

## Chapter: II

### Origin, Antiquity and Identification of the Bodo

Human fossils, stone tools and cave paintings which have been discovered from different places give us clues for the reconstruction of early human history. Each of the discoveries has a history of its own. It is a scientific consensus that the oldest human genus appeared on the earth at least 5 million years ago, then evolved into *Homo habilitus*, *Homo erectus* and early *Homo sapiens* about 100,000 years ago, and then finally into *Homo sapiens*, to which modern man belong.

Despite several attempts and continuous efforts of researchers to grasp a concrete knowledge on the origin of first human being- the time and place (when and where human evolution took place on the earth); it is still unsolved problem and remain at the center of philosophical and scientific curiosities for centuries for which theories are propounded by scholars on the subject. According to Out-of-Africa theory, early modern human being first come into sight in Africa between 200 and 150 kya, and subsequently scattered to the rest of the world<sup>1</sup>. The Multiregional theory asserted that the modern man appeared at the same time as in separate regions from an ancestral *hominine* that originated in Africa, and later dispersed to Asia and Europe sometime between 1.8 and 1.0 Mya<sup>2</sup> (proposes the modern humans evolved in Africa, Asia and Europe from archaic forms). Xinhua News Agency reported that modern men have been descended from the indigenous archaic human populations in the world. Neanderthals were inhabited in Europe or from the so-called Java man or from the Peking man in Asia. The multi-regionalism theory also asserted that our progenitor have been migrated from Africa in about 1.5 million years ago<sup>3</sup>. Some scholars support the Out-of-Africa theory but they advocate for absorption and admixture between African and Asian *Homo sapiens*<sup>4</sup>. Regarding the origin of modern man, particularly the modern Chinese, there exist long-lasting disputes between the two schools of which one advocate Africa as the exclusive cradle land and others argues that beyond doubt multiple evolutionary centers coexisted in the route of human evolution, where continues evolution cropped up<sup>5</sup>. Huang Weiwen<sup>6</sup>, a senior research fellow with the Institute of Vertebrate Paleontology and Pale

anthropology (IVPP) of the Chinese Academy of Sciences stated that modern Chinese man is more likely to have originated in China. A new finding in the dating of Chinese hominid fossils challenged the popular "out-of-Africa" theory on the origin of modern human being arguing that *Liujiang Hominid* roved south China more or less 70,000 to 130,000 years ago, rather than 30,000 years ago or less as it was held earlier. The new finding supports the theory that modern Chinese man originated in the Chinese territory<sup>7</sup>. On the finding of a skull of a very early form of man in the central Java in 1891, it is revealed that South East Asia is the first place where the transition from earlier form to human life transpired<sup>8</sup>.

From the facts and findings of evolutionary theories, it may be concluded that *Homo sapiens* did not evolve in the soil of Assam. Therefore, the indigenous ethnos particularly the Bodo in Assam migrated most probably from East and South East Asian regions at different periods of time in the successive waves of movements. The word Bodo used to indicate the greater Bodo races, who have yellowic complexion, prominent cheek, bones and snub nose, mainly settle down in Sikkim, North Bengal, Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Ladhak of Kashmir etc. with the similarity of their culture and tradition, speaking Tibeto-Burman languages.

The term 'Bodo' was for the first time applied by B. H. Hodgson<sup>9</sup> as an ethnographical term to a group of languages to refer the Meches of Darjeeling district in 1847, which was confirmed by G. A. Grierson<sup>10</sup>. If truth be told, the word Bodo is very recent one which is the product of B. H. Hodgson. The term 'Bodo' is originally a linguistic one, but very often it is used as a generic name of all the Tibeto-Burman (Bodo) speaking people of the Sino-Tibeto origin. The Bodo comprises numbers of ethnic tribes namely - the Koc, the Kachari, the Lalung, the Demacha, the Garo, the Rabha, the Tipra, the Chutiya, the Maran and other tribes of the Mongoloid features. Those Bodo who are living to the west of the present Kamrup district or in and around Kamrup are called Mech by their Hindu neighbours. The word Mech which applied to the Bodo by their neighbours is most probably a corruption of Sanskrit Mleccha. They were also known as Kachari<sup>11</sup>.

The Bodo who are inhabited in various places are known by diverse designations as such- the Bodo in North Bengal, Nepal and Bhutan are recognized as Mech or Meche, in between the Sonkos river and the Brahmaputra river they are known earlier as Meches and afterward Bodo, on the Kachari hills they come to be known as Kacharies, in

Dimapur they are called Dimasa, in Tripura as Tripuri or Kok Borok and so on<sup>12</sup>. In this work, the term Bodo will signify only the Bodo of the Assam who speak the present Bodo language.

Each and every community has their own stories about the creation of man which often do not match with the scientific theories and discoveries. Like other communities the Bodo also do have their story of the evolution of human being. The mythology connected with the origin of the Bodo is relayed as follows:

*“Boro-Kacharini gwdwniprainw kugajwng kuga swlibwnai batra baidiywibla anan gosai Aham Guruni gswwao gaham sannai swmjikangnaiaoa gaoni swrji gwhwjwng biyw manwi dao-daojw jwnwm jahwyw. Daojwni gwrbwao daodwi dwitam jaiga mwnw arw somni unao bay dwitam daodwia un sigangwi daoniprai wngkarw. Gwbang bwswrni unao bay daodwi dwitamniprai gaoba gao mohorni gib jwnwm jagwn hwnnanwi Aham Gurua dojwkwo swrgwniprai bunghornai jayw. Daojwya obla bay dwitam daodwikwo gonw homnaiswi.*

*Bay baidinw daojwya daodwi dwitamkwo bayseba rwja bwswr gobai natai oblabw daodwiniprai pisa wngkarnaini jebw mohorkwonw nunw mwna. Obla daojwya dwise daodwikwo sipainanwi nainaiswi. Oblabw natai daodwi singaoniprai maba mwnse jib jwnwm jagwnni sin nunw mwnnai jayakwimwn. Daojwya jwbwr duku jabai. Bay somao Aham Gurua daojwnisim mw dai raojwng bunghornaiswi- “daodwi dwinwikwo dasipruswi, nongyabla buhuma jwbsrangwn. Siprunai daodwi dwisekwo guntutrijwng kebkangnanwi swrgiding sarlananwi hwdw”. Jerwi bitwn arwi maonai jabai. Gubrusarnaikwo sarlanai bwi daodwiniprai Daini, Yogini, Mwdai-Bhut, Ampwo-Anla, Bipang-Laipang, Hagra-Bongra jwnwm janaiswi. Jwnwm mwnnai jib-jiratpra jagra adarni angkalao gwlninanwi gwdao-swrao nagirnanwi gidinlabainw homnaiswi.*

*Mwrtwpuriyao obla hakwo swrjinai jayakwimwn. Binikainw anan gosaiya mwrtwpuri swrjinw gwnang janaiswi. Mwrtw purikwo hajwng swrjinw takai anan gosaiya jib jibipwrkwo patalpuriniprai ha lainw tinhorbai. Natai raobw labwnanwi hwpwinw hayaswi. Manwna bay somao dularai muluganw dwijwng bungpobnaimwn. Dwi singyao patal purini rajajwng ha bahagwya bangnanwi dwnjanaimwn. Rajani santri ha negrapwra patalpurikwo bangwbnanwi dwndwngmwn. Unao kaseo arw omapwra ha labwnw haywilai bay kebao Aham Gurua halise bwrai magur arw burwi magurikwo ha lainw tinhornaswi.*

*Patalpuriyao tangnanwi magur bwrai arw magur burwiya jese hagwo ase hakwo labia, natai pwipinnai somao negrapwrjwng homjanaiswi. Negrapwra magur bwrai , magur burwiniprai hakwo senanwi manwikwobw twihang borobhang jajase saja hwbai. Sibai manwibw angkarbnai somao lama soseyaonw sreng twinaiswi. Bibadinw gwbang san barlangbai, magur bwrai arw magur burwini jebw udis gwila. Sansekali horkab Aham Gurua magur bwrai arw magur burwikwo gswwkangnanwi daoma-daosa, gib-gibi boikwobw nagirnw tinhornaiswi. Jai para-pari boibw nagir hwinaiyao mase doukaya magur bwrai-burikwo dwiyao gwjaona tanai nunanwi anan gosai Aham Gurunw kinta pwibai. Obla Aham Guruna magur manwikwo pwtangpinnw takai swrgwyao*

*gao undugra amni korosaniprai gwtwi token, gwtang token lainw takai neolaikwo tinhornaiswi. Duku-gisib, suku-gisib lainw takai mase dausrikwo tinhorbai. Tiya bato daokwo lairanglai (tarai jatwni bipangni bilai) lainw tinhorbai. Somao gasibw jogar janaiswi.*

*Magur bwrai magur burwikwo lairanglaiao pwranna dwnnanwi sigang gwtwi tokonjwng bubai, bayni unao gwtang tokonjwng jebla buyw magur manwibw tangkangnaiswi. Duku-gisibjwng sibnanwi negra bunaini sigangni biskwo baisinwi sakangsin hwyw arw sanaijwng babrabnw homw. Unao suku-gisibjwng sibnanwi gasibw sanai sunaipwrkwo srang kalanjwbw. Anan gosai Aham Guruna patalpurini hani batra swngnaiyao magur-maguriya gasibw batrakwo pwrmai jwnnaiswi. Bayni unao magura gaoswrni dariao sitabnanwi pwinai hakwo talir bilaiiao dwnnanwi bejwngnw mwrtwpuri swrjinw takai Aham Gurunkwo kaolaibai. Aham Gurunabw bidinw maonaiswi. Anan gosaiya swrjinai mwrtwpuriya ha aseloni takainw dwi bahagwnikrui ha bahagwya asesin jadwng hwnnanwi Boro-Kacharipra pwtaiyw. Swrjinai mwrtwpurikwo sanni dungnaijwng pwrannanwi anjad nainw takai anan gosai Aham Guruna mase dausen daukwo mwrtwpuriyao tinhorw. Daosen daoya mwrtwpurini hayao tabainanwi lanjai swmao swmao ganainanwi anjad nayw arw dasimbw gurwiywi dong hwnnanwi anan gosainw esarajwng kinta horw. Unao anan gosaiya mwi hwnanwi mwrtwni hakwo soman kalamw. Mwi hwnai somao ha sapra gwjwo janai bahagwya hajw, mwijwng hakor jananwi tanai bahagwpwra lwitw, bilw arw dwima-dwisa jananwi tanaishwi.*

*Bayni beseba rwja bwswrni unao daodwi dwinwiniprai gaoba gao mohorni mansi jwnwm janaiswi. Sigangni daodwiniprai jwnwm jabai- Mwnsing-sing bwrai arw burwi. Nwiti daodwiniprai jwnwm mwnbai- Diba bwrai-Diba buri. jwnwm mwnmarnw biswr sabrwibw swrgwyao tangnw gsww janaiswi. Natai swrgwya pap gwiywi mansipwrni takaisw, papipwrni takai nongya. Anan gosai Aham Guruna olokotao gwglwibai. Unao beyw mwense raha kalambai- swrgwyao tangnw hagwn, natai swrgwyao tangnai somao jai unniprai naihoringwn binw mwrtwpuriyao gwgwipwipin nangwn. Bay radaikwo gonainanwi Mwnsing-sing bwrai-buri arw Diba bwrai-buri sabrwibw swrgwao tangnw homnaiswi. Swrgwni sose lama tangnai somao mwrtwpurini jib-junarpwra daorao-daosi janw hombai. Mwrtwpurini daorao-daosikwo kwnananwi Diba bwrai-Diba buri unting naihoringw. Lwgg lwgg biswr sanwibw mwrtwao gwggi bwnaiswi. Biswr obla duku jarla arw janai lwngnaini angkalao gwglwinanwi raha mwnnw takai Aham Guruni katiyao pwinanwi aroj gabnaiswi. Biswrni arojao onkangananwi Aham Guruna bungbai- "nwnswrni gibi subung Mwnsing-sing bwrai-burwini pisa-piswopwra mwrtwpuriyao songsar japwigwn, biswrniprainw nwnswr sibirai-janai mwngwn arw nwnswr biswrni rwikagiri janw hagwn"<sup>13</sup>.*

Free English translation:

In the beginning the creator of the universe who is known as *Aham Guru* in Bodo produced two birds- male and female. Three eggs were laid by the female bird. Then a voice came from *Aham Guru* that in due course of time three eggs will turn to three different lives. When hearing the word of *Aham Guru*, the female incubated the eggs for a long time but could not see any sign of the birth of life. So, the female bird

broke one egg to see whether any life was existed or not. When the female bird broken one egg, *Aham Guru* sent another heavenly message to the female bird stating that the remaining two eggs should not make any harm because some lives would be appeared from that two eggs. It was also directed to the female bird to spread the broken egg all around. When female bird dispersed the broken egg suddenly ghosts, witches, ants, flies, trees, creepers etc. were emerged. Following the advice of *Aham Guru*, the female bird again continued incubating the eggs. The newly created creatures roamed here and there helplessly without finding any foods. *Aham Guru* thought the need of the creation of the earth for the survival of the creatures. *Aham Guru* instructed the bird and other creatures to collect soil from the bottom of the water. However, none of them could fulfill the task. Then *Aham Guru* entrusted to the two old *Magur* fish to bring the soil. They brought the soil but on their return they were killed by the guard of the nether world. After many centuries they did not appear before the *Aham Guru*, He sent a crow to know where about the two *Magur*. The crow detected the two *Magur* were dead and informed the matter to *Aham Guru*. Then *Aham Guru* advised the mongoose to fetch the magic death stick and life stick from His bed which was in the heaven. *Aham Guru* also ordered *Maina* to bring pain-giver and pain killer fans for giving treatments to the death fishes. He also asked parrot to bring *Lairanglai*. After getting all those materials *Aham Guru* laid the death fishes on the *Lairanglai* to make dry. *Aham Guru* beat them with the life stick which brought them back to life but they were still in severe pain. Then *Aham Guru* fanned them with the pain killer fan after that they relieved from all pain. Then *Aham Guru* started to create the earth with the little amount of clay which get from the two *Magur*. After many centuries from the two eggs human being were born. *Man-Sin-Sin Borai* (male) and *Man-Sin-Sin Buroi* (female) were born from one egg and *Diba Borai* (male) and *Dibi Buroi* (female) born from another egg. The four human beings desired to go to heaven. *Aham Guru* allowed them with condition not to look back during their journey to heaven. *Diba Borai* and *Dibi Buroi* looked back after hearing the sound of crying of the creatures that were in the earth. So, both of them were fell down on the earth because of violating of the instruction of the *Aham Guru*. They faced problems of their survival because of the scarcity of the food and made request to the *Aham Guru* to provide enough food. *Aham Guru* replied that the offspring of *Man-Sin-Sin Borai* and *Man-Sin-Sin Buroi* would come to the earth to live. Worshipped offered by

them to both of you. You would become their saviours. *Man-Sin-Sin Borai* and *Man-Sin-Sin Buroi* were believed to be the first human beings who were created by *Aham Guru*. Their offspring are considered as the progenitor of different human groups. Among them the Bodo are also regarded as one of them.

In spite of the lack of historical evidences on the origin of man in Bodo's perception, the conventional knowledge of the mythical origin of the Bodo as reflected in traditional Bodo folklores and folktales have been supplied a little hint on the origin of man in their beliefs and thought. The Bodo folktales and folklores, that have been construed the evolution of man, have been discussed above which related to Darwin's evolution theory. The beliefs and thought of the Bodo which revealed in the folktales and folklores emphasized on the role of the birds, egg and fish for the creation of man. It can be understood from the belief that how the unicellular cell evolved through different multi cellular stages to *Homo sapiens* to which the modern man belong. The scientific viewpoint behind the folktales and folklores of the Bodo can be interpreted as there was, no doubt, long evolutionary process of life leading to man, which clearly alludes to the ecological concept of the Bodo in ancient days. It is said that *Aham Guru*<sup>14</sup> the creator of the universe order men to go back to the earth in order to keep ecological symmetry with other living beings like ants, flies, animal, trees, etc.<sup>15</sup>. This shows a clear indication of having some philosophical knowledge of the Bodo on the evolutionary theory of creatures including the human being. The origin of the world, birds and animals, mankind, vegetation and the phenomena of nature have been elucidated through myths which have been orally handed down from generation to generation and explained the phenomena of nature through myth by the Bodo. Many of the scholars namely Dr. Kameswar Brahma<sup>16</sup>, Dr. Anil Boro<sup>17</sup>, Medini Choudhury<sup>18</sup>, Premalata Devi<sup>19</sup>, Kumud Ranjan Basumatary<sup>20</sup> also agreed with this view while touching on the origin of the Bodo which based on folktales and folklores that have been prevalent among the Bodo.

Almost similar versions have been expressed by many of the scholars on the mythical origin of the Bodo. The mythical episode refer to the origin of the Bodo cannot be considered as an authentic one as it is contradictory to modern scientific theory of evolution. However, it may be used as a source to understand the beliefs and thought that present in the mind of the Bodo in the process of evolution since early days<sup>21</sup>.

The Bodo linguistically and racially show a close affinity to the East and South East Asian. The language spoken by the Bodo belongs to Tibeto-Burman sub-family of

the Tibeto-Chinese (Sino-Tibetan) family of languages. The ethnogenic history or origin of the Bodo is still murkiness and debatable. The Bodo, one of the Mongoloid races has been described to be a group of peoples who were inhabited in the north of Himalayas and west of China. The region which was lying in between north of Himalaya and west of China is called Bod which means homeland. Edwin Atkinson<sup>22</sup> refers to Bod country which comprised central Tibet and the Bodpa. The meaning of Bod is Tibetan person of Bod country and Tibetan called their country Bodyaut. Many parts of the country known as Hor Bod, Kur Bod etc. were also mentioned in the works of the other scholars<sup>23</sup>. The word Bodpa is the derivative form of Bod and the Bodo of the Bod country named after the Bod<sup>24</sup>. So, the term Bodo/Bodho/Boddo/Boro seems to be originated from the name Bod. The Tibetans used to call the areas to the Southern Himalayas as Bod or Pot which means land of the snows and whence the name of Bodo derived<sup>25</sup>. Kameswar Brahma<sup>26</sup> speaks about the *Bodo-Ficha* or *Bodocha* or *Bodosa* as the people of Bodo country. According to him Bodo=land and *Ficha* or *Cha*= children i.e. children of the Bodo country. With the passages of the time, they are simply called as Boddo or Bodo or Boro. It is also said that the word Bodo seems to be originated from the word “*Borok*”. The literal meaning of *Borok* is “Man” in Tipperah language which is obviously a branch of the Bodo speech<sup>27</sup>. ‘*Boro phica*’ (children of the Boros) is the word which comes from the Tibetan word ‘*Hbrug-bu-tsa*’, the meaning of which is the children of the people living in the plain land having no trees and plants<sup>28</sup>. In ancient time the Eastern and North Eastern India was the home of the heterogeneous Indo-Mongoloid Kirata people with the diversity of their own dialects.

S. K. Chatterji<sup>29</sup> identified the Kiratas of ancient India with the Tibeto-Burman Mongoloid and also holds that they might have peopled in the southern slopes of Eastern Himalayas in Eastern India around the beginning of first millennium before Christ. The present Bodo-Kachari tribes of Assam, the Nagas, the Kukis and the Meiteis of the eastern hills are considered to be the descendents of the Kiratas<sup>30</sup>. According to G. P. Singh<sup>31</sup>, the tribes of North-Western and North Eastern India including Assam, Bengal, Tripura, Orissa, Sikkim and of Nepal, Tibet and Burma between the epic age and fifth century A.D. are the Kiratas in the Classical literature. However, he stated that all the Kiratas do not belonged to the Mongoloid stock as held by some anthropologists, historians and philologists but only some of them are Mongoloid who had been settled down since the time immemorial. Rejecting the opinion of the G. P. Singh, who stated

that only those who had settlement in India from pre-Vedic age to tenth century A.D. are meant Kiratas, Dr. Binoy Kumar Brahma<sup>32</sup> argued that G. P. Singh's view on the Kiratas which is based on the specific time frame is not reasonable. The well known fact is that the identity of any race or community may not be based on the space of time. The distinctiveness of the community should be remained for a long time if their history is not in extinct. Hence, the Kirata concept is not based on time but on race as their history is continued to exist to some extent.

Sylvian Levi<sup>33</sup> has proposed the Mongoloid racial affinity of the Kiratas by drawing a conclusion that they are Mongoloid community. This projection is based on the *Mahabharata* and views of ancient Hindu writers. In respect to the Kiratas origin of the Bodo, it is observed that there is a closed affinity of the Bodo with that of the Kiratas of ancient Indian literature<sup>34</sup>. R. N. Mushahary<sup>35</sup> opined that the Kiratas are the ancestor of the Bodo (Boro). The Kiratas is a general term referring to the Mongolian origin and mainland Indian referred to the Mongoloid Bodo as the Kiratas. Reflecting on the view of the Kiratas origin of the Bodo, many of the scholars do support to identify the Bodo as the Kiratas<sup>36</sup>. It is worthy to mention here that the generic term Kirata signified the people belonging to Mongoloid origin dwelling in classical Indian sub-continent and the Bodo are to be only one of the sections of the greater Kirata group<sup>37</sup>. Many of the scholars exposed the idea that the Bodo and its cognate tribes living within and outside Assam are all belonged to Tibeto-Burman linguistic group and Indo-Mongoloid stock of the great Mongoloid race. They came to be popularly known as Kirata during the epic period<sup>38</sup>. Agreeing to the view of the Kiratas origin of the Bodo, based on the study of physical traits, language, socio-cultural status of the Bodo, it is confirmed that the ancient Kiratas belonged to Indo-Mongoloid Tibeto-Burman speech family later on recognized as Kachari and usually term as Bodo in Assam<sup>39</sup>. It is affirmed that the Indo-Mongoloids or Kacharies or Bodo were the Kiratas in ancient Sanskrit literature and they were outside the Hindu Varna fold<sup>40</sup>. No doubt, the Bodo of today are progenies of the Kiratas and Cinas who are the Mongoloid origin<sup>41</sup>.

Tradition says that Mahiranga Danav who was supposed to be the son of Brahma was the earliest king of Pragjyotisa or Kamarup. *Kamarupar Buranji* supplied information that his father was called Sambrasur whose capital was at *Rangamati*. The earliest known king of the Mech was Mairong who flourished in North Eastern India long before the *Kurukshetra* war of the *Mahabharata*. It is promptly made a comment on

Mairang as a Bodo race and Mahiranga was a Sanskritised name of Mairang. Undoubtedly, Mairang is a Bodo name and the people of this race were designated as the Kiratas and Mleches, the Mongolian immigrants<sup>42</sup>. There is striking similarity between the Mech (Bodo) and Kirata's physical features, colours etc. So, the Kiratas are the progenitor of the Meches (Bodo)<sup>43</sup>. Majority of the scholars including Dr. Anil Boro<sup>44</sup>, Manaranjan Lahari<sup>45</sup>, Dr. Premananda Mushahary<sup>46</sup>, Birendra Giri Basumatary<sup>47</sup>, etc. stick to the Kiratas origin of the Bodo.

The origin of the word Kirata is the subject matter of controversies; however, they have been specified as non-Aryan tribes of the Mongoloid origin of the Himalayas and North East India who had connection with the Chinese, Bhotas or the Tibetans and other Mongoloid sections<sup>48</sup>. The word Kirata has been derived from the Sanskrit root Kaksaka which mean the people of the frontier area<sup>49</sup>. It is also said that the term Kirata possibly derived from the word *Cirata* or *Cirayita* which also well-known as *Kirata-tikha Prakrt= Cilaitta* or *Ciraa-tta*, a very bitter plant which used for medicinal purposes by the non-Aryan people. This plant was grown in the lower region of the Himalaya, the place of the modern Kiratas<sup>50</sup>.

The word Kirata is first time mentioned in the *Yajurveda*. Two Vedic texts namely *Sukla-Yajurveda*<sup>51</sup> and *Atharvaveda*<sup>52</sup> informed that they were the people living in the caves and mountains in the Eastern Himalaya region and of low status who were outside the Aryan fold during the Vedic age<sup>53</sup>. The *Ramayana* also testified to the dwelling of the Kiratas in the Eastern region of India<sup>54</sup>. Some of the *Puranas* also address to the Kiratas as the tribe living in the hills of Eastern India<sup>55</sup>. *Samhitas* also made a reference to the Kiratas as a people dwelling in the cave of mountains<sup>56</sup>. From the information provided in the Vedic *Samhitas* and *Brahmanas* of the Kiratas, it has been clearly advocated that the name was applied to the aboriginal hills people, who were inhabited in the caves of mountain and propped up themselves by hunting. It is appeared that the name Kirata is conferred to a cave dweller of the mountains which signified their dedication to cave (*Vajasaneyi Samhita* and also *Taittiriya Brahmana*). *Atharvaveda* speak about a Kirata girl (Kairatika) who digs a remedy on the ridges of the mountains and the name most probably applied to any hill folk, but the aborigines<sup>57</sup>. There are some hazy reference to the Kiratas in *Vajasaneyi Samhitas*<sup>58</sup>, *Taittrinya Brahmana*<sup>59</sup>, *Satapatha Brahmana*<sup>60</sup>, *Aitreya Brahmana*<sup>61</sup>, *Satyayanaka Brahmana*<sup>62</sup> and *Jaiminiya Brahmana*<sup>63</sup>. It is clearly indicated that the Kiratas people had been settled in this land

since ancient days. As they were inhabited mainly in the hill areas and lived on hunting, their culture seems to be different from that of the culture of the Aryan. They continued to maintain their own distinctive cultural traits and traditions by living outside the Aryan fold.

The legend of Shiva Mahadeva who was taking the guise of Kiratas, with Uma with him as a Kiratas woman, to assess Arjuna when he was in Himalayas by practicing religious penance: a legend have in the verse of the *Sata-rudriya* section of the *White Yajurveda* (XVI, 7)<sup>64</sup> as:

*Asau yo vasarpati nilo-grivo vilohitah/*

*Utainam gopa adrsrann adrsrann udaharyah: sa drstoMrdayati nah//*

The verse mentioned above indicates that it was somewhat a high exaltation of the non-Aryan hill dwellers status of the Kiratas<sup>65</sup>. The *Mahabharata* also mentions the Kiratas as the people of Himalayan regions particularly the Eastern Himalayas. In course of Bhima's campaign for conquering territories he met the Kiratas in the East. In this regards *Sabha Parvan* of the *Mahabharata* described as:

*Vaidehasthas tu Kaunteya Indra-parvatam antikat:*

*Kiratadhipatinsapta vyajayant tatra Pandavah //*<sup>66</sup>.

The free English translation run as follows:

Kunti's son, the hero Pandava defeated the seven Kirata rulers<sup>67</sup>. The *Puranas* described them as foresters, barbarians, mountaineers, shepherds residing on the hills to the north of Bengal<sup>68</sup>. F. Wilford<sup>69</sup> stated that the Kiratas are the native of India which include the Kiratas of the Brahmaputra valley. It is also to be noted that they (Kiratas) along with the Cinas inhabited in the frontier of the Pragjyotisha Kingdom, the most ancient name of Assam and its name was changed to Kamarupa in the time of Kalidas<sup>70</sup>.

James Taylor<sup>71</sup> described that the location of the country of Cinas was adjacent to Kamarupa on the east. This region, no doubt was the eastern part of Assam valley. Moti Chandra<sup>72</sup> while dealing with the Cinas of the epic age stated as Chinas of upper Burma. Cinas were first identified by F. E. Pargiter<sup>73</sup> with the Chinese considering them as the Kiratas as well as Mongoloids. The *Mahabharata* mentioned the Kiratas as the people living around the Brahmaputra, who were supposed to be the same people described by Periplus, Ptolemy and other early writers as Cirrhadoe<sup>74</sup>. Thus, it may be concluded that the geographical location of the Kiratas country was situated in the North Eastern part of the present India extending up to the Myanmar or up to the South East Asian countries if

we fully agreed that the Kiratas were the Cinas or Mongoloids. From the available sources we come to know that the country of Cina was in close proximity to Kamarupa.

*Arthasastra* of Kautilya in 4<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. contained information about the physiognomical features, settlements, military skills and the status of the Kiratas during the Mauryas<sup>75</sup>. The Buddhist and Jain texts also made some references to the Kiratas. *Sasanavamsa Himavantapadesa, Apadana* (11. 358-9), two Pali commentaries- *Sumangala-Vilasani* on *Digha Nikaya* (1. 176) and Sammoha-Vinodani on *Abhidhamma Pitaka* (388)<sup>76</sup> and *Milinda-Panha* (IV.8.94)<sup>77</sup> composed by Nagasena, the Buddhist scholar before C. 400 A.D. and Malalasekera<sup>78</sup> referred to Cinas and Kiratas as well as their (Kiratas) language. The Kiratas have been described as tribal people living in the forest<sup>79</sup>. Kiratas is also mentioned in the Jain chronicle texts, which reasonably corresponds to the Kiratas of the Sanskrit and the Pali as a people providing no details about them<sup>80</sup>. Kalidasa<sup>81</sup> while dealing with the Kiratas described them as wild tribe who were living in the hills, mountains and forests. *Brihatsamhita* of Varahamihira<sup>82</sup> who belonged to the Gupta age very frequently cited the Kiratas and Kern and placed them in the north-east and north-west<sup>83</sup>. They were placed along with the Cinas of the North Eastern part of India particularly Pragjyotisa kingdom which also corroborated by Ajoy Mitra Shastri<sup>84</sup>. E. T. Atkinson<sup>85</sup> opines that the Cinas and Kiratas like some other tribes were autochthonous. The war of the Kiratas with Naraka in Pragjyotispur is depicted in the *Yogini Tantra* which composed in about late 16<sup>th</sup> century or 17<sup>th</sup> century. From this source the socio-religious life of the Kiratas of the Kamakya region in the ancient days can be portrayed<sup>86</sup>.

Periplus spelt the Kiratas as Kirrhadae whose locations were in the hills of the Assam and Burma<sup>87</sup>. Ptolemy also called them Kirrhadia and their country may have the comprehended of the Tripura, Sylhet and Cachar<sup>88</sup>. The Kiratas of South-East Bengal and Western Assam was the people of Mongolian race<sup>89</sup>. Lassen<sup>90</sup> also touched on the socio-economy, political, religion and expansion of the Kiratas in Bengal, Bhutan and other Himalayan belts, dynastic rule in Nepal etc.

Fa Hien, the Chinese pilgrim who came to India during the time of the Guptas supplied some hints of the Mongoloid people so called Kiratas<sup>91</sup>. Hiuen Tsang, another Chinese pilgrim, popularly known as prince of pilgrim who visited India during the time of Harsha Vardhana left a valuable account of the India. He wrote a famous book *Si-Yu-Ki* and his writings were rendered into English by Walters in "*On Yuan Chwang's*

*Travels in India*". And a biography of Hiuen Tsang was translated into English by Mr. Beal. The account of the Hiuen Tsang has immense importance for the identification of the Kiratas of the hills areas who dwelt in North East region. He made some important clue of the hill people of Assam who were considered as Mongoloid Kiratas with dark yellow complexion<sup>92</sup>. The tribal people of North East India who had yellow complexion, no doubt, can be identified with the Kiratas of ancient India.

A celebrated Arabian scholar whose name was Alberuni referred to the Kiratas of North East India regions namely Pragjyotisa, Lohitya, Pundra, Udayagiri and Manipur as well as other countries like China, Suvarnabhumi etc. in his monumental work *Tahqiq-I-Hind* of Kitab-Ul-Hind<sup>93</sup>. Marcopolo<sup>94</sup> also made a mention of the Kiratas in the Himalayas region. Ibn Bathuta<sup>95</sup> incidentally described the origin of the Indo-Chinese population with the Mongolian characteristic and also used the term "Kamru" which is identical with the Kamarupa. Detail description of the Kirata's rule over Tripura of North Eastern region which was known as Kiratasdesa in ancient time is found in *Rajmala*, the Royal Chronicle of Tripura<sup>96</sup>. The Royal Chronicles of Tripura and other sources notified that Tripura (Tipperah) was Kiratadesha where the Kiratas ruled over there<sup>97</sup>. It also mentions that the Kiratas were the early ruler of Tripura which can be evident from the fact that there is still surviving tradition in Tripura. Not only Tripura but also other parts of North Eastern region are the dwelling place of non-Aryan of Mongoloid features right from the remote past. Now those people are found both in hills and plains area of North East India.

The Kiratas have been classified into four groups- i) Himalayan Kiratis ii) Tibetan-Himalayan iii) Khas-Kiratis and iv) the Kacharis of South Asian region<sup>98</sup>.

Himalayan Kiratis include the following:

- i. Rai
- ii. Limbu
- iii. Sunuwar
- iv. Newar
- v. Dewan
- vi. Bahing
- vii. Kulung
- viii. Parali

The following are the Tibetan-Himalayan groups:

- i. Bhutia
- ii. Lepcha
- iii. Sherpa

As per the 1881 census, 19 (nineteenth) following groups are within the Kachari or Bodo Kirati:

- i. Bodo
- ii. Dimasa
- iii. Dhimal
- iv. Garo
- v. Hajong
- vi. Koch
- vii. Lalung (Tiwa)
- viii. Madahi
- ix. Mahalia
- x. Mech
- xi. Moran
- xii. Phulgaria
- xiii. Sutiya
- xiv. Rabha
- xv. Sonowal
- xvi. Sarania
- xvii. Solaimiya
- xviii. Thengal
- xix. Tiprasa

In fact, numbers of Mongoloid groups have been dwelling in different parts of North-East India since ancient days. The golden colour complexion of the Kiratas is mentioned in the Ramayana as follows:

*“Kiratasca tiksna-cudasca hemabhah priya-darsanah, antar-jala-cara ghora nara-vyaghra iti srutah/”*<sup>99</sup>.

In connection to the Kiratas complexion, it is stated that the Kiratas had straight hair, golden colour<sup>100</sup>. Gold like i.e. yellow in colour of the Kiratas is noted down in the

*Kirata-parvan* section of the *Vana-Parvan* of the *Mahabharata*. The passages of which run as follow:

“*Kiratam vesam asthaya kancana-druma-sannibham*”

“*Dadarsatha tato jisnuh purusam kancana-prabham*”

‘*na tvam asmin vane ghore bibhesi kanaka-prabha*’<sup>101</sup>

The free translations run as:

The Kiratas were looking like a tree of gold,

Arjun saw a Man who was shining like gold<sup>102</sup>.

The above stanzas indicated that the complexion of Kiratas was fair and they had golden colour. The *Mahabharata* stated that the army of Bhagadatta, the Cinas and Kiratas soldiers were of gold complexion<sup>103</sup>.

Before and in the early Christian centuries, the Hindus were familiar to the Kiratas, who had yellow complexion and distinct culture. Their original homeland was in the Himalayan slopes and the mountains of east particularly in Assam<sup>104</sup>. *Yajurveda*<sup>105</sup>, *Atharvaveda*<sup>106</sup> and the *Kalika Purana*<sup>107</sup> mentions Kiratas as short stature, golden colour, shaven head, rough skin and addicted to meat and drink. The Kiratas may be illustrated as the original inhabitant of the Assam.

G. Bertand<sup>108</sup> portrayed the Kiratas as the people bearing the golden complexion and dwelling on the slopes of the Himalaya in the mountain regions of the east and of the rising Sun in the Karusa by the shores of the Sea and on the banks of the Lauhitya as described in the scared writings of the Hindus have been called Mongols and they are identified with the Bodo of Assam, the Tibeto-Burmese race on the ethnological ground. But G. P. Singh<sup>109</sup> said that the hypothesis is groundless as we do not have any evidence to support this hypothesis.

Literary evidence show that a section of the Kiratas whose complexions were golden and extraordinary strength and nomadic, cannibals, and fair looking with sharp pointed hair knots had their settlement in the eastern region and another section who were in the island lived on raw fish and ferocious by nature, etc.<sup>110</sup>. No doubt, they were the ancient tribes of Assam, the dwellers of the forest, caves and in the marshy area near the sea coast extending up to the east Bengal. They were the people who were inhabited both sides of the Lohita river since the early days<sup>111</sup>.

Mongoloid people are typified by board face, brownish-yellow complexion, small stature, high cheekbones, Chinese eyes, etc. who are plentiful in Tibet and the high

valleys of Bhutan, Kashmir and Nepal<sup>112</sup>. The Mongoloid tribes have been classified into three physical types as i) the primitive long headed Mongoloids mainly found in the sub-Himalayan tracts, in Nepal and mostly in Assam ii) the less primitive and more advanced short-headed Mongoloids, who are mainly inhabited in Burma and from Burma through Arakan into Chittagong and iii) finally the Tibeto-Mongoloids of fairly tall and having lighter skins and appear to be the most highly developed type of the Mongoloids who came to India. They are linguistically characterized Tibetans and their different sections of off-shoots who reached in India through the Himalayas, spreading from Bhotan and Sikkim to Ladakh and Baltistan<sup>113</sup>. The physical feature and complexion of the Mongoloid people who mainly dwelt in Assam and eastern Himalayas are short head, broad nose, a flat and comparatively hairless face, a short but muscular figure and a yellow skin<sup>114</sup>.

Ptolemy, the Greek geographer of Alexandria in his *Geography* talks about the best *malabathim* (*Tejpata*) which was available in enormous in the country of the Kiratadesha as it was produced in that country<sup>115</sup>. It was grown in the Khasi-Jaintia Hills, the Garo Hills and the valley of Cachar of ancient Assam, Eastern Bengal (Sylhet), Sikkim in Western Bengal, Himalayan region as well as in Northern Himalayan regions namely Tibet and Nepal<sup>116</sup>. McCrindle<sup>117</sup> specified the Kiratas as the Mongoloid origin. Kirrdioi<sup>118</sup> is mentioned along with the other tribes of India who were undeniably identical with the Kiratas. Scyritae and Skiratai of Megasthenes seem to be indistinguishable with that of the Sanskrit Kirata<sup>119</sup>. The Kiratas were most probably Scyrites of Pliny<sup>120</sup>. They were also described as Kirrhadae and Besatae by Periplus<sup>121</sup> and belonged to Tibeto-Burman tribe<sup>122</sup>. The Kiratas were also known as Bisadae<sup>123</sup>. The Nagalogai and Dimassa of Ptolemy can be identified with the Nagas and Dimasas of North Cachar Hills<sup>124</sup>. It is categorically stated by G. E. Gerini<sup>125</sup> based on Ptolemy Geography that Kirrhada of Ptolemy corresponds to the Kiratas of Tipperah, the modern Tripura, Kacher and Sylhet and also informed that Garo tribes called themselves *Achikrang* which means hills people i.e. Kiratas. H. C. Ray and S. K. Chatterji have proposed to identify the Kiratas with the Cinas of Chinese and other Mongoloid people<sup>126</sup>. The Kiratas were also identified with the Tibeto-Chinese people by D. C. Sircar<sup>127</sup>. Sudhakar Chattopadhyaya<sup>128</sup> called the Kiratas as the Tibeto-Mongoloid people of Himalayan region stating that the Kiratas in the epic were non-Aryan of Tibeto-Chinese or Tibeto-Mongoloid origin. B. H. Hudgson<sup>129</sup> fittingly comments while dealing

with the aborigines of the sub-Himalayans and the Eastern frontier that the Kiratas of ancient Assam, Tripura and Nepal were all Tibeto-Chinese or Mongoloid origin. Robert Shafer<sup>130</sup> kept the Kirata under the Mongoloid race stating that they were the speaker of Tibeto-Burman language. According to the tradition of the Rai and Limbu, the mountain tribes of Sikkim are belonged to Tibetan origin. Munaimua who is believed to be the first person, who came from the Tibet, had two sons. One of his sons was called Gurupa who is considered as the progenitor of Gurungs. From the Kirati legend, it is clear that the name Gurung is derived from ‘*Gu*’ which means nine and *Rong* which means chief. According to the chronicles of the Gurungs they are the offspring of the “Mongoloid Kirat” tribe<sup>131</sup>. It is also appropriate to mention here that in the language of the Bodo *Gu* means nine (9) which also confirmed that there is a close relation between the Bodo and Gurung. So the Bodo may be described as the broods or descendants of the Mongoloid Kiratas.

Kasten Ronnow<sup>132</sup>, a French scholar made comment on the term Indo-Mongoloid used by S. K. Chatterji as “Suniti Kumar Chatterji’s extension of the term Kirata to be an equivalent for Indo-Mongoloid was unfortunate” and also made two division of the Kiratas namely i) who have affinities with Mongoloid and ii) those who are of mixed origin. Most of the Kiratas of the Northern and Eastern India are of Indian origin. No doubt, the tribal populations of North East India form a heterogeneous group migrating in all probability from different places like South-East Asia, Tibet, Burma, etc. who are mostly belonged to Mongoloid stock with distinct identity. On the works of anthropology, sociology, ethno-history, linguistic, geography, archaeology, history, etc. based on cultural and physical aspects provided the data to devise the notion that the Mongoloid groups of North-East India including the present Bodo have associated their origin with South-East Asia regions and China. It is noteworthy that the tribes of North-East India have been described as Kiratas in ancient Indian literatures and in the classical ancient Greek and Latin literatures. The Bodo, one of the Mongoloid tribes of North-East India are also considered as offspring of ancient Kiratas. The Bodo are none but the Kacharis who were absolutely identical with the ancient Kiratas. Martin Montgomery<sup>133</sup> made observation regarding the identification of Kacharis with the Bodo as the proper name of the Kachari is Bodo. Anthropologists and historians make an effort to identify the Bodo with the Kiratas in ancient India who were related with the Chinese, the Tibetans and other Mongoloid races. Majority of the scholars also agreed with the fact

that they are the progeny of the ancient Kiratas. However, the Bodo of today neither designate themselves as Kiratas nor Kacharies but called themselves as Bodo or Boro or Boro- Phisa which denotes a race who speak Sino-Tibetan Bodo language<sup>134</sup>.

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