CHAPTER I

Anthropological Analysis

India's North-East is an ethnological museum where we find colourful tribes in the hills and plains with their traditional heritage and culture. Of them the Kacharis were distinguished from others. They were numerically superior and in a good standard of civilisation.

The Kacharis belong to the mongoloid ethnic stock. The majority of the mongoloids of the North East have a predominantly tribal heritage. These people can be classified into two linguistic groups viz. - the Tibeto-Burmans and the Austrics under the Mon-Khmer family of languages now represented by the Khasi-Syntengs of Meghalaya. Here we are not concerned with the second group. The Tibeto-Burman family include a host of tribal communities and they are -(A) Aka, Miri, Abor(Adi), Dafla and Mishmi in the Northern Assam group, (3) the Kacharis in the Assam-Burmese group, (C) the Nagas, (d) the Manipuris (Meiteis), Mizos etc. in the Kuki Chin group and (E) the Kachins of Northern Burma.

The Kacharis have similarities and contrasts with the aforesaid tribes. They (except the Mizos) had entered into the North East from Tibet, China and Burma at various intervals of history and survived as powerful tribes till the advent of the Ahoms. The Mizos were later immigrants. The Kacharis continued to survive as a great political force even after the Ahoms conquest of the land. They migrated from the river valleys of Hoang Ho and Yangtse Kiang, the cradle of the Asiatic mongoloids.
Ethnic Elements in North East India :-

So far as colour terms are concerned the entire world population can be classified into three basic sections as follows. Caucasian or Europoid represented by the white skinned Europeans, Negroid - the black Negroes of Africa and Mongoloid - the yellow skinned Chinese. Yellow complexion is a criteriam of the mongoloids.

In the epic Ramayana the Kiratas (Kacharis) are referred to as yellowish in complexion and beautiful in appearance. It is recorded in the Kalika Purana that they were golden in appearance and bright like flames. Hiuem Tsang also refers "their complexion is dark with a yellowish tinge". In modern times Risley says "complexion is dark with a yellowish tinge". The natural hypothesis is that throughout the course of history the tribe had experienced several on slaughts of alien cultures, viz Dravidian, Alpine and probably Negritus and consequently they have lost their mongoloid entity to a reasonable degree. One anthropologist went to the extent of saying that "the hill tribes of Assam, Burma and Indo-China appear to contain an amount of caucasian stock which penetrated to the south East Asia before the southern migration of the mongolians". In the forthcoming chapter a reference is planned on the Aryanisation of the valley of the Brahmaputra. Even after the Aryanisation of the land intermarriages and absorptions of the Aryans in the folds of the tribal societies is a matter of conjecture only, and we have little evidences at disposal to confirm such a fact.
In physical appearance i.e., in their stature the Kacharlis resemble the mongoloid Chinese to a greater degree. The average stature of a pure mongoloid varies from medium tall to medium short. Hsiu Tsang wrote about the Kacharlis as they "are of small stature". According to modern anthropological datas the Kacharlis are medium in stature in more then fifty percent cases. Thus the trend is towards a mongoloid pattern. In general appearance they are a strong and stout people. In the Kalika Purana there is a reference to their pillar like physique. Similarly the body structure of the Kacharlis (Kiritas) is mentioned as charming and beautiful in the Ramayana. Dalton says, "they are a fine athletic race, industrious and thriving".

The head form of an average Kachari is broad like a mongoloid. Plenty of black hair is found on the heads of the males and females alike. The hair is smooth and flat wavy in a perfect mongoloid pattern distinguished from the wooly and curling hair of the Negritas. But the Kacharlis have no face hair or mustaches, and if there are such cases these are exceptions.

The Kacharlis generally have projecting check bones. The face is naturally flat where pair of oblique eyes below forehead attract one's ready attention of first sight.

Habitat and environment on the Ethnic features of the Kacharlis -

Influence of the physical world and environment on the ethnic transformations of the Kacharlis is astonishing. In the days of the pre-christian era not only the whole of the North East but also North Bihar, North Bengal, slopes of Nepal, entire Bhutan and
Tribes were populated by the Mongoloid ethnic groups allied to the Kachari. Waves of alien ethnic groups viz. Dravidians, Aryans and Negritos left their marks on the widely distributed Kachari tribes and their cognates as stated before. Consequently the present generation of the Kachari tribes of the North East are not pure representatives of their progenitors from the point of view of ethno-history.

Aryan Hinduism made considerable influence upon the tribes of Nepal. Still, ancient missing links are found preserved in traditions. According to a Nepal tradition the Lepcha, Jimdo and Mech (a Kachari tribe) were three brothers and from them originated the three tribes of the same names. In Nepal there is a place known as Tiranti in the eastern slopes, and according to legend Tiranti was a corrupt formation of the term Kirat used by the ancient chroniclers to denote the Non Aryan mongoloids of the Bodo (Kachari) group of languages. The Mech Section of the Kacharis have great degree of similarities with the Nepalis. According to some, "There is reason to believe that there is a considerable strain of Nepalese blood among the Mech". Sidney Medde is right when he says an average Kachari is strikingly similar to a Nepali. The case is also the opinion of the present writer. The Nepalese are now mostly Indo-Europeans and so in their cultural lives they do not resemble the Kacharis. The Sherpas are the only subtribe of Nepal who still use the Tibeto-Burman tongue although the script is Dev Nagra.

Buddhism also had played a significant role on the cultural lives of the tribes of North Behar and Nepal who were
identical with the Kachari tribes. Verrie Elwia says, "it is possible that Buddha himself was an Indio-Mongoloid or Kirata and through him India has a spiritual link with the whole Buddhist mongoloid world. " The whole of North Bihar and Nepal were predominantly mongoloid in the sixth century B.C. when Buddha was born in the Terai of Nepal. The Bodo Kacharis or the Bodos (Kacharis of the Brahmaputra valley) are also known as Bodo fisa, or sons of Bodo (fisa means sons in Kachari tongue). Hence one source state that 'Bodo' is a corruption of the term Buddha and therefore the Bodos were the sons of Buddha i.e. Buddhists. This assumption though lacks confirmation through other sources seems not at all unlikely. Whole of Tibet and portions of Sikkim and Bhutan are still Buddhists and so it is probable that the mongoloid immigrants of India who were adherents to Buddhism gradually adopted Indian culture and polity which was Hinduised in order to place themselves at par with the contemporary populace of the country.

Physical feature of the North East India left its mark on the ethnic identities of the Kachari tribes and their cognates to a considerable degree. The valleys of the Hoang Ho and Yang Tse Kiang the cradle of the Asiatic Mongoloids differ drastically from the Brahmaputra valley of Assam. Marcel Granet writes, "one could suppose that it had always and everywhere been easy to set up houses and till the fields. As a matter of fact the Chinese soil has only revealed its fruitfulness canton by canton, and
at the cost of heroic labours. The soil of the Brahmaputra Valley the new abode of the mongoloid immigrants of China was quite opposite. It was fertile as it still now and its dump climate had tremendous relaxing effects upon the inhabitants. Naturally, here people enjoy great material prosperity but there is a strong tendency towards physical and moral deterioration, ultimately this state of affairs lead to inevitable consequences of the loss of sturdiness and robust health.

A class of warriors and hardy cultivators thus gradually degenerated into a race of peaceful peasants. It was one reason though not sole, which according to Haarmeyer was responsible for the downfall of the Hedambari Kachari Kingdom of the N.C.hills and Cachar. Superior polity and culture of the Kacharlis brought them into contacts with the advanced ethnic groups, the process of which had commenced since the down of the Christian era in India. The Aryan conquest of the Brahmaputra Valley brought them under the influence of Hinduism in that very early stage. The effects were deteriorated. The process went on increasing throughout a course of subsequent ages. Vaisnavite sect of Hinduism propagated in Assam by Sri Sankaradeva (1449-1569 A.D.) made so much influence in Assam that a large number of Kacharis embraced that cred. These convosits are now known as Soronias. In the seventies of the nineteenth century their total number only in the present district of Kamrupa was 11,312 according to W.W. Hunter. The Soronias were Hinduised and their differences with the animist Kacharis in the realm of cultural lives
The Brahma Samaj, a popular creed of the late nineteenth century, also left its mark upon the tribals of the North East Sentinel of India. A fair number of Kacharis embraced this creed. These Kachari Brahmas differ materially from their animist kin.  

Impact of economic factors were not negligible. The exposure of the market economy and the advantages of cash money brought startling changes in the life pattern of the Kacharis since the beginning of the last century. In the old good days there were few needs and barter system was widely prevalent among them. With the opening up of means of communications alien ethnic groups viz the Bengalee and Marwari traders brought with them mill made clothes, match boxes, spices and many other things which previously had to be manufactured by them at the cost of tremendous labour. In Assam, Bengalee and Marwari traders began to invest their capital towards the beginning of the nineteenth century. In the markets of urban areas batches of tribals frequent regularly for selling their surplus agricultural yields and to purchase the essentials of daily life viz. match boxes, spices etc. This practice had commenced since longtime back. Those who were intelligent quickly learnt the technique of small business and thereby have learnt to appreciate the advantages of monetary transactions instead of barter system. An economically self-sufficient tribe thus began to depend upon others with the steady increase of their demands for modern amenities of life. This had produced effects upon the life pattern of the Kacharis in two ways.
First, contacts with alien ethnic groups gradually taught them to learn new food habits. In ancient times they had few taboos so far as amonial flashes were concerned. Due to their growing contacts with Hinduism most of them had given up the habit of consuming cheap animal meat and beef. The Nagas and the Garos were habituated to consume varieties of animal meat and too much wine and consequently were more formidable and stout in physical standard as most of them still are. 35

Secondly, the increasing demands for modern amenities of life considerably discouraged them to stick to their traditional village based economy. Instead, many of them preferred to settle in the vicinity of towns and urban areas where jobs were available and money could be earned by various other means. A class of shop keepers, service holders and labourers began to emerge from them. This new class is distinguished by its sharp contrasts with the traditional life. In the by gone days the whole Kachari tribe was laborious, industrious and strenuous with few or be exception at all. Those days are not too far whom "a fine athletic race" as Dalton wrote in the last century will degenerate into a mercantile and occupational race like the advanced communities. 37 The challenge of habitat and environment thus, is a vital factor in transformation of ethnic character.

The process of change has not yet ever. It is true that the Kachari tribes belong to the great mongoloid race of the world who now dominate the states of South East Asia. But
centuries of residence in India had completely dislocated their ethno-linguistic ties with the mongoloids of China, Japan, Burma and elsewhere. The matter will be easier to understand if we take into count the history of the Ahoms of Assam. Originally belonging to the great Shan race of Burma they entered Assam in the thirteenth century A.D. as a very small group of warriors, nobles and princes. In Assam they preferred to marry non-Ahom girls and adopted the traditional culture of the land which was Hinduised to win the hearts of the vanquished as well as to fulfill their territorial ambitions as part of their diplomatie far sight. The met result is that the Ahoms lost their ethno-linguistic originality to a maximum degree and at present have few differences with the Assamese speaking communities. The same thing happened in the case of the Kacharîes too. They also gradually came under such cultural influences of the Hinduised populace which we shall refer with details in the Chapter I. Consequently, they have become Indian in every respect and bear only an ethnic similarity which is not more then in the realm of physical anthropology with the mongoloids of the South East Asia. Hence the term Indo-Mongoloid applied to them by the great scholar Dr. S.K. Chatterjee is most appropriate to justify their Indian connection.

Different Branches -

The great Kachari tribe is now found scattered in a widely distributed area of the North East India. Numerous groups of this tribe still survive in imnumerable isolated pockets of
this region under various tribal or regional names and their separation with each other is so complete and decisive that a person of the tribe hailing from the North Bengal will fail to understand the tongue of his Tippera counterpart at first meeting. They differ with each other in the same way that we find between an Assamese of Barpeta and Jorhat, and a Bengalee of North Bengal and calcutta proper. Still, similarities do exist and the difference are not more distinct than those found among various members of a joint family. Difference are found not primarily in the domain of ethnic set up and language, but in various aspects of clan system, cultural life, economic enterprises and territorial as well as dynastic affiliations having their origin rooted deep in the past. Tentatively speaking the whole Kachari community of the North Eastern India can be classified under three heads - Eastern southern and western, obviously taking into count all the above stated factors.

The Eastern Kacharis -

In the Eastern tract of Assam (popularly known as Upper Assam) the Kacharis are known variously as Chutiyas, Sadiyal Kacharlis Sonowal and the Thengal Kacharis.

The Chutiyas were the earliest settlers of Assam in the vicinity of Sadiya, and belong to an earliest wave of the mongoloid immigrants from China. The Chutiyas believe that they are related with the mythological king Bhismak who had his kingdom in Kundila Nagara in the vicinity of Sadiya.
The Kingdom of Kundila Nagara was also known as Vidharbha, and according to Kalika Purana one Vidharbha king gave his daughters marriage to Narakasura, the traditional king of Pragjyotisha. Thus in the Eastern Assam Sadiya was a flourishing centre of Mongoloid Kachari (Bodo) culture. On the ruins of this mythological Kingdom the Chutiya Kingdom was founded around Sadiya in the thirteenth century A.D. under one Birapala of the line of the mythological king Dhimak. The Kachari (Bodo) word for water 'Di' forms the first syllable of the names of a good number of Assam rivers viz. Dihong, Dibong, Dibru, Dihing, Dimu, Desang, Dikhu, Dikrang, Digaru, all near Sadiya, confirmatory were to the fact that the Chutiya section of the Kacharlis were holding hegemony over a vast area of the North-East Assam in the pre-Christian epoch. Since we propose to touch an outline history of the Chutiya kingdom in the Chapter V, further descriptions in this regard is not necessary here.

In their ethnic set up the Chutiyas had assimilated and absorbed foreign elements to a greater degree than other Kachari tribes. Throughout the course of history they were exposed before the waves of alien ethnic groups. The Kingdom of Kundila Nagara possibly was sponsored by the races of mixed Dravidian and Mongoloid origin.

In the thirteenth century A.D. with the advent of the Ahoms the Chutiyas again were exposed before a new ethnic onslaught. The Ahoms entered into Assam with a few thousand
warriors accompanied by a number of nobles; the leader of this
expedition was Prince Sukpha. They brought with them few
females of their own ranks. Ahom warriors preferred tribal
women as their life partners and nobles freely married tribal
girls who were mostly Chutiyas, Morans and other branches of
the great Kachari tribe. Many tribals were also appeased with
the prospect of Ahom social ranks. This evidently produced
miraculous changes in the ethnic setup of the Chutiyas and
other petty Kachari sub groups of the North East Assam. L.A.
Waddell has rightly detected an amount of Ahom blood in the
vains of the Chutiyas. The Barahils another tribe of mixed
Mongolo-Dravidian origin also preferred to marry Chutiya girls.
In ancient times the Chutiyas had property rights and had
liberties to change their husbands at will. Not only inter-
marrriages, many of them also preferred to adopt Ahom and Borahi
culture instead of their traditional one. This led to the
further break-up of the traditional society and three sections
sprang up with divergent affiliations and loyalties viz. the
Hindu Chutiyas, Asom Chutiyas and Borahi Chutiyas. The Hindu
Chutiyas continued to identity themselves with the traditional
glory of their race while the other two broke way from this
line.

The Chutiyas are now found chiefly in the Sibsagar,
Dibrugarh and Lakhimpur districts of Assam. Although sub-
divided the Chutiyas were mostly Hinduised. Further details
of the Chutiya social set up and languages etc. are planned
The Chutiyas and the Sadial Kacharis are almost identical. In the Buranjis of the Ahoms we hear about the Sadial Kacharis of the medieval age. It seems that during the Ahom invasion of Assam the Sadial Kacharis were pushed to the Dimansiri valley by the conquerors. Then they gradually got themselves assimilated into the ranks of the Dimasa Kachari. The Sadial Kacharis and Chutiyas were identical. It is evident from the fact that they (Sadial) had in common with the Chutiyas the tradition of a golden cat as the source of their fortune and power. Further, the Sadial Kacharis and the Chutiyas were worshippers of the Tantrik goddess Kesaki (eater of raw flesh) with rites and sacrifices. It appears that the term "Sadial" is a territorial one than purely ethnic. They had founded their principality in the vicinity of Sadiya in the pre-Ahom epoch, and hence are so-called. This episode will be narrated in the Chapter V.

The Sonowal Kacharis are so called because of their occupational skill as gold (sona) washers. The river beds of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries were rich with gold dusts and the tribe earned their livelihood out of it. One of their tradition goes in saying that they migrated to the vicinity of Sadiya from their former abode in the District of Darrang. It is therefore likely that they originally belong to the western branch of the great Kachari tribe. But such an assumption is not well founded, because we do not know that what
degree of authentically should be assigned to the legend stated above. Throughout the course of history this group have experienced manifold ethnic and linguistic transformations, and as a small sub tribe are now at the print of extinction. Most of them have lost their original Bodo tongue and now use Assamese for the purpose.\textsuperscript{58} It is however, certain, that the term Sonowal is an occupational one having no territorial character. During the period of the Ahoms gold washing from the river beds of Brahmaputra was economically gainful and it seems that members of other tribal groups also came to be known as 'Sonowal Kacharis' in recognition of their occupational loyalty to the Ahom monarchs. The gold washers were required to pay to the Ahom exchequer one tola gold per head per year.\textsuperscript{59} Gold washing continued to be practised by them till the British occupation of Assam, when it was discontinued by the government considering the huge volume of labour connected with such a craft. The Sonowal Kacharis are now mostly Hinduised and they have their localities in Upper Assam, along with the Thengals, the silver washers.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{6} Endle in his monumental work, the 'Kacharis' suggested that the 'Morans of the North-Eastern Assam are a branch of the great Kachari tribe.\textsuperscript{61} All that we know about the Morans is that in the thirteenth century they had their small principality in the N.E. of Assam, under one of their king Badancha by name.\textsuperscript{62} The Ahom Buranjis and other sources record that the Ahoms vanquished them first by the flashes of swords and later reconciled many of them with the prospect of Ahom social ranks, status and fortune.\textsuperscript{63} Evidently many of their woman were married to
the Ahom warriors and the majority of the males preferred to opt Ahom life pattern in order to upgrade themselves in status and future. The tribe is now at the point of extinction and represent a mixed ethnic character. Linguistically, the Moran tongue can be classified as a sub section of Bodo (Kachari) as suggested by Grierson. Moran an important railway station of Upper Assam still bear the memory of the tribe associated with the locality.

The Southern Branch

The Dimasa Kacharis of the districts of Karbi Anglong, N.C. hills and Cachar are numerically an important member of the southern branch of the Kacharis. According to a Dimasa tradition the Dimasas believe that their original above was in the Brahmaputra Valley. At a subsequent age they migrated into the Valley of the Dhansiri (now largely in Nagaland).

Dimasas were identical with the Chutiyas and the Sadiyal Kacharis. Of all the Bodo group of languages, the southern Dimasa is most intimately associated with the Eastern Chutiya. After the Ahom conquest of Upper Assam large numbers of Sadiyal Kacharis sought shelter in the Dhansiri Valley. There were many waves of such immigrations from the North East in the medieval age. It appears that large numbers of those immigrants were adopted in the social set up of the Dimasa Kacharis, HojaIs and Lalungs of the present day. The Dimasas were also worshippers of the Tantrik goddess
Kesaikhaiti like the Chutiyas. A temple of this goddess was built in Cachar when the Dimasa (Hedambial) Kachari kings were ruling in the plains. It is therefore more or less conclusive that the Dimasa Kacharis had assimilated considerable traits of Kachari culture of the North East Assam. To a similar manner the Kacharis of the Western tract of Assam left their mark on the Dimasa polity and culture. Sizu (Euphorbia plant) the well-known emblem of Bathow (Siva) of the Bodo Kacharis of the Brahmaputra Valley was sacred to the Dimasas. It was the royal heraldic and insignia of the Dimasa (Hedambial) Kachari kings of N.C.hills and Cachar. The Dimasa Kachari folk-lore says that Sibrai (Siva) was one of their ancestor from whom the Dimasas were born. The Dimasas thus represent a synthesis of the Eastern and the western fractions of the Kachari tribe in their socio-cultural set up.

It is however a matter of speculation that as to what extent there was intrusion of foreign elements in the ethnic set up of the Dimasa Kacharis. In this regard their affinities with the Negritos, Austric speaking mongoloids and the mongoloids of the Naga and Karbi (Mikir) tribal groups may be examined. We lack sufficient evidences to justify the infiltrations of Negrito culture, but fortunate in having informations about Naga admixture. Naga legends and traditions confirm that Nagas had terms political as well as cultural with the Dimasa Kacharis. Naga girls were adopted as wives and consorts by the Hedambial Kachari kings. The sturdy Nagas of the hills also catered to the
defence requirements of the Hedambial kings as palace guards and as auxiliaries in the battle fields. The Buranjis of the Ahoms and archaeological sources throw considerable light in this regard. Trade and commerce was another media of their contacts. In the markets of the Dhansiri Valley the Nagas were purchasers of salt from the Kacharis in exchange of their steel products. These types of contacts brought the two tribes, closer. Naga dance pattern, dances and fashions began to be appreciated by the Kacharis. A stone sculpture found at Maibong in the twenties of this century furnishes interesting informations in this regard. The dress pattern of the sculptured figure probably a royal sentry bear striking similarities with the costumes of the Konyak Nagas. We shall refer this matter again in the Chapter VII. Naga wives and consorts of the royal palaces of Dimapur and Maibong were undoubtedly important channels of the flow of Naga ideals in palace culture. They definitely had taken much pains to foster their own culture among the Kacharis.

To a similar degree the Dimasa Kacharis contain an amount of Karbi (Mikir) culture in their fold. Karbi language forms a connecting link between the Kachari and certain Naga dialects. This suggests their contacts. Sometimes bitterness and hostilities resulting to battles characterised the mutual terms of the two tribes. It is said that some Karbi women were compelled to supply their breast milk to
the Kachari Rajas of Maibong and for this reason the Karbis fought with the Dimasa Kacharis and suffering defeat took temporary shelter in the neighbouring kingdom of Jayantiapur in large numbers.⁷⁴

The Dimasa Kacharis are also called Hedambial Kacharis, because they were the descendants of the epic hero Bhima through Hidimba Raksasi.⁷⁵ It is, however, a matter of wide speculation that how the term Dimasa originated. In Dimasa language 'Di' means water and sa means sons, and according to one interpretation the Dimasas are sons of 'Big water', i.e. Brahmaputra. But this interpretation has been refuted by some on the ground that Dimasa has nothing to do with the Brahmaputra. According to them 'Dima' means Dhansiri river in Dimasa language and sa means sons and they suggests that the 'Dimasas' are the sons of Dhansiri river, on the banks of which Dimapur, the citadel of the Kacharis emerged.⁷⁶

The Barman Kacharis of the plains of Cachar were originally Dimasas. Hedambial Kachari king Krishna Chandra (1790-1813 A.D.) and his brother Crown prince Govinda Chandra formally embraced Hinduism in 1790 A.D.⁷⁷ Those Dimasa subjects who following the example of the royal family embraced Hinduism subsequently came to be known as the Barman. They become upgraded in social status in comparison with the animist Dimasas of the hills. Apparently this prompted Baden Powell to suggest that the term Barman originated from Bara Manus, a Hindu or Bengali equivalent for great man.⁷⁸ It is also likely that the term was an
imitation after the manner of the celebrated Varman lina of kings of ancient Kamarupa founded by Pushya Verma in the fourth century A.D. For about two centuries the Barmans are residing in Cachar in the midst of Bengalee settlers of the district. In dress, food habits and in other they have gradually adopted many of the usages of the Bengalee Hindus. In general appearance most of them are less muscular and sturdy than the animist Dimasas of the hills.

The Hojaís and Lalungs of the N.C.hills Karbi Anglong and Nowgong districts of Assam also belong to the Southern branch of Kacharís ethnically as well as linguistically.

The meaning of the term Hojai is 'hillmen' connected with the Bodo word 'Haju' meaning hill. The Lalungs bear considerable amount of Karbi and Garo blood in their ethnic set up. This observation was made by Waddel and it can be backed by historical evidences. According to one source they were the inhabitants of the Dhansiri valley where they suffered persecution in the hands of the Dimasa kings and their women folk were also molested by the Dimasas. So, they sought temporary shelter in the Jayantia hills; from Jayantia, they again returned to the Karbi Anglong and started living in the midst of the Karbis and Dimasas. The origin of the term Lalung has a curious history. One legend says that first migration of the Lalungs in the Dhansiri valley from further north was obstructed by the Kalang river, and in their attempt to cross the river they were drowned and were rescued by the Karbis. After this incident
the Karbi people started calling them Lang Lung which after words changed to Lalung (Lang and Lung meaning 'water' and 'to sink in it' respectively in Karbi language). Sidney Endle, has classified the Tipperas under the southern sub section of the great Kachari tribe. Here this classification is warranted on the simple ground that the term Tripura or Tippera is a later origin and has nothing to do with the antiquity or the early Aryan epoch of the history of Tripura and eastern Bengal. The ruling dynasty of Tripura migrated to the province of the same name after centuries of wanderings in the districts of Nowgong and Cachar in Assam, and their hold was firmly established in the province not before the fourteenth century A.D.

In the classical epoch, i.e. in the early years of the Christian era Tripura was known as 'Kirata Desa' (i.e. the land of the Kiratas or the Kacharis of the Bodo group of languages). Geographer Ptolemy has also noticed the predominance of the Kiratas not only in Tripura but also in the adjoining tracts of Sylhet (present Bangladesh) and Cachar. Entire Eastern Bengal was predominantly inhabited by these ancient Kiratas who in later years lost their ethnic entity due to factors more than one. The people also had their royal glories under various kingdom, and so far we have been able to identify at least five known as Pattikara, Harikela the kingdom of Sylhet, Lauda and Taraf, with a Bodo (Kachari) base ground. Their history will be narrated in the Chapter III.

How this ancient Bodo (Kachari) speaking tribes of the Eastern Bengal lost their ethnic character is a matter of speculation. It
seems that in the first few centuries of the Christian era waves of Negritos and Dravidians got themselves assimilated with those ethnic stocks of Eastern Bengal. In the following centuries beginning from the fourteenth the new creed of Islam propagated their under the patronage of Muhamedan conquerors had turned their animistic ethnic character by a religious polish. At present glimpses of their faded links with the tribal world is perceptional only to an energetic investigator.

These above stated ethnic stock of Bodo (Kachari) origin were also predominant in Tripura as stated before. They were saved from the cultural influence of Islam. The ruling dynasty of Tripura accompanied by large number of Bodo (Kachari) subject appeared in the province around C. fourteenth century A.D., and founded a kingdom there with a purely Kachari background. Then there followed another ethnic evolution between the ancient ethnic stocks and the new immigrants and the present Tippera tribe represent a composite race due to the interaction of such forces. Inspite of the same ethno-linguistic origin the Tipperas differ from the Kacharlis. Their Hinduised tribal dynasty had territorial sovereignty in Tripura and also the Tipperas can be classified as the cognats of the Kacharlis. More details in this regard planned in the subsequent pages, under the heading cognates of the Kacharlis.

The Western Branch-

The Bodo Kacharlis, Meches, Rabhas, Hajongs and Himalals etc. figure prominently in the western Branch of the great Kachari tribe.
In the districts of Kamrup, Goalpara and Darrang the Bodo Kacharis were most numerous in ancient times as they are still now. Waddel considers that the world Bodo may be related to 'Bod' the old name of Tibet. Even to day a section of the Tibetans call their country as 'Bod'. It appears that the progenitors of the present Bodo Kacharis migrated in the North Eastern India by the river valley routes of North Bengal and the mountain passes having outlet Darrang through Arunchal Pradesh from Tibet. About these two ancient routes we shall deal in the next chapter. It further appears that they spent several years possibly centuries in Tibet as stop gaps to their southern journey from the river valley of Hoang Ho and Yang Tsekiang of China. Tibet thus served the purpose of a reservoir of various mongoloid immigrants from China. Consequently Tibetan culture which was primarily matriarchal left its mark upon these immigrants and although many centuries elapsed since then those can still be detected among the various members of the eastern Kacharis. Thus in certain cases the Bodo Kacharis recognised the right of women in society and there is a system of marriage known as Samdang Jagamey according to which a groom is required to reside in his father in laws house permanently as a house groom after marriage. Such matriarchal influences are more distinct in the ethno-cultural set up of the Rabhas.

Be that as it may, the Bodo Kacharis differ from the Eastern Chutiyas in this regard that while the Chutiyas trace their ancestry from the mythological king Bhismak of Kundila.
Nagara (referred before) they (Bodo Kacharis) trace their ancestry from (Bana' the traditional King of Sonitpura (in the Darrang District of Assam. About Bana Kalika Purana contain valuable references. It therefore appears that the present district of Darrang was the stronghold of this section of the Kacharis where the king Bana had his citadel. Though they had royal glories there was less influence of Hinduism in their ethno-cultural set up. Bodo fisa is also another name of the Bodo Kacharis. It has been stated before that Bodo fisa or, song of Bodo (fisa means sons in Boro tongue) is nothing out a corruption of Buddha and therefore the Bodos were the sons of Buddha i.e. Buddhists. But we do not have sufficient archaeological evidences at disposal to confirm this fact. 'Bodo' means knowledge in Bodo (Kachari) tongue. Waddel says, the term Boro or Bodo is simply a Bengali or Hindi equivalent of the word 'great'. It is suggestive of the superior standard of culture and civilisation which they had attained in comparison with other tribal groups.

The district of Darrang no doubt was the cradle of the Bodo, Kacharis but they gradually extended their thrusts to almost all tracts of the North-Eastern India since time immemorial. It seems that a fraction of the Tippera tribe of Tripura and the Bodo-Kacharis were identical. Those Tipperas like the Bodo Kacharis take part in 'Kherai festival' which is celebrated to please the mother earth with rites and sacrifices for good harvest. It is indicative of their common links.
In the past. In the more subsequent epochs they established their settlements in Goalpara, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur and in the Dibrugarh districts of modern Assam. 98

In the ancient times considerable Austric usages also crept into the ethno-cultural set up of the Bodo Kacharls. Thus they worship Sisu (enphasia) tree as an emblem of Siva (known as Bathow) and it is nothing but an earlier Austric usage 99. In the fifteenth century they sustained a major thrust of Hinduism in their traditional ethno-cultural life pattern. Bisva Singha (1515-1540 A.D.) the first king of the Koch Behar Kingdom was aided by a large number of Kachari followers to fulfill his imperialistic aims. He himself also belong to a Kachari (Mech) community of the Goalpara district of Assam according to the Buranjis of the Ahoms. 100 After becoming king Bisva Singh formally embraced Hinduism and his Kachari followers also followed the example, and they became Hindus under the caste label of Koch. 101 The Koches now differ widely from the animistic Kacharls.

In the subsequent decades beginning from the sixteenth century A.D. the ethnic entity of the Bodo Kacharls experienced another set back. The Vaisnavite cult propagated in Assam by the great saint Sremanta Sankara Deva (1449-1569 A.D.) attracted them most. It is true that the Kacharls initially were opposed to the cult. 102 But with the passages of time bitternesses faded out and consider able sections of them gradually embraced this cult instead of their traditional faith. Consequently, large scale conversion followed. These converts popularly known as
the 'Soronla* Kacharl or followers of the Eko sarana Dharma of Sri Sankara Deva differ materially from the ethno-cultural set up of the Kachari Society.

For centuries the Bodo Kacharis (apart from the aforesaid converts) remained firm in their animistic faiths with frayed touches of Hinduism here and there. In general appearance their assemblances with the Nepalis are quite striking as both are short in stature, stout in body built, and mostly muscular. Their general affinities with the Garos are closer than the southern Dimasa Kacharis of the hills. Extremely hardworking and labourious the Bodo Kacharis depend solely on agriculture which is the mainstay of their economy. It is a pleasant scene to a stranger that both the sexes work in the paddy fields of their villages almost round the clock in harvesting seasons, women broad casting and planting the seeds and plants and the man ploughing and spading the fields with unbounded energy and joy. The Mechas are identical with the Bodo Kacharis. The origin of the term 'Mech' is still a matter of surmise. According to one opinion 'Mech' is nothing out a corruption of the Sanskrit word 'Mlecha' used by the Aryans to designate the Kacharis and other Non-Aryans. The second opinion is that the terminology of the word has no connection with the 'Mlechmas' and the tribe is so-called because they flourished on the bank of the Mechi river of Northern Bengal. Menchi is a small North Bengal river on the bank of which early Kachari settlements grew up in ancient times. Hence originated the word Menchi Mech. The Mechas and the Bodo Kacharis have little differences. The
The Meches unlike the Kacharlis have a lesser number of clans (about sixteen) than the Bodo Kacharlis who at one time had about twenty exogamous clans. These details will be appended in the appendix.

Nothing authentic is still known about the past of the Rabhas of Goalpara. It is almost certain that they entered into the Assam through North-Bengal from Tibet, but it is an absurdity to confirm that whether, they were the contemporaries of the Bodo Kacharlis in this regard or belong to a group of later immigrants. They are said to be descended from a Hindu father who lost his caste by marrying a Kachari woman. However there is lack of authentic evidences to support this view. Be that as it may, the Rabhas consider themselves superior to the Kacharlis and it is for this factor most of them abandoned their tribal dialects in favour of Assamese in the past. The Dhimalis of Northern Bengal can also be classified under the head of the western Kacharlis. The identity of this group is now at the point of extinction. B.H. Hedgson in the forties of the nineteenth century estimated their total number approximately to fifteen thousand souls. Their early settlements grew up on the banks of the Kanki and Dhorla river of Northern Bengal.

Present North Bengal is predominantly non-tribal in culture. Only a detailed field investigation can reveal the hidden histories of these races still buried in innumerable folk lore and local traditions.
Cognates of the Kacharlis:

The Garos-

Ethnology and linguistic speak a common origin of the Garo and Kachari, although the former is known by its own national name.

Unfortunately nothing is still known about the earliest phase of Garo culture of the Northeast India with a cent percent accuracy. According to one conclusion drawn from a number of sources it seems that the Garos had started their political and cultural career in the North Eastern region prior to the Aryan conquest of the land. According to another conclusion drawn from other sources it appears that they entered into India from the Mongoloid home of Tibet at a much later date possibly in the medieval epoch a little before or after the advent of the Akoms in Assam. Thus according to a Kachari legend, the Garos had started their political career in the North East before the Aryansation of the land. The legend says, the mythological king Bana of Sonitapura (Darrang district of Assam) or one of his descendants had four sons and one of them was known by the name Garo. This son, Garo, was the founder king of a Garo kingdom, the legend says. Bana was a Non-Aryan (Mongoloid of the Bodo group a language under Tibeto-Burman speech family) king and his dynasty flourished long time before the advent of the Aryans according to Kalika Purana as stated earlier. The authentity of the tradition is open to Criticism no doubt, but it cannot be refuted whole
sale since this is corroboratedly another such legend of the Babhas of Goalpara. A section of the Babhas believe that they too, are the descendants of king Bana. A Babha chief Dadon by name is said to be a descendant of Bana, the Babha tradition says. Linguistically as well as in many matters of ethnic system the Babha section of the Kacharls are closely related to the Garos than other tribal groups. Hence it seems feasible that the Garos had started their political career in the North-Eastern India before the Aryan conquest of the land. Secondly, in the Kalika Purana we hear about the Kirata race and their king Ghatakasur of ancient Pragjyotisha who was everthrown by the Aryan conqueror Narakasur. These ancient Kiratas are identical with the Boro speaking tribes of the present day such as the Kacharls, Garos, Tipperas etc. The Garos also speak the Bodo language, we have stated before. Thirdly, the ancient land of Pragjyotisha became Aryanised after the defeat of Ghatakasur. Evidently, the Kiratas of the Brahmaputra valley became loyal to the Aryan conquerors and their culture. Under their strong and forceful initiative Aryan ideals fairly penetrated in the realm of Kirata culture and polity as it appears from the narrative of the Kalika Purana. Vanquished Kiratas of the Brahmaputra valley become blind champions of the Aryan ideals and got themselves affiliated to the exploits of Bhagadatta, son of Narakasur, the founder, of the Aryan kingdom there. This blind adherence to Aryan culture and polity continued to exist in a dilapidated form in the socio-religious lives of the tribals of the North East even many generations after the collapse of Assam's Aryandom.
In this regard it is worthy to mention here about the custom of horse sacrifice among the Garos. Horse sacrifice or Asvamedha ceremony was an well known ritual connected with the Digvijaya of the Aryan world of ancient India. The real significance of the horse sacrifice however have undergone through the centuries of changes and modifications as a result of the oral rituals of the tribal priests and the Garos now a days perform this rite in order to increase the fertility of their soil in harvesting seasons. Still there in we detect a missing link of the Garos with the Aryan world whose predominance they had acknowledged after suffering defeat. Hence it is feasible to conclude that the Garos were partners of the Great Kachari race (ancient Kiratas) in initiating an advanced civilisation in the North-Eastern India prior to the advent of the Aryans.

In the light of the above it is now convenient to examine the conclusion drawn from other sources according to which the Garos belong to a group of later mongoloid immigrants from Tibet. According to their own tradition the Garos believe that they came from Tibet and settled first in Koch Behar. In Koch Behar they did not remain for a longer period and sub-sequently appeared in Jogighopa (in Goalpara district of Assam ) where they had established a principality of their own under one of their chief Sukapha Bongipa by name. In Jogighopa too, they failed to retain their hold and subsequently migrated to Gauhati, where misfortunes were stored for them. As soon as they appeared in Gauhati, the Assamese people enslaved
them. The Khasis came to their rescue and escorted them to the Garo hills via Boko (a place in the Kamarupa district of Assam). The legend has not yet died out totally and it only suggest that the event had taken place not definitely at a very ancient epoch in view of the fact that the memory of the tribe is short. It had taken place sometime in the medieval epoch when the Kacharis were a strong political force in Assam and the Ahoms were about to enter here from the Shan home of Burma. The inscriptions and literary chronicles of the kings of Kamarupa as well as the Ahom chronicles are silent on the above stated migration of the Garos. Hence it is possible that this event had taken place some time in the early eleventh century A.D. when an unsettled period characterised the history of Assam otherwise there would have been some references of it in the inscriptions of the Kamarupa kings or in the Ahom chronicles.

Linguistic evidences also suggest that the Garos were later immigrants. The vocabulary of the garo and Tibetan Languages contain many common words and this further point out to the fact that the Garos appeared in India at a later date. Though linguistic evidences are not always conclusive in history, still, the many points of similarities in vocabulary only incline as to suggest that they belong to a group of later immigrants from Tibet.

The actual fact lies in the midway of the above mentioned two conclusions. The inevitable hypothesis which is at once
reasonable and scientific is, due to clan feuds or other such troubles a group of Kacharis might have migrated to the other bank of the Brahmaputra, now in the Garo hills district of Meghalaya. They gradually lost contact with the main body of the race which remained in the valley of the Brahmaputra, and in the next stage came under much cultural influence of the Khasis. This division of the great Kachari tribe had taken place fairly long time ago, possibly sometime after the Aryanisation of the Brahmaputra valley.¹²¹

The Garos unlike the Kacharis are matriarchal in their social set up and this matriarchal aspect of their society was not definitely the result of one or two centuries of contacts with the Khasi people it must have taken its parallel matriarchal character either after several centuries of contacts with the Khasi people, or as an offshoot of certain Tibetan communities those are female dominated even to day.¹²² In the subsequent epochs these people were joined by a new horde of Tibetan immigrants about which we have mentioned before. Possibly successive waves of Tibetan immigrants sought refuge in the Garo hills through North Bengal and Assam. The leader of one such batch of Tibetan immigrants was a person Garo by name, and he has given the name Garo to the tribe says one legend.¹²³

Thus it appears that the formation of the Garo tribe had practically started after the Aryanisation of the land some
time in the beginning of the Christian era and successive waves of Tibetan immigrants got themselves assimilated in the Garo social set up at various epochs of history and the process of this absorptions and assimilations came to a terminating point by the eleventh century A.D. as stated before. It is further evident from the fact that the Garos classify themselves by geographical divisions called 'dal'. Each 'Dal' possibly was formed by such migrants. This assimilation of the first settlers of the Garo hills and the new immigrants was conductive to the racial development of the Garos. Their contacts with the matrilineal Khasis and Jayantias went on increasing since then. By the sixteenth century A.D. enterprising Garo leaders established their hold over the distant Jayantia country bordering the kingdom. About the political exploits of the Garos medieval chronicles contain some references. The compiler of the Deodhāi Asom Buranjis records that a Garo prince by virtue of his talents became the king of the Jayantias taking up the name Bara Gosain. Bara Gosain ruled in the Jayantia country in the sixteenth century A.D. The Persian work Baharistan-in-Ghayabl also records that during the Muhamedan invasion of Assam the Garos were recruited in the Muhamedan army. There are striking points of similarities and contrasts between the Garos and the Kacharis. About close linguistic affinities mention has already been made before. In ethnic set up to an average Garo in his stature, skin colour and in nasal and head form in strikingly similar to a Kachari. Many common customs and usages also connect the Garos and Kacharis more than other
trades. In this regard mention may be made to the memorial posts which the Garos erect in memory of their deceased persons. These Garo memorial stones also known as Kima are strikingly similar with the Kachari stone monoliths of Dimapur. Playfair says, "The comparison is of great with small, for the Dimapur stones are immense in size, while the Kimas are but wooden posts. Still, the resemblance certainly exists, and the fact that the Kimas are always carved to the same pattern (except when they represent a human face) tends to prove that the carving is done on the same definite principle, handed down perhaps from one generation to another the origin of which has long been lost." The Garo social set up is matriarchal like the Khasis, but here also they had more affinities with the Rabha section of the Kacharis. Thus according to Garo matriarchal society a daughter is the natural heir of the properties of her parents, and after her marriage she lives in her parents house with her husband. The Rabhas were predominantly matriarchal in ancient times. According to their system of 'Nok Dzungh khai' marriage the husband was required to live in his wife's house after marriage, and it was definitely a stamp of matriarchal influence, which is now gradually on the wane among the Rabhas. The Bodo Kacharis of the Brahmaputra valley also had similar such matriarchal tendencies in their social set up. Thus it appears that the Garos and the Kacharis belong to the same ethno-linguistic stock. One Garo legend says, the Bodo-Kacharis "are descended from an ancestress named Kingsari Kangsari, who married a slave of Sukja-Bongipa
when the Garos were residing at Jogighopa. In a similar manner they also claim relationship with the Rabha section of the Kacharis, and they say that the Rabhas are descended from an ancestress named Sae-Bonge or Bonge-Kate. The Garos as we have mentioned before classify themselves into numerous geographical divisions called 'Jal'. There are numerous exogamous septs called 'Chachi' subdivided into 'Maharis' or families. There is no restriction of intermarriages between members of different Jals provided that they do not belong to the same sept. In this regard Garo system is strikingly similar to the exogamous clan system of the Dimasa Kacharis. All these findings only help us to conclude that the Garos and the Kacharis are branches of the same stock and are related with each other.

The Tipperas

The modern province of Tripura as it has been referred before was known as 'Kirata desa' in ancient times. Ptolemy wrote about 'Kiradhia' or the Land of the Kiratas. Gereni has rightly located this 'Kiradhia' or the land of the Kiratas with Tripura, Cachar and Sylhet. Whole of eastern Bengal and Tripura was a prominent centre of Kirata culture and civilisation. But it is unfortunate that nothing authentic is known about the exploits of these ancient Kiratas of the province of Tripura. While, in the neighbouring regions of Eastern Bengal ruling dynasties with a Bodo (Kachari or Kirata) background continued to survive from the beginning of the Christian era.
down to the Muhammedan conquest of the land. This history of Eastern Bengal is planned in the Chapter III. The Tippera tribe and their ruling dynasty migrated to the Province of the same name around C. fourteenth century A.D. and founded a kingdom there. According to the Rajamala or the dynastee chronicle of the Tippera kings the venue of the Tippera kingdom was situated in the Kapili valley of the modern Nowgong district of Assam in the neighbourhood of the Hedambial Kachari kingdom. The Tippera kingdom of the Kapili valley was known as Trivega and its only point of difference with the Kachari Kingdom was that the former was Hinduised and the later faithful to the animistic fact. According to the Rajamala a person Daitya by name founded the Tripura kingdom on the bank of the Kapili river. Daitya's successors were Tripura and Trilochan. Trilochan had married a daughter of the Hedambial Kachari king who had his kingdom in the vicinity and became father of twelve sons through this marriage tie. Meanwhile, the Hedambial Kachari king died and as he was survived by no sons, Trilochan's eldest son Drikpatl inherited his maternal grand father's Kachari kingdom. Drikpatl after becoming king of the Kacharis gained power and strength and drove out his eleven brothers to the plains of Cachar and annexed the Tripura Kingdom with ancestral principality. This episode according to Rai K.L. Barua had taken place sometimes in C. century A.D. Dakshin, the eldest of the eleven brothers migrated to the plains of Cachar and founded a capital at Kholongma on the bank of the river Barak. We do not know with accuracy
that how long the Tippera kings ruled in Cachar. From numismatic sources it appears that in the fifteenth century A.D. they had established themselves firmly in the modern province of Tripura, and more details in this regard is kept pending for further analysis in the related chapter.

Evidently a large number of subjects accompanied the royal princes in their journey from Cachar to Tripura. They were of Bodo (Kachari) origin. It is thus conclusive that the present formation of the Tippera tribe was an offshoot of two waves of the great Kachari or Kirata race, i.e. the first settlers and the new immigrants who went to the province along with the royal dynasty in the fourteenth century A.D. It further appears that other waves of mixed Kachari-Garo tribes poured in the hills of Tippera from the vicinity of the present Kamrupa district of Assam and the Garo hills district of Meghalaya. One Garo tradition says, that a "...... party went south from the neighbourhood of Gauhati, and it is not impossible to believe that from this last party are sprung the people of Hill Tippera, whose linguistic affinity with the Garos is almost as striking as that of the plains Kacharis."¹⁴³ Thus the Tipperas of modern Tippera contain maximum amount of various Kachari fractional elements in their ethno-cultural set up. It is however a matter of wide speculation that how the term Tripura or Tippera originated. It is likely the term originated from 'Tripur' one of the early Tripura kings who ruled in the Kapili valley about whom mention has been made before.
Be that as it may, the Tipperas had many points of similarities with the great Kachari tribe. The royal dynasties of the Tipperas and Kacharis, such as the Hedambials and the Chutiyas belonged to the same origin, i.e., mongoloid of the Bodo group of speech family.¹⁴⁴ The Hedambial Kacharis trace their origin from 'Bhima' the epic hero. The ruling dynasty of the Tipperas although trace their ancestry from 'Druhyu one of the sons of Yayati the renowned king of the Lunar dynasty," still certain individual rulers of the line identified themselves with the Hedambial Kacharis in this regard. Thus one Tippera king Vijaya manikya, in his inscription dated 1410 saka bore the epithet "Partho-Sahodero" with his name.¹⁴⁵ According to D.C. Sircar 'Partho-Sahodero' means Bhima, that is the brother of Parthe or Arjuna.¹⁴⁶ It is indicative of his close terms with the Hedambial Kacharis. The Tipperas had other points of similarities with the great Kachari tribe. Both belong to the same linguistic group, i.e., 'Bodo' under Tibeto-Burman speech family.¹⁴⁷ They should in mere concise way be termed as a southern sub-section of the great Kachari tribe. Thus according to a tradition of the Tipperas there was a Tipper king subrai, who introduced all arts and crafts in Tripura.¹⁴⁸ The Dimasa Kacharis of the southern Assam also regard one Sibrai as their ancestor. Hence it seems possible that in ancient times there are more such points of similarities between them and those are now at the point of extinction. The Dimasa Kacharis were exceptionally proficient in the manufacture of mats, baskets etc.
testified by the contemporary sources of the medieval epoch as well as by the remnants of their traditional skill in this regard. To the same degree the bamboo and cane products of the Tipperas were also famous as these are still now in the markets of the plains. It is seems that the same system and mode of manufacture continued to be practised by the tribe even when their separation with each other was accomplished. In the pre-Aryan epoch the bamboo products of the Kiratas had great demand in the markets of outside Assam. The Tipperas are also the in heritors of this heritage. The same pattern of shifting system of cultivation or Jhum is still popular among the Tippera tribes of the hills, although they are much discouraged by the government in this regard, because jhumming cause much harm to the forest resources. If the Tipperas had more things in common to the southern or the Dimasa Kacharlis, their ties with the western or the Bodo Kacharlis were closer, evidently pointing out that both sprung from the same origin. We have noticed before that both the Tipperas and Bodo Kacharlis of the Brahmaputra valley celebrate "Kherai" festival. The Kherai festival is celebrated to please the mother earth for good yields in harvesting seasons. Thus, though separated by many miles of hilly terrains the Tipperas and the Kacharlis are the twin branches of one ethnic stock.

The Koches

The origin of the term Koch is enveloped into a great degree of obscurity. Yogini Tantra, a work of the tenth century A.D. belonging to a Koch country, tells a strange story regarding a woman in violation of the Kula of the Keralakutta. Yogini Tantra is a peculiar book, little known outside Bengal, which may be classed as a mythological work. But this book is not in the English language.
enterprising Kachari warriors of Goalpara district of modern Assam utilised this account of the scripture to their own advantages. Let us now turn our attention to this phase of Kachari History.

According to the Deodhai Asom Buranji, there were twelve Mech (Kachari) families in Goalpara. One Haira Mandal was the chief of these twelve families. According to the Buranji, Haira Mandal's son Bisu was energetic and brave since his boyhood. This son Bisu gained power and strength with the aid of his maternal grand father Hajo who also belonged to a Kachari community. About this time there was total absence of a strong royal authority in the western Assam and the twelve Bhuyans or the Bara Bhuyans were the de facto rulers of this tract. The Kamarupar Buranji records that Bisu with his Kachari followers defeated the Bhuyans one after another and carved out a principality for himself in the Koch Behar district of North Bengal in 1449 Saka i.e., 1527 A.D. This is the story behind the foundation of the Koch Behar kingdom. The kingdom thus was founded in the land of the ancient Koches.

It appears that Bisu founded his kingdom with the tacit consent of the Koch tribes, and his Kachari followers also identified themselves with the aspirations of the Koches. It has been stated earlier that the Koches were mostly Hinduised. So Bisu in order to placate their loyalty as well as to upgrade himself to the status of the sovereigns of the rest of India embraced Hinduism just after his accession. His followers, mostly Kacharis and their cognate and Karbis(Mikirs) followed the example of the king. These converts in the next stage came
to be known as the Rajbansis or the descendents of the royal line of Koch Behar founded by Biswa Singa. Others who also preferred to associate themselves with the Koch Behar kingdom at a subsequent stage were allowed to do so by the surrender of their old tribal names in favour of Hinduism and they came to be known as the Koches. Thus the ancient Koch tribe which was also mongoloid in origin with a Dravidian admixture assimilated the new tribal immigrants, mostly Kacharis within their fold. Though the Koches contain maximum amount of Kachari elements in their ranks it is wrong to classify them under any one of the sub sections of the Kacharis after the manner of Sidney Endle. The Koches had their territorial loyalty to the Koch Behar Kingdom founded by Biswa Singh and as they were mostly Hinduised their affinities with the Kachari animists were less striking. However, from the viewpoint of ethno-history the Koch should be regarded as the cognate of the great Kachari tribe. Their royal dynasty originally belonged to the Kachari tribe. The bulk of their fighting elements too, i.e., troops had a predominantly Bodo (Kachari) background with an admixture of other allied tribes viz. the Karbis (Mi'irs). So far, as language is concerned the Koch dialects of Assam has a wide range of similarity with a number of Kachari (Bodo) dialects such as Rabha and Garo; however, in Northern Bengal the language is almost at the point of assimilation with Bengali.
REFERENCES OF CHAPTER ONE

1. KJK. pp. 22, 50.
2. Ibid. pp. 22-23.
3. The Buranjis of the Ahoms contain references to these tribes vide - DAB pp 5-8; TB pp. 127.
7. V.R. Kishkindhya Kanda p. 501. The Kiratas and the Kacharis are identical. vide F.N. No-113 of the current chapter.
10. POI. p. 34.
12. C.A. p. 64.
13. CAI. p. 404.
17. DEOB p. 82.
19. POI. p. 34; and ITB. p. 20.
23. EB and ADG of Gruning p. 37.
25. KJK. pp. 40-43.
28. C.C. p. 139.
35. HAA. p.89.
36. This point in details in Chapter IX.
37. DEOB. p.82.
38. DAB. pp 6-7.
40. KJK. pp 37-38
41. DAB. p.193
44. I.V.C. p.135.
45. EOK. p.179 ; in the said work Barua writes that the kingdom was a Dravidian one, but the present writer suggests that there was a mongoloid share behind the foundation of the Kingdom.
46. DAB. pp.6-8.
47. HOA pp 79-80 ; and Ang.A. Rel. pp.3-4.
49. For Details - BG.O. A.C. pp.60-61.
51. JASB. Vol.L.XIX. part III. 1900 p.42.
52. DAB. p.176.
53. AB. p.142.
54. DAB. pp 176-177 ; 193-194.
55. ADG. Sibsagar 1967. p.35.
56. JASB. Vol. L.XIX. part III. 1900 pp 44-45 ; and DAA. p.36.
57. AJ. pp 70-77.
58. Gathered by field work.
59. HOA. pp. 79-80.
61. The Kacharis. p.5.
63. HOA. pp.79-80.
64. L.S.O.I. Vol. III. p.130
65. AJ. pp.44-53.
68. CDR. p.1. It is written in the work "In 1765 there was a Burmese attack on Cachar, when the Kachari King made a show of submission by the handing over to the victorious Burmese general a tree with the roots counted in their native clay.
70. Sema Nagas. p.379; and Dimasa. p.68.
71. JASB. Vol. XX. 1924. pp.143-147.
72. GOI. Kohima p.22.
73. LSOL Vol. III. pp.379-381.
74. KJ. pp.5-6; and N.E.F.I. p.213.
75. DAB p.177.
76. LSOL Vol. III. p.56; and AJ. pp 44-53.
77. SAA. Vol. II. p.401.
78. IVC. p.140.
79. JASB. Vol. LXIX part III. 1900 p.44.
80. Ibid. p. Ibid.
82. ADO. UM. & N.C. Hills 1979 pp.86-87.
83. Kacharis p.5.
84. For migration of Tippera kings from Nowgong to Cachar and then Tripura reference is in Chapter III. Dhanyamanikya (1431-62 AD) was the first king who ruled in Tripura proper according to archaeological sources vide Coin. T. pp. 1-3, 43-44.
85. GTOAMI p.41.
86. P.G. pp.51-52.
87. Details in Chapter III & IX.
89. JASB. Vol. LXIX part III 1900 p. 44.
91. Tibet pp. 24-25.
92. EKSAS. pp. 116-118.
93. DAB pp. 193-194 contain an account of the ancestry of the Chutiyas while the article of Gagan Chandra Sonowal "Sonowal Kachari" in A.J. pp. 70-78 contain the account of a Sonowal Kachari legend according to which the Bodo Kacharis are descendants of Bana.
95. EKSAS p. 20.
96. JASB. Vol. LXIX part III 1900 p. 44.
97. KJK. pp 129-130.
98. In Goalpara the Bodo Kacharis are 9.41 p.c. of the total population according to census 1951 while in the N.E. Assam other Kachari communities form a sizable populace vide ADG. Goalpara 1979 p. 92; and ADG Lakhimpur 1976 pp. 117419.
99. in Chapter VIII.
100. DAB pp. 173-174.
102. About this time Ahom Kachari war was going on and in course of this the Kacharis once attacked Sankaradeva's village of Bardova which compelled Sankaradeva to leave his native village. Vide DCAM. pp. 62-64.
103. KJK p. 97; and EKSAS p. 20.
104. Kacharis pp. 24-27, 81-82; also nyn Adhyay. Appendix.
105. Ibid p. 83.
106. Ibid. p. Ibid.
109. AJ. pp. 70-77.
110. EAR pp. 119-121.
111. LSOI. VIII. Pp. 102-103; and Garos p. 16.
112. KP. 100: 101, 103: 104 Astottringso Adhyay. pp. 318-319
113. BGOAC p. 15.
114. K.P. Astottringso Adhyay. It is stated there in that only those Kiratas were allowed to stay in the Brahmaputra valley who had agreed to remain loyal to the Aryans.
117. Ibid. p. Ibid.
120. Garos pp.165-166.
122. Khasi Society is matrilineral. Vide article of Dr. R.S. Lyndon. in CQ.; and Tibet. pp.24-25. 123. Garos. p.7.
125. DAB. pp.190-192.
126. HOA. p.419.
129. Garos. p.16.
131. R.S. pp.76-77.
132. Garos. p.16.
133. Ibid. p. Ibid.
134. IGI. Vol.XII. 1908 pp.175-176
135. Details in Chapter VII.
137. Rajmala pp.1-12.
138. Ibid p. Ibid.
139. Ibid. p. Ibid.
140. Ibid.p. Ibid.
141. JARS. Vol.III October 1935 pp.92-98
142. Ibid p. Ibid; and Rajmala pp.1-12
143. Garos p.16.
144. H.O.T. p.12; According to DAB p.182, the surnames of early Kachari kings were Pha; the name endings of early Tippera kings were also pha vide- NEFI. pp.269-270.
145. JASS. Vol.XVII, No.2. 1951. pp.73-75
146. Ibid p. Ibid.
Tripura, p.163

WAA. p.95. records that Tamradhvaj the medieval Hedambial Kachari king presented a five mat to the Ahom monarch Rudra Singha. for such traditional mats offered as seats of dignitaries by the Dimasas consult. DK of NCH. pp.50-52.

L.O.S.S. illustration between pages 56-57.

MLA. p.80 ; and H.O.S.E.I. p.119


DAB pp 173-174.

A.B. pp.124-126.

K.B. pp.10-11.

HAT pp.414-415.

Kacharis p.5.