CHAPTER-1

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Ethnic identity of the Boros and the Rabhas:

Assam is a multiethnic and a multicultural state of north-eastern India. As per 1991 census report of Assam, the total populations of the Boro speakers are estimated 118569 while the Rabha speakers are estimated 12424. There are four different language families viz: Indo-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman, Austro-Asiatic and Dravidian. Genetically the Boros and the Rabhas of Assam belong to the Tibeto-Burman sub-family within the Sino-Tibetan family of languages. The two linguistic communities share common features at all levels of folk-culture and language system. As the Boros and the Rabhas have a common point of origin, therefore linguistic and cultural correspondences abundantly occur. Most of the scholars have some valuable opinion about the origin of the concerned linguistic communities. Among them Rev. Sidney Endle remarked, "The origin of the Kachari race is still very largely a matter of conjecture and inference in the absence of anything entitled to be regarded as authentic history. As remarked above, in feature and general appearance, they approximate very closely to the Mongolian type and this would seem to point to Tibet and China as the original home of the race."1

The generic term *Bodo* was first used by Hodgson to this group of languages.2 Dr. G.A. Grierson had also designated them as *Bārā or Bodo*. The Bodo group comprises (as stated in the Linguistic Survey of India, vol.-I, Part-I) the following tribes: Kachari or Bodo, Lalung (now called Tiwa), Dimasa, Garo, Rabha, Tripuri (Kakborok), Koch, Chutiya (Deuri) and Moran.

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1 Endle, Rev. Sidney: The Kacharis, P-3
2 This opinion is stated from the Linguistic Survey of India, vol.-III, Part-II, P-1
"The group of tribes known as Bodo or Bārā forms the most numerous and important section of the non-Aryan tribes of the provinces of Assam." It is supposed that the generic term Bodo or Boro had been configured from the name of Tibet. The inhabitants of the Tibet country have more affinities in cultural traits with the Boro-Garo (P.K.Benedict and Dr.D Moral used the term in case of Bodo used by G.A.Grierson) group of people.

The Boros are known by different names in some regions of Assam and its few adjacent areas. In the Brahmaputra valley, the Boro native speakers identify themselves as Boro while the Hindu Asamiya speakers and speakers of other linguistic communities address them as Kachari or Boro-Kachari. Edward Tuite Dalton has mentioned as Kachari or Bodo. Gait and Rev. Sidney Endle also referred to them as Kachari. In North Bengal, they are also known as Mese or Mech. Edward Tuite Dalton once remarked about the Meches and the Kacharis. "All the authorities agree in considering the Mech and Kachari as the same people or at least of common origin." He added that the Meches of the Goalpara district have been converted to Hinduism by repudiation of their ethnic origin and called themselves Rajbongshis. They have become to a great extent Hinduised by the process of proselytism. In this regard, Grierson also opined: "The Bārā folk who lived to the west of the Kamrup district are called Mech by their Hindu neighbours. This word is probably a corruption of the Sanskrit 'Mlechcha' which corresponds to the original meaning of our word 'Welsh' i.e. foreigner, stranger. Those of the Bārā who lives in and to the East of the district of Kamrup are called Kacharies, pronounced Kosari by

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3 Grierson, G.A: LSI vol-III.Part-II. P-61
2 Dalton, Edward Tuite: Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal. P-88-89
5 Ibid-P-88-89
As it were, the Boros were the aborigines of the Brahmaputra valley. So J.D. Anderson rightly said, "The river names of the whole Brahmaputra Valley are Bodo names, and it is demonstrable that the Bodos were the aborigines of the Valley." Likewise, there is no distinct information about the origin of the Rabhas. Some scholars regarding their place of origin offer divergent opinions. Major A. Playfair noticed that the Rabhas had migrated from the Tibetan regions to the Garo-Hills and afterwards spread throughout the state of Assam-plains. In respect to the origin of the Rabhas, Gait wrote in his 'Census Report of Assam' (1891), "There seems to be a good deal of uncertainty as to who these people really are. In lower Assam, it is asserted that they are an off-shoot of the Garos, while in Kamrup and Darrang it is thought that they are Kachari on the road to Hinduism." Edward Tuite Dalton also noticed, "The Rabhas and the Hajongs of the Goalpara district are also branches of the Kachari race and connected with the Garos." There is no doubt about the fact that the Rabhas have a language and culture to identify them as a distinct tribe. There is no logic to offer a vague opinion that a Kachari becomes a Rabha through the acceptance of Hinduism or proselytism or that the Rabhas are an off-shoot of the Garos. There are diversified opinions and explanations about the origin of the Boros and the Rabhas. However, ethnic affinities establish them to be members of the same stock. In course of time, they acquired an identical inheritance of language and culture of their own. In comparison to other Boro-Garo group of languages, they spread throughout the length and breadth of the Brahmaputra valley in Assam, besides Meghalaya, and North Bengal.

7 This opinion is cited from the Introduction Chapter of "The Kachars" written by Anderson, J.D.
8 Dalton, Edward Tuite: Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal. P-87
The Rabhas are an indigenous tribe and it consists of Rongdani, Maitori, Koch (or Pan-Koch), Hana, Pati, Dahun, Totla, Bitalia etc. The first three groups are the major socio-linguistic group. They are maintaining their inherent language and culture in comparison to the other minor groups. The major group of the Rabhas i.e. Rongdani, Maitori and Koch show variations in the lexical and phonological levels. The Rongdani claim for them a position of superiority. Most of the writers and written literature are flourishing recently in this dialect. So, efforts have been made recently to codify the Rongdani dialect as a standard language of the Rabhas as a whole. Different books and magazines are also being published currently in this dialect. The *Bebak Rabha Krourang Runchum* (a literary organization of the Rabhas) and the *Rabha Bhasha Parishad* (another literary organization) have taken up many effective plans to enrich their language, literature and culture. Vocabulary books and dictionaries are published by the literary organizations.

Other minor groups of the Rabhas like the Pati, Totla, Hana etc have lost their own language and have shifted to Assamiya which has resulted in the formation of "Rabhamese" an ethnic dialect within the Assamiya speech community.⁹

The Rongdanis and the Maitoris are concentrated over the southern part of Goalpara district and the north-eastern part of the Garo-Hills district of Meghalaya. The Patis live in Kamrup and the eastern part of Goalpara district. The Koches are the most important dialect group of the Rabhas. The highest numbers of populations of the Koches are distributed in the West Garo-Hills of Meghalaya, North Bengal, and in a few areas of the district of Dhubri Goalpara, Bongaigaon and Kokrajhar of Assam. The Koches are also known as Pani Koch

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⁹ Hakasam, Dr. Upen Rabha: Asamiya Aru Asamar Tibbat-Barmiya Bhasa. p-35
particularly in the West Garo-Hills. The term is derived from /panni Koch/ In Rabha, /pan/ means tree and /-ni/ is a suffix. It means inhabitant of the forest.¹⁰ In this regard, Edward Gant observed that the Pani Koches are the only division of the tribe, which speaks Koch language. On the other hand, Dr. G.A. Grierson has mentioned the six divisions of the Pani Koches viz Harigaya, Satpariya, Dasgaya, Chapra, Wanang and Tintekiya.¹¹ One striking observation is found in this regard. H.B. Rowney observed, “The primitive or Pani Koches lived amid the woods but there are few of them now to meet with where still existing. They claim to be of the same race with the Garos and the language and customs of the two peoples certainly do agree to a great extent.”¹² As it were, the Rabhas are a distinct tribe of Assam having many dialect groups of its own and shows maximum similarity with other Boro-Garo group of languages in respect to language and culture.

1.2 Aim and area of the study: The aim of this study is to identify the cultural and linguistic affinities of the Boros and the Rabhas of Assam. Both the tribes are indigenous of the Brahmaputra valley. They have a long association of relationship in the context of culture and language. Apart from genetic affinity due to long years of contact they have a lot of similarities both in the cultural and linguistic levels. As per the topic of this research work entitled “A Study in Cultural and Linguistic affinities of the Boros and Rabhas of Assam”, an attempt has been made for a comparative study of the linguistic and cultural features of the two concerned languages. It is worth mentioning here that till date no convincing comparative linguistic analysis has been attempted by anybody between any Boro-Garo languages. In this context it can be said

¹⁰ Rabha. Dhananjay: Rabha Janajatir Chamu Itihas. P-34
¹¹ Grierson. G.A.: L.S. vol-III. Part -II. P-95
¹² Rowney. Horatio Bickerstaff: The Wild Tribes of India. P-146
that apart from Wolfenden, Dr. D. Moral has been also attempted to analyse the common linguistic features of cognate languages of the Boro-Garo group as a whole. (In this regard, Dr. Dipankar Moral has analyzed elaborately in the article entitled “Brahmaputra Upatyakar Boro-Garo xaxar Bhasa: ek xamiksha” published in the book “Bhasa: Chintan Aru Manan”, p-109-114, published by Cotton College Centenary Celebration Committee, 2002). It is of significance that this is a first such attempt of any two members of the BG stock. The analysis is done based on the field data collected from primary as well as secondary studies of the concerned linguistic communities.

The area of the study is confined within the state of Assam. The Boros and the Rabhas are fairly uniformly spread in the Brahmaputra valley in Assam. The major portion of the Rabha community is concentrated on the southern part of this valley. The Rongdanis and the Maitoris are found mainly in the districts of Goalpara and Kamrup. Likewise the major portion of the Boro community is found in the districts of Dhubri, Goalpara, Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup (including the northern and the southern part of the Brahmaputra valley) and Darrang district respectively. In respect to the Rabhas, materials are collected from the Rongdanis, Maitoris and the Koches groups.

Regarding Boro, linguistic materials are collected from the standard form of Boro language i.e. Western Boro dialect (WBD); because the WBD is recognized as the standard form or the literary form of the Boros.

The present study incorporates cultural and linguistic elements for illustration and critical analysis. Materials are gathered from different native speakers or informants of these speech communities. Materials included in this thesis are divided into two parts: one is cultural contact
and its resultant diffusion and the other is linguistic affinity. The analysis of common linguistic features of the two languages have been shown at different levels of both the languages i.e. phonology, morphology and lexis. Thus analysis of common cultural features has also been made from a purely folkloristic point of view. As they had a common point of origin, the two communities show maximum affinity in various cultural traits within the social sphere as reflected in the oral narratives, social folk-customs and the items of material culture etc. In this thesis, emphasis is given on a synchronic analysis.

1.3 Importance of the study: The proposed study demands highly an academic value besides its sociological importance to establish a common relationship and integration among the cognate tribes of Boro-Garo group. The study will reveal the affinity of the concerned linguistic communities both linguistically and culturally. Broadly speaking, such type of study will help us to know sufficiently about the formation and background of the concerned languages and cultures. Besides, the study will also highlight the process of acculturation and diffusion in the linguistic and cultural levels of the concerned communities.

1.4 Methodology: As in any other social science research, interview and observation methods are applied in this study to collect the folkloristic and linguistic data from the native speakers. For documentation of folkloristic data i.e. the different genres of oral narratives, devices like photography and tape recordings are used where necessary. Besides, the equipment for recording linguistic data is also applied to determine properly the articulation of the phonetic data. As secondary sources, all kinds of existing published materials available in the form of journals, books, and articles etc. have been collected.
1.5 A brief sketch on the written literature of Boro and Rabha: Both Boro and Rabha have a rich tradition in respect to the folk-literature. In the folk-society, songs of the folk, tales, legends, charms related to various religious festivals and performances, various myths, riddles, idioms and sayings are also still prevailing as relic of the folk-knowledge. More affinities are found if analysis is done based on the text, texture and contextual point of view.

While considering the written trends of Boro and Rabha literature, it is necessary to notice the beginning of 1900 A.D. The Boro written literature was flourishing towards the beginning of twentieth century with the publication of several outstanding magazines, souvenirs and books on prayer songs etc. Now a brief note on the respective literature is described below.

1.5.1 The written Boro literature: The written Boro literature was emerged with the publication of books “Bathu Nam Bwikhaguni Gidu” ("bathu nam bwīkʰaguni gidu"-Songs of the Bathų and Bwisagu festival) and “Boroni phisa O Ayen” ("boroni pʰisa o ayen"-Son of the Boros and its Customary Laws). The second one was the first book in Boro written in prose form by Ganga Charan Kachari and published in 1915. On the other hand, the first one was compiled by Prasannalal Khakhlary in 1925.13

This book contains two parts: i) Bathų Song and ii) Bwisagu Song. Bathų song reflects the philosophy of the Bathų religion, which is the very ancient religion of the Boros. Thus Bwisagu song reveals the pangs of love and youthful exuberance. It is worth mentioning here that some of the songs are collected from the village folk and some of the songs are self-composition by the poet. The book has opened the gateway of written tradition of the Boro literature. No doubt, it is the earmark to the Boro written literature.

In 1924, the first Boro magazine “Bibar” (bibar/-flower) was published being edited by late Satish Chandra Basumatary. A good number of poetry was published in this magazine containing the theme of religion, culture, ethics, morality and advice to the Boro community for the social upliftment. Among them noted poets were namely Satish Chandra Basumatary, Jaladhar Brahma, Parsuram Brahma, Rupnath Brahma, Madaram Brahma, Judhusthir Hajugsumary and others. Most of the poetry books of that preliminary stage were written in rhyming couplets. Poems were written just to bring social reform among the Boros. In 1923, a poetry book “Khonthai Methai” (khonthai methai/-Poems and Songs) was jointly compiled by Rupnath Brahma and Madaram Brahma. This poetry book contains the topic mainly on national spirit as regards religion, culture and so on. Poems and songs were composed in rhyming couplets. Another poetry book “Boroni Gudi Sibsa Arv Aroz” (boroni gudi sibsa arv aroz - 1926), meaning first devotion and prayer of the Boros, was written by Padmashree Madaram Brahma. This book is a collection of prayer songs composed in verse form. During this period, two poets composed some romantic poems. They were- Ishan Chandra Mushahary and Pramod Chandra Brahma. They wrote mainly on beauty of nature and love theme. Figurative diction were also used in their poems based on poetic aestheticism. Most of the poems were published in the magazine “Hathorkhi Hala” (hatorkhi hala/-1930) meaning constellation edited by Pramod Chandra Brahma.

Ishan Chandra Mushahary is entitled as the greatest romantic poet in the history of the Boro literature. “Sonani Mala” (sonani mala/-Chain of Gold) and “Phumi” (phumi -lotus) both of the poetry books were self-composition by Mushahary. On the other hand, most of the poems written by Pramod Chandra Brahma were published in the book “Sonakhi Bizah”
They represent the nature as the anchor of their spirit and source of all inspirations. Kali Kumar Lahary, who was contemporary to Pramod Chandra Brahma and Ishan Chandra Mushahary, also wrote a good number of poems containing classicism, romanticism and satirical ideas. Poems written by Lahary were published in the magazine “Hathorkhi Hala”. Lahary wrote a poetry book “Khonthai Bizab” (Golden book, 1951). Contemporarily Nileswar Brahma also published a poetry book “Balabganvi” (Two episodes, 1952) which was properly a collection of songs sung by the poet. It is mentionable that poems of Lahary and Brahma were published before the inception of the Bodo Sahitya Sobha (1952, 16th November). As it were, Boro critics like Madhu Ram Boro and Brajendra Kumar Brahma have opined that first part of the twentieth century is the remarkable age of renaissance of Boro poetry. After the inception of the Bodo Sahitya Sobha, many promising and talented poets have made a mark in the field of poetry. Poems were written in free verse and poetic prose depending upon various current social problems and crisis. Both traditional and individual symbols are used to represent aesthetic feelings of the poets. Brajendra Kumar Brahma, Manoranjan Lahary, Samor Brahma Choudhury, Jagdish Brahma, Guneswar Mushahary, Dharanidhar Wary, Barun Boro, Surath Narzary and many others have made a mark in the field of Boro modern poetry. At present, some young poets like Anju, Katindra Swargiary, Arabinda Uzir, Bijoy Baglary, Anil Boro, Romakanta Basumatary and so many promising poets are taking leading part in the field of Boro modern poetry. It is obvious that since the very beginning of written tradition of the Boro literature, poetry has an influential role in the history of Boro literature even till date.
Before the inception of the Bodo Sahitya Sobha, a few literary genres like short story, drama, poems and only objective articles were came into existence. The first name of the Boro short story was "Abari" (/abari/-a name of a girl) written by Ishan Chandra Mushahary, which was published in the magazine "Hathorkhi Hala".14 Besides, a few short stories were published in various magazines during this period. But these were not standard one. Short stories published in "The Bodo" (a mouthpiece of the Bodo Sahitya Sobha) are considered as specimen of modern and standard short story to some extent. Another magazine "Bithorai" (/bítʰora/-bud) edited by Samar Brahma Choudhury encouraged many writers by publishing their short stories. Chittaranjan Mushahary's "Phwimal Miziŋ" (/pʰwimal miziŋ/, 1970) meaning viewless vision is the first published short story collection in Boro. His second short story collection book is "Thalim" (/tʰalim/, 1974) meaning rehearsal. Some Boro critics like Madhu Ram Boro and Manoranjan Lahary have opined that late Nilkamal Brahma is the first grade short story writer in Boro. Nilkamal Brahma notably contributed a lot of standard short stories to the Boro literature. Short story books written by Nilkamal Brahma are as follows: "Hagra Guduni Mwǐ" (/hagra guduni mwǐ/, 1972) meaning deer of the deep forest, "Silinkaŋhar" (/siliŋkʰar/, 1985) meaning devastation, "Sirinai Mandar" (/sirinai mandar/, 1985) meaning off shoot mandar flower and "Mem Daudwi" (/mam daudwi/-The Egg Lady). At present, the fiction writers like Manoranjan Lahary, Dharanidhar Wary, Janil Kumar Brahma, Hareswar Basumatary, Nandeswar Daimary, Katindra Swargiary and Nabin Malla Boro are busy in writing modern short story.

It may be mentioned here that Boro drama came into publication in 1919. "Nalabuha" (/nalabuha/, One-act-play) written by Satish Chandra Basumatary is the first written Boro

14 Lahary, Manoranjan: Boro Thunlaini Jarimin, p-60
Before the inception of Bodo Sahitya Sobha (BSS) so many dramas were written or translated into Boro from other languages. Well known dramatists of that period were Dwarendra Nath Basumatary, Satish Chandra Basumatary and Mada Ram Brahma. All of them had taken a remarkable role to create dramatic movement in Boro society. In the early age of twentieth century Satish Chandra Basumatary wrote some dramas viz: *Nalabuha, Rani Laimuthi, Dorson Zylhaao* etc., Dwarendra Nath Basumatary wrote some dramas viz: *Rangalu Zylhaao, Nilambar, Chitra Nagada, Sonani Maibay* etc., Mada Ram Brahma wrote *Raimali, Dimaphur Nwgwr Bainai, Sodan Bwiragi* etc. After inception of the BSS, Kamal Kumar Brahma, Manoranjan Lahary, Surath Narzary, Mangal Singh Hazowary, Aniram Basumatary and many others wrote dramas. Kamal Kumar Brahma wrote "Raza Iragdao" (a historical drama), "Gwdn Phwisali" (/gwdn phwisali/, a social drama) and "Horbadi Khwmsi" (/horbadi kwxmsi/, a social drama). Manoranjan Lahary wrote a social drama "Anari" (/anari/-a name of a girl). Mangal Singh Hazowary wrote a few historical and social dramas viz. "Swnw" (/swndwn/, a historical drama), "Zylhaao Dwimalu" (/zylhao dwimalu/, a historical drama), "Zawlia Dewan" (/zawlia dewan/, a historical drama) etc. Besides, he wrote a few one act plays in Boro. During this period mythological drama "Sandw Baodia" (/sandw bawdia/) was also written by Surath Narzary.

Boro novel came into publication in 1962. Chittaranjan Mushahary is the pioneer in this field. His "Zuzaini Or" (/zuzaini or/, 1962, a social novel) meaning fire of husk, is the first novel in Boro. Mr. Mushahary has written about twenty-five novels till date. Famous fiction writers like Manoranjan Lahary and Dharanidhar Wary has fame for their distinctive creations. Mr.

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15 op.cit. p-70
16 op. cit. p-136
Lahary has achieved fame for his novel “Kharlut" (/kɔːrloʊt/, meaning unsettled man) and “Hainamuli" (/hainamuli/, meaning a kind of enchanting medicine) which depict social habits, customs and various social pictures of the Boros as a whole. Mr. Wary has also achieved fame for his novel “Mvihur" (/mviːhur/, meaning hunting) which purviews the hunter side, outlook and habits of the Boro society. At present, so many novels come into publication in Boro. Novelist like Nandeswar Daimary and Katindra Swargary are very famous among the new generation of novelists.

Literary genres like children literature, biography, travelogue etc. are started very lately in Boro. Kalicharan Brahmacary (junior) did the pioneer work on biography. He wrote “Sarnai Gurudebni Bwspn” (/sarnai gurudebni bwsp/, preaching of Gurudev). This book was written based on his Guru Kalicharan Bramha’s life. After this biography book, a good number of biographies were written based on life and activities of the great personalities of the Boros and also that of the great personalities of India, like Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Bhimrao Ambedkar and others.

Travelogue was also written very lately in Boro. Mohini Mohan Bramha did the pioneer work in this discipline. He wrote two books of travelogue based on his experience of journey in China and America. His “Amerikayaw Dawbayhvınay” (/amerikayaw dawbayhvinay/, Travel in America) and “Chin Hadoraw Dandise” (/sin hadrawundance, A Few moments in China) are best examples of travelogue in Boro. Another two books based on his travel experience were written by Nabin mall Boro. These two travelogues are “Somnath Darokani Mvzwınse Bisombi" (/somnat h darokani mvzwınse bisombi/, a few memories of Somnath and Dwarka,
1996) and "Chitrakutniphrai Mountabu" (/sitakutnip\textsuperscript{b}rai mauntabu/, from Chitrakut to Mountabu). It is assumed that the tradition of travelogue writing is in a very infant stage till now.

The number of children literature is also not very abundantly found in Boro. In Boro literature, the themes of children literature are folk songs, tales, adventures, legendary heroes or heroines, moral lessons and the great personalities from different fields. These are either collections from different sources or abridge version or translation from other languages. Innovative creative creations suitable to children mentality are very rarely found in Boro literature.

1.5.2 Written literature of the Rabhas: The written tradition of Rabha literature was started in the beginning of twentieth century with the publication of a religious book "Markni Nima Saikai" (/markni nima saikai/, 1909) which was translated into Rongdani dialect from The Gospel of Mark of the original holy Bible. It was most probably the oldest specimen of written literature in Rabha.\textsuperscript{17} "Penem Lamon Dam" (/penem lamon dam/, a religious book) was written by Purna Chandra Koch in Rabha in 1926. Besides some pioneer works were done by Rajen Rongkho and Adhar Bantho. "Rabha Zibraw Orgi" (/rab\textsuperscript{ha} zibraw orgi/, a book on Rabha language) and "Bhag Tekkan" (/b\textsuperscript{ha}g tekkan/, 1948) were written by Rajen Rongkho and published by Ishawar Chandra Hato. Thus Adhar Bantho wrote a book "Rabha Bhasa" (/rab\textsuperscript{ha} b\textsuperscript{asa}/, 1950, Rabha language). During this period, various socio-cultural organisations came into existence. For example, "Rabha Krishti Sammilan" (1955) had taken up many effective plans for the upliftment of the Rabhas. Late Rajen Pam and Rajen Rabha both were the pioneers in this respect. Prasanna Kumar Pam wrote a legendary drama "Dodan Bir" (/dodan bir/, 1957) which

\textsuperscript{17} Hakasam, Dr. Upen Rabha: Rabha Bhasa Aru Sahitya, P-100
was most probably the first Rabha drama. Thus several outstanding Rabha dramas on socio-cultural aspects were flourishing very slowly. Bineswar Kumar Santok wrote a historical drama “Zabed Bir” (/zabed bir/, 1960) while dramas like “Sirigini Risi” (/sirigini risi/) and “Rangsari” (/raŋsari/) were written by Rajen Pam. He also translated several dramas into Assamese from the original Bengali drama. “Sati Dumkachi” (/sati dumkasi/, 1988) was a bi-lingual (Rabha-Assamese) drama written by Dr. Upen Rabha Hakasam. Besides these, he also wrote a historical drama “Rāngir Parsuram” (/raŋgir parsuram/, 1998). Some of the dramatists who contributed a lot of dramas in the field of Rabha literature are: Prakash Rabha, Naren Rabha Hakasam, Khanin Rabha, Anil Hadu, Anil Rabha, Uday Rabha and others.

In 1973, the first Rabha magazine “Zatini Khuraŋ” (/zatini kʰuraŋ/, message of the race) was published under the editorship of Prakash Rabha. In this decade, an outstanding magazine “Champai” (/champai/, 1978, honeycomb) was published under the editorship of Listi Rabha Rongkho. It is worth mentioning here that these two magazines had taken up influential role in respect to the development of literary genres like poetry, prose, short story, novellete etc. The first Rabha novellete “Phesek Twraŋkayto” (/pʰesek twraŋkayto/, 1973) was written by Listi Rabha Rongkho and was published in the magazine “Zatini Khuraŋ” (/zatini kʰuraŋ/). In the last decade of twentieth century, novels like “Zanoŋ Zinoŋ” (/zanoŋ zinoŋ/, 1990, river and rivulet) and “Daidi” (/daidi/) were also written by Rajen Pam bearing social folk-customs and cultural aspects etc. It is mentionable that more novels or novelletes are not found in printed form in the present trends of Rabha literature.

Poems and short stories were written by few enthusiastic writers and most of the writings were published in the magazine “Champai”. These poems and short stories contained the theme
of religion, culture, ethics and advice to the Rabhas for social upliftment. Some of the noted poets of the "Champai Age" (1978-1982) of Rabha literature were Charumohan Rabha, Prakash Rabha, Bhaben Rabha, Bhupen Rabha, Suranjib Baksak, Mala Ram Rabha and so on. During the "Champai Age" some poems were translated into Rabha from Assamese poems. These are translated by some enthusiastic Rabha poets. Some famous poems of Amar Khayyam were also translated into Rabha by Listi Rabha, while Hato Mama (Prakash Rabha) translated an Assamese poem "Xule Bhani Xule" (/xule bɔni xule/) written by Mitra Devi Mahanta. Besides these, Assamese poem like "Xusi" (/xusi/) written by noted Assamese poet Nilamani Phukan was translated into Rabha by Charu Dabang with the Rabha title "Pithar" (/pibar/) meaning sacred. Poem of Ananda Chandra Agarwala “Ai” (/ai/) meaning mother was also translated into Rabha by Charumohan Rabha with the Rabha title “Aiya” (/aiya/). Another poet Someswar Rabha translated an Assamese poem "Dhulikana Mai" (/dulikona moi/) written by Chandra Dhar Baruah. He translated into Rabha with the title "Gosa dhuri An" (/gosa dɔuri an/, I am dust). In Rabha, poems in prose were also written by Upen Chandra Rabha with the title “Handar nay” (/handar nay/). This poem was published in the magazine "Champai". It is mentionable that two poetry books were published during the pre-Champai Age. "Randana Chandana" (/rondona chondona/, 1963) was written by Lakshmi Phenan while in 1966, Khagen Hato wrote a poetry book "Hachuini Khuran" (/hachuini kɔran/, a collection of romantic poems). Charumohan Rabha wrote a poetry book “Khusombrippar” (/kusombrippar/) during the “Champai Age". In 1987, S.M.Santok wrote a poetry book “Tokraṇi khuran” (/tokraṇi kɔran/) containing seventeen poems of romantic ideas. Towards the last decade of twentieth century some poetry books were published bearing the theme of national spirit as regards religion, culture, heritage
etc. Most of the poems were composed in rhyming couplets. Various romantic poems were composed in this period. A poet Jagat Kama wrote many poems bearing socio-cultural themes and published in the form of poetry book with the title "Doñchanabe" (doñsanabe/). A collection of forty one (41) lyrical romantic poems "Madapkay Ganthini Khurañ" (/madapkay gantʰini kʰurañ/, weeping of the soul) was published in the last part of twentieth century. Poems were written by Parikshit Rabha based on love theme especially to the nation and nature.

Towards the beginning of twenty first century, some promising young poets like Hima Rabha and Riniki Churchung Pam are taking leading part in the field of Rabha poetry. "Charpak" (/charpak/, a collection of romantic poem, 2000) is written and published by Hima Rabha while Riniki Churchung Pam has written and published a collection of romantic poems with the title "Mukachari" (/mukachari/, 2001). These two poetry books are highly appreciated by the Rabha critic Dr. Malina Devi Rabha. "Rachak Par" (/rachak par/, 2002) is a famous poetry book in Rabha written by Nitai Rabha which consists of 26 (twenty six) poems. This book is published by Nirupama Rabha of Goalpara District. Mr. Jagat Kama, President of the BRKR, writes a few words on this book that the poems explore patriotism, love to nature and socio-religious aspects of the Rabhas.\textsuperscript{18} During this year, two other books on songs was published. These are "Nañi Chika Zorai" (/nañi chika zorai/, 2002) written by Sulochan Rabha and "Hasoñi Parchun" (/hasoñi parchun/, 2002) written by Sandesh Baksaka.

In the field of short story, the Rabhas are not rich in comparison to written trends of Boro short story. The written trend of Boro short story was started since 1938; but in Rabha, it was started since 1982. A young writer Durjyodhan Rabha Juro wrote a short story "Tukhur Sabra"

\textsuperscript{18} This opinion is stated from the "Foreword" written by Jagat Kama in the book "Rachak Par", 2002
(/tukʰur sabra/) in the magazine “Champai” (4th issue, 1982). Most probably it is the first and pioneer work in the field of Rabha short story. The writer has published a short story book containing two short stories with Assamese version. The name of the book was “Pramchina Thekai” (/pramchina tʰekai/, 2000). Prior to that late Rajen Rabha wrote some short stories and these were published by Rabha Bhasha Parishad with the title “Gopchani Gaŋkhay” (/gopchani goŋkʰay/, 2001). Presently these stories are highly appreciated by the native readers. It is said that the written trends of Rabha short story is flourishing very slowly in this literature. Jharna Chikasam (in the nick name) has also two self-composed short stories. These are: “Hasoŋ Siri” (/hasoŋ siri/, 1994) and “Habayni Soŋsar” (/habayni soŋsar/, 1994). Both the short stories are highly appreciated by the native readers. It is mentionable that literary genres like criticism, children literature, travelogue, biography and satire writings are in an infant stage in the history of Rabha literature till now.

1.6 Present status of the Boro and the Rabha language: The Boros and the Rabhas are distinct linguistic communities in the north-east region. They have a traditional culture, religion and language of its own. Linguistically as belong to the TB group of languages, they have acquired some common linguistic features from the TB root. On the other hand, in the present heterogeneous cultural and linguistic sphere of the north-east, both the linguistic communities have developed their languages by the influence of other Indo-Aryan cultural and linguistic elements. Therefore, both Boro and Rabha have acquired and adapted various loan elements from other language families living in the north-east India. Effect of acculturation and assimilation processes are occuring to the deeper level of linguistic and cultural area.
The Boro and the Rabha language have been introduced as medium of instruction. For the first time, the Boro language was introduced in the primary level of education in 1963 in the district of Kokrajhar and at present the Boro medium schools (from primary level to high school standard) have been widely established in different Boro majority areas of Assam. Now the Boro language is introduced as a subject in the Higher Secondary level and in Bachelor degree as MII. and Elective subject (having 5 papers). Besides these, there is a Certificate Course and Post-Graduate degree course in Boro, which is presently running under the department of MII of Gauhati University. PG degree course was introduced in this department in the year 1995. Major course in Boro is yet to be introduced in the bachelor degree course. The Boro language was also introduced as one of the Modern Indian Languages under the Dibrugarh University and the North-Eastern Hills University, Shillong. Boro language was also introduced as the Associate official language of Assam since 1984 to be used in Kokrajhar district and Udalguri sub-division as a first phase. For enrichment of knowledge of the student community, text books, books on science, history, geography, grammar and dictionaries have also been written in recent times. Reference books and history of literature were also composed for the benefit of the students and the readers. Literary genres like poetry, short story, drama, novel, prose and various articles, children literature, biography, travelogue etc. are also flourishing in the field of Boro written literature.

On the other hand, the Rabha language was introduced as medium of instruction upto class three standard of Primary school in 1988. Besides it was only introduced as a subject in class four. Further no initial step has been taken in this regard. The Rabha language has not
gained an opportunity to use as medium of instruction in the high school standard, as MIL subject in the higher secondary or college level and P.G. course in the university.

Rabha primers and text books for students of primary level are also written in recent times. After inception of “Bebak Rabha Krourang Runchum” and “Rabha Bhasa Parishad”, most of the writers and enthusiastic personalities have dedicated for writing grammar and text books besides different literary genres. Rabha grammars for school students are composed under the auspices of “Rabha Bhasa Parishad” in 1982-83. Rabha dictionary and vocabulary books are also composed during this period.

1.6 Uses of script: Traditionally Boro and Rabha have no script of its own. In the beginning of the 20th century when the written tradition was initiated as part of its standardization process, most of the writers of both the languages used Roman or Bengali script for writing. In the last decade of the 19th century, the Christian missionaries like Rev. Sidney Endle, J. D. Anderson and many other enthusiastic personalities collected Boro folk literature and published all these materials in the printed form. The Missionaries adopted the Roman script for writing in Boro. In the beginning of the 20th century, Boro writers also used Bengali as well as the Asamiya script. Most of the Boro writers used the Asamiya script. This tradition continued up to 1974-75. During this year, Asamiya script was replaced by the Devanagari script. As a result of the script movement, an agreement was adopted by the Central Government of India and the Bodo Sahitya Sobha, where it was decided to accept the Devanagari script as the standardized script. At present Devanagari script is recognised popularly by the entire Boro community.

On the other hand, Bengali and Roman scripts were used for writing the Rabha language since the beginning of the 20th century. The Christian missionaries translated the Holy Bible into
Rabha. The Gospel of Mark was translated into Rabha with the title “Martini Nima Saikai” in 1909 which was published by the British and foreign Bible society. This book was translated with the help of Bengali script. The Rabha book like ‘Penem Lamon Dam’ written by Purna Chandra Koch and published by Rabha Baptist Church union was also in this script. The Rabha writers of this period like Rajen Rongkho and Adhar Bantho were also used Benagli script for their writings.

It is to be mentioned here that during the last decade of the 20th century when “Bebak Rabha Krourang Runchum” and “Rabha Bhasa Parishad” came into existence; the Bengali script was replaced by the Asamiya script. This script is being very popularly used by the Rabha writers till date.

1.7 A brief note on the dialect groups of Boro and Rabha: Dialects are regionally or socially distinctive variety of a language which is formed with a larger number of speakers. Many of the dialects of a language are either mutually intelligible among them or mutually unintelligible to each other. In case of Boro and Rabha, such problems are not quite found though they have many dialects with distinctive set of words and phonological and grammatical variations. Boro has three major regional dialects while Rabha has chiefly three clan dialects. The Boro dialect is further sub-divided as follows:

A) The Western Boro Dialect (WBD)

B) The Eastern Boro Dialect (EBD)

C) The Southern Boro Dialect (SBD)

The indigenous western Boro dialect group comprises the districts of Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Dhubri and partially southern part of the Brahmaputra valley of Goalpara
The Eastern Boro dialect group comprises the districts of Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup (Northern part of the Brahmaputra valley) and mainly Darrang district respectively. On the other hand, the Southern Boro dialect group comprises the district of Goalpara (partially from Krishnai-Agia to Dudhnoi Sub-division) and particularly partial part of the kamrup district (from Boko-Chaygaon to Rani Area). These dialect groups are divided based on a number of variations among such dialect groups in the areas mentioned above. The variations are found chiefly in the phonological, lexical and partially in morphological levels.

Rabha has also chiefly three dialect groups which are associated with maitori, Rangdani and Koch or Kocha group of the Rabha community. There are eight sub-branches of the Rabhas. Among them Maitori, Rangdani and Koch or Kocha are the major sub-division of the Rabhas. They have been maintaining languages and culture. But other sub-branches have lost their native language and converted to the Hindu community as a whole. It is interesting to note that the three major dialect groups show some linguistic variations in respect to phonology, lexical set of words and morphology to some extent. But cultural divergences are not found evidently among these dialect groups.

1.8 A brief note on linguistic studies of Boro and Rabha: In these two languages, linguistic studies had been initiated primarily by some enthusiastic Christian Missionaries towards the last few years of the 19th Century. While discussing about the linguistic studies in Boro, it has to notice to the pioneer work "Outline Grammar of the Kachari (Bārā) Language" (1884) which was written by Rev. Sidney Endle. This Grammar was written based on the dialect as spoken in the district of Darrang. The second was "A short Grammar of the Mech or Boro

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19 Hakasam, Dr. Upen Rabha: Rabha Bhasa Aru Sahitya, P-1
Language" (1889) written by Rev. L. Skrefsrud. This grammar was written based on the dialect as spoken in the district of Goalpara. Skrefsrud tried to analyse a few topics like Boro phonology and grammar. Dr. G.A. Grierson also worked on Boro philology and he incorporated the materials in LSI, Vol-III, Part-II. Dr. Pramod Chandra Bhattacharya has also made a remarkable research work on Boro Language. Dr. Bhattacharya has a keen observation in the field of Boro phonemics and morphology. Dr. Bhattacharya's "A Descriptive Analysis of the Boro Language" (1977) is an authentic work on the history and structure of the Boro language. This is a thesis for the Ph.D degree from the Gauhati University in 1965 and published in 1977. Topics incorporated in this thesis are mainly phonology, morphology, syntax and vocabulary. It is written in English with a detail introduction dealing with aim and scope, sources, method and approach, introduction of Boro speech community, population, area and dialects, race, script and literature, elements of culture and importance of the study etc.

Next to Dr. Bhattacharya, late Bhaben Narzy was a pioneer and a noted person in the field of Boro language and culture. He worked as the chief informant to Dr. Bhattacharya and acquired adequate experience and knowledge in the field of linguistics and research work. As a result, he wrote a Boro grammar namely "Boro Bhasa" (Boro Language, 1990) in Assamese which is a distinct contribution in this field.

Towards the last few years of twentieth century, two enthusiastic personalities of Boro namely Kamal Kumar Bramha and Madhuram Boro dedicated their best of knowledge and talent for linguistic studies particularly in the field of Boro philology. Kamal Kumar Bramha has written Boro grammar. "Boro Rawkhanthi" (/Boro raw khanthi/- Boro Grammar) is a remarkable work written in Boro in this line. Madhuram Boro has formal training on linguistics and he
obtained his M.A. degree in linguistics from Deccan College, Poona in 1965. He has done a lot of works on Boro philology. His "The Boro Structure" (1990), "The Historical development of the Boro Language" (1990), "Assamese and Boro: A Comparative and Contrastive study" (1990) are valuable contribution in this regard. He has also written Boro grammar in Boro

Dr. D.N.S. Bhat has also compiled a "Boro Vocabulary" and it was published by Deccan College. It is also an important contribution to this field.

The tradition of compilation of Boro dictionaries started since the last sixties of the twentieth century. The pioneer work in this field was done by Rajendra Lal Narzary. This was a bilingual dictionary namely "Boro-Asamiya Abhidhan" (1962). In 1968, the Boro Literature Board (Shillong) published "Boro-English Dictionary" and compiled by Halvorsrud and Maguram Moshahari. In the year 1973, one more dictionary namely "Hindi-Bodo Dictionary" was published from Gauhati and compiled by Dr. Dharmadutt Tiwari. "Bodo-Asamiya Sabdakosh" (Boro-Asamese Dictionary, 1983) was published by NELSO, B Barooah College, Gauhati. In 1985, "Bodo-English Dictionary" was published from Mawprem, Shillong. It was compiled by Maniram Mochari. Under the joint compilation of Heramba Narzary and Nil Kamal Bramha one more dictionary book namely "Anglo-Boro Dictionary" (1986) was published from Bina Library, Kokrajhar. Late Promod Chandra Bramha compiled the "Bodo-English-Hindi Dictionary" during the middle part of the last twentieth century and this dictionary was published later on with a radical change in 1996, by the Bodo Sahitya Sabha. In foreword informations have been mentioned in details on the present publication. "In the sense, the present dictionary is a radical change from the original manuscript. The present dictionary contains 10,000 head words, 2,100 suffixes and some thousands of explanatory words which
have not been occurred as headwords unfortunately. In fine, the present dictionary happens to carry more than thirty thousand Bodo words."\textsuperscript{20} It is worth mentioning that at present a few Assamese scholars and linguists are also busy in active research works on Boro phonology as well as on Bodo-Garo group of languages of the North-eastern region. Among them a few important names of the linguists are as follows: Dr. Pramod Chandra Bhattacharya, Dr Dipankar Moral, Dr Upen Rabha Hakasam, Dr Satyendra Narayan Goswami and Dr Ramesh Pathak. Besides them a few Boro personalities as well as research scholars are also busy in synchronic study of the Boro language.

Likewise, linguistic studies on Rabha language had been started primarily by some enthusiastic Christian Missionaries towards the last few years of the 19th Century. W.W. Hunter had given a few informations on Rabha in the Statistical Accounts of the District of Jalpaiguri in 1876. G.A. Grierson in his Linguistic Survey of India, (Vol.-III, Part-II) had given a note on Rabha language with a specimen of Rongdani dialect. Besides, Damant, G.H. had also given a few informations about the Rabhas and their language in his writing "Notes on the Locality and population of the Tribes dwelling between the Brahmaputra and Ningthi River."\textsuperscript{21} The three personalities namely J.D. Anderson, Major A. Playfair and Rev. Sydney Endle also worked on the Rabhas and their language. J.D. Anderson had given a comparative note on Rabha and Boro vocabulary which was incorporated in LSI, Vol.-III, Part-II. Major A. Playfair had also given a comparative list of Rabha-Garo vocabulary in appendix of "The Garos", 1909. Next to Playfair, Rev. Sidney Endle had described in brief on the Rabhas and their language in the appendix-1 of

\textsuperscript{20} Extracted from the "Foreword" written by Surath Narzary in Bodo-English-Hindi Dictionary (1996). Compiled by Pramod Ch. Brahma
\textsuperscript{21} This report is quoted from the LIS. Vol-III, Part-II
"The kacharis". From a comparative outlook, Endle opined a valuable comment on the Rabha language, "Their language, which would seem to be rapidly dying out, forms a very interesting link between Garo and Kachari, having much in common with both, but with some special features peculiar to it. Like the language of other branches of the Boro race, the Rabha language at one time undoubtedly agglutinative, seems to be in process of becoming inflexional, through contact and intercourse with the speakers of more or less broken-down Sanskritic languages e.g. Bengali, Assamese etc." Besides Friend Periera and Rev. A. F. Stephen were also the mentionable names in this field.

It may be noted that scientific analysis on Rabha language has also been done since the mid twentieth century. Dr. Rebati Mohan Saha is an important name in this field. He has done a comparative analysis on Bangla and Koch-Rabha language. Much important information of the koch-Rabhas i.e. Koch and their dialect concentrated especially in the district of Goalpara and North Bengal, are analysed elaborately in his thesis "Bangla Bhasar Tulana Prasanghe Koch-Rabha Bhasa" (1981). "Ethnic Affinities of the Rabha" (1960) written by B.M.Das is also a valuable book on ethnic identity of the Rabhas.

Towards the last few years of the twentieth century, a couple of scholars from the Rabhas are busy in active research on the Rabha philology and culture. Scholars like Dr. Upen Rabha Hakasam and Dr. Malina Devi Rabha have their valuable contribution to this field. The two books "Rabha Bhasa Aru Sahitya" (Rabha language and literature, 1997) and "Asamiya Aru Asamar Tibbat Barmiya Bhasa" (Assamese and Tibeto-Burman languages of Assam, 2000) are important contributions to the field of Rabha language and literature compiled by Dr. Hakasam. Before and after inception of the "Bebak Rabha Krouran Runchum" and "Rabha Bhasa Parishad" a few Rabha Grammars are also compiled for the benefit of the students and learners.

22 Endle, Rev. Sidney: The Kacharis, Appendix-I, p-83
of the Rabha language. The enthusiastic personality like Rajen Rongkho wrote a grammar i.e. "Rabha Zibrao Orgi Bhag Tekkan" (/rabʰa zibraw orgi bhag tekkan/, 1948), while Adhar Bantho also wrote a Rabha grammar "Rabha Bhasa" (1950). These two grammar books incorporate some fundamental introduction of the Rabha language. Presently Rabha organisations like BRKR and Rabha Bhasa Parishad are also taking active role to compile Rabha grammar for the school students and the learners of the Rabha language. Vocabulary books like "Rabha Rawthap" (/rabʰarawlʰap/, Rabha vocabulary, 2000) and "Rabha Xobda Puthi" (Rabha vocabulary, 1991) are published by the "Rabha Bhasa Parishad" in recent times.

A concise dictionary is also compiled by Rabha experts and published by the organisation. A great achievement to the field of Rabha philology is contributed by Dr. U.V. Jose. His "Khuraŋnala" (Rabha-English Dictionary, 2000) is published by Don Bosco Publications, Guwahati, Assam. It is an undoubtedly great contribution to the Rabhas.

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