait, op.cit, p.299
148 Dr. Banikanta Kakati, op.cit., p.1
149 S. Endle, op.cit, p.3
150 Edward Gait, op.cit, p.299.
152 U.C Guha, op.cit.  p.35
authentic history.¹⁵³ The early history of Kachāris and their kingdom is not found before the advent of the Ahoms in the thirteenth century A.D. From the settlement pattern of the Kachāri people near the river valley of Brahmaputra and its tributaries we may presume that they migrated from the North East provinces of China. B.N. Bordoloi says that the original home of the different groups of the Kachāri race belonging to the Tibeto-Burman family was in Western China near the Yang te-kiang and Howanggho river from where hordes of them went down the courses of the Chindwin and the Irawadi and then the Brahmaputra and started settling down in the valleys of these rivers and also remote hills adjacent to the valleys.¹⁵⁴.

Assam is located in one of the great migration routes of mankind. There are several routes of migration of the Mongoloid people to Assam from the ancient past. S. Endle observes that one group of Kachāri people entered North-east Bengal and Western Assam through the valley of Tista, Dharla, and Sankosh. While the other through Subansiri, Dibong, and Dihong valleys into Eastern Assam where already a branch of the widespread Kachāri race, known as Chutiās,¹⁵⁵ lived for long. H.K. Barpujari also agrees with this view¹⁵⁶ and says that the hill passes of Bhutan, Tibet and Nepal were also probably used by certain waves of the Tibeto-Burmans. However, most of the scholars opine that the ‘most frequented route was on the west, the valleys of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, through which the Aryans penetrated into Pragjyotisha-

¹⁵³ S Endle, op.cit, p.3
¹⁵⁴ B.N Bordoloi: The Dimasa Kachāris of Assam, Tribal Research Institute, Assam, Guwahati, 2nd edition 1984,p.2
¹⁵⁵ S.Endle, op.cit, p.4
B.M Das, op.cit, in Basanta Deka (ed) op.cit, pp.86-87
Kamarupa'. Grierson also mentions that the Tibeto-Burmese group entered through the Brahmaputra, Sindwin, Irrawaddy, and Mekong passes to Assam from the north-eastern and south-eastern sides. P.C Choudhary comments that the Bodos, a group of Kachāri entered through the North Western side to Assam. Bhaben Narzi opines that a section of Mongoloid people, entered through the river branches of Brahmaputra to the north-eastern part of Assam and in course of time they founded their own principality on the river bank of Brahmaputra. According to M’Cosh there is a route that runs across the Himalaya mountains parallel with the course of the Brahmaputra, in the extreme east of Assam and an open road from Upper Assam into Burma, and then into China, by which a considerable trade in Chinese and Burmese manufactures is carried on and therefore is there much probability of migration of the Indo-Mongoloid people to Assam through this route. And some of them settled in the Sadiya region that was closely associated with trade with China. In the course of time these people came to be known as the Sonowāl Kachāris.

1.9 A rapid survey of the political background of Kachāris in general:

The early political history of all the Kachāri branches is obscure and for this matter we do not know much more about the early history of the Sonowāl Kachāris. The political history of the Kachāri kingdom is found in an articulate form from the Ahom chronicles, where the Ahom-Kachāri relation is described. The early accounts of the

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158 J.B Bhattacharjee, op.cit, p.20,
161 Ibid: p.11, M’Cosh further mention that the intercourse between China and Assam by this route is extremely tedious and can only is followed by trading people who traffic as they go long.
Kachāri kingdom, then the subjugation of the Kachāris by the Ahoms also is found in the Sātsari Asom Buranji and Deodhāi Asam Buranji. And from the study of earlier sources we can presume that one branch of the Kachāris ruled in the eastern part of Assam on the eve of coming of the Ahoms. The traditional stories of early Ahom-Kachāri contacts also indicate that the Kachāris could not win over the Ahom diplomatically and politically. Therefore they left the place and it ‘might be that the stories are spoken and popularized by their predecessors’ later.

S.K. Bhuyan remarks that there is no record of any attempt to fuse the scattered Kachāris into one political unit. About their first home in Assam the Kachāris themselves believe that they originally lived in the land called Kāmruli (kamrup?) by which followed a river in a great valley; they were driven out and got to a place called Kundilo (kundil or Sadiya?)

The Kālikā purāṇa a religious treatise belonging to the 12th C.E records a story of an Aryanised adventurer-ruler coming from Videha in Northern India and killing the

162 S.K Bhuyan, op.cit, p.73., And S.K Barpujari, op.cit, pp.37-42
163 All the stories based on oral tradition and myths of the community go to a line of birth of a new kingdom, with traditional culture and social norms. And oral traditions and myths of the community provided information about the cultural continuity of indigenous communities through the sharing of stories, songs, history, personal experiences and social commentary. And Jan Vansina expresses his view regarding the ‘Oral Tradition’ that ‘applies both to a process and to its products. The products are oral messages based on previous oral messages, at least a generation old. The process is the transmission of such messages by word of mouth over time…’ Vide Jan Vansina: Oral Tradition as History, Great Britain, 1985, p.3
164 Romila Thapar also express that ‘Events concerning the more remote periods often take the form of a myth. Myth is an a sense a prototype history since it is selection of ideas composed in narrative form for the purpose of preserving and giving significance to an important aspect of the past; their analysis can reveal the more emphatic assumptions of a society. Myths record what a people like to think about their past and to that extent some modern histories are not always free of an element of myth making,’ Vide: Ramila Thapar; Cultural Past: Essays on early Indian History, Oxford University Press India, 2003, pp.754
165 S.K Bhuyan, op.cit, pp.iv-v.
166 S.K Bhuyan, op.cit, p.vii.
Kirata ruler of Pragjyotishpura\textsuperscript{166}, he drove the remaining members of the tribe to the east up to Sadiya.\textsuperscript{167} U.C Guha says on being expelled from their original seat of power in Kamarupa, they became scattered in different places or regions.\textsuperscript{168}

According to P.C Choudhary, in fact at a subsequent time with the decline and extinction of the central power in Kamarupa in between 11\textsuperscript{th} and 15\textsuperscript{th} century A.D many principalities were founded by the Kachāris\textsuperscript{169}.

1.10 A Survey of the Political background of the Sonowāl Kachāris:

At this stage of our knowledge we find no authentic information of an independent territory meant exclusively for the Kachāri group of people known as Sonowāl Kachāri. We find a legend prevalent among the Kachāris, as quoted by U.C Guha saying that the ancestors of the Kachāris lived at the junction of the river Ganga and the Brahamaputra on the coast of the sea. But as their country begun to decay in subsequent years, the king at the advice of the elders, decided to abandon the country. Though many subjects remained there, a majority of them accompanied the king to the upper streams of the Brahamaputra and moved towards Nilachal.\textsuperscript{170} He further says “It is said that after abandoning the mouth of the Brahamaputra, king Kundil

\textsuperscript{166} Debendra Nath Bhattacharya (translated): Kālikā purāṇ, Bani Mandir, Guwahati, 2008, pp. 32-42
\textsuperscript{167} H.K Barpujari , op.cit,p.88
\textsuperscript{168} U.C Guha, op.cit, p.42
\textsuperscript{169} P.C Choudhary: History and civilization of the people of Assam upto 12\textsuperscript{th} Century AD, Guwahati, 1966, p.257
\textsuperscript{170} U.C Guha , op.cit, p.31,
Gunaviram Barua: Asam Buranji,( In Assamese), Publication board of Assam, Guwahati, 5\textsuperscript{th} edition 2012.
Gunaviram Barua stated that in the early decades of 15\textsuperscript{th} century A.D, Biswasimha, the founder of Konch Kingdom, came towards Nilachal hill to defeat and consolidated the Mech and Konch people of this area. A Mech woman let him know about the supernatural power of the tree ground. Later on he wins wars due to his faith on this pith. Therefore he constructed a temple known as Kamakhya,pp.33-34.
And the story of crossing the river indicated the separation of Kachāri people living in Brahmaputra valley.
Narayan of Ghotutkash dynasty founded a kingdom named Kundil in modern Sadiya region on the North bank of Brahmaputra. This kingdom is called Hālāli (Hā- means lands and lāli-means brightness) in Kachāri language.\(^{171}\) The Kachāri buranji also mention a kingdom founded by one Manik and his son-in law Mukuta in the Sadiya region. Bishnu Prasad Rabha also opines that there existed a large Bodo kingdom on the banks of the rivers Dibong and Dihing. The kingdom was founded by the Sonowāl Kachāris, a branch of the Bodos. There ruled Manik and Mukuta and their fourteen generation.\(^{172}\)

A legend prevailing among the Sonowāl Kachāris says that their ancestor the great munificent, non Aryan king Boli’s eldest son Bana had four sons named Gāro, Dimāsā, Bhālukbir and Hogrā. Gāro established the Gāro kingdom; Dimāsā the Dimāsā kingdom, Bhālukbir established the Akā kingdom at Balipara while Hogrā\(^{173}\) moved towards north to Sadiya along with a thousand Kachāri families.\(^{174}\) In subsequent years their descendents established the Hāllāli or Hemāli kingdom at

\(^{171}\) U.C Guha op.cit,p.41, The Bodo word Hālāli means lustremitting ; Chinese traveler to Assam in the 7th century AD, Hieun –Tsang praised very much a Hālāli caot made with Bodo silk and presented to him by the then king of Assam…vide R.M Nath, op.cit, pp.16-69

\(^{172}\) Prof. Jogesh Das & Dr.Sarbeswar Bora(ed), op.cit, pp.1124-1127, Benu Borah( et.all), op.cit, p.36, The fourteen clans of Sonowāl Kachāris are Hogrāl, Muktāl, Madan, Mānkiāl, Ahmāl, Farmāl, Barhāzuāl, Haruhāzuāl, Kumrāl, Dhekiāl, Dinigiāl, Lathīāl, Darangāl, and Chatiāl.

\(^{173}\) The name of Hogrā is also found in the Haidāng geets of Sonowāl Kachāri. He was remembered as a brave warrior and hunter, known as Hogrābeer. Moreover in the list of the administrative body of the Hālāli kingdom Hogrā was mentioned as a King. Hogrā was referred as king by Majinder of Bāithou temple at Barpather and referred as a arranger of pig for sacrifice in the puja. Moreover the song related with the Hogrā dance also depicts Hogrā as hunter king. The verse runs thus: Hātāt Kārfāi lo hero dadāi māār oi bālī sarāi, Karuā Kakāiere kāār khal khelile māār oi bālī sarāi… Rajāi goisili pahu māriholoi māār oi bālī sarāi, Soongote gadhuli hal harilaore māār oi bālī sarāi…vide Gagan Sonowāl: Hogrā nāchar geet, in Benu Borah(et.all), op.cit, P.287

\(^{174}\) Ibid, p.17
Sadiya. Sarbananda Rajkumar also assumes that the Tāmreswari temple, Kachāikhāti temple and the names of the rivers at Sadiya suggest the existence of a Sonowāl Kachāri kingdom at Sadiya. S.K Bhuyan comments: “The Kachāris had built up political and administrative units, vestiges of which have lingered till this day….it is evident that Bodo or Kachāri sovereignty was exercised in Assam in different ages, in different names and in different places. The kingdom of Kāchār is one of the numerous states brought to existence by the political genius of the Kachāri people”.

When the Hālāli kingdom was established, is however, not known. From story references it is known that Manik became the king in 11th and 12th century. J.B Bhattacharjee also clarifies that by the term Kachāri Rājya, he means the Dimāsa or Hidimā kingdom of the medieval period, which had its first capital at ‘Sadiya’ and subsequently, Dimapur, Maibong and Khāspur… The Kachāri Buranji mentions the boundary of the Maniks kingdom from Sadiya in the east to Dikhoumukh in the west; from the south bank of the Dihing in the north to Dilihi kenduguri in the south. The location of the kingdom and the names of the founder kings Manik –

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176 S.K Bhuyan, op.cit, p.vi, Pandit Padmanath Bhattacharyya got a letter from a Kachāri gentleman descended from an aristocratic family of Cachar where it was mention that it is possible that Kachāri princes had once ruled in Sadiya, for we have still now to offer worship to the reputed Kechāi-khāti goddess whose temple is situated in the neighborhood of Sadiya.
177 Sarbananda Rajkumar: Axom Sahitya Sabha Patrika, ( In Assamese), 20th year, vol-1, p.4
178 S.K Bhuyan, op.cit, pp.2-3
179 Dr. Lila Gogoi: Axom Sahitya Sabha Patrika, ( In Assamese), 20th year, vol-3, p.23
180 J.B Bhattacharjee,op.cit,p.1
181 S.K Bhuyan, op.cit, p.1
Mukuta resemble those of the Hālāli kingdom of the Sonowāl Kachāri. Hiteswar Barbarua says “The original home of the Kachāri Sonowāl was Sadiya.” Even today the members of the Mānikiāl and Mukutāl clans refer to their glorious ancestors. They nostalgically remember their abode at Sadiya through their Bihu songs. However details of the reign of their kings, their administration or polity are not known. From the narratives of Rajamala, it is evident that in the days of Mahabharata the Tripura Raja had a good relation with Hidimā Rājya which in those days was in the valley of Brahmaputra and it took too much time to reach Kapili from Hidimā Rājya. K.L Barua also says that during that period the capital of Hidimā was not Dimapur, it might have been some place in upper Assam. Though we cannot fully rely on the Rajamala history it however throws light on the history of the Kachāri kingdom to some extent. Therefore if we consider the existence of Hidimbā kingdom then the capital must have been in Sadiya, a view supported by Pradip Sharma. In the report of Francis Bukanan Hemilton of 1808, he had mentioned that after the shifting of capital of the Hidimā kingdom to Khāspur during the reign of Krishnachandra, ‘the Kachāris of Brahmaputra valley paid annual tax to the king of Cachar’. If this is true than we can assume that the Sonowāl Kachāris were those who paid tax to the king.

182 Hiteswar Barbarua: op.cit, p.573
Benu Borah (et.all),op.cit, p.136
184 E.F Sandys: History of Tripura, Tripura state tribal research institute & museum, Agartala, 3rd reprint 2008. Rajamala is the royal chronicles of Tripura to believed to be oldest book dealing with the history of Tripura. Historians are of the opinion that the account of Rajamala is not acceptable.
185 Pradip Sharma: Asomor Sesh Madhya Jugiya Mandir – Shapata, ( In Assamese), Publication board of Assam, Guwahati, 2012, p.113. He remarks that, the history and legends of the Kachāris proved that once they have a kingdom in Sadiya region of upper Assam in different times.
186 J.B Bhattacharjee, op.cit, p.58
Thus, it is seen that the Sonowāl Kachāris, a branch of greater Kachāris have a kingdom named ‘Hālāli’ in the Brahmaputra valley. They ruled there till the coming of the Ahoms and then shifted their kingdom and settled accordingly in Dimapur, Maibong and Khāspur. Rajmohan Nath opines that after shifting the capital to Khāspur the relation between the Kachāris of the two valleys though gradually decreasing was not totally cut off.¹⁸⁷ It is further proved by the report of Hamilton which throws light on the tributary status of Kachāri chiefs of Brahmaputra valley. Therefore, it can be conceded that during their transfer from the Brahmaputra valley to Kapili-Dhanshiri valley some of them retained the same place. The Kachāri kingdom declined during the reign of Krishnachandra; it was divided into two parts between Gobindachandra and Tularam Senapati later. Finally, due to the diplomatic policy of the British, the territories of Cachar were annexed in 1832 and 1854.¹⁸⁸

The dynastic history of the Kachāris after that diminished. On the other hand the British rule in Assam had brought some tremendous changes in the society, economy and culture of Assam. And simultaneously the government policies, attitude of higher caste towards the tribes, and the socio-political consciousness of the late 19th century and early 20th century forced the tribal people of Assam to fight for their identity formation with distinct geographic locations. The Sonowāl Kachāris also followed suit. Presently the Sonowāl Kachāris have Autonomous council including the Sonowāl inhabited places in upper Assam.

The Sonowāl Kachāris also play an important role in the socio-economic and political development of the Assamese society through their activities. They are fearful of

¹⁸⁷ R.M Nath, op.cit, p.75
losing their own identity. This fear leads them to adopt such measures to revive their ethnicity with the help of various socio-political and cultural organizations. It is also noticed that the Kachāri tribes of Assam have undergone significant socio-cultural and politico-economic changes. The period from the year 1921 to 2005 is marked by a gradual progress of ethnic identity and organizational development of Assam in general. The growing ethnic consciousness led to the development of ethnonationalism among the various tribes of Assam including the Sonowāl Kachāris. A number of socio-political organizations have been formed by the Sonowāl Kachāris with the aims and objective of attaining equal social status and political rights. Certainly, these organizational developments pushed forward the Sonowāl Kachāris of Assam to their goal of attaining autonomy which they obtained in the year 2005. The study will try to highlight the development of ethnonationalist movements among the Sonowāl Kachāris of Assam in general and Tinsukia district in particular with the establishment of various socio-political organizations among them.

1.11 The importance of the period: 1921-2005

The period of study is important from different perspectives. The most remarkable development of this period was the new wave of the Indian freedom movement where a number of tribal people also participated from Assam including Sonowāl Kachāris. The growth of nationalism in India during the 19th century culminated with the rise of different socio-political organizations in the preceding years. In this

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189 Dandiram Das, Gambhir Sonowāl, Kamaleswar Sonowāl, Kalpa Sonowāl, Gahin Hazarika and many more from Tinsukia district participated in the Non-Cooperation in 1921 and Quite India movement in 1942. Please see: Report of enquiry commission of freedom fighters1979, Government of Assam, p.16-134

190 There is a rapid growth of nationalism in India during the 19th century as an impact of British role. The outcome of this nationalism is seen in the formation of Indian National Congress in the year 1885. For details please see A.R Desai: Social Background of Indian Nationalism, Popular Prakashan pvt.ltd, Mumbai, sixth edition 2000
context Assam also witnessed the rise and growth of the same, though the level of consciousness was not similar to the mainland Indian context. Simultaneously, the rapid growth of ethnic consciousness in Assam created a gap between the ethnic Assamese and ethnic tribes of Assam. To express their view they needed a platform through which they could also create awareness among their people. They used their socio-cultural symbols as their tool of identification and thus were anxious to attain autonomy with distinct identity and territory. And the new awakenings of the 19th century also touched the lives of the tribal people of Assam with the rise of ‘communal feelings among the Hindus, Caste Hindus, and also Hinduised tribes including Ahom’ and Chutiya. Most importantly the Ahoms, who were believed to levy the greater Assam and Assamese society during their reign from the 13th century to the end of 18th century, were the inaugurator of sub-nationalism in Assam. The first organization based on an individual caste and creed was the Ahom Association of 1893. Then the Konch Rajbansi Khatriya Sanmillon in 1913, ‘Bodo Sātra Santhā in 1915, Bodo Mahā Sanmilloni in 1915, ‘Dangari Kachāri Yuvak Sanmilloni in 1921, Assam Kachāri Jubok Sanmilloni 1927, Chutiā Sanmillon in

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191 S.L Baruah, op.cit, p.635
194 Indibar Deuri; Janagostiya Samasyā: Ateet Bartaman Bhabishtyat, (in Assamese), Bandhav, 2015, pp.3-4
Jadav Chandra Khaklari: Kachāri Tribal Anodolanar Kathā, (In Assamese), Diary, 1955, p.2-10
1925, *Srimanta Sankardev Sangha* in 1930, and the *All Assam Plains Tribal League* in 1933 signified their level of consciousness in the region. The formation of these organizations was ‘an expression of their discontent with the national political parties, as they felt that these parties had neglected their interests or did nothing concrete for their development’. Interestingly, the nature and activity of the *Chutiā Sanmillon* was quite different and critical in the initial period. The tribal league, including the *Sonowāl Kachāris* was also concerned about their social upliftment and distinct identity. Thus we get a picture of Assam with the birth of numerous tribal socio-political organizations in particular which is quite sensitive. The birth of new organizations makes the ethnic tribes of Assam more distinct and significant. The *Sonowāl Kachāris* did not lag behind in this development. Rather, they organized various socio-political organizations through which they could attain their goal of identity and development of the community. Of course, it led them to the formation of an Autonomous council of their own in the year 2005. Thus, the period of the study had witnessed some important socio-economic and political developments of the *Sonowāl Kachāri* community. Therefore, it has been taken for the present study to

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196 Dr Devabrata Sharma: *Chutiyasakalar ıtma Parichitir Ek Shatikā*, (In Assamese), Eklayyva Prakashan, Jorhat, 2006, p.57

197 Among the various socio-political organizations of that time ‘the foundation of *Srimanta Sankardev Sangha*’ in Assam was different. Though the social discrimination of the caste Hindus of Assam was one of the prime factors of its birth but it also aims to established equal status among the different cast and creed by preserving their own identity. Further it also worked for the foundation of unity in diversity and development of humanitarian outlook among the different communities of Assam on a democratic way. The role of this organization became stronger and motion after the joining of Sonaram Chutiya, famous as a ‘Dalit Daradi’.

In this context details may be found in: *Sankardev Sanghar Itihas*, (In Assamese), Head Office, Nagaon, Jibakanta Nath and Dr Milan Neog (ed): *Vaishnava Pandit Sonaram Chutia : Vyktitva Aru Krititva*, (In Assamese), Srimanta Sankardev Sangha, Nagaon, 2015

198 S.L Baruah, op.cit, p.636

examine to what extent the socio-economic and political lives of the Sonowāl Kachāris of Tinsukia district has changed during this period.

1.12 Review of Related Literature and Earlier Works

There are available sources of literature on ethnicity, ethnic identity and ethnonationalism in the context of the world and India. These books help to understand the theoretical approaches of the present study and recognize the causes of ethnonationalism among the different communities of different countries. There is also an availability of written sources of literature both English and Assamese on the subject in general which provides useful information to make a thorough study on the tribal people of Assam. Some of them are discussed below:

A: Books in English

Ethnonationalism in the Contemporary World: Walker Connor and the Study of Nationalism, edited by Daniel Conversi, is a significant work to understand the term and meaning of ethnonationalism and its development in different parts of the world. The author provides a concise introduction about the distinction between patriotism and ethnonationalism including the assessments of the primordialist’s interpretation of the development of nations and nationalism.

Ethno-Nationalism and the Emerging World [Dis] Order: an edited book of Gurnam Singh, it is a work which deals with the concept, theory and its effects in different parts of the world. The book discusses the concept of ethnonationalism, ethnic identity consciousness and nation building in plural societies including Ethnicity and Globalization, and Ethnic conflict and Minority Rights.

Citizenship, Nationality and Ethnicity written by T.K. Oommen: the central argument of the author is to take a different approach to studying ethnicity with variations
within and across societies; this is vital for understanding contemporary dilemmas of ethnicity. The author aims to develop a new analysis of the relation between the nation on the one hand and ethnicity and citizenship on the other.

*The Ethnic Origins of Nations* written by Anthony D. Smith is another important work which makes us understand the development of nations. According to the author, Ethnic defines the boundaries within which modern nations can be formed. The ethnic are constructed of ‘more permanent cultural attributes’ such as memory, value, myth and symbolism.

*Ethnicity and Nation-building in South Asia*, written by Urmila Phandis, discusses the dynamics of ethnic identities and movements in South Asian, stated in a comparative framework. The author discusses the issues of ethnicity and nation-building from different approaches, including the issues of ethnic dynamics of autonomist and secessionist demands.

*Ethnicity and Nationalism, Theory and comparison*, written by Paul R Brass is another significant work on ethnicity and nationalism. The central arguments of this book are that ethnicity and nationalism are not a given but are social constructions.

*Ethnic Times: Exploring Ethnonationalism in the former Yugoslavia*, written by Dusan Kecmanovic is another important source which throws light on the development of ethnonationalism in the pre-war Yugoslavia. The author discussed his personal experiences in Yugoslavia, and how ethnic consciousness arose among the Serbs, Croats and Bosnian Muslims.

*Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* written by Benedict Anderson is an important work on Nationalism and its origin. The author
explains that the nation is an imagined political community and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.

*The invention of Tradition* a book edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger deals with the origin of the traditions. Eric Hobsbawm in his article explains that traditions which appear or claim to be old are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented.

*Croatia: A Nation Forged in War*, written by Marcus Tanner is a book which deals with the history of the breakup of former Yugoslavia to deal with the newly emerged Croatian state outside any general Yugoslavia history.

*India against itself, Assam and the politics of nationality*, written by Sanjib Baruah, deals with sub national challenges. The author discusses the history of conflicts in Assam and tensions between pan-Indianism and Assamese sub nationalist concerns ever since the province became a part of British India and one of the world’s leading tea producing regions in the nineteenth century.

*Ethnonationalism in India, Critical Issues in Indian Politics*, written by Sanjib Baruah, deals with various topics such as ethnonationalism in India in its various forms viz. separatism, secessionism, sub-nationalism and regionalism. It traces the intellectual history of debates on federalism and majoritarian versus consensual democracy.

*Antonio Gramsci Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quentin Hoare, Geoffrey Nowell –Smith, is a book which help us to understand the relationship between politics and culture. Gramsci’s complex and fruitful approach to questions of ideology, power and change help in the theoretical understanding of socio-political change in society.
The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, written by Max Weber is an important book to understand how religion played the most crucial role in establishing capitalism in the west.

On Nationalism a book complied of three different articles written by Romila Thapar, A.G. Noorani and Sadanand Menon is a work on nationalism. Romila Thapar in her article ‘Reflections on nationalism and history’ explains that nationalism meant differentiating between the nation and the state…further it evolved historically, was inclusive and drew on the idea of the unification of diverse groups to form a new community of citizens.

Cultural Past written by Romila Thapar throws light on the myths and history.

From Plassey to Partition, a history of modern India, written by Sekhar Bandyopadhyay: Apart from the narratives of freedom movement of India this book deals with the emergence of Indian nationalism beyond that constricted discursive space where the nation state is situated at the center and the existence of a homogenous nation, speaking in one voice.

Indian Social Structure and Change written by K.L. Sharma discusses the social structure of Indian society and the factors of changes in the society.

Society in India written by Ram Ahuja, deals with the concepts, theories and recent trends in Indian society.

Social Anthropology, written by S. L. Doshi, P.C Jain, deals with the subject of anthropology, the scope of social anthropology, its relation with social sciences, methods of study, social structure and structuralism, gender issues in tribal societies, different aspects of tribal movement including autonomy, which help in the study of tribal society, economy, culture and polity.
Social Change in Modern India, written by M.N Srinivas, is a work on some theories of social change. The factors of social change in modern India: Sanskritization, Westernization, some expression of Caste mobility, secularization, and some thoughts on the study of one’s own society are firmly discussed.

The Tribal Culture of India, written by L.P Vidyarthi, Binay Kumar Rai, discuss in detail about the history of Indian Anthropology, dimensions of Tribal India and civilization, and the economic system and social organizations of the tribal populace. It also discusses their political and social life.

A Century of Tribal Politics in northeast India (1874-1974) written by V. Venkata Rao, deals with the formation of the District Council in the tribal areas of North East India and the state politics. The formation of separate States of Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, and Autonomous councils in the hills district of Assam helps us to understand the origin of tribal problems in the North East and Assam.

Rainbow People: Ethnic Identity and the North East India written by Falguni Rajkumar, discusses the concept and meaning of ethnicity and identity from theoretical perspectives in North –East India.

Impact of Globalization on Tribal in the context of Kerala, written by Matthew Arthayil deals with the impact of globalization on the tribal people of Kerala. This book gives the idea and theory of globalization and its effects on different aspects of the people.

‘Tribal economy at crossroads’ edited by S.N Choudhary is a book compiled of various issues of economy and society of the tribal peoples of India.

The Red River and the Blue hill written by Hem Barua is an important informative book which dealt with the history of Assam, about the races, religion and people of
Assam, and also the urban and rural life of the people of Assam including its language and literature.

*Gopinath Bardoloi, ‘The Assam Problem’ and Nehru’s Centre*, written by Nirode K. Barooah, is an important source to understand the politics of Assam during the time of Gopinath Bardoloi. The book contains a chapter which dealt with ‘Bardoloi and the Tribal Assamese of the Brahmaputra valley, which is sufficient to understand his attitude towards the tribal Assamese.

*The Transformation of Assamese Identity: A Historical Survey, the H.K Barpujari Endowment Lecture (4)*, delivered by Udayan Misra, in the NEIHA, held at Imphal, November, 2000, was a valuable speech which reflected the history of the formation of Assamese nationality and sub-nationalism. It also speaks about the transformation of the Assamese community over the past one hundred years and the demographic changes that had occurred in the Assamese society due to certain major factors.

*Social Change in North-East India, Partition, Ethnicity, Revivalism, Globalization, the H.L Gupta Endowment Lectures(4)*, delivered by Mahadev Chakravarti, in NEIHA, held at NEHU, Shillong, October, 2004, is another valuable speech which speaks in general, about the social changes in North-East India.

*Jawaharlal Nehru, Tribes and Tribal policy*, edited by K.S Singh is another important work which throws light on the policies adopted by Jawaharlal Nehru for the tribal people of India.

*An Introduction to the study of Indian History*, written by D. D. Kosambi, is an important source to make a survey on Indian history including tribal elements which are fused and absorbed by the Indian society.
Myth and reality, written by D.D. Kosambi is another important theoretical book on myth. The narratives supply us information on the origin of myths and their role in reconstructing history.

Early History of Kamarupa written by Rai K.L Barua Bahadur, deals with the history of the old kingdom known as Pragjyotisha or Kamarupa from the earliest time till the death of the Koch king Naranarayan towards the end of the sixteenth century.

‘The Kachāris’ written by Rev. Sidney Endle is one of the primary sources, which throws light on the Kachāri people of Assam and the homeland, racial and ethnographic background of the people.

‘Kirata Jana-Kirti’ written by S.K Chatterji is one of the important primary sources which throw much light on the origin of the Indo-Mongoloids of Assam.

‘Kiratas in ancient India’ written by Dr G.P. Singh is another informative book which throws new light on the origin of the Kiratas in ancient India. The author makes new interpretation about the origin home of the Kiratas of ancient India.

‘Statistical accounts of Assam’ by W.W. Hunter also give a detailed account of Lakhimpur district. It discusses the boundary, geography, environment and natural resources, ethnic composition, official records and economic activities of the state of that time.

Lakhimpur district gazetteer, 1905, by B.C Allen, is a descriptive account of the then Lakhimpur district including present Dibrugarh and Tinsukia district. The report gives us an account of the towns, industries, natural resources, population, environment, in and out migration of the district. It helps us to identify the Sonowāl population of the district.
Assam District Gazetteers, Cachar, vol-one, 1905, by B.C. Allen, is also an important source to know about the history of Cachar and its physical aspects, population, and the general administration of the district.

The report of Capt. R. Boileau Pemberton ‘The Eastern Frontier of British India’ gives information on the eastern frontier of British India; which supplies us information about various tribes of North East India and their habitat areas including the Sonowāl Kachāris of Assam.

‘Topography of Assam’, John M’Cosh, also supplies valuable information on the routes of migration from and to Assam. Indeed it is a valuable book for every researcher in history to understand the routes of migration as well as their habitat areas.

Report on the Province of Assam, A.J. Moffatt Mills, throws light on the system of administration prevailing in Assam during the early period of British rule in Assam and also on the socio-economic and educational situations in the province.

Bhauma-Naraka legend and State formation in Pragiyotisha-Kamarupa’ the published form of H.K Barpujari endowment lectures (5), delivered by J.B Bhattacharjee, explains the role of legend in the state formation policy in ancient Assam. It helps us to understand the importance of legends.

Social and Economic History of Assam 1853-1921, written by Rajen Saikia, analyses the erosion of the old ruling class and the disappearance of traditional and artisanal industries; it examines to what extent it was due to foreign rule and intrinsic limitations.
Satellite Autonomous Councils of Assam & the Tribal Law vol. one, written by Dr. Khireshwar Borah is a work dealing with the Sonowāl Kachāri and various issues of the community concerning their movements, grievances, contents of their accord/MoU etc signed with the government.

Report on the survey of Alienation of Tribal land in Assam prepared by Dr B.N Bordoloi. The report shows the alienation of tribal land in Assam. The report helps us in many ways to study the major prominent tribes of Assam.

History of the Dimasas (From the earliest times to 1896 A.D), S.K Barpujari (ed), is a significant work on the Dimasa Kachāris of Assam. He uses the traditional stories of the Kachāris regarding their origin, and raises the question of whether the Sadiyal branch of the Kachāris was identical with the Chutiyas of Sadiya or not.

Kachāri Buranji’ edited by S.K Bhuyan deals with the political history of the Kachāris of Assam. Further he mentions the myths and legends relating to the origin of Kachāris of Assam. He mentions the two branches of Kachāris of Assam. Some important information given on the Sadiyal branch of the Kachāris needs further study.

A History of Assam written by Edward Gait is an important source of Assam history. This book covers the entire period of Assam history from the earliest to the modern. This book also throws light on the relationship between Ahom and Kachāri. The author also mentions the ‘Sonowāl’ as a professional khel during the Ahom period.

A Socio-Economic and Cultural History of Medieval Assam (1200-1800 A.D) by S.N Sharma, is a work of comprehensive history of medieval Assam. There is a brief mention made of the Sonowāl Kachāris of Assam.
‘Tribal Women of Assam, A Social Geographic Perspective,’ a published thesis of Madhushree Das. It deals with the subject of demographic and socio-economic characteristics and socio-cultural practices among the tribal women of Assam including Sonowāl Kachāri, in relation to their social structure and the pattern of social change and development in the state.

‘Scheduled Tribes of North-East India and Development’ edited by Th. R articles deals with various aspects of tribal life, viz. the mass movement in the pre- and post-independence India.

Amalendu Guha’s work entitled Planter Raj to Swaraj freedom struggle and electoral politics in Assam, supplies a lot of information regarding the freedom movement of Assam and the contemporary electoral politics in Assam. The book also throws light on the growth of Assamese nationalism.

Tradition to Modernity written by Sivanath Barman is a collection of eighteen essays on topics as diverse as Hinduism and the Hindu cults of Assam. The author also has made a dispassionate attempt to explore the roots of the ethnic agitation in Assam.

B. Books in Assamese:

‘Kachāri Rāijyar Uthān Āru Patan’ written by J.B Bhattacharjee, throws light on the socio-political history of Kachāri kingdom of Assam. He refers to the ancient Hālāli kingdom of the Sadiyal Kachāri, whom we are taking into consideration as today’s Sonowāl Kachāris of Assam.

Asom 1864, Oscar Flex, translated by Salim M. Ali, is a valuable book, which supplies information regarding the life in tea gardens and its labour, the society and
economy of Assam during that time, the newly emerging traders and merchants, early tea gardens in Assam, and reference of Kachāri tea garden workers.

Ahomar Din written by Hiteswar Barbarua is an important book dealing with the history of Ahom period, which has supplied a lot of information regarding the relationship between the Ahom and Kachāri. Further it also gives information about the Sonowāl Kachāris.

Naobaisha Phukanar Asom Buranjī written by Padmeswar Naobaisha Phukan, deals with the history of Ahom kings and a detailed account of the khel system; the names of various officers are given in this book. Moreover the author also deals with the origin of the Chutiā Kachāris of Assam. Further references are found about the different branches of Sonowāl Paiks.

Antonio Gramsci: Jeevan Sangrām Tattva an analytical account of life and philosophy of Italian revolutionary, Antonio Gramsci in Assamese, written by Munin Bayan is an important work which helps to understand the theory and philosophy of Gramsci.

Asomiya Madhebittya Shreneer Itihās, written by Dr Prafulla Mahanta discusses the origin of the growth of Assamese middle class. The factors which led to the rise of the Assamese middle class were discussed elaborately.

Boro Jātiya Uttaranar Etibitta, written by Taren Boro is a collection of articles on language, literature, socio-economic and distinguished personalities of the Bodo community.

Janagosthiya Samasyā: Ateet Bartamān Bhabishyat: a collection of articles in Assamese on the ethnic problems of Assam, written by Indibar Deuri, discussing the tribal problems, particularly the autonomy movements of the tribal people of Assam.
Asomar Janajāti Samasyā: Aitihāsik Utsa Sandhān, A book on the tribal problems of Assam, written by Dr. Sivnath Barman also provides information on the origin and causes of tribal problems in Assam.

Asamar Jātiya Jibanat Sanghati Āru Sanghāt, a book in Assamese on the Nationality problems of Assam, written by Hiren Gogoi, is an important source to understand the unity and conflict in the national life of the Assamese.

Asomiā Jātigathan Prakriyā Āru Jātiya Janagosthigata Anusthān Samuh Assamese Nationality Construction Process and the (Role played by) National and Ethnic Organizations in it, written by Dr. Devabrata Sharma is an important work which deals with the subject of the formation of Assamese nationality. The author provides the readers with a vast idea of nationalism, its growth and origin, the role of the Assamese middle class and its origin.

Tinisukiār Itihās, edited by Debasis Phukan, is an important book which supplies valuable information about the Tinsukia district. The articles of Dr Swarnalata Baruah, Benudhar Sarmah and the poem written by Ambikagiri Rai Choudhary on ‘Tinsukia’ are informative.

Sadiyār Bornomoy Buronji, written by Shrikumar Dohutiya is an informative book which provides information regarding the history, heritage and folk culture and life of the people of Sadiya.

Asamiyā Mānuhar Itihās, written by Nagen Saikia is another significant work of Assam and its people. The author deals with the various topics including origin of the name of Assam, the folk life of Assamese people, routes of migration of different groups of people to Assam, ethnic and linguistic groups of people of Assam, the political, social, economic, and cultural and religious life of the people, food and
dress, language of Assamese community, Neo-Vaishnavism and its impact, and so on and so forth.

Gagan Ch. Sonowal’s “Sāhitya sanskriti Bichitrā” is an important book where he describes different aspects of the community.

‘Mongol Kachārir Gupta Itihās’ written by Rajani Hazarika, is an important book dedicated to the Sonowal Kachāris of Assam. He not only dealt with the Sonowal Kachāris but also as a whole the entire mongoloid people of Assam. Although the author does not follow a scientific research method while writing the book, it is rich in data and information.

‘Sonowal sourabh’ edited by Mohan Sonowal, has also provided a lot of information about the Sonowal Kachāri people. The book contains a number of different articles and matters regarding the origin, history, society, economy, religion and political consciousness of the people.

Kulanandan Subha Baruah an edited souvenir by Basanta Sonowal, is a work where information regarding an eminent personality, the Late Subha Baruah is found. It throws light on the initiatives adopted by Subha Baruah for the betterment of the Sonowal community. It helps us to understand the causes that helped in the growth and development of ethnonationalism among the Sonowal Kachāris of Assam.

‘Sonowal Kachāri: Tatwa Āru Bislekhon’ A collection of articles on Sonowal Kachāri culture and religion, written by Prasanta Kumral: In this book the writer tries to analyze the myths related to the origin of the Sonowal Kachāri of Assam. He also raises the question of ‘Bāthou dharma’ and emphasizes the divine philosophy of the Sonowal Kachāri and its features. The analysis raises questions regarding the origin and religion of the Sonowal Kachāris of Assam.
Sonowāl Kachāri Tattva Anvesana written by Prasanta Kumral is a valuable book which throws light on some important aspects of the Sonowāl Kachāris of Assam. The article on Sonowāl Kachāri Nāmghar is a thought-provoking one which makes us bound to think about the origin of the Nāmghar in Assam. The other relevant articles such as ST Sonowāl and Non-ST Sonowāl, tragedy in Sonowāl Kchari folk literature, the cultural heritage and its crisis, and the Rangāli bihu of Sonowāl Kachāri: characteristic, its development and transition, are some important writings of the author which throw a new light on the history and culture of the Sonowāl Kachāris of Assam.

Sonowāl Janagusthi Āru Janajātiya Protivār Samikhyā: A collection of articles compiled by Guneswar Sonowāl is another important work of the community. It not only discusses the cultural life but also about the growth of ethnic consciousness and its causes among the Sonowāl Kachāris. It helps us to understand the role of the Sonowāl Kachāri middle class in the development of political and social consciousness among the community.

‘Sonowāl Kachāri Sakalar Pariyāl Parichoi’ is written by Rajo Sonowāl. It is a collection of the meaning and historical background of the clans of Sonowāl Kachāris. It gives a detailed account of Sonowāl Kachāri clan, khel and paiyal or family.

Dāngari Uchahator Mādhyamik Bidyālayar Etihāhar Rengani Āru Onyanya Rasanā, edited by Aimanu Sonowāl Deuri Bharali, is an important book that supplies valuable information about the Dangari H.S School of Tinsukia District including the information regarding the growth and development of ethnic consciousness among the Kachāris of the Tinsukia district, particularly the Dangari area.
Dr. Gajendra Adhikary’s work entitled ‘Asomar Itihasār Keitāman Kimbandanti: Ek Bislesan’ is on myths and legends of Assam. Here the author makes a historical analysis of some legends of Assam history.

Asom Āndolan: Yugamiā Cintār Ek Pratifalan, vol- 5 and vol-6, edited by Dr. Joyasree Goswami Mahanta, is a book of a collection of articles regarding the Assam movement against illegal migrants from foreign countries to Assam, India.

The Khogeswar Borah edited work entitled Vaisnava Pandit Sonaram Chutiya: Jivan aru Manisā is an anthology of essays in honour of Vaisnava Pandit Shri Sonaram Chutiya, which throws light on the works and activities of Sonaram Chutia.


Laxmi Nath Tamuly edited work Barenya Byaktitva: A biographical anthology of renowned personalities of various tribes of Assam, supplies information about the prominent tribal personalities of Assam belonging to different tribal communities.

Dr Hiren Gohain’s work entitled Asomiyā Jātiya Jeevanat Mahāpurushiā Paramparā is an important book which throws light on the impact of Sankardeva and his teachings in the life of the Assamese people.

Asamiyā Jātiyatābādar Utsha Prasanga (On Assamese Nationalism) written by Dr. Prafulla Mahanta is an important book on the origin and sources of Assamese nationalism.

Dr Prafulla Mahanta’s work on Janajātiya Swādhikār Āndolan Āru Bodo Jātisattā, a collection of articles in Assamese on contemporary Assam, deals with various issues related to Assamese chauvinism and nationalism.
Dr Prafulla Mahanta’s work entitled *Janagosthigata Chetanā: Ātmapratisthār Prashna, a collection of articles on Culture, Ethnicity and the History of Assam* also discusses a number of issues like history of myths: and search of it sources, the contribution of heritage, Assam –Asomiya, historically ignored questions of the tribals, bhakti movement and the history of middle age.

*Asomiyā Samāj Jiban Bibartaan*, written by Diganta Oza, is an important work which throws light on the question of nationality, reinterpretation of ancient legends, geography, culture, Assamese society and language, and nationalism.

*Chutiā Jātir Buranji*, a History of Chutias of Assam, edited by Swarna Lata Baruah, is another important source that throws light on the origin and history, political, social, religious and folk life of the *Chutiās* Assam.

**C. Unpublished Theses:**

Chandrajyoti Sonowāl did his Ph.D in ‘*Gender system of Sonowāl Kachāri of Assam*’. The study focuses on the gender system that has existed within the *Sonowāl Kachāri* society. It is an anthropological study of the *Sonowāl Kachāri* of the Zamira village of Dibrugarh district.

Meenakshi Borkotoki did her Ph.D in ‘*Acculturation of Sonowāl Kachāri of Assam*’ in which she studied the socio-cultural and religious practices of *Sonowāl Kachāri* of Assam. Her study confined itself to the different rites and rituals observed by the *Sonowāl Kachāri* of Assam. The study ignores the socio –economic and political changes that have come into the life of the people.

Jintu Hazarika did his Ph.D ‘*Sonowāl Kachārisakalar Lok Jiban*’ : this research includes the entire folk life of the *Sonowāl Kachāris* of Assam. Here we find only the folk life of the *Sonowāl Kachāri* community of Assam.
Another research work has done on the Sonowāl Kachāri by Kumud Gogoi, titled ‘The society and culture of Sonowāl Kachāri of Assam with special reference to Tinsukia and Dibrugarh district’. The work mainly focuses on the social and the cultural practices of the community. No discussion on the political and economic aspects of the community is found in this work.

Nityananda Kalita’s research work on ‘A historical perspective of ethnic conflict in North-East India with special reference to Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills district’ focuses on the ethnic conflict and causes and growth of ethnonationalism among the two hills tribes. Therefore it left the scope for study of growth of ethnonationalism among the plains tribes of Assam.

Another research work on the line of ethnonationalism was done by Rajiv Acharjya with the title ‘Ethnonationalism and ethnic insurgency a comparative study of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim Isak Muivah and National Socialist Council of Nagalim Khaplang.’ This work focuses on the theoretical perspective of ethnonationalism in the context of north east India. The study is confined to Naga ethnonationalism and therefore left much scope for study of ethnonationalism among the plain tribes of Assam.

D. Souvenirs:


E. Journals:

The other sources comprise of the Archival Records, most of which are gathering dust in the offices of the Directorate of Archives of Assam, Guwahati, and Archives at West Bengal, Kolkata. These records include Census Reports, Official Proceedings prepared at different times by competent authorities, Parlances in the State Assembly. Moreover the News papers English and Assamese daily, Proceedings published by NEIHA, Souvenirs of SKAC and other organizations. Moreover, the Letters and Proceeding of various organizations of Sonowâl Kachâris, letters of All Assam Tribal Sangha, letters of Tinsukia District Tribal Sangha, proceedings of Tinsukia District Tribal Sangha, letters and Proceedings of Sonowâl Kachri Jatiya Parishad memorandum of Autonomy Demand Committee of Sonowâl Kachâri, memorandum of Sonowâl Kachâri Jatiya Parishad, and memorandum of demands of All Assam Sonowâl Kachâri Students’ union; the Preamble of All Assam Sonowâl Kachâri Students’ Union is also studied, which helps us understand their work and initiative. All these documents supply us information to study the problems of Sonowâl Kachâris in proper perspectives. We are attempting to do this very thing in the following pages.
1.13 The Significance of the study:

1) The study helps to know about the origin of the Sonowāl Kachāris.

2) The study helps to trace and understand the roots of ethnicity and nationality through the discussion of their traditional society and economy.

3) The study focuses on the causes of development of ethnonationalism in Assam in general and among the Sonowāl Kachāris in particular.

4) The study provides information regarding the organizational development and their activities among the Sonowāl Kachāris of Assam.

1.14 Aims and objectives of the study:

1) To trace the roots of ethnicity and nationalism among the Sonowāl Kachāris.

2) To identify the causes of development of ethnonationalism among the Sonowāl Kachāris.

3) To discuss the emergence and activities of socio-political organizations among the Sonowāl Kachāris.

1.15 Hypothesis:

1) The Sonowāl Kachāris possess the characteristics of ethnicity which help them in establishing themselves as a separate tribal ethnic community.

2) The contemporary events create a sense of ethnic consciousness among the Sonowāl Kachāris.

3) The emergence of socio-political organizations among the Sonowāl Kachāris helps them in the promotion and projection of their ethnonationalistic activities.

4) Ethnonationalism gives a new dimension to the Sonowāl Kachāris.
1.16 Methodology:

Historical and analytical methodology is used in the projected research work. Both primary and secondary data and information are used in the preparation of the research work. The primary sources includes archival data, Census reports, reports from the District Statistical department, reports from the D.C record room, Assembly debates reports from the library of Assam Legislative Assembly, Dispur and Ahom chronicles. Moreover, in-depth interviews with the leading personalities of the community, field works, observations and case study method are also applied wherever it is felt they are necessary.

Secondary sources are the books, published and unpublished theses, personal diaries, proceedings of different meetings and memorandums different organizations, souvenirs, journals, magazines, newspapers, etc. After collecting the data and information, it is cross-examined when required. The study is divided into six chapters.

Field study: The relevant data for this work are collected from the villages of Tinsukia district; purposively nine villages have been selected for our study. The data of the villages are used as a whole for the sub-division. For the tables of religion, economy and globalisation each of the house of the villages are used as a sample unit. And for the table of education, the population of the villages are used as a sample unit. Due to the variations in the villages, the number of houses and population are not equal with one other. The villages of Tinsukia sub-division is highly populated by Sonowal Kacharis. The number of houses in Laina village are increased due to the separation of the families and depicted as nuclear family in the census report. The village Lawpati is a merger of two villages, viz. Lawpati no-1 and 2. And the village...
Borpather is taken as a greater whole by assembling the four parts of the village. It is a highly populated village containing the ancient traditional temple Bāithou. But the Margherita and Sadiya sub-division has a mixed population. The village Ambikapur is a small village within the Sonowāl Gāon and Bāliani is within Ratanpur in Sadiya sub-division. Moreover the names of some villages do not match with the name of the village list of the Sonowāl Kachāri. It might be due to the separate distribution of villages under the jurisdiction of Autonomous council. Therefore a new list of proposed villages for Sonowāl Kachāri Autonomous Council has been submitted before the government. The population data as found during field study is not similar with the figure found in the village list. Therefore the latest data is used for the study.

The following are the selected nine villages of the district:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the village</th>
<th>No of House</th>
<th>Total Sonowal Kachari Population as found in 2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laina</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawpati no 1 &amp; 2</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borpather Greater</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>1741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kherjan Forest village</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borhoolung Nagaon no-3</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoolung pather</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratanpur</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratanpur Baliani</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambikapur (Sonowal Gaon)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>