LAND, LIVELIHOOD AND IDENTITY:
A STUDY OF THE BODOLAND TERRITORIAL AREA DISTRICTS, ASSAM

Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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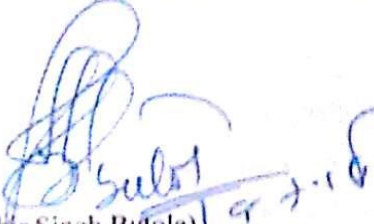Date: 19th of July, 2016

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled "Land, Livelihood and Identity: A Study of The Bodoland Territorial area Districts. Assam" submitted by me in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my original work. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this university or any other university.
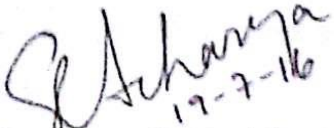
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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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For all those innocents whose lives have been trampled upon by violence

Acknowledgements

CONTENTS

List of illustrations

Select Bibliography

Appendices

List of Tables

List of Maps and Figures

Chapter 1
The Relation of Land, Livelihood and Identity

How lovely is the dear motherland
Beautifully created by god
Oh, you awake not
But lie fast asleep
Awake, awake mother dear
And arouse the sleeping country

-Oral poetry of Folk literature of Bodos

Come, oh sons of Bodos
Come out you, sword and shield in hand
Lets go and rout the enemy
Brother Bachiram, ride forward
Pursue the enemy hard.

-From Brahma 1960, p. 132

The love for a homeland, no matter whether evolved or imagined, has always been successful in driving people to do extraordinary things- good or bad but never ordinary. No piece of land is worthless if it is a homeland, no devotion is questioned if it is for the homeland and no violence is stopped if it is for the protection of the homeland. History has a treasure of stories where people have fought and died over ownership of pieces of land, died bravely with no regrets and asked the posterity to in fact do the same. This relation that exists between land and people no matter how intense- be it just an attachment with the land he/she was born and lived in or a passion willing to kill when challenged, has always been manifested in different forms throughout history. The Bodo tribe, the largest tribal group of Assam has a same story of love for homeland, in the structure of a post-colonial society where the struggle for recognition as a separate identity and hence 'deserving of a homeland' has torn the state of Assam with violence claiming the lives of thousands and making thousands homeless. It is considered to be the most violence-ridden areas in post-independent India (Mahanta 2013, p. 49).

Land is a piece of territory, but land transforms into something much bigger depending on the meanings attached to it. Land therefore, has within it the capacity to be more than a territory. In this context, land is no more a passive entity when assigned with different emotions as it becomes a defining element of the group's identity. Identity struggles has always had a strong

territorial component when it comes to the tribal population, often because the tribes in India has always been identified via the thesis of being geographically isolated. This isolation makes them clingy to their territory, not because they are historically rooted to it but also because it is that territory which assigns them their identity. The Bodo tribe of Assam, however, is not a geographically isolated tribe. They are spread all over the state of Assam if their history of migration into the north-east is accounted and hence the territorial boundary for this tribe is fragmented. Nevertheless, the Bodo movement for grant of autonomy vehemently demanded that different boundaries of territory be assigned to them as their homeland and finally, via the Bodo Accord of 2003, four western-most districts of Assam-Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri were carved out to make a homeland for the Bodos under the sixth schedule of the Indian constitution. This area is known as the Bodo Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) and the Autonomous Council which governs this territory is The Bodo Territorial Council (BTC). It has been about a century since the Bodos have emerged as an ethnic identity, struggled to become a political identity and demanded a separate territory to call their homeland.

The Land and Livelihood

BTAD is a plain area lying to the north of the river Brahmaputra in western Assam. It is drained by the Beki and the Manas- two major north bank tributaries of the river Brahmaputra. To the north of BTAD, it shares a boundary with Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh. In its west lies the state of West-Bengal and the non-autonomous districts of Assam lies in the south and east directions. Owing to its physical geography, land, water and forest have been the prime resources of the region. BTAD is very modestly urbanised making the major occupation practised by the people to be agriculture.

Map 1.1: The Bodo Territorial Area Districts
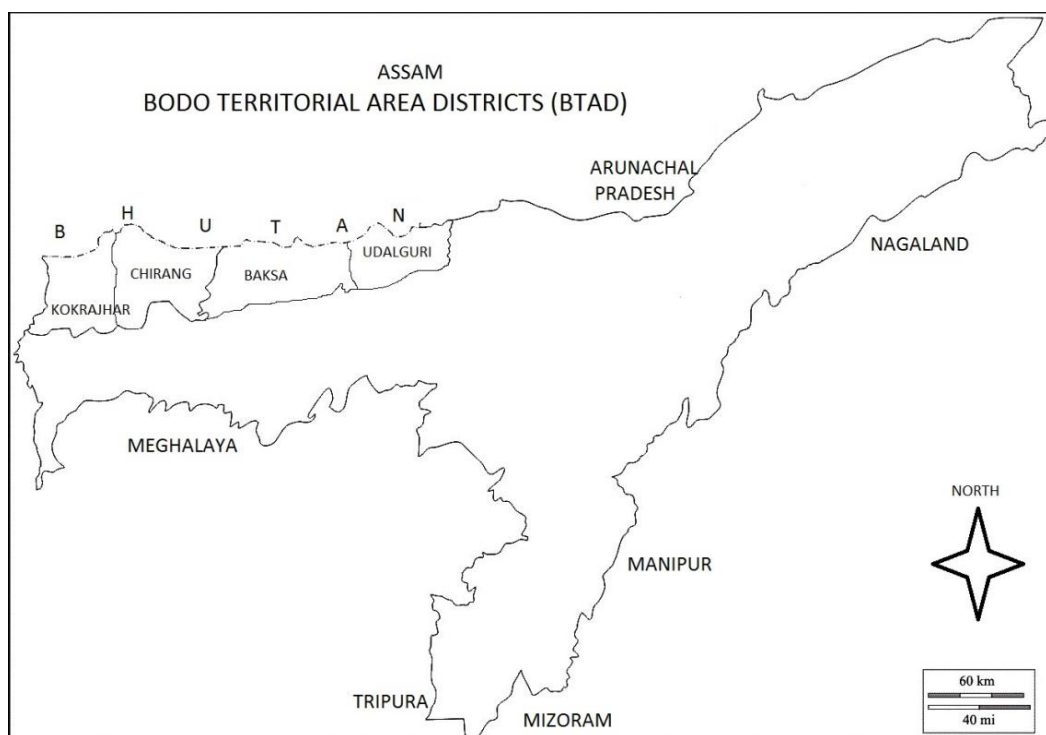
BTAD is almost entirely rural with more than 30% Scheduled Tribes population. The following table is an overview of the population and area of the BTAD:

Table1.1: Overview of the Bodo Territorial Area Districts

Districts of BTAD	Area (in sq. km)	Population in each district	% of rural population	% of ST population in each district	Population density per sq. km
Kokrajhar	3296	887,142	93.81	31.42	269
Chirang	1923	482,162	92.67	37.09	251
Baksa	2457	950,075	98.71	34.71	387
Udalguri	2012	831,668	95.48	32.11	413
Total/average	9688	3,151,047	95.55	33.83	330

Source: Calculated from the Census of India, 2011 and Economic Survey of Assam 2013-14
Note: Data on Area and hence Population density per sq. km is conflicted, considered provisional.

Although the Bodo tribe is numerically the most dominant in BTAD, there are also numerous other Scheduled tribes in the districts, Rabhas being the next major group. The Adivasis which includes Central Indian tribes like the Santhals and Oraons are also co-inhabitants of BTAD but are not recognised as the Scheduled Tribes in Assam. The Koch-Rajbonshis, a close allied group of the Bodos are no more recognised as the tribal population in the state.

Apart from these ethnic communities, Bengalis, Assamese, Nepalis, Marwaris and Biharis are also a part of the society of BTAD.

Table 1.2: The various tribal groups inhabiting the Bodo Territorial Area Districts

KOKRAJHAR		CHIRANG		BAKSA		UDALGURI	
Tribal groups in each district	% to district ST population	Tribal groups in each district	% to district ST population	Tribal groups in each district	% to district ST population	Tribal groups in each district	% to district ST population
Bodo	80.757	Bodo	93.956	Bodo	87.127	Bodo	81.752
Rabha	7.986	Rabha	1.142	Rabha	6.045	Rabha	11.547
Garo	3.741	Garo	0.248	Hajong	0.311	Garo	1.936
Sonowal Kachari	0.620	Hajong	0.215	Garo	0.039	Hajong	0.355
Barmans	0.030	Dimasa	0.004	Deori	0.011	Deori	0.056
Miri	0.016	Lalung	0.003	Barmans	0.008	Barmans	0.033
Dimasa	0.003	Miri	0.002	Miri	0.003	Miri	0.025
Hajong	0.003	Barmans	0.001	Dimasa	0.002	Lalung	0.006
Lalung	0.002	Deori	0.001	Lalung	0.002	Khampti	0.006
Mech	0.001	Mech	0.001	Mech	0.002	Mech	0.005
Singhpho	0.001			Sonowal Kachari	0.000	Sonowal Kachari	0.003
						Dimasa	0.002

Source: Calculated from the Census of India, 2011: Table A-11 on Individual Schedule Tribe Primary Census Abstract Final Data

The society in BTAD therefore, although comprises of a major tribal population, is a diverse mixture of many communities. However, it needs to be noted that the groups like the Marwaris, Biharis and Hindu Bengalis comprises of only a minor section of the society and are not depended upon agricultural practices. The tribal communities, the Rajbonshis, Assamese, Adivasis and the Bengali Muslims are the communities who are mostly dependent upon the agricultural sector and these communities also makes up a demographic majority in BTAD. The agrarian sector thereby is the leading sector in the economy of BTAD and hence land is of utmost significance.

Ownership and access to land is very significant because:

a) Land provides livelihood to the people.
b) It is the only tangible asset that a tribal household possesses

c) As more than 90% of BTAD is rural, ownership and access to land determines the quality of life.

d) Land ownership dovetails into providing social status and economic security not only for the present generation but also for posterity.

The Identity

The BTAD forms the core area of Bodo habitation and not the only area where Bodos are spread in Assam. The Bodos had migrated into Assam even before the Ahoms; considered to be the first colonizers of the state of Assam. "The Bodos or Bodo-speaking people are the oldest, the most widely spread and the most numerous in the population of the North-East" (Dikshit and Dikshit, 2014, p. 270). The had gradually spread into different parts of the north-east India, overtime acquired different names to be recognised by and hence have a fragmented presence all over the north-east.

> "The areas of the largest concentration of Bodos in Assam have been the middle and western parts of Brahmaputra valley, consisting of the districts of Darrang, Nowgong, Kamrup, Goalpara extending into Jalpaiguri and Koch Bihar districts of Bengal. The Bodos are known as Dimasas or hill Kacharis in North Cachar Hills, Rabha in the areas west of Kamrup, Lalung in Nagaon, Garos in Garo Hills, Tripuri in Tripura and Chutias in Sadiya area of North-East Assam. The Bodos who are not converted to Hinduism are largely concentrated in the submontane tract, suggesting that for the original Bodos the preferred sites for habitation were in the submontane region, but as they learnt better art of farming, they spread to other areas. Today, the submontane belt extending from Kokrajhar to Darrang district is the core area of Bodo habitat" (Dikshit and Dikshit, 2014, p.273).

The Bodos therefore, once the major colonisers of the north-east India, over the period of time fragmented away and converted into various other tribal groups. Some sub-groups, after embracing different religions have moved out of the ambit of a tribal Bodo group altogether.

Table 1.3: The Bodos and their allied groups in conversion

Sub-groups of the Bodo-Kacharis		
Communities influenced by Hinduism	Bodo group in the process of conversion	Bodos wholly converted
Kachari	Rabha	Chutia
Mech	Madhai	Koch and Rajbonshis
Lalung	Mahalia	
Hajong	Sarania	
Garo (plains)	Totila	

Source: Census of India (1881) as mentioned in Dikshit and Dikshit, 2014, p. 374

The evolution of a distinct Bodo identity however, has been non-inclusive of the tribes like the Rabhas, Garos, Dimasas, Lalungs etc. although are all are considered to have belonged under one overarching group called the Bodo speaking tribes or the sub-groups of the Bodos. The movement for grant of autonomy via identity assertion has been led by the Bodos belonging to the western area of Assam and has been focussed exclusively on the Bodo tribe, especially since the 1980s. This core area of Bodo habitation has been recognised as BTAD and is the only autonomous council in the plain-tribe category to be assigned the status of a sixth schedule area. Therefore, this study is only limited to BTAD as the area of study for the Bodo tribe.

In this core area of the Bodo tribal population, the identity movement has been closely linked with land. Therefore, for the Bodos of BTAD ownership over a territory or the importance of land transcends the conventional contours of land being only a socio-economic asset because:

a) For the Bodos, the land of BTAD is their "motherland" which has been earned by them through martyrdom, sacrifice and bravery. The very idea of a motherland assigns to it the characteristics of an "indivisible territory."[1] Taking on territory as an indivisible component actually grants it the character of an almost pious entity. This means that even a 'perception' that the territory is somehow going to be lost justifies any means necessary to keep it 'undivided and safe'. The possibility of loss of this land then, is a powerful trigger of emotion, of economic reasoning and also of a social disturbance so much so that, violence in the name of protecting this land is often an outcome. In such a situation where communities are shaped by their association with land, land ownership or access goes into creating certain identities of this community which stands protected by the very lives of the people itself.

b) In the year 2003, four new districts were demarcated on the basis of Bodo majority which constitutes the BTAD. The driving logic which sanctioned the creation of BTAD was that the indigenous population (Bodos) have been losing out on their resources throughout history due to mass migrations into their areas and these migrant communities has been constantly alienating them from their resources. Although the

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[1] The theory of "Indivisible territory" explains why some ethnic identity issues turn violent.
"Territory is a sine qua non of the state and can be an irreducible component of ethnic group identity. For both, control over territory may become a matter of survival and, consequently, an indivisible issue. When both sides in a conflict regard control over a disputed territory as indivisible, violence is likely." (Toft, 2003, p. 2)

demand was to create a separate state for the Bodos, keeping in mind the safeguarding of resources against the rapid increase of the "other communities"[2], what was achieved was the creation of the Bodo Territorial Autonomous Districts. The creation of these Autonomous Districts, therefore, is acceptable for the Bodos more as a consolation prize for a long endured strife, conflict and violent loss. The BTAD therefore is the child of a continuous long struggle of the Bodos for "safeguarding their resources". The right of self-determination has successfully won them the 6th schedule status among plain tribes- the exception in the country. The history of struggle to arrive at an Autonomous Council in order to safeguard their resources, primarily land, therefore, grants land the position of that supreme resource which has been hard-earned.

c) Land also has a special importance for the Bodos because folklore, cultural norms, religious proceedings are all embedded in their association with land. The Bodo folklore abounds in tales of agriculture, rivers and rain which pronounces too clearly the 'belongingness' that the tribal psyche has with the land. In the Bodo traditions, if the chastity of a daughter becomes questionable, the process of establishing the truth involves three elements- rice, land and the revered Siju tree. According to Endle,

> "In cases where there are several unmarried girls in a family, and one of them is suspected of having broken the law of chastity, the following plan for detecting the offender is sometimes adopted. The whole family gathers round the sacred Siju tree *(Euphorbia Splendens)*…at the foot of this revered tree a quantity of rice (uncooked) is solemnly buried and allowed to remain there over-night. Early next morning, this rice is carefully disinterred, and a certain quantity is given to each grown-up girl to be masticated. The offender, under the pressure of the fear of imminent detection is unable to masticate her potion of rice, the faculty of secreting saliva failing her in her terror of discovery and disgrace." (Endle, 1911, pp. 30-31)

Such a process is also resorted to in determining theft or other misdemeanours in the family circle. These traditions shows how land and its produce is integrated into the Bodo way of

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[2] These other communities are considered to be the migrant communities and were brought in by the colonial British Government to cater to the resource use in the state of Assam, they include:
a) Santhali and Oraon population brought in from Central India to work at the tea plantations of Assam
b) The people from then India, now Bangladesh to work as agricultural aids in the abundant lands of Assam

life. This association with the land is more than topophilia[3], because it is governed by a continued cultural traditional root; challenge or threatening of which often gives way to violence. It defines their ethnic identity and concomitantly, defines the very essence of the Bodos as a tribe.

Land, thus, is not merely the territory where people live but is the "living resource" which assigns the people their 'subsistence', their 'belonging' and finally their 'space' in the society. In this context, land becomes that unanimously accepted marker of the identity of a community which is amply defined not only by a history of struggle but by the results of that struggle. Access and ownership of land therefore determines the present as much as it gets defined by the past. The Land-Livelihood-Identity question of the Bodos therefore has become associated with the very definition of the Bodo tribe.

Significance of the study:

Today nearly two-thirds of all armed conflicts include an ethnic component (Toft, 2003, p. 3). Ethnic conflicts are almost twice as likely to break out as fights over governmental control and four times more likely than interstate wars.[4] Ethnic conflicts are the most prevalent form of armed conflict and are unlikely to abate in the short and long term (ibid). These conflicts affect the lives of millions throughout the world. The ethnic conflicts of Assam are one of such conflicts where there has been a continued loss of lives and property over the decades. Violence has been an inseparable part of Assam's social and political development since independence (Hussain 1995). A chronology of the major episodes of violence in Assam shows that the issue of the Bodo identity assertion has remained "the issue" in the society and politics of the state of Assam since independence but yet to be solved. Needless to mention that such frequent outbreaks of violence and conflicts destabilizes the entire society which needs to be resolved. Understanding the reasons behind such disturbance in the society where citizens are not only victims of violence but are also active participants is important. This

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[3] Term coined by geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) in *Topophilia: a study of environmental perception, attitudes and values,* Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall in order to describe the love that people of a place has for it and the affective bond that people inhabiting a place shares for that place. Such a bond varies in intensity and in its expression and it is often derived from aesthetic appreciation, memory, pride of ownership, dependence on a place for one's livelihood or security. In the context of the Bodos, the last one in the series is the most significant.

[4] Wallensteen, P and Sollenberg, M. (1997). Armed Conflicts, Conflict Termination, and Peace Agreements, 1989–1996. *Journal of Peace Research,* Vol. 34, No. 3, pp. 339–58. as quoted in Toft (2003, p. 3)

work is intended to provide an inclusive understanding of the issue and has the potential to shape policy outcomes.

Table 1.4: A timeline of those violent conflicts in Assam which contributes to the Land-Livelihood-Identity question of BTAD

Times	Event	Place	Character	Targeted at	Consequence
post-1947	Communal violence in the wake of partition of the country	Districts of Lower Assam	Communal		Community-targeted mass killings, loss of property and displacement
1960	Linguistic-Cultural Identity conflict	Spread all over Assam	Ethnic		Loss of life and property
1972	Linguistic-Cultural Identity conflict	Spread all over Assam	Ethnic		Loss of life and property
1980s	AASU agitations	Widely spread	Indigene-Outsider, Ethnic	Bengali Muslims	Loss of life and property
1983	Nellie Massacre	Nellie, Nagaon	Indigene-Outsider, Ethnic	Bengali Muslims	Community targeted mass killings and displacement
1993	Post Bodo Accord violence	Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon	Indigene-Outsider, Ethnic	Bengali Muslims	Wide scale displacement, 18000 Muslims displaced
1994	July 94 violence	Barpeta	Indigene-Outsider, Ethnic	Bengali Muslims	Community targeted killings and wide scale displacement. 56000 Muslim villagers displaced and more than 100 killed
1996	May 96 violence	Kokrajhar and Bongaigaon	Indigene-Outsider, Ethnic	Adivasis	Community targeted killings and wide scale displacement. Many dead and 262600 displaced
1998	September 98 violence	Bongaigaon	Indigene-Outsider, Ethnic	Adivasis	314000 Adivasis displaced
2008	August-October violence	Udalguri and Darrang	Indigene-Outsider, Ethnic	Bengali Muslims	Killings and more than 100000 made homeless
2012	July violence	Kokrajhar,	Indigene-	Bengali	450000 Muslims

		Chirang, Dhubri	Outsider, Ethnic	Muslims	displaced
2014	December violence	Kokrajhar, Chirang, Sonitpur	Indigene-Outsider, Ethnic	Adivasis	Community- targeted killings, more killings in protests of both Bodos and Adivasis in the aftermath.

Source: Compiled from Bhattacharjee (1996); Guha (2006); Hussain (1987, 2000); Mahanta (2013)

Objectives

The objectives of this work are:

a) To understand how identities are governed and shaped in an indigenous society that has become plural because of in-migration.
b) To study the Bodo movement in the context of their land and identity.
c) To understand the Bodo community in respect to their ethnicity and conflicts.
d) To understand the linkages between land-livelihood and identity in an indigenous society like BTAD.

Research Questions

a) How has access to land shaped the Bodo identity?
b) How the contemporary Bodo identity is defined? What are the nature of the identity conflicts and the consequences of the Bodo movement?
c) Is the Bodo identity still determined by land ownership, access and alienation?
d) What has been the role of the Bodo Territorial Council in addressing the land-livelihood-identity question of the Bodos?

The approach of the thesis: Data Source and Methodology

This thesis is an exploration into the working of the relationship between land and identity (via the understanding of the struggles of the Bodo tribe) with focus on land as the major defining element of identity. This work adopts a somewhat different framework in understanding the Bodo movement, when compared to the existing work on the Bodos.

Instead of taking the outsiders' point of view on the land-livelihood and identity question of BTAD, this study has worked the other way round; i.e. it has tried to look at the process of identity construction, the land ownership structures and its linked livelihood aspects from the within. This study relates with the questions as the people of BTAD understand them,

interpret them, perceive them and act on them. This work, although necessarily substantiated from the existing literature, is based on an ethnographic field survey because the emotions which construct an identity, the feeling of loss in violence and the never-ending conflicts over lands cannot be explained and understood by mere quantification and analysis. If identity is determined by the attachment one has with the land, or if one demands a separate homeland because he/she understands it to be the sole way to safeguard one's ethnic identity or if one goes into violent conflict in the name of achieving a homeland- all point out to complex multifaceted issues which quantitative data alone is not armed to tackle.

Ethnography as a tool of analysis:

Ethnography is a tool for detailed research pioneered by anthropologists. It is the investigation of a culture, a thorough study of a cultural group involving systematic collection, description and analysis of the collected information to reach a definite end. "Typical ethnographic research employs three kinds of data collection: interviews, observation, and documents. This in turn produces three kinds of data: quotations, descriptions, and excerpts of documents, are resulting in one product: narrative description. This narrative often includes charts, diagrams and additional artefacts that help to tell the story" (Hamersley, 1990). There defining characteristics of ethnographic research are:

a) Ethnography uses the society as its laboratory to carry out its study.

b) Ethnography involves interaction with the subject being studied; this interaction is mostly a long term one and might be traced back over fragmented time periods.

c) Ethnographic research is aimed to provide a holistic and a systematic view of the study.

d) It is based on documentation, recording of experiences of people and perspectives of the cultural group being studied.

e) It has a wide scope because it is descriptive. Different interpretations, models and theories can be drawn from the information collected via an ethnographic survey. Therefore, ethnography is interpretative.

f) Research is not allowed to be diverted by use of any hypothesis or pre-arrived conclusions. It is guided by research questions pertaining to the cultural group and hence the focus is on the quality rather than quantity.

Methodology used in this thesis: Modified Ethnography

After a review of some of the literature on BTAD and a pilot survey in a few Bodo villages of Assam, the following findings were the most prominent:

a) Land is the most conflicted of resources in the society but also the most important. Hence, a proper analysis of land via quantitative data was required if the land question of the BTAD were to be aptly captured.

b) The Land issue was also tied to various conflicted issues- like illegal claims over the fallow land, a blame-game between communities regarding ownership, and most importantly, the emotions of the people were significantly directed by land ownership. The way the Bodos understood land and nature was more passionate than their neighbouring communities. Hence, capturing these emotions and passions, which were so attached to the land needed to be integrated into the study because their everyday lives were lived in that framework. An omission of these would be a major drawback.

c) Identity is a qualitative issue of research. The only research methodology which could capture the Bodo identity, apart from a content analysis was to be within the very matrix of the Bodo identity to understand it in all its dimensions.

Therefore, owing to the nature and demand of the topic, the study adopts a mix use of the quantitative as well as qualitative techniques. The objective is to study each issue from the lenses of a quantitative analysis and at the same time incorporate a qualitative approach. For example, the land ownership of the Bodos and Non-Bodos have been quantified by collecting data but at the same time also analysed the land ownership structure in BTAD as the people perceives them in their society. The spatial conflict over ownership of the fallow land has been studied through quantitative data, but at the same time that space of conflict has also been analysed qualitatively in order to capture the way the people of BTAD understands them.

Quantitative data: The study is based on quantitative data collected from the field survey for land ownership. The methodology used was administration of questionnaires in the field survey to collect the data on land. This work follows the classification of land ownership as per the National Sample Survey 70th round on 'Land and Livestock holdings'. The sample size of NSS surveys in the districts of BTAD is not only too small for analysis but also non-

inclusive of all the different communities. A holistic picture of land ownership, inclusive of all the communities could be covered only via a field survey. Hence the NSS data on land has not been used and instead this work is based on primary data collected in the same structural frame of NSS. Tables and charts have been used in order to present the data collected on land.

Qualitative data: It is here that the study adopts the ethnographic framework for analysis because documentation of the experiences, emotions and perceptions which makes up the narratives of the people can be best captured via ethnography. However, ethnography requires the documentation of all the elements noticed in the field because it is often of an extensive time period. Owing to a limited time period of 25 days, the field work limited itself to only addressing the issues which were directly linked with land and identity. The field study was aimed at capturing how the Bodo identity understands itself and the others; and also how the Bodo identity is understood by the Non-Bodos. The tools used:

a) Questionnaire based Interviews of the heads of the households over the required issues.
b) Focus group discussions with the members of the Village Council Development committees (VCDC).
c) Making of mental maps: The President of the VCDC committee and in his/her absence or inability from one of the members to make a map, from their memory and perception, of the social groups inhabiting their VCDC and the conflicted area, if present, of fallow Khas land.

The data thus collected were tabulated into different narratives based on the broad themes they covered. The mental maps were redrawn, making the least of the distortions while making it presentable.

This work, therefore, uses an integrative framework of content analysis, quantified data analysis and interpretation of the Bodo land-identity questions as the people themselves understands it. The research questions in this thesis have not only been answered by a data analysis but also by integrating the subjects of analysis into the study itself- their interpretations, emotional attachments and feelings being captured by an ethnographic survey and quantified data supporting these claims from the field survey. This work, therefore, in many respects is a hybrid of methodologies – it is a modified ethnographic methodology

inclusive of quantitative data; it is both quantitative and qualitative, it is both descriptive and interpretive.

The application of a different structural framework in understanding the land- livelihood-identity question has both its limitations and advantages. The primary limitation is that, since the structure adopted is new, there have not been many studies that this work has been to reference. However, it can be argued that such a limitation can be accepted if not overlooked because the field survey highlighted many different issues which had never been integrated into the studies of BTAD.

Data Source for land ownership

Primary Data: The primary survey has been conducted at two levels- the village level and the household level.

Although the majority of the sample pertains to the village level and provides a macroscopic picture of the questions dealt with, the household surveys bring in a more in-depth microscopic picture to the fore. The study wanted to ensure the coverage of the widest possible area under the 4 districts of the BTAD and hence the village level surveys have been conducted.

Criterion of selecting samples:

The survey assumed the possible existence of a core and a peripheral area within the BTAD in terms of the construction and assertion of the identity; the assumption was based on the existence of a more aggressive manifestation of identity assertion in the administrative headquarter as compared to the other districts. That is why, Kokrajhar district has been given the utmost priority and thereby household surveys have been conducted in this district apart from village surveys. The rest of the three districts- Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri have been covered through village surveys.

Household Surveys: Total Sample size= 120 Households (HH)

Kokrajhar district: 2 Blocks

- Bodo majority block (39.21% ST, Census 2011): Kokrajhar
- Bodo Minority Block (13.72% ST, Census 2011): Gossaigaon

Average ST Population based on which the majority and Minority category has been obtained is 27.54% (calculated from Census 2011)

Bodo households= 60 and Non-Bodo households= 60 from 7 villages (random sampling within the selected block). The Non-Bodo groups include Rajbangsi, Rabhas, Nepali, Bengali and Adivasi.

Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri districts

For each of these three districts, the village samples have been selected based on the same Bodo and Non-Bodo criteria:

District Chirang:

- Bodo Majority: Block: Sidli (45.47% ST Census 2011)
    - 2 VCDCs = Villages= 19
- Bodo Minority: Block: Manikpur (10.8% ST Census 2011)
    - 2 VCDCs = Villages= 11

District Udalguri:

- Bodo Majority: Block Khoirabari (50.3% ST Census 2011)
    - VCDC = Villages =10
- Bodo Minority: Block Mazbat (21.26 % ST Census 2011)
    - 2 VCDCs = Villages =14

District Baksa

The Blocks could not be selected as per the majority and minority sample because of unpredicted closure due to various 'Bandhs'. Therefore, in instead one Block has been covered and from it Bodo and Non-Bodo VCDCs has been covered to meet the sample coverage.

Block: Tihu-Barama (40.4 % ST Census 2011)

- Bodo Majority VCDC: Silakuti = 22 villages
- Bodo Minority VCDC: Koklabari = 7 villages

The total samples therefore under Primary survey:

- Household Surveys = 120

- Villages Surveys = 9 VCDCs = 86 Villages

Organisation of the work

The thesis has been divided into seven chapters. There are four core chapters- each deals with one of the research questions and three other chapters- the first two chapters are introductory- which explains the context, data source, methodology and literature review.

Chapter 3 is a historical depiction of the evolution of the Bodo identity. The focus of the chapter is to understand how the Bodo identity has been shaped by continued land alienation in the colonial and post-colonial periods. The chapter is also a narrative about how the Bodo identity grew from an ethnic to an othering identity, incorporating politics and creating the 'indigene-outsider binary' on the already existing land situation.

Chapter 4 is a continuation of the third chapter but of the contemporary time period and is based on the ethnographic field survey. This chapter defines the contemporary Bodo identity as understood by the Bodos as well by the Non-Bodos. This chapter shows how the two communities perceive and understand each other and hence brings out the various differences which often become the explanation of the conflicts in the society.

Chapter 5 enquires into the contemporary land question of BTAD by making a comparative analysis of the land ownership structure of Bodos and the Non-Bodos. It brings out the significance of land in determining the constructs of the Bodo identity via a quantitative analysis of land owned and possessed by the communities based on the primary survey. It also incorporates the Land Title ownership in the area and brings out the conflict over the claimed ownership of the fallow land in BTAD. The chapter also shows how conflicts over the ownership of fallow land have given rise to Informal land institutions in BTAD.

Chapter 6 is a critical analysis of the creation of the BTC, its role in addressing the land-livelihood-identity question of BTAD. This chapter analyses the very logic behind assigning a sixth schedule status to the BTAD, its powers, functions and limitations. It also discusses the major rift in the BTAD society- the creation of an autonomous council for the minority Bodos and its implications.

Chapter 7 sums up the findings of the research questions.

Identity forms a very integral part of the lives of everybody because it makes an individual, a group, a community, a region and also a nation. The simple fact that Google search lists over 93 million sites linked to the key word 'identity' (Malsevic, 2006, p.24) shows that there is a plethora of avenues to explore identity. The issue of identity is moulded by social norms and customs, politics, economy and personal beliefs. The concept of identity therefore is existent for all, subjected to be modified by all and hence influences all. Identity therefore, being influenced and made at such diverse levels has earned it a universal appeal but the same has also made understanding identity very ambiguous.

The term identity politics is widely used throughout the social sciences and the humanities to describe phenomena which arise from "identity". Identity politics covers topics "as diverse as multiculturalism, the women's movement, civil rights, lesbian and gay movements, separatist movements in Canada and Spain, and violent ethnic and nationalist conflict in postcolonial Africa and Asia, as well as in the formerly communist countries of Eastern Europe" (Bernstein, 2005, p. 47). The issue of identity as taken up in this research, as has already been stated, deals with identity and its assertion whose main driver is the access and ownership of land in a tribal Autonomous area. This review of literature therefore, confines itself to the boundaries of identity politics in relation the criteria of 'violent ethnic identity conflict'[5].

The literature which deals with similar research is based on a number of constructed structures where politics, economy and territorial affiliation forms the broad contours within which the whole issue of identity is positioned. These can be called the broad theoretical framework which explains identity and its associated issues. The literature on identity has been group under three categories to make the analysis comprehensive.

The Political Structure of understanding Identity

This paradigm associates identity and its construction and assertion with multiculturalism, minority and group rights, right of self-determination and not the least with the increasing effect of globalization on the world. The assertion of identities, identity politics or the upsurge of ethno-nationalism or sub-nationalism is a global phenomenon which characterises

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[5] The ethnic identity issues in BTAD have given way to violence in more than one instance; therefore, the ethnic identity struggle becomes the struggle of identity politics.

states having plural ethnic groups or states having more than one nation in its territory. The political structure provides the following explanation for the rise of identity issues:

a) The upsurge of ethno-nationalism aided by the fall of the communist regime in the Soviet Union and the East European nations has fuelled the politics of identities.

b) The continued spread of globalisation, aimed to be an equalizing process but being otherwise.

c) The process of formation of nation-states in the modern era.

d) Failure and insensitivity of the State towards diverse groups which constitutes its populace.

It has been argued that the ever increasing globalisation process has been successful in flattening out all the differences across the global societies and thereby has led to homogenisation of cultural identities. It is "this homogenising thrust of globalisation which is being resisted at different levels through appeals to culture, ethnicity, history, language and similar vehicles of identity, which are both national and sub-national" (Singh, 2006, p. 205). The homogenising effect of globalisation is equally thwarted by the parallel rise of the subaltern/ sub-national/ethno-national movements in order to preserve their "diversity". Globalisation has created a paradoxical situation which has resulted into homogenisation and the promotion of global 'monoculture' where local cultures stood in threat of losing their identities (Dhanagare, 2003, p. 23). Examples of such resistances abound in the identity struggles of the Eastern European nations as well as in the Islamic nations. The local or particular societies with an affiliation of ethnic identities or any other identity are circled out to be the "different or others" which fuels their identity politics. The process of globalisation creates a reshuffle of identities which otherwise has been embedded in the societies for generations. R. Robertson names this process to be "universalization of the particular" and "particularisation of the universal".

The modern period which is characterised by the formation of the nation-states has seen the mass uprising of the sub-national/ethno-national identities because the main root of the problem lies in the process of formation of the nation-states themselves. The characterising elements that make nation-states are also problematic which leaves ample space for identity assertions. Singh points out that:

"During the modern period, the main stress was on pluralism, not on multiculturalism. The former recognises the presence of differences in the society but remains silent about the

public status of diverse identities in the politics of the same society. Its prime concern is peaceful co-existence and harmony among the diverse identities. The main limitation of pluralism is that it does not deal with the issue of equality in public sphere amongst the diverse identities of the society. Multiculturalism's major concern is the equality amongst diverse identities in the public sphere. Pluralism gives the dominant position to so called national identity and other identities are subordinated to it" (Singh,   2006, p. 207).

Apart from it, the "process of nation-building" in itself left the lacuna required for identity assertions. The whole process of nation-building in the modern period has been pregnant with "the inherited psyche of identity which found expression in the dynamics of religion, ethnicity and minority (Baral, 2003, p. 80). The process of nation-building in cases of those societies having plural groups went on to construct a universal national identity without addressing the differences in its plural populace. Under the aegis of a modern structure, a universal national identity was constructed by merely assimilating rather than accommodating the diverse socio-cultural identities into the mainstream politics.   Its detrimental impact has been argued by Singh to be:

> Modernisation or modernity as an epitome of rationality tried to construct an overall umbrella or universal national identity in each nation-state but it met with dismal failure. The process of construction of aforesaid identity led to the assimilation instead of accommodation of local identities into the universal identity. Consequently, the local identities felt threatened and started asserting in public domain vis-à-vis the imagined national identity, which has been shaped by the nation-states throughout the world (Singh, 2006, p. 207)

This priority of 'assimilation' rather than 'accommodation' of the different diverse communities in a plural society has led to the assertion of identities of the "marginal groups in the nation-states" and of the subaltern and has provided the congenial environment for the politics of identities. The idea of sovereign nation-state in the context of plural societies, based on the constructed universal national identity, is the root cause of the whole trouble (ibid: 208). Along with it, the dominant cultural/religious group which is in majority in a state has also taken to domination of the local/particularistic groups and the assertion of identities is a reinforcement of the local identities against the majoritarian domination. In the absence of an overall and universal plural identity, the particularistic identities have emerged on the political landscape of the world as well as nation-states (ibid: 207).

Specific to South Asia and India, the role of the "Sectarian State" in creation of the fertile ground for identity assertions is dominant. The literature strongly accuses the state in creating disruption in the lives of the subalterns whereby they are forced to revolt. The demeaning role of the state is too clear when Muni states that:

"It is this sectarian state which isolates and marginalises minority groups and identities, provoking them to react. The sectarian state also emboldens the majoritarian ethnic groups to exploit and oppress the minorities, forcing them to revolt" (Muni, 2003, p. 401)

The situation in Assam and more specifically in the BTAD is a situation of intense internal politics where the politics partially explains the conflicting identities. Apart from these afore-stated reasons of rise of ethno-nationalism, there are a host of reasons which stands valid when it comes to ethno-nationalism in BTAD:

a) Role of a colonial history
   a. Bringing in of labourers from Central India (Santhal and Oraon tribals) to work in the tea cultivation of Assam
   b. Bringing in of labourers from then Bengal, now Bangladesh to work the abundant fields of Assam to promote agricultural activities in the state.
   c. Role of the Foreign missionaries
b) The persistent neglect by the Assamese high caste/class dominant State Government which neglects the other tribal groups
   a. Role of Assam movement to impose Assamese language on all the different ethnic groups in the state
   b. Continued superiority of the Assamese driving a wedge between themselves and the other ethnic groups
c) Initiation of the tribal groups to arrive at their own narratives of nationalism, giving rise to 'Nations from Below' and 'Nativism' in search of a 'Abode proper'
   a. Failure of the tribal political institutions
d) Failure of the Autonomous Council to deliver to the tribal population

It has been argued in the literature that the ethnic ferment in north east is the result of: withdrawal of old-style colonialism, rise of democratic forces which sprouted new hopes for the population failed to deliver, neo-colonial intrigues of contemporary imperialism. The colonial regime had helped in the forging of "new nationalist" identities which were an over-lap on the ancient ethnic identities of the people. The hope with which the journey to gain independence was carried out was crushed by the newly formed independent State as the tribal groups continued to remain in the periphery only to be dominated by the upper class/caste of the Assamese ruling State. Freedom for India in 1947 only meant "continued Colonisation" for them (Roy, 2005, p. 2177). In the decade following independence, the welfare state, failing to deliver their promises to the masses led to the creation of a new

awareness among the Dalits and Adivasis. It was in response to such a treatment that they now started demanding "an active political role for themselves" (Gohain, 1997, p. 390). To fuel this further, Assam saw the mass supported popular movement to install Assamese as the state language deeply disturbed the tribal elites. The structural constraints of the bourgeois-liberal democracy (that India is) prevented the operationalization of the rules of bio-politics to their full effect to realise the integration of the common people with the nation and the ethnic communities continued to nurse their feeling of difference, their own cultural identities and did not respond to the call of national integration (Roy, 2005, p. 2177).

The failure of the state is also highlighted by the fact that the struggle of 'decolonisation' has always been spear-headed by the ethno-national groups. Roy points out that the response of the state for such struggles has always been in the form of:

a) granting statehood or regional autonomy by signing special Acts and Agreements,
b) devolution of power through the institutions of local self-governments (panchayats and municipalities),
c) development (economic) initiatives through people's participation,
d) campaign for cultural and ideological integration into Indian nationalism, and
e) resorting to coercion as a measure of suppression of 'rebel' voice (Roy, 2005, p. 2177).

The Bodoland Accord of 2003 under which BTAD was constituted was one of such 'silencing' tactics of the 'rebel' Bodo ethno-national group by the State. This objective of the state presents a figure of dominance through its game of power that seeks to normalise the cultural politics of identities from below (Roy, 2005, 2177). The failure of the state in tacking the Bodo ethnic conflicts is also pointed out by Mahanta (2013) when he states that the crisis in Bodoland is a reflection of the abdication of responsibility by the Indian state:

> "First, the state has not addressed the structural issues that confront indigenous tribes like the Bodos since the dawn of Independence in 1947. Second, it has failed to address the multicultural, multi-linguistic and multi-ethnic composite culture of the region; rather, it has continued with the policy of ethnic insularity and ethnic homeland followed by the colonial rulers" (Mahanta, 2013, p. 49)

The Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District (BTAD) area, popularly known as Bodoland, is one of the most violence-ridden areas in post independent India. It has witnessed a saga of ethnic-hostility, wanton killing, destruction and displacement right from the days of the first

failed Bodo Accord of 1993, though the identity assertion of the autochthon Bodo tribes goes back to the days of the pre-Independence period (Mahanta, 2013, p. 49). The Bodo nationalism in Assam emerges through a multifaceted contestation: against the Indian State, against the dominance of Assamese nation and a clash with other peripheral and dominant identities such as Adivasi, Bengali, and Koch (Roy, 2005, p. 2178). The identity assertion of the Bodos functions at two levels: the Bodos refuses to be appropriated by the dominant Assamese identity in the state and the same time, the Bodos attacks the other subordinate tribal and non-tribal identities in the areas of the Bodo majority. The explanation of the being the 'Autochthon' of the place is upheld to be the dominant reason in the political set-up although much deeper resource conflict and livelihood issues are present.

The failure of the political administrative institutions constituted to address the grievances of the tribals has also gone a long way in fuelling the Bodo Imbroglio. The proposal to create a tribal state- 'Udayachal' due to internal politics of the different tribes also tested the patience of the Bodos. Even the Union of several different tribes under the umbrella of Plains Tribal Council of Assam fell apart in the 1980s as militant Bodo nationalism increasingly antagonised other tribes in the alliance (Gohain, 1997, p. 390). Such continued failures on the ground of arriving at a particular tribal institution to address the issues of the tribals or the ethno-national groups created hopelessness among these groups so that it was increasing realised that asserting their different identities in order to gain autonomy and then the status of a separate state was the only way to find proper solution to their problems.

The signing of the Bodoland Accord of 2003 and the creation of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) to govern BTAD under the provision of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution has not been able to quell the conflicts of the region. The smaller states or autonomous district councils created on ethnic lines (and according to the Constitutional provisions) so far have not addressed the issues on which the movements were launched. The post-conflict arrangements have failed to arrest the ethnic cleavages, the ever-increasing class differences within the community, or to protect the cultural rights of the tribal groups (Roy, 2005, p. 2179). The failure of the Autonomous Councils and its elected "popular" leaders adds to the fuel of resistance and onslaught of the Bodos which motivates them to wage the violent struggle in the name of ethnicity. Such failures only create a further sense of hopelessness for the Bodo mass, thereby re-affirming their faith on "their loss, their

exploitation, their neglect, their backwardness". Roy (2005) captures this scenario when he states that:

> "The…Bodo movement began as freedom movements but ended with a 'cohabitation arrangement' with state, and the forces of liberation ended up being 'agents of integration' of the liberal democratic ('colonising') state. A complete turnabout on the part of the leaders of 'liberation movements' in the north-east from a position of rebellion to a law-abiding integrative agent could be noticed in case of the leaders of the now disbanded Bodo Liberation Tigers. The leaders of the BLT seem happy accepting positions such as the chief executive member and deputy chief executive member of the interim council of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC). The erstwhile leaders of the liberation movement soon break up into leaders of multiple political factions and parties, learn the manipulative tactics of electoral politics in no time and even prepare to be 'sold' in the race for power in the state. The regional political parties of 'nations from below' often change political camps when there is an opportunity to make easy money or to grab a share of power" (Roy, 2005, p. 2179).

Land and Resource: Economic Structure

This set of literature highlights the importance of economic factors in understanding the tribal identity conflicts in Assam.

Singh (1987) argues that the 'identity crisis' in northeast India does not come from the urge to national integration, rather the main sustaining force behind the 'identity crisis' syndrome emanates from the complex operation of economic forces in the region. He states that the indigenous people, the tribals and the non-tribals alike firmly believes that the condition of poor state of life in the state "has been caused not by their inactivity, sloth or lack of entrepreneurship, but by 'outsiders' who have 'robbed' them of their economic opportunities both in the agrarian sector as well as in government offices" (Singh, 1987, p. 279). In support of this view there are two special features of development interest, as pointed out by Singh:

> "First, there is a widely shared view, particularly in Assam, that no important development project was ever initiated in the region without clamour from the local people…..Secondly, the words 'development', 'industrialization', and 'urbanization' are considered in several quarters in the region as instruments to favour the outside population of the region (Singh, 1987, pp. 279-280).

The importance of the economic forces is also highlighted by Fernandes as he draws from the historical lessons as to why the ethnic identity issue is economic in nature. According to him, the base of the conflict lies in "the effort to control the resources (as it) is basic to it". Such an effort on the part of the ethno-nationals has found "expression in terms of nationality, identity and ethnicity; the tribals are not able to cope with the depletion of their resources caused by the commercialisation of forest and agricultural produce" (Fernandes, 1999, p. 3579).

Further, the mixing up of the tribals with the dominant groups in the society gives rise to an "ethnic consciousness" and "finally leads to identity expansion or several groups merging to expand their identity without giving up their individuality" (ibid).

The direct and the most significant economic onslaught on the tribals, primarily Bodos has been the systemic and continuous process of land alienation. There are two important factors to be considered under this frame of literature relating to the tribal identity question:

a) Land alienation of the tribals: colonial and post-colonial periods
b) In-migration leading to sharing of the same resource base

Elwin (1949) argues that "the first cause of their (tribals) depression was the loss of their land and forests. This had the effect so enervating the tribal organism that it had no interior resistance against infection by a score of other serious evils…to the tribal mind, government's attitude about land and forests is as important as any scheme for development or education" (Elwin, 1949, p. 62). The economically poor condition of the Scheduled Tribes has been highlighted time and again in the literature.

Sharma argues that "prior to the advent of the British, the tribals enjoyed a separate space which prevented rigorous interaction of the tribals with the non-tribal 'mainstream population' of the society although small scale trade relations existed between them. In fact, social interactions between them were strongly discouraged" (Sharma, 2001, p. 4791). The tribals were left mostly undisturbed from the "outside" world. The colonial government brought about the tremendous changes in the tribal affairs of the state and even "relatively isolated tribal habitats were encroached upon" (ibid). Arnold (1982) argues that the loss of resources of the tribals started with the non-tribals penetrating into the forest and the hill areas to exploit economic resources, which undermined the traditional economy and society of the tribals. This sudden infiltration of the non-tribals into the tribal areas is seen as the incentive of the colonial government. Along with it, the British laid the basis of private property and created feudal interest on land including land and forests belonging to the tribals. The major issue of scarcity of land for the tribals has been created primarily owing to their land ownership structure. In the tribal societies, community ownership[6] of land was the practised and accepted form of land ownership which was not acceptable to the British colonial government. Land being abundant, the tribal peasantry moved from place to place

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[6] This community ownership driven mode of production in the tribal societies is also characterized by very minimal levels of accumulation in the tribal society.

cultivating jhoom lands. Because most tribals were attached to a mode of shifting cultivation, migrating from one area to another, it led to the colonial government to not grant the tribals permanent land-rights (Gohain, 1997). Barman (1995) argues that this practice was also carried out in order to avoid paying revenue to the British colonial government. This process deprived the tribal peasants from procuring permanent patta land rights.

Most significant was the change in the land administration policies introduced by the British. Assam went the onslaught of the new land policy of the British and the problem for Assam was even more acute than the rest of mainland India. The tribals, under such an alien system were devastated. Sharma (2001) points out the complex process of land alienation that occurred:

> Although towards the later part of the 18th century cash economy started to make some headway in Assam, yet it was in too low degree to be treated as a general mode of exchange. So, leave alone the tribal peasantry, even the non-tribal peasantry did not have enough cash at their disposal to meet the demand of an exacting colonial revenue policy. This compelled them to take loans from the Marwari usurers who were encouraged to enter the state of Assam by the colonial administration with this same very objective along with carrying on with trade and commerce. Both the tribal and non-tribal peasantries of Assam were, however, not in a position to earn enough cash to repay the debt and thus entered into a devastating debt trap. The necessity of repaying debt compelled them to selling off their land and agricultural product at throwaway rates. The tribal peasantry suffered more acutely in this process due to their ignorance and innocence (Sharma, 2001, p. 4793).

The colonial government took ownership of all the natural resources which were the prior livelihood support of the tribals, thereby alienating the tribals from their very ecological niche. Complete alienation of the tribal and their resources were achieved as pointed out by Sharma (2001):

a) "The British created feudal interest on land and forests belonging to the tribals through the grant of 'Zamindary' to the landlords

b) All agricultural and forestlands of the country were brought under the control of the colonial administration. Relatively isolated tribal habitats were encroached upon in the process.

c) The British commercialised everything the tribals until then had treated and known as their community holding when "each and every item of their daily use like bamboo, thatch, reed and wood in the forest, fish in the rivers and beels- everything was brought under taxation" (Sharma, 2001, p. 4792).

Sharma further states that the tribal peasantry of Assam could not withstand the burden of the colonial revenue policy "and the latter resulted in widespread poverty, land alienation and displacement of the tribal population of the state and this went on unabated despite protests from them" (Sharma, 2001, p. 4793).

Apart from the administrative tumult, there was division of even the physical space of the habitation of the people in the state under the colonial government. The tribal areas of Assam under the colonial Governments' Line System was divided into two- 'excluded areas' and 'partially excluded areas'. The Line System Committee instituted to look into the working of the line system found that the tribal villagers were the worst victims of the land encroachment by the immigrants. Arnold (1982) argues that in this process, many tribal villages disappeared and their inhabitants moved into sub-montane zone. Sharma documents this process when he states that how "the colonial administration, on the one hand, imposed sanction on the movements of even the indigenous non-tribal population of the state into the tribal areas with the excuse that the separate identity of the tribals would be endangered otherwise, while on the other hand, it virtually opened up the tribal land to facilitate the settlement of the immigrant peasantry with the motive of maximising revenue resources" (Sharma, 2001, p. 4794).

Land alienation among the tribals has also been a resultant feature of the Assam Ceiling Act of 1956. An overwhelming number of peasants were thus evicted from surplus land belonging to individual landlords or institutions were tribal peasantry (Raychoudhury, 1990, p. 24). A large of peasants, thus evicted were tribal peasants. Further, the Ceiling Act also resulted "in many tribal peasants getting much less than they hereditarily deserved" (Sharma, 2001, p. 4794). Land alienation for the tribals continues even in the post-colonial era as "most of the industrial projects in the state after independence were granted land out of tribal belts and blocks and further that the evicted tribal peasants did not receive compensation even after one or two decades after their eviction" (Gohain, 1997, p. 390)

The increase in the non-tribal population, partly because of influx of refugees from east Pakistan, partly because of illegal and legal migration from across the borders of the state, and partly owing to a natural rise in the state's population as a result of improvement in health services, scarcity of land became an acutely distressing problem for the small tribal peasants who formed the large bulk of the tribal population (Gohain, 1997, p. 390). Mishra (1980) analyses the issue of immigration as important issue which has been highlighted with the

purpose of diverting the attention of the masses from the other important problem of economic underdevelopment of the state. She argues that the issue of illegal immigration serves as a conduit to emotionally engage the people with one issue and thereby not highlighting the economic underdevelopment of the state. She blames the colonial exploitation of the state and its colonial legacy where after the British, the Indian Government and the Indian capitalist class substitutes the role of exploiters of the natural resources of the state.

Whereas one segment of the literature points out that there have been large immigrations to the state of Assam there is yet another view which states that the Bangladeshi immigration issues needs to be discarded as it a ploy of the Assamese middle class to maintain their hegemony in the state. Baruah (1980) also focuses on the role of the Assamese Middle class in defining the politics of favouring immigration. According to her immigration started with the support of the British colonial government and the Assamese middle class favoured it seeking their own gain. Another line of critique stems from the nationalist framework which dismisses the issue of immigration as a weak link of the Indian political system. For Guha (1980) the concern over the disappearing resources and Assamese culture is nothing more than a construct of the Assamese middle class which is dubbed in "irrationality". Though the role of the Assamese middle class is highlighted in the politics of immigration in the state, Das (2005) provides a rather overarching approach to politics of the state where the Assamese middle class is just an element among the multiple "intra-class, intra-party, intra-ethnic, intra-party and intra-castes rivalries and competitions" for the control of power in the state. Mishra (1999) comes up with the term "Asamisation" in respect of assimilation of the incoming people to the state and a lack of such phenomenon coupled with neglect of the dominant Assamese class in the power politics of the state has led to the conflicts.

Ethnic Identity assertion and Violence Structure

This section of literature explains why the identity issue of the BTAD has become violent, the importance of territory and the importance of topophilia in binding the Bodos not only as an ethnic group but also as a political group.

a) Land as a territory
b) Land/Region and Identity linkages: Place and identity
c) Land as a living space; a threatened living space "needing protection".

Place and Identity, or an identity constructed based on and from that place is nothing new for the ethno-national struggles. The role played by a place, region or locale in shaping the identity of an individual or a community[7] has always been recognized as a primary factor in giving rise to identity struggles and conflicts. This points out that the relation between people and the territory that they inhabit goes into defining their actions- making place:

a) Identity plays a very important role in the institutionalization of regions i.e. identity constructions concomitantly leads to the establishment of a region.

b) Identities in a region are purely constructions. This process is best put together by Paasi (1996; 2002) when he states that:

> "Discourses on regions and regional identity, in which actors invest their interests and presuppositions in things, may actually create the 'reality' that they are describing or suggesting… A region and a regional identity are social facts that can generate action as long as people believe in them…In these practices and discourses they shape socio-spatial consciousness and can be used to reproduce structures of domination and legitimation" (Paasi, 2002, p. 139).

c) Regions are social constructs dependent on the people who make the region; it is a historically contingent process whose existence is not naturally given and it provides scope and elements that constructs an identity (Paasi 1986a; Paasi 2002; Murphy 1991; Gilbert 1998).

d) Elements such as 'ideologies', history or social transformations- all of them constitutive of social identities and distinctions- have different meanings in different territorial cases (Paasi 1986a; Gilbert 1988; Weichart 1990; Dirven et al. 1993; Rose 1995; Sibley 1995). 'Regions' are only one element in social identity formation and their importance varies contextually (Paasi 2002).

e) The process of identity construction involves the simultaneous functioning of a plethora of elements and processes. Regions and the role played by regions is only a part of the bigger whole that makes an identity.

The emphasis on understanding "land" as a physical entity i.e. as a territory attaches emotional securities to the land. Any perceived threat of losing its association with this territory, be it in the form of having to share resources of this land with the "migrants /

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[7] There is a confusion regarding the link between the individual identity and the identity of individuals when they group themselves into a community. "…the link between the personal and collective dimensions of identity remains unclear…" (Paasi, 2002, p. 139)

outsiders" creates an impulse which culminated in turning BTAD into a killing field. The importance of territory and boundaries and the way the Bodos relate themselves with the territory of BTAD, this feeling being topophilia is a way to safeguard their resources; identity assertion being a mere method to achieve that final result- protection of "their space, their resource" in "their homeland".

Toft (2003) in her work on ethnic identity and violence points out that the reasons behind as to why ethnic groups asserts their identities (also thereby giving way to violence) is to understand the ethnic group's concern with their territory.

> "Territory takes a meaning that far exceeds its material and objective description. It becomes not an object to be exchanged but an indivisible component of a group's identity" (Toft, 2003, p. 1)

Understanding how the emphasis on the territory informs the workings of the ethnic group becomes important because it helps to understand the continuous resort to violence. Toft (2003) argues that the settlement patterns of the ethnic groups within a given territory will determine the kind of bargains that the ethnic group will carry out with their fellow settlers in the same territory:

> "The key to understanding ethnic group demands is their settlement patterns. Ethnic groups will seek to rule territory if they are geographically concentrated in a particular region of a country, especially if that region is a historic homeland. They will show little interest in controlling territory when they are either widely dispersed across the state or concentrated only in cities" (Toft, 2003, p.19).

The ethnic group resorts to a protection of their territory in the strictest of the terms primarily because of their notion of the territory as their homeland:

> "A homeland is therefore a special category of territory: it is not an object to be exchanged but an indivisible attribute of group identity. Regardless of a territory's objective value in terms of natural or man-made resources, ethnic groups rationally view the right to control their homeland as a survival issue" (Toft, 2003, p. 20).

The guiding rationale for the ethnic groups to resort to this path is that for them, the control of their homeland means they will have the space to propagate their faith, culture, language and religion. This intimacy that the ethnic group feels with the territory gives them the boost required to resort to violence if necessary to "protect their homeland".

The Bodo identity movement also has its own set of armed revolters, making BTAD one of the most violence-ridden areas in the post-independent India and also one of the major issues of the state of Assam. It has witnessed a saga of ethnic hostility, wanton killing, destruction and displacement right from the days of the first failed Bodo Accord of 1993 (Mahanta: 2013).

The formation of the BTAD was through re-dividing the existing western districts of Assam in order to make four Bodo majority districts. However, the process of delineation of boundaries in order to make space for the Bodo 'homeland' was faulty. The districts did not possess a Bodo majority and some were formed even without any clear cut boundary and with a Non-Bodo population. Some areas under the Bodo Autonomous Council had more than 50% non-Bodo population which comprised of Asamiya Hindus, Asamiya Muslims, Rabhas, Na-Asamiya Muslims, Bengali Hindus, Santhals and Nepalis. In a large part the BAC area, the Bodos do not constitute a simple majority. And, therefore, in order to create a majority for the Bodos, the ethnic cleansing process started (Hussain, 2000, p. 4521). Such mass violent massacres were carried out not by the Bodo mass but by the Bodo militants. The Bodo identity assertion is a way to recapture what they call "their resources" and "their land/homeland" and hence the ousting out of the "new-settlers" becomes their priority. This viewpoint is proven by the attacks on the Santhalis/Adivasis. The violence against the Santhals was aimed at generating fear in order to displace them from their present living space and to recapture the space for the Bodos (Hussain, 2000).

Baruah (2008) argues that identity assertion of the Bodos is therefore driven by an "exclusivist" ethnic/national plank where the diversity of the society is not celebrated, not even tolerated, and is oblivious to the history and rights of the "other communities" against whom the Bodos fight. The ethnic identity struggle of the Bodos has successfully created binaries of "Us Vs. Them", "Originals Vs. Outsiders", "Autochthon Vs. Migrants" which perpetuates the identity struggle. The indigenous-outsider binary is far too dissonant with local spatial practices and the actually existing political economy of north-east India. This has produced recurrent challenges to equal rights including episodes of ethnic violence and displacement and a permanent crisis of citizenship.

The ethnic identity struggle of the Bodos, therefore, becomes a deep seated process of "othering" where government failures, economic backwardness and petty social feuds are escalated into a blame game amongst communities where the card of ethnicity and historical

exploitation is played by the Bodos in order to gather public support. The identity assertions of the Bodos has gone into creating an "ethno-pathology"[8] in the BTAD, resulting from the absence of cultural and social appropriation of the Adivasis/Santhalis and Bengali Muslims with the Bodos creating a particular section of the society against whom all the failures of the region can be pinned. This has led to the creation of "specific community markers…the immigrant Bengali Muslim, Santhal and other smaller tribal communities like Mishing, Moran, etc, are defined as 'immigrant', 'tribal' or 'labourers' indicative of 'lower' social positions, thus encoded with an element of stigma or Othering (Roy, 2005). This recklessness of the "ethnic identity struggles" which had resulted into the creation of the Bodo Autonomous Council has also not been able to address the issues that the Bodos had been complaining against as has already been discussed.

From the literature survey, the most significant factors which led to the setting up of a context for conflicts in Assam are the following:

a) The role of a colonial history which created a plural society by initiating the process of bringing in of labour from outside the state of Assam. In-migration in the colonial period and feared immigration in the post-independence Assam has made "the migration issue" the main issue of politics in the state.

b) The persistent neglect by the Assamese high caste/class dominant State Government which neglects the other tribal groups has also led to the creation of conflicts in the state. The role of the Assam movement in imposing the Assamese language upon the various linguistic and ethnic groups has been also been complemented by a continued superiority of the Assamese driving a wedge between themselves and the other ethnic groups.

c) Initiation of the tribal groups to arrive at their own narratives of nationalism, giving rise to 'Nations from Below' and 'Nativism' in search of a 'Abode proper' has further complicated the politics because these tribal institutions has been a continuous failure in fulfilling what they stood for.

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[8] A term coined by Biswas (2002) in, *Nations from the Below and Rebel Consciousness: The 'New Subaltern' Emergence of North East India* in Dhamala and Bhattacharjee. Eds. 2002. Human Rights and Insurgency: The North-East India , Shipra, New Delhi, p 142. Also quoted in Roy (2005). Ethno-pathology is that state of response in which others in the neighbourhood are perceived to be the source of sufferings of one's own community, against which an 'emergence' becomes necessary.

d) Failure of the Autonomous Council to deliver has further aggravated the realisation of failures of the tribal people.

In the light of this structural context of the society, the primary reasons for the Bodo identity movement as highlighted in the literature are:

a) It is the sectarian State which has provoked the minority groups to react by isolating and marginalising them. The revolt of the minority and the ethnic groups are a forced outcome of the persistent failures of the State. The State has not been successful in addressing the structural issues of the indigenous tribes of BTAD and has also been a failure in addressing the multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic culture of the region. The State has only continued with its policy of tribal insularity like its colonial predecessors.

b) The continuous failure of the administrative institutions which were constituted to address the problems of the Bodos has also fuelled the Bodo identity movement. Failure of the Plains Tribal Council of Assam, the creation of Udayachal and Tribal Belts and Block system to protect the rights of the indigenous communities has also contributed to the Bodo movement for autonomy. This has been also complemented by the failures of the Bodo leaders to meet their promises when they come to power thereby transforming the movement for freedom into a 'co-habitation arrangement'. The regional political parties once granted power has often changed political camps at the opportunity of making easy money or to grab power.

c) Another set of literature is more direct with the goals that the Bodo identity movement is aimed at achieving. According to it, the Bodos want to become a majority in BTAD and therefore, the ethnic cleansing process was started by them; the main guiding element of the Bodo identity movement is to become a demographic majority. The violence in BTAD is a means to achieve an end. The aim of the conflicts in BTAD is to generate fear among the 'migrant communities' i.e. Adivasis and Bengali Muslims in order to displace them from the lands they occupy in BTAD. This would provide the Bodos to reclaim these lands which they consider was lost to them because of the in-migration of these communities. The Bodo identity movement therefore, is a way to get more space for themselves.

d) Migration has been a very significant issue in the Bodo Identity movement. The continued in-migration has led to the creation of an unavoidable indigenous-outsider

binary which fuels the Bodo identity including episodes of ethnic violence, displacement as well as crisis of citizenship.

e) The Bodos, like many other indigenous communities strongly believes that their lack of development has been made possible by the various 'other migrant communities' which has robbed them of their opportunities in 'their homeland'. The base of the conflict in the BTAD lies in the effort to control the resources of the region. Such attempts, on the part of the indigenous communities have found expression in terms of nationality, identity and ethnicity movements. The loss of land and forests has been a prime factor in making the indigenous communities politically conscious, the demand for autonomy being an outcome of such a realisation.

From the literature therefore, is can be argued that the identity question of the BTAD is a multi-faceted issue, most significantly represented by the political outcomes of the movement. However, there is a different set of literature which points out the relationship between land and its people and explains how the relation between land and people- bonded by a sense of belongingness determines the outcomes for a people. This set of literature is closely linked with the economic framework of analysis because land also translates into being an economic resource for the tribals. In the case of BTAD, it is the political structure of analysis which is the most dominant. The Bodo identity movement might be manifested in various political outcomes- as a movement pushed by State failure, as a movement driven by in-migration, as a movement against the dominance of the Assamese elitist Government or as a struggle to assert their ethnic identity. But what binds all these outcomes of the Bodo identity can only be explained by exploring as to why the Bodos do what they do and what is the base on which all these outcomes are played out? The Bodo identity assertion is an outcome, but an outcome of what? The Bodo identity movement is against in-migration, but why? The Bodo identity movement is to assert their identity, but what is the base of this identity? This work therefore, adopts a holistic approach, and tries to build up a structural framework where land, its associated livelihood and the determined identity is a tightly linked framework of which the political outcomes although constitute an important part, but, is not the whole. This work argues that the Bodo identity is more than political and it is more than ethnic. This argument is supported by drawing out the experiences, the memories and the narratives of the Bodos and the Non-Bodos to show that the Bodo identity movement is a land-livelihood governed movement, the rise of the Bodo identity being its political outcome.

Chapter 3
The history of Land Alienation and Building up of Bodo Identity

The Bodoland movement builds upon a continuous strain of historical events which alienates the tribal community from the mainstream. Forging of a divide between the two is the beginning of the realisation and construction of the 'other' in the society, which given sufficient disfavouring exploitations, creates a society seeped in violence and insecure living. The issues which create such mass uprisings in the BTAD have had a long period of gestation; traced through the history of alienation and exploitation aided by the distress of colonial governance.

The history of the Bodo movement is fused with overlaps of goals desired. Such overlaps have been a resultant phenomenon of the marked stages in the "evolution" and "construction" of the Bodo identity. The identity movement of the Bodos has been nurtured historically wherein the goals has varied from 'socio-cultural assimilation', 'social reforms and upliftment', 'economic development' to 'demand for autonomy' and 'demand for sovereignty'. The base however, from which these manifold ideologies and systematic endeavours have sprung up is one i.e. the affiliation and dependence of the Bodos on land. Although the demands of the movement have been diverse, the entire Bodo imbroglio boils down to one single relationship: territorial ownership as the safeguarding instrument of the Bodo identity.

This chapter traces down the events in history which created the ambience for the Bodo uprising. Keeping in mind the scope of this work, the broad history has been intentionally kept bounded to the objectives, amalgamating the events and factors which shaped the identity of the Bodo community and their dependence on land and livelihood. The objective here is to construct a timeline to improve the understanding of the land, livelihood and identity issues that the BTAD society faces today. The unfolding of the historical events clearly shows how the Bodo movement grows from a protection seeking stand (safeguarding land) to one demanding complete autonomy where the Bodos arise as a constructed nation with political rights and a homeland.

The Bodos – Genesis

The Bodos belong to the Tibeto-Burman stock of the Indo Mongoloid group. "The Indo Mongoloids were known as the Kiratas in the Vedas, Mahabharata, Ramayana, Kalika Purana

and Yogi Tantra. The historians classify these Indo Mongoloid people into the following four branches- a) Tibetan; b) Himalayan Branch; c) Assam-Burmese branch; d) North Assam branch. The Bodos are classified as the Assam-Burmese branch" (Bhattacharya, 1996, p. 20).

Believed to be the earliest settlers of Assam (Gait, 1967, p. 299; Endle, 1975, pp. 7-8; Sonowal, 2013, p. 2) the Bodo was originally a linguistic group of early migrants which comprised of different tribes of today spread across the north-eastern states, West Bengal as well as Bangladesh and Nepal. They migrated from China, Tibet and Siberia, via the Patkai hills into north-eastern India. Anderson describes the Bodos to be the original people of the Brahmaputra valley[9]. According to Endle the original homeland of this people is Tibet and China, the trans-Himalayan countries (Endle, 2012 reprint, p. 3). In time, this group of migrants spread across the whole of the north eastern part of India. Endle has divided the Bodo Kachari groups into two based on their geographical location of habitat as depicted:

Table 3.1: The Bodo-Kachari groups in their geographical habitat

Name	Approximate Numbers	Chief Habitat
The Northern Group		
Bårå (Kacharí)	272,500	Western Darrang, Kacharí Duars and North Kamrup
Rábha (Totalá)	31,370	Goalpara
Mech (Mes)	93,900	Goalpara
Dhimal	(see Bryan Hodgson)	North-East Bengal
Koch	10,300	On Northern Frontier from Jalpaiguri to North-West Darrang
Solanimiyas	15-18 families only	Only in Mangaldai sub-division
Mahaliyas Phulgariyas Saraniyas		Western Darrang. All slightly Hinduised Kacháris
The Southern Group		
Di-má-sá (Big-water-folk)	15,931	North Cachar Hills
Hojáis	2750	North cachar Hills and Nowgong
Lálungs	40,160	South-west Nowgong and adjoining districts
Garos	150,000	On Garo Hills and at foothills of the same
Haijongs	8766	On plains adjoining southern slope of the Garo Hills
Hill Tippera (Tripura) people	105,850	Hill Tippera

Source: Endle, 2012 reprint, p. 5

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[9] D. Anderson, in an Introduction to Endle, S. (2012 reprint) pp. i-xix

The Bodo-Kachari tribe therefore, had migrated into the north-east and over a period of time, spread themselves into different locations. Sonowal (2013) presents this migration stream in brief:

> The Bodos were a migratory populace (and a linguistic group) who branched off into many pockets in north eastern India, Bangladesh and Nepal. In this way the Bodo people spread throughout the Brahmaputra valley, gradually moving into the Garo Hills, North Cachar Hills, Cachar plains, Tripura Hills and plains and finally to the foothill region of present Bangladesh. Over time, the Bodos branched off into various other tribes as they are known today. Therefore the parent Bodo group comprises of the Lalungs, Rabhas, Koches and Sonowals in the Brahmaputra valley, the Dimasa in the Cachar Hills, the Barmans in the Cachar plains, the Tripuris and their allied tribes in Tripura, the Garos of Meghalaya, the Hajongs in the Garo Hills of Meghalaya, lower Assam and Bangladesh and finally the Mechs in lower Assam, north Bengal and south-eastern Nepal (Sonowal, 2013, p. 4)

This tribe is mainly concentrated under the foothills of Arunachal Pradesh and Bhutan in the northern tracts of the valley of Brahmaputra at present. Apart from these, they are also found today in the neighbouring areas of Assam, namely, the north-Bengal, Meghalaya, Tripura, Nagaland etc. within India and Mymensingh of Bangladesh and Nepal beyond the Indian Territory (Bhattacharjee, 1996, p. 20). The tribe which is now known as the Bodo is the 'most prominent and original' of the Bodo groups and they are spread almost all along the northern bank of the Brahmaputra in Assam and in the southern banks they are concentrated in pockets in the districts of Nagaon, KarbiAnglong and Golaghat. A sizable section of them are also found in and around Dimapur in Nagaland (Sonowal, 2013, p. 5).

Owing to this vast spread of the Bodo migration, the Bodos are known by different names at different places. They are known by the names of Kacharis and Mech in plains of Assam to the neighbouring Hindus, while they prefer to call themselves as Bodos. In the North-Cachar Hills District they are called Dimasa, the dwellers of the North Lakhimpur district and Nagaon district call themselves Sonowals. The great Bodo race includes Rabhas, Mech, Koch, Dhimal, Saraniyas, Lalung, Hajong, Dimasas, Garos and Hill Tipperas (Bhattacharjee, 1996, p. 21).

This Bodo linguistic group was assigned the name 'Kachari' as a racial name by the colonialists under whom the Bodo forms a group.[10] The Census Report of 1881 listed 12 sub-

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[10]Sonowal (2013) states that the British and the Christian Missionaries were the first to write down literature in the Bodo language and they had used the word 'Kachari' as a racial name to depict the larger Bodo tribes.

groups as belonging to the Kachari race.[11] It was the noted linguist Brian Hodgson who assigned the name "Bodo" to the whole of the Kachari race.[12]

The Bodos inhabiting BTAD today, therefore, is only a sub-group of the greater Bodo people. The Bodos in BTAD are comparatively the most compact and are located in one territorial unit in relation to the other tribal groups with the same origin. This factor of proximate location has played an important role in the development of a collective consciousness among the Bodos thereby helping them form the identity of firstly, an ethnic community and then of a nation eligible to demand political autonomy and a homeland. The land, livelihood and identity issues of the Bodos which form their present have many of its explanations in the past. Land alienation, construction of the Bodo identity by separating themselves from the mainstream, construction of the 'other' unfolds as various episodes in the history of the Bodos. The present ethnic violence, discriminatory killings of select communities and political turmoil are the culmination of a cumulative process of alienation, exploitation and marginalisation. This process has been explained here.

Pre-Colonial Livelihood of the Bodos

As no written records were maintained of the earlier Bodo political affairs, so the information in regard to their economy is not available except in scattered form from some published materials which would only provide a sketchy idea about their economic lives (Bhattacharjee, 1996, p. 51). However limited the records of this period may be, based on the available information of the history of Bodos in this period, it is evident that agriculture occupied the most important place in their economy. Like the majority of the tribal populace, the primary occupation and source of livelihood of the Bodos were agriculture and animal husbandry.

Agriculture had always been the dominant occupation of the Bodos. Even in the earliest records, dating to the period of the Mahabharata, the transition from being hunters to cultivators has been recorded. Jhum cultivation was practised by the Bodos before switching on to sedentary agriculture.

> "The Kiratas have been depicted in classical Sanskrit literature as hunters' par-excellence…but the fact remains that they had reached the rudimentary stage of agriculture. In course of time they had crossed the hunting and food gathering stages which represent the

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[11] The names of the 12 sub-groups included under the Kachari race are Kachari, Mech, Lalung, Hajong, Garo (plains), Rabha, Madhahi, Mahalia, Saraniya, Totala, Chutiya, Koch and Rajbanshi as mentioned in; Bhattacharya, 1983, pp. 12-13

[12] Grierson, G. A. (1908). Linguistic Survey of India. Vol. XIX, Delhi, p. 224 as mentioned in Sonowal (2013)

earliest form of natural economy and gradually reached a new stage of primitive agriculture, popularly known as shifting or jhum cultivation. Agriculture constituted the backbone of their economy.[13]

The dominance of agriculture in the economy of the Bodos is further asserted by the fact that the Bodos had their indigenous irrigation system. They successfully brought into implementation a complex network of irrigation channels in order to water the cultivation fields. "They were the first to introduce irrigation system and to teach the autochthonous groups of this region how to domicile themselves to plants'' (Mishra, 1980, p. 20). The location of the Bodo villages also establishes the importance of agriculture in the Bodo economy. "The chief pursuit of the people was agriculture, the village site was generally placid along the river banks which made the irrigation easy and crops more secure. In fact, most of the settlements mentioned in the epigraphs were on the banks of river."[14]

Apart from agriculture, the Bodos were experts in Sericulture and also carried out border trade with Bhutan and Tibet. The Bodos were adept in the art of weaving. "The Kiratas of north-east had full knowledge of the textile industry. They have a rich heritage of artistic craftsmanship; indigenous industrial art, metallurgical and technological art etc."[15] In fact, the Bodos, through their trade with China introduced the art of weaving silk to the mainstream communities of Assam. "It was again they who introduced another very important thing which was later reckoned as the pride of Assam- that is the art of using silk-worms into weaving" (Misra, 1980, p. 20). "The Mongoloid tribal societies of Assam, mostly of Bodo group, inherited the culture of manufacturing silk from cocoons from China and had gone down in history as the creators of Silk cultures in Assam."[16]

The beginning of the sixth century brought about tidal changes in the socio-economic scenario of the Bodo community. With the introduction of feudal economy, land- peasant relations started changing, the duality of tribal and Brahminic culture gains stronghold and the role of the ruling monarchy (then the State) emerges in separation to the indigenous tribal populace.

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[13] Singh, G. P. (1990). *The Kiratas in Ancient India*. New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, p. 195 as quoted in Bhattacharjee, 1996, p. 52

[14] Vasu, N. N. (1980). *The Social History of Kamarupa. Vol. I*, Calcutta, p. 70 as mentioned in Bhattacharjee, 1996, p. 52

[15] Singh, 1990, p. 200 as mentioned in Bhattacharjee, 1996, p. 53

[16] Sen, D. (1984). *Ethnic Elements in the Silk Industry of Assam in Proceedings of North-East India History Association*, Fifth Session, Aizwal, p. 72 as mentioned in Bhattacharjee, 1996, p. 53

The initial phase of feudalism began with land grants to the Brahmanas[17] for construction of temples. The close affiliation of the kings of Kamarupa with the Gupta Dynasty is supposed to be the primary explanatory factor behind the promotion of land grants to the Brahmanas. These lands were granted to the Brahmanas who belonged to outside of Assam, to site a few examples, the Nagarkot Brahmanas of Punjab and Gujarat, The Brahmanas from Kannauj etc.) This process of land granting continued from the sixth to the twelfth century.

With the Ahom kingdom gaining stronghold from the late thirteenth century, the feudal economy enters a different stage. The Ahoms entered into subjugation relations with the tribal chieftains, making them subject to the Ahom royal crown. The policy of granting lands to the Brahmanas for the promotion of spiritual ambience also continued unabated under the Ahom patronage. The Ahoms created an entire system of governance of the population known as the Khel system where the people were rooted to their land. Dependence on land thereby became institutionalised under the Ahoms. Baishya (1990) states that:

> "(The Ahoms) while apportioning of chiefs to the nobility, subjugation of local chiefs to the vassalage was a normal feature of the Ahom patrimonial policy. Land grants to Brahmanas, temples and other religious institutions like the Satras and Mosques became the special privileges of the newly proselytised rulers since the late seventeenth century particularly since the reign of Gadadhar Singha (E. Gait 1905/84: 170). The period may be called the climatric of feudalism in Assam with grouping of the population into occupationally differentiated classes (khel system) attached to land" (Baishya, 1990, p. 229).

The feudal system via land grants to the Brahmins, in the long run, introduced a duality of tribalism and Brahminical culture into the society of Assam. Tribal societies, under the domination of the feudal superstructure, witnessed gradual fragmentation. Apart from it, the tribal societies were gradually side-lined from the mainstream society. "The self-subsistence economy of the tribals with little specialisation became stratified as it was being transformed into feudalism."[18] The Ahom economic policy cleverly turned their hostile communities (including the Bodos) into the feudal class under the Khel system (Bhattacharjee, 1996, p. 56). The State in the form of the Ahom Monarchy thereby arises outside the ambit of the tribal matrix where the divisions of 'tribal' and 'mainstream' is strongly forged.

Another important feature of the feudal era was the ongoing process of Aaryanisation due to the mixing of the Brahmanas who had come from outside Assam. The local people, who were

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[17] Bhaskara Varman, the twelfth generation king of the Varman dynasty made the first land grants jointly to some sixteen Brahmanas during the first decade of the seventh century through the Dubi Copper plate charter.
[18] Paul, M. C. (1989). Dimensions of Tribal Movement in India: A Study of Udayachal in Assam Valley. New Delhi, p.62 as quoted in Bhattacharjee, 1996, p. 55

brought under the Hindu fold via conversions, were allotted the lowest social strata within the Brahminical Hindu religious framework. Bhattacharya states that this factor along with the Feudal system was responsible for the grievances of the Bodo community prior to the advent of the British.

British Colonialism, the State and the Tribals

Assam was annexed to the British colonial government via the Treaty of Yandaboo, 1826. Entry into the colonial system of governance meant a series of unprecedented changes for the whole of Assam including the Bodos. The tribals were already labouring under the feudal structure of the society when the British government, with their colonial agenda of revenue generation took hold of the economy of Assam. However, soon afterwards, the British realised that the population of the north –east India, including the tribals were very different from the population of the mainland India that they have been governing for almost two centuries then. This led to the search for different methods of dealing with the people of the north-east; revenue generation being a sincere necessity for the colonial governance, the British searched for ways to maintain an unprecedented flow of revenue into their exchequer. Among many changes that the British implemented, the most significant one was the promotion of voluntary as well as forced migration into Assam with the ultimate goal of adding more wealth to their treasury. This section lists such events where the colonial State alienated the tribals (the Bodos) from their land and livelihood.

The Trade breakdown and Establishment of complete dependence on land for the Bodo population:

The migration of business communities like the Marwaris of Rajasthan into the economic core of the Bodo society disposed them off of their role as traders and left them devoid of a chunk of revenue earnings which the Bodo community had historically been privileged to. Having migrated from the Sino-Tibetan border regions through numerous mountain passes, the Bodo settling in the northern foothills region of Bengal and Assam had maintained trade links with the bordering Hill tribes on the north and through them the Bodos kept further business transactions with the Tibetan and Chinese traders (Sonowal, 2013, p. 5) Such trading activities took place through *'Doars'* (in English: Passes) that linked the Bodo settlement Plains with the Bhutan and Tibetan settlements via the Mountains. "These *doars;* located in northern foothills of Jalpaiguri in North Bengal and Kokrajhar, Bongaigaon, Barpeta,

Nalbari, Kamrup, Darrang and Sonitpur districts of Assam were controlled and operated by the Bhutan and Tibetan authorities. The Bodos even kept further trade links with interior of Tibet; sometimes extending till China" (Roy, 1995, p. 21). "The most famous trade route was the 'Lhasa-Tawang-Udalguri route' which saw a considerable volume of barter trade between the Tawang hill tribes and the Bodo tribes of the Udalguri region. Besides this, the tribes of Western Arunachal Pradesh and Bhutan Himalayas used to come down to the plains through these routes to trade with the Bodos (Sonowal, 2013, pp.5-6). These trades were also of a community-binding nature where the traders coming down from the Hills (various tribes) would stay with the Bodo community in their houses; such practices were based on trust and co-dependence. The diverse range of commodities[19] traded thus provided not only economic security but also social prosperity to the Bodo community.

After the annexation of Assam into the British colonial government, this system of trade saw its dismantling. With the goal of economic expansion, the British sought out ways of inland trade with China which meant that the already established *doars* were immediately resorted to by the British. The modern complex monetary trade of the British stood in direct conflict with the age-old traditional trade methods carried out by the Bodos. As if to fill in the void, the newly annexed state of Assam saw the large infiltration of the Marwari traders in order to guard the monetary trade. The British promoted this migration because the Marwaris were adept in monetary trade, unlike the barter-friendly Bodos and thus served the colonial purpose. The entire trade system was swiped from the hands of the Bodos to the Marwaris. Sonowal (2013) documents these changes:

> "The bigger volumes of trading transactions were being done with the newly arrived Marwari traders who also monopolized the entire wholesale trade. Gradually, as monetary transactions almost completely replaced the barter trade, the need for capital percolated down to the retail sector as well as the small-scale whole scale sector" (Sonowal, 2013, p. 7).

Thus the annexation into the colonial governance brought in too sudden a change into the Bodo community where the modern era trade was written and lived out by the British with the Marwaris at their disposal. The Bodo community had no place in this new found modernity; they were completely pushed to the agrarian sector for livelihood.

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[19] The items imported through these routes into India included Chinese silk, ponies, musk wax, rubber and gold-dust and the exported items included rice, cotton yarn and cloth, silk yearn, dried fish etc.

Losing land and 'Forward Trading':

The worsening of the agrarian sector for the Bodos was complemented by the process of 'forward trading' prevalent in the Bodo society. A section of traders from Barpeta, known as Barpethias maximizing their trading profits in Udalguri striked upon a way to generate extra earnings through what was known as forward trading of the mustard seed crop and other grain crops grown by the Bodo farmers. Under this system, the price of the crop was assessed while it was still standing on the fields and the money was forwarded to the Bodo farmers well in advance. After the harvest, the crop belonged to these Barpatiahs which they sold at higher prices in their already established border trade. Being perpetually short of money (under the colonial system of tax payments), the Bodo farmers had welcomed this move. On the flip side of this process, however, was the fact that as a measure of safety, forward trading demanded that a portion of land of the Bodo farmers be mortgaged to the Barpathias in order to meet the risks and uncertainties in case of crop failures. The factors counted as risks were climatic uncertainties- predominantly failure of rainfall. As insurance to this uncertainty the Barpethias not only assessed the expected quantity of harvest at the lowest possible average but also adjusted the output as a measure of extra guarantee and used to execute non-judicial deed on paper (Sonowal, 2013, p. 8). The Bodos could not secure a successful crop output as multi-cropping and using fertilizers were not prevalent in the Bodo society. On the other hand, the usual tribal insularity kept them away from the fresh and new ideas of life that the British brought to this country which had already enthused the Assamese elite to venture into the threshold of the modern age (ibid). In such junctures of the colonial society, the Bodo farmers, on the event of crop failures, were forced to let go of their lands uncontested. Though the genuine cases for honouring these mortgage deeds did arise, often such mortgage transfers of land used to be accomplished on the strength of mutilated or even false mortgage deeds (Roy, 1995, p. 22). With the passage of time, the Barpetiahs, apart from engaging in trading and agricultural dealings; also started credit dealings with the Bodo society. Along with the *Barpethias*, credit lending was also managed by the wealthy Marwari traders. As an incentive to make their practice of forward trading a success, they also facilitated the immigrant labourers into the cultivation of the lands. "Marwari traders and even Assamese traders of Barpeta provided a substantial part of the necessary finance to enable the immigrant peasants to bring virgin soil under the plough" (Guha, 2006, p. 83). Credit transfers, mortgages, loans fused with corrupt practices at the lower rungs of the revenue officials sequestered the lands of the Bodo community.

Losing out on the Agrarian Sector: Tea and Rice

Before the advent of the British, the land settlement system in Assam was free from all monetary transaction; no revenue of any kind was required to be paid to the state for their land (Sonowal, 2013, p. 7). The agrarian sector was the basis of earning revenue for the colonial British Government. True to their cause, the British Government with their first revenue assessment of 1843 imposed agrarian taxes on the people. Unaccustomed to such terms of work[20] the Bodos could not keep tune with the colonial treasury requirements. The British required more revenue generation from the vast fertile plains of Assam, which with the local inhabitants was proving to be a difficulty.

The British then launched their 'watershed development and cultivation project'- a system which brought under its purview the possibility that if the local indigenous population was proving to be insufficient to generate optimum revenue from the land, then fresh batch of people should be introduced to these resourceful lands which would meet the revenue demands for the colonial government. Under this project, the British aimed at generating maximum revenue from all possibilities available. The wastelands of Assam were to be auctioned out for two revenue generating mediums:

a) Cultivation of paddy which encouraged mass migration of landless farmers from the dense plains of Bengal (now Bangladesh) to work the comparatively very less populated fertile plains of western Assam (Bodo dominated areas).

b) The wastelands were to be auctioned out for plantation agriculture i.e. creating prospects of tea culture in Assam.

This policy opened a floodgate of Bengali immigrants into BTAD. It was a win-win situation for the colonialists as well as for the immigrants. For the immigrants; tired of dense settled plains of Bengal with declining cultivable land, the comparatively vacant fertile plains of BTAD provided them the respite which literally gave them the source of livelihood. For the British, a large populace cultivating land meant an ever increasing flow of revenue to their

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[20] Under the Ahoms, the Bodos needed to cultivate only the *ga-mati*- the land allotted by the Ahom monarchy to every peasant household to cultivate for their own sustenance. No taxes were imposed upon these lands. The Bodos, like all the other peasants were free to clear out uncultivated land and use it for their domestic requirements as they deemed fit. The Bodo population, therefore, cultivated the amount they required and when and how it was required. Devoid of the competition of access to resources and devoid of the policy of accumulation, the Bodos enjoyed the freedom to earn their livelihood in response to their requirements. The British policy however, mandated annual cultivation in larger tracts to meet the revenue demands which was never done by the Bodo community before.

exchequer. This flow of immigration was substantially augmented in 1905 when Assam was merged with the fifteen districts of east Bengal and was created into a new province called East Bengal and Assam (Sonowal, 2013, p. 8). This merger ushered in unhindered flow of peasants searching for land into Assam. Owing to the geographical proximity of the Bodo dominated areas, the immigrants settled in large numbers in the lands which today falls under BTAD.

The plight of the Bodo farmers was unaccounted for; on the one hand the new colonial foreign revenue system was too great an economic adjustment and on the other the influx of peasants from Bengal provided them a competition community. The influx of mass immigrants into their fold perhaps made them aware for the first time of the importance of 'land as an economic resource' which had otherwise just been an abundant natural resource for them.

The initial experimentation of manufacturing tea in Assam was an encouraging success. Following this, "In 1840, two-thirds of the Government Experimental Gardens were transferred to the Assam Company, rent –free for the initial years. To make the waste lands available for special cultivation on attractive terms, a set of rules were framed" (Guha, 2006, p. 10). These rules, known as the waste land rules of 6 March, 1838 was aimed at encouraging European capitalists, because under the conditions fixed in these rules only Europeans could afford to avail themselves of this opportunity. These rules were further "revised in 1854 providing a 99 year lease on more liberal terms, the minimum area of land for which one could apply was raised to 500 acres. These rules stimulated a land rush…" (Guha, 2006, p. 11). He depicts in detail the attractions of investing in the waste-lands for the Europeans:

> "The wasteland settlement policy tempted planters to grab more land than they required or could manage. This was because such waste lands provided them with far greater resources than what land as a factor of production ordinarily denotes. The wasteland contained necessary housing materials including, in most cases even valuable timber. Being transferable under the 1854 Rules, such lands could be sold later for an unearned profit. Above all, labourers could be settled as tenants on the surplus lands of the plantations, like so many serfs tied to the land…Yet another motivation behind this perverse land-grabbing policy was to keep away prospective competitors from the neighbourhood." (Guha, 2006, p. 11)

Along with the huge transfer of land to the Europeans, a stream of tribal labour migrants were brought in from the tribal belt of Central India in order to work these plantations. They served

as serfs tied to the land, perpetually at the disposal of the tea garden European *sahibs*. They are the Adivasis in the present society of BTAD.

In order to facilitate land-grabbing further, the British introduced a system of simple fee grants in 1861, under which "land was sold at rates ranging from 2-8 as. to Rs. 5 per acre. No clearance condition was attached to the fee simple grants…About 0.7 million acres of land had been settled with the planters in Assam by 1870-71 but the area actually under tea was 56,000 acres, that 8 percent or so thereof." (ibid, pp. 11-12). These tea garden owning European *sahibs* not only paid lowest possible wages to the labouring Adivasis, "but also settled rice-producing tenant cultivators on their land, so that the latter could provide them with casual labour in the peak season. The planters usurped the grazing fields and encroached upon the jhum (slash and burn) rights of the tribal shifting cultivators" (ibid, p. 12) of the region. The tribals of BTAD thus lost out on their shifting cultivation. The following table shows the encroachment of the plantation economy over lands and forests to the plantation economy:

Table 3.2: Land-use included under plantation economy over extended time periods and Revenue Generation

Rules of 6 March 1838 Three categories of wasteland				Rules of 23 October 1854 Irrespective of the Categories of Waste Land	
Under Grass	Under Reeds and High Grass	Under Forests	Land Revenue per acre		Land Revenue per acre
First 5 years	First 10 years	First 20 years	Nil	First 15 years	Nil
Next 6-8 years	11 – 13 years	21 – 23 years	9 as.	16 – 25 years	3 as.
Next 9-30 years	14 – 35 years	24 – 25 years	Rs. 1-2 as.	26 – 99 years	6 as.
On expiry of leases			At par with rice lands		
One fourth of grant perpetually revenue free				One fourth of grant perpetually revenue free	

Source: From Guha (2006 reprint) p. 12 after Baden Powell, B. H. (1895). *The Land Systems of British India*, Vol. 3, London, pp. 410-415

While evaluating the colonial economy in Assam, A. Guha states, "Links between the plantation economy and the surrounding peasant economy - both labour-short – remained tenuous and minimal. Except land, practically all other inputs of production for the expanding modern sector were brought from outside the province: capital and enterprise from the imperial metropolis itself, and labour from other Indian Provinces" (Guha, 2006, p. 21). The

labour-shortage in the economy was utilised by the British to intensify the migration of labourers from outside of Assam- Adivasis from Central India to work the tea plantations and Bengali Muslim peasants from East Bengal to work the paddy fields. Over time, the population growth rates of the migrants in comparison to the indigenous population were troublesome. Epidemics, famines and *Kala Azar* (Black fever) had created wide tilts in the population distribution in the state so that the population balance between the indigenous and the migrant communities were highly distorted.

> "The indigenous population of the Brahmaputra Valley tended to stagnate or even decrease during the two decades between 1901. On the basis of an exercise listing all Hindu indigenous castes and indigenous tribes of Assam Proper, and their numbers for the relevant Census years, the census authorities came to the conclusion that the indigenous population actually decreased by 5.4 percent between 1881 and 1891, and 6.4 percent between 1891 and 1901. Later the Assam Congress Opium Enquiry Committee re-examined the issue. On the basis of a list of indigenous linguistic groups of the Brahmaputra Valley, they came to the conclusion that the decline was much less, the respective rates being nevertheless 20.9 and 1.9 percent. On the basis of these latter figures, the cumulative decline of the indigenous population of the valley may be accepted to have been at least 7.7 percent over the last two decades of the century. The non-indigenous population of Assam proper increased. Meanwhile from less than 1 lakh in a total population of 15 lakhs in 1872, to an estimated 5 to 6 lakhs in a total population of about 22 lakhs in 19.01. The influx of the immigrants more than neutralised the decline in the indigenous population. The population mix thus underwent a substantial ethnic redistribution." (Guha, 2006, p. 31)

The population composition in the valley underwent massive changes. This caused two long term changes with a permanent implication-

- Firstly, the ethnic composition of the state underwent drastic changes with the accommodation of huge migrant population.
- Secondly, the large scale migrant population mix changed the spatial distribution of population within the districts.

This major migrant input in the distribution of population impacted the tribal peasant economy adversely because they entered the agriculture sector and became dependent upon the same resource base as the autochthon tribals.

Furthering the Process of Land Alienation: Entry of State Legislations

Land systems: With the annexation of Assam into the colonial system of governance, the Land system was revised to the Zamindary and Ryotwari system. The then Goalpara district, which comprises the Kokrajhar district of BTAD today, came under the Zamindary system

and the other districts of BTAD were assigned under the Ryotwari system. Under this revenue generating system, the tax burden was to be borne entirely by the peasants and the labourers; failure of payment meant selling off of their lands as the measure of the colonial government allowed the legal attachment of property to the Government itself. "In order to avoid heavy taxation many peasants left their jobs and became either slaves or sought for wage-earning jobs in the tea-plantation industry, oil fields etc. initiated by the British; this directly affected agriculture" (Bhattacharjee, 1996, p. 58).

There were, as expected, notable changes between the zamindars and the peasants. Not only were land rents increased considerably, but this process also instigated the dispossession of certain established social groups; like rent-free holders and village headmen. These new implementations of colonial institutions led to a massive shift in the income distribution obtained from land. The peasants (both Bodos and others) who produced the output were completely alienated from their own entitlements as "redistribution of the existing income from land (occurred notably) in favour of zamindars" (Kumar and Raychaudhuri, 1983, p. 176). Such processes of alienation fuelled further distress for the peasants. Confined to no choice and completely alienated from their own, yet another striking shift in the agrarian sector took place as a result of institutional changes. There occurred distress-sale of peasant holdings and such sales were "increasing in number over the years and was far from confined to periods of famine or to similar periods of exceptional distress" (ibid). This only shows that the roots of distress causing elements in the society were not environmental but a creation of the colonial institutions at work.

The changing land relations also saw the development of a "land market" otherwise unknown to the rural tribal masses caused remarkable changes in the landed society of the country. Although primarily the conversion of rural land into land as an economic asset was based upon the measure that valued land would find purchases, yet the constraints on transfer of cash provided a speed bump. It should be noted however, that these purchases were made by a particular class of people- traders, merchants, money-lenders and bankers and the ones benefitting most were the Zamindari bureaucracy and also the official bureaucracy (in case of BTAD, the Marwaris and the Bengali bureaucracy class who had migrated to Assam). These were notably the urban groups. Thus a distinction layer and the growing dominance of the urban elites are imminently visible in the dealings that the colonial institutional set-up brought to the society of Assam.

Such tectonic changes in the land and revenue institutions in the state saw a highly negative fall-out. The case of institutional transfer and changes hit Assam the worse as "peasants in Assam evidently surrendered to the state a larger proportion of their total agricultural output than peasants in other parts of Eastern India" (ibid, p. 91). It is to be noted that under the rule of the Ahoms, Assam had more of a community-based (the Paik system) distributed working structure which did not involve collection of revenue in cash. This system, the British found was highly unsuitable for their colonial pursuits and abolished the age-old system which meant that "the Assamese gentry were reduced to poverty overnight" (ibid, p. 93). Evidently protests broke out which was duly "punished" by the British by taking away whatever were the remaining privileges. Here, unlike in Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, the aristocracy class was never even tried to be assimilated into the new fiscal policy that the colonial government undertook, thereby setting off the stage for a separate alienating process exclusively for Assam. Guha (2006) writes,

> "In such an unenviable and complex scenario – where tribalism and elements of feudalism persistently with new-born capitalist relationships…The peasantry- traditionally unaccustomed to any kind of money taxation, and now, constantly in dread of enhancement of land revenue and imposition of new taxes- kept up the smouldering fire of protest and hatred against the Raj….. The conditions of peasantry worsened very much in the 1891 – 1901 due to rise in opium prices and land revenue rates. The devastating earthquake of 1897, which caused the deaths of more than 1,500 people added to their misery." (Guha, 2006, pp 21, 41)

Increasing pressure for the tribals was bound to be vented out by some outlets. Excessive increase in revenue was accompanied by the rise of the *'mels'*[21]. No-rent campaigns were carried out in many parts of the state. In the Bodo areas, the pressure of revenue saw an additional vent out in the Rangiya Bazar incident. "On the 24th of December, 1893, the Rangiya Bazar was looted by 200 to 205 people, mostly Bodos. This happened immediately after the holding of a *mel* at the neighbouring village of Belagaon (present day, near Kokrajhar). Everywhere the *mels* directed the people not to pay the enhanced rates of revenue" (Guha, 2006, p. 42).

Submission to the Simon Commission: Beginning of the Bodo Movement

"According to section 52 (A) of the Government of India Act, 1915, Governor General-in-Council was empowered to declare any tract, if so thought, to be backward" (Bhattacharjee, 1996, p. 74). Under this provision, large tracts of the north east, including areas of BTAD

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[21] A local assembly of people gathering to discuss important events of the society.

were declared to be backward. These backward tracts were to be evaluated by the Simon commission or Indian Statutory Commission. The news that a commission has been specially dispatched to examine the backward tracts of Assam kindled hope in many Bodo people. This led to the drafting of a memorandum by the Bodo leaders addressing the grievances of the Bodo community in order to submit to the Simon Commission. The submission of this memorandum marks the beginning of a political stand taken by the Bodo and the plain tribals of Assam to address their issues. "The Bodo movement may be identified to have started from the year 1929 with the submission of this memorandum" (Bhattacharjee, 1996, p. 75).

The alienation that the Bodos felt is clear by what they mentioned in the memorandum to the Commission. They mention that "In spite of our large numbers all advantages are enjoyed either by a Brahmin, or by a Kshatriya or by a Sudra"[22]. The changes demanded via this memorandum were not about their land but mostly political.

> "In 1929, Jadav Chandra Khaklari, general secretary of the All Assam Kachari Association, submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission demanding separate representation for the Bodos. Besides demanding special treatment in matters of education and appointment, the Bodo community of Goalpara district also wanted a second chamber in the Legislative Council and urged the commission not to transfer Goalpara district to Bengal. In 1933, Rupnath Brahma and Bhimbar Deuri established the All Assam Tribal League (AATL) and reiterated the demands of separate representation" (Mahanta, 2013, p. 50).

Although no specific changes were made by the Simon commission, nevertheless, via this memorandum, the Bodo emerges as a distinct community in the political field of Assam. With the participation in the memorandum, for the first time, the Bodos conceptualise themselves as a separate political and social identity by revisiting their history.[23] Construction of the Bodo identity begins on a political front.

Formation of Plains Tribal League: Bodos achieve political representation

The All Assam Plains Tribal League was formed in 1933 as a first political platform of the plain tribes of Assam through the assimilation of the various minor tribal organizations.[24] This umbrella organization was the result of a collective awareness of the tribals of the plains of Assam regarding the fast growing problem of land alienation and the urgent need to seek

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[22] Memorandum to the Simon Commission by the Bodo community, Goalpara district, 1929
[23] The submission of Srujit Jadavchandra Khaklari of 'Assam Kachari Jubok Sanmiloni' to the Simon commission emphasises their history of a long standing tradition of distinct social practices, historical isolation and their political backwardness.
[24] The organizations were The *All BodoChatraSanmilan, BodoMahaSabha, Assam Kachari Youth Sanmilan, MiriSanmilan, All Assam DeoriSanmilan, RabhaSanmilan, LalungSanmilan* and some other organizations.

protection of the tribal lands. The tribal population had also realised by then, that the elite Hindu and Muslim powerful leaders of the Assamese society did not count tribal land alienation as a significant problem to be raised at the level of state politics. In fact, the primary causative factor for the loss of tribal land was a beneficial factor for the non-tribal agricultural elites of the Assamese society. It needs to be noted that the Assamese landed class supported the pro-immigration policy of the British Government because it meant easy availability of labour to work their fields. Even many Assamese landowners welcomed these immigrant settlers inside their own areas in order to facilitate better cultivation and yield (Roy, 1995, p. 24). This created a duality within the Assamese society- on the one hand, the tribals demanded protection from the incessant immigration and on the other, the Assamese landed class prospered by increasing support to immigrant labour force. This situation etched a division in the attitude of the Bodos towards the entire Assamese society; the very people who were responsible for the loss of tribal land were the ones patronised by the Assamese society. Andrew Clow, the then Governor of Assam (1942-46) observed:

> "The Assamese, both castes Hindu and the Muslims, professed solicitude for the tribes, but neither had troubled to study the question nor had any real sympathy with the tribes. This feeling of deprivation among these communities thus fostered the growth of local organisations i.e. the Kachari Sanmilan, the Koch-Rajbonshi Sanmilan, Chutia Sanmilan, the Muttock Association, etc. throughout the province. Initially each organisation worked independently and confined its activities and in the thirties they joined hands and formed the All Assam Plains Tribal Council" (Basumatary, 1980, pp. 44-45).

The formation of the Plains Tribal League was therefore a decision arrived at collectively by the plains tribes of Assam. The tribals had accepted that in order to gain political autonomy, they would require a representative body of tribals because the Assamese leaders were not sympathetic to their cause and hence couldn't be depended upon.

> Their (the League's) leaders like Bhimbar Deuri for instance realised that by remaining divided the communities would never be in a position to exert enough political pressure to convince the government as well as the national parties of their needs and aspirations. Their basic aim was to fight the socio-economic problems of the tribals (Basumatary, 1980, pp. 311-312).

The majority of the leaders of the Plain Tribal League were Bodos and hence the Bodo tribal identity remained at the forefront in this organisation. The basic aim of the League was two: a) to address the socio-economic problems of the tribals and b) safeguard the land of the tribals. The very first political organisation was formed in order to safeguard land. The land and identity question if the Bodos institutionalises since then.

Creation of the Line System:

Under the incessant pressure and active cooperation of the Tribal League, the British colonial Government implemented the 'Line System' in Assam for protection of tribal land by amending the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation Act of 1886. The British colonial government had formulated 'The Assam land and Revenue Regulation Act' in 1886; the act, however, did not include any specific protective measure for the areas having a dominant tribal population. At the behest of the All Assam Tribal League, the British government launched the 'Line System' as a scheme in order to safeguard the land of the tribals. This was the first attempt at demarcating territory specific to the tribals.

Under this system, the districts having a significant immigrant population were divided into blocks of 'indigenous population' and 'immigrant population'. This directly led to the creation of densely settled immigration population blocks and less dense indigenous tribal and Assamese areas. The Line system, although implemented by the colonial British government, supported by the Tribal League and supposedly representing the 'will of the people'; yet it had a severe dividing element in it. The most significant backwash of the Line system was that it physically divided the society of Assam into three distinct clusters. First were the tribal blocks, second were the immigrant population settlement blocks and third was the remaining Assamese society.

The Line system aided the Bodos strongly in the growing consciousness that their problems could only be addressed by remaining outside the ambit of the mainstream Assamese politics. Although the Line system was implemented for the "protection of tribal lands"; it was also verging on the famous 'divide and rule' policy of the colonial government. The Line system however was unsuccessful in protecting the tribal lands by limiting immigrant population. The fall out of this policy was also seen in the form of "corrupt revenue officials and other interested parties" helping in the "settlement of newly arriving stream of migrants (Sonowal, 2013, p. 12).

Migration of Bodos

The problem of land alienation was added upon when the Bodo areas witnessed the coming in of various other communities into their midst within a very short span of time. The colonial form of government required an educated class of populace who could work for the Government at the lower rungs of administration. Like the other tribes of the state, the Bodos

too failed to meet the requirements of the colonial government. As a result, the administrative posts were filled up by the Assamese elite class and if not they then population moving into Assam from other parts of India (having already been colonized a century ago) filled in the posts of governance as required by the British government. The Bodos were constantly failing in achieving anything substantial for progress in the tough fight for survival.

The ongoing population flux and the wrath of the colonial economic order and to some extent the pressing of the Barpethias triggered a search for alternatives for the Bodos. This alternative was seen in the form of a stream of migration. They migrated northwards from the plains to enter the dense forests of the foothills of the Himalayas to acquire new lands. It was the misconception of the Bodos that they considered that unsettled land adjoining the forest and the forest itself could provide them new options of livelihood; for the colonial government saw such an act as 'encroachment' of the forests. The Bodo peasants, faced by occasional droughts and chased by periodic eviction operations launched by the Forest officials, often moved from one reserve forest area to another all over Assam (Sonowal, 2013, p. 12). Thus they spread over the in the reserve forest areas of Sibsagar, Golaghat and Karbi Anglong districts besides increasing their unauthorized settlements in North Lakhimpur districts (A. Roy 1995: 26). Ultimately, the Bodos realized that moving away from their land into unoccupied terai lands or into the forests were no more an option under the colonial government as it had been earlier. Search for an alternative to the ongoing situation thereby ended as a failure.

The Hockenhull Committee Report:

The growing grave situation of the Bodos did not go unnoticed by the colonial Government as another committee named as the 'Hockenhull Committee' was soon appointed to assess the situation of the society after the creation of the Line System. The committee submitted its report in 1938. The report clearly stated that the condition of agriculture in Assam would only worsen if the immigrant population were to be withdrawn; hence for a proper maintenance and development of agriculture in the state the immigration must continue unabated. It also stated that the protection of the tribals and their land were of utmost importance and hence the line system should be further tightened. As per the recommendations of the committee the Congress Government aided by the Tribal League set up plans to tighten the control over the lines and "conceived the idea of constituting prohibited areas in localities predominantly

populated by the tribal and backward classes of people wherein immigrant settlers would not be permitted to settle" (ibid).

However, before the recommendations of the Hockenhull committee could be properly implemented, the Second World War broke out in 1939. The Congress Governments all over the country resigned as a protest to the dictated involvement of the Indian soldiers in the war and the recommendations of the committee were laid to rest undefinitely.

War Worries:

The Muslim League (under Sadullah) formed the Government in Assam after the resignation tendered by the Congress government. With the war raging on, demand for food supplies and provisions compulsorily increased. The British looked upon the Sadullah ministry to generate optimum output from the fertile plains of Assam. More acres of land were brought under the plough so that this steep demand for food could be met. In order to make this possible, the Sadullah ministry arranged for huge influx of Bengali immigrant peasants in order to cultivate more and more fallow land.

This episode in history is specifically very significant because within a short period of time, under the banner of war time necessities, the Sadullah ministry opened up the tribal belts and blocks for the immigrant peasants to settle in.

> "In the light of the war time crisis, its "grow more food" campaign and the development scheme in the post 1942 period virtually opened the forests and grazing grounds for the resettlement of the immigrants from East Bengal, which caused great panic among the Bodos and other communities of the state" (Mahanta, 2013. p. 50).

Tribal lands were lost helplessly and often went unaccounted under the war worries of the colonial government.

Revisiting Land Laws:

In 1946 with the coming in of the Congress Ministry into power with many veteran tribal leaders, the Land Bill of the state- Assam Land and Revenue Regulation 1886 saw the addition of chapter ten in it with the sole purpose of safeguarding tribal lands. This chapter provided that no land within these belts and blocks would henceforth be settled with any non-notified class of people and those non-notified persons who had by then encroached on any unsettled lands within these belts and blocks would forthwith be evicted from there; it also provided that no transfer of lands in these belts and blocks be given to any non-notified

person by way of sale, lease, mortgage etc; adding further that the lands so transferred would not be registered by the government (Sonowal, 2013, p. 13).

> "These provisions empowered the state government to adopt such measures as it deems fit for the protection of those classes who on account of their primitive condition are incapable of looking after their welfare insofar as such welfare depends upon their having sufficient land for their maintenance. The Assam government constituted 31 belts in total, and the same number of blocks during 1947-51 covering 15,000 sq. kilometres comprising 2,795 villages" (Mahanta, 2013, p. 51).

The territorial demarcation stretched from the undivided districts of Goalpara, Kamrup, till Nagaon, Darrang and Lakhimpur. The primary objective behind the creation of excluded territorial zones was to firstly, to safeguard the tribal areas from encroachment by the immigrants of then East Bengal and secondly, to protect the tribal lands from the onslaught of the non-tribals themselves.

Although the creation of the belts and blocks was an appealing model with the capacity to protect tribal lands; it also ended in failure as there existed a huge gap in what was highly proposed to be done and what was actually done. Large tracts of tribal lands still went on getting transferred to the non-tribals with the corrupt backing of revenue officials; malpractices and manipulations in the transfer of tribal lands ran rampant. Such illegal transfer of land could not be checked because apart from the dominant power nexus of the non-tribals buying the lands, this piece of legislation was not enforceable in the court of law[25] and it lay within the easy grasp of the Government to dissolve these belts and blocks as and when it saw fit. These provisions undermined the very necessity of creation of tribal belts and blocks as the decisive power of managing them lay at the mercy of the state. It did not take time for the Bodo tribal leaders to realize that this Act was an oxymoronic farce; that it was in no way capable of safeguarding their interests. The process of land alienation thus continued unabated. The continuous infiltration of the immigrants into the protected areas "aggravated the fear psychosis among the Bodos that in the near future their survival as a distinct community is in danger" (Mahanta, 2013, p. 51). Independence from the British crown kindled new hope among them that their lands could finally be safeguarded by their own government.

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[25] These sections of the chapter ten (added on 1946) to the Assam Land and Revenue Legislation Act 1886 states that:
  a) Section 166: No suit shall lie against any public servant for anything done by him in good faith under this chapter.
  b) Section 167: No civil court shall exercise jurisdiction in any of the matters covered by this chapter.

Post-Independence Developments

The post-independence period, especially from the 1960s, saw a renewed vigour of political channels to safeguard land of the Bodos. This period saw rapid mobilisation in the Bodo community along two complementary fronts- firstly the construction of an inward looking Bodo identity and secondly, active participation in the political organisations to defend the loss of tribal lands. The fight for safeguarding land was accompanied by a ferocious exercise of building up of the Bodo identity, not only via a revision of their history, culture and social norms but also through the establishment of a Bodo language with a script[26]; verging on secessionist movements to demand for autonomy within the ambit of the constitution.

Three organisations played a pivotal role in the Bodo movement that began from the 1960s- a) The Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS, November 1952), b) All Bodo Students Union (ABSU, February 1967) and c) Plains Tribal Council of Assam (1967). These organisations have played the most significant roles in fostering in the Bodos, the consciousness of a Bodo nationality. That the nation of the Bodos is a constructed community is proven by the gradual building up of the identity of Bodos and embedding that identity in their consciousness.[27] The entwining of the 'identity consciousness' and 'territorial possession and reclamation' had already been centre-staged in the Bodo movement when the political and administrative fields saw the following developments.

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[26] The Bodo language is an old language. However, the Bodos did not have an established script for their language. The Bodos soon realised that in order to be identifiable as a separate ethnic community, they needed a language in its entirety- grammar, script and vocabulary. The strong movement for the acceptance of a suitable script swept the politics of the state. Initially the Roman script, at the behest of the suggestions from various organisations was accepted only to be questioned by various Non-Bodo communities. After decades of debates and politics later, the Devanagari script was allotted to the Bodo people by the then Prime Minister of India-Indira Gandhi. Bodo was established as a medium of instruction in the primary schools in Bodo areas in 1963 and was included in the 8th schedule via the ninety-second amendment Act of the Indian Constitution in 2003.

[27] The main objectives and demands of the BSS were to develop Bodo language, literature and culture through creation of a Separate Directorate of Public Instruction for Bodo medium educational institutions; retention of English as medium of instruction in the Primary, Secondary, Graduate and Post-Graduate stages; implementation of Bodo medium schools; inclusion of the Bodo language in the Eight Schedule of the Indian constitution and so on. The major objective of the BSS was to develop and promote Bodo language and literature and later on it participated in agitation politics also.
The main aims and objectives of the ABSU are to promote the language, literature and culture of the Bodos. With its professed goals, the ABSU has been trying to make the young Bodo generation identity conscious and has motivated them to fight for their rights and privileges. It aims to develop and safeguard the culture of the Bodos by bringing reforms to it through various perspectives, to develop the Bodos economically. The ABSU recognizes the superiority of the Indian constitution, although they have spoken of political self-determination on failure to meet their demands.
The BSS and ABSU has thus been 'constructing' the Bodo identity based on a district language, culture and norms while putting economic development as the core to return to. This inter-linkage between identity and territory leads to the development of the identity consciousness embedded in the territory.

Demand for creation of the state of Udayachal:

The fight for the safeguarding of the Tribal land post-independence in the administrative section was first reflected in the Commission under the Chairmanship of U.N Dhebar, appointed by the Govt. of India in 1960 to examine the legal implementation of the tribal belts and blocks throughout the country. In its report, the Commission suggested the cancellation of illegally transferred land patta and restoring back the land to original land owners in the case of Tribal Belts and Blocks with retrospective effect from January 26th 1950.[28] However, the recommendation of the Committee has fallen on deaf ears and no such transfer of lands has been recorded in Assam.

On January 13, 1967, the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared that Assam would be re-organised on federal basis. This was vehemently opposed by the committee formed by the Assamese Students but this declaration came as a hopeful promise for the realization of the demands and aspirations of the Bodos and it gave a considerable fillip to the possibility of having a separate Bodo state of their own. The ABSU welcomes this move and soon, at the initiative of the ABSU, a political party named as the Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA) was soon formed (February 1967) to articulate the political demands of the Bodos. The aim of the PTCA was to defend the rights of the tribals and was to function completely for the safeguarding of the tribal interests.[29]

The PTCA raised the demand for a separate Union territory named "Udayachal" comprising of the Bodo dominated areas all along the northern bank of the Brahmaputra extending from western border of Kokrajhar sub-division (now a district under BTAD) right up to the eastern border of North Lakhimpur sub-division (now district) (Roy, 1995, p. 60).

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[28] Memorandum of ABSU and BPAC, April 8th, 1991 as stated in Sonowal (2013)

[29] The plain tribals of Assam have three distinct sets of challenges:
   a) A large number of tribal peasants had been squeezed out of their lands as a result of the colonial policy of not granting permanent land rights to the tribals. Added to this was the fact that many of the tribal peasants were migratory cultivators shifting from place to place every few years. They were dispossessed of their traditional areas where they been practicing shifting cultivation as a consequent to the growth of the monetary economy.
   b) Secondly, successive Congress governments had hardly paid any attention to the Bodo inhabited areas. The handful of the Bodo youths who had received higher education were facing great difficulties in getting jobs. They had to compete with the politically powerful caste-Hindu Assamese. They were a frustrated lot and they felt that they were being discriminated against.
   c) Thirdly, they were alarmed at the growing campaign of the Assamese (the Assam movement of 1960s) which they saw as a threat as their culture through establishment of Assamese cultural hegemony over theirs.

Dutta, P. (1993). The Bodoland Agitation in Assam. New Delhi. pp. 25-29 as given in Sonowal, 2013, pp. 54-55

The separate tribal state: Udayachal was not only demanded to safeguard tribal land and culture from the immigrants but also to cater to their development without being hindered by the Assamese mainstream community. The imposition of Assamese language as the sole medium of instruction in the universities in 1972 despite opposition from large sections of the communities of the state (Nagas, Khasis, Garos, Bengalis of Surama valley, Mishings, Mizos and Bodos) made it convincing enough for the Bodos that their goals and aspirations lay in direct clash with the mainstream Assamese society; the creation of a separate state could only answer the growing needs of the tribals. To complement this complex of the Bodos, the state of Assam underwent a wide scale redistribution of its territories. The Naga Hills district separated from Assam to form Nagaland in 1963, the Khasi Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills District separated from Assam to form the state of Meghalaya in 1972 and Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh were given the status of Union Territories under the North-Eastern Reorganisation Act, 1971. The Bodos, under such state reorganisation exercise, demanded for a Union Territory status for the proposed state of Udayachal under the PTCA in December 1973.

The Udayachal Issue was the main election agenda for the PTCA in the 1985 election which brought victory to the PTCA candidate in one Parliamentary Constituency and three assembly constituencies (Bhattacharjee, 1996, p. 100). However, after coming to power with the joining of the Janata Dal party, in 1977, the PTCA not only denounced its demand for Udayachal but made a feeble attempt to demand only autonomy for the region. The failure of the PTCA erupted into a political and social dilemma for the Bodos.

> "The betrayal of the Assam government have compelled them to take resolute stand and rise in struggle to defend their birth-right to preserve their land, language, culture and tradition which have by and large been incorporated in the Indian constitution. Heroic, militant and zealous defender of their identity through ages, the plains tribals today have decided to convert their grievances into a political movement and resolved to carry forward unflinchingly till their demands are fulfilled."[30]

Frustrated at the utter "betrayal" of the common Bodo masses, the society saw the uprising of a core militant organization- Bodo Security Force (BrSF) later renamed as National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB)[31]. It is a rebel insurgent organization of the Bodo

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[30] Chaudhary, S. B. (1989). On Udayachal Movement in Bhuyan, B. C. (ed.). Political Development in the North-East. New Delhi: Om sons, p. 115 as quoted in Bhattacharjee, 1996, p. 105
[31] Renamed in 1996

youth wedded to violent tactics set to achieve the goal of a sovereign Bodoland.[32] The PTCA and the Udayachal episodes in Bodo history fizzled out.

Demand for creation of the autonomous districts of Nilachal:

The ABSU, disappointed at the failure of the PTCA, 1987, launched the Bodoland Movement. It organised mass movement from the 2nd of March 1987 with a goal to achieving a separate autonomous state for the Bodos by the year 1990 on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra. The ABSU went on to create a sister wing named as the Bodo Peoples' Action Committee (BPAC)[33] which while working in unison with the ABSU demanded the creation of separate autonomous districts for the Bodos- to be called Nilachal. A 92-point charter of demands released by the ABSU in 1987 marked a distinct phase in the Bodo identity movement, the charter inter alia, demanded creation of a separate Bodo state, creation of two distinct councils on the southern bank of Brahmaputra and third, inclusion of the Bodo-Kachari of Karbi Anglong into the Scheduled tribes (Hills) List (Mahanta, 2013, p. 51).

This movement saw wide scale participation from the Bodo masses all over Assam where the slogan "Divide Assam 50:50" was raised. Bhattacharya writes that "their fight was mainly *against the Assamese domination* in every sphere of their life. They felt that only separation from Assam would help the Bodos, the Mishings, the Deuris, the Lalungs and the Rabhas to maintain their identity and save them from all kinds of discrimination. Their political aspiration emerged out of a perceived *crisis of identity*" (emphasis original, Bhattacharjee, 1996, p. 113).

The Central Government and the Assam Gana Parishad (AGP) state government, however, could not arrive at any satisfactory mutually enforceable solution to the ABSU-BPAC demands. In the ABSU conference of 1988, in Dhubri, the ABSU, in presence of delegates from various local organisations, lakhs of Bodo people and about 35,000 representatives from the ABSU and BPAC announced to take the Bodo movement to the next level. "In the

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[32] The main objective of the BrSF was to bring liberty, equality and fraternity, to free the Bodo nation from socio-political and economic exploitation, oppression, suppression and colonization in alliance with other armed revolutionary organizations of the oppressed aboriginal nationalities in the Indo-Burma region. The Sentinel, June 4 and 5, 1992 as mentioned in Sonowal (2013).

[33] The BPAC comprised of all the Bodo groups like the Bodos, Lalungs, Rabhas, Thengals, Hajongs, Meches, Dimasas, Dhimals, Datials, Garos, Totlas, Saraniyas, Hojais,Barmans, Deoris, Koch-Rajbnshis etc. It brought together and was backed by not only the mainstream Bodo community but also all the tribes who had a common Bodo linguistic origin.

conference, the ABSU formally declared its suspension of the 89 non-political demands retaining only the three political demands and upgrading the demand from Union Territory to full statehood for more autonomy and political power and was given nomenclature 'Bodoland' to the proposed state" (Bhattacharjee, 1996, pp. 122-123).

The then Assam Chief Minister, Prafulla K. Mahanta, himself a student leader (of AASU) turned politician, however, firmly rejected the demand for separation. He strongly opposed the division of the territory of Assam any further under any condition. Even Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of the country was opposed to the idea of making further divisions from the state of Assam. It became clear to the Bodo leaders that the political atmosphere in the state as well as in the Centre was opposed to the creation of Bodoland.

Frustrated at the concomitant failures to meet any of their demands, the Bodo areas saw the first phase of violence. The period from February to August 1989 was the first violent phase in the Bodo agitation with Bodo activists embarking on a series of killings, kidnapping and bomb attacks in which 350 people were killed (Chadha, 2005, p. 265).

It is noteworthy that that the movement till now, this moment was inclusive of the needs and aspirations of their fellow tribal population. This had assigned a complementary relation between the Bodos and the other tribal populace. It was only via this conference of 1988 that the Bodos decided to represent none other tribal organisation or community apart from themselves. The Bodo movement became a singular identity movement exclusively for the needs of the Bodo community.

Land alienation, till this period was unanimously accepted to be the sole issue governing the Bodo identity movement for autonomy. The following table shows how in spite of the legal provisions, land alienations continued unabated:

Table 3.3: Comparison of the laws safeguarding tribal land and their impact

Sr. No	Time	Resolution/Law/ statute	Objective	Impact
1	15th January, 1945	Govt. of Assam adds a paragraph in the "Resolution of Land Settlements"	To provide protection to the tribals and other backward classes of people	No particular safeguard of the tribal land
2	13th July, 1945	Assam Govt. adopts a resolution No. RD	For protection of tribal people in areas predominantly inhabited by	Creation of tribal belts and blocks. No particular safeguard of

		68/44	tribals.	the tribal land
3	1947	Assam Land Revenue Amendment Act, addition of Chapter X	To provide protection to the tribal lands.	The First tribal belt of Sidli and first tribal block of Bijni was created. Thereafter various tribal belts and blocks have been created. As on 30th of June, 1990 there were 17 tribal belts and 30 tribal belts and blocks in Assam.
4	5th December 1947	Assam Land and Revenue Regulation (Amendment) Act in section 160, sub-section 2. (Assam Act No. XV)	Specified that cultivators pertaining to plain tribes, Hill tribes, Tea-garden tribals, Santhals and Scheduled Castes as communities entitles for protection.[34]	Legal protection extended to Bodo lands but only in paper
5	25th September 1958	Resolution No. RSS. 205/58 applicable vide Order no. RSS. 329/53 dated Shillong March 6th, 1959	Resettlement of all the displacement East-Pakistani Cultivators should be settled in the wastelands to the effect that 'landless displaced cultivators from East Pakistan shall have equal claim with the local landless agriculturalist'.	Land alienation
6	1981	Creation of a new sub-section under the Assam Land Revenue and Regulation (amendment) Act	Imposing bar on acquisition of land within tribal belt or block. Section 164, Sub-section 2 stated that no land-holder shall transfer his land in a belt or block to a) to any person not belonging to a class of people notified under section 160 or b) to any person who is not a permanent resident in that belt or block. But it kept the provision that the provisions of this chapter shall cease to apply to any area or areas, to which they have been applied under the provisions of sub-section (1).	Exploitation of the loophole in the act and land alienation continued. For example: Under sub-section 4 of sub-section 162, by notification no. RSD. 3/59/25, dated 1st January 1962, an area of 11,253 bighas 2 kathas 7 lessas of land from the Bijni tribal block was allotted to rehabilitate 1368 refugee families of East Bengal origin. This area is known as Bishnupur colony.

Source: Compiled from Gangopadhyay, 1991, p. 3; Bordoloi, 1991, pp. 9-10 and
http://revenueassam.nic.in as mentioned in Narjinary, 2014, pp. 44-50

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[34] Under this Amendment, the Nepali Grazers were also included in the list of communities entitled for protection but were removed from the list following the Notification No. RSD/26/64/PT/15, dated 27th June, 1969 read with a corrigendum No. RSD 26/64/101, dated 16th December 1971

The Bodoland Accord of 1993:

It was only in 1991 after the coming in of the Congress Government in the state that the Bodoland issue was paid due attention. The ABSU and the BPAC leaders served an ultimatum to the government threatening to resume their movement if their demands were not met by February, 1991. The Government worked fast to constitute a three member committee, headed by Bhupinder Singh, I.A.S, to demarcate the Bodo areas and to make recommendations regarding the grant of autonomy. "In a closed door meeting held in Guwahati, with the Bodo leaders and Union minister for State Home Affairs assured them the Bodo aspiration would soon be fulfilled."[35] The committee submitted its report in the early part of 1992 with a proposal to grant the Bodo *maximum autonomy short of separate state* within the Union (emphasis original, Bhattacharya, 1996, p. 134).

This led to the signing of The Bodoland Accord on February 1993. It was signed by the leaders of the ABSU-BPAC leaders and the representatives of the Government of Assam in Kokrajhar as a solution to the Bodo problem. Under the Accord, it provided for the creation of a Bodo Autonomous Council (BAC); it was agreed upon by the Bodo leaders to have an autonomous Bodoland Council instead of a separate Bodo state after endless disagreements and debates.

The creation of the BAC, although aimed at a solution to the Bodo problem; however, created diverse clashes within the Assamese society at large which snowballed to more clashes, violence and vehement disagreements. There were many gaps which the BAC had overlooked in the hurry to find a "solution"; the primary among them being the failure to arrive at a consensus regarding the territorial extent of the areas to be covered under the BAC.[36] The real difficulty about the demarcation of the BAC area arose out of the vehement

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[35] The North-East Times, February 27th, 1991 as quoted in Bhattacharya, 1969, p. 133

[36] The proposed Bodoland territory was not in any case an exclusively Bodo inhabited compact area as in the case of some of the Hill states of the north-eastern region are, with regard to the particular indigenous tribes inhabiting those territories. Even in areas having exclusive habitation of the Bodo people, contiguity is often broken by non-tribal villages in between them. The Bodos had demanded the inclusion of a large number of non-Bodo villages, towns and tea gardens into the BAC area whereas the Government had put a cap of existence of more than 50% Bodo population in an area to be its inclusion indicator. The ABSU-BPAC had demanded the inclusion of three thousand and odd villages whereas the Government had proposed to include only two thousand and odd villages. The Government had also refused to include some 25 to 39 tea gardens and reserved forest areas along the northern foothills. The ABSU-BPAC had also demanded the inclusion of a 10 km stretch on the Bhutan border which the Government refused.

opposition by the non-tribal group of population of the proposed Bodoland council territory.[37] The creation of the BAC, in the face of these uncertainties and difficulties failed to answer to the expectations of the Bodo community. Also, it should be noted that the creation of the BAC and its partial acceptance and partial contestation led to a wedge even within the Bodo community apart from deepening the differences between the Bodos vis-à-vis the other communities inhabiting the contiguous areas.[38]

The failure of the BAC to satisfy all the sections of the Bodo agitation groups saw the birth of another militant organization which earned notoriety for the wide scale violence and sabotage activities is the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT). The uprising of the fragmented "representative" groups of the Bodo society advocating diverse ideologies- some democratic, some militant and some extremist have left the Bodo areas bleeding. The decade post failure of the BAC saw unprecedented violence and killings of not only "immigrant" Muslim peasants and Adivasis but also fratricidal killings where veteran Bodo leaders were eliminated.[39]

In 1993, the Bodo Accord failed miserably. The Bodo leadership itself went division into Brahma and Bwismutiary camps.

Militant phase of the Bodo Movement

The phase of the Bodo movement post the failed Bodo Accord of 1993 is the bloodiest protest and demand for self-autonomy violence witnessed by the state of Assam. The Bodo identity question linked with the strenuous history of their struggle to secure their resources, fight for their land, assert their identity had turned too political and the frustration behind the extended decades of fighting began to be painted in the society in a thick dull grey and red with all the killings and violence. The Bodo question, however, reverberated back to the basic one liner- territorial ownership as the safeguarding instrument of the Bodo identity.

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[37] The BJP, United Minority Front, Congress (S), All Assam Koch-Rajbanshi Students' Union, Bongaigaon Unit, All Assam Minority Students' Union, Barpeta Road Anchalik Unit, All Assam Students Union and tea-workers were opposed to the territorial demarcation and inclusion propositions.

[38] One dimension of the problem was the ideological conflict between two sections of the Bodos- one section supporting the solution of the Bodo problem with the Indian constitution and another aiming for a sovereign Bodoland. Rivalry to dominate the Bodo society turned violent resulting in the attack and counter-attack on river group. The separatist BrSF rejected the Bodoland Accord outright signed by the ABSU.

[39] Violent assaults of 1993 and 1994 (targeted Bengali Muslims), 1996 and 1998 (targeted adivasis). "Operation Dahar" launched by the NDFB resulted in large number of fratricidal killings.

Mahanta (2013) states that the failed Bodo Accord of 1993 sent out three definitive conclusions for the Bodo people:

- "One, they must prove a majority in the BTAD areas. This was extremely important as in some areas they were in minority. While immigrants continue to flood the region, the government was accused of giving the pattas to the illegal settlers.
- Two, as AASU was the reference point for the ABSU, the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), an extremist organisation fighting for the secession of the Assamese, became the reference point for various Bodo extremist groups who believed that the political elite in Delhi and Dispur would not listen to the voice of non-violence.
- Three, the extremist groups thus adopted violent means that affected not only the immigrant Muslims, but also other indigenous and local groups living in the areas like the Rabhas, the Adivasis, the Koch-Rajbonshis, the Nepalis, the Bengalis and the Assamese-speaking people" (Mahanta, 2013, p. 52)

This phase of the Bodo movement caused death as well as large scale displacement of the people. Refugee camps became a casual element in the landscape of the Bodo society as almost every year violence-torn families thronged into these camps in search of protection and food. The Bodo-Muslim violence that occurred in October 1993 had displaced about 3,568 families consisting of 18,000 persons. One of the most serious killings of innocent people was in the relief camp Bashbari in the Barpeta district on 24 July 1994 in which more than 100 immigrant Muslims were killed, hundreds of houses were torched and 70,000 were rendered homeless (Barooah, 1994). As a result of Bodo attacks on ethnic Santhals in May 1996, more than 2,50,000 persons were displaced. In 1997, the majority returned home, but were forced to flee after renewed fighting during 1998 (ibid). At the peak of the Bodo armed movement, Assam accounted for nearly more than half of India's population of Internally Displaced Persons (S. Bhaumik, 2005, p. 45).

Many scholars like M. Hussain and N. G Mahanta indirectly points out that the Bodos already have a structure for a homeland; the many attempts at creating a separate territory for the tribals have made sure of that. The fact that the Bodos cannot overlook is that they need to be in majority which they are not. They explain that the Bodos need to constitute a Bodo majority geographical landmass which perhaps has led to the ethnic cleansing process.

At the political front, the government has also been able to provide no respite. Elections in the Bodo areas are contested by the militant outfits. Mahanta writes:

"One of the noticeable features of the insurgency scenario in north-east India is that although many of the militant outfits avowedly want to secede from India and want nothing to do with Indian democracy in reality, they actively participate in all democratic elections by putting up or supporting candidates of their choice in order to propagate their agenda. A number of Bodo groups came together to form the Bodo State Movement Council (BSMC) with active support from the BLT (also known as the Bodo Liberation Tiger Force or BLTF). It was established on 18 June 1996 under the leadership of Prem Singh Brahma. The hardliners of ABSU and BrSF formed the People's Democratic Front (PDF). With the active support of the BrSF, the PDF won eight seats and the BSMC one. Since then, participation of militant groups in the election process of Bodoland is a common phenomenon" (Mahanta, 2013, p. 52)

In fact, Mahanta argues that there is a very thin line between the non-violent political groups and the violent insurgent groups like the NDFB and BLT. In line with the same, Baruah (2012) argues that:

The continuities are explained by the diffuse presence – in the background– of an inchoate constituency that feels un-represented. This constituency can derive a sense of representation, meaning and even identity through a social movement, an insurgency, or a political party, not necessarily in a serial order. Not only can these political phenomena all relate to one another, together they can be understood in terms of a society coming to terms with historical social change. In such a context, violence "interweaves incessantly with nonviolent politics (Baruah, 2012, pp. 27-45).

In the insurgency chapter of the Bodo movement, the NDFB and the BLT has emerged as equally terrorising outfits of violence. The wide scale displacement and mass killings finally appealed to the Government to take another look at the demands of the Bodos. This led to the creation of the Bodo Territorial Council and finally the Bodo Territorial Autonomous/Area Districts (BTAD) was created in 2003. However, the militancy phase of the Bodo movement is still on.

Formation of the BTC in 2003:

On February 10th, 2003 the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) was formed under the provision of the amended sixth schedule of the Indian Constitution by allotting four districts of Western Assam (districts of Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri) as the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD). The ABSU, BPAC and BLT have supported the move towards grant of autonomy under the provisions of the 6th schedule. However, the NDFB still rejects it, the conflicts in the BTAD still continues unabated and violence rages on.[40]

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[40] Violent assaults of 2012 (targeted Bengali Muslims) and 2014 (targeted adivasis).

An evaluation of the role of the BTC and how far has it been successful in addressing the needs and demands of the Bodo movement has been attempted in chapter 6. As far as there is no peace in BTAD, as long as the mass killings, targeted community mass violence continue, it would be a mistake to state that the Bodo Movement has come to an end. The Bodo movement rages on, with insurgents as its propagators.

This chapter explored the role of land in defining the Bodo identity through a historical framework. Land has historically evolved to occupy two significant meanings for the Bodos:

a) Land as a resource from which they have been alienated through a continuous influx of in-migrants. Protecting this resource became important because land governs the livelihood of the Bodos. The in-migrants, specifically the peasants from east Bengal were as much dependent on land for their livelihood as the Bodos. In this scenario, there occurs a dependence on the same resource by the indigenous as well as by the outsider migrant; thereby creating a competition for the indigenous community to have access to that very resource which had been at their uncontested disposal for generations. This discovery triggers a consciousness which gets manifested in the form of identity assertion. Land as a resource therefore had constructed the Bodo identity.

b) The development of such a consciousness, coupled with continued land alienation of the tribals assigned another meaning to land- Land as a territory. Throughout the history of development of a Bodo identity consciousness and an identity construct, there have been repetitive demands from the Bodos to assign them a separate territory. Even the colonial as well as the post-colonial government has created various provisions in order to assign a separate territory to the tribals. Although some argue this to be a policy of exclusion, it needs to be noted that the implication of such a step- be it exclusionary or not, creates a consciousness of land as territory. The following table shows that throughout the period of evolution of the Bodo identity, there have been six failed attempts to grant a separate territory to the Bodos (along with the plain tribals). The formation of the BTAD is the seventh of such an attempt. Each of these provisions and demands which sought to assign a separate territory to the tribals was based on popular demands for protection by the tribal population themselves, so the nature of these attempts conforms with protective discrimination instead of being exclusionary.

Table 3.4: Attempts at assigning a separate territory to the Bodos along with the Plain tribals of Assam

Attempts at assigning a separate territory to the tribals	What it sought to do	Basis of such an action or demand
Creation of the Line System	Protect tribal lands by demarcating absolute boundaries over the tribal inhabited areas; separation of tribal majority territories	Protection from Land encroachment
Hockenhull Committee report	Intensify the boundaries of the territories marked out for tribals	Protection of tribal land from alienation
Revisiting the Land Laws after the Second World War	Eliminate the corruption through which there had occurred infiltration into these demarcated tribal territories	Protection of tribal land from alienation
Demand for a separate tribal state of 'Udayachal'	Create a separate state for the plain tribals of Assam	Land alienation, inspite of all efforts was still continuing
Demand for autonomous districts of 'Nilachal'	Create a separate state for the plain tribals of Assam	Land alienation, inspite of all efforts was still continuing
Bodoland Accord of 1993	Demarcate certain Bodo dominated territories to be governed autonomously	Protection of Land of the tribals and recognition of a separate ethnic Bodo identity.

Source: A concluding remark based on the analysis of this chapter

Land therefore, evolved as a resource needing protection and as a territory was integrated into the construction of the Bodo identity.

"A sense of identity can be a source not merely of pride and joy, but also of strength and confidence….And yet identity can also kill- and kill with abandon."

-Amartya Sen (Identity and Violence: the Illusion of Destiny, 2006:1)

The last chapter traced down the history of land alienation, marginalisation and exploitation of the Bodo tribal populace in Assam and explained how the Bodos gradually evolved into a distinct ethnic and political identity with the progressing Bodo movement. The movement has secured them the status of the sixth schedule autonomous governance, via the Bodoland Accord of 2003 and hence their fight for the right to self-determination has been a success story. The contemporary, post-2003 accord society of the BTAD, is however, still seeped in violence targeted at specific communities, riots and bandhs making one almost doubt if the accord has ever been signed. With peace being a distant dream, the Bodo heartland of Assam continues to be driven by the questions of land, livelihood and identity.

This chapter and the one that follows are based on the ethnographic survey which targeted the understanding of this very land-livelihood and identity question of BTAD. This chapter is an analysis of how identities of the different communities of BTAD are understood, analysed and interpreted. More specifically, understanding as to what are the factors that determine the construction of identities. In a society that has been under the shadow of inter-community targeted violence for decades, it becomes imperative to understand that the process which creates violence also creates identities. The BTAD is one society where its communities have different culture, language and religion; but what makes BTAD prone to the conflicts is the fact that the communities in BTAD share different histories. Different histories assign different identities, feeding into the cacophony of identity politics based upon competition over the one precious resource- land.

The Bodo identity is a complex multifaceted representation of their history, ethnicity and contemporary politics. For the Bodos in BTAD, identities exist simultaneously at three different levels of consciousness:

a) Firstly, the way in which the individual creates his/her personal self. This motivates perception and effect the cognitive frame of the mind.

b) Secondly, the way the individual creates an identity for the people of his/her own community. This is the creation of an imagery of the individual for his/her own/ kin community. It is accompanied by loyalty, brotherhood and bonds of belongingness to the community. It is the imagery that the individual is a part of the whole.

c) Thirdly, the way the individual creates an identity for the people of the rest of those communities not considered to be in his/her kinship group. This process assigns identities to 'the other' and is more significant because the other communities are judged, understood and accepted or rejected based on it.

The Bodo identity has undergone a long process of metamorphosis, rooted to the space where it evolved and tied down with the baggage of the past.

Identities- as observed from the field

The identity question in BTAD, as in many post-colonial societies arise from the result of colonialism; an exploitative system of governance which thronged the society with migrants in order to fill up their treasury. The post-colonial government has made a failed attempt to implement the imaginative nation-state model to multi-ethnic societies in an effort to integrate many ethnicities into homogeneities of the nation-state. The most significant manifestation of the identity question in the state has been the rise of the Bodos as a multifarious identity encompassing within it ethnic, political, militant, othering and fratricidal sides.

The Bodo identity is an imagined identity (Benedict Anderson's words), a discovered identity (Amartya Sen's words) and in mine, a constructed identity. A study of the Bodo identity from ethnography reveals that there exists pivotal constructs around which the Bodo identity revolves. They are as given under:

I. **The Bodo Identity is defined in relation to the Bodoland Movement**

a) **Witness and Memory:**

The Bodo identity is dependent upon the memories and witness of the Bodo movement. For many Bodos, identifying with the Bodo identity meant identifying with the Bodo movement. Asking people to relate with their identity meant implementing the agency of 'witness and memory' which meant to ask the people to enquire into their minds, to excavate those

markers which make them Bodo. Everybody has a memory, everybody has a story, everybody has an opinion and everybody felt that his or her narration was the correct version of the truth. Memory of a person witnessing an event (be it directly at the location to witness it or indirectly be living in that very society) is a strong determinant of the construction of a set of beliefs and opinions which creates the context of their identity.

Nora (1989) shows how significant the agency of memory and witness can be when she writes:

> "Memory is life borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived……Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present…. Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and relations between things. Memory is absolute while history can only conceive the relative."[41]

The memories of the Bodo people, therefore, of the witnessing of the movement bind them into a community undergoing a phase of history in unison. Such memories fosters a collective identity among the group which is plural, multifaceted and yet valid at the level of the individual. Memories of collective struggles to safeguard the very issues of livelihood is revolutionary. Although witnessed at each individual level, such memories grow beyond their individual locations and expand into developing an image of the entire society. Memory therefore, constructs identity. Dutta (2012), invoking Anderson in identity construction, writes:

> "Memory is also linked to the construction of many of the crises that function as markers within the identity discourse, and to the project of colonial modernity inscribed in the British documentation methods of mapping, censuses and (perhaps) museums. Benedict Anderson demonstrates evocatively how such methods are used in conjuring up the national idea in the imagination of a community (Anderson 1999: 163-86). Prior to these interventions, the idea of specific territories for culturally distinct groups was not necessarily an idea that anybody lived by and that had any imaginative existence" (Dutta, 2012, p. 14).

Memories therefore bear in them the seeds for the construction of the tomorrow, for the construction of not an individual but of a nation. It allows people to commit and form opinions and more significantly gives them the reasons for justification of such opinions.

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[41] Nora, P. (1989). Between Memory and History: Les Liex de Mémoire, Representations, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory, 23 (Spring), 7-24, pp. 8-9 as quoted in Dutta, 2012, p. 12

Therefore, what the Bodos witness constructs their memories creates their identity and gives them the reasons to continue the struggle for a tomorrow to come.

The people identified themselves as Bodos in consonance with all the struggles that they had to face because of the "land-hungry immigrants", "negligent, good-for-nothing Assam government" and "exploitative Assamese community". The Bodo people presented that they have been the ones to be "ruthlessly exploited" despite their pleas and complaints. The Bodo movement was the saviour of the Bodo community because it united them under one umbrella; it gave weight to the scattered voice of the Bodo individuals. The movement made them realise their glorious history, it instilled within them the confidence that they too can rule themselves. To quote a Bodo elderly man:

> *"We came to this land even before the Ahoms, the Assamese and the British. We ruled this land before the Ahoms won it from us. If Ahoms and the Assamese have their separate state today (Assam) then why is it so absurd to conceive of a separate state for the Bodos? We are no less than any community, we have our history, we have our own traditions, we have our own language and we have our own struggles. That's what makes us Bodo."*

To those people who have been involved with the movement, a participant or an witness, the struggle for self-determination and the resistance to be assimilated under the 'Greater Assamese Identity' meant that they were Bodos. It was the realisation that they have been living in that land for generations and yet denied a homeland; that they were the ones to colonise the virgin Brahmaputra plains and hence they had a right to that land. The movement accommodated all these demands and aspirations of the Bodo people. Being a part of the movement meant being a Bodo fighting to save their identity.

b) re-constructing the movement for those who have not lived through it:

The memories and witness of large scale land alienation, violence, fratricidal killings and loss were convincing enough for the mass of the Bodo populace to become a part of the Bodo movement. It is only the young generation of Bodos, not old enough to be an active participant in politics, who lack experience of this movement that has swept every household of the Bodo community. The young generation of Bodos, however, who bear no part in the movement are also inducted into the Bodo identity via a lesson of the history of the Bodo. They are made aware of "who they are" not merely by a familiarization of the customs and traditions of the Bodos but by a narration of the re-constructed version of the Bodo movement. To quote a Bodo man, father of two children:

"We tell stories to our children. They have to know who we are. They have to know why we are here. They have to know why our family members died. They have to know their identity."

The identity issue is re-articulated through a reading of the past, and of the relationship with the 'other' often with the own interpretation of the narrator. The historical process of alienation, exploitation and marginalisation which constructed the Bodo identity is re-imposed upon the young through detailed narratives of a mix of the past glories and loss, of pride and death and of struggle and violence. The young, although not a witness to the exploitative history are thus initiated into the identity question of BTAD and the baggage of the past struggles is passed on for the posterity to carry.

This conditioning of 'being Bodo' is re-lived by the narrators not only by passing on the identity question to the younger generation but also by refreshing their own identity via a constant narration and convincing of why the Bodo identity is significant. The memory and witness of the movement is constantly invoked to sustain the created identity, foster new found meanings to their struggles and justify the reasons of having created the 'other' in their society.

 c) **The Bodo Identity is kept alive by the imageries of the Bodo struggle:**

Creation of an imagery about an event is a window into the past. The Bodo identity is constantly emphasised upon by the very landscape of the society. Stories of valour and of martyrs who have laid down their lives for the cause of Bodoland have found their place among the Bodo folktales. They are celebrated as heroes in the Bodo society; their sacrifice a painful reminder of the struggles against the 'other'. Kokrajhar houses a cemetery, only dedicated to the heroes and martyrs of Bodoland where statues of Bodo youths struggling for their homeland gaze down upon the people; urging them to continue the fight for Bodoland for which they had given their lives. War memorials, passionate graffiti and zealous cultural programmes dotes the landscape of the Bodo society reminding them of their history, inducting them into the ongoing struggle and thereby constantly creating and re-creating the Bodo identity.

This imagery constitutes the very landscape of BTAD, where the people are constantly reminded of the decades of the Bodo movement in a single glance. The Bodo identity is thus sustained through presentations of glimpses from the past, through a constant conditioning of the memory and witness that they have hard-earned their recognition, that there is an 'other'

among them'; where the wounds of the past are not allowed to be forgotten and the hope for a homeland is forever rekindled.

II.   The Bodo identity is embedded in its place

The Bodo identity is governed by its location, the idea of a land belonging to them for which they have fought and hence deserved. The Bodo identity is embedded to its land, the physical entity which has defined their traditional norms and customs, the land which has been woven into their folklores, the land which has given them their occupation and hence their identity.

Following the Bodo movement, this attachment to the land- topophilia[42] has seen a burgeoning from merely being the land of their ancestors and folktales to the land which is now wet with their blood and memories of the lost members of their community. Although history and identity politics in BTAD has painted an additional shade to the attachment that the Bodos have with their land; the basic context where the relation to the land goes into defining a community remains intact. This relationship can be witnessed in the social customs and traditions of the Bodos, the informal institutions in the tribal community which are entirely land-based, their occupation since generations- all governed by the relationship of the Bodo tribal community to their land.

Space or land is no more considered a passive entity, a mere inert territory having no influence over anything. Place in fact creates identities. Identity becomes an output of the relation between the people and their place, an expression of all 'the sense of place' that gives the cultural systems of the society its meanings. Jackson (1984) brings it out more clearly when he writes:

> Landscape is really no more than a collection, a system of man-made spaces on the surface of the earth. Whatever its shape or size it is *never* simply a natural space, a feature of the natural environment; it is *always* artificial, *always* synthetic, *always* subject to sudden and unpredictable change. We create them and need them because every landscape is the place where we establish our own human organization of space and time. (Jackson, 1984, p. 156)

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[42] Term coined by geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) in *"Topophilia: a study of environmental perception, attitudes and values,"* Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall

Topophilia is used in order to describe the love that people of a place has for it and the affective bond that people inhabiting a place shares for that place. Such a bond varies in intensity and in its expression and it is often derived from aesthetic appreciation, memory, pride of ownership, dependence on a place for one's livelihood or security. In the context of the Bodos, the last one in the series is the most significant.

The meaning of land therefore, lies beyond the boundaries of a demarcated territory as it is attached to a host of intangible perceptions like home, belonging, embeddedness, region and nation which are entirely governed by the actions of the human agency. "Landscapes are not individual property; they reflect a society's – a culture's – beliefs, practices and technologies" (Crang, 1998, p. 15). The element which assigns these landscapes their meanings is the human agency at work to constantly create and modify this landscape, which in turn assigns the human agency its culture- its identity. This relation between land and people, "is also inherently dialogical, 'shuttling' between material and immaterial, perception and presence, human and non-human, as spatial heterogeneity, mixing, crossing-over, contradicting; always processive and always unfinished" (Berberich, Campbell and Hudson, 2012, p. 20). Spirn (1998) emphasis this very point when he states that:

> Landscape is loud with dialogues, with story lines that connect a place and its dwellers. …. A coherence of human vernacular landscapes emerges from dialogues between builders and place, fine-tunes over time. … The context of life is a woven fabric of dialogues, enduring and ephemeral. (Spirn, 1998, p. 17)

In other words, it is the human element that assigns meaning to land and land in turn influences those that assigned meanings about it. The relationship is a binary of causative and complementary interaction and identities are created and recreated as an outcome of this interaction and is made tangible by the actions of the human agency on the landscape. This interaction creates the landscape of BTAD in as much as they themselves are created and defined by it. These constructions therefore are embedded in the space in which it is created. These constructions forms the beliefs, practices, thoughts and also actions which are dependent, derived and are manifested upon that space. As Creswell (1996) argues:

> The geographical environment forces people to relate beliefs to actions. Our actions in place are evidence of our preferred reading…so a place comes to have meaning by our actions in it – by "practice" – and through our reactions to this practice. … Thus places are active forces in the reproduction of norms – in the definition of appropriate practice. Place constitutes our beliefs about what is appropriate as much as it is constituted by them. (Cresswell, 1996, p. 16)

In respect of BTAD, the interaction between the land and its people has produced everyday space, manufactured identities, created ties and bonds which define the very essence of the lives of the people of the region. It would hardly be a debatable proposition to consider that a continued interaction between the land and its people, extending for a long period in history, would be capable of assigning definitive characteristics to both its people and its place.

Identities are built from such long term interactions in the society and are constructed in space through "memory, fantasy, narrative and myth" (Hall, 1990, p. 226).

The Bodo identity is an identity which is embedded in its location- the land. An embedded identity is an identity forged into its people by the history of that place and kept alive by the everyday interactions with the place. In the context of BTAD, for the autochthon Bodos, embedded identity acts as a way of identifying not only with the present but also is a way to re-live the past and project the future. Embedded identity is built upon the economic, political and social identities and most importantly for the autochthon, on the ethnic identity. The following chart shows a sketch of how an embedded identity is created and the various factors that are in play in creating it:

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┌─────────────────────┐
│ Environment/ SPACE  │
└─────────────────────┘
   ↕        ↕                    ┌──────────────────────────────────┐      ┐
   ┌──────────────────┐          │ Social relations and informal norms │      │  ┌──────────────┐
   │   Interaction    │─────────▶└──────────────────────────────────┘      │  │ Follows the  │
   └──────────────────┘──────────┌──────────────────────────────────┐      ├──│ spatial      │
   ↕        ↕                    │   Culture and traditional set up     │      │  │ dynamics     │
┌─────────────────────┐         └──────────────────────────────────┘      │  └──────────────┘
│ Habitat (HUMAN AGENT)│─────────┌──────────────────────────────────┐      │
└─────────────────────┘          │      Occupations (livelihood)      │      ┘
                                 └──────────────────────────────────┘
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Fig 4.1: Embedded Identity

Embedded in the particular space (BTAD) through generations (temporally)

Social identity | Ethnic identity | Economic identity

Embedded Identity

Process of Identity formation

Social life and institutions | Traditional set-up | Ways of livelihood (occupations practiced)

Continued interaction (temporal scale)

Fig 4.1: Embedded Identity

The following table shows the responses generated by the Bodo samples regarding the relation to their land:

Table 4.1: Role of land as conceptualised by Bodos

Samples response in assigning ranks	Role of land in your life				
	Determines your occupation	Source of earning credit	Integral part of Bodo politics	Defines traditions	Only for construction of house
sample 1	1	4	2	3	5
sample 2	3	1	2	4	5
sample 3	4	3	1	2	5
sample 4	1	2	3	4	5
sample 5	1	2	4	5	3
sample 6	2	5	1	3	4
sample 7	1	3	2	4	5
sample 8	3	4	1	2	5
sample 9	1	3	2	4	5
sample 10	2	5	1	3	4
sample 11	2	5	3	4	1
sample 12	1	5	2	4	3
sample 13	3	4	1	2	5
sample 14	1	5	3	2	4
sample 15	1	5	2	4	3
sample 16	2	5	1	3	4
sample 17	2	4	1	5	3
sample 18	1	4	3	5	2
sample 19	1	2	3	4	5
sample 20	1	3	2	4	5
sample 21	1	2	3	5	4
sample 22	1	4	2	3	5
sample 23	2	5	1	3	4
sample 24	1	4	2	3	5
sample 25	3	5	2	1	4
sample 26	3	4	1	2	5
sample 27	1	2	4	5	3
sample 28	3	5	2	1	4
sample 29	2	5	1	4	3
sample 30	1	3	2	4	5

Source: Field Survey

Note: Rank 1 show most important and 5 shows least important. The rank-chart is a miniature version of the original data collected which comprises of 63 samples of Bodo households. The data has been shortened here in order to be depicted in a presentable but authentic form. The full chart has been provided in the appendix.

The Bodo identity lived through their emotional attachment and economic dependence on land is evitable from the rankings that they assign to the role played by land in their lives. The categories which are ranked the highest are "determines your occupation", "Integral part of Bodo politics" and "defines traditions". The Bodo identity, therefore, is embedded in its place.

III. The Bodo identity is an othering identity, exclusionary in nature and violent in its essence.

Identity is not only defined by the way one sees himself/herself; the definition of identity is enhanced by the way one is perceived by the others. So Bodo is not only what Bodos think themselves to be, Bodo is also what the others think them to be. The understanding of the Bodo identity can only be completed by a look into what the other communities of BTAD perceive the Bodos to be. Understanding the Bodos, from the eyes of the 'other' is also significant because the Bodo identity also reacts to the way they are perceived, re-constructed accordingly and the unending bilateral relation feeds into each other to carry it on.

In BTAD, the troubled history, the contemporary politics, the belongingness of an embedded identity which assigns deep meanings to the Bodo identity, in turn also creates the "us/ our community" and the "they/ other/ outsider/ migrants" i.e. the "us- they" identity. For the Bodo community, it encompasses the creation of the other. It also creates the sections of the society which are assigned identities as understood by the powerful autochthon thorough the process of othering. Spivak analyses three dimensions of othering:

a) Creation of the supremacy, a reminder of "who they are subject to" (Spivak, 1985. p. 254).
b) Creation of the pathological and morally inferior (Jensen, 2011, p. 65; explaining Spivak, 1985).
c) Knowledge and Technology as the property of the powerful (After Spivak and Jensen).

The theory of identity formation inherent in the concept of othering assumes that "subordinate people are *offered*, and at the same time relegated to, subject positions as others in discourse" (Jensen, 2011, p. 65, emphasis original). Othering is described by Spivak as a multidimensional process, in the sense that it touches upon several different forms of social differentiation (Jensen, 2011, p. 65). This difference is manifested in the BTAD society in the form of two different community identities: The Bodos and The O-Bodos (the Non-Bodos).

The O-Bodos comprises of a plethora of different communities- the Rabhas, Assamese, Bengalis, Adivasis, Nepalis, Koch-Rajbonshis who identify themselves not by their social or ethnic identity but by the identity of O-Bodo because the only criteria which seems significant enough to beget an identity for them in BTAD is that they are anyone but Bodo. The O-Bodos often represent a collective voice against the Bodos, although fathomable differences exist within the communities of O-Bodos. For these communities, to be identified as a negative ethnicity i.e. Non-Bodo is important because the Bodo has become an autonomous identity and they have not. The common factor which binds them together is the fact that unlike the Bodos, they does not have a Council created for them and neither do they have a piece of territory created for them. Via the creation of the BTC in 2003, the Bodos were uplifted to the position of a "special ethnicity with their own council" and also as "the powerful one in the plural society" thereby forging the 'Us- Other' binary in the society. To quote a Koch-Rajbonshi man,

> *"We are O-Bodos because we have to be. In here, politics is very strong. Politics determines so many things. O-Bodos is not our birth identity, we did not choose it ourselves, we became O-Bodos when the Bodos surpassed us to gain autonomy and control of this whole area."*

The 'Us - Other' binary is an idea which determines the perceptions, beliefs as well as the actions of one community towards the other. The sanction for such beliefs is assigned by the inherent acceptance of the 'us and they' binary. To be categorised into 'us' means that loyalty, brotherhood, allegiance and most importantly, a reliability of belonging to a community is secured. On the other hand, the perception about the other is pregnant with discrimination, loss, sacrifice and disharmony which have been brought about by the presence of the other. Sen argues that the benefits that being the 'us' brings to a community also leads to the creation of exclusion for the other community. According to him,

> "A strong- and exclusive- sense of belonging to one group can in many cases carry with it the perception of distance and divergence from other groups. Within-group solidarity can help to feed between-group discord....A sense of identity can firmly exclude many people even as it warmly embraces others. The well-integrated community in which residents instinctively do absolutely wonderful things for each other with great immediacy and solidarity can be the very same community in which bricks are thrown through the windows of immigrants who move into the region from elsewhere. The adversity of exclusion can be made to go hand in hand with the gifts of inclusion." (Sen, 2006, pp. 2-3)

In BTAD, the conceptualisation of the other is dependent upon the memory of the history and the witness of the present politics. However, memory and witness which defines the perception of one community towards the other is biased and hence the process creating the

'other' is biased. The perception about the 'other' need not necessarily be the ultimate truth. The opinion of the 'other' is never absolute, it changes as memory changes, its relativity contested as new events are witnessed and the process of 'othering' is renewed through fresh additions of memories and witness of the other. Nora writes about the inherent biasedness in memory:

> "Memory in so far as it is affective and magical, only accommodates those facts that suit it; it nourishes recollections that may be out of focus or telescopic, global or detached, particular or symbolic- responsive to each avenue of conveyance or phenomenal screen, to every censorship or projection…Memory installs remembrance within the sacred…. Memory is blind to all but the group it binds- which is to say, there are many memories as there are groups, that memory is by nature multiple yet specific; collective, plural and yet individual…." (Nora, 1989, p. 9)

Looking at the Bodo Identity via the eyes of the 'Others':

The Bodo identity is an othering identity, it is perceived to be exclusionary in nature and dominant in its existence. The O-Bodos leave no stone unturned to lament about the misfortune that they are being subjected to ever since the BTAD was constituted. The narratives collected from these diverse communities have one common factor which binds all of them together against the Bodos- the fear of Bodo domination. This fear is propelled by the apprehension that the Bodos, being the politically dominant group would extend this domination to gain control over all the resources of BTAD. Although governed under a democracy and the Bodoland Territorial Council contains provisions to include the membership and ensure participation of all the communities of BTAD, the O-Bodos, however, fear that the presence of the Bodo majority in the Council casts too long a shadow for them to overcome. This fear of Bodo domination is argued out to be a truth by citing examples from the workings of the Council. Any work started by the Council in the Bodo areas is seen as proof of Bodo domination, any work started together in the areas having a mix of Bodos and O-Bodos is doubted as "doing more in the Bodo areas and less in the areas of the O-Bodos" and the work initiated solely in the areas of the O-Bodos is seen merely as a face-saving measure which a governing body is mandatorily required to do.

The following is a section of discussion on the domination of the Bodos as collected from the field survey. It was conducted with an attempt to bringing out what the Non-Bodos mean by 'Bodo Domination' and also wanted to understand the crucial social relations between the two groups which create the process of othering.

Question: *All of you have emphasised that the Bodos are very dominating in their nature. Why do you think the Bodos dominate you all? And how do they dominate you?*

Respondent 1: "They have made a council for themselves. Now this Council is all Bodo, we (our representatives) are there for namesake. They have a government entirely devoted to themselves." (scowl on the face)

Respondent 2: "True. Our people in the Council are sold to the Bodos. They speak the same tone of Bodo politics; they represent only the voice of the Bodos. May be that's why they were selected because they are on the side of the Bodos." (anger on the face)

Respondent 3: "We don't see any work done for us at all. All that is being done is for the Bodos. The O-Bodos in the Council are perhaps not taken into account."

Respondent 2: "When the O-Bodos in the council are also siding with the Bodos then what will be our fate? We don't trust those people, that they are there for us is a big lie and anyone who believes otherwise is a fool." (anger on the face)

Respondent 4: "If you want examples, then look at job recruitment. All the jobs are going to the Bodos. Sometimes via the ST card, sometimes via the Minority card (Christian Bodos). But the truth is they deliberately give all to the Bodos only. Even the contracts arrangements are for the Bodos alone."

Question: *Would you please elaborate.*

Respondent 4: "The Council is making roads and repairing schools; so there are a lot of contract works. As these are government contracts, they are well-paid. Now who wouldn't want some good money? (Jokingly laughs). But it doesn't matter who applies, the contract always goes to a Bodo. Ask anyone, everybody will tell you the same thing."

Respondent 1: "The contractor in our area is a Bodo. Our area is entirely a non-Bodo area but you see, the contractor belongs to a distant village and yet he got the contract because he is a Bodo."

Respondent 3: "It is not only about the jobs and the contracts. It's the way the attitude of the Bodo people has changed. Earlier we would be able to see eye to eye. Now, they have an air of supremacy about them, in the way they look at others, the ways they talk....they are just so proud now."(anger on face)

Respondent 1: "Ever since the Council has been formed, they think they can do anything. It is only the other day that I saw some Bodo youths steal fish from my pond. I tried to catch them but they sneered at me and yelled, "This is our land, the fish in this land is ours." I could not do anything." (anger on face)

Me: So does this happen very frequently? Stealing? Why don't you report it to the police?

Respondent 1: "They don't steal because they are in need. It is just a way to annoy us. Sometimes our hens and ducks will be lost and sometimes a goat or two. They have to show that it is Bodoland now and we do not have any place here. U say go to the police. The police will only mock me if I go with a complaint regarding stolen hens and fish." (scowl on face)

Respondent 2: "It is true. My family has also seen the same thing. It started out as a prank perhaps, but now it is very frequent and it is definitely not a prank. The bullying attitude is too obvious to miss."

Respondent 3: "That is Bodo domination. But I guess, since this is Bodoland now, we have it coming."

Source: Discussion from the Field Survey

Bodo domination is the common thread; this singularity however, is not the only construct which makes the Bodo identity. The narratives collected from the field survey throw up into the light many elements of fear and doubt, some more aggressive than the others and some surprisingly naïve. Surfing through the narratives in order to find out which are the actual identity markers for the Bodo community was a complicated task because some opinions might simply have been grievances or jealously. Memory and witness, over a period of time can be corrupted through recent developments which could be at the personal level but nevertheless impact the opinions about an entire community. The work of a sieve, therefore, becomes almost mandatory when narratives are taken into account. The criteria or the sieve used in this study was to gather those narratives regarding the othering Bodo identity which are told and retold time and again by many members of the community. It was found to be the most apt way of representing the information from the noise of complaints regarding the nature of the Bodo identity. The following are chosen conclusions which not only shape the Bodo identity but are also telling of a context in which the Bodo identity is constructed into being.

a) **The construct of, "We don't belong in Bodoland. We belong in Assam."**

There exists an almost arrogant denial that they (the O-Bodos) live in the Bodo homeland-BTAD and not in Assam. Although BTAD is an autonomous area, included under the state of Assam, the O-Bodos are adamant that Assam and BTAD comprises of two separate territories with two separate people. It is their belief that "there is nothing Assam-like in BTAD", and that they "belong in Assam" but "have been trapped here in BTAD instead." It

is a source of a dilemma for many O-Bodos that their village, which comprises of no Bodo population has been included under a territorial boundary meant specifically for Bodos. Herein lies the conflict of a demographic majority and geographical non-contiguity[43]. The O-Bodos are bewildered that in spite of being the demographic majority in their village and in many other villages around them, they have been included in the territory of BTAD. To quote a Non-Bodo:

> *"We are not Bodos, there is no Bodo is our village and in the village next to ours and the one after that. When there is no Bodo in our area then why have we been included under BTAD? It is only because of the Bodos that we have to see this day. We belong in Assam, not in Bodoland."*

Belongingness to a land- the topophilia of a homeland which has been one of the prime motivating factors for the Bodos in their quest for self-determination is completely antithetical when it comes to the Non-Bodos. Creation of the BTAD, which was greeted as a victory by the Bodos was seen as an alienating move by the Non-Bodos. The grant of the autonomy while seen as an empowering move by the Bodos, the same however was seen as a discriminatory move by the Non-Bodos. For them, the creation of the Autonomous Council is highly discriminatory because:

> *"We have been left nowhere. The day the Bodos were granted autonomy, we became no-one. We do not fit in Bodoland because we are not Bodos and we have been thrown out of Assam because these Bodos wanted Bodoland. Is this fair? Definitely not!"*

b) The construct of "The Bodo is an othering identity which kills".

The Non-Bodos are also doubtful of the security of their land because they fear clashes and violence instigated by the Bodos will make them lose their land. The militant phase of the Bodo movement continues to cripple the peace of BTAD with community targeted killings and burning up of villages. These communities are constantly subjected to the anxiety that their house might be set on fire, they might lose their family or they might lose their land.

The Adivasis and the Bengali Muslims are the communities which have been the easy targets of the violence with rampant killings and dislocations. People have lost not only loved ones but their houses have been torched down, their cultivated paddy burnt in the storage and their cattle lost. Narratives of the death of a father, a mother, a son, a daughter, a brother, a sister are not very difficult to find among these communities. Although the people put up a brave

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[43] The issue of a demographical majority in a geographical non-contiguity is one of the complex issues of BTAD. An entire section has been explained on this issue in chapter 6.

face but the scars that violence leave is not easy to ignore. Violence in BTAD is not only the result of belligerent identities gone to the extreme end of inhumanity but it is also seen to be the result of a long-held grudge of vengeance against these immigrant communities. The people narrate different stories, but all tied down by the same conclusion- that the Bodos are an othering identity which kills with vengeance.

Table 4.2: The narratives of the killing Bodo identity

Community	Narratives about the Killing Bodo identity
Adivasi man	*"My house has been burnt twice, like all the houses of my village. We were lucky to have escaped unhurt but everything that we had to call our own were lost in the fire- our crops, our clothes, our utensils….everything. Our cattle had run away and after the fire all I could think about was how will I cultivate without my oxen?"*
Adivasi man	*"I can't sleep peacefully at night. I am constantly thinking that they might come to burn us. The last time they came at night…led by the NDFB with guns and flaming torches. The NDFB open fired and they torched down our houses. We had to run to the forest to take shelter...we waited there for what seemed like ages, and then the army came and took us to camps. Sometimes I lie awake the whole night because I just can't fall asleep."*
Adivasi woman	*"The army came to take us to the camps. Our house was burning, I wanted to run and throw water at the fire. My son was holding me so that I could not go…once we were at the camps, the situation was so worse. My pregnant daughter died at the camp….(leaves the sentence mid-way and starts crying)."*
Bengali Muslim man	*"It is purely horrible. After losing so much all I want to do is leave this place. But where will we go? We are already hunted down here as immigrants, if we go out to other districts we might be thrown out of Assam altogether. They will call us Bangladeshi and deport us. Horrible. Purely horrible. I was born here, my father was born here, my grandfather was born here, and my great grandfather was also born in this land. And now this land has become of the Bodos and they hunt us as immigrants. It is all because of the Bodos that we have been made immigrants in our own land."*
Bengali Muslim woman	*"You know I had a big family…my husband's brothers and their families…we all used to live here together. When the Bodos came to burn us, we were taken by surprise. We heard that our village might be burnt; people were saying other villages have been torched down, but I thought our neighbours were not that cruel to do that to us. We know them. So, when they came to burn us, I was too shocked.....(long pause)...We lost 5 family members that month...3 lost to the fire, 1 died after injuries and 1 died in the camp."*

Source: Ethnographic survey

The violence that these two communities have been subjected to makes them blame the Bodos to be the hostile community in BTAD. Many expressed that perhaps the problem in BTAD lies with the presence of the Bodos, if they (the Bodos) were not present in BTAD, there would be peace. For these communities, the Bodo identity is the violent identity, the Bodo identity is the one that kills.

c) **The construct of "The Conspiracy Theory: the Bodos want everything for themselves and they will take it."**

The Non-Bodos understand the unrest in BTAD to be a creation of the Bodo themselves; a twisted conspiracy in order to gain control over all the resources of the area. It is seen as a larger process, wherein the Bodos are trying to establish a control over all the resources of the area including those lands which were lost from them. The ongoing violence which continues even after the creation of the Bodo Territorial Council (BTC) is understood as the proof that the plan of the Bodos includes eliminating the immigrant communities by violence so that the land which had been taken away from them since generations could now belong to them again. Although the people have no proof that the Bodos could be advocating such a mass genocide of the Adivasis and Bengali Muslims; many veteran people seemed comfortable with this conspiracy theory. It is even surprising that the Koch-Rajbonshis, Assamese, Nepalis and Rabhas are also equal believers in this theory. The violence in BTAD is a way to 'clear up' those lands so that the Bodos can take them back. According to a Non-Bodo (Rajbonshi man):

> *"In the days long ago, these lands belonged to the tribals. When the immigration started, due to various reasons, the tribals were forced to lose the land. Now these lands do not belong to the Bodos. But, the Bodos think that since they have gained an autonomous council to protect them, they have all the right to these lands. They don't want to believe that these lands are lost; they still see it as theirs. The success that they got from the Bodo movement has further emboldened them. They are on a killing spree now so that they can take back their lands."*

The Non-Bodos feel trapped and helpless that there is nothing on their hands to do. The creation of the Council is seen as a 'favour' for the Bodos so that this unabated thirst to gain control over the resources of the BTAD can be made a reality. The Non-Bodos cite examples of different Bodo individuals from amongst them who has "suddenly become so rich after the creation of the Council." They state that the Bodo villages have seen "tremendous level of development" and the village "which was like ours a decade ago have now been transformed

with new roads, pumps, schools and health care centres" whereas "our village is exactly the way it was ten years ago."

The O-Bodos are apprehensive that with only thirteen years of the BTC, the Bodos have developed in leaps and bounds, so where would they be in the next fifty years. They further wonder that since the Bodos also have a militant outfit to eliminate people and a Council to defend their progress, what resources would be left for the Non-Bodos. A frightful version of the Conspiracy theory which I noted among many in the ethnographic survey was that:

> *"The immigrants, especially the Bangladeshi Muslims came in large numbers and wrought havoc among the Bodos by taking away their land. Now, after coming into power, the Bodos are killings them in the largest numbers and bringing havoc to them. They plan on eliminating these immigrants. That's why even after they got their Council the violence still continue. That's why the Adivasis are running further into the forests. The Bengali Muslims are people of the char (riverine floodplains), so they can't hide like the Adivasis. They have a Council to give them jobs and develop them, and they have a militia to do the dirty work of killing. It has been only a decade, wait and see; one day the Bodos will take back their Bodoland."*

Such disturbing constructs not only conditions the people to see the Bodos with fear but often, also with hatred. Stories of such mass genocide often lead to mass genocides. History is proof of that. The political turmoil in the region perhaps has been too long and too intense for the people to make such constructions about an entire community. If this theory, however, has even a shred of truth hidden somewhere in it, then BTAD is yet to see more horrors in the future.

d) The fear that "Bodoland will become a state of India."

Along with all the identity constructs that the O-Bodos have for the Bodo identity, the culmination of all these constructs is seen in the form of the creation of a separate state for the Bodos. Although the Bodo leaders have accepted the position of being an autonomous area within the state of Assam, the Non-Bodos are still apprehensive that a separate Bodo state could ultimately be created if the violence does not stop. Following the creation of the BTC, the area has been witness to some worst episodes of community-targeted violence where thousands of people have lost their lives and property and thousands have been dislocated. Since the creation of the Autonomous Council could not put a stop to such acts of terror, therefore, the O-Bodos doubt that the Government might respond by creating a separate state for the Bodos. Bodoland could become a state of India in order to put an end to the violence.

All the O-Bodo communities oppose the creation of Bodoland. The O-Bodos express that their fear that the Bodos want complete domination over all the resources of BTAD would be turned into a reality if Bodoland becomes a state. Along with it, the fear of imposition of Bodo language and culture also haunts the O-Bodos. According to them, the creation of Bodoland is synonymous to declaring them to be homeless. Creation of a separate state for the Bodos will be "a nightmare", "the worst fear come true", "unimaginable" and "the indication that we should all pack our bags and leave."

An enquiry into the opinions of the Non-Bodos regarding the justification of creation of Bodoland however shows that there exists a huge gap of communication, ignorance of the Bodo history and external conditioning of the opinions of the O-Bodos. The Adivasis and Bengali Muslim peasants are completely unaware of the history of land alienation which led to the uprising of the Bodo community in protest. The long history of alienation, marginalisation and exploitation which formed the core of the Bodo identity struggle are not only unknown to these communities; there exists strange notions among them regarding the origin of the Bodo tribe. Some narratives (of the Adivasis and Bengali Muslims) surprisingly state that the Bodos migrated into BTAD from Dimapur (Nagaland). The widespread belief and opinion is that "the Bodos are the outsiders who came from Dimapur and now they took over every resource of this land", "they came from Dimapur to this land and now they want it to be their state". Surprisingly, it needs to be noted that for these communities, the Bodo tribe is the invader who has created violent conflicts, killing the members of their community and subjected them to loss in their own land. The identity construct for the Bodos here, is the same 'outsider/ other' exploitative identity which the Bodos use for these immigrant communities.

Barring the Adivasis and Bengali Muslims, the other Non-Bodos communities understand that the Bodos have been subjected to exploitations and losses and they are sympathetic to their cause. However, the fear of Bodo domination is very apparent. According to a Rajbonshi man:

> "We were all subjected to loss and exploitation (excluded Adivasis and Bengali Muslims), we all suffered together; it is not fare that only the suffering of the Bodos have been recognized and a homeland made for them. Now they dominate over everything in their homeland with their Council. If Bodoland were to become a full-fledged state, then it would mean doom for all of us."

These identity constructs characterise the narratives of the O-Bodos regarding the Bodo identity. As already mentioned, these constructs and opinions contribute into making the Bodo identity.

Looking at the 'Others' from the eyes of the Bodos:

In a diverse society like BTAD, where different communities co-exist, the other need not necessarily be one community. A history of loss and exploitation accompanied by contemporary identity politics leads to the constructions of different imageries for different communities, thereby creating many 'others' in the same community. In such societies, the process of othering becomes hierarchical and the different others are constructed based on the perceived intensity of loss and disturbance created by the other; thereby assigning a scale to measure out the differences with the other. For the Bodos, there are different others in their society. One the one hand, there are some 'other' communities accepted as an integral part of the society which only complements the diversity whereas on the other hand, there is an 'outsider other' perceived as a threat and a competition owing to a disturbed history.

Based on the differences of narratives for these two categories of 'other' for the Bodo community, I have created the classification of:

a) The Complementary Other
b) The Outsider Other

The Complementary Other is not resisted as an outsider, neither are they identified as the causes of the troubles of the Bodo tribe. The history of ethnic clash and violence with these communities are almost negligible when compared with the clashes that the Bodos have with the Adivasis and the Bengali Muslims. The Complementary other comprises of the Assamese, the Rabhas, the Rajbonshis, the Nepalis and the Hindu Bengalis. For the Bodos, there exist two forms of explanations of acceptance for the complementary other:

a) They are accepted as the fellow communities who have shared the same history of land alienation and exploitation as the Bodos at the hands of the colonial government and Assam Government. This group is 'complementary' because the Bodos share cordial historical relations with them. Till 1987, the Bodos and these autochthon groups (comprising of the other tribal groups of the region which have converted from the wider Bodo-Kachari group- the Rabhas, the Xoroniya and the Rajbonshis) fought

against land alienation and exploitation under the same banners like PTCA, demanded the creation of the tribal states of Udayachal and Nilachal. It was only in 1987 that ABSU declared that they would be taking the Bodo movement to the next level following which the Bodo Movement broke away from the rest of the tribal groups. The last chapter on the history of the Bodo movement has captured this in detail. It follows from these historical similarities that these others are complementary.

b) They are considered to be different communities who, although does not share the same history of loss yet has never been a source of conflict for the Bodos over their land and livelihood. The Nepalis and the Hindu Bengalis, although not a part of the historical movement are still complementary because the Bodos do not feel threatened to lose their land from these groups.

The Outsider Other is perceived as the 'invader' into the Bodo tribal society who has been a source of land alienation, long-term clashes and violence in BTAD. The communities counted as the 'Outsider Other' are the Adivasis and the Bengali Muslims. They are the immigrant communities who were brought into Assam from Central India and then East Bengal (now Bangladesh) in order to work as tea garden labourers (Adivasis) and cultivators (Bengali Muslims) respectively. The identity of being the "immigrant" is still in active circulation for the Bengali Muslims.

The 'Outsider Other' as described by the Bodo narratives has only two repetitive phrases- "came from outside" and "took away our lands". This singular identity assigned to the 'Outsider Other' forever disconnects them from the fellow communities of the BTAD. Further, the locations of the origin for these migrants are counted as different homelands of the Adivasis and Bengali Muslims. The Bodos deny the fact that these two communities have been a part of the Bodo society for more than a century, for in the eyes of the Bodos, they still belong to the distant lands they came from, "their homeland" is not BTAD and hence "they" can never "belong to BTAD". As a Bodo passionately stated:

> *"They are not from our society. They came from outside. And on top of that, they attacked our lands and took them from us. We were the naïve tribals who lost everything to these outsiders. The people of this land had given them shelter but they took away the lands from those very people. This can never be their home because you just don't steal from your brothers and sisters."*

The complication in the imagery of the 'Outsider Other' is further aggravated by the fact that these communities are associated with the primary resource base of the BTAD society- the

land and the forest. The Bengali Muslims being cultivators are entirely dependent on the land whereas the comparatively diverse Adivasi is dependent not only on the land but also on the forest. The Bodos contests their dependence on these resources because land and forests also constitutes the primary resource base for the Bodos. The imagery of the 'Outsider Other' is therefore also an imagery of a clash of the resource base. In fact, the 'Outsider Other' is visualised to be the source of all the trouble in BTAD- ranging from poverty, underdevelopment to outbreaks of violence.

For the Bodos, the history of the 'Outsider Other' is boxed in one absolute opinion- that they are the ones who took away the land, forests and livelihood of the tribals in their society. The widespread opinion is that, throughout history, the tribals have been subjected to loss of land on the hands of the Bengali Muslims; and that threat still persists. This is added upon by the Adivasis because the forest is also being 'invaded' now. The Bodos narrate that therefore, they have to be alert to save "their land" and "their forest". The following table condenses the various narratives about the 'Other' in BTAD:

Table 4.3: Bodo Narratives on 'the Other' in BTAD

The Outsider Others	The Narratives of the Bodos about the "Others" in BTAD				
	On Land alienation	**On forest encroachment**	**On social ties**	**On the violent conflicts**	**On economic condition**
About the Adivasi	"The Adivasis don't encroach upon the land, it is only the Bengali Muslims"	"The Adivasis encroach upon the forests. Earlier they used to collect forest woods but now there is gradual but continuous encroachment. They are settling down in the forests, cutting it down to make entire villages. We have to confront them each time we go to the forests."	"During the clashes, there is no social relation. Otherwise, we visit sometimes."	"They have burnt our villages. We are being made to lose our homes in our very homeland."	"They are a threat to the forests. Since they have made the forest their village so we need to confront them in the forest. There is always tension and the fear that something will go wrong and fight will break out."

Continued…

88

The Outsider Others	The Narratives of the Bodos about the "Others" in BTAD				
	On Land alienation	On forest encroachment	On social ties	On the violent conflicts	On economic condition
About the Bengali Muslims	"They have taken so much of our land and they continue to encroach upon the fallow land. Earlier there used to be so much of fallow land, now we feel 'surrounded' by them. We Bodos like to live freely in the open, but they have surrounded us from everywhere. We don't like such congestion."	"No they have not taken the forest till now."	"We try to maintain a distance. But some people have formal relations with them."	"They are very aggressive. They have killed our people, burnt our homes and they fight us in our very homeland."	"They have made us poor because they have taken our lands."

About The Complementary Others	The Narratives of the Bodos about the "Others" in BTAD				
	On Land alienation	On forest encroachment	On social ties	On the violent conflicts	On economic condition
Rabhas	"Rabhas are sufferers like us. They have also lost their lands on the hands of these immigrants."	"They don't encroach."	Good relations	No conflict with them	No threat
Assamese	"They have not taken our lands"	"They don't encroach."	Good relations	No conflict with them	No threat
Koch-Rajbonshi	"Rajbonshis have not taken our lands."	"They don't encroach."	Good relations	No conflict with them	No threat
Nepali	"They have not taken our lands"	"They don't encroach."	Good relations	No conflict with them	No threat
Bengali Hindu	"They have not taken our lands"	"They don't encroach."	Good relations	No conflict with them	No threat

Source: Ethnographic Survey

IV.   The Bodo Identity is defined by a clash of Livelihood pivoting around land.

After a careful analysis of all the narratives of the Bodos, the entire identity question of BTAD boils down to this complicated issue- a clash of livelihood dependent on land. The prolonged historical process of immigration and land alienation has led to the development of the Bodo identity in some distinct phases, each characterised by definitive identity constructions linked with land and livelihood throughout. The entire Bodo movement for autonomy pivots round the issue of land where clash of livelihood of the autochthon Bodos

and the immigrant communities becomes apparent. In order to understand the significance of the land and livelihood issue integrated to the Bodo identity, it is helpful if history is fitted into the phases of the identity constructs of the Bodos. The following telling of the history shows that the identity question of the Bodos grow in unison with developments at two complementary fronts:

a) Firstly, from a realisation of the loss of lands due to the influx of large number of immigrants
b) Secondly, following the visualisation that those immigrants are taking over the same resource base which sustains the Bodos.

Table 4.4: Phases in Development of the Bodo Identity

Period	Event	Implication	Identity Constructs
Pre-Ahoms	-	-	Agriculturalists and Traders
	Land Grants to Brahmanas	Not directly loss of Bodo land	Not Brahmanas, different
Ahoms	Appropriation of Bodo chiefs under the Ahom	-	Not Ahoms, Not Brahmanas
	Land Grants to Brahmanas	Duality of Brahminical and Tribalism culture	Vague Ethnic identity
	Aaryanisation/ Sanskritisation	Bodo converts assigned to the Lower rung of Hindu society	Hindu Bodos Vs. Animistic Bodos

Phase 1 of Bodo Identity : Land becomes an economic resource, immigration and land alienation: inclusive of other tribal communities

Period	Event	Implication	Identity Constructs
British Raj	Trade Breakdown, replaced by Marwaris	Complete dependence on land	Only tribal agriculturalists Dependent on the resource base- land and forest
	Imposition of agrarian taxes	Growing pressure	
	Modern monetary transaction	New system for them	
	Forward Trading	Loss of land	
	Watershed development and cultivation project	Immigration from East Bengal, Infusion of an outside culture and community not linked with their society	Realisation of the importance of land as an 'resource', Agriculturalists
	Imposition of Zamindary and Ryotwari land system (Institutional	huge Tax burden, selling off of land, entry of Bodo into other jobs like tea gardens, oil industry	Realisation of loss of land and marginalisation

	change)		
		Changing relations between the zamindars and peasants	Loss of entitlements, marginalisation
	development of a land market	Changes in the land owner society, urbanities and Marwaris ruled the land market	Loss of land, complete alienation from the new institutions in the society, growing realising of being the low different
	Submission to the Simon Commission	the first step of the Bodo collectively for themselves	Beginning of the Bodo identity construct based on their different culture and traditions
	Formation of Plains Tribal League	Bodos achieve political representation, based on their loss of land and marginalisation	Bodos becomes a political identity, separate from the Assamese identity, the beginning of the construction of the other
		It also meant that the Bodos could not be represented under the mainstream political parties	Bodos realise that they need a separate political platform to voice their grievances and needs
	Line system	Territorial exclusions created to safeguard Bodos from the immigrants and help secure their lands	Institutionalised that the Bodos were a separate tribal identity, Ethnic identity identified based on loss of land
		Ghettoization of the society- tribal pockets, immigrants blocks, non-tribal mainstream	Construction of the Bodo identity based on territorial divisions created by the Line system
	Continued immigration	Loss of land of Bodos, Out-migration of Bodos in search of fallow land	Dislocated from own land due to coming in of outsiders. Indigene-Outsider identity construct
	2nd World War	Coming of Sadullah Ministry, Grow more food campaign, Opened up the forests and protected tribal belts and blocks to immigrants	Further loss of land at the hands of immigrants, constructing the indigene-outsider binary
	Addition of chapter ten to Assam Land and Revenue Regulation act, 1886	Intensified protection of tribal land on paper, but corrupt official made tribal land transfers a continued affair	Identity of being the exploited and marginalised in their own assigned tribal belts and blocks territory

Phase 2 of Bodo Identity Construction: continued land alienation, othering from the Assamese community, becomes a political Identity: inclusive of other tribal communities

Period	Event	Implication	Identity Constructs
British Raj	Establishment of the Bodo Sahitya Sabha (BSS)	Construction of Inward looking Bodo Identity	Separate ethnic community with a separate history and culture
Indian Government	Creation of the All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU)	Active participation in politics in defend the loss of tribal lands	Growing consciousness as an ethnic community with a glorious cultural history, but an exploited and marginalised socio-political history

	Imposition of Assamese as the sole medium of instruction in the universities	The Bodos were alarmed at the growing domination of the Assamese community, it made them realise that Bodos needed a separate state/ homeland if they were to develop	Continuation of the construction of the Bodo as a national identity, growing pressure of the Assamese identity domination (the other identity)
	Language movement	Creation of the stand that the Bodos are a linguistically separate community	Addition of another dimension to the Bodo identity- 'we have our own language; we are an entirely different community'.

Phase 3 of Bodo Identity Construction: land alienation, othering from all, political militant identity: non-inclusive of other tribal communities

Period	Event	Implication	Identity Constructs
Indian Gover nment	Demand for creation of Udayachal and formation of Plains Tribal Council of Assam (PTCA)	Increased political participation and mobilisation of the Bodo people that now with a separate state (Udayachal), the tribal lands will finally be safe-guarded	Continued construction of the Bodos as a community deserving a separate state because their lands are not getting the required protection under the current State (Assam)
	Giving up the demand for Udayachal by PTCA	Mass anger at the 'betrayal' of the PTCA	Bodo continues to be constructed as a national identity
	Rise of the Bodo security Force (BrSF) renamed as National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB)	Rise of militarism to secure the demands of the Bodos	Establishment of the militant Bodo identity
	Demand for creation of Nilachal	ABSU led demand and movement, growing importance of the ABSU as a leader of the voice of the oppressed Bodo mass.	Bodo identity as a separate nation is constructed, Bodo demand that Assam be divided 50:50
		Wide scale participation by the Bodos from all over Assam	
	Nilachal rejected by the State and Central Government	ABSU intensifies the movement	Bodo identity on the path of becoming a hard identity with the inclusion of the violent identity
		1st phase of violence erupts in Bodo areas	
	Bodoland Accord of 1993	Signed by leaders of the ABSU-BPAC with the Govt. of Assam, agreed to have an autonomous council not a separate state.	The Bodo feel respite, Bodo identity becomes an institutionalised identity with the acceptance form the Government
		Contestation regarding the territorial extent of the Autonomous area granted, in a hurry to sign the pact, many	

		sensitive questions about the accord were left open for dispute	
Failure of the Accord of 1993	Bodo leadership undergoes divisions into two		Bodos feel cheated all over again, hardening the consciousness about the 'other' for whom they are having to suffer
	Rise of another militant organisation- Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT), causing wide scale violence of killings of 'immigrant' Muslim peasants and Adivasis and also fratricidal killings of Bodo veteran leaders who had 'failed' to win the Bodos their homeland		The Bodo identity learns to eliminate the 'other', whoever stands in the way of Bodoland must be killed, the Bodo identity becomes a hard identity- ethnic, political and militant
Militant phase of the Bodo movement	Bloodiest protests and mass 'community -targeted killings', eliminating the 'source and the reason' for whom the Bodos are having to suffer. Wide scale displacement of people, killings, bandhs and hate-speech.		Restless and frustrated identity on the militant front, a section non-supportive of violence but fully aware of the 'others' for whom they lost their land and are seeing their homeland burn. No trust on the Assam government, they are the 'other' too.
Formation of the BTC, 2003	Creation of Bodoland (BTAD)		Bodos gain their homeland, Bodo identity is an established identity.
	ABSU-BPAC and BLT section hopes this will solve the issues of their homeland, the NDFB (militant organisation) still rejects it		**Bodo identity is militant, fratricidal, othering, political, ethnic, hardened identity**
YEAR 2016			
Community targeted killings and violence continues		Is BTC the solution?	Demand for a state still alive for the Bodo identity. Land-Livelihood is the primary issue

Source: It is a tabulation of the historical process as mentioned in chapter 3

The land and livelihood question has always been woven into the Bodo demand for autonomy. Land alienation formed the core issue of the Bodo uprising throughout history and it is still entirely valid in the contemporary society of BTAD as pointed out by the field study.

The Identity marker which points out to a clash of livelihood in contemporary BTAD is the primary occupation practised by the communities in conflict (Bodos vs. Adivasis and Bodos vs. Bengali Muslims). The primary occupation of the Bodos is agriculture which is the same as the immigrant communities- Adivasis and Bengali Muslims. Although the Assamese, Rabhas and Rajbonshis too practices agriculture as their primary occupation, but historically these communities have struggled along with the Bodos to safeguard tribal lands. Therefore,

the common markers among these communities which determine the conflict in BTAD are the following scenarios:

a) The Autochthon Bodo and the "immigrant- Outsider Other" both are dependent upon the use of the same resource base- land.

b) An identity construct widely accepted in the society where the conflict is understood to be between the "Immigrant Other" and the "Original inhabitant" of the society.

The following matrix depicts this position of the BTAD society:

Identity Markers for Clash of Livelihood	Bodo	Adivasi	Bengali Muslims	Assamese	Rabha	Rajbonshi	Nepali	Bengali Hindus
Primary Occupation	Agriculture	Agriculture	Agriculture	Agriculture	Agriculture	Agriculture	Non-Agriculture	Non-Agriculture
Accepted Identity (narrative of the Bodos)	Autochthon of BTAD	Immigrant Outsider	Immigrant Outsider	Belongs to BTAD	Belongs to BTAD	Belongs to BTAD	Belong to BTAD	Belong to BTAD
Conflict and Violence	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No

Source: Ethnographic Survey

This competition which exists in BTAD regarding the use of the same resource base is also apparent from the narratives of the Bodos.

Table: 4.5: Bodo narratives on Forests and Land

Bodo Narratives on Forests and Land
"The Adivasis took the forests near our village….Now each time we go there, we have to face them."
"Land of the Bodos went to the Bengali Muslims and the Forests in this land went to the Adivasis. We have to fight this competition…and we are failing because we have never been on such a race to get resources before."
"Our land has been lost, not today but since many years…and it still continues. Earlier, the Bodos did not know how to stop it, we lost almost all when we were finally given the BTC to protect our land. But our land is still under encroachment…..the Adivasis have also started encroaching upon the forests which is another problem….all of these leads to the clash as we try to secure our resources and they fight to take it from us."

"They took our land from us…and now they are taking away the forests too. The forests are for the landless and the poor among us. The poor go and claim a cleared patch of forest land, and then it is leased out to somebody who pays rent on that rent. That rent is sometimes an only source of income for us. The Adivasis have taken the opportunity of the poor to survive."

"We don't open our homes to the Adivasis and the Bengali Muslims because they burned out many Bodo villages, took away our lands and forests. We have a conscience; we cannot let them come into our village."

"The Bodos are peace loving people. We open our homes to many people in the past and look what they did. They stole everything from the Bodo people. It is only now, that we have realised that we have to keep ourselves safe."

Source: Ethnographic Survey

These narratives of the Bodos are an excavated presentation of those memories and long formed opinions about the problems of the BTAD society. There is an acceptance of being the marginalised tribals who continuously lost their lands at the hands of the immigrants. After the creation of the BTC in 2003, however, there is still apprehension that they might lose their lands. The Bodos still fear that since their dependence on the resource base is contested by the presence of the Adivasis and the Bengali Muslims, they are vulnerable to further loss of land and forests at the hands of these immigrant communities. This fear of being exposed to be exploited yet again creates the political contemporary Bodo identity. It can be understood from the following tabulation of this perceived sense of vulnerability from the different communities of BTAD:

Table 4.6: Perception about dependence on the Resources, Various Communities, BTAD

Measuring Dependence on the Resource Base	Adivasi	Bengali Muslims	Assamese	Rabhas	Rajbonshi	Nepali	Bengali Hindus
Whether the Bodos fear about losing land due to the presence of this community	No	**Yes**	No	No	No	No	No
Whether the presence of this community is perceived as a competition to access the forest by the Bodos?	**Yes**	No	No	No	No	No	No

Bodo's perceived negative impact on the CPRs due to the presence of this community	**Yes**	**Yes**	No	No	No	No	No
Primary Occupation practised by this community same as Bodos?	**Yes**	**Yes**	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Conflict of the Bodos with this community?	**Yes**	**Yes**	No	No	No	No	No

Source: Ethnographic Survey

The justification behind the identity construct of the Bodos regarding safeguarding of "their lands", "their forests" from the "immigrant encroachers" can be explained by what has been called 'the homeland principle' in literature. The motive of the Bodos behind the safeguarding of their resources from the 'outsiders' and similarly their fear that they are still vulnerable to losing 'their resources' to the 'outsider' stems from the inherent belief that the territory of BTAD and all resources that are in it belongs first and foremost to the autochthons, in this scenario- to the Bodos. The autochthons of a territory fight for the resources in it because they belief that in the choice between providing the use of those resources to the 'outsiders' or to the 'autochthons', the justified choice is always the latter. Such an unquenchable desire to gain control over the territory and the resources of the homeland arises because "A homeland is a special category of territory: it is not an object to be exchanged but an indivisible attribute of group identity. Regardless of a territory's objective value in terms of natural or man-made resources, ethnic groups rationally view the right to control their homeland as a survival issue" (Toft, 2003, p. 20). Such a fight to safeguard the resources of the BTAD also arises because homeland contains "the fundamentals of culture and identity. And, as such, [they are] about sustaining cultural boundaries and boundedness. . . . The other is always and continuously a threat to the security and integrity of those who share a common home."[44]

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[44] Morley, D and Robins, K. (1993). No Place Like Heimat: Images of Homeland in European Culture. *Space and Place: Theories of Identity and Location*, edited by E. Carter et al. London: Lawrence and Wishart, p.8 as quoted in Toft, 2003, p. 20

The territory- or land therefore arises as the sole issue which still governs the identity and livelihood issue of BTAD. In this chapter, the development of the Bodo identity and the defining characteristics of the Bodo identity have been presented. In a nutshell, the Bodo identity has been noted to be the following:

a) The Bodo identity is embedded in the natural rural environment. The identity construction of the Bodo community is determined by the disembeddedness experienced from this natural rural environment.

b) The contemporary Bodo identity has metamorphosed from being an ethnic into a political identity. It has evolved based on the injustices meted out to them along history.

c) The Bodo identity is based on a harsh realisation that they have been made a minority in their very homeland.

d) Identity assertion of the Bodos, demanding a separate state is based on the notion that the Bodos can only achieve an inclusive development if they have a separate state to call their homeland.

e) The Bodo identity strongly believes that salvation of the Bodos lies in separation from the territory of Assam and winning its freedom from the negligent Assam Government- Creation of Bodoland is the only way to peace in BTAD.

f) The militant Bodo identity is perceived to be the outcome of incessant negligence and lack of action by the Government by the Bodo community.

g) Violence is not supported, but is understood as an obvious outcome of the continued atrocities meted out to the tribal people by the Bodos.

h) The Bodo identity differentiates between their fellow communities- a section of whom are considered as foreigner encroaching upon their land and hence the biggest threat. The Bodos have constructed two 'Others' in BTAD: The Outsider Others and The Complementary Others. The violence is always targeted at the Outsider Others whereas the Complementary Other, having several tribal communities which were once under the umbrella of the Bodo-Kachari group is not considered as a threat.

i) The Bodo identity is on a path of continuous construction where the present events remakes the past identities- sometimes more vicious and violent and sometimes more cooperative. The identity of the Bodos is a shifting identity.

Chapter 5
The Land Question
Ownership, Informal Institutions and Spatiality of Core-Periphery

The last chapter ended with the note that the identity question in BTAD pivots around land. The evolution of the Bodo identity from an ethnic to a political militant identity has been in accordance to the realisation of loss of land and growing contestation over the same resources as the 'immigrant others'. How the historical process of land alienation among the Bodos, via different episodes of changing administrative governance, imposition of new institutions and laws, changing land ownership ultimately evolved into the Bodo identity assertion has been already explained in the third chapter. That land begets the Bodo identity and the Bodo identity struggle in turn, is tied down to the land has already been established not only via the history of evolution of the Bodo identity movement, but also by the contemporary narratives of the Bodo vis a vis Non-Bodo people (in the last chapter).

The present chapter, therefore, taking the significance of the land question into account, is an attempt to capture not only the contemporary land distribution, ownership and access among the Bodos and the Non-Bodos in BTAD but it also seeks to bring out the auxiliary processes in function (for example, the informal land institutions) that determines access and ownership of land. The primary objective of the chapter is to bring out the land question in contemporary BTAD and hence the sources for the chapter are primary: a) narratives and discussions from the ethnographic survey and b) statistics on land collected via administered questionnaires. Based on the findings, this chapter has been divided into three separate but integrally linked sections:

a) The first section discusses land distribution, ownership and access among the Bodos as well as among the Non-Bodos so that a comparison between the two is drawn out.

b) The second section discusses the informal institutions which are bodies of local governance acting solely to the maintenance of the fallow land of BTAD. These informal institutions are not a renewal or a vestige of the tribal community-based systems of governance but a modern creation. It is a local tribal body to supervise the fallow land with the only agenda of thwarting their encroachment from the Adivasis and Bengali Muslims.

c) The third section depicts a spatial model of the land question of BTAD in the form of a core-periphery based on the first two sections.

Land Distribution, Ownership and Access

I.   Land Distribution among Bodos in comparison to Non-Bodos:

Land distribution among the Bodos and the Non-Bodos has been measured by using the same land classifications as the National Sample Survey. In accordance to it, information about land holdings has been collected under the criteria of Operational holding, Homestead land, Land Owned, Otherwise Possessed Land, Leased-In and Leased Out land, parcels owned and finally Land Owned and Possessed by a sample household. The definitions for all these criteria have been made available in the appendix.   There are three among these criteria which merits special importance when it comes to understanding the land distribution and ownership in BTAD, they are:

a) **The Operational holding:** This constitutes land which has been utilised by the household for agricultural production. Since BTAD has a dominant rural sector economy, the land utilised for obtaining agricultural output by a household speaks clearly of its economic status in the society. Apart from it, land is valuable collateral to obtaining credit against its lease and hence it also counts as an economic asset to the household as it provides security.

b) **Homestead land:** This is the land where the house or the dwelling unit of the household is located. A household growing vegetable in kitchen garden, flowers and trees in the courtyard, raising livestock or carrying out pisciculture within the proximity of the household dwelling has been included in the homestead land. It should be noted that NSS includes such land under operational holding. However, in BTAD, carrying out of such activities in the homestead is more of a social practice rather than an economic endeavour. Almost all households surveyed had one of the criteria counted by the NSS as mentioned above. The products thus obtained were meant almost always for self-consumption rather than the market. Along with it, there was no regularity in such cultivation as it was more of a social hobby and depended on the household members for its continuation. Besides, it proved almost impossible, even for the members of the sample household to furnish accurate data as to how much of their land comprises only of the dwelling unit and how much is the vegetable garden etc. Therefore, all of the above land has been included under the homestead criteria.

Understanding the size of the homestead becomes important because the settlement structure is a major marker of identity construction in BTAD. The homestead composition is different for the indigenous communities as compared to the 'immigrant outsider' communities, as will be explained later in this chapter. This difference not only tells about the economic standing of the household but also comes with a social identity construct and is used as an element of othering.

c) **Otherwise Possessed Land:** This is the land owned without the legal title of ownership or occupancy right. This criterion of land ownership is the most significant indicator of the complex history of land alienation, encroachment and ongoing conflict in BTAD. The ownership of this criterion of land is associated with the informal land institutions and it also has a core-periphery structure in BTAD.

Land Owned and Possessed:

The distribution of land between the Bodos and the Non-Bodos of Kokrajhar shows that the Bodos have a better share of land holding as compared to the Non-Bodos. The following can be noted from the analysis of the data:

a) Land owned among the Bodos is more spread and evenly distributed throughout all the classes of land holdings in comparison to the Non-Bodo households. The size of the Bodo land holdings covers a wider range, from marginal to medium size holdings whereas the distribution of land holdings is limited within marginal to semi-medium for the Non-Bodo households.

b) There is no Non-Bodo household which is landless whereas 3.17% of the Bodo households are landless.

c) The largest share of land holdings of the Bodos (34.92%) concentrates on the 'small' holdings, ranging from 1 to 2 hectares and the distribution of marginal land is 26.98% and for Semi-medium is 23.81%. The Non-Bodos, on the other hand has no ownership of medium class lands. The concentration of land holdings for the Non-Bodos is in the marginal class with 35.09% distribution in the small and semi-medium classes.

d) Land owned among the Non-Bodos is concentrated on the lowest three classes of land holding sizes with 64.9% of land owned as only marginal land. The Bodos own all the medium sized holdings in Kokrajhar which constitutes 11.11% of their land holdings.

e) There is no large land holding for either of the groups.

Table 5.1: Land Owned and Possessed in Kokrajhar: Bodos and Non-Bodo households (HH)

Landholdings		Bodo		Non-Bodo	
Size (in hectares)	Criteria	Sample units in each class	% of sample HH in each class	Sample units in each class	% of Non-Bodo HH in each class
> 0.002	Landless	2	3.17	0	0.00
0.002-1.000	Marginal	17	26.98	37	64.91
1.000-2.000	Small	22	34.92	13	22.81
2.000-4.000	Semi-Medium	15	23.81	7	12.28
4.000-10.000	Medium	7	11.11	0	0
< 10.000	Large	0	0.00	0	0
Total HH		63	100.00	57	100.00

Source: Data collected from Field Survey

This distribution of land owned and possessed, is the cumulative ownership of the operational holdings, homestead land, leased land and otherwise possessed land. These criteria, when considered as a single unit of classification in itself, reveals important land distribution structure among the Bodos and Non-Bodos. In order to bring out a detailed picture of land distribution and ownership, I have broken down the analysis under Operational holdings, homestead land and otherwise possessed land.

a) **Operational Holding:**

Only 6.35% of the Bodo households are not dependent on agricultural activities and hence own no operational holdings. The Non-Bodo households who do not have any operational holdings are 22.8 % of the sample. This is explained by the composition of the Non-Bodo sample households. All the Nepali and Hindu Bengali households in the sample are engaged in tertiary activities, thereby peaking up the data on no operational holding. The Adivasis and the Bengali Muslim population in the same sample however, are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood.

The Bodos have larger operational holdings in comparison to the Non-Bodos with 19.05% of Bodo households having semi-medium holdings against 7.02% of Non-Bodos. The holdings are also more evenly distributed throughout the classes for the Bodos in comparison to the

Non-Bodos. The size of the operational holdings is smallest for the Non-Bodos as 52.63% of their holdings count as marginal against 44.44% of the Bodos. There is no land holding in the large category for either of the two groups.

Table 5.2: Operational Holdings in Kokrajhar: Bodos and Non-Bodo households (HH)

Operational Landholdings		Bodo		Non-Bodo	
Size (in hectares)	Criteria	Sample Units in each class	% of HH sample in each class	Sample Units in each class	% of HH in each class
> 0.002	Landless	0	0.00	0	0.00
0.002-1.000	Marginal	28	44.44	30	52.63
1.000-2.000	Small	18	28.57	10	17.54
2.000-4.000	Semi-Medium	12	19.05	4	7.02
4.000-10.000	Medium	1	1.59	0	0
< 10.000	Large	0	0	0	0
Households having No Operational Holdings		Bodo		Non-Bodo	
		4	6.35	13	22.81
Total HH		63	100	57	100

Source: Data collected from Field Survey

b) **Homestead Land**

The size of the homestead land usually points out the economic condition of the household. It has been noticed that there is a complementary relationship between the size of the homestead and the operational holding in the rural areas. As a generalised statement, it can be mentioned that those households having a larger homestead land were the comparatively affluent households; and also owned a larger size of operational holdings.

The Bodos have a larger size of the Homestead land in comparison to the Non-Bodos. Although the major share of the homestead size is marginal for both the communities (92.06% for the Bodos and 98.25% for the Non-Bodos), it is significant that Bodo households even have semi-medium homestead holdings. The Non-Bodos, however, have almost uniform homestead holding in comparison to the Bodos who have a greater tilt of disparity in homestead land ownership. With 3.17% of the Bodo households being landless against no homeless households among the Non-Bodos, it can be said that disparity in land ownership is greater among the Bodos.

Table 5.3: Homestead Land ownership in Kokrajhar: Bodos and Non-Bodo households (HH)

Homestead Landholdings		Bodo		Non-Bodo	
Size (in hectares)	Criteria	Sample units in each class	% of HH in each class	Sample units in each class	% of HH in each class
> 0.002	Landless	2	**3.17**	0	0
0.002-1.000	Marginal	58	**92.06**	56	**98.25**
1.000-2.000	Small	2	**3.17**	1	**1.75**
2.000-4.000	Semi-Medium	1	**1.59**	0	**0.00**
4.000-10.000	Medium	0	0.00	0	0
< 10.000	Large	0	0.00	0	0
Total HH		63	100.00	57	100.00

Source: Data collected from Field Survey

As already mentioned, understanding the constituents of the homestead land becomes important because the settlement structure is a major marker of identity construction in BTAD. The homestead composition is different for the indigenous communities as compared to the 'immigrant outsider' communities and this difference not only tells about the economic standing of the household but also comes with a social identity construct and is used as an element of othering. Various narratives of the Bodos regarding a livelihood mentions that land is the most important socio-cultural asset of the ethnic group because,

> *"We are nature-loving people. We like to live with trees, fruits, vegetables and animals. Life seems to be incomplete without being surrounded by all of them. Everybody belonging to this soil shares the same feeling of attachment with nature. The Rajbonshi and the Rabhas are also like us in this way because they belong to this land. But look at the houses of the migrants. They don't live like us; they live with no love for nature."*

The following tables depict the homestead compositions of the 'indigene-outside' binary. True to the narratives, the Bodos and the 'Complementary Others' share a very similar homestead structure whereas the 'Outsider Other' stands out in their differences. This element of similarity between the homesteads of the tribal populations of the BTAD not only alienates the 'other' but also reinforces the indigene-outsider binary.

Table 5.4: Constituent features of Homestead land of Bodo village

Village Chakma (Bodo population)	Households identified having the following in the homestead land					
	Flower Garden	Arecanut trees	Vegetable garden	Bari having fruit trees	Only the house	Shelter for livestock
HH 1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
HH 2	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
HH 3	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

HH 4	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
HH 5	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
HH 6	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
HH 7	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
HH 8	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
HH 9	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
HH 10	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
HH 11	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
HH 12	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
HH 13	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
HH 14	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
HH 15	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
HH 16	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
HH 17	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
HH 18	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
HH 19	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
HH 20	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Source: Data collected from Field Survey

Table 5.5: Constituent features of Homestead land of Non-Bodo villages

Sr. No	Sample Ethnic Population	Households identified having the following in the homestead land					
	Adivasi	Flower Garden	Arecanut trees	Vegetable garden	Bari having fruit trees	Only the house	Shelter for livestock
1	HH 1	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
2	HH 2	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
3	HH 3	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
4	HH 4	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
5	HH 5	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
	Bengali Muslim						
6	HH 1	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
7	HH 2	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
8	HH 3	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
9	HH 4	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
10	HH 5	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
	Rajbonshi						
11	HH 1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
12	HH 2	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
13	HH 3	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
14	HH 4	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
15	HH 5	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
	Hindu Bengali						
16	HH 1	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
17	HH 2	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

	Rabha						
18	HH 1	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
19	HH 2	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
	Nepali						
20	HH 1	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes

Source: Data collected from Field Survey

c) **Otherwise Possessed land:**

This category of land ownership is the indicator of the contested land ownership in BTAD. In Kokrajhar, it is only the Bodo community who claims ownership over the fallow land, called Khas ownership. This category of otherwise possessed land has no legal sanction of ownership and does not assign occupancy rights to its owner. However, it can be noted that 25.4 % of the Bodos have Otherwise Possessed land against 0% ownership for the Non-Bodos.

Table 5.6: Ownership of Otherwise Possessed Land

Otherwise Possessed land Size (in hectares)	% of Bodo HH owning it
> 0.002	0.00
0.002-1.000	14.29
1.000-2.000	7.94
2.000-4.000	3.17
4.000-10.000	0.00
< 10.000	0.00
Total Percentage of Bodo HH owning land in this criteria	25.40

Source: Data collected from Field Survey

Claimed ownership over the Khas is a very significant issue in land-conflict torn BTAD. The total land ownership of the Bodos- land owned and possessed is highly distorted by the addition of the otherwise possessed land. When this category is omitted, then it is seen that 15.87% of Bodo households owns semi-medium land instead of 23.81%, 9.52% own medium land against 11.11%. The major size of landholdings is small for Bodo households. Even the % of landless Bodo households increases from 3.17% to 6.35% when otherwise possessed land is not counted. This shows that the landless among the Bodos depend upon the fallow Khas land for a livelihood and shelter. Therefore, the actual land ownership of the Bodos is actually distorted via the addition of the otherwise possessed land. The disparity in land ownership is greater for the Bodos when compared to the Non-Bodos. The following table shows the adjusted land owned and possessed for the Bodos.

Table 5.7: Adjusted Land Owned and Possessed without counting otherwise possessed land

Landholdings		% of Bodo HH		% of Non-Bodo HH
Size (in hectares)	Criteria	land owned with otherwise possessed land	land owned without otherwise possessed land	land owned
> 0.002	Landless	3.17	6.35	0.00
0.002-1.000	Marginal	26.98	28.57	64.91
1.000-2.000	Small	34.92	39.68	22.81
2.000-4.000	Semi-Medium	23.81	15.87	12.28
4.000-10.000	Medium	11.11	9.52	0
< 10.000	Large	0.00	0.00	0
Total HH		100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Data collected from Field Survey

This criterion of otherwise possessed land has given rise to informal land institutions and depending on its claimed ownership in BTAD, a core periphery model is also applicable. These issues are complex and hence have been dealt with in a separate section later in this chapter.

Loss of Land

Loss of land in Kokrajhar is determined by many factors like selling (distress sale and willingly sold), lands lost due to failure to pay mortgage in time, flood, lost to Government projects and in some cases due to violent clashes. The percentage of Bodo households who have lost land due to sale of land is higher compared to the Non-Bodos.

Loss of Land
Bodo HH compared to Non-Bodo HH

	Sold Land	Mortgage	Flood	Govt. Projects	Others
% of Bodo HH	4.76	14.29	11.11	4.76	1.59
% of Non-Bodo HH	3.51	15.79	19.30	43.86	0
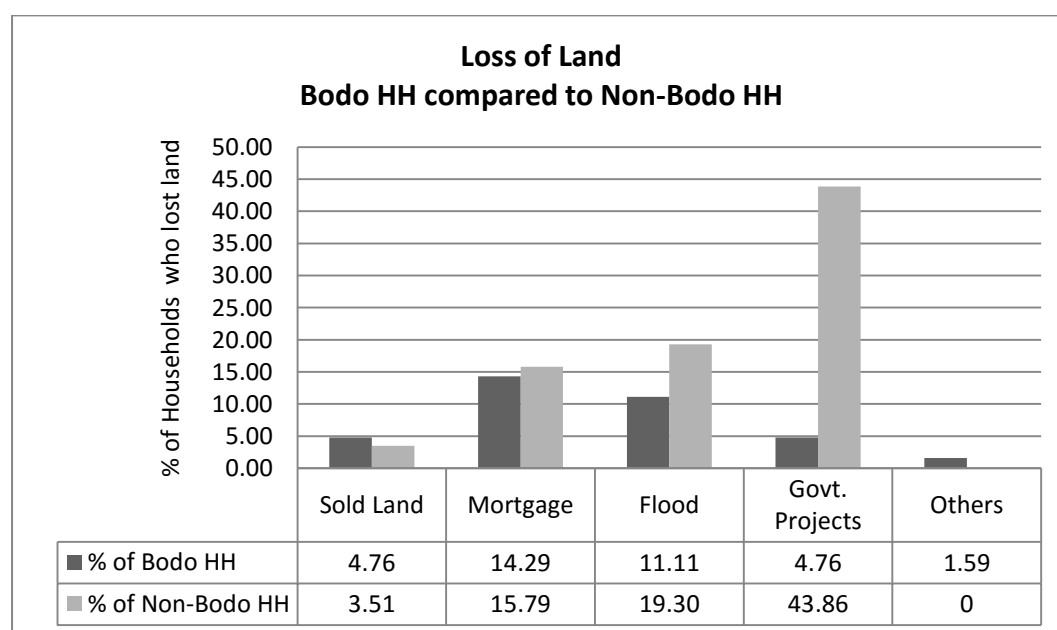
Source: Calculated from data collected from field survey

This has been a result not only of willingly sold land but also sometimes in distress for many households. Economic necessities figure as the primary reason for distress selling of land. This is coupled by the loss of land due to failure to pay off mortgage in which they are forced to sell off their lands. The data presented in the chart shows the percentage of land already lost to mortgage is high for both the Bodos as well as Non-Bodos. Among the Non-Bodos, it is only the Adivasis who have lost due to failure of mortgage payment and not any other community. The percentage of Adivasi households owning currently mortgaged land is also high, at 13.2%. There is also a good possibility that the lands of these 13.2% households will also be sold out die to failure of mortgage payments. For the Bodos also, land lost to mortgage is significant. The percentage of Bodo households whose lands were counted as currently mortgaged is very high, almost 20%. Economic insecurity could transform this 20% of households owning currently mortgaged land to lose their lands.

Loss of land, as has been noted from the field survey, is determined not only by the economic condition of the household, but also by the location. The location has determined loss of land due to flood as well as due to Government projects. Many of the Bodo and Non-Bodo households have lost land due to flood. For the Bodos, however, flooding has been a major push factor to initiate migration. Many Bodo households in Uttar Bashbari village have migrated to the current village following loss of land in floods. Although more of the Non-Bodo households have lost land due to flood, there is no distress migration noted, at least among the sample. The Bods have also lost their land, in the violent conflicts, this being counted under the 'others' category.

Loss of land due to government projects is significantly high for the Non-Bodos as compared to the Bodos. Such Government activities which have trigged loss of land are primarily construction of new roads or expansion of the already existing road. It should be noted that loss of land due to government projects is utilised positively by the Bengali Hindus and the Nepali community. In their village, they had lost land due to establishment of an educational institution. They had not only managed to corner a proper amount of compensation but also, some households, united under a "citizens' forum'', also forced the Government to secure employment for their children in that institution. As for the other Non-Bodos who lost land due to expansion of infrastructure, primarily the Adivasis, not only were they not given the proper compensation (in some households no compensation was paid), their claims were also turned down citing reasons like, "enjoy the new road now", "no funds available" and "the

land you lost never in fact belonged to you". The Bodo households who lost land due to Government activities were fully compensated.

II.   Land Ownership Titles, Provisions and Associated Conflict

Land ownership in BTAD is governed by differential outcomes, depending on the title of the owned land. These outcomes might be contested ownership with no legal provision of land rights, temporary provisions of ownership with occupancy rights or permanent

patta ownership with legal sanction of rights and provisions. The 'us-other' binary or the 'indigene-migrant' conflicts in contemporary BTAD is amply explained by these differences of provisions and contestations. Land in BTAD therefore, can be classified according to their titles, understanding the titles and their associated provisions or contestations goes a long way in highlighting not only the land ownership structure but also inter-community identity constructs which often becomes the context of the Bodo identity movement.

a) Land Ownership titles and their significance in BTAD

There are three land ownership titles in BTAD: Miyadipatta, Eksoniya and Khas land ownership, each defined by the land rights assigned to it.

i.   Miyadipatta:

This class of land certifies the owner with permanent ownership via the patta issued by the Government. Taxes or '*mati khazana*' is collected on the ownership of this land. There are two types of rights attached to this land: right to use and right of disposition. The right of disposition ascertains to the owner to sell, bequeath, lend or give away the land. The owner also has the right to use the land. This right to use legalizes cultivation of the land in the agrarian areas. The transfer of such land is also hereditary. It is the best collateral for credit in the rural areas. In BTAD ownership of miyadipatta is seen to be proof of long term residence, often argued to be the indicator of indigenous villages of the region. It is the least contested land ownership with assigned rights of inheritance, allotment, settlement and transfer and hence, also the most desired in BTAD.

A village in BTAD having a clear majority of settled land under the miyadipatta ownership is indicative of the following situations:

a) That the village is old in terms of its settlement history.

b) It is a legal settled area and its residents have inalienable rights to their land, an infringement of which guarantees compensation by law.

c) Most importantly, it shows that there is no land ownership conflict among the communities because all of them are secured of their land ownership via the same rights.

ii. Eksoniya:

Eksoniya titled lands are those which have no legal individual ownership. They are often the parcel fallow land belonging to the Government which, owing to its size and non-contiguous distribution is not utilised for Government purposes and hence supposed to be left fallow. However, there is large scale encroachment of this land and the people settled in it are referred to as *'dokholi'* (meaning: somebody who has occupied land not belonging to them). There are no rights of inheritance, allotment, transfer or disposition assigned to it. However, the people who settle in it often also use it for cultivation or there could be only cultivation carried out in that land with its owner being the resident of a neighbouring village. The Government revenue office collects a minimal tax from the *dokholi* or the one using the land-called '*tauzi khazana'*. This class of land therefore can be said to have semi-ownership. Against the tauzi khazana paid to the Government, a certificate of lease is given to the dokholi, which only assigns recognition of temporary occupancy to the dokholi and not right of occupancy.

In BTAD, this document of lease is informally sold and bought by various people at verbally agreed bargains without involving the Government. This lease contract however, can be renewed upon its expiry which provides this the elasticity to be converted into miyadipatta ownership after sufficient years of continued use by a single household. Over a period of time, the Revenue office revises its land ownership and taxes collection. Often, in such cases, the Government takes into account the ownership of these Eksoniya land and converts them into miyadipatta land with all legal rights of ownership. Conversion of Eksoniya to Miyadipatta follows a process fixed by the government, with the rights of ownership registered against its owner (called *namjari*), payment of nominal taxes and final registration with the allotment of a patta grant. It is owing to this possibility of gaining miyadipatta ownership that many people in BTAD claims ownership over neighbouring fallow land.

Eksoniya ownership of land is indicative of the following:

a) There is an attempt at converting non-patta land into patta land i.e. into miyadipatta because the population is on the increase and there is not enough land within the village.

b) There could be conflicts in areas of such land ownership as communities might perceive it to be an attempt at land garb.

c) In a village where there is Eksoniya ownership of land along with Miyadipatta ownership under the same households, it points out to being an attempt to bring the fallow land under their ownership. If there are different communities living in such villages there is always a possibility of inter-community conflict as it can be understood to be land encroachment.

d) In many of the villages, households may be influenced to initiate the process to claim land, one after another, seeing some other people claiming it. In such cases, it is the element of competition which begins with one household claiming ownership snowballing into many households following in their trail.

iii. Khas Land:

Khas land is the large-scale fallow land which is not under the ownership of any individual. The Government reserves the right of its ownership and hence it is also called as the reserved land. This class of land are often the char lands (riverine tracts of land under annual flood), the land of the natural levees, fallow land between settlements serving as the Common Property Resources (CPRs) as well as the cleared lands between forests. In BTAD, there is wide scale claim of the ownership of the Khas land and ensuing conflict over the management of these lands. Khas land is not converted into miyadipatta and there is no issue of any terms of lease from the Revenue department. Since they are large areas of fallow land, they are mostly supposed to be used for grazing and hence a common property for all.

In BTAD however, the Khas is considered to be very important land as they are visualised to be "in need of protection" from the "migrants". The history of land alienation of the indigenous tribal population, and the contemporary violent conflicts and identity politics in the BTAD makes these Khas land very significant because fallow land is always seen by the tribals as "the last of their lands which have not yet been encroached". Protecting these lands, therefore gains utmost priority for them.

Villages claiming ownership over the Khas/ Reserved Land is the most telling and significant because it shows the contemporary conflicting land ownership in BTAD. It clearly points out that:

a) The ownership of such land is illegal but yet ownership over it is claimed because people are driven by a belief that it is the 'right thing to do'.

b) A whole community claiming ownership of the Khas could be an attempt to encroach upon the fallow land.

c) It could also be a measure unanimously adopted by a community to 'safeguard' that fallow land from encroachment by some 'other community'. There is usually a history of attempts made to encroach upon the Khas in such a scenario or ongoing encroachment in the neighbouring areas.

d) In some aspects, settlements on the Khas could also be indicative of an act of refuge-seeking of the displaced people (often the Adivasis and Bodos). Due to the violent clashes, thousands in BTAD have been rendered homeless. These people also move into the forest, sometimes clearing a patch of land and settling adjacent to the forest villages. Such an act is a resort from distress but might also be viewed as an act of encroachment by the people of the forest villages.

Claiming ownership of the Khas therefore is contested and a multifaceted issue; sometimes it being a real encroachment and sometimes just a claimed ownership over the Khas simply to protect it from being encroached by other communities. Land in BTAD, therefore, analysed as per these titles of ownership brings out a whole different dimension of the land question.

b) **Land in BTAD analysed through the titles of ownership: Core-Periphery**

For a better presentation of the analysis of these criteria of land, I have divided this section under two definite sub-sections based on the following:

a) The title ownership of land presents a spatial characteristic of BTAD. The land title ownership in Kokrajhar is very different than its contiguous districts of Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri. Therefore, the analysis has been presented in two different sections to show the differences as noticed in the field.

b) The ownership of the titled lands is mostly overlapping; sometimes combined into two titles ownership or sometimes all three i.e. the same household would have miyadipatta, Eksoniya and Khas or a combination of two. Since, miyadipatta land

ownership is the inalienable among the three and indicates a stable permanent ownership in comparison to the other two, therefore, I have presented the analysis in two categories:

    a. Miyadipatta ownership (secured ownership)

    b. Eksoniya and Khas ownership (controversial ownership)

Land titles in Kokrajhar

The Bodos of Kokrajhar have miyadipatta, Eksoniya as well as Khas land ownership. The Non-Bodos however have only miyadipatta ownership. There is no claim over the Khas from the Non-Bodos in this district except 5% households of the Bengali Muslims who claims ownership over a Khas land.

Land ownership is highly diverse and fragmented for the Bodos. 17.46% of the Bodo households have all three types of land titles ownership whereas 61.9 % have only miyadipatta ownership. This shows that 38.1% of the Bodo household in Kokrajhar have controversial ownership as depicted by the following table:

Table 5.8: Land Titles ownership in Kokrajhar

Households Having	% of Bodo HH	% of Adivasi HH	% of Bengali Muslim HH	% of Hindu Bengali HH	% of Rajbonshi HH
Secured Ownership 1. Only Miyadipatta	61.90	100	95	100	100
Controversial Ownership					
2. Only Eksoniya	3.17	0	0	0	0
3. Only Khas	4.76	0	5	0	0
4. Both Miyadipatta and Eksoniya	7.94	0	0	0	0
5. Both Miyadipatta and Khas	6.35	0	0	0	0
6. All three titles	17.46	0	0	0	0

Source: Data collected from Field Survey

Land Titles in Chirang, Baksa, Udalguri

Land titles ownership in these three districts is very different from Kokrajhar, much more complex because it is inclusive of all communities and hence contested. The data presented on the titled ownership for these districts is at the level of villages and hence wider in its coverage unlike that of Kokrajhar where the data was of the household level.

Villages in these three districts have a high share of Eksoniya and Khas ownership- 77.91% of the villages has claims over these titled lands. This also shows that only 22.09% of the villages had completely miyadipatta ownership and none other title. Unlike Kokrajhar, the Eksoniya and Khas land titles are claimed by almost all the communities in these districts including the Bodos.

Table 5.9: Land Title Ownership in Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri

Villages having land Title claims over land	No. of Villages	% of Villages
Secured Ownership Miyadipatta	19	22.09
Controversial Ownership Eksoniya and Khas title claims noted altogether in	67	77.91
Total	86	100
Out of these 67 villages, Eksoniya ownership has been noted in	62	72.09
Out of these 67 villages, Khas ownership has been noted in	47	54.65

Source: Data collected from Field Survey

The above table shows that among those 67 villages where Eksoniya and Khas land titles have been claimed by the communities, 62 villages has Eksoniya title ownership and 47 had Khas land ownership. Claims over the Eksoniya land is more in the villages because the contiguous parcel fallow land adjacent to the villages are claimed to be belonging to the nearest neighbouring household.

A community wise analysis of the land ownership titles in these districts shows that the villages which have solely miyadipatta ownership comprises of those communities with whom the Bodos have no history of conflict. It should be noted that there is no village with Adivasi community where there is only miyadipatta ownership. This is not to say that all Adivasis have controversial land ownership, but all those villages which have only miyadipatta land ownership does not have Adivasis. Similarly there is only one village with Bengali (Both Hindu and Muslim) community having solely miyadipatta ownership. On the other hand, all the Assamese and the Rabha communities have only miyadipatta land ownership and these two are the only communities throughout all the districts of BTAD who have no claims over Eksoniya and Khas lands.

The following table shows the community wise composition of each of the villages having only miyadipatta land ownership.

Table 5.10: Villages with entirely Miyadipatta ownership and their inhabiting communities in Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri

Sr. No.	Villages	Communities inhabiting those villages	Land Titles Ownership		
			Miyadipatta	Eksoniya	Khas Land
1	SIALMARI	Rajbonshi, Bodo	Bodo, Rajbonshi	No claim	Khas is fallow, no claim
2	KASHDOBA	M. Bengali, Bodo	M. Bengali, Bodo	No claim	Khas is fallow, no claim
3	NADHIAPARA	Bodo, Assamese	Bodo, Assamese	No claim	No fallow land nearby
4	KUMARGAON	Rajbonshi, Bodo	Rajbonshi, Bodo	No claim	Khas is fallow, no claim
5	BARIMAKHA	Assamese, Bodo	Assamese, Bodo	No claim	Khas is fallow, no claim
6	DONGPAR	Bodo, Assamese	Bodo, Assamese	No claim	Khas is fallow, no claim
7	DOLBARI	Bodo, Rabha	Bodo, Rabha	No claim	Khas is fallow, no claim
8	KAKLABARI	Bodo, Rajbonshi	Bodo, Rajbonshi	No claim	Khas is fallow, no claim
9	KHAIRABARI	Assamese, Bodo	Assamese, Bodo	No claim	Khas is fallow, no claim
10	GORMARA	Assamese, Bodo	Assamese, Bodo	No claim	Khas is fallow, no claim
11	DINGDANGPARA	Bodo, Rajbonshi	Bodo, Rajbonshi	No claim	No fallow land nearby
12	MAZAR CHUBURI	Bodo, Rajbonshi	Bodo, Rajbonshi	No claim	No fallow land nearby
13	DEWRIPARA	Bodo, Assamese, Rajbonshi	Bodo, Assamese, Rajbonshi	No claim	No fallow land nearby
14	NIZ CHINAKONA	Bodo, Assamese	Bodo, Assamese	No claim	No fallow land nearby
15	KHAGRAGAON	Bodo, Assamese, Hindu Bengali	Bodo, Assamese, H Bengali	No claim	No fallow land nearby
16	DONGPAR	Bodo, Rabha	Bodo, Rabha	No claim	No fallow land nearby
17	NAKTIPARA PAM	Bodo	Bodo	No claim	No fallow land nearby
18	SILAKUTI DONGPAR	Bodo	Bodo	No claim	No fallow land nearby
19	SAUKUCHI	Bodo, Assamese, Bengali Muslims	Bodo, Assamese, B. Muslims	No claim	No fallow land nearby

Source: Field Survey

Eksoniya and Khas land titles ownership depicts a more complex picture because the majority of the villages have claims over these land titles. The following table shows that the

villages having no Eksoniya title lands are only 27.91% and the villages where there is no claim over the Khas land are only 11.63%.

Table 5.11: Controversial land titles in villages of Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri

Controversial Land Titles	Number of villages	Percentage of villages
Villages having no claims over Eksoniya title	24 out of 86	27.91
Villages where there is no Khas land	29 out of 86	33.72
Villages having fallow Khas land with no claims	10 out of 86	11.63

Source: Calculated from field survey

As already stated, apart from the Rabhas and the Assamese, all the other major communities in these three districts have claimed ownership of the fallow land as depicted through the detailed table below.

Table 5.12: Details of Land Ownership Titles in Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri

Various communities in the sample villages	No of villages in the sample having these communities	Title ownership for each of these communities as noted in the villages
		Miyadipatta ownership
Bodos	58	All Bodos in these 58 villages have miyadipatta ownership
The 'Outsider-Others'		
Adivasis	31	All Adivasis in these 31 villages have miyadipatta ownership
Bengali Muslims	14	All Bengali Muslims in these 14 villages have miyadipatta ownership
The 'Complementary Others'		
Rajbonshi	23	All Rajbonshi in these 23 villages have miyadipatta ownership
Rabha	2	All Rabha in these 2 villages have miyadipatta ownership
Hindu Bengalis	30	All Hindu Bengali in these 30 villages have miyadipatta ownership
Assamese	12	All Assamese in these 12 villages have miyadipatta ownership
	Number of villages having Eksoniya title claims	**Eksoniya title claims**
Bodos	32 out of 58	55.17 % of Bodos have Eksoniya title claims
The 'Outsider-Others'		
Adivasis	29 out of 31	93.55 % of Adivasis have eksoniya title claims
Bengali Muslims	9 out of 14	64.29 % of Bengali Muslims have eksoniya title claims

The 'Complementary Others'		
Rajbonshi	15 out of 23	65.22 % of Rajbonshis have eksoniya title claims
Rabha	0 out of 2	The Rabhas have no claims of Eksoniya title lands
Hindu Bengalis	8 out of 30	26.67% of the Hindu Bengalis have eksoniya title claims
Assamese	0 out of 12	the Assamese have no claims of Eksoniya title lands
	Number of villages having Khas land claims	**Khas land claims**
Bodos	22 out of 58	37.93% of Bodos claims the Khas land
The 'Outsider-Others'		
Adivasis	13 out of 31	41.93% of Adivasis claims the Khas land
Bengali Muslims	10 out of 14	71.42% of Bengali Muslims claims the Khas land
The 'Complementary Others'		
Rajbonshi	11 out of 23	47.82% of Rajbonshis claims the Khas land
Rabha	0 out of 2	No Rabha claims the Khas land
Hindu Bengalis	8 out of 30	26.67% of Hindu Bengalis claims the Khas land
Assamese	0 out of 12	No Assamese claims the Khas land

Source: Calculated from field survey

From the above analysis of land title ownership, the following can be noted:

Claimed land titles ownership is high for the "Outsider Other" Communities: The Adivasis and the Bengali Muslims have very high shares of claimed ownership over the Eksoniya and Khas land. A high 93.55% of the Adivasis claims ownership of the Eksoniya title lands along with 64.29% Bengali Muslims also claiming ownership over the Eksoniya lands. The claimed ownership over the Khas land is highest for the Bengali Muslims- a 71.42% of the community claiming Khas land ownership. Among the Adivasis, 41.93% of the Adivasis also claims ownership over the Khas land. In comparison to the ownership of Khas of these communities, 55.17% of the Bodos claims ownership over the Eksoniya and 37.93% claims ownership of the Khas land.

Claimed land titles by the "Complementary Other" Communities: In these districts, the Rajbonshi and the Hindu Bengali communities also have substantial claims of fallow land ownership. The Rajbonshis have 65.22% claiming ownership over the Eksoniya title and

47.82% claiming Khas land ownership. The Hindu Bengali community also claims ownership over the fallow lands- 26.67% claims Eksoniya and Khas lands of BTAD.

Although fallow land is claimed by both the "Complementary Other" and the "Outsider Other", there ought to be difference maintained between the two because, the motives behind the claimed ownership are different for both the community groups. In this group, the Rabhas and the Assamese claim no ownership of the fallow land and the Rajbonshis claim fallow land ownership in collaboration with the Bodos so that they could keep the Khas land fallow. The Bodos, sometimes in collaboration with the Rajbonshis and sometimes alone has formed informal institutions which governs the ownership claims over the Khas land. The ownership claim of the Rajbonshis over the Khas, therefore, is not to gather the fallow land under their personal land ownerships but to "keep the Khas land fallow". The Hindu Bengalis, on the other hand, like the Adivasis and the Bengali Muslims have no collaboration of informal institutions to keep the Khas land fallow. They ownership claims of these communities are for personal reasons.

Land title ownership in BTAD has a spatial dimension: A Core-Periphery: The Bodos of Kokrajhar, apart from owning miyadipatta lands has asserted their claims over the fallow land in the district- both Eksoniya titles and Khas land is claimed. In a previous analysis, it has already been shown that 25.4% of lands owned by the Bodo households fall under the criteria of 'otherwise possessed' which indicates their claims of ownership over the Khas as well as the Eksoniya. Apart from the Bodos, no other community in Kokrajhar has otherwise possessed land. In the rest of the districts of BTAD-Chirang, Baksa, Udalguri, Eksoniya and Khas land is has claimed ownership from not only the Bodo community but from all the other communities in the district too barring only the Rabhas and Assamese.

This spatial dimension can be fitted into the districts of the BTAD to form a core and a periphery. The core is the administrative district of BTAD which has been at the centre of the Bodo identity assertion, the Bodo movement and the location where the Bodo identity has gained in prominence. The core also has only the autochthon owning the Eksoniya and the Khas land unlike the periphery where different communities still claims the fallow lands. The Bodos own a better share of land in comparison to the Non-Bodos in Kokrajhar along with claiming ownership over the fallow land. In the Kokrajhar Core, a quarter of the Bodo population has claims over the fallow land; these claims are uncontested from the various other communities of the district. Such claims of the Bodos are often justified by invoking

emotional arguments of the loss they had endured throughout a cruel history. Their claim over the fallow land, in contemporary society, therefore is "an act of taking back," it is a sanctioned way of "keeping the fallow land free from the migrants" so that "the migrants do not settle down upon these lands as well". On the other hand, in the periphery- the districts of Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri, land ownership for the Bodos is not the same here as in the core. In the periphery, the Bodos' claim over the fallow land is outnumbered by the Adivasis and the Bengali Muslims, 93.55% of Adivasis claims the Eksoniya and 64.29% of the Bengali Muslims claims the Eksoniya too whereas 41.93% of Adivasis claims ownership over the Khas and 71.42% of Bengali Muslims claims the Khas too. In comparison to this, 55.17% of Bodos have claims over the Eksoniya and 37.93% has claimed the Khas land.

The creation of the BTAD under the sixth schedule grants in its provisions that lands of the tribals be safeguarded. Land alienation has continued unabated throughout history for the tribals and the vestiges of those land encroachment can still be seen in these peripheral districts where the majority of the Adivasis and the Bengali Muslims- the two historically migrant communities, still claims the fallow land. Such claims not only acts as an assurance to the Bodos that land encroachment by the migrant communities is still an alive issue but it also feeds into the identity construct by deepening the indigene-outsider binary. Such processes of feared alienation gives rise to conflicts and further continue to act as the context which is ever-present to be invoked in times of violence. Even in the time of "peace" in BTAD, land conflicts over the ownership of the fallow Khas is a phenomenon lived by the people daily. The next section shows how the people have responded to this continuous fear of land alienation.

III.   The Khas land ownership and Associated Informal land Institutions

Informal land institutions are a committee of people self-chosen to negotiate the use of the Khas land. These institutions are tribal institutions formed by the Bodos and Rajbonshis, sometimes in collaboration with one another or sometimes only within themselves. These institutions however are nothing like the old traditional tribal institutions who governed the affairs of the tribal community. Although such community governing institutions are still very alive and dominant among the hill tribes of north-east India, the Bodos being a plain tribe had long lost their traditional institutions[45]. Therefore, these land institutions of

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[45] The hill tribes owing their geographical isolation and the creation of further separation by the colonial Line system has been kept aloof from the process of assimilation with the plain valley people often considered to be

contemporary BTAD are a modern creation- 35 to 40 years old, created as a response to contain the unabated encroachment of the fallow land by the migrant communities. The primary objective behind the functioning of these institutions is to safeguard and manage the Khas land which is often utilised as the Common property resource by the villagers.

These institutions are often headed by a small committee of veteran people, who are considered to be 'leaders' of the village. The rest of the village community often obeys and supports their decisions regarding the management and ownership of the Khas land. There is no definitive structure of these committees, sometimes it could comprise of six to seven members and sometimes only two or three. These institutions are not sanctioned by any legal titles and are neither recognised under the sixth schedule Village Council Development committees (VCDC). However, these institutions exits side by side with the government created formal institutions and functions with the will of the people. These institutions are:

a) **Representative of a collective will:** The opinion of these informal institutions often represents the opinion of an entire village, the actions of the committee are not only sanctioned by the village community but their viewpoints also become the opinion of the mass. These institutions provide the tribal populations with a sense of security of protection of the fallow land thereby assuring them that their access to the fallow land is protected and will not be lost. Hence, these institutions although informal are very powerful.

b) **Driven by the Homeland Principle:** The Bodos are the primary tribal community who forms these informal institutions; mostly themselves but sometimes also in collaboration with the Rajbonshis if they also inhabit the same village. The narratives of the Bodos brings out that they consider it to be of utmost importance that "they protect their lands." The Bodos mention that throughout history, they have been made "to lose their lands on the hands of the encroachers so much so that they have become a minority in their own land". Creation of these institutions to protect the Khas land is driven by a motive of keeping the fallow land from any further encroachment. The Bodos consider it to be their "responsibility" now to keep their lands safe. As one Bodo man notes:

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the mainstream population. The plain tribes, on the other hand have been exposed to the historical changes that swept these mainstream populations. This mixing process called circulation and diffusion has assigned many new changes to the plain tribes and has done away with their traditional institutions in the process so much so that, these plain tribes in Assam has been often considered to be a part of the mainstream society.

"This is our land. We have already lost so much of it to the migrants. They are still encroaching on all the fallow lands. So now, if we want our lands to be safe, we have to protect them."

c) **Inspiring and Followed:** The informal institutions are an inspiration to those Bodo villages which are yet to come up with their own institutions. These institutions not only safeguard the Khas from encroachment but also determine a just use of the Khas for the collective benefit of the entire village community. Along with it, the informal institutions are also entrusted with reminding the people that as per the laws of the Sixth Schedule, land of the Scheduled tribes (in this case, of the Bodos) has been safeguarded through various provisions. Along with it, indirectly, these institutions also have a strong say in the land transactions that are carried out in the villages and in its neighbouring areas. There is a collective opinion about whom to sell their lands and whom not to. These transactions are often monitored by the informal institutions as they act as a guardian to the tribal lands.

d) **Management of Collective farming in the Khas land:** In some of the villages, the Khas land is completely utilised for cultivating crops. It is a collective community endeavour, managed and coordinated by the institution where the Bodos, apart from carrying out cultivation in their personal miyadipatta lands, also cultivates the Khas land. Cultivation on the Khas is a community effort, undertaken with members of other households of the same village. After the harvest, the production is divided among themselves. In some cases, if both Rajbonshi and Bodo has formed an institution, then such community cultivation is carried out in turns- the Bodos cultivate on the Khas land for one agricultural year and the next year the Rajbonshis carry out the cultivation and soon. Putting the Khas to such use every year checks that no encroachment takes place and at the same time gives economic gains to the community in the form of a harvest.

Mapping the Khas Land governed by the Informal Institutions

There are three distinct types of Khas land Institutional set-ups in BTAD. This section maps these Khas lands. The methodology used in order to carry out such an exercise was:

- Focus group discussions of the members of the VCDCs in order to collect enough data about the location of the villages where such institutions are functional. Once it is

agreed upon by the members of the VCDCs that such institutions are functional in definite locations, the next important information is to gather the terms of settlement followed by the institution, the inter-community relations in the villages in those locations, the composition of the institution and the communities who have formed the informal institution.

- Sketches prepared by the president of the VCDC where such institutions are functional. It is the most significant of spatial data collection process. These sketches are in fact the mental imageries of the president of the VCDC who is responsible for these villages. Since the president is the most superior body in the Village council development committee and is responsible for the functioning of an entire VCDC, therefore the mental map created by the president showing the Khas lands, their neighbouring villages and those villages where there occurs conflict was agreed to be highly reliable information.

- The third step of the method was to cross check the information furnished by the president, about the composition of the communities living in the villages and their location from the census of India, 2011 data. Once verified, I redrew their mental maps making sure to make the least possible distortions so that the maps are reproduced in the authentic form.

The following shows the different Khas land set-ups in BTAD:

a) Fallow Khas and Limited Insitutional set-up:

When the Khas land is fallow and there is no community claiming the land, there is no formation of any informal institution. In these cases, there is no conflict regarding the use of the fallow land between the communities who utilises the land as a CPR. Since there is no conflict regarding their use, so the need is not felt to create an institution to govern its use. The villages Borimakha, Dongpar, Agchia of Koklabari VCDC in the Baksa district are located near the Khas land but the Khas is uncontested and fallow. The communities inhabiting these villages are Bodos, Rajbonshis and Assamese. Since there is no fear of encroachment and no conflict, the khas land is used for grazing of animals and sometimes also to host community events. There is no institutional set-up to govern the use of this Khas land.

Lying in close vicinity to these villages, there are the villages of Dolbari and Koklabari inhabited by the Bodos and the Rajbonshis. The Khas land present near these villages, however, has been put to community use and hence these villages claim ownership over the Khas. The Bodos and the Rajbonshis of these villages has formed an informal institution in order to facilitate the use of the Khas land. There is however, no conflict between them and the institution is merely a coordinating body.
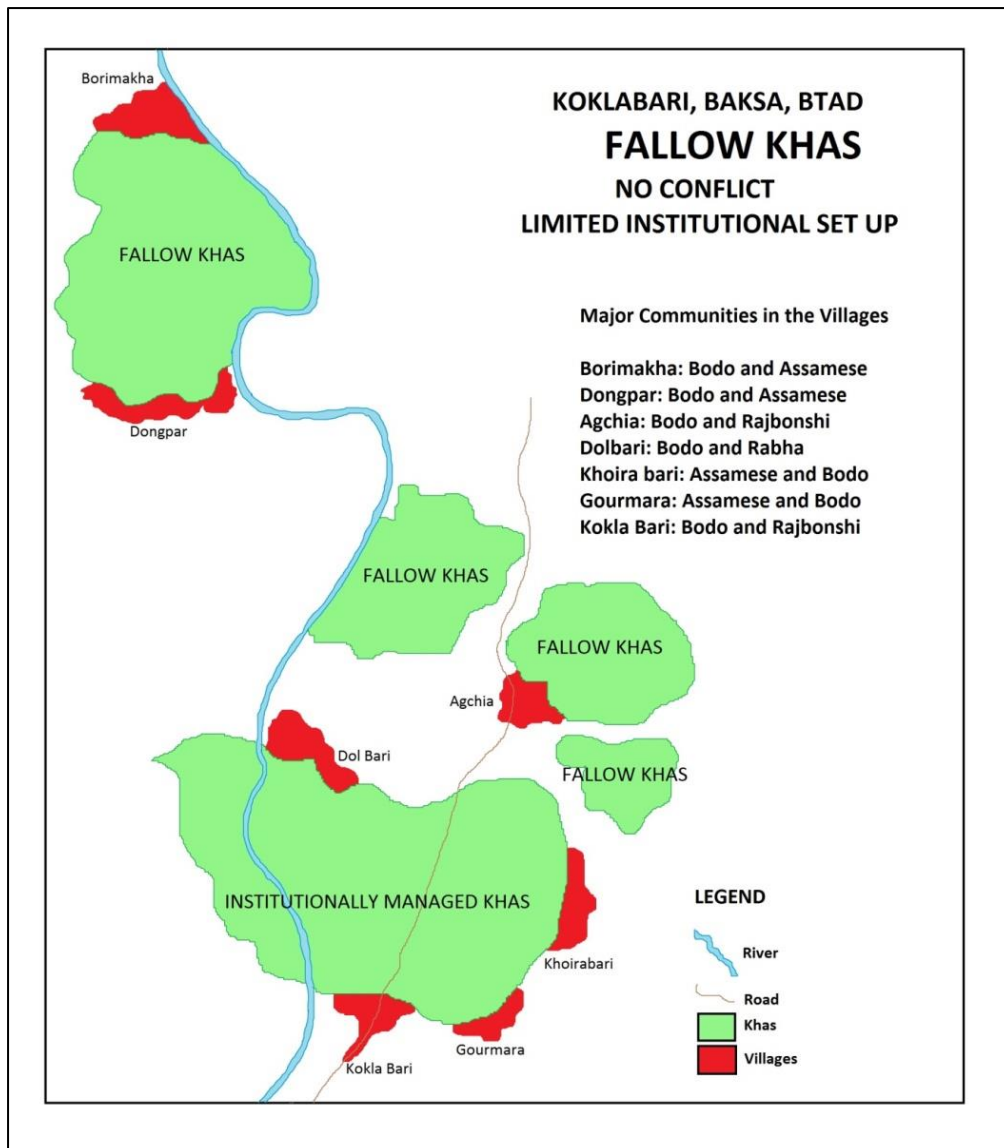
Fig 5.1: Fallow Khas

b) **Uncontested Khas ownership**:

In this type of ownership of the Khas, the communities living near the Khas land has no conflict between them; although all of them claim ownership over the Khas. In such a scenario, the entire village is represented by a committee having a sub-committee of each

community living in the village. The communities are represented by their respective committees and they make decisions regarding the use of the Khas land based on discussions. In such cases, both the villages who were making the claims or, alternatively, both the communities claiming ownership of the Khas gets to utilize the Khas to their benefits. The terms of use and the settlement is arrived upon via discussions conducted by the representative committees. In the Sidli VCDC of Chirang district, the two villages namely, Thungkhubari and Silghagri have a Khas land of 86 hectares. The two villages manage and use the Khas land for cultivation together alternatively. The benefits are shared by the entire village community. The communities engaged in this no conflict use of the Khas are the Bodos and the Rajbonshis.
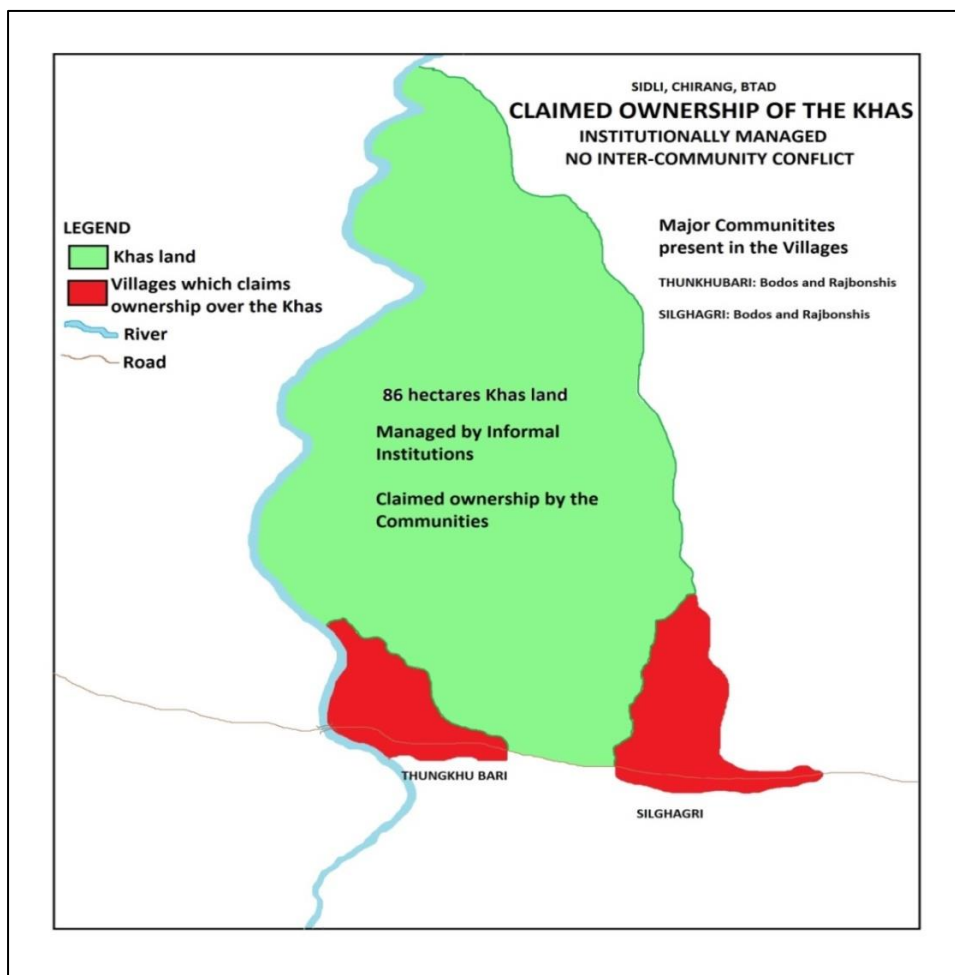
Fig 5.2: Claimed Ownership of the Khas

c) **Conflicting ownership and Competitive claims over the Khas:**

This situation is the most conflict ridden of all the claimed Khas ownership. In such a scenario, two or more communities in one or more villages claim ownership over the Khas

and are unable to arrive at a reconciliation. The Silakuti VCDC of Baksa shows that, in the upper reaches of the river, three villages- Dangor Makha, Sansari, and Bhawrabari has Khas land in their proximity and they have come up with an informal institutional set-up which allows all the three villages to utilise the Khas to their needs without conflict. These villages are populated by the Bodo tribes and there exists no conflict in the ownership of the Khas.

Although the three villages claim ownership over the Khas, the informal institutional setup governs its terms of use. These villages utilize the Khas land for carrying out community cultivation. However, in the lower reaches of the river, Badulipara and Saukuchi villages has a conflicted ownership over the Khas. The communities in disagreement are the Bodos and the Bengali Muslims who claims ownership over the same Khas land. The Bodos see this as an act of encroachment of the Bengali Muslims and the creation of the institution was to protect this fallow land. The Bodos claim ownership over the Khas so that it is not used for settlement by the Bengali Muslims. The settlement pattern of the villages also shows that they have almost enveloped the Khas in order to claim its ownership.
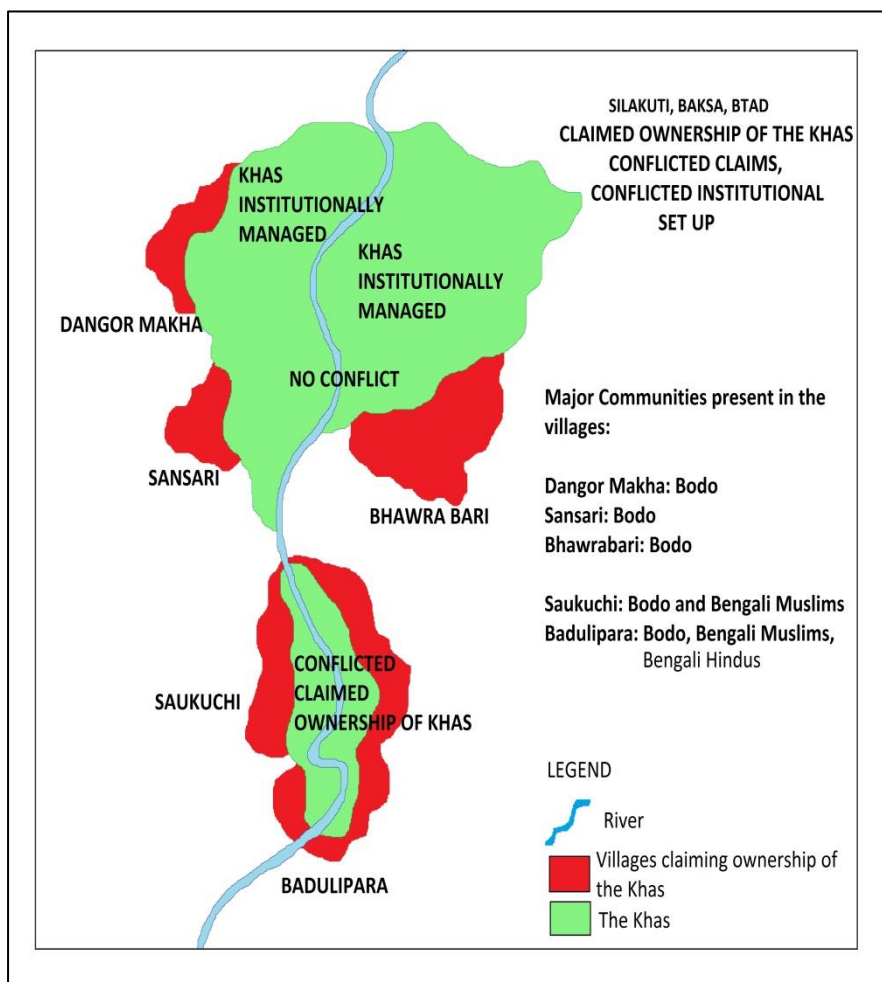
Fig 5.3: Conflicted Claimed Ownership of the Khas

In such a situation, there is no conclusive terms of agreement arrived at by the institution of the Bodos. The role of the informal institution in such a case is to ascertain that the Khas land remains fallow and is not encroached upon by the Bengali Muslims. The history of conflict between the Bodos and the Bengali Muslims play their part and the unrelenting position of both the communities reinforces the disturbing autochthon-outsider binary.

From the analysis carried out in this chapter, the following can be concluded:

a) The Bodos of Kokrajhar has a better land ownership as compared to the non-Bodos. But this scenario of the Bodos needs to be understood in light of the fact that 25% of the land owned by the Bodos is Khas lands which has no legal ownership. The claims over this Khas land, if unaccounted, than land ownership of the Bodos is not much better than the Non-Bodos.

b) Land ownership in BTAD is contested, community-determined as well as spatial. The claimed ownership over these fallow lands, although not legally secured still provides livelihood and shelter to the one's who has claimed the land. Except for in Kokrajhar, many communities claim ownership over the fallow Khas land along with the Bodos which has led to the development of informal land institutions in order to manage the fallow lands. The dependence of the people on land where land is understood both as a resource and as a territory comes out very clearly through the conflicted land ownership as witnessed in the field survey and brought out in this work.

c) The claims of ownership over the Khas apart from being the proof of a society seeped in land related conflicts also, most importantly, serves as a continuous reminder to the Bodos that they still have land alienation, land encroachment by the migrants as a contemporary issue in their homeland. This in turn, feeds into the identity construction of the indigene-immigrant binary, deepening the sense of loss of the Bodos and intensifying their stand that if they need to secure the tribal lands, a separate Bodo state is the only solution.

Such land ownership therefore, is not only a harbinger of a contested land ownership scenario but a proof of a society torn with strife and violent conflict, where continued stranded land relations becomes the strong context supporting the desirability of a movement for autonomy.

The creation of the BTAD, as an autonomous territory was sanctioned under the sixth schedule of the Indian constitution. This was a "solution" to all the problems of the land-

livelihood-identity question of BTAD. As this thesis is a study of this question, it will be incomplete if the role of the sixth schedule governance in BTAD is not analysed. The next chapter, therefore, analyses not only the role of the BTC (Bodoland Territorial Council to govern via the sixth schedule) but also how the people in BTAD has responded to the grant of the sixth schedule autonomy on BTAD, in order words, does the people of BTAD think that BTC is really a solution to the problems in BTAD.

Chapter 6
Bodo Autonomous Council:
Its role in addressing the Land-Livelihood-Identity Question

In the movement for self-determination, the Bodos in 1980 fervently painted the words "Autonomy or Death" upon their bodies as a form of protest. "We want Bodoland", "If Telangana why not Bodoland?", "Divide Assam 50-50" slogans also reverberated the protests of the Bodos; but the widely supported choice between autonomy and death brings out the complexity of a struggle of identity assertion turned into a demand for sovereignty.

The signing of the Bodo Accord in 2003 between the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) and the Central and State Governments conferred upon them the 'autonomous' territory of BTAD to be governed by an autonomous council under the 6th schedule of the Indian Constitution. This Accord led to the Creation of the Bodo Autonomous Council (BAC) to govern the newly created four districts of Bodo Territorial Area Districts (BTAD). Autonomous Councils are grass root level democratic structures of the Indian Federal system of governance which devolves administrative, economic, legislative as well as judicial powers; thereby bringing autonomy to the people themselves.

The signing of this accord was a culmination of the ceasefire agreement signed by the Bodo Liberation Tiger Force (BLTF) with the Assam Government in 2001 in order to reinstate peace in the region. The Accord was the handed down solution by the Governments (both Central and State) to address the Bodo protestors.[46] In the aftermath of the grant of autonomy to the Bodos and post Bodoland Accord, however; violence, conflicts and killings continue unabated in these 'autonomous' districts of Bodoland. This reality of BTAD points out that the objective with which the BAC was institutionalised has not been completely successful in addressing the problems of the region.

The creation of the BAC nevertheless brings a monumental change in the protest movements of the Bodos because grant of autonomy as a significant step in self-governance cannot be overlooked. How far the creation of a separate council has been successful can be better

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[46] The Bodo movement is not a homogenous opposition to the existing political structure of governance of the Bodo areas. The opposition comprises of non-violent peaceful protesting organisations as well as militant terror outfits who believe in employing violence to win sovereignty for the Bodos, beyond the purview of the constitutional norms. Addressing the demand for autonomy therefore needs to account for the demands for all the sections of the opposing parties.

informed by a critical appraisal of the role of the BAC in addressing the land, livelihood and identity concerns of the autochthon Bodos.

This chapter seeks to evaluate these concerns by analysing the role of the BAC within a particular framework with focus on:

I.   Critical appraisal of the attempt at building a homogenous geographical territory for the Bodos in a demographical non-contiguity
II.   Content analysis on the appropriateness of assigning a sixth schedule status to address the contentious identity issues of the Bodos.
III. Structural analysis of the Bodo Autonomous Council (BAC): its powers, exercise and limitations
IV.   Evaluating the performance of the BAC: Narratives of the people from the field survey

I.   Critical appraisal of the attempt at building a homogenous geographical territory for the Bodos in a demographical non-contiguity

Through the historically continuous struggle of the process of nation building, the Bodos have been successful in - creation of a singular identity of a community, gaining political representation and demarcating a territory to make a homeland. Such a demarcation of a territory to be governed by regional councils is made possible under the provisions of the sixth schedule wherein the councils are expected to be consistent with the already existing territory of the tribal units. "This is surely the first and arguably the only instance of the Indian Government assigning governmental boundaries according to immediate relevant social identities" (Stuligross, 1999, p. 504). The impact of such provisions, while benefitting the other autonomous councils of Assam and the north-eastern states; however is not entirely an uncontested outcome for BTAD. Many of the conflicts generated in the four districts of BTAD are also explained by the contestation against the creation of a geographical territory for the Bodos where they are not in a demographical majority.

It is a demographical fact that the Bodos comprises of only 35% of the population of the BTAD. In all, 2,570 villages situated in a vast and contiguous area extending from the western border of Kokrajhar right up to the eastern border of Mazbat constituency of Udalguri district were included in the Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC) area (Mahanta,

2013, p. 49). "Some areas under the BAC had more than 50 per cent non-Bodo population composed of Asamiya Hindus, Asamiya Muslims, Rabhas, Na-Asamiya Muslims (Bengali Muslims), Bengali Hindus, Santhals and Nepalis. In a large part the BAC area, the Bodos do not constitute a simple majority" (Hussain, 2000, p. 4520). The geographical contiguity of the BAC area is not accompanied by a demographical contiguity of the Bodo majority areas. "Hiteswar Saikia demarcated the boundary by excluding 515 villages having less than 2% Bodos. The government asserted that the Bodos constituted a majority in only 1,100 villages of the 2,750 notified villages" (Mahanta, 2013, p. 49). This makes Bodos in majority in only 40% of the villages in BTAD.

The following table shows the percentage composition of the Bodo tribe in each of the districts of BTAD along with the other Scheduled Tribes. The Bodos are as low as 25.36% in Kokrajhar, 26.28% in Udalguri, 30.35% in Baksa and highest in Udalguri with only 34.82%.

Table 6.1: Percentage composition of Bodos among other STs in BTAD

KOKRAJHAR			UDALGURI		
Tribal groups	% to district ST population	% to District Population	Tribal groups	% to district ST population	% to District Population
Bodo	80.757	25.367	Bodo	81.752	26.282
Rabha	7.986	2.509	Rabha	11.547	3.712
Garo	3.741	1.175	Garo	1.936	0.622
Sonowal Kachari	0.620	0.195	Hajong	0.355	0.114
Barmans	0.030	0.009	Deori	0.056	0.018
Miri	0.016	0.005	Barmans	0.033	0.011
Dimasa	0.003	0.001	Miri	0.025	0.008
Hajong	0.003	0.001	Lalung	0.006	0.002
Lalung	0.002	0.001	Khampti	0.006	0.002
Mech	0.001	0.000	Mech	0.005	0.002
Singhpho	0.001	0.000	Sonowal Kachari	0.003	0.001
Hojai	0.000	0.000	Dimasa	0.002	0.001
BAKSA			CHIRANG		
Bodo	87.127	30.355	Bodo	93.956	34.820
Rabha	6.045	2.106	Rabha	1.142	0.423
Hajong	0.311	0.108	Garo	0.248	0.092
Garo	0.039	0.014	Hajong	0.215	0.080
Deori	0.011	0.003	Dimasa	0.004	0.002
Barmans	0.008	0.003	Lalung	0.003	0.001
Miri	0.003	0.001	Miri	0.002	0.001

Dimasa	0.002	0.001	Barmans	0.001	0.000
Lalung	0.002	0.001	Deori	0.001	0.000
Mech	0.002	0.001	Mech	0.001	0.000
Sonowal Kachari	0.000	0.000			

Source: Calculated from the Census of India, 2011: Table A-11 on Individual Schedule Tribe Primary Census Abstract Final Data

In order to test the demographic composition of the BTAD, the following exercise has been undertaken. In order to obtain a spatial depiction of the demography I took into account:

a) the most prominent geographical features of BTAD- the rivers Manas and Beki running from the north to the south to join the Brahmaputra, the Manas National park on the north and the national highway 31 which runs almost along the centre of BTAD

b) the boundaries of the villages on the westernmost revenue circle of Kokrajhar and the boundaries of those villages along the easternmost revenue circle of Udalguri.

Keeping these in view, I constructed a transect cutting across BTAD from the eastern most boundary to the western most, in full coverage of the settled areas of the plains, the areas near the forests as well as near the major rivers of the districts in order to be able to cover maximum geographically diverse areas in a transect. I noted down the villages which falls directly along this transect and analysed their population compositions from the Census of India data, 2011. The primary objective behind this exercise is to be able to obtain a contiguous demographic and geographical picture of BTAD.

The number of villages which falls along this line is 134- 34 in Kokrajhar, 27 in Chirang, 32 in Baksa and 41 in Udalguri. These 134 random but geographically contiguous villages are taken to depict the demographic pattern of STs in BTAD.

6.1: Mapping the demographic pattern of STs in BTAD.
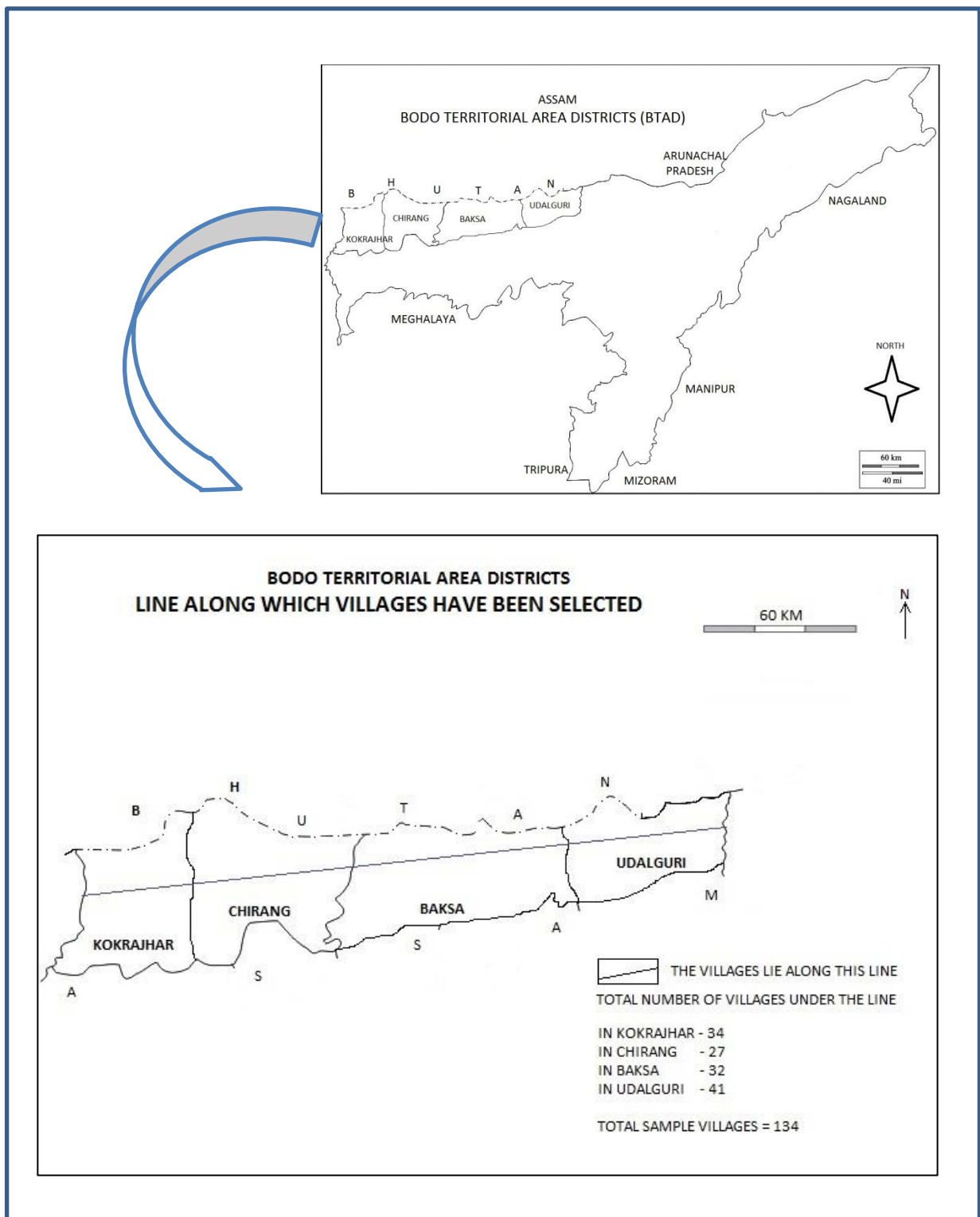
Note: These 134 villages, selected through this line are considered to be representative of the demography of the entire BTAD

The presence of ST population, in these villages has been represented through making range classes. It shows that:

Table 6.2: Presence of ST population in the selected contiguous villages

ST population classes	No. of villages in each class	Percentage composition	Presence of ST population	Percentage composition
0 _ 10	46	32.39	less than 10	32.39
10 _ 20	19	13.38	less than 20	45.77
20 _ 30	7	4.93	less than 30	50.70
30 _ 40	10	7.04	less than 40	57.74
40 _ 50	8	5.63	less than 50	63.38
50 _ 60	8	5.60	less than 60	68.98
60 _ 70	8	5.60	less than 70	74.58
70 _ 80	5	3.52	less than 80	78.10
80 _ 90	10	7.04	less than 90	85.14
90 _ 100	21	14.79	less than 100	99.93

Source: Tabulated for analysis from Census of India, 2011 data

The table shows that 63.38% of the villages in BTAD have less than 50% ST population. This composition of ST population becomes noteworthy because the other two autonomous councils of Assam- Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) and the Dima Hasao Autonomous Council (DHAC) constitute 55.7% and 77.4% of ST population respectively. These ACs have more than 50% of its population as tribals, thereby clearly representative of a tribal majority. The BAC, on the other hand, 50.7% of the villages have less than 30% of ST population. The following graph shows the composite location of the villages analysed.
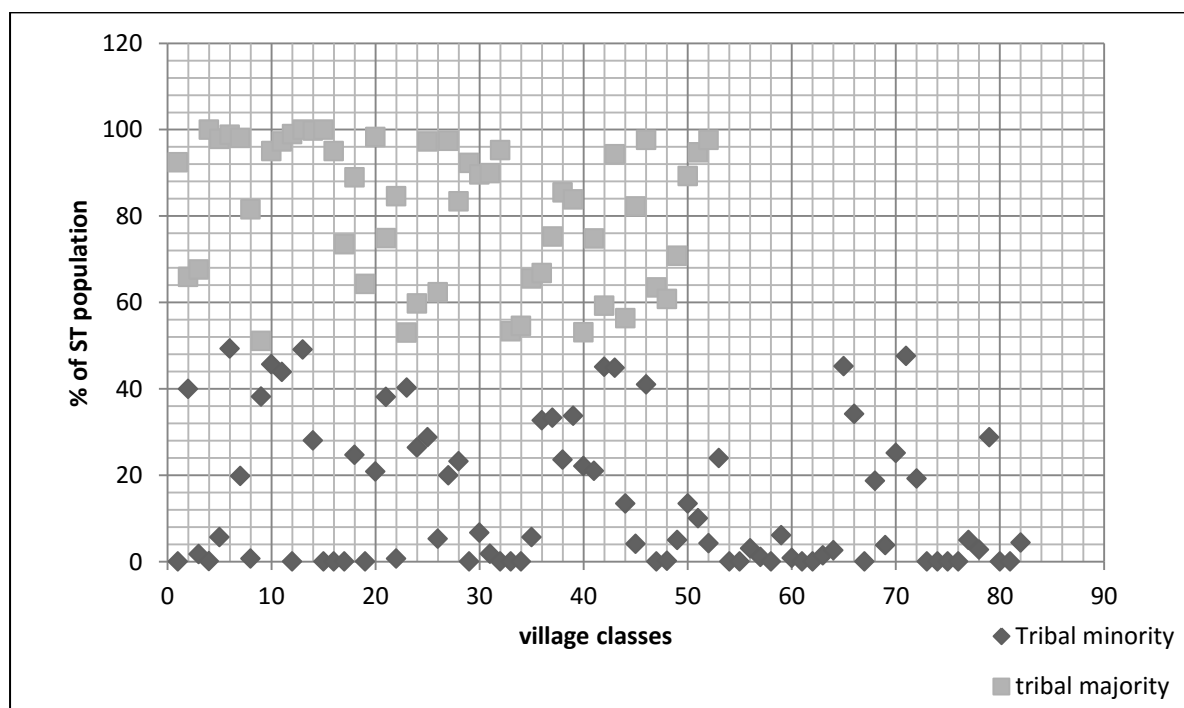
Note: One dot represents one village

The provision for creation of a separate territory for a tribal group under the sixth schedule requires that the territorial boundary is consistent with the demographical unit of the tribals. The creation of the BTAD lies in gross violation of the very essence behind the creation of the sixth schedule area.

Creating a geographically contiguous area for the Bodos in an otherwise demographical non-contiguity in BTAD is significant because the conflicts derive their context from the existing population pattern. Hussain (2000), while contemplating the possible reasons behind the conflicts in BTAD finds such an imbalance of the demography to be a very powerful reason. He states that:

> "…in order to create a majority for the Bodos, ethnic cleansing process started. And very intelligently, the largely oppressed and marginalised and very importantly ex-displaced groups were made the target of such cleansing process. It must however, be pointed out that the common Bodo masses are not generally enthusiastic in the cleansing process, therefore, the armed militants took the responsibility of cleansing by using their foreign made sophisticated armament with minimal manpower" (Hussain, 2000, p. 4521).

The Government was fully aware of the demographic situation of the BTAD- that the Bodos are a minority in the area created specifically for the Bodos. It is only logical therefore to state that the Government supported the creation of an autonomous area where one defined community would be politically dominant in spite of it being a minority. It is only obvious that the Non-Bodos resents such a clubbing into BAC area. Besides resentments towards the inclusion of their villages into the BAC area, the Non-Bodos, specifically the Bengali Muslims and the Adivasis feel vulnerable at being included in BTAD. The process of othering and its linked outcomes which are generated following such resentments has already been discussed in the previous chapters.

> *"Our village has no Bodo population. You can go to our neighbouring villages and even there you will find no Bodo people. If we are not Bodos and there are no Bodos here, then why are we in Bodoland? (note emphasis). It is a mistake. We should not have been included here."*

> *-Collective response of the Non-Bodos, Baksa district*

II.   Questioning the Assignment of a Sixth Schedule Status to the BTAD

The administrative and political logic that decreed the creation of an Autonomous Council was based on a flawed analysis that granting autonomy in the form of a 6th schedule Council

would address the complex land, livelihood and identity issues of the Bodos. Application of the 6th schedule in a violence torn area has only created a more hegemonic structure among the conflicting communities in BTAD. Barbora (2005) states,

> "The autonomous districts in Assam, formed under the auspices of the 6th schedule of the Indian constitution are a *showpiece for the State's capacity to address indigenous ethnic aspirations* in the Northeast…instead of leading to the reduction of violent conflict, it has only added to the volatile *ethnic polarisation* in the region." (Barbora, 2005, p. 1; emphasis mine).

The 6th schedule which governs the creation of the Autonomous District Councils (ADC) of the Indian constitution is an 'integrationist' approach of the Indian Federal System.[47] When the Indian Constitution was promulgated in 1950, the founding members of the constitution recognized the importance of providing explicit recognition to the ethnic communities of the north-east India. The fact that the ethnic tribal communities of the north-east were a separate entity in the Indian society is proven by the fact that "six regions comprising the bulk of the north-east Indian landmass were designated ADCs. These councils have less power than states but more than local governments; they are intended to incorporate their predominantly tribal populations, as communities, into the Indian State" (Stuligross, 1999, p. 497). The ADCs in the north-east India was recognised as per the recommendations of a carefully detailed study of the north-east tribal populations by the Gopinath Bordoloi sub-committee. The Bodo Autonomous Council however, was never in the recommended propositions of this committee.

The Assimilation vs. Integration Debate

Serious ambiguities surround the questions of what constitutes a tribe and their relation to the Indian State. Whereas the different characteristics separating the tribal population from the non-tribal population of the country are unanimously agreed upon, the scholars have never been able to arrive at a definition of what is "tribal" or a "tribe" conclusively let alone the definitive relationship of these tribal communities with the Indian State. "Most commonly the 'tribal' category has been conceived as an amalgamation of otherness: tribals do not practice Vedic Hinduism; they are not Muslim; they are not economically or ritually stratified and are not integrated into the 'modern' economy or civilization that surrounds them" (Stuligross, 1999, p. 499 and Beteille, 1997). Beteille's identifying markers though

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[47] The Autonomous District Councils are "the clearest recognition of the integration principle occurs at a third level of the Indian Federal system."(Stuligross, 1999, p. 497)

significant are not conclusive as all of these characteristics are contested. Beteille (1995) also points out that "tribe" is a colonial construct as they were added into a list in the nineteenth century which made people 'tribal'. It is not even clear in which sense the British used the word tribe. Xaxa (1999) points out these ambiguities when she writes:

> The term tribe was used in general parlance in more than one sense: in reference to a group of people claiming descent from a common ancestor, and in reference to a group living in a primitive or barbarous condition…in the Census reports of 1881, when the first 'proper' All-India census was undertaken, the term used was not 'tribe' but 'forest tribe', and that too as a sub-heading within the broader category of agricultural and pastoral castes. A somewhat more serious effort towards a distinction is reflected in the later censuses. Risley and Gait, in charge of the 1901 and 1911 censuses respectively, added 'so-called animists' in the table for caste and others. Marten followed the same pattern in the 1921 census, except that he changed the heading from 'animism' to 'tribal religion'. Tribes were defined as those that practised 'animism'. (Xaxa, 1999, p. 1519)

The approach of the Commission on Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes on arriving at a defining criterion for the tribes has also been a futile exercise because like the British colonial government before them, the Commission has only been able to come up with lists rather than definitions. Scheduled tribes of India therefore, as those communities whose names appear on the list, otherwise they are not. The theory behind the creation of such lists was that "while members of communities ought, as *individuals*, to present their claims to government, some communities ought to relate to government as *communities* – because their collective social contribution to the Indian polity is greater than the sum of its individual members" (Stuligross, 1999, p. 499, emphasis original).

The relationship between the 'tribal' and the Government was taken up as a subject of debate only towards the beginning the twentieth century.[48] It became a policy debate when contending propositions regarding the tribals' status were forwarded by notable scholars. "G. S Ghurye advocated assimilation of all individuals (tribals) into a common Indian identity; Verrier Elwin became the leading proponent of the 'tribal distinctiveness' approach and argued for political and social autonomy of tribal communities in an independent India" (Stuligross, 1999, p. 499). The creation of the 6th schedule and demarcating areas of the

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[48] Stuligross (1999) points out that the debate regarding this topic began only in the turn of the century and points out that "the most notable of the early batch were S. C. Roy and W. G. Archer. Roy's first study, The Mundas and Their Country (Calcutta: City Book Society, 1912), is an anthropology classic. Future studies included The Oraons of Chota Nagpur (Ranchi: Bar Library, 1915), The Birhors (Ranchi: Man in India, 1925), The Hill Bhuiyas of Orissa (Ranchi: Man in India, 1935), and The Kharias (Ranchi: Man in India, 1937). In addition, Roy founded India's most prominent anthropological journal, Man in India, in 1921."

Indian Territory into autonomous areas under this 6th schedule was the culmination of this debate.

Ghurye rejected the views that the tribals were distinct communities from the mainstream Indian society along with the prevalent notions that tribals initially populated those areas which were now areas of non-tribal dominance. His denial that the tribals were a separate community is obvious from the title of his book, *"The Aborigines – So-called – and their Future."* Deriving his arguments from the historical census uses of the word 'tribal', he argues that "so-called aboriginals who form the bulk of the scheduled tribes and who have been designated in the censuses as animists are best described as 'backward Hindus' " (Ghurye, 1963, p. 205). He cites examples of the Gond tribe of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra and argues that like the Gonds, many tribal groups in the country as neither aboriginals nor autochthons.[49] He traces through the linguistic and folklores of the tribals to establish the view that the tribal communities of the country "are not native to the area in which they currently live, or even to India, and hence are not autochthones" (Stuligross, 1999, p. 499). He uses the process of Sanskritization to defend his arguments that tribals are nothing but lower-caste Hindus and hence deserve no separate recognition.[50] "Tribals, then, are not necessarily more native than other Indian population, nor traditional settlers, nor are their cultural practices necessarily distinct from their Hindu brethren, nor do they necessarily wish for their communities to be distinct" (ibid). However, Ghurye did recognise the cultural distinctness of the tribal communities. For him, the tribals were more of an estranged group within the fold of the Hindus which needed assimilation. He argued that the cultural distinctiveness of the tribals should not be ignored as these tribals were the "marginal" people which needed to be assimilated into the "mainstream" Indian society. This would bring about a clearer sense of the national Indian identity as all the tribes at individual level would associate themselves with the oneness of the Indian national identity. "The genius of India's multi-cultural heritage was not to be denied, but Ghurye believed that inducing all cultures to come into closer contact with and learn from one another could best enhance this genius. A

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[49] Ghurye argues that the Gonds could only rise to prominence and thereby gained recognition only after a great Hindu king left that region. Therefore, the Gonds could not be considered to be the original community of Madhya Pradesh and thereby, not the autochthons.

[50] According to Ghurye, many mobile tribal groups adopt the Hindu way life when they adjust their practices with the cultural practises of the Hindu group that they wish to join. Such adoption of the Hindu culture occurs both at the individual as well as the community levels. This process of Sanskritization of the tribals into the caste Hindu fold shows that the tribals are lower caste Hindus seeking assimilation into the mainstream.

cultural merging would take the best from each and lead to a richer culture for all" (Stuligross, 1999, p. 500).

Elwin on the other hand was aware of the complexities that could be generated from a miscalculated assimilation of the simpler tribal communities into the caste hierarchal Hindu mainstream society. He rightly points out that assimilation of the tribals into the Hindu mainstream would more likely occur along the fault-lines of power relations in the society. Since the Hindu society was already segregated into multitudes of caste hierarchies, Elwin could very clearly foretell that assimilation of the tribals into such a society would not be in the better interest of the tribals. Therefore the "assimilation into one Indian national identity" that Ghurye so fervently advocated would never be realised on an equitable plane for the tribals. In-fact, ironically, Ghurye himself accepts the tribals to be 'lower-caste' Hindus. Given such a situation, the objective value and equity for the tribals would be lost in the process of assimilation with tribals' assigned position in the lowest rungs of the caste hierarchies of the Hindu mainstream society. Elwin dedicated his research to portray not only the differences between the tribal societies but also, in many instances, the 'superiority' of the tribal society to the mainstream Hindu society. Elwin (1943) argues that:

> The tribesmen do not cheat and exploit the poor and the weak. They are mostly ignorant of caste and race and prejudice. They do not prostitute their women or degrade them by foolish laws and customs. They do not form themselves into armies and destroy one another by foul chemical means. They do not tell pompous lies over the radio. Many of their darkest sins are simply the result of ignorance. A few of them are cruel and savage, but the majority are kind and loving, admirable in their home, steadfast in their tribal loyalties, manly, independent, honourable.[51]

The differences between the tribal and the non-tribal communities are obvious from what Elwin writes. However, Elwin also did not opine that the tribals should be kept aloof from the mainstream Indian society. He argues that keeping the tribals separate from the mainstream society would lead to their exclusion, a process which he terms "museumification of the tribals". It would only be detrimental to the tribal communities as complete exclusion would stifle further development of these communities. Elwin agreed that the tribals had to be brought at par with the mainstream but not via the method advocated by Ghurye. Instead of assimilation, what Elwin proposed was an integration of the tribal communities into the mainstream society so that integration occurs at the level of community rather than being

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[51] As quoted in Stuligross, 1999, p. 501 and also in Guha, R. (1999). Savaging the civilized. Oxford University Press, note 11.

entirely individual. "He sought to *integrate* tribes *as communities* into the Indian national state. Pride in community and trust in state would lead to the continued development of both" (Stuligoss, 1999, p. 501; emphasis original). Recognition of such a difference was significant because the tribals are inherently different from the castes of Hindu society. The caste society is anything but homogenous whereas "tribesmen, on the other hand, expect their society to be homogenous – or, at least, not necessarily heterogeneous" (Mandelbaum, 1970, p. 577). Other differences between the castes and tribes have been pointed out by Xaxa (1999):

> Tribes do not differentiate as sharply as caste groups do between the utilitarian and non-utilitarian function of religion. Caste groups tend to maintain different forms, practices and behaviour patterns for each of these two aspects of the religion. Tribes in contrast maintain similar forms, practices and behaviour patterns for both functions. Tribes and cates are also seen to be different in respect of the psychological disposition of member. Tribes are said to take direct, unalloyed satisfaction in the pleasures of the senses – in such areas as food, drink, sex, dance and song – whereas caste people maintain a certain ambivalence about such pleasures. (Xaxa, 1999, p. 1520).

The argument that the tribals were not autochthons of the places where they habitat as proposed by Ghurye is also rejected by Elwin. He considered the tribals to be the autochthons of the society where they lived. In his book, 'The Aboriginals' (1943), Elwin concludes that "the aboriginals are the real swadeshi products of India, in whose presence everyone is foreign. These are the ancient people with moral claims and rights thousands of years old. They were here first; they should come first in our regard" (Elwin, 1943, p. 32).

Creating a Sixth Schedule

The ADCs, designated under the provisions of the 6th schedule, are a dedicated application of V. Elwin's integrationist approach of the tribal communities. The governance of the tribal areas under the British crown was fragmented and indirect in nature. After a decision of transfer of power from the British colonial government to an Independent India was arrived at, the 'Cabinet Mission Plan' was dispatched in 1946 by the then British Prime minister, Clement Attlee to supervise the smooth transfer of power. This committee submitted that since the tribal areas were geographically excluded and politically under-governed, special provisions should be guaranteed for the tribal communities as well as the minorities.

Based on the report submitted by the Cabinet Mission Plan, the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel's Advisory Committee on the Fundamental Rights of Minorities, Governance of Tribal Areas were constituted. The sub-committees of A.V Thakkar and G.P Bardoloi were assigned the

task of evaluating the situation of the tribals of the country. The Bodoloi committee determined which of the tribal communities in the north-east India 'deserved' to be given autonomous status.

> The five-member Bardoloi committee undertook an extensive tour of northeast India, where they interviewed local leaders at all district headquarters except the Naga Hills (where they were prevented by insurgency) and the Garo Hills (where they were prevented by rains. They interviewed people at Shillong, the Khasi district headquarters, but the interviews did not include leaders of any of the twenty-five Khasi tribal states that comprised the district. These leaders were in the process of negotiating an independent accommodation with the British and did not wish to "compromise these negotiations" through consultations with anticipated representatives of a country they did not wish to join. (Stuligross, 1999, p. 502).

The proposal of the Bordoloi committee to incorporate certain areas of the north-east India under the 6th schedule ADCs was driven by twin comprehensive agendas:

a) The provision of partial autonomy to the tribals would help them integrate into the mainstream Indian society in the long run and in the short run provide them the much needed positive discrimination or affirmative action for equitable development. "Bordoloi sought to craft an institution that would ensure maintenance of the distinct social customs and tribal organisations of the different peoples as well as their religious beliefs and would also ameliorate the fear of tribal exploitation by the people of the plains on account of their superior organisation and experience of business" (ibid: 503).

b) The provision of autonomy would serve as an acceptable compromise to those separatist tribal fractions who were demanding complete independence from India as well as from Britain.

The committee took into account the geographical regions created by the British in the north-eastern territory of India. The criteria of classification of these regions were entirely based on geographical accessibility. The regions of the north-east were:

1) The Plains districts of Assam
2) The Excluded Areas
3) The Partially Excluded Areas
4) The Frontier Tracts

The Frontier tracts were the territories close to China, present day Arunachal Pradesh. The Excluded areas were demarcated from the Non-excluded areas based on an imaginary line

constructed on the north eastern territory. This was called the Line system. The British demarcated that the tribal areas up-to the Inner line were the Excluded areas; it followed the geographical contour of the foothills of the Himalayas.

After a careful assessment of the demands and political assessments of the region, the Bordoloi committee report proposed the establishment of ADCs in the former 'excluded areas' of Assam. All the ADCs proposed by the Bordoloi committee were the hill areas of the north-east India and was envisioned for the governance of the hill tribes. These areas, demarcated by the Bordoloi committee which needed to be governed by ADCs were:

1. United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District (present day Meghalaya: full statehood)
2. Garo Hill District (present day Meghalaya: full statehood)
3. Lushai Hills District (present-day Mizoram: full statehood)
4. Mikir Hills District (present day Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council: KAAC in Assam)
5. North Cachar Hills District (present day Dima Hasao District Autonomous Council: DHDAC in Assam)
6. The Naga Hills District (present day Nagaland: full statehood). This ADC was never accepted by the Naga leaders and was never implemented.

It is noteworthy, that in the proposal of the Committee report, there is no suggestion that the Bodos should also be granted autonomy by bringing them under the governance of ADCs. In-fact, the report of the committee mentions nothing about the 'plain tribes' of Assam. It can only be presumed as to why the committee which conducted such detailed analysis of the north-eastern tribals decided to ignore the plain tribes (Bodos included); there could be three reasons:

a) **Scenario A**: The committee presumed that the plain tribes of Assam had undergone significant transformation because of their continued association with the non-tribal plain inhabitants. In time, these plain tribes were way ahead than the hill tribes in the process of being integrated with the mainstream society. Providing autonomy would only constrain this process of integration by creating an illusionary boundary between the plain tribes and non-tribes. Since the ultimate motive was to integrate the 'excluded' tribals with the 'mainstream', the plain tribes simply did not fit the criteria.

This was perhaps accepted as a positive outcome since affirmative action for the plain tribes were not necessary.

b) **Scenario B**: The committee overlooked the possibility that although the plain tribes were more connected with the non-tribal population, there still existed reasons as to why a separate recognition should have been made in their case. It could be the failure of the committee to take note that the plain tribes were still vulnerable to be exploited by the advanced non-tribals and hence some degree of positive discrimination was mandatory for the plain tribes as well.

c) **Scenario C:** The committee understood the comparatively vulnerable position of the plain tribes. However, perhaps they realised that the demographic distribution of the plain tribes were not limited to any geographically contiguous area. They were spread in wider areas with a mix of non-tribal population within them. Since there was no geographical possibility of bringing them under one ADC without risking the inclusion of non-tribals in the same, the committee decided against it. It was perhaps realised that creating tribal councils to govern large tracts of minority tribal areas mixed with non-tribals would cause further hierarchies and resentments within the society. Their conditions were accepted to be better-off than the hill tribes and hence ADCs were not proposed for them.

This lack of closure as to why the plain tribes were not mentioned by the Bordoloi committee left behind enough open space for the following generations to cultivate doubt and assign failures to the committee report.

The creation of a 6th schedule as proposed by the Bordoloi committee was debated in the parliament on the 5th of September 1949 and fully ratified on the 7th of the same month. The proposed draft of the 6th schedule by the Bordoloi committee became the 6th schedule of the Indian constitution.

The ADC provided to the Bodos via the Bodo accord in 2003 was never planned nor was felt required in the Bordoloi committee findings. Proposal for a Bodo Autonomous Council never existed. Mahanta (2013) writes:

> The Sixth Schedule, however, was not meant to be a general device for all the tribals of the region; only those areas, in the old excluded and partially excluded parts came under its purview. Thus, the Bodos, the largest plains tribe group in Assam, have been excluded from the ambit of the Sixth Schedule. The Bordoloi subcommittee did not consider the status of the plains tribes such as the Bodos, Mishings, Rabhas, etc. In the Constituent Assembly, a

separate subcommittee in charge of minority rights was entrusted with the responsibility of looking into the issues of the plains tribes in which a prominent Bodo leader Rupnath Brahma was a member. (Mahanta, 2013, p. 49)

However, a section of writers believe that the Bordoloi committee failed to do justice to the plains tribals by treating them as an integral part of the Assamese thereby depriving them of special rights and privileges (Barpujari, 1998, pp. 93-94; Constituent Assembly Debates, VII: 121, 127, 156). The Bodo identity assertion is also associated with the failure of the 6th schedule to recognize them. Dash (1989) writes:

> The plains tribals are once again perhaps inadvertently, left out from the ambit of the sixth schedule. The sixth schedule was amended by the Lok Sabha on November 29, 1988 with regard to Mizoram and Tripura by granting greater autonomy to the governors of these states towards the aspirations of the tribals, but not with regard to Assam. "Constitutional discrimination", as alleged by the plains tribals of Assam, is still more evident in the fifths Schedule of the Constitution which sanctions state level committees for the economic development and welfare of the tribal people all over India to be constituted, except in the case of the plains tribals of Assam. This was mainly perhaps because of the presumption that the plains tribals would ultimately undergo assimilation with the larger community in Assam. This differentiation between the hill tribals and the plains tribals (Bodos) and the consequent special provisions extended to the hill tribals is at the root of ferment among the Bodos today. (Dash, 1989, p. 339).

But the logic and context through which the Bodos were granted the status of a sixth schedule area was not to integrate them into the mainstream Indian society nor was it driven by the ideology of protective discrimination to foster better development. Instead the goal which was aimed at while bringing the Bodos under the status of the 6th schedule was to bring about a temporary solution to the separatist demands. The 6th schedule was exploited to fit into its agenda the failures of the governments instead of making a genuine attempt at addressing the problems of the Bodos. The quality of the autonomy that was provided to the Bodos has been taken up next.

III.   Structural Analysis of the Bodo Autonomous Council (BAC): its powers, exercise and limitations

The sixth schedule, in its final form can be validly compared with a mini constitution for the tribal population. These twenty pages comprising twenty one articles became the bridge that connects the tribal population of the north-east to the Indian State. The significance of this schedule is indicated by the fact that, unlike the fifth schedule which governs only 30 to 35

percent of tribal population in the Central Indian Tribal belt, the 6th schedule brings under its governance nearly 80 percent of the tribal population of the north-east.

Powers and Provisions of the Bodo ADC

The ADCs are bestowed with a wide range of powers and functions ranging from executive, legislative and judicial. The administrative powers of the ADCs are enacted via the Governors. The Governor is the custodian of the governance of the ADCs. He has the ultimate power to govern the ADCs which covers legislative and administrative powers. The Governor is also empowered to bring about changes in the ADCs. He has the authority to:

a) create new autonomous districts
b) change the area of existing districts
c) redefine the boundaries of the existing ADCs
d) alter the names of the Autonomous councils

Legislative Provisions: The District Council is also allotted legislative powers. They include making laws on wide ranging issues which covers land, agriculture, primary health, health, establishment of village councils and town committees, appointment and succession of chiefs or headman, inheritance of property, marriage and divorce, money-lending, trading facilities carried out by non-tribals and more. Safeguards for the settlement rights, transfer and inheritance of property etc. of the non-tribals are incorporated in the para 3 of the 6th schedule. Any such law as may be made by the BTC in this regard will not, in particular:

a) Extinguish the rights and privileges enjoyed by any citizen of India in respect of his land at the commencement of BTC
b) Bar any citizen from acquiring land either by way of inheritance, allotment, settlement or by way of transfer if such citizens were eligible for bonafide acquisition of land within the BTC area.[52]

The District Council also has to power to approve and alter State and Centre laws before allowing it to be implemented in the 6th schedule areas. The Councils is checked by the Governor in its legislative functions. He has the power to alter the laws passed by the district councils if and when he should realize that the proposed law is in violation of the provisions of the 6th schedule.

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[52] The Sixth Schedule

Executive Provisions: The District Council has the power to manage and construct new primary schools, dispensaries, markets, cattle pounds, ferries, fishes, roads and waterways. Recognition of the medium of instruction in the primary schools also comes under the jurisdiction of the District Councils. Following the Bodo protest movement for recognition of Bodo language, the Council has established Bodo as the medium of instruction in the schools of BTAD.

Judicial Provisions: The District Council also has judicial powers as per which it has the authority to constitute Village and District Council Courts to preside over conflicts involving the customary laws of the tribal community. "But no case involving offences punishable by death or imprisonment for five or more years are taken up by these courts. The District Council Court and the Regional Council Court are courts of appeal for all subordinate courts. Only the High Court and the Supreme Court of India have jurisdiction over suits and cases decided by the Council Courts."[53]

Provision for Income and Revenue Sources

The District council has the power to **"**collect land revenues, levy and collect taxes on lands, holdings, shops, entry of goods into market and tolls etc within their respective jurisdictions. But the District Council has the concurrent power on the professions, trade, callings, employments, animals, vehicles and huts, tolls on passengers, and goods carried in ferries and maintenance of schools, dispensaries or roads. Under para 9 of the Sixth Schedule, the royalty on the licenses or leases for the extraction of minerals in the autonomous districts goes to the District Council. However, the tax on motor vehicles is collected by the State Government on behalf of the District Council. Other sources of income are grant-in-aid, loans and advances from the state government.**"[54]**

Table 6.3: Areas of Governance under BTC

Areas under the power and functions of the BTC		
1. Cottage Industry	14. Education	27. Tribal Research Institute
2. Animal Husbandry and Veterinary	15. Adult Education	28. Tribal Welfare
3. Sericulture	16. Primary Education	29. Markets and Fairs
4. Fisheries	17. Up to Higher	30. Lotteries, Theatres, Dramatic

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[53] Status of Governance in the Sixth schedule area accessed from http://socialissuesindia.wordpress.com
[54] ibid

	Secondary including Vocational Training	Performance and Cinemas
5. Handloom and Textile	18. College education (general)	31. Vital statistics including registration of births and deaths
6. Forests	19. Cultural Affairs	32. Food and Civil supplies
7. Agriculture	20. Health and Family welfare	33. Intoxicating Liquors, opium and derivatives etc.
8. Public Works Department	21. Public Health Engineering	34. Museums and Archaeology
9. Soil Conservation	22. Social Welfare	35. Urban development- town and country planning
10. Co-operation	23. Sports and Youth Welfare	36. Land, Land Revenue and Revenue
11. Irrigation	24. Weights and Measures	37. Public Relations
12. Flood control schemes for protection of villages (not of highly technical nature)	25. Library Services	38. Printing and Stationary
13. Tourism	26. Transport	39. Municipal Corporation, Improvement Trust, District Boards and other local self-government or village administration

Source: www.bodoland.gov.in

Limitations

The essence of a sixth schedule governance is to facilitate closer participation of the people in administrative and political governance, achieving rapid economic development of the area via direct transfer and utilisation of funds and enacting an integrated social development so that these "excluded" areas could become integrated to the mainstream Indian governing structure. In case of the BTC, safeguarding of the land of the tribals, more specifically of the Bodos has been a priority cause for its creation. Although the powers and functions allotted to the BTC impresses upon the people their capability to govern themselves, it however, fails to account for the bottlenecks in providing the same. Safeguarding land of the tribals which has been the burning issue in the conflicts of BTAD was assigned to the BTC under the department of "Land, Land Revenue and Revenue". However, there is hardly any work undertaken for the safeguarding of the land of the tribals under that department. Apart from it, there are also various short comings in the powers of the Council to implement proper inclusive development of BTAD.

Although the area in which the BTC has started working is immensely diverse and necessary, however, the BTC has not undertaken any work which attends to safeguarding the lands of the tribals in BTAD. Amongst the plethora of plans and programmes in which the council has

committed itself, protecting tribal land from encroachment or creating provisions for the protection of the Khas land is visibly non-existent.[55]

It needs to be noted that the areas of work which has been taken up under the BTC, is no different than the areas in which the state and central governments already works in the rest of the country. Being a sixth schedule area, with an autonomous government will hardly make an impact if the state government is also equally involved in carrying out the same development activities. The creation of the BTC was not to create a parallel government running similar activities as are already being run under the state government but rather to closely work for the safeguarding of the lands of the tribals and to bring about development in the tribal areas by keeping in focus the characteristics of a tribal area. However, the BTC has not met with it the sole agenda under which it was established but rather only created a parallel government with the Government of Assam. Existence of such parallel governments only means competition without the promise of any delivery of development.

As far as the working of the BTC is concerned, the primary focus of the BTC has been to bring economic development. All the plans and policies undertaken so far by the BTC have an economic agenda, apart from being cultural. However, the autonomous councils are simply not assigned the powers and provisions to endorse all round economic development of a region. Limitations on the BTC to function as an engine of economic growth are not only ensured by the parallel state government but also by the limitations of financial assets. Stuligross (1999) points out the following reasons as to why the ACs cannot bring about economic development in the regions governed under the ACs. He states that ADCs are weak agents of economic development because of the following reasons:

> They are ineffective at lobbying the state government and shaping the state development budget. ADCs have been unable to influence state budget processes indirectly through members of the state legislative assembly (MLAs) elected from constituencies in the ADC territory. ADCs themselves have relatively tiny development budgets. Within the context of their small budgets, ADCs face annual budget difficulties because the state government is almost always late in providing its required disbursements. ADCs have been effective at collecting taxes themselves. ADCs are ineffective agents of development because they do not deploy their meagre budget in ways that would promote a direct role in economic growth. (Stuligross, 1999, pp. 507–510)

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[55] A works currently being undertaken as well as the works carried out under the BTC has been included in the appendices.

As the BTC is not engaged in the management of land or protecting tribal lands, it can, therefore, be said that land is not the primary focus of the BTC. There is also ambiguity regarding as to how far the BTC is equipped to bring out development in BTAD. The workings of the Council are therefore accepted by the people of BTAD in different ways. The next section highlights the opinions of the people from different communities about the role of the BTC in fostering development in BTAD.

IV.   Evaluating the performance of the BTC: Narratives of the people from the field survey

The awareness of the people of Bodoland regarding the presence of the Bodo Territorial Council is impeccable. The people of BTAD are more than just aware of the workings of the Council; they are committed to their political proceedings. The high level of participation of the people in the VCDC meetings shows this accountability[56]. The following table shows a count of the frequency of attendance in the council meetings.

Table 6.4: Participation in the VCDC Meetings

Participation of the heads of the households surveyed in the VCDC meetings				
Frequency of the meetings attended	Regularly	Sometimes	No participation	Total samples
Number of people in each group	101	6	13	120
% in each group	84.17	5	10.83	100

Source: Calculated from the Field Survey Data

The workings of the Council have been a welcome change for the people of BTAD. Inefficiency of the Assam Government is accepted as a disturbing fact not only by the governed in BTAD but also by the people who are active in their governance. The creation of the BTC in its least of functions is expected to ensure the return of an accountable system of governance.

The narratives of the people regarding the function of the BTC are marked by regional variation. The same core –periphery relations exists in the narratives of the people; the people of the Kokrajhar district (core) have different opinions about the working of the Council whereas Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri (the periphery) has different narratives.

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[56] The Council meetings at the grass root level are conducted through the Village Council Development Committee (VCDC). The VCDC is an institutional body comparable to the Panchayat.

The creation and functioning of the BTC is unanimously recognised as a positive outcome for BTAD in the peripheral districts. All the VCDCs surveyed in these three districts reports progressive work being undertaken by the Council. There is no difference noted for Bodo dominated VCDCs in comparison to the Non-Bodo VCDCs. The different sectors where the Council is noted by the public to be working for are:

a) Construction of roads and culverts
b) Repairing of school infrastructure
c) Repairing of Public Health Centres
d) Proper implementation of the Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) of the Central Government.
e) Irrigation and Fishery development
f) Supplying sewing machines under handloom projects
g) Supplying of Spray machines and cycles to farmers
h) Supplying of mosquito nets

Developing infrastructure and creating accessibility via road connectivity is noted to be the major area of developmental activity carried out by the BTC. The Bodo area reports the carrying out of same development activities as the Non-Bodo areas. The people in these districts reports that although there is progress, it is slow and proper development in BTAD has still a long way to go. The people agree that whatever activities are being undertaken by the BTC, those activities are non-discriminative. The Bodos and the Non-Bodos narrates of gaining similarly from the working of the BTC.

The working of the Council, however, is strongly questioned and debated among the communities in the Kokrajhar district. It needs to be noted that community specific opinions regarding the functioning of the BTC is deeply marked in this district. The Bodo community is unanimously satisfied at the workings of the Council and they endorse that grant of autonomy has been a successful step towards bringing peace into their society.

> *"The Council is doing good work. They have constructed roads extensively, even in the most inaccessible areas of our Bodoland. Connecting the villages will bring more development. Our village got a new road made after the coming of the BTC."*
>
> *-Bodo man, Uttar Bashbari village, Kokrajhar*

> *"There has been a lot of development since the creation of the Council. They have made new roads, repaired the culverts and made new roads where there were none. They are repairing hospitals, making new schools for our children. The council is working."*
>
> *-Bodo man, Chakma village, Kokrajhar*

The BTC has however, failed to satisfy the Non-Bodo communities in BTAD. These communities feel vulnerable that a council with an over whelming Bodo majority would fail to do justice to the needs of the large sections of the Non-Bodo population living in the same region. Their primary concern is that, given a choice of creating opportunities for the Bodos and the Non-Bodos, the Council would always choose their own community. Partial representation and favoured policy outcomes could jeopardise the development of the Non-Bodos in BTAD.

> *"The Bodos don't have to worry about their development anymore. They have their council to take care of them. But what have we got? The council has not helped us in any particular way till now and we fear it will continue in the future too."*

> *-Adivasi man, Modati village, Kokrajhar*

> *"The Council is for the Bodos. They have helped the Bodos only. In fact I should say that they have over helped the Bodos. Not only has the council given the Bodos development, the Council has also given our share of development to them. We have nothing."*

> *-Bengali Muslim man, Anthai Bari, Kokrajhar*

The Non-Bodos apart from the Disliked Others also expresses similar concern over the workings of the Council. The council is accepted as a partial body, created by the struggle of the Bodos for themselves, constituting Bodos in majority and working for the development of the Bodos endlessly. The Non-Bodos feel that the Bodos have earned 'their' council and hence, the council would almost always favour their own community over the others.

> *"The Council exist to a large extend for the Bodos only. I am not saying that the Council should not focus on developing the Bodos. They should and they are already doing that. But I am also saying that in that process, we are getting neglected. If this continues, then we would be the sufferers in their land."*

> *-Nepali man, Belgaon, Kokrajhar*

> *"The Council is almost entirely of the Bodos. And so, the Bodos are benefitting from them. Look at the nearby Bodo village, where they were ten years ago and where they are now- they have developed so well. But look at our village. We are where we were ten years ago. We are the ones left behind. We have nothing."*

> *-Rajbonshi man, Joregaon village, Kokrajhar*

The BTC is a welcome change in governance by the Bodos but the Non-Bodos are troubled by such an implementation. Whereas the role of the Assam Government in neglecting the BTAD is unanimous for all the communities, the role of the BTC is seen to be no different than the Assam Government by the Non-Bodos. In fact, the Non-Bodos states that prior to the

grant of autonomy (2003), all the communities were neglected by the Assam Government. After the creation of the BTC, a section of their society has been favoured (the Bodos) whereas they (the Non-Bodos) are still in the same neglected position as they were prior to 2003. If only, they fear that the Bodo domination in the politics of the BTAD would mean more neglect and underdevelopment for them.

The narratives of the people of the BTAD, although has regional variations yet is unanimous in one stand: that there is no specific activity undertaken by the BTC in relation to access and use of land under the 'Land, Land Revenue, Revenue' department. There has been no specific policy or project to safeguard the land of the tribals in any of the districts of BTAD. The council has also not undertaken any measure to reclaim the encroached land of the tribals and neither is there any institutionalised effort to safeguard land of the tribals.

Although the ADCs have power to make laws for land development and land revenue, hardly any significant steps have been taken to initiate land reforms which hold the key to prosperity in tribal society (Dutta, 1999). Besides, Dutta and Bhuyan (2007) also argues that the absence of plain areas from where revenue can be raised since there was no tax on jhum land (shifting cultivation in the hill areas of North East India) in the hill areas, food scarcity caused by drought, irregular collection of land revenue due to ethnic conflicts and deplorable communication made the collection of revenue small and complicated in the ADCs areas of Assam state. However, the BTAD area is a jhum free area where sedentary agriculture forms the mainstay of the Bodo tribe; land distribution is seen to be even more dismal in these BTAD districts when compared with land ownership in the other two ADC governed areas of the state. The long history of incessant migration, the doling out of land for cultivation to the newly-brought in migrants and the huge acres of tribal land which were converted into plantations in BTAD could be the sole explanation as to why the creation of ADC is hardly able to bring any change in the land ownership of the tribals.

In its publication "Land Administration in Protected Belts and Blocks in Assam", the state government said that the total figure of land encroachment in all tribal belts and blocks was around 5.90 lakh bighas or approximately 4.53% of the total areas of protected blocks and belts (Dutta and Bhuyan, 2007). Under such circumstances, the "autonomy" that the ADCs enjoy is only questionable for "autonomy and autonomous institutions have not delivered justice" (Barbora, 2005, p. 17). The observation of Barbora (2005) is also indicative of the failure of the ADCs in the region-

"Autonomy- as framed within a statist discourse- does not address the issue of control of resources, finances and costs of running autonomous territories in a comprehensive manner. When they do, as in the Sixth Schedule, they seem ineffectual and laden with contradictions that make the principle of custodianship appear more like a managerial policy....If anything, it is seen as an impediment and a "Trojan Horse" that leads to further loss of lands of indigenous people. The political processes that oil the workings of such autonomous arrangements (as in Karbi Anglong) lead to an overarching reliance on institutions that need not have a democratic ethos....Where these autonomy arrangements are sought to be bestowed as a "peace measure", as in Boroland, they have only worsened ethnic and political relations between Boros and others who share the same space" (Barbora, 2005, p. 17).

Such a scenario, where the BTC has not been able to undertake any activity to protect the tribal lands and as can be understood via the narratives of the Bodos and Non-Bodos has only worsened the inter-community relations, the very provision of creating an autonomous area for a particular tribal group where their majority is contested not only reinforces the 'indigene-outsider' binary for the tribals (the argument that "the migrants have made us a minority in our own land") but also leads the Non-Bodos to question the intention of creating such an autonomous exclusive territory for a minority of their society.

The role of the ADC in safeguarding lands of the tribals and forging a peaceful situation in BTAD is a failure. In Kokrajhar, the Council has attracted visible grievances from the Non-Bodo communities. The Council is not the answer to the economic underdevelopment of BTAD and neither has the violence in BTAD come to an end after the creation of the BTC. However, the Council functions as a close social and economic ally to the population. The BTC has brought governance to the community level in BTAD. As a social and economic information facilitator, the BTC has a success story to tell but as far as bringing an end to the Bodo movement and addressal of the violence in BTAD is concerned, the BTC has still a long way to go.

This work has shown that the ethnic identity movement of the Bodos is a method resorted to in order to protect their access and ownership of land and thereby their livelihood. The Bodo identity was never a strong identity until the British colonial government flooded the otherwise sparsely populated plains of Assam with peasants and labourers from East Bengal and Central India. This process led to loss of tribal lands, created colonial institutions almost overnight which stripped the tribals of their ways of life by engulfing them into a foreign and modern economic structure which was not only a burden but sometimes also incomprehensible. Large scale doling out of tribal lands for creating a plantation economy and settling of peasant cultivators to feed the hunger of revenue generation made the Bodos realise that the lands and forests which they had understood to belong to them was no more an existential reality. Land therefore transformed into a resource which had otherwise been an abundant natural blessing. Continued in-migration complemented by continued loss of land to the migrants made the Bodos realise that demanding protection was not the only avenue to secure this precious land resource. The Bodos, forced to fight for a security of their livelihood looked towards history to discover, imagine and construct their glorious history. They recreated their language, revived their dormant rich heritage in order to assert that they are a distinct ethnic group, the oldest in Assam and hence they deserved to be recognized. The base of this identity construction was loss of land and a threat to the security of their livelihood. This thesis has traced down this historical process of land alienation, discovery and construction of their identity.

In addition to it, it would be worthwhile to mention that attempting this work has been an adventure because this work creates an entirely different structure to contain the land-livelihood and identity question of the BTAD. The historians have dealt with the context of the movement in much appreciable detail about how the Bodos were pushed into such a low that even the slight form of resistance should be lauded with appreciation. The political scientists have equally detailed how the Bodo movement gained in its importance and the parallel actions of the governments (both Centre and State) in contributing to the development of the Bodo identity movement. This work uses these approaches as the context to understand the Bodo identity because they constitute very important parts of the Bodo identity but not the whole. Through this work, an attempt has been made to create a holistic

approach to understand this issue in its entirety- its history, integrated politics but also its embeddedness in understanding land as a resource as well as being affiliated to land as a territory. The work, through its various chapters has shown the following:

Chapter 3- "The history of Land Alienation and Building up of Bodo Identity" has traced down how the Bodoland movement has built itself from different historical events, most significantly, land alienation, in-migration and neglect of the tribal population by the Assamese middle class dominated government. This chapter shows that the history of the Bodos is dotted with continuous attempts at assigning the tribals a separate territory- an aspect which emboldened their consciousness to demand autonomy via asserting their identity.

Chapter 4 is a continuation of the third chapter but in its contemporary scenario- "The Bodo Identity Question". This chapter is based on the ethnographic survey which targeted the understanding of this very land-livelihood and identity question of BTAD. The chapter brings out the various identity constructs of the Bodos not only from the way the Bodos understand themselves but also by the way they are understood. The Bodo identity is a complex multifaceted representation of their history, ethnicity and contemporary politics pivoting around land. The Bodo identity is embedded in its natural environment which feeds their realisation of land as a resource and as a territory. The Bodo identity assertion has been influenced by the disembeddedness experienced from this natural rural environment. This is coupled by their understanding that they have been made a minority in their very homeland. The Bodo identity can be argued to be a metamorphosed identity as the contemporary Bodo identity has developed in stages, constructing a new identity for themselves in each of these stages. The Bodo identity is a shifting identity. It is driven by the notion that they can only achieve an inclusive development if they have a separate state to call their homeland; salvation of the Bodos lies in achieving a separate homeland.

The Bodo identity differentiates between their fellow communities by constructing two 'Others'- a section of whom are considered as foreigner encroaching upon their land and hence the biggest threat. The Bodos have constructed two 'Others' in BTAD: The Outsider Others and The Complementary Others. The violence is always targeted at the Outsider Others whereas the Complementary Other, having several tribal communities which were once under the umbrella of the Bodo-Kachari group is not considered as a threat.

The Bodo identity is on a path of continuous construction where the present events remakes the past identities- sometimes more vicious and violent and sometimes more cooperative. The militant Bodo identity is perceived to be the outcome of incessant negligence and lack of action by the Government by the Bodo community. The Bodo masses do not support the violent Bodo militant section, but nevertheless they perceive the violent conflicts as an obvious outcome of the continued atrocities meted out the tribal people.

Chapter 5 analyses the Land Question in BTAD. The BTAD society can be analysed via a 'Core-Periphery' model where the Bodos of Kokrajhar, forming the core has entirely different land ownership structure in comparison to the Non-Bodos. The Bodos of Kokrajhar has a better land ownership as compared to the non-Bodos. But this scenario of the Bodos needs to be understood in light of the fact that 25% of the land owned by the Bodos is Khas lands which has no legal ownership. The claims over this Khas land, if unaccounted, than land ownership of the Bodos is not much better than the Non-Bodos. In the core, claims over the fallow khas land is limited to only the Bodos as the other communities have only miyadipatta land.

In the periphery, formed from the three districts of Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri, ownership is claimed over the fallow land by many communities, significantly the migrant communities. Land ownership in the periphery is contested, community-determined as well as spatial. Such land ownership therefore, has led to the creation of various informal land institutions by the Bodos, sometimes in collaboration with the Rajbonshis in order to manage and 'protect' the fallow land.

The claims of ownership over the Khas apart from being the proof of a society seeped in land related conflicts also, most importantly, serves as a continuous reminder to the Bodos that they still have land alienation, land encroachment by the migrants as a contemporary issue in their homeland. This in turn, feeds into the identity construction of the indigene-immigrant binary, deepening the sense of loss of the Bodos and intensifying their stand on a separate homeland to protect their lands. The dependence of the people on land where land is understood both as a resource and as a territory comes out very clearly through the analysis of the conflicted land ownership as witnessed in the field survey and brought out in this work.

Chapter 6 is based both on content analysis as well as on the field survey. This chapter on-"Bodo Autonomous Council: Its role in addressing the Land-Livelihood-Identity Question"

makes a critical analysis of the role played by the Bodo Autonomous Council in safeguarding the land of the Bodos. Further, this chapter analyses whether the creation of the BTC as a solution to the Bodo movement has been a successful act. The BTC has not been a success story in addressing the problems of the 'land-livelihood-identity' issues of the region, the continued violent conflicts post Bodoland accord is a reminder of that. The field study also shows that BTAD has a minor Bodo population in comparison to the Non-Bodos thereby making BTAD a geographically contiguous but demographically non-contiguous solution which has only played a negative role in the society and led to the worsening of the inter-community relations in Kokrajhar. The Bodos resent this stand on the part of the Non-Bodos by reconstructing the 'other' identity.

The demand for self-determination by the Bodos although intended to be an answered through the grant of a sixth schedule status, the Land-livelihood-identity question of BTAD however has not been answered. The Bodo demand for autonomy has been made peace with by the Bodo leaders who once led the mass with the fever of gaining "autonomy or death". Had the Bodo movement only desired autonomy, then there would not have been the bloodbaths strewn across the post-Bodoland accord years. BTAD is a beautiful scenery to the eye when one sees the hills, cultivated fields and fresh streams and rivers; little would one notice the rise of the graveyards or the increased number of loved ones set on the pyre or the dirty refugee camps that 'shelter and protect' the people from themselves.

As this work has shown, the land-livelihood and identity question is the defining element of the BTAD itself and hence, it is the beginning of a new stage of the Bodo identity. Identity of BTAD is an amoebic identity which changes its form as per the demands and needs of the context- sometimes being only to be recognised as a distinct ethnic group, sometimes as to be recognised as an exploited autochthon group in need of protection, sometimes an assertive identity demanding their share in the society and sometimes a dominating frustrated identity with a will to kill. Therefore, the grant of a sixth schedule status is just another stage for enacting the Bodo identity.

In this autonomy period, there are three identities in BTAD which has its own history-individualised community struggles but integrated into the same land-livelihood-identity question of the region. As a next step to this work, it would be an interesting research to understand these three distinct communities in action- the Bodos, The Adivasis and the Bengali Muslims not only in BTAD alone but also in its contiguous districts. Owing to a

limited time frame and scope, this work has been limited to the BTAD alone and focussed on the identity of the Bodo community but this complex issue would perhaps be better understood through a comparative analysis of the identities of these three different communities- each addressing the same question but via different structural realities.

It would perhaps be interesting to end with this note. The importance of land as a resource and as a territory has already been sanctioned in the naming of the region. The Bodo autonomous council, unlike all the other councils of the North-eastern states has been specially named as "Bodo *Territorial Area* Districts" instead of being named only autonomous area like the rest. The people of BTAD however, have never once referred to their place as BTAD throughout the field survey- all communities, Bodos or Non-Bodos refer to their place as Bodo*land.* This is indicative enough that the identity issue of the Bodos is one embedded in land and a possibility that there might yet be a Bodoland state.

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Appendix 1

Table: Role of land as conceptualised by Bodos

Samples response in assigning ranks	Role of land in your life				
	Determines your occupation	Source of earning credit	Integral part of Bodo politics	Defines traditions	Only for construction of house
sample 1	1	4	2	3	5
sample 2	3	1	2	4	5
sample 3	4	3	1	2	5
sample 4	1	2	3	4	5
sample 5	1	2	4	5	3
sample 6	2	5	1	3	4
sample 7	1	3	2	4	5
sample 8	3	4	1	2	5
sample 9	1	3	2	4	5
sample 10	2	5	1	3	4
sample 11	2	5	3	4	1
sample 12	1	5	2	4	3
sample 13	3	4	1	2	5
sample 14	1	5	3	2	4
sample 15	1	5	2	4	3
sample 16	2	5	1	3	4
sample 17	2	4	1	5	3
sample 18	1	4	3	5	2
sample 19	1	2	3	4	5
sample 20	1	3	2	4	5
sample 21	1	2	3	5	4
sample 22	1	4	2	3	5
sample 23	2	5	1	3	4
sample 24	1	4	2	3	5
sample 25	3	5	2	1	4
sample 26	3	4	1	2	5
sample 27	1	2	4	5	3
sample 28	3	5	2	1	4
sample 29	2	5	1	4	3
sample 30	1	3	2	4	5
sample 31	1	4	2	3	5
sample 32	2	5	1	3	4
sample 33	1	4	2	3	5
sample 34	4	3	1	2	5
sample 35	2	5	1	3	4
sample 36	1	2	3	4	5
sample 37	2	5	1	3	4
sample 38	1	4	2	3	5

sample 39	4	3	1	2	5
sample 40	1	4	2	3	5
sample 41	2	5	1	3	4
sample 42	1	3	2	5	4
sample 43	2	5	4	1	3
sample 44	2	5	1	3	4
sample 45	2	5	1	3	4
sample 46	2	3	1	4	5
sample 47	1	4	2	3	5
sample 48	2	5	1	3	4
sample 49	4	3	1	2	5
sample 50	2	5	1	3	4
sample 51	2	5	1	3	4
sample 52	4	3	1	2	5
sample 53	2	5	1	3	4
sample 54	1	4	2	3	5
sample 55	2	5	1	3	4
sample 56	2	3	1	4	4
sample 57	2	5	4	1	3
sample 58	1	4	2	3	5
sample 59	2	5	1	3	4
sample 60	2	5	4	1	3
sample 61	1	4	2	3	5
sample 62	2	5	1	3	4
sample 63	2	5	1	3	4

Appendix 2: Definitions and Concepts Used:

The definition of land holdings has been used as per the definitions standardized by the NSSO 70th Round (January-December, 2013) on "Key Indicators of Land and Livestock holdings in India" with a little modification.

Household Operational Holding: It constitutes land which has been used for agricultural production and was operated by member(s) of the household alone or with the employed assistance of others, without regard to title, size or location. When a household does not carry out any agricultural activities in any of its owned lands, then that household is considered to have no operational holding.

Homestead Land: This is the land where the house or the dwelling unit of the household is located. A household growing vegetable in kitchen garden, flowers and trees in the courtyard, raising livestock or carrying out pisciculture within the proximity of the household dwelling has been included in the homestead land.

Lease of Land: The land given to others on rent or on any other conditions of terms of use for a particular time period has been considered to be under lease of land. It includes leased-in and leased-out land.

Otherwise Posessed land: Land owned by a household without the legal title of ownership or occupancy right. NSS considers encroachment of private land by the household to be Otherwise Possessed land. However, in BTAD, Government land (Reserved land) and land without individual ownership or land meant to be used by all (Khas land) has been widely encroached upon. I have included claimed ownership of such land to be under this category.

Land Owned: A combination of Operational holdings, Leased-in land, Homestead land and Otherwise Possessed land is the land owned by a household after subtracting the leased-out land.

Size of Holdings: The NSS' classification of land classes from landless to large holdings in hectares has been followed. Although the local unit of land measurement in the BTAD is *bigha* and *lusa*, it has been converted into Hectares. 1 hectare = 6.2 Bigha. The following classes of land holding have been used:

Holding Class	Landholdings (in hectares)
Landless	> 0.002
Marginal	0.002-1.000
Small	1.000-2.000
Semi-Medium	2.000-4.000
Medium	4.000-10.000
Large	< 10.000

Source: NSSO 70th round, 2013

Appendix 3: Data on land

Table 1: Operational Holding

B_1	B_2	B_3	NB_1	NB_2	NB_3
4.0	0.8	3.2	0.9	0.0	2.0
0.8	1.6	0.8	1.7	0.8	0.3
4.0	0.9	0.8	1.3	0.8	0.0
1.6	1.3	0.5	1.3	0.6	0.0
1.6	0.9	0.8	0.6	0.0	0.0
1.1	0.4	0.6	1.6	0.6	0.0
0.9	0.9	3.2	0.4	0.1	0.0
2.4	0.3	2.4	0.4	0.1	1.3
1.3	1.3	3.5	0.4	0.0	2.4
1.6	9.6	3.5	1.5	0.0	0.8
0.8	2.0	1.2	1.4	0.0	2.6
1.4	1.4	0.8	0.5	2.5	2.5
0.8	0.3	0.0	0.9	0.0	0.1
0.9	0.3	0.5	0.3	1.1	0.9
1.6	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	1.9
0.3	0.0	0.4	0.2	0.1	1.6
0.2	0.5	1.6	0.6	0.4	0.9
0.4	1.3	1.1	0.6	0.1	0.8
1.6	0.3	2.4	0.4	0.2	0.5
1.4	0.5	2.9	1.1	0.0	0.0

Table 2: Land Owned

B_1	B_2	B_3	NB_1	NB_2	NB_3
7.6	0.2	0.9	1.5	0.64	3.2
1.9	1.76	1.1	0.7	0.4	0.35
6	1.8	1.3	1.95	0.05	0.3
2.3	1.4	1	2.7	0.8	0.003
2.8	1.3	1.1	0.65	0.3	0.4
3.2	0.7	0.7	1.65	0.9	0.8
1.6	2.7	5.1	0.45	0.15	0.003
2.7	0.9	3.2	1.55	0.2	1.9
1.4	2.7	4.1	0.45	0.1	0.3
2.2	1.2	5.5	2.35	0.1	0.8
1.6	4.5	2.45	1.5	0.3	3.1
4.2	2.2	1.1	0.55	2.7	3
0.9	0.4	0.3	1	0.05	0.6
1	0.35	0.8	0.75	1.4	1.2
2.7	0	0.4	0.55	0.2	2.2
1.1	0	0.7	0.25	0.2	1.9
1.4	0.85	2	0.9	0.5	1.2
1.2	1.6	1.4	1.05	0.15	0.6
1.9	0.4	2.8	1.75	0.4	0.8
2.1	0.6	3.4	1.8	0.4	0.2

Table 3: Homestead Land

B_1	B_2	B_3	NB_1	NB_2	NB_3
2.4	0.2	0.8	0.6	0.64	1.2
0.6	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.05
0.4	0.1	0.5	0.05	0.05	0.3
0.3	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.2	0.003
0.4	0.4	0.3	0.05	0.3	0.4
0.1	0.3	0.1	0.05	0.3	0.8
0.4	0.3	1.9	0.05	0.05	0.003
0.3	0.3	0.8	0.05	0.1	0.6
0.1	0.1	0.6	0.05	0.1	0.3
0.3	1.2	0.8	0.05	0.1	0.8
0.2	0.5	0.05	0.1	0.3	0.5
0.3	0.2	0.3	0.05	0.2	0.5
0.1	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.05	0.5
0.1	0.05	0.3	0.05	0.3	0.3
0.6	N.A	0.4	0.05	0.1	0.3
0.8	N.A	0.3	0.05	0.1	0.3
0.1	0.05	0.4	0.3	0.1	0.3
0.4	0.3	0.3	0.05	0.05	0.6
0.3	0.1	0.4	0.05	0.2	0.3
0.3	0.1	0.5	0.1	0.4	0.2

Table 4: Otherwise Possessed Land

B_1	B_2	B_3	NB_1	NB_2	NB_3
0	0	0.1	0	0	0
0.5	0.4	0	0	0	0
1.6	0	0	0	0	0
0.4	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	0	0	0	0
0.3	0.6	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0
1.6	0	0	0	0	0
0.3	0	0	0	0	0
0.3	0	0	0	0	0
2.5	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0
1.3	N.A	0	0	0	0
1.1	N.A	0	0	0	0
1.1	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0	0	0
0.4	0	0	0	0	0

Table 5: Loss of Land

NO.	VILLAGE	LOSS OF LAND				
		Sold land?	Due to mortgage payment failure?	Due to flood?	Due to Govt. Projects?	Other?
1	Uttar Bashbari	No	No	Yes. In other village. Had to migrate and settle here after losing all my land to the flood.	No	No
2	Uttar Bashbari	No	No. Currently mortgaged.	No	No	No
3	Uttar Bashbari	No	No	Yes. In other village. Had to migrate and settle here after losing all my land to the flood.	No	No
4	Uttar Bashbari	No	No	No	No	No
5	Uttar Bashbari	No	No. Currently mortgaged.	No	No	No
6	Uttar Bashbari	No	No. Currently mortgaged.	No	No	No
7	Uttar Bashbari	No	No	No	No	No
8	Uttar Bashbari	No	No. Currently mortgaged.	No	No	No
9	Uttar Bashbari	No	No. Currently mortgaged.	No	No	No
10	Uttar Bashbari	Yes. Economic.	No	No	No	No
11	Uttar Bashbari	No	No	No	No	No
12	Uttar Bashbari	No	No	No	No	No
13	Uttar Bashbari	No	No	No	No	No
14	Uttar Bashbari	No	No	No	No	No
15	Uttar Bashbari	No	No	No	No	Yes. Conflict 1996
16	Uttar Bashbari	No	No	No	No	No
17	Uttar Bashbari	Yes. Economic.	No	Yes. Champa river erosion.	No	No
18	Uttar Bashbari	No	No	Yes. In other village. Had to migrate and settle here after losing all my land to the flood.	No	No
19	Uttar Bashbari	No	No	Yes. Champa river erosion.	No	No
20	Uttar Bashbari	No	No	Yes. Champa river erosion.	No	No

NO.	VILLAGE	LOSS OF LAND				
		Sold land?	Due to mortgage payment failure?	Due to flood?	Due to Govt. Projects?	Other?
21	Chakma	No	No	Yes. River erosion.	Yes	No
22	Chakma	No	No	No	No	No
23	Chakma	No	Yes. Also currently mortgaged.	No	No	No
24	Chakma	No	No	No	No	No
25	Chakma	No	No	No	No	No
26	Chakma	No	No	No	No	No
27	Chakma	No	No	No	No	No
28	Chakma	No	No	No	No	No
29	Chakma	No	No	No	No	No
30	Chakma	No	No	No	No	No
31	Chakma	No	No	No	No	No
32	Chakma	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
33	Chakma	No	No	No	No	No
34	Chakma	No	No	No	No	No
35	Chakma	No	No	No	No	No
36	Chakma	No	Yes	No	No	No
37	Chakma	No	No	No	No	No
38	Chakma	No	No	No	No	No
39	Chakma	No	No	No	No	No
40	Chakma	No	No	No	No	No
NO.	VILLAGE	LOSS OF LAND				
		Sold land?	Due to mortgage payment failure?	Due to flood?	Due to Govt. Projects?	Other?
41	Bhumka No. 1	No	No	No	No	No
42	Bhumka No. 1	No	No	No	No	No
43	Bhumka No. 1	No	No	No	No	No

NO.	VILLAGE	Sold land?	Due to mortgage payment failure?	Due to flood?	Due to Govt. Projects?	Other?
44	Bhumka No. 1	No	No	No	No	No
45	Bhumka No. 1	No	No	No	No	No
46	Bhumka No. 1	No	No	No	No	No
47	Bhumka No. 1	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
48	Bhumka No. 1	No	No	No	No	No
49	Bhumka No. 1	No	No	No	No	No
50	Bhumka No. 1	No	No	No	No	No
51	Bhumka No. 1	No	No	No	No	No
52	Bhumka No. 1	No	No	No	No	No
53	Bhumka No. 1	No	No	No	No	No
54	Bhumka No. 1	No	No	No	No	No
55	Bhumka No. 1	No	No	No	No	No
56	Bhumka No. 1	No	No	No	No	No
57	Bhumka No. 1	No	No	No	No	No
58	Bhumka No. 1	No	No	No	No	No
59	Bhumka No. 1	No	No	No	No	No
60	Bhumka No. 1	No	No	No	No	No
NO.	**VILLAGE**	**LOSS OF LAND**				
		Sold land?	**Due to mortgage payment failure?**	**Due to flood?**	**Due to Govt. Projects?**	**Other?**
61	Modati	No	No	No	Yes	No
62	Modati	No	No. Currently mortgaged.	No	Yes	No
63	Modati	No	Yes. Also Currently mortgaged.	No	Yes	No
64	Modati	No	Yes. Also Currently mortgaged.	Yes	No	No
65	Modati	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
66	Modati	No	No. Currently mortgaged.	Yes	Yes	No
67	Modati	No	No	No	No	No
68	Modati	No	No	No	No	No
69	Modati	No	No	No	No	No

NO.	VILLAGE	LOSS OF LAND				
70	Modati	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
71	Modati	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
72	Modati	No	No	No	Yes	No
73	Modati	No	No	No	Yes	No
74	Modati	No	No	No	No	No
75	Modati	No	No	No	No	No
76	Modati	No	No	No	No	No
77	Modati	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
78	Modati	No	No	Yes	No	No
79	Modati	No	No	No	Yes	No
80	Modati	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
NO.	**VILLAGE**	**LOSS OF LAND**				
		Sold land?	**Due to mortgage payment failure?**	**Due to flood?**	**Due to Govt. Projects?**	**Other?**
81	Anthai Bari	No	No	No	No	No
82	Anthai Bari	No	No	No	No	No
83	Anthai Bari	No	No	No	No	No
84	Anthai Bari	No	No	No	No	No
85	Anthai Bari	No	No	No	No	No
86	Anthai Bari	No	No	No	No	No
87	Anthai Bari	No	No	No	No	No
88	Anthai Bari	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
89	Anthai Bari	No	No	Yes	No	No
90	Anthai Bari	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
91	Anthai Bari	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
92	Anthai Bari	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
93	Anthai Bari	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
94	Anthai Bari	Yes, economic hardship after	No	Yes	No	No

NO.	VILLAGE					
						the 2012 riots
95	Anthai Bari	No	No	No	Yes	No
96	Anthai Bari	No	No	No	No	No
97	Anthai Bari	No	No	No	No	No
98	Anthai Bari	No	No	No	Yes	No
99	Anthai Bari	No	No	No	Yes	No
100	Anthai Bari	No	No	No	Yes	No
NO.	**VILLAGE**	**LOSS OF LAND**				
		Sold land?	**Due to mortgage payment failure?**	**Due to flood?**	**Due to Govt. Projects?**	**Other?**
101	Balgaon	No	No	No	No	No
102	Balgaon	No	No	No	Yes	No
103	Balgaon	No	No	No	Yes	No
104	Balgaon	No	No	No	No	No
105	Balgaon	No	No	No	Yes	No
106	Balgaon	No	No	No	Yes	No
107	Balgaon	No	No	No	No	No
108	Balgaon	No	No	No	No	No
109	Balgaon	No	No	No	Yes	No
110	Balgaon	No	No	No	No	No
111	Joregaon	No	No	No	No	No
112	Joregaon	No	No	No	No	No
113	Joregaon	No	Yes	No	No	No
114	Joregaon	No	No	No	No	No
115	Joregaon	No	No	No	No	No
116	Joregaon	No	No	No	No	No
117	Joregaon	Yes, Disease Treatment	No	No	No	No
118	Joregaon	No	No	No	No	No

| 119 | Joregaon | No | No | No | No | No |
| 120 | Joregaon | No | No | No | No | No |

Table 6: Homestead Land composition

NO.	VILLAGE	Households identified having the following in the homestead land					
		Flower Garden	Arecanut trees	Vegetable garden	Bari having fruit trees	Only the house	Shelter for livestock
1	Uttar Bashbari	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
2	Uttar Bashbari	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
3	Uttar Bashbari	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
4	Uttar Bashbari	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
6	Uttar Bashbari	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
7	Uttar Bashbari	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
8	Uttar Bashbari	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
9	Uttar Bashbari	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
10	Uttar Bashbari	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
11	Uttar Bashbari	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
12	Uttar Bashbari	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
13	Uttar Bashbari	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
14	Uttar Bashbari	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
15	Uttar Bashbari	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
16	Uttar Bashbari	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
17	Uttar Bashbari	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
18	Uttar Bashbari	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
19	Uttar Bashbari	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
20	Uttar Bashbari	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
21	Chakma	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
22	Chakma	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

23	Chakma	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
24	Chakma	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
25	Chakma	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
26	Chakma	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
27	Chakma	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
28	Chakma	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
29	Chakma	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
30	Chakma	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
31	Chakma	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
32	Chakma	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
33	Chakma	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
34	Chakma	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
35	Chakma	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
36	Chakma	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
37	Chakma	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
38	Chakma	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
39	Chakma	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
40	Chakma	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
41	Bhumka No. 1	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
42	Bhumka No. 1	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
43	Bhumka No. 1	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
44	Bhumka No. 1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
45	Bhumka No. 1	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
46	Bhumka No. 1	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
47	Bhumka No. 1	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
48	Bhumka No. 1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
49	Bhumka No. 1	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
50	Bhumka No. 1	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
51	Bhumka No. 1	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

52	Bhumka No. 1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
53	Bhumka No. 1	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
54	Bhumka No. 1	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
55	Bhumka No. 1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
56	Bhumka No. 1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
57	Bhumka No. 1	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
58	Bhumka No. 1	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
59	Bhumka No. 1	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
60	Bhumka No. 1	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
61	Modati	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
62	Modati	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
63	Modati	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
64	Modati	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
65	Modati	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
66	Modati	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
67	Modati	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
68	Modati	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
69	Modati	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
70	Modati	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
71	Modati	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
72	Modati	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
73	Modati	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
74	Modati	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
75	Modati	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
76	Modati	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
77	Modati	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
78	Modati	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
79	Modati	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
80	Modati	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes

81	Anthai Bari	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
82	Anthai Bari	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
83	Anthai Bari	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
84	Anthai Bari	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
85	Anthai Bari	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
86	Anthai Bari	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
87	Anthai Bari	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
88	Anthai Bari	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
89	Anthai Bari	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
90	Anthai Bari	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
91	Anthai Bari	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
92	Anthai Bari	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
93	Anthai Bari	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
94	Anthai Bari	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
95	Anthai Bari	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
96	Anthai Bari	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
97	Anthai Bari	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
98	Anthai Bari	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
99	Anthai Bari	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
100	Anthai Bari	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
101	Balgaon	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
102	Balgaon	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
103	Balgaon	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
104	Balgaon	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
105	Balgaon	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
106	Balgaon	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
107	Balgaon	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
108	Balgaon	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
109	Balgaon	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

110	Balgaon	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
111	Joregaon	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
112	Joregaon	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
113	Joregaon	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
114	Joregaon	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
115	Joregaon	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
116	Joregaon	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
117	Joregaon	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
118	Joregaon	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
119	Joregaon	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes
120	Joregaon	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes

Table 7: Land Titles Ownership in Kokrajhar

VILLAGE	COMMUNITY	Ownership	VILLAGE	COMMUNITY	Ownership
Uttar Bashbari	Bodo	1	Chakma	Bodo	1
Uttar Bashbari	Bodo	1 and 2 and 3	Chakma	Bodo	1 and 3
Uttar Bashbari	Bodo	1 and 2 and 3	Chakma	Bodo	1 and 2
Uttar Bashbari	Bodo	1 and 2 and 3	Chakma	Bodo	1 and 2
Uttar Bashbari	Bodo	1 and 2	Chakma	Bodo	1
Uttar Bashbari	Bodo	1 and 2 and 3	Chakma	Bodo	1
Uttar Bashbari	Bodo	1 and 2 and 3	Chakma	Bodo	1 and 3
Uttar Bashbari	Bodo	1 and 2	Chakma	Bodo	2
Uttar Bashbari	Bodo	1 and 2 and 3	Chakma	Bodo	2
Uttar Bashbari	Bodo	1 and 2 and 3	Chakma	Bodo	1
Uttar Bashbari	Bodo	1 and 2 and 3	Chakma	Bodo	1
Uttar Bashbari	Bodo	1 and 2 and 3	Chakma	Bodo	1
Uttar Bashbari	Bodo	1	Chakma	Bodo	1
Uttar Bashbari	Bodo	1	Chakma	Bodo	1
Uttar	Bodo	1 and 3	Chakma	Bodo	N.A

VILLAGE	COMMUNITY	Ownership	VILLAGE	COMMUNITY	Ownership
Uttar Bashbari	Bodo	1 and 2 and 3	Chakma	Bodo	N.A
Uttar Bashbari	Bodo	1	Chakma	Bodo	1
Uttar Bashbari	Bodo	1	Chakma	Bodo	1
Uttar Bashbari	Bodo	1 and 2	Chakma	Bodo	1
Uttar Bashbari	Bodo	1 and 2 and 3	Chakma	Bodo	1
VILLAGE	**COMMUNITY**	**Ownership**	**VILLAGE**	**COMMUNITY**	**Ownership**
Bhumka No. 1	Bodo	1 and 3	Modati	Adivasi	1
Bhumka No. 1	Bodo	1	Modati	Adivasi	1
Bhumka No. 1	Bodo	1	Modati	Adivasi	1
Bhumka No. 1	Bodo	1	Modati	Adivasi	1
Bhumka No. 1	Bodo	1	Modati	Adivasi	1
Bhumka No. 1	Bodo	1	Modati	Adivasi	1
Bhumka No. 1	Bodo	1	Modati	Adivasi	1
Bhumka No. 1	Bodo	1	Modati	Adivasi	1
Bhumka No. 1	Bodo	1	Modati	Adivasi	1
Bhumka No. 1	Bodo	1	Modati	Adivasi	1
Bhumka No. 1	Bodo	1	Modati	Adivasi	1
Bhumka No. 1	Bodo	1	Modati	Adivasi	1
Bhumka No. 1	Bodo	1	Modati	Adivasi	1
Bhumka No. 1	Bodo	1	Modati	Adivasi	1
Bhumka No. 1	Bodo	1	Modati	Adivasi	1
Bhumka No. 1	Bodo	1	Modati	Adivasi	1
Bhumka No. 1	Bodo	1	Modati	Adivasi	1

VILLAGE	COMMUNITY	Ownership	VILLAGE	COMMUNITY	Ownership
Bhumka No. 1	Bodo	1	Modati	Adivasi	1
Bhumka No. 1	Bodo	1	Modati	Adivasi	1
Bhumka No. 1	Bodo	1	Modati	Adivasi	1
VILLAGE	**COMMUNITY**	**Ownership**	**VILLAGE**	**COMMUNITY**	**Ownership**
Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1	Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1
Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1	Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1
Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1	Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1
Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1	Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1
Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1	Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1
Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1	Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1
Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1	Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1
Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1	Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1
Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1	Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1
Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	3	Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	3
Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1	Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1
Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1	Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1
Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1	Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1
Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1	Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1
Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1	Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1
Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1	Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1
Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1	Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1
Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1	Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1
Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1	Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1
Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1	Anthai Bari	Bengali Muslim	1

VILLAGE	COMMUNITY	Ownership
VILLAGE	**COMMUNITY**	**Ownership**
Balgaon	Nepali	1
Balgaon	Hindu Bengali	1

Balgaon	Adivasi	1
Balgaon	Hindu Bengali	1
Balgaon	Hindu Bengali	1
Balgaon	Hindu Bengali	1
Balgaon	Hindu Bengali	1
Balgaon	Bodo	1
Balgaon	Bodo	1
Balgaon	Bodo	1
Joregaon	Rajbonshi	1
Joregaon	Rajbonshi	1
Joregaon	Rajbonshi	1
Joregaon	Rajbonshi	1
Joregaon	Rajbonshi	1
Joregaon	Rajbonshi	1
Joregaon	Rajbonshi	1
Joregaon	Rajbonshi	1
Joregaon	Rajbonshi	1
Joregaon	Rajbonshi	1

Table 8: Land Ownership in Chirang, Baksa, Udalguri

Sr. No.	Name of the Village	Different ethnic groups	Land Ownership Criteria		
			Miyadipatta? Which?	Eksoniya? Which?	Reserved lands? Which?
1	KOLOBARI	Bodo, Rajbonshi	Bodo, Rajbonshi	Bodo, Rajbonshi	Bodo, Rajbonshi
2	NAMALPUR	Rajbonshi, Adivasi, Bodo	Rajbonshi, Adivasi, Bodo	Rajbonshi, Adivasi, Bodo	Rajbonshi, Adivasi, Bodo
3	NIMAGAON	Rajbonshi, Bodo, Adivasi	Rajbonshi, Bodo, Adivasi	Rajbonshi, Bodo, Adivasi	Rajbonshi, Bodo, Adivasi
4	PADMAPUR	Rajbonshi, Bodo	Rajbonshi, Bodo	Rajbonshi, Bodo	Rajbonshi, Bodo
5	RAJAJAN	Rajbonshi, Adivasi, Bodo	Rajbonshi, Adivasi, Bodo	Rajbonshi, Adivasi, Bodo	Rajbonshi, Adivasi, Bodo
6	SIDLI	Bodo, Rajbonshi	Bodo, Rajbonshi	Bodo, Rajbonshi	Bodo, Rajbonshi
7	SILGHAGRI	Rajbonshi, Bodo	Rajbonshi, Bodo	Rajbonshi, Bodo	500 Bigha Khas
8	SOULMARI	Adivasi, Bodo, Rajbonshi	Adivasi, Bodo, Rajbonshi	Adivasi, Bodo, Rajbonshi	Adivasi, Bodo, Rajbonshi
9	THUNKHOBARI	Rajbonshi, Adivasi, Bodo	Rajbonshi, Adivasi, Bodo	Rajbonshi, Adivasi, Bodo	Rajbonshi, Adivasi, Bodo
10	BATABARI	Bodo, Adivasi	Mix	Mix	Bodo, Adivasi
11	CHANDPUR	Adivasi	Mix	Mix	No
12	GARUBHASA NO.1	Bodo, Adivasi, Rajbonshi, Bihari, H. Bengali	Mix	Mix	No
13	GARUBHASA NO.2	Bodo, Adivasi	Mix	Mix	No
14	GORAGAON	Adivasi, Bodo, Rajbonshi	Mix	Mix	No
15	GORAGAON SALLBARI	Bodo, Adivasi	Mix	Mix	No
16	UTTAR ISHILAKATA	Bodo, Adivasi	Mix	Mix	No
17	ISHILKATA	Bodo, Adivasi	Mix	Mix	No
18	JAOLIABARI	Adivasi	Mix	Mix	No
19	JUILOGA	Bodo, Nepali, H. Bengali	Mix	Mix	Bodo, SCs has been alloted land by the Govt.

20	KAHIBARI	Bodo, Adivasi, Rajbonshi	Mix	Mix	No
21	NEPALPARA	Bodo, H. Bengali, M. Bengali, Nepali, Adivasi, Bihari	Mix	Mix	No
22	UTTAR NANGDORBARI	Bodo, Adivasi	Mix	Mix	Bodo, Adivasi
23	DAKHIN NANGDARBARI	Nepali, Adivasi	Mix	Mix	No
24	SUPARIGURI NO. 1	M. Bengali, H. Bengali	H. Bengali, M. Bengali	H. Bengali	No
25	SIALMARI	Rajbonshi, Bodo	Bodo, Rajbonshi	No	Yes, fallow
26	DANGAIGAON	Assamese, Bodo	Assamese, Bodo	Bodo	Yes, fallow
27	KASHDOBA	M. Bengali, Bodo	M. Bengali, Bodo	No	Yes, fallow
28	NADHIAPARA	Bodo, Assamese	Bodo, Assamese	No	No
29	KUMARGAON	Rajbonshi, Bodo	Rajbonshi, Bodo	No	Yes, fallow
30	NO. 1 BASHBARI	M. Bengali	M. Bengali	M. Bengali	M. Bengali
31	NO. 2 BASHBARI	Rajbonshi, H. Bengali	Rajbonshi, H. Bengali	Rajbonshi, H. Bengali	Rajbonshi, H. Bengali
32	NO. 3 BASHBARI	M. Bengali	M. Bengali	M. Bengali	M. Bengali
33	NO. 4 BASHBARI	M. Bengali	M. Bengali	M. Bengali	M. Bengali
34	NO. 5 BASHBARI	M. Bengali	M. Bengali	M. Bengali	M. Bengali
35	NO. 6 BASHBARI	M. Bengali	M. Bengali	M. Bengali	M. Bengali
36	NO. 7 BASHBARI	M. Bengali	M. Bengali	M. Bengali	M. Bengali
37	SALABILA NO. 1	M. Bengali	M. Bengali	M. Bengali	M. Bengali
38	SALABILA NO. 2	M. Bengali	M. Bengali	M. Bengali	M. Bengali
39	SALABILA NO. 3	M. Bengali	M. Bengali	M. Bengali	M. Bengali
40	AOULAGURI	Rajbonshi, H. Bengali	Rajbonshi, H. Bengali	Rajbonshi, H. Bengali	Rajbonshi, H. Bengali
41	BECHIMARI	Rajbonshi, H. Bengali	Rajbonshi, H. Bengali	Rajbonshi, H. Bengali	Rajbonshi, H. Bengali
42	BARIMAKHA	Assamese, Bodo	Assamese, Bodo	No	Yes, fallow
43	DONGPAR	Bodo, Assamese	Bodo, Assamese	No	Yes, fallow
44	AGCHIA	Bodo, Rajbonshi	Bodo, Rajbonshi	Bodo	No
45	DOLBARI	Bodo, Rabha	Bodo, Rabha	No	Yes, fallow

46	KAKLABARI	Bodo, Rajbonshi	Bodo, Rajbonshi	No	Yes, fallow
47	KHAIRABARI	Assamese, Bodo	Assamese, Bodo	No	Yes, fallow
48	GORMARA	Assamese, Bodo	Assamese, Bodo	No	Yes, fallow
49	UMANANDA	Bodo, Hindu Bengali	Bodo, H Bengali	No	H Bengali
50	JALUKBARI	Bodo, H Bengali, Bihari, Rajbonshi	Bodo, H Bengali, Bihari, Rajbonshi	No	H Bengali
51	SUKULIAPARA	H Bengali, Bodo	H Bengali, Bodo	H. Bengali	H Bengali
52	CHENIALPARA	Bodo, H Bengali	Bodo, H Bengali	No	H Bengali
53	DINGDANGPARA	Bodo, Rajbonshi	Bodo, Rajbonshi	No	No
54	MAZAR CHUBURI	Bodo, Rajbonshi	Bodo, Rajbonshi	No	No
55	BATABARI NO. 1	Bodo, H Bengali	Bodo, H Bengali	No	H Bengali
56	DEWRIPARA	Bodo, Assamese, Rajbonshi	Bodo, Assamese, Rajbonshi	No	No
57	NIZ CHINAKONA	Bodo, Assamese	Bodo, Assamese	No	No
58	KHAGRAGAON	Bodo, Assamese, H Bengali	Bodo, Assamese, H Bengali	No	No
59	MAZBATGAON	Adivasi, Nepali	Adivasi, Nepali	Adivasi	No
60	KUKURAKHAITI	Adivasi, Nepali, Bihari	Adivasi, Nepali, Bihari	Adivasi	Nepali
61	GABHARUPARA	Adivasi	Adivasi	Adivasi	No
62	No.1 MAZGAON	Adivasi	Adivasi	Adivasi	No
63	HABIGAON GRANT	Adivasi	Adivasi	Adivasi	No
64	MAZGAON	Adivasi	Adivasi	Adivasi	No
65	KORAIBITI	Adivasi	Adivasi	Adivasi	No
66	No.2 BETIBARI T.E.	Adivasi	Adivasi	Adivasi	Adivasi
67	No.1 BETIBARIT.E.	Adivasi	Adivasi	Adivasi	Adivasi
68	KHAMTAOBARI No. 1 (Khamtoubari)	Adivasi	Adivasi	Adivasi	Adivasi
69	KHUSURABARI (Khusurabari No.1)	Bodo, Adivasi, Nepali	Bodo, Adivasi, Nepali	Adivasi	Adivasi
70	KHARAMOKHAGAON	Adivasi, Nepali, H Bengali	Adivasi, Nepali, H Bengali	Adivasi	Adivasi, Nepali

71	BOIGAPARA	Assamese, Adivasi, Bihari, H Bengali	Assamese, Adivasi, Bihari, H Bengali	Bihari, Nepali	Adivasi, Nepali
72	DONGPAR	Bodo, Rabha	Bodo, Rabha	No	No
73	BADULIPARA	Bodo, H. Bengali, M. Bengali	Bodo, H. Bengali, M. Bengali	No	B.Muslims
74	NAKTIPARA PAM	Bodo	Bodo	No	No
75	NAKTIPARA KOLBARISUPA	Bodo	Bodo	Bodo	Bodo
76	KOLBARI	Bodo	Bodo	Bodo	Bodo
77	LANGDANGPARA	Bodo	Bodo	Bodo	Bodo
78	SILAKUTI	Bodo	Bodo	Bodo	Bodo
79	SILAKUTI NO. 2	Bodo	Bodo	Bodo	Bodo
80	SILAKUTI NO. 3	Bodo, Assamese	Bodo, Assamese	Bodo	Bodo
81	SILAKUTI DONGPAR	Bodo	Bodo	No	No
82	BHAURABARI	Bodo	Bodo	Bodo	Bodo
83	SANSALI	Bodo	Bodo	Bodo	Bodo
84	DANGARMAKHA	Bodo	Bodo	Bodo	Bodo
85	SANGBARI SUPA	Bodo	Bodo	Bodo	Bodo
86	SAUKUCHI	Bodo, Assamese, B. Muslims	Bodo, Assamese, B. Muslims	No	No

Table 9: Land and Institutions

Sr. No.	Name of the Village	Presence of Institutions	Conflict regarding use of resources?	Existence of any law that brought change to access to resources?	Have there been changes since the creation of the AC?	Has AC ensured better access to Resources?
1	KOLOBARI	No	No	No	Yes but Meagre	Not as such
2	NAMALPUR	No	No	No	Yes but Meagre	Not as such
3	NIMAGAON	No	No	No	Yes but Meagre	Not as such
4	PADMAPUR	No	No	No	Yes but Meagre	Not as such
5	RAJAJAN	No	No	No	Yes but Meagre	Not as such
6	SIDLI	No	No	No	Yes but Meagre	Not as such
7	SILGHAGRI	Yes	No	Informal community decisions	Yes but Meagre	Not as such
8	SOULMARI	No	No	No	Yes but Meagre	Not as such
9	THUNKHOBARI	No	No	No	Yes but Meagre	Not as such
10	BATABARI	Yes	Yes	Informal community decisions	Very less	No
11	CHANDPUR	No	Yes	No	Very less	No
12	GARUBHASA NO.1	No	Yes	No	Very less	No
13	GARUBHASA NO.2	No	Yes	No	Very less	No
14	GORAGAON	No	Yes	No	Very less	No
15	GORAGAON SALLBARI	No	Yes	No	Very less	No
16	UTTAR ISHILAKATA	No	Yes	No	Very less	No
17	ISHILKATA	No	Yes	No	Very less	No
18	JAOLIABARI	No	No	No	Very less	No
19	JUILOGA	No	Yes	No	Very less	No
20	KAHIBARI	No	Yes	No	Very less	No
21	NEPALPARA	No	Yes	No	Very less	No
22	UTTAR NANGDORBARI DAKHIN	Yes	Yes	Informal community decisions	Very less	No
23	NANGDARBARI	No	No	No	Very less	No
24	SUPARIGURI NO. 1	No	No	No	No	No

25	SIALMARI	Yes	No	Informal community decisions	Yes but Meagre	No
26	DANGAIGAON	Yes	No	Informal community decisions	Yes but Meagre	No
27	KASHDOBA	Yes	Yes	Informal community decisions	Yes but Meagre	No
28	NADHIAPARA	No	No	No	No	No
29	KUMARGAON	Yes	No	Informal community decisions	Yes but Meagre	No
30	NO. 1 BASHBARI	No	No	No	Yes but limited	No
31	NO. 2 BASHBARI	Yes	No	Informal community decisions	Yes but limited	Yes
32	NO. 3 BASHBARI	No	No	No	Yes but limited	No
33	NO. 4 BASHBARI	No	No	No	Yes but limited	No
34	NO. 5 BASHBARI	No	No	No	Yes but limited	No
35	NO. 6 BASHBARI	No	No	No	Yes but limited	No
36	NO. 7 BASHBARI	No	No	No	Yes but limited	No
37	SALABILA NO. 1	No	No	No	Yes but limited	No
38	SALABILA NO. 2	No	No	No	Yes but limited	No
39	SALABILA NO. 3	No	No	No	Yes but limited	No
40	AOULAGURI	Yes	No	Informal community decisions	Yes but limited	Yes
41	BECHIMARI	Yes	No	Informal community decisions	Yes but limited	Yes
42	BARIMAKHA	No	No	No	Yes	No
43	DONGPAR	No	No	No	Yes	No
44	AGCHIA	No	No	No	Yes	No
45	DOLBARI	Yes	No	Informal community decisions	Yes	No
46	KAKLABARI	Yes	No	Community and Council decisions	Yes	Yes
47	KHAIRABARI	No	No	No	Yes	No
48	GORMARA	No	No	No	Yes	No
49	UMANANDA	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
50	JALUKBARI	No	No	No	Yes	No
51	SUKULIAPARA	No	No	No	Yes	No
52	CHENIALPARA	No	No	No	Yes	No

53	DINGDANGPARA	No	No	No	Yes	No
54	MAZAR CHUBURI	No	No	No	Yes	No
55	BATABARI NO. 1	No	No	No	Yes	No
56	DEWRIPARA	No	No	No	Yes	No
57	NIZ CHINAKONA	No	No	No	Yes	No
58	KHAGRAGAON	No	No	No	Yes	No
59	MAZBATGAON	No	No	No	Yes	No
60	KUKURAKHAITI	No	No	No	Yes	No
61	GABHARUPARA	No	No	No	Yes	No
62	No.1 MAZGAON	No	No	No	Yes	No
63	HABIGAON GRANT	No	No	No	Yes	No
64	MAZGAON	No	No	No	Yes	No
65	KORAIBITI	No	No	No	Yes	No
66	No.2 BETIBARI T.E.	No	No	No	Yes	No
67	No.1 BETIBARIT.E.	No	No	No	Yes	No
68	KHAMTAOBARI No. 1 (Khamtoubari)	No	No	No	Yes	No
69	KHUSURABARI (Khusurabari No.1)	No	No	No	Yes	No
70	KHARAMOKHAGAON	No	No	No	Yes	No
71	BOIGAPARA	No	No	No	Yes	No
72	DONGPAR	No	No	No	Yes	No
73	BADULIPARA	No	No	No	Yes	No
74	NAKTIPARA PAM	No	No	No	Yes	No
75	NAKTIPARA KOLBARISUPA	Yes	No	Informal community decisions	Yes	No
76	KOLBARI	Yes	No	Informal community decisions	Yes	No
77	LANGDANGPARA	Yes	No	Informal community decisions	Yes	No
78	SILAKUTI	Yes	No	Informal community decisions	Yes	No

79	SILAKUTI NO. 2	Yes	No	Informal community decisions	Yes	No
80	SILAKUTI NO. 3	Yes	No	Informal community decisions	Yes	No
81	SILAKUTI DONGPAR	No	No	No	Yes	No
82	BHAURABARI	Yes	No	Informal community decisions	Yes	No
83	SANSALI	Yes	No	Informal community decisions	Yes	No
84	DANGARMAKHA	Yes	No	Informal community decisions	Yes	No
85	SANGBARI SUPA	Yes	No	Informal community decisions	Yes	No
86	SAUKUCHI	No	No	No	Yes	No

Table 10: ST populations in BTAD

Kokrajhar		Chirang		Baksa		Udalguri	
Tribes	Population in the district	Tribes	Population in the district	Tribes	Population in the district	Tribes	Population in the district
Bodo	225041	Bodo	167888	Bodo	288397	Bodo	218581
Hojai	1	Barmans	1	Barmans	25	Barmans	89
Sonowal Kachari	1729	Deori	1	Deori	38	Deori	151
Lalung	5	Lalung	5	Sonowal Kachari	1	Sonowal Kachari	8
Mech	4	Mech	1	Lalung	7	Lalung	15
Miri	44	Miri	4	Mech	7	Mech	13
Rabha	22255	Rabha	2040	Miri	10	Miri	67
Dimasa	9	Dimasa	8	Rabha	20009	Rabha	30873
Hajong	7	Hajong	384	Dimasa	8	Dimasa	5
Singpho	3	Garo	443	Hajong	1029	Hajong	950
Garo	10424			Garo	129	Garo	5175
Barmans	84					Khampti	15

Appendix 4: The areas in which the BTC has undertaken work

	Activities carried out by the BTC
1	Centre for Development & Research of Bodo language
2	Upgradation of existing educational infrastructure
3	Cultural Complex at Kokrajhar
4	Super speciality hospital with all the modern facilities at Kokrajhar
5	Sports complexes in all the district headquarters
6	Food processing plants and Cold storage in all the districts
7	Bridge over the River Aai
8	Bodoland Bhawan in Delhi
9	Integrated agro-Processing park and Textile cum Apparel park
10	Revitalisation of Kokilabari Agricultural Farm
11	Promote Manas sanctuary as an international tourist spot
12	Champa, Suklai and Dhansiri irrigation projects
13	Highway on the Indo Bhutan border from Jamduar to Bhairabkunda
14	Set-up model dairy, fishery, horticulture and poultry farms/training centres in all districts
15	Improvement of existing facilities of Veterinary hospitals
16	Road 1. improvement of PWD and Rural Roads 2. Conversion of all SPT bridges to RCC bridges / culverts
17	Flood control 1. Protection of erosion of river Aai 2. Protection of erosion of river Saralbhanga 3.Protection of erosion of river Tarrang, Sankosh and Champamati
18	Irrigation 1. Completion of Champamati project 2. Suklai Project 3. Khanamakra, Kuklung, Saralbhanga river bank erosion protection
19	Agriculture 1. Raising of agricultural production utilizing modern technology 2. Supply of tractors / water pump to cultivators on subsidised rate 3. Speedy implementation of all irrigation projects 4. Setting up of cold storage facilities in all districts
20	Public Health 1. Drinking water supply schemes of Kokrajhar town, Subankhata and to all needy villages
21	Health and Family Welfare 1. Construction of 100 beded Civil Hospitals in all district headquarters 2. Construction of 30 beded rural hospitals in all uncovered rural areas 3. Improvement of existing hospitals and State Dispensaries 4. Setting up of Nursing College
22	Industry 1. Integrated infrastructure development- Industrial Estate / Growth Centre /

	Commercial Estates
	2. Special Incentives to attract the investors for setting up of small scale, cottage and rural induatries
	3. Skilled manpower development
	4. Encouragement for setting up agricultural based industries, food processing, export oriental units
23	Education
	1. Setting up of Central Institute of Technology at Kokrajhar
	2. Improvement of colleges / schools buildings, laboratory equipment and library
	3. Introduction of IT education to all schools and colleges
	4. Setting up of Bodo language Research Centre
24	Culture
	1. Cultural complex at Kokrajhar
	2. Auditorium and cultural hall in all district and sub-divisional headquarters

Source: www.bodoland.gov.in/plaNprogram.html

Appendix 5: HOUSEHOLD QUESTIONNAIRE

I. Identification of Sample Household

1	Name of the Village	
2	Name of the Block	
3	Location of the Household (*code*)	
4	Name of the head of the Household	
5	Name of Informant	
6	Social Group (*code*)	
7	Ethnic group (*code*)	
8	Religion practiced (*see code*)	
9	Household Classification (*Code)*	
10	Whether operated any land for agricultural activities during the last 365 days *(yes=1; no=2)*	

II. Demographic and Other particulars

Sl. No.	Name of the Household Member	Relation with Head *(code)*	Sex *(male=1; female=2)*	Whether associated with the Operational Holding *(code)*
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

III. Ethnographic Survey

	Dependence on resource: Perception and Cognition: Economic Identity	
1	Do you think that there are probable reasons for you to lose your land in the future?	
	If yes, why so?	
	If no, why so?	
2	Do you feel that the presence of any community near you could act as a probable threat for you to lose your land?	
	If yes, who and why so?	
3	Do you feel that the presence of any community is a competition to your access to resources?	
	If yes, who and how so?	
4	Do you feel that you are deprived in any way in rightful access to resources?	
	If yes, please elaborate.	

	Dependence on Resources: Perception and Cognition: Social Identity	
5	You are well aware that your region is considered to be the hotspot of migration related conflicts. How do you describe the problems attached to it? Note: Difference to be maintained for the Bodos and non-Bodos.	
6 (exclude Bengali)	Would you say that there has been a negative change in your society due to the migration and mixing of different communities?	
7	Have your community, at any level, come up with any informal law or collective understanding regarding sale of land, access to common resources or about any other matter exclusive to your community alone with the purpose of safe guarding of resources?	
8 (exclude	Do you consider the presence of migrants (old and new) to be a "disturbance''	

migrant communities)	in your society?	
	If yes, how so?	

Ethnic Identity

9	The Bodo Movement for autonomy has dominated the politics of the state since many decades now. Do you feel that the demand for Bodoland is justified?	
10	What do you think is the major reason for the Bodo unrest?	
11	How do you think the Bodos can develop better if the Bodos are the ones solely governing "their" land?	
12	Do you that the migrant communities in a way "eat away'' the ''share of resources'' of this region?	
13	Do you think the Bodos have been neglected in the process of development by the Government?	
14	After the creation of the Autonomous Council, do you think the tribals' access to resources has been secured?	

Political Identity

15	Are you or any member of your family of you a member of any political organisation?	
16	Are you or any member of your family of you a member of any committee/ organisation? (non-govt.)	
17	Are you or any member of your family a member of the Autonomous council?	
18	How does the Council involve you and your community in the decision making process if you are not members of it?	
19	How frequently do you participate in the meetings of the Panchayat and the Council?	
20	Do you consider yourself and your family to be involved in your	

self-governance?		
How do you evaluate your participation?		

IV.   Land Ownership

Do you own any land?	
If yes, what is the land ownership right? *Miyadipatta=1, Eksoniya=2, Others=3*	
Proceed to Section A and B	
If no, then what is the land ownership of the area where you are currently settled? *tenant=1, Permanent attached farmworker=2, Reserved land (dokhol mati)=3*	

Section A

In this village			Outside this village	
Sl. No.	**Land Categories**	In Hectares	**Land Categories**	In Hectares
1	Operational Holding		Operational Holding	
2	Homestead land		Homestead land	
3	Land Owned		Land Owned	
4	Land Leased In		Land Leased In	
5	Land Leased Out		Land Leased Out	
6	Otherwise possessed Land		Otherwise possessed Land	
7	Land Possessed [3+(5-6)+7]		Land Possessed [3+(5-6)+7]	
8	Parcels		Parcels	

TOTAL LAND =

Section B *(Code exists for all)*

10	Type of operational Holding	
11	Main use of the operational Holding	
12	Kind of Possession for the major part of the period of last one year	
13	Type of Possession	
14	Duration of Possession	
15	Use of the Leased In Land	
16	Use of the Leased out land (if Known)	
17	Whether Flooded during the period	
18	Land Use	

19	Type of Crop Production/ livestock farming	

Changes and Impact

	Changes due to buying and selling	
1	Have you bought any land in the last 10 years?	
	If yes, then what are you using that land for currently?	
	From which community did you buy the land from?	
2	Have you sold off any land in the last 10 years?	
	If yes, then kindly state the reason for it.	
	If yes, then to which community did you sell off your land to?	
	Changes due to mortgage	
3	Do you currently own any land which is mortgaged to another?	
4	Have you lost any land due to failure of mortgage payment in the past 10 years?	
	If yes, then which community did to lose it to?	
	If yes, then what was the land ownership of that plot of land?	
	Changes due to flood	
5	Have you lost any land to flooding of rivers?	
	If yes, then what was the land ownership of that plot of land?	
6	If yes, then after the flood abated, did you reclaim the land?	
	If no, then kindly state the reason	
	Changes due to Government Developmental projects	
7	Have you lost any land due to take over by government work?	
	If yes, then how much land did you lose?	
	If yes, then did you purchase any land to compensate for that loss?	
	Changes due to other factors	
8	Did you lose any land for any other reason?	
	If yes then, what was the reason for it?	

Impact Assessment

1	If you have lost due to any of the above reasons, then how would you describe its impact on your lives?	
2	Do you know of any instance where anybody has lost their land or sold off their land?	
	If yes, then what was the reason for it?	

Rankings (Only for the Bodo HH)

Rank the importance of land in your life and livelihood from 1 to 6, 1 being the most important

Not important	
Determines your occupation	
Integral part of Bodo politics	
Defines traditions	
Only for construction of house	
Source of earning credit	

Fill up by self from observation

Homestead defining elements

Presence of flower garden, Arecanut tress, bari. Livestock shelter, ponds and anything traditional which defines the community.

Codes:

Codes for plate I:

For 3: Location of the Household
- *Near a river= 1;*
- *near an urban settlement=2;*
- *near industrial areas=3;*
- *completely rural area=4;*
- *near a refugee camp=5;*
- *other (specify) =9*

For 7: Ethnic Group
- *Bodo=1;*
- *Nepali=2;*
- *Bengali=3;*
- *Koch-Rajbonshi=4;*
- *Santhali=5;*
- *Others=9*

For 6: Social Group
- *General= 1;*
- *Other Backward Class=2;*
- *Scheduled Caste=3;*
- *Scheduled Tribe=4*

For 8: Religion practiced
- *Hinduism=1;*
- *Islam=2;*
- *Christianity=3;*
- *Others=9*

For 9: Household classification is to be determined based on the source of the major income of the Household; (following NSSO):
- *Cultivation=1;*
- *Livestock Farming=2;*
- *Other Agricultural activities=3;*
- *Non-agricultural Enterprise=4;*
- *Wage/Salaried Employment=5;*
- *Others (Pensioners, Remittance Recipients etc.)=9*

Codes for Plate II:

For (2): Relation with Head:
- *Self -1,*
- *Spouse of head -2,*
- *Married child -3,*
- *Spouse of married child -4,*
- *Unmarried child -5,*
- *Grandchild -6,*
- *Father/ mother/ father-in-law/ mother-in-law -7,*
- *Brother/ sister/ brother-in-law/ sister-in-law/ other relatives -8,*
- *Servants/ employees/ other non-relatives -9.*

For (4): Whether associated with the household land holding:
- *Main Operator of the Household Holding=1;*
- *Other Member associated with the household operational holding=2;*
- *Not associated with the household operational holding=3*

Codes for Plate IV. Section B

For 10: Type of Operational Holding
- o *Entirely Owned=1*
- o *Entirely leased in=2*
- o *Both owned and leased in=3*
- o *Entirely otherwise possessed=4*

For 11: Main use of the operational holding
- o *Only crop production=1*
- o *Only farming of animal/fisheries=2*
- o *Other agricultural uses=3*
- o *Other non-agricultural uses=4*

For 12: Kind of Possession for the major part of the period of last one year
- o *Owned and possessed=1*
- o *Leased-in=2*
- o *Otherwise possessed=3*
- o *Leased-out=4*

For 13: Type of Possession
- o *Leased in=1*
- o *Otherwise possessed=2*

For 14: Duration of Possession
- o *Less than one agricultural season=1*
- o *At least one agricultural season but less than one agricultural year=2*
- o *At least one agricultural year but less than two agricultural years=3*
- o *Two agricultural years or more=4*

For 15 and 16: Use of the Leased-In and leased-Out land
- o *Only food crop production=1*
- o *Growing vegetables=2*
- o *Only farming of animal/fisheries=3*
- o *Other agricultural uses=4*
- o *Other non-agricultural uses=5*

For 17: Whether Flooded during the period
- o *Flooded and agricultural activities could not be carried out=1*
- o *Flooded but agricultural activities were carried out=2*
- o *Flooded but the plot was not for agricultural activities=3*
- o *Not flooded=4*

For 18: Land Use: Code same as for 11

For 19: Type of Crop Production/ livestock farming
- o Cereals=1
- o Pulses=2
- o Oilseeds=3
- o Vegetables=4
- o Fodder=5
- o Other Crop=6
- o Orchards=7
- o Plantation=8
- o Dairy=9
- o Poultry/Duckery=11
- o Piggery=12
- o Fishery=13
- o Farming of other animals=19

Apprendix 6: Village Questionnaire

1	Name of the village	
2	Name of the Block	
3	What are the different ethnic groups living in the village?	
4	How many households does each of the ethnic group comprise of?	
5	What are the different occupations practised by the villagers?	
6	What are the occupations practised by the different ethnic communities? Is there any occupation exclusive to one community only?	
7	Have you noticed any change in the occupation structure of the communities in your life time?	
	If yes, what brought about that change?	
	What has been the implication of those changes in the livelihood of the people?	
8	What are the land ownership criteria in this village?	
	Is the majority of land ownership under *miyadipatta* ownership? Which community?	
	Is there *eksoniya* land ownership? Which community?	

	Are there households constructed in reserved lands in this village? Which community?	
9	Which ethnic community own the major share of land in this village? Are they also the majority community in this village?	
	Have you noted any change in land ownership structure (inter-community) in your lifetime?	
	What has been the implication of that change in the livelihood of the people?	
10	Is there any institutional set-up (formal or informal) in governing the use of land, forest or fisheries in this village?	
	If yes, then please elaborate on the functioning of that institutional set-up	
11	Has there been any change in the governing or functioning of that institution within your lifetime?	
	What brought about that change?	
	What has been the implication of that change in this village?	
12	Has there been any conflict in the past regarding the access or managing of the forest or fisheries amongst the ethnic groups in the village?	
13	Has there been any conflict in the past regarding land ownership amongst the ethnic groups in the village?	
14	Has there been any Govt. law or legislation which (in your opinion) brought about significant changes in managing land, forest and fisheries in your village?	

15	What are the changes that have been brought about in the village after the creation of the Bodo Territorial Council in 2003?	
	Do those changes pertain to management of land, forest, fisheries in this village?	
	What has been the implication of that change in this village?	
	Would you consider that the coming up of the Autonomous Council has helped the villagers in gaining better access to forest, land and fisheries?	
16	How would you describe the inter-community relations within the village as well as outside the village?	

Appendix 7: Primary questions in the Group discussions

- What are the events, instances, factors and circumstances that you would say have shaped the Bodo identity and still continue to do so? Where do you involve politics in all of that?
- What would you consider to be the reason for the Bodo uprising?
- The history of clashes in BTAD in association with the Bodos involves the Bengali Muslim and the Adivasi community and not the others. Do you think there is any particular reason behind the involvement of only these two communities?
- Do you think the ethnic clash of BTAD is a struggle to gain control over resources?
- Are there fallow lands in your area? How are they used?
- Mental map