CHAPTER-II
BACKGROUND OF THE TIWAS

2.1 History and migration:

Tiwas of Morigaon District have very limited published and written historical records of their own. Because of inadequacy of evidence, it is difficult to come to a conclusion about the history of the Tiwas. However, efforts can be made to trace their ancestry from the available sources. Common beliefs and narratives present since time immemorial may also be considered for ascertaining their past history.

The Tiwas (Lalungs) belong to the Mongoloid community and to the Chino-Tibetan linguistic communities from the anthropological and linguistic perspectives. The earliest evidence of the existences of the Tribes of the North East India of the Chino-Tibetan family including the Tiwas are collectively mentioned as the Kiratas in the Yajurveda and Atharvaveda.\(^1\) In the epic, the Mahabharata, there is a mention of the Kiratas that Bhima met them to the east of Videha where Ghototkocha, the son of Bhima were born and in general all the dwellers of the eastern Himalayas were called Kiratas.\(^2\)

It is however, a difficult task to find out the historical background of the Mongoloid people. Sir Edward Gait observes-

\(^1\) Some three or four thousand years ago a number of tribes of Aryan race entered India from the north-west. Like the Dravidians, these tribe had a long head but unlike them, they were tall and well-formed, with fine and prominent, but not long
noses and comparatively fair complexion. They almost obliterated the earlier Dravidian type in the Punjab and adjoining parts of North-West India, while further east and south they produced a mixed race in which the Aryan element diminishes as the distances from the Punjab increases-gradually amongst the higher, more rapidly amongst the lower castes-and eventually in the south disappears all together.

From the opposite corner of India, through Assam and eastern Himalayas, there was a similar influx of tribes of Mongolian origin, whose main physical characteristics are short head, a broad nose, a flat and comparatively hairless face, a short but muscular figure and a yellow skin. In Assam (excluding the Surma Valley) and north-east Bengal the Dravidian type has to a great extent been replaced by the Mongolian, while in the Surma valley and the rest of Bengal, a mixture of races has taken place in which the recognizable Mongolian element diminishes towards the west and disappears altogether before Bihar is reached.\(^3\)

According to historical description, these Mongoloid people originally lived in the river valleys of the river Iang Sikiang of China. A part of them migrated to the Brahmaputra Valley and the other parts, started living on the hilly regions of Assam entering through the eastern and south-eastern passes. Another group entered the North-West Assam, South Assam, North Bengal, Tripura etc. through the valleys of rivers Tista and Dhanala and spread over the hilly regions of the north-west corner. Almost, all the ancient hilly regions of Assam were crowded with the Mongoloid people of sub-tribes like Bodo, Kachari, Mech, Koch, Rabha, Tiwa or Lalung, Dimacha, Tipara, Chutia, Moran, Bapahi, Missing, Adi, Michi, Apatani etc. excluding the Khasi and Jayantia hills.\(^4\)
Hem Baruah in this regard writes—

*These Mongolians in general belong to the Tibeto Burman family of the Indo-Chinese group. The Kacharies, the Rabhas, the Mechess, the Miris, the Lalungs, the Garos, the Nagas, the Kukis and the Lihe are the members of the early Mongoloid group that migrated in to this land.*

Most of the scholars are of the opinion that Tiwas and their forefathers have come down from the Tibet region. But a section of historians urges that the habitats of the Tiwas were somewhere near Allahabad on the bank of the river Yamuna. But they were pushed out by the Aryan invasion and were forced them to leave that place and took asylum in the Himalayan passes in the distant past. Thereafter, the ‘Tiphras’ entered into Pragjyotishpur and established a kingdom known as ‘Trivega’ in 1900 B.C. Pratardddan was the first Tifra king who ruled in Trivega. Beginning from Pratardddan, a total number of sixteen kings ruled in Trivega—

*At the time of fifteenth king, ‘Tripura’, mismanagement created disaffection among the subjects and the neighbours and a catastrophic famine further aggravated the matter and the king was assassinated …… and subjects ran pell-mell to neighbouring states for foods. His son Trilochan reorganized the state and married the daughter of neighbouring Kachari king from a new kingdom in the Barak Valley with his headquarter at Kholongma somewhere east of Silchar.*

Trilochan had two sons- Drikapati and Dakshin. The Kachari king had no son; therefore, his grandson in-law, Drikapati became the king of the Kachari kingdom after the death of its king. On the other side, Dakshin, the younger son of Trilochan, was enthroned
as a successor to his father. But Drikpapati, the eldest son of the king, could not agree to his young brother’s ascendance to the throne. In stead he claimed to be the royal head on the ground of being the eldest of the successor. Subsequently, he waged a war against his brother. Dakshin was defeated in it and he left for the southernmost part of his kingdom. In this retreat of Dakshin he was accompanied by some of his followers. The group crossed the Barail mountain range. The founded a kingdom therein, which was named ‘Tippare’ or ‘Tripura’, Kholongma was its capital.

*The Tiffras who did not accompany Dakshin hide themselves in the hilly areas and their descendants were later known as ‘Lalung’.*

During the reign of 15th Tifra king, many of his subjects left the kingdom as he was inept in performing royal duties. Again, during the war between Dakshin and Drikapati another group of the subjects fled away from the kingdom and took refuge under the Jayantia kings. The remaining part that stayed there became descendants under the Kacharies. The group that became native under the Jayantia kings started to follow matriarchal rules of the Jayantias. This part of people is known as Tiwa or Lalungs.

G. A. Grierson has a different view regarding the history of the Tiwas:

*How the Lalungs came to their present site or when is not known. They are not mentioned by the Ahom historians nor in the accounts of the Koch kingdoms. In Nowgong, they are said to have a tradition that came from the Jayantia Hills while some of the Lalungs say that their ancestors immigrated thither in the reign of the Jayantia.*
Edward Gait also put a very little light about the origin or migration of the Tiwas—

.....and Bodo, which claims practically all the surviving non-Aryan languages of the Brahmaputra valley, Garo Hills and North Cachar; it includes among others, Kachari or Mech, Garo, Lalung, Rabha and Chutiya. 11

The prominent Assamese chronicle, Deodhai Asom Buranji has given a brief account of the Tiwas in its section of Datiyolia Buranji. As per the description, during the reign of Ahom king Jayadhaj Singha the Ahom outpost were established at Raha and Jagi with a view to stop the further incursion of the Kacharies as well as the Koches. Teleka Sandikai was deputed in Raha as an administrator. Sometimes after, Teleka Sandikai, now Rohial Barua happened to see fire on the top of the neighbouring hills. He sent his officers to observe those places; they came upon villages with active settlements. The inhabitants ran away to different places at the sight of the Ahom army, and the Ahom soldiers ate the food they could recover from the deserted houses. The old and descript frontiersmen who were left behind at home for their infirmity were extremely pleased to see that the Ahom soldiers had eaten food from which they concluded that the Ahoms were from similar caste as themselves. The Ahoms asked them about the custom of their country. The frontiersmen reportedly said that a son was debarred from succession as per their custom, and the son of a daughter was declared as their successor, and that the son of chief had to earn his livelihood by service under another person. The Ahom officers exposed this injustice of their matriarchal custom and assured them
of a more popular mode of inheritance if they agree to place themselves under the domination of the Ahoms. As a result of this negotiation, twelve families of Mikir and twelve families of Lalungs migrated to the Ahom territories down to the plain. Their leaders were taken to the presence of the Ahom king Jayadhaj Singha who promised them protection and the justice according to which a son could inherit his father’s property. The king thanked Teleka Sandikai and other officers for procuring the migration and homage of the subjects of another country and establishing village by settling them in the Ahom territory.\textsuperscript{12}

The Ahoms and colonial writers represent the Gobha kingdom as the over-all kingdom of the Tiwas. But according to Tiwa oral traditions, there were many small kingdoms within the Tiwa habitat areas. They have the tradition of kingship like \textit{sato raja, pancho raja, datiyalia raja} and \textit{powali raja}. This means that there is a tradition of governance among the Tiwas. The Gobha kingdom was the prominent principality under the Jayantia king.

Most of the researchers opine that the Tiwas migrated to Assam from the Tibetan region, settled and founded a kingdom in the north bank of river Luit. From there they gradually migrated to Nagaon and Morigaon district. N. K. Choudhury and M M Das had their opinion in their edition, \textit{The Lalung Society} as:

\textit{The Dimasha, the eastern branch of the Bodos were dominant in central Assam. It is very likely that that Lalungs who are linguistically closely related to the Dimashas were also distributed on both sides of the Brahmaputra along with them the traditions that the Lalungs lived at Helem and that Jangal}
Balahu was their Hero may not be entirely devoid of historical value.\textsuperscript{13}

From linguistic evidence, it can be predicted that the Tiwas are descendants of the Bodo family of the Tibeto-Chinese group of Mongolbid stock.\textsuperscript{14} It has been said that the Bodo (Kachari), Garo, Rabha, Dimasa, Tippera and Lalung Language appears from the greater Bodo family which belongs to the Burmese-Chin-Kuki family. This Burmese-Chin-Kuki family fall in Assam- Burmese linguistic group which in turn is a sub group of Tibeto-Burman group as well as Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese speech family. This is shown in the chart of the next page. (i.e. page no. 28)

The Tiwa oral traditions also indicate that the original abode of the Tiwas were Tibet and they have come down to Brahmaputra valley. From there, the Tiwas are supposed to have dispersed to the hilly regions of Meghalaya and Karbi Anglong. Some oral traditions also suggest that a considerable migration of the Tiwas take place back to the plains of the Brahmaputra from the hills. Thus, it can be said that they have some relation to water. Concerning the origin of the words Lalung and Tiwa  B. K. Gohain observes—

*The Hill Lalungs hold that the word Lalung is derived from the word libing or libung or labung which, over the years, got phonetically changed to Lalung. The word libung means men. “The word Tiwa has its origin in the words ti-phar-wali meaning ‘a clan living near water’. Ti-phar-wali became ti-wali, meaning ‘a tribe born out of water’, which later became Tiwa. According to the Hill Lalungs, the first Lalung, Sotonga Raja, was born out of water and hence the entire Lalung tribe is called Tiwa. It is noteworthy that Sotonga is a place in the Jaintia area.*\textsuperscript{15}
There are a large number of Tiwa people still living in the hills. But both these line of habitants, *hills Tiwas* and *plain Tiwas* have difference as on date according to their livelihood, customs and tradition. While the hill Tiwas still retain their age old language, culture and tradition; the plain Tiwas gradually coming into the influence of the neighbouring other communities have adopted the Assamese language as their medium of communication.

In the ‘Assam Census Report, 1881, Wadell makes a significant proposition about the Tiwas, *The Lalungs got mixed up with the Garos and the Mikirs. They have numerous exogamous clans.*\(^{16}\)

That is why, perhaps, the Ahom chroniclers did not differentiate the Tiwas from the other tribes of the hills. Wadell articulated his findings in a book form later where he expressed this historical confusion regarding the Tiwas as-

*This is a small semi-Hinduised tribe in the plains skirting the Mikir country at the foot of the Jayantia Hills. No mention is made of them in the earlier historical accounts of plains in Ahom histories. They seem to be a branch of the Kacharis, though they are less robust. They appear to be mixed up with Mikir or Garo blood accordingly as they adjoin one or other of those tribes. The few I have seen had fairly good long noses with somewhat prominent bridges.*\(^{17}\)

The Tiwa principalities scattered towards the north of Gobha are known as *satu raja* and towards east known as *pachu raja* centering Gobha as their parent kingdom. The kingdoms of Tiwas have been in existence under Ahom protection well till the 18th century but in the 19th century, the Gobha king was involved in a
conflict with the British. It had far-reaching consequences for the Gobha kingdom as well as the Tiwa community. Sir Edward Gait mentions this incident as:

In 1832, the Raja of Gobha in the west of Nowgong, one of the petty chieftains dependent upon Jayantia, acting under the orders of his suzerain, seized four British subjects, three of whom were afterwards immolated at the shrine of the goddess Kali. The fourth escaped and gave information of the occurrence...On the 15th March, 1835, Captain Lister with two companies of the Sylhet Light Infantry, took formal possession of Jayantiapur and issued a proclamation announcing the annexation of the Jayantia Parganas to British Territory. A few weeks later, Gobha, in the Nowgong District was similarly taken over by a detachment of the Assam Light Infantry.¹⁸

After this Gobha kingdom, the traditional administrative structure of the Tiwas centering on Gobha also lost its dynamism. Today, the traditional Tiwa kings remain as customary kings in the Tiwa living areas.

### 2.1.1 Myths and legends relating origin of the Tiwas:

There are myths and legends regarding the history of the Tiwas. Some of them are mentioned below:

- **Adijamal myth:** According to Hindu sacred text *Sri Sri Adijamal*, the Tiwas born out of the saliva of God Mahadev. There is popular verse in the text as, *Lalotito honte voila lalung uttpoti.*¹⁹

  Meaning – The Lalungs (Tiwas) were created out of the saliva of God Mahadev. The Tiwas believe *pha Mahadeu* as their supreme God. They consider themselves as the successors of God Mahadev.
• **Monikonwar myth:** God Mahadev created a god out of his bodily sweat known as ‘Lungla Mahadeu’. Lung means stream of juice arising out of lord Siva and La means formation of a living being out of juice.\(^{20}\) The union between lord Lungla Mahadeu and Jayanti Devi (Goddess Durga) gave birth to three daughters.\(^{21}\) They were Lai, Hilali and Lehi.\(^{22}\) From the eldest the Karbis were created; from the second, the Boro Kacharies and from the youngest Lalungs were created.\(^{23}\)

• **Hilali kingdom legend:** Tiwas of Morigaon till today believe, they came from the great Hilali kingdom. The Hilali kingdom was situated on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra encompassing the region *Helem* where a powerful king named Ramchandra ruled as described at ‘Rupohir Purabitta’.\(^{24}\) King Ramchandra had a beautiful wife named Chandraprava. The king was fascinated at the beauty of the queen and sometime even forgot his royal duties. Once a havoc of flood and erosion severely affected his kingdom. The *luit konwar* dreamt him a dream that the king should have to sacrifice his queen in the river. The king with a deep sorrow and hesitation raised this issue at his court and accordingly the pregnant queen was sacrificed into the river to sweep away by the river currents resting her in a *bhur*. She was rescued by a *baidya* at *Baidyagarh* towards the downstream of the river. By the passage of time her son known as Arimatta became a very powerful king. Arimatta’s two sons Jokanka (Jongal Balahu) and Mriganka (Ratnasingha) both became eminent kings later on. The Tiwas of Sahari (Jongal Balahu’s Kingdom) even today worship Arimatta and jongal Balahu as their forefathers. Hilali song, the famous Tiwa song originates from this Hilali kingdom legend and in the song the description of their happily life in Hilali kingdom is explained.
• **Hora-Tangra Legend:** - According to this legend the Tiwas came down from the Jayantia kingdom. Once there was a debate in the kingdom between the chief ministers Hora and Tangra regarding the matrilineal and patrilineal selection of the *zela* (king). This debate turned out to a severe war. Subjects divided in each group. Tangra was defeated and killed. Hora also left the kingdom with his followers and came down to the plains for the fear of being punished by the royal family and other subjects. During their journey, they swam across a river. The sharp flow of the river was about to sweep away and the nearby Karbi people rescued them from the water. The Karbis called them as ‘Lang lung’ (people rescued from water). Since then, they have been started known as ‘Lalung’.

Some of the Tiwa eminent scholar and researcher have their opinion regarding the history and migration of the Tiwas are as follows:

• According to Maneswar Deuri, Nabheti, Morigaon, aged around 65, a renowned Tiwa scholar and researcher, opined that the Tiwas are indo-chinese group and lived in the hills. They are brought to the plains by the Ahoms. They were settled under some small principalities (*puwali raja*) known as frontier kings in the foothills of Karbi Anlong district. These kings helped in safeguarding the Ahoms from probable invasions of the Kacharies and the Koches. Also, they provided the Ahoms military support besides the contributions from their subjects in the form of contribution as tax. During the reign of the Bhuyans there was a second wave of migration of the Tiwas from hills to plains as agricultural labours to work in the lands of the Bhuyans who later on settled there and converted themselves to *Vaishnavism*. 
Jursingh Bordoloi, Jagiroad, aged about 55, a subject Teacher from Jagiroad, opined that Tiwas had their own kingdom even before the existence of the Ahoms somewhere in the Marjong, Umsuai area of west Karbi Anlong district. They have their own independent kings. Later on, during the period of the Ahom rule, they came down to the plains to form some kingdoms in the foothills of the Karbi Anglong district.

Tulsi Bordoloi, Jagiroad, aged about 56, Asstt. Professor in History, Jagiroad College opined that Tiwas came from the Tibet and started to live in the hills, came down to plains after being disturbed by the Jaintias. They have a close affinity in terms of their customs, traditions, rituals etc. with other tribes like Bodos.

2.2 Origin of the name Lalung and Tiwa:

There are several opinions regarding the origin of the word Lalung and Tiwa. Some of them are related to historical facts while others depend on mythical believes.

2.2.1 Origin of the word Lalung:

There are several opinions regarding the origination of the name Lalung. Some of them are cited in the following-

G. C Sarmathakur argues as-

_The Karbis called those people as Lalungs who were living on the south bank of the river Brahmaputra. ‘La’ means water and lung means rescued. The river Brahmaputra rescued or gave shelter to the Bohemian people, hence they were known as Lalungs._"
Sarma Thakur has cited a second meaning of the word Lalung as, According to the Lalung dilact Libing or Libung means man. In course of time Libing or Libung changed its form to Lalung.  

- B.K. Gohain states—

  .....when they left their original home and took shelter beside the river Nilalung flowing through the present Karbi Anlong district. As the people lived on the bank of the river Nilalung, tributary of the river Dayang, they got the name Lalung.

- Din Haripad Deva Goswami states, the ‘La’ means ‘bank of river’ and ‘Lu’ means ‘to come away’, hence people who came through the bank of the river are known as Lalung.

- The Jaintias entered into India through the north-east passes in some 4500 B.C. The second similar group started to live in Tibet. They were known as Chinese Tiang> Chinteng or Jinteng > Jaintia. Thus, it is assumed that the word ‘Tiwa’ comes from ‘tia’ of the last part of ‘Jaintia’ since the Tiwas are the heirs of the Jaintias.

- There are several myths on origination of the name Lalung. One such myth is Adijamal myth as stated already. Lalung got their name from the verse “Lalotitta honte voila Lalung utpatti” as stated by Maneswar Deuri. This was further supported by N. K Syam Choudhary in ‘The Lalung Society’ that the Lalungs were born out of the salvia (Lal) of God Mahadev, hence they were known as the Lalung. The other such myth is the Monikonwar myth where it has been sounded that the descendents of Lungla Mahadeu are known as the Lalungs.
• The Hora-Tangra legend suggests that the Krbis used to call them as Lalung as they were rescued (Lang) from water (Lung) of being blown away while crossing the river.³⁴

### 2.2.2 Origin of the word Tiwa:

The word Tiwa has some historical origins. Some of them are cited below-

• Anil Barua states about the word Tiwa as-

  The original Tribal name of Lalung community was Tiwa. ‘Ti’ in Lalung dialect means water; ‘Wa’ means great, noble, high, elevated. From this end their constant references of water and river in their religious deities it is observed by the historians, that the Lalungs were originally living on the bank of holly river.³⁵

  A similar opinion has also been put forwarded by Sarma Thakur in his book.

• Sarma Thakur remarks about the origin of the word thus—

  Propably Tiwa derieves its origin to the term ‘Tibbatia’ meaning people hailing from Tibbet. In the course of time this ‘Tibbatia’ might have changed to ‘Tiwa’.³⁶

• The Lalungs living in the hills believe that the word Tiwa comes from the word ‘Tiper-wali’ or Ti-far-wali’, indicates a dynasty living over water. In the hills ‘Wali’ means a dynasty or clan such as Majongwali, Aamboiwali etc. In course of time this ‘ti-far-wali’, it became ‘ti-wali’ (means an ethnic group born out of water) and from ‘ti-wali’, the word ‘Tiwa’ was derived. Hence, the Lalungs lived on the valleys of Kalang and Kapili are called Tiwa.³⁷
Shyam Choudhury and M.M Das states-

*The Tiwas tried to cross the Kalang river located to their east when Assam was attacked by the Man. Many Tiwas drowned in Kalang. The Karbis living in the bank of Kalang rescued many Tiwas. Since then, the Karbis called them ‘Lang Lung’ or ‘Lalung’ which means ‘man falling into water’.*

The name of the Tiwas or the Lalungs has two dimensions. *One,* They gave it themselves. *Two,* How the neighbouring communities used to call them. The name they gave themselves seems to have come out of the geographical features, place of dwelling and the profession of the individuals. On the other hand, the neighbouring communities name them depending on the culture of the community which forms out of the features of the place of living, habits and activities of the individuals.

Thus, it is clear from the above analysis that both the words-Lalung and Tiwa have similar meaning. Both ‘La’ from Lalung and ‘Ti’ from Tiwa means water and similarly ‘Lung’ and ‘Wa’ means people rescued from water. Almost all the researchers agree with this meaning. Thus, the etymology of the words Lalung and Tiwa clearly signals that Tiwas have some relationship to water bodies or river while living in the Tibbet region or in the plains near Brahmaputra. To conclude, it can be said that the Lalungs or the Tiwas are one of the river based civilizations.
2.3 Geo-physical identity of the habitat:

Morigaon district stands on the south bank of the river Brahmaputra in the middle part of Assam. It used to be a sub division of the undivided Nagaon district until it was announced as an independent district in 1989, vide Govt. Notification No.GAG/CB/370/87/102 dated Sept. 1989. Now, the district has the single subdivision with five revenue circles. The revenue circles are Morigaon, Mayong, Bhuragaon, Laharighat and Mikirbheta. Morigaon has one statutory town and 5 Census Towns. The geographical area of the district is 1551 Sq Km in which rural area covers 1525.50 Sq.Km. and Urban covers 25.5 Sq.Km. The district has 7 Community Development Blocks. There are 632 numbers of villages in the district at present. The geographical position of the district is 26.31° and 26.33° North Latitude and 91.59° and 92.35° East Longitudes. The district is surrounded by Nagaon district to the east, the Brahmaputra river to the north, Karbi Anglong district and state of Meghalaya to the south and Kamrup district is to the west. It is situated at the greater Brahmaputra Valley having some small pieces of hills and hillocks spreading here and there in its western part. The district is well known for its Lagoon, big natural water tank and basins. The main rivers of the district are Kapili, Kolong, Killing, Sonai and Pokaria etc. and all are actually the tributaries to Brahmaputra river. Because of the abundance of the water bodies in the district in one hand, and the close set up with the river Brahmaputra on the other, identifies the district as one of the flood porn or flood affected districts of Assam. Over all, Morigaon
district can be recognized as one of the beautiful districts for its natural bounty.

2.4 Name of district, Morigaon:

The story how the name of the district became ‘Morigaon’, takes us back to the regime of Ahom king Chandra Kanta Singha in the 17th century. Two princes of Darrangi Konwar came across Brahmaputra from Darrang district (situated on the north bank of Brahmaputra) due to the conflict sprang up with the king. The two princes with their 72 families crossed the Brahmaputra river at Chaul Khowa ghat (now to the west of Mayong) and took shelter in a place known as Barbari. The Ahom king allowed the two princes to settle temporarily in that place. After some day, Supradhawas Singh, one of two princes, was declared as the king of Sukhnagog by Ahom king. The king Supradhawas had two sons. They left Sukhnagog due to insufficient area of land and proceeded through the jungle in search of new land. After several days later, they reached the place Bhurbandha and settled there for a short period. Later, due to internal conflict between the two princes, Ram Singh and Bhim Singh, Ram Singh along with his followers returned to his father’s kingdom. But Bhim Singh proceeded forward and later on, he found a suitable place for dwelling besides a small river, Morikalang (a dead part of the Kalang river). He established a small village there known as Morigaon.
2.5 **Current administrative setup:**

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) of the district is the head of the administration of the district and acts as the collector of Revenue, District Magistrate in case of maintenance of law and order or general administration, District Election Officer in case of conducting Election and as a Principal Census Officer while conducting census and so on. There are a number of officers under DC as shown in the organizational chart.

**Organisational Chart**

![Organisational Chart Diagram]

**Source:** Deputy Commissioner Office, Morigaon District
2.6 Demography of the district:

The district comprises of numerous type of people irrespective of religion, caste and creed. The entire district was Hindu dominated at one point of time but the present status reveals a different picture. Today, there are Hindus, Muslims followed by a small portion of Christians and Jains living in the district. From the view point of census data, Scheduled Tribe population plays a vital role in composition of population in the district. Within the Scheduled Tribe population the main component is the Tiwas. Only a very small part involves the other Tribes.

*Tiwas have been recorded the status of Scheduled Tribe (ST) by the Constitution of India for the State of Assam excluding the autonomous districts of Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hills (now named Dima Hasao).*

However, the ST status has been extended to hill Lalungs of Karbi-Anglong district also in 2002.

2.6.1 Trend of Tiwa population:

Data reflecting the trend of population growth has not found uniformly available for all the period. But the collected data shows the following summery-

The population of the Tiwas was mentioned as 40,160 in the book ‘Linguistic Survey of India’ by George Abraham Gearson published in 1901. The Assamese speaking Tiwas were not included here. Thus, 40,160 people were Tiwa language speaking people at that point of time.
According to the census of 1961, the total population of Tiwas was 61,315. In the census 1971, the population increased up to 95,609 where number of male population was 48,397 and number females for that period were 47,212. The population growth rate of the Tiwas in the period 1961-71 was 36%. On the other hand the population growth rate of the other Scheduled Tribes in Assam was 40.98%. The 1981 census was not held in Assam. According to the 1991 census, total population of Tiwas in Assam were accounted as 1,43,746, out of which 72,511 were males and 71,235 were females. The population of the Tiwas in Morigaon district was 81,750. The numbers of male and female populations were respectively 41,023 and 40,727.

In the 2001 census, the total population of the Tiwas recorded as 1,70,622. The percentage of their population was 5.16% of the total population. Total numbers of males were 85,964 and females were 84,685. The literacy rate was 51.53%.

According to 2011 census, the total population of the scheduled Tribes in Morigaon district are 1,36,777. It estimates 14.27% of the total population of the district. In the context of population structure of Assam and Morigaon district, the Tiwas have been contributing a lot. At present the overall Plain Tiwa population in India is 371000 approx.\textsuperscript{47}

Decadal growth rate population of the district as a whole is shown in the table below.\textsuperscript{48}
### Table 2.1 Decadal growth rate of population

<table>
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<th>Period</th>
<th>Growth rate of Population (in %)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>1911-1921</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2001-2011</td>
<td>23.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2.6.2 Literacy:**

Average literacy rate of Morigaon in 2011 were 68.03% compared to 58.53% of 2001. The male and female literacy rate for the period stood as 71.90% and 64.04% respectively. For 2001 census, same figures were 65.15% and 51.51% in the district. Total numbers of literate people in district were 539,902 of which males and females were 289,698 and 250,204 respectively.\(^{49}\)

**2.7 Child population:**

Children population plays an important role on the future population. As per Census 2011, data regarding child under 0-6 years of age show that there were total 163,819 children in this
group as against 148,765 of 2001 census. Of total 163,819 children number of boys and girls were 83,746 and 80,073 respectively. Children Sex Ratio as per census 2011 was 956 compared to 966 of census 2001. In 2011, Children under 0-6 formed 17.11 percent of the total district population compared to 19.16 percent of 2001. There were net changes of -2.05 percent in the period.\textsuperscript{50}

\textbf{2.8 Religion distribution of people :}

As stated already, although the district was originally a Hindu majority district, but today it is turning to a Muslim majority district. The data presented below witnesses a comparative analysis of religious categories.\textsuperscript{51}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>451,882</td>
<td>47.20 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>503,257</td>
<td>52.56 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>834</td>
<td>0.09 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sikh</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>0.01 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>0.01 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Jain</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>0.03 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0.00 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Not Stated</td>
<td>1,017</td>
<td>0.11 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2 Religion wise distribution of population.
Besides these, a numerous data reflecting different aspects of the district has been shown on the report which are summarized below.\textsuperscript{52}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area Sq. Km</th>
<th>1,551</th>
<th>1,551</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Density/km\textsuperscript{2}</td>
<td>617</td>
<td>501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion to Assam Population</td>
<td>3.07%</td>
<td>2.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex Ratio (Per 1000)</td>
<td>967</td>
<td>946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Sex Ratio (0-6 Age)</td>
<td>956</td>
<td>966</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Literacy</td>
<td>68.03</td>
<td>58.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Literacy</td>
<td>71.90</td>
<td>65.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Literacy</td>
<td>64.04</td>
<td>51.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Child Population (0-6 Age)</td>
<td>163,819</td>
<td>148,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Population (0-6 Age)</td>
<td>83,746</td>
<td>75,676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Population (0-6 Age)</td>
<td>80,073</td>
<td>73,089</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literates</td>
<td>539,902</td>
<td>5,312,396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Literates</td>
<td>289,698</td>
<td>2,872,529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Literates</td>
<td>250,204</td>
<td>2,439,868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Proportion (0-6 Age)</td>
<td>17.11%</td>
<td>19.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys Proportion (0-6 Age)</td>
<td>17.21%</td>
<td>18.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls Proportion (0-6 Age)</td>
<td>17.01%</td>
<td>19.37%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.3 A glance to the district population statistic.

\textbf{2.9 Socio- material aspects :}

\textbf{2.9.1 Physical features :}

The Tiwas being the heir of the Mongolioid stock have a physical appearance similar to the other tribes. They possess the trait of the non-aryan root with short and muscular figure. Edward Gait in this context has an elaborate description in his book as-
Tiwas belong to the great Bodo race into which tribes like the Bodo Kachari, Chutiya, Deori, Rabha, Mech, Garo, etc. are included. The Tiwas, in their view, share similar physical features with them. The Tiwas are of medium stature, strong built and generally fair complexioned people, which are the characteristic features of the Mongoloids. They have flat nose, straight hair, wide faces with scanty beards and moustaches. They are similar to Bodo Kachari and the Karbis, the other similar tribe in look being from the same Mongoloid family.

2.9.2 Abode and villages:

In the plains, Tiwa concentrations are mainly found in the districts of Nagaon and Morigaon in Central Assam. They are also seen in Kaliabar, Lanka, Raha, and Kampur in Nagaon district, and the Tribal Belt of Sonapur Revenue Circle of Kamrup Metropolitan district. They are found in the Dhemaji and Jorhat districts also, and some of them reside in the Jowai sub-division of Jaintia and Ri-bhoi district of the state of Meghalaya. The home of the Hill Lalungs in the district of Karbi Anglong of Assam is in the Amri Development Block, and a part of the Hamren sub-division. Because of the difference in topography and ecology the hill Lalungs are significantly different from the plain Lalungs in term of food habits, house type, rituals, customs, social and agricultural ceremonies etc.

Tiwas are known as ‘Hajuali Tiwa’, ‘Tholuali Tiwa’ and ‘Datiolia Tiwa’. The Hajuali Tiwa live in the hills, Tholuali in the plains while the Datiolia in the foothills; altogether they form the Tiwa society.
In some occasions, they are also referred to as ‘Hill Tiwas’ and ‘Plain Tiwa’. In the Morigaon district Tiwas live in the areas like Amsoi, Baghara, Bangphou, Barapujia, Beltola, Bengenabari, Bhomoraguri, Bonpora, Charaibahi, Dabarghat, Darapani, Deosal, Dohali, Garamkusi, Gobha, Jagibhakatgaon, Kumarbari, Kumoi, Makrangkusi, Manipur, Mokaria, Nabheti, Nakhola, Natungaon, Nellie, Palashguri, Pashim Nagaon, Phakalihabi, Sahari, Sarangkusi, Silsang, Sindhisar, Sukhunagog, Tarani, Tetelia. Tiwas living here are plain Tiwas or Tholualti Tiwas.

2.9.3 Domestic homesteads:

The domestic homesteads house type of the Tiwas of the plains resembles to that of the Bodo Kacharis tribe. They build their houses on earthen plinths. They normally use thatch for roofing. The walls of the house are made of reed and bamboo. Both bamboo and wooden post are used in their houses. In the recent years the traditional house type of the Tiwas are replaced by Assam type houses made of bricks plastered in the walls, using concrete post and roofing sheets of tin and other materials. A traditional typical Tiwa house has a barghar. It has two rooms, one is used for the household deity, and the other for cooking. There is also a majghar with two or three rooms used for sleeping purposes and a choraghhar a seating arrangement for the guests. Towards the east, they construct their granary. Some of them use a corner of the living room or choraghhar as granary for storing paddy.
The hill Tiwas construct their house on the earthen platform. The hill Tiwas constructs their traditional house with two rooms. There is also a *verandah* in front of the house. The front room is called *nomaji*, and the second one is named as *nukthi*. The *nomaji* is used as the guest room as well as the store of paddy. The *nukthi* functions as a living-room, kitchen and sometime as store-room. Both bamboo and wood are used as the construction material for the traditional Tiwa house in the hills with mud plastering on the bamboo walls.

Having a courtyard in front of every Tiwa house is a common feature for both in the hill and plain Tiwas which is used for threshing of paddy and other purposes.

### 2.9.4 Equipments and utensils:

The household equipments and utensils of the Tiwas are simple and limited which consists mainly of the daily used household materials such as of cooking pots, large earthen vessels for preparing rice beer, the mortar and the pestle used for husking paddy and some other equipment, use bamboo baskets of different shapes and sizes and a few *daos* and hoes. The Tiwas living in both the hills and plains use a number of implements for other activities as hunting, fishing, and for agriculture. Bow with arrow, *daos* and firearms are used for individual hunting even today especially in hill areas. Tiwas are fish lovers. Fishing is a very popular habit among them, both the hill and plain Tiwas. In the plains, community fishing is practiced frequently in some days mainly during the winter seasons.
in the *beels* (wetlands) when the water in the streams and *beels* is scant. In fact, it is one of the highlights as well as a customs of the Jonbeel *mela*. Groups of people go to the *Beel* and they form some human rows and then the entire group of people enter into the *beel* water and catch fish with the help of fishing implements using different kind of nets, the *palo* and *juluki*. During the summer season when the water level rises in the river, fishing nets are used for individual fish catching in the rivers. Bamboo made devices for fishing like *chepa*, *dalanga*, *pacha* are also used in the paddy fields to catch the fish that emerge in the fields because of overflowing water due to heavy rain. The hill Tiwas is sometimes seen to use poison to stupefy the fishes in streams and rivers. The *nangal* (plough) is one of the most widely used agricultural implements of the Tiwas in the plains. It consists of a beam and a yoke. They use a *juwali* (harrow) for farming their fields along with plough. The other agricultural implements used by the Tiwas are the *kor* (spade), *jabaka* (a kind of cleaner), *fal* (share), *moi*, *dalimari* (soil mixer), *kachi* (paddy cutter), etc. For grinding rice, they also use the *dheki* (a grinding tool). The hill Tiwas practice shifting cultivation. The chief implements they use in such cultivation are the *khangra* (a versatile bush knife), *paku* (hoe), *khaji* (a cuuutin tool) and the *ruwa* (axe), etc.

### 2.9.5 Foods and dress:

One of the important cultural traits of a community or society is the food culture. The Tiwas also have a food culture of their own.
Rice is known to be the main food of the Tiwas. They take two major meals in a day which consists of rice and vegetables. Meat, fish and eggs are an important part of the food. Chicken and pork are regarded as the delicious of the Tiwas. The guests are served with meat, especially chicken or duck’s flesh. Almost all the Tiwas rear pigs and fowls, since pork and chicken are essential items in their meals as well as in socio-religious ceremonies. However, milk is not considered as an item of food. Rather, the Tiwa people prefer to take locally made rice beer viz. **ju** or **zu** in their day to day life. It is also an essential item in certain religious ceremonies.

The dress of the Tiwa women of the plains is similar to those worn by the other rural Assamese women. The traditional dress of the Tiwa women is called kashong phaskai. This typical dress of the Tiwa women constitutes one mekhela (kashong) and one chadar (phaskai). One of the noteworthy characteristic of the Tiwa women is that they are expert weavers and they weave all the clothes for both male and female. The dresses of the men folk are similar as well to those of other Assamese men folk. In the past, **dhoris** woven by women folk were the major items of dresses. However, now-a-days only elderly man wears **dhoris**. ‘Nimai Sola’ and **thagla** were the shirts of men folk but these dresses are no more in vogue. Moreover, the dresses of the hill Tiwas are quite different from those of plain Tiwas. Men folk of hill Tiwas put on a narrow strip of the cloth called **lengti** which is about a half a cubit in breadth and six or seven feet in length. Lengti is worn as a piece of traditional dress. The male Tiwas also wear a shirt prepared locally. And the elderly people wear turbans.
2.9.6 Village administration:

The Tiwa society is a stratified society and there are different office bearers in village having socio-religious assignments. The social organisation is divided into two categories. The first category may be called a secular village organisations which is headed by the gaonbura (village Headman) and assisted by an official called barika. There are four categories of officers namely shangdoloi, shangmaji, suruma and khuramul who run the affairs of chamadi. The non secular organisation is run by the three office bearers namely gharbura, zela and harikunwari. Besides, there is deori (Priest) who presides over the worship of than.

2.9.7 Animal husbandry:

The rearing of livestock plays a vital role in the hill Tiwa family life not only as to get assistance in agriculture from but also to take other benefit of exchange. Rearing of pigs, goats, poultry either for traditional habit or for income generation plays an important part. It does not constitute only the important part of hill Tiwa’s economic life; it is also regarded the easy and simple way for removal of poverty. But still rearing is limited to as daily household activity because certain shortcoming and inconvenience. They don’t show much commercial benefits as both male and female engaged in other household activities. The females are predominant, which in addition to daily household activities use their leisure time in rearing poultry, piggery. With the help of their traditionally inherited knowledge, they earn something to run their daily life.
2.9.8 Dormitory system:

The dormitory in Tiwa society is called *chamadi* or *dekashang*. It is a bachelor’s dormitory and no doubt the most significant social institution of the Tiwa people. Only male youths are allowed to stay in this institution. Women are strictly prohibited to enter the *chamadi*. The boys who attain at age of 7 become the member of the *chamadi*. However, the youths staying in *chamadi* are divided into three groups according to their age. They are *khorkiya*, age from 7 to 16, *panthai* age from 16 to 28 and *grapanthai* those who cross their marriage age. They have to attend this dormitory usually at the night. There is a committee named *panthaikhel* to run this dormitory. *shangdoloi* and *shangmaji*, *khuramul* and *suruma* are the head of the *chamadi*. However, this *chamadi* or youth dormitory institution is fast disappearing from the plains Tiwas where the hills Tiwas are still running this institution with traditional splendour.

2.9.9 Weapons for war and hunting:

The Tiwas have the section of people in their society as blacksmiths, enough traces of which exist in Kamarkuchi, a village near Jagiroad. Different war equipments like cannons and swords were made in this village for the *rajas* and the soldiers of the kingdom. Bow, arrow, *daos* and firearms are used by the Tiwas for war and chase. Tiwas are reeknowned as excellent archers and during the Ahom rule, they were used as such by the Ahom kings under *Jagial Barua* and *Rahial Barua*, two administrator under the
Ahoms. The main weapons of the hill Lalungs are the long knife, Daos, die spear, and the bow and arrow.

### 2.9.10 Family:

The family composition is, however, quite different among the Hill Lalungs. Gohain states:

> A typical Lalung family of the hills consists of parents, unmarried sons and daughters and a married daughter with her husband who stays in the house as a resident son-in-law, that is, gobhia and his children.

Ideally, the youngest daughter of the family called sadiya in the Lalung language stays with her husband in the house of her parents i.e. gabhiya system and inherits by their custom the parental house as well as landed property. In case of the daughter is not the youngest in the family, the husband constructs a new house in the land of his father-in-law and they do not inherit the paternal houses or lands in such cases. In a Tiwa household of the hills, the husband becomes the head of the family only after marriage.

But in the plains, Tiwas follow the traditional Assamese system. Here, male is the chief of the family and girls have to go to husband’s house after marriage. She shares the property of her husband.

### 2.9.11 Kingship:

Before the advent of Britishers the Tiwas had principalities that enjoyed sovereign political powers in the area. The Tiwa kings ruled over kingdoms like satu raja, pachu raja, datiyolia raja were
known as Deoraja as because they also perform some rituals and religious functions in their society. The hill Tiwas believe that the first Tiwa kings were sotonga raja, mallowa raja and lampha raja. The Gobha was the great kingdom of the Tiwas by its name and fame in latter stage. The other smaller kingdoms like; Nellie, Kholo and Sohori were the state subordination to the Gobha kingdom and followed the Gobha king which itself was under the Jayantia kingdom in transition. During the time of Ahom rule in Assam, the Paso rajya and Sato rajya were the chieftains under Ahom rule. The Pasorajya was the five clustering kingdoms like- Kumoi, Baghara, Torani, Kacharigoan and Sukhanagug to the north of Gobha kingdom. The Satorajya was the seven principalites under Gobha like - Ghagua, Tetelia, Mikirgoanya, Baropujia, Tupakushi, Khaigah and Sara-rajya to east of the Gobha. A legend of the Tiwas goes to the extent that there were about one hundred Puvali kings (small chieftians) in different areas of the Tiwas. Today, the kingship is still prevalent but as customary.
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