



**RURAL HABITAT: RURAL SETTLEMENTS WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
KARBI ANGLONG DISTRICT OF ASSAM.**

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Abstract: This paper deals with Rural Settlements in Karbi Anglong District of Assam. Karbi Anglong is, in fact, the largest administrative district of Assam with an area of 10,434 sq. Km. and a population of 9,56,313 according to 2011 census. The major tribes living in the district are the Karbis, the Bodos, the Dimasas, the Kukis, the Hmars, the Rengma Nagas, the Garos, and the Tiwas. As settlements are influenced by the elements of each tribe, we see a lot of diverse settlements in the district. The main point of the paper is to bring out the settlement morphology-trends, forms, sizes, spacing and patterns etc. of the Bodo Tribe in the district of Karbi Anglong. The research will be done in the whole of Karbi Anglong District of Assam by collecting both primary data and secondary data. The re- search shall show qualitative and comparative research data in line with the settlement morphology keeping a focus on the Bodo Tribe in the hilly and plain regions of the district, the tribe living in the district are still facing lots of challenges. The Bodos are no exception to this. In this regard, poverty and illiteracy are two main concerns. Apart from that, health and access are two of the major challenges confronted by the Bodos, as well as other tribes in the district.

Key words: Culture, Morphology, Rural Settlement

1. Introduction: The study of settlement is significant as it reflects not only human relationship with nature and environment but also helps to understand the growth and development of a society. Settlement. In Geography, are human settlements ranging from small village with a population in the hundreds to large cities with a population in the tens of millions, according to National geographic society.



In some countries rural settlements are defined by National census bureau. It may include even small rural towns. But in some other countries, towns are not generally included in rural settlement even though they may be small in size. Villages, hamlets and farms are common human settlements. It is a community that is involved in all activities of human life, such as agriculture, culture, religion, education and all sorts of infrastructures needed for human life.

In India "Rural area" as per the 2011 census, means a place that fulfills the following criteria:

- i. A population of less than 5000.
- ii. Density of population less than 400 per sq. Km.
- iii. More than 25 percent of the male working population is engaged in agricultural.

2. Study Region/Area:

- i. For the present study, Karbi Anglong District of Assam has been selected as the study area.

Karbi Anglong is the largest district of Assam as per the area is concerned. It is situated at the heart of Assam surrounded by Golaghat District in the East. Marigaon District and the state of Meghalaya in the West, Nagaon and parts of Golaghat District in the North, and North Cachar Hills District in the South. The location of the district is between 25° to 33° North latitude and 92°10' to 93°50' East longitude.

- ii. Karbi Anglong district covers a large area with plain and hilly regions. So it experiences different climates in different regions. During summer it experiences the temperature of 25 to 35 degree celcius. In winter the temperature ranges from 6 to 24 degree celcius.

The monsoon generally starts from the middle of the month of May and lasts till the month of September. The average rain fall is 1147 mm, but the rain fall is not uniform in all the parts of the district. It differs from place to place.

- iii. Population Pattern: The tribal people are the aboriginal inhabitants of the district. The major tribal ethnic groups living in the district, are the Karbis, the Bodos, the Dimasa, the Kukis, the Hmars, the Garos, the Rengma Nagas and the Tiwas, Non-tribal communities such as the Assamese, the Bengalis and the Adivasis etc. Also inhabit the district. The Bodos, the Assamese and the Bengalis live in the plain regions. The Karbis, the Dimasaa and the Garos live both in the hills and the plains. All the tribal ethnic groups have language and culture of their own.



According to census 2011, Karbi Anglong has a population of 956313. Out of them 490,167 are males and 466,156 are females. The district recorded 22.72 percent population increase in the last two decades.

The total area of the district is 10,434 sq. Km. Density of population is 93 sq. Km. Sex ratio is 956 females 1000 males.

Revenue circle wise number of villages -

The total number of villages in the district is 2928, Most of the population live in the rural area. 88.19 percent of total population live in the rural areas and 11.81 percent live in the urban areas.

Sl.no	Revenue circle	Total villages
1	Diphu	875
2	Dongka	570
3	Phuloni	1077
4	Silonijan	406

3. Objective: The objective of this study is to analyse the micro-level rural settlements. The present study focusses on the spatial distribution of the tribal population in the district with special reference to the Bodos.

4. Database and Methodology: The study is based on primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected by area survey and the secondary data were collected from different sources like books, articles, research papers, Karbi Anglong District population census 2011, Assam etc. Intensive interviews with the local area people were also a great help in accumulating information for the study.

The study regions were divided into hilly and plain regions and the settlements were also divided community wise. The study has basically focussed on physiographic unit wise data to analyse the distributional patterns of the settlement in the district.

5. Results and Discussions: The rural settlement in the district may be regarded as the natural outcome of physical and cultural setting people of diverse language and culture inhabit the district, Therefore dwellings and settlements are also varied in regards to their size, type and patterns. Depending on community, culture, availability of natural resources for livelihood and climate of the area, the rural settlements have grown up. The people of the same ethnic group share the same geographical area for their dwelling. In spite of sharing the same land, varied



communities dwell in different villages with their own communities. The Bodos live in their “Gami or lagw” (i.e. Village), whereas the Karbis live their “Arong” (ie. Village): The Dimasa and the other tribes have their own settlements too. One of the major non-tribal communities living in the district is the Assamese. They, too, have their “Gaon” (ie. Village). In spite of having different language, culture and settlement, they share the land peacefully. They have a common language (The official language of the state is Assamese) through which they communicate with other linguistic groups.

The present study has found that the size of the villages are not dependent on the size of population. Some of the villages in the district are big in terms of area, but the size of population is not so big. In some areas, specially at the periphery of towns, the villages are not so big but the size of population is bigger than average. The settlements in the district, have been categorised on the basis of the number of families. If the number of families are single digit, then it is a small village. The villages having 10 to 50 families are medium villages and more than 50 families comprise a big village. Small villages generally have less than 50 population, medium villages embody 50 to 500 population and big villages incorporate more than 500 population.

Karbi Villages are thinly populated in comparison to that of the other tribes. Some of the Karbi villages are comprised of 2-3 families. The size of villages is not dependent on the size of population. Bodo villages are bigger in comparison to that of the other tribes. Karbi villages are named after the name of the village headman, but other tribes are free from that naming custom.

6. Location of settlements: There are several factors that influence in locating the settlements.

i. Availability of water:

Water is scarce in the hilly regions of the district. It is not possible for all the common people to make necessary arrangements for drinking water because of rocky surface on the hills. Therefore, they constructed their settlements near rivers or streams.

The early Bodo’s had good agricultural experience. Therefore, they always preferred fertile land near rivers or streams for their settlements. So did the Dimasas. The meaning of the word “Dimasa” is the “Son of river”.



ii. Physical Geography:

One of the most important factors that determines the location of rural settlement is the physical geography. Rural people are mostly dependent on agriculture. So, they need good climate and good soil to have a good harvest.

iii. Infrastructure:

Good infrastructure is one of the basic needs for settlement location. Good infra- structures for functioning of all kinds of activities related with life are a determining factor of rural settlements.

iv. Center place for market

Market is also a determining factor for the location of rural settlement. Rural market. Is necessary for the growth of rural economy. If the rural economy collapses then it drives people to cities.

7. Types:

Compact or semi compact settlements are not found in the rural areas in the district.

8. Patterns:

The patterns of the rural settlements in the district are mostly linear, there are neither circular nor starlike patterns. They are elongated linear settlements. In some areas the houses are closely knitted but in some areas, specially, the in remote areas, the houses are not closely knitted.

9. Dispersed settlement:

In our survey we found some dispersed settlements. In this type of settlements the number of villages is less than half the number of hamlets. The inhabitants of this type of settlements, live in isolated dwellings. They are not systematic and are scattered in agricultural fields. The growing number of population is one of the main reasons of this type of isolated dwelling. The sentiment of living freely may be another reason. They are deprived of neighbourhood but they are not separate entity. Unlike other tribes in dispersed settlements in India, as we can see, they are connected emotionally and socially with their parent villages, from where they had to come away because of increase in population in the family. Even though they dwell in an isolated place, they are not isolated socially or culturally, they maintain their relationship with their original village and enjoy social life.

In the hilly regions dispersed settlements are a common view in the district. Rural settlements at the foot hill areas near paddy fields are later developments



"Agriculture plays an important role in the economy of the district and about 85% of the rural population directly depends on agriculture for livelihood. The district has a medium to high cropping intensity and more intensive and diversified farming systems in comparison to the others zone. The major field crops are rice (Sali and Ahu) black gram, arahar, lentis pea, maze, Rape and mustard, sesamum, wheat etc." --- Department of Agriculture, Karbi Anglong. Diphu (Project Green Net).

10. Conclusion:

From the above discussion, it is clear that the rural settlement scenarios are not only related with the physical geography of an area but also influenced by various factors like economy, growing number of population and access to modern education. Moreover, language, culture, community, religion, security, transportation, smaller business centers and 122 infrastructures needed for the functioning of a community or a society, play a great role in spatial distribution of rural settlements.

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