adibasi/ adivasi  Lit. original dweller. Adopted by radicals among the tea labour community in Assam, in emulation of groups in today’s Jharkhand and Chattisgarh regions, where their ancestors originated. Also known as Tea Tribes, after the official usage modelled on the 6th Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Sometimes the term baganiya (people of the bagan/garden) is also used.

abu  Short-maturing rice, suitable for dry farming. Often cultivated with hoes.

amla  Agent or clerk.

anna  A monetary unit equal to one-sixteenth of a rupee.

arkattti  Village recruiter.

babu  Indians who had some connection with the British, through employment or the wearing of westernized attire. Used by the British as a term of ridicule.

bailung  Shaman or ritual specialist for the Ahom community.

bandi/ beti  Male and female servile labour in the pre-colonial household economy.

Bangal  Until the mid-nineteenth century this referred to any foreigner, irrespective of ethnicity; later referred to an inhabitant of Bengal.

bari  Garden.

barkandazi  Military mercenary from eastern or northern India.

Barua  An Ahom official with jurisdiction over a department of state or a khel of people, with the prefix indicating his responsibility (e.g. Hathi Barua, the official in charge of the royal elephants). Later became a surname, often with prefix dropped.

bhaal manuh  Respectable (lit. good man).

bhakat  Monastic acolyte attached to the satras (Vaishnavite monasteries).

bhakti  Devotion to God.

bhasa/ bhasha  Language, usually the commonly spoken vernacular. With matri (mother) as prefix, a new usage signifying mother-tongue.
**bidesi**  Stranger (from outside the des/homeland).

**bigha**  One-third of an acre.

**Brahmin**  Priestly and learned caste groups. Patronized by later Ahom kings.

**brahmottar**  Revenue-free grants to Brahmins.

**buranji**  Chronicle; also used to denote history, text or discipline.

**carit-puthi**  Devotional hagiographies, usually produced in the satras.

**chakri**  Clerical job, with connotations of drudgery.

**chapori, char**  Riverine shoals and islands resulting from silt deposits.

**chatra samaj**  Student community.

**Daivagna**  Astrologer caste (also called Ganak) which leveraged Ahom courtly patronage to claim ritual rank after Brahmins. This claim to the second rank in Assam’s caste hierarchy was contested by other upwardly mobile castes such as Kalitas during British colonial rule.

**dangariya**  An Ahom noble; later extended to mean anyone of high status.

**des/desh**  Homeland or country.

**devottar**  Revenue-free grants to devalayas (temples and shrines).

**dewan**  Land agent (e.g. Maniram Dewan).

**dharma**  Moral or religious path.

**dubhashi**  Lit. someone who had two languages or bhashas, used here to refer to those members of the service gentry who translated for the early British.

**durbar**  A court or levee.

**eri**  A local silk of rough, heavy texture, used as an outer garment in cold weather.

**gaon**  Village.

**gohain**  An Ahom aristocrat. Later becomes a surname.

**Gosain**  Lit. god. Respectful title for the head of a temple or satra (monastery). Another such term was Mahanta. Both terms, Mahanta and Gosain (in its Anglicized form Goswami), came into use as surnames.

**gyati**  Kin.

**haat**  A weekly or biweekly market serving a village or group of villages.

**jat**  Endogamous caste grouping, also used here to refer to a species.

**jati**  Different uses in a context of community, from caste to ethnie to nation.

**Jatiyo/jatiya**  Usually denotes national.

**Kalita**  A peasant caste with high status; many subcastes and occupational groups are within its ranks. Its higher sections were members of the service gentry.

**kaniya**  Opium eater, from kani (opium).

**kaya**  Local term for a Marwari (Rajasthani) trader.

**kbiraj**  Full revenue-paying land.

**Kunwari**  Could denote Aideo (princess), but usually an aristocratic Ahom woman.
la-khiraj  Land exempt from paying revenue.
maund   A variable unit of weight, usually 36 kilograms in Bengal.
mauzada  Villages grouped into a unit for revenue purposes. Could cover
       anywhere from 8 to 200 square miles depending on the number of vil-
       lages.
mauzadar  Revenue collector in charge of mauza commissions.
mel     An assembly of people gathered for a common purpose.
mess    Rooms rented by a group of students, with a common kitchen.
moburir  Supervisors in government courts and offices, or tea planta-
       tions.
muga    A thick silk with a golden sheen. Unique to Assam.
Munsif  See Sadar Amin, below.
Na-Asomiya Lit. New Assamese, descendants of Bengali Muslim mi-
       grants.
namoni  Lower (as in Lower Assam).
nisf-khiraj Land paying revenue at half the usual rate.
paik     A peasant subject to annual service obligations for the Ahom state.
parbatya Pertaining to parbat (hill).
Phukan  Superintendent of a khel in the Ahom period, with a jurisdic-
       tion over up to six thousand people. Later used as a surname. Usually
       confined to Brahmins and Ahoms.
rai     Public, or the subjects of the raja.
rupit  Land suitable for growing transplanted (wet) rice.
ryot    Peasant (also raiyat).
sabha  Meeting or assembly.
sabhya  Civilized; a/sabhya is used as its antonym, and sabhyata as the
       noun form.
Sadar Amin Civil court judges; with Munsifs, so-called native judges,
       had limited jurisdiction. In Assam they had fewer powers and emolu-
       ments than in Bengal, since a Munsif drawing Rs 80 pm could not try
       civil cases above Rs 100. A Sadar Amin tried cases above Rs 100 and re-
       ceived Rs 150 pm.
sahitya Literature.
sali    Long-maturing “wet” rice needing transplantation, frequent weed-
       ing, and use of ploughs. Much more labour-intensive than ahu and other
       “dry” varieties of rice.
Sardar  Plantation field supervisor and labour overseer.
sati    Chaste and true woman, typically a fount of wifely virtues.
satra   A Vaishnavite monastery in Assam, typically with lands attached to it.
Satradhikar Head of a satra, often known as Gosain; or Mahanta if a
       non-Brahmin.
seer    Unit of weight; in British India it was 2.05715 pounds or 0.9331
       kilogram.
Seristadar  A registrar or record keeper, especially a head “native” officer
of a court or collector’s office in charge of public records and official documents.

**shish** Lay disciple of Gosains or Satradhikars.

**Swargadeo** Lord of heaven, a title used by the Ahom kings.

**tehsildar** Revenue official at the tehsil level of local administration, below districts.

**tithi** Commemorative anniversary.

**ujani** Upper (as in Upper Assam).

**unnati** Progress.

**utsav** Festival.