

Chapters 2

The Study Area

CHAPTER-2

Assam:

Assam is the land of undulated blue hills, green forestry and mighty snow while river Brahmaputra with its innumerable tributaries situated between 90°-96° east longitude and 24°-26° north latitude, it is comparatively developed economy of North-East India. It is bounded by Arunachal Pradesh on the East and West Bengal on the West. While the North side is flanked by Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh and southern side there is Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, and Meghalaya. The southernmost side is flanked by Mizoram.

Physiologically Assam is divided into three regions, the Brahmaputra and the Barak Valley and the hill region of North Cachar and Karbi Anglong, situated in the lower-middle part of Assam, Guwahati is the largest city of North East Region. This city may be called as the Gateway of North East Region. For administrative and revenue purposes, the state has 27 districts including the newly created Kamrup urban district and four districts under the newly created Bodo land Territorial Council (BTC) areas Kokrajhar, Baska, Chirang and Udalguri. As per 2011 census, total population of Assam was 31,169,272. The total population of the state has increased from 26,638,407 to 31,169,272 in the last ten years with a growth rate of 16.93%.

Of the 27 districts of Assam, eight districts registered rise in the decadal population growth rate. Interestingly, religious minority-dominated districts like Dhubri, Goalpara, Barpeta, Morigaon, Nagaon, Hailakandi etc. recorded growth rates ranging from 20 per cent to 24 per cent during the last decade. On the other hand, eastern Assam districts like Sivasagar, Jorhat etc. registered around 9 per cent population growth, and for the record, these districts do not share any international border.

Total population of Assam was 26.66 million with 4.91 million households in 2001. Higher population concentration was recorded in the districts of Kamrup, Nagaon, Sonitpur, Barpeta, Dhubri, Darang and Cachar. Assam's population was estimated at 28.67 million in 2006 and at 30.57 million in 2011, 34.18 million by 2021 and 35.60 million by 2026.

In 2011, literacy rate in the state was 73.18%. Male literacy rate was 78.81% and female literacy rate was 67.27%. In 2001, the census had recorded literacy in Assam at 63.3% with male literacy at 71.3% and female at 54.6%. Urbanization rate was recorded at 12.9%.

Growth of population in Assam has experienced a very high trajectory since the mid-decades of the 20th century. Population grew steadily from 3.29 million in 1901 to 6.70 million in 1941, while it has increased unprecedentedly to 14.63 million in 1971 and 22.41 million in 1991 to reach the present level. The growth in the western and southern districts was extremely high primarily due to the rapid influx of people from East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. An estimated 400,000 people have been displaced in the recent ethnic violence between indigenous Bodos and Bengali-Muslims.

Assam has many ethnic groups and the People of India project has studied 115 of these. Out of which 79 (69%) identify themselves regionally, 22 (19%) locally, and 3 trans-nationally. The earliest settlers were Austro-Asiatic, followed by Tibeto-Burman, Indo-Aryan speakers, and Tai-Kadai speakers.[96] Forty-five languages are spoken by different communities, including three major language families: Austro-Asiatic (5), Sino-Tibetan (24) and Indo-European (12). Three of the spoken languages do not fall in these families. There is a high degree of bilingualism.

There are 23 notified Scheduled Tribes (ST) in Assam with the Bodos (40.9 per cent) making half of the total ST population (around 13 per cent) of the state. The

other STs (both plains and hills) include Miri, Karbi, Rabha, Kachari, Lalung, Barman in Cachar, Borokachar, Deori, Hajai, Mech, Dimasa, Hajong, Singhphho, Khampati and Garo, Biate, Khasi, Jaintia, Synteng, Pnar, War, Bhoi, Lynggam, and Kuki,Chakma, Hmar.

Geography:

Geomorphic studies conclude that the Brahmaputra, the life-line of Assam is an antecedent river, older than the Himalayas. The river with steep gorges and rapids in Arunachal Pradesh entering Assam, becomes a braided river (at times 10 mi/16 km wide) and with tributaries, creates a flood plain (Brahmaputra Valley: 50–60 mi/80–100 km wide, 600 mi/1000 km long).[35] The hills of Karbi Anglong, North Cachar and those in and close to Guwahati (also Khasi-Garo Hills) now eroded and dissected are originally parts of the South Indian Plateau system.[35] In the south, the Barak originating in the Barail Range (Assam-Nagaland border) flows through the Cachar district with a 25–30 miles (40–50 km) wide valley and enters Bangladesh with the name Surma.

Assam has petroleum, natural gas, coal, limestone and other minor minerals such as magnetic quartzite, kaolin, sillimanites, clay and feldspar.[36] A small quantity of iron ore is available in western districts. Discovered in 1889, all the major petroleum-gas reserves are in Upper parts. A recent USGS estimate shows 399 million barrels (63,400,000 m³) of oil, 1,178 billion cubic feet (3.34×10¹⁰ m³) of gas and 67 million barrels (10,700,000 m³) of natural gas liquids in the Assam Geologic Province.

With the “Tropical Monsoon Rainforest Climate”, Assam is temperate (summer max. at 95–100 °F or 35–38 °C and winter min. at 43–46 °F or 6–8 °C) and experiences heavy rainfall and high humidity. The climate is characterized by heavy monsoon downpours reducing summer temperatures and affecting foggy nights and

mornings in winters, frequent during the afternoons. Spring (Mar–Apr) and Autumn (Sept–Oct) are usually pleasant with moderate rainfall and temperature.

Urban Centers:

Guwahati is the most important city in Assam and also one of the 100 fastest growing cities in the world. Guwahati is the gateway to the North-East India. Silchar, (in the Barak valley) the 2nd most populous city in Assam and an important centre of business, education and tourism. Dibrugarh, the 3rd populous city and with better rail, road and air connectivity and flourishing oil, natural gas, tea and tourism industry around, is a major city in Assam after Guwahati Jorhat (in the Brahmaputra valley), the 4th most populous city and an important urban centre of Eastern Assam with flourishing business and educational institutions.

The Barak Valley:

Barak Valley is situated in the southern part of the Indian state of Assam. The main city of the valley is Silchar. It is named after the Barak River. Barak valley mainly consists of three districts namely Cachar, Karimganj, and Hailakandi. Karimganj. The district headquarters of Karimganj, is the second largest town in the valley. It is considered as the cultural centre of Barak valley. The Barak River is the major river of north-eastern India and part of the Surma-Meghna River System. It rises in the Manipur hills and enters the plains near Lakhimpur. Downstream of Silchar town and before entering Bangladesh the Barak bifurcates into the Surma River and the Kushiya River. The principal tributaries of the Barak in India are the Jiri, the Dhaleshwari, the Singla, the Longai, the Sonai and the Katakhal.

From its source in the Manipur Hills near Mao Songsang, the river is known as the Barak River. It flows west through Manipur State, then southwest leaving Manipur. The principal tributaries of the Barak in India are the Jiri, the Dhaleshwari, the Singla, the Longai, the Sonai and the Katakhal.

In Mizoram State it flows southwest then veers abruptly north when joined by a north flowing stream and flows into Assam State where it turns westward again near Lakipur and flows west past the town of Silchar where it enters Bangladesh. In the upper part, the river receives a lot of little hill streams, namely, Gumti, Howrah, Kagni, Senai Buri, Hari Mangal, Kakrai, Kurulia, Balujhuri, Shonaichhari and Durduria.

The official language of Barak valley is Bangla. However, majority of people speak a dialect, which is known as Sylheti Bangla. Religious composition of the valley population is Hindu: 50%, Muslim: 46%, and others 4%. Hindus are majority in Cachar district (60) % while Muslims are majority in Karimganj district (53%) and Hailakandi district (57%). Apart from Sylheti Bengalis, Barak Valley is the home land of Kacharis, Manipuris (Both Bishnupriya and Meiti), Rongmai Nagas, and tea garden labourers.

Of the three districts, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts have a Muslim majority while Cachar district has 40% Muslim population. The valley has a long history of Islam and Muslim life; half of the valley came under the rule of the Turk-Afghan dynasties of Bengal from the early 14th century and continued with the establishment of the Mughal Empire. However, the dominance of Muslim culture finally ended with the introduction of British rule in Bengal. In 1947 when plebiscite held in Sylhet, the district got divided into two, the eastern part of Sylhet which is known as Karimganj remained with India whereas the other part fell under Bangladesh. The official language of the valley is Bengali, while the majority of people speak Sylheti, a dialect of the Bangla language. Geographically the region is surrounded by hills from all the three sides except its western plain boundary with Bangladesh. Nihar Ranjan Roy, author of *Bangalir Itihash* says, "South Assam or Barak Valley is the extension of greater Meghna Valley of Bengal' in all the way from culture to geography.

Cachar District:

Cachar is an administrative district in the state of Assam in India. The district headquarters are located at Silchar. The district occupies an area of 3786 km². The Bhuban Range, the Borail Range and Rengti Range are the major hills of the district. Cachar District is located at the southern fringe of the state of Assam, in the North-east India. Although various modes of communication to this district is available, due to the remoteness from the mainland of India, the existing transportation and communication facility is a major bottleneck in the development process of the district. The major road link to the district is National Highways i.e. Silchar-Mizoram, Silchar-Badarpur-Jowai-Guwahati, Badarpur-Silchar-Manipur. There also inter district road communication with Hailakandi and Karimganj

Cachar district have its own airport. The nearest airport at Kumbhirgram (near Silchar - in Cachar district) at a distance of 25 Kms. from Silchar town (10 Kms. from Udharbond) serves as the major communication link point for the people of Cachar. Indian Airlines (Alliance Air) operates flight services in the Silchar-Calcutta (7 days in a week) and Silchar-Imphal (3 days per week) Silchar- Guwahati (6days in a week) routes from this airport. Cachar is one of the 27 districts of Assam. It comprises only two Subdivisions which are also named as Silchar & Lakhipur Sub-Dvn. Below this level, there are 5 *Revenue Circles (Tehsils)*, namely – Silchar, Lakhipur, Sonai, Udharbond, Katigorah. Furthermore, from developmental angle, the district is divided into 15 *Community Development Blocks*. Below the block level set-up, there are 163 *Gram Panchayats* each comprising about ten villages on the average and governed by local-self bodies. From the angle of Police administration, the district area is divided among 8 *Police stations* – Silchar, Lakhipur, Katigorah, Sonai, Borkhola, Udharbond, Jirighat and Dholai

Bengali has a status of Official Language in this district, majority of the people of the district primarily speak Bengali and Sylheti, a distinct Bengali-dialect. Silchar is one of the most important business centres of Assam. It is also one of the 6 cities of Assam to have an airport. NIT Silchar is one of best engineering colleges in

India. The name Cachar traces its origin to the Kachari kingdom. Cachar was a part of the greater Kachari kingdom which also included the adjoining Hailakandi and Karimganj districts.

Origin and History of the Barmans

The Barmans are one of the scheduled plain tribe of South Assam part of India. Historically, the Barman had been part of Dimasa-Kachari society who ruled different parts of Assam under different names at different point of time. Therefore, to know the history of Barmans one has to begin with the history of Dimasa-Kachari tribe.

Indian History consisted of undated and chronicle chapters. Thus in Assam, except not very remote events, beginning of the history is shrouded into as dark an obscurity. Glimpses of the undated history can, however, can be obtained with regard to the earlier important settlers of Assam: the group of the invading hordes, known as the Kacharis or Cacharis. An age-old tradition, particularly retained by the section of the Kachari group, known as the Dimasas, indicate a retrospective saga, that gives an outline of their earliest settlements and their subsequent move, thenceforth, spreading far and wide. Distorted by time and transmuted by generations can be deciphered only by deep and elaborate study.

The Dimasa are part of the greater Kachari group one of the ancient Kachari tribes. They live mostly in the northern half of the Dima Hasao District, an administrative district of the Indian state of Assam that includes the ravines of the Jatinga valley and adjoining land. The name 'Dimasa' most probably stands for "children of the big river," referring to the Brahmaputra. Kacharis appear to be one of the earliest indigenous ethnic groups of north eastern India.

The origin of the word 'Dimasa' is not conclusively known. A section of the indigenous scholars trace the descent of the Dimasa people from the Brahmaputra river and hold that the word is linked with this river. They emphasize that the Dimasa-Kachari are the original inhabitants of this large river valley. According to **S.R.Thaosan**, the Dimasa were known as Bodosa who migrated to Dimapur region

from eastern Assam and started living on the bank of the Dhansiri, since when they came to be known as the “Dimasa”. According to his interpretation, the term “Dimasa” refers to the people inhabiting the plains of the river Dhansiri, and in the Dimasa language the Dhansiri river is called *Dima* . The word “Dimasa” may be presumed to have been derived from the conjunction of two Kachari words, *Dima* and *Fisa*, where the first word means a big river (*Di* = water and *Ma* = big) and second, a child. To remove the confusion in regard to the big river, we can logically say that this obviously indicates the river Doyang of the Dhansiri river basin, on the bank of which the Dimasa kingdom sprouted and flourished. The only written source from which we can gather information about the history of the Dimasa is the Ahom chronicles which record the origin and settlement of this dynasty in the Dhansiri valley.

Kacharis being one of the indigenous tribe of India's North and North-East, their history is quite old. In the Mahabharata and other ancient Hindu scriptures there are mention about the foothill dwellers of the Great Himalayas called ‘Kiratas’. The term Kirata stands for Mongoloid racial communities, but some historian believed that it indicates Kacharis. The earliest Kachari settlements were in the foothills of the Himalayas. From there they moved to the Brahmaputra valley with their Capital at Kamruli Kamrupa. **Sir Edward Gait** in his History of Assam (1906) is of the opinion that the Kacharis were the aborigines or earliest inhabitants of the Brahmaputra valley. After hundreds of years of rule in the Brahmaputra valley, a bulk of this race due to socio-political turmoil, were believed to have migrated south of the Brahmaputra and settled in the areas of the present Sadiya of Assam after crossing the mighty river by planning of cane bridge, probably the Brahmaputra. This section is now known as 'Dimasa' etymologically 'the children of the great river' (*Di* = water, *ma* = big, *sa* = children) (Bordoloi 1988, Gait 1906).

Facing Ahom aggression, they further migrated toward south, on to the Dhansiri valley and established their capital at Dimapur presently in the state of Nagaland after a short stint at Kachomari about forty kilometers from Dimapur. It

was here that the Kacharis undertook an arduous task of state building and flourished for several hundred years till 1536 when they shifted their capital to Maibang at the present day district of Dima Hasao (Old name "North Cachar Hills") of Assam. Historical relics of Kachari royaldome still exist in and around Dimapur, particularly in the Dimapur fort called Kachari Rajbari in spite of the constant ravages of human encroachment, show that the Kacharis at that period had attained a state of the result of bricks making. Among the large tanks Podum Pukhuri, Bangle Pukhuri, Bamun Pukhuri, Raj Pukhuri, Jor Pukhuri and others. Still survive to this day. It is said in one folklore that during the invasion of the Ahom, The Kachari King had dumped gold and other precious metals in some of these tanks and believed to have told his subject that long after he left, a day would come when a male Mithun would come from the hills and dig up this gold by its horn, which would weigh mound (about 240 kg) and that would be the time when Kacharis rise again and prosper.

The Dimapur reign of the thirteen-century extended along the southern bank of the Brahmaputra, from the Dikhow river in the east to Kalang in the west and Dhansiri valley. Historians are not in the position to tell the exact date of establishment of the Kacharis capital at Dimapur. However, according to a Kachari tradition, the Muli bamboo (Wa-thi) flowered once after ever fifty years and during the region of the Kachari Kings at Dimapur these flowered nine times, this means that they had ruled for 450 years at Dimapur, and since the Kacharis shifted their capital to Maibang in 1536 Kacharis had established Dimapur approximately in 1087. This had been elaborated rightly by S.R. Thaosen. A Dimasa Scholar in his own right, in his article. This fact becomes more vivid by the fact that when Ahoms invasion too place in this region in 1228. Dimapur was said to flourishing at its full heights. For, it must have taken at least hundred years for the King to build his state.

The beginning of the end of glorious Rule of the Kacharis at Dimapur began with the advent of the Ahoms in the upper Brahmaputra by the close of the fifteenth century. The expansionist behavior of the Ahoms leads to constant hostilities between

the two. Thus in the year 1490 the major battle was in which the Ahoms were completely routed and their Chief Chuhenpha was forced to sue for peace. However peace did not last for long as the Ahoms intruded into the Kachari territory and set up a fort at Morangi(near the present Jorhat)and thus the battle ensued in 1526 AD and the Ahoms were again defeated and pushed back beyond the *Dikhow river*, which became the natural boundary between the two principalities for some years. Meanwhile when the Ahoms kept on consolidating their army, the Kacharis, emboldened by previous successes, became complacent and neglected the security affairs of their country. Taking advantage of this, the Ahoms again broke their peace treaty with the Kacharis and set up a fort at Morangi and thus another battle ensued and the Kacharis were finally defeated due to superior number of army. A Kachari folk tale says that the Ahom army rode on cows during this battle, which shocked the Kachari army, since killing cows would be defilement. The Kacharis, particularly the Dimasas of that period, considered cows 'gushu' (impure). Only later, after they embraced Brahmanical Hinduism, did they believe cows sacred. After defeating the Kacharis monarch Khunkradao Raja, the Ahoms installed Dehtsung, the kings brother, as Dimapur King on condition of allegiance to the Ahoms ruler. However, within a few years the Kachari king revolted and refused to pay tribute to the Ahoms ruler and thus another battle became inevitable and in 1536 another fierce battle was fought. The Kachari King was completely defeated and the city of Dimapur was sacked. The survivors of the ruling clan along with loyal subjects thereafter shifted their capital to Maibang.

From Dimapur, the royal family of Kachari in their last lag of migration moved to Kashpur of Kachar district of Assam. The Kachari kingdom finally annexed by the British East India co. along with Assam following *Yandabu Treaty*.

Situated on the banks of the river Dhansiri, (originally known as Dong-siri meaning a ravine of peaceful habitation) Dimapur, often described as the 'Brick City' by European scholars and also by the Ahoms, was the ancient capital of a ruling

nation, the Kacharis, who were once a powerful and predominant race in the Entire North-East India region particularly the Brahmaputra Valley. There are two versions of how Dimapur got its name. Many writers are of the opinion that the name ' Dimapur' was derived from Kachari words Di-meaning water, Ma-meaning big and Pur-meaning city or township in Dimasa dialogue. while other believe that Dimapur is a corruption of Hidimbapur , meaning the city of Hidimba of Mahabharata fame whose wedlock with Pandava prince Bhima gave birth to Ghotokacha, who is believed to be the progenitor of the Kacharis. Later Hidimbapur devolved to Dimbapur and then finally to Dimapur. In some Kachari folklores Dimapur is often referred as Dimabang Halali, which implies that Dimapur was originally known by that name but was Sanskritized later by the Brahmins. In Ahom Chronicles Dimapur has been described as 'Che-din-chi-pen' (town-earth-burn-make) meaning 'brick town' or ' Che-Dima' meaning town of Dimasa

The seat of capital of Dimapur Kingdom was originally surrounded by bricks walls of four feet wide, sixteen feet high with outer ditch running alongside the walls of sixteen feet width and twelve feet in depth except on the southern side where the river Dhansiri served as the natural ditch. On the eastern side there was a fine solid gateway with brick masonry of pointed double arcs. The gate was secured by double heavy doors hinged in pierced upright setting of solid stone blocks. At both ends of the battlement there were turrets of half quadrant shape and in between the arc-way and the turrets did niches resemble ornamental windows. On both sides above the arc there were symbolic works of sun flower. There were originally inset by bright brass coating and could be seen dazzling from the great distance.

Inside the fortified city, there were seventeen artistic stone pillars. These stone monuments were decorated with carvings of foliage, flowers, familiar animals and birds but nowhere any human images of gods and goddesses were seen. These implied that the Kacharis were free of Hindu influence at that time. These monoliths are believed to be lineal monuments of the ruling kings of Dimapur. The biggest of them

was seventeen feet high and twenty four feet in circumference and was said to be memorial of the greatest Dimapur ruler Makardhwaj (probably Khungkradoa Raja who was given sanskritized name by Brahmins later) in whose time the traditional glory of the Kachari Kingdom rose to its climax and during whose time the conquests were made of Manipur and Burma by Dehmalu, the greatest warlord of the Kacharis. Also during this period, heroes like Rangadao (Who was given the southern part of Dimapur, Ranga Pathar after his name), Degadao and mystic heroines like Waringma, Waibangma flourished in war affairs and mysticism. Other V-shape stone monuments seventeen in numbers indicated seventeen royal clans of the 'Kachari Aristocracy' a term used by Dr. Francis Hamilton, a renowned scholar of the Kachari Royal Clan.

Shri H.K. Barpujari in his book ' History of the Dimasa' and some writers opined that the Kachari Kings to commemorated their Victory over other tribesman, erected moonlights of different shapes indicating the different traditions of the vanquished tribes. This tradition of carving victory memorial is in vogue hill tribes and it is possible that the Kachari kings might have followed the tradition of these tribes; hence it is possible that the Kachari kings might have followed the tradition of these tribes for administrative interest. **Dr H. Bareh** in the 'Gazetteer of India' writes that the oblong V-Shaped stone pillars closely correspond to the similarly V-Shaped post protruding from the roof of the house of wealthy Angamis

The tallest and largest megalith, which lies isolated from others and has a unique Sultanate style, is believed to have been erected by the founder king of Dimapur, who after vanquishing the tribes all around made his triumphal tower to commemorate his victory and this became a tradition setter. In and around this old city, large number of tanks over fifty in number existed, although most of them have since either dried up or have been destroyed by reckless human encroachment without an iota of respect for the history. These tanks were believed to be either dug by the kings for providing water supply to their people or might have resulted due to brick making, as pieces of old bricks could still be found in and around these tanks and, as

has been mentioned earlier, Dimapur was known for use of bricks. Most of large tanks are rectangular and have a hardwood seasoned poles planted deep at the centre of the tanks, which have lasted for hundreds of years. Others are of irregular shapes without any such wooden poles. Inference in that, the former ones might have been dug by the kings for water supply and the later were habitation as Digjo Dijua meaning cut off from main river or stream' and this tradition is still in vogue, and this area covers Dimapur and Kachari inhabited areas of Karbi Anglong District of Assam in the Dhansiri valley. The present Dimapur is the commercial capital of Nagaland and is one of the fastest growing townships in the entire North-east region. But irony is, in the name of the modernity and development, this ancient city of Dimapur, whose historical relics finds a place in the World Heritage is being gradually destroyed of its rich history by reckless human greed, and total destruction of its rich heritage is only a question of time.

The Dimasa King, Tamradhvaj first made their settlement at Hawarma area of the plains of Cachar. It is situated within the present Bikarapur locality, in the village areas of Gharerbhitar, meaning within ramparts. The remains of the rampart can be seen at a distance east of Bihara station of the N.F. Railway. At this place there has been a strong hold and remains of temples, royal tanks and other monuments lie strewn in that locality. The Dimasa Kingdom in Cachar witnessed unprecedented cultural development reached its new height. During the reign of Raja Lakshmi Chandra, he organized the Dimasa Community into two groups, the evolved society of involved ways, and those who renowned evolution and reform. Those groups of the Dimasa, who preferred the paternal faith, the faith of ancestral genetic father, Bhima, the Epic hero and put on holy thread to signify their Vedic fold. They formed the so called puritan section. They were in line with the ruling house, and detached themselves with the aristocratic title of "Barman" to indicate the ruling caste "Kshatriya". Their social and religious functions became consistent with the dictum of "Veda" in collaboration with Brahmin Priest.

Now, they are known as the “Barmans” of Cachar being the renovated group absorbed into Hindu fold. However, At Maibang, the Kacharis kings came under Brahmin influence. The son of *Dersongpha* took a Hindu name, Nirbhay Narayan, and established his Brahmin guru as the *Dharmadhi* that became an important institution of the state. The king's genealogy was drawn from Bhima of the Pandavas, and his son Ghatotkacha born to Hidimba. The kingdom then came to be known as Heramba, and the rulers Herambeswar. Now, the Dimasa groups of Kachar are now confined mainly to Dima Hasao, and its adjacent areas on the Northern tracts. In short, Kachari people got themselves disintegrated into two social set up of ‘paternal creed and maternal ways. The brief rule extending barely ten years of Raja Lakshmi Chandra was replete with constructive work and social reform. From this onward, the Herambo rulers maintained a secular state. He was the founder of the district of Cachar that we find today with its unique features of elements and problems. This district of Cachar was known to be Herambo principedom till the time of Lord William Bentinck, the Governor General of the East India Company.

By the 17th century the Kachari rule extended into the plains of Cachar. The plains people did not participate in the courts of the Kachari king directly. They were organized according to *khels*, and the king provided justice and collected revenue via an official called the *Uzir*. Though the plains people did not participate in the Kachari royal court, the Dharmadhi guru and other Brahmins in the court cast a considerable influence, especially with the beginning of the 18th century. Queen Chandraprabha, the illustrious queen of Tamradhvaj was the first to initiate the Brahmin scholars as the court priest. Since then, ruling monarchs of Cachar or Herambo continued to initiate Brahmin scholars as the court priest and establish them within their realm with gifts of land and causing tanks excavated and temples erected in their settlements. These Brahmins were brought down by way of Assam valley, through the sponsor of the Koch chiefs. These Brahmins were usually Sanskrit scholars and had been made the adviser of spiritual and moral conduct of the state.

During the reign of Raja Lakshmi Chandra, a number of Brahmins migrated from Bengal partly in search of livelihood and partly due to the fact that they either lost were deprived of their basis for subsistence, by the alien iconoclasm or Muslim proselytism. Coming into contact with the Vedic creed, the ruling princes of Cachar or Herambo began to be drawn more and more, towards spiritual life rather than temporal consideration. Having particularly absorbed into the Hindu orthodoxy, Raja Krishna Chandra became devoted to religious pursuits. Although Hindu proclivity began to occur at Maibang, since the reign of regent Queen mother Chandraprabha formal conversion took place during the time of Herambo rulers at Khaspur.

However, such process of inculcation towards social evolution and reform was not favoured by many Dimasa of Hills. They began to desert the King and his innovated followers and preferred to isolate in the hilly range. They scoffed at the spiritual and cultural reform of their Raja and brooded a rebellious mood. They thought that their ruler had gone over to alien society and culture, and had flung away their ancestral heritage. Subsequently they joined their administrator Kohi Dan (alias Kashi Chandra) to make open revolt against their monarch, which resulted into disintegration among the Kachari nation. King Govinda Chandra, the last ruler of Heramaba Kingdom and the successor of King Krishna Chandra found himself involved in difficulties during his tenure. Kohi Dan, who had been appointed to a post in the Northern tract, where he rebelled and endeavoured to form an independent kingdom. Govinda Chandra managed to inveigle him to Dharampur, where he causes to be assassinated. However, the rebellion was continued by Kohi Dan's son Tularam. Gobinda Chandra, thus, deprived of the Northern portion of his dominions, but worse was to follow, in 1818 Marjit Singh, Chaurjit Singh and Gambhir Singh of Manipur invaded his territory in the plains. As a result the monarch had to flee to Sylhet, where he invoked in vain the help of the British authorities.

In 1824, with the help of British he became a tributary Raja of Cachar and pay Rs. 10,000 as annual tribute to British. In this condition, Govinda Chandra tried to

capture N.C.Hills, presently, Dima Hasao from Tularam , but Britishers make a settlement with Tularam in har 1823. After the death of Tularam, North Cachar Hills, now presently named as Dima Hasao district was annexed by the British India and similarly in plains of Cachar after the death of Raja Govinda Chandra the last emperor of Kacharis, the British annexed the Cachar on 14th August 1832 A.D. (Barman, 1972)

During the reign of Govinda Chandra when Tularam revolted against him the Kachari kingdom bifurcated into two parts-North Cachar Hills and Cachar. It was perhaps the time when the Kacharis divided into two groups namely the Dimasa and the Barman. Those who were against of adopting orthodox Hindu rituals and practices continued to be called Dimasa. While the followers of the King Govinda Chandra, who adopted orthodox Hindu rituals called themselves as Barmans

Silchar Town:

John Edgar was the first Civil District Officer of Cachar during the British regime. Edgar did his best to improve the living condition of Silchar town. Because of his direct supervision Silchar began to grow fast. He gave up the former policy of restricted emigration and opened the doors of Cachar to the emigrants. He encouraged the hindus to come and settle in Silchar and other places of trade marts. He preferred the Hindus in white collar jobs and in the business enterprises. He gave them the government license liberally. He invited his known acquaintances from Dacca to Silchar. It was during his time the emigrant enterprising Hindus became the pilot of local trade and commerce. It was because of Edgar's initiative the new market complex of Silchar got a shape. The grateful merchants of Silchar renamed the market after him- 'Jhonyganj' (present Janiganj). Edgar was the president of the Local Board and hence as per law supervised the works of the Public works Deptt. Under his supervision metal roads were constructed in the town and he connected Lakhipur with Silchar by a pucca road.

During the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857, all the rebels' i.e., freedom fighters took shelter in Cachar district. In 1921, Mahatma Gandhi and in 1935 Jawaharlal Nehru visited Cachar.

At the time of partition of India in 1947, Silchar, Hailakandi and Haflong were the three Sub-divisions of Cachar. After partition, Karimganj was included in Cachar as a sub-division and Haflong was separated from Cachar to North Cachar Hill district as the district head quarter. Silchar was declared the district head quarter of Cachar. However, later, Karimganj and Hailakandi were also separated from Cachar as two independent districts.

In April 1960, Assam Pradesh Congress leaders desired to make Assamese language as the state language as the Assamese speaking people out numbered in Assam. On October 10th, 1960, a resolution (Bhasa Bill) was passed in the legislative assembly to that effect which sparked linguistic turmoil in the state because the inhabitants of Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj are mainly Bengali speaking people. So they seriously objected for such a resolution and showed protest. Unfortunately, on 19th May, 1961, when they were picketing at Silchar, Tarapur Railway Station, police opened fire. As a result, 11 students died on the spot and several injured.

The total population of Silchar Municipal Board area was 1, 15,483 according to 1991 estimated census report. Most of the people in Silchar speak Sylhetti a dialect of Bengali. It is largely based on service and business. Silchar is connected by road, rail and air communication. It is connected to other states - Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura by road. State transport buses and private buses ply between all these places. The Assam Bengal Railway brought Silchar into the railway map in 1899. The railway entered into Cachar near Badarpur Junction across Sylhet. A branch line from Badarpur through south bank of Barak pushed up to Silchar pass Katakhal, Salchapra and Gagra . The N.F. Railway touches the different towns like Karimganj, Dharmanagar and Jiribam connecting the state of Manipur with Silchar. It is likely to be transformed into a broad-gauge in near future. The Indian Airlines

connects Silchar with Calcutta Guwahati, Agartala and Imphal. The Kumbhirgram aerodrome is located at a distance of about 29 kms from Silchar. The All India Radio, Silchar is serving for the people of Barak Valley for last 30 years. The programmes are broadcasted in Bengali, Manipuri and Dimasa and Hindi languages. Silchar Doordarshan Kendra was started in 1995. There are no heavy industries in Silchar town, but there are about 61 registered small and medium size industries like, small scale candle, Hume pipe, Match stick and Brick industries.

As far as education is concerned the male literacy rates goes to 88.1 per cent and female literacy to 78.2 per cent and the total figure comes at 83.8 percent. There are a number of primary schools, high schools, higher secondary schools, college, etc. There is also a significant growth of English medium and Hindi medium schools. In Silchar, there is a Polytechnic, a Regional Engineering College now attained the status of a deemed university, a Medical College and a Civil Hospital. A Central University namely Assam University, Silchar was established in 1994 by an Act of Parliament of 1989 (Act No. XIII). This University came into existence on 15th January 1994 through a notification of the Govt. of India. It is a teaching cum affiliating University. All the colleges of five district of South Assam- Cachar, Karimganj, Hailakandi, North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong stand affiliated to this University. This includes three law colleges, five B.Ed. Colleges, one Medical College and one Engineering College.

Three Bengali Daily News papers namely, '*Dainik Sonar Cachar*', '*Dainik Jugasankha*', '*Dainik Prantajyoti*' are published from Silchar. There is only one English Daily Newspaper - '*The Frontier Sun*' published from Silchar.

Bijoypur Village:

Bijaypur Village is come under Borkhola Development Block of Cachar District. It also comes under the revenue jurisdiction of Borkhola Revenue Circle. The meaning of the word "Borkhola" is the 'place for keeping huge animals'. It has been said that during the period of Rajas, Elephant were kept in this locality; this is how it got its

name. Bijoypur (Borkhola) is situated at the bank of the river Jatinga. This village is dedicated in the name of Queen Chandrakola (Thubangdi). The village is approximately 35 k.m. from the Silchar Town.

The major mode of transportation for the villagers is Bus and sometimes Sumo. Now, there is a National Highway road running across the village. The major florals found in the village are Hibiscus, Marigold, etc. and fauna are Cow, Goat, Hen, Duck etc. Bamboo tree are mostly found here, then, coconut tree, betel-nut tree.

The villagers mostly used P.H.E water supply for drinking purpose but sometime they also have to depend on pond water. Most of the houses in the village are Assam type with brick wall and most of the houses have one pond in front of the house.

The villagers mainly visit Borkhola Primary Health Centre for treatment. In case of any serious cases, they tend to go for S.M.C. or any Private Clinic at Silchar. In the village, there is one branch of S.B.I office, one Post office. Villagers mainly do their marketing at Borkhola Bazar. There is also a market day in the village on Thursday and Sunday which is known as *Dolu Bazar*. In the past people from other district i.e. from Dima Hasao (North Cachar Hills) used to come for marketing because of its popularity of fresh vegetables. There is a *Jatinga river* running across the village. There is one primary school named, Tribal Primary Basic School established in 1938.

The village also has one big *Ranachandi Mandir*, at the entrance of the village. It also has its own historical significance. For communication purpose villagers mainly depended on mobile services.

Listed below are the name of Barman villages of Cachar district which are given according to Legislative assemble Constituencies (Paul 2001:72)

Barmans in Silchar Town:

Silchar is the main city of Barak Valley. It is the headquarter of Cachar District. Silchar is situated by the banks of Barak River in what it is popularly known as Barak

Valley. Silchar is located at the southern part of Assam. Situated on the Barak River near the Bangladesh border, it is a trade and processing centre for tea, rice and other agricultural products. Silchar is connected by road, rail and air to the rest of the country. Silchar is connected through meter gauge rail network with Lumding and this is currently being updated to broad gauge lines. There are regular interstate bus services connecting Silchar with Guwahati, Shillong, Aizawl, Agartala and other places. The airport is located at Kumbhirgram, about 22 km from Silchar and there are regular flights connecting Silchar with Kolkata, Guwahati and Agartala.

The Barmans constitutes a major population in Silchar town. According to the Census 2001 the total Scheduled tribe population constitutes 0.24% of the total population of the town. The Barman population in the town has been growing steadily for a long time, and, as per the field survey. The Silchar Dimes' Samaj the executive Committee of the Urban Barman Association recorded on 25th January 2006, approximately 107 Barman families in the town concentrated mainly in Tarapur, Rongpur, Sonai Road, Ithkhola, Malugram, Jhalupar and Hailakandi Road. However, the field survey conducted by Research Scholar (Dr. Maumita Nath) of Sociology Department, Assam University in the year-----, it has been recorded of 111 Barman families.

The Barmans of Cachar districts have been shifted their base to Silchar town from the middle of the 20th century in search of employment; livelihood and many of them constructed their permanent settlement in the town. Because of the continuous contact with the Bengali culture and people and corresponding impact of urbanization and modernization, a scenario of socio-economic and cultural changes is emerging among the urban Barman. Though some of the traditional institutions of the Barmans are existing in the town till date, yet there are also undergoing many changes in respect of their jurisdiction, influence and function under the impact of modernization. But, at the same time, adaptation of their traditional society to the new

environment is also seen in the urban setting and the society is passing without any break down.

There are various Barman social organization in Silchar related to its socio-cultural development, they are: Silchar Dimasa Samaj, Nikhil Cachar Hidimba Barman Samiti, Dimasa Historical Foundation, Silchar Bahumukhi Barman Mahila Samity, All Dimasa Students Union, Phonglo Assam Association and Langthasa Association.

Barman Villages in Cachar District Circle Wise

Sl. NO.	NAME OF THE CIRCLE	NAME OF THE VILLAGES
1	Borkhola	Barban,Bijoypur,Chandra,Dumkhar,Dolu, Koairbandh,Marwa,Ujannagar
2	Katigorah:	Andurgul,Baherala,Balirbandh,Gorerbhitur, Nathurbandh.
3	Lakhipur:	Bigajim,Dharmanagar,Diguli,Diphu, Dolaichera,Harinagar,Joypur,Kalinagar, Kanakpur,Koraibill,Krishnanagar, Kumachera,Laduma,Langlachera, Lakhinagar,Makhannagar, Mudri,Nagarbasti, Narainpur, Rakhaltilla,Raidilung, Salamatpur,Sonitpur,Sonpur,Taipunagar, Thailu,Watetung,Zemboo
4	Sonai	Chekercham,Dholai,Dhonip,Dolakhil, Dormikhil,Golaghat,Kangla,Kulichera, Lailapur,Lantugram, Methanathal,Mohanpur,Nikama,Pancherra, Puni,Sodagram,Sewratal,Ujangram, Zembroo,Zibangram,Zoorkhal
5	Udharbandh	Amaranagar,Bagherkhona,Chattachera, Chimtibil,Leburbandh,Khaspur,Nayagram, Ratanpur,Siburbandh,Tikarpar,Thaligram