INTRODUCTION

0.1. Aim and Scope.

This is an attempt to describe a spoken form of the Boro language of Assam. This descriptive analysis is based on a dialect of north-west Assam in the Brahmaputra valley comprising of the northern portions of Goalpara and Kamrup districts. This spoken form is still a living medium of expression of this area in day-to-day life. The people who speak this language call themselves 'Boro' [phonetically bo' PO].

The neighbouring (India) Assamese speakers call these people and their speech 'Kachari' (Pronounced in Assamese as KOSARI). The western most sections of the Boros who live in adjoining areas of Goalpara (Assam) and Jalpaiguri (West Bengal) are known to their neighbours as Neek (pronounced "mE's"). The Linguistic Survey of India(1) states that "that the generic name 'Bodo' was first applied by Hodgson to this group of languages. The exact sound is better represented by spelling it Bāḍā or Bārā. Like other tribal names in Assam, the name probably once meant a male member of the tribe (e.g. Tripura-Bārā (k) = a man)."

S. H. Wolfenden explains the tribal name 'Bārā-fisa' consisting of Bārā-and-fisa (son, children) in relation to the Tibetan languages and equates to bBrug-pa "inhabitants of the steppes, the nomadic Tibetans" and he opines that Bārā-fisa should probably be reconstructed into bBrug-bu-tsa 'descendants (sons) of the steppe'.(2) Grierson called these speakers and their speech Bārā, Bodo or plains Kachari primarily

on the basis of Adele's grammar. (3) Adele analyzed the speech of Barrang district situated in north Central Assam valley. The dialect described by me belongs to the north Western Assam Valley and as such, any inquisitive reader would notice a considerable number of dialect variations between the present analysis and Adele's grammar from the point of linguistic materials collected in different areas and in different periods. The present study aims at presenting phonological, morphological and syntactic analysis with specimens of colloquial and recorded texts and vocabulary from the standpoint of descriptive linguistics. I gathered the background for this analysis from my linguistic training received in different sessions of the School of Linguistics organized at Deccan College, Poona, and K.N. Institute of Hindi Studies, Agra University during 1954-50 to supplement my initial knowledge earned in the University of Gauhati and then in the University of Calcutta. (4)

The present descriptive analysis therefore incorporates first-hand linguistic materials of this form of Boro language gathered from a number of representatives of the Boro people belonging to the area under investigation. The scope of this study is considerably limited to the relevant features present in the linguistic materials gathered from these informants usually through direct method. I have tried my best

(3) Adele, S. - Outline Grammar of the Kasbari (Birá) Language as spoken in district Barrang, Assam, Shillong, 1884.

(4) This study was initiated at the University of Gauhati in 1954-50 under the guidance of Dr. Banikanta Kakati and the learning of this form of language was possible for a research scholarship granted by the Government of Assam. Since 1953, Dr. Birinchi Kumar Barua guided my research work due to sudden demise of Dr. Kakati, I was deputed by Dr. Barua to the University of Calcutta and the School of Linguistics to receive instructions from the linguists, Dr. Anit Kumar Chatterji, Dr. Sukumar Sen and others. Dr. Sukumar Sen has been kindly assisting me in this project since 1955 along with Dr. B. K. Barua.
to present a true and authentic description of the language with my available equipments in the light of the knowledge gathered from field work as well as theoretical training. There are further scope of detailed study of different branches of linguistics from different angles of outlook. In this analysis, morpho-phonemic and syntactic descriptions are given in brief in comparison to phonology and morphology. The vocabulary is also far from complete; only a few specimens of oral and written texts are incorporated in this analysis.

The materials analyzed in this description are primarily collected from a selected number of speakers of this form of language. The chief informant is Shri Shabendra Harzi who hails from the village Jhargaron (pronounced Jargaw) under Ramgija Police Station of North Kamrup. This village is situated at about forty miles north from Gauhati, the premier town of Assam. Shri Harzi is near about thirty nine years in age. His parents and other elderly people of the village came here more than fifty years ago from Bodoma area of North Goalpara to settle in this fertile portion of North Kamrup. The original Boro inhabitants of North Kamrup are also living in and about the village of Jhargaron and they still preserve their dialectal variants among them. Shri Harzi and their relatives speak their North Goalpara form of the language which differs a little from the neighbouring speech of North Kamrup. Though North Goalpara and North Kamrup broadly belong to the same dialect area, still a small number of phonological, morphological and glossarial points differences exists. I have enumerated most of them in the body of this analysis.

Shri Harzi always speaks Boro with members of his family and the village, but he speaks Assamese with almost equal fluency outside
his Boro surroundings and especially at Guahati where he works as a pleader's clerk. Moreover he has to speak English, Hindi and Bengali with considerable degrees of fluency in different occasions as necessary. Shri Narzi served as an informant in two sessions of the School of Linguistics organised at the Deccan college, Poona during the summer and the autumn of 1955 and I had the opportunity to attend his classes of Field Methods of Descriptive Analysis under the direction of Prof. J. Burton-Page\(^5\) of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London and of Prof. William Mc Jermich of U.S.A. Shri Narzi has proved himself to be an ideal informant in the School of Linguistics, Deccan College, Poona. He is very eagerly associated with me as the chief informant since the beginning of my studies learning of this form of Boro Language in 1952. He has moreover shown outstanding literary talents in the midst of his official and social pre-occupations \(^6\).

Shri Ramesh Chandra Boro of village Bighali near Tizu in North Kamrup helped me as an informant at the initial stage of learning this language. He speaks an allied dialect of North Kamrup. From Shri Natilal Brahna of Ichilakhata village near Sidli in North Goalpara I gathered a small portion of Boro oral texts in 1957. He speaks a form of speech which is similar to that of Shri Narzi.

Moreover, a selected number of Boro people whom I consider to be suitable representatives of the speakers of the dialect-area under analysis helped me as informants on a number of occasions. All published texts in Boro used in this description are attested by

\(^5\) Burton-Page, J. \(\) An Analysis of the syllable in Boro, Indian Linguistics, Vol.16, 1955, pp 334-344; presents some of the results of the work in Field Methods of Descriptive Analysis of Boro Phonology.

\(^6\) Narzi, B. \(\) Boro-Kacharir Jana Sahitya (Folk-literature from the Boro-Kacharis), Guahati, 1957; Pages 80-52; a pioneer study of Boro folklore in Assamese; besides he has a number of published essays and a large manuscript on Boro culture.
Sari Bhabendra Narsi, my chief informant and the phonemic transcription is based on his reading in normal speaking style. I have not attempted any description of the form of speech uttered in fast speaking style and in unusual prayer and worship, story-telling, stage-acting and emotional outbursts.

0.3 Method and approach.

I have essentially applied the method of descriptive linguistics which is elaborately dealt in a good number of authoritative books mostly written by the scholars of so-called American School of Linguistics. In addition to these books on descriptive linguistic theories, I have also received the background of any approach from a number of books written by eminent British and Indian linguists. I have specially gathered the method of this analysis from my study of the writings by Sapir, Bloomfield, Pike, Nida, Bloch and Trager, Gleason, Hockett, Haas and Harris(7) Mention should also be made to the useful collection


Pike, Kenneth Lee : Phonetics, A Critical Analysis of Phonetic theory and a Technique for the Practical Description of Sounds; Ann Arbor, 1947, pp. 182.

Phonetics, A Technique for Reducing Languages to Writing; Ann Arbor, 1947, pp. 254.

Tone Languages; Ann Arbor, 1948, pp. 157.


Bloch, Bernard, and George L. Trager : Outline of Linguistic Analysis Baltimore, 1942, pp. 82.


Haas, Mary R. : Tunics, New York, 1940, pp. 143.

entitled 'Readings in Linguistics' edited by Martin Joos for the Committee on the Language Program of the American Council of Learned Societies which contains a good number of research papers on the different aspects of descriptive linguistics. I have freely consulted these papers whenever necessary to get any new light on this subject so that I can apply it in my own analysis.

I have always kept constant contacts with my chief informant since I began to learn this language. As there are no facilities for instrumental phonetics in the University of Gauhati, my learning of the Boro language depended primarily on the articulatory and auditory approaches. I always tried to reproduce the text as soon as I gathered it from the informants through the direct method. It took long years of effort on my part to acquire the speaking faculty of this form of speech but it was a splendid experience for me. I learnt as well as analysed my recorded texts phonologically and grammatically often by trial and error. In 1955, under the auspices of the School of Linguistics, I had the opportunity to analyse a few sounds uttered by my chief informant, Shri Harai in the Phonetic Laboratory of Deccan College, Poona to determine the tonal contrasts. I took the help of a tape recorder also to analyse a few features of Boro Phonology in the School of Linguistics organised at the I. M. Institute of Hindi Studies, Agra University in 1960. Later on, I have attested all my materials incorporated in the Chapter on Phonology, with the help of tape recordings gathered from Harai during 1961-63. A few photographs showing the lip-positions of Boro

vowels as uttered by Shri Harri are inserted in this analysis.
Moreover I was inspired by the writings of a number of Indian and foreign Scholars(9) to take up this lonely project in the midst of a considerable number of national and personal calamities.

As to the method applied and the approach needed to this subject, I have carefully utilised the private suggestions and comments received from Dr. Robert Shaffer of California, U.S.A., through the good services of Dr. S. K. Chatterji since 1954, Dr. M. A. Gleason, Jr. of the School of Linguistics, Beecan College, Poona in 1955 and Dr. Ashok R. Kelkar of K. N. Institute of Hindi Studies, Agra University (now of Beecan College, Poona) since 1960.

0.4. Boro Speech Community:

0.4.1. The place of Boro within Aino-Tibetan Family.

The Boro group of speech community is scattered at present all over Assam, NEA, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, West Bengal and adjoining areas of East Pakistan. In this context, the Boro group of speech community includes Boro or Boro-Kachari, Dimasa or Dimasa-Kachari, Koch, Rabha, Lelung, Totto, Chutiya (Bouri), Garo, Hajeang and a number allied tribes and sub-tribes. These Boro tribes are linguistically


connected with the Nagas. According to the classification given in the Linguistic Survey of India,(10) the Boro or Boro-Kachari, which is described in this analysis, belongs to the Boro (Bodo) Sub-Section of Bodo-Naga section under the Assam-Burma Group of the Tibeto-Burman branch of Sino-Tibetan or Tibet-China speech family. As per the classification given by Robert Shafer(11), Boro (Bodo) belongs to the Western branch of Darish section under Baris Division of the Sino-Tibetan Family.

As to the expansion of Sino-Tibetan speakers including the Boro's, S.K. Chatterji observes: "The area of characterization for the primitive Sino-Tibetan Speech appears to have been North-Western China between the head-waters of the Huang Ho and the Yang-tze Kiang rivers .... Mongoloid tribes from Western China speaking forms of the Sino-Tibetan speech appear to have been pushing south and west from their original homeland from pre-historic times, but certain large-scale movements of which we have faint inklings seem to have begun in the early part of the first millennium B.C. ....... the Bodos, who spread over the whole of the Brahmaputra valley and North Bengal as well as East Bengal, forming a solid bloc in North-eastern India, were the most important Indo Mongoloid people in Eastern India, and they form one of the main bases of the present-day population of these tracts, Judging from the wide range of extension of their language, the Bodos appear first to have settled over the entire Brahmaputra valley, and extended west into North Bengal (in Koeb Bihar, Kangpur and Dinajpur districts); they may have pushed into North Bihar also, and the


Indo-Mongoloids who penetrated into North Bihar might equally have been either Bodos or 'Himalayan' tribes allied to the Newars.\(^{(12)}\)

Based on S. K. Chatterji's *Kirata-Jama-Krti*,

I present below a brief tabular representation of the Sino-Tibetan family of languages following the linguistic survey of India relevant to the Boro language under analysis:

**Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese Speech Family**

- **Sino-Tibetan Proper**
  - Probably early modification of Sino-Tibetan

  - **Tibeto-Burman**
    - **Mongol**
      - **Tibetan**
        - **Himalayan**
          - **North-Asham**
            - Aka, Abor (Adi), Kiri, Dafia, Mishmi etc.
          - **Bodo-Maga**
            - **Bodo (Boro)**
              - **Naga**
                - **Kuki-Chin**
                  - **Leio, Kashin**
                    - **Old Burmese**
                      - **Old Burmese**

  - **Assam-Burman**
    - **Burmese-Kuki-Chin**
      - **Kashin-LoLo**

  - **Chinese or Sinitic**

Robert Shafer has given another classification of the Sino-Tibetan languages pointing out a number of discrepancies in that of the Linguistic Survey of India given by Stem Know under the editorship of G.A. Grierson: "The present world-wide misconception that the Sino-Tibetan family of languages is divided into an eastern "Chinese-Siamese" sub-family and a western "Tibeto-Burman" sub-family has resulted from two distinguished scholars (Hemsi Nespero and Stem Know) working on opposite sides of the area and their almost total ignorance of the languages in their colleagues field."

The following is the brief tabular representation of the Sino-Tibetan languages following Robert Shafer:–

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sino-Tibetan</th>
<th>Divisions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sinitic</td>
<td>Manic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Chinese)</td>
<td>(Thai or Tai) &amp; its</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Branches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moran</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are differences in respect of classification and genetic relationship of the Sino-Tibetan languages. According to H. A. Gleason, Jr., "The classification of languages is not within the province of descriptive linguistics, though many descriptive linguists also work on this problem. For descriptive linguistics a language classification is simply a tool provided by another discipline. But it is a tool which cannot well be dispensed with."(13) Unless the different languages and dialects spoken around the Boro are analysed systematically and precisely, the definite place of Boro within the Sino-Tibetan family cannot be assigned. From a lexicostatistic or glottochronological count of Boro and Garo languages, Robbina Burling and myself found that Boro and Garo separated from each other about two thousand years ago from an ancestral common language. Dimasa or Hills Kachari spoken in North Cachar of the Surma Valley branched off from the ancestral common language not before one thousand years ago. That is, Dimasa is nearer to Boro than Garo. From similar glottochronological studies based on descriptive linguistic materials, we shall be able to prepare a definitive listing and classification of the Sino-Tibetan languages.

0.4.2. Population

According to the Census of India, 1951, the Boro (Boro-Kachari) speakers of Assam is estimated at about one lakh and seventy thousand persons. This figure includes the Boro (Plains Kachari), Boro dean (Boro dialect) and Kacharidean (Kachari dialect) and excludes Dimasa, Meeh and other cognate languages and dialects. (14) But a considerable number of Boro Scholars and representatives of the Boro (Bodo)

(13) Gleason, Jr., H. A.; An Introduction to Descriptive Linguistics, New York, 1955 Pages 333-34.

Sahitya Sabha considers this census figure to be inaccurate. According to their estimates, the number of Boro speakers is not less than two lakhs. According to the census of 1931, the Boro (Kacharis) numbered 2,91,000 persons. The decrease of Boro speakers is due to a number of social factors. One of them may be due to the gradual conversion of the Boro into Hinduism and thereby giving up their tribal religion, customs and language. Most of the Boros are bilingual and they speak Assamese or Bengali just outside the jurisdiction of their family and villages. The enumerators may not be learned enough to enter the mother tongue correctly. The Boro people mostly live in the plains of Assam surrounded by the Assamese speaking and other neighbours.

The distribution of their present population in the districts of Goalpara, Kamrup, United Mikir and North Cachar Hills, Darrang, Nowgong, Garo Hills, Cachar, Sibsagar, United Khasi and Jayantia Hills and also in NEFA and Nagaland is shown approximately in the enclosed map of Assam. But it should be noted that the census in NEFA was incomplete in 1951 (vide, before p. 15).

According to the census of Assam, 1951, the speakers of Boro group of languages are estimated at about four lakhs and fifty six thousand, while total speakers of Sino-Tibetan family of languages are estimated at about twelve lakhs. These figures cover the state of Assam, Nagaland and NEFA (incomplete).

0.4.3. Area and Dialects.

The Boro speaking areas of Assam, at present are stretching from Dhubri in the west to Sadiya in the east. The Boro speakers have close relation to the so-called Mech speakers of Jalpaiguri and other adjacent districts of West Bengal. As per my present information, there are at least four dialect areas of the Boro language of Assam.
(a) The dialect under present analysis comprises of the northern regions of Goalpara and Kamrup districts; this may be called north-west dialect area. This north-west dialect area mainly contains two forms of speech of sub-dialects, the North Kamrup and the North Goalpara. The phonological, morphological and glossarial differences are noted briefly below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phonological</th>
<th>North Goalpara</th>
<th>North Kamrup</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-o - ~ - a -</td>
<td>2phaey 'Come'</td>
<td>2phaey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s - ~ kh -</td>
<td>2saw 'burn'</td>
<td>2kha'w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- s - ~ - kh-</td>
<td>2ma' so 'one person'</td>
<td>2kha'so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- rs - ~ - kh-</td>
<td>2ha'sa 'Caste Hindu'</td>
<td>2ha'sa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-a/-rd ~ -r</td>
<td>2ge'dar/1ge'der 'beg'</td>
<td>2ge'dar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morphological</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negative past tense suffix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-0a0 khey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glossarial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2be'dlaw 'leech found in water'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2kha'sa'pha're 'moon'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2thur'si 'dish'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(b) The dialect area comprising of South Goalpara, Garo Hills and a few places of South Kamrup may be called south-west dialect area. There are salient differences between the north-west and the south-west dialect areas in the matters of phonology, morphology and vocabulary. (15)

(c) The dialect area comprising of the districts of Barpang, Lakhimpur

(15) T.G. Khakhlarl has pointed out a number of phonological differences of these two dialects in the magazine Chipkhy (Boro & Assamese), 1963, Gauhati.
and a few places of NEA represents the North Central Assam dialect area. This dialect was described by S.Hale in his Grammar (16) mainly based on the spoken form of Darrang district in particular. Though forms of speech of Lakhimpur and NEA are akin to that of Darrang, there are considerable differences of sub-dialectal nature.

(d) The form of speech spoken in Moriganga, North Cachar and Nikir Hills, Cachar and adjacent areas represents the Southern Assam dialect area. There are more or less sub-dialectal differences.

The clear-cut division of different dialect areas of the Boro language of Assam requires further research and field-work. I have only presented here one of the possible divisions in the light of my analysis.

0.4.4. Race

The Boro speakers racially belongs to the Mongoloids. S.K. Chatterji has included the Boro speakers in his new terminology, the Indo-Mongoloids or Kiratas. According to him, this term (Indo-Mongoloids) defines at once their Indian connexion and their place within the cultural milieu in which they found themselves, as well as their racial affinity. Fr. Matthias Hermanns includes the Beros in his term, the Indo-Tibetans. (16)

In the words of Fr. M. Hermanns, "As is the case with the Mache and so also with the Kathari (Boro), among the Mongoloid features are very prominent: the strong cheek bones, slit eyes, a slight growth of hair on the body and scant beard. They are shorter and more stocky than the Indians of the north-east".

The Indo-Mongoloids or Indo-Tibetans including the Beros made close contacts with the Negritos, the Austro, the Mediterranean

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(16) Hermanns, Fr. Matthias, : The Indo-Tibetans, Bombay, 1954, Pages 159 with Illustrations and Map.
(Dravidian speaking) and the Nordic (Aryan speaking) races of India in different times. 3. K. Chatterji rightly remarks: "In India from the earliest times cultural assimilation went hand in hand with a large amount of racial fusion, people of the above mentioned races races with various of Austrie, Dravidian and Aryan speech (as well as Mongoleid or "hoe-Tibetan speech in Himalayan and North-eastern India) intermarrying with each other the stronger and better organised later comers as was natural taking to wife the daughters of the weaker earlier peoples more often than giving their own daughters in marriage to the members of a backward or supposedly 'inferior' race."

In Assam and Eastern India, the Mongoleid or Kirata elements in the population are easily noticeable. Even the Austria speaking Khias and Santena (Jayantia) are racially Mongoleid. The Mongoleid or kirata people were described in a number of Sanskrit and Assamese old texts like the Yajurveda, the Atharvaveda, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Kalika Purana, the Yogini Tantra, the Kaushari Buranji, the Darrang Raj Vansavali and others. The Yogini Tantra clearly admits that the religion of Kamrupa (Assam) is of the Kirata origin: "तद्धैसि! योगिनी-पिठे धर्माः कैराताजे मनोहः". The peoples known in the present day Assam, Nagaland, NEFA, Manipur and Tripura as Boro, Rabha, Garo, Lalung, Mala (Mishing), Mopa, Aka, Bafla, Adi (Abor), Mikir, Hasi, Santena, Dimasa, Neithei, Tipra, Majong, Nige (Lushai) Naga, Mishmi, Singphou, Apatani, Nekte, Wancha, Kuki-chin, Khanti and a large number of so-called tribes residing in the hills and plains belong essentially to the Mongoleid or Kirata race. Even the Nordic (Aryan speaking) population of Assam has a substratum of Mongoleid (Kirata) race.

0.4.5 Script and Literature.

The Boro language under the present analysis is said to have no inherited scripts of their own. Shri Bishnu Prasad Rabha, the famous
Artist of Assam, told me that in ancient times there were a kind of Beedhal Scripts among the Kacharis (Boros and Dinasas). Shri Babha represented in writing the Beedhal alphabet as gathered from an informant of Dimapur area which was noted for the Kachari reign and remains representing the art and architecture. As this form of Beedhal scripts is no longer in vogue, I leave the matter for further enlightenment.

At present, the Boros make use of the Assamese alphabet and the Roman alphabet as modified to suit their need. The Boro Christians only usually write their text-Books and religious matters in the medium of Roman Scripts; other Boros forming a clear majority write in the modified Assamese Scripts. The Boro Sahitya Sabha has accepted the modified Assamese scripts for use in their text book and literature. Since 1963, the Boro language has been introduced as the medium of instruction in the Boro Predominant Primary Schools of Kokrajhar Sub-division in the district of Goalpara. The literacy is slowly but steadily increasing. In 1954, there were eight senior graduates of Arts, Science, Medicine and Engineering among the Boros.

The Boro literature consists of the vast amount of oral literature including folksongs, folktales, ballads, idiom and proverbs and of the considerable amount of written and published literature in Assamese and Roman Scripts. The published literature comprises mainly of books relating to poems, stories, prayers and songs on the one hand, and journals and magazines with different types of compositions on the other hand. There are a good number of unpublished novels, dramas etc. so far my knowledge goes. A few selected specimens of written and published literature are given in chapter 6 as sample texts with my phonemic transcription.

The themes and beauties of Boro literature will reveal their mode of life and attitude towards nature. The rhyming metres of Boro verse and songs always appeal to the reader's ear and heart.
0.4.6. Elements of Culture.

The Boro culture is a part and parcel of the Mongeoid (Kirata) culture. This subject is vast and enormous. The Mongeoid Boro culture in Assam has influenced to some extent the Indo-Aryan Assamese culture and the vice versa.

The different aspects of Boro culture in the background of Assamese culture are discussed by a good number of competent scholars. I just mention here a few elements of Boro culture based on personal knowledge gathered through my field-work.

The Beros of the northern bank of the Brahmaputra valley narrate their origin of creation in relation to the worship of Bathon (Ba'theow) the Supreme God among the Beros. Bathon represents the five elements of creation. He is also known as Sibrahi (Siva). Sibrahi with the help of his wife created this universe and the first man, Mosesin (Monsinpip). As Mosesin remained a life long celibate, Sibrahi and his wife (Siva's wife) created Darimba, the male and Singhadeba, the female in order to propagate the human population or the mankind (man's son). Bathon created Siva (Euphorbia splendens) plant, the first tree which stands as an emblem of the Supreme God at the altar.

Another legend depicts the origin of the Beros from Siva, the third power of the Hindu Trinity. The Kashari Buranji records two legendary traditions of the royal origin of the Beros from Siva. The Berring Raj Vamcavali also narrates the origin of the Koch Kings from Siva.

(17) In addition to the books already mentioned and listed in the selected Bibliography, special mention may be made to B.Kakati’s the Mother Goddess Kamakya, Guahati, 1948, B.K.Basu’s A cultural History Assam, Newgong, 1955, P.Goswami’s Ballads and Tales of Assam, Guahati, 1960 which deal with religion, culture and folklore of Assam with reference to Bero.
According to Lepcha and Rai traditions, the Lepche (Lepcha or Heng), Jimdar (Khambu or Rai) and Meohe (Mech or Boro) were three brothers born of the same parents and in course of time, they were separated and thus three tribes originated. (20)

The Boro people including their western and eastern branches had the royal glories as we gather from the records of history. The western section of the old Boro (Kacharis) occupied the thrones of Koch-Behar, Bijnai, Darrang and Beltola. An eastern branch in the name of Chutiyas also established a powerful kingdom with its capital near Sadiya. The Chutiyas were engaged in a prolonged struggle with the Ahoms, a section of the great Shan (Tai or Thai) people, who entered into Assam in 1229 A.D. with Sukantha as the Ahom king. The Ahoms subdued the Morans, Borahls and other branches of the great Boro people. Another section of the eastern Boro maintained their kingdom with capitals at Dimapur, Nalbong and Khaspur against the continuous strife with Ahoms and neighbouring powers up to the 19th century. The advent of the British rule in Assam. This section of the Boroos is known to us now as Dimasas or Dimasa Kachari (Hills Kachari). Govinda Chandra was the last Kachari king of Cashar and he was murdered in 1830 and his kingdom became part of the British dominions.

A portion of the Kachari country was in possession of tularam Semapati, the Commander-in-chief of Govinda Chandra up to 1854 A.D.

There is a legend among the Dimasas (Hills southern Kacharis) as regards their final separation from the northern branch (Boroos).

From a lexicostatistic dating or glottochronological count, I consider the Boro to be a separate language from the Dimasa; but from the point of history, tradition, legend and culture, there are a large number of common characteristics and links. W.C.N. Bundas wrote a grammar and dictionary of the Dimasa language in 1908 and

Coppit wrote a historical and descriptive account of the Dimasa.

The Boro social structure is primarily patriarchal with a few elements of matriarchal characteristics. There are definite regulations as to their house-building and maintaining of their homestead. The Boro main house is built on the northern side of the homestead. This main house stretches from the west to the east. There are three divisions of the main house with provision of a door facing to the south. The easternmost portion (3\textsuperscript{rd} sip) of the main house is meant for eating and worship. The courtyard also provides the altar of Bahan, the Supreme God, with a Simu tree as the emblem. This Simu tree is planted on the north-eastern corner of the courtyard parallel to the easternmost portion of the main house. The altars of Khamikha (mother Goddess), Maina (Goddess of Fortune or Lakshmi) and Bathan (Great Father) are placed inside the easternmost portion of the main house. The Boros are not animistic. They are worshippers of Bahan, the Supreme God. They have other minor gods and goddesses. They believe in ghosts and spirits also. But the conception of Supreme God is predominantly remarkable. The Boros are primarily villagers and farmers. They are industrious and worshippers of beauty. They have finer conceptions of beauty in relation to male and female physique.\(^{(21)}\)

That the Boros have entertained a religious philosophy influenced by the Buddhists and Hindus in a matter of research and deeper analysis.\(^{(22)}\)

There are a large number of folk-beliefs relating to the Boro main house, courtyard, agriculture and other house-hold activities. They observe various ceremonies and festivals in relation to birth, wedding, death and agriculture. The Beisag or the springtime

\(^{(21)}\) Harai D.; Bodo-Kashari included in Assam Janajati (Tribes of Assam) in Assamese edited by P.G. Bhattacharya, for Assam Sahitya Sabha, Jorhat, 1962, Pages 54 - 69.

festival is famous for community singing, dancing and consuming of rice beer (\textsuperscript{1}na\textsuperscript{2}w/su\textsuperscript{1}may) accompanied with feasts. They have their own social laws and customs. There is the provision of a village council headed by the village headman (\textsuperscript{2}ga\textsuperscript{2}mi\textsuperscript{1}bray). The position of women in the society is almost equal to that of men. There is the provision of widow-marriage. The women are equally industrious. The weaving of cotton and endi (eri) cloth with fine embroidery is the special craftsmanship of the womenfolk.

A male person may have more than one wife in special cases. Polyandry is not allowed in the case of women. There are definite customs observed with rituals in respect of birth, marriage and death.

We find a definite cremation ground for the village. There are divisions of labour in the society according to the clans (\textsuperscript{2}ma\textsuperscript{2}ha\textsuperscript{1}ri) They follow some interesting methods and processes in respect of fishing and hunting. The use of magic, witchcraft and hymns in different ceremonies is remarkable. The articles of food include rice, vegetables, fish and meat gathered from tortoises, crabs, fowls, deer and pigs. They never take beef. There is also aversion to milk among the elder section of the Bares. This aversion of milk is possibly due to the fact that milk has the opposite and harmful reaction in relation to rice-beer which is considered to be their national drink. The preparation of rice-beer with special condiment as ingredients is an interesting technique essential in their domestic life. The dried fish and dried meat are regarded as favourite articles of food. Their sacrifices consist of rice, fruits, male goats, pigs, cocks, pigeons, ducks etc. The function of Deodhai (male) and Deodhami (female) as priestly dancers at the time of Bathou worship and Kherai festival is an essential requisite. Kherai is their national festival which which provides also ancestral and hero-worship.
Out of the thirteen outstanding characteristics of Mongloid culture as enumerated by W.C. Smith, I find that the Boros have at present five, modified characteristics common to other Mongloid (Kirata) people; namely, (i) they have the habit of betel-chewing; (ii) they have the aversion to milk as an article of diet; (iii) they have the simple loom for wearing cloth; (iv) they have a large type of shield used in war; and (v) they have often changing residence in isolated regions with a crude (Primitive) form of agriculture. Moreover, they have fine music, dances and musical instruments.

Thus, the Boros have culturally varied and rich materials which require further and freest research of systematic nature based on the direct field-work.

0.5. Importance of the study.

The importance of linguistic study of Boro and other languages of Assam is great from the point of Assam and India. Such studies will reveal truth and provide descriptive matters for lexicostatistic dating and comparative work. The position of an Indo speech like Assamese surrounded by the Sino-Tibetan languages can only be ascertained through scientific study of these languages.

S. K. Chatterji rightly remarks that a close study of the evolution of Bengali and Assamese Syntax, in comparison with the Bodo (and Khasi) speeches particularly, is sure to reveal further and surer points of contact between Indo-Aryan and Indo-Mongloid. The phonology, 68 leenwords in Boro provides a number of interesting tendencies of the Boro language which is only slightly illustrated in the specimens of vocabulary. It requires further study and analysis.

The Sino-Tibetan elements in the Indo-Aryan languages with special reference to Assamese, Bengali, Maithili, Parbatiya, Hindi etc. will be possible to ascertain only after close analysis of all the Sino-Tibetan languages of India including Boro.

The scientific study and analysis of various tribal languages will also pave the way for national development and emotional integration in our independent India.

The Boro language is only one of about three hundred Sino-Tibetan speeches spoken by the Kiratas or Indo-Mongoloids (Indo-Tibetans) who constitute the fourth basic element in the formation of the Indian people along with the Austrooid, the Mediterranean (Bravidians) and the Nordic (Aryans).