CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

A PROFILE OF ASSAM:

Assam which is situated on the North-east side of the Indian Union is colourful and picturesque not only from natural and geographical points of view but also from the standpoint of racial patterns.

The geographical situation of North-east India as a frontier region has given it its special position and importance. It is a mountainous region forming natural boundaries separating India from the adjacent foreign lands. This extends over an area of more than 2.5 lakhs Sq. kilometres with an approximate population of 19.9 millions.¹

The mighty Brahmaputra can tell the fascinating tale of cultural fusion and assimilation in this part of India since the pre-historic time. On the South of the Brahmaputra from the South West the mountain ranges take the name of the Garo, Khasis and Jayantia, North Cachar and Naga hills. This mountain system is collectively known as Assam range.

To the South of Assam range lies the Surma Valley through which the river Barak flows. As a result of the independence of India and the subsequent division of the country into India and Pakistan only the district of Cachar and a very small portion of Syhet have been included in the modern state of Assam. To the South of Cachar and Nagaland (Naga hills) lie the Lushai hills presently known as Mizo hills and the State of Manipur. The State of Manipur is isolated from the neighbouring states by an encircling zone of mountains inhabited by Naga and Kuki tribes. To the West of Cachar lies the state of Tripura.

Besides the hill tribes inhabiting the great mountain ranges on the north, east and south, there is another hill tribe known as the Mikirs inhabiting the Mikir hills which are insulated from the southern mountains by the valley of the Jamuna river and cover the eastern part of Nowgong and a greater part of Sibsagar district on the west. The Mikir hills cover an area of 2000 Sq. miles and contain peaks upwards of 4000 ft. in height.

Assam is thus divided into two main parts, the hilly tracts on the north, east and the south and the plains below. The plains consist of the great river valley of the Brahmaputra and a part of the Surma Valley comprising the present Cachar and Karimganj districts. The Brahmaputra Valley forms an alluvial plain to the extent of about 450 miles in length with an average breath of 50 miles lying almost east and west in its lower portion but in its upper portion to the North-east.
The Brahmaputra flows through the Centre of the Brahmaputra Valley and receives in its course the drainage of the Himalayas on the north and the Assam range on the South.

The Brahmaputra is called Lohit or Luit in Assamese. It is the chief gate-way of Assam. The Valley as a whole is a plain of fairly uniform breath except in the centre where the Mikir hills (Karbi Anglong) project from the main mass of Assam range, almost up to the southern bank of the Brahmaputra.

Low hills are found on both sides of the river between Tezpur and Dhubri. The modern districts Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur comprise the whole of the Brahmaputra Valley. The Brahmaputra is a compact geographical unit and the whole history and culture of Assam from time immemorial, flourished on the fertile plains of this Valley. On the other hand, owing to geographical situation the Surma Valley could never play the dominating role in shaping the history and culture of Assam.

During the period of 1950 and 1971 and 1971 and 1985, the political history of Assam was completely changed. As the people of the hill districts wanted distinct political cultures separate from the plains districts of the Brahmaputra Valley, each tribe was allowed to have its own state. The Naga hills was created a State

2. Devi Lakshmi, Ahom - Tribal Relations (A political study)
in 1961. The State of Nagaland was officially inaugurated on 1 December, 1963. Similarly, Manipur which was a Princely State before independence was constituted into a State on 21 January 1972. A new civil district comprising of the area of the north Cachar hills sub-division of the United Mikir North Cachar district was created on 2 February 1970. The Mikir hills district was renamed as Karbi Anglong on 14 1976. This district which is an autonomous body was created in accordance with Para 2 of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. The State of Meghalaya came into being with the passing of a bill in the Lok Sabha on 24 1969. Similarly, Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh were also accorded statehood subsequently.

Up to 1983, Assam comprised of twelve districts. After 1983, the Government of Assam created eight more districts. At present, Assam possesses 21 districts.


BACKGROUND OF ASSAM'S TRIBES:

Assam is the homeland of different tribes of hills and plains. North-east India comprising seven political units viz., Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur is the habitat of a large number of tribes which are broadly put under the common ethnic group called the Indo-Mongoloid. These tribes infiltrated into this region through the mountain passes in the North-east from the Mongolian world in Eastern Tibet and South-Western China about 4000 B.C.  

Most of the tribes of Assam viz; the Garos, the Mizos, the Nagas, the Boro-Kacharis, the Lalungs, the Chutias — all belong to the Mongoloid stock. But the Khasis and also the Jaintias belong to the Hox-Khomer group of the Indo-Chinese family of tribes and are now the only survivors of this group in this part of the world.

Similarly, the Garos have also strongest resemblance with the Bodos both linguistically and physognomically. In fact, the resemblance is so great that Major Playfair in his monograph on the Garos concluded that these two races constituted one group.

The origin of the Mikirs as the Karbis is obscure. It is not possible that they are autochthous. Of the tribes of North Cachar hills, the zemis came from the Naga hills. They are a sub-tribe of the Angamis whose men are noted for their physical vigour and manly beauty. The Dimasas are bifurcation of the Kacharis who ruled over upper Assam until they were driven out by the Ahoms at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The Kukis came to the Cachar hills from where they were chased out by the more vigorous Lushais who had migrated from the Chin in Burma. 6

There is a controversy regarding the term 'Lushais'. Mizo is the accepted term. About other terms used to denote the community, the only other term there appears to controversy is the term 'Lushais'. 63% of the informants consider it to be derogatory while the rest 37% consider it to be at par with the term 'Mizos'. 6% of the informants gave the term 'Kapu' to be used by the non-tribals to indicate the Mizos and this term is considered to be derogatory. Another term given by 2% of the informants is 'Tlaxmgi' which is also considered to be derogatory. 6

These tribes had hardly any contact with the outside world till a few decades ago. But there tribes after having their

own states changed their conditions. A new era commenced in every hill state. Among the hill tribes the Mizos have become advanced educationally and economically in comparison to other tribes.

The Governments have taken schemes to wean the people away from the practice of Jhum cultivation and rehabilitate in well-planned colonics in the plains and induce them to take to settled methods of cultivation.

In the field of cultural activities also, the Manipuries have earned name and fame both in India and abroad. 7

The scheduled castes and scheduled tribes Amendment Act, 1976 specifics 14 tribes in the two Autonomous hill Districts viz; Karbi-Anglong and the North Cachar hills and nine in the plains districts of Assam as scheduled tribes. 8

Numerically, while the Boro-Kacharis are the largest group among the plains tribes, the Mikirs otherwise known as Karbis are the largest group among the hill tribes.

According to the Census Reports of 1881, 1921, 1931 and 1971 the populations of the Boro-Kacharis of Assam are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>POPULATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>3,23,303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>3,50,211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>2,91,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>6,10,459</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But according to the All Bodo Student's Union the above mentioned figures of populations are very much vague and far from truth.

According to the All Bodo Student’s Union the population of Assam as on 1986 (estimated) is as follows:
Total Muslim Bengalis Tribals Others Tea-garden labourer Nepalis Rajbanshis Other generals Total non-tribal population Percentage of Tribal population:

As per 1971 Census, the Scheduled Tribes population of Assam was 16,07,035, 13, 44, 413 in the plains and 2,62,622 in the hills.

The percentage of the tribal population to total population was 10, 99, 9.19% in the plains and 1.80% in the hills.

Since no census could be undertaken in Assam in 1981 due to the agitation over foreign nationals issue, only estimated projected population of the Scheduled tribes in 1981 could be furnished assuming a growth rate of 36.09 percent during the decade 1971-81.

9. Source: Why Separate State? (A Memorandum submitted to the President of India and the Home Minister of India, New Delhi by All Bodo Student's Union, K.Q. Kokrajhar, Date- 10-11-87 Total No. of Pages - 78) P.33.
At this rate the total tribes in 1981 would be 22.02 lakhs, 16.29 in the plains and 3.73 in the hill areas. In this connection, it would be worth while to mention that the tribes which are scheduled in the plains areas of Assam are not enlisted as scheduled tribes in the hill areas and the tribes which are scheduled in the hill areas are not enlisted as scheduled tribes in the plains areas.10

Bodos are

The spread over the whole of the Brahmaputra Valley and North Bengal as well as forming a solid bloc in North-Eastern India. The Bodos who belong to the Indo-Mongoloid stock have formed one of the bases of the present day population of the tracts.

Judging from the wide range of expansion, the Bodos appear to have settled over the entire Brahmaputra Valley and extended west to the North Bengal (In Koch Bihar, Rangpur and Dinajpur districts); they may have pushed in to the North Bihar also, and Indo-Mongoloids who penetrated in to North Bihar might equally have been either Bodos or Himalayas tribes allied to the Newars. Then they skirted the Southern bend of the Brahmaputra and occupied the Garo hills and they spread in Northern Maimansing, where the Semi-Bengalised Hajong tribe is of Bodo origin.

10. Bordoloi, B.N. Director, Tribal Research Institute, Guwahati, (Bulletin, Vol. No. 1-No-3-1986 Total No. of Pages - 140)

P.P. - 1-2.
From Nowgong district in Assam, their area of occupation extended to Cachar district (particularly in North Cachar hills) and into Sylhet and from Cachar and Sylhet they moved further to the South, to Tripura State, where there is still a Bodo speaking block in the shape of Tipra tribe which founded the State. From there they spread into comilla and possibly also Noakhali districts and they occupied the months of the Ganges by the eastern sea. With the exception of Meghalaya, the whole of Assam (barring the eastern parts inhabited by the Nagas and the South-eastern parts inhabited by the Kuki Chins) and North and East Bengal was the home land of the Bodo people. Ethnologically, the hill tribes of the North-East frontier are primarily of the Tibeto-Mongoloid stock with a sprinkling of Austro and Dravidian Stock.11

There were, at least, two great immigrations from the North and North-East into the rich valley of the Brahmaputra. One group entered North-East Bengal and Western Assam through the valley of the Tista, Dharla and Sonkosh and Others made its way through the Subansiri, Dibong and Dihong Valleys into eastern India, where a branch of the Boro-Kachari race known as Chutias undoubtedly held sway for a long period.12

The Boro-Kacharis belong to Northern Mongoloid Stock which migrated from China. Their original habitat had been somewhere towards the South of the Upper Yantaza. Most of them came to India through Tibet in successive waves. All the groups did not make it straight to their homes. Rather most of them had stayed back for sometime in the locked areas of Tibet till they were pushed down in subsequent waves of migrants. The ancient migrants were inter-mingled with the autochthons of the Sub-Himalayan region and spread over almost to the entire length from the Indus in West to the Teesta and beyond in the east. In course of time they even came to overflow the hear plains of India.13

The term 'Bodo' is originally a linguistic one but very often it is used in ethnic sense. The term 'Bodo' is used to denote a large number of tribes like Kacharis, Garos, Rabha, Mech Lalung, Tripuri (Tippera) Hajongs etc. The Bodos were found in almost entire Brahmaputra Valley, however, showing concentration in certain areas. The Dimasas who live in the North Cachar hills are also Bodo speakers. They are confined to Assam only. Their members are found in North Bengal and Bangladesh also.

The original homeland of the Speakers of the Tibeto-Burman languages was in North-east China near the HoWang Ho and Yangtze Kiang rivers. From there they migrated south ward some where in North Burma and there they were divided in to different groups. One group migrated West Ward along the Sub-Himalayan ranges. Another group entered Brahmaputra Valley by the north-eastern route while one third group moved towards south to reach as far as South-east Asia.14

THE PROCESS OF ASSIMILATION:

The process of assimilation of the plainstribes with the Caste-Hindus began during the time of Mahapurush Sankardev, the Vaishnava Saint of Assam. The Sattras i.e., the religious institutions headed by Gosains and Mahantas tried to convert the scheduled tribes to Hinduism.

In this way, many Boços or Kacharis and the people of other tribes viz ; Lalungs and Chutias were converted to Hinduism. At first, they became 'Sarania' after taking 'Saran' from the Goswamis and Mahantas and then they were promoted to the Madahi Koch and from Madahi Koch they were promoted to the Bor Koch or big Koch. Therefore, Koch is the first step in the caste Hindu hierarchy.15

15. Saikia, Dr. P.C.- Asomat Janajatir Para Jaliloi Rupantarar Prabahita Prakria - included in the 'Asomar Manah' (ed) by Dr. B.M. Das, Asom Sahitya Sabha, Jorhat, Assam, Ist edition, 1986 - Price Rs. 15.00 (Total No. of Pages - 141) P. 119.
The term 'Koch' has very much the same meaning with the term 'Shaikh' among Muslims in Upper Assam. In Assam, it is used to include converts from non-Hindu tribes to Hinduism. It does not immediately include all converts when a Kachari takes 'Saran' i.e., discards certain of his old habits and adopts Hindu usage and becomes a 'Sarania' and after some generations his descendants especially if well to do could at least become a Koch in some parts of Kamrup.

The Gosains, in fact, multiplied with their disciples and the growth of branch Sattras throughout the Brahmaputra Valley between 1650 and 1800 can be taken to indicate the rapid progress of proselytisation. Although some converts attach from other Hindu sects the majority must have been tribal people. To-day, initiation by the Guru is the first step in the gradual transformation of a tribal into a caste.16

The hill-tribes of Assam particularly the Garos were converted to Hinduism. They adopted the customs and usages of caste-Hindus. The Koches also became a semi-Hindu Caste, most of whose members talk Bengali or Assamese. It can be proved that the aboriginal members of the Koch Community within quite recent times spoke Bodo language.17

But this process of transition and assimilation was stopped many years ago. It was the Baptist Missionaries in Assam who were believed to be responsible for diverting the minds of the plains tribals. The plains tribals have now become conscious of their own heritages. After forty years of independence, they have felt that the plans and programmes envisaged to improve the conditions of the tribal people are not sufficient and, therefore, both hill tribes and plains tribes i.e., the Karbis and the Boro-Kacharis are demanding either an autonomous state or a separate state so that they can live as equal citizens of the country.

Conversion to Christianity and advancement in the field of literacy and education have aided the growth of a new political awareness among the tribal communities. In a way, religious and socio-cultural changes have come about almost together. Further it is true that much of the tribal problems of North-Eastern India can be traced to economic backwardness. U

It appears problems is the north-east lare undoubt economic roots apart from political assertiveness is a plurcl society. Things have become rather complex with the emergence of a middle class is the tribal society with its society expectations.

This tribal middle class in most cases represent, a particular set of interests which is either political or psychological. This middle class appear to have followed the queer logic that what is good for the class is good for the mass. 18

I have selected to study about the progress of the Boro-Kacharis of Udalguri Sub-division of Darrang District since 1974 i.e., from the beginning of the Fifth Five Year Plan because the Government of India laid more emphasis on the all-round development of the tribal people.

Besides, the Sub-plan for the Integrated Tribal Development Project (I.T.D.P.) was envisaged during this plan period. From the beginning of the Fifth Five Year Plan till today many changes have taken in the social life of the Boro-Kacharis.

As regards my method of study, I have adopted a historical-cum-analytical method for my study. It is confined to the sub-division of Udalguri of Darrang District. It is an in-depth study of the area with its focus on tribal development.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF UDALGURI:**

Udalguri which lies between 26.46'N and 92.7'E is the sub-division of Darrang District. Before the British Government took over the administration of Darrang district it was known as Darrangi Rajya. It was ruled by as many as 14 Koch Kings during the period of 1608 and 1651.

In 1608, Bali Narayan was the first king of Darrangi Rajya. The Ahoms defeated the Koch Kings and Pratap Singha re-instated him (Bali Narayan) as the tributary king and renamed him Dharma Narayan. The Koch King Dharma Narayan selected
'Kherkheria' as the capital of Darrangi Rajya. It is situated on the foot hills of Bhutan.

But owing to certain difficulties such as lack of food, severe cold and the repeated attacks of the Bhutanese upon the people of this area, the Koch King had to shift the capital to Mohanpur, one km. away from Mangaldai town, headquarter of Darang district. At present, 'Kherkheria' is a beautiful hilly tea-estate. ( The remains of broken bricks and broken walls still tell the story of 4 hundred years back ).

Biswa Singha, the first Koch King conquered Darrangi Rajya with other principalities viz; Dimarua, Beltola, Rani, Luki, Boko, Chhaygaon, Barnagar, Karaibari, Athiabari etc. Barnadi formed the eastern boundary of Biswa Singha's territory. 19

The Gohain Kamala Ali was constructed by the Koch King as part of the military strategy. The road covered a distance of about 560 kms. from Koch Behar in West Bengal along the north bank of the Brahmaputra to Narayanpur in Lakhimpur District of Assam. 20

Bhutan and this area of Darrangi Rajya were connected on the northern borders near Udalguri. The Bhutan border extended to Rotass river which is the boundary between Bhutan and Darrang. The Bhutias brutally killed some persons near Udalguri.

and as a punishment for this crime the region bordering Bhutan was attacked to Darrang by the British Government.

Till the annexation of Assam by the British the Koch Kings maintained commercial relations with Bhutan. Besides, the Dev Raja of Bhutan did not permit the Chinese to enter this region for trade and commerce. \(^{21}\)

The exports from Assam were lac, silk erendi and silk which obtained from the worm that is fed on Recinus and dried fish. The Bhutanese imported cloths, gold, dust, salt, musks, hosses, the celebrated Tibet Chowics and Chinese Silk. But trade between Bhutan and this region was discontinued due to worst state of affairs in Assam for ghastly plundering of the Burmese in Assam.

In 1833, only two Bhutanese came down to this region to meet the British officer Lt. Rutherford who was in charge of Darrangi Rajya. It was he who allowed the Bhutanese to hold a fair at 'Chatgaree'. At this fair, the Bhutanese brought such articles as rock salt, red blankets, chowics and musks. The British also took the golden chance by permitting the Bhutanese to hold this fair because they could sell the factory manufactured goods to the people of Bhutan and Tibet. \(^{22}\)


22. Ibid - P. 180.
TUSSLE BETWEEN THE BHUTAN GOVERNMENT AND THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT:

After the British Government took over the charge of northern part of Darrang and Kamrup, the relations between the Bhutan Government and the British Government, began to deteriorate over the collection of 'POSA'.

'POSA' was enjoyed by the Bhutanese long before the advent of the British in Assam. It was Momai Tamuli Bor Baruah who under the orders of the Ahom King Pratap Singha effected a settlement of the disputes by which the Bhutanese were allowed to collect the 'POSA' from the Khels of the Bohateas in the north of Kamrup. The Commissioner of Assam Mr. Scott also allowed the Bhutan Government to collect 'POSA' from the inhabitants of the plains near the Bhutan border subject to the payment of annual tributes and a remission annas eight (paise fifty) of land tax was granted to the Pykes to meet the requirements of the Bhutia Chiefs which they collected. 23

In the name of collection of 'POSA', the Bhutanese looted the villages of the plains. The life and property of the inhabitants of the plains people became insecure. They carried away many Assamese people and kept them as slaves. The British Government warned the Bhutan Government but it proved of no avail.

The Bhutanese were entitled to have from each ten families - one Borkapor, a course Endi Sheet, one hand-kerchief, one Gamocha, one dao, two Kgs of salt and one black cow. But Mathic, the principal Assistant of Darrang district reduced the articles of 'POSA' to one Borkapor, one Gamocha, one dao, and two Kgs of salt. Moreover, the method of collecting 'POSA' was given to the Patgiris of Majbat and Crang. Accordingly, the former practice of allowing Shutia Chiefs and their followers to collect in person miscellaneous articles from each house was commuted to one annual payment to be made by the collector in cash or kind and to cover the expenses, a remission of six percent was made in the assessment.

The arrangement of collecting 'POSA' was not to the liking of the Bhutias and being afraid of the British they wanted to take revenge upon the Patgiris who were entrusted with the responsibility of collecting 'POSA'.

Therefore, all of a sudden, the Bhutias attacked the family of Madhu Saikia, the Patgiri of Majbat and killed three members of the family. At this, the British Government wanted to give a befitting reply to the Bhutias. The British Government had to kill some Shutias in order to release some Assamese captives from the clutches of Bhutias.

When hostilities with the Bhutan Government became unavoidable on 7th March, 1836, Bogle marched against the enemy with a detachment of the sebundis under Liut Vetch Matthews. Whereupon the Bhutias abandoned Silku and fell back on the main wing under the Raja at Subankhatta.
Six hundred Bhutias could not face a small unit of British soldiers. 25 Bhutias were killed and many injured in the encounter.

The British Government did not like to annex Bhutan because the British Government realised that they would not be benefitted economically by annexing Bhutan. Secondly, the Anglo-Tibetan Trade was on the decline.24

GENERAL BOUNDARIES:

The Sub-division is bounded by mountaneous hills of Bhutan on the north, on the west by the river Barnadi which divides the district from Kamrup district, on the east the Pachnai which divides the district from Sonitpur district and on the south the Mangaldai Sub-division.

There are 14 rivers which originate from the foothills of Bhutan viz; Barnadi, Nanai, Kaoha, Kulsi, Naika, Bhola Chandara, Gulanadi, Daipam, Lhansiri, Phulguri Laochali, Batiamari, Rowta and Pagala. Of these the Nanai river is approximately 104 Kms in length and has its catchment area of 504 Sq. Kms. It is a fairly long tributary of the Brahmaputra. It over tops both of its banks from the railway line crossing to its out fall in every flood season and thereby disrupts communication and causes damage to crops.25

AREA AND POPULATION:

Udalguri is a backward sub-division with a total area of 1899 Sq.Kms. and having a total population of 5,95,841 souls. It accounts for 11.61 of the total population of the state. The density of population per Sq. mile is 198 in the sub-division.

Table - 1 shows the Thana wise population of the sub-division according to Report of 1971 Census.26

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Division or Thana</th>
<th>Areas in Sq. Kms.</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Udalguri Sub-Division</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Panery P.S.</td>
<td>813.2</td>
<td>95,315</td>
<td>84,369</td>
<td>1,79,684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Udalguri P.S.</td>
<td>391.1</td>
<td>50,072</td>
<td>44,928</td>
<td>95,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Majbat P.S.</td>
<td>380.7</td>
<td>30,841</td>
<td>27,004</td>
<td>57,845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Kalaigaon P.S.</td>
<td>422.1</td>
<td>69,191</td>
<td>64,694</td>
<td>1,33,462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Tangla P.S.</td>
<td>391.2</td>
<td>59,651</td>
<td>70,201</td>
<td>1,29,850</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SIZE DISTRIBUTION OF SETTLEMENTS:

The study area is composed of 709 villages and two towns. The two towns of the study area are Tangla and Udalguri, the population of which is 9,572 and 8,302 respectively. 27

TABLE - II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Police Stations</th>
<th>Density per Sq. Km.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Panery</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Udalguri</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Kalaigaon</td>
<td>317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Majbat</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Tangla</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

STUDY AREA AND ADMINISTRATIVE AREA:

Udalguri sub-division comprises 10 Mouzas, 4 revenue circles, 3 blocks, 5 Police Stations and 5 Police Out-Posts. It comprises Udalguri and Majbat Blocks whereas Khoirabari Block is excluded from the study area as this block is not inhabited by the majority of the tribal people.

CLIMATE:

The climate of the area is characterised by summer and well distributed rainfall during monsoon months. Winters are generally very cold. The maximum and minimum temperature of the area is 35°C and 12°C respectively. The climate of the sub-division is similar to the neighbouring districts of upper Assam and is characterised by the absence of a dry hot season, the highest temperature being experienced during the South-West monsoon season along with the abundant rains and a highly humid atmosphere throughout the year. The winter season begins from December to February and the summer season begins from March to May. The South-West monsoon begins from June to the beginning of October. October and November constitute the post monsoon season.

RAINFALL:

The average annual rainfall of the district is 2181.7 m.m. and the Udalguri receives 1930 m.m. which is average rainfall of the area during last ten years. The heaviest
rainfall in 24 hours recorded at any station in the district was 284.2 m.m. at Kherkheria on 10th July, 1985.28

TEMPERATURE:

There are meteoragical observations at Majbat and Tangla in the sub-division. The winter season starts towards the end of November when both day and night temperatures begin to decrease. January is the coldest month of the year with the mean daily maximum at 9° c to 11° c. In association with low pressure waves passing east wards, during the winter season, the month experiences cold spells of a day or two when the maximum temperatures continue well into South-west monsoon season. When temperatures are higher than even in the period March to May. The highest mean daily maximum temperature is about 32° c and the mean daily minimum is 25.0° c. This together quite high humidity (highest during the year) makes the South-west monsoon season rather unpleasant.

MINERALS:

Being almost entirely covered by a vast alluvial tract, the district does not possess any mineral of economic value except for the alluvial clays, sands, grands, boulders and

the gneissic rocks in the isolated hillocks which provide suitable construction materials. The alluvial sands in small poekets along the course of Dhansiri, Pachnai, Nanai and other rivers are suitable for use in construction. The tertiary sand stones along the Himalayan foothills across the northern boundary of the district include occasional lumps, fragments and nests of lignite formed due to alteration of drift wood enclosed within the sand stones. Pieces and lumps of lignite found in the beds of Bargang and Dikal rivers in the Behali reserved forest and in Dhansiri and Nanai in the Panery reserved forest are evidently carried down from the foothills by the rivers and have no economic importance.

**FLORA:**

At present, there are only two reserved forests in the sub-division viz; Rowta (1930 hectares) and Orang (15,656 hectares). The reserved forests of Bengbari, Khalingduar, Barnadi, Noanadi situated on the western part of the sub-division and covering an area of 99.03 kms. fall under North Kamrup Forest Division.

The main forest belt is situated in the sub-mortane tract at the foot of the Bhutan, Aka and Dafla hills from the Barnadi on the West to the Mornadi in the West. The Noanadi, Orang, Singri, Bhomoraguri Reserved forests are on the Southern side
near the Brahmaputra. All these forests fall within the geographical limits of 92° 7½ and 94° 30' East Longitudes and 26° 30' and 27° 25' North latitudes.29

CHRONOLOGICAL ARRANGEMENT OF THE HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRAMMES OF THE TRIBAL PEOPLE:

The British Government in Assam, at first, adopted the policy of non-interference towards the hill tribes. The Supreme Government was determined to remain 'non-interventionist' on the ground that a policy of annexation might be financially harmful and politically premature and that any political disturbance on this frontier might seriously affect the supply of labour to the tea gardens causing great loss to the tea industry. But in course of time the British had to change the policy as the tribal raid could not be stopped. Having failed to check the onslaught of the raiders, the British Government was compelled to post their officers in the interior of hills for putting down the outrages, redressing grievances and securing safely of the plains and afterwards to annex the tribal territories and bring the tribes under its political control.

The British Government did not formulate any rational policy for the development of the tribal communities of North-east India and as such they did not have any development strategies for them in the true sense of the term. The areas inhabited by the tribals were either excluded or partially excluded. The

29. Ibid - P.F. 31-33.
British Government allowed the tribals to manage their own affairs unless it was absolutely necessary. Their 'Laissez Faire' policy or consequent segregation paid them good dividends. The main intention of the British Government was to keep the tribal as far as practicable at a long distance from the rest of the population. They followed this policy to suit the needs of the administration and found that it had been working well in serving their interest to the full. The British Government by different Acts viz.; The Government of India Act, 1919 and 1935 wanted to take protective measures for the tribals of both plains and hills. But the political factors in the British rule as well as the subsequent period could not improve the status of the tribes of Assam.

The plains tribals of Assam were to some extent, politically conscious and therefore, they formed a 'Tribal League' as early as in 1935 to pressurise the Government for their demands. Moreover, Jawaharlal Nehru was very considerate towards the tribals of India.30

It was Jawaharlal Nehru who first moved a resolution on the fifth day of the first session on 13, December, 1946. The resolution resolved to proclaim India as an independent sovereign Republic and to safeguard for minorities, backward and tribal areas and depressed and other backward classes. The resolution was adopted unanimously by the constituent Assembly on 22, January, 1947.

In order to translate this principle into action the constituent Assembly divided the section of the people into four categories:

1. Minorities
2. Scheduled Castes
3. Scheduled Tribes
4. Other Backward Classes

Muslims, Sikhs and Christians were regarded as minorities. Those castes who had been suffering from the age-old stigma of untouchability were regarded as scheduled castes. The groups of people who lived in jungles and hills leading a primitive and sub-human life were regarded as scheduled tribes and the educationally and economically backward classes were regarded as other backward classes.

The constituent Assembly constituted a drafting committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to prepare the Draft Constitution who after a hard toil of six months presented the Draft Constitution to the constituent Assembly.
Originally, articles 292, 294 and 299 of Part XIV of the Draft Constitution dealt with various safeguards of the minorities, Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. Later on, in the constituent Assembly these provisions were modified. There were provisions for minorities to service and posts. There were also provisions for special officers for minorities for the union and the states. Moreover, the report of the minority committee provided that all minorities should have two privileges viz; representation in the legislature and representation in the services.

Moreover, the Paragraph - 9 - of the report stated that in all India and provincial services the claims of all minorities would be kept in view in making appointments to these services consistently with the consideration of efficiency in the administration. This was the original proposition passed by the constituent Assembly.

Later on, the constituent Assembly did not accept the Muslims and the Christians as the minorities. In view of the controversy the article - 299 was redrafted specifying only the communities viz; the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes.

Before the articles - 292, 294 and 299 were taken up for consideration by the constituent Assembly, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the constitution moved amendments to these articles as follows:
According to article 295, seats shall be reserved in the House of people for the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes except the scheduled tribes in the tribal areas of Assam and for the scheduled tribes in the Autonomous districts of Assam. There shall be reserved seats in the state legislatures for the people of the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes except the scheduled tribes of the tribal areas of Assam.

It is interesting to note that when the article 292 was incorporated in the draft constitution, there was no proposal for fixing any time-limit regarding reservation of seats for the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes for Parliament and State Legislatures. The reports of the committees included only the suggestions that these communities should be protected. Later on, the Chairman of the Drafting Committee moved a motion introducing a new article namely 295-A. This new article provided that the provisions of this constitution relating to the reservations of seats for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes either in the House of People or in Legislative Assembly of States shall cease to have effect on the expiration of a period of ten years from the commencement of this constitution.

Later on, Sardar Patel moved a motion that the system of reservation of seats for minorities be abolished and the reservation of seats for scheduled tribes and scheduled castes shall be limited to ten years and his motion was decided in the constituent Assembly.
In view of the slow progress of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in the field of social, educational, and economic advancement, the time-limit of ten years has been extended from time to time in the Parliament. The amendment i.e., the constitution (Forty fifth Amendment) Act, 1980, extended the period of reservation for another ten years.

Though provisions are made in the draft constitution in articles - 292, 294, 296, 299, these were finally numbered 322, 334, 335 and 338 to the constitution of India.  

The latest amendment i.e., the constitution (62nd Amendment) Act, 1989 extended the period of reservation for another ten years. The Act also made it clear that it only sought to give a ten-year extension to reservation for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in Parliament and State Assemblies and not linked to the reservation policy in general.

31. Rao, Siva (ed) - The Framing Of India's Constitution.
Vol. III. P.P. 770-772.
Indian Institute Of Public Administration,
New Delhi, 1966-68.

32. Source : The Assam Tribune, Vol. LI. No. 348,
Guwahati, Friday, December, 22, 1989.
POST INDEPENDENCE POLICY:

Special provisions were incorporated into the constitution, like Articles 244(2), 275, 339. Article 46 of the constitution of India states that 'the state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and in particular of the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes and shall protect them from special injustice and all forms of exploitation'.

Again, by the end of the 4th Five-Year-Plan, the number of Tribal Development Blocks was increased to 504 in India. Whatever development strategies were undertaken for the improvement of more than 250 tribal communities in India, the 4th Five-Year-Plan, due consideration was not given to treat each tribe separately basing on the fact that there has been a wide divergence in their socio-economic, cultural and technological milieu.

Therefore, an expert committee was set up in 1972 under Prof. S. C. Dube to formulate their strategy for tribal development in the country during the Fifth Five Year Plan which
equated tribal development as social and economic development of tribal people through fast and time-bound development and other programmes suiting the genius of the people, progressing elimination of all forces of exploitation and ensuing a move towards the goal of equality and justice.

On the basis of the recommendation of the Dube committee, the Integrated Tribal Development Projects were created in the areas having 50 percent of tribal population.

At present, there are 181 Integrated Tribal Development projects in India and there are 19 Integrated Tribal Development Projects in Assam.33

The Government of Assam prepared sub-plans for the development of the tribal people of Assam according to the policy of the Fifth-Five-Year-Plan of the Government of India. The aims and objectives envisaged by the state Government were to raise the poor people of the tribal communities from the poverty line by improving the socio-economic conditions of the tribal people of Assam. The Strategies for integrated approach to tribal development led to the launching of the tribal sub-plan.

The concept of tribal sub-plan is based on the following considerations:

1. There are variations in social, political, cultural conditions among the scheduled tribe communities.

2. These communities are concentrated in some parts and dispersed in other parts.

3. The most backward tribes live in the secluded areas.

Therefore, the compact areas where the percentage of tribal population is 50 percent or above have been demarcated and brought under tribal sub-plan.

The tribal sub-plan area of Assam covers an area of 10,991 Sq. Kms. which accounts for about 14 percent of the state's total area of 78,523 Sq. Kms. As no Census could be carried in
Assam in 1981 due to the agitation over foreign nationals issue, we have to rely on the projected population only assuming a growth rate of 36.09 percent during the decade 1971-81. The projected population of plains tribal population of Assam on 1st March, 1981 would be 18.31 lakhs. Although, during the Fifth Five Year Plan, the sub-plan area of Assam covered 71.94 percent of the total plains tribal population, during the sixth plan period this could be increased to 80.57 percent by including some additional contiguous small pockets to the sub-plan area under the modified Area development Approach commonly known as HADA.

The entire sub-plan area of Assam was constituted into 19 Integrated Tribal Development Projects for the successful formation and implementation. These projects vary from place to place in respect of population. Kokrajhar has the highest number of population whereas a project of Cachar has the smallest number of population.

Besides, the Government of Assam has created The Tribal Development Authority in September, 1983 for the accelerated development of the tribal people. The Tribal Development Authority has been entrusted with the functions of preparing short-term and long-term plans for all round development and recommending such other measures as may be considered necessary accelerating the development of the area. As a first step, the authority has identified 19 backward Gaon Panchayats one each in 19 Integrated Tribal Development Projects in the Tribal sub-plan area of Assam and special schemes under six sectors viz.: Irrigation, Agriculture, Education, Animal Husbandry and Veterinary, P. W. D.
A total outlay of Rs. 20 lakhs for each of the 19 Gaon Panchayats and these schemes are now being implemented in a phased manner.

As regards the funds for the Tribal Development Authority, it may be said that all sums received from the state Government for the development of the plains tribal areas shall be credited to the "Tribal Development Authority Fund" which is not lapseable. The Authority has also the power to float loans from the State Government.  