

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY  
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SILCHAR–788011, INDIA

### **DECLARATION**

I, Prem Kanta Borah, Ph.D. Scholar, bearing Registration No. Ph. D/1862/12 Dated 20.04.2012 hereby, declare that the thesis titled **INTER-ETHNIC CONFLICTS IN NORTH EAST INDIA: A CASE STUDY OF THE GARO-RABHA CONFLICT** is a record of work done by me and to the best of my knowledge the contents of this thesis haven't been a basis for award of any degree to me or anybody else. The thesis has not been submitted to any other university/institute and, therefore, it is submitted to Assam University for award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology.

Place: Assam University, Silchar  
Date: 15 March 2016

**Prem Kanta Borah**  
Ph.D. Research Scholar

## PREFACE

Ethnic conflict is almost invariably present in every part of the world. Its genesis and history is perhaps as long as the origin of mankind on earth and it is still continuing with occasional episodes of break. The intense concern of human beings with the 'self/other' binary is perhaps the most prominent factor in instigating violent conflicts that result in ghastly and indiscriminate killings of innocent people. It creates a consciousness (often antagonistic) in one's mind about the existence of the other who is separate from his/her selfhood. This feeling of discreteness is basically responsible for the awareness of intense racism – the members of one ethnic group identify themselves as separate from the other ethnic group. Very often it gives birth to intense form of hatred for the other. This hatred in course of time takes the shape of conflict, violence, ethnic cleansing and ethnic unrest between two or more ethnic groups.

The demographic pattern of North-East India that characterizes diversity of ethnic groups is responsible for the frequent occurrence of ethnic unrest. In the region people belong to diverse languages, castes, religions, tribes and communities. This region has witnessed several ethnic conflicts. The issues of the conflicts include such as sons of the soil, foreign nationals, migration, religion, language etc. The conflicts center around the demands of autonomous council, separate statehood, etc. to protect their ethnic identity, ethnic homeland, and other resources. One of the conflicts that occurred in Northeast India is the Garo-Rabha conflict that occurred in violent form in January 2011, resulted in a massive bloodshed and displacement of people. The conflict broke out in the Assam-Meghalaya border area. The violence resulted in the killing of 20 people, torching of about 1,500 houses, rendering about 50,000 people homeless. In the conflict Rabhas particularly those living in the state of Meghalaya were more affected. This conflict has been empirically studied under the present research.

This research work entitled *Inter-ethnic Conflicts in North East India- A Case Study of the Garo-Rabha Conflict* attempts to analyze and make a scientific arrangement of facts related to the inter-ethnic conflicts in Northeast India in general and the Garo-Rabha conflict in particular. This research also incorporates field study conducted through interview schedule as well as informal interviews in the conflict

ridden Assam-Meghalaya border area. The study divides into seven chapters, in all. Chapter 1 entitled *Theoretical framework* consists of the theoretical perspectives needed for the analysis of Garo-Rabha conflict and review of existing literature along with a general discussion on ethnic violence. Chapter 2 entitled *Inter-ethnic Conflicts in Northeast India* attempts to enumerate almost all the ethnic conflicts that have occurred in Northeast India and also analyses the causes that are responsible for the frequent outburst of ethnic unrest in this region. Chapter 3 entitled *The Garo and Rabha Communities: Ethnic Identities* takes into account the Garo and Rabha traditions. Chapter 4 entitled *Field of the Study* puts forward the structural differences between the Garo and Rabha communities in the study area. Chapter 5 entitled *Sequences and Causes of the Garo-Rabha Conflict* and it deals with the historical events and the sequences of the causes of the Garo-Rabha conflict. Chapter 6 entitled *Social Impacts of Garo-Rabha Conflict* attempts to assess the aftermaths and social impact of the Garo-Rabha conflict. Lastly, Chapter 7 gives *Summary, Findings and Conclusion* of the study.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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I thank UGC for facilitating me to avail the FDP leave and thereby pursue my research work smoothly. I would like to thank Dr. Siddheswar Borah, the Principal of Sarupathar College, for his valuable help and cooperation. I am also grateful to my wife Monami Porasor for her help and cooperation.

I extend thanks to all the Garo and Rabha people who helped me a lot during the field work. Radesh Rabha, Brojen Rabha, Khanin D. Momin, Tharsus K Sangma, Sarbesh Rabha Albert Momin, Madan Rabha, Anukul Rabha, Aloni Rabha, Biren Rabha and Phukan Rabha are some of the noteworthy names who helped me in carrying out my field study. I would like to thank my students who also helped me.

I would like to thank the libraries of Assam University Silchar, NEHU, IIT Guwahati and Gauhati University. Last but not least, I would like to thank all the faculty members and non-teaching staff of the Department of Sociology, Assam University for their help and cooperation. I would also like to thank the administrative offices of Goalpara and North Garo Hills district for the cooperation that I received during the fieldwork.

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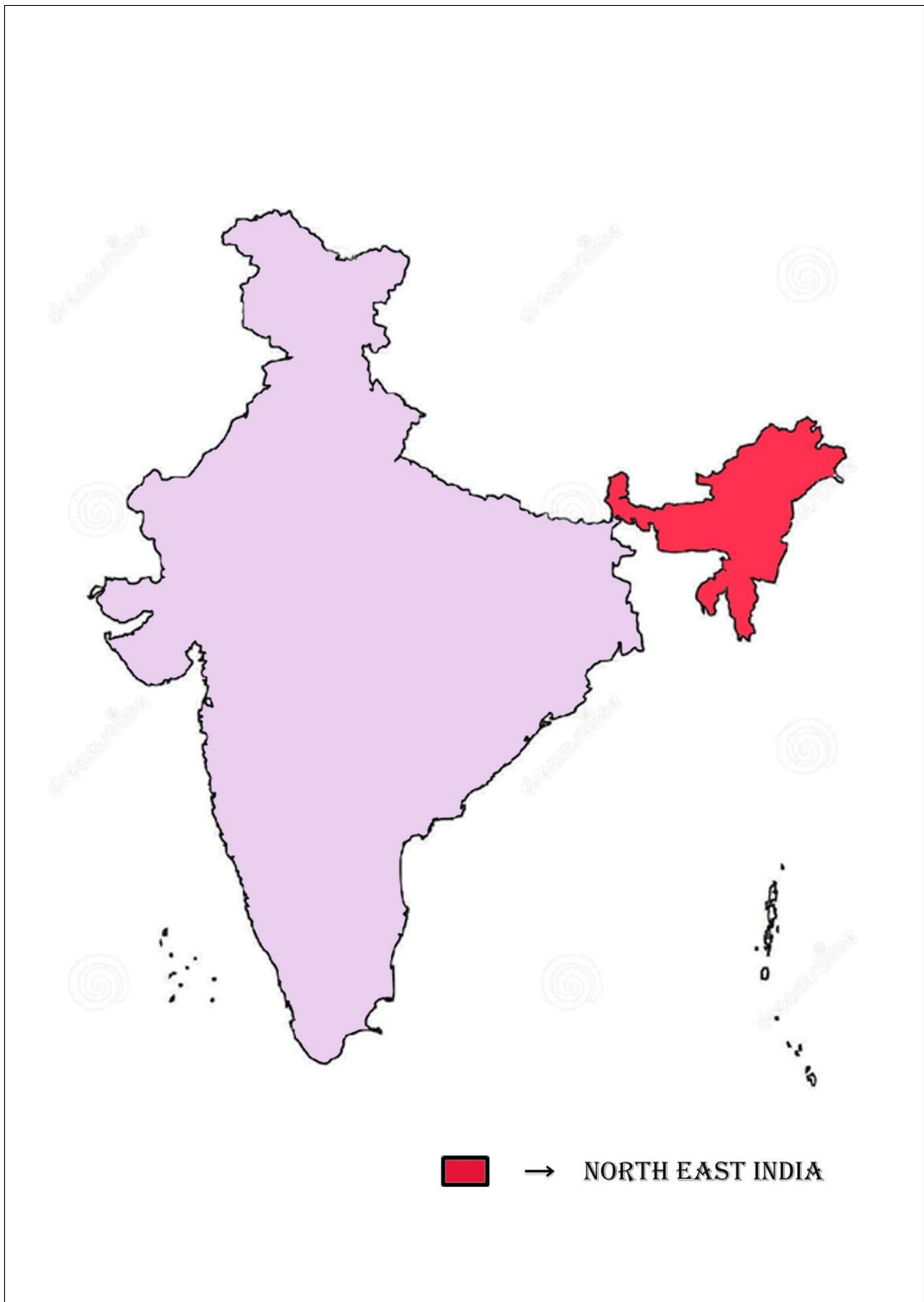
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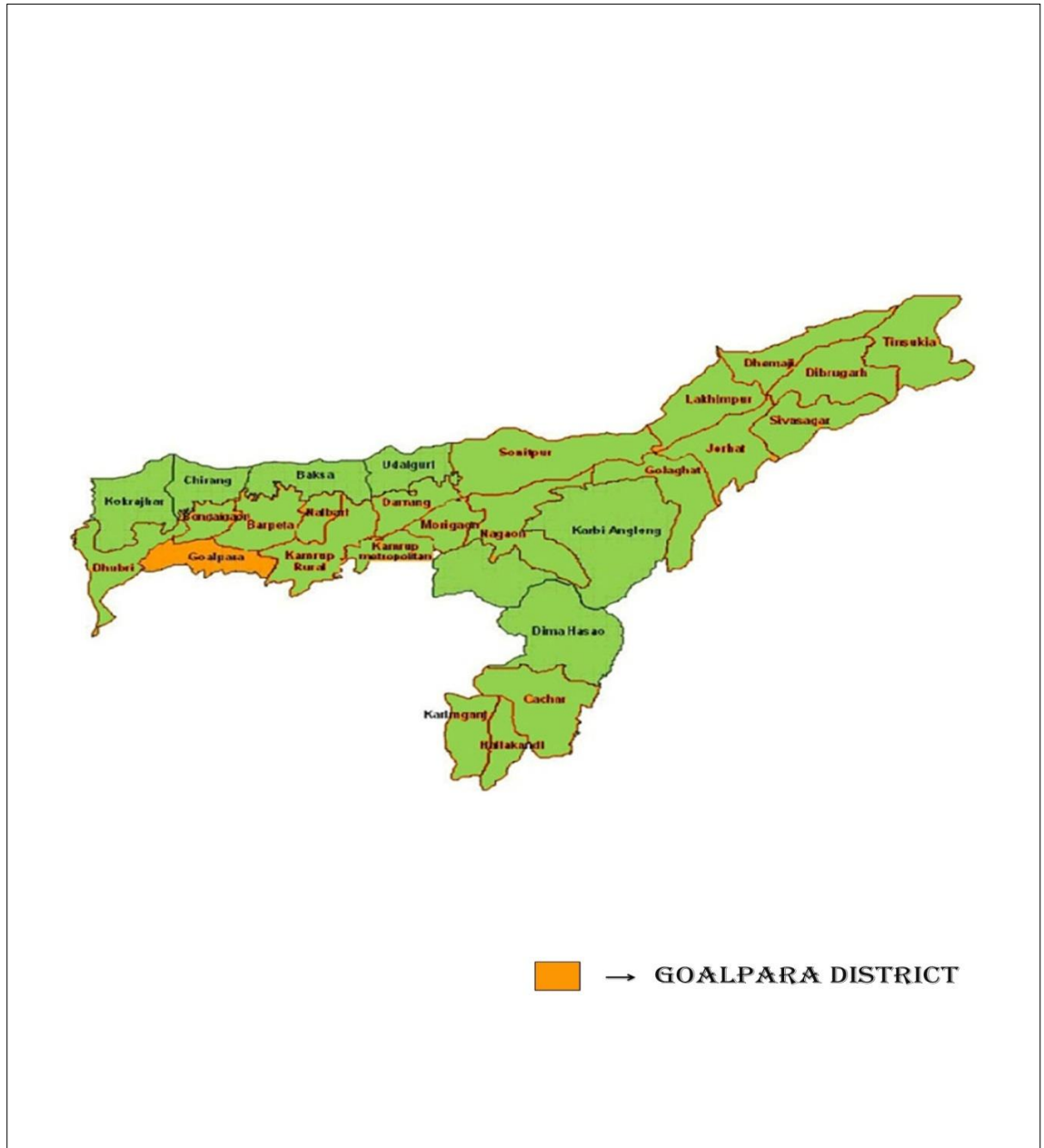


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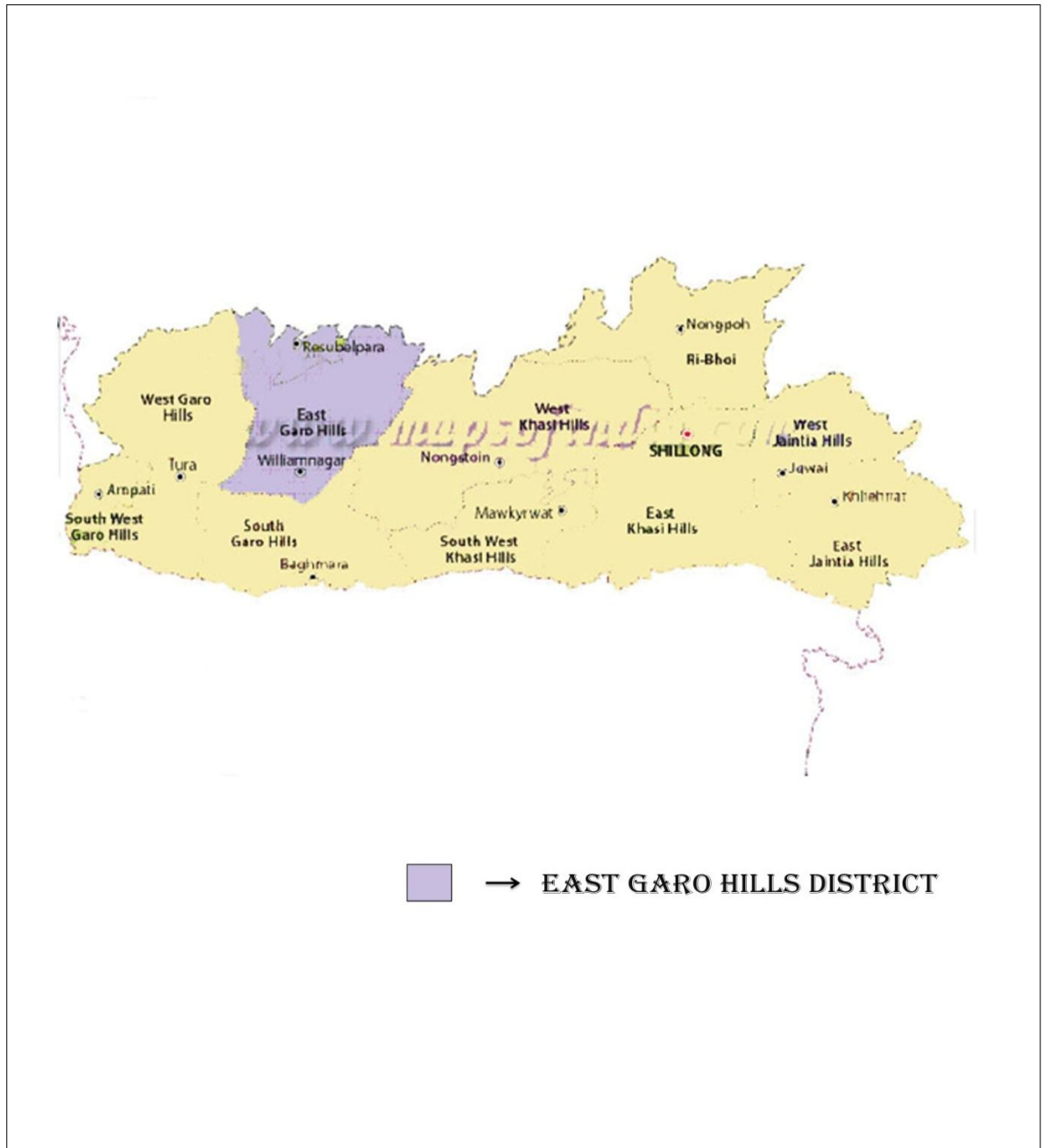
MAP 1: INDIA



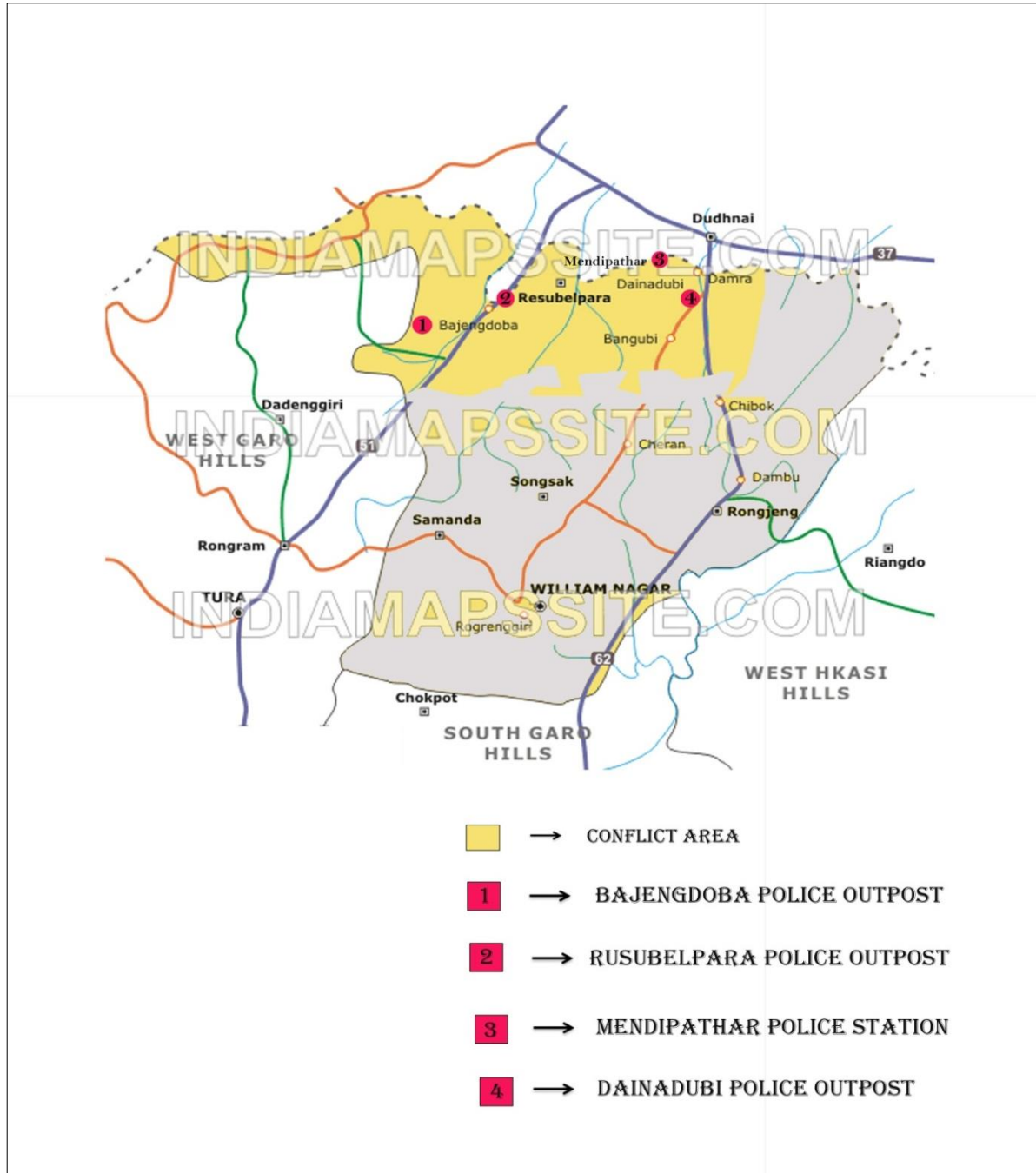
MAP 2: ASSAM



MAP 3: MEGHALAYA



MAP 4: EAST GARO HILLS DISTRICT



MAP 5: GOALPARA DISTRICT

