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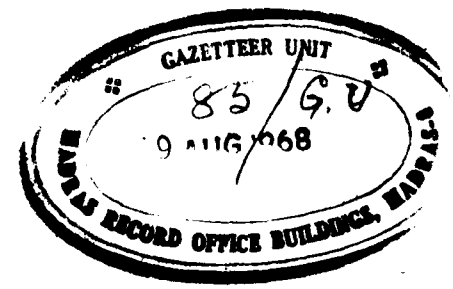
GAZETTEER OF INDIA
ASSAM STATE
SIBSAGAR DISTRICT



ASSAM DISTRICT GAZETTEERS

SIBSAGAR DISTRICT

[With a "Foreword" by Sri B. P. Chaliha, Chief Minister, Assam]

19/8/68
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FOREWORD

I am glad that the first volume of the revised Gazetteer for the District of Sibsagar has been brought out by our State Government through the efforts of the Revision of District Gazetteers Unit. It is as comprehensive as informative, dealing with the important aspects of the life of our people and administration. It is expected that the Gazetteer would serve as a useful guide to all those who are engaged in the administration, welfare and research activities of the State.

Dated Shillong,
August 26, 1967

B. P. CHALIHA,
Chief Minister, Assam

GAZETTEER UNIT
9 AUG 1968
GOVT. RECORD OFFICE BUILDINGS, MADRAS-8

PREFACE

This is the first publication in the series of District Gazetteers of this State, brought out under the Scheme of the Revision of District Gazetteers, sponsored by the Government of India. This Scheme was undertaken by the State Government under the 2nd Five Year Plan in 1957 with one State Editor, one Editor and a skeleton staff with its headquarters at Shillong. Eventually District Units, attached to the office of the Deputy Commissioners, were established with one Compiler in each with a view to collecting data and making preliminary drafts on 19 Chapters on the lines indicated by the Central Unit of the Government of India. These Chapters are on : I—(General) Physical Features and Natural Resources ; II—History ; III—People ; IV—Agriculture and Irrigation ; V—Industries ; VI—Banking Trade and Commerce ; VII—Communications ; VIII—Miscellaneous Occupations ; IX—Economic Trends ; X—General Administration ; XI—Land Revenue Administration ; XII—Law Order and Justice ; XIII—Other Departments ; XIV—Local Self Government ; XV—Education and Culture ; XVI—Medical and Public Health Services ; XVII—Other Social Services ; XVIII—Public Life and Voluntary Social Services Organisation ; and XIX—Places of Interest. To assist the State Editor a State Advisory Board, consisting of 13 members : 1. State Editor (Chairman), 2. Editor (Secretary), 3. Chief Secretary or his representative, 4. Commissioner of Plains Division, 5. Commissioner of Hills Division, 6. Dr. S. K. Bhuyan, Vice-Chancellor (Gauhati University), 7. Dr. B. K. Barua, Gauhati University, 8. Dr. M. N. Goswami, Secy, Finance, 9. Director of Statistics (Dr. S. C. Sarma), 10. Secretary Education, 11. Sri R. Vaghaiwalla, ex-Census Commissioner, 12. Dr. P. C. Choudhury, Director of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, 13. Dr. V. Elwin, Anthropologist, NEFA, was constituted in March, 1958 with a view to advising Government in the Revision of the District Gazetteers in Assam, and its first meeting was held in the Conference Room of the Assam Civil Secretariat in May, 1958. This Board was reconstituted from time to time, and its present members are : 1. Chief Secretary (Sri A. N. Kidwai, I.C.S., Chairman), 2. State Editor (Education Secretary—Sri S. M. Rahman, I.A.S.) 3. Editor, 4. Commissioner of Hills Division, 5. Commissioner of Plains Division, 6. Dr. M. N. Goswami, Vice-Chancellor, Gauhati University, 7. Sri S. C. Sarma, Director of Statistics, 8. Dr. P. C. Choudhury, Director of Historical and Antiquarian Studies (the present Editor), 9. Dr. H. Bareh, Editor, Revision of District Gazetteers for NEFA (now of Nagaland).

In all the districts, District Advisory Boards were also constituted to advise the Deputy Commissioners and the Compilers concerned on similar lines, and these boards have been functioning since then. Constituted as these Advisory Boards are with the educationists, Heads of Departments and expert members, they have been rendering immense help in the work of both compilation and examination of the draft Chapters both at the State and district level.

In so far as the history of Gazetteers of Assam is concerned, some books on history, Census reports starting at least from 1881 and other statistical records served to some extent the purpose of District Gazetteers. We may mention in this connection the valuable works like the *East India Gazetteer* by W. Hamilton, published in 1815 ; *Eastern India* by M. Martin, published in 1838 ; and *A Statistical Account of Assam* by W. W. Hunter, published in 1879. The Census reports, published every ten years are invaluable Government records bearing on important aspects of the life and conditions of the people including the working of the State machinery through the ages. The first systematic attempt at the compilation of the District Gazetteers of this State, based on official and private records including historical materials was made by Mr. B. C. Allen, and volumes on all the existing Districts were published between 1905-07. But, since then that is for the last sixty years or so no revised Gazetteers incorporating up-to-date information on varied subjects have been produced. This has more or less been the state of affairs in all other States of the Indian Union. Hence was the imperative necessity for bringing out revised district gazetteers incorporating there in the changes that have taken place affecting the life of the people and the condition of the country during all these years, based on a scientifically drawn out plan covering all aspects of the State administration and touching the life and condition of the people in general.

As this revised Gazetteer is required to be an authentic source of information covering the said detailed topics, the members of the staff, both at the head-quarters and the district level were required to undertake laborious work in collecting data and compiling the draft chapters. Prof. K. N. Dutt, the ex-Editor took, from the inception of the Scheme till his release from service on the expiry of his term of contract, considerable pain in compiling the present volume for which he deserves appreciation. The credit for doing the spade work in collecting data and making preliminary draft of the Chapters goes also to Sri M. C. Saikia, the Compiler of the District.

The Gazetteer Volume after receiving the approval of the State Advisory Board and the Central Unit of the Revision of District Gazetteers of the Government of India as early as 1963, was sent to the Press in February, 1966 which started sending proofs from August of the same

year. The present Editor, Dr. P. C. Choudhury who took over from Prof. Dutt in April, 1966, after going through the proofs of the first three Chapters which contained innumerable mistakes in manuscripts found that the volume should be recast and he accordingly placed the matter before the State Advisory Board which advised him to get back the Press copy from the Press, correct the contents and effect revision where considered necessary. The present publication is, therefore, the re-edited Gazetteer of the District. Even so, it is likely that being the first work of the series and due to certain other unavoidable reasons, some mistakes may have crept in to the Gazetteer here and there. It is expected that this Gazetteer would serve as a model to the other revised District Gazetteers of the State.

We take this opportunity of acknowledging with gratefulness the valuable assistance rendered to us by many expert writers on selected topics, including educationists, professors of the University of Gauhati and Colleges, Heads of Departments and district Officers of both the Central and State Governments in the compilation of the Gazetteer. We apologise for not mentioning their names for want of space. Our sincere thanks are also due to the Central Unit of the Revision of District Gazetteers, specially to its Editor for their kind assistance and guidance in the matter of finalisation of the work. We are grateful indeed to the Government of India in the Ministry of Education for their kind financial assistance in the publication of the Gazetteer. Our thanks are also due to all members of the Revision of District Gazetteers staff at the head-quarters particularly to its present Editor Dr. P. C. Choudhury for their assistance in many ways rendered towards the publication of the volume ; and last but not the least to the Proprietor, Nabajiban Press, Calcutta for printing the same in time.

We shall be happy indeed and deem our labour well-paid if this Gazetteer, which, besides the said Chapters contains some very important tables, illustrations, Glossary, Bibliography and an informative Index, be of any help to the administrators, the educationists, those engaged in research studies, Journalists, etc., in their respective fields of avocations.

S. M. RAHMAN,
State Editor,
Revision of District Gazetteers
in Assam

Dated Shillong,
The 8th August, 1967

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9 AUG 1968
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CHAPTER I

(GENERAL)

PHYSICAL FEATURES AND NATURAL RESOURCES

(a) Introductory :

Origin of the name Sibsagar :

More than two hundred years ago, in the year 1733 A.D., the Ahom Queen Ambika Devi dug a tank at the then Ahom capital Rangpur, covering an area of 257 acres, to commemorate the name of her beloved husband, King Siva Sinha. The place came to be known as Sivpore (Sivpur) being associated with the great Siva temple (Siva Dol) built on the bank of this tank. Then with the passage of time, the name Sibsagar, alluding both to the tank and the town, gained popularity. During the declining days of the Ahoms, when their independent sovereignty had come to an end, Purandar Sinha was entrusted in 1833 with the administration of Upper Assam by the East India Company who had already won mastery over Assam in 1826 as a result of the First Anglo-Burmese war. Even this artificial ornamentation by a scion of the Ahom Royal House was short-lived, for in the year 1838 A.D. the whole area was resumed by the authorities of the East India Company and annexed to British territory ; and on September 16 of the same year Col. Adam White was appointed its Political Agent. By a Proclamation in 1839 the area was divided into the two districts of Sibsagar and Lakhimpur and placed under the same form of administration as prevailed in the Lower Assam districts. Thus the Sibsagar district came into being bordering on the river Dhansiri on the west and the Namsang Tipam Parbat on the East, and the origin of its name can, as such, be traced back to a historical event rather than to a mythological one as in the case of Kamrup.

Location, General boundaries, total area and population :

The district of Sibsagar lies between 25°49′ and 27°17′N. latitudes and 93°5′ and 95°26′E. longitudes. On the north it is bounded by the districts of Darrang and Lakhimpur, on the east by the district of Lakhimpur and the Tirap district of N.E.F.A., on the south by the newly constituted State of Nagaland, on the west by the districts of United Mikir and North

Cachar Hills and Nowgong. The district now covers an area of 3,453 square miles and has a population of 1,508,390.[1]

Purandar Sinha ruled with Jorhat as the capital of his territory, Upper Assam ; but with its annexation, about which mention has been made earlier, came the shifting of the headquarter of the newly formed Sibsagar district from Jorhat to Sibsagar and the formation of two other sub-divisions, one at Jaipur and the other at Golaghat. In 1846 A.D. Jaipur sub-division was transferred to Lakhimpur district and on December 18 of the same year Jorhat was declared as a sub-division, comprising certain portions of Golaghat sub-division also. The district, as now constituted, did not last long, for in the year 1884-85 A.D., Namsang, Borduari, Paniduari, Mutonia, Banferia, Jobaka, Chungloli, Mulungia, Jaktangia, Tablungia and the Naga villages to the west of the Dikhou river, were transferred to the then Naga Hills district. Again in 1913 A.D. there took place another change. This time it concerned the district headquarter which was shifted from Sibsagar to Jorhat, the former remaining a sub-divisional headquarter.[2]

In 1951, the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district was formed. Over and above other areas, it included Mikir Hills excluded area, totalling 1,676.3 square miles of Sibsagar district. Not only that, certain portions of Borpathar, Sarupathar and Marangi mauzas of Golaghat circle and Duarbagori of Bokakhat circle, amounting to a total of 179.72 square miles, were also transferred to the newly formed district.

Subdivisions : For general administrative purposes the district has been divided into three sub-divisions—Sibsagar, Jorhat and Golaghat, occupying respectively the eastern, central and western parts of the district. Their headquarters are respectively the towns bearing the corresponding names. In area Golaghat is the largest, while Sibsagar is the smallest sub-division. But so far as population is concerned, the reverse is the case (as per 1951 and 1961 census figures shown below.)

Sub-Division	*Area*	*Population*	
		1951	*1961*
Sibsagar.	1,019 sq. miles.	4,44,011	5,47,716
Jorhat.	1,094 sq. miles.	4,34,660	5,47,342
Golaghat.	1,363 sq. miles.	3,33,553	4,13,332

Sub-Deputy Collector's Circles : There are ten Sub-Deputy Collector's Circles in the district. Of them, Sonari, Sibsagar and Nazira circles

[1] 1961 Census : Paper No. I of 1962, p. 332.

[2] Informations supplied by Sri B. C. Handiqui of Joysagar. *See also* (1) A. C. Banerjee's '*Eastern frontier of British India*' and (2) Gunabhiram Barua's '*History of Assam*'.

comprise Sibsagar Sub-division; Jorhat, Titabar, Teok and Majuli circles comprise Jorhat sub-division, and Golaghat, Dergaon and Bokakhat circles comprise Golaghat sub-division. With 799.95 square miles of area Golaghat circle is the largest among them and with only 150.10 square miles of area Dergaon is the smallest.

Circle	*Area in Sq. miles.*	*Circle*	*Area in Sq. miles.*
Dergaon	150·10	Bokakhat	360·00
Jorhat	201·82	Sibsagar	370·37
Teok	208·54	Sonari	371·22
Titabar	215·29	Majuli	511·78
Nazira	285·00	Golaghat	799·95

The number of thanas in the district is eleven. Three of them viz. Bokakhat, Dergaon and Golaghat constitute the Golaghat Sub-division; four of them viz. Majuli (Kamalabari), Teok, Jorhat and Titabar constitute Jorhat sub-division and the remaining four viz. Amguri, Sibsagar, Sonari and Nazira constitute Sibsagar sub-division. In area Golaghat is the largest and Amguri is the smallest thana.

Thana	*Area in Sq. miles.*	*Thana*	*Area in Sq. miles*
Amguri	140	Bokakhat	251
Teok	188	Jorhat	311
Nazira	207	Sibsagar	315
Dergaon	227	Sonari	357
Titabar	236	Majuli	359
		Golaghat	988

Mauzas : There are sixty-five mauzas in all, of which twenty are in Golaghat subdivision, twenty two in Jorhat subdivision and twenty three in Sibsagar subdivision. A list containing their names and population (1951 Census) is given below :

Golaghat Sub-division :

Mauzas	*Population.*	*Mauzas*	*Population.*
1. Kaziranga	15,495	11. Marangi	31,005
2. Bokakhat	25,029	12. Dhekial	15,198
3. Ahatguri	16,003	13. Moukhowa	8,896
4. Missamari	20,090	14. Dakhinkengera	15,441
5. Rangamati	18,417	15. Kacharihat	7,480
6. Dergaon	21,549	16. Athgaon	8,662
7. Gurjogania	9,622	17. Ghiladhari	21,967
8. Kakadonga	7,199	18. Dayang Barpathar	23,353
9. Mahura	12,571	19. Barpathar	2,865
10. Khumtai	22,392	20. Sarupathar	23,340

Jorhat Sub-division :

	Mauzas	*Population.*		*Mauzas*	*Population.*
1.	Salmora	28,370	12.	Baligaon	8,642
2.	Kamalabari	32,493	13.	Hezari	14,332
3.	Teok	15,185	14.	Charigaon	21,258
4.	Simaluguri	17,598	15.	Hatigarh	6,855
5.	Gakhirkhowa	1,598	16.	Chaukhat	9,829
6.	Nakachari	21,405	17.	Holongapara	27,473
7.	Lahing	19,269	18.	Garamur	8,593
8.	Parbatia	13,831	19.	Katani	20,060
9.	Khongia	18,350	20.	Titabar	21,916
10.	Charaibahi	20,031	21.	Thengal	17,719
11.	Sarucharai	12,873	22.	Amguri-Kharikatia	50,716

Sibsagar Sub-division :

	Mauzas	*Population.*		*Mauzas*	*Population.*
1.	Jakaisuk	15,868	13.	Khaloighogora	17,448
2.	Morabazar	17,794	14.	Mahmara	25,349
3.	Godhulibazar	17,192	15.	Abraipur	41,540
4.	Solaguri	15,543	16.	Sapekhati	17,020
5.	Dopdar	18,253	17.	Baruasali	25,887
6.	Panidihing	11,487	18.	Joktali	11,819
7.	Thowra	37,140	19.	Athkhel	27,527
8.	Kowarpur	21,064	20.	Nazira	7,517
9.	Meteka Bongaon	10,096	21.	Dhopabar	20,364
10.	Nagarlauhal	3,343	22.	Silakuti	25,810
11.	Betabari	15,207	23.	Nitaipukhuri	
12.	Bakata	16,680			

(b) Land System :

Natural divisions : Sibsagar falls into three natural divisions. The first one is a belt of flooded land varying from three or four to as much as seven or eight miles in width and situated on the south bank of the Brahmaputra throughout the whole of its course through Sibsagar. The country in this part is covered with high reed jungle, interspersed with swamps or '*bils*' and magnificent stretches of rich fodder grass. There is little cultivation except of summer rice followed by pulse or mustard. Such inhabitants as there are, mostly the Miris, whose houses are built on piles which raise them well above the level of the floods, or Nepali graziers, whose buffaloes wander at will over the marshes and sandy *chars*. West of Bokakhat this trip of inundated country is seven or eight miles in breadth, and affords a splendid shelter for every kind of game. There are patches of tree forest in which wild elephants and mithuns can shelter from the noon-day heat and stretches of high reeds impenetrable to any but the larger animals. Here and there in this sea of grass are little muddy pools

in which the great rhinoceros loves to wallow, surrounded by reeds and grasses from fifteen to twenty feet in height. There are *bils*, or shallow mires, lying in the bottom of basins carpeted with luscious fodder grass, and enclosed by a wall of jungle. Here the wild pig come and burrow for their food, and wild buffalo wallow in the water or lie beneath the shade of the gigantic reeds. Near the tree jungle there is higher ground, where the grasses cannot grow so rank and the deer can make their home.

South of this flooded tract and east of the Dhansiri is situated our second natural division which is a wide, healthy and homogeneous plain lying between the Naga Hills and the low lying area along the Brahmaputra. It is the most populous and important portion of the district in which there is hardly any jungle to be seen and where cultivation brings in considerable prosperity and progress. On the lower land the staple crop is transplanted rice, while the higher levels have been planted out with tea. The landscape, as a rule, is one of rural plenty. On every side stretch fields of waving rice, and on every side the view is bounded by groves of feathery bamboos, and slender areca nut trees in which the houses of the cultivators lie concealed. The tea gardens themselves have little to appeal to the lover of the picturesque. The rows of the bushes are pruned down to one unform level, and the monotony of this expanse of green is only relieved by the labourers' lines, the factory and the manager's bunglow. But they have, as a rule, been opened out on forest land, and the noble trees, with which the cultivated portion is frequently shut in, afford a pleasant contrast to the trim neatness of the handiwork of man. However, on the west of the Disai, the appearance of this plain is diversified by the protrusion of sub-soil, and rice is often grown in curious depressions, called *holas*, which are three or four feet below the level of higher land. The ground between these *holas* is used for grazing or for the village site, and is often planted out with sugarcane. The part of Sibsagar that lies west of the Dhansiri differs as much from the part east of that river as Nowgong differs from Lakhimpur. It is a country of hills, forests and marshes, inhabited by primitive Assamese tribes of Bodo origin who migrated there from the lower part of the valley. This country has felt the quickening effects of the great tea industry only to a very modified degree. The upper valley of the Dhansiri and of the Dayang is covered with dense tree forest which is almost entirely destitute of population. A wonderful view of this forest can be obtained from one of the outer ranges of the Naga Hills. North, east and west, as far as the eyes can reach, there is nothing but a pathless wilderness of trees. In the far distance of the north the blue ranges of the Mikir Hills can be discerned some twenty-five miles away, but on the east and west there is forest '*et praeterea nihil*'.

North of the Brahmaputra is the Majuli, our third natural division

and the greatest river island in the world occupying nearly 511 square miles of area and accommodating no less than 93,541 inhabitants. It is separated from Lakhimpur by the Subansiri and the Kherkatia Suti, at one time the main channel of the Brahmaputra. About a century ago nearly all of the Majuli lay too low for the cultivation of transplanted rice, and the staple crops were summer rice and mustard. Much of the country was under high reed jungle, much under fine tree forest which was rendered beautiful by festoons and loops of creeping cane. It was a country of luxuriant vegetation, of light sandy soil covered with fresh dub grass, of deep pools surrounded by umbrageous trees, of village paths and tracks bordered and carpeted with ferns. There was only one road in the island, which crossed it about the centre, and the inhabitants seemed quite cut off from the strenuous and eager life in the neighbourhood of Jorhat.

The old picture has changed somewhat. Though high reed jungle is to be seen in very low lying areas the fine forest trees are no more, consequent upon the growth of population. The flood waters of the Brahmaputra inundate the plains every year. Ahu, Bao, Mustard and Sali are the main crops, the latter covering an area of 32,000 acres approximately. So far as communication is concerned, there are three main P.W.D. roads, one from North Lakhimpur to Kamalabari connecting the south bank of the Brahmaputra with the former and the Majuli, the second from Baghgaon (Near Badati) to Salmora-gaon and the third from Pahumara along the river Subansiri to Haldhibari through a big tribal belt. These three main roads from north to south and east to west together with P.W.D. embankments and village feeder roads and paths, bring all the interior places of the Majuli into close touch with one another and with Jorhat. Improved communication has not, however, brought economic progress to the inhabitants in its wake. Joint family system is widely prevalent among the Miris, the Deuris and the Sonowal Kacharies of the Majuli. An average family consists of about 30 members. But instances are not a few where as many as 92 members are reported to have comprised a single family. Though these people are fine agriculturists, and both men and women work in the field, they are to purchase paddy for 3 to 4 months in a year on account of spending nearly half of their paddy in brewing rice beer. Added to these are the ravages of annual floods, which seem to have broken the economic backbone of the people.

Majuli is a principal place of pilgrimage for the Vaisnavites of Assam since the Ahom days. There are several *satras* of Vaisnava religious creed. Of these holy seats, Auniati, Daksinpat, Garamur and Kamalabari are the four most prominent.

Hills: The whole of the district is a level plain. Two small hillocks call for special mention, but only on account of the associations with which

they are connected and not from any intrinsic importance of their own. The Charaideo hill in the Dhopabar mauza was the site of the first Ahom capital and once the burial place of the Ahom kings, and the ruins of their tombs are still to be seen, though they were rifled of their treasures by the Mughal invaders in the seventeenth century. The Neghereting hill is a small eminence near the Brahmaputra on which stands a temple sacred to Mahadeva.

(c) River System :

The Brahmaputra: The whole of the drainage of the district ultimately finds its way into the Brahmaputra which is an enormous river here even at a great distance from its sources of origin. As it flows past from east to west on the north of the district it forms the Majuli, the greatest river island of the world.

The Brahmaputra river has two names:—Lauhitya, which is evidently a Sanskritized form of the Tibeto-Burman name Luhit. The word Lauhitya gives good enough meaning in Sanskrit as 'the Red River', but it is in all likelihood just a Sanskritisation of the pre-Aryan, Sino-Tibetan name. It is so called because of the fact that the river takes this colour during the rainy seasons when it cuts through the red soils in the adjoining embankments. There is a mythological interpretation also given to the origin of this name. It is connected with Parasurama and his sins; it was in this river, it is said, in the upper reaches at Parasuramakunda or Brahmakunda, that the great saint washed off his bloody stains due to matricide and regained his sainthood, and hence the water of the river is said to be red.

The other and better known name of the river, is Brahmaputra, and it means 'son of Brahma', and that is quite within the orbit of Sanskrit nomenclature.[3] The Ahoms called the river Nam-Dao-Phi. It means the "river of the Star-god". The Brahmaputra is formed by the Dibang and the Lohit rivers on the north-east merging into the Dihang, and thus joining into one fat stream. The prefix *nam* in the Ahom language, like *di* in the Bodo language means "water" or "river".

The Hindu scriptures hold that the river Brahmaputra rises in the sacred pool known as the Brahmakunda in the easternmost point of the State. It is a religious sanctuary, and is situated about fifty miles east of Sadiya. In fact, an element of romance hangs over the river, as a certain portion of its course has never been actually explored, though there is little doubt that the Tsan-po, or great river of Tibet, pours its waters through the Dihang into the river which is known as the Brahmaputra in Assam.

[3] Sri Vishnu Rabha has suggested that the word is just a Sanskritization of a Bodo expression, Bhullumbuttur.

The source of the Tsan-po is in 31° 30'N., and 82°E., near the upper waters of the Indus and Sutlej, and a little to the east of the Mansarovar Lake. Rising in these glaciers, this mighty river Brahmaputra, which has a total length of 1,800 miles and a drainage area of about 361,200 square miles, flows for about half its length in a trough, north of the Himalayas running parallel to the main Himalayan range. Then it swings north-east, runs through many gorges in a series of cascades and rapids, makes a hairpin bend and turns south and south-west. After receiving the waters of the Dihang and the Luhit, the united stream from this point flows 450 miles down the Assam Valley in a vast sheet of water dotted with numerous islands, the chief among them being Majuli and Umananda.

General feature of the river basin: The mass of silt brought down from the Himalayas is sufficient to form sand-banks, and even islands in the lower valley, wherever it is blocked by any impediment in the current of the river, which thus alters its channel amidst an intricate network of waterways. Broad streams diverge from the main river and rejoin it after a long separate existence of uncontrollable meandering.

The Brahmaputra with its chief tributaries, the Subansiri, Bharali, Barnadi and Manas on the north bank and the Dihang, Disang, Dikhou, Jhanji and Dhansiri on the south, traverses an alluvial plain about 450 miles in length with an average width of 50 miles. It receives the drainage of the Himalayas in the north and the Assam range in the south, and continuing its course round the western spurs of the Garo Hills for 180 miles, joins the Ganges at Goalunda from where the river flows under the name of Padma, and reaches the Bay of Bengal by the broad estuary of the Meghna.

Throughout the greater part of its course in Assam, the Brahmaputra is bounded on either side by stretches of marshy land covered with thick grassy jungle relieved occasionally by patches of cultivated land. Further behind, however, where the elevation is higher, the plain is covered with rice fields and dotted over with clumps of bamboo, palm and fruit trees.

The tributaries of the Brahmaputra for most of their lengths drain the steep slopes of the Himalayas to the south where rainfall is heavy. Consequently they not only carry heavy run-off, particularly where slopes are denuded of forests, but also a very large volume of detritus, the result of excessive soil erosion. A great amount of this material contributes, without doubt, to raising the land surface in the plains by bank spill, but the major portion of the heavily silt-laden floods carried to the Brahmaputra not only aggravates its flood congestion, but also adds to the silt-charge of the flood. The plain area of the valley has since been built up and is being raised gradually by comparatively coarse material (without much cohesion between the particles) carried down from the hill slopes. The soil is very friable,

resulting not only in considerable tortuosity of the streams, but also frequent shifting of their courses, which in fact, is necessary to a certain extent in the economy of the nature as it is only by such shifting that the alluvial plain can be raised uniformly.

Cross Section: No regular records have been kept of the cross sections of the Brahmaputra at various important places throughout its course, so that any significant change which had occurred cannot be scientifically discussed or analysed. A few cross sections and gauge readings were recorded at certain important stations during the earlier part of this century, but this will be of little interest or value unless they are compared with regular and accurate gauge readings recorded over a series of years and co-related to the earlier ones. It may, however, generally be noted here that the dry season channels vary from 500 to a few thousand feet in width, with large stretches of sand *chars* extending for several miles in many places, until a bank sufficiently high is formed to limit the width of the channels during the flood season, but not sufficiently high to prevent inundation during peak periods of floods. In the vicinity of Gauhati and Goalpara, the width of the river is about 3,500 feet flowing between more or less permanent banks with the greatest depths varying from about 50/60 feet during the dry season to 130/150 feet during the rainy season. At these points discharge calculations have been made when the river was being surveyed for the purpose of spanning it with a bridge. From some old records which are available we find that the gauge reading and the widths at some of the more important stations have been quoted as follows :

	Dry	*Season*	*Flood*	*Season*
Gauge Station.	Width Average	Depth Average	Width Average	Depth Average
Tezpur	3,300 ft.	34 ft.	7,700 ft.	51 ft.
Gauhati	3,000 ft.	23 ft.	3,400 ft.	48 ft.
Goalpara	1,650 ft.	62 ft.	—	—
Dhubri	4,000 ft.	28 ft.	—	—

Shoals: Shoals are continually being formed, causing serious impediments to navigation. From old records we find quoted some 84 shoals in existence between Dibrugarh and Gauhati and 43 shoals between Gauhati and Goalunda. The navigable channels through these shoals are clearly marked by bamboo marks placed by the major I.W.T. operators. Apart from a record of the depths on these shoals each season, no comprehensive data has been collected to enable a study of the reasons for the formation of these shoals or the conditions existing in the vicinity of regular recurring shoals.

Flood: The different effect which the various stages of flood has on alluvial rivers such as the Brahmaputra, frequently cause radical changes in the rivers themselves and in the configuration of the land through which they flow. This is quite noticeable, year by year, in the large rivers of North East India.

On the Brahmaputra the fluctuations in river levels begin towards the end of March or early part of April, when the Himalayan snow begins to melt and the annual phenomenon of North westerly storms speed across the plains and valleys of North East India. From this period onwards, the Brahmaputra river levels record a series of "Pumps" or rises of short duration till the end of April, when a more defined rise is felt and in early May the first of flood rises are experienced. As a general rule this first big rise is of short duration and does little harm to the land or early cultivation but improves navigation facilities in the river throughout and enable river "ghats" to be moved into their high level sites adjacent to bazars, road and rail terminals.

By early June the S. W. monsoon registers its arrival in the Assam Valley and with the continuous heavy rain experienced, the river levels rise rapidly and the Brahmaputra remains in flood condition, registering a series of peak flood levels until October. These peak floods top the main banks and inundate large expanse of land, causing severe damage to railways and roads. At these times the only reliable or possible form of safe transportation is by river and by air, when the aerodromes are not flooded.

From October onwards till December the Brahmaputra levels steadily drop till about December or early January when the lowest levels are recorded. Thereafter the levels remain reasonably steady till the end of March or early April when the early pumps are again experienced.

The average ranges between High Water and Low Water levels recorded at various important stations are :

Ranges between average H. W. & L. W. levels.

Name of Station	Pre-earth-quake	1950	1951	1952	1953
Dibrugarh	18,75 ft.	16,00	9,20	12,10	9,70
Tezpur	26,36 ft.	24,17	26,60	23,40	24,40
Gauhati	33,27 ft.	20,30	31,70	30,10	28,50
Dhubri	22,55 ft.	———	17,80	17,60	17,10

The figures suggest that bed level in the upper Brahmaputra has risen considerably since the 1950 earthquake.

The Brahmaputra is navigated by large powered inland vessel of 300 ft. in length and 1,000 tons carrying capacity which regularly ply from Calcutta through the Sunderbuns and East Pakistan up to as far as Disangmukh, 42 miles downstream of Dibrugarh.

Navigation: Vessels formerly navigated the Brahmaputra as far as Sadiya Ghat on the South bank, both of these ghats being at the confluence of the three tributaries mentioned above. Gradual deterioration in channel conditions, however, rendered the river unnavigable in this area and just prior to World War II, the Companies were forced to terminate their services at Dibrugarh on the south bank, some 60 miles downstream.

From Sadiya Ghat the river flows in a south westerly direction through the alluvial plains of Assam and the town of Dibrugarh which is the headquarter of the Lakhimpur district of Assam, is the first large town on the bank of the river. This town has suffered very severe erosion originating with the great Assam earthquake of August, 1950, and during the rainy season of 1951, many buildings were swallowed by the river. Since then, extensive protection works of stone groynes and permeable spurs have been constructed and the erosion of the town has been checked. This, however, has induced major silting of Dibrugarh town which, coupled with serious deterioration in the approach channels following the earthquake, now prohibits the passage of steamers to Dibrugarh.

At Dibrugarh the main banks of the river are about 5 miles apart and the main channel begins to meander from one bank to the other. About 30 miles below this town the Dihing river joins the Brahmaputra on its south bank and, downstream of the outfall of this tributary, extensive shoals exist. During the low water season the main channel through these shoals carries 5 feet of water or less in many places and navigation in this area, even prior to the earthquake, was only possible due to extensive river training.

About 20 miles below the outfall of the Dihing, the Disang river also flows into the Brahmaputra through the south bank and Disangmukh, a small centre at the out-fall is now the terminal point for large vessel proceeding up the Brahmaputra. The channel in this area during the low water season is only 100 yards wide and the range of river levels during the year being about 17 feet extremely strong currents are encountered in this vicinity after rain in the Himalayan catchment area during the months from June to August.

A few miles below the outfall of the Disang river, a tributary called the Dikhou flows into the Brahmaputra, again on the south bank, and the sand brought into the Brahmaputra from this river form a very extensive shoal area at Banaria, some miles down stream of Disangmukh. The Banaria shoals cause delay to the passage of steamers at times during the low water season when bars having depth of 5 feet or less exist in the channels.

For many years small feeder steamer services proceeded up these three tributaries during the rainy season to bring down cargoes of tea for transhipment to larger vessels on the Brahmaputra. In recent years, how-

ever, road communications have been greatly improved and only one of these small feeder services now remains on the Disang river.

Below the Banaria shoals a large transhipment station has been developed, at Nimati, again on the south bank of the river. The station has been in existence for many years but it was only subsequent to the earthquake of 1950 that it was expanded to its present size. With extensive rail sidings and road connections, it now replaces Dibrugarh as the major river port serving the rich tea districts and oilfields on the south bank of the Brahmaputra in Upper Assam.

The Brahmaputra at Nimati has for its northern bank, the island of Majuli which is approximately 10 miles broad and 55 miles in length and the largest inland island in the world.

Below Nimati a further shoal area exists at Benegena-ati which extends over a distance of approximately 10 miles and carries minimum navigable drafts of 5 ft. 3 inches during the dry season. Immediately downstream of this shoal area, on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, is the outfall of the Subansiri river which is separated from the Brahmaputra proper by Majuli island. For many years small feeder steamers operated in the Subansiri river as far up as Pathalipam and up the Ranganadi river, a tributary of the Subansiri, to Bordeobam. The upper reaches of these rivers have, however, since deteriorated and vessels cannot now proceed above Borduti, situated about 18 miles from the out-fall. Large steamers of up to 220 feet in length with cargo flats of similar length drafted to 6 ft., can reach this town during the rainy season but only small feeder steamers of 3 ft. draft serve this point at other times in the year. The steamer stations of Borduti and Subansirimukh, which is at the out-fall of the river, are the limits of the steamer service on the north bank of the Brahmaputra and serve a small but remote tea-growing district from which the only other regular communication was by air. Only recently it has been linked by rail, and road communication with the bridging of important turbulent rivers on the north bank is also easier and better.

The Dhansiri river flows into the Brahmaputra through the south bank, a short distance below Subansirimukh. Feeder steamers at one time navigated this river as far as the large town of Golaghat during the rainy season but due to road and rail diversion of traffic via Nimati this service is no longer necessary. Below the out-fall of the Dhansiri (where there is a steamer station serving the local tea district) deeper channels exist and the main flow of the Brahmaputra meanders between the banks of the river to the towns of Silghat on the south bank and Tezpur on the north bank. These two towns are situated almost opposite each other and connected by a ferry service. Tezpur and Silghat are both important tea centres and have relatively large steamer stations; transhipment facilities between the river and rail exist at the latter.

The river from Tezpur flows in a westerly direction, passing several small steamer stations on both banks, until the major town of Gauhati is reached on the south bank. Here the river becomes narrow as it passes through a hilly gorge. Channel depths between Tezpur and Gauhati rarely fall below 6 feet in any season of the year, but, during the rainy season, extremely strong currents run through the gorge area, attaining speeds of 7 to 8 knots for short periods in high spates.

Some distance below Pandu, the hilly area is left behind and the river again commences to meander as it flows on towards the town of Dhubri on the north bank. Channel depths over this stretch are generally favourable although there is one shoal on which drafts in the low water season may fall to as low as 5 feet 6 inches. There are also two points where narrow channels dictate extremely strong current flows during the rainy season.

Below the town of Dhubri, which is the major jute exporting station in Assam, the Brahmaputra swings into a southerly course and enters East Pakistan. Extensive shoaling occurs in this area due to the existence of a number of turbulent tributary rivers which enter the river from the north, the major ones being the Raidak, Dharala and Teesta. This shoal area, commonly known as Noonkhowa shoal divides the river into three main channels intersected by a multitude of spill channels. The area is 25 miles in length, between 7 and 8 miles wide, and is probably the greatest inland shoal in the world. Natural depths in the dry season fall to exceptionally low levels as the river's flow divides and spreads into the three main channels and with the simultaneous fall in current speeds, silt deposit is heavy causing extensive bars to form in the main channels. The area is maintained under constant survey, and river training on a considerable scale is carried out annually to maintain navigable depths of 5 to 6 feet in the low water season.

Below this extensive shoal the river flows through Pakistan into the Bay of Bengal.

The Disang: On the east of the district flows the Disang river starting its maiden journey from the Patkai Bum which is situated at latitude 26°38′ and longitude 95°27′. The maximum altitude near about this origin is 8,511 feet. Then the river Tisa, as the Disang is known near about its origin, moves towards north and travels about 38 miles horizontally, before it meets with its first tributary, Towaijo, which originates in the Konyak Naga country at an altitude of 5,391 feet. The combined flow moves towards further north and meets with the tributary Tiratjo, coming from the right bank. Moving further north, the river gushes out from the hills near Dilih Tea Estate and flows a south-west course through the plains of Lakhimpur district and reaches Namrup railway station. Many small streams meet the main river near this place. The river flows through

the alluvium plains of Lakhimpur and Sibsagar districts with meandering loops and curves and passes by Namrup. From near the Namrup railway station, the river flows towards west with a tendency to move southwards. It then travel about 54 miles and meets the tributary, Bor Timik Nadi, which originates from the foot-hills, on the left bank. After about a 14 miles south-west course, the river meets one of its main tributaries, Taokak. Then the river moves towards west, meets its tributary Safrai on the left, passes through Nanglamaraghat and turns north. Following a further course in a serpentile way, it embraces the Dirai and the Dimou on its right bank and finally empties itself into the Brahmaputra after a total course of 144 miles near Disangmukh about 12 miles from the subdivisional town of Sibsagar.

The catchment area of the Disang is 1,599 sq. miles. The length and the catchment area of its tributaries have been given below. The maximum discharge of the Disang in the years 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959 and 1960 was respectively of the order of 25,101, 32,785, 26,681, 29,012 and 24,210 cusecs. The river bed at the Nanglamara site is composed of fine brown sand mixed with clay and to some extent is stable in nature. The variation in its depth is approximately of the order of 20 feet.

Tributaries	*Length in miles*	*Catchment area of square miles*
Towaijo	20	181
Tiratjo	20	62
Bar Timuk Nadi	21	86
Taokak	30	323
Safrai	28	115
Dirai	38	263
Dimou	36	125
Balama	18	63

A survey conducted on this river from Nanglamara to Akhoiphutia reveals that the flow of the river is restricted between the embankments on either side of the river except in some portion near Kourtop and in the proximity of its confluence. There is little variation in the bed-width throughout the river length under investigation. It also comes to light that the depth undergoes a major change with the increase in discharge of the river. There are a lot of curves in this river though they are not of acute nature. Two permanent bridges, one known as Disang railway bridge and the other as Assam Trunk Road bridge span this river almost at the same place. The headway under both the bridges is not sufficient to allow a steamer to pass under them. During dry season two temporary bridges, one at Akhoiphutia and the other at Nanglamara connect roads on either bank. They do not leave much room to allow country boats to pass under them as a result of which navigation becomes virtually impossible. Over and above these, the depth of the flow is also insufficient during the dry season

to permit navigation. During monsoon, however, navigation can be introduced from the Brahmaputra to the A. T. Road bridge, as a greater depth of flow is available then. But the bed-width being not much, proper protection against the danger of erosion caused by the heavy wave action of plying steamers will have to be provided first.

The Dikhou : West of the Disang is the Dikhou which originates from a Sema Naga area whose latitude is 26°5′ and longitude 94°33′. This place has an altitude of 5,981 feet. Near its origin this fiver is known as the Longa river, which, moving north-west or about 12 miles, turns north-east and proceeds in this way for about 16 miles and then meets its first tributary Chimel Nadi on the right bank. The river now takes the name of Dikhou or Tezela or Nagar and passes through steep gorges towards north and meets its most important tributary Yangamun or Yangayur on the right bank. It then moves further north and debouches from the hills to the plain of Sibsagar near Naginimara railway station. During its journey through the plains of Sibsagar district the river flows past Nazira and Sibsagar towns and meanders through the alluvium of the district in loops and curves. After traversing about 124 miles the river merges into the Brahmaputra at a distance of about 6 miles downstream of Disangmukh. Its principal tributary in Sibsagar is the Darika, which flows a little north-east of Sibsagar town and falls into the Dikhou near its mouth.

The catchment area of the Dikhou is 1,294 square miles. The maximum discharge of this river in the years 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959 and 1960 was of the order of 36,916 ; 45,931 ; 34,787 ; 29,545 ; 43,784 ; and 31,450 cusecs respectively. At Sibsagar site the bed of the river is composed of fine grade black sand and it is aggrading in nature.

The depth of the flow during monsoon is about 25 feet while the same during lean season does not exceed 4 feet. A survey conducted on this river from Nazira Railway bridge to its confluence reveals that the flow of the river is restricted within the two embankments on either side of the river. The width of the river is not much and is more or less uniform throughout. There also exist a good number of curves which are terribly acute in nature. A particular curve downstream of Sibsagar has a flow-change of about 170 feet.

There are three permanent bridges across the river ; namely, (1) Nazira Railway bridge, (2) Nazira bridge and (3) Sibsagar Road bridge. Excepting for the last named bridge, there is no arrangement to allow steamer to pass under the other two bridges. The headway under these two bridges is insufficient to allow passage even for small steamers. During the dry season there is another temporary bridge at Sunpura about two miles downstream of Nazira. Boats of 50 maunds capacity ply up to Sunpura during this season while in summer boats with carrying capacity

of 200 to 300 maunds can ply upto Nazira. In view of bridge obstruction and insufficient depth, it does not appear that navigation could be economically feasible.

The Jhanji: West of the Dikhou it is the Jhanji which originates near Mukokchung at an altitude of 4,644 feet, the latitude and longitude respectively being 26° 20′ and 94° 32′. At the initial stage the river is known as the Melek Nadi which moves north-west and meets innumerable streams until it comes across its main tributary Muning Nadi of the right bank. After this confluence the name Jhanji comes into being and the said river continues its downward journey through hills and dales in a north easterly direction. The river comes out of the hills near Wamakan and in its course through the plains it forms the boundary between Sibsagar and Jorhat subdivisions. During this journey it meets the Tsurang Nadi or Tiru Nadi and the Teok Nadi on its left bank. After a northerly course through the district the river falls into the Brahmaputra at a distance of 10 miles downstream from the confluence of the Dikhou with the Brahmaputra.

The total length of the Jhanji is 67 miles and its catchment area 530 square miles. The catchment areas of the Teok (length 24 miles) and the Tsurang (length 30 miles) are respectively 84 and 71 square miles. Though in the dry season the river becomes very shallow, prior to the earthquake of 1950 it was navigable by boat upto Amguri throughout the whole year. But the calamity silted the river very badly as a result of which navigability by boat is now confined only to the rainy season. There are three permanent bridges in all across this river, two of which are road bridges and the remaining one a railway bridge. The railway bridge and one road bridge are situated at Amguri while the other road bridge is located at Jhanji.

At Garamur site the river bed of the Jhanji is composed of the fine grade brown sand mixed up with a little percentage of clay and the bed is to some extent stable in nature. The maximum discharge of this river in the years 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959 and 1960 was of the order of 11,493; 21,828; 20,643; 10,602; 11,047 and 5,086 cusecs respectively.

The Dhansiri: The river Dhansiri rises in the south-west corner of the Naga Hills, below the Laishiang peak. It is the largest river in the district after the Brahmaputra. The total length of the river from its source to its confluence with the Brahmaputra at Dhansirimukh, opposite the western end of the Majuli, is 220 miles. For the first 23 miles, the river flows in a north-westerly direction for about 47 miles upto Dimapur near about which place it enters the Sibsagar district. From Dimapur to Golaghat, it traverses a northerly course but thereafter takes an abrupt turn and flows in a westerly course upto the confluence. Very little is known about its upstream as the

valley there is a plain of considerable width, shut in between the Naga and Mikir Hills, and covered with dense tree forest, and, except in the neighbourhood of Golaghat the greater part of its course lies through jungle land. Although the river is fed by many small streams, it is small in size and capacity. From its source upto Dimapur, it forms the boundary between Cachar and Nowgong districts and Nagaland. The main tributaries of the river on the right bank are the Dayang, the Diphu, the Bhogdoi or Gelabil and on the left bank are the Nambar, the Daigrung and the Kaliyani. Besides these tributaries there are also many sub-tributaries among which the Kakadonga, the Renguna and the Bhagti are important.

The catchment area of the Dhansiri is 4,766.40 square miles. The maximum discharge of the river in the years 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959 and 1960 was of the order of 39,990; 49,730; 41,746; 43,828; 81,074; and 34,441 cusecs respectively. At Numaligarh site the river bed is composed of black medium grade sand with a little percentage of coarse grade sand. The bed is aggrading in nature.

There are two bridges across this river, one a road bridge near Numaligarh and the other a railway bridge near Bokajan. During the monsoon small steamers can ply upto the road bridge from the confluence; but beyond that point it is not possible for them to proceed as the headway of this bridge is not sufficient enough to allow any passage for them. Country boats of 700 maunds capacity ply upto this point all the year round carrying food-grain, tea and other commodities, but as the channel is getting silted year by year, even plying of country boats will come to a stop very soon.

The Bhogdoi (or the Disai): It rises in Nagaland and after a north-westerly course through the Sibsagar district falls into the Dhansiri at a distance of 3 miles upstream of Dhansirimukh. In the upper part of its course it is styled the Disai and the lower part of its course is called the Bhogdoi. The name Bhogdoi is said to have first come into use at the end of the 18th century in memory of feast given by the Ahom Raja to the mob he employed on deepening of the lower channel. At Jorhat site the river bed is composed of medium grade sand and the bed is aggrading in nature. Its maximum discharge in the years 1955, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959 and 1960 was of the order of 4,884; 8,299; 10,520; 7,379; 8,710; and 6,655 cusecs respectively. But the discharge is very fluctuating in nature. At times it dwindles down to less than 100 cusecs. Compared to other tributaries this river has got fairly stable banks. Mariani railway junction and a considerable tea centre, and Jorhat are situated on its left bank. The river is silted very much and in winter there remains hardly one foot of water in it, but on the arrival of the monsoon the velocity of the river goes up. As a result, the river is not navigable at all. It is spanned by both

road and railway bridges at Jorhat and Mariani respectively and is 100 miles in length. Its catchment area is 919.68 square miles.

The Dayang: It rises near Mao Thana and flows a north-easterly course for about 45 miles, when it turns abruptly to north-west and pierces through the main chain of hills. After flowing nearly 13 miles in this way it turns at right angle and flows nearly for 20 miles in south-east direction after which it runs sharp, again to the north-east. Emerging from the hills the river meets with its tributary, Rengma, and flows thereafter a northerly course till its confluence with the Dhansiri at Dayangmukh, some 13 miles upstream of Golaghat. The Dayang receives all the drainage from the main range of hills between Rengma and Wokha, while its tributary, the Bhagti, a stream of about 2 miles long, drains the valley between Bhandari and Sonigaon. It is navigable only for a few months within the hills as the channel is blocked with rocks at Nabha. If these are blasted, canoes can probably go as far as the Mokokchung Wokha road. The Dayang is 125 miles long and its catchment area is 1,763.68 square miles.

Other Tributaries and Sub-Tributaries: The Diphu is a tributary of the Dhansiri and joins the latter on its right bank at a distance of 6 miles downstream of Dimapur. Very little is known about this river, as it passes through thick and impenetrable jungle. The Kakadonga is a sub-tributary of the Bhogdoi and rises from Nagaland. Its length is 42 miles and catchment area is 424.32 square miles. It forms the boundary between Jorhat and Golaghat subdivisions. The rivers, Jhanji, Bhogdoi and Kakadonga, resemble one another in several particulars. They all flow through deep channels and do not change their courses. The bottom is muddy, there is no foreshore, and unlike the Brahmaputra and its tributaries from the north, there is no alluvial or diluvial action going on.[4] The current is as a rule very slack, at least in winter, but like all the streams rising in the hills, they are liable to sudden freshets. On the left bank of the Dhansiri these tributaries such as the Nambar, the Dairung and the Kaliyani meet it. They all rise from the Mikir Hills. The length of the Dairung is 40 miles and that of the Kaliyani is 55 miles. Their catchment areas are 150.56 and 508.96 square miles respectively. The discharge of these rivers is very low and fluctuating in nature, as all of them are hilly streams.

West of the Dhansiri, the only river of importance is the Diphu, which for a considerable portion of its course flows parallel with the Brahmaputra. This is a phenomenon which is exhibited in a greater or lesser degree by almost all the rivers in the district, as the tendency of the drainage is to follow

[4] According to the *Census Handbook* the lengths of the rivers are as follows :— Dhansiri—177 miles, Jhanji—71 miles, Disai 81 miles, Dayang 136 miles.

the levels of the country, which naturally fall towards the west. Conspicuous instances of this are to be found in the Tuni and Gelabil. The Tuni is situated in the Majuli and the Gelabil in the north of Golaghat; both of them are merely channels of the Brahmaputra, which take off from that river and rejoin it again at a point lower down in its course.

Lakes and Tanks: The greater part of Sibsagar lies too high for the formation of lakes, *bils* or marshes, and the only ones of any size are situated in the Majuli and the flooded country south of the Brahmaputra. Even here, there are no sheets of water of any considerable size, and, as a rule the *bils* take the form of deep ponds, very long in proportion to their breadth, which are simply the remains of rivers that have changed their course.

There are, however, plenty of tanks which still tell the tale of Ahom rule of pre-British days and glorify the achievements of the Ahom kings. The total number of old tanks is very large, but five of them in Sibsagar subdivision stand out pre-eminently. These great fresh water tanks, entirely excavated by hand, still remain the finest in Assam.[5] The court buildings and the jail of Sibsagar have been built upon the banks of the Sibsagar tank of beautiful fresh water. The area of the tank with its bank is 257 acres; the area under water is 129 acres; present water-depth is 20 cubits and the total length of the banks by road is 2 miles, 4 furlongs and 64 yards. About 2½ miles south of Sibsagar town there is the Joysagar tank, the biggest in India, and on whose banks, besides old temples, there are a few institutions including the Sibsagar college. The area of this tank with its banks is 318 acres; the area under water is 155 acres; present water-depth is 20 cubits and the total length of the banks by road is 2 miles, 4 furlongs and 96 yards. About 5 miles south-west of Sibsagar town there are two big tanks known as Napukhuri and Puranipukhuri. These were constructed in the year 1653 A.D. Some 8 miles south-west of Sibsagar town there is the Gaurisagar tank by the side of the South Trunk Road. The area of this tank with its bank is 293 acres; the area under water is 150 acres and the water depth is 20 cubits. The fact that these great sheets of water are situated in close proximity to one another is ample evidence that their designers were not actuated so much by utilitarian motives as by a desire for glory. These tanks are surrounded by moats from which earth was evidently taken for the embankment of the reservoirs. The water level of the tank is thus higher than that of the encircling moats.

Flood and their causes: The plains of Sibsagar district lying in the basin areas of river Disang, Dikhou and Jhanji suffer frequently from the

[5] Muirhead Thompson : *Assam Valley*, p. 77.

floods. But the magnitude of the devastation and havoc caused by floods have increased after the great earthquake of 1950.

The causes of the increased flood hazard to which these plains have been subjected are complex. It is well-known that the great earthquake of 1950 has changed the topography of the basins. The large scale land slides caused by the earthquake have denuded hills of forests, and hill slopes have cracked and become unstable. The danger of occurrence of land slides is ever present. The river bed aggraded and the carrying capacities of the rivers have been reduced. In search of required waterways the rivers over-flow their already shortened banks and spread all over the plains, which are widening every year. There is no indication to confirm any abnormal flood run-off in the catchments and the rivers carry discharge which is comparable with their past flows. Neither are there any statistical indications to show that the intensity of monsoon rainfall has increased during recent times over their past records. The causes of flood havoc lie mostly in the conditions of river course and the rapid silting of river beds. The siltation is still in progress. The rivers are cutting their banks, and beds, deeper and deeper in the narrow gorges in the hills and all the while depositing their silt load in the river reaches of the plains.

So something like traffic jam is created and the smooth flow and clearance of detritus from section to section becomes impossible. The river tries to overcome the jam by overflowing. On account of the extreme manageability and fluid mobility, the river succeeds in breaking loose from the narrow confine banks and flood the surrounding plains. There is another unusual phenomenon which causes sudden and heavy floods in these regions. Land slides occur in the narrow gorges of the mountain damming up the river and creating a storage reservation. But these slip dams burst after a few days releasing all stored water suddenly. The enormous quantity of water rushes down in a huge wave and causes heavy flood without warning. This causes great havoc in the plains.

These basin areas are not habituated to heavy floods compared to any other river basins, the reason being all the rivers are controlled by marginal embankments. The embankments are constructed on both sides of the river to restrict the over-flow. But at places due to strong current the embank-ments are breached at several places and the surrounding areas are inundated.

At a distance of about 12 miles from Golaghat town and on the bank of the Namdang river, there is a place known as Garampani where there is a hot spring. People say that its water has medicinal utility.

(d) Geology :

The geological history of Sibsagar district, and for that matter, of the Upper Assam Valley as a whole, is related to two long narrow subsiding

trough (geosynclines) lying on either side of an old rigid continental shield (foreland). The foreland is geologically a north-eastern continuation of the Shillong and Mikil Hills plateau and is concealed in the valley by a great thickness of alluvium and tertiary rocks. To the north of this mainland of Archaean rocks was an ancient central geosynclinal sea known as the Tethys. The geological history of the rest of Assam region is fragmentary upto the Tertiary time. An arm of a sea invaded Assam from the south in the Cretaceous time. With the beginning of the Tertiary era, the sea extended further north-east and submerged the greater part of Assam. But for occasional and temporary retreat of the sea, marine condition prevailed till about the Miocene time. Thousands of feet of sediments were deposited on the foreland as well as in the geocynclines, the floors of all of which were slowly but continuously sinking.

Meanwhile, a series of intermittent earth movements went on in the Assam region. The movements accentuated in the post-Pliocene age and the piles of sediments that were accumulating in the geosynclines were severely compressed and uplifted into the lofty Himalayas in the north and the Naga, Lushai and the other associated ranges of hills in the south. The sea was gradually driven back towards the Bay of Bengal giving place in its slow regression at first to estuarine and then to fluviatile conditions. Erosion moved many thousands of feet of material from the rising areas. Finally, deposition began on the foreland area of the Upper Assam Valley, pre-sumably late in the Dihing times and continued until the present day.

Stratigraphy : The geology of almost the entire district is, thus, concealed by alluvial depcsits. Geological Surveys, aided by drilling for oil, have shown that under the recent deposits there are many thousands of feet of Tertiary sediments which lie over an Archaean basement complex. These Tertiary rocks represent the foreland facies and are distinguishable from the geosynclinal facies of Tertiary rocks which form the hills on the south and south-east of the district. Rocks of the latter facies are found out-cropping in a small area within the district along the hills to the south of the railway near the north-eastern boundary.

The Tertiary rocks of the two facies may be broadly classified as follows :

Age	*Local Name.*
1. Recent & Pleistocene	Alluviums.
2. Pliocene	Dihing Series (Dhekiajuli beds); unconformity.
3. Mio-Pliocene	Namsang beds : possible unconformity.
4. Miocene	Tipam Series & Surma Series; unconformity.
5. Oligocene	Barail Series.
6. Eocene	Disang Series (Naga Hills) Jaintia Series (Mikir Hills & Upper Assam Valley).

The thick Disang Series (over 10,000 feet) of Naga Hills is composed mostly of shales, whereas the comparatively thinner Jaintia Series (2,000 ft.) is composed of fossiliferous limestones, sandstones and shales in the Upper Assam Valley. The Barail Series is of considerable economic importance as it contains oil and workable seams of coal. The Series is about 10,000 ft. thick at the north-eastern end of the Naga Hills and includes sandstones and shales. In this area the upper portion of the Barail Series forms the Coal measure sub-series. In contrast to the above, the Barails are only 2,000 to 3,000 ft. thick in the alluvial valley and are made up of sandstones, mudstone shales, oil sands and coal seams. The Surma Series consists mainly of alterations of shales and shaly sandstones. The Tipam Series is made up of clays, sandstones, oil sands, mudstones and shales. The oil sands of Digboi are of this Series. The Series in the Upper Assam Valley closely resemble the corresponding beds in Digboi, but is rather thinner. The succeeding beds are called Namsang Beds and are of standstones, grits, conglomerates and thin beds of 'coal-conglomerate'. A series of pebble-beds unconformably overlying the Namsang Beds is known as the Dihing Series. The beds underlie the alluvial deposits of the Brahmaputra. The greater portion of the Sibsagar valley is covered by comparatively new alluvial deposits. Terraces of high level alluvium of Pleistocene age occur along the foot hills to the south-eastern border of the district.

Mineral Wealth : Coal : Coal is the only mineral which has so far been commercially exploited in the district. It is mined in Nazira and Jaipur coalfields. Coal is also found on the Jhanji and Disai rivers. The Jhanji area is only three miles long and stretches into the Nagaland. It lies fifteen miles south-east of Amguri railway station. The Disai area is said to be about five miles long and situated just on the border with the Nagaland, about ten miles south-east of Mariani railway junction. The seams in both these cases are few, thin and highly inclined. The coals have 3.4 to 6.8 per cent moisture, 4.8 to 6.5 per cent ash, 33.8 to 36.9 per cent volatile matter and 52.9 and 54.9 per cent fixed carbon.

The Nazira coalfield is nearly 16 miles long and situated about four miles south of Naginimara railway station up the Dikhou river. Except for a small out-crop of coal-measures within five miles of Safrai railway station, the coalfield lies in the Nagaland. Since the coal is worked out from Sibsagar, this coalfield may conveniently be described here.

The thickest coal-measures are exposed in the Safrai river where there are five worked seams totalling about 73 feet in thickness. The coal reserve estimated in limited area of the coalfield appears to be about forty million tons. Some of the coal seams are worked by the Nazira Coal Company at Nazira colliery situated in the Borjan-Waktingjan Valley. The colliery with an area of two square miles produced about 25,400 tons of coal in

1957. Data available from sources other than the Regional Coal Survey Station, Jorhat, indicate that the coals are of good quality. They have about five per cent moisture, one to four per cent ash, and two to four per cent sulphur.

In Jaipur, out-crops of the seams are seen along a strip 25 miles long, about half of which lie in the Sibsagar district. A thickness of more than 45 feet of coal in six seams is exposed in the Dilih river. The coal bearing rocks dip to the east with high degree of inclination (30° to 80°). On the Sibsagar side, the coal is worked by the Dilih Collieries (Assam) Ltd. The colliery has an area of four square miles and produced 23,656 tons of coal in 1959.

Investigations carried out at the Regional Coal Survey Station, Jorhat, show that the Dilih coals have, on the air dried basis, 5·3 to 6·3 per cent moisture, 1·4 to 6·3 per cent ash, 40·5 to 43·9 per cent volatile matter and 46·7 to 49·5 per cent fixed carbon. Compared to the coals of Makum coalfield of Lakhimpur district, the Dilih coals have low carbon (75·71 to 79·21 per cent) low calorific value (13,460 to 14,150 Btu/lb) and high oxygen (12·29 to 14·23 per cent) on unit coal basis. The coals investigated appear to have been oxidised in site and it is likely that they may improve in quality at depth. They have 1·31 to 4·68 per cent sulphur. The low temperature carbonisation of the coals in the Fischer Assay apparatus at 550°C give the following yields per metric ton of dry coal: char 700 to 740 kilogram and tar 110 to 150 litres (14 to 15 cwt. of char and 24 to 33 gallons of tar per avoir ton). Like all Tertiary coals of Assam, the Dilih coals are friable and produce very high proportion of fines.

Oil : Over and above coal, oil is another mineral of considerable economic importance which has recently been discovered in Sibsagar.

The Oil and Natural Gas Commission undertook exploration in Sibsagar and neighbouring areas for oil and natural gas early in 1957, when a seismic survey was initiated and continued later till to-day. Gravity Magnetic surveys were carried out in 1962. At present, two seismic field parties are working in the area for location of suitable structures favourable for oil accumulation.

Deep exploratory drilling commenced in 1959 in this area. The Disangmukh test well was dry. Rudrasagar well Nos. 1, 2 and 4 were completed in 1960, 1961 and 1962 respectively. Well No. 6 is now under drilling. Oil was encountered in all the wells drilled so far on the Rudrasagar structure.

The Commission is carrying out production testing in the wells drilled in the area and is making arrangements for drilling in Lakwa and Teok areas.

Clay : So far as clay is concerned, much is yet to be known about the quality and quantity of clay occurring in the district. Ordinary clay for pottery and brick making is found almost anywhere in the district. Fire clays have been found to occur with the coal seams, but their quality and quantity are not known. Fine white clays are reported from Borhat and Nambor river. The beds, however, require closer examination.

Special features—volcanoes, earthquakes, earthtremors etc.: The frequency of earthquakes in Assam is closely related to the geology of the region. Earthquakes occur in places where the crust is markedly unstable, such as mountain belts of geologically recent origin. One such region is the arc formed by the Himalayas and the Naga and Lushai Hills around the northern, north-eastern and eastern border of the stable peninsular wedge of the Assam plateau with its north-eastern extension below the alluvium of the Upper Assam Valley. The organic forces which culminated in the rise of the mountains are still in progress, though equilibrium has largely been attained. Adjustments taking place from time to time find expression as earthquakes.

Like the rest of Assam, Sibsagar is also liable to earthquakes. The chronicler of Mir Jumla's expedition describes the alarm produced amongst the invaders by one of these unlooked for visitations. The great earthquake of 1897 was distinctly felt and did considerable damange, though it was nothing in comparison with the widespread havoc brought elsewhere. The treasury at Golaghat was injured, and two brick pillars in the engine house at the Jorhat railway station collapsed in ruins. Some damage was done in tea gardens, and here and there stretches of road were shaken down to the level of the rice fields. Even in Sibsagar the earthquake was a distinctly singular experience, and, had it not been for the extraordinary violence of the shock between Gauhati and Sylhet, it would have taken rank as quite a serious seismical disturbance.

The earthquake of 15th August, 1950, with its epi-centre at about 200 miles north of Sadiya, was one of the biggest earthquakes the world had ever experienced. An area of 15,000 sq. miles including the districts of Lakhimpur and Sibsagar suffered most extensive damage in life and property. The earthquake was accompanied by usual effects such as fissuring, subsidence and elevation of the ground, land-slides and floods. The drainage of the country was changed considerably. It was noticed that generally the river-beds silted up considerably and many had changed their courses. In some cases these changes were temporary but in others permanent. The Brahmaputra at Rangoli-Kobo, a little below the junction of the Dihing and the Lohit, had silted up by 8 to 10 feet. At Dibrugarh the minimum low water level recorded was 325 in January, 1950 and 331·1 in January, 1951. At Nimati and Disangmukh the water level appeared to be

nomal but above Disangmukh it appeared to be appreciably higher, indicating that silt had moved downwards. Silt was permanently deposited on river beds making in many cases navigation almost impossible. At Jorhat hundreds of houses collapsed and many office buildings suffered damage. Near the town a few places on the Assam Trunk Road subsided with cracks. Jagannath Baruah road leading to Kokilamukh was badly damaged. It took time to restore it to its proper condition. Slight damage was also caused to Jorhat Mariani road. Fissures appeared in paddy fields and villages and sand gushed out of them and destroyed crops. A large number of tanks and ponds were filled up with sand causing difficulty in supply of drinking water. At Sibsagar heavy damages were caused to Jail and High School buildings and the Police lock-up. Jail walls on the north and south collapsed and had to be renewed completely. The Disangmukh road subsided in two places. The town was under water for 3 to 4 days due to a breach on the right bund of the river Dikhou just near the bazar. The Siva temple, which withstood the 1897 shock creditably, cracked and tilted. Cattle, fish and wild animals died in great number. But compared to the intensity of the earthquake, the loss of human life was negligible.

So far as destructive huricanes are concerned, it may be said that Sibsagar is not visited by them. But during the rains a spell of hot dry weather is often followed by a thunder shower, which immediately cools the air and, thus, on that account is refreshingly welcome. Hail storms occasionally do damage but, fortunately, they are of very local nature.

(e) Flora :

Botanically the forest of Sibsagar can roughly be divided into two divisions—the tropical evergreen forests and the miscellaneous forests. The first category includes climatic climax vegetation such as *Hollong, Nahor, Sam, Amri, Gunseroi, Makai, Sopa,* etc. They are the best stocked stand of the district. In the second category such species are included whose top canopies are deciduous and the middle and lower canopies are evergreen in character. Qualitatively the latter forests are inferior to the former and they are composed of such species whose commercial value is negligible. The evergreen forests are also most picturesque to the eyes, the miscellaneous forests being far from that. But the latter forests may in the long run transform into evergreen forests, if they remain unaffected by any biotic influence.

The evergreen forests, as the name suggests, are evergreen in character and are generally found in Dilih Sapekhati, Geleki, Tiruhill, Disai and Disai Valley reserves. They are composed of many canopies, the top canopy being predominated by *Hollong* which towers majestically over others with clean straight poles of nearly 100 feet long. In some reserves of Sibsagar subdivision, *Makai* is also found associated with *Hollong* in this canopy.

Other species that tend to attain considerable heights in the top canopy are *Sam, Sopa, Gunseroi,* etc., but their occurrence is only sporadic in an otherwise gregarious crop of *Hollong* and *Makai.* Since they are confined only to better drained areas, in areas where drainage is poor, they get themselves replaced by species like *Sollokh, Ajhar, Urium,* etc. In the middle canopy of evergreen forests we generally find *Nahor* and *Morsal.* But there are also other species such as *Bandordima, Bhomora, Dhuna, Jamu, Singori, Gomari,* etc. Sometimes these species in this canopy are replaced by bamboos like *Keko, Dalo* and *Watai.* In the lower canopy there is a variety of evergreen shrubs and herbs among which *Phutuka, Gashbhedeli, Gerukatamul, Kawpat, Tora, Lengoo,* etc., predominate. Inferior quality canes are also not uncommon in the depressions and low lying areas.

The leafless period of deciduous species that are found abundantly in the top canopy of miscellaneous forests is considerably short. The most common tree in this canopy is *Bhelu* which towers over the rest and grows to gigantic dimensions. But it has a poor stem on account of its large buttressing habit. Among other species that occur in this canopy are different kinds of *Sopa* and *Sam* intermingling in a lesser degree with *Bogipoma, Gunseroi, Bonsom,* etc. In the middle canopy *Nahor* finds a prominent place. But here and there *Bandordima, Dhuna, Singori, Seleng, Paroli* and *Paniamora* also grow. Compared to evergreen forests, the undergrowth here is lighter but climbers are found in greater profusion. Bamboos such as *Keko* and *Dalo* occur plentifully in higher areas.

The forests of Dhansiri Valley Division, falling in Sibsagar district may conveniently be called moist deciduous riverian of canes. However, the nature of the forests at certain places is such that they may be termed northern tropical semi-evergreen types instead. The terrain of this region being flat and interspersed by a series of mounds of varying heights, the tree-growth is confined to elevated grounds, whereas the ill-drained interspaces contain luxuriantly growing canes like *Jati* and *Tita.* In the top canopy we find *Ajhar, Amari, Bonsom, Sam, Urium,* etc. while in the middle canopy *Outenga* overwhelms all others.

The species of Kaziranga reserve represent Savannah type which contains various kinds of grass such as *Ekara, Nal, Khagari,* etc. They generally grow in low-lying areas, while in the higher plane *San* grass holds its sway. Patches of *Koroi* also occur here and there. *Simalu* grows profusely in over-grazed areas around the *Khutis* along the southern bank of the Brahmaputra. A belt of mixed evergreen forest also occurs along the bank of Kaziranga from south-east to north-west. The belt generally harbours the wild elephants of the sanctuary.

Forest Belts: Another division can be made of the forest of the district Reserve Forest and Unclassed State Forest. Reserve Forests have

been constituted under provisions made in Assam Forest Regulation VII, 1891 by which the following acts are mainly prohibited. (1) Tresspassing, or permitting cattle to tresspass, or allowing cattle to pasture; (2) Causing any damage by negligence in felling any tree, or "cutting or dragging any timber"; (3) Any fresh clearance under provisions of Section 7; (4) Setting, kindling or leaving any fire in contravention of any rules made by the Government so as to endanger the forest; (5) Felling, cutting, girdling, marking, lopping; taping or causing injuries by fire or otherwise to any tree; (6) Quarrying stone, burning lime or charcoal or collections subject to any manufacturing process or removal of forest produce; (7) Clearing or breaking up of land for any purpose; and (8) Poisoning water or in contravention to Government rules hunting, shooting, fishing, setting of trap or snare. In 1902-03 the Reserve Forest covered an area of 876 square miles, but presently it has dwindled to 737 square miles which comprise as many as twenty one reserves, namely—Dilih Sapekhati, Diroi, Doal, Geleki, Panidihing, Tiruhills, Disai Valley, Disai, Hallongapar, Kakadonga, Dayang, Upper Doigurung, Lower Doigurung, Nambor North, Panbari, Kaziranga, Nambor West, Nambor South, Diphu and Rengma. There are two forest divisions in the district—Sibsagar and Dhansirii. The latter includes the last named four reserves which have a total area of about 232 square miles. Among the reserves, the smallest is Sola with an area of only 2½ square miles and the largest is Kaziranga which stretches over an area totalling 165 square miles. In Sibsagar division the reserves are situated on the southern part of the district, while in Dhansiri division they form continuous belts around the river valleys.

Unclassed State Forests are managed under provisions of Sections 34 and 35 of Assam Forest Regulation VII, 1891. Under these provisions no use of any forest produce in such land will be made except in accordance with rules to be made by the Government. To be brief, such forest is simple Government waste land and does not necessarily possess any of the characteristics which are usually associated with the expression 'forest'. It may be a sandy *char,* or a huge expanse of low-lying land covered with high grass and reeds and almost totally destitute of trees. It may be a small piece of arable land which has been resigned by its former holder and has not yet been settled with any other person, or it any be, what its name would naturally suggest, actual tree forest. In 1902-03 such forest occupied an enormous area of 2,839 square miles. But in 1956-57 the area was 3,07,251 acres in Sibsagar Division and 1,90,459 acres in Dhansiri Valley Division.

Effects of Government forest Policy: The first object of the management of forest is to conserve forest for the maintenance of climatic balance and to provide protection from erosion. Unfortunately due to various

reasons these aims have not been achieved to the desired extent. During the past twenty years or so almost all the Unclassed State Forests of the district have been completely deforested and settled for cultivation. In addition, many square miles of Reserved Forest have also been deforested and settled with landless people. The results of this process are bearing fruit in the shape of erosion and devastating flood.

The second object of the management is to attain a more regular and superior type of forest than the existing one. In this respect sufficient progress has been made during the course of past 50 years. With the help of scientifically prepared working plans superior species are naturally regenerated and plantation is carried on very systematically.

Another objective of the management is to provide Veneer industry and Saw mills with timber, the people with firewood, bamboo and cane. The management has been able to meet all these requirements. Moreover, forest produce from the district is sent to other parts of the country also.

(f) Fauna :

In Sibsagar quite a large number of the denizens of the silvan world is conglomerated in the Kaziranga Wild Life Sanctuary. The exhibit par excellence of the sanctuary is the great Indian one-horned Rhinoceros, to be found generally wallowing in the mud of the swamps. These are now estimated to be nearly 384 of them in the sanctuary, the number having increased, thanks to the protection given by the government, from less than a score in the early thirties of this century. Another magnificent species, getting rarer in the rest of India, which can be seen here, is the wild buffalo. While it is difficult to estimate their numbers, there may be more than 300 of these in the sanctuary. The bull wild buffaloes visit the tame cow buffaloes of the professional graziers and the progeny of these commands a good price because of their greater strength and, presumably, greater milk-yielding capacity. No tame male buffalo can survive in the sanctuary. Another animal greatly increasing, but rare both in Assam and India, and which at one time became almost extinct in the sanctuary, is the swamp deer. Due to the special protection afforded in the last decade, their number has increased and there may be nearly a hundred of them in the sanctuary. A few herds of bison are there in the sanctuary. The number of wild elephants is not many and their stay in the sanctuary in general is seasonal, migration taking place to the neighbouring Mikir Hills. Countless numbers of hog deer are also there in the sanctuary and the number of wild pigs is even greater. It is not uncommon to see sounders of over fifty, busy digging for roots on the fringes of the swamps. Tigers are definitely on the increase now and in a few instances they have become dangerous to the calves of the rhinoceroses. A few leopards have been seen. As real tree jungle is of limited extent, the barking deer and the sumbhur deer, which

like this types of forest, are not many in this sanctuary. Among other animals that are seen in the sanctuary, mention may be made of Himalayan bear, jungle cats and crab-eating mongoose. Others abound in the streams as also tortoise, the latter particularly on the banks of the Brahmaputra. Water birds such as the whistling teel, snipe, adjutant, cormorants, black-billed storks and white billed storks are in abundance. Different types of ducks are also seen as migratory birds in the season. Egrets follow the rhinos and are often found riding them, picking off insects from their bodies.

From the above it would be wrong to conclude that species found in Kaziranga are absent in other parts of the district. Barring a few, such as rhinoceros, wild buffalo, swamp deer, etc. most of the species, more particularly elephants and tiger, abound in the rest of the district also. Over and above them species found in the district are clouded Leopard, Black Panther, Sloth Bear, Spotted Deer, Pigmy Hog, Small Govet Cat, Fishing Cat, Wild Dog, Monkey, Langoor monkey, Hoolook monkey, Parkapien, Ant Eaters, Hares, Squirrel, Mongoose, Tiger, Civer Cat and Binturong. Among the reptiles found in the district mention may be made of Crocodile, King Cobra, Lizard, Monitor Lizard and Python. The names of the birds found in the district are Pelican, Cane, Wild, Fowl, Wild Goose, Wild Duck, Blue Coot, Green Pigeon, Imperial Pigeon, Parrot, Partridge, Quall, Florican, Blackface Pheasant, Peacock Pheasant, Tragophan Pheasant, Scarlet and Yellow Mi and Hornbill.

Elephant Catching : There are mainly two processes prevailing in the district for catching elephant. They are known as *Mela Shikar* and *Kheda Shikar*. In *Mela Shikar*, mahouts mounted on staunch and well-trained elephants pursue the herd, which generally takes to flight. The chase is of a most arduous and exciting character. The great animals go crashing through the thickest jungle and over rough and treacherous ground at a surprising pace, and the hunter is liable to be torn by the beautiful but thorny cane brake, or, were he not very agile, to be swept from his seat by the boughs of an overhanging tree. After a time the younger animals begin to flag and lag behind, and it is then that the opportunity of the pursuer comes. Two hunters single out a likely beast, drive their elephants one on either side, and swiftly throw a noose over its neck. The two ends of the noose are firmly fasterned to the *Kundis*, as the hunting elephants are called, and, as they close in on either side, the captured animal is unable to escape, or to do much injury to his captors, who are generally considerably larger than their victim. The wild elephant is then brought back to the camp where it is tied up for a time and gradually tamed. It is said that the system of *Mela shikar* was introduced in the time of Purandar Sinha.

The principle of the *Kheda* operation is a simple one. In the very thick jungle, near a path used regularly by a herd of wild elephants, the trap or

stockade is erected. It consists of a large circle of very strong, high fencing, made of tree trunks firmly embedded in the ground and securely roped togethr. On the outside, to strengthen this fence, a bulwark of earth is thrown up on it to about the height of an elephant, and, at intervals, there are buttresses of wood. The entrance is a very strong gate, also made of tree-trunks and large branches. Outside the gateway, on either side, there are barricades leading away from the stockade and away from each other to form a funnel. These barricades are not too obviously foreign to the surrounding jungle, so that the elephants do not notice them till it is too late.

When all is ready and a herd of wild elephants is reported to be approaching the area, men on tame elephants create a disturbance behind the wild elephants and stampede the herd. In the ensuing excitement, the men drive the younger smaller members of the herd into the funnel made by the two barricades. By the time the elephants realise that they are in a trap, it is too late, and the only opening they can see, free from men and noise and torches (made of burning branches), leads to the stockade, and the gate is crashed shut behind them. Every effort is made to exclude the large tuskers as they are of no use for training and can cause unlimited troubles and danger.

Once the elephants are secure in the stockade, there is the difficult task of bringing them out and taking them to the stockade-camp, where they are gathered in the shade until such time as they can be taken to the training camp.

To tie up the wild elephant, a noose is slipped round its neck and the end is fastened to a strong tree whose bark has been removed and the trunk smoothed, so that the rope does not fray readily. The hind legs of the elephant are tied together, the rope being passed a number of times from one leg to the other, then the rope is securely fastened to a tree behind the elephant. This is done in such a way that the elephant is unable to bring its hind legs well under its body, in which position it would obtain more purchase when struggling to break its bonds ; and also so that the elephant is at a slight stretch all the time and, therefore, tires much more quickly.

Games law and measures for the preservation of wild life : There are various laws and measures for the preservation of wild life. Shooting, hunting or trapping in a sanctuary is absolutely prohibited except under special licenses issued by the Conservator of Forests to approved sportsmen for the exclusive purpose of hunting and killing carnivorous animals. The killing and capture of wild animals and birds are prohibited during the closed seasons as prescribed in Assam Forest Manual of 1947. Under Sections 34 (2) (f) and 35 (2) of Assam Forest Regulations (VII) of 1891 no rhinoceros shall be killed in the unclassed state forest except with the previous sanction of the State Government. There are also provisions for the

protection of fish. Under Sections 25 (g) and 72 of Assam Forest Regulation (VII) of 1891, the killing of fish by the use of explosives or poison, the netting of fish except under special license issued by the Divisional Forest Officer, the taking of eggs and trapping of birds are absolutely prohibited.

Hunting, shooting or fishing within a reserved forest is prohibited except under license issued in accordance with certain rules. The Conservator of Forests with the previous approval of the State Government may declare any reserved forest, or part thereof, to be Class I or Class II reserve for the purpose of limiting the numbers of particular species of game that may be killed or hunted, or for the purpose of protecting any species absolutely. Class I forests are in turn divided into shooting blocks none of which remains open for more than 15 consecutive days to be reopened only after a gap of another 15 days. No person or member of a party reserving a block shall be permitted to kill in any one year more than (1) two buffaloes, (2) two bisons, (3) four sambhurs, (4) two swamp deer, and (5) one spotted deer.

There are also certain laws in regard to shooting implements. Use of rifles of bore less than 300 for shooting big game is prohibited. Cartridges loaded with shot larger than No. 4 is not be carried in reserved forest.

(g) Climate and Rainfall :

In common with the rest of Upper Assam this district has a climate which is characterised by a highly humid atmosphere, abundant rains and general coolness. The cold season from December to February is followed by the season of severe thunder storms from March to May. The southwest monsoon season is from June to about the beginning of October. October and November constitute the post-monsoon season.

Records of rainfall in the district are available for twelve stations for periods ranging from 22 to 90 years. The details of the rainfall at these stations and for the district as a whole are given in Tables 1 and 2. The average annual rainfall in the district is 2,197.0 mm (85·49″). The rainfall generally increases from the southwest to the northeast. About 64% of the annual rainfall is received during the monsoon season, July being the month with the maximum rainfall. The variation in the annual rainfall of the district is small. During the fifty years period from 1901 to 1950, the highest rainfall amounting to 133% of the normal occurred in 1929 while 1914 was the year with the lowest rainfall which was 80% of the normal. From table 2 it will be seen that in 40 years out of 59, the rainfall in the district was between 2000 and 2500 mm (78·74″ and 98·43″).

On an average there are about 119 rainy days (days with rainfall of 2·5 mm—10 cents or more) in a year. This number varies from 94 at Barpathar to 132 at Athabari.

The maximum rainfall in 24 hours recorded at any station in the district was 253·5 mm (9·98″) at Golaghat on June 2, 1889.

Temperature and Humidity: There are meteorlogical observations at Sibsagar, Golaghat and Jorhat in the District. While the records at Sibsagar extend to a long period of years, the observatories at Golaghat and Jorhat were started only recently. The records of temperature and other meteorological conditions available for Sibsagar may be taken as representative of the conditions in the district in general. The cold season starts about the end of November when both day and night temperatures begin to drop rapidly. January is the coldest month of the year with the mean daily minimum temperature at 9·8°C (49·6°F) and the mean daily maximum at 21·6°C (70·9°F). Temperatures begin to rise from about the beginning of March, and by July they attain the highest point, the mean daily maximum temperature being 31·8°C (89·3°F).

The monsoon season is the period of the year with the highest temperatures. Being also the period with high moisture in the air, the weather is often unpleasant with the damp heat particularly in between the spells of rain. With the withdrawal of the southwest monsoon by about the second week of October, the weather gradually becomes cooler.

The highest maximum temperature recorded at Sibsagar was 42·8°C (109·1°F) on May 23, 1945 and the lowest minimum temperature was 2·8°C (37·0°F) on February 13, 1905.

The atmosphere is highly humid throughout the year.

Special Weather: The sky is generally heavily clouded to overcast in the south-west monsoon season. In the post-monsoon and winter seasons it is lightly to moderately clouded but in the morning particularly in the winter months the sky is obscured due to the fog in the valley lifting up. During the period, March to May moderate to heavily clouded sky is common.

Winds are generally light and are predominantly from directions between northwest and northeast. In the thunderstorm season, March to May, in association with thunderstorms, strong winds with occasional squalls occur for short periods. During the southwest monsoon, winds from south and southwest are also common as the northerlies and northeasterlies.

Cyclonic storms and depressions from the Bay of Bengal do not move into Upper Assam. Thunderstorms are frequent in the period from March to September. The thunderstorms in the period, March to May are similar to the norwesters of Bengal and are sometimes violent and are accompanied with occasional hail. Fog is frequent in the post-monsoon and winter seasons.

Tables 3, 4 and 5 give the temperature and humidity, mean wind speed and frequency of special weather phenomena respectively for Sibsagar.

TABLE—2

FREQUENCY OF ANNUAL RAINFALL IN THE DISTRICT
(Date 1901—1950)

Range in mm.	No. of years	Range in mm.	No. of years.
1701—1800	1	2301—2400	10
1801—1900	1	2401—2500	5
1901—2000	4	2501—2600	2
2001—2100	9	2601—2700	1
2101—2200	8	2701—2800	0
2201—2300	8	2801—2900	1

TABLE—3

NORMALS OF TEMPERATURE AND RELATIVE HUMIDITY
SIBSAGAR

Month	Mean Daily Maximum Temperature	Mean Daily Minimum Temperature.	Highest Maximum ever recorded.		Lowest Minimum ever recorded		Relative Humidity 0830	Relative Humidity 1730.
	°C	°C	°C	Date	°C	Date	%	%
Jauuary	21.6	9.8	28.9	1942 Jan. 17	3.3	1917 Jan. 9	93	77
February	23.0	12.1	30.6	1942 Feb. 28	2.8	1905 Feb. 13	87	72
March	26.3	15.6	35.6	1945 Mar. 25	7.2	1917 Mar. 2	81	69
April	27.7	18.9	36.1	1933 Apr. 18	12.8	1912 Apr. 14	81	73
May	29.6	22.1	42.8	1945 May 23	16.7	1893 May 4	84	76
June	31.4	24.6	37.8	1881 Jun. 6	19.4	1907 June, 7	85	79
July	31.8	25.4	38.9	1883 July 12	20.6	1909 July, 29	87	78
August	31.6	25.3	37.8	1931 Aug. 21	18.3	1944 Aug. 16	86	81
September	30.9	24.6	36.4	1958 Sep. 11	19.4	1890 Sept. 23	87	84
October	29.1	21.5	35.6	1938 Oct. 10	15.0	1938 Oct. 31	88	85
November	25.8	15.5	32.2	1896 Nov. 1	9.4	1928 Nov. 29	89	83
December	22.6	10.6	28.9	1958 Dec. 6	4.4	1916 Dec. 26	93	80
Annual	27.6	18.8					78	78

* Hours I.S.T.

TABLE—4

MEAN WIND SPEED IN KM/HR.

Sibsagar

Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Annual.
1.9	2.9	4.0	4.5	4.0	3.7	3.7	3.4	3.1	2.3	1.8	1.6	3.1

TABLE—5

SPECIAL WEATHER PHENOMENA

Sibsagar

Mean No. of days with.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Annual
Thunder	0.9	3.8	9.3	12.9	13.8	16.3	17.2	15.4	13.9	3.7	0.3	0.8	108.3
Fog.	19.2	8.9	3.4	1.5	0.1	0	0	0	0	7.9	15.9	25.9	81.7
Hail	0.1	0.1	0.8	0.4	0	0	0	0	0	0.1	0	0.2	1.7
Dust-storm	0	0	0.3	0.6	0.1	0.3	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	1.4
Squall	0	0	0	0.1	0	0	0	0	0.5	0	0	0	0.6

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CHAPTER II

HISTORY

(a) Early History :

Scholars are of opinion that the great Bodo tribe of Sino-Tibetan origin had established over the valley of the Brahmaputra fairly early, possibly in the second millenium B.C., and some Austric and possibly also Dravidian tribes had preceded the mongoloid Bodos in this tract. The area now represented by the district of Sibsagar formed part of this tract of country and it was in all probability covered by tribal settlements of Bodo or mixed Austric-Dravidian and Bodo races. When the land of Assam as Pragjyotisa or Kamarupa came within the pale of Pauranic geography, particularly in the age of the *Mahabharata*, it figures as a land of the Kiratas, and the Pragjyotisa king Bhagadatta of *Mahabharata* fame is believed to have enlisted levies of Cinas and Kiratas for the army he led to the battle fields of Kuruksetra. The Kiratas were Mongoloid people, particularly Bodos. It is with the Bodos and Shans that the early history of Sibsagar is concerned and not with the legendary princes of Hindu mythology. But it is to be remembered that Hindu and Pauranic traditions linked up Assam long before the Christian era with the Aryandom of North India, though not as belonging to the Aryan pale but as a vassal or friendly land of Kirata or Mongoloid peoples, the upper classes of which had become or were becoming Aryanised. An Aryan stream also continued to flow into Assam, particularly since the beginning of the Christian era.[1]

Sibsagar must have formed part of the old kingdom of Pragjyotisa-Kamarupa, particularly during the time of the Varman rulers of Assam of at least the 7th-8th century. This political status seems to have continued till the Hindu dynasty declined and different small principalities were established by the Bara-Bhuyans and the Bodo chiefs, beginning with the 12th century A.D. or a little earlier. In comparison with Kamrup which witnessed the rise and fall of dynasties beginning with that of the legendary Naraka, the history of Sibsagar is a thing of yesterday. But what it lacks in antiquity is made up in accuracy and detail, for here we shall presently be dealing with a people (the Tai-Ahoms) endowed with the historical sense,

[1] Dr. S. K. Chatterjee—*The place of Assam in the History and Civilisation of India* pp. 9-22.

a people who compiled the annals of their nobles and their kings and whose records have most fortunately come down to us.

(b) The Kachari kingdom : Origin of tribe :

When the curtain lifts, and it does not lift, as in the rest of the Assam Valley, only to fall again before it rises for the drama of modern history, we find a large part of the district under the dominion of the Kachari king of Dimapur. These Kacharis belong to the great Bodo tribe we have mentioned above, which are found not only in the valley of the Brahmaputra but also in the Garo Hills and in Hill Tippera far away to the south. They are thought to be a section of the Indo-Chinese race, whose original headquarters are said to have been located in the inaccessible hills and valleys which conceal the sources of the Yang-tse-kiang and Ho-ang-ho and they seem to have gradually spread in successive waves of immigration over the greater part of what is now known as the State of Assam. At the present day, a prayer is still in use in North Cachar which refers to a huge pipul tree growing near the confluence of the Dilao (Brahmaputra) and the Sagi. There the Kacharis were born and increased greatly in numbers, and thence they travelled till they reached Nilacal, the hill in Kamrup on which the temple of Kamakhya stands. From Gauhati they migrated to Halali, and finally settled in Dimapur. This account of the migration of the Kacharis is to some extent confirmed by Hindu tradition which describes the line of Naraka as being overthrown by foreign invaders, and as being afterwards restored in the person of one of his descendants, Brahmapala.

Difference between Kacharis of Darrang and of Dimapur : At the time when they moved eastward from Gauhati the tribe seems to have split up into different sections, and there is nothing to suggest that the Kacharis living on the north bank of the Brahmaputra continued to be subject to the king of Dimapur. Originally, no doubt, Rabhas, Meches, Garos, Lalungs, Bodo or north bank Kacharis, and Dimasa or the Kacharis of Cachar were all members of the same stock ; but they have gradually grown away from one another, and Bodo and Dimasa are now as dissimilar as French and Spanish. Even in the same district the two sections of the tribe are said to be distinct. The Kacharis in the north of Nowgong are Bodos, and are closely connected with the Kacharis of Darrang ; but they have nothing to do with the Hojais, who are Dimasa and live near the North Cachar and Jaintia Hills. At the time of the Ahom invasion in 1228 A.D. the Kacharis seem to have been a powerful tribe occupying the valleys of the Kapili and the Dhansiri. The ruins of their capital at Dimapur, which are described at length at the conclusion of this chapter, show that they had advanced a considerable distance on the path of civilisation. At the present day this place is buried in dense jungle, and the tract of country between

the Mikir Hills and the Assam Range is a howling wilderness almost destitute of inhabitants, but the remains of tanks and temples found in the Kapili valley suggest that at one time there must have been fields and houses where there is now nothing but waving reeds and whispering grass.[2]

War between Kachari kings of Dimapur and the Ahoms : The history of the Kacharis in Sibsagar is but vague and fragmentary, as, unlike the Ahoms, they have left no annals of their rule. They are said to have engaged in war with Jangal Balahu, a Raja whose fort was situated near Raha in Nowgong ; but even the date at which this prince was reigning is uncertain, and we do not reach the solid base of fact till we find them in collision with the Ahoms.

But it should be noted that prior to the advent of Sukapha, the founder of the Ahom dynastry, the whole of Eastern Assam was under tribal rule. Almost all the tribes in occupation of this region belonged to the Mongoloid Bodo race. A powerful section of this race, locally called Chutiya, ruled the country east of the Subansiri and Disang rivers, probably with a strip of territory extending upto the confluence of the Dikhou and the Brahmaputra. The Chutiya rulers established their capital at Sadiya. They contain an accounts of what were called the Sadiyal Kacharis, as distinguished from the Hedambial (Dimasa) Kacharis to the west of the Dikhou, who had a Kingdom extending from the Dikhou river to the Dihing (the modern Dihang) in the east touching the Dilih river in the south. This is also the area over which the Chutiyas were found ruling early in the thirteenth century A.D. These Sadiyal Kacharis had in common with the Chutiyas the tradition of a golden cat as the source of prosperity and power. Further, both the Sadiya Kacharis and the Chutiyas worshipped the goddess, called Kecaikhati, with rites and sacrifices. This Kecaikhati temple is situated in the area of Chunpura near Sadiya. According to Dr. B. S. Guha, the Deori Chutiyas are a sub-tribe of the Kacharis.[3] Thus the Sadiyal Kacharis (Bodos) and the Chutiyas were the same people or were cognates.

The Hedambial Kacharis of the Dhansiri Valley had their capital at Dimapur and in the Hindu legends their first king is said to have been born of a union between the second Pandava, Bhima, and Hidimba Raksasi. The Dimasa king, Bisarpatipha, said to be a son of Mahadev by another legend, was a contemporary of Sukapha. Sukapha wrested Mahang, the eastern part of the territory of this Kachari king, driving him into the hills. Mahang is to the east of Borhat and south of Jaipur in Upper Assam. The local Moran (Matak) and Borahi Chiefs, whom Sukapha won over to his side

[2] Dimapur situated in the plains near the Naga Hills is now included in Nagaland.

[3] *JASB*, vol. XVII, 1951, pp. 28-29.

without a fight, must have contributed to his strength in this campaign to extend his foothold.

A major collision took place when the Dimasa (Timasa) Kacharis invaded the Ahom territory in A.D. 1490. The force sent by the Ahom King Suhangpha (1488-1493), was defeated and driven across the Dikhou. The Ahom king made peace by offering a girl to the Kachari king. Without further pressure, the Kacharis then returned home. The scene of the battle is in itself significant, as it showed that the Kacharis could fight, and fight successfully, at a considerable distance from their capital, and that they could make their influence felt not only in the Mikir Hills and the forests of the Dhansiri but also in the fertile plains of Jorhat and Golaghat. But it was not for long that they were to enjoy the pleasant sense of victory. War soon broke out again, and in 1536 A.D. Suhungmung who was generally known as the Dihingia Raja, advanced up the valley of the Dhansiri, killed the Kachari Raja, Detsung, and sacked his capital, Dimapur. The head-quarters of the kingdom were then removed to Maibong in the North Cachar Hills, and from there again to Khaspur in the plains to the south of the Barail, but the subsequent history of Cachar and the Kachari kings has little or no connection with Sibsagar.

(c) The Chutiyas :

It now remains to consider what is known of the history of the Chutiyas, the other section of the Bodo tribe, who, at the time of the advent of the Ahoms, shared with the Kacharis the sovereignty of the Sibsagar district. The early history of the ancient tribes is naturally veiled in some obscurity, but there seems little doubt that the Chutiyas were members of the great Bodo race, and entered the plains from the north-east. Colonel Dalton, quoting from an ancient chronicle which is confirmed by local tradition, states that they were originally settled in the hills near the Subansiri river. The tribe lived in large independent villages like the Abors and Miris of the present day. In course of time about A.D. 1189, one Birpal or Birabar seems to have attained a certain measure of supremacy over the neighbouring villages, and the process begun by the father was carried on still further by the son, named Gaurinarayan. He extended his influence over the wild tribes, brought under subjection all the Chutiyas living in the different hills in the area, assumed the title of Lord of the Hills and, at the head of his followers, descended into the valley of the Brahmaputra. He there defeated a king called Bhadra Sen and founded a capital called Ratnapur, which is said to have been situated in the Majuli or in the North Lakhimpur subdivision. Gaur was at that time still under the rule of a Hindu dynasty, so the eruption of the Chutiyas must have taken place prior to its (Gaur) conquest by the Muhammadans in 1204 A.D. The Chutia leader assumed the name of Ratnadhvaj Pal, contracted an alliance with

a neighbouring Raja called Nyayapal and generally consolidated his power. He excavated tanks, built temples and constructed a line of forts along the frontier. He then asked the king of Kamatesvar[4], to bestow a daughter in marriage upon his son, and on that prince rejecting the proposed alliance with scorn, constructed a road to his territories protected by forts, erected at intervals along the line of march, and, so alarmed the Kamatesvar Raja that his daughter was handed over without delay. Ratnadhvaj visited the king of Gaur, and left a son to be educated at his court. The boy died and his body was despatched, so goes the story, to his father, who received it when he was building a new city, called in memory of this event, Sadiya (the place where the corpse was given).

Downfall of the Chutiyas : Ratnadhvaj was succeeded by nine kings, each of whom bore the name of Pal. The ninth of the series, Dhirnarayan *alias* Dharmadhvaj Pal, had one daughter named Sadhani, for whose hand there were so many suitors that the king, with a Jephthah like fatuity, decided to submit the selection of his son-in-law to the arbitrament of fate. A flying squirrel was seen hovering over trees in front of the royal court, and the hand of the princess was promised to the man who could bring it down with an arrow. A poor young Chutiya was successful, and much to her disgust, the proud princess was united to her lowly spouse. The old king then resigned in favour of his son-in-law, who assumed the name of Nitipal.[5] Naturally enough, he was utterly unfitted for the high position to which he had so suddenly and undeservedly been raised, and the kingdom was soon reduced to a state of anarchy and confusion. The Ahoms seizsd this opportunity to push home their attacks, and the power of the Chutiyas was once for all lost. Little reliance can, however, be placed upon these legends. The story of the poor Chutiya boy who married the princess is probably a poetical description of the descent of the tribe in the valley, and of the subjugation of the Hindu dynasty reigning in Lakhimpur. The date of the downfall of the Chutiya Kingdom, according to the Chutiya Buranji, is moreover, 150 years later than that, assigned to this event in the Ahom chronicles, which state that it took place in 1523 A.D.[6]

[4] Presumably Kamatapur in Koch Bihar, which is said to have been founded by Niladhvaj, whose grandson Nilambar was conquered by the Muhammadans at the end of the fifteenth century. This date would be too late for the invasion of the Chutiyas, and the expedition against Kamatapur is probably quite mythical.

[5] According to another version the king left an infant son, for whom Nitipal acted as regent.

[6] Mr. H. J. Kellner, in a manuscript note in the Nowgong office, says that it must have occurred before 1503 A.D. The general who conquered the Chutiyas was Phrachenmung Bargohain, who was killed in a great battle between the Ahoms and Kacharis at Kaliabar in 1503.

The Ahom account of the Chutiyas : The Ahom historians say that when they entered Assam in 1228 A.D., the Chutiyas were established at Sadiya, and were masters of the country as far west as the Disang river.

It may particularly be noted that during the expansion of the Mao-Shan Empire under King Sukhanpha and Sawbwa or Sukhanpha of Mong-Mao in the third decade of the thirteenth century A.D., Samlongpha (Khun-sam-Long), brother of Sukhanpha and Shwbwa (Chaopha) of Mong-Kawug (Mogaung) in Upper Burma, who is said to be the greatest general and conqueror in South-east Asia at that time, after having conquered the region of the Lushai Hills, Tripura, Cachar and Manipur marched upon the Chutiya kingdom via Hkanti-Long, conquered it easily and proceeded triumphantly as far as the Namrup-Tipam area in Eastern Assam (Wehsali long).

Within a year after Samlongpha had left the Chutiya capital, the Chutiya feudatory Prince, Kossi Raja, revolted against the Mao-Shan authority and killed the Governor, appointed by the Mao General. At this, Emperor Sukhanpha despatched his cousin, Chao Sukapha, with a force to punish the refractory Prince. The Chutiya Prince, being defeated by Sukapha, fled with his followers towards the west and took refuge in Cachar, and the Chutiya Country was finally brought under the great Mao-Shan Empire. Later when Chao Sukapha forced his way across the Patkai Hills, conquering the middle region, not conquered by Samlongpha and entered the Eastern Assam Valley, he took over charge of all the conquered territories including the Chutiya territories on this side from Samlongpha and received the tributes arranged by Samlongpha from them.

Hostilities broke out between the two powers towards the middle of the fourteenth century. In 1376 A.D. the Chutiyas declared that they were ready to make peace, invited the sixth Ahom king Sutupha to a regatta on the Safrai river, and put him to death as soon as they had got him into their power. The two tribes continued to live in a state of intermittent conflict, but at the beginning of the sixteenth century during Suhungmung's reign, the struggle began to assume an acute form. The Chutiyas at first met with a considerable measure of success under Dhirnarayan. They pitched their camp at Dikhoumukh, raided the territory of the Ahoms, and were, at any rate, not worsted in the enagements that ensued. Another account represented the Chutiyas as extremely stupid. They mistook scare crows sent down the river on rafts for the enemy, and, when preparing a night attack by water, they were so drunk that they forgot to unmoor their boats. On waking the next morning they were so puzzled to find themselves still in the same place that they at once retreated without attempting to engage the enemy.

In 1523 the Chutiya king began to negotiate for peace, but declined to accept the Ahom terms, which involved the surrender of ancestral heir-looms in the shape of the royal gold umbrella and bracelets and also the

golden cat. The attack was accordingly resumed, and the Chutiya king retreated with his army to the Hills Chantan or Chandangiri. The Ahoms in their pursuit experienced the difficulties which at a later date confronted the British troops in their trans-frontier expeditions. The soldiers at first retreated, but they were rallied by their officers ; and, in the engagements that ensued, the Chutiya king and his son were killed. Their heads were conveyed to the Ahom prince Sukungmung, more generally known as the Dihingia Raja, and placed by him, according to one account, at the foot of the stairs leading to the house of god at Charaideo. Another version says that the heads were tied by a string in the form of a garland and left dangling on the hill. A more authoritative version says that they were buried at Charaideo raising mounds over them. This is more convincing because the Ahom customs was to show respect to the dead when they were royal personages or heroes or nobles even if they be enemies. Even the Muslim General Turbak Khan's body was given a decent burial in the royal cemetery at Charaideo raising a mound over it. The administration of Sadiya was then entrusted to an Ahom noble and the leading Chutiya families were deported to places lower down the valley. But the tribe again rebelled ; it was only with difficulty that this fresh revolt was stamped out, and as late as 1572 A.D. an expedition was sent against an insubordinate Chutiya chief.

(d) The Ahom Rule :

Having disposed of the Chutiyas and Kacharis, it is time to turn to the history of the Ahoms, the fierce and warlike tribe of Shans, who call themselves Tai. They were a branch of the great Tai race of East Asia. These Ahoms or Tai-Ahoms appeared in Eastern Assam by crossing the Patkai Hills from Upper Burma under their leader Chao Sukapha and starting from the smallest of beginnings, gradually subjugated the whole of the valley of the Brahmaputra as far as the manas.

At the beginning of the thirteenth century, there was a problem with regard to the succession to the kingdom of Mong-Mao or Pong in the upper portion of the Irrawady Valley. Pa-Meo-Pong was the king of Mong-Mao, but, as he had no son, his sister's son, Prince Sukapha was nominated as the successor. But later Pa-Meo-Pong's wife gave birth to twin brothers, Sukhangpha and Samlongpha. Sukapha then abandoned the hope of the Mong-Mao throne and left for his father's kingdom Mong Mit Kupklingdao (Mong-Mit and Keng-Lao). There he succeeded to his father's throne and ruled over the kingdom for eighteen years, when Sukhangpha, who became a mighty king at Mong-Mao, made him acknowledge his suzerainty and also asked him to join him in a war against the king of Jun-Lung (Yon-lon) who was related to them. Sukapha pleaded against such a course, but Sukhangpha was adamant. Sukapha being apprehensive of strong action by the latter, proceeded with his advisers and a large force to Mogaung where

his brother was ruling. Sukapha's force had "cavalry and infantry armed with cannon, guns and gun-powder". The Magaung Chief advised him to conquer with his superior arms the Upper Chindwin region (Nara country) and be its independent ruler. Sukapha then led his expedition towards the west, but instead of stopping on the other side, he crossed the high hills, later called the Patkai, and entered the Brahmaputra Valley in Upper Assam. Here he conquered a foot-hold which soon expanded into a small kingdom of which the capital was built on the Charaideo hills.

When Sukapha, the first Ahom king, arrived in 1228 A.D. he found the Chutiyas ruling in the north with an outpost at Safrai, and the Kacharis in the south with an outpost at Kenduguri, the river Dilih forming the boundary between the two. In the narrow strip of territory near the hills there were a few families of Barahis and Morans, evidently of Bodo origin, whom the Ahom chief absorbed into his clan in the rough and ready manner of that day.

Sukapha won over to his side the local Matak Chief Badaucha and the Barahi Chief Thakumtha and even encouraged intermarriage with these peoples. The Barahis were found to be good cooks, some of whom were appointed to prepare meals for the king. The Matak Chief helped Sukapha in conquering the neighbouring hostile tribes. One Mimun Matak was his constant companion.

Steady growth of Ahom power: The struggles between the Ahoms and the Chutiyas and Kacharis have already been described, but, apart from this gradual movement of expansion towards the east and west, the early history of the Ahom dynasty contains few incidents likely to attract the attention of the historian. A list of the successive Ahom kings will be found in the chronological table appended to this summary, but many of them are names and nothing more, and of their reigns little or nothing of interest is known. On the whole it seems to have been a cruel and treacherous time; and in this respect the Ahoms were no better than their neighbours. It is true that the Ahom king was murdered by his hosts at a regatta to which he had been invited by the Chutiyas; but a similar ruse was employed by the Ahoms against the Tipamias. When they suspected this people of an inclination to rebel, they asked them to a feast, and then put them all to death. Though they sinned against the laws of hospitality, they were evidently unconscious of the heinous character of the offence, and the skulls of their victims were hung up on the Tipam-stone to commemorate this grisly banquet. Arbitrary and tyrannical conduct by the Raja was checked or, rather, ended by the principal ministers of state; and more than one king who failed to give satisfaction to his duly constituted advisers, met with a sudden end from the knife or spear of the hired bravo.

Suhungmung Dihingia Raja (1497-1539): The first Ahom king to step forth from the position of a petty local prince into that of a ruler who had dealings with the outside world was Shungmung or the Dihingia Raja who came to the throne at the end of the fifteenth century. The reign of Suhungmung Dihingia Raja, 1497-1539 witnessed a marked expansion of the Ahom territories and also of their spheres of influence. The Chutiyas living round Sadiya, the Bara-Bhuyans of the north bank of the Brahmaputra, and the Kacharis of the Dhansiri Valley were brought under submission and the territories of the first two were annexed to the Ahom dominions, while the land of the Kacharis was placed under Ahom vassalage. Suhungmung was no less successful in his dealings with the Musalmans and Koches.

The Muslims sent two expeditions up the Brahmaputra Valley, but neither met with much success, and the leader of the second, a Pathan named Turbak, said to be a scion of the family of Gaureswar, was killed with most of his followers on the banks of the Bharali in 1532 A.D. after three years of protracted war. This was the first important Muslim invasion of the Ahom Kingdom, planned probably by the then ruler of Bengal, Nasir-ud-din Nasrat Shah (1519-33), the eldest son of Ala-ud-din Husain Shah. The survivors of the Muslim army were made prisoners, and are said to have been the ancestors of the Morias, who earn their living as braziers in Assam at the present day. It was in this war that the Ahoms are said to have first employed fire-arms. The Bharali seems at this time to have been the western boundary of the Ahom kingdom north of the Brahmaputra. Prince Suklenmung and general Ton-Kham, a reputed Ahom noble, at the head of an expeditionary force, aided by general Kan-Ceng and general Kham-peng, drove the scattered forces of Turbak across Kamrup and Kamata without much resistance from the enemy and reached the bank of the Karatoya in Bengal. In this drive, the Ahoms received the co-operation of the Kamatas. Being frightened, the Sultan of Gaur negotiated for peace by offering two of his daughters to the Ahom king and a large tract of territory consisting of five parganas as dowry. The peace was concluded and the Ahom generals constructed a small brick temple and excavated a tank on this side on the bank of the Karatoya as a memorial of their victory. One chronicle says that a six-man embassy by general Ton-Kham also visited Orissa and met king Vikramasena of that country. While returning, the Ahom general received the homage of the Koch Chief Bisva Sinha, the founder of Cooch Behar, to whom all the territory west of the Sonkosh received as dowry, was given to be administered on an annual tribute basis. Thus under Suhungmung, the Ahom kingdom reached its greatest expansion and Kamrup and Kamata were liberated from Muslim domination. It is recorded that, in 1529 A.D., the king took up his quarters at Bisvanath, and ordered his generals to plunder the territory lying west of the Bharali.

Suhungmung, like so many of the Ahom kings, met his end at the hands of an assassin, and was succeeded by Suklenmung (1539-1552), who is said to have founded a capital at Gargaon near modern Nazira.

Sukhampha (1552-1603): His successor Sukhampha, better known as Khora-Raja, enjoyed the throne for forty-one years, but he was unable to withstand the victorious armies of the Koch Naranarayan (1540-84) of Cooch Behar who occupied Gargaon and extorted tribute from the Ahom Raja. Other neighbouring rulers and chieftains also sued for peace before the victorious onslaughts of king Naranarayan and his warrior brother Sukladhvaj or Chilarai.

It may be noted that the Koches made two successive attacks on the Ahom Kingdom in 1562 and 1563 A.D. During the first advance of the Koch army under Chilarai by the Gohain Kamala road on the north bank, the Habung Brahmins and also some Sudras, knowing the sentiments of the Koch Princes, rode on cows prominently exhibiting the sacred threads and sacred lines on their foreheads to save their lives. Some accounts say that the Ahom king, knowing the scruples of the Hinduized Koches sent forward an armed band of Sudras, dressed as Brahmins, mounted on cows to oppose the Koch general. The stratagem had the dramatic effect of forcing the Koch general to retreat avoiding the shedding of Brahmin blood. But, on subsequent realization that he had been outwitted by the Ahoms he made the second advance against the Ahom capital, which was successful after the invincible Tipam Raja, called also Deo Raja, who cammanded the Ahom army at the mouth of the Sessa river, had withdrawn from the battle-field and entered voluntarily a grave at Charing on his amulet being snatched away by a Kite at the time of bathing and dropped amidst Chilarai's army. The well-known 'Deo Raja maidam' is a standing monument to-day in Charing, Sibsagar. The triumph of the Koches was, however, short-lived and about 1614 A.D. Bali Narayan, the grandson of Chilarai, Naranarayan's brother, was compelled to apply to the next Ahom king, Suchengpha or Pratap Sinha (1603-1641) for help against the Muhammadans. The war dragged on in Lower Assam with varying success, but in 1637 the Nawab of Dacca sent up an overwhelming force, which carried all before it. The Ahoms were driven out of Kamrup, and a treaty was made in A.D. 1639 under which the Barnadi was accepted as the frontier between Muhammadan and Ahom Territory

Suchengpha or Pratap Sinha (1603-1641) A.D.: Suchengpha's experiences from his wars with the Mughals made him undertake elaborate administrative reforms. He created the posts of the Barbarua and the Barphukan, the first being a functionary at the head of the Secretariat and the judiciary immediately under the king, and the second functionary in

charge of the defence of Lower Assam and of diplomatic relations with foreign countries of the west. The latter was placed at Gauhati. The common free population was neatly divided for civil and military purposes into brigades of one thousand, one hundred, and twenty men or paiks, with a gradation of officers called Hazarika, Saikia and Bora respectively to command them. As diplomatic relations rapidly developed with Dacca and other Indian States, the king selected from among the Hindus, particularly Brahmins, of his Kingdom, competent persons knowing the languages, manners and customs of those countries to act as envoys and ambassadors. He introduced the system of registration of foreigners who entered his kingdom. His reign is notable for the development of backward areas, construction of innumerable roads, forts, ramparts and tanks and also for the reorganization of villages on a planned basis.

Sutamla or Jayadhvaj Sinha (1648-63): In 1648 Sutamla (Jayadhvaj Sinha) came to the throne. Taking advantage of the confusion that ensued when Shah Jahan was deposed by his rebellious sons, he drove the Musalmans out of Kamrup and Goalpara, and for a short time the Ahoms were in possession of the whole of the valley of the Brahmaputra down to the point at which the river turns south to enter the fertile plains of Bengal. Mir Jumla, who had been appointed the Nawab of Dacca by Emperor Aurangzeb, was not, however, the man to brook such aggressions on the territory of the Mughal Empire, and in 1662 he started with a large force consisting of 12,000 horse and 30,000 foot and fleet of 323 war-boats mostly manned by Portuguese and Dutch sailors for the conquest of Assam.

Mir Jumla's invasion: No resistance was offered to the Muhammadans during the initial stages of their march, and they occupied the forts at Jogighopa, Saraighat, and Pandu near Gauhati, Gauhati itself, and Kajali on the western frontier of Nowgong without striking a blow. At Simalugarh, which seems to have been in the neighbourhood of Kaliabar, there was a strongly fortified post, upon which even the guns of the Muhammadans made but little impression, but the garrison displayed extraordinary cowardice, and the place was captured without difficulty. The Ahoms then attempted to destroy the huge flotilla of boats which accompanied the invading host, but fortune still declined to smile upon them, and they met with no better success than when engaging the enemy by land. The naval battle was fought above Kaliabar in the night of 3rd March, 1662, and it looked as if the Ahom fleet would swallow up all the Mughal war vessels. But the latter being manned by Portuguese mercenaries, with up-to-date European weapons, withstood the assault. The Portuguese warded it off making a great din with their mortars and matchlocks! Meanwhile the Assamese fleet had the misfortune to be carried down past the enemy

position by the strong current of the Brahmaputra. When they veered round to attack, it became advantageous for the enemy to fall upon them with great impetuosity and destroy them. The real strength of the Ahoms lay in the navy, but this time the naval superiority of Mughuls, coupled with an outbreak of cholera in the fort at Jogighopa, caused the Ahoms, after brief resistance, to retreat nearer their main strongholds and naval centres. But the modernised Mughul navy manned by European soldiers, proved too strong for them. Half of their fleet, which is said to have consisted of seven or eight hundred vessels, each armed with a guns, was lost, and the rest were put to flight. If the Musalman historians are to be believed, the river must at that time have been covered with native craft, as the Registrar at Gauhati reported that no less than 32,000 boats had visited that town, more than one-half of which, it is said, belonged to the Assamese.

Advance to Gargaon: No further opposition was offered to the advancing host, and on March 17, 1662, the Nawab entered Gargaon. The Raja and his army had evacuated the town and retreated to Namrup in the south-east. The general placed his headquarters at Mathurapur, a place about seven miles south-east of Gargaon, and established thanas in different parts of the Sibsagar district. But when the rains began to break, these isolated posts were exposed to attacks from the Assamese, and had to be drawn in, and the position of the imperialists was such as to cause dissatisfaction to the men and the gravest anxiety to their generals. They were unable to move about the country, and any stragglers who ventured outside the camp were promptly shot. They were exposed to perpetual night attacks; there was heavy mortality from fever; and apart from rice, there was very little food. Salt was sold in the camp for Rs. 30/- a seer, butter for Rs. 14 a seer, and opium fetched as much as a gold mohur per tola. The soldiers under Mughal command "Rajput and Muslim alike, were opium eaters to a man, and they underwent unspeakable agony at being deprived of the necessary drug." The health of the troops at Mathurapur became so bad that it was found necessary to move them to Gargaon. It proved to be impossible to retire even this short distance in good order, and the Muhammadans were compelled to abandon their sick and to leave many of their guns sticking in the mud. At the cessation of the rains the Musalmans began once more to take the offensive, but Mir Jumla's health had become so bad that he was unable to pursue the campaign with any degree of vigour, and a peace was patched at Ghilajharighat in January, 1663. According to the Muhammadan historians, the Ahom Raja agreed to pay a heavy indemnity, and the country north of the Brahmaputra and west of the Bharali, with Beltola, Dimarua, and the Naga Hills on the south bank of the Brahmaputra, were ceded to the Mughul

Emperor. It is, however, doubtful whether these terms were even carried out. This, at any rate, is certain that only a few years later the Ahoms were once more in possession of Kamrup, and the outposts of the Muhammadans were located not on the Bharali but at Rangamati in the Goalpara district.

Assam as described by Shihabuddin Talish: The description of Assam in the latter half of the seventeenth century as given by Shihabuddin Talish, who accompanied the Muhammadan invaders is full of interest. The road from Kaliabar to Gargaon is said to have passed through well cultivated land, and on every side there were houses, gardens and orchards. This description hardly holds good of the road from Kaliabar to Bokakhat at the present day, but the remains of roads and plinths north of Kaziranga show that, what is now a howling jungle inhabited by buffaloes and rhinoceros, must in former days have been the site of prosperous villages.

It is also said that the north bank was better cultivated than the south. Rich and poor alike built their houses of wood, bamboo and thatch, and the people generally seem to have led a simple vigorous life. "The people of this country (Assam) are free from certain fatal and loathsome diseases such as leprosy, white leprosy, elephantiasis, cutaneous eruptions, goitre and hydrocele,—which prevail in Bengal. They are also immune from many other lingering maladies". It is further said that they (the Assamese) are greatly frightened by horses, but "if one of them encounters ten Musalman infantry men, he fearlessly tries to slay them and succeed in defeating them". The people of this country "eat whatever they get from the hand of any man, regardless of his caste" and " do not abstain from eating food cooked by Muslims and non-Muslims, and partake of every kind of meat . . . except human flesh."

The following description of Gargaon is of sufficient interest to warrant reproduction:

The town has four gates built of stone and mortar, the distance of each of which from the palace of the Raja is three kos. A high and wide *Ali*, very strong, had been made for the traffic; and round about the town, instead of fortifications, there are circular bushes of bamboos, about two kos in diameter. But the town is not like other towns, the huts of the inhabitants being within the bamboo bushes near *Ali*. Each man has his garden or field touching the *Ali*, and the other the houses. Near the Raja's palace, on both sides of the Dikhou river, are large houses. The bazar road is narrow, and is only occupied by pan-sellers. Eatables are not sold as in our markets; but each man keeps in his house stores for a year, and no one either sells or buys. The town looks large, being a cluster of several villages.

Products of the country: Rice was the stapple food, but salt was scarce and dear. Salt of an inferior quality was obtained from the salt wells in the coal measures, but the bulk of the people used the 'khar pani' that is so commonly distilled from the ashes of the plaintain at the present day. Mangoes were plentiful but full of worms, and sugarcane of three varieties, black, white and red, did well. Pineapples were large and of good quality. Elephants were evidently a source of wealth, but asses, camels, and horses were rare.

Raja's palace: The Raja's palace is described in the most glowing terms, and one cannot help suspecting that the writer was inclined to magnify the wonders he had seen. The ornaments and curiosities with which the whole wood-work of the house is filled, defy all description; nowhere in the whole inhabited world will you find a house equal to it in strength, ornamentation, and pictures. The sides of this palace are embellished by extraordinary wooden trellis work. Inside there are large brass mirrors highly polished, and if the sun shines on one of them, the eyes of the by-standers are perfectly dazzled. Twelve thousand workmen are said to have erected the building in the course of one year. At one end of the hall, rings are fastened on four pillars opposite to each pillar having nine rings. When the Raja takes his seat in the hall, they put a dais in the middle of these four pillars and nine canopies of various stuffs are fastened above it to the rings. The Raja then sits on the dais below the canopies.

The Battle of Saraighat, 1671: Jayadhvaj Sinha did not long survive his expulsion from his capital, and, in 1663, he was succeeded by Chakradhvaj Sinha (1663-1670). This new king was a man of indomitable courage and wonderful foresight. He was also a great warrior himself. Being faced with the humiliating terms of the Treaty of Ghilajharighat and audacious demand of the Mughals for payment of war indemnity, he exclaimed: 'Better death than be under the Bangals,' which became a historic utterance. He started a vast war preparation under his direct supervision and reorganized the navy on a massive scale in the most up-to-date style. He attacked the Mughals and epeedily recovered Kamrup in 1667 and placed at Gauhati a young and enterprising officer, named Lachit as Barphukan (Viceroy). When the news of Ahom offensive reached the Mughal capital, Emperor Aurangzeb despatched his renowned general Raja Ram Sing, son of Mirza Raja Jay Sing of Amber with a large army to chastise the Ahoms. But the Ahom general Lachit Barphukan who displayed consummate ability against great odds, inflicted a crushing defeat on Ram Sing in the historic battle of Sarighat in 1671. This victory in the battle of the Brahmaputra earned for Lachit immortal fame as did the victory in the battle of the Nile for Nelson just a hundred and twenty-seven years later.

During the reign of Chakradhvaj Sinha there was a severe famine. According to the old chronicles there was no water in the fields, no field was tilled, and no water could be got except by drawing it from deep wells with ropes.

On the death of Chakradhvaj, a short period intervened in which the nobles with designs of their own proved too strong for the crown, and between 1670 and 1681 no less than seven princes were placed upon the throne, only to come to a bloody and untimely end. The Mughals took advantage of these disturbances to regain possession of Gauhati in 1679. But Laluk Sola Barphukan (the Viceroy of Gauhati) treacherously handed over the city to them in the hope of being installed Raja of Assam, with their aid.

Gadadhar Sinha restores order: But they were finally driven out of the kingdom by Gadadhar Sinha of the Tungkhungia dynasty, who came to the throne in 1681, and restored to it the prestige which it had formerly enjoyed. Gauhati was recovered in 1682 and the frontiers of Assam were again pushed forward to the river Manaha. Not content with consolidating his power in the plains, he despatched expeditions against the Mishmis and Nagas. By this rigorous policy he reduced to order the hill tribes, who have, whenever the central Government was weak, been a source of great annoyance to the dwellers in the valley.

Rudra Sinha (1696-1714): The zenith of the Ahom power was reached in the reign of Rudra Sinha. He founded a new capital at Rangpur, which was built for him by one Ghanasyam, who also constructed a bridge across the Namdang. He despatched two large armies against the Rajas of Cachar and Jaintiapur, one of which marched through the North Cachar and the other through the Jaintia Hills, and brought both the princes captive to Assam making them acknowledge the sovereignty of the Ahoms. The Miris and Dafalas were enlisted as soldiers in the royal army, and, at this time, the Ahoms seem to have dominated not only the whole of the valley of the Brahmaputra but the outer hills as well. Rudra Sinha died at Gauhati in 1714 when he was engaged in large-scale plans for an expedition against the Mughals in Bengal. The Rudresvar temple was erected there by his son Pramatta Sinha in memory of that sad event. Rudra Sinha has been called the Sivaji of Eastern India. 'The personality of Rudra Sinha has an all-India significance. Certainly not Assam only but the whole of India can feel proud of Rudra Sinha Su-khrung-pha the Ahom king'.[7] It is because he had formed the noble conception of organising a confederacy

[7] Dr. S. K. Chatterjee—*The place of Assam in the History and Civilisation of India*—pp. 47-52.

of Hindu rulers to fight the Mughals and was on the point of carrying out his plans when he died.

Siva Sinha (1714-1744): His son Siva Sinha was a weak prince much under the influence of his wives. His wife Phulesvari whom he installed as Bar-raja to avoid the evil effects of a prediction on his royalty excavated the Gaurisagar tank and built temples on its bank. She was a staunch devotee of Saktism and insulted the Moamaria Mahanta by compelling him to bow down to the Goddess Durga. She prescribed cremation for the Ahom custom of burying the dead. The name of his second wife Ambika is remembered by posterity as the excavator of the great tank near which the present town of Sibsagar (Siva's tank) stands. The Dafalas seem to have given trouble and in 1717 the Dafalagarh was constructed to keep these mischievous tribes in check. Siva Sinha was initiated into Sakta Hinduism. The adoption of Sakta Hinduism by the Ahom monarch, followed by the conversion of the principal nobles, introduced a new factor in the social and political life of the people.[8] It may be mentioned here that it was during the reign of Siva Sinha that four Europeans are said to have visited Rangpur.

Pramatta Sinha (1744-1751) and Rajesvar Sinha, (1751-1769): The reign of the next prince, Pramatta Sinha was short and uneventful. He built the Rangghar in Sibsagar with bricks. During the incumbency of his successor, Rajesvar Sinha, the signs of decay of the Ahom power became all too clear. The Raja of Manipur was driven from his home and applied to the Ahom king for aid. Orders were issued for the despatch of an expedition, but the nobles, to whom the command was entrusted, excused themselves on various grounds, and declined the proffered honour. The army which advanced, opening up a shorter route by cutting immense tangles of forest creepers, lost its way when endeavouring to cross the Patkai. A large number of men perished, and the expedition, popularly known as the 'Lata-kata-ran' failed. A second expedition was despatched in 1762 and though ultimately the Manipur Raja succeeded in regaining his dominions, it is doubtful if the assistance of the Ahoms materially contributed towards his success. But yet the very news of the approach of a vast army from Assam frightened the Burmese who then left the occupied country.

The alliance between the Ahoms and the Manipuris was, however, cemented by the bestowal of the Manipuri princess named Kuranganayani, whom Rajesvar Sinha elevated to the rank of principal queen. It also led to religious and cultural contacts between the two countries.[9]

[8] S. K. Bhuyan—*Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 202.

[9] See *Revised Gazetteer of Manipur*, p. 51. See also S. K. Bhuyan's *Studies in the Literature of Assam*, p. 100.

In 1759, the peaceful tribe of Mikirs is said to have raided on the plains, but little difficulty was experienced in putting down this rising. The Rajas of Cachar and Jaintiapur also made demonstrations on the southern frontier, but, on troops being despatched to Raha, they came to the conclusion that discretion was the better part of valour. Another expedition was despatched against the Dafalas, and the Raja of Khyriem formally tendered his submission and promised to pay a yearly tribute of iron. In 1757 Jorhat was honoured by a visit from the Ahom king and he had a temporary residence erected there, but this town did not become the capital of the Ahom kings till they had been driven from Rangpur by the Moamaria rebels. In each of the two capital cities, Gargaon and Rangpur, he erected brick-built palaces, the Karengghar and the Talatalghar, the ruins of which are now protected monuments.

Lakshmi Sinha (1769-1780): Moamaria insurrection: The reign of his successor, Lakshmi Sinha, was signalized by the outbreak of the Moamaria insurrection. The Moamarias were disciples of the Maya-Mara Satra, founded by Aniruddhadeva and mainly comprised the sturdy Mataks and Morans inhabiting the south-bank areas of the present Lakhimpur district. They were Vaisnavites of the orthodox school. The causes of their insurrection are not quite clear. According to the chroniclers, a certain Hatidharia chungi with one Nahor Kachari came to offer their annual tribute of elephants to the king. The elephant which they tendered to the Barbarua (Kirtichandra) was a lean and haggard animal, and, as an expression of his disapproval, the Barbarua cut off their hair and noses, flogged them, and drove them away. Boiling with indignation at this outrage, Nahor proceeded to the house of a Hadi woman, whose daughter he expoused, and from whom he received a set of metal plates, covered with mystical incantations to confound the enemy. He then applied to the Moamaria gosain for help, which was readily afforded and the standard of revolt was raised. This is the account given by the Ahom chroniclers, and it differs to some extent from the story, as told by the Moamaria gosain at the present day. According to this authority, the leaders of the rebellion were two Moamarias, named Nahor Khora and Ragha Moran, who, after they had been punished for failing to deliver the elephants required, went for assistance to their gosain. The gosain himself declined to listen to their proposals, but they succeeded in wining over his son, Gajin Bardeka, who gave them a weapon consecrated with the magic plates of the *Kalpataru*. The *Kalpataru* was a sacred book which Aniruddha is said to have obtained from Sankaradeva, though the Ahom chroniclers contemptuously assert that it was the property of a sweeper woman. It may be noted that the Ahom-Moamaria conflict was of socio-religious character in its origin, taking in course of time a political colour. The introduction of Sakta

Hinduism into the Ahom Court during the reign of Siva Sinha, the insult given to the Moamaria Mahanta by his queen Phulesvari and the disdain with which the Moamarias were generally treated by the Ahoms, led to strained relations between the two communities. Ultimately it proved to be the most important factor in bringing about the downfall of the Ahoms.

Success and subsequent defeat of the Moamarias : From the very first the rebels carried all before them. The royal armies were defeated under circumstances which suggest that men and officers alike were guilty of gross incompetence and cowardice ; and Lakshmi Sinha was driven from his capital and captured. The insurgents then proceeded to appoint Ramakanta or Ramananda, the son of Nahor Khora, to be their Raja, contrary to their promise to put on the throne Batgharia Barjana Mohanmala Gohain, the exiled prince and brother of Rajesvar Sinha. It was the presence of this prince, whom most people loved, at the head of the Moamaria forces that enabled the latter without facing much opposition to capture the Ahom capital. Once it was accomplished, the insurgents treacherously put the prince in confinement and also murdered the two sons of Rajesvar who were persuaded to co-operate with them. Mohanmala was later poisoned to death. Marauding parties of Moamarias harried the country on every side, and the misery of the common people was extreme. Raja Ramananda sacked the leading Brahmanical *satras* of Majuli and collected an enormous sum of money. He arrested and put into prison the Mahantas of the above *satras*. As a punishment he chopped off the nose and gouged out the eyes of Vagish Bapu of Auniati. Ragha, who became the Barbarua, forcibly took as wives many of the daughters of the Ahom nobles and these nobles, including the three great Gohains and Barbarua and Barphukan, were put to death at Khutiaputa, the abode of the Maomaria Mahanta. A report already gained ground that orders had been issued for the execution of all the former officers of State, and this incited the adherents of the rightful king Lakshmi Sinha to make one final effort.

The signal for the counter-attack is said to have been given by one of the wives of Lakshmi Sinha, the Manipuri princess Kuranganayani. Ragha, who had forcibly taken her as wife was one of the most influential men amongst the Moamarias, and as he was bending down at the *Bohag Bihu* to offer his largess to a dancing boy, she cut him down with a sword. According to another version, the Manipuri Princess was secretly requested by the royalist emissaries 'to make an attempt on the life of Ragha Barbarua as soon as the alarm should be given and the fortress appear on fire'. As pre-planned, in the middle of the night, the assailants entered and the spacious hall was in that moment in flames. The Morans (Moamarias) issued from the edifice from every side and perished by the swords of the Ahoms. Ragha Barbarua on the first alarm rushed from his apartment, but was

intercepted by the weapon of the Magalu Princess (Manipuri Princess), and he lay wounded at her feet. The Rajas (Ramananda or the Pitri Raja and Nahar Khora or Deo Raja) escaped to Kalugaon, where they soon experienced a similar fate with their wives and families. This version tallies with the one in the Thungkhungia Buranji that 'Raja Ramananda escaped with his chief queen through a tunnel'. On the death of their leader the rebel forces were surprised and scattered, and a pitiless vengeance was taken that spared neither age nor sex. The house of the Moamaria mahanta was surrounded, and the mahanta was killed with almost the whole of his family, while all the officers appointed by the Moamarias, were seized and put to death. The wives of the rebel prince are also said to have been treated with savage cruelty.

Gaurinath Sinha (1780-1795) : In 1780, Lakshmi Sinha who had been restored to the throne died, and was succeeded by his son Gaurinath in whose reign the Moamaria insurrection broke out anew, and with increased violence.

At first, the king's troops met with some measure of success, and orders were issued outlawing the rebels and authorising any person to kill any Moamaria he might meet, regardless of time, place, sex, or age. Such orders seem to have been only too well adapted to the temper of the people and, according to the Ahom chronicler, "the villagers thereupon massacred the Moamarias with their wives and children without mercy." The rebels in their turn were not slow to make reprisals ; they plundered the country on every side, and "the burning villages appeared like a wall of fire." The ordinary operations of agriculture were suspended, no harvests could be raised, and famine killed those whom the sword had spared. "The price of a katha of rice rose to one gold mohur, and men starved in crowds under the trees, forsaking their wives and children". The highest Hindu castes are said to have eaten the flesh of cows, and dogs and jackals were devoured by the common people.

In 1786, the rebels under Bharat Sinha inflicted a decisive defeat upon the royal troops, and took Rangpur, the capital, by storm. The king fled to Gauhati, and in his terror even left his wives behind him. His generals under the leadership of Buragohain Purnananda remained behind in upper Assam and carried on the contest with varying success. Troops were despatched to their assistance from Manipur, but most of them were ambushed and cut up, and the survivors had no heart to carry on the struggle. The desolation of the country is thus described by the Ahom chronicler:—"The Mataks harried the temples and the idols of the gods, and put to death all the sons and daughters of our people. For a great length of time our countrymen had no home, some took shelter in Bengal, some in Burma, some in the Dafla Hills, and others in the fort of the Bura Gohain, who was

fighting with the Mataks for years and months together." Bharat Sinha ruled at Rangpur for more than six years, and coins are extant which bear his name. Meanwhile Gaurinath Sinha had been making appeals for help against the Moamarias to the British Governor General Lord Cornwallis at Calcutta and in 1792 a small British force was sent to the assistance of the Ahom king under the command of Captain Welsh. Gauhati, which had been captured by a mob of Kaivartas under a Vairagi, was retaken. Krisna Narayan, the rebellious Raja of Mangaldai, was subdued, and in March 1794 Rangpur was re-occupied after a decisive victory over the insurgents. Captain Welsh was then recalled by Sir John Shore who succeeded Cornwallis but the Ahom king was able to keep his enemies in check by the help of sepoys trained on the English system.

Kamalesvar Sinha (1795-1811): A few months after the departure of Captain Welsh, Gaurinath died, and was succeeded by Kamalesvar Sinha. The country was still in a state of great disorder. The Dafalas, not content with harrying the villages on the north bank, crossed the Brahmaputra and attacked the royal troops near Silghat, but were repulsed with considerable loss. Even Europeans were not safe and Mr. Raush,[10] a merchant of Goalpara, who had extended his business operations to Darrang, was robbed and murdered. These freebooters then occupied North Gauhati, but when they attempted to make good their position on the south bank, they were defeated with heavy loss by the royal troops near Pandughat. The Dafalas again harried the Darrang district, and even enlisted Bengali sepoys in their service, but were ultimately conquered and dispersed. Victories were also obtained over the Moamarias and the Khamtis at the eastern end of the valley.

Final collapse of the Ahom kingdom: Kamalevar Sinha died in January 1811 and was succeeded by his brother Chandra Kanta Sinha. Badan Chandra Barphukan, the viceroy of Gauhati, incurred the suspicion of the Bura Gohain or Prime Minister Purnananda and fled to Calcutta and thence to Burma. In response to his entreaties and representations at the Burmese Court against the Buragohain, a Burmese army crossed the Patkai early in 1817 and reinstated the Bar Phukan, the Buragohain having died at this critical hour, but shortly after their withdrawal the Barphukan was assassinated. Chandra Kanta was deposed and Purandar Sinha, son of Brajanath and a descendant of Rajesvar Sinha was put on the throne in his stead. The banished monarch appealed to the Burmese, who, in 1819,

[10] This Mr. Raush was the first European to interfere in the affairs of Assam. He sent 700 burkandazes to Gaurinath's assistance, but they were cut up to a man. A mass of masonry to size of a small cottage, covers the remains of Mr. Raush's infant children at Goalpara.

returned with a large force and replaced him on the throne. The failure of the Ahoms to withstand and repel the Burmese attacks made it clear that they had lost their vigour as a military race, and the nobles frittered away their energies in unseemly quarrels amongst themselves.

The Burmese soon, however, made it clear that they intended to retain their hold upon Assam and in 1821 Chandra Kanta, being disillusioned about their intentions, fled to Goalpara, and from British territory began a series of abortive attempts to recover his lost kingdom. The Burmese put on the throne their own puppet and began a reign of terror. They were guilty of gross atrocities during their occupation of the country, the villages were plundered and burnt, and the people were compelled to seek shelter in the jungle. Women who fell into their hands were dishonoured with every circumstance of brutality, and the misery of the unfortunate Assamese was extreme. Fortunately for them, causes of quarrel had by this time arisen between the British and the Burmese. In 1824, war was declared by the British Government, and depending on the goodwill of the harrassed Assamese, a force was sent up the valley of the Brahmaputra, which occupied Rangpur in January 1825, and compelled the Burmese to retire to their own territories. In the following year, by the treaty of Yandaboo, of February 24, 1825, the king of Ava renounced all claims on Assam and her dependencies. The British were already in occupation of Assam. As the Ahom princes and nobles had lost their internal unity and their hold on the people who were utterly distracted at the time, it led to the eventual annexation of Assam to the dominions of the East India Company.

(e) Ahom Administration :

The above is but a brief account of the rise and fall of the Ahoms. It now remains to consider what is known of their social institutions, and the conditions under which those subject to them passed their lives.

The Paik system: The most striking feature in the economy of the Ahom State, and one which must have outlived its importance on the introduction of British rule was the Paik system or the system of enforced compulsory labour. The lower orders were divided into groups of three or four called *gots*, each individual being styled a *powa paik*. Over every twenty paiks was placed an officer called Bora, over every five Boras, a Saikia, and over every ten Saikias a Hazarika. In theory one paik from each *got* was always employed on duty with the State, and while so engaged, was supported by the other members. The Raja and his ministers had thus at their disposal a vast army of labourers to whom they paid no wages. As a reward for their services, "each paik was allowed two puras (nearly three acres) of the best rice land free of rent. If personal service was not required, he paid two rupees instead. He was given land for his

house and garden for which he paid a poll or house-tax of one rupee." The paiks were entitled "to nominate, and claim the dismissal of, their Boras and Saikias, and sometimes even of their Hazarikas," which means that they had a right to be free from oppression by the officers. It was this system which enabled the Ahom Rajas to construct the enormous tanks and great embankments, which remained to exite the envy of subsequent generations, which have been compelled to import from other parts of India almost all the labour required for the development of the State and its industries. Many of the works constructed were of undoubted utility, but many, on the other hand, were chiefly intended for the glorification of their designers. Few objects are more worthy of the attention of an enlightened government than the supply of wholesome drinking water to the people. But the huge sea-like reservoirs, scientifically constructed by the Ahom kings and some in close proximity to one another, were not all meant for supply of water only. The majectic presence of religious temples on the banks of tanks like the Siva-sagar and Joy-sagar protected the waters from improper use by rendering the sites sacrosanct. The embankments, which were thrown up along the sides of some of the rivers around the capital, protected the land, which later became uncultivable since the embankments fell into disrepair. The duty of providing the various articles required for the use of the king and the nobility was assigned to different groups or *'Khels'* which were gradually beginning to assume the form of functional castes. The rapidity with which these groups abandoned their special occupations with the advent of the British regime shows the tremendous impact of the commercial enterprises of the British people in the 19th century as stimulated by the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain. Even in Great Britain "home and small industries gave place to the Factory System, under which the output was enomously increased." In Assam, as in India of that transitional period, great masses of hand-workers were thrown out of employment from their traditional crafts by foreign competition with the result that there was an unprecedented increase in the pressure on land. Yet there are even today many villages of old functional castes in Assam, such as Sonarigaon, Kamargaon, Kumargaon, Kanhargaon, Katanigaon, etc., carrying on their old trades.

The military system of the Ahoms: The Ahoms ruled over Assam for about 600 years. Lord William Bentink referred to the long continuance of Ahom rule in Assam as 'almost without parallel in history.' The military achievements of the Ahoms are impressive. The Ahoms were "one of the few races in India who could stem the tide of Mogul conquest. It was only for ten months during 1662-63 that Mir Jumla remained in possession of the Ahom capital; and Kamrup since its first annexation to the Ahom kingdom in 1615, was possessed by the Moguls for a total period of twenty-six years only, once from 1639 to 1658, and again from 1663 to 1667, and from 1679 to 1682".[11]

It is a remarkable achievement. There is another aspect of this achievement which has been emphasised by Dr. Suniti Kumar Chatterjee. 'Assamese kings stopped the Muslim flood from penetrating into Burma and beyond in a wave of aggressive warfare and conquest. Colonisation, proselytisation and then conquest of Arab merchants and their religious teachers in Indonesia led to the final Islamisation of Indonesia. The Arabs and later on Indian Muslim merchants from Western India found a direct line of access by sea to Malaya and Indonesia, but a land route for aggressive advance was denied to the Indian Muslims by the Ahoms of Assam. Otherwise the history of Burma and Siam and Indo-China might have been different."[12]

The military organisation was not, however, free from defects. These became pronounced under weak generalship when the Ahom power began to decline. According to the Ahom chronicler, nearly 40,000 troops were despatched during the reign of Rajesvar Sinha to reinstate the Manipuri Raja on the throne. Their guides, however, failed them, they lost their way in the Charaideo Hills, and "a great number of men died on the hill (Charaideo)," the mortality being chiefly due to exhaustion of provisions and disease. Faults have been found with the military dispositions even of Rudra Sinha, one of the greatest Ahom kings, suggesting want of due deliberation in design and a feebleness and lack of method in execution. In his expeditions against the Kachari and Jaintia Rajas the Ahoms lost 3,243 persons, and the practical results obtained seem to have been not commensurate with the loss sustained. The Jaintia Raja was himself ready to accept the Ahom king as his suzerain, but he could not impose his will upon the independent hillmen, who owed him but a nominal allegiance, and who declined to surrender their freedom at the bidding of their king. The Kachari prince sent tribute, but only "a string of pearls, a dugdugi (locket) and a horse;" assuredly a very small return on the quantity of human life and treasure expended. It must at the same time be admitted that the loot obtained on this occasion was not inconsiderable. It included three large cannon, 2,373 large and small guns, 12,000 pieces of silver, 143 gold embroidered coats, 63 elephants and 11 Turkey horses, besides other things; and, more valuable perhaps than all, over 2,000 human beings. At the conclusion of this dangerous and troublesome expedition, each paik received a gratuity of four annas *batta* which would hardly satisfy the sepoy of to-day. The descriptions of the campaigns against the Moamarias given by the Ahom

[11] Dr. S. K. Bhuyan : *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 7.
[12] Dr. S. K. Chatterjee : *The place of Assam in the History and Civilisation of India*, p. 46.

chroniclers, clearly show that the generals were often guilty of incompetence and cowardice while the rank and file do not seem to have fully realized the dangers that beset a defeated army. Conditions such as these must of necessity have been disastrous to the private soldier.

The Muhammadan historians of the invasion of Mir Jumla give, however, a more favourable account of the Ahom military dispositions.[13] Their resources seem to have been considerable, and in the course of the expedition, the Muhammadans captured 675 guns, one of which throw a ball, three maunds in weights, besides a large number of match-locks and other field pieces. No less than 1,000 ships were taken, many of which could accommodate three or four score sailors ; and in the naval engagement which took place above Silghat in March 1662 A.D. the Assamese are said to have brought seven or eight hundred ships into action. The Ahoms are described as strongly built, quarrelsome, bloodthirsty and courageous, but at the same time merciless, mean, and treacherous. They were more than equal to the Muhammadans in a foot encounter, but were much afraid of cavalry. This corps d'elite did not, however, exceed some 20,000 men, and the ordinary villagers, who were pressed into the service were ready to fling away their arms and take to flight at the slightest provocation.

Character of Government : Another factor, which cannot but have reacted unfavourably upon the common people, was the uncertainty of tenure, under which both the ministers and king held office. A perusal of the Ahom chronicles leaves the reader with the impression that the ministers were continually being deprived of their portfolios, and not unfrequently of life itself. Hardly less precarious was the position of the king, and, in short space of 33 years, beween 1648 and 1681, no less than two monarchs were deposed, and seven came to a violent end. Good Government, as we understand the term, must have been impossible under such conditions ; and we may be sure that the people suffered from this constant change of rulers. Buchanan Hamilton, writing at the beginning of the nineteenth century, states that the administration of justice under Ahom rule was fairly liberal. Important trials were conducted in open court, the opinion of assessors was consulted, the evidence recorded, and capital punishment inflicted only under a written warrant from the king. It is true, no doubt, that few persons possessed the power of imposing the death sentence. But they were allowed to inflict punishments which the victim could hardly be expected to survive, and his position was not unlike that of the heretic delivered by the inquisition to the civil arm, with the request that "blood may not be shed."

[13] An interesting account of this invasion will be found in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol. XII, Part I, pages 49-100.

Abundant evidence is available in the Ahom chronicles to show the rigorous way in which the royal authority was exercised. The following instances are quoted from the reign of Pratap Sinha, (1603-1641). It may be noted that Pratap Sinha's reign was one of wars and diplomacy which demanded constant vigilance and rigorous enforcement of discipline on the part of his subordinates. A Kataki, or envoy charged with diplomatic relations with foreign powers, asked the Mahammadan commander on his frontier to supply him with two jars. His conduct was reported to the king, who immediately ordered him to be put to death. Another Kataki reported that he had heard from a down-country man that Muhammadan force was advancing up the valley. The king enquired of the Kataki responsible for watching the movements of the enemy whether this information was correct. This man declared that he was unable to obtain any confirmation of the rumour, where upon the first Kataki was executed for presuming to meddle in matters with which he had no concern. Three merchants then endeavoured to establish friendly relations beween the Nawab of Dacca and the Ahom king and one of them, named Sonari Mudoi, informed the Barphukan at Kajali about it for communicating to the king. The latter, on the evidence available at the time, took umbrage at such unwarrantable, meddlesomeness on the part of traders in affairs of State. Remarking 'he is a trader and should therefore mind his business of trade alone. Why should he bring Bengal ambassador', the king ordered the merchants to be put to death. It subsequently appeared that the facts had not been correctly represented, and the Barphukan and two other men responsible were promptly killed. A few years later the king shifted the Bara-Bhuyans and other people supporting them from the north to the south bank of the Brahmaputra and settled them with land. It was because the Bhuyans had discontinued to pay their tribute since the Koch invasion under Chilarai and later revolted under their leader Udaya. They were warned that any one, who would attempt to revisit his former home, would suffer the penalty of death with all his family 'even to the child in the womb'. Five hundred men attempted to return as they wished, the chronicler informs us, to rear a brood of silkworms. The king had them arrested, and 300 were put to death, the remainder escaping in the darkness of night.

The following incident that occurred in the reign of Lakshmi Sinha (1769-1780) is typical of the uncertainties of the times. One Ramnath Bharali Barua, an officer of the State, had the presumption to appear mounted on a horse in the presence of his official superior, the Barbarua. A complaint was promptly laid before the king, who directed that both Ramnath and his brother should be deprived of sight. The injured man was not, however, destitute of friends, and came with his complaint to the Kalita Phukan, who had his private reasons for desiring the downfall of the Barbarua. The Phukan went to the king, poisoned his mind against his minister with the

suggestion that a conspiracy was on foot, a suggestion, which in those days must always have seemed plausible enough, and, in a short time, the heads of the haughty Barbarua, his two uncles, and of his brother were rolling in the dust. It is needless to multiply instances of the savage violence of the time which besmears the pages of medieval history even of Europe, but the different form of punishment in vogue calls for some remark. Where life was spared, the ears, nose, and hair were cut off, the eyes put out, or the knee pans torn from the legs, the last named penalty generally proving fatal. Persons sentenced to death were hugged, impaled, hewn in pieces, crushed between two wooden cylinders like sugarcane in a mill, sawn asunder, burnt alive, fried in oil, or, if the element of indignity was desired, torn of their hands and feet and placed in holes,which were then utilized as latrines.

Social life amongst the Ahoms: The native chroniclers are naturally most concerned with the wars and religious festivals, which bulked so largely in the eyes of the historians of the day, and with the rise and fall of successive families of ministers. It is only incidentally that light is thrown on the social conditions of the people. The kings seem to have indulged in frequent tours about their territories, the itinerary usually followed being Rangpur, Sonarinagar, Tengabari, Dergaon, Jaliarang, Barnagar, Visvanath and Kaliabar. They were fond of fishing and shooting, and fully appreciated the excitement to be obtained from the hunting of wild elephants. On the occasion of coronations and royal weddings, a week was generally devoted to the festivities, which seem, however, to have consisted for the most part of prolonged feasts, accompanied by much music. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, acrobats and jugglers were imported from Bengal, who amused their royal patrons with clever tricks. Kamalesvar Sinha visited in State the two principal *satras* of Auniati and Daksinpat and was entertained with all his retinue by the gosains. The chronicler quaintly tells us that the lunch at Daksinpat gave greater satisfaction than the one at Auniati, but does not say whether this was due to the superior skill of the Daksinpatia cook, or to the greater beauty of the *satra* precincts.

Attitude of the Ahoms towards Hinduism : Saktism and Vaisnavism: The first Hindus to influence the Ahom kings were Saktists, and at the instigation of the Brahmins, Pratap Sinha (1603-1641) persecuted the Vaisnavites, one of whose leaders named Misra Gosain of Kuruavahi, had converted his sons to Hinduism. Another named Mukunda Gosain was executed on being found guilty of introducing corrupt practices in the society in the name of religion by deviating from his proper sacerdotal duties. The disciples of the gosains were seized, human odur was placed on their foreheads and they were degraded to the sweeper caste. To be found in the possession of religious books meant death, not only to the actual owner, but

also to every member of his family. Even Pratap Sinha's spiritual pastors who claimed supernatural powers for their cult, were not spared, and he denounced the new religion which, in spite of the adherence of the Raja, had not been able to save from death his own beloved son. He then assembled 700 Brahmins, ostensibly to perform a festival, and, as a punishment for their incompetency, degraded them to the status of paiks. But this king also made many donations to the Brahmins, built a number of Hindu temples including the two important temples at Visvanath and Dergaon and appointed Brahmins as his trusted Katakis or envoys. The persecutions of Pratap Sinha were continued by Gadadhar Sinha, who in 1692, remembering the ill-treatment meted out to him by the Gosains in the past and finding them living in a princely style abandoning the life of simplicity, behaviour of saints and sadhus, seized and attached the treasure houses of the Vaisnavite gosains and cast the idols into the water. The sacred head of the Auniati *satra* was driven from his home to Tejikhat. He fared, however, better than the gosain of Daksinpat who opposed his being made king. The latter had his eyes put out and his nose cut off, while many Hindu priests were put to death. This policy of suppression was reversed during the reign of Rudra Sinha, his son, who was publicly admitted as a disciple of the Auniati gosain; and, from this time onward, the influence of the priests seems to have increased. The introduction later of Sakta Hinduism into the Ahom Court through priests imported from Bengal led to religious disunity in the Ahom kingdom and ultimately to civil war.

During the Moamaria insurrection the religious orders again fell upon evil times. The rebel king confined the persons of the four principal gosains, and extorted Rs. 8,000 each from Auniati and Daksinpat, and Rs. 4,000 each from Garamur and Kamalabari. Religion was degraded by the promulgation of an order that any person could be initiated on payment of a betelnut, and the common people in crowds availed themselves of this indulgence. Subsequently in the reign of Gaurinath Sinha, the Moamarias attacked the Garamur *satra*, burned it to the ground, slew a large number of the disciples, and nearly killed the gosain himself. His successor Kamalesvar Sinha (1795-1811) found himself unable to pay the sepoys, whose services were indispensable for the maintenance of some sort of order in the kingdom. Following the example of other monarches, he called uopn the church to supply the funds for the support of the temporal power. Contributions were levied on all the mahantas, and the demands of the soldiers were satisfied.

But, though converted to Hinduism, the Ahoms found the restrictions of their new religion irksome; and their gosains, with the tact which they display towards their converts of the present day, allowed their new disciples a considerable degree of latitude. Rudra Sinha, though he had been publicly admitted to the church by the Auniati gosain, feasted his followers

on buffaloes and pigs on the occasion of his father's funeral ; while not only buffaloes but even cows found a place in the menu of his coronation banquet. At the time of the first Moamaria insurrection, the rebel chief made overtures to Lakshmi Sinha, and offered him apparently in good faith, a pig for supper. A present such as this clearly shows that even towards the end of the eighteenth century, the Hinduism of the Ahom kings was one of the most liberal variants of that catholic creed. Before taking any decisive step, it was the practice to refer, not only to the Brahmins and Ganaks, but also to the old Ahom priests, the Deodhais and Bailungs. These venerable men were required to consult the omens, by studying the way in which a dying fowl crossed its legs, a system of divination which is in vogue amongst many of the hill tribes of Assam to the present day. The restrictions of caste were evidently somewhat lax, as we heard that the Moamaria mahanta had an intrigue with a Hadi woman ; while at the beginning of the 19th century, the Viceroy of Gauhati took a Kaivarta girl for his mistress, a breach of the covenants for which, it should be added, he was deposed.

The position of woman : The influence of the Muhammadans in Assam proper was so slight that the view they professed to take of the other sex had little or no effect upon the general population. The Ahoms, like their Burmese ancestors, held their womenfolk in honour, and the purdah was almost unknown in the country inhabited by the Assamese. The Ahom princesses seem to have taken a prominent part on ceremonial occasions, and not unfrequently, exercised considerable influence on affairs of State. In the middle of the 17th century, two of the queens almost usurped the reins of government, and, according to the Ahom chronicler, "their words were law". When called to account by the successor of their husband, they proudly stated that they had been of great service to the king at a time when he was ignorant of the way in which he should behave, whether when "eating, drinking, sitting, sleeping, or at council". Siva Sinha (1715-1744) is said to have abdicated in favour of his queens hoping thereby to defeat a prophecy which declared that he would be deposed ; and coins have been found bearing the names of four of these princesses. The mother of Lakshmi Sinha dug a tank, and Gaurinath entrusted to his stepmother the control of the *Khangia mel*, and consulted with his mother about affairs of State. It was not, however, only the princesses of royal blood who concerned themselves with public matters. At the time of the Moamaria insurrection, one Luki Rani was sent against the rebels ; and the victory over Turbak in 1531 is partly ascribed to the courageous action of Mula Gabharu, the widow of the Bargohain, Phra-sen-Mong, who had been killed in a previous engagement by the Muhammadans. Being desperate at the loss of her husband, Mula Gabharu put on armour and rode into the ranks of the enemy to avenge his death. No mercy was shown her and she fell, pierced with spears ; but

her example emboldened the Ahoms, who at once advanced to the attack and defeated the Musalmans with great slaughter. Joymati Kunvari, the wife of Gadapani (king Gadadhar Sinha), earned eternal fame by sacrificing her life at the hands of her tormentors for the safety of her husband who was sought to be disabled for kingship by her predecessor on the throne.

Gifts of the Ahoms to Assam and India : It is necessary to add a few words about the gifts of the Ahoms to Assam and to India. 'The gift of the Ahoms to Assam', says Dr. S. K. Chatterjee, 'was primarily in their military organisation and their administration. Nothing so practical and elaborate and efficient appears to have existed not only in Assam but also in the whole of Eastern India. The Ahoms were so powerful that the Kingdom they carved out for themselves came to be associated with their name as a nation." It is presumed that the name 'Assam' was derived from the tribal name of the Ahoms.

'The Ahoms unified Assam. They fought the Muhammadan invaders and after varying fortunes in war they finally drove them out of their territory in 1681 when they fought with the Moguls during the heyday of their power.' Thus Assam became the last stronghold of Hindu independence in Eastern India in medieval times. The Ahoms had a keen sense of history and they made history writing a distinctive thing of Assam both in the Sino-Tibetan Ahom and the Aryan Assamese languages. The Ahom word for history is 'buranji' and this word, with the art of history writing was taken over by the Aryan speaking Assamese. The result was the development in the Assamese language of a tense and vigorous and withal exceedingly picturesque prose style for writing history. This certainly has been one of the greatest gifts of the Ahoms to the Indo-Aryan language, Assamese, which they ultimately adopted.

(f) British Period :

Condition of Assam at the time of British annexation : In estimating the effects of British rule that lasted from 1826 to 1942 it is necessary to form a clear idea of the state of the territory of Assam at the time when it passed into British possession. Some historians maintain that the British did not conquer Assam in the sense in which that word is usually employed. The native system of government had completely broken down, the valley was in the hands of cruel and barbarous foreigners, and it was not as conquerors but as protectors and avengers that the English at first came. They were not inspired by any lust for land. For some time after the expulsion of the Burmese, the East India Company were doubtful whether they would retain their latest acquisition, and an attempt was even made to administer the upper portion of the valley through a descendant of the Ahom kings.

The condition in which the British found the country was stated to

be lamentable in the extreme. For fully fifty years it had been given over to desolation and anarchy. Life, property, honour were no longer safe and the people in their misery had even abandoned the cultivation of the soil, on which they depended for their very livelihood. Bands of pirates used to raid up the valleys of the Dhansiri and Kakadonga, and return with their boats laden with booty, leaving ruin, death and desolation in their wake. The hill tribes were no longer kept in order, and the Dafalas descended and harried the submontane tracts, and even extended their depredations to the south of the Brahmaputra. The treatment meted out to the unfortunate villager, can be judged from the protest made by the hill-men to Rajesvar Sinha, shortly before the collapse of the Ahom government, when they begged him, "not to pull out the bones from the mouths of dogs". Buchanan Hamilton, writing in 1809 A.D., states that north of the Brahmaputra "there is no form of justice. Each power sends a force which takes as much as possible from the cultivator".

The memories of this miserable time survived long after it had passed away. In 1853 an Assamese gentleman, Ananda Ram Dhekial Phukan, wrote as follows to Mr. Moffatt Mills :[14] "Our countrymen hailed the day on which British supremacy was proclaimed in the Province of Assam and entertained sanguine expectations of peace and happiness from the rule of Britain. For several years antecedent to the annexation, the Province groaned under the oppression and lawless tyranny of the Burmese, whose barbarous and inhuman policy depopulated the country, and destroyed more than one-half of the population, which had already been thinned by intestine commotions and repeated civil wars. We cannot but acknowledge with feelings of gratitude that the expectations which the Assamese had formed of the happy and beneficial results of the Government of England, have, in a great measure been fulfilled ; and the people of Assam have now acquired a degree of confidence in the safety of their lives and property which they never had the happiness of feeling for ages past".[15]

While an alien Government such as the British Government in India cannot escape criticisms for mistakes of policy or for exploitation of the people during an administration of nearly one hundred and twenty years there can be no question that the introduction of a settled form of government had been of the greatest benefit to the immense mass of the people to whom it had been extended.

Purandar Sinha's territory : Reference has been already made to the hesitation with which the East India Company undertook the administration of Assam. In 1833, the experiment was tried of placing the portion of the valley lying between the Dhansiri and the Dihing south of the Brahmaputra, and between Visvanath and Sadiya on the north bank, under Raja Purandar Sinha. The Raja was accorded the position of a protected prince, was entrusted with full civil powers, and was required to pay an annual tribute of Rs. 50,000 to Government. It was though that this arrangement would prove acceptable to the old nobility and the Assamese people, but experience showed that this was not the case. In 1838, Captain Jenkins, Agent to the Governor General on the North-East Frontier, travelled through the Raja's territories and recorded in the journal of his own that was met on every side by complaints and charges against the Raja's administration. North of the Brahmaputra the country was left unprotected, and the people were harried by the Dafalas, who carried off their women and children and held them to ransom. Small guards of sepoys were occasionally sent to protect the frontier, but, as the villagers were expected to provide them with all that they required, their presence and absence alike were felt to be a grievance.. The distasteful system of compulsory labour was still maintained ; duties of as much as one anna in the rupee were levied on everything except rice sold in the markets, and the people who remained were required to pay the poll tax of others who had died or had migrated to the territory directly under British administration.

There are reasons to believe that Purandar Sinha's administration was generally unpopular, but it is difficult to resist the conclusion that it was never really given a fair chance. Major White estimated that the revenue of his territories amounted to about Rs. 80,000.[16] Of this no less than half-a-lakh was earmarked as tribute, and the Raja was left with a nominal Rs. 30,000 per annum from which to defray the expenses of his court, to satisfy the demands of the priests, and to carry on the business of the administration. It is hardly a matter for surprise that little was spent on public works, that the army was small and inefficient, and that it was impossible to remit taxation. The natural tendency of mankind to cavil at the government seems to have been overlooked, and too much importance was attached to every murmur of complaint. The Muhammadan settlers in the country professed that they had serious grievances, yet Captain Jenkins was himself constrained to admit that those who came to see him were far better dressed than he expected, and that, judging by externals, many of them were well off. The resumption of this territory in 1838 was, however, an act

[14] Judge of the Sadar Court at Calcutta who was sent to Assam by the Bengal Govt. to prepare a report on the administration of the province which then formed a part of Bengal.

[15] Mills, *Report on the Administration of the Province of Assam*, XXXI.

[16] Letter No. 80. dated 6th July 1838, from Captain Jenkins. A letter from Purandar Sinha's son states that when his father accepted the Raj he had no idea what a large proportion Rs. 50,000 bore to the total revenues of the country. Colonel Cooper, he says, had made a settlement for Rs. 1,70,000, but neither he nor any of the British officers who succeeded him could collect more than Rs. 70,000 or Rs. 80,000.

which secured to meet with general approval of the majority of the persons affected. Purandar Sinha was offered a pension of a thousand rupees but he declined to accept it. His further representations for restoration were turned down by the British authorities. It must be said that he and his descendants were not fairly treated by the company's government with the result that germs of disaffection were nourished by this royal house till 1857 when Kandarpesvar Sinha, Charing Raja, the grandson of Purandar became the centre of a plot to overthrow the British power.

State of country under British rule : The history of the district since it came under British rule was one of comparative security. The great tea industry had a wonderfully stimulating effect, and the progress of the people was not very much retarded by the terrible outbreaks of Kala-azar which decimated the population of Lower and Central Assam. This disease entered Assam from Bengal during the early part of the British rule under which unlike under the Ahom rule, gates were freely opened for the influx of all kinds of people from that province. This fell disease swept eastward over several districts, before it could be controlled, taking a heavy toll of life for about half a century. The only other points that call for notice are the conduct of the local notables during the stiring times of 1857 and the behaviour of the Naga tribes beyond the then frontiers of Assam.

Bid to overthrow the alien Government in 1857: At the time of the great Sepoy Mutiny in India, the resumption of Sibsagar was a matter of comparatively recent date, and it was only natural that the family of the Raja and the upper classes and hangers-on of the former court should think regretfully of the times of Purandar Sinha. Mr. Moffatt Mills in 1858, admitted that they had been ruined by the emancipation of their paiks and personal attendants, and that this measure had reduced many families of respectability to indigence ; and it was not to be expected that such people would be enthusiastic suporters of the Company. The miseries of the Burmese invasion were not yet forgotten, and they had no desire for actual independence—but they had every reason to deplore the abolition of the privileges of their high social position, which they hoped to be able to restore in a protected native State. Even in 1853, the young Raja Kandarpesvar Sinha, urged on Mr. Mills his right to hold Upper Assam as an independent tributary ; and it was only natural that, when four years later the flame of revolt spread over Hindusthan, the more daring of his adherents should have planned to seize by force what had been denied to their more peaceful supplications.

The prime mover in the matter was Mani Ram Dewan, who, in the time of Purandar Sinha, was one of the most important persons in the district. On its resumption by the Company he lost his most valuable

offices and emoluments, and resigned those that were left to him to take service as Dewan of the Assam Company. He no longer found it an easy matter to support his household, which, he informed Mr. Mills, numbered no less than 185 persons, and he had every motive to induce him to promote the restoration of the old order, and sufficient patriotic urge and independence to attempt to give effect to his desires. From Calcutta he wrote to the Charing Raja, Kandarpesvar Sinha, informing him that Hindusthan had been conquered by the sepoys, who were daily approaching nearer to the Presidency town, and advising him to take this opportunity of recovering the throne. Meetings were accordingly held at night at the Raja's house, and Duti Ram, the criminal sheristadar at Sibsagar, was approached who lent his approval to the scheme. The Subadar at Dibrugarh was also seduced from his allegiance, and promised to bring his men to support the Raja at Jorhat. A number of other influential men seem to have been gained over, and steps were taken to collect provisions for the soldiers.[17] The rising was to take place in the *Durga Puja* when, in the presence of Mani Ram Datta and other leading men amongst the Assamese, Kandarpesvar Sinha was to be seated on the throne. It is difficult to say if this proposal met with general approval. Some of the older men, approached by the Raja, not only declined to assist him in the furtherance of his plan but disclosed them to Haranath Parbatia Barua, the *daroga* of Jorhat.

The district officer, Captain Holroyd, seems to have been well informed of what was going on, and at the proper time the Raja was arrested and despatched to Alipur. At the conclusion of the enquiry, he was released, but was required to live under surveillance in the neighbourhood of Calcutta and then at Gauhati, and was not allowed to return to his native place, Sibsagar. Mani Ram was arrested at Calcutta, and sent up to Assam where he was hurriedly tried and sentenced to death by Captain Holroyd acting as special Commissioner and hanged by him at Jorhat acting as the District Magistrate. Pioli Barua, who was similarly tried and sentenced as an accomplice, was also hanged along with him. The sepoys at Dibrugarh seem to have been much affected by the mutiny of Konor Sinha, from whose territory many of them came, and, for a time at any rate, succeeded in influencing the Assamese soldiers in the corps. This feeling of uneasiness was not noticed till September, when Colonel Hannay made carefully conducted enquires with regard to the temper of his men, distributed the Hindusthanis over the smaller and remoter outposts, from which they had no means of communicating with one another and gradually concentrated the loyal nucleus of the Nepalese at Dibrugarh.

The hands of the authorities were further strengthened by the des-

[17] Letter dated 28th June 1858, from Capt. Holroyd to Secretary to Government of Bengal.

patch of two naval brigades, each consisting of 100 Europeans, who reached Assam in September 1857 and January 1858, and there was no overt outbreak to disturb the public peace.

British relations with the Trans-Dikhou Nagas: The hills east of the Dikhou are inhabited by tribes of independent Nagas, but, even in the days of native rule, they were in political relation with the Ahom government. They had always derived considerable profit from their dealings with the plains, and they generally had sufficient sense to abstain from carrying their quarrels into British territory. In 1842, Captain Brodie, who was at that time in charge of the Sibsagar district went for a tour amongst the Naga villages between the Dikhou and the Buri Dihing. He reported that in this tract there were the following ten clans:—

(1) The Namsangias with 8 villages; (2) The Barduaris with 8 villages; (3) the Paniduaries with 10 villages; (4) the Mutonias or Kulungs with 4 villages; (5) the Banferas with 4 villages; (6) the Jabakas with 4 villages; (8) the Mulungs with 5 villages; (9) the Jaktungias with 8 villages; (10) the Tablungias with 13 villages.

Captain Brodie persuaded the chiefs of those clans to abstain from outrages on British territory and to discourage inter-tribal feuds, and, so great were the advantages they obtained from intercourse with the valley, that these sections of the Naga race had seldom been a source of serious trouble. In 1863, the outpost at Geleki was burnt down by a raiding party belonging, apparently, to some of the remoter Naga tribes. Government did not on this occasion close the 'duars' to trade, but when in 1867 the post was again attacked and several of the constables killed, the neighbouring tribes were promptly excluded from the plains. This measure resulted in the arrest of two of the principal offenders, who were found to be Zungia Abor Nagas, a clan whose villages were situated at a considerable distance from the valley.

In 1884-85, the Deputy Commissioner of the Naga Hills toured through the country lying on either side of the Dikhou, and in the following year it was laid down that the hills west of that river should be under his management and not under the Deputy Commissioner of Sibsagar. The most important tribes with which the latter officer was concerned are the Banferas and the Jabakas. The two clans had for many years been on bad terms with one another, but, so long as they respected the sanctity of the frontier they were allowed to settle their disputes as best they could. The Sibsagar Nagas were generally fairly quiet, but from time to time they carried their feuds across the border of caused annoyance by their petty thefts. In 1891, they seemed to have been unsettled by the Manipur disturbances. They became more insolent in their manner, the people living near the frontier were alarmed, and a detachment of 100 sepoys was stationed for

nearly two months at Sibsagar. Small parties of men were sent to Sonari and Bihubar, and some military police were quatered at Geleki, and public confidence was thus restored.

In the following year there was an epidemic of outrages upon the frontier. In April, a party of Banfera Nagas sallied out to kill the Raja of Lakrang, a small village which had formerly been subject to Banfera but which had been annexed by the Jabaka Nagas. The Raja made his escape, but one of his followers was murdered in some jungle on the Balijan grant near the Inner Line.[18] The Banfera Raja was called upon to deliver up the culprit, and, as he only handed over a wretched individual who was innocent of the crime, he was fined Rs. 500 by the order of the Chief Commissioner. Barely half this fine was, however, realized and the balance was remitted. In November of that year two Nagas of Jaktung were killed near the Santak grant by Failung Nagas, who mistook them for men from Khongan, a village with which they were at feud. The murderers were sent in and sentenced by the Sessions Judge to trasportation for life, but were pardoned by the Chief Commissioner on condition that the Failung and Jaktung villages composed their differences. In March 1893, a Banfera Naga who had settled in the Abhaipur mauza was murdered by the Lakrang Raja. The murderer was arrested by the police and committed to the Court of Sessions.

In 1892 and the following years, complains were received from the General Manager of the Assam Tea Company of petty thefts committed by Nagas on the Dholbagan and Charaideo gardens. In February 1895 these petty annoyances culminated in the destruction by fire of a godown at Charaideo and of stores valued at about Rs. 4,000. The chiefs of all the villages using the Tiru path were ordered to deliver up the culprits, or in the alternative to pay a fine of Rs. 50 per village and, as they failed to comply with these demands, the path was closed and a guard of 14 military policemen posted there to enforce the order. Three years later the guard was withdrawn as its retention was no longer considered to be necessary.

In July 1900, the Jabaka chief Vangping and three of his relations were murdered, and twenty-five of his relatives and friends fled to British territory to avoid sharing his fate. They reached the Tingalibam garden, and were followed there by parties of armed Nagas, who demanded their surrender. This was refused, as the refugees declared that their lives would be in danger, and in the evening they were sent to the Sonari outpost for protection. The pursuing Nagas remained for some time in the garden, but fortunately committed no overt acts of violence. A small fine was, however, imposed on them for coming armed into British territory.

[18] A line laid down as the limits of the effective jurisdiction of the Assam administration, without prejudice to British claims to territory beyond it.

(g) The story of the Freedom movement : *First phase :*

Continued occupation of Assam by the British after the Treaty of Yandaboo on the ground that otherwise the country would relapse into disorder, aroused suspicion in the minds of the Ahom nobility and princess of the royal house ; for it was not consonant with the then declared policy of the British against permanent annexation of Assam. The question of future peace and security of Assam, as also apportionment of the costs of war could have been settled with the lawful rulers of the country after it had been restored to them. The prolonged post-war indecision in this regard on the part of the Company's government worked up the minds of the princes and nobles to a pitch of bitter discontent against the imposed rule of an alien race. The discontent reached the breaking point when on March 7, 1828 permanent annexation of Lower Assam to the British possessions in India was announced by the British authorities.

Rebellion of Gomdhar Konwar : The first standard of revolt against British rule in Assam was raised in the same year by an Ahom prince named Gomdhar Konwar, who proclaimed himself 'Svargadev' and proceeded to interfere with the collection of revenues for the foreign rulers. Gomdhar's attempt to restore the national government by ousting the British rule from the soil was, however, premature and based on miscalculations of the enemy's strength. It was not difficult for the British arms to quell this first rising. But Gomdhar's example, however unsuccessful, seemed to have roused up to action other scions of the Ahom royal house and nobility as also the freedom loving peoples of the hills bordering on the valley. Among those who resisted the British aggressions on the Highland countries between 1830 and 1833 the name of U Tirot Singh, the Khasi patriot and Siem of Nongkhlaw, stands pre-eminent.

The members of the Ahom aristocracy had generally a deep aversion to jobs offered to them under the Company's government and detested the master servant relationship with these white foreigners. There were, of course, persons who sought favours at the hands of these new masters for their selfish gain, gave them all manner of information and with loyalty served them in the work of consolidating their power. Such elements were looked down upon by the patriotic section of the population. Failing to receive the expected co-operation from the former ruling classes except in rare cases, the British authorities procured the assistance of Bengali clerks and other outsiders to rule over Assam at the initial stages. There was bound to be a feeling of humiliation in the old ruling classes whose discontent with the new order of things was not concealed.

Revolt of 1830 and martyrdom of Pioli Barphukan : Determined to liberate the country from foreign domination before it was too late, Numali Gohain of the Dilihial Buragohain family, in collaboration with another dignitary of the old regime, Pioli Barphukan, son of Badan Chandra Barphukan, made in 1830 a large-scale preparation for a massive armed attack on the British so as to expel them from Assam. They were joined in this venture not only by a number of veteran ex-nobles such as Dhanjoy Pioli Bargohain and Rupchand Konwar, but even the Nagas, the Khasis, the Singphos and the Khamtis too, it is said, responded to their appeals and made common cause with the plains people in their effort to drive out the British. The result was the revolt of 1830 in Upper Assam with simultaneous attacks on all the British camps on the banks of the Dikhou. At a number of centres, such as Nazira and Dikhoumukh, the British forces were overwhelmed and defeated with their camp houses destoryed at the former place and their war boats sunk at the latter.

But timely information received from secret agents had put the British on guard at Rangpur and when the attack began it was successfully repulsed. Its leader Pioli Barphukan fell into the hands of the British. This failure which had a disastrous effect on the whole campaign, is said to have been brought about by a treacherous groups of Assamese people who had sold themselves to the British master. Heroes and patriots of the liberation struggle like Numali Gohain, his daughter Lahari, Chikan Dhekial Phukan of Lankak, Moina Khargharia Phukan, Sundar Gohain of the famous Madurial Bargohain family died in combat with the British at various places after the Rangpur disaster. Pioli Barphukan and Jiuram Dulia Barua were tried and found guilty of treason by David Scott, Commissioner of Assam, and sentenced to death of hanging, which was carried out at Sibsagar in August, 1830. Pioli Barphukan is said to have asserted at the trial that it was no treason to attempt to liberate one's country from alien hands. Other four offenders, including one Bom Singhpho, were sentenced to banishment for fourteen years each.

The British authorities realized that there would be no end of hostilities as long as some concessions were not granted to the disaffected sections of the people. They therefore decided in 1833 to pacify Upper Assam by installing Purandar Sinha at Jorhat as a feudatory Raja of Upper Assam under the British on an annual tribute of Rs. 50,000. But, as we have already noticed earlier, the experiment of a native State in Upper Assam did not or was not intended to prove a success and Raja Purandar was deposed in 1838 on the ground of default in payment of the tribute and also for maladministration, and his territory was finally annexed. At the time of deposal of the Raja, his Chief Counsellor, Maniram Dutta Barbhandar Barua (later Dewan), vigorously pleaded for the Raja, but Commissioner Jenkins disposed of him with the stricture that he advised the Raja 'in a very crooked line of policy'.

In 1858 Sir Andrew John Moffatt Mills, a judge of the Sadar Court

at Calcutta, visited Assam, as already mentioned, to enquire into and report on the administration of the province. Maniram Dewan continued to be the Chief political adviser successively to Purandar's son Raja Kamesvar Sinha and, after Kamesvar's death in 1852, to his son Kandarpesvar Sinha Charing Raja. While acting as adviser to Kandarpesvar Sinha, Maniram seized upon the opportunity to Mills' visit to present a petition to him giving a critical and comparative analysis of the British system of administration in this country. There he pointed out the harmful aspects and injustices of the new system particularly in the matter of taxation and how all this was in contrast to the Government of Assam Rajas who 'treated with mercy and consideration all classes in Assam from the most respectable down to the Abors and other Hill Tribes.' He thus placed before Mills a clear picture of the state of affairs in Assam and pleaded for the restoration of the Raja's rule over at least some part of Upper Assam. But Mills's comments were adverse and Maniram Dewan was described by him as 'a clever, but an untrustworthy and intriguing person'.

After this failure Maniram Dewan proceeded to Calcutta and petitioned the Supreme Government in 1857 on behalf of the young prince Kandarpesvar Sinha for restoration to him of at least a part of the ancestral Kingdom. The events leading to the engineering of a plot to overthrow the East India Company's Government in Assam in the wake of the Sepoy Mutiny which has been called India's first war of Independence, the discovery of the plot and its suppression, and the trial and execution of the Dewan by Captain Charles Holroyd have already been described in the foregoing pages. It may be noted here that Holroyd showed undue haste and anxiety in bringing Maniram from Calcutta to Sibsagar for trial in his court where the decision was a foregone conclusion and in getting him executed quickly on February 26, 1858 within three days of the sentence without the formality of having the sentence of death approved by the Commissioner of Assam or any higher authority. Holroyd thus exposed himself to the charge of malice against the Dewan.

Second phase : Resistance to British authority through armed rebellions or revolts organised by scions of old royal or noble families practically came to an end with the suppresion of the Sepoy Mutiny or the first war of Indian Independence. During the remaining decades of the nineteenth century a new consciousness of nationalism among the people of India slowly grew under the leadership of popular leaders. The Indian National Congress was founded in 1885. In Assam also there was a new awakening in this closing decades of the century which is to be seen in the literary zeal of the period. Political consciousness of the people found expression in different *ryot sabhas* and especially in the opening decades of the present century in the *Assam Association.*

The growth of national consciousness during the opening decades of the present century in Assam as a whole centred round the *Assam Association*, a political organisation of moderate political views. While delegates from Assam attended some of the earlier sessions of the Indian National Congress, there was no separate Congress Organisation in Assam until 1921. The first Great War, the proposed Montagu Chelmsford Reforms, the Rowlat Act and its aftermath, all these had their reaction in Assam too. And the leaders of Assam, notable amongst whom were Tarunram Phukan, Nabin Chandra Bardoloi, Chandra Nath Sarma and Kuladhar Chaliha, took necessary steps to see that Assam got her rightful place as a Governor's province in the new constitutional scheme for India to be incorporated in the Government of India Act 1919.

It is, however, with the launching of the Non-Cooperation movement by the Indian National Congress under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi in 1921 that real political consciousness on a wide scale dawned in Assam, as in other parts of India. But it is to be remembered that in Assam it was the students who appeared to be in the vanguard of the Non-Cooperation Movement. In October 1920, the Non-Cooperation Resolution was passed in the Nagpur Session of the All India Students' Conference. Bedanath Barthakur and Bidyadhar Sarma attended this Conference as representatives from the Cotton College and they on their return propagated Non-Cooperation amongst the students. Students began to hold meetings and adopted resolutions on Non-Cooperation in pursuance of which they began to boycott the educational institutions. Many students of Jorhat and Sibsagar left school or college for good.

But it was felt that no definite line of action could be carried out without a regular Congress office at Jorhat. The agitation, however, began to spread and soon a meeting of the *Assam Association* was held at Jorhat in which almost all the leaders of the Province were present. At a large public meeting, held in front of the Bishnuram Hall at Jorhat in which 5000 to 6000 villagers also assembled, Non-Cooperation was explained by the leaders of the people. After this meeting the local leaders found it easy to carry on the movement in the villages. A Congress Committee was formed for the first time on the advice of late Chandra Nath Sarma and then an office was also onened in a house lent out for the purpose by a local leader. But it was only after Mahatma's visit to Jorhat in 1921 that the management of the Congress Committee was taken by the local leaders. Workers and Volunteers soon gathered around the Congress Committee to work out the Non-Cooperation programme which included such activities as picketing before liquor and opium shops, boycott of foreign cloth, and encouragement of Swadesi in its place. Village Panchayats began to be formed as a result of the general awakening and these became the centres of the Movement in Assam. Several pleaders boycotted the bar and renounced their practice.

Meetings were held in the whole Sub-division of Jorhat and 4 to 5 thousand people enrolled themselves as volunteers.

As from Jorhat so also from Sibsagar a large number of students had left college for good and plunged themselves into the movement helping to spread it in the whole Sibsagar Sub-division. The local leaders utilised the enthusiasm of the students in carrying out propaganda work in the villages. Batches of students moved from village to village to explain the meaning of Non-Cooperation and boycott. Picketing before opium, liquor and ganja shops was carried on with vigour and enthusiasm. The movement began with full swing. Congress Committees were formed in the villages with headquarters at Sibsagar town. Durga Prasad Barthakur and Bhuban Chandra Gogoi were the first incumbents as President and General Secretary respectively of the Sibsagar Congress Committe. The Movement received a temporary setback when most of the leaders and workers were arres'ed and convicted ; but notwithstanding arrests and convictions, people's enthusiasm did not lie down, and funds were collected for the Tilak Swaraj Fund. O. S. Gunning was then the S.D.O. of Sibsagar. He had no sympathy for the Movement and had ordered Gurkha Sepoys to disperse Non-Cooperation meetings and processions by taking recourse to whipping with clubs and sticks.

Golaghat, another Sub-division of the district responded to the call of Non-Cooperation with equal alacrity and enthusiasm. Nazira, Jhanji, Dikhoumukh, Panidihing, Bamun-Pukhuri, Kakajan and other such places soon developed into centres of Congress propaganda or Non-Cooperation against the British Government. By 1922, the whole district was agog with the spirit of Non-Cooperation. The Non-Cooperation Movement succeeded in spreading the message of the Congress throughout the length and breadth of Assam and Mahatma Gandhi was almost deified by the rural people. The movement itself began to languish after 1923 due to repression and fresh developments within the Congress Organisation with regard to the working of the reforms, but the spirit of resistance and the craving for freedom which it generated in the people never died down. The 41st Session of the Indian National Congress was held at Pandu in 1926 and it created a fresh wave of enthusiasm in the country for the ideals of freedom from bondage to a foreign rule that it preached.

With the Salt Satyagraha of Gandhiji the Congress Movement started afresh in 1930 and Assam also reacted to it powerfully. The movement in Assam was given an added impetus by an indiscreet measure adopted by the then Government of Assam through what is known as the Cunningham Circular intended to restrain students from joining in the political movement. Large numbers of students refused to abide by the instructions contained in the circular for executing a bond to abstain from politics and there was a countrywide movement demanding the withdrawal of the Circular. The

Government in response to the popular agitation against it modified its provisions. But already several schools were started in important towns under non-official patronage to enable students to prosecute their studies without having to obey the Circular.

In Sibsagar almost all the students of the Sibsagar Sub-division had boycotted the schools and joined in the movement. A National School, namely, Sibsagar Vidyapith was established for those students who boycotted the Government institutions. The Sibsagar Government High School was burnt down by some people. When as a result of the general Satyagraha or Civil Disobedience Movement in Assam Sri B. R. Medhi, President of the A.P.C.C. was arrested, the Assam Provincial Congress Office was shifted to Sibsagar and Jadav Prasad Chaliha and Sonaram Dutta were selected as President and Secretary of the A.P.C.C. In 1930 all Congress workers of Sibsagar Sub-division were engaged in flood relief work and in the organisation of the Vaidyapith, and as such, other works of the Congress programme suffered to some extent. Constructive work such as encouraging spinning and weaving was also, however, carried on by a few leaders who had time to do so. In 1931 a Congress Sevadal was also organised in the Sibsagar Sub-division.

The 1932 Movement had also its repercussions in Sibsagar and many people suffered arrest and imprisonment. After release, he engaged himself in constructive works of the Congress and established Khadi Centres in Na-Katani and other places. Thus from 1933 to 1937 many constructive works were done in the Sibsagar Sub-division by the Congress and in the election of 1936 Congress candidates were returned to the Assam Legislative Assembly.

In 1940, the individual Satyagraha Movement was started in Sibsagar also by Moulana Taibulla, the then President of the A.P.C.C. A Committee was set up to organise the Satyagraha movement and many persons courted arrest and imprisonment. In 1942 the 'Quit India' Movement of the Congress led to a tremendous upsurge in Sibsagar Sub-division. The workers displaced the railway lines at Lakwa, Namti, Barhat, Sepekhati and Safrai. The Sibsagar Circuit House, the Government High School, Jhanji Dak-bunglow, Gaurisagar Dak-bunglow, Amguri M. E. School and Sibsagar Settlement Office, all these places were burnt down. The Police made lathi charges on processions in Joysagar and Sibsagar. Many persons were arrested and imprisoned or detained as a result of this Movement.

There were almost similar reaction to the Congress Movement in the Golaghat Sub-division as well. There were devout workers like Sri Shankar Chandra Barua and Gangaram Bormedhi who spread amongst the people, the use of khadi, boycott of foreign cloths, prohibition of liquor, etc. Notwithstanding obstructions from Government, a strong Congress Organisation had been established in the Golaghat Sub-division. By 1929, about 50%

of the people of Golaghat were in the Congress. The students of Golaghat also joined in the movement and established a Students' Organisation to carry out the Congress programme. The Cunningham Circular had also its effects in driving the students more towards the Congress Movement. Here a Home Guards Bahini was also constituted for the first time. During the 1932 movement, a campaign for non-payment of revenue was launched in the villages of this Sub-division and a few people suffered on account of it from confiscation of land and property. The 1942 Movement had widespread effects in the Sibsagar district. But the military checked the Golaghat Congress office and harrassed the people everywhere with a view to suppressing the movement. The European Club at Golaghat and several other places were burnt down. Railway derailment at Barpathar led to the arrest at that time of several persons including Kusal Konwar. Kusal Konwar, who was believed to be innocent, was, however, declared to be guilty of sabotage and awarded capital punishment by the court that tried him. He was hanged in the Jorhat Jail in 1943. The Government also levied collective fines on the people of Golaghat with a view to stopping the movement.

When at length independence came to India in August 1947 in fulfilment of the peoples's aspirations, the district of Sibsagar, which had made immense sacrifices at the altar of Freedom, proudly participated in the jubilations that marked the end of slavery. The martyrdom of Pioli Barphukan and Jiuram Dulia Barua, of Maniram Dewan and Pioli Barua, and of Kusal Konwar had not been in vain; the trials and tribulations suffered by the people in their fight for Freedom under the banner of the Indian National Congress, with Gandhiji's motto of 'truth and non-violence', were not too high a price for freedom. In the post-independence era Sibsagar has been in the front rank of districts in the State. The district administrative machinery has been sufficiently reorientated to enable it to carry through plans and programmes of development in different directions, and an urge for better living has been noticeable in the endeavours of the people.

(h) Archaeological remains :

A few archæological remains of importance, ascribable to the pre-Ahom period have been discovered in the district. The notable centres are Deopani and Numaligarh.[19]

The principal memorials of their rule left by the Ahoms in Sibsagar are the fine bunds, many of which are still used as roads. The total number of old tanks in the Sibsagar district is very large, but five stand out pre-eminent. The town of Sibsagar was built upon the banks of a tank of beautiful fresh water called Sibsagar tank, which is about 2 miles 196 yards

[19] See P. C. Choudhury : *The History and Civilisation of the people of Assam, Second Ed.*, pp. 442-43.

in circumference, and is no less than 129 acres in area under water. About two miles south of Sibsagar is the Joysagar tank, which has an area of about 155 acres under water. It is the biggest of all the tanks excavated by the Ahom monarchs, and six miles west of Joysagar is Gaurisagar (148 acres). These three tanks in themselves would satisfy the requirements of a dense population, but between Joysagar and Gaurisagar there are two more great reservoirs, one north and one south of the road that runs to Gaurisagar. The northernmost is known as Athaisagar (now Purani Pukhuri) and has an area of 103 acres, while immediately opposite is the Rudrasagar tank (now Na-Pukhuri), area 118 acres. The fact that these great sheets of water are situated in such close proximity to one another is ample evidence that their designers were not actuated by only utilitarian motives. These tanks are surrounded by moats from which earth was evidently taken for the embankment of the reservoirs. The water level of the tank is thus higher than that of the encircling moat.

The temples are built of thin flat bricks baked, till they have almost reached the consistency of earthenware. Nearly all of them are of one design, and consist of an egg-shaped dome enclosing the shrine approached by a short nave. The outer walls of the dome is often adorned with bas-reliefs. A list of the temples in the district will be found appended to the following chapter. The temples on the Sibsagar and Joysagar tanks are naturally the best known.

The Palace and Rangghar at Rangpur: The palace at Rangpur stands about a mile to the south of Sibsagar town. The following description is taken from the Report of the Archæological Survey, Bengal Circle, for the year 1902-03.

"It is a building of irregular shape, consisting of a long flight of rooms running from east to west, with several smaller wings in its northern and southern side. The lower storey apparently served principally as stables, store-rooms, servants' quarters, etc., while the royal apartments were located in the upper storey which has now disappeared for the greater part. In the central northern wing is an octagonal room, which is now called the pujar ghor. Close to it a portion of the royal apartments still exists. It has a stair leading up to the terrace, and the ante-room is covered by a vaulted roof. South of it stands an isolated room, believed to have been used by the queen during her confinement. Another isolated room in the south-western corner of the palace is believed to have been used as a kitchen. The area within which the palace stands is surrounded by a wall, which is approximately two miles in circumference. Another isolated building inside this area is said to have been used as a powder magazine. It is called Kharghar."

"The Rangghar stands outside the palace enclosure, to the west. It

was the place from where the king used to watch buffalo-fights and other sports. Its erection is ascribed to Pramatta Sinha in the year 1744 A.D. It is the best preserved ruin of the ancient Ahom capital. Its shape is octagonal, but the northern and western sides are much longer than the other ones. Each of these longer sides has three large and two small openings. The building has two storeys, each being divided internally into one large central room and two smaller ones at the eastern and western end. The position of the western chamber is occupied by the stairs leading to the upper storey, outside a gap is left in the staircase, sufficient to allow an elephant standing between it. "A person mounted on an elephant thus could ascend the steps leading to the upper storey immediately from the back of his elephant, without dismounting first. The roof is crowned by three small turrets in its centre and at its eastern and western end are the projecting heads of two small makaras or jalhastis."

Gargaon: Of the ruins of Gargaon very little now remains. The palace was a three-storeyed building. The two lower storeys contained a single centre chamber with a verandah on each side, at each corner of which there was a small room. The storey was nothing more than a cupola, the room being only five or six feet square. The building is at present in a very dilapidated state, but is possessed of some architectural merits.

Dimapur: Some of the most interesting remains which are, however, in no way connected with the Ahoms are to be found in the old Kachari capital at Dimapur which is situated in the midst of the huge Nambor forest, which stretches as pathless wilderness of trees for many miles on every side. Dimapur was formerly in the Sibsagar district and then transferred to Naga Hills. Prior to the construction of railway it was extremely inaccessible, and the existence of the remains of what must evidently have been a considerable city in the middle of this howling jungle affords a striking instance of the rapidity with which nature in the East can obliterate the handiwork of man. The enclosure wall of the capital at Dimapur is made of thin flat native bricks, and according to Dr. Bloch, is about one and a half miles in circumference.[20] It is entered by brick gateway which belongs to the Bengal style of Muhammadan architecture, and which was probably erected under the direction of some foreigner like Ghanasyam, the architect of the Ahom Raja. Within there are several rows of curious pillars, some shaped like gigantic pawns and others in the form of a capital V. A little to the south of the gate there are four rows, two of pawns and two of V shaped pillars, consisting alternately of 16 and 17 monoliths. They

[20] *Annual Report of the Archaelogical Survey of India,* Bengal Circle, for the year 1902-03.

are massive pieces of sandstone, those in the centre being about 13 feet high and 14 feet in circumference and are ornamented with rude carvings in low relief of flowers, geometrical figures and animals. A little to the west of this group of pillars there is a single pawn, the largest yet discovered, which is 16½ feet high and 23½ feet in circumference. North of this pillar there is another double row of pawn pillars, while to the south are the remains of more pillars, all of which are lying scattered on the ground and half buried in the earth. Local tradition has it that these pillars were erected at the place where animals were sacrificed by the Raja, and tradition is to some extent confirmed by the customs of the Nagas at the present day. These hospitable hillmen keep a record of their feasts and erect a round-topped post when they have killed a mithun and a V-shaped post when they have slain a cow; and these curious monoliths may thus commemorate some particularly gorgeous banquet of the Kachari king. On the top of the V-shaped pillars there are mortice holes, but it hardly seems probable that they can ever have supported the roof of any building. All traces of this building, if any such existed, have at any rate completely disappeared. That Dimapur was once the centre of a crowded population is shown by the existence of a large number of tanks in the immediate vicinity. It is said that there are altogether fifty two, but most are buried in impenetrable jungle, and it is not easy to ascertain their actual number. Some of them are of considerable size; the tank on which the inspection bunglow is built measures about 300 yards along the shorter sides.

Ruins at Kasomari pathar: In the forest near the Dayang, about one day's journey by boat from Jamuguri railway station, there are the remains of the old city. The earthen ramparts and moats are still visible, and seem to have extended for about half a mile each way. Within the ramparts are lines of pillars, and in addition to the chessmen and V-shaped pillars of Dimapur, there are others of the shape of a sword of dagger.[21]

Miscellaneous: In the Malow Pathar, a little to the west of Jorhat town there is a large earthen platform known as the *barbheti,* which is said to have been the site of the *namghar* of the Moamaria Gosain in the latter half of the seventeenth century. According to the Ahom chronicles, each disciple of the Gosain brought one sod for the construction of this enormous mound, and this enabled him to ascertain their number. Two smaller mounds near by are known as the *major bheti* and the *majia bheti,* and were the sites of the houses of the Gosain and his brother. Old Ahom cannon are common in the district, and there is one of really enormous size, which has been placed in position on the banks of the Sibsagar tank near the Sibsagar Court building.

[21] These ruins are described in the *Report of the Archaeological Survey,* Bengal Circle, for the year 1904-05.

CHAPTER III

PEOPLE

(a) Population :

Total Population according to sub-divisions and thanas : The district of Sibsagar in 1951 had a total population of 12,12,224 of which 6,47,932 were males and 5,64,292 were females. The density calculated according to the area figures submitted by the Surveyor General of India was 351 persons per square mile, an advance of exactly 50 over the 1931-41 decade. The district which was the second densest in this Natural Division in 1931, next only to Cachar, gave place to Kamrup also in this respect in 1941, whereas in the 1941-51 decade it was surpassed in density by Cachar, Kamrup and Nowgong as well. The most thickly populated parts in the district were in the centre towards the south viz., the thanas of Jorhat with a density of 650, Amguri 518, Nazira 504, Sibsagar 444, Teok 432, Dergaon 409, and other thanas with a relatively high density, whereas the areas of the lowest density were Bokakhat thana 161, Majuli 170 and Golaghat 245.

In 1951 there was not a portion of the district which had a density less than 150 and higher than 750. The largest proportion both of its area and population, 36.99 and 43.85 per cent respectively, fell within the middle density group of 340-450. Majuli and Bokakhat thanas occupying 16.93 per cent of the area inhabited by only 8.36 per cent of the total population of the district fell within the density group of 150-200, whereas the large Golaghat thana consisting more than one-fourth of the total area of the district fell within the middle density group of 200-300. The district headquarter thana of Jorhat with its 8.7 per cent of the area and 16.68 per cent of the total population of the district was the only police station to fall within the high density group of 600-750, though two thanas of Amguri and Nazira fell within 450-600 group. We find that nearly one-third of the total population was squeezed within one-fifth of the total area, leaving the remaining four-fifths of the entire area for the remaining two-thirds of the population. To put it differently, one-fifths of the population was comfortably settled within nearly half the area of the district, which leaves the remaining three-fourths of the population in an area little more than the remaining half. The 1941 figures tell a similar tale. Majuli and Bokakhat police stations occupying 17.55 per cent of the area of the district were then still in the low density group of 100-150, Golaghat police station spreading itself

over 25.46 per cent of the total area was within the low density group of 150-200, while Jorhat police station remained within the group 450-600, with Amguri and Nazira yet in the middle density group 300-450. Another interesting feature revealed by the comparison of the figures for the two censuses is that, while 60 per cent of the population continued to remain at both censuses to live within the middle density group of 200-450, the area which it occupied shows a tremendous increase from 48 per cent in 1941 to 64.66 per cent in 1951.

Among the three sub-divisions in 1951 Sibsagar tops the list with 4,44,221 persons. It is followed by Jorhat and Golaghat with 4,34,553 and 3,33,553 persons respectively. From the point of view of population, Jorhat thana is the largest with 2,02,147 persons and Bokakhat the smallest with only 40,534 persons. In this respect Jorhat thana is closely followed by Golaghat thana with 2,00,219 persons. The following table (1) shows the thana-wise and sub-division-wise distribution of population (male and female) in 1951 at a glance.[1] Table II gives the population figures for 1961.[2]

TABLE I

Sub-division	Thana	Male	Female	Total
Sibsagar	Sonari	68,301	59,163	1,27,464
	Nazira	55,428	48,960	1,04,334
	Sibsagar	74,838	65,115	1,39,253
	Amguri	38,409	34,061	72,470
		2,36,976	2,07,245	4,44,221
Jorhat	Teok	42,896	38,256	81,152
	Jorhat	1,09,00	93,147	2,02,147
	Titabar	48,035	42,463	90,498
	Majuli	32,477	28,386	60,863
		2,32,408	2,02,252	4,34,660
Golaghat	Dergaon	49,343	43,456	92,800
	Golaghat	1,07,392	92,827	2,00,219
	Bokakhat	22,022	18,512	40,534
		1,78,758	1,54,795	3,33,553
Sibsagar-District	—	6,47,392	5,54,292	12,12,224

TABLE II

District/Sub-division/Police Station/Town Group or Town.	Total Rural Urban	Population
Sibsagar District	T	1,508,390
	R	1,431,685
	U	76,705

[1] *1951 Census, Sibsagar* p. xi.

[2] *District Census Handbook* 1961, Sibsagar p. 141 : Table A-1, Area, Houses and Population.

District/Sub-division/Police Station/Town Group or Town.	Total Rural Urban	Population.
Golaghat Sub-division	T	413,332
	R	390,831
	U	22,501
Bokakhat P.S.	R	51,881
Dergaon P.S.	T	112,324
	R	104,522
	U	7,802
Dergaon (T.C.)	U	7,802
Golaghat (P.S.)	T	249,127
	R	234,428
	U	14,699
Golaghat (M)	U	14,699
Jorhat Subdivision	T	547,342
	R	513,154
	U	34,188
Majuli P.S.	R	80,179
Jorhat P.S.	T	256,974
	R	222,786
	U	34,188
Jorhat (M)	U	24,953
Mariani	U	9,235
Teok P.S.	R	96,192
Titabar P.S.	R	113,997
Sibsagar Sub-division	T	547,716
	R	527,700
	U	20,016
Amguri P.S.	R	83,546
Sibsagar P.S.	T	171,881
	R	156,775
	U	15,106
Sibsagar (M)	U	15,106
Nazira P.S.	T	126,690
	R	121,780
	U	4,910
Nazira (T.C.)	U	4,910
Sonari P.S.	R	165,599

Growth of population : In 1841, Mr. Robinson estimated that the population of Sibpur, which was bounded on the west by the Dhansiri and on the north by the Brahmaputra and thus excluded the Mikir Hills and the Majuli, was 2,00,000 souls.[3] A census of the district including the Majuli taken in 1844 showed a population of 1,59,573 persons, but this census was probably more inaccurate than the Deputy Commissioner imagined, and even he was of opinion that the population was about 1,80,000. In 1872, the first census of the whole of the Province was taken, and though

[3] Robinson—*Descriptive Account of Assam.*

non-synchronous, it was probably more accurate than its predecessors. According to this, the population of the district in 1872 stood at 3,17,799—1,65,545 males and 1,52,254 females. In 1881 this figure rose to 34,92,545—2,06,329 males and 1,86,216 females, showing a percentage variation of 23.5. In the following two decades, the increase was large and steady. The population figures in 1891 stood at 4,80,659—2,52,687 males and 2,27,972 females and in 1901 at 5,97,969—3,16,985 males and 2,80,984 females, showing percentage variations of 22.4 and 24.4 respectively. A great part of this increase was due to the labourers who were imported in large numbers to work on the tea gardens situated in the district; but it should be borne in mind that in comparison with lower and central Assam there had been a substantial natural growth of population (Natural growth was measured by the increase in the number of those born and censused in the district). The district in that year had a density of 120 per square mile This, however, should not lead one to suppose that it was sparsely peopled. West of the Dhansiri there was very little population and a dense population would have been an impossibility, both in the Mikir Hills and in the flooded tracts that fringe the Brahmaputra. But south of this flooded area and east of the Dhansiri there was no lack of inhabitants. In Golaghat there were considerable areas with a population of over 300 per square mile. In the Jorhat tahsil there was in 1901 a density of 441, while two mauzas near the town had a density of no less than 621. In Sibsagar and Namtidol tahsils and the Hachara and Joktali mauzas, 344 square miles in all had a density of 341. Even in the more densely settled tracts, Sibsagar was in no way over populated then, but the pressure on soil was severely felt.

Among the three sub-divisions, the increase during the decade 1891-1901 was especially pronounced in the Sibsagar sub-division, showing a percentage increase of 32.1 as against 20.9 and 19.9 in Jorhat and Golaghat sub-divisions respectively. This, no doubt, was largely due to the fact that during this period there had been a large increase in the area under tea, which necessitated a corresponding increase in the labour force. Further there was more waste land available for settlement in Sibsagar than in Jorhat, where the population was already fairly dense, and that was a fact which naturally influenced settlers when they left the gardens.

In 1911 the population of Sibsagar stood at 6,90,299—3,64,810 males and 3,25,489, females. During the decade 1901-11 there occurred an increase of 13.41 per cent in Sibsagar sub-division, of 16.20 in Jorhat, and of 17.02 in Golaghat, the average for the district being 15.4 per cent, which was less than that shown at any previous census. It was found that the increase of natural population of Sibsagar had exceeded the actuals; this was ascribed by Mr. J. McSwiney, Superintendent of Census Operation in Assam, 1911, to the tracking westwards of time-expired tea garden labourers and the high death rate among new immigrants. There were extensive areas of waste

land in Golaghat where the density of population was only 65, but unfortunately the Nambor forest, which covered a great part of the sub-division, was most unhealthy. Jorhat had a density of 247 and there was not a great deal of unoccupied land in the sub-division. Sibsagar had more tea gardens than Golaghat and was only slightly less thickly populated than Jorhat. The completion of the Assam Bengal Railway had apparently brought with it a large amount of prosperity to the whole district. It appeared from the report of the local authorities that the decade had been one of uneventful prosperity.

The natural population in 1921 had grown by 17.3 per cent and the whole population showed an increase of 19.1 per cent on the 1911 total and stood at 8,23,197—4,33,913 males and 3,89,284 females. Thus the position in 1921 was different from that of 1911. In the middle years of the decade there occurred a boom in tea industry which attracted many labourers from outside. The total increase of population in the ten years was 1,31,795. Somewhat less than one-third of this was due to immigration. The stream of Eastern Bengal settlers stopped short before Sibsagar and the immigrants here were almost all tea garden labourers. The district had the largest population in the valley, but it also covered the largest area, the mean density being only 162. Of the three sub-divisions, Jorhat had the greatest density, 285, followed by Sibsagar with 281. Golaghat with a large area of the Mikir Hills and the Nambar forest, supported only 75 persons per square mile. A belt running in the centre and north-east was the most thickly populated part of the district. Sibsagar sub-division had the largest increase, but the other two sub-divisions had also increased considerably. Jorhat thana was the densest thana, having risen in density from 349 to 461. Amguri, Titabar and Nazira thanas all had over 350 persons per square mile. The Majuli and the hill portions of Golaghat thana were still sparsely peopled; Mauzas Khangia, Kotahangaon, Charigaon, Nazira and Godhuli Bazar supported the densest population, all having 750 persons or more per square mile. The mauzas having the largest increase in population were Nakachari, Thaora, Khaloighogora, Kardaiguri and Duar Nikharu. In Jorhat subdivision there was little room left for expansion but there was still ample land in the north and east of Sibsagar, and round the hills of Golaghat. There had been a good deal of clearance of waste land, owing to pressure in the crowded parts and settlement of ex-labourers.

Sibsagar district in 1931 had a population of 9,33,326, an increase of only 13.4 per cent since 1921. It was so, only the second largest district in point of population in the Assam Valley, Kamrup being the first, and had thus lost the headship of the valley—a position which it held from 1901 to 1921. It was stated in the 1921 Census Report that if tea continued to flourish and if, as seemed likely, the stream of cultivating immigrants from East Bengal continued its eastward trend, the population of Sibsagar might

approach a million in 1931. Neither of these 'ifs' had been fulfilled. Tea had not flourished greatly and there had been no immigration of Eastern Bengal colonists into the district. On the other hand the district had actually lost a considerable number of foreign born persons in spite of the fact that the population censused on tea gardens had risen from 2,28,870 to 2,34,274. Of the three sub-divisions into which the district is divided, the highest rate of increase had been recorded by Golaghat with 18.4 per cent, exactly the same rate of increase as in 1911-21. Sibsagar sub-division showed an increase of 14.4 per cent as against 20.5 in 1911-21 and Jorhat only 8.5 against 18.2 in the same decade. An interesting feature about the increase in Jorhat subdivision was that it occurred in those mauzas in which there were no tea gardens or very few. In fact, except for the increase in the riverine mauzas on the north of the Trunk Road, which were lowlying for tea, and in the Maujuli where there was not a single tea garden, the increase in the population of the sub-division by 17,000 was due to increase in the riverine mauzas. The small increase in the population of the main tea-producing area of the district might be due to a considerable loss of foreign-born labourers since the last census. Jorhat sub-division was very densely populated for an Assam Valley sub-division. Its actual density was 299, but if the portion of the Majuli island which fell within the sub-division was excluded, the density of the rest of the sub-division came to 360 and some mauzas, viz. Charigaon (820) and Khangia (792) were very thickly populated.

Sibsagar sub-division had a density of 327, much the same as Jorhat, and like Jorhat showed considerable increase in the areas where there were few tea gardens. Sibsagar *thana* which contained very few tea gardens had increased by 17.6 per cent, whereas Nazira *thana* in the centre of the tea industry of the district had increased by only 7.2 per cent and Amguri *thana* by only 5.9 per cent. Sonari *thana* showed an increase of 25.3 per cent which was largely due to the opening up of the waste lands in Baruasali Mauza. Golaghat had increased at exactly the same rate as in 1911-21 (18.4 per cent). This was the only sub-division in the district in which waste land was still available in any quantity and the large increase (166 per cent) in Barpathar, a vast mauza of 596 square miles was particularly noticeable. This mauza was being rapidly colonized, principally by ex-labourers. The density of Golaghat sub-division (91) was very low compared with that of Jorhat and Sibsagar. This was due to the fact that about half the total area of the sub-division consisted of the Mikir Hills which were very thinly populated. The population of these hills (excluding Barpathar, which though technically a part of the Mikir Hills Backward Tract, was really an undeveloped plains mauza) had actually decreased by over a thousand since 1921. The decrease was particularly noticeable in the case of Duar Nikharu and Duar Disha mauzas. These low hills were unhealthy

and full of wild animals and there might have been some emigration from them to the Naga Hills.

The district in 1951 had a population of 12,12,224, second largest in Assam even if the influx of displaced persons was ignored, as against its population of 10,40,428 in 1941. It thus accounted for an overall increase of 1,71,796 during the 1941-51 decade against 1,07,102 in the previous one, the smallest increase among the districts of this Natural Division excepting Goalpara. For the first two decades of this century, Sibsagar enjoyed the primacy among the plains districts regarding total population which it had lost to Kamrup since 1931. It should, however, be noted that the increase in the decade 1931-41 had been artificially depressed by the removal of 34,313 persons from its 1941 population on account of the creation of the new district of United Mikir and North Cachar Hills. If this change were ignored, then the overall increase of the district would come to 1,41,415 for the decade 1931-41 and 1,73,388 for the decade 1941-51. Sibsagar had thus increased at the rate of 16.15 per cent over its 1941 population against 11.48 per cent in the decade 1931-41. Its rate of increase in the decade ending 1951, like its overall increase was higher than that of Goalpara only among the districts of this Natural Division, all other districts having increased at a rate higher than that of Sibsagar. For the decade 1931-41 the percentage increase was 11.48. This figure was artificially low on account of the exclusion of Mikir Hills portion which, if included, would force up the percentage increase for this decade to 15.15 and slightly bring down the percentage increase for the next decade to 16.13. Among the three sub-divisions the highest rate of increase had been recorded by Golaghat sub-division, 19 per cent, against only 2 per cent in the 1931-41 decade, followed by Sibsagar sub-division with its 16 per cent increase in the 1941-51 decade against 13.6 per cent in the previous one. Jorhat sub-division had increased by 15.2 per cent—a rate identical with that, recorded in the previous decade. The percentage increase of Golaghat sub-division for the previous decade was alarmingly low, percentage of 2 ascribable to reasons of terrible epidemics or unprecedented natural calamities. The actual cause was, however, not so terrifying and was a simple one viz. the reduction of a population of 34,313 from the 1941 figure for the sub-division on account of its transfer to the newly created United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district. If an allowance was made for these transfer the percentage increase of Golaghat sub-division for the previous decade would come to the more normal one of 14 per cent. Though the increase registered by the district as a whole had been shared more or less evenly by all its police stations, Sonari thana with its 22.8 per cent has registered the highest rate of increase, closely followed by Golaghat thana, 21.5 wheras the least increase was given by Dergaon, 10 per cent, Teok 10.1 per cent and Bokakhat 13 per cent ; all other thanas showed a rate of increase round about 15 per cent.

The following table will show the growth of population in towns during the period 1901-51.

Sub-division / Year	Jorhat	Sibsagar	Golaghat	Nazira
1901	2,899	5,712	2,359	—
1911	5,231	5,764	2,236	2,583
1921	6,626	5,329	3,655	2,632
1931	8,334	6,669	4,688	3,484
1941	11,664	7,559	5,470	3,436
1951	16,164	10,622	8,283	4,250

The total population of Sibsagar district according to 1961 census is 1,508,390 of which 808,935 are males and 699,455 are females. The rate of growth of population in the district during the 1951-61 period is 24.43 per cent. The density of population at present is 438 per square mile as against 315 in 1951.[4]

Migration : As recorded in the old Gazetteer, 1,51,612 persons, or just a little over one-fourth of the total population had been born in 1901 outside the frontiers of Assam. About one-half of these people came from the Chota Nagpur division of the then Bengal, which supplied Assam with the healthiest but most costly of its labourer, while one-quarter came from other places in the province. Upwards of 18,000 persons came from the Central Provinces, nearly 9,000 from the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh and over 4,000 from Madras. The great bulk of these persons had been imported to the tea gardens as labourers. There were a few artisans and carpenters from China and the Punjab and a few from Bombay who were either employed in the railway or interested in the liquor trade. Some people from Afghanistan, known as Kabulis, also came and travelled all over the province in the cold weather as pedlars. The Nepalis were for the most part graziers who kept large herds of buffalo on the marches near the Brahmaputra, and the natives of Rajputana were the shrewd Marwari merchants who had succeeded in monopolising practically the whole of the trade of the Assam Valley. As far as inter-district migration was concerned, Sibsagar sent settlers to the waste lands of Lakhimpur and Darrang and received labourers from Kamrup and Goalpara.

During the period ranging from 1947 to 1950 East Bengal immigrants continued to pour into the district. In the year 1947-48, 8,41 labourers migrated to Sibsagar from other provinces to work in various capacities. In the following two years the number of such migrants were respectively 6,379 and 8,151.

[4] *Census of India*, 1961 p. 332.

(ii) Distribution between urban and rural areas: In 1901, Sibsagar contained three small towns, Sibsagar, Jorhat and Golaghat with the population of 5,712, 2,899 and 2,359 respectively. There were then 2,109 villages. These were not, however, well defined units, clusters of huts which stood out clearly in the centre of the fields tilled by their inhabitants. Rice, the staple crop, was grown in wide plains, dotted over with clumps of bamboos and fruit trees in which were burried the houses of the cultivators. It was groves and not villages that the traveller saw when riding through the more densely populated portions of the district, and not a house could usually be seen till he had penetrated this jungle of plantains, betelnut trees, and bamboos. There was generally no dearth of building sites, there were no communal lands, and there was nothing to keep the population together. It was difficult to tell where one village ended and another began, or to which of the larger clumps of trees should be assigned the smaller clumps which were freely dotted about amongst the rice fields. The result was that the statistics of the villages were of little practical importance, but, taking them for what they were worth, it appeared that villages ran small, and in 1901 about half the population were lying in hamlets with less than 500 inhabitants.

The picture in 1951 had changed somewhat. The number of towns was four now as against three in 1901 and urban population stood in 1951 at 39,319 as against 10,970 in 1901 showing an increase of nearly three times the figure of 1901. During the course of last fifty years Nazira emerged as a new town which had a population of 4,259 and an areas of 0.8 square miles in 1951. As distinguished from this, rural population which stood at 5,86,999 in 1901 rose to 11,72,905 in 1951 showing a mere doubling of the figure of 1901. The percentage of urban population worked out from these figures also shows a steady growth. In 1901 there were only 1.9 per cent town-dwellers whereas in 1951 nearly 3.5 per cent people lived in towns.

In 1901, from the population point of view, Sibsagar town occupied the top position, while Golaghat the bottom. In 1951, Jorhat came to the top and Nazira came up after Golaghat. There were 16,164 souls in Jorhat in 1951, 10,622 in Sibsagar, 8,283 in Golaghat and 4,250 in Nazira. Though Sibsagar sub-division comprises two towns, the total urban population was less by 1,292 than Jorhat in 1951. But so far as rural population is concerned, Sibsagar sub-division dominates over the others with 4,29,349 souls. In this respect Jorhat with 4,18,496 inhabitants closely follows Sibsagar. Golaghat stands at the bottom of the ladder with 3,25,270 people. Nearly 96.5 per cent of the people of this district live in villages.

Besides the above mentioned towns there are a number of semi-urban localities, such as Moran, Sonari, Simaluguri, Nazira, Amguri, Mariani, Titabar, Dergaon, Farkating, Barpathar, Sarupathar, Numaligarh, Bokakhat, etc., which have become famous mainly for trade reasons.

Habitations in town areas are congested, whereas this is not the case in villages. Rural habitations vary from permanent type in the middle portion of the district to shifting type in the extreme north where the furies of the mightly Brahmaputra find sometimes their full bloom. Rice, the staple food, is still grown in the wide plains dotted over with clumps of bamboos and varieties of local fruit trees where in lie the houses of the cultivators. The tea gardens, numbering 233, offer a panorama of carpet like greenery, enriching the beauty and economy of the district besides adding to its population.

A normal village is self-sufficient in indigenous materials of agriculture and allied matters. It is a social unit observing a number of unwritten rules of conduct for maintenance of moral and social integrities. The villagers share the joys and sorrows of each other helping mutually in cultivation and construction of houses and the like, but with the passage of time these ties of social relationship are getting loose. But it should be noted that the Five Year Plans launched for the betterment of the social, cultural, economic, educational and health conditions of the people have been able to infuse a measure of enthusiasm to work for their own improvement.

(iii) Displaced Persons: The number of displaced persons that entered the district following the partition of India was till 1951 only 7,514. But the figure has gradually increased and the recent statistics show that it now stands at 21,945 and comprises as many as 4,389 families. Of this total, 8,815 persons are in Sibsagar sub-division, 7,875 in Jorhat and 5,255 in Golaghat. A circle-wise analysis shows that Sonari circle absorbs the largest, numbering 4,265 persons and Majuli the smallest, 765 persons only. These people are chiefly engaged in three occupations—urban business, rural business and agriculture. 41 per cent of the total are engaged in urban business, 37 per cent in agriculture and 22 per cent in rural business. Most of the displaced persons of Sibsagar sub-division are either involved in agriculture or in rural business. For 46 per cent of them are agriculturists and 33 per cent are rural business men. Only 20 per cent are doing urban business. The picture in Jorhat is just the reverse. Here there are 54 per cent who do urban business while the other 28 and 16 per cent are engaged in agriculture and rural business respectively. A similar trend is discernible in case of Golaghat also. For 53 per cent in Golaghat do urban business, 33 per cent agriculture and only 13 per cent rural business. Thus it can be concluded that the bulk of the urban businessmen is concentrated in Jorhat sub-division while rural businessmen and agriculturists preponder in Sibsagar sub-division. The mother tongue of all the displaced persons is Bengali and the same is the script used by them. It is quite likely that most of them would soon learn Assamese and be

bilingual. The displaced persons, settled in the District, are mostly Hindus barring a few families who practise Buddhism. These people have migrated generally from Chittagong, Noakhali, Tippera, Sylhet, Mymensing and Dacca districts of East Pakistan.

For the settlement of these people no Government land was available except 32 bighas in Majuli where 32 families have been settled allotting 1 bigha to each family. Some 10 per cent of these people living in rural areas have purchased land by their own efforts. No grazing land, waste land, or reserve forest has been given to displaced persons. At Jorhat the Rehabilitation Department has acquired 42 bighas of private land for settlement of 133 homeless families under urban housing scheme. It is not understood how land would be found for the displaced persons who now stand in the same category with the indigenous landless.

The displaced persons were also offered ex-gratia grants in the shape of (1) financial assistance to displaced students, (2) marriage grants, (3) cash doles, (4) maintenance allowance for orphan children, (5) grant for *Sraddha* ceremony, (6) Medical aid to T.B. patients, (7) reimbursement of costs of medicine and (8) Maintenance cost to 3 L. P. Schools and grants to new venture schools. The main object of granting ex-gratia grants was to help financially deserving persons to meet their urgent needs. Besides ex-gratia grants loans to the tune of Rs. 12,15,144.06 were given to deserving displaced persons for carrying on urban business, housing, agriculture and rural business. These aids were fruitful almost in all cases. Upto 31st March, 1961 the following amounts were spent under different heads.[5]

(1)	Education	Rs. 1,57,052.95
(2)	School building construction grants	Rs. 22,679.00
(3)	T. B. Grant	Rs. 7,675.70
(4)	Marriage and Sraddha grant	Rs. 5,225.00
(5)	Shifting cost of D.P.S. to Lichubari	Rs. 4,500.00

(b) Language and Dialects :

In 1951 the people of Sibsagar spoke as many as fifty different languages. Excepting Assamese, all other languages constituted a very negligible minority. Nearly 85 per cent people spoke Assamese, 3.5 per cent Bengali, 2.5 per cent Hindi, 2 per cent Oriya, 2 per cent Mundari and less than 1 per cent Miri. Speakers of nearly forty-five other languages formed only 4 per cent. So far as regional distribution is concerned, the following table will reveal clearly that Assamese speakers predominated every nook and corner of the district. As speakers of other languages are very insignificant, we have, in the table below, taken into account the speakers of only the above mentioned six languages.

[5] *Report of the Relief & Rehabilitation Department.*

Tract	Assamese	Bengali	Hindi	Oriya	Mundari	Miri
Jorhat Majuli	2,21,818	7,765	5,465	1,197	2,791	2,708
Teok Titabar	1,38,194	3,690	5,426	6,234	6,091	1,540
Nazira Amguri	1,47,544	4,178	5,432	5,194	3,205	355
Sibsagar	1,11,648	1,981	2,748	1,610	1,696	3,902
Sonari	99,809	7,052	4,240	5,128	2,924	340
Dergaon Bokakhat	1,15,692	3,539	2,476	2,330	1,794	873
Golaghat	1,59,752	6,555	4,975	3,616	5,407	713
Urban	29,112	6,321	2,997	135	20	52
Total	10,23,569	41,581	33,759	25,444	24,028	10,483

Among the Assamese speakers, only 16,684 people could speak a language other than Assamese. But in case of speakers of other languages the reverse was the case. Nearly 56 per cent Bengali speakers, 60 per cent Hindi speakers, 70 per cent Oriya speakers and 68 per cent Mundari speakers were conversant with languages other than their own. Another important feature is nearly 75 per cent of Miris could speak other languages.[6]

The above observations are in striking contrast to the picture of 1901 when there were 59 per cent Assamese speakers, 19 per cent Bengali speakers, 6.5 per cent Hindi speakers and 2 per cent Miri speakers. But doubt persisted so far as figures relating to Bengali speakers were concerned and Mr. B. C. Allen observed that "it is doubtful whether to an Assamese enumerator Bengali means anything more than a foreign language, and this term probably included many forms of speech which would have been hardly intelligible at Nadia."[7]

(c) Religion and caste :

(i) Principal Communities : The population of Sibsagar is composed mainly of three religions—Hindu, Muslim and Christian, in that order of importance. Buddhists, Jains and Sikhs are also there, but they form only little drops in a vast Hindu ocean. The figure of more than 91 per cent Hindus will clearly bring out the fact of overwhelming Hindu preponderance. To have the religion-wise population figure at a glance we have given the following table :

Total population 12,12,224 ('51 *Census*)

Religion	*Population*	
Hindu	11,15,662	(92.03%)
Muslim	70,543	(5.82%)
Christian	21,213	(1.75%)
Buddhist	3,235	(0.27%)
Jain	446	(0.04%)
Sikh	360	(0.03%)

[6] *District Census Handbook*, Sibsagar, 1951.
[7] Mr. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, Sibsagar, p. 77.

(ii) Four main classes : If the population is further divided between four classes—Backward, non-Backward, Scheduled caste and Scheduled tribe—we witness a peculiar picture where Backward classes with 49.15% of people out-number all other classes. It is difficult to ascertain from these census figures, whether these people are backward either educationally or economically. Be that as it may, it is significant that the majority people of Sibsagar, which was the seat of the Independent Ahom Kingdom less than one hundred and fifty years ago, became backward within an astonishingly short period. The table below shows the class-wise population figures:

Class	*Population*	
Backward	5,95,795	(49.15%)
Non-backward	4,86,965	(34.05%)
Scheduled Tribe	68,658	(5.66%)
Scheduled Caste	60,825	(5.02%)

(iii) Further divisions of castes and tribes : Broadly speaking the population of Sibsagar can be divided into four categories namely (1) indigenous, (2) plains tribal, (3) tea and ex-tea garden labourers and (4) others. The indigenous population comprises the Brahmins, Kalitas, Kayasthas,, Banias, Barias, Ahoms, Chutias, Daivajnas, Koches, Keots, Kaibartas, Kumars, Katonis, Mataks, Morans, Muslims, Naths, Suts, Swarnakars, etc. The plains-tribal population comprises the Deoris, Garos, Kacharis, Miris, Nagas, Shyams, Sonowals, etc. The tea gaden and ex-tea garden population comprises the Bhumis, Garhs, Kurmis, Lohars, Mundas, Oriyas, Rohidases, Santals, Telengas, etc. The other people comprise the Bengalis, Marwaris, Nepalis, Punjabis, Sikhs, etc.

All the communities are spread over the entire district. But generally the Deoris, Miris and the Kaibartas live on river sides while the Muslims prefer road sides.

Brief accounts of the indigenous castes and tribes, and their beliefs and customs are given below. It is to be borne in mind that caste in many cases is a misnomer and stands for professional groups and classes.

Brahmins : There are more Brahmins in Sibsagar than in any other district of Assam except Kamrup, but this is only natural as priests are generally found in close propinquity to a native court. Some Brahmins of Sibsagar are supposed to have originally come from Upper India, Mithila, Orissa, Banaras, and Kanauj and got mixed up with Brahmins of pre-Ahom days, and have little in common with the Brahmins of Bengal. The great majority are natives of Assam, but there are a few Bengali Brahmins, who in social questions keep themselves quite distinct from their Assamese confreres. The great centres of the Brahmin population are

Dergaon, the neighbourhood of Jorhat, and the Majuli. Most of the Assamese Brahmins obtain their living from agriculture, though they do not plough with their own hands.

Kayasthas : The Kayasthas constitute but a small fraction of the population of the district. They, like the Brahmins, are said to have come from Upper India, from places like Mithila and Kanauj, and later also perhaps from Bengal. They enjoyed a high social status and worked as officers and scribes in the Ahom Court. Some of the Mahanta families holding charge of Vaisnavite Satras are Kayasthas. The Kayasthas generally earn their living by non-agricultural means, many preferring Government services. They follow orthodox rites in respect of marriage and other caste usages.

Kalitas : The Kalitas are an important caste in the social scale. Traditional accounts of their origin such as that they were Ksatriyas who concealed their caste for fear of Parasurama or that they were Kayasthas degraded for having taken to cultivation are hardly now given credence to. It is possible that they are descended from an early Aryan colony that settled in Assam before emergence of the functional division of castes. It is, however, difficult to say how the word 'Kalita' was derived or what significance it has as the name of a caste which is fairly widespread in Assam but is not heard of in any other State. Dr. Bani Kanta Kakati says that the Kalitas were a class or a 'Faid' and not a professional caste like the Vaidyas of Bengal.

Early marriage was common in Goalpara before, but not in the rest of Assam except amongst the upper sections of the caste. The Kalitas are invariably united by the Hindu marriage rite and employ a Brahmin. They have professed different religious faiths, and socially hold a position just below the Brahmins and the Kayasthas.

Keots : In social ladder they are placed just below the Kalitas and are therefore included among caste Hindus. While in certain districts, for example, in the Barpeta sub-division of Kamrup, they are generally known as Kamars or blacksmiths, in Sibsagar this profession of Blacksmith has been undertaken by even Kalitas. Besides this occupation, they have taken to agriculture and other trades. Among this class of people there are, however, intelligent persons who have contributed their share to the advancement of social and cultural life of the State.

Borias : The Borias are a caste peculiar to Assam; the term Boria is said to have been derived from "bari" meaning a widow. In general they are said to have originated from the offspring of a Brahmin widow by a Sudra husband. The children of Brahmin girls married to Sudras

are also called Borias. The people prefer to call themselves Sut. But it is doubtful if this latter appellation can be derived from Sut, the expounder of the Puranas who was himself the son of a Brahmin widow. Agriculture is the ordinary occupation of the Borias, and their manners and customs do not differ materially from those of other lower caste Assamese.

Jugis: The Jugis are seen still adhering to their traditional occupation of weaving. In Sibsagar, under native rule, the Jugis were entrusted with the task of rearing pat silk worms, while the Katanis, a sub-division of the caste, spun the thread. They have now largely taken to agriculture, and silkworm rearing is only practised as a subsidiary occupation. Like other humble castes they lay claim to a high origin saying that they are descended from Goraksanatha, who is said to be an incarnation of Siva. In Sibsagar, the name Jugi is derived from 'Jogoa' to supply, because they fed the worms, while the Katanis spun the thread. Others connect it with *Jugieri*, the name of a creeper whose leaves are eaten by the *pat* worm. The Jugis have been endeavouring to improve their social position by celebrating the Hindu marriage rite, when their circumstances admit of expenditure, and by burning instead of burying their dead.

There are besides many sub-castes and classes namely, *Mali, Kumar, Sonari, Hida, Napit, Nat, Suri* and *Dhoba* which are more or less functional. Of these sub-classes, *Dhoba* and *Napit* are not indigenous. Besides these two, the other sub-groups, included among Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes, have, under special provisions contained in the Constitution of India, and given effect to them by the State Government, made some progress in their social, educational and economic conditions.

Nadiyal or Kaibartas: They have been associated with water, and fishing is their main profession. Some of them have, however, taken to agriculture and other trades. They have in general, been following the essential pre-requisites of Hinduism. It is interesting to note that most members of this community are followers of the *Vaisnava* tenet, founded by Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva. In the observance of marriage and other customary rules they are not quite different from other caste Hindus. In the present Constitution of India they have been included among the Scheduled Castes. With the progress of education and other social uplift measures undertaken by Government they have been advancing just like their breathren along the path of progress.

Ahoms: The Ahoms are the descendants of the Shan tribe originally inhabiting China and then Burma. They entered Assam in the early part of the thirteenth century, (1228 A.D.) and gradually extended

their sway over the whole of the Brahmaputra Valley. They are divided into four sections, the Chamuas or gentry, the Kheluas or functional sections, and the Meluas or servants of the royal family and the Karis or the ordinary labour class. These sections are not endogamous, though there is a natural tendency for men to take wives from families in their own rank of life, and intermarriage between certain families was prohibited for reasons of social status. The Ahoms still possess a sturdier physique than the ordinary Assamese.

Their complexion is fair, the cheek bones high and the face unusually broad. Though their original religion approached Taoism they are now mostly Hindus and only a few are Buddhists. Even then their marriage, known as the *chaklang*, is quite different from that of the Hindus. Agriculture is the chief occupation of the caste. Their social position is somewhat peculiar. The fact that prior to British occupation of the country they were the ruling race, obtains for them a considerable measure of social position and respect.

Turungs: About sixteen miles to the South of Jorhat town there are some thirty-two Buddhist families known as Turungs representing Buddhist culture and bearing some traits of Burmese culture in their mode of living. Their origin, although a bit obscure in the absence of authentic materials, finds mention in Mr. Gait's 'History of Assam' where he writes :—'The Khamtis, Phakials, Aitonias, Turungs and Khamjangs are all Shan tribes who have, at different times, moved along the same route from the cradle of their race.'[8] According to Mr. Gait those Buddhist people had a fairly continuous intercourse with the inhabitants of their original home beyond the Patkai hills till very recent times. These Buddhists, if we accept the views of the same historian, had migrated at a later date than the Ahoms.

"Turungs" is a Siamese word, meaning water. It is stated that these inhabitants of Deogharia village originally lived on the banks of the Turung river beyond the Patkai hills and came to settle at Deogharia only in the 19th century. Their Turung cousins are found in the villages of Tipamia, Pahukatia, Ovang, Sarupathar and Naojan. Their marriages generally take place with these people.

The Turungs perform many festivals, the important among them being *Ahar purnima* (Barsabarash day), *Bhadra purnima* (Madhu purnima), *Ahin purnima* (Prabarana day), *Kati purnima, Maghi purnima* and *Bahagi purnima*. On all these occasions, the holy books are recited. *Pancasila* is preached to all, and *Astasila* to the old and aged persons. Charity is the main feature of celebration of these festivals.

[8] *History of Assam*, p. 77.

On the Barsabarash day begins the period of confinement of the Buddha Bhiksu within the monastery for meditation and religious preaching. The Bhiksu ends this period on the Prabarana day when the Bhiksu of one monastery goes to another to have religious discourses. The *Madhu Purnima* day is observed to celebrate the presentation of 'Madhu' by a monkey to Tathagata. On the *Kati Purnima* day gifts are presented to the Bhiksu in the Buddha Vihar. The *Maghi Purnima* day is observed to mark the desire of Tathagata for attaining *Parinirvana* on this day. The greatest of all these celebrations is the *Bahagi Purnima* day.

This small village contains one Buddha Vihar which closely resembles the Assamese Namghar in architectural design. About three hundred yards away from this Vihar, there is a stupa resembling the Burmese Pagoda, but representing neither a Pagoda nor a stupa wholly. This stupa reminds one of Burmese culture.

There are several Buddhist religious books such as the *Abhidharma Pitaka, Vinaya Pitaka, Sutta Pitaka* and six volumes of the *Jatakas* in the monastery. It is interesting to note that all these books are stated to have been written in Siamese language into which these were translated from the original Pali. While the people of this village use the Singpho dialect, the Head Priest uses Pali and the children are educated in Assamese.

The mode of living of these people is slightly different from the Assamese in so far as they live in elevated wooden floors raised by means of piles. They are mainly agriculturists and seem to be less advanced in the field of education and industry. Whenever a guest is entertained, the host stoops down on his knees in order to show his respect. This is reminiscent of South-East Asian culture.

The Assamese custom of burning *Meji* on the *Magha Sankranti* day is also performed by them on the Maghi Purnima day.

The Miris: The Miris, also known as Mishings, were originally a hill tribe living in the hills between the Dafala and the Abor territory in the present North East Frontier Agency and came down to the plains in the reign of the Ahom kings in Assam. In the plains they settled near running water on the banks of the Brahmaputra and the Subansiri rivers and their tributaries with agriculture as their principal occupation. They belong to the Tibeto-Burman family of Mongoloid people that followed the Austro-Asiatic races of India and are akin to the Bodo. It is believed that the origin of the Abors and the Miris is the same, both having common ancestors. The Abors and the Miris speak the allied dialects. The appearance of the Miris, though of a distincly Mongolian type, are not unpleasing. They have square set face, prominent cheek bones, scanty beard and moustache with almond shaped eyes. They are strongly built with fine developed limbs. They are cleaner in their persons than many

of the Tibeto-Burman tribes and fully appreciate the advantages of the bath.

The Miris are divided into two main endogamous septs: (1) Baregam (twelve gams) and (2) Dahgam (ten gams) which are again subdivided into a large number of minor groups.[9]

But inter-group marriage and inter-dining are prevalent amongst both the groups. Their houses are built on bamboo platforms raised about five feet or some times seven feet above the ground according to the flood level, and are sometimes as much as 40 yards in length. A single house will often contain a family of sixty to eighty persons living in one great room without any partition, though with separate fire places with a verandah in front, where guests are entertained. Pigs and fowls scratch about beneath the houses which are usually built in two long rows without fruit trees or gardens around them. The fire place known as *Meram* or *Gulung* in Miri dialect is looked upon with much reverence, and besides cooking, certain offerings are also performed in the corners of the 'Meram' and the Miris also swear in the name of the fire place.

Cultivation is the chief means of livelihood of the Miris. They grow paddy, mustard, millet, pulses and potatoes. The Miris live on rice, leafy vegetables, edible roots and fish which constitute their staple diet. Their great delicacies are fowl and pork to which Ngo-san (dried fish) may be added. They do not eat beef. Instead of applying spices in the curries, they apply pepper much more than an Assamese does in preparing their curries. Like any other hill tribe of Assam the Miris drink '*Apong*' (rice bear) which is a favourite drink for them and which they take like tea.

Theft and murder cases are very rare amongst the Miris. During night time they generally sleep in their houses without their doors being locked. The Miris are very hospitable and they invite their guests from house to house till the whole village is completed and receive them with "*Apong*", the rice beer. Most of the Miris possess elephants and herd of cattle; every house rears fowls and pigs. They rarely use mustard oil in preparing curries.

In most of the Miri villages the unmarried youngmen do not sleep in their own houses. Free mixing is prevalent in the Miri society. Miri marriages are costly affairs, entailing considerable expenditure upon food,

[9] The main clans which fall within the category of Baragam : Pegu, Dolois, Kutum, Patir. The Pegus are again sub-divided into—Gapit ,Gadang, Kari and Dolois into Gezera, Letum and Ledang. The clans which fall with the Dahgam are mainly these : (1) Chayang or Chayangia, (2) Moing or Moiangia, (3) Oyan or Oyangia, (4) Dambuk or Dambukial, (5) Delu or Lachorgaya, (6) Tayu-Taye, (7) Chamuguria, (8) Tamargaya, etc. These clans are again sub-divided into various sub-clans such as Pamegam or Gam, Padi, Medak, Keman, Panging, Ngate, Mipen, Polong, etc.

rice, beer, betel-nuts, which are borne by the families of both the contracting parties. They are strictly exogamous with regard to sub-clans. The Miris as a rule are monogamous ; but having more than one wife is not treated as a breach of social law provided one can afford to maintain a big family. Marriage with maternal uncle's son or daughter is prevalent, among certain sections of the Miri community. There is no bar on the part of a widow remarrying another person. But this marriage should be performed informally. Polyandry is quite unknown amongst the Miri community, but a widow can marry the younger brother of the deceased. Bride price ranging from Rs. 100/- to Rs. 200/- is generally paid to the parents of the bride especially when the girl elopes away with a person to whom the parents do not like to give their daughter in marriage.

The Miris of Assam in general and the Miris of Sibsagar district in particular have, due to the influence of the teachings of Mahapurusa Sankaradeva, became Hinduised. But though Hinduised and they describe themselves as Hindus, they have been still retaining their old forms of worship, culture, manners and social customs. Their religion is of the ordinary animistic type quite akin to that of the Abors. Its principal feature is the propitiation of malignant spirits likely to do harm. The Miris believe in the immortality of soul and they also believe in re-birth although they do not dogmatise on this point. Ancestor-worship is a common feature of their annual functions. They never burn their dead but burry them and the funeral ceremonies include a substantial feast. In the matter of inheritance the Miris appear to have followed principles enunciated in the *Dayabhaga* system of Hindu law.

The Miris of Sibsagar district except a few of them have their own dialect but no script of their own. They receive education through the medium of the Assamese language. Save the educated few who know the language well the Miris (in general) speak broken Assamese.

Miri women hold a position subordinate to men. They are, in general, more industrious than their men. Rowing and swimming are their favourite pastimes. They husk paddy, work in the field, and gather firewood and also clear jungles, besides feeding their husbands and children by cooking themselves. The Miri women are expert weavers of various designs ; they are fond of ornaments of gold and silver. Young girls are expert in dancing and singing.

The festivals of the Miris are many, most important of them being *Ali-ai-liagang, Porag* and *Dabur,* which are connected with the sowing and harvesting of crops, celebrated with dance and music.

Rajbansi or Koch : The Koches are one of the race castes of Assam. Originally they were an aboriginal tribe, apparently of Mongolian origin, which at the beginning of the sixteenth century rose to power

under their great leader Visva Sinha. His son, Nara Narayana, extended his conquests as far as Upper Assam, and by the middle of the sixteenth century the Koch king had attained to a position of such power that the aboriginal people were anxious to be enrolled as members of his tribe and called themselves Rajbansis. The result is that at the present day the name is no longer that of a tribe but of a caste into which new converts to Hinduism are enrolled. In Sibsagar and Lakhimpur these converts still retain their tribal names, and the Koch is a respectable Sudra caste, which is not broken up into various sub-divisions. This is not the case in Lower Assam, and the different groups there are allotted a different status, which is dependent on the time that has elapsed since conversion took place and the extent to which aboriginal habits have been shaken off.

Kacharis : In Lower Assam, Kacharis, when they are converted to Hinduism, are generally incorporated into the ranks of the people called Koch, and the number of Hindu Kacharis is comparatively small. In Sibsagar this is not the case. The great majority of the tribe have been converted to Hinduism, and most of them have foresworn pigs, fowls and liquor, and live much as do the other humble Hindu castes. They do not as a rule attempt to change their names, though, of recent years, some have taken to calling themselves Ahom or Chutiyas or occasionally Koch, and there is one family of Kachari priests who actually style themselves Kayastha. The broad distinction which in Lower Assam exists between the Kachari and the ordinary lower castes Assamese is hardly to be found in Sibsagar and the tribe has lost its special tribal characteristics. The Kacharis in Upper Assam are held to be the same people as the Meches in Goalpara, all of whom belong to the great Bodo race.[10]

Chutiyas : The Chutiyas, like the Koch and the Ahoms, are one of the race castes (plain tribes) of Assam. Their physical appearance suggests a Mongolian origin ; their language, which is still preserved amongst the Deoris or priestly clan, belong to the Bodo family and it seems probable that they are a section of the great Bodo race which includes the Garo, the Kachari, and the Tippera. It is supposed that their original home was in the hills through which the Subansiri makes its way, and that they entered the Assam Valley about a thousand years ago. The story of the decline and fall of the Chutiya power has already been told in the preceding chapter. Their conqueror wisely deported the leading families to different parts of the Assam Valley, but the great mass of the Chutiyas are still to be found in Sibsagar and Lakhimpur. The caste is divided into four sub-divisions : Hindu, Ahom, Deori, and Borahi. The

[10] See *Old Gazetteers for an account of the Bodos.*

last group, as their names implies, is still uncoverted and eats pork, but the number of Borahi Chutiyas is still very small.

Deori Chutiyas: The Deori Chutiyas are the old priestly class of the Chutiyas who migrated from their original home east of Sadiya to North Lakhimpur at the beginning of the nineteenth century and from there moved to Majuli, the Disang river, Sisimukh, and the Baligaon Mouza in Jorhat. They have distinctly Mongolian features like the Miris. Their houses are also built on *chang* which often take the form of long barracks accommodating as many as sixty or even more members of an increasing family. The Deori Chutiyas of the Majuli profess to be Hindus but they keep pigs and fowls. Their temples, built generally of wood and thatch, are imitations of the famous copper temple of Sadiya which has long been in ruins. The Deoris possibly attach more importance to their own religion, but a knowledge of its mysteries is confined to the priests. Each *Khel* is said to have four priests attached to it, the Bar and Saru Deori and the Bar and Saru Bharali, the former two alone being allowed to enter the temple. The chief gods worshipped are three, Gerasi Geri (Assamese, Bura buri) worshipped by the Dibongiya Khel; Pishadema (Assamese, 'Boliya devata'), the elder son, worshipped by the Tengapaniya Khel and Pishasi (the daughter) who is also known as Tamesvari Mai and Kecaikhati (eater of raw flesh). In former times human sacrifices were offered to the goddess Kecaikhati at Sadiya.[11]

The temple near Sadiya, known as the Tamar Ghar or Copper Temple, which was already in ruins towards the close of the last century, is described as a small stone building, nearly square, built without cement, the stones joined by iron pins, not clamped. The roof was of copper but it fell in and was lying there. The interior was eight feet square. The whole area was enclosed with a brick wall, 130 feet by 200. Near the grand entrance on the western wall, was a small stone tripod where sacrifices were performed. On the decline of the Ahom power the Deoris abandoned their possessions in the vicinity of the temple and the horrible Tantric rites were also stopped.[12]

Ahom Chutiyas: The Ahom Chutiyas have for some generations been converts to Hinduism, but in the social scale they rank below the Hindu Chutiya. The Ahom and Hindu Chutiyas can smoke but cannot eat together, and in theory cannot inter-marry. A member of the Ahom section can, however, obtain a Hindu Chutiya girl if he is willing to pay

[11] See *Report on the Census of India*, 1901 for a description of the Deori Chutiyas.

[12] See the old Gazetteer for a fuller account of the Tantric rites.

a slightly higher price for her, but the bride sinks to the status of her husband.

Hindu Chutiyas are some times united by the Hindu marriage ceremony, while the *chaklong* rite, which is the Ahom form of marriage, is in vogue amongst the Ahom Chutiyas. The Chutiyas are, however, far from strict in their views on matrimonial matters, and one gentleman reports that 50 per cent of the so-called married couples have performed no ceremony at all. The social position of the caste was rather low, and almost all of them are petty cultivators. They burn their dead and perform the *sraddha* ceremony at the expiry of a month. Brahmins of inferior social standing act as their priests.

Manipuris: In Sibsagar sub-division there are four Manipuri villages. These people came to these places during the time of Ahom kings, although a few came later on. The Ahoms had political and matrimonial relations with the Manipuri kings and a few Manipuri princesses were married to Ahom kings. The Manipuris were at the time known as Magalu. The Magalu Jiyekor *Pukhuri* and *Khat* (Tank and estate of Manipuri princess) at Sibsagar still give evidences of their relationship.

Though they speak Manipuri among themselves they can speak and write Assamese very well. They are all Vaisnavas and have retained their old manners and customs. Their main occupation is agriculture and small industries such as carpentry, weaving, small-scale business, etc. Economically they are not bettter-off.

Nagas: There are a few Naga villages in Hahchara and Nazira mauzas of Sibsagar sub-division. The Nagas of the former mauza have been living there for a considerably long time and their village constitutes a regular village of the locality. They belong to the Gallno tribe of the Nagas. They are all Hindus belonging to the Vaisnava cult and are disciples of the Satradhikar of Mayamara. But they have retained their own dialect, manners, customs and original dress. They can speak Assamese well and a few students are also studying in Assamese L. P. Schools. Their occupation is agriculture. Educationally and industrially they are backward.

Shyams (or Naras): In all the sub-divisions of the district there are a few Shyam villages. These people actually belonged to the Nara or Khamjang group of the Tai clan. They are near kinsmen to the Ahoms. The boundary of the Ahom and Nara kingdoms was the Patkai hills and the latter's original home was Mungkong. Here in Assam they called them-

selves Shyams. It is said that these people entered Assam during the early part of nineteenth century, during the later part of Ahom rule and had close relation with the Ahom kings.

Almost all Shyams are Buddhists, each village possessing a Buddhist shrine. A few such villages have Pali Vidyalayas for religious teaching of the pupils. The Naras of this district have mixed up with the Assamese considerably, adopting their dress, language, manners and customs. They also observe all the Buddhist ceremonies. Some, however, have retained their Tai culture.

Most of the dwelling houses are *chang-ghars*, but neat and clean. Their main occupation is agriculture and small industry such as weaving dyeing, etc. A few students are studying in colleges and schools. Economically they are not advanced.

(iv) Hindus and their Sectarian faiths :

Animism : All sections of people are more or less animists, for who does not believe in the existence of some spirit in stone, tree or even in Hills and forests ? This belief leads us to worship a stone or a tree. This is nothing but animism. Then again, the cause of a disease is attributed to the evil influence of a spirit. While this primitive religious faith is still common among some tribal population of the district like the Miris, the so called advanced Hindus and other sections of the population are not completely free from some of these crude notions.

Saktism : Thirty per cent of the Hindus, returned as such in 1901, described themselves as followers of Sakti, or worshippers of the reproductive powers as manifested in the female.

Nearly five-sevenths of these Saktists were, however, from the tea plantations, and a considerable number of those living in the villages were probably ex-garden labourers. The great majority of these persons were no doubt so styled, because they ate meat and drank liquor, though this in a garden labourer is often not so much an indication of his adherence to the goddess Kali or Durga, as of the uncertainty of his sectarian creed. Assam is believed to have been at one time the home of Tantricism. The Kamakhya temple at Gauhati, the Kecaikhati temple at Sadiya and other Sakta temples at Dergaon, North Lakhimpur and other places bear proofs of Tantric influences in ancient Kamarupa. Tantric rituals in their debased forms are known to have been practised in Assam in the centuries preceding the Vaisnava revival. Ahom Monarchs, when they were Hinduised, were at first initiated into Vaisnavism which was the predominant faith in Assam at that time. Gadadhar Sinha who succeeded Lora Raja in 1681 and his son Rudra Sinha showed leanings towards Saktism and

from the father's death onwards that faith became the creed of the Ahom sovereigns and of the principal nobles and officers.

Saivism : Saivism is the counterpart of Saktism, and is concerned with the worship of the procreative energy as manifested in the male. In 1901, 8090 persons in Sibsagar professed this special form of Hinduism. It is, however, doubtful whether the distinction between the worshippers of Siva and Sakti was very clearly understood. Worship in the Siva temples still continue.

Vaisnavism : The worship of *Visnu* was prevalent in Assam from early times. Kings of ancient Kamarupa traced their lineage to *Visnu* through Naraka, and many of them were worshippers of *Visnu*. Bhaskaravarman is described in Bana's *Harsacarita* as a descendant of the Vaisnava family. Vaisnavism, however, occupied a subordinate position in subsequent centuries. Decay and degeneration in the religious field led to a revival of the Vaisnavite faith in the fifteenth century.

The leader of the Vaisnava Renaissance in Assam was Sankaradeva (1449-1568).[13]

At Dhuwahat a Sakta youth, Madhava (1489-1596), also a scion of Kayastha Bhunyas, a busy tradesman too came to have a religious disputation with Sankara, as he found that the Vaisnava leader was interdicting people from the worship of, and blood sacrifices to, the Devi. The hot debate, which went on vigorously for quite a few hours, ended in the immediate conversion of Madhava, and he very readily gave up his trade, and dissolved a maturing proposal for marriage to choose a life of celibacy and ardent devotion and service to the guru. He became Sankaradeva's dearest and closest disciple, supporting the guru in his proselytising and literary activities, and the greatest apostle of the newly found faith, giving poise and strength to the organisation of the Vaisnava order in Assam.

But soon followed a period of unrest for the Vaisnavas due to the hostility of the Brahmin priesthood, who found that its authority was being challenged by the new-fangled creed, which placed the Brahmin and the pariah alike on the same religious footing and opened the portals of sacred knowledge to the common man by rendering religious texts into the local language, minimised the importance of ritualism by extolling the *kirtana* form of worship and discarding the worship of many Gods in favour of rigid monotheism. Sankara's followers were openly molested. He, therefore, arranged to meet the scholarly section of the hostile camp, and in the discussions that ensued, the latter was completely

[13] The life-long activities of the Reformer along with his contributions to the Assamese cultural life may be found in Nowgong and Kamrup District Gazetteers.

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routed. The opposition then vilely abused the ears of the Ahom monarch, Suhungmung (1497-1539), against the religious rebel, who was immediately hauled up for trial, but the saint acquitted himself well in the presence of the king, and was left off with honour. All the same, there was no cessation of hostility: and although Sankara's cousin Ramaraya, seems to have some administrative responsibility under the Ahoms, the Bhunyas always suspected as a possible source of mischief, soon earned royal disfavour, and there was an order for the arrest of some of them including Sankaradeva. Madhava persuaded the Master to go under ground for a time; and he himself and Sankara's son-in-law, Hari Bhunya, were apprehended and taken to the capital at Gargoan for trial. Hari was beheaded; and Madhava, but an ascetic, was kept under detention and then released.

This incident filled Sankara's mind with disgust which led him to leave the Ahom kingdom. The king of the western state of Koch Behar, Nara Narayana (A.D. 1540-1584) and his brother and commander-in-chief of the Koch army, Sukladhvaja (the author of the *Saravati* commentary on the *Gitagovinda*), already well-known for their learning and wisdom, were leading an attack on the northern parts of the Ahom-kingdom. Some of the Bhunyas, related to Sankaradeva and his group, had already joined the Koch camp. Sankara and his followers seized this opportunity, and rowed down the Brahmaputra for safety within the Koch State. Sankaradeva visited the Koch capital several times after this; and it was here that he passed away in 1568 A.D. His teachings and his message of love have permeated into the very being of the people and enlivened their national consciousness. His name is ever on his nation's lips, and his music in the country's heart.

Sankaradeva was the founder of Neo-Vaisnavism in Assam. He did away with the worship of images, the elaborate rituals and sacrifices and the esoteric rites practised by the Saktas. His creed is known as the *Eka-Sarana Nama-Dharma* or the religion of the worship of only one God *Visnu* through recitation of His Name in hymns and prayers. He prescribed *bhakti* or devotion, of the '*dasya*' school for his followers. As his teachings were based mainly on the *Bhagavata-Purana* it is also known as the *Bhagavati Dharma*.

Sankaradeva nominated Madhavadeva (1489-1596) as his successor to hold charge of the order.

Madhavadeva sent out holy men as apostles of the *Bhakti* faith, the chief among them being Gopaladeva of Bhavanipur, Padma Ata, and Gopaladeva better known as Vamsigopala. The nomination of Vamsigopala, a Brahmin, was approved by Damodaradeva, another Brahmin saint also. These three apostles and their deputies established *satras* mostly in Assam,

that is the Ahom kingdom and some of their *satras* are very rich, and each claims a large and widespread laity.[14]

The followers of Gopaladeva formed into a school, characterised by catholicity and democratic out-look and freedom from the tyranny of creeds. It particularly thrived and acquired large followings in the north-eastern parts of Assam with their predominatingly Tibeto-Burman population, and reclaimed large number of people from animistic practices. The followers of the Moamara or Mayamara mahanta within Gopaladeva's order rose in revolt as one man against royal oppression (1769) and succeeded in subverting Ahom power for a time. The history of Assam Vaisnavism is one of many conflicts and persecutions. The course of political history of this eastern part of India also had been changing considerably from time to time. But the Renaissance, which had its beginnings in the activities of Sankaradeva, has wrought itself into fulfilment in many ways, and marked out a definite place for Assam in the cultural map of India.

The Satras of Sibsagar: There are nearly two hundred *satras* in Sibsagar scattered all over the district. These *satras* are more or less religious Colleges of the Hindus resembling in some respects the medieval monasteries. There is a head called Adhikar in each *satra* who is considered as Guru at the time of initiation by adults before marriage. The Gurus are installed in most cases under conventional rights of succession and inheritance. In one or two cases selection by election also takes place. The law of primogeniture is usually followed in the householding *satras*, while in the *satras* of celebates one Deka Adhikar is installed by selection, who after the death of the Adhikar succeeds him ceremoniously.[15]

In some *satras* the *Bhakats* (resident monks) earn their livelihood by cultivation. In the rest, especially in those that are in possession of Devottar or Lakheraj lands, some villages of disciples or lands are pegged to each *Bhakat* who collects from these gifts or land produces and gets a share out of these collection for his maintenance. The members of the *satra* establishments viz. the Leader of prayer, the reader of the study circle, the Storekeeper, the Satradhikar's personal attendants, etc., are either paid in cash or in kind, or in both.

[14] Gopaladeva of Bhavanipur (1541-1611) spread the message of the *Bhagavata* among the Ahoms, Morans, Kacharis and Chutiyas in addition to Brahmins, Kayasthas and Kalitas. Twelve Satras were established under the auspices of Gopaladeva; six of them were presided over by Sudra Mahantas and six by Brahmin Mahantas . . . . . The Dihing Satra and the Mayamara Satra were the most prominent of the six Sudra monasteries of Upper Assam associated with Gopaladeva: Dr. S. K. Bhuyan—*Anglo Assamese Relations*, p. 194..

[15] There is a very interesting account of the founding of these Orders in Dr. S. K. Bhuyan's *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, pp. 194-195.

Most of the Assamese Hindu families are associated with one *satra* or the other by initiation. With a few exceptions these *satras* preach and teach Vaisnavism about which we have said earlier. Sankaradeva was the founder of the *satra* movement in Assam. He brought about a religious, social and cultural revolution in Assam. The religious dramas known as *Bhaonas* introduced by him are still performed in *satras* with equal pomp and gay. The *satras* are also treasure houses of beautiful articles. In Auniati *satra* we find the most beautiful *Gaja-cintamani puthi*, the ivory mat and some ornaments of the Ahom kings including one ring of Gadadhar Sinha. We also find Sankaradeva's artistically and beautifully bordered, *Ekadasa Bhagavata* in Daksinpat satra, the huge *Katha-Bhagavata puthi* in Bar-Alengi satra, the Ahom minister's golden coat and umbrella in Bengenaati satra, old wood-work workmanship in Kamalabari satra, and gold-silver plated *sarais* in Auniati, Daksinpat and Bengenaati satras.[16]

The Kuruabahi Satra: Vamsigopaladeva who had been deputed by both Madhavadeva and Damodaradeva to Upper Assam for spreading the message of *Bhakti*, established several *satras* and inspired his disciples also to set up *satras* in Upper Assam. The major *Satra* set up by Vamsigopaladeva, was Kuruabahi at the mouth of the Dhansiri river in the district of Sibsagar. Kuruabhai, Auniati, Daksinpat and Garamur are the four principal *Bamuniya Satras* or *Satras* having Brahmin Adhikars or preceptors. Some of the important *satras* such as Auniati, Daksinpat, Kamalabari and Garamur have been described below in detail. Besides them there are also other *satras* such as Norwa, Sologuri, Dighali and Chamaguri which are important. These four *satras* are said to have originated direct from the *satra* institution of Sri Sri Sankaradeva and hence they are still known as '*Jiudhara satras*'. Though poverty has done much for the decline of their former prestige, yet their existence is to be especially recognized for their being the Mahapurusia *satras* in truest of the term. The *Padasila* of Sri Sri Sankaradeva is still preserved as a heirloom in the Chamaguri *satra* of Majuli.

The Garamur Satra: It is situated in the Kamalabari mauza of the Majuli, and was established in 1654-55 simultaneously with the Daksinpat Satra. Laksminarayan, Vamsigopala's uncle Paramai's great grandson, a saint of the Damodariya sect and passionate devotee, established the Garamur Satra during the reign of Jayadhvaj Sinha. But Laksminarayan did not accept the king's offer of land and paik. After his death, king Siva Sinha granted Jairamdeva 30,000 puras of rent-free

[16] The account of Sankaradeva and the Vaisnavite renaissance is mainly reproduced from an account furnished by Dr. Maheswar Neog, M.A., D. Phil of the Gauhati University.

land and 1200 paiks. This *satra* has 330.57 acres of revenue-free land (Majuli circle).

The *namghar* itself is a huge structure, being approached by a good road. It is sufficiently spacious. The roof is of corrugated iron sheets. Huge wooden pillars support the roof, and the great floor space is almost entirely baren, save for one or two lecterns on which the sacred writings are reposing. The actual shrine is a separate building closely adjoining the eastern end of the *namghar* and contains a single trinity of deities before whom offerings of fruit and grain are made. This shrine is very different from the penetralia of the Sakti temples; the whole place is dominated by that note of decency and propriety which is so marked a characteristic of the Vaisnavism of Majuli. The *namghar* is surrounded by garden of flowers and fruit trees, and in addition to plantations and graceful areca nuts, there are various members of the citron family whose golden fruit shows bright against the dark green foliage. In a square around these gardens stand the lines (hati) in which the *bhakats* (resident monks) live. They consist of well-built rows of fairly spacious rooms and are kept scrupulously clean and neat. Nothing could exceed the courtesy of the welcome extended to a visitor visiting the *satra*. The smiling monks flock round him, chairs are placed in the portico of the *namghar*, and Gosain himself is summoned. On the arrival of the Satradhikar, his followers fall upon their knees, and the Gosain and his visitor sit and converse in the midst of a circle of kneeling monks. There is something singularly gracious and pleasing in the whole atmosphere of the place. Everything is fresh and neat. The well-groomed smiling monks are evidently at peace with themselves and with the world at large, and even the little boys who flock around them are usually clean and well behaved. These children are recruited from neighbouring villages and trained up to be *bhakats*, but, if at any time they find restraints of celebracy irksome. they are at liberty to return to the outer world. Relaxation of the law of celebacy had recently been granted by the last Satradhikar Pitambar Deva Goswami which is an important feature of the Garamur satra. But the Satradhikar himself is a celebate. The residing monks or *bhakats* who desire to get married are freely allowed to do so.

The Daksinpat Satra: The Daksinpat satra was originally founded by Banamalideva in the latter half of the sixteenth century. The *satra* is of the religious following of Shri Damodaradeva, who breathed his last at Baikunthapur satra of Cooch Behar and was succeeded by Sri Sri Baladev Randhani, Sri Sri Paramanandadeva and Sri Sri Banamalideva. Banamalideva was born at Kalabari, a village within the jurisdiction of Tezpur sub-division, and was a man of character possessing vast knowledge of Vedanta philosophy.

The reigning Ahom king Swargadeo Jayadhvaj Sinha was deeply interested to learn about the wisdom and piety of this great Gosain. From Cooch Behar he came to the Ahom kingdom in A.D. 1654 on the expressed invitation of Jayadhvaj Sinha and brought with him an image of Visnu from Orissa. The Gosain was not allowed to go back and arrangements were made for the establishment of his *satra* in the vicinity of Rangoli-Bahor, the Ahom camp at Majuli. King Jayadhvaj Sinha treated him with utmost courtesy and endowed the *satra* with large grants of land. Subsequently the *satra* came to be known as the Daksinpat satra and the image of Sri Sri Jadava Rai came to be the sole idol of worship in the *satra*. Banamalideva died in 1683 at the age of 107 years and was succeeded by his nephew Ramadeva Goswami as Adhikar of the Daksinpat Satra.[17]

Many occupants of the Ahom throne such as Chakradhvaj Sinha, Udayaditya Sinha, Ramdhvaj Sinha, and Lora Raja were disciples of the Daksinpat satra. Some members of the upper class Ahom families were also intimately connected with this satra.

The surroundings of the Daksinpat satra are even more attractive than those of Garamur. On entering the lichgate, which is an almost invariable feature in these institutions, the visitor finds himself in a huge quadrangle. In place of lawns one would expect to find there great tanks whose banks are overshadowed by huge umbrageous trees.

The tenth Adhikar of the *satra* was Sri Sri Basudeva Goswami. It is said that being directed by God in his dream he composed a drama, entitled *Rasalila*, in A.D. 1840. Since then the performance of *Rasalila* on the *Kartik Purnima* day has become an annual feature. The twelfth Adhikar Sri Sri Naradeva Goswami had a literary bent of mind and donated good amounts of money to the Assam Sahitya Sabha, by means of which the Sabha created a trust fund known as Naradeva Trust Fund. The Fund has been able to publish many Assamese books so far. The Adhikar also contributed much for the establishment of a Sanskrit Tol. The thirteenth Adhikar Sri Sri Narayanadeva was also a man of broad humanitarian outlook and a patron of education and extended all kinds of help in times of floods and other natural calamities. The high school at Meragarh is named after the name of this Adhikar. The present Adhikar Sri Sri Harideva Goswami made several donations towards Meragarh high school, Daksinpat M. V. School, Sibsagar College and J. B. College. He also extended relief and rehabilitation to the erosion affected people of the Majuli.

The *satra* owns 48,194 bighas of lakheraj land and 1,005 bighas of Nisf-kheraj land. It has some sub-satras such as Takou Bari (Gauhati)

[17] Other Satras founded by Banamali Gosain which are flourishing till this day are the Jakhalabandha Satra in Kaliabar, Jatakara Satra in Ahatguri mauza in Majuli, and Achyutpur Satra at Kalabari in Tezpur Sub-division.

Sanarisal, Deepota, Balipara, Kalabari (all in Darrang District), Gopalpur (North Lakihmpur), Debor satra, Khuta Kan, Adalia Bar, Kachari satra and Mathurapur (all in Nowgong District). The Daksinpat satra is not only a centre of theological study but also a preserver of old art and culture and customary rules of the *satra*. Among its activities are included the maintenance of peace, discipline and religious faith. Sometimes judgments are also given in cases of disputes arising among its disciples. These activities are meant for strengthening social unity and solidarity. This *satra* though orthodox in outlook, is liberal enough to cope with the changing conditions of time. It has 7937.19 acres of revenue free land (Majuli circle).

The Auniati Satra: The Auniati satra was founded by Niranjanadeva who was a front rank disciple of Vansigopaladeva during the reign of Jayadhvaj Sinha. Before Jayadhvaj Sinha ascended the Ahom throne, there had prevailed religious intolerance in the Ahom kingdom. Even some atrocities were committed to suppress Vaisnavism. These suppressive measures were followed by great calamities which made Swargadeo Jayadhvaj Sinha to revise the religious policy of the State. He organised a religious festival to get himself initiated into Vaisnavism. This was followed by some sacrificial ceremonies of great pomp at Galpurghat in A.D. 1653. He thereafter, assumed the Hindu name Jayadhvaj Sinha and installed Niranjanadeva as the royal Satradhikar (head of the satra) at the Majuli. The place where the *satra* was constructed by Madhav Charan Barbarua was originally full of 'Aunipan'—a kind of wild bettle creeper, and hence the name Auniati. The central deity installed in the *satra* was Govinda, an image of Lord Krisna, which was brought from Puri by Vangsigopaladeva. The *satra* from the date of its establishment had fallen a prey to Nature's destructive hand. It had to be shifted several times from one place to another during the course of last few decades or so on account of erosion by the Brahmaputra. The first shifting from the original site took place during the reign of king Siva Sinha, who himself selected a new site and entrusted its construction once again to Madhab Charan Barbarua.

The *satra* proper is situated on a big plot of land measuring about 120 bighas. The surrounding area measuring about 450 bighas belongs to the *satra*. There are four *hatis* (barracks) on four sides with the *manikuta* (temple) and the *Namghar* (prayer hall) in the centre. Other buildings such as store houses, residence of the Satradhikar, Sanskrit Tol, etc. are arranged suitably to the north of the *Namghar*. There are a few big tanks on the banks of which *Nagesvar* and other trees have added beauty and serenity to the place.

The Satradhikar as the head of the Institution conducts the affairs

of the *satra* in consultation with, and co-operation of the prominent *bhakats*. All properties legally belong to the deity, Sri Sri Govinda. The Satradhikar adopts a young Goswami called the Deka Goswami as his successor and besides there is a tender aged Goswami known as Govindapuri under them. These Goswamies are generally recruited from the Kuruabahi or Mahara Satras. They are given proper education so that they may fit themselves into the tradition and environment of the *satra* and become competent to shoulder the responsibility as the head of the Institution. The succession ceremony of the Deka Goswami as the Satradhikar is an occasion of great importance and the three other big Satradhikars grace it with all pomp to offer their blessings and *nirmali*. The daily routine of the *satra* spreads well over 15 hours from morning to about 9 P.M.

Besides the death anniversaries of the departed Satradhikars, the main festivals celebrated in the satra are *Bohag Bihu, Magh Bihu, Janmastami, Palnam* and *Rasotsava*. *Palnam* in the last part of Kartik is a special attraction of the Auniati satra when thousands of people assemble to attend the *Nama-Kirtana* held throughout the day and night.

There is a Sanskrit Tol and Middle Vernacular School attached to the *Satra* for the boys residing within and around it. The *satra* posseses a good library of Assamese and Sanskrit manuscripts. Three of the Manuscripts need special mention and they are *Gajachinta-mani, Sri-Hasta-muktavali* and *Mahamoha Kavya*. Scholars attach great importance to these manuscripts in and outside Assam. The experts give training in music and dance to the talented young men. On every festive occasion celebrated in the *satra*, a drama written by one of the Satradhikars to suit the time and the occasion, is staged. Recital and discourse on the *Bhagavata* are a regular feature of the *satra* routine. The *satra* has instituted a fund in the name of Sri Sri Duttadeva to award every year two medals, one gold and the other silver, to the students of the Matriculation Class of Assam standing first and second in an Assamese Essay Competition. Three High Schools, the Auniati Kamaldeva Institution at North Gauhati, the Hemchandra High School at Kamalabari and the Auniati High School at Amguri, have been established on the munificence of this *satra*. The *satra* maintains a batch of competent Vaisnavas holding offices under the Satradhikar to tour frequently in the villages preaching the tenets of Vaisnavism and other matters relating to higher and nobler ways of life. From time to time, the *satra* has come forward with relief measures at the time of flood, earthquakes and famine. Tribal people specially Miris, Sonowals and Lalungs have been brought under the Vaisnava fold through peaceful preaching.

Of the thirteen former Satradhikars, Sri Sri Kesava, the second in succession, exercised great influence over the king and the people of his time because of his saintly character. During the reign of Gadadhar Sinha while in exile at Sadiya, it was through Satradhikar's special virtue and power that

many of the tribal people specially the Sonowals came under the fold of Hinduism. The eleventh Adhikar, Sri Sri Duttadeva Goswami was also a guru of great personality. His saintly nature coupled with his deep knowledge brought him great fame throughout Assam and its neighbourhood, and due to this Sir Bampfylde Fuller, Lt. Governor of Eastern Bengal and Assam was eager to come to the Majuli to have an interview with Sri Sri Duttadeva Goswami. The next Satradhikar Sri Sri Kamaldeva Goswami also was of charming and outstanding personality, possessing penetrating intelligence. He travelled all over Northern India on boat twice without budging an inch from his traditional ways of life. Lord Chelmsford, Viceroy of India described him as Princely Abbot of Assam in an interview at the Majuli. He used to give away money and cloth to the poor profusely on every occasion.

The present Satradhikar Sri Sri Hemchandra Deva Goswami who recently completed his India-wide tour by his own bus, is now concentrating all his efforts in re-building the *satra* at North Gauhati and re-orienting the whole *satra* Institution. Wide experience has led him to devote his attention to the problem of organising the *satra* system in accordance with modern ideas of social and moral uplift of the masses. As he toured in different parts of India he became conscious of and anxious to remove the defects that have crept into the *satra* institution and have been responsible in making it outgrow its existence. During this tour he availed of the opportunities to have talks on different topics with the Chief Ministers of West Bengal and Mysore and Governor of Orissa, the Rajpramukh of Mysore, the Speaker of the Indian Parliament and the Prime Minister Shri Jawaharlal Nehru. He had to deliver lectures in some ten places on the Hindu religion and its preachings laying special stress on the Vaisnavite cult followed in Assam.

This *satra* has 9321.98 acres of revenue free land (Majuli circle).

The Kamalabari Satra: The Kamalabari satra was established by Sri Sri Badula Ata. It is generally believed that under the direction of Sri Sri Sankaradeva, Mahapurusa Madhavadeva assigned Sri Sri Badula Ata, whose real name was Sri Sri Kamala Kanta (Padma Ata), the task of preaching the religious cult of Vaisnavism in 'Ujan Rajya'. In compliance with his wish the Ata selected a site at Mudoibheti near the present Kamalabari satra and established the *satra*. As he was entrusted with the task of preaching Vaisnavism in place of (badal) Sri Sri Madhavadeva, people began to call him Badula Ata by which name he is still remembered.

Having taken up the responsibility, Badula Ata proceeded on the task of inculcating Vaisnavism probably from A.D. 1546. In order to fulfil his object he established as many as twenty-three sub-satras at different places. He was held in high esteem by the Ahom kings who allowed him to use 'Chora or khel Nao', a kind of boat used exclusively by the royal

family, as he did not travel in any vehicle drawn by living beings. The kings also donated lands to him. The tenth Satradhikar made a great contribution towards the spread of the cult of Vaisnavism throughout the nook and corner of Assam. He also laid great stress on the development of art and cuture of the *satra*. During his days the *satra* had to be shifted from its original site in order to avert erosion. Following the great earthquake of 1950 the *satra* had to be shifted once again.

The Satradhikar as well as the *bhakats* are unmarried and indifferent to worldly affairs. They devote themselves to the cause of Vaisnavism and offer religious teachings to disciples. They are showing a new awareness to keep the art and culture of the *satra* alive through the medium of the All India Radio, Sangit Natak Academy and other cultural organisations of Assam and India. There is also a primary school for the education of newly converted little boys and also a Sanskrit Tol.

The present Satradhikar is a widely travelled man. This *satra* has 6485.28 acres of revenue free land (Majuli circle).

Some *bhakats* of Kamalabari started a new *satra* known as Natun Kamalabari Satra on the bank of the Tuni river.

(v) Muhammadans :

In 1951, there were 70,543 Muhammadans in Sibsagar which was equivalent to roughly 5 per cent of the total population. The great majority of these people are Sunnis and it is said that in places the Muhammadan villagers are still imbued with Hindu superstitions. Mantras are occasionally chanted in times of trouble, *Ai* is invoked when small-pox appears, and some even go to the length of sacrificing fowls and pigeons. The Morias are a section of degraded Muhammadans who are said to be the descendants of prisoners, captured when Turbak was defeated and killed in A.D. 1532. They were employed in various capacities for which they showed themselves to be quite unfitted and were finally made braziers. Outside the towns there are a few masonry mosques. In Sibsagar the *Dargah* or grave of Komaldya Khunkar Muhammad Gani, which is situated in Chakala village in the Banmukh mauza, is regarded as a place of particular sanctity, and is visited by pilgrims every year.

It may be noted that this community, like the Hindu families has adopted some of the titles of high offices held previously under the Ahom rule. They, like other Assamese people, actively participate in the observance of the Bihu festivals in particular leading to harmony among different peoples. By their linguistic and literary contributions, they have contributed immensely to the advancement of the Assamese culture.

(vi) Christians : Sibsagar contains more native Christians than any other district in the plains, with the exception of Goalpara and Lakhimpur.

In recent years they have been steadily increasing in numbers, as in 1881 there were only 462 native Christians ; in 1891, 1,048 and in 1901, 2,113. There is a branch of the American Baptist Mission in Sibsagar town and more than half of the native Christians profess themselves to be members of this Mission. In 1911, 1921 and 1931 the Christian population was respectively 5,410 ; 8,380 ; and 13,231. The Baptist Mission at Sibsagar made remarkable contributions to Assamese language and literature. The first Assamese journal the *Orunodoi* was published by the Mission in 1846 from Sibsagar.

(d) Social life : (Hindus)

(I) *Family System :* Property is generally held by the head of the family, who manages it as its custodian. After the death of the father his sons and daughters inherit the property. In the case where the owner is without any issue the property is inherited by the person who performs the *Sraddha* ceremony according to customary rules.

The joint family system was very common. There are cases even now where it is found that several brothers live jointly and have a common kitchen. But nowadays it is found that families tend to break up into smaller units under new socio-economic influences and the joint family system is weakening its hold.

(II) *Marriage :* The Hindus in general perform a ceremony when a girl attains puberty. The actual marriage ceremony is started like this : When a boy attains 25 years of age or so the father of the boy or his relatives approaches the father or guardian of the girl who is the prospective bride. If they come to terms, a date is fixed for the ring ceremony, when a party from the boy's place visits the bride's place and either the bridegroom himself or someone related to him places a ring on the bride's finger. The bride then bows down to the main member of the party and shows her respect. The marriage age of a girl is generally 18 years or more. Marriage is generally solemnized in two ways, by the orthodox ceremony of the Hindus and by 'Chaklang' rite which is prevalent only among the Ahoms. In the full Hindu form of marriage the sacred fire is lighted and a priest is engaged to perform the ceremony. Brahmins, Kayasthas, Kalitas and other high classes invariably perform the *Homa* ceremony with the chanting of 'mantras' as prescribed in the Sastras.

In Chaklang, (which means marriage) before the arrival of the bridegroom on the marriage day a big circle is drawn on the ground at the bride's place. This is called *"morol"* and it has seven different colours depicting the solar system from which the *'Mahaqni'* originates. The whole 'morol' consists of six circles, one inside the other, representing the (then known) six planets, with the sun as the pivot divided by sixteen radii giving

96 crossings for 96 lights to stand on. To these lights 4 additional lights are added in honour of the great father Indra and another light is placed at the centre to represent the sun. Thus there are altogether 101 lights in the *'morol'*. Prayers and offering are made by both the bride and the bridegroom before this *'morol'* under the guidance of an Ahom priest. They then both exchange garlands, each of 101 flowers, and later the bride offers a sword, known as *Hangdang*, and a *Tongali* to her newly married husband beseaching him to take a vow that he will defend the country, protect the righteous and her chastity and dominate the wicked. The sword is accepted by the bridegroom pledging himself to do the duty assigned to him. The priest helps the bride and the bridegroom in their offerings and chantings, recites the history of their forefathers and explains the obligations and duties, which they are to observe and perform in their newly married life. The whole function takes about two hours but varies according to the functioning capacity of the priest. After this they are ceremoniously taken inside the house, where tit-bits of other social functions are resorted to in the midst of female guests and relatives.

The marriage ceremony is usually preceded by a ceremonious function known as the *'Joran'* which takes place two days before the appointed day of the marriage. On that day a party from the bridegrooms's place visits the bride's place and offers *Joran* which means presentation of sets of new dresses and ornaments for the bride. The party leaves after the function is over and after the entertainment. On the marriage day guests and invitees are entertained at both places. Very interesting customs are observed in giving ceremonial baths to the bride and the bridegroom on the marriage day and in tying the nuptial knot. Marriage costumes have a novelty of their own.

Formerly the bridegroom came to the bride's place on a 'palki' or an elephant or in a bullock cart. Palki is no longer in use now-a-days. Modern transport facilities are also utilised for conveyance.

During the years 1959 and 1960 there took place 6 and 8 marriages respectively under the Special Marriage Act, No. 43 of 1954. Over and above the customary marriages, civil marriages through the courts of law have also come to be solemnised in recent years in certain cases and under special circumstances.

(III) *Home life :* In a rural family the following are the houses generally found. *Choraghar* (Reception house), *Barghar* (living house), *Gosainghar* (house for worship), *Bharalghar* (store house) and *Gohali Ghar* (cow-shed). These houses in most cases have thatched roofs, mud plastered *ikra* (reed) walls and bamboo or wooden posts. At the present day many people have constructed houses with pucca plinth and C. I. sheet roofing with up-to-date fittings. In rural areas latrines are not common.

Previously *chalpira* (wooden sofa), *tamulipira* (low wooden stool) and mats such as *merdhara, dhara, bardhara* and *patidhara* were the common furnitures. Their places now-a-days have been taken by wooden benches, tables and chairs and other modern furnitures. *Bankahi, Banbati, kahi, bati, lota, charia* and *sarai* were the common utensils. But now cups and saucers, china plates, glasses, tumblers, etc. are in more frequent use especially in the urban areas. 'Kakoi', which was used for hair dressing has now been replaced by the modern hair comb. Formerly the posts and beams in houses were decorated with various designs. Now such designs are out of use and modern methods of decorations are prevalent.

Female dress consists of *riha, mekhala, chadar,* and blouse, and ornaments include *keru, mani, kharu, jhangphai keru, dugdugi bena,* necklace, chain, ear-ring, *bala,* etc. Gold and silver ornaments are preferred. Cheap gilded ornaments are also available. Male dresses include *dhoti, chadar,* shirts, trousers, and the modern pants and coats.

Tribal women put the *mekhala* on their breast. Miri and Deori people have *chang-ghars* where more than 20 people often live together. They use 'urals' for pounding paddy, whereas the Assamese people use the popular device known as *dhenki.*

Rice is the main staple food of all people. Vegetables, dal, fish, egg, meat, milk, curd, fruit, etc. form the subsidiary items of food. Besides these Assamese people take *'khar'*, an alkaline preparations, and *'tenga'* a sour preparation made out of sour fruits or vegetables.

(IV) *Communal life :* Feasts, singing parties, and *bhaonas* or simple theatrical performances are the principal amusements of the villagers. The *bhaonas* are often held in temporary sheds constructed by the road-side, and on a winter's morning the traveller who is early abroad frequently comes upon parties of revellers still lingering over the pleasures of the previous night. The *'dol jatra'* or festival in honour of Lord Krisna in February or March, when the image of the god is swung to and fro and the people merrily indulge in throwing red powder or coloured water on one-another in memory of Lord Krisna's frolicking with the milkmaids of Vrindavan, has also gained favour with the Assamese. Other Indians, whether still residing in tea gardens, or living in the villages are great observers of the *fagua* or 'holi' festival as it is called. The *Janmastami* in honour of Lord Krisna's birth in August or September, and the *Sivaratri* in memory of Siva in March, are also commonly observed. The *Durga Puja,* once celebrated by the Saktists, is now a festival of most Hindus.

The special festivals of the Assamese are the three *Bihus* and the death anniversary ceremonies of Sri Sri Sankaradeva and Sri Sri Madhava-deva, the founders of the Mahapurusia sect of Vaisnavism. The *Kartik Bihu*

is celebrated on the last day of Aswin (October) and is not an occasion of very much importance. Hymns are sung outdoors in honour of God near a *Tulasi* plant and in place of their usual meal of rice and curry, people take curds, molasses, plantains and *chira*. The *Magh Bihu* or the *Bhogali Bihu* is the harvest home, and begins on the last day of *Pous* (January 13th or 14th). For weeks ahead of the festival tall heaps of firewoods sited within four posts are a prominent feature in the rural landscape. At the dawn of day the villagers bathe and warm their chilled bodies at these bonfires, a very necessary precaution, as at this season of the year the mornings are always cold and generally foggy. The *Magh Bihu* is to some extent a youth and children's festival, and most of the merriment is confined to the youth and smaller boys who sing and dance, and feast in small grass huts that have been constructed for the purpose. Buffalo fights are organised in the rice fields, but these contests are rather tame affairs, and the animals very seldom injure one another. The *Vaisakh Bihu*, also called the *Rongali Bihu*, which begins on the last day of Chaitra (April 13th or 14th) is in honour of the New year. It is a spring festival and its origin is traced to the remote past. The cattle are smeared with oil mixed with *matikalai*, turmeric, and rice, and are then taken to the nearest stream and bathed. The villagers go from house to house singing hymns and pastoral songs and offering greetings. The *Bihu* is now observed as national festival by the Assamese people and it serves to promote unity among different creeds and communities. The death anniversary of Sri Sankaradeva is celebrated in August-September and that of Sri Madhavadeva three days before the *Janmastami*. All work is laid aside on these two days and the people devote their time to the singing of hymns and eating 'prasads'. The tithi of Sri Damodaradeva is also similarly observed by the Bamuniya sect of Vaisnavites.

Every Assamese village of this district has a *namghar* or community prayer hall which also serves as a stage and auditorium. Assamese dramas are performed in the *namghar* and in the *satras* at a regular interval twice or thrice every year. It is generally seen that on the death anniversaries of *Sri Sri Sankaradeva and Sri Sri Madhavadeva* a drama composed by either of them is invariably staged if other factors prove congenial. The *Bhaona* or the staging of drama is an innovation of Sankaradeva who employed this for the propagation of the Bhakti cult. Sankaradeva selected the themes generally *Bhaonas* from the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata* and the Puranas *Gosa*ting to the life of Rama and Krisna.

har (The *Rasalila* of Daksinpat and Garamur satra of Majuli are highly a ere imed by the people. But one interesting feature is that while co-acting in a modern fashion is allowed in the *Rasalila* of Garamur satra, it is not custo nary to allow women even to be in the audience in the *Rasalila* of Daksinpat satra. The *Bhaona* is very much popular in Majuli.

In conclusion it may be observed that under the impact of modern democratic forces old ideas are yielding place to new and the rigours of the caste system among the Hindus which were never very pronounced in this part of India are giving way to a broad-based society and the dividing line between communities is also losing its sharpness. Customs no more found beneficial to a community are dying out slowly and gradually and a new liberalised society is in the process of formation.

CHAPTER IV

AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION

(a) Land Reclamation and Utilisation ;

(*i*) *Land under forests : clearing of forests for agricultural purposes :* In a way the forests of the district may be divided into two classes—Reserved Forest and Unclassed State Forest. Reserved Forests have been constituted under provisions made in Assam Forest Regulation VII, 1891 by which certain acts are mainly prohibited inside such forests. The area under Reserved Forest at present is 737 square miles and comprises as many as twenty one reserves namely, Dilih, Dirai, Disai valley, Disai, Dayang, Geleki, Hallongapar, Kakadonga, Kaziranga, Lower Doigurung, Nambor North, Panbari, Panidihing, Sapekhati, Sola, Tiruhills, Upper Doigurung, Diphu, Nambor South, Nambor West and Rangma. The first seventeen reserves have an area of 505 square miles and fall under Sibsagar Forest Division. The last four have an area of about 232 square miles and fall under Dhansiri Valley Forest Division. Among the reserves, the smallest is the Sola Reserve with an area of only 2½ square miles and the largest is the Kaziranga Reserve which stretches over an area totalling about 165 square miles.

Unclassed State Forests are managed under provisions of Sections 34 and 35 of Assam Forest Regulation VII, 1891 which prohibit use of any forest produce in such land except in accordance with rules to be made by the government. Briefly speaking, such forest is simple government waste land and does not necessarily posses any of the characteristics which are usually associated with the expression forest. It may be sandy *char*, or a huge expanse of low-lying land covered with high grass and reed and almost totally destitute of trees. It may be a small piece of arable land which has been resigned by its former holder and has not yet been settled with any other person, or it may be, what its name would naturally suggest, actual tree forest. In 1956-57 the area under class of forest had 4,97,710 acres, of which 3,07,251 acres fell in Sibsagar Forest Division and the remainder in Dhansiri Valley Forest Division.

A study of the old Gazetteer will show that the area under Reserved Forest and Unclassed State Forest was respectively 876 and 2,839 square miles in 1902-03 but has dwindled down to 737 and 778 square miles at present. Although it cannot be said off hand that agriculture is responsible

for its diminution of area under forest, it is undoubtedly true that many agriculturists who had suffered a lot during the course of last fifty years or so on account of flood, erosion, earthquake, loss of fertility of soil, etc., had to be rehabilitated on many occasions by clearing forest. Moreover, for a steady supply of forest labour, the Forest Department has been pursuing a policy of settlement of landless people in forest villages by allowing 5 bighas of *basti* land to each household and another 10 bighas to each householder, provided the same provides the Department with at least one male working member. At present there are as many as 33 such villages in Sibsagar. All these lead us to believe that a good amount of area under forest has been cleared for agricultural purposes.

Agricultural population : According to 1951 census[1] the total agricultural population of the district was 7,81,421, of which 4,11,435 were female. There were four classes of these people, (1) cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned, and their dependents ; (2) cultivators of land wholly or mainly un-owned, and their dependents ; (3) Cultivating labourers and their dependents and ; (4) non-cultivating owners of land, agricultural rent receivers and their dependents. Each of the above four livelihood classes has been divided into three-sub-classes with reference to the economic status as thus : (i) Self-supporting persons ; (ii) non-earning dependents and ; (iii) earning dependents. A self-supporting person is one who earns an income in cash or kind sufficient at least for his own maintenance. A non-earning dependent is a person who has no income of his own either in cash or in kind. An earning dependent is a person who earns a regular (not casual) income not sufficient even for his own maintenance. It includes seasonal income also. The total population under the class (1) was 5,89,244, of which self supporting persons were 1,25,882, non-earning dependents 3,36,051 and earning dependents 1,27,311. Similarly the total population under the class (2) was 1,74,090, of which 38,022 were self-supporting persons, 96,984 non-earning dependents and 39,084 earning dependents. Likewise, the total population under the class (3) was 10,910, of which 4,023 were self-supporting persons, 5,039 non-earning dependents and 1,848 earning dependents. The total population under the class (4) was 7,177, of which 1,597 were self-supporting persons, 5,012 non-earning dependents and 568 earning dependents. Thus it would appear that, of the total agricultural population of 7,81,421, self-supporting persons total 1,69,524, non-earning dependents 14,43,086 and earning dependents 1,68,811.

(*ii*) *Cultivable waste : measures taken to exploit them :* Though the exact area to be farmed as cultivable waste is not available, it may be

[1] 1961 census figures were not available at the time of writing this chapter.

surmised that such waste is not negligible considering the fact that over and above the exposed cultivable waste, such land can be found even inside Unclassed State Forest, Tea gardens, where the area under plantation in many cases is less than the area leased out and Forest Reserve. The amount of cultivable waste in Golaghat sub-division stood at 18,209 B-ok-17L on 1-7-60.

Reclamation of waste land and its subsequent utilization for cultivation and other purposes did not make much head way in the past partly due to non-realization of its significant role fully and partly due to dearth of funds. With the inauguration of Planning in the country and realisation of the fact that the solution of the problem of feeding an industrially oriented and over-growing population does not rest solely on the introduction of manuring, irrigation and better methods of cultivation for increased production but partly also on the relcamation of waste land, this matter was given due importance. During the First Plan period several acres of land were reclaimed through the Fallangani project in the Golaghat Subdivision and utilized for the purpose of setting up a seed farm of 30 acres. Out of a total of 20,800 acres of small plots of waste land, which lie scattered all over the district and are being used by the people as grazing grounds about 2,000 acres have recently been brought under Bodo paddy. Along with this tea garden waste lands are also being progressively utilized for cultivation purpose. But big waste lands such as Jerengapathar of Sibsagar could not be reclaimed uptill now, as the amount required for such reclamation is fairly high.

(iii) No scheme for reclamation of any swamp has been undertaken in the district.

(iv) There are no deserts in this part of India, but there are patches of vacant grounds growing only grasses and weeds. These may be classed with waste land. The district has on the whole a rich vegetation. Vana-mahotsova under which fruits and other valuable tree are being planted from year to year at present to cover up the normal deforestation is also gaining in popularity.

(b) Irrigatiou :

(i) *Irrigation facilities :* The cultivators of the district are mainly dependent upon rainfall. But rainfall being unevenly distributed, they also resort to indigenous methods of irrigation such as lifting of water by means of *lahoni* (swing busket). Nature and these indigenous methods are insufficient to meet the demands of the agriculturists for a regular supply of water and so irrigation schemes were undertaken by the Agriculture Department as far back as 1942-43. Minor irrigation projects, undertaken by this Department, involve less than Rs. 10,000.00 and their functions centre round (1) construction of bunds across the *jans* and *holas* to prevent

overflow of water along the field ; (2) construction of *dongs* to carry water to the field and to drain out water from *holas* and such other pockets ; and (3) construction of contour bund to check the menace of soil erosion. In such projects the cultivators also participate and they have become extremely popular. As a result of these projects during the period, 1953-57 nearly 21,961 acres were benefited and about 2,707 tons of rice were additionally produced.

In addition to the above, Power Pump irrigation scheme was also introduced in the district primarily for the extension of Bodo paddy cultivation. The following table will show the expenditure, incurred on minor irrigation projects, area benefited and out-turn additionally produced during the 2nd Five Year Plan period by the Department of Agriculture :

Year	*Subdivision*	*Expenditure incurred*	*Area benefited (in acres)*	*Additional out-turn (in tons)*
1956—57	Jorhat	Rs. 75,122.87	5,382	559.00
1957—58	"	Rs. 70,539.99	2,713	329.50
1958—59	"	Rs. 42,830.11	2,162	273.11
1959—60	"	Rs. 20,676.13	1,943	160.05
1960—61	"	Rs. 17,150.00	3,195	221.06
1956—57	Golaghat	Rs. 4,789.62	813	129.69
1957—58	"	Rs. 15,141.38	2,203	743.45
1958—59	"	Rs. 18,235.88	3,600	599.46
1959—60	"	Rs. 19,471.78	2,191	495.07
1960—61	"	Rs. 20,000.00	4,212	285.80
1956—57	Sibsagar	Rs. 11,711.50	2,022	155.50
1957—58	"	Rs. 16,265.88	4,997.6	912.31
1958—59	"	Rs. 24,362.40	6,182	715.03
1959—60	"	Rs. 26,449.75	6,130	546.57
1960—61	"	Rs. 16,360.00	2,157	289.01

(ii) *Protective bunds against floods :* Protective bunds against soil erosion are not common in the district, because the soil erosion in higher places takes in the shape of sheet erosion which is not conspicuous. As a result of this ignorance vast tracts of land are open to this type of erosion, which is sapping the fertility of the soil considerably. Proper survey as to the degree of this kind of erosion has yet to be undertaken. The rivers of the district carry a huge quantity of suspended material consequent upon which the river beds have become shallow resulting in the crippling of their capacity to discharge rain waters effectively. This disability causes wide scale flood and erosion, the latter being more prominent at Majuli. Flood, which has become a regular feature in the district, makes most of the cultivable land uncultivable by the deposition of sand. Sometimes,

riparian tracts receive deposition of silt also. This is indirectly a blessing where flood water recedes immediately without remaining stagnant for longer days. Certain *chaporis*, where cultivation of mustard and paddy are most suited, are the principal beneficiaries from this disguised blessing.

Construction of bunds for flood control was resorted to even during the days of the Ahom rule in Assam. The British, when they occupied this land, found many of these bunds in existance though many were in a damaged condition due to the unsettled conditions of the time. These were repaired and new ones built. Some of these bunds were used also as roads.

In recent times embankments are being constructed alongside most of the rivers to regulate floods though without much appreciable success.

(iii) *Water potential, etc.:* Rainfall in the district has been described in some detail earlier. The river system has also been described in its proper place. Major projects which will divert water from the rivers to agricultural fields will require planning as well as finance. The low lying bed areas, where water during the rainy season rises upto 20 feet or so, are being exploited for cultivation of Bodo paddy. There is also scope for bringing other low lying areas such as Borchola, Jerengapathar, Ouguri, Gelabeel, etc., under the plough.

(c) Agriculture including Horticulture :

(i) *Soil:* The arable soils of the Sibsagar district may very broadly be grouped into : (1) old alluvial soils ; (2) new alluvial soils of riparian tracts ; and (3) hilly soils. The major portions of the arable soils of the district are, however, alluvial soils (either old or new).

The texture of soils of the district varies from sandy loams to sands. There are also some clayey loams or clayey soils. Both old alluvial soils and hill soils are acid in reaction and deficient in calcium. They are usually deficient in "available" phosphate and potash also. As regards total nitrogen, it varies from high to low in the case of old alluvial soils. it is medium in most of new alluvial soils, while hill soils are usually comparatively rich in nitrogen apparently due to the virgin nature of the soils. The nitrogen content is fairly high in Sibsagar district and generally high in most of the soils of Jorhat sub-division.[2] New alluvial soils are usually richer in "available" phosphate and potash compared with old alluvial soils and hills soils.

(ii) *Crops:* Tea, paddy, sugarcane, vegetable, and to some extent fruits are the main crops, grown in old alluvial soils of the district, soil conditions being suitable for these crops.

[2] *The Indian Council of Agricultural Research*—Bulletin No. 73, 1958, pp. 57-58.

Pulses, mustard, paddy, sugarcane, potato, vegetables are the main crops grown in new alluvial soils, soil conditions being suitable for these crops. These new alluvial soils are, in fact, the typical mustard and pulse growing areas of the district.

Rice, being the principal food crop, it has been grown in the district since time immemorial. It occupies about 5,06,088 acres i.e., 63% of the total crop area of the district. Other important crops in the district are tea (15%) mustard 4%, etc. So far as paddy is concerned, Borholla-Titabar area may be said to be the granary of the district. The land of this area is highly suitable for the cultivation of paddy.

Varieties of rice : Rice can be classified into the following categories, each suited to different localities, seasons and to different water requirements :

Salidhan comprises the most important class of paddy and occupies about 90% of the total area under rice. The crop is always transplanted. Seeds are sown in the seed bed (*Kothiatoli*), near homesteads from May to June, seedlings are transplanted from July to September and harvesting commences from November and continues upto January. *Kothiatoli* land is ploughed and harrowed for six or seven times in April and May and reduced to a puddle and carefully manured with cowdung and sweepings. The proper area borne by the seed beds and the area to be transplanted varies according to the fertility of soil, time of transplanting and such other factors. Generally it ranges from 4 to 10% of the total area to be transplanted. In poor soil, close transplanting, a span apart (*Bigutia*) is necessary. In ordinary good soil, seedlings are transplanted usually giving a spacing of a cubit apart (*Hatiya*). In exceptionally good soils they are placed at the width of fishing busket apart (*Palachabiya*).

Selection of seed is done by mass selection. Selected seeds from previous year's crop are steeped in water for two or three days, allowed to germinate and then sown over the beds in May and June. In the meantime preparation of fields is done for transplanting the seedlings. Ploughing of the land is started as soon as the soil becomes soft after the reception of the spring rain and the process is repeated till it is reduced to a rich puddle of mud. After the third ploughing, land is harrowed and small embankments (*Ali*) of a few inches high surrounding small plots of land, intended to retain water, are constructed or repaired where old bund existed. Protection of fields from stray cattle are made by giving split bamboo fencing near the road or village site. When the seedlings are about seven or eight week old they are pulled out from seed bed and carried from the nursery in bundles (*akhis*) to the field for transplanting. They are planted out in hand fulls (*muthi*) each of which contains three or four seedlings. Usually the seedlings are steeped in water for a day or two

before transplanting and the tops are removed if the seedling are not weak and stunted. Transplanting starts from July and continues upto the middle of September. Lifting of seedlings from Nursery and transplanting operations are generally done by women. The work is of a most arduous description and involves stopping for hours in a field of mud under the rays of the burning tropical sun.

The crop becomes ready for harvest from November and the operation continues till the middle of January. Women grasp a handful of the ears and cut them off about 10 inches below the head. These handfulls (*muthi*) are each tied up with a piece of straw, and strewn over the field as the cutting process goes on.

The *muthis* are collected and are made into larger sheaves. Six or eight *muthiis* form a *thor* or *jhap* and five or six *thors* a *dangori*. A *dangori* is fixed to either end of a sharp pointed bamboo *biria* and the load, which is called a *bhar* is carried on the shoulder to the homestead by the cultivator or his men.

The different kinds of paddy fall under two main divisions, *Lahi* and *Sali*. *Lahi* matures earlier and is grown in comparatively higher areas. The grain is of finer quality but the yield is lower than that of *Sali*. About 74 different varieties of *Salidhan* are under cultivation in the District. Glutinous paddy or *Boradhan* is a variety belonging to the *Sali* paddy group, used for making cakes, etc. It is not cultivated on a commercial scale. It is grown by individual farmers generally to meet his own requirements. The paddy is used for preparing indigenous cakes known as *Pitha* as well as for preparing soft rice.

Bao paddy is suitable for lowlying areas. Seeds are usually sown in April-May and the crop is harvested in November-December.

Ahu is the earliest of all classes of paddy. It is sown relatively on higher area as its water requirement is the least among all the cultivated paddies. Preparation of land for this paddy starts from January and the seeds are sown in the months of March and April. In some areas where *Ahu* is grown in the same field after harvesting of mustard, pulses or other Rabi Crops, preparation of land becomes easy, commonly five or six ploughings followed by harrowing, are practised. The clods are broken up by a wooden mallet (*Dolimari*). A high seed rates of 30 to 45 seers per acre is commonly used. This is done to keep down the weeds through thick sowing. Weeds are a common menace to the *Ahu Crop* and as such 2 or 3 weedings are essential. When the plants are about six inches high and catch the wind, harrowing is done with indigenous spike-tooth harrow (*Bindha*) to remove the weeds and thin out the crop. The crop becomes ready for harvest in June and July.

Formerly, about one fourth of the *Ahu* crop was raised at Majuli and most of the remainder was grown on the *Chaparis* south of the

Brahmaputra i.e. Jorhat and Golaghat Sub-divisions. It is difficult to protect the *Ahu* crop from stray cattle, as most of the cattle are let loose for grazing from November up to June and July. Individual farmers cannot afford to erect fencing to protect their crop. The Field Management Committees at present are trying to protect the fields by means of common fencing.

Bodo paddy is grown in lowlying areas, where there exists at least one or two feet of water during December and January. It can be grown very successfully on slightly higher areas under irrigation.

This class of paddy was introduced in 1956-57 taking only those centres, namely Majuli, Malowpather and Jakaichuk in this district. It has been growing in popularity in the areas, which are subject to flood during the monsoon as an insurance against failure of *Sali* paddy, which may be damaged by floods. The increasing popularity of the crop can be judged from increasing areas being brought under cultivation of this crop annually.

For the popularization of *Bodo* cultivation 347 acres were brought under this paddy by means of power pumps in 1957-58. In the following year 10,000 acres in Jorhat subdivision alone were brought under this paddy. In 1959-60 and 1960-61 the acreage brought under this paddy were respectively 926 and 300.

The grain is usually stored as it is brought from the field in an out house called *bhoral* which, unlike the houses of the villages, is raised on posts well above the level of the ground. When it is required for use, the sheaves are untied and spread over the courtyard. Cattle are then driven round and round over the heap of grain and straw, till the ears have been finally separated from the stalk. The grain is next passed through a sieve and placed in a flat bamboo tray called *kula*. It is then jerked into the air and allowed to fall slowly to the ground till gradually the chaff is carried off. After thrashing, the paddy is stored in huge drums called *Mer* or *Duli*. They are made of split bamboo and the outer surface is plastered over with clay and cowdung.

Other crops: Mustard is normally grown in conjunction with *Ahu* on riparian flats. The jungle is cut down in February and March. If the land cannot be prepared in time for summer rice it is allowed to rot upon the ground, what remains, is burnt in October, the stumps are dug out and the land is ploughed over four or five times. The seed is sown, @ 10 srs. per acre about the end of October to the beginning of November. The crop is ready to be pulled out from the field about the middle of February. It is generally left to dry for a few days and then thrashed either in the field in a place prepared for the purpose or near the homestead. Mustard is generally grown in conjunction with *Ahu* paddy and

about two third of the total crop of the district is in the *Chaparis* of Jorhat and Golaghat, Baligaon and Hezari being the principal Mustard growing *Mouzas* of Jorhat subdivision and Michamara and Rangamati Mouzas in the Golaghat subdivision.

The total area coming under mustard in the district is 24797.14 acres.

The important pulses grown in the Sibsagar district are *matimah* (Black gram) 11,009.19 acres and *Magumah* (green gram) 2900.40 acres. Other pulses like *Khesari* (Lathyrus Sativus), *Arahar* (Cejanus indicus) *Lentil* (Lens esculenta), etc. are also grown, but not to any considerable extent.

Pulses are usually grown on the new alluvial flats in conjunction with the summer rice and mustard. Only two or three ploughings are required for the pulses. If the ground is naturally clear of jungle, the seeds are sown in September and the crop becomes ready for harvest in November. The plants are pulled out and left for a few days in the field to dry and then collected at the convenient place for the cultivators. The seeds are thrashed out by the cattle, but the seeds do not get separated readily from the pods. Their efforts are supplemented by a man with a flail. About nine tenth of the pulse crop is grown in Majuli.

(iii) *Jute:* Among the fibre crops Jute is grown comparatively to a large extent. Two varieties of Jute are grown in the district, *Corchorus capsularis* (*Titamora*) grown in comparatively lowlying areas and *C. olitorius* (*Mithamora*) grown on higher areas. Preparation of land starts from February and 6 to 7 ploughings and harrowings are given to obtain a fine tilth; seeds are sown and plants are cut in August—September just at the time of small pod stage. The crop is cut down at ground level and left in the field for two or three days where the leaves are stripped off and then tied into bundles. The bundles are kept under water for fifteen or more days to rot. When the barks become soft and easily removable from the stem, the bundles are broken in the middle and beaten to and fro in the water till the inner part drops out and only the fibre remains. The fibres are then dried and tied in bundles and they become ready for use. Another important fibre *Rhea* (Hehmeris nivea) is grown in the gardens. The fibre of *Rhea* is exceptionally strong and is durable and is used in making fishing nets. Jute occupied 2987 acres in this district in the year 1960-61. Approximate outturn was 8,961 bales (400 lbs per bale).

In the production of jute, Jorhat Subdivision ranks first in this district. The areas under this crop in this subdivision are (1) Purana Gohaingaon, (2) Kokilamukh, (3) Upper Deuri, (4) Nam Deuri, (5) Garamur, (6) Majuli, (7) Janjimukh, (8) Borholla and (9) Teok. Improved methods of cultivation such as Line swings, mechanical demonstration, Subvention

trail, etc. are also being carried on. The area under this crop in this subdivision is 1235 acres.

Sugarcane: Sugarcane (saccharum officinarum) is one of the oldest crops grown in the district. It is grown in high land near the village. The crop is propagated from the tops of best canes, which are cut off at harvest time and kept in shady place. The tops contain 3 nodes and from each node comes out one cane. Four local varieties of cane are recognised. The *Mag* or white, which is long enough, 7 to 10 feet high, and soft juicy in texture. The *Teli* is of purple colour. There are two varieties of *Pura*, the purple or indigenous and the white or Bengali. The latter is larger and more juicy, but its sucrose content is less.

The land is hoed till it is reduced to a fine tilth and the tops planted in trenches between April and June. The area is fenced with split bamboo and a stout hedge of *Arahar* is raised, to protect the crop from jackals and other animals. While the crop is growing, it is continually hoed and weeded. Usually two or three times earthing is done. Earth from the ridges is hoed down and gathered around the new shoots in the trench with canes which becomes a ridge and the area in between the two rows of canes becomes a furrow. Harvesting starts from January to April. Since sugarcane is an exhausting crop the need for maintaining organic matter and nitrogen content in the soil at a high level is to be borne in mind. The soil is to be enriched with farmyard manure, compost or bulky organic manures.[3] The area under sugarcane in Sibsagar district in 1902-03 was over 8000 acres. But due to the establishment of a Co-operative sugar Mill at Baruabamungaon, the area has been increasing to 16270 acres during the year 1957-60. Sugarcane is grown in small plots in every part of the district, but the principal cane growing centres are Moukhowa, Dhekial, Michamora and Naharani mouzas in the Golaghat Sub-division. Government is advancing loan and subsidy to the cane growers to extend the area under sugarcane. Prior to the establishment of the sugar Mill, all the canes were used for preparation of *gur*.

Preparation of Gur: The indigenous form of mill is generally used for the extraction of the juice from sugarcane. It consists of two wooden rollers fixed side by side in a trough hollowed out of a heavy block of wood.

In this connection it is to be noted that wooden rollers are no longer to be seen even in the remotest parts. Crushing machines (*Kuhiyar Sal*) made of iron largely on the model of the wooden rollers are imported now-a-days from outside the State. *Gur* makers prefer them for their better crushing capacity helping to extract all the juice from the canes crushed.

[3] M. S. Randhawa: *Agriculture and Animal Husbandry in India*, p. 187.

Banana : One of the most valuable garden crops of the district is the Banana (*Musa, sapiantum*) known as *kal* in Assam ; as many as ten varieties of this crop are grown, but most important are those locally known as *Manohar, Cenicampa, Malbhog, Bhimkal, Purakal* and *Jahaji*. *Purakal* is used as vegetable which represents 'Musa faradisiaen, and should correctly be called a plantain but not banana. The *Jahaji* is the dwarf variety of banana which represents botanically 'Musa cavandish'. The other varieties of *kal* are edible fruits. Of the table varieties *Jahaji, Malbhog* and *Manohar* are by far the best in quality of fruit. These, however, are very extracting in their soil, requiring cultural and manural practices and get degenerated unless proper care is taken. The other varieties comparatively can stand some amount of negligence in field treatments. The *Bhimkal* is in a way very outstanding, being the high yielder and having the biggest size. This fruit is commonly used as infant food.

Propagation of banana is done vegetatively by employing suckers which arise at the base of their plants from the under ground rhizomes. Suckers, possessing long narrow leaves are removed with a bit of the rhizomes from the mother plant and are planted in holes prepared in the field. The size of the holes usually varies according to the varieties. Generally holes are of 18 inch wide and 18 inch deep and are manured with cowdung and ash. Young plants take from 18 months to 2 years to flower. The hanging terminated, bud of the fruit bunch is removed.

The whole plant from leaf to root is used for different purposes such as the terminating bud (*Kaldil*) used as vegetables, the leaves and sheath used as substitute for dishes ; from the sheath tumblers (*khol*) are made for immediate use. The plant in general is used for decorating gates, etc. in different ceremonies. The *Kalakhar* is indigenous Alkali preparation and is commonly used in preparation of certain dishes among the Assamese. The Banana plant and corns are sliced down and dried in the sun ; when completely dried, they are burnt and the ash is used as *Kalakhar*. *Kalakhar* is used for preparation of *Kharanipani*, etc.

Areca nut (Areca Catechu) is grown almost as universly as the banana and with the bamboo forms the great trinity of trees among which the houses of the Assamese are usually embedded. The plantation is hoed up, and kept clear of weeds and the trees are most liberally manured with cowdung. The *Pan* (betelvine) is frequently trained up their stem, and the lead and nuts, which are invariably eaten in conjunction are thus grown side by side.

Steps have been taken to increase the area under these crops. An Areca nut Nursery has been established at Borbheta, Jorhat for supplying good quality seedlings to the cultivators. Recently from the year 1959-60 a scheme has been taken up to establish certified areca nut nurseries in the

village. The area occupied by this important crop in the district was 12,000 acres in 1957-58.

Tobacco : Tobacco is also seen growing in the majority of gardens in the new alluvial soils. The seedlings are raised in carefully manured beds in August and September. At the beginning of November they are transplanted in to the field which has been reduced to fine tilth, and protected from the sun. The bed is lightly hoed 2-3 times and not more than ten or twelve leaves are allowed to grow on each plant, the remainder being picked off as they appear. The leaves are first gathered in February and March and there is a second but much inferior crop, about 2 months later. If required for chewing they are either dried in shed or else pressed into hollow bamboo (*Chunga*) and allowed to ferment. When the tobacco is destined for the pipe, leaves are piled in heaps till they ferment, then cut into pieces and mixed with molasses, when it is ready for the *hookah*.[4]

Pineapple and orange : Pineapple is also an important fruit grown in the district. Proper survey as to its area in this district is not yet definitely known. The popularity of this fruit can be judged from the fact that almost every household possesses a few pineapple plants. The main pineapple growing area of the district is Borpathar area in Golaghat Subdivision. Borpathar pineapple has good market within the State as well as outside the State. Other common fruit trees grown in the district are Mango, Jack fruit, Litchi, Assam lemon, etc. Cultivators are generally of the habit of growing a few trees of each type in their garden mainly for home consumption. Orange is also grown in the foot hills of Naga Hills.

Vegetables : The common vegetables grown, are spinach, *lai Radish, Lafa, Suka,* Cabbage, Cauliflower, Tomato, Onion, etc., different kinds of Brinjal, Potatoes and sweet potatoes are also grown in the Majuli and in the villages situated in the bank of the Brahmaputra.

Tea : Tea is the world's most widely used beverage which enjoys the greatest popularity because it is the cheapest of all common beverages. Methods of tea culture and marketing vary widely throughout the world. The tea plant being perennial, its culture must inevitably be different from ordinary farm practices where annual crops are raised. The tea plant, bush or tree is an evergreen of the 'Camellia' family, which flourished in warm,

[4] The following figures of area and production are given for Sibsagar in the Indian Tobacco Statistics, 1939-1959 issued by the *Indian Central Tobacco Committee,* Ministry of food and Agriculture, Govt. of India, Madras, 1960, pp. 32-33.
1955-56 : Area 950 acres Production—665,280 lbs.
1956-57 : Area 1,050 acres Production—734,720 lbs.

rainy regions of the tropics and sub-tropics. Although tea is a hardy plant which grows under diverse conditions, the climate, considered most favourable to tea culture, is characterised by a small daily rise in temperature, generous rain throughout the year (at least 60 to 80 inches annually) and the absence of strong dry winds and freezing temperature. Similarly, soil on which tea is grown has a strong influence on the quality of the tea. Clay soils tend to give a strong scent but poorer flavour to tea. Black organic soils in damp areas tend to produce a leaf giving a sweet taste but a poor aroma. Loose sandy loams usually give a favourable balance of taste and aroma. Practically all tea soils must be fertilised if the tea plant is to thrive. The useful life of a tea plant depends upon general care in cultivation, pruning, plucking, and control of pests and diseases.

Tea plant yields crops for 8 months and in some cases, for the whole year round. As such, need for proper cultivation is of utmost importance and growth of all kinds of weeds and other plants are to be checked, else, it prevents rapid decomposition of organic matter in the soils. It is a well-established fact that tea cannot thrive in a waterlogged soil, or in one which is subject to frequent and lengthy periods of flooding. The tea land must be properly drained in order to maintain the soil at its optimum water content for as long a period as possible throughout the year. Further, the harmful effect of prolonged dry spells, resulting in low water content of the soil, is equally well recognised.

In its natural state in the forest, the tea grows to a height of from 15 to 30 feet or more, a height and an extent of foliage which under it is unfit for rapid production of leaves in successive 'flushes', while its shape as well as height would render the labour of gathering the leaves both difficult and expensive. Hence, the primary object of pruning is to change the form which the plant would naturally take, and so turn it into a low bush instead of a tree. Further, pruning is necessary to encourage the bush to produce leaves rather than wood, and to spread into a ramification of twigs, giving a large plucking surface, and yet not so dense as to obstruct the free passage of light and air to the leaves everywhere, which is a condition essential to the healthy life of the tea plant.

As the plant matures, it becomes necessary to remove dead and moribund branches, and to thin out unproductive shorts where growth has become too dense.

In all questions of pruning, as well as other operation, the continued robust health of the plant must be reckoned as of primary importance, and when properly done, pruning can be a distinct aid rather than a hindrance to health. There are many methods in vogue for pruning young tea plants. After the young plant has been four or five years in the ground, and has been pruned judiciously, its frame will be formed, sound and well-balanced. Subsequent pruning methods will depend to a great extent on

climatic and economic conditions, compatible with maintaining a sound health and steady yielding bush. Frequency of pruning, whether annual, biennial, or at longer intervals, and the amount of growth removed in pruning, are the two chief factors in pruning which chiefly influence crop and quality.

The need for replanting in a certain area arises when an area of tea has become unproductive for one of these reasons, (a) extreme age of the tea, (b) death or debility, through disease, improvishment of soil or bad cultural methods, of a large percentage of the bushes.

Having selected the area for replanting, the first operations are to be directed towards the preparation of nurseries. After old tea has been uprooted and the land hoed up, it is customary and a very good plan to leave it under Green crop such as Tephrosia candide, Crotolaria anagyroides, Desmodium gyroides, Indigofera Teysmanii, etc.

The object of manuring tea gardens is to maintain in the soil a sufficiency of the materials necessary to maintain the growth required to produce a certain level of crop, without detriment to the plant itself.

Adequate manuring of young tea is of the greatest importance in the production of vigorous healthy plants with a well formed permanent frame, and in bringing them into economic bearing as soon as possible.

The use of inorganic fertilisers at the time of planting out from the nursery is not recommended. Dry well-rooted cattle manure at the rate of 10l lbs. and 1 oz., of ordinary superphosphate should be used per pit. In case cattle manure is in short supply, oil cake at the rate of 8 to 12 ozs. per pit may be used as a substitute. Sterilized animal meal (without any inorganic additive) is a valuable alternative to either cattle manure or oilcake, and should be used at the rate of 6-10 ozs. per pit well mixed with the soil. Following planting five months later in April planting and twelve month later in autumn planting, inorganic manure mixture of NPK in the proportion of 1 : 2: 2: is recommended, until such time as the young plants meet and cover the ground and at any rate for three years. Manures should not be applied after pruning which increases the incidence of rimblight, until most of the new shoots occur. In droughty areas manures should not be applied before the early rains have moistened the soil. In case of mature tea, cattle manure is no longer lasting than the supposedly quick acting, short lasting artificials.

In order to enrich the tea soil in available nitrogen and also to increase its fertility, shade trees and green crops belonging to the family, 'leguminoseæ' are grown with great advantages. Besides they serve to supply shade to the tea bushes, to reduce soil wash, to suppress weed growth and also to act as wind brakes and protection against hail storm, etc. The shade trees like Albizzia procers, A lebbel, A. sinensis A. odoratis simiam, A. moluccana, Dalbergia assamica, Derris robusta, etc., and green

crops like Crotolaria anagyroids, Teprosia candida, Indigofera teysmanii, Desmodium gyroides, etc. are usually grown in Tea garden with specific purposes. Green crops should, however, be used only in young tea, cut back tea, and tea which has not sufficient spread to cover the soil well.

The bush is grown with the sole object of producing leaves. The process of building up of new growth is quite interesting and shows that the leaves are the more important part of the plant than any other part of its structure. To a great extent the food supply available to the bush must determine the extent to which a bush can be plucked wihout deterioration. The most efficient method of plucking the crop from the tea bush will be that which obtains the crop of highest quality of an indefinite period of years. The growth of the tea plant, like other plants is not maintained at a continuous rate, but periods of rapid growth alternate with periods of dormancy. The new shoot which a bush produces in the spring makes a certain amount of growth and then becomes dormant, the terminal bud at this stage being small and thin which is commonly termed as 'Banjhi'.

The plucking of tea leaf for manufacture is usually begun after the bushes are about 3 years old, though a certain amount of light picking is also carried on even before they attain this stage. In the first flush of leaf after pruning the extreme tip of the growing branch consisting of the unopened leaf bud together with 1 or 2 leaves is plucked and the 2 or 3 leaves lower down which are older are left standing. Following this operation, eventually another branch springs from the axile of the leaf lower down and grows out. Two, or even three, may spring from the same axile and simultaneously a branch may spring from the leaf axile immediately below. All these constitute the second flush. The extreme tip of this flush is now picked, leaving at least one fully developed leaf to remain on each branch. After the second flush is over, a third flush breaks out in its turn in the same manner. The flushes continue to come and there may be 10 or even 15, flushes in the year. Not all the branches flush at the same time, and the shoots are therefore not ready to pluck all at one time; this necessitates a large number of pluckings and the bushes are gone over 30 or more times in the year.

The number of grades in quality are recognised and all of these depend upon the type of leaf of which each is largely made up. Plucking is broadly classed as fine, medium and coarse; the plucking of the tip with 1 or 2 leaves is called fine, that with the tip and three leaves is called medium; and that with tip and four leaves is called coarse. When high quality is the object, fine plucking is resorted to and when quantity is the object, medium and course pluckings are adopted.

The manufacture of the green tea leaves into tea of commerce is

conducted in large tea factories. The processes are mainly four in number: (i) Withering, (ii) Rolling, (iii) Fermentation, and (iv) Drying.

The withering merely consists in allowing the freshly picked leaves to dry somewhat until they lose part of their moisture during which process they become trump and somewhat tough and assume a twist in shape. If the leaves are spread in a thin layer in a well ventilated room overnight or approximately for 18 hours, the withering is generally completed to the degree required. The withering really prepares the leaf for the next process of rolling.

The rolling process consists in brushing the leaves withered in the above manner, by subjecting them to the grinding or pressing action of two hard surfaces, one moving over the other. The leaves are crushed and bruised, the leaf cells are broken and the cell contents, including the much prized oil, flow over and wet outer surface or leaves, thereto undergo the fermentation or olivation of the next stage move thoroughly.

The rolled leaves are now subjected to fermentation. A yellowish copper colour is taken as a good indication of correct fermentation while a black colour indicates over fermentation. All the 'Cup' qualities of Tea, colour body, pungency, strength and flavour depend a great deal upon the correctness of this stage.

The next process is the stopping of any further fermentation, the killing of the ferment and precaution of all further organic changes, and then the slow desiccation or drying out of the leaf. The tea leaf at this stage is crisp, dry and brittle and can be rubbed between the hands into a coarse powder.

The subsequent processes consist merely in shifting the tea and sorting it into the different grades already mentioned by appropriate sieves, and packing them in air-tight containers, usually wooden chests, lined with aluminium sheet.

The tea bushes are quite often attacked by different kinds of pests and diseases. Some of the major pests are looper caterpiller, Red slug caterpiller, Bunch Caterpiller, Red Borers, Tea Mosquitoes, Tea leaf hopper, Red Spiders, Crickets, Termites, Root rot, nematodes, etc. The disease which occurs in tea bushes are primarily fungus although bacteria, virus and non-parasitic diseases other than fungus are also prevalent. A few major diseases are charcoal stump rot, Brown root rot, Violet root rot, Branch canker, Thorny blight, Thread blight, Blister blight, etc.

The Tocklai Experimental Station which is the biggest tea research institution not only in India but also in Asia, has done a good deal of investigation in different aspects of tea culture and manufacture, the results of which are published in the Tea Encyclopedia, *Two leaves and a Bud*, etc., besides numerous scientific publications and the different research journals.

The total area under tea cultivation in Assam during 1956-57 was 381,065 acres, of which the greater part was in the two districts of Lakhimpur and Sibsagar (Likhimpur had about 115,430 acres and Sibsagar about 106,656 acres). The total output of tea in Assam in 1956-57 was 166,990 metric tons of which about 58,000 tons came from Lakhimpur and about 46,000 tons from Sibsagar.[5]

The following statement will show the area in acres under principal agricultural crops in Sibsagar District from 1950-51 to 1956-57:

Period	*Autumn rice*	*Winter rice*	*Spring rice*	*Maize*	*Tur Arhar*	*other rabi pulses*	*Sugarcane*	*Potato*
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1950-51	36,000	4,80,580	1,280	102	2,193	14,857	12,724	2,856
1951-52	42,108	4,66,552	—	92	—	19,308	12,255	4,230
1952-53	35,158	4,58,944	—	224	100	14,002	12,735	4,010
1953-54	38,102	4,34,715	—	269	200	12,000	12,280	4,135
1954-55	39,875	4,97,813	—	264	200	10,572	12,417	4,764
1955-56	38,866	5,01,803	—	458	—	6,424	14,025	4,232
1956-57	38,195	48,5,956	4,580	274	3	18,747	14,112	2,809

We have already described at length about the irrigation facilities available in the district and also given some data regarding the area benefited and additional rice produced during recent years. Further information may be incorporated here. Altogether 318 minor irrigation projects have been executed during the period extending from 1944 to 1952 as a result of which 91,607 acres of land have benefited and 16,009 tons of clean rice were additionally produced. The average additional yield of clean rice per acre during recent years may be estimated to be 1.90 cwt. for old areas and 10.50 cwt., for new areas. *Ahu* paddy, which was formerly grown only in the Majuli area, now-a-days is grown on the south bank also. The establishment of Co-operative Sugar Mill at Dergoan gave the cultivators an impetus to reclaim vast tracts of land for the cultivation of sugarcane. But the important thing in this respect is not the area irrigated, but the enthusiasm of the people which has shown an awareness of the beneficial objects of such projects and a proclivity to co-operate with official organs readily.

(iv) *Progress of Scientific Agriculture : Agricultural implements :* Among the older types of implements, still widely prevalent and useful, is the Plough. It is usually made of the jack fruit tree or some other hard wood, and consists of three parts, the handle and body which are usually

[5] Techno-Economic Survey of Assam, p. 28.

all in one piece, the pole which joins the plough at the junction of the handle and the body, and the yoke which is merely a piece of wood, fastened by rope at right angles to the pole, with pegs affixed to it to keep it from sliding from the necks of the bullocks. The front portion of the body is sharpened to a point which is shod with iron, and in soft soil a piece of bamboo is sometimes substituted for the iron. This piece of iron is the only portion of the plough which the farmer has to purchase. The rest he makes for himself, sometimes in collaboration with his cultivator friends. The whole instrument is suited to the wretched class of animal required to draw it. It weights as a rule about 20 lbs., and the yoke seldom stands as much as 36 inches from the ground. It is obvious that such an implement can only penetrate from three to four inches into the soil, but the wretched quality of the plough cattle prohibits the use of a more effective instrument.

Other implements include the harrow (*moi*), which is generally a bamboo ladder, about eight feet in length and on which a man stands as it is drawn across the field. It is used to crush the clods turned up by the plough before mustard or summer rice is sown, and to reduce the fields required for wet rice to puddle. It's place is sometimes taken by a plain log of wood. It is prepared by the cultivator himself from the bamboos growing in his garden. The harrow is mainly used as a secondary tillage implement. It supplements the work of a plough for preparing the seed bed for crops and for covering the seeds after sowing. The object of harrowing is to obtain a proper tilth of soil.[6] Clods are broken by the mallet (*doli-mari*) which is also made at home. Hoes (*Kors*) are used to trim the embankments (*alis*) which help to retain the water. The head is bought in the market and fitted with a shaft by the farmer himself. The hoe is an all purpose farm implement used for many agricultural operations, such as forming ridges, bunds, water courses and channels, preparing small seed beds and removing slumps of crops, harvesting roof crops, etc.[7] Sickles (*kaci*), with which paddy is reaped, have also to be purchased. In *ahu* cultivation a large wooden rake (*Bindha*), with teeth nearly one foot in length is dragged over the crop by a bullock when the plants are about six inches high. The *nirani,* a kind of trowel with a long handle, is used for weeding *ahu* rice. The ordinary implement used for husking grain is the *dhenki,* a long beam with a pestle affixed at the end, which is supported by two posts at about two-third of the length from the head. The shorter end is depressed by the foot, and the pestle is thus raised into the air, the weight is then removed and the

[6] *Indigenous Agricultural Implements—An All India Survey*—Indian Council of Agricultural Research, 1960, p. 131.

[7] Ibid, p. 177.

pestle falls into a small mortar buried in the ground in which the grain is placed. The *dhenki* is the implement ordinarily employed by the Asamese to husk their rice or pulse, but certain tribes generally have been using a large wooden mortar (*ural*) and a pestle (*mari*). All of these implements are made at home.

Among the improved implements mention may be made of *Mould Board Plough* which originated in Europe mainly as a labour saving device. This plough has got different sizes and types, the suitability being dependent upon the nature of the soil and the capacity of the bullocks. Its sizes are expressed in inches of the width of the furrow. The recommended sizes for the district are 4, 3½ and 3 inches. The depth of the ploughing can be adjusted by a simple device of shifting the bolts and nuts.

The different parts of the *Mould Board Plough* are these: (1) *The frog*, is an irregularly shaped piece of metal to which the share, landslide, mould board and beam are attached; (2) *The share* is the cutting edge of the plough and its main parts are the point, wing and the cutting edge or the throat; (3) *The landside* is that part of the plough-bottom which slides along the face of the furrow wall. It helps to counteract the side pressure exerted by the furrow slice on the mould board and to stabilize the plough while in operation; (4) *The mould board* forms the back of the share and turns it; (5) *The beam* is attached to the frog and extends out to the front to form suitable means of drawing the plough forward; (6) *The handle* extends to the rear of the bottom to be used to guide the plough. The handles are generally made of wood and are fixed at an angle of about 40 or 50 degrees. This plough at present costs from Rs. 20.00 to Rs. 22.00 per piece and is being taken up at Jorhat too.

Another implement of note is the *Japanese weeder* which is operated manually to weed out rice lands. This is a simple machine easy to work and is found in two sizes, viz., single row and double row. This weeder is useful where paddy is grown 9 to 12 inches apart in rows. Under such conditions it takes nearly 5 hours to weed an acre of rice land. The weeder is recommended to the cultivator on account of the fact that it is an easy and effective machine for intercultural operations.

The usual method of thrashing is trampling the harvested crop with bullocks and then separating the grain by manual labour. The same operation can be performed easily in less time with the help of *Japanese Pedal* operated thrashing machine, and bullocks can be spared for other work. There are two different sizes suitable either for one man or two men. In the latter case the two men are required to stand side by side at the time of operation. When the operation begins, the machine should be kept on a clean floor, the operators stand and tread the pedal by one leg and the footheld drum begins to turn smoothly. As the drum starts rotating, the operators hold the bundle of crop over the rotating drum and the

thrashed grain drops on the floor. The operation is repeated and the clean grain and straw are collected separately. One-man-operated machine can thrash out 8 mounds of paddy in 8 hours by rotating 100 times a minute.

Another implement is *rake which is useful* for garden and nursery. The implement with twelve teeth can conveniently work in collecting weeds between lines of plants and in breaking clods in fields. The teeth are 3½ inches long and are made of M.S. Rods. Its price varies from Rs. 2.50 to Rs. 10.00 and it can be found at *Government Sales Emporium*, Jorhat.

The *Pronged cultivator* is a very handy implement used for interculture of vegetable gardens and jute fields where line sowing is practised. The three prongs are made of M.S. Rods and the width of operation per stroke is 4 inches.

Another useful and handy garden implement is *hand hoe*, the spikes at the top of the blade of which provide a very efficient way of loosening soil and breaking clods. It is very light and can be handled even by children. The blade can also be sharpened by the village blacksmiths. Its price varies from Rs. 3.00 to Rs. 4.00 per piece.

Agricultural diseases and pests: The following lists will show the names of diseases:

List of major diseases of economic crops prevalent in this part of the State:

1.	Areca palms	Stem bleedings
2.	Arhar	Wilt
3.	Brinjal	Leaf spot and root rot
4.	Cabbage	Damping off
	Couliflower	Ringspot
	Turnip	Black rot
5.	Chillies	Ripe rot, Virus diseases
6.	Citrus	Whithertip, Canker, Scab Gummosis, Foam, Sooty mould
7.	Coconut	Budrot, Nutfall and stem bleeding
8.	Jute	Stemrot and black baud
9.	Mustard	Blight and Downy mildew
10.	Paddy	Brown spot
11.	Pan	Root rot and leafrot
12.	Papayee	Stem rot, leaf spot and fruit rot
13.	Pea	Powdery Mildew, Downy mildew
14.	Pineapple	Heart or stem rot, leaf spot
15.	Potato	Early blight and Late Blight
16.	Sugarcane	Red rot, wilt, leaf curl
17.	Tomato	Wilt
18.	Termeric	Leaf spot

Names of major pests that cause great damages to the economic crops of this part of the State :

1.	Brinjal	Stemborer, fruit-borer and 12 spotted Epilachna Beetle
2.	Cabbage couliflower	Diamond back moth, Greasy surface caterpillar, cabbage caterpillar, Jassid
3.	Citrus	Leman caterpillar, leaf miner, Green Bug, citrus moth, Trunk borer, shoot borer, Mealy Bugs and Scale *insects*
4.	Jute	Hairy caterpillar, Semilooper and Mites
5.	Litchi	Borer and Leaf curl
6.	Maize	Mouth borer, stem borer and Aphis
7.	Mango	Hoppers, Fruit Borer, stem borer, Mealy bug, weevil
8.	Mustard	Mustard sawfly, Diamond back Moth, Aphis and painted Bug
9.	Paddy	Swarming caterpillar, Army worm, Hispa, stem borer, Case worm, Rice bug Grasshopper, Jassid, Mealy bug
10.	Potato	Greasy surface caterpillar, Tubermoth, Jassid
11.	Pulses	Indigo caterpillar, Hairy caterpillar, Arhar leaf roller, Gram caterpillar, Gram Semilooper, Greasy surface caterpillar, Arhar pod butterflies or plume moth
12.	Sugarcane	Leaf hopper, Topborer, Stem borer
13.	Tobacco	Caterpillar, Hairy caterpillar, stem borer, stem cutting caterpillar.

Formerly, small bug called *gandhi* which injures the rice plant by feeding on the stems and sucking all the sap from the young grains, was naturally driven by high wind and rain and good results were also obtained by lighting fires of vegetable refuge windward. Sometimes the insects were also collected by smearing a winnowing fan with some glutinous substance and brushing it over the ears of grain, when many of the bugs would be found adhering to the fan. This remedy was tried in the morning or late afternoon, as the insects did not feed in the heat of the day. The *charaha* is a tiny beetle, which eats away the outer surface of the leaves and stalks, and thus effects the outturn of the crops. It attacks the small plants in the nursery. Smoking in the fields produce good results, but had to be continued for some days or the beetles would return.

Among other traditional measures light traps and bonfires were made in the cultivated fields at night to destroy the adult insects. The outer skins of various fruits such as *Citrus grandis* were cut into thin pieces and scattered in the pest affected areas, so that the insects were repelled by the pungent and disagreeable smell of such skins. The barks of some indigenous jungle trees and herbs were also used similarly for repelling the insect pests. The dry shoots of bamboo trees and dry twigs of jungle plants

are kept standing on the cultivated fields at short distances so that the carnivorous birds may sit on these and eat away the destructive insects. The cultivators in ancient times also practised ploughing the cultivated fields or burning the stubbles and thus making most of the larvae or resting pupae exposed to birds, etc., or destroyed. The insect affected fields were very often used to be flooded to destroy the insects whenever the water was available. The cultivators also hand-picked the destructive insects and then killed them by crushing or drowning in water. The rotten fishes, crabs, etc. were put in the pest affected fields possibly with a view to driving away the insect by the bad odour emitted out of such things. Some of the cultivators in ancient times were rather superstitious and thought that appearance of these destructive insects was a sign that God was annoyed with them. Such cultivators used to worship God in the belief that the destructive insects would disappear from the cultivated fields when He would be pleased with them.

Methods used for controlling pests : Now-a-days various ways such as cultural, mechanical, chemical, biological and quarantine methods are in practice for control of the insect pests.

The cultural method includes measures, as clearing the weeds and jungles from or near the cultivated fields and then burning or burying these underground. The times of sowing of seeds are altered so that the insects may not find their food at their proper time of need. The rotation of crops is done to divert the destructive insect from cultivated fields. The fields are properly ploughed and manured before cultivation of a crop.

The Mechanical methods consist of handpicking of the adult insects, larvae or eggs from the affected fields and destroying them by drowning in water, mixed with kerosene oil. Light traps and bonfire are made in the pest infested areas at night to attract and kill the adult insects. The pest affected plants or parts of such plants are also cut and then burnt or burried at the early stage of attack. Trenching is done around the heavily infested areas to prevent migration of the insects to an unaffected crop. The bagging i.e. a bag, soaked in crude oil emulsion is carried by two persons over the infested fields in such away that the insects are collected inside the bag and then these are destroyed by crushing.

The chemical one consists of using various contact, stomach and systemic poisons to kill the insect. The contact poisons such as Gammaxane (B.H.C.), DDT., Ekatox, Folidol, etc., which cause death to larve or adult insects when they eat these poisons along with their food plants. The systemic poisons such as Systox when sprayed over plants penetrate and these are mixed with plant sap. Insects and their larve are found to perish when they feed upon these sprayed plants.

Fumigation with chemicals like Carbon tetrachloride, Ethylene dichloride, Hydrocynic acid gas, etc., is done under air tight condition to kill various insect pests and rhodents.

Poison baits are made with chemical such as Zincphosphide, Barium carbonate, Lead arsenate, etc. These are mixed with bait base which consist of normal food or the destructive pest, an attractant like molasses or sugar, an adhesive substance such as vegetable oil and water in proper proportion. These poison baits are scattered over which have biting mouth parts and act as stomach poison.

The dusting, spraying or fumigation is done with the help of power sprayer or dusters, hand sprayers or dusters, pumps and air crafts for aerial spraying or dusting.

Many chemicals are available now-a-days in the market and are used as present day scientific remedies for control of insects pests. The Chlorinated hydrocarbons such as Chlordane, Gammaxane DO 25, Gammaxane WBP. 50, Guesarol 550 (DDT) are widely used in the cultivator's fields. There is one group of chemicals such as Ekatox 20, Paramar 50, etc., which are parathion preparation. There are phosphatic group of insecticides also e.g. Zinc phosphide, Hexaethyal tetraphosphate (H.E.T.P.) Tetraethyl pyrophosphate (T.E.P.P.) etc. Products of certain plants such as derris, pyrethrum, tobacco and others are also used as insecticides in the present days. The sulphur compounds and the cyanide compounds are also used in a large scale for control of mites, insects or rhodents.

Certain insects eat and thrive upon other insects and such insects are known as predators and parasites. Here the Biological method is applied. This method of controlling insects, pests consist of rearing the parasites and predators in the laboratory in large numbers and then releasing them over the infested fields containing their hosts, the insect pests.

Now-a-days there are legislative measures which prevent introducing insect pest from one country to another. Sufficient steps such as fumigation or treatments with pesticides of exported food stuffs and plants, careful examination of imported food stuffs or plants, are taken to prevent spreading of population of an insect pest to extensive areas. This measure is called the Quarantine method of controlling pests.

Popularity of Scientific methods: The scientific methods of controlling insect pests have been taken up gradually by the cultivators, as they find that most of these methods and chemicals give easier elimination of the injurious mites, insects or rhodents.

The cultivators are giving up the traditional methods of controlling insect pests, particularly those which are based on superstition. Some of the cultivators in the far interior villages are ignorant about the present day advanced methods even today. But there is every prospect that ignorance of such cultivators will be removed in near future and they will be enlightened by the achievement of their fellow cultivators who have already adopted the advanced scientific methods for control of insects and other pests.

Application of Scientific methods and the part played by the Agricultural Department: The District Agricultural Officer, Jorhat was invested with overall responsibilities for the implementation of the 2nd Five Year Plan. He was assisted in this task by two Subdivisional Agricultural Officers posted at Sibsagar and Golaghat and numerous other agricultural Inspectors, Assistant Inspectors and Demonstrators. An Agricultural Extention Officer was posted in every National Extension Service Block for intensive development work. Some of the overall achievements during the 2nd Plan period have been given below :

In Jorhat Subdivision 18,596.8 acres were covered under the N.P.K. fertiliser scheme against a fixed target of 40,640 acres. The reasons for the non-attainment of these targets in full are (1) insufficient supply of fertiliser and (2) lack of enthusiasm among cultivators. Under this scheme mainly, nitrogenous fertilizer, supperphosphate and other fertilizers were distributed.

Under the scheme of seed multification and distribution in Jorhat subdivision 40,733 acres under improved paddy and 1,008 acres under pulses were covered. In Sibsagar Subdivision 4,828 maunds of improved seeds such as paddy, pulse and wheat were distributed in the period ranging from 1958-59 to 1960-61. In Golaghat subdivision 5,213 acres in 1958-59, 3,422 acres in 1959-60 and 7,085 acres in 1960-61 were covered by this scheme.

The achievements made under the Green Manure Scheme have been given below :

Year	*Quantity Distributed*	*Area covered*
1956-57	377 maunds	14,678 acres
1957-58	80 "	5,635 "
1958-59	328 "	8,010 "
1959-60	296 maunds 17 srs & 8,793 plets of green manuring seed	13,119 "
1960-61	345 mds. 12 srs. and 1600 plets of J. M. Seed.	10,080.9 "

Under the crop competition scheme 776.5 acres were covered and 172.9 tons additionally produced in Jorhat subdivision. In Golaghat sub-

division 220 acres were covered and in Sibsagar subdivision 24 units of crop competition were undertaken.

In two years, 1956-57 and 1957-58, 2,883 and 2,820 acres were under the Japanese method of cultivation. In the following three years, 4,760.5 acres were brought under this method in Jorhat subdivision alone. In the same period 3,832.54 acres were brought under this method in Golaghat Subdivision and 1,739 acres were brought under this method in Sibsagar subdivision in the last two years of the 2nd Plan.

In the years 1956-57 and 1957-58, 9,011 acres were treated with pesticides under the Plant protection scheme. In the following three years the achievements made under the scheme were Jorhat subdivision—6,1405 acres; Golaghat subdivision—2,785 acres; and Sibsagar subdivision—10,619.47 acres.

22,711 acres in Jorhat and 1,232 acres in Golaghat were brought under Double cropping during the period 1958-59 to 1960-61.

In the first two years of the plan 3,170 acres were covered by the Rural compost scheme and in the folowing three years the coverage was: Jorhat subdivision—15,532 acres; Golaghat subdivision—3,927.7 acres; and Sibsagar subdivision—9.023 compost pits.

During the plan period Jute development scheme covered 5,757 acres in the whole district.

A total of 613 acres have been covered by the Oil seed development scheme in the year 1960-61.

Under the Horticultural development scheme in the year 1960-61 citrus, coconut and spices plants were distributed; of them fruit grass numbered 6,128, coconut seedling 8,495 and cashewnut and spices 1,737.

Altogether 14 district Seed farms were established in the district for multiplication and distribution of improved seeds. They are as follows :

Jorhat Subdivision—	1. Tingtingia	seed	farm
	2. Cherelipathar	"	"
	3. Jogduar	"	"
	4. Holongapar	"	"
	5. Majuli	"	"
	6. Kundargaon	"	"
Sibsagar Subdivision—	1. Karengghar	"	"
	2. Bakata	"	"
	3. Sapekhati	"	"
	4. Dimow	"	"
Golaghat Subdivision—	1. Hebbebi	"	"
	2. Charingia	"	"
	3. Fallangani	"	"
	4. Bafariani	"	"

In order to increase production through the active co-operation of the tillers of the soil a new Statewide programme, under the Field Management Committee, was organised throughout the State during the year 1959-60. The unit area of operation is the Field, locally known as *Pathar*, and the agency of implementation will be a Field Management Committee which will include the actual cultivators. The objective of the organisation has been to enthuse each and every cultivator to develop along progressive and scientific lines. The organisation also seeks self-help, voluntary co-operation and enterprise from peasants. As it is not possible for the scattered Agricultural staff to contact and enthuse the huge number of agricultural families, it was thought desirable to organize a programme where every cultivating family realize that the initiative for their and the country's development rested with them and it needed to be sustained by their own labour and effort.

The following table will show the number of such committees formed and registered in different subdivisions of the district :

Subdivision	*F.M.C. formed*	*F.M.C. registered*
Sibsagar	652	496
Jorhat	471	461
Golaghat	495	400

At present all agricultural activities of the department are being canalized through these committees. These committees will be the principal agencies for assisting the Department of Agriculture in matters of production. In future the Department will contact the cultivators through these committees and not individually. The committee members are now being trained on various improved methods of agriculture by holding seminars in different subdivisions and Development Blocks.

Agricultural Research centres: There are three research centres (1) Rice Experimental Station, Titabar (2) Toklai Experimental Station, Jorhat and (3) Agro-Economic Research Centre, Jorhat. The Assam Agricultural College is the only College of its kind in the State. Mention may also be made of the Research-cum-multiplication Farm, Kokilamukh, composite Research Station for pepper, cardamon and cashew nut, Dergaon & Arecanut Research Nursery, Barbheta.

Rice Experimental Station, Titabar: The *Rice Experimental Station* at Titabar was established in the year 1922 to study the paddy varieties, *ahu* and *sali*, grown in Assam Valley and to conduct researches on the improvement of these two classes of paddy. The experiments were conducted to evolve high yielding varieties possessing desirable qualities.

There are two Sections working at the Station viz. Research Section and General Section. The General Section of the Farm consists of Manager, Assistant Manager, and Office Assistant. The Manager is responsible for

general management of the farm and multiplies the improved seeds evolved by the Research Section. The Research Section consists of one Botanical Assistant, one Botanical Field Assistant and one Botanical Field man. The Botanical Assistant is fully responsible for conducting various experiments on the improvement of Paddy.

The work of the Research Station started with the collection of different varieties of paddy, grown in the Assam Valley as well as from outside. The total collection of varieties are 350 in *Ahu* and 1260 in *Sali*. The Experimental works are conducted on the following lines :

1. *Pure line Selection.*
2. *Pure Varietal trials.*
3. *Final Varietal trials.*
4. *Cultural Experiments :*
   (*a*) Number of ploughings.
   (*b*) Time of ploughings.
   (*c*) Seed rate per acre in Ahu.
   (*d*) Seed rate per acre of seed bed.
   (*e*) Time of sowing.
   (*f*) Time of transplanting.
   (*g*) Spacing between the seedlings.
   (*h*) Number of seedlings per hole.
   (*i*) Time of harvesting (maturity).
5. *Manurial trials :*
   (*a*) Organic manures *vs.* non manure.
   (*b*) Inorganic furtilizers *vs.* non manure.
   (*c*) Combination of N.P. and K.
   (*d*) Different dozen of N2.
   (*e*) Time of application of fertilizers.
   (*f*) Effect of minor elements in production.
   (*g*) Green manuring.
6. *Milling Experiments.*
7. *Miscellaneous experiments (seed testing, etc.)*
8. *Cross breeding of different varieties to combine desirable characters.*
9. *Study of different generation of hybrid types.*
10. *Study of high fertility respond types.*
11. *Study of Japanica and Indica crosses* (FAO. scheme.)
12. *General studies, etc.*

The selected type which is known as improved variety with high yield and desirable qualities is multiplied at the station as nucleus seed. These nucleus seeds are distributed to the districts for multiplication as primary seeds which have been distributed to the growers.

The types thus evolved and selected by the research section of this station have been tested against the local best variety at the farms as well as the cultivators' fields before distributed to the actual growers.

The better cultural methods which are found to be superior to the local practice and better manuring process are also communicated to the district staff time to time for publication.

Here a large number of samples of *ahu* and *sali* paddy are collected from different growing areas of the State and out-side the State and grown in time to test the purity. Plants that are found to breed true are continued to study the various characters. They have to pass through a rigid test before final selection. Thus the pure line is established and their respective yields recorded. Some of the promising ones are compared together in a preliminary varietal trial in suitable statistical layout for three years. Five or six best types are then selected from the above trial and put them in final varietal trial which is continued for five years. The most promising type is finally selected for multiplication and distribution. As a result of selection from the pure lines, a number of improved strains have been recommended from the Titabar Station suitable to different localities, viz. three in *ahu* and eight in *sali*. The list is attached to it with characters for information.

Cross breeding work on *Ahu* and *Sali* paddy was taken up at the station with a view to evolving new strains processing economic and desirable characters. Cross breeding between two different types is necessary when we want to combine two different characters of these types. Artificial crossing in paddy is a difficult job to obtain a desirable plant having desirable characters. Cross breeding is done every year at the station to study some characters as well as to evolve a high yielding strain.

As a result of breeding and selection works at the station one hybrid in *Ahu* and two hybrids in *Sali* have been recommended to the growers. The list of these types is attached here for information.

A large number of hybrids are under study in different generations. The hybrids of the cross between Japanica and indice types are also under study in different generations under high fertility condition. A number of promising types are under comparative trials now.

Besides the improved strains, a series of cultural experiments were conducted with a view to improve the method of cultivation of paddy. As a result of these experiments, conducted at the station, the following improved methods of paddy cultivation have been recommended to the growers:

Broad-cast Ahu :

Best time of sowing—March and April.
Best seed rate per acre—60-70 ths
Optimum number of weeding—2 times
Best state of harvesting—When the grains are still somewhat green in the lower part of the penicle

Transplanted Ahu :

Best time of sowing—April
Best seed rate per acre seed bed—4 maunds
Best time of transplanting—May
Best age of seedlings—4-5 weeks
Best number of seedlings per hole—2-3 numbers
Best spacing—6 inches both ways

Sali Paddy :

Best time of sowing—June and July
Best seed rate per acre of seed bed—5-3 mds.

Best time of transplanting—July to middle of August

Best No. of seedlings per hole—2-4 numbers

Best spacing—9 inches both ways

Time of harvesting—30 days after flowering

The object of the station is to conduct researches in the various scientific lines for the all-round improvement of paddy. The experiments are conducted to evolve better cultural practices with a view to improving the quality as well as increasing the yield of the crop. Cross-breeding is done to evolve high yielding strains with desirable economic qualities. The following list shows the improved strains of paddy :

LIST OF IMPROVED STRAINS OF PADDY

Name of variety	*Strain No*	*Duration of crop*	*Yield per acre*	*Kernel*	*Remarks*
AHU :-					
Rangaduria	As. 86	100 days	1900-2000 ths	Red	Grains medium, good for double cropped areas
Dubaichenga	As. 48	110 days	2100-2200 ths	Red	Grains medium good yielder
Garmah	As. 35	103 days	2200 ths	Red	Grains medium
Hybrid	As. c. 318-11	100 days	1600-1700 ths	White	Medium grains
SALI :-					
Ahom Sali	S. 70 (a)	160 days	3200-3300 ths	White	Grain medium
Kanaimuluk	Sl. 533	158 days	3100-3200 ths	"	Grains medium, can stand in all weather condition
Land dermra	S. 126	165 days	3200-3300 ths	"	Grains coarse
Latamaguri	S. 115	165 days	3000-3200 ths	"	Grains coarse, can be grown broad-cast
Gomeri Bara	S.B. 279	160 days	2800-2900 ths	"	Grains coarse, good for pitha, and soft rice
Jahari	S.D. 240	160 days	2800-2900 ths	"	Grains medium, elongated good for chira and muri
Hati Sali	S. 36	170 days	2900-3000 ths	"	Grains coarse, good for late transplanting
Kalamdani	S.L. 202	162 days	3300-3400 ths	"	Grains medium, elongated can be grown as broadcast in low areas
Hybrid Andrew Sali	S.C. 308-57	166 days	3200-3300 ths	"	Grains coarse elongated
Hybrid	S.C. 406-93-1	160 days	3300-3400 ths	"	Grains medium good yielder

There is scope for further improvement of works on the researches on paddy, specially on breeding works to evolve high yielding strains with resistance to disease and insect pests. Experiments on the application of nitrogen, phosphates and potash are still to be investigated to find out a suitable formula applicable to Assam soil.

Provision for the improvement of paddy crop at Titabar Station was not done in the first and second five years plans. Efforts were made to include some research works in the third five year plan for expanding the works on different classes of paddy viz. *Ahu*, *Sali*, *Bao* and *Boḍo* of Assam. It is stated that works are also in progress on jute, banana, pulses, bamboo and pineapple.[8]

Tokolai Experimental Station : The Tokolai Experimental Station is the research headquarters of the Scientific Department of the Indian Tea Association. This scientific Department is financed and run entirely by the Association, and provides a research and advisory service for the North Indian Tea Industry. Research is carried out on the culture and manufacture of tea, and the results of this research and other useful information are disseminated by the Department's advisory officers.

The service of the Tokolai station and its advisory officers are available to both I.T.A. member estates and non-member estates. The latter have to pay fees for these service in lieu of the subscription to the I.T.A.

The Scientific Department of the Indian Tea Association was inaugurated in 1900 in Calcutta. Dr. H. H. Mann was appointed Scientific Officer and was given working room in the Indian Museum in the laboratory of the Economic Chemist to the Government of India.

In 1902 a new field experimental station was opened at Silikha T. E. Mariani, Assam and Mr. H. Hutchinson appointed to take charge of it. In 1906 an Entomologist was appointed who took up residence in Cachar.

In 1911 it was decided to centralise the work of the various branches and an Experimental Station was opened at Tokolai near Cinnamara, Assam. By 1914 the staff consisted of a Chief Scientific Officer, two Assistant Scientific Officers, an Entomologist and a Mycologist.

After the first World War Mr. Carpenter became Chief Scientific Officer and on his suggestions a period of expansion was started, which lasted until the financial depression of 1931.

Between 1935 and 1939, following the recommendation of a Commission of Enquiry headed by Prof. Sir Frank Engledow there was further expansion of staff and service.

[8] M. S. Randhawa : *Agricultural Research in India : Institutes and Organisation* 1958, p. 297.

The period of World War II, however, saw further setbacks in the work of the Station and a serious reduction in staff, although it was possible to maintain most of the more important field experiments and thus preserve their continuity.

In the immediate post-war years staff, whose service had been lost during and after the war, were replaced and few new appointments were made. A second Commission of Enquiry again headed by Sir Frank Engledow was constituted in 1953, and following his recommendations, published in 1954, the greatest period of expansion in the history of Tokolai took place.

The following list shows the branches functioning at present, and gives some notes on their activities. The Director Mr. H. Ferguson is in full administrative and technical control of the Station.

The Physico-Chemical branch deals with the soil and climate of the tea growing areas. Its functions are to find out the factors in these environments which are favourable or otherwise to tea, to define suitable condition and to try different methods of ameliorating unfavourable factors.

The Botany branch deals with the tea plant. Its functions are to distinguish between different types of tea, to select and propagate by suitable means the best types for different regions, and to study metabolism of the tea plant in relation to its environment, so that cultural practice, etc., can be adapted to the plant's requirements for maximum yield and optimum quality.

The Agricultural branch deals with the culture of the tea crop cultivation, manuring shade, pruning, plucking, etc. Its main work is to test the effect of different cultural treatments, different types of tea, etc. on tea-yield and quality, in field experiments under garden conditions. This branch is responsible for the experimental garden at Borbheta, situated about 3 miles from the main Tokolai Station and consists of a total of about 250 acres of which approximately 100 acres are under tea.

The Plant Pathology branch deals with pests and diseases of tea bushes and of shade trees. These are the factors which cause loss in yield even when the best type of plant is grown under the best conditions of soil and climate. The branch comprises sections for entomology, mycology and pesticide testing.

The Biochemistry branch is engaged in elucidating the chemical differences in tea leaf at all stages of manufacture, associated with different types of tea, culture practices and manufacturing methods ; and to correlate these with flavour, quality, etc. This branch co-operates closely with Indian Tea Association Laboratory in London.

It is essential to check quality as well as yield and the function of the branch of Tea-testing and Manufacturing Advisory Board is to maintain or improve quality associated with different types of tea, cultural practices

and methods of manufacture. Advice is given to commercial estates, on methods of manufacture and faulty processes. There is close co-operation between this branch and the Engineering Department Branch.

The Engineering branch, established in 1951 at Tokolai, specialises in design of tea machinery and investigation of mechanisation in both the field and the factory.

A Statistical Department was set up in 1958 and is engaged on surveying and assessing the relative effect of factors associated with the yield and quality of tea. It co-operates closely with other branches in the designing of experiments and analysis of their results.

Advisory Branches: North East India is catered for by the Assam and West Bengal Advisory Branches each with its own Chief Advisory Officer.

In Assam, sub-stations are maintained in Cachar and on the north Bank and West Bengal there is a sub-station in Darjeeling for the Darjeeling Terai and Western Duars area. Two Assistant Advisory Officers are employed with the special task of assisting gardens, not member of the I.T.A.

Advisory Officers maintain close contact with the planting community by regular touring and visits to gardens and they are also responsible for the supervision of field experiments and trials in their own district. These trials are supplementary to those at Borbheta and provide a valuable commercial check on, and amplification of Borbheta results under local conditions.

The work of the Scientific Department is brought to the tea planter by means of Tokolai Scientific Memoranda, by the *Tea Encyclopaedia* and the quarterly News Letter, *Two Leaves and a Bud*. A very close personal liaison is also maintained and much individual advice provided by the Advisory Branches.

Over the years, the work of Tokolai has contributed largely to the continued success of the tea industry. By trials and experiments improvements in the methods of culture and manufacture have been achieved and the future aim of the station is to bring about further improvements and to introduce modern techniques both in culture and manufacture.

Extensive investigations have been carried out in cultivation manuring, pruning and plucking, green crops, shade, plant breeding and propagation, etc. and an active Pathology Department has done much to minimise the damage of pest and diseases throughout the industry. Modern machinery has been developed and new methods of manufacture investigated.

Work has been carried out on the long and short term effects of continuous artificial manuring on crop and quality and on soil status. The

efficacy and suitability of various natural and artificial fertilisers has been investigated, and the most suitable fertilisers and optimum application rates and times have been found. The effect of shade and green crops on soil status and yield and quality continues to be studied.

Pruning and plucking in relation to quality, crop-yield and distribution have been investigated in most districts of North East India, and work has been done on the modification required to suit various environmental conditions.

The kinds of tea in commercial use have been extensively studied, and breeding and propagation schemes put into operation. These aim at the development of superior kinds of tea both in respect of crop and quality and at the rapid multiplication of stocks of these new teas.

Pests and diseases affecting tea have been extensively studied and effective control measures evolved. Various pesticides are constantly under trial to find the optimum economic dose rates and to find the best methods and times of application. In connection with this various types of spraying and dusting equipment have also been extensively tested.

To enable these investigations to be carried out an average of about 50 field experiments have been in operation annually over the last 20 years. The majority of these are being carried out in the Association's own experimental garden at Borbheta near Tokolai, although many are replicated in various districts of North East India. The former are under the supervision of the Agricultural Branch, and the latter under the joint supervision of the Agricultural branch and the Station's advisory officers.

Studies by the Biochemical branch into the chemistry of tea have contributed largely to the understanding of the manufacturing process which in turn has facilitated the development of modern methods. Factory experiments have been conducted throughout the tea areas, designed to assist in achieving methods which will produce tea of the best quality and to find means of effecting a measure of control over variable factors in the process.

Since 1951 the Engineering Branch has been working on the development of machinery which will enable a controlled and continuous methods of manufacture at all stages to be introduced.

It should be noted that much of the work of the Scientific Department has been possible by the co-operation of members of the Indian Tea Association in whose gardens and factories many of the experiments have been carried out.

Further major expansion of the Scientific Department is not anticipated in the near future, but it is intended that existing services will continue and that research and experiment in all aspects of culture and manufacture will also continue at the present level.

Assam Agricultural College, Jorhat: The need of the Agricultural College in the State of Assam was felt for a long time and with the attainment of independence this idea received impetus. This College was established in 1948 as a Government College (affiliated to the Gauhati University) in an abandoned military canteen at Borbheta which is situated at a distance of 3 miles from Jorhat Town with 30 students in the roll. The first batch of students appeared at B.Sc. (Agriculture) final Examination in 1952 and the College was shifted to its new building at Borbheta in 1954.

This College has been established for imparting Scientific, Theoretical and Practical Training in Agriculture and in the sciences most closely related to Agriculture. It encompasses not only farming but a wide range of related objects that offer, and will continue to offer, opportunities to young people of ability, no matter whether their interest centre is in farming, commercial enterprise, science and experiments or in education.

The responsibility for the discipline and management of the College is vested in the Principal under the control of the Director of Agriculture, Assam.

The climate of the place where the college is situated is fairly pleasant, except for a few months from May to August. The average rainfall of the place is about 85" a year, and this is fairly well distributed throughout the year. In mid-winter, fogs are very common at night as well as in the morning. The elevation of the place is about 300 feet above the sea level.

The present college building is located just outside the Government Farm, Borbheta. The area in which the College now stands was part of the Military Camps at Rowriah, a small railway station on the Furkating Jorhat Railway. The area is therefore about half way from the Jorhat town and the Rowriah Station. The land nearly is studded with tea gardens and is therefore, quite open, and for that reason, very suitable as site for an Agriculture College.

The College is in possession of an area of about 120 acres of land which is adjacent to the Jorhat Experimental Farm. The College farm is also being laid out in the area. The Government Experimental Farm has an area of nearly 80 acres on which experiments on sugarcane and other crops are conducted by the Agricultural Chemist and the Economic Botanist. The Government Cattle farm covering an area of another 104 acres is attached to the College. The cattle farm has a number of cattle of different breeds and the Poultry section is also situated in the Cattle Farm. The Plant Protection Division is located just outside the Cattle Farm. The Basic Agricultural School was abolished in 1960, and merged with the Integrated Extension Training Centre, Borbheta. The Government Nursery and Orchard operated by the Horticultural Development Officer are also located

near the College area. The Titabar Farm where experiments of Paddy are conducted and the Kokilamukh Farm where experiments of *Rabi* crops are conducted, are 11 and 7 miles respectively from the College site which are providing ample facilities to the students for Practical Training. Excellent facilities are, therefore, available for giving practical instruction to the students of the College in all aspects of the Agricultural Science.

The College site is contiguous to the experimental plantation of the Tea Research Station of the I.T.A. This station carries on reseach works on all problems connected with the production and manufacture of tea. An Extension Training Centre, run by the Community Project Administration, is also adjacent to the college.

The admission of students was raised to 70 with the beginning of 2nd Five Year Plan. Further expansion of building programme is in its way. Several staff quarters and subordinate quarters has been completed towards the end of the 1st Five Year Plan and in the beginning of the Second Five Year Plan several staff quarters for Principal, Professors, Lecturers, two Hostels, Library building are completed and a few are in the way of completion.

The number of students in different years are shown below along with the students graduating from this College:

Number of students in		*Number of graduates coming out of the College in*	
1948	30	1952	14
1949	60	1953	8
1950	60	1954	12
1951	76	1955	16
1952	85	1956	20
1953	91	1957	22
1954	91	1958	20
1955	100	1959	15
1956	129		
1957	137		
1958	177		
1959	189		

Five merit Scholarships at Rs. 55/- p.m. plus free tution in First Year, Second Year, Third Year and Fourth year Classes are open to the students belonging to the State of Assam.

Besides these, students obtain a number of Scholarships from the Education Department, Tribal Areas Department, Relief and Rehabilitation Department, Tea Board, etc.

The total number of seats in 1961-62 was 100. The allotments of

seats are subject to variations year by year under Government instructions. Subjects taught in the different Courses of Studies are as follows :

Subject taught in the I.Sc. (Agri)
Duration 2 years

1. Agronomy
2. Botany (includes Elementary Zoology)
3. Chemistry (includes Soil)
4. Animal Husbandry (includes Vety. Science)
5. Physics and Climatology (includes Mathematics)
6. English & Indian Languages

Subject taught in the B.Sc. (Agri)
Duration 2 years

1. Agronomy
2. Agri. Botany
3. Plant Pathalogy and Bacteriology
4. Agricultural Chemistry
5. Dairy Farming & Dairying
6. Entomology
7. Agri. Engineering
8. Horticulture
9. Agricultural Economics
10. Tea

Agro-economic Research Centre for North-East India at Jorhat: The Agro-Economic Research Centre for North-east India owed its origin to a programme of Continuous Village Survey to gauge Socio-Economic changes in the rural societies initiated by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Government of India. Previously the north-eastern region of India was under the jurisdiction of the Agro-Economic Research Centre for East India, Visva-Bharati University, Santiniketan. Ultimately it was decided that the region comprising Assam, Manipur, NEFA and the Naga Land, may be entrusted to a new Centre and the present Centre at Jorhat started its work in the month of February, 1960. The Centre had to face many initial disadvantages, both in the matter of organisation and set-up. Ultimately it could overcome those difficulties and address itself to the task for which it was intended.

The functions assigned to the Centre, *interalia,* are as follows:

1. To make a study of changes in rural economy by means of survey of a number of selected villages each year and resurvey of the same group of villages at intervals of five years.
2. To conduct adhoc investigations into problems of interest to the Ministry of Food and Agriculture.
3. To carry on research work on fundamental problems relating to agricultural economics of the country.
4. To give technical advice to the Government of India and the State Governments on such issues as with mutual agreement may be referred to the Centre.

The Centre within a short period of its existence could cover some of the assignments in respect of studies in rural change and some problematic studies concerning rural economy. Two reports on the benchmark surveys of two tribal vilages have been completed: Kanther Terang a typical jhum village in the district of Mikir Hills, Assam and Kathaliacherra, a Government-sponsored jhumia settlement colony in Tripura have covered some of the basic problems connected with jhuming or shifting cultivation. An adhoc study on the State Trading in Paddy in Assam was taken up and the reports on the subject have been finalised. Moreover, the benchmark surveys of Morangaon in the district of Sibsagar and the resurvey of Dispur, a village in the district of Kamrup and Chotahaibar, a village in the district of Nowgong have been completed. Over and above its regular programme of continuous village surveys, the Centre proposes to undertake problem-oriented studies concerning the Tribal communities of the region.

(d) Animal Husbandary and fisheries :

(i) *Area under fodder crops:* There are nearly 381 bighas of land under fodder crop. Fodder cultivation at Joysagar Key Village centre has proved profitable and people of surrounding areas are taking keen interest in grow more Fodder campaign. Free distribution of roots and seeds of improved grasses is undertaken by this centre. Sale proceeds of the products of the centre are more than the expenditure incurred in cultivation though all the roots and seeds are distributed free of cost from the centre.

(ii) *Dairy-farming:* There is only one Dairy Farm, known as Kaliapani Dairy Farm, in existence since 1958-59. Established at a cost of Rs. 6,27,000.00, it has an area of 900 bighas and another 400 bighas will be brought under it soon. In January 1961 the farm had 93 Hariana cows and 3 breeding bulls. The Veterinary Department contemplates to rear another 186 cows in near future and the supply of milk would then be made available to Jorhat and Sibsagar towns. Milk pasteurisation scheme is under consideration and every endeavour is being made to make the Farm self-sufficient.

(iii) *Poultry:* There are six government and thirty-six private Poultry Farms. Government demonstration Poultry Farms are at Borbheta, Dimou and Sarupathar. Government Pig Farms are at Dimou, Sarupathar and Kamalabari. Improved Birkshire breeds of pigs are sold in these Farms. Dimou and Borbheta have also got demonstration Goat Farms.

(iv) *Fisheries:* The observation made in the old Gazeteer of this district that fishing on a commercial scale was restricted to the Nadiyals

only is no longer valid now. Fishing is a growing industry, where both public and private enterprises participate, irrespective of any class, creed or caste. The Superintendent of Fisheries at Jorhat is the Head of the Department in the district, who is assisted by two Fishery Officers at Jorhat and Golaghat, there being no such officer at Sibsagar. At Joysagar there is another Superintendent of Fishery, who is also Research Officer there and who is independent of the district organisation, but works in collaboration with his counterpart at Jorhat. In addition there are Assistant Fishery Officers, Fishery Demonstrators and Fishery Supervisors, one in each centre of Borbheta Fish Farm, Negheriting Sivadol tank, Golaghat Ware House tank and Maridhansiri Beel and one Fishery Demonstrator in each blocks of Dimou, Majuli, Jorhat and Sarupathar.

The Joysagar Fish Farm, over and above earning revenue for the Government, imparts training to demonstrators supervisors and gramsevaks in subjects such as Fishery, Biology and Technology, Pisciculture, Boat and Net Making. The duration of the course in this training centre is of one year and so far training has been imparted to 59 demonstrators, 33 gramsevaks and 13 supervisors.

The revenue figures of Joysagar fish farm have been given below:

1951-52	...	Rs. 1695/13 as		1956-57	...	Rs. 2265/10½ as	
1952-53	...	Rs. 3479/ 1 as		1957-58	...	Rs. 2172/ 3 as	
1953-54	...	Rs. 2935/15 as		1958-59	...	Rs. 6147/ 8 as	
1954-55	...	Rs. 2906/12 as		1959-60	...	Rs. 10,517/ 6 as	
1955-56	...	Rs. 3049/ 9 as					

The activities of the Development of Fisheries in the district were started in 1948 with the establishment of seed collection centres at Nazira and Joysagar. After that the activity was extended to Jorhat and Golaghat sub-divisions in 1954 and 1958 respectively by appointing one Fishery Officer in each sub-division.

In Golaghat Sub-division, one old Tank was reclaimed at Negheriting and was stocked with fish seeds since 1957. The tank has not yet been fished and is going to be fished on tender basis shortly.

At Borbheta, within Jorhat Sub-division, a Fish Farm has been constructed and the reclamation work is in progress. Induced Breeding operation has been successful here for the first time on 30-6-60. From the Borbheta Fish Farm, fish seeds are supplied to the interested Pisciculturists.

In Golaghat Sub-division the primary work of the Department has been to help Pisciculturists by supplying fish seeds and by giving technical

advice. Recently, reclamation work of a tank at Golaghat town and the Maridhansiri beel in the Golaghat Sub-division has been taken up.

In addition, there are small Fish Farms in the Development Blocks at Sarupathar and Dimou from where fish seeds and fishes are sold to public.

The right of fishing the more important rivers and *beels* is every year put up to auction by Revenue Department. The revenue yield by the fisheries in 1959-60 amounted to Rs. 178,467.88 P.

The most important fisheries, after the Brahmaputra, are in Sibsagar Sub-division, the Darika river, the Dilih, Garjan, the Jaradhara, Rangapani, the Napukhri and Bhatiapar tanks, and the Mitang *beel*. In Jorhat they are the Dilhili, Kakadonga, and Kokila rivers, the Molow and Raboi *beels*, the Kakorikata *beel*, the Teok Taptapi, and the Kharupatiajan. In Golaghat the Dhansiri river and the Gela *beels* bring in a considerable revenue.

The nets that are most commonly in use include: (1) *Ghakota*, a net in the shape of a shovel which is pushed through the water and is generally used to catch *pona* fish; (2) *Khewali*, a piece of netting to the centre of which a rope is attached, while all round the edges there are weights. The net is thrown flat on the surface of the water, when the weights sink and drag the sides of the net together. It is then drawn by the rope to a boat or bank. The names, applied to this net as the mesh decreases in size are: *sayani*, *pachani*, *afalia*, *angtha* and *ghanjal*; (3) *Langi*, a large net which is stretched right across a river, the bottom being weighted and the top buoyed. The fish are then driven towards the net and become entangled in its meshes. The *tenga langi* is a smaller variety, the two ends of which are brought round to form a circle as the net is not long enough to reach across the river; (4) *Parangi*, a square net, the opposite corners of which are fastened to flexible bamboos. The net thus hangs like a sack from a stout pole to which the bamboos are attached and is lowered into the water and raised at intervals. Various wicker-work traps are also used. The *pola* resembles a gigantic wine glass with a short stem made of wicker work. It is generally used by men, who walk through shallow water and keep pressing the rim on the mud at the bottom. Any fish that are caught are removed through an opening at the top. The *Juluki* is a smaller kind of *pola*. The *Jakoi* is a species of wicker work shovel which is generally used by women. They place the broad end of the shovel on the ground before them, and trample up the mud so as to drive the small fry into it. Conical bamboo traps which are called *dingaru*, *thupa*, *sepa* and *gui*, and are worked on the principle of the lobster pot, are placed in small streams of running water near the rice fields.

The list of fishes found in the district is given below:

Scientific name	*Local name*
Carps	
Labeo rohita	Rohu
Lalbeo calbasu	Mali (mahlu)
Labeo nandina	Nadani
Labeo genius	Kurhi
Labeo bata	Bhangan
Labeo angra	Anka nara
Labeo panpanguisia	Nara
Catla catla	Bahu
Cirrhina reba	Lachim
Cirrhina mrigula	Mirika
Barbus sarana	Senee
Barbus tor	Pithia
Murrels	
Ophiocephalus marulius	Sal
" straitus	Sol
" punctutus	Goroi
" Cachual	Sengeli
" stewarti	Senga
" *amphibious*	*Barsenga*
Cat fish	
Wallago attu	Barali
Mystus seenghala	Anari
" Oar	Bheu
" cavsius	Gagal
" tengra	Singra
" *Bleedery*	*Hingara*
Clarious magur	*Magur*
Heteropneustes fossilis	Singee
Callichrous bimacoulatus	Pabha
" *Padba*	Pabha
Entropichathys vacha	Bosa
Pangasius pangasius	Punga
Cat fish	
Pseudotropious gorua	Neria
Silonoa silonlia	Kas
Rita rita	Ritha
Bagarious bagraius	Gorua
Misc	
Narbus stigma	Puthi
" Ticto	*Puthi*
Natopterus natopterus	Kandhuli
" chitala	Chital
Hilsa ilisha	Ilisa
Anabsas testudeneus	Kaoi
Tricogaster faciatus	Khalihana
Tricogaster chuna	Bheseli
Nandus nandus	Gadgedi
Glassogobious giurius	*Patimutura*
Gudusia *chapra*	Karati
Rasbra elenga	Eleng
Mastacembalus armatus	Bami
" Pancalius	Tura
Rhynobdella aculeata	Tura
Ambasis nama	Canda
Amblypharayngodon mola	Moa
Rashora donricus	Dorikana
Ambasis ranga	Chanda
Esmus donricus	Donikana
Yenonotodon cancila	Kakila
Chela Bacila	Chelkana
Laubucca laubuca	Laupatia
Rohtee cotio	Hapha
Batia dario	Batia
Amphipneus cuchia	Kuchia
Barilius bola	Bariala

(vi) *Measures taken for improving quality of breeds, etc.:* Upgrading of local cattle has been taken up through artificial insemination in the *Key Village* units with sufficient number of cows. Removal of weedy Bulls has also been taken up by means of castration. Semen from Hariana Bulls is being used for insemination of local cows. There are few numbers of Hariana Bulls for natural service which are also kept at the Bull depots and Dairy Farms in different places and in certain breeding centres. There is a Cattle-breeding Farm at Jorhat. Cattle fairs and calf rally are organised in connection with *Gausamvardhana* week and exhibitions are

held. The district staff visits the interior villages and delivers lectures on segregation of old, invalid and diseased animals.

(vii) *Animal diseases and Veterinary Hospitals:* The cattle diseases common in the District are anthrax, haemorrhagic—septicaemia, black quarter, B.C.P.P., foot and mouth disease, rinder pest and parasitic diseases. In the Majuli areas of the district a particular cattle disease known as Bovine contagious Pluropneumonia occurs in any and every season of the year sporadically.

There are two Veterinary hospitals at Sibsagar and Lichubari (Jorhat Sub-division). The number of dispensaries is 21 and they are situated at Nazira, Moranhat, Sonari, Jorhat, Mariani, Majuli, Teok, Titabar, Ratanpur, Kakojan, Golaghat, Badalipara, Dergaon, Bokakhat, Kahar, Dimou, Sarupathar, Borhola, Borhat, Charingia and the Mobile dispensary with headquarters at Jorhat. Another at Tipomia will start functioning soon.

The following table will show the livestock population of the district in 1956:

Cattle	*Buffalo*	*Horse*	*Goat*	*Sheep*
6,63,204	67,406	4,206	1,75,972	1,072.

Pig	*Poultry*	*Ducks*
45,783	6,08,892	2,77,631

(e) Forestry:

There are two types of forests in the district, tropical evergreen forests and miscellaneous forests. The first category includes climatic climax vegetation such as *Hollong, Nahor, Sam, Amri, Gunseroi, Makai, Sopa,* etc. They are the best stocked stand of the district. In the second category are included the species whose top canopies are deciduous and the middle and lower canopies are evergreen in character. Qualitatively the latter forests are inferior and their commercial value is less.

The evergreen forests, as the name suggests, are evergreen in character and composed of many canopies, the top canopy being predominated by *Hollong* which lowers majestically over others with clean and straight poles of nearly 100 feet length. In some reserves *Makai* is also found associated with *Hollong* in this canopy. Other species that tend to attain considerable heights in this canopy are *Sam, Sopa, Gunseroi,* etc., but their occurrence is only sporadic in an otherwise gregarious crop of *Hollong* and *Kahir.* In the middle canopy of evergreen forests are found *Nahor* and *Morsal,* whereas in the lower canopy we find a variety of evergreen shrubs and herbs among which *Phutuka, Goshbhedeli, Gerukatamul, Rawpat, Tora, Lengoo,* etc., predominate.

The top canopy of miscellaneous forests is covered with deciduous species whose leafless period is considerably short. The most common tree in this canopy is *Bhelu* which towers over the rest and grows to gigantic dimensions but has a upper stem on account of its large buttressing habit. In the middle canopy *Nahor* finds predominant place but in the lower canopy, compared to evergreen forests, the undergrowth is lighter though climbers are found in greater profusion.

The harmful effects of soil erosion and scarcity of rainfall are yet to be felt here keenly although destruction of forest is taking place for a considerable long time. *Vanamohotsava* under which fruits and other trees are planted meets the situation only to a little extent.

(i) *Importance of Forestry:* Forestry has played an important role in the economy of the district. A vast majority of the people of the district depends upon forests for firewood for domestic consumption and for timber, bamboo, *ekra,* reed, thatch, *jengu, tokopat,* cane, etc., for house building purposes. In Dhansiri Valley division a large revenue is derived from cane which is used for making baskets that are marketable especially in tea and coal industries. Cane is also used for making furniture and is in great demand. Besides there are also boulders, gravels, sands, *dhunas, patidois,* etc., in the forests, which earn a considerable revenue. During the year 1956-57 in Dhansiri Valley part of the district Rs. 20,349.00 were earned from major forest products and Rs. 72,358.00 from minor forest products.

(ii) *Forest produce:* The value of minor forest produce in 1956-57 of Sibsagar and Dhansiri Valley Divisions stood at Rs. 3,42,805 and Rs. 1,36,381 respectively.

Revenue is also earned by permitting elephant hunting. The rates of royalty for each captured elephant are: (i) Rs. 500.00 for tusker; (ii) Rs. 250.00 for female; and (iii) Rs. 350.00 for *makhna.* Besides royalty, monopoly fees are levied on each captured elephant according to the rates offered by the successful operator. During the period ranging from 1951-52 to 1960-61, 35 tuskers, 52 *makhanas* and 72 females were captured and the total revenue realised, amounted to Rs. 1,12,964.00. During the period ranging from 1953-54 to 1960-61, Kaziranga Game Sanctuary afforded the opportunity of seeing the wild life to as many as 8,971 tourists and earned as much as Rs. 1,43,359.00 by issuing view permits. There is yet another source of earning revenue. This is done by means of issuing permits to professional graziers allowing their cattle to graze in the forests and realising a tax, known as grazing tax, from them on account of this. The amount of grazing tax, realised in the year 1957-58, is Rs. 7,488.00.

The revenue earned by selling rhinos during the years after independence amounted to Rs. 2,53,114.00. The price payable per rhino

delivered at Kahara, inclusive of cost of capture and feed and upkeep for one month from the date of capture, has been progressively increased from Rs. 10,000.00 in 1947 to Rs. 15,000.00 in 1950-51, then to Rs. 30,000.00 and subsequently in 1959 it had been fixed at Rs. 50,000 for sale outside India. For Indian Zoos the rate has been fixed at present at Rs. 25,000.00. But it has been further decided that when animals are to be given in the national interest, no price except the cost of capture and upkeep for one month only is to be charged.

Altogether fifteen rhinos were sold by giving a pair each to London, Chicago, Cairo, Brussels, Hamburg and Philadelphia Zoos and one each to Italy, Alipur and West Berlin Zoos. Four rhinos were given as free gifts, one each to Bombay, Madras, Delhi and Tokyo Zoos. Five rhinos were sold at actual cost of capture, one each to Mysore, Trivandrum, Bombay, Lucknow and Washington Zoos and one rhino was given on exchange basis to a dealer who sold it to the Tokyo Zoo.

The following is a statement, showing the number of Rhinos caught and sold or gifted to different parts of the country and outside the country during the 14 years after independence:

Year	*Places to which Sold or Gifted*	*Price Realised* Rs.	P.	*Remarks*
1. 1947	London Zoo (One)	9,965	00	—
2. 1947-48	Chicago Zoo (One)	10,000	00	—
3. 1947-48	"	10,000	00	—
4. 1948-49	Cairo Zoo	10,000	00	—
5. 1948-49	"	10,000	00	—
6. 1950-51	Brussels Zoo (One)	15,000	00	—
7. 1950-51	Italy Zoo (One)	15,000	00	—
8. 1951-52	Alipur Zoo (One)	15,000	00	—
9. 1951-52	London (One)	16,000	00	—
10. 1951-52	Bombay (One)	Free gift		—
11. 1951-52	Brussels Zoo (One)	15,000	00	—
12. 1952-53	Madras Zoo (One)	Free gift		—
13. 1952-53	Philadelphia (One)	15,000	00	—
14. 1955	"	20,000	00	—
15. 1956	Hamburg Zoo (One)	13,600		—
16. 1957	Mysore Zoo (One)	4,200	00	At actual cost of capture
17. 1957	Trivandrum Zoo	4,200	00	At actual cost of capture
18. 1958	Bombay	5,000	00	At actual cost of capture
19. 1958	Tokyo Zoo (One)			On exchange basis with a dealer who sold it to Tokyo Zoo
	Total—			Carried over

Year	*Places to which Sold or Gifted*	*Price Realised* Rs.	P.	*Remarks*
	Brought foward			
20. 1958	Lucknow Zoo (One)	4,200	00	At actual cost minus the cost of animal and birds supplied to State Zoo by the Lucknow Zoo
21. 1959	West Berlin Zoo (One)	30,000	00	—
22. 1959	Delhi Zoo (One)			Free of cost on exchange basis
23. 1960	Hamburg Zoo (One)	30,000	00	
24. 1960	Washington Zoo (One)	7,049	00	At actual cost of capture
25. 1961	Tokyo Zoo (One)			As free gift
	Total—	2,53,114	00	

Saw Mills: Over and above these, there are also many Saw Mills which depend primarily for their raw materials upon forest. There is also a big Veneer Mill at Mariani which manufactures tea-chest, flush-door and commercial plywood. There are also Agar distillation units, two at Deberapur Charali and one at Barpathar. These are run by expert labourers brought from outside Assam. The following table will show the outturn of Mariani Veneer Mill:

Year	*Nature of Plywood*	*Qantity in sq. ft. of ply wood*	
1957	Commercial plywood	925645	(3 ply basis)
	Tea-chest	1671109	"
1958	Commercial plywood	4505069	"
	Tea-chest	1361693	"
1959	Commercial plywood	8166535	"
	Tea-chest	2264575	"
1960	Commercial plywood	11595084	"
	Tea-chest	2824527	"

Forest Village: Another economic benefit derived by the people is by way of forest villages. These villages are meant for the settlement of Landless people who in return would constitute a steady supply of labour for various kinds of forest work such as maintenance of plantation, etc. An allotment of 5 bighas of *basti* land is made to each household and another 10 bighas are given if the household provides with at least a male working member. Land revenue at the rate of 36 Paise per bigha is realized from these villagers. The villagers also derive some other conees-sions or benefits, such as (i) land for cultivation is allowed at a concessionat rate of land revenue under annual patta; (2) household is allowed free

grazing for all necessary plough cattle and 10 heads of other cattle; (3) advances in cash or grain are allowed to forest villager to enable him to sow or prepare his land, or for purchase of plough bullocks to be recovered with interest at the rate of 6.25 P. %; (4) on condition of rendering 5 days free labour to the Department adult male forest villagers are allowed to remove free of royalty sufficient building materials to erect or maintain their houses and 10 cart loads of fuel annually. In return for these privileges the Forest Department has the first claim to the labourers of these villages and each adult villager, if called upon to do so, shall have to render 20 days labour per annum at the rate of wages locally current then. The following is the list of forest villages in Sibsagar District :

	Village	*No. of Household*		*Village*	*No. of Household*
1.	Rongoli	85	18.	Naojan	23
2.	Dighalia	14	19.	Kakadonga	386
3.	Disow	24	20.	Annapurna	90
4.	Nirmolia	69	21.	Koliapani	7
5.	Batua	36	22.	Amguri	21
6.	Kurujuri	105	23.	Kachomari	49
7.	Balijan	25	24.	Chawdangpathar	75
8.	Gomotha	26	25.	Merapani	26
9.	Sokolia	22	26.	Gomariguri	247
10.	Tiphuk	56	27.	Torani	34
11.	Ronganadi		28.	Tangani	14
12.	Jonakipathar	21	29.	Kothas	14
13.	Singlo	55	30.	Rampur	45
14.	Mariani	13	31.	Naojan	48
15.	Kakopathar	6	32.	Urianghat	9
16.	Sapekhati	35	33.	Chungajan	36
17.	Panidihing	362			

(iii) *Forest Research Centre:* All the reserves of the district are managed scientifically as per prescription embodied in specially working plans which are revisable in every 10 to 15 years. There is a Sericultural Research Centre at Meleng inside Hollongapathar reserve where experiments on the growth of both indigenous and exotic species are carried on.

(iv) *Different use of Forest produce:* All qualities of timbers ranging from very durable to very undurable types are available in the district. For house posts, *Nahor, Ajhar, Sonaru, Gohora, Momaileteku,* are available; and for general construction purposes we find *Sollock, Amari, Gunseroi, Khokon, Gomari, Sam* and *Sopa*; for furniture making there are *Bonsom, Sollock, Titasopa, Poma, Gunseroi,* etc. Dug-outs and boats are generally made from *Ajhar, Gunseroi, Sollock, Sam* and *Poma. Sollock* is of great demand to ply-wood industry. From both *Makai* and *Sollock* tea-chests are made and from *Titasopa, Bagapama,* etc., commercial plywood

is made. *Simalu* is supplied mostly to Dhubri Match Factory and sleepers from *Hollong* and *Nahor* are supplied to railways. Among bamboos, *Wakthai, Dalu, Bojal* and *Keko* grow profusely in the district. *Wakthai* and *Dalu* are used mainly for construction of temporary railway quarters. Tea gardens also want these bamboos for construction and other purposes. Among canes, *jati* and *tita* canes are available in plenty and they are demanded greatly for manufacture of furniture and baskets. Thatch and *ikara* are also found in plenty and they are in great demand. Over and above these, sand gravel and floating timbers are also available in the district.

(v) *Kaziranga Wild Life Sanctuary:* There is a wild life sanctuary, known as Kaziranga Wild Life Sanctuary, in the district. It is famous for one-horned rhinoceros and visitors from far off places visit that place to have a glimpse of them. Detailed information in respect of fauna and facilities available for tourists are to be found elsewhere in this gazetteer.

GAZETTEER UNIT
9 AUG 1968
ASSAM RECORD OFFICE BUILDINGS, GAUHATI

CHAPTER V

INDUSTRIES

(a) Industries in early times :

The early evolution of the varied industrial arts constituted one of the important features of the cultural life of the Assamese people. Self-sufficiency had been the key-note of Assam's economy in early medieval times, and various cottage industries formed, therefore, an inalienable part of her culture. To a large number of the people these small scale industries had been as it were a way of life rather than a mere source of earning. Historical evidences bearing on Assam's old time industries are not scanty, and the references that we have in historical and other literature of Assam are sufficient to point to a high standard of industrial efficiency that the people obtained in Assam in early times. Assam produced almost all that was necessary for life according to the standard of living prevalent in those days.

The district of Sibsagar, being the seat of the Ahom Government that ruled in medieval Assam, was naturally the place where Assam's industries along with her culture developed to a high degree of perfection. The names of villages in the district such as Kamargaon, Patiagaon, Kumargaon, Japisojiagaon, Guryogania, Sonarigaon and Kohargaon indicating as they do the habitation of professional artisan classes such as blacksmiths, mat-makers, potters, *japi*-makers, *gur*-suppliers, goldsmiths and bell metal workers respectively highlight the socio-economic structure existing in those days. We may mention the following old industries that had been in vogue in the district of Sibsagar :

(i) *Weaving :* Assam has had a high reputation and early traditions in manufacturing cotton clothes required for her use. Cotton weaving was and still is one of the most common industries in Assam. In very recent times only articles of foreign manufacture made their way slowly into Assam. The reasons are not far to seek : The unique variety of dress of the Assamese women folk consisting of the *Mekhela* for the lower part of the body, the *Riha* for the upper, and the *chadar* or the *Pardiya Kapor*, a sort of wrapper for the body, were not manufactured to any extent outside Assam. Assamese women preferred to make their own garments with cotton or silk. Different varieties of silk worms (*Pat*, *Muga* and *Eḍi*) were reared in Assam and silk weaving industry also flourished to a considerable extent. Cotton was also produced in Assam and ginning and spinning of cotton was done by indigenous methods by Assamese women in their homes. In later times, import of machine-made yarn gradually replaced the hand-spinning yarn and most weavers gave up spinning in favour of imported fabrics. Spinning was not, however, completely forgotten. It survived in some village homes and later received an impetus from the Khadi movement.

All weaving is done in Assam with handlooms and not a single cotton mill has been established here. There exist different types of looms in the plains and the hills. Looms resting on posts are in use in the plains, while a simple kind of loom is in use in the hills. It was remarked that the loom of the plains had reached a stage of machinery and what is true of Assam is true of the Sibsagar district. The Miris of Golaghat and Jorhat were famous for a kind of rug called *Mirijin*. In Jorhat, the Noras made a kind of bag (*thunga*) and some Muhammedans of Jorhat town made a special kind of embroidered shawl. Embroidered and ornamented cloths of Assam were very much liked by the people in early times, as in the present days. There was a class of workmen called the *Gunakaris* who made within the province gold and silver wires used for embroidery. Importation of European gold and silver wires later led to the decline of this industry. About the general condition of the cotton weaving industry in Assam, Mr. Samman wrote in 1897, "among the Assamese proper, weaving still holds an important position, including even the manufacture of the coarser cloths. It will probably be long before these are altogether superseded by imported fabrics, and weaving of delicately ornamented cloths will, no doubt, long continue to be a favourite pastime for the daughters and wives of the well-to-do." In fact, Assamese women folk have earned an all India reputation in weaving. Mahatma Gandhi remarked that Assamese women could weave fairy tales into their clothes. Later the importation of cotton piece goods and also silk materials produced some adverse effect on the indigenous hand-loom industry, but fresh impetus seems to have been given to it by the Khadi Propagation Movement.

(ii) *Metal Industries :* There were professional jewellers, both goldsmiths and silversmiths, patronised throughout the district by both the higher and lower classes of society. The jewellers exhibited considerable amount of skill and artistic refinement in their industries, and ornaments made by them were of various designs that conformed to the taste of the society. The indigenous pattern of jewellery has of course lost much of its demand in modern times and the number of master craftsmen has also become fewer. Brass and bell-metal industries also thrived in the district, as there was a constant demand for brass and bell-metal works. But, under modern conditions the industries have suffered considerable decay and can

be seen only in a few places like Kakajan, Titabar, etc. Blacksmiths constituted an important section of metal workers in the district. Old concentrations of blacksmiths at Dhekargarah and Karanga near Jorhat, are still to be seen. The blacksmiths in these villages have been working for several generations, being but branches of the same old families. Ahom chronicles testify to the fact that the blacksmiths of Karanga were specially appointed by the rulers for manufacturing artilleries.

(iii) *Wood and Bamboo works:* The high proficiency attained in wood works by the craftsmen of those days can be seen even today in the beautiful wooden *asana* (throne), *Sarai, Saria* and *Bata,* preserved in the *Satras.* The number of workers adept in the old patterns of these articles is in modern times, very small, and new designs are replacing the old. Bullock and buffalo carts made of wood in particular were extensively used in those days and a considerable number of people were engaged in this trade which has now passed into the hands of the people coming from other States.

Boat making was an important industry of Assam and it is still to be seen at Salmara and Daksinpat in Majuli. As for bamboo work, *Japi* and *Ranca* making deserve special mention; these arts are still widely practised in this district. *Japis* are manufactured in a wide scale at Japisojiagaon near Sibsagar and Lukomai in Golaghat subdivision. Bamboo reeds *ranca* are still in use in country looms and they are manufactured in Charaibahi and Pokamura mouzas near Jorhat and in the Jhanji area in Sibsagar subdivision. Hand fans made of split cane at Auniati Satra in Majuli testify to the cratsmanship of the artisans who make them.

(iv) *Pottery, Brick making and Ceramics:* The pottery industry has lost its past glory and is now confined only to common pottery like earthen jars, pitchers and such other vessels. Garamur near Jorhat, Salmara in Majuli, Kumarpati and Kakadonga near Golaghat, and Pengeri near Amguri, and Arjunguri near Sibsagar town are the centres of this industry. The fine art of manufacturing old type bricks, earthen pipes and terracottas which once flourished in Rangpur (Sibsagar) is extinct today.

(v) *Stone carving and masonry:* This old time art is now almost extinct. The stone carving of Numaligarh in Golaghat subdivision and the masonry work of the Namdang Bridge over the Namdang river in the Assam Trunk Road near Gaurisagar still bear testimony to the high standard of efficiency the craftsmen attained in this domain of art in the days of the Ahom Kings.

(vi) *Manufacture of articles from Tusk and Horn:* Ivory articles and combs made of horn were used by the kings and the nobility of Assam.

Manufacture of combs from buffalo horns is still seen in Konwarpur near Sibsagar.

(vii) *Manufacture of dye and ink:* Manufacture of dye and ink was widely practised in old days. These were made of forest products. Dyeing was very common among the tribals and weaving of coloured and stripped cloth is still popular among the tribals, as the white one among non-tribals. The writings and drawings produced with locally prepared ink and dye, as for instance on the old manuscripts, are still to be seen in their original brilliance. Various dyes are still used in *Satras* and other places in painting wooden *Sinhasana, Saria, Sarai* and *Bata.*

(viii) *Ghani and allied cottage industries:* Gur making and hand-pounding of rice are still widely practised in the district. The major concentration had been in the Golaghat subdivision. The old type of oil-ghani is still in use and improved ghanies of recent origin have also started to be used through the efforts of the State *Khadi and Village Industries Board.* The old type of leather industry is practically extinct and is now confined only to tanning of hide for drums. Rhino hides were used for armour during the days of the Ahoms. Sewing, embroidery and knitting were also the fine arts known to the people. Hand sewing is now practically replaced by machine sewing excepting in the tribal villages in the interior, and knitting and embroidery have ceased to be done on commercial lines. Similarly, fishing-net making, though still practised in the Kaivarta villages, has ceased to be done on a wide scale and a good part of the present requirement is met by import from other States.

Manufacture of musical instruments and theatrical goods had thrived for centuries along with theatrical performance and community songs that formed part of the *Satras,* providing amusement to thousands. The *Satras* were generally the centres of these performances and the inmates of the Satras as also some in the outlying villages are still engaged in these allied arts. Manufacture of lime from lime stone quarried from the neighbouring hills was also an important old industry. Lime was in extensive demand in connection with masonry construction of palaces, temples, Rangghar, bridges, etc. Rangpur (Sibsagar) was one of the centres. Chunpura near Sibsagar got its name from the burning of lime stone. This industry is now extinct. During the old days writing materials were prepared from *Sanci* bark. They have fallen into disuse now-a-days.

(ix) *Defence industries:* Defence industry was highly developed by the king and the ruling aristocracies. Blacksmiths of Borhoiting, Jabaka, Tiru in Sibsagar subdivision, Dhekargarah, Karanga and Teok in Jorhat and Morongia, Kumargaon in Golaghat specialised in making cannon and

other weapons for the king's army. King's people used to produce gunpowder, and the royal navy consisted of fleets of well-built big boats.

Conclusion: Most of the ancient indigenous industries of the district are flourishing, though some of them are languishing at the hands of a few poor artisans. The reasons for the gradual decay of the old time industries are not far to seek: Firstly, political insecurity, following the downfall of the Ahom Kingdom led to a disruption of the old social order. The patronage of kings and nobles that often led to the growth of various industries came to an end. The advent of British rule into Assam brought the impact of Western civilisation to bear upon the life and habits of the people. Impact of industries from the West and competition of machine made goods coming from the West along with the British led to the decay of old time industries. The alien Government showed indifference to the question of preservation and development of the old time indigenous industries of the land. New technique of production came into being and old time production could hardly stand the competition.

(b) New Industries and Manufactures :

(i) *Power supply:* Supply and distribution of power in the urban areas of the district have in recent years been undertaken by the *State Electricity Board*. All the State power stations of this district are run by Diesel Oil. There is every possibility of Hydro-electric project being installed in the district in near future. One big Thermal station (Gas Plant) has already been established at Namrup.[1]

Two sets of A.C. of 350 k.w. each are under erection by the State Electricity Supply, Jorhat. All efforts are being made to convert the existing D.C. system to A.C. system in Jorhat. Parallel A.C. lines have been drawn all over the town. The following stations will be supplied with energy from State Electricity Supply, Jorhat, through high tension line, the work on which is in progress: (1) Assam Engineering College, (2) Regional Research Laboratory, (3) Jorhat Civil Hospital, (4) Rowriah Airfield. It is also proposed to electrify (1) the Tokolai Experimental Station, (2) Cinnamara and (3) Mariani.

One generating set of 250 k.w. A.C. has been installed at Sibsagar town. Electric energy has been supplied to the newly erected Flour Mill at Sibsagar. Nazira and Joysagar town have been electrified. Energy is passed through 11 K.V. Line to both the places from Sibsagar power stations. There is a proposal to electrify Simaluguri, but the matter is under negotiation with the Railway authority as Simaluguri happens to be a Railway Junction.

[1] For details see in Lakhimpur District Gazetteer.

One generating set of 100 k.w. A.C. and one set of 50 k.w. A.C. have been installed at Golaghat and Dergaon respectively. Furkating is under the process of electrification. It would be fed from Golaghat through 11 K.V. Line.

(ii) *Mining and heavy industries:* There are no shipbuilding, machine tools, automobile and other heavy industries in the district.

Oil industry: The drilling of oil, undertaken in and around Sibsagar town constitutes one of the important and profitable industries of the District. The first discovery of oil was made at Moran within Sibsagar Subdivision by M/s. Oil India Ltd. The Indian National Commission for Oil & National Gas in 1959 located the first exploratory well at Langchai near Disangmukh. In the year 1960, drilling was started at Rudrasagar (old Rangpur City) and drilling works are now being carried out at many places including Lakwa within the said subdivision.

Coal Industry: The survey of the coal resources of Assam was started by the Central Fuel Research Institute at Dhanbad in 1953, and later in 1957 the Coal Survey Station for the Assam coal fields was established in a temporary premises at Jorhat. It is going to be housed permanently near Rowriah where the Regional Research Laboratory for Assam has been constructed. The survey and research conducted by the C.F.R.I. and its station at Jorhat have brought to light much valuable information about the coal deposits. The knowledge gathered is not only of great scientific value but is of importance in the planning of industries based on coal. It is also a pre-requisite for efficient and rational utilisation of this important mineral resource of the State. Investigation has revealed that Assam coals are very interesting geologically. The Tertiary coals are found generally to be a rank of lignite, but Assam coals have abnormal properties in so far as they exhibit dual characteristics of a high and of a low rank coal, and their abnormality is generally attributed to high organic sulphur contents.

The mineral products of economic importance in Sibsagar are oil and coal. While oil is uniformly distributed over this district and Lakhimpur, the major coal-deposits lie beyond the boundary of the district. The coal belongs to the Barail Series of the Naga Hills geosynclinal facies of tertiary rocks.

Jaipur Coalfield: The coal bearing strata extends along the western edge of the Tipam Hills. Outcrops of the seams are seen along a strip 25 miles long, about half of which lie in the Sibsagar district. A thickness of more than 45 feet of coal in 6 seams is exposed in the Dilih river. The coal bearing rocks dip to the east with high inclination, (30° to 80°). On

the Sibsagar side, that is, to the west of the Dilih river, the coal is worked by the Dilih Collieries (Assam) Ltd., the colliery having an area of four square miles. It produced 23,756 tons of coal in 1959. Compared to the coal of Makum field, the Dilih coal, has, as shown by investigation, carried out at the Regional Coal Survey Station at Jorhat, low carbon, low calorific value and high oxygen on unit coal basis. The coal investigated appears to have been oxidised in situ, and it is likely that they may improve in quality at depth. Like all tertiary coals of Assam the Dilih coals are friable and produce high proportion of fines.[2]

Nazira Coalfield: The Nazira coalfield about 16 miles in length lies about four miles south of Naginimara station up the Dikhou river. Except for a small outcrop of coal-measure within 5 miles of the Saffrai railway station, the coalfield lies in the Naga Hills. Since the coal is worked from the Sibsagar district, the Nazira coalfield may be conveniently described here.

The thickest coal-measures are exposed in the Saffrai river where there are 5 workable seams totalling about 73 ft. in thickness. The reserves of coal estimated in limited areas off the coalfield, appear to be about 40 million tons. Some of the coal seams are worked by the Nazira Coal Company at Nazira colliery situated in the Borjan-Waktingjan valley. The colliery with an area of two square miles produced about 25,400 tons of coal in 1957. Data available from sources other than the Regional Coal Survey Station indicates that the coals are of good quality. They have about 5 per cent moisture, 1 to 4 per cent ash and 2 to 3 per cent sulphur.

Jhanji and Disai River Coal deposits: The coal bearing area on the Jhanji river is quite narrow, only three miles long, and lies 15 miles south-east of Amguri Station 14 miles further south-west, and ten miles south-east of Mariani Station; coal is found in the Disai river where the proved outcrops are stated to be 5 miles long. While the Disai lies just on the district border, the other area stretches further into the Naga Hills. The seams are few, thin and highly inclined.

(iii) *Large Scale Industries:* There are no Textile Mills or Jute Mills in the district. The tea industry takes the place of large scale industries in the district.

Tea Industry: The history of the tea industry in Assam dates back to the year 1823, when indigenous tea plants growing in the plains of Assam came to the notice of the East India Company. Earlier experiments having shown bright prospects for the industry in Assam, a Company known as

[2] There is also mention of Bemolapur colliery in *Indian Industries*, 1961, p. 6.

the *Assam Company*, was founded in 1839 to take over the experimental holdings of the Company's Government established in Assam in 1826. This was the first Company in India to undertake the commercial production of tea and was, in fact, the direct successor of the East India Company. A site was cleared from the jungle at Nazira which became and remained as the headquarter of this Company until it was shifted to Calcutta in 1965. The official incorporation of this Company was effected in 1845. This Company, however, had not much prosperity during the first ten years of its existence. By about 1852, under the management of George Williamson, one of the great pioneers in tea garden management, its condition began to improve and its success made the prospect of the industry appear so promising and attractive that speculators eagerly rushed to it. Between 1860 and 1865 the industry was the object of wild speculation. Then came the collapse in 1866, when all tea properties depreciated and all the bubble concerns failed. So severe was the situation that a Government Commission of Enquiry was appointed. It reported that the industry was basically sound, and by 1870 confidence was restored and development continued on sounder basis.

In 1881, the North India Tea Estate Owners formed the *Indian Tea Association*. The industry grew continuously till 1900, and thereafter it went through a depreciation for a short period between 1902 and 1906, but soon recovered from the same. The industry did not recapture its expansion mood in the present century. On the other hand, great improvements have been made in the yield per acre under tea, in the grouping of gardens under a limited number of Companies, in the progressive mechanisation and rationalisation of production and in increasing their efficiency in regard to the productivity of labour.

Manufacture of tea by the *Assam Company* mentioned above is by the C.T.C. process and all factories are modern and well equipped. The primary aim is the production of fine quality tea for the export markets. The total number of permanent employees in this company is some 18,000 plus dependents for all of whom medical facilities are available both in garden hospitals and dispensaries and in central hospital at Nazira. At Nazira, in addition to the central hospital and administrative offices, there are large modern scientific workshops under the direction of the Company's engineers together with the specialists, a large number of tea testors, labour and welfare officers, scientific officers and surveyors.

Another tea company of importance functioning in the district ever since 1859 is the *Jorhat Tea Company* whose area under tea in 1860 was 716 acres and production amounted to only 119,000 pounds. By 1920 the area under tea came up to 10,031 acres producing a crop of about 6,000,000 pounds. To-day the crop is approximately 11,000,000 or some 1,300 pounds per acre, compared with an out-turn of 166 pounds per acre in 1860.

From rolling lead by hand and drying it over charcoal fires, housed inside bamboo and thathed buildings, the Company has progressed to the stage where, by the use of modern rollers and C.T.C. machinery, housed inside up-to-date steel and concrete buildings, it now produces some of the finest quality teas available in the world today. Not only that, its labour strength of 2,000 in 1859 increased to 35,000 at present. Scientific experiments carried on by its own department for the purpose enabled it to produce its own botanical strain which gives a higher yield and a still better quality of tea. Social services provided to its employees include the most up-to-date medical facilities in modern hospitals run by qualified medical staff. The Company's Centenary Hospital at Cinnamara contains the most up-to-date apparatus, operating theatre and X-ray equipment.

In 1911, the *Tokolai Research Station* was established near Jorhat with a view to carrying on research on cultivation and manufacture of tea. This Research Station has been very useful in disseminating knowledge for the increase of yield-rate of tea and for development of the industry on sounder basis. The industry was in a state of boom during the First World War, but the year 1920-21 was disastrous for the Tea Companies. However, there was a remarkably rapid recovery and from 1921-22 another period of prosperity began. In the year 1932-33, it again met with severe crisis due to the world wide depression and over-production of tea. This crisis was successfully everted by enacting the Indian Tea Control Act, 1933, and instituting an international Tea Committee and an India Tea Licensing Committee. During the World War II, the industry again passed through a boom period and after 1951 it reached an unprecendented prosperity. Then followed a severe crisis in 1952 when prices of tea crashed to an extent often below the cost of production. Among the manifold causes suggested as being responsible for the recession in tea prices, the most potent ones seemed to be over-production in competing countries, a glut in medium and indifferent grades of tea which could not attract a ready market owing to the cessation of the bulk purchase system in the United Kingdom, and the impact of the general downward trend in the commodity prices during the post-Korean slump of late 1951 and early 1952. The crisis, however, receded since late 1952 and seemed to be almost over by 1953 alothough a few uneconomic estates lost the chance of revival in the immediate future.

Recently the Tokolai Experimental Centre had developed a machine known as Rotorvane. It is a continuous processing machine for use in a continuous system of manufacture. Methods of manufacture requiring the use of orthodox rollers are necessarily bath systems. Having been invented as a continuous green leaf processing machine it was found that the Rotorvane could be used to prepare the withered leaf for cutting in the C.T.C. machines without previous processing orthodox rollers. It was also

observed that the Rotorvane could be used on hedge cut leaf in the place of epicyclic pressure or cone rollars.

The use of Rotorvane in conjunction with these two methods showed no falling off in the market values of the finished products and had these advantages: (1) continuous green leaf processing; (2) saving in labour requirements; (3) saving in harse-power requirements; (4) saving in total machinery requirements; (5) improved control over bacterial infection; and (6) saving in space requirements. The machine can also be used in the coarse leaf after the extraction of two fines following conventional rolling. In this instance the coarse leaf will have an improved liquor and the dry leaf will be of a more convenient size. The latter point means a reduction in the amount of breaking and cutting, necessary in the sorting room resulting in improved bloom.

It is of course possible to use the Rotorvane on withered leaf without any previous or subsequent leaf processing. This is known as 100 per cent. Rotorvane manufacture and is only carried out on estates where the quantity of tea produced is insufficient to have any appreciable market value. Rotorvane manufacture destroys tip and does away with whole leaf grades. The Rotorvane has become most popular with the management.

The district of Sibsagar has the second highest acreage under tea in Assam, the highest being in the Lakhimpur District. The following figures show the number of tea estates, total area under tea, number of factories, production of tea from 1957 to 1960 and total number of tea garden labourers employed daily:

1. Total number of tea estates	...	254	
Agency	...	78	
Proprietory	...	176	
2. The total area under tea (on 31.3.61)	...	1,14,731.06	acres
Planted	...	1,10,029.26	"
Fallow	...	4,701.80	"
3. Total number of tea factories	...	188 (provisional)	
4. Total production in 1960	...	15,75,83,817	kgs.
5. Average production during 1957-59	...	37,00,58,323	lbs.
Production in 1957	...	35,57,37,801	lbs.
Production in 1958	...	37,73,44,910	lbs.
Production in 1959	...	37,70,92,258	lbs.

The following table will show the average number of different

labourers employed daily in tea gardens during the period ranging from 1956 to 1958:

Year	*Garden labourer (permanent)*	*Outside labourer (permanent)*	*Outside labourer (temporary)*	*Total*
1956	1,37,893	9,404	13,614	1,60,911
1957	1,34,207	12,115	13,119	1,59,441
1958	1,29,038	16,814	12,350	1,58,202

Tea being a commodity which is subject to direct taxation by way of excise duty, export duty and a cess under Tea Act, the industry makes substantial direct contribution to Central Revenues. Besides these taxes, Tea industry is also subject to Central Income-tax, Super Tax (Corporation Tax) and Agricultural Income-tax. The Agricultural Income-tax along with Sales Tax levied upon the tea industry inflates the income of the State Government to a very great extent.

Tea is the mainstay of the Plywood industry. Tea grown in different parts of Assam are packed in the garden factories in plywood chests for despatch either to the sale centres in India or for export. Tea estates need huge quantity of fertilisers such as ammonium sulphate, phosphate, manures and potash, all of which are used to ensure the healthy growth of the plants. Thus the industry gives a strong support to the fertiliser industry also. Transportation of tea from the tea estates which are far from the sale centres means heavy freight charges which swell up the earnings of the Railways and River Steamship Companies. The industry has also played a very valuable part in opening up and developing areas which were previously inaccessible jungles and forests. The areas retrieved and developed into flourishing tea gardens were not areas where food grains could ordinarily be grown and as such there is no problem of competition between this crop and any other food crop. The importance of the industry in the social structure is also noteworthy. The vast army of labourers working in the tea estates has made Assam population more heterogeneous than it usually would have been. The labour force of the industry is mainly constituted of a mosaic of immigrants from other parts of India chiefly from Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Madras. Along with the advent of these labourers the problems of education, reclamation of waste lands, health and sanitation have become much more complicated. Agricultural in nature, the tea industry needs the application of modern scientific way of cultivation. A single unit of the tea estate has to accomplish all the processess right from seedling to final packing of the manufactured tea. Besides, its labour intensive nature marks clearly one more important feature of this industry.

Coffee Industry: Robusta coffee was first planted in 1942-43 and there are now more than three acres planted with this variety. In addition about two acres of Arabica coffee were planted in 1955-56.

After harvesting, the berries are processed at Khoomtie Tea Estate, where also plantation of coffee takes place, to produce the beans, which are then ready for manufacture. Roasting and grinding take place at Nazira, whence much of the crop is distributed directly to retailers and consumers in sealed tins.

The venture is still in the experimental stage, but it may be added that the Khoomtie product gives an excellent cup of coffee and the beans have been given good valuation.

The Assam Co-operative Sugar Mill: The Assam Co-operative Sugar Mill was established very recently at Dergaon, 16 miles east of Jorhat near the Assam Trunk Road. The history of the co-operative venture dates back to 26th March, 1955, when the Society was registered under the Co-operative Societies Act. The manufacturing license to start the Sugar Mill under the Industrial Development and Regulation Act was obtained on 1-8-56. A contract for procurement of the entire machinery was entered into with Messrs. Skoda (India) Private Ltd., Calcutta, under which the major portion of the machinery was to be imported from Czechoslovakia and the rest to be supplied by Indian manufacturers. Import licenses were soon procured for import of machinery from foreign countries.

The foundation stone was laid by the then Chief Minister, Sri Bishnuram Medhi on 24-5-57 and the erection started on 10-9-57, under the supervision of Czech technicians with Indian labour, and it was completed in March 1958 after overcoming many difficulties relating to transport and procurement of building materials. The factory went into full production in 1960-61 yielding about 25 per cent. of the total sugar requirement of Assam. Improvement of the quality of sugar-cane was one important factor to be concentrated upon. The factory has had to depend for its sugarcane requirements on supplies from distant areas in Sibsagar, Dimapur, Nowgong and Dibrugarh. In the interest of getting fresh sugarcane and reduction of transport cost, it is desirable that all the sugarcanes required should be grown as near the factory as possible so that sugarcanes should reach the factory the very day these are harvested.

The Mill provides direct employment to a large number of technicians, educated youngmen and unskilled labour and a vast population is connected with supply of raw materials and other ancilliary activities resulting in the improvement of their economic condition. The total strength of employees is about 650 which is much less than what is being employed by older Mills of similar capacity owing to the most modern machineries

installed. On the financial side the total capital expenditure of the project is about Rs. 1.20 crores, which is made up of share capital subscribed by the public contribution from the State Government, loan from Government, the Assam Co-operative Apex Bank, etc. The Government and the people of Assam have been watching with keen interest the progress of this great venture in the co-operative field. Unfortunately however, due to various causes heavy losses were incurred by the Mill during the first few years of it existence. Unless defects were remedied and things improved within a reasonable time there would be no prospect for this or any other venture of its kind. The crushing capacity of Mill is 800 to 1,000 tons per 24 hours. In 1958-59 it crushed 6,30,447 maunds of sugarcane and produced 47,071 maunds of sugar, in 1959-60 it crushed 15,70,200 maunds of sugarcane and produced 1,17,279 maunds of sugar and in 1960-61 it crushed 20,32,236 maunds of sugarcane and produced 1,16,067 maunds of sugar.

Flour Mill: The *Assam Valley Flour Mill* which is a Roller Flour Mill was opened on 7-8-59 just near the Rangghar Charali, about a mile from Sibsagar town with a total capital investment of Rs. 7,82,156.13 P. This flour mill represents the Sibsagar Sub-division in the sphere of major industrial undertakings in the district with 62 souls in the employees' list. The raw material, that is wheat, is supplied mainly from Jorhat Central Storage Depot.

The significant feature of the manufacturing process is that before actual milling operation of wheat takes place the entire wheat passes through a series of cleaning processes in the automatic machines, Separator and Aspirator. After this the wheat is thoroughly washed with water in another automatic machine called Wizzer Machine. Thus the products, namely, flour, sooji, and the resultant atta, are as clean as can be expected. Another aspect is that after the whole wheat is put in the elevator box for automatic lifting, no handling by manual labour is necessary in any of the various processes until the bags containing the finished products are full and ready for sewing and weighing. The finished products are extracted according to the percentage fixed by the Central Government, that is 50 per cent. flour, 3 per cent. sooji, 27 per cent. atta, 17 per cent. bran and 3 per cent. refraction, and the first three items are distributed by the State Government within the State of Assam at the prescribed ex-mill rates. The employees are paid both in the monthly pay system and daily piece-rate system. The mill is extending housing facilities where necessary and also rendering free medical aid to all workers. Two other flour mills, *The Brahmaputra Mills Ltd.*, Dergaon, and *Dergaon Sankar Rice & Flour Mills*, Dergaon, Sibsagar have also been working.[3]

[3] For details see Volume on *Indian Industries*, 1961, Sec. V, p. 41.

Veneer Mill: There is a big Veneer Mill at Mariani which started production in 1957. Its block capital stood at Rs. 21,60,102.00 on 31st December, 1960. The mill manufactures tea-chests, commercial plywood, black board and flush doors. The raw materials of the mill are obtained from lease-held forests and private contractors. The important feature of the manufacture lies in making veneers from timbers and pressing the veneer for the manufacture of plywood. Most of the products of the mills are sold in Delhi, Bombay, Madras and Calcutta.

The concern had 585 employees in their pay roll on 30th September, 1961. They are paid on fortnightly and monthly basis and are allowed to take firewood from the mill, and medical facilities in the form of supply of medicine are provided to them. The following table shows the production of the mill during the years as shown against each:

Year	*Nature of plywood*	*Quantity in sq. ft. of plywood*	*3 ply basis (3 mm.)*
1957	Commercial plywood	9,25,645	"
1957	Tea-chest	16,71,109	"
1958	Commercial plywood	45,05,069	"
1958	Tea-chest	13,61,693	"
1959	Commercial plywood	81,66,535	"
1959	Tea-chest	22,64,575	"
1960	Commercial plywood	1,15,95,084	"
1960	Tea-chest	28,24,527	"

A good summary of the industrial resources of the district may be found in *Techno-Economic Survey of Assam*. It states thus: Lakhimpur district is the leading industrialised zone of Assam. The second important centre of factory concentration is Sibsagar district. This zone specializes in tea manufacturing which absorbs 89% of the workers. There are about 186 tea factories forming a ribbon of the manufacturing units along the railway from Barpathar to Kamrup. Besides these there are a few rice, sugar and saw mills, and a few metal based industries. Jorhat is the leading industrial town with *punctiform* agglomeration of various industries ranging from tea to metal based industry. The district can now also boast of having Assam's first sugar mill at Baruabamungaon with an installed capacity of producing 800 tons of sugar a day.[4]

(iv) *Small-scale Industries:* There are *Rice Mills* at Jorhat, Titabar and Golaghat; *Oil Mills* at Furkating, Sarupathar, Barpathar; and *Atta Mills* at Dergaon, Bokakhat, Sibsagar, Simaluguri, Nazira, Amguri,

[4] *Techno-Economic Survey of Assam*, p. 94.

Sonari, Bhojo and Sapekhati (small rice hullers are, however, to be seen in different rural areas of the district). Permission for setting up new rice mills and oil mills is restricted, and instead hand-pounding of rice and *oil ghanis* are being encouraged under the *Khadi and Village Industries Board Programme*. Several saw-mills with sawing machines can be seen at Jorhat, Golaghat, Bhojo, Nazira, Barpathar, Amguri, Simaluguri Naojan and Gaurisagar, while hand-sawing by village sawyers are still done in the villages and in the forests.

Engineering Workshops: While large tea estates have their own repairing workshops, smaller ones have no arrangements for day to day servicing and have to seek outside help for repairing their machines. Originally started for repairing of tea garden machinery in the district, Engineering Works though still predominantly engaged in repairing jobs, have in recent years grown up in their sizes and volume of work. These are mostly at Jorhat though a few can also be seen at Sibsagar and Golaghat primarily for availability of power.

Besides repairing of tea garden machineries, their activities now include repairing of other machineries and manufacture of small parts by moulding as also of tea garden requisites like C.T.C. segments, wire fencing, gates, overhead tanks, etc. Some of these workshops have automobile and electrical repairing branches also. This industry is predominantly in the hands of people hailing from the Punjab. The workshops are not, however, generally very well equipped. No full-fledged modern and independent foundry is to be seen in the district. A few of the engineering workshops at Jorhat have a cupola or a crucible furnace just to keep a moulding branch for manufacture of less complicated common machinery parts.

Automobile Workshop: With the growing use of automobiles viz., motor cars, trucks, stage carriages, etc., automobile workshops have also sprung up to meet the increasing demand for servicing and repairing. The Second World War gave a fillip to this industry. The workshops are mostly situated at Jorhat while minor repairing shops are to be seen at the subdivisional headquarters. Spray painting units are also attached to some of the workshops.

Vulcanising and Tyre Rethreading: These Works are comparatively of recent origin and have come up with the growing use of automobiles and on account of short supply of new tyres. These are mostly at Jorhat and one or two at Sibsagar, Golaghat, Moranhat, Nazira, Dergaon and Amguri. Full mould rethreading is, however, very rare.

Blacksmithy and Allied Industries: In the rural areas the places of concentration of blacksmiths are Karanga, Dhekargarah, Titabar, Bhojo and Sonari. Most of the rural blacksmiths are descendants of those of olden days. Many have gradually given up this trade and taken to other trade or profession so that there has been practically no addition to the number of indigenous people or unit taking up the trade of blacksmithy. A fairly large number of blacksmiths of East Bengal have, after Partition, migrated to and settled in the district and their principal concentration is at Daksinhengera in the Golaghat sub-division. Though working without all the required equipments the indigenous blacksmiths have, by their manufactured articles, shown a high standard of workmanship. The principal items of manufacture are common agricultural and tea garden implements like pruning knives, rakes, etc. The tea estates in the district spend a large amount of money almost every year for purchase and reconditioning of pruning knives and other implements and cutleries. Till before the First World War, these articles were largely imported from outside India by English tea-estate owners. With the cessation of supply from England the tea estates in Assam had naturally to look to the indigenous blacksmiths and to the units in Calcutta, and those indigenous units started making tea garden implements. They have, however, now to face keen and sometimes unhealthy competition from well organised and mechanised units outside Assam on account of better finish which is lacking in the indigenous products though better in other qualities. The *Karanga Kamar Silpa Samabai Samiti Ltd.*, near Jorhat has, however, adopted some modern techniques and power driven machineries with a view to ensure better quality and finish for their articles.

Brass smithy was in the past solely in the hands of indigenous people known locally as Morias, and this was a hereditary industry of these people. But gradually many of their descendants have given up this trade and the number of Morias, actually engaged in it, is now small. They are to be seen at Patiagaon and Kakajan in the Jorhat sub-division and at Samaguri near Amguri. The Morias of Kakajan have formed a Co-operative Society, but they have not been able to make much headway.

The bell metal industry is one of the indigenous industries of this district and a hereditary occupation for generations. The hereditary bell metal artisans of Titabar and Thengal mauzas near Jorhat were famous for their high standard of workmanship. The industry is now languishing at the hands of a very few of their descendants. Temporary or seasonal bell metal units are seen in different places of the district. These are run by groups of artisans coming from Sarthebari in the Kamrup district. They also manufacture different articles as per the order of mahajans in towns and also for local sale in their own villages.

The tinsmith industry is mostly located in urban and semi-urban areas, because only such places can offer adequate markets for this concern. Unlike most other cottage industries, this industry is less subject to seasonal

fluctuations. Most of the workers are non-indigenous. Kerosene lamps and funnel are the typical items of manufacture of this industry. Besides, manufacturing different articles they also undertake soldering and other allied repairing jobs.

Trunk making and Sheet Metal Works also constitute an urban industry and are seen in the towns of Jorhat, Sibsagar, Golaghat, Moranhat, Dergaon, Mariani, and Nazira. While there are some indigenous workers in this industry, most of them are non-indigenous. Trunks, suitcases, buckets, tubs and small water tanks are the usual items of manufacture of this industry.

Brick Making: Brick making, as noticed before, is also an old industry in the district. The bricks of the quality and type of the days of the Ahom kings are no longer made and it is now a forgotten industry. Manufacture of present day type of bricks in *bhata* is also in practice for a pretty long time. Brick kiln, though of recent origin, is also now widely seen. About 50 such kilns are operating in this district. While many of them produce bricks for open sale, big establishments like tea estates allow the contractors to run brick kilns to turn out bricks for their own building programme. These kilns can be seen all over the district. They are, however, mostly on the outskirts of the towns, connected by roads with towns and commercial centres. Brick *bhatas* can also be seen in certain places in the distant villages.

The normal practice in the brick kilns is to make the green bricks by manual process with the help of moulds called 'forma', and then to burn it in the oval pattern multi-chambered kilns. Only one unit at Cinnamara near Jorhat introduced a brick making machine run by power, where puddling of clay and moulding of the finished green bricks are simultaneously done. The burning is done in the multi-chambered kiln as mentioned above. The venture has, however, not proved successful, as the soil used was found unsuitable for machine bricks. After several tests by experts, soil near Golaghat has been found suitable for making bricks by machine.

No serious effort has been made for manufacture of roofing tiles in this district. The tiles manufactured at the pottery section (now closed) of the Rural Polytechnic at Joysagar was quite good. If pugmil were used, the quality would have been much better. Recently a private concern has started making a lighter and smaller variety of roofing tiles near Numaligarh, and this has been successfully used in making the roofs of the labour quarters of the neighbouring tea estates. Similar attempts have been made by a contractor near Mariani. This district with high quality clay perhaps offers the best scope for manufacturing roofing tiles.

Earthen works: The manufacture of earthen pots, jars, images, dolls, etc., has undergone a considerable decay among the indigenous people

and is now practised by a few people in the Sibsagar town, Mukalimuria Satra (near Dergaon) and at Gaurisagar, etc. This has of late come to be practically a monopoly of immigrants from Bengal with whom the industry is hereditary. The number of such units is, however, very small and can be seen only in the towns of Sibsagar, Jorhat and Golaghat.

Foot-wear Industry: While it is estimated that about five thousand people known as cobblers, engaged in repairing of shoes, are spread all over the district, the number of units engaged in regular manufacture of shoes in their own workshed is, however, small. Altogether 32 units engaged in shoe-making are found in the district, having their own worksheds, owned or rented. As the trade of shoe making is not looked upon with favour, the industry is followed only by a class of people like *chamar* and *muchi* with whom it has been a hereditary profession. A shoe-makers' co-operative, which was formed at Jorhat a few years ago, is now practically dormant.

Tanning is not done in the district though there is a good prospect for the industry. The dead animals are flayed by *chamars* and the hide sold to the middle men; and the middle men again in wet salted condition sell these to merchants engaged in despatching the hides to Calcutta and other places. Rubber Sandal making, though a cobbler's job and carried along with shoe repairing, etc., is also carried on as an independent industry in urban areas like Jorhat and Golaghat. These are sold mostly in local markets and are comparatively cheaper than leather sandals.

Printing Presses: These are located at the sub-divisional and district headquarters as also at Nazira in the Sibsagar sub-division. Some of the establishments are run with treddle type printing machines, and a few others are equipped with both treddle and flate type of printing machines. There is, however, no arrangement for coloured printing and block-making in any of the printing presses. Excepting at Nazira electricity is being used to run the printing machines. Some of the printing presses have a binding unit attached to them.

Umbrella Making: The number of units in the district engaged in this trade is very small and all are in the urban areas. The umbrellas are, in fact, assembled from different parts obtained from outside the State. No umbrella parts are manufactured in the district and very few indigenous people are found engaged in this industry or in repairing umbrellas. The repairing job is done mostly by Muslims from other places moving from house to house and place to place and also in weekly village markets.

Soap Making: Soap making is still generally an urban industry but is also to be seen in semi-urban areas. There are soap factories at Jorhat,

Sibsagar, Golaghat, Amguri and Bokakhat. These factories manufacture only washing soap and the requirement of this stuff in this district is mostly met by products of those places and also by imports from other places of the State. Some Panchayat authorities, for example, Charing and Bokakhat, have of late started manufacturing washing soap.

Tailoring: With improvement in the standard of living and with increased use of tailored garments both in urban and rural areas, the tailoring industry is perhaps growing very wide and can be seen all throughout the district. The majority of workers in this industry are males. Of late, however, women in good number have also started tailoring, working mostly within their own houses. The *Mahila Samittee* branches of the Central Social Welfare Board in the district, *Community Development Blocks* and other non-official organisations in the district have arrangements for imparting training in tailoring to women and in some cases to men too. The Industries Department of the State runs a Tailoring Institute at Sarupathar, attached to the Sarupathar Development Block in the Golaghat sub-division. Most of the tailoring shops are engaged in tailoring of pants, shirts, trousers, pyzamas, blouses and frocks with cloth supplied by customers, while some are engaged in making ready-made garments with cloth supplied by dealers. The number of units on modern lines with highly efficient tailors capable of intricate tailoring is, however, small.

Manufacture of Bedding requisites: As in various other places, manufacture of bedding requisites in this district is a monopoly of a section of East Bengal Muslim settlers and of Muslims from Bihar. While some of the units have their own fixed shops mostly in urban areas, a good number of workers of this trade move from house to house in search of work. The fixed shops keep a stock of ready-made articles and also make goods out of materials supplied by the customers themselves.

Manufacture of Cement Concrete Ring and Urinal and Latrine Slabs: This industry is of very recent origin and can be seen only in a few places of the district. While some units manufacture the items mostly against their own contract either with the Public Works Department or Community Development Block or Public Health Engineering Department, or against orders from large establishments like tea estates, etc., with the growing hygienic sense in the rural areas, squatting type water sealed latrine slab placed over a deep and narrow pit is now in extensive use and the slabs are supplied by these units. Some units also manufacture R.C.C. fencing posts against orders. Very few units, however, maintain a ready stock for sale. The Associated Cement Marketing Corporation of India recently held a short

course training centre at Barbheta near Jorhat and gave training to the youngmen of the locality for manufacture of articles as mentioned above, as also various items of daily necessities.

Safety Match: The first attempt at manufacturing modern type of safety match in a small scale in the district was made in 1912 at Sibsagar in the name and style of *Rangpur Match Factory*. But the unit was closed down soon after its birth. The second and biggest attempt was the *Brahmaputra Match Factory* at Jorhat, which was also closed down almost at its very start. The reason for the failure was perhaps the high cost of production and non-availability of abundant suitable timber near about. Manufacture of Black Board, Graph Board, etc., is an industry of recent origin in the district and there are only a few units engaged in this work in the urban areas. The work is carried on either along with other carpentry works or sign-board manufacturing.

Miscellaneous industries: There are two small units at Jorhat engaged in making cycle bags with canvas cloth and bazar bags with gunny cloth. These establishments are very small and are run mostly by family members. The industry, however, provides full time occupation throughout the year. The products are sold locally and do not generally go outside the district.

There is only one unit at Jorhat engaged in candle making which is combined with manufacture of sugar-candy and logenges. Logenges and chocolate making are entirely urban industries and there are units at Jorhat and Golaghat, and 50 per cent. of the district demand is met by up-country people. The units are mostly run by paid workers. Attempts to set up units for manufacture of perfumes, ink, distilled water, incense, etc., have not met with very great success. There is, however, one unit at Jorhat engaged in the manufacture of fountain pen ink, common ink fluids, ink powder, phenyle, adhesive paste and also hair oil. There is no unit for manufacture of cosmetics nor any engaged in manufacture of fruit syrup or fruit products on commercial scale. There is also no industry engaged in the manufacture of chemicals and drugs except one unit at Sibsagar for manufacture of Ayurvedic medicine.

Attempts were made some years back for starting a hosiery industry at Jorhat by some private enterpreneurs, but it met with a failure. The reason is that hosiery is something like a subsidiary industry and generally clusters round textile and spinning mills. In the absence of such mills in the district and for the matter of that in the State, hosiery units have to depends for their entire supply of raw materials and packing materials on spinning mills in far away places involving huge transport cost.

(v) Cottage Industries :

Pottery, Ceramics, etc.: While ceramics as a modern branch of pottery has not yet come up anywhere in the district, common pottery like manufacture of earthen wares is, as already noticed, a very ancient industry in this district. It is almost hereditary and is done by the people known as Kumar and Hida. But the industry is practically declining among the indigenous people because the younger section of the community, engaged in this trade with education, has been neither following the family trade nor trying to introduce modern techniques. The decline of the indigenous industry has opened scope for potters from Bihar and displaced potters from East Pakistan who are now found working in isolated units. The biggest concentration of indigenous potters can be seen at Salmora in Majuli. Other concentrations are at Garamur near Jorhat, Dhekial and Kamarpatti near Golaghat and at Pengera, Arjunguri and Amguri in Sibsagar sub-division. The market for the wares is generally confined to the local and surrounding markets and villages, while a good part of the wares of the Majuli potters go to the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra.

The most common item of manufacture is a pitcher like pot (known as tekeli) of different sizes used for keeping *Gur*, milk products, etc. The other items are earthen tumbler, *charu*, *dunori*, *gacha*, etc. The wheel with radial spoke, used by the Bihari potters, is a flat disc. A good number of people among the indigenous potters, particularly women among them, do not use the wheel at all. None of the artisans both indigenous and others, is found to have any knowledge of glazed potteries. The quality of clay varies from place to place, but that around Sibsagar is fairly good. A few years ago, a pottery section was opened and attached to the Rural Polytechnic at Joysagar, a training centre run by the State Government for training of Panchayat secretaries and other office bearers, where training was started in manufacture of glazed potteries and terracottas and also roofing tiles. But it was closed.

Carpentry, etc.: Next to weaving and perhaps one of the most widely practised industries in the district by male artisans is carpentry. There is hardly a village in the district which does not have a mistry or carpenter. Village carpenters do not specialise in any particular branch and generally do both furniture making and construction of buildings. In the urban-like areas Cabinet shops are seen, while in rural areas the work is done both as a part time or seasonal and whole time job. In the urban areas both the manually operated and power driven machines are used in general engineering workshops in the district. Modern wood working machines are rarely used in the cabinet workshops excepting small circular saws. Manufacture of wooden *urals* and *ural-mari* which are the equipments for pounding rice and in grinding the cereals into powder are common in tribal villages and also can be seen in other rural areas.

Wooden agricultural implements like plough, harrow, *Juvali* are still made by village carpenters throughout the district, and some times with the help of a *dao* alone. Wooden sandals or *Khadams* are in considerable use especially in the *Satras* in Majuli. Cart-wheel making has already been referred to. Boat making, which has also been referred to, is done mostly in Majuli, predominantly at Salmora and at other places on the bank of the Brahmaputra, viz., Panidihing, Disangmukh, Dikhoumukh, Jhanjimukh, etc. Boats are made in some cases for sale. This is done mostly as a subsidiary occupation and very rarely as a principal one. A type of strong-built wooden box, known as *Pera*, was a speciality of Assam but it has ceased to be in common use now.

Cane works: Cane industry is located in urban and semi-urban areas of the district. One of the principal products is the plucking baskets which are required in huge quantity in the tea gardens of the district every year. Cane baskets are also required for carrying earth and also by Railways for carrying coal. As the tea gardens or the Railways or other big establishments find it difficult to purchase their requirements in small quantities they prefer to purchase in big lots. Consequently, this industry is in the hands of big arms. The workers engaged in the industry are mostly paid employees coming from Bihar or Muslims coming from other districts. Cane furniture is also widely in use, and units engaged in making such furniture can be seen in urban and semi-urban areas of the district. The number of workers engaged in this industry is steadily increasing, but the best unit for making cane furniture in the district is the Jail industry unit at Jorhat. The industry of making *Pati* was widely practised in the district, as it appears from the names of villages like Patigaon, and availability of *Patidoi* in vast marshy areas of the district. It is, however, noticed that a social stigma is attached to this industry which accounts for its abandonement by indigenous people and which is now practically entirely in the hands of displaced persons.

The manufacture of cane furniture calls for a high degree of skill on the part of the workers. The majority of the workers, engaged in the making of cane furniture are artisans from East Pakistan, and indigenous workers skilled in the trade are very rare. Inspite of the abundance of raw materials and a considerable demand for the products, the industry is not widely pursued in the State, it is stated, because of the dearth of skilled labour in the main.[5]

Weaving of mats or *Kath* out of the stalks of particular kinds of

[5] *A Survey of Cottage Industries in Assam*, 1958, Vol. I, p. 75.

marshy plants and weeds is a rural industry, providing part-time and subsidiary occupation to the agriculturists and others in their spare time. An indigenous industry of the district, it seems to have lost much of its universal use now due to the introduction of substitutes. *Kath* (mat) making from unretted jute and a kind of weed with long stalk which grows in the marshy and water-logged areas, mostly leased out to *mahaldars*, are still to be seen. Bamboo mats known at *Chatai-dhari, Bardhari, Mer-dhara,* etc., are made in almost all villages. In the existing patterns of this industry there seems little possibility of its development. It is said that Japan has a flourishing industry in this line. In India also we find the industry mainly developed in the South and other places. While Japanese mats are made of paddy straw and certain types of grass with long stalks, the materials in South India are almost like the weeds used for making *Kath* in Assam.

Bamboo works: Making of bamboo articles is pursued by the agriculturists as a subsidiary occupation in their spare time and may be seen all over the rural areas in the district. Every rural family especially agriculturists, produces, at least a part of its requirement of bamboo products, though not always for sale. The products mostly are mats, baskets of various sizes and shapes, winnowing trays, fishing traps, like *Jakoi, Khoka, Chepa, Dingora, Hukuma, Palah, Juluki, Pawry,* etc., and they are sold in local markets. The most important item is, however, the *Japi,* a headwear, made of bamboo and *takou* leaf.

Japi (Bamboo and leaf head gear) is one of the most indispensable items in the scanty paraphernalia of the open air worker, especially the cultivator. It can be called the poor man's umbrella. Almost invariably the industry is pursued as a subsidiary occupation.

It is needless to express the fact that unlike many other cottage industrial products *Japi* has got a ready market and will continue to be as such. The busiest period of production starts with the advent of monsoon and lasts for about three months, which also happens to be the busiest season of agriculture. Very often they secure orders from contractors for tea garden supplies which are generally to be made within specified periods. Only 4.2 per cent. of the average output per establishment was remaining unsold and the rest were mainly sold in local markets. Casual sales are also made to nearby consumers direct from the producers premises but the major supply in bulk, goes to the tea gardens through the contractors. Usually the requirement of *Japi* in tea gardens are of the order of thousands or more. The tea planters obtain their entire supply from approved contractors. The producers are however exploited by the presence of middle man who enjoys the lion's share of the profit.

The above, however, relates to the ordinary *Japis.* There are also

beautifully decorated *Japis* which requires considerable skill. The price of such a *Japi* ranges from Rs. 10 to Rs. 12.[6]

Fishing Net and Rope Making: Compared to the large number of Kaibarta population in the district, persons engaged in the manufacture of fishing nets on a commercial scale is very small. A good number of East Bengal Muslims are, however, engaged in this trade and meet the bulk of the requirements of fishing nets of the fishing trade in the district. Ropes of different types are, however, made in the villages from *Tarapat, Udal,* Jute, *Kakur suta, San, etc.* Fishing nets are also sometimes made of locally grown *riha* (ramie) which is very much durable.

Processing of smoking and chewing tobacco: Indigenously processed tobacco is widely used in the district for smoking and also for chewing with *tambul* or betelnut. The smoking tobacco is prepared by making small dusts of tobacco leaves and properly mixing them with scummy waste of jaggery. The tobacco or *dhopat* for chewing with *tambul* is prepared by keeping small pieces of tobacco leaf in a piece of small bamboo tube (*cunga*) for a considerable time, mixed with molasses and taking them out after the pieces have softened and become black in colour.

(vi) Industrial Arts :

Weaving: While weaving in general is a subject of Cottage industries, there is another important aspect of it, and that is its artistic value based on fine embroidery and decorative floral and creeper designs, whether done over pieces of cotton cloth or on *edi, muga* and *pat* dresses. In the production of the said dresses, Assam has a world-wide reputation. The Government emporiums throughout the country bear testimony to this fact. In so far as the district of Sibsagar is concerned, besides the private persons who manufacture their own dresses, there are weaving societies and training centres, subsidised by Government, where such fine dresses are produced in a large scale for commercial purposes.

Manufacture of handloom accessories has not developed as a specialised branch of carpentry in many other places. Only few units in the urban areas have started making these articles as subsidiary to furniture and cabinet making, and these articles have also their artistic value. The accessories are :

(*a*) Ugha
(*b*) Chereki
(*c*) Letai
(*d*) Botula Cunga
(*e*) Nachani
(*f*) Toltha
(*g*) Mako (shuttle)
(*h*) Mahura
(*i*) Dorpati
(*j*) Decorative Mahura khorung (bucket)
(*k*) Bhohary
(*l*) Neothani
(*m*) Charkha, Edi spinning and Reeling machine.

[6] *A Survey of Cottage Industries in Assam,* 1958, Vol. I, pp. 75-76.

Jewellery: The most important industrial art is Jewellery which has, however, declined to some extent, as the number of highly skilled artisans possessing traditional workmanship in gold and silver has become very small. Families of hereditary artisans carrying on this trade are still to be found in villages near Jorhat and Sibsagar. The traditional patterns of jewellery have their own peculiarity of design and finish. And though due to changes in fashion and increasing demand for modern designs, the articles made by indigenous goldsmiths seem to have lost their popularity, a good sign has been noticed in recent times in the revival of the traditional much prized designs, which consist of *galpata, dugdugi, keyura, kankana, thuriya, nupura,* etc. A good number of hereditary goldsmiths from Bengal have settled in this district mostly in urban areas. The tools and implements used by them in making ornaments are superior to those used by the indigenous workers in the villages. It may be stated in this connection that the Government Gold Control measure adversely affected this indigenous industry. Wide use of rolled gold and electroplated wares are also contributory factors for this decline. The withdrawal of the said gold control order is expected to give impetus to the renewal of the growth of this aesthetic trade.

Mobile units of jewellery from Bihar, Rajasthan and the Punjab are also seen in the towns and commercial places and tea estates. These units manufacture mostly the ornaments for people of their respective States residing in the district.

Metal works: We have already dealt with the ordinary metal utensils, of silver, brass, copper, etc. Besides working in gold and silver ornaments, a few artisans are also engaged in manufacturing metal utensils with beautiful decorative designs. Some of the *satras* still preserve silver *sarai* inlaid with gold. It is true, however, that such articles were and are not manufactured in a commercial scale.

Wood carving: Wood carving is an age-old industrial art of Assam and is still practised in the *Satras* and by village artisans. Different mythological figures and *Sinhasana* are made by wood carving for use in religious and social ceremonies. Artisans of this industry can be seen at Akagaon near Golaghat town and at Dohotia near Jorhat. The Khanikar and Barhoiting villages of Sibsagar sub-division still bear the name of the old industry in the district.

Bamboo works: While the making of common *Japi* as head wear for agriculturists and tea garden workers is widely practised in the district, the making of fancy *Japi* or *Phulam Japi,* as they are called, is very limited. Fancy *Japis* are of two types, small and big. The smaller *Japi* is known as *sarudaiya* and the bigger one as *bordaiya* or *Barjapi* which is used in ceremonial occasions like marriages. The Ahom royal palaces and many

Satras were adorned by such decorated big *japis* forming canopies over royal crown and *vigrahas.*

Cosmetics: The most important chemical industry of the district is manufacture of *atar* oil by a process of distillation of agar wood (locally known as *sanci*). The concentration of units engaged in manufacturing it are at Barpathar and Naharani villages in the Golaghat sub-division. There are units at Nakachari in Jorhat sub-division and at Chataichiga in Sibsagar sub-division. The market for the products is, however, outside the State, secured through middlemen in the district and also in Bombay. The distillation is done through a crude method. Attention of the experts has already been drawn for suggestion of improvement and introduction of modern methods. It is said that *atar* oil and agar extract have medicinal properties and there lies a considerable scope for research and experiment for finding out alternative uses of *agar.*

Musical instruments: Making of various types of drums such as *Dhol, Khol, Gagana, Tokari* (a violin like musical instrument) and bamboo flutes is another industry found in rural and semi-urban areas of the district. But the industry provides only part time employment. Similarly, theatrical goods like masks, false hair, false mustaches and theatrical costumes are done by *Satra* inmates and other people mostly in the riverine island of Majuli, where theatrical performances like *Yatras, Bhaonas,* etc., provide the only means of enjoyment for the people and also a good market for such goods.

Misc. Arts: Minor industrial arts, practised as supplementary occupation by only one unit at Jorhat is that of making paper flowers and decoratives. Making of paper pulp is also a very minor industry for which there are small units, one at Nimati and the other at Nazira. These are engaged in making different decoratives out of paper pulp like flower vase, figures of animals, toys, etc. Another very small industry is that of horn and bone products. There is one unit at Konwarpur near Sibsagar engaged, as a supplementary occupation, in making combs with cow and buffalo horns; one unit near Disangpani in the Sibsagar sub-division is engaged in making loom shuttles and various products like buttons, hair clips, etc., out of elephant bones.

Hand fans (*bichanis*) made of fine cane strips and other decoratives are still a speciality of the Auniati Satra in Majuli. Cheap hand fans are, however, made of bamboo strips, *Jenguti* lead, and sometimes with animal hides and occasionally by weaving coloured yarn, taken from borders of cloth or otherwise. Bamboo decoratives are comparatively of recent origin and are done by very few people. Cylindrical type of bamboo decoratives like flower vase is made near Golaghat and at Nagajanka near Jorhat.

Peteri, cane product, widely used in olden days, has now fallen into disuse. These were used for keeping cloths and served the purpose of a trunk or a suit-case.

(c) Plan and Potentials for future development of Industries :

(i) *General observation :* The Khadi and Village Industries Board is in recent years giving a new impetus to some of the cottage industries of old and has also encouraged new industries like bee-keeping. The Board is rendering all possible help for reviving *Ghani* for pressing oil out of mustard seeds by introducing improved Wardha type *ghanies*. It has also encouraged hand pounding Co-operative Societies in the district. The Board has its own officers and organisers to see to the development of these industries.

The industrial units of both cottage type and small scale industries in the district are predominantly single proprietorship units. In the cottage sector work is carried out by the proprietor with the help of family members ; and in the small scale sector the proprietor runs the industry with the help of paid employees. In the cottage sector what is known as the Ojha system of work still prevails particularly in rural areas. Out of a large number of industrial Co-operative Societies a good majority is for weaving. The co-operative venture in industry has not, however, made much headway in the district. The biggest co-operative venture in small industry is the *Karanga Kamar Silpa Samabai Ltd.*, and in the major industrial sector the *Assam Co-operative Sugar Mill* at Dergaon is the only venture.

While most of the urban industrial establishments provide whole-time occupation, the establishments in the rural areas provide occupation as subsidiary or supplementary to agriculture which happens to be the principal occupation of the people. Another characteristic of industries in rural areas is that they are mostly seasonal and the number of part time workers far exceed that of the whole timers. While a good number of females is engaged in several rural type of industries, males constitute the greater number. Females are engaged in industries like hand-pounding of rice, manufacture of other rice products, *ranc* making, *kath* making, etc. In urban industries the workers are mostly males. The rural industries are not well organised, while the urban, particularly the small scale industries, are more or less organised.

As in other places, cottage industries in the district, particularly in rural areas, is labour intensive and the equipments and implements are very simple, and the works are carried out in a part of his living house or in a small katcha shed put up by the artisan himself with materials mostly procured from his village. As such the average capital investment in rural industries is generally very small. As for working capital in this sector, the position is not otherwise. The amount of working capital in general is very small and sometimes not worth mentioning. In case of urban industries

and in small industries the condition is, however, different. It is also to be pointed out that the principal handicap for cottage industries as also for small industries in urban areas is inadequacy or lack of finance. This, besides other factors, has badly hampered the progress of industries in this district. Recently organised agency for financing these industries has been instituted.

(ii) *Raw Materials :* The special feature of the ancient and indigenous industries of the district was availability, in most cases, of raw material in required quantity if not in plenty in the district itself or the neighbouring district. The position has, however, changed in recent times. The raw materials for bamboo and cane products, wooden articles, gur, sugar, milk products, are still available in the district. Raw materials for most other industries are to be brought from other districts and also from outside the State. These are available from merchants in towns and other urban-like areas. Bigger industrial establishments sometimes themselves indent their requirements in bulk from outside the state and occasionally from foreign countries. Difficulties are sometimes reported by small units, but as a matter of fact the difficulty is not so much of availability of raw materials as it is of finance and high prices.

(*iii*) *Production technique :* One of the reasons for the decay of some of the old industries in the district was the friction of technique. The local artisans could not stand the thud. The techniques adopted by the local artisans in most cases, particlarly in the rural areas, still continue to be as in olden days. The tools used are mostly primitive and obsolete, and not to speak of modern production machineries, the units are mostly without the improved tools. Urban units are, however, gradually taking to modern techniques and machineries, though still lagging far behind the progress of modern times.

As to marketing of the products, it is to be noted that the products of cottage and small industries in the district are mostly for sale in the local markets or for consumption in the district itself. But it will not be correct to say that no product of this district goes outside the district or outside the State. The tea industry is a big customer for *Japi*, cane baskets, pruning knives, etc. The railways take large number of cane baskets for carrying coal, but the benefit generally does not go to the actual artisans who sell their articles to the middlemen and who in turn sell these to big establishments. A good number of the products of cottage industries of the district has, however, caught the fancy of foreign visitors and persons coming from other parts of the country. Though it is a fact that the sale of cottage industry products has increased in recent times, these and the small industries are required to keep up their existence in the teeth of competition from large and economic establishments outside the State.

The most remarkable step taken in recent times for improvement of small and cottage industries has been the introduction of credit facilities to these industries. In line with the policy adopted throughout the country, credit and other financial assistance are available to small units through the state agencies of *All-India Khadi and Village Industries Board, the State Financial Corporation,* the *Industries Department of the State Government, the State Bank of India, the Co-operative Apex Bank* and other *commercial banks.* Credit from the State Bank of India is generally in the form of short term loans for working capital. The credit from the Department of Industries is limited to Rs. 20,000 and credit for bigger amount is to be obtained from the *State Financial Corporation.* There is a *Cottage Industry Loan Board* in each of the three sub-divisions of the district to dispose of applications for industrial loans for amount not exceeding Rs. 2,500.00 in each case. Besides loan, the *State Department of Industries* gives grants-in-aid both in cash and in kind of varying amount to large number of artisans with weightage in case of artisans belonging to backward classes. This Department offers other financial aids in the shape of stipendiary education in some training-cum-production centres to create an industrial bias. All these aids have been given under *Assam Aid to Industries (Small and Cottage Industries) Act,* 1955.

At present loans upto Rs. 2,500.00 in individual cases under the said Act are issued by the Industries Department of the district and the loans beyond that amount are directly issued by the Directorate of Industries, Shillong. The total amounts of former types of loans given in the district were as follows :

Sub-division	*1959-60*	*1960-61*
Sibsagar	Rs. 14,500.00	Rs. 35,000.00
Jorhat	Rs. 23,000.00	Rs. 49,050.00
Golaghat	Rs. 14,500.00	Rs. 20,900.00

The total amounts of grants in-aids were as follows:

Sub-division	*1959-60*	*1960-61*
Sibsagar	Rs. 9,415.00	Rs. 13,080.00
Jorhat	Rs. 10,440.00	Rs. 11,570.00
Golaghat	Rs. 935.00	Rs. 2,900.00

Stipends are given by the Industries Department to the trainees of *Sarupathar Tailoring Institute* and *Joysagar T.C.P.I.* for soap making training section and watch & clock repairing section. Stipends are also given to the trainees of Training-cum-production centre of Moamari.

The Small Industries Service Institute, Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Govt. of India, with its Headquarters at Gauhati in the State of Assam has been rendering technical, economic, industrial management, liaison and information services to the existing industrial units and the prospective industrialists of the State. One of the three Industrial Extension Centres of the Institute is located at Jorhat in the Sibsagar District. Work-shops in (1) Smithy, (2) General Engineering and (3) Electroplating are being attached to the *IEC* of Jorhat for rendering mainly these services:

(i) Testing of raw materials; (ii) Demonstration of Production processes; (iii) Training to industrialists; and (iv) Undertaking jobs from the industrial units for demonstration purposes.

In conclusion it may be stated that the district of Sibsagar is rich in natural resources, only a small proportion of which has so far been exploited. There are great prospects for industrial development of the district and Industries Department of the State Government has quite a number of Five Year Plan schemes for this purpose.[7]

(d) Labour and Employers' Organisation :

Three out of four all India organisations are functioning in the district through their branches, and there are also some local organisations.

(i) *The Indian National Trade Union Congress : its Assam branches :* It is an All-India organisation. Its Assam branch is functioning in the district through its affiliated unions in Tea, State Transport, inland Steamer-ghats, Electricity, P.W.D., Printing Presses, Cinema Houses, Municipality and sundry industrial and commercial establishments. The *Assam Chah Mazdoor Sangha* and the *Assam Chah Karmachari Sangha,* the former a union representing the labourers and the latter representing the staff, are All-Assam organisations having their district branches in the Sibsagar district and they are affiliated to the Indian National Trade Union Congress.

(ii) *The Hind Mazdoor Sabha : its Assam branches :* It is also an All-India organisation. Its Assam branch functions in the district through its affiliated unions in some tea gardens, in some rice and oil mills and in some industrial and commercial establishments in the district.

(iii) *The All-India Trade Union Congress : its Assam branch :* This is another All-India organisation. Its Assam branch is functioning in the

[7] Plans and progress in industrial development of the district may be found in Five-year Plan Schemes.

district through its affiliated unions in some tea gardens, some rice and oil mills and some industrial and commercial establishments.

(iv) *The Assam Tea Labour Association :* It is a local union mainly functioning in some tea gardens of the district.

(v) *The Assam Zahaz Karmi Sangha :* The *Assam Zahaz Karmi Sangha,* formerly a self-registered trade union, known as *Sibsagar Transhipment Labour Union,* organised under the banner of the I.N.T.U.C., was in 1959 reorganised as a branch union of the handling and pilotage staff labourers of the RSN and IGN and Railway Company Ltd. entitled, *Assam Zahaz Karmi Sangha* which is a registered trade union with its headquarter at Gauhati. All the 693 handling workers in the 6 ghats of the Sibsagar district, viz., Rajabari, Disangmukh, Nimati, Badati, Subansirimukh and the Dhansirimukh were regular members of the union in 1959. In the last two years the membership strength varied as a result of new entrants, death, resignation, transfer and closure of ghats, and the figure stood at 727 in May, 1961. So far as collective disputes are concerned, the *Sangha* can claim to be the most victorious one in collective agreements. Eradication of contract system of employment is first of the kind. This system prevailed in the *Joint Steamer Company* working from their inception. On various attempts made by the Union with the help of the Government tripartite machinery, progressive direct employment was achieved for the workers and thereby almost all the labourers were brought under direct employment. Regularisation of working hours, provision of leave facilities, housing, medical, and other amenities are provided to the workers through collective bargaining. In comparison to the other unskilled workers of the country, the handling labourers are paid high because of piece rate system of working with an arrangement of speed bonus system. The Union, during the period under review, has collected some 67,000 rupees by way of membership subscription and levy. The balance sheet of the Union reveals balance 'nil' as on 31st March, 1961.

(vi) *Postal Employees Organisation :* In 1924 a service union under P & T Department was established. Since then several changes have taken place and the *National Federation* of P & T employees came into being in 1954, in which all unions of different arms were re-aligned according to class. There are two unions in the postal arm in Sibsagar, viz : (1) All-India Postal Employees Union Class III, and (2) All-India Postal Employees Union, Postman and Class IV. Similarly there are two unions in each of the arms, viz : Telegraph traffic and Telegraph engineering.

The aims and objects of the Union are to (a) cultivate the co-operative spirit among the employees, (b) endeavour to mitigate various staff grievances

by negotiations and consultations, (c) promote good relations between the employees and employer and look after all round welfare of the staff.

The union has been able to improve the service conditions of the employees. It has also been able to maintain the cordial relations between the Govt. and the employees. Moreover the union has been able to successfully press the Govt. for the establishment of two pay Commissions whose awards improved the pay prospects and amenities of the staff.

In addition to the above there are some independent local small unions, not affiliated to any affiliating unions, functioning in some small establishments. There are also labour organisations in Railway and Central Govt. undertakings.

(vii) *Employers' Association :* The following employers' associations are functioning in the tea industry of the district : (1) *Assam Branch India Tea Association,* (2) *Assam Tea Planters' Association,* (3) *Bharatia Chah Parisad,* and (4) *Tea Association of India.* The fourth organisation is a new one. Of all these Employers' Associations, the *Assam Branch Indian Tea Association* calls for special mention. To trace the history of the *A.B.I.T.A.* we are to go back to 1881 in which year the *Indian Tea Association* was formed in Calcutta, the object being to promote the common interest of all those concerned in the cultivation of tea in India. The *A.B.I.T.A.* was formed in consequence of a meeting held at Kokilamukh on the 29th October, 1889 and was originally called the *Assam Valley Tea Association.* The *Assam Branch Indian Tea Association* is divided into 16 circles which are grouped in three zones as follows :

Zone 1	...	Doom Dooma, Dibrugarh, Panitola, Tingri, Naharkatia and Moran.
Zone 2	...	Sonari, Nazira, Jorhat and Golaghat
Zone 3	...	Nowgong, Bisvanath, Tezpur, Borsala Mangaldai, and North Lakhimpur.

Each circle is represented on the appropriate Zone Committee and also on the General Committee in which is vested the management and control of the Associations' affairs. There is an Executive Sub-Committee of the General Committee to assist the Chairman in arriving at decisions on matters of urgency when time does not permit of a reference to the General Committee. The Branch Chairman and all committee members are elected annually. The offices of the Branch Secretary and the Joint Secretary, Labour, are at Dikom in Lakhimpur district. In each zone there is a Zone Secretary and an Additional Secretary, their offices being located at Chaulkhoa (Zone 1), Cinnamara (Zone 2), and Sonabeel Tea Estate (Zone 3). All the estates in the four circles in Zone 2 and nine estates belonging to the Moran circle in Zone 1 are in the Sibsagar district.

The objects of the Association are to watch over and safeguard the intrests of its members and of labour employed on member estates. Close touch with the Government of Assam is maintained by the Association's adviser in Shillong and with district officials by the Zone stipendiary officers. There is also constant liason with the parent Association in Calcutta and with sister Associations elsewhere on matters of common interest. The Association's stipendiary officers advise members on labour and other problems and assist them in negotiation with trade unions and in proceedings under the *Industrial Disputes Act*. The Association also represents members on the various tripartite committees set up by the Government to advise on matters of labour policy. The 1959 membership of the Assam Branch of the Association is 327 estates with a total acreage of 2,35,560.91 ; of these estates a total acreage of 81,541 are situated in Sibsagar district.

The *Assam Tea Planters' Association* is another employers' organisation in the district established to safeguard the interests of small tea growers. The head-quarters of the Association are now at Jorhat. The formal inauguration of the Association was made in the year 1935 under the name of *Assam Valley Tea Planters' Association*, but in 1947 when Sylhet was curved out of Assam, the name was shortened to *Assam Tea Planters' Association.*

The aims and objects of the Association are (1) to promote the common intrest of all persons concerned in the cultivation of tea in India particularly of the tea planters of Assam and the welfare of the labour employed, (2) to keep in touch with Government in matters effecting the tea industry and (3) to maintain close intercourse with all sister Associations on matters connected with the industry or having the same or like objects in view and to ensure uniformity in all garden practices amongst the member estates.

The Association has been divided into ten Tea District Committees with Jorhat, Sibsagar and Golaghat having one such Committee each. The total acreage under these committees is 26,652.64. The Committee-wise breakdown of this figure is Jorhat 8,297.94 acres, Sibsagar 7,257.26 acres and Golaghat 11,097.44 acres. It has also been laid down that there will be one representative for every thousand acres under tea or part there of subject to a maximum of eight and minimum three in each tea district.

Generally one tea estate is a member of one Association, but some gardens are members of more than one Associations. These associations are advising bodies to their members and see to the interest of the members in matters of business, industrial relations and progress of the industry.

The Printing Presses and Rice and Oil Mills also have employers' associations which mainly see to the business interest. Employers' Associations in other industries and callings are not very prominent in the district.

(c) Welfare of Industrial Labour :

The general condition of industrial labour in the State is fast improving. It is now far better than what it was in pre-independence days. Security of service, freedom of association, freedom of expression and rapidly increasing influence on industrial relations are the land-marks of progress in the field of labour welfare. The lower wage level has now risen several times above that of the late thirties and early forties of the present century. Statutory minimum wages have been fixed for the labour in tea industry, rice, oil and flour mills, public motor transport, roads and building construction, stone quarries, agricultural operations and handling of commercial goods.

The *Employees State Insurance Act*, which is a Central Act, providing for sickness and unemployment days, is yet to be enforced in this district. The *Plantation Labour Act*, 1951, providing for housing, educational facilities, medical facilities, sanitation, water supply, clubs, creche, maternity benefits, sickness allowance, earned leave with wages, rest days, hours of work, overtime and other conditions of service, are in full force in the tea gardens of this district.

The *Factories Act*, 1948 has made statutory provisions, inter alia, in matters of health, safety and welfare of the factory workers. The salient features of the *Factories Act* are the prevention of industrial accident and occupational diseases and the restriction of working hours in the factories. To enforce all the rules made under this Act, the District Factory office was set up at Jorhat with jurisdiction at first over both the districts of Sibsagar and Lakhimpur and over Sibsagar only from 1960 when a separate District office was set up at Dibrugarh for the Lakhimpur district. This District office is a branch of the State Factory Inspectorate with its headquarter at Shillong. Two Inspectors of factories are stationed in this district office for carrying over the purposes of the Act. A Medical Inspector of Factories has also been attached to the office in recent years to look after matters relating to the health of the factory workers.

Owing to the ever greater complexity of the machines and the interdependence of the various manufacturing processes, the introduction of new machines, the adoption of new manufacturing processes, the construction of new workshops, the use of a great variety of toxic products, the Inspectorate has had to face new problems concerning the safety of workers, their health, welfare, working hours, occupational hazards, etc. As Sibsagar is mainly a tea growing and oil producing district, the number of factory workers has been increasing rapidly. This along with other factories such as the Sugar Mill at Dergaon calls for special attention to the problems of Labour welfare. The total strength of the registered factories in Sibsagar district was, in 1959, 290.

The *Assam Shops and Establishment Act*, 1948, governs the service

conditions of employees in shops and commercial firms. Some Tea Companies and some other employing concerns have their own pension schemes and gratuity system on retirement of workers.

It may be pointed out that whenever necessary the employers, employees and Government meet in tripartite conferences and make decisions on important matters which are not governed by laws and statutory rules.

Some welfare institutes for labour welfare are being run by the State Government and other agencies for such work. At Rowriah there is a Labour Welfare Centre for tea garden men where training cources in labour matters of law, health, safety, welfare and hand work are given. At Mozenga, near Nazira, there is a Labour Welfare Centre where training courses suited to tea garden women are given. The former is being run through a strong managing committee representing Government, employers, employees and *Hindustan Mazdoor Seva Sangha* and the latter is being run through the *Kasturba Memorial Trust*. Another Labour Welfare Centre for tea garden children is being run at Teok by *Kasturba Memorial Trust*. At Dakhinhengra Tea Estate (Golaghat) and Sundarpur Tea Estate (Sibsagar) two Government Community Projects for tea garden labour are under construction. The *Assam Seva Samity* is running small vocational training centres at Bokakhat (Golaghat), Selenghat (Jorhat) and Kaidinga (Sibsagar), mainly for tea garden children. The I.N.T.U.C. have some weaving training centres at different places for tea garden children. In all the above mentioned training centres, the trainees are given stipends to cover their expense.

CHAPTER VI

BANKING TRADE AND COMMERCE

A. Banking and Finance

a) History of indigenous Banking :

The history of indigenous banking in Sibsagar district is difficult to trace, for we do not have sufficient materials to draw upon. However, it may perhaps be safely said that the origin of such banking concern lies in the establishment of Marwari firms which came in the wake of the tea industry. In this connection the following observations made by the *Assam Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee* in 1929 are of special interest to us: "The history of indigenous banks in Assam is shrouded in obscurity We know that there are Marwari firms which started business in Assam 80 or 90 years ago. From Gait's History of Assam we find that about 1835 'a number of enterprising Marwari merchants had already established themselves in the province'—. It was about this time that British rule in the Brahmaputra Valley was being consolidated. We think that it would be correct to say that the growth of Marwari enterprise was pari passu with the development of the tea industry. The Marwari and the tea planter were the two pioneers in the Assam Valley. Tea was first manufactured in Assam in 1837, though not on a commercial scale. By 1853 tea gardens had been started in Upper Assam and in the next few years the industry made rapid progress. It does not necessarily follow however that in the early stages of their existence in Assam, Marwaris engaged in banking business. The probability is that their business at the beginning was trading pure and simple, and indeed this is the main function that they perform at the present time. Any banking business they transact is only secondary, in business parlance what we may call a "side-line". About the nature of this banking business the report further says that it is practically "confined to large Marwari firms in some of the towns of the Assam Valley who accept deposit and do lending business. Some of them also issue cheque. It is to be noted that these firms donot invite deposits. Local people, however, do keep deposit at about 6 per cent per annum which are withdrawable at call. People seem to have confidence in these indigenous banks and difficulty is rarely experienced in withdrawing the money when required. It might not be thought that all big Marwari firms receive deposits, though most do. Then again, there are

smaller Marwaris in the villages who very occasionally receive deposits, but as a rule they depend for their finance on bigger firms in the towns. Pass books are rarely issued by the indigenous banks though frequently deposit receipts are granted. The accounts of baking business are, however, not kept separate from those of the general trade business and no separate balance sheet of the losses and profits of banking business only is prepared. The loans in villages frequently take the forms of advances on condition of repayment of principal and interest in the shape of produce. As a rule, the Marwari firms would not transact any pure banking business unless they had a surplus not required for trade and business. The first consideration is trade and not banking. A mixture of trade and business is to be found in cases where an agriculturist required a loan, say for a marriage. Such a loan if granted in cash, would usually be spent in food stuffs and clothes and the borrower, as a rule, has to take the loan in the shape of goods, if the Marwari has them in stock. No information is available as to the amount of capital lying with these indigenous bankers for purpose of credit. We believe it amounts to many times the working capital of the Joint Stock companies".

(b) General credit facilities :

(*i*) *Rural and Urban indebtedness :* Materials for the assessment of the trend of rural indebtedness in Sibsagar district are scanty. Nor do we have much information on the extent of indebtedness in the past. The settlement officer in charge of last settlement in the district reported on the basis of economic cadastres prepared by him during the summer of 1924 in four typical villages of Jorhat and Golaghat subdivisions that one person in every four was in debt. The average amount of debt per individual or family was not given but it was stated that in many cases the debt went hand in hand with opium consumption and disproportionate expenditure on marriages and *sraddha* ceremonies, besides unavoidable calamities such as sickness, loss of plough cattle or death.

The report of the *Assam Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee* also provides an idea about the debt position in the year 1929-30. This Committee proceeded on to ascertain the extent of rural indebtedness in Assam and in doing so conducted an enquiry in 71 typical villages of the State. The findings of the Committee related that only 15 per cent of the families were debt free; that the average debt per family was Rs. 205.00 and that per indebted family was Rs. 242.00. The total agricultural indebtedness of the plains districts was over Rs. 22 crores, which amounted to several times the land revenue. The estimate of indebtedness in Sibsagar district was, however, incomplete. The figures collected from Golaghat and Sibsagar subdivisions were meagre and incomplete and, therefore, had to be discarded at the time of tabulations. Figures for 146 families in 5 villages of Jorhat subdivision were only used. The proportion of debt-free families in this subdivision was estimated to be 16.5 per cent and average debt per indebted family stood at Rs. 145.00. These estimates, in the opinion of the Committee, did not pretend to be accurate, but were nevertheless useful by way of giving a general picture of debt position in 1929-30.

The Committee further observed that "on the whole the people are not indebted to any large extent except where they are in the hands of middlemen or buyer of produce. This is the case in places where the people are of the lower castes with improvident habits and where communications are backward. This is particularly true of the Majuli and of the fluctuating area on the south bank of the Brahmaputra. This is economically the worst part of the district and the people though simple and honest are surprisingly improvident and largely indebted to traders, a condition doubtless induced by the chances and changes to which their geographical position in midstream renders them unpleasantly liable".

Though no deliberate attempt was made to assess the extent of rural indebtedness during the depression of early thirties, yet there is little doubt that the actual incidence of burden or indebtedness became much more crushing during the Great Economic depression, when unmarketable surpluses and unremunerative prices operated as patent causes of increasing agricultural indebtedness. On the other hand owing to the short supply and the phenomenal rise in prices of most of the agricultural produce as also to the check and restriction exercised by war-time controls on many old familiar avenues of spending of the peasants, the burden of debt must have been reduced substantially during the early thirties and thereafter.

The actual debt position in post-independence era of the rural people of Sibsagar has been brought to light in an *Economic Survey Report* published in 1962 by the Department of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam. The report says that "out of 2,682 families as many as 1,659 (or 61.86 per cent) are debt-free families. The average debt per family is Rs. 66.00 while the average debt per indebted family is Rs. 173.00. The percentage of debt-free families is the highest (78.1 per cent) in the Miri villages. Debt in kind constitutes a negligible proportion. Of the amount of money-debts 55.8 per cent is secured. The bulk of the debt are of short standing; about 80 per cent of the total money debt was contracted during the three years preceding the survey. The bulk of the rural debt is incurred for unproductive purposes and only 32 per cent of the money-debt was incurred for the purpose of purchasing farm cattles, farm implements and land'. The professional or semi-professional money lenders play a predominant role by supplying about 80 per cent of the borrowed amount. Commercial bank facilities are still beyond the reach of an agriculturist. Co-operative credit has not yet attained any lime-light.

It is also revealed in the said survey report that non-cultivators are

heavily indebted and among agriculturists, the owner-cultivators are more in debt. The burden of debt falls heavily on the small holders who are also easily susceptible to exploitation by means of high rates of interest.

(*ii*) *Private Money-lender:* The most important source from which credit could be obtained in the district is the private money lenders. In 1952 of the total loan advanced this source alone affored loan to the extent of 59.61 per cent. But professional money lenders as such were unimportant some seventy years ago. The *Census Report* of 1891 reported that there were only 1,792 professional money lenders in the whole of the Brahmaputra Valley and of these Kamrup district alone accounted for 1,211. If an average for the rest of the districts is calculated it comes to 116 per district. A clear picture of the present-day position of money lenders can be seen from the following table :

Sources	*Percentage of loan offered*
1. Land-owner	0.20
2. Commercial bank	0.87
3. Co-operative bank	2.28
4. Government	4.49
5. Friends and relatives	32.55
6. Money-lender	59.61

Private money lenders sometimes charge exorbitant rates of interest varying from 10 to 100 per cent annually; but usually their rates range between 25 to 40 per cent. Inspite of that they play a predominant role in rural finance. The reasons for this dominance are not far to seek. Firstly, the rural people are ignorant about the complex procedure of securing loans from commercial banks. Secondly, these banks are situated in towns and, hence, not easily accessible to villagers. Thirdly, the potential borrowers of villagers donot have tangible assets to hypothecate at the time of obtaining loans. Fourthly, the co-operative banks, though they charge 6½ per cent rate of interest as against 9 per cent by the commercial banks, are yet to make their presence felt in villages. On the other hand private money lenders are readily accessible and often times they issue loans simply on personal acquaintance.

The system of money lending in villages is known as the *Dadan* system in which the traders who are interested in agricultural produce advance loans to cultivators against their further crop. But the Kabuliwalas advance loans against cash. The peculiar thing about them is that they deduct the interest from the capital before they hand over the advance.

These people confined their business primarily in tea gardens but now-a-days they have stepped into the villages even. In this connection there is another interesting point. The land-owners who advance loans recover the interest by way of wage-free labour, which the borrower has to offer in lieu of the interest.

(*iii*) *Joint-Stock Banks:* There are three branches of the *State Bank of India* at Sibsagar, Jorhat and Golaghat towns. They perform treasury functions and receive deposits from the public. Being nationalized institutions they have an advantage over other banks in attracting deposits.

Besides these banks there are other commercial banks such as *M/S United Bank of India Ltd.* (Head Office, Calcutta), *M/S Punjab National Bank Ltd.* (Head Office, New Delhi), and *M/S Gauhati Bank Ltd.* (Head Office, Gauhati) which are functioning in the district. *M/S Commilla Union Bank Ltd.*, which opened its branch at Jorhat in 1937, later merged into the *United Bank of India Ltd.*, which has its sole branch in the district situated at Jorhat. It being an old established institution caters to the need of the district right from Mathoni Tea Estate to Sonari. Besides financing traders and millers this Bank meets the need of most of the Indian-owned Tea Estates. The *Punjab National Bank* opened its branch at Jorhat only in 1959. It serves the need of the mercantile community and being comparatively new in the district has yet to spread its activities outside the town area.

The *Gauhati Bank* has two branches at Jorhat and Sibsagar since 1926. In the years after the World War II there was a run in this bank as a result of which the depositors withdrew their money leading to a closure of the Bank. Later however the Bank was reopened and all attempt was made to revive its business. The bank has yet to regain its former confidence of the people, and except some business in bills and cheques nothing worth mentioning is being done by it at present.

Sibsagar is primarily an agricultural district. The banking habit has not yet developed to an appreciable extent. Whatever confidence there was during the pre-World War II days, was lost consequent upon the run in many banks such as *Sun Light Bank, Tripura Modern Bank, Surma Valley Bank, Gauhati Bank* etc. Hence large-scale financial transactions do not take place. This is more true in respect of two subdivisional towns of Sibsagar and Golaghat. In this connection it is to be noted that although the tea industry in the district is by far the largest in the State of Assam, banking in the district has not proportionately developed as the foreign owned tea concerns do their banking business in foreign Exchange Banks and through their Agency House and Brokers in Calcutta.

(iv) *Co-operative Credit Societies and Banks:* The Co-operative movement in Assam during the course of the last six years or so has

regained the confidence of the people which was so badly shaken for its reverses during the last Great War days and after. The achievement in the past few years in comparison to what was done before is very encouraging although in some respects only a beginning has been made as in marketing and storage. Substantial progress seems to have been made in respect of co-operative credit.

The agricultural population, when the war-time activities were ever, began to suffer for want of finance and Government took up the matter of rehabilitation of rural credit once again.

The *Second Five Year Plan* for co-operative credit was prepared on the lines of the recommendations made by the *All India Rural Credit Survey Committee*. It was decided to have a target in each State of covering 50% of credit requirements within the next 10 to 15 years. In Assam the target was fixed at 40% within the plan period and it was worked out to achieve this target on the basis of Rs. 200.00 short term, Rs. 500.00 medium term and Rs. 1000.00 long term loan per family.

Under the above scheme some of the existing credit societies and 7 central Banks in the plains districts were to be reorganized and 300 large size credit societies were to be organised. The *Reserved Bank of India* agreed to provide an amount of Rs. 22.5 lakhs to the proposed 300 societies at Rs. 7,500 each in share capital.

In the region covering Jorhat and Golaghat Sub-divisions 14 large-sized co-operatives at Golaghat, and 13 at Jorhat, have been organized and registered since the beginning of the second plan for making credit facilities available to needy agriculturist. Out of the above large sized societies 15 have been given subsidies of Rs. 1,500.00 each for maintenance of staff, etc. in the first year and Rs. 1,000.00 in the beginning of the second year. Four societies, each at Jorhat and Golaghat, have also constructed godowns within Rs. 12,500.00 out of a 75% loan 25% subsidy, made available by the State Government.

Under the said scheme 3 *Marketing Societies* within Jorhat subdivision, one each at Jorhat, Nakachari and Kamalabari and 2 such societies in Golaghat subdivision, one each at Dergaon and Furkating, have been organized and registered. For the construction of godowns Government also offered Rs. 15,000.00 as loan, Rs. 5,000.00 as subsidy, Rs. 20,000.00 as contribution to share capital and Rs. 5,000.00 as subsidy for the maintenance of staff on a sliding scale for 3 years at the beginning to these societies.

Over 22% of people of these two subdivisions are served by co-operative organization of one form of other. The organizations have attracted savings to the tune of Rs. 12,18,730,00 as paid-up share capital excluding that of Sugar Mills. The total working capital is made of paid-up share capital of Rs. 12,730.00 borrowings of various kinds from central financing

agencies, different Boards and Government of Rs. 42,14,013.00, reserves of Rs. 1,43,525.00 and deposit of Rs. 50,037.00.

Central Co-operative Bank Ltd. Jorhat and Golaghat: The *Central Co-operative Banks* of Jorhat & Golaghat have been amalgamated into one under reorganisation scheme of Central Banks to make it strong and economically viable. After reorganisation in 1957 there is one Central Bank at Jorhat with a branch at Golaghat. Since then the membership of the Bank is on the increase. The Bank has now in its membership 18 individuals and 176 societies.

The State Government has contribution in share capital of the Bank to the extent of Rs. 1,00,000.00. The owned funds of the Bank gradually show an increasing tendency; Rs. 2,97,936.29 shows the present strength of the funds. The position shall be further improved with the realisation of unrealised profit. It has also a good achievement in improvement of the working capital structure. Rs. 28,38,747.20 now represents the working capital of the Bank. The Bank expects further increase in the capital in this first year of the 3rd plan. The total in this capital of Rs. 2,88,015.00 has increasing tendencies even in this year too with the implementation of the lending policy. The Bank has in its lending policy the linking of borrowing with share holdings. The Bank issues credit to the debtor societies 10 times the value of shares held with the Bank with Government contribution and 20 times to those societies having no Government participation. The total volume of short term credit advanced by the Bank during the period is Rs. 30,26,153.74 and the present out-standing thereof stands at Rs. 14,38,668.42. Rs. 2,47,419.00 represents the present outstanding of medium term credit out of a total issue of Rs. 2,98,925.00 during the period. Rs. 24,096.00 is the present outstanding of the long term credit of a total issue of Rs. 30,000.00. The Bank had to assume this responsibility before the *Central Land Mortgage Bank* came into operation. Thus the Bank plays an important role in supply of rural credit.

The volume of borrowing of the Bank has also been on the increase substantially from Rs. 1,91,854.00 to Rs. 25,36,664.37 in the period.

Agricultural Credit Co-operatives: At the primary level, the number of societies including 27 large-sized *Credit Societies* and 197 *Service Co-operatives* had raisen up to 239 till December, 1960. These Societies have a total membership of 19013 with paid-up share capital of Rs. 1,33,015.00. The total amount of rural credit advanced by the Credit Societies during the period was Rs. 17,86,819.00, of which Rs. 14,68,500.00 is still outstanding. Total working capital of them comes to Rs. 27,62,743.00 at present. Though the deposit resource of the societies is insignificantly scanty, it is encouraging that they have proposed

to launch a drive for tapping deposit even in their proportional stage. The large sized societies have got State Government participation in shares, at Rs. 7,500.00 each and managerial subsidy on a gradually decreasing scale for 1st three years from Rs. 1500.00-1000.00 to Rs. 500.00 for trained whole-time Secretaries ; 9 large-sized societies had supply of finance from the State in shape of loan and subsidy for construction of Storage godowns, at Rs. 12,500.00 per godown. Managerial subsidy at Rs. 150.00 per Society has also been granted to the *Service Co-operatives* set up newly in the wake of reorganisation of small-sized *Credit Societies.*

Primary Land Mortgage Bank : This institution is of very recent origin. Before this has been brought into being, the *Central Land Mortgage Bank* issued long term credit to the agriculturists through its two sections, opened one at Jorhat and the other at Golaghat. The activities of the sections were administered through a local committee consisting of the Local Co-operative Officers and the Chairman of the Central Bank. One Government Officer from the cadre of Asstt. Co-operative Officer is placed I/C of the Section. The Golaghat Section has not as yet been converted into a full fledged Primary Bank. The total long term credit issued by the section since inception up to date is Rs. 95,750.00. No further credit could be supplied by the *Jorhat Primary Land Mortgage Bank* nor the Section at Golaghat for lack of fund with the *Central Land Mortgage Bank.*

Agricultural Marketing and Processing Societies : The number of *Primary Marketing Societies* in both the sub-divisions were five till 1959-60. But their number has increased to 11 in the wake of the *State Trading policy* which is being implemented through the medium of *Co-operative Societies.* All the Societies have been undertaking the responsibility of executing the State Trading Scheme from 1-1-61. The State Trading Scheme has brought to the fore the exigency to cover the entire two subdivisions with the activities of more *Marketing Societies* with necessary readjustment in the areas of their operation.

Before the *State Trading Scheme* was enforced, the *Marketing Societies* dealt in sugar. The *Golaghat Besakina Society Ltd.* (Marketing) has dealings in fertilisers also. The *Marketing Societies* are now engaged in procuring paddy with total membership of all credit and *Service Co-operatives.* The individual membership is 115. These *Marketing Societies* have hitherto raised share capital of Rs. 96,900.00 including the State contribution. The State participation at the rate of Rs. 10,000.00 in the first and similar amount in the second year has not been made available to all of them. Only 4 societies have so far been given the participation. Three *Marketing Societies* have built their godowns with loan and subsidy from

the Government. Total financial help given for the purpose is Rs. 30,000.00 of which 75% loan and 25%subsidy.

The *Marketing Societies* are working now with a total working capital of Rs. 7,57,275.00. The advance to meet the need of working capital has been made by the *Apex Co-operative Bank* to the Societies. The Societies being new have not been able to create reserve and other funds.

The Societies engaged in processing activities are the *Paddy Husking Societies* which are 31 in number, brought into being during the period. They have hitherto handled a volume of business worth of Rs. 22,000.00 with a membership of 732. Most of their borrowed capital was taken from the *Khadi Board.* The Societies being in existence from recent date have not been able to form their owned capital except 12% of the share capital.

The *Assam Co-operative Sugar Mill Ltd.* with working capital of Rs. 1,28,000.00 came into operation producing sugar from the 3rd year of the Second Plan. This is a remarkable achievement of the Co-operative sector of the region. The Mill crushed 6,30,447 mds. of sugarcane in 1958-59, 15,70,200 mds. in 1959-60, and 20,32,236 mds. in 1960-61 producing 47,071 mds., 1,17,279 mds. and 161067 mds. of sugar respectively.

Co-operative Farming Societies : The number of such Societies has gone from 13 in 1956 to 65 in 1957-60 with total membership of 2223 and working capital of Rs. 15,47,383.00, mostly supplied by the *Jorhat Central Co-operative Bank Ltd.* The paid-up share capital of the Societies is Rs. 1,98,105.00. The Societies falling in different categories have covered a total area of 13,603 bighas of land, of which 7,903 bighas are under cultivation. The Societies are mostly growing sugarcanes for supply to the *Assam Co-operative Sugar Mill Ltd.* The Societies are seized with the problems like irrigation, labour to be provided by the members, good and qualified leadership, technical guidance, transport bottleneck, etc ; for want of efficient management the investment of their borrowed capital has not been proper. They have not been able to produce quality canes with high percentage of recovery and have considerably defaulted repayment of their dues to the financing agency.

Milk Supply Societies and Central Co-operative Milk Union Ltd. There are 7 *Milk Supply Societies* with membership of 254 and working capital of Rs. 35,941.00. The Societies coming into existence during the period have not been able to function properly for high rate of cattle mortality and want of fodder. The *Jorhat Central Co-operative Milk Union Ltd.* is engaged now in selling of milk to the consumers. The Union has one milk pasturisation plan. But this has not yet been installed for want of boiler. The total working capital of the Union is Rs. 85,941.00. The supply

of milk to the Union is made by the Government Dairy farm at Kaliapani and one milk supply society.

Fishery Societies: There are 10 *Fishery Societies* in two subdivisions with membership of 325 and working capital of Rs. 15,933.00. The working of the societies is linked up with acquiring fishing rights in Govt. fisheries. So when the rights cannot be acquired due to high bid the societies remain defunct.

Trading Co-operatives: There are 6 *Trading Co-operatives* functioning now. They are the remnant of those set up during the period of scarcity. The membership of them comes to 6960 with working capital of Rs. 75,164.00. Three of them have been engaged in *State Trading* in Majuli area.

Overdue position of the Central Bank and its causes: The following facts by and large testify to the present overdue position of the Cental Bank which most unhappily comes to about 80% of the demand:

(a) Natural calamities, such as draught and flood occur every year causing extensive damage to the agricultural crops. The rural credit is mainly issued to the members for seasonal agricultural operation. The agriculturists invest the credit generally in production of food crops. Because they are very hard up and want credit only for investment in that crop. Therefore due to low return, the investment becomes hardly sufficient to cover their home consumption resulting in no surplus. Consequently for the last 4 to 5 years the natural calamities are occurring regularly all over the area, affecting very much the expected yield. In the circumstances, the loanee members default their repayments which creates the present overdue position.

(b) The intentional defaults to the extent of at least 25% are also responsible for the said position. The coercive measures taken against the wilful defaulters have not been so effective due to the belated execution of the awards by the *Bakijai* Officers.

The *Farming Societies* have defaulted their repayment of their outstanding dues to the extent of 75%. Overdue position of the *Farming Societies* can be ascribed to the unscientific cultivation of Sugarcane resulting in very low yield.

The system of linking credit with marketing has to be operated here ...ectively so as to ensure recovery of overdues through that process. The ...overy in coins has also been difficult, as the people generally is not inclined ...art with cash in terms of repayment.

It is expected very much that introduction of *State Trading Scheme* will ...ring about a considerable improvement in overdue position.

The following *Marketing Societies* have so far received loans, subsidies, participation in share capital as mentioned against each of them:

Name of Society	*Loans for construction of godowns*	*Subsidy for godown*	*Participation of share capital*	*Subsidy for staff*
Dergaon Besakina Samabai Samiti	Rs. 15,000	Rs. 5,000	Rs. 20,000	Rs. 25,000
Kamalabari Marketing Society	Rs. 15,000	Rs. 5,000	Rs. 10,000	Rs. 2,500
Samyukta Besakina Samabai Samiti	Rs. 15,000	Rs. 5,000	Rs. 1,000	Rs. 2,500

Present position of Co-operative Societies: Co-operative Movement in the Sibsagar sub-division commenced soon after the passing of the *Indian Co-operative Act* of 1904 by registering five or six *Co-operative Societies* with unlimited liability. Loans to these societies were granted direct from Shillong. Due to absence of supervision and lack of the spirit of co-operation, these Societies could not thrive and had to be liquidated. After the passing of the *Indian Co-operative Societies Act* 1912 more societies came into being. A reorganisation Scheme was also taken up by Government and a *Central Co-operative Bank*, perhaps oldest in the State, was established in this town. Loans were issued by the Govt. through the *Central Co-operative Bank*. The *Central Co-operative Bank* also received deposit from the public. Up to 1929 about 40 *Credit Societies* were obtaining loans from the Central Bank. In the economic depression of 1929-30 the Central Bank had to send many societies into liquidation but still then its investments were fully realised. No where in North Eastern Region of India, perhaps more glorious record of working could be found of a central Bank as in the case of this Bank. The Bank realised all its dues from the Societies and refunded voluntarily all its liabilities to the creditors. During the 2nd World war, the members could get easy money for their crop and labour and as such no fresh loans were issued during that period, neither further development in the organisation of Co-operatives could be noticed. After cessasion of hostilities and post-war depression people again felt the need of finance. With the strengthening of the Co-operative Department by the Govt., officers were sent to every nook and corner for reorganisation of moribund Societies and organisation of fresh

ones. From 1954 the *Apex Bank* started issuing loans direct to societies upto 1956. During this period about 26 *Co-operative Credit Societies* obtained loans direct from the *Apex Bank*. Short-term Loans for seasonal agricultural operation repayable within a year, amounting to Rs. 88970/- were granted to 24 Societies, out of which a sum of Rs. 16,526- due from 9 societies is still overdue. Loans for another sum of Rs. 52370/- was paid to 14 societies as Medium-term Loans for the purpose of improvement of cultivable land, repayment of dues to mahajans, purchase of bullocks, etc., repayable in three equal annual instalments. A sum of Rs. 34,010/- on this account is still due to the *Apex Bank* from 14 societies.

From 1956-57 onwards Co-operative loans were granted by the *Apex Bank* to *Central Co-operative Bank* from which *Primary Co-operative Societies* should obtain loans.

The *Apex Bank*, Sibsagar Branch granted loans to the extent of Rs. 10,61,712/- under Short-term, Medium-term and Special Medium & Long term basis during the Period from 1956 to 1959, out of which a sum of Rs. 5,74,911/- is still overdue. The position of this subdivision in respect of realisation of Co-operative loans is not encouraging, as Co-operators consider the said loans as reliefs granted by the Govt. Thus, to avoid repayment, they speak of natural calamities viz cattle epidemic, drought, etc., and even well-to-do Co-operators are not repaying their dues. Consequently the *Local Central Co-operative Bank* has failed to reduce its overdues which makes them deprived of obtaining any fresh loans. The position, therefore, is in a stand still state.

(c) Insurance :

(i) *Life Insurance :* Prior to 1930, there was no proper organisation of any company in this district to take up Insurance business earnestly. It was Sri M. P. Barua who in 1930 carried out some organizational work to start business in Insurance on behalf of the *Bombay Mutual Life Insurance Society*. There after the same gentleman started organizational work for the *Oriental life Assurance Company* in the district in 1935. Subsequently *Empire of India, National Indian, National Brawbans Life* and many others organized their business in the district till 31st August 1956 when *Life Insurance Corporation* came into being.

At present there are two branches of the *Life Insurance Corporation* at Jorhat and Golaghat and one recently established sub-office at Sibsagar. The utility of Life insurance has spread even to the remotest villages of the district. A large number of people is now seen to be eager to take out insuarnce policies. The figures given below support the extent of its popularity :

Year	*No. of Policies*	*Amount*
1957	3,397	99,80,950
1958	3,964	1,12,32,250
1959	4,884	1,49,55,100

Since nationalization of the Insurance business people are taking more interest in getting their lives insured. It is noticed that almost every government servant or private employee takes at least one insurance policy. It is expected that with the increasing propensity to save for the future and rising standard of living of the people, the number of insurance policies will also rise considerably.

(ii) *General Insurance :* General insurance business against risks of fire, theft, pilferage, etc., in respect of tea in transit and all tea garden factories and other buildings are generally done in Calcutta with foreign concerns. Local petty cases of fire and motor insurance are, however, accepted by the *New India Assurance Campany, Ruby General Insurance Company of India*, etc. The *New India Assurance Co. Ltd.* opened its sub-branch at Na-ali, Jorhat in the year 1960. The number of policies issued by them against fire, marine and accidents were till 7.2.62 as follows : fire—102, marine—51 and accident—485. The *Scottish Union and National Insurance Company*, a foreign concern with an Officer-in-Chief for India, stationed in Calcutta, has been doing life and general insurance since the end of 19th century, although it had no organization at Sibsagar till 1954 when an Inspector was first appointed to control the increasing volume of business. Since 1st January, 1960 a sub-branch of this company has been operating at Jorhat. The reason for the location of this branch office at Jorhat while other Insurance companies are opening their branches at Gauhati is to render efficient and prompt service to tea concerns, *Assam Oil Company* and other private and Semi-Government enterprises. The total business done by this company in entire Assam was Rs. 1,55,000 (net premium) out of which Rs. 1,30,000 was collected from Sibsagar district.

(d) *State Assistance to industrial development :* In recent years the maximum State assistance in this district went to *Assam Co-operative Sugar Mill Ltd.* This mill is a Co-operative venture registered under the *Assam Co-operative Societies Act 1949* (Act 1 of 1950) : vide certificate of registration No. 219, dt. 26.3.55. The objects of the Society are to promote economic interests of its members and to encourage production of sugarcane

and development of sugar industry on Co-operative lines with a view to securing the advantage of large scale agricultural production. The licensed capacity of the mill is 800-1000 tons per day.

The authorised share capital of the society is Rs. 2 crores, divided into 10 lakh shares of Rs. 20.00 each. So far the Society had been able to collect Rs. 10.40 lakhs from the public, Rs. 20 lakhs from the Government as share capital and Rs. 45 lakhs from *Industrial Finance Corporation*, India, as loans.

During the past four seasons, from 1958-59 to 1961-62, the mill had altogether 4.70 crushing days during which period it produced 4,86,037.10 maunds of sugar by crushing 61,08, 642.32 maunds of sugarcane. The raw materials of the mill are available in plenty, but they have to be procured from distances varying from 30 to 60 miles, and only about 40 per cent of raw materials, required for the mill, are available within a radius of 20 miles. Its finished products are both sugar and Molasses. There is no difficulty at all in marketing the former, as the entire production can be consumed in Sibsagar District alone; but in order to popularise the local product among various consumers of the State, sugar produced here is sold to dealers of almost all places of the State. As regards the latter, the only customer which offers a fair price to it is the *Dikom Distillery*.

Besides the above, *Industrial Co-operatives* receive financial help from the Government either by way of working capital, share capital, loan or subsidy. Out of the 164 *Industrial Co-operatives* now existing in the district, 135 are *Weaving Societies* and the rest are other types of Societies. The Weaving Societies are supplied with credit by the *Handloom Board* in the form of working capital, and share capital loans. The Societies raise their 75 percent of share capital from loans of the Board which are given in the shape of yarns. They are also supplied with handloom accessories on the basis of 75 percent loan and 25 percent subsidy. The Societies being amateur, very few of them have availed of this system of credit. In 1960 the paid-up share capital of these Societies stood at Rs. 32,020 and total sale during the said year came upto about Rs. 40,500.

The rest of the *Industrial Co-operaitives* mentioned earlier have not made much headway mainly due to dearth of finance and good management. Only one such Society, *Karanga Kamar Silpa Samiti Ltd.*, has been doing exceedingly well. Though its paid-up share capital stands at Rs. 2,220 only, the Society received loans and subsidies from Co-operative and Industries Departments of Assam Government to the tune of Rs. 98,000. The principal products of this Society are pruning knife, hoe and axe, which are sold to tea gardens mainly and till 1960 the total sale-proceeds of these products stood at Rs. 32,000.

(e) Old Coinage System :

Assam is proud of her ancient treasures. She is rich in old sculptures, architectures and stone and copper-plate inscriptions. But it is unfortunate that no concrete numismatic evidence of our ancient kings, prior to the Ahom King Suklenmung (1539-1552 A.D.) has yet come to light. This does not mean that ancient kings did not have their own coins. The art of melting metals and impressing seals on clay or melted metals was known at least during the time of Bhāskaravarman of the seventh century A.D., as evidenced by his Nalanda seal and copper-plate inscriptions. Gold and copper could be obtained within the Kingdom. So this mighty king must have struck coins of his own. In the Silimpur stone slab inscription of the time of Jayapala (1115-1125 A.D.) the last king of the Brahmapala dynasty of Assam it is mentioned that the king (Jaypala) offered to make a large gift of gold equal to his own weight (*tulapurusa*) to a learned Brahmin Prahasa by name, over and above 900 gold coins. This proves that his Kamrupa king minted coins of gold if not of silver and copper, though unfortunately no such coins have yet been discovered. The inscription of Ratnapala mentions the existence of copper mine within the kingdom which the king worked with profit. Ratnapala might have issued copper coins.

Ahom Coins : Although coins of Ahom Kings prior to Suklenmung, as stated above, have not been discovered as yet, historical evidences are there that as early as the fourteenth century A.D. Sudangpha alias Bamuni Konwar (1397-1407) A.D. struct coins in his own name on his accession to the throne. Since then the practice has grown with the subsequent monarch of issuing coins while ascending the coronation building known as the *Singarighar* which contained a throne of gold for the new monarch to occupy. So the credit of minting the first Ahom coins goes to Sudangpha and not to Suklemung as opined by A. W. Botham who might have based his opinion on the view of Sir Edward Gait. In this connection it is worth mentioning that in England, too, the first gold coin the Gold Neble, was initiated by Edward I in 1344 A.D. which was only earlier by fifty-three years than Sudangpha's coinage of gold, with silver coins circulating side by side in both the countries. It is interesting to note that the Ahom coins, unlike other coins, have the peculiarity of being octagonal in shape. There are different interpretations as to the octagonal shape of the Ahom coins. One interpretation is that the ancient Assam was octagonal in shape as narrated in *Yogini Tantra* and hence the Ahom Kings adopted octagonal shape in their coins. But the Ahom kingdom was not octagonal and as such

[1] Detailed information on the coins of the Ahom and other contemporary dynasties may be found in A. W. Botham's authoritative book : *Catalogue of the Provincial Coin Cabinet, Assam.*

this geographical interpretation is unconvincing. There is a reference in Ahom Buranji that Pratap Sinha (Susengpha 1619-1649 A.D.) conquered eight Kingdoms and accordingly struck octagonal coins. But this interpretation also does not hold good because such coins were struck from the time of Suklenmung, if not earlier. The earliest Ahom coins so far discovered are those of Suklenmung issued in 1543. He was contemporary of Naranarayana, the Koch King who also struck coins in his name. The coins of Suklengmung bear inscriptions in the Tai language and characters. The earlier coins with exception to those of Suklenmung bear the dates of accession to the throne of the kings who minted them. It is interesting to note that Jayadhavaj Sinha and his successor Chakradhavaj Sinha used Sanskrit inscription in place of Ahom inscription, while Gadadhar Sinha again reintroduced Tai characters in his coins. The reason is not far to seek. A mere peep into the history of the Ahom kings will show that Sutamla was the first Ahom King to become a convert to Hinduism and to assume the Hindu name of Jayadhavaj Sinha, but Gadadhar Sinha was not converted to Hinduism. Rudra Sinha (1696-1714) A.D.) introduced an annual issue from 1696 in Assamese scripts, and Sanskrit language. This was followed nearly every year until the end of the Ahom rule. All the coins are on the same lines—the obverse containing the name of the king and the date of the coin while the reverse contains an impression on the king's devotion to particular deity.

The most interesting coins of the series are those minted during the reign of Siva Sinha and Rajesvar Sinha. Queen Pramathesvari, wife of Siva Sinha, for the first time broke away the tradition by striking at Gargaon in 1651 a square coin with Persian script. Rajesvar Sinha again issued different forms of coins almost throughout his reign. In addition to the ordinary octagonal coins in Assamese script, he struck in the first year of his reign (1674) square coins in Persian script from Rangpur. He also issued square coins in Assamese script. Besides these, he issued octagonal coins in *Devanagari* characters in Saka 1675, and one octagonal series with Persian script was issued in Saka 1685 from Rangpur.

During the reign of Gaurinath Sinha, the Moamorias became rebellious and they succeeded in setting up different Rajas in different parts of the kingdom. It is said that two of these Moamoria insurgents, Bharat Sinha and Sarbananda opened mints. Coins of the former dated A.D. 1796, 1797, and of the latter dated A.D. 1794 and 1795 are still extant. Bharat Sinha described himself in his coins as a descendant of Bhagadatta, while Sarbananda used the Ahom style Swargadeva. The last dated available coin is half rupee of Jogesvar Sinha minted in 1743 Saka (1821 A.D.). The Burmese during their last invasion between 1819-1826 are said to have struck two very rough coins. They are locally known as *Gahori Muhar* (big coins).

The rupee and gold muhars of the Ahom kings were struck to the

Indian standard of about 170 grains. Rudra Sinha is appeared to have introduced half and Siva Sinha quarter rupees. An eight and sixteen, both of the rupee and of the muhar were introduced by Rajesvar Sinha and a thirty-second by Gaurinath Sinha. There was no copper currency—its place being taken by *cowries*.

Barring a few, generally there is no mention of mint place on the body of the Ahom coins. There is however, a mention of mint place in some Persian coins issued by Pramathesvari and Rajesvar Sinha, the places being Gargaon and Rangpur respectively. Again the name of mint place —Disai is found in the coins issued by Gaurinath Sinha. Thus it may be concluded that the Ahom coins were minted in modern Sibsagar District.

Koch Coins: The Koch rupees are round in form. The inscriptions are in Sanskrit, in archaic Assamese script, and are on similar lines to those of the Ahom coins. "The half rupees are struck from dies much larger than the coins, and the inscriptions are therefore incomplete". The first Koch king to strike coins in his name was Naranarayan whose "conquests are said to have extended over the whole of Assam valley, the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, Manipur, Tipperah and part of Sylhet." Naranarayan allowed Raghudeva, son of Chilarai, in 1581, to set up a subordinate kingdom in the area east of the river Sonkosh, with an understanding that he might strike coins only in his uncle's (Naranarayan) name. Soon after the death of Naranarayan Raghu Deva declared his independence and struck coins in his own name in 1588. Laksminarayan, son of Naranarayan could not tolerate this kind of insubordination on the part of Raghu Deva and sought the help of the Bengal Nawab, who availed of this opportunity and defeated Raghu Deva's son Pariksitnarayan in 1612 or 1613 A.D. Since then Laksminarayana and his descendants continued to reign in the western kingdom which later became known as Koch Behar, but only as a vassal of the Mughal Empire.

"The right of minting full rupees was denied to them and henceforth their coinnage consisted only of the half rupees with incomplete inscriptions which are known as "Narayani Rupee". But there are two or three full coins of Prannarayan now preserved in the British Museum, dated Saka 1556 (1633 A.D.). These might have been struck between 1658 and 1662 when Prannarayan tried to assert his independence. The coin in question, issued probably on his accession, may be regarded as his claim to independent status with retrospective effect. The Koch kings of the western kingdom struck coins in their own name right up to the last part of the 19th century. In the opinion of Mr. Botham, the only known issues of the eastern Koch kingdom included a few rupee coins of Raghu Deva and a single rupee of Pariksit Narayan.

The Kachari Coins: The Kacharis are the earliest known inhabitants of Assam. They in their coins trace their origin from Hachengsa. We have

coins of Yasonarayan Deva and of Satrudaman alias Pratapanarayana. One of the coins of Yasonarayan contains the date (1505 Saka—1583 A.D.) showing that he occupied the throne about 27 years before Satrudaman. The existence of a coin of Tamradhvaj whose date is 1706 A.D. shows that this series of coins continued for at least 20 years. Coins of more modern type were issued by the last Kachari king Govinda Chandra (1813-1830).

Jaintia Coins: Very little is known about the earlier rulers of Jaintiapur except the occasional records in the Koch and Ahom annals of their conflicts with the Koches, Ahoms and Kacharies. "The records of the Koch kings state that in the middle of the sixteenth century Silarai (Chilarai), brother of Koch king Nara Narayana, defeated and slew the Raja of Jaintia and imposed on his son the condition that he should not issue coins in his own name." This shows that the Jaintia kings struck coins in their own names. They maintained their independence until 1835 when their territory was annexed by the British Government.

The rupee coins of the Jaintia kings bear in obverse the inscription, "Jayantipura Purandara", without their names. The coins also bear Saka era 1591, 1592, 1630, 1653, 1695, 1707 and 1772. Now it can be assumed that as in the case of earlier Ahom coins these dates represent the dates of accession or those of the installation of the Kings who issued coins. Quater rupee coins dated Saka 1653 to 1692 bearing the names of Bargosain II show that the stipulation imposed by Chilarai was perhaps applied to the coinage of full coins only. The rupees are locally known as *Katrataka* (Sword rupee) from the musket on them.

B. TRADE AND COMMERCE

Commercial Policy of the Ahoms: Sibsagar being the capital of the Ahom rulers, it calls for special mention of the commercial policy of the Ahom kings by which they sought to create an atmosphere of peace and harmony among the surrounding tribes and the neighbouring countries. We have quoted below an extract from Dr. S. K. Bhuyan's *"Anglo Assamese Relations"* which, we believe, will describe the commercial policy of the Ahoms in some detail.

"The Ahoms were promoters of trade just like other rulers, and their diplomatic relations with the neighbouring states and tribes centered, in many cases, round the object of introducing free commercial intercourse to the advantage of both the parties. The Ahom Government aimed at making their markets secure and free so that people of the adjacent territories could frequent them with commodities and thereby contribute to the maintenance of a steady income from market duties and customs revenue".

"The old time conception of a trader or *Bepari* is recorded in a conversation held about the year 1686 in the court of the Gauhati Barphukan. A Jayantia envoy compared a *Bepari* to a black-bee which settles wherever honey can be found. To this the Barphukan replied,—'What you have said is correct. The Black-bee settles on number of flowers with the object of sucking honey from them. Having extracted honey from these flowers it settles with the same object on a lotus. But suddenly the sun sets, the lotus folds up its petals, and the bee becomes shut up there. With the rise of the sun next morning the lotus unfolds itself again, and the bee sets itself on its wings". This comment of the Barphukan points to the vicissitudes of profit and loss which a trader must be prepared to face in his commercial enterprises and stipulations which are made still more precarious by his subjection to political changes and unexpected slumps and depressions."

"The Ahom Government interested itself in the trade of the frontier tribes, though it was conducted on a small scale, as large scale production was unknown to the frontier tribesmen. Protection was given to the traders by the frontier wardens known as Datiyalia Bisayas and Duarias. But when commercial states were concerned the Ahom Government considered petty trading to be outside their scope and function. Free commercial intercourse with Bengal required Governmental protection of the traders of both the countries, and the supervision and control of the frontier officers and collectors of duties. The Ahoms were unwilling to set up an elaborate machinery for the purpose of safe-guarding small quantities of articles. This is borne out in the reply given by king Rudra Singha in June 1713 to a request made by the Mogul Fauzadar of Rangamati for establishing commercial relations with Assam in which a proposal was made for despatching only a few boat-loads of commodities. This idea was not viewed with favour by the Ahom monarch, and he said,—'Is it called trade if it be limited to the import of a few maunds of salt from Bengal, and the despatch of two or four boats from our place? If the Nawab is intent on the establishment of regular commercial intercourse with us he should send his merchants (Shah-Mahajans) to Jogighopa and Goalpara, and our leading traders (Bar-mudois) will proceed to Kandhar Choky with large quantities of valuable articles. If matters could be arranged on this line then only they can well deserve the status of *hat-bat* or trade".

"The Ahoms made a clear distinction between politics and trade, and they considered the former to be more important and serious than the latter. Some agents of the Rangamati Fauzadar were gently rebuked by the Gauhati Barphukan when they pressed for the discussion of some commercial matters in the full court. "It is an affair relating to trade," said the Barphukan, "and it is not a fit subject for being taken up in the Durbar.

Still then, I must admit that our trading activities have become more vigorous than before. The agents have spoken about multiple trade, but we have appointed only one man for this purpose, namely the Duaria". In doubtful matters the version of a Kataki was considered to be more reliable than that of a mere trader.

"Merchants were prohibited from meddling in politics. Three Assamese traders had once assured the Dacca Nawab that they would establish friendly relations between the Nawab and the Ahom Government. The traders brought with them to Assam a couple of diplomatic agents of the Nawab together with letters and presents meant for the Ahom monarch Pratap Singha. The King accused the leader of the merchants, saying,— 'He is a merchant and he could have confined himself to trading activities. What business had he to bring envoys from Bengal? "The traders were executed along with forty oarsmen in their employ."[2]

"The Ahoms were ever-vigilant of the merchants of foreign territories, and never allowed them to settle in Assam lest they, as secret agents of some designing state, created any disruption in the country. The foreign traders had to transact their business in all possible haste, and return to their own land after completing their commercial activities in Assam".

Proportion of people engaged in trade and commerce: The exact percentage of people engaged in trade and commerce in recent years is not available. However, the 1951 Census revealed that out of 12-12-224 souls of the district, 38,967 were engaged in trade and commerce (male 22,939, Female 16,028). Sub-division wise break-up of these figures has been given in the Principal Table. It is generally seen that people of urban areas devote mostly to trade and commerce while people residing in the rural areas such as Majuli engage themselves practically in agriculture. This is because of the fact that trade and commerce require financial strength, business shrewdness and adequate communication facilities which Indian villages can hardly furnish. Throughout the nook and corner of the district generally the Marwari people are to be seen engaging themselves in activities associated with trade and commerce. This is due perhaps to their inherent zeal and skill in pursuing such professions. The Old Gazetteer's observation on the aptitude of the local Assamese people in trade and commerce of the district is worthquoting here, although large numbers of Assamese people specially in urban areas have now taken up trade and comerce for their livelihood.

"The Assamese have no commercial aptitude, and the native people of Sibsagar have allowed the whole of the profits of wholesale and of a large portion of the retail trade to be absorbed by foreigners. The principal

[2] Dr. S. K. Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, pp. 48-49.

men of business are Kanyas, the astute Marwari merchants whose shops are to be found on every tea garden, at the three head quarters towns, and wherever else there is money to be made. They are practically the sole importers of the district, and bring from Calcutta piece-goods, clothes and blankets, grain and pulse of various kinds, salt, oil, ghi, iron, cement, corrugated iron, umbrellas, and thread."[3]

(a) Course of Trade :

(i) *Exports and Imports:* The export and import policies during the British rule in the district were formulated in such a manner as to ruin the indigenous arts and crafts of the district and increase the volume of imports from foreign countries. A writer of the State in one of his recent publications remarked as follows on this ruinous policy of the alien rulers:

"Formerly the state was the patron of local artisans. But during the British rule, all the artisans were thrown off from their vocations. Only the blacksmiths and the goldsmiths survived the crisis. The Govt. gave no protection to them. The policy of exports and imports threw them into the jaws of death. Raw materials were exported from the state. Naturally the price of internal raw materials shot higher and grew beyond the reach of the poor artisans. On the other hand, the finished products of machine were imported to flood the markets. Local artisans could not compete with the machine. Thus the broom-stick of import policy swept away the local arts and crafts-manship."

A portion from the table of imported articles inserted in the famous report of Mills will throw a flood of light on the deliberate policy of the alien rulers. These were the imported articles of Sibsagar District in 1852:

Articles	*Quantity*	*Value*
Opium (kani)	85 mds.	Rs. 17,000
Soap	80 mds.	Rs. 400
Guns	—	Rs. 160
Books (native)	—	Rs. 120
Tobacco	870 mds.	Rs. 4,350
English Medicines	—	Rs. 100

(ii) *Volume and Value of Exports and Imports:* It has been estimated by the Supply Department of Jorhat that the money-value of imports to Jorhat sub-division alone may be about seven crores of rupees. Sibsagar and Golaghat sub-divisions will account for less than this amount as certain portions of imports to these places go from Jorhat. The main items of imports to the district are pulses, mustard oil, tobacco, cement,

[3] B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, Sibsagar, p. 191.

all kinds of textile goods, building materials, chemical manures, drugs and all kinds of consumer goods. The items of export are tea, jute, forset produce, oil cake,, etc. It is reported that about 300 tolas of *Atar,* valued at Rs. 60,000/- are exported from Barpathar mauza to places like Bombay and Arabia each year. But the principal item of export is tea which is of considerable economic importance to this district. Out of the country's total production of 650 million lbs. of tea, Assam produces about 350 to 360 lbs. Sibsagar in turn perhaps produces the highest quantity of Assam tea, as is evident from the fact that 27 per cent. of the total tea acreage in the State belongs to this district, and unlike Cachar, the yield per acre in this district is among the highest. The average annual production of tea in Sibsagar is 37,00,58,323 lbs., of which excepting a little amount sold for home consumption, the entire amount is exported. As a result the country earns a good amount of valuable foreign exchange.

(b) Trade Centres :

Jorhat is the headquarter of the trade in the district, Sibsagar and Golaghat being sub-headquarters. Several factors, such as direct connection with Calcutta by air, the proximity of a good river port at Nimati, the location of financial institutions, administrative headquarter and other commercial carrying centres have contributed to raise Jorhat to its present status. "In 1865 the Bazar of Jorhat contained 160 shops of which 28 belonged to Marwari merchants, who import cotton and woollen cloth, salt, mustard oil, tobacco, molasses, spilt-peas, clorified butter, gold, corals, brass and bell-metal plates, iron panes, steel and glass beads, etc., from Calcutta, Sirajganj and Goalpara; in return they export silk cotton, mustard seed, and a small quantity of beas, wax and ivory. A few shops are kept by Mahammadans of the district, the chief articles sold by them being "Europe" goods and furniture; the remaining shops are all petty stalls in which grains, oil, onion, etc., are retailed."

Other trade centres of importance in the district are Titabar, Mariani, Nazira, Dergaon, Bokhakhat, Amguri, Moranhat, Sorupathar and Borapathar.

Markets: Regulated markets are coming up in the district. But a great deal of business is transacted at the local markets or *hats,* which, for the convenience of both the buyers and the sellers, are held mostly on Sundays. At certain places these *hats* are held in Saturdays and in tea gardens on pay-days. Except the urban people who visit daily *hats* in towns, both the villagers and the tea garden labourers are dependent on these *hats* for their daily necessities. Here the villagers bring in their surplus agricultural produce, such as vegetables, rice, betel-nut and leaf, etc., and sell them to needy buyers. The petty traders who gather there from

towns and small trade centres sell their goods, such as cotton piece goods, oil, salt, pulses, spices, toilets, cosmetics, utensils, etc. In tea garden *hats* the most predominant buyers are the labourers and they buy from both the villagers and petty traders, as they are not habituated to cultivating anything in their homesteads.

In Golaghat sub-division the Daksinhengera Panchayat *hat* is noted for the huge transaction of livestock and molasses. Intending purchasers visit this place from remote parts. Other two important *hats* in this sub-division are Sarupathar and Barapathar where people from Tinsukia, Lumding and Dimapur attend. In normal times the Nagas bring *Kachu,* ginger, orange, etc., for sale in these markets. The Mikirs too visit these *hats* with their pepper, lac, cotton, mats and small baskets, etc. The Manipuris bring in plough cattle via Dimapur Road.

In Sibsagar sub-division the biggest *hat* is the Sapekhati where besides others, the Nagas bring their betel-leaf for sale and purchase their necessaries, such as salt, kerosene, cloth, etc. Other two important *hats* in this sub-division are Sepon and Simluguri. The former is situated in the midst of a huge tea-cum-village area and well linked by both rail and road. Petty traders from distant places visit this *hat.* A large number of goats are supplied by this *hat* to Dibrugarh town regularly. The latter *hat* is situated near the Railway junction. As this *hat* is held on Saturdays, petty traders here purchase especially betel leaf at a comparatively cheap rate to sell them at a higher price on the following day in nearby and distant *hats.*

In Jorhat Sub-division the most important *hat* is the Titabar *hat* which is better known for its huge transactions of rice stock.

The only important *mela* in this district is held annually at Sibsagar town on *Sivaratri.* Though a huge congregation takes place on the occasion, it does not, from the commercial point of view, have any significance as the amount of money transacted on this day cannot exceed some thousands. Tea, fruits, book and picture stalls, and small stationeries with toys and dolls only are opened on this day. People come here only to pay respect to the deity by pouring milk, water, etc., and not to buy anything. However, toy and balloon sellers do a flourishing business. A list of rural marketing centres is given in an appendix to this chapter.

(c) Co-operation in wholesale and retail trade :

Though there is co-operation in wholesale and retail trade, there is no fixed area in respect of wholesale trade centre and retail trade centre respectively. The major portion is carried out from Jorhat. It is generally seen that both wholesale and retail trade go side by side in almost all trade centre of the district. Of course, the majority of the wholesellers operate their business transaction from three major towns of the district. The

products dealt with by these whosesellers are consumers goods and foodstuff.

The nature of co-operation between the wholesale and the retail sale depends on the nature of business itself and it differs in different places. Generally financial co-operation runs through cash, cheques, drafts and occasionally on credit basis.

(d) State Trading :

State Trading in food-grains (paddy and rice) has been introduced recently in this district. At present the *Assam Co-operative Apex Marketing Society* is purchasing through its branches at Jorhat, Golaghat and Sibsagar paddy at fixed prices and thereby trying to improve the lot of the cultivators as well as of the consumers by means of a stable price system.

Uptil 31st March, 1961 the *Assam Co-operative Apex Marketing Society* purchased 2,32,061 mds. 38 srs. of paddy in the whole district. The collection was as follows :

Golaghat	...	...	1,09,639 mds. 33½ srs.
Jorhat	...	...	74,227 mds. 11½ srs.
Sibsagar	...	...	48,194 mds. 33 srs.

No State Trading Corporation is in operation in the district.

(i) *Fair Price Shop :* There are some Government controlled fair price shops all over the district for stabilising market prices and also for distribution of food-stuff at controlled rates to the consumers. Major items of food-stuff are distributed by these shops. The fair price shops are under the strict supervision of the Supply Department. Besides the fair price shops there are some approved retail shops through which Atta, Flour and Sugar are generally distributed., Fair price shops came into existence in the year 1954 when there was control of rice and paddy all over India. Upto the year 1957 rice was supplied to the fair price shops by Central Government from their Central Depot established in some parts of this province. After recontrol in 1958 these shops were supplied with rice by State Government and Central Government to stabilise market prices during lean months.

(e) Consumers' Association or Trade Associations :

In this district there are no Trade Association and Consumers' Association though in the form of Trade Associations there are *Chambers of Commerce* at Jorhat, Golaghat and Sibsagar. The object of these chambers are to promote the interest of the business community in respect of inland and foreign trade, commerce, manufacture, agriculture, shipping, transport, banking, insurance and industry.

It may, however, be recalled that Consumers' Associations and Trading Co-operatives were functioning under the Co-operative Department in all Sub-divisions of the district. The Consumers' Associations were started during the World War II when with the rise in the prices of agricultural produce the prices of consumer goods shot up and supply of these goods could not keep pace with the demand and hence black marketing and profiteering became rampant inspite of control orders promulgated by the Government. With a view to give relief to the people in securing consumers goods at reasonable prices, the Co-operative Department had paid its attention to formation of Consumers' Co-operative Societies in all Sub-divisions. This consumer movement was very much popular at the beginning. The growth was, however, not healthy as these societies depended principally on controlled goods. This was evident from the fact that with the lifting of control, most of the consumer stores started closing down.

In 1947 the Co-operative Department prepared a new scheme whereby a large element of Government Control and management was introduced. The activities were also proposed to be concentrated on Multipurpose Trading Co-operatives, and the movement was to form an integral part of the development plan with the formation of *Rural Panchayats*. The Scheme was given effect to by the Act of 1949 and intensive action was taken to cover the entire Sub-divisions by *Primary Trading Co-operatives* with uniform byelaws. According to the Scheme, the primary Societies were to be federated into *Central Trading Co-operatives* in each Sub-division. To finance all these societies the *Assam Co-operative Apex Bank* was started with branches in principal Sub-divisional towns. The Apex Bank was to advance money to the *Central Trading Co-operatives* which were to procure the controlled goods and supply to the *Primary Trading Co-operatives* on payment. These Societies worked till the control continued.

Labour organizations in trades are not prominent in the district though indirect labour organizations, such as the Sibsagar Branch of the *Assam Zahaz Karmi Sangha* is there to influence in the commercial aspect of the district, as much of the export and import trade of Sibsagar is carried out through the inland water transport. With the increase of trade volumes the importance of this labour organization is also rising (details of this organization can be found in Industries Chapter).

(f) Weights and Measures :

The existing units of weights and measures of the district are the same as in other parts of the State. Metric system of weights and measures has been made compulsory from April, 1962 on an all-India basis.

As regards the units of weights prevailing in the district in the latter

part of 19th century, W. W. Hunter in his *Statistical Account of Assam* writes as follows :

"There are no regular weights in use in the district, nearly everything being sold by measurement, generally according to the following standard. 10 Katha=1 don ; 3 don=1 pura. The pura is supposed to be equal to thirty pounds weight but the actual quantity varies. In the case of paddy, twenty two pounds weight make up a pura".

"A 'don' is a wicker basket of which the size varies somewhat, but the standard size contains 3½ seers of paddy. The standard size is known as the 'Do Kathiya' *don* which has a capacity of 5 srs. of rice (not paddy). When coolies (they are now called Mazdoors) come (to the market) the villagers measure with their own 'don' and get full value—when the trader comes, he purchases with a 'don' in the same way, but his 'don' is apt to be larger than the standard and he is an expert in manipulating the paddy so as to get more in the basket."[4]

Of course the use of *don* is now declining to a considerable extent and is rarely seen in the interior parts of some villages of this district.

"Prior to 1852 land in Assam was measured by a *tar*, a measuring rod of 4 haths (cubits), in length, equal to nearly 11½ English feet". "In 1852, by order of Govt. the standard Bengal bigha of 14,400 square feet was introduced into Assam and since that date, all measurement papers have been prepared according to this standard."[5]

Dissemination of trade news : Though there are no precise organs for dissemination of trade news in the district, the Chambers of Commerce, the daily newspapers and market news bulletins of All India Radio supply information on the state of current wholesale and retail prices of commodities. Interested merchants also collect information by individual effort. The inter district telephone connection is also helping the business community in exchanging trade news.

[4] Quoted in the *Assam Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee Report*, 1929.
[5] W. W. Hunter, *Statistical Account of Assam*, pp. 133-34.

APPENDIX

LIST OF RURAL MARKETING CENTRES IN THE SIBSAGAR DISTRICT

(i) (*a*) *List of Rural Marketing Centres of Sibsagar Sub-Division :*

Sl. No.	*Name of Mauza in which situated*	*Name of hat*	*Sl. No.*	*Name of mouza in which situated*	*Name of hat*
1.	Bakata	Mahkhuti	11.	Abhoipur	Sonari
2.	Silakuti	Lakwa Rangagara	12.	do	Bhajo
3.	do	Naharhabi	13.	Mahmara	Kakotibari
4.	Betbari	Dhital Pukhuri	14.	Nitai	Nitaipukhuri
5.	Godhulibazar	Amguri	15.	Konwarpur	Disangmukh
6.	Morabazar	Gaurisagar	16.	Thaora	Rajabari Ulta bazar
7.	Dhopabor	Simaluguri	17.	Baruasali	Barhat
8.	do	Bihubor	18.	Sapekhati	Sapekhati
9.	Dopdor	Namtimaiguri	19.	do	Sepon
10.	Athkhel	Ladaigarh Naga			

(i) (*b*) *Private Market*

1.	Baruasali	Barhat Garden	28.	Nazira	Mekipur garden
2.	do	Barpatra Garden	29.	do	Mezenga garden
3.	do	Boruasali Garden	30.	do	Bamunpukhuri
4.	Sapekhati	Kamubari	31.	do	Ligiripukhuri
5.	do	Salkathani Garden	32.	Athkhel	Lakhimijan garden
6.	Abhoipur	Tingalibam Garden	33.	do	Bihubor garden
7.	do	Towkak Garden	34.	do	Athkhel garden
8.	do	Jabaka Garden	35.	do	Deopani garden
9.	do	Teok Rajabari	36.	do	Geleki
10.	do	Nafuk Garden	37.	do	Geleki garden
11.	do	Bekadolong	38.	Dopdor	Deopani garden
12.	do	Safrai Garden	39.	do	Barsila garden
13.	Mahmara	Deepling Garden	40.	do	Barsila garden
14.	do	Banamali	41.	do	Tiphuk garden
15.	do	Khuntai Garden	42.	Godhuli bazar	Barbam garden
16.	Abhoipur	Safrai Station	43.	do	Halukating garden
17.	Khalaighugura	Hingrajan Garden	44.	do	Halukating Public
18.	do	Domardolong	45.	Joktoli	Hawamara
19.	Bakata	Amguri Garden	46.	Hahchara	Cherekapar
20.	Dhopabor	Mathurapur	47.	Panidihing	Teteliguri
21.	Silakuti	Lakwa Garden	48.	Thowra	Rajmai
22.	do	Lakwa Rajabari	49.	do	Athabari
23.	Dhopabor	Mathurapur Garden	50.	do	Khorahat
24.	do	Charaideo Public	51.	do	Thowra Garden
25.	do	Charaideo garden	52.	do	Krishnabehari garden
26.	do	Santak Public			
27.	do	Santak Garden	53.	Godhuli bazar	Amguri garden

(ii) *A List of Rural Marketing Centres of the Jorhat Sub-division*
(1960-61)

Sl. No.	*Name of Mouza in which situated*	*Name of hat*	*Sl. No.*	*Name of Mouza in which situated*	*Name of hat*
1.	Lahing	Teok Garden	38.	do	Nagajanka
2.	do	Hemlai Garden	39.	do	Baghdhara
3.	do	Dalim Garden	40.	do	Koliapani
4.	do	Gabharu garden	41.	do	Katonibari
5.	do	Baisahabi garden	42.	do	Dhekiajuli
6.	Gakhirkhoa	Teok Private	43.	Khongia	Kamarbhandha Private
7.	do	Balama garden			
8.	Nakachari	Kathalguri garden	44.	do	Gatonga garden
9.	do	Kakajan garden	45.	do	Senchoa garden
10.	do	Bheleuguri garden	46.	do	Mahbandha
11.	do	Balijan garden	47.	Kamalabari	Garamur Private
12.	do	Hollonguri garden	48.	Baligaon	Owana
13.	Nakachari	Dihingiapar garden	49.	Titabar	Chungi garden
14.	do	Tirual	50.	do	Rangajan garden
15.	do	Deberapar Private	51.	do	Panbari
16.	do	Naginijan garden	52.	do	Bokahola
17.	Hollongapar	Natigarh	53.	do	Kuhum
18.	do	Meleng Kapradhara Private	54.	Amguri Kharikatia	Madhapur
19.	do	Chenijan garden	55.	do	Dhapatbari
20.	do	Hatichung	56.	do	Kolapani
21.	do	Hindubari	57.	do	Mariani
22.	do	Meleng	58.	do	Rajabari
23.	do	Rajoi	59.	do	Dangdhara
24.	do	Jatukia	60.	do	Dholi
25.	do	Deha	61.	do	Barhola
26.	Parbatia	Sakalani	62.	do	Letekujan
57.	do	Sarucharai	63.	do	Saraipani
28.	Charaibahi	Rowriah	64.	do	Naga Dholi
29.	do	Gariahabi	65.	do	Gobindapur
30.	Thengal	Thengalbari	66.	do	Dafalating
31.	do	Kamarbandha	67.	do	Silikha
32.	Garamur	Cinnamara	68.	do	Bandorchaliha
33.	Katoni	Chaikata	69.	do	Bahani
34.	do	Duklangia	70.	do	Titabar weekly bazar
35.	do	New Sonowal			
36.	do	Mariani Private	71.	Charigaon	Bahana (Budhbaria hat)
37.	do	Murmuria garden			

(iii) *List of Rural Marketing Centres of Golaghat Sub-division*

1.	Barpathar	Matikhula	
2.	Sarupathar	Naojan	
3.	do	Sukiapathar	
4.	do	Rajapukhuri	
5.	Sarupathar	Sarupathar	
6.	Marangi	Bogidhola	
7.	do	Bokial	
8.	do	Letekujan	

Sl. No.	*Name of Mouza in which situated*	*Name of hat*	*Sl. No.*	*Name of Mouza in which situated*	*Name of hat*
9.	do	Doigurung	24.	do	Saotoli
10.	do	Rangajan	25.	Rangamati	Rangamati
11.	do	Murphulani	26.	do	Bheluatar
12.	do	Thuramukh	27.	Dhekial	Salmara
13.	Kaziranga	Amguri	28.	Dakhinhengera	Dakhinhengera
14.	do	Latabari	29.	do	Dakhinhengera Panchayati Bazar
15.	do	Bokakhat Chariali			
16.	do	Hatikhuli			
17.	do	Diring	30.	Kacharihat	Salikihat
18.	Bokakhat	Naharjan	31.	Ghiladhari	Jamuguri
19.	do	Bihora	32.	Ghiladhari	Oating
20.	Mahura	Rangagara	33.	do	Woka
21.	Kakadonga	Mahima	34.	do	Makrong
22.	Guryogania	Hatiekhowa Adarsa Panchayati Bazar	35.	Missamara	Missamara
			36.	do	Sikarighat
23.	Khumtai	Khumtai	37.	Dergaon	Negheriting

CHAPTER VII

COMMUNICATIONS

(a) Highways, roads, etc. in olden times :

(i) *During Ahom days :* Not much information is available regarding old time trade routes, highways and modes of conveyance in the period prior to the later Ahom period. As the area now represented by the district of Sibsagar possibly formed part of the ancient Kamarupa kingdom, it may be assumed that there must have been means of communications connecting this area with other parts. The extensive river front of the district has been facilitating a highly developed water-born traffic in olden days. The great river Brahmaputra flows through the district from East to West. The Dikhow, the Disang, the Dhansiri, besides several other smaller streams, traverse the district before discharging their waters into the Brahmaputra. The Headquarter of the Ahom Government that ruled over the greater part of Assam in the middle ages for several centuries was situated in the vicinity of the present town of Sibsagar. The Ahom Government took particular care for the development of communication throughout their kingdom and took active interest in building roads, bunds, tanks and canals. Several rulers built roads also for the purpose of commemorating their names. Thus the district of Sibsagar was covered with a net-work of roads and bunds built by the Ahom rulers. Several of the roads in the district of Sibsagar bear the names with which they were associated at the time of their construction. During the period of decline of the Ahom monarchy, the roads and bunds failed to be repaired due to internal revolts and civil war. During the Burmese invasions which brought Ahom rule to an end early in the 19th Century, the roads fell into further dis-repair and many were altogether destroyed.

The particular position of the town of Sibsagar on the river Dikhow with the river Brahmaputra flowing at a distance of a few miles north made it strategically important for establishment of the headquarter of the ruling dynasty. Forts, places, tanks and temples were built in the area, the ruins of which are standing even today to bear testimony to the importance of the town. Charaideo at a distance of 18 miles from the town at the foot of the Naga Hills to the south and Gargaon at a distance of 8 miles in the same direction were the seats of the Ahom Government at an earlier period but communication was maintained with these places even later. The Siva temple built on the bank of the Sibsagar tank and other temples

standing on different sites in the neighbourhood were the factors that presupposed a flow of traffic both by road, river and bunds. A brisk border trade thrived between the subjects of the Ahom kingdom and the hill tribes on its fringes. One very important road of Ahom days is the Dhodar Ali which connects Sibsagar with Nazira, Sonari, Sapekhati and other places.

Almost all the roads were straight, high, and wide enough and served the purposes of fort, embankments and thoroughfare. Till now almost all these roads are being used by the present generation. About 90% of the roads of Sibsagar Sub-division were constructed by the Ahom Kings, or Queens, Ministers and other Courtiers, and sometimes by common people. Many of the old embankments have now been used as roads.

The main conveyances used on land in olden times were, horses, elephants and palanquins. But these were generally used by kings and the nobility, and the common people had generally to walk on foot if they were to go from one place to another. That the use of carts drawn by horse, bullocks and buffaloes was in vogue, is supported by historical evidence. Under the officer-in-charge of elephants, known as "Hati Barua", the Ahom kings kept a huge number of elephants for war, hunting, journey and for carrying purposes. Similarly, thousands of different types of horses were maintained under an officer known as 'Ghora Barua'. Horses were used in wars, hunting, postal service, and for journey purposes. There was a relay system maintained by means of horses to carry important news and orders from one place to another. Historical records reveal that the Ahom kings possessed a large number of Turkish, Manipuri, Bhutanese and Chinese horses. An officer known as Dulia Barua was in charge of palanquins, used mostly by kings and nobles, which were carried by a class of people. Most of the small rivers were embridged with stone, planks, bridges or culverts. These were known as *Pakidalong Silsako, Pat Sako* or *Dalong*. Till now a large number of stone and brick bridges are seen in Sibsagar Sub-division. Kalia Bhomora Handique Borphukan proposed to construct a strong bridge over the Brahmaputra near Silghat, in the latter part of the eighteenth century. But due to his untimely death the project could not materialise. Remains of mortars, bricks, stones, etc. are still to be seen in the Bhomoraguri Hills near Tezpur.

Such rivers as the Disang, Dihing, Dikhow, Jhanji, Disai, Kakadonga and Dhansiri were crossed by means of boats. In emergent cases, temporary bridges were constructed over them. The strong stone bridge over Namdang river in Sibsagar Sub-division known as *Silsako, constructed* by Swargadeo Rudra Sinha, is still serving as a bridge on the Assam National High Way. This was constructed in 1701 A.D. and no major repairs have since been made to this stone bridge during the British rule or thereafter. Such other stone bridges as the *Darika Silsako* (Stone bridge) and the Rahdai stone bridge were constructed by Swargadeo Gadadhar Sinha during the

17th Century. There are many brick culverts of old days which are still serving the purposes of bridges.

The present National Highway from Dhubri to Sadiya was constructed mostly during the reign of the Ahom kings. Within Sibsagar district the portion of road from Golaghat Sub-division to Jhanji was known as *Cheoni Ali*, constructed by king Jayadhvaj Sinha. From Jhanji to Gaurisagar, this portion of the road was known as *Machkhowa Garh*, and was constructed by the same king. From Gaurisagar to Joysagar this portion was known as *Bar Ali* or *Gajpuria Alia*, constructed by Swargadeo Susenpha or Pratap Sinha, from Joysagar to Sibsagar as *Na Ali*, and from Sibsagar to Dibrugarh as *Barborua Ali*, constructed by Swargadeo Rajesvar Sinha.

The *Dhodar Ali* which is now an important P. W. D. road passing through Sibsagar district and Dibrugarh Sub-division was constructed by Swargadeo Gadadhar Sinha. Similarly Ladaigarh, Gargaonr Ali (Simaluguri road) *Deka-Bar Borua Ali* (Disang road) *Naga Ali, Kharikotia Ali, Saloguri Ali, Ramani Ali, Bakatar Ali, Haripara Ali, Dhai Ali, Duborani Ali, Maduri Ali, Chatai Ali, Nitai Ali, Barphukanar Ali, Senchao Ali, Kiria Ali, Sripuria Ali* and in this way about 200 small and big roads of the Sibsagar Sub-Division were constructed by the order of the Kings, Queens, Nobles, and other leading persons of the time.

Kamar Bandha Ali, Mahbandha Ali, Sarbaibandha Ali, Garh Ali, Na-Ali and many others in Jorhat Sub-Division and *Aka Ali, Daksinhengera Ali, Marangi Ali*, etc. in Golaghat Sub-Division were constructed by the Ahom kings.

Most of the earthen embankments as Ladaigarh, Bahgarh, Rajgarh, Pathaligarh, Kharagarh, Kerimerigarh, Chintamanigarh, Katari Khamargarh, Bibudhigarh, (Gar-Ali of Jorhat town) Numaligarh, Lakhow garh, Mergarh, etc. have been partly or entirely changed to public roads. A great number of old roads, embankments and Garhs were destroyed by floods and also by men during the British rule. For want of proper maintenance a great number of good roads have been damaged.

During Ahom rule there were officers to construct and maintain roads, bridges culverts, etc. E.T.D. Lambert says : 'It was the supply of disciplined labourers that enabled the kings to construct the great public works which even to this day of Machine are a wonder of the age'.

River ways were also equally important during those days. Rivers like the Brahmaputra, Dihing, Disang, Dikhow, Darika, Namdang, Jhanji, Disai, Kakadanga, Dhansiri, etc., and its diffreent tributaries were quite navigable at that tme. These water-ways were mainly utilised for the purposes of warfare, trade and journey. The kings at that time dug several artificial channels by diverting the courses of the original rivers. King Kamalesvar Sinha dug the Bhogdai river by diverting the course of the Disai at the upper source of the river. Similarly the Rupahi, Sonai,

Khanajan and many others in Sibsagar Sub-Division were dug by different Ahom kings so as to make short cuts to the Brahmaputra river and to some other places. It is said that on both sides of the present Assam Trunk Road there were deep and wide ditches, connecting with Disaibahar (Jorhat), where big boats could ply. It may be remembered that in several naval engagements the Ahoms inflicted defeats on the Moghul flotilla. The most outstanding naval victory of the Ahoms was that at Saraighat against the Moghul armies, sent by emperor Aurangzeb in 1670-71.[1] Big and small boats of various types were maintained under different classes of officers known as Nao-Baisa Phukan, Pani Phukan, etc. It is well known that the Ahom rulers were very strong in navy. At that time boat making was a big industry. Instances are found in historical accounts that the Ahom kings had built some machine boats which moved very fast. Boats were mostly used for warfare and trade, and commonly for journey purposes. In the whole State of Assam there was a large number of boat-yards and docks which are generally known at present at Sibsagar as *Nao Sali* under the officers known as Nao Salia Phukan and Baruas. Sometimes big rafters of wood and bamboos (*bhur* or *bhel*) were also used.

The distances by roads from one place to another and also by waterways were surveyed and recorded. During the time of Swargadeo Rudra Sinha surface distances from Rangpur (Sibsagar) to Gauhati and from Rangpur to Khaspur were measured.

(*ii*) *During Early British days :* When the British first came into possession of the province, the difficulty of communications, however, proved a most serious obstacle to its development. The old roads having been damaged or been out of repair, the Brahmaputra was the great highway which connected this portion of the country with Bengal, but it took a long time for the journey up the river in any boat of ordinary size. "M'Cosh, writing in 1837, stated that a large boat took from six to seven weeks to come from Calcutta to Gauhati though the post, which was conveyed in small canoes rowed by two men, who were relieved every 15 or 20 miles, reached Gauhati in ten days and Biswanath in three days more. From Gauhati to Dibrugarh it was a months' journey for a 'pinnace' even in the cold weather ; and in the rains against the current, the journey took much longer. Few people presumably had sufficient time or patience to undertake the voyage at that season of the year." Even in the winter, the journey was a very tedious one. The banks of the river were covered with high reeds and grass which were quite impenetrable to a man on foot. "It was only occasionally that a traveller could relieve the monotony of the voyage by a stroll on shore."[2]

[1] S. K. Bhuyan : Lachit Barphukan and his times, p. 83.
[2] B. C. Allen, Assam District Gazetteer, Sibsagar, pp. 179-80.

Beginning of Steam Navigation: It was in 1848 that Government steamers were arranged for the first time to ply between Calcutta and Gauhati. Three years later, Major Jenkins, the Commissioner of Assam, made a proposal to Government that steamers should be allowed to proceed right up to Dibrugarh at least three or four times a year. His suggestions did not meet with their approval on financial grounds. But his views were strongly supported by Mr. Mills, the Judge of Sadar Courts, when he visited the province in 1853 and proposal secured the approval of the Lieut. Governor. Accordingly steamer was put in service in that year and several voyages were made with satisfactory results. "The journey from Gauhati to Dibrugarh and back occupied not more than 15 days, an extra-ordinary contrast to the interminable delay of the same voyage in a country boat. The cargo tendered soon exceeded the carrying capacity of the steamers;"[3] and in 1855 it was "complained that the vessels reached Gauhati fully laden with goods shipped in Upper Assam, so that Gauhati and the ports below derived practically no advantage from the downward service of the steamers."

The fare charged for the journey by the said steamer was very high, as a ticket from Calcutta to Gauhati cost not less than Rs. 150/-. There were, however, other advantages, as provided under regulation issued in 1851. By it a passenger was allowed even to carry a piano in his cabin free of freight if it was meant for use during his journey, but not in packing cases. The freight on ordinary goods was charged at the rate of Re. 1/- per cubic foot. It may be mentioned in this connection that great part of the trade of the Province continued to go by country boat. The planters, for instance, despatched tea in country boats.

Private Steamers: The *India General Steam Navigation Company*, a private shipping concern, undertook in 1860 to place two of their vessels in service every six weeks, Government having been agreed to withdraw their boats from the routes. From that date onward the steam navigation of the Brahmaputra Valley came into the hands of this company as well as the River Steam Navigation Company, both being associating Shipping concerns.

Notwithstanding the existence of a regular steamer service through private enterprise, journey by boats continued to be slow. Colonel Hopkinson, the then Commissioner of Assam was dissatisfied with the condition of affairs and in his letter to Government submitted in 1861 gives a very gloomy picture of the time. It states thus:

"With the furious current of the Brahmaputra still un-conquered by steam, opposing a barrier to all access from without and not a single road

[3] *Ibid*, pp. 180-81.

fit for wheeled carriage or even passable at all for a great portion of the year, there is such an absence of the full tide of life running through Assam, such a want of intercourse between man and man as does and must result in complete apathy, stagnation, and torpidity and a terrible sense of isolation, by which enterprise is chilled and capital and adventures scared away. The profits of tea cultivation should attract hundreds where tens now come, but the capitalist is not always to be found who will venture his money in a couuntry to which access is so difficult as it is to Assam, through which correspondence travels at the rate of a mile and a half an hour, and in which it may take a month to accomplish a journey of two or three hundred miles; nor on the other hand is it every spirit, however, bold, that cares to encounter so dreary a banishment and to be so entirely cut-off from his fellows in a place from which exit is only possible at rare intervals and must be so literally a prison or tomb to him."[4]

There was a gradual improvement of the said service; in 1884 steamers started plying daily between Dibrugarh and Dhubri. The daily steamer service helped a great deal in minimising transport difficulties between Assam and outside world. It proved to be advantageous also from the stand-point of both speed and regularity. Even then, the duration of the voyage, for instance from Dibrugarh to Dhubri during the rains was not short, as was expected to be. The shipping companies had, therefore, to make a serious effort to minimise the span of time for the voyage to the lowest limits just to keep the timings of the Assam Bengal Railway when its Assam lines were opened.

A direct steamer service carrying goods from Dibrugarh to Calcutta via the Sundarbans was also opened. From the stand-point of navigation, the district of Sibsagar with its long river frontage occupied a vantage position. The most important of the ports were Dhansirimukh, Negheriting, Kokilamukh, Kamalabari on the north bank, Dikhowmukh, Disangmukh and Dihingmukh. The picture, however, gradually changed and the navigability of the river Brahmaputra by Steamers was later limited to Kokilamukh only due to silting up of the river-bed in the upper reaches.

(b) Road:

(i) *Nature of transport facilities:* Road transport is now playing a vital part in moulding the economic structure of the country. In conjunction with other classes of transport, chiefly Railways, which are unable to lift all passengers and goods needing transport facilities due to wagon difficulties, road transport is being expanded not only in the urban areas but also in the rural areas, so as to make communication easy with all important localities and rail-heads. The State Transport is generally

[4] Quoted by B. C. Allen in *Sibsagar District Gazetteer*, pp. 182-83.

limited to roads and is maintained by skilled operators. The development of Transport has opened up avenues for employment and have been absorved accordingly, while improved communications have led to the amelioration of the conditions of the people. Save in case of some Local Board roads, all P.W.D. roads are either B.T. surfaced or gravelled. There is only one National Highway, i.e. the Assam Trunk road which runs through the district and in which the Transport Department of the State Government is running their buses. There are feeder services on different routes, as on the Jorhat-Mariani and Golaghat-Kamargaon Roads.

There are bus services on important roads for passengers and also private and public vehicles for carrying goods. Taxis are available in municipal areas, and reserved buses, known also as bazar bushes, connect all market centres. Tourist taxis are also available at reasonable rates. Ipso facto road transport facilities seem to be fairly adequate with the influx of new vehicles in large numbers, and the bottle neck of inland transport which existed before, is being largely eliminated. No goods, perishable or otherwise, remain unlifted now for want of transport. Wasteful competition is also being avoided by pursuing the principle of co-ordination and co-existence. The conception of the establishment of individualistic concerns and monopolistic manoeuvres are growing feeble, and the idea of forming co-operatives or partnership business is gaining ground. Encouragement in all possible ways is being given to such enterprises. So many development schemes are now round the corner that a new economic era is already in view and the prospects for the economic emancipation of the masses are also bright. The more and easier the transport, the cheaper should be the rates. The question of cheaper rates of transport is also receiving the anxious consideration of the Government and ways and means are being explored with a view to achieving the object on a wide scale.

Mr. C. K. Rhodes, the Settlement Officer of Sibsagar, writing in 1926, made some useful observation on the easy connection facilities, offered to the inhabitants of particularly what he termed the Central Jorhat Group. This has been true more or less of the entire district of Sibsagar.

It may be mentioned in this connection that the credit for the rapid development of communications is to be assigned largely to the growth of tea industry in the district. This is well commented upon by an economic survey made on the rural condition of the district as early as 1952, published by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics of the Government of Assam. It states that it was mainly due to the growth of the tea industry that an extensive network of communications by roads, railways, steamers and country-boats came to be developed here facilitating exports and imports, which also accounts for the comparatively progressive character of the district.

(ii) Categories of Roads :

(*a*) *National High-way :* The South Assam Trunk Road, now known as the National High-way Route 37, traverses through the district. The Route enters the district at 129th mile i.e. 20 miles west of Bokakhat. After running for 122 miles and passing through the towns of Jorhat and Sibsagar it leaves the district at 250th mile, i.e. at Moran. It is an all weather motorable road with sufficient space on both sides of the black top.

As has been said earlier, the portion of the High-way from Jorhat to Gaurisagar was built by King Joyadhvaj Sinha and the two parts of this portion were known as *Cheoni Ali* and *Machkhowa Garh.* The portion from Gaurisagar to Joysagar, built by King Susengpha, was known as *Bor Ali ;* Joysagar—Sibsagar portion as *Na-Ali ;* Sibsagar—Dimou portion as *Barbarua Ali* and *Dimou—Moran* as *Barphukanar Ali.*

The Numuligarh—Dimapur Road which is known as National High-way 39 starts from the A. T. Road at Numaligarh and passes south-west by the side of Golaghat town and ends at Dimapur.

(*b*) *State Roads :* The State Government roads in the district are under the public Works Department of the State. Some of the roads under this Department are black topped but almost all are gravelled and motorable. At the end of the First Five Year Plan the Road mileage in the district under the P.W.D. was 565.317 miles all weather (i.e. surfaced and gravelled) and 145.565 miles fair weather (i.e. earth road) motorable roads. The most important P.W.D. road in the district is the *Dhodar Ali* which takes off from the National High-way at Kamargoan and runs south-east up to Golaghat where it turns east and after passing through the southern portion of the district enters Lakhimpur.

(*c*) *Local Board Roads :* These roads have been taken over by the Panchayats constituted under the Assam Panchayats Act, 1959. At the end of the first Five year Plan mileage under the local bodies was as follows ; (1) Motorable—all weather 131 miles, fair weather 374 miles, (2) non-motorable—751 miles. The location of these roads could not be given as they are scattered all over the district.

(*d*) *Village Roads :* The villages in the district as a whole possess a number of good gravelled and Kutcha roads. All the roads in the interior are, however, not up to the mark and during the rains some of them become muddy and impassable. Prior to the dissolution of local Boards these roads were under their management but now a days their management rests with the Panchayats.

(iii) Vehicles, conveyances, etc. :

(*a*) *State Transport :* On the 1st of August 1948 the State Transport Services were introduced for the first time in this district by taking over the Nowgong-Jorhat Route. Prior to this the Private bus Services were running under authority from the Government. The Transport Services have been of considerable importance in view of the large number of tea gardens situated throughout the nook and corner of this district. Jorhat is the main station where from feeder services and through services are being run. From Jorhat one can proceed direct to Nowgong, Gauhati and Silghat to the west and to Dibrugarh and Tinsukia on the east on the A.T. road. Services from and to the Sub-Divisional head-quarters are also being maintained for the convenience of the travelling public. The through State Transport Express Bus service from Gauhati to Dibrugarh and recently introduced Gauhati-Tinsukia service which pass through Jorhat and Sibsagar have added to the benefits that are being already enjoyed by the people of this district in the matter of quick and easy travel facilities.

State Transport Bus Services plying on the P.W.D. roads at present are as follows :—from Kamargaon to Mariani via Dhodar-Ali, a distance of 41 miles ; from Jorhat to Mariani, a distance of 11 miles and from Jhanji to Amguri via Mokokchung road, a distance of only 4 miles.

(*b*) *Private conveyance :* Private Bus Services still ply on some of the roads of this district not covered by the State Transport services. The total number of such Motor vehicles as recorded in the D.T.O.s office comes to 154 up to August 1959. But the degree of comfort in these buses in comparatively lesser than in the State Transport buses. The idea of profit motive seems to have dominated in the mind of the bus owners, as revealed by the statistics of mobile courts held from time to time to check overcrowding and overloading.

There are also privately owned Bazar Bus Service connecting the major markets of the district for the convenience of the traders as well as the public and easy flow of trade and commerce. The jurisdictions of these privately owned bus services are laid down by the District Transport Authority.

No Municipal Services are to be seen in the district. The Jorhat Municipal Board, however, contemplates to introduce city-bus services in the urban and the semi-urban areas in the near future, but plying of rickshaws are regulated by the Municipal Boards within the town areas, and every rickshaw puller is to take a licence from the Boards by paying a certain amount of money. The number of rickshaws in the three Municipalities of Jorhat, Golaghat and Sibsagar is considerable.

Taxis also ply within the district but are not so popular among the people at large, as the fares charged, are too high. Records in the D.T.O's office reveal that there are 13 Nos. of taxis up to August, 1959 plying within the jurisdiction of this district. The District Transport Authority also regulates the plying of taxis.

(*c*) *Other Conveyances :* Besides the above, the use of Private cars, Jeeps, autocycles, bicycles, bullock carts, public and private carriers has also been in vogue in the district. The number of private and public trucks is up to August, 1959 respectively 273 and 858. These trucks play a vital role in the transportation of perishable and non-perishable goods from one place to another. They are proving a good substitute of the railways that usually take a long time for transportation of goods to different business centres. The road transport is after all playing a vital role in saving time in many ways, and this time factor counts very much in commercial undertakings. One can see the buses and trucks plying on the roads for twenty-four hours. This shows but the extent to which the road transport has of necessity become increasingly popular.

The total number of private cars, jeeps and autocycles as recorded in the D.T.O's office rose to 1388, 254 and 43 respectively (up to December 1959). These private cars and Jeeps are catering to the needs of the individual parties in their day to day avocations. The number of such vehicles has gradually been on the increase.

Large number of rickshaws are plying in the urban and Semi-urban areas of the District thus providing for the cheaper means of conveyance. Rickshaws are relatively cheaper than the taxis, but costlier than the bus services. So the rickshaws are mainly used for local travel and where bus services are not available at all times.

It is said that the number of bicycles in the district exceeds those of some other districts of the State. The relatively good roads even in the interior villages of the district seems to be one of the reasons for its extensive use. People from Nimati, Mariani, Dergaon and Teok, possessing a bicycle do not mind coming to Jorhat cycling for attending courts and other offices. Prior to the introduction of bus services, Bullock carts were under extensive use and was the sole means of communication. But, as could be traced from Hunter's '*A statistical account of Assam* (p. 259) there was no use of bullock carts in this district at least upto 1879, the year of publication of the book. This means of communication is gradually declining in importance, because of its slow movement, and is now used for carrying local loads and light items of trade in the villages, and also in the urban areas to a limited extent.

As regards the relative importance of different kinds of conveyances, State Transport seems to occupy the first position, as it is cheaper, more comfortable and provide better through service than the rest of the road transports can do. As such, people of moderate means prefer this

service to others. For the Local travel in urban and semi-urban areas rick-shaws are more popular than the taxis on account of their cheaper rates and easy plying even on narrow lanes.

(d) Railways :

(i) *Rail roads :* The year 1885 saw the completion of a small 2 feet wide state railway in Sibsagar District, running from Kokilamukh on the Brahmaputra to Mariani and Titabar. This railway was originally built for the convenience of the numerous tea gardens in the neighbourhood as the unmetalled road to the river became almost impassable to wheeled traffic in rains. It was known as Jorhat Provincial Railway and was built at a cost of Rs. 4,73,000. Its length was 30 miles. When in 1904 the Assam Bengal Railway was built on the south of the district, the State Railway served as a connecting link between the Steamer services on the north and main railways on the south.

The present extent of the railway in the district is 206 miles. The main line of the N. E. Railway enters the district at Bokajan and after passing through such stations and Junctions as Naojan, Sarupather, Barpather, Jamuguri, Oating, Furkating, Kamarbandha Ali, Chakiting, Titabar, Kharikatia, Mariani, Meleng, Nakachari, Lahing, Selenghat, Namtiali, Mejenga, Nazira, Simaluguri, Lakwa, Safrai, Bhajo, Longputia, Sapekhati and Baruanagar, leaves the district at Borhat. The whole of the railways is on metre gauge and under two railway traffic districts—Lumding and Dibrugarh. The former covers stations from Bokajan to Furkating and the latter rest of the stations on the main and branch lines.

There are three important railway junctions in the district, Furkating, Mariani and Simaluguri. The branch line that takes off from Furkating passes through Golaghat, Halmira, Siding, Saotoli, Khumtai, Badulipar, Rangaliting, Baruabamungaon, Moubandha, Gotanga, Bhalukmara, Rowriah, Jorhat town, Jorhat, Patiagaon and Gosaigaon and ends at Nimati. The branch line that takes off from Mariani is a short one, and after passing through Cinnamara and Doklangia, ends at Jorhat. The Simaluguri junction has two branch lines, one leading to Naginimara through Santak and Bihubar and the other leading to Moranhat through Sibsagar, Disang, Kharahat, Mahkhuti, Sepon and Moran. One important point here is that all the important towns, viz. Golaghat, Jorhat and Sibsagar, are situated on branch lines.

Thus from the above description it seems that the distribution of railway lines is being adequately made to solve the problem of communication in this border District. But often time complaints are also vigorously made in the press and the platforms as to the inadequacy of railway transport. It being the only fate line of the whole of Upper Assam, a slight disruption causes overwhelming difficulties, and the merchants, taking advantage of the situation, invariably raise the price of foodstuff and other necessaries of life on the slightest pretext of the disruption of train services. The volume of passengers and goods carried by this main line is indeed of a high magnitude. Of late, however, railway journey through this district to upper Assam has not been so safe as the passengers may expect, and it has been felt at all quarters that constant vigil on the rail tracks should be tightened up against the nefarious designs of all kinds of evil doers.

It is not necessary to add that the railway services have largely contributed to the economic growth and progress of the people at large.

(e) Inland Water Transport :

As has been described in some detail earlier a system of inland water transport has been in vogue in the district since good old days. The great river Brahmaputra, which forms the northern boundary of the district, together with its tributaries, has offered ample scope for development of this class of transport. In former times country-boats were the sole means of conveyance on water ways. Steam-boats and launches now operate on the big rivers, and steamers regulraly ply on the Brahmaputra. There are several ferry ghats throughout the district with facilities for crossing the river at important road points. Mar-boats of six tons capacity are generally used for conveyance of passengers, goods and even vehicles from one bank to the other.

Until recently passenger steamer services in the Brahmaputra were plying on alternate days. But at present the said services for passengers have been stopped, and only cargo ships are plying on the Brahmaputra under the management of the Joint Steamer Companies. The Joint Steamer Companies were managing almost the entire export of tea of this district and import of all tea garden requirements. This is now done by road transports. Nimtai the river port on the north of Jorhat town, continued till the other day to be the nerve centre of the District. A few years back Kokilamukh was also a good river port, but the importance of this river port has been considerably reduced due to the growth of shoals in the mouth of the port thus preventing the approach of steamers.

The Nimati-Kamalabari major power driven ferry plies twice daily with 12 ton and 18 ton capacity engine-fitted to mar boats and with a capacity of 84 passengers. Engine-fitted single boat service providing main link with North Lakhimpur and Majuli area is under the management of the P.W.D. Assam. There are also two Panchayat Ferries operated by engines at Nimatighat to link Daksinpat and Salmara on the north, and one Panchayat Ferry from Kokilamukh to Auniati to establish a network of communication with Majuli. There is another Ferry at Tamulichiga on the Hahchara road where a permanent bridge has now been constructed.

Some important bridges of the district are to be seen on the Assam

Trunk Road. They are the Dhansiri bridge, Dikhow bridge and the bridge on the Disang. Formerly small steamers were plying on the Dikhow river for the purpose of carrying tea chests of the Assam Company. Therefore, the bridge on the Dikhow was so constructed as to facilitate raising of the middle portion of the bridge to enable the Steamers to have an easy pass under the bridge. But with the increase of road communication, the steamers have ceased to operate in the Dikhow to fetch the exportable tea for onward transmission to Calcutta. Bridges over the river Dhansiri on the National Highway Route No. 37 and the Golaghat-Dimapur road are important. The previous Numaligarh bridge, 587 ft. in length and 11 ft. in breadth, and constructed in 1930 collapsed on 28-7-63 and has since been replaced by an R.C.C. bridge. There is another important bridge 600′ × 11′ over the same river on the Barpathar Feeder road which connects some important places. The bridge on the Golaghat-Dimapur road was constructed originally by the Army in 1942-43, the timber decking of which was replaced by R.C.C. slab in March, 1960 by the P.W.D. The jhanji bridge (length 333′) is also another important bridge within the district.

(f) Air Transport :

In the District of Sibsagar there is no Civil Aerodromes like Gauhati, Mohanbari and Dum Dum which are maintained by Civil Aviation Department, Government of India. The Indian Airlines Corporation is using the Indian Air Force's Air field at Rowriah, 4 miles from the town of Jorhat. Indian Airlines Corporation operates two scheduled Air Service daily from Calcutta to Mohanbari touching Jorhat in the district. These Services are thus helping the people of this district specially the business community in the matter of inter district and inter State through communications. In some particular places of the District Air Strips are, however, to be seen to cater to the needs of the commercial organizations or companies engaged in exporting tea or importing other goods, specially tea garden requirements.

(g) Travel and Tourist Facilities :

Besides the historic monuments at Gargaon, Rangpur, Joysagar, etc. the district of Sibsagar abounds in beautiful spots of panoramic view and varied interests to attract the eyes of the naturalists and other tourists. The famous Kaziranga Game Sanctuary is situated in this district. Rhinos and wild elephants, besides a variety of other animals, such as tigers, deer, bison, and wild cows are to be found in these forests. In the Game Sanctuary, there are observation posts, and wild life can be seen at close range. The single horned rhinos of Assam have been in great demand in foreign lands, and not a few have been treasured in their zoos. The forests are full of valuable timber. There are several spots of

tourist interest in the district, like Charaideo near the foot of the Naga Hills and the tanks and temples in and around Sibsagar Town. These ruins of archaeological interest at Sibsagar and Gargaon in particular attract a large number of visitors every year. Majuli, the largest river island in the world, where the premier *satras* of Assam, like Auniati, Garamur, Daksinapat and Kamalabari are located, attracts pilgrims at different seasons of the year. There are steam launches for crossing over to Majuli from Nimatighat, 9 miles from Jorhat Town.

It is strongly felt that the entire district, nay at least the valley of the Brahmaputra could have been turned into a tourist paradise, had more attention been given to at least the maintenance and proper preservation of its antiquities, which, as the prevailing conditions seem to testify, is nobody's affair. We should not lose sight of the fact that tourism has in the meantime made great strides in other States. We are perhaps lacking in creating proper conditions so as to attract at least a sizable number of tourists to this district, nay the State of Assam.

There are Dak bunglows and rest houses at important places in the interior and with little effort places of interest can be made more attractive. The district is well connected with railways, but local travel is mostly done in State Transport and other vehicular conveyances. The State Tourist Department makes arrangement for travel to some of the important places in the district and also does some publicity work. There are a few hotels with modern facilities in the district. There is, however, an up-to-date rest house in the Kaziranga Game Sanctuary for the short stay of visitors. There are also a few forest bunglows in attractive surroundings, meant chiefly for Government Officers.

(h) Postal Facilities :

According to the classified list of post-offices, corrected upto 30.9.64 there are 336 post-offices in this district, and telegraph facilities are provided for in 38 of these offices. The number of post offices is however, increasing in the district from year to year. It is interesting to note that in 1875 there were only 13 post offices and in 1903-4 there were 52 post offices in the whole of the district. The total number of different post offices in the district at present is shown below :

The following is the complete list of post-offices of all categories in the district :

Jorhat Division

1. Jorhat (H.O.)	5. Disaingar.	9. Nahatia
2. Bangalpukhuri	6. Dhekargara	10. Namduori
3. Chengeligaon	7. Korokatoli	11. Patiagaon
4. Chenijan	8. Moutgaon	12. Puranigohaingaon

13. Tokarichuk
14. Tarajan West
15. Badulipar
16. Bholaguri
17. Bangaon
18. Rangagarahat
19. Bahana
20. Barkhaliagaon
21. Baghmara
22. Chaokhat
23. Kapradhara
24. Ladaigarh
25. Rangdaicharali
26. Barbheta
27. Chalihagaon
28. Pakamura
29. Barpathar
30. Bilgaon
31. *Disiorigayasatra*
32. Japarajan
33. Mirigaon
34. Upperlengta
35. Baruabamungaon
36. Haladhi bari
37. Misamara
38. Bhogdoimukh
39. Bokakhat
40. Barjuri
41. Dhansirimukh
42. Kaziranga
43. Kahara
44. Lakhowjan Tinali
45. Naharjan
46. Gorajan
47. *Ikarani*
48. Mahimabari
49. Pulikaitani
50. Raidangjuri
51. Rajabari
52. Urangial
53. Rajabahar
54. Cinnamara
55. Karanga
56. Na-ali Dhekiajuli
57. *Dahatia*
58. Dergaon
59. Ahatguri
60. Bahguri
61. Dadhara
62. Garumara
63. Khangia
64. Negheriting
65. Nak-kati
66. Rangamati
67. Subansirimukh
68. Mudoigaon
69. Dhalar Satra
70. Furkating
71. Bhandari
72. Gomariguri
73. Garali
74. Golaghat
75. Adharsatra
76. Betioni
77. Dhekial
78. Phalangani
79. Ganak pukhuri
80. Saotoli
81. Kacharihat
82. Marangi
83. Marangi charali
84. Mission Patty
85. Murphulani
86. Nobhota
87. Pulibar
88. Ultajan
89. Padumani
90. Gatanga
91. Chungi
92. Dhalajan
93. Satriagaon
94. Jorhat Air Field
95. Jorhat Engineering College
96. Jorhat Research Laboratory
97. Charingia
98. Pulibar
99. Kamalabari
100. Auniatisatra
101. Bali chapari.
102. Bengenaati Satra
103. Bhakatiduar
104. Chamaguri Kamalabari
105. Daksinpatsatra
106. Phulani bari
107. Garamur Satra
108. Gazera
109. Goalgaon
110. Hazarikagaon
111. Jengramukh
112. Karatipar
113. Karkichuk Mishinggaon
114. Koliagaon
115. Majorduori
116. Momari Mishinggaon
117. Rangachahi
118. Ratanpur
119. Ratanpur Mirigaon
120. Salmara
121. Sonowal Kacharigaon
122. Tataya
123. Kamarbanda-ali
124. Athabari
125. Barjan
126. Bokalaigaon
127. Salikihat
128. Kharikatia
129. Bahani
130. Kachukhat
131. Kamargaon
132. Khumtai
133. Mahuramukh
134. Kachupathar
135. Letekujan
136. Bukial T. E.
137. Dholaguri
138. Kanaighat
139. Majulibargaon
140. Mariani
141. Meleng
142. Nagajankha
143. Mahima
144. Hatiekhowa
145. Namchungi
146. Namkhatowal
147. Nakachari
148. Baloma
149. Fachual
150. Gohainbari
151. Khatisona
152. Lahing-gaon
153. Pirakata
154. Ujani Rajabari
155. Rajoi
156. Nimatighat
157. Numaligarh
158. Bahara
159. Karuabahi Satra
160. Karuabahi-Tinali
161. Oating
162. Baruagaon
163. Jamuguri
164. Purana Titabar
165. Birinasayak

166. Chakiyal
167. Melamati
168. Sarupathar
169. Gohaingaon
170. Tengabari
171. Selenghat
172. Hamlai
173. Mogoraigaon
174. Teok
175. Tokharia
176. Jhanjimukh
177. Kakajan
178. Kakajan Duliagaon
179. Kamarkhatowal
180. Teok Rajabari
181. Titabar
182. Baruajan
183. Phulbari
184. Jalukanibari
185. Madhapur
186. Mereng-gaon
187. Rangajan
188. Tipamia
189. Kokilamukh

Sibsigar Division

1. Sibsagar (H.O.)
2. Balighat
3. Banmukh
4. Chaulkara
5. Cherekapar
6. Dhaiali
7. Dhuliagaon
8. Hahchara
9. Juriapar
10. Kenduguri
11. Khamun
12. Mithapukhuri
13. Nakatani
14. Santipar
15. Sukanpukhuri
16. Meteka
17. Amguri
18. Barahibari
19. Bhuyanhat
20. Chataichiga Kakatigaon
21. Morabazar
22. Amguri Haloating
23. Dopdar
24. Betbari
25. Bhajo
26. Barhat
27. Barpatra T.E.
28. Baruachali
29. Changmai
30. Lafra
31. Titlagar-Chariali
32. Charing
33. Haphaluting
34. Demou
35. Disangmukh
36. Ouphula
37. Kherkatamukh
38. Gaurisagar
39. Joysagar
40. Charaimaria
41. Dikhoumukh
42. Hatighuli
43. Kumarajan
44. Khonakekora
45. Mograhat
46. Saloguri
47. Bamunpukhuri
48. Bhitarual
49. Bonai
50. Chintamani
51. Phulpanichiga
52. Jarabari
53. Khanamukh
54. Moranchiga
55. Mari Jhanji
56. Bhagamukh
57. Kalugaon
58. Konwarpur
59. Lakwa
60. Bakharbengena
61. Cholapathar
62. Charubhanga-Dihingia
63. Khaloighogora
64. Lakwa (Rl. Stn.)
65. Sarumathura
66. Silakuti
67. Mechagarh
68. Moran
69. Mahkhuti
70. Moranhat
71. Kochumari
72. Nazira
73. Athkhel
74. Bartal
75. Choukimukh
76. Deopani
77. Dhitaipukhuri
78. Diksu
79. Geleki
80. Khemdeopukhuri
81. Lakhimijan T. E.
82. Maduri
83. Mackaypur T. E.
84. Mazenga
85. Michajan
86. Namticharali
87. Namti
88. Nangalamara Tinali
89. Panibil
90. Rajmao
91. Tiphuk
92. Deogharia
93. Namtidol
94. Nemuguri
95. Netaipukhuri
96. Rajmai,
97. Bomrajabari
98. Charugua
99. Dihingthan
100. Dihingmukh
101. Disanghat
102. Kharahat
103. Nahat
104. Pelengi
105. Paraliguri
106. Rangpurnagar
107. Santak
108. Sapekhati
109. Barbaruakhat
110. Baragaon
111. Baruanagar
112. Chatianaguri
113. Kambari
114. Longpatia
115. Nagahat
116. Ongurishyam
117. Rahan
118. Sepon
119. Bakata Chandbasa
120. Chakalia

121. Doba
122. Halouguri
123. Patsako
124. Simaluguri
125. Bihubar
126. Dolbagan
127. Dhopabari
128. Gargaon
129. Moutgaon (Rl. Station)
130. Ramani-ali
131. Tengapukhuri
132. Sonari
133. Aideopukhuri
134. Bengenabari
135. Bharalipukhuri
136. Barahigaon
137. Kakatibari
138. Korokani
139. Miripathar
140. Taokaghat
141. Sufrai
142. Banamali
143. Disangpani
144. Mathurapur
145. Manomohangaon
146. Nimanagarh
147. Tamulichiga

Number of H.O. (H.S.G) in the district	...	...	2
Number of L.S.G. offices	...	...	3
Number of E.D.S. offices	...	...	15
Number of branch offices (including experimental and no delivery offices)	...	...	270
Number of Sub-Post offices	...	...	46
Total	...		336

It may be pointed out from the above table that adequate postal facilities are being provided to the public and there are plans for further extension of the service. The number of offices where combined P. & T. facilities are available are as follows :

Jorhat, Badulipar, Barbheta, Barpathar, Bokakhat, Cinnamara, Dergaon, Furkating, Golaghat, Gatanga, Jorhat Air Field, Jorhat Research Laboratory, Kamalabari, Kharikatia, Letekujan, Bukial T.E., Mariani, Mahima, Nakachari, Numaligarh, Oating, Selenghat, Titabar, Sibsagar, Amguri, Haloating, Barhat, Disangmukh, Moran, Moranhat, Nazira, Rajmai, Sapekhati, Sepon, Simaluguri, Sonari, Sufrai, Lakwa.

In the near future the following post offices are proposed to get telegram facilities :

Bahana, Barua Bamungaon, Nimatighat, Mahkhuti, Kahara, Kamarbandha-Ali, Gaurisagar and Jorhat Engineering College.

There have also been plans for opening new post offices in many other places including the following :

Tahal Sing Nagar, Battalion Hd. qr., Bagadharia-pukhuri, Bogidol, Janambhumi, Gitapur, Gunakatia, Chowdang pathar, Belimukhion, Binapani, Garigaon.

A list of telephone exchanges is furnished here to give an idea of communication facilities that the people of this district are enjoying. With an abundant net-work of phone, telegram and postal services the barriar between time and space has been minimised as far as practicable.

Sl. No.	Name of Exchanges	Type	Capacity
1.	Jorhat	C. B. M.	521 Lines
2.	Mariani	C.B.M.M.	63 „
3.	Golaghat	C. B. M. M.	112 „
4.	Bokakhat	Mag.	13 „
5.	Dergaon	Mag.	50 „
6.	Sibsagar	Mag.	174 „
7.	Nazira	Auto	38 „
8.	Kanjikhowa	—	67 „
9.	Moranhat	—	28 „
10.	Sepon	—	59 „
11.	Sonari	—	42 „
12.	Titabar	—	20 „

Public call facilities are available at the following places :

Jorhat, Jorhat Research Laboratory, Mariani, Nakachari, Titabar, Golaghat, Dergaon, Bokakhat, Barpathar, Sarupathar, Kahara, Furkating, Sibsagar, Amguri, Barhat, Joysagar, Moran, Moranhat, Nazira, Rajmai, Simaluguri and Sonari.

(i) Radio and Wireless Stations :

There is no radio Station in the district. But the no. of Radio licencees is daily on the increase.

Attached to the P. & T. Department there are two Wireless Stations, one at Jorhat as the transmitting centre and the other at Lichubari as the receiving one. The Radio Wireless Station at Dergaon is meant for the Police Training College, the only one of its kind in Assam.

(j) Organisations of owners and employees in the field of Transport and Communications :

As for the nationalised routes or highways and roads on which State Transport Buses and other vehicles ply in the district, the State Government is the owner. There are branches at the district level of the State Transport employees associations of different categories. In so far as the private buses and other vehicles are concerned, there are registered bodies of both the owners and the employees. This is true also of those of Air Travels (Road ways) services in the district. The water-ways or Steamer services plying mainly in the Brahmaputra have been under a company known as the R.S.N. & R.G.N. and the employees working in the different steamer ghats, have had also their associations known as the *Jahaz Karmachari Sangha*, affiliated to all-India Labour Organisations. There are also branch unions of the P. & T. employees of different categories, affiliated to an All India parent body. Some more details about the employees' associations have already been given under Chapter V.

CHAPTER VIII

MISCELLANEOUS OCCUPATIONS

While a substantial section of the people of this district are agriculturists, there is another section that resorts to other miscellaneous occupations for their livelihood. These occupations relate to public administration including local bodies, learned professions, viz., law, medicine, education, engineering and other technical subjects, and domestic and personal services. The number of persons so employed in one capacity or another together with their dependents has been continually on the increase. The tailors, barbers, washermen, domestic servants, petty traders and a fairly large number of urban and rural population depend on the employees in public administration and on those undertaking such professions as Law, Medicine, Education, Engineering, etc.[1]

(a) Public Administration :

So far as public administration is concerned which included both the Central and State Government services, only a small section belongs to the higher income group. They are District, Divisional or Zonal Heads, Judges, High military Officials and Heads of Higher Educational Institutions, both technical and non-technical. As in other districts, the majority of the persons, employed in public service belongs to the middle or lower middle income group. This is evident from the following Statement on the basis of the Census of State Government employees which shows such employees serving in this district in their basic-paywise groups (as on 31.3.61).

Basic Pay Group	*Gazetteed*	*Non-Gazetted.*	*Total*
Below Rs. 51/-	—	4766	4766
Rs. 51/- to 101/-	—	2801	2801
Rs. 101/- to 251/-	73	1231	1304
Rs. 251/- to 301/-	91	26	117
Rs. 301/- to 451/-	74	2	76
Rs. 451/- to 501/-	12	—	12
Rs. 501/- to 1001/-	29	—	29
Rs. 1001/- to 1501/-	2	—	2
Rs. 1501/- to above	N	I	L

1. This Chapter has been compiled on the basis of 1951 Census. The details on miscellaneous occupations according to 1961 Census may be found in an Appendix at the end of the Chapter.

It is to be noted that Government services are preferred to private employment unless otherwise lured by better prospects. It should also be remembered that not all those who are in the services, especially in the higher ranks, are natives of the district.

The total number of persons engaged in Health, Education, and public administration was 6,358, out of which 5,824 were males and 534 females. The break up figures were as follows :

Occupations	*Total*		*Employers*		*Employees*		*Independent workers*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
1. Medical & other health Services	1021	280	19	...	499	223	503	57
2. Educational Services & research	1770	208	47	...	1168	206	555	2
3. Army, Navy & Air Force	152	1	...	...	152	1	...	...
4. Police (other than village watchman)	968	3	...	...	968	3	...	...
5. Village Officers & servants including village watchman	965	2	...	...	965	2	...	...
6. Employees of Municipalities & Local Boards	193	14	...	...	193	14	...	...
7. Employees of State Government	533	24	...	...	533	24	...	...
8. Employees of the Central Govt.	191	2	...	...	191	2	...	...
9. Employees of Non-Indian Govt.	31	...	...	...	31	...	...	...

The above statistics bear testimony to the fact that the percentage of women employees in various services is very small.

As regards employment in the local bodies, it may be stated that since the enactment of the *Assam Panchayat Act* 1959, the Local Boards of the district were replaced by the 3 tier system of Panchayats, *Mahkuma Parishad* at the Sub-divisional level, *Anchalik Panchayats* at the Block level and *Gaon Panchayats* at the village level. These Panchayats, together with the newly constituted town committees, also absorb a small percentage of total population of the district over and above the employment opportunities provided by the Municipal Boards of the district.

Amenities in Public service: Besides providing for allowances, the State Government have made provisions for the drawal of building and festival advances by its employees. The existing Rules regarding Pension and Gratuity have been liberalised for their benefit. For certain categories of services there are provisions also for Government quarters. Government servants enjoy certain privileges in respect of medical treatment as well.

Central Government employees, the employees of Corporations (i.e. L.I.C.I. and A.L.C.) employees of the State Bank, Railway etc. have got their own schemes of privileges and benefits which as compared to those enjoyed by the State Government employees, are more beneficial.

(b) Learned Professions :

Persons, included in this group belong to various sub-groups which are quite distinct from one another. Under this group comes pleaders, authors, journalists, sculptors, architects, photographers, musicians, actors, dancers, doctors, teachers and engineers. The district Census Hand Book of Sibsagar, 1951 has included them under the section 'services not elsewhere specified' which also includes domestic and personal services. For the sake of convenience the break-up of figures of the persons engaged in learned professions are given below :

Occupations	*Total*		*Employers*		*Employees*		*Independent workers.*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
1. Legal & business services	520	5	1	...	372	3	147	2
2. Arts, letters & Journalism	17	1	...	...	5	...	12	1
3. Religious, charitable & Welfare services	434	22	2	...	69	4	363	18
4. Recreation services	97	9	...	...	68	7	29	2

Education: According to 1951 census, under educational services and research, there were 1770 males and 208 females out of which 1084 males and 139 females were employed in the rual areas and 686 males and 69 females in the urban areas. Since 1951 there has been great expansion in the sphere of education. The number of research personnel were not separately shown in the said Census. But, in recent years various research Institutes and Laboratories have come into existence in this district. Detailed descriptions of these laboratories and research centres will be found in appropriate chapters.

So far as education is concerned, this district is fortunate in having such professional Government institutions as the Jorhat Engineering College, the Assam Agricultural College, the Post-Graduate Training College, the Prince of Wales Institute of Engineering and Technology, the P. G. Basic Training College, the Industrial Training Institute, and last but not the least the oldest Normal School of the State located at Jorhat which are all situated within the Sub-division of Jorhat. All these institutions, together with other private organisations have thus contributed to the growth of education on both the technical and non-technical lines.[2]

In the district there is no Government College for imparting general education. Some of the existing colleges are Government aided and affiliated to the Gauhati University.[3] The colleges have no research facilities. At present the Government have allowed the U.G.C. scale of pay in all the private colleges. Most of the Colleges have got one affiliated Unit of the All Assam College Teachers' Association. The Aided High Schools and the Primary schools have also got their own Associations for safeguarding their interest and betterment of service conditions.

Medical: The number of persons engaged in the profession of medicine and in health services in the 1951 census was 1301 out of which 503 males and 247 females were employed in rural areas and 518 males and 33 females in the urban areas. This district provides no facility for the medical education which may be had elsewhere in the State. It is seen that highly qualified doctors rarely prefer to go to the rural areas. This district possesses one unit of the All Assam Medical Practitioners Association which is affiliated to the All India Association.

Law: The profession includes Advocates and Muktears, their clerks and petition writers, etc. In the census of 1951 the legal occupation and business occupation were enumerated together, according to which there were 525 persons, associated with legal and business services, out of which 520 were males and 5 females. There is no facility in the district for legal education. Hence, whoever proposes to study law is required to go outside the district.

In this district there are 3 Bars at Jorhat, Golaghat and Sibsagar, the number of members in these Bars in 1960 being, 76, 30 and 31 respectively. Among the independent associations these Bars in the past held a prominent position by virtue of their united and intellectual strength and the active

2. The names of the Sankardeva Seminary and the Vocational Collegiate High School of Jorhat may perhaps be mentioned as private educational institutions, run on professional basis.

3. With the establishment of the Dibrugarh University, all Colleges in the distinct have come under its jurisdiction.

interest its members took in matters of Politics, Religion, Public administration, education, etc. So, in the moulding of public opinion these bars are expected to play a vital role.

Arts, Letters and Journalism: The number of persons associated with these learned professions in 1951 was 18 out of which 8 were in rural areas and 10 in urban. With the establishment of schools and private organisations imparting education in fine and allied arts, the figures must have increased by now. A detailed picture of the cultural activity of the district will be found in the Chapter on Education. As regards Journalism, it may be mentioned here that only a weekly paper is published from Jorhat, the other two Sub-divisions having no claim in this regard. However, a few monthly and half yearly magazines are published from Sibsagar and Jorhat. Representatives of other Newspapers accredited to this district are, however, to be seen here.

Religious, Charitable and Welfare Services: In the 1951 Census the number of persons associated with professions of this category was 456 out of which 434 were males and 22 females; 431 males and 15 females were in the rural areas and 3 males and 7 females in the urban. Compared with statistics revealed by other learned professions, employment figures in these professions seem to be quite high. While for the material advancement of the district the followers of these professions do not contribute much, they cater to the needs of spiritual and social uplift of the people.

Recreation Serivce: The 1951 Census figures under this head were 97 males and 9 females. Recreation service includes Musicians, dancers, players of musical instruments and their attendants. The figures shown above were only of rural areas. The number of such people has now increased considerably.

Occupations in Trade: On the occupational aspect of commerce, we find in the 1951 Census that 12,302 persons were associated with commercial activity, of which 11,531 were males and 771 females.

The detailed classification is shown in the following table:

Occupations	*Total*		*Employers*		*Employees*		*Independent workers*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
1. Retail trade otherwise unclassified	3993	321	78	...	919	74	2996	247
2. Retail trade in foodstuff (including beverages and narcotics)	5938	331	190	3	1013	25	4735	303

Occupations	*Total*		*Employers*		*Employees*		*Independent workers*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
3. Retail trade in fuel including petrol	40	22	5	...	9	9	26	13
4. Retail trade in textile and leather goods	1021	21	69	...	281	1	721	20
5. Wholesale trade in food stuff	230	5	8	...	5	...	217	5
6. Wholesale trade in commodities other than food stuff	94	...	4	...	28	...	62	...
7. Real estate	53	23	...	...	17	...	36	23
8. Insurance	39	21	...	...	20	21	19	...
9. Money lending, banking and other financial business	123	27	...	...	74	20	49	7

Occupations in Transport: As regards occupations provided by Transport, Storage and Communication, the Census of 1951 show the total number of employees as 4,445, of which 4,411 are males and 34 females.

The detailed classifications are given in the following table:

Occupations	*Total*		*Employers*		*Employees*		*Independent workers*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
1. Transport & communication otherwise unclassified & incidental service	11	...	...	...	8	...	3	...
2. Transport by road	1169	17	9	...	860	12	300	5
3. Transport by water	466	...	...	...	375	...	91	...
4. Transport by Air	8	1	...	...	8	1	...	...
5. Rly. transport	2427	9	...	...	2424	9	3	...
6. Storage & warehousing	16	5	...	...	10	5	6	...
7. Postal service	238	2	...	...	238	2	...	...
8. Telegraph	46	...	...	...	46	...	...	...
9. Telephone	27	...	...	...	27	...	...	...
10. Wireless service	3	...	...	...	3	...	...	...

(c) Domestic and Personal services :

The total number of persons included in this category in the 1951 Census is given in the following table :

Occupations	*Total*		*Employers*		*Employees*		*Independent workers*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
1. Domestic Service	2986	473	46	...	1892	390	1048	83
2. Barbers & Beauty Shops	964	14	38	...	217	...	709	14
3. Laundries & Laundry Services	355	37	1	...	82	5	272	32
4. Hotels, Restaurants, etc.	377	5	30	...	109	...	238	5

Domestic Services : Cooks, indoor servants, water carriers, motor drivers, cleaners, etc. constitute this group. The number of domestic servants as recorded in the 1951 Census was 3.459 out of which 1,602 males and 337 females were in rural areas and 1,384 males and 136 females were in the urban. Females either for full time or part time services are rarely engaged in domestic purposes, a practice which is so commonly prevalent in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. Of course, some planters or well-to-do-families employ *Dhais* or maid servants to do the household odd jobs or for looking after their children.

Barbers : Hindu religious practices have given a secured position to the barbers. On the occasions of marriage, thread ceremony, and funeral rites and on numerous other occasions the barbers are inevitably required to be present.

But the old custom of barbers visiting one village after another in search of customers has been declining. Instead, barber-shops or Saloons as they called, are coming up even in the interior part of the district. In most of the cases the workers themselves are the owners. The 1951 Census revealed that out of 978 persons 456 male and 14 females were in the rural areas while 508 males were in the urban locality. It is noticed that most workers in this profession are not indigenous people of the district, but are persons, hailing from other States specially from Bihar and Bengal.

Washerman : The 1951 Census recorded that out of the 392 persons engaged in Laundry and Laundry services 212 males and 28 females were in the rural areas, while 143 males and 9 females were in the urban. It is seen that Laundering is now becoming a paying profession. Most of the good Laundries are, however, located in the urban areas and in the rural areas

the washerman moved from door to door to collect garments and to return those already taken for washing. In this case also it is seen that workers associated with this profession are mostly from Bihar. Local persons are seen only in the Dry-cleaning shops.

Hotels : The total number of employees associated with the trade as per 1951 Census were 377 males and 5 females, out of which 221 males and 5 females were in the rural areas, while 156 males were in the urban areas. No female was reported to be working in the urban areas.

It is seen that majority of the hotels and restaurants are concentrated in the urban areas. While the number of tolerably good hotels with accommodation for lodgings is very limited, tea-stalls and restaurants are seen in every nook and corner of the urban areas and even in the interiors of the district.

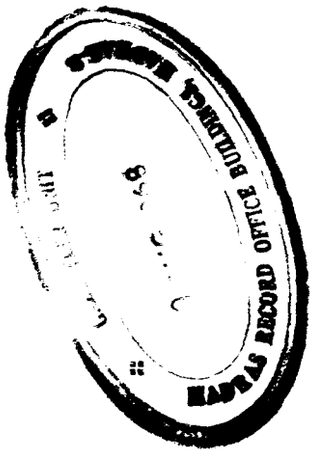
Tailors : For this group of occupation no separate figure was shown in the 1951 Census. In recent years tailoring has become a paying profession. With the rising standard of living, ordered tailoring is often preferred to ready-made garments even in the interior parts of the villages of this district. Formerly a section of the Muslim people generally known as "Khalipha" was specially engaged in making ready-made garments for the purpose of selling them in the rural hats and bazars. As stated above, the use of ready-made garments has been declining to a considerable extent.

Big tailoring establishments are found confined to the urban areas. In this connection it may be mentioned that the charges asked for a complete woollen-suit is about Rs. 40.00, and that of a cotton one is Rs. 15.00 to Rs. 20.00. These charges are more or less fixed throughout the whole district. This paying profession ought to have attracted more and more educated persons.

It may be added here that with the increasing complexity of life, the barriers of caste and creed are no longer honoured. With growing trends for the dissolution of the Joint Family life, individual struggle for existence has become all the more acute. Hence a tendency has of late grown to follow any and every occupation that appears to be easily available.

It is due to this trend that the occupational castes which continued so long to enjoy the monopolistic position of their occupations, are no longer in that advantageous position. This seems to be a healthy sign for the economic development of the mass people.

	(a) Fire Fighters, Policemen, Guards and related workers	4,596	—	4,596
ation workers :	(b) House keepers, Cooks, maids and related workers	4,605	950	5,555
In all areas :	(c) Waiters, Bartenders and related workers	11	—	11
Male .. 11,799	(d) Building caretakers, cleaners and related workers	523	112	635
Female .. 1,363	(e) Barbers, Hairdressers, Beauticians and related workers	1,180	—	1,180
Total .. 13,162	(f) Launderers, Dry-cleaners and pressers	441	301	742
Urban areas only :	(g) Athlets, Sportsmen and related workers	213	—	213
Male .. 5,041	(h) Photographers and related Camera operators	230	—	230
Female .. 317				
Total .. 5,358				
10. Workers not classifiable by occupation :	(a) Workers not classifiable by occupation	3,010	227	3,237
In all areas :				
Male .. 3,010				
Female .. 227				
Total .. 3,237				
Urban areas only :				
Male .. 739				
Female .. 142				
Total .. 881				



APPENDIX

Note.—As this Chapter on *Miscellaneous Occupations* is found compiled on the basis of 1951 Census of the district, though in tune with the classifications made in the synopsis of the chapter, underlined by the Centre, we have found it necessary to incorporate some details in respect of the said occupations as given in 1961 Census of the district. According to this Census, the different categories of population other than those engaged in cultivation have been placed under 10 broad divisions, viz.—

(1) Professional, Technical and related workers, with a total population of all age groups of 7,924
(2) Administrative, Executive and Managerial workers, 2,082
(3) Clerical and related workers, 7,534
(4) Sales workers, 19,175
(5) Farmers, Fishermen, Hunters, Loggers and related workers, 1,43,952
(6) Miners, Quarrymen and related workers, 739
(7) Workers in Transport and Communications, 8,304
(8) Craftsmen, Production Process workers, etc., 56,025
(9) Service sports and Recreation workers, 13,162
(10) Workers not classifiable by occupations, 3,237

There are many sub-groups under each division with a total number of workers in both the rural and urban areas, which will be evident from the following table :

CHAPTER IX

ECONOMIC TRENDS

(a) General Livelihood Pattern of the District :

(*i*) Analysing the livelihood pattern of Sibsagar, the Census Report of Assam (1951) says that 64·5 and 35·5 per cent of the total population of the district constitute respectively the two broad categories of Agricultural and non-Agricultural people. In the agricultural sector there were 5,89,244 persons who were termed as cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned by them, and their dependents ; 1,74,090 persons who were called cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned, and their dependents ; 10,910 persons who were known as cultivating labourers and their dependents ; and there were 7,177 persons who represented as non-cultivating owners of land, agricultural rent receivers and their dependents. Thus the total agricultural population stood at 7,81,421.

On the non-Agricultural sector, 3,18,564 persons have been found engaged in production other than cultivation ; 38,967 in commerce ; 12,880 persons in transport ; and 60,392 persons in other services and miscellaneous occupations. Thus the total figure of non-Agricultural sector stands at 4,30,803.

In this connection one important fact to be borne in mind is that the entire number of tea garden labourers is not accounted for in non-agricultural sector, though tea is primarily agricultural in character and rural in atmosphere needing only a small portion of the total labour force for factories. No doubt, in one sense tea is an industry having some common characteristics with industrial undertakings. But that does not mean that the entire tea garden labour force should be categorized as non-agricultural labour. If the exact number of labourers of tea gardens is added to the agricultural population, the percentage of the latter will go high up reducing at the same time the percentage of non-agricultural sector.

It is thus evident from the above analysis that this district is mainly an agricultural one and the impact of an agricultural economy is explicitly revealed in all directions. This agricultural character of the district has further been intensified by the grace of the monsoons. The average rainfall ranges in between 80"-85" which is sufficient for tea shrubs and other agricultural crops to thrive well. But it is also to be noted that though Sibsagar is mainly an agricultural district, the holding of cultivable land per individual

TABLE SHOWING THE NUMBER OF POPULATION UNDER MISC. OCCUPATIONS AS IN 1961 CENSUS : SIBSAGAR DISTRICT.

Divisions	All Age Groups	Occupational Distribution		
		Male	Female	Total
7. Workers in Transport & communication :	(a) Dock workers, Engine officers and Pilots	1	—	1
In all areas :	(b) Crues and Boat-men	219	—	219
Male .. 8,260	(c) Aircraft pilots, Nevigators and flight engineers	1	—	1
Female .. 44	(d) Drivers and Firemen: Railways	256	—	256
Total .. 8,304	(e) Drivers, Road Transport	4,703	—	4,703
Urban areas :	(f) Conductors, Guards: Railways	571	—	571
Male .. 3,234	(g) Inspectors and allied workers	438	—	438
Female .. 20	(h) Telephone, Telegram, Tele. coms. operators	126	12	138
Total .. 3,254	(i) Postmen and messengers	537	—	537
	(j) Workers in tele-communications	1,408	32	1,440
8. Craftsmen, Production process workers, etc.	(a) Spinners, Weavers, Knitters, Dyers and related workers	583	20,343	20,926
In all areas :	(b) Tailors, cutters and related workers	3,803	415	4,218
Male .. 31,976	(c) Leather cutters, Sewers & related workers	691	109	800
Female .. 24,049	(d) Furnacemen, Rollers, Drawers, moulders and related metal making workers	512	1	513
Total .. 56,025	(e) Precession instrument makers, watch makers, Jewellers and related workers	846	—	846
Urban areas only :	(f) Tool-makers, Mechanists, Plumbers, Welders and related workers	1,519	2	1,521
Male ... 6512	(g) Electricians and related Electrical and Electronic workers	180	—	180
Female .. 1,747	(h) Carpenters, Joiners and Cabinet makers	4,180	—	4,180
Total .. 8,259	(i) Painters and Paper Hangers	2	—	2
	(j) Bricklayers, Plasterers and construction workers (n.e.c.)	3,446	69	3,515
	(k) Compositors, Printers, Engravers, Book Binders & related workers	772	7	779
	(l) Potters, Kilnmen and related workers	2,060	1,346	3,406
	(m) Millers, Bakers, Brewmasters and related workers	2,776	152	2,928
	(n) Chemicals and related process workers	53	—	53
	(o) Tobacco preparers and product makers	9	1	10
	(p) Craftsmen and production process workers (n.e.c.)	264	210	474
	(q) Testors, Packers, sorters and related workers	9	—	9
	(r) Stationary Engine Excavating & Lifting Equipment operators	76	—	76
	(s) Labourers (n.e.c.)	10,195	1,394	11,589

cultivator is not encouraging. This had become evident from a survey conducted in a random Sample method by the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Assam.[1] It is stated in the Report that out of the 2,682 families surveyed in 35 villages, 11·26% are absolutely landless, while another 1·12% hold less than 0·5 bighas of land; 10·18% of the families have large holdings (above 30 bighas) covering 37·65% of the areas under all holdings; 40·90% of them have medium holdings (11-30 bighas) accounting for 48·48% of the area, while 48·92% of the families are small holders (10 bighas or less) and account for 13·87% of the area. The average holding measures 15·10 bighas. The middle holding group comprises of an area of land from 5 to 15 bighas, which represents the condition of agricultural holdings prevailing in about 41% of the rural families. Comparatively large holdings are to be seen in the Miri villages of the District.

Analysing the causes of such low holdings we find that the operation of the laws of inheritance, the growth of the spirit of individualism and dissolution of the joint family system, and the decline of the handicrafts and cottage industries are responsible for such uneconomic holdings. This has further been aggravated by the measure of fragmentation and the system of tenancy under which the rent is paid by the tenants to the landlords. Fixed cash rent, fixed rent in kind and share-cropping have been stated to be the three different systems of tenancy prevailing in various parts of the district. As against the small holdings of the rural people, it is interesting to note that of all the districts, Sibsagar has the highest tea acreage which forms about 27% of the total tea area in the State. In 1956-57 Sibsagar district had about 106,656 acres under tea cultivation and the total output was about 46,000 tons during the same period. Thus it is evident that the districts' economy is interlinked with the growth and expansion of the tea industry and a considerable number of people are employed in tea gardens. But it is rather painful to observe that except for a few tea garden proprietors, the local indigenous people are lagging far behind in the competition with other business and industrial people coming from other parts of India.

From what has been said in the foregoing paragraphs it would appear that some proprietors of tea gardens, a handful of men of foreign nationality, serving at top positions in tea and other industries, a few top government officials and distinguished lawyers and other professional men constitute what may be called the well-to-do class. They are able to lead a somewhat descent if not luxurious life. Next to them come the lawyers in general, teachers of colleges, physicians, teachers of schools, the bulk of the businessmen and officials, engineers, contractors, etc. During the last few years the number of this middle class has increased considerably. In the lowest rung may be included the day labourers, tea garden and other classes of

1. *Survey Report on the Rural Economic conditions of Sibsagar district* 1952.

agriculturists, petty traders and others. The disparity in income between the first and the last class is inordinately large.

(ii) *Level of Prices and Standard of living:* A gradual rise in prices of essential food stuff may be noticed since a decade or so. This has been more conspicuous from the year 1930 and from the period of economic depression that actually started since the Second World War. The very wide gulf in the level of prices will be evident from the following comparative statements, occurring in the Old District Gazetteer of the district and the present one. Mr. B. C. Allen states thus:

"In a rural area like Sibsagar the question of price is of more importance to those who sell than to those who buy, and the undoubted prosperity of the district is to some extent due to the fairly high prices which the villagers generally obtain. It is, however, difficult to ascertain these prices with any degree of certainty as the *dun*, which is the unit of measure, is a basket which may contain from 3½ to 3¾ seers of unhusked rice. Near Jorhat unhusked rice generally sells at the rate of six *duns* or 21 seers for the rupee. In less accessible parts the price seems to range from 7 to 9 *duns*, or from 24½ to 31½ seers per rupee. Where the rayats in the western portion of the district have taken advances, as much as 15 *duns* or 52½ seers are taken by the traders for a rupee. Mustard generally sells at the rate of from 12½ to 15 seers per rupee. The price of molasses is subject to sharp variations. Upto 1902, it had stood fairly steady at between Rs. 4 and Rs. 5 per maund. It fell in that year to Rs. 2-8, but in 1903 was up again to Rs. 5."[2]

To quote Mr. Allen again: "Rice and pulse have risen in price during the last quarter of a century, while salt has been growing cheaper."[3] From the following table (X) inserted in the old Gazetteer and its subsequent supplementary issue, the reader will get some idea of the then prevailing prices of rice, salt and pulses as recorded at the markets of Sibsagar, Jorhat and Golaghat.

2. *Assam District Gazetteers, Sibsagar*, pp. 171-72.
3. *Ibid*, p. 171.

				Sibsagar			Jorhat			Golaghat		
				Common rice	Salt	Matikalai	Common rice	Salt	Matikalai	Common rice	Salt	Matikalai
1890	2nd	Week of	February	20	8	15	16	8	16	16	8	13
	do	do	August.	13	8	13	12½	8½	15	13	8	13
1900	do	do	February	13	9	13	12	9	13	12	8	12
	do	do	August.	10	8	10 9/16	11	9	10½	10	8	11
1902	do	do	February	13	8¼	11	10½	8	12	12	8	11
	do	do	August.	8	8	12¼	8	9	12	8	8	11
1904	do	do	February	14	11	13	13	11	11¼	14	10	11
	do	do	August.	13	11	13	12	11	12	12	10½	11
1908	do	do	February	8½	16	8	8	16	8¼	8	13	8
	do	do	August.	9	16	8	7	16	8	6	13	8
1912	do	do	February	14	15	9	12	16	9	12½	14	10
	do	do	August.	10¼	15	8	11	16	8	9½	16	10

Against the background of the prices quoted from the old Gazetteer as above, it may be of interest to see the retail prices of things prevailing in March 1942 and March 1962 to mark the range of variation of prices during the last two decades from that of the prices prevalent in the beginning of this century.

Retail Prices of Food Stuff

March 1942				March 1962			
		Rs.	nP.			Rs.	nP.
1. Rice	Per seer	0	16	Rice	Per seer		
2. Mustared oil	do	0	37	Mustared oil	do	0	75
3. Kerosene oil (white)	do	0	31	Kerosene oil (white)	do	0	50
4. Kerosene oil (red)	do	0	28	Kerosene oil (red)	do	0	44
5. Sugar	do	0	37	Sugar	do	1	12
6. Gur	do	0	12	Gur	do	0	62
7. Salt	do	0	12	Salt	do	0	19
8. Potatoes	do	0	9	Potatoes	do	0	50
9. Atta	do	0	31	Atta	do	0	50
10. Ghee (vegt.)	do	1	62	Ghee (vegt.)	do	3	25
11. Machurdal	do	0	20	Machurdal	do	0	75
12. Arahar	do	0	19	Arahar	do	0	75
13. Onion	do	0	19	Onion	do	0	50
14. Tea	do	1	00	Tea	do	6	00
15. Soap	do	0	53	Soap	do	1	50

The rise in price since Second World War is summed up in the *Census Report, Assam 1951*, thus:

"The outbreak of the World War led to a great rise in prices all over the country which became greater as the war went on. Prices in Assam rose even higher than elsewhere in India. The end of the war did not see any easing up of the economic situation. Actually the prices rose still further and surpassed even the highest peaks reached during the war. The decade was throughout one of high inflationary prices and was, therefore on the whole a prosperous one for the agriculturists. But the condition of the latter was by no means affluent, as the prices of other non-agricultural articles soared to even higher levels, while they had to submit to seizure and regular control of their stocks of rice and paddy."

"Supply conditions in the State gave cause for concern. The villager was happy for the high prices that his produce fetched, but for others it was a problem to get the food supplies. The problem of obtaining clothes, fuel and kerosene and other necessities engrossed every one's attention."

"At the beginning of the decade various control orders were instrumental in reducing prices, but they also had the effect of driving supplies underground and the problem of shortage of rice in the market was partly due to hoarding, but a good deal of grain undoubtedly was consumed by the producer himself owing to increased prosperity. The cultivator met his needs by disposing of only a small quantity of grain in the market (which brought him sufficient money) and consuming or hoarding the rest. This, besides other factors, made the deficit of food grains real, especially at the end of the war. Rationing was introduced in most of the towns in respect of rice, kerosene oil, and dal. Sugar, cloth and kerosene oil rationing was later on extended to rural areas also. They had their inevitable repercussions in the form of increased blackmarketing, profiteering and hoarding, depending upon the efficiency of the district authority to enforce the control orders."

It is thus evident from the price list referred to above, that the general level of prices seems to be keeping an upward trend. This tendency towards high prices is ascribable partly to wartime inflations especially during the last Great War and perhaps to the increase in the total amount of money circulation later as a result of the launching of the Plan Programmes. Articles of day to day consumption have been becoming dearer to the general masses whose incomes were generally limited to what was derived from agricultural produce. While agricultural income had not remained fixed, the low income group amongst the agricultural people has been very much susceptible to economic distress. Though it was a fact that with the growth of agricultural marketing facilities due to construction of new roads and bridges, the price of agricultural produce has gone up by 300% as against the agricultural price prevailing at the time of the last resettlement operation

in 1929, yet their relative high income has been offset by the high prices of other consumer goods and day-to-day essential commodities.

But on the whole it is to be admitted that the execution of the Five Year Plans has been raising the standard of living of the people of this district, which is of no mean order. Owing to the implementation of the Plans, there have been developmental activities in the spheres of agriculture, irrigation and embankment, communictions, education, public health, cottage industries and social welfare, covering the entire countryside which have tended to bring about a slight increase in the prosperity of the cultivators along with that of others. Through the benefits accruing from Developmental Departments and price control of some essential consumer goods, the cultivators have now provided themselves with better dwellings and amenities of life supported by general education and some technical know-how. Though the bulk of the population of the district is agriculturists, under the State encouragement, some have taken to small trade and commerce. All these, together with the increasing scope for employment in different spheres, have evidently raised the standard of living to a considerable extent in both the urban and rural areas. People in general and the young folk in particular have developed a taste for better things and they participate in important social and religious functions and rural amusements which by themselves are indicative of the urge for better and higher standard of living.

Since the Second World War the picture has changed totally. The price level which showed a sharp increase in war days has not only maintained that upward trend but also been rising still higher. In recent years huge amounts of money have been spent as developmental expenditures. This money permeating through the hands of consumers finds expression in the shape of increased demand, which being unmatched by supply, helps the price level to remain at a higher level. In a region with rural economy which is predominantly agricultural in character, the relative prosperity of the people depends to a large extent on the fertility of the soil. Mr. B. C. Allen, on the basis of a report, submitted by the Settlement Officer of the district, writing in 1905, states, however, that the "land is far from fertile, the immense mass of the cultivators subsist on the produce of their gardens and of one crop, transplanted paddy, yet nowhere in Assam will be seen more comfortable homesteads or more prosperous villagers."[4]

The economic condition of the people of this district before the Second World War was described by the Settlement Officer in his Settlement Report of 1929. The *Assam Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee* (1929), while studying the economic condition of the people endorsed the views expressed in the Settlement Report which is being reproduced below together with the observations made by the Committee.

4. *Assam District Gazetteers, Sibsagar*, p. 176.

"It is difficult to generalise regarding the economic condition of a district population numbering nearly a million souls and composed of widely differing races, or to speak dogmatically regarding changes discernible in the comparatively short period of 20 years. People are not wanting who say that the position of the raiyat is now worse than what it was 20 years ago. . . while the average raiyat is now no better off as regards actual cash in hand, he is now living on a definitely higher level of comfort and, thanks to the greatly increased prices obtainable for surplus produce, is able to enjoy regularly things which 20 years ago were regarded as sheer luxuries. My experience of the district extends over the last 14 years only, but even in that time visible signs are not wanting to blar out this contention. The average villager is now better clothed, he wears a shirt and coat, he carries an umbrella, he smokes cigarette, he drinks tea, he often has tin-roofed house, he travels frequently in trains and motor omnibuses and in general enjoys a higher standard of living than of yore. His children, too, are better educated."

It was further stated that the economic state of the people varied directly with the nature of their caste and the habits of life inseparable therefrom. The Settlement Officer points out that the Ahoms, the most numerous caste in the higher ranks are temperate, industrious and prosperous. The lower castes of the Ahoms are less so. Kalitas, Koches, and Keots, who form the intermediate Hindu castes are usually of temperate habits. Miris and Kacharis on the other hand are too fond of rice beer and have a low standard of living. The Muhammadans who form a comparatively small proportion in the population of the district are more prosperous than the average Hindu, mainly bceause they engage in trade or shop-keeping. The ex-tea garden coolies who are not usually the best cultivators, are addicted to rice beer and country liquor and live in poor houses, but in spite of that they are in general quite well-off as they are of industrious habits and supplement their income from agriculture by working in tea gardens when they need money. And, of course, some localities are more prosperous than others, as much depends on the caste of the residents, the fertility of the soil, freedom from the floods and proximity to markets of tea gardens where surplus produce can readily be disposed of.

In 1924, economic cadastres were prepared for four typical villages in the Jorhat and Golaghat subdivisions. The Settlement Officer drew the following deductions from the figures of the cadastres :

(*a*) "Since the Assamese raiyat to a large extent feeds and supplies himself, his actual cash income and expenditure is comparatively small. (*b*) In the village there are few very rich or very poor. The majority are of medium condition, and the difference between the two extremes is not wide. (*c*) The man with subsidiary industry or profession is invariably better off than the cultivator, plain and simple. (*d*) The natural conditions are

favourable. Given self-control as regards drink and drugs and a reasonable amount of work, a good livelihood and a fair measure of comfort can be secured without difficulty. The trouble is that not a few are either lazy or self-indulgent or both. (*e*) Almost every family grows enough paddy for its own consumption and generally has a surplus to sell."

Then follows an observation which we believe to be true of the indigenous Assamese throughout the Assam Valley—"The Sibsagar villager is neither rich nor thrifty; he is content to live humbly on a comparatively small amount of toil, and hitherto has had few ambitions towards self improvement". Interesting also are the remarks as to the size of an average holding: "Allowing for a normal increase since the Census of 1901 was taken, the village population at the time of the last re-settlement was 4,45,000 and the area under ordinary cultivation 14,88,399 *bighas* which gives a holding of 16·7 *bighas* for every family of 5 persons. The corresponding figures for the present day are an estimated village population of 5,94,790, a cultivated area of 20,19,207 *bighas* and an average family holding of 16·9 *bighas*.

It is true, however, that land within the district is being rapidly taken up. All the land has already been almost exhausted and the land fit for ordinary cultivation will probably be fully occupied before another generation has passed. In consequence, pressure on the soil is bound to grow though at present it is light, compared for instance with that of the Surma valley."

Elsewhere, in connection with the fragmentation of holdings it is stated that "in the oldest and most densely populated villages, for instance, the Muhammadan village of central Golaghat, the resulting situation is seen at its worst since holdings have become so small as to be below the economic level".

As regards subsidiary industries, the commonest is the rearing of *muga* silkworms. The Settlement Officer says: "it is reckoned that an average house-hold produces in a year about half a seer of silk, the value of which is some 12 or 15 rupees. The thread is either woven into garments for home use by the women of the house, or sold to the local Marwaries who readily purchase it for export to Calcutta or Sylhet." Other industries are the making of earthen pots, brass and bell-metal articles and also hats of wicker work; there is also goldsmithy. The Settlement Officer remarks that "unfortunately, however, these specialised village industries are undoubtedly declining because a desire for higher social status leads to their gradual abandonment, since the castes of these artisans mostly rank low in the social scale." And as alsewhere in the province, the Assamese is averse to manual labour on roads, gardens or elsewhere. Besides other things, food, dress and housing conditions depict the actual standard of living of the people. We have a side-light on these items from old records. Mr. B. C. Allen, for

instance, states that "the staple food of the people is boiled rise, eaten with pulse, spices, and fish or vegetables curry. Amongst the well-to-do, pigeon or duck occasionally takes the place of fish, but fish is a very common article of diet. Tea drinking is very common, especially in the early morning. Sweetmeats usually consist of powdered grain mixed with milk, sugar and *ghi*. The ordinary form of dress for a villager is a cotton *dhoti* or waist cloth, with a big shawl or wrapper and sometimes a cotton coat or waistcoat. Women wear a petticoat, a *riha* or scarf tied round the bust, and a shawl. These clothes are still very often made at home, and in the case of the women, and of the large wrap worn in the cold weather by men, are frequently of silk. Sibsagar is, in fact, the great centre of *muga* cultivation, and well-to-do women wear a *muga riha* as an article of every day attire, and many don a silk petticoat as well. Foreigners wear cheap imported cotton cloths and blankets and ready made coats, and the use of these articles of clothing is spreading amongst the Assamese. This change is hardly for the better, as the cheap cloths of Manchester are not so artistic or durable as the products of the native loom, and it is doubtful whether the time that was formerly spent on weaving is now employed on any profitable occupation. The *jhapi* or national hat of the Assamese has already been described in detail. Boots and shoes are the exception and in their own homes even well-to-do people wear wooden clogs. Wooden sandals are also used by villagers when travelling or working in jungle ground, where there are tufts of sharp pointed grass. Reference has been already made to the jewellery manufactured near Jorhat. The extent to which it is worn is a clear index of the prosperity of the district."[5]

"The homestead of the ordinary peasant is generally separated from the village path by a ditch or bank on which there is often a fence of split bamboo. Inside there is a patch of beaten earth which is always kept well swept and clean. Round this tiny courtyard stand two or three small houses, almost huts, and in a corner there are generally two open sheds, one of which contains a loom, while the other serves the purpose of a cow-house. The whole premises are surrounded by a dense groove of bamboos, plantains, and areca nut trees, and there are often numerous specimens of the arum family covering the ground. The general effect is picturesque enough, but the presence of all these plants and trees makes the whole place very damp and excludes all sun and air. At the back there is generally a garden in which vegetables, tobacco, and other plants are grown. The house are small, dark and ill-ventilated and must be very hot in summer. They are built on low mud plinths, and are thus extremely damp. The walls are made of reeds plastered with mud, or of split bamboo, the roof of thatch, the rafters and the posts of bamboo.

5. *Assam District Gazetteers, Sibsagar*, p. 172-73.

"The houses of the middle class are built on practically the same plan, but they are larger, and wooden posts and beams are often used in place of bamboo, while roofs of corrugated iron are sometimes to be seen. The furniture of the ordinary cultivator is very simple, and consists of a few boxes, wickerwork, stools and baskets, brass and bell metal utensils, and bottles and earthen pots and pans. His bedding is a quilt made out of old cloths, and he either sleeps on a mat on the damp floor or on a small bamboo *machan* or platform. The well-to-do have beds, tables, and chairs in their houses but these articles of luxury are seldom found outside the towns. This style of house is common to all the Assamese, but in the flooded tracts there are none of the graceful areca plants, as the tree cannot thrive if the roots remain long under water. These orchards and gardens are a considerable source of wealth to the cultivators, and a house standing on a bare patch of ground has always a somewhat poverty stricken appearence to eyes accustomed to the luxuriant vegetation in which the typical Assamese cottage is embedded. The Miris on the Majuli build their houses on platforms to raise them above the level of the floods, and the village site is practically bare. The prosperity of the Assamese in Sibsagar is indicated by the comfortable appearance of their houses. There are probably few places in Assam where building materials would be more expensive, as there is little government forest in the more densely settled tracts and jungle-wood posts thatching grass, and cane have often to be brought from a considerable distance. But the people realize that a comfortable home is conducive to their personal well-being, and are willing to expend the time and labour which its creation and maintenance entails. Ex-garden coolies build, as a rule, small and uncomfortable cottages."[6]

Recently some improvement in housing conditions of both the urban and rural areas of the district has been noticed. This improvement is to a greater extent the direct outcome of the Low-Income-Group Housing Scheme of the State Government under which loans upto a maximum of Rs. 8,000·00 with interest at the rate of 4·75% (plus 0·50% in case the house is not insured against the risk of fire) are offered to needy builders fulfilling certain conditions as laid down by rules. Under this Scheme quite a good number of houses have been constructed and others are in various stages of construction. Over and above this Scheme, there is also another Housing Scheme known as Middle Income-Group Housing Scheme under which some houses are under construction. The rate of interest under this Scheme is 5·50% and insurance is compulsory.

With the rising standard of living housing conditions in recent years have improved considerably. There are many people who even without any financial help from the Government have taken up construction of

6. *Ibid*, pp. 173-75.

pucca houses, indicating thereby a general level of prosperity and an inclination towards higher standard of living.

As regards the housing condition in tea gardens, the *Plantation Labour Act* 1951, makes it obligatory on the part of employers to provide good houses to plantation workers, but the progress made in this regard is not satisfactory due perhaps to weak financial resources and not-too-happy fortune enjoyed by the tea industry at present. It is interesting to note in this connection that under the *Plantation Labour Housing Scheme* introduced by the Government of Assam a good number of houses have been built in this district. This venture is first of its kind in the whole of India. The Government has recently introduced schemes for loans for the betterment of housing conditions of factory labourers and Municipal Board labourers.

Some higher middle class families of urban areas generally possess motor cars. They live in well furnished and electrified buildings with spacious compounds where flowers of various kinds and colours bloom. Most of them have municipal water taps and sanitary latrines in their houses. They use radio sets, fine garments and costly toilets. Their general diet consists of rice, fish, meat, egg, dal, milk, ghi, vegetables, tea, coffee, biscuit and the like. They educate their children in flourishing educational institutes. Brilliant boys from such families go abroad for foreign degrees and diplomas. Average monthly family budget is estimated to be between Rs. 1000/- and Rs. 1200/-

The well-to-do people of rural areas also live in well-built and neatly furnished semi-permanent houses though they generally do not have electricity. Some of them possess cars and use fine garments, radio sets and toilets. Rice, fish, meat, butter, ghi, tea and vegetables are the common articles of consumption. Most of these are produced by them. Their children get all the facilities for higher education. The monthly budget of such families is estimated to be between Rs. 500/- and Rs. 800/-.

Though the economic status of the middle class people in the urban areas cannot be generalized, yet from general observation it can be said that semi-permanent houses with decent furniture are their abodes. A few of them possess cars and radio sets. Those who cannot afford to maintain cars, purchase motor cycles, bicycles, etc. Meat, fish, milk, butter, tea, vegetable, rice are chief components of diet. They use garments and luxury articles of moderate price. Their children are educated in schools and colleges. Average family expenditure per month is estimated to be between Rs. 400/- and Rs. 700/-.

People of the same class in the rural areas live in semi-permanent houses and their diet consists of rice, fish, milk, vegetables, etc. Most of these articles are produced by them. They use garments and toilets. Their children are sent to towns for studies. Average family expenditure per month is estimated to be between Rs. 200/- and Rs. 400/-. They hardly

maintain cars but most of them have bicycles and bullock carts. The use of bicycles in rural areas of this district is fairly common.

People of the lowest income group in the urban area live in small semi-permanent and kutcha houses. Rice, vegetables, dal, tea are their chief articles of consumption. Very few of them can afford to arrange better diet. They use cheap cloths and hardly send their children to other than elementary schools. Average monthly expenditure is between Rs. 100/- and Rs. 150/-.

People of this class in the rural areas possesses kutcha houses built by themselves. Rice, dal, vegetables, tea, etc. are their chief articles of consumption. Vegetables are in most cases grown by them. Sometimes they take fish which are found in village fisheries. They use the most ordinary clothes. Averge monthly budget is between Rs. 40·00 and Rs. 80·00.

In this connection the findings of an economic survey on the condition of the people of Sibsagar, (1952) may be quoted to show the items of consumption of an average family and the extent of their expenditure item-wise. The survey was conducted in a random sample method in 35 villages of the district. The following table as well as the extracts that follow have been reproduced from the said report.

Components of average annual expenditure of rural families (size of average family is 6·5 members).

	Items of expenditure	value of Items obtained in kind (in rupees)	Cash Expenditure (in rupees)	Total expenditure (in rupees)	percentage to total of Col. (4)
	1	2	3	4	5
(A) Food	Rice	524.10	75.75	599.85	53.66
	Pulses	3.19	16.07	19.26	1.72
	Potato and Vegetables	10.98	10.48	21.46	1.9?
	Fish and meat	.....	15.11	15.11	1.35
	Salt and spices	0.66	20.01	20.67	1.85
	Mustard oil	2.51	25.20	27.71	2.48
	Sugar and gur	6.32	22.22	28.54	2,55
	Milk and Milk products	22.34	4.35	26.69	2.39
	Total	570.10	189.19	759.29	67.92
(B) Clothing		3.48	75.28	78.76	7.04
(C) Fuel and lighting ..		.....	15.65	15.65	1.40
(D) Tea, tobacco and drugs					
	Tea	... ..	16.76	16.76	1.50
	Betelnut	19.89	17.23	37.12	3,32
	Tobacco	0.58	32.13	32.71	2.93
	Liquor	13.57	6.00	19.57	1.75
	Total	34.04	72.12	106.16	9.50

	Items of expenditure	Value of items obtained in kind (in rupees)	Cash Expenditure (in rupees)	Total expenditure (in rupees)	Percentage to total of Col. (4)
	1	2	3	4	5
(E) Miscellaneous.					
	Wages	.....	7.25	7.25	0.65
	Interest	.....	5.09	5.09	0.46
	Repairing of homestead	5.14	20.63	25.77	2.31
	Education	.....	13.44	13.44	1.20
	Medical	.....	11.62	11.62	1.04
	Marriages, ceremonies, etc.	2.47,	54,58	57.05	5.10
	Travelling	.....	12.79	12.79	1.14
	Litigation	.....	2.19	2.19	0.20
	Orraments	.....	8.83	8.83	0.79
	Others	.....	13.93	13 93	I.25
	Total	7.61	150.36	157.97	14.14
	Grand Total	615.23	502.60	1,117.83	100.00

"It will be seen that per family average annual expenditure in the sample is Rs. 1,118. The average net income per family being Rs. 960, the budget of the average rural family is thus a deficit one.

"The items of consumption and the quantities consumed naturally vary from family to family, but these have been reduced to a common measure in terms of money. In fact the average pattern for all families reflects the composite of facts of several factors-income, community group, occupation, region, and family size. In fixing the prices, the local average retail prices have been taken into account and the imputed money-value of the consumption of articles produced at home or in the farm as well as these received as wages in kind has been included in the family expenditure as in the case of the income. It will be seen that of the total average expenditure on food as much as 75 per cent. is accounted for by food articles obtained in kind either from the farm or as wages. On the other hand the value of home-made clothing is a comparatively minor item. It accounts for even less than 5 per cent of the family incurred on clothing items. This suggests that the practice of home spinning and weaving in rural homes is gradually dying out, possibly due to the villagers' increasing preference for mill-made cloths, the growing apathy of the women folk for engaging themselves in spinning and weaving and scarcity of mill yarn during their spare hours.

"Much more significant than the overall expenditure is its proportionate distribution among the various consumption groups which provide the weights for the construction of the cost of living index. Of the total expenditure, 67·9 per cent was incurred on food, 7·0 per cent on clothing, 1·4 per cent on fuel and light, 9·5 per cent on tea, tobacco and drugs, and 14·1 per cent on the miscellaneous group items which included education,

medicine, travelling, litigation, marriage and ceremonies, etc. Again of the average annual expenditure on the food items rice accounted for about 80 per cent of the expenditure while the percentage of expenditure incurred on pulses, fish and meat, edible oil, milk and milk products, varied between only 2·0 per cent to 3·7 per cent. The analysis clearly shows that the diet of the average rural family was poor and deficient from the point of view of nutritional potential. But consumption of tobacco, betelnut and liquor is higher compared with that of fish and meat. Also the traditional emphasis on social and religious obligations" account for "high proportion of expenditure on marriages, sradhas and religious ceremonies."

"Generally speaking, the comparatively high percentage of expenditure on food and low percentage of expenditure on items like clothing, houses and repairs, education, indicates a low standard of living in the average rural family."

(iii) *Wages:* In the past two modes of payment to the labourers of different categories : payment in cash and in kind have been in vogue. As labour wages have had their intimate connection with the general economic conditions of the people, the rise in prices of essential commodities, and the standard of living, we have noticed great variations at different times. Since the Second World War, there had been sharp rise in wages of different kinds. The present position is that the daily wage of a labourer, engaged in a house-hold work, for instance, has risen to at least two times than what it was even ten years before from now. The gulf of difference will be wider if we take into consideration the state of affairs obtaining some twenty years back.

The old Gazetteer of the district records thus: "In spite of the existence of a considerable number of ex-garden coolies who are not debarred from working by any social considerations, labour is said to be difficult to procure. The ordinary wage asked is four annas a day, but ploughmen are usually paid in kind, and are either given the crop from one *bigha* of land for every twelve they plough or allowed the use of their employer's bullocks on their own farm for one day out of three. . . Assamese occasionally work on the roads for the Public Works Department, provided that the work is at some little distance from their homes. . . . Servants are paid from Rs. 2/- to Rs. 9/- per mensem, but the ordinary rate is Rs. 4/- or Rs. 5/- with food. Artizans are very scarce, and when procurable command high wages."[7]

At present wages of skilled labourers are from Rs. 4·50—Rs. 5 and that of unskilled labourers generally are Rs. 4 per day. At Majuli it is Rs. 3/- per day. Since 1st December, 1959 the ordinary unskilled employees

7. *Assam District Gazetteers, Sibsagar*, p. 171.

employed in tea plantations of Sibsagar district are getting minimum wages in the following rates per day :

	Basic wage	D.A.	Total
Male	Rs. 1.52	Rs. 0.37	Rs. 1.89
Female	Rs. 1.45	Rs. 0.31	Rs. 1.76
Working minors (12 to 16 years.	Rs. 0.75	Rs. 0.16	Rs. 0.91

The above rates are inclusive of concessions enjoyed by the workers in respect of supplies of foodstuffs and other essential commodities, if any, and all claims by way of compensation for reduction in the quantity of food-grains issued, but are inclusive of other amenities which are expected to continue unaffected.

Since 1st December, 1959 the minimum wages per day of those workers who are engaged in all operations connected with paddy cultivation, (except transplanting, harvesting and for carrying and thrashing), horticulture, poultry farming and cow keeping have been fixed as Rs.1·53+ 1 meal or Rs. 1·75 for adult males, 75p+1 meal for minors. These rates were fixed with reference to the operations in which adult male and female and minors were customarily employed in the locality, on the basis of the then existing rates and hours of work which would prevail undisturbed thereafter. Adult female employed in an operation in which adult males only are customarily employed shall get the adult male rates provided the task or work load and the hours of work are the same and vice versa. For harvesting and for carrying and thrashing paddy and other operations connected with jute cultivation, dairy farming and paddy transplantation both male and female adults will get Rs. 2·00 per day plus existing amenities, if any.

The above rates shall apply subject to the following conditions : (1) The above daily rates shall be raised or reduced by 25p. according as the ruling market price of paddy exceeds Rs. 12·00 per maund or falls below Rs. 5·00 per maund ; (2) In harvesting and transplanting paddy, both male and female adults should be paid at the rate of one maund of paddy for four days' work in place of cash rates specified above, if the former carries a higher monetary value.

Over and above the daily rates the Government also announced certain monthly and annual rates for all employees of agricultural operations, which are as follows :

Male : Rs. 30·00 p.m. plus food and shelter ; if the period of employment exceeds 3 months, clothing is also to be supplied if it is customary in the locality.

Female : Rs. 50·00 p.m. without perquisites.

Minors: Rs. 15·00 p.m. plus food and shelter; if the period of employment exceeds 3 months, clothing is also to be supplied if it is costomary in the locality.

Annual: Rs. 250·00 if paid in advance and Rs. 300·00 if paid at the end of the year or season plus food, clothing and shelter. Shelter in the above cases includes accomodation, bed-stead, bed-sheet, pillow, mosquito curtain and blanket.

(b) (i) General level of employment :

We have, on the basis of 1961 census, quoted the total number of people in Miscellaneous occupations other than cultivation. The percentage of people in the Agricultural sector, which, according to the census Report of Assam 1951, shows at 64·5 as against 35·5 in non-agricultural occupations, maintains more or less the same trend. This position is however, inclusive of the employees in Tea gardens. Taking into consideration the total number of people employed in different occupations, as revealed by the said 1961 census, we have a clear idea on the per cent of such people in between the urban and the rural areas. Though comparatively such employees are predominantly to be found in the rural areas, in so far as certain occupations, technical or otherwise are concerned, the p.c. of people working in the urban areas, for instance in the major towns of Jorhat, Sibsagar and Golaghat are not negligible. In other words, while in the agricultural sector the p.c. of people working in the rural areas is considerably high, we have noticed the same high p.c. of workers in the urban areas. The position has not, however, been uniformly maintained in both the areas at different times. This will be evident if we analyse the figures under different occupations as quoted in different census reports of the district starting with that of 1901. That is to say the p.c. of population working in the agricultural sector seems to have declined and that of the non-agricultural sector in the urban and semi urban areas has fairly increased.

(ii) *Population shift from Agriculture to Industry and Industry to Industry:* It may be mentioned in this connection that the growth of industries, and to a certain extent, because of the low p.c. of yields of stapple food stuff in particular consequent on the effect of natural calamities, more often than not create conditions of imbalance in the existing general level of employment in different occupations. The former reason has been largely responsible in causing exodus of population in search of employment to the urban and semi-urban areas even at the cost of their own cultivation on which the rural economy of the people in the villages in particular is based.

It is because of the development of the industries in the urban and semi-urban areas that we have noticed the shifting of population from the agricultural sector to the industries. The oil industry for which the district is noted has largely accounted for this shifting of population. Small scale industries like workshops, manufacturing factories, timber business, Carrying Companies and farms and H. Qs. of certain other business, though located in the rural areas like Tea industry, are in no small measure responsible for inviting the people in general working in agriculture and the educated un-employed persons in particular for employment in the respective fields of industries.

While it has been a general tendency on the part of a section of the agrarian population of the district to shift to urbanished and industrially advanced parts like those of the other districts of the State, shifting of population from one industry to another has also been noticed. This trend has been on the increase since the last few years along with the progress made in the field of industries. With the establishment of a few major industries, some small scale industries in and around them have also sprung up mainly in the three sub-divisional towns of Jorhat, Sibsagar and Golaghat, and as such, population shift from one industry to another has also become marked in the said towns. Such change of employment in different industries takes place due to varied reasons, viz., prospects of higher salary and better service conditions. Shifting of this kind is, however, not seen much amongst the educated section of the population, as in case of the wage earners.

(iii) *Role of Employment Exchange in the field of Employment:*

Prior to the opening of Employment Exchanges in the district, no such agencies functioned which could provide us with some data on the level of employment of that time. It is nearly over a decade or so that this agency, a regular department of the State Government has come to function in the three sub-divisional towns, which have been playing an effective role in directing the unemployed persons to seek different types of jobs. Government have made it compulsory that only through Employment Exchanges that at least third grade and fourth grade persons can be recruited. This agency has been assisting in imparting training and in putting the properly qualified persons or the right man in the right job. Every year they bring out figures of persons getting employment through them and ascertain the no. of educated unemployed, thus giving proper guidance to and instructing the Government and other employees' organisations in making plans and programmes so as to absorb more persons in future.

(c) National Planning : Community Developments, etc.

The present economic condition of the people reflects to some extent the successful implementation of the various schemes of development. The country as a whole is in a stage of all round economic development as a result of the Five Year Plans which opened up vast avenues of employ-

ment for all classes of labourers, including unskilled labourers. A good number of weekly *hats* in semi-urban areas and also of a few daily *hats* mostly in urban areas provide a ready market for agricultural products which generally fetch a very decent price. Means of communication and transport have improved so much so that the price differences between rural and urban areas for both local and imported commodities are negligible. The monopoly enjoyed by a section of the business community, however, still persists ; but under the changed circumstances the society has a leaning towards co-operatives. Recent agrarian reforms, which ensure all those who are engaged in agriculture a legitimate share of the land, have re-established hope for the development of rural economy.

The village is the same as existed thirty years ago, but with better roads, better transport and communication facilities, better provisions for drinking water to be had either from ring wells, tube wells, or tanks, better education facilities and some better houses too. People in general and the young generation in particular have developed a taste for better things. These are certainly indicative of the urge for better and higher standard of living.

Various Governmental measures undertaken to prevent and control diseases and promote spread of education among a large section of the populace have made the public alive to unhygienic and insanitary conditions. Moreover, better drinking water facilities and medical aids are available now-a-days to most people as a result of which incidence of disease and mortality is fewer in number than before.

Indebtedness is on the decline, perhaps for better prices of agricultural commodities. Co-operatives are playing an important part in improving the economic condition of the people. People in general seem to have taken advantage of the plans and programmes undertaken by the government through various schemes of community development.

Under National Planning, Community Development Blocks have been playing a vital role not only in improving the economic condition of the people but also in the important task of what may be called rural uplift and reconstruction. From recent times these Development projects have been and are being functioning with the active co-operation of the Mahakuma, Anchalik and Gaon Panchayats. Notable among these Blocks are, Golaghat South, Dimow, Majuli, Barhat, Sonari, Golaghat East, Amguri-Titabar, Sibsagar, Golaghat Central, Golaghat West, East Jorhat, Nazira, Sapekhati, Golaghat North, North-west Jorhat and Amguri. It may be mentioned that the success of the plans under national planning largely depends on the efficient working and faithful implementation of the schemes, planned by our State Government. We have, however, noticed general improvement in the material condition of the people and of the areas of the district where such community projects have been established.

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CHAPTER X

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

For general administrative purpose the district is divided into three Sub-divisions with their headquarters at Jorhat, Golaghat and Sibsagar. Jorhat is also the headquarter of the district which was shifted from Sibsagar in 1913 and since then the Sadar Sub-division is under the direct charge of the Deputy Commissioner. The other two Sub-divisions are entrusted to Sub-Divisional Officers either of I.A.S. or A.C.S. cadre, but under direct control of the Deputy Commissioner.

Functions of the Deputy Commissioner and District administration : During the pre-independence days the two most important functions of the Deputy Commissioner were supervision of the collection of land revenue and administration of Law, Order and Justice. But in the Post-independence days the field of activities of the officer is ever widening. Among his varied functions are revenue collection and administration of Justice, district branches of Transport, Elections, Excise, Police, Agriculture, etc. The Deputy Commissioner is the Chairman of the Regional Transport Authority, Jorhat and the Returning Officer of the Sadar Sub-Division for conducting General Elections. He is also the Chairman of the *Falangani Reclamation Advisory Board* in the capacity of which he is to suggest ways and means for the proper functioning of the reclammation schemes. Over and above these the Deputy Commissioner, as the Chairman of the Sub-Divisional Development Committee, is responsible for the execution of all developmental works of the Sub-Division under the plan programmes. The entire machinery of the Community Development programmes is also under his supervision. He is the appointing authority of office staff, Gram Sevakas and other personnel under Block Schemes and keeps general control over the Block Development Officers. For the administration of Law and Order the Deputy Commissioner is the head of the Police organisation in the district.

In his own establishment, there are several major branches, such as Revenue, Magistracy, Treasury, Registration, Passport, Citizenship registration, Nazarat and Records Room. With these and numerous smaller branches the office of the Deputy Commissioner appears to be a miniature Secretariat. The Revenue Branch, one of the important branches of the collectorate, deals with matters relating to mauza collection, Fishery, Encroachment, Bakijai,

Land sale, Relief, Land acquisition, Land-ceiling, etc. All these works of the Revenue branch are looked after by the Senior Revenue Assistant known as the Revenue Sheristadar.

The Magistrate Branch, another important unit of administration deals with matters relating to registration of new cases instituted on complaint, Railway cases, and other miscellaneous cases. This branch is also responsible for keeping records of fines imposed and realised, issuing licenses for guns, Cinema Halls, etc.

For carrying out all these works the Deputy Commissioner is assisted by one Additional Deputy Magistrate, one S.D.O., a few Extra Assistant Commissioners, one Treasury Officer and one Sub-Registrar (Sadar). While the Treasury Officer is to look exclusively after matters relating to the District Treasury, the Sub-Registrar (Sadar) is to look after all the duties of District Registrar (the Deputy Commissioner is the District Registrar) except appeal cases under Sections 68 and 72 of the *Indian Registration Act* 1908. The Sub-Registrar (Sadar) is also the Marriage officer of the Sibsagar District under Special Marriage Act of 1954 and under the Hindu Marriage Act. At Golaghat there is one Sub-Registrar but at Sibsagar the works of the Sub-Registry office are performed by an E.A.C. in-charge. There are no Treasury Officers at Golaghat and Sibsagar and as such the works of these two Sub-treasuries are entrusted to E.A.C.-in-charge.

The Extra Assistant Commissioners are entrusted primarily with the task of taking up criminal cases coming under Indian Penal Code and other Acts, both Central and State. They are also required to take up revenue matters as and when necessary under orders of the Deputy Commissioner. The post of the Principal Revenue Assistant was created in 1959 with the object of assisting the Deputy Commissioner in matters relating to Land Reform.

The post of the Additional District Magistrate was created in 1944-45 at first with annual sanction. The Deputy Commissioner with his multifarious executive works hardly found sufficient time to devote to case works. Along with the growth of population as well as the increase in the government activities in different fronts, the need for an Additional District Magistrate was acutely felt. Besides carrying out all executive works in the absence of the Deputy Commissioner, the A.D.M. disposes cases under the *Return and Wages Act, Minimum Wages Act,* cases under the *Workmen Compensations Act,* Partition cases and Revenue appeals and Encroachment cases, etc.

The Deputy Commissioner, besides exercising a thorough supervision on all units of the administration, takes up for himself the question of maintenance of Law and Order, Border problems and liaision with the defence services, Welfare Schemes for Tribal and Backward classes including removal of untouchability, supervision over Local Self-Government, issue of

International Passport and Citizenship Registration, general control over Textile, Supply and Procurement, and implementation of Housing Schemes, etc.

As regards administration of Prohibition Laws in respect of Opium and Ganja it may be stated that prior to July 1961 a special Excise Branch was working under direct control and supervision of the Deputy Commissioner of Excise, Assam, Gauhati. But in pursuance of some recommendations of the Estimate Committee, there has been a reorganisation of the Excise Department in consequence of which the Special Branch was amalgamated with the District branch since July, 1961. This amalgamated branch is now working under the supervision of the Deputy Commissioner of the District. Owing to the operation of Prohibition laws and combined efforts of the Opium Prohibition Committee under the Honorary Prohibition Commissioner and the Excise Officers of the Department, the number of addicts are expected to be very low. It seems that the opium habit has not been completely eradicated from society. During the last year there had been a statewide survey of opium addicts under the supervision of a responsible officer like the Deputy Superintendent of Excise with the aim of opening new treatment centres for the addicts and also to find out ways and means to check the activities of the smugglers.

There are reasons to believe that the number of smokers of *ganja* and *bhang* has come down due to the Prohibition Laws. The detection of offences under the *ganja* and *bhang* prohibition Act is increasing. Wild *bhang* and Hill Ganja (Manipuri *ganja* and Naga *ganja*) are believed to be smuggled from the neighbouring areas like Manipur, Naga Hills, etc. But, it is hoped that with the co-operation of the public this will be driven out in near future. The number of opium and *ganja* cases detected during the last three years are given below:

	1959-60	1960-61	1961-62
Opium	66	45	63
Ganja	195	92	139

Besides the executive officers under direct control of the D.C. as stated above, there are a number of other officers to carry out departmental activities either at State, District, Zonal, Divisional or Sub-divisional level with headquarters at Jorhat. The organisational set-up of the departmental offices being quite different from each other, they cannot be put in a single list. As such we have given in an Appendix the designations of the officers

having their jurisdiction over the district and then other officers with varying jurisdictions. Most of these officers are administratively under the control of their respective Heads of Departments and the D.C. maintains a general supervision and acts as a liasion officer in between these departmental officers, if and when necessary.

Sub-Divisional Administration: The Sub-Divisional Administration is patterned after the district administration, and for all executive works of the Sub-divisions, the S.D.O. is directly responsible to the Deputy Commissioner; as such approval of the district authority is required to be obtained for all policy matters and major issues. The S.D.O. presides over all committees or Boards, constituted for the purpose of executing development works under the plan programmes. Revenue, Supply, Excise, Housing, Elections, Development, etc. constitute different branches of the S.D.O.'s office of which he is the executive head.

As in the Sadar Sub-Division, the S.D.O. is helped in his executive works by the Extra Assistant Commissioners numbering four at present in each of the Sub-divisions of Golaghat and Sibsagar.

The officer is helped in revenue matters by the Circle Officers in normal times. During the time of Settlement operation, Circle Officers work usually as Assistant Settlement officers. However, the Sub-Deputy Collectors attached to the S.D.O. are to deal with revenue matters over and above miscellaneous works as and when required. (In Golaghat there is a Sub-Deputy Magistrate having 3rd Class power). In all these Sub-Divisional and Sadar Courts the Police runs the office of the Prosecuting Inspectors who with his subordinate Sub-Inspector attend to the cases instituted on police report.

Detailed information regarding administration of Civil and Criminal Justice may be found in Chapter XII.

APPENDIX

A list of officers at the district and sub-divisional level:

1. District Agricultural Officer, Sibsagar, Jorhat
2. District Veterinary Officer, Sibsagar, Jorhat
3. District Publicity Officer, Sibsagar, Jorhat
4. District Statistical Officer, Sibsagar, Jorhat
5. District Transport Officer, Sibsagar, Jorhat
6. District Medical Officer (C. S.), Sibsagar, Jorhat
7. District Labour Officer, Sibsagar, Jorhat
8. Assisant Director, Cottage Industries, Sibsagar, Jorhat
9. Superintendent of Excise, Sibsagar, Jorhat
10. Settlement Officer, Sibsagar, Jorhat
11. Superintendent of Police, Sibsagar, Jorhat

Other Officers:

1. Executive Engineer (R & B) Jorhat Division
2. Executive Engineer (E & D Investigation)
3. Executive Engineer (E. C. B. C.) Jorhat
4. Executive Engineer (Electrical) Jorhat
5. Executive Engineer (Mechanical) Jorhat
6. Executive Eugineer (P. H.) Jorhat
7. Mychologist, Assam, Jorhat
8. Sugarcane specialist, Assam, Jorhat
9. Agricultural Chemist, Assam, Jorhat
10. Economic Botanist, Assam, Jorhat
11. Superintending Engineer, Jorhat
12. Divisional Forest Officer, Sibsagar Division, Jorhat
13. Joint Director of Agriculture, Eastern Zone, Jorhat
14. Deputy Director of Health Service, Eastern Zone, Jorhat
15. Deputy Director of Supply, Jorhat
16. Inspector of Schools, U. A. C. Jorhat
17. Deputy Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Upper and central Assam Zone, Jorhat
18. Assistant Development Commissioner (C. P.) Eastern Zone, Jorhat
19. Divisional Superintendent, Transport, Jorhat
20. Superintendent of Weaving, Assam, Jorhat
21. Assistant Registrar, Co-op Societies, Jorhat
22. District Social Education Officer, Jorhat
23. Inspector of Housing, Jorhat
24. Deputy Inspector of Schools, Jorhat
25. Assistant Malaria Officer, Jorhat
26. Oil Seed Development Officer, Jorhat
27. Medical Officer, School Health, Jorhat
28. Employment Officer, Jorhat

Most of the district level officers have got their subordinate officers in the other two Sub-divisions of Sibsagar and Golaghat to assist them in the discharge of official duties. Similarly the Divisional & Zonal officers also in most cases have got their subordinate officers to assist them within the jurisdiction of the district.

The State level officers have got subordinate officers in their own offices, but no officer in any other Sub-divisions of their district. These offices are:

1. Office of the Income Tax Department at Jorhat, Sibsagar
2. Office of the Oil & Natural Gas commission, Sibsagar
3. Office of the Department, of Archaeology, Sibsagar
4. Office of the Central Water and Power Commission, Sibsagar
5. Regional Coal Survey Station, Jorhat (Under C.S.I.R.)
6. Regional Research Laboratory, Jorhat (Under C.S.I.R.)
7. Office of the Divisional P & T. Superintendent, Sibsagar Division, Jorhat
8. Office of the Assistant Director (Food), Government of India, Jorhat
9. Offices of the Central Excise and Land Customs Department, Jorhat, Golaghat and Sibsagar
10. Office of the Central P.W.D. Jorhat

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CHAPTER XI

LAND REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

(a) Land Revenue Administration :

(*i*) *History of Land Revenue assessment and management :* The district, for that matter, the State of Assam has a long history of land tenure and assessment. The royal *sasanas* of the pre-Ahom rulers give us some idea about the system of land tenure and classification of land along with the collection of land revenue.[1] The System of land tenure in force under the Ahom Kings was one based on personal service. The Ahom Administration harnessed every adult male in the service of the State either as a labourer or a soldier. He was registered as a *paik*, and four *paiks* (later three paiks) constituted a squad, known as a *got*. The *paiks* had to serve the government in turn, and the normal work of an absentee *paik* in his village had to be performed by his home-keeping comrades. Usually one man out of the four had to be absent from home, sometimes two, and when emergencies came, three men in squad were employed in State service. Thus every male subject of the kingdom acquired some elementary konwledge of the requirements of the State, and when he returned home after his allotted period of service, he became a source of political information in his village. Some amount of civic obligation was fostered by the system of rendering assistance to the normal work of the comrades, absent from their village on State service. The levy of the first man in a squad was called a *mul*, of the second, a *dowal*, and of the third a *tewal*. The *mul* levy, being on active service, the *dowal* and the *tewal* remained ready in their villages for being called upon to report for duty at any time. An elaborate machinery was set up for maintaining a record of the *paiks*, and for filling up vacancies as occasions arose. Twenty *paiks* were placed under an officer known as a Bora, a hundred under a Saikia, and a thousand under a Hazarika. The head of the unit under whom the paiks served was called a Barua ; and sometimes a Phukan, if the unit was of greater importance. Each unit was called a *Khel* ; and the component of a *Khel* considered themselves to be members of one political fraternity.

The *paik* system of the Ahoms obviated the necessity of maintaining a huge army at the headquarters, as the non-serving *paiks* constituted a standing militia which could be mobilised at a short notice by the kheldar working through his subordinate officers. Some preliminary knowledge of his duties, civil or military being implanted in each *paik* by his previous service in the State, he had to undergo a brushing off or a refresher course at his allotted headquarter or the metropolis, combined with intensive training specially needed for the occasion. Only a signal had to be passed on to the Kheldar and the machinery of mobilisation moved on space placing at the disposal of the government the requisite number of men as the occasion demanded. Some subjects enjoyed immunity from personal service if their dis-association from their villages caused dislocation to the normal life of the people. Government had not to resort to formal conscription as the services of the whole body of adult effectives could be commanded in times of emergency.

[1] See P. C. Choudhury, *History of Civilisation of Assam*, Second ed., pp. 277-81.

The *Paiks* were grouped on an occupational and territorial basis. They were attached to the several guilds or *Khels*, namely bow makers, bow shooters, musketeers, gunpowder manufacturers, boat builders, boat repairers, rice suppliers, honey suppliers, gold washers, supervisors of temples, etc. The *Paiks* of a specified area were sometimes placed under a Rajkhowa, who wielded in his jurisdiction all the powers of a Barua or a Phukan.

Classes of land : Land was divided into three broad classes : *basti*, *rupit* and *faringati*.[2] Each *paik* in return for his labour was allowed 8 bighas of *rupit* land in addition to his *basti* land free of rent. He had to pay rupee one annually for the piece of land meant for his house and garden. "Any land taken up in excess of this amount was assessed at 4 annas a *bigha*. In addition to this, each adult *paik* paid a poll tax of one rupee."

When Sibsagar was under the management of Purandar Singh, the poll tax was raised to Rs. 3, but on the resumption of his territories in 1838 by the Company, the district was measured up and the revenue assessed upon the land itself and not upon its occupants. The revenue at first was assessed at 4 annas per *bigha* for *rupit*, or land growing transplated rice, and 2 annas a *bigha* on all other kinds of land. In 1844, the revenue on *rupit* was raised by one anna a *bigha* and in 1849 the rate on other land was raised to 3 annas 6 pies, but this enhancement was accompanied by a measure of concession to the gentry of the district. It is held that the upper and the

[2] In the five upper districts of the Brahmaputra valley, the soil was divided into three main classes—*basti, rupit* and *faringati. Basti* was the land on which the rayat's house stood with garden enclosures around it. *Rupit* was the land on which the winter crop of transplanted rice (*Sali*) was grown, as well as the low swampy land devoted to this cultivation of *bao*. The term *faringati* denoted the higher and tighter soils which produced *ahu* or summer rice, sugarcane, mustard oid seed and other crops : *Final Reports of the All India Soil Survey Scheme—The Indian Council of Agricultural Research*, 1958, pp. 56-57.

middle classes amongst the Assamese did not suffer much from the abolition by the new Government of the personal services and other privileges hitherto enjoyed by them as they were now to enjoy certain concessions. "Persons who paid Rs. 20/- or more in revenue were assessed at only half the usual rates, and people paying anything between Rs. 20- and Rs. 10/- were assessed at Rs. 10/- only"[3] But they had reasons for other genuine grievances.

Lieutenant Colonel Hopkinson, the Commissioner of Assam, proposed in 1865 to discriminate between *basti* or garden and other land and to raise the *bigha* rates to Rs. 1/- per *basti*, 10 annas for *rupit* and 8 annas for other land. Hopkinson considered the existing assessment as very low. The new assessment was given effect to in 1868-69 and in spite of the enormous enchancement and protests from the ryots in some places the revenue was collected even at the harassment of the people.

The next settlement made in 1893, retained the three-fold division of land, and for the purpose of new assessment, the villages were divided into four grades, the rate of revenue imposed having been different with the varied grades. The villages were placed under different grades by the Director of Land Records and Agriculture on the principle of the demand for land, and not on other considerations like value of the produce, the fertility of the soil, or the profits of cultivation. The survey, as admitted by the British officials here, was based on inaccurate data and information, and hence the assessment was not justified. "The theory on which the settlement was based was that worst lands were capable of bearing the assessment imposed and that Government alone was a loser by its inequalities." The arguments advanced by the authorities in support of the new measure of assessment were of no avail. It was considered, and rightly so, to be high-handed by the people, and there were several agrarian outbreaks in Kamrup and Darrang not without some repercussions in Sibsagar.

The next Sibsagar settlement was carried out in 1902-06 mainly by Mr. L. J. Kershaw, I.C.S. (afterwards Sir Louis Kershaw), and completed by Mr. S. G. Hart, I.C.S. The classification of lands this time was considered as scientific and simple. The survey was made by the Settlement Officer and the new assessment was based on what was called soil unit of a varying nature. In every *bigha* of first class homestead land as many as 24 soil units were found and in every *bigha* of badly flooded land there were only 4, and the rate of revenue for a first class homestead land was assessed at six times the revenue of a badly flooded land in a village. A detailed enquiry was made into the specific nature of the land including the opinion of the cultivators before the new assessment was brought into being.

"The general condition of the inhabitants, the prices they could obtain for their produce, and the facilities for trade which they enjoyed, were the

[3] B. C. Allen, *Asssam District Gazetteers, Sibsagar*, p. 200.

principal factors taken into consideration when determining the value to be assigned to the soil unit of the village."[4] In Executive Instructions (118-122) of the *Assam Resettlement Manual*, there is a detailed description of the soil-unit and how to determine it and of the unit rate.

This settlement divided the land of the District into 13 different classes. Homestead or *bari*, was classified into three grades; good (*bhal bari*) average (*bari*), and poor (*takala bari*). Land fit for the growth of transplanted rice (*rupit*) was placed under four main heads: *Carpara* or land enriched by natural manure; *alatiya* or clay loam; *balicahiya* or sandy land, and *jalatak* or land liable to flood. Each of these four classes was subdivided into *da* or low and *bam* or high land. Except in the flooded area, *da* land is naturally the more valuable of the two. Two other classes were *cecukiya* or shaded lands and *faringati* which included all land, and which was neither *bari* nor *rupit*.

The following is the statement showing number of soil units under each class of land:

Bhal Bari	*Bari*	*Takala Bari*	*Carpara*		*Alatiya*		*Balicahiya*		*Jalatak*		*Cecukiya*	*Faringati*
			Da	*Bam*	*Da*	*Bam*	*Da*	*Bam*	*Da*	*Bam*		
24	18	9	21	13	16	9	12	7	4	12	6	6

For the fluctuating area, consisting of the Majuli and some of the low-lying areas along the south bank of the Brahmaputra, the old classification of *basti*, *rupit* and *faringati* was retained. The area brought under classification and settled was 1,357,373 *bighas* in the established groups and 131,026 *bighas* in the fluctuating groups. The Sibsagar district had not suffered severely from kala-azar or from the results of the earthquakes; it was felt that the rise in prices, improvement in communications and enhanced value of land justified a moderate increase in the land revenue. The *kheraj* revenue was increased from Rs. 12,06,732 to Rs. 12,81,004 or by Rs. 74,542 or 6·15 per cent. *Nisf-kheraj* lands are much less important in Sibsagar than in Kamrup; their assessment was raised from Rs. 3,392 to Rs. 5,804 or by 71 per cent. mainly by the assessment at cultivation rates of land hitherto held as waste at nominal rates. The settlement was for 20 years, from 1st April 1905 in the case of Golaghat and Jorhat Sub-Divisions and from 1st April 1906 in the case of Sibsagar. As in Kamrup it was ordered that land taken up after the Settlement Officer left the district should be settled at a low rate but be liable to re-classification in the 11th year of the settlement period.

[4] *Ibid*, pp. 203-04.

The settlement of 1923-28 was carried out by Mr. C. K. Rhodes, I.C.S. No change was made in the simple and suitable classification of lands adopted in the settlement of 1902-06. The total Kheraj area classed and settled amounted to 2,019,207 *bighas*. The revenue was increased from Rs. 17,00,785 to Rs. 20,34,462 or by 19.62 per cent, the average incidence per settled *bigha* being increased from 13·5 annas to 16·8 annas. The deferred enhancement rules were applied as in Kamrup, with the result that Government surrendered annually during the first five years of the settlement period about Rs. 43,000, and in the second five years Rs. 14,000. The rate of revenue on *kheraj* land held for special cultivation was raised from 10 to 12 annas per *bigha* and the revenue rose from Rs. 1,36,976 to Rs. 1,64,372 giving an enhancement of Rs. 27,396. The settlement was for 30 years (except in Barpathar mauza and some towns) and started from 1st April 1927 in case of Golaghat and Jorhat Sub-divisions and from 1st April 1928 in case of Sibsagar Sub-division. Barpathar mauza (now split up into Sarupathar and Barpathar since 1933) and some minor towns, viz. Barpathar, Furkating and Dergaon, in view of special circumstances of the areas, were settled for 15 years from 1st April 1927. After expiry of the 15 years, the term of settlement of these areas again extended until 1951 when they were brought under immature area resettlement, involving revision of assessment. The term of this immature area settlement expired concurrently with the term of district settlement. The town lands were also re-assessed; owing to the fact that no change in rates in the towns had been made since 1893, the enhancement was heavy, from 18,158 to Rs. 59,945 and special orders to secure graduated enhancements were passed.

Nature and kinds of land tenure: The Zamindary system of settlement was never prevalent in the district. The system of land tenure as it prevails in the district is *Ryotwari* where each individual holder of the land is made directly responsible for the payment of land revenue. Under this system land is settled either for special cultivation or for ordinary cultivation. All the lands, settled for special cultivation are in the hands of actual users (tea planters) who often hold fee-simple and other grants, while the lands settled for ordinary cultivation are held directly under the state under three different systems, *Lakheraj, Nisf-kheraj,* and *kheraj* (periodic *kheraj* and annual *kheraj*). Lakheraj means revenue free estate, granted by the Ahom rulers for religious, charitable or other purposes and which were confirmed by the Special Commission set up under Bengal Regulation II of 1828 to enquire into the validity of such grants. *Nisf-kheraj* or half-revenue-paying estate, as distinguished from *kheraj* or full revenue-paying estate, forms a special class of tenure which is to be found only in Assam. The *Nisf-Kherajdars* are generally the managers of a temple or the highest priest (Gossain) of some religious institution or might be the *paik* performing

special duties in a temple. During the earlier part of the British rule in Assam, there was a confusion regarding the revenue assessment of *Nisf-kheraj* estates. The *Nisf-kherajdars* claimed full exemption of revenue on the ground that the lands were granted to them by the Assamese rulers for some religious or charitable purposes or for extra-ordinary work of their ancestors as officials under the Ahom regime. To clear up the anomalies, created by the landed interests during the first decade of the British rule in Assam regarding assessment under *Lakheraj* and *Nisf-kheraj* tenures, a decree was passed by the Government in 1871 when the term *Nisf-kheraj* was invented for all estates paying half the ordinary revenue rate in order to avoid the confusion caused by the use of the term *Lakheraj* which had beed applied to them prior to that date. The holders of *kheraj* land are given settlement extending for a term of years at a time (periodic *kheraj*) or from year to year (annual *kheraj*). Kheraj land under periodic lease carries with it a permanent, inheritable and transferable right, subject to the payment of land revenue and local rate, as fixed at the successive re-settlements, and to all intents and purposes, is a permanent piece of property of the holder. Annual lease, on the other hand, confers no right on the soil beyond the right of use for the year for which it is given, though the lease is normally renewed except in cases where the Government requires the land for some public porpose. Annual lease is granted mostly in fluctuating areas where uninterrupted retention of land is not customary or in other places where there is no established occupancy or permanent demarcation.

In the *Lakheraj* and larger *Nisf-kheraj* estates, owned chiefly by religious monasteries and priests, the practice of sub-letting lands to tenants is wide-spread, the common procedure being to charge Government rates of revenue wherefrom the landlord keeps for himself the entire or part of the revenue which he has not to pay to Government. The Rural Economic Survey conducted by the *Department of Economics and Statistics,* Government of Assam, in 1947, revealed that out of 35 sample villages in Sibsagar one Assamese and one Miri village were found to be comprised entirely of *Lakheraj* lands (owned by the Satradhikar of Aunniati satra,) where excepting for the total area of village land no other details of land utilisation were available. *Nisf-kheraj* land tenure system was also found in two villages, both belonging to Assamese village group. Generally, *Lakheraj* and *Nisf-kheraj* estates were found to be located in convenient and established villages and contained some high grade *rupit* and *basti* lands which had been held by the tenants for generations together. These tenants were very seldom disturbed in their possessions and, therefore, might be regarded as occupancy right holders so far as their interest in the cultivation of land was concerned.

The same survey revealed that sub-letting was practised by the holder of the *Kheraj* land although in many cases only temporarily. Actual figures of the practice of subletting was difficult to obtain, as some of the landlords

appeared to have a conscious motive for suppressing the existence of sub-tenancy in their lands under the apprehension that entries of such figures in the records might lead them to trouble over their occupancy rights. An attempt was, however, made at the time of enquiry to collect information on the number of tenants and the amount of land rented by them, and it was found that in the sample as a whole, 8,701·5 *bighas* of land were sub-let out of 43,290·3 *bighas* under different systems of settlement. This constituted about 20·1 per cent. How much of this was accounted for by *Lakheraj* and *Nisf-kheraj* lands was not known. But, assuming that the entire area under these two categories was sub-let, the percentage of sub-let area in the *kheraj* land came out as 11·2. This might be compared with district percentage of sub-let *kheraj* land during the last resettlement which was only 2·76 per cent. Thus, the Report remarks, sub-tenancy in the district was gathering strength. As a rule, whenever the holder of the *kheraj* land happens to be averse to, or inexperienced in, cultivation or confines his interest to the land only to draw the utmost rent (either cash or kind), the practice of letting the whole or part thereof to tenant cultivation is resorted to. Besides, in good *Lakheraj* and *Nisf-kheraj* estates a process of sub-infeudation has developed. If the economic rent of the land tends to leave a marginal profit over the fixed Government land revenue and other outlays, then intermediaries spring up between the right holder and the actual cultivators. These intermediaries as also the non-cultivating rightholders have constituted a class of parasitic and functionless landlord in agricultural economy. Of 2,350 families holding land, it was found that 192 families belong to the essentially non-cultivating class whose sole interest in the land consists of receiving rents from tenants.

Fee simple Rules : The first Fee simple Rules were those issued by Lord Canning in October 1861. The Secretary of State took objection to some of their provisions and a fresh set of rules was issued on the 30th August 1862. The rules issued by Lord Canning provided for the disposal of the land to the applicant at fixed rates ranging from Rs. 2·8/- Rs. 5/- per acre. The rules of August 1862 provided that the lot should be put up to auction, grants were to be limited, except under special circumstances, to an area of 3,000 acres. In each case the grant was ordinarily to be compact, including no more than one tract of land in ring fence. The upset price was to be not less than Rs. 2·50/- an acre, and in exceptional localities it might be as high as Rs. 10. Provision was made for the survey of lands previous to sale and for the demarcation of proper boundaries where applicants for unserveyed lands were, for the protection of proprietory or occupancy rights in the lands applied for. The purchase money was to be paid either at one or by instalments. In the latter case, a portion of the purchase money not less than 10 per cent was to be paid at the time of sale, and the

balance within ten years of that date, with interest at 10 per cent per annum on the portion remaining unpaid. Default of payment of interest or purchase money rendered the grant liable to re-sale. These rules were in force until August 1872, when the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal stopped further grants under them pending revision of rules.

Revised Fee-simple Rules were issued in February 1874, just before the constitution of the province as a separate Administration, which raised the upset price of land sold to Rs. 8 per acre and made more careful provision for accurate identification of the land and for the consideration of existing rights and claims before its disposal. These rules continued in force until April 1876. In 1876 new rules were issued under which the land was leased for 30 years at progressive rate and prior to its advertisement in the Gazettee, at an upset price of Re. 1 per acre under the provisions of Act XXIII of 1863. When the *Land Revenue Regulation* was passed, these rules were revised and re-issued under sections 12 and 29 as section I of the Settlement Rules. (i) They have remained in force until recently, but the extent of their application has been progressively restricted with the extension of cultivation in the province. In Cachar, these leases were not popular owing to the more immediately favourable nature of the *jangal bari* leases under which land required for special cultivation was allowed to be taken up ; and the rapid disappearance of waste land as defined in the rules i.e. land of such a character or in such a position that it is not likely to be taken up for the cultivation of the ordinary staples of the country within a reasonable time led to the withdrawal of the offer of leases on such favourable terms and for some years past no leases under the 30 year rules have been issued. Land required for special cultivation has been taken up under other Sections of the Settlement Rules i.e., under terms very similar to those under which land is settled for ordinary cultivation. The term of all 30 years leases which expired, has been extended on a slightly increased rate of revenue to 1932, in which year they will all be due for resettlement.[5]

The fee-simple lands and other lands held at concessional rates of revenue have since been assessed to full-revenue under the *Assam Assessment of Revenue free Waste Land Grant Act* of 1948. Under this Act such lands are assessable to full rates of revenue which, however, should not exceed the rates prevalent for similar classes of land in the neighbourhood. This Act has done away with the favoured treatment so long enjoyed by certain classes of lands under special cultivation.

(ii) *Present system of survey, assessment and collection of land revenue :* The unsurveyed villages are at first traversed by the theodolite and the internal detailed survey is made on the polygons by chain survey.

[5] *Assam Land Revenue Manual.*

These maps are generally prepared in the scale of 16 inches to a mile in case of villages and in the scale of 32 inches to a mile in those of urban areas.

Generally the lands are assessed under the district classification scheme, except in case of lands, held for special cultivation, which are now usually assessed at a single flat rate for the whole estate. The method of assessment under the district classification scheme is based on the soil unit system. The relative value of different classes of land means and includes relative productiveness of the different classes of land as determined by taking 16 to represent the ordinary type of average class of rice land and giving to other classes of lands figures above or below according as they are more or less productive than this average class. These figures are called soil factors.

In a process of re-assessment the incidence of pressure of the existing assessment per unit of land in a particular village or area is first determined and the same is raised or lowered according to the circumstances to a limited extent and this new incidence, is the 'Unit Rate' or in other wrods the incidence of pressure of the proposed assessment per unit of soil.

The unit of assessment is the village. The assessment depends upon the economic condition of the people, the trend of prices, the rates of rent paid by the tenants, the effect of improvement in communication, the effect of the changes in population, etc.

At present land revenue is collected by the Mauzadars who work as Government agents on commission basis except in case of direct paying estates whose proprietors deposit the revenue direct into the Treasury. The Mauzadars get a commission of 15 per cent upto a collecttion of Rs. 15,000, beyond which they get a commission of 10 per cent upto Rs. 40,000, above which they get a commission of 5 per cent.

Besides the Mauzadari system, Tahsil system was also introduced for some time in Morabazar, Godhulibazar, Majuli and Teok Mauzas. But at present only the former system is prevalent all over the district.

The last settlement operation was started in 1957. This as usual, includes; (a) map revision (survey and demarcation), (b) preliminary record writing and field classifications (c) record attestation, (d) submission of assessment report, (e) revenue attestation, and (f) offer of settlement. The final publication of the resettlement figures seems to have revealed that large areas of fallow lands, found during the last resettlement have come under occupation and the use of lands has been gradually intensified resulting in the upgrading of classes. Homestead sites have also increased in number. Trade, communication, education, marketing facilities have been extended to the remotest parts. Agricultural produces have had easy access to markets, resulting in increase of bargaining power of the producer. An important feature of the said re-settlement is the addition of two more classes i.e.

special *faringati* and *bepararthai* (rural trade site) in case of the established groups and extension of the provisions of classes special *faringati, dajalatak* and *Bao* in the fluctuating groups hitherto limited only to 3 classes. The overall position presents a picture of gradual development and upgrading of lands. The new assessment shows a substantial increase in revenue over the existing area.

Revenue Officers: The Deputy Commissioner is also the Collector and is at the apex of the Revenue administration in the district. The Sub-Divisional Officers in their respective Sub-divisions are also Collectors having concurrent powers with the Deputy Commissioner. The Extra Assistant Commissioners are also Revenue Officers. All orders passed by the Subdivisional officers under the Assam Land & Revenue Regulation are appealable to the Deputy Commissioner. All these officers have other miscellaneous functions besides collection of revenue.

Every Sub-division is divided into a number of Revenue Circles, each under a Sub-Deputy Collector. He is in charge of the land records of the Circle and works under the control of the Deputy Commissioner in the Sadar Subdivision and under the Subdivisional officer in the outlying Subdivisions. He is the Assistant Settlement Officer and Assistant Survey Officer as well. Every Circle consists of a number of mauzas, each mauza being divided into a number of lots. Each lot remains in charge of a Mandal. Each Circle also contains two or more Sub-circles which remain in charge of supervisor Kanungos. The S. K. supervises the works of Mandals within his sub-circle and submits settlement demands, crop abstracts, area abstracts, etc., of the Sub-circle.

Revenue Courts: The Courts of Sub-Deputy Collectors exercising the powers of Assistant Settlement officers, Extra Assistant Commissioners, Sub-Divisional Officers and Deputy Commissioner are called Revenue Courts in so far as they deal with revenue matters. The proceedings of these Courts are conducted according to the procedure laid down in the *Assam Land and Revenue Regulation and Civil Procedure Code.* These Courts deal with the registration of names of settlement holders in respect of land acquired by transfer, inheritance, etc. All Revenue Officers, however, exercise their powers under the control of the Deputy Commissioner who is the Chief revenue authority in the district, and subject to the general control of the Deputy Commissioner all revenue officers, other than the Subdivisional officers in a Subdivision of a district are Subordinate to the Subdivisional officers.

Maintenance of Land records: The Records-of-Rights are maintained in *jamabandi* based on *chitha* and field map. The *chitha* is the field

catalogue being maintainned by the recorders up-to-date and is copied periodically by them. Besides the names of the settlement-holders and the areas held by them, the *chitha* keeps records of the various crops grown in each plot, year by year. This forms the basis of agricultural statistics. The entries in the *chitha* are made up-to-date by recorders by incorporating changes ordered by the Revenue Officers in accordance with the rules.

The *jamabandi* is the Record of Rights prepared on the basis of the *chitha* and the field map as stated above. Separate *jambandis* are prepared for (a) periodic *pattas* and (b) annual *pattas*, the former at regular intervals and the latter annually. In addition, there are separate *jamabandis* for special tenures, such as *Lakheraj* and *Nisf-kheraj*. The *jamabandis* are prepared in duplicate, called local periodic *jamabandi* which is kept with the Recorder and *jamabandi* Register which is kept in the district and Sub-divisional head-quarters. The *jamabandi* Register is maintained and kept up-to-date by the Registrar-Kanungo with necessary annual corrections, as ordered by competent authority from time to time, and the Recorders also incorporate such corrections in the local periodic *jamabandi*, kept by them for reference annually.

(iii) *Income from land Revenue :* The district contributes yearly a good amount of money as land revenue to the State exchequer.

The following statement will show the annual land revenue (in rupees) during the period ranging from 1948-49 to 1958-59 :

1948-49	...	28,63,239
1949-50	...	28,06,592
1950-51	...	28,92,375
1951-52	...	28,14,159
1952-53	...	31,53,361
1953-54	...	29,27,078
1954-55	...	28,43,443
1955-56	...	32,52,593
1956-57	...	17,55,612
1957-58	...	17,33,540
1958-59	...	37,86,418

(b) Land Reforms :

So far as land reform is concerned there is nothing of particular interest in the distrct. But as the general policy of the State Government is followed in all the districts, we may state here the salient features of that policy.

(i) Soon after India became independent it was recognised that land reforms and agrarian reorganisation were essential for the proper development of the country. In the wake of this realisation, the Planning

Commission enunciated two broad principles by which it sought to abolish Zamindars or intermediaries and to establish agrarian reorganisation. The former was recommended with a view to securing the fixity of tenure and transferring the ownership to actual tillers and the latter for consolidation of holdings and land management practices and for development of co-operative farming and village management. The State Government had accepted these principles and for their implementation passed different legislations since 1948. They are (I) *The Assam Adhiar Protection and Regulation Act,* 1948 : Act XII of 1948 as subsequently amended; (II) The *Assam State Acquisition of Zamindars Act* 1951 : Act XVIII of 1951 as subsequently amended; (III) *The Assam (Temporarily Settled Districts)* Tenancy Act, 1935 as amended by the Act I of 1943 and Act XXVIII of 1953; (Iv) *The Assam Fixation of Ceilings on Land Holdings Act* 1956 : Act I of 1957 as amended by Act XVII of 1957; Act XXVII of 1960 and Act XX of 1962; (V) *The Assam State Acquisition of Lands beloging to Religious or Charitable Institution of Public Nature Act* 1959: Act IX of 1961 and also the *Assam Consolidation of Holdings Act,* 1960 (Assam Act XIX of 1961.)

The Government also wanted to convert the annual *pattas* into periodic as early as possible. The annual *pattas* have two main drawbacks: (I) They being unable to confer any right of transfer, the owners of land cannot generally procure loans by hypothecating annual *patta* lands; and (II) the *pattas* being liable to cancellation on serving of non-renewal notice, the tenure is insecure. For this the Government laid down certain conditions, which, when fulfilled, would make conversion easier. The conditions were: (I) the land should be demarcated and actually surveyed and it should be demarcated and situated in such village which had been traversed, surveyed, maped and classed; (II) the land should be actually cultivated with some permanent crops, such as *sali* paddy; and (III) a premium at the rate of Rs. 5/- per *bigha* should be paid. The Government decided that premium might be paid in 5 equal annual instalments and the lands should be converted into periodic on payment of the first instalment. It also decided that no annual *patta* should be cancelled without prior approval of the Government. The latter also waived their right to cancel an annual *patta* and to renew it automatically in those cases in which the land had been pledged on mortgage either to the Government or to a State sponsored Co-operative Society which had been formed for the purpose of removing rural indebtedness or establishing cottage industries or providing loans to low income groups and to other beneficial purposes.

Together with the reform of annual *patta* lands, the Government also made their policy known in respect of (1) Reserve Forests; (2) Professional Grazing Reserve; and (3) Village Grazing Grounds. The area under Reserve Forest was short of International standard and deforesta-

tion was likely to affect rainfall and climate, adversely causing drought, flood and soil erosion on both agriculture and food production. The Government, therefore, decided not to reduce the area under Reserve Forest any further. The area under Professional Grazing Reserve was also considered insufficient for the maintenance of the total number of cattle and buffaloes, kept by the professional graziers. The habit of stall feeding was yet to gain popularity among them. So, it was decided not to further reduce the area under this head except in very exceptional circumstances. In the matter of Village Grazing Grounds, it was proposed to take up scientific fodder cultivation through the Government Departments, village panchayats or any other suitable organisation. Only after implementation of this policy Government would consider whether there remains any surplus area fit for settlement to cultivator and others. The Government also decided to deal with organised encroachers firmly.

Yet another important decision the Government took was in respect of future settlement of land. The available surplus of cultivable land being insufficient to meet the individual demand of the agriculturists, future settlement was sought to be made as far as possible with farmers' co-operatives. When the settlement to individuals is to be made, a sort of preferential procedure is to be followed and the area allotted to an individual should range from 8 to 12 *bighas* according to fertility of the soil. The settlement holders who have been rendered landless by flood, river-erosion or earthquake and whose lands have been requisitioned or acquisitioned by the Government for public purpose would get first preference in future settlement of land. The second preference would go to landless cultivators and displaced persons. The third preference would go to settlement holders who have been rendered landless by river erosion but who occupy Reserve land with the permission of the Deputy Commissioner. Such occupants shall not be removed until alternative land can be provided.

The Government also decided to take steps to reclaim whatever area be available by means of irrigation, drainage, embankment, etc. Surplus waste lands of tea gardens which can be distributed among cultivators without jeopardizing the tea industry must not remain as such but should go to needy people. It also decided that in the matter of land settlement a committee should advise the local officials, but the decisions of this committee must be taken quickly so that lands do not remain unallotted for a long time. If the committee delays matters the Government may dissolve that committee and reconstitute a new one.

(*ii*) *Rural wages and the conditions of agricultural labour:* The daily wages of agricultural labourers vary considerably and they are far from satisfactory. It is hoped that with the implementation of the *Adhiar Act*,

Tenancy Act and the *Ceiling Act*, the condition of agricultural labourers will improve.

The number of agricultural labour is large where there are large land-holdings. Their condition is always uncertain, as their lot depends on the mercy of the landlords, and they have no protection. In some locality the agricultural labourers are given the share of the crops, in others they work on wage basis. There is surplus manpower almost in every village and these surplus hands are generally engaged as agricultural labourers.

The Government of Assam has fixed the minimum wage under the *Minimum Wages Act*, 1948. Such wages may either be in cash or in kind. Mostly rural wages are governed by the forces of demand and supply.

(c) Administration of other sources of revenue : Central and State :

Among the State Government taxes, special mention may be made of (1) Assam Sales Taxes, (2) Motor Spirit and Lubricant Taxes, (3) Amusement and Betting Taxes, (4) Finance Taxes, (5) Professional Taxes, (6) Taxation on goods carried by roads or inland waterways. A table showing the amount of revenue receipts from the said sources appears at the end of the chapter. Administration of these taxes is made by Superintendents of Taxes whose offices are situated at the three sub-divisional headquarters of the district. In administration, the Superintendents are helped mainly by the Inspectors of taxes. The following table will show the amount collected in the year 1958-59 at the three sub-divisional headquarters under different heads :

	Jorhat	Golaghat	Sibsagar
1. Taxation on good earried by roads on inland water ways	Rs 22,38,898.88	Rs 18,62,639.00	Rs 27,21,270.47
2. Assam Sales Tax	Rs 12,92,055.00	Rs 2,50,764.00	Rs 2,66,224.06
3. Motor spirit and lubricant tax	Rs 10,67,414.00	Rs 33,274.00	Rs 88.06 (lubricant only)
4. Amusement & Betting tax.	Rs 1,58,811.00	Rs 65,397.00	Rs 79,879.66
5. Finance Tax	Rs 1,08,792.00	Rs 25,020,00	Rs 30,831.58
6. Professional Tax	Rs 1,02,850.00	Rs 35 859,00	Rs 53,622.00
7. Central Sales Tax	Rs 15,158.00	Rs 4,360.00	Rs —

From this district accrues to the Central Exchequer a good amount of money by way of Income Tax, Gift Tax, Wealth Tax, Expenditure Tax, Central Excise and Land Customs duties. Besides, both in tea and oil, the District contributes considerable amount to the Central revenue receipts. For realization of these taxes and duties, there are offices of the Income tax

officer at Jorhat and Sibsagar and offices of the Superintendents of Central Excise and Land Customs at Jorhat, Golaghat and Sibsagar.

The Central Excise administration was started in Assam in 1944 and the Jorhat Circle then comprised some of the tea gardens of Sibsagar and Golaghat sub-divisions. Subsequently on re-organisation, the present Circle with its jurisdiction over Jorhat Subdivision only, came into being. This Circle has been divided into three ranges, each range being under one Deputy Superintendent. The ranges have again been subdivided into sectors, each sector being placed under an Inspector. There are altogether 18 sectors in this Circle. Besides, there is one Inland Land Customs Station at Nimati under this Circle which is managed by three Inspectors and one Sub-Inspector under the direct supervision of the Superintendent. There are two P.Is in this Circle whose main duty is to prevent smuggling and to collect intelligence.

Upto 1959 the Circle at Sibsagar comprised the whole of the Subdivision and was placed in charge of a Superintendent with one Deputy Superintendent and 24 T.F. ranges. Since May 1958, the Circle has been re-organised and three M.O. Ranges have been created and placed under charge of Deputy Superintendents. Each range here has six sectors. With effect from 1.2.59 the Tingkong area of Lakhimpur district has been placed under this Circle.

The Golaghat Circle came into existence in 1949 but its jurisdiction has changed from time to time. At present this Circle comprises the whole of the Golaghat Sub-division and a portion of Mikir and North Cachar Hills district lying to the north of North East Frontier Railway line between Lumding and Naojan Railway Stations.

Table showing Revenue collected from the district under different heads from 1950-51 to 1957-58.

Year	*Excise*	*Amusement & Betting Tax*	*Motor spirit & Lubricant Tax*	*Sales Tax*	*Professional Tax*	*Agricultural Income Tax*	*Registration Fees*
1950-51	19,03,906	1,22,058	2,97,354	6,81,966	43,730	23,58,986	22,353
1951-52	26,65,398	1,63,197	3,62,956	9,49,428	39,517	16,03,557	38,412
1952-53	28,15,527	1,42,007	2,66,979	10,04,737	39,727	25,10,310	45,071
1953-54	31,24,091	1,45,481	3,14,356	13,32,018	55,220	13,05,240	44,072
1954-55	49,07,197	1,70,837	2,87,833	13,65,236	73,145	24,28,014	49,076
1955-56	60,83,420	2,11,181	3,49,545	21,25,365	1,57,224	35,82,954	45,058
1956-57	56,40,609	2,49,828	5,94,460	22,41,231	1,48,077	41,09,949	60,808
1957-58	No information	2,62,838	4,04,138	27,36,906	1,63,356	45,18,847	—

CHAPTER XII

LAW ORDER AND JUSTICE

(a) Incidence of Crime :

Severity of panalties kept the incidence of crime very low during the rule of the Ahoms. Crimes were few in this district during the early days of the British regime also. Migration of people did not take place at a scale as it has been in recent times, and crimes against property were practically nil. With the turn of the century the picture began changing and since about 1930-31 the population began to grow much more rapidly than before, and an element of heterogeneity was also introduced into it. People with doubtful antecedents migrated into the urban areas, seemingly for better prospects. Commensurate with this rise in population there was also a rise in the incidence of crimes. Other factors that have been responsible for the increase in the incidence of crimes are: (1) urbanization and industrialization, as a result of which there was a break in the traditional modes of peaceful life and a lowering of moral conscience leading to crimes; (2) rising standard of living which brings frustration to those who have less income to cope with the situation ; (3) growing unemployment which offers the unemployed an opportunity to commit crimes and (4) better reporting of cases. In all 2,675 crimes were committed in 1957 ; 2,757 in 1958 and 2,819 in 1959 in the district.

Administration of law and order in the district was made difficult also by such factors as labour unrest, strained agrarian relations, growth of the student population with a high degree of political consciousness not without some amount of indiscipline and clashes and factions created by political parties. It may be remembered that Sibsagar was the vortex of a serious communistic agitation during the decade after independence that called for strong police action to suppress it.

(*i*) *Varieties of Crimes :* Crime in general includes all cognizable cases reported to police stations. The various crimes against property occurring in this district are : (1) burglary, (2) dacoity, (3) robbery, (4) theft and (5) cases under Section 411 of Indian Penal Code.

Most of the burglaries are committed by the local criminals of the district. Their modus operandi is either to dig a *sindhi* (hole) or to open the doors and then to enter the house. The burglars generally prefer cash, ornament, utensil and cloth. In recent years there has been a decline in

burglary cases. This is due to many reasons, such as better investigation and supervision of cases, help rendered by Village Defence Parties in detecting criminals, checking of foreigners and strangers, better vigilance on bad characters, and suspects, and extensive and intensive police and V.D.P. patrols in crime centres. Even so, in 1957 such cases were 630; in 1958, 601 ; and in 1959, 592.

Dacoity is treated as an act of severe crime against property. In recent times such crime has been committed by the Naga hostiles from the adjoining area. In 1957 there were 87 dacoities of which 47 were committed by Naga hostiles. In 1958 total dacoities stood at 67, and Naga dacoities at 9 and in 1959 the same were respectively 53 and 14. Naga dacoits equipped with arms loot not only property but also arms and ammunitions and oftentimes endanger human lives. These dacoities have political significance behind them. However, such cases are on the decline now as a result of rounding up of several rebel Nagas and tightening up of security measures along Naga Hills-Sibsagar border and to some extent due to peaceful negotiations carried on between the Government and the hostiles. Other dacoities are committed by different gangs coming from both inside and outside the district.

Robbery is another crime, often unorganized and committed by individuals and particular gangs. The pedestrians on the road are generally robbed of money, bicycle, wrist-watch, etc. The total number of such cases in 1957, '58 and '59 was respectively 21, 22 and 24. But they are now on the increase. The police are taking all necessary steps to check this crime.

In 1957 the total number of theft cases was 608 ; in 1958, 645 ; and in 1959, 711. But these figures should not give cause for much anxiety as these crimes are of ordinary nature. Though such cases have gone on increasing due to the influx of foreigners and outsiders, effective steps are being taken to bring the culprits to book by means of careful investigation and adoption of preventive measures.

In 1957 cases registered under Section 411 I.P.C. numbered 27; but in 1958 the number fell to 24 only to rise again to 49 in 1959. The police have been successful in recovering most of the lost properties from the culprits involved and to bring them to book.

In 1957 there were 13 of sex crime ; in 1958, 27 and 1959, 35. They relate to kidnapping of minor girls and abduction of other women for marriage purposes.

There have been cases of smuggling of contraband opium and illicit liquor. Case of this nature are detected both by police and the personnel of the State Excise Department. They jointly conduct raids and bring the culprits to book. Such cases in 1957 were 45 ; in 1958, 32 ; and in 1959, 47.

There had been several cases of border raids since 1956 and most of them were committed by Naga hostiles.

In 1957 the number of rioting cases were 67; in 1958, 85; and 1959, 81. Land dispute and labour unrest in tea gardens are two kinds of rioting. The increase in number of rioting cases in 1959 was due to communal and other disturbances.

Murder is another serious crime, committed in the district. In 1957 there were 53 such cases; in 1958 also 53, and in 1959, 51. Murder is generally committed on account of disputes over a woman or landed property or due to intoxication. Some murders are also committed on grave provocation or for some kind of gain. The incidence of such crime is prevalent generally among tribal people and tea garden labourers.

In 1957 there were 17 registered cases of attempted suicide; in 1958, 24; and in 1959, 18. The causes for such crimes are domestic troubles, incurable diseases, love affairs, poverty and frustration in life. The incidence of such crime is not altogether negligible in this district.

b) Organisation of the Police Force :

The district head of the police force is the Superintendent of Police whose headquarters are located at Jorhat and who is responsible for the maintenance of law and order and control of crimes in the whole district though in the two Sub-divisions of Sibsagar and Golaghat such functions fall within the jurisdictions of Sub-divisional Police Officers who act there as representative of the Superintendent of Police. The Sub-divisional Police Officers hold either the rank of Assistant Superintendent of Police or Deputy Superintendent of Police. At Jorhat there is another high police official known as the Additional Superintendent of Police who assists the Superintendent of Police in his administrative as well as executive duties. There are three police circles in the district corresponding to civil sub-divisions and their officers-in-charge are known as Circle Inspectors. The police circles are subdivided into police stations (or thanas) whose officers are Sub-Inspectors of Police, who are primarily responsible for all police duties, such as prevention, detection and investigation of crimes. The Circle Inspectors supervise the works of the Thana Officers and generally train, direct and guide them.

Circle Inspectors and officers above their rank are known as supervisory officers, and officers below their rank are called executive officers. Each police station is provided with necessary staff which comprises Sub-Inspectors, Assistant Sub-Inspectors, Head Constables and constables. Under certain police stations out-posts are also opened for performing all police duties. Some times in crime affected areas patrol-posts are also opened and suitable officers are stationed to prevent and control crimes.

Besides the above there are other important branches of police in the district. One such branch is the Armed Police force stationed at Barbheta Police Reserve, Jorhat. Its in-charge is one Armed Branch Inspector who

is assisted by Armed Branch Sub-Inspectors. Besides, there are 3 unarmed branch Sub-Inspectors and Assistant Sub-Inspectors, known as Reserve Sub-Inspectors and Reserve Assistant Sub-Inspectors respectively under one senior unarmed branch Reserve S.I., called Reserve Officer. They maintain records of dispositions, arms and ammunitions, clothings, kits, etc. and deal with discipline, leave, pay and increment of Inspectors and officers below their rank and arrange medical, recreational and welfare facilities in order to keep the moral of the force high. All emergency deputations are done from the Reserve Branch. There is special arrangement at the Reserve hospital for education in family planning and the hospital looks after the maternity and child welfare problems of the families of police personnel staying in Reserve Lines. One co-operative canteen is also functioning at the Reserve to cater essential commodities at cheaper rates.

A group of plain clothes police officials and men work under the Superintendent of Police and collect intelligence reports of the district. They are personnel of the Intelligence Branch. The group is headed by an Inspector. The S. P. exercises control and supervises their work in his capacity as the S.P., District Intelligence Branch.

There is one Prosecuting Inspector of Police at Jorhat Court and two Prosecuting Sub-Inspectors of Police at subdivisional courts of Sibsagar and Golaghat. There are some police personnel under them in each court. The Prosecuting Inspector of Jorhat in addition to his prosecuting duties exercises general control over the other two Prosecuting Sub-Inspectors, who perform prosecuting duties in their respective courts. The S. P. generally supervises the prosecution staff and keeps a watch on the working of the Government pleaders and public prosecutors who are appointed to conduct important cases.

There is one permanent Police Station at Jorhat in charge of one S.P. of Police (communications) who is designated as Officer-in-charge, Police Radio, Jorhat. He is under the control and supervision of the S.P. This Wireless Organisation has several small wireless stations in the bordering out-posts of the district to cope with operational work in the Naga Hills border.

There is one Fire Station at Jorhat under local control and supervision of the S.P. The Fire Service is managed by one Station Officer of the rank of S.I. of police who is assisted by necessary staff and fire-fighting equipments.

Village Defence Organisation: The S. P. as the District Village Defence Officer and Secretary of the *District Village Defence Organisation Advisory Committee* supervises the work of the Village Defence parties in the district and attends to all administrative matters relating to village Defence Organisation. There are about 371 registered and 150 un-registered

Village Defence Parties which are formed by volunteers from villages. They execute patrol duties in specific areas to prevent crimes and to help police in their duties in the country parts.

Traffic Control: Since World War II due to the growth of commercial activities in the main towns there has taken place increased flow of traffic. But road conditions are as they were in pre-war days. As a result traffic control has posed a problem to the town police. However, they are making necessary arrangement to meet the situation. The police now have specially trained S. I's and Havildars and use of modern traffic signals and equipments. Occassionally the Jorhat police launch a "Road safety Week" to educate pedestrains and motorists and to inculcate road sense amongst them. But unless the roads are widened and the different means of conveyances are properly controlled it won't be possible for the police authorities to cope with the problem of traffic control in the over popu'ated and rapidly industrialised towns of the district.

Assam Police Training College, Dergaon: With the attainment of independence a re-orientation in the mode of police training became necessary and with this end in view, the Assam Police Training College was started on the 1st April, 1949 at Salonibari in the district of Darrang. Later in 1952 the College was shifted to its present site at Dergaon, the date happily synchronizing with the Independence Day of that year. Dergaon is a small village within the Golaghat Sub-division of the Sibsagar District. The College along with 3 other Armed Battalions forms a police colony situated on what was an air field during the War time. This growing township is situated at a distance of about 2 miles from Dergaon village and lies astride the South Assam Trunk Road. The nearest Railway Station at Baruabamungaon is about 5 miles from the College campus. The College imparts training to the newly recruited police personnel. There has since been a gradual increase in the intake of recruits and at present it trains every year a number of Deputy Superintendent of Police, depending upon the yearly recruitment, about 30 S. Is, 40 to 50 A.S.Is and approximately 500 to 600 constables. The Institution also provides supplementary training to the I.P.S. Officers posted in the State of Assam.

Instruction given in the College comprises of both field and class room work and cover all aspects of police duties including jurisprudence.

The Instructors for the training College are Police Officers, chosen for their education, experience, efficiency and character and consist in addition to the Principal, who is invariably a senior officer of at least S.P.'s rank and the Asst. Principal of the rank of D.S.P., two senior Law Instructors of Inspectors' rank and 13 L. Is of the rank of S.Is, besides a U.B.S.I. and an A.S.I. of the Reserve Office.

The college has been planning to start a detective training school

shortly, for which trained experts, equipments, laboratory, a crime museum, etc. shall have to be provided.

(c) Jails and lock-ups :

(i) *Location of jails, etc:* The Jorhat District Jail is situated at Barbheta near the town. This jail was constructed in 1911 A.D. on a plot of land measuring about 376 bighas. The staff of the jail includes one Jailor, 5 Assistant Jailors, 3 Head warders and 35 Warders including a female Warder. Besides them thre is a medical staff consisting of one whole time Assistant Surgeon II and one whole time compounder. In the educational staff there is only one whole time teacher.

There is a separate enclosure for female prisoners where only 12 of them can be accommodated.

There is one dispensary inside the jail under one Assistant Surgeon II, who is assisted by a compounder. In the jail hospital there are 17 beds in the general ward, 2 in the female, 4 in the detenue and 4 in segregation wards. There has been a proposal for the construction of a 15 bed ward outside the jail walls for convicts suffering from T.B. and leprosy.

The Sibsagar District Jail is situated on the northern bank of the Sibsagar Tank. The Jail was constructed about one hundred years back. It covers an area of 3 *bighas* 4 *Kathas* 9 *lechas* of land, and is surrounded by a masonry wall. The present area of the jail land is 20 *bighas* 1 *katha* 15 *lechas*. The staff of the Jail includes 2 Assistant Jailors, 2 Head warders, 9 warders, 4 temporary warders, including 2 female warders. Besides them there is a medical staff consisting of one part time Assistant Surgeon (Grade I) who is also the Sperintendent of the Jail and one part time compounder. It may be mentioned here that the Jail has got neither educational staff nor educational facilities. Lectures on moral development are, however, given by religious instructors.

The Jail contains accommodation for about 88 male and 8 female inward prisoners, 4 male prisoners in Hospital wards and 4 male non-criminal lunatics in cells.

The Golaghat district jail is situated in the heart of the Golaghat town in an area of land measuring 12 *bighas*, 1 *katha* and 12 *lechas* out of which 6 *bighas*, 1 *katha* and 12 *lechas* have been kept apart for vegetable gardening. The original accommodation in this jail was 36, including 4 for females. But the present capacity is 76, including 4 females.

There is one S.D.M.O. who is assisted by one Assistant Jailor. There is no handicrafts in this jail and prisoners are engaged in horticulture.

In the year 1958-59 the average daily population of the Jorhat jail was 575·49 (male) and 14·32 (female). During the same period the rate of jail mortality per 1,000 was, 11 ; total expenditure incurred for jail maintenance was Rs. 2,88,261·00 ; cost per prisoner (excluding civil) was Rs.

488·73; cost per prisoner (rations) Rs. 58·39. In this period the jail earned from its handicraft products Rs. 2,221·14, the cash earning per prisoner being Rs. 3·76.

In the same year the average daily population of the Sibsagar Jail was 169.10 (male) and 2·48 (female). During the same period the rate of mortality of this jail per 1,000 was 24·48; total expenditure on Jail maintenance was Rs. 7,75,000·00; cost per prisoner (excluding civil prisoner) was Rs. 452·00; costs per prisoner under heads: rations and clothing were Rs. 277·00 and Rs. 21.00 respectively. During the period under reference the total cash earnings of the Jail were Rs. 56·00, Re. 1·28p being the cash earnings per prisoner.

Within the Sibsagar District Jail there is a 6 feet high elevated dome, where Pioli Phukan and Jeuram Duliya Barua were hanged by the British on charges of alleged treason. The Government of Assam have now decided to preserve the memory of these two martyrs.

The Government pay kit allowance to the Jailor and Assistant Jailors and provide warders and head warders with uniforms. One Head Warder is in charge of the Warder guards and looks after the proper maintenance of their kits, arms and ammunitions.

(ii) *Prison discipline:* The Jailor is responsible, under the supervision of the Superintendent of Jail, for the maintenance of prison discipline. He is assisted in discharging his duty by Assistant Jailors. Unlocking, locking, counting and bathing of prisoners, parade, working at day time, washing of clothes, looking after sanitation and hygiene, etc. are carried out according to the rules laid down in the *Assam Jail Manual.*

(iii) *Welfare of Prisoners:* Certain Jail prisoners are engaged in manual works, while some others, who undergo long-term imprisonment, are employed in cane and bamboo work, carpentry or agriculture on payment of wages under the supervision of a specialist. Grown-up prisoners are engaged in hard labour subject to a period of one third of their sentences.

Juvenile prisoners are given training in the three 'Rs.' by one paid teacher. Occasionally lectures are also given on moral development. They are kept completely separate from grown-ups and exempted from hard labour. Juveniles on their release are handed over to the police for escorting them to their homes on plain dress. Non-criminal lunatics are sometimes detained in Sibsagar Jail for medical observation. They are released or transferred to the Mental Hospital at Tezpur according to their mental conditions. There is a separate enclosure for female prisoners, who with sentences of more than one month are transferred to Jorhat Jail for confinement.

Books and newspapers are supplied to prisoners from the jail library. On Sundays prisoners are allowed to entertain themselves with musical

instruments. They are also allowed to participate in games, such as carrom, playing cards, volleyball, etc. They also stage dramas and *bhaonas* on festive occasions, and the Government give them Rs. 30/- to defray the expenses. There are facilities for medical treatment of the prisoners in all the district jails.

(*iv*) *Board of visitors:* In each of the jails a board consisting of officials and non-officials has been functioning since a long time. It is re-constituted every two years. Members of the Board visit the jail quarterly, and the Board sits once every fortnight. Members at the time of visiting go round the jail and hear complaints from prisoners. They record their suggestions in the visitors' book which are forwarded to the Government with comments from the jail Superintendent.

(d) Civil and Criminal Courts of Justice:

(i) *Civil:* From 1837 to 1860 Assam proper was administered by a code of rules known as the *Assam Code* of 1837. These rules were subsequently supplemented by a few civil and criminal rules in 1839. All these were extracts from the *Bengal Regulations* and were nothing but rules of judicial procedure only. In 1860 and 1861, the Civil and Criminal Procedure Codes which were in force in Bengal, were extended to Assam also and the *Assam Code* was taken as repealed. From 1st of July 1887, *the Bengal, Agra and Assam Civil Courts Act* (Act 12 of 1887) came into force for the whole of Assam except such portions as for the time at that time were not subject to the ordinary civil jurisdiction of the High Court. Now all the Civil Courts under the jurisdiction of U.A.D., Jorhat are functioning under this Act.

Sadar (Dewani) Courts were brought into being in the Lower Assam districts in 1835 under Act II of 1835. These were extended to Sibsagar district in 1839. The administration of Civil justice in Sibsagar district, like other plains districts of the Brahmaputra Valley, was under the control of the District Judge, Assam Valley Districts, with headquarters at Gauhati, who in turn was under the control and supervision of the High Court at Calcutta. At that time, magistrates with powers of the Munsiff were posted at Jorhat, Golaghat and Sibsagar to carry on civil justice.

In 1927, the headquarters of the first Additional District and Sessions Judge, Assam Valley Districts, were shifted to Jorhat. A separate judgeship for the Upper Assam, comprising the districts of Sibsagar, Lakhimpur and Cachar, was created on 15th November, 1948 with headquarters at Jorhat. (2) And consequent upon the formation of a separate High Court for Assam, the control and supervision of the High Court at Calcutta over all the courts of Assam ceased to exist. The District and Session Judge, U.A.D., was then assisted by three Sub-ordinate Judges and eight Munsifs stationed at district and subdivisional headquarters of Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Silchar, Gola-

ghat, Sibsagar, North Lakhimpur, Karimganj and Hailakandi. This judgeship was further bifurcated and a separate judgeship for the Cachar district with headquarters at Silchar was created on 7th September 1956. At present the District and Session Judge, U.A.D., is assisted by one Additional District Judge, posted at Dibrugarh, two Subordinate Judges, at Dibruargh and Jorhat and five Munsifs at Jorhat, Golaghat, North Lakhimpur and Dibrugarh.

There are at present three Munsifs at three subdivisional headquarters of Sibsagar district and their jurisdiction extends only to that subdivision where one is posted. The ordinary pecuniary jurisdiction of a Munsif extends to all like suits of which the value does not exceed one thousand rupees, but the Government with the recommendation of the High Court may extend this pecuniary jurisdiction to not exceeding two thousand rupees. The experienced and comparatively senior Munsifs are sometimes invested with the powers of a Judge of Small Cause Court upto the limit of Rs. 250/-. The Munsifs have got magisterial powers also and in that capacity they take up criminal cases as well.

There is at present one Subordinate Judge in the district with headquarters at Jorhat. His jurisdiction extended upto North Lakhimpur subdivision since 1st August, 1934. (3) He tries original suits and cases of higher valuation beyond the pecuniary jurisdiction of the Munsif without any limit. Prior to the creation of the Upper Assam Judgeship, the Deputy Commissioner, Sibsagar, exercised the powers of the ex-officio Subordinate Judge, (4) but with effect from 24th October, 1949, he ceased to exercise these powers. From February 1953 all civil appeals from the decrees or orders of the Munsifs of Jorhat, Golaghat, Sibsagar, and North Lakhimpur which had been filed in the court of the District Judge, were directed to be filed in the court of the Subordinate Judge, Jorhat, direct. (5) An appeal from the decree or order of the Subordinate Judge as original courts, lies to the District Judge where the value of the suit does not exceed five thousand rupees. All other appeals, where the valuation exceeds the above amount, lie with the High Court. The Subordinate Judge is authorised to exercise the powers of the District Judge for the purposes of the *Indian Succession Act*, 1925. (6) He is also authorised to exercise powers under the *Land Acquisition Act*, 1894, (7) and to try all classes of cases under *Provincial Insolvency Act*, 1920. (8) For the convenience of the litigant public, the Subordinate Judge, Jorhat, is authorised to hold occasional circuit courts at North Lakhimpur, Golaghat and Sibsagar. (9) He may hear appeals only against the orders of the magistrates with 3rd class powers. He cannot pass death sentences and can take up such criminal cases which are triable in the Courts of Sessions.

The District Judge receives application in contention cases under the *Probate Act*, under sections 75, 89, 113, 118, 141, 144, 163, 196, 219, 234, 260, 304, 307, 375 and 614 of the *Indian Companies Act*, 1956 ;(10) under

Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 ; (11) and memorandum of appeals under *India Trade Union Act*, 1926. (12) He disposes of them by himself or transfers them to the Additional District Judge for disposal. The District Judge also receives application under *Guardians and Wards Act*, 1890 and may empower any Subordinate Judge by name to dispose of such proceedings.(13)

The civil courts and officers, subordinate to the High Court are guided by the civil Rules and Orders issued by the authority of the High Court. As the principal civil court of the Upper Assam districts, the District Judge is empowered to withdraw *SUO-moto*, or, on the motion of any party, any civil suit, miscellaneous case, execution case or any civil appeal from the file of any subordinate court and transfer to any other competent court having jurisdiction to try. The District Judge is required to inspect personally the works of all the courts and offices under him ordinarily every year and to submit notes of inspection to the High Court as soon as possible. The above power of inspection cannot be vested in Additional District Judge.

The District Judge occasionally holds circuit courts at Dibrugarh. Besides disposing of civil cases, civil suits, civil appeals, criminal revisions, etc., he is entrusted with certain other judicial enquiries by the Government. Thus recently he has been appointed Election Tribunal to hear election petition filed in this district in connection with the General Election, 1962. The District and Session Judge can pass any sentence under the law except of capital punishment which requires confirmation from the High Court. He hears both criminal and civil appeals from the lower courts. In cases where revision of orders of the lower courts are prayed for, he may recommend the cases for revision to the High Court.

As district-wise break-up of the disposal of cases is not possible, the disposal in the whole Judgeship for the years 1960 and 1961 has been shown below :

District and Sessions Judge and Additional District and Sessions Judge-2

	1960	1961
Civil Suits	34	9
Cases	55	73
Appeals	64	17
Criminal Session	114	130
Criminal Appeals	382	223
Criminal Revision	84	74
Subordinate Judges-2		
Civil Suits	187	122
Cases	199	180
Execution Cases	163	159
Appeals	275	181
Sessions	402	72
Criminal Appeals	80	54

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Munsifs-5		
Civil Suits	1305	1221
Cases	669	470
Execution Cases	885	904
Criminal Cases	735	842

(ii) Criminal: Since 1912 the court of sessions of the Assam Valley Districts held occasional circuit courts at Jorhat. Regular sessions court is being held at Jorhat since 1927. The Additional Sessions Judge, Jorhat, was authorised to hear all appeals to the court of sessions from the judgments, or orders, of criminal courts in Sibsagar District from October, 1930. At present the Session Judge, Jorhat, is assisted by one Additional Session Judge, stationed at Dibrugarh and two Assistant Session Judges at Dibrugarh and Jorhat.

The trial of sessions cases with the help of assessors was not in vogue in this District. But such trials were held with the help of jury since 1st June, 1893, which, however, had been discontinued with effect from 1st April 1958.

The District Magistrate, Sibsagar, is in charge of control, supervision and detection of crimes and investiture and prosecution of State cases in the district. His control and supervision extends to private cases also, since he has to exercise control and supervision over the taking of cognizance in all criminal cases. He can also withdraw any criminal case from prosecution. He is assisted in his above functions by an Additional District Magistrate, one Subdivisional Magistrate, three 1st class Magistrates and one 3rd class Magistrate at Jorhat. At Golaghat and Sibsagar, besides the Subdivisional Magistrates' courts there are two and one 1st class Magistrates' courts respectively. At Sibsagar there is also one 2nd class Magistrates' court. All the Magistrates of the District tried 8,469 original criminal cases during the year 1960, in course of which they examined as many as 13,607 witnesses. The vast majority of these cases concerns property or human body.

The magistrates are invested with three classes of powers, viz. first, second and third class. A magistrate in the initial stage is invested with 3rd class magisterial powers. When he gathers experience and efficiency, the government on the recommendation of the District Magistrate, invests him with 2nd class magisterial powers. But at the time of conferring him 1st class magisterial powers, the Session Judge is ordinarily consulted.

All criminal cases in the first instance are tried by the magistrates according to their powers. In a sessions triable case, it is committed to the court of sessions when it is found that a prima-facie case is duly established. On receipt of such commitments the session Judge, either keeps the records

with him for trial by himself, or transfer either to the Additional Session Judge or to the Assistant Session Judge for disposal after examining the pending files and the nature of offence involved. All criminal appeals are in the first instance filed in the court of Session Judge. Appeals from the decision of magistrates of the 2nd and 3rd class may be tried by the Assistant Session Judge when transferred. The District Magistrate does not exercise the powers to hear appeals against the orders of the Magistrates. Appeals against the decision of the Session and Additional Session Judge lie before the High Court. The Session Judge also exercises powers under sections 435 and 528 (2) Cr.P.C. over all the magistrates of Upper Assam districts.

Besides trying cases within courts, Magistrates sometimes hold local trials. The local trials give the trying magistrates an opportunity to read the circumstances under which the alleged offences are reported to have been committed. The Additional District Magistrate holds local trial of the cases under the Excise Department, when necessary. Till 1946 many of the cases instituted under section 100 Cr.P.C. against habitual offences were tried locally. These trials had a healthy effect among the people in general. Characters with criminal disposition felt the hammer of law, while the peace loving people of the locality became doubly assured of their security.

Since 1953 the competent courts have taken up holding of trials on open streets to detect offenders on the spot, under the *Municipal Bye-laws* and *Motor Vehicle Acts* and try the cases then and there. These trials are known as *Mobile Courts*, and meant chiefly for fostering better civic sense in the minds of the people.

In order to effect quicker disposal of cases in all the Sub-Divisional and Sadar courts, monthly meeting among the magistrates is held, wherein difficulties regarding quicker disposal of cases and measures to remove them are discussed. This helps in taking appropriate steps for minimising the number of long pending cases.

When the civil file of any Munsif is comparatively light, he is invested with magisterial powers to enable him to devote his time to the disposal of criminal cases. At present all the Munsifs in the district try criminal cases in addition to their usual civil work .

The State cases before the magistrates at Jorhat are conducted by the Prosecuting Inspector who is assisted by an Assistant Public Prosecutor. At Golaghat and Sibsagar they are conducted by Prosecution Sub-Inspectors. All the prosecuting officers belong to Police Department.

The Assistant Session Judges are allowed to exercise powers under *Criminal Law Amendment Act*, 1952 as Special Judges. The jurisdiction of Special Judge, Jorhat, is limited to Jorhat and Golaghat Subdivisions of Sibsagar district and North Lakhimpur subdivision of Lakhimpur district, while the jurisdiction of Special Judge, Dibrugarh is confined to Dibrugarh

subdivision of Lakhimpur district and Sibsagar subdivision of Sibsagar district. The District Magistrate takes cognizance of such cases and transfers them to the Special Judges' file for disposal.

The Session Judge is authorised to inspect the courts of 1st class Magistrates (excluding the District Magistrate). The inspection is of general nature. The courts of subordinate Magistrates are inspected by District Magistrate and Commissioner. For the convenience of witnesses and others, the government authorises holding of occasional Circuit Session Courts at North Lakhimpur, Golaghat and Sibsagar.

For conducting prosecution in session cases and for appeals and revisions before session courts, there is a Public prosecutor who is assisted by a panel of Assistant Public prosecutors. They are selected from amongst the lawyers at the Station. The Public Prosecutor gets a retainer's fee in addition to the fees for actual work done and the Assistant Public Prosecutors are entitled to remuneration in accordance with the scale of fee as laid down in the *Assam Law Department Manual*. A panel of defence lawyers is also maintained to give legal assistance to pauper accused persons in murder cases where death sentence or imprisonment for life is prescribed in that particular section. Such defence lawyers are also entitled to remuneration in accordance with the scale of fee as laid down in the above manual.

In addition to the civil and criminal courts, there are Revenue Courts presided over by Assistant Settlement Officers and Settlement Officer. In normal times when there is no settlement operation, the Sub-Deputy Collectors hold such courts. The circle S.D.C.s hear the *Adhiar* cases, and in that capacity they sit as Revenue courts. The Revenue courts deal only with revenue matters, such as mutation, settlement, *Adhiar* rights, etc. The Deputy Commissioner and his subordinate officers, such as A.D.C., S.D.O., executing concurrent powers of the D.C. in certain revenue matters, and Extra Assistant Commissioners invested with revenue powers, hear different revenue cases such as *Bakijai* and Certificate cases, Encroachment cases, Land Sale cases, etc. The D.C. hears appeals against the orders of assessment by the District Transport Officer under *Motor Vehicle Taxation Act*. The object of these Revenue courts is to administer equity and justice in the sphere of revenue matters.

Besides the above mentioned courts, the Labour Court, presided over by a single Judge hears cases relating to labour problems. Sibsagar, being a prominent tea growing district, the number of such labour cases are not negligible. This court has no permanent official sitting; but mostly holds its sessions at the Jorhat Circuit House.

(*iii*) *Panchayat Adalat:* After enactment of the Panchayat Act the Panchayats have been empowered with powers to decide some petty

criminal cases. It is not quite uncommon that the Panchayats, whether official or non-official, settle many cases through amicable settlement. The motive behind the institution of the *Panchayat Adalat* is to train up people in legal matters and in the administration of justice so that no inordinate delay is made in deciding local cases. Unless people train themselves up in this direction, some people may remain far off from the channel of administration of justice either because of their pecuniary limitations or distance from the seats of the courts. The said local court of justice, it is expected, will render immediate legal relief to the needy people more quickly and easily than has been possible under the present set up.

(*iv*) *Separation of Executive and Judiciary:* To consider ways and means in connection with separation of Judiciary from the Executive in Assam, Government of Assam constituted a committee in 1958 consisting of 6 superior officers of the Government of Assam, three from the Administrative side: Chief Secretary, one Senior-most Commissioner, and one Senior-most Deputy Commissioner; three from the Judicial Department; the Registrar of the High Court, the Legal Remembrancer and one Senior-most District & Session Judge. A few sittinges of the committee were held at Shillong with the Chief Secretary as the President. On the recommendation of the committee, Judicial functions have been separated from the Executive and an independent Judiciary has been set up.

(*e*) *Nature of cases handled:* The table below shows the number of criminal cases of a serious nature under various heads in the district from the year 1949 to 1957:

District	*Year*	*Rioting or unlawful assembly*	*Other offences against the State, public tranquility, etc.*	*Murder, attempt at murder, culpable homicide & murder by dacoits*	*Grievous hurt & hurt by dangerous weapon*
1	*2*	*3*	*4*	*5*	*6*
Sibsagar	1949	37	11	52	138
	1950	44	11	40	122
	1951	82	6	65	223
	1952	22	4	66	128
	1953	48	11	70	160
	1954	75	6	57	113
	1955	48	6	76	132
	1956	72	8	77	327
	1957	43	4	40	235

[1] Figures quoted from *Statistical Abstract of Assam*, 1958.

Serious criminal offence	*Other serious offences against the person*	*Robbery & dacoity*	*Serious mischief including mischief by killing, poisoning any cattle*	*House breaking & trespasser*	*Wrongful restraint & confinement*	*Theft including cattle theft*
7	*8*	*9*	*10*	*11*	*12*	*13*
14	56	34	41	601	11	641
18	62	44	50	590	4	510
13	71	98	46	909	13	709
8	66	74	53	901	9	598
18	59	76	49	899	11	657
14	78	56	40	663	16	560
22	75	41	41	524	13	639
27	105	78	53	790	25	711
17	73	117	42	599	26	603

Receiving stolen property	*Lurking & criminal house trespass*	*Total*
14	*15*	*16*
55	49	1740
54	28	1577
51	48	2334
45	36	2010
39	43	2140
38	63	1779
31	60	1708
66	89	2428
36	121	1956

The causes of these increasing incidences of crimes may perhaps be attributed to growth of population, rising standard of living and growing problem of unemployment. Occasional increase of cases in some years is due to registration of cases arising out of communal troubles and organised riots, etc. The institution of petty theft cases due to better registration facilities was also the cause of increase of all crimes.

Mr. B. C. Allen, writing in 1905, aptly remarks that, while in other places "the Assamese are singularly free from criminal tendencies or instincts, but cases of burglary are by no means uncommon in the neighbourhood of Jorhat. The number of murders, though not as high as in Lakhimpur, is still above the average. In the ten years ending with 1889

there were on the average six during the year. In the next decade the annual average rose to 11, and in 1900 there were 19 or one case for every 30,000 people, a ratio more than four times as high as that prevailing in the province of Bengal in 1901. Most of these murders are committed in a fit of passion and are often due to jealousy. Now and again, however, there are cases which argue a considerable degree of intelligence in the perpetrator of the crime."

"The average annual value of property, said to be stolen during the decade ending with 1899 was Rs. 25,000. Cattle theft is fairly common, and attempts have even been made to steal elephants, in spite of the difficulties attendant on the concealment and disposal of the missing property."[2]

During the past decade or so, the number of capital punishment ordered was 5 (1 in 1951 and 4 in 1959). It may be mentioned here that convicts with sentences of cases of capital punishment are executed at Jorhat Jail. Life imprisonment or long term imprisonments are rather few in number. Fine seems to be the most common punishment in the district. Next to that comes the rigorous imprisonment for short periods not extending one year.

Note :

[The post of the District and Sessions Judge, Lower Assam Valley was held by a person of the Indian Civil Service. In 1880 the District and Session Judge, Gauhati, was allowed to hold the post of the Commissioner in addition to his own duties. But in 1902, the post of the Commissioner was separated. The District and Sessions Judge was then a member of the Bengal Judicial Service, and this continued till 1912 when Assam was separated from Bengal. After Independence the post of the District and Sessions Judge, Gauhati, was held by persons of the Assam Civil Service (senior) for some time.

In 1955, the Assam Judicial Service was introduced. It is divided into two groups, Senior and Junior and each group is also divided into two grades :

(1) The Senior Judicial Service : Grade I :—The District & Session Judge, The Registrar of the High Court and the Legal Remembrancer, Assam; Grade II : The Additional District & Session Judges.

(2) The Junior Judicial Service : Grade I : The Subordinate & Assistant Sessions Judges and the Deputy Registrar of the High Court; Grade II : Munsifs.

The control of the Civil judiciary remains under the direct control and supervision of the High Court which retains only the right of Superintendence over the Criminal Courts.

Appointment, transfer, posting and promotion of persons of the Judicial service are made in accordance with the provisions made under sections 233 and 234 of the Constitution of India.

All correspondence by the District judge with the Government on all matters except three items : (1) Budget estimate; (2) Entertainment of admissible temporary staff; (3) Extension of services of ministerial officer after the age of superannuation, are made through the High Court.

[2] *Assam District Gazetteers*, Sibsagar, pp. 223-24.

The District & Session Judge is required to submit consolidated monthly, quarterly and annual criminal returns and quarterly and annual civil returns to the High Court. In quarterly Civil returns remarks on the disposal of each of the Subordinate Judges and Munsifs are given. The monthly and quarterly returns received from the District Magistrates in consolidated form are checked and forwarded to the High Court. Comments on the adequacy of disposals of cases against each magistrate are also given along with the monthly criminal returns. At the end of the year a comprehensive confidential report on each magistrate is prepared and submitted to the Government. Similar reports are also prepared in respect of each Subordinate Judge and Munsifs and submitted to the High Court. Annual Administration Reports, both Civil and Criminal, are submitted to the High Court after submission of the annual returns.]

(f) Legal Profession and Bar Association :

Lawyers, advocates and Muktiars constitute the members of this profession. To enter the legal profession the system of taking Licenses on payment of fees has been in vogue, and these are required to be renewed every year in case of Lawyers and Muktiars.

Throughout the district there are three Bar Associations at Golaghat, Jorhat and Sibsagar. The numerical strength of Jorhat Bar exceeds that of the other two, as this town is the Sadar of the district.

Till recently Muktiars were allowed to practise after passing an examination conducted by the Assam High Court, but this system was abolished a few years back. Their number is, however, very low. The Jorhat Bar, it is reported, does not extend membership to them.

A tendency has been noticed among the youths to join this legal profession in large numbers. And the more this profession can attract talented persons and honest characters, the more would they help in the uniform dispensation of justice.

GAZETTEER UNIT
9 AUG 1968
MADRAS RECORD OFFICE BUILDINGS, MADRAS

CHAPTER XIII

OTHER DEPARTMENTS

(a) Public Works Department (Road & Building) :

Road & Building : Under the Superintending Engineer, Eastern Assam Circle, whose headquarter is at Jorhat, there are five P. W. D. (R & B) Divisions functioning in this district. These Divisions are : (1) Jorhat ; (2) Sibsagar ; (3) Golaghat ; (4) Mechanical Division, Jorhat ; (5) Engineering College Building Construction Division, Jorhat. The Chief Engineer P. W. D. (R & B) Assam Shillong is the technical and administrative head of the Department.

(i) *Jorhat Division :* The jurisdiction of the Jorhat division (R & B) is extended at present to Kakadonga river on the west, 190th mile of A. T. Road (N.H.W.—37) on the east, Lohit river on the north and Dhodar Ali on the south. This Division was first created in June, 1942 with three sub-divisions at Jorhat, Golaghat and Mechanical Sub-division. Subsequently in the year 1955 the Amguri Sub-division was opened with jurisdiction extending to Jorhat and Golaghat civil sub-division and up to Mokokchung in the then Naga Hills district. On the opening of the new Mokokchung Division and the Golaghat Division, Amguri Sub-division and Golaghat Sub-division were transferred to the above Divisions respectively. In the year 1953, Jorhat Sub-division was sub-divided into two sub-divisions : Jorhat West and Jorhat East ; and subsequently Majuli sub-division, Jorhat Building sub-division, Jorhat "C" sub-division and Jorhat Electrical Sub-division were opened in the year 1953, 1958, and 1960 respectively. Jorhat East Sub-division was transferred to Jorhat Engineering College Building Construction Division in the year 1960.

The Jorhat Division at present comprises of Jorhat west sub-division, Jorhat Building Sub-division, Jorhat "C" sub-division, Jorhat Electrical sub-division & Majuli Sub-division, and is under Eastern Assam Circle of Assam P. W. D. (R & B).

During the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Five Year Plan periods a good number of undeveloped roads were improved and many new buildings and bridges constructed in this division. Mention in this connection may be made of the construction and widening of the National High Way, construction

of the Basic Training College at Titabar, Assam Agricultural College Buildings and District Library Buildings at Jorhat.

For administrative purposes each sub-division is under the charge of one S. D. O., under whom there are several Sectional Officers who supervise the execution of works at site. This division is under an Executive Engineer with headquarter at Jorhat. He is to supervise the execution of schemes and look after the works of the S. D. Os, control expenditure and to make payment to the contractors.

(ii) *Sibsagar Division:* The Sibsagar P.W.D. Division (R & B) was created on the 1st of February 1957. Prior to this the works of this area were managed by the Lakhimpur Division. The Division at present is comprised of 3 sub-divisions: Sibsagar, Sonari, and Naharkatiya. There are eight sections in the entire division for both supervisory and maintenance works. The sectional offices are under Sub-Engineers.

In the 1st Five Year Plan additional 161 miles of roads were nearly completed. During the Second Five Year Plan about 85 miles of roads were constructed and improved, and during the Third Five Year Plan more roads have been taken up for construction and improvement. Along with this a good number of important building projects in different branches of education, Medical, Civil and Police amounting to Rs. 25,00,000·00 approximately have also been taken up during this period.

Two major R.C.C. bridges at Nazira over Dikhou river and at Dilih over the Disang with a length of 498 Rft. and 315 respectively are to be found under this Division.

The Division is under one Executive Engineer with his office at Sibsagar, and he holds control over expenditures and supervises works of the S. D. Os.

(iii) *Golaghat Division:* The Golaghat Division till its creation in January, 1953 was combined with Jorhat Division. Under this Division there are at present 3 Sub-divisions: (1) Golaghat North, (2) Golaghat south and (3) Dergaon, under the charge of S. D. Os (P.W.D.). Altogether there are 13 sections, of which 3 are in Golaghat North, 4 in Golaghat South, and six in Dergaon Sub-division.

The total road mileage in this Division upto 31-3-62 is 496·015 miles, of which 97·73 miles are surfaced and almost the whole of the rest are gravelled. Some portions of the two National High ways: (1) The Assam Trunk Road (N.H.W Route No. 37) and (2) Numaligarh-Dimapur Road (N.H.W. Route No. 39) with a distance of 50·04 miles and 72·50 miles respectively are running through this Division. In addition to this, 33·12 miles of a diversion road from Barpathar to Dimapur (under N.H.W. Route No. 39) is also within this Division.

Like other P.W.D. Divisions, this division is also headed by an Executive Engineer with his head-quarter at Golaghat. He is to inspect the execution of the schemes, look after the works of S. D. Os and control expenditure and make payment to contractors.

On the side of special achievements of the Golaghat Division (R & B) reference may be made to the construction of a few major bridges, over Gelabil and Dhansiri river.

(iv) *Mechanical Division, Jorhat:* The Mechanical Division P.W.D. (R & B), Jorhat comprises of two Sub-divisions, one at Silchar and the other at Jorhat. The Jorhat sub-division was originally known as Mechanical Engineer's office with a workshop which controlled the entire machineries of P.W.D. divisions of Assam. This office with the workshop was the only organisation of this kind to look after the entire mechanics of the State P.W.D. at that time. This Office (now Jorhat Mechanical Subdivision) came into being in the year 1932. The then Mechanical Engineer (P. W. D) also had dual functions, as he acted as the Chief Surveyor in the State of Assam, in addition to his own duties. Prior to this the works of the P.W.D. machines (mainly road-making machines) were carried out with 2 skeleton workshops with only three hand operating machines at Jorhat.

With the passage of time the activities of the State P. W. D. increased, necessitating expansion of the existing workshop to a certain standard to cope with the increased volume of works. Consequently the workshop's capacity was increased to the required standard, and Government was pleased to declare the Mechanical Engineer's Office as an independent P. W. D. Subdivision in 1945. Prior to this it was under the immediate control of the Jorhat P. W. D. Division.

During the Second world war a part of the work shop under the Mechanical Engineer had to be transferred to Imphal for looking after the emergency works in connection with the construction of the India Burma Road. But consequent upon the bombing of Imphal, the Civil Administration was replaced by the Military Authority at Manipur when all these works were duly handed over to them. So this part of the Mechanical Engineer's workshop at Imphal was withdrawn and temporarily located at Kohima for a short period and ultimately amalgamated with the original workshop of Mechanical Engineer at Jorhat after completion of India Burma Road.

After World War II, Government realised the importance of the workshop of Mechanical Engineer and ordered for further expansion with well equipped implements including construction of additional workshop Buildings. Accordingly, after the independence of India, it took a different shape, as some improved type of machineries were procured during the 2nd Plan period. In the year 1958 the Mechanical Engineer's Office at Jorhat

was upgraded to a full fledged Mechanical division with Sub-divisions under it.

The works of the Division consist of purchase and repairing of different P. W. D. machineries including supply of marboat propelling units with its own design and manufacture and various country made ferries plying in different River ghats under the administrative control of the different P. W. D. (R & B) Divisions in the districts of Assam.

At present the Division looks after the machines of the P.W.D. Divisions of Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat Engineering College Building construction, Golaghat, Cachar, Karimganj, Aijal, Lungleh and D.C.P.W.D., Mizo District. The division is now manned by one Executive Engineer (Mech) one S.D.O. (Mech), Jorhat, Workshop Foreman with other technical staff, one store Overseer, one Subordinate Engineer, one Mech. Assistant Engineer, one Assistant Mech. Engineer, one Subordinate Engineer (Computor), one Mech. Draftsman, and one Tracer in the drawing branch.

The Executive Engineer (Mech) is to supervise the works of the technical staff including all other office works and accounts of this office; over and above this he is to supervise the execution of different schemes, control expenditure and to give payment to the suppliers and contractors as the case may be.

(v) *Engineering College Building Construction Division, Jorhat:*

The Engineering College Building Construction Division with its headquarter within the college campus at Garamur started functioning with effect from 7th December, 1958 for the construction of a Residential Engineering College at Jorhat under the 2nd Five Year Plan.

Two projects costing Rs. 39,97,000/- and Rs. 10,93,000/- for construction of one Multi-storeyed Administrative Building covering an area of 1,04,00 sq. ft. with residential accommdations for the employees and 4 hostels to accommodate 400 boys including electrification and independent water supply for the whole campus were taken up immediately over an area of 345 *bighas* of land acquired for the purpose at Garamur.

Two surfaced roads of 2 miles from the College campus linking Jorhat town in the west and Assam Trunk Road in the north were also constructed.

All the works except the multi-storeyed buildings, could be completed timely to give start to the college session which commenced from 8th August, 1960. Subsequently Jorhat East Sub-division was transferred from Jorhat Division and joined with the College Construction. Since then the jurisdiction of the Division is more or less half of Jorhat Civil Subdivision from Jorhat eastward excluding Majuli areas in the north but including the entire area to the south of Dhodar Ali from Kakadonga to

Jhanji river. The Division thus comprises 4 Sub-divisions with 4 Sub-divisional Officers. There are Sectional Officers under them.

The Division has so far constructed the following buildings of the State Government:

(1) Administrative and hostel Buildings of H.R.H., P.O.W. Institute Jorhat; (2) Administrative Building of I.T.I., Jorhat; (3) Post Graduate Training College at Jorhat; (4) Basic Post Graduate Training College at Titabar; (5) Diary Farm at Jogduar; (6) Dispensary Buildings at Borhola, Tipomia and Nakachari.

Besides, the Division undertook improvement and maintenance of a fairly long distance of the National High Way and surfaced and gravelled roads under the State Government.

(vi) *E. & D. Division:* This Division at Jorhat with one Executive Engineer is under P.W.D. Flood Control & Irrigation Wing to the Government of Assam. It has started its functioning from April, 1959. The jurisdiction of this Division extends to the entire district of Sibsagar. There are Sub-divisional Officers at Golaghat and Sibsagar.

The Division is required to carry out investigation works for Drainage and Irrigational schemes including its execution. In addition to these, there are permanent discharge and gauge observation sites for collection of datas and recording behaviour of the different rivers for future Flood Control and Irrigation Works.

Mention may be made of the following Irrigation Schemes that were taken up in recent years under this Division:

(1) Providing Irrigation facilities at Falangani in Marangi Mouza under Golaghat Civil Sub-division (Doigurung river); (2) Providing Irrigation facilities in Amguri and Kharikatia Mouza under Jorhat Civil Subdivision (Kakadonga river); (3) Providing Irrigation facilities in Bokakhat Mouza under Golaghat Civil Sub-division (river Kankochang); (4) Drainage of low-lying area in Jakaichuk Mouza under Sibsagar Civil Subdivision; (5) Providing Irrigation facilities in Holongapar and Gakhirkhowa Mouza under Jorhat Civil Sub-division

Moreover survey works have also been undertaken for executing (1) Titabar Irrigation Scheme and (2) Majuli Central Drainage Scheme. This division has further submitted three Drainage Schemes for being executed by the Executive Engineers of Dibrugarh E & D Division and Sibsagar E & D Division.

In addition to these, other E & D Works in Golaghat Sub-Division only are carried out by this Division. Similar works including construction and repair of bunds for controlling floods have been performed in Sibsagar subdivision as well.

Note:

Public Health Engineering Department, Jorhat: This Department has been functioning in Sibsagar District since 1957. The office of the S.D.O was started at

Jorhat by the end of the year 1956 when schemes were taken up in Nowgong District and Mikir Hills District, and these schemes were within the Jurisdiction of Jorhat (PHE) Sub-Division. The Divisional Office of this Organisation was functioning first at Shillong and then it was shifted to Gauhati in the month of May, 1957. Due to heavy work-load, one separate Division was opened at Jorhat with one Executive Engineer in March 1959. Since that time, all works executed by the Public Health Engineering Department have fallen under Jorhat Division.

During the 2nd and 3rd Five Year Plan period, many schemes were taken up by this department for national water supply through construction of ring wells and quite a good number of sanitary measures implemented spceially for the improvement of hygienic conditions in the rural areas.]

P.W.D. (central): The Central Public works Department started its works with one Assistant Engineer at Jorhat from September, 1960. This office is administratively controlled by the Executive Engineer, Assam, Central P.W. Division, Shillong. The jurisdiction of this office extends to almost the whole of Upper Assam including Mikir Hills. This office is in charge of all the Central Government buildings and roads of different Ministries, including army works of the External Affairs Ministry. During the last four years or so this office has constructed different types of buildings for the defence personnel. Godowns have also been constructed at Cinnamara and other places for the storage of food grains for the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. Some other buildings like the All India Radio Receiving and Tranmsitting centres, and those of the Post and Telegraph Department have come up.

(b) Department of Agriculture :

The office at the district level is under the District Agricutural officer with his headquarter at Jorhat. He is under the controlling authority of the Joint Director of Agriculture, Eastern Region with his headquarter at Borbheta, Jorhat. The Director of Agriculture, Assam with his headquarter at Shillong is the technical and administrative head of the Department.

The jurisdiction of the District Agricultural officer extends over the whole of the civil district of Sibsagar. For the purpose of administration the entire jurisdiction of the District Agricultural officer has been subdivided into the three sub-divisions of Jorhat, Sibsagar and Golaghat. Each of the Agricultural sub-divisions is placed under a sub-Divisional Agricultural officer with headquarter at each of the civil Sub-Divisional headquarter.

Apart from the Sub-Divisional Agricultural officers the District Agricultural officer is assisted by the Assistant Cash Crop Development officer who is attached to the District Agricultural office. There are also three Agricultural Inspectors in three different branches of Agriculture to help the District Agricultural officer and S.D.A.Os. as the case may be in the implementation of departmental programmes.

There are seventeen blocks in the district, of which eleven are full fledged. In every full-fledged Block, there is an Agricultural Extension officer and under him there are 10 Gram Sevaks, and in every other six blocks there is an Agricultural Inspector with six or seven Agricultural Demonstrators under him.

The Blocks are situated as follows :

Sub-Division	Full fledged	Shadow
Sibsagar	4 Nos.	2 Nos.
Jorhat	4 „	2 „
Golaghat	3 „	2 „

The staff working in each block are also under the District Agricultural Officer or Sub-divisional Agricultural Officer as the case may be for technical purposes.

There are altogether seventeen Seed Multiplication Farms in the District, of which Sibsagar & Jorhat Sub-divisions have six each and Golaghat five. One Field Assistant is in Charge of each Farm.

(c) Veterinary Department :

The Department might have been functioning in the district with its head-quarter at Mariani even prior to 1905, for we come to know from the old records that one Veterinary Surgeon, entertained by the District Local Board had his office at Mariani. For some time he had to work under the control of the Superintendent of Veterinary, stationed at Dacca. Records also reveal that one Veterinary Dispensary was established at Jorhat on 17th July, 1911. Gradually other Veterinary Dispensaries, under the management of the Local Board and Government were established.

Organisational Set-up and duties: There are about fourteen Vety. Assistant Surgeons, sixty three Veterinary Field Assistants, one Farm Manager, one Livestock Inspector, three Livestock Demonstrators and thirty nine fourth grade staff under the District Vety. Officer who is responsible to the Director and the Deputy Director of the Veterinary Department for Animal Husbandary works in the District. He is helped in his day to day work by one Sub-Divisional Vety. Officer at Sibsagar and one Livestock Inspector (in the district) and Sub-Divisional Veterinary officer (in the Sub-Division). There is one Sub-Divisional Vety. Officer at Sibsagar and one Livestock Inspector at Jorhat to help the D.V.O. in his field activities and general supervision of his work in the field.

There are eight Development Blocks (Dimow, Sonari, Sibsagar, Majuli, Borbheta, Amguri, Titabar, Sarupathar, Golaghat East). Each of them has an extension officer (vety.) whose technical works are supervised by the District Veterinary Officer.

The duty of the Department in the District is to control and eradicate contagious, infectious and other diseases of the animals and birds, for which it takes the following measures :

(1) Preventive measures by mass vaccination against Rinderpest, Anthrax, Haemorrhagic Septicemia, Black Quarter, Ranikhet disease, Foul cholera are adopted to control the out-break of the above mentioned diseases. Curative treatments are resorted to for combating foot and mouth diseases and the diseases mentioned above.

Parasitic diseases like Liverflukes, round-worms, tapeworms infection in animals and birds are treated with most modern drugs, but the control of these diseases has become a difficult problem due to lack of knowledge of our villagers in improved animal husbandry, poverty and want of facilities for stall feeding. The result of this is that our Livestock population is devitalised in general.

(2) The department has taken up the policy to upgrade the local non descript cattle, birds, goats, pigs with Hariana bull, R. I. birds, white leghorn birds, Jamunapari bucks and Birkshire Pigs. It appears that the up-graded Livestock will thrive well in our local climatic conditions.

Besides two Artificial Insemination Centres and one Urban A. I. centre that have been established in the District, the Department had placed about twenty-three Hariana bulls and twenty improved birds in the villages for breeding purposes.

(3) "Grow more fodder" campaign has been started in this district, though the subject has not yet been able to create any perceptible impression in the minds of our cultivators in general due to the lack of adequate propaganda and demonstration on the part of the Department, paucity of fund and personnel and lack of knowledge of the food value of various improved grasses so far introduced in the district. Our cultivators in general give little importance to balanced diet of the animals.

Special Achievements and Future Plans : (i) The Department has brought the Rinderpest, a fell disease of cattle and buffaloes, under control with mass vaccination against the disease. About one third of the entire cattle population has already been protected against the disease. (ii) Vaccination against Ranikhet disease (a disease of poultry) has been taken up by the Department, and it has been decided that all the birds will be vaccinated once a year. (iii) Preventive measures against Anthrax, Haemorrhagic Septicemia are being adopted in the places which are known to be often infected areas. (iv) Fodder cultivation at Joysagar Key Village Centre has proved to be profitable, and people of the surrounding areas are taking keen interset in "Grow more Fodder" campaign. Free distribution of roots and seeds of improved grasses are undertaken by this centre. Sale proceeds of the products of the centre bring more than what is incurred in

cultivation, though all the roots and seeds are distributed free of cost from the centre. (v) Department renders services to the people by treating their animals and advising about Animal Husbandry and allied subject. (vi) The Kaliapani Dairy Farm has been established at a cost of Rs. 6,27,000·00 for supply of milk. It has an area of 900 *bighas*. Another area of 400 *bighas* is being brought under the Farm. At present the Farm has about 93 Hariana cows and three breeding bulls. The Department contemplates to rear another 186 cows in the near future in this Farm, and supply of milk will be made available at Sibsagar and Jorhat towns. Every endeavour is being made to make the Farm self-sufficient. (vii) The Department has maintained one Bull Depot at Kaliapani where bulls are kept to distribute in the urban areas. Its aim has been to make it an ideal Livestock demonstration Depot in the 3rd Five Year Plan. (viii) It contemplates to establish one District Veterinary Laboratory for research, etc., at Jorhat town for local investigation of diseases and diagnostic purposes. (ix) One Mobile Veterinary Dispensary has started functioning in this district with adequate staff, equipments and medicines. (x) The Department contemplates to establish Veterinary Dispensaries and Aid Centres at every 10 miles in the next plan. The dispensary will have laboratory for A. I. purposes along with the treatment facilities. Each dispensary will have one demonstration fodder plot and some will have demonstration Livestock units. (xi) This district has got eighteen Veterinary Dispensaries. It is expected there will be another six Veterinary Dispensaries soon.

The Key village centre at Joysagar has the following commendable works to its credit :

1. Nos. of Inseminations	3711
2. Nos. of calves born from insemination	987
3. Nos. of calves received calf subsidy	121
4. Amount awarded	Rs. 12570.00
5. Castration of Weedy bulls	5,800
6. Vaccination (against R.P.; H.S., A.X.,B.Q., and R.D.)	57559
7. Nos. of animals treated	3749
8. Areas brought under fodder cultivation	81 bighas
9. Calf-rally held	14 Nos.
10. Cattle show held	3 Nos.

Achievement in respect of treatment and castration of animals in the District from the year 1951-52 to year 1960-61 is as follows :

1. Nos. of animals castrated	67,215
2. Nos. of animals treated	3,44,161

(d) Forest Department :

Past history regarding systematic listing of the Reserved forests of this district is very little known ; but it can be inferred that more or less

no operation was carried out in these areas in the past. Before reservation these areas were classed as Government Waste Lands.

The first area to come under reservation as early as 1872 was the Nambor Reserve. Going back to 1873 it can be gathered from available records that timber operations took place in the area now constituting Nambor Reserve North Block. Departmental operations were carried out in both the banks of the Dhansiri river.

Mr. A. R. Dicks worked out a plan in 1904, to be in force for 15 years in respect of the Nambor forests of the district. Six years later Hollongapar Reserve also was brought under systematic working with the inception in 1910 of the working plan prepared by Rai Sahab U. N. Kanjilal. This plan was for a period of 20 years. For the next 20 years after the inception of Kanjilal's plan, no attempts were made to bring any of the other reserves under any systematic scheme of working.

The mode of exploitation was, however, sporadic and irregular in nature. There was no attempt at systematic working of the Forests. The last great war was particularly responsible for an aggravation of the situation. Accessible areas were worked out.

Attempts at introduction of mechanical means for conversion of timbers began in the year 1892 when a Saw Mill was put up near Morangial within Jorhat Sub-division for cutting soft wood into tea boxes. The Mill did not work long, and was subsequently closed down. After a long lapse of time, a purchase contract was executed with the Jhanzie Tea Company in the year 1920 for the operation of timbers from Disai Reserve for making Tea Boxes. The Mill worked only for four years. Nothing further happened for the next twenty five years, till at the end of the last great war a lease land Mill was started at Golaghat to work out timbers from the drainage area of Dhansiri River. This also was subsequently closed down. In fact there are about 13 Saw Mills at present and one Veneer Mill in the District.

Present Administrative Set-up: Reserved Forests in Sibsagar Division in 1956-57 account for 4,80,880 acres and that of Dhansiri Valley Division for the same year 292,739 acres. Unclassed forests in Sibsagar Division and Dhansiri Valley Division account for 3,07,251 and 1,90,459 acres respectively in 1956-57.

These forests are now under two administrative Forest Divisions viz, Dhansiri Valley Division and the Sibsagar Division. There are four Ranges and one Independent Beat in Sibsagar Division and one Range under Dhansiri Valley Division and the headquarter of the Dhansiri Valley Division is at Manipur Road. Each Division is under the control of a Divisional Forest Officer, with one Assistant Conservator of Forests to assist him. The headquarters of the Range are at Sibsagar, Mariani, Golaghat, Kaziranga and Naojan. Each Range is under the charge of a Forest Ranger.

In the Dhansiri Valley Division there are four Reserves: (1) Nambor West (6·6 sq. miles); (2) Nambor South (9·8 sq. miles); (3) Diphu (6·5 sq. miles); and (4) Rengma (5·6 sq. miles). In the Sibsagar Division there are 18 Reserves: (1) Sapekhati (2·33 sq. miles); (2) Dilih; (3) Diroi (80·50 sq. miles); (4) Sola (2·61 sq. miles); (5) Panidihing (16·64 sq. miles); (6) Abhaypur (25·99 sq. miles); (7) Geleki (22·83 sq. miles), (8) Tiru Hills (22·62 sq. miles); (9) Disai Valley (67·35 sq. miles); (10) Disai (10·80 sq. miles); (11) Hollongapar (8·10 sq. miles); (12) Kakadonga (9·57 sq. miles); (13) Dayang (95·11 sq. miles); (14) Upper Doigurung (8·30 sq. miles); (15) Lower Daigurung (8·00 sq. miles); (16) Nambor North (Part only 31·00 sq. miles); (17) Panbari (2·95 sq. miles); and (18) Kaziranga (165·84 sq. miles). The Kaziranga Reserve Forest was constituted in 1908, and it is now the largest reserved forest of the District.

Duties & Activities of the Department: The duties and activities of the Department pertain to (1) General administration; (2) protection of the forests; (3) working of the forests, according to plans and management of the operations of timber and other minor forest produce; (4) collection of Revenue; (5) replenishing stock of timber and other minor forest produce by employing artificial methods as well as by assisting natural regeneration (6) maintenance of roads, buildings etc. as well as opening up of new lines of communication; (7) demarcation and survey; (8) managing supply of raw materials to industries and other agencies; (9) maintenance of the Tourist Lodge and rest houses and providing other amenties to the tourists for visiting Kaziranga wild life Sanctuary; (10) settlement and maintenance of Forest villages within Reserved forests.

On the side of achievement it may be mentioned that the Sibsagar division has been yielding forest revenue gradually at an increasing scale, as indicated by the figures shown below for the last ten years. The figures include a little amount of revenue from Mikir Hills District and a very negligible amount from Naga Hills district.

1950-51	... ...	3,24,613.00	1955-56	... ...	4,92,747.00
1951-52	... ...	2,33,346.00	1956-57	... ...	5,64,428.00
1952-53	... ...	2,39,076.00	1957-58	... ...	8.00,216.00
1953-54	... ...	3,14,193.00	1958-59	... ...	9,26,698.00
1954-55	... ...	3,49,096.00	1959-60	... ...	9,24,239.00

(e) Department of Industries :

For over-all supervision and administration of matters relating to industries, the Department has an Assistant Director, posted in the district headquarter at Jorhat and a Superintendent of Industries under him. With

a view to giving special attention to marketing, the Department has a Marketing Superintendent at Jorhat, as also a Marketing Officer under him. Till recently the Department had no establishment in the district, and prior to the establishment of the district office the works of the Department here were looked after by the Rural Development Officer in the Sub-divisions and by a regional Inspector of Cottage Industries under the direct supervision of the Deputy Commissioner. The district office was started at Jorhat in January, 1958 with one Superintendent of Industries. But in March of the same year it was placed under one Assistant Director, the office of the Superintendent of Industries having been merged with it. The Department has at present no establishment at Sub-divisional headquarters. It has, however, eight Extension Officers (Industries), one in each of the eight Community Development Blocks, to carry out an integrated programme of development of Industries in the Development Block areas with a separate allotment of funds specifically meant for rural art & crafts under the Block budget. This is in addition to the district and State budget for industries.

For extending technical assistance to artisans and industrial units, the Government of India in the Ministry of Commerce & Industry has also set up an Extension Centre at Jorhat under the charge of an Assistant Director. The Centre has started its work in three trades : Blacksmithy, Electroplating and General workshop.

For marketing purpose, the State Department of Industries have sales Emporia at Jorhat, Golaghat, Sibsagar and Nazira. The Emporium at Sibsagar is a marketing organisation centre meant to cater to the needs of weavers by supply of yarn, design and technical guidance, and then to take back the finished products on payment of wages. The Emporium at Jorhat has recently been taken over by the Assam Government Marketing Corporation.

For extending facilities for training, the Department has three *Training-cum-Production Centres* in the District, at Joysagar for soap making and watch & clock repairing, at Sarupathar (attached to the Community Development Block Headquarters) and at Moamari in Majuli for Blacksmithy & welding. These have put emphasis on practical works and have an artisanship bias. The Block Development headquarters at Kamalabari (Majuli) and Dimow are soon going to have *Training-cum-Production Units* in bamboo works. The non-official efforts for training facilities are also worth mentioning. The mahila samitis at Golaghat & Jorhat have facilities for training in weaving, tailoring and knitting works. The Golaghat Samiti has an additional branch of leather works. The *Central Social welfare Board* has a training centre at Titabar. Besides these, there are several other small units organised by members of the public all over the district.

The *Khadi and Village Industries Board* has a district organiser at

Jorhat to look after the Board's programmes and has a model centre for Bee-keeping at Bahona near Jorhat and Bee-keeping fieldmen in the interior areas. The Board has also an oil *ghani* Inspector at Golaghat. Besides the Government Sales Emporia in the district, the Board has also a Sales Emporium (khadi bhandars) for sale at Jorhat, Golaghat & Sibsagar. The Khadi Board has *parisramalys* for spinning of cotton yarn by *Ambar Charkhas* at different places of the district. The attempt at Patsako near Sibsagar for manufacture of washing-soap from non-edible oil with financial assistance from the Khadi Board has not proved successful, mainly for high cost entailed in bringing non-edible oil from outside the State.

(f) Co-operative Department :

The majority of population in the district are directly or indirectly dependent on Agriculture. Most cultivators are in debt and a few of them has up till now been supplied with credit from co-operative agencies. The private individuals like the money lenders, village Mahajans have been playing the dominant role in the field of rural credit, who charge interest at exhorbitant rate, which falls heavily on the poor agriculturists. Normally there is no arrangement also to finance agricultural undertakings through the Government agency, though during difficult times and acute distress Government render such help to people in distress and agricultural loan is given in time of cattle mortality or failure of crops due to floods, or ravages caused by insects, etc.

History of Credit Movement : After the passing of the *All India Co-operative Societies Act* of 1904 Assam took to organisation of *Primary Credit Societies* with unlimited liabilities in the rural areas and with limited liabilities in urban areas, and after the *All India Co-operative Act* of 1912 came into force, all other types of Co-operative Societies and their federations were organised ; but the main form of Co-operative was the establishment of *Rural Credit Societies* for supplying credit to the agriculturists. With this end in view a Central Bank was established in the District. During the depression almost all the Rural Societies became worse as there was no paying capacity on the part of the members. The *Rural Co-operative Credit Societies* continued to survive only some how.

Consumers & Trading Movements : During the World War II along with the rise in the prices of agricultural products, the price of consumer goods shot up, and supply of these goods could not keep pace with the demand ; black marketing and profiteering became rampant inspite of control orders promulgated by the Government. With a view to giving relief to the people in securing consumer goods at reasonable price, the Co-operative Department paid its attention to formation of *Consumers Co-operative*

Societies in all subdivisions. This consumer movement was very much popular at the beginning. The growth was, however, not healthy, as these societies depended principally on controlled goods. This is evident from the fact that, with the lifting of control, most of the Consumers Stories started closing down.

In 1947 the Co-operative Department prepared a new scheme whereby a large element of Government control and management was introduced. The activities were also proposed to be concentrated on Multipurpose Trading Co-operative and the movement was to form an integral part of the development plan with the formation of Rural Panchayats. The scheme was given effect to by an Act of 1949, and intensive action was taken to cover the entire Sub-division with *Primary Trading Co-operatives* with uniform bye laws. According to the scheme the Prmary Societies were to be federated into a *Central Trading Co-operatives* in each sub-division. To finance all these societies the *Assam Co-operative Apex Bank* was started with branches in principal Sub-divisional towns. The Apex Bank was to advance money to the *Central Trading Co-operatives* which were to procure the controlled goods and supply to the *Primary Trading Co-operatives* on payments. These societies worked only till the controls continued.

During the period of last six years the credit movement in the district has regained the confidence of the people which was so badly shaken for its reverses due to the last great war. During this period a relatively satisfactory progress of constructive work in certain spheres of co-operation has been made. The active support of the Government, which the movement has received has helped in dispelling doubts from the mind of the people during the period of transition from the Trading Co-operative Movement to a planned development conceived from an entirely new angle.

To solve the problem of the agriculturists the co-operative movement had to make available cheap, adequate and timely credit through *Co-operative Credit Societies.* Thus with a view to rehabilitate the co-operative credit movement Statewise schemes were prepared and given effect to from January, 1954. In order to operate the scheme, the financial working condition of the Central Banks was examined and where necessary, replenished for financing the *Primary Credit Societies.* The *Primary Credit Societies* were also examined and classified into 3 categories viz., A.B.C. according to their credit worthiness. Thus some works were taken up in the 1st Five Year Plan under State Level Scheme and progress achieved there on was satisfactory.

During '59-60 about 100 *Service Co-operative Societies* were organised both in Jorhat and Golaghat Sub-divisions either by revitalising the old small size unlimited credit societies or by organising new such societies in the area not served by any Co-operative Society. These *Service Co-operative Societies* were to obtain a subsidy of Rs. 150/- each. Further it was also proposed to install one Co-operative Oil Mill C.D. Block. The milk was to get a share capital contribution of Rs. 75,000/- and as subsidy Rs. 3,000/- from the Government.

Organisational set-up: In the District level there is one Assistant Registar of Co-operative Societies for Jorhat and Golaghat Sub-divisions with headquarters at Jorhat. Sibsagar Sub-division of the District falls within the jurisdiction of the Assistant Registrar of Co-operative Societies Dibrugarh. There are two Sub-divisional Co-operative Officers designated as Deputy Co-operative Officers with headquarters at Jorhat and Golaghat under the Assistant Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Jorhat, and another Sub-divisional Deputy Co-operative Officer is in Charge of Sibsagar Sub-division within the administrative control of the Assistant Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Dibrugarh. Each Sub-division has separate staff, one for audit and the other for organisation works of the Co-operative Societies.

Audit work of the department has been entrusted to the officers of the rank of Deputy Co-operative Officer, and generally each Sub-division has utilised services of 4 or more Deputy Co-operative officers in audit work. The Department has engaged the services of two Deputy Co-operative Officers in each Sub-division to supervise the works of credit and marketing exclusively. The services of Deputy Co-operative Officer I/c credit is now placed at the disposal of Central Co-operative Banks of the Sub-divisions for working as Secretary of the Bank.

The Department has posted one Assistant Co-operative Officer in each block and shadow block of the Sub-divisions for organisational works. There are six Assistant Co-operative Officers in Golaghat Sub-division and six Assistant Co-operative Officers in Sibsagar Sub-division for the purpose. Further two or three Assistant Co-operative Officers have now been posted for supervision of credit work, and their services are placed at the disposal of the *Central Co-operative Banks* of the Sub-division. One more Assistant Co-operative Officer is placed in charge of the Land Mortgage Section of each Central Bank to deal exclusively with the long term loan.

Besides the above organisational set up, each Sub-division has a Liquidator of Co-operative Societies with headquarters at Sub-divisional towns, drawn from the rank of Deputy Co-operative Officer. The Department has also placed two Deputy Co-operative Officers exclusively for audit of the *Assam Co-operative Sugar Mills, Ltd.*, Baruabamungaon, at Golaghat Sub-division and one Deputy Co-operative Officer has also been placed in charge of the *Sugarcane Farming Co-operative Societies,* Golaghat.

(g) Excise Department :

(i) *State :* Until the time when the post of the Excise Commissioner was created, matters relating to excise were vested in the Commissioner of Divisions for the Brahmaputra Valley, and the Chief Commissioner exercised the same functions in so far as the Surma Valley and the Hills Districts were concerned. There were altogether 3 Excise Inspectors for entire Assam.

During the year 1904 the number of posts of Excise Inspectors was raised to 8 so as to provide one Inspector in each of the Plain district of the State, and they have been posted under the direct control of the D.C. of the district, two of them belonging to the cader of E.A.C. and 6 to that of S.D.C.

In the year 1905 when Bengal was partitioned and a state was formed as Eastern Bengal and Assam, then a whole time Commissioner of Excise was appointed to run the Department. This arrangement has continued till this date. In the year 1910 the designation of the Excise Inspector, posted in each of the plain district, was changed to that of Superintendent of Excise and the post of Sub-Inspector of Excise was also introduced. This continued till the year 1920 when the post of Sub-Inspector was abolished and was designated as Inspector of Excise.

Again the post of Sub-Inspector was reintroduced in the year 1928 and this post was again abolished in the year 1948, as recommended by the Pay Committee held in that year.

Gradually the preventive and Inspecting staff were increased and in the year 1954 a few posts of Deputy Superintendent of Excise wre created. The present departmental strength in the district is : one Superintendent of Excise, 2 Deputy Superintendents and 16 Inspectors, with 12 Circles and 2 Warehouses at Nazira and Jorhat. Above this there are 4 Special Inspectors under the Deputy Commissioner of Excise for preventing opium and Ganga smuggling. The district of Sibsagar has been noted for opium eaters. There was no restriction to manufacture or to cultivate opium beforehand, and no prohibition too. It was realised that its unrestricted use had a degrading effect upon the persons concerned. So the most important task of the Department of Excise had been to put a check to its smuggling and to its use. With this end in view our State Government introduced total prohibition of Opium and directed the Excise Department to deal strongly with both the classes of offenders.

Prohibition policy is a very long term policy and its effect can be gauged only in generations and not in years. In the new generation there is hardly any opium addicts.

Though opium prohibition was introduced in the year 1941, all offences relating there to were dealt with under the *Opium Act* of 1873. In

1947 the *Opium Prohibition Act* was promulgated and all offences relating thereto are being dealt under this Act since then.

In this district Ganja is not largely used. Like opium its use has gradually decreased, and the passing of the Act of total prohibition in April, 1959 has reduced its use to the minimum.

Consumption of Country spirit or liquor in the year 1905-06 in this district was 20,520·0 L.P.G. and gradually the consumtion increased to 1,97,635·2 L.P.G. in the year 1958-59. This shows that its use has increased inspite of the prohibition.

Even though Acts of prohibition have been promulgated, the total Excise revenue from all heads rose to Rs. 59,77,843/- in the year 1958-59 from a sum of Rs. 7,06,298/- in the year 1905-1906, within last fifty years.

Excise and opium offences : 141 cases were detected in the year 1905-06, and with increase of staff and reorganisation of the Department the detection rose to 2,382 cases in the year 1958-59.

(ii) *Central Excise :* The Central Excise administration was started in Assam in 1944 with the Jorhat Circle then comprising of some of the tea gardens of Sibsagar and some of Golaghat Sub-Division. Subsequently on reorganisation, the present Circle with its jurisdiction of Jorhat Subdivision only, came into existence.

This Circle has been divided into 3 Ranges, each under one Deputy Superintendent. The Ranges have again been divided into Sectors, each under one Ispector. There are in total 18 Sectors in this Circle. Besides, there is one Inland Land Customs Station at Nimati under this Circle, and that Station is managed by 3 Inspectors and 1 Sub-Inspector under the direct supervision of the Superintendent. There are 3 P.I.O.s in this Circle headquarter whose main duty is the prevention of smuggling and collection of Intelligence.

The Circle of Sibsagar till 1958 covered the whole Sibsagar Subdivision, placed under the charge of a Superintendent with his headquarters at Sibsagar, assisted by one Deputy Superintendent with 24 T. F. Ranges. With effect from March, 1958, the Circle Administration was reorganised creating 3 M.O. Ranges, placed under the charge of a Deputy Superintendent for each Range and having 6 Sector office under each Range office. With effect from 1-2-59 a portion of Lakhimpur District (Tingkhong area) has been attached to this Circle. The present strength of staff of this Circle office are one Superintendent, assisted by 4 Deputy Superintendents designated as M.O. Range Officers, having five Sectors under each Range ; each Sector has under it 3 to 4 Tea Factories.

Golaghat Circle came into existence in 1949, but the jurisdiction was changed from time to time for the sake of better administrative control. This

Circle now comprises of Golaghat Sub-division of Sibsagar District and portions of the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District, north of the North Eastern Railway line, between Lumding Railway Station and Naojon Railway Station, and old Naga Hills district.

(h) Publicity Department :

The utility of publicity in a democratic Government is too evident to be emphasised. Publicity has essentially an educative value, which should to be inculcated in the minds of the people for appreciating the activities of the Government and for creating an urge in them so as to go ahead in the establishment of a Welfare State.

In recent years with the implementation of the Schemes of the Community Projects, the Five Year Plans, etc., the work of publicity has assumed more importance.

During the Five Year Plan period the District Publicity officers are required to publicise Plan activities in the areas under their jurisdiction. Besides publicising National and States' Plans, these Officers have been doing miscellaneous publicity works for their respective districts. An Information Bureau has been set-up in each District Publicity Office. Provision has also been made for holding fairs, exhibitions and staging dramas, in addition to regular display of documentaries in the rural and urban areas. One mobile unit with its accessories has been placed at the disposal of each District Publicity Officer, and this publicity media has been playing an important part in publicising developmental activities of our State Government. The said Officers help the local Press correspondents in supplying informations relating to Government's activities and cover tour programmes of Union and State Ministers.

The District Publicity Officers are also to take necessary steps for installing dry battery Radio sets in the villages within their respective jurisdictions. The mass people are thus helped in listening to radio programme broadcast specially for them from the All India Radio. Endeavours have now been made to persuade the villagers to come to the studios for taking part in the broadcasting programmes. Thus the District Publicity Unit has undertaken extensive tour in contacting the rural population in large numbers and making them familiar with the Governmental activities.

(i) Education Department :

The Inspectors of Schools, Upper Assam Circle (comprising the 2 districts, of Sibsagar and Lakhimpur) is the Divisional Head for all Educational Institutions from Primary to the Secondary stage. He has under his control one Assistant Inspector of Schools with his headquarter at Dibrugarh and another at Jorhat. The Deputy Inspectors, Additional

Deputy Inspector of Schools, Sub-Inspectors of Schools and their Assistants have had their head offices in every sub-division.

There is only one Inspector for Physical Education for the said Circle. Besides there is one District Organiser for Social Education of the District with one S.I. and two Assistant S.I. with headquarters at Jorhat.

Inspection of High Schools, special and professional Schools is done by the Inspector and Assistant Inspectors, Middle Schools by the Deputy Inspectors and Primary Schools by Sub-Inspectors and Assistant Sub-Inspectors. Details about the activities of the Department and the progress achieved in the removal of mass illiteracy in the district along with the advancement of the cultural life of the people in general appear in Chapter XV.

(j) Postal Department :

Sibsagar Postal Division has under it the three units of Sibsagar, Nagaland and Manipur. The Superintendent of the Division has his headquarter at Jorhat. He is directly under the control of the Director P. & T., Assam Circle, Shillong. For administrative purposes and for running the services efficiently the Division has been divided into four sub-divisions, and each is under an Inspector. In the district of Sibsagar there are two such sub-divisions : Jorhat and Sibsagar with headquarters at Jorhat and Sibsagar respectively. The headquarters of the other two sub-divisions are at Imphal (*Manipur*). The two Inspectors in the Sibsagar District are assisted by twenty ,Overseers spread all over the district. There is a large field staff of postal peons, runners, etc. There is one Head Post Master of the Senior selection grade of the postal service at the Head Post Office at Jorhat. Below him there are four Postmasters of Junior selection grade, who control the Sub-Post Offices at Golaghat, Sibsagar, Nazira and Dergaon. Below them are the Postmasters controlling the time scale sub-Post Offices. The extra departmental post offices are under the control of the Head-Postmaster. The extra departmental branch post offices are under the control of the Head-Postmasters, selection grade sub-Postmasters and time scale sub-Postmasters.

In recent years, with the establishment of a large number of new post-offices and branch offices, there has been a considerable increase in the volume of works, done by the Departmental staff throughout the district.

CHAPTER XIV

LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT

(a) History of the Institution :

The history of local self government in the district is obscure. During the pre-Ahom period it is possible that ancient Indian institutions like Pura and Janapada and other units of local administration functioned at different places.[1] The Ahoms who established their rule in Assam in the thirteenth century, introduced their own system of administration; but they also seemed to have favoured the Panchayat as an instrument of local government. This body constituted of elderly, experienced representatives of the people in the rural areas concerned was generally utilised for settling local disputes. But these local bodies were generally overshadowed by the personal rule of the feudal nobles who constituted the hierarchy of the Ahom administration as well as by a system of centralised monarchy. When the British came it was to the Panchayat that they also turned their attention at the beginning of their administration for despatch of revenue and judicial business. Municipal Boards and Local Boards as institutions of local government were created by the British at a later time.

(b) Municipal Boards :

Among the three Municipal Boards in the district, the Jorhat Municipal Board is the oldest and Golaghat the youngest. The former was formed in February, 1909 by raising the status of the Jorhat Union. At present this Board has as many as 14 members, of which 2 are nominated by Government from scheduled caste and schedule tribe communities. The rest are elected from six wards, each of which is a double member constituency. The Chairman is elected by the members themselves. The Board derives its income from taxes levied on municipal holdings, cinema halls, rice mill, flour mill, hotel, restaurant, bakery, soda water factory, bamboo, firewood and timber godowns, pony-cart, rickshaws, markets, etc. The Municipal market alone gives an income of more than one lakh of rupees annually. In addition to its own income from taxes, the Board receives recurring and non-recurring grants from Government.

Milk is supplied in this town partly by co-operative Milk Union and partly by milk-men. Introduction of city bus is being contemplated.

1. See P. C. Chowdhury : *History of Civilisation of Assam* (*2nd ed.*) p. p. 299-304.

One of the important duties of the municipality has been to maintain roads and bridges under its jurisdiction and to look after proper clearance of the principal lanes and other thorough-fares with the help of a band of Harizons, who are paid from the Board's funds. Supply of pure water, looking after sanitation and taking active part in eradicating epidemic diseases are some of the beneficial measures, undertaken by the municipality.

The Sibsagar Municipality was established on 22nd November, 1916. There are twelv lected members in this Board representing 12 single-member wards, with a Chairman from among themselves. Formerly there were 3 nominated members, but since 1958 this number has been reduced to 2. The Board derives its income from tax levied on municipal holdings, light, cycle, cart and rickshaw registration fees, tax on profession and trade, tolls on ferries, pound, vaccination fee, conservancy receipts other than taxes, fees on market. Besides, it received yearly grants from Government.

During 1959-60 important municipal roads were improved and two footpaths were constructed on either side of the road leading from the Siva temple to the Marwari patty charali with the Government grant of Rs. 15,000.00.

Compost manure has been distributed among Government farms and fisheries. The Board has made available grants to two educational and other public institutions

The Golaghat Municipal Board was formed in 1920 when the status of the Union Board was raised to that of a Municipality. The Board is constituted of 8 elected members, including the Chairman, 4 of which represent 2 double-member wards and 2 nominated members. It derives its income from taxes levied on Municipal holdings, street-light, markets, stalls, etc.

All the Municipalities are run in accordance with the provisions laid down in the Assam Municipal Act, 1956, Subsdiary Rules, framed by the Government from time to time, and Fundamental Rules.

In order to have a picture of incomes and expenditures of the Municipalities in the district under different heads we may take the year 1958-59 as a test year, and the figures are as follows:

INCOME TABLE (*in rupees*)

Sources of income	*Jorhat Municipality*	*Sibsagar Municipality*	*Golaghat Municipality*
Opening balance	21,000	20,526	16,420
Tax on houses and lands	1,33,106	32,873	22,000
Pounds	500	296	20
Fees from markets	1,13,648	9,404	21,000
Grants from Local funds & Govt.	82,436	40,542	7,321
Other sources	82,170	1,80,248	87,300

EXPENDITURE TABLE (*in rupees*)

Heads of Expenditure	*Jorhat Municipality*	*Sibsagar Municipality*	*Golaghat Municipality*
Administration	25,474	17,604	6,842.77
Conservancy	79,437	36,186	570.00
Public works	58,921	15,334	3,529.89
Public Instruction	836	350	300.00
Drainage	3,526	3,131	570.00
Other heads	1,91,519	73,771	
Closing balance	73,147	1,37,013	10,857.00

(c) Town Planning and Public Health :

There are no town-planning schemes in the district. The Public health engineering Department has been carrying on two national water supply and sanitation schemes, (rural) one at Charing and the other at Titabar. The former consists of Simaluguri, Jakaisuk, Gadhulibazar and Morabazar mauzas, and the latter Thengal and Titabar mauzas. The estimated cost of each is Rs. 4,05,000.00.

Nazira Town Committee: The Nazira Town Committe was established on 1st July, 1909 under the Bengal Municipal Act 1884 (III of 1884) which was in force till March, 1923 when it was replaced by the Assam Municipal Act I of 1923 which came into force with effect from 1-4-23, as amended from time to time and was in force till 31-10-57 which was replaced by the Assam Municipal Act, 1956 (*Assam Act XV* of 1957) that came into force with effect from 1st November, 1957.

The small town of Nazira is comprised of 4 wards for which there are 4 members elected from each ward. There are also two nominated members.

The area of the town is rather small. Had the Assam Tea Company establishments been within the Town Committee area, there would have been a considerable increase in the total jurisdiction of the Town Committee.

The Town Committee is run in accordance with the provisions laid down in Assam Municipal Act, 1956, as amended from time to time, Committee's Model Bye-laws and Subsidiary Rules framed and published under Government notifications, Fundamental Rules and Subsidiary Rules, made thereunder with amendments from time to time.

The Committee derives its income from taxes levied on houses, light, conveyances including cart, bicycles and rickshaws, revenue from market and pound, fines under the Municipal Act, and Government grants and other sources.

Though the town has been electrified since 26-1-59 under the Town and Village Electrification Scheme, the entire town area is yet to be brought under electrification.

On the absence of the Water Works, water supply position of the Town Committee is unsatisfactory. The Town Committee with its limited resources cannot undertake water works scheme to solve the problem of scarcity of pure drinking water nor can it do the same by taking loan. So Government have been moved to take up a water supply scheme for Nazira under the National Water Supply Scheme and Sanitation Programme.

The income from taxation per head of population during 1960-61 stood at Rs. 2.70 against Rs. 2.79 of previous year and that of income was Rs. 6.64 during 1960-61 against Rs. 6.80 previous year.

The total income of the Town Committee, as in 1960-61 stood at Rs. 32,995/- (including opening balance of Rs. 2,082) against Rs. 29,463/- of the preceding year and the total expenditure during the same year was Rs. 31,753/- against Rs. 27,381 of the previous year.

The table below shows income and expenditure of the Town Committee for five years from 1956-57 to 1960-61.

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT OF NAZIRA TOWN COMMITTEE FROM 1956-57 to 1960-61.

Source of Income	INCOME					Heads of Expenditure	EXPENDITURE				
	1956-57	1957-58	1958-59	1959-60	1960-61		1956-57	1957-58	1958-59	1959-60	1960-61
Opening balance	7,941	4,633	3,332	3,549	2,082	General Administration & collection charges	6,793	7,527	7,062	7,862	8,942
Tax on house & lands	4,274	5,730	5,515	4,741	5,239	Public safety (lighting)	635	523	638	2,583	2,924
Tax on animal & vehicles	23	83	—	—	18	Water Supply	471	319	426	325	1,114
Latrine Tax	5,023	6,785	6,599	5,756	6,003	Drainage	500	220	200	120	1,400
Lighting Tax	—	—	—	1,356	2,199	Conservancy	9,018	8,211	8,675	8,039	8,707
Warrant fee	1	13	2	25	—	Public Health & Dispensary	1,144	1,402	1,981	859	60
Process fee	4	5	—	—	—	Vaccination	864	924	935	1,046	1,106
Rent on lands	362	331	331	321	319	Market	325	2,461	423	523	297
Hat revenue	3,010	2,868	3,560	2,760	2,529	Public works	4,310	5,317	5,968	1,460	2,112
Pound revenue	40	40	45	50	40	Public Instruction (Contribution to School Board)	808	832	832	908	184
License fee on bicycles, Rickshaws, tea & sweet-meat shop & dangerous & offensive trades	1,757	2,337	2,725	1,823	1,676	Miscellaneous	2,105	2,113	2,590	3,040	3,611
Vaccination fee	3	4	3	3	2	Repayment of Govt. Loan	616	616	616	616	616
Government grant (recurring & non-recurring)	9,594	10,840	11,090	8,234	10,513	Advance to employee	—	—	—	—	680
Miscellaneous	190	78	693	845	4,457						

Dergaon Town Committee: The Dergaon Town Committee came into existence in 1960, but actually started functioning from 1961. It is a small town with an area of less than 2 square miles. The total yearly income of the Town Committee stands at about Rs. 30,000.00. The L.S.G. Department of the State is granting some grants towards its managements.

The town committee has got four wards. But government have proposed to exclude the entire area, occupied by the A.P. Battalion and Police Training College from the Town Committee jurisdiction and hence no assessment could be made in the above areas for realisation of revenues. The exclusion of this vast area has thus minimised the total receipts of the town committee. One other drawback of the town committee in its income side is that it has no daily market within its jurisdiction wherefrom it could have drawn its income.

The town committee has got no water supply or conservancy provisions. Arrangement will, however, be made shortly for conservancy works. Water supply schemes may be delayed till the financial condition of the town committee improves.

Dergaon being less important in respect of trade and commercial transactions, income side of the town committee is not likely to improve in the coming years. The Town committee has made provisions for street lights under its jurisdictions through the State Electricity Board, Assam.

(d) Local Boards :

Till the introduction of the system of Local-Self Administration through Panchayats, Local Boards functioned at least in all the plains districts of Assam. The history of this institution goes back to 1915 when under the provisions of the Assam Local Self-Government Act (*Assam Act I* of 1915) one Local Board in each of the three sub-divisions of Sibsagar was established. Majority of the members of the Boards were elected, but a small proportion of them were nominated from either officials or non-officials and were appointed by the Commissioner of Divisions, subject to the control of the Local Government. Sibsagar being a tea growing district, a proportion of the members were tea-planters, elected from among themselves.

The procedure followed in the election of members for and constitution of, Local Boards had been identical with that of the Legislative Council. Local Boards could elect non-official Vice-Chairman, and Chairman as well with the approval of the Government.

These bodies were empowered to hold both moveable and immoveable property, and might take over property vested in any person when it was necessary to do so.

Subject to rules, the Local Boards had to provide, within the sub-division, for the construction, repair and maintenance of roads, embank-

ments, bridges, waterways and other works except a few main lines of communication which were under the management of the P.W.D. Subject to the general control of the Education Department, Local Boards were entrusted with the management of Primary education, and could, where necessary, raise a Primary school to the Middle vernacular standard. They were also allowed to maintain and make grants to M. E. schools. These Boards also maintained under them dispensaries, including Veterinary units, besides adopting proper measures for sanitation and health.

The Boards received local rates, levied under the *Assam Local Rates Regulation*, 1879, the surplus income from pounds and ferries, and other taxes and tolls levied under the Assam Local Self-Government Act. This income was supplemented by annual grants from provincial funds. The annual budgets of the Local Boards were submitted to the Commissioner of Divisions for sanction. With the repeal of the *Local Self-Government Act*, 1953 (*Assam Act XXV* of 1953), the Local Boards of Sibsagar, Jorhat and Golaghat were abolished and their functions were taken over by the Panchayats, enacted under the *Assam Panchayat Act*, 1959.

The Jorhat Local Board till it was taken over by the *Mahakuma Parisad* consisted of 30 members, 24 general and 2 each of Scheduled caste, Tribal and Nominated categories. The following tables will show income and expenditure of the Board during 1957-58 under different heads.

INCOME TABLE (*in rupees*)		EXPENDITURE TABLE (*in rupees*)	
(1) Land Revenue	21,917	(1) Interest	1,538
(2) Provincial Rate	84,616	(2) General Administration	31,611
(3) Interest	50	(3) Law & Justice	387
(4) Police	3,002	(4) Education	32,829
(5) Medical	27,858	(5) Medical	47,174
(6) Civil Works	82,710	(6) Scientific & Other minor departments	12,220
(7) Miscellaneous	8,378	(7) Pension & Allowance	1,244
		(8) Stationery & Printing	2,744
		(9) Civil Works	1,26,427
		(10) Miscellaneous	1,926
		(11) Closing Balance	37,365

The total Government contribution during the year amounted to Rs. 71,247.00.

The Sibsagar Local Board in 1957-58 consisted of 39 members, 27 general, 3 plains tribal, 4 Scheduled Caste, 5 nominated. The following was the financial position of the Board during that year: Opening balance: Rs. 1,95,736.00, total receipt excluding debt deposit and advance : Rs. 2,40,231.00; total expenditure : Rs. 2,45,316.00 and closing balance : Rs. 1,89,496.00.

The composition and functions of the Local Board at Golaghat, being almost similar to those of Jorhat and Sibsagar, we have refrained from enumerating them.

The following table will show the income and expenditure of Golaghat Local Board during the year 1957-58 under different heads.

INCOME TABLE (*in rupees*)		EXPENDITURE TABLE (*in rupees*)	
(1) Opening Balance	1,91,758	(1) Improvement of Bazar	15,876
(2) Land Revenue	33,407	(2) General Administration	8,584
(3) Local Rate	20,000	(3) Law & Justice	58
(4) Law & Justice	162	(4) Police	372
(5) Police	3,389	(5) Education	507
(6) Medical	14,778	(6) Medical	21,139
(7) Miscellaneous	4,056	(7) Scientific & Other minor departments	11,494
(8) Civil Works	10,525	(8) Pension	796
(9) Communication	77,670	(9) Stationery & Printing	198
		(10) Miscellaneous	1,882
		(11) Civil Works	3,927
		(12) Communication	55,702
		(13) Closing Balance	18,839

(c) Panchayat : History of the Institution :

The Panchayat as a local unit of administrative machinery goes back to antiquity in Assam, and the institution continued to function in different capacities in both the pre-Ahom and Ahom days.

When the British took the administration of Assam, a properly organised Panchayat or Council appears to have functioned from 1825 to 1828 with regular sessions on the bank of the Joysagar Tank. In the Council were included among others Kasinath Tamuliphukan and Radhanath Barbarua.

But in the middle of 1828 when Maniram Dutta, later known as Maniram Dewan became the Revenue Seristadar under Captain Nuefville, the former Council or Panchayat was split up into three different organs: (1) Sadar Panchayat or Barpanchayat; (2 Sarupanchayat; (3 Charachari Panchayat or Council.

The first and the second Panchayats were to deal with cases of money lending and borrowing. Cases involving from Rs. 300/- to 1000/- were dealt with by the *Barpanchayat*, while the *Sarupanchayat* dealt with cases involving less than 300/- rupees. The *Charachari Panchayat* or the Council tried cases relating to non-payment of Government revenue and taxes, or heavy imposition of Government taxes or cases involving any dispute on land between the tenants and the landlords.

Serious cases involving murder, cheating, robbery, theft, caste-humiliation and treason were tried by different courts to which the prominent members from the *Bar* and *Saru Panchayats* were called to give their considered opinion in the proper dispensation of justice.

In November, 1828 Captain Nuefville shifted the Panchayat from Joysagar to Jorhat Nabahar, and up to the resumption of Purandar Sinha (22nd April, 1833 the *Panchayatghar* of Jorhat Nabahar was known as the *Kachari* (court). But though the Panchayats were shifted to Jorhat yet the *Dewani Panchayat* was retained on the bank of the Joysagar Tank. It was this *Dewani Panchayat* at Joysagar that inflicted death sentence in 1830 to Jeuram Duliya Barua and Piyoli Barphukan on charges of treason against the British.

Rural Panchayat: An interesting development in the post-independence Assam was the Rural Development Plan of the Assam Government, according to which Rural Panchayats were established, covering the entire district. The *Assam Rural Panchayat Bill* of 1948 received the assent of the Governor General of India in November 1948 and became law in December 1953. The Act envisages two tiers of Panchayats: *Primary Panchayats* at the village level and the *Rural Panchayats* at the next higher level comprising five to seven Primary Panchayats. The Rural Panchayats, established thus in the rural areas of every district were to cover population of about 10,000. The primary Panchayats under the Act did not possess independent powers and functioned mostly as agents of the Rural Panchayats.

The main consideration governing the formation of these Panchayats was that each of them should be a compact and as far as practicable, economically self-sufficient block and that even the remotest house included within its area of operation should *not* be more than two and a half miles to four miles from the rural development centre. Under the *Assam Rural Panchayat Amendment Act* 1952, the number of population had been increased to 20,000 in accordance with the instruction, issued by the Planning Commission, and consequently the area under each Rural Panchayat was enlarged.

In every Rural Panchayat a trained Secretary was placed in charge of the office. It was further sub-divided into smaller units, called *Primary Panchayats*, each comprising some homogeneous villages. Under the Amended Bill the number of Primary Panchayats under each Rural Panchayat was restricted to five. The adult members of the constituent units were to elect under the Principal Act one representative to the Rural Panchayats for every two hundred of their population, but in view of the Amended Act, every five hundred of their population were to elect one representative to the Rural Panchayat. This representative Assembly was

responsible for electing its own President and Vice-President. Besides this permanent body, each Primary Panchayat had its own Primary Executive Committee to manage its own affairs.

The Primary Panchayats formed during this period assisted the Rural Panchayats in (1) improving rural communications ; (2) installing ring-wells, Tube-wells or digging tanks, i.e. improving drinking water supply ; (3) Collection of taxes from village markets, Ponds, carts and Bicycles in their areas and in other development activities.

With the establishment of a Primary Panchayat, a properly trained salaried Secretary was appointed and his chief work, besides acting as the Registrar of births, deaths and marraige, was to make a house to house survey of the number of persons, and land possessed by each household, the amount and type of agricultural produce, the cotton industries practised, etc. On the basis of the information gathered, the Rural Panchayat was required to formulate developmental plan of the whole area, which, among other things, covered agricultural prospects, i.e. crops to be raised and their marketing, cottoge industries to be sponsored and developed, including disposal of the products thereof, and in all possible ways to make the area economically self-sufficient. In all these tasks it was expected that new Primary Trading Co-operatives contemplated under the Rural Development Plan would play a great part, specially in importing into the area all goods required by the people from outside and buying from the villagers the surplus agricultural and cottage industries products and in marketing with profit in the interest of the members. This Primary Trading Co-operative was to function as the economic sinews of the unit, of which the "Panchayat cabinet" under the chairman of the Rural Panchayat formed the administrative and executive counterparts. The principle of decentralisation of power and economy had thus been secured as above, and this would have a real meaning had the administration of justice been separated and given to the institution of what is called *Panchayati Adalat*. But before the *Panchayati Adalat*, as contemplated in the Act, came into being, the *Rural Panchayat Act* itself was substituted by the *Assam Panchayat Act* 1959.

The *Assam Panchayat Act* 1959 was passed following the recommendation of the Balwanta Rai Mehta Committee. The main aim of the Act was to launch a State-wide programme of democratic decentralisation. With this end in view, the Government of Assam decided to devolve full responsibility to the Panchayats for developing the entire countryside, and accordingly the *Assam Panchayat Act* was enacted and given effect to from 1st October, 1959. The Act provides for three tiers of Panchayati Organisation : the *Gaon* Panchayat at the village level, the *Anchalik Panchayat* at the Block level and the *Mahakuma Parisad* at the Sub-divisional level.

The *Gaon Panchayat* is constituted of 11 to 13 members with a President and a Vice-President, elected by all electors of the *Gaon Sabha*.

A *Gaon Sabha* consists of one or more villages having a population of about 2,500 on the average. There is provision for co-option of one woman member and one each from the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe, if none is elected.

The *Anchalik Panchayat* representatives are to be elected directly by the electors of the *Gaon Sabha* falling within its jurisdiction. One representative is required to be elected by the Chairman of Co-operative. All M.L.A.s and M.P.s, are represented as ex-officio members having no right to vote. There is provision for co-option of one member each from the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes, if none is elected. The *Mahakuma Parisad* is to be composed of the Presidents of the *Anchalik Panchayats*, all M.P.s and M.L.A.s, Chairman of the Municipalities, Town Committees and School Boards and such officers as Government may appoint as ex-officio members. Here also there is provision for co-option of one member each from the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes, if none is elected. With the coming into force of the new *Panchayat Act* of 1959, all 23 *Rural Panchayats* in the district were abolished and *ad hoc Anchalik Panchayats* formed by Government who also selected the Presidents either from M.L.A.s or old Rural Panchayat Presidents. These office-bearers were allowed to continue till elected persons took over charge from them in 1960-61.

Rural Welfare: The *Gaon Panchayat* is required to look after and manage: (*i*) Village sanitation and health; (*ii*) rural communications; (*iii*) education and culture; (*iv*) village defence; (*v*) improvement of agriculture and preservation of forests; (vi) improved breeding of cattle; (*vii*) village industries and (*viii*) any other functions, assigned by the State Government. The *Anchalik Panchayat* in the Community Development area is to implement *Community Development programmes*, in addition to doing its other statutory duties and functions. The *Mahakuma Parisad*, mainly a co-ordinating, supervising and advisory body having practically no executive functions to perform, is to advise and guide the *Anchalik Panchayats*, approve of their budgets, and to advise preparing district plans and distributing grant-in-aid.

Unlike some other States, in Assam representatives to the *Anchalik Panchayats* are directly elected by the villagers on the basis of adult franchise. Another distinguishing feature of the Assam Act is that a non-official is elected as President of the Mahakuma Parishad. Unlike Andhra, Assam has established *Anchalik Panchayats* both in the Community Development Block areas as well as in the Shadow Blocks.

Financial Resources: Provision has been made in the Act to give the Panchayat organisation sufficient financial resources. Government intended to pool resources from other development departments for this purpose. At the village level the *Gaon Panchayats* have been allowed to have local rates, collected within its area. Besides, it is to obtain a share (15 per cent) of the land revenue collected within its jurisdiction, as well as the sale proceeds of all the pounds and minor *hats*, and one-third share of the receipt from the major *hats*, and have had the authority to impose taxes on brick buildings, sale of fire wood and thatch, slaughter houses, supply of water and lighting, cess on registration of sale of cattle, license fee on tea-stalls, hotels, sweetmeat shops, private *hats*, collection of hides and bones and surcharge on duty for transfer of immoveable property. It is expected that each *Gaon Panchayat* will have a sum of Rs. 2,500 each year from all these sources. Besides, it will receive grants for specific development purposes like rural water supply, rural communications, self-help projects, social education, etc. from different Government Departments.

The *Anchalik Panchayats* are allowed to have a share (10 per cent) of the land revenue, collected within its area, two-third share of the receipts from all major *hats*, income from ferries and fisheries, allotted to them. Besides, they are empowered to impose water rate on minor irrigation, License fee on Carts, Carriages, Cycles, Boats, Cinema halls, Circuses, Confectionery, Bakery, Saw-mills, Tile-kilns, timber depot, oil and rice mills and taxes on cultivable land lying fellow for 2 consecutive years. Further, the entire amount of schematic budget of Community Development Block is to be placed at their disposal. Grants for specific purposes are to be made available by different Departments of the State Government. It is expected that the Anchalik Panchayats, specially in Community Development Blocks, will have enough of resources for development purposes.

The *Assam Panchayat Act*, 1959, provides for establishment of *Panchayati Adalat* also. Such *Adalat* is required to be established for five or more *Gaon Sabhas* and the personnel be selected by the District Judge out of a panel of persons elected by the *Gaon Sabha* (two from each *Gaon Sabha*). Provisions are made in the Act for giving powers to the said *Adalats*.

The Polytechnic Institute at Joysagar and one Extension training centre at Jorhat are imparting training to the various categories of officials of the Panchayat organisation. Altogether 978 Primary Panchayat Secretaries, now working as Gaon Panchayat Secretaries have been trained at the Joysagar Rural Polytechnic, Sibsagar. Recently a Panchayati Raj Institution has been established at Jorhat for imparting training to Panchayat personnel of the whole State of Assam.

Activities of Panchayat: The Gaon Panchayat is the over-all planning and executive body and is responsible for the all round development in its area as a unit of self-government. It is expected to draw up plans in co-operation with the Co-operatives and field Management Committee and with the assistance of technical persons to be made available by the *Anchalik*

Panchayat. The Co-operatives are to provide for timely supply of necessary resources including credit and arrange marketing. The *Gaon Panchayat* is required to co-ordinate and co-relate the activities of the Field Management Committees and Service Co-operatives for the purpose of increasing agricultural production within its area and look for its implementation. Section 49 of the *Assam Panchayat Act* provides for formation of Committees by the *Gaon* or *Anchalik Panchayat* to assist it in the discharge of any specified duty or class of duties. In order to chanalise the activities of the Panchayats and to increase agricultural products, instructions have already been issued to the Gaon Panchayat to form Committees on agriculture by co-opted members from the Field Management Committees and Service Co-operatives.

With the passage of time and with the experience gathered by the people at large in working through the Panchayati system of administration, it is expected that the system would be of great help in the rapid development of the rural areas in all respects, besides teaching them a good lesson in the art of administering themselves. The total number of *Gaon* and *Anchalik Panchayats*, now spread over the entire district,[2] gives us an idea about the measures that have been taken by our Government under the provisions of the Act for making the institution universally popular.

A list of the *Anchalik Panchayats* with some details appears at the close of the chapter.

A LIST OF ANCHALIK PANCHAYATS IN THE DISTRICT

Sl. No.	*Name of Anchalik Panchayat*	*Name of Headquarters*	*Territorial Jurisdiction in Mouzas/ Circles/Unions*	*No. of Gaon Sabha*	*No. of Village*	*Population*
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.	Dimow	Dimow	Consists of Mouzas : 1. Konwarpur 2. Thowra 3. Nitaipukhuri 4. Panidihing	23	162	57,647
2.	Sonari	Desangpani	Consists of Mouzas : 1. Khaloighogora 2. Mahmara 3. Abhoypur	25	177	57,519

[2] *Sibsagar Census Hand Book*, pp. 411-412.

Sl. No.	*Name of Anchalik Panchayat*	*Name of Headquarters*	*Territorial Jurisdiction in Mouzas/ Circles/Unions*	*No. of Gaon Sabha*	*No. of Village*	*Population*
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3.	Amguri	Charing	Consists of Mouzas : 1. Jokai-suk 2. Morabazar 3. Gadhulibazar 4. Solaguri 5. Meteka Bongaon	30	123	60,944
4.	Sibsagar	Sibsagar	Consists of Mouzas : 1. Silakuti 2. Bakata 3. Hahchara 4. Betbari 5. Nagarmahal	20	140	40,623
5.	Nazira	Namtidol	Consists of Mouzas : 1. Joktali 2. Nazira 3. Dopdar 4. Athkhel 5. Dhopabar	23	137	59,875
6.	Sapekhati	Sapekhati	Consists of Mouzas : 1. Baruasali 2. Sapekhati	11	97	28,263
7.	Golaghat East	Padumani	Consists of Mouzas : 1. Ghiladhari 2. Athgaon 3. Kacharihat 4. Moukhowa	28	113	62,446
8.	Golaghat Central	Dhekial	Consists of Mouzas : 1. Kakadonga 2. Gurjogania 3. Dhekial 4. Khumtai 5. Rangamati	28	91	72,873
9.	Golaghat South	Sarupathar	Consists of Mouzas : 1. Sarupathar 2. Barapathar 3. Marangi	22	137	77,698

Sl. No.	*Name of Anchalik Panchayat*	*Name of Headquarters*	*Territorial Jurisdiction in Mouzas/ Circles/Unions*	*No. of Gaon Sabha*	*No. of Village*	*Population*
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10.	Golaghat North	Dergaon	Consists of Mouzas : 1. Ahatguri 2. Missamara 3. Dergaon	21	112	57642
11.	Golaghat West	Bokakhat	Consists of Mouzas : 1. Mahura 2. Bokakhat 3. Kaziranga	19	83	53,095
12.	Majuli	Kamalabari	Consists of Mouzas : 1. Salmora 2. Kamalabari	30	177	60,863
13.	Jorhat	Rangamati	Consists of Mouzas : 1. Khongia 2. Charaibahi 3. Thengal 4. Garamur 5. Katani	19	107	84,679
14.	Amguri Titabar	Titabar	Consists of Mouzas : 1. Amguri-Kharikatia 2. Titabar	18	132	73,632
15.	East Jorhat	Selenghat	Consists of Mouzas : 1. Simaluguri 2. Lahing 3. Nakachari 4. Gakhirkhowa	20	118	66,761
16.	Central Jorhat	Teok Rajabari	Consists of Mouzas : 1. Chaukhat 2. Hatigarh 3. Holongapar 4. Teok	14	113	58,342
17.	North West Jorhat	Dhekorgara	Consists of Mouzas : 1. Parbatia 2. Sarucharai 3. Baligaon 4. Hezari 5. Charigaon	26	96	70,936

CHAPTER XV

EDUCATION & CULTURE

(a) Historical Background : Centres of learning in ancient medieval and early modern times :

The frontiers of Assam in the past extended far beyond its present boundaries. Though physical barriers stood in the way of free communication between Assam and the rest of India, there was no barrier to the spread of knowledge and culture. Energetic and enterprising people from this part of the country visited far-away places like Nawadip and Banaras in quest of learning, and scholars and learned men, due in a large measure to the patronage of the rulers, visited and often settled permanently in this land and helped in the diffusion of India's traditional lore. The type of education and learning that obtained in the land was mainly Aryan in content and knowledge-thirsty pupils usually flocked to a Guru who had assignments of lands from the State for his maintenance and even for the maintenance of those who came to him. Sanskrit was the vehicle of thought and expression and higher Education was generally restricted to the Brahmins. Writing materials included, among other things, *sancipat* from aloe wood (aquilaria agallocha) and *tulapat* (hand made paper). The ink was prepared from *silikha* (terminalia citrina) and bull's urine. The pen was the goose quill, reed, pointed bamboo, wooden piece or metallic substance.

The centres of learning were mostly confined to western Assam especially to the old Kingdoms of Kamarupa and Cooch Behar. Pragjyotisapura, the capital of ancient Kamarupa was a reputed centre of learning, and as we learn from Hiuen Tsang's account scholars from far and near came to Pragjyotisapura because of its reputation as a centre of learning. Cooch Behar similarly became a centre of learning under the patronage of its kings. As the Ahoms gained ascendancy and consolidated their power, the seats of learning were also shifted to eastern Assam, more particularly to Sibsagar and began to thrive there under royal patronage. The *Gurukula* system of education that existed in the past gradually assumed popular forms. Regular classes for imparting education with teachers usually from Brahmin families who specialised in the realms of religious studies were held in temples, private dwellings, residence of teachers and even under trees. Such centres of learning of the indigenous type were known as *Tolas*.

In the sixteenth century, in the wake of the neo-Vaisnavite movement a large number of *Satras* were established in different parts of Assam and

these *Satras* also served as centres of learning and culture. The leaders of the Vaisnavite movement gave also an impetus to the study of the vernacular language, and for the benefit of the people they rendered the religious scriptures in particular into Assamese. Henceforth Assamese became a popular medium of expression and instruction. In the *tolas* and *Satras* knowledge of a higher order, spiritual in content, was generally imparted. In the *tolas* the curriculum of studies included Sanskrit literature, grammar, philosophy, law, astronomy, the Vedas, the *Bhagavata Gita*, and the Puranas and stress was laid on memorisation of the Sutras and commentaries. Subsequently with the increase of the number of Muslim population *Madrassas* were opened. Both in *tolas* and *Madrassas*, the three Rs were taught, but in the *Madrassas* Urdu and Islamic learning were additional subjects.

The notable feature of the Ahom period is the language policy of the Ahoms. Tai, the language of the Ahoms was of the Tibeto-Burman family. The Ahom rulers in the beginning tried to make Ahom the language of the court and culture and the *Buranjis*, chronicles of the court, and other documents were recorded in the Ahom language. But, this practice was found to be fraught with practical difficulties, as the bulk of the Assamese subjects did not understand this alien language. Consequently these records and land grants had to be written both in Ahom and Assamese. Later on, this procedure was also abandoned, and Assamese completely replaced the Ahom language.

Learning and literature during the Ahom period : The Ahoms not only defended the country against external aggression, but also created favourable conditions for the development of indigenous literature and learning through Assamese, paving the way for the evolution of a homogenous broad Assamese cultural society. Kings like Rudra Sinha brought masons, architects, artists, artisans, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, tailors, etc. from other countries. Ministers and nobles together with the kings, patronised poets and writers by making land-grants to them, and the recipient poets and authors have eulogised their patrons in their verses. Some changes in emotional complexion came over literature and the first change was seen in panogyric lyrics composed by such poets as Kaviraj Chakravarty, Ruchinath Kandali, Vidyachandra Kavisekhara who received liberal patronage from Ahom kings. A notable distinction between the Vaisnavite and Ahom period is that while in the former the Divine God was the subject of literary treatment, man takes its place in the latter. Literature now ceased to be otherworldly and idealistic. The shift was towards realism. Even in poems and romances, men and women of the common work-a-day-world now engaged the poet's attention.

The *Buranjis* compiled under the royal patronage of the Ahoms are invaluable contribution to Assamese prose literature. These court chronicles

or documents were principally the periodic reports, transmitted to the Court by military commanders and frontier governors, diplomatic epistles sent to and received from foreign rulers and allies, judicial and revenue papers submitted to the kings and ministers for their final orders and the day-to-day annals of the court which incorporated all the transactions done, important utterances made, and significant occurrences reported by reliable eye-witnesses. These *Buranjis* are found written in a rich, sinewy, picturesque and colloquial prose style and paved the way for modern Assamese prose literature.

There is another class of historical writings, composed both in verse and prose generally known as *Vamsavali*, which, besides recording the genealogical history of the different families of the kings, are found to have depicted life-sketches of important nobles. Many Sanskrit books other than the scriptures and religious texts came to be translated into Assamese prose under the royal patronage. The subjects dealt with are medicine, astronomy, astrology, arithmetic, dance, music, painting, etc. In these books for the first time Assamese prose was employed as a vehicle for utilitarian knowledge. Apart from their value as literary documents and technical pamphlets they are most important as specimens of contemporary prose for scientific expression. The notable among the said works is *Hastividyarnava* of Sukumar Barkath. This is a profusely illustrated treatise on elephant lore, containing an illuminating account of the different kinds of elephants, their habits, the ways of their domisticating, and their diseases and treatment. It was compiled and written in Assamese prose for use by the Hati Barua, the officer in charge of the royal elephants. This book was compiled in 1734 A.D. under orders of King Siva Sinha and his consort Ambikadevi.

Beginning of Western Education: The last half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth were, on the whole a dull period in the history of the Assamese people. Culturally, the neo-Vaisnavite influence was on the wane, Sanskrit scholarship was at a low ebb, and the tradition of indigenous learning was on its last legs. This gloomy picture was the result of an uninspiring political situation. Civil dissension, the Moamaria rebellions, court intrgues, the Burmese invasion and wide-spread use of opium, all these had tended to disorganise social and political life. When the British took charge of Assam in 1826 they found a people which was disillusioned and distracted. So when some sort of social stability was restored, the mind of the more advanced was stirred with new ideas. Unfortunately there were not many enlightened people to come forward to cooperate with the British in restoring peace and orderly administration in the country. The Ahom nobility was sullen due to the loss of their prestige and power and a middle class gentry worth the name had not come into being. To assist them in their administration of the province the British imported

a large number of Bengalis who had already learnt to be efficient clerks and subordinate officers. This was followed by the substitution in 1836 of Bengali as the language of the court in Assam and as medium of instruction in the schools that were opened in different parts of the country. The introduction of Bengali as medium of instruction in the schools affected the progress of education in the province for well over 30 years. The period was marked by a bitter controversy as to the separate identity of the Bengali and Assamese languages. In 1872 the Lieut. Governor of Bengal Sir George Campbell recognised the independent status of the Assamese language and ordered its restoration in the courts and schools of Assam.

Luckily for the cause of the Assamese language and literature two remarkable members of the American Baptist Mission, the Rev. Nathan Brown and O. T. Cutter had set foot on Assamese soil. Among other things they brought a printing press as a part of their missionary equipments. With a view to propagating the message of Christ among the mass people the missionaries set about learning Assamese, and within three months of their arrival, produced the first Assamese Primer for use in the schools which they started. Thus "the missionaries made Sibsagar in Eastern Assam the centre of their activities and used the dialect of Sibsagar for their literary purposes." By courtesy of the Missionary printing Press, the *Assam Buranji* written by Kashinath Tamuli Phukan was first published in 1844.

In 1846 the American Baptist Mission brought out a monthly magazine: *Arunodai* from Sibsagar, under the editorship of O. T. Cutter. In her book *A Glimpse of Assam*, Mrs. S. R. Ward has remarked thus: "A monthly paper called the Oronodai or 'dawn of light' began its career of usefulness in 1846, and for many years was the only paper published in the province. It was most carefully edited, profusely illustrated, treating all subjects, both secular and religious in a manner calculated to instruct and interest the people. This useful *sheet* came to an end in December, 1880."

It was through the pages of *Arunodai* that the modern Assamese writer came to have a grasp of newer modes of expression—the lyric, the essay, biography, history, the short story, and the novel. Two series of histories: *Ahom Buranji* and *Chutiya Buranji* were simultaneously published through the pages of the magazine. The Mission was also active in bringing out translations from English. In 1848 Bunyan's *Pilgrims Progress* was translated under the title *Jatrikar Jatra*. The Missionaries were further responsible for preparing text books for schools and books of information and knowledge for students and general readers alike. Robinson's *Assamese Grammar, Pahila Kitap, Gananar Kitap* (1st and 2nd part) were the pioneer publications for school children from the Missionary Press of Sibsagar.

Through their writings they revived not only the intellectual life of the province, but also the literary activity of the people. Another, probably the most important contribution made to the language was in 1868, when

Mr. Bronson published a *Dictionary of the Assamese language*, Assamese to Assamese and to English. This was the first Dictionary of the language, perhaps the best one. But the Dictionary of Mr. Bronson appears to have been based mainly on the Assamese and Bengali Dictionary, prepared by Late Jaduram Deka Barua in 1839 and presented by him to Col. Jenkins, who afterwards presented to the Christian Missionary Society of Sibsagar. The efforts of the Missionaries were backed up by the educated section of the Assamese who could realise the loss of their independence, their language and the consequent social and economic deterioration, the people were passing through. This national consciousness took time to express itself through good literature. One of the most brilliant young man of the time, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan (1829-1859) a contemporary of Raja Ram Mohan Roy of Bengal, exhorted his countrymen through his writings to be conscious of their culture and language and to take full advantage of the new awakening that had taken place under the British administration. His book: *A few remarks on the Assamese language* exerted a powerful influence in favour of Assamese in the Bengali-Assamese controversy.

The claim of the independent status of the Assamese language was yet to be recognised by the British authorities and the administrators and a process laid for restoration in its rightful place.

As soon as the British were in full possession of the district after resumption of Purandar Sinha's territories in 1838, they established vernacular schools with Bengali as the medium of instruction and a High School was also established in 1841 with English as the medium of instruction.[1] By far the most important name to be remembered in connection with the spread of western education in this district is that of Late Gobinda Chandra Bezbarua, the 6th son of Late Dina Nath Bezbarua and the brother of Sahityarathi Lakshinath Bezbarua. He served for sometime in 1879 as a Translator in the Calcutta High Court and then joined the Mysore College as a Professor of Chemistry. In 1883 he came back to Assam and devoted himself wholeheartedly to the establishment of a High School at Jhanji and one M. E. School at Negheriting in 1884. Thereafter he made it a mission of his life to establish more schools for the spread of education among his countrymen. He established one M. E. School at Dergaon in 1885, one High School at Golaghat in 1886, and one High School at Sibsagar in 1889. At Jorhat he established the Bezbarua High School in 1894 and Bezbarua Branch School (M. E. Standard as feeder) at Charing in 1902.

All the schools, except the one at Jhanji established by him, are still

[1] This School was established with one D'souza as Headmaster: *Cotton College Golden Jubilee Vol.* p. 8. There is mention here also of Purandar Sinha's order that no revenue charge would be given to any one who could not read or write and that every Kheldar must establish a School in his jurisdiction. The scheme was, however, not worked out and it was stopped.

in existence. There had been only about 12 (twelve) schools for English Education in the province when he first started to establish schools. These schools still bear glaring testimony to his far-sightedness and made him one of the pioneers in the history of education so far as the district of Sibsagar was concerned.

(b) Literacy and educational standards :

It is clear from what has been stated in respect of the progress of education that according to modern standard mass education was in a deplorable state during Ahom days and learning was generally confined to a few. With the advent of the British, not only Western education began to spread, but an awakening of the masses for liberal education took place, and as a result schools of particularly primary and secondary standard came to be started at different places. But collegiate education, as in other districts of Assam, did not make much headway until recent times, and after independence it gained a new impetus. It may, however, be noted that as early as 1860 a demand was raised in Sibsagar for establishment of a College in Assam. A brief review of the progress of literacy in the district since 1881 is given below.

The number of male literates per thousand in 1881 of all ages (10 and over) was only 39. This figure gradually rose to 81 in 1891 but dropped to 79 in 1901, thereafter showing an ascending trend. In the three subsequent decennial censuses it stood at 122, 160 and 178 respectively. The last figure 178 of 1931 can favourably be compared with the figure of 1951, when it stood at 328 per thousand. During the past 60 years, it can be said, that the percentage of literacy more than quadrapuled. There is no denying that literacy has maintained a steady progress, but in comparison to other countries it was far from satisfactory, only about one-third male population being literate.

Similarly, the number of female literates per thousand in 1881 of all ages (10 and over) was only 1. This number rose to 2 in 1891 and then 6,7,14 and 18 in the four succeeding decennial censuses. In 1951 the number of female literate per thousand was 99, a five-fold increase over the 1931 figure ; yet it falls far short of the requirements. Here also, no doubt, progress is there but unsatisfactory. From the above it is clear that education among women was not widespread. Gradually, however, the picture has changed considerably. There were 14 high schools in 1958-59, 70 Middle English Schools, 6 Middle Vernacular Schools, 8 Senior Basic Schools, 19 Junior Basic Schools, 105 Primary Schools and 14 Social Education Schools exclusively for girls. Over and above these, co-education right from the primary to the high school stage has had become widely prevalent. In the same year the total number of girl students in different schools stood at 79,255, of which 43,421 were in Primary Schools, 15,187

in Junior Basic Schools, 10,063 in High Schools, 4.616 in Middle English schools, 3373 in senior Basic Schools, 1386 in Middle Vernicular Schools, 1,022 in Special Schools, 101 in Professional Schools and 86 in Nursery Schools. These figures show a happy trend when compared to female literacy figure of 1951, which stood at 56.198.

The spread of education among the Backward classes, Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes is also encouraging. In the year 1958-59 the students from the said classes were as follows :

	Boys	*Girls*
Higher Secondary	431	—
High School	8778	3582
M. E. School	5606	2638
M. V. School	416	230
Senior Basic	1958	1240
Junior Basic	9848	6535
Primary	35390	15351
Commercial	186	41
S. E. S.	2092	282
Nursery	7	8
Total:	64712	29907

Many students of these classes have been receiving financial aid from the Government for prosecuting their studies.

(c) General Education : Schools and Colleges :

The number of primary schools in the district in 1874-75 was 130. In 1900-01 this figure rose to 328. During the subsequent fifty years the increase in this number was five-fold, as the total number of primary schools in 1950-51 stood at 1,511. The figure for 1960-61 being 1,788 shows that the number has still been increasing.

There are two kinds of Basic schools, Senior and Junior. The former made a beginning in the district in the year 1952-53 with only 3 schools, which stood at 72 in 1960-61. The latter one numbered only 19 in 1950-51. But its 1960-61 figure is 444.

The Secondary Schools numbered only 6 in 1900-01. This number rose to 57 in 1950-51 and then to 98 in 1960-61. Besides, there are 203 Middle Schools, 3 Higher Secondary Schools and 3 Nursery Schools.

Jagannath Barooah College : The gift of a commodious building which was the residence of Late Rai Bahadur Jagannath Barooah B.A., and a site measuring 15 bighas of land presented by Sri Murulidhar Barooah helped make a beginning of college education in the district in the year 1930. A Second grade College was established by public effort and Sri K. K.

Handique became its first Principapl. The University of Calcutta granted its affiliation to the College up to I.A. standard in 1931 in English, Assamese, History, Mathematics, Civics, Logic, Sanskrit and French. The first batch of students appeared at I.A. Examination in 1933. In the same year affiliation to Commercial Geography was also obtained. Affiliation to Commercial Arithmatic and Book keeping was obtained in 1939 and to Persian in 1946. B.A. classes were started in 1941, and in the same year Assamese Second Language classes upto I.A. standard were also opened. Commerce subjects upto I.Com. standard were started in 1939, and B.Com. classes in 1944. Commerce classes upto 1949 were also held at day time. Thereafter night shift was started with a view to providing facilities to day workers.

The opening of Science Section was made possible by a donation of Rs. 15,000 by His Holiness the Satradhikar Goswami of Daksinpat. This amount was augmented by another donation of Rs. 16,000 made by Sri K. K. Handique who donated all his pay as Principal from 1942 to 1947. The affiliation upto I.Sc. standard was obtained in the year 1949-59 and that upto B.Sc. standard in the year 1952-53.

Besides teaching other subjects, the College provides Honours in Economics, Philosophy, Mathematics, Sanskrit, Physics and Chemistry. It has a hostel accommodation for 110 boys, and its library has a collection of about 15,000 volumes. The total roll strength of the College at present is about 2,000.

Sibsagar College: Though a project for starting a college at Sibsagar was undertaken in 1942 it was founded actually on 2nd November, 1947 and the classes upto I.A. standard were held at the Kaliprasad Memorial Hall till 1952, when it was shifted to its permanent home on the bank of the historic Joysagar tank. Like other colleges in Assam, this College also had to face financial hardship in the beginning. But thanks to the zeal and enthusiasm of the students and public alike, the observance of the first College Week and the College Building fortnight helped to collect Rs. 11,000 and Rs. 13,000 respectively. What is more, the College authorities successfully conducted four Charity Raffles which secured for them a material benefit to the tune of Rs. 80,000. Besides these, many philanthropists contributed donations to the College.

The College is at present a full fledged Arts College providing Honours in Assamese and Economics. It had also I.Com classes for some time. Besides Arts, there is provision for Science teaching upto the Degree standard.

The College has on its roll a strength of about 1,000 students. It has hostels for both boys and girls, including a hostel for plains tribal students. Its library has a collection of about 6,000 books. Attached to it

is a museum where specimens bearing different aspects of indigenous cultures have been housed. The N.C.C. unit of the College has already earned the reputation of sending some of its members for traning at the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute.

Debraj Roy College: Founded in 1949, the College at Golaghat came to be known as Debraj Roy College after the name of Debraj Roy on a donation of a sum of Rs. one lakh made by his son, Sri S. N. Roy. The College started functioning as an Intermediate Arts College in the premises of the Government B.B.H.E. School, and sometime after it was shifted to a rented bunglow owned by the American Baptist Mission. In 1951 the College was upgraded to the Degree standard, but this had to be abandoned after four years of running due to paucity of funds. The said course was re-introduced in 1958. The College has also Science Section upto the Intermediate standard, and this section is being upgraded to the Degree level. It has on its roll about 665 students. The College has a library of its own containing some 4,623 books, besides a good number of magazines and periodicals

Devi Charan Barua Girls' College, Jorhat: The College, named after Late Raibahadur D. C. Barua was established in 1955. In response to a request from the public of Jorhat, Shri H. P. Barua and other sons of Late Raibahadur D. C. Barua offered 3 bighas of land and a cash amount of Rs. 30,000 for the establishment of the College. Some distinguished persons of Jorhat made liberal contributions to the fund of the College. With the amount thus collected, the project of a Girls' College at Jorhat was given a concrete shape.

This College was permitted by the Gauhati University to open both 1st year I.A. and 3rd year B.A. classes in the very first year of its inception, and it started in 1955 with 61 students on the roll. The Gauhati University granted affiliation upto I.A. in English, Assamese, Bengali, Assamese Second language, Bengali Second language, Sanskrit, History, Civics, Logic and Commercial Geography with effect from the session 1955-56 and provisional affiliation for 3 years upto the Degree standard in Arts in English, Assamese Vernacular, Bengali Vernacular, Economics, Philosophy, Sanskrit, History, Alternative Assamese, Assamese second language in 1959. This affiliation has been extended to the last Degree Examination of the University. With the introduction of the Three-Year Degree Course, the Pre-University and Degree classes in different subjects have been started. Honours teaching in English Assamese and Economics has also been started.

As in other colleges, this College also has introduced N.C.C. unit.

Besides the above colleges there are also a few other colleges for general education which have sprung up in recent years. Among them

mention may be made of the Titabar College at Titabar, Gargaon College at Nazira, Chandrakamal Bezbarua College at Teok. The names of the following venture colleges started very recently in the district may also be mentioned. They are the New Jorhat College, Jorhat College, Majuli College at Majuli, and the Kamal Narayan College at Dergaon.

(d) Professional and technical Schools and Colleges :

Jorhat Normal School: Prior to 1906, one Normal School with provisions of Guru Training Classes existed at Gauhati, but in that year it was shifted to Jorhat.

The aims and objects of the school had been to impart training to Middle and Secondary school teachers in the art and method of teaching. The minimum educational qualification required for admission into this school was M.E. or M.V. passed. But subject to availability of seats matriculates were also admitted into the second year of the three year diploma course. Since 1915 the school made good progress in turning out trained teachers. Physical training was also imparted to the teachers. It was this school that had produced atlases, models, teaching aids, etc. for use by the teachers and the taught alike. The Superintendent was the head of the institution.

Basic Training College, Titabar: The College was first started in 1948 as a training centre. Later on in 1954-55 it was converted into a College, and since then provision for training of both junior and senior Basic teachers had been made. The main objective of this institution has been to train up teachers for imparting vocational instruction to the students through practical training in crafts like spinning, weaving, carpentry, agriculture, etc.

During the past few years the College was successful in opening up 58 junior and 4 senior Basic schools with 173 trained teachers. Uptil now it has brought out about 800 pupils who are in employment all over the State. As a good number of schools was established in recent years, the demand for trained teachers has been on the increase. But accommodation and other facilities are available only to about 100 students.

Post-graduate (Basic) Training College, Titabar: The College was established in 1957 with a view to training the staff of Basic Training Institutions, Supervisors of Basic Schools and Teachers for Senior Basic Schools, organizing short courses of training for experienced teachers and Inspectors and conducting research in the field of child education, Social education in general and Basic education in particular.

The subjects of study in this institution are varied. These include (1) theoretical study and practical participation in community life; (2) theory and practice of arts and crafts like spinning, carpentry, etc. The training period at present covers one academic year. Its teaching staff consists of one Principal, Lecturers and Instructors.

His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales Institute of Engineering and Technology: This institution was established by the Government of Assam in 1927. It is situated on a plot of about 15 acres of land within the Jorhat town. The aim of starting this School then was to make the province self contained in the supply of skilled Mechanics, Electricians, Fitters, Drivers, Smiths, Carpenters, etc. to the then existing industries and to meet the demand of the growing industries in the province. By its establishment an era of Technical education in Assam was started. Inspiration for opening such an Institution was also provided by the Late Bhola Nath Barooah, who made a munificent donation of rupees one lakh for the purpose. The certificate courses in Engineering Trades that were first introduced here are : (1) Junior Motor Mechanic Courses ; (2) Wood Working or Carpentry ; (3) Mechanical Apprenticeship : The School went on functioning with the above courses till 1935 when another course by the name of "Higher Motor Mechanic Course" of three years' duration and open to Matriculate students was introduced. The standard of training was higher in this section than in others, and was calculated to produce skilled supervisory personnel for the Engineering Industries.

In 1940-41 two sections, one in Bell Metalling and the other in Electroplating of one year's duration each were started.

The School was staffed and equipped with tools as in a Commercial Workshop for giving the best type of training to its pupils. During the second World War the Military took it over in December, 1943. The school establishment with a minor portion of the equipments was, however, shifted to other places. The Principal's headquarters with Carpentry and Junior Motor Mechanic courses were transferred to Nowgong and located in Local Board Crafts school, and the major section, that is the Mechanical Apprentice and Higher Motor Mechanics Sections to one Lower Primary school campus attached to the Jorhat Normal School. The Bell Metalling and the Electroplating sections were shifted to Tezpur and subsequently discontinued.

In August, 1946, some of the School buildings were handed over to its authorities by the Military. The Junior Motor Mechanic and Wood working sections remained at Nowgong. Schemes for development and expansion of the Institute after the war were taken up in hand in February, 1948, under the post-War Development Scheme when two Diploma courses, one in Mechanical and Automobile Engineering and the other in Electrical Engineering of Four-years' duration and one year in Plant training were introduced. These courses were primarily meant to equip the

students with sufficient theoretical knowledge and practical skill to enable them to hold supervisory positions in Engineering Industries and concerns. The old certificate courses were abolished and eight new courses of two-year duration in different Engineering trades were also introduced in 1949 to train out artisans. These courses were meant for under matric students. The administration and control of the school was transferred from the Cottage Industries Department to the Education Department of the Government of Assam in 1948. The trade courses were of the standard of the All-India D.G.R. & E. Courses of the Ministry of Labour, Government of India and meant to turn out skilled craftsmen in different Engineering trades.

In the year 1948, a move was also initiated to develop this Institution to the standard of a College of Engineering. Though the proposal fell through, the second Engineering College in Assam was established separately at Jorhat in 1960 as a result of this move.

The scheme for development of the school was undertaken under the First Five Year Plan in 1952. In 1954 the name of the school was changed from the school to the Institute of Engineering and Technology, and in the same year, the Institute was affiliated to the All India Council for Technical Education and received grant from the Government of India. In the mean time National Certificate courses in Mechanical and Electrical Engineering of three years' duration and two years in plant training as per All India Council's syllabi were introduced.

In the year 1956, three Certificates courses of 2 years' duration, each in Cutting and Tailoring, Smithy and Welding and Carpentry were introduced. Carpentry was introduced in this Institute in order to turn out trained Instructors for Multi-purpose High Schools.

During the First and Second Five Year Plan period, the Institute was further developed. In 1957 the National Certificate Course in Civil Engineering, as per All India syllabi was introduced. The trade courses of two years duration were abolished and the Institute has since then become purely an Institution for awarding Diplomas in Civil, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering. It has since 1. 12. 58 come under the control of the newly created Directorate of Technical Education for Assam.

Side by side with the training, facilities for extra curricular activities such as Games, Sports, National Cadet Corps training, publication of Magazine etc. have been provided. One National Cadet Corps, Air Wing (Technical) Unit was started in the Institute in the year 1958. Once the Nowgong, Tezpur and Silchar Technical Schools were under the control of the Principal of this Institute. Even the Engineering College at Jorhat remained under the control of the Principal of this Institute till November, 1960 from the date of initiation of the scheme.

Jorhat Engineering College: Unlike the Engineering Institute, the Engineering College is of recent origin and started its classes in Civil Engineering only in October, 1960 with an intake of 61 students selected on the basis of merit. It has now started courses in other Engineering subjects, and the number of students had been on the increase every year. There has been proposal for introducing Chemical Engineering Course as well. The College library contains quite a good number of books on Engineering and other subjects worth several thousands of rupees. Under the Third Five Year Plan period, the College has made appreciable progress both in its expansion and technical education.

Industrial Training Institute, Jorhat: The exigencies of the Second World War necessitated the setting up of an organization for training craftsmen, and the Labour Department, Government of India, started the Technical Training scheme in 1940 under which training centres were opened up at various places of the country. After cessation of hostilities the number of such centres in the country was 99 and they were utilized for training Ex-service men, adult civilians and in some cases, displaced persons too. Soon after, the Government of India appointed the Shiva Rao Committee, following whose recommendations the administration of these centres were handed over from the Director General, Resettlement and Employment to respective State Governments with effect from 1st November, 1956.

The Industrial Training Institute, Jorhat, is one such training centre, which originally started functioning as a separate wing of the Don Bosco Technical School, Shillong, and came under the regular training scheme of Government of India in 1943. In 1947 this centre was shifted to Jorhat. The Institute imparts training in both technical and vocational trades, and has succeeded by now in turning out a lot of blacksmiths, carpenters, mechanical draughtsmen, electricians, motor mechanics, surveyors, dyers and printers, cutters, tailors, weavers, etc.

Sericulture Training Institute, Titabar: This Institute was established in 1944-45 for training up students in different branches of Sericulture, mulberry cultivation, rearing of silkworms, seed production, silk reeling and spinning, etc., in respect of *Pat, Eḍi* and *Muga*. Judged from the progress made by other States of India as well as Japan in this field of Scientific knowledge it was felt that the training imparted here was quite insufficient. So a proposal was made to Central Silk Board for expansion of the Institute on proper lines. The proposal met with their favour and a phased programme was worked out. In the syllabi were during the Second Five Year Plan period included, besides fundamental subjects of Sericulture, all the important science subjects.

Two courses, Diploma and Certificate, open to Intermediates in Science and Matriculates respectively were provided for.

Recently new buildings have been constructed, furniture and scientific apparatus valued at Rs. 1,25,000.00 purchased and an ice-plant and a gas plant installed. Besides these, an up-to-date Silk Testing and Conditioning Department for imparting training as well as testing the silk, reeled in Assam so as to improve their quality to international standard has been set up. Both in the Diploma and Certificate Courses the Institute has already turned out a good number of trained personnel, meant for the Sericulture Department.

Post Graduate Training College, Jorhat: This college was established at Jorhat in September, 1957 with one Special officer and two lecturers in the beginning to train graduate and undergraduate teachers for Secondary Schools. Science section imparts instruction in teaching methods, meant for the teaching of Science in Secondary Schools of Assam.

The Assam Polytechnic Institute, Sibsagar: Founded by Late Bhubon Chandra Gogoi, in 1918, the Assam Polytechnic Institute, Sibsagar was in a venture stage till 1931. Affiliated to the Banaras Hindu University in 1932, it was but in 1951 that the Institute was brought under University of Gauhati. Subjects taught there in include those on Trade Crafts like Weaving, Carpentry and Metal works ; and Vocational like Motor training.

At present, the Institute comprises of two sections, High School and Technical. The High School Section has been made open to Girl trainees since 1964. Examinations in Trade Courses are conducted by a Board of Examination whose appointment is approved by the Department of Technical Education, Assam. There is a Governing Body approved by the Education Department.

(e) Institutions for the cultivation of fine arts :

In recent years many institutions, devoted to the cultivation and promotion of fine arts like music, dancing, etc. have grown up in different localities of the district. Among these institutions mention may be made of: (1) Jorhat Sangeet Vidyalaya, (2) Sankar Mandir, Jorhat, (3) Kenduguri Sangeet Vidyalaya, (4) Dharmasanmilani Sabha, Barigaon, (5) Tarajan Milan Sangha, (6) Sanmilita Kristi Sangha, Charigaon, (7) Usha Nritya Kala Parisad, (8) Charigaon Kala Mandir, (9) Buddha Samiti, Jorhat, (10) Sangeet Vidyalaya, Baligaon, (11) Sanmilani Natya Mandir, Baligaon, (12) The Central Club, Jorhat, (13) Sangeet Vidyalaya, Garamur, (14) The Jorhat Theatre, (15) Amateur Theatre Club, Golaghat, (16) Gunabhiram Das Memorial Hall and Library, Golaghat, (17) Bapuji Mandir, Dergaon, (18) Town Club, Dergaon, (19) Jubak Sangha, Kuruabahi, (20) Alok Sangha, Dergaon, (21) Natya Samaj, Sibsagar, (22) Kaliprosad Memorial Hall, Sibsagar, (23) Seujia Samaj, Sibsagar, (24) Sri Sri Sankaradeva Samaj, Sibsagar, (25) Natya Samiti, Nazira.

The Sankar Mandiir at Jorhat was established in 1929 with a magnificent donation of late Rai Bahadur Siba Prasad Barua. The Organisation performs daily *nama* and *kirtana* on purely Assamese Vaisnava line of worship and promotes studies of the Vaisnava literature of Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva. The Usha Natya Kala Parisad has beeen engaged in cultivating different types of dances including the *Satriya* Dance. It organises and holds demonstrations of the indigenous dances of Assam in and outside the State.

The Charigaon Kala Mandir, established in 1916 has been contributing to the promotion of cultural activities of the people by holding cultural shows, Dance dramas and Theatres.

The Theatre at Jorhat was established as early as 1896. Late Bishnu Ram Barua donated a sum of Rs. 2000/- for it and the present hall was established in 1913. For the first time the Assamese drama *Sabitri-Satyaban* by late Radhanath Phukan was staged. This Theatre took a prominent part in directing the future stage organisations of the State. It has produced a good number of prominent dramatist and writers like Radha Kanta Handique, Chandra Dhar Barua, Indreswar Borthakur, Mitradev Mahanta, etc.

The Golaghat Amateur Theatre Club was established in 1895. The main aim of this club has been to promote Assamese culture based on fine arts.

The Bapuji Mandir of Dergaon has been affiliated to the Assam Sangeet Natak Academy. It has different sections, devoted to the promotion of dance, drama and literature.

The Natya Samaj at Sibsagar, a theatrical Association was inaugurated in 1898. It has its own theatre Hall, styled Sibsagar Natya Mandir and a revolving stage was established in the Natya Mandir in 1957. It has been equipped with all modern amenities and musical instruments. It may be stated that this revolving stage is the 1st of its kind in Assam.

The Seujia Samaj of Sibsagar is an Association devoted to the cultivation of music and dance. Classes on music are held regularly and the school section is known as the Seujia Samaj Sangeet Vidyalaya.

The Kaliprosad Memorial Hall at Sibsagar was established in 1929. It was denoted by late Rai Bahadur Kali Prosad Chaliha, father of Shri B. P. Chaliha. It was formally opened by Mahatma Gandhi on his visit to Assam in 1934. In 1954 it was handed over to a Board of Trustees, the K. P. Memorial Trust Board. There is a library and a reading club attached to the Hall. The Hall is available to members of all communities for cultural purposes.

The Sankaradeva Samaj at Sibsagar was started in 1929. The in-

titution is devoted to the development of Vaisnava art and culture. The Samaj contemplates to open a music college in near future for the propagation of *satriya* music, dance and drama.

The Nazira Natya Samiti, a cultural and theatrical Association has been affiliated to the Assam Sangeet Natak Academy in the year 1958. It has its own Natya Mandir where dramatic performances are occasionally held. The Natya Samiti has undertaken an ambitious scheme for the construction of a building with a spacious Hall and a revolving stage with modern fittings. The foundation work of the Hall and the Stage has already been completed.

(f) Oriental Schools and Colleges :

(1) *Jorhat Sanskrit College :* This Institution was started in 1939-40. Though known as a college, the curriculum of studies pertain to *tola* education of the State. It receives a Government grant of Rs. 15/- per month.

(2) *Jagannath Barua Arya Vidyalaya :* This institution at Baligaon, Jorhat wes established solely to provide instructions upto the Middle English Sanskrit Standard. It receives a Government grant of Rs. 45/- p.m. and has been doing useful work in the promotion of Sanskrit studies.

(3) *Eastern Theological College, Jorhat :* The Eastern Theological College is an outgrowth from a rather long history of Christian Education here in Jorhat. In 1905 Mr. Boggs, first came to Jorhat to set up an institution for training Christian leaders, and through his efforts Christian Schools upto the High School standard were established. For some time the Church leaders began to review the position of the Jorhat Christian schools in the overall programme of the church and took a decision to start a College at Jorhat, which was eventually established at Barapani under the nomenclature of the Union Christian College.

It was at this time some people began to feel that centering round the Christian schools Jorhat should have a Theological College for the training of leadership for the Christian Church in Assam. A beginning was made in this direction under the leadership of Dr. Cook in 1950, and Rev. M. J. Chance. From 1952 to 1958 Dr. D. J. Duffy remained as Principal. The College has been functioning under the auspices of the Council of Baptist Churches in North-East India.

(g) Adult literacy, and Social education :

The State Board of Social Education established by the State Government has been instrumental in the progress of adult literacy in each district. The emphasis has been laid more on mass education in the rural areas than

in the urban. In Sibsagar a number of centres have already been opened in different sub-divisional localities, placed under trained officers.

The table below furnishes the number of Social Education centres together with their enrolment figures in the district (1963) :

	Number		*Enrolment*	
	Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Sibsagar	20	3	922	151
Jorhat	41	5	3150	255
Golaghat	18	Nil	838	Nil

For the purpose of imparting instructions each year is divided into two terms, each with a duration of four months. The course is divided into pre-literary and post-literary. The pre-literary course is meant for the illiterates and the post-literary for those passing out of the pre-literary course. There is a network of Village Libraries which caters to the needs of the new literates and through which interest for further knowledge is aroused.

The total number of such Libraries in the district are : Sibsagar 20; Jorhat 27; Golaghat 43.

For efficient management this essential branch of Education has been placed under the charge of a District Officer with his headquarters at Jorhat. He has under his charge Mobile Vans with Cinema projectors, and Educational film shows are demonstrated in rural areas at regular intervals.

The teachers for Social Education centres are generally recruited from primary teachers.

The Janata College at Titabar, an Institution for social education, did for years commendable work in educating the youth in various social activities. But it was abolished in 1961-62.

(h) Cultural, Literary and Scientific Societies :

The Asom Sahitya Sabha : The Asom Sahitya Sabha, the premier literary and cultural association of Assam was established in 1917, and the Sabha was registered in 1924 under the Societies Registration Act. Its objective has been to effect all round improvement of the Assamese language and literature. Organised on the basis of (1) the parent association and (2) branches and affiliated bodies, there are about 200 branches and affiliated bodies of the Sabha at present. Late Padmanath Gohain Barua was elected president of the first session of the Asom Sahitya Sabha, held at Sibsagar in 1917. The first General Secretary of the Sabha was late

Sarat Chandra Goswami. During the last 50 years of its existence the Sabha have had 34 annual or periodical sessions. Along with the annual literary conferences, other sections on History, Music, Science, Culture and others came to be organised since 1924. The *Asom Sahitya Sabha Patrika*, a quarterly magazine, published from Jorhat has continued till now as the organ of the Association.

The Sabha has a library of its own and a collection of rare and valuable books on literature, history and culture. It has obtained representation in the Assam Text Book Committee and in the Gauhati University Court. The representatives of the Sabha have attended some all-India Conferences of Language and literature. It is also represented in the International conferences like UNESCO.

The Central office of the Association is located at Jorhat in the Chandra Kanta Handique Bhaban.

The business of the Sabha is conducted by an Executive Committee of 21 members, who are elected in every General Session.

The Association has its own funds, replenished by subscriptions from the affiliated branches, donations and Trusts from individuals and grant-in-aid from the State Government made from time to time.

The existing Trust funds are as follows :

(*a*) The Chandra Kanta-Indrakanta trust fund, created out of a donation made by late Radhakanta Handique, of which an amount of Rs. 15,000 was spent for construction of Chandrakanta Handique Bhaban and the rest meant for the maintenance of the Bhaban as well as for the compilation of an Assamese Abhidhan, Buranji, etc.

(*b*) The Chandra Kanta-Indrakanta ceremony fund. This trust fund (Rs. 1,550) was endowed by late Radhakanta Handique and the interest of the Fund is to be utilised in feeding the little children on 9th September, every year.

(*c*) The Dakhinpat Trust Fund Rs. 5,000. This fund was endowed by His Holiness Shri Naradev Adhiker Goswami of Dakhinpat Satra for the organisation and publication of Sanskrit and ancient Assamese religious manuscripts.

(d) The Kamaladevi Trust Fund Rs. 2,000. This trust fund was endowed in memory of Kamaladevi of Mohora Satra by her son late Radhanath Goswami for publication of suitable children's literature.

The Sabha has published a large number of books of merit and erudition, of which the following are worth mentioning : *Chandrakanta Abhidhan*, a dictionary of the Assamese language ; Brahmavaivarta Purana ; Sattvata Tantra of Bhagavat Misra ; Shri Banamali Deva Charita ; Lava-Kushar Yudha of Harivara Bipra ; The Asom Sahitya Sabha—A brief history ; Buranjimulak Prabandhar Talika ; Sahitya Sabha Varsiki—parts I and II; Asom Sahitya Sabhar Bhasanavali—parts I and II ; Pavitra

Asom ; The outlook of N.E.F.A. ; Simantar Sambada ; Nilachal Path ; Ananda Ram Dhekial Phukan ; Dhekial Phukanar Assamiya Bhasa.

The Sahitya Sabha with its net-work of branches, spread over every nook and corner by the State by its manifold literary and national activities has been contributing to the enrichment of the cultural heritage of Assam. It is to this body that in times of any crisis affecting the age-old harmonious working of the Assamese life and conditions that the people at large look for its guidance, and this district in which the head-office is still located may take credit for directing the activities of the Sabha from Jorhat.

(i) Cultural, Literary and Scientific Periodicals :

Though the district had been an important centre of literary activities from early times, no important literary and scientific magazines have yet been published in recent times from any of its towns. The *Janambhumi*, the only Assamese weekly newspaper is published from Jorhat, and the paper has its wide publicity all over the State because of the national interests that are found focussed by it. There are besides School and College magazines which, though meant for the students, are also circulated among the interested public. The importance of the *Asom Sahitya Sabha Patrika* in the field of literature and Assamese culture has already been stated. It is felt, however, that in this vital subject of literary and scientific periodicals, the district is yet to come up to the mark.

(j) Libraries, Museums, etc. :

Along with the increase in the percentage of literacy in the district, growth of Libraries has also been noticed. In view of the important role played by them in the field of mass education Government has been granting liberal grants-in-aid to these institutions, and consequently quite a good number of Libraries have been opened in both the urban and semi-urban areas, particularly in the towns of Jorhat, Golaghat and Sibsagar. There are besides small Libraries and reading clubs attached to every public Hall throughout the district. The Government District Library, situated in Jorhat has been equipped with important books and magazines. The Village Libraries, however, lack in up-to-date and modern amenities.

CHAPTER XVI

MEDICAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

(a) Survey of Public Health in early times :

Nothing much is known about Public Health & Medical facilities as were existing in the Sibsagar District in early times. The study of medicinal lore and practice of medicines prior to and during the rule of the Ahoms, however, deserve mention.[1] There is evidence to show that during the Ahom rule there were separate departments under trained officers and physicians to look after and prescribe indigenous medicines for patients, both human beings and animals. The indigenous medical books are generally known as the *Nidan Sastras*. The practice of Ayurvedic treatment is also in evidence, as may be seen from extant manuscripts on the subject some of which have now been preserved in the Department of Historical & Antiquarian Studies, at Gauhati. The Ayurvedic system, though based on the ancient system of the Hindus, developed along its own lines in ancient Kamarupa, with the result that many expert Ayurvedic physicians in Assam added something to it from their own knowledge and experience and even from indigeous ways of treatment. This system continued upto the advent of the British and continues even now.

Referring to the Medical practitioners of Ahom days Mr. W. W. Hunter writes in his *Statistical Accounts of Assam* that there were Vaidyas or Kavirajas in Sibsagar district, who practised Ayurvedic system according to the rules laid down in the Hindu religious books. Their pharmacopoeia was defective. Of surgery they were quite ignorant. Their medicines consisted of large pills, containing many ingredients possessing different and sometimes antagonistic properties. They used various kinds of indigenous medicines.

We get the following picture on the State of Public Health and Medical facilities in the Sibsagar district in the 19th Century from the same account :

"The Endemic Diseases prevalent in Sibsagar are fevers, dysentery, diarrhoea, pulmonic affections, rheumatism, enlargement of the spleen, cholera, small pox, venereal and cutaneous disorders, dropsical affections, leprosy, goitre, and elephantiasis. Fevers are exceedingly common throughout the year, especially between the month of June and October. In the Civil Station and other towns, they generally appear in intermittent and remittent forms, mild in character, and easy of cure. When proper treatment is neglected or when the disease is allowed to last more than a week or ten days, it frequently ends in enlargement of the spleen and liver,

[1] See P. C. Choudhury, *History of Civilisation of Assam*, 2nd ed., p. 381 and fn. 105a.

followed by dropsical effusions. Fevers contracted in the neighbourhood of the hills and the jungle parts of the country, are invariably of a severe remittent type attended with great prostration of strength, and local congestions, especially of the head and stomach. It is hardly necessary to state that they are entirely attributable to malaria. Dysentery and diarrhoea are the diseases from which the natives chiefly suffer and the former proves fatal in a large number of cases among the poorer classes. The prevalence of these diseases, and the great mortality occasioned by them, are in a great measure due to the use of deficient and unwholesome food, insufficient clothing, bad water procured from the stagnant pools in the vicinity of their dwellings, sleeping on damp floors, want of the accustomed stimulus of opium, and the frequent practice of keeping on wet clothing. A few cases of sporadic cholera occur almost every year during the months of April and May, but are chiefly confined to places where sanitary rules are most neglected. Goitre is met with in many parts of the District, especially near the hills ; females seem to suffer more from it than men. The Civil Station and some of the other towns have become decidedly healthier in recent years ; and a marked change has of late been observed in the character of some diseases, especially fevers, which are much milder in forms, and more susceptible of treatment than before. This change is no doubt attributable to the improved sanitary measures now carried out.

Epidemics do not occur frequently in the District. *Epidemic cholera*, after many years' absence made its appearance in 1869. The first case was reported to have occurred on the 12th February and the last on the 29th June. The disease, as it appeared in the town of Sibsagar, was not of a very severe type, many cases yielding to treatment when medical advice was obtained early. It is supposed to have been due to the importation of coolies from Bengal, but no positive evidence could be obtained to prove this hypothesis. It broke out at several independent and distant centres at or about the same time as in the Civil Station ; and the Surgeon of the District holds the opinion that it was of spontaneous origin, arising strictly from local causes. As usual, the disease chiefly attacked the lowest classes, who were worst fed and clothed and who lived in houses abounding in insanitary conditions. The Civil Surgeon reports that it is impossible to determine the exact proportion of the population affected by the disease, but so far as the reports received from the revenue collectors went, it certainly did not exceed one-twentieth of the entire population. The mortality was high, about seven hundred deaths having been reported throughout the District during the whole period of the outbreak. The Civil Surgeon, however, attaches much importance to the opinion that in Assam the character of any disease cannot be fairly judged by the amount of mortality occasioned by it, as in times of epidemic several circumstances contribute greatly to increase the mortality than would otherwise attend the disease. Among

these may be mentioned the consumption of unboiled rice beaten into thick cakes and the practice of sitting up for several nights in succession, singing and clapping hands to avert the calamity. The steps taken to protect the inhabitants from the disease were to distribute cholera pills through the charitable dispensary and at each of the police stations; to keep the roads, drains, sewers and cesspools, as far as practicable, clean and free from jungle, and to prohibit the sale of putrid or indigestible articles of food in the bazar. Small pox in an epidemic form occasionally visits the district, and breaks out every fourth or fifth year. In almost every instance the outbreak has been traced to the injurious practice of inoculation, which is still sanctioned and encouraged by the priests and religious preceptors (gosains). Fortunately, however, it has not made its appearance in or near the civil station for many years past.

On the health condition of the district Mr. B. C. Allen writes thus; "In comparison with Central and Lower Assam Sibsagar is, however, a very healthy district. The greater part of it consists of a wide plain lying south of the Brahmaputra, and for some reason or another it would seem that the bank of the river, except in those parts where the Assam Range projects into the valley, is much healthier than the country on the north even though it may be situated at some distance from the Himalayas. There is not much jungle near the principal centres of the population, the proportion of unsettled land is comparatively small, the winter season is cold and bracing and the rainfall is abundant".[2] We believe, the picture is not much different now.

(b) Vital Statistics :

The vital statistics at the lowest level in the rural areas are submitted as a matter of procedure by the village headman to the Mauzadar who in turn compiles his mouza figures and submit them to the Civil Surgeon or the Sub-divisional Medical Officer as the case may be. The tea garden authorities supply their figures direct to the Civil Surgeon in case of gardens within the jurisdiction of the Sadar Sub-division or to the Sub-divisional Medical Officer in the case of other Sub-divisions. In the urban areas such figures are supplied by the Municipal Boards either to the Civil Surgeon or to the Sub-divisional Medical Officer as the case may be.

All the figures thus collected are finally compiled in the office of the Civil Surgeon for onward transmission to the Government in the appropriate department. The machinery for collection of vital statistics should be made more efficient so that the accuracy of the figures can be guaranteed.

The following statements taken from the Directorate of Health Services, Shillong show the figures of vital statistics including selected causes of death from 1951 to 1960.

[2] *Assam Gazetteers, Sibsagar*, pp. 231-32.

Years	Total births	Total deaths	Total increase (+) decrease (—) of births over deaths	Percentage increase of births over deaths
1	2	3	4	5
1951	22,847	10,955	+11,892	52.05
1952	24,623	11,845	+12,778	51.89
1953	20,504	9,996	+10,508	51.25
1954	18,728	7,740	+10,988	58.67
1955	13,496	5,379	+ 8,117	60.14
1956	9,781	4,117	+ 5,664	57.91
1957	6,242	2,385	+ 3,857	61.79
1958	9,851	3,660	+ 6,191	62.85
1959	11,941	4,294	+ 7,647	64.04
1960	11,504	4,231	+ 7,273	63.22
Total	149,517	64,602	+84,915	56.79

DEATH FROM SELECTED CAUSES DURING THE PERIOD 1951-1960 IN THE DISTRICT

Years	Cholera	Fever	Small-pox	Dysentery & Diarrhoea	Plague	Respiratory Disease	Suicide	Child-birth	Malaria	Kala-azar	Tuber cular Disease	Snake bites	Leprosy	Cancer
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1951	57	263	291	1,208	1	868	28	234	5,073	27	31	16	20	11
1952	59	216	141	1,300	..	961	47	262	5,561	36	16	15	9	9
1953	20	141	76	1,383	..	892	32	198	4,334	36	..	16	..	2
1954	16	1,379	9	1,012	..	692	59	178	1,879	30	8	9	12	10
1955	28	802	24	708	..	493	33	124	1,511	33	20	..	6	17
1956	1	1,462	35	310	..	506	51	98	514	21	22	..	1	21
1957	7	907	51	124	..	392	64	92	64	3	39	8	2	57
1958	5	1,735	20	340	..	293	33	102	7	16	6	7	..	11
1959	4	1,485	18	597	..	379	28	126	3	21	10	2	1	2
1960	5	1,554	18	554	..	399	46	99	4	16	7	..	..	6
Total	202	9,944	683	7,536	1	5,875	421	1,513	18,950	239	159	73	51	146

(..) Indicates data not available.

It is reflected in the above statements that the birth rate has been increasing when compared with the death rate. This decline in the death rate may perhaps be attributed to the improved conditions of life and consequent higher longivity of people both in urban and rural areas.

The important causes of mortality are dysentery, T. B., aneamia, helminthic infection, old age and accidents. The high humidity of the climate, want of potable water supply, dust nuisance, deficient supply of food articles such as milk, fish and meat are to a great extent responsible for epidemics and other conditions of ill health in the district. Experience shows that water-borne diseases generally occur mostly after subsidence of floods.

(c) Common diseases :

A description of diseases common in the district has been given above from Hunter's *Statistical Account of Assam*. That account relates to the 19th century. The most common diseases of this district as at present are: Malaria, Kala-azar, Dysentery, Diarrhoea, Worms, Respiratory diseases and T. B.

Diarrhoea and Dysentery, intestinal diseases, and hookworms are generally common in riverain areas. Influenza generally flares up after continuous rains and floods. Similarly cholera also breaks out after cessasion of flood and very often cholera is imported from outside the State. Cholera made its appearance in an epidemic form in 1948 within some portions of Golaghat Sub-division, but on account of the alertness of the Public Health Department no great loss of lives occurred.

Malaria was also most common in the southern mountainous regions bordering on the Naga Hills District and now with intensive activities of the National Malaria Eradication Project in the district this terrific scourge has been brought under control.

Kala-azar used to claim heavy toll of lives in the past in Golaghat and Sibsagar Sub-divisions. The 1951 Census Report records that before the beginning of the decade from 1928 Kala-azar was creating havoc in Golaghat Sub-division, and as many as 2584 and 2128 cases suffered in 1940 and 1942 respectively. It was brought under complete control from 1944, when mortality was less than 100. It further dropped to less than 15 in the last two years of the decade in this Sub-division. Sibsagar is also now greatly relieved of this dreadful disease.

Goitre is most common amongst the people on the banks of the Jhanji and Dikhow rivers. It is also seen that leprosy is generally common amongst the tribal people and specially in Majuli and Ahatguri areas of the district.

The following statement shows the incidence of different diseases common to the district from 1957 to 1960 :

Disease	1957	1958	1959	1960
Influenza	31299	35697	15876	23705
Cholera	20	9	28	12
Diarrhoea & Dysentery	11598	17259	17431	21101
Small-pox	81	48	13	61
Intestinal diseases	836	9883	14118	22907
Hookworm	3707	3326	4544	4855
Malaria	19067	23347	12797	11201
Kala-azar	180	343	59	133
Goitre	2499	2425	2125	2509
Leprosy	466	288	204	51
T.B.	217	215	210	283
Total cases treated in the district	199892	260568	190777	
Total deaths in the district	136	101	105	148

(d) Organisational set-up of the Medical Department :

Public Hospitals and Dispensaries : Prior to 1st February 1958 Public health activities were carried on by one Assistant Director of Public Health, Eastern Zone, with one District Medical Officer of Health and two Sub-divisional Medical and Health Officers and with 22 Rural Dispensaries and one Kala-azar Hospital. Each of the Dispensaries and Hospitals had one Medical Officer for treatment of all diseases, survey of diseases, control of epidemic, sanitation and to check adulteration of foodstuffs. Besides these, there were 26 Auxiliary Health personnel namely Rural Health Inspectors and Health Assistants with 60 vaccinators to carry on vaccination work in rural areas. The Public health activities were mainly confined to the rural population, and on 1st February, 1958 all dispensaries with their staff were amalgamated and brought under the control of the Civil Surgeon, Sibsagar, with the Deputy Director of Health Services, Eastern Zone, Jorhat, above him. There were 7 Hospitals, 17 Local Board Dispensaries, 28 Subsidised Dispensaries including 5 Ayurvedic and 24 State (Public Health) dispensaries including one Sub-centre at Simaluguri, and 12 primary Health Units and two Sub-centres under Sonari Development Block rendering treatment to both rural and urban population of the district.

On the 1st April 1959 all Local Board and Public Health Dispensaries were brought under the control of the Civil Surgeon, Sibsagar, and all preventive and curative treatments were thus centralised. Under the amalgamated scheme of 1958 both Medical and Public Health Department came under one Health Directorate, with all responsibilities of looking

after both the curative and preventive aspects of the organisation of the State as a whole.

In the District level the Civil Surgeon as Head of the District office is responsible for both curative and preventive aspects of the set up. The Assistant Surgeon 1 in charge of Public Health unit, is required to look after the public health side of the organisation and help the Civil Surgeon accordingly.

In Sub-divisional level, Sub-divisional Medical and Health Officers are similarly responsible in so far as their jurisdictions are concerned. There is one Assistant Surgeon in charge of epidemic unit to help the Sub-divisional Medical and Health Officer.

All State Hospitals and Dispensaries numbering over ninty, spread over both the rural and urban areas are to look after the curative and preventive aspects of the organisation, and therefore, all Medical Officers are concurrently empowered to act as food Inspectors, to look after and check adulteration of food stuffs. Besides, some hospitals and dispensaries are provided with Maternity and Family Planning wings to render Child Welfare, Maternity and Family Planning Services in their respective areas.

Primary Health Units: Each Primary Health Unit covers a population of about 40 to 60 thousand. Each of them is required to attend to both curing and prevention of diseases occurring in the area, survey of diseases, taking up of sanitary measures, and supply of potable water supply, etc. These works are generally done in collaboration with Public Health Engineer, Social Education Organiser, and respective Block Officers. Each such Unit has 3 to 4 sub-centres to look after the curative and preventive aspects of diseases, Maternity, Child Welfare and Family Planning Services in their respective areas. Each Primary Health Unit is usually run by a group of qualified medical personnel which include: One Medical Officer, One Pharmacist, One Sanitary Inspector, One Public Health Nurse or lady Health visitor, Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (3 to 4 Nos.)

Maternity Services: Each Auxiliary Nurse Midwife like Public Health Nurses is required to render some preliminary treatment in the centre and also at residences within her jurisdiction. She gets all assistance and necessary guidance from the Medical Officer of the Unit.

The number of Maternity & Child Welfare and Family Planning Centres in the district in 1960 stood at about eleven and twelve respectively.

Family Planning Services: Family Planning Services are rendered at the Family Planning Centres; Contraceptives, Jellys, etc. needed, are supplied free of charge in indigent cases. Operational interference cases are referred to the District or Sub-divisional Hospitals.

Tuberculosis Services: There are chest clinics at Jorhat, Golaghat and Sibsagar. Each of them has been provided with X-Rays plant with laboratory for early detection and treatment of cases. In all there are about 15 beds at these chest Hospitals. Generally, cases are given outdoor treatment at the clinic free of charge. Besides these, there is one B.C.G. Mobile team for the entire State to do Tuberculin test and to render B. C. G. vaccination by rotation.

School Health Services: There is one School Health Service with a view to looking after the health of the School children and providing necessary medical facilities to the needy and the handicapped. The Headquarter of the School Health officer is at Jorhat. The unit is manned by a Trained Staff.

Ayurvedic Treatment: There is one Ayurvedic out-patient section, attached to the Civil Hospital at Jorhat, Golaghat and Sibsagar. There are also four Ayurvedic subsidised Dispensaries to render indigenous Ayurvedic treatment to patients.

Allopathic subsidised Dispensary: There are at present 21 Dispensaries. Medical officers of the dispensaries render part-time medical and public Health Services in their respective jurisdictions. Government subsides Rs. 60/-to each Medical Officers and medical grants of Rs. 500/- are being given for the purpose. (Out of these 21 dispensaries, 7 have now been closed for want of Medical officers due to low subsidy).

Number of Doctors and Nurses: The total number of Government Doctors and nurses in the district up to the year 1961 stood at doctors: 85 (from Civil Surgeon to Assistant Surgeon II, including Lady Assistant Surgeons); subsidised doctors—22;

Nurses: 64 (including P. H. Nurse, sisters, staff nurses, midwives, Auxiliary Nurse Midwife, Health visitors and Dhais). There is no specialist in the Government Hospitals and Dispensaries. The number of beds for the indoor patients in the different Dispensaries of the district have been in recent years increased by the Medical authorities.

Special Facilities Accorded: T.B. patients are given free treatment and aids in the Civil Hospitals of the district. Moreover, one Ambulance Car has been put under the disposal of the Civil Surgeon to fetch serious patients and accident cases for treatment in the Civil Hospitals. Besides, UNICEF authorities have already given aids in the shape of conveyances and hospital equipments which include one school bus for the Auxiliary

Nurse Trainees; one Jeep to Civil Surgeon for supervision of Public Health work; one Jeep and other equipments for Sarupathar Primary Health Unit.

They have also provided equipments to all the Maternity centres and teaching equipments to training schools at Jorhat.

Medical Facilities in the rural areas: As regards medical facilities provided in the rural areas of the district, it would perhaps be better to refer to a random Sample Survey conducted in 35 villages of this district by the *Department of Economics and Statistics*, Government of Assam. Published in 1952, the Survey Report makes the following observations:

"All the thirty-five villages suffered from one or more of the common diseases such as malaria, kala-azar, dysentery small-pox, cholera and the various skin diseases. Of these malaria was of most frequent occurrence, specially during the monsoons and after, and the incidence of this disease was reported from as many as twenty-nine out of the thirty-five villages. It was found also that nine villages suffered from kala-azar, eighteen from dysentery, seventeen from small-pox, fifteen from cholera and eight from skin diseases. Leprosy was also reported from two of the villages. Reports of kala-azar were received from the villages situated in the Dhansiri valley of the Golaghat Sub-division and also from a few villages in the central areas of the Sibsagar Sub-division. The havoc of death caused by Kala-azar which nearly decimated the population of the Dhansiri valley during the last decade of the past century and early years of the present century is a fact of history, and thanks to wide-spread launching of anti-kala-azar measures and appropriate treatments, the death-roll from the terrific scourge has been reduced very substantially in recent years".

"As regards medical facilities for combating other epidemic diseases, however, the state of affairs is far less satisfactory. As many as sixteen villages of the sample of thirty-five have no hospitals whatsover within the distance of five miles. Fifteen villages get the service of one hospital each, three villages from two hospitals each, and only one village was fortunate enough as to get the benefit of three hospitals within five miles from it. There is no village in the sample getting medical facilities from more than three hospitals. Significantly enough the majority of the villages reporting absence of medical facilities are found to lie in Dhansiri valley, Majuli, and the borders of the Naga Hills and Lakhimpur which are all conspicuous by insanitary climate and adverse physical set-up, and where malaria and epidemics are of frequent occurrence. Moreover, villages even with hospitals within their reach reported that the help they received from those hospitals were not often timely and adequate. Thus the unfortunate situation where masses of the rural population go without proper and timely medical relief and thereby suffer substantial loss of

life, health and working days persists as a common phenomenon in majority of the villages". Of course ten years have elapsed since the publication of the Survey Report and with the launching of the Plan programme and C.D. movement in the rural areas, medical conditions have improved considerably by this time, as for instance, incidence of malaria is now negligible, and in all the areas where leprosy was prevalent, Leprosy social workers and Leprosy Injectors are posted. They as well as the local dispensaries of those places are distributing anti-Leprosy drugs. These workers are also doing leprosy survey and are bringing all leprosy cases of those areas under treatment. Anti-hookworm campaign has also been launched by different *H.W.* teams in the villages.

Regarding sanitation and rural hygiene, Sanitary Inspectors, Rural Health Inspectors and health Assistants are looking after necessary arrangements for supply of pure drinking water, construction of sanitary latrines, etc. They are also supervising anti-small-pox works done by the vaccinators. Works of these Health staffs are supervised when necessary by the Medical Officers of those areas.

(e) Private Hospitals and Nursing Homes:

There is one Christian Mission Hospital at Jorhat both for outdoor treatment of cases with T.B. Wards for Hospitalisation and treatment of T.B. cases. The same Mission has a leper colony for treatment of infected leprosy cases. Besides these, the colony runs annual mobile treatment centres at different places of this district. State Government also contribute funds for the purpose.

There is another Leper colony at Jengraimukh, Majuli, managed by the *Assam Seva Samiti* wherein infected Leprosy cases are treated and outdoor- patients are also given necessary medicines accordingly.

Over and above the Christian Mission Hospital, there are numerous tea garden hospitals and dispensaries in the district for rendering both preventive and curative treatment to labourers and other employees of the concerns. Special mention may be made of the Jorhat Tea Company's Centenary Hospital at Cinnamara and Assam Company's Central Hospital at Nazira. Both the Hospitals at Cinnamara and Nazira contain the most up-to-date apparatus, operating theatres and well-equipped X-Ray Plants with experienced staff.

A nursing Home has recently been opened at Jorhat under the name and style of "Debendra Nath Bezbarua Diagnostic Clinic".

The Homeopathic system of treatment has also gained some popularity in this district and there are pharmacies and practitioners both in urban and rural areas.

The number of private practitioners and specialists has been on the increase particularly in the urban areas of the district. Even in the

rural areas there are no dearth of such practitioners. The specialists in branches like Dentistry and Ophthalmology have in recent years opened their clinics in the sub-divisional towns.

(f) Medical and Public Health research centres and institutions :

Except for the *Ross Institute of Tropical Hygiene*, India Branch, Jorhat there is no research centre or institution for disseminating knowledge on Public Health. There is, however, one mobile van with cinematography projector covering upper Assam including Nowgong district to demonstrate films on Public Health matters. There has been a proposal for installing a Public Health Laboratory at Jorhat which will do research work as well.

There are two Nurse Training Schools for training Auxiliary Nurse Midwives at Jorhat Civil Hospital and Borbheta Christian Mission Hospital. There is also one Magic lantern operator for the district to demonstrate magic lantern slides in fairs and festivals both in the rural and urban areas. Experts in different branches hold demonstrations and discourses on Public Health matters, sanitation, birth control and nutrition. Family Planning centres are of recent growth initiated under the Five Year Plans. Every Maternity and family planning centre at present assists both the urban and the rural women in taking appropriate measures for birth control so as to minimise the number of family members.

The *Ross Institute of Tropical Hygiene* was founded in London in 1926 and its India Branch was opened in 1930, and since 1948 had its headquarters at Cinnamara near Jorhat.

In the early days the most urgent problem was the control of malaria which in Assam, as in so many other States of India, caused a large number of death. The first Principal of the Branch Dr. G. C. Ramsay, achieved a brilliant success by the first known example of control of the vector anopheles by naturalistic means. Since the introduction of residual insecticide after the war, malaria in tea estates has been greatly reduced, and the Institute has been able to devote time to the control of other diseases. In 1950 and 1951 it directed a B.C.G. campaign which tested more than one million people living on tea estates and vaccinated about half a million against Tuberculosis. In 1955 the Institute brought to Assam two oversea experts to advise on the treatment of Anaemia. Recently a sputum examination service has been inaugurated to assist doctors on tea estates to reduce, and eventually to eradicate, Tuberculosis by a widespread and systematic search for new cases. The Institute advises the Indian Tea Association on Family Planning programme and is planning a training centre near Jorhat with the objective of placing a Health Visitor trained in Family Planning in every tea estate. Since the headquarters were opened at Cinnamara in 1948, Refresher Courses for Assistant Medical Officers have been held yearly, and since 1961 the Institute has also started training non-medical men for

employment as Health Assistant in tea estates. Upto 1962, 342 doctors have attended Refresher Courses and 80 men have been trained as Health Assistants.[3]

(g) Sanitation :

Prior to 1958 rural sanitation was controlled by Local Boards with their own employees in L. B. Dispensaries and vaccinators aided by the State Public Health staff. Now all Primary Health Units and State Dispensaries in rural areas are engaged in the treatment of all infectious diseases and looking after disinfection of water supply where and when necessary for the interest of Public Health. People in general are often advised to observe the elementary measures of sanitation in respect of their latrines, drains and homestead. The rural sanitation programme is proving very much effective in areas where co-ordinations between the Departments of Public Health, Public Health Engineering, Social Education and Community Development have been established.

Urban sanitation is controlled by respective Municipal Boards with Urban Health Officer, Sanitary Inspectors and vaccinators. Matters relating to conservancy, water-supply, clearance of latrines, prevention of food stuff adulteration and instituting preventive measures against infectious disease, viz. cholera and small-pox, etc. are dircetly looked after by Municipal Boards. But the Civil Surgeon of the district is the over-all authority in matters of sanitation both in the urban and rural areas.

Slum Clearance and underground drainage : In this district no programme has yet been taken up for slum clearance or for under-ground drainage. In fact there is no proper drainage system in the district, with the consequence that, particularly during rains the roads and market places in the urban areas and thickly populated sub-divisional towns become filthy and water-logged, affecting the general health condition and sanitation of the areas concerned. This state of affairs has posed a great problem to the Municipal authorities. By any means, construction of the drainage system, under-ground apart, has been felt to be of immediate necessity by the inhabitants of the towns concerned.

Protected Water Supply : In the two sub-divisional towns of Golaghat and Sibsagar and in the Sadar Sub-division of Jorhat there are protected water supply plants under the maintenance of the Municipal Boards. Apart from these, the Public Health Engineering organisation has been carrying out two National Water-supply and sanitation schemes (Rural), one in Charing area, consisting of four mouzas : Simaluguri, Jakaisuk,

[3] Account furnished by Principal, *Ross Institute*, India Branch, Jorhat.

Godhulibazar, and Morabazar area and the other at Titabar area consisting of Thengal and Titabar Mouzas.

Anti-Malarial measures: Anti-malarial measures have been taken up under the National Malaria Eradication Programme. In 1954 four centres were opened at Nazira, Bokakhat, Dimapur and Sarupathar. The measures consisted of three phases: control, eradication and surveillence. The spraying of D.D.T. and B.H.C. inside the houses constituted one of the essential measures, meant at the eradication of the disease. But then, the mosquito menace still persists, which is worse than the disease itself.

Besides these measures, villages are surveyed and data in regard to anopheles mosquito collected for implementation of the anti-malarial measures where necessary.

Vaccination: Under the State Medical Department there are a large number of Vaccinators to carry out periodical vaccination work both in urban and rural areas. Rural Health Inspectors and Health Assistants usually assist them in such works when situation demands. These works are periodically checked by their superiors. Both the Municipalities and the Medical Departmental units at the district level look after this vital matter particularly during epidemics.

CHAPTER XVII

OTHER SOCIAL SERVICES

(a) Labour Welfare :

The general condition of industrial labour in the State is fast improving. It is now far better than what it was in pre-independence days. Security of service, freedom of association and expression and rapidly increasing influence of labour on industrial projects as well as management are the landmarks of progress in the field of labour welfare. The lower wage level has now risen several times above that of the late thirties and early forties of the present century. Statutory minimum wages have been fixed for the labourers in tea industry, rice, oil and flour mills, public motor transport, roads and building construction, stone-quarries, agricultural operations and handling of commercial goods.

The *Employees' State Insurance Act,* which is a Central Act, providing for sickness and unemployment insurance is yet to be enforced in this district. The *Plantation Labour Act,* 1951, providing for housing, educational facilities, medical facilities, sanitation, water supply, clubs, creches, maternity benefits, sickness allowance, earned leave with wages, rest days, hours of work, overtime and other conditions of service, are in full force in the tea gardens of this district.

The *Factories Act,* 1948 has made statutory provisions, *inter alia,* in matters of health, safety and welfare of the factory workers. The salient features of the *Factories Act* are the prevention of industrial accidents and occupational diseases and the restriction of working hours made under this Act. The District Factory office was set up at Jorhat with jurisdiction at first over both the districts of Sibsagar and Lakhimpur and over Sibsagar only from 1960 when a separate District office was set up at Dibrugarh for the Lakhimpur district. This District office is a branch of the State Factory Inspectorate with its headquarter at Shillong. Two Inspectors of factories are stationed in this district office for carrying out the purposes of the Act. A Medical Inspector of Factories has also been attached to the office in recent years to look after matters relating to the health of the factory workers.

Owing to the ever greater complexity of the machines and the interdependence of the various new machines, the adoption of manufacturing processes, the construction of new workshops, the use of a great variety of

toxic products, the Inspectorate has had to face new problems concerning the safety of workers, their health, welfare, working hours, occupational hazards, etc. As Sibsagar is mainly a tea growing district, the number of factory workers has been increasing rapidly. This, along with workers in other factories, viz. the Sugar Mill at Dergaon calls for special attention to the problems of labour welfare. The total strength of registered factories in Sibsagar district was 290 in 1959. The *Assam Shops and Establishment Act*, 1948, governed the service conditions of employees in shops and commercial firms. Some Tea Companies and some other employing concerns have their own pension schemes and gratuity system on retirement of workers.

It may be pointed out that, whenever necessary, the employers, employees and Government meet in tripartite conference and make decisions on important matters which are not governed by the extant laws and statutory rules.

Some welfare institutes for labour welfare are being run by the State Government and other agencies for such work. At Rowriah there is a Labour welfare Centre for tea garden men where training courses in labour law, health safety, welfare and hand work are given, and at Mezenga, near Nazira, there is a Labour Welfare Centre where training courses suited to tea garden women are given. The former is being run by a strong managing committee representing Government, employers, employees and *Hindustan Mazdoor Seva Sangha*, and the latter being run through the *Kasturba Memorial Trust*. Another labour welfare centre for tea garden children is being run at Teok by *Kasturba Memorial Trust*. At Daksinhengera Tea Estate (Golaghat) and Sundarpur Tea Estate (Sibsagar) two Government Community Projects for tea garden labour are under Construction. The *Assam Seva Samity* is running small vocational trainig centres at Bokakhat (Golaghat), Selenghat (Jorhat) and Raidinga (Sibsagar), mainly for tea garden children. The *I.N.T.U.C.* have some weaving centres where stipends are given to the trainees.

(b) Prohibition :

Opium : It is held that the habit of smoking or drinking opium was prevalent in Assam since it came into contact with the Moghals. Captain Welsh in 1792 reported to Lord Cornwallis that the king Gaurinath Sinha was intoxicated with opium. The Burkandazes that were brought to Assam were also addicted to it. They after creating a reign of terror in Kamrup for same time remained with the Koch kings at Beltola near Gauhati where they grew the opium poppy for the first time in the history of Assam, during Lakhmisinha's reign, about the year A.D. 1795.

In the petition of Moniram Dewan presented on behalf of himself and others to A. J. Moffat Mills, Judge of the Sadar court in Calcutta on his visit of Assam in 1853 and incorporated in Mills' *Report on the Province of Assam*, 1853, occurs the following passage which is worth mentioning :

"In Lukhmee Sing Rajah's days poppy seeds were first introduced from Bengal and first cultivated at Beltullah, but during his time opium was used only by a few respectable persons and not by the lower orders".[1]

As Moniram Dewan was undoubtedly one of the outstanding figures in Assam at that epoch and a man of remarkable knowledge and intelligence, it is not likely that he would have made this statement without accurate information which he could easily have gathered from those who knew the facts.

Captain Butler in his book *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam* published in 1855 writes that Opium was first introduced into Assam in 1794, when the British troops assisted the Rajah against the Muttocks.

It is proved therefore that the cultivation of the poppy was practically unknown in Assam before it was introduced by the Rajput troops who were brought into Assam either by the Koch chiefs or by the British. It was, however, not so widely cultivated then as in later years. Its cultivation was, however, put down with a very strong hand by the high officers of the Ahom rulers.

This suppression of poppy cultivation at the beginning of the nineteenth century was effected chiefly by an imposition of tax of Rs. 12 per *pura* of land, under poppy cultivation. This amount, according to the present value of money, would be about sixty to one hundred rupees. The exceedingly high tax probably succeeded in keeping down the cultivation to a comparatively low level.

When finally the British in 1826 took possession of Assam they turned their first attention to the establishment and consolidation of their power. From 1826 to 1860 they practically followed a policy of drift on the question of opium for revenue purposes in order to undersell the indigenous product. Government opium sold at Rs. 5/- per seer in 1835. The new Administration did nothing to check the opium habit or even the cultivation of the opium poppy. It allowed the terrible evil to spread among the people, who had just come under their power after nearly a century of feuds and internecine wars. For nearly thirty years, this policy of drift continued. The new Government was quite prepared to obtain a portion of its revenue out of the vices of the people and to leave the evil habits undisturbed. This attitude of indifference continued until the publication of Mr. Moffat Mills' Report of 1853. Mills' Report was emphatic in its condemnation of the opium habit. During 1853-1860 the Report was discussed and canvassed and at last action taken to stop cultivation of the

[1] *Report on the Province of Assam*, p. ixxvi.

poppy plant by the people. In 1860 opium was made a Government monopoly in Assam, and it became a criminal offence to cultivate the opium poppy in the province.

Even in those remote days, Indian leaders of prominence denounced the indifferent attitude of the Government. At the same time they did not countenance the establishment of a Government monopoly in opium. In his petition to the Government in 1853 Moniram Dewan gave expression to contemporary opinion on the subject in the following words: "The introduction of the Government opium into the province will have to be put a stop to and the people allowed to grow their own drug. But some method ought to be invented by the Mohamuntree Saheb (i.e. King's representative) for the eventual eradication of opium cultivation by a gradual reduction, at the rate of one in twenty per annum".

About the same time, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, another patriotic Assamese leader of the time wrote thus: "The extensive introduction of Government opium, however, leads us to conclude that the measure will be productive of consequences other than the extirpation of the drug from the country."[2] The introduction of the Government opium and the effort to undersell the local product did indeed have consequences other than the extirpation of the evil. In answer to arguments for a monopoly, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan had said "that by abolishing the production of opium in the country and rendering it dearer to the people, the use will be rendered less universal." But he adds: "We would beg to submit that the people will never shrink from the use of the drug as long as they continue to obtain supplies of it; and whatver be the price put upon it they would seldom consider themselves too poor to purchase it". Inspite of these protests Government monopoly was at last introduced and poppy cultivation, as stated above was abolished in 1860.[3]

Thus the first restriction on opium was imposed in 1860. This took the shape of: prohibition of cultivation and manufacturing; prohibition of unlicensed sale; imposition of duty; prohibition by imposing license fee; and gradual reduction of retail shops in opium.

Inspite of these restrictions, use of opium was in the increase and Assam was declared a black spot in the Geneva Convention. It was from 1925 that the pass system was first introduced.

Total consumption of opium in the Sibsagar district in the year 1904-05 was 367 mds. and 31 seers and it rose to 386 mds. 27 seers in the year 1918-19. With further restriction and introduction of pass system the consumption came down to 209 mds. 37 seers in 1925-26. With 10%

[2] Mills : *Report on the Province of Assam*, p. xliii.

[3] The abolition of the poppy cultivation was one of the causes of the Phulaguri uprising in Nowgong district in that year. Government took no steps to enlighten the people on the need for the abolition.

reduction in the opium ration in 1928 consumption came down to 26 mds. 25 seers in the year 1939-40. Finally total prohibition was introduced in the year 1941 throughout the district in consequence of a decision taken to that effect by the Congress-Coalition Ministry of Gopinath Bardoloi.

In the year 1904-05 revenue derived from opium in the district was Rs. 4,87,978 which gradually rose to Rs. 11,19,411 in 1925-26. With the introduction of 10 per cent cut in the ration, it dwindled down to Rs. 1,29,854 in 1939-40.

All offences relating to opium were dealt with under the *Opium Act* of 1878. Since the introduction of *Opium Prohibition Act*, 1947 such offences are dealt with under the new Act.

Ganja Prohibition: In this district ganja was not largely used. In 1904-05 the consumption of ganja stood at 114 maunds which came down to 26 maunds 15 seers in 1958-59. Since 1st April, 1959 total prohibition of ganja had been introduced. Revenue from ganja was Rs. 66,900 in 1904-05 but went upto Rs. 1,05,176 in 1958-59 due to enhanced duty and licence fee though consumption was by far less.

Excise officers find it difficult to enforce prohibition laws due to non-co-operation of public especially when the latter are required to depose before the court as witnesses. The number of opium and ganja cases detected in the district during the last three years (under the prohibition laws) were as follows :

	1959-60	1960-61	1961-62
Opium	66	45	63
Ganja	195	92	139

Liquor Prohibition: It is being introduced by stages, and prohibition is already in operation in the Kamrup and Nowgong districts. Liquor has not yet been prohibited in Sibsagar District.

(c) Advancement of backward classes and tribes :

The total population of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other backward classes of this district stood as follows according to 1951 census.[4] Percentage to total population is shown within brackets.

Scheduled castes	60,825 (5.02%)
Scheduled tribes	68,658 (5.66%)
Other backward classes	595,759 (49.15%)

Among the Scheduled castes in the district, the most prominent people are those belonging to the *Kaivarta, Namusudra, Hida, Bania, Dhobi*

[4] According to 1961 Census, total population of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes stood at 94,005 and 96,000 respectively.

and *Mali* families. Those of the Scheduled tribes are the Miris, Bodo-kacharis, Hojais, Sonowals, Lalungs, Mech and a few Nagas. The most predominating backward classes are the Ahoms, Chutiyas, Rajbansi or Koches, Manipuris, Kumars, Borias, Napits, Yugis (Naths), besides the Tea garden labourers or tribes.

It may be stated that except in a few cases, large compact areas, inhabited by only one class of the said people are not to be seen in the district. They are scattered in all the three Sub-divisions, although Mishing (Miri) community is too numerous in the Majuli area, as the Ahoms in the Sibsagar Sub-division.

There had always been an effort for the advancement of the backward classes, scheduled castes and tribes, but after independence the work in this respect has been intensified. The Constitution of India in its Article 275 provides for special grants for the purpose of educational upliftment of these classes of people. Even in the matter of appointment in the Government services and in the settlement of ferry ghats, fishery bills, P.W.D. contracts, Forest Department's coup Mahals, etc. reservation is made and preference given to the candidates belonging to these categories so as to bring them economically and socially at par with other classes of people. In the political field the Election Commission provides for reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled tribes people so as to give them representation in the State Assembly. During the 1957 Election there were reservations for these groups of people in the manner of double-member constituencies. But there being no double member constituencies in the last Election, the S.T. and S.C. people of the district were given exclusive reservation in the Majuli and Dergaon constituencies.

Scheduled Tribes: The Tribal Areas Department of the Government of Assam looks after all aspects of development of the tribal people of this district as well as other districts of the State. In every Sub-division of this district there is one Tribal Advisory Board consisting of tribal M.L.As and other representatives and leading tribal members. In the matter of distribution of Government grants and execution of various schemes such as improvement of poultry rearing, improvement of buildings, water supply, etc. suggestions of the Board are always sought for. There are a large number of Kristi Sanghas in Jorhat Sub-division which are engaged in the cultural improvement of the tribals. They sometimes receive Government grant for the purpose. The *Mishing Bane Kebang* of Golaghat which works for the development of Mishing culture is a recognised Tribal Association in the Sub-division. Another cultural organisation of Golaghat is the *Mishing Yuvak Sangha.* The Tribal Cultural Association of Sibsagar is another Association of that Subdivision devoted to the same cause.

Scheduled Castes: There are about 136 cadestral villages populated by scheduled castes in this district out of which 40 are stated to be in Sibsagar Sub-division, 52 in Jorhat Sub-division and the rest in Golaghat Sub-divison. In each of the three Sub-divisions of this District there is one affiliated unit of the Assam Scheduled Caste Association, known as the District Scheduled Caste Association. These Associations take active interest in all round development of their own people. Besides these Associations, there are Scheduled Caste Advisory Boards in all the three Sub-divisions of the district. Scheduled Caste members of the Anchalik Panchayat and Mahkuma Parisad are also the members of this Board besides other Scheduled Caste representatives of various organisations. The Advisory Boards are convened in times of distribution of various Government grants, concerning removal of untouchability, water supply, construction of institutional buildings, etc.

Other Backward Classes: For the development of the other Backward classes, there are one Sub-divisional Advisory Board at Jorhat and an Welfare Committee at Sibsagar.

All M.L.As and M.P.s and leading members of other backward classes and tribals from their respective Sub-divisions are members of these Welfare Commitees or Advisory Boards as the case may be. The members meet to help the S.D.O.s and the D.C. (as the case may be) in times of distributing grants for execution of Welfare Schemes. A branch of the All Assam Backward Classes Association has been functioning at Sibsagar Sub-division whose aim is also to look after all round development of other backward classes.

It is on record that all possible steps, as per provisions of the Indian Constitution, have been taken up for the welfare and advancement of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes and other backward classes in their social and educational aspects with the concerted efforts of the various development departments of the Government of Assam.

CHAPTER XVIII

PUBLIC LIFE AND VOLUNTARY SOCIAL SERVICES ORGANISATION

(a) Representation in the State and Union Lagislatures :

Until 1874, Assam was administered as part of Bengal, but in that year it was formed into a separate Province under a Chief Commissioner. This arrangement lasted till 1905 when Lord Curzon partitioned Bengal and formed a new Province by joining Eastern Bengal with Assam under a Lieutenant Governor. Three Assamese and one European represented Assam in the Eastern Bengal and Assam council at Dacca, the new headquarters of the Province. In 1912 Assam was again restored to a Chief Commissionership and in January of the following year a Legislative Council with eleven elected and fourteen nominated members was formed, over which the Chief Commissioner presided. This Council is perhaps memorable for the 'Tainted money" controversy, in which Rai Bahadur Phanidhar Chaliha, a citizen of Sibsagar, characterised the opium traffic as immoral and the income from opium revenue as 'Tainted money' demanding total abolition of the opium trade. This brought an angry retort from the Chief Commissioner, Nicholas Dodd Beatson Bell, who presided over the Council. In course of diatribe he made personal attacks on Chaliha, which insulted the honour and prestigs of not only Chaliha but also other non-official members of the Council. Chaliha was a retired Government official and when he called the opium revenue 'Tainted money' Beatson Bell asked Chaliha to sell all that he had and refund the money he had received as pay and pension since his appointment as a Government servant, which being tainted money, 'must now be clogging his conscience'. The reaction to the Chief Commissioner's harangue was one of bitterness throughout the country.

When the new Assam Legislative Council was formed in 1923 after the passing of the Government of India Act, 1919, the following members represented Sibsagar district: Sri Taraprasad Chaliha, Sri Rohini Kanta Hati Barua, and Rai Bahadur Debi Charan Barua who represented non-Muhammadan rural constituencies of Sibsagar, Jorhat and Golaghat respectively. Maulavi Faiznur Ali was elected to this Council from the Muhammadan rural constituency comprising Sibsagar and Lakhimpur district. Sibsagar has the distinction of sending one of its inhabitants, Sri Chandra Dhar Barua as representative of Assam non-Muhammadan constituency to the Council of the State in the same year.

When the Constitutional reforms, as envisaged in the Government of India Act, 1935, was put into operation Assam got its first Legislative Assembly in April 1937, which functioned for nearly 9 years instead of the normal period of 5 years by virtue of an amendment to Secition 61(2) of the Act made in that behalf by the British Parliament under the stress of circumstances brought about by the World War II. There was, however, an interregnum of 8 months, extending from 25th December, 1941 to 24th August, 1942 due to the suspension of the constitution in the province under Section 93 of the Act and the Governor assuming to himself all the powers to carry on the administration. After having functioned for a little over three years since the restoration of the Constitution on the 25th August, 1942, the Assembly was dissolved with effect from the 1st October, 1945 under Section 62 (2) of the Government of India Act, and a general election was ordered to take place by 2nd February, 1946.

To this first Legislative Assembly of Assam, representatives from the following constituencies were elected : Golaghat north, Golaghat south, Jorhat south, Jorhat north, Jorhat north reserved seat, Sibsagar west, Sibsagar east, Sibsagar and Jorhat. Except two constituencies, one Muhammadan and one Labour the rest belonged to general constituencies. There was only one member to the Assam Legislative Council in the year 1937.

After the 1946 election members were elected to the Legislative Assembly from the following constituencies : Sibsagar east, Sibsagar west, Jorhat north reserved seat, Golaghat north, Golaghat south, Sibsagar, Nazira, Lakhimpur and Majuli. There were representatives from Muhammadan, Labour, Tribal Plains and Indian Christian constituencies, one each.

In the first election of independent India held in 1952, there were as many as 12 constituencies in Sibsagar district, of which 2 were double-member constituencies in each of which a seat was reserved for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. Of the 14 seats of this district 13 were won by members of Congress Party and the remainder by the candidate of All people's Party. The Parties winning the election in different constituencies were as follows : Congress, Golaghat east, Congress, Golaghat west general seat, Congress, Golaghat west reserved seat for Scheduled Tribes, Congress, Dergon, Congress, Jorhat south, Congress, Jorhat north general seat, Congress, Jorhat north reserved seat for Scheduled Castes, All People's Party, Tiabar, Congress, Teok, Congress, Amguri, Congress, Sibsagar, Congress, Nazira, Congress, Nazira-Sonari, and Congress, Sonari.

In the same election two representatives from the Congress Party were elected to the House of People from Golaghat, Jorhat and Sibsagar—North-Lakhimpur constituencies.

In the election that took place in 1957, of the total 14 seats, 13 went to Congress Party and the rest to the candidate of Revolutionary Communist Party of India. The parties capturing the seats were as follows : Congress,

Marangi, Congress, Golaghat, Congress, Dergaon General, Congress, Dergaon reserved for Scheduled castes, Congress, Titabar, Congress, Teok, Revolutionary Communist Party of India, Amguri, Congress, Nazira, Congress, Sonari, Congress, Thowra, Congress, Sibsagar, Congress, Jorhat General seat, Congress, Jorhat reserved seat for Scheduled Tribes and Congress, Katanigaon. Both the members, elected to the House of people from Jorhat and Sibsagar constituencies belonged to the Congress Party.

There were certain peculiarities in this year's election results. Firstly, both the members to the reserved seats were elected unopposed. Secondly, Srimati Kamal Kumari Barua who was elected from the Katanigaon constituency became the first woman member from Sibsagar district to the Assam Legislative Assembly. Thirdly, Srimati Mofida Ahmed who was elected to the House of People from Jorhat constituency became not only the first woman member from this district to the said House, but earned the distinction of being the first woman M.P. of a minority community (Muslim) from the State of Assam.

In the last General Election held in 1962, of the total 14 Assembly seats, 12 went to Congress and the other two to Independent & R.C.P.I. candidates. The parties holding the seats were as follows : Congress, Marangi, Congress, Golaghat, Congress, Bokakhat, Congress, Dergaon, Congress, Titabar, Congress, Katanigaon, Independent, Jorhat, Congress, Majuli, Congress, Teok, R.C.P.I., Amguri, Congress, Nazira, Congress, Sonari, Congress, Thowra and Congress, Sibsagar. The two members elected to the Lok Sabha from Jorhat and Sibsagar, belonged to the P.S.P. and the Congress party

During this election the system of double member constituencies was done away with. Instead two constituencies, viz. Dergaon and Majuli were exclusively reserved for members belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes respectively. So, in place of 12 constituencies there emerged 14 single member constituencies. Then again, for the first time since 1952, the Congress lost one more seat to other party candidate in the Assembly election, and the party conceded an M.P. seat to a member of the opposition.

(b) Political parties and their hold in the district :

The main All India Political Parties representing Assam branches with District Organisations till the General Election of 1962 are the Indian National Congress, the K.M.P., later on the Praja Socialist Party and the R.C.P.I. and the Communist Party of India. A local party known as the All Peoples' Party was also there. The results in the past elections show the strength and weakness of the parties concerned in this district. In 1962 election there were 14 seats in the Legislative Assembly for the Sibsagar district. Since 1952 the Indian National Congress has been contesting for all the seats. Their success in the last three General Elections may be said

to be overwhelming, for in 1952 they lost only the Titabar seat to a candidate of All People's Party and in 1957, though they regained the lost seat they had to concede the Amguri seat to a candidate of Revolutionary Communist Party of India. In the latter election two of the Congress candidates were elected unopposed. In the 1962 election the Congress could not regain the lost seat at Amguri, but lost yet another seat at Jorhat to an Independent candidate.

In the first two general elections the majority of the valid votes in Assembly elections were cast in favour of Congress, the percentages being 52.27 in 1952. and 55.21 in 1957. But the picture changed in 1962, the Congress party secured only 46.23 per cent of valid votes. But this does mean that Congress was challenged by a close rival, since most of the votes cast against this party were distributed among different parties and individuals, as the following paragraphs will testify.

In 1952 the only party besides the Congress which contested the election in all the 14 seats was the Socialist Party of India. But they could not win any seat and polled 20.32 per cent of valid votes. In 1957 the Socialist Party set up only one candidate and polled only 1.87 per cent of valid votes without winning any seat. In 1962 election their number of candidates rose to 4 but they could neither win a seat nor fared well in the polling, securing only 2.87 per cent of valid votes.

The Communist Party of India though yet to win a seat, has been strengthening their position gradually, as the following statistics will reveal. In 1952 they set up 3 candidates and polled 2.16 per cent of valid votes. In 1957 they again set up the same number of candidates but polled a higher percentage of valid votes i.e. 5.95. In 1962 their number of candidates rose to 6 and they polled a still higher percentage of valid votes i.e. 8.22.

Two other all-India parties viz. Krishak Mazdoor Praja Party and Bolsevik Party of India contested the election in 1952 though subsequently they were no longer in the field. The first party contested 4 seats and the latter 1, but none won any seat. They polled respectively 2.48 and 0.31 per cent of valid votes.

In 1957 election two all-India Parties viz. Praja Socialist Party & Revolutionary Communist Party of India emerged. The former Party contested 6 seats, won none and polled 13.01 per cent of valid votes. In the election of 1962 this Party set up 11 candidates, won none and polled 17.16 per cent of valid votes. But the emergence of R.C.P.I. was somewhat spectacular, for in the election of 1957 it contested only 1 seat and won it polling 4.53 per cent of valid votes. In the 1962 election it contested 6 seats, but besides retaining the old seat it could not increase the number. This time it polled 7.66 per cent of valid votes. Another Party

in the name of Worker's Party of India participated in the election of 1962 and polled 0.24 per cent of valid votes.

Besides the all-India parties, there was a local party which fought the 1952 election in the name of All Peoples' Party, 1957 election in the name of Sarbadal and the 1962 election in the name of Sarbadal Sramik Sabha. The headquarters of this Party was at Jorhat and it represented ex- and present tea garden labourers. In all the three elections, the Party has been consistently contesting only 3 seats. In the first election it won the Titabar seat, but subsequently it failed to secure any. The percentage of valid votes polled by this party in the last three elections stood at 4.48, 6.76 and 4.20 respectively.

Over and above the parties, there are also a number of Independent candidates who fought elections without any party affiliation. The number of such candidates stood at 23 in 1952; 13 in 1957 and at 20 in 1962. In the first two elections they did not meet with any success, but in the election of 1962 one of their candidates was elected from Jorhat. In the three elections they respectively polled 17.99; 12.67 and 13.19 per cent of valid votes. Almost invariably one or the other of them contests a seat. But exceptions are also there. In 1952 in one constituency there was no Independent candidate, in 1957 there were 5 and in 1962, two. There are also instances where more than one independent candidate seeks election from the same seat.

A review of the past three elections reveals that there were 5,47,271 voters in 1952; 5,73,768 in 1957 and 6,30,098 in 1962. In 1952, 3,33,481 (60.93 per cent) valid votes, in 1957, 2,73,809 (47.72 per cent) and in 1962, 2,89,568 (45.95 per cent) were cast. The rest of the electorate were either indifferent or some atleast cast invalid votes. From all accounts it appears that Congress is still a force to be reckoned with in the district and no single Party has yet emerged to challenge its supremacy.

In the elections to the Lok Sabha as well, the Congress holds its sway. In the first two elections it won both the seats earmarked for the district. But in the election of 1962 it suffered a setback, one of the two seats being won by a P.S.P. candidate. The P.S.P till the election of 1962 had not won any seat in the Assembly.

In 1952 for two seats of the Lok Sabha 7 candidates contested, of whom 2 belonged to Congress, 2 to Socialist and 1 each to All Peoples' Party, K.M.P.P. and Independent group. Out of a total electorate of 7,09,294 (in one of its constituencies certain portions of Lakhimpur district are also included), 3,41,195 valid votes were cast. Of them Congress secured 1,83,281, Socialist 71,376, All Peoples' Party 36,851, K.M.P.P., 18,071 and Independent 31,616. In the election of 1957 altogether 8 candidates contested for these two seats. Party-wise, the candidates were Congress, 2; P.S.P., 2; Sarvadal, 1; Communist, 1 and Independent, 2.

Out of a total electorate of 7,48,909, the number of valid votes cast was 3,41,043, of which Congress polled 1,72,402, P.S.P. 60,169, Sarvadal 31,734, Communists 33,713 and Independent 43,025. In 1962 in all 7 candidates contested for these two seats, of which 2 belonged to Congress, 2 to P.S.P., 1 to Communist, 1 to R.C.P.I & 1 to Independent. Out of a total electorate of 8,63,218, the number of valid votes cast was 3,93,932, of which Congress polled 1,78,930, P.S.P. 1,03,892. Communist 47,282, R.C.P.I. 33,488, and Independent 30,340.

(c) *Newspapers:*

In 1846, the first Assamese magazine *Orunodoi* was published from the Missionary Press of Sibsagar. It was a monthly magazine, and its first editor was O. T. Gutter. Though published with the intention of propagating Christianity, the magazine contained information in respect of science, history, morality, nature study, etc. Over and above them one could find in these magazines translations from various other languages and series of articles bearing on Assam's history and books of knowledge. It won universal popularity among the Assamese people. The magazine was brought out only till 1882.

As a pioneer Assamese literary piece on the subject, the contribution made by the magazine towards Assamese cultural life is manifold. It made the Assamese society known to the outside world; by its patronage of Assamese language and literature, it paved the way for Assamese having been recognised as a separate independent language; by being the pioneer in the field of publication of Assamese magazines, it gave a fillip to newspaper industry as well as to journalism.

We have already mentioned elsewhere the wide popularity of the *Asom Sahitya Sabha Patrika*, the mouth-piece of the Assamese life and conditions, published from its head-office at Jorhat.

Presently, *Janambhumi*, a weekly newspaper with a circulation of 3,000, is published from Jorhat. It was first published on 15th March, 1947 and reflcets popular opinion to a large extent. Its circulation has been daily on the increase and large number of copies are sent out of the district. Among the other widely read newspapers in the district, published in both Assamese and English in and outside the State are: The *Assam Tribune*, the *Frontier Times*, the *Natun Asamiya*, *Dainik Asom*, *Asom Batori*, *Asom Bani*, *Nava Dhara*, the *Statesman*, the *Hindusthan Standard*, the *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, etc. Among the Assamese magazines mention may be made of *Ramdhenu*, *Avahan*, *Pratinidhi*, *Manideep*, etc.

(d) Voluntary Social Service Organisations:

Mahila Samiti: For their own uplift in both the cultural and political fields, branches of such Samiti have been opened not only in the sub-divisional towns but also in many rural centres, affiliated to District

Samitis. The Jorhat District Mahila Samiti was first constituted in 1926-27, but subsequently reorganised in 1946. The Sibsagar Samiti was formed in 1920 and the Golaghat in 1951. At present the total number of branches of the aforesaid District Samitis has been reported to be about a hundred, and of these Sibsagar District Mahila Samiti claims about 52, Golaghat 13 and Jorhat 33, with a total membership of about 5914 (Jorhat 2074 Golaghat 800, and Sibsagar 2040). The State Government have been encouraging the formation of such Samitis with necessary help and guidance for infusing a sense of civic responsibility and self-reliance in them for the betterment of Social life as a whole.

These Mahila Samitis have been exerting commendable influence on the secluded life of the rural as well as urban women-folk. They have provided opportunities to the womenfolk in general for the widening of their educational, cultural and religious out-look which are so essential in a secular Democrate State. The Sibsagar District Mahila Samiti for the first time in Assam brought out a monthly Magazine called *Ghar Jeuti*. This magazine was widely read specially by the women-folk and proved to be a good medium for discussing general and specific problems pertaining to them. But the life-span of this magazine was very short hardly running for a period of four years. Credit also goes to the afore-said Mahila Samiti for initiating the establishment of an M.E. School under the name and style of Joymati M. E. School. At present this Samiti is organising weaving industrial centres throughout the whole Sub-division where improved technique of weaving, embroidery and wool-knitting are demonstrated with a view to imparting lessons to rural and urban womenfolk. Sometimes demonstrations are also arranged on the art of fruit preservation.

Work in the adult literacy, sewing, weaving, embroidery, leather work and cooking sections are reported to be progressing under Golaghat District Mahila Samiti. The Jorhat District Mahila Samiti is progressing well with its weaving and sewing sections in its own building at Nehrupark. This Samiti is proposing to open an adult literacy training centre. Similar proposal has also been submitted by the Sibsagar District Mahila Samiti to the State Social Welfare Board. The Golaghat District Mahila Samiti contemplates to open a Montessori class and construct its own office building.

Maina Parijat: By the year 1950-51 there were two different childrens' organisations in Assam: the *Moinamel* in Upper Assam mainly with Jorhat as its centre; and the *Parijat Kanan* mainly in Lower Assam. A good number of child Psychologists, educationists and Social Workers were the sponsors and guides of the organisations. In 1958 in a Jorhat Session of the *Moina Mel* and the *Parijat Kanan* at Dibrugarh the two organisations were united under the name of *Maina Parijat* and a common constitution was framed and adopted for the smooth functioning of the same. Thus the *All Assam Maina Parijat* was born and got itself registered in 1959 under the Societies Registration Act. Now in the District of Sibsagar there are three branches at Sub-divisional level with a number of units under them.

The *Maina Parijat* is a Children's Welfare Organisation and in that capacity it may be run along with a Kindergarten and a Montessori School. Its aim has been to give the little children ample opportunity to develop their faculties through games, sports and marrymaking, and to teach them the lesson of unity, self reliance and leadership so as to make them competent to build the edifice of social, moral and cultural life in future and to enhance the tie of friendship among the children of towns and villages, hills and plains.

Student Volunteer Corps Organization: During the early years of the freedom struggle various youth organisations were established all over Assam. These organisations were then led by different parties with different principles. Just after independence the youth organisations of Jorhat decided to form a combined non-political and volunteer youth organisation at Jorhat. As a result of this, an organisation was established at Jorhat under the caption Jorhat Volunteer Unit. This Volunteer Unit took a leading part not in this district alone, but also in the district of Lakhimpur in rendering all possible help to the earthquake affected people of 1950. Again in the year 1953-54 this organisation could draw the attention of the Public by way of their volunteering services rendered to the Jorhat Session of the Asom Sahitya Sabha. After making some change in the working of the organisation in 1954-55 the area of operation which was so long confined within the Sub-division of Jorhat alone, was extended to the whole district. Henceforward local units were opened at every High and M.E. Schools of the district. A governing body was formed with the local educationist, and prominent citizens of the Town for the proper functioning of the organisation. The name of the organisation has been changed once more to the Jorhat Central Volunteer Corps and then in 1955-56 it was renamed as Students' Volunteer Crops with a set of ideal set before it.

Since then the Students' Volunteer Corps of the district, whose head-quarters is at Jorhat, has been taking part in National Celebrations including Republic day and Independence day, other social and educational programmes and also helping the police personnel in maintaining road discipline specially on occasions like Dewali, Durgapuja and Sivaratri.

Alengi Welfare Extension Project: It was inaugurated on the 1st of April, 1955 with 5 centres. This Project was on 11. 7. 59 subsequently

converted into Amguri-Titabar co-ordinated Welfare Extension Project. This is the only Social Welfare Organisation in this district functioning under the *Assam State Social Welfare Board*. At Present 10 centres are functioning under the Project at these Places: Hatisungi, Karangaikhat, Mohanating, Melamati, Pathargaon, Balajan, Rajabari, Ekaranibacha, Birinachaya and Raidongjuri. The activities of the centres relate to maternity, feeding of children, Social education including arts and crafts, recreational activities, Sewing, weaving, etc. The Project has by now done appreciable works on the above lines

CHAPTER XIX

PLACES OF INTEREST

Before the annexation of Assam by the British, the centre of the administration of Assam was Sibsagar where the Ahoms ruled for nearly six hundred years. They took special care to build numerous temples, dedicated to different deities, and dig large tanks which till to-day stand out as memorials to their glory. From the point of view of architectural grandeur and beauty most temples in their designs and finish may be well compared with any contemporary architecture found in other parts of India, and some of them have received high commendation from expert observers. Again most of the monumental tanks have no parallel elsewhere.

(a) Places of Archaeological and Historical interest including Hindu Pilgrim Centres :

Sibsagar Sub-division : This Sub-division is hallowed by antiquity, and it abounds in countless monuments of national importance and of sculptural excellence, which bear eloquent testimony to the glory that was Assam. This place, Sibsagar, better known as Rangpur was the capital of the mighty Ahom kings till 1826. The name Sibsagar originates from the name of the tank Siva Sagar.

Sibsagar Tank : This tank along with the three temples, standing on the south bank of the tank, was constructed by queen Ambika Devi, wife of king Siva Sinha in 1733 A.D. to commemorate the name of her husband. The area of the tank with its bank is 257 acres; the area of the tank under water is 129 acres; present water depth of the tank is 20 cubits; and the total length of the banks by road is 2 miles, 4 furlongs and 64 yds.* On the bank of the tank stand three temples, viz. Siva Dol, Visnu Dol and Devi Dol, and also a collection of different sizes of cannon used during the reign of Ahom Kings.

Siva Dol : This is the tallest temple in Assam, the total height including the Golden Dome, which is 7½ feet long, being 132 feet 9 inches. One of the greatest festivals of this part of the country, *Sivaratri* with *mela* is duly performed at this Dol every year. The Golden Dome of this

* In some papers it is written as 2 miles 196 yards.

Dol fell down in the earthquake in 1947 and was reinstalled in 1954 after necessary repairs. But the temple was badly damaged by the great earthquake of 15th August, 1950 as a result of which ornamental stone work on the outer surface suffered heavily and the masonry super-structure stood imbalanced. Since then, the Department of Archaeology, Government of India, has been attending to the necessary repair works, and major portions of the damaged outer stone have been repaired.

Visnu Dol: It is situated in line with and to the east of Siva Dol. Dol Jatra and Ratha Jatra are celebrated here.

Devi Dol: It is situated in line with and to the west of Siva Dol. Durga Puja is celebrated here.

Kareng Ghar: This palace locally known as Talatal Ghar, was the capital and military station of Ahom Kings, first constructed by King Rudra Sinha in the year 1700 A.D. The building is of seven storyes, four above and three below the ground and said to contain two tunnels, one from Kareng to Dikhow river and the other from Kareng to Gargaon palace. The former tunnel is 1½ miles in length and the latter about 10 miles. The palace is surrounded on all sides by high ramparts. Within the ramparts another structure is sutuated known as Golaghar, (which means the magazine). There is a water reservoir close to the palace for the use of the Royal Palace and it was connected by an earthen pipe with the Joysagar Tank. A detailed description of the architectural designs of the palace has already been incorporated in chapter II, p. 75. The entire plan of both the Karengghar and the Talatal ghar speaks of the excellent workmanship of the architects.

A considerable portion of the palace has been destroyed by the treasure hunters. Nature also played its part equally. Due to several earthquakes some of the structures got buried under the earth. Archaeologists, historians and visitors come in large number to see this historic site, now full of ruins.

Rang Ghar: The amphitheatre of the Ahom kings, situated by the side of the National Highway (37) opposite the Kareng Ghar is a brick built, two storeyed, oval shaped structure, constructed in the year 1745 A.D. for the purpose of witnessing games, sports, animal fights, etc. by the members of the Royal family. The monument is almost in its original structure. Its architectural design is a novelty. A good description of the structure occurs in the Report of the Archaeologigcal Survey, Bengal Circle, 1902-03, which has already been incorporated in chapter II, p. 76. The site is of great historical and archaeological importance.

Joysagar Tank: This tank is situated about 2 miles south of Sibsagar town. This is the biggest tank in India and was constructed within 45 days by king Rudra Sinha in memory of his mother Sati Joymoti Kunworee, who is said to have sacrificed her life in 1619 A.D. in order to save her husband Gadapani or Gadadhar Sinha as well as her beloved mother-land. The place where Joymoti was prosecuted by Lora Raja lies to the south-west of this tank along the south Trunk Road and is called Jerenga Pathar. The area of the tank with its bank is 318 acres; the area under water is 155 acres and the depth of water of the tank is 20 cubits. The total length of the banks by road is 2 miles, 4 furlongs and 96 yards. On its bank stand four temples Joy Dol (Visnu), Siva Dol, Devi Dol and Ghanashyam Dol, and several institutions including the Sibsagar College.

Ghanasyam Temple: It is situated on the south-west corner of Joysagar Tank and is dedicated to the memory of Ghanashyam, the famous architect who built the Kareng Ghar. It is a small, brick-built, hut-type structure, lavishly decorated with terracotta works. It was standing in a dilapidated condition and the Department of Archaeology did a lot to restore to its present condition.

In between Joysagar and Kareng Ghar, there are Rongnath Dol, Fagua Dol, Gaurivallabha Dol and Hara-Gauri Dol, some of which are being looked after by the State Government.

Napukhuri and Puranipukhuri: Thsee two tanks are situated about 5 miles south-west of Sibsagar twon. Napukhuri and Puranipukhuri are also known as Rudrasagar and Athaisagar tanks respectively. The Puranipukhuri was constructed in the year 1653 A.D. by Jayadhvaj Sinha. The Napukhuri was constructed in 1773 A.D. by Laksmi Sinha.

Stone Bridge: Beyond the above two tanks there is a stone bridge over the river Namdang. Its length is 202 feet and breadth 21½ feet. It was built entirely with stones by king Rudra Sinha in about 1703 A.D.

Gaurisagar Tank: It is situated about 8 miles southwest of Sibsagar town by the side of the south Trunk Road. It was built by Queen Fulesvari in between the years 1715 and 1717 A.D. The area of the tank with its bank is 293 acres; the area under water is 150 acres and the depth of the tank is 20 cubits. Three temples known as Siva Dol, Visnu Dol and Devi Dol stand on the north bank of the tank. These temples were also constructed by the same Queen. Two of these temples are entirely brick-built, but the other one i.e. Devi Dol is partly brick-built and partly stone-built. The stone built lower portion is decorated with carvings.

Gargaon Palace: It is situated about 8 miles east of Sibsagar town and about 1½ mile north of Nazira town and 1½ mile west of Simaluguri Railway junction. It was constructed with wood and stones in 1540 A.D. and was rebuilt by King Rajeswar Sinha in 1752 A.D. Surrounded by big brick walls, about 3 miles long, it was the principal capital of Ahom Kings. The palace is of seven storeys and connected with Kareng Ghar by a tunnel. There are other structures within the ramparts associated with the palace and they are in a dilapidated condition. Shihabuddin Talish has given a copious description of this historic capital city, some details of which have already been incorporated in chapter II, p. 45. The site is of great archaeological interest.

Charaideo: This place, situated about 18 miles east of Sibsagar town at the foot of Naga Hills, was the first capital of the Ahom kings, established by king Sukapha. The origin of the place name is uncertain. It is said that formerly birds were offered there in the name of god. So the place came to be known as Charaideo. Formerly the Kacharis, the Borahis, the Morans, the Nagas and the Ahoms used to offer their prayers and oblations to deities at the sacrificial altar of Charaideo, known as Deosal.

In the hillock of Caraideo exist high *maidams* or graves of Ahom kings and Queens, which cover a wide area of about six miles right from Santak to Mathurapur. Two tanks, known as *Sa-dhowa* and *Petudhowa*, can also be seen by the side of the road.

The foreign invaders including Mir Jumla, being very much tempted by valuable treasures that lay buried in the above graves, dug them out and plundered the whole area mercilessly. Although these graves are concealed by dense forest, one cannot but wonder to see the artistic brick built houses underneath. The site deserves preservation in view of its historic importance in the annals of the Ahom rulers.

Nazira: It is a small town situated on the bank of the Dikhou river about 10 miles east of Sibsagar town. For years it was the headquarters of the Assam Tea Company Ltd., the oldest tea company of India. Relics of the huge iron boats used by the East India Company are still lying in the vicinity of the Company's headquarters. Besides a Town committee, Nazira has a college and several educational institutions.

Amguri: This border township, situated near the newly created Nagaland State has assumed commercial importance in recent times. It is connected with the National Highway (37) at Jhanji by a gravelled road of 4 miles long and situated at a distance of 20 miles from Sibsagar town.

Moran: Situated at a distance of 25 miles east of Sibsagar town on the National Highway (37), the place came into lime-light as soon as oil was found in areas surrounding it. A town Committee has recently been formed. It has one Multipurpose school for both boys and girls and one High School for girls.

Sonari: It is a small town compared to Amguri, Nazira, and such other places and situated at a distance of about 28 miles south-east of Sibsagar town. As it is situated on the border of Nagaland, Nagas in groups come here for weekly markets. An ungravelled road runs from here to NEFA.

Rudrasagar: It is an oil prospecting area situated in the neighbourhood of Sibsagar town. In view of favourable geological features, the Indian National Commission for Oil and Natural Gas in 1959 located some exploratory wells and as a result of which the Rudrasagar structure which is situated to the south of Disangmukh near the town of Sibsagar was taken in hand. On 28 May 1960, the drilling of oil was commenced, and now the operations have been extended to cover more oil areas.

Other Ruins: A collection of huge stone images was long lying in the premises of Sub-divisional Officer's residence at Sibsagar. They have been assigned to the tenth-eleventh century A.D. Only a few years ago, these valuable sculptures have been removed to Gauhati at a Considerable cost and the images of *Gaja-Laksmi, Varahavatara, Kamadeva, Saraswati* and so on are now adorning the Assam State Museum at Gauhati. These images are believed to be the remains of a Visnu temple which possibly existed in the vicinity of their find spots. This ancient Visnu temple was in all likelihood erected by the Kamarupa Kings of the tenth or eleventh century. It is interesting to note that even till the eleventh century the Kamarupa Kings exercised their rule as far as the easternmost corner of the Assam valley.

Near the S.D.O.'s court at Sibsagar a few cannon of the Ahom period are still to be seen. The Archaeological Department of the Government of India granted protection to these cannon as early as 1932. The biggest one among them measures 19′ in length and 5′ in circumference.

Jorhat Sub-division: Jorhat is a new town, its former name being Disai Bahar. As there were a couple of markets near Disai, such as Phukanar hat, Machar hat, the place came to be known as Jorhat meaning twin-market (jor means twin and hat means market). When Rangpur was ruined as a result of aggression by the Morans, the then King Gaurinath Sinha shifted his capital to this place in 1794 A.D. He expired in this Bahar on 22nd *Sravan* of *saka* 1717. During the British days the headquarters of the district was shifted from Sibsagar to this place in 1913 A.D.

Bangalpukhuri: On the southern side of Jorhat, near Na-ali, there is a tank popularly known as Bangalpukhuri. In the month of *sravana* of *Saka* 1739, Badan Barphukan was murdered by Rupsing Bangal when he was going to take bath. For this act, he was rewarded with some money which he spent in excavating this tank. The people do not use the water of this tank as it was excavated with the money received for killing a man. Some others hold the opinion that Rupsing Bangal washed his blood-stained knife in this tank after killing Badan Barphukan and so it came to be known as Bangal Pukhuri.

Bar Pukhuri: There is a tank near Tarajan which is known as Bar Pukhuri but its actual name is Buragohain Pukhuri.

Burigosani Devalay: The Burigosani and the priest were brought from Jayantia after defeating that king and were established first at Rangpur. When the capital was shifted to Jorhat, the image of Burigosani was also shifted and placed in a temple which lies in the middle of the town. It is a Sakta shrine.

Raja Maidam: The existing *Maidam* (vault) which lies on the south bank of Tokolai river on the northern side of Jorhat town is of king Purandar Sinha, who expired on 1st October 1864. That was the time of *Durga Puja.* The officers of different ranks who came to witness the festival carried out the dead body of the king for funeral. His son, the crown prince washed the body of the king with water from the four jars of gold, silver, copper and bell-metal, wore ornaments and placed clothes on the *Sarai* after which followed another royal funeral and performed the last rites on the Disai river. The present *maidam* was constructed to preserve the ashes.

Purnananda Buragohain Maidam: There is a maidam on the bank of the Tokolai near Macharhat which is of Purnananda Buragohain. It was constructed by his son Racinath Buragohain in 1815. The residence of Purnanda Buragohain was at the site of the present Civil Hospital.

Kunwori Pukhuri: About two miles east of Jorhat town near the Trunk Road there is a big tank which is known as Kunwori Pukhuri. The grand daughter of Sataialia Dilabandha Borgohain was made Parbatia Kunwori by king Gaurinath Sinha. This Parbatia Kunwori constructed the tank.

Garh Ali: A big embankment was constructed to protect the Ahom kingdom from the Moamarias and it extended from Sewni Ali to Naga Hills. Having seen this, the Moamarias got bewildered and hence this came to known also as the *Bibuddhi garh.*

Bilvesvar Siva Temple: About 3 miles north of Jorhat town by the side of South Trunk Road there lie ruins of an old and small temple, along with a tank, which is known as Buragohain Devalay or Hatigarh Devalay. Both the temple and the tank were constructed by Rucinath Buragohain.

Gazpur: At a little distance towards north of Bilveswar Siva temple the remains of Hatigarh can be seen. The Garh was erected to capture elephants. The king decided to make a town, Hastinapur by name by collecting one thousand elephants. But it was difficult to collect so many elephants. Therefore, the king gave up the idea and named that place as Gazpur.

Magolu Khat: Magolu Khat is situated about four miles west of Jorhat town. The king Rajesvar Sinha established the Magolus or Manipuris here after marrying Kuranganayani, the princess of Manipur at Manaimaji village.

Ladaigarh: King Pratap Sinha constructed a garh on the north and south to protect the kingdom. One part of this garh is called Mera garh which is in Majuli. Swatalat garh is on the northern side and Ladai garh on the southern side.

Baduli Pukhuri: During the reign of the king Jayadhvaj Sinha a tank was excavated by Baduli Borphukan near the Trunk Road at Teok, and it was named after Baduli Borphukan.

Borbheta: Situated 2½ miles from Jorhat town Borbheta is known for the Assam Agriculture College, the only institution of this kind in Assam, District Jail, Jorhat Police Reserve and the Christian Mission Hospital.

Karanga: It is a village famous for its black-smithy which caters to the demand of neighbouring tea estates and local people.

Cinnamara: The famous Tokolai Experimental Centre of the I. T. A., the Christian Theological College and the office of the Jorhat Tea Company are located here beside the Gymkhana Club where annual horse-race is held.

Mariani: A railway junction, Mariani has recently become important on account of the big ply-wood factory which is located here.

Titabar: It is a small town and has come into prominence with the establishment of several educational institutions, such as Basic Training College, Post-graduate Basic Training College, the Regional Sericultural Research Station, Ice Research Station, etc. There are also a few rice mills. The small town has recently been electrified.

Majuli: A detailed information in respect of its topography, population and several satras has been incorporated in chapters I & III. What is of special importance is its *satra* establishment, consisting of separate structures, built for different purposes.

The sanctum sanctorum is called the *Bhanjghar*, and also the *Manikuta*. This is constructed as a separate house either with two curved roofs or with four flat roofs. In front of the sanctum sanctorum is constructed a big *mandapa* known as the *Kirtana ghar*. This is a very commodious building, 50 to 100 feet wide and 100 to 200 feet long with wide verandahs on two sides parallel to the length. The roof of the huge *Kirtana ghar* is covered with thatching grass on bamboo roof frame which is supported on a timber queen truss constructed with timber with artistic design. This huge truss is supported on timber pillars, 9 to 12 feet in circumference placed at a distance.

The two roofs are of the *dosala* pattern, but the front of the house is provided with a rounded slanting roof of the same pattern as the vestibule in front of the *Gopuram* of the Kamakhya temple. The bridge of both the *Kirtana ghar* and the *Manikuta* is invariably finished with a round roofed garret over it called the tope (tupi). In front of the *Kirtana ghar* a few hundred feet away from it and its approach road is constructed the *Batcara* or the gate house, invariably a two roofed small cottage without any walls.

Barbheti: In the Malow Pathar a little to the west of Jorhat town lies a mound called Barbheti, which is said to have been the site of the *namghar* of the Moamaria gosain in the latter part of the seventeenth century. According to Ahom chronicles, each disciple of the gosain brought one sod for the construction of this enormous mound, and this enabled him to ascertain their number. Two smaller mounds near by are known as the *Majorbheti* and the Majiabheti and were the sites of the houses of the gosain and his brother. During the reign of Rajesvar Sinha the Moamaria Mahanta Chaturbhuj ordered his disciples to demonstrate their might by erecting a *bheti*, to be known as Barbheti by bringing a certain amount of soil per head.

Teok: Situated at a distance of 14 miles from Jorhat on the National Highway (37) it is a small sub-urban area and has a venture

college. At Jogduar two miles from here, a Government Dairy Farm is situated.

Nimati: Situated at a distance of 11 miles from Jorhat, it is an important river port of the district as well as of Upper Assam. The office of the sub-agent, Joint Steamer Company was located here. It is a gateway to North-Lakhimpur. Extensive railway sidings have helped its rapid growth.

Charigaon: It is situated at a distance of about four miles from Jorhat towards Nimati. The pumping station of the Oil India, Ltd., has been stationed here.

Borholla: Situated at a distance of 12 miles from Titabar, Borholla is a paddy growing area. A considerable amount of paddy is supplied from here to rice mills of Titabar and Golaghat.

Kokilamukh: Situated at a distance of 10 miles north of Jorhat town, it was an important steamerghat on the Brahmaputra and till the great earthquake of 1950 a ferry used to ply between this place and Kamalabari, but due to heavy silting caused by the earthquake ferry service had to be discontinued. A daily ferry plays now between Kokilamukh and Bhekelimukh of the Majuli. It is a very fertile area and vegetables are supplied daily to Jorhat town.

Rowriah: It is an important aerodrome of the Indian Air Force. The Regional Research Laboratory has been constructed near about it.

Golaghat Sub-division: This sub-division was formed in 1846 A.D. The name Golaghat originates from the word, gola (a market). This market was held on the bank of the river Dhansiri during Ahom rule. This Sub-division contains ancient ruins of historical importance. The Kaziranga Wild Life Sanctuary and the Garampani Wild Life Sanctuary fall within its jurisdiction.

Negheriting Siva Temple: The place is situated on the north side of the National Highway (37) near Dergaon. The Ahom king Rajesvar Sinha constructed this temple in the middle of the eighteenth century on a hillock known as Negheri. In design this Siva temple differs from all other Siva temples of Sibsagar sub-division. Daily worship is still carried on in this temple. More details about the archaeological style of this temple can be had from the *Annual Report of the Archaeological Survey of India* for 1924-25.

Dergaon temple: The old site of this temple was to the north of the Negheriting temple. The new temple at the present site was built by king Susenpha through Momaitamuli Borbarua in 1672 A.D.

Burigosanir Devalaya: It is situated at Dergaon. The temple is in ruins now.

Athgaon than: This old shrine stands at a distance of about 3 miles from Furkating Railway Junction towards Golaghat. The stone image of the Devi is still worshipped in a building. The history of this shrine is not yet known.

Halowa Gasanir Than: It is situated in Marangi mouza. The temple was constructed by king Gaurinath Sinha in 1784 A.D., and is a living one.

Deopani Shrine: It stands inside Deopani Tea Estate. The old temple was destroyed; one Visnu image of exquisite workmanship with an inscription in Devanagari characters inscribed on it still lies there.

Numaligarh: The great embankment known as Numaligarh was built by king Pratap Sinha. A *bahar* (town) known as Numali Bâhar was also constructed with brick buildings, brick ghats, compound, etc. on the south bank of the Dhansiri river near the fort. The two other forts—Raj Garh and Lakhow Garh join this main fort.

By the side of this near Numaligarh Tea Estate there are ruins of an old temple or temples on hill-top. These ruins date to pre-Kachari and pre-Ahom periods. The entire hill is full of temple remains, gateways, pillar plinths and huge number of images and other relics with artistic designs. The antiquities of both Deopani and Numaligarh testify that stone edifices of great archaeological importance existed there.

Kacharipathar ruins: On the bank of the Dayang river near the Jamugiri Railway station these ruins can be found inside a deep forest. The site was once the capital of powerful Kachari kings. In some chronicles it is stated that this city was founded by the Kanchari King Prasantadhvaja Narayana. Some are of opinion that it was founded by king Chakradhvaja. The city was known as Bor Dimapur and is older than Dimapur. It was surrounded by an earthen fort of about half a mile on each side. Rows of stones, pillars of different size and shapes are still lying there.

Sarupani ruins: A few stones with peculiar mark on them are found there. Some say that they are the finger prints of a certain Ahom king.

Kako Gosanir than: Located in Kaziranga area it is an old Sakta shrine founded by Gadadhar Sinha. It is said that Gadadhar Sinha at the time of his exile worshipped this deity which he kept concealed inside a kako bamboo chunga (pipe).

Basanti than: It is also situated in Kaziranga area. The image is of Durga and annual celebration of Durgotsava is held during the spring season. The antiquity of the place is uncertain.

Kulumai than: Another Sakta shrine in this area is Kulumai Than. Details are lacking.

Stone Elephant: It stands on the bank of Dipholu river by the side of Kahara Pahar at a certain altitude. This stone-cut elephant is of considerable size and adorned with architectural designs. The history is obscure.

Fatasil: It is situated at a distance of about 2 miles from Garampani in Nambor forest. It is a small waterfall in the Namdang river.

Garampani: It is situated at a distance of 12 miles from Golaghat town on the bank of the Nambor river just by the side of the Golaghat-Dimapur road. There is a big hot spring, where people take bath for the curative effect of the hot water. It is an ideal place for holiday makers. Recently to protect the wild birds and animals available in and around the hot spring, an area measuring 3½ square miles on either side of the Nambor river has been turned into a Wild Life Sanctuary. The hot spring is a familiar hunt for various kinds of birds and beasts.

Dergaon: Situated at a distance of about 14 miles west of Jorhat town on the National Highway (37) Dergaon is a small township and primarily known for the Assam Police Training College. The headquarters of the Assam Police Battalions are also located here. Six miles south-east of it at Missamara is located the Assam Co-operative Sugar Mills. The township has recently been electrified.

Bokakhat: Situated at a distance of 40 miles west of Jorhat town on the National Highway (37) Bokakhat is a new town constituted under the Government notification No. RSS. 466/49 dated 4th January, 1954. This town has been constituted by taking away parts of four villages viz. Kalakhowa, Karaiati, Mohmaiki and Dergaon. The Dhansiri steamer-ghat is situated at a distance of 7 miles north-east of this place and is connected by a good gravelled P.W.D. road. Bokakhat is surrounded by several tea gardens and is famous for milk and milk products.

Barpathar: Barpathar, with the railway station of the same name in the centre, is a small town and is situated at a distance of about 3 miles from Numaligarh-Dimapur road. It is connected with both Sarupathar and Golaghat town by road and a regular bus service is in existence between it and the latter place. Besides being a distributing centre of essential commodities to adjoining areas, certain important commodities like timber, railway sleeper, molasses, jute, mustard, paddy, vegetables and pineapples are exported from here. There is also a cane supply centre of the Forest Department.

Furkating: The place has been coming into prominence. It is an important railway junction and a branch line, running via Golaghat-Badulipar-Jorhat connects it with Mariani. Golaghat town is situated only at a distance of 4 miles from this place. As it is situated in the heart of a large paddy growing area, there are as many as 8 rice mills including 1 combined oil mill. In recent years the growth of population has been rapid and trade and business are on the increase.

(b) Other Pilgrim Centres : Churches : Buddha Vihars : Muslim Shrines :

All Saints' Church of Cinnamara, Jorhat: This Church was constructed in 1895 under the direction of the Bishop of Calcutta on a plot of land donated by the Jorhat Tea Company. But due to a fire accident the Church had to be reconstructed in 1911. The then Assam Government contributed Rs. 1,550/- towards the construction of the Church, and the Jorhat Tea Company donated Rs. 550/-. In 1924 the Jorhat Tea Company presented a Bell to the Church.

American Baptists Foreign Mission Church, Jorhat: The history of this Church is not so old. In about 1903 a Christian Baptist Missionary Rev. S.A.D. Boggs opened an institution in the Rajabari area for the study of the Bible, out of which emerged an institution of prayer in the form of a Church. Side by side with the study of the Bible, courses of studies for primary, M.V. and High Schools were also introduced, and specially the tribal students were given good opportunity for the learning of arts and crafts. After the Second World War the High School itself was converted into a Theological College.

Christ Church, Golaghat: In 1906 the Manager of the Mahima Tea Garden along with his other colleagues constructed the Church at Golaghat. Prior to 1930 this Church was under the Church of England in India.

Central Baptist Church, Sibsagar: Dr. Nathan Brown constructed this Church on the eastern bank of the Sibsagar tank. The Church was on its original place for about hundred years, but now this has been removed to the south eastern side of the tank, and has been named as Central Baptist Church.

Buddha Vihars: There are a large number of Buddha Vihars in the district of which those at Barpathar, Sarupathar, Kaliani, Chalapathar and Disangpani are the most important. One new Buddha Vihar has been constructed at Rahanpathar Syamgaon near Sapekhati. Vikshus and Sramanas are there to perform the day to day ritual. Among all the Buddha Vihars, the one situated at Disangpani is really beautiful. Disangpani is connected by all weather motorable roads from Sibsagar and Sonari.

Dargah of Ajan Pir Muslim Shrine: It is situated on the north of the Dikhow river near the Brahmaputra in Haraguri Chapari. It is said that the Ahom king Pratap Sinha constructed this shrine surrounded by an earth wall for Ajan Pir (Shahmilon).

There is another Muslim shrine known as the Dargah of Khundker Pir, lying on the bank of the Dilih river.

(c) Game Sanctuaries :

Side by side with ancient monuments can be found various forest products and species of animals, some of which are rare and many of which are of interest to tourists as well as to botanists and zoologists.

Kaziranga Wild Life Sanctuary: Among the places of interest in the district, Kaziranga Game Sanctuary is the most important and it is known throughout the world for its one-horned rhino. Till the last century this species of rhino roamed about the valleys of North-East India, but is now confined only to a few Sanctuaries in Assam, Bengal and Nepal.

This Prehistoric-looking and armour-plated animal is often found along with the magnificent wild buffalo, the handsome Sambar, the swamp deer, the hog deer, the pig and occasionally with wild elephants and various water birds, which frequent the *beels* and other favourite haunts of the rhino.

At one time Kaziranga used to be a favourite hunting ground for sportsmen and poachers. Rhinos were shot and trapped, chiefly for their horns reputed for their aphrodisiac value. These were sold for Rs. 3000/- per seer. About the year 1904, however, it was realised that rhinos were becoming scarce, and there were only about 12 rhinos left in the place.

In 1908 the area was entirely closed to shooting and declared as Forest Reserve. In 1926 the name of Kaziranga Reserve was altered to Kaziranga Game Sanctuary. Lately it has come to be known as Kaziranga

Wild Life Sanctuary. In 1953 the Government of Assam created a buffer zone all round the Sanctuary in which all shooting is prohibited.

Midway between Gauhati and Dibrugarh, Kaziranga covers an area of 166 square miles on the south bank of the river Brahmaputra. The National High Way runs close to its southern boundary. The Mikir Hills lies just to the south of the National Highway.

Inside the Game Sanctuary one can see animals and birds of varied species. The rhinos number about 300 hundred. They are gradually becoming accustomed to visitors and riding elephants. Some animals near the Tourist Lodge can now be approached quite close without danger. There are about 75 to 150 wild elephants in Kaziranga, mostly found in herds in the northern and more dense parts of the Sanctuary. Usually they are not dangerous. Among the other animals, mention may be made of bison, tiger, wild buffalo, sambar deer, swamp deer, barking deer, hog deer, wild pig, Himalayan bear, Indian jungle cat, others, etc.

Kaziranga abounds in a large variety of water and other birds particularly in or near the *beels*. Some of the interesting ones are : Bengal florican, spotted-billed pelican, smaller adjutant stork, black-necked stork, white-neck stork and open-billed stork, purple heron, Indian darter (or snake bird), cormorant and little egret, cattle egret, jungle myna, swamp patridge, jungle fowl, green pigeons and ducks of different kinds.

Facilities for visiting the Sanctuary : The Sanctuary is easily accessible by air from Calcutta to Jorhat or Gauhati and thence by road, 60 miles from Jorhat and 130 miles from Gauhati. There is a Tourist Lodge (full furnished) at Kahara, about 135 miles from Gauhati on the Trunk Road to Dibrugarh. The Divisional Forest Officer, Sibsagar Division, Jorhat is in charge of the Sanctuary and the Tourist Lodge and he makes all arrangements for the tourist. The Forest Department car is usually available to take visitors from Jorhat Air Field to the Sanctuary at 50 nP per mile. State Transport buses also ply between Gauhati and Kaziranga and between Jorhat and Kaziranga.

The Tourist Lodge at Kaziranga is a two-storeyed building and contains five completely furnished rooms with beds in each. This bunglow has been named as Lachit Bhaban after the name of the famous Ahom general of the 18th century.

In the vicinity of this two-storeyed Lodge another hostel with 8 double bedded rooms have been constructed in 1960-61 for the low income group tourists with electricity and running water. Catering arrangement is also available there.

There is also a well furnished Forest Rest House at Buguri near about the Game Sanctuary where catering arrangements are also available for the tourists. For those who prefer to camp inside the Sanctuary proper, another furnished Forest Rest House is there at Arimora, about half a mile from the Brahmaputra approachable by a fair weather road about 10 miles from the Tourist Lodge. For going to the inside of the sanctuary elephants are inevitable. There are a good number of trained elephants for this purpose under the disposal of the Range Officer whose office is by the side of the Tourist Lodge. The staff of the Range office act as guides.

The charges for elephant ride are : Rs. 10.00 per trip for a single visitor ; Rs. 8.00 per trip per elephant per person if two visitors are accommodated on one elephant ; Rs. 6.00 per trip per elephant per person if three visitors are accommodated on one elephant. Motor launch and man-powered boats are also available.

The protection measures taken for wild life in this and other Wild Life Sanctuaries of the State and the amenities for the visitors are being steadily increased by the State Government in collaboration with the Government of India.

APPENDICES

A. GLOSSARY

Ahu :	A kind of paddy, harvested during Summer
Alatiya :	A loam
Ali :	An embankment across a rice field
Apong :	A Miri word for rice beer
Baki-jai :	A list of defaulting ryots filed by Mauzadar for recovering arrears of revenue
Bala :	An ornament for the wrist
Bali-cahiya :	Sandy land
Bam :	A high land
Ban-bati :	A bellmetal cup-like utensil with a foot
Ban-Kahi :	A bellmetal dish-like utensil with a foot
Bangal :	An outsider
Bao :	A kind of paddy sown in flooded land
Baradhan :	Glutinous paddy
Bari :	A home stead ; a plot of high waste land
Basti :	A homestead
Bata :	A small tray with a foot made usually of silver, bellmetal and brass used for keeping areca nut and betel vine
Bati :	A bell-metal cup-like utensil
Ba-tula cunga :	A bamboo pipe to furnish with healds in a loom
Bhakat :	A disciple ; a resident monk in the premises of a Vaisnava satra
Bhal-bari :	A high waste land of good quality
Bhaona :	A Vaisnava dramatic performance
Bhar :	A load of paddy in particular carried on a shoulder suspended from either end of a bamboo pole
Bhata :	A kiln
Bigha :	A measure of land standing for ⅓th of a *pura* of land
Bihu :	An Assamese national festival
Bil (Beel) :	A small lake
Bhohary :	A wheel attached to the spindle on which the Muga silk in particular is wound
Bhur (Bhel) :	A raft made of bamboo or pieces of banana tree

Cecukiya :	A damp land
Chadar :	An upper garment used by a female
Chaklang :	An Ahom marriage ceremony
Changghar :	A dwelling house, built on a raised platform
Chapori :	A high land formed by silt-deposit on the bank of a river
Char :	An alluvial land
Chariya :	A bowl made usually of brass
Charpara :	Land raised by silt or natural manure
Chepa :	A kind of bamboo fish trap
Chereki :	A contrivance for winding thread
Dangori :	A large sheaf of paddy
Dargah :	A Muslim shrine
Dhara :	A bamboo mat
Dhenki :	A paddle for pounding rice
Dingaru :	A kind of square bamboo fish trap
Dol :	A Hindu Shrine ; a Vaishnava temple
Don :	A basket for holding five seers of grain ; $\frac{1}{4}$th of a *pura* of land
Dong :	A small depression in a cultivated land used for irrigation
Dorpati :	The batten of loom
Dugdugi :	A pendant attached to a necklace
Edi :	A species of silk, the cocoons of which are fed on castor plant
Faringati :	A high land where Ahu paddy and other grains like mustard and sugarcane are sown
Galpata :	A flat necklace
Ganja (bhang) :	An Indian hemp
Ghar :	A dwelling house
Ghat :	A landing stair or a bathing place on a river bank
Got :	An agreegate of three or four paiks during the Ahom rule
Hangdang :	A sword used during the Ahom rule by kings, nobles and an Ahom bridegroom
Hat :	A market place
Hati :	A row of dwellings of the resident Vaisnava monks
Hola :	A shallow ravine
Hukuma :	A kind of bamboo fish trap
Jakoi :	A kind of bamboo scoop used in catching fish
Jalatak :	A flooded land or land liable to flood

Jan :	A brooklet
Japi :	A wicker hat, used as an umbrella
Juluki :	A kind of fish basket
Juvali :	An yoke
Kahi :	A bellmetal dish
Kakoi :	A Comb, made usually of animal horns and elephant tusk.
Kalpataru :	A sacred scripture written by Sri Sri Sankaradeva
Kataki :	A royal messenger or envoy of the Ahom and contemporary rulers of Assam
Kath :	A mat made of grass or cork
Katha :	A measure of land standing for 1/5th of a *bigha*
Kathiatoli :	Paddy seed-bed
Keru :	Ornaments used in ears
Khar (Kala)	An alkaline preparation extracted usually from banana tree ashes
Kharu :	Ornaments worn in wrist
Khat :	A small estate including arable land
Khedashikar :	A process employed in catching elephant
Khel :	A division of people made by the Ahom rulers for specific profession
Khoka :	A conical bamboo fish trap
Kukur suta :	A species of plant wherefrom threads and ropes are prepared
Kundi :	A hunting elephant
Kunwaree :	A queen, a princess
Lahi :	A fine variety of paddy
Lahoni :	A swing basket
Lecha :	A measure of land standing for 1/20th of a *katha*
Letai :	A kind of long bamboo reed used for winding when the threads are wet
Lota :	A kind of water pot, narrow in the middle portion, made of bellmetal and brass
Mahura :	A piece of reed where threads are wound for weaving
Mahut :	An elephant driver
Maidam :	A funeral vault of the Ahom rulers and nobles
Maina (Kanan-mel-Parijat) :	A Childrens' organisation
Makhana :	A male elephant without tusk

Mako :	A shuttle
Mani :	A kind of beads used as ornaments
Meji :	A pile made of bamboo pieces, straw etc., raised on the eve of the Magh-bihu festival
Mekha(e)la :	A girdle
Mela :	A public show ; an exhibition
Melashikar :	A process employed in catching elephant
Muga :	A variety of Assam silk, the threads of which are usually yellow with the tinze of gold
Nachani :	A part of a loom
Namghar :	A place of worship in a Vaisnava Satra in particular
Neothani :	A Cotton gin
Nirmali :	Flowers or offerings made to a deity and distributed among the votaries
Paik :	A Ryot during the Ahom rule whose duty was to render service to the king or the State
Pala(h) :	A kind of bamboo basket trap for catching fish
Palnam :	A Vaisnava devotional (nama-kirtana) prayer lasting for days
Pat :	A fine variety of Assam silk, the yearns of which are prepared from mulbérry-fed cocoons
Pat (Sil) sako :	A stone bridge
Pathar :	A paddy field ; an orchard
Pati :	A kind of fine mat
Pawry :	A kind of bamboo fish trap
Peteri :	A cane basket with a lid
Petu-dhowa :	To wash entrails of a dead body
Pona :	Young fish
Pukhuri :	A pond
Pura :	A measurement of land standing for four *bighas* of land or four to five *dons* of grain
Ranca :	A reed of an Assamese loom
Riha :	A kind of scarf used by females
Rupit :	Land on which winter crop or transplanted paddy is grown
Ryot sabha :	An assemblage or meeting of cultivators paying land revenue
Sadhowa :	To wash dead body
Salidhan :	A principal variety of transplanted paddy
Sanci :	A kind of tree (Agaru) from which leaves are prepared for writing old manuscripts on

San :	Fibre of hemp or flex
Sarai :	A tray with foot, made usually of silver and bellmetal
Satra :	A Vaisnava religious institution
Takalabari :	A barren land ; a deserted homestead
Tarapat :	Leaves of wild cardamon
Tenga :	A sour preparation of fruit
Toltha :	One of the beams of the Assamese hand-loom
Tongali :	A kind of dress wrapped round the waist
Thor (Jhap) :	Five, Six or eight bundles of paddy
Thuriya :	An ornament used in ears
Tulapat :	Cotton paper
Ugha :	A kind of reel for winding thread on
Ural :	A wooden mortar used for pounding paddy and rice

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D. PRINCIPAL TABLES

I AREA AND POPULATION, URBAN AND RURAL

1	2		3			4			5		6	
Name of District ..	No. of Towns		Total area in sq. mile			Total Population			Density per Sq. mile		No. of villages	
Sibsagar ..	1941	1951	1941	1951	1961	1941	1951	1961	1941	1951	1941	1951
	4	4	6,138	3,454	3,476	1,040,428	1,212,224	1,508,390	209	350.96	2,009	2,225

7		8			9		
Urban Population			Village Population			Percentage increase of population	
1941	1951	1961	1941	1951	1961	From 1931 to 41	From 1941 to 51.	From 1951 to 61
28,129	39,319	76,705	776,144	1,172,905	1,431,685	11.48%	16.5%	24.43%

N. B. 1941 figures of Area, Population (Urban and rural) etc. include Mikir Hills which was separated from this district only in November, 17, 1951.

District	Area in (Sq. mile as per'61 census)	Persons						
		1961	1951	1941	1931	1921	1911	1901
Sibsagar	3,476	1,508,390	12,12,224	1,040,428	9,33,326	8,23,197	6,91,402	5,98,251

1961 : Urban : 76,705 .. Rural : 1,431,685
1951 : Urban : 39,319 Rural : 1,172,905
1941 : Urban : 28,129 Rural : 7,76,144
As per village statement of Sibsagar District 1941 Census

Source : 1951 & 1961 *Census*.

II. POPULATION ACCORDING TO LANGUAGE (1961 CENSUS)

1			2			3			4			5			6		
Abor/Adi-mi			Afgani/Kabuli/Pakhto Pashto/Pathani			Aka/Hrusso			Ao			Arabic/Arbi			Assamese		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
10	11	21	20	1	21	4	17	21	121	117	238	2	0	2	679,709	609,742	1,289,451

7			8			9			10			11			12		
Bengali			Bhili			Bihari			Bilaspuri			Bishnupuriya			Bodo-Boro		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
28,155	17,881	46,086	3	..	3	563	259	822	61	..	61	1	1	2	143	235	378

13			14			15			16			17			18		
Burmese			Canadian			Chinese/Chini			Dafala			Deori			Dimasa		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	..	1	3	..	3	13	6	19	9	1	10	1,014	1,414	2,428	3	..	3

19			20			21			22			23			24		
English			French			Garhowali			Garo			Goanese			Gujrati		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
112	59	171	8	..	8	3	..	3	314	151	465	1	1	2	70	72	142

25			26			27			28			29			30		
Gurumukhi			Hindi			Hindustani			Irani/Iranian			Italian			Kachari		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
240	164	404	34,839	15,597	50,436	12	..	12	1	..	1	2	..	2	1,183	767	1,950

31			32			33			34			35			36		
Kalachandi			Kannada			Kharia			Khasi			Konda			Kuki/Unspecified		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
15	26	1	1	..	1	530	330	860	36	67	103	38	26	64	3	..	3

37			38			39			40			41			42		
Kurukh/Oran			Lalung			Limbu			Lushai/Mizo			Malayalam			Mangari		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1,914	1,174	3,088	161	172	333	8	8	16	149	24	173	93	33	126	54	4	58

43			44			45			46			47			48		
Manipuri/Meithei			Manjhi			Marari			Marathi			Maria			Marwari		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
867	768	1,635	18	19	37	116	138	254	95	148	243	562	370	932	1,162	727	1,889

49			50			51			52			53		
Mikir			Miri			Mishing			Munda/Unspecified			Naga/Unspecified		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
353	254	607	14,623	13,160	27,783	7,957	6,792	14,749	4,713	5,297	10,010	240	212	452

54			55			56			57			58			59		
Nagari-Hindi			Nagpuri-Marathi			Nepali			Oriya			Parji			Parsi-Bhumij		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
52	44	96	3	2	5	8,709	5,864	14,573	13,146	11,171	24,317	97	..	97	227	38	265

Persian			Punjabi			Rabha			Rajasthani			Reang			Rumsen		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	..	1	684	521	1,205	2	..	2	123	69	192	1	..	1	5	4	9

Sadan/Sadri			Sam			Santali			Savara			Siamese/Thai			Sindhi		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
812	855	1,667	12	16	28	279	424	703	1,018	823	1,841	45	118	163	21	3	24

Singpho			Spanish			Surgujia			Tableng			Tamil			Telegu		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2	..	2	1	..	1	286	361	647	13	..	13	410	200	610	1,999	2,340	4,339

Thado			Tripuri			Urdu		
Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
..	5	5	8	..	8	651	352	1,003

Source : *1961 Sibsagar District Census Hand-book.*

III POPULATION ACCORDING TO RELIGION

Total Rural Urban	Total			Buddhists		Christians		Hindus	
	Persons	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Total	1,508,390	808,935	699,455	2,242	1,834	15,709	13,371	739,856	643,331
Rural	1,431,685	761,757	669,928	2,184	1,806	14,878	12,777	702,667	620,889
Urban	76,705	47,178	29,527	58	28	831	594	37,189	22,442

Jains		Muslims		Sikhs		Other Religions and Persuasions		Religion Not Stated	
Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
587	315	48,717	39,194	952	733	858	649	14	28
445	258	40,246	33,170	489	395	848	633	..	..
142	57	8,471	6,024	463	338	10	16	14	28

Tribal religion and other faiths	Total			Rural			Urban		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Mikir ..	928	456	472	921	454	467	7	2	5
Ahom ..	250	219	31	233	212	21	17	7	10
Naga ..	189	101	88	189	101	88	..	..	..
Garo ..	94	46	48	94	46	48	..	..	..
Animist ..	16	12	4	16	12	4	..	..	..
Brahmo ..	13	11	2	13	11	2	..	..	..
Manipuri ..	11	8	3	9	7	2	2	1	1
Vaisnava ..	6	5	1	6	5	1	..	..	..

Source : *Sibsagar District Census Hand-book, 1961*

IV LIST OF FAIRS AND FESTIVALS

Sl. No.	Names of the Fairs and Festivals	Village(s) or Town(s) in which it is observed	English month of the year in which it is observed	Duration of the Festivals	REMARKS
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Ambubasi	Both in towns and villages	June	15 days	Observed in individual houses. The festival is actually observed on the last day
2.	Id-Ul-Fitar	—do—	March	1-2 days	Observed by Muslims only
3.	Id-Uz-Zuha	—do	June	1-2 days	—do—
4.	Jagaddhatri Puja	—do—	October	3 days	Observed by Hindus only
5.	Durga Puja	—do—	September & October	5 days	Observed by a section of the Sakta Hindus
6.	Doljatra	In all places of the district except Muslim villages	March	3 days	Observed by Hindus only
7.	Fatiha-I-Duazdaham	Both in Towns and Villages	September	1 day	Observed by the Muslims
8.	Basanti Puja	—do—	April	3 days	Observed by the Hindus
9.	Bisvakarma Puja	—do—	September	1 day	Observed by the Hindus
10.	Bhim Ekadashi	—do—	October	1 day	Observed by the Hindus only
11.	Manasa Puja	—do—	August	1 day	Observed in individual houses
12.	Muharram	—do—	July	1 day	Observed by Muslims only
13.	Ram Navami	—do—	March	1 day	Observed in individual houses
14.	Laksmi Puja	—do—	October	1 day	Observed in individual houses
15.	Sri Panchami	—do—	February	1 day	Observed by students of every school and College
16.	Satyanarayan Puja	—do—	At any time	1 day	Observed in individual houses
17.	Sabebarat	—do—	When it falls	1 day	Observed in individual houses by Muslims
18.	Good Friday	—do—	April	1 day	Observed by Christians
19.	Easter day	—do—	April	1 day	—do—
20.	Deva Damodara Tithi	—do—	April	1 day	Observed in individual houses and in public Namghars
21.	Sankaradeva Tithi	—do—	August/September	1 day	—do—
22.	Janmastami	—do—	August	2 days	—do—
23.	Madhavadeva Tithi	—do—	August	1 day	—do—
24.	Rangali Bihu (Bohag Bihu)	—do—	April	7 days	Assamese national festival
25.	Magh Bihu	—do—	January	5 days	—do—
26.	Buddha Purnima	—do—	May	1 day	Observed by the Buddhists in general
27.	Christmas	—do—	December	2 days	Observed in every Christian house
28.	Kali Puja	—do—	October	1 day	Observed by the Sakta Hindus
29.	Maghi Purnima (Fair)	At Sibsagar Siva Temple	January & February	1 day	Observed in Sibsagar Sub-division
30.	Asokastami	At Disangmukh, Sibsagar Town and Dikhowmukh	March & April	1 day	Observed by both the Hindus and the Buddhists
31.	Rathjatra	InVisnu Temple	December	1 day	Observed in Sibsagar Sub-division
32.	Sivaratri	Both in Towns and Villages	February	1 day	Observed in Siva Temple
33.	Ras Jatra	—do—	November	2 days	Observed in individual villages
34.	Kati Bihu	—do—	September	1 day	Observed in individual houses
35.	Dvipannita (Dewali)	—do—	October	1 day	Observed in individual houses
36.	Sri Sankaradeva Birth day	—do—	September	1 day	Observed in individual houses, Public Namghars and other institutions

V LIVESTOCK POPULATION 1945-61

Livestock	Population in 1945	Population in 1951	Percentage variation in 1951 over 1945	Population in 1956	Percentage variation in 1956 over 1951	Population in 1961	Percentage variation in 1961 over 1956	Percentage variation in 1961 over 1951
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Cattle	610,199	723,509	+18.57	673,204	−6.95	845,652	+25.62	+16.88
Buffaloes	73,242	73,578	+0.47	67,415	−8.38	62,551	−7.22	−15.00
Sheep	1,446	1,677	+15.97	125,179	+7,364.46	2,027	−98.38	+20.87
Goat	139,501	169,731	+21.67	175,975	+3.68	283,768	+61.25	+67.19
Horses and Ponies	2,730	3,853	+41.13	3,955	+2.65	3,554	−10.14	−7.76
Poultry	..	1,028,409	...	936,322	−8.96	1,097,366	+17.20	+6.70

N.B. : Poultry Census was undertaken for the first time in 1951, and so figures are not available for 1945 Census
+ Sign for increase
− Sign for decrease

Source : *Sibsagar District Census Hand-book. 1961*

VI IRRIGATED AND NON-IRRIGATED AREAS

(Figures in acres)

Period	Irrigated area	Non-Irrigated area	Net area sown
1	2	3	4
1949-50	Nil	7,75,913	7,75,913
1950-51	Nil	7,59,855	7,59,855
1951-52	Nil	6,76,563	6,76,563
1952-53	Nil	6,41,033	6,41,033
1953-54	50,000	5,75,771	6,25,771
1954-55	50,000	6,48,411	6,98,411
1955-56	50,000	5,56,158	7,06,158
1956-57	56,600	6,57,566	7,14,166
1957-58	61,050	6,78,948	7,39,998

Source : *Department of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, Shillong.*

VII INDUSTRIAL AND MINERAL PRODUCTION WITH REFERENCE TO PRINCIPAL PRODUCTS (1956-58)

District Sibsagar	1955-1956		1956-57		Absolute increase or decrease during 1956-58	
	Output (tons)	Value (Rs.)	Output (tons)	Value (Rs.)	Output (tons)	Value (Rs.)
Coal	22,398.00	78,431.00	33,000.00	11,71,000.00	(+)10,602(+47.3%)	3,86,689(+49.3%)

VIII STATISTICS—TEA INDUSTRY (1956-58)

	No. of tea Gardens			Coverage under tea as on 31.3.61 (in acres)			Total No. of Tea Factory	Total annual production (1960)
	Agency	Proprietory	Total	Planted	Fallow	Total		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Sibsagar	78	176	254	1,10,029.26	4,701.80	1,14,731.06	188	1,57,583,817 kg. (provisional)

Annual average production (average for 1957, 58 & 59)
10
3,70,058,323 lbs

Total No. of tea garden labourers
11
Daily average no. of person employed in tea plantation in Sibsagar during the year 1956, 1957 & 1958 (furnished by the Economics & Statistical Adviser, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Ministry of Food & Agriculture, New Delhi)

Year	Garden labourers permanent	Outside labourers permanent	Outside labourers Temporary	Total
1	2	3	4	5
1956	137,893	9,404	13,614	160,911
1957	134,207	12,115	13,119	159,441
1958	129,038	16,814	12,350	158,202

Source : *Tea Board.*

IX CIRCUIT HOUSES AND INSPECTION DAK BUNGLOWS

Circuit Houses :

1. Golaghat
2. Jorhat
3. Sibsagar
4. Rowriah

Inspection Bunglows :

1. Kaziranga
2. Bokakhat
3. Kamargaon
4. Badulipar
5. Dergaon
6. Ganakpukhuri
7. Golaghat (Combined Dak and Inspection Bunglow)
8. Garampani
9. Barpathar
10. Kakajan
11. Kakadonga
12. Jhanji
13. Gaurisagar
14. Sibsagar (Combined Dak & Inspection Bunglow)
15. Jongaon (Floating Inspection Bunglow)
16. Kamalabari

Dak Bunglows :

1. Golaghat
2. Jorhat
3. Sibsagar

Inspection Bunglows and Rest Houses Under Forest Department

1. Kaziranga (Tourist Lodge)
2. Baguri I. B.
3. Arimora I. B.
4. Borjan I. B.
5. Garampani I. B.
6. Jamuguri I. B.
6. Naphuk Rest House
8. Borhat do
9. Halua do
10. Meleng I. B.

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