

ORIGIN OF BODO - A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

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India is a land of diverse races, cultures, civilizations, religions, ethnic groups and societies. Streams of human races and groups of Austro-Asiatic, Nitrates, Dravidians, Alpines, Indo-Mongoloids, Tibeto-Burman and Aryans penetrated into India through different routes and migrate and settled in different parts of India making their history, culture and civilization and contributed to the structuring of the great Indian culture, history and civilization. The Tibeto-Burman people are predominant in whole North-Eastern Region. The Bodo are one of the sections of the Tibeto-Burman family. The term '*Bodo*' was for the first time used by B.H. Hodgson as an ethnological terms it refer the Meches, the Bodo speaking people of Darjeeling district in 1846 while writing about them¹. Since then the word '*Bodo*' has been used as a generic term to denote the different branches of the Bodo language group. G.A. Grierson says, "The generic term '*Bodo*' was first applied to these languages."² But the Bodo speaking people called themselves as the Boro.

The Boro, Bodo, Boro-Kacharis and Meches by whatever names one may choose to call them are the same people and form a sub-section of the Bodo-Naga section under the Assam Burma group of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan speech family³. Today, Bodo constitute one of the important indigenous tribes of the North East India. In the Brahmaputra valley the people call themselves as *Bodo or Boro*, in Goalpara district of Assam and Jalpaiguri district of North Bengal they called '*Mech*' by their neighbours and to the Upper Assam and Barak valley they are called as '*Kachari*'⁴. By whatever name they may called by their neighbours and wherever they may live, they are the same group of people and speak the same dialects with few local peculiarities. What ever may be the case the fact is that is that the Great Bodo once wielded great power and influence in the entire North East India. Suniti Kumar Chatterji writes, "The whole Assam and North and East of Bengal were the country of the Great Bodo people"⁵. But at the present they scattered all over Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura Nepal and Bangladesh etc. However the majority of them are found at present in the *Bodoland Territorial Council* of which was created in the year 1993.

There are number of scholars who connected the origin of the name of Bodo with different opinions. But whatever may be the truth, it was Bryan Hodgson who first gave this generic name to a group of Tibetan-Burman branch of the Tibeto-Chinese speech group in which Grierson includes the Kacharis (Boros and Dimasas), Koches, Garos, Rabhas, Chutiyas, Lalung and other allied tribes of North East India¹⁰.

As regards the origin of the Bodo, there are number of opinion. According to R.M. Nath the group of immigrants who followed the Austrics to North East India were from the north of the Himalayas and North West China. This country was known as *Bod*, meaning land of snow and a section of its inhabitants were known as the *Bodosa*, meaning Children of *Bod* country. These Bodosa were subsequently known simply as

Bodos¹¹. According to Grierson the Tibetans in early days called their country Bodyut, their language Bodskat and a Tibetan person a Bodpa¹². John Bowl refers to a Tibetan plateau which its inhabitants called *Bod*¹³.

As we have referred to the Bodo as having derived their name from *Bod* which was their original homeland. Now the question arises as to how the name Boro or Bodo originated. According to R.M. Nath, some section of the Bodo tribes derived their tribal name from that of particular parts of the *Bod* country when they migrated at a later date. For instance, he refers to the Koches and the Meches having derived their tribal names from those of Kucha and Mecha areas within the *Bod* country and retained these names as their tribal names after they had migrated to Assam¹⁴. If this theory to be true then it appears that this particulars section of the population of *Bod* country preferred to retain their national name Bodo as their tribal name after they had migrated to Assam and the name Bodo was perhaps spelt as Boro. According to Grierson, that the sound of Bodo can better be represented by spelling it as Bada or Bara pronounced as Boro¹⁵. Again we have references to the term Bara fisa must have been subsequently termed as pronounce as Boro.

The reference to '*Korosa Aris*' in the saying suggest that in a very dim past, the Boro called themselves as *Koros*. Aris means 'the first born people' or 'the earliest settlers' of the region. In the Boro languages, '*Koro*' means 'head' '*Sa*' means 'child' and *Aris* is the clan or suffix. The compound word of Korosari therefore means 'the first born or the people'. The term Koros is usually used to the first born child. They claim themselves to be the 'first born people' or the 'earliest settlers' of the region. This demand is not absurd in view of the opinions expressed by Rev. Endle, J.D Anderson, Edward Gait, and K.L. Boruah etc. Rev. Endle holds that the Boros are the autochthones of Assam¹⁹. J.D. Anderson in his introduction to the above writer's monograph, 'The Kacharis' asserted that the 'Kacharis' were the aborigines of the Aryans of the Brahmaputra valley²⁰. Edward Gait is of opinion that the 'Kacharis' may perhaps be regarded as the earliest known inhabitants of the Brahmaputra Valley²¹. Rai Bahadur, K.L. Boruah writes that the Bodo tribes occupied the plains of Assam for a very long time and constituted the bulk of the population in the Assam valley during the time of the Mahabharata war or even earlier²². This proved that the Boros, a constituent tribe of the Bodo race inhabited the Brahmaputra valley from time immemorial, which has qualified them to be called the 'first born people' of the region.

As regards the origin of the name Kachari, there appears to be a consensus of opinion that the name Kacharis is derived from Kachar. However the identification of this Kachar differs. Edward Gait traces a Limbu legend from Risley's 'tribes and casts of Bengal' which relates the origin of the name 'Kachari'. According to the legend, the 'Kacharis' were originally known as the 'Meches' and in course of their migration, they inhabited the 'Kachar country', the name given by Nepalese to the tract between the Brahmaputra and the Koshi rivers and these people were later on called 'Kacharis'²⁴. This theory get full support of C.C. Sanyal who states that a section of the Boros under the name 'Meches' as we would see later in the succeeding pages, moved towards Nepal and settled down in the 'Kachar country' at the foot hills of Nepal and subsequently came to be known as the 'Kacharis' very definitely after the name of the country. S.K. Chatterji holds that the Boros were given the name 'Kachari' after the name of the present *Cachar* district of Assam after they moved to that place²⁵. This is quite improbable in view of the fact that they were

known by this name long before they came to settle there. Gait asserts that the district of *Cachar* might have got its name after the name of its principal tribes i.e. the ‘Kacharis’ and it is very certain that the ‘Kacharis’ did not get their name from *Cachar*. They are known by this name in many parts of the region far removed from *Cachar* and were so called long before a section of the tribes took possession of that district. R.M. Nath writes that the ‘Kacharis’ king placed the administration of the newly acquired territory under a Deputy and the area was named ‘Kachar Zilla’ meaning district of Cachar. Thus it is cleared that the district of Cachar derived its name from the name of the ruling tribe the Kachari’ and not that the ‘Kachari’ derived their name from that of the district of *Cachar*.

As per the migration of the Bodo are concerned there are number of opinions among the scholars. As the Bodo are racially belonged to the Mongoloid, they surely and certainly migrated from the Central Asia, the mainland of the Mongoloid people. Most of them agreed that the people of Bodo origin migrated into India about 5000 B.C. and the Bodo or the Kiratas are the latest migrants before the Aryans. According to Dr. N.N. Acharyya, ‘Kachairs are the earliest known indigenous habitants of Assam. They are known under different names in different places and ages throughout the North Eastern part of Indian sub-continent. In Goalpara and North Bengal they are called Mech, in the North Cachar Hills as ‘Dimasa’ and in Brahmaputra valley the Kacharis are known as ‘Bodo’ or ‘Bodo-fisa’.²⁸ The idea of Dr. Acharyya is based on the contemporary ethno-demographic structure and distributions of the Bodo people lying in north Bengal and Assam, which is very partial. His information about the present distribution of the Bodo population is incomplete and did not cover the areas like-Nepal, Tripura, Meghalaya, Bangladesh. He is far distance from the pre and archaeological part of the Bodo History. It may be because of his preoccupation in approach and attitude towards the construction of Indian History in general due to which history of Bodo and other aborigines failed to gain actual place in the history of India. Many of the historians failed to show balance in attitude, interest and approach in the study of Bodo History.

Realistic approach in the study of the Bodo History, culture and society was started only with the English writers. The Bodo living in different parts of India have been identified by different names. In addition to the Kacharis proper, S. Endle has classified the following tribes of Boro, Rabha, Mech, Dhimal, Sarnias, Dimasas, Garos, Lalung, Mahaliyas, Hajongs, Hojais, Phulgurias etc. within the fold of great Bodo race.²⁹ To Endle may be one or more communities e.g. the Moran, the Chutias of upper Assam, whose language not altogether extinct as yet though apparently dying out rapidly, would seems to prove them to be closely akin to Kacharis (Bodo) race. The Bodo or Meches of Bengal called themselves’ as ‘*Bwrdhwnary*’ or ‘*Bardhanari*’. The term Bardhanari is a suggestive to that section of the Bodo people who might have been the subjects of Harsha Vardhana, the great King of Northern India who was contemporary to Kumar Bhaskar Varman, the king of Asura dynasty of ancient Kamrupa. The term *Bardhan* or *Bwrdw*n may have close connection with the ‘Bardhan Confederation’, Bardwan, Bardhaman, Boudha, Bodo etc.

The question of the routes of migration of the people to Assam is also a confusion and controversial among the scholars. Different scholars have suggested different routes but there is no consensus among them. Here an attempt has been made to prove a hypothesis. It is now an established fact that the north eastern tribes including the Boros were the immigrants from the north. If this is the case they must have

filtered into Assam through the various mountain passes and river courses from the north and any attempt to prove their migration to Assam from other imaginary directions like Bihar, Gangetic plain, Bay of Bengal etc. would therefore, be an attempt to falsify the historical fact. Prof. Ram Rahul in his book ‘Himalayan Borderland’ refers to three prominent trade routes connecting Tibet with Assam and Bengal through Bhutan. These routes are: the Manas river valley, the Kariapara Duars and the Paro Valley. Formerly, there was flourishing trade between India and Tibet with the Bhutanese as carrying agents. From Bengal and Assam, the Bhutanese used to collect dyes endi or eri cloth and cocoons, nuts, tea, tobacco etc. and exchange them with the Tibetan for wool, salt, musk etc.³⁰ S.K. Chatterji writes that a meagre stream of trade from China used to filter into Assam through Kirata country comprising Tibet, Sikkim, Bhutan, Manipur and adjacent areas. He quotes Changkien, the Chinese general and explorer of Central Asia in the Second century B.C. as having referred to such trade routes connecting North East India and Western China.³¹ Again another route connecting Tibet and Assam runs through Bhairab Kundha on the north of Udaguri district of Assam and Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh.³² Most of the big rivers flowing towards the south and through India and Burma such as Brahmaputra, the Chindwin, Mekong, Menam, Subansiri, Dharla, Teesta, Sonkosh etc, rise in the Tibetan highlands and adjacent mountains region and the courses of these rivers very obviously facilitated flourishing trades between India and other countries on the north. During the Chinese aggression of India in 1962, the Chinese forces penetrated into East while NEPA (Arunachal Pradesh) through the mountain passes across the Himalaya. Thus, it is seen that North east India is open to Burma, Tibet and China and therefore must have been subjected to ceaseless flow of immigrations from the north and north east from time immemorial.

So, the question arises as to which particular route was followed by the Boro immigrants while entering Assam. In this regards, the north and north eastern directions seems to be a consensus of opinion among the scholars. A Boro tradition refers to the Choraikaling pass north of Lakimpur district of Assam through which the Boro immigrations took place.³³ Edward Gait and P.C. Chaudhury suggest that the Bodo tribes entered Assam from the north eastern direction.³⁴ Imperial Gazetteers of India states that the north eastern route was followed by the Mikir, Lalungs and the Boro(Kachari).³⁵ Grierson holds that the Tibeto-Burman races entered Assam through the courses of the Brahmaputra, Chindwin, Mekong etc. and the mountain passes of India and Burma through the north-east and south east.³⁶ Rev. Endle refers to two great immigrations at different times one entering from the North-East Bengal and Western Assam through the valley of Teesta, Dharla, Sonkosh etc. and other making its way through the Subansiri, Dibang, and Dihang Valley into Eastern Assam.³⁷ However it is to be noted that the flow of immigrations to North East India was a continuous process spreading over a long period of time from pro- historic times. Therefore to suggest a particular route for all immigrations would certainly be far from the truth.

To locate early settlement of the people under our review in Assam, no concrete evidences are available but there are suggestive evidences that provide us with ample scope to establish the fact that the Boros occupied the plains of Assam predominantly till they were overwhelmed by the later arrivals. It appears that the Boro immigrants before penetrating into the heart of Assam and adjoining areas in gradual process must have settled down along the foot hills of the Himalaya. This contention holds well in view of

the opinions expressed by a good numbers of scholars who refer to a group of Mongoloid people under the name Kirata. The name Kirata was given to the people dwelling along the foot hills of the Himalayas after they had come from their original habitats in the Himalayan region.³⁸ S.K. Chatterji introduces Kirata as the frontier dwellers of the Himalayas and the north eastern Himalayan tracts which included Sikkim, Bhutan, Manipur and other adjacent tracts which were exactly the lands of Mongoloid settlement in India.³⁹ The Boros and others tribes are the descendants of the Kiratas country referred to above was the land of early settlement of the Boros. Grierson holds that a section of the Tibeto-Burman occupied the hills on the southern side of the Himalayan range right along from Assam in the east to the Punjab in the west⁴⁰. Linguistically it is also prove that these Tibeto-Burman predominantly include the Boro. Padmeswar Gogoi contents that the ‘Kocharis’ dominated Eastern Assam at the time when the Ahom entered the land.⁴¹ N.N. Vasu is of opinion that the ‘Kacharis’ spread and settled down over the whole eastern frontiers of India and called them Lohitic.⁴² The Lohit region comprises the Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh and the contiguous areas of Tibet and Burma. S.K. Chatterji holds that originally the areas covered by the Lohit River in the present Arunachal Pradesh appeared to have been inhabited by the Bodo speaking people.⁴³ R.M. Nath refers to the inhabitation and control of the foot hills of the Himalayas by the ‘Kacharis’ and it was in these foot hills that innumerable chieftains grew up and gradually pushed towards the south where they established petty kingdoms.⁴⁴ Depending on the above view points, one hardly finds any room for doubts that the Bodo at the initial stage of their travels and adventures in quest of lands for settlement settled along the foot hills to the south of Himalayas which provided them a good base for further penetrations into and settlements in the interior parts of Assam and beyond in different batches at different times in different directions.

Regarding the movements of the Bodo in Assam and adjoining areas of North Bengal, Charu Chandra Sanyal writes that section of the Boro immigrants moved towards the west along the foot hills of the Himalayas up to the river Mechi between India and Nepal. The Mechi River has its origin in Nepal and flows into India through North Bengal. These section of the Bodo immigrants settled down along the bank of the river Mechi and hence were called ‘Meches’ by the neighbours clearly after the name of the river. They cultivated paddy in the interspaces of the dense terrain forests. This part of the land was very fertile and the yield of the crop was high. The Nepalese on the hills were probably attracted by the high yield of the crops and descended there to grab the land of the ‘Meches’. The displaced Bodo settlers then crossed the Mechi river and many of them descended and moved southwards and settled in the forest to the north of Noxalbari in the district of Darjeeling. Some of them crossed Balasan and Mahananda areas, whence they shifted to Baikunta forest in the district of Jalpaiguri. As tea garden grew up to the river Sonkosh, a natural boundary between Assam and west Bengal, while some of them inhabited Rangpur, Dinaspir and their adjoining areas. A great number of them again crossed the Sonkosh River and penetrated into Assam.⁴⁵ This is proved by old census reports and Gazetteer of the provinces of Assam and west Bengal and that there area large number of Boro villages on both side of the Sonkosh River.

According to Grierson the Bodo after entering into plains of Assam proceeded along the course of the Brahmaputra River up to the great bend near Dhubri town. From there some of them went south and

occupied modern Garo Hills. South of Garo Hills, they spread in northern Mymensing at present in Bangladesh.⁴⁶ R.M. Nath mentions that the Boro settlement in Assam extended as far as Nowgaon district where they built a city *Brahmapur* On the bank of the Kullong River and than gradually pushed towards the slopes of Mikir Hills where they again established cities at *Sonapur* and *Urdhaganga*. This is evidenced by the fact that Urdhaganga is called ‘*Paro-Khowa*’ meaning the lands inhabitants of the Boros.⁴⁷ From there, their area of occupation and settlement extended to Cachar district, particularly in the North Cachar Hills and then spread into Sylhet. From Cachar and Sylhet, they moved further to the south Tripura state where there are large still a number of Boro speaking people,⁴⁸ who were today known to be a distinct tribes by the name ‘Barok’ or ‘Borok’, a name clearly a corruption of ‘Brog’ or ‘Boro’. At present these ‘Borok’ form a solid bloc in the state of Tripura. Grierson again points out that the ‘Kacharis’ could not occupy the mountainous tract between North Kachar and Garo Hills which constitute Khasi and Jointia Hills forming a part of present state of Meghalaya.⁴⁹ Then a large number of them pushed towards the foot of the Naga Hills where they established their first powerful kingdom with Dimapur as capital on the bank of the Dhansiri River. The establishment of the flourishing kingdom there furnishes a positives evidence that at one time the Boro settlements spread in the Naga Hills with heavy concentration in the capital city Dimapur. Moreover ‘Dimapur’ is unmistakably a Boro name derived from Boro word *Doima* meaning a ‘big river’ and *pur* meaning ‘city or kingdom’. The compound word ‘Dimapur’ or ‘*Doimapur*’, therefore, means a kingdom on the bank of a big river. The big river referred to is identified with the river Dhansiri on the bank of which is situated the kingdom. N.N. Vasu and Edward Gait suggest that the ancient name of the ‘Kachari kingdom’ were Haidimba or Hidimba and the name of their capital city ‘Dimapur’ was the corruption of ‘Haidimbapur’ or Hidimbapur⁵⁰. This is very unlikely. S.K. Chatterji is perhaps right in asserting that Dimapur was arbitrarily sanskritised into ‘*Haidimbapur*’, and in this way a connection was established between the ‘Kachari’ and Haidimba, a Rakshasi or non-Aryan wife of Bhima, the Pandva hero of Mahabharata fame.⁵¹

Late Bhisnu Prasad Rabha, an eminent artist of Assam is very often quoted as having suggested that the name Brahmaputra River is a corruption of the Boro name *Burllungbutor*, meaning a big river a gargling noise.⁵² The term Bull is the abbreviation of two words - *Bullung* and *Butur*. *Bullung* means ‘to pull out’ and *butur* means ‘to remove or let go’. The compound words, *Burllungbutor*, therefore means, ‘to pull out together and then remove or let go’. The Brahmaputra River is understood to have pulled out waters from others rivers together and then let the collected waters go in a single channel with gargling noise. Hence its name *Burllungbutor* and the modern name Brahmaputra is the sanskritised form of this Boro name. In this connection, it is worthwhile to refer that the three prominent rivers such as Dibong, Dihong and Lohit flowing through Arunachal Pradesh combined together at different stages in Assam and came to be known as the Brahmaputra. S.K. Chatterji holds that the name Brahmaputra is of recent origin and even later that Lauhitya and is certainly a sanskritised form of some other Indo-Mongoloid name. However, he suggested that *Burllungbutor* might not be the name, as contented by Late Bishnu Prasad Rabha, but *Burrambutar*, whose pronunciation approximates that of sanskritised Brahmaputra.⁵³

The name ‘*Lauhitya*’ is suggested to be a corruption of the Boro formation Lauthou, an abbreviated form of Golao and Gothou meaning, long and deep.⁵⁴ The river Lauhitya, identified with the Brahmaputra is the longest and the deepest of all the rivers in the region. Therefore it appears that the name ‘Lauhitya’ is the corruption of the Boro formation Lauthou. Similarly, the names Tilao, Dibong, Dihong etc. have the Boro elements ‘*Ti*’ and ‘*Di*’ meaning river or water. Among these names that of Tilao deserves special mention. It is clearly of Boro origin corrupted from *Ti* and *Lao* or *lau* meaning ‘river and long’ respectively. *Tilao*, meaning a long river, therefore, refers to the river Brahmaputra.

The present day Bodo of North-East Indian were of course not known by the name of the Bodo by the others. During the time of epics and Puranas the present day Bodo were known as Danavas, Asuras, Rakhshasa, Daityas, Mleches, Kiratas, etc. The people whose life and culture were structured around the Vedic system gave these names. It appears that the presence of the various Mongoloid groups of Sino-Tibetan speaking people were noted by 10th century B.C., when the Vedas were compiled and the composite Hindu culture and civilization reached the Mongolian peoples of North and North-Eastern mountains and plains from about that date.⁵⁵ Dr. S. K. Chatterjee proposed the name ‘Indo-Mangoloid’ as an equivalent to what the ancient Hindus was understood by the term Kirata. In the history of Assam the Mlechas or the Meches were the most important people as these people had moulded and shaped the history of ancient Assam then known as Pragjyotispr and Kamrupa.⁵⁶ Suniti Kumar Chatrjee writes, “One may say that, the Bodo who spread over the whole of the Brahmaputra valley and North Bengal as well as East Bengal, forming a solid block of North Eastern India, were the most important Indo-Mongoloid people in eastern India and form one of the main basis of present day population of these tract. Judging from the wide range of extinction of their language, the Bodo appear first to have settled over the entire Brahmaputra valley and extended west into north Bengal (in Koch Bihar, Rongpur, Dinaspur district). They may push towards north Bihar also and the Indo-Mongoloids who penetrated in the north Bihar might equally have been Bodo or Himalayan tribes allied to the Newars.⁵⁷ Dr. T.C. Sarma stating the distribution of the Bodo people says ‘from the records in the Epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata it is known that the north – eastern frontiers kingdom of India, a Mlecha territory ruled by the Bodo kings referred to as Danava and Asura by Aryans of the Ganga Valley was known as Pragjyotishpur(the land of Astrology) and later known as Kamrupa with its central Shrine of mother Goddess Kamakhya on Nilachal Hill overlooking the mighty Brahmaputra within the metropolitan complex of Gauhati. He also opines that North Bengal and parts of east Bengal were ethnically and politically an extension of the Bodoland of Assam.⁵⁸

The first historical name of Assam is *Pragjyotisha* and its capital was called *Pragjyotispur*, now identified with *Dispur*, Gauhati capital of modern Assam. According to the popular Boro folks, Pragjyotispur is the sanskritised form of the Boro name *Prajutoipur*. *Pra* means sea, *jutoi* means ‘full of blood’ or most powerful’ and *pur* or *puri* is the suffix of place, city or kingdom. *Prajutoipur* therefore means a most powerful kingdom or city on the sea side.⁵⁹ Bihuram Boro refers to a popular Boro legend according to which a powerful Boro King named *Barka* Basumatary ruled over the kingdom of Prajutoiur. In course of time, king Barka was succeeded by his son *Narko* Basumatary born of his second queen and brought up in non Boro surroundings. He also refers to king *Narko* being identified with Puranic *Naraka Asura* by Late

Bishnu Prasad Rabha.⁶⁰ Early History of Kamrupa refers to Puranic legend that Supreme God Vishnu in his incarnation of the Great Boar while lifting the earth from the deluge with his tusk took her as his consort and had by her a named *Naraka*. It is for this reason that Naraka is called *Bhauma*, meaning ‘born of earth’.⁶¹ A Boro clan known as Basumatary to which King Barka and king Narko belonged to, seems to be Aryanised one meaning ‘Earth folk’ and probably Aryanised form of original Boro name *Vasari* meaning ‘Earth folk’ or ‘the descendants of Earth’. Dhuparam Basumatary explains the Boro background of the sanskritised name *Pragjyotisa* in a different context. He states that the name *Pragjyotisa* is the corruption of Boro formation *Purga-Jongti*, meaning star shining white or shining bright.⁶² This can be explained in the light of a legendary origin of the name *Pragjyotisa*. Edward Gait and other local scholars define *Prag* as eastern and *jyotisa* as a star, astrology or shining. The compound word *Pragjyotisa*, therefore, may be taken to mean ‘city of Eastern astrology’. They also refer to the Kalita Purana stating that Brahma made the first calculation of stars in this land and the temple on the Chitrachal hill near Gauhati is said to have been dedicated to the Navagraha or nine planets. *Pragjyotisa* owes its name to this temple.⁶³ From the above it appears that the Boro word *Purga-Jongti* and Sanskrit *Jyotisa* are identical in meaning. The Boro *Purga-Jongti* therefore must have referred to those stars. P.C. Chaudhury holds that the same *Pragjyotisa* appears to be sanskritisation of some non-Aryan formation.⁶⁴ It can therefore, be suggested that the name *Pragjyotisa* is a sanskritised form of the Boro formation *Prajutoipuri* or *Purga-Jongti*.

The changes of the existing local names of places, rivers and even institutions as indicated above must have certainly taken place as it is understood from the fact that the progressive sanskritisation of the various pre-Aryan and non-Aryan peoples in their culture, their outlook and their way of life forms the keynote of India throughout the ages. Judging from wide range of extension of their language and its influences on the culture of present Assam and beyond, there can hardly be any doubt that the Bodo established not only political supremacy through out the length and breadth of Assam but also wide spread settlement till they were overwhelmed by the later arrivals. Even today, they form one of the main bases of population of the plains of Assam and in parts of North East India.

The 19th century had been a period of darkness for the Bodo people. They had already lost their ruling identity with the kings disintegrating successively over the centuries of Ahom rule and culminating with the British annexation of Assam. It was also a period when their age old agriculture and barter economy took hard and fatal blows from advance non-Mongoloid businessmen. The demographic and economic consequences of the British rule hurt the Bodo and other ethnic Mongoloids the most. By the time a few of them had acquired education and began to understand the new equations of life, a century had passed by.

It was only from the first half of the twentieth century that the Bodo found themselves in a position to make concerted efforts to focus on their identity and unity by recalling the grandeur of their past. By this time the community had already been divided into many tribes and sub-tribes. The demographic scene of the state as already noted was being transformed drastically. The Assamese speaking people Bengali, Nepalese Marwari and migrants from East Bengal had began to crowed the semi towns and rural inhabited by the Bodo. Many of the aboriginal Bodo retreated into the forests both reserved and unreserved to escape the social and economic onslaught of the new comers. The Assamese speaking non-Mongoloids were not known

to be particularly concerned about the plight of the Bodo. Many of them were only interested in converting the Bodo into Hindus and Assamese speaking non-entities.⁷¹

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