

CHAPTER III

Emergence of Middle Class Among the Karbis

The Karbis, who have been classified as ‘Scheduled Tribe Hills’ by the census of India, occupy an important position among the tribal communities of Assam in particular and the North East India in general. They constitute the third largest tribal community in Assam after the Bodos and the Mishings and are the principal tribal community in the Karbi Anglong district, the largest district of Assam having an autonomous administrative system under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. In fact, the district is named after the tribe itself. Though, mainly found in the district of Karbi Anglong, the Karbis also reside in the district of N.C. hills, (presently Dima Hasao), besides in some parts of Golaghat, Nagaon, Kamrup districts and also in small pockets of Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh. In the words of Dr. Phukan Ch Phangcho, “The Karbis are a group of people living in the hills, plateaus and plains of the central part of North East India, specially in Assam. Some of them are also reported to be living in Sylhet district of Bangladesh.”¹ Ethnically, they belong to the Indo-Mongoloid race and linguistically to the Tibeto-Burman family of languages.² The original home of the various people speaking Tibeto-Burman languages was in western China near the Howang-ho and Yangtjikiang rivers and from these places they went down the courses of the Brahmaputra, the Chindwin and the Irrawaddy and entered India and Burma. The Karbis, along with others entered Assam from Central Asia in one of the waves of migration.³ The word ‘Karbi’ by which the tribe is known is derived from the Karbi word ‘Thekar kibi’ or ‘Me akar kibi’.⁴ ‘Among the Karbis ‘Thekar kibi’ is a compulsory traditional ceremony of purifying a newborn baby after six months of its birth. It is generally believed that without performing this particular ritual, the infant cannot be recognized socially as a real Karbi. On the other hand, ‘Me akar kibi’ means keeping spark of fire in the fireplace of the house for performing the ceremony of ‘Thekar kibi’. Therefore, the tribe is called as ‘Me akar kibi’ which in course of time became ‘Karbi’.⁵

The Karbis who prefer to call themselves as 'Arleng' (which in their own language means 'man') were earlier known as 'Mikirs', a name believed to be given to the community by the non Karbis. Some feel that 'Mikir' is derivative of the word 'Mitir' or friend. There are various other legends regarding the origin of the term 'Mikir'. According to one legend, some Karbis who went to the forest for hunting were searching for their pet cat which was lost in it. In Karbi language a cat is called as 'Meng-kiri'. While the tribesmen were searching for their pet cat they met non Karbis. The non Karbis asked the Karbis what they were searching for. The Karbis replied 'Meng-Kiri - searching for a cat'. Therefore they were called 'Meng-Kiris' which in course of time became 'Mikir'.⁶ However this hypothesis regarding the genesis of the term 'Mikir' is strongly denounced by a large number of upcoming Karbi scholars who offer their own interpretations regarding the origin of the term and these interpretations greatly differ from each other .

There is another legend prevalent among the Karbis regarding the origin of the term 'Mikir'. As per this legend, prior to their migration to the North East India the Karbis used to live somewhere in Lasha of present Tibet. After leaving Tibet, they passed through Burma(presently Mynmar). On their way they came across some the Naga villages. The Naga people did not know who they were but as the tribe came towards Assam earlier than most of the other tribes , the Khizakino Nagas called them as 'Mikiri' . In their language 'Mi' means 'men' and 'Kiri' means 'gone before'. Therefore , the tribe that came from Tibet towards Assam before the other tribes were called by the Nagas as 'Mikir'.⁷

A section of other Karbis put forwarded another interpretation of the origin of the word 'Mikir' which appears to more logical than the previous ones. According to this analysis, the term 'Mikir' has originated from the Karbi word 'Mekar' meaning the member of the household of a Karbi village. According to them, a traditional Karbi village known as 'Rong' in Karbi language is organized around the institution of a village headman known as 'Sarthe'. Members of every household of the village are called 'Mekar'. "It could therefore be possible that a Karbi introduced himself to an outsider only as a 'Mekar' or an ordinary member of a Karbi village. In a sense,

every Karbi is a 'mekar' and in those days of communication barrier erected by unintelligible linguistic differences, the outsiders simply took the tribe to be only a 'mekar' which in course of time got corrupted to give the word 'mikir'⁸

Historically speaking, various neighboring tribes had called the Karbis by various names with whom the tribe had interactions in its migration and settlements in various locations across the North East. The Karbis, for some time settled in present Dima Hasao district of Assam where they came in to contact with the Dimasa people. A large group of the Karbis also migrated to the present districts of Jaintia Hills and Ri-Bhoi under the state of Meghalaya. This led the Dimasas to consider Karbis not a separate tribe but 'Pnar-sa' meaning, the sons of the Jaintias. On the other hand, the Jaintias themselves used the term 'Bhoi' to denote the Karbis after which the present 'Ri-Bhoi' district is named. Still the group of Karbis that came in to contact with the Ahoms was named as the 'Mikir'. Going by this pattern, there could have been various other names given to the Karbis as they migrated across the lands of Kuki-Chin tribes, Meities or Nagas and thereby cultivating a long history of interactions before finally settling down in the present Karbi Anglong district. Based on the census report of 2001, (*Caste census report of 2011 is not yet published*) the total Karbi population in Assam was 587,310 and they constituted 17.8 % of the total Scheduled Tribe population of the state. Their main concentration is Karbi Anglong district where about 55 per cent of the Karbis live. The total population of the Karbis of Karbi Anglong district is: 3,45,540 (out of the total population Assam of 813,311)⁹

III.I. Spatial Division of the Karbis:

The Karbis are divided into four spatial groups, namely, *Amri*, *Ronghang*, *Chinthong* and *Dumurali*. Of them, the *Amris* are originally found to be the Western most settlers who now largely occupy the hills of Amri Block-the Western most part of the Hamren sub-division, Ri-Bhoi area of East Khasi Hills, low hills and foot hills of Southern Kamrup (from Guwahati eastward) and scattered areas of Pragjyotishpur district up to Mayang. The 'Amris' are perhaps the oldest settlers among the whole

tribe . They thus came to reach the Western most portion in the course of their migration from the East.¹⁰

The ‘Ronghang’ section of the Karbis is found to inhabit the entire area covering the Eastern half of Hamren sub-division , particularly the Rongkhang plains and its adjoining areas , i.e. the southern part of Hojai sub-division of Nagaon district lying on the East of Kopoli river. Ronghangs are also to be found in the parts of North Cachar Hills(now Dima Hasao) falling within Kopili river.

The Karbis of Chinthong Development Block of Hamren and those of Diphu sub-division , particularly those in the Lumbajong area including Diphu town itself, are said to be the ‘Chinthongs’ .What appears from the legends is that this section is very closely connected to Diphu-Lumbajong area after the Kacharis completely abandoned Dimapur-Dhansiri valley following their total defeat in the hands of the Ahom forces from the East in 1536 A.D.

The ‘Dumurali’ Karbis are plains dwellers now inhabiting the Southern part of Nagaon district covering mainly from Jamunamukh on the East to Sonapur (in Southern Kamrup) on the West . They are believed to have come down from the neighboring hills in the South after having lived there for many years . According to information gathered , they migrated to the plains after Ahoms had already established themselves the master of the area covering greater part of the Brahmaputra valley.

III.II. Social System of the Karbis:

The Karbis are a patrilineal race and trace their descent through males. It is also staunchly patriarchal in social organization. According to Prof. Tanmoy Bhattacharjee, “No society is more male dominated than the Karbis.”¹¹ The female occupies an inferior status in a Karbi society. She has no share in administration

though spread of education among the tribe has changed the situation to a great extent in recent times .

The tribe is divided in to five clans called ‘nok:hum’. These are shown in the in the following table. (Table-7)

Table 7: Five clans of the Kabis

Sl. No	Name of the clan	No. of sub clans
1.	Terang	15
2.	Teron	9
3.	Inghi	30
4.	Ingti	5
5.	Timung	30

Each of the five clans has a number of sub-clans. While ‘Inghi’ and ‘Timung’ have thirty sub-clans each, ‘Terang’ has fifteen sub clans, ‘Teron’ has nine sub clans and the ‘Ingti’ has six sub clans. Unlike the Hindu caste system , the Karbi clans are non hierarchical and all the clans are equal to one another and there is no distinction between them. These clans are completely exogamous and marriage between the boy and girl belonging to the same clan can never take place since the children of the same clan are considered as brothers and sisters. Violation of the customary law obviously leads to ex-communication of the couple from the society.

Although, monogamy is prevailing practice, there is no bar to polygamy among the Karbis. However, the cases of polygamy are very rare. Cross cousin marriage is the preferred choice. Like other tribal societies, the Karbis do not have the system of bride price, though there is a system of ‘bride earning’ where a young man is to work in the house of the girl for some years before they can tie the nuptial knot. After marriage, the wife continues to use the surname of her father but the children assume the title of their father. Thus the Karbis follow the patrilineal system of family structure. The settlement pattern of the Karbis is in the form of a village . Each village

has a headman called 'Gaonbura' or 'Sarthe' which is hereditary in nature and each Karbi village is name after the village headman or Sarthe.

The Karbis have their own traditional dressing style and these dresses are artistically designed. These dresses are woven at their traditional looms. There are separate sets of dresses for men and women. The aged men use an artistically designed shirt called 'Cho-angpo' and the shirt used by the young men is called 'Choi-hongthor'. The Karbi women and girls generally use 'Pini-kamflak', a piece of cloth tied around the waist like a skirt. A piece of artistic cloth is used by them to cover the upper part of their body and it is called 'Pekok'. An intricately woven waist band with artistic motifs called 'Vamkok' is also used by every woman and girl. The ladies use coloured and striped showal made of endi silk called 'Khonjari' during winter.

The Karbis are a colourful tribe and they perform a number of festivals, such as the 'Chojun', 'Rongker', 'Sok-keroi', 'Hacha-Kekan', 'Chomangkan' etc. All these festivals are socio-religious in nature and occupy important place in the Karbi society

III.III. Religion:

The Karbis have their traditional tribal religion which is based on the faith that every object in this universe has its own God known as 'Arnam'. Sun, moon, star, stream, tree, hill, forest, rain, wind, fire, road, house etc all have their individual Gods or deities. In this sense, therefore Gods are innumerable. They believe that there could be at least ten million Gods. All the Gods, however, are not worshipped.

For every worship (Kangduk) there is always an animal, preferably a chicken sacrifice. Besides chicken, other animals sacrificed include pig, goat and pigeon. Apart from other animals, hen's egg, rice powder and 'tulsi' leaves are necessary to perform worship or ritual. Rice beer and spirit are indispensable in all the worships.

The Karbi worships are performed in varieties of places. The hill Karbis have no definite shrine or temple as such, while the plains Karbis do have shrines called 'than'. Both the groups also perform worships in places like corner of a house, middle of a road, under a tree or foot of big stone, bank of a stream, forest area, paddy or any crop field at the time of beginning of cultivation or harvesting, places of hunting or fishing etc. The Karbis believe that there are gods and goddesses in all the three worlds, namely, heaven, earth and hell. They believe in the existence of one supreme God and existence of god or deity in every object of the universe and the worship of Hindu deities such as Indra, Agani, Rudra, Kamakhya, Maheswar etc. even though in Karbi style, are the evidences that the Karbi religion is greatly influenced by Hinduism. The significant difference is that most Hindu deities like Bhrama, Vishnu, Indra, Agani, Durga etc. are believed to have heavenly abodes while that of the Karbis dwell in the earth. The heavenly deities are less popular in Karbi society than the earthly ones who are offered sacrifices in greater number of occasions. Moreover, the Karbis do not go for idol worship.

A new religious movement was launched among the Karbis on 5th February 1959. This religion according to Swami Bangovinda Parampanthi is a 'variation of Vaishnavism'.¹² Guru Lakhimon Ingti, the founder of this movement, advises his followers to take vegetarian food as far as possible. The followers of this religion do not take meat, but they can take fish. On Wednesday, they remain completely vegetarian. A priest is appointed to every village 'namghar'(place of recitation) who looks after it. He wears a sacred thread having nine knots. Out of these nine knots two signify two promises, one for the preservation of own religion and the other for the honour of motherland. No idol or image is worshipped or no sacrifice is made. Devotion is expressed by singing hymns and religious songs praising Hemphu whom they equate with the supreme God himself. It can therefore be said that this religious movement endeavours to bring the Karbis in to one discipline that would combine both Hindu and traditional Karbi beliefs.

A large number of Karbis have also been converted in to Christianity. The Karbi Christians are found mainly in Karbi Anglong district. They are divided in to the following denominations as shown in the table 8.

Table 8: Divisions of Christian denominations in Karbi Anglong

Sl. No	Name
1	American Baptist
2	Welsh Mission
3.	Church of God
4.	Baptist Federation
6.	Seventh Day Adventist
7.	Catholic

The conversion of some of the Karbis in to Christianity started as early as in 1854 when some Karbi children got enrolment in the Mission School , Nagaon. The first Karbi Church, the Tika Church was established in 1906 with 27 members.

According to the census report of the 2001 the Religion wise Break-up of the Karbis are as follows- (Table 9)*

Table 9: Religion wise Break-up of the Karbis as per the census report of 2001

Sl. No	Religion	Percentage
1	Indigenous	70 %
2	Hindu	14.64 %
3	Christian	15 %
4	Others	0.36 %

(*Caste and religious census report of 2011 are not yet published)

III.IV. Karbi Anglong District:

The Karbi Hills, politically known as Karbi Anglong is one of the two Hills districts of present Assam, the other being the N.C. Hills (presently Dima Hasao). At the beginning, when the district was carved out on 17th November 1951 (vide Government Notification No. T.A.D./R 31/50/204 dated 3rd November, 1951), it was known as United Mikir and North Cachar Hills. The political region, so created earlier was formed by combining the partially excluded areas of Nagaon and erstwhile Sivasagar (Mikir Hills Tract), Block-I and Block-II of United Khasi and Jaintia Hills District and North Cachar Hills (excluded area) Sub-Division of Cachar District, on the recommendation of Commission appointed for the purpose (vide Notification No. TAD/R/31/50, dtd. 03.10.1950). The present Karbi Anglong by then was a sub-division, namely, the Mikir Hills sub-division. Historically speaking also, this area was administered by British a bit differently, in the sense that the Govt. of India Act, 1919 classified these areas as Backward Tract and Govt. of India Act, 1935 classified them as excluded and partially excluded areas.

After independence, Constitution of India maintained the special status by way of provisions contained in Sixth Schedule of the constitution. The Karbi and Dimasa areas came to be ruled by their own District Councils. Thus came into existence the North Cachar Hills District Council on 29th April, 1952 and the Mikir Hills District Council on 23rd June, 1952. Both the District Councils were inaugurated by Bishnuram Medhi, the then Chief Minister of Assam. In the year 1970, the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district was bifurcated into two separate districts under banners as "Mikir Hills" and North Cachar Hills districts respectively. The Mikir Hills district was again rechristened as "Karbi Anglong District" *w.e.f.* 14th October'1976 (vide Govt. Notification No. TAD/R/115/74/47 Dtd. 14-10-1976). Thus Karbi Anglong came into being as a full fledged separate district in the map of Assam with its Head quarter at Diphu. The district enjoys autonomy under the provision of Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. It is the largest district of Assam with a total geographical area of 10, 434 Sq. Kilometer. With the vigorously changed political development in early 1990's under aegis of ASDC/KSA/DSU/NCHSF/KNCA the Karbi Anglong District Council was renamed

as the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) by an Act of Parliament by amending the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution (Amendment) Act, 1995 (42 of 1995) to the Constitution of India granting greater Autonomy to the Council vide Govt. Notification No. HAD.57/95/63-64, dtd. 29.06.1995, entrusted 30 (thirty) more departments to the KAAC.

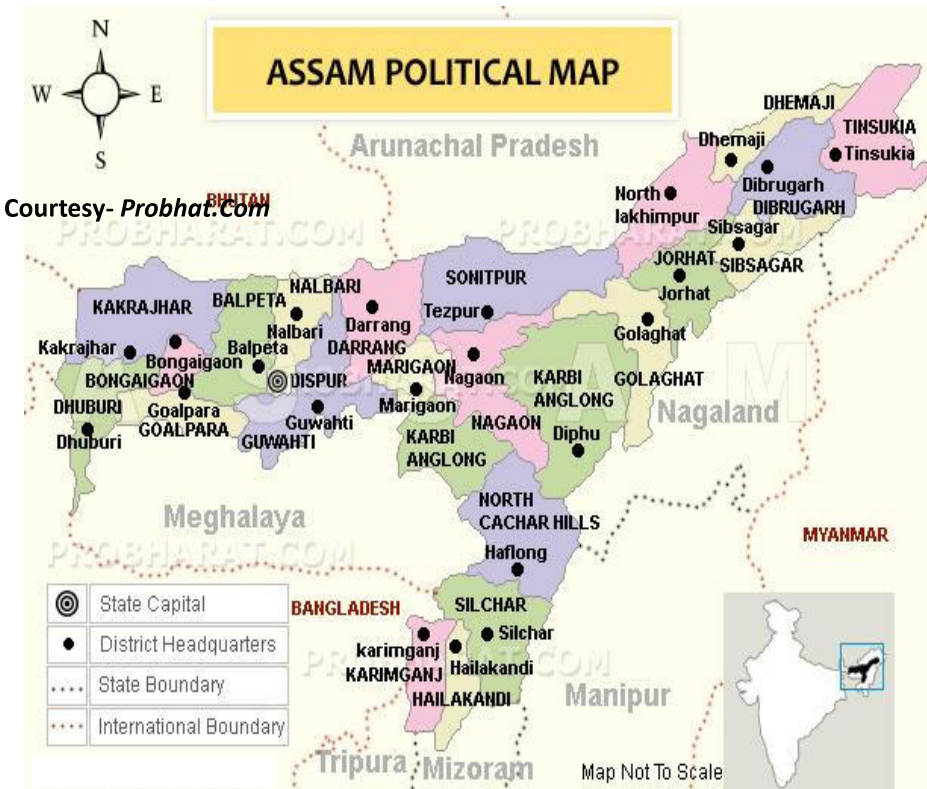
III.IV.I. Location:

The Karbi Anglong District is situated in the central part of Assam. It is bounded by Golaghat district in the east, Meghalaya and Morigaon district in the west, Nagaon and Golaghat district in the north and N.C. Hills district and Nagaland in the south. The district with dense tropical forest covered hills and flat plains is situated between 25° 33' N to 26° 35' N Latitude and 92° 10' to 93° 50' E Longitude. The location of Karbi Anglong district is shown through the following maps which include the map of India, the map of Assam and the map of the Karbi Anglong the district in it including the relation maps.(Map:1, Map:2, Map:3, Map:4 and Map:5)

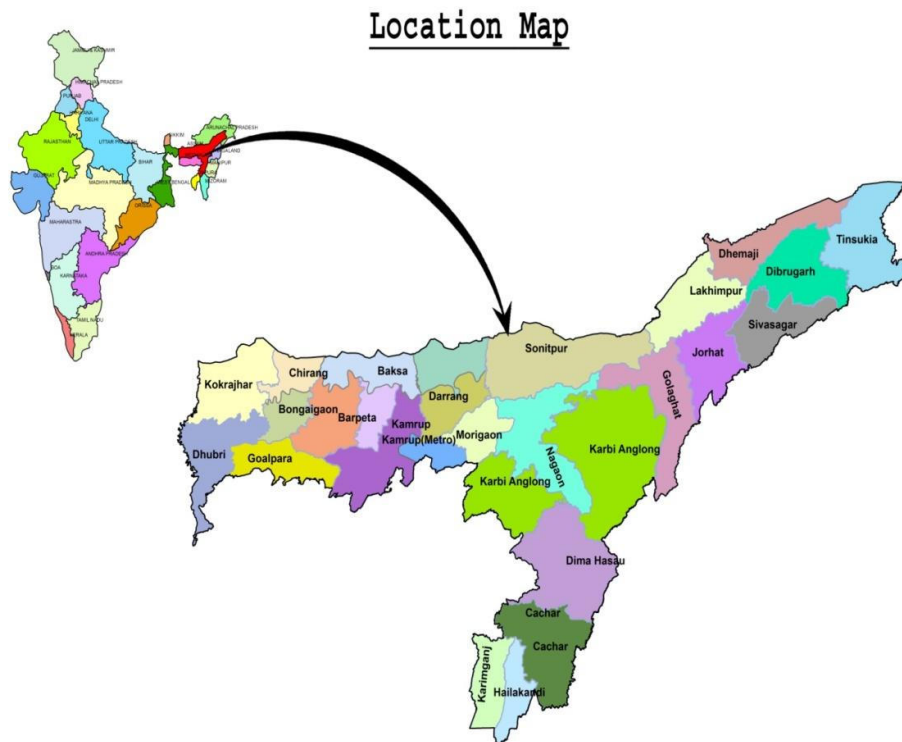
Map 1: Map of India



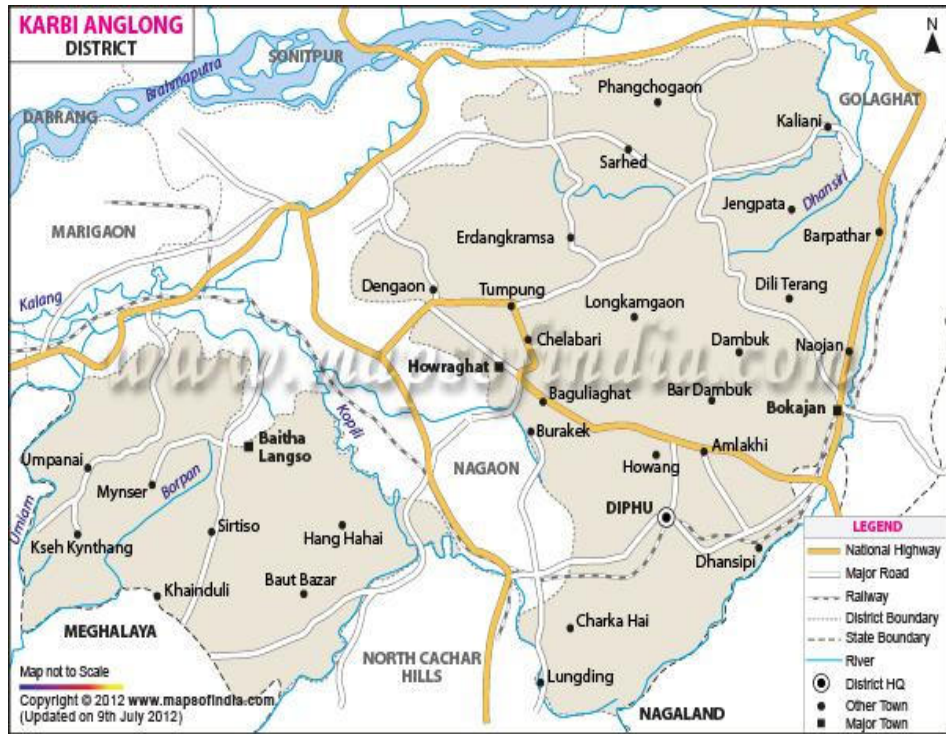
Map 2: Map of Assam



Map 3: Location map of Assam in India



Map 4: Map of Karbi Anglong district



Map 5: Location map of Karbi Anglong district in Assam



III.IV.II. Climate:

Due to variation in the topography, this hill zone experiences different climates in different parts. The winter commences from October and continues till February. During Summer, the atmosphere becomes sultry. The temperature ranges from 6 degree to 12 degree and 23 degree to 32 degree Celsius in summer. The average rainfall is about 2416 mm.

III.IV.III. Population Pattern:

The population of the district is predominantly tribal. The major tribal ethnic groups of this district are :-Karbis, Bodos, Kukis, Dimasas, Hmars, Garos, Rengma Nagas, Tiwas,Man(Tai Speaking). Besides, a large number of non-tribals also live together in this hill region. The Karbis are the major community of the district. Besides the Karbi tribe the area wise other prominent tribal communities residing in the district are as follows:(Table-10)

Table 10: Other prominent tribal communities residing in KA

Sl.No	Name of the tribe	Residing area in K/A
1	Dimasas	Dhansiri, Mohendijua area.
2	Bodos	Langhin area.
3	Kuki / Thadou / Hmar	Singhason and Koilamati araes.
4.	Rengma Nagas	Silonijan-Chowkihula area of the Nilip Block
5.	Tiwas	In bordering Nagaon and Morigaon District.
6.	Garos	Hamren Sub-division.
7.	Man-tai speaking community	Bokajan Sub-Division.
8.	Some Khasi Tribes	Meghalaya borders mostly in Hamren Sub-Division.
9.	Scattered population of Chakmas	Borlangphar area.

III.IV.IV. **Agriculture:**

The district is basically an agricultural district. Different types of agricultural crops are cultivated among which paddy is the main crop. Except for the valleys, the people follow the jhum system of cultivation.

III.IV.V. **Roads and Communication:**

The district is well connected with other districts through various routes. On the north it is covered by NH-36 and on the east by NH-39. The internal routes are covered by the P.W.D.

III.IV.VI. **Railways:**

The N.F. Railways pass through the district touching only a few points (stations) along the boundary. The railway stations falling under the district are shown in the table-11.

Table 11: Railway stations in KA

Sl. No.	Name of the Rly station
1	Hawaipur,
2	Lamsakhang,
3	Borlangphar,
4	Langsoliet,
5	Nilalung,
6	Diphu,
7	Doldoloi,
8	Dhansiri,
9	Rongapahar,
10	Khotkhoti
11	Bokajan.

III.V. General Data of Karbi Anglong District:

As per the census report of 2011, the basic information of the district is given below:¹³(Table-12)

Table 12: Basic information of the KA district

Sl.No	Area of information	Data in figures
1	Area	10,434 Sq. Km
2	Total Population	9,65,280 Nos.
3	Male Population	4,93,482 Nos
4	Female Population	4,71,798 Nos.
5	Literacy Rate	73.52 %
6	No. of Revenue Circle	4 Nos.
7	No. of Sub-Divns.	3 Nos.
8	No. of Blocks	11 Nos.
9	No. of Police Stations	20 Nos.

III.V.I. Area:

The total area of the of the district as per 2011 Census is shown in Table-13.

Table 13: Area of KA district

Total	Rural	Urban
10,434 Sq.Km	10,397 Sq.Km	37 Sq. km.
2. Density of Population : 93 per Sq. Km.(As per 2011 census)		
3. Sex Ratio :- 956 females/1000 males (As per 2011 census)		
4. Total No. of villages: : 2928 (As per 2011 census)		

III.V.II. **Literacy Rate** :(2011 census): The literacy rate of the district as per the census report is shown in the following table (Table-14)

Table 14: Literacy rate of KA as per census report of 2011

As per 2011 census		
Total	Male	Female
73.52 %	82.12 %	64.62 %

III.V.III. District Headquarter:

The head quarter of KA district is Diphu. The district has three Sub-Division (Table-15)

Table 15: Sub-divisions of KA district

Sl. No.	Name of the sub division	Sub-divisional Headquarter
1	Diphu (Sadar Sub)	Diphu
2	Bokajan (Civil Sub)	Bokajan
3	Hamren (Civil Sub)	Hamren.

III.V. IV. Development Blocks:

The district has 11 development blocks. The list of the sub-division wise development blocks and their headquarters are shown in the following table¹⁴ (Table- 16)

Table 16: List of the sub-division wise development blocks and their headquarters in KA

Sl.No.	Name of Sub-Divn.		Name of Blocks	Headquarters
1.	Diphu Sadar Sub-Division.	1.	Lumbajong Dev. Block	Manja.
		2.	Howraghat Dev. Block	Howraghat.
		3.	Samelangso Dev. Block	Dokmoka
		4.	Langsomepi Dev. Block	Bakulia
2.	Bokajan Civil Sub-Division.	1.	Bokajan Dev. Block	Bokajan
		2.	Nilip Dev. Block	Chowkiholo.
		3.	Rongmongwe Dev. Block.	Kat Teron.
3.	Hamren Civil Sub-Division.	1.	Rongkhang Dev. Block.	Donkamokam.
		2.	Socheng Dev. Block.	Zirikinding.
		3.	Chinthong Dev. Block.	Hamren.
		4.	Amri Dev. Block.	Ulukunchi.

III.V.V. Revenue Circles:

The district is divided in to 4 revenue circles. The sub division wise revenues circles and their head quarters ¹⁵ are shown in Table-17.

Table 17: List of sub-division wise revenues circles and their head quarters in KA

Sl.No.	Name of Sub-Division		Name of Revenue Circle	Headquarters
1.	Diphu Sadar Sub-Divn.	1.	Diphu	Diphu.
		2.	Phuloni	Phuloni
2.	Bokajan Civil Sub-Divn.	1.	Silonijan	Silonijan
3.	Hamren Civil s Sub-Divn.	1.	Donka	Donkamokam

III.V.VI. Mouza:

The district is divided in to 24 mauzas. Under Diphu Sub-Divn there are 14 mauzas, under Bokajan Sub-Divn there are 5 mauzas and under Hamren Sub-Divn there are 5 mauzas ¹⁶. The names of the mauzas falling under each Sub-Division of the district are shown in Table-18.

Table 18: The names of the mauzas falling under each Sub-Division of KA

Sl.No.	Name of the Mouza		
	Under Diphu Sub-divn.	Under Bokajan Sub-Divn.	Under Hamren Sub-Divn
1	Nomati	1.Borjan - II	1. Duar-Amla
2	Langpher	2.Borpathar	2.Block - I
3	Duardisha - I	3.Sarupathar	3.Block - II
4	Duardisha - II	4.East Rengma	4.East Rongkhang
5	West Rengma	5.Duar Bagori	6.West Rongkhang
6	Duar Dikharu		
7	Duar Bamuni		
8	Duar Salona		
9	Jamunapar		
10	Borjan - I		
11	Langlokso		
12	Phuloni		
13	Langhin		
14	Howraghat		

III.V.VII. District Boundary:

A. Inter-District Boundary:

1. Karbi Anglong-Golaghat.
2. Karbi Anglong-Nagaon.
3. Karbi Anglong-Morigaon.
4. Karbi Anglong-N.C.Hills.

B. Inter-State Boundary:

1. Assam-Nagaland.
2. Assam-Meghalaya.

C. International Boundary: NIL.

III.V.VIII. Parliamentary Constituency:

The district along with the Dima Hasao district has 1 (One) Parliamentary constituency named, -Autonomous District (ST) Parliamentary constituency which comprises of five L.A. segments. The 5(Five) L.A. segments are shown below :- (Table-19)

Table 19: List of L.A. segments under Diphu Parliamentary constituency

Sl. No.	Name of L.A. Segments
1	16 Haflong (ST)
2	17 Bokajan (ST)
3	18 Howraghat (ST)
4	19 Diphu (ST)
5	20 Baithalangso (ST)

III.V.IX. **Legislative Assembly Constituencies:** The district has four Legislative Assembly constituencies. These are shown below (Table-20)

Table 20: Names of the LA constituencies in KA

Sl. No.	Name of the L.A.C.
1	17-Bokajan (ST)
2	18-Hawraghat (ST)
3	19- Diphu (ST)
4	20-Baithalangso (ST)

III.V.X. **MAC Constituencies:**

The KAAC has 26 MAC constituencies. The names of the MAC constituencies in the district are shown below - (Table-21)

Table 21: Names of the MAC constituencies of the KAAC

Sl. No.	Name of the Constituency	Sl. No.	Name of the Constituency
1	1-Duaramla	14	14-Karkanthi
2	2-Amri	15	15-Mahamaya
3	3-Chinthong	16	16-Namati
4	4-Socheng	17	17-Socheng Dhenta
5	5-Rongkhang	18	18-Lumbajong
6	6-Bithung Rengthama	19	19-Dhansiri
7	7-Kopili	20	20-Singhason
8	8-Hamren	21	21-Borjan
9	9-Amreng	22	22-Sarupathar
10	10-Howraghat	23	23-Bokajan
11	11-Langfer	24	24-Deopani
12	12-Phuloni	25	25-Nilip
13	13-Langhin	26	26-Duar Bagori

III.VI. **Middle Class Among the Karbis:**

The concept of the middle class has already been discussed in details the first chapter of the thesis where we found that the term 'middle Class' is used as an

umbrella term of great flexibility to describe all the people who are not manual workers. The term gained currency when the classes were began to be measured in terms of their economic standing and the analysts found out the symbolic relationship between the economic standing and its social behavior. In the backdrop of the various definitions of the middle class as discussed in the first chapter of the study we have adopted a working definition of the term 'middle class' in that chapter according to which it is an intermediary social and economic class between two distinct classes – upper and lower. The middle classes represent neither the affluent and highly propertied class nor they are economic paupers. They comprise all classes which are not part of the polar classes of a particular dominant mode of production, capitalist or the working class. The middle classes are the groups of people who are mainly composed of the professionals and white collar employees, mostly non manual workers and they mainly consist of the people who owe everything to their own efforts, resources, qualification, education, etc. Self-made as they are, middle-class people are furthermore self-employed and relatively free and autonomous in their work. Occupation and income are the identifying criteria of the middle classes. But again, income is related with education and status. Persons with high income who are not educated will not be regarded as middle class. The middle class are the intellectuals who carry influence in social, political and cultural spheres. Thus, in terms of occupation , shopkeepers , salesmen, brokers , government and non government office workers , writers , teachers, social workers, cultural workers and self employed professionals , such as engineers , pleaders , doctors, etc , constitute the middle class . Most of these occupations require at least some degree of formal education. The middle class occupy a strategic field in the economy and politics, thus obtaining power and initiatives which make it possible for them to struggle for political dominance over other classes including the bourgeoisie. As Aijaz Ahmed says, “these classes play a key role in the construction of political reaction as well as in the process of radicalisation and even revolution. What political role they play in a given conjuncture and whether they will align themselves with the class above or class below, is highly influenced by the historical constitution of the conjuncture itself.”¹⁷

In the context of the Karbis of the Karbi Anglong district of Assam, a middle class as accepted in our working definition do exist. The Karbis are engaged in different professions which are said to be professions of the middle class. The government and non government office workers including bureaucrats , writers, teachers, the entrepreneurial classes, the professionals - such as engineers , pleaders , preachers , doctors and journalists etc. are found in abundance among the Karbis and therefore the existence of the middle class among the tribe can be declared with full conviction. The Karbi middle class possesses the traits of the middle class which we have accepted in our working definition and the same will be justified in our study in the subsequent chapters.

During the course of our study we found that most of the sample respondents had the basic idea about the meaning of the term middle class and the primary attribute of the middle class. Further the majority of the sample respondents were of the opinion that a middle class do exist among the Karbis. Out of the 350 sample respondents, 276 (78.86 %) respondents viewed that they are aware of the meaning of the term middle class, while the remaining 74 (21.14 %) of the respondents viewed that they were not aware of the meaning of the term middle class.

Again, out of the 276 sample respondents who viewed that they were aware of the meaning of the term middle class, 238 (86.23 %) of them indicated the option no.(e) which included the attributed of the middle class as - (a) the middle position between the capitalist and the manual workers. (b) Non manual occupation. (c) Education and (d) Status in the society as the main attributed of the middle class. On the other hand, the remaining 38 (13.77 %) of the sample respondents viewed the other options as the main attribute of the middle class.

As regards the existence of the middle class among the Karbis of Karbi Anglong district of Assam, the overwhelming majority of the sample respondents viewed that middle class as we have accepted in our working definition exist among the Karbis of the Karbi Anglong district of Assam. Here, out of the total 350 sample respondents,

271(77.43 %) of them viewed that a middle class exists among the Karbis of Karbi Anglong district of Assam while the remaining 79 (22.57 %) replied as 'No' or 'Can not say'

On the basis of the above inputs received from the sample respondents, we proceeded further in our study in the light of the above inputs and tried to establish the existence of the middle class among the Karbis of the Karbi Anglong district of Assam.

III.VI.I. Karbi Bureaucrat Class: The bureaucratic class among the Karbis started to emerge even before the independence of the country. Semsonson Sing Ingti, who later on went to be revered as the father of the Karbi nation was the first bureaucrat from the tribe who by virtue of his merit was appointed as Inspector of Schools by the British administration. He was given the responsibility of improving the system of education in the erstwhile Mikir Hills. Born 28th February 1910, Semson Sing Ingti completed his studies from Murarichand College, Sylhet (presently in Bangladesh) in the year 1933 and became only the second graduate in the Karbi community. As an educational administrator, his untiring effort to spread the light of education among his fellow tribe earned him great respect from his people. Semson Sing Ingti was also the guiding force in politically uniting the Karbis and securing a district for the tribe. Though he died prematurely, his contribution in the development of the Karbi society is quite unparalleled for which he is worshiped as the father of the Karbi community by his fellow tribesmen. The other three brothers of Semson Sing Ingti, namely Lawrence Sing Ingti was the first Karbi IAS officer (nominated) who served as the Deputy Commissioner of the then Lushi Hills district (presently the state of Mizoram) of undivided Assam, Lt. Rolan Sing Ingti was an Additional Superintendent of Police, Pratap Sing Ingti was an IAF (Indian Forest Service) officer. The life and contribution of the entire 'Ingti' family has been traced later in the course of our study. Likewise, another prominent Karbi personality, Chandra Sing Teron who later went on to become the Chief Executive Member of the erstwhile Karbi Anglong District Council also started his career as a bureaucrat. When the District Council was created, Chandra Sing Teron joined the Council as an Assistant

Secretary and guided the district as a top bureaucrat from the Karbi community in those days when higher education was still a far cry for the majority of the Karbis. Chandra Sing Teron resigned from the government service in 1957 to join in politics and immediately he was elected as a Member of the District Council (MDC). Another famous personality from the Karbi community, the renowned Karbi writer Longkam Teron occupied the important office of the Public Relation Officer of the Karbi Anglong District Council during 1960's (1964). A Karbi lady, Kabon Neli Timungpi, better known as Bonily Khongmen, went on to become a member and then Chairman of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) 1960 and in that capacity she continued till 1970. She was the product of the British time and rose to prominence only after the independence. Born as Kabon Neli Timungpi in to Christian Karbi family originally hailing from Umpani of present Western part of the Karbi Anglong, she studied in Shillong and Calcutta and got the degree from the university and become the first graduate among the Karbi community. After marrying a Jaintia gentlemen named, Welson Khongmen, Kabon Neli Timungpi assumed the name of Bonily Khongmen. Her family background has been traced later in this chapter. Initially she worked as a school teacher for some time. In 1946 she became a member of the Assam Legislative Assembly from the Shilling L.A(reserved for women) constituency from by winning as a Congress candidate and became the Deputy Speaker of the Assembly. In 1957 she became a Member of Parliament (MP). She also represented India in the UN from 1957 to 1960. She was the chairman of the Assam Public service Commission (APSC) from 1946-1951 and was appointed as a member of the Union Public service Commission (UPSC) in 1960. Later she was appointed as the Chairman of the Nagaland Public Service Commission (NPSC), a post she occupied from 1979-73. Her last appointment was as the Chairman of the Nagaland Pay Commission (NPC) in 1973-74. Her example is the most glittering one and it proves how the capacity can take a person to glittering heights. The then Education Minister of Assam, Mr. Deb Kanta Barua in one of his visits to Diphu remarked that "Everybody considers the Karbis as the backward community but one lady from this community has become the member of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and she has enough powers to offer jobs to all. I cannot call this community as backward."¹⁸

In the post independence period , the educated intelligentsia of the Karbis started joining the civil service after getting through either IAS or the ACS . Pawan Sing Ingti, the eldest son of Semson Sing Ingti, the founder of Karbi Anglong district was selected for the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) . He joined the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) as an officer of the West Bengal cadre in the year 1966 and earned the distinction of being the first directly recruited IAS officer from the Karbi community. Pawan Sing Ingti hold different high positions under the Government of West Bengal before retiring as a top bureaucrat of the state. Likewise, Priyanka Ingti(Bose), the daughter of Pawan Sing Ingti has also joined the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) in the year 2004 as an officer of Himachal Pradesh cadre and she is the first Karbi women to secure IAS. Apart from it, other educated Karbi are regularly joining the state civil service after getting through the competitive examinations conducted by the Assam Public Service Commission from time to time . A number of the Karbi officers have also been nominated to the IAS and among them the name of Jhon Ingti Kathar and Longki Phangcho are prominent . Both these Karbi officers occupied important positions under the government of Assam before their retirement in the year 2010 and 2011 respectively. At present, in the district of Karbi Anglong alone , (as on 20.02. 2013) as many as four (4) Karbi officers under the Assam Civil Service (ACS) are engaged under the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council(KAAC) whereas as many as two (2) other Karbi ACS officers are engaged in under the office of the Deputy Commissioner(DC) of Karbi Anglong district.

The following table will give an idea about the present status (on 20.2.2013) of the Karbi government employees-¹⁹ (Table-22)

Table 22: Position of the Karbi government employees in KA

Sl. No	Position	Number of persons employed
1	ACS officers engaged under the KAAC	4
2	ACS officers engaged under the DC office Karbi Anglong	2
3	Karbi Employees employed in Karbi Anglong district	5748

III.VI.II. **Writers among the Karbis:** Karbi literature did not have a written form till the 19th century. Major John Butler, in his 'Travels in Assam', had said: "The Mikirs have no particular creed, or any written language of their own, yet their dialect differs from that of every other tribe in the province, and we are at a loss to conjecture whence they came, or from what race they sprang."²⁰ All elements of folklore, like social rituals, legends, historical tales, ballads of love and separation, folksongs of Ram-Ravan, love songs, fables, magic chants and proverbs etcetera, have been kept alive through oral literature. Among the first written texts in Karbi language, 'Karbi Catechism', a propaganda newsletter printed at the Christian Missionary press at Sivasagar in 1875 is the first.

However, despite several constraints, a section of writers among the Karbis began to emerge even before the independence of the country. Among them, the name of Bonglong Terang occupies the most important place. Terang published three books in the Karbi language in 1937: 'Ha-E', 'Rukasen' and 'Adam-Asar'. 'Adam-Asar' is a collection of traditional wedding songs. 'Rukasen' is a description of the activities of the headman of a Karbi village; it also describes how Karbis established villages and also contains some folksongs about the origins of paddy and the chilli. 'Ha-E' contains a ballad about the eternal love of a young couple. After the formation of the Karbi Anglong district, this writer composed 'Karbi Kapusan', 'Dinmir', 'Sar Lamsam', 'Ser Hangtham', 'Ranglin', and 'Aran Ateng'. Another writer of note in this period is Raghunath Teron who is a Karbi from the plains of Assam and he authored the book 'Karbi Po'. After the formation of the Karbi Anglong district, a few conscious Karbis began to write and publish in their own language. Various organizations for the social and economic upliftment of the Karbis also began to publish their newsletters in Karbi. In 1966, the 'Karbi Lammet Anei', or the Karbi Sahitya Sabha, was formed along the lines of the Asam Sahitya Sabha to work towards the development and spread of Karbi literature. Formation of this apex literary body of the Karbis encouraged the next generation of the Karbi writers to contribute towards the development of the Karbi literature. Longkam Teron and Padmashree Rongbong Terang were the founding president and secretary respectively of the Karbi Lammet Anei.

Among all the Karbi writers, Prof. Rongbong Terang occupies the most important position. Prof. Terang not only writes in Karbi language but his contribution towards the Assamese language is also unique. Born in the year 1937 near Bakulia of Karbi Anglong district, Prof. Terang completed Masters' degree in Assamese from Guwahati University in the year 1966 after which he joined at Diphu Govt College as a lecturer in Assamese in the same year. He ultimately retired as the Principal of Diphu Govt College in the year 2002. Some of the important books written by him in Karbi language includes, 'Karbi Lamkuru', 'Karbi Lamtasam', 'Karbi Alakha Akitap' etc. Some of the important books written by Prof. Terang in Assamese language include, 'Rongmilir Hahi' (fiction), 'Krantikalar Asru'(fiction) and 'Mirbin' (fiction) etc. For his valuable contribution to the literary world, Prof Terang has been honored with the title of Padmashree by the government of India in the year 1989. Besides this, he has been honored with innumerable other awards citations by the government of socio- political organizations of the state. In the year 2008, he was elected to the prestigious position of the presidentship of Assam Sahitya Sabha, the apex literary body of Assam, a position he held for two consecutive terms.

Writers who have been contributing regularly to the development of Karbi literature through their various compositions include Rongbong Terang, Lunche Timung, Bidarsing Kro, Sabrasi Timung, Longbiram Ingti Kathar, Suren Kramsa, Bidyasing Rangpi, Khayasing Hanse, Bapuram Teron, Ananda Rangphar, Jit Kumar Rangpi, Pari Rangpi, Gandhi Takbi, Sarklim Taro, Langkamar Timung, Deben Timung, Arun Teron, Jarsing Bey, Mandalsing Bey, Sarkrat Hanse, Sing Kro, Logkam Teron, Samsing Hanse, and Dr. Phukan Ch. Phangcho among others. Of late, a new generation of the Karbi writers have started to write both in Karbi, Assamese and also in English language. Among them, the name of Borsing Rongphar, Joysing Tokbi and Kangbura Singnar are important. Upcoming writers like Dharam Sing Teron and Mondal Sing Bey are trying to write on Karbi folk culture in English and have achieved considerable amount of success in this regard.

III.VI.III. College and University Teachers among the Karbis:

Education administration in Karbi Anglong district started with a Deputy Inspector of Schools in 1954. Later on it was elevated in to an Inspector and he now looks after the Primary and Secondary education in the district whereas, the higher education of the district is looked after by an Additional Director. Presently (as on 1st January 2013) the same person are holding both the positions in the district. At the beginning, there was only one high school in the entire district whereas the numbers of ME School were five (5). There was no College in the district till 1964. Padmashree Rongbong Terang is the first College teacher from the Karbi Community. This distinguished person from the Karbi community has already become a legend for the people not only of Karbi Anglong but of the entire North East India . Born in the year 1937 at Langbungdipi village near Bakulia of the then Mikir Hills tract , he completed his school education from Kaki LP School and Lanka High School (presently in Nagaon district). After completing his matriculation by securing first division from Lanka High School in the year 1958, Rongbong Terang got himself enrolled in to Nowgang College in same year. He secured his bachelor's degree from Nowgang College with honours in Assamese in the year 1962. He is one of the first students(out of only two students) from the college to pass with honours in Assamese. After this, he completed his MA in Assamese from the Guwahati University in the year 1966. Prior to the declaration of his MA result , Rongbong Terang started his professional career as a part time teacher, first at Lanka High School and then at Diphu Govt. Girl's High School. In the year 1966, he joined Diphu Govt College as a Lecturer in Assamese and thus became the first person from the Karbi Community to become a college teacher. He later went on to become the Head of the Department of Assamese and then became the Principal the College in the year 2000 and worked for the upliftment of the college till his retirement in the year 2002. During the course of our study it was found that Prof . Rongbong Terang is the second person from the Karbi community to secure a Master's degree, the first person being Pawan Sing Ingti who is senior to Prof. Terang by one year.²¹ It is therefore clear that Prof Rongbong Terang is the pioneer of Higher education from among the Karbis. Likewise, another renowned Karbi academician, Lt. Dr. Phukan Chandra Phangcho , the founder principal of Rangsin College , Donkamukam, Karbi Anglong is the first person from the Karbi Community to obtain an M.Phil degree and later a Ph.D. degree. Lt. Dr.

Phangcho is the first B.Sc. degree holder from the Karbi Community, the first M.Sc., first M.Phil and the first Ph.D from the Karbi community. Born in the year 1946 at Chandrapur , near Guwahati, Dr. Phangcho completed his school education from his native village and then completed his college education from the prestigious Cotton College followed by his Master's degree from the Guwahati University. He obtained his M.Phil degree from the North Eastern Hill University (NEHU) Shillong in the year 1978. In the year 1989 he was awarded the Doctorate degree by the University of Guwahati for his research thesis entitled 'The Karbis: A Spatio-Temporal Analysis in Tribal Geography' and thus he became the first person from the Karbi community to be awarded a Ph.D. degree. Lt. Phangcho conducted his research under the guidance of Dr. Mohammed Taher , Professor of Geography, Guwahati University. Apart from authoring a number of books, he has authored a number research based articles which were published in the leading journals of the country. The book entitled "The Karbis of North East India" authored by Lt. Dr. Phangcho is acclaimed to be one of the most valuable books ever written on the Karbis. He was instrumental in establishing the Rangsin College at a backward place like Donkamukam of West Karbi Anglong in the year 1983 and retired as the full fledged principal of the college. During the course of our study it was also found that Lt. Dr. Phukan Chandra Phangcho is the first person from the Karbi community to become a college principal. He was awarded with the honour of the best citizen of the country by the International Publishing House, Delhi in the year 1999. The path shown by Prof. Rongbong Terang and Dr. Phukan Chandra Phangcho has rightly been followed by a large group of Karbi youths in the subsequent years . Mrs. Lilly Teronpi, is the first Karbi women to obtain a Master's Degree (MA) and is also the first Karbi woman to be a College lecturer when she joined the Patkai Christian College , Dimapur as a lecturer in Education in 1974. Her life and contribution has been studied later in this chapter. Among the second generation of the Karbi youths taking up college lecturership as profession include the names of Nobin Terang, Bernard Rongphar and Miss Tado Terangpi. All the three of them joined Diphu Government College as lecturers after getting through the screening test conducted by the APSC. All the three of them completed their masters degree from NEHU , Shillong and joined Diphu Government College one after the other . Presently, Mr. Nobin Terang is an Associate Professor and the Head of the Department, Chemistry, Diphu Government College and he is also the Vice Principal of the College , whereas , Mr. Bernard Rongphar is an

Associate Professor in Political Science and Miss Tado Terangpi is an Associate Professor and the Head of the department of History , Diphu Govt College. Besides, them, a large number of other Karbi youths have chosen the profession of college lecturer in the recent past. Presently, (as on 01.01.2013) at Diphu Govt College alone as many as 29 (twenty nine) Karbi lecturers are rendering their services in different subjects of all the three streams (i.e. Arts, Science and Commerce) of the college. As far as other five major colleges of the district are concerned , the number of Karbi lecturers employed in them are as follows- six at Thong Nokbe College, Dokmoka, six at Rangsin College Donkamukam , six at Eastern Karbi Anglong College , Sarihajan , five at Rukasen College , Bakuliaghat and two at Hawraghat College, Hawraghat. Apart from this , a large number of Karbi youths are employed as teachers in different schools and other educational institutions of the district .

The following table will give an idea of the present strength (on 1st July 2013) of the Karbi College/University teachers employed under the central and state government run institutions in the district:- (Table-23)

Table 23: Position of Karbi College & University teachers employed in different institutions in KA

Sl. No.	Name of the Institution	Karbi Lecturers employed
1	Assam University Diphu Campus	2
2	Diphu Govt. College	29
3	Thong Nokbe College, Dokmoka	6
4	Rangsin College	6
5	Eastern Karbi Anglong College	6
6	Rukasen College	5
7	Hawraghat College	2

III.VI.IV. Professionals among the Karbis:

At the beginning when the district was first carved out , the professionals were almost nonexistent among the Karbis. However, with the passage of time and within a very short period of the formation of the district, the professionals- such as, doctors, engineers , pleaders and journalists etc. began to emerge among the Karbis. Arlice Enghipi is the first MBBS from the Karbi community. In the 70's of the last century, Dr. Arlice Enghipi, MBBS and her contemporary Dr. Jayshri Hansepi, MBBS infused new hopes and aspirations among the upcoming Karbi youths to create a distinct place for themselves in the society by choosing the prestigious medical profession for them. After them, the Karbi community has been flooded with a large number of doctors both specialists and general practitioners. Each Year, a large number of Karbi youths are joining the medical profession after successfully completing the tough medical education from different medical colleges of the country. At present there are 54(37 under Joint director of Health service-KAAC and 17 Under NRHM) Karbi doctors engaged in different health facilities of the district (As on 1st March 2014). The present Superintendent of the Diphu Civil Hospital, Mrs. Kareng Rongpipi (as on 1st January 2013) also belongs to the Karbi community. Likewise, the number of engineers among the Karbis is also increasing by each passing year. Janbar Phangcho is the first person from the Karbi community to secure an engineering degree (BE). After him, a large number other of Karbi youths have joined the profession and presently there are 104 Karbi Engineers in Assam engaged in both government and private sectors(As on 1st April 2014). Presently, some of the top engineers from the Karbi community engaged in Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) include, Joytsna Katharpi, BE- Executive Engineer (Civil) and Madhu Sing Kro-Executive Engineer (Mechanical).(As on 20.02.2013)With the passage of time the a number of Karbi youths have even started to join the legal professions as lawyers. Lt. Joysing Terang was the first person from the Karbi community to secure a degree in Law (LL.B) from the Guwahati University and joined the legal profession. He later retired as Legal Advisor to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Kolkata region. Presently,at the Diphu Court itself, 05 registered Karbi lawyers are practicing the legal profession.(as on 1st March 2014) Among them, Mrs. Amola Rongpipi is an Additional Public Prosecutor at the Diphu Court. Moreover, as the Karbi students are

pursuing legal degrees at Diphu Law College and other Law colleges of the country and the number of Karbi lawyers is expected to go up rapidly in the immediate future. As far as the Karbi professionals in the field of the journalism is concerned it must be said a large number of educated Karbi youths have adopted journalism as their profession and some of them have achieved much success in the field .The following table will give an idea of the present strength of the Karbi professional classes in Karbi Anglong district. (Table-24)

Table24: Position of the Karbi professional classes in KA district.

Sl.No	Name of the profession	Number of Karbi persons engaged
1	Doctors	54 (as on 1 st March 2014
2	Engineers(govt and private sector)	104(as on 1 st April 2014
3	Lawyers(registered under Diphu Bar association)	5 (as on 1 st March 2014
4	Journalists	214 (as on 1 st January 2014)

Thus the above findings have clearly proved the hypothesis that the middle class among the Karbis do exist.

III.VII. Reasons for Emergence of Middle Class among the Karbis:

Different factors are responsible for the emergence of the middle class among the Karbis .During the course of our study the questionnaire which were circulated among the respondents to collect information contained a question regarding the factors responsible for the emergence of the middle class among the Karbis . The respondents were asked the following question and they were requested to select any one of the options given in the questionnaire itself.

“Q. According to you, which one of the following factors is responsible for the emergence of middle class among the Karbis ?”

- (A) Traditional socio-political system of the Karbis [.....]
- (B) British Administrative system, i.e. appointment of Mauzadars and other similar officials [.....]
- (C) Advent of Christianity among the Karbis [.....]
- (D) Spread of Modern education among the tribe [.....]
- (E) Modern means of communication [.....]
- (F) Urbanization [.....]
- (G) Formation of the District Council [.....]
- (H) All the above factors [.....]
- (I)None of the above [.....]

Out of the 350 sample respondents, 269 (76.86 %) respondents choose the option number (H), i.e. ‘all the above factors’ as their answer, while the remaining 81(23.14 %) of the respondents choose other options as the factors responsible for the emergence of the middle class among the Karbis of Karbi Anglong district of Assam. Thereafter, on the basis of the feedback of the respondents we conducted our study on those factors. After the study, the following factors were found as responsible for the emergence of middle class among the Karbis.

III.VII.I. Traditional Socio-Political System of the Karbis: Elite class of a type existed in the traditional Karbi society from the time immemorial in the form of the ruling chiefs and their dignitaries. Though, this class does not fulfill the criteria to be called a middle class in the accepted sense of the term, still this class enjoyed considerable amount of influence over their fellow tribesmen and in course of time it paved the way for the emergence of a middle class among the Karbis. It is an established fact that the hill tribes, whether Nagas or Kuki-Chins have come to their present habitat from different places of China or South East Asia through Burma in different times. In the course of their migratory movement and sojourn at different

places, the people have evolved very stable and time tested traditional institutions which can withstand the challenges of time. The Karbis being a Kuki Chin origin tribe are not an exception in this regard. The Karbis have their own rich traditional socio-political institutions which have given rise to an elite and respected class among the tribe. Some of the most important traditional socio-political institutions of the Karbis are as follows:-

III.VII.I.I. **Lindokpo** (King): The whole Karbi Karbi land is divided in to three regions called as 'Rongbong' . These regions are Amri, Ronghang and Chinthong²² and each region is under the control of a chief known as the 'Lindokpo'.The traditional administration is maintained by the Lindokpo with the help of several functionaries like , 'Dili', 'Katharbura', 'Dengjia' etc. which constitute the 'Pinpomer' or the Cabinet of the 'Lindokpo' . The legislative, executive and judicial powers are entrusted to the Pinpomer and only when the 'Pinpomer' fails to decide any case it will then be referred to the Lindokpo whose decision will be considered as final. The Ronghang Lindokpo is regarded as the king of the Karbis and his traditional capital is at Niz-Rongkang , which is located about 17 k.m. from Hamren sub-division of the present Karbi Anglong district .The 'Lindokpo' is only a social chief and he has no soldier or weapon at his disposal. However, despite this the office of 'Lindokpo' has always commanded respect and obedience from the ordinary Karbis even today.

III.VII.I.II. **Dili** (Commander): The 'Dili' has to be the most trustworthy person of the 'Lindokpo'. He is responsible for all field activities. The Dili has to attend the cases when they are informed by the 'Habes'. The 'Dili' settles the disputes on behalf of the King and then inform the king about it .

III.VII.I.III. **Habe**(Minister): The 'Habe' is the Head of the village council known as 'Longri' or 'Mei'. The 'Habe' is appointed by the King and he generally settles all kinds of disputes in the village. But he has no power to inflict a sentence of death. A Habe is selected from among those who are well versed in Karbi laws and customs.

III.VII.I.IV. Rong **Sarthe** (Village headman): The ‘Sarthe’ plays a dominant role in the village level administration. He is appointed by the Habe and to assist him there are several functionaries like ‘Basapo’, ‘Pherenke’ etc. He has full control over social as well as judicial matters in relation to his village. He is the most respected person in the village . He is the first person to be invited with honour to attend the functions which take place in the village .

It is thus clear that the Karbis have very well planned and rich traditional socio-political institutions. The office bearers of these institutions have always enjoyed great amount of influence in the Karbi society and they were regarded as the elites of the Karbi society and in course of time a middle class began to emerge from among the children and other close relatives of these elites of the Karbi society. The examples of Sarsing Teron Habe , the founder president of the Karbi Adarbar, the first political organization of the Karbis and his son , Chandra Sing Teron, the third Chief Executive Member (CEM) of the erstwhile Karbi Anglong District Council (KADC), Harsing Ingti Habe, one of the first Executive Members(EM) of the Karbi Anglong District Council in 1952 are the examples of this fact.

III.VII.II. **Impact of British Administration:**

The advent of the colonial administration in to Assam is one of the most important factors responsible for the emergence of middle class among the Karbis. The Britishers after their subjection of Assam introduced the English system of administration in the region and appointed a large number of low ranked officials from among the locals for the purpose of running the large machinery of the revenue and judicial administration of the newly conquered province. The appointment in to these positions did not require much education but zeal and capacity to earn the confidence of the British officials. Taking advantage of the time, a section of the shrewd, enterprising and farsighted local people were able to grab important positions in the field of the revenue and judicial administration newly introduced by the Britishers in the region . These advanced sections of the locals managed to get appointment as tehsilders, mauzadars (revenue collector),

mandals,(village accountant and surveyor) interpreters, vaccinators etc and thus became the pioneers for the emergence of a middle class in Assam. The same conditions are found as applicable in case of the Karbis also. Referring to the emergence of the middle class in the hill areas of the North East , Professor Lal Dena viewed that, “The emergence of the tribal middle class was a colonial creation.... In the wake of colonial administration, there came the opportunity of government services and small contract works and of course earning as labourer was already there. The subsistence barter economy was gradually replaced by monetized economy.”²³

The British Government became the principal authority of the entire North East India following the Treaty of Yandabo on 24th February 1826. Thus, like other people of the region, the Karbis too first came under the British administration from this time. Soon after the assumption of power in Assam, the colonialists introduced the British model of administration in the region. As a result, some reformatory measures in respect of land settlement and the collection of revenue from that time onward was introduced. It was based on the actual measurement of land and the regular assessment of it. Under this reform, a district was divided in to mauzas or mahals , each of which was looked after by a mauzadar appointed from among the locals and his duty was to collect land revenue from all the families residing within the territorial jurisdiction of his mauza and deposit it to the government annually .

Under the mauzadari system introduced in 1834-35, the then existing Karbi inhabited areas at the foot of the Karbi Hills, called as the Mikirpar Mahal was divided in to nine smaller mauzas or duars and each of the newly created mauza was placed under a Karbi mauzadar(revenue collector) or ‘bikhoya’. The names of some of the prominent Karbi inhabited mauzas created at that time are shown in the following table²⁴ (Table-25)

Table 25: The names the Karbi inhabited mauzas created during 1834-35

Sl. No	Name of the Mauza
1	Duar Bagori
2	Duar Bamuni
3	Duar Salona
4	Rongkhang
5	Duar Amla Parbat
6	Duar Dikharu
7	Duar Kothiatali,
8	Jamuna Par,
9	Langpher

In the very first year of the introduction of the mauzadari system in the area, the revenue collected from the Karbis for the strip of land known as Mikirpar Mahal was approximately Rs. 5,002.44 ²⁵ Further, a sum of Rs.38/- per annum was also collected from the Karbis for the four lakes (locally known as 'beels') they have been fishing before this time. Those four lakes are shown the following table- (Table-26)

Table 26: Names of the fishing lakes in Mikirpar mahal during British period

Sl. No.	Names of the fishing lakes
1	Mori Kallang
2	Maharool
3	Pathori
4	Jamguri.

The Karbis also claimed to have been using five river ferry points or ghats rent free from the times of the Ahoms. Those ghats were- (Table-27)

Table 27: Names of the river ferry points used by the Karbis during the Ahom periods

Sl.No.	River ferry points
1	Dipholu ghat
2	Senchua Mukh
3	Auniati, Mikirhat
4	Nikamuli

The total revenue charged from them was Rs.12/- annually. The revenue collected from the ‘ghats’ and the lakes, however were in the form of kind amounting to 12 poorhas (or 4 founds) of rice and fish respectively. The revenue was collected from the whole tribe and not from any individual family or household. But in the year 1837-1838, the system of taking revenue in kind was abolished and the Karbi households or families were divided in to three classes and each class was taxed at the rates shown in the following table (Table-28)

Table 28: Amount of revenues paid by per Karbi household during 1837-38

Sl. No.	Grade of household	Amount of revenue per Household annually
1	Household containing more than 4 cultivators	Rs 4/-
2	Household containing 3 or 4 cultivators	Rs. 3/-.
3	Household containing not more than 2 cultivators	Rs.1.5/-

However, the system of collecting house tax grade wise failed to evoke the desired result and the government introduced another revenue system whereby each household was to pay Rs.2.52 annually. This system though proved unsuccessful again was followed till 1851-1852. The newly introduced land revenue system by the British did not at all affect the Karbis living in the hill areas at the initial stage . The Karbis living in the lower portions such as the valleys of the Kopoli and Langpi of Nagaon (now in Karbi Anglong) practically came under the cadastral areas.²⁶ By

this new administrative system the individual Karbi families became land owners and thus they earned the right over their property. Earlier, in a Karbi village, the land was owned by the entire village under the guardianship of the village headman known as the Sarthe. As a result of the permanent settlement, the community system of cultivation known as 'Jirkedam' began to vanish from the Karbi society and this was in a way responsible for infusing a sense of self development among the Karbis. The permanently settled Karbis concentrated on production of more crops to earn more profit and this in the course of time paved the way for the emergence of the middle class among the tribe. Gradually, the Mauzadari system of land revenue and settlement began to be introduced even in the hill areas of the Karbi hills. We find the mention of some of the hill Mauzas of the then Nowgong district in Sir Charles Lyall's famous book *The Karbis* (originally published as *The Mikirs*) published in 1908. Referring to the existence of the Karbi mauzas, Lyall viewed "The following are the Mikir mauzas, or territorial divisions including a number of villages, in Nowgong district- Duar Bagori, Duar Bamuni, Duar Salona, Rongkang, Duar Amla Parbat, Duar Dikharu, Duar Kothiatoli, Jamuna-par, Langpher, Lumding Mikir. The last two are new mauzas, the opening out of which is due to the Assam-Bengal Railway, which traverses the tract. Each mauza has a Mikir mauzadar or bikhoya."²⁷

The mauzadars were given responsibility of collecting the land revenue from the villagers and deposit the same to the British treasury annually. In return, they were given a certain percentage of the revenue collected by him (initially it was 12 ½ % of the total revenue collected) and the amount was sufficient enough for the mauzadars to live an affluent life. In the collection of the revenues the mauzadars were actively helped by the sarkari gaonburahs and in the villages where there was no sarkari gaonburahs, the village headman or the Sarthes. The mauzadars and his associates commanded great respect, obedience, influence and also considerable amount of fear from the ordinary Karbis for whom the Mauzadar was the embodiment of the colonial power in to his area and thus the mauzadars became the real elites in their respective areas. In the words of Prof. Tanmay Bhattacharjee, "During the whole course of the British rule, Karbi land was inaccessible and very much unsought after. The British only established some revenue mauzas under mauzadars for revenue collections. The mauzadars were the real elites in their respective areas."²⁸ Actually, the Karbi middle

class began to emerge initially from among the section of the Karbi mauzadars and their subordinate officials. In the subsequent years, a number of Karbi mauzadars went on to become the destiny makers of the Karbi community as a whole. The first Karbi to adopt Christianity was a Mauzadar. His name was Rongbong and he adopted Christianity under the guidance of the American Baptist missionary, Miles Bronson in 1863²⁹ and became an active member of the Nagaon Baptist mission. The reason why Miles Bronson chose Rongbang mauzadr for conversion into Christianity was his idea that being a mauzadar, Rongbong would be able to exert his influence to persuade his fellow tribesmen to adopt Christianity. Another famous educated Karbi mauzadar who by dint of his intelligence became very close with some of the high ranking British officers of his time was Sardoka Perrin Kay. His original Karbi name was Sardoka Ingti and after his conversion into Christianity, he adopted the name of his sponsor at Baptism, Perrin Kay and became an active member of the American Baptist Mission at Nowgong. In the year 1904, Sardoka was appointed as the Mauzadar of the then Mikir mauza of Duar Bagori. But even prior to his appointment as a mauzadar, Sarkoda came to prominence because of his close proximity with Edward Stack, the then Secretary to the Chief Commissioner of Assam. Sardoka Perrin Kay was the chief aid to Edward Stack when the latter prepared the Papers on the Mikirs in 1884. Sardoka helped Edward Stack in compilation of all the information about the Karbis and these information were later greatly used by Sir Charles Lyall in writing his much acclaimed book, The Mikirs. After the death of Stack, Sardoka served for many years in the Assam Secretariat and helped in the preparation of the specimens of Mikir for the Linguistic Survey in 1902 and this was followed by his transfer as Mauzadar of Duar Bagori mauza in September 1904.³⁰

Another Karbi mauzadar who was the guiding force in the creation of the Karbi Anglong district for the Karbis and later securing a District Council for the tribe was Khorsing Terang mauzadar of Duar Disa mauza. Khorsing was born in the year 1906 and his father, Longkam Terang was also the mauzadar of the same mauza till his death. Khoring Terang later went on to become the first Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) in the year 1937 from the then Mikir Hills tract and thus became the sole representative of the Karbis in the Provincial Assembly. He along with Semson Sing Ingti, the second Karbi graduate (1st Karbi male graduate) and a brilliant

product of the British administration was instrumental in the formation of the Karbi Anglong district for the Karbis in the year 1951. Later, Khorsing mauzadar became the first CEM of the erstwhile Mikir Hills (now Karbi Anglong) District Council in the year 1952, a post he held till his death in the year 1955. Khorsing mauzadar's brother Soi Soi Terang also was one of the founders of the Karbi-Adarbar in 1946 and later became an Executive Member (EM) in the first Executive Council (EC) of the then Mikir Hills District Council formed by his elder brother Khorsing in the year 1952. Even after the death of his brother, Soi Soi continued to be EM in a number of subsequent ECs of the District Council formed by different other CEMs. Later he became a Minister of the Government of Assam. Another prominent Karbi leader emerging from a Karbi Mauzadar family was Joysing Doloi. He was one of the main organizers of the public meeting held at Kathalguri in 1945 (presently at Nagaon district) to discuss the modalities for the formation of a national organization of the Karbis. It was in that meeting itself an unanimous decision was taken for the formation of the Karbi-Adarbar, the first national organization of the Karbis which was formally launched in a meeting at Hawaipur in 1946. At that time Joysing Doloi was serving as a teacher at Kothalguri L.P School. Later he went on to become the fifth CEM of the erstwhile Mikir Hills District Council in 1972 and continued to dominate Karbi politics for a long period of time after that. Joysing Doloi's father Ching Kang Terang was the mauzadar of the then Mikir mauza of Duar Salana and he was also one of the founding executive committee members of the Karbi Adarbar. Satra Sing Teron, another stalwart of the Karbi politics and one of most important representatives of the first generation of the Karbi middle class also sprang up in to prominence from a Karbi mauzadar family of the post independence period. His father, Mohansing Teron was the mauzadar of the then Mikir mauza of Duar Amla. Chatra Sing Teron went on to become the third CEM of the then Mikir Hills District Council in 1957 and later a Cabinet Minister of the Assam Government. His life and political contribution will be studied in the next chapter of the research. In the formation of the Karbi-Adarbar and the subsequent movement for the creation of the Mikir Hills District (now Karbi Anglong) a number of other mauzadars played crucial roles. It was found that some of the prominent Karbi mauzadars the list of which includes, - Biren Teron mauzadar of Duar Amla, Khoya Sing Rognahng mauzadar of Borneuria and Thong Rongpi mauzadar of Deithor played important roles in the formation of the Karbi Adarbar.

Apart from securing some of the important positions in the revenue administration, some of the Karbis also managed to get posts in some other fields of the British administration. An intelligent Karbi named, Sardkoa Perrin Kay, a convert of the American Baptist Mission at Nowgong who occupied an important post in the Assam Secretariat and helped in the preparation of the specimens of 'Mikir' for the Linguistic Survey in 1902. The life and contribution of Sardoka has already been discussed earlier in this chapter. Another prominent product of the British administration among the Karbis was Thengkur Sing Ingti, popularly known as Thengkur Pandit among his contemporaries and the father of the illustrious Semson Sing Ingti. Apart from actively helping the missionaries in preaching Christianity among the Karbis, Thengkur Sing worked as a Dubhasi (interpreter clerk) at the office of the Golaghat Deputy Commissioner. In the year 1937, Thengkur Sing Ingti unsuccessfully fought election for the member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) from the Mikir Hill tract against Khrosing Terang mauzadar. Later on, Thengkur Sing along with his son Semson Sing Ingti played a significant role in the formation of the Karbi Adarbar, the first national organization of the Karbis in the year 1946. Song Bey, another famous Karbi personality who first worked as a vaccinator at Golaghat dispensary and later joined as a Dubashi (interpreter clerk) at Golaghat deputy Commissioner's office where he came in close contact with Thengkur Sing Ingti. Song Bey later played a key role in the formation of the Karbi Anglong district along with his contemporaries. However, the most important and outstanding product of the British administration among the Karbis was Semson Sing Ingti, who later went on to be revered as the father of the Karbi nationality. He was the first male graduate (2nd overall) from the Karbi community and in 1934 he became the first person from the community to be appointed as the sub-inspector of schools for the then Mikir Hills tract of Nowgong district. Semson Sing was the guiding force in the Karbi movement for the creation of a separate district for the tribe and securing a district council for the tribe under the 6th Schedule of the Indian Constitution. For his unparalleled contribution towards the upliftment of the Karbi tribe he is revered by the Karbis as the father of their nationality.

III.VII.III. **Advent of Christianity:** Another most important factor that contributed towards the emergence of the middle class among the Karbis is the advent of the Christianity among the tribe. Christianity was not only responsible for the eradication of the aged old prejudices and superstitions from the Karbis converts but being an international religion, Christianity inculcated a global outlook among the members of the tribe who so long lived in isolation almost completely cut off from the rest of country. The Christian missionaries were the first to establish schools in the inaccessible and densely forested Karbi inhabited areas when communication with these areas was almost unimaginable for a common man of the plain areas of the country. Though their main objective was to spread their religion, but they also undertook to spread literacy, render medical aid, open schools and other educational institutions, etc. among the Karbis. The schools though solely established for the purpose preaching, introduced the Karbis to the rest of the world and infused among them a sense of self respect, self preservation, self development and self assertion. As a result of spread of Christianity and education in the early days, a few Karbi families at Tika hills got the opportunity to move higher along the socio-cultural ladder. There was a time in Karbi society when going to school was considered the conversion to Christianity. The Karbi word 'sekure' meaning school also denoted Christianity to the simple and easy going Karbis of the early period. It is therefore quite natural that the majority of the first generation of the Karbis middle class emerged from among the Christians of the Karbis. Most of the destiny makers of the Karbis, like, Thengkur Sing Ingit, his son, Semson Sing Ingit (revered as the father of the Karbi nationality), Sardoka Ingti better known as Sardoka Perrian Kay, Song Bey, Reverend Handrowel Millick, Jhon Kathar, Davild Long Enghi etc. were the creation of the American Baptist mission. All the above mentioned Karbi personalities except Sardoka Perrian Kay conceptualized the Karbi-Adarbar, the first national organization of the Karbis which later became the sole mouth piece of the Karbis in their bargaining with the Britishers and later with the Constituent Assembly for securing maximum political benefits for the Karbis. It was because of the efficient and farsighted leadership of the Karbi-Adarbar, that the Karbis were bestowed not only with a district of their own but a special protection under the 6th Schedule of the Indian Constitution. On the other hand the contribution of Sardoka has already been mentioned the earlier study in this chapter.

The American Baptist Mission was the first Christian denomination to start preaching in Assam. In 1836, Major Jenkins, the Commissioner of Assam, asked Calcutta Baptists to start a mission on the frontiers with chief reference to the Shans or Khamti tribes. Mr. Nathan Brown and Mr. Oliver Cutter with their printing press were sent from Burma in 1836 and they established a mission centre at Sadyia. They travelled on the river Brahmaputra by boat to Sadyia. In April 1837, Mr. Miles Bronson and Rev. Jacob Thomas came to join them. While traveling onward to Assam and up the Brahmaputra River, Thomas was killed suddenly by a falling tree from the river bank. After the tragic incident, Dr. Miles Bronson began working among the Nagas in Jaipur. Because of his ill health Dr. Miles Bronson left his work among the Nagas and settled in Nagaon. Then their mission was focused on the Assamese and the mission centers were at Nagaon, Sivsagar and Guwahati. Then Bronsons, having shifted to Nowgong, and in the year 1846 on January 25th Dr. Miles Bronson established Nagaon Baptist Church³¹ and thus Nagaon became the centre of preaching Christianity among the tribals including the Karbis who were living in Nagaon and its neighboring hill tracts.

The Karbis first came in to contact with the Baptist Christian missionaries of Nagaon in 1858 when some of the Karbi boys got admitted at Nagaon Mission School established on 1846. By that time Miles Bronson became familiar with some of the Karbis at the Nagaon market after which he got interested on the tribe and planned to preach Christianity among them. After securing necessary permission from the Home Board of America in this regard, Miles Bronson and the Guwahati based Baptist missionary Willaim Ward made an extensive exploratory tour of the Karbi Hills in the year 1857. Satisfied with the report of Bronson and Ward, the Home Board of America appointed C.F. Tallman to preach Christianity among the Karbis with his base at Nagaon. However, Tallman could not get much success in this regard due to his ill health. Moreover, at that time, the entire Karbi inhabited areas were severely affected by the fatal malaria disease and Tallman himself got infected by it as a result of which he voluntarily retired from the responsibility in 1861. After this, missionaries like E.P. Scot, R.E. Neighbor came after one another to work among the Karbis, of course with their base at Nagaon. In the mean time, Miles Bronson himself baptized the first Karbi named, Rong Bong in the year 1863, just one month

before the arrival of E.P. Scott among the Karbis. In 1871, R. E. Neighbor joined Nagaon Baptist mission with the assignment of preaching among the Karbis. Neighbor, did some translation work of the gospels in to Karbi language and was able to establish some schools. He even travelled in to the interior Karbi inhabited areas for the purpose of preaching. But soon he fell victim of unhealthy climate of the area and returned home in 1878. By 1886 there were 43 Karbi Christians – 41 in Nowgong Church and 2 in Guwahati Church.³² Till that period a Karbi Church was yet to be established, though a Karbi named Ser Bey was actively involved in the establishment of the Kohima Church in 1880-81. In the course of our study it was found that two Karbi persons namely, Tungkrung Timung and Karabamon Ingti, after adopting Christianity travelled to United States of America (USA) in 1885 along with a Baptist missionary. While Tungkrung Timung stayed back at USA, Karabamon Ingti came back to his native place³³. Karabamon Ingti was the father of famous , Thenkur Sing Ingti and his grandson Semson Sing Ingti, went on to play the most crucial role in the formation of the Karbi Anglong district. Nevertheless, after the departure of Rev. Neighbor from Nagaon, the preaching work among the Karbis came to a complete halt for the next five years.

In 1890 the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (ABFMS) appointed Penn E. Moore to the Assam mission field. He was married to Miss Charlotte Pursell. At first they were stationed at Nowgong, but soon they realized that if preaching is to be successful among the Karbis they must establish a mission centre among tribe itself. They chose a tiny village called Krungjeng (now Kolonga) as the first mission centre in this hilly region in 1894. They appointed Serlok, a young Karbi evangelist for the mission field among the Karbis . After a few years, a young American (English by Birth), John Moses Carvell, sailed for India to assist the missionaries in Assam. He married Miss Amy of Nowgong , and together they joined Rev. and Mrs. Moore. Finding Krungjeng unhealthy and unsuitable, they shifted the centre to another place called Tika Hills, a place situated between Hamren and Baithalango in 1897. Both the couples continued to stay in the area and concentrated in evangelical work among the Karbis against the adverse climatic condition of the region. They learned the Karbi language within one year of their stay in the Karbi areas and could fluently interact with the locals in their language. They established a primary school

and primary health centre at Tika Hills and kept themselves busy with various translation and evangelistic works. It was this centre where the first school education and the composition of primary school books in Karbi and the translation of the Bible in to that language and such other activities began. Thengkur Sing Ingti, one of the earliest Karbis to accept Christianity and the father of more famous Semson Sing Ingti , the founder of the Karbi Anglong district (then known as Mikir Hills) was as a teacher at the Tika Hills Mission School. On August 1, 1897 Mrs. Amy Carvell died. For some time the missionary work was affected due to the untimely death of Mrs. Carvel .Later on that year Rev. J.M.Carvell met an English lady, Alice Parker, who was staying at Nowgong and on December 13, 1897 they got married. In that year they baptized six people, and with the help of the new converts they constructed a temporary church building at Tika Hills in 1897, even though the congregation consisted of not more than fourteen baptized members. They began to involve themselves deeply in publication works after setting up a printing press at Tika in 1893. In 1912, Alice Parker Carvell left for the USA with their 7 years son .The missionary work at Tika received a serious jolt in 1916, when the Mission house was completely destroyed due to severe lightning. Following the incident, the missionaries left Tika Hills in 1917 but they continued their evangelical works among the Karbis from Nagaon Mission centre. Rev.Moore left India in 1919, but Carvell stayed behind and concentrated on the missionary works among the Karbis. Even after his retirement he worked alone for twenty months as an independent missionary, making the spreading of the gospel his primary duty. He built a modest house for himself near Tika, and was getting ready to build another at a higher altitude when for two weeks he suffered from malaria and died on October 29, 1925. As per his wish he was put to rest at Tika hills near the grave of his first wife Lt. Amy Carvell who also died at Tika while engaged in missionary works. After the death of J.M. Carvell , no missionary came to Tika Hills but they continued their evangelical works among the Karbis from the Nagaon and Golaghat Mission.

Apart from the Baptist mission, the Catholic mission is also very active in the district and running a series of educational institutions and medical health centers at some the remotest corners of the present district of Karbi Anglong. On January 25, 1914, a group of six Karbi villagers of Marjong village of Umswai of the present West Karbi

Anglong led by one Lantuk Hanse, trekked across to Umtyrkhang in Khasi Hills beyond the river Umiam, to be baptized by Christopher Becker Sds. Thus the first Catholic community of Umswai and of Karbi Anglong was born.³⁴ The Donbosco and Christ Joyoti Schools are run by the Catholic mission.

The Karbi Christians are to be found mainly in Karbi Anglong district and are divided in to several denominations as shown in the following table- (Table-29) .

Table 29: Division of Karbi Christians of KA as per their denominations

Sl.No.	Divisioons of the Karbi Christians in KA
1	American Baptist,
2	Welsh Mission,
3	Church of God,
4	Baptist Federation
5	Baptist Mid Mission,
6	Seventh Day Adventist and
7	Catholic

Though their main purpose was preaching Christianity among the Karbis, The Christian missionaries, particularly the American Baptist missionaries were responsible for giving rise to a *Renaissance* in the Karbi society and contributed immensely towards the emergence of the middle class among the Karbis. The missionaries were the pioneers of education among the tribe and were the first to introduce the Karbis with the Western ideals of development, democracy, justice, liberty and equality etc. Christianity was also responsible for broadening the outlook of the Karbi society which was so long living with aged old prejudices and superstitions. In the pre independence period, Tika Hills became of centre of education and the development of the Karbi language and literature. It is for this reason that the literary rate among the Karbis of Tika is much higher than the rest of the district and the first generation of the educated Karbi middle class mainly

emerged from this tiny village of the then Mikir Hills. Thengkur Sing Ingti who was one of the earliest Karbis to adopt Christianity became the symbol of this *Renaissance* among the Karbis. His illustrious son, Semson Sing Ingti was the first male graduate among the Karbis. The life and contribution of Semson Sing Ingti towards the upliftment of the Karbi nationality as a whole will be studied in details in the next chapter of the research. The other children of Thengkur Sing Ingti rose to prominence in their respective fields and thus in a way, the entire 'Ingti' family became the vanguard of the Karbi middle class. The eldest of Thengkur Sing Ingti's children, Lt. Junaki Sailabala Ingtipi was the principal of Sion Jiyora College, Golaghat (Theological college), Semson Sing was his second child; Lt. Lawrence Sing Ingti, the third child was an IAS officer. He was the first Karbi IAS officer (nominated), the fourth son Ronald Ingti joined RAF as Radio Officer during the Second world war and later became an Additional Superintendent of Police, the fifth child, Pratap Sing Ingti retired as Chief Conservator of Forest, Meghalaya; Maya Ingtipi, the youngest in the family was a Special Officer, Social Welfare, Tribal Areas Department, Govt. of Meghalaya and was a Noble Prize nominee in 2005.³⁵ It was found that all the children of Semson Sing Ingti, i.e. grandchildren of Thengkur Sing Ingti also rose to prominence in their respective fields. Pawan Sing Ingti, the first child of Semson Sing Ingti, an IAS cadre of West Bengal Batch of 1966 has retired as a top bureaucrat of the West Bengal Government and is presently settled at Calcutta. It may be mentioned that Pawan Sing Ingti was the first Karbi to get through the competitive exam of the IAS examination and joined the administrative service. Pawan Sing Ingti has also the rare distinction of being the first Karbi to obtain a Master's degree (MA). Semson Sing Ingti's second son Lt. Dr. Tapan Sing Ingti was the Superintendent of the Diphu Civil Hospital, his third son Ajay Sing Ingti was a bank officer. Notably, Priyanka Ingti (Bose), the first Karbi woman to secure IAS directly also happens to be the granddaughter of Semson Sing Ingti. Priyanka, who is a Himachal Pradesh cadre of the IAS of 2004 batch is the daughter of Pawan Sing Ingti, the eldest son of Semson Sing Ingti who was first Karbi to be directly recruited for IAS.

Apart from the famous 'Ingti' family, a number of other Karbi Christians rose to prominence and became the standard bearer of the first generation of the Karbi middle

class. The meteoric rise of a Karbi lady named, Kabon Neli Timungpi , better known as Bonily Khongman in to prominence has already been studied earlier. Her father Mon Sodar Timung , a Christian of Umpani village of present West Karbi Anglong was a doctor by profession during the British period . Influenced by modern outlook and an urge for the better future for his children, Mon Sodar Timung and his wife Flourisa Kropi shifted to Jowai (presently in Meghalaya) where in 23rd June 1913, their fourth child Kabon Neli was born. Dr. Mon Sodar Timung send her daughter Kabon Neili to Shilling to get the best of the education available at that time. Later, Kabon Neli obtained her bachelor's degree from Calcutta and earned the distinction of being the first Karbi graduate among the Karbis and the rest of her life is a history in itself. Likewise, Dr. Phukan Chandra Phangocho, the first Karbi to obtain a Doctorate Degree (Ph.D) was also a Christian. Mrs. Lilly Teronpi, the first Karbi women to obtain a Master's degree (MA) and the first Karbi woman to be a college lecturer is also a product of the Baptist mission. Born in 1947 at Tika Hills, Lilly Teronpi completed her schooling first from Nagaon Mission School and then from Golaghat Mission School. She completed her graduation from Lady Keane's College, Shillong in 1970 and then obtained Master's degree (M.A. in Education) from the Guwahati University in 1972 ,in the process she became the first Karbi woman to obtain an MA degree. When she joined Patkai Christian College, Dimapur as a lecturer in 1974, she became the first Karbi woman to be a college lecturer. Presently, she is the Managing Director (MD) and the Principal of the Badan Memorail English High School, Diphu. Incidentally, her daughter, Anjok Korpi(Gracy) is married to the son of Maya Ingtipi, the youngest daughter of Thengkur Sing Ingti. Her father Mesning Teron, a government mondal (land surveyor) during the British period who adopted Christianity under the influence of the Tika Hills Baptist Mission actively took part in the quit India Movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi in 1942.³⁶ Mrs Lilly Teronpi has been awarded with the honour of the 'Best Karbipi' (best Karbi woman of the Year) in 2007. Some of the other Christian Karbis from Tika village who rose to prominence include, Jhon Ingti Kathar , the retired IAS who served as a Deputy Commissioner(DC) of Karimganj district of Assam and his sister Larlim Ingtipi (ACS), who has retired as the Principal Secretary of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council(KAAC) . Among the other prominent Christian Karbis active in the political filed of the district include, Dr. Jayanta Romgpi , ex-CEM , of the erstwhile Karbi Anglong District Council and ex-MP , Diphu ST Parliamentary Constituency, Jotson

Bey ex-CEM-KAAC, Elwin Teron ex-Member of the Autonomous Council (MAC), Prof. Angelus Terang ex-MAC, etc and all of these Karbi personalities are the prominent pro-autonomy/ separate state movement leaders of the district presently.

III.VII.IV. Impact of Modern Education: Another most important factor that is responsible for the emergence of the middle class among the Karbis is the impact of Western education. The role of the American Baptist missionaries in spreading the light of modern education among the Karbis in the post independence period has already been found in the preceding discussion. The Karbis first came in contact with the modern education when some of the Karbi boys got enrolled at the Nagaon Mission School in 1858 and after this a number of industrious and farsighted Karbi parents, mainly belonging to the Christian Karbis realizing the importance of the modern education began to send their children to the schools. It is therefore, quite natural that the majority of the first generation of the Karbi middle class sprung up from the Christian community. Among the first generation of the educated Karbis, included, Sardoka Ingti, better known as Sardoka Perrin Kay, a product of the Nowgong Baptist Mission. Sardoka, after his conversion into Christianity pursued western education and completed his P.U. (Pre- University) from the Presidency College, Calcutta and thus became the first highly modern educated person from among the Karbi community. His life and enormous contribution towards introducing the Karbis to the rest of the world has already been found in our above study. The journey of the Karbis in the path of the modern education as started by Sardoka Perrin Kay was fruitfully followed by some of his contemporaries and a large section of the subsequent generations of the Karbis, even from the non Christian sections of the tribe. Among other prominent first generation of the educated sections of the Karbis include, Thengkur Sing Ingti and all of his children, including Semosn Sing who is worshipped by the Karbis as the father of the Karbi nationality, Kabon Neli Timungpi, better known as Bonily Khongman(ex-MP and ex-Chairman UPSC), Barelong Terang(founder member, Karbi-Adarbar and Ex-Minister, Assam) Song Bey (founder member, Karbi Adarbar and social reformer) Nihang Rongpher (2nd CEM), Chatra Sing Teron (3rd CEM and ex- Cabinet Minister, Assam), Chandra Sing Teron (5th CEM), Joy Sing Doloi(7th CEM), Prof Rongbong Terang(first Karbi Professor and Padmashree awardee), Dr. Phukan Chandra

Phangcho (first Ph.D degree holder), Mrs. Lily Teronpi(first woman MA), Janbar Phangcho(first B.E) and Pawan Sing Ingti (first directly recruited IAS), Arlice Inghipi (first MBBS) etc. All the above mentioned educated Karbi personalities were able to secure immense success in their respective fields and thus became the symbol of the of the Karbi middle class. However it was found that at the initial period, the modern education was confined only to a handful of the Karbis who were fortunate enough to go to educational institutions situated beyond the Karbi inhabited areas. Post independence period witnessed a sea change in the educational scenario among the Karbis. After the formation of a District Council for the Karbis, modern education gradually but steadily began to spread among them and soon the next generation of the Karbis middle class emerged to take over the charge of leading the socio-economic, political and cultural life the tribe.

At the time of the independence of the country, the educational scenario of the district which was then known as the Mikir Hills was quite bleak. Illiteracy was the order of the day and almost the whole population was outside the orbit of formal education. In 1946, the entire area of Mikir Hills tract falling under the district of Nowgong and Sibsagar had only two M.E. Schools, namely, Dengaon Merkok M.E. School and Deithor Private M.E. School, while, there was not a single High school in the entire tract inhabited by the Karbis even till 1953.

It was only after the formation of the Mikir Hills district in 1951 and granting a District Council to the tribe in 1952, the educational scenario among the Karbis began to improve considerably . The District Council up to 1960 established 97 primary schools and appointed 127 teachers to run these schools. The list of the number of primary, ME and High Schools in Karbi Anglong from 1953 to 1977 is given in the table below³⁷ (Table-30)

Table 30: Number of primary, ME and High Schools in KA from 1953 to 1977

Year	Primary School	ME School	High School
1953	180	9	nil
1961	360	29	8
1971	612	72	29
1975	740	80	39

With the establishment of more schools, the literacy rate in the district improved considerably over the years. The census year wise literacy rate of the district from 1951 to 1991 is shown in the table given below:³⁸ (Table-31)

Table 31: The census year wise literacy rate of the district from 1951 to 1991

Year	United Mikir and NC Hills (literacy rate)	Assam (literacy rate)
1951	5.7 %	18.2 %
1961	17.4 %	27.4 %
Year	Karbi Anglong *	Assam
1971	19.2 %	28.3 %
1981 (no census in Assam)	NA	NA
1991	45.57 %	52.89 %

N.B.-The districts of Karbi Anglong (then Mikir Hills) and NC Hills were bifurcated in 1970.

The above table gives a clear indication of the rapid spread of the education in the district over the years. Further, the census report of 2011, has estimated the literacy rate of Karbi Anglong district as 73.52 % which is a clear indication of the steep rise in the literacy rate of the district in the post independence period. The Karbis have made good use of the educational facilities available at their disposal. The rapid increase in the literacy rate among the Karbis is responsible for giving rise to a large section of middle class among the tribe. The rapid rise of the literacy rate in the district is the direct result of the opening of a large number of schools and colleges in the district. As compared to the limited number of educational facilities available

during the initial period of its formation, the district of Karbi Anglong presently has a large number of educational and vocational institutions.

The list of the educational institutions presently (as on 1st January 2013) regulated and funded by the KAAC is given below.³⁹ (Table-32)

Table 32: Number of educational institutions (School level) regulated and funded by the KAAC

Sl. No.	Type of schools	Number of schools
1	Primary Schools	1897
2	ME Schools	336
3	High Schools	256
4	Higher Secondary Schools	20

Apart from the above schools, the district has a large number of private educational institutions managed either by the individual persons, NGOs or the missionaries.

The list of the number of institutions of the higher education in the district is given below-(Table-33)

Table 33: Number of institutions of the higher education in the K

Sl.No.	Type of the educational institutions	Numbers
1	Government College	1
2	Provincialised Colleges	4
3	Venture colleges	8
4	B.Ed. College	1
5	Law College	1
6	ITI and	1
7	Full fledged campus of the Assam University,	1
8	Medical college *	1
9	Polytechnic college	1
10	Nursing College *	1

*(*The construction works of the medical college and nursing college at Diphu are going on in full swing)*

Significantly, the Diphu Government College , which was established in 1964 has brought higher education within the reach of the poor Karbis who could hardly imagine to go to other places for higher education. The College has all the three streams of Arts, Science and Commerce and majority of the students of the college belong to the local tribal communities among whom the Karbis are the numerous. A large number of the present generation of the Karbi middle class are actually the product of the Diphu Government College . In this context , mention may be made of Bidya Sing Engleng (ex-CEM and present MLA), Mongal Sing Ingti (ex-CEM), Dr. Jayanta Rongpi (ex-CEM and ex-MP), Monsing Rongpi (ex-MLA), Dharam Sing Teron (ex-MLA), Hemsing Tisso (ex-MLA), Jagat Sing Ingti (ex-MLA) and majority of the present EMs of the KAAC are the product of the Diphu Govt. College . Almost all the present generation of the top Karbi bureaucrats had their college education in this particular college and therefore it can clearly be said that the contribution of the Diphu Govt College towards the emergence of the modern generation of the Karbi middle class is the most. In the words of Prof Tanmay Bhattacharjee, “ The Diphu Government College has become the hub of the Karbi educational resurgence and here the government has come in a big way to provide the real stimulus to the resurgence.”⁴⁰

It is therefore very clear from the above discussion that, education played a very important role in the emergence of the Karbi middle class. It is because of the spread of the modern education among the Karbis that by the end of the British period , the consciousness for revivalism came to the minds of the few educated and enlightened Karbis . It is this group of people led by Semson Sing Ingti, the first graduate from the community insisted for the creation of a separate district for the Karbis by taking the territory of their habitation for their all round development. The subsequent Karbi movements for the creation of an autonomous state and separate state are also led by the educated middle class of the Karbi society. These educated sections of the modern Karbi middle class led by Dr. Jayanta Rongpi(MBBS,DGS), Holiram Terang(BA) and Elwin Terang (M.A. in Pol.Sc. from J.N.U.) etc. were able to generate a new wave of socio-political consciousness among the Karbi youths during the later parts of the 1980s and the entire decade of the 1990s. The present Congress ruled Karbi Angong Autonomous Council (KAAC) is also directly guided by veteran

Biren Sing Ingti, MP and ex- Union Minister who himself is one of the highly educated persons(M.A.,LL.B.) among the Karbis .

III.VII.V. Creation of the District Council: The granting of a District Council to the Karbis under the 6th Schedule of the Indian Constitution is one the most landmark event in the history of the Karbi tribe as it provided an opportunity to the tribe to directly take part in the developmental activities of the district and formulate policies for the rapid socio-economic of the ethnic group. At the same time it opened new vistas for a section of the industrious and smart Karbis to change their fortune and climb up in the social ladder by availing the different facilities provided by the District Council. The District Council is therefore responsible for the emergence of the divergent sections of the middle classes among the Karbis. Karbi Anglong district came in to being on 17th November 1951 and on 23rd June 1952, the district was granted a District Council under the provision of the 6th Schedule of the Indian Constitution. In the year 1995, the Karbi Anglong District Council (KADC) was up graded to the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council(KAAC). The detail in this regard has already been given at the initial part of this chapter under the heading, ‘Karbi Anglong District’.

One of the immediate outcomes of the creation of the District Council for the Karbis was the emergence of a political middle class among the tribe. The Council provided an opportunity to a section of the politically ambitious Karbis who could hardly imagine to take part in the political decision making process in the pre- District Council period to try their luck in the politics of the district and most of the time earning quite a success in the endeavor .The respect and power associated with a Member of the District Council (MDC) or an Executive Member (EM)was difficult to ignore for a Karbi having some sort of organizational skill or leadership quality. For such kind of people, to become a Member of the District Council (MDC) and later to become an EM turned to be the ultimate goal of the life. This resulted in rampant manipulation, nepotism and favoritism in the politics of the District. At the initial period of the formation of the District Council, the political power in district was confined to a few prominent Karbi family who had informal understanding among

them but at the same time they developed strong rivalry among themselves. Nevertheless, these newly formed political middle class of the Karbis due to their frequent interactions with the people of the plains came to realize the importance of education and modernization of their children. As higher education was still a far cry in the district during the initial period of its formation, the political middle class of the Karbis were conscious enough to send their children to Shillong to get the best available education at that time. Significantly, Shillong was then the capital of undivided Assam and a prominent educational hub in the entire North East. As a result of this, a modern section of the Karbis middle class began to emerge from among the political families of the Karbis. Lt. Sika Terangpi (ACS), Hummili Terangpi(ACS), Dr. Mansing Rongpi (present MLA from Baithalangso constituency) Dr.Jagat Teron, Dr. Kareng Rongpipi are a few examples of the people from political families of the district to acquire high position in the government through their merit and intellect . Among the present generation of the Karbis youths also joining in the Autonomous Council (earlier District Council, i.e. details already given before) politics is considered to be more lucrative than going for other business or profession. It is found that quite a good number of Karbi who find it difficult to attain an university degree or get a good job, prefer to go to politics. They believe that doing politics or becoming an Member of the Autonomous Council (earlier District Council) is more beneficial and lucrative than becoming a first class one gazetted officer or a successful entrepreneur.

Apart from the political middle class, the District Council is also responsible for the creation of a middle class of the government employees among the Karbis. With the formation of the district in 1951 and the subsequent granting of a District Council in 1952, a large number of government departments were established in the district and to run them a large number of employees were recruited. However, as education was yet to make a serious impact among the Karbis during that period, most of these posts were filled up by the people coming from the plains districts of Assam. Some of the local Karbis could get some of the posts of grade IV and equivalent in the district as the educated and efficient Karbis of that period preferred to join in the newly created District Council politics than to become an a government employee. However, during that period of the scarcity of the educated Karbi employees , people

like Chandra Sing Teron joined the government service and become an Assistant Secretary in the newly created District Council , a job which he left later to join in the politics and later became the CEM of the District Council. Another prominent Karbi to occupy a high post in the Council during the early period was Lt. Lonkam Teron, who was the Public Relation Officer of the District Council in the 1960s. However, with the passage of time and the spread of education among the Karbis , a large number of Karbis began to join in the government service under the District Council. After the up gradation of the Karbi Anglong District Council to Karbi Autonomous Council (KAAC) through a constitutional amendment by the Indian Parliament, the number of Karbi employees in the district began to increase considerably. At present the Karbis have to compete among themselves to secure a government job either under the KAAC or in the departments under the state government. These employees section of the Karbis who have formed the KEA form a substantial section of the Karbis middle class. A number of prominent Karbi political leaders of the recent period have emerged from this government employees section of the Karbi middle class. In this context mention may be made of Dr. Jayanta Rongpi (ex-CEM & MP), Dr. Sarsing Terang (Ex-MAC) Holiram Terang (ex-MLA & Minister , Assam), Babu Rongpi (Ex-MLA) and Bharat Kumar Timung (ex-MDC) etc. who before joining the pro-autonomy/ separate state movement were the government employees and resigned from their respective government services to lead the movement .

The District Council and in the recent period the Autonomous Council has given rise to a business middle class among the Karbis . The business middle class of the Karbis is the direct creation of the District Council which is endowed with the powers of formulating and implementing different developmental projects in the district. These developmental works have given rise to a contractor section of the middle class among the Karbis. In fact one of the most popular sources of income among the Karbis youths of Karbi Anglong is the contract work under the District Council (now Autonomous Council). Most of the Karbis youths who have either left their studies halfway or who fail to earn their livelihood through other ways are attracted by the contract works that fetch them good amount of cash within a short period of time . There are plenty of on going and projected construction works for which contract

work can be secured if the concerned EM or MDC (now MAC) could be pleased. Therefore , large number of the Karbis have made their fortune through the contract work under the Council sector and many of them have emerged as influential political personalities in the district in the recent years. The present CEM of the KAAC, Mr. Tuliram Ronghang was a successful contractor before becoming the CEM recently.(2013)

III.VIII. **Conclusion:-** It is thus quite evident from the above discussion that a middle class do exist among the Karbis and different factors , such as the traditional socio-political systems of the Karbis, the impact of the British administration , impact of Christianity, the impact of modern education and the creation of the District Council(now autonomous Council) are responsible for the emergence of the middle class among the Karbis. It is this middle class of the Karbis that has become the guiding force of the Karbi political activities and has been dominating the Karbi politics from its very inception.

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