DIFFERENT ETHNIC GROUPS AND THEIR LIVING VILLAGES

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Different ethnic groups and their living villages:

Assam is a place of different ethnic group and in fact a place of melting pot of socio-cultural since the earliest times. Different ethnic groups came and settled at Assam in different times.

1. The Bodo - Kacharis:

The Bodo - Kacharis of Assam is the Indo-Mongoloid tribe who migrated to Assam in the pre-christ era from western China and Tibet. Rev. S. Endle describes them as the original autochthons of Assam. In the Mahabharata and other religious scriptures like Kalita puran, described them as Kiratas. According to S.K. Chatterjee and Fr. Matthias Harmannas they belong to Indo Mongoloid (Kirtas) group which include the Boros and their allied tribes. "As is the case with the Meche (Mech)" says Fr. M. Harmannas" so also with the Kacharis (Boros), the Mongoloid features are very prominent, the strong check bones, slit eyes, a slight growth of hair in the body and scant beard. They are shorter and more stocky than the Indians of the North east." According to Dr. B.K. Baruah, Mongoloid tribe came to Assam through the tributaries of river Brahmaputra and
settled nearest to the tributaries also established small kingdom there. Sir E. Gait supports the view that the successive hordes of immigrants from the great hives of Mongolian race in western China had entered India through Assam from the North East.

A new theory was established by M.L. Bose regarding the originality and the route of migration of the tribes of Assam as well as of the North East India. As per his opinion the Kirats, the earliest inhabitants of Assam as described in the Kalika purana, were no Mongolian but Mongoloids whose original home was the region where India, China and Burma met. Bose has also further stated that the ancient kingdom Pragjyotishpur was the original home of the Kiratas, Nishadas and the Meches.

When Narakasura founded his empire in this region many of the original people deserted their lands and found way to new home across the ranges into Burma, China etc. When the Kingdom of Kamrupa began to disintegrate some of these tribes beyond the frontiers together wish new ones started entering into North East India.

At present they are concentrated mainly in the Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup, Sonitpur, Darrang and small pockets of Nagaon district.
2. The Dimasa Kacharis:

Dimasa Kacharis are one of the major tribal communities of Assam and they constitute an important ethnic group in North East India. Their present abode is confined mainly into the North Cachar Hills district. They are, however, found in small scattered group in Dhansiri, Mahangdijna (Manja), Hawaipur and some interior areas of the Karbi Anglong district also. In the district of Cachar the Dimasa are known as Barmans.

The Dimasa Kacharis belong to the great Bodo group of people and linguistically they belong to the Tibet Burmon group. The Dimasa Kacharis is confined mainly at the present autonomous hill districts and the Bodo Kacharis is confined at the plains of Assam refer to the some stock of people although their languages and customs have many differences. This might have been the result of separation and isolation of the two peoples for centuries together.

Dimasas have a tendency to live on the bank of rivers and stream, every Dimasa village is found to be situated on the hill slope with a stream or a river running by. They were once a ruling tribe. 7

3. Sonowal Kacharis:

Sonowal Kacharis are inhabitant in the Brahmaputra
valley of Assam, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia and Chapakowa (Sadiya) Subdivisions of Tinsukia district, Sibsagar subdivision of Sibsagar district, Majuli subdivision of Jorhat district and Golaghat district are the main areas of concentration of the Sonowals. The Thengal Kacharis who have a substantial population in the Jorhat district are also included among the Sonowal Kacharis.

The Sonowal Kacharis are the branches of the great Bodo group of people. Kacharis who engaged were for gold washing were known as Sonowal Kacharis.

4. The Mishing:

The Miris otherwise known as the Mishing are the second largest tribe in the plains of Assam. The Mishings were originally a hill tribe who inhabited at the Abor, Miri and Mishimi hills in the present Arunachal Pradesh. They migrated to the plains of Assam prior to the advent of the Ahoms and settled in the riverine areas of the Brahmaputra and the Subansiri. The Mishings or the Miris call themselves AMI or TAMI which means man. According to Alexander Macken Zie the Abors and the Miris belong to the same habitat and they are still alike in all material aspects.

According to Assam census Report 1881, the term Miri was given by the Assamese to the people who lived between the Assam valley and Tibet. The Mishings belong to
the Tibet - Burmon family of the Mongolian group.

The Mishings, have special liking to live on the river banks in spite of the fact that every year they have to face the fury of turbulent floods of the rivers during the monsoon. A village generally consists of more or less fifty houses built generally on two sides of the village roads.

5. The Lalungs:

The Lalungs are one of the major tribes of Assam. They are confined mainly at Nagaon, Morigaon, Karbi Anglong district and in some pockets of Dhemaji subdivision of Lakhimpur district. The Lalungs belong to the Bodo group of people and from their folklores it can be ascertained that they once inhabited near Dimapur, the Kachari capital and due to various reasons they migrated from place to place and established their own kingdom.

6. The Rabhas:

The Rabhas are one of the major plains tribes of Assam. The Rabhas are mainly confined in the district of Goalpara, Dhubri, Barpeta, Kamrup, Darrang, Sonitpur and Lakhimpur districts are in the Brahmaputra Valley. Different scholars expressed different opinion in respect of ethnic groupism of the Rabhas. But most of the scholars expressed their opinion that the Rabhas belong to the great Bodo group of families.
7. The Deoris:

The Deoris are one of the important plain tribal communities of Assam. The Deoris are inhabitant of Jorhat, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, Lakhimpur and Sonitpur district. Deori villages found mostly on river banks.

8. The Karbis:

The Karbis who were still recently known as the Mikirs are a major hill tribes of Assam. Though they are confined mainly at Karbi Anglong district of Assam. Even Karbis are also found at North Cachar hills, Golaghat, Nagaon, Sonitpur and Kamrup district. Racially the Karbis belong to the mongoloid group and linguistically they belong to the Tibeto Burman group.

There are other tribal communities who are small section namely Garo who inhabits in the district of Garo hills of Meghalaya, in the district of Kamrup, Goalpara of Assam.

Aka who are small section lived in some parts of Darrang district of Assam. And various other tribal communities like Abor, Dofola, Aftani etc. are in small section in Assam.

Present population of Assam:

The present population of Assam can be classified
into three broad categories, viz, the tribals, the non tribals caste Hindus and the scheduled castes. The tribals consist of different ethnocultural communities such as the Miris, the Kacharis (including the Bodos) the Deoris, the Rabhas etc. The non tribal group includes mainly the Ahoms, the Brahmins, the Kayathas, the kalitas, the Koches, the Morans, the Muttaks, the Chutias etc. The Basfors, the Boniyas, the Dhobis, the Dholis, the Hiras, the Kaibartas and the Namasudras etc are included in the scheduled castes. The immigration during the British days were mostly thrown up by Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and other parts of India.

One of the major groups was that of the tea garden workers, collectively known as 'Baganiyas' who were brought from Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa by the British tea planters for employment in their estates during the later part of the last country.

The religious system like Tantricism, Hinduism, Vaishnavism have contributed to the development of the present religious system in Assam. The Vaishnavite religion, which cuts across caste and creed distinctions with the liberal attitude touched the minds of all castes and creeds irrespective of tribal, non tribal, scheduled caste and even Muslim and other religious groups also.
The Tribal rulers in the earlier ages did not maintain any caste distinction. The Ahom also introduced only their own system of social stratification purely for the purpose of administration.

The Assamese society is and has always been, an open society. The process of assimilation and fusion has always been alive and active and has embraced every ethnic, linguistic, cultural or religious groups. Though the Aryanisation of the land in the remote past a developed a society fundamentally based on Aryan ideas, the other non Aryan tribes, who existed there and who came since, were readily absorbed or got themselves assimilated in this general pattern of the social structure. Out of the process of give and take and the mutual assimilation and appreciation developed a culture known as the Assamese culture.

Liberalism, the basic foundation of the Assamese society and culture, has facilitated complete adjustment of different ethnic groups with each other and adaptation of each other's cultural elements. The various tribes with divergent linguistic and cultural affinities are spread all over the state living in peace and harmony with the non tribal communities. The tribals not only learn Assamese as their lingua franca and medium of instruction but also borrow from Assamese vocabulary to their own languages.
Ethnic groups living in the study area:

In the study area at Barpeta and Nagaon district there are some ethnic groups, who are inhabitant of some pockets of both the districts. These ethnic groups are commonly Boro - Kacharis, the Rabhas, in the district of Barpeta. Boro - Kacharis groups happens to be the largest closely followed by Rabhas.

Similarly in the district of Nagaon, where Boro - Kacharis, Lalung, Karbis, Rabhas are the inhabitant of some pockets.

The tribes mentioned above constitute an integral part in the state.

In the study area, sample households of Boro - Kachari and Rabhas from the sample villages mostly inhabited by Boro - Kachari and Rabhas are selected for study.

These villages are Uttarburaikhamar and Banglipara in the district of Barpeta, where Boro-Kacharis are the inhabitant of these sample villages. Similarly sample villages of Kachari gaon and Samuguri grant of Nagaon district, where Boro - Kacharis and Rabhas are the inhabitant of these villages. It is learnt from the local sources that Boro-Kacharis and Rabhas of Kacharigaon and Samuguri grant of Nagaon
district are the outsider and not old inhabitant of these villages. They came from Goalpara district in search of employment and livelihood.

Other groups in the study area:

In the study area, apart from Tribal villages, immigrant Muslim villages, mixed populated villages and Rajbongshi villages are selected for study. Immigrant sample households who are selected from the villages of Rangloo Sutragaon, Bengnaati, Marangial, Sonaibali in the district of Nagaon and Khundaibari pathar. Chalcharia, Nizdamugaon of Barpeta district. Sample households of Rajbongshi villages from sample village of Ketekibari, Duramari, Sukanjani of Barpeta district. Similarly other sample households are selected from the mixed populated villages which are covered by the caste of Brahmin, Kalita, Yogis (Nath) Kayastha, Keots, Barlas, Sut, Kaivarttas or Jaityas etc.

In the context of sample households of Rajbongshi are one of the race caste of Assam. Originally they were an aboriginal tribe, apparently of Mongolian origin which at the beginning of the sixteenth century rose to power under the great Leader visva singh and by the middle of the sixteenth century Koch had attained a position of such power that the aboriginal people were anxious to be enrolled as members of their tribe and called themselves
as Rajbangshis. The result is that at the present day the name is no longer that of a tribe but of a caste. In course of time aboriginal habits have been shaken off and assimilated with the Assamese society.

Recently some factors are trying to destabilize the society with the idea of separation from Assam and Assamese society as result their peace and progress in all aspects of life are being disturbed.

The social structure of different ethnic group:

The different ethnic group have been living in the remote hills and forests and also living in plain districts of Assam. The communities were more or less self governing groups and they have a democratic life which play an important role in their thought and actions although in the present context the self governing and democratic life has been affected.

The social structure of different ethnic groups are different with the social structure of other communities of plain district of Assam. Social structure of different ethnic groups living in plain district of Assam are also different among the different ethnic groups.

A. Boro - Kachari:

The social structure of the Boro - Kacharis is
primarily patriarchal in character. The matriarchal element is also not totally absent among the Boro - Kacharis. According to Dr. B.K. Baruah Boro - Kacharis of Indo - Mongoloid were tribe coming from matriarchal family. They have certain rules in respect of their houses and maintenance of their households.

(i) Position of houses:

They generally construct their main houses to the northern side of their homestead and this house stretches from west to east. There are three divisions of the main house with provision of a door facing to the south. The eastern most portion of the main house is meant for cooking and worship. The courtyard also accommodates the altar of the Bothow, the supreme god and whom a sizu tree is the emblem.

(ii) Festivals and Ceremony:

Boro - Kacharis observe certain ceremonies and festivals on the occasion of birth, wedding and death. The most important festivals of the Boros is the Baisagu or the Spring time festival in which singing, dancing, drinking and holding feasts mark the day. Drinking occupies an important place in the social life and at the festivals. The rice bear is prepared almost in every family and they rejoice in drinking collectively during their festivals.
(iii) Position of women:

The position of woman is not inferior to that of a man. In cases of marital separation the woman is denied of her right to have a share of the property of her husband, although she is allowed to take her ornaments. During their maidenhood they enjoy the liberty to participate in singing, dancing, and marry making on the occasions of marriages and festivals, but married women generally refrain from outdoor exhilarations. The Boro women are labourious and work in the agricultural fields, they also good weavers and generally weave their own cloths.

(iv) Democratic social structure:

Boro - Kacharis have a democratic social structure. The clans have equal right and position in the society. They have co-operation among the families. The village headman is called Gaonburah is in fact supreme in all matters concerning the villages. In some Boro - Kacharis village two institutions, namely 'Hachung-Goura' and 'Haden Goura' responsible for the maintenance of customary laws and rules. While 'Haden-Goura' which is akin to judgeship has jurisdiction over 12 adjoining villages, each of the subordinate 12 villages has the institution 'Hachung Goura'. A village council known as 'Mel' (village panchayat) discharges the duties of the aforesaid two institutions in those villages where the 'Haden-Goura' and 'Hachung-Goura' are absent. The decisions of these 'Mels'
which are generally presided over by men of character and social status are binding on concerned parties.\textsuperscript{12}

(v) Marriage:

Marriage by negotiation is the prevailing custom. No marriage can take place between the same clan. Bride price is still prevalent. The prospective bridgroom stays and renders manual labour in his would be father in law's house for one or two years which may further be extended upto 4 years in some cases.

(vi) Economy:

Their economy is basically agrarian. Most of them are wet paddy cultivation and they cultivate their land with a plough and a pair of bullock or buffalo. They cultivate jute, mustard, pulses and various vegetables. Every Boro - Kachari family raise arecanut trees and the betel nuts are mainly for domestic consumption. They also raise horticultural plants to some extent. They rear domesticated animals and birds mostly of indigenous varieties. Boro - Kachari women in general rear all kinds of silk worms. Boro - Kacharis are good craftsmen also. Bamboo and cane goods, some of which are very artistically designed, are manufactured by the male folk generally.

Land alienation, heavy indebtedness, brewing or rice beer in large quantities etc. have deteriorated their economic conditions.
B. The Dimasa Kachari;

(i) Family structure:

Father is the head of the family, they follow patriarchal system of family structure. After marriage son or brother live separately. Dimasa family is unitary in character. But the existence of parallel male and female clans in the Dimasa society has a great impact on the law of inheritance. There is distinction of sons and daughters and sons get the property on inheritance. The maternal property like jewellery, clothes and looms with their accessories used by mother is inherited by the daughters only and never by son.

(ii) Village administration:

The traditional village headman called Khunang still play a considerate authority of all affairs of village administration except the religious matters. The village council headed by Khunang and constituted with other village elders including Dili, the assistant headman tries cases and settles disputes. The bachelor's dormitory called Nodrong is at dying stage now.

(iii) Religion:

The religion is a combination of traditional religion and Hinduism.
(iv) Economy:

Agriculture is the principal occupation of the Dimasa. The practice of Jhum cultivation is common. Wet rice cultivation is also common. They raise mixed crops in the jhums. Besides paddy, Dimasas cultivate maize, sesame, cotton, chilly, pumpkins, ginger, brinjal, castor etc. Dimasa family also cultivate pineapples and orange by terracing the gentle hill slopes. Dimasa family rears pig, buffaloes, goats, fowls and ducks and not cows.

She buffaloes are never milked either for drinking or for commercial purposes. Rearing of Endi and silk worms is a household industry. The women of Dimasa are expert weavers and requirement of clothes are met from family looms. Males of Dimasa are also expert in manufacturing of bamboo and cane products some of which are very artistically designed. They have traditional dresses and ornaments. Celebration of Bihu (harvesting festival) is the gavest as well as the most expensive festivals of the Dimasas. They also perform two socio religious festivals called Rajini Garba and Harin Garba annually prior to the starting of cultivation.

C. The Sonowal Kacharis:

(1) Family structure and right of inheritance:

The father is the head of the family. Primary as well as joint family system are prevalent. Land is divided
equally to all sons after the death of the father. But house goes to the eldest son only. Though there is a equal status between men and women, yet women are not allowed to take part in deliberations of the mel, the village council.

The seven clans called Khel are there among the Sonowal Kacharis. Seven clan or Khel are subdivided into 14 subclans. Monogamy is the prevailing tradition.

The Gaonbura or village headman plays the most important role and in the performance of socio-religious functions in the village. Barik also perform the function of Namghar. Pathek (reader of religious scriptures), Ashirabadia Burah (Aged man who showers blessings), Geetghai (expert in Hunsari) and other religious songs Medhi (chief of all religious functions) bayan (expert who imparts training in religious dances) Tamuli (one who provides betelnut and leaves to the participants in religious functions) Randhani (one who cooks for all) and Bilonia (one who distribute cooked food and other estables in socio religious functions). The Gaonbura, the other functionaries mentioned above and the village elders constitute the village council its permanent seat being the Namghar. This council tries cases settles disputes and delivers judgement. The offenders are punished with fines in cash. The amount goes to the public fund. In
extreme cases, the offenders are excommunicated. Village
council maintain peace and harmony in every Sonowal
Kacharis village. Co-operation in all spheres of socio-
religious life is the essence of the Sonowal society.

(ii) Religion:

The Sonowal Kacharis accepted Vaishnavism of
Srimanta Sankardev, the great Assamese preacher of
Vaishnavism. Some traditional gods and goddesses are
worshiped for their peace and harmony Burha - Burhi (Shiva & Parvati) and Lakhimi (goddess of wealth) are also
worshiped.

(iii) Economy:

The Sonowal Kacharis are one of the most advanced
tribe of Assam. Although their primary occupation is
agriculture, a good number of them are working in state
government services. They have accepted the improved
method of cultivation and besides rice they cultivate
other crops like pulses, mustard etc. They rear
livestocks. Women are expert in weaving. Rearing of Endi
is a household industry. Rice is staple food.

(iv) Festivals:

Among the festivals, the Rangali Bihu is most
important. On the first day of this Bihu cows are washed
ceremoniously and tied with new ropes. On the second day
the elders are paid due respect by younger one.

Hunchari, Bihu songs and Bihu dances are continued for several days. The Sonowal have forgotten their own language and accepted the Assamese as their own language. Their houses are very neat and clean. The Sonowal are very much hospitable. The assimilation of the Sonowal Kacharis to the greater Assamese society cannot be distinguish the village inhabited by the other Assamese.

D. Deoris:

(i) Khel:

The Deoris have four divisions called khel among them, namely Dibangial, Tengapania, Borgonya and Patargoyan. The last division is not traceable at present and it is presumed that the people of this khel might have been amalgamated with the Dibangias.17 Each of these divisions have a number of clans called Bansha. While the Dibangian have eleven clans, the Tengapanias have nine clans and the Borganyan have six clans.

(ii) Marriage:

Marriage by negotiation is common.

They have four types of marriage known as Bar Biya, Saru Biya, Dharam Biya and Tamulkata Biya. In case of Bar Biya and Saru Biya, the guardian of the bride may demand and accept bride price, whereas, the question of bride
price does not arise in case of Dharam Biya and Tamulkata Biya.

(iii) Religion:

The Deoris maintain their traditional belief and also perform various religious rituals. "The Deoris attach much importance and mystery to their religion and that is why the knowledge of their religion seems to be confined to the elder people and particularly to the Pujaris or priest i.e. to the Boro - Deori, Soru Deori, Bor - Bharali and Soru - Bharali only". Giru (Lord Mahadeva) and Girisa (Parvati) are their principle deities. People belonging to the group of Dibangia worship these two deities. Pisa Dema or Balia Baba son of Gira and Girisa is worshipped by the Tengapanias and the Borgayanas worship pisans ; dema or Kenchaikhati the daughter of Gira and Girisa.

In the Than (place of worship) pujas are performed for the well being of entire village population. In the pujas goat, ducks, pigeons and fowls are sacrificed.

Deoris houses are built on bamboo platform. The length of the house varies according to number of family members.

(iv) Economy:

Agriculture is the main occupation and besides
paddy cultivation, mustard, pulses and vegetables are also cultivated. Pigs, ducks, cows, goats, buffaloes are reared by them. Women are expert in weaving. Endi silk are also reared. The educated people are employed in public, semi public and private sectors.

Rice is their staple food. They take meat of pigs, fowls, ducks and goats. Fish both raw and dry are consumed. Rice beer is their most favourite beverage.

(v) Festivals:

Bohag Bihu is most important for them and seven days is observed with pujas at village. Than and subsequently Huchari, Bihu songs and Bihu dances are performed.

(vi) Dress:

They have traditional dresses and ornaments which are used by women only. Menfolk generally use their traditional dresses during the socio-religious festivals.

E. The Karbis:

(i) Clan and Marriage:

The Karbis have five exogamous clan called 'Kur'. They are Terang, Teron, Enghee, Engti and Timung. Each clan has a number of sub clans. The system of bride price
is absence in the Karbi marriage system. After the marriage the wife does not change her surname. The children, however, assume the title of their father. Marriage by negotiation is the prevailing rule.

(ii) Patriarchal:

The Karbis follow the patriarchal system of family structure. At the death of their father, the sons inherit his property.

(iii) Religion:

The Karbis observe many religious rituals where sacrifice of pigs and fowls and use of rice beer is indispensable. Hinduism in its crude form finds manifestations in their worship of gods, goddesses and deities although they have neither idols nor shrines.20.

(iv) Belief:

The Karbis believe in reincarnation21.

(v) Economy:

Agriculture is the main occupation. The practice of shifting cultivation is common in the hills but in the plains portion of the Karbi Anglong district, the settled cultivation is common. Cows, buffaloes, pigs and fowls are
reared. Milk is hardly used either for consumption or for commercial purpose. The Karbi women are expert in weaving and they meet the domestic requirement of clothes. Rearing of Endi Silk worms, spinning of cotton and Endi threads and weaving of cotton as well as Endi clothes are common sights in a Karbi village. Bamboo and cane goods are made and used by them. There are good carpenters and blacksmiths among them.

Rice is staple food. Meat of pigs and fowls and dry fish are favourite for them. Their favourite beverage is rice beer.

(vi) Festivals:

At the beginning of the cultivation for their year Rongker festival is observed by the people of the whole mouza' for a good crop. The festival of Hacha is observed as a harvesting festivals.

(vii) Dress:

They have traditional dresses, ornaments, dances, music and folklore. The village council of the elders called 'Me' presided over by the gaonbura (village headman) still settles the minor disputes.
The Rabhas:

Clan division:


While the Maitori Rabhas have been observing their old traditions, customs and beliefs, the pati Rabhas have completely given them up. The Rongdani Rabhas, on the other hand, can be said to be in between the Maitoris and the patis so far as the upkeep of the old traditions, customs and beliefs are concerned.

(i) Marriage:

The Rabhas are exogamous and no marriage can take place between a boy and a girl of the same Barai (clan). Monogamy is the prevailing rule. Divorce, widow remarriage, are prevalent in the Rabha society. Men and women have equal in the society.

(ii) Patriarchal structure:

Rabhas follow the patriarchal system of family structure. Sons inherit father's property at his death. After marriage bride reside in her husband house.

(iii) Religion:

The influence of Hinduism is visible on the Rabha
society. M.M. Choudhury says "in the districts of Darrang and Kamrup, a great majority of the tribe have been subjected to conversion or a gradual process of assimilation so much so that there is hardly any difference between the Assamese other backward classes Hindus and the Rabhas." 24

The biggest socio-religious festival of the Rabhas which is performed annually is called Khakeri (Baikhu). This is regarded as fertility festival in which all people irrespective of age and sex indulge in merry making, singing and dancing, and drinking of rice beer. Young boys and girls are allowed to mix freely and may select their life companions during this festival. 25

(iv) Economy:

Agriculture is the primary occupation of the Rabhas. Cultivation of mustard, jute and pulses are common. A considerable amount of rice in each family is used for brewing rice beer which is not only for domestic consumption but for entertaining guests as well. Rice beer plays an important role in respect of festival either in social or in religious matter.

Improved method of cultivation also accepted by the Rabhas. Rearing of Endi silk worm is an important cottage industry. The women are expert in weaving and designed one
beautifully made at the clothes. The women folk generally used for cloth made from their own looms. Cows, buffaloes, pigs, fowls and ducks are reared by the Rabhas. Earning is very little from their domesticated animals and birds. Bullocks and buffaloes are reared for ploughing and drawing carts. Cottage industry like manufacturing of bamboo and cane goods also play an important role.

Rabhas have their own traditional dress and ornaments. They are rich from the point of view of dance and music.

Q. The Lalungs:

(i) Clans

The Lalungs have 12 major exogamous clans and each of the twelve clans has a number of sub clans.

(ii) Marriage:

Marriage by negotiation is the prevailing rule. But negotiated marriage is too expensive since a gran feast has to be offered to the villages and other relatives at the bride's house on the day of the marriage. The clans being exogamous marriage between a boy and a girl of the same clan cannot take place. Divorce is rare phenomenon and widow remarriage is permissible. There are system of 'Gandharva Bibah'. It is rather a marriage by capture and
approval from the parents of both boys and girls are necessary in presence of village elders. Under this system of marriage nominal bride price and a feast from the boy's parents is required to entertain the villagers.

Though matriarchal family structure was prevalent in past now it has been switching over to the patriarchal family structure.

The Lalung villages donot fundamentally differ from the neighbouring non Lalung villages of indigenous people.

The Lalung are follower of vaishnavism preached by Srimanta Sankardeva and they have Namghar's (congregational prayer houses) in their villages while in the other villages where the traditional religion still prevails there are Borghars and Thans as congregational prayer houses.

(iii) Community house:

The Lalung have a very well managed bachelors' dormitory system for unmarried young boys and it is called 'Samadi'. But this institution has lost much of its past glories and it now functions as a community house where all community problems are sorted out through discussions. But this institution still functions as a centre for
training of the youths in various handicrafts, dance and music. Moreover all the welfare works involving the entire village community are also performed by the members of the Samadi. At present this prestigious institution has also lost its past significance. Gobha Raja acts as a king once in a year when the Lalung Darbar (Lalung council) is held in session. At present each village has a village headman called Gaonbura.

(iv) Economy:

Agriculture is the main occupation. They cultivate Ahu paddy, sali paddy also cultivate cash crops like jute, mustard and pulses like Matikalai, vegetables. The women are expert in weaving and most of the families rear Endi silk.

Other cottage industries like manufacturing of bamboo and cane. Their economy is a self supporting subsistence one leaving very little surplus for sale. Their problem is land alienation, indebtedness, inadequate credit and marketing facilities, brewing of rice beer in huge quantities etc.

The Lalung society is fast changing. The corporate life has almost been replaced by individualistic life.

H. The Mishings:

1) Patriarchal structure:

The Mishing have the patriarchal family structure.
The father's property is equally divided among the sons. The joint family system is the unique characteristic of the Mishing family life. Many families live together under the same roof. All family member obey the headman of the family.

The Mishings are divided into two exclusive sections, which are known as Borogam and Dahgam. Borogam has a number of clans, such as Doley, kutum, Kuli, Patir, Pait, Basar, Pasar etc. Similarly Dahgam has also a number of clans such as Taye, Pamegam, Bori, Pawo, Panging, Noro, Koma, Moying etc. Marriage by negotiation or formal marriage called Midang is very much expensive.

(ii) Religion:

The present religion followed by the Mishing can be described as a mixture of vaishnavism and traditional religious practices. They also observe community festivals like the Bohag Bihu. Ali Aai Ligang (a spring dance festival having socio economic significance) and porag (festivals celebrated at the close of Rabi paddy cultivation).

(iii) Economy:

Agriculture is the main source of livelihood and it is still at the subsistence level. Cultivation of Rabi
paddy or Ahu as well as Kharif paddy or sali has become popular. They also cultivate mustard, pulses, maize, cotton, banana and seasonal vegetables.

The Mishing women are very fine weavers and they prepare all the requirement of clothes for domestic uses. The production of Miri Jim, a piece of very heavy quilt like cloth made from cotton strip, is their speciality.

The present value of Miri Jim is about Rs. 10000.00 Cottage industries like manufacturing of bamboo and cane goods. Livestock like cows, buffaloes, birds are reared. Rice beer is brewed at home. It has an important role either as a food of as a drink. Rice beer called Apong is also essential to entertain guests as well as festivals.

(iv) Dress:

They have traditional dresses and ornaments which are used specially by women. They have their own musical instruments, dances and music.

Social structure of different ethnic groups have so far been discussed in the context of plains and hills district of Assam.

Social structure of ethnic group in the study area:

In the study area of Barpeta and Nagaon district,
some sample villages represented by sample households of Boro-Kacharis and Rabhas are selected. These villages are Uttar Buarikhamar and Banglipara of Barpeta district and Samngurigrant and Kacharigaon of Nagaon district.

From the observation in the context of social structure of Boro Kachari and Rabhas among the sample households of sample villages, the following points can be noted.

1. They are mostly agricultural class and major portion of their income derived from agriculture in both the district. Traditional cultivation is common among the sample households of both the districts. Generally, Ahu, Sali, mustard, pulses are cultivated. Womenfolks are important works force during the agricultural season especially at the time of sowing of crops.

2. Cottage industry like bamboo and cane, weaving among the women is common among the sample households of sample villages of both the districts. Requirement of clothes are met by weaving. Rearing of Endi worms are also common among the sample households of both the district.

3. Rearing of pigs, cows, birds are common in all sample villages of both the district.
4. Rice beer is generally found common and drinking plays an important role especially at the time of festivals.

5. Construction of houses are remained traditional, however some changes is observed among the rich, well to do educated families who constructed in different pattern.

6. Rajahuwa Bharal (public store house) is found at the sample village of Barpeta district in which mutual helps to the village people during the time of need are provided. This has given a co-operative living.

7. Sample households of sample villages of both the districts are democratic in outlook.

8. Services holders of state, central and private sectors are found among the sample households of both the districts.

9. Literacy rate is rising among the sample households of sample village of both the districts and female education also expanded.

10. Out migration from the sample village of both district are found.

11. Birth rate is found high among the sample households of both the districts.
12. Sex composition among the sample households of both the district is more or less proportionate.

13. Co-operation informally through ploughing, mutual exchange of labour are common among the sample households of both the district.

Sample households of sample villages of Ho-ro-Kacharis and Rabhas of Barpeta districts are comparatively found advanced in respect of agriculture, service, education.

Social structure between the period 1985 to 1993 is remained same.

Contact with the outside society, contact with new development, spread of education has helped to change some of the traditional habits, customs and thus helped to develop a new pattern of life.

Though new development of technology in the agriculture has not yet been introduced, yet rearing of livestocks, weaving and other cottage industry of bamboo and cane is an indication to minimise atleast the needs.

My observation in the light of study area can be explained through out Assam among the tribal community regarding minimisation of needs with the practices of weaving, rearing of livestocks etc.
The situation in Assam among the tribal community can be explained in the context of rising trend of appearance of some forces in Assam in the pretext of separation which has caused serious setback recently and will create problem in respect of development and will break the cohesion.

To sum up, socio-economic development are remained almost same in Assam and more particularly in the study area. Provision of education, provision of employment, provision of new technology in agriculture will change the society to compete with the advanced society.

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