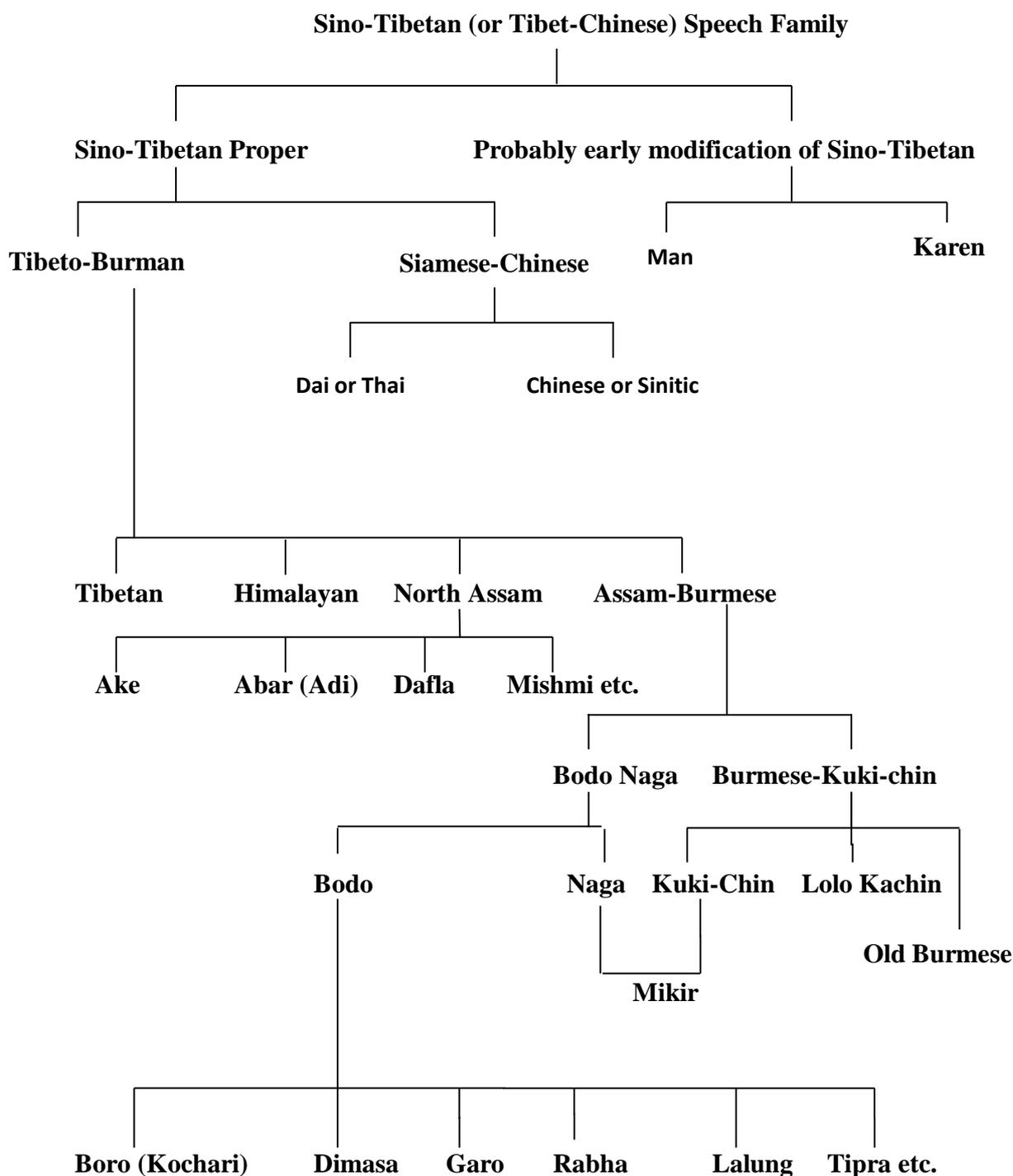


Chapter-I

Introduction

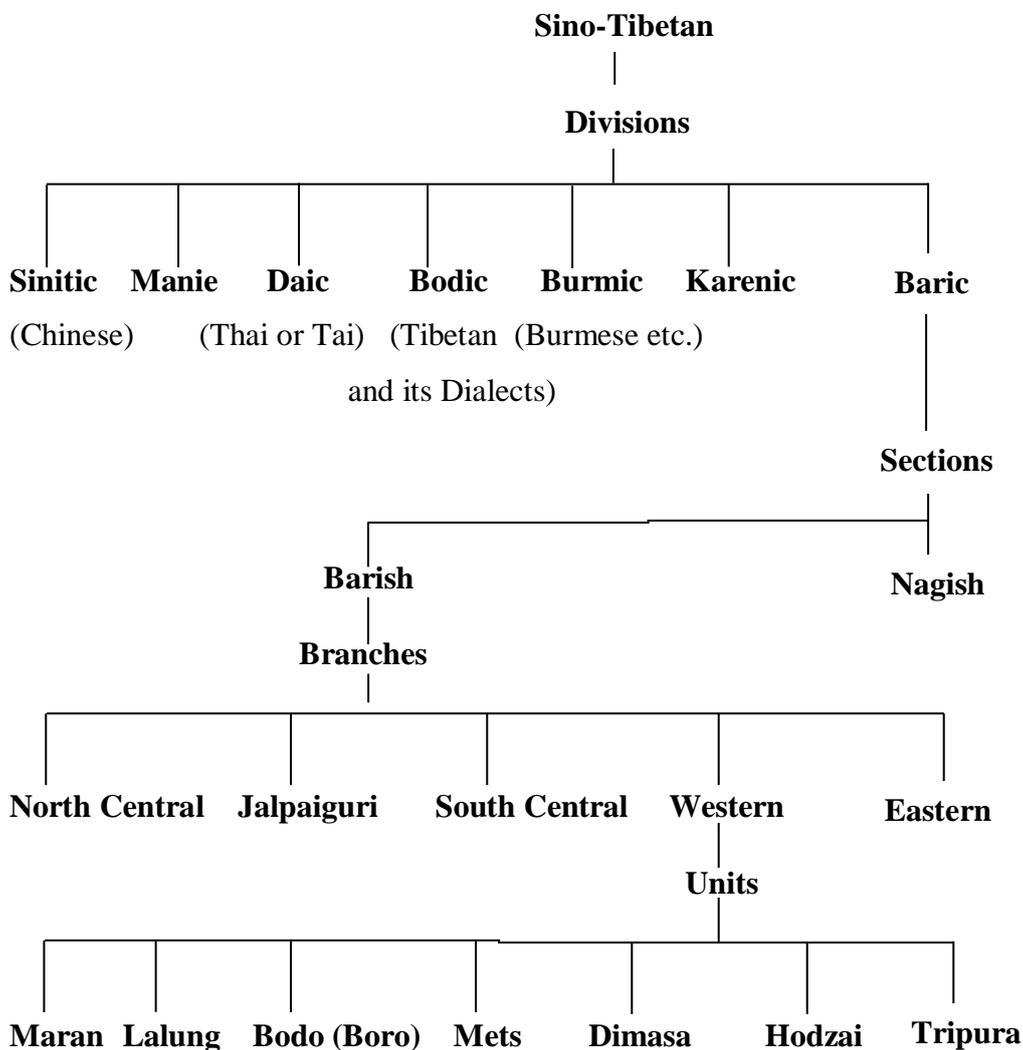
1.1 Introduction: The North-East portion of India is known as North East India and the portion mainly comprises of eight states viz, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim. Earlier, Sikkim was not included in the North East India; there were only seven states before inclusion of the state of Sikkim. North East India was so referred to as the Seven Sisters. Amongst the states in Northeast India, Assam is the largest. It is a beautiful state with different caste, languages and culture. The Bodos and the Rabhas are the indigenous people of North East India specially in the state of Assam scattered in different districts having distinct language and culture of their own since long period. As per generic side these two clans are Indo-Mongoloid group of people and in Linguistic Affinity the Bodo and the Rabha languages fall within the Sino-Tibetan language family origin having the root in Tibeto-Burmese. The Bodo and Rabha are branches of Assam-Burmese part of Bodo-Naga Section within the Bodo group having separate identity and characteristics of their own. The Koch Rabha language is also a branch of Rabha spoken in some areas and this is classified in some dialects such as – Pati Rabha, Dahori Rabha, Totla Rabha, Bitalia Rabha, Hana Rabha, Rangdani Rabha, Koch Rabha and etc.

Some linguistic scholars have classified the Bodo and the Rabha languages- the language of same family of Sino-Tibetan origin in a different way. Among them S.K. Chatterji in his book '*Kirata-Jana-Krti*' (1951) has described as below-



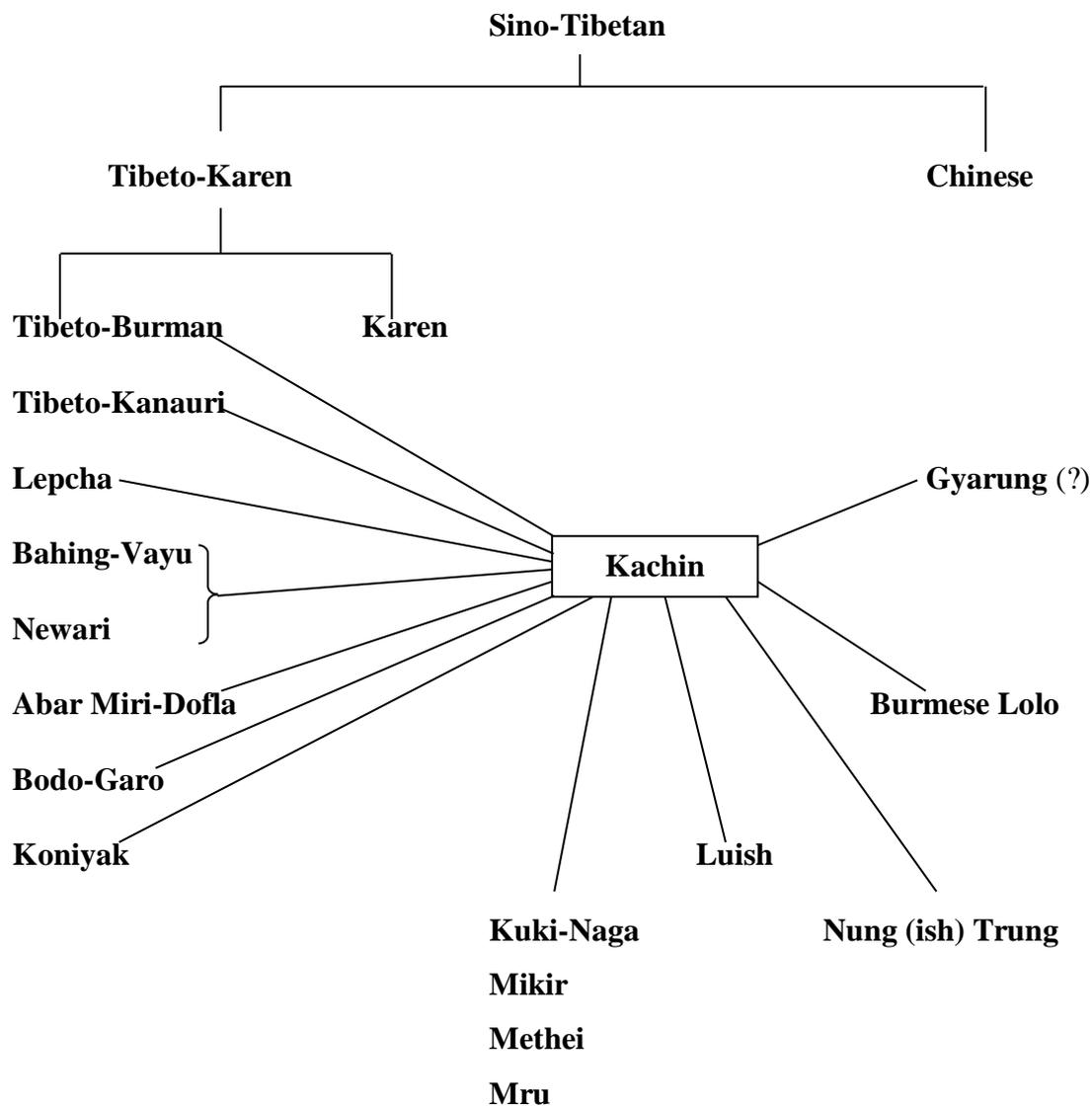
(Chart-1.1: The above chart representation of the Sino-Tibetan languages is quoted from- Promod Chandra Bhattacharya's '*A Descriptive Analysis of the Boro Language*', 2007. P-8)

According to Robert Shafer (1955) the language family of both the languages is given below:



(**Chart-1.2:** The above chart representation of the Sino-Tibetan languages is quoted from- Promod Chandra Bhattacharya's '*A Descriptive Analysis of the Boro Language*', 2007. P-9)

According to Benedicts (1972) it is given bellow:



(**Chart-1.3:** The above chart representation of the Sino-Tibetan languages is quoted from- Promod Chandra Bhattacharya's '*A Descriptive Analysis of the Boro Language*', 2007. P-0.12)

1.2 Review of the Related Literature

Numerous studies have been conducted on the language, customs, religion, and culture of the Bodo and Rabha. Some of the books on this topic are:

(a). *A Handbook of Rangdani-Kocha-Assamese- English Language*, (2019): In this book also the authors Romeo Rwtin Lokobok and Anupama Rabha discussed about the basic vocabulary of Rangdani Rabha, Koch Rabha, Assamese and English languages.

(b). *Bodo Rabha Vocabulary* (2017): In this book the author Musuka Bala Brahma is comparatively discussed only about the lexis and their structures of the Bodo and Rabha languages and her another book *Comparative Study of Bodo, Garo and Rabha Phonology*, (2017): Here the author discussed about the Bodo, Garo and Rabha phonology with the similarities and dissimilarities of vowels, consonants their descriptions and distributions an the suprasegmental side she discussed about the tone, syllable parts with the comparative points of view.

(c). *Boro Raokhanthi*, (2006): Here the author Swarna Prabha Chainary discussed the two parts of linguistics. First part is phonological parts of the Boro language and another part is morphological parts of the Boro language.

(d). *Boro Raoni Mohorkhanthi*, Second Edition, (2005): In this book the author Phukan Basumatary is discussed the theoretical parts of morphology and Boro morphology portions only.

(e). *Engraji-Rabha Krow Chwduk (Portom Bhag)*, (2010): Here the authorRev. Ananta Kr. Sumbri is discussed the initial parts of the Rabha grammar.

(f). *English Kocha Rabha Language (A Learners' Handbook)*, (2017): Here the author Romeo Rwtin Lokobok is showing only the basic vocabulary of English and Koch Rabha languages.

(g). *Rabha Aru Garo Bhasar Ruptoty: Athi Thulunamulok Adhayon*, (2014): Here the researcher Sandana Rabha is comparatively discussed the morphological parts of the Koch Rabha and Garo languages.

(h). *Rabha Dialects a Linguistics Study* (2014): In this Ph. D. thesis, the researcher Jibiswar Koch has discussed about the whole Rabha dialects and their differentiations in linguistics points of view.

The researcher has not come across any books or research papers that compare the morphology of the Bodo and Koch Rabha languages.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

The Bodo and Rabha (Koch Rabha) languages are independent languages which are originated from the Bodo group of the Sino-Tibetan language family. In a similar way, Assam-Burmese group is originated from the Tibeto-Burmese and the Sino-Tibetan group. The Bodo and the Rabha (Koch Rabha) languages also originated from the Bodo-Naga group under the Assam Burmese group. There are not only racial similarities between the Bodo and the Rabha (Koch Rabha) but also linguistic similarities also. There are close similarities between the two languages in many respects. Therefore, the researcher has taken up this topic to make a comparative study on the morphological similarities.

1.4 Objective of the Study

The main objectives of the study are-

- (i) To study the language family of the Bodo and the Koch Rabha.
- (ii) To study the similarities of word structure of morphology in Bodo and the Koch Rabha.
- (iii) To study the similarities of nominal group of morphology in Bodo and the Koch Rabha.
- (iv) To study the similarities of verbal group of morphology in Bodo and the Koch Rabha.

1.5 Ethnic Identity of the Bodo

The Bodo people are belonging to the Indo-Mongoloid group of peoples. A renowned Bodo writer Bhuben Narzi in his book '*Boro-Kocharini Somaj Arw Harimu*' has described:

‘Two thousand years ago the group of Mongolian people were found roaming in Siberia and in the country of Mongolia’¹.

In later part, they split into three sections. One of these sections went to Turkey and Italy and they settled there. Now-a-days it is identified that the indigenous people of those countries –Turkies and Italian. The second group crossed the Siberia and went to North America in Mexico area. The third group went to Japan. The people of this third group, the Bodos spread in to the southern side and western area of Yang-tse-Kiang and the river side of great river Hoang-ho and Tibet. The very word Bodo represents both the nation and language. B.H. Hodgson used the Bodo word for the first time in his illustrious book *‘Miscellaneous Essays Relating to Indian Subjects’*. G.A. Grierson has described it clearly in his book *‘Linguistic Survey of India’* (Vol-III part-II 1903). He mentioned:

‘The generic term Bodo was first applied by Hodgson to this group of languages. The exact sound is better represented by spelling it Bada or Boro. Bodo or Bara is the name by which the Mech or Mes and the Kocharis call themselves.’²

Raj Mahan Nath is also of the same opinion towards the Bodo word and opines:

‘The inhabitants of various parts of the Bod Country were known as Bodd Fichha or Bodo-Cha or the Children of the Bod Country and were later known simply as the Bodd or Bodo.’³

According to his opinion the word Bodo came from the Tibet. The Bod who lived there Bodo Fichha or Bodo-Cha. The term "Bod" signifies "Homeland." One may argue that clan names have historically been taken from the names of territories, such as Har Bod, Kur Bod, Besti Bod, etc. Since the settlers of the country 'Bod' were called as 'Bodfichha' or 'Bodocha' etc. so, the meaning of 'Bodo' is 'Land' and that 'Fichha' is 'Children'. Thus, the meaning of 'Bodo-cha' denotes son of 'Bod' land. According to some scholars the 'Bodo' word has been derived from 'Bodo-cha' which is closely related to the word 'Bod'. According to the 2001 population census of India

¹ Narzee Bhaben: *Boro-Kocharini Somaj Arw Harimu* (Sixth Edition, 2014) p. 1

²Grierson G. A.: *Linguistic Survey of India* (Vol-III part-II 1903), quoted from Bindu Basumatary: Rao Arw Thunlai Bizirnai (Vol. II 2015) p. 63.

³ Lahary Manaranjan: *Boro Thunlaini Zarimin* (Second Edition, 2004) p.2

the total number of Bodo speaking people of Assam is 12,96,162 and 13,50,478 in India as a whole.

1.6 Area of Concentration of the Bodo

The Bodo people of Mongolian race migrated to Nepal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Assam and concentrated over there. Some of the Boro or Bodos went to Moran district of Nepal; some have gone to Behar and Uttar Pradesh and then migrated to Bangladesh. In Nepal they settled down in Moran district. Some of them went to Moimonsing and Rongpur district of Bangladesh. Some people of this clan spread to Arunachal Pradesh, Dimapur of Nagaland, Meghalaya and Tripura. Thus, the Bodo Mongolian people spread all over India- Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan. They specially made compactness in Assam. The undivided district of Assam i.e., Goalpara, Kamrup, Darang and Nogaon are the districts where the compactness of the Bodo people is found and it is also mentionable here that more in number is found in Lower Assam than the areas of Upper Assam.

The *Bodos* settled in Assam and established Kingdoms and built the nation protecting highly developed civilization and culture. Raj Mahan Nath is in the opinion:

*'The Bodos brought all the equipment for weaving and sericulture purposes like- HishanSali, Makhu, Rashw, Swrkhi, Danga-natha, Thaokhri etc. and Indi, Khun, Mugalatha and also the agricultural tools as Nan-gal, Jun-gal, Mwi, Hashini, Sikha, Rua, Khodal, Hathura, Mwswo-Mwisw etc.'*⁴

According to Bani Kanta Kakoti:

*'Amongst the Tibeto-Burman people, the Bodos were the most powerful. They built up strong Kingdoms and varying fortunes and under various name; they held away over or another part of North-Eastern India during different historical times.'*⁵

⁴ Lahary Manaranjan: *Boro Thunlaini Zarimin* (Secon Edition, 2004) p. 2

⁵ Lahary Manaranjan: *Boro Thunlaini Zarimin* (Secon Edition, 2004) p. 2

The Bodos were known as Kirato. The Kirato kings had established first kingdom in Assam. It is mentionable that Mahiranga, the king Bano, Bhagadatta, Narkhw Budang and Bishmako were the Bodo kings. They used the Bodo names to the hills, plains, rivers etc. such as Burlungbuthur (the Brahmaputra), Hazo, Lamding, Maibang, Haplong, Disang, Dwikhrong etc. But the Ahoms after the British rule called Brahmanos from Konouj and encouraged to re-nomenclate all the Bodo term in Aryan tongue and Sanskritised the names of villages, rivers etc.

Although the Bodos were scattered in the areas as mentioned above the major Bodo population is found in Assam. Consequently, the Bodos entered into a political agreement in 1993 establishing BAC, a state-wide organisation. Another Memorandum of Settlement (MOS) was BTAD signed through negotiation with B.L.T, Government of Assam and the Government of India on 10th of February 2003 comprising four districts- Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri. Again, on 27th of January 2020 the third agreement has been arrived at with All Bodo Students Union (ABSU), National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), Government of Assam and the Government of India. This agreement is called as ***Bodoland Territorial Region (B.T.R.)***. After the newly formed Tamulpur district the BTR has got five districts.

1.7 Status of Bodo Language

The language spoken by the Bodo people is said to be the Bodo language. Bodo word represents both the Bodo community and Bodo language. Bodo language belongs to Boro-Garo language group. The Bodo Language was recognized as the medium of instruction in Lower Primary classes on the 18th of May 1963. Since then, the Bodo has become medium of instruction in Assam in different classes.

- (i) On the 2nd of April, 1968 the Bodo language was introduced as a medium of instruction in High School stage.
- (ii) On the 26th of May, 1977 the Bodo language was introduced as M.I.L. subject in P.U. classes.
- (iii) On 24th of July, 1981 the Bodo language was introduced as M.I.L. subject under the affiliated colleges of the North East Hills University (NEHU).
- (iv) On 25th of January, 1980 the Bodo language was introduced as a M.I.L. subject under the affiliated colleges of the Gauhati University.

- (v) On 22nd of August, 1994 the Bodo language was introduced as M.I.L. subject for the degree classes under the Dibrugarh University.
- (vi) On 25th of November, 1997 the Bodo language was introduced as a department in Gauhati University.
- (vii) On the 31st July, 1999 the Bodo language was introduced as an elective subject under Gauhati University as well as Dibrugarh University on 4th of August, 2004.
- (viii) On the 18th January, 2006 the Bodo language was introduced as major subject under Gauhati University.
- (ix) On 31st of July, 2006 the Bodo language was introduced as an advance language subject by the Assam Higher Secondary Education Council (ASHEC).
- (x) On 27th of May, 2011 the Bodo language was opened as elective subject for the TDC (three Years Degree Courses) classes in Assam University, Silchar.

By the BTC agreement of 10th February, 2003 the Bodo language has been included in the Eight Scheduled of the Indian Constitution. It is worth mentioning that the Bodo language is the only language of the Bodo-Garo language group included in Eight Schedule of Indian Constitution.

The Bodo writers created high standard literature enabling to hold Sahitya Akademi Award and other National awards by the Government of India. In 2005, Mangalsing Hazoary was first to be awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award for his anthology of poems '*Ziuni Mwkthang Bisombi Arw Aroj*'. Now, the Bodo has been introduced as one of the subjects in competitive examinations conducted by UPSC. Besides, there is facility for elected members to deliver speeches in Bodo in both Assembly and in Parliament too. It can be cited here that the Bodo language got recognition as Official Language since 1984 in B.T.R. and in Assam as well. Now a day's PG course in Bodo is taught in four universities in Assam. These are Gauhati University, Bodoland University, Dibrugarh University and Cotton University. So, in the present context, the Bodo language is a Modern Indian language (M.I.L.) in India.

1.8 Ethnic Identity of the Koch Rabha (Rabha)

The Rabhas are the aboriginal people of North East India. They belong to Indo-Mongoloid race and linguistically they are within the Sino-Tibetan origin like the Bodos. In present time they are scattered in different areas in India having their language and culture of their own. They are scattered mainly in the districts of Darang, Goalpara, Kamrup, Kokrajhar, Udalguri, Chirang, Baksa in Assam. They are live in other parts of India like Jalpaiguri, Koch Bihar, Alipurduar, Tufanjanj Sub-division of West Bengal and Garo-hills in Meghalaya. Among the Rabhas there are different sections with different dialects such as Rongdani Rabha, Pati Rabha, Maitori Rabha, Koch Rabha, Dahori Rabha, Bitalia Rabha and Sunga Rabha. Reverend Sidney Endle mentioned about the Rabhas in his book *'The Kocharis'* (1911):

*'The name of this tribe (Rabha) is of uncertain derivation and in this district (Darang) the people themselves are sometimes called Totlas, which may perhaps be a nickname.'*⁶ (P. 83).

Dhananjay Rabha has explained the 'Rabha' word:

*'The 'Rabha' word came most probably from the word 'Rab-Ha' from Koch Rabha dialect. The word 'Rab' denotes 'uneven' or 'rough' and 'Ha' denotes 'land' or 'earth'. So, meaning the word 'Rabha' is 'rough land' or 'uneven earth'.'*⁷

Dhananjay Rabha's opinion is that some group of people who lived in 'Rab-Ha' in Tibet belonged to the Koch. Thereby they were called Rabha. They gradually migrated to Assam and Garo hills. Later on, they were known as the Rabhas from the original Tibetan Rab-Ha and settled in Mango Valley.

The Koch Rabha is a race of Rabha race. They are known as Rabha and Koch Rabha. But they called themselves as the Kocha or Koch in present time. According to the opinion of Romeo Rwtin Lokobok -the Rabhas or the Koch Rabhas call themselves Kocha. Lokobok has also mentioned in his thesis that the Rabha or Koch Rabha called themselves as the Kocha Rabha. As per the opinion of Lokobok:

⁶ Endle R. S.: *The Kocharis* (1911) p. 83.

⁷ Lokobok Romeo R.: *Cultural Identity of the Kocha Rabha: A Study of Kokrajhar District of BTAD, Assam* (2022), p-2

‘The Kocha Rabhas of Kokrajhar district are only a part of the Kocha Rabha tribe as a whole. The Kocha Rabhas are known by two names viz. the Rabha and Koch Rabha but they prefer to be called as Kocha or Koch. In their day-to-day life, they call themselves as Kocha pronouncing the Koch as Koch-ha.’⁸

However, the Koch Rabhas in Kokrajhar district have been retaining their distinct language and culture despite the fact that the many Rabha groups are dispersed over various regions.

1.9 Area of Concentration of the Koch Rabha

North-East India is home to the Indo-Mongoloid group of people, of which the Rabhas are the indigenous race. They are currently widespread across India, rather than only in the northeast. The districts of Kokrajhar, Darang, Goalpara, and Kamrup in Assam, as well as Jalpaiguri, Cooch Bihar, Alipurduar, and Tufanjonj in West Bengal and the Garo hills of Meghalaya are where they are primarily found. As per the opinion of Dhananjay Rabha, the Rabhas or the Koch Rabhas migrated from the Rab-Ha of Tibet in to Assam and Garo hills of today. Likewise, gradually they are living scattered in Assam and also in different places of India. The Rabhas have settled down in different parts of North-East India and also West Bengal. In 1995, the government of Assam established Rabha Hasong, an Autonomous Council within the state, on the basis of their population. The area of the council comprises the Goalpara district and some parts from south Kamrup.

1.10 Status of Koch Rabha (Rabha) Language

The Rabha language is also belongs to Bodo group of Bodo-Naga linguistic group. Like Bodo, the very word ‘Rabha’ is also distinctly shows the Rabhas and also the Rabha Language. Rabha language is the mother language of the Rabha people. Of course, the Rabha language is not yet been included in the Eight Schedule in its constitution by the Government of Indian. It is worth mentioning that the Bodo language is the only language which is included in the Eight Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

⁸ Lokobok Romeo R.: *Constructing Cultural Identity of the Kocha Rabha: A Study of Kokrajhar District of BTAD, Assam* (2022), p-7

There are different dialects or languages among the Rabhas, these are *Rangdani, Pati, Maitori, Koch, Dahori, Bitalia* and *Sunga*. But it can be mentioned here that the dialects *Rangdani, Maitori* and *Koches* are only found in written form. Though the Rabhas have different dialects, some Rabha people use Assamese as their main link language.

As per the population census of 2001, the number of Rabha population is 1,64,770. Male number is 83,229 where female number is 81,531. The census record shows that there are 1,30,875 Rabhas in Assam. Among them 66,053 are male and 64,822 are female.

Among the different dialects of the *Rabhas, Koch Rabha, Rangdani* and *Maitori* dialects are spoken by a good number of Rabha people. In present time the Rabhas are striving hard to create the written literature *Koch Rabha* dialect. In its starting period of Bodo literature Bodos used different scripts to write Bodo language; similarly, the *Rabhas* also using different scripts to write their Rabha language. Now the *Rabhas* use the Assamese script to write the *Rabha* language.

1.11 Hypothesis

The following are the hypothesis of the present research study-

- 1) The Bodo and Koch Rabha both the languages are belong to Sino-Tibetan same language family.
- 2) The Bodo and Koch Rabha languages have similarities in word structure.
- 3) Both Bodo and Koch Rabha languages have similarities in nominal group of morphology.
- 4) Both Bodo and Koch Rabha languages have similarities in verbal group of morphology.

1.12 Delimitation of the Research Work

The present research work ‘Bodo and Koch Rabha Morphology: A Comparative Study’ is limited to the following main points-

- 1) In case of nominal group of morphology- noun, pronoun, number, gender, case, numerals, kinship terms and classifier.
- 2) In case of verbal group of morphology- verb, adjectives, adverb and tense.

1.13 Data Collection and Methodology

The study compares the morphology of the Bodo and Koch Rabha languages from a linguistic perspective. The study is confined to the Kokrajhar District only. Data gathered from both primary and secondary sources is used to conduct the study.

(a). Primary sources:

(i). The main sources of the study are collected from the speakers of Kokrajhar district.

(ii). The researcher has recorded their voices by way of morphophonemic pattern.

(b). Secondary sources:

(i). Books, journals, articles, newspapers and such other documentations are collected from central library of the Bodoland University, Kokrajhar, central library of Janata College, Serfanguri, departmental library of Janata College Bodo Department, departmental library of the department of Bodo, Zamduar College, Saraibil, personal library of Drubojoyti Koch as secondary sources for the research.