CHAPTER FOUR

SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE BOROS

I. SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF THE BOROS

In their social and domestic life, the Boro Kocharis do not differ from their Hindu neighbours. The social structure of the Boros is primarily patriarchal in character. In this system father is the head and sole authority of the family. On the other hand in this system the authority rests with the mother. After the death of the father eldest son inherits the rights exercised by him. It is also customery that the entire property of the family is distributed among the sons. Like the Hindu family, in the Boro society daughter do not have the right to property when there are sons. But if there is no son or male child in the family then the property is distributed among daughters. Even they can enjoy this property after their marriage. Sometimes it is observed that a portion of the property is given to the wife by her husband. But after her death the property automatically goes to the possession of her sons.

The eldest son assumes the charge of the household or the death of the father and discharges his responsibilities in consultation with his mother.

The family debt if any is dischargeable from the income of the
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family and on the event of dissolution of the joint family, the unmarried brothers get double of the family property than the married brothers. The eldest male members also gets a proper ratio share in view of his assumption of family liability and other social responsibilities.

The Boro villages are not very big in size consisting of about 150-160 households. The shape of the village is normally long and narrow. Houses are constructed on both sides of a common street. The village land for rice cultivations is also kept in one side according to their convenience. They also keep grazing field where in one corner there is a "Garja Sali" or a common place of worship of gods and goddesses. The Brahma dharma followers have their own "Dharma Mandir" or temple of worship in the village. The Boro people organise their society in three forms - i) Village organisation, ii) Area organisation and iii) District organisation.

i) VILLAGE ORGANISATION: In every village there is a village head man called "Gamibrai" (Gaon Bura). He is the recognised leader and elected on the general consensus of all the villagers on the basis of his character and ability to guide socio-religious rites. He is also generally elderly popular and prominent person in the village. The "Gamibrai" and the "Halmazi" (village messenger) organised village level social worker. Besides this, all matters relating to the affairs of the villagers or disputes of any matter in the village, if occurs are settled and discussed in meetings presided over by the Gamibrai. He is also helped by other elderly persons of the village. There is a common fund in a village. The fund is operated by the Gamibrai, who
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is also as like as treasurer. The "Halmazi" (village messenger) who is also as like as treasurer. The "Halmazi" (village messenger) is also selected by the villagers. He performs his duties on the advice and guidance of the gaonbura. The Halmazi is to inform the villagers for meeting together for any purpose, besides festivals and ceremonies of the village. There is no limited term of office of the Gaonbura and Halmazi. There is an oja (Medicine-man) and Douri (Priest) in the village. They are regarded as very important person of the Society. No religious festival can be performed without their presence. The douri beside presiding over other religious rites also guides the atonement proceedings wherever so required. The Boro-Kocharis society prescribed atonement proceedings for verification of misdeeds.

ii) AREA ORGANISATION: In area organisation, it consists of several village of a locality called Mouza. In every Mouza there is a committee called samaj. The president is the head of the Samaj. The president deals with all the problems of the area concerned and is entrusted with responsibilities for maintaining peace and order by minimising any disputes arising among villagers and is allowed to work developmental activities in that area.

iii) DISTRICT ORGANISATION: This organisation is organised at the district level by the Boro people which is called District Boro Samaj. The Samaj is entitled with administrative power according to the provisions laid down in the constitutions made by the Boros in different districts.
During the early part of this century, the social culture of the Kochari tribe was blessed by such virtues like honesty, truthfulness, S. Eandle in his work (P-2-1975 *the Kocharis). But with the passage of time, things have somewhat changed bringing new complexities. The improvement of communication, general mobility and intercourse with the people all around have brought some psychological and attitudinal change of all sections of people. To meet this changing situation of life as well as feeling of necessity to frame some local laws. They framed some laws on the basis of customs and traditions as prevailed in the society. Thus the locally framed customery usages and practices of the Boro societies are known as "Pandulipis" as they are in manuscripts and hereby printed. These laws are differ from area to area in its contents and application, because it does not maintain co-ordination in homogenous sets of laws.

There are also different social groups in Boro society. All these social groups or "Aris" of the Boros which are based on specific work or duties. All these social appointments are open to all provided the persons to be selected are capable of discharging public responsibilities. The clan structure of the Boro Kocharis though means about their traditional division of labour, yet in the present day, such divisions are no longer recognised. There are as many as 24 aris in the Boro Society. These are as follows:

1) Swargiari or Swargiari, 2) Basumatary or Bwiswmathari, 3) Narzari or Narziari or Narzinari or Narzi, 4) Musari or Musahari, Mosari or Mwsahari, 5) Goyari, 6) Owari, 7) Khangkhlari or Khakhlari, 8)
Dwimari, 9) Lahari or Laihari, 10) Hazoary, 11) Jigabnari or Kherkatari. 12) Siningarim 13) Sabairiari, 14) Bibaiari or Bibariari, 15) Bingiari or Bingbingari, 16) Mahilari or Moholari, 17) Mao Marari or Moa Marari. 18) Ramchiari or Ramchari, 19) Samphramari or Samphramari, 20) Phadangari or Phadamari, 21) Islary, 22) Ganjlerari; 23) Bargoyari or Bargabari or Bargoyeari, 24) Kachari, 25) Boro or Bodo, 26) Thalirari or Thaletari or Thaleddar.

1) SWARGIARI OR SWORGIARI: The Boro people of this group claim their position to be the top of all the groups. They also claim to be the direct descendent of the God 'Bwrai Bathou'. The Boro society entrusted the duty of worshipping the God upon this group. In Boro "Swargw" means heaven. Swargw + ari - swargari - swargiari. They are also known as the heavenly folk. The Boros selected worshippers called douris or ojas from among the swargiaris.

2) BWISWMATHARI OR BASUMATHARI: In Boro "Bwiswmatha" means the "Mother earth". Bwiswmathari - Bwiswmathari - Basumathari, the folk of the earth or the "Earthly Folk". They are related to the cultivation and any matter related the land. So they are also known as the land-lord class of people. Dr. C. Sanyal describes this group of people as the "Mother Earth sect". The word Basumathari is a sanskritised form of Bwiswmathari. This group is entrusted with the responsibility of solving the land problem, distribution of land, settlement of any disputes relating to land holding.

3) NARZARI OR NARZIARI OR NARJINARI OR NARZI: The
meaning of the Narzwi is the dry leaves of the jute plant. Dried jute leaves constitute a favourite food of the Boros. Although the taste of Narzi (Dry leaf of the jute plant) is bitter, the curry prepared from narzi is a favourite dish. The Narzi is an essential commodity for the Boros. From Narzi comes the name of the group Narzi or Narzari or Narziari (Narzwi + ari> Narzwiari> Narzari. It is believed that the person of Narzari or Narziari group were entrusted with the duty to collect and supply Narzi goran (dry leaves of the jute plant) during the sardha ceremony. In the present Boro society the people of this group call themselves Narzi or Narzari.

4) MUSARI OR MUSAHARI OF MOSARI OR MUSAHARI: The word Musari or Musahari comes from "Musa + ari> Musari> Musahari. In Boro 'Musa' means tiger. So, this group is related to the tiger. The people of this class follow some traditional customs relating to the tiger. They are not supposed to kill a tiger. Further, when they get information of the killing of a tiger, they have to remain without food for a day and clean the house for purification. It is believed that the real duty of this clan was to ensure the safety of the domestic animals from the danger of the attack by tigers. In early period the tigers created troubles to the villagers. The Musahari folk kept watch at night so that no tiger could kill the domestic animals.

Some Boro people belonging to the Musahari group of Assam are found using the surname Baglari, instead of Musahari. S. Endle has described them as tiger folk. "Bagh" is an Assamese word which means the tiger and it is quite probable that the Boro people who lived
in close proximity of Assamese speaking people and the use of the term "Baghlaari" in place of Musaahari is the result of influence of the Assamese language on those Boros.

Again, it may be mentioned that "Mwsa" means dance in term. Therefore some sections of educationists as well as terminologists derive its meaning as Mwsa + Ari-Mwsari-Mwsahari or Mosari or Musahari. Some Boro people belonging to the Mwsahari group of Assam are found, using them as dancer in the festivals of Kherai, Bwisagu, Domasi etc.

5) GOYARI : In Boro "Goy" means areca nuts. The Boros are very fond of areca nuts. The goyari clan or group is believed to have been named after goy or areca nut. Hence Goy + ari> Goyari, the group of people who were traditionally associated with the planting the areca nuts.

According to the social tradition of the Boros the goyari clan or group originated from the people who were engaged to collect and distribute areca nuts during the time of social functions, festivals, ritual ceremonies as well as marriage ceremonies.

6) OWARI : The name of the group or clan Owari originated from the word own which means of comes from owa + ari> owari. It is said that since during the festivals like kharai large quantity of bamboos are essential, persons who were engaged in collecting Bamboos for such festivals came to be known as Owari. It is believed that they are first
persons or group who planted bamboos for the first time.

7) KHANG KHLARI OR KHAKHLARI: Khangkhla is a kind of plant which is used in the kherai festival. The belief is that persons who were engaged to collect the plant khangkhla for kharai come to be known as khangkhlari. So the word comes khangkhla + ari - Khangkhlari. In the present Boro society the members of this clan use the surname khakhli in place of Khandkhlari.

8) DWIMARI: The word dwima in Boros means big river, and the people related to the big river were called Dwimari (Dwima + ari > Dwimari). It is said that some people who used to live by the bank of the big river got their livelihood by fishing. It is also said that some groups of people were engaged in the work of floating down longs down the big river to the towns or market centres where the Timbers were sold. Anyway, persons who lived on the banks of big rivers either by fishing or by any other means were grouped as Dwimari.

9) LAHARI AS LAIHARI: In Boro lai means leaf. In the great festival like kharai huge quantities of leaves, specially banana leaves are required. To collect the leaves some persons were engaged during the great festival, so it is said that those persons who were engaged or entrusted to collect the leaves were called as laihari or lahari. It comes from lai + ari > Lahari or Lahari. According to another explanation this lahari originated from the word laha which means lac. So the people of this clan or group were associated with the production of lac (Laha), thus it was believed to be originated as laha + ari -
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Lahari. But this explanation does seem to be very convincing as there is little evidence of Boro people having been engaged in the collection of or trade in lac.

10) HAZOARI: It is said that name of the clan or group was derived from their habitat. In Boro "Hajw" means a hill and the people who lived in the hills, foot-hills might have been called as Hazoari (Hazw + ari) Hazoari or hill-dwellers.

Another origin of the term Hazoari comes from the word "Hazowari" that means cutter of land. In kherai festival as well as in cremation this group or clan are engaged as the cutter of land.

11) JIGABNARI OR KHERKATARI: The people of the Jigabnari or Kherketari clan or group are very few in number. It is said that the name comes from Kherkata. (Cutting of thatch) Kherkata + ari - Kherketari. However, kherkata is not a Boro expression. It means cutting of the straw or thatch in Assamese. In Boro thatch is called Jigab. It is said that the persons who were engaged to collect thatch (Jigab) during the festivals were called Kherketari.

12) SIBINGARI: Sesame is called sibing in Boro. This commodity is essential in the performance of the great religious festivals. So the people who were engaged in collecting or supplying sesame were called sibingari. The word comes from Sibing + ari - Sibingari. It is said that they were the first cultivators of sesame. Of course there
is no such specific function attached to any groups in the present Boro Society.

13) SABAIRIARI: Like sibing or sesame sabai is also a kind of pulse which is essential during the festivals. Hence, people who were engaged to supply sabai were given the name of the group sabairai (sabai + ari - sabaiari). It is believed that they were the first producers of the pulse Sabai (Mati kalai in Assamese).

14) BIBAIARI OR BIBARIARI: Feasts are common during the festivals of the Boros. Some persons were engaged in collecting some essential commodities like rice, fruits etc. by begging from the same community. In Boro "Bibai" means begging. Hence, the group came to be designated bibaiari or Bibariari (Bibai + ari - Bibariari or Bibariari).

15) BINGIABI OR BINGBINGARI: Bingi is a small one stringed instrument which is played on during the festivals specially during the Bwisagu festival. In course of time the persons who made these instrument and played on it during the festivals came to constitute the group called Bingiari (Bing + ari - Bingiari or Bing bingari). People of this group are very rare in the present Boro Society.

16) MAHILARI OR MOHOLARI: It is believed that the clan or group Mahilari or Moholari originated from the word "Mohol" or lease. A group of Boro people lived on fishing and they get the fisher tanks on lease from the authorities concerned. Some people were also lessess of timber mohols and were called Moholari or Mohilari.
describes them as the Fishery lessess (or Moholdars). In the present Boro Society the people of this clan or group are very rare.

17) MAO MARARI OR MOA MARARI: The name of this clan or group might originate from the name of the place "Maomari". Sometimes it is found that the people of a particular place are known by the name of the place. Several places known as Maomari still exist in this State of Assam. Hence, it is probable that the people of the place Maomari were called Maomarari (Maomari + ari - Maomarian > Maomarari).

18) RAMCHIARI OR RAMCHARI: It is believed that the clan or group Ramchari or Ramchiari originated from the name of a place called Ramcha. (Ramech + ari - Ramchari - Ramchiari), on the other hand, in Karbi language Rama means Kachari (The Boro Kachari people). The place known as Ramcha is situated in the district of Kamrup on the Southern bank of the river Brahmaputra.

19) SAMPHRAMARI OR SANGPHRAMARI: According to a story available in the district of Jalpaiguri of West-Bengal, this group originated from the incident where the rice was left half cooked. In 'song' means to cook or to search something and phram means to leave any work half done (Song + phram + ari - Somphramari). Thus, Somphramari is a clan or group of people who had left the rice half cooked.

20) PHADANGARI OR PHADAMARI: Phadang or Phadam is
a tree. It is believed that those people who took shelter under the shade of the phadang tree came to be called by the name phadangari.

On the basis of another belief, it is said that this clan or group originated from the phadang tree. In an early period, before the creation of cloth the people used the bark of the phadang tree as garments. So, the people who collected and supplied the barks of the phadang tree were called phadangari.

21) ISLARI OR ISWARARI: In Boro 'God' is called "Iswr" (of Sanskrit Isvara). It is said that the people who were engaged in preparation for the worship of God Bwrai Bathou and other God and Goddess were called "Iswarari", (Iswar + ari - ISwarari) which means Islari in course of time.

22) GANJLARARI: This name of the group is believed to have originated from the slug which the Boros call gajler (a kind of snail). It is hated by everybody. There was a custom among the Boros that if a person outraged the modesty of a lady then the guilty person had to perform penance by eating slug (gajler). A man who had to eat the gajler for his hateful behaviour was addressed by the name gajler (slug) and the group that originated from him is believed to have been designated as gajlerari (gajler + ari - gajlerari).

23) BORGOYARI OR BARGABARI OR BARGAYEARI: In Boro "Bwr" means blessing, "gab" means cry or prayer. In the kherai or in the Garja Puja the persons who are engaged as the Douri or Oja
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(preist) prays to god Bwrai Bathou for blessing. It has suggested that the group might have got its name from the words Bwr (blessing) and gab (cry or prayer), (Bwr + gab + ari > Bwrgabari or Bargaoari - Bargoyari). However, their duties do not appear to be much different from those of Swargiari group, which we have already discussed earlier.

24) KACHARI OR KHORASAHARI: In Boro term "Kharasa" means head or higher, "Hari" means class or group. Therefore, "Kharasa + Hari - Kharasahari" means the people of higher class or group. According to some historians as well as writers it may be mentioned that the kacharis who ruled and dwelt in cachar (Kachar) were known as kacharis.

25) BORO OR BODO: According to Boro terms 'Boro' means the human being. In Kok-Borok (Tripura), 'Kok' means kachari, 'Borok' means human being. So the term Boro or Kok-Boro is similar which means the human being.

26) THALIRARI OR THALETARI OR THALEDDARI: Thaler or Thalir means banana. It is believed that this group originated from the word "Thalir" (Thalir + ari - Thalirari or Thaletari). The persons who were engaged to supply thalir (banana) during the festivals like Kherai or Garja were probably designated as thalirari or thaletari or thaledder. They are also believed to have planted the banana trees for the first time. The people of this group are very rare in the present Boro Society. Besides the groups the Boros of the state of West-Bengal have
some more groups. Groups like Sangphathang, Katajari, Bamuda laorari, Eophramari, Khakhloari, etc. are found among them.

Mention may be made here that the followers of the Brahma Dharma may use the surname Brahma although they belong to different groups of clans. There are Boro people in Assam who have assumed different non-tribal Assamese surnames like Chaudhury, Patgiri, Deka, Das, Sarania, Bharali, Bora, Hazarika etc. after conversion into Hinduism.

All the groups of the Boros, are of equal status. In respect of the inter-group marriage there is no bar. After the marriage the girl assumes the surname of her husband. The children also assume the surname of their father.

The Boros of Assam and West-Bengal have been maintaining their connection with clans or groups through their surnames only. Clans or groups do not have social, economical or cultural significance to-day.

II. DWELLING AND LIVELIHOOD PATTERN

The mode of living of the Boro kacharis in compact villages and putting barriers all around the homestead is a common sight to see. This speaks of their sense of privacy and esthetic beauty in putting up a residential house. Rev. S.Endle on this account gives a vivid description one prominent feature in the typical Kochari villages can not
fail to strike the attention of any casual visitor at first sight. Each house with its granary and others building is surrounded by a ditch and fence. The fences are usually made of Ekra-reed, Jungle grass or split bamboo, etc. The ditch, some three or four feet in depth surrounds the whole homestead, the earth taken from it being thrown up on the inner side, that is the nearest to the dwelling house, and on the earth-works some two or three feet in height. So, thrown up are firmly inserted the reeds or split bamboo work forming the fence itself this later often INCLINING OUTWARDS at a very obtuse angle. So; that the ditch and fence are not easily surmounted from the outside by the would be intruders ("The Kacharis", PP 11-12 reprint 1975). This type of Semi fort like residential complexes have been adopted by the Boros in common.

i) SELECTION OF PLOT FOR A HOUSE: Before constructing a house, they pay due attention about the plot of land to be selected for the purpose. There is a system among the Boros by which they examine the plot of land. It is cleaned with the spade and it is plastered with the mud and cow-dung. A pair of basil leaves (Tulunsi bilai), nine grains of rice are placed on a banana leaf (Thalir Bilai) and all these things are covered with a bamboo basket (don) and are left for the night. Next morning the things are observed after removing the basket. If the things are found alright, that is in the same position in which they were left, then the plot of land is believed to be suitable for building a house, and if the things are found displaced then the plot of land is regarded to be unfit or inauspicious.
After selection of a plot, next important thing is of the housestead. Before constructing any house the Boros build the granary (Bakri) in the east of the homestead. The Boros give much importance to the presence of the granary and cowshed in the family. They also believe that the cow and the kite enter to the house where Mainao (Goddess of wealth) does not reside.

ii) POSITION OF HOUSE: The main house (Nomano) is built on the North side facing to the South. This main house is partitioned into three rooms. The first room is known as "Ishing", means internal room, where the alter of the Goddess Mainao is placed. The middle room is known as "Okhong", means confidential room, where some confidential discussions are made. The third room is known as the "Khofra" which means drawing room as well as guest room.

The first room Ishing is used as kitchen. The Boros attach sacredness and sanctity to the main house Nomano. They placed the alter of the God-in-chief that is Bwrai Bathou in the North-east side of the court yard. In the Ishing another alter of the Mainao Goddess is placed, where some items of the daily food are offered in the name of Mainao. The Boros believe that the creator of all things should be offered first any food before it is taken by themselves. So, a little quantity of every item of the daily food was offered to the God and Goddess before it was consumed by the members of the family.

Now a days it is not used. But before cooking a little quantity of rice is offered in the name of Mainao where the "Mainao Bindw" or
"Mahendw" is established at the Mainao altar.

On the other hand, the outsiders that means who are not members of the same village or who are non-Boros are not allowed to enter into the Ishing and Okhong of the "Nomano".

The guest house is built in front of the homestead. It is generally kept outside the inner compound of the homestead. The Boros call the guest as "Chourano" or "Nosuna" which the non-Boro or Assamese people call as "Charaghar" or "Alahighar". The Chourano are used by the bachelors who slept there in group, singing, dancing and merry-making together. Some Boros have also platforms which they call it Chang-bangla like the hill tribes and others have. The Assamese people call it as Cang-ghar. But now it is seen that some Boros are not used the part of the main house "Nomano" as kitchen and they have an extra house for cooking and other section still use the main house as the kitchen believe their tradition.

At the North-east corner of the courtyard and in front of the granary house, paralleled to the room Ishing of the main house "Nomano", and altar about a foot high is built. At the altar the Sijou plant is planted. A little to the South of the Sijou tree a Basil plant (Tulunsi) and in the North side of the Sijou Jathrashi plant are planted. Around the altar there is fencing of narrow pieces of bamboo-split with eighteen pairs of small bamboo posts or splits. There is a small passage in front of the altar. The complete altar is known as Bathou, where the God-in-chief Bwrai-Bathou is represented by the Sijou tree while the
Goddess-in-chief Mainao Burwi is represented by the Basil Tulsi and Jatrasi as Saraswati or Goddess of learning. The members of the family worship the Bwrai Bathou and Mainao Burwi regularly everyday in the morning and evening lighting a lamp on the altar.

III. AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is the Chief occupation of the Boros. Their livelihood pattern is characterised by agricultural occupations and also a way of life. They practice both Ahu and Sali. The plains and alluvial land is selected by them for the purpose of agriculture. They mainly depend on the paddy cultivation. The major part of the cultivated land of the village is devoted to growing rice, which is the staple food of the Boros. Even today rice is the chief means of fare in the villages. They regard alluvial land as the mother of the soil and called "Hamaha". Their indigenous devices for preserving seeds and digging dongs and canals are widely acclaimed. In this regard Rev.S.Endle says "The people are especially skillful in the construction of irrigation canals and earth-work embankments for diverting water from river beds into their rice fields and their efforts in this direction are very largely aided by their closely clannish organisation. When ever the rainfall threatens to be below the average, the village headman with his associated elders fixes on the spot. When the water is to be brought from the nearest river to the rice fields. At this spot very rude and Primitive shelters of Jungle grass etc. are putup, and here all the manhood strength of the village, each man armed with hoe, dao etc. are compelled to take up their abode until the necessary work has been fully carried out ("The
Kacharis"), the Boros have a vigorous efforts of self help high commendation and hearty support.

Rice falls under three main heads. "Maisali", "Bawa" and "Ashu". The Maisali (or Sali in Assamese) is transplanted as winter rice in low lying land. The long "Baw" or "Bawa" is the steemmed rice sown broadcast mainly in marshes with deep water. "Ahu" or "Ashu" is also sown in the spring time and is grown in high lands. Among these three, the Maisali is preferred mere by the Boro people.

Besides rice growing, the cultivation of jute (Pathw), mastered seeds (Besar) and various kinds of pulses are done side by side. Another important fruit tree which brings more economy to them is the areca tree (Goi Biphang). the areca nuts are most essential for them in every walk of life. Without areca nuts and betel leaves no social function or ritual can be performed in their society.

The "Endi" and "Muga" is another traditional culture of the Bodos. They produce "Endi", "Muga" and silk of these standard. The Boro women are expert weavers. They prepare their "Dokhna", "Fashra", "Gamsa" etc. themselves. They also produce cotton and from cotton the Boro women after spinning, weave the cotton cloths for their family use as well as for the economy purpose.

Regarding agriculture, the Boro people pay their attentions in selection and classification of the plot of land. For the cultivation of the paddy crops the Bodos select the plot of land taking some conditions
into view. Because agriculture is the occupation of the Boros and their chief source of livelihood. It is to custom of the Boros that they select a site for setting up or village after getting confirmation, that there is a facility for agriculture. So, they select the field for agriculture first then they select the site for dwelling houses. They also desire to have a grazing field for the cattle, a river or "Beel" for the purpose of fishing and forest or jungle near by for fuel. If they do not have any one of these facilities they abandon the place and select newly.

For successful agriculture the Boros select a field very carefully. They consider only the plain or table-land for the purpose of agriculture. The land where the plant called "Dingdinga" grows abundantly is called the "Khandina ha" which is regarded as the most temporary land for the paddy cultivation. This type of land is generally not selected by the Boros for cultivation.

The plot of land which is situated by the bank of a river or stream is called "Hashrao-ha". This type of land is also regarded to be not suitable for the paddy cultivation. Because that type of plot of land cannot contain water for a long time for the water flows down to the river or the stream.

The irrigation facility is regarded as the best criteria for the classification of land. The plot of land where the cultivation of paddy is done with the help of the rain water then the plot of land is called "Sharab daria ha". It is regarded as medium standard for the paddy cultivation.
The standard type of land is "Jampha daria ha". This type of land is suitable for the paddy cultivation. If there is proper irrigation facility with the help of canals that type of land called "Jamphai" by the Boros. They construct "Canals", "Bandh" or embankment to preserve water for the use in cultivation and divert the water to the plots of land where they plant the paddy.

IV. FOOD HABITS

Rice is the staple diet of the Boros. They supplemented it by plentiful supply of vegetables. They collect different types of vegetables from their garden as well as from the neighbouring forests. They are also very fond of fish and meat. They were at liberty to eat almost every kind of flesh that is pork, goat, cock, duck etc. the most highly prized article of diet is the pig and numbers of these animals are seen in all Kachari villages. Their national beverage is a kind of rice-beer known as "Madh" or "Jau" prepared by steeping rice in water for two or three days. Another liquor, known as "Photica" or "Phitica" prepared from "Madh" or "Jau" by distillation, is of a less innocent character. It is colourless and has a strong pungent taste, and has something in common with very strong whisky. If it is taken in any quantity, acts on the brain very rapidly and injuriously.

The rice-beer has a great importance in the Boro society. It is offered to the "Bathou Borai" (the Chief God) and other minor Gods and Goddessess. The "Jau" is comparatively harmless liquore and
preparing with traditional system. Before preparing Jumai, a medicine which is called "amaw" is essential. The "amaw" is made of uncooked rice that is rice powder, some pieces of "mokhna" flowers (a kind of wild plants roots of or leaves of "agarchitha" (a kind of small plant), some roots of or leaves of "Bongphang rakheb" (a kind of small plant), and the top leaves of the banana tree. All these things are ground together and the dust of the things is mixed with water and rice powder and then it is shaped into cake forms. After three or four days the raw cakes become full fledged "Amaw" and ready for the use. Then the rice is cooked and placed on a winnowing fan, where the dust of the medicine "Amaw" is mixed with the cooked rice. Then it is stored in an earthen pitcher which is called "Dabka" or "Maldang" in Boro. After three or four days the cooked rice becomes "Jau" or "Jumai" and it can be consumed as rice-beer (JAw). The Jumai also prepared from the "Maibra rice" (bara cawl) can be preserved for two or three months and the taste becomes sweet.

The Boro society uses rice-beer in several purposes. In social functions like Marriage, Funerals and at the January and April Bihu festivals, and more particularly at "Nowan Bhat Khoa" (Mikham guddan Zanai) which is known as the "first eating of the new rice". It is usually taken place about the middle of December or a little earlier.

The people of Boro welcome their guests offering a full cup of "Jumai" or "Jou" and they become very glad if they can entertain their guests with "Jumai" or "Jou" and porks (Oma beddar). This has become their traditional custom. During the festival, ceremonies and pujas...
they offer Jumai to the God and Goddess. It is also essential for the "Ojas" or the medicine-man of the Boros.

The Boros are hard working class of peasants. After doing a hard labour at the paddy field or anywhere they consume rice-beer (Jou) and become refreshers. Sometimes, the rice-beer is used as medicine in Boro society. If they suffer from some diseases like, disorder of bowels kolera, etc. they use rice-beer as medicine and get relieved from the diseases.

Now a days, a section of the Boro society becomes educated and also concious about the use and effect of rice-beer. So, some of them use their traditional drink rice-beer improperly. It is also seen that some of them are using this thing as a commodity of profit making business. They sell it in the small shops which are built temporarily. This has rather broken the traditional custom of the Boros.

The Boros are very fond of meat and fish. They dry the flesh of deer and port and preserve these for a long period and use it as food during the time when they are busy with their agricultural works. This sort of dried flesh and fish are called "Bedorgoran" and "Nagoran" respectively. They also dry the small fishes in the sunlight or on the fire, apply some quantity of steams of "Arun" then grind them together, store it in bamboo tube (Owa hashung) and cover the mouth of the tube with the leaves of the plantain (Thalir Bilai). This is called "Napham" in Boro (Sukati in Assamese) and it can be preserved for two or three years.
They collect fish from river, stream etc. They conduct fishing operations to collect fish where the leading part is commonly taken by women on certain prearranged dates, the women of a village, sometimes of a group of villages are fished a certain stream, or a number of streams, for a distance extending over several miles.

The fishing implements used are of a very simple. These are commonly prepared from materials found in almost every village. The implements commonly used are mainly - (1) The Zakhai (2) The Foloh (3) The net (Ashraje) etc. The Zakhai is used by women and the Foloh and Ashraje are commonly used by man. The Foloh and the Zakhai are made of split bamboo work fastened together with cane. The Zakhai is a triangular basket, open at one end, the three triangular sides closing to a point at the other. The whole is attached to a bamboo handle some three or four feet in length. The process of catching fish is that by grasping the handle firmly the holder enters the river or stream, usually two or three feet deep and lowers the basket to the bottom, keeping the open end in the front of her person and then making a splashing with her feet, and quickly lifted and keep the fishes into the fish basket (khobal in Boro). The Foloh is also made of split bamboo fastened together by cane-work and is about three or three and half feet in height, and about two feet in diameter at the base. The upper portion is drawn some what closely together, leaving an open space at the top, so that a man’s hand can be passed through it. Armed with this the fisherman quietly enters the shallow water and place it.
A third instrument used by kacharis in fish - Catching is a small pointed metallic spearhead attached to a light bamboo. This is called "Suli" in Boro. This is thrust rapidly and firmly into soft mud or other like places. In this way fisherman collect their fishes for daily diet.

The people of Boro are accustomed of collecting the wild vegetables from the forest, besides they produce at home. The wild vegetables are of different tastes. Among the favourite wild vegetables the most common are "Sibru" (a kind of thorny plants used as vegetables), "Doushrem" (a kind of small creeper of sour taste), "Lapha Saikho" (a plant of sour tastes), "Jaglauri" (a scented plant), "Ungkham gajang" (a creeper of sour taste), "Nakhi" (a plant of bitter taste), "Gangamala" (a small plant), "Hangso ramai" (a small plant), "Khungkha" (a kind of bitter taste), "Buri thokon" (a small plant) and "Raidang" (cane tree). Another favourite wild vegetable is "Anthaibajab" (a small plant with scent). This vegetable is used in the fish curry, specially with the "Kushiafish" and flesh of goat. The wild vegetables are not only used as curry but they use these as medicines also. It is seen that the villagers of the remote places do not use any modern type of medicines and they use the wild vegetables as medicines while they suffer from any disease and get relieved.

The Boro-Kacharis are also very fond of the "Andla Khari" prepared with the dust of rice, the chicken and the shoot of the bamboo (owa mewai in Boro). As like as non-Boro societies like Hindu, the Bodo-kacharis also are fond of the locally prepared alkali potash which
they call "Kharoi" and in Assamese it is called "Khar".

Meat is the essential item for the guests in the Boro society. So to meet the immediate necessity as food when any guest visits one's house and to some extent for the purpose of economy they keep fowls, ducks, pigs, goats, pegions etc. at home. They generally eat the porks or the meat of pigs (Oma beddar in Bodo), meat of ducks (hansa bedor), meat of pegions (phareo bedor), meat of goats (barma bedor), meat of deer (moi bedor), meat of turtle (khusung bedor), meat of hare (sena bedor). They do not take the meat of buffalo (moisha bedor) and beef (mashau bedor). They have the custom of community hunting and fishing for food. The villagers organise hunting programme to collect meat in the forest.

V. SMOKING

The people of Boro smoke regularly. Therefore, smokers are not rare among the Boros. There is no restriction specially in the villages as well as towns. The elders and the youngers smoke together. The elderly women also smoke. In remote villages a sort of earthen or wooden "Hangkha" is used. The "Hangkha" has two parts, the distal part can be separated when not in use. The top portion is called "Silim" (an earthen small smoking vessel), which can be used either alone or alongwith the "Hangkha". The "Phuski" is popular and constant companion. It is a small pipe with wide upper end for the tobacco and narrow end for the mouth. Raw tobacco leaf after curing in shade in open air, is cut into small bits and placed on the top receptacle. Set fire
to it and suck the smoke from the other narrower side, on the other hand, the tobacco is also prepared by making the tobacco leaf as dust after heating on fire or sun shine and mixed with other liquid things which is called "Lali" and make small round piece. This system is like the ciger pipe used by the European. Now a days "Biris" and "Cigarettes" have used by the majority of the Boro people. This old system and fashion has replaced by these new things like cigarettes etc. Yet in some interior areas the old system is used to some extent.

VI. DRESSES AND ORNAMENTS

The Boro-Kacharis do not differ materially from their non Boro neighbours in their mode of dress, but they show a certain fondness for coloured garments, and are acquainted with the art of dying the materials for preparing the dyes (specially blue and various shades of red) being supplied generally from the leaves or roots of trees.

The male persons, both young and old put on "Gamscha" which are commonly prepared at home, they hang down the gamscha to the knees from the loins. During winter they use to wrap the body with a rapper of cotton or "Endi" which are spun and woven at home. This is called "Jumgra" or "Madamni gamscha". They also use a banion, a sort coat of cotton or Endi. But now a days such dresses of the Boro male persons are found rare, except the villagers of the interior places. The young one uses the modern dresses of the present days like pant, shirt, dhuti etc. and old one uses dhuti and kamij or shirt. The women tie a cloth round the chest just below the armpit that hangs to the toe.
It is called "DOKHNA". If it is plain, it is called "Sala Matha" and if it is ornamented, then it is called "Dokhna thwsi". It is most essential during the marriage ceremony, when the bride (Hinjao godan in Boro) and the two "Boirathis" are to were compulsorily. Now a days, it is seen that the young Boro girl uses the ornamented "Dokhna" in common. In earlier days the Boro women did not use any other body cover except a scarf called "Alowan". But at present the women were blouse, peticoat (under wear mekhela), as other Hindu women do and they also use a small border decorated scarf called chadar or "Jumgra" or "Fashra" in Boro.

In some advanced families the women wear "Sari" also like the Boro women in upper Assam. The Boro women are expert in weaving. They weave their "Dhokhna", "Gamscha", "Fashras", "Arnai" (for boys), "Jumgra", etc. They weave their ornamented "Dokhna" with varieties designs. The orange, yellow, dark-blue and the sky colours are their favourite colours. They spin the yarn from cotton at home. The spinning is done with a spindle called "Takuri" and the pit loom is called "Hi-chan chali". After spinning they pull the yarn to make long about three and half for one "Dokhna" with the help of two posts and again the yarn pass through a "Rashow" (in Boro) with the help of a loop ("Khaitha" in Bodo) and make round with the help of two big wooden blocks which is called "Gandwi" in Boro. They use many things like "Makhu" (short wooden stick), "Mushra Fisha", "Mushra gidir" (a short wooden tube), "Nwo", "Phogai", "Sal khunta", (wooden post), "Bangwja", "Gorkha" (two bamboo or wooden sticks), "Khilabari" etc. in weaving, they weave their "Dokhna", "Arnai", "Fashra", as ornamented which is...
called "Agar" in Boro. Some popular designs of the ornament "Dokhna" are as follows:

"Daothugod" the designs of doves neck, "Phareo megon" designs of pigeons eye, "Pahar agar" designs of hills scenery, "Maider agar" designs of elephant's foot print etc.

The women use other few ornaments made of silver and gold. They use ornaments for ear, nose, neck and hand. For the ear, they use "Khera" or "Kheru", "Japkhring" (ear ring), "Talinglura" or "Boula" for the upper ear, "Puti" (a small flower or a plug attached to the ear lobe) etc.

For the nose, they use "Nak phuli" (it is a small flower or a knob struck to the nostril or to the outer skin of the nose through a hole made earlier), "Bulaki" (nose pendant).

For the neck, they use necklace which is called "Chandrahar" (it is a heavy necklace of five layers hung on the chest from the neck), "Bisahar" (a necklace), "Thanka-siri" (it is a necklace worn round the neck), "Jibou Zinsiri" (it is a necklace with a silver oval unornamented piece for the back of the neck from which hangs on two sides two snake like chains biting into two sides of another plain silver oval plate resting at the junction of the chest and the abdomen) (Jibou- snake).

For the hand, they use "Mutha", it is an ornamented bangle about 2 1/2 inch wide. It is also worn by the Rajbonshis of North-
Bengal, "Ashansuri" (a small bangle). In Boro any bangle is called "Ashan".

VII. LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

As per Robert Shafer's classifications, the Boro language belongs to the western branch of Barish section, under Baric division of the Sine-Tibetan family. Griesen in his "Linguistic survey of India" describes the Boro or the Bore kacharis as a member of the Boro (Bodo) Sub-section under the Assam-Burma group of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese speech family.

The Boro speaking areas of Assam at present are stretching from Dhubri in the West to Sadiya in the East. The total boro speaker in Assam account for 5,09,006 as per 1971 census and besides Assam where majority of the Boro speaking people live, the Boro speech area includes Tripura, the Garo hills of Meghalaya and certain other parts on the North-east India. The languages spoken by Chutias, Morans, Tiwas, Lalung, Dimasa, Rabha, Koches are all undistorted Bodo or Boro languages.

The Boros as a group of Sino-Tibetan, this family of languages originated for the first time in the mouth of the Mongoloid people. So it was the main family for the speakers of the Mongoloid tribes. According to linguistic opinion this stock originated in the plain areas of Yang-tse-kiang and Huangho rivers in China. This family is now already wide spread, through out the eastern and the south-eastern part
of the Continent of Asia including Burma and North-east India including Assam. According to "Linguistic Survey of India", the Sino-Tibetan family of languages are classified in the way detailed on CHART - I.

From this classification of Sino-Tibetan family of languages, it has two main groups. (1) Tibeto-Burman and (2) Siamese-Chinese. These Tibeto-Burman speechs of India fall into four groups. These are (a) Tibetan (b) Himalayan (c) North Assam and (d) Assam-Burmese. The language and dialects spoken by the Indian Mongoloid tribes and sub-tribes who form the major bulk of population in the Eastern India are grouped under common appellation of "North Assam group" and "Assam Burmese group".

According to S.K.Chatterjee's classification there are two main branches of Sino-Tibetan family of languages which is shown on CHART-II.

From this classifications of the Tibeto-Burman groups, the tribes who speak the languages of the "North Assam group" are known As "Aka", "Dafla", "Abar", "Miri" and "Mishmi". The speakers of the "Assam Burmese group" form two sub-groups (a) Bodo; Naga and (b) Burmese-kuki-chin, of which the first sub-group covers a very wide areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, East and North Bengal and the entire Nagaland. While the second sub-group mainly covers Manipur, Mizoram or Lushai hills and its adjacent parts of Tripura. The Bodo-Naga group further sub-divided into a number of dialects and sub-dialects under the head of two principal branches Bodo (Boro) and Naga groups.
The Burmese-kuki-chin group again sub-divided into few sub-groups, out of which the following speeches are spoken in Assam, Arunachal, Manipur and Mizoram, these are Mikir (modern term is karbi) Kuki, Meithei, Singphho etc.

Thus the Sino-Tibetan family of languages are divided into the various sub-groups, among which the Boro language, is belong to the Tibeto-Burman, a sub-family of the Sino-Tibetan family of languages. It has special characteristics in structure. The Boro language is a tonal language. Accept "O" there are six vowels in Boro language. These are known as 'a', 'i', 'u', 'e', 'o' and 'o'. Thus there are fourteen consonents in Boro language. These are as 'Kh', 'g', 'h', 'th', 'd', 'm', 'n', 'ph', 'b', 's', 'z', 'r', 't' and 'h'. The Boro vowels are described as syllabic associated with features of tones, high, mid low or neutral as necessary. 'O' is central mid vowel pronounced with spreaded lips which is peculiar from Assamese or Bengali speaking point of view. 'i', 'u' are high with front and back positions. 'a' is central low with a considerable range. Besides these mentioned fourteen consonents, there are two non syllabic semi-vowels in Boro language. These are 'w' and 'y'. On the other hand, 'h' is belong to the non-syllabic semi-vowel. So it is treated as non-syllabic semi-vowel. So it is included to semi-vowel with 'w', 'y' and 'h' in Boro language. So there twenty-two syllables in Boro language as considered by segmental phonemes. There are three junctures namely close open and terminal joint, two phonemic syllables, two phonemic words and two phonemic clauses respectively.

The phonology, Morphology and syntax are the main or notable
peculiarities of the Boro language. The phonological features of Boro in respect of segmental and sprasegmental phonemes (vowels, consonants, tones junctures, contours) are varied. It requires direct help from a native speakers to acquire the phonological features with special reference to significant tones. Themore phonological structures of Boro present a considerable number of features in deprivation, inflection, terminating suffixes etc. The words may be divided as participles and non participles. Participles are capable of taking affixes. The non-participles are of two types nominal and verbal. The nominal group includes noun, pronoun and numeral and the verbal group includes verb, adverb and adjective. The derivative prefixes, derivative suffixes, gender indicating suffixes, case suffixes, terminating suffixes may be associated with the nouns in different contexts. The pronouns are capable of taking only derivative, plural indicating, case signifying and terminating suffixes. The numerals are preceded by classifying definitives and followed by case suffixes and terminating suffixes. The verbs are preceded by negetive prefix, derivative prefixes and followed byderivative suffixes, finite verbal suffixes, subordinating verbal suffixes, substantive verbal suffixes, nominal principle suffixes and terminating suffixes. As to adjective, we have few inflectional suffixes to mean the comparative and superlative degree. The adverbs are related to verbs. These may be regular and irregular. The regular adverbs are derived verb based capable of taking a kind of inflectional suffix. The irregular adverbs may have nominal or adjectival correlations and they do not take any kind of inflectional suffix.

The syntax of Boro deals with the role of the participles the-
phrase types, the clause-types and the sentence-types. The idiomatic and the non-idiomatic phrase, clauses and sentences along with an extensive vocabulary make the study of syntax of sentence-grammar of Boro is interesting.

Obviously, the Boro language has no script of its own. But it is said that the Boros had a kind of scripts known as "Deodhai Hongkho" which are available till now as specimens of these scripts in the inscriptions of stone pillar wreckages and main gate to the Royal Palace of the Boro (Kochari) kings in Dimapur, now it is under Nagaland state of India. Yet, at present the Boros make use of the Assamese and Devanagari scripts to suit their needs in writing the Boro language. The various books of school and college level (in Boro medium) are published in Devanagari scripts. The Bodo Sahitya Sabha which was established in 1952, also has adopted the Devnagari scripts since 1974 for use in Boro text books. The Christian Missionaries, who came to propagate their religion in India, learnt Boro and its branches current in different areas of Assam for this purpose, prepared some preliminary books including grammar and established educational institutions in different areas of Assam to teach this Boro language. As for example Rev. S. Endle's Boro grammar book "Outline grammar of the kochari language" is mentionable.

Since 1963, the Boro language has been introduced as the medium of instruction in the Boro population areas primary schools of Kokrajhar district. In 1968 it was also included as a medium of instruction in the middle schools and from 1972 it was included in high
schools and from 1976 in Colleges under Gauhati University as one of the Modern Indian Language (M.I.L.) for Pre-university (P.U.) level of education. In 1978 for degree level. The Boro language was introduced as a M.I.L. subject for teaching in Post-graduate Certificate Course under Gauhati University in M.I.L. department in 1985. On the other hand, it was introduced as a part paper for the subject of linguistics in the general linguistic department under Gauhati University from 1980. The one year diploma and two years M.A. (in Boro) course are also being introduced by the University from the year of 1994 and 1995 respectively. It becomes one of the Associate official language of Assam under (Amendment) Act, 1985 and to be used in Kokrajhar district and Udalguri sub-division as a first phase.

Now, the Boro language is the mother tongue of about 31 (thirty-one) lakhs of Boro people spread throughout the North-eastern parts of India and specially 1,90,841 people of Kokrajhar district. The Boro literature consists of the vast amount of oral literature including folk songs, folktales, ballads and proverbs and of considerable amount of written and published literature in Assamese and Devanagri scripts.

Till the mid nineteenth century, the Boro literature was composed mainly of oral literature such as folk songs, folktales, ballads, proverb etc. The written literature emerged first in the wake of the Brahma movement among the Boro kacharis. It is noted that, the reformatory writings in connection with the spread of Brahma cult did the spade work for the development of Boro literature. The pioneering works of some literary man like Promode Brahma, Ishan Mushahari
Satis Basumatary, Rupnath Brahma, Modaram Brahma, Bishnu Charan Basumatary etc. shall always be remembered in this connection. The formation of the "Bodo Sahitya Sabha" in 1952 is a direct legacy of this literacy campaign. But at present the Boro literature has been growing rapidly and the "Bodo Sahitya Sabha" is making considerable efforts in publishing Boro literary work in all fields - short story, drama, poetry fiction etc. The poetic horizon of Boro literature is widening steadily. These are found in three poetic dimensions as classicism, romanticism and mysticism. The Boro folk songs have a great bearing on their philosophy of life.

The sources of Boro literature are mostly indigenous - it has borrowed any legendary or mythological episodes of the old Indian scriptures unlike the literary work in other regional languages.

VIII. RELIGIOUS AND CULTURAL LIFE OF THE BORO

The religious philosophy of the Boro-Kochari tribe centres round the super power of "Bwrai Bathou" or "Almighty God". The Sijou plant is regarded as representing the "Bwrai Bathou" - The supreme deity of adoration. Therefore, every traditional Bodo-kachari house hold is seen planting a "Sijou" tree along with sapling of "JAtrasi" and a "Tulansi" in the northern corner of their courtyard.

Besides "Bwrai Bathou" they also worship other God and Goddess at home such as "Mainao Bwrai" as the goddess of wealth. They also worship many other goddesses like "Ashu Mainao", "Sali Mainao".
"Basumati", "Bagraja", "Burali", "Ali Bura", "Agraug", "Khoila", "Khaji", "Rajkhandra", "Rajputhur" and "Choudri". Among them some of these deities are benevolent and some are malevolent. The malevolent deities are regarded as the originator of all ills including natural calamities and for their propitiation sacrifices and offering of rice-beer are invariably necessary. The propitiation to benevolent deities like Asu Mainao and Sali Mainao is done for higher yeild of crops as well as endowment of prosperity.

There is a slight difference regarding the religious belief of the traditional Boro-kocharis with that of the Brahmas. Because Brahmas institute "Hom yojna" before the sacred fire in all socio-religious obligations following the tenets preached by their Guru. This section (Brahma) practice vedic rites like other Hindus and do not resort to appeasement of Gods and Goddesses by sacrificing pigs and fowls and also by offering rice-beer. But culturally both the sections do not differ from each other.

The Boro-kocharis perform some religious annual community festivals like Bathou Puja, Kherai, Baisagu, Katigasa, Domasi, Amthisua or Amti, Putuli Haba, Mohahonai etc.

i) Bathou Puja: During Bathou worship, males and females take part in priestly prayer song. They are called Oja and Gwthari (Priest). The alter is encircled by bamboo fencing. The Boros regard "Sijou" as supreme soul or power. So they planted a Sijou tree at the alter they arrange these alter at the north-east corner of the courtyard and in
front of the granary house parallel to the room jishing of the main house Noman. A little to the south of the Sijou tree a "Basil plant" or "Tulsi" and in the north side of the Sijou Jatrashi plant are planted. They protect this altar by a fencing where there will be of narrow pieces of bamboo-split with eighteen pairs of small bamboo posts or splits. There is a small passage infront of the altar to enter to the altar to light a lamp. The complete altar is known as Bathou, where the God-in-chief "Bwrai Bathou" is represented by the Sijou tree while the Goddess-in-chief "Mainao Burwi" is represented by the "Basil Tulshi" as Lakhmi and Jatrashi as "Bwrlipurai" or Saraswati or Goddess of learning. The members of the family worship the "Bwrai Bathou" and "Mainao Burwi" regularly everyday in the evening lighting a lamp on the altar. According to the Boros this Bathou represents the five elements called "Panchabhat" namely earth, air, water, ether and fire.

ii) Kherai : Kherai is the greatest religious festival of the Boros. It is mostly performed in the month of Kartik or Aghon in an open field by the people of a village collectively. The Boros are agriculturists and their livelihood pattern mainly depended upon agriculture. Hence, they observe so many major or minor festivals and ceremonies which have relations with agriculture. These festivals are ceremonies can be classified in various headings, like (a) Religious (b) Seasonal and (c) Agricultural. In fact all the major festivals and ceremonies, including the religious and seasonal festival are closely connected with agriculture.

The main purpose of the kherai puja is welfare of both private
and public lives. For the welfare of the private life, they perform kherai individually and for the welfare of the villagers as a whole they perform kherai collectively once or twice a year. Besides welfare of both private and public lives the kherai is performed for the good harvest of crops that means to acquire blessings from Bwrai Bathou (Almighty God) and Mainou Burwi (Lakhmi Devi).

The Bodo worshippers believe that the word "Kherai" originates from the sound "Kher" and with it is added the word "Rai" which means Puja or the chanting formula before the Chief God Bwrai Bathou. The etymological meaning of the term kherai is explained in the following ways:

(a) Kherai : 'Kher' i.e Kneel down rai i.e. worship.

(b) Kherai : hanthu kheraina raichang i.e chant the name of the God or pray the God in the kneeling position.

(c) Kherai - Kheraibrai, the other name of Almighty God, his worship.

However, the kherai puja is the greatest religious festival of the Boros.

It is symbol of hope and desires, which has been prevailing among them since the time immemorial.
This kherai puja is of four kinds. (a) Darshan kherai (b) Umrao kherai (c) Phalo kherai and (d) Noaoni kherai. These kherais are performed in different times. The Darshan kherai is performed during the first week of Kati which meant for Mainao who is identified with Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth.

The Umrao kherai is held during the month of Ashar, at the end of the Amthisua for the welfare of the villagers as well as of the crops. The Phalo kherai is performed during the month of Magha specially on the day of maghi purnima or the full moon night of the month of magha and the Noaoni kherai or family kherai is performed by a family whenever it deems necessary to ward off evil or to ensure welfare. In a kherai eighteen primary items and more than seven additional items of dances by Doudini recitals are instituted in the names of eighteen Gods and Goddesses befitting the temperament of individual deities through which the ethnic and cultural identity of the Boros manifest fully. The rituals begin with different dance recitals along with singing of ballads in tune with the traditional musical instrument such as kham (drum) ciphung (Flute), Jotha (Cymbal), Cerja (a kind of stringed instrument) and so forth. The kherai dance is strictly restricted to the women folk. The man folk are not allowed to take active part in this dance. But they are allowed to play on various musical instruments. The women who plays the main role of the kherai dance is called deudini i.e female shaman or female oracle. The Oja (Priest) recites the Montras and Deudini speaks oracles.

iii) Baisagu : The word "Baisagu" means 'Baisw" means year
"Agu" means prior or before. So Baisagu means prior or before of a new year i.e. start. Hence, Baisa-Agu > Baisagu, or the starting of the new year. On the other hand, this spring time festival is observed at the starting part of the Assamese month Bohag, which they called Baisakh. In other sense the word 'Bihu' comes from a conjunction of two Boro words namely, "Bi" and "Hu" which are means by "Bi" means to ask and "Hu" means to take. By celebrating Baisagu they beg from the almighty God the fertility of land and prosperity to the people. This is a festival of joy and pleasure and a sign of mutual understanding among the members of the families. It is observed during the last day of chaitra and on the first day of the month of Baishak. This day is observed as "Mwsau puja" or "Mashau Puja" which meant for cow. At the very morning of this day cows are driven to the nearby rivers or ponds for washing the cow. Black ashes mixed with mustered oil are put on the forehead of the cows and new ropes are given. On that first day of the year all the members of the family bow down before Bathou by offering various kinds of foods. In this festival the younger one pay their regards to the elders by touching their feet and seek apology from their elders for any omissions and commissions that may have been committed during the period of festivals. The elders also feel happy with joy by offering their blessings to the youngsters. On the second day of their Baisagu Kachari offer food and drink to their ancestors and recently dead relatives and placed in a corner of the yard. There is also the ceremonial eating of fowl cooked with bitter herbs as "Khungkha" or other wild vegetables of different tastes. In Boro it is called "Gukhagakhoi Janai". They offer it to the visitors also. From next day dance and music become a regular feature and while
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Youngmen play on the Siphung the drum, the four-stringed Serja and beat out drum with a piece of split bamboo; girls dance in hands and play on the Jews harp gongona and small cymbal. The young boys and girls sing songs of love.

During the Baisagu festival, the young boys and girls beg alms from door to door singing and dancing in tune of some traditional musical instruments. It is believed by the Boros that the begging boys and girls should not be refused by any householder. The young boys and girls arrange feasts with the householders at the end of the Baisagu festival. In this way, during this Baisagu time (which they observe for seven days) every family becomes the centre of merrymaking and all the members of a family forget themselves out of enjoyment.

iv) Domasi or Domahi: The next important and popular seasonal festival is the Domashi or Domahi, the harvest festival. The word "Domashi" means the junction of two months. This festival is observed on the last day of the month of push and on the first day of magh. They offer the product of their agriculture as a gratitude to the Bwrai Bathou and Mainao Burwi. This festival is known as Bhogali Bihu in Assamese. On the last day of push month, they burn "Bhelaghar" or "Belangur" (Meji) at the very early morning the young boys construct the "Belangur" a high temple-like structure with dried banana leaves and green bamboo posts. They also arrange a non-fire (argeng) with the big pieces of fuel (generally stolen) and spend sleepless night, singing and dancing. The boys burn the Belangur before dawn. Before the crows come out from their nests. The characteristics of this festival are to enjoy
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with different types of foods, like cakes or pithas to entertain the friends and relatives with foods and drinks, and to enjoy singing and dancing. They have another tradition that the male members of the family lig
cords around the fruit bearing trees of the house. The Boros believe that the fruit bearing trees would bear more and more fruits if the trees are tied with cards of straw during the domashi. In this festival also they offer prayer to the Bwrai Bathou and God of fire.

v) Katrigasa Saonai or Katibihu: The katrigasa saonai or kati
bihu is another seasonal festival of Boros. This festival is observed on the last day of the month of Ahin. The Boros call this festival as Katrigasa Saonai and they observe it to welcome Mainao Burwi (Lakhshmi). It is called the Bihu of the crises. Because the villagers have nothing to eat like other Baisagu or Domasi festival during this month. So they observe it in a very simple way on that very particular day of katrigasa, in the evening a pair of earthen lamps are lightened at the paddy fields. At the altar of the Bathou, at the gateway, at the cowshed, in front of granary, and Ishing also. On that day, the unmarried girls of the Boro families go to the paddy field with a "Sewari" a long bamboo stick used in weaving, polished it with mustard oil and touch the paddy plants with the stick. By doing like this the Boros believe that the paddy plants would bear large scale of paddy. It is significant that since on that day they start the act of chopping paddy.

vi) Putuli Haba: The Boros perform a Putuli Haba (Doll marriage) on the seventh day of the Baisagu festival. This festival is performed jointly by the villagers at the place of worship. They make dolls
of straw in the name of "Diba Bwrai" and "Dibi Burwi" or "Raona" and "Raoni", who are believed to be deities of wind and rain. They also believe that if the deities of rain and wind that is deba bwrai and devi bwrai will become satisfied then there would be sufficient rain in the earth and the deities will send "Bardai Sikhla" (Bardoi Sila), the symbolic girl of the wind and rain to the earth. When she will come she will bring rain with her and turns the earth fertile for cultivation. So the Boros also worship these deities with the hope of sufficient rain for cultivation.

vii) Moha Honai: The Boros observe another ceremony which is called "Moha Honai" means driving the mosquitoes. This is generally observed by the young boys of the village. They drive the mosquitoes with the burning torches at their hands and walk from door to door singing songs and asking alms from the house owners of the village. This ceremony is generally held at the later part of November or early part of December. After finishing this ceremony, they jointly arrange a feast with the articles which they have received as alms from the villagers. But this ceremony is observed by the Boros of Kamrup and Darrang districts as well as some people of the Southern Goalpara.

The Boros of the Kokrajhar district are not well acquainted with this festival and so they do not observe this festival.

IX. THE LIFE CYCLE OF THE BOROS

Life, in cyclic order is full of transition. The life of an individual in
any society is a series of passages from one age to another and from one occupation to another. Generally a man's life comes to be made up of a succession of stages with similar ends and beginning birth, social puberty, marriage, fatherhood, advancement to a higher class, occupational specialization and death. For every one of these events there are ceremonies whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally well defined.

The life cycle consists of a series of rites of transition which have been called rites de passage. It is accompanied every change of place, state, social position and age. Birth is the first crucial transition of the human being. All sorts of rites, ceremonies, observances, taboos etc. are associated with child-birth and rites the passage. Ceremonies accompanying name giving, adoption etc. are all transition rites. Puberty rite is another important ceremony of the human society. It is a symbolic practice which is observed in case of transition of a female member from childhood to womanhood. Another important transition in the life and status of the individual is marriage. It is also accompanied by different types of rites and ceremonies. Rites and ceremonies in connection with marriage include various observances to protect the new couple from evil spirits or the eyes of evil spirit etc. to secure and enhance the safety and prosperity of the new couple.

Death is the last but great transition of the human life. Various rites are performed relating to death. Purification from contact with the dead body, purification of his belongings or the houses believed in.
must be accomplished after death of a person. There are ceremonies which are performed to free the dying from sins, to disconnect the living ones from him, to show the path or road to the afterworld, to protect the living members from his evil motive and to make his journey easy and free from danger.

The Boro life cycle centres round the three most important rites of passage namely birth, marriage and death. There are a few other ceremonies connected with different stages of life but they are clearly of lesser importance in comparison with these three. Among these rites, marriage is the greatest social and cultural significance for the Boro society.

1. Birth: In the Boro society it is generally seen that a Boro woman prefers to get a male child rather than a female child. It is perhaps the general psychology of the Boro parents that to give daughters in marriage is a matter of great burden, while in the case of sons it is not so. On the other hand, the Boro society being patriarchal, sons are the sole inheritors of the Parents' Property. Hence, sons are more desirable to the Boro Parents than daughters.

In regard to births, the family makes an offering to the household deities by sacrificing a cock or a hen in the occasion after getting information of the first pregnancy of their daughter-in-law. It is also a prevailing custom among the Boro-kacharis to entertain the midwives in a feast within a reasonable time who attend the mother during her confinement. In case the baby is not surviving, the mother can dis-
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charge her obligation by simply entertaining them with rice-beer and fried chickens. At the time of child birth the Boros of the rural areas follow some old and traditional customs. Since time immemorial the Boro women have cooperated with each other at the time of child birth. After the child's born the umbilical cord is cut with a sharp-edged slip of green bamboo skin placing the cord a cotton or Muga silk thread is tied around it. No widow or widower is allowed to cut the cord. It is believed that the child may not have a long life if the cord is cut by Widow or widower. After this the baby is sprinkled with holy water mixed with some "dub grass" a few holy basil leaves and a ring of gold.

Another ceremony is performed by the Boro's only in the case of a male child is hair cutting. Generally in the case of the first born Male child the hair is allowed to grow long for a period of one or two years after which the hair is ceremonially cut. The maternal uncle of the child is invited to cut the hair of his nephew in presence of the relatives and the villagers on this occasion a feast is arranged, where a large quantities of rice-beer (Jau) pork and rice are offered.

Ceremony of giving name regarding this, there is no specific name - giving ceremony children are given pet names associated with the physical appearance of the baby, the name of the day on which the baby is born, for example if a child possess a big nose is called Hongle or Topsi, in case of female and Topsa or Hongla in case of male child. Children are also given the name Jarau, Rani, Babu etc in endearingly.
In regards puberty of the girls no social observance is seen to be resorted to in the Boro society particularly in the Kokrajhar district area. But the Boro kocharis of Dibrugarh district observe a kind of ceremony on puberty. The parents of the girl arrange a feast and ceremonial marriage of the girl with a banana plant is performed. Thus a public announcement is made that the girl has attained puberty. However, the girl who attains puberty is somehow restricted from mixing with the boys freely and also has to change her dress, and to put on a garment that is dokhna in boro.

Regarding the ceremony of feeding the newly born babay, the Boro parents follow some customary procedures. At the age of between five and seven months the Boro parents arrange a specific day and prepare rice and first offer to their domestic Gods and Goddesses, Bwrai Bathou and Mainao. This function is performed by a Douri or Oja. On the other hand, the system of adoption is prevalent among the Boros. If the couple is childless and has no hope of having the child then the question of adoption comes. Children who are orphans or whose parents are not able to maintain them are generally adopted either by some related persons or others. The children are treated as full members of the family and they can inherit the property of her after the death of her or his father.

2. Marriage: Marriage has been defined as a union between a man and a women. It creates new social relationship and reciprocal rights between the spouses, between each and the kin of the other
and establishes what will be the rights and status of the children when they are born.

There are few systems of marriage in Boro marriage system. These are the Asura marriage, Paisasa marriage and the Brahma marriage. In the Ashura marriage the bridegroom uses to get a bride by paying a reasonable price for her. In the paisasa marriage, the bride is physically overpowered by the bridegroom in order to make her yield to his passion.

The Brahma marriage is also a kin to a Boro marriage system in which the father of the bride selects his son-in-law and keeps him in his house. This system is called "Gwrjia lakhinai" in Boro. The bridegroom is to stay in the family of his father-in-law even after his marriage the marriage ceremony is the most important ceremony in the life cycle of the Boros. Marriage is called Haba by the Boros.

The Boro society is solemnised the various types of marriage like "Songnanai lainai haba", "Lakhinai Gwrjia haba", "Kharsonnai haba", "Dongkha Habanai haba" etc. According to these systems of marriage in sangnanai lainai haba is settled after negotiation, where parents of the bridegroom is selected their bride. It is also called a marriage by service because the bridegroom has to give service at the house of the bride before the marriage. But now this type of marriage is going to be rare in the Boro society. Another system of a marriage is approved by the Boro Society. In this marriage the bride is widow. If a man lives in the house of a widow as her husband than they are
recognised as husband and wife by the society. Another irregular marriages like, re-marriage of widow, forcefully taken away the bride marriage without taking consent of the parents, the bride enters into the house of the bridegroom etc. are the irregular marriage prevailed to some extend in the Boro society.

However, there are fundamental ritualistic differences in solemnising a marriage between the traditional Boro-Kacharis and the followers of Brahmaism. The Brahmas take recourse to vedic rites and perform Hom-Yojna ceremony before the sacred fire. But the traditional Boro-kocharis send only a little party to fetch the girl ceremoniously to perform the rituals at the groom’s house. When the bride accompanied by her kith and kin and the party arrives in a most joyous mood. She is received at the gate amidst a benedictory-ovation and taken inside. After this a grand feast is thrown out in honour to the bride and the bridal party by killing a pig. After the feast is over the members of the bridal party leave the house of the groom. Another important function of the day is "Hatha-chuni" (literally means distribution of rice by the bride with a wooden ladle). The bride is asked to make a symbolic cooking and then to offer a little amount of food, so cooked to the household deities, amidst citation of invocatory prayer by the village "Douri" the bride makes the offering first to Mahadeva and then mother Kamakhya. Then the bride is allowed to touch the rice pot kept normally in a corner of the kitchen. After this, the bride herself is to distribute the residue of the feast at least once first to her husband and then to the invited guests. On the eight day of the marriage the groom is to visit the father-in-law’s house with his bride, which is also a part
of the marriage ceremony. This is the marriage system which is prevailed in Boro society.

3. Death: The Bodo-kocharis practice both cremation and burial process. Just after the confirmation of death and dead body is taken out from the house and kept in the middle of the courtyard. The dead body is then washed with water and a new cloth is tied on the body. The near and dear ones offer rice and some favourite foods of the dead person with water before taking the dead body to the cremation ground. Then the funeral procession with the dead takes place towards the cremation ground. On the way, from the house of the dead person to the cremation ground the oja leaves back small pieces of yarn believing that the soul of the dead will go to the cremation ground from the house following the yarn.

It is customary for the members attending a funeral procession to take bath on their return home and drink "Santijal" followed by mastication of a little amount of "Sokota" (a bitter tasting dried leaf) believing that from that day onwards the relationship with the dead is finally severed.

On the tenth day from the day on which death occurs the first phase of the funeral rites begins, which is called as "Dasa" or "Daha" means to give up grief. This ceremony performed simply by offering some favourite foods of the dead person. The final shraddha ceremony is held either on the 12th or on the 13th day or long thereafter depending on the economic condition of the household. But he has to lead a
very restricted life and he is to practice all the social taboos connected with deaths until the shraddha is observed. These restrictions is to maintain only by the eldest son who is responsible for this ceremony. The shraddha ceremony is a mere highly developed form of the primitive funeral feast and of the custom of feeding the dead.

The followers of the Brahma Dharma perform "Ahuti" during the shraddha ceremony. After the ahuti is over all the persons present are entertained with a common vegetarian meal. In this way the impurity caused by death is ceremonially removed and the members of the family can perform all normal activities after ceremonial cleaning.