

Intangible Cultural Heritage of India-3

Textile Designs of the Boros of Northeast India

**Rani Kakati Hazarika
Kabita Boro**

General Editor

Kishor K. Basa

This book tries to unfold the rich cultural heritage of the Boro-Kachari Tribe of Northeast India. All the tribal communities of Northeast India are very colourful and vibrant with their unique lifestyle. Textile garments of all the tribal communities of this region represent some speciality of their own. The Boro-Kacharis also wear specially designed textile materials with varied colours. Their women are expert weavers and prepare all the necessary dress materials in handlooms till today. Their dresses have been beautifully designed by themselves with traditional and modern motifs. Rearing and spinning of silk are the most ancient tradition of the Boro women. Boro women use hand made unstitched dress covering the whole body from shoulder to foot (ankle) which display beautiful motifs all over the body.

This book has given a vivid picture of the Boro culture with special reference to their famous perennial designs of textile. It is a matter of pride for Boro women to make their own cloth in their traditional handloom and key's fly shuttle even at this age of machine made goods.

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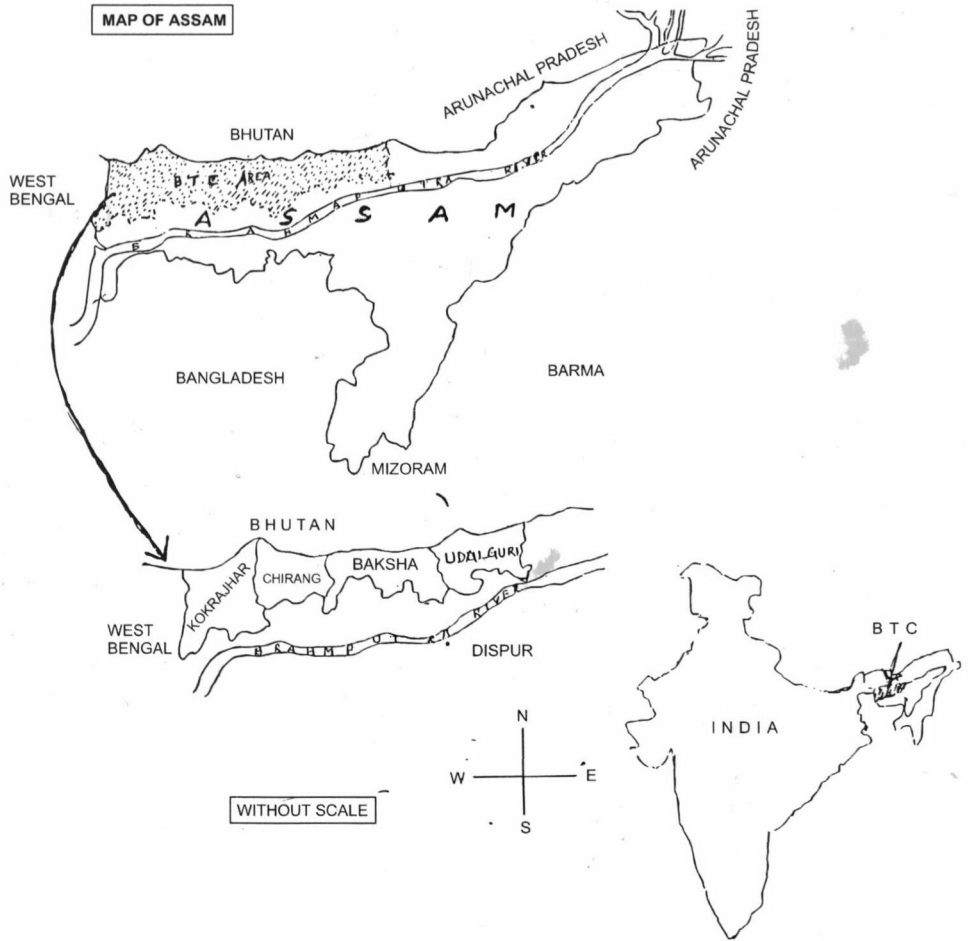
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Source : A. Paul & B. Narzary

Chapter 1

The Boros : An Ethnographic Profile

The Bodos (or the Boro-Kacharis) are the largest tribal community of North East India with a distinct culture of their own. In Assam they are recognized as a plain Scheduled Tribe. They are widely scattered in the Brahmaputra and Barak valley of Assam, north and eastern part of Bengal. But their main concentration is in the north bank of the Brahmaputra where they have recently formed the Bodoland Territorial Council comprising four districts namely Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksha and Udalguri. Kokrajhar is the headquarters of Bodoland Territorial Council. It covers approximately an area of 8970 square kilometers spreading flood plains of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries and includes 3082 villages within its territory.

The Bodos (or Boros) are originally the inhabitants of a country west of China, in the foothills of Himalayas. This land is known as "Bod", which means homeland. The inhabitants of Bod country are known as the *Bodo Ficha* or *Bodocha*. Bodo means land and *Ficha* means children, hence the meaning is children of Bod country, and in course of time they come to be known as Boddo>Bodo>Boro (Brahma, 1992). According to Endle (1911), there were two great migrations of the Boro-Kacharis. One wave came from north and entered western Assam through the valley of Tista, Sonkosh and founded their kingdom in that area. The other migration was from the northeast through Subansiri, Dibong and Dihing valley of the present day Arunachal Pradesh.

The Linguistic Survey of India describes the Bodos or the Bodo-Kacharis as a member of the Bodo sub-section under the Assam-Burma group of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese speech family (Grierson 1903). On the other hand, Shafer (1955) is of opinion that the Bodo language belongs to the western branch of Barish section under Baric division of the Sino-Tibetan family. The classification of Shafer has also been supported by Bhattacharya (1962).

According to Bordoloi, Sharma Thakur and Saikia (1987): "The Boro Kacharis of Assam is a branch of the Great Bodo Group of the Indo-Mongoloid family falling within the Assam Burmese Linguistic section. Their identity is not uniform as an ethnic group. In Bengal and in lower ranges of the Himalayas coming within the territory of Nepal, they are known as Meches. In upper Assam they are identified as Sonowal and Thengal Kachari, while in the western Assam they are more popularly known as Boro Kachari. In the southern districts of North Cachar and Cachar they are designated as Dimasa and Barmans respectively". With their physical features like prominent cheekbones, small eyes with slight epicanthic fold, little growth of hair in the body, scanty beard, light brown to pale yellow skin Colour and medium to short stature of the strongly built body, they represent Mongolian characteristics. Endle (1975) refers to the original home of the Kacharis as Tibet and China on the basis of their Mongolian affinities. There are various opinions about the original habitation of the Boros. But it can be said that these people are the ancient inhabitants of Assam along with the Aryan migrants who also lived here from ancient times. In the book *Early History of Kamrupa*, Baruah (1966) states that after the arrival of the Aryans to the Indian soil, hordes of later Mongolian poured through the northeast corner. They were described to be the Kiratas in the Mahabharata and other Hindu scriptures like *kalika Puran* and *Yoginitantra*.

S.K.Chatterjee (1974) calls them Indo-Mongoloid in his book *Kirata-Jana-Kirti*. According to Baruah (1966) the Kacharis, Koches, Rabhas, Meches, Mikirs, Lalungs, Garos, Nagas, Kukis and the Chutiyas are the present day representatives of these Mongolians or the Indo-Mongoloid and the tribe speaking Bodo (Boro) languages seem to have occupied the plains of Assam for a long time. Gait (1963) writes: "Having regard to their wide distribution and to the extent of country over which Bodo languages of a very uniform type are still current, it seems not improbable that at one time the major part of Assam and North-East Bengal formed a great Bodo kingdom, and that some, at least of the Mech kings mentioned in the old copper-plate inscriptions belonged to the kachari or some closely allied tribe". Whatever may be the origin of these people, it is widely accepted that they brought into N.E. India the technique of food production by plant cultivation and domestication of animals. They are considered as the first rice cultivators of this region. They are also the first introducers of the art of rearing silkworm as well as spinning and weaving of silk cloth (Sharma 1983).



A Boro woman in her loom



Ready to sacrifice a fowl

The Boros felt for a long time that they were neglected in their own land. As a result, they organized themselves under the banner of “**Assam Bodo Chatra Sanmilan**” to bring about a general awakening in the backward masses. They became successful in their venture of reforming their society along with the blessings of reformist Guru Kalicharan Brahma. They met the Simon Commission at Shillong on 2 January 1929 to present their demands. On the advise of the Guru the leaders joined to build up a political platform to fight for their identity. In 1933 the Assam Plains Tribal League was formed under the leadership of Rupnath Brahma. According to their demand the British Government in India passed an act and reserved five Assembly seats for the Plains Tribal in Assam. Afterwards this party merged with the Assam Congress and sacrificed their political identity. But later it was felt that the Congress party did not give them proper protection as assured. The Boros renewed their movement with the formation of All Bodo Students Union on 15 February 1967. On the initiative of the All Bodo Students Union at Rongjasali Hall, Kokrajhar, a political organization named Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) came into existence on 27 February 1967. The PTCA and ABSU jointly demanded a separate autonomous state for the Bodos. Later they demanded a full-fledged state named Udayachal. But dissatisfied with the activities of the PTCA the leaders of the ABSU started working independently. During the Assam movement their demand for a separate state died down. When the Assam Gana Parishad political party came into power in 1985 and made Assamese language compulsory in schools, colleges and offices the ABSU opposed this and launched a vigorous mass movement under the leadership of Bodofa Upendra Nath Brahma. After his death, Sansuma Khungur Bwismutiary became the President of ABSU. They continued their demand and several organizations like Bodo People’s Action Committee, All Bodo Employers’ Federation, All Bodo Samaj and All Assam Tribal Women Welfare Federation actively joined with them to make the movement a success.

The Government wanted to crush the movement by enforcing a number of laws like Disturbed Areas Act 1955, Armed Forces Special Powers Act 1958, the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1987, etc. After a long period of movement, with the worst blood shed, on 20 February 1993 a Memorandum of Settlement was signed with the Government of India, the Government of Assam and All Bodo Students Union and Bodo Peoples action Committee and the movement ended peacefully. As a result of this the Bodoland Autonomous Council Law

has been implemented. Ultimate solution was made with the understanding of all the concerned parties in 10th February 2003 by signing the Agreement with the Government of India, the Government of Assam, BPAC, BLT and ABSU. The first 12 members Interim Council of Bodoland Territorial Council was Sworn-in at Kokrajhar on 7 December 2003 in presence of the then Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani. The total strength of the BTC is 40.

A complete Boro household is constituted of three to four main houses surrounding a square or rectangular courtyard in the middle. It is also essential that each house is surrounded by bamboo fencing and separated from other houses. Earlier it was compulsory to construct long ditch in four sides of the boundary. Endle (1975) writes "One prominent feature in the typical Kachari village can not fail to strike the attention of any casual visitor at first sight. Each house with its granary and other outbuildings is surrounded by a ditch and fence, the latter usually made of *ekra* reed, jungle grass or split bamboo, etc. The ditch, some three or four feet in depth, surrounds the whole homestead, the earth taken from it being thrown up on the inner side, i.e., that nearest to the dwelling house; and on the earth-works, some two or three feet in height, so thrown up are firmly inserted the reed or split-bamboo work forming the fence itself, this later often inclining outwards at a very obtuse angle; so that the ditch and fence are not easily surmounted from the outside by the would be intruders". In the northern side, they construct the kitchen, granary, etc., living house is in the east and southern side is for the boys, western side is for the guest and open house is constructed without a wall sometimes for *dhinkhi* (mortar), loom, domestic animals and birds, etc. Pigsty is constructed at a distance in backside of the living room or other houses. The open courtyard is necessary for various socio-religious functions. As the Boros are agriculturists they need the courtyard for keeping paddy after cutting for it should be dried and thrashed. The northeastern corner is the most sacred place of this courtyard. There is an alter about one foot high at this corner made of mud plinth from the paddy field where a *Siju* (*Euphorbia splendens*) plant is grown.

This alter is surrounded by bamboo splits, tied together with five rings of horizontal bamboo stripes crossed with 18 pairs of about 2 feet high vertical bamboo stripes. In the front side, three pairs of these strips are twisted in traditional style and it is called *Daothu Bikha Hebnai*. This *Daothu Bikha* stands for the three folds of power of *Bathou* viz, creation, nutrition and dissolution.



Alter of Bathou with Siju (Euphorbia Splendens)

The kitchen is made on earthen plinth and walls are of bamboo or reed, plastered with a mixture of mud and cow dung. The roof of the kitchen is generally of bamboo and thatch or tin. On the eastern side of the kitchen, the granary is constructed for keeping rice, which is made on a platform of 1 to 2 feet high with bamboo or wooden posts. The door of the granary faces towards the kitchen.

Granary and kitchen are considered as sacred places where the *Mainao* (Lakshmi) lives and religious offerings are made inside the kitchen and on the *Bathou* alter and granary. In their custom the construction of new house is started with the granary. The living house is started after selecting the site. There are some beliefs regarding the selection of a suitable place among the Boros. The site for construction is tasted by wiping the floor with mud and placing some rice on top of banana leaf on that place and covered it with a bamboo basket for the whole night. Next day morning it is examined whether the rice remains intact by removing the basket. If the rice is scattered then the site is not good for construction, if it is found as it is then a hole is dug up to one and half feet and the soil is tasted by eating. If its taste is sweet or salty it is a good soil and if sour taste then this site is very bad. The quality of soil is considered as compulsory because the traditional Boro houses are made on earthen plinth. After final selection the construction is started by raising the granary. Living houses are made on mud plinth about 1 foot

high. Sweeping with cow dung plaster is a common practice of the walls and floors. In rituals sweeping of courtyard with cow dung mixture is must. Sprinkling of holy water mixed with *Thulungsi* (basil) leaf, gold ring and dub grass, sesame, on occasions like Bathou puja, Garja puja, etc. is a must.

The main house is called *Noma-No*, which is 22 to 25 feet long and 13 to 15 feet wide and divided into three rooms, the eastern most room is called *Ishing*, middle room is *Okhong* and western room as *Khofra*. The guest room is a separate house known as *Chora-No*. A rich household may construct outhouse for servants and other guests. There is a cowshed at a distance on southern or western side of the courtyard. Long cowshed and granary shows the good economic condition of the owner. The house construction materials like bamboo, wood, thatch, etc., are generally collected from the forest. The rich families make R.C.C. houses or tin roofed Assam type houses. In Boro villages dwelling sites are generally near their paddy fields. There are grazing grassland and stream, ponds or river also for their cattle. There is a belief among the Boros that if there is no grazing land then there will be quarrel and no peace will prevail in the village in future. Therefore the villagers give importance to have open grassland near village.

The traditional dresses of the Boros are Colourful and unique with their designs. The womenfolk weave their own dress and also for their male folk. The women's dress consists of *Dokhna* and blouse with a *Phali* on top of it. Male dress is very simple. It consists of shirt, dhoti or *Gamcha*. Boro women wear a few ornaments of gold or silver. In marriage ceremony, the groom or groom's mother offers also only one or two symbolic ornaments to her daughter-in-law. They do not like exaggeration or too much stylish boy or girl who are termed as *Chaldang*, a derogatory word to mean people not interested in actual work. Their artistic mind is reflected in the Colourful design of the cloth, not in ornaments. Now a day, the girls are using some long pattern of earrings available in the market. The traditional earring, nose ring, wrist and neck ornaments have special place in their society. Earrings are known as *Khera* or *Kanpacha*, *Japkhiring* and *Talinglora*. Two varieties of nose ring are generally used, named as *Gonthongni* and *Boula*. Necklace is the favorite of married women. These are known as *Chandrahar*, *Bisahar* and *Galpata*. The hand / wrist ornament is called *Ashan* in Boro language. These are known as *Bala*, *Mwthi Ashan*, *Baju*, etc. Finger ring is called *Akhtam* or *Astham*. Gold ornament is kept as a friend in need as they can sell it at the time of

danger or need. There is a system of keeping gold ornament in mortgage with *Mahajan* and return it when they repay the debt. So the ornaments are kept for social security in every family.

The Boro Kacharis like to live in the plains and preferably by the riverside in homogeneous villages. They always live in well-constructed, well bounded households, which constitute of married couple, their children and near and distant relatives. Family is the basic unit in the village. There is a strong tie among the villagers. The Boro villages have clear boundaries. Community feeling is expressed in various socio-religious ceremonies. Each family is related to another family by kinship. There are several clans among them; all people belonging to various clans live in the same village. Clans are totemic. They strictly follow patrilineal descent, succession and rules of inheritance. After marriage the girls are supposed to move to their husband's house. The Boros follow clan exogamy.

As they are rice cultivators, it is necessary to live near their fields with the traditional *dong* and canal digging system where cooperation of all the villagers is needed. Various rituals are also performed with the help of village priest, *Bwisagw* and *Domashi* are the two general festivals connected with beginning and ending of agricultural work and the whole community is involved in these festivals. *Amthi* is observed for the prosperity of seasonal fruits and crops. They also perform rituals like *Apeswari puja*, *Garja puja* for the protection of the whole village. *Kherai Puja* is the main community worship where all the villagers participate. There is the involvement of the head priest, assistant priest, dancers, singers, drummers, *siphung* (flute) players, *jotha* (cymbals) players, etc. The musical instruments namely, *Kham* (drum), *Siphung* (flute), *Jotha* (cymbals), etc., are used in this *Kherai Puja*.

In their religious beliefs and practices, Boros are worshippers of *Bathou* as their Supreme Being. At the same time, various other lower deities and spirits and ghosts are also worshipped. Their belief is polytheistic. There is a *Siju* (*Euphorbia splendens*) plant in the northeastern side of the courtyard of every household, which is the worshiping place of every family. The *Siju* plant is considered as a symbol of *Sibrai*, or *Bura Bathou*, which is the supreme god. Before starting any work or ceremony it is compulsory to first worship *Bathou* in the *Siju* plant altar. There is also a *Thulungsi* (basil) plant in the courtyard. *Mainao* is worshipped as the goddess of wealth.

There are numerous malevolent and benevolent spirits. The eighteen gods worshipped along with *Bathou* are *Mero*, *Ailang*, *Agrang*, *Bwrli*, *Bharali*, *Khaji*, *Khungur*, *Rajputra*, *Jwmwn Bagra*, *Jwmwn Khola*, *Thangiri*, *Mangiri*, *Bagraja*, *Bagheswari*, *Brahma*, *Bishnu*, *Maheswar*, *Surya*. The *Bathou* altar is encircled with a specially designed bamboo fencing. A long bamboo, brought for this purpose, is cut into three pieces-each, measuring three feet. Then, each of these pieces is again split into six long sticks and altogether eighteen sticks known as *Khunthi* are made from these bamboo pieces. The lower end of the *Khunthi* is stuck in the ground around the border of the altar. The tops of the sticks are cut into a V-shape. Then five long bamboo pieces, known as *Khami* are tied parallel to each other in a horizontal position to these eighteen *Khunthi*. On the northern side of the *Bathou* altar a long altar is raised where eighteen gods are worshipped. These eighteen gods are represented by eighteen branches of *Khankhlia*, planted in eighteen holes along with branches of *Mwkhna* plant. At first a white female goat is sacrificed before *Bathou*. A pair of white pigeon is sacrificed for *Mero*. For each of the eighteen gods, a fowl is sacrificed and its head along with mustard oil lamp, incense sticks, fruits and flowers is offered on banana leaves for eighteen gods separately. All the family members and other invited guests, village people present there bow down in front of the *Bathou* and seek blessings. Then the priest and family head and elderly women enter the kitchen and worship *hasung mwdai*. Inside the kitchen a pair of fowl are sacrificed and its meat is cooked with *Bhogo*. Five bamboo cups are made of round bamboo pieces and rice beer is offered in these bamboo cups inside the kitchen. Then obeisance is paid to the granary (or *Bhandar*) by offering earthen lamp with mustard oil, incense sticks, betel nut, etc.

However, there are a number of people among them who have embraced Brahmanism and Christianity. There is also a new trend in the form of reviving the *Bathou* and several new ideas and rituals are included in this religion. There is a strong belief in the existence of the soul even after death and it may enter into any newborn baby according to the *Karma* performed during his/her lifetime. They are following the destiny according to the *Karma* of a person.

Rice is the staple food of the Boro people. They are always dependent on their own paddy cultivation. Both *Sali* and *Ahu* varieties of paddy cultivation is practised by them. They consume boiled rice with vegetable curry, fish or meat curry. Dry fish is a delicacy. They are expert in fishing

and both male and female know the art of catching fish. The male generally use net, fishing spear, basket automatic or manipulated. Female folk generally use *Jekhai- Khobai* a kind of handmade basket, etc., specially for collecting small fishes and snails. They prepare fish curry, snail curry, etc. Small dry fish, half dried stem of black *Thaso* (arum), both the items mixed and made into paste-pounding by *Dhinkhi* (motar) and preserved in bamboo tube or earthen pot and it is also preserved after making round cake type shape and dried it up in sunrays. It can be kept for several days. It is known as *Napham*. It can be taken after boiling with alkali, salt as required, garlic, *Dhania*, etc., with water. The curry *Na Rudubanai* is prepared by boiling with small fresh fish, garlic, chili, ginger, alkali and salt in water. In this curry, other vegetables can be added, such as leaves of *Narasingha* or *Nwrsin Bilai*, flower of *Basiki*, *Sewali Bibar*, etc. In this way, *Na Gwran Rudabnai* curry is prepared by adding dry fish. There is a delicious curry of black gram prepared by them. Small dry fish and black gram boiled in water with garlic, chili, ginger, alkali and salt as required. *Na Gwran Bathwn* or *Na Bathwn* is also a favorite *chatny* prepared by the Boros. Fried dry fish or fresh fish, chili, garlic, ginger and salt as required, ground into fine powder. There are different types of curry prepared by adding alkali; *Laikharwi* is prepared by adding alkali and salt as required and keep for a while on fire in a pot and boiled in water adding fish, *Dhania* if available. Sometimes they mix rice powder into it known as *Ondla*. Besides this *Laikharwi* there are various types of curry prepared by alkali and other vegetables. The preparation method of these curries are also same as the *Laikharwi*. Bamboo shoot or banana tree curry is also a delicious dish among them. Fresh fish boiling in water and adding *Mesta gwkha* or *Mesta Gwkhwi* or *Singri Mwkhwi* or Wood apple is also a favorite item among the Boros. In wood apple curry they sometimes add ground rice powder and this is known as *Thaigir Ondla*. *Thaso Aitheng* (elongated stem of arum) and *Thaso Bithari* (tender bud of arum) curry are another favorite dishes among them. It is prepared by adding dry fish or fresh fish, *Thaso Aitheng* or *Thaso Bithari*, salt as required, chili, ginger, *Jabrang*, etc., and boiled in water. Bamboo shoot, banana plant curry is another delicious curry among them. Besides this they also prepare the curry of snails, crabs, etc. The preparation methods of the curry are changing with time and due to the influence of neighboring people.

Meat of pig, goat, duck, pigeon, chicken etc. are favourite dishes. These are kept at every home as domestic animals and used as food

whenever they need their meat, especially to entertain guests. These are also used at religious ceremonies for sacrificial purposes. Though cow and bullock are kept as domestic animals, these are used for ploughing and cow dung is used for manuring the field and religious purposes. Cow's milk and milk products are not favorites among the Boros. Now-a-days they are learning to use milk as food item and prepare tea with milk. The favourite drink is rice beer locally named as *Jonga* or *Zumai*. There are mythical stories connected with the origin of *Zumai* and it is considered as divine or sacred. In religious ceremonies, the *Zumai* is the most essential item to be offered to gods and goddesses. All the members, male, female and children are allowed to drink this item on festive occasions. Rice beer is prepared at every home by the female folk. At the time of agricultural activities, worships, marriage ceremonies even sickness people use it and according to their belief it rejuvenates the body and mind from all sorts of worries and fatigue.

There are many rituals connected with birth, to death and after death of a person in the Boro community. After marriage, a couple expects children otherwise it is not a complete family. They cherish birth of a boy or girl equally. After birth, the midwife (or Dhai) cuts the umbilical chord with the help of a sharp bamboo slit or blade and the placenta is buried in the courtyard or at a distance within one's own compound. The sacrifice of a chicken is a must to offer the deity and the midwife is entertained with chicken meat and rice beer. No such elaborate rituals are observed. Only mother and child remained confined for a period of nine days. While coming out the mother put the soil of the door entrance at the forehead of the child. Rice beer is also nominally given at its tongue to taste. The priest or *Douri* purifies both the baby and the mother by sprinkling holy water mixed with *Thulungsi* (basil leaf), dub grass, sesame and rice. A gold ring is dipped in water, which is given to the owner afterward. Dried naval chord is not thrown away; it is kept inside the house or put into a *Tabiz* and tied to the neck of the baby.

Puberty rituals are not observed among the Boros. When the girls or boys are of marriageable age, the parents of both sides look for their bride or groom. In Boro society parents are responsible for the marriage of their children. The consent of the boy or girl is not at all considered necessary. Parents or guardian of a boy will go first to see the girl in her house. If they first see the girl working in the courtyard, drying rice or combing her long hair, it is considered as a very good sign. If the

thundercloud, snake or *Neol* cross the road from left to right when they are travelling then it is considered as a bad sign. If the party sees dead body on the road that marriage will not be fruitful and the arrangement is cancelled. The Boro-Kacharis generally prefer marriageable girl to be good looking, with long hair, long fingers and fine narrow waist, etc. Boro girls also like tall figure with heavy, well built ankle and narrow waist of their would be husbands. The choice of the boy or girl is of no importance for the guardians for there is a saying that the choice or love of the immature boys or girls is like "a fire of paddy straw" as these are burnt for very short period and become ashes immediately.

There is a custom of keeping a pair of silver bangles by the bridegroom's party at the roof of the living house of the girl in certain districts of Assam. If this pair is not returned within a week then groom's party thinks the proposal is accepted by the parents of the girl. There is a custom of visiting the bride's house by the groom at least for one time after negotiation. Then the girl is supposed to bow down in front of him with a floral *gamcha* woven by her. If the girl does not offer *gamcha* then it is a sign of unwillingness, so the marriage proposal is cancelled. If the groom is offered with *gamcha* then the marriage is fixed. After these formalities, the *Khabri* or *Goi Thao Khaonai*, is offered by the groom's family in the bride's house. A relative with a pair of rice beer and betel nut and betel leaf (*pan*) accompanied by two women (*Ayoti*) relatives visit would be bride's family. The women must cut the betel nut and leaf carried with them and distribute among the relatives and neighbors invited by the bride's family. The male member who carried the rice beer must distribute it among the male members sitting in courtyard. Those who have embraced "Brahma Dharma" should carry tea leaf and sugar instead of rice beer. After this occasion, two three times visiting of the bride and groom's family members in each other's house, both the parties fixed the date of marriage. The date of ceremony is fixed according to the convenience of both the parties. On the day of the ceremony, the girl's father invite relatives and villagers to attend the same. Women folk are particularly invited to help in work and also to sing songs. The marriage ceremony is performed in the groom's house after the girl is taken by the marriage party to groom's house. In the simple ceremony the girl and the boy bow down in front of the villagers and exchange garlands. The *Hathachuni* ceremony is performed by allowing the bride to cook rice and chicken and distribute among the groom and his family members and invited guests. She is also allowed to bow in front of the *Mainao* in the

Ishing, on that day, before altar, by offering rice and curry in banana leaf. In case of the follower of *Brahma* sect, the bridegroom goes to bride's house and performs *Hom Yogya* at the house of bride and then brings the bride with him to his house. After performing the rituals the villagers sit in the courtyard and the bridegroom has to bow down in front of the villagers and invited guests of the bride's family with offering of two baskets of rice, betel nut, *gamcha* and two coins on top of it. The father should accept two coins as bride price. There is also a custom of offering Rs.100 to Rs.1500 or so to the villagers by the groom's party. In certain districts the bride price amount is only Rs.5 to Rs.15 and that is also not accepted but the bride's family must accept the two coins. After this ritual, a nominal amount of money, Rs.5 to Rs.15 is to be given to the villagers which is known as *Malcha*, this money goes to village fund of the bride's parent. There is a custom of handover of the bride by the guardian to the groom, known as *Mokhra Simnai*. There is another custom of giving special honor to the bride's maternal uncle by the groom's family; on the day of marriage ceremony it is only the form of promises to offer the honor. There is a custom of the Boros, that if the girl becomes widow then she should be returned to her parents, family with that *Malcha* money to the villagers to be returned to the groom's family and this is known as *Khola Gothainai*. The last item is to pay Rs.2.50 to the village headman of the bride's village by the groom's family, which is called *Barihaga*. After this marriage ceremony is finished and the bridegroom leaves the place with the bride along with the relatives of the bride and village elders. All of them arrive at the groom's house and take feast and rice beer offered by them. After taking meal the bride's party leaving her, proceed to their own village. In return they also carry rice and half of the pig meat offered to them, which is cooked into a feast in the bride's house at the arrival. After the feast all of them go to their own place. The *Douri* purify all the places with the holy water and marriage ceremony is completed. After eight days the bride with the groom visit her original home, bring with them rice beer, *Muri* or other biscuits or sweets and meat etc., it is known as *Athimangal*.

Boros have traditional beliefs and practices connected with the death of a person. They have to perform these rituals as the soul will loiter within the house and not be able to go to heaven if these are not performed in right time. There is a common burial or cremation ground for each village. They either bury or burn the dead body. Dead body is carried to the burial ground by lying in a bamboo bier. The groove from

which bamboo are used for funeral is considered as taboo and from that groove no bamboo is taken for any other purpose. Before taking out, the dead body is washed and scented oil or mustard oil is massaged all over the body. Hair is combed and kept on the bier. Relatives cook rice and chicken and then give to the mouth and then cover the dead body with white cloth. It is tied to the bier with cane. In the waist a very tight knot is given so that in the next birth the person will be born with a narrow waist or slim figure. Then, four male members carry the bier to the grave on the shoulders. Before them a person will carry a long thread to the grave, which will show the soul its way to the burial ground. If the dead person was unmarried, a banana tree is planted near the grave. In their belief a man should not be alone in the next birth. A branch full of leaf is planted with any male or female so that in the next birth he or she will possess plenty of hair on their head. A coin, a knife and a bunch of paddy straw left near the grave in the belief that the dead person can use these items. After returning from the graveyard the persons take bath and chew bitter leaf. Then sprinkling of holy water with *Thulungsi* leaf purifies them and after that they may return to their home. Before entering into their home again, they are purified by sprinkling holy water and on fire. After ten days a dress of *dhoti* for male and *Dokhna* for female with betel nut and leaf and some food are offered at a place near water. The particular place is cleaned and a white cloth is tied over four bamboo posts under which the above mentioned items are offered to the dead and after sometime these are taken back. Next day a feast of *Sardha* is offered to the neighbors and relatives. A male member only can perform this *Sardha*.

According to their belief, there are several reasons of illness. These are, 1) Evil eye of the evil spirit may fall on a person when he/she walks on their way unknowingly. 2) Intrusion of foreign objects into human body. 3) By performing black magic by someone with the help of certain objects like nail clippings, hair, cloth, earth, food remnants, bodily excretion etc. 4) Evil sights and words of a person. Whenever somebody falls ill then the village medicine man (*ojha*) is called in. He diagnoses the causes of illness with the help of divination and then makes necessary arrangements for the treatment. It is deeply believed by the people that they must offer puja to gods or goddess before taking any medicine. It is done by the *Ojha*. There are different deities responsible for different types of diseases, e.g. *Kuber mwdai*, *Hagrani mwdai* are responsible for body ache, arms pain, stomachache, stomach disorder etc. There is a belief

among the Boros that some of the persons born on Tuesday and Saturday possess "evil eye" or "evil word". Their sight or word may cause a disease named *Khuga-nagnai*. The persons suffering from *Khuga-nagnai* feels very weak and cannot take rice or any food properly. Any elderly woman of the family can treat such person. The woman collects red chili, small stick of broom and a piece of old cloth on Tuesday or Saturday, burn these things together by uttering the spell like- "*Sanibar-Mangalbar Khuga, Eh hwnba bih thu thu*". This act is performed in the evening time.

Till today the Boros live in closely knit communities. They have continued their traditional religious beliefs and practices with progressive thinking.