

**TRIBAL, NON-TRIBAL BOUNDARIES IN
ASSAM WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO AREAS OF
BODO CONCENTRATION**

ABSTRACT

**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**BY
MITHU SINHA**

COMPUTERISED

**TO
THE DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY
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At a very broad level, the tribes and non-tribes seem to have occupied different resource areas, characterized by distinct environmental setting. The dividing line between these areas too represents the boundary between two ethnic groups. However, this dichotomous representation is only indicative and static as a picture. The changing relationship between the tribes and the non-tribes as well as their interaction continuously modifies the morphology of the boundary existing between them over space. Broadly, two types of morphology can be postulated. First, it may be a dichotomous distribution such as an uninterrupted or unceasing distribution of the tribal or non-tribal population in a particular pocket. They may be found interspersed with each other in villages having a dominance of either of the two segments. This nature of transition acquires divergent forms depending upon the degree and intensity of non-tribal penetration into the areas once inhabited exclusively by the tribes; interaction between the tribes and the non-tribes and the intensity of their interdependence.

The present research is an attempt to understand the nature of boundary existing between the tribes and the non-tribes. The attempt here is to examine the issue more specifically related to the tribes distributed in plain areas. Unlike the spatial distribution of the tribes and the non-tribes in sharply defined ecological units leading to much sharper boundary line existing between them, the morphology of such boundaries in the case of plains-tribe are expected to be not only complex in their forms, but also that they are more dynamic and subject to continuous changes and modifications arising out of an equally complex relationship between the tribal and non-tribal population sharing similar resource base. The present research aims at identifying specific forms of boundaries that

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separates the areas of tribal habitations from that of non-tribal habitations in diverse ecosystems such as those in the plains.

It is assumed that the identification of the changing morphology of tribal non-tribal boundaries shall have to be examined at the lowest level of spatial aggregation. Perhaps a village level analysis of the distribution of those two social groups shall unravel the true nature of the boundary existing between them. It is also assumed that the various types of boundaries existing between the tribes and the non-tribes shall reflect the diversity of interactions between the tribes and the non-tribes. The areas of transition between the tribes and non-tribes shall reveal the effects of spatial processes of spillover, overlap and interpenetration between the groups. In this context, it may be pertinent to scrutinize the process of redistribution of tribal population consequent upon the process of spatial shift of the two groups in order to examine whether the tribal population is dispersing or moving out reducing the concentration or due to infiltration of non-tribal population diluting tribal concentration pattern. It is also proposed to get an insight into the socio-economic factors inherent in the process of redistribution of tribal population as well as its possible consequences and implication for the tribal people.

Given the nature of the problem, the state of Assam, which supports a significant proportion of its tribal population, distributed both in its hilly as well as plain areas, provides an excellent case study for the present research.

The tribes living in the valley areas of Assam have been living with other non-tribal communities since time immemorial and there has been a great amount of cultural give and take between the tribes and the neighboring non-tribal communities. On the other hand, the habitats of the hill tribes are largely separated from the habitats of other

non-tribal communities, but tribes dwelling in the valley live amidst non-tribal communities.

The broad objectives of the present research is to analyse regional variation in the distribution of tribal and non-tribal population in Assam at various levels of spatial aggregation; to identify areas of tribal concentration and the nature of transition in the boundary between the areas of tribal and non-tribal concentration; to get an insight into the pattern of redistribution of tribal population with specific reference to the Bodos and to study the causes and implications of changing morphology of tribal non-tribal boundaries.

The study proposed to test the following hypotheses: (i) the tribal groups living in the hills are expected to maintain largely exclusive territory leading to a form of boundary that represents a dichotomous distribution. However, the tribal groups located on the plains are unlikely to maintain such exclusiveness in their distribution. The morphology of the boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes in the case of plain tribes would assume transitional forms; (ii) distribution of the tribes and the non-tribes and the nature of transition existing between their areas of concentration have undergone rapid changes in the plain areas. The morphology of tribal non-tribal boundary in such areas would embody evidences of overlap and interpenetration. Cases of interpenetration would be far more likely in the areas of tribal concentration. The non-tribal population, given its dominant social and economic position would be in a better position to make inroads into areas of tribal concentration. The tribal population in turn is likely to squeeze further into smaller areas or spread into areas of marginal lands, leading to a process of significant redistribution of population.

Relevant data for the present research have been collected from both secondary as well as primary sources. The major source of secondary data pertains to the Census of India. The primary data has been generated through field investigation conducted at selected villages located in the study area.

Since the scope of the study includes temporal element, changes in the morphology of tribal non-tribal boundary has been examined for three points of time viz. 1961, 1971, and 1991. In order to examine the specificities of transition in the tribal non-tribal boundary, proportion of tribal population has been represented through a series of choropleth maps at district and block levels to identify main areas of concentration of tribal population. This exercise is repeated for all the three points of time to indicate the shifts in the areas of tribal concentration if any. Based on these maps, a typology of tribal concentration has been identified to indicate the areas having consistently rising tribal concentration, areas experiencing consistently declining tribal proportion and areas which have a constant proportion of tribal population over the years.

At least one district from each category has been taken as a sample to investigate village level patterns in tribal non-tribal distribution and the changes therein over the period of investigation. The specific method of identification of morphology of tribal non-tribal boundary consists of drawing a series of village traverses depending upon physical and socio-economic criteria. A typology of the existing boundaries has been attempted. The investigation in the second stage consists of specifically addressing a particular tribe, i.e. the *Bodos*. The third stage of the research involved selection of a few villages for field investigation. The number of such villages depended upon the types of morphology in the distribution of Bodo and the non-Bodo population. The information

has been collected on household basis to determine varying socio-economic reality in different transitional areas of Bodo concentration.

The contents of the dissertation are organized into seven broad chapters. The introductory chapter includes a brief statement on the choice of study area, an outline on the methodology adopted as well as an overview of literature available on the topic of research. Regional distribution of tribal population in the study area at the district level is analyzed in the second chapter while the village level distribution is attempted for selected districts in the third chapter. The fourth chapter makes an attempt in the identification of the typology of tribal non-tribal boundary using village traverses. The fifth chapter is devoted to an understanding of the process of redistribution of tribal population in Bodo areas. The socio-economic and demographic problems in transitional areas in Bodo dominated district is analyzed in the sixth chapter. The final chapter provides the summary of the research findings.

An understanding of the spatial variation in the distribution of the scheduled tribes in Assam led to the following broad generalizations:

Tribal population remains constant over 61- 71 but increases subsequently by the year 1991 revealing natural increase in the tribal population relative to the non- tribal population.

Distribution of the scheduled tribes is highly uneven over the districts providing insights into the nature of tribal non- tribal boundary in the present and indicating about the nature of such boundaries in the past.

A hill and plains pattern in the concentration of tribes is clearly discernible. The tribes are far more concentrated in the hills of Mikir, Karbi and Cachar Hills and in those plain districts of Assam located north of Brahmaputra.

The boundary line demarcating the areas of the tribal and the non-tribal concentration is far more clearly defined in Southern Assam with a line that demarcates the hills from the Barak Plains. The tribes and the non-tribes seem to have developed two types of boundaries depending upon the ecological setting of their habitats. The plains and the hill pattern are evident. The Barak Valley and the Cachar/Karbi Hills generally represent exclusive boundaries between the tribes and the non-tribes wherein the former is exclusively dominated by the non-tribes while the latter constitute an area of exclusive tribal dominance. On the other hand, in the Brahmaputra plains the boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes appear to be a complex one indicating overlap and transition. The fact that the share of tribal population has increased in some districts while in some it has become less may be due to influx of non-tribal population into the tribal dominated areas. It is in the Brahmaputra plains that the struggle for the resource base between the tribes and the non-tribes may be a continuous affair as both the groups share similar resource base and whatever differences exist within this vast plain may have played a major role in the redistribution of these two groups making the boundary not only complex but also a constantly changing one. The boundary appears to be a static between hills and plains but highly dynamic within the plains.

The tribal proportion as a whole increases northwards with the exception of the Karbi and Cachar Hills which retain its dominant tribal character. These hilly areas however seem to have been affected by large-scale non-tribal incursion particularly

during 1961-71 decade. However, the process seems to have been partially reversed in the following decades. It is possible that there has been a considerable withdrawal of the non-tribal population from these areas once again changing the ethnic composition of these hills in favour of the tribes. The demand for a separate Karbi state to be carved out of Assam must have had a base in the large-scale infiltration of non-tribal people into the area during 1961-71 decade and must have played a key role in the decrease of non-tribal population in the following decades.

The discontinuity in the concentration pattern of scheduled tribes in the valley is indicative of organized attempts by non-tribal segments into areas of formerly high concentration of scheduled tribes. There also appears to have been a process of squeezing of tribal population into the present areas of their high concentration as a direct outcome of present communities infiltrating into those traditional habitats of the tribes, which have relatively higher potential for agriculture.

High concentration of scheduled tribes in the extreme northwestern corner is surrounded by very low concentration of tribal population. The boundary between the tribal dominated area and the non-tribal area is a sharp one because districts surrounding Kokrajhar support a very low concentration of tribal people. The district of Kokrajhar could have been a contiguous area with another area of high tribal concentration and i. e. the region lying north of the Brahmaputra but most probably the people of tribal origin from the boundary area were possibly pushed both ways. Another demarcating line between the tribal area and the non-tribal area is the region lying south of the Brahmaputra River. This region stands out as an island of tribal concentration in the midst of non-tribal dominated areas surrounding it. The Karbi Anglong block in a way

shares a similar boundary with respect to the non-tribals as is the case with Kokrajhar. As a whole, the concentration of tribes gradually increases towards the north. It seems obvious from the analysis that there has been a northward pushing of the tribal segment of the population. Only the Karbi hills have retained its dominant tribal character due largely to the fact that the low agricultural potential of these hills has not been attractive to the peasant groups. The case of Cachar hills too is comparable with that of the Karbi hills though the concentration of tribal population in this district is as high. However, the proportion of the non-tribal segment is only marginal in this district.

There seems to have been substantial changes in the ethnic composition of the areas where the tribes are largely concentrated. This change has been towards an increasing presence of people of non-tribal origin thereby reducing the numerical strength of the scheduled tribes in the total population. This has been responsible for the general unrest among the tribal people in the areas of their high concentration. The demand for a separate Karbi state or the demand for Bodoland are partly linked to the process of this ethnic change in the areas of concentration of the tribes.

The village level analysis in the changing proportion of the tribal population in three selected areas lead the following broad conclusions:

In an area (Kokrajhar district) characterized by an increasing proportion of scheduled tribes over the years, it is seen that there has been a significant rise during 1971-91 period, in the proportion of such villages which are exclusively or dominantly tribal in their ethnic composition. Conversely, the proportion of exclusively non-tribal villages has decreased significantly. This is a sufficient proof of redistribution of population along ethnic lines, whereby ethnically mixed villages are becoming fewer

over the period. The ethnic divide between the tribes and the non-tribes, which was not so clear before 1971, is becoming more sharply defined by the year 1991. This fact of ethnic divide is clearly reflected on space when the village level data is shown on the map. The map clearly reflects a more sharply defined boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes as ethnically homogenous areas are in the process of forming. A dichotomous distribution of the tribes and the non-tribes is slowly replacing an earlier pattern of a tribal-non-tribal boundary, which was more of an overlap. The region to the north is getting more homogenous in terms of tribal concentration while the south is becoming more homogenous in terms of non-tribal concentration. An analysis of the population growth pattern reveals unprecedented growth of population in fewer villages, mostly located in the areas of tribal concentration and very high negative growth in a large number of villages. This is a sufficient proof of large-scale inter village transfer of people along ethnic lines, a process not very different from what is known as "*ethnic cleansing*".

In an area (Karbi Anglong) that has experienced substantial fall in the proportion of scheduled tribes over the years, is an area characterized by hilly environment, and is a traditional habitat of the tribes too shows a pattern identical to what was observed in Kokrajhar though with some modification. In fact, the pattern of ethnic divide is even more sharpened in this area when compared with Kokrajhar. The area has experienced penetration of a substantial number of people of non-tribal origin thereby changing the ethnic composition of the area in favour of the non-tribal segment. This kind of a change seems to have had its effects in creating ethnically homogenous areas as far as the tribes are concerned as a defense against non-tribal infiltration. The tribal non-tribal boundary within this area thus is being sharply defined than ever before. However, there is a

difference in this ethnic divide when viewed over space in terms of a boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes. In spite of tremendous inter village transfer of people along ethnic lines; no separate or exclusive tribal and non-tribal territories have been formed. This is perhaps due to the nature of hill topography, which has not permitted exclusive ethnic territories to emerge though such clusters are not few. The tribal non-tribal boundaries in this area does not therefore present itself in the form of a sharply defined line but as small clusters defining territories of the tribes and the non-tribes dispersed all over the block.

In sharp contrast to these two areas of high tribal concentration and experiencing either a rise or fall in the proportion of the scheduled tribes, the pattern in the distribution and growth of tribal population in an area (Barpeta) that has a relatively low share of scheduled tribe population that has undergone little change over the years provides a stability in the boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes. In this plain area there is hardly any evidence of redistribution population. It is mainly an area of ethnically mixed villages characterized by a boundary, which displays either overlap or transition.

A comparison of the three case studies reveal interesting patterns as far as redistribution of population along ethnic lines and the nature of boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes is concerned. In Kokrajhar district characterized by increasing conflict between the two ethnic groups and in an area that has forested tract to the north and plain areas in the south, the redistribution of population has taken place in a manner to create ethnically homogenous areas in these two physical regions separating the tribal areas of the north from the non-tribal areas in the south. The boundary line between the

tribes and the non-tribes thus is acquiring the character of a dichotomous nature wherein the physical boundary is also the ethnic boundary. This kind of a boundary is not visible in the case of a hilly terrain represented by Karbi hills where the redistribution along ethnic line is far too evident. Here the boundary line between the two groups is getting sharply defined but in terms of clusters of exclusive tribal territories followed by clusters of non-tribal territories. This however depends on the ecology of the area and the internal variation in the nature of topography. In the plain areas however, none of these processes are operative and the boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes remain an elusive one.

While the former two areas represent a model of increasing conflict between the two ethnic groups in entirely different contexts, the latter is a case of stability, cooperation and assimilation between the two groups. It is clear from the analysis that the spatial patterning in the distribution of the two groups and the resultant (and changes in) boundaries seem to be a function of the social processes.

Village Traverses

The following broad conclusions may be made from the analysis of morphology of tribal non-tribal boundaries based on village traverses drawn latitudinally as well as longitudinally:

Majority of the traverses in the Kokrajhar Thana of Kokrajhar district reveal that large number of villages not only recorded high share of tribal population in 1971 but also in 1991. The traverses resemble plateaus like form with a slope that falls abruptly on either one or both sides. In some traverses the slope is more like cliffs. These indicate that the morphology of the boundary in these traverses assume dichotomous distribution at the

village level. The sharp fall in the share of tribal population from one village to another village bears testimony to this conclusion. Villages which have low concentration of tribal population are generally located in the non-tribal dominated areas. Only a few villages in this Thana recorded a low concentration of tribal population.

A north-south comparison of the profiles reveals a broad pattern of consolidation of the tribes in the northern sectors while the southern sector retains a conglomerate picture of transition. It appears that the tribes from the south have selectively moved to the north to make it more ethnically homogenous. The non-tribal population has relocated itself from the north on pressures from the ethnic divide. The profiles clearly reveal the process of ethnic redistribution in a north-south divide in the Thana. The longitudinal traverses show much more confused picture as far as the boundary is concerned. However, the north-south divide is somewhat clear in most cases.

The traverses of Howraghat Thana of Karbi Anglong district portray a similar picture with that of the Kokrajhar Thana. The traverses show a high share of tribal concentration in some villages in 1971 but after two decades there was a steep fall. The morphology of boundary between the tribes and the non tribes show substantial changes due largely to the effects of non-tribal infiltration into the area and a subsequent withdrawal of these people from some areas. Sudden rise and sudden fall in the share of tribal population indicate growing tendency of a dichotomous nature of tribal and non-tribal boundary.

It is evident from the latitudinal cross sections that the southern sector has seen a much more vigorous redistribution of population along ethnic lines than in the north. The morphology of tribal non-tribal boundary across the northern traverses remains more

stable. The tribal population in the south has established its supremacy in the south by displacing the non-tribal population living in this area.

Unlike the case in Kokrajhar, the Karbi Anglong case seems more confused as far as the morphology of tribal non-tribal boundary is concerned. This is however is not surprising considering the conclusion arrived at the earlier chapter. While it was pointed out that the ethnic divide is more sharply defined in the case of Karbi Anglong district, it was also found that this ethnic divide was not fully translated on space. In fact the extreme ethnic divide took place in making more ethnically homogenous villages in the district, but they were found in small clusters within the district. No broad zones of tribal territory or for those matter non-tribal territories were formed. This is why the morphology of the tribal non-tribal boundaries on the traverses analysed do not show any clear cut north-south or east west ethnic divide.

It is evident from the traverses in Sorbhog Thana of Barpeta district that the villages recorded almost the same share of tribal population for both the census years. The share has remained static for the past three decades and so the boundary between the tribal and the non-tribal segment is characterized by overlap and smooth transition. The traverses usually show a picture of a very gradual slope. This area being a plain area did not support large concentration of tribal population and is mostly inhabited by peasant communities. No such drastic changes have been observed in this place for the past few years. The morphology of the boundary that exists between the tribes and the non-tribes in this Thana reveals a transitional character where the villages are more ethnically mixed. Not much redistribution is visible as indicated by largely unchanging profiles of tribal proportion in the total.

It may be noted here that the Barpeta district does show a pattern of stability as far as the morphology of tribal-non-tribal boundary is concerned. None of the villages on the traverse show complete domination of tribal population. In fact most of the villages are ethnically mixed. The profiles also reveal very little changes over the years. The north-south or east west profiles are not too different in their morphology.

Ethnic Cleansing in Bodo Areas

The pattern in the distribution of the tribes and the non-tribes in the Bodo dominated areas has been analysed by taking into consideration the situation in Kokrajhar district only. The distribution at the village level and changes therein has been understood by classifying the population into three broad ethnic groups, namely the Bodos (Scheduled Tribes), the Santhals (the Scheduled Castes) and the others (non-Bodo, non-Santhali).

Available data shows that there have been tremendous transfers of population among the three different ethnic groups namely the Bodos, the Santhals, and others. The Santhali as well as the Bodo population seems to have dispersed over more villages over the period of twenty years. The real decline in the presence of the non-Santhali, non-Bodo presence is rather alarming. The 'others' had a much wider presence in the villages of the district in 1971 but their presence was highly restricted in 1991 indicating substantial erosion to their widespread presence in the district. The Bodos substantially increased their presence in many more villages. Likewise the Santhals too got dispersed into more villages in this period. It appears that the vacuum created by the Bengalis, Nepalese and Assamese people was filled by the Bodos and the Santhali people in this period.

The most glaring fact about Bodo consolidation and control over the area and ethnic homogenization is revealed from the fact that the Bodos by the year 1991 had exclusive presence in 139 villages from only one in 1971. This is a clear indication that in 138 villages the Bodos have been successful in evicting the non-Bodo population with whom the Bodos had been living for centuries. The fact that there has been a corresponding decline in the exclusively dominated villages of the Santhals clearly indicates that it is this segment of the population which has been evicted from their traditional habitations. The Santhali and the other ethnic groups seem to have lost the battle and have redistributed themselves in a manner to protect themselves in a fewer villages within the district or have taken shelter in the Relief camps. The spatial patterning in this process of redistribution of ethnic groups reveals greater homogenization of ethnic areas within the district. The analysis reveals a step towards ethnic cleansing though the pattern would certainly be clearer when the village level data for 2001 census would be made available.

Socio-Economic Problems

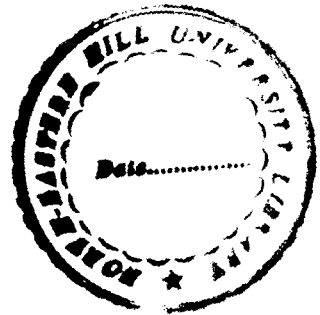
Only two villages in Kokrajhar district were selected from the transitional areas for an in-depth study of the socio-economic problems if any faced by the people living in such areas. The villages were selected at that boundary which demarcated the dominantly tribal areas from that of the dominantly non-tribal areas. The first village (Debargaon) consisted of majority of the Bodo tribes while the second village (Kumguri) consisted largely of the non-Bodo population including Assamese, Bengalis and Nepalese. Socio-economic problems observed in the two villages were more or less similar, related to lack of good roads and communication facilities, educational and health infrastructure etc.

Surprisingly, inter ethnic clash which has been dominating the political scene in this district did not find a place in these two villages. The people however lived in fear of a possible clash that may take place due to the transitional nature of their location. Interestingly a majority of the people in both the villages made a remark that the development in their village is lacking mainly due to transitional location of their villages and lack of co-operation between diverse ethnic groups who are suspicious of each other due to the recent political development. On being asked if they would like to move out of their village if the ethnic situation worsens, none wanted to do so and a majority opinion in the Bodo Village was that a separate Bodoland would bring overall prosperity to the region. Such an opinion was muted in the non-Bodo village.

The conclusions arrived at this thesis adequately prove the hypotheses stated in the first chapter. In spite of serious problems of data and limitations flowing from rapid administrative changes the research made a humble attempt at identifying the possible boundaries between the tribes and the non-tribes in plains of Assam. The findings cannot be conclusive and further research at micro level is required to get far better picture of the rapidly changing ethnic situation. This is a task for future research in this area.

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**BY
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**TO
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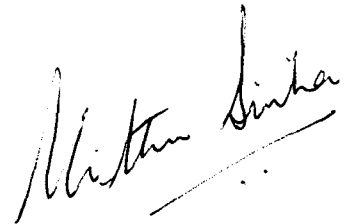
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September 2003

I, Miss Mithu Sinha, do hereby declare that the subject matter of the thesis is the record of work done by me, that the content of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Institute.

This is being submitted to the North Eastern Hill University for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Geography.




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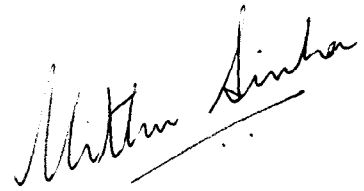
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A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Mithu Sinha". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

(MITHU SINHA)

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environmental setting which is by and large averse to intensive settled agriculture. "Spread along with entire spectrum-ranging from the stone-age hunters and gathers of forest produce to the urbanized, industrial wage-earners-the tribal communities constitute an important segment of the Indian population."(Raza et al.1997). For ages, these communities lived in *cul-de-sac*, away from the fertile river valleys and outside the framework of peasant formations. Their tendency to cluster and concentrate in a few enclaves is characterized by low agricultural potential that has contributed significantly to the lack of adequate interaction between the tribal and non-tribal components of population. The process of change within the tribal society has consequently operated sluggishly permitting the older modes to continue very long with marginal modification only leading to socio-economic stagnation of a high order.

The present day spatial distribution of tribal population in India can be viewed in terms of the historical process of peopling of the sub-continent. The process of trans-continental migration pattern (Richards, 1932) brought people from different ethnic, cultural and economic backgrounds into India and has generated forces of cultural assimilation and diffusion (Raza and Ahmad 1990). The geographical factors evidently exercised far-reaching controls over the manner in which the migration waves came into India as well as over their later dispersal into the vast sub-continent.

Constrained by a difficult and rigorous environment, the blind alleys of civilization in India (Subba Rao 1958) - fostering physical and /or social isolation for ages, the tribal communities have been exposed to exogenetic forces only recently. It may be postulated that the diverse ethnic groups must have lived in complete isolation from each other only at the initial level of the process of their settling down in an area.

Nevertheless, once the stability came to the territorial organization of different communities, the process of interaction among these groups took place. Thus, it may be highly presumptuous to suggest that the tribes lived in vacuum, though the degree of intertribal or tribal/non-tribal interaction must have varied depending on their location and type of economic organization pursued by them. Consequently, the boundary lines separating the tribes and the non-tribes are likely to have acquired complex forms ranging from a dichotomous distribution of the two social groups to the development of a continuum.

At a very broad level, the tribes and non-tribes seem to have occupied different resource areas, characterized by distinct environmental setting. The dividing line between these areas too represents the boundary between two ethnic groups. However, this dichotomous representation is only indicative and static as a picture. The changing relationship between the tribes and the non-tribes as well as their interaction continuously modifies the morphology of the boundary existing between them over space.

The North-Eastern region constitutes one of the most important regions of tribal concentration in India, providing an exceedingly interesting profile of tribal situation in its regional specificity of ecology, habitat and culture. The region presents itself as a replica of the subcontinent both physically as well as culturally only on a smaller scale. The tribal habitats in the entire region thus displays a remarkable diversity in their physical setting and ecological parameters forcing them to make adjustments to make the most effective use of the varying natural resources in accordance with their technological equipment and social resources. The economic and social as well as cultural responses of the tribes thus confirm to the varying qualities of their respective habitats.

Assam is known by different names in the Epics, Puranic and early historical literature. Both the Epics, of *Ramayan* and *Mahabharata* have the name of *Pragjyotisha*. *Pragjyotisha* included not only the whole of Assam but also North and East Bengal and the hills tracts up to the border of China. It is known for the first time as *Kamrupa* in the Allahabad pillar inscription of Samudra Gupta and in the early Puranas. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang visited Kamrupa in the second quarter of the 7th century. This territory is called "*Asham*" in the *Ain-i-Akbari* and "*Asam*" in the *Padshahnamah* and the same name was applied by Francis Hamilton in his *Account of Asam* compiled during 1807-8. Assam is apparently the English form of 'Asam'.

The boundaries of Pragjyotisha Kamrupa did not remain static or constant throughout, but underwent changes in different ages for reasons political or otherwise. The western limit receded from the river *Karatoya* to the *Manas* or *Manah* under the *Tai-Ahoms*, who ruled the territory from the 13th to early 19th century. The district of Goalpara, an integral part of the ancient kingdom of Kamrupa, was occupied by the rulers of Bengal for several centuries but was reunited in 1874 when Assam was constituted as a separate province comprising the two valleys of Brahmaputra and the *Barak* or *Surma* and the hill tracts in the middle, north and the northeast.

The Assam Valley is an alluvial expanse laid down by the mighty Brahmaputra and its tributaries extending for nearly 640kms between Dhubri and Sadiya. The average width of the valley ranges between 90 and 100kms. This valley offers suitable environment for the settlement of agricultural communities. However, the valley has not been very averse to tribal people in providing them with a habitat. They have found suitable sites for settlement in the isolated hill features, forested portions of the valley and

its marshy tracts. The northern bank of the river as well as the river islands remain their predominantly tribal character. The area of the transition between the hills and the plains of the Brahmaputra is also largely tribal in its ethnic composition. The plain tribals "generally represent the spill-over communities from the hilly regions except for the *Boros* who are a big tribal group largely confined to the plains"(Sharma 1984). These habitats of the tribes in the valley are in close proximity to areas of peasant cultivation, which has profound implication for their society and economy.

"Recent contacts with the non-tribal societies and tea plantations on the hill slopes of Assam have provided new incentives under which the tribals have migrated out of their tradition homelands and have been absorbed as labourers in tea plantations" (Raza and Ahmad: 1990).

If the tribal distribution is examined at the village level, it depicts a different scenario from that of the macro level understanding to that of a state, district or taluka. The distribution of the tribal/ non-tribal population at the village level shows a more complex morphology in the boundary that separates the tribal habitats from that of the non-tribals, which include overlaps and inter-penetration. This fact is not clearly brought out at the macro level.

Broadly, two types of morphology can be postulated. First, it may be a dichotomous distribution such as an uninterrupted or unceasing distribution of the tribal or non-tribal population in a particular pocket. They may be found interspersed with each other in villages having a dominance of either of the two segments. This nature of transition acquires divergent forms depending upon the degree and intensity of non-tribal

penetration into the areas once inhabited exclusively by the tribes; interaction between the tribes and the non-tribes and the intensity of their interdependence.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The empirical patterning in the distribution of the tribal population in India presents two broad types: one in which the tribal population shows a high level of concentration, as is the case in the North-East and the other in which the tribal population displays a high level of agglomeration as is the case in mid-India. The main reason for such a patterning appears to be the quality of the resource-base of the tribal habitats. If the resource base is adequate, it has permitted high level of agglomeration. On the other hand, an area with low resource-base has given rise to a high level of concentration of tribes in the population. The other reasons for high level of concentration appear to be rooted in historical factors wherein the tribal population has been able to aggressively guard its territory from incursions of other groups.

It is quite likely that later interaction between different groups might have changed the initial distribution pattern of the tribal groups. The present distribution of the tribal population may be explained in terms of (1) initial formation, (2) later interactions and (3) the manner in which non-tribal elements infiltrated into tribal areas.

Nevertheless, tribes as an exclusive category have a tendency to cluster and concentrate. In the periphery of their clusters, however, a transition may come into being, which shows a continuum. In most cases, an abrupt transition may not be ruled out. Transitions are usually abrupt, if the ecological variations are too striking.

As stated earlier, the tribal segment of the population in India is largely confined to enclaves away from the main foci of population concentration. The locational

constraints, thus have forced them to adjust their respective habitats and this fact alone has been responsible for the low level of interactions between the tribes and non-tribes. However, for historical reasons, not all tribes are constrained by their location away from the non-tribal areas. The tribes living in plain areas, by virtue of their location, are intertwined with their non-tribal counterpart, experiencing a different set of problems. The present research, while addressing in general, the nature of boundary existing between the tribes and the non-tribes, the attempt here is to examine the issue more specifically related to the tribes distributed in plain areas. Unlike the situation of tribal non-tribal distribution in sharply defined ecological units leading to much sharper boundary line existing between them, the morphology of such boundaries in the case of plains-tribe are expected to be not only complex in their forms, but also that they are subject to continuous changes and modifications arising out of an equally complex relationship between the tribal and non-tribal population sharing the same eco-system. The present research aims at identifying specific forms of boundaries that separates the areas of tribal habitations from that of non-tribal habitations in diverse ecosystems such as those in the plains.

It is imperative at this stage to clarify on the term "boundary" as applied in this context of the distribution of the tribal and non-tribal population. The term boundary here is not used in the conventional sense as is used to demarcate political boundaries between nation states or the administrative boundaries between different states and districts within a nation state. The notion of boundary in this case is essentially an ethnic boundary as expressed on space. For example, there may be a distinct boundary or zone that separates a linguistic zone from that of another. So is the case with other social categories like

religious communities or caste groups, which may have their own specific domain of concentration, creating a boundary between and among these categories and permitting identification of regions of their influence. It is a known fact that elements of the social plurality in India have a strong regional expression. Social categories have a core of their concentration and a periphery that acts as a transition to another core. This boundary formation applies equally to the distribution of the two broad ethnic types namely the tribal and the non-tribal segment. However, the boundary that may separate the areas of concentration of the tribal segment from that of the non-tribal may not be seen as a distinct line but as a zone of transition as much as the case with language boundaries. In some cases it may be knife edged indicating lack of interaction between the two groups in the past and in others it could be a broad zone of transition indicating the process of assimilation or absorption. Secondly these boundaries are liable to continuous change and modifications arising out of changing relationship between the two segments depending upon the changes in the society and economy.

It is assumed that the identification of the changing morphology of tribal non-tribal boundaries shall have to be examined at the lowest level of spatial aggregation. Perhaps a village level analysis of the distribution of those two social groups shall unravel the true nature of the boundary existing between them. It is also assumed that the various types of boundaries existing between the tribes and the non-tribes shall reflect the diversity of interactions between the tribes and the non-tribes. The areas of transition between the tribes and non-tribes shall reveal the effects of spatial processes of spillover, overlap and interpenetration between the groups. In this context, it may be profitable to scrutinize the process of redistribution of tribal population consequent upon the process

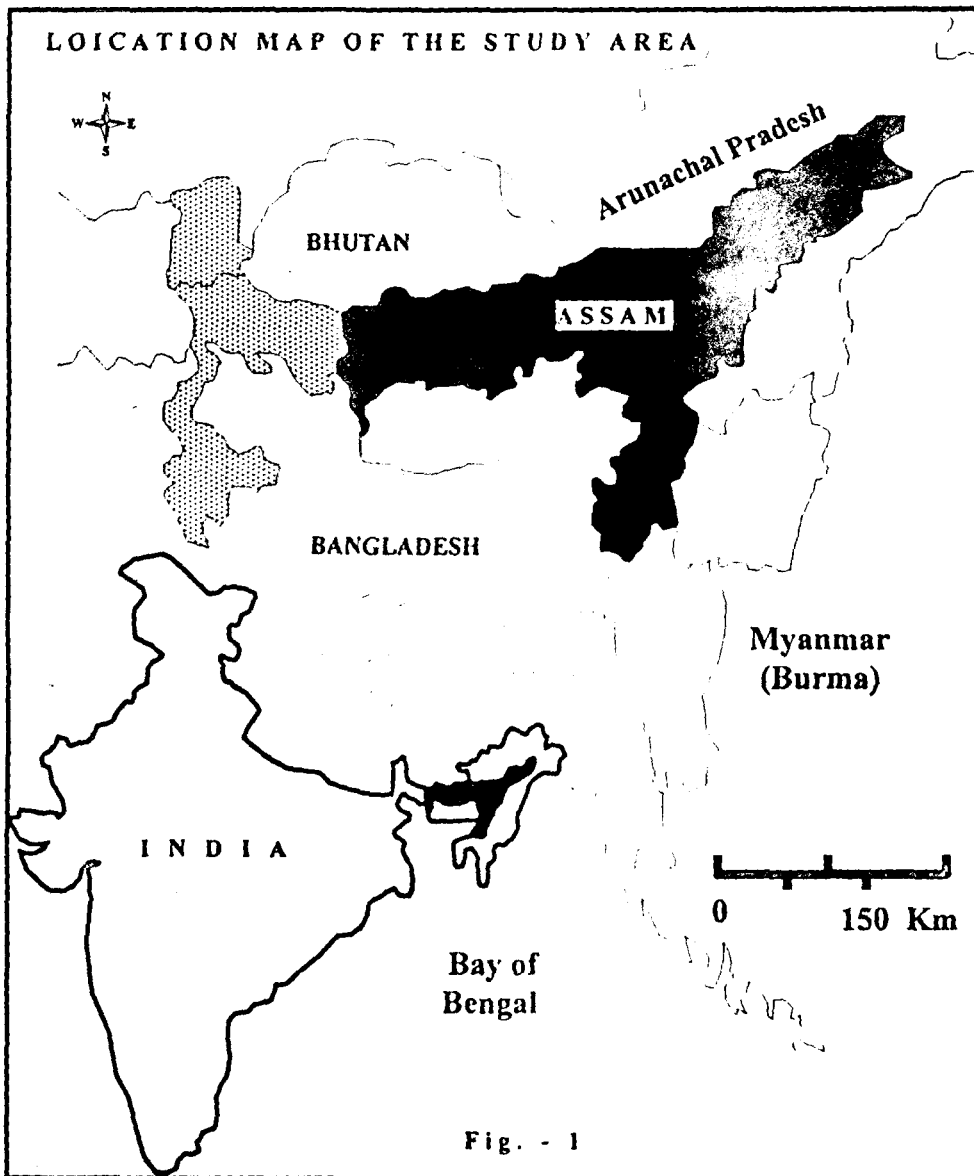
of spatial shift of the two groups to examine whether the tribal population is dispersing or moving out reducing the concentration or due to infiltration of non-tribal population diluting tribal concentration pattern. It is also proposed to get an insight into the socio-economic factors inherent in the process of redistribution of tribal population as well as its possible consequences and implication for the tribal people.

1.3 Choice of the Study Area

Given the nature of the problem proposed to be investigated, the state of Assam, which supports a significant proportion of its tribal population, distributed both in its hilly as well as plain areas, comes as an excellent area selected for the present study.

The Assam Valley is almost a flat plain with little variation in relief. The valley consists of alluvium deposited by the mighty Brahmaputra and its numerous tributaries. The alluvial Brahmaputra plain covers an area of 6962 sq. kms. The Brahmaputra plain is a narrow elongated valley with an east-west distance of about 660 kms and an average of north-south distance of about 70 kms and is about 90 kms wide, widening in the west with the retreat of Meghalaya Plateau. It is narrow near Guwahati and the plain is dotted with numerous inselbergs of gneissic hills as in Darrang, Barpeta, Nalbari, Dhabri, Kamrup and Goalpara. The slope of the valley in the southern bank is gentle while in the northern banks; it indicates a sudden drop of elevation of the Himalayas to 500 m to 200 m. in the plains.

The tribal population, however, finds suitable sites in isolated hill features, forested portions and marshy lands within the valley. The islands within the valley for example continue their predominantly tribal character. The level of isolation for these



tribes located within the valley has been less intense; they have been forced to develop some contacts with their non-tribal neighbors in close proximity.

The geographical conditions of Assam with their fertile river valleys, heavy rainfall, abundant water, luxuriant vegetation and rich fauna attracted primitive man to settle and hence, there were streams of migrations into it even during the Paleolithic Age. The northeastern boundary has passes like *Bum La, Tse La and Tunga* across the eastern Himalayas connecting Tibet with India. These passes have been serving as the gateways for immigrants from Tibet, South-Eastern China and Burma to North-East India since pre-historic period. In the west, the Brahmaputra Valley and the Barak Valley open up widely to the Gangetic Plain, providing easy thoroughfare for the migrants to come to India. Thus, the geographical setting of the area is found to be well disposed towards the process of peopling.

An analysis of peopling of Assam based on neolithic, ethno-linguistic and historical evidences reveals that there are as many as eleven waves and streams of migration. The notables among them chronologically are the Austroloids or the Austro-Asiatic, the Tibeto-Burman, the Indo-Aryan, Muslims and the Ahoms. In the recent past, there has been immigration of people of Bengali origin particularly the landless agriculturists as well as the displaced Hindus from the erstwhile Pakistan in the wake of partition of the country.

The tribes living in the valley areas of Assam have been living with other non-tribal communities since time immemorial and there has been a great amount of cultural give and take between the tribes and other neighboring communities. In fact, the present Assamese culture is a synthesis between the cultures of the tribal inhabitants and the

Aryan migrants. On the other hand, the habitats of the hill tribes are completely separated from the habitats of other non-tribal communities, but the valley dwelling tribes live amidst non-tribal communities.

As against an all India average of 7.95 per cent, Assam records 12.82 per cent tribal population in its total population. The district wise tribal population varies greatly among the districts. The districts in the hilly areas contain even larger percentage with 41.14 per cent, Dhemaji with 43.92 per cent and Karbi Anglong with 51.56 per cent. North Cachar has the highest concentration of tribal population with 65.53 per cent. The districts that have recorded a concentration of tribal population ranging between 10-20 per cent are mostly located in the lower Brahmaputra valley namely Bongaigoan, Goalpara, Nalbari, Kamrup, Darrang, Sonitpur, Marigaon, Golaghat, Jorhat, Karimgang, and Hailakandi. The districts of Dhubri, Nagaon, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, Tinsukia and Cachar record below 10 per cent of tribal population.

1.4 Objectives

The broad objectives of the present research are outlined below:

to analyse regional variation in the distribution of tribal and non-tribal population in Assam at various levels of spatial aggregation,

to identify the areas of tribal concentration and the nature of transition in the boundary between the areas of tribal and non-tribal concentration,

to get an insight into the pattern of redistribution of tribal population with specific reference to the Bodos and

to study the causes and implications of changing morphology of tribal non-tribal boundaries and redistribution of population.

1.5 Hypothesis

The study proposed to test the following hypotheses during the course of this research:

1. The nature of boundary that exists between the tribal and the non-tribal population in Assam depends on the location of tribal group on either hills or plains. The tribal groups living in the hills are expected to maintain largely exclusive territory leading to a form of boundary that represents a dichotomous distribution. However, the tribal groups located on the plains are unlikely to maintain such exclusiveness in their distribution. The morphology of the boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes in the case of plain tribes would assume transitional forms.

2. Distribution of the tribes and the non-tribes and the nature of transition existing between their areas of concentration have undergone rapid changes in the plain areas. The morphology of tribal non-tribal boundary in such areas would embody evidences of overlap and interpenetration.

2a. Cases of interpenetration would be far more likely in the areas of tribal concentration. The non-tribal population, given its dominant social and economic position would be in a better position to make inroads into areas of tribal concentration.

2b. The tribal population in turn is likely to squeeze further into smaller areas or spread into areas of marginal lands, leading to a process of significant redistribution of population.

1.6 Sources of Data

The data for the present research have been collected from both secondary as well as primary sources. The major source of secondary data is the data available with the Census of India.

Analysis of distribution of tribal population in Assam at district and block level has been made on the basis of the data available in the Census of India for the year 1961, 1971, 1991. Village level data on tribal population has been collected from District Census Handbooks of Assam for the selected districts only.

In order to determine the distribution of specific tribal groups in different areas of Assam, help has been taken from Census of India special tables on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled tribes for Assam for different census years. Census tables on languages as well as socio-cultural tables have been utilized for getting additional information on the distribution of specific tribes.

Apart from the census, toposheets have provided valuable information on the locations of sample villages as well as micro scale differences in topography and ecological parameters. Published books, Gazetteers and other relevant documents, reports, newspapers etc. constitute as valuable sources of information pertaining to individual tribes.

Primary data has been generated through field investigation conducted at selected villages located in the study area. The data was collected through a household survey of sample households to generate information on the demographic, social and economic attributes of the population to be utilized for understanding the implications of changing morphology of tribal non-tribal boundary. The household data collected through field investigation include such information as sex composition, literacy level, access to land, sale and purchase of land, occupational composition, migration etc.

1.7 Methodology

Since the scope of the study includes temporal element, the changes in the morphology of tribal non-tribal boundary has been examined for three points of time viz.

1961, 1971, and 1991. No census was conducted in Assam in 1981, which is why the decennial uniformity could not be maintained between 1971 and 1991.

In order to examine the specificities of transition in the tribal non-tribal boundary, the proportion of tribal population has been represented through a series of choropleth maps at district level to identify main areas of concentration of tribal population. This exercise is repeated for all the three points of time to indicate the shifts in the areas of tribal concentration if any. Based on these maps, a typology of tribal concentration has been identified to indicate:

- (a) Areas having consistently high tribal concentration.
- (b) Areas having consistently low tribal proportion.
- (c) Areas which have a constant proportion of tribal population over the years.

At least one block from each category has been taken as a sample to investigate village level pattern in tribal non-tribal distribution and the changes therein over the period of investigation. The specific method of identification of morphology of tribal non-tribal boundary consists of drawing a series of village traverses. A typology of the existing boundaries has been attempted.

The investigation in the second stage consists of specifically addressing a particular tribe, i.e. the *Bodos*. Only one district having the highest concentration of the Bodos, namely Kokrajhar district has been selected for this purpose. The total population of the district has been ethnically disaggregated into the Bodos, the Santhali and the 'others' meaning thereby the non-Bodo and the non-Santhali population. Proportion of the Bodo, Santhali and the others has been calculated for each of the

villages in the district for two points of time; 1971 and 1991 to indicate the change in the ethnic composition of the villages.

The issue of redistribution of Bodo population has been examined by plotting the data for two points of time for the all the villages in Kokrajhar district to determine the nature of changes in the pattern.

The third stage of the research involved selection of two villages located in the transitional areas for field investigation. The number of such villages depended upon the types of morphology in the distribution of Bodo and the non-Bodo population. The information has been collected on household basis to determine varying socio-economic reality in different transitional areas of Bodo concentration.



1.8 An Overview of Literature

Tribes generally have a wider connotation, which not merely means certain group of people. The term came into wider use with colonization of territories by the European colonizers in the 18th and 19th Century. They not only looted their resources but the indigenous people were perceived as constraints in their endeavor. It was only in the 19th century that the colonizers had to stop the barbaric acts of elimination, annihilation or assimilation because of the growth of humanism.

However, such was not with the case with the Indian tribes. In 1833, the Britishers considered the tribal pockets as '*excluded areas*' which was made as an act in the year 1874. By the year 1935, this act was transformed into identification of groups of people. In the year 1921, it meant those people staying in forests and in 1931; Hutton introduced another term '*primitive tribe*'. The scheduling policy of the Government of India after Independence continues to be in part the legacy left behind by the British.

The tribal territories of India are inextricably woven into the regional fabric of the country. The tribal people share basic characteristics of the social ethos of India in its wide spectrum of regional diversities (Raza and Ahmad, 1990).

The river basins have constituted the attractive areas for early peasant communities. They have continued to be the perennial nuclear regions of India while on the periphery were the less attractive isolated areas and which have remained as blind alleys in the history of India. This chequered process of diffusion of diverse culture groups explains the pattern of distribution of the tribes in the North Eastern region, which supports the largest concentration of tribal population in India. Nestled within the complex of the sub-Himalayan ranges, the Indo-Burmese hills of Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram and the erosional surfaces of the Meghalayan Plateau, the tribes of North East India have a world of their own. Having lived in the marchland between India and China and in the triangle where the Indian and the Chinese worlds meet, they have picked up the impression that they belong to none. The boundaries of the British Empire as they were defined in the North East, left the tribal question as an irrelevant adjunct of the territorial question (Ahmad, 1983).

An interesting feature of tribal reality in North East India is their incredibly small size, barring only a few notable tribes of large size. The 1981 census records as many as 65 tribal groups out of a total of 111 having a population size less than 1000 persons each. In spite of small population size, most of these communities exhibit a high degree of concentration as against the low degree of concentration of their counterparts in mid-India. Here most tribes have developed knife-edged boundaries between and among themselves with a core of their concentration, often without a periphery or a transition

over space where the presence of one tribe gives rise to another tribe (Nayak and Mipun 1999). It is this geographical patterning of the tribes that create a defined tribal habitat exclusive to each other. The tribal population of the North East displays far greater diversity in their totality of responses '*more than any comparable area in the world*' (Hutton 1946).

Built by the alluvium brought down by the mighty Brahmaputra, the valley is suitable for settlement of agricultural communities; however, the tribals have usually settled in the remote hill regions, forested areas and in the marshy tracts. The area of the transition between the hills and the plains of the Brahmaputra is also largely tribal in its ethnic composition. The plain tribals "generally represent the spill over communities from the hilly regions except for the Boros who are a big tribal group largely confined to the plains" (Sharma: 1984).

Phanjouban in his paper "*Ethnic Identity and Community Relationship in the North East*" has written that all tribal groups in the North East are facing some problem or the other. As in the case of Bodos, they have a fear of losing their distinctive identity in the face of constant influx of alien population from Bangladesh and Nepal. Immigrant Bodo tension had been on the rise during the 1980s and 1990s in large tracts of traditional Bodo territories in lower Assam where the non-tribals were exploiting their resources. This later grew into a strong resentment among the tribals.

Historians agree that the Bodos and other aligned tribes were one of the earliest known settlers of Assam, even earlier than the Ahoms who arrived in the state in the 13th century and later the Hindu Assamese dominated the state. The early migrants did not prove to be a threat to the tribals because land was plenty but gradually when the

migrants were coming in waves; the Bodos were further pushed into the brink. As a result the Bodos have been subjected to land alienation. It is also for the reason that the Bodos actively supported the 'anti-foreigners' agitation led by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU), in the 80s. It was after the AGP Government that the Bodos moved away from the Assamese.

Baruah in his book, "*India Against Itself, Assam and the Politics of Nationality*" (1999) has written widely concerning the Bodo tribals on the chapter, "*We are Bodos, Not Assamese*" contesting a sub national narrative. In his book, he has described the ethnicity of the Bodos, their fight towards sub nationalism and the present impasse and the ethnically targeted violence it has produced.

This pattern of clustering and concentration has contributed significantly to the lack of adequate interaction between the tribal and the non-tribal components of the population. The processes of change in the tribal society have taken place at a slow pace thus leading to socio-economic stagnation. Constrained by a vigorous environment fostering isolation, the tribal communities have been brought under the influence of exogenetic forces only recently. Thus, in due course of time the tribal communities have developed a mode of living, in consonance with the ecological conditions in the enclaves, which have provided them with a resource base. (Raza et al. 1977:2) It is in these enclaves that the tribes have shown a strong tendency of clustering concentration. While areas close to the traditional homelands of these communities have undergone rapid changes from the early stages of food gathering and subsistence farming to the modern production system based on advanced technology the tribes have not experienced such a fast socio-economic transformation.

The transition from primitiveness to modernity in India is often abrupt and generally ungraded. It is of great relevance therefore to evaluate the spatial attributes of tribal distribution in India, which provides valuable insights on not only the tribal problem itself but also the problems of spatial patterns of social change and transformation. A better understanding of the tribal pattern of spatial dispersion is achieved by identifying the cores and peripheries of individual tribal group. Each tribal community was monolithic in their composition but with their process of transformation changed into peasant communities. These communities moved from food gathering to *jhum*-cultivation. With the increase in the number of tribal population, there was a pressure exerted by non-tribal peasant communities on arable land and in turn, either assimilated the tribals or was squeezed into those areas of their primeval homeland, which were negative from the point of settled agriculture. Because of this, the proportion of non-tribals remained low in tribal areas.

In the process of spatial distribution, it is seldom seen that tribal groups infiltrated into other tribal areas unlike the non-tribals. Such spatial distribution of tribal population has been widely studied by Ahmad (1988), N.K. Bose (1979) Moonis Raza (1979).

The tribal population of India has also undergone transformation. Usually in the peripheries a transition occurs which is a gradual one. However, in some cases an abrupt transition may also be seen. Such dichotomous distribution may be found in areas having sharp ecological contrast where the tribal non-tribal boundary may be very abrupt. Where the ecological variations are not very sharp, the continuum takes the shape of a gradual one. In fact, there is little evidence to show frequent interaction between the tribes and the non-tribes. It has been noted that outside contact has only been a source of

disturbance to the otherwise self-contained tribal social world. (Pingle, 1990). With the transformation process the tribal areas witness two impacts, one is an influx of non-tribal peasantry and the other is the transformation of subsistence tribal agriculture into a cash cropping economy. The tribals started with cash economy without having any basic knowledge of the trade. As a result, they were looted, deceived, and taken advantage of by the non-tribal moneylenders. The tribals slowly started losing their hold on the lands they required. The forest policies too started having an access to the tribal lands. "Immediately, what followed was shrinkage in the area of the tribal habitat and a transformation of tribal way of life". (Ahmad, 1999).

Urmila Pingle's study (1990) of the Raj Gonds, Maria Gonds (Chanda district, now renamed as Chandrapur) and Koyas (Adilabad district) illustrated the devastating effects of non-tribal penetration on these communities. The Maria Gonds survived on subsistence cultivation, the Raj Gonds turned their arable lands to cotton cultivation while the Koyas were the worst effected as half their population had turned out to be landless agricultural labourers.

There was a restricted nature of interaction between the tribes and the developed non-tribes, which has allowed the old tribal phenomena to continue uninterruptedly, thus depriving them the process of development. With this was the intrusion of the English missionaries in the tribal areas, where they converted the tribals into Christianity and introduced welfare activities in the tribal areas, such as health services and schools. "The English Language which they picked up served the much useful purpose of inter-tribal communication." (Ahmad: 1999).

With the intervention of the British, the tribal economy also got affected. The mineral bearing Chotanagpur region became the hub of mining and industrial activity. The twin processes of industrialization and urbanization introduced non-tribal elements into this tribal region on an unprecedented scale leading to a chain of developments. (Ahmad: 1999). Such interventions disrupted their traditional mode of economy. The spillover of peasants from the thickly populated parts of the Central Bihar plains led to the process of land alienation. These alienated tribes gradually became agricultural labourers. However, these encroachments on tribal lands were seen as early as 1850 in the Chotanagpur region. These resistance movements were quite dangerous to the state authority during the British period.(Raghaviah: 1971)

Inevitably, Chotanagpur and other mid- Indian tribal region became a focal point of developmental activity on an unprecedented scale. These developments resulted in structural changes in the tribal economies. Firstly, the tribes were displaced from their lands, or deprived of access to the forest. Location of industry, mining establishments, river valley projects and fencing of reserved forests accelerated their process of alienation further. Secondly, the influx of the non-tribal elements led to a demographic change in the tribal areas around industrial complexes. Thirdly, voluntary or involuntary eviction of tribals from the lands, traditionally owned by them caused substantial occupational changes. Such a scene was seen in Bastar and Koraput districts. The peasant communities who came to settle down on lands reclaimed from the forest in the Dandakaranya Project areas were experienced in intensive paddy cultivation. This penetration of the peasant mode further accelerated the process of marginalization of the tribes.

The research work available on industrialization and urbanization among the tribal societies is extremely limited. The tribal population in India, especially in mid-India was remote and physically isolated from the centers of administration and trade. The administrators and outsiders had minimal interests in the tribal areas other than coming in contact with them in institutional and religious spheres. Yet these tribal areas, specially the mid Indian belt proved to be the richest in their mineral wealth. Besides, these areas provided cheap labour too. Therefore, the isolation and comparatively independent economic system of the tribal communities were broken down slowly by establishing mines and quarries in their areas, and by employing the tribal people as unskilled labourers in the industries. With the establishment of tea plantations in Assam, North Bengal, and East Bengal, the demand for cheap labour increased and the tribal communities became the main source of labour recruitment.

The population experienced a phenomenal growth in North India as well as in South India. Though the tea gardens were not situated in the tribal areas, they have directly affected many tribal people because they constituted the bulk of the labour force in the tea-plantations. This industry mainly depended on the immigrant labour. In Assam and North Bengal, recruitment of labour was a major problem. Chotanagpur also became a very important centre for labour recruitment and the other areas were the Santhal Parganas. The main reasons for recruitment of the tribal people were their extremely poor economic conditions.

Das and Banerjee in their book "*Impact of Tea Industry on the Life of the Tribal of West Bengal*" (1964) have described the impact of the tea industry on the tribal labourers of West Bengal. They conducted this study among the tribal labourers. They

have described their findings in this book, under “economic”, “social” and “psychological” impacts of the tea industry on the tribal labourers. Caste and religion remain the important processes of change generated by industrialization on the tribal life contrasted with the impact of Hindu social organization on the tribal communities. In relation to Hindu society, they retained “their group identity” partly because of the traditional economic and social system.

It has been seen that other than geographers, anthropologists, sociologists also have contributed a lot to the impact of industrialization and urbanization in tribal dominated areas. Notable among them are Gallagher, Vidyarthi and Bose. N.K.Bose in his book “*Some Observations on Industrialization and its Effect on Tribal Life*” has written elaborately on the impact and implication of industrialization on the tribes.

The Indian tribes also described as ‘*pre-literates*’ (Goody: 1971) have been exposed to literacy only recently. Tribal responses to the programmes of literacy and education vary significantly from state to state (Raza, Ahmad and Nuna:1985). While some sections of the tribal society have responded to literary programmes, some have remained outside the ambit of education. These responses generally depend on their socio-cultural, economic and demographic characteristics and on the magnitude and direction of the forces of modernization, such as urbanization and industrialization (A.B.Bose:1970) as well as the influence of Christianity (Madan: 1951). The initiatives taken by the Government and the NGOs to educate the tribes through special education and literacy drives have contributed significantly towards the modernization of the tribal communities. However, these literacy programmes were not carried out properly thus giving rise to significant variations in the regional pattern in the past few decades

(Srikant: 1966). The socio-cultural change in tribal society can be understood with the level of literacy in a tribal area. Literacy has been imparted to few tribal areas and has been examined in the case of Gonds, Bhils and Santals.

With the tribal regional developmental policies, the geographers can contribute to the regional development. Firstly the peculiarity of their distribution which is based on the resources and secondly the tribal non-tribal interaction which is again based on rich resource based region. After the British had come to India, the mineral resources were considered important and as a result the rich tribal areas were greatly exploited by the non-tribals. Therefore, in order to overcome these problems the tribal developmental policies were initiated. With these policies, they started preserving the tribal social customs from certain erosion, and then they tried to safeguard the traditional vocations without exploiting the tribals. Necessary steps were taken also to reduce the state of tribal isolation and to raise their educational level and standard of living in order to facilitate their assimilation with the rest of the population.

It is seen from the above that all geographers, anthropologists as well as sociologists have written extensively about the tribals starting from their origin, present condition, places of inhabitation, economy, distribution so on and so forth including the consequences. However, rarely anyone has attempted to write about the plain tribals of Assam with their interaction with the non-tribals in the surrounding areas. This is an attempt to understand the morphology between the tribals and the non-tribals of Assam in context to their boundary. The tribes belong to different ethno-lingual groups; they profess diverse faiths and are at disparate levels of socio-economic development, which ranges from the Stone Age hunters and gatherers to the urbanized industrialized earners. The

tribal communities constitute a considerable amount of population. (Raza et al., 1977:1)
Their spatial distribution is however characterized by a strong tendency of clustering and concentration in pockets of diverse degrees of isolation.

1.10 Organization of the Manuscript

The contents of the dissertation are organized and classified into the following broad chapters.

The first chapter enunciates the research design and includes a statement on the problem of investigation, broad objectives placed before the research and the hypothesis. The chapter also includes a brief statement on the choice of study area, an outline on the methodology adopted as well as an overview of literature available on the topic of research.

The second chapter deals with the spatial distribution of tribal population in Assam- aspects of clustering and concentration: This chapter intends to analyse the regional distribution of tribal population in the study area for three points of time i. e. 1961, 1971, and 1991 at district level.

The third chapter is devoted to an analysis of the village level pattern in the distribution of the tribes for selected blocks only.

The fourth chapter makes an attempt at the identification of morphology of tribal non-tribal boundary using village traverses.

The fifth chapter includes a specific study of the process of redistribution of population with special reference to the Bodo speaking people. The analysis based on data at village level in Kokrajhar district of Assam.

Socio-economic and demographic problems in transitional areas is analysed in the sixth chapter through household survey in two selected villages of Kokrajhar district.

A summary of the major findings of this research is presented in the seventh and final chapter.

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Spatial Distribution of Tribal Population in Assam

2.1 Introductory Statement.

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to understand the spatial distribution of the scheduled tribe population in Assam while trying to understand the morphology of tribal non-tribal boundary. By analyzing the regional distribution of the tribal population in the study area, it would be possible to identify the areas of concentration and clustering of the tribal segment. This has been achieved by analyzing the census data on the tribal population at various levels of spatial aggregation such as at the state, district and the block level. However, in order to analyze the changes in the pattern of distribution, temporal dimension of the changes in the distribution pattern has been examined by using the data for three points of time i.e. 1961, 1971, 1991². As many as three techniques³ have been used to identify the areas of tribal concentration in relation to its counterparts i.e. the non-tribal population.

2.2 The Region

Assam may be broadly divided into two physical units: the North- Eastern, Central Hill tracts and the valleys of the Barak and the Brahmaputra. On the north of Assam lie the Eastern Himalayas reaching the highest altitude in the northeast at Namchu Burwa, at 7,756 feet above the a.s.l. The different parts of the sub-Himalayan region are

² There was no Census conducted in Assam in the year 1981.

³ The three techniques are: *Share*, indicating the percentage of scheduled tribe population in a district to the total population in that district, *Concentration index*, showing the percentage of scheduled tribe population in a district to the total scheduled tribe population in the state as a whole and *Location Quotient* showing the ratio between the proportion of scheduled tribe population in a district to that of the state.

named after the semi-Mongoloid tribes who inhabit in these hills; the Bhutias, Akas, Duflas (Nishis), Abors (Adis), Miris (Mishings) and Mishmis. This range continues towards the southeast and joins the Patkai hills, the natural boundary between Assam and Myanmar. The Assam Range in the middle is occupied from the east to the west by the various tribes of the Nagas, Jaintias, Khasis and Garos. On the south lie Chin and Lushai (Mizo) Hills, Chittagong Hill Tract and Hill Tipperah. Though surrounded by mountain barriers, Assam was linked up with the neighboring countries by several routes; of the Assam- Burma route, it helped the migration of the racial elements from Southeast Asia; the Ahoms and other Tibeto- Burmans followed the Patkai route from the Northeast. The hill passes of Bhutan, Tibet and Nepal were probably used by certain waves of Tibeto- Burmans. The most frequented route was on the west, the valleys the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, through which the Aryans penetrated into Pragjyotisha- Kammarupa. Assam is thus located in one of the great migration routes of mankind.

The physical divisions led the emergence in Assam of two distinct ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups, namely the dwellers of the hills and those of the plains. It is said that the process of '*Aryansitation*' or '*Sanskritization*' was nearly completed in the Brahmaputra Valley by 1200 A.D. This was not the case of all those "who have been for centuries living far away from the mainstream, in the relatively isolated and inaccessible and less fertile and less agriculturally productive regions of forests, hills and mountains." They continued to maintain their identity in speech, traditional customs, usages, institutions and religious beliefs. Land was the backbone of their economy, but the nature and extent of soil forced them to practice *jhumming* or the shifting cultivation. There had been frequent intercourse between the people of the hills and the plains notwithstanding

the natural barriers like the passes and the river routes for economic reasons or otherwise. The hill men depended largely on the plains for their foodstuff and other necessities while the plainsmen would provide them with their requirement. Some of them preferred even to settle in the plains or at the foothills and consequently there had been a process of assimilation, though small racially, linguistically and culturally.

One of the main reasons for tribal disenchantment was the lack of development of their areas, which remained backward, and whatever development was taking place in the state was concentrated in the non-tribal areas. The alienation of the Assamese tribal was beginning to take place. Underdevelopment, poverty and ever-growing pressure from land from the immigrants were some of the factors which pushed the plains tribals of the Brahmaputra Valley to the wall. As a result, the sense of alienation came to be expressed in the growth of different tribal organizations, which started demanding political power and social justice.

Historians agree that the Bodos and other aligned tribes were one of the earliest known settlers of Assam, even earlier than the *Ahoms* who arrived in the state in the 13th century. However, no tension resulted at the time because the population was small and land was plenty. The early migrants arrived in small numbers and very gradually, the later migrants from across the border have put the Bodos further and further to the brink.

During the last 300 years, there has been a significant incursion of non-tribal population into the exclusive tribal areas and that is why a dilution has taken place in the tribal community exclusively. There is little reason to suspect that the tribal population has dispersed itself. The tribal variations in the numerical strength are to be considered at the village level. If the village level data is plotted, it can be easily shown that the tribal

population shows clusters; a reality, which is lost when the analysis is made at highly, aggregate level i.e. *Tahsil* or district. At the village level, it will be clear that the tribal population has a tendency to cluster and concentrate. In the periphery, of course a transition is a gradual one. However, in some cases an abrupt transition may be ruled out. Such a dichotomous distribution may be found in areas having sharp ecological contrast where the tribal non-tribal boundary may be very abrupt. Where the ecological variations are not very sharp, the continuum takes the shape of a gradual one.

2.3 Distribution of Tribal Population: The Regional Dimension

One of the most significant features of the Northern-Eastern region is an extremely high concentration of the scheduled tribe population as compared to India as a whole. The tribal population in this region constitutes a little over 11 per cent (11.43%) of the total tribal population of the country as per the 1991 Census enumeration. This percentage is not significant, unless of course one takes into consideration of the fact that the region supports only 3.57 per cent of the total population of the country.

In spite of the fact that the North- Eastern region supports a very high percentage of tribal population; their spatial distribution reveals a striking variation at both the state and the district level. The share of tribal population is the lowest in Assam where they constitutes a little over 10 per cent of the total population. On the other hand the tribes constitute a vast majority of population living in the Eastern Himalayas i. e. Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram where they account for over 80 per cent of the total population. The state of Meghalaya, which is located in the south of the Brahmaputra Valley and characterized by hill features and plateau surface, is also included in this category. The tribal population in Manipur and Tripura is substantially low when

compared to the states of Mizoram, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya. This indicates the generally open character of the former, which has permitted a higher degree of infiltration of non-tribal groups. (Raza and Ahmad:1990)

Table: 2.1
Percentage of Tribal Population

% ST population	1981			1991		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
Nil	-	-	5	-	-	7
< 5	3	3	5	8	8	22
5 - 10	-	-	2	4	4	2
10 - 20	-	-	1	9	9	6
20 - 30	2	2	2	3	1	3
30 - 50	4	4	4	6	7	5
50 - 70	5	3	5	4	3	2
70 - 90	9	8	10	11	11	9
> 90	12	15	1	15	17	4

Source: Nayak D.K. (2000)

The district level pattern reveals a further accentuation in the degree of spatial variation in the distribution of tribal population in the North-East (Table 2.1). According to 1991 census counts, as many as 12 districts, mostly located in the Brahmaputra and Barak Valley in Assam as well as in the Imphal Valley in Manipur, have a tribal population as low as 10 per cent and less. In most of the remaining districts in the Brahmaputra Valley, the tribes account for 10 to 20 per cent of the population. Around 20- 40 per cent of the tribes are found in the districts of Lakhimpur, Kokrajhar and Dhemaji in Assam, Dibang Valley, Lohit and Changlang districts of Arunachal Pradesh and in the state of Tripura. In the remaining districts, most of which are hilly in character and are located in the higher altitudes, the tribes are in a majority like the districts of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills. Other than these districts and Arunachal Pradesh,

they account for 50- 70 per cent tribal population and the remaining districts, which are in the hilly terrain, constitute more than 70 per cent tribal population.

It is clear from the above that the tribal population is far more concentrated in the hilly, forested areas while the river valleys and the Manipur basin support a smaller proportion of tribal population. The isolated hills and the marshy areas in the Brahmaputra Valley retain their dominantly tribal character. It is seen that the areas, which are more favourable for intensive agriculture, support less tribal population.

The Brahmaputra Valley represents an area of the lowest concentration of tribal population in the region as a whole and acts as a transition between high concentration areas lying on the north and the south. The presence of some important tribal groups in the valley makes a sharp distinction between the 'hill' and 'plain' tribes. It is important to note that the hilly tracts of the region generally represent a very high concentration of tribal population but with a low level of agglomeration and low densities. This is mainly because of low resource base and primitive methods of cultivation.

Another important feature of the spatial distribution in the north-east is that the tribal groups, barring a few notable exceptions are numerically very small. More than three- fourths of all tribal groups have a population below 20,000 and over 60 per cent of them have a population below 10,000 each. According to the 1981 census, thirty- eight tribal groups recorded a population of less than 1,000 persons each. Few large groups are Khasis, Jaintias in the Meghalaya Plateau, the Mizos and the Nagas in the eastern Himalayas and the Boro Kacharis in the plains. The other larger groups are the Garos in the plateau, the Mikirs, Miris, Rabhas and the Tripuris who are largely plain tribes. Most of the plain tribes are much larger than in their population size compared to the tribes

inhabiting hilly areas. An extraordinarily large number of tribal groups occupying the hilly terrain, particularly in Arunachal Pradesh, are numerically insignificant.

Lastly, the tribal groups in the hills, unlike their counterparts in the valleys or in the mid-Indian tribal belt, are distributed with knife-edged boundaries between them and without a periphery of their distribution. Their cores are highly compact displaying much higher degree of concentration. "This may be largely due to the topography... and partly to the relative isolated location of their territory" (Raza and Ahmad 1990)

2.3.1 Assam: Inter District Variation in Distribution of Tribal Population

The distribution of tribal population within Assam is highly uneven. Assam had a total tribal population constituting nearly 11 per cent (10.74%) of the total population as per the 1961 census enumeration. By the next census undertaken in the year 1971, the proportion of the states' tribal population remained by and large unchanged with the scheduled tribes accounting for a little over 10 per cent (10.29%) of the total population. However, the proportion of the scheduled tribes registered a substantial increase by the year 1991, increasing by more than 2 percentage points. As there was no census held in the year 1981, no data is available for this particular period. A little less than 13 per cent (i.e. 12.82 per cent) of the population was returned as scheduled tribes in the year 1991. Because of administrative reorganization the number of districts increased by the year 1991. There were only eight districts in the year 1961 as well as in 1971 but increased to twenty-three districts by the year 1991.

For a better insight into the patterning of the distribution of tribal concentration in Assam, it is necessary to examine the distribution of tribal population at lower aggregate level, say at the district level. Even at the district level which is very large aggregative

units, the tribes in the state display a strong tendency to cluster and concentrate in particular areas. An attempt has been made to examine the pattern at the district for three points of time viz. 1961, 1971 and 1991. In order to understand the variation in the distribution of the scheduled tribes, three important techniques have been used as follows:

1. Percentage share of the tribal population to the total population in a given district,
2. Concentration index which depicts the share of the scheduled tribe population in a district to their total population in the state as a whole and
3. Location quotient, which shows their relative proportion in a district as compared to their proportion at the state level.

2.3.2 Share

As mentioned earlier, Assam recorded a total tribal population of more than 10 per cent (10.74 per cent) in the year 1961. At the district level however (there were eight districts in Assam in the year 1961) the distribution was extremely uneven showing large concentration of the scheduled tribes in a few districts while many others had only a negligible presence of the scheduled tribes. For example, United Mikir and North Cachar Hills recorded the highest concentration of the scheduled tribes with more than 75 per cent (75.54 per cent) of the population returned as scheduled tribes (Table: 2.2) and all the three districts of Kamrup, Darrang and Lakhimpur recorded a share of around 11 per cent. The districts of Nowgong and Sibsagar districts usually known as Upper Assam recorded a share ranging between 6 to 7 per cent only. Cachar district had only a marginal proportion of 1.02 per cent scheduled tribes as compared to that of United Mikir

and North Cachar Hills. The district of Goalpara had a moderate share of tribal population of more than 14 per cent (14.66 per cent).

Table: 2.2
Assam: Inter-District Variation in the Distribution of Scheduled Tribe Population; 1961

ASSAM (1961)	Share (%)	Concentration Index	Location Quotient
Goalpara	14.66	19.46	1.37
Kamrup	10.78	20.00	1.00
Darrang	10.87	12.04	1.01
Lakhimpur	10.64	14.30	0.99
Nowgong	7.22	7.52	0.67
Sibsagar	6.36	8.24	0.59
Cachar	1.02	1.20	0.09
U. M. & N. C. Hills	75.54	18.14	7.06
Assam	10.74	100.00	1.00

Source: Census of India, 1961.

A clearer picture of the distribution of tribes in the state of Assam emerges when the data is depicted on the map (fig. 2.1). Four broad areas of concentration are clearly discernible: the area of lowest tribal concentration in the southern plains, the area of the highest concentration in the hills, the area of low concentration in the plains of upper Assam and a moderately high concentration of the tribes in the northern foothill zone and in the northern bank of the Brahmaputra. The Cachar plain in the south emerges as an island where the scheduled tribes have a negligible presence only. This is in sharp contrast to the neighbouring hilly district of United Mikir and North Cachar Hills where the tribes constitute a dominating share in the total population. Immediately to the north of it, in the districts of Sibsagar and Nowgong, the scheduled tribes are again fewer in numbers making the two plain areas on the north and the south of the hilly areas as dominantly non-tribal habitations. The boundary line between the tribes and the non-tribes in the southern Assam seems to be clearly defined as a line that separates the hills

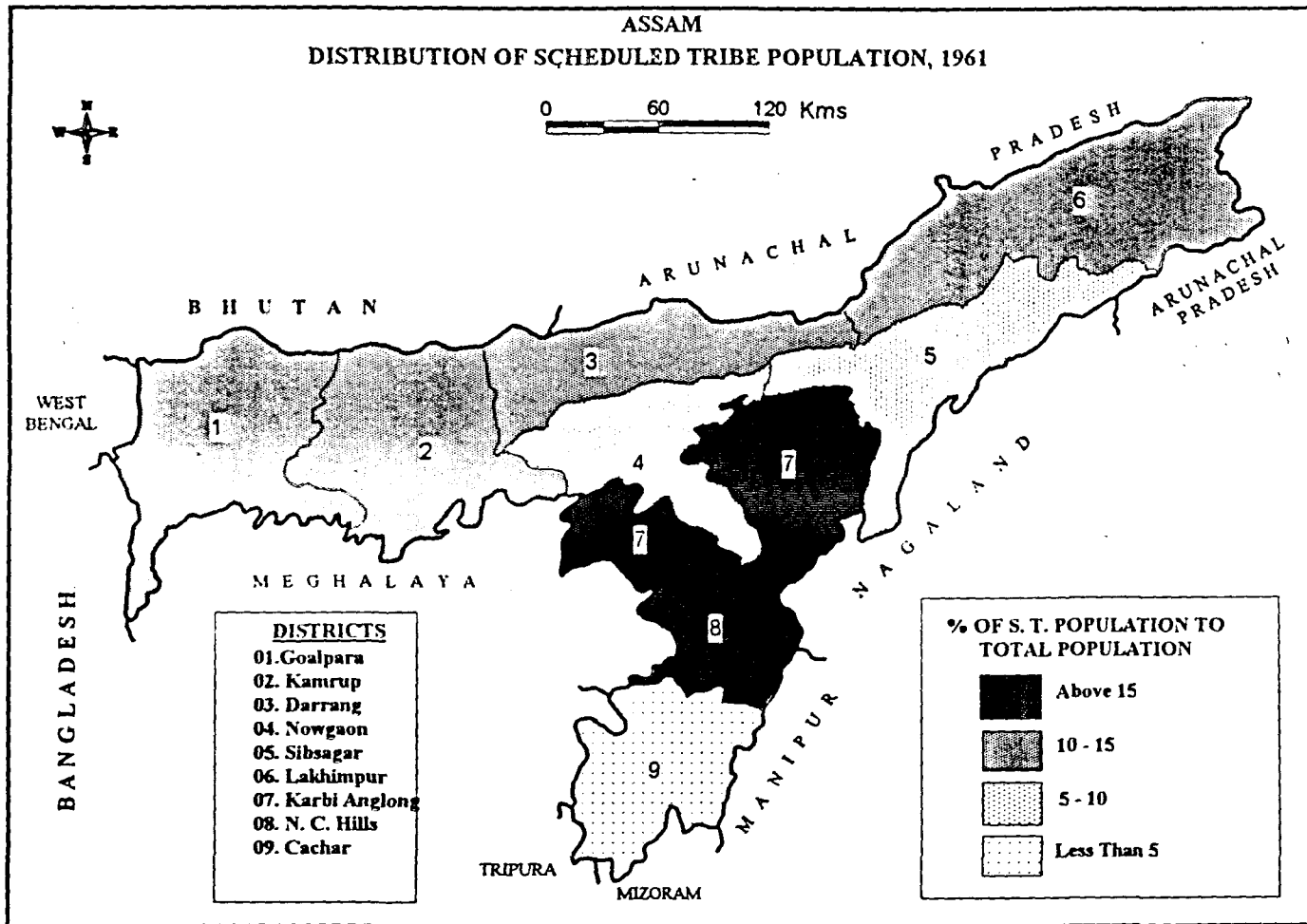


FIG. - 2.1

from the plains. The four northern most districts namely Kamrup, Goalpara, Darrang and Lakhimpur contain a sizeable proportion of 10-15 per cent of the scheduled tribes in their population making them a contiguous area. Much of the tribal population in these districts however is concentrated north of Brahmaputra which adjoin the foothill zone of the Arunachal Himalayas; an area traditionally inhabited by the tribes. The tribal population in these districts is also concentrated in the isolated hill features and the river islands, which have provided the tribes with an ideal habitat since time immemorial.

Table 2.3
Assam: Inter-District Variation in the Distribution of Scheduled Tribe Population; 1971

ASSAM (1971)	Share (%)	Concentration Index (%)	Location Quotient
Goalpara	13.85	20.48	1.34
Kamrup	10.44	19.82	1.01
Darrang	10.69	12.33	1.03
Lakhimpur	13.48	19.02	1.30
Nowgong	7.44	8.31	0.72
Sibsagar	6.82	8.32	0.66
U. M. & N. C. Hills	35.40	10.71	3.43
Cachar	0.89	1.01	0.08
Assam	10.29	100.00	1.00

Source: Census of India, 1971.

The distribution of tribes as far as their percentage share in the total population remained largely unchanged in the year 1971. There was a marginal fall in the share of the scheduled tribe population in the state as a whole from 10.74 per cent in the year 1961 to 10.29 per cent in the year 1971. All the districts except Lakhimpur, Nowgong and Sibsaagar, experienced a fall in the proportion of the scheduled tribes in their total population. It is clear from the table 2.3 that the proportion of scheduled tribe population declined further in Cachar district indicating further erosion in the proportion of the scheduled tribes in this district, which in any case had the lowest presence of this segment of the population. The largest change is witnessed in the formerly tribal dominated

district of United Mikir and North Cachar Hills which experienced a substantive decline in the share of the scheduled tribe population in its total, i.e from 75.54 per cent in the year 1961 to a mere 35.40 per cent in the year 1971. While such a large decline in the tribal population in this district is inexplicable, it may be safely concluded that the district did experience a large-scale infiltration of the non-tribal population as evident from a significant rise in the total population of the district, but a small rise in the tribal population. This phenomenal rise in the total population cannot be attributed to natural growth rate of the small non-tribal population in the district. The share of the tribal population in the Upper Assam districts, like Nowgong and Sibsagar remained by and large constant in the year of 1971 with the share ranging between 6- 7 per cent.

Fig.2.2 depicts a similar picture, as was the case in the year 1961. The hilly tribal district of North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong district remained the fortress of a tribal habitat though much affected by non-tribal incursion reducing the dominance of the tribes in the district. This hilly district demarcates the boundary between the northern and the southern plains. The district of Cachar, which is plain area formed by the alluvial deposits of the Barak River supports peasant population characterized by minimum number of tribal people. The two districts, which share the boundary of the tribal district of United Mikir Hills and North Cachar Hills are plains of Nowgong and Sibsagar and support less tribal population ranging between 5-10 per cent. The northern plains situated above the mighty Brahmaputra contained relatively higher proportion of scheduled tribes for reasons stated earlier.

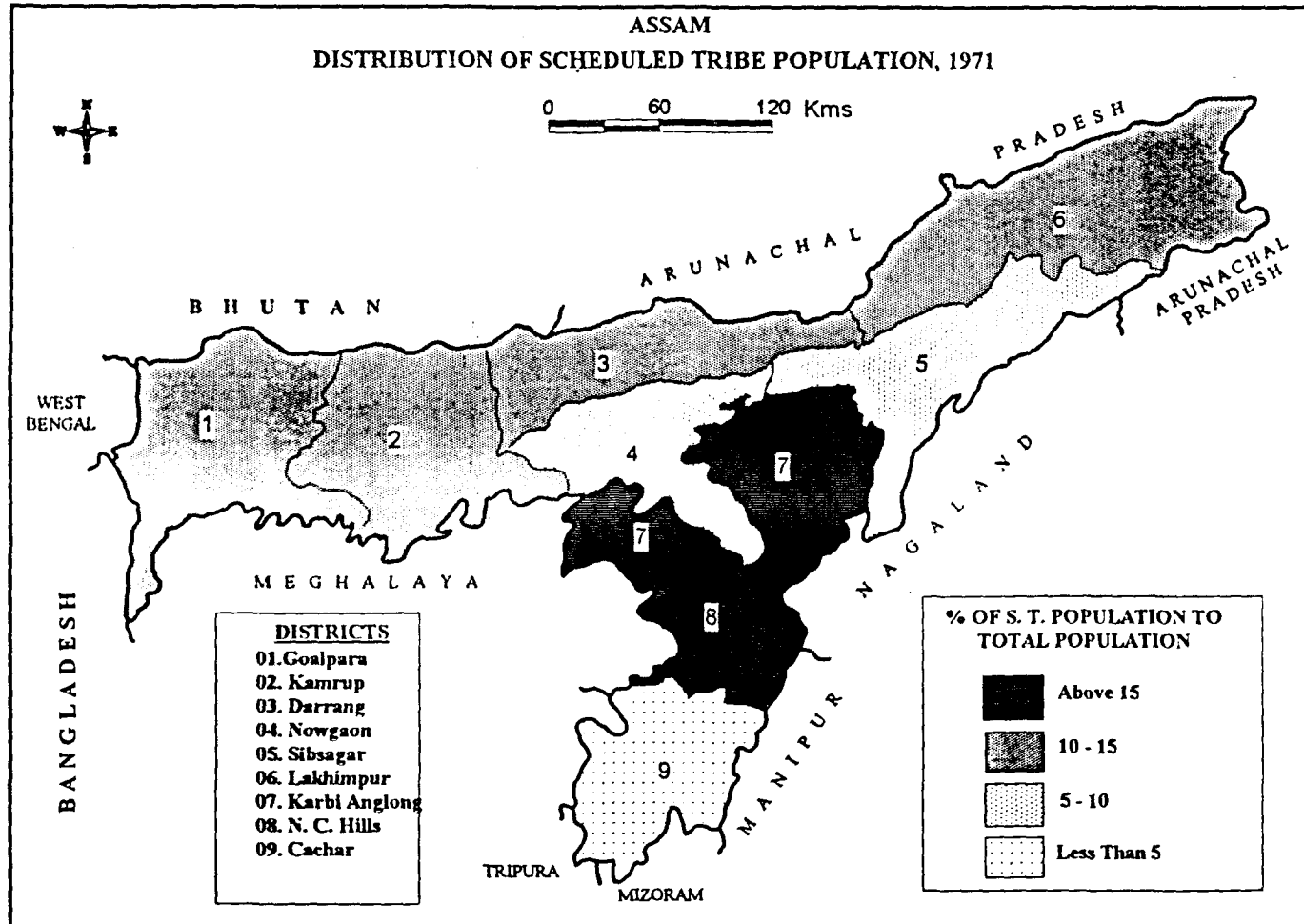


FIG. - 2.2

Table 2.4

Assam: Inter-District Variation in the Distribution of Scheduled Tribe Population; 1991.

ASSAM (1991)	Share (%)	Concentration Index	Location Quotient
Dhubri	2.42	1.12	0.89
Kokrajhar	41.05	11.46	3.21
Bongaigaon	17.52	4.92	1.36
Goalpara	17.22	4.00	1.34
Barpeta	7.97	3.84	0.62
Nalbari	17.67	6.24	1.38
Kamrup	10.71	7.45	0.83
Darrang	17.31	7.82	1.35
Sonitpur	10.70	5.30	0.83
Lakhimpur	23.57	6.16	1.84
Dhemaji	43.92	7.31	3.43
Marigaon	15.39	3.42	1.20
Nagaon	3.68	2.42	0.28
Golaghat	10.25	2.95	0.80
Jorhat	12.08	3.66	0.94
Sibsagar	3.80	1.20	0.29
Dibrugarh	7.95	2.88	0.62
Tinsukia	5.35	1.79	0.41
Karbi Anglong	51.56	11.88	4.02
N. Cachar Hills	65.53	3.43	5.12
Karimganj	0.17	0.04	0.01
Hailakandi	0.15	0.02	0.01
Cachar	1.36	0.57	0.10
Assam	12.83		

Source: Census of India, 1991

With the increase in the number of districts in 1991, the spatial pattern in the distribution of scheduled tribes and their tendency to cluster and concentrate in specific areas became more sharply defined. This is inevitable as the districts became smaller and hence the physical diversities within a district were much less compared to the large districts in the previous years when the districts contained more ecological diversity within them. Interestingly the proportion of the scheduled tribes increased substantially by the year 1991 from its earlier position in the year 1971.

Table 2.4 clearly reveals the extreme unevenness in the distribution of scheduled tribes in the state. The two hilly districts of North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong had a dominantly tribal character with the share of the scheduled tribes far higher than 50 per

cent. These two districts were carved out of the earlier United Mikir and Cachar Hills. Interestingly, these two districts together had witnessed large-scale penetration of the non-tribal people in the preceding decade of 1961-1971. However, in the next two decades, the situation seems to have reversed and the tribal people have once again dominated the total population. It is possible that there has been a considerable withdrawal of the non-tribal population from these areas once again changing the ethnic composition of these hills in favour of the tribes. The demand for a separate Karbi state to be carved out of Assam must have had a base in the large-scale infiltration of non-tribal people into the area during 1961-71 decade and must have played a key role in the decrease of non-tribal population in the following decades.

What is more revealing after the districts were reorganized is that while no district had more than 15 per cent scheduled tribes in their total population in the year 1971, at least two districts in the year 1991 showed a very high presence of the scheduled tribes. These are Dhemaji (43.92 per cent) in upper Assam and Kokrajhar (41.15 per cent) in lower Assam. Both these districts are located on the northern bank of Brahmaputra and are close to the foothill zone of the Himalayas. The other districts, with a relatively large share of tribal population, are Lakhimpur (23.63%), Nalbari (17.67 per cent) Bongaigaon, (17.53 per cent), Darrang (17.32 per cent), Goalpara (17.23 per cent) and Marigaon (15.40 per cent). The districts, which have a tribal proportion close to the state average, are Kamrup, Sonitpur, Golaghat and Jorhat. The other districts supported very low proportion of scheduled tribes often below 5 per cent. The southern districts of Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj recorded a tribal proportion around 1 per cent or less.

Fig. 2.3 more clearly reveals the pattern of clustering and concentration of the tribal population in the year 1991. Like the earlier years the hilly districts of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills recorded the highest concentration of tribal population though the district has been divided into two. The other two districts with a comparative high concentration of tribal population are the districts of Kokrajhar and Dhemaji located in the extreme east and western part of the valley of Brahmaputra in the plains. The district of Dhemaji is in the extreme northern part and Kokrajhar is in the eastern part. The district of Lakhimpur in Upper Assam also supports a high proportion of tribal population where a little less than a quarter of the population (23.63 per cent) consists of scheduled tribes. Districts like Bongaigaon, Goalpara, Nalbari, Darrang and Marigaon constitute a contiguous area of relatively low (10-15 per cent) concentration of tribal population. The scheduled tribes constitute a very small proportion of the population in those districts, which are located in the plains and are mainly confined to districts like Barpeta and Dhubri in the lower Brahmaputra valley and Dibrugarh, Sibsagar and Tinsukia in upper Brahmaputra valley as well as Nagaon in the central Valley. The Barak valley districts comprising Cachar, Hailakandi and Karimganj constitute an area of the lowest concentration of scheduled tribes, as this area has been open to substantive infiltration of non-tribal elements from the erstwhile East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. This fertile tract of plain land has always been attractive to non-tribal peasants who have been able to make deep inroads into the area and the tribes have been pushed to other areas.

The tables and figures above in spite of difficulty of inter census comparison due to large-scale administrative reorganization of the districts, adequately indicates that the tribes and the non-tribes have developed two types of boundaries depending upon the

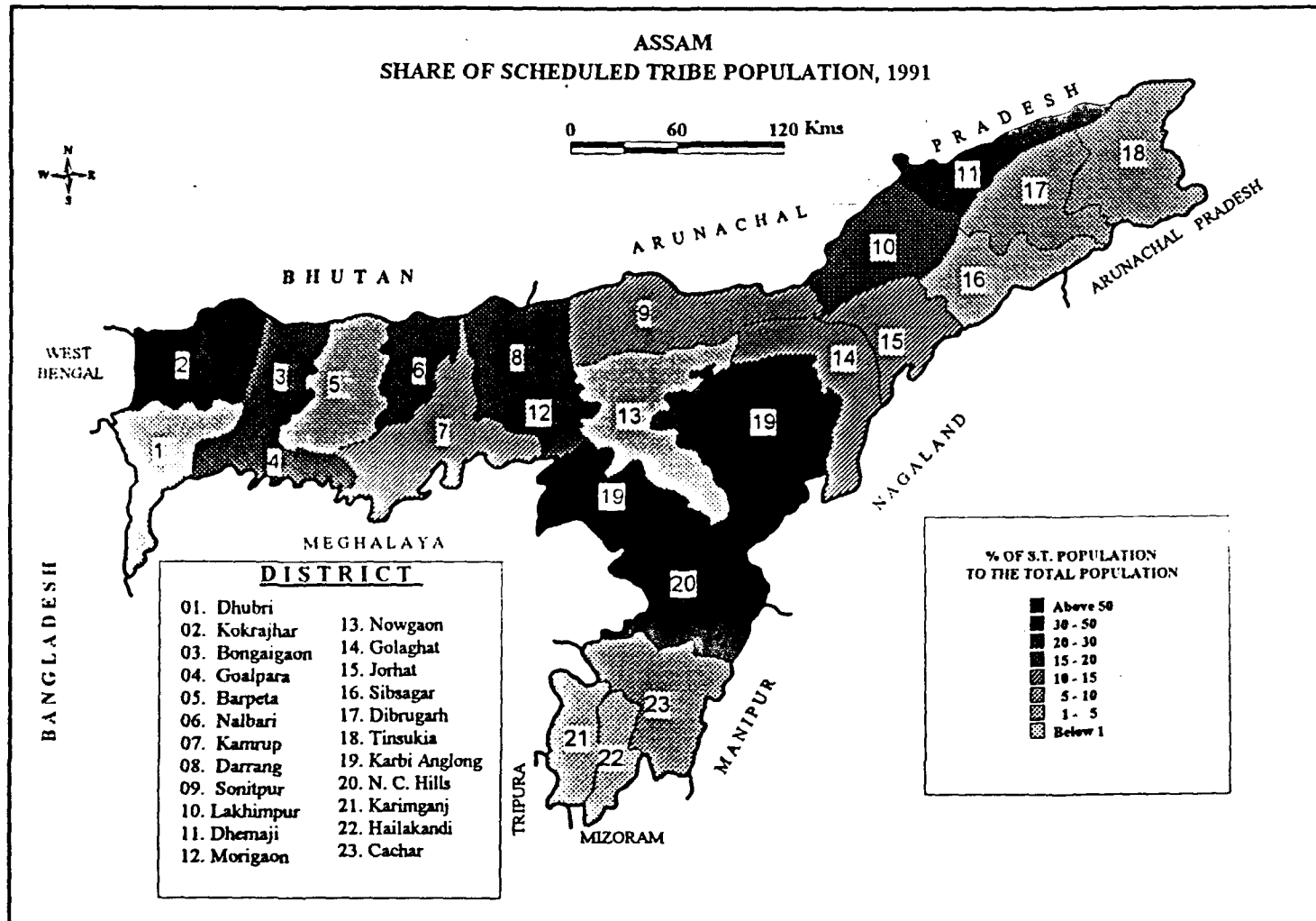


Fig 2.3

ecological setting of their habitats. The plains and the hill pattern are evident. The Barak Valley and the Cachar/Karbi Hills generally represent exclusive boundaries between the tribes and the non-tribes wherein the former is exclusively dominated by the non-tribes while the latter constitute an area of exclusive tribal dominance. On the other hand, in the Brahmaputra plains the boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes appear to be a complex one indicating overlap and transition. The fact that the share of tribal population has increased in some districts while in some it has become less may be due to influx of non-tribal population into the tribal dominated areas. It is in the Brahmaputra plains that the struggle for the resource base between the tribes and the non-tribes may be a continuous affair as both the groups share similar resource base and whatever differences exist within this vast plain may have played a major role in the redistribution of these two groups making the boundary not only complex but also a constantly changing one. The boundary appears to be a static between hills and plains but highly dynamic within the plains.

2.3.3 Concentration Index

The second technique used is the Concentration Index². This technique is used to see the share of the scheduled tribe population in a district to their total population in the state. In the year 1961, as is evident from table 2.2, there are four districts namely Goalpara, Kamrup, Lakhimpur and United Mikir and north Cachar Hills which together contain nearly four fifths of all tribal population living in the state. Each of these districts contains around 20 per cent of the total tribal population. Interestingly, the district of United Mikir and North Cachar hills, which contained the largest proportion of the tribal population in its total, support only around 18 per cent of the total

tribal population of the state. On the other hand, the other three districts with a high concentration of scheduled tribes are those where the tribal proportion in the total population of those districts was rather low. There is a greater agglomeration of the tribes in these three districts. The total size of the tribal population is very large but their proportion in the total population is small. On the contrary, there is a greater concentration of tribes in the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills where the tribal population is small in size but is much undiluted by infiltration of the non-tribal segment. The other district that contains a sizeable proportion of the tribal people of the state is Darrang. Around 12 per cent of the tribal population in the state is found concentrated in this district. Around 7-8 per cent, tribal population of the state is confined to Sibsagar and Nowgong district. Cachar district has only a marginal concentration of the scheduled tribes. Fig. 2.4 reveals a relatively uniform concentration of the tribal population in all the districts of Assam. This is in spite of considerable differences in the proportion of scheduled tribes in the total population of these districts. Only Barak plains in the south and to a smaller extent, Sibsagar and Nowgong districts in the central part of the state contain less tribal population compared to the remaining.

The concentration pattern underwent substantial modifications by the year 1971 (Table 2.3). The most glaring of the change was visible in the case of United Mikir and North-Cachar Hills, which contained only 10.71 per cent of the total scheduled tribe population of the state recording a large decline in the proportion of tribes living in this district. On the contrary, the proportion of tribes in Goalpara and Lakhimpur districts increased substantially. The proportion of tribes in the remaining districts registered little changes. This substantial change in the concentration pattern is indicative of significant

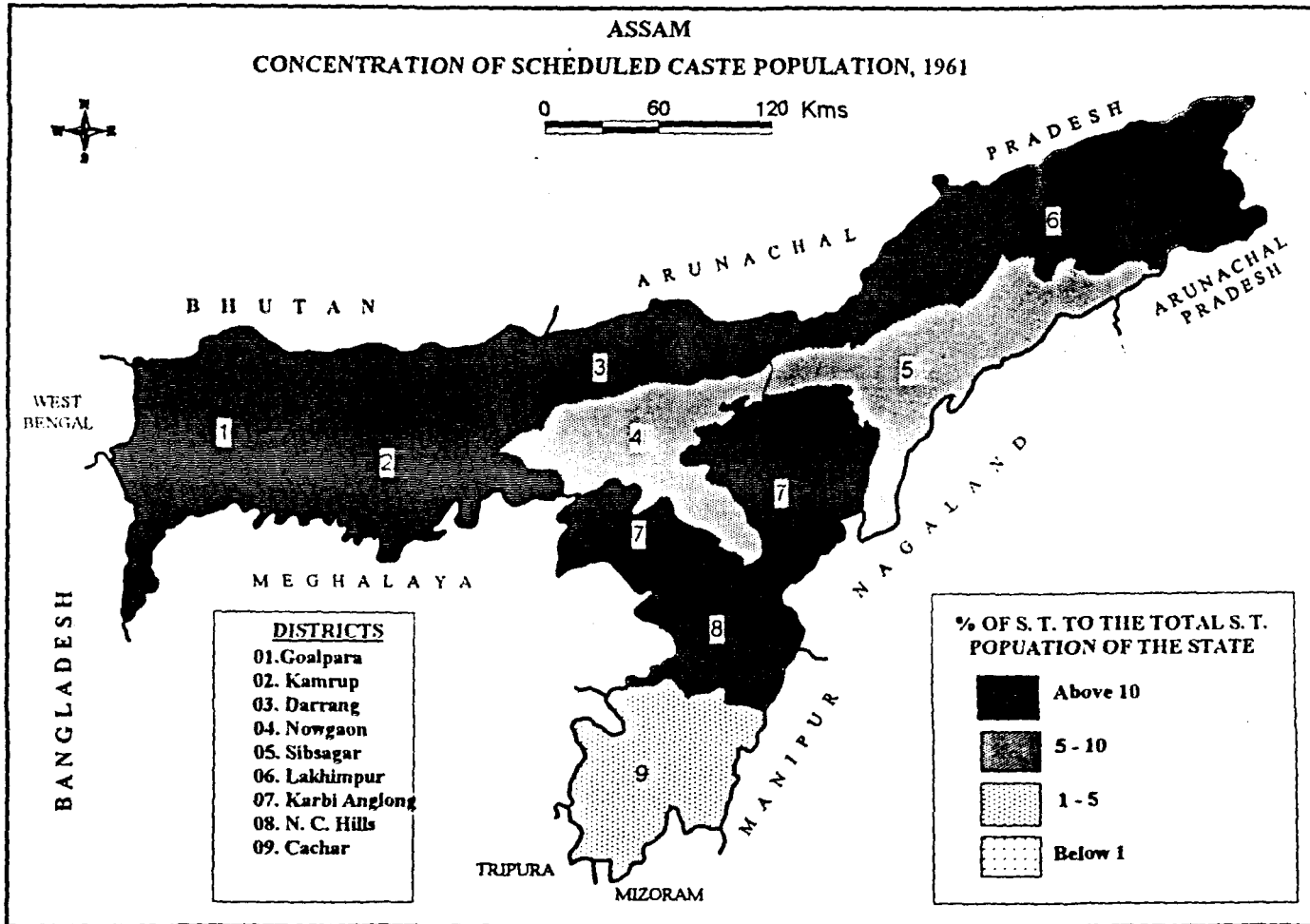


FIG. - 2.4

redistribution of tribal population in the intervening decade between 1961-71. This redistribution might have been a result of significant changes in the growth pattern of the tribal population or due to migration of the tribal population or both. It is quite possible that the tribal population in the plains district has experienced large increase in its population and has experienced migration of the tribes into these districts increasing their population size and this has resulted in a relative fall in the proportion of tribes in the United Mikir and North-Cachar Hills. It is equally possible that the tribal population in the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills has been growing at a lower pace than the tribes living in the plains districts.

The fig.2.5 however shows a pattern in 1971 that is identical to that of the pattern in 1961. This is in spite of substantial changes in the concentration of scheduled tribes in the districts as revealed from the table 2.3. The highest concentration of tribes is seen in all the districts except in the districts of Nowgong, Sibsagar and Cachar. The district of Nowgong and Sibsagar though centrally located have a tribal concentration of 5-10 per cent.

Table: 2.5

Assam: Concentration of Scheduled Tribes, 1991

% of Tribes	Number of districts
Above 10 per cent	2
5-10 per cent	6
1-5 per cent	12
Less than 1 per cent	3

Source: Census of India, 1991

Although the pattern obtained in the year 1991 is not comparable to those in 1961 and 1971 due to reorganization of districts, the concentration index for the year 1991 is quite revealing for it provides information for much smaller spatial units than was the case in 1961 or 1971. Table 2.5 shows great clustering of tribes in a fewer districts and

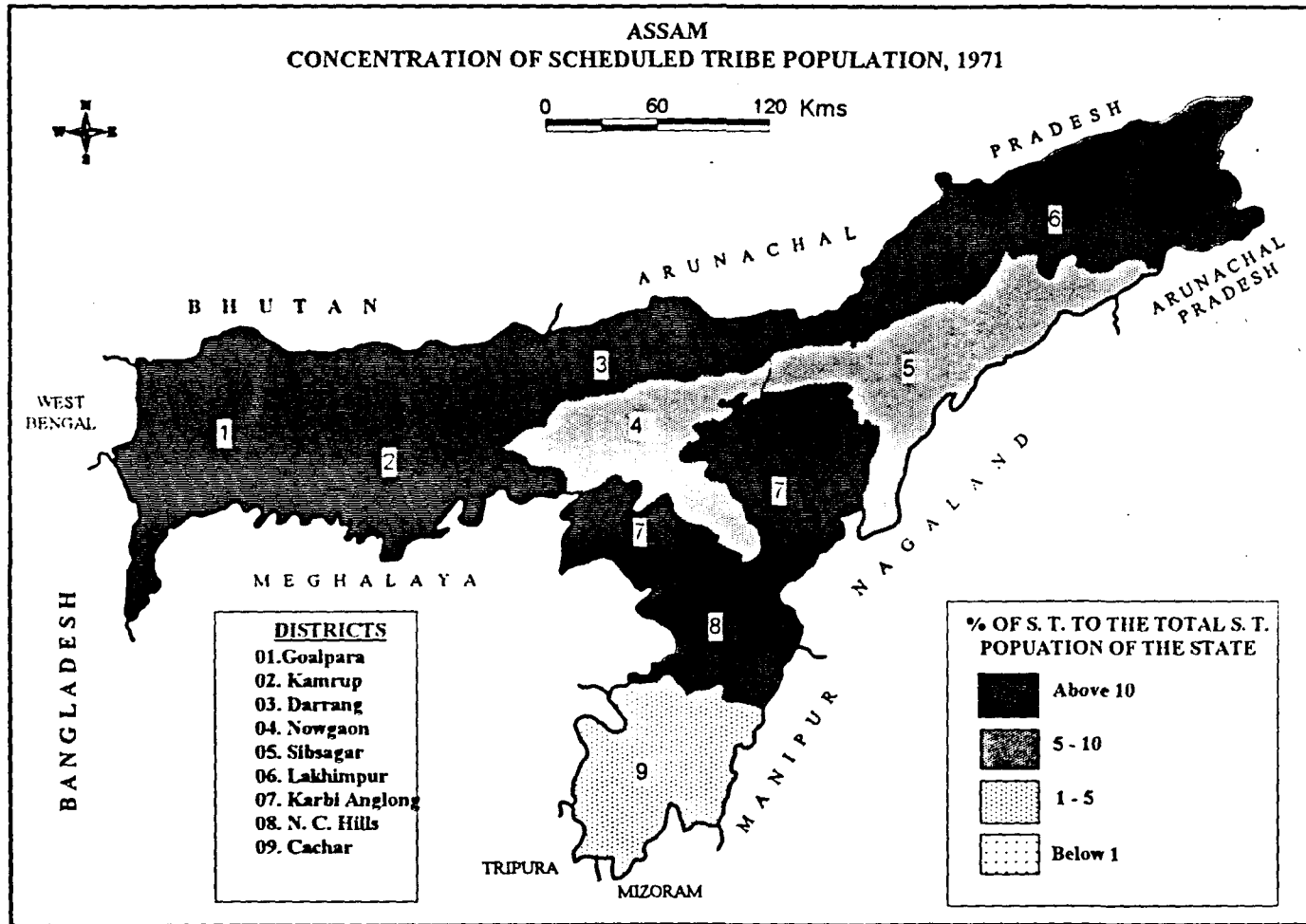


FIG. - 2.5

the pattern is highly uneven. As many as 12 districts each contain scheduled tribe population, which constitutes only 1-5 per cent of the state's total tribal population. All these districts are found in two contiguous belts; one located in the lower Brahmaputra valley and the other and the larger pocket in the upper Brahmaputra valley (fig.2.6). All the three districts in the Barak plains in the south too have little concentration of the scheduled tribe population (less than 1 per cent each) which is in spatial contiguity with the upper Assam belt of low tribal concentration. Only two districts, one in the hills and the other in the plains contained over 10 per cent of the total scheduled tribe population of the state each. The other districts, which contained sizeable tribal population (5-10 per cent each), are mostly located in a contiguous belt from Nalbari in the west to Dhemaji in the east. Barring Kamrup, all these districts are located on the northern bank of Brahmaputra. Interestingly Karbi Anglong, a district characterized by hill features stands out as an island of extremely high concentration of tribes in the surrounding districts of low tribal concentration making the tribal non-tribal boundary to assume a sharply defined one. It is noteworthy that another hilly district namely North-Cachar hills supporting a very high proportion of its population as tribes has very low concentration of the tribal population in the district. This means that the district has very small non-tribal component in its population but supports a small tribal population as far as its number is concerned.

The pattern in the concentration of tribal population across the districts as revealed from the map is revealing in more sense than one. The pattern reveals that there has been a process of pushing away of the tribal segment from the areas of their former concentration due largely to organized attempts by the non-tribal segment to

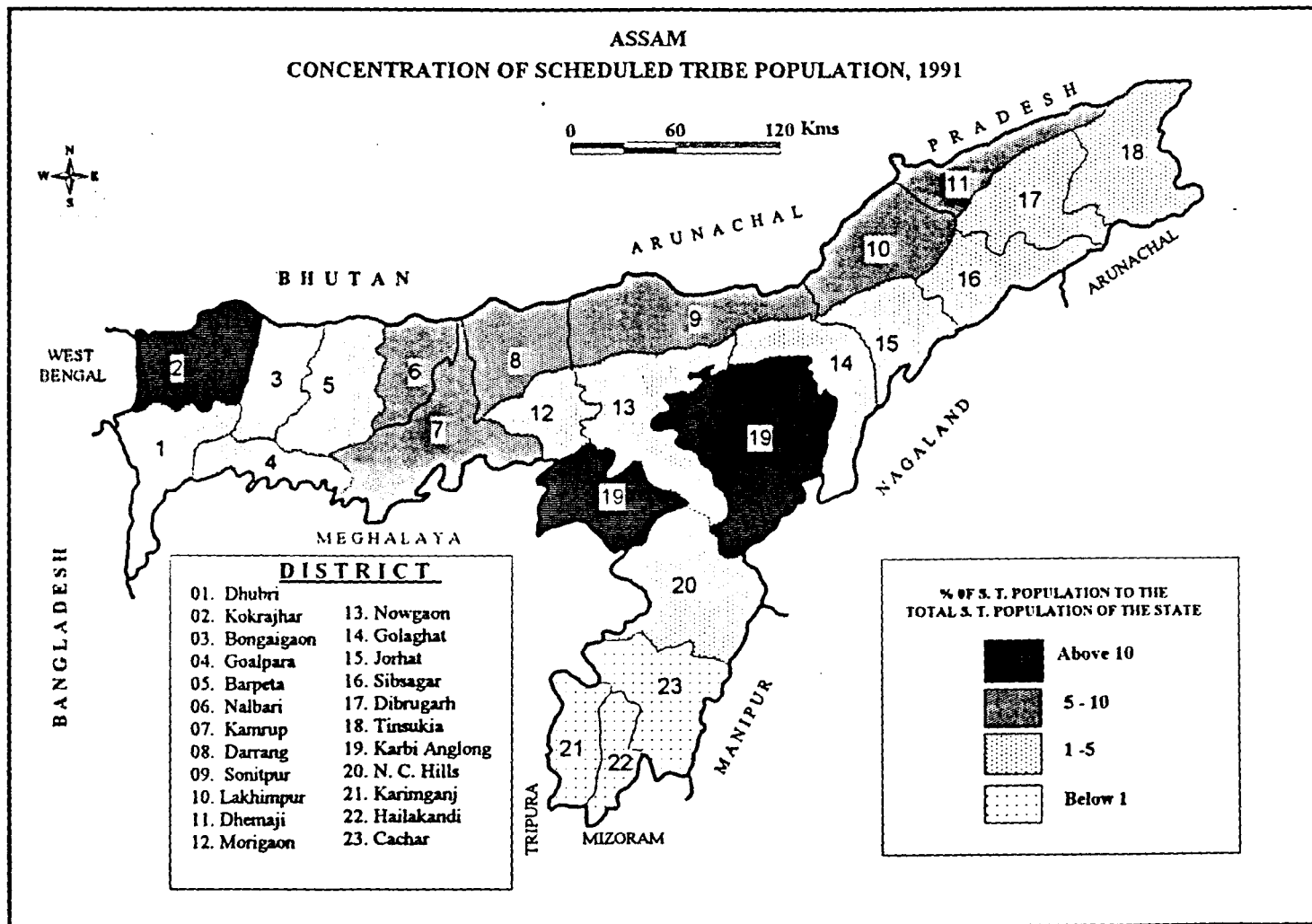


Fig. 2.6

infiltrate into the tribal dominated areas. The two highest concentrations of tribal areas are located both in a hilly area as well as in the plains though these areas do not form a contiguous belt. The high concentration of scheduled tribes in the extreme northwestern corner is surrounded by very low concentration of tribal population. The boundary between the tribal dominated area and the non-tribal area is a sharp one because districts which surround Kokrajhar are Bongaigaon, Barpeta, etc. which support a very low concentration of tribal people. The district of Kokrajhar could have been a contiguous area with another area of high tribal concentration and i. e. the region lying north of the Brahmaputra but most probably the people of tribal origin from the boundary area were possibly pushed both ways. Another demarcating line between the tribal area and the non-tribal area is the region lying south of the Brahmaputra River. This region stands out as an island of tribal concentration in the midst of non-tribal dominated areas surrounding it. The Karbi Anglong block in a way shares a similar boundary with respect to the non-tribals as is the case with Kokrajhar. As a whole, the concentration of tribes gradually increases towards the north. It seems obvious from the analysis that there has been a northward pushing of the tribal segment of the population. Only the Karbi hills has retained its dominant tribal character due largely to the fact that the low agricultural potential of these hills has not been attractive to the peasant groups. The case of Cachar hills too is comparable with that of the Karbi hills though the concentration of tribal population in this district is as high. However, the proportion of the non-tribal segment is only marginal in this district.

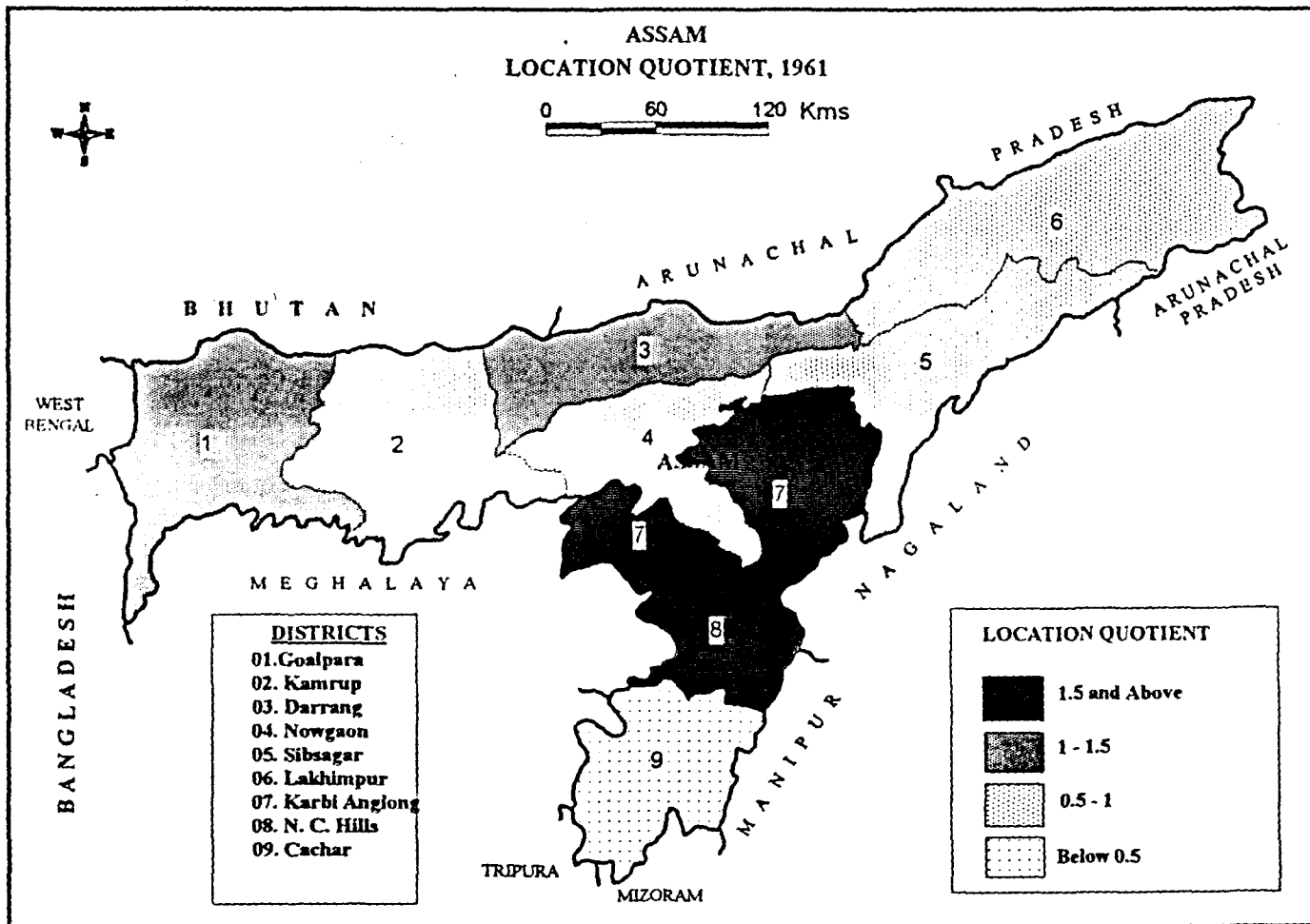


FIG. - 2.7

2.3.4 Location Quotient

The last and the final technique used to understand the distribution of the scheduled tribes is the Location Quotient³, which is used as a technique to show the relative distribution of tribal population.

Table 2.2 reveals that only the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills have a location quotient as high as 7.06 in the year 1961. This means that the proportion of scheduled tribes in this district is seven times higher than the proportion at the state level. The only other district, which has a quotient higher than the unity, is Goalpara. Barring these two districts, all other districts have quotients close to unity or far below it. Cachar district as usual has the lowest quotient of less than 0.1. Fig. 2.7 shows the distribution of districts in different location quotient categories map for the year 1961.

There have been some significant changes in the distribution of tribal population in the year 1971 (Table 2.3). The most notable change is seen in the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills where the location quotient fell to a low of 3.43 in 1971 compared to 7.03 in the year 1961. This drastic fall, as has been explained earlier, is a result of vigorous non-tribal incursion into these hills fomenting a demand for a separate Karbi State in order to protect their identity. The quotients in other districts however remained largely identical with that of 1961. Fig. 2.8 presents the distribution of districts in different categories of location quotients and the pattern is little different from that in the year 1961.

The distribution of tribal population in 1991 can be better understood with table below showing the distribution of districts using the technique of Location Quotient.

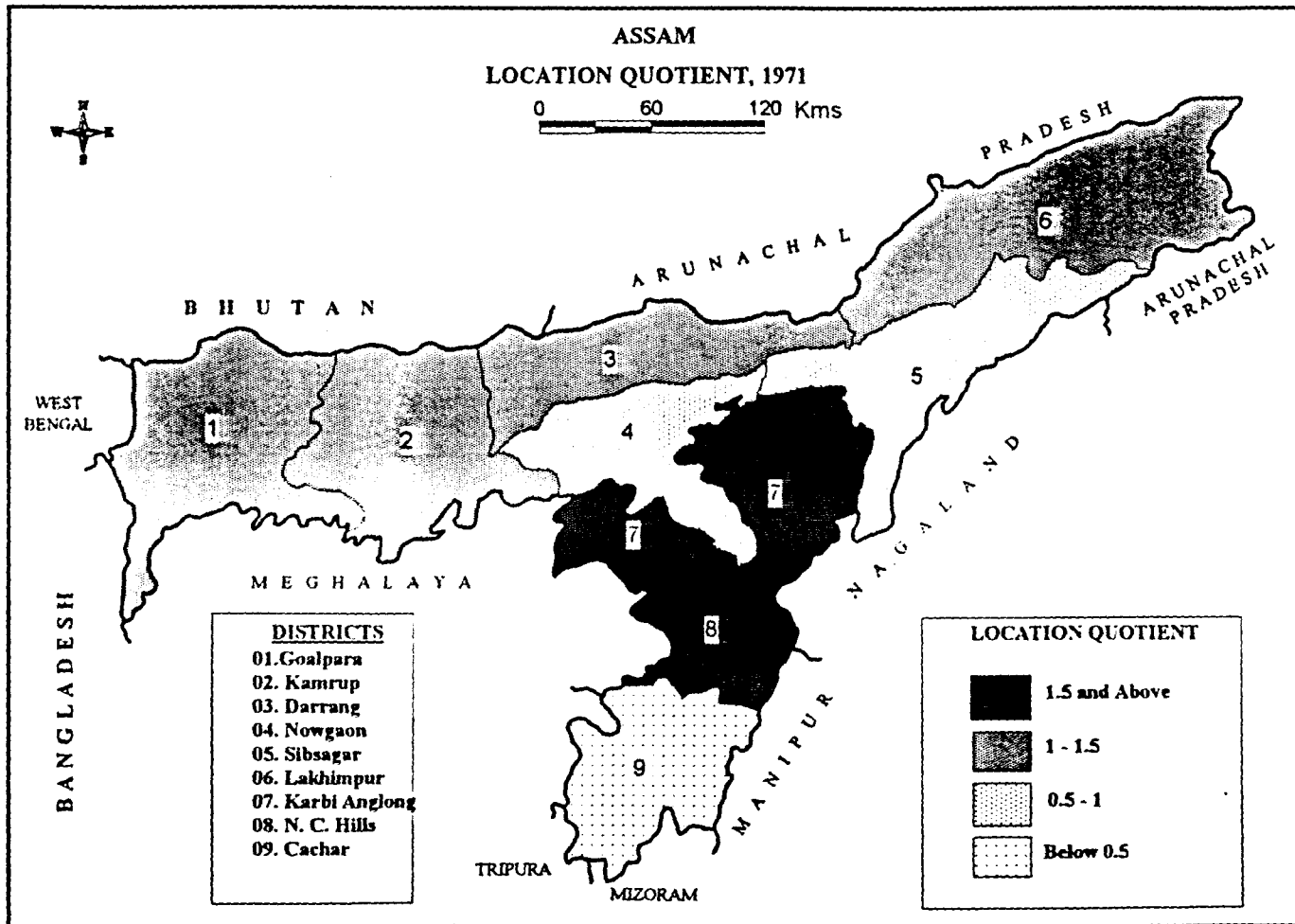


FIG. - 2.8

Table: 2.6
Assam: Location Quotient, 1991

L.Q.Category	Number of districts
Above 1.5	5
1-1.5	5
0.5-1	6
Less than 0.5	7

Source: Census of India, 1991

It is clear from the above table that out of twenty- three districts of Assam as many as ten districts have a tribal proportion higher than the unity. In the remaining, the location quotient is below one and it is extremely low (less than 0.5) in seven districts.

Fig 2.9 reveals that these seven districts are dispersed all over the state in four pockets. The first cluster lies in the Barak plains. The second cluster is seen in the upper valley of Brahmaputra in the districts of Sibsagar and Tinsukia. The third one is located in the Central valley in the district of Nagaon. The last pocket is found in the lower valley in Dhubri district. The location quotient is lower than the unity (0.5-1.0) in two more clusters of districts, one in the Upper Brahmaputra Valley and the second in the lower course of Brahmaputra representing areas of low concentration of tribes. These two clusters are generally in spatial contiguity with the districts which had the lowest concentration of tribes. The location quotient is the highest in those ten districts generally distributed in two pockets; one in the Karbi and Cachar Hills and the second on the northern banks of the Brahmaputra valley. Once again one finds the concentration of tribes increasing northwards and the dichotomy of a hill and plains pattern.

In terms of the total share of tribal population in the state as a whole there has been an increase of nearly 3 per cent in the proportion of scheduled tribe population in the state during 1971 and 1991. This may be due to relatively higher natural increase in the population of the scheduled tribes compared to that of the non-tribes. There have been

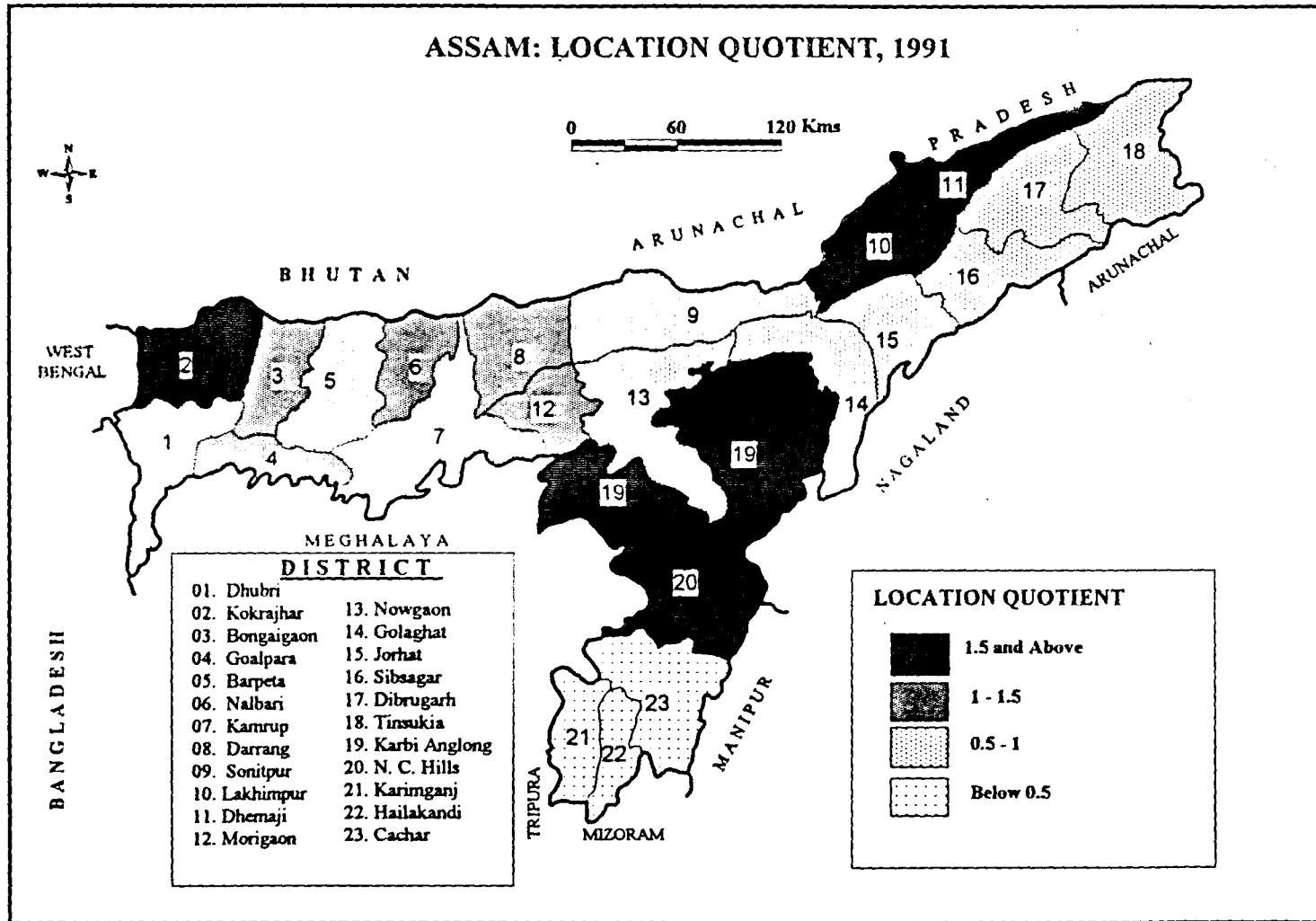


Fig. 2.9

however significant inter district variations in this increase. For example, the hilly district of United Mikir and North Cachar hills there was a significant decline in the share of tribal population during 1961-71 decade but the share improved in the following two decades.

2.4 Concluding Statement

The above analysis leads to the following broad conclusions:

Tribal population remains constant over 61- 71 but increases subsequently by the year 1991 revealing natural increase in the tribal population relative to the non- tribal population.

Distribution of the scheduled tribes is highly uneven over the districts providing insights into the nature of tribal non- tribal boundary in the present and indicating about the nature of such boundaries in the past.

A hill and plains pattern in the concentration of tribes is clearly discernible. The tribes are far more concentrated in the hills of Mikir, Karbi and Cachar Hills and in those plain districts of Assam located north of Brahmaputra.

The boundary line demarcating the areas of the tribal and the non-tribal concentration is far more clearly defined in Southern Assam with a line that demarcates the hills from the Barak Plains. The tribes and the non-tribes seem to have developed two types of boundaries depending upon the ecological setting of their habitats. The plains and the hill pattern are evident. The Barak Valley and the Cachar/Karbi Hills generally represent exclusive boundaries between the tribes and the non-tribes wherein the former is exclusively dominated by the non-tribes while the latter constitute an area of exclusive tribal dominance. On the other hand, in the Brahmaputra plains the boundary between the

tribes and the non-tribes appear to be a complex one indicating overlap and transition. The fact that the share of tribal population has increased in some districts while in some it has become less may be due to influx of non-tribal population into the tribal dominated areas. It is in the Brahmaputra plains that the struggle for the resource base between the tribes and the non-tribes may be a continuous affair as both the groups share similar resource base and whatever differences exist within this vast plain may have played a major role in the redistribution of these two groups making the boundary not only complex but also a constantly changing one. The boundary appears to be a static between hills and plains but highly dynamic within the plains.

The tribal proportion as a whole increases northwards with the exception of the Karbi and Cachar Hills which retain its dominant tribal character. These hilly areas however seem to have been affected by large scale non-tribal incursion particularly during 1961-71 decade. However, the process seems to have been partially reversed in the following decades. It is possible that there has been a considerable withdrawal of the non-tribal population from these areas once again changing the ethnic composition of these hills in favour of the tribes. The demand for a separate Karbi state to be carved out of Assam must have had a base in the large-scale infiltration of non-tribal people into the area during 1961-71 decade and must have played a key role in the decrease of non-tribal population in the following decades.

The discontinuity in the concentration pattern of scheduled tribes in the valley is indicative of organized attempts by non-tribal segments into areas of formerly high concentration of scheduled tribes. There also appears to have been a process of squeezing of tribal population into the present areas of their high concentration as a direct outcome

of peasant communities infiltrating into those traditional habitats of the tribes, which have relatively higher potential for agriculture.

High concentration of scheduled tribes in the extreme northwestern corner is surrounded by very low concentration of tribal population. The boundary between the tribal dominated area and the non-tribal area is a sharp one because districts surrounding Kokrajhar support a very low concentration of tribal people. The district of Kokrajhar could have been a contiguous area with another area of high tribal concentration and i. e. the region lying north of the Brahmaputra but most probably the people of tribal origin from the boundary area were possibly pushed both ways. Another demarcating line between the tribal area and the non-tribal area is the region lying south of the Brahmaputra River. This region stands out as an island of tribal concentration in the midst of non-tribal dominated areas surrounding it. The Karbi Anglong block in a way shares a similar boundary with respect to the non-tribals as is the case with Kokrajhar. As a whole, the concentration of tribes gradually increases towards the north. It seems obvious from the analysis that there has been a northward pushing of the tribal segment of the population. Only the Karbi hills have retained its dominant tribal character due largely to the fact that the low agricultural potential of these hills has not been attractive to the peasant groups. The case of Cachar hills too is comparable with that of the Karbi hills though the concentration of tribal population in this district is as high. However, the proportion of the non-tribal segment is only marginal in this district.

There seems to have been substantial changes in the ethnic composition of the areas where the tribes are largely concentrated. This change has been towards an increasing presence of people of non-tribal origin thereby reducing the numerical strength

of the scheduled tribes in the total population. This has been responsible for the general unrest among the tribal people in the areas of their high concentration. The demand for a separate Karbi state or the demand for Bodoland are partly linked to the process of this ethnic change in the areas of concentration of the tribes.

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Distribution of Scheduled Tribe Population: Village Level Patterns

3.1 Introductory Statement

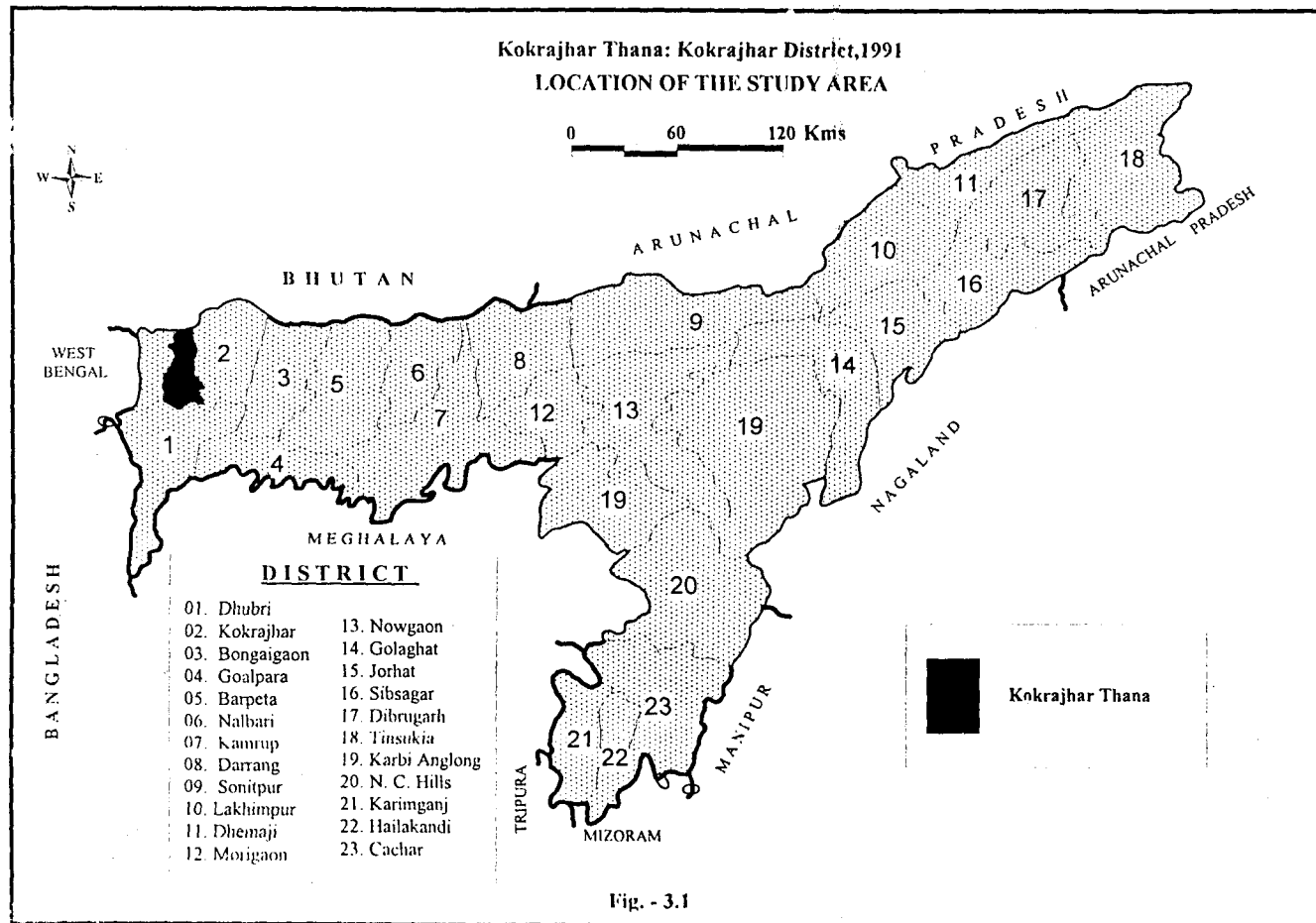
In this chapter, an attempt is made to understand and identify the morphology of the tribal non-tribal boundaries of Assam. The district level understanding undertaken in the earlier chapter does not clearly bring out the nature of the boundary between these two groups, as the districts themselves are too aggregate as units of analysis concealing enormous ecological variation within them. A village level analysis may provide a far better picture as far as the distribution of tribal population is concerned as the villages are more homogenous ethnically and socially. It may however be noted that the attempt covers an understanding of a few selected Thanas only as it may be an extremely difficult task to consider all the villages of Assam or even the districts as a whole due to constraints of time. Only three districts have been selected for a village level analysis and from each of these districts a particular Thana has been chosen. The basis of the selection has been the share of tribal population in a district and the Thana as it has changed over the 30 years beginning with the year 1961. One of the selected districts is the one, which has had a constantly rising share of tribal population over the years. The second is the one which has had a declining share of tribal population over the years. The last one is selected on the ground that the tribal population in this district remained largely constant over the years. The districts chosen are Kokrajhar, Karbi Anglong and Barpeta respectively. In order to avoid the confusion regarding the changes in the district boundaries in successive census years, the districts of 1991 have been considered for they

are small. Only the villages common to both 1971 and 1991 census have been considered for the sake of easy comparison in the particular thana chosen in each of the district. The analysis has been undertaken with the help of techniques used for district level analysis with growth rates as an added technique.

3.2 Kokrajhar district

Kokrajhar (Fig.3.1) is one of the few districts in Assam that has been experiencing constant rise in the share of scheduled tribe population in its total. The reasons are a mix of high natural growth rate in the scheduled tribe population as well as migration of Bodo tribes into this district in the wake of a demand for separate Bodoland state during the last few decades. Kokrajhar may be described as the gateway to the northeastern region of India. The district has a total area of 3,169.22 sq. km. and a total population of 9, 30,404 according to the 2001 Census. The district is located on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra that slices the state of Assam into two, identified as north and south banks. The district is bounded on the north by the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, by Dhubri district on the south, Bongaigaon district on the east and the Indian state of West Bengal on the west.

The district was originally a part of undivided Goalpara district. Until 1956, the Kokrajhar town was merely a small village with a railway station that connected it to the rest of the world. In 1957, a new Civil Sub-division was created after carving out the northern part of Dhubri Sub-division and some parts of Goalpara Sub-division. This new sub-division was called Kokrajhar Sub-division. Goalpara district thus became divided into three sub-divisions. The area covered by the then Kokrajhar sub-division consisted



of five tracts of the Eastern Dooars, viz., Bijni, Sidli, Chirang, Ripu and Guma with a total area of 4066 square kilometres.

On July 1, 1983 the Kokrajhar Sub-division was upgraded into Kokrajhar district with its headquarter at Kokrajhar town. There were four police stations in the new district. They were Bijni, Sidli, Kokrajhar and Gossaigaon. The area of the district extended from the Manas River in the east to the Sonkosh on the west.

There was further reorganization of the districts in 1989, and some new districts were created. Thus, about 40% of the total geographical area of Kokrajhar district was carved out for inclusion in the new district of Bongaigaon. The area delimited from Kokrajhar district to Bongaigaon covers the entire Bijni Revenue Circle along with 347.50 square kilometres of Sidli Circle. Later on twenty villages of Naikgaon G.P. with a total area 40.22 square km under Chapar Revenue Circle of Dhubri district was transferred to Kokrajhar district. The present geographical area of Kokrajhar district is estimated to be 3,169.22 square km.

The district now has two revenue sub-divisions- Kokrajhar and Gossaigaon sub-divisions. The river Gongia that is known as Tipkai in the southern part is the natural boundary of two civil sub-divisions. Gossaigaon town is the headquarter of Gossaigaon Sub-division.

For the present analysis the Kokrajhar Thana has been selected for the village level analysis.

3.2.1 KokrajharThana: Changes in Ethnic Composition

In order to understand the level of concentration of the scheduled tribes at the village level, two techniques have been used. They are the percentage of the scheduled

tribes in the total population of the villages and the growth rate experienced by the scheduled tribe population over the period 1971 and 1991.

Only one block is taken as a case study to understand the changing boundary amongst the tribes and the non-tribes, here Kokrajhar Thana under Kokrajhar Circle is taken as the case study. A total of 193 villages have been taken into consideration and the villages have again been sub-divided according to the percentage of classes for both 1971 and 1991 as shown in the chart below:-

Table 3.1
Kokrajhar Thana: Distribution of Scheduled Tribes at Village Level: 1971-1991

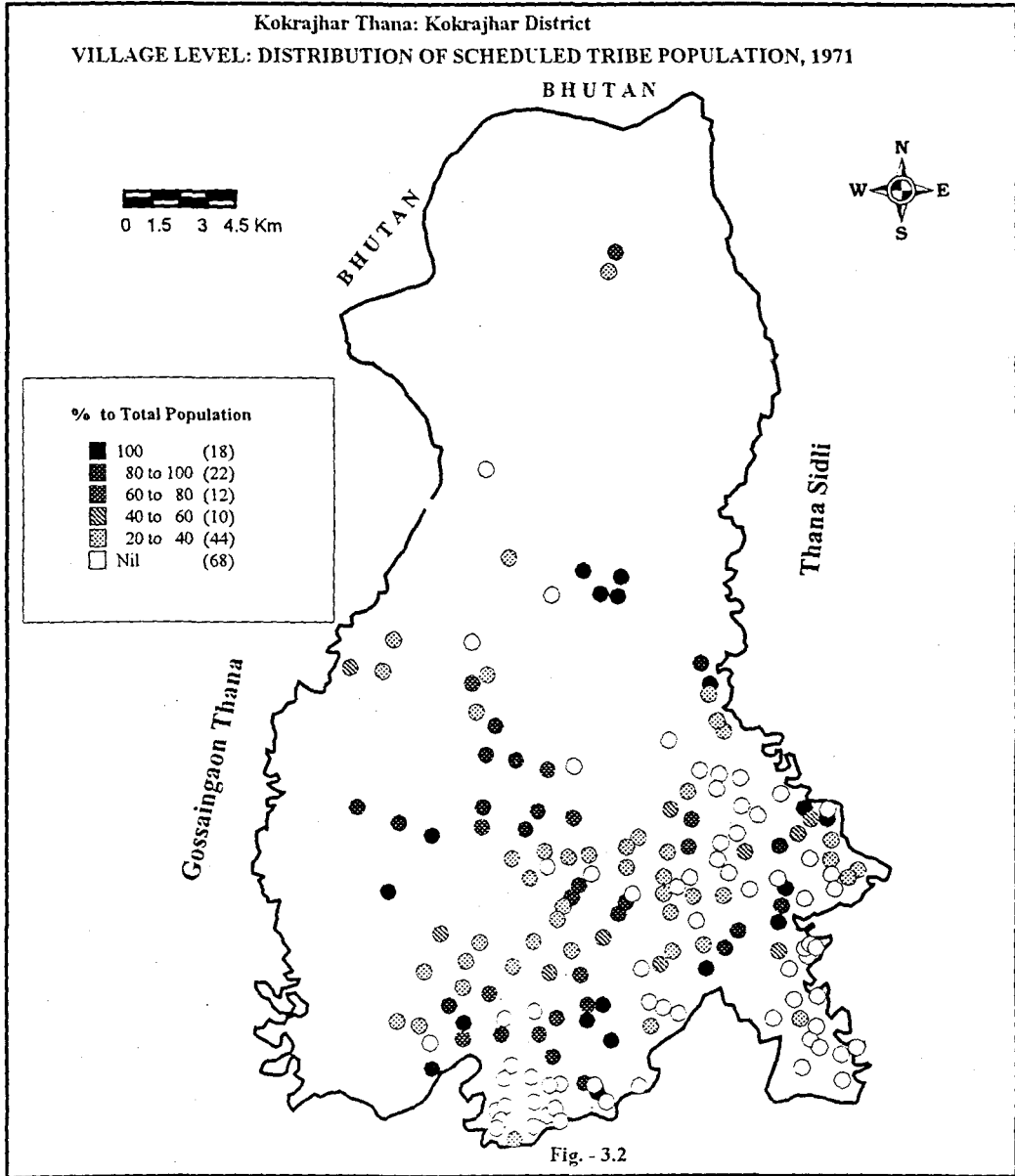
% of scheduled Tribes	No. of villages (1971)	% (1971)	No. of villages (1991)	% (1991)
100	21	10.88	26	13.47
80-100	22	11.39	23	11.73
60-80	11	5.69	16	8.29
40-60	15	7.77	11	5.69
20-40	19	9.84	24	12.43
<20	29	15.02	28	14.50
Nil	76	39.37	65	33.67
	193		193	

Source: Census of India, 1971, 1991.

Table 3.1 clearly indicates that in 1971 majority of the villages did not record any tribal population. Nearly 40 per cent (39.37 %) of all the villages in this block had no tribal population at all. Around 15 per cent of the villages had only marginal presence of the tribes (below 20 per cent). This shows that around 45 per cent of the total villages in the selected block had either nil or negligible proportion of the scheduled tribes. On the other hand, nearly 11 per cent villages were exclusively tribal in their ethnic composition and in yet 11 per cent of the villages, the tribes were highly dominant. Thus, the tribes were in a very dominant position in about 22 per cent of the villages where their proportion ranged from 80 to 100 per cent. In addition, about 6 per cent of the villages recorded well over half of the population in the category of the scheduled tribes.

The situation changed substantially by the year 1991, when not only the number of villages with a tribal presence increased, there was also an increase in the number of such villages where they commanded numerical superiority. For example, the tribes increased their presence in about 6 per cent more villages as evident from a fall in the proportion of such villages, which did not have a presence of tribal population in the year 1971. The fall was from 39.37 per cent in 1971 to 33.67 percent in the year 1991. In fact more than 48 per cent villages recorded nil or negligible tribal population in the year 1991. Likewise, the exclusively tribal villages too increased in number from twenty-one in 1971 to twenty-six in 1991. Around 25 per cent villages by the year 1991 had a tribal population ranging between 80-100 per cent as against only 22 per cent in 1971. Overall, the tribes dominated in over a third of all villages compared to around 26 per cent villages in 1971. It was evident by the year 1991 that the scheduled tribes were present in more areas all through the Thana. The tribes also increased their numerical strength in more villages than in the year 1971.

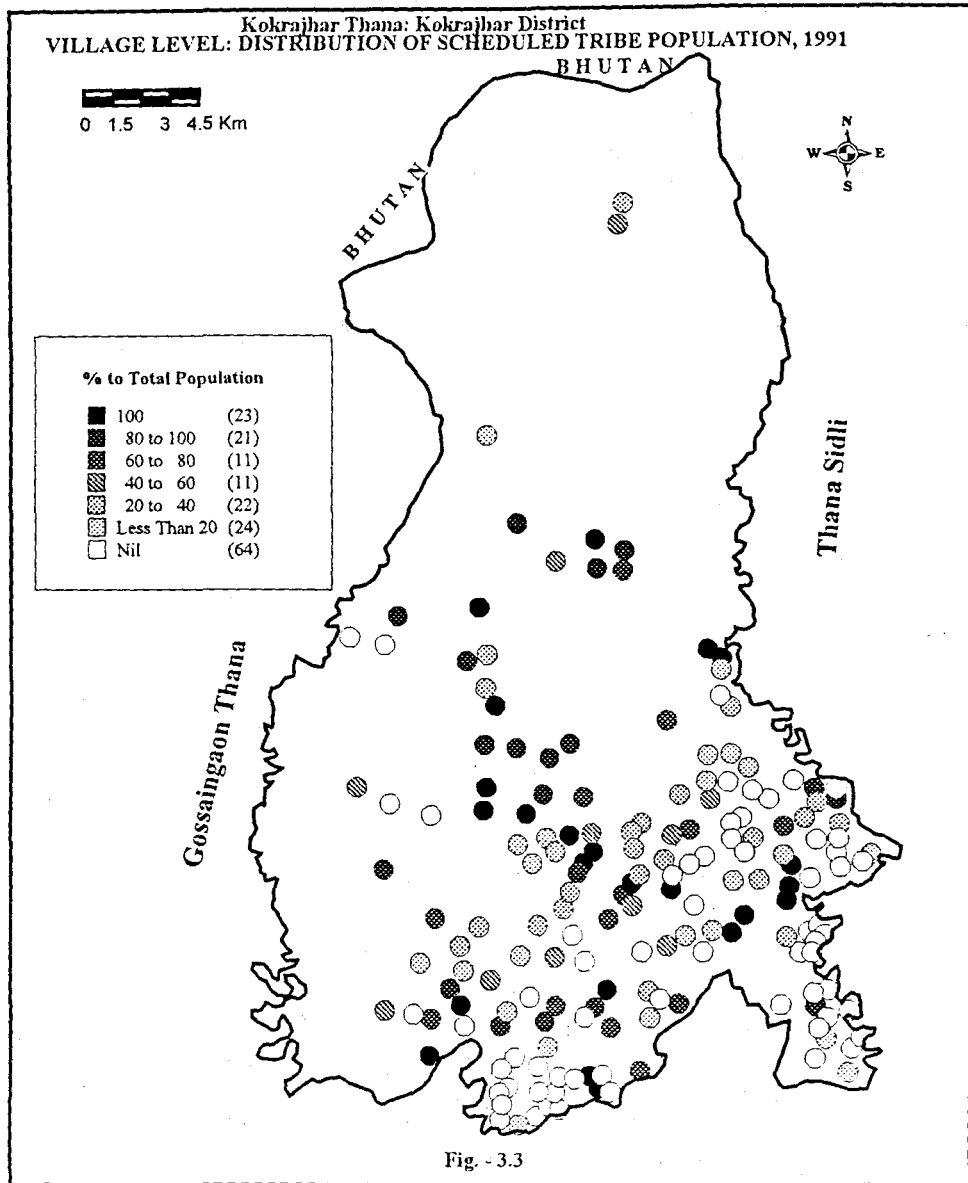
Less than half of the villages were dominated by the tribes in 1971 and by 1991 the proportion of villages with a very high proportion of tribal population increased significantly. This shows that a process of redistribution has taken place in this Thana, where the villages did not have any tribal population started showing high concentration of the tribes. In 1991, the number of villages with nil scheduled tribe population not only decreased from what it was in 1971 but also increased in categories with higher tribal concentration. Significant decline in the percentage of exclusively non-tribal villages sufficiently prove that non-tribal population have moved away from these areas. The decline in the number of non-tribal dominated villages may be directly linked to the Bodo



problem, during this period the Bodo movement was in full momentum, and this has forced the non-tribal people to move away from their territory. The non-tribal started moving away from their original habitats to other nearby districts.

Fig.3.2 and 3.3 show the distribution of villages according to their ethnic composition for the year 1971 and 1991 respectively. It is evident from fig.3.2 that the dominantly tribal or dominantly non-tribal villages were distributed in 1971 in a manner difficult to find any segregated pattern. However, a close look at the 1991 map (Fig.3.3) reveals tendency towards ethnic segregation on space as dominantly tribal villages are more numerous in the north compared to the south. This is primarily due to further northward migration of the tribal people from the south increasing their concentration in these areas. Likewise, there has been an increase in the presence of the non-tribal people in the south with a consequent withdrawal of this segment from the north. Thus, a boundary line demarcating the areas of dominance for the tribes in the north and the areas of dominance of the non-tribes are emerging in the south is emerging. This is evident from lesser number of villages with non-tribal dominance in the north and vice versa. The tendency towards ethnic segregation on space is more clearly brought out by the fig. 3.4, which depicts the location of only those villages where there has been very remarkable changes in the ethnic composition.

As is evident from the map, villages which had nil or negligible tribal population in 1971 but increased to a considerable number in 1991, were eleven in number. For example the village of West Maligaon F.V. had no tribal population in 1971 but it had increased to more than 51 per cent (51.14%). A vast difference was noticed in the village of Uttar Patgoan where there was no trace of tribal population in 1971 but transformed

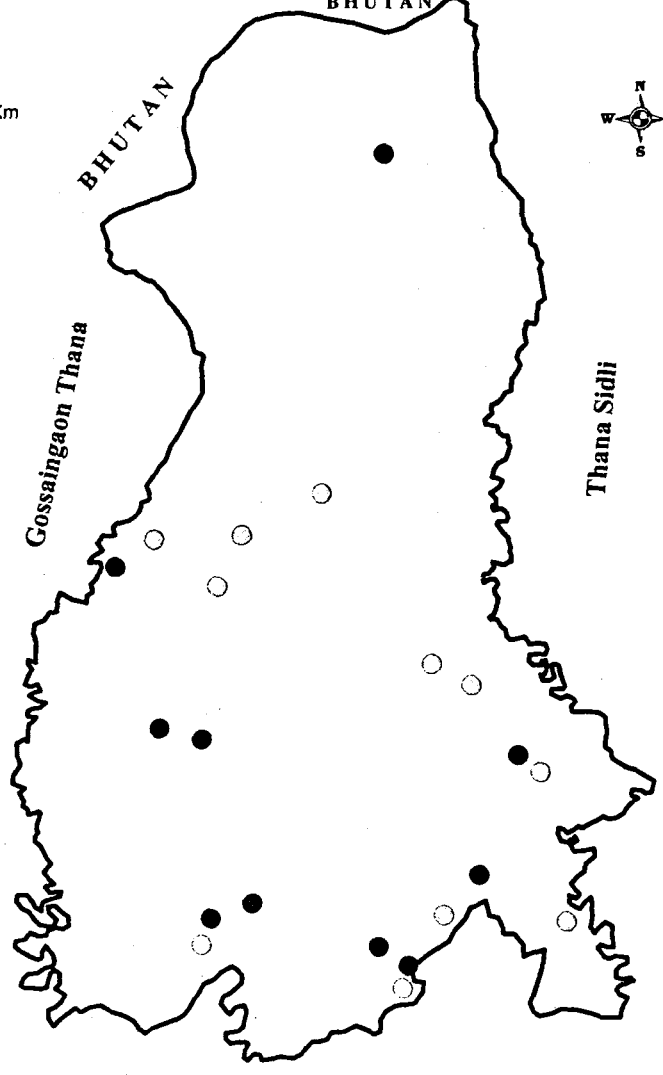


into an exclusively tribal village by 1991. A common reason could be that there was redistribution of tribal people to those villages from where the non-tribal people moved away en masse. Pakriguri is another village where it recorded a share of almost 6 per cent (5.97%) tribal population in 1971 that recorded more than 82 per cent (82.60%) in the year 1991. It means that there was an increase of more than 76 per cent of tribal population. There was negligible tribal population in the village of Ulubari in 1971 but it recorded almost 73 per cent (72.92%) in 1991. The village of Bhag Amguri and Charaikhola located in the south had a high share of tribal population in 1991 with a little more than 92 per cent (92.34%) and more than 82 per cent (82.45%) respectively, but did not record any tribal population in 1971. Similar was the case with the village of Haltugaon F.V. where it recorded nil tribal population in 1971 was more than 83 per cent (83.78%) in 1991. A moderate share of tribal population was recorded in the village of Kurshakati Lakheraj in 1991 with 67.21 per cent but with no share of tribal population in 1971. With a very low share of tribal population of hardly 5 per cent (4.59%) in 1971, the village of Kathalguri recorded a high share of 71 per cent in 1991. The two villages of Molandubi and Dhupguri did not witness any share tribal population in 1971 but recorded a moderate tribal population of 60.43 per cent and a little more than 64 per cent (64.22%). Most of these villages are located in the north.

There are opposite examples too. In about ten villages the ethnic composition changed in favour of the non-tribal component and most of this took place in the southern part of the Thana. The village of Ultapani F.V. recorded a decline of tribal population from more than 64 per cent (64.32%) in 1971 to less than 33 per cent (32.74%) in 1991. The villages of Ravapara No.2, Shimlaguri and Kathalguri recorded a similar decline.

Kokrajhar Thana; Kokrajhar District
Location of Villages Experiencing Drastic Change in Ethnic Composition, 1971-1991
BHUTAN

0 1.5 3 4.5 Km



- Villages Dominantly S. T. Population in 1971 but Nil in or Negligible in 1991 (10)
- Villages with Nil or Negligible in 1971 but Dominantly S. T. in 1991 (11)

Fig. - 3.4

However, the tribal population completely withdrew itself from these villages to transform these villages into exclusively non-tribal ones. In 1971, the village of Ravupara No.2 recorded a share of tribal population of more than 71 per cent (71.63%), Shimalaguri with a little more than 87 per cent (87.24%) and the village of Kathalguri recorded almost 67 per cent (66.80%). The villages which recorded fully tribal population in 1971 are Anthaibil and Tilapara but in 1991 they did not record any share of tribal population at all. A share of 70.16 per cent of tribal population was recorded in the village of Magurmari in 1971 but in 1991, the share of tribal population lessened and it recorded a little more than 45 per cent (45.24%). The village of Shyamthaibari was tribal dominated in 1971 but by 1991, the share of tribals became less and less and recorded more than 76 per cent (76.50%). A decrease of more than 23 per cent of the tribal population was noticed. In the village of Harinaguri Part II, there was a decrease of almost 62 per cent. In 1971, it had a share of more than 87 per cent scheduled tribes (87.12%) and in 1991, it decreased to less than 25 per cent.

During the 1990's Kokrajhar witnessed the process of ethnic cleansing to create a Bodo homogenous area for getting statehood. So wherever the non-tribals were less in number were driven out from these areas and were occupied by the tribals.

It is seen that the dominantly tribal villages were more concentrated towards the northern part of the Thana. There are large tracts of forested areas in the northern part, which means the tribals have been pushed further into the interiors, while few such villages are seen to be scattered on the eastern and on southern part of the Thana also.

3.3.2 Growth Rate

To get a clearer picture of the process of redistribution of population in this Thana other than percentage, growth rate of the scheduled tribe population over the period 1971 to 1991 is taken into consideration.

Table 3.2
Kokrajhar Thana: Growth rate of S.T. Population 1971-1991

% Growth Rate	Number of villages	Percentage (%)
250 & above	17	8.80
100-250	20	10.63
50-100	29	15.02
25-50	12	6.21
0-25	13	6.73
0 to -25	96	49.74
-25 to -50	4	2.07
-50 & above	2	1.03
	193	

Source: Census of India, 1971,1991

It is fairly clear from the table 3.2 that more villages have experienced a fall in the scheduled tribe population than those which have experienced increase in their population. Over 53 per cent of the villages have witnessed decline in the scheduled tribe population while the remaining have experienced increase in their population. However, the interesting fact is that the increase of scheduled tribe population in fewer villages is phenomenal while the decrease of scheduled tribe population in more villages is less spectacular. In any case, such great alterations in the growth rate could not have been due to differential natural increase in scheduled tribe population. There must have been a great deal of inter village transfer of people along ethnic lines.

It is clear from the table 3.2 that a significant 8.80 per cent of the villages had experienced exceedingly high growth rate among the scheduled tribe population of more than 250 per cent and above during 1971-91 period. Around 19 per cent of the villages saw an increase in the growth of tribal population ranging between 100 and 250 per cent

or more. Fewer villages experienced smaller growth of their tribal population. Around 13 per cent villages recorded a growth rate from 0-50 per cent. In fact, the highest share of the villages (15.02%) had a moderate growth of scheduled tribe population (50-100 per cent). This means that there has been a phenomenal increase in the share of tribal population in 17 villages. Such high growth rate was seen in the villages like Labanyapur, Mohendrapur F.V., Uttar Maligaon, to name a few. Labanyapur, which is situated in the extreme northern part, had a phenomenal growth rate of almost 584 per cent (583.90 %) in its tribal population. This village is situated in the forested tracts of Chirang Reserve Forest. Though Labanyapur had a low share of tribal population with a little more than 14 per cent (14.21%) in 1971 and in 1991, the share increased to almost 48 per cent (48.45%), the growth rate has been comparatively high. It is a known fact that the tribals are usually found in the geographically negative areas. Not many villages are found around Labanyapur. Mohendrapur, which is situated in the central part of the Thana, has recorded a growth rate of more than 490 per cent (490.49%). This has been an exclusively tribal village since 1971. Kashiguri too, located in the central part of the Thana has a high growth rate of almost 637 per cent (636.93%). Here, the share of tribal population, which was 100 per cent in 1971, declined in 1991 to 87.84 per cent. There was a difference of -12.16 per cent. A very distinct increase is visible in the village of Pakriguri, where it recorded a very high growth rate of a little more than 2404 per cent (2404.8%). This village had a tribal share of almost 6 per cent (5.97%) in 1971 and substantially increased to more than 82 per cent (82.60%) in the year 1991. There was an increase of more than 76 per cent (76.63%). The non-tribals who originally inhabited this area seem to have been pushed away and the tribal people have filled the vacuum. Dakhin

Karigaon though had a high growth rate but the share of tribal population was comparatively very less. This village a tribal proportion of only 2.5 per cent in 1971 and it increased to a little more than 18 per cent (18.37%). Kalugaon is another village, which had a growth rate of more than 430 per cent (430.80%).

In the next category of 100-250 per cent growth rate, there were twenty villages accounting for less than 11 per cent (10.63%) of all villages. Some common villages are Bhadranpur F.V., Bashbari, Mestabari, etc. Bhadranpur recorded a growth rate of more than 126 per cent (126.16%), the total share of tribal population in this village in 1971 was 100 per cent, and in 1991, the percentage fell drastically to 0.09 per cent. This indicates substantial infiltration of people of non-tribal origin. The village of Bashbari had a growth rate of 126.16 per cent, while the share of tribal population in this village was comparatively high. Mestabari had a growth rate 165 per cent and Harinaguri, which recorded a low share of tribal population both in 1971 and 1991 (7.39% in 1971 and 12.13% in 1991) recorded a high growth rate of more than 111 per cent (111.11%). All these villages are usually in the eastern and central part of the Thana.

In the category of 50-100 per cent, twenty-nine villages are included and they record a moderate growth rate in little less than 14 percent (13.98%) villages. The prominent villages are Khargaon, Magurmari, to name a few. Majority of the villages are situated in the southern part of the Thana. Here both tribal as well as the non-tribal villages are present. The village of Gendrabil had a high share of total tribal population in 1991 but decreased to 90 per cent. Diabari is another village containing tribal population only but the growth of the tribal population was only 61.53 per cent. A difference of little less than 4 per cent was recorded between both the census years of 1971 and 1991.

With a share of more than in twelve villages. The growth rate ranged between 25-50 per cent in a little over 6 per cent (6.21%) of the villages. The few villages are Sota Adabari, Charaikhola Part II, Karigaon, etc. The villages in this category are scattered but majority of them are in the eastern sector. These villages recorded a moderate share of tribal population in the both the census years, other than the village of Mohanpur F.V. where the share of tribal population was 100 per cent in 1971 but decreased to little less than 75 per cent. Village of Dolgaon witnessed an increase of more than 2 per cent of tribal population in 1991.

In the next category of 0-25 per cent indicating minor increase in population, thirteen villages fall in this category accounting for more than 6 per cent (6.73%) of the villages. The villages in this category are conglomerated in the eastern side of the Kokrajhar Thana apart from just one or two in the central part.

The negative growth rate among the scheduled tribes has taken place in more villages compared to those that witnessed much increase in scheduled tribe population. Scheduled tribe population fell marginally (0 to -25 per cent) in a great majority of villages experiencing negative growth rate. Ninety-six villages, nearly 50 per cent of the villages in the Thana registered a decline up to 25 per cent.

Only a handful of villages registered massive decline in the scheduled tribe population. Only three villages experienced a decline of 25 to 50 per cent, while two villages witnessed a massive decline of 50 per cent or more in the scheduled tribe population. These villages are concentrated in the central part of the Thana. Fig. 3.5 shows the broad pattern in the population growth rate among the tribal population in the Thana. It is very clear that the villages in the north have experienced much increase in

their scheduled tribe population while the villages in the south have experienced fall in their population.

Some broad conclusions can be made from the analysis based on the tables and maps. There has been a phenomenal increase in the share of tribal population in the year 1991 from its base in the year 1971. As many as 96 villages have registered a decline in the tribal population marginally and there was a drastic decline of 1 per cent in only two villages. Nevertheless, more than half of the villages witnessed some decline in the scheduled tribe population. The fact that the analysis revealed massive increase in a few villages and some decline in the scheduled tribe population in a great majority of villages, is sufficient to conclude that there has been large scale of transfer of people indicative of redistribution of tribal population which could not have been due to differential natural growth rate alone.

A large number of villages, which were earlier non-tribal villages, had turned to tribal villages. Such redistribution mainly took place in the Bodo areas. This change was seen more during 1991, because by the 90's the district of Kokrajhar was facing the problem with the Bodos, who were demanding a separate state. Therefore, the non-tribals, who were mainly the Santhalis were driven out of their homes and such villages were later occupied by the tribals who were mainly the Bodos. The tribals started conglomerating in pockets wherever there was a substantial size of tribal population. The process of redistribution could not have been one way. The non-tribal population too got redistributed in manner so as to make homogenous ethnic areas and in this process must have driven out the tribal people from areas exclusively dominated by the tribes. This explains reduction in the number of scheduled tribes in a large number of villages. The

Kokrajhar Thana: Kokrajhar District
 VILLAGE LEVEL: GROWTH RATE OF SCHEDULED TRIBE POPULATION, 1971-1991

0 1.5 3 4.5 Km



% of Growth rate	
■	250 and Above (14)
■	100 to 250 (18)
■	50 to 100 (29)
■	25 to 50 (11)
■	0 to 25 (12)
■	-25 to 0 (92)
■	-50 to -25 (0)
□	-50 and Above (1)

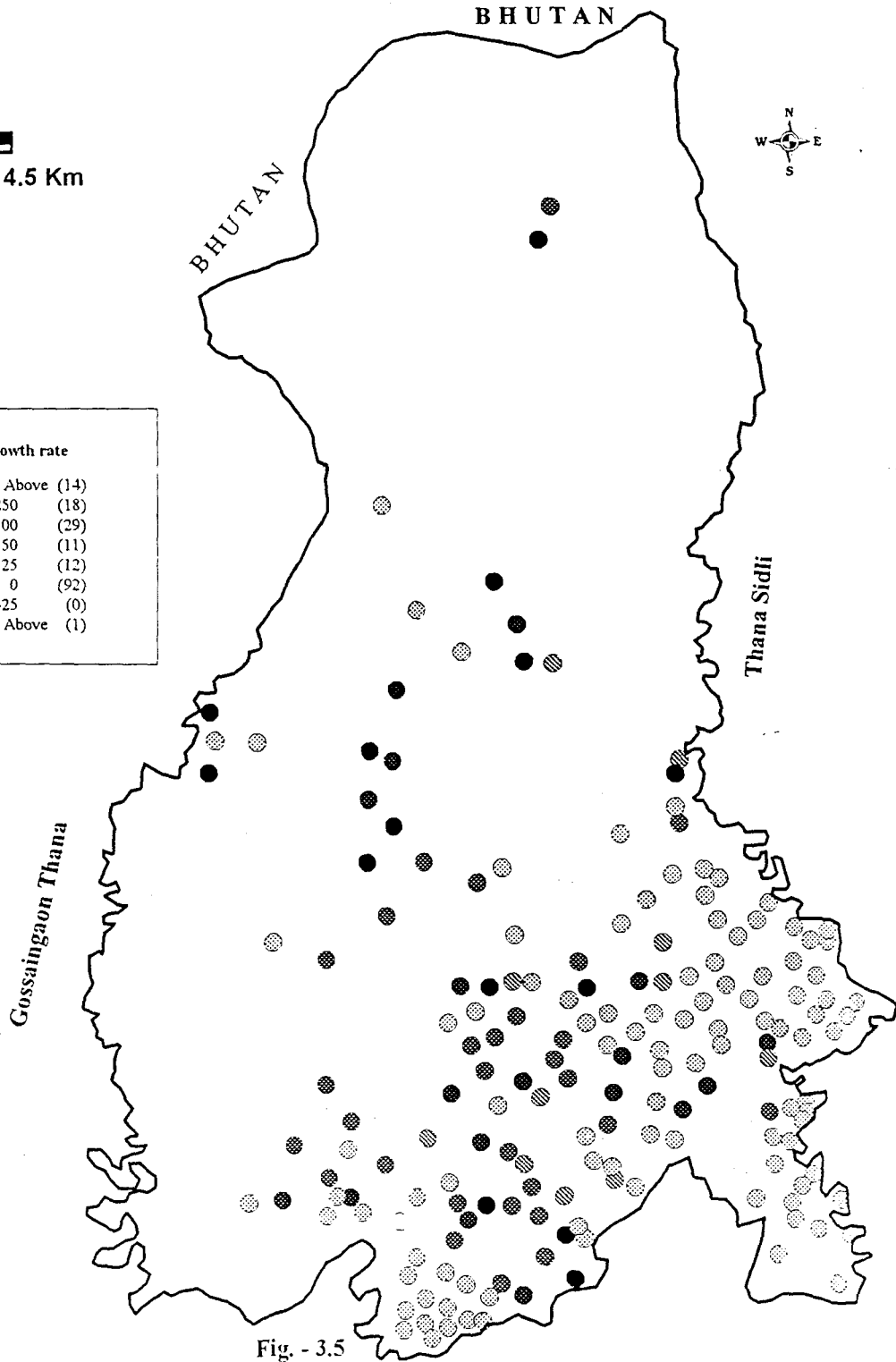


Fig. - 3.5

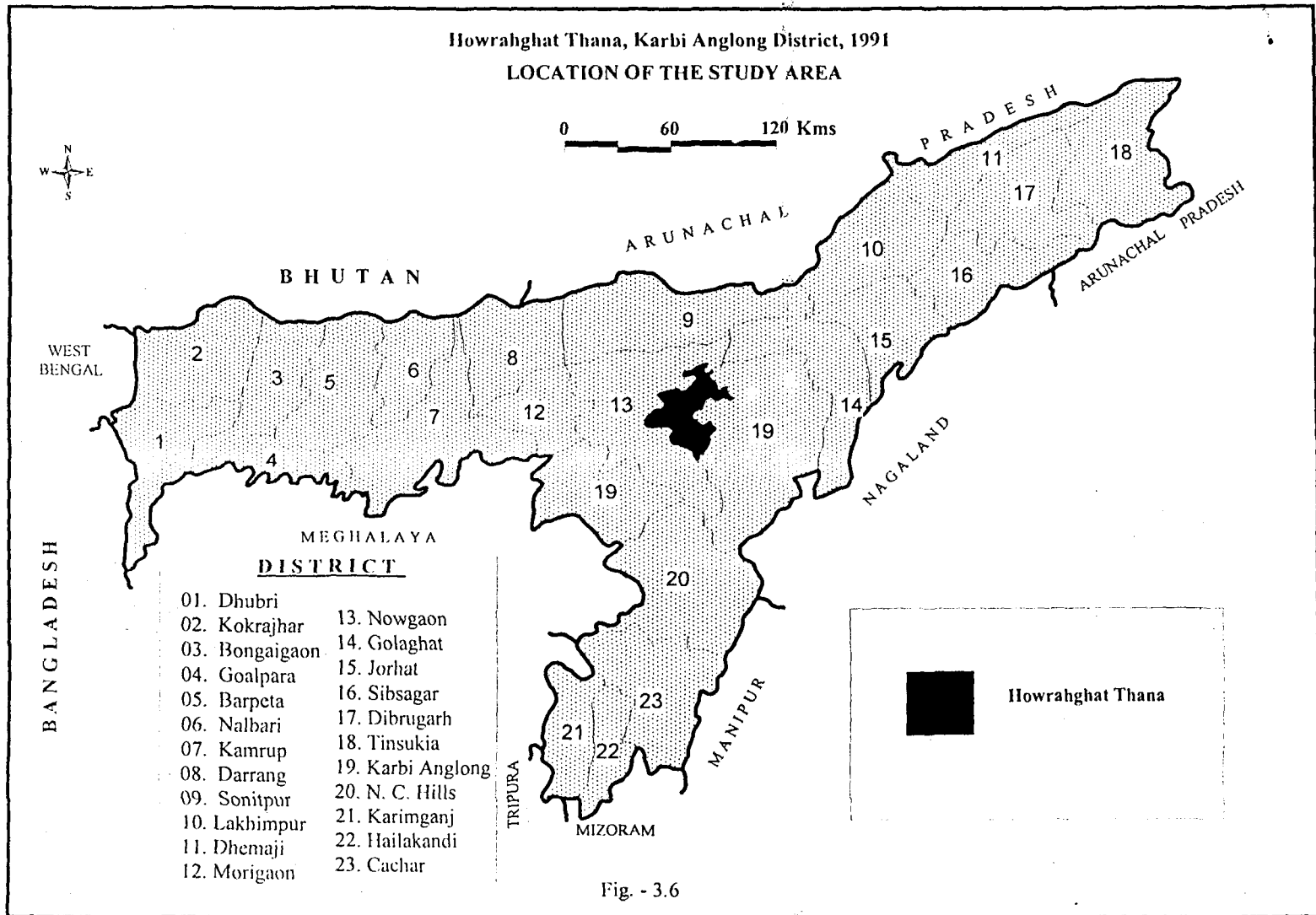
tribal people must have moved out from these villages, which were generally non-tribal dominated, to those villages where the tribes dominated. Such villages though fewer in number did experience phenomenal increase in scheduled tribe population (see fig. 3.5).

3.4 Karbi Anglong District

The district of Karbi Anglong experienced substantial decrease in its scheduled tribe population during 1971 and 1991 indicating significant infiltration of people of non-tribal origin into these hills. Before the changing ethnic composition and growth rate in the scheduled tribe population is analysed it may be useful to have a brief description of the area.

The Karbi Anglong District (Fig.3.6) is situated in the central part of Assam encircled by Golaghat district in the east; Meghalaya, Morigaon district in the west; Nagaon, Golaghat district in the north; North Cachar Hills district and Nagaland in the south. The district with dense tropical forest is covered with hills and flat plains.

The new district of United Mikir and North Cachar Hills was formed on the 17th November 1951. This was followed by the bifurcation of the erstwhile district of United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district into two separate districts under banner as "Mikir Hills" and North Cachar Hills district in the year 1970. The Mikir Hill district was again rechristened as "Karbi Anglong District". Thus, Karbi Anglong came into being as a full-fledged separate district in the map of Assam with its headquarters at Diphu. The district enjoys autonomy under the provision of Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. It is the largest district of Assam.



3.4.1 Howraghat Thana: Changes in Ethnic Composition

The villages, which have been found common in both the census years of 1971 and 1991, have been selected for studying them in detail. Since the district did not exist in 1971 and was a part of United North Cachar and Mikir Hills, the village data of Howraghat Thana under Phuloni Circle has been taken into consideration for comparison with the villages of the present Karbi Anglong District.

Table 3.3
Howraghat Thana : Distribution of Scheduled Tribes at village level :1971-1991

% Scheduled Tribes	No. of villages (1971)	% of Villages	No. of villages (1991)	% of Villages
100	22	13.83	49	30.81
80-100	29	18.23	23	14.46
60-80	15	9.43	17	10.69
40-60	10	6.28	4	2.51
20-40	16	10.06	4	2.51
<20	14	8.80	11	6.91
0	53	33.33	51	32.07
	159		159	

Source: Census of India, 1971, 1991.

Though the district of Karbi Anglong recorded a decline in the share of tribal population, the number of villages with exclusive tribal population doubled in 1991 from 1971. Table 3.3 clearly indicates that in 1971, less than 14 per cent (13.83%) of the villages were exclusively tribal villages. The share of the villages doubled to more than half by almost 31 per cent. In the higher categories, the proportion of scheduled tribe population, which is between 80-100 per cent, the share of the villages to the total number of villages is more than 18.23 per cent in the year 1971 but decreased to 14.46 per cent. The scheduled tribe population ranging between 40-80 per cent the was found in less than 16 per cent villages in 1971 and declined to around 13 per cent. A drastic fall took place in the number of villages in the category of 20-40 per cent schedule tribe

Howrahbat Thana: Karbi Anglong District
VILLAGE LEVEL: DISTRIBUTION OF SCHEDULED TRIBE POPULATION, 1971

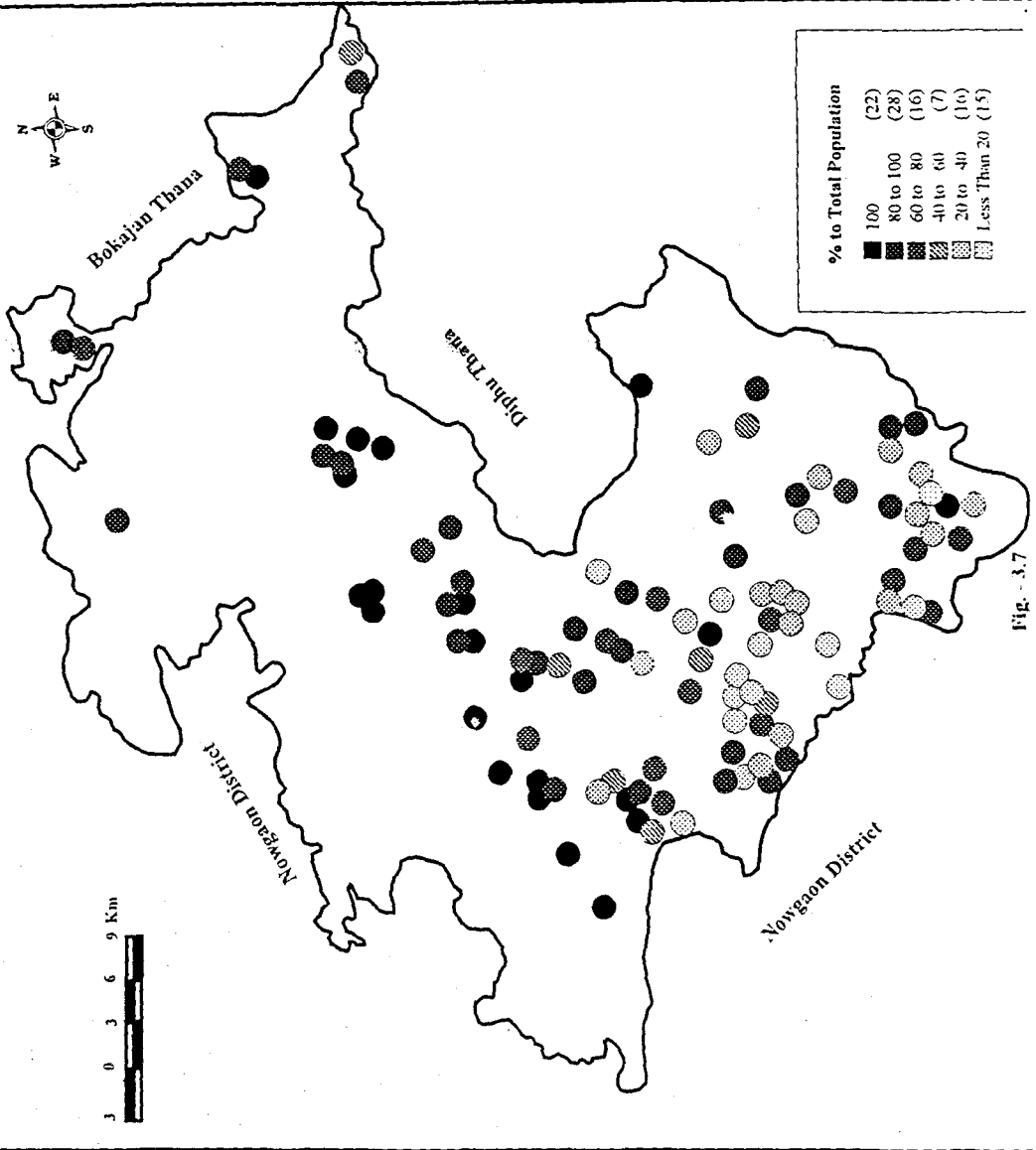


Fig. - 3.7

population. The proportion of such villages was more than 10 per cent in 1971 but it decreased to less than 3 per cent in 1991. There was also significant decline in the number of villages that supported less than 20 per cent scheduled tribe population. It is interesting that the number of villages, which were exclusively non-tribal, remained largely unchanged.

It may be noted that there has been a significant decline in the number of villages containing ethnically mixed population whereas the villages, which are exclusive in terms of ethnic composition, have increased phenomenally. This process is evident more in the case of the scheduled tribes, but remains constant in the case of non-tribal villages. This means that the tribal population has withdrawn from such villages where they were in minority leading to greater homogenization of villages in terms of ethnic composition of these villages. A process of vigorous population redistribution, more intense than what was observed in the case of Kokrajhar district seems to have taken place in the Karbi Anglong hills. The ethnic divide is more sharply defined here than elsewhere. Fig.3.7 shows that very few villages were exclusively tribal in their population composition in the year 1971 and were mainly concentrated in the northern part of the Thana. Villages with moderate tribal population or mixed villages are scattered mainly in the southern part (fig 3.7). By the year 1991 not many villages supported ethnically mixed population. Majority of the villages in the year 1991 witnessed exclusively dominant tribal villages or villages with high share of scheduled tribe population. (See fig 3.8).

However, the pattern of such an ethnic divide on space is more confusing. Unlike Kokrajhar, no north-south divide is discernible. Fig.3.7 and 3.8 shows that the great

Howraghat Thana: Karbi Anglong District
 VILLAGE LEVEL: DISTRIBUTION OF SCHEDULED TRIBE POPULATION, 1991

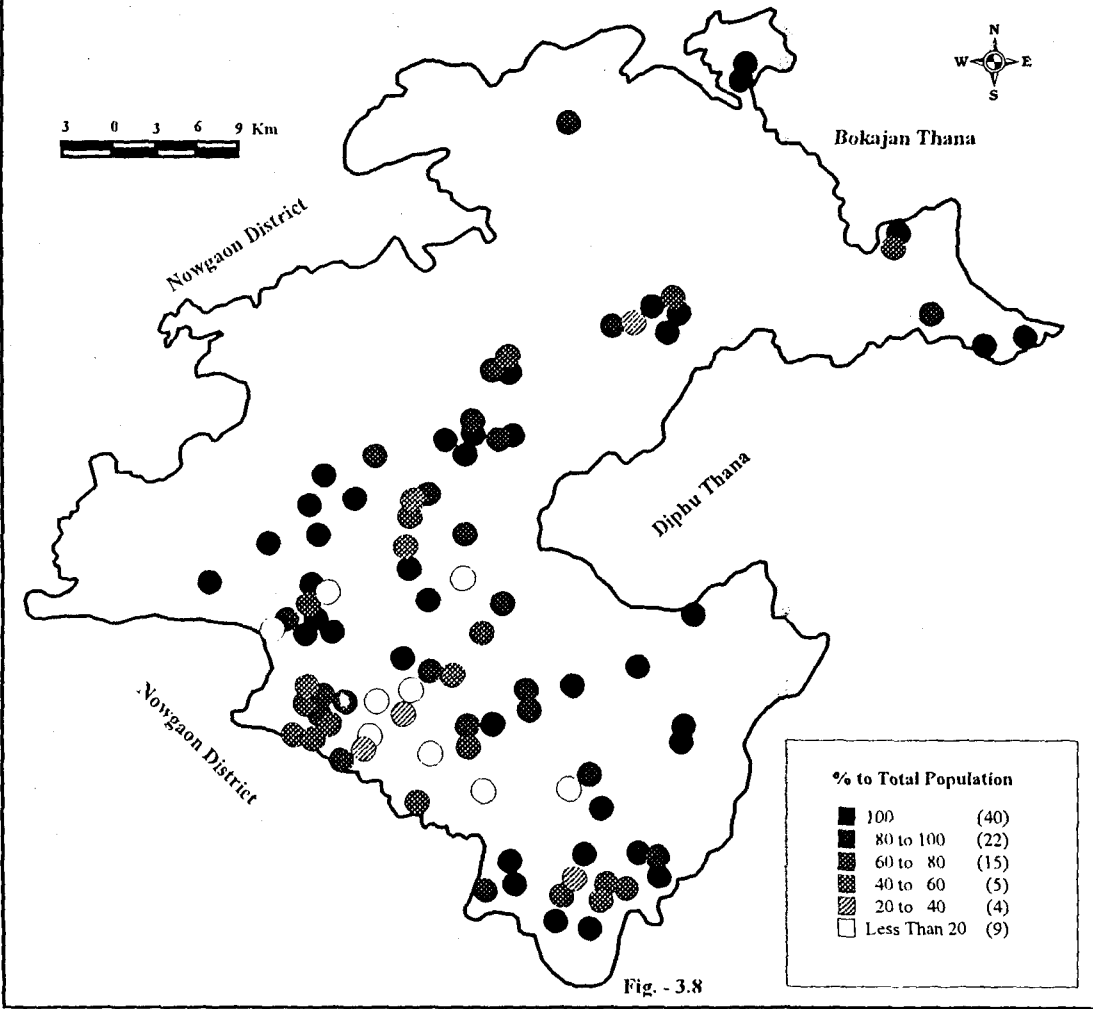


Fig. - 3.8

changes in ethnic composition bringing about homogenization have very little reflection on space. Ethnically homogenous tribal or non-tribal villages or the mixed ones in both the years (1971 and 1991) are dispersed all over the block. This means that while the ethnic divide is very sharp at the social level, it has not translated itself into an equally sharply defined spatial boundary meaning thereby that the exclusive tribal and non-tribal territories have not been formed. This in spite of the fact that the exclusive tribal villages are more numerous in the central part of the Thana.

Fig. 3.9 reveals the distribution of those villages where extraordinary changes in the proportion of scheduled tribes has taken place. Villages have been located which had nil or negligible (less than 5 %) tribal population in 1971 but were dominantly tribal (more than 50%) in 1991 and secondly, those villages have been identified which were dominantly tribal (more than 50%) in 1971 but contained either nil or negligible (less than 5%) scheduled tribe population in 1991.

In the first category where the tribal population was nil or negligible in 1971, fifteen villages were found. The village of Phuloni Terong, which had no share of tribal population in 1971, had increased to more than 91 per cent (91.02%). This shows that there has been an influx of tribal people into this village from other nearby areas. There has been 100 per cent increase in the village of Ramsing Engti Gaon from 1971. All the villages under this category are usually concentrated in the central part, only few of them are scattered in the southern and the eastern part. The village of Onteron, which is situated in the extreme north-eastern part, had witnessed changes in the share of tribal population. In 1971, this village did not record any tribal population but by 1991, it witnessed an increase of almost 67 per cent (66.95%). Kachari Gaon is another village,

Howrahhat Thana: Karbi Anglong District
 LOCATION OF VILLAGES EXPERIENCING DRASTIC CHANGE IN ETHNIC COMPOSITION, 1971-1991

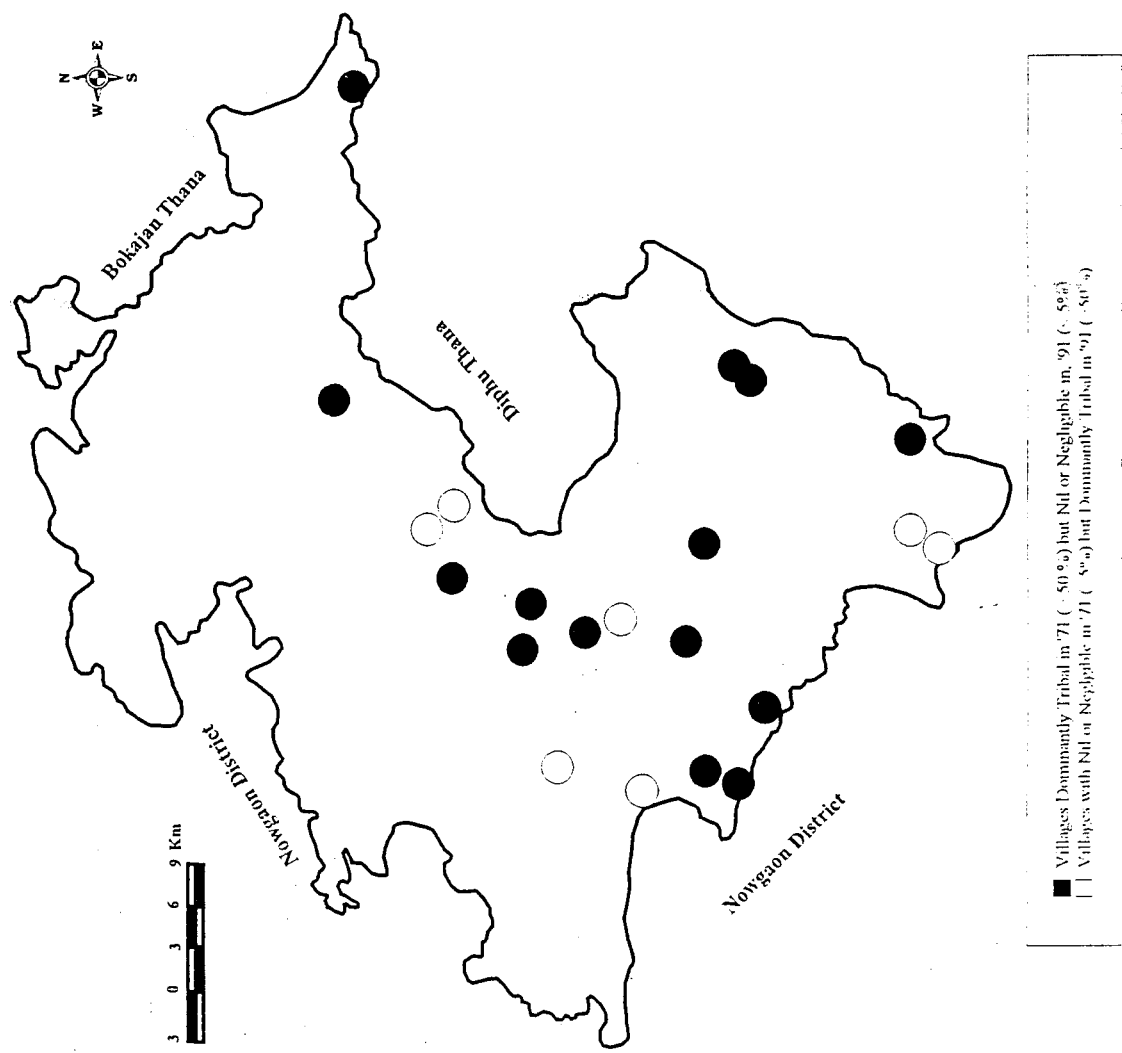


Fig. - 3.9

located in the northern part, is the only village where it has witnessed such drastic changes. Pub Dikharo and There Gaon are the two villages, situated next to each other in the western sector. Their share of tribal population in 1971 was nil but in 1991 they had an equal share of 78 per cent in both the villages. As these two villages form the boundary villages, there has been an infiltration of tribals into these areas. A similar case has also been seen in the two villages of Pub Gajalipar and Matikhola Timung Gaon. These two villages saw an increase of more than 93 per cent and 100 per cent respectively. Once again, the same conclusion can be derived here that the villages of Pub Gajalipar and Matikhola Timung Gaon are the boundary villages and saw an influx of tribals from the neighbouring villages, though they recorded nil tribal population in 1971 but within the two decades, it witnessed a tremendous increase in the share of the tribal population. In this category, Desoi Teron was the only village, which saw an increase of 50 per cent in the share of the tribal population. While other villages increased their share of tribal population by 100 per cent.

In the next category where the villages were dominantly tribal in 1971 but had nil or negligible tribal population in 1991 were not too many. The seven villages of Garukatia Ratia Gaon, Sarjeng Gaon, Matikhola Gaon, Jaypur, Phongioket Doli Gaon, Durgapur and Raja Pathar Tiniali witnessed such changes. These villages are usually scattered all over the block but the two villages of Phongioket Doli Gaon and Raja Pathar Tiniali are situated in the southern part and are located next to each other. The village of Phongioket Doli Gaon had a share of almost 70 per cent (69.77%) tribal population in 1971 but did not record any tribal population in 1991. Raja Pathar Tiniali also saw such similar changes where there was a decrease in the tribal population in 1991 by a little less

than 65 per cent. The other two villages, which are located in the central part, are the villages of Jaypur and Durgapur. By 1991, these two villages had more of non-tribal population than the tribal as there was a decrease of more than 93 per cent (93.64%) in Durgapur and a little less than 76 per cent in Jaypur. Matikhola Timung Gaon and Garukatia Ratia Gaon are both located in the western side of the Howraghat Thana but they are far apart from each other. Sarjeng Gaon is the only village, which is in the central part, which has more of non-tribal population than the tribals staying in the surrounding villages.

It is clear from the map (fig.3.9) that the tribal villages have dominated the Howraghat block in 1991 than in 1971. Only countable few villages with dominant share of non-tribal population are found while the tribals mainly inhabit the rest. The concentration of the tribal people is mainly in pockets and in the centre while the villages consisting of the non-tribes are very few and scattered.

It is thus evident that in spite of tremendous inter village transfer of people along ethnic lines; no separate or exclusive tribal and non-tribal territories have been formed. This is perhaps due to the nature of hill topography, which has not permitted exclusive ethnic territories to be formed though such clusters not few. The tribal non-tribal boundaries in this area does not therefore present itself in the form of a sharply defined line but as small clusters defining territories of the tribes and the non-tribes dispersed all over the block.

3.4.2 Growth Rate

The differential growth rate in population belonging to the scheduled tribe provides further clue to the process of redistribution of people along ethnic lines. It is evident from the table 3.4 that a large number of villages (over three fourths) have experienced a decline in the number of scheduled tribe population while a few of them have witnessed phenomenal rise in their total population indicating mass transfer of scheduled tribe population from one village to the other.

Table 3.4
Howraghat Thana: Growth rate 1971-1991

% Growth Rate	No. of villages	Percentage
250 and above	5	3.14
100-250	13	8.17
50-100	8	5.03
25-50	6	3.77
0-25	7	4.40
0 to -25	87	54.71
-25 to -50	7	4.40
-50 and above	26	16.35
	159	

Source: Census of India, 1971, 1991

An extraordinary high growth rate of over 250 per cent and above was witnessed in five villages accounting for 3.14 per cent of all villages. Notable among these villages are Jengrang Hang, Barsing Rong Chehon, In the next category of 100-250 per cent growth rate of tribal population, there are 13 villages constituting more than 8 per cent (8.17%) of all villages. Some common villages in this category are Parakhawa, Englang Gaon, Nanboka, etc. As many as eight villages experienced an increase of 50-100 per cent in the total scheduled tribe population. Less than 5 per cent villages recorded a small increase in the scheduled tribe population ranging between nil to 25 per cent.

A large number of villages on the other hand recorded a negative growth rate. As many as 122 villages constituting over 75 per cent of all villages in the block

Howraghat Thana: Karbi Anglong District
 VILLAGE LEVEL: GROWTH RATE OF SCHEDULED TRIBE POPULATION, 1971-1991

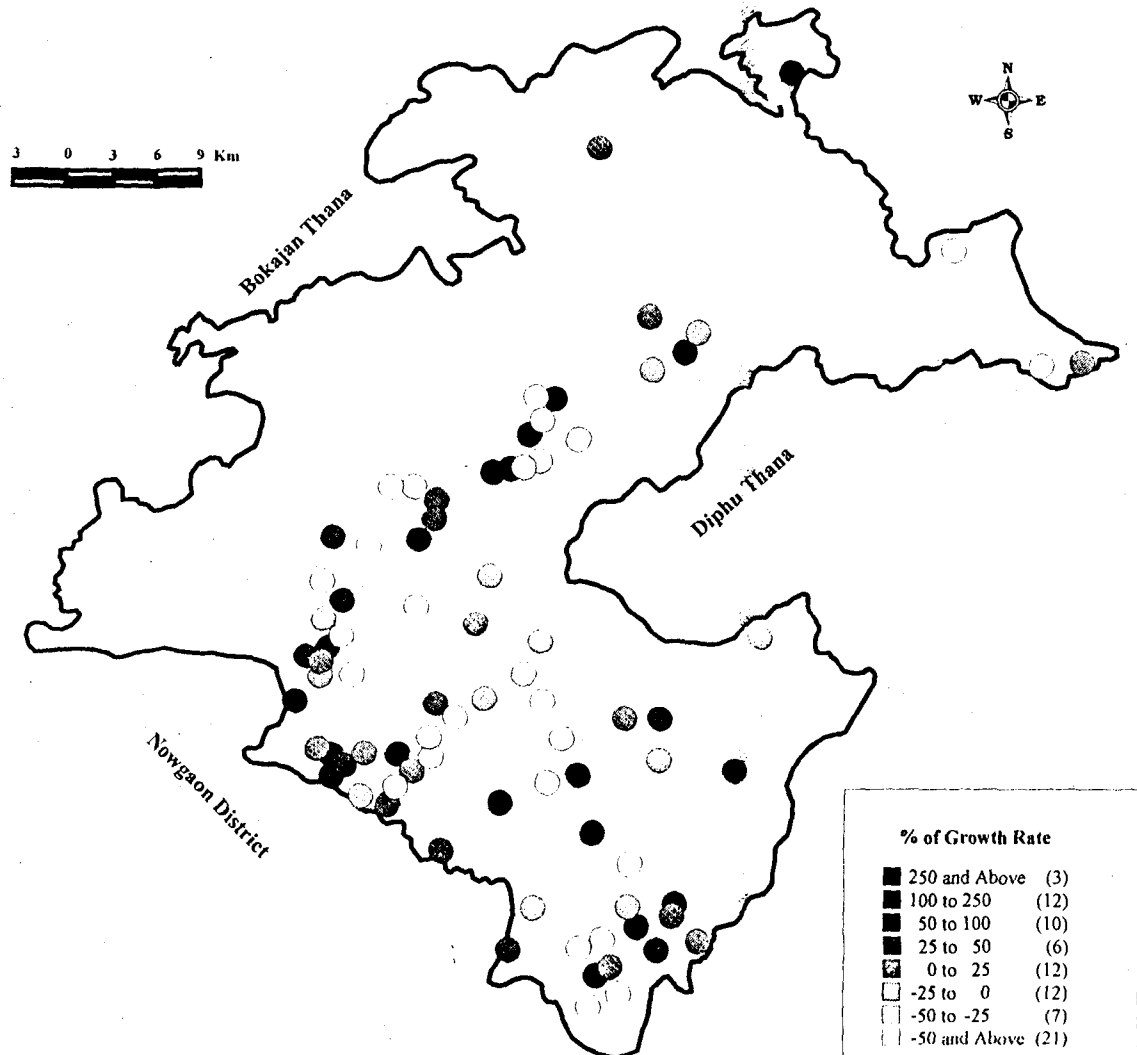


Fig. - 3.10

witnessed a fall in the total scheduled tribe population. This is surely due to migration of the scheduled tribe population and not merely due to natural decrease in the scheduled tribe population in these villages. This also indicates that a large number of villages, which contained some tribal population, are experiencing out migration of this segment, which in likelihood have moved into those villages of exclusive tribal concentration. It is these villages, which have experienced phenomenal increase in their population.

As much as 16 per cent of the villages witnessed a very high negative growth rate (over 50 per cent) of the scheduled tribe population (see fig.3.10). Such a drastic fall in their population is reflected in the falling share of their population in the total in many villages (see table 3.3). This shows that the tribals who originally inhabited these areas had migrated to other places. A decline of 25 to 50 per cent in the scheduled tribe population took place in over 4 per cent villages, but a large number of villages accounting for nearly 55 per cent villages experienced at least some decline (up to 25 per cent) in scheduled tribe population.

Such a drastic fall in the scheduled tribe population does indicate mass transfer of the scheduled tribe population across the villages.

3.5 Barpeta District

This Lower Assam district covers an area of 3245 square kms. and is bounded by the international border of Bhutan Hills in the north, Nalbari district in the east, Kamrup and Goalpara district in the south and Bongaigaon District in the west.

The general topography of the Barpeta district varies from low-lying plains to highlands having small hillocks in the South-West-corner of the district, namely Baghbar, Fulora and Chatala overlooking the scenic and mighty Brahmaputra River. The River Brahmaputra flows from east to west across the Southern part of the district. The

tributaries of these rivers that flow through the district are Beki, Manah, Pohumara, Kaldia, Palla, Nakhanda, Marachaulkhowa and Bhelengi flowing from North to South. Rivers Pohumara and Kaldia join near Barpeta town to form river Nakhanda whereas Palla and Beki join with Nakhanda to ultimately form Chaukhowa River. The soil of Barpeta District may be classified as sandy, sandy-loamy and forest-soils.

The Barpeta District was carved out of erstwhile Kamrup District of Assam in July 1983. The district derived its name from the headquarter town of Barpeta. The British Administration created it as a Civil Sub-Division in 1841. Today the district consists of two Civil Sub-Divisions, (1) Barpeta and (2) Bajali

The Barpeta district became a district in 1983 headed by the Deputy Commissioner. The district has two sub-divisions, namely Barpeta and Bajali. The Sub-divisional office (civil) Bajali is the civil head of the sub-division. There are five revenue circles in the sadar sub-division and three circles constitute the Bajali sub-division.

Barpeta district ranks fourth in overall ranking among the districts population size in Assam. The percentage of decadal variation in population in Barpeta district is +18.53 According to the 2001 census, the total population of the district is 16,42,420 with 846106 males and 796314 females. The density is 506 sq. kms. The total literate population is more than seven lakh, with a little less than 66 per cent of male literates and more than 57 per cent female literates.

Barpeta sub-division has five revenue circles and Bajali has three. Each revenue circle has a headquarter with a number of villages under its jurisdiction. Barpeta revenue circle has 176 villages with its headquarter at Barpeta. Baghbar circle has its headquarter located at Mandi with 182 villages, while the revenue circle of Sarthebari has

its headquarter at Sarthebari with 129 villages. There are 198 villages in the revenue circle of Barnagar, with Sorbhog as its headquarter. Kalgachia is the name of the next revenue circle, headquarter, and has 100 villages. The next sub-division of Bajali has three revenue circles. The Bajali revenue circle has its headquarter at Patacharkuchi and has 72 villages. There are 135 villages in Sarupeta revenue circle, with Sarupeta is its headquarter also. Finally, the next revenue circle is Jalah with 94 villages and its headquarter also the same. These two sub-divisions have been divided into Mouzas. Barpeta sub-division has seventeen mouzas and Bajali sub-division has nine mouzas. While Barpeta sub-division has six police stations and they are Barpeta, Sarthebari, Barpeta Road, Sorbhog, Tarabari and Baghbar. There is only one police station under Bajali sub-division and that is Patarkuchi.

For the present analysis the Sorbhog Thana of the district has been taken into consideration.

3.5.1 Sorbhog Thana: Changes in Ethnic Composition

To get a better insight into patterning of the distribution of tribes in the Sorbhog Thana (Fig.3.11), the proportion of scheduled tribes in the total population of the villages under the Sobhog Thana has been calculated and plotted on map.

Here again common villages of both the census years of 1971 and 1991 have been chosen to study the distribution as well as the growth rate of the tribal population. The district of Barpeta is one of the few districts, which show constancy in the proportion of scheduled tribe population over the years. It is evident from the table 3.5 that there are a very large number of villages of mixed ethnic population and that the tribes account for a

Sorbhog Thana: Barpeta District, 1991
 LOCATION OF THE STUDY AREA

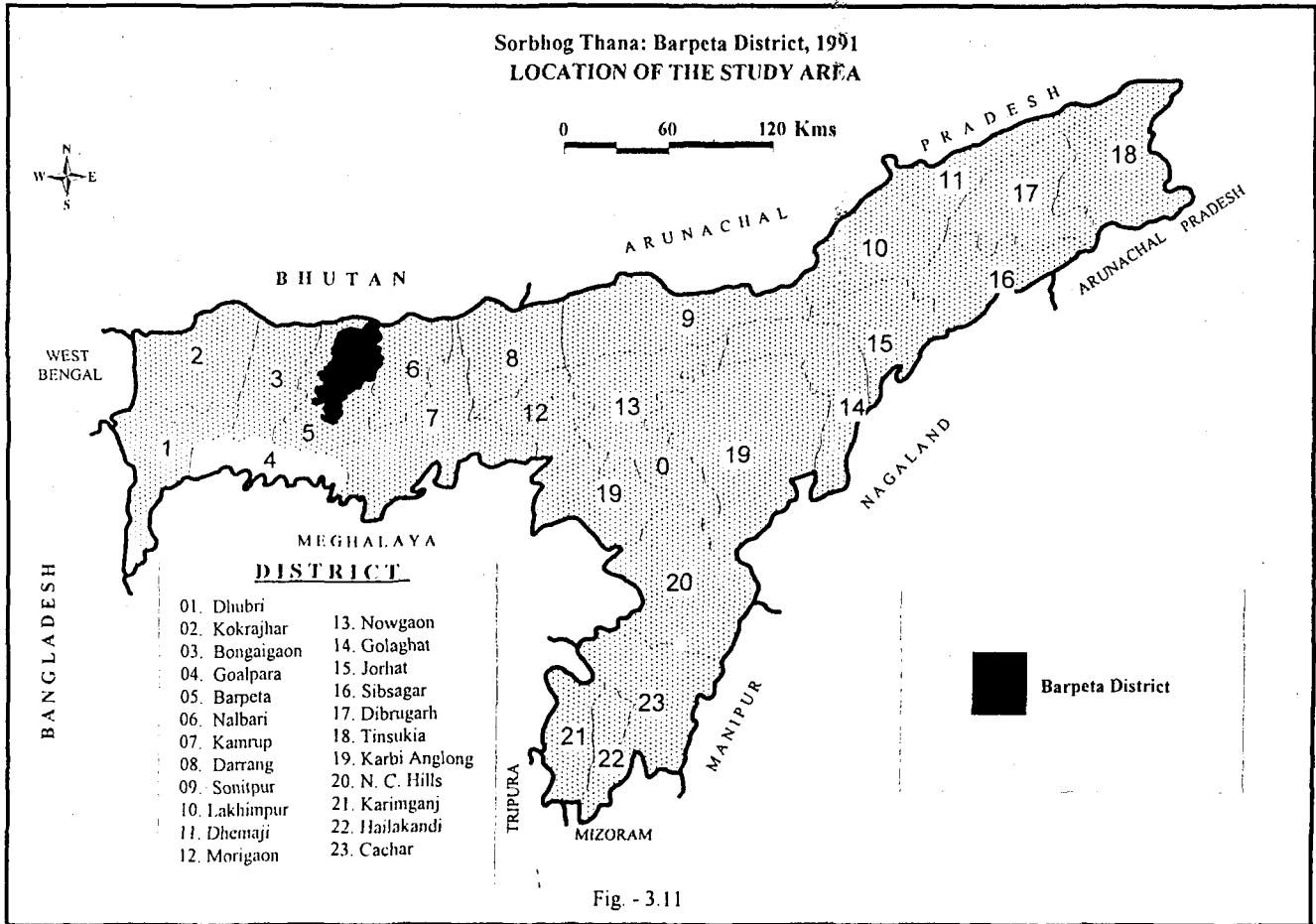


Fig - 3.11

minority segment in about 40 per cent of the villages. They are a majority (over 60 per cent) only in about 8 per cent of the villages.

Table 3.5
Sorbhog Thana: Distribution of Scheduled tribal population at village level

% of scheduled tribes	No. of villages (1971)	% Villages	No. of villages (1991)	% Villages
100	1	0.72	1	0.72
80-100	8	5.79	7	5.07
60-80	3	2.17	3	2.17
40-60	10	7.24	10	7.24
20-40	22	15.94	16	11.59
<20	30	21.73	42	30.43
0	64	46.37	59	42.75
	138		138	

Source: Census of India, 1971, 1991

One hundred and thirty-eight common villages have been found in both 1971 and in 1991. The percentage of the scheduled tribes has been divided into seven categories. Only one exclusively tribal village namely Sunpoira, situated in the eastern part of the Thana is found in the year 1971. The situation remains the same in the year 1991 too. However, it is not the same village. This means that there has been some dilution in the exclusive character of this village in terms of tribal concentration. The village has seen infiltration of people of non-tribal origin. On the other hand, another village has become an exclusively tribal village with the exclusion of the few non-tribal population living there in the year 1971. In about 6 per cent of the villages, the tribes are numerically dominant (80-100 per cent). The proportion of villages with 80-100 per cent tribal population remains identical in the year 1991 too. A little above than 2 per cent (2.17%) villages both in the year 1971 and 1991 contained scheduled tribe population ranging between 60-80 per cent. These villages are Beja Gaon Pathar, Bennibari and Bahbari. An identical proportion of villages (around 7 per cent) in 1971 and 1991 supported a tribal percentage of 40-60 per cent in the total population of these villages. In the remaining

Sorbhog Thana: BARPETA DISTRICT
 VILLAGE LEVEL: DISTRIBUTION OF SCHEDULED TRIBE POPULATION, 1971

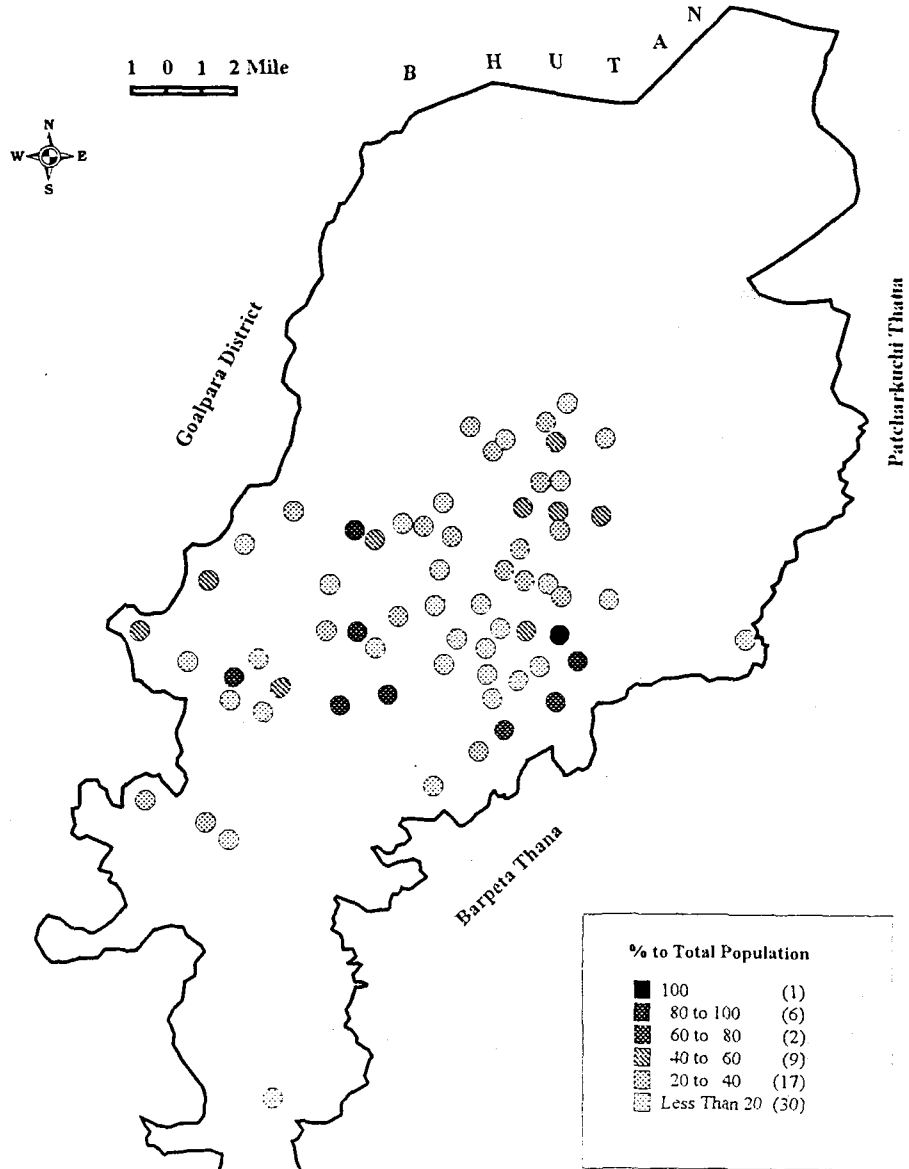


Fig. - 3. 12

villages, the scheduled tribes are numerically less compared to the non-tribal segment. Villages that supported around 20-40 per cent scheduled tribes in their population did experience a fall in number during the period 1971 and 1991. The proportion of such villages came down from 15.94 per cent in 1971 to 11.59 per cent in the year 1991. A very large number of villages (21.73 per cent) contained small proportion (below 20 per cent) of scheduled tribes in the year 1971. However, the proportion of such villages increased substantially in the year 1991 to over 30 per cent. This means that the only transfer has taken place in the categories of villages that contained less tribal population. Barring these there has been little changes in the proportion of villages in different percentage categories. Exclusively non-tribal villages constituted a little over 46 per cent of all villages in the year 1971. Percentage of such villages registered a minor decline in the year 1991 to nearly 43 per cent indicating some dispersal of the scheduled tribe population into more villages.

It is evident from the above description that the Thana experienced little changes in the distribution of the scheduled tribe population over the years. Whatever changes have come is something that is expected in the normal course. Unlike the other two examples, Barpeta seems to have experienced little inter village transfer of population along ethnic lines and whatever transfer has taken place, need not be viewed as a case of ethnic divide. The tribes in any case do not constitute a significant proportion in this Thana. The non-tribal segment constitutes the majority in large number of villages. The ethnic boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes seems less clearly defined and is a case of assimilation. Unlike Karbi Anglong and Kokrajhar representing conflict situation, the case is more of peaceful co-existence and assimilation between tribes and

Sorbhog Thana: Barpeta District
 VILLAGE LEVEL: DISTRIBUTION OF SCHEDULED TRIBE POPULATION, 1991

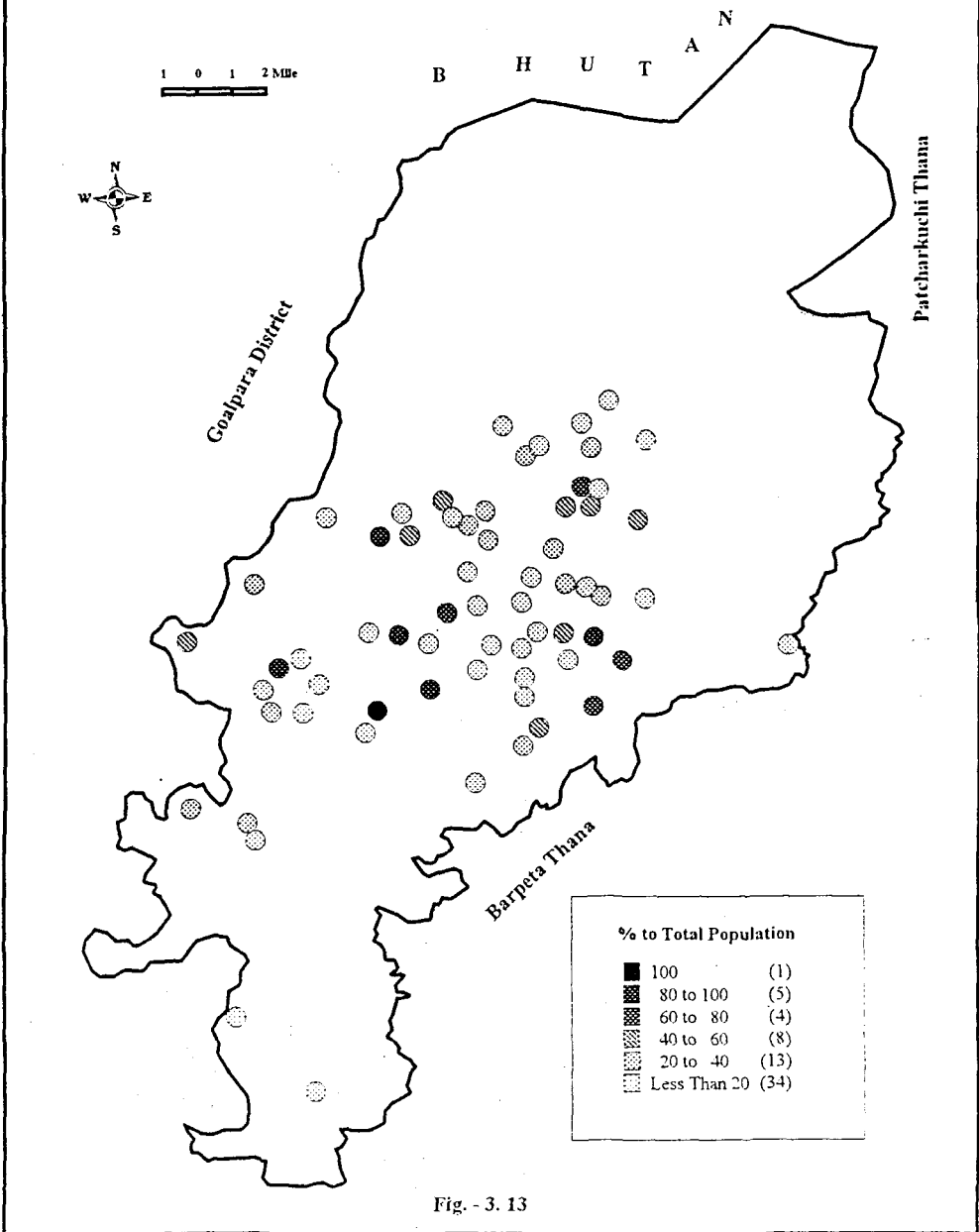


Fig. - 3. 13

the non-tribes in this Thana representing a situation of stability. Fig.3.12 and 3.13 depict the distribution of scheduled tribe population in this Thana at village level for the year 1971 and 1991 respectively. A comparison of the two maps reveals what has been described so far. There is little change in the distribution of the scheduled tribes in both the years at the village level. This certainly adds to the conclusion arrived at earlier that in the absence of any conflict, the spatial distribution of tribal and the non-tribal population remains unchanged on space.

3.5.2 Growth Rate

Other than the share of the tribal population, the growth rate of Sorbhog Thana has also been attempted. Both the census years of 1971 and 1991 have been taken into consideration to understand the rise and fall in the share of tribal population. The table below attempts to explain the growth rate of the scheduled tribe population.

Table 3.6
Sorbhog Thana: Growth rate of Scheduled Tribe Population, 1971-1991

Growth Rate	No. of villages	Percentage
250 and above	6	4.34
100-250	12	8.69
50-100	10	7.24
25-50	8	5.79
0-25	84	60.86
0 to -25	11	7.97
-25 to -50	2	1.44
-50 and above	5	3.62
	138	

Source: Census of India, 1971,1991

Table 3.6 clearly shows that a very large number of villages have experienced normal increase in the population of the scheduled tribe population which can be due to natural increase or decrease. Unlike the other two cases described earlier, only about 12 per cent villages have witnessed a decrease in the total scheduled tribe population. The remaining villages have experienced an increase in their scheduled tribe population. A

Sorbhog Thana: Barpeta District
VILLAGE LEVEL: GROWTH RATE OF SCHEDULED TRIBE POPULATION, 1971-1991

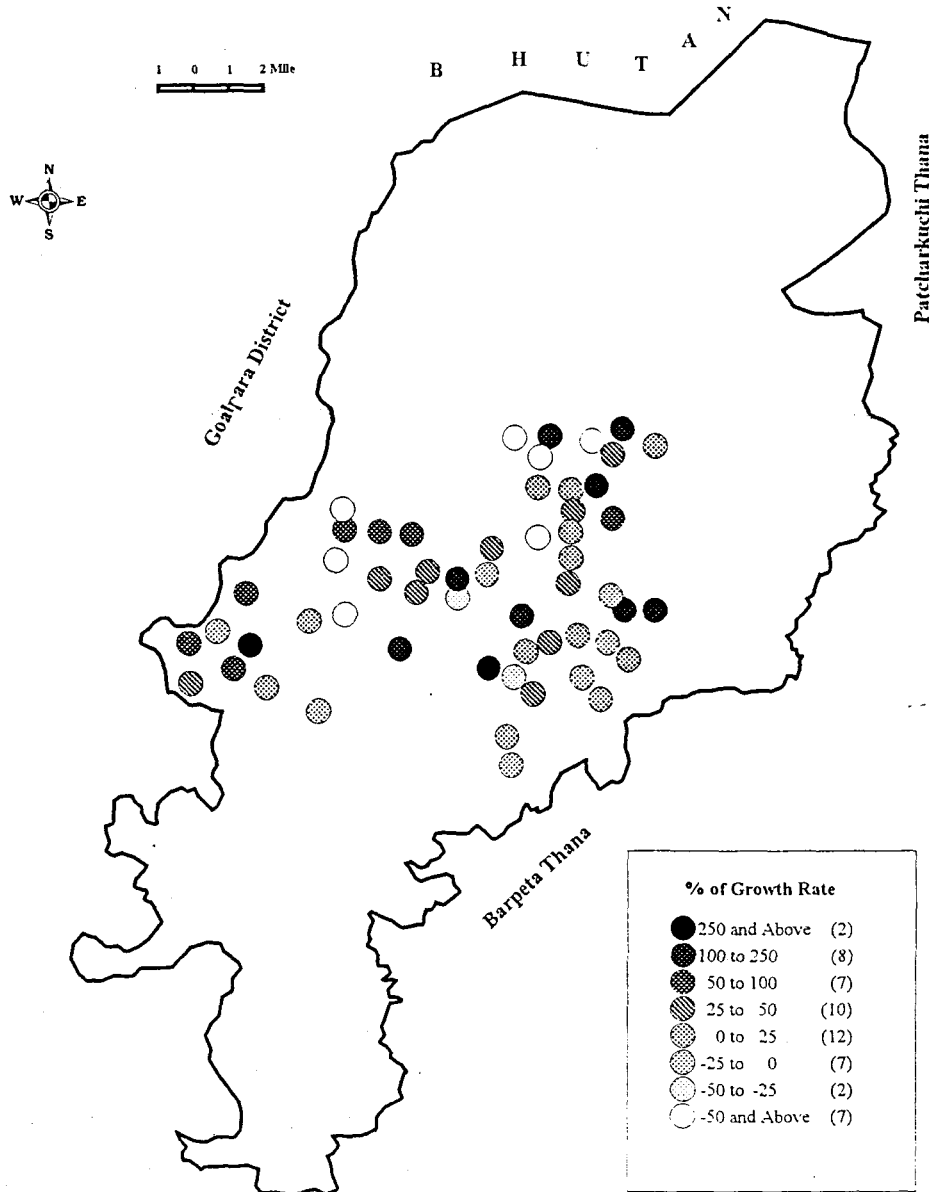


Fig. - 3. 14

very significant percentage of villages (about 67 per cent) have experienced normal increase up to 50 per cent in their scheduled tribe population over the 30 years period. Exceptionally high increase (above 100 per cent) in the population belonging to the scheduled tribe segment is confined only to a few villages accounting for only around 13 per cent of all the villages in the Thana. Like wise exceptionally large decrease (50 per cent or more) in the scheduled tribe population is also confined only to a handful of villages (around 3 per cent) in the Thana. Since there is hardly any change in the distribution of the tribal population at the village level during the 1971-91 periods, it was not considered necessary to attempt a village level mapping of the distribution of the scheduled tribe component.

The analysis of growth rate of the scheduled tribe population in this thana too supports the earlier conclusion that the district has experienced little instability as far as population growth is concerned (see fig.3.14). Much of the growth in scheduled tribe population can be ascribed to differential population growth over the three decades and not due to large-scale transfer of people along ethnic lines. Whatever little changes in the growth pattern or distribution are observed are taking place in the normal course, which only indicates stability in the pattern. The boundary of the tribes and the non-tribes under such circumstances remains that of a transition and overlap rather than dichotomous in nature unlike what was seen in the case of either Kokrajhar or Karbi Anglong.

3.6 Concluding Statement

The village level analysis in the changing proportion of the tribal population in three selected areas lead the following broad conclusions:

In an area (Kokrajhar district) characterized by an increasing proportion of scheduled tribes over the years, it is seen that there has been a significant rise during 1971-91 period, in the proportion of such villages which are exclusively or dominantly tribal in their ethnic composition. Conversely, the proportion of exclusively non-tribal villages has decreased significantly. This is a sufficient proof of redistribution of population along ethnic lines, whereby ethnically mixed villages are becoming fewer over the period. The ethnic divide between the tribes and the non-tribes, which was not so clear before 1971, is becoming more sharply defined by the year 1991. This fact of ethnic divide is clearly reflected on space when the village level data is shown on the map. The map clearly reflects a more sharply defined boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes as ethnically homogenous areas are in the process of forming. A dichotomous distribution of the tribes and the non-tribes is slowly replacing an earlier pattern of a tribal-non-tribal boundary, which was more of an overlap. The region to the north is getting more homogenous in terms of tribal concentration while the south is becoming more homogenous in terms of non-tribal concentration. An analysis of the population growth pattern reveals unprecedented growth of population in fewer villages, mostly located in the areas of tribal concentration and very high negative growth in a large number of villages. This is a sufficient proof of large-scale inter village transfer of people along ethnic lines, a process not very different from what is known as "*ethnic cleansing*".

In an area (Karbi_Anglong) that has experienced substantial fall in the proportion of scheduled tribes over the years, is an area characterized by hilly environment, and is a traditional habitat of the tribes too shows a pattern identical to what was observed in Kokrajhar though with some modification. In fact, the pattern of ethnic divide is even

more sharpened in this area when compared with Kokrajhar. The area has experienced penetration of a substantial number of people of non-tribal origin thereby changing the ethnic composition of the area in favour of the non-tribal segment. This kind of a change seems to have had its effects in creating ethnically homogenous areas as far as the tribes are concerned as a defense against non-tribal infiltration. The tribal non-tribal boundary within this area thus is being sharply defined than ever before. However, there is a difference in this ethnic divide when viewed over space in terms of a boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes. In spite of tremendous inter village transfer of people along ethnic lines; no separate or exclusive tribal and non-tribal territories have been formed. This is perhaps due to the nature of hill topography, which has not permitted exclusive ethnic territories to emerge though such clusters are not few. The tribal non-tribal boundaries in this area does not therefore present itself in the form of a sharply defined line but as small clusters defining territories of the tribes and the non-tribes dispersed all over the block.

In sharp contrast to these two areas of high tribal concentration and experiencing either a rise or fall in the proportion of the scheduled tribes, the pattern in the distribution and growth of tribal population in an area (Barpeta) that has a relatively low share of scheduled tribe population that has undergone little change over the years provides a stability in the boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes. In this plain area there is hardly any evidence of redistribution population. It is mainly an area of ethnically mixed villages characterized by a boundary, which displays either overlap or transition.

A comparison of the three case studies reveal interesting patterns as far as redistribution of population along ethnic lines and the nature of boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes is concerned. In Kokrajhar district characterized by increasing conflict between the two ethnic groups and in an area that has forested tract to the north and plain areas in the south, the redistribution of population has taken place in a manner to create ethnically homogenous areas in these two physical regions separating the tribal areas of the north from the non-tribal areas in the south. The boundary line between the tribes and the non-tribes thus is acquiring the character of a dichotomous nature wherein the physical boundary is also the ethnic boundary. This kind of a boundary is not visible in the case of a hilly terrain represented by Karbi hills where the redistribution along ethnic line is far too evident. Here the boundary line between the two groups is getting sharply defined but in terms of clusters of exclusive tribal territories followed by clusters of non-tribal territories. This however depends on the ecology of the area and the internal variation in the nature of topography. In the plain areas however, none of these processes are operative and the boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes remain an elusive one.

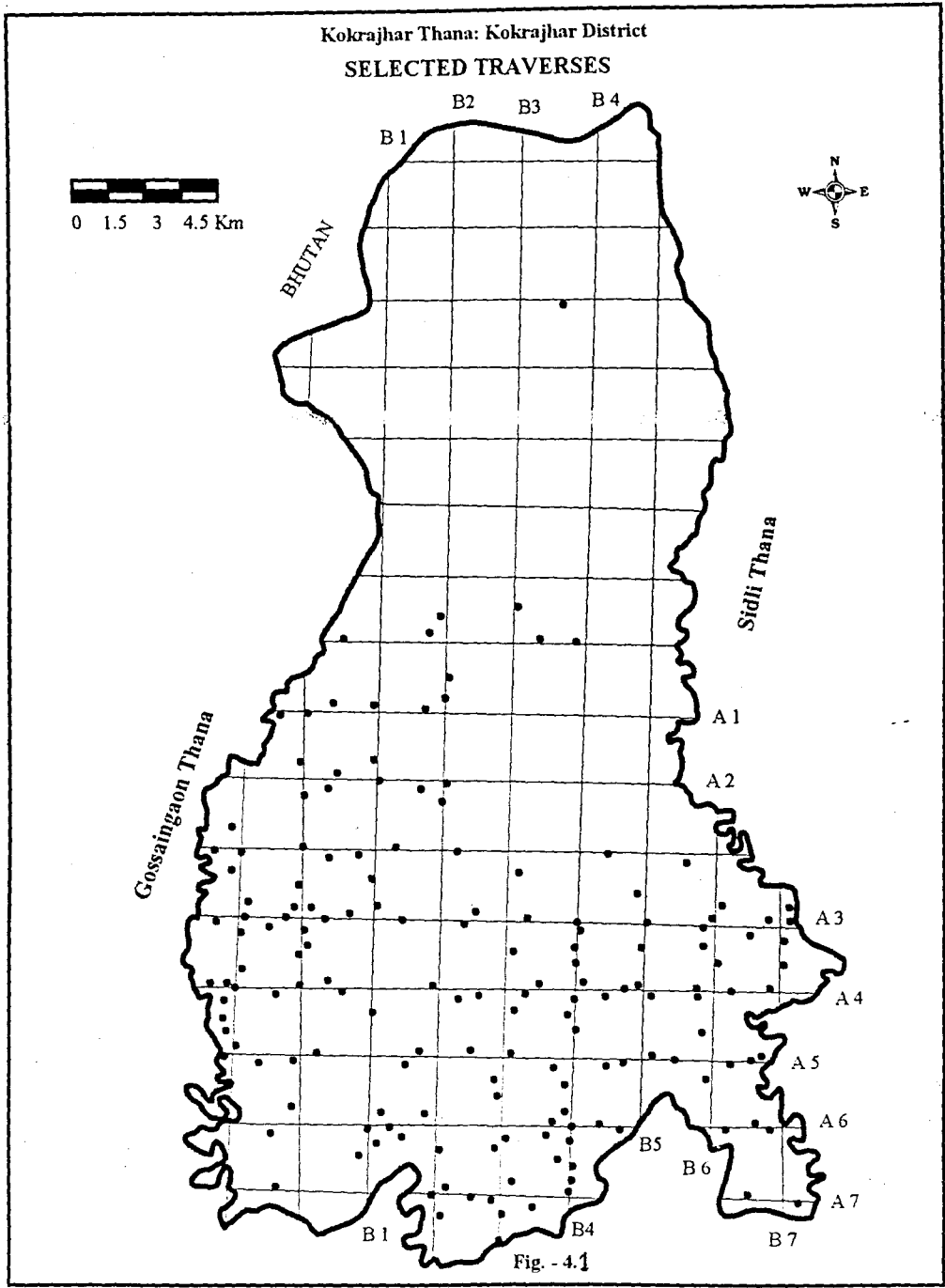
While the former two areas represent a model of increasing conflict between the two ethnic groups in entirely different contexts, the latter is a case of stability, cooperation and assimilation between the two groups. It is clear from the analysis that the spatial patterning in the distribution of the two groups and the resultant (and changes in) boundaries seem to be a function of the social processes.

Chapter -4

Morphology of Tribal Non-Tribal Boundary: A Study of Village Traverses

4.1 Introductory Statement

So far, the question of tribal non-tribal boundary in Assam has been understood at a very broad level using district level data available in the census or by a reference to the changing pattern of the distribution of the scheduled tribe component at the village level. The analysis undertaken so far provide valuable clues as to the changing nature of tribal non-tribal boundary in the context of physiographic differences and ethnic divide or absence of it. However, these analysis have been undertaken at a broad level, which while providing valuable insights regarding the changes in distribution of the scheduled tribes do not however indicate the specific changes in the morphology of the boundary between the two important ethnic groups. In this chapter, an attempt has been made to understand the morphology of the boundary of the tribal non-tribal population with the help of a series of village traverses. This is also an attempt to see the substantive changes at selected traverses, which have occurred during the past two decades. The traverses are analysed for the three Thanas in the three selected districts chosen earlier for the purpose of village level pattern, namely the districts of Kokrajhar, Karbi Anglong and Barpeta (see location of the selected blocks in Fig. 3.1, 3.6, & 3.11). Each selected Thana (refer to chapter 3) have been chosen and lines are drawn both longitudinally as well as latitudinally. Selection of these traverses depended on the distribution of the villages in the thana to include more villages in each of the traverses. This is why the traverses are



not always equidistant. The traverses have been identified as A1, A2 (Latitudinal) B1 and B2 (Longitudinal) and so on. From these maps, traverses are drawn for both 1971 and 1991 in order to examine the changes in the distribution and morphology of the boundary over these two decades as indicated by the profiles drawn. The comparison between 1971 and 1991 of the traverses is done for the same villages. The proportion of the tribal population for each of the villages falling on the traverse is plotted to obtain a profile of the distribution on these traverses.

4.2 Traverses of Kokrajhar District

Fig 4.2a and Fig 4.2b reveal the latitudinal traverses that have been selected from northwards (see fig.4.1 for the location of selected traverses). The first traverse (A1) represents the northernmost area and it clearly shows that both the villages of Bhadrampur and Bashbari located on this line were exclusively tribal villages in the year 1971 and continued to be so in the year 1991. A little south of the A1 traverse represented by A2 however shows a completely different picture. The profile for the year 1971 shows that the entire traverse had little or no tribal population, but by the year 1991, both the villages had transformed into dominantly tribal villages displacing the entire non-tribal population from this zone. The A3 traverses located a little further south indicates a rise in the existing very high concentration of the tribal population over the two decades. Interestingly, the traverse shows that the tribal population has displaced the existing non-tribal population on the eastern sector of the traverse and has established its supremacy in this sector. The A4 profile reveals a similar picture of consolidation of the tribal population on the traverse on the western but slowly concedes to the presence of non-tribal segment on the eastern sector in a transitional manner.

Kokrajhar Thana: Kokrajhar District
LATITUDINAL TRAVERSES

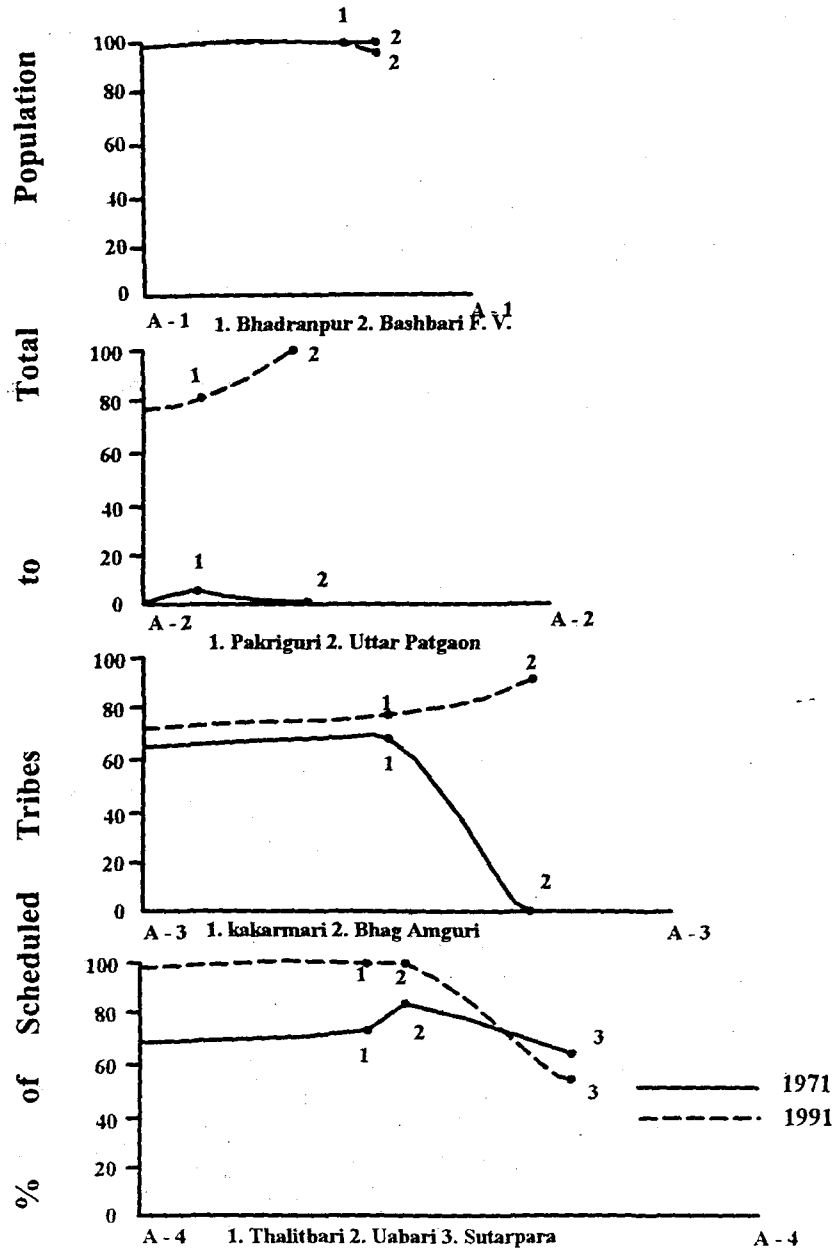


Fig 4.2a

Kokrajbar Thana: Kokrajbar District
LATITUDINAL TRAVERSES

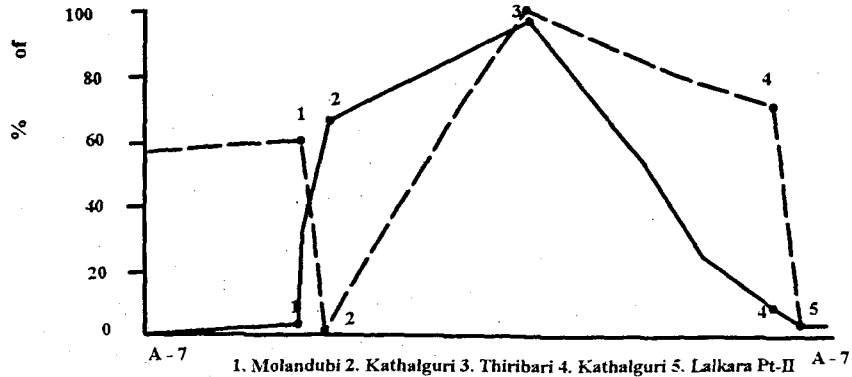
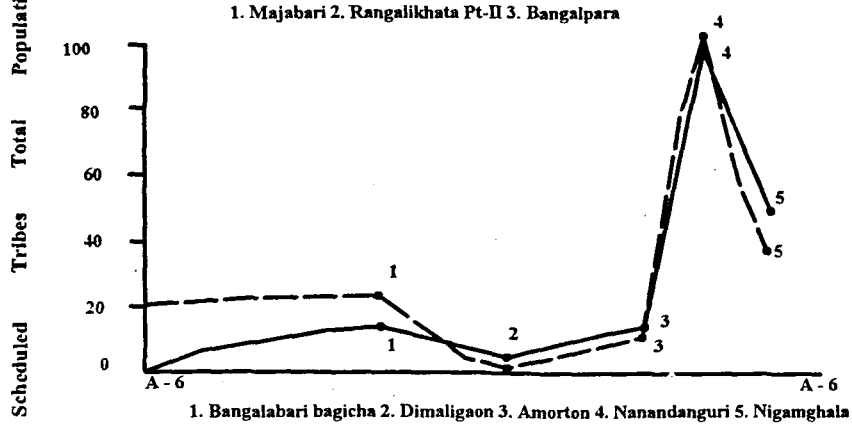
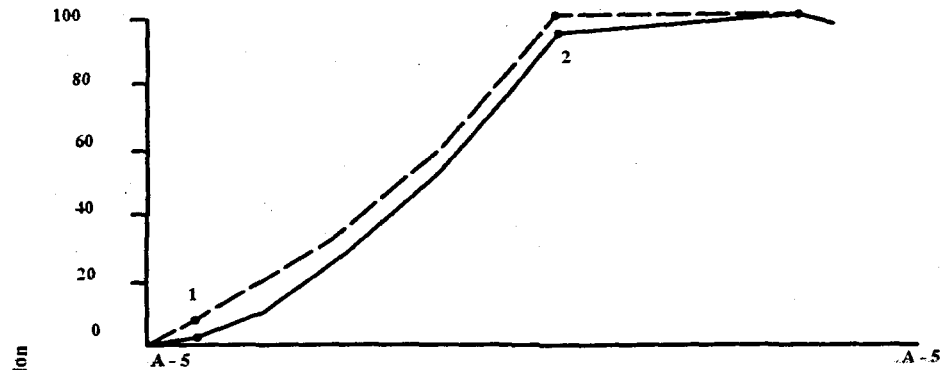


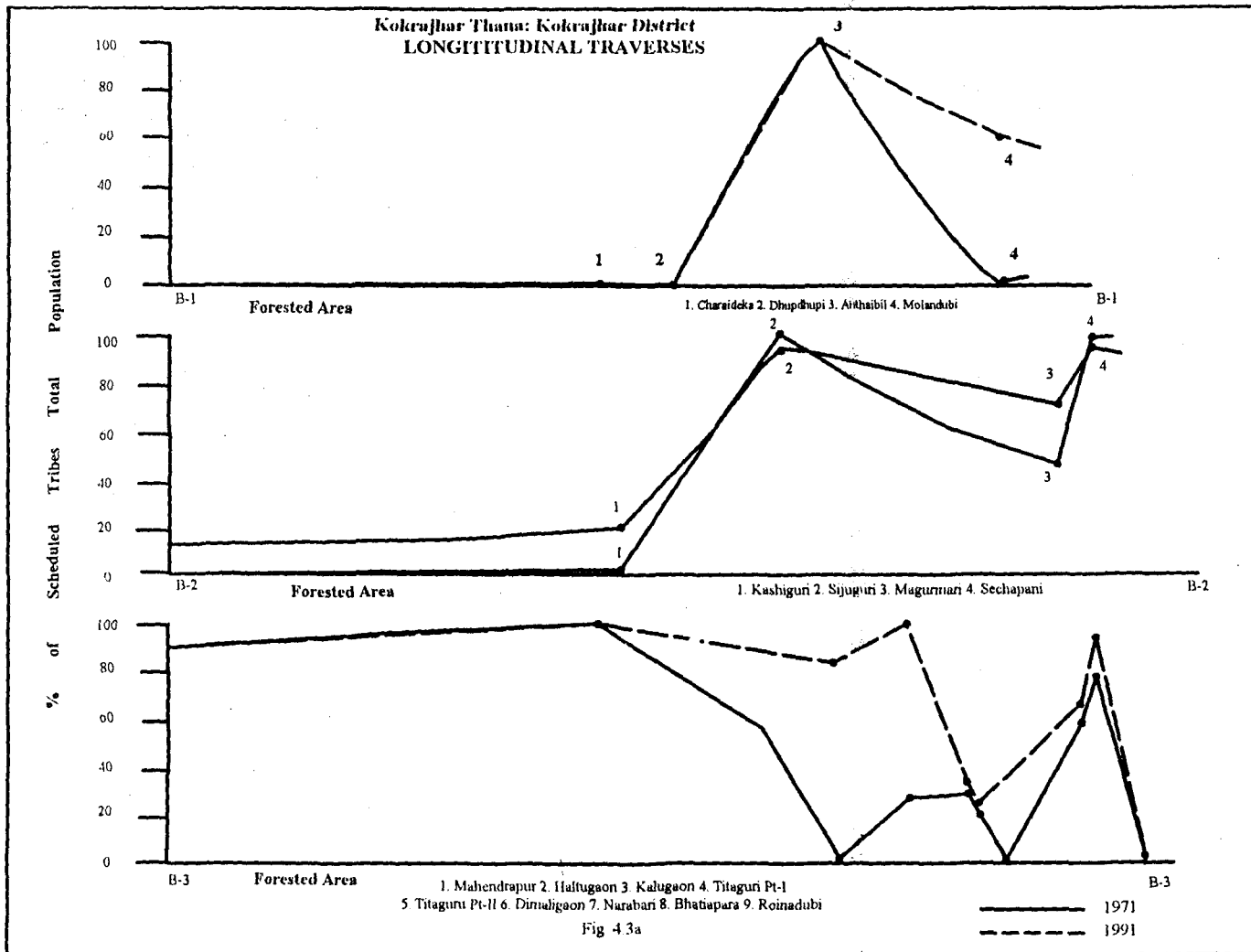
Fig 4.2b

————— 1971
- - - - - 1991

The traverse of A5 (Fig.4.2b) shows a picture of dynamic changes in the morphology of the tribal non-tribal boundary. In the year 1971, the entire traverse is characterized by an exclusive presence of the tribal population. However by the year 1991, the tribes seem to have moved away from the western sector and the non-tribal segment has filled the vacuum thereby creating a sharply defined boundary between the two. The next traverse (A6) shows an unchanging morphology of the profile over the years. A tribal village remains as an island in the midst of non-tribal village. The southernmost traverse (A7) depicts a transitional boundary as the proportion of the tribal population falls gradually in both directions up to a certain distance. However, the tribal block is in the midst of non-tribal dominated villages surrounding it. This clearly indicates a sharp boundary between the tribal and the non-tribal villages.

A north-south comparison of the profiles reveals a broad pattern of consolidation of the tribes in the northern sectors while the southern sector retains a conglomerate picture of transition. It appears that the tribes from the south have selectively moved to the north to make it more ethnically homogenous. The non-tribal population has relocated itself from the north on pressures from the ethnic divide. The profiles clearly reveal the process of ethnic redistribution in a north-south divide in the Thana.

The longitudinal traverses reveal a different picture altogether, where cross sections are drawn from north south. The first traverse (B1) in figure 4.3a in the westernmost sector shows a dichotomous boundary towards the south in the year 1971 which transforms itself to a transitional one in the year 1991 with a larger presence of the non-tribal population in the south. The traverse B2 a little towards the east shows an unchanging morphology of a sharply defined boundary over the two years. However this



Korajhar Thana: Kokrajhar District
LONGITUDINAL TRAVERSES

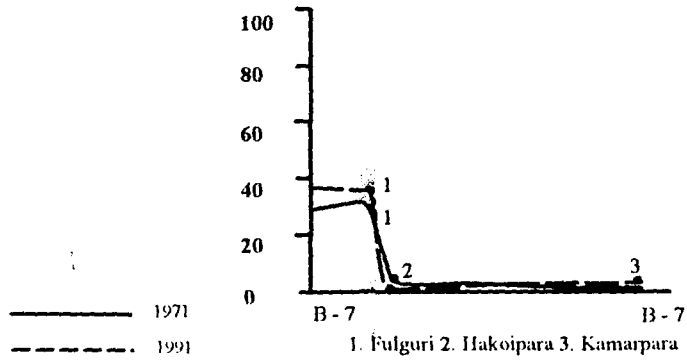
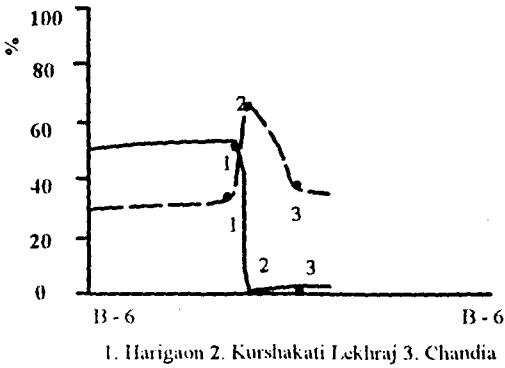
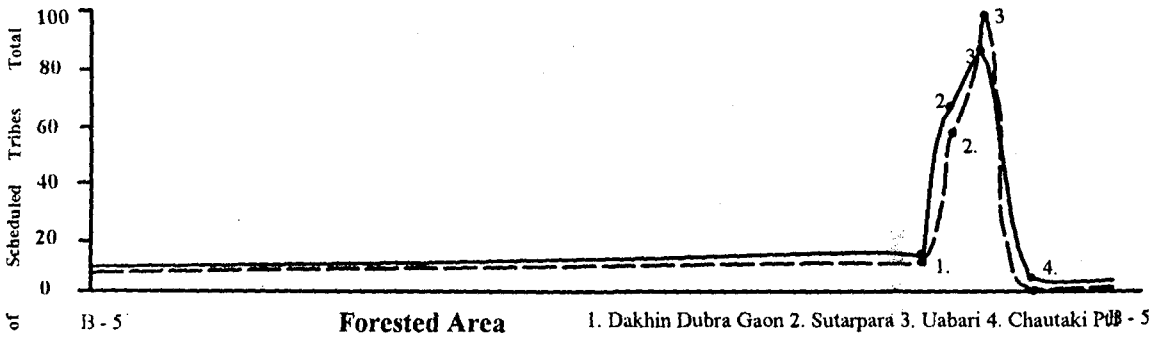
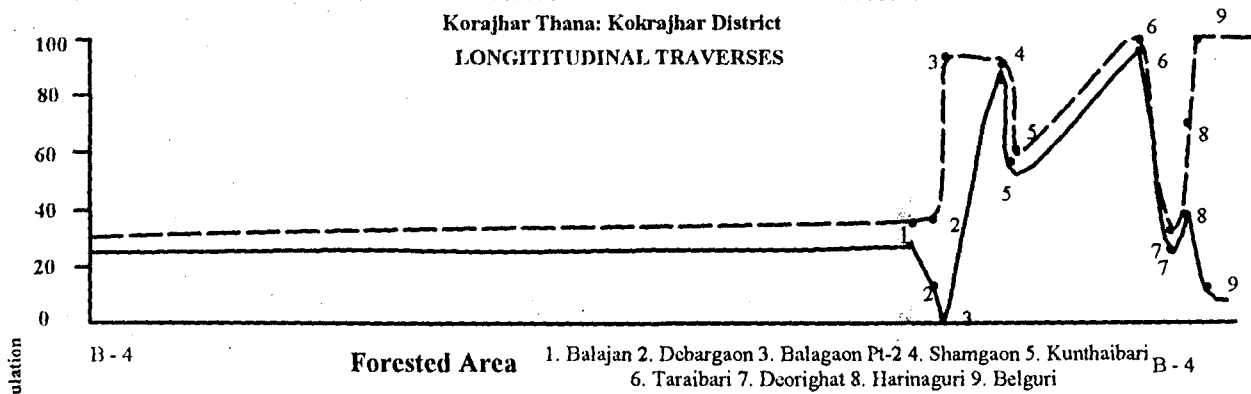


Fig. - 4.3b

is one profile that shows little tribal population in the north but sudden increase in their population towards the south. The traverse B3 further eastwards show dominance of the tribes in the northern sector but a significant change in the morphology as one moves to the south. There is a substantive increase in the tribal population towards the south forcing the non-tribal population to move out. The morphology of the boundary, which in 1971 reveals dichotomous nature, is slowly transforming into a transitional one by the year 1991. The traverses B4 and B5 (Fig. 4.3b) further east show a static pattern but more complex morphology in the southern sector. The traverse of B5 shows a picture of a dichotomous boundary once again with the traverses moving northwards very sharply in most of the villages except for the last village where it recorded a negligible share of tribal population in 1971 but became a total non-tribal village in 1991. The traverse of B6 shows a north-south dichotomy in the distribution of tribal and non-tribal population. It is clear from the figure that the villages on this line did not support a high share of scheduled tribe population. Whereas the next figure of B7 further depicted a picture of very low tribal population as much of the traverse is located in the southern part of the Thana.

The longitudinal traverses show much more confused picture as far as the boundary is concerned. However, the north-south divide is somewhat clear in most cases.

4.3 Traverses of Karbi Anglong

The village traverses have been drawn for Karbi Anglong (Fig.4.4) district too, selecting a Thana with common villages of both 1971 and 1991 (refer to chapter 3).

In Fig. 4.5a, the first traverse of A1 reveals two villages in the northernmost sector where both the village were exclusively tribal dominated villages indicating an

Howraghat Thana: Karbi Anglong District

SELECTED TRAVERSES

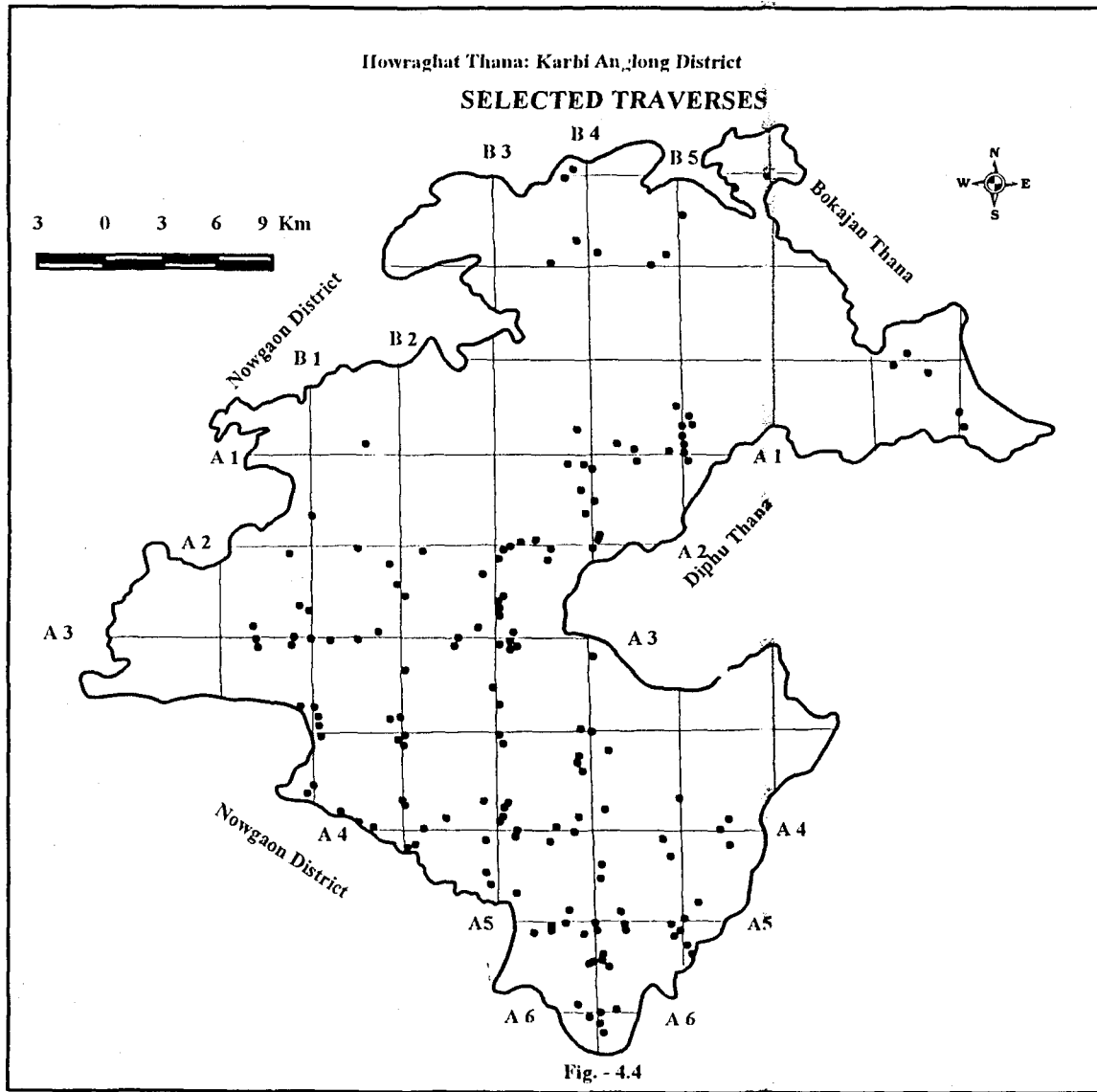
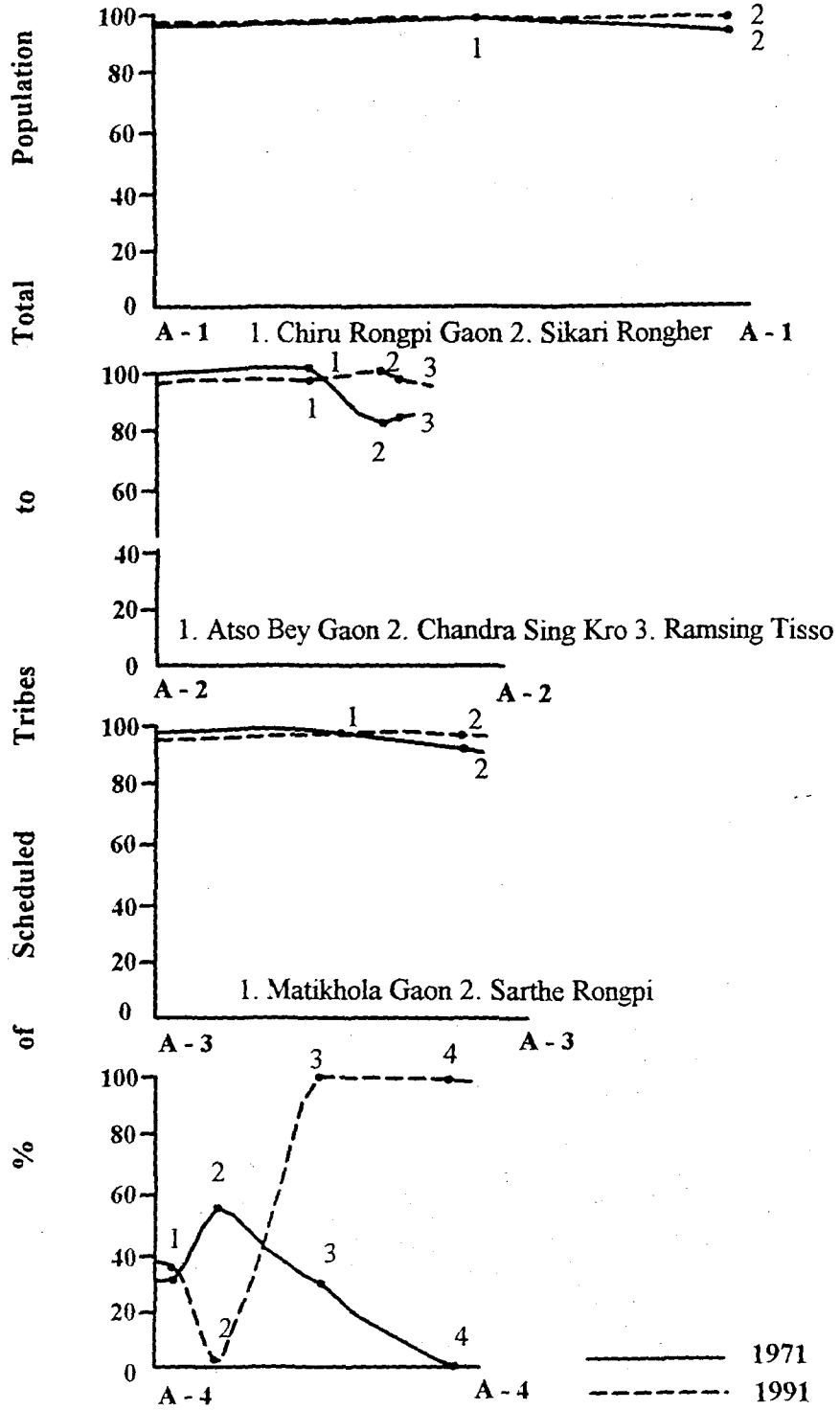


Fig. - 4.4

sections of A2 also reveals villages having constantly high tribal population except for one village, where it recorded 80 per cent in the year 1971 and a little less than 85 per cent in Ramsing Tisso Gaon village. This area indicates a dominantly tribal populated area. The change is only marginal in the year 1991. Similar is the picture with the traverses of A3 where it is seen that both the profiles of 1971 and 1991 are almost the same having almost the same share of tribal people. All the three traverses clearly depict a picture of ethnically homogenous villages with high tribal concentration. The cross-section A4 however reveals a substantive changes in the morphology that changed from a transition to dichotomy. The first village of Jamuna Pagla Than recorded almost the same proportion of the tribal population, but the next village on the traverse experienced a complete depletion of the tribal population. Interestingly the next village on the traverse (Monsing Tokbi) experience a reverse situation where the non-tribal population was completely missing by the year 1991. There appears to have been drastic redistribution in the population on this traverse leading to a dichotomous distribution.. The traverse A5 in fig. 4.5b shows a complete homogenization of the profile as the tribal dominance increased phenomenally on this traverse accompanied by a complete withdrawal of the non-tribal segment. The cross-section of A5 shows three villages falling in this latitudinal line. The next traverse of A6 too reveals a similar picture with the traverse of 1991 indicating absolute tribal dominated area then what it was in the earlier years of 1971. Such cross-sections all over the Howraghat Thana clearly indicate that the area had become a homogenous tribal area on ethnic lines. It is also evident that the non-tribals have slowly moved out of this area as their share had dwindled in number.

Howraghat Thana: Karbi Anglong District

LATITUDINAL TRAVERSES



1. Jamuna Pagla Than 2. Pankumar 3. Monsing Tokbi 4. Rongbong Terong

Fig. - 4.5 a

Howraghat Thana: Karbi Anglong District
LATITUDINAL TRAVERSES

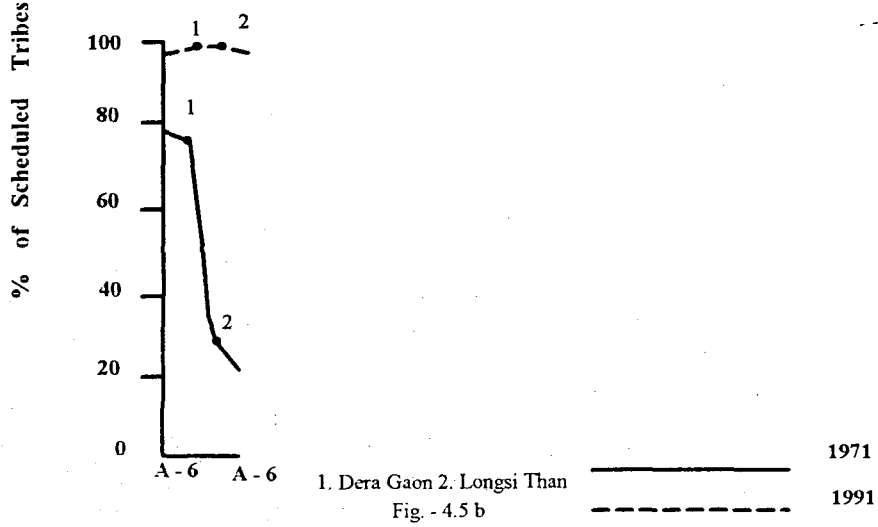
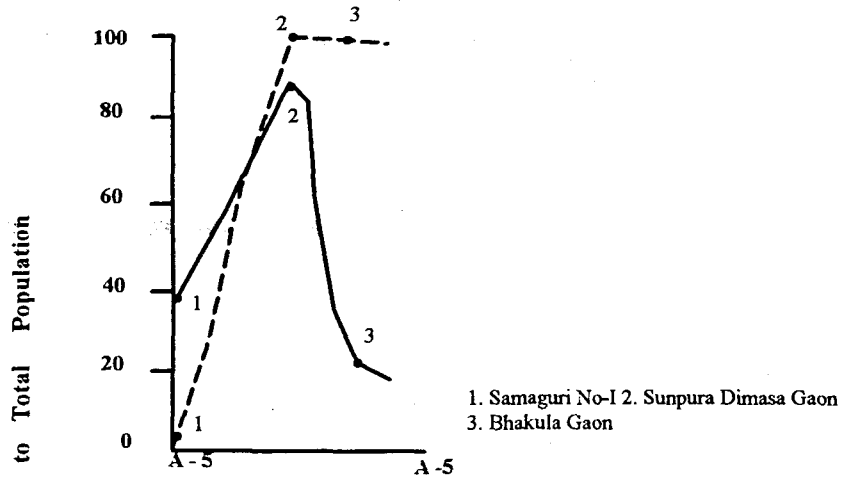


Fig. - 4.5 b

It is evident from the latitudinal cross sections that the southern sector has seen a much more vigorous redistribution of population along ethnic lines than in the north. The morphology of tribal non-tribal boundary across the northern traverses remains more stable. The tribal population in the south has established its supremacy in the south by displacing the non-tribal population living in this area.

Longitudinal traverses have been drawn too. Figure 4.6a and 4.6b depict as many as five selected longitudinal traverses. The first traverse of B1 in the westernmost sector in 1971 shows a moderate concentration tribal people in one village and falling very abruptly in a cliff-like fashion to the next village. However, the tribal population fell abruptly in these villages by the year 1991 and the western sector became a dominantly non-tribal area. As one moves eastwards, the traverse of B2 is visible and the cross-section clearly indicate the rising share of tribal population not only among the villages but also in the different census years. In the year 1971, the village of Men Teron witnessed more than 50 per cent share of tribal population to the total population and saw a transition to the next village of Hongbong Gaon. However, by the year 1991 both these villages had become total tribal villages indicating moving away of the small non-tribal people. The next cross-section of B3 further eastwards shows a dichotomous pattern towards the southern sector. The boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes is very sharp and a dichotomous division is clearly visible. As one moves from north to south the first village of Sarthe Engti was mainly a village inhabited by the tribal people. The next village witnessed a high share of tribal people though not completely, then the cross-section of 1991 fell drastically with the village of Karkok Bilashpuri and immediately increased to 100 per cent in the village of Kania Tisso. It is the traverse of 1971 that

Howraghat Thana: Karbi Anglong District
LONGITUDINAL TRAVERSES

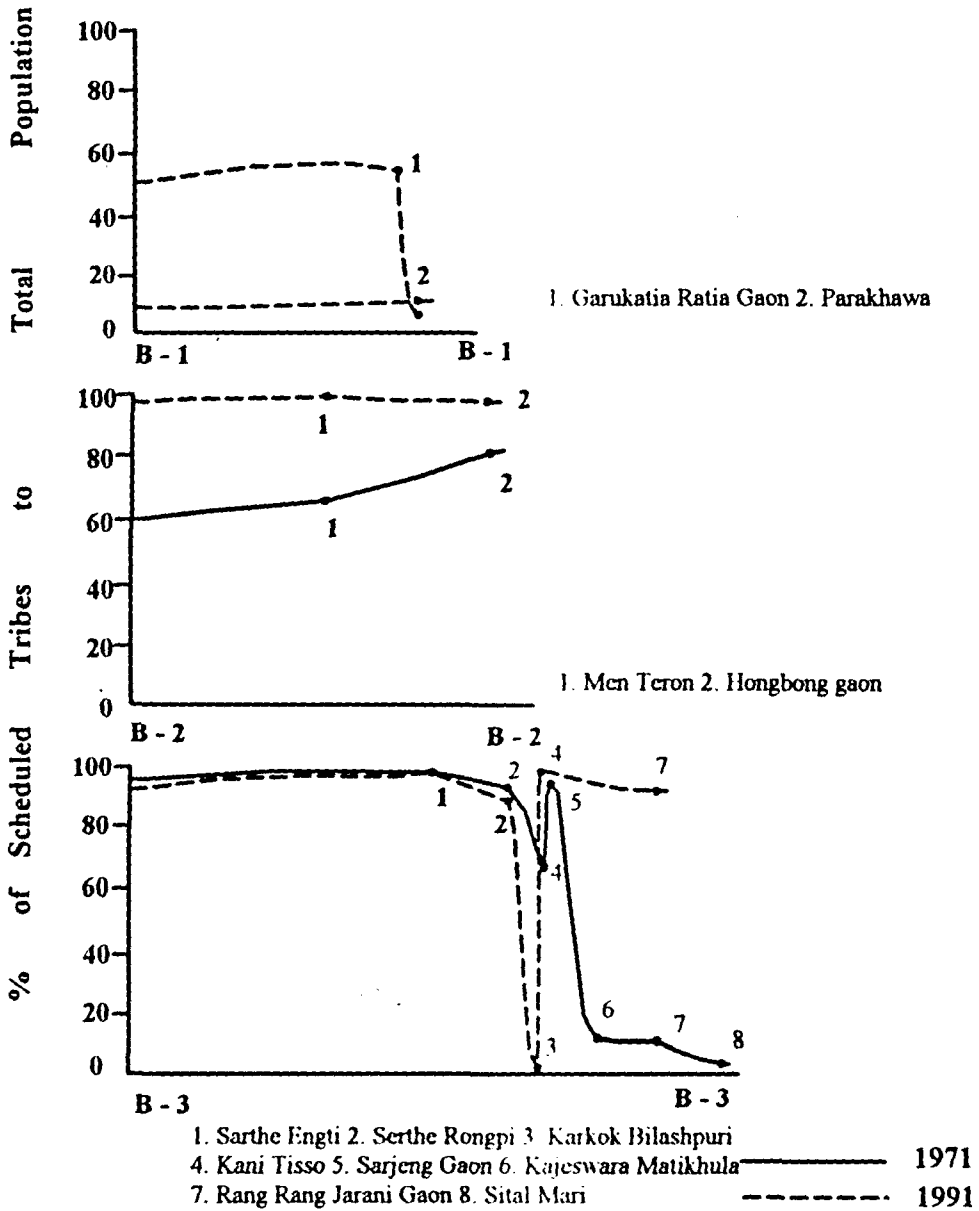


Fig. - 4.6 a

Howraghat Thana: Karbi Anglong District
LONGITUDINAL TRAVERSES

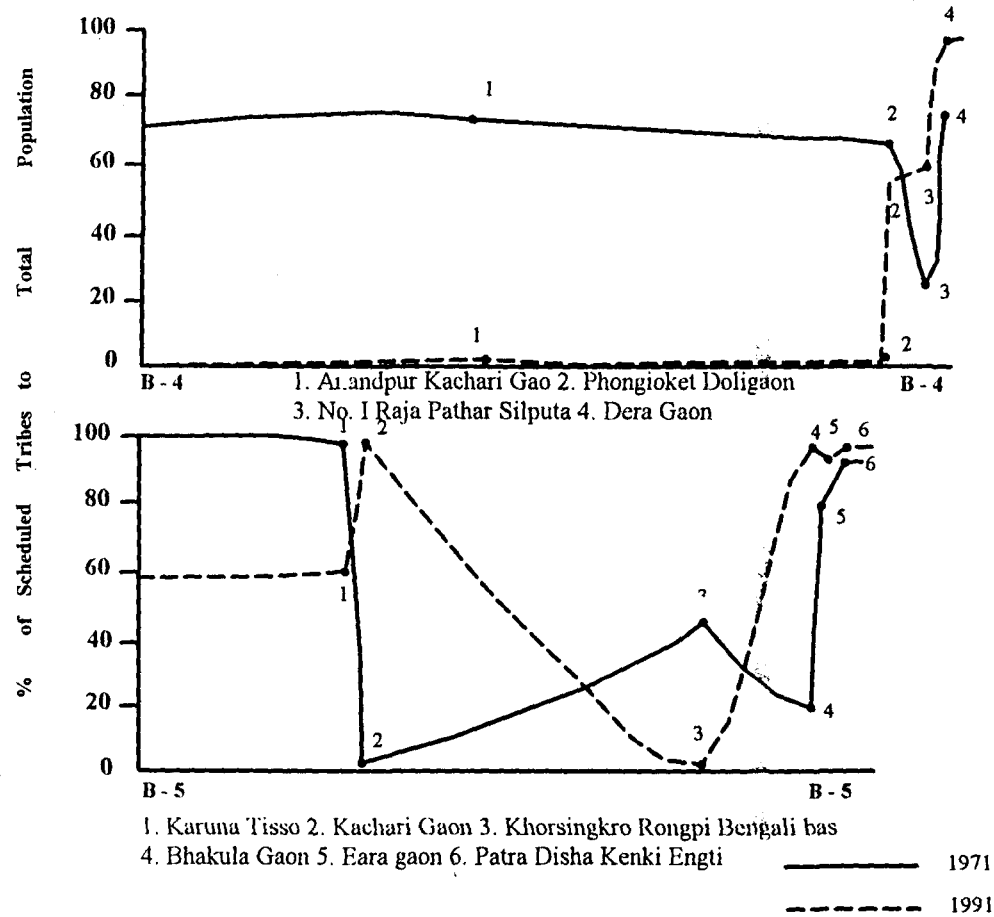


Fig. - 4.6 b

again witnessed a fall to as low as 20 per cent and this trend of low share of tribal population continued with the other neighboring villages too. Fig. 4.6b included two traverses and the traverse of B4 shows a transitional pattern that remained unchanged over the years. The mixed ethnic character of the villages remained in force in spite of changes that were seen in other traverses. The easternmost traverse (B5) shows drastic changes in the morphology of the boundary particularly in the northern sector where the tribal proportion decreased precipitously fell rapidly as one moves further south and experienced sharp rise in the extreme south. This confused morphology is indicative of the dynamic nature of the tribal non tribal boundary as revealed by this traverse.

Unlike the case in Kokrajhar, the Karbi Anglong case seems more confused as far as the morphology of tribal non-tribal boundary is concerned. This is however is not surprising considering the conclusion arrived at the earlier chapter. While it was pointed out that the ethnic divide is more sharply defined in the case of Karbi Anglong district, it was also found that this ethnic divide was not fully translated on space. In fact the extreme ethnic divide took place in making more ethnically homogenous villages in the district, but they were found in small clusters within the district. No broad zones of tribal territory or for those matter non-tribal territories were formed. This is why the morphology of the tribal non-tribal boundaries on the traverses analysed do not show any clear cut north-south or east west ethnic divide.

4.4 Traverses of Barpeta District

Other than the districts of Kokrajhar and Karbi Anglong, the district of Barpeta with a case study of Sorbhog Thana has been chosen to find out the share of

Sorbhog Thana: Barpeta District
SELECTED TRAVERSES

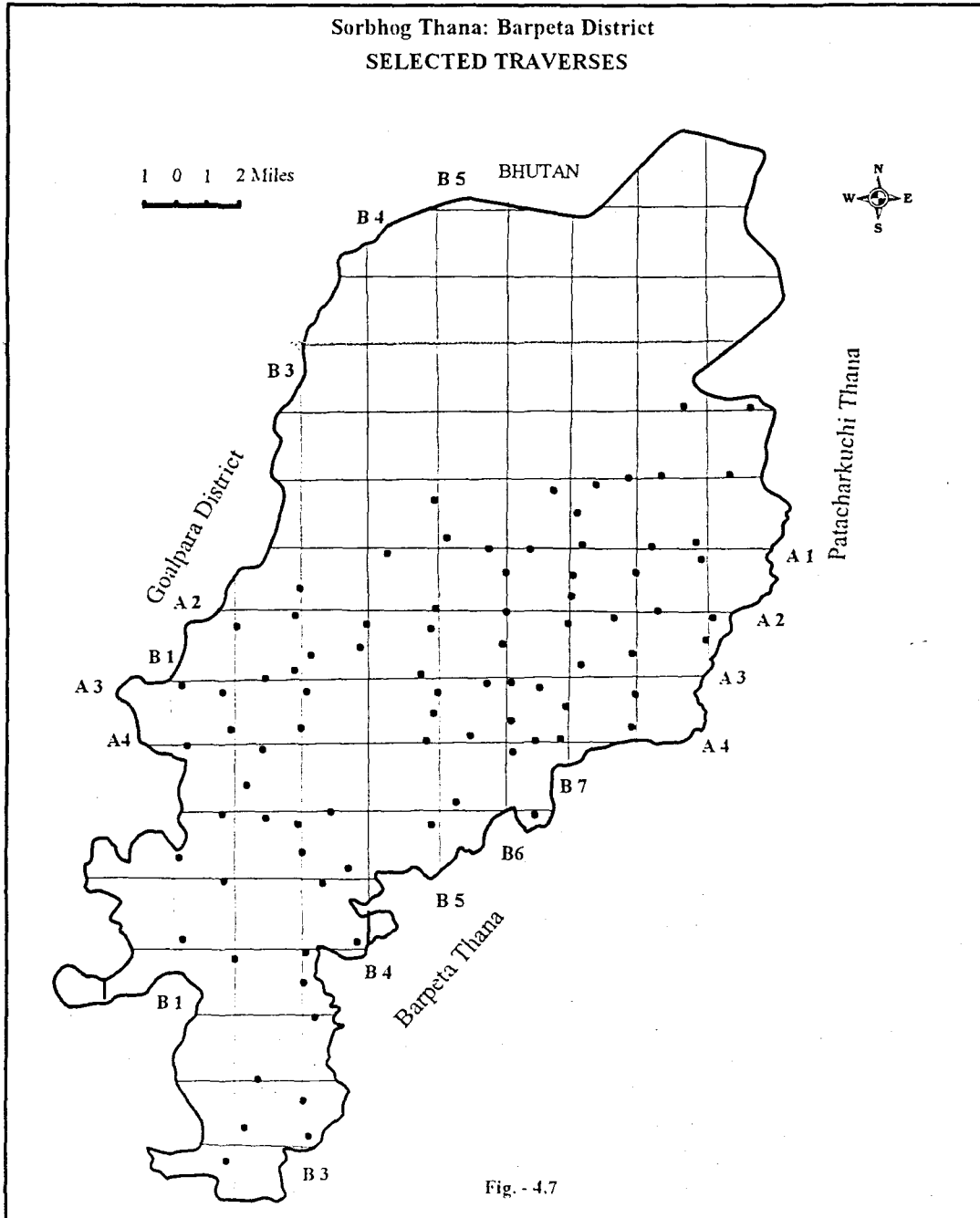


Fig. - 4.7

tribal population along the village traverses (Fig. 4.7). A very significant characteristic of this district is that the tribal population for both the years has remained almost constant.

In the latitudinal line the traverse of A1, (fig. 4.8) it is clearly seen that the morphology of the boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes remain more or less constant in spite of the fact that in the western sector, the tribal proportion fell abruptly. All the villages on the traverse show mixed ethnic groups but the tribal proportion rises gradually towards the east. The cross-section of 1971 saw a higher concentration of tribals than 1991 though the pattern remains almost the same. The traverse of A2 reveals again a similar picture of transitional boundary with some changes in the proportion of the tribes in the eastern sector that witnessed an increase in the proportion of the non-tribal segment. A reverse situation prevails in the traverse A3 where the proportion of the tribal population has marginally increased. But the transitional nature of the morphology is evident here too. The villages which fall in A4 reveal a dichotomous distribution of the tribes and the non-tribes that remains unchanged over the years. The two villages had comparative low share of ethnic people but a sudden rise is visible in the next village of Nimua. This clearly indicates that the village of Nimua is mainly a tribal village among other non-tribal villages.

It is important to note that the morphology of the boundary that exists between the tribes and the non-tribes in this Thana reveals a transitional character where the villages are more ethnically mixed. Not much redistribution is visible as indicated by largely unchanging profiles of tribal proportion in the total.

The traverses, which have been taken on the longitudinal line, also reveal a similar picture with that of the latitudinal line. On the first longitudinal traverse of B1

Sorbhog Thana: Barpeta District
LATITUDINAL TRAVERSES

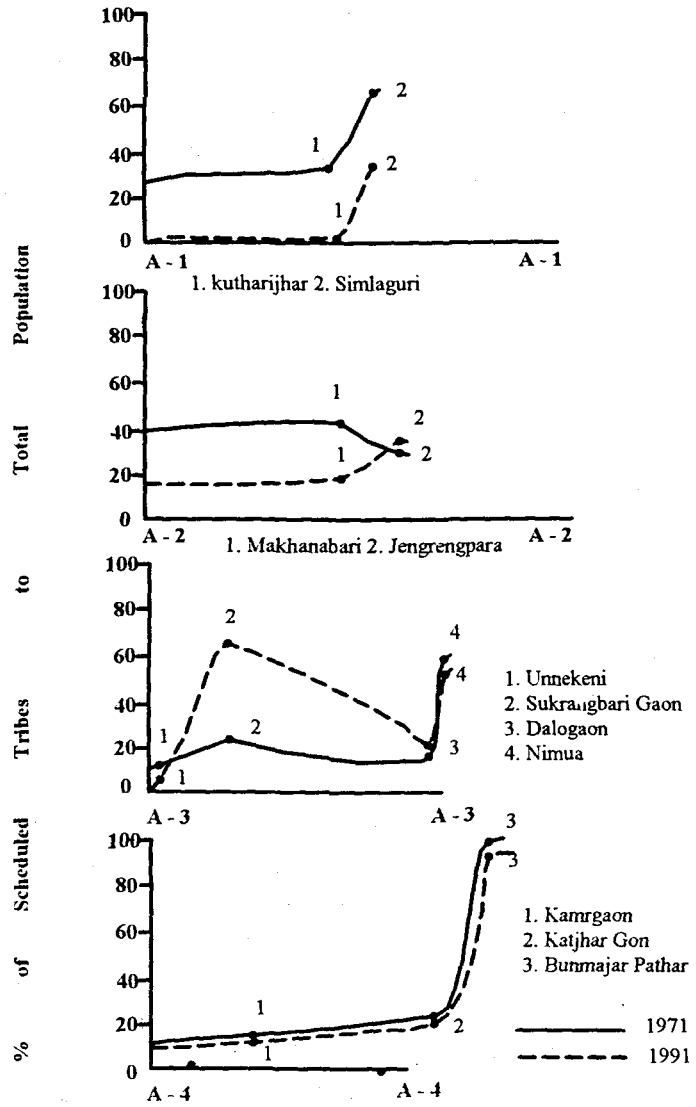


Fig - 4.8

(Fig.4.9a) only two villages fall on this line and both recorded very low share of tribal population and the village of Uttar Bheribheri did not witness any tribal population in the year 1991. Again, an abrupt fall is noticed in the next traverse of B2 where one village witnessed high tribal population and the other village, which did not record any tribal population at all. This dichotomous nature of the boundary remains in tact over the years. The traverse B3 too indicates a similar pattern. However, both these traverses lie very close to each other. The next traverse of B4 reveals a smooth transition in the proportion of the tribes and the non-tribes. However, there has been some decline in the proportion of the tribes in the northern sector. Barpeta district, which lies on the banks of the river Brahmaputra did not support high share of tribal people as, is evident in the next traverse of B5 (Fig. 4.9b). The first village of Narayanguri which had a moderate tribal population decreased to almost nil or negligible tribal population. The other villages did not see much difference between both the census years regarding the share. The cross-section of B6 shows a smooth transition containing almost equal share of tribal and non-tribal population in all the villages on the traverse. The traverse B7 shows a complex morphology with tribal dominated villages in close spatial proximity to dominantly non-tribal villages. There have been some significant changes in the proportion of tribal population on the northern as well as southern section of the traverse.

It may be noted here that the Barpeta district does show a pattern of stability as far as the morphology of tribal non-tribal boundary is concerned. None of the villages on the traverse show complete domination of tribal population. In fact most of the villages are ethnically mixed. The profiles also reveal very little changes over the years. The north-south or east west profiles are not too different in their morphology.

**Sorbhog Thana: Barpeta District
LONGITUDINAL TRAVERSES**

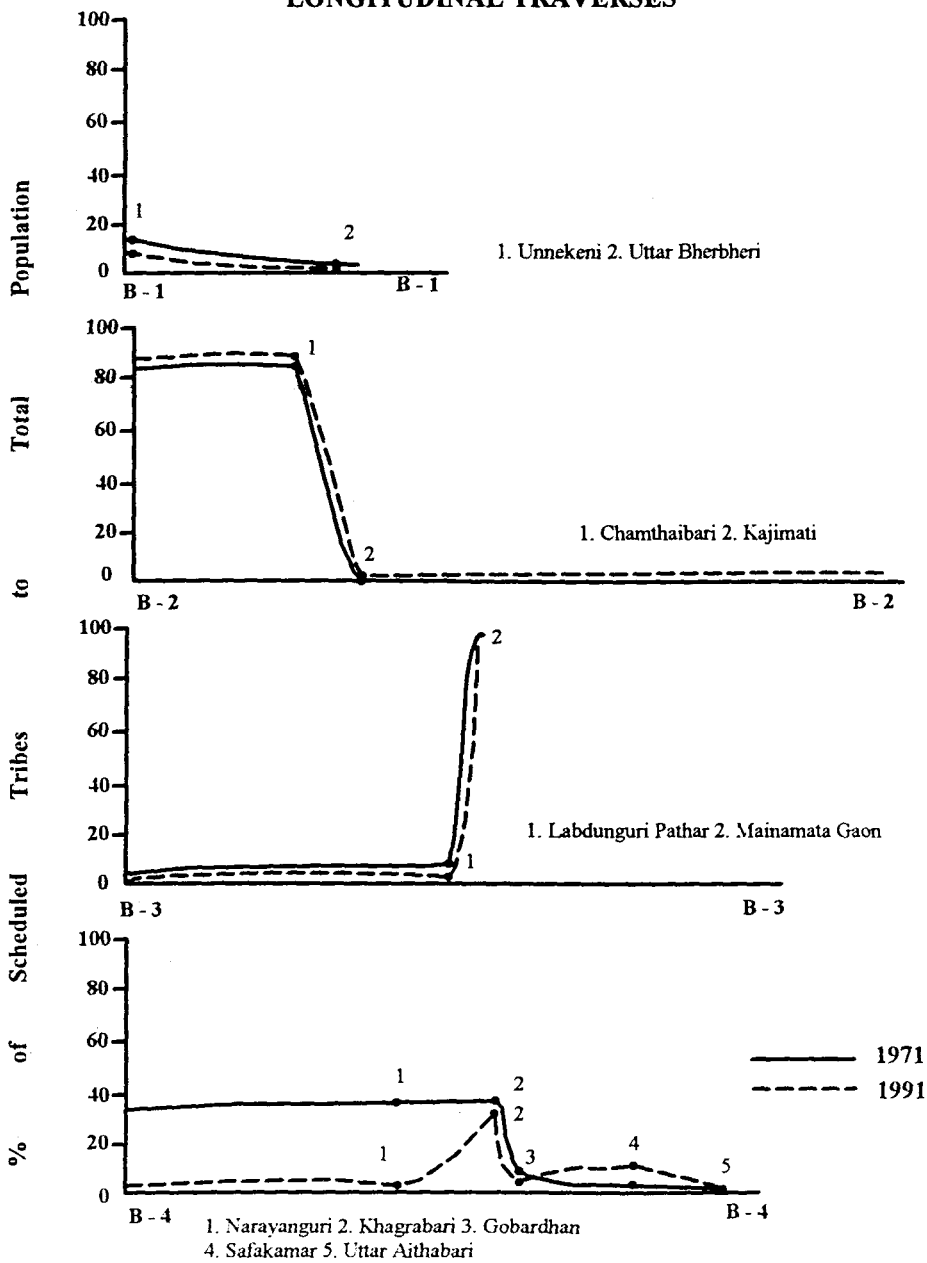


Fig. - 4.9 a

Sorbhog Thana: Barpeta District
LONGITUDINAL TRAVERSES

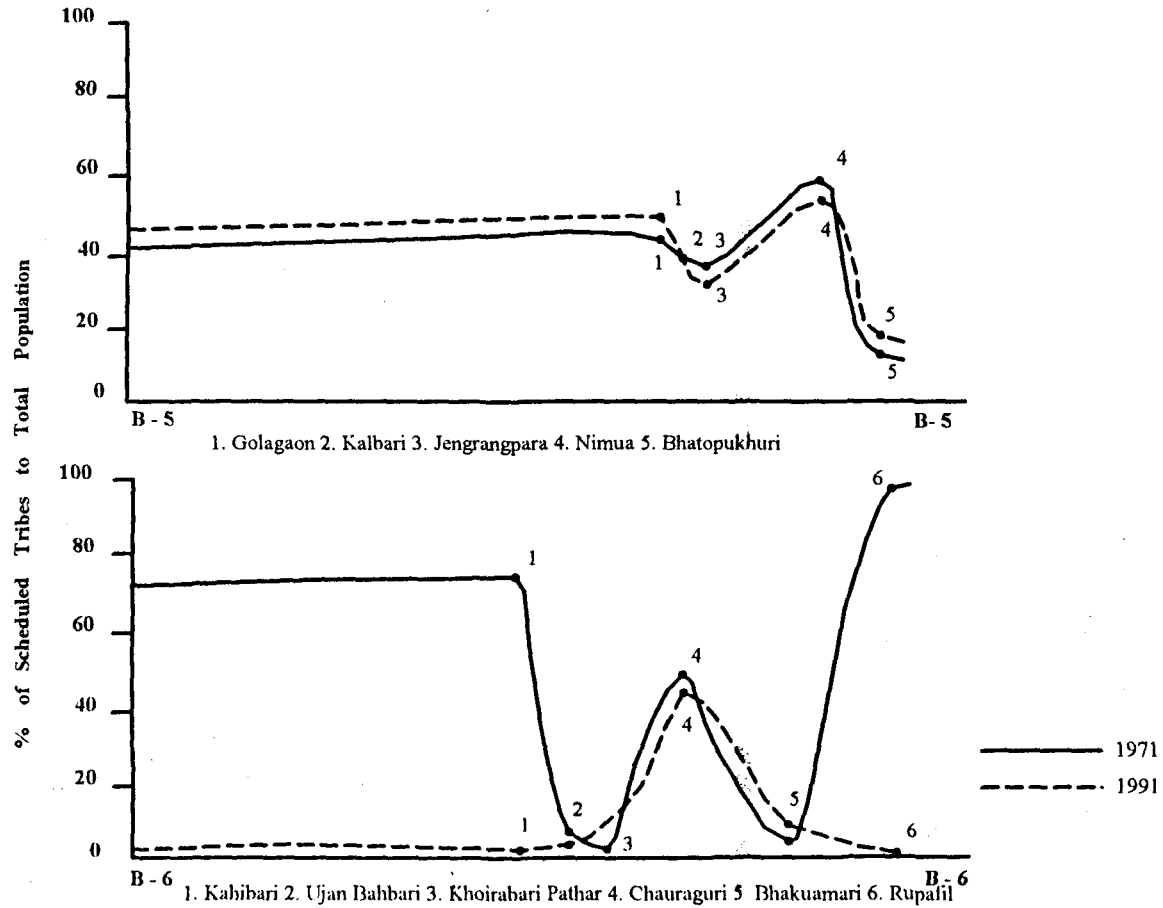


Fig. - 4.9b

4.5 Concluding Statement

The following broad conclusions may be made from the analysis of morphology of tribal non-tribal boundaries based on village traverses drawn latitudinally as well as longitudinally:

Majority of the traverses in the Kokrajhar Thana of Kokrajhar district reveal that large number of villages not only recorded high share of tribal population in 1971 but also in 1991. The traverses resemble plateaus like form with a slope that falls abruptly on either one or both sides. In some traverses the slope is more like cliffs. These indicate that the morphology of the boundary in these traverses assume dichotomous distribution at the village level. The sharp fall in the share of tribal population from one village to another village bears testimony to this conclusion. Villages which have low concentration of tribal population are generally located in the non-tribal dominated areas. Only a few villages in this Thana recorded a low concentration of tribal population.

A north-south comparison of the profiles reveals a broad pattern of consolidation of the tribes in the northern sectors while the southern sector retains a conglomerate picture of transition. It appears that the tribes from the south have selectively moved to the north to make it more ethnically homogenous. The non-tribal population has relocated itself from the north on pressures from the ethnic divide. The profiles clearly reveal the process of ethnic redistribution in a north-south divide in the Thana. The longitudinal traverses show much more confused picture as far as the boundary is concerned. However, the north-south divide is somewhat clear in most cases.

The traverses of Howraghat Thana of Karbi Anglong district portray a similar picture with that of the Kokrajhar Thana. The traverses show a high share of tribal

concentration in some villages in 1971 but after two decades there was a steep fall. The morphology of boundary between the tribes and the non tribes show substantial changes due largely to the effects of non-tribal infiltration into the area and a subsequent withdrawal of these people from some areas. Sudden rise and sudden fall in the share of tribal population indicate growing tendency of a dichotomous nature of tribal and non-tribal boundary.

It is evident from the latitudinal cross sections that the southern sector has seen a much more vigorous redistribution of population along ethnic lines than in the north. The morphology of tribal non-tribal boundary across the northern traverses remains more stable. The tribal population in the south has established its supremacy in the south by displacing the non-tribal population living in this area.

Unlike the case in Kokrajhar, the Karbi Anglong case seems more confused as far as the morphology of tribal non-tribal boundary is concerned. This is however is not surprising considering the conclusion arrived at the earlier chapter. While it was pointed out that the ethnic divide is more sharply defined in the case of Karbi Anglong district, it was also found that this ethnic divide was not fully translated on space. In fact the extreme ethnic divide took place in making more ethnically homogenous villages in the district, but they were found in small clusters within the district. No broad zones of tribal territory or for those matter non-tribal territories were formed. This is why the morphology of the tribal non-tribal boundaries on the traverses analysed do not show any clear cut north-south or east west ethnic divide.

It is evident from the traverses in Sorbhog Thana of Barpeta district that the villages recorded almost the same share of tribal population for both the census years.

The share has remained static for the past three decades and so the boundary between the tribal and the non-tribal segment is characterized by overlap and smooth transition. The traverses usually show a picture of a very gradual slope. This area being a plain area did not support large concentration of tribal population and is mostly inhabited by peasant communities. No such drastic changes have been observed in this place for the past few years. The morphology of the boundary that exists between the tribes and the non-tribes in this Thana reveals a transitional character where the villages are more ethnically mixed. Not much redistribution is visible as indicated by largely unchanging profiles of tribal proportion in the total.

It may be noted here that the Barpeta district does show a pattern of stability as far as the morphology of tribal non-tribal boundary is concerned. None of the villages on the traverse show complete domination of tribal population. In fact most of the villages are ethnically mixed. The profiles also reveal very little changes over the years. The north-south or east west profiles are not too different in their morphology.

Redistribution of Tribal Population in Bodo Areas: A Case Study of Kokrajhar District

5.1 Generalities

Needless to say that it is in the tribal areas of the country that the process of redistribution of population seems to be taking place at an alarming rate. The process perhaps began during the colonial period itself when the resource-rich tribal areas, particularly in mid-India were exposed to colonial exploitation. This resulted in organized movement of the non-tribal elements deep into the monolithic tribal areas changing not only the ethnic composition but also bringing about far reaching changes in their socio-economic order. The land-hungry peasants too made deep inroads into the fertile tracts in the tribal habitats, resulting in an unprecedented redistribution of tribal population. Evidences of redistribution of tribal population are spatially contained in the fragmented cores and peripheries of many tribal groups living in central India. The tribal groups who were distributed in 'geographically negative areas' were further squeezed into more inhospitable tracts or had to move out to newly emerging towns to work there in the unorganized tertiary sector of the economy.

Such a process of redistribution was experienced in the North-Eastern region of India- a region supporting large concentration of scheduled tribes and a legion of ethnically differentiated tribes-though on a much smaller scale and much different in quality. The most significant aspect of spatial distribution of tribal population in this region is an almost exclusive concentration of the tribes in the hilly region and in some areas of Brahmaputra Valley. It is the latter, which has been subjected to redistribution of

population more than the former. The Bodo community, which is widely distributed as a one of the very few 'plains tribe', has been experiencing a great redistribution of its population both in the past as well as in the present, if the data available in censuses is of any indication.

An attempt is made in this chapter to understand the process of redistribution of population along ethnic lines in the Bodo dominated area of Assam on the wake of the ongoing demand for a separate state for the Bodo people of this state. The Bodo people, a dominant tribe mostly concentrated in the plains of Assam are waging a relentless battle for separate state on the ground that they are being continuously marginalized at the hands of the dominant Assamese people and the immigrants from outside the state. The demand for a separate state has not remained peaceful and has taken a violent turn resulting in bloody clashes with the immigrant Bengali community as well as the Santhali community. This ethnic clash has affected the traditional distribution pattern of these communities in the region as a whole and a process of redistribution of people along ethnic lines has been unleashed on a scale unprecedented in history.

The main objective of the research is to assess the extent of spatial distribution of population and its consequences following the demand for *Bodoland* during the last couple of decades. Given this scope of the present research, the period of investigation is confined to three decades starting with 1970. The 1970s are chosen as the starting point as the decade is not much known for inter-ethnic strife resulting in forced ethnic redistribution. The decades of 1980s and 1990s have witnessed ethnic violence in many parts of the *Bodo* Areas and the redistribution tendencies characterize this period. Thus data pertaining to the period in 1970s have been profitably used to describe the pattern of

population distribution while the data pertaining to the later years indicate the pattern of redistribution.

The distribution of population in areas of *Bodo* concentration has been understood by dis-aggregating the data into four sets: total population, total non-tribal population, total non-*Bodo* population, and total Scheduled Tribe population. Distribution of these categories of population has been examined at district and subdivision level as well as between the rural and urban areas.

A village level analysis has been done by identifying villages, which are dominantly inhabited by (a), the *Bodos*⁴ (b) non-*Bodo* tribe⁵ and (c) non-tribal segment. The redistribution tendencies have been examined for all the three categories of population; at village level.

The three ethnic dominated areas and clusters of villages (i.e. the *Bodos*, non-*Bodo* tribes and non-tribal) have been compared to examine if a greater homogenization in ethnic composition is taking place in spatial terms.

5.2 The Problem:

The ethnic situation in India's North-East has been and continues to cause concern. The situation is particularly difficult in Assam where the *Bodos* are demanding a separate state carved out of Assam where they have 'majority'. It is true that some of the major tribes living in the North-East have been granted statehood based on exclusive areas of their concentration and have been enjoying a degree of autonomy. However, the geographical distribution of the *Bodos* is such that they do not claim numerical majority at the district level in not more than they do not claim one. Initially the *Bodos* were

⁴ The *Bodos* by and large are enumerated as scheduled tribe population in Kokrajhar district

⁵ The Santhals, though an ethnic tribe, are enumerated as scheduled castes in Kokrajhar district

content with the demand for an autonomous council for greater financial autonomy. However, subsequently, due to inept handling of this sensitive issue and political expediency on the part of both state as well as Central Government, a much simpler issue turned out to be an extremely complicated one. The Bodos no more wanted financial autonomy, but a full-fledged state within the Indian Union and took recourse to violent path creating a situation of gross violation of human rights. Geographical distribution of the tribe became an important issue over claims to statehood and the tribe set before itself a task of evicting non-Bodo groups in the areas of their proposed state. Faced with this, the non-Bodo groups too consolidated themselves resulting in the worst ever-human tragedy that forced many to find themselves as refugees in their own land. In the present analysis a modest attempt is made to have a close look at the changing spatial pattern in ethnic distribution in the Bodo areas of Assam by taking village level data for analysis. Though the data for 2001 Census could have thrown a better light on the massive change in the geographical distribution of different ethnic groups in the study area, it has not been possible as village level information is not yet available until the completion of this report. Hence, the study confines itself to the period between 1971-1991.

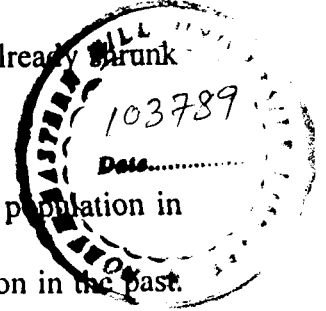
Available records show that the Bodos before Independence were extensively distributed on both sides of the Brahmaputra River as well as in the *char* areas (river islands). After the partition of India, influx of refugees from the erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) created problems of shelter and settlement in large parts of the state. Gradually the immigrant groups captured the tribal lands. Internal migration too took place from various states and this had a debilitating effect on availability of land for the tribal people as a whole and particularly the Bodos who were squeezed rapidly towards

the north. The process continued much after the partition and it 'threatened' the Bodo identity owing to continued influx of people of non-Bodo origin into the already drunk areas of their habitat.

It is thus clear that as in some other parts in mid-India, the tribal population in Brahmaputra valley has witnessed substantial redistribution of its population in the past.

Of particular importance that invites research efforts is the Bodo population, which is now largely confined to a few districts on the northern bank of the mighty Brahmaputra. Because of their redistribution, the Bodo people have been demanding a separate statehood in the same line as many other tribal groups in the North-East have been given separate states. The demand ostensibly flows from their real or perceived fear of loss of their land, culture and identity. The demand for statehood has transformed into a political movement culminating not too infrequently into violence in many areas. The formation of Bodo Autonomous Council in the year 1993 has not much helped improve the situation

It is in this context that the present problem assumes significance. It is clear that the redistribution of the tribal population has been an ongoing process for quite sometime. It is not the purpose here to examine this long drawn process of redistribution of the tribal population, but to confine the study only to the recent period of political and ethnic unrest when the process of redistribution of population has acquired a qualitatively new dimension. It is no more confined to the *Bodo* segment only. The violent nature of the demand for a separate *Bodoland* state has unleashed a process of redistribution, which encompasses in its fold not only the *Bodos*, but also the non-*Bodo* tribes as well as the other non-tribal groups. It is this process of redistribution and its spatial manifestation as



well as its consequences, which form the core of the proposed research. The all-pervasive nature of the redistribution of population cutting across ethnic boundaries, makes the process of redistribution not only quantitatively different from the earlier trend, but also makes it unprecedented both in quality and quantity.

This chapter aims at identifying the spatial patterns in this process of redistribution and proposes to examine if the patterns are becoming more ethnically homogeneous in certain areas of *Bodo* concentration. The research also makes a modest attempt at getting an insight into the consequences of such a possibility in the context of human rights.

5.3 Displacement in North-East India

Throughout the Northeast violence and displacement, continue in many areas. The level of violence, number of displaced, and the conditions for the displaced vary from state to state in the Northeast. A conservative estimate of the displaced in the Northeast at the end of the year 1998 puts the figure between 170,000 and 230,000. That figure included 80,000 ethnic Santhals (and a small number of ethnic Nepalese) in Assam; from 3,500 to 60,000 Bengalis in Assam; more than 20,000 ethnic *Paite*, *Kuki*, and *Naga* in Manipur; 39,000 ethnic *Reangs* displaced from Mizoram into Tripura; 25,000 Bengalis in Tripura; and 3,000 ethnic *Chakmas* in Arunachal Pradesh.

In Assam, the displaced Santhals, Bengalis, and ethnic *Nepalis* were largely displaced by *Bodo* (or *Boro*) insurgents seeking greater autonomy or independence. In the mid-1990s, Bodo attacks on Bengalis and ethnic *Nepalis* aimed at increasing the proportion of Bodos in the area displaced more than 60,000 people, mostly Bengalis. It is difficult to know how many of the *Bengalis* who became displaced remained displaced in

1998. Some or many of the *Bengalis* displaced during that time have settled elsewhere, but thousands remain in camps. In May 1996, *Bodos* mounted large-scale attacks on ethnic *Santhals* that displaced more than 250,000 persons, mostly *Santhals*. *Santhals* too organized themselves, got armed and fought back, causing the displacement of several thousand *Bodos*. During 1997, most of the displaced *Santhals* and all of the displaced *Bodos* returned to their homes. However, the Assam state government prevented some 40,000 *Santhals* from doing so, saying that the land they had lived on was "forest land" protected by law (*Bodos* living in the same forest areas were, however, able to return home). In May 1998, further *Bodo* attacks displaced another 25,000 *Santhals*, many for the second time. The displaced population again grew to between 65,000 to 80,000, living in 33 camps. *Bodo-Santhal* clashes in September left 30 dead and resulted in the displacement of another 2,000 people.

5.4 Bodo Problem: the Antecedents

Since the year 1966, the *Bodos* have struggled for a separate political identity for themselves. They are now demanding among other concessions from the Central Government, the creation of a separate State on the north bank of Brahmaputra as well autonomous districts for their *Rabha* and *Tiwa* tribal cousins on the south bank, so that these plains tribes are all able to achieve a measure of self-rule. They also demand restraints on unlawful habitation in "*Bodoland*"; the allocation of a bigger share of planned development expenditure (as has been enjoyed by other tribal states); the driving out of "undesirable human elements" either lawfully or by force; complete control over the economic, social and political life in their state; and effective measures to tackle unemployment.

As is the case with many other tribes in the North-East, in the post Independence era the *Bodos* too began their agitation in the late sixties, mainly to demand the inclusion of the *Bodo* language as the medium of instruction in their schools, and followed this up with a movement for their own script in 1972. The *Bodo Autonomous Council* (BAC) has only recently adopted the Roman script for the BAC areas, replacing the *Devnagari* script (used in Hindi) that was allowed to them earlier.

A movement for the recognition of the *Bodo* language as an official language of Assam followed the script movement. After four years of struggle, the Assam Government granted⁶ the *Bodo* language the status of an associate official language of Assam. Until 1987, the *Bodos* were content to demand an autonomous council along the lines of the other hill tribes of Assam⁷. A *Bodo* regional party, the Plains Tribal Council of Assam, originally put up this demand also. They were not successful in achieving even this limited degree of autonomy.

Insensitivity to the problems of the *Bodos* coupled with the "chauvinism" of successive state governments in Assam was responsible for escalating a manageable problem into a major one. The Central Government's intelligence agencies are also believed to have played a part in promoting the militancy of the *Bodos*⁸. After several years of violent agitations, the Indian Central Government and the State Government of

⁶ It is significant that the Assam State Government had some years earlier allowed the use of the Roman script for the Mishing language, which caused much resentment among the *Bodos*, who saw the rejection of their own demand for the Roman script as discriminatory.

⁷ Both the Karbi Anglong and North Cachar hills people have autonomous councils in which they enjoy a modicum of self-rule.

⁸ In an interview with *The Statesman*, (Nov. 8, 1997), B. K. Rao, a key government negotiator in the talks leading up to the *Bodo* accord, notes that: In the mid' 80s, when the whole of Assam stood behind the All Assam Students' Union and the United Liberation Front of Assam, the Centre decided to directly foment an agitation to weaken this force. With the *Bodo* stir taking shape, the ULFA and the AASU lost half of their support since the new movement was fully backed by (the tribal people of) lower Assam, considerably sapping the strength of ULFA which would have otherwise influenced the tea gardens (and their tribal labour) in that area.

Assam negotiated an accord with some major *Bodo* groups. The *Bodoland Autonomous Territory Accord* was signed in February 1993. The accord has however not worked because some of its essential provisions have not been implemented and severe infighting among the *Bodo* factions and their competing populist leadership made it impossible to achieve stability within the *Bodo Autonomous Council* (BAC). In the five years since the accord was signed, no elections were held for the BAC. No proper boundary was drawn, marking the autonomous tribal region (comprising the contiguous geographical areas between the rivers *Sankosh* and *Mazbat*.) The Central and Assam Governments also deliberately complicated matters to avoid implementing the accord, particularly the financial provisions that had devolved powers to the Council to mobilize resources while fixing plan and budgetary accountabilities on the Assam Government exchequer.

It is widely believed that the situation in the area would not have deteriorated to the extent that it has if the BAC Accord had been handled more sympathetically. Consequently the *All Bodo Students Association* (ABSU), which had signed the agreement in 1993 accord, hardened⁹ its stand for a separate state by the year 1998. Political parties too further complicated the matter. In September 1997, as the tripartite talks were about to begin, the Congress party demanded that adequate safeguards for non-Bodos living in the *Bodo Autonomous Council* areas must be incorporated in any negotiated settlement of the *Bodo* issue. They felt that the *Bodo* leaders must remove the apprehensions among non-Bodos as their democratic rights may be curtailed under the

⁹ The ABSU president U. G. Brahma in 1998 said that, "my organisation had signed the agreement in 1993, keeping in view the ground conditions that time. Now, the accord, even if implemented in totality, cannot satisfy the Bodos. Last year (1997), even before participating in the tripartite talks in New Delhi, the ABSU president had said, "there can be no solution to the problem by discussing the Bodo Accord and its implementation. Rather the talks should now mainly focus on the modalities of granting a separate state to the Bodos."

BAC and that the *Bodos* and *Non-Bodos* will have equal status in all matters under the BAC set-up.

Therefore, five years after the *Bodoland* accord was signed, nearly all influential *Bodo* groups, including the ABSU, which were signatories to the agreement, resumed the movement for a separate state. The merciless killings of non-*Bodos*, particularly the *Santhals*, point to the intensity of feeling amongst the more extremist *Bodos* who are bent on ousting *Bengali* and other minority settlers from what they perceive is their homeland. Since the eastern and northern borders of *Bodoland* were not delineated to their satisfaction they felt that by undertaking such actions, they can drive out "outsiders" and claim an area from Kokrajhar in the west to Darrang in the east, on the north bank of the Brahmaputra river, for their new state of *Bodoland*.

The outbreak of this war between the *Bodos* and the *Santhals* has added another deadly dimension to the conflicts already raging in Assam that turned itself to a problem of human rights. The militant *Bodos*¹⁰ as recourse to convert the areas of their proposed *Bodoland* dominated started the process of "ethnic cleansing" by the *Bodos* through violent means. The two major non-*Bodo* land-owning segments are the *Santhals* and the immigrant Muslims from Bangladesh. The Muslims have settled only in the *char* or the riverine areas of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries, and there is no immediate conflict between the *Bodos* and the Muslims over land rights. Even so, scores of Muslims were killed in the 1993-94 riots. The *Santhals*, on the other hand, had encroached on prime reserve forestlands, had cleared them, and had set up permanent habitations.

¹⁰ Even as prominent a person, S. K. Bwismutiary, member of Parliament from Kokrajhar, noted in a newspaper interview that: the *Bodos* are now pretty sure that they are to get *Bodoland*. Maybe it will take another two or three years. However, in the proposed *Bodoland*, there may be many areas where *Bodos* constitute less than fifty per cent of the population. Naturally, they are keen on seeing that by the time *Bodoland* materializes, their numerical majority also becomes an accomplished fact, hence the urge to evict the non-*Bodos* and grab their land.

Severe tensions exist also between *Bengali*-speaking Muslim immigrant, *Koch-Rajbanshis* as well as *Nepali* settlers and the *Bodos* in the same disturbed region. While the violence between the Bangladeshi immigrants and the *Bodos* has been of relatively long standing, the recent violent clashes between the *Bodos* and the *Santhals* demonstrate the heavy price that failed political arrangements exact from the most vulnerable and poorest households who are usually defenseless.

The failure to resettle the *Santhal* refugees from earlier riots is one of the main causes of the renewed ethnic violence in Kokrajhar district, particularly the resettlement of refugees uprooted from the reserved forest areas. They have not been able to go back to these forests as in most cases; others now occupy their settlements, (despite court orders restraining people from settling in the reserve forests). Over 300 people had died in the May 1996 *Bodo-Santhal* clashes, which carried on for over two weeks and rendered 2,00,000 persons homeless. About 60,000 of these are still living in the refugee camps. The district authorities used to supply the refugees with rice, which has now been stopped. Some of the *Santhal* refugees were also given a 'rehabilitation grant' of Rs. 10,000 on the condition that they gave a written undertaking that they would not go back to the homesteads they had carved out of the forests. Unfortunately, however, some of them recently left the refugee camps out of desperation, and attempted to go back to their old homes where they confronted the same *Bodo* militants who had forcibly evicted them and who were now occupying these lands, and the killing began anew. Meanwhile, a tragedy of immense proportion is in the making in these refugee camps, where women and children live in unhygienic conditions. The number of deaths in these camps is now larger than the mortalities associated with the attacks by the *Bodos*.

The *Santhals* in Kokrajhar district, who had eked out a living from the forests before the violence began, are now believed to be getting help from their fellow tribesmen in West Bengal and Bihar. Santhals outfits, such as the *Birsa Commando Force* (BCF), *Adiulfa* and the *Cobra Force*, are trying to counter the *Bodo* onslaught by retaliating with acts of gruesome violence themselves. The Bodos say that these tribals (Santhals) are being increasingly better organised.

The *Bodo* groups feel that their bargaining power in demanding a separate state of Bodoland has been subverted by migration into this region, which has changed its demographic pattern decisively. While these areas were traditionally *Bodo*-majority regions, the influx of migrants over the past few decades has reduced them to barely a third of the total population of the area. A bitter internecine struggle for the leadership of the *Bodos* has further worsened matters. Fratricidal killings between the two main *Bodo* terrorist organizations, the NDFB and the BLTF, are in the nature of a power struggle for supremacy over the BAC.

5.5 Redistribution and Ethnic Cleansing in Bodo Areas

According to 1971 census, the proportion of the Bodo to the total population of Assam was only 4.23 per cent. It marginally increased to 5.48 per cent in 1991 (Table 5.1). The share of Scheduled Tribe population to the total on the other hand was 10.98 per cent in 1971 census and increased to 12.83 per cent by the year 1991. This means that the Bodo population increased at a much faster rate than the other scheduled tribe population. This is evident from the fact that while the share of Bodo population to the total Scheduled Tribe population of Assam was only 38.49 per cent in 1971, it increased to 42.71 per cent in the year 1991.

Table 5.1
Assam: Percentage Distribution of the Scheduled Tribes and the Bodos, 1971-91

Districts	Scheduled Tribes		Bodos				% to Total Bodo Population	
			% to total		% to ST			
	1971	1991	1971	1991	1971	1991	1971	1991
Goalpara	13.84	17.13	10.69	14.03	77.29	81.88	38.52	41.24
Kamrup	10.44	11.46	7.26	8.29	69.53	72.35	33.51	29.73
Darrang	10.69	13.86	7.64	10.60	71.5	76.49	21.46	23.51
Nowgaon	7.44	6.65	0.39	0.38	5.2	5.78	1.05	0.79
Sibsagar	6.82	8.62	0.29	0.39	4.23	4.58	0.86	0.84
Lakhimpur	13.49	16.14	1.33	1.47	9.86	9.11	4.57	3.87
K. Anglong	55.37	51.56	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
N.C. Hills	69.15	65.54	0	0.00	0	0.00	0.00	0.00
Cachar	0.89	0.75	0.01	0.01	0.93	1.17	0.02	0.02
Assam	10.98	12.83	4.23	5.48	38.49	42.71	100.00	100.00

However, this increase is not spatially uniform when the data is analyzed at the district level. At the district level, the Bodo population is highly concentrated only in three districts of Assam in both the census years of 1971 and 1991. The Bodo population accounted for 10.69 per cent of the total population of Goalpara district in 1971 and the proportion increased to 14.13 per cent in the year 1991. The share increased from 7.64 per cent to 10.60 per cent in the same period in Darrang. Likewise the Bodo population accounting for 7.26 per cent of Kamrup's population in 1971 increased to 8.29 per cent by the year 1991. It is evident that the proportion of the Bodo population in the total population showed large increases in all these three districts during the two decades. The increase in the share of Bodo population however was the highest in Darrang district. This phenomenal increase in the share of Bodo population in these districts, particularly in Darrang could not be attributed to differential natural increase in its population alone. It must have resulted from redistribution of the Bodo population itself whereby many Bodo people might have migrated into these districts from other districts or due to out-migration of non-Bodo people from these districts or both. The changes in the share of

Bodo population in other districts in these two decades are marginal compared to the changes registered in these three districts.

The pattern remains largely identical when the proportion of *Bodo* population to the total scheduled tribe population is considered. For example, the proportion of the *Bodos* increased to 81.88 per cent in 1991 from 77.29 per cent in 1971 in Goalpara. Darrang district too recorded an increase from 71.5 per cent to 76.49 per cent and in Kamrup districts the *Bodo* proportion in the Scheduled tribe population increased from 69.53 per cent to 72.35 per cent. The changes in the *Bodo* concentration in other districts were not as glaring as in these three districts. Among the three districts, Darrang district witnessed the maximum increase in the *Bodo* segment. It is further evident that there was a significant redistribution of the Bodo population in Assam.

Compared to this, it is interesting to note that the proportion of the scheduled tribe population to the total population registered a decrease in other districts containing little *Bodo* population. For example, Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills the two districts supporting a very high share of tribal population (more than 50 per cent) did experience a fall in their proportion in the total population. The proportions in Karbi Anglong decreased from 55.37 per cent to 51.56 per cent. Similarly, the share in North Cachar Hills decreased from 69.15 percent to 65.54 per cent. Both these districts had no *Bodo* population at all.

Going by the concentration index (proportion of the Bodos in a district to their total population in the state as a whole) the Bodos is largely confined to only three districts, namely Goalpara, Kamrup and Darrang. Over 93 per cent of the Bodo population is concentrated in these three districts though their share in the total

population in each of these three districts is rather low ranging between 10-15 per cent only. Though the Bodos have a geographically restricted area of their concentration, they are spatially intertwined with non-Bodo communities, which they find as an obstacle to their demand for autonomy and a separate state.

Even at the district level, which may be too aggregate as spatial units the proportion of the Bodos has, shown substantial increase during 1971 and 1991 in those districts where they are largely concentrated indicating a process of redistribution that encompasses all the ethnic groups. It is evident that the Bodos have been able to displace a substantial number of the non-Bodo ethnic groups through violent means thereby increasing their share in the total population. It is also likely that a section of the Bodo people living in the adjoining districts away from the area of their main concentration too have migrated into these districts either to increase their share or in the face of mounting pressure from non-Bodo communities as a retaliatory measure.

The village level data may now be profitably used to examine the extent of ethnic redistribution taking place in Kokrajhar district- an area that has been the scene of intense power struggle by the Bodos in their strive towards achieving statehood.

Table 5.2
Kokrajhar District: Changing Ethnic Composition: Village-Level Pattern (1971-91)

% to Total Population	No of Villages 1971			No of Villages 1991			Percentage of villages 1971			Percentage of villages 1991			Change		
	S.C.	S.T.	Oth	S.C.	S.T.	Oth.	S.C.	S.T.	Oth	S.C.	S.T.	Oth.	S.C.	S.T.	Oth.
0%	731	363	24	702	283	147	78.4	38.9	2.58	75.3	30.3	15.7	-3.1	-8.6	13.1
0-10%	135	98	5	151	93	73	14.4	10.5	0.54	16.2	9.97	7.83	1.71	-0.5	7.29
10-30%	58	133	2	52	89	100	6.22	14.2	0.22	5.58	9.55	10.7	-0.6	-4.7	10.51
30 - 50 %	6	125	207	19	76	97	0.64	13.4	22.2	2.04	8.15	10.4	1.4	-5.3	-11.8
50-80 %	2	206	211	4	134	139	0.21	22.1	22.6	0.43	14.3	14.9	0.22	-7.7	-7.72
80-100%	0	6	227	4	118	182	0	0.65	24.3	0.42	12.6	19.5	0.42	12	-4.83
100%	0	1	256	0	139	194	0	0.11	27.4	0	14.9	20.8	0	14.8	-6.65
Presence	201	569	908	230	649	785	21.5	61.0	97.4	24.6	69.6	84.2	3.11	8.59	-13.2
All Villages	932	932	932	932	932	932	100	100	100	100	100	100			

Available data shows that there have been tremendous transfers of population among the three different ethnic groups namely the Bodos¹¹, the Santhals¹², and others¹³. Kokrajhar district has a total of 932 villages. Table-5.2 clearly brings out the widespread changes in the distribution of diverse ethnic groups in the period of 1971-91. The Santhali as well as the Bodo population seem to have dispersed over more villages over the period of twenty years. The real decline in the presence of the non-Santhali, non-Bodo presence is rather alarming. The 'others' had a much wider presence in the villages of the district in 1971 (they were found in 908 of the 932 villages), but in 1991, their presence was restricted only to 785 villages indicating substantial erosion to their widespread presence in the district. The Bodos substantially increased their presence in an additional 90 villages where they had no presence at all in 1971. Likewise the Santhali population added 29 villages in the list of their presence in this period. It appears that the vacuum created by the Bengalis, Nepalese and Assamese people was filled by the Bodos and the Santhali people in this period.

The most glaring fact about Bodo consolidation and control over the area and ethnic homogenization is revealed from the fact that the Bodos by the year 1991 had exclusive presence in 139 villages from only one in 1971. This is a clear indication that in 138 villages the Bodos have been successful in evicting the non-Bodo population with whom the Bodos had been living for centuries. The fact that there has been a corresponding decline in the exclusively dominated villages of the Santhals clearly indicates that it is this segment of the population which has been evicted from their

¹¹ The Bodos along with Rabhas and Tiwas are covered under the Scheduled Tribes in the Census data.

¹² The Santhals are covered under the Scheduled Castes in the Census data.

¹³ 'Others' include Bengali, Nepali and ethnic Assamese

traditional habitations. The Bodo segment has been able to proclaim its supremacy in 257 villages which was only 7 in 1971. The Santhali and the other ethnic groups seem to have lost the battle and have redistributed themselves in a manner to protect themselves in a fewer villages within the district or have taken shelter in the Relief camps. The spatial patterning in this process of redistribution of ethnic groups is presented in the series of maps (below) that reveals greater homogenization of ethnic areas within the district. The tables do reveal a step towards ethnic cleansing though the pattern would certainly be clearer when the village level data for 2001 census would be made available.

Table 5.3
Change in the Percentage share of Population

% Change	Non-Bodo/Santhali Villages		Santali Villages		Bodo Villages	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
-100 to -50	66	7.08	1	0.11	5	0.54
-50 to 0	583	62.55	101	10.84	81	8.69
0 to 25	257	27.58	810	86.91	486	52.15
25 to 50	14	1.5	15	1.61	289	31.01
50 to 80	7	0.75	3	0.32	39	4.18
80 to 99.99	0	0	2	0.21	18	1.93
100	5	0.54	0	0	14	1.5
Total Villages	932	100	932	100	932	100

Table 5.3 clearly reveals such a pattern. The change in the share of Bodo population is rarely negative and is confined to only 9 per cent villages. Such villages are also not many among the Santhalis though certainly more than that of the Bodos. The worst sufferers are the non-Bodo and non-Santhali people.

5.6 Relief and Rehabilitation

Strive towards ethnic supremacy is not without its price in terms of human misery and sufferings. The Bodo-Santhali clash has resulted in deaths of many thousands people and has rendered many homeless to seek refuge in relief camps. It is not only the

Santhalis but also Bodos who have to leave their villages and take shelter in the relief camps. The Government of Assam provided us the following information regarding the people currently living in the relief camps. Though the records are certainly under enumerated the figures paint a gloomy picture.

Table 5.4
People living in Relief Camps

No. of Camps		No. of Families		Adult		Minor		Total		Community
1996	1998	1996	1998	1996	1998	1996	1998	1996	1998	
22	34	19681	25222	64540	83909	35219	46158	99759	130067	Santhali
6	14	2868	5566	10918	24316	5196	11269	16114	35585	Bodo
1	2	40	64	150	260	65	97	215	357	Rabha
29	51	22589	30852	75608	108485	40480	57518	116088	166009	Total

As is evident from Table 5.4, bulk of the displaced people is the Santhalis whose number is now over 130 thousands. The displaced Bodo people account for over 31,000. Over 30,000 families have made the relief camps their home. The most agonising aspect is the overwhelming presence of a sizeable number of children in these camps. The displaced are mostly living in public buildings, makeshift shelters, or under plastic sheeting. In most camps, there was little medical care and no formal education. Camp residents reported deaths and malnutrition in the Assamese camps resulting from inadequate health care and food aid.

In early May 1998, residents of Kachugaon camp, who had gone without food aid for 17 days, took food by force from a local merchant. The next day, the police came to the camp and met with the residents. Tension erupted, and the police allegedly fired into the crowd, killing three of the displaced and injuring seven others.

The displaced in these camps has an uncertain future. The majority cannot return home because they lived in the so-called forest areas. The local authorities have told them

that they also cannot stay in camps and receive assistance indefinitely. However, those same authorities cannot help them find any alternative, leaving them in limbo.

Among the inmates are more than 50,000 children, in the age group five to eight years. These inmates, who have no means of earning their livelihood, have been provided with only five to six days of dry rations by the administration in the past two months.

Residents complain that the government rations are very erratic. In any case, the foodstuff provided to them is adequate to last only about 10 days a month. For the rest of the 20 days, they are forced to eat roots. Apart from the problem of food, five to six people have been forced to share one blanket in the severe cold of December-January. The living conditions in the camps are unhygienic, leading to several hundred disease-related deaths since May 1996.

After remaining in the displaced persons' camps for a year, in mid-1997 many displaced Santhals, including those from Gongia, returned home. The Indian government gave the returnees grants intended to help them rebuild their homes and begin economic activities anew. Most of the displaced had been farmers. The Gongias used their grants to buy cows, farming implements, and rebuild their homes. The Gongias return was to be short-lived, however. Several months after they returned home, Bodos again threatened them. The Gongias asked the local authorities for help, but were told that it would be difficult to protect them because their village is so remote and isolated. The authorities said that if they feared for their safety, they should return to the displaced persons' camps.

The Gongia villagers did just that, leaving with only those possessions they could carry. Once they reached the camp, the men returned to the village to collect their animals and other belongings. However, they found that members of yet another ethnic

group, who lived in a nearby village, had looted all of their belongings. Most of Gongia's residents are now once again in the camp. For now, they are receiving government food aid, but they do not know what to do in the future. They fear that if they return to Gongia, they will be killed. They do not want to live in a camp, but have nowhere else to go. Without land, they cannot survive. Unless the government finds new land for them, they will remain displaced.

Since there are more than 40,000 other displaced Santhals in the same predicament, the likelihood of the government finding them new land appears very slim indeed, particularly as no local group wants what they regard as "outsiders" in their area.

Amidst all this confusion, the unfortunate victim has been the poor villager in a completely underdeveloped district of the state. Kokrajhar, which borders West Bengal, serves as the gateway to the northeast, and any disturbance in the area has often led to choked lines of communications to and from the region. A prolonged state of uncertainty therefore does not augur well for the entire region.

5.7 Concluding Statement

The pattern in the distribution of the tribes and the non-tribes in the Bodo dominated areas has been analysed by taking into consideration the situation in Kokrajhar district only. The distribution at the village level and changes therein has been understood by classifying the population into three broad ethnic groups, namely the Bodos (Scheduled Tribes), the Santhals (the Scheduled Castes) and the others (non-Bodo, non-Santhalis).

Available data shows that there have been tremendous transfers of population among the three different ethnic groups namely the Bodos, the Santhals, and others. The

Santhali as well as the Bodo population seems to have dispersed over more villages over the period of twenty years. The real decline in the presence of the non-Santhali, non-Bodo presence is rather alarming. The 'others' had a much wider presence in the villages of the district in 1971 but their presence was highly restricted in 1991 indicating substantial erosion to their widespread presence in the district. The Bodos substantially increased their presence in many more villages. Likewise the Santhals too got dispersed into more villages in this period. It appears that the vacuum created by the Bengalis, Nepalese and Assamese people was filled by the Bodos and the Santhali people in this period.

The most glaring fact about Bodo consolidation and control over the area and ethnic homogenization is revealed from the fact that the Bodos by the year 1991 had exclusive presence in 139 villages from only one in 1971. This is a clear indication that in 138 villages the Bodos have been successful in evicting the non-Bodo population with whom the Bodos had been living for centuries. The fact that there has been a corresponding decline in the exclusively dominated villages of the Santhals clearly indicates that it is this segment of the population which has been evicted from their traditional habitations. The Santhali and the other ethnic groups seem to have lost the battle and have redistributed themselves in a manner to protect themselves in a fewer villages within the district or have taken shelter in the Relief camps. The spatial patterning in this process of redistribution of ethnic groups reveals greater homogenization of ethnic areas within the district. The analysis reveals a step towards ethnic cleansing though the pattern is likely to undergo substantial modification when the village level data for 2001 census would be made available.

Chapter -6

Socio-Economic and Demographic Problems in Transitional Areas

6.1 Introductory Statement

The analysis so far depended on data available at the secondary source namely the Census. In spite of the limitations in the Census data, the analysis did provide valuable insights into the nature of boundary and the changes in the morphology of the boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes in Assam. The analysis did bring out the fact that there has been an intense power struggle between these two groups in certain areas. The case study of Kokrajhar district which is the core of Bodo agitation for achieving a separate state was taken up as a special case and it was seen that an attempt has been made to create ethnically homogenous areas for the Bodos in a manner akin to ethnic cleansing. The spatial patterning in the distribution of the Bodos and the non-Bodos certainly reveal such a tendency. In this chapter, an attempt is made to go deeper into the socio-economic problems of those areas which are located on the boundary. As has been mentioned, the boundaries on space are actually a zone. Due to paucity of time, only two villages have been selected which lie in this transition zone between a dominantly Bodo area and a dominantly non-Bodo area. The two selected villages likewise represent the two sides of the ethnic divide: a village exclusively inhabited by the Bodos and the other inhabited by non-Bodo groups (Fig. 6.1). The objective is to understand the problems of the villages which arise due to the transitional location of these villages.

**Kokrajhar Thana: Kokrajhar District
LOCATION OF SELECTED VILLAGES
BHUTAN**

0 1.5 3 4.5 Km

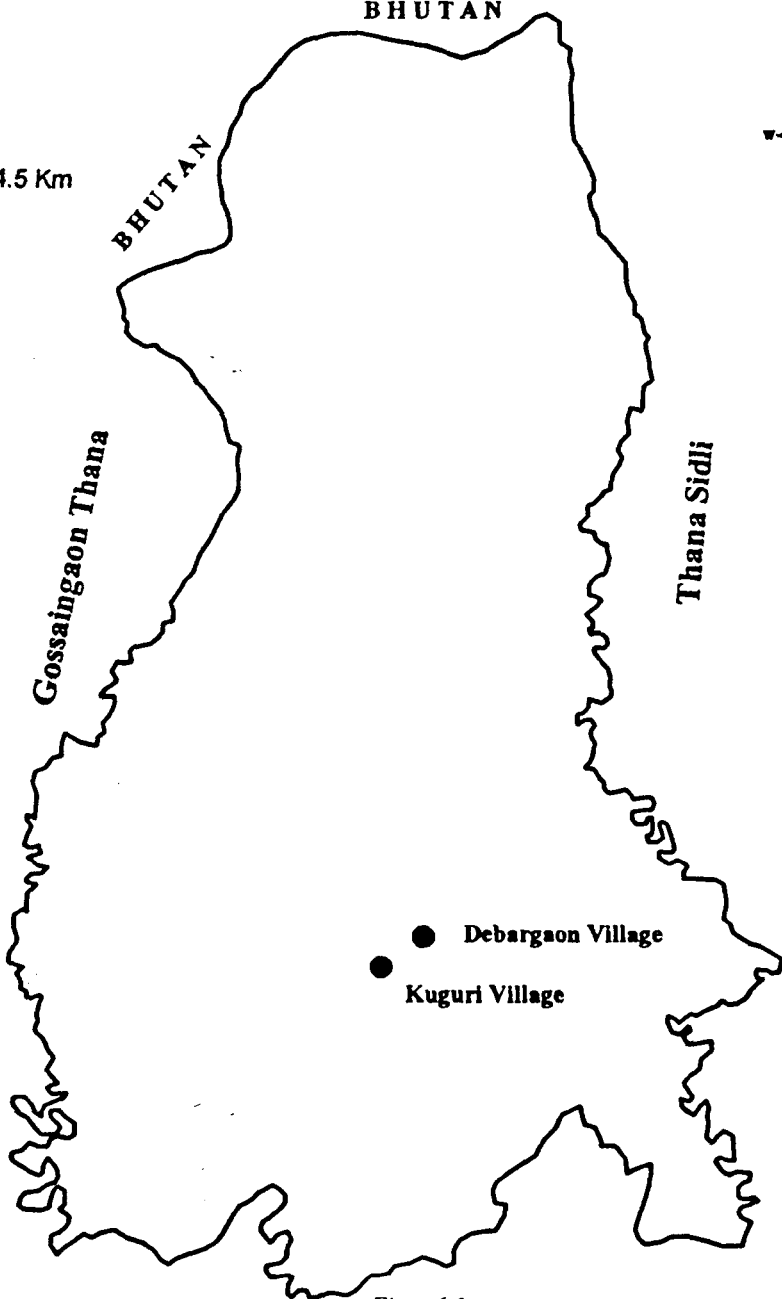


Fig. - 6.1

6.2 Debargaon Village

This village consists of non-tribal people only. This village is located in Kokrajhar district under Gossaingaon sub-division in Serfanguri police station. Debargaon is situated just a quarter of a kilometer from the main road. The road approaching this village is kachha and the mode of transport is usually by bus. The railway station is twenty and a half kilometers far from the village while communication with this village is possible by telephone. The distance to the nearest primary school is half a kilometer from the village, while the Secondary School and the Higher Secondary School are two kilometers away and there is a College at a distance of one and half kilometers from the village. The village is electrified. Other than the schools and colleges, the village has the services of a police station, a post office; a bank and a dispensary with a qualified doctor located half a kilometer away from the village. The main source of drinking water is from wells and tube-wells.

6.2.1 Demographic Characteristics

The total population of this village is 354, consisting of 174 males and 180 females. From the study undertaken, it is found that there are more minors than adults. There are 185 minors and one 160 adults. Only thirty-one households of a total of 69 households have been included in the study area. All the families are nuclear families and no extended families have been found in this village.

Ethnically the village contains two broad linguistic groups namely the Assamese and the Bengalis. Out of the thirty-one families, 17 are Assamese and the remaining are Bengalis. The total population of these households is around 150 only. The

male population is more than the female population in these sample households. The age structure of the population is as follows (Table 6.1):

Table 6.1
Debargaon Village: Age Distribution of Population

Age in Years	Male	Female
Below 15	18.98	33.80
15-30	40.50	32.39
30-45	25.31	22.53
45-60	11.39	9.85
Above 60	3.79	1.40

Source: Village Survey, 2002

In the category of children below 15 years, the number is more in the female category than the male category. About one third of the female population is in the category of children and adolescents. The corresponding figure for the male population is about 19 per cent. In the age group of 15-30 years, the proportion of males is higher. Around 40 per cent males are in the age bracket of 15 to 30 years, while the percentage of females in this age group is only 32.39 per cent. Around a quarter of the males and 22 per cent females are in the age cohort of 30 to 45 years of age. The proportion of males is higher in higher age group. The preponderance of males in higher age group reveals higher death rate for females in these age groups.

6.2.2 Literacy

The literacy level (table-6.2) in Debargaon village is also quite high. There are no illiterates in this village; quite a large number of persons are educated at least to the school level. As many as one hundred and ten persons have attended schools and twenty-two of them are matriculates. Only four of them are below graduates and only eight have graduated from colleges.

Table 6.2
Debargaon Village: % of Literates

Literacy Level	%
Illiterates	Nil
Below Matric	76.38
Matric	15.28
Below Graduate	2.08
Graduate	5.56
Post Graduate	Nil

Source: Village Survey, 2002

6.2.3 Economy

The people in this village depend more on agricultural activity (Table 6.3). However, a significant proportion of the agricultural workforce is engaged as agricultural labourers as most of the families do not own land. Petty trade occupies a prominent place in the economy of the people and a quarter of the working force is engaged in such works.

Table 6.3
Debargaon Village: Occupational Structure

Type of Occupation	%
Service	6.10
Household industry	7.48
Petty trade	25.95
Agricultural Labourers	37.40
Cultivators	23.05

Source: Village Survey, 2002

The few cultivators generally own large plots of land. Only one family has thirty-five acres of land with a large number of livestock. This shows that the land is very unevenly distributed among the families.

Table 6.4 presents the variation in the income level of the sample households. It is evident from the table that a majority of the household earns an annual income ranging between 30,000 and 60,000 rupees. About a quarter of the household is very poor earning less than 15,000 rupees annually.

Table 6.4
Debargaon Village: Income Level

Level of income	% of households
Below Rs. 15,000	Nil
Rs. 15,000- 30,000	21.21
Rs. 30,000-45,000	36.36
Rs. 45,000-60,000	15.15
Rs. 60,000-75,000	27.27
Above Rs.75,000	Nil

Source: Village Survey, 2002

Generally the land owning families and those in business have a relatively better economic position with high level of earning. Land owned by the families is generally very small often less than an acre which force them to work as daily labourers in others fields.

6.2.4 Livestock

The inhabitants of this village generally keep large numbers of livestock. Most cultivators possess cows and bullocks. However, majority of the families have cows as assets which ranges from two to seven of them. while only one family has two pigs only. Out of thirty-one families only nine families rear Chicken, which ranges from two to four. The two families, which still practice agriculture, have bullocks; other two families also possess bullock. The number of bullocks present in this village is not many and it ranges from one to four of them. Very few goats are found in this village and an insignificant number of ducks are found. Some families though are not agriculturalists also rear animals like pigs, chicken, goats, ducks etc.

6.3 Kumguri Village

This tribal village, which has been selected, is Kumguri village under Serfanguri Police Station. This village is under Kokrajhar district of Assam. Kumguri village has been selected as it falls in the transitional area of a tribal and non-tribal area. The people

staying here are mainly tribal belonging to the Bodo Kacharis community. This village is situated half a kilometer from the main road and the type of road is usually kachha. The railway station is seventeen kilometers away from the village. Though the railway lines are far away from the village it does not restrict the people from communicating with the outside world in any manner, all sorts of communication facilities are available here which is usually by road.

This village has the nearest Primary School and Secondary School just half a kilometer away and the Higher Secondary School is two kilometers far from the village. A college is also available only half a kilometer away. However, In spite of the facility available, the village remains backward. It is not yet electrified. The main source of drinking water is usually from wells at home. Other than the schools and colleges, Kunguri village has access to a police station, a post office, a bank, dispensary and a hospital too. All these are located only half a kilometer away from the village. However, the hospital at Serfanguri is at some distance. There are however no qualified doctors there.

Majority of the families inhabiting this village live in nuclear families. There are seven joint families in this village and twenty-one nuclear families. This tribal village speaks Bodo as the mother tongue and practice Hinduism. In this village, only twenty-eight households have been selected.

6.3.1 Demographic Characteristics

These selected households have a total population of 141 persons, with 69 males and 54 females. The sample households have excess of males.

Table 6.5
Kumguri Village: Age Distribution of Population

Age in Years	Male	Female
Below 15	14.49	20.37
15-30	31.88	38.89
30-45	18.84	14.81
45-60	31.88	20.37
Above 60	2.90	5.56

Source: Village Survey, 2002

Table 6.5 reveals that over 15 per cent males and 20 per cent females are in the age group of less than 15 years of age. There are more females in the young age group. Comparatively large number of people are found in the next category of 15-30 years and males are a little less than 32 per cent (31.88%) but the share of the females are much higher with almost 39 per cent (38.89%). While in the middle age group of 30-45 years, the share of male population is a little less than 19 per cent. But in this category the share of females is much less than the males with a little less than 15 per cent. Again, a higher proportion of population is noticed in the next category of 45-60 years with 31 per cent males and 20 per cent females. An insignificant number of 2 per cent or more are in the last category of 60 years and above. But the female share is more than 5 per cent in this category. Unlike the earlier village the females seem to enjoy a better life expectancy in this village compared to their male counterparts. It is rather intriguing that the proportion of population in the age group 30 and 45 is rather less.

Table-6.6
Kumguri Village: Percentage of Literates

Literacy Level	%
Illiterates	20.66
Below Matric	32.23
Matric	31.40
Below Graduate	12.39
Graduate	3.23
Post Graduate	Nil

Source: Village Survey, 2002

The literacy level in Kunguri village is rather poor as evident from a high level of illiteracy. Around 21 per cent of the population cannot read or write in this tribal village. The persons who had done minimum education by going to school but have not got through their matric exams constitute over 32 per cent of the population. Another 31.4 per cent has completed matriculation. Very few indeed have gone beyond matriculation.

6.3.3 Economy

The occupation of the people here are primarily agriculture as well as in the service sector. Table 6.7 shows that over 42 per cent of the working force is engaged as cultivators, followed by 27.35 per cent as agricultural labourers. Unlike the non-tribal village, the proportion of cultivators is more. Petty trade accounts for 14.87 per cent of the working force while around 6 per cent is engaged in household industry particularly in village craft. A little less than 10 per cent of the working force is in the service sector.

Table 6.7
Kunguri Village: Occupational Structure

Type of Occupation	%
Service	9.83
Household Industry	5.78
Petty Trade	14.87
Agricultural Labourers	27.35
Cultivators	42.15

Source: Village Survey, 2002

The people of Kunguri village possess large tracts of land and large sections of the people are agriculturalists. Some families possess land as low as less than an acre to five or more than five acres. The poverty level seems to be higher in this village as evident from mortgaging of land by a few families. Not all the cultivators of

this village possess their own land but work in others' land, while some work in their own fields.

The income of the people varied as some were in the service sector and some practice agriculture while the others are involved in business. The income of the people ranged from Rs. 12,000/- annually to Rs. 1,49,000/-.

Table 6.8
Kumguri Village: Income Level

Level of income	% of households
Below Rs. 15,000	17.14
Rs. 15,000- 30,000	14.28
Rs. 30,000-45,000	24.28
Rs. 45,000-60,000	27.85
Rs. 60,000-75,000	13.57
Above Rs.75,000	3.00

Source: Village Survey,2002

Table 6.8 shows that more than 17 per cent of the households fall in the first category of below Rs. 15,000/- income annually, generally poor among the households selected. Around 14 per cent of the households earn between 15000 and 30000 rupees annually. In the middle income group i. e. income ranging between Rs. 30,000-45,000 more than 24 per cent of the households are found. Here the source of income has not been indicated clearly as there is no particular source of earning. About 28 per cent of the households earned a substantive income of Rs. 45000 to 60000. Very high level of income is confined to nearly 16 per cent of the households of which about 3 per cent earns about 75000 rupees or more annually. The disparity in the income level is evident in the village.

6.3.4 Livestock

Livestock is found in abundance in this village. Almost every family in this village owns cows and chicken. The total number of chicken is 46 and 17 households own them.

The number of cows varies from family to family. As many as twelve cows are found in some families. Nineteen families own pigs and there are twenty-nine pigs reared by these families. Some families own one pig each while some other households own as many as six. However, chicken is found in abundance in this village and the total number is one 138. Almost all the families own chicken. It ranges from one to thirteen of them in some families. Thirteen families own bullock and all the families who practice agriculture own at least one. The total number of bullock in this village is 34 but none of the households own goats or ducks. The tribal practice of keeping large livestock continues in this village too.

6.4. Social Problems

Interestingly, despite being located in a transitional area, none of the two villages reported any significant cases of social problems related to the ethnic conflict. One reason may be that the villagers really did not cooperate while answering the questions pertaining to the social problems for fear of being quoted in a surcharged atmosphere. The other reason may be that these villages lying on the transitional area did not actually experience the kind of problem which villages in the core areas of the two ethnic groups did go through. It may be for this reason that none of the two villages reported any case of out migration or immigration linked to the ethnic conflict. Any case of migration was found to be normal linked to education, marriage or for employment. No case of death, police firing etc. was reported. No one was found missing. Morbidity was found to be less of a problem and nothing extraordinary was noticed.

Socio-economic problems observed in the two villages were more or less similar, related to lack of good roads and communication facilities, educational and health

infrastructure etc. Surprisingly, inter ethnic clash which has been dominating the political scene in this district did not find a place in these two villages. The people however lived in fear of a possible clash that may take place due to the transitional nature of their location. Interestingly a majority of the people in both the villages made a remark that the development in their village is lacking mainly due to transitional location of their villages and lack of co-operation between diverse ethnic groups who are suspicious of each other due to the recent political development. On being asked if they would like to move out of their village if the ethnic situation worsens, none wanted to do so and a majority opinion in the Bodo Village was that a separate Bodoland would bring overall prosperity to the region. Such an opinion was muted in the non-Bodo village.

6.5. Concluding Statement

The ethnic problems associated with the Bodo demand for separate state in Assam seems to have had little impact on the villages located in the transitional areas. These villages did not reveal the impact in terms of social conflicts which seem to have made the life difficult for people in the core areas.

Chapter-7

Summary of Conclusions

At a very broad level, the tribes and non-tribes seem to have occupied different resource areas, characterized by distinct environmental setting. The dividing line between these areas too represents the boundary between two ethnic groups. However, this dichotomous representation is only indicative and static as a picture. The changing relationship between the tribes and the non-tribes as well as their interaction continuously modifies the morphology of the boundary existing between them over space. Broadly, two types of morphology can be postulated. First, it may be a dichotomous distribution such as an uninterrupted or unceasing distribution of the tribal or non-tribal population in a particular pocket. They may be found interspersed with each other in villages having a dominance of either of the two segments. This nature of transition acquires divergent forms depending upon the degree and intensity of non-tribal penetration into the areas once inhabited exclusively by the tribes; interaction between the tribes and the non-tribes and the intensity of their interdependence.

The present research is an attempt to understand the nature of boundary existing between the tribes and the non-tribes. The attempt here is to examine the issue more specifically related to the tribes distributed in plain areas. Unlike the spatial distribution of the tribes and the non-tribes in sharply defined ecological units leading to much sharper boundary line existing between them, the morphology of such boundaries in the case of plains-tribe are expected to be not only complex in their forms, but also that they are more dynamic and subject to continuous changes and modifications arising out of an

equally complex relationship between the tribal and non-tribal population sharing similar resource base. The present research aims at identifying specific forms of boundaries that separates the areas of tribal habitations from that of non-tribal habitations in diverse ecosystems such as those in the plains.

It is assumed that the identification of the changing morphology of tribal non-tribal boundaries shall have to be examined at the lowest level of spatial aggregation. Perhaps a village level analysis of the distribution of those two social groups shall unravel the true nature of the boundary existing between them. It is also assumed that the various types of boundaries existing between the tribes and the non-tribes shall reflect the diversity of interactions between the tribes and the non-tribes. The areas of transition between the tribes and non-tribes shall reveal the effects of spatial processes of spillover, overlap and interpenetration between the groups. In this context, it may be pertinent to scrutinize the process of redistribution of tribal population consequent upon the process of spatial shift of the two groups in order to examine whether the tribal population is dispersing or moving out reducing the concentration or due to infiltration of non-tribal population diluting tribal concentration pattern. It is also proposed to get an insight into the socio- economic factors inherent in the process of redistribution of tribal population as well as its possible consequences and implication for the tribal people.

Given the nature of the problem, the state of Assam, which supports a significant proportion of its tribal population, distributed both in its hilly as well as plain areas, provides an excellent case study for the present research.

The tribes living in the valley areas of Assam have been living with other non-tribal communities since time immemorial and there has been a great amount of cultural

give and take between the tribes and the neighboring non-tribal communities. On the other hand, the habitats of the hill tribes are largely separated from the habitats of other non-tribal communities, but tribes dwelling in the valley live amidst non-tribal communities.

The broad objectives of the present research is to analyse regional variation in the distribution of tribal and non-tribal population in Assam at various levels of spatial aggregation; to identify areas of tribal concentration and the nature of transition in the boundary between the areas of tribal and non-tribal concentration; to get an insight into the pattern of redistribution of tribal population with specific reference to the Bodos and to study the causes and implications of changing morphology of tribal non-tribal boundaries.

The study proposed to test the following hypotheses: (i) the tribal groups living in the hills are expected to maintain largely exclusive territory leading to a form of boundary that represents a dichotomous distribution. However, the tribal groups located on the plains are unlikely to maintain such exclusiveness in their distribution. The morphology of the boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes in the case of plain tribes would assume transitional forms; (ii) distribution of the tribes and the non-tribes and the nature of transition existing between their areas of concentration have undergone rapid changes in the plain areas. The morphology of tribal non-tribal boundary in such areas would embody evidences of overlap and interpenetration. Cases of interpenetration would be far more likely in the areas of tribal concentration. The non-tribal population, given its dominant social and economic position would be in a better position to make inroads into areas of tribal concentration. The tribal population in turn is likely to squeeze

further into smaller areas or spread into areas of marginal lands, leading to a process of significant redistribution of population.

Relevant data for the present research have been collected from both secondary as well as primary sources. The major source of secondary data pertains to the Census of India. The primary data has been generated through field investigation conducted at selected villages located in the study area.

Since the scope of the study includes temporal element, changes in the morphology of tribal non-tribal boundary has been examined for three points of time viz. 1961, 1971, and 1991. In order to examine the specificities of transition in the tribal non-tribal boundary, proportion of tribal population has been represented through a series of choropleth maps at district and block levels to identify main areas of concentration of tribal population. This exercise is repeated for all the three points of time to indicate the shifts in the areas of tribal concentration if any. Based on these maps, a typology of tribal concentration has been identified to indicate the areas having consistently rising tribal concentration, areas experiencing consistently declining tribal proportion and areas which have a constant proportion of tribal population over the years.

At least one district from each category has been taken as a sample to investigate village level patterns in tribal non-tribal distribution and the changes therein over the period of investigation. The specific method of identification of morphology of tribal non-tribal boundary consists of drawing a series of village traverses depending upon physical and socio-economic criteria. A typology of the existing boundaries has been attempted. The investigation in the second stage consists of specifically addressing a particular tribe, i.e. the *Bodos*. The third stage of the research involved selection of a few

villages for field investigation. The number of such villages depended upon the types of morphology in the distribution of Bodo and the non-Bodo population. The information has been collected on household basis to determine varying socio-economic reality in different transitional areas of Bodo concentration.

The contents of the dissertation are organized into seven broad chapters. The introductory chapter includes a brief statement on the choice of study area, an outline on the methodology adopted as well as an overview of literature available on the topic of research. Regional distribution of tribal population in the study area at the district level is analyzed in the second chapter while the village level distribution is attempted for selected districts in the third chapter. The fourth chapter makes an attempt in the identification of the typology of tribal non-tribal boundary using village traverses. The fifth chapter is devoted to an understanding of the process of redistribution of tribal population in Bodo areas. The socio-economic and demographic problems in transitional areas in Bodo dominated district is analyzed in the sixth chapter. The final chapter provides the summary of the research findings.

An understanding of the spatial variation in the distribution of the scheduled tribes in Assam led to the following broad generalizations:

Tribal population remains constant over 61- 71 but increases subsequently by the year 1991 revealing natural increase in the tribal population relative to the non- tribal population.

Distribution of the scheduled tribes is highly uneven over the districts providing insights into the nature of tribal non- tribal boundary in the present and indicating about the nature of such boundaries in the past.

A hill and plains pattern in the concentration of tribes is clearly discernible. The tribes are far more concentrated in the hills of Mikir, Karbi and Cachar Hills and in those plain districts of Assam located north of Brahmaputra.

The boundary line demarcating the areas of the tribal and the non-tribal concentration is far more clearly defined in Southern Assam with a line that demarcates the hills from the Barak Plains. The tribes and the non-tribes seem to have developed two types of boundaries depending upon the ecological setting of their habitats. The plains and the hill pattern are evident. The Barak Valley and the Cachar/Karbi Hills generally represent exclusive boundaries between the tribes and the non-tribes wherein the former is exclusively dominated by the non-tribes while the latter constitute an area of exclusive tribal dominance. On the other hand, in the Brahmaputra plains the boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes appear to be a complex one indicating overlap and transition. The fact that the share of tribal population has increased in some districts while in some it has become less may be due to influx of non-tribal population into the tribal dominated areas. It is in the Brahmaputra plains that the struggle for the resource base between the tribes and the non-tribes may be a continuous affair as both the groups share similar resource base and whatever differences exist within this vast plain may have played a major role in the redistribution of these two groups making the boundary not only complex but also a constantly changing one. The boundary appears to be a static between hills and plains but highly dynamic within the plains.

The tribal proportion as a whole increases northwards with the exception of the Karbi and Cachar Hills which retain its dominant tribal character. These hilly areas however seem to have been affected by large- scale non- tribal incursion particularly

during 1961-71 decade. However, the process seems to have been partially reversed in the following decades. It is possible that there has been a considerable withdrawal of the non-tribal population from these areas once again changing the ethnic composition of these hills in favour of the tribes. The demand for a separate Karbi state to be carved out of Assam must have had a base in the large-scale infiltration of non-tribal people into the area during 1961-71 decade and must have played a key role in the decrease of non-tribal population in the following decades.

The discontinuity in the concentration pattern of scheduled tribes in the valley is indicative of organized attempts by non-tribal segments into areas of formerly high concentration of scheduled tribes. There also appears to have been a process of squeezing of tribal population into the present areas of their high concentration as a direct outcome of present communities infiltrating into those traditional habitats of the tribes, which have relatively higher potential for agriculture.

High concentration of scheduled tribes in the extreme northwestern corner is surrounded by very low concentration of tribal population. The boundary between the tribal dominated area and the non-tribal area is a sharp one because districts surrounding Kokrajhar support a very low concentration of tribal people. The district of Kokrajhar could have been a contiguous area with another area of high tribal concentration and i. e. the region lying north of the Brahmaputra but most probably the people of tribal origin from the boundary area were possibly pushed both ways. Another demarcating line between the tribal area and the non-tribal area is the region lying south of the Brahmaputra River. This region stands out as an island of tribal concentration in the midst of non-tribal dominated areas surrounding it. The Karbi Anglong block in a way

shares a similar boundary with respect to the non-tribals as is the case with Kokrajhar. As a whole, the concentration of tribes gradually increases towards the north. It seems obvious from the analysis that there has been a northward pushing of the tribal segment of the population. Only the Karbi hills have retained its dominant tribal character due largely to the fact that the low agricultural potential of these hills has not been attractive to the peasant groups. The case of Cachar hills too is comparable with that of the Karbi hills though the concentration of tribal population in this district is as high. However, the proportion of the non-tribal segment is only marginal in this district.

There seems to have been substantial changes in the ethnic composition of the areas where the tribes are largely concentrated. This change has been towards an increasing presence of people of non-tribal origin thereby reducing the numerical strength of the scheduled tribes in the total population. This has been responsible for the general unrest among the tribal people in the areas of their high concentration. The demand for a separate Karbi state or the demand for Bodoland are partly linked to the process of this ethnic change in the areas of concentration of the tribes.

The village level analysis in the changing proportion of the tribal population in three selected areas lead the following broad conclusions:

In an area (Kokrajhar district) characterized by an increasing proportion of scheduled tribes over the years, it is seen that there has been a significant rise during 1971-91 period, in the proportion of such villages which are exclusively or dominantly tribal in their ethnic composition. Conversely, the proportion of exclusively non-tribal villages has decreased significantly. This is a sufficient proof of redistribution of population along ethnic lines, whereby ethnically mixed villages are becoming fewer

over the period. The ethnic divide between the tribes and the non-tribes, which was not so clear before 1971, is becoming more sharply defined by the year 1991. This fact of ethnic divide is clearly reflected on space when the village level data is shown on the map. The map clearly reflects a more sharply defined boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes as ethnically homogenous areas are in the process of forming. A dichotomous distribution of the tribes and the non-tribes is slowly replacing an earlier pattern of a tribal-non-tribal boundary, which was more of an overlap. The region to the north is getting more homogenous in terms of tribal concentration while the south is becoming more homogenous in terms of non-tribal concentration. An analysis of the population growth pattern reveals unprecedented growth of population in fewer villages, mostly located in the areas of tribal concentration and very high negative growth in a large number of villages. This is a sufficient proof of large-scale inter village transfer of people along ethnic lines, a process not very different from what is known as "*ethnic cleansing*".

In an area (Karbi Anglong) that has experienced substantial fall in the proportion of scheduled tribes over the years, is an area characterized by hilly environment, and is a traditional habitat of the tribes too shows a pattern identical to what was observed in Kokrajhar though with some modification. In fact, the pattern of ethnic divide is even more sharpened in this area when compared with Kokrajhar. The area has experienced penetration of a substantial number of people of non-tribal origin thereby changing the ethnic composition of the area in favour of the non-tribal segment. This kind of a change seems to have had its effects in creating ethnically homogenous areas as far as the tribes are concerned as a defense against non-tribal infiltration. The tribal non-tribal boundary within this area thus is being sharply defined than ever before. However, there is a

difference in this ethnic divide when viewed over space in terms of a boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes. In spite of tremendous inter village transfer of people along ethnic lines; no separate or exclusive tribal and non-tribal territories have been formed. This is perhaps due to the nature of hill topography, which has not permitted exclusive ethnic territories to emerge though such clusters are not few. The tribal non-tribal boundaries in this area does not therefore present itself in the form of a sharply defined line but as small clusters defining territories of the tribes and the non-tribes dispersed all over the block.

In sharp contrast to these two areas of high tribal concentration and experiencing either a rise or fall in the proportion of the scheduled tribes, the pattern in the distribution and growth of tribal population in an area (Barpeta) that has a relatively low share of scheduled tribe population that has undergone little change over the years provides a stability in the boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes. In this plain area there is hardly any evidence of redistribution population. It is mainly an area of ethnically mixed villages characterized by a boundary, which displays either overlap or transition.

A comparison of the three case studies reveal interesting patterns as far as redistribution of population along ethnic lines and the nature of boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes is concerned. In Kokrajhar district characterized by increasing conflict between the two ethnic groups and in an area that has forested tract to the north and plain areas in the south, the redistribution of population has taken place in a manner to create ethnically homogenous areas in these two physical regions separating the tribal areas of the north from the non-tribal areas in the south. The boundary line between the

tribes and the non-tribes thus is acquiring the character of a dichotomous nature wherein the physical boundary is also the ethnic boundary. This kind of a boundary is not visible in the case of a hilly terrain represented by Karbi hills where the redistribution along ethnic line is far too evident. Here the boundary line between the two groups is getting sharply defined but in terms of clusters of exclusive tribal territories followed by clusters of non-tribal territories. This however depends on the ecology of the area and the internal variation in the nature of topography. In the plain areas however, none of these processes are operative and the boundary between the tribes and the non-tribes remain an elusive one.

While the former two areas represent a model of increasing conflict between the two ethnic groups in entirely different contexts, the latter is a case of stability, cooperation and assimilation between the two groups. It is clear from the analysis that the spatial patterning in the distribution of the two groups and the resultant (and changes in) boundaries seem to be a function of the social processes.

Village Traverses

The following broad conclusions may be made from the analysis of morphology of tribal non-tribal boundaries based on village traverses drawn latitudinally as well as longitudinally:

Majority of the traverses in the Kokrajhar Thana of Kokrajhar district reveal that large number of villages not only recorded high share of tribal population in 1971 but also in 1991. The traverses resemble plateaus like form with a slope that falls abruptly on either one or both sides. In some traverses the slope is more like cliffs. These indicate that the morphology of the boundary in these traverses assume dichotomous distribution at the

village level. The sharp fall in the share of tribal population from one village to another village bears testimony to this conclusion. Villages which have low concentration of tribal population are generally located in the non-tribal dominated areas. Only a few villages in this Thana recorded a low concentration of tribal population.

A north-south comparison of the profiles reveals a broad pattern of consolidation of the tribes in the northern sectors while the southern sector retains a conglomerate picture of transition. It appears that the tribes from the south have selectively moved to the north to make it more ethnically homogenous. The non-tribal population has relocated itself from the north on pressures from the ethnic divide. The profiles clearly reveal the process of ethnic redistribution in a north-south divide in the Thana. The longitudinal traverses show much more confused picture as far as the boundary is concerned. However, the north-south divide is somewhat clear in most cases.

The traverses of Howraghat Thana of Karbi Anglong district portray a similar picture with that of the Kokrajhar Thana. The traverses show a high share of tribal concentration in some villages in 1971 but after two decades there was a steep fall. The morphology of boundary between the tribes and the non tribes show substantial changes due largely to the effects of non-tribal infiltration into the area and a subsequent withdrawal of these people from some areas. Sudden rise and sudden fall in the share of tribal population indicate growing tendency of a dichotomous nature of tribal and non-tribal boundary.

It is evident from the latitudinal cross sections that the southern sector has seen a much more vigorous redistribution of population along ethnic lines than in the north. The morphology of tribal non-tribal boundary across the northern traverses remains more

stable. The tribal population in the south has established its supremacy in the south by displacing the non-tribal population living in this area.

Unlike the case in Kokrajhar, the Karbi Anglong case seems more confused as far as the morphology of tribal non-tribal boundary is concerned. This is however is not surprising considering the conclusion arrived at the earlier chapter. While it was pointed out that the ethnic divide is more sharply defined in the case of Karbi Anglong district, it was also found that this ethnic divide was not fully translated on space. In fact the extreme ethnic divide took place in making more ethnically homogenous villages in the district, but they were found in small clusters within the district. No broad zones of tribal territory or for those matter non-tribal territories were formed. This is why the morphology of the tribal non-tribal boundaries on the traverses analysed do not show any clear cut north-south or east west ethnic divide.

It is evident from the traverses in Sorbhog Thana of Barpeta district that the villages recorded almost the same share of tribal population for both the census years. The share has remained static for the past three decades and so the boundary between the tribal and the non-tribal segment is characterized by overlap and smooth transition. The traverses usually show a picture of a very gradual slope. This area being a plain area did not support large concentration of tribal population and is mostly inhabited by peasant communities. No such drastic changes have been observed in this place for the past few years. The morphology of the boundary that exists between the tribes and the non-tribes in this Thana reveals a transitional character where the villages are more ethnically mixed. Not much redistribution is visible as indicated by largely unchanging profiles of tribal proportion in the total.

It may be noted here that the Barpeta district does show a pattern of stability as far as the morphology of tribal non-tribal boundary is concerned. None of the villages on the traverse show complete domination of tribal population. In fact most of the villages are ethnically mixed. The profiles also reveal very little changes over the years. The north-south or east west profiles are not too different in their morphology.

Ethnic Cleansing in Bodo Areas

The pattern in the distribution of the tribes and the non-tribes in the Bodo dominated areas has been analysed by taking into consideration the situation in Kokrajhar district only. The distribution at the village village level and changes therein has been understood by classifying the the population into three broad ethnic groups, namely the Bodos (Scheduled Tribes), the Santhals (the Scheduled Castes) and the others (non-Bodo, non-Santhalis).

Available data shows that there have been tremendous transfers of population among the three different ethnic groups namely the Bodos, the Santhals, and others. The Santhali as well as the Bodo population seems to have dispersed over more villages over the period of twenty years. The real decline in the presence of the non-Santhali, non-Bodo presence is rather alarming. The 'others' had a much wider presence in the villages of the district in 1971 but their presence was highly restricted in 1991 indicating substantial erosion to their widespread presence in the district. The Bodos substantially increased their presence in many more villages. Likewise the Santhals too got dispersed into more villages in this period. It appears that the vacuum created by the Bengalis, Nepalese and Assamese people was filled by the Bodos and the Santhali people in this period.

The most glaring fact about Bodo consolidation and control over the area and ethnic homogenization is revealed from the fact that the Bodos by the year 1991 had exclusive presence in 139 villages from only one in 1971. This is a clear indication that in 138 villages the Bodos have been successful in evicting the non-Bodo population with whom the Bodos had been living for centuries. The fact that there has been a corresponding decline in the exclusively dominated villages of the Santhals clearly indicates that it is this segment of the population which has been evicted from their traditional habitations. The Santhali and the other ethnic groups seem to have lost the battle and have redistributed themselves in a manner to protect themselves in a fewer villages within the district or have taken shelter in the Relief camps. The spatial patterning in this process of redistribution of ethnic groups reveals greater homogenization of ethnic areas within the district. The analysis reveals a step towards ethnic cleansing though the pattern would certainly be clearer when the village level data for 2001 census would be made available.

Socio-Economic Problems

Only two villages in Kokrajhar district were selected from the transitional areas for an in-depth study of the socio-economic problems if any faced by the people living in such areas. The villages were selected at that boundary which demarcated the dominantly tribal areas from that of the dominantly non-tribal areas. The first village (Debargaon) consisted of majority of the Bodo tribes while the second village (Kumguri) consisted largely of the non-Bodo population including Assamese, Bengalis and Nepalese. Socio-economic problems observed in the two villages were more or less similar, related to lack of good roads and communication facilities, educational and health infrastructure etc.

Surprisingly, inter ethnic clash which has been dominating the political scene in this district did not find a place in these two villages. The people however lived in fear of a possible clash that may take place due to the transitional nature of their location. Interestingly a majority of the people in both the villages made a remark that the development in their village is lacking mainly due to transitional location of their villages and lack of co-operation between diverse ethnic groups who are suspicious of each other due to the recent political development. On being asked if they would like to move out of their village if the ethnic situation worsens, none wanted to do so and a majority opinion in the Bodo Village was that a separate Bodoland would bring overall prosperity to the region. Such an opinion was muted in the non-Bodo village.

The conclusions arrived at this thesis adequately prove the hypotheses stated in the first chapter. In spite of serious problems of data and limitations flowing from rapid administrative changes the research made a humble attempt at identifying the possible boundaries between the tribes and the non-tribes in plains of Assam. The findings cannot be conclusive and further research at micro level is required to get far better picture of the rapidly changing ethnic situation. This is a task for future research in this area.

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Appendix-1

Village Schedule

- i) Name of the Village:
- ii) Police Station:
- iii) Sub-Division:
- iv) District:
- v) Communities:
- vi) Number of Households:
- vii) Total Population:

Total Population		Adult		Minor	
M	F	M	F	M	F

- viii) Main Occupation:

Location of the village:

- i) Distance from the main road
- ii) Distance from the railhead
- iii) Type of approach road:
- iv) Type of communication facility available:

Basic Amenities:

- i) Distance from the nearest Primary school:
- ii) Distance from the nearest Secondary school:
- iii) Distance from the nearest Higher Secondary school
- iv) Distance from the nearest College
- v) Is the village electrified: Y/N
- vi) Source of drinking water and distance:
- vii) Police station and distance:
- viii) Post office and distance:
- ix) Any Bank; distance:
- x) Dispensary and distance:
- xi) Hospital and distance:
- xii) Any qualified doctor in the village: Y/ N
- xiii) Any communal riots experienced in the village in the past 5 years? Y/ N

vii) Any birth in your family (Last 5 years) if yes gives details:

	R. H. H.	M/ F	Year of birth	Age	Place	Remark
1						
2						
3						

viii) Any death in your family (Last 5 Years)

	R. H. H.	M/ F	Age at death	Year of death	Cause*	Remark
1						
2						
3						

*1. N. Death, 2. Accident, 3. Disease 4. Encounter 5. Killed. 6. Any other, specify

ix) Any missing persons in your family? If yes give details:

x) After migration how did you stay in new place a)camp b) Relatives house c) Constructed house d) Other

SOCIAL PROBLEMS:

- i) Is your family a victim of any of the following?
- ii) Theft ii) Rape iii) Murder iv) Threatening v) communal frenzy vi) Any kind of pressure
- iii) How is Law and Order situated in your area/ village?
- iv) Do you get essential commodities (say Rice, Salt, Kerosene etc.) from the govt.? a) Fair price shop regularly? Y/N

B. ECONOMIC BACKGROUND

i) Occupational Structure:

	R. H. H	Present			Past		
		Main Occupation*	Subsidiary Occupation	Income	Main Occupation*	Subsidiary Occupation	Income
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							

*Agricultural wage earner, Owner cultivator, wage earner, both, teagarden labourer, wage earner in non agricultural activities, cottage industry, crafts, weaving, pottery,

** Service (govt. driver/ non govt., teacher, doctor. nurse etc.), forest, lumbering, wage earner, self, shop, pity shop, other.

Present Assets (In acres)

Land	Land owned	Land operated	Land mortgage	Leased In	Leased Out

Past Assets (In acres)

Land	Land owned	Land operated	Land mortgage	Leased In	Leased Out

Live Stock(In number)

Cow	Pig	Chicken	Bullock		Other

Agricultural Equipments: Does the household own any of the following:

Power tiller, Tractor, Truck, Bullock and Pump set etc.

Liabilities:

Loans taken

Amount	Year	Source	Purpose	Remark

SOCIAL

Health:

- i) Any Diseases afflicting the members in the family (Chronic):
- ii) Has the disease affected after migration into the new place? Yes/No

Education:

- i) How many children currently in the school:
- ii) How many dropped out. And reasons for dropping: (Specify, M/F)
- iii) What kind of problems faced for children's education

Access:

- i) House Electrified : Yes/No
- ii) Source of drinking water: well /pond tube well/piped water/ other (specify)
- iii) Distance from where the water is collected (in Km)

House:

- i) House type (Pacca, Kaccha, Semi Pacca. Others (Specify)
- ii) Type of roof: Thatched/RCC/Tiled/Tin/ others(Specify)
- iii) Number of Rooms:

Appendix-II

Sl.No.	Name of the District	Share %	Concentration Index	Location Quotient
1961				
1	Goalpara	14.66	19.44	1.37
2	Kamrup	10.78	19.09	1.00
3	Darrang	10.87	12.04	1.01
4	Lakhimpur	10.64	14.29	0.99
5	Nowgong	7.22	7.51	0.67
6	Sibsagar	6.36	8.24	0.59
7	Cachar	1.02	1.20	0.09
8	United Mikir & North Cachar hills	75.54	18.14	7.06
	ASSAM	10.74	100.00	1.00
1971				
1	Goalpara	13.85	20.48	1.34
2	Kamrup	10.44	19.80	1.01
3	Darrang	10.69	12.33	1.03
4	Nowgong	7.44	8.31	0.72
5	Sibsagar	6.82	8.32	0.66
6	Lakhimpur	13.48	19.02	1.30
7	United Mikir & North Cachar Hills	35.40	10.71	3.43
8	Cachar	0.89	1.01	0.08
	ASSAM	10.29	100.00	1.00
1991				
1	Dhubri	2.42	1.12	0.18
2	Kokrajhar	41.15	11.46	3.21
3	Bongaigaon	17.53	4.92	1.36
4	Goalpara	17.23	4.00	1.34
5	Barpeta	7.97	3.84	0.62
6	Nalbari	17.67	6.24	1.38
7	Kamrup	10.72	7.45	0.83
8	Darrang	17.32	7.82	1.35
9	Sonitpur	10.71	5.30	0.83
10	Lakhimpur	23.63	6.16	1.84
11	Dhemaji	43.92	7.31	3.43
12	Marigaon	15.40	3.42	1.20
13	Nagaon	3.69	2.42	0.28
14	Golaghat	10.25	2.95	0.80
15	Jorhat	12.09	3.66	0.94
16	Sibsagar	3.80	1.20	0.29
17	Dibrugarh	7.95	2.88	0.62
18	Tinsukia	5.35	1.79	0.41
19	Karbi Anglong	51.56	11.88	4.02
20	North	65.54	3.43	5.12

	CacharHills			
21	Karimganj	0.17	0.04	0.01
22	Hailakandi	0.16	0.02	0.01
23	Cachar	1.36	0.57	0.10
	ASSAM	12.83	100.00	1.00

Curriculum Vitae

A. General Information.

- a) Name: Miss Mithu Sinha
b) Sex: Female
c) Nationality: Indian
d) Whether SC/ ST/ OBC: OBC
e) Father's Name: Shri H. K. Sinha
f) Address: C/O Shri H. K. Sinha,
Streamside Road,
Bishnupur,
Shillong, 793004, Meghalaya.
g) Occupation: Govt. Servant

B. Educational Qualification

- a) M. Sc. In Geography, North-Eastern Hill University
First Class

C. Work Experience

- a) Worked as a lecturer in St. Mary's College from October 1995 to December 1995, Shillong.
b) Worked as a lecturer in St. Dominic from May 1996 to 1998 and Goodwill College from July 1997 to 1998 as Part timer, Shillong.

D. Curricular Activities

- a) Worked as Research Assistant in a Govt. Project on Children in Need of Special Care and Protection (CNCP).
b) Participated in XVII Indian Geography Congress as a rapporteur.

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