

## Original Research Article

# Ecological Echoes in Place Names: A Study of Biodiversity-Based Toponyms in Kokrajhar, Assam

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**Abstract:** A toponym is a place name given to any specific location or to any geographical features like city, town, hill, river etc. This study examines the toponymy of five revenue circles of Kokrajhar district (BTR), Assam, focusing on how local flora and fauna have influenced village and town names. An official village directory, primary and secondary sources was used to collect data on plant- and animal-based toponyms. A total of 197 place names were identified, out of which as 65 of them were derived from plant and animal species. Among plant-based names, 46 species across 21 families were documented. These species, mainly native and dominant, have ethnobotanical importance and are traditionally used for timber, handicrafts, furniture, musical instruments, medicinal, and cultural purposes. Trees constitute the majority (25 species) of plant-based toponyms, followed by shrubs (9 species) herbs (7species), and single species of aquatic plant, climber, and liana. Animal-based names represented 16 species from 11 families, with 17 villages named after aquatic animals such as fish and crabs, and others after land animals like roosters (3 villages) and horses (3 villages). Linguistic analysis showed that over 53% of place names were derived from the Bodo language, indicating a strong indigenous influence, followed by Assamese (30%) and other regional languages. More than 40% of lexical items overlap across languages, reflecting shared traditional ecological knowledge and cultural exchange. The study highlights the integral role of biodiversity and indigenous knowledge systems in shaping the cultural landscape through toponymy.

**Keywords:** Biodiversity, Bodo language, Ethnobiology, Toponymy

## Introduction

Place names often reveal the characteristics of the local environment, capturing the floral and faunal species native to a particular area, as well as the cultural and historical significance to the communities that inhabit it. Toponymy is the study of place names has only recently gained recognition as a distinct scientific discipline (Cassi, 2008). The primary objective of toponymy is to investigate the origins, meanings, and transformations of place names associated with cities, regions, and various geographical features (Tent & Blair, 2009). Toponymy

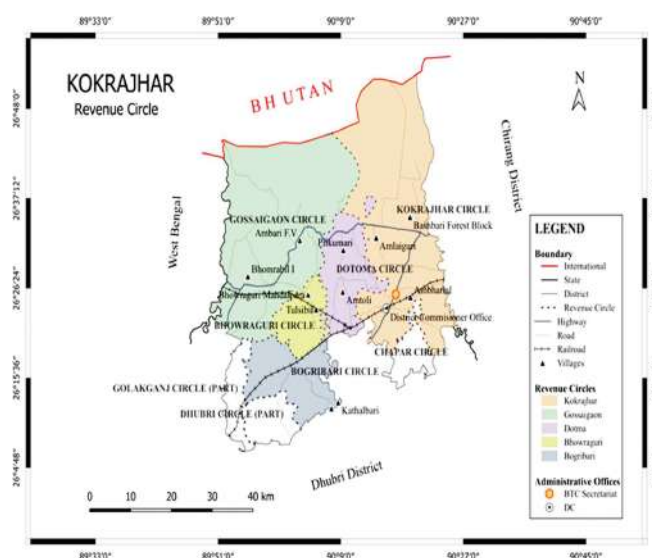
offers a unique lens through which the interaction between local communities and their natural environment can be examined (Hough, 2016). Variations in climate and geographical features give rise to diverse types of vegetation, which are often reflected in the naming of these places (Fagúndez & Izco, 2016). Plants or animals with particular cultural, medicinal, or economic importance are often reflected in place names. Several studies have highlighted that place names are deeply influenced by historical land use practices. Agricultural activities, patterns of

settlement, and forest utilization have all contributed to the toponymy of various regions, reflecting the intimate relationship between human activity and the landscape (Tayade & Patil, 2012; Mohanty & Tripathy, 2011; Patil, 2015). Areas with a long history of cultivation might have place names reflecting crops or cultivated plants (Fagúndez & Izco, 2016). The linguistic and ethnic backgrounds of the people in an area can shape how places are named. Different cultures might have different names for the same plant, leading to a rich tapestry of place names. Place names can tell us about the settlers' perceptions of their surroundings in a historical context. Kokrajhar is one of the five districts within the BTR region and is known for its diverse mix of ethnic groups, cultures, languages, and religions. The region is predominantly inhabited by the Bodos, an indigenous ethnic group characterized by their rich oral folklore and traditions. Alongside them, people from various other communities also live here, including Garo, Rabha, Rajbongshi, Nepali, Hindi, Bengali, Santhali, Muslim, and Assamese-speaking groups. The current study is focused on the plant and animal based toponym of Kokrajhar district. The Kokrajhar district has been researched both floristically and ethnobotanically (Daimari *et al.*, 2019; Basumatary *et al.*, 2025). The ethnozoology and faunal resources of the district are also widely evaluated (Machahary *et al.*, 2025). However, the influence of surrounding biodiversity on the toponymy of settlements and the topographical terrain has not been studied elaborately. The aim of this article is to investigate how the characteristics of the local environment and biodiversity, including floral and faunal species, influence place names in Kokrajhar district. The objectives of the study are: 1) to examine how the floral and faunal biodiversity reflect in the local place names, 2) to explore the relationship between local biodiversity and cultural practices and 3) to analyze the significance of environmental features in shaping the cultural identity of the region's toponym.

## Materials and methods

**Study Area:** The Kokrajhar District is one of the thirty-five districts of Assam and consists of 2.8% of the State's population which is also considered the gateway to Northeast

India. In the South, this district is bounded by West Bengal and internationally consists of Bhutan. Kokrajhar district is roughly in between the latitude of **26°19' North to 26 ° 54' North**, and the longitude is 89°46' East to **90°38' East**. The district covers 3169 sq Km of which 1,719 sq Km is forest area. It comprises of three subdivisions, eight revenue circles, and eleven development blocks. In the present study, five out of eight revenue circles (Fig. 1) have been considered to study the place name derived from flora and fauna (Homepage of Kokrajhar district, Govt. of Assam).



**Fig. 1.** Map showing the five revenue circles and study area-Kokrajhar, Dotma, Gossaigaon, Bogribari and Bhowraguri of Kokrajhar District.

**Method of data collection:** Village and town names were extracted from Indian village directories *VillageInfo.in*. Both primary and secondary sources were used to investigate the above given objectives of the study. Fieldwork included visits to multiple localities and interviews with elderly residents and village leaders following recommended standards for conducting ethnobiological survey (Jain & Rao, 1977). The ethnographic information and perception were noted down. Place names were categorized based on their botanical or zoological origins. Scientific names, families and ethno-biological significances of the associated species were documented. The statistical analysis and graphs were plotted using Microsoft Excel software.

## Results

The analysis conducted in five revenue circles of Kokrajhar district-namely Kokrajhar, Bhawraguri, Bagribari, Dotma, and Gossaigaon-revealed strong correlations between local biodiversity and place naming practices. A total of 197 villages and towns were identified whose names are derived from 65 different species of plants and animals.

### Influence of floristic diversity on Toponym

In this study, place names were derived from 46 plant species (Table 1). Of the 42 plant species, the majority were trees, comprising 24 species, followed by shrubs with 9 species and herbs with 7 species. Aquatic plant, climber, and liana were each represented by a single species, while a few names (2) were based on general terminologies and could not be placed

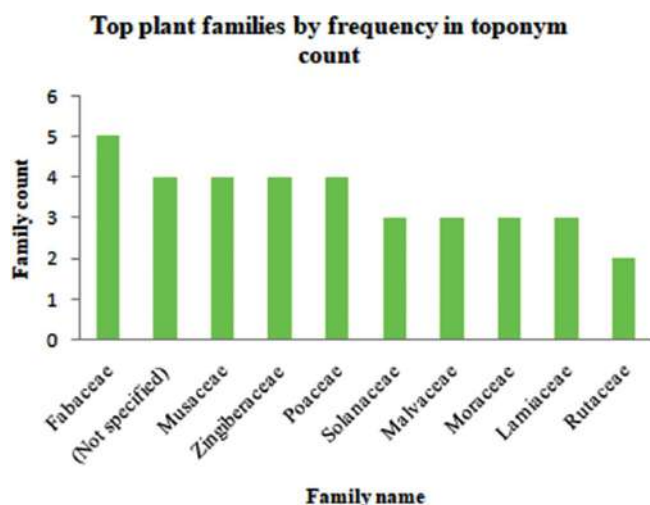


Fig. 2. Bar chart showing Plant Families by Frequency in Toponyms.

in habit categories (Fig 3). These plant species were distributed in a total of 21 unique plant families. Even the three revenue circles Kokrajhar, Bagribari, and Bhawraguri, have originated from local flora, Khungkhra (*Boehmeria nivea*), Baigri (*Ziziphus mauritiana*) and Baora (*Terminalia bellirica*).

The plant species widely used for the nomenclature of village names are: *Mangifera indica* (07 villages), *Bambusa* sp. (06 villages), *Terminalia bellirica* (09 villages), *Chorchorus capsularis* (05 villages), *Artocarpus heterophylla* (05 villages), *Ficus religiosa* (05 villages), *Butea monosperma* (05 villages), *Bombax ceiba* (09 villages), and *Shorea robusta* (05). These

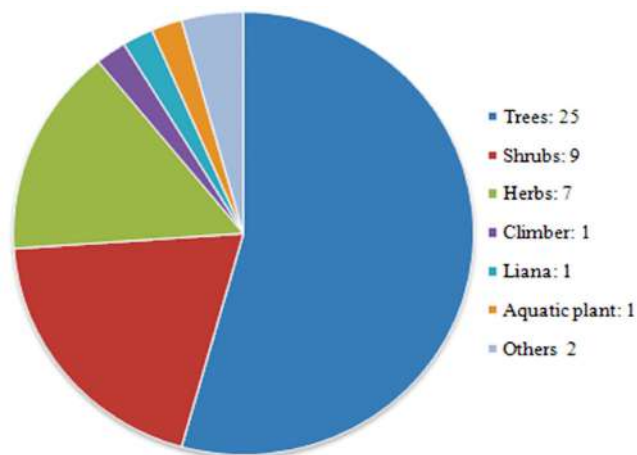


Fig. 3. Pie chart showing the habits of plants used in place names of Kokrajhar district.

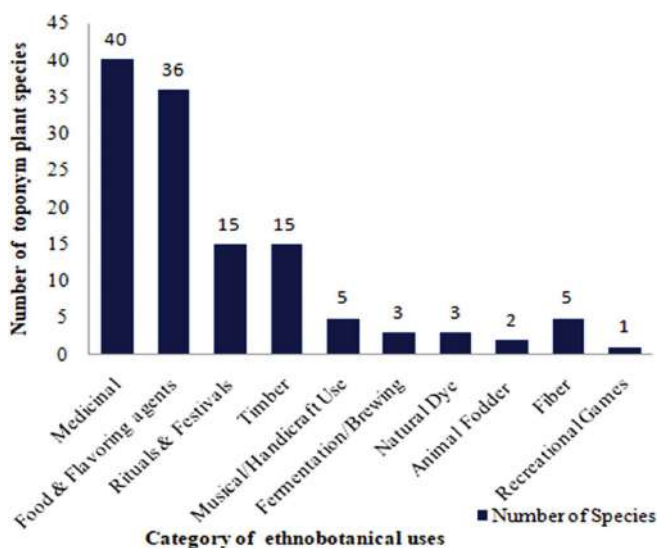


Fig. 4. chart showing the categorization of ethnobotanical uses of toponym plant species.

species are frequently found near human settlements, along roadsides and in forest peripheries, highlighting the close relationship between human habitation and natural vegetation. The trees *Shorea robusta*, *Terminalia* spp., *Gmelina arborea*, and *Ficus* spp. found across all five revenue circles indicate their ecological dominance and widespread utility in the region.

According to the uses of the plants, they are categorized into five groups represented in Fig. 4. The name of the categories are: Medicinal, food & flavoring agents rituals & festivals, timber, musical/handicraft use, fermentation/brewing, natural dye, animal fodder, fiber and recreational games.

**Table 1.** Plant species Toponymy.

Toponym	Linguistic elements	Common Name and Habit	Family	Scientific Name	Ecological, Cultural and Ethnobotanical Significance
1 Alukata Pt 1, 2, 3	Derived from <i>Alu</i> meaning Potato in Bodo and Assm.	Potato (Herb)	Solanaceae	<i>Solanum tuberosum</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Economically significant and used in local cuisines</li> </ul>
2 Adabari, Boro Adabari, Adabari F.V.	Derived from <i>Ada</i> meaning ginger in Assm.	Ginger (Herb)	Zingiberaceae	<i>Zingiber officinale</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is used in folk medicine for the treatment of respiratory ailments such as <b>cough</b>, cold &amp; <b>tonsillitis</b>.</li> <li>Ginger is deeply integrated into the ethnic cuisines and <b>rhizome</b> and <b>leaves</b> are commonly used to enhance the flavor of traditional dishes.</li> <li>The region is home to a rich diversity of ginger (<i>Zingiber officinale</i>) cultivars and varieties, many of which remain scientifically unexplored.</li> <li>Used parts Rhizome &amp; Leaves</li> </ul>
3 Haldibari	Derived from <i>Haldwi/ haldi</i> meaning turmeric in Assm. & Bodo	Turmeric (Herb)	Zingiberaceae	<i>Curcuma longa</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used in Bodo folk medicine to treat liver-related ailments and is believed to purify the blood. Additionally, it is applied in cases of eye infections, oedema and various skin conditions. Among children, it is commonly administered as a de-worming agent.</li> <li>The plant plays an important role in Bodo cultural practices. It is used during Bwisagu (Bihu) celebrations and other religious or seasonal rituals, symbolizing purification and renewal.</li> <li>Beyond its medicinal and ritual applications, the plant is valued for its utility as a natural dye and is widely incorporated into traditional ethnic dishes, contributing both color and health benefits.</li> <li>Used part: Rhizome and leaves.</li> </ul>
4 Amlaiguri F.V Athiabari, Athiabari F V Pt I, Athiabari F V Pt II	Derived from <i>Amlai</i> meaning gooseberry in Bodo  Derived from <i>Athia</i> meaning a cultivar of wild banana with seeds in Bodo	Gooseberry (Tree) Banana (Tree)	Phyllanthaceae Musaceae	<i>Phyllanthus emblica</i> <i>Musa balbisiana</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Used in Folk medicine</li> <li>Probiotic pickles &amp; drinks are made using the fruits.</li> <li>Used in Folk medicine to cure ailments related to stomach, loose-motion etc.</li> <li>The stem and leaves are dried to make traditional alkali called Khardwi or Khar</li> <li>The tender internal part of the stem is used as vegetable.</li> <li>Fruit, stem and leaves.</li> </ul>
5 Ambartal, Amguri, Amguri Forest Block, Ambari F.V., Amtoli, Bhog Amguri, Amjhora, Thaijouguri	Derived from <i>Aam</i> meaning mango in Assm., Bengali. In Bodo mango is called <i>Thaijou</i> .	Mango (Tree)	Anacardiaceae	<i>Mangifera indica</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leaves are used religious rituals</li> <li>Cotyledons eaten for sore throat</li> </ul>

6	Bagariguri , Bagribari	Derived from word <i>Bwigri</i> meaning Zuzube in Bodo	Berry (Tree)	Rhamnaceae	<i>Ziziphus mauritiana</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edible fruit; Fruits are dried to make pickles and sherbets.</li> <li>• Parts used: Fruits</li> </ul>
7	Basbari, Bashbari F V, Bashbari Forest Block, Owguri Forest Village, Uttar Bashbari, Weahbari, Auabari	Bamboo is known as Owa in Bodo and Bash in Assm. & Rajbongshi.	Bamboo (Tree)	Poaceae	<i>Bambusa</i> sp.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bamboo is in the construction of houses and fencing and in the crafting of agricultural tools and equipment and local handicraft. It is used to make various containers, which are essential in the preparation and storage of traditional items such as fermented fish and yogurt.</li> <li>• Young bamboo shoots are edible. They are cooked as vegetables and also used in the preparation of pickles and fermented food products.</li> <li>• It is used in various traditional rituals and celebrations.</li> <li>• In folk medicine, bamboo is valued for its therapeutic properties.</li> <li>• Bamboo is used in the making of Bodo and other traditional musical instruments such as the <i>sifung</i> (flute), <i>bahi</i>, <i>gogona</i>, <i>gongona</i>, <i>thorkha</i> and <i>laigrig</i>, which are integral to the region's musical and cultural expressions.</li> <li>• Whole plant used</li> </ul>
8	Belguri, Belpara, Beltari	Derived from <i>Bel</i> meaning wood apple in Bodo, Assamese and Bengali	Wood apple (Tree)	Rutaceae	<i>Aegle marmelos</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fruits are edible</li> <li>• dried edible parts are used to make tea</li> <li>• In Folk culture it is used to cure ailments related to stomach</li> <li>• Leaves are used in religious ceremonies.</li> </ul>
9	Bhomrabil-I, Bhomrabil-II, Bhomoraguri F V, Bhawraguri Baruapara Pt.-I, Bhawraguri Baruapara Pt.-II, Bhowraguri-Mandalpara, Bhawrihora.	Derived from word <i>Bowra/ Bahera</i> (Bodo, Assm, Bengali)	Bahera (Tree)	Combretaceae	<i>Terminalia bellirica</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The fruits have medicinal properties and used to treat respiratory disorder, throat infection, oedema in Folk medicine</li> <li>• The fruits are also used in religious rituals.</li> </ul>
10	Dawaguri No.1, Dawaguri No.2, Dawaguri No.3	Derived from <i>Dawa</i> meaning lakoocha plant (Bodo)	Lakoocha (Eng.) Tree Dahu (Sanskrit)	Moraceae	<i>Artocarpus lakoocha</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used as timber</li> <li>• Young bark is used as medicine for gastrointestinal problem in traditional medicinal system.</li> <li>• The latex is chewed with batel nut.</li> </ul>
11	Dingdinga	Erect flowers of the plant is called <i>dingdinga</i> (Bodo & Rajbongshi)	Plant not identified		<i>Not known</i>	-
12	Dumbazar F.V., Damuriguri	Derived from <i>Dumru khaosa</i> (Bodo) & <i>Dumuru</i> in Assm.	Ficus (Tree)	Moraceae	<i>Ficus racemosa</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used as timber and make uwal (mortar)</li> <li>• Used in folk medicine as antidiabetic and hepatoprotective ingredient.</li> </ul>

13	Fulkumari	Assm.	Flower	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Levees are boiled given to lactating cows and buffaloes to increase milk production.</li> <li>• General terminology</li> </ul>
14	Gambaribil, Gambariguri, Gambhiraghat	Derived from <i>Gambari</i> in Bodo & <i>Gomari</i> in Assm.	Beechwood (Tree)	Lamiaceae	<i>Gmelina arborea</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The plant holds notable cultural significance in the Bodo society. Special types of stool “gambari khamplai” where no iron nails are used are made from the trunk of the tree. This stool is traditionally used during marriages and various religious rituals, symbolizing respect and sacredness in ceremonial contexts.</li> <li>• The leaves of the plant serve as a vital food source for silkworms, particularly for the production of <i>endi</i> (eri) silk, which is an important aspect of local sericulture. Additionally, the flowers of the plant are consumed as food.</li> <li>• The plant is also valued for its timber.</li> </ul>
15	Ghilaguri	Derived from <i>Gila</i> (Bodo)	Sword bean (Tree, Liana)	Fabaceae	<i>Entada rheedei</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ghila/ Gila hold cultural importance in Bodo society. The fruit legumes are used in religious and harvest festivals, while the seeds play a central role in the Bodo traditional indigenous game known as <i>Gila-khela</i>.</li> <li>• The seeds are used in joint and arthritis pain along with other formulated medicine &amp; herbal plant parts.</li> </ul>
16	Guabari, Guwabari, Goibari	Derived from <i>Goi</i> in Bodo & <i>Gua</i> in Assm.	Betel nut (Tree)	Arecaceae	<i>Areca catechu</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goi, or betel nut, holds deep social and cultural significance for all the communities in Assam. It is commonly offered to deities during both religious and harvest festivals.</li> <li>• The fruit is edible and traditionally consumed raw or processed—often with or without betel leaf—as a mouth freshener after meals.</li> </ul>
17	Kachukata, Barkochua, Kachugaon	Derived from <i>Kochu</i> in Assm. & Bengali	<i>Colocasia esculenta</i> (Herb or Shrub)	Araceae	<i>Colocasia esculenta</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Colocasia esculenta</i> and its cultivar varieties are widely used as vegetables. The corms, leaves, and stems are all edible and form an essential part of traditional diets. Some varieties are also cultivated as staple crops.</li> <li>• The plant is a key ingredient in the preparation of <i>napham</i>, a traditional fermented fish delicacy.</li> </ul>
18	Kahibari, Kashiguri F V, Kashipara	Derived from <i>Kasi</i> in Bodo & <i>Kahi</i> in Assm.	Wild grass (Shrub)	Poaceae	<i>Saccharum spontaneum</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Saccharum spontaneum</i> is native to tropical and sub-tropical countries.</li> <li>• The plant is used as medicine in skin ailments.</li> </ul>
19	Kathalguri, Kathalguri No 1, Kathalguri No 2,	Derived from <i>khanthal</i> in Bodo;	Jackfruit (Tree) Wild turmeric	Moraceae Zingiberaceae	<i>Artocarpus heterophyllus</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Artocarpus heterophyllus</i> is an economically important timber plant.</li> </ul>

	Kathalguri No 3, Kathalbari, Katribari, Katribari F.V., Katrigasa	<i>Kathal</i> in Assm. and Bengali. Derived from <i>khatri</i> in Bodo	(Herb)		<i>Curcuma aromatica</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Its leaves are traditionally used in preparing <i>emao</i>, a starter culture for brewing traditional rice beer.</li> <li>• In ancient time the stem was boiled to produce a natural dye'</li> <li>• Traditional color <i>khanthal mada</i> used in Bodo dress <i>Dokhna</i> is derived from the yellow colour of the trunk of Jack-Fruit tree.</li> <li>• During Bwisagu it is tied in gates to mark the arrival of spring.</li> <li>• The plant are and burnt to prepare khardwi</li> <li>• The rhizomes have medicinal properties</li> <li>• The leaves are used for wrapping materials and were an alternative to plastics during earlier generation.</li> </ul>
20	Khunthaibari	Derived from <i>khunthai</i> (Bodo)	Solanum (Herb)	Solanaceae	<i>Solanum torvum</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edible fruit</li> <li>• It has medicinal uses and used for worm infection and skin diseases</li> </ul>
21	Kolabari, Kolaigaon, Kolabari, Kolaigaon, Kolabari F V	Kola is banana in Assm.	Banana (Tree)	Musaceae	<i>Musa</i> sp.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Same as no. 2</li> </ul>
22	Kuklingpara	<i>Arhar</i> is <i>Kukling</i> in Bodo	Arhar (Tree)	Fabaceae	<i>Cajanus cajan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edible fruit and seeds are used as pulses.</li> </ul>
23	Kusumbil F.V.	General term kusum which means flower in Assm., Santhal, & Bengali	Flower	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General terminology</li> </ul>
24	Lakhanabari	Derived from <i>Lwkhana</i> in Bodo	Hill glory bower (Shrub)	Lamiaceae	<i>Clerodendrum infortunatum</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaves are used in the preparation of traditional rice beer starter culture emao.</li> <li>• During Bwisagu it is tied in gates to mark the arrival of spring and it is also used in other ceremonies like Kherai Puja.</li> </ul>
25	Manderia F.V., Manderkhuti	Derived from <i>Mandar/ Madar</i> (Bodo & Assm.)	Mandar (Tree)	Fabaceae	<i>Erythrina stricta</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Showy flowers</li> <li>• In Ayurveda, it is used to treat worm, anorexia and cholesterol imbalance.</li> </ul>
26	Mestabari	Translated from Bodo word <i>Mwitha</i>	Roselle (Shrub)	Malvaceae	<i>Hibiscus sabdariffa</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Edible vegetable</li> </ul>
27	Narongguri	Derived from <i>nareng</i> , a Bodo word meaning citrus	Citrus (Tree and shrub)	Rutaceae	<i>Citrus</i> sp.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used to treat jaundice and liver disorders.</li> <li>• Edible fruit with many medicinal uses</li> </ul>
28	Odlaguri No.1, no. 2	Derived from <i>Odla</i> (Bodo)	Odla (Tree)	Malvaceae	<i>Sterculia villosa</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used as timber</li> <li>• Used in making of traditional musical instrument kham.</li> </ul>
29	Oxiguri, Oxiguri F.V. , Oxibari	Derive from <i>Oxi</i> (Bodo)	Oxi (Tree)	Dilleniaceae	<i>Dillenia pentagyna</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used as timber</li> </ul>
30	Padmabil, Podmapukhuri	General terminology for water lily in Assm., Bengali & Santhal	Water lily (Aquatic plant)	-	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General terminology</li> </ul>

31	Pakhiriguri, Pakeriguri, Pakriguri, Pakriguri F.V., Pakhriotol	Derived from <i>Phakri</i> (Bodo)	Peepal tree (Tree)	Moraceae	<i>Ficus religiosa</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious significance</li> <li>• Leaves are used in funeral and other rituals</li> <li>• Bark and leaves are used for stomach ache, boils, mineral deficiency, burnt skin</li> </ul>
32	Palashguri, Palashguri F.V., Palashguri-I, II, Palashkandi	Derived from <i>Palash</i> (Bodo, Assm.)	Forest flame (Tree)	Fabaceae	<i>Butea monosperma</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Showy flowers</li> <li>• Medicinally used in stress, anxiety, cognition, hepatitis and fertility.</li> </ul>
33	Panbari F.V., Panbari No. 1, 2, 3	Derive from <i>Pan</i> Assm.	Betel leaf (Climber)	Piperaceae	<i>Piper betle</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boil, lice, cough and cold, zinzibitis</li> </ul>
34	Salbari, Salbari F.V., Saljuri No.1, 2, 3	Derived from <i>sal</i> (Bodo & Assm.)	Sal plant (Tree)	Dipterocarpaceae	<i>Shorea robusta</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used as Timber and dominant species of the region.</li> </ul>
35	Shyamthaibari	Derived from <i>Shyamthai</i> (Bodo)	Prickly grass (Herb)	Poaceae	<i>Chrysopogon aciculatus</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common weed</li> </ul>
36	Simlaguri, Jor Simlaguri, Simultapu, Simladohi	Derived from <i>Simul</i> , <i>Sumli</i> (Bodo, Assm., Bengali)	Simul (Tree)	Bombacaceae	<i>Bombax ceiba</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used as timber, for rearing cotton for pillows bed ect.</li> </ul>
37	Sonaludabri	Derive from <i>Sonalu</i> (Bodo)	Golden shower (Tree)	Fabaceae	<i>Cassia fistula</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One of the dominant tree species</li> <li>• In tongue sore in infants. The blackish sticky pulp of the ripe fruits is applied with honey over the tongue sore in infants.</li> </ul>
38	Taraibari	Derived from <i>Tharai</i> (Bodo)	Tara (Shrub)	Zingiberaceae	<i>Alpinia nigra</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food and rituals; dominant species near rivers Urinary trouble &amp; liver disorder.</li> </ul>
39	Tetiliguri	Derived from <i>Teteli</i> (Assm.)	Tamarind (Tree)	Leguminaceae	<i>Tamarindus indica</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Food additive and timber</li> <li>• A small piece of young root is tied pendulously near the nose of the expectant mother so that she is able to smell it ensuring quick delivery and relieve from labor pain.</li> </ul>
40	Thaigirguri	Derived from <i>Thaigir</i> (Bodo)	Elephant apple (Edible)	Dilleniaceae	<i>Dillenia indica</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fruits are edible and many delicacies are prepared from it.</li> <li>• Paste of young leaves is mixed with 20 ml of water to treat blood dysentery.</li> <li>• Dried Bark is powdered and used to treat cold and cough.</li> </ul>
41	Thalitbari	Derived from <i>Thalir</i> meaning banana in Bodo	Banana (Tree)	Musaceae	<i>Musa sp.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Same as no. 2</li> </ul>
42	Thuribari	<i>Thuri</i> is Bodo for tha thatch grass.	Thatch grass (Shrub)	Poaceae	<i>Imperata cylindrica</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural significance</li> <li>• Used to make broom</li> </ul>
43	Tulsibil, Tulsijhora	<i>Tulunsil</i> <i>Tulsi</i> (Bodo, Assm.)	Holy Basil (Herb)	Lamiaceae	<i>Ocimum tenuiflorum</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Religious significance</li> <li>• Used for ringworm</li> <li>• Used in cold and cough</li> </ul>
44	Serfanguri	Derived from Bodo word <i>Serfang</i> , This name has other interpretation which is not related to plant name.	-	Bignoniaceae	<i>Stereospermum sp.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used as Timber</li> </ul>
45	Tamukubari	Tobacco is called <i>Thankhu</i> in Bodo	Tobacco (Shrub)	Solanaceae	<i>Nicotiana tabacum</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The leaves are dried and chewed.</li> </ul>



46	Dakhin Patgaon, etc.	Derived from <i>Phatw</i> Jute (Shrub) for jute in Bodo & <i>Pat</i> in Assm. & Bengali. This name has other interpretation that the name has a British origin meaning well.	Malvaceae	<i>Corchorus capsularis</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The leaves are eaten as vegetables. The leaves are dried and ethnic food called narzi is prepared from it.</li> <li>The narzi has religious significance in Bodo community. They are used in rituals and funerals as purifying agent.</li> <li>Fruit and seeds are used during gut related issues; the dried and young leaves are used in liver associated problems, urinary disorder and constipation.</li> <li>Used as rope, bags and other handicrafts</li> </ul>
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**Table 2.** Animal species Toponym.

Sl. No.	Toponym	Linguistic elements	Common Name	Family	Scientific Name	Cultural and Ethnozoological Significance
1	Bandorchora	It is derived from <i>bandor</i> which means monkey (Assamese)	Monkey	-	-	The primate Golden Langur ( <i>Trachypithecus geei</i> ) is endemic to the region
2	Bhalukjhora, Bhalukmari	It is derived from <i>bhaluk</i> which means bear (Bodo, Assm., Bengali)	Bear	Ursidae	<i>Melursus</i> sp.	–
3	Boro Singimari, Choto Singimari, Singimari, Singibil	Derived from <i>Singi</i> or <i>sing</i> (Bodo Assm., Bengali)	Asian stinging catfish	Heteropneustidae	<i>Heteropneustes fossilis</i>	This fish is known for its nutritional values and in indigenous knowledge system of Bodos, these are fed to lactating mothers.
4	Chengmari, Chengmari F.V., Nislaguri	<i>Nislaa</i> in Bodo and <i>Cheng</i> in Assamese	Fish	Channidae	<i>Channa orientalis</i>	This fish is known for its nutritional values and in indigenous knowledge system of Bodos, these are fed to lactating mothers.
5	Chesapani	Chesa/ Sesa meaning rabbit in Bodo	Rabbit	Leporidae	<i>Oryctolagus</i> sp.	-
6	Daloabari Bagicha, Daloabari Pt I, Daloabari Pt II	<i>Dao</i> / <i>Daola</i> meaning chicken/rooster in Bodo	Rooster	Phasianidae	<i>Gallus domesticus</i>	Used as non-veg food protein source.
7	Deoraighat	<i>Daorai</i> meaning peacock in Bodo	Peacock	Phasianidae	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	Religious significance
8	Goroimari	<i>Goroi</i> meaning sneakehead fish in Bodo	Snakehead fish	Channidae	<i>Channa punctata</i>	-
9	Ghoramari, Goraimari	<i>Gorai</i> meaning horse in Bodo	Horse	Equidae	<i>Equus ferus caballus</i>	-
10	Khangkhuraibari Pt.-I, Khangkhuraibari Pt.-II	<i>Khangkhrai</i> means crab in Bodo	Crab	Crustaceae	-	Nutritionally and medicinally used

11	Kurshakati No.1, Kurshakati No.2, Kurshamari F.V., Kursamari, Kurshakati-Lakheraj, Kurshakati Pt I, Kurshakati Pt Ii	Derived from word <i>khusia</i> which means eel fishin Bodo	Indian mottled eel	Anguillidae	<i>Anguilla bengalensis</i>	Used as non-veg food protein source. They are known as highly nutritious and help increase blood in anemia.
12	Magurmari	Derived from word <i>magur</i> which means catfish (Bodo, Assm. & Bengali)	Walking catfish	Clariidae	<i>Clarias batrachus.</i>	Used as non-veg food protein source.
13	Nasraibil F.V.	Derived from word <i>nasrai</i> which means a variety of snake head fish	Snakehead fish	Channidae	<i>Channa</i> sp.	Used as non-veg food protein source.
14	Puthimari	Derived from <i>puthi</i> fish (Assm. & Bengali)	Fish	Cyprinidae	<i>Puntius</i> sp.	Used as non-veg food protein source.
15	Sialmari Pt.-I to IV	Derived from <i>siyal</i> which means jackal (Bodo, Assm. & Bengal)	Fox	Canidae	<i>Vulpes</i> sp.	-
16	Symaguri	<i>Syma</i> means dog in Bodo	Indian pariah dog	Canidae	<i>Canis</i> sp.	-

**Source:** Primary field survey and secondary source from the book “Traditional knowledge of Bodos” (Narzary, 2024).

Many of these plants documented in this study are used in **traditional medicinal practices**. Numerous species such as *Curcuma longa* (turmeric), *Zingiber officinale* (ginger), *Terminalia bellirica* (baora), *Solanum torvum* etc. (Table 1) are used in to treat ailments like digestive disorders, respiratory infections, skin diseases, and parasitic infections. Parts such as leaves, rhizomes, barks, fruits and latex are employed in various indigenous healing systems.

Several plants such as *Colocasia esculenta*, *Musa balbisiana*, *Hibiscus sabdariffa* and *Cajanus cajan* are important dietary staples, often forming integral parts of traditional cuisines. Edible fruits and vegetables from plants like *Mangifera indica*, *Artocarpus heterophyllus*, *Ziziphus mauritiana*, and *Aegle marmelos* are consumed both raw and processed.

These plants also hold a **sacred place in rituals and festivals**. The holy basil (*Ocimum tenuiflorum*) is offered during prayers, while *banana plants*, *bamboo* and *peepal trees*

are central to community celebrations like “*Bwisagu*” and “*Kherai Puja*”, or in marriage and funeral rites. Beyond food and medicine, many plants are part of **daily utility**. *Sal* and *gambari* trees provide wood for houses, while *bamboo* is a true all-rounder—used to make baskets, fences, and even traditional musical instruments like the “*sifung*” (flute) or “*gogona*”. *Artocarpus heterophyllus* and *Clerodendrum infortunatum* species are used in starter culture cakes for fermenting local rice beer, showcasing their role in **traditional food processing and fermentation**. The detail ethanobotanical uses of the plant species toponym have been given in table 1.

#### **Faunal Elements in Place Names**

Animal-based toponyms, though fewer in number, also offer significant insight into the socio-ecological connections of the region. The analysis of animal-related toponyms reveals the presence of 11 distinct animal families and a total of 16 unique

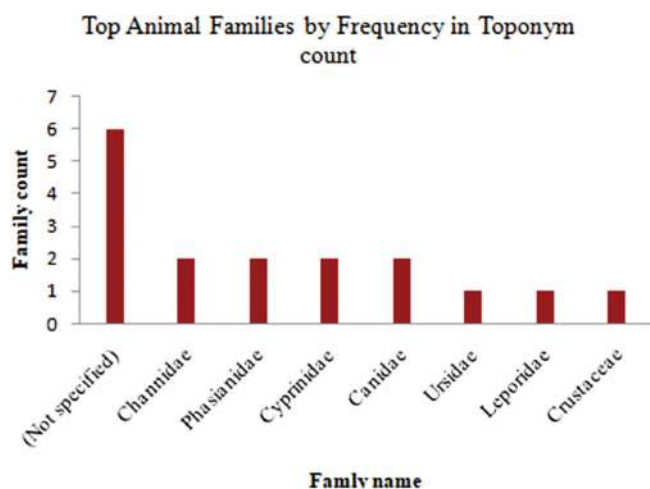


Fig. 5. Bar chart showing Animal Families by Frequency in Toponyms.

animal species have been identified based on their scientific names (Table 2). A total of 17 villages are named after aquatic species such as fish and crabs, while a few are named after terrestrial animals such as roosters (3 villages) and horses (3 villages). The emphasis on fish and aquatic species can be linked to Kokrajhar's rich network of flood plain and freshwater wetlands (*beels*) and small water bodies, which serve as vital habitats for various fish species. These wetlands also support the local economy and cuisine, thereby reinforcing the cultural relevance of aquatic fauna in place names. Notably, several entries lack specific family identification, indicating either general references to animal types (e.g., bird, fox, monkey) or gaps in taxonomic resolution.

Among the identified families, Channidae (snakeheads), Phasianidae (pheasants, including domestic fowl and peacocks), Cyprinidae (freshwater fish) and Canidae (dogs, foxes) appear multiple times, emphasizing the cultural and ecological prominence of these animals in local life. These species are often associated with traditional uses, such as in food, has a symbolic representation in local folklore, or their significance in rural livelihoods.

## Discussion

### Structure and Linguistic origins of Toponyms

In this study, the linguistic elements interprets that 53% of the names have derived from Bodo, 32 % from Assamese &

15 % from other languages. This finding points that **over half** of the words are derived from Bodo indigene language, highlighting its **dominant linguistic influence** in place name of Kokrajhar District. A significant proportion of the lexical items in the dataset (over 40%) show overlap across Bodo, Assamese, Rajbongshi, Bengali and other regional languages. These overlaps serve as linguistic evidence of shared ecological knowledge and interethnic cultural syncretism in Kokrajhar. The overlap can be seen in more than two languages indicating deep rooted widely shared traditional knowledge system; two languages (Bodo & Assamese/ Rajbongshi) reflects regional bilingual influence; Bodo origin and adoption in other languages show substrate influence; Assamese- Bengali overlap shows Indo-Aryan influence; Unique to Bodo highlights indigenous identity and distinctiveness.

Bodo is a Tibeto-Burman language under the Baric branch, according to Shafer's classification (1974), which includes languages like Bodo, Dimasa, Kok-Borok and Garo (Bradley, 2002). Being one of the indigenous languages, it has contributed majorly in naming places, rivers of Assam. Rivers of Assam like *Dihing*, *Dikhou*, *Dikrong* and *Dibang* are derived from baric language group (*Di* meaning water).

The structure of village names in Kokrajhar typically includes a prefix, often the name of a plant or animal species, and a suffix denoting a geographic or settlement characteristics. The research identified a set of Bodo generic terms commonly used as prefixes and suffixes in toponyms, such as *bili*, *bari*, *gam*, *guri*, *jhahar*, *pur*, *puri*, *nwgr* and *ong* (suffixes), and *Da*, *De*, *Dhu*, *Di*, and *Do* (prefixes) (Brahma, 2023). These elements carry cultural and ecological significance and are instrumental in identifying the linguistic roots of place names. However, due to cultural assimilation and frequent mispronunciations, the original Bodo prefixes and suffixes are often altered; resulting in the common practice of translating or adapting these place names into Assamese or other languages. This process of linguistic substitution or hybridization reflects both phonetic accommodation and sociolinguistic dynamics. For example, the Bodo place name *Mwderkhor*, which means "elephant head," is frequently

rendered in Assamese/Bengali as *Hatimatha*, carrying the same semantic meaning. Similarly, several Bodo toponyms and lexical items undergo translation or phonetic adaptation into Assamese (Brahma, 2023). For instance, *Nisla* is rendered as *Cheng*, *Thalir* (meaning banana plant) becomes *Kol*, *Gwrwi* (referring to the snakehead fish) is pronounced as *Goroi*, *Gambari* in Bodo (*Gmelina arborea*) becomes *Gomari*, and *Ouwa* (meaning bamboo) is commonly translated as *Bash* or *Bah*. These linguistic transformations highlight a broader pattern of cultural and linguistic assimilation, where original terms are either translated for semantic equivalence or modified for phonological convenience in the multilingual setting of the region. Moreover, it is often noticed that certain words of Bodo origin appear in written documents in unclear or distorted forms. This is likely the result of mispronunciations or mishearings of the original words, especially by people who are not familiar with the Bodo language. When these words are spoken and passed on informally, especially in multilingual settings, small changes in pronunciation can easily occur. Over time, these altered forms sometimes make their way into official records or everyday use, gradually replacing the original versions. This shows how language can change in subtle ways through everyday interactions, especially when different language communities live side by side.

#### **Ecological context and forest cover area of Kokrajhar district**

Kokrajhar district is ecologically rich, with approximately 55% forest cover. It includes Raimona NP, Sikhwna Jwhwlao NP, Manas NP and six reserved forests. The dominant forest types are Moist Deciduous and Mixed Deciduous Forests, with a significant presence of sal trees (*Shorea robusta*). These forests also support species such as: *Lagerstroemia* spp., *Stereospermum personatum*, *Artocarpus* spp. (Sam), *Ficus* spp. (Bor, Dimoru, Dhupbor, etc.), *Bischofia javanica* (Uriam), *Gmelina arborea* (Gomari), *Michelia champaca* (Teeta champa), *Terminalia bellirica*, *T. chebula*, *T. arjuna* etc (<http://environmentandforest.assam.gov.in/>.) In the present investigation place names on Sal tree, *Terminalia* spp., *Ficus* spp., *Gmelina arborea*, etc. are common in all four revenue

circles. The prominence of these species in both the natural environment and in place names points to a longstanding interdependence between local communities and forest ecosystems. Additionally, economically significant species such as bamboo, mango, betel nut, banana, and Indian jujube (*Ziziphus mauritiana*) also feature prominently in toponyms, reflecting their integral role in the socio-economic life of the region's people.

Results and discussion section sections must be separated as per the format of Journal of BioResearch. Conclusion may not required

The findings clearly suggest that place names in Kokrajhar district are not arbitrary but are deeply rooted in the ecological and cultural consciousness of the communities. The use of both floral and faunal elements in place naming illustrates how ethnobotanical and ethnozoological knowledge is embedded in local language and identity. Such naming practices serve as repositories of indigenous knowledge, historical land use, and community interaction with the environment.

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