

### 3. People of Assam

#### 3.1. Introduction

Assam falls in one of the great migration routes of mankind and over the ages there have been waves of migration of diverse groups. The possible routes of migrations are: the northern passes of Bhutan, Tibet and Nepal, Assam- Burma routes on the eastern side, the valleys of the western side formed by the Brahmaputra- Gangetic plains and the sea route, by Bay of Bengal via Bengal and Burma (Choudhury, N.D., 1985, pp. 25-26). The migration which started thousands of years ago is continuing till present day.

#### 3.2. Early Migrations

As we trace the background of the people inhabiting Assam, we find literature referring to the earliest settlers. There is the mention of the *Kiratas*, *Cinas*, *Nishada*, and other tribes. When the Vedic Aryan people came to Assam, they encountered these communities. The literatures of ancient times also have some references about the physical features and skin colour of the people. Some anthropologists have used the term *Nishada* to denote the Australoids. The *Kiratas* were also mentioned in the ancient literatures. In The Ramayana, Mahabharata, and the Kalika Purana, references have been made to their yellow skin colour. These people were occupying the different regions of the Himalayas and the northeastern part of India. The *Kiratas* were regarded as Mongoloid people. The term 'Kirata' was first mentioned in the Yajurveda. The first ruler of ancient Kamarupa was Mahiranga Danav. He was a *Kirata*. The other rulers like Hatak Asur, Sambar Asur and Ratna Asur were also *Kirata* rulers and their subjects were all *Kiratas*. These ancient rulers were of Mongoloid origin.

Anthropologists from detailed studies of the population of this region have come to the conclusion that tribes of Assam are Mongoloid in origin. There are also some Australoid ethnic traits among them. The Australoids are regarded as the earliest settlers of Assam.

They were followed by the Mongoloids. The Austric speech –family was associated with the Australoids and their descendents. The Khasis of Meghalaya belong to this linguistic group.

The Mongoloid tribes of North east India are categorized under the Khasis, Boro, Lushai-Kuki, Naga, Arunachal tribes and “Others” on the basis of one or the other factors like linguistic affinity, cultural similarity, common territory and biological closeness. The Boro form one of the most important tribal groups in Assam and belong from a very early period. (Das. 1987, pp.43).

The Mongoloids of northeast India are mostly speakers of the Tibeto-Burman languages. These languages have their origin in southwest China. These people at different times came from different directions and migrated to the hills and valleys of north east India. S.K. Chatterjee suggests, “It seems quite probable that long before 1000 B.C., some of these early Tibeto –Burmans had penetrated within the frontiers of India, either along the southern slopes of the Himalayas, or by way of Tibet”( cited in Das. B.M., 1987, pp. 43).

After the Mongoloids, came the Caucosoids. Their migration occurred in several waves. The Indo – Aryans and Irano -Scythians were preceded by the Mediterranean and Alpino-Armenoids in this region.

### **3.3.Later Migrations**

Another series of migration of people took place in Assam after it came under British rule. After the British annexed Assam in 1826, large number of people started migrating to Assam to meet the growing need of human resource for running the British administration. As tea cultivation began to be started in 1836, a large group of people from different parts of India were brought to work as tea labourers. Started in 1853, migration of tea garden labourers on a large scale took place since 1860. This continued till 1937, the number falling low after 1931, by which time the tea garden labourers numbered 10 lakhs in Assam. (Census of India, 1961, Assam, General Report, as cited in Saikia, etal., 2003, preface). The Tea tribes who form an important part of the culture of

the state consist of a number of individual tribes who have been given the nomenclature of 'Tea Tribe'.

The next stream of migration started with Muslim peasants coming from the then East Bengal districts of Mymensingh, Pabna, Bogra, and Rangpur. It was in the beginning of the 1900s that people migrated from erstwhile East Bengal started inhabiting the *chars* of the Brahmaputra River. They came first to the district of Goalpara from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in the subsequent two decades they occupied lands in Nowgong, Kamrup (the then Brahmaputra sub – division) and Darrang. By 1931 most of the wastelands of the Brahmaputra valley was under their occupation. By 1941, they settled down in North Lakhimpur district. They at present form a significant proportion of the state's population.

The third stream of migration consisted of Bengali Hindus refugees mostly from the then Sylhet district to the adjoining areas of present Assam during the partition of the country. After independence also, this flow of people continued.

In Assam, another stream of migration took place with the advent of the Nepali graziers who from the beginning of the twentieth century started settling in the uncultivated and unowned hill slopes.

### **3.4.The present population of Assam**

#### **3.4.1 Introduction**

Assam is a meeting place of different groups of people who over the centuries have come and settled down. Over times, admixture has taken place between different members of two groups. Centuries of living side by side with each other has resulted in the fusion of both cultural and physical traits resulting in the growth and development of a composite culture which is unique to Assam. Contemporary Assam is now home to a group of communities belonging to different tribes, castes, language and religion.

The people of Assam can be viewed from the perspective of religion, tribes, and Castes. According to the Census figures of 2011 A.D., the total population of the state

is 31,205,576 of which 15,939,443 are male and 15,266,133 are female. This includes the populations of the hill districts, Barak valley and the Brahmaputra valley. The People of India project has studied 115 of the ethnic groups in Assam. 79 (69 percent) identify themselves regionally, 22 (19 percent) locally and 3 transnationally. Forty five languages are spoken by different communities including three major language families: Austro Asiatics(5), Sino-Tibetan(24), and Indo European (12). Three of the spoken languages do not fall in these families. On both side of the Brahmaputra, Assamese language is spoken by about twenty million people.

#### 3.4.2 Different Religious Communities

From the religious point of view, the majority of the people in the state practice Hinduism. They account for 61.5 percent of the total population of the state. In Assam, in general practice, two broad categories of Hindu castes are recognized. These are the 'Bamun' (Brahmin) and the 'Sudir' (Sudra: non- Brahmin). The Sudir group includes several castes of different hierarchical positions. (Das. B.M. 1987, p.12) . The Sudirs are sub-divided into several castes such as Kalita, Kayastha, Ganak, Kaibarta, Hira, Kumar, Jogi, Keot, etc.( Dutta, 2001, PP. 105). There is another classification by the Government , which has also identified 15 numbers of Scheduled Castes Communities in the State, they are 1. Bansfor, 2. Bhuinmali, Mali, 3. Brittial Bania, Bania, 4. Dhupi, Dhubi, 5.Dugla, Dholi, 6.Hira,7. Jalkeot, 8. Jhalo,Malo, Jhalo-Malo, 9. Kaibortha Jalia, 10. Lalbegi, 11. Mahara, 12. Mahtar, Bhangi, Muchi, Rishi, 13. Namasudra, 14. Patni, 15. Sutradhar. The Scheduled Caste Population of the state constitute 7.2 percent of the total population of Assam .

The Scheduled Castes community in Assam are not concentrated in specific pockets and they are interspersed. Agriculture is the mainstay of the majority of the Scheduled Castes in Assam. The Kaibortha , Namasudra and Jalkeots have to depend on fishing. Pottery and goldsmithy are the important occupation of the Hiras and Banias.

The urban dwellers like the Bansfor, Muchis, Bhangis, Mahtar and Maharas have to switch to other professions because of the changing socio-economic situation.

Muslims is the second largest religion in Assam .There is a significant population of Muslim people in the state. According to 2011 census, 34.22 percent of the population of Assam are Muslims.Assam came into contact with Muslims since the early part of the thirteenth century with the first Muslim invasion of Assam . There were several invasions over the centuries which were thwarted by the different rulers of Assam at different times. The Muslims soldiers did not return to their native land. Instead they stayed back and married local women and became a part of this region. During the Ahom rule, many Muslim artisan families were invited by the Ahom rulers to come to Assam and settle here. A Muslim saint Hazarat Milan, popularly known as Azan Fakir came to Assam in the middle of the seventeenth century. He promoted Muslim religion in Assam. Many local people converted to Islam because of his influence. There has been a slow incorporation of Muslims into Assam over a long period of time. The traditional Assamese Muslim community includes the descendents of the Muslim soldiers, the artisan families, Muslim preachers and the local converts. To add to the Muslim population in Assam are the *Char* dwellers who inhabit the thousands of *Char* and *Chapories* or the sand bars of the rivers of Assam.

The Christian community of Assam `accounts for 3.7 percent of the state's population. With the coming of the British and American Missionaries, Christianity in the Assam developed after the establishment of the British regime in 1826. The first missionaries to arrive in this region were sent by the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Mission, who was followed by the American Baptists. They were the pioneers in the field of education in this region. They established churches, schools and hospitals. In Assam, large number of people especially belonging to the tribal communities converted to Christianity. There are also followers of Christianity from other communities in the state.

Assam's relationship with Buddhism is an ancient one. K. Burah Gohain (1946) suggests that Buddhism was brought to Assam (earlier known as Kamarupa) from Eastern India. (cited S.Sasanananda, 1986, pp. 23). During the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., Buddhism was introduced into Kamarupa by Thera Dhitika and it widely spread here by the efforts of the renowned Brahmin , Siddha who had converted to Buddhism

(S.Sasanananda, 1986, p. 101.) Buddhism again showed resurgence during the reign of Kumar Bhaskar Varman. Although Bhaskar Varman was a follower of Hinduism, he showed great reverence to Buddhist teachings. It was during his reign that the famous Chinese monk Hiuen Tsang visited Kamarupa. Discovery of relics of Buddhist temples from different parts of Assam indicates that the religion was in prevalence during bygone age. The present group of people belonging to the Tai community brought Buddhism with them when they came to Assam. In different parts of Assam, we find the members of the Tai stock living and adhering to their Buddhist tradition and culture. The Singphos, Tai Khamtis, Tai Phakes, Khamyangs, Aitonias, Turungs, are followers of Buddhism and are concentrated in certain pockets of the state. According to 2011 census the state has a population of 0.2 percent who follow Buddhism.

The Assamese Sikhs form a distinct entity in the state. They are presently concentrated in a village called as Borkhola in Nagaon district, although members of the community are scattered in different parts of the state. They are the descendents of the Sikh soldiers who came to Assam to aid the Ahom rulers to fight against the Burmese invaders. Many of the soldiers settled in the state and married local women and in course of time became an indispensable part of Assam. According to 2011 census, 0.1 percent of the states population are followers of Sikhism. Beside the above religious groups, there is a small community of followers of Jainism in Assam.

### 3.4.3 The Tea Community

The Tea Tribe consist of people belonging to different communities and accounts for 25 percent of the population of the state. They form an integral part of Assam. The Tea industry depend on a strong labour force, and as such the British brought thousands of workers from the Chhotanagpur region covering the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, and also from West Bengal ,Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The term 'tea tribe' in fact includes different groups of communities .There are as many as 96 castes/tribes in the Central List of Other Backward castes (OBCs) for the State of Assam falling under the description as "Tea Garden Labourers, Tea Garden Tribes, Ex-Tea Garden labourers & Ex-Tea Garden Tribes". They are distributed in almost all

the districts of Assam. Their population is significant in the districts of Sonitpur, Jorhat, Golaghat, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Tinsukia and Lakhimpur. They are also found in the districts of Darrang and the Barak valley regions. The Bodo Territorial Area District (BTAD) also has a significant percentage of the population.

As observed by Bhuiya (1960), these people belong from three different linguistic groups. They are Kolarian speaking, e.g., the Munda, Ho, Santal and the Kharia, Dravidian speaking groups, e.g., the Oraon, Kondh, Gond, and Malpharia, and the Groups speaking Oriya, Bengali and Hindi (cited Kar, 1997, pp. 162). After they came to Assam, they started settling in a new socio-economic environment which was very different from their original home. Although they belong from different linguistic groups in the tea plantations, they share a common lingua franca, which is called as *Cha Bagichar Ahamiya* (Sadani), i.e., 'Assamese of tea garden' (cited in Kar, 1997, pp. 165). They are regarded as part and parcel of Assamese society. In this context, Saikia (1982) suggests the term *Chah Bagichar Asamiya*, i.e., 'The Assamese of Tea Garden' for them (cited Kar., 1997, pp. 167)

#### 3.4.4 The *Char* Dwellers

The bed of the Brahmaputra has formed innumerable river islands locally called as *chars* or *chaporis*. These *chars* or *chaporis* vary greatly in size, shape and physical vulnerability. Most of the *chars* are temporary or semi-temporary and only a few are permanent. Due to this reason, the inhabitants of the *chars* seldom have a permanent address and have to change residence several times. The people living in the *char* and *chaporis* lead a river-centric life. Their livelihood, society and culture are profoundly influenced by the river.

Centering the river Brahmaputra there are around two thousand *chars* in Assam which are habitable. Besides, the Mising, Deoris, Kaibartas, these islands are inhabited by the Muslim cultivators who immigrated into Assam from East Bengal, the Nepalees immigrating from Nepal, the Hindu refugees and small numbers of people from Bihar and Bengal. The majority of the *char* dwellers are followers of Muslim religion and their population is estimated to be around thirty lakhs people. These people are given different names like *Pamua Musalman* (the Farming Muslim), *Na-Asamiya* (Neo-

Assamese) *Charua Musalman* (the Muslims of the river Islands or banks). They occupy the *chars* of Dhubri, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup, Morigaon, Nagaon, Darrang, Sonitpur, etc. On the other hand, the Misings, Deori and Kaibbartas are found in the *Char-chaporis* of Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, etc.

#### 3.4.5 The Tribes in the Plain districts

Assam is home to a diverse groups of tribes who have given colour and vibrancy to the state's culture . The Government of India has given Scheduled Tribe status to various communities in both the hills and Plains of the state. The total Scheduled Tribe population according to 2011 census stands as 3,884,371 of which 3,665,405 are from rural areas and 218,966 are from urban areas. The Scheduled tribe population accounts for 12.41 percent to total population of the state. There are altogether fifteen numbers of Scheduled Tribes (Hill) and fourteen Scheduled Tribes (Plain) having distinctive culture, language, folkways, legal system, religious belief and practices, and are at various stages of development socially, educationally and economically. The Scheduled Tribes, both plains and hills are distributed in all the 32 districts of the state. The plain tribes are found in the plain districts and the hill tribes are concentrated mainly in the hill districts of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills. The following is the list of the Scheduled Tribes in Assam-

In the autonomous Districts: 1. Chakma, 2. Dimasa, Kachari , 3. Garo ,4. Hajong, 5.Hmar, 6. Khasi, Jaintia, Synteng, Pnar,War, Bhoi, Lyngngam,7. Any Kuki Tribes, 8. Lakher, 9. Man (Tai Speaking) , 10. Any Mizo (Lushai) tribes, 11. Mikir, 12. Any Naga Tribes, 13. Pawi, 14. Syntheng,15. Lalung

In the state of Assam excluding the autonomous districts: 1. Barmans in Cachar ,2. Boro, Borokachari, 3. Deori, 4. Hojai, 5. Kachari, Sonowal ,6. Lalung, 7. Mech ,8. Miri, 9. Rabha, 10. Dimasa, 11. Hajong, 12. Singhpho, 13. Khampti, 14. Garo.

Although , the population of the Brahmaputra valley, The Barak Valley and the Hill districts of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao constitute the people of Assam, yet for the convenience of the study the culture and society of the people of the Brahmaputra valley has been taken as the focus of this study.

The Brahmaputra valley is the meeting ground of diverse linguistic and racial groups. The valley is home to both tribal and non tribal communities. The Bodo also called as Boro or Boro Kacharis is a branch of the great Bodo Group of the Indo-Mongoloid family. Regarded as one of the earliest settlers of this region, this group of people had their original habitat in Tibet or China. The Bodos are scattered throughout Northeastern India. There are some small Bodo pockets outside India like in Burma, Nepal, and Bhutan. The state of Assam is the main adobe of the Bodos. Their main concentration is now on the northern bank of the river Brahmaputra starting from Dhubri to Dhemaji district in the east. District wise they have a sizable population in Bongaigaon, Nalbari, Barpeta, Darrang, Goalpara, Dhubri and Kamrup apart from newly constituted Kokrajhar, Baska, Chirang and Udalgiri districts of Bodoland Territorial Area District. They also inhabit the regions of Nagaon, Karbi Anglong and Golaghat districts. Bodo is regarded as a generic term and different names are used to designate them. In Bengal and in Nepal, they are known as Meches. In Upper Assam they are identified as Sonowal Kachari, while in the western Assam, they are more popularly known as Boro or Boro- Kachari. In the Southern districts of North Cachar and Cachar they are designated as Dimasa and Barmans respectively (Bordoloi.B. N, et al., 1987, pp. 1).The Boro or Boro Kachari according to 2011 census is the largest tribe of Assam with a population of 1,361,735 persons.

The Mising of Assam previously known as Miris is the second largest group of Scheduled Tribe (Plains) of Assam. The term 'Miri' was given to them by the plain people and the tribe prefer to call themselves as Mising. Their population according to 2011 census is 6,80,424 persons. They are mainly concentrated in the riverine areas of Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, Dhemaji, Jorhat, Golaghat, Sonitpur and Tinsukia districts of Assam. Originally, they were hill dwellers and lived along with the Abors of Arunachal Pradesh. They migrated to the plains of Assam before the reign of the Ahom kings and began settling in the riverine areas of the Brahmaputra and Subansiri rivers. They migrated to the Brahmaputra valley from an area upstream of the Dihong river(Sharma

Thakur. G.C., 1972,pp.2). They belong to the Tibeto Burman family of the Mongoloid group.

The Rabhas are one of the Scheduled Tribes in the plains districts of Assam. They are widely scattered, but mostly concentrated in the districts of Goalpara, Kamrup and Darrang. Besides Assam, their distribution spreads over Meghalaya, Bangladesh, Nepal, West Bengal, Manipur etc. According to 2011 census, their population is 296,189. There are divergent views by different scholars regarding the ethnic individuality of the tribe, its original place of abode, and the relationship with other tribal groups. Rev. S. Endle had shown seven 'sub-tribes' of the Rabhas such as 'Rangdaniya', 'Maitoriya', 'Pati', 'Koch', 'Bitliya', 'Dahuriya' and 'Sangha'. (Bordoloi.B. N, et al., 1987, pp. 129).The Pati section of the tribe shows great Hindu influences and the impact of acculturation is more prominent amongst them. Numerically the Rangdanis are well represented in western Goalpara. The Maitoris are numerically less in Assam than the Rangdanis and is concentrated in western Meghalaya. The Dahuri group is found in north Goalpara and the Totlas in north Kamrup area and in the northern belt of Darrang District particularly around Rowta, Udalguri and Hugrajuli.

The Sonowal Kacharis is one of the important plain tribes of Assam. They are distributed in the districts of Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, Jorhat and Golaghat. The Sonowal Kachari has a population of 2,53,344. They belong to the great Bodo group. The Sonowal Kachari believes that they are the descendents of Bhaskarbarman, Narakasur, Ban, Bhagadatta, Hirimba, Ghototkos, Bhim, Prahlad and Bali. Regarding the origin of the name 'Sonowal', it is opined that the Kacharis who used to collect gold or 'son' from the bank of the Subansiri came to be known as Sonowal Kacharis.

The Tiwas , earlier referred to as Lalungs are one of the major ethnic groups in Assam. According to Tiwa language, 'Ti' means 'water' and 'Wa' means 'great'. The origin of the tribe is shrouded in mystery. It is said that while migrating to Assam, they followed the course of the Brahmaputra and introduced themselves to others as Tiwa. They were called as Lalung by the non Tiwas. The Karbis called those people as Lalungs who

were living on the South bank of the Brahmaputra. 'La' means water and 'lung' means rescued. The river Brahmaputra gave shelter to this people; hence, they came to be called as Lalung. They are a branch of the Bodo group and belong ethnically to the Mongoloid stock. The Tiwas are mostly concentrated in Nagaon, Morigaon and Karbi Anglong districts of Assam. Besides these, there are a few other Tiwa villages in Dhemaji, Sonitpur, Jorhat and Kamrup districts. In respect of habitats, the present day Tiwas can be divided into two viz., Plains and Hill Tiwas, the latter being able to preserve their traditional life and culture. The topography and ecology of the plains and hills have influenced the Tiwas considerably. Certain aspects of socio-cultural life of the Hill Tiwas have become distinct from that of the Plains Tiwas. The Hill Tiwas have been able to maintain many of their traditional characteristics. The Plain Tiwas are settled cultivators where as the Hill Tiwas still resort to *Jhum* system or Terrace cultivation. According to 2011 census, the population of the Tiwas in the plains is 1,82,663.

The Garos have received the status of Scheduled tribes both in the hills and Plains of Assam. In the plain region they are distributed in Kamrup, Goalpara and Dhubri districts of the Brahmaputra valley. The Garos call themselves as Achik Mande meaning 'HillMan'. They belong to the Mongoloid race, and are from the Tibeto Burman families of the Bodo linguistic group. According to 2011 census, their population in the plain is 1,36,077. The Garos follow the matrilineal family structure. They trace their lineage through females.

Another riverine community of Assam is the Deori tribe .They are one of the fourteen Scheduled Tribes ( Plains) of Assam. The original adobe of the Deori was on the banks of the river Kundilpani at Kundil, presently known as Sadiya . In the census of 1901, it is mentioned that the banks of the Kundilpani river is the ancient habitation of the Deoris. Brown In the book 'Deori Chutiya Grammar' (1837) observes that the Deories had their original habitation on the bank opposite to Sadiya. ( cited Deori .S, 2013,pp.11).

They are ethnically affiliated to the Tibeto Burman tribes of northeast India. The term 'Deori' means the 'off springs of God and Goddess'. They were regarded as the Levite or priestly body and functioned as the priests of the Chutiyas of Assam (Deori. 2002, pp.16). The Deories are also known as *Jimochanya*. The Deories had come from China and Mongolia in the distant past. From there, they migrated to Kundil or Sadiya and then moved to several places like Manas Sarovar, Lhasa, banks of the Swati Sarovar and Tsangpo and finally settled in Sadiya and Jaidam. These people settled on the valleys of the Brahmaputra and other areas. Later they settled on the bank of the rivers Dibang, Tengapani and Patorsal, at present within the jurisdiction of Arunachal Pradesh and Sadiya Chapakhoa Sub Division of Tinsukia District of Assam. Their present habitation is spread in the riverine areas of Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Tinsukia and Sonitpur and Golaghat districts of Assam. As per 2011 Census their total population is 43750.

The Dimasa Kachari constitutes one of the major tribal groups of Assam and is an important ethnic group in the autonomous hill districts and also in the plain districts of Assam. In the plains they have a population of 19,702. Linguistically, the Dimasa belong to the Boro group of Tibeto-Burman family. The tribal meaning of the word 'Dimasa' is 'son of a big river'. 'Di' means 'water', 'Ma' means 'big' and 'Sa' means 'son'. There are several opinions regarding the origin of the name Dimasa. As the Brahmaputra is the biggest and longest river in Assam, it is presumed that the Dimasas consider themselves to be the descendents of the Brahmaputra. Another section of scholars opine that the Bodos came to be known as Dimasa after they established their capital at Dimapur on the bank of the river Dhansiri. In Dimasa, the river Dhansiri is called as 'Dima'. Till recent years, the Dimasa Kacharis were also known as Hill Kacharis as they prefer to live in hilly areas. Before the advent of the Ahoms in the thirteenth century, the Kachari kingdom was extended along the south bank of the Brahmaputra from the Dikhou River to Kolong River. It included the Dhansiri valley.

The Singphos in Assam has a population of 2,342. The Singphos belong to the Tibeto Burmese language group of the Mongoloid stock. According to Singpho tradition, the Singphos migrated to this region through the Brahmaputra via the Sampo River

between 800-700 B.C. There are several references about the tribe from literature of the medieval times. The four boundaries of the Singpho territory are given in the periodical Arunoday ( cited in Ninkhe, 2013, pp. 18-19) as follows- towards North lies the Brahmaputra, towards East lies Mishmi hills, towards West lies the Patkai mountains and towards South it extends from the mouth of the Na Dihing river to the Burhi Dihing river. The Singphos inhabit around twenty five villages in Margherita region of Tinsukia district. They are also found in the two villages of Dighali and Ouguri in Sibsagar district. The Singphos have been credited to have first introduced the tea plant to the British. Around 1823, Robert Bruce met the Singpho chief called as 'Bisa gam' who showed Bruce the tea plant which was a traditional plant of his family. He also gave Bruce seeds and saplings of the tea plant. This was stated to be the beginning of the tea culture in Assam which the British learnt from the Singphos. Ningroola, from the Singphos was the first person to own tea plantation on the bank of the Burhi Dihing river.

The Khamti tribe of Assam consists of 1,106 persons. The Tai Khamtis migrated to Assam from Bar Khamti (khamti Lung) in Burma during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. First they settled on the bank of the Tengapani River. From there they went to Sadiya and ultimately to Narayanpur. At present the Tai Khamtis inhabit several villages in the Narayanpur region of North Lakhimpur district. They were earlier settled in Sadiya, from where they migrated to the bank of the Dikrong River at Narayanpur.

The Karbis are an important tribe of Assam. They are mainly found in the hill district of Karbi Anglong. They are given the status of scheduled tribe ( H) in Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao districts. A large number of Karbi villages are also found in the plain areas of the state. They are mentioned as Mikir in the constitution order, Govt of India. Although their main concentration is in the Karbi Anglong. In the plains, Karbis live in the districts of Kamrup (M), Morigaon, Nagaon, Golaghat, Sonitpur, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur and Cachar. Racially the Karbi belong to the Mongoloid group and linguistically they belong to the Tibeto- Burman group. They call themselves as 'Arleng'. The Karbis are divided into four groups, namely, Chinthong, Ronghang, Amri and Dumrali. The Karbis believe that their migration to the plains of Assam took place at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

There are several small tribal communities in Assam who follow the Buddhist religion. They are the Turungs, Aitonias, Tai Phakes and Khamyangs.

The Tai Turungs were originally residing on the bank of the river Turung in Burma. From there they migrated to Assam. They are presently found in three villages of Jorhat, two villages in Golaghat and one village in Karbi Anglong district.

There are six villages in Karbi Anglong and three in Golaghat district inhabited by the Aitonias. They came to Assam from Myanmar during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Another small community following the Buddhist faith are the Tai Phakes. At present they inhabit the villages of NamPhake and TipamPhake in Namrup area of Tinsukia. According to historical sources (cited in Ninkhe. R, 2013, pp. 47), the Tai Phakes inhabited the Hukong Valley in the Patkai range of Mountains. From here they had to migrate to other places. Between 1742 to 1850 they had to shift from one place to another in search of proper habitation. In 1777, they came by the river on boat and arrived at Kokilamukh. Here they settled on the bank of the river Disou in Jorhat. In course of time, after several eventful situations they finally settled in Naharkatiya.

The Tai Khamyangs are presently found in Margherita area of Tinsukia district, and in some villages of Jorhat, Golaghat and Sibsagar. During the 16<sup>th</sup> century they were believed to have inhabited the place called as Khamjang Na, in the Patkai range. In course of time they migrated to the Tengapani and Sadiya regions of Assam.

The Ahom community in Assam inhabit the Upper Assam districts of Jorhat, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, North Lakhimpur, Golaghat, Dhemaji and in certain areas of Nagaon and Sonitpur districts . They are also distributed in small pockets in other parts of the state. The Ahoms belong to the Tai ethnic group of the Mongoloid race. They came to Assam during the early part of the thirteenth century. The kingdom which Sukapha, the first Ahom king of Assam laid down in 1228 continued till 1826 .Within this six hundred years , they have left a rich legacy in the history of this land.

#### 3.4.6 The Vaishnavite Gurus of Assam and Satras

The Birth of Sri Sankardev is an epoch making event in the history of Assam . Sankardev belonged to a leading Bara Bhuyan family. His ancestors were *Siromanis* or overlords of the Bhuyans. During the reign of king Durlabhanarayana, Candivara, the great great grandfather of Sankardeva was given the epitaph , *Devidasa* and also land to settle at a place called Bardowa in Kamarupa. Thus, he along with six other Kayasthas and seven Brahmins migrated to Kamarupa from Gauda. Sankardeva was born in 1449 at Alipukhuri in Bordowa, a rich and bountiful land on the bank of the Brahmaputra. His father's name was Kusumavara and his mother's name was Satyasandha. Both his parents died when he was seven years of age. He was brought up by his grandmother Khersuti. Till the age of twelve years Sankardeva led a carefree life of a young boy spending his days by playing with his friends, catching small animals and birds, and looking after cows in the fields. He was also said to have often swam from one bank of the Brahmaputra to another and back without any aid. He took his early education in a *tol* (educational institution) under the Brahman *pandit*, Mahendra Kandali. After leaving the *tol*, he had to take the responsibility as an administrator by taking the role of the *Siromani Bhuyan*. During this time he got married to Suryavati. Sankardeva along with his administrative and household duties continued with his studies. A daughter was born who was named as Manu or Haripriya. His wife died soon after.

When he was around thirty two years of age, Sankardeva went for his first pilgrimage to different religious places of India like Puri and Benaras. He stayed in these places for several years. This pilgrimage had great influence on his career and was responsible for giving shape to his thoughts and ideas about propagation of the Vaishnava religion. After twelve years, he returned home. He married for the second time to Kalindi. He immersed himself in matters related to religion and held religious discourses with others. Sankardeva started preaching his religion and succeeded in getting many people to his fold.

Sankardeva along with his kinsmen migrated to several places within a short period of time and then settled in Dhuwahat (Majuli). It was at Dhuwahat that Sankardeva met Madhavdeva in 1522. At that time, Madhavdeva was thirty two years and a staunch

believer of Saktism. Initially, he refused to accept the teachings of Sankardeva but was finally convinced by the great man's philosophy. He accepted Sankardev as his Guru and remained a devoted disciple and friend till the end.

Sankardeva's religion gave access to people from all caste and creed. He rendered the Bhagavata purana into simple Assamese songs and verses which could be followed by everyone. Sankardev's popular religion invited the hostility of the Brahmans whose teachings were at stake. He along with his followers had to undergo abuse and pain. During the reign of the Ahom king Suhungmung, Madhavdeva along with Haridev, the son in law of Sankardeva were arrested. While Haridev was executed, Madhavdeva had to live in confinement for six months.

Soon after this incident, Sankardeva, Madhavdeva along with their disciples left Kamrupa and migrated to the Koch kingdom in 1546. During that period, Narayana was the Koch king. He and his brother Chilarai were great patrons of learning. In the Koch kingdom Sankardeva was able to preach his religion and many people became his followers, the chief among them was Bhavananda, later called as Narayana Thakur or Thakur Ata. Narayan Thakur was responsible for conversion of a large number of people into the Neo Vaishnavite fold. From here Sankardeva and his followers changed their residence several times and finally settled in Patbausi. Patbausi formerly known as Bausi is an important Sattra in Barpeta. Sankardeva spent around eighteen to twenty years here. It was here that the Guru made all his major poetical and dramatic works. In Patbausi, Sankardeva met Damodardeva, a Brahman youth who was also a staunch follower of Vaishnavism.

From Patbausi, Sankardeva left for his second pilgrimage to Puri. After this short visit to Puri, Sankardeva returned home and spent his time in holding religious congregation and writing books. Sankardeva wrote the Kirtana Ghosa and rendered the Bhagavata, X. Adi into Assamese verse. These are the two great and popular books of Assam Vaishnava.

Chilarai was a patron of Sankardeva and he was instrumental in building the Bhela or Bheladanga Satra in the Koch capital for Sankardeva. Sankardeva at the request of

Chilarai had a forty yard long piece of cloth woven by the weavers of Tatikuci in Barpeta. This piece of cloth called as the Vrindavani vastra , depicts Krishna's life in Vrindaban.

Sankardeva was a versatile genius who excelled himself in a multitude of talents. He was a social reformer, poet and dramatist, painter, musician and actor in dance drama. He is said to have lived a life of excellent and vigorous health, coupled with purely intellectual and spiritual enlightenment. Sankardeva died in 1568 at Koch Behar at the ripe age of around 120 years.

Sankardeva was succeeded by his disciple Madhavadeva to preach the teachings of the Neo Vaishnavite religion. Like Sankardeva, Madhavdeva was also a Kayastha. Madhavdev was born in 1489 A.D. in a village close to Narayanpur. His father was Govindagiri Bhuyan. Madhavdeva secured his education under Rajendra Adhyapaka at Banduka. Soon, he engaged himself as a small trader and worked for sometimes as a Majumdar under the ruling chief of Banduka. Madhavdev went to Dhuwahat where he met Sankardeva. The ancestors of both Sankardeva and Madhavdeva were Saktas. After his conversion to Vaisnavism; he devoted his life to the services of Sankardev and the dissemination of the Neo Vaishnavite philosophy. After the death of Sankardeva, Madhavdeva stayed for sometimes at Patbausi and then at Sundaridiya where he built a monastery. During the later part of his life, his nephew Ramacarana kept him company and served him. Madhavdeva spent his years by preaching the faith of Sankardeva in Kamarupa. He was a scholar, poet and a singer. He composed the verses for his work, the Namaghosa and the Bhakti-Ratnavali. He spread the teachings of Sankardeva and also stayed at Carabari sands of the Brahmaputra River. He stayed at Tatikuci in Barpeta where another monastery was built. He also stayed at Koch Behar when it was ruled by Laksminarayan, the son of Naranarayana. Here he was welcomed and was able to stay and compose his verses. Madhavdeva died in 1596 A.D. He dedicated his whole life to the service of Sankardeva and the cause of the Neo-Vaishnava movement.

Along with the two great gurus, there were several other individuals who contributed to the growth and development of the Neo- Vaishnavite religion of Assam. Damodaradeva was the son of a Brahmin friend of Sankardeva. He brought many

people under the fold of Vaishnavism. Damodardeva established the Vaikunthapur Satra. His disciples established several satras in different parts of Assam. Haridev was another Vaishnava leader who initiated many followers to the fold of Vaishnavism. He established a satra at Maneri. Damodardeva and Harideva had their own followings and these sects established their own satras. There were also nine Atas or elders who are revered by the followers of Vaishnavism. They are Srirama Ata, Gopaldeva Ata of Bhavanipur, Mathuradasa Budha Ata of Barpeta, Kesavacarana Ata of Bhataukuci, Bar Vishnu Ata of Dhopaguri, Badaluwa Padma Ata, Laksmikanta Ata of Dhopaguri, Govinda or Lecakaniya Ata of Khatara Satra, and Harihara Ata, besides the two Thakurs and grandsons of Sankardeva namely Purusottama and Caturbhuj. Different Satras were established by the twelve apostles, each of Purusottama Thakur and Caturbhuj Thakur, Kanaklata Ai, the wife of Caturbhuj and the sons of Sankardeva's granddaughters and great granddaughters.

Ever since the adoption of Neo Vaishnavite religion in the sixteenth century, Assamese society and culture has undergone a state of Renaissance. The Neo-Vaishnavite movement in Assam propagated by Sri Sankardev and his disciples has left lasting impression on the life and culture of the people of Assam. Sri Sankardev taught a simple creed, which was also called as *ekāsarana nāma-dharma*. The movement initiated during the sixteenth century by Sankardev was carried by his disciples to almost all parts of Assam in the next two centuries and governs the socio-religious lives of the people of Assam. This new religious order stressed on the need to worship a monotheistic deity, Visnu, mainly manifesting as Kṛishna. This is *ekāsarana. Nāma-dharma* is the practice of *nāma*, that is, *śrāvana and kirtana*. (The listening to and the chanting of God's name). It discouraged rituals and is based on simple prayers for everybody to practice. The Institution of Satras and Namghars were established for meeting the religious, spiritual and socio-ethical needs of followers of this order. The Satras established by the Gurus have spread across the length and breadth of Assam and has also touched the neighbouring region of Koch Behar, now in West Bengal. The Satras are cultural centres where literature, painting, Mask making, sculpture, drama, songs, music and dances are practiced and propagated. The *Bargitas* (Great songs) were composed by both Sankardeva and Madhavdeva. The Satras are also storehouses

of ancient manuscripts, religious objects, antiques and other valuables. The satras are classed into four sub –sects, each called as samhati. They are the Brahma- Samhati( The Brahmanical group), The Nika- Samhati( the purist group), the Purusa- Samhati, and the Kala- Samhati. The followers of Damodardeva constitute the Brahma – Samhati group. The Auniati, Dakhinpat, Garamur and Kuruwabahi satras are some satras under this group and during the Ahom reign all these satras enjoyed patronage from the Ahom rulers. The followers of Mathuradas, Padma Ata and others constitute the Nika-Samhati group. The Kamalabari Satra, Barpeta Satra and Madhupur Satra of Koch Behar are the three important institutions under this group. The followers of the grandsons of Sankardeva and their successors are the members of the Purusa Samhati. The Bardowa, Bar-bara-janiya, saru- bara- janiya and Kanaka-bara-janiya groups of satras constitute this community. The followers of Gopala Ata constitute the Kala-Samhati group. Since the days of Sankardeva, the adherents of Neo- Vaishnavite religions have come from different caste or social positions and many professional backgrounds. The benign influence of Neo – Vaisnavism has built a society of tolerance and inclusiveness where the rigidity of caste and creed has become diminished to a great extent.

Table- I

List of food of different communities/ tribes of Assam

Sl.No.	Name of the Community	Food
1.	Assamese	Rice is the staple food of the Assamese people. Fish is a favorite food of the people. <i>Khar</i> , <i>Tenga</i> ( light and Sour Curry), <i>Poita</i> ( cooked rice soaked in water and kept overnight) , <i>Pitika</i> ( boiled and mashed vegetables of different kinds), <i>Jolpan</i> ( <i>Snacks</i> consisting of different kinds served with curd, jaggery,etc) , <i>Pitha</i> ( Rice cakes of different varieties) are some other traditional dishes.

2.	Bodo	<p>Rice is the staple food of the tribe. They eat a variety of vegetables which they grow at home. They also collect wild vegetables from the forest. The Bodos are very fond of meat and fish. Fish is a delicacy. Pork is a favorite food. They dry the flesh of pork which is called as <i>bedor goran</i> . The dried fish which they use is called as <i>na goran</i>. They also use eat duck, goat , pigeon and hen. They have a traditional rice beer known as <i>madh</i> or <i>jau</i>. Another type of dried fish prepared with arum stems and stored in bamboo tubes called <i>napham</i> is a favorite food and can be preserved for two or three years.</p>
3.	Deori	<p>Rice is the staple food of the Deori. They prefer boiled vegetables and eat fowls, pigs , ducks and goats. Fish is an important part of their diet. They drink a kind of rice beer called as <i>Suze</i>. Some of their traditional preparation are <i>Meroku Jubura</i>(curry of roasted rice powder ), <i>Merkuji Jubura</i>(broken rice curry), <i>Miduji Jubura</i>, <i>Ujungon Niyom</i>(curry of bamboo shoot).</p>
4.	Dimasa Kachari	<p>The staple food of the Dimasas is rice. Vegetables from the kitchen gardens , and also cultivated in the jhum fields are eaten. They also collect wild vegetables from the jungle. They are very fond of meat and fish. Dried fish is a delicacy. They drink a rice beer used is called as <i>zou</i>.</p>

5.	Garo	<p>The staple food of the Garos is rice which they eat boiled. They also eat pork and other types of meat. Meat is prepared by boiling it with yam, gourd or pumpkin. They also have a hot and spicy soup called as <i>Baring naikam</i>, which is prepared with kind of dry fish called as <i>Nakham</i>. Some popular Garo dishes are <i>Doo Pura</i>, <i>Doo Kalai</i>, <i>DooKapa</i>, <i>Nakam Bitchi</i>, etc</p>
6.	Karbi	<p>Rice is a staple food of the Karbi people. Their diet also includes <i>Tsophe</i>( black gram lentil)They eat a variety of vegetables, fish and meat. Pork is a favorite food. They use a rice beer called as <i>Horlong</i>. The stronger type of rice beer called <i>Hor arak</i> is also popular. Like the other tribal communities in this region they are also fond of dry fish. <i>Toman</i>( Fermented fish preserved in bamboo pipes) is a delicacy.</p>
7.	Khamti	<p>They eat rice . Their rice cooked in packets of leaves called as <i>Topola Bhat</i> is very popular. They also consume different type of leafy vegetables, edible roots, fish and meat. They have two different types of fish preparation called as <i>Pasom</i> and <i>Pasao</i>. Both these dishes are preserved for future use. They also store dry meat called as <i>Nguhaing</i>. <i>Pokatsang</i> is another special dish prepared with green leaves and kept in bamboo tubes and eaten after one week. Dishes made with potato-yam and fish called as <i>Fak- pasa</i> are specialties.</p>

8.	Mising	Like the other tribes of Assam, rice is the staple food of the Misings. Fish is a favourite food. They also consume preserved fish known as <i>Ngo San</i> . They also eat the flesh of pigs. They eat poultry. Their rice beer is called as <i>Apong</i> .
9.	Rabha	Rice is the staple food of the people. They like various kinds of vegetables. They eat the meat of duck, pig, goat, fowl, etc. they use an indigenous type of rice beer known by various names like <i>Chako, Makham, Sinchina</i> , etc
10.	Sonowal Kachari	Rice is the staple food of the Sonowal Kachari people. They also include lentil and a variety of vegetables in their diet. They also use a special variety of rice, such as <i>komal chaol</i> and <i>Bora chaul</i> which they take with them when they go to the fields for doing the agricultural work.
11.	Singphos	The Singphos are agriculturist and traditionally cultivate tea. Rice is a staple food. They prepare the rice in packets of leaves and these are called as <i>topola bhat</i> . They prepare their food by adding different kinds of green herbs. In their preparation of food, the use of oil is absent or minimal. They eat fish and meat including pork which is a favorite food item. They prepare fish and meat dishes using the bamboo tube ( <i>Supung</i> ), plant leaves ( <i>Kou</i> ), bamboo Skewer ( <i>ping</i> ) and boiling ( <i>Gubang</i> ). Mushroom is also favoured by them. The rice beer used is called as <i>Sapop</i> .

12.	Tiwa	Rice is the staple food of the Tiwas. They eat a variety of vegetables, meat and fish. Pork and chicken are essential items in their menu. They drink a rice beer called as <i>Zu</i> .
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Table-II

Traditional attires of the different Communities/Tribes of Assam

Sl.No.	Name of the Community	Traditional Attire
1.	Assamese	<i>Dhoti, Suriya</i> (Lower garment of the males) <i>Eri Chaddar</i> (shawl), , <i>Mekhela Chador</i> ,( Lower wrapper and Upper wrapper for Females). Other traditional clothes include, <i>Riha, Gamosa</i> , etc
2.	Bodo	The male persons wear a <i>gamcha</i> , which hangs down to the knees of the wearer.In winter they use a <i>Endi</i> wrapper which they call as <i>jumgra</i> or <i>madamni gamcha</i> The Bodo women wear the <i>Dokhana</i> , which is a single piece of cloth covering the wearer from the breast to the ankles. If the <i>Dokhona</i> is plain it is called as <i>sala matha</i> and if it is ornamented it is called as <i>dokhna thawsi</i> . Their favourite and traditional colour is yellow.

	Deoris	The women wear the <i>Igu</i> ( lower wrapper covering the body from the chest to the toes, <i>Jokka Chirba</i> (a piece of cloth encircling the waist), <i>Gatigi</i> (tied around the head), <i>Baiga</i> (long cloth for the upper part of the body) . The Dress of the married women are different then the unmarried girls. The males wear the <i>Iku</i> (long clothes for the waist), <i>Bose</i> or <i>Jema</i> (kind of towel), <i>Deicha</i> ( big clothes), <i>Churu Icha</i> ( small clothes). White, red and green are the dominant colours in their dresses.
3.	Dimasa Kachari	The traditional dress of the Dimasa male consist of the <i>richa</i> ( Towel), <i>chola</i> ( Shirt), <i>cholahula</i> ( overcoat), <i>Gainthou</i> ( Piece of cloth wrapped around the loin), <i>rikausa</i> (Scarf), <i>paguri</i> , <i>Sagaopa</i> ( Turban), and <i>rimchauramai</i> . The women wear the <i>rigu</i> ( lower wrapper), <i>ritap</i> ( <i>endi</i> wrapper) <i>rijamphai</i> , <i>rijamfinaberen</i> , <i>rikaucha</i> ( upper wrappers), <i>rikhra</i> , <i>jinsudu</i> , etc.
	Garos	The traditional attire of the Garos has been replaced by modern clothing. Neverthe less there are some dresses which were worn since earlier times. The traditional dress of a female consists of a lower wrapper and a blouse to cover the upper part of the body. In the winter, they use a shawl to cover the upper part of the body.

4.	Karbi	<p>The Karbis have their own traditional dresses. The male Karbi wear a turban called as <i>Poho</i>, and a <i>dhoti</i> or <i>Rikong</i> made of cotton. They call the shirt as <i>choi</i> and they put on a sleeveless jacket called as <i>Choi-hongtor</i> designed with long fringes called as <i>Abu</i> or <i>Apri</i>. A thick <i>endi</i> silk shawl is worn during the winter season. The women wear a petticoat or <i>Pini</i> designed with white, red and black strips. An ornamental girdle or belt called as <i>Vankok</i> is tied over the petticoat. In the Plains, especially the Dumurali Karbi woman use <i>Paning</i> instead of the lower-part garment called <i>Pini</i>. The upper part of the body is covered with a wrapper called as <i>Jalcho</i>.</p> <p>As accessories, traditional Karbi woman always carries a small bag called <i>Chui</i> and a knife (<i>Noke</i>) with them.</p>
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5.	Khampti	<p>The Khamtis males wear the <i>fa-noy</i> or the <i>lungi</i> . While assembling in the council house or the temple they wear the <i>lungi</i> as a symbol of their national dress.</p> <p>The othe dresses of the male consists of a Shirt or <i>shaw</i>, a Turban or <i>phaho</i>, a lower garment or <i>phanoi</i>, a lower wrapper called as <i>Seleng</i> or <i>phamoi</i> . The dress of the female consists of a short shirt to cover the upper part of the body which is locally called as <i>shoopijing</i>, a Turban or <i>phaho</i>. The garment, which covers the lower part of the body, is known as <i>shin</i>. They also use a red belt called as <i>shasin</i> tied at the waist . They wear <i>Riha</i> or the <i>longwat</i>. It is mandatory for a woman to wear the <i>phaho</i>. Only the married women wear the <i>longwat</i>. The unmarried women wear the <i>shin</i> (mekhela), <i>phamoi</i>(chador) and <i>saisin</i> (belt)</p> <p>The monks wear the <i>Sangkan</i>, a garment which is wrapped around the upper part of the body and the <i>Sangpen</i>, a garment which is worn to cover the lower part of the body. They also wear the <i>Angichet</i> which is a shirt like the vest and a rope called as <i>Sainok koupat</i> which is tied around the waist. The above materials are of saffron colour.</p>
6.	Mising	<p>The traditional dress worn by a Mising woman consist of a wide strip of cloth worn around the waist, extending down to the knees and is called as <i>Sumpa</i>. Around the breast, they wrap a piece of narrow cloth called as <i>Galuk</i>. A small piece of cloth called as <i>Hura</i> is used as a headdress. A narrow piece of extra cloth worn round the hips distinguishes the married women from the unmarried ones. The male dress consists of a narrow strip of cloth called as <i>Kaping</i>.</p> <p>On festive occasions the women wear the <i>Yambo</i>, <i>RiwiGaseng</i> and <i>Ege</i> and the men wear the <i>Miboogaluk</i>, <i>Tangali</i> and <i>Gonroo</i>.</p>

7.	Rabha	The women's traditional dress consist mainly of <i>Rifan</i> , <i>Kambung</i> and <i>Khodabang</i> which are invariably needed for attiring a bride at the time of her marriage. At present they wear <i>Lemphota</i> (lower garment).The male dresses consist of <i>Pajal</i> (dhoti), <i>Pazar</i> ( Neck cloth), <i>Buksil</i> ( shirt), <i>Phali</i> ( handkerchief).
8.	Sonowal Kachari	The Sonowal Kachari women wear the <i>Mekhela Chador</i> and the men wear the <i>Suriya</i> , <i>Dhoti</i> and shirt.
9.	Singpho	The Singphos are expert weavers and almost all members of the community wear hand woven cloth and wear homemade dresses. The Singpho women wear the <i>khakhokhring</i> . They wear a lower garment called as <i>Bukang</i> .They also wear the <i>Nunguat</i> which is tied above the chest.The belt called as <i>Singket</i> is used. They also wear a special dress adorned with silver pieces called as <i>Kumphong Plong</i> . The male folk use a lower garment called as <i>Bupa</i> or <i>Baka</i> and a white turban ( <i>Pham bam</i> ).

10.	Tai Phakes	<p>The dress of the male consists of a woven <i>Lungi</i> called as <i>Fatong</i> which is worn from the waist extending up to the ankle. Shirts and pullovers are purchased from the markets. Old men use a white shirt with long and loose sleeves while going to the temple or to other villages. A white turban called as <i>Fahoho</i> is worn by both the sexes. A white chador called as <i>Fafekmai</i> is worn by the elderly persons when they go to the temples.</p> <p>The dress of the female consists of a lower wrapper called as <i>Chin</i>, which extends up to the portion below the knee joint. On the breast, they use a long striped cloth called as <i>Fanangwat</i>. On the waist a belt called as <i>Chairchin</i> is worn. The unmarried girl wear a white breast cloth called as <i>Fafek</i>. The women wear a white chador when they go out of their villages or to the temple.</p>
11.	Tiwa	<p>The plain Tiwas use dresses similar to those worn by other rural Assamese women. The typical dresses consist of a lower wrapper, and an upper wrapper. On festive occasions they wear <i>Singkhap Mekhela</i>, <i>Riha</i>, <i>Sondia Kapor</i>, <i>Thenus</i>, <i>Seleng</i>, <i>Sakathia</i>, <i>Farke</i>, <i>Mankapor</i>, and <i>Borkapor</i>. The women wear a waistband called as <i>Thongali</i>. The women also wear a wrapper at the breast, which covers their body, and falls below their knee. The Plain Tiwa men wear the dhoti, <i>Nimai Sola</i> and a shirt called as <i>Thagla</i>.</p>

Table-III

Traditional ornaments of the different Communities/Tribes of Assam

Sl.No.	Name of the Community	Traditional Ornaments
1.	Assamese	Ornaments worn on the neck , such as <i>Golpata</i> , <i>Dugdugi</i> , <i>Kerumoni</i> , <i>Jonbiri</i> and <i>Dholbiri</i> , ear pieces like <i>Thuriya</i> , <i>Keru</i> and <i>Loka- paro</i> , Bracelets like <i>Gaam Kharu</i> and <i>Muthi Kharu</i> . In olden times, Male also used to wear elaborate ornaments on their neck, wrist and fingers.
2.	Bodo	The women wear the <i>Khera</i> or <i>Kheru</i> , <i>japkhiring</i> ( ear rings), <i>boula</i> ( for the upper ear ) , <i>Nak phul</i> as nose studs, <i>Chandrahar</i> , <i>Bisahar</i> , <i>Thanka-siri</i> , <i>Jibou-zin-siri</i> , as neck laces and <i>Mutha</i> , and <i>Ashan suri</i> for the hands.
3.	Dimasa Kachari	The elderly Dimasa males earlier used to wear the silver earrings called as <i>Kharih</i> and silver armlets called as <i>Youcher</i> .  The Dimasa women wear a variety of ornaments like <i>Poal</i> ( necklace made of silver pieces and sea shells), <i>Chandrawal</i> ( silver necklace), <i>Rongborsha</i> ( necklace made of silver coins),other neckpieces like <i>Liksim</i> , <i>Likjao</i> and <i>Jongsama</i> . Other ornaments are <i>Khamonthai</i> , (earring of gold), <i>Khamonhai</i> (earring made of silver) <i>Khadu</i> ( silver bracelet) <i>Eansidam</i> ( nose ring), etc.
4.	Garos	There are different types of traditional ornaments like <i>Nadongbinr Sisha</i> , <i>Nadirong</i> , <i>Natapsi</i> ( worn on ears), <i>Jaksan</i> ( bangles), <i>Ripok</i> , (necklaces made of long beads, and sometimes with silver or brass), <i>Sengki</i> ( Waist band ) and <i>Pilne</i> ( ornament worn on the head). The men wear rings called as <i>Jaksil</i> .

5.	Karbi	<p>The Karbi females use a number of ornaments like rings, silver bangles, necklaces (<i>lek</i>) and a kind of heavy bracelet known as <i>roipengkhcms</i>. They use different types of necklaces such as <i>Lek-peng mui</i>( red and blue bead necklace with designed silver pieces), <i>Lek-pengkhar</i>( necklaces made of red beads joined with designed silver pieces), <i>Lek-siki</i> (necklaces made of multi-coloured beads and silver coins), <i>Lek-pingjiri</i> (necklace made of silver), <i>Lek-pil</i> (necklaces made of big beads of orange colour and pieces of eri clothes) , <i>Lek-yaikom</i> (a necklace made of multicoloured beads inserted through three threads), <i>Bon-mala-</i> (necklace made of big-size silver beads).</p> <p>In the traditional society Karbi men folk wore bead necklaces (<i>Lek</i>) and silver bangles (<i>rni</i>).</p>
6.	Rabha	<p>The Rabha women are fond of ornaments which they purchase from the goldsmith. The traditional ornaments which were in use in earlier times are the <i>Namri</i>, <i>Dala</i>, <i>Bola</i> ( for the ears), <i>Hancha</i>, <i>Sukimata</i> (necklace) <i>Rubuk</i>, <i>Reckhop</i> (waistband), <i>San</i>(bangle), <i>Khusumakrang</i> (hairpin), <i>Chasikam</i>(finger ring). <i>Thek</i>, <i>Kuria</i>, <i>Nakputi</i>, <i>Bali</i>, <i>Chelahar</i>, <i>Chandrahar</i>, <i>Sangka</i>, <i>Kantabaju</i>, <i>Thengchela</i> are some ornaments which are worn by the Rabha women nowadays.</p>
7.	Tiwa	<p>The elderly Tiwa women wear silver, bead or stone necklaces and ear rings. Earlier they wore the silver and gold bracelets called as <i>Gamkharu</i>, <i>Sipatmani</i> (necklace), <i>Gotakharu</i> (bracelet) , <i>Sen Patia Angathi</i> (A specially designed ring). The men used to wear <i>Siha</i>( earring made of gold and silver)</p>

Table- IV

Musical Instruments used by the different communities/ tribes of Assam

Sl.No.	Name of Tribe/ Community	Musical Instruments
1.	Assamese	<i>Dhol, Gogona, Pepa</i> ( the horn pipe), <i>Taal, Toka</i> (a piece of bamboo with one part of it split), <i>Xutuli, Khol, Mridanga, Madol, Dotor, Dogor, Baanhi, Nagera, Ektara, bhortala, Doba, bah Jantra, Zuti tala.</i>
2.	Bodo	<i>Kham</i> ( drum), <i>Jotha</i> ( Cymbal), <i>Khawang</i> ( Cymbal bigger than the <i>Jotha</i> ), <i>Siphung</i> ( a long flute), <i>Serja</i> ( four stringed instrument) .
3.	Deori	<i>Durum</i> (drum), <i>Khol, Taka</i> (A bamboo instrument), <i>Pepa</i> (flute), <i>Luguru Kuci, Salmara, Dholtong, Tal, Kah, Samkha, Bin, Ghanta, Suti</i> ( Clapper of bamboo or wood), <i>Singa , Gagana, Bahi, Bin, Tokari,</i> etc

4.	Dimasa Kachari	Dance and music play an important part in their culture. They have the indigenous musical instruments like the <i>Khram</i> (drum), <i>Muri</i> , <i>Muri Wathisa</i> and <i>Suphin</i> (all flute like reed instruments, <i>Khram- Dubung</i> ( a kind of Veena), <i>Pen</i> or <i>Bin</i> ( stringed instrument).
5.	Garo	They have three types of drums . The longer one is called <i>Dama</i> , the shorter one is called as <i>Kram</i> and the smallest one is called as <i>Nadid</i> . They also use a few wind instruments and cymbals of various sizes.
6.	Karbis	The Karbis use a few musical instruments like the drums called as <i>Cheng</i> and <i>Chengbruk</i> . The <i>Cheng</i> is a big drum while the <i>Chengbruk</i> is small in size. They flutes called as <i>Muri</i> , <i>Pangsi</i> , <i>Mri tangpa</i> .
7.	Morans	<i>Sutuli</i> , <i>Dhiting</i> or <i>Dhutong</i>
8.	Meches	<i>Chiphung</i> ( Flute), <i>Serza</i>
9.	Mising	<i>Dumdum</i> (drum), <i>Khartal</i> ( clapper of bamboo and wood), <i>Kakter</i> ( A bamboo instrument), <i>Le:nong</i> of different size and shape called as <i>Marbang</i> , <i>Lolong</i> , and <i>Bali</i> . <i>Lu:pi</i> , <i>Mibu-yakca</i> ( A sword shaped instrument), <i>Rai-Ko-reg</i> , <i>zejuk Tapung</i> (a flute) <i>Gunga</i> or <i>Gung-gang</i> , <i>Pempa</i> , <i>Puli</i> or <i>Kuruli</i> , <i>Dumpag</i> , <i>Dentok</i> . <i>Dendun</i> , <i>Kehkung</i>

10.	Rabha	<i>Umbanggi</i> , (a kind of mouth pipe), <i>Karanal</i> ( a long node less pipe), <i>Natagungglay</i> ( earthen mouth organ), <i>Buburenga</i> (mouth organ made of reed), <i>Badungdwpa</i> (a string instrument made from bamboo tube), <i>Kham</i> (drum), <i>Brangsi</i> (flute), <i>Daidi</i> (gong), <i>Chengchop</i> (cymbal) <i>Gamena</i> (Jews harp), <i>Singa</i> (flute made of buffalo horn), <i>Jhop</i> or <i>Jhap khara</i> ( flute).
11.	Sonowal Kachari	<i>Dhol</i> (drum), <i>Mrdanga</i> , <i>Taka</i> (A bamboo instrument), <i>Hat-taka</i> , <i>Taka- Mari-Taka</i> , <i>Khutital</i> , <i>Bahi</i>
12.	Tai Buddhist	<i>Kong pat</i> , <i>Dhol</i> , <i>Jamtong</i> or <i>Yammong</i> , <i>Jammanlung</i> , <i>Chang-an</i> , <i>Kartak</i> , <i>Techi</i> , flutes like <i>Pi Khao Khai</i> , <i>Tut</i> , <i>Kang-kang</i> , <i>Pirengceo</i> , <i>Pitai</i> , <i>Bin</i> or <i>Ting</i> , <i>Dhetung-tung</i> , <i>Behera</i> .
13.	Tea Tribes	<i>Dhak</i> , <i>Nagara</i> , <i>Madal</i> , <i>Timki</i> (a conical type of drum), <i>Nissan</i> , <i>Dhamsa</i> , <i>dhapla</i> , <i>Vamsa</i> , <i>Dhal</i> , <i>Ravka</i> , <i>Makati</i> , <i>Jhaj</i> , <i>Kartal</i> , <i>Kanshi</i> , <i>Ghungaur</i> , <i>Poiri</i> , <i>Jhutia</i> , <i>Kathimor Danda</i> , <i>Banshi</i> , <i>Pepti</i> , <i>Shahrani</i> , <i>Tirio</i> , <i>Madan Bher</i> , <i>Buang</i> , <i>Banam</i> , <i>Kendora</i> , <i>Tuita</i> .

14.	Tiwa	<i>Khrams</i> (drum), <i>Khramba</i> (big Drum), <i>Pisu Khram</i> (small drum), <i>Dogoraa</i> ( resembles a pumpkin in shape and two sticks are used to beat it to produce sound), <i>Kali</i> (pipe) <i>Tandrang</i> (instrument like the violin), <i>Thogari</i> ( a Stringed instrument), <i>Thuraang</i> (a long bamboo flute), <i>Paangsi</i> (a small flute), <i>Saraileo</i> , <i>Taka</i> .
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Table- V

Religion and Festival of Different Communities/Tribes of Assam

Sl.No.	Communities/Tribes involved in celebration	Name of the festivals along with a brief description
1.	Assamese	<p>Bihu is a festival associated with the seasons and agriculture. It is a festival which is celebrated by all people from different religion, caste and creed. There are three types of Bihu which includes <i>Rongali Bihu</i> or <i>Bohag Bihu</i>, <i>Bhogali</i> or <i>Magh Bihu</i> and <i>Kati</i> or <i>Kongali Bihu</i></p> <p><i>Rongali Bihu</i> is celebrated on the onset of spring . <i>Kati bihu</i> is celebrated during the Month of October when the granaries are empty . <i>Magh Bihu</i> is celebrated, after the crops are harvested and the granaries are full with grains. People enjoy this festival by feasting on food and drinks.</p>

2.	Bodos	<p><i>Bathou Borai</i> is their supreme God who is symbolized by the Siju plant which is planted in the Bodo households for offering prayers . The Bodo also worship many Gods and Goddesses and visit various temples of Shiva and Shakti.</p> <p>The Brahma section of the tribe devotedly follows the teachings of Kalicharan Brahma. And they perform Hom Yajna in the Vedic style. But they revere the <i>sizu</i> plant which they plant in their courtyard as representing <i>Bathou</i>.</p> <p><i>Kherai puja</i></p> <p>The religion and festival of the Bodos are intimately connected to agriculture . <i>The Kherai puja</i> ( form of worship) performed in different times of the year in accordance with particular occasions. Thus, there are <i>Darshan Kherai, Umrao Kherai , Phalo Kherai</i> and <i>Nowaoni Kherai</i>.</p> <p><i>Garja puja</i> is another important religious festival.</p> <p><i>Baisagu</i></p> <p>It is celebrated to herald the spring season. The supreme deity <i>Bathau</i> or <i>Sibrai</i> is worshipped on this occasion by making offerings to him. Community singing and merriment with the accompaniment of traditional musical instruments marks the festival and continues for a week. They also observe certain restrictions ( taboos) during the period. It is customary to offer community prayer at the close of the festival.</p> <p><i>Katri gasa</i></p> <p>They celebrate <i>Katri gasa</i> on the last day of the month of Ahin.</p> <p><i>Domashi</i></p> <p>It is a seasonal festival celebrated to welcome the new harvest.</p>
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		<p>Different kind of cakes locally called as <i>pithas</i> made with rice flour are prepared and served to relatives and friends. The occasion is celebrated with enthusiasm and festive fervor.</p>
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	Deori	<p>They are worshipper of Lord Mahadev and Parvati. The Dibongiyas call these supreme deities as <i>Kundimama</i>. <i>Kundi</i> is identified as Lord Shiva and <i>Mama</i> as Parvati. The common place of worship among the Borganya and Tengapaniya is the <i>Than</i> while the Dibongiyas call it as <i>Midiku</i>.</p> <p><i>Bohagiyo Bisu</i></p> <p>‘Bi’ means ‘extreme’ and ‘su’ means ‘rejoicing’. There is much merriment and joy during this period. The festival generally commences from a Wednesday. The celebration must be preceded by a <i>Than Puja</i>. The festival has a close relation with the agricultural activities. The <i>deodhani</i> dance forms an important part of this celebration. It is celebrated on the <i>Sangkranti</i> of <i>Chait</i></p> <p><i>Magiyo Bisu</i></p> <p>It is celebrated on the ‘<i>sangkranti</i>’ of <i>Puh</i>. It is a seasonal festival celebrated for the new harvest. Different kind of cakes locally called as <i>pithas</i> made with rice flour are prepared and served to relatives and friends. The occasion is celebrated with enthusiasm and festive fervor.</p>
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3.	Dimasa Kachari	<p><i>Rajini Gabra and Harini Gabra</i></p> <p>The Dimasa are predominantly followers of Hinduism and they have been maintaining their autonomy and culture to a great extent. The Dimasa Kacharis observe various festivals. The celebration of the socio-religious festivals <i>Rajini Gabra</i> and <i>Harni Gabra</i> is held once annually before the starting of new cultivation. The former is celebrated during day time only. The <i>Kunang</i>, the traditional headman propitiates his family deity by closing the village gate on the day of the performance of <i>Rajini Gabra</i>. In the same night the function called <i>Harni Gabra</i> is also celebrated. Here the deity <i>Harni</i> is worshipped for the protection and welfare of the people during the coming years.</p> <p>It is very interesting to note that during the performance of <i>Rajini Gabra</i> and <i>Harni Gabra</i> if any outsider enters into the village in spite of seeing the sign of the closing gate, the entire function is considered to be spoilt. The intruder bears the total expenses of holding the festival anew.</p> <p><i>Busu Dima</i></p> <p>But the celebration <i>Busudima or Busu</i> (harvestry festival) is the joyest and most important of all. Prior to celebration of <i>Busu</i> a specially decorated and artistically designed gate called <i>Fangsla</i> is erected at the main entrance to the village</p>
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4.	Garo	<p>The Garos are followers of Christianity. They celebrate Christmas, Easter and other festivals with religious fervor. They also have some traditional festival. They celebrate <i>Wangala</i>, which is the harvest festival. This festival is also known as the festival of hundred drums.</p>
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5.	Karbi	<p><i>Rongker</i></p> <p>It is a socio- religious festival. The gods and goddesses are propitiated for the welfare of an entire village and to ward off disasters such as disease and natural calamities. It is also performed to welcome a good harvest.</p> <p>Another type of <i>Rongker</i> called as <i>Wofong Rongker</i> is celebrated at an interval of five years and continues for two days.</p> <p><i>Hacha Kekan</i></p> <p>It is a merry making festival. Community feast, dance and songs take place. It is a thanksgiving ceremony when the goddess of prosperity is thanked for bestowing her blessings to the people.</p> <p><i>Chomankan</i></p> <p>It is an elaborate and important ceremony performed for the deaths in Karbi society. The Karbis believe that the spirits of the dead men and women have to be sanctified by rituals of the death ceremony called <i>Chomangkan</i> . It is an elaborate rituals which requires prior planning, large expenditure and elaborate arrangement .There are three types of <i>chomangkan</i> namely – <i>Kanphlaphla</i> which is performed for the ordinary Karbi people, <i>Langtuk chomangkan</i> , performed for the persons who used to occupy high position in the social hierarchy of the Karbis and <i>Harne chomangkan</i> which is performed for the persons who occupied highest position in the society</p>
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6.	Khamti	The Khamtis are Buddhist . They celebrate the festivals called as <i>Poi Changkan</i> , <i>Mai-Ko_soom-Phai</i> , and others.
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7.	Mising or Miri	<p><i>Ali-Aye-Ligang</i></p> <p><i>Ali-Aye-Ligang</i> is the most important festival held on the first Wednesday of the <i>Ginmur Polo</i> (month of Fagun). This spring dance festival is observed to mark the sowing of the seeds. <i>Ali</i> means root, seed, <i>Aye</i> means fruit and <i>Ligang</i> means sow. Thus ceremonial sowing of paddy starts on this day. Dancing and singing is the characteristic feature of this festival. The whole atmosphere is surcharged with music of <i>Dum Dum</i>, <i>Pempa</i>, <i>Siphung</i> and <i>Gunggang</i> played with the rhythmic dances of the girls attired in their best <i>Ribigaseng</i> and <i>Ribiyege</i>. <i>Poro Apong</i> and dried fish is essential for the feast. The festival continues for five days and during these days dancing and feasting is held on the courtyard of the villagers and in return the host entertains the <i>Gurmrak</i> dancers. The festival is concluded with <i>Dapan Tipan</i> i.e. a community feast. The last day of the festival is called <i>Linen</i>. During this festival certain taboos in respect of cutting trees, catching fish, ploughing, burning jungles, eating vegetables cooked with oil etc., are observed.</p> <p><i>Porag</i></p> <p>Porag is another important festival. For the smooth functioning of this festival the <i>Mimbir Yame</i> i.e youth organization of the Misings make necessary arrangements. They do it in a formal and systematic manner called <i>Daglik</i>. The <i>Murong</i> is renovated. Large quantities of food and drink are arranged much in advance. The host village invites the villagers from neighbouring Mising villages who also participate in singing and dancing. A <i>Miboo</i> is appointed who conducts the prayer to <i>Chedi Melo</i> and <i>Donyi Polo</i> etc. <i>Poro Apong</i> and pork are essential items for this festival. At least 4/5 pigs are sacrificed</p>
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and grand feast arranged where all the villagers participate. At night the *Miboo* leads the dancing and for three days the whole village celebrates with feast and dance. The women folk in their traditional dresses take part in dancing and singing along with the rhythmic beating of drums. The festival comes to an end with a prayer dance known as *Ponu Nunam*.

*Amrok*

the Misings also observed a festival called *Amrok*. Every household observes the *Amrok* festival where food prepared out of harvested crop is offered to the ancestors. The festival is observed on community basis also. Feast with *Apin Apong*, pork and chicken is arranged. After the feast the youths perform *Pakso Monam* dances along with the tune of *Oi Nitam*. During festival obligations are offered to the malevolent deities (*Uram Kusung*).

8.	Rabhas	The Pati Rabhas of Boko and South Goalpara areas are Hinduised and call themselves Vaisnavas. A large section of the tribe has converted to Christianity. The Pati Rabhas observe the <i>Rangali Bihu</i> and <i>Bhogali Bihu</i> . They speak the Assamese language. They observe <i>Langa Puja</i> . The Rangdani and Maitori groups offer <i>Baikho</i> or <i>Khoksi</i> puja, a festival celebrated to propitiate <i>Baikho</i> the goddess of Wealth and Prosperity.
9.	Singphos	The Singphos are followers of Buddhism. Every year on 14 <sup>th</sup> February they celebrate the day as <i>Sopong yong manau poi</i> .
10.	Sonowal Kachari	<p>The Sonowal Kachari observes the Three types of Bihu – <i>Rongali Bihu</i>, <i>Kati Bihu</i> and <i>Magh Bihu</i>. Some other festivals which they perform during the year are <i>Bhur Utua</i>, Tithis of Sankardeva, Madhavdeva and Lila Kanta Goswami, <i>Laksmi Tola Sabha</i>, <i>Kheti Utha</i> or <i>Chengeli Machor Sabah</i>, <i>Bali Sabah</i>, etc.</p> <p><i>Rangali Bihu</i></p> <p>It is celebrated on the <i>Sangkranti</i> of <i>Chait</i> and continues for a fortnight. Considered as a traditional community festival, the occasion is marked with great joy and merriment. Young boys and girls dance in separate groups along with the beating of drums and pipes. During the festival the entire village is astir with festive fervour.</p>
11.	Tai Phakes	The Tai- Phakes are followers of Buddhism. They celebrate <i>Poi Changkan</i> . They also celebrate other festivals like <i>Poi- Khowa</i> , <i>Poi- Okwa</i> , <i>Poi-Kithing</i> , <i>Mike- sumphai</i> , <i>Kham Sang</i> and <i>Poi-</i>

		<i>Leng.</i>
12.	Tiwas	<p>The Tiwas living in the plain districts of Nagaon and Morigaon districts of Assam are mostly assimilated to the fellow Assamese way of life. Vaisnavism has taken a deep root among them . The <i>Naamghar</i> has also made its appearances in the villages. The traditional culture is however not extinct. This is reflected in the socio- religious beliefs and practices specially among them. . Lord Mahadev is the supreme deity and there are <i>thans</i> ( public worshipping place) where pujas are held with sacrifice of fowls and animals.</p> <p><i>Bichu</i> is a festival centering around agriculture. They celebrate three types of <i>Bichus</i>-which they call as <i>Boisaak bichu, Maakh Bichu and Kaati Bichu</i> corresponding to the three Bihus celebrated in Assam. The famous <i>Jon Beel mela</i> near Jagiroad is held in January and provides traditional barter facilities.It is an attractive feature of the <i>Maakh Bichu</i>.</p> <p>The <i>Gossain Uluwa Utsav</i> is an important part of the <i>Boisaakh Bichu</i> festival.</p> <p>Another festival celebrated by the Plain Tiwas is the <i>Barat festival</i>. In order to appease God, Brat or fasting is observed by the womenfolk , at the end of which a festival is arranged to culminate the occasion.</p> <p>The institutions of <i>Rajas (Poali raja)</i> has survived. Every year the Raja( Gobha raja) is honoured publicly.</p>

Table-VI

## Traditional Institutions among different Communities and Tribes of Assam

Sl. No.	Name of Community/Tribe	Traditional Institutions
1.	Bodo	<p data-bbox="787 667 982 703"><i>Raijani Bokhri</i></p> <p data-bbox="787 751 1461 1115">It is the common granary which is present in almost all villages. This common village granary is nurtured by the collective contribution of households by means of kind. During lean period the grain is loaned to needy members against a nominal interest rate. It is a cooperative institution of an indigenous form.</p> <p data-bbox="787 1163 1006 1199"><i>Raijani Metheng</i></p> <p data-bbox="787 1247 1461 1444">It is the traditional village panchayat which solves different issues like theft, assault, quarrels, land partition disputes, and problems arising due to breaking of customary law.</p> <p data-bbox="787 1493 868 1528"><i>Saori</i></p> <p data-bbox="787 1577 1461 1717">This word in Bodo- Kachari language means rendering physical labour on invitation of a co villager during times of need.</p>

2.	Deoris	<p>The Dibangiya and Barganya sections of the tribe have maintained their traditional language same.</p> <p><i>Sariya Mata</i></p> <p>An organisation which renders assistance to fellow villagers by way of providing service is present among the Deories. Also present are the <i>Morungghar</i> and <i>Mel</i>.</p>
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3.	Dimasa Kacharis	<p>The Dimasa Kacharis have a strong clan organisation. They have both patrilans and matrilineans. The Patrilans are called as <i>sengphong</i> and the matrilineans are called as <i>jaddi</i> or <i>julu</i> . The patri and matrilineans in the Dimasa society regulates the social behaviour of the members of the society. Marriage and inheritance follow clan rules.</p> <p><i>Salis</i>( Village Council)</p> <p>It is the traditional village level governing institution. . It has a traditional headman called as <i>Khunang</i> who along with several elders look after the welfare of the villagers by performing both executive and judicial activities.</p> <p><i>Nodrang</i> ( Bachelors Dormitory)</p> <p>Earlier the youths had to undertake armed fights against enemies of their villages. .Its activities over the years have changed. Now it is concerned with economic and social activities in the village.</p> <p><i>Hangsao</i></p> <p>The Institution of <i>Hangsao</i> present among the Dimasas assist the villagers during sowing in the <i>Jhum</i> fields and plantation in the paddy fields. They take a nominal charge from the families after the crops are harvested.</p>
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4.	Karbi	<p>Existence of some traditional institutions is seen among the Karbis although in the present day context many of these institutions have lost its relevance. These institutions concern the social, political and economic life of the people.</p> <p><i>Me and Mepi</i></p> <p><i>Me</i> is the village council which settles the inter-village problems. The council is presided over by the <i>Sarrthe</i> (the village headman) <i>Rongthe</i> (in the Dimoria Longri) and all the adult males are members (<i>Chakris</i>) of the council. In the Dimoria Longri, the headman is called <i>Bangthe</i>, a term used as the synonym of <i>Sarrthe</i>. The <i>Mei</i> plays an important role in regulating the socio-economic and religious life of the village. <i>Mepi</i> is the greater council presided over by the <i>Habai /Bangthe</i> (in the Dimoria Longri) who is a high officer than a <i>Sarthe</i>.</p> <p><i>Kerung Amie</i></p> <p>The Karbis also have a traditional economic Institution called <i>Kerung Amie</i> which is like a grain bank. This system gives sustenance to poor Karbi households during time of adversity. Karbi households can take loan in the form of paddy from the bank and return the same later to the bank with a nominal rate of interest. There are three types of grain banks which are managed by the community.</p>
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In one such type, the grain bank is maintained by the youths of the village. The youths are allotted a plot of land for cultivation by the community. They cultivate the paddy and loan it to needy persons of the community. Similarly, the elderly males of the Karbis also manage a grain bank. They cultivate the paddy in a plot of land which is given to them by the community for this purpose.

*Jirkedang* (Youth Dormitory)

The unmarried male members of the Karbi society are the members of the youth dormitories. It is an institution of social work and performs social work in the village. During the festival of *Rongker*, and *Chomangkan* the members take active part. It is to be noted that in the plains areas outside Karbi Anglong district, *Zirkerdam* is not found. In such areas the *Risomel* or the youth club serves almost the same purpose as *Zirkerdam*

6.	Miris or Misings	<p>The Miris or Misings have undergone tremendous changes in their society but we find that they have been able to preserve most of their traditional cultural trait. Vaisnavism has entered Mising society. Material culture of the Mising tribes has undergone changes due to their close contact with non tribal communities. Some of the villages in Bokaghat district have completely lost the Mising language and now speak the Assamese language.</p> <p><i>Kebang</i></p> <p>The village Panchayat consisting of village elders which plays an important role in the socio- cultural and religious matters within a village.</p> <p><i>Bane Kebang</i></p> <p>This is a bigger Body then the Kebang and decides cases involving two or more villages. A jury helps in deciding the cases.</p> <p><i>Morung</i> ( Bachelor Dormitory)</p> <p><i>Mimbir Yame</i> : A traditional institution, the literal meaning of the term is ‘ young women and men’. Unmarried boys and girls above the age of 12-13 are members of this organisation. Discipline and tribal etiquette are taught by the members. They also offer social work in the village.</p>
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## 1. People of Assam

## 1.1.Introduction

Assam falls in one of the great migration routes of mankind and over the ages there have been waves of migration of diverse groups. The possible routes of migrations are: the northern passes of Bhutan, Tibet and Nepal, Assam- Burma routes on the eastern side, the valleys of the western side formed by the Brahmaputra- Gangetic plains and the sea route, by Bay of Bengal via Bengal and Burma (Choudhury, N.D., 1985, pp. 25-26). The migration which started thousands of years ago is continuing till present day.

## 1.2.Early Migrations

As we trace the background of the people inhabiting Assam, we find literature referring to the earliest settlers. There is the mention of the *Kiratas*, *Cinas*, *Nishada*, and other tribes. When the Vedic Aryan people came to Assam, they encountered these communities. The literatures of ancient times also have some references about the physical features and skin colour of the people. Some anthropologists have used the term *Nishada* to denote the Australoids. The *Kiratas* were also mentioned in the ancient literatures. In The Ramayana, Mahabharata, and the Kalika Purana, references have been made to their yellow skin colour. These people were occupying the different regions of the Himalayas and the northeastern part of India. The *Kiratas* were regarded as Mongoloid people. The term 'Kirata' was first mentioned in the Yajurveda. The first ruler of ancient Kamarupa was Mahiranga Danav. He was a *Kirata*. The other rulers like Hatak Asur, Sambar Asur and Ratna Asur were also *Kirata* rulers and their subjects were all *Kiratas*. These ancient rulers were of Mongoloid origin.

Anthropologists from detailed studies of the population of this region have come to the conclusion that tribes of Assam are Mongoloid in origin. There are also some Australoid ethnic traits among them. The Australoids are regarded as the earliest settlers of Assam. They were followed by the Mongoloids. The Austric speech –family was associated with the Australoids and their descendents. The Khasis of Meghalaya belong to this linguistic group.

The Mongoloid tribes of North east India are categorized under the Khasis, Boro, Lushai-Kuki, Naga, Arunachal tribes and “Others” on the basis of one or the other factors like linguistic affinity, cultural similarity, common territory and biological closeness. The Boro form one of the most important tribal groups in Assam and belong from a very early period. (Das. 1987, pp.43).

The Mongoloids of northeast India are mostly speakers of the Tibeto-Burman languages. These languages have their origin in southwest China. These people at different times came from different directions and migrated to the hills and valleys of north east India. S.K. Chatterjee suggests, “It seems quite probable that long before 1000 B.C., some of these early Tibeto –Burmans had penetrated within the frontiers of India, either along the southern slopes of the Himalayas, or by way of Tibet”( cited in Das. B.M., 1987, pp. 43).

After the Mongoloids, came the Caucosoids. Their migration occurred in several waves. The Indo – Aryans and Irano -Scythians were preceded by the Mediterranean and Alpino-Armenoids in this region.

### **1.3.Later Migrations**

Another series of migration of people took place in Assam after it came under British rule. After the British annexed Assam in 1826, large number of people started migrating to Assam to meet the growing need of human resource for running the British administration. As tea cultivation began to be started in 1836, a large group of people from different parts of India were brought to work as tea labourers. Started in 1853, migration of tea garden labourers on a large scale took place since 1860. This continued till 1937, the number falling low after 1931, by which time the tea garden labourers numbered 10 lakhs in Assam. (Census of India, 1961, Assam, General Report, as cited in Saikia, etal., 2003, preface). The Tea tribes who form an important part of the culture of the state consist of a number of individual tribes who have been given the nomenclature of ‘Tea Tribe’.

The next stream of migration started with Muslim peasants coming from the then East Bengal districts of Mymensingh, Pabna, Bogra, and Rangpur. It was in the beginning of the 1900s that people migrated from erstwhile East Bengal started inhabiting the *chars* of the Brahmaputra River. They came first to the district of Goalpara from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in the subsequent two decades they occupied lands in Nowgong, Kamrup (the then Brahmaputra sub – division) and Darrang. By 1931 most of the wastelands of the Brahmaputra valley was under their occupation. By 1941, they settled down in North Lakhimpur district. They at present form a significant proportion of the state's population.

The third stream of migration consisted of Bengali Hindus refugees mostly from the then Sylhet district to the adjoining areas of present Assam during the partition of the country. After independence also, this flow of people continued.

In Assam, another stream of migration took place with the advent of the Nepali graziers who from the beginning of the twentieth century started settling in the uncultivated and unowned hill slopes.

#### **1.4.The present population of Assam**

##### **3.4.1 Introduction**

Assam is a meeting place of different groups of people who over the centuries have come and settled down. Over times, admixture has taken place between different members of two groups. Centuries of living side by side with each other has resulted in the fusion of both cultural and physical traits resulting in the growth and development of a composite culture which is unique to Assam. Contemporary Assam is now home to a group of communities belonging to different tribes, castes, language and religion.

The people of Assam can be viewed from the perspective of religion, tribes, and Castes. According to the Census figures of 2011 A.D., the total population of the state is 31,205,576 of which 15,939,443 are male and 15,266,133 are female. This includes the populations of the hill districts, Barak valley and the Brahmaputra valley. The People of India project has studied 115 of the ethnic groups in Assam. 79 (69 percent

identify themselves regionally, 22( 19 percent) locally and 3 transnationally. Forty five languages are spoken by different communities including three major language families: Austro Asiatics(5), Sino-Tibetan(24), and Indo European (12). Three of the spoken languages donot fall in these families. On both side of the Brahmaputra, Assamese language is spoken by about twenty million people.

### 3.4.2 Different Religious Communities

From the religious point of view, the majority of the people in the state practice Hinduism. They account for 61.5 percent of the total population of the state. In Assam, in general practice, two broad categories of Hindu castes are recognized. These are the ‘Bamun’ (Brahmin) and the ‘Sudir’ (Sudra: non- Brahmin). The Sudir group includes several castes of different hierarchical positions. (Das. B.M. 1987, p.12) . The Sudirs are sub-divided into several castes such as Kalita, Kayastha, Ganak, Kaibarta, Hira, Kumar, Jogi, Keot, etc.( Dutta, 2001, PP. 105). There is another classification by the Government , which has also identified 15 numbers of Scheduled Castes Communities in the State, they are 1. Bansfor, 2. Bhuinmali, Mali, 3. Brittial Bania, Bania, 4. Dhupi, Dhubi, 5.Dugla, Dholi, 6.Hira,7. Jalkeot, 8. Jhalo,Malo, Jhalo-Malo, 9. Kaibortha Jalia, 10. Lalbegi, 11. Mahara, 12. Mahtar, Bhangi, Muchi, Rishi, 13. Namasudra, 14. Patni, 15. Sutradhar. The Scheduled Caste Population of the state constitute 7.2 percent of the total population of Assam .

The Scheduled Castes community in Assam are not concentrated in specific pockets and they are interspersed. Agriculture is the mainstay of the majority of the Scheduled Castes in Assam. The Kaibortha , Namasudra and Jalkeots have to depend on fishing. Pottery and goldsmithy are the important occupation of the Hiras and Banias.

The urban dwellers like the Bansfor, Muchis, Bhangis, Mahtar and Maharas have to switch to other professions because of the changing socio-economic situation.

Muslims is the second largest religion in Assam .There is a significant population of Muslim people in the state. According to 2011 census, 34.22 percent of the population

of Assam are Muslims. Assam came into contact with Muslims since the early part of the thirteenth century with the first Muslim invasion of Assam. There were several invasions over the centuries which were thwarted by the different rulers of Assam at different times. The Muslims soldiers did not return to their native land. Instead they stayed back and married local women and became a part of this region. During the Ahom rule, many Muslim artisan families were invited by the Ahom rulers to come to Assam and settle here. A Muslim saint Hazarat Milan, popularly known as Azan Fakir came to Assam in the middle of the seventeenth century. He promoted Muslim religion in Assam. Many local people converted to Islam because of his influence. There has been a slow incorporation of Muslims into Assam over a long period of time. The traditional Assamese Muslim community includes the descendents of the Muslim soldiers, the artisan families, Muslim preachers and the local converts. To add to the Muslim population in Assam are the *Char* dwellers who inhabit the thousands of *Char* and *Chapories* or the sand bars of the rivers of Assam.

The Christian community of Assam accounts for 3.7 percent of the state's population. With the coming of the British and American Missionaries, Christianity in the Assam developed after the establishment of the British regime in 1826. The first missionaries to arrive in this region were sent by the Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Mission, who was followed by the American Baptists. They were the pioneers in the field of education in this region. They established churches, schools and hospitals. In Assam, large number of people especially belonging to the tribal communities converted to Christianity. There are also followers of Christianity from other communities in the state.

Assam's relationship with Buddhism is an ancient one. K. Burah Gohain (1946) suggests that Buddhism was brought to Assam (earlier known as Kamarupa) from Eastern India. (cited S.Sasanananda, 1986, pp. 23). During the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., Buddhism was introduced into Kamarupa by Thera Dhitika and it widely spread here by the efforts of the renowned Brahmin, Siddha who had converted to Buddhism (S.Sasanananda, 1986, p. 101.) Buddhism again showed resurgence during the reign of Kumar Bhaskar Varman. Although Bhaskar Varman was a follower of Hinduism,

he showed great reverence to Buddhist teachings. It was during his reign that the famous Chinese monk Hiuen Tsang visited Kamarupa. Discovery of relics of Buddhist temples from different parts of Assam indicates that the religion was in prevalence during bygone age. The present group of people belonging to the Tai community brought Buddhism with them when they came to Assam. In different parts of Assam, we find the members of the Tai stock living and adhering to their Buddhist tradition and culture. The Singphos, Tai Khamtis, Tai Phakes, Khamyangs, Aitonias, Turungs, are followers of Buddhism and are concentrated in certain pockets of the state. According to 2011 census the state has a population of 0.2 percent who follow Buddhism.

The Assamese Sikhs form a distinct entity in the state. They are presently concentrated in a village called as Borkhola in Nagaon district, although members of the community are scattered in different parts of the state. They are the descendents of the Sikh soldiers who came to Assam to aid the Ahom rulers to fight against the Burmese invaders. Many of the soldiers settled in the state and married local women and in course of time became an indispensable part of Assam. According to 2011 census, 0.1 percent of the states population are followers of Sikhism. Beside the above religious groups, there is a small community of followers of Jainism in Assam.

### 3.4.3 The Tea Community

The Tea Tribe consist of people belonging to different communities and accounts for 25 percent of the population of the state. They form an integral part of Assam. The Tea industry depend on a strong labour force, and as such the British brought thousands of workers from the Chhotanagpur region covering the states of Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, and also from West Bengal ,Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The term ‘tea tribe’ in fact includes different groups of communities .There are as many as 96 castes/tribes in the Central List of Other Backward castes (OBCs) for the State of Assam falling under the description as “Tea Garden Labourers, Tea Garden Tribes, Ex-Tea Garden labourers & Ex-Tea Garden Tribes”. They are distributed in almost all the districts of Assam. Their population is significant in the districts of Sonitpur, Jorhat, Golaghat, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Tinsukia and Lakhimpur. They are also found

in the districts of Darrang and the Barak valley regions. The Bodo Territorial Area District( BTAD) also has a significant percentage of the population.

As observed by Bhuiya (1960) , these people belong from three different linguistic groups. They are kolarian speaking, eg., the Munda, Ho, Santal and the Kharia, Dravidian speaking groups, e.g., the Oraon, Kondh, Gond, and Malpharia, and the Groups speaking Oriya, Bengali and Hindi (cited Kar, 1997, pp. 162). After they came to Assam, they started settling in a new socio-economic environment which was very different from their original home. Although they belong from different linguistic groups in the tea plantations, they share a common lingua franca, which is called as *Cha Bagichar Ahamiya*( Sadani), i.e., ‘ Assamese of tea garden’ (cited in Kar. 1997, pp. 165). They are regarded as part and parcel of Assamese society. In this context, Saikia (1982) suggests the term *Chah Bagichar Asamiya*, ie., ‘ The Assamese of Tea Garden’ for them( cited Kar., 1997, pp. 167)

#### 3.4.4 The *Char* Dwellers

The bed of the Brahmaputra has formed innumerable river islands locally called as *chars* or *chaporis*. These *chars* or *chaporis* vary greatly in size , shape and physical vulnerability. Most of the chars are temporary or semi- temporary and only a few are permanent. Due to this reason, the inhabitants of the *chars* seldom have a permanent address and have to change residence several times. The people living in the *char* and *chaporis* lead a river centric life. Their livelihood, society and culture are profoundly influenced by the river.

Centering the river Brahmaputra there are around two thousand *chars* in Assam which are habitable. Besides, the Mising, Deoris, Kaibarrtas , these islands are inhabited by the Muslim cultivators who immigrated into Assam from East Bengal, the Nepalees immigrating from Nepal, the Hindu refugees and small numbers of people from Bihar and Bengal . The majority of the *char* dwellers are followers of Muslim religion and their population is estimated to be around thirty lakhs people. These people are given different names like *Pamua Musalman*( the Farming Muslim), *Na- Asamiya*(Neo-Assamese)*Charua Musalman*( the Muslims of the river Islands or banks). They occupy the *chars* of Dhubri, Barpeta, Nalbari, Kamrup, Morigaon, Nagaon, Darrang, Sonitpur,

etc. On the other hand, the Misings, Deori and Kaibbartas are found in the *Char-chaporis* of Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, etc.

#### 3.4.5 The Tribes in the Plain districts

Assam is home to a diverse groups of tribes who have given colour and vibrancy to the state's culture . The Government of India has given Scheduled Tribe status to various communities in both the hills and Plains of the state. The total Scheduled Tribe population according to 2011 census stands as 3,884,371 of which 3,665,405 are from rural areas and 218,966 are from urban areas. The Scheduled tribe population accounts for 12.41 percent to total population of the state. There are altogether fifteen numbers of Scheduled Tribes (Hill) and fourteen Scheduled Tribes (Plain) having distinctive culture, language, folkways, legal system, religious belief and practices, and are at various stages of development socially, educationally and economically. The Scheduled Tribes, both plains and hills are distributed in all the 32 districts of the state. The plain tribes are found in the plain districts and the hill tribes are concentrated mainly in the hill districts of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills. The following is the list of the Scheduled Tribes in Assam-

In the autonomous Districts: 1. Chakma, 2. Dimasa, Kachari , 3. Garo ,4. Hajong, 5.Hmar, 6. Khasi, Jaintia, Synteng, Pnar,War, Bhoi, Lyngngam,7. Any Kuki Tribes, 8. Lakher, 9. Man (Tai Speaking) , 10. Any Mizo (Lushai) tribes, 11. Mikir, 12. Any Naga Tribes, 13. Pawi, 14. Syntheng,15. Lalung

In the state of Assam excluding the autonomous districts: 1. Barmans in Cachar ,2. Boro, Borokachari, 3. Deori, 4. Hojai, 5. Kachari, Sonowal ,6. Lalung, 7. Mech ,8. Miri, 9. Rabha, 10. Dimasa, 11. Hajong, 12. Singhpoh, 13. Khampti, 14. Garo.

Although , the population of the Brahmaputra valley, The Barak Valley and the Hill districts of Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao constitute the people of Assam, yet for the convenience of the study the culture and society of the people of the Brahmaputra valley has been taken as the focus of this study.

The Brahmaputra valley is the meeting ground of diverse linguistic and racial groups. The valley is home to both tribal and non tribal communities. The Bodo also called as Boro or Boro Kacharis is a branch of the great Bodo Group of the Indo-Mongoloid family. Regarded as one of the earliest settlers of this region, this group of people had their original habitat in Tibet or China. The Bodos are scattered throughout Northeastern India. There are some small Bodo pockets outside India like in Burma, Nepal, and Bhutan. The state of Assam is the main adobe of the Bodos. Their main concentration is now on the northern bank of the river Brahmaputra starting from Dhubri to Dhemaji district in the east. District wise they have a sizable population in Bongaigaon, Nalbari, Barpeta, Darrang, Goalpara, Dhubri and Kamrup apart from newly constituted Kokrajhar, Baska, Chirang and Udalgiri districts of Bodoland Territorial Area District. They also inhabit the regions of Nagaon, Karbi Anglong and Golaghat districts. Bodo is regarded as a generic term and different names are used to designate them. In Bengal and in Nepal, they are known as Meches. In Upper Assam they are identified as Sonowal Kachari, while in the western Assam, they are more popularly known as Boro or Boro- Kachari. In the Southern districts of North Cachar and Cachar they are designated as Dimasa and Barmans respectively (Bordoloi.B. N, et al., 1987, pp. 1).The Boro or Boro Kachari according to 2011 census is the largest tribe of Assam with a population of 1,361,735 persons.

The Mising of Assam previously known as Miris is the second largest group of Scheduled Tribe (Plains) of Assam. The term 'Miri' was given to them by the plain people and the tribe prefer to call themselves as Mising. Their population according to 2011 census is 6,80,424 persons. They are mainly concentrated in the riverine areas of Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, Dhemaji, Jorhat, Golaghat, Sonitpur and Tinsukia districts of Assam. Originally, they were hill dwellers and lived along with the Abors of Arunachal Pradesh. They migrated to the plains of Assam before the reign of the Ahom kings and began settling in the riverine areas of the Brahmaputra and Subansiri rivers. They migrated to the Brahmaputra valley from an area upstream of the Dihong river(Sharma

Thakur. G.C., 1972,pp.2). They belong to the Tibeto Burman family of the Mongoloid group.

The Rabhas are one of the Scheduled Tribes in the plains districts of Assam. They are widely scattered, but mostly concentrated in the districts of Goalpara, Kamrup and Darrang. Besides Assam, their distribution spreads over Meghalaya, Bangladesh, Nepal, West Bengal, Manipur etc. According to 2011 census, their population is 296,189. There are divergent views by different scholars regarding the ethnic individuality of the tribe, its original place of abode, and the relationship with other tribal groups. Rev. S. Endle had shown seven 'sub-tribes' of the Rabhas such as 'Rangdaniya', 'Maitoriya', 'Pati', 'Koch', 'Bitliya', 'Dahuriya' and 'Sangha'. (Bordoloi.B. N, et al., 1987, pp. 129).The Pati section of the tribe shows great Hindu influences and the impact of acculturation is more prominent amongst them. Numerically the Rangdanis are well represented in western Goalpara. The Maitoris are numerically less in Assam than the Rangdanis and is concentrated in western Meghalaya. The Dahuri group is found in north Goalpara and the Totlas in north Kamrup area and in the northern belt of Darrang District particularly around Rowta, Udalguri and Hugrajuli.

The Sonowal Kacharis is one of the important plain tribes of Assam. They are distributed in the districts of Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, Jorhat and Golaghat. The Sonowal Kachari has a population of 2,53,344. They belong to the great Bodo group. The Sonowal Kachari believes that they are the descendents of Bhaskarbarman, Narakasur, Ban, Bhagadatta, Hirimba, Ghototkos, Bhim, Prahlad and Bali. Regarding the origin of the name 'Sonowal', it is opined that the Kacharis who used to collect gold or 'son' from the bank of the Subansiri came to be known as Sonowal Kacharis.

The Tiwas, earlier referred to as Lalungs are one of the major ethnic groups in Assam. According to Tiwa language, 'Ti' means 'water' and 'Wa' means 'great'. The origin of the tribe is shrouded in mystery. It is said that while migrating to Assam, they followed the course of the Brahmaputra and introduced themselves to others as Tiwa. They were called as Lalung by the non Tiwas. The Karbis called those people as Lalungs who

were living on the South bank of the Brahmaputra. 'La' means water and 'lung' means rescued. The river Brahmaputra gave shelter to this people; hence, they came to be called as Lalung. They are a branch of the Bodo group and belong ethnically to the Mongoloid stock. The Tiwas are mostly concentrated in Nagaon, Morigaon and Karbi Anglong districts of Assam. Besides these, there are a few other Tiwa villages in Dhemaji, Sonitpur, Jorhat and Kamrup districts. In respect of habitats, the present day Tiwas can be divided into two viz., Plains and Hill Tiwas, the latter being able to preserve their traditional life and culture. The topography and ecology of the plains and hills have influenced the Tiwas considerably. Certain aspects of socio-cultural life of the Hill Tiwas have become distinct from that of the Plains Tiwas. The Hill Tiwas have been able to maintain many of their traditional characteristics. The Plain Tiwas are settled cultivators where as the Hill Tiwas still resort to *Jhum* system or Terrace cultivation. According to 2011 census, the population of the Tiwas in the plains is 1,82,663.

The Garos have received the status of Scheduled tribes both in the hills and Plains of Assam. In the plain region they are distributed in Kamrup, Goalpara and Dhubri districts of the Brahmaputra valley. The Garos call themselves as Achik Mande meaning 'HillMan'. They belong to the Mongoloid race, and are from the Tibeto Burman families of the Bodo linguistic group. According to 2011 census, their population in the plain is 1,36,077. The Garos follow the matrilineal family structure. They trace their lineage through females.

Another riverine community of Assam is the Deori tribe .They are one of the fourteen Scheduled Tribes ( Plains) of Assam. The original adobe of the Deori was on the banks of the river Kundilpani at Kundil, presently known as Sadiya . In the census of 1901, it is mentioned that the banks of the Kundilpani river is the ancient habitation of the Deoris. Brown In the book 'Deori Chutiya Grammar' (1837) observes that the Deories had their original habitation on the bank opposite to Sadiya. ( cited Deori .S, 2013,pp.11).

They are ethnically affiliated to the Tibeto Burman tribes of northeast India. The term 'Deori' means the 'off springs of God and Goddess'. They were regarded as the Levite or priestly body and functioned as the priests of the Chutiyas of Assam (Deori. 2002, pp.16). The Deories are also known as *Jimochanya*. The Deories had come from China and Mongolia in the distant past. From there, they migrated to Kundil or Sadiya and then moved to several places like Manas Sarovar, Lhasa, banks of the Swati Sarovar and Tsangpo and finally settled in Sadiya and Jaidam. These people settled on the valleys of the Brahmaputra and other areas. Later they settled on the bank of the rivers Dibang, Tengapani and Patorsal, at present within the jurisdiction of Arunachal Pradesh and Sadiya Chapakhoa Sub Division of Tinsukia District of Assam. Their present habitation is spread in the riverine areas of Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat, Tinsukia and Sonitpur and Golaghat districts of Assam. As per 2011 Census their total population is 43750.

The Dimasa Kachari constitutes one of the major tribal groups of Assam and is an important ethnic group in the autonomous hill districts and also in the plain districts of Assam. In the plains they have a population of 19,702. Linguistically, the Dimasa belong to the Boro group of Tibeto-Burman family. The tribal meaning of the word 'Dimasa' is 'son of a big river'. 'Di' means 'water', 'Ma' means 'big' and 'Sa' means 'son'. There are several opinions regarding the origin of the name Dimasa. As the Brahmaputra is the biggest and longest river in Assam, it is presumed that the Dimasas consider themselves to be the descendents of the Brahmaputra. Another section of scholars opine that the Bodos came to be known as Dimasa after they established their capital at Dimapur on the bank of the river Dhansiri. In Dimasa, the river Dhansiri is called as 'Dima'. Till recent years, the Dimasa Kacharis were also known as Hill Kacharis as they prefer to live in hilly areas. Before the advent of the Ahoms in the thirteenth century, the Kachari kingdom was extended along the south bank of the Brahmaputra from the Dikhou River to Kolong River. It included the Dhansiri valley.

The Singphos in Assam has a population of 2,342. The Singphos belong to the Tibeto Burmese language group of the Mongoloid stock. According to Singpho tradition, the Singphos migrated to this region through the Brahmaputra via the Sampo River

between 800-700 B.C. There are several references about the tribe from literature of the medieval times. The four boundaries of the Singpho territory are given in the periodical Arunoday ( cited in Ninkhe, 2013, pp. 18-19) as follows- towards North lies the Brahmaputra, towards East lies Mishmi hills, towards West lies the Patkai mountains and towards South it extends from the mouth of the Na Dihing river to the Burhi Dihing river. The Singphos inhabit around twenty five villages in Margherita region of Tinsukia district. They are also found in the two villages of Dighali and Ouguri in Sibsagar district. The Singphos have been credited to have first introduced the tea plant to the British. Around 1823, Robert Bruce met the Singpho chief called as 'Bisa gam' who showed Bruce the tea plant which was a traditional plant of his family. He also gave Bruce seeds and saplings of the tea plant. This was stated to be the beginning of the tea culture in Assam which the British learnt from the Singphos. Ningroola, from the Singphos was the first person to own tea plantation on the bank of the Burhi Dihing river.

The Khamti tribe of Assam consists of 1,106 persons. The Tai Khamtis migrated to Assam from Bar Khamti (khamti Lung) in Burma during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. First they settled on the bank of the Tengapani River. From there they went to Sadiya and ultimately to Narayanpur. At present the Tai Khamtis inhabit several villages in the Narayanpur region of North Lakhimpur district. They were earlier settled in Sadiya, from where they migrated to the bank of the Dikrong River at Narayanpur.

The Karbis are an important tribe of Assam. They are mainly found in the hill district of Karbi Anglong. They are given the status of scheduled tribe ( H) in Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao districts. A large number of Karbi villages are also found in the plain areas of the state. They are mentioned as Mikir in the constitution order, Govt of India. Although their main concentration is in the Karbi Anglong. In the plains, Karbis live in the districts of Kamrup (M), Morigaon, Nagaon, Golaghat, Sonitpur, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur and Cachar. Racially the Karbi belong to the Mongoloid group and linguistically they belong to the Tibeto- Burman group. They call themselves as 'Arleng'. The Karbis are divided into four groups, namely, Chinthong, Ronghang, Amri and Dumrali. The Karbis believe that their migration to the plains of Assam took place at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

There are several small tribal communities in Assam who follow the Buddhist religion. They are the Turungs, Aitonias, Tai Phakes and Khamyangs.

The Tai Turungs were originally residing on the bank of the river Turung in Burma. From there they migrated to Assam. They are presently found in three villages of Jorhat, two villages in Golaghat and one village in Karbi Anglong district.

There are six villages in Karbi Anglong and three in Golaghat district inhabited by the Aitonias. They came to Assam from Myanmar during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Another small community following the Buddhist faith are the Tai Phakes. At present they inhabit the villages of NamPhake and TipamPhake in Namrup area of Tinsukia. According to historical sources (cited in Ninkhe. R, 2013, pp. 47), the Tai Phakes inhabited the Hukong Valley in the Patkai range of Mountains. From here they had to migrate to other places. Between 1742 to 1850 they had to shift from one place to another in search of proper habitation. In 1777, they came by the river on boat and arrived at Kokilamukh. Here they settled on the bank of the river Disou in Jorhat. In course of time, after several eventful situations they finally settled in Naharkatiya.

The Tai Khamyangs are presently found in Margherita area of Tinsukia district, and in some villages of Jorhat, Golaghat and Sibsagar. During the 16<sup>th</sup> century they were believed to have inhabited the place called as Khamjang Na, in the Patkai range. In course of time they migrated to the Tengapani and Sadiya regions of Assam.

The Ahom community in Assam inhabit the Upper Assam districts of Jorhat, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia, North Lakhimpur, Golaghat, Dhemaji and in certain areas of Nagaon and Sonitpur districts . They are also distributed in small pockets in other parts of the state. The Ahoms belong to the Tai ethnic group of the Mongoloid race. They came to Assam during the early part of the thirteenth century. The kingdom which Sukapha, the first Ahom king of Assam laid down in 1228 continued till 1826 .Within this six hundred years , they have left a rich legacy in the history of this land.

#### 3.4.6 The Vaishnavite Gurus of Assam and Satras

The Birth of Sri Sankardev is an epoch making event in the history of Assam . Sankardev belonged to a leading Bara Bhuyan family. His ancestors were *Siromanis* or overlords of the Bhuyans. During the reign of king Durlabhanarayana, Candivara, the great great grandfather of Sankardeva was given the epitaph , *Devidasa* and also land to settle at a place called Bardowa in Kamarupa. Thus, he along with six other Kayasthas and seven Brahmins migrated to Kamarupa from Gauda. Sankardeva was born in 1449 at Alipukhuri in Bordowa, a rich and bountiful land on the bank of the Brahmaputra. His father's name was Kusumavara and his mother's name was Satyasandha. Both his parents died when he was seven years of age. He was brought up by his grandmother Khersuti. Till the age of twelve years Sankardeva led a carefree life of a young boy spending his days by playing with his friends, catching small animals and birds, and looking after cows in the fields. He was also said to have often swam from one bank of the Brahmaputra to another and back without any aid. He took his early education in a *tol* (educational institution) under the Brahman *pandit*, Mahendra Kandali. After leaving the *tol*, he had to take the responsibility as an administrator by taking the role of the *Siromani Bhuyan*. During this time he got married to Suryavati. Sankardeva along with his administrative and household duties continued with his studies. A daughter was born who was named as Manu or Haripriya. His wife died soon after.

When he was around thirty two years of age, Sankardeva went for his first pilgrimage to different religious places of India like Puri and Benaras. He stayed in these places for several years. This pilgrimage had great influence on his career and was responsible for giving shape to his thoughts and ideas about propagation of the Vaishnava religion. After twelve years, he returned home. He married for the second time to Kalindi. He immersed himself in matters related to religion and held religious discourses with others. Sankardeva started preaching his religion and succeeded in getting many people to his fold.

Sankardeva along with his kinsmen migrated to several places within a short period of time and then settled in Dhuwahat (Majuli). It was at Dhuwahat that Sankardeva met Madhavdeva in 1522. At that time, Madhavdeva was thirty two years and a staunch

believer of Saktism. Initially, he refused to accept the teachings of Sankardeva but was finally convinced by the great man's philosophy. He accepted Sankardev as his Guru and remained a devoted disciple and friend till the end.

Sankardeva's religion gave access to people from all caste and creed. He rendered the Bhagavata purana into simple Assamese songs and verses which could be followed by everyone. Sankardev's popular religion invited the hostility of the Brahmans whose teachings were at stake. He along with his followers had to undergo abuse and pain. During the reign of the Ahom king Suhungmung, Madhavdeva along with Haridev, the son in law of Sankardeva were arrested. While Haridev was executed, Madhavdeva had to live in confinement for six months.

Soon after this incident, Sankardeva, Madhavdeva along with their disciples left Kamrupa and migrated to the Koch kingdom in 1546. During that period, Narayana was the Koch king. He and his brother Chilarai were great patrons of learning. In the Koch kingdom Sankardeva was able to preach his religion and many people became his followers, the chief among them was Bhavananda, later called as Narayana Thakur or Thakur Ata. Narayan Thakur was responsible for conversion of a large number of people into the Neo Vaishnavite fold. From here Sankardeva and his followers changed their residence several times and finally settled in Patbausi. Patbausi formerly known as Bausi is an important Sattra in Barpeta. Sankardeva spent around eighteen to twenty years here. It was here that the Guru made all his major poetical and dramatic works. In Patbausi, Sankardeva met Damodardeva, a Brahman youth who was also a staunch follower of Vaishnavism.

From Patbausi, Sankardeva left for his second pilgrimage to Puri. After this short visit to Puri, Sankardeva returned home and spent his time in holding religious congregation and writing books. Sankardeva wrote the Kirtana Ghosa and rendered the Bhagavata, X. Adi into Assamese verse. These are the two great and popular books of Assam Vaishnava.

Chilarai was a patron of Sankardeva and he was instrumental in building the Bhela or Bheladanga Satra in the Koch capital for Sankardeva. Sankardeva at the request of

Chilarai had a forty yard long piece of cloth woven by the weavers of Tatikuci in Barpeta. This piece of cloth called as the Vrindavani vastra , depicts Krishna's life in Vrindaban.

Sankardeva was a versatile genius who excelled himself in a multitude of talents. He was a social reformer, poet and dramatist, painter, musician and actor in dance drama. He is said to have lived a life of excellent and vigorous health, coupled with purely intellectual and spiritual enlightenment. Sankardeva died in 1568 at Koch Behar at the ripe age of around 120 years.

Sankardeva was succeeded by his disciple Madhavadeva to preach the teachings of the Neo Vaishnavite religion. Like Sankardeva, Madhavdeva was also a Kayastha. Madhavdev was born in 1489 A.D. in a village close to Narayanpur. His father was Govindagiri Bhuyan. Madhavdeva secured his education under Rajendra Adhyapaka at Banduka. Soon, he engaged himself as a small trader and worked for sometimes as a Majumdar under the ruling chief of Banduka. Madhavdev went to Dhuwahat where he met Sankardeva. The ancestors of both Sankardeva and Madhavdeva were Saktas. After his conversion to Vaisnavism; he devoted his life to the services of Sankardev and the dissemination of the Neo Vaishnavite philosophy. After the death of Sankardeva, Madhavdeva stayed for sometimes at Patbausi and then at Sundaridiya where he built a monastery. During the later part of his life, his nephew Ramacarana kept him company and served him. Madhavdeva spent his years by preaching the faith of Sankardeva in Kamarupa. He was a scholar, poet and a singer. He composed the verses for his work, the Namaghosa and the Bhakti-Ratnavali. He spread the teachings of Sankardeva and also stayed at Carabari sands of the Brahmaputra River. He stayed at Tatikuci in Barpeta where another monastery was built. He also stayed at Koch Behar when it was ruled by Laksminarayan, the son of Naranarayana. Here he was welcomed and was able to stay and compose his verses. Madhavdeva died in 1596 A.D. He dedicated his whole life to the service of Sankardeva and the cause of the Neo-Vaishnava movement.

Along with the two great gurus, there were several other individuals who contributed to the growth and development of the Neo- Vaishnavite religion of Assam. Damodaradeva was the son of a Brahmin friend of Sankardeva. He brought many

people under the fold of Vaishnavism. Damodardeva established the Vaikunthapur Satra. His disciples established several satras in different parts of Assam. Haridev was another Vaishnava leader who initiated many followers to the fold of Vaishnavism. He established a satra at Maneri. Damodardeva and Harideva had their own followings and these sects established their own satras. There were also nine Atas or elders who are revered by the followers of Vaishnavism. They are Srirama Ata, Gopaldeva Ata of Bhavanipur, Mathuradasa Budha Ata of Barpeta, Kesavacarana Ata of Bhataukuci, Bar Vishnu Ata of Dhopaguri, Badaluwa Padma Ata, Laksmikanta Ata of Dhopaguri, Govinda or Lecakaniya Ata of Khatara Satra, and Harihara Ata, besides the two Thakurs and grandsons of Sankardeva namely Purusottama and Caturbhuj. Different Satras were established by the twelve apostles, each of Purusottama Thakur and Caturbhuj Thakur, Kanaklata Ai, the wife of Caturbhuj and the sons of Sankardeva's granddaughters and great granddaughters.

Ever since the adoption of Neo Vaishnavite religion in the sixteenth century, Assamese society and culture has undergone a state of Renaissance. The Neo-Vaishnavite movement in Assam propagated by Sri Sankardev and his disciples has left lasting impression on the life and culture of the people of Assam. Sri Sankardev taught a simple creed, which was also called as *ekāsarana nāma-dharma*. The movement initiated during the sixteenth century by Sankardev was carried by his disciples to almost all parts of Assam in the next two centuries and governs the socio-religious lives of the people of Assam. This new religious order stressed on the need to worship a monotheistic deity, Visnu, mainly manifesting as Kṛishna. This is *ekāsarana. Nāma-dharma* is the practice of *nāma*, that is, *śrāvana and kirtana*. (The listening to and the chanting of God's name). It discouraged rituals and is based on simple prayers for everybody to practice. The Institution of Satras and Namghars were established for meeting the religious, spiritual and socio-ethical needs of followers of this order. The Satras established by the Gurus have spread across the length and breadth of Assam and has also touched the neighbouring region of Koch Behar, now in West Bengal. The Satras are cultural centres where literature, painting, Mask making, sculpture, drama, songs, music and dances are practiced and propagated. The *Bargitas* (Great songs) were composed by both Sankardeva and Madhavdeva. The Satras are also storehouses

of ancient manuscripts, religious objects, antiques and other valuables. The satras are classed into four sub –sects, each called as samhati. They are the Brahma- Samhati( The Brahmanical group), The Nika- Samhati( the purist group), the Purusa- Samhati, and the Kala- Samhati. The followers of Damodardeva constitute the Brahma – Samhati group. The Auniati, Dakhinpat, Garamur and Kuruwabahi satras are some satras under this group and during the Ahom reign all these satras enjoyed patronage from the Ahom rulers. The followers of Mathuradas, Padma Ata and others constitute the Nika-Samhati group. The Kamalabari Satra, Barpeta Satra and Madhupur Satra of Koch Behar are the three important institutions under this group. The followers of the grandsons of Sankardeva and their successors are the members of the Purusa Samhati. The Bardowa, Bar-bara-janiya, saru- bara- janiya and Kanaka-bara-janiya groups of satras constitute this community. The followers of Gopala Ata constitute the Kala-Samhati group. Since the days of Sankardeva, the adherents of Neo- Vaishnavite religions have come from different caste or social positions and many professional backgrounds. The benign influence of Neo – Vaisnavism has built a society of tolerance and inclusiveness where the rigidity of caste and creed has become diminished to a great extent.

Table- I

List of food of different communities/ tribes of Assam

Sl.No.	Name of the Community	Food
1.	Assamese	Rice is the staple food of the Assamese people. Fish is a favorite food of the people. <i>Khar</i> , <i>Tenga</i> ( light and Sour Curry), <i>Poita bhat</i> ( cooked rice soaked in water and kept overnight) , <i>Pitika</i> ( boiled and mashed vegetables of different kinds), <i>Jolpan</i> ( <i>Snacks</i> consisting of different kinds served with curd, jaggery,etc) , <i>Pitha</i> ( Rice cakes of different varieties) are some other traditional dishes.

2.	Bodo	<p>Rice is the staple food of the tribe. They eat a variety of vegetables which they grow at home. They also collect wild vegetables from the forest. The Bodos are very fond of meat and fish. Fish is a delicacy. Pork is a favorite food. They dry the flesh of pork which is called as <i>bedor goran</i> . The dried fish which they use is called as <i>na goran</i>. They also use eat duck, goat , pigeon and hen. They have a traditional rice beer known as <i>madh</i> or <i>jau</i>. Another type of dried fish prepared with arum stems and stored in bamboo tubes called <i>napham</i> is a favorite food and can be preserved for two or three years.</p>
3.	Deori	<p>Rice is the staple food of the Deori. They prefer boiled vegetables and eat fowls, pigs , ducks and goats. Fish is an important part of their diet. They drink a kind of rice beer called as <i>Suze</i>. Some of their traditional preparation are <i>Meroku Jubura</i>(curry of roasted rice powder ), <i>Merkuji Jubura</i>(broken rice curry), <i>Miduji Jubura</i>, <i>Ujungon Niyom</i>(curry of bamboo shoot).</p>
4.	Dimasa Kachari	<p>The staple food of the Dimasas is rice. Vegetables from the kitchen gardens , and also cultivated in the jhum fields are eaten. They also collect wild vegetables from the jungle. They are very fond of meat and fish. Dried fish is a delicacy. They drink a rice beer used is called as <i>zou</i>.</p>

5.	Garo	<p>The staple food of the Garos is rice which they eat boiled. They also eat pork and other types of meat. Meat is prepared by boiling it with yam, gourd or pumpkin. They also have a hot and spicy soup called as <i>Baring naikam</i>, which is prepared with kind of dry fish called as <i>Nakham</i>. Some popular Garo dishes are <i>Doo Pura</i>, <i>Doo Kalai</i>, <i>DooKapa</i>, <i>Nakam Bitchi</i>, etc</p>
6.	Karbi	<p>Rice is a staple food of the Karbi people. Their diet also includes <i>Tsophe</i>( black gram lentil)They eat a variety of vegetables, fish and meat. Pork is a favorite food. They use a rice beer called as <i>Horlong</i>. The stronger type of rice beer called <i>Hor arak</i> is also popular. Like the other tribal communities in this region they are also fond of dry fish. <i>Toman</i>( Fermented fish preserved in bamboo pipes) is a delicacy.</p>
7.	Khamti	<p>They eat rice . Their rice cooked in packets of leaves called as <i>Topola Bhat</i> is very popular. They also consume different type of leafy vegetables, edible roots, fish and meat. They have two different types of fish preparation called as <i>Pasom</i> and <i>Pasao</i>. Both these dishes are preserved for future use. They also store dry meat called as <i>Nguhaing</i>. <i>Pokatsang</i> is another special dish prepared with green leaves and kept in bamboo tubes and eaten after one week. Dishes made with potato-yam and fish called as <i>Fak- pasa</i> are specialties.</p>

8.	Mising	Like the other tribes of Assam, rice is the staple food of the Misings. Fish is a favourite food. They also consume preserved fish known as <i>Ngo San</i> . They also eat the flesh of pigs. They eat poultry. Their rice beer is called as <i>Apong</i> .
9.	Rabha	Rice is the staple food of the people. They like various kinds of vegetables. They eat the meat of duck, pig, goat, fowl, etc. they use an indigenous type of rice beer known by various names like <i>Chako, Makham, Sinchina</i> , etc
10.	Sonowal Kachari	Rice is the staple food of the Sonowal Kachari people. They also include lentil and a variety of vegetables in their diet. They also use a special variety of rice, such as <i>komal chaol</i> and <i>Bora chaul</i> which they take with them when they go to the fields for doing the agricultural work.
11.	Singphos	The Singphos are agriculturist and traditionally cultivate tea. Rice is a staple food. They prepare the rice in packets of leaves and these are called as <i>topola bhat</i> . They prepare their food by adding different kinds of green herbs. In their preparation of food, the use of oil is absent or minimal. They eat fish and meat including pork which is a favorite food item. They prepare fish and meat dishes using the bamboo tube ( <i>Supung</i> ), plant leaves ( <i>Kou</i> ), bamboo Skewer ( <i>ping</i> ) and boiling ( <i>Gubang</i> ). Mushroom is also favoured by them. The rice beer used is called as <i>Sapop</i> .

12.	Tiwa	Rice is the staple food of the Tiwas. They eat a variety of vegetables, meat and fish. Pork and chicken are essential items in their menu. They drink a rice beer called as <i>Zu</i> .
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Table-II

Traditional attires of the different Communities/Tribes of Assam

Sl.No.	Name of the Community	Traditional Attire
1.	Assamese	<i>Dhoti, Suriya</i> (Lower garment of the males) <i>Eri Chaddar</i> (shawl), , <i>Mekhela Chador</i> ,( Lower wrapper and Upper wrapper for Females). Other traditional clothes include, <i>Riha, Gamosa</i> , etc
2.	Bodo	The male persons wear a <i>gamcha</i> , which hangs down to the knees of the wearer.In winter they use a <i>Endi</i> wrapper which they call as <i>jumgra</i> or <i>madamni gamcha</i> The Bodo women wear the <i>Dokhana</i> , which is a single piece of cloth covering the wearer from the breast to the ankles. If the <i>Dokhona</i> is plain it is called as <i>sala matha</i> and if it is ornamented it is called as <i>dokhna thawsi</i> . Their favourite and traditional colour is yellow.

	Deoris	The women wear the <i>Igu</i> ( lower wrapper covering the body from the chest to the toes, <i>Jokka Chirba</i> (a piece of cloth encircling the waist), <i>Gatigi</i> (tied around the head), <i>Baiga</i> (long cloth for the upper part of the body) . The Dress of the married women are different then the unmarried girls. The males wear the <i>Iku</i> (long clothes for the waist), <i>Bose</i> or <i>Jema</i> (kind of towel), <i>Deicha</i> ( big clothes), <i>Churu Icha</i> ( small clothes). White, red and green are the dominant colours in their dresses.
3.	Dimasa Kachari	The traditional dress of the Dimasa male consist of the <i>richa</i> ( Towel), <i>chola</i> ( Shirt), <i>cholahula</i> ( overcoat), <i>Gainthou</i> ( Piece of cloth wrapped around the loin), <i>rikausa</i> (Scarf), <i>paguri</i> , <i>Sagaopa</i> ( Turban), and <i>rimchauramai</i> . The women wear the <i>rigu</i> ( lower wrapper), <i>ritap</i> ( <i>endi</i> wrapper) <i>rijamphai</i> , <i>rijamfinaberen</i> , <i>rikaucha</i> ( upper wrappers), <i>rikhra</i> , <i>jinsudu</i> , etc.
	Garos	The traditional attire of the Garos has been replaced by modern clothing. Neverthe less there are some dresses which were worn since earlier times. The traditional dress of a female consists of a lower wrapper and a blouse to cover the upper part of the body. In the winter, they use a shawl to cover the upper part of the body.

4.	Karbi	<p>The Karbis have their own traditional dresses. The male Karbi wear a turban called as <i>Poho</i>, and a <i>dhoti</i> or <i>Rikong</i> made of cotton. They call the shirt as <i>choi</i> and they put on a sleeveless jacket called as <i>Choi-hongtor</i> designed with long fringes called as <i>Abu</i> or <i>Apri</i>. A thick <i>endi</i> silk shawl is worn during the winter season. The women wear a petticoat or <i>Pini</i> designed with white, red and black strips. An ornamental girdle or belt called as <i>Vankok</i> is tied over the petticoat. In the Plains, especially the Dumurali Karbi woman use <i>Paning</i> instead of the lower-part garment called <i>Pini</i>. The upper part of the body is covered with a wrapper called as <i>Jalcho</i>.</p> <p>As accessories, traditional Karbi woman always carries a small bag called <i>Chui</i> and a knife (<i>Noke</i>) with them.</p>
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5.	Khampti	<p>The Khamtis males wear the <i>fa-noy</i> or the <i>lungi</i> . While assembling in the council house or the temple they wear the <i>lungi</i> as a symbol of their national dress.</p> <p>The othe dresses of the male consists of a Shirt or <i>shaw</i>, a Turban or <i>phaho</i>, a lower garment or <i>phanoi</i>, a lower wrapper called as <i>Seleng</i> or <i>phamoi</i> . The dress of the female consists of a short shirt to cover the upper part of the body which is locally called as <i>shoopijing</i>, a Turban or <i>phaho</i>. The garment, which covers the lower part of the body, is known as <i>shin</i>. They also use a red belt called as <i>shasin</i> tied at the waist . They wear <i>Riha</i> or the <i>longwat</i>. It is mandatory for a woman to wear the <i>phaho</i>. Only the married women wear the <i>longwat</i>. The unmarried women wear the <i>shin</i> (mekhela), <i>phamoi</i>(chador) and <i>saisin</i> (belt)</p> <p>The monks wear the <i>Sangkan</i>, a garment which is wrapped around the upper part of the body and the <i>Sangpen</i>, a garment which is worn to cover the lower part of the body. They also wear the <i>Angichet</i> which is a shirt like the vest and a rope called as <i>Sainok koupat</i> which is tied around the waist. The above materials are of saffron colour.</p>
6.	Mising	<p>The traditional dress worn by a Mising woman consist of a wide strip of cloth worn around the waist, extending down to the knees and is called as <i>Sumpa</i>. Around the breast, they wrap a piece of narrow cloth called as <i>Galuk</i>. A small piece of cloth called as <i>Hura</i> is used as a headdress. A narrow piece of extra cloth worn round the hips distinguishes the married women from the unmarried ones. The male dress consists of a narrow strip of cloth called as <i>Kaping</i>.</p> <p>On festive occasions the women wear the <i>Yambo</i>, <i>RiwiGaseng</i> and <i>Ege</i> and the men wear the <i>Miboogaluk</i>, <i>Tangali</i> and <i>Gonroo</i>.</p>

7.	Rabha	The women's traditional dress consist mainly of <i>Rifan</i> , <i>Kambung</i> and <i>Khodabang</i> which are invariably needed for attiring a bride at the time of her marriage. At present they wear <i>Lemphota</i> (lower garment).The male dresses consist of <i>Pajal</i> (dhoti), <i>Pazar</i> ( Neck cloth), <i>Buksil</i> ( shirt), <i>Phali</i> ( handkerchief).
8.	Sonowal Kachari	The Sonowal Kachari women wear the <i>Mekhela Chador</i> and the men wear the <i>Suriya</i> , <i>Dhoti</i> and shirt.
9.	Singpho	The Singphos are expert weavers and almost all members of the community wear hand woven cloth and wear homemade dresses. The Singpho women wear the <i>khakhokhring</i> . They wear a lower garment called as <i>Bukang</i> .They also wear the <i>Nunguat</i> which is tied above the chest.The belt called as <i>Singket</i> is used. They also wear a special dress adorned with silver pieces called as <i>Kumphong Plong</i> . The male folk use a lower garment called as <i>Bupa</i> or <i>Baka</i> and a white turban ( <i>Pham bam</i> ).

10.	Tai Phakes	<p>The dress of the male consists of a woven <i>Lungi</i> called as <i>Fatong</i> which is worn from the waist extending up to the ankle. Shirts and pullovers are purchased from the markets. Old men use a white shirt with long and loose sleeves while going to the temple or to other villages. A white turban called as <i>Fahoho</i> is worn by both the sexes. A white chador called as <i>Fafekmai</i> is worn by the elderly persons when they go to the temples.</p> <p>The dress of the female consists of a lower wrapper called as <i>Chin</i>, which extends up to the portion below the knee joint. On the breast, they use a long striped cloth called as <i>Fanangwat</i>. On the waist a belt called as <i>Chairchin</i> is worn. The unmarried girl wear a white breast cloth called as <i>Fafek</i>. The women wear a white chador when they go out of their villages or to the temple.</p>
11.	Tiwa	<p>The plain Tiwas use dresses similar to those worn by other rural Assamese women. The typical dresses consist of a lower wrapper, and an upper wrapper. On festive occasions they wear <i>Singkhap Mekhela</i>, <i>Riha</i>, <i>Sondia Kapor</i>, <i>Thenus</i>, <i>Seleng</i>, <i>Sakathia</i>, <i>Farke</i>, <i>Mankapor</i>, and <i>Borkapor</i>. The women wear a waistband called as <i>Thongali</i>. The women also wear a wrapper at the breast, which covers their body, and falls below their knee. The Plain Tiwa men wear the dhoti, <i>Nimai Sola</i> and a shirt called as <i>Thagla</i>.</p>

Table-III

Traditional ornaments of the different Communities/Tribes of Assam

Sl.No.	Name of the Community	Traditional Ornaments
1.	Assamese	Ornaments worn on the neck , such as <i>Golpata</i> , <i>Dugdugi</i> , <i>Kerumoni</i> , <i>Jonbiri</i> and <i>Dholbiri</i> , ear pieces like <i>Thuriya</i> , <i>Keru</i> and <i>Loka- paro</i> , Bracelets like <i>Gaam Kharu</i> and <i>Muthi Kharu</i> . In olden times, Male also used to wear elaborate ornaments on their neck, wrist and fingers.
2.	Bodo	The women wear the <i>Khera</i> or <i>Kheru</i> , <i>japkhiring</i> ( ear rings), <i>boula</i> ( for the upper ear ) , <i>Nak phul</i> as nose studs, <i>Chandrahar</i> , <i>Bisahar</i> , <i>Thanka-siri</i> , <i>Jibou-zin-siri</i> , as neck laces and <i>Mutha</i> , and <i>Ashan suri</i> for the hands.
3.	Dimasa Kachari	The elderly Dimasa males earlier used to wear the silver earrings called as <i>Kharih</i> and silver armlets called as <i>Youcher</i> .  The Dimasa women wear a variety of ornaments like <i>Poal</i> ( necklace made of silver pieces and sea shells), <i>Chandrawal</i> ( silver necklace), <i>Rongborsha</i> ( necklace made of silver coins),other neckpieces like <i>Liksim</i> , <i>Likjao</i> and <i>Jongsama</i> . Other ornaments are <i>Khamonthai</i> , (earring of gold), <i>Khamonhai</i> (earring made of silver) <i>Khadu</i> ( silver bracelet) <i>Eansidam</i> ( nose ring), etc.
4.	Garos	There are different types of traditional ornaments like <i>Nadongbinr Sisha</i> , <i>Nadirong</i> , <i>Natapsi</i> ( worn on ears), <i>Jaksan</i> ( bangles), <i>Ripok</i> , (necklaces made of long beads, and sometimes with silver or brass), <i>Sengki</i> ( Waist band ) and <i>Pilne</i> ( ornament worn on the head). The men wear rings called as <i>Jaksil</i> .

5.	Karbi	<p>The Karbi females use a number of ornaments like rings, silver bangles, necklaces (<i>lek</i>) and a kind of heavy bracelet known as <i>roipengkhcms</i>. They use different types of necklaces such as <i>Lek-peng mui</i>( red and blue bead necklace with designed silver pieces), <i>Lek-pengkharra</i>( necklaces made of red beads joined with designed silver pieces), <i>Lek-siki</i> (necklaces made of multi-coloured beads and silver coins), <i>Lek-pingjiri</i> (necklace made of silver), <i>Lek-pil</i> (necklaces made of big beads of orange colour and pieces of eri clothes) , <i>Lek-yaikom</i> (a necklace made of multicoloured beads inserted through three threads), <i>Bon-mala-</i> (necklace made of big-size silver beads).</p> <p>In the traditional society Karbi men folk wore bead necklaces (<i>Lek</i>) and silver bangles (<i>rni</i>).</p>
6.	Rabha	<p>The Rabha women are fond of ornaments which they purchase from the goldsmith. The traditional ornaments which were in use in earlier times are the <i>Namri</i>, <i>Dala</i>, <i>Bola</i> ( for the ears), <i>Hancha</i>, <i>Sukimata</i> (necklace) <i>Rubuk</i>, <i>Reckhop</i> (waistband), <i>San</i>(bangle), <i>Khusumakrang</i> (hairpin), <i>Chasikam</i>(finger ring). <i>Thek</i>, <i>Kuria</i>, <i>Nakputi</i>, <i>Bali</i>, <i>Chelahar</i>, <i>Chandrahar</i>, <i>Sangka</i>, <i>Kantabaju</i>, <i>Thengchela</i> are some ornaments which are worn by the Rabha women nowadays.</p>
7.	Tiwa	<p>The elderly Tiwa women wear silver, bead or stone necklaces and ear rings. Earlier they wore the silver and gold bracelets called as <i>Gamkharu</i>, <i>Sipatmani</i> (necklace), <i>Gotakharu</i> (bracelet) , <i>Sen Patia Angathi</i> (A specially designed ring). The men used to wear <i>Siha</i>( earring made of gold and silver)</p>

Table- IV

Musical Instruments used by the different communities/ tribes of Assam

Sl.No.	Name of Tribe/ Community	Musical Instruments
1.	Assamese	<i>Dhol, Gogona, Pepa</i> ( the horn pipe), <i>Taal, Toka</i> (a piece of bamboo with one part of it split), <i>Xutuli, Khol, Mridanga, Madol, Dotor, Dogor, Baanhi, Nagera, Ektara, bhortala, Doba, bah Jantra, Zuti tala.</i>
2.	Bodo	<i>Kham</i> ( drum), <i>Jotha</i> ( Cymbal), <i>Khawang</i> ( Cymbal bigger than the <i>Jotha</i> ), <i>Siphung</i> ( a long flute), <i>Serja</i> ( four stringed instrument) .
3.	Deori	<i>Durum</i> (drum), <i>Khol, Taka</i> (A bamboo instrument), <i>Pepa</i> (flute), <i>Luguru Kuci, Salmara, Dholtong, Tal, Kah, Samkha, Bin, Ghanta, Suti</i> ( Clapper of bamboo or wood), <i>Singa , Gagana, Bahi, Bin, Tokari,</i> etc

4.	Dimasa Kachari	Dance and music play an important part in their culture. They have the indigenous musical instruments like the <i>Khram</i> (drum), <i>Muri</i> , <i>Muri Wathisa</i> and <i>Suphin</i> (all flute like reed instruments, <i>Khram- Dubung</i> ( a kind of Veena), <i>Pen</i> or <i>Bin</i> ( stringed instrument).
5.	Garo	They have three types of drums . The longer one is called <i>Dama</i> , the shorter one is called as <i>Kram</i> and the smallest one is called as <i>Nadid</i> . They also use a few wind instruments and cymbals of various sizes.
6.	Karbis	The Karbis use a few musical instruments like the drums called as <i>Cheng</i> and <i>Chengbruk</i> . The <i>Cheng</i> is a big drum while the <i>Chengbruk</i> is small in size. They flutes called as <i>Muri</i> , <i>Pangsi</i> , <i>Mri tangpa</i> .
7.	Morans	<i>Sutuli</i> , <i>Dhiting</i> or <i>Dhutong</i>
8.	Meches	<i>Chiphung</i> ( Flute), <i>Serza</i>
9.	Mising	<i>Dumdum</i> (drum), <i>Khartal</i> ( clapper of bamboo and wood), <i>Kakter</i> ( A bamboo instrument), <i>Le:nong</i> of different size and shape called as <i>Marbang</i> , <i>Lolong</i> , and <i>Bali</i> . <i>Lu:pi</i> , <i>Mibu-yakca</i> ( A sword shaped instrument), <i>Rai-Ko-reg</i> , <i>zejuk Tapung</i> (a flute) <i>Gunga</i> or <i>Gung-gang</i> , <i>Pempa</i> , <i>Puli</i> or <i>Kuruli</i> , <i>Dumpag</i> , <i>Dentok</i> . <i>Dendun</i> , <i>Kehkung</i>

10.	Rabha	<i>Umbanggi</i> , (a kind of mouth pipe), <i>Karanal</i> ( a long node less pipe), <i>Natagungglay</i> ( earthen mouth organ), <i>Buburenga</i> (mouth organ made of reed), <i>Badungdwpa</i> (a string instrument made from bamboo tube), <i>Kham</i> (drum), <i>Brangsi</i> (flute), <i>Daidi</i> (gong), <i>Chengchop</i> (cymbal) <i>Gamena</i> (Jews harp), <i>Singa</i> (flute made of buffalo horn), <i>Jhop</i> or <i>Jhap khara</i> ( flute).
11.	Sonowal Kachari	<i>Dhol</i> (drum), <i>Mrdanga</i> , <i>Taka</i> (A bamboo instrument), <i>Hat-taka</i> , <i>Taka- Mari-Taka</i> , <i>Khutital</i> , <i>Bahi</i>
12.	Tai Buddhist	<i>Kong pat</i> , <i>Dhol</i> , <i>Jamtong</i> or <i>Yammong</i> , <i>Jammanlung</i> , <i>Chang-an</i> , <i>Kartak</i> , <i>Techi</i> , flutes like <i>Pi Khao Khai</i> , <i>Tut</i> , <i>Kang-kang</i> , <i>Pirengceo</i> , <i>Pitai</i> , <i>Bin</i> or <i>Ting</i> , <i>Dhetung-tung</i> , <i>Behera</i> .
13.	Tea Tribes	<i>Dhak</i> , <i>Nagara</i> , <i>Madal</i> , <i>Timki</i> (a conical type of drum), <i>Nissan</i> , <i>Dhamsa</i> , <i>dhapla</i> , <i>Vamsa</i> , <i>Dhal</i> , <i>Ravka</i> , <i>Makati</i> , <i>Jhaj</i> , <i>Kartal</i> , <i>Kanshi</i> , <i>Ghungaur</i> , <i>Poiri</i> , <i>Jhutia</i> , <i>Kathimor Danda</i> , <i>Banshi</i> , <i>Pepti</i> , <i>Shahrani</i> , <i>Tirio</i> , <i>Madan Bher</i> , <i>Buang</i> , <i>Banam</i> , <i>Kendora</i> , <i>Tuita</i> .

14.	Tiwa	<p><i>Khrams</i> (drum), <i>Khramba</i> (big Drum), <i>Pisu Khram</i>(small drum), <i>Dogoraa</i> ( resembles a pumpkin in shape and two sticks are used to beat it to produce sound), <i>Kali</i> (pipe) <i>Tandrang</i> (instrument like the violin), <i>Thogari</i>( a Stringed instrument), <i>Thuraang</i> (a long bamboo flute), <i>Paangsi</i> (a small flute), <i>Saraileo</i>, <i>Taka</i>.</p>
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Table- V

Religion and Festival of Different Communities/Tribes of Assam

Sl.No.	Communities/Tribes involved in celebration	Name of the festivals along with a brief description
1.	Assamese	<p>Bihu is a festival associated with the seasons and agriculture. It is a festival which is celebrated by all people from different religion, caste and creed. There are three types of Bihu which includes <i>Rongali Bihu</i> or <i>Bohag Bihu</i>, <i>Bhogali</i> or <i>Magh Bihu</i> and <i>Kati</i> or <i>Kongali Bihu</i></p> <p><i>Rongali Bihu</i> is celebrated on the onset of spring . <i>Kati bihu</i> is celebrated during the Month of October when the granaries are empty . <i>Magh Bihu</i> is celebrated, after the crops are harvested and the granaries are full with grains. People enjoy this festival by feasting on food and drinks.</p>

2.	Bodos	<p><i>Bathou Borai</i> is their supreme God who is symbolized by the Siju plant which is planted in the Bodo households for offering prayers . The Bodo also worship many Gods and Goddesses and visit various temples of Shiva and Shakti.</p> <p>The Brahma section of the tribe devotedly follows the teachings of Kalicharan Brahma. And they perform Hom Yajna in the Vedic style. But they revere the <i>sizu</i> plant which they plant in their courtyard as representing <i>Bathou</i>.</p> <p><i>Kherai puja</i></p> <p>The religion and festival of the Bodos are intimately connected to agriculture . <i>The Kherai puja</i> ( form of worship) performed in different times of the year in accordance with particular occasions. Thus, there are <i>Darshan Kherai, Umrao Kherai , Phalo Kherai</i> and <i>Nowaoni Kherai</i>.</p> <p><i>Garja puja</i> is another important religious festival.</p> <p><i>Baisagu</i></p> <p>It is celebrated to herald the spring season. The supreme deity <i>Bathau</i> or <i>Sibrai</i> is worshipped on this occasion by making offerings to him. Community singing and merriment with the accompaniment of traditional musical instruments marks the festival and continues for a week. They also observe certain restrictions ( taboos) during the period. It is customary to offer community prayer at the close of the festival.</p> <p><i>Katri gasa</i></p> <p>They celebrate <i>Katri gasa</i> on the last day of the month of Ahin.</p> <p><i>Domashi</i></p> <p>It is a seasonal festival celebrated to welcome the new harvest.</p>
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		<p>Different kind of cakes locally called as <i>pithas</i> made with rice flour are prepared and served to relatives and friends. The occasion is celebrated with enthusiasm and festive fervor.</p>
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	Deori	<p>They are worshipper of Lord Mahadev and Parvati. The Dibongiyas call these supreme deities as <i>Kundimama</i>. <i>Kundi</i> is identified as Lord Shiva and <i>Mama</i> as Parvati. The common place of worship among the Borganya and Tengapaniya is the <i>Than</i> while the Dibongiyas call it as <i>Midiku</i>.</p> <p><i>Bohagiyo Bisu</i></p> <p>‘Bi’ means ‘extreme’ and ‘su’ means ‘rejoicing’. There is much merriment and joy during this period. The festival generally commences from a Wednesday. The celebration must be preceded by a <i>Than Puja</i>. The festival has a close relation with the agricultural activities. The <i>deodhani</i> dance forms an important part of this celebration. It is celebrated on the <i>Sangkranti</i> of <i>Chait</i></p> <p><i>Magiyo Bisu</i></p> <p>It is celebrated on the ‘<i>sangkranti</i>’ of <i>Puh</i>. It is a seasonal festival celebrated for the new harvest. Different kind of cakes locally called as <i>pithas</i> made with rice flour are prepared and served to relatives and friends. The occasion is celebrated with enthusiasm and festive fervor.</p>
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3.	Dimasa Kachari	<p><i>Rajini Gabra and Harini Gabra</i></p> <p>The Dimasa are predominantly followers of Hinduism and they have been maintaining their autonomy and culture to a great extent. The Dimasa Kacharis observe various festivals. The celebration of the socio-religious festivals <i>Rajini Gabra</i> and <i>Harni Gabra</i> is held once annually before the starting of new cultivation. The former is celebrated during day time only. The <i>Kunang</i>, the traditional headman propitiates his family deity by closing the village gate on the day of the performance of <i>Rajini Gabra</i>. In the same night the function called <i>Harni Gabra</i> is also celebrated. Here the deity <i>Harni</i> is worshipped for the protection and welfare of the people during the coming years.</p> <p>It is very interesting to note that during the performance of <i>Rajini Gabra</i> and <i>Harni Gabra</i> if any outsider enters into the village in spite of seeing the sign of the closing gate, the entire function is considered to be spoilt. The intruder bears the total expenses of holding the festival anew.</p> <p><i>Busu Dima</i></p> <p>But the celebration <i>Busudima</i> or <i>Busu</i> (harvestry festival) is the joyest and most important of all. Prior to celebration of <i>Busu</i> a specially decorated and artistically designed gate called <i>Fangsla</i> is erected at the main entrance to the village</p>
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4.	Garo	<p>The Garos are followers of Christianity. They celebrate Christmas, Easter and other festivals with religious fervor. They also have some traditional festival. They celebrate <i>Wangala</i>, which is the harvest festival. This festival is also known as the festival of hundred drums.</p>
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5.	Karbi	<p><i>Rongker</i></p> <p>It is a socio- religious festival. The gods and goddesses are propitiated for the welfare of an entire village and to ward off disasters such as disease and natural calamities. It is also performed to welcome a good harvest.</p> <p>Another type of <i>Rongker</i> called as <i>Wofong Rongker</i> is celebrated at an interval of five years and continues for two days.</p> <p><i>Hacha Kekan</i></p> <p>It is a merry making festival. Community feast, dance and songs take place. It is a thanksgiving ceremony when the goddess of prosperity is thanked for bestowing her blessings to the people.</p> <p><i>Chomankan</i></p> <p>It is an elaborate and important ceremony performed for the deaths in Karbi society. The Karbis believe that the spirits of the dead men and women have to be sanctified by rituals of the death ceremony called <i>Chomangkan</i> . It is an elaborate rituals which requires prior planning, large expenditure and elaborate arrangement .There are three types of <i>chomangkan</i> namely – <i>Kanphlaphla</i> which is performed for the ordinary Karbi people, <i>Langtuk chomangkan</i> , performed for the persons who used to occupy high position in the social hierarchy of the Karbis and <i>Harne chomangkan</i> which is performed for the persons who occupied highest position in the society</p>
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6.	Khamti	The Khamtis are Buddhist . They celebrate the festivals called as <i>Poi Changkan</i> , <i>Mai-Ko_soom-Phai</i> , and others.
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7.	Mising or Miri	<p><i>Ali-Aye-Ligang</i></p> <p><i>Ali-Aye-Ligang</i> is the most important festival held on the first Wednesday of the <i>Ginmur Polo</i> (month of Fagun). This spring dance festival is observed to mark the sowing of the seeds. <i>Ali</i> means root, seed, <i>Aye</i> means fruit and <i>Ligang</i> means sow. Thus ceremonial sowing of paddy starts on this day. Dancing and singing is the characteristic feature of this festival. The whole atmosphere is surcharged with music of <i>Dum Dum</i>, <i>Pempa</i>, <i>Siphung</i> and <i>Gunggang</i> played with the rhythmic dances of the girls attired in their best <i>Ribigaseng</i> and <i>Ribiyege</i>. <i>Poro Apong</i> and dried fish is essential for the feast. The festival continues for five days and during these days dancing and feasting is held on the courtyard of the villagers and in return the host entertains the <i>Gurmrak</i> dancers. The festival is concluded with <i>Dapan Tipan</i> i.e. a community feast. The last day of the festival is called <i>Linen</i>. During this festival certain taboos in respect of cutting trees, catching fish, ploughing, burning jungles, eating vegetables cooked with oil etc., are observed.</p> <p><i>Porag</i></p> <p>Porag is another important festival. For the smooth functioning of this festival the <i>Mimbir Yame</i> i.e youth organization of the Misings make necessary arrangements. They do it in a formal and systematic manner called <i>Daglik</i>. The <i>Murong</i> is renovated. Large quantities of food and drink are arranged much in advance. The host village invites the villagers from neighbouring Mising villages who also participate in singing and dancing. A <i>Miboo</i> is appointed who conducts the prayer to <i>Chedi Melo</i> and <i>Donyi Polo</i> etc. <i>Poro Apong</i> and pork are essential items for this festival. At least 4/5 pigs are sacrificed</p>
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and grand feast arranged where all the villagers participate. At night the *Miboo* leads the dancing and for three days the whole village celebrates with feast and dance. The women folk in their traditional dresses take part in dancing and singing along with the rhythmic beating of drums. The festival comes to an end with a prayer dance known as *Ponu Nunam*.

*Amrok*

the Misings also observed a festival called *Amrok*. Every household observes the *Amrok* festival where food prepared out of harvested crop is offered to the ancestors. The festival is observed on community basis also. Feast with *Apin Apong*, pork and chicken is arranged. After the feast the youths perform *Pakso Monam* dances along with the tune of *Oi Nitam*. During festival obligations are offered to the malevolent deities (*Uram Kusung*).

8.	Rabhas	The Pati Rabhas of Boko and South Goalpara areas are Hinduised and call themselves Vaisnavas. A large section of the tribe has converted to Christianity. The Pati Rabhas observe the <i>Rangali Bihu</i> and <i>Bhogali Bihu</i> . They speak the Assamese language. They observe <i>Langa Puja</i> . The Rangdani and Maitori groups offer <i>Baikho</i> or <i>Khoksi</i> puja, a festival celebrated to propitiate <i>Baikho</i> the goddess of Wealth and Prosperity.
9.	Singphos	The Singphos are followers of Buddhism. Every year on 14 <sup>th</sup> February they celebrate the day as <i>Sopong yong manau poi</i> .
10.	Sonowal Kachari	<p>The Sonowal Kachari observes the Three types of Bihu – <i>Rongali Bihu</i>, <i>Kati Bihu</i> and <i>Magh Bihu</i>. Some other festivals which they perform during the year are <i>Bhur Utua</i>, Tithis of Sankardeva, Madhavdeva and Lila Kanta Goswami, <i>Laksmi Tola Sabha</i>, <i>Kheti Utha</i> or <i>Chengeli Machor Sabah</i>, <i>Bali Sabah</i>, etc.</p> <p><i>Rangali Bihu</i></p> <p>It is celebrated on the <i>Sangkranti</i> of <i>Chait</i> and continues for a fortnight. Considered as a traditional community festival, the occasion is marked with great joy and merriment. Young boys and girls dance in separate groups along with the beating of drums and pipes. During the festival the entire village is astir with festive fervour.</p>
11.	Tai Phakes	The Tai- Phakes are followers of Buddhism. They celebrate <i>Poi Changkan</i> . They also celebrate other festivals like <i>Poi- Khowa</i> , <i>Poi- Okwa</i> , <i>Poi-Kithing</i> , <i>Mike- sumphai</i> , <i>Kham Sang</i> and <i>Poi-</i>

		<i>Leng.</i>
12.	Tiwas	<p>The Tiwas living in the plain districts of Nagaon and Morigaon districts of Assam are mostly assimilated to the fellow Assamese way of life. Vaisnavism has taken a deep root among them . The <i>Naamghar</i> has also made its appearances in the villages. The traditional culture is however not extinct. This is reflected in the socio- religious beliefs and practices specially among them. . Lord Mahadev is the supreme deity and there are <i>thans</i> ( public worshipping place) where pujas are held with sacrifice of fowls and animals.</p> <p><i>Bichu</i> is a festival centering around agriculture. They celebrate three types of <i>Bichus</i>-which they call as <i>Boisaak bichu, Maakh Bichu and Kaati Bichu</i> corresponding to the three Bihus celebrated in Assam. The famous <i>Jon Beel mela</i> near Jagiroad is held in January and provides traditional barter facilities.It is an attractive feature of the <i>Maakh Bichu</i>.</p> <p>The <i>Gossain Uluwa Utsav</i> is an important part of the <i>Boisaakh Bichu</i> festival.</p> <p>Another festival celebrated by the Plain Tiwas is the <i>Barat festival</i>. In order to appease God, Brat or fasting is observed by the womenfolk , at the end of which a festival is arranged to culminate the occasion.</p> <p>The institutions of <i>Rajas (Poali raja)</i> has survived. Every year the Raja( Gobha raja) is honoured publicly.</p>

Table-VI

Traditional Institutions among different Communities and Tribes of Assam

Sl. No.	Name of Community/Tribe	Traditional Institutions
1.	Bodo	<p><i>Raijani Bokhri</i></p> <p>It is the common granary which is present in almost all villages. This common village granary is nurtured by the collective contribution of households by means of kind. During lean period the grain is loaned to needy members against a nominal interest rate. It is a cooperative institution of an indigenous form.</p> <p><i>Raijani Metheng</i></p> <p>It is the traditional village panchayat which solves different issues like theft, assault, quarrels, land partition disputes, and problems arising due to breaking of customary law.</p> <p><i>Saori</i></p> <p>This word in Bodo- Kachari language means rendering physical labour on invitation of a co villager during times of need.</p>

2.	Deoris	<p>The Dibangiya and Barganya sections of the tribe have maintained their traditional language same.</p> <p><i>Sariya Mata</i></p> <p>An organisation which renders assistance to fellow villagers by way of providing service is present among the Deories. Also present are the <i>Morungghar</i> and <i>Mel</i>.</p>
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3.	Dimasa Kacharis	<p>The Dimasa Kacharis have a strong clan organisation. They have both patrilans and matrilineans. The Patrilans are called as <i>sengphong</i> and the matrilineans are called as <i>jaddi</i> or <i>julu</i> . The patri and matrilineans in the Dimasa society regulates the social behaviour of the members of the society. Marriage and inheritance follow clan rules.</p> <p><i>Salis</i>( Village Council)</p> <p>It is the traditional village level governing institution. . It has a traditional headman called as <i>Khunang</i> who along with several elders look after the welfare of the villagers by performing both executive and judicial activities.</p> <p><i>Nodrang</i> ( Bachelors Dormitory)</p> <p>Earlier the youths had to undertake armed fights against enemies of their villages. .Its activities over the years have changed. Now it is concerned with economic and social activities in the village.</p> <p><i>Hangsao</i></p> <p>The Institution of <i>Hangsao</i> present among the Dimasas assist the villagers during sowing in the <i>Jhum</i> fields and plantation in the paddy fields. They take a nominal charge from the families after the crops are harvested.</p>
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4.	Karbi	<p>Existence of some traditional institutions is seen among the Karbis although in the present day context many of these institutions have lost its relevance. These institutions concern the social, political and economic life of the people.</p> <p><i>Me and Mepi</i></p> <p><i>Me</i> is the village council which settles the inter-village problems. The council is presided over by the <i>Sarrthe</i> (the village headman) <i>Rongthe</i> (in the Dimoria Longri) and all the adult males are members (<i>Chakris</i>) of the council. In the Dimoria Longri, the headman is called <i>Bangthe</i>, a term used as the synonym of <i>Sarrthe</i>. The <i>Mei</i> plays an important role in regulating the socio-economic and religious life of the village. <i>Mepi</i> is the greater council presided over by the <i>Habai /Bangthe</i> (in the Dimoria Longri) who is a high officer than a <i>Sarthe</i>.</p> <p><i>Kerung Amie</i></p> <p>The Karbis also have a traditional economic Institution called <i>Kerung Amie</i> which is like a grain bank. This system gives sustenance to poor Karbi households during time of adversity. Karbi households can take loan in the form of paddy from the bank and return the same later to the bank with a nominal rate of interest. There are three types of grain banks which are managed by the community.</p>
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In one such type, the grain bank is maintained by the youths of the village. The youths are allotted a plot of land for cultivation by the community. They cultivate the paddy and loan it to needy persons of the community. Similarly, the elderly males of the Karbis also manage a grain bank. They cultivate the paddy in a plot of land which is given to them by the community for this purpose.

*Jirkedang* (Youth Dormitory)

The unmarried male members of the Karbi society are the members of the youth dormitories. It is an institution of social work and performs social work in the village. During the festival of *Rongker*, and *Chomangkan* the members take active part. It is to be noted that in the plains areas outside Karbi Anglong district, *Zirkerdam* is not found. In such areas the *Risomel* or the youth club serves almost the same purpose as *Zirkerdam*

6.	Miris or Misings	<p>The Miris or Misings have undergone tremendous changes in their society but we find that they have been able to preserve most of their traditional cultural trait. Vaisnavism has entered Mising society. Material culture of the Mising tribes has undergone changes due to their close contact with non tribal communities. Some of the villages in Bokaghat district have completely lost the Mising language and now speak the Assamese language.</p> <p><i>Kebang</i></p> <p>The village Panchayat consisting of village elders which plays an important role in the socio- cultural and religious matters within a village.</p> <p><i>Bane Kebang</i></p> <p>This is a bigger Body then the Kebang and decides cases involving two or more villages. A jury helps in deciding the cases.</p> <p><i>Morung</i> ( Bachelor Dormitory)</p> <p><i>Mimbir Yame</i> : A traditional institution, the literal meaning of the term is ‘ young women and men’. Unmarried boys and girls above the age of 12-13 are members of this organisation. Discipline and tribal etiquette are taught by the members. They also offer social work in the village.</p>
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