

ASSAM DISTRICT GAZETTERS



DARRANG DISTRICT

SHRI N. C. DUTTA, A. C. S.

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

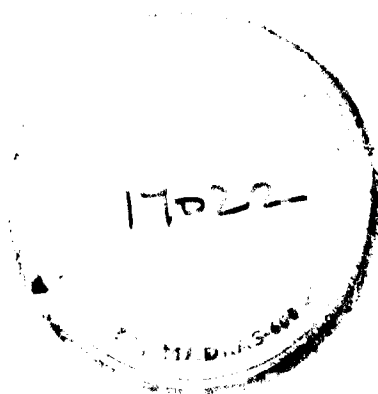
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ASSAM DISTRICT GAZETTEERS UNIT

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FOREWORD

I have the proud privilege of presenting the second District Gazetteer, namely the Darrang District Gazetteer under the scheme of Revision of District Gazetteers of Assam, before the public within a single year. I believe, the book has maintained its unique status of importance as a valuable reference book as far as the district of Darrang is concerned.

I congratulate those whose extreme toil has made the work complete in time.

Gauhati
April, 1978.

Shri Lakshya Dhar Choudhury
Minister, Education, Assam.

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P R E F A C E

The present publication is the fourth volume in the series of District Gazetteers of Assam so far published under the scheme of Revision of District Gazetteers in Assam. Importance of a Gazetteer need not be repeated again.

The district office for Darrang Gazetteer was started on 3-12-59 with joining of Shri M.C. Bhuyan as the Compiler for the district of Darrang. Materials were collected in the district locally from district offices by the District Compiler who also prepared the preliminary draft of the Gazetteer as per prescribed pattern under the guidance of the District Advisory Board. After the closure of the district office and withdrawal of the district staff in February, 1969, the final drafts were prepared at Gauhati Head office and naturally the task of data compilation became very difficult and time consuming as personal contact with concerning sources was lost with centralisation of the machinery. However, during the time of Shri N.C. Dutta, A.C.S. who joined the department as Editor-in-Chief on 17th September, 1970, the final drafting of Darrang District Gazetteer was completed and edited by him. It was sent to the Government of India for its approval after due clearance from the State Advisory Board on 18-7-72, and on 16-10-73 Centre's approval for printing of the Darrang District Gazetteer was made. The Gazetteer was sent to press for printing in May, 1978. Much difficulties had to be experienced by this office in getting the book printed out from press, as much time was lost in transit during the process of printing which also includes proof reading. We are thankful to the authorities of Assam State Transport Corporation which made the night-service-mail facility available to us. Without this, it would have been almost an impossibility to get the book printed within the year.

Credit for preparation of the final draft and press copy of the revised Gazetteer on Darrang district goes to Shri M.C. Bhuyan, Shri S.N. Neog, Shri R. Dass, Shri P.K. Baruah, Shri J.N. Bhuyan and Shri R.C. Medhi, all Compilers under the office of the Editor-in-Chief, District Gazetteers, Assam.

It is not possible to accomplice such a gigantic task as compilation of Gazetteer without the active help and co-operation from all the connected quarters including government departments, public and private institutions and organisations, and other agencies of

quasi-government nature and I humbly acknowledge their help and co-operation and hope to receive their unimpaired co-operation in future also. In compiling the work, many scholars of repute had to be consulted personally by our office and we make unreserved acknowledgement of their advices and leads. No name in this regard can possibly be mentioned as they will be enumerable in number.

We owe our gratitude to Dr. P.N. Chopra, Editor, Gazetteers Unit, Govt. of India who extended his unfailing help in bringing out this Gazetteer with his and his colleagues' valuable suggestions.

There occurred some mistakes here and there due to defect in the procedure of data collection for which we may be excused. We shall be glad to know if the Gazetteer is ever availed of by the College teachers as reference book, a status which it can proudly claim, in their institutions.

My thanks are also due to my office staff and all other colleagues who did not spare any pain in bringing out this volume in time.

At the end, I must admit that the 'ghost' in the printing press has not spared us inspite of our utmost effort and for this unavoidable lapse we may be pitied though not excused.

31.3.78
Gauhati

S.B. Roy Choudhury
Editor-in-Chief,
District Gazetteers,
Assam, Gauhati.

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CHAPTER I

GENERAL

PHYSICAL FEATURES AND NATURAL RESOURCES

(a) Introductory :

(i) Origin of the name Darrang : The name of the district appears to have originated from the term *Darrang Raja* specifying a branch of Koch kings who ruled over this area since the time of Koch king Naranarayan. The tract west of the Bhareli river came under the Koch hegemony during the early sixteenth century. The Koch kingdom was divided between Raghudev and Naranarayan towards the end of the sixteenth century. This was followed by friction between the cousins that led to the intervention by the Muhammadans who annexed a part of the Koch kingdom ruled by Parikshit. Ultimately the Ahoms helped his brother Balinarayan in carving out a kingdom for himself in the tract now known as Darrang district minus the tract east of the Bhareli river. According to D. Sarma, Balinarayan who was known as Dharmanarayan was the founder of the dynasty of *Darrang Rajas*.¹ Darrang district derives its name from the western part which was formerly under the rule of *Darrang Rajas*.²

Even after annexation of Assam by the British as per treaty of Yandabo in 1826, the present Mangaldai area was known as *Darrang Desh*. In the *Resettlement Report* of 1927-32 it has been observed as follows—"It was from *Desh Darrang* that the district took its name."³

Late Omeo Kumar Das, a noted educationist and political leader of Assam believed that the word *Darrang* might have been used by the aboriginals of this district who were of Tibetan stock. He further pointed out that the word *Darrang* or words analogous to it gained popularity in the areas inhabited predominantly by the tribal people. In support of his contention he cited place names such as *Darrang* village of K & J Hills and *Darrang-giri*, a village at the foot hills of Goalpara. He also referred to the title *Doloi* which

1. D. Sarma - *Mangaldair Buranji*, Mangaldai, 1961, P. 63.

2. E. A. Gait - *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1967, P. 350

3. Mc. Swiney - *Resettlement Report of Darrang District* 1905-09, P.3.

is common to both Assamese and Tibetan Languages.⁴

In several parts of this district the word *duar* meaning gate-way is suffixed to many place names. *Khalingduar*, *Charduar*, *Chayduar* are instances at point. One view is that in ancient times, these places were located on the routes running from the plains to the Himalayan range and with passage of time the word *Dwaram* alluding to gate-way to the Himalayas and the vast wilderness around might have gained popularity.⁵ A similar interpretation has been given in the census report of 1961 as follows. "The present name of the district Darrang may have been borrowed from the Daflas or the Bhutias whose main *duar* or pass for coming to the plains from the Himalayan ranges lay along the course of the Barang river, and they called it *Duar-ganga* which after corruption to *Duara-nga* may assume the present form of *Darranga* or Darrang. A similar pass to the west, in the present Mangaldai Subdivision along the course of the Rowta river which has a sacred lake or *Kund* (now known as Bhairavi or *Brahmakund*), is still known as *Darranga* near Udalguri."⁶

In his report on Darrang district compiled in 1835 Lt. Mathie has observed that Darrang means *Land of Flood* and is derived from *Dur* and *rung* possibly Ahom words.⁷

In the *Kumar Haran*,⁸ an Assamese book written in verse, it has been described how Aniruddha, grandson of Krishna secretly entered the castle where Bana's beautiful daughter was kept under surveillance. Usha had earlier dreamt of Aniruddha, and was charmed with his beauty. Aniruddha married her according to *Gandharva* ceremony. When Bana came to know about this marriage he immediately threw Aniruddha into prison. This led to a grim battle between Bana and Lord Krishna who came to rescue his grandson. The profusion of blood that spilled in this war was the reason for calling this place Sonitpur, (*Sonit* means blood, *pur* means city).

From various inscriptions discovered so far it appears that

the Salastambha dynasty ruled over the northern bank of the river Brahmaputra. Their temporary capital, was at Haruppeswar Nagar which was definitely the present Tezpur town. The kings of previous Varman dynasty donated some lands to Brahmans to make them settle in Chandrapur district on the bank of the Kausiki river. The place is identified by some scholars with Tezpur.⁹

(ii) Location, general boundaries, total area and population: The Darrang district lies between 26°12' and 27°08' N latitudes and 91°42' and 93°47' E longitudes and covers an alluvial tract between the Brahmaputra river on the south and the foot hills of the eastern Himalayas forming parts of Bhutan; Kameng and Subansiri districts of Arunachal Pradesh on the north. To the east it is bounded by the Lakhimpur district and to the west by the Kamrup district. The Darrang district stretches for about 210 kms. in length from east to west; its widest (about seventy kilometres) portion is the western region; it is about thirty-two kilometres across at Tezpur and about twenty kilometres wide at its eastern extremity.¹⁰ The district covered a total area of 8,726.2 sq. kms. and had a total population of 12,89,670 souls, 6,94,927 males and 5,94,743 females according to the census report, 1961. In 1971 the area and the total population stand at 8,775.00 sq. kms. and 17,36,188 persons including 9,19,635 males and 8,16,553 females respectively.

(iii) History of the district as an administrative unit; The history of the district as an administrative unit can be traced only since 1826 when Assam was ceded to the East India Company. It is doubtful whether at any period the entire area now forming the district of Darrang was a separate polity under its own ruler prior to annexation. It formed a part of the ancient kingdom of Kamarupa, the boundaries of which have been described in the *Yogini Tantra*.¹¹ It is doubtful whether the boundaries of Kamatapur which held vast areas north of the Brahmaputra under its sway in Goalpara and Kamrup areas, also included this land. During this

4. Report from late Omeo Kumar Das.

5. D. Sarma, *Mangaldair Buranji*, Mangaldai 1961, P - 1.

6. *Census of India, 1961, Assam District Census Handbook Darrang, Gauhati* 1964, P - 5.

7. K. N. Dutta, *A Hand Book to the old Records of the Assam Secretariat* P - 9.

8. Kumar Haran is an elucidation of Bana's story that we find in *Vishnu Purana* and the *Bhagavata*

9. *Census of India 1961. Assam District Census Handbook. Darrang, Gauhati, 1964, P - 5.*

10. Report of the Director of Geological Survey of India., Assam Circle. Shillong.

11. In the *Yogini Tantra*, Kamarupa is said to have extended from the Karatoya river on the west to the Dikrang in the east. It roughly included the Brahmaputra valley, besides many other tracts.

period petty chiefs known as the Bhuyans were ruling in this area in small principalities independent of each other. It is evident that the tract west of the Bhareli river came under the Koches during the reign of Naranarayan and the Ahom king Suhungmung conquered the tract east of the Bhareli river. The territory now forming the Darrang district was thus partly under the rule of the Koches and partly under the Ahoms. After the death of king Balinarayan *alias* Dharmanarayan in 1637, the Ahoms annexed the larger portion of the territory of the Darrang kings. The rule of these kings prevailed within the tract that roughly corresponds to the boundary of the present Mangaldai subdivision. The Ahoms thereafter relegated these kings to the position of mere *Zamindars*. The anarchical condition that prevailed after the downfall of the Ahoms, was aggravated by the inhuman atrocities perpetrated by the Burmese from whom it passed into the hands of the East India Company. After annexation, the East India Company divided the newly acquired Ahom kingdom into two parts viz. Upper Assam and Lower Assam, the former being left under Purandar Sinha, the Ahom Raja, as a tributary king and the latter under their own administration.

The East India Company at the beginning, annexed the western part of Darrang including Vishwanath with the areas of Kamrup and, Nowgong which formed Lower Assam with its headquarters at Gauhati while the area to the east of Vishwanath formed a part of Upper Assam, the dominion of Purandar Sinha. In 1833, the administration in Lower Assam was reoriented forming three districts as administrative units, one of which was Darrang that extended from the Barnadi in the west to Vishwanath in the east. The headquarters of the district were located initially at Mangaldai which was subject to recurrent floods, and erosion of the Brahmaputra. Attempt was then made to establish the headquarters at Vishwanath, which, however, was found unsuitable. Tezpur was finally selected and in 1835 the headquarters were shifted to Tezpur, a centrally situated place nearest to the Dafla tribe who at the time was a source of frequent trouble and anxiety to the Government. Some more areas comprising the present Behali and Gohpur thanas were subsequently transferred from Lakhimpur district to Darrang district.

Even after constitution of the district in 1833 the northern boundaries were not determined till annexation of the strip of level country at the foot of the Himalayas locally known as *duars*. From the time of the Ahom kings the Bhutias claimed two *duars*. Khaling

and Buriguma, extending over the north-west frontier of the district, east of the river Barnadi. "Originally the boundary of this debatable land lay at some distance to the north of the Gohain Kamala Ali, but the Bhutias took advantage of the weakness of the Ahom government, and occupied territory even to the south of that great road".¹² Although they were driven back in 1810 the Bhutias advanced again, and in 1835 were in occupation of villages south of the Gohain Kamala Ali. Initially, the British managed jointly with the Bhutias the Bhutan *duars* of Darrang. "In 1841, the seven duars [including Khaling and Buriguma] were definitely annexed, and Rs. 10,000 per annum was offered to the Bhutias as compensation for the loss of such rights as they possessed"¹³.

East of the Bhutan *duars* of Darrang there was another *duar*, known as the Kariapara *duar*, which was held by certain Bhutia chiefs called *Sat Rajas*, whose hills formed part of Tawang. In 1844, the local chiefs ceded the *duar* to the British authorities in consideration of an annual payment of Rs.5,000 or one-third of the supposed revenue.

"In 1912 a new charge was formed under the name of the 'Central and Eastern Sections, North-East Frontier', with headquarters at Sadiya. At the same time another charge, the Western Section, was created for the area in contact with the Bhutia, Dafla, Aka and Apa Tanang tribes in the foothills of the Himalayas further to the west. Both tracts were placed in charge of Political Officers directly under Government. As nuclei of the tracts certain parts of the Lakhimpur and Darrang districts were transferred and placed under the two Political Officers. In 1914 the designations of the two charges were changed to 'Sadiya Frontier Tract' and Balipara Frontier Tract'.¹⁴

It may also be mentioned that the old bed of the Barnadi river formed the western boundary of the district at the time of the resettlement of 1927-32, after the conclusion of which the present channel of the river was fixed as the western boundary of the district with Kamrup district and as a consequence, fourteen villages west of the present channel of the Barnadi river were transferred to the Kamrup district.¹⁵

12. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers Vol. V. Darrang*, Allahabad, 1905 P.53

13. Ibid. P.54

14. *Report on the Administration of Assam for the year 1921-22*, Shillong 1923, P.37.

15. *Resettlement Report of Darrang District 1927-32* P.1.

This gives a brief history of the district as an administrative area during the British rule. It is to be added that the areas in the plains of the Balipara Frontier Tract (since defunct), which were not included in the Tribal Areas specified in Part B of the table appended to paragraph 20 of the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution, ceased to be areas of the North East Frontier Agency (Arunachal Pradesh) with effect from May 1, 1951. These areas were formerly parts of Darrang district and were retransferred to it.¹⁶

(iv) Sub-divisions, Circles, Thanas and Mauzas : At present there are two administrative sub-divisions in the district—Tezpur (Sadar) sub-division in the east and Mangaldai sub-division in the west. Tezpur the district headquarters and Mangaldai are respectively the sub-divisional headquarters. In respect of both area and population the Sadar sub-division is much bigger than the other sub-division. The Pachnai river forms the boundary between the two. The following table shows the area according to the 1971 census and population according to the censuses of 1951, 1961 and 1971.

Sub-divisions	area in Sq. Kms in 1971 *	Population		
		1971	1961	1951
1	2	3	4	5
Tezpur	5,255.2	9,01,614	7,07,046	5,11,340
Mangaldai	3,465.3	8,34,574	5,82,624	4,02,501

Revenue Circles : There are six revenue circles in this district four in Sadar sub-division, viz., Helem, Nauduar, Tezpur and Dhekiajuli with their respective headquarters at Helem, Chutia, Tezpur and Dhekiajuli and two in the Mangaldai sub-division viz., Mangaldai and Kalaigaon with their headquarters at the places bearing the same names. The figures given below show the approximate circle-wise areas in 1961.

16. Government of Assam Notification No. TAD/R/35/50/137 dated 25th April, 1951.

* The total area of the district as furnished by the Surveyor General of India is 8775.00 Sq.kms. while the total of the sub-divisional areas is 8720.5 sq. kms. which does not show any significant change over the total area of 8720.2 sq. kms. in 1961. The difference in the total area figures in 1971 is due to the fact that the areas of the police stations are collected from the State Director of Survey as explained in page 212, District Census Hand Book, Darrang District, 1971.

Tezpur Sub-division		Mangaldai Sub-division	
Circles	Area in sq.kms.	Circles	Area in sq. kms.
Helem	872.49	Mangaldai	1565.15
Nauduar	1087.89	Kalaigaon	1728.84
Tezpur	2423.55		
Dhekiajuli	1038.96		

Each sub-division has six Police Stations. Mangaldai, Kalaigaon, Dalgaon, Paneri, Udalguri and Majbat are in the Mangaldai sub-division and the remaining six, viz., Tezpur, Dhekiajuli, Rangapara, Chutia, Behali and Gohpur are in the Tezpur sub-division. The Rangapara Police Station has been created in recent years by upgrading it from an outpost under the Tezpur Police Station. In area Dhekiajuli is the largest and Majbat is the smallest Police Station in the district.

Police Station-wise area in 1971.

Police Station	Area (in sq.kms.)	Police Station	Area (in sq. kms.)
1	2	3	4
1. Paneri	813.2	7. Dhekiajuli	1,266.5
2. Udalguri	391.1	8. Tezpur	733.0
3. Majbat	380.7	9. Rangapara	852.1
4. Kalaigaon	422.1	10. Chutia	945.4
5. Dalgaon	525.8	11. Behali	865.1
6. Mangaldai	932.4	12. Gohpur	593.1

In 1961 there were fifty-one *mauzas* in this district, twenty-six in Tezpur sub-division and twenty-five in Mangaldai sub-division.

(b) Topography :

(i) Natural Divisions : Physiographically, the district is mainly a flat alluvial tract ; in its southern part, a few scattered 'inselbergs' of gneissic rocks not exceeding 90 to 140 m., in height above mean sea level, lie along the north bank of the Brahmaputra. In the northern front along the base of the foothills of the eastern Himalayas from where the alluvial plain gradually slopes down to the Brahmaputra there are several low-lying mounds made up of unassorted

river terraces. Some parts of the district are still covered with long grass jungle interspersed here and there with patches of rice fields. The two component subdivisions of the district, exhibit different physical characteristics.

Tezpur Sub-division: The Tezpur sub-division, the eastern part of the district is intersected by numerous rivers and hill streams which divide it into several tracts of varying characteristics. The Gohpur and Behali *mauzas* at the eastern end of the district and lying east of the Bargang river are comparatively thinly populated. Here the area is practically one unbroken plain sloping gently towards the south. Excepting a block in the north of Behali, which is of uneven (*hola-chapori*) formation there is no abrupt change in the level in any part. There is, however a belt of high land under low grass jungle along the banks of the Burai river. "There is very little tree growth in this region, though an occasional *simul bombax malabaricum* is to be seen; but here and there amongst the jungle are to be found *bils*, and stretches of rich grazing ground (*dolonis*) in which the cattle can wade knee deep in luscious grass. Near the trunk road, there are patches of cultivation, but there are places where for a considerable distance this great thoroughfare is shut in on either side by a wall of jungle. Further north the level rises, and the country lying at the foot of the hills is covered with dense evergreen forest."¹⁷ Near the Brahmaputra on the south there is a belt of marshy land three or four kilometres in width where sandy flats are covered with reeds and grasses some three to five metres in height. This area is inhabited by the Miri people and the construction of *Kharel bund* has now rendered the area fit for cultivation.

West of Behali the Vishwanath plain lies in between the Bargang river on the east and the Ghiladhari river on the west. It is an elevated region stretching to the bank of the Brahmaputra river and is of older geological formation than other parts of the district. "The high bank reaches right down to the Brahmaputra, without the intervening belt of inundated land, and the plain itself is too high for the growth of transplanted rice, so that most of it is covered with short turf."¹⁸ The jungles at the foot of the hills have been cleared and the region is now dotted with tea gardens and the plain is covered with fields of waving rice.

17. B. C. Allen : *Assam District Gazetteers Vol.V, Darrang*, Allahabad, 1905 P. 1-2.

18. *Ibid*, P.2.

The area west of Chutia falling in between the Ghiladhari river and the Bhareli river gently slopes down towards the Brahmaputra. Rice is grown in great stretches having villages in the background. Feathery bamboos, slender palms, and broad leaved plantains add to the wealth of greenery of the country. From the present channel of the Bhareli river to its dead channel the area known as the Bhareli *Chapari* is a low alluvial tract which was practically all waste till the commencement of the resettlement of 1905-09 but was gradually occupied by the Mymensingh immigrants and Nepalis.

The area west of the Mara Bhareli contains the most populous Assamese villages upto some distance from the Brahmaputra. In some of the southern villages, however, mostly in the Mahabhairav *mauza* the lands are of uneven (*hola-chapari*) formation and cultivation is carried out to a considerable extent in the low lying areas. In this region, the Tezpur town is situated on an elevated tract about 78 metres above mean sea level and in and around which are situated a few low hills along the bank of the Brahmaputra. To the north of Tezpur the landscape is generally high and uneven. The best tea gardens in the district are situated in this region within a big block which is fringed by villages of ex-tea garden labourers on the east and west of it. Between Tezpur and the Gabharu river stretches of paddy fields and thickly populated Assamese villages dominate the entire landscape which in itself turns from olive green in the summer to rich gold in the winter.

The tract between the Gabharu river and the Pachnai river is one continuous high plain rising slowly towards the west. Till the resettlement operation of 1905-09 this tract was lying waste but the virgin soil was gradually upturned by ex-tea garden labourers and Nepalis who rapidly settled in this area. Several tea gardens grew up, particularly in the Barchola *mauza*. Thickly populated villages laced with green paddy fields present a typical rural scenery particularly in the midland. The northern region at the foot of the hills is covered with wide stretches of jungle forests and the southern region along the Brahmaputra by high reeds and elephant grass jungles.

Mangaldai Sub-division :- The entire Mangaldai Sub-division, intersected by numerous hills-streams is almost a quadrilateral block of alluvial plain, with an abrupt southward slope in the north, and the level falls in the south with a dip towards the south-west. The tract falls into three natural divisions. The northern submontane tract which is about 19 to 22 kilometres in width is inhabited mainly by the

Kacharis and Nepalis. This tract has a steep southward slope of 150 to 120 metres in about four to six kilometres. The elevation where this slope ends is 76 metres above mean sea level and falls in the middle of the plain. The soil is composed of loose sandy texture with occasional sands and gravels. Water is scarce in the upland country primarily because the turbulent hill rivers do not inundate large tracts for long and the rain water is quickly soaked in the sandy soil. The local people, however, cultivate the land with the help of small irrigation channels called *dongs* of which there is a wide net-work in the region. Northern part of this area is largely covered by tea gardens fringed here and there by villages of ex-tea garden labourers.

The middle part of the sub-division forming the second natural division where the slope of the landscape is gentler than the northern submontane tract is an alluvial plain.

The third division lying in the extreme south is the most populous part of the sub-division where the flat alluvial plain is covered with stretches of rice lands interspersed with homesteads of the Assamese Hindus and Muslims. These old villages abound in *pan* (betel) and *tamul* (areca nuts), bamboos and other fruit bearing trees. The tract on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra is a low flat alluvial plain, covered with reeds or tall grasses and villages of Muslim immigrants. Dexterous cultivators as they are, a number of crops such as rice, pulse and mustard are grown in the sandy soil. The *Chaparis* also form good grazing ground. In the eastern part of this division lies the Dalgaon *mauza* where the plain situated on higher level and broken here and there by the old bed of the Dhansiri river was covered with wild jungles till the early years of the current century but with the advent of the Muslim immigrants a few decades later, the jungle covered waste lands were reclaimed and made fit for cultivation.

This district has much appeal to the lovers of scenic beauty. A few kilometres to the north the mountains rise like a wall from the dead level of the plain and throughout the year, the eternal snow line of the great Himalayan range can be viewed from the district in clear weather. The snow-clad peaks of Arunachal Pradesh glitter under the winter sun. In the southern bank the view is bounded by the Mikir Hills and the outlying portions of the Assam range whose forest clad sides shut in the plain with a soft blue wall.

(ii) Hills : There are no mountains in this district. The elevated tracts consist of a range of low hills, about sixty to one hundred fifty metres high, covered with jungle and sweep outwards in a crescent shape from the Bhairavi to the Brahmaputra. These hillocks are estimated to cover an area of about sixty-four square kilometres. The most accountable range in this district is a small spur projecting from the Himalayas into the north of Balipara containing two low hills, namely, Bhalukpong and Gossainloga. Some ruins found at Bhalukpong are associated with the capital of the mythological king Bhaluka, grandson of Bana. Along the river front near Tezpur there is a range of low hills whose summits are 90 to 135 metres above the mean sea level. The traditionally famous *Agnigarh* hill is situated at Tezpur town, a little to the east of the Deputy commissioner's court. This *Agnigarh* hill is associated with the mythological king Bana who is said to have constructed at the site of the present Tezpur town, a lovely town called *Ushanagar* for his charming daughter, princess Usha whose palace was situated on this hillock. Tradition has it that the fortification that was raised around the town ceaselessly emitted fire and smoke, preventing the enemy from having access to the city.

To a little east of this hillock there is the Bamuni hill, which remains virtually inaccessible during the summer season when the reptiles are seen here slithering in numbers beneath thickly grown tall grasses. On the flat top of this hill there are the remains of a magnificent stone temple. Stone carvings of gods and goddesses and of lotus were lying here and there on this hill, most of which have been shifted to the Colepark and also to other places. The Europeans picked up beautiful stone pieces to decorate with aplomb the outer walls of their official residences and some other institutions. Mythology connects this Bamuni hill with the *Vamana* incarnation of God *Vishnu* and the powerful king Bali, who vanquished all the kings and even gods in heaven. It is said that on the top of this hill Bali held the great sacrifice (*Yajna*) in which God *Vishnu* appeared in disguise of a *Vamana* (dwarf) and made Bali migrate to the nether world.

Further east of the Bamuni hill is the Bhairavi hill where there is a small shrine of goddess Bhairavi. This hill is also connected with the king Banasura and his daughter Princess Usha. It is said that Bana constructed the temple of Bhairavi on this hill and his daughter Usha came here to propitiate the goddess. Close to this hill is the Manukata hillock, where as tradition has it, human

sacrifices were offered in the olden days.

A little to the east are the Bhomoraguri hills which are connected with Kalia Bhomora Borphookan of Kaliabor, who embarked upon a massive plan to construct a bridge over the river Brahmaputra connecting the Bhomoraguri hills with the Kamakhya hill on the south in Nowgong district. Some big pillars are still to be seen lying here and there on these hills. These are said to have been collected by Kalia Bhomora for construction of the bridge. These hills have now been reclaimed by the Forest Department under afforestation scheme. Beyond the Bhomoraguri hills is the Rudrapad, so called because in the bed of the Brahmaputra close by there is a rock bearing the imprint of *Siva's* (*Rudra's*) foot-print. North of the Rudrapad, there is the Samdhara hill, on which, there was a temple in Ahom days.

A little to the west of the old steamerghat near the Tezpur Railway Station there is the Auguri *Parbat* at whose foot is situated a small shrine of Bhairavpad and beyond it is the Dhenukhana *Parbat* on which there are ruins of stone buildings. This hill is also known as the Tiger hill.

At the south-eastern corner of the Barchola *mauza* is situated the Singri hill famous for the temple of *Gopeswar* (Lord *Siva*) worshipped by the Hindus and the Buddhists. The Bhutias still come down to the Singri hill to pay their obeisance to the deity. Every year a very big fair (*mela*) is held here on the occasion of the *Sivaratri*.

In the Mangaldai Subdivision there are no hills in the mainland except a range of nine low hills in the south-western corner of the Sipajhar *mauza* on the bank of the Brahmaputra. One of these hills is the Kurua which is traditionally associated with Kauravas for whom some camps were pitched up on this hill by king Bhagadatta on the occasion of his daughter Bhanumati's marriage (*sayambara*). On another hill there is a shrine of *Ganesh*. Besides, there are few spurs on the northern submontane tract, which are offshoots of the Bhutan hills.

(c) River System and water Resources :

(i) Main Rivers and Tributaries :

The Brahmaputra : The whole of the drainage of the district ultimately finds its way into the Brahmaputra which flows along the southern boundary of this district. The river here is wide and deep

and remains navigable throughout the year. Its main tributaries in the district are the Burai, Bargang, Bhareli, Gabharu, Dhansiri, Nanai, Noanadi and the Barnadi.

The Brahmaputra river has another name *Lauhitya*, which is evidently a Sanskritised form of the Tibeto-Burman name *Luhit*. The word *Lauhitya*, means in Sanskrit, 'pertaining to red', 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 season when it cuts through the red soils in the adjoining embankments. Mythology connects the origin of the river with the sins of Parasuram. It was in the upper reaches of this river, it is said, at *Parasuramkund* or *Brahmakund* that the great saint washed off his bloody stains of matricide and regained his sainthood. The river, crimson with the human blood, came to be known as the *Lauhitya*.

The other and better known name of the river, is Brahmaputra, and it means 'son of Brahma', and the name is quite within the orbit of Sanskrit nomenclature.¹⁹ The Ahoms called the river *Namdao-Phi*. It means the "river of the Star-god." The Brahmaputra is formed by the Dibang and the Luhit 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 *Brahmakund* in the easternmost point of the State. It is a religious sanctuary, and is situated about eighty kilometres 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 Tsang-po, or great river of Tibet, pours its waters through the Dihang into the river which is known as the Brahmaputra in Assam. The source of the Tsang-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 the glaciers, this mighty river Brahmaputra, which has a total length of about 2,900 kms. and a drainage area of about 9,35,500 square kms. 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

¹⁹ Sri Bishnu Rabha has suggested that the word is just a Sanskritization of a Bodo expression, *Rhullumbutter*.

cascades and rapids, makes a hairpin bend and turns south and south-west taking the name Dihang. After receiving the waters of the Dibang and the Luhit, the united stream from this point assumes the name Brahmaputra and flows for about 725 kms. down the Assam Valley in a vast sheet of water dotted with numerous islands, the chief among them being the Majuli and Umananda. The total length of the river within Darrang district is about 240 kms.

General features of the river basin : The mass of silt brought down from the Himalayas is sufficient to form sandbanks, 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, Bhareli, Barnadi and Manas on the north bank and the Disang, Dikhu, Jhanji and Dhansiri on the south, traverses an alluvial plain about 724 kms. in length with an average width of eighty kilometres. 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 about 290 kilometres joins the Ganga 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, dotted with clumps of bamboo, palm and fruit trees.

The tributaries of the Brahmaputra for most of their length 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 flood 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 can 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 in the dry season channels vary from 150 to a few hundred metres in width, with large stretches of sand *chars* extending for several kilometres 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 more than 1000 metres flowing between more or less permanent banks with the greatest depths varying from about fifteen to eighteen metres during the dry season to forty to forty six metres during the rainy season. At these points discharge calculations have been made when the river as being surveyed for the purpose of spanning it with bridge. From some old records which are available we find that the gauge reading and the widths at some of the more important station have been quoted as follows :—

Dry Season			Flood Season	
Gauge	Width Average	Depth Average	Width Average	Depth Average
Tezpur	1005.84 metres	10.36 metres	2346.96 metres	15.54 metres
Gauhati	914.40 metres	7.01 metres	1036.32 metres	14.63 metres
Goalpara	502.92 metres	18.90 metres	—	—
Dhuburi	1219.20 metres	8.53 metres	—	—

Shoals : Shoals are continually being formed, causing serious impediments to navigation. In old records we find mention of some

84 shoals which are in existence between Dibrugarh and Gauhati and 43 shoals between Gauhati and Goalunda. The navigable channels through these shoals were clearly marked by bamboo marks placed by the Inland Water Transport operators. Apart from a record of the depth on these shoals each season, no comprehensive data have 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 floods which are so frequent in the Brahmaputra cause tremendous changes in the river course, as well as raise the river bed by depositing the detritus carried from the upper reaches. This is a common feature of the flood in the big rivers, that flow across the alluvial soil of the north east India.

The fluctuations in river level 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 level records 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 south-west monsoon registers its arrival in the 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 reliable or possible form of 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 the Flood Gauge located near Ganeshghat, Tezpur commencing from 1954 are as follows :—

Ranges between average High Water and Low Water levels at Tezpur²⁰.

Danger level	1954		1955		1956	
	H. W.L.	L. W.L.	H. W.L.	L. W.L.	H. W.L.	L. W.L.
	on 2.7.54	on 6.2.54	on 28.7.55	on 26.2.55	on 30.8.56	on 22.2.56
218.00 ft. (66.45 metres)	219.99 ft. (67.05 metres)	194.12 ft. (59.17 metres)	219.82 ft. (67.00 metres)	191.51 ft. (58.37 metres)	217.52 ft. (66.30 metres)	197.48 ft. (60.19 metres)

1957		1958		1959	
H. W.L.	L. W.L.	H. W.L.	L. W.L.	H. W.L.	L. W.L.
on 9.7.57	on 24.2.57	on 28.8.58	on 6.3.58	on 25.6.59	on 18.3.59
218.48 ft. (66.59 metres)	199.17 ft. (60.71 metres)	219.29 ft. (66.84 metres)	199.20 ft. (60.72 metres)	218.53 ft. (66.61 metres)	202.10 ft. (61.60 metres)

The miseries caused by the high floods in the Brahmaputra beggar description. Villages situated on the river banks are submerged and paddy fields are turned into vast sheets of water. The standing crops are destroyed, some of the cattle are swept away and hundreds of cultivators, fishermen or other people living in these areas are rendered homeless. All the important lines of communication are snapped and life hinges on the relief provided by the government and the public. When the floods subside, pestilence creates havoc among men and cattle alike.

The flood of the Brahmaputra in 1954 is one of the highest ever recorded. The river maintained a very high level for the last part of June, throughout July and till the first part of August without respite.

There had been widespread inundation in the riverine areas all over the district of Darrang and erosion in the areas from Vishwanath

20. Extract from a report from the Executive Engineer, Embankment and Drainage Division, Tezpur.

to Kathanibari. The Embankment and Drainage Department, Tezpur has constructed a total length of about 112 kms. of dykes along the northern bank of the Brahmaputra at most vulnerable points and this has benefited about 28,280 hectares of lands in different areas of the district.

Navigability : The Brahmaputra river remains navigable throughout the year. From time immemorial it has been the main line of communication connecting the Darrang district with the districts on the southern bank and the outside world. The chief means of transport was the country boat until 1848, when the British Government introduced steamers to ply between Calcutta and Gauhati and then to Dibrugarh in 1853. It is navigable even now by large powered inland steamers of 300 ft. (ninety metres) and 1000 tons carrying capacity, which till 1965 plied from Calcutta through the Sundarbans and East Pakistan upto Disangmukh, 67.59 kms. downstream of Dibrugarh. But after the earthquake of 1950, the river bed has been silted up in many places. Frequent changes in the main current and formation of *chars* at different places bring in their wake numerous problems for navigation, including shifting of the ferry ghats which is particularly noticed at Tezpur and Silghat where this problem has become acute since 1960. The Tezpur river-ghat has been shifted about eleven kilometres east to Bhomoraguri and that of Silghat is shifted to Bhurbandha in winters. Near Mangaldai town the river has receded about five kilometres to the south over a few decades. Important river-ghats in the district are Kharupatiaghat, Singri, Tezpur (Bhomoraguri), Panpur, Vishwanath and Gamirighat.

The Bhareli : The largest tributary of the Brahmaputra in Darrang is the Bhareli, which is accredited with taking a heavy toll of human lives in the living memory. In *Kalika Purana*, we find the name of the river, Bhattarika, which can be identified with the Bhareli river. Tradition associates this river and seven others viz., the Mansiri, the Ghiladhari, the Burigang, (Burhiganga), the Dipota (Dipta), the Gabharu (Sonarupa), the Belsiri, and the Dhansiri with the goddess Bhairavi and her seven sisters. The story goes that goddess Bhairavi was deeply aggrieved to see her devotees suffering from drought ; so she herself came down in the form of a river which was called the Bhairavinadi. The term Bhareli is perhaps the corrupt form of the Bhairavi. The Bhairavi temple on the bank of the old channel lends some weight to this story. Bhairavi is a manifestation of *Sakti* and was widely worshipped in this region in the past.

A very interesting story is told by the people, by way of explaining the origin of this river. Chandra, the moon-god and Pulama, a fairy consummated at Bhomoraguri where they had their bath in a sacred pool. As a result of this union a girl was born but she was abandoned by her parents in the hills. The girl was brought up by the sage Sravana who named her as Kanyaka, who subsequently became an ardent devotee of Lord *Siva*. The poor girl was cursed by the goddess Bhairavi who made her melt and flow as a river which came to be known as the Bhairavinadi. It is believed that in her eagerness to meet Lord *Siva* she is pushing her course towards the east and perhaps will make a dent on Vishwanath where the famous *Siva* temple still stands.

This river originates in the Aka hills²¹ and flows about 193 kilometres in the hills and 56 kilometres in the plains after entering the district at Bhalukpong. "It first flows east between two ranges of hills, and then turns sharply to the south, and flows, a tortuous course to the Brahmaputra, which it joins about seven miles (about eleven kilometres) east of Tezpur town. The gorge through which the river makes its way is of great natural beauty. The hills covered with forest rise steeply from the water's edge, and the noble river hurries on over its rocky bed, now dashing down a rapid and foaming and boiling round a sunken rock, and anon lingering in still deep pools where the mahseer love to lie."²² Originally, the course of the river near its confluence with the Brahmaputra was close to the town of Tezpur but sometime in the early part of the 19th century the river changed its course and shifted about 8 kilometres further east. The dead course is known as *Mara Bhareli* as distinguished from *Jia-Bhareli*, the present flowing channel.

The river is fed by the discharge from a large catchment through its innumerable tributaries of which the Bordikarai is a major one. The principal tributaries are on the left bank, the *upar Khari* and Bordikarai which emanating from the Dafla hills, meet the *Jia-Bhareli* river near about Silanighat in Darrang and on the right bank are the *Upur Sonai* and *Nam Sonai* and the Mansiri, which has numerous feeders from the Bhalukpong range.

21. In a monograph of the P.W.D., Government of Assam on (Jia) Bhareli Bridge, the origin of the river has been shown as the unexplored lower regions of the Himalayas beyond the Aka and Dafla hills.
22. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol. V, Darrang, Allahabad, 1905, P. 6.

In its course through the plains the Bhareli, not unfrequently overtops its banks which are low and not well defined, and for the greater part of its way it flows through jungle land. And also in this reach the course of the river is so meandering with its predominant tendency to change its course at any place, that it really threw a challenge to bridge the river at Colderghat.

The havoc caused by flood in the river and erosion are quite extensive. A reading of the flood gauge at Silanighat reveals that its high water level crossed the danger mark of 79.59 metres by touching the level of 79.66 metres in 1958 and in subsequent years rose to still higher points and reached 80.45 metres in 1968 the highest so far recorded and the maximum discharge of water in the year being 2,71,354 cusecs was also the highest. The discharge of water in 1964, 1965, 1966 and 1967 was 1,17,583, 1,09,624, 1,87,668 and 1,80,521 cusecs respectively.

As a flood control measure some wooden spurs at Silanighat and Mornakurighat were constructed by the State Govt. The spurs at Silanighat successfully withstood the strong current in 1955-56 but were badly battered by swirling flood waters of the following years. However, spurs at Mornakuri have proved successful. An embankment running about 35 kilometres has been constructed on both the banks, in 1958-59. The total area benefited by this embankment is about 3,681 hectares.

There had been very severe erosions on the right bank of the river downstream of Chowkighat in the year 1956. Some protective measures were taken up at the site to divert the main current of the river towards another channel in the east. This measure was a great success and the erosion was finally halted.

The river remains navigable all throughout the year by country boats from Boragaon *Bagicha* to its confluence with the Brahmaputra, the total distance being about 64 kilometres.

The Burai river : The Burai is an important river that flows through the eastern part of the district. This river emanates from the Dafia hills in Kameng Frontier Division of Arunachal Pradesh. The river after coming down from the hills flows towards south and falls into the Brahmaputra. The approximate length of the river is about 32 kilometres in the plains. In this course the river Burai has a total fall of about 91 metres.

The river is not a perennial one nor is navigable in the dry season. In the winter season the river becomes very shallow and its major

portion completely dries up. But in the monsoon the heavy rainfall in the catchment area pumps mass of water causing a rapid rise in its plains portion.

The flood of Burai river is normal. It has not effected the adjoining areas so far, and so no flood control works have yet been taken up for this river.

The Bargang river : West of the Burai is the Bargang river which emanates from the Dafia hills in Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh, from an elevation of about 2,073 metres. After flowing for about 9 kilometres through forests and hills the river receives its first tributary, Naomara at Duvimukh. Its second tributary is the Dikal which joins further down. Then the river flows through the plains of Darrang district for about 20 kilometres and finally joins the Brahmaputra. The river meanders through the plains for about 33 kilometres from the confluence of Naomara to that of the Brahmaputra. In this course the river has a total fall of about 91 metres.

In the winter season the river becomes very shallow and at places completely dries up. In the monsoon, the heavy rainfall in the hilly catchment area, causes a sudden rise in the water level of the river. The main features of the river are that it flows between very wide banks and that it has very steep bed slope due to which the canal-flow of the river goes on changing in every flood season.

The spill-over of the flood waters of the Brahmaputra also causes high flood in the Bargang at its outfall. A reading of the flood gauge at North Trunk Road crossing at Bargang shows that the high water level remaining below 84.80 metres, has never crossed the danger level of 86.63 metres above mean sea level. The maximum discharge of the river is 26,823, 30,453, 24,108, 15,540 cusecs and 294.35 and 606.58 cubic metres in 1955, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967 and 1968 respectively. As this river has caused no substantial harm in its catchment area no flood control measure has yet been taken up.

The Ghiladhari river : The river originates from the hilly range of the Kameng district. It flows in well defined course within the district. After flowing about 24 kilometres in the plains it joins the old outflanking channel Ajalisuti which forks out of the Brahmaputra at Vishwanath and rejoins it at Panpur. From the confluence of the Ghiladhari river the Brahmaputra channel also bears the name of the Ghiladhari river. The total length of the river from its origin to confluence is about 33 kilometres.

The flood in the Ghiladhari river in itself does not cause havoc unless swelled up by the backlog of the spilling waters of the Brahmaputra. The important feature of the flood in the Ghiladhari, is that the water level recedes only when the water level of the Brahmaputra also falls. In the lower reaches of the Ghiladhari basin the flood Control Department has constructed an embankment along the west bank from Bangaligaon to Ghiladharimukh about 13 kms. in length. About 1,414 hectares of land are likely to be benefited by this embankment. The river is navigable during the rainy season for about 24 kilometres from Goriakhana to its confluence with the Brahmaputra by country boats only.

The Gabharu river : The river Gabharu or Sonarupa rises at an altitude of about 1,524 metres above mean sea level a little to the east of the Belsiri river in the hills of the Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh. After traversing about 24 kilometres in hilly areas, the river enters the plains near the village Rikamari. In the plains its approximate length is 38 kilometres upto its outfall into the Brahmaputra. The average slope of the river bed is 0.95 metre per kilometre.

In the valley the river has no high banks. Its bed is very shallow. It causes active erosion in its horse shoe bends. On account of heavy silt deposits on its bed it becomes shallow and wide and spills conspicuously in high flood on its left bank from Kalakuchhi *Bagicha* to Gabharughat and on its right bank from Gabharughat to Gabharumukh causing damages to the rich paddy fields and homestead lands.

A reading of the flood gauge at Kalakuchhi since 1955 upto 1968 shows that the high water level in all years crossed the danger level of 78.64 metres and reached the highest mark of 79.58 metres in 1955 and remained round about 78.94 metres in other years. The maximum discharge of water was 16,222, 18,931, 8,750, 3,733, 5,446, 3,278 cusecs in 1956, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, and 1968 respectively.

During 1955-56 the State Government constructed 32 kms. of tributary dykes and flood embankments of the river. An area measuring 3,640 hectares of land in Bargaon, Bihaguri and Bahbari *mauzas* has been benefited by this embankment.

During the rainy season only, the river is navigable by country boats for a distance of about 40 kilometres from Misamari to its confluence.

The Belsiri river : The Belsiri river rises at an altitude of about 2,743 metres above mean sea level near Pankmala in the hills of the Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh and pursues its journey through the Charduar Reserved Forest. Entering the plains near Belsiri foot hills, it flows in south-easterly direction for about 32 kilometres and crosses the North East Frontier Railway line near Belsiri Railway Station. After crossing the Railway line, the Belsiri river flows south for nearly 48 kilometres and joins the mighty Brahmaputra near Moamaripam. The downstream extending from Belsiri Railway station upto the Brahmaputra river is flanked by villages, teagardens and paddy fields. In the lower reaches the river banks gradually widen and the river remains shallow in the dry season.

The river Belsiri is well confined in its course above the North Trunk Road crossing. In this reach both banks are high and not subject to inundation even during high flood; but in the lower reaches extending from downstream of North Trunk Road crossing to its outfall the banks are subject to erosion and high floods which inundate the area from Garudoba to its outfall. A reading of the flood gauge at North Trunk Road crossing since 1955 shows that the high water level crossed the danger mark of 73.15 metres almost every year by a 0.3 metre or so. The maximum discharge of water was 7,531, 5,531, 5,322, 11,829, 4,288, 12,838, cusecs in 1956, 1964, 1965, 1966, 1967, 1968, respectively. The Embankment and Drainage Department completed during 1958-59 the construction of 9.3 kms. long embankment along both banks of the Belsiri from Thelamara Singri road to its outfall. It has benefited about 1,820 hectares of land.

The Jia Dhansiri river : The Jia Dhansiri is one of the important tributaries of the river Brahmaputra in Mangaldai sub-division. It emanates from the Bhutan hills and has an approximate total length of about 80 kilometres from its source to outfall. The river is of very little importance in the hills but grows in size and importance when it enters the valley being fed by other streams. Its bed is shallow and underlined. In its lower reach it has the tendency of changing its course, specially during the flood season causing havoc to human life and property.

The river has a steep bed slope in the upper reaches and assumes a flat slope as it enters the plains. The bed slope is very flat near its confluence with the Brahmaputra; the bed slope in the last 29 kilometres between the railway bridge and its confluence being 1:800. Silting and erosion of this river are of great magnitude in the lower reaches. The area

stretching from upper North Trunk Road crossing to its outfall is especially affected by its flood. A reading of the flood gauge shows that the high water level has been crossing the danger mark of 84.12 metres almost every year since 1955.

The Embankment and Drainage Department constructed 16.57 kilometres long embankments on the banks of this river. The embankments benefited about 4,200 hectares of land.

The river is not navigable during winters. Only country boats ply during rainy season from Rowta Railway station to its confluence with the Brahmaputra, a distance of about 48 kilometres.

The Noanadi River: It originates from the Bhutan hills collecting some drainage from the hills. After entering into the plains it flows about 72 kilometres in Darrang district and ultimately joins the Brahmaputra. In its upper reach the river is known as the Lachmi. The lower reach of the river from Harisinga Railway station down to its outfall is subject to heavy flood that causes extensive damage to crops on both banks.

A reading of the flood gauge at the North Trunk Road crossing shows that every year the high water level has been crossing the danger mark of 54.4 metres by more than 0.3 metre since 1955. It reached the all-time high mark of 54.86 metres in 1959.

The Flood Control Department has already constructed about 33 kilometres of embankments along both the banks on Noanadi as flood control measures. Total area benefited by this embankment measures about 400 hectares of lands.

The Nanai River : The river Nanai has its origin in the Bhutan range of the Himalayas in the Tongsa province at an elevation of about 1,220 metres above mean sea level. After crossing the Bhutan boundary the river enters the Darrang district and traverses through Khalingduar forest where it flows through gorges and rapids till it enters the plains near Bhutiachang village. After flowing about 19 kilometres from Bhutiachang the river crosses the North East Frontier Railway line near Tangla Railway station. Further flowing towards south in a curve for a distance of 69 kilometres, the Nanai joins the Brahmaputra at about 16 kilometres upstream of North Gauhati.

The upper reach of this river is covered with thick tropical forest. At the foot hills there are some tea estates, and in the plains it slithers through the paddy and jute fields.

The river Nanai is approximately 104 kms. in length and has its catchment area of 504 square kilometres.

It is a fairly long tributary of the Brahmaputra river. It overtops both of its banks from the railway line crossing to its outfall in every flood season and thereby disrupts communication and causes extensive damage to crops.

A reading of the flood gauge shows that the high water level crossed almost every year the danger mark of 52.12 metres, and rose to the height, 52.6 metres in 1959.

A total length of about 54 kilometres of dykes along both banks of the river have already been constructed by the Embankment and Drainage Department as a flood control measure. The river is navigable only in the rainy season for about 32 kilometres from Hapamara to its confluence with the Brahmaputra and only country boats can ply in this river.

Other tributaries and sub-tributaries : Besides those mentioned above, there are some other important tributaries and numerous streams, streamlets, locally called *Jan* which carry off the drainage of the hills into the Brahmaputra. The principal hill stream in the Gohpur mauza is the Dubia or kharel, which flows in a southerly and westerly direction to the Brahmaputra. Its tributaries are the Balijan and the Marnai. Other important hill streams here are the *Jia* Pichala and the Brahman. These streams cause some damage to crops and become navigable by country boats during the rains. The Kharel bund has greatly benefited cultivation. There are innumerable smaller streams or *jans* which unite and fall into the Brahmaputra near Behali and among these the Behali and the Rangajan are important. In the Chutia mauza, the Sadharu and the Dikrai are two other important streams west of Tezpur. The drainage south of the hills is carried off by a small stream called the Dipota which is navigable during summer to some distance from its confluence. Another important hill stream among many others traversing this region is the Sirajuli in Barchola mauza and is known as the Chapai in its upper reach. Then comes another principal tributary, the Pachnai, which forms the boundary between the two sub-divisions of the district.

In the western part of the district there are two other main tributaries; one of these is the Mangaldai which flows from the Bhutan hills and is known as the Singrimari and the Batiamari in its upper reaches. After traversing a tortuous course in the plains it is joined by

the Noanadi as its largest tributary in its lower reach, before it falls into the Brahmaputra. The Barnadi, the course of which forms to a large extent the western boundary of the district with Kamrup, remains navigable throughout the year. This western part of the district is traversed by numerous smaller hill streams of which the important ones are the Mara Dhansiri flowing past the Kaupati garden, the Rowta, the Daiphong, the Galandi, the Chandana, the Dimila, and the Kulsi. The Bega, the Sapkhaiti, the Kulsi and the Kalapani are small streams which originate from the tributaries of the Brahmaputra. The last three streams are dammed in places for irrigation purposes. Most of other smaller streams lose themselves in the gravel slope at the foot of the hills and reappear in the form of streams further down and then flow in well-defined channels.

(ii) *Bils*, marshes and Tanks : There is a steady fall in the level of the district towards the Brahmaputra, and there is thus but little tendency for the drainage of the district to collect in lakes and marshes. In the whole of the sadar subdivision there are only three *bils* which are just big enough to be sold as public fisheries and in Mangaldai there are but six. These *bils* are shallow pools of water which form in the depressions in the lower parts of the district, generally near the Brahmaputra. In the cold weather they are usually surrounded by a belt of rich green grass which afford the most splendid grazing. The whole is shut in by a wall of high reeds and elephant grass some three or five metres in height. The boundaries of many of these *bils* are now being gradually reduced. Some of the important *bils* are Dhandi Jawani, Raumari, Chitalmari, Garaimari, Hatigarh, Gaudhowa, Bhojmari, Kadamani, Barbil or Bheselimara Dighali, Bherbheri, Sagunekhati, Shauraguri, Barghuli, Salmari, Bahumari, Shaitani, Ahuguri, Baralimara, Khalihamari, Kachu, Arimora, Barchola, Kochmora, Kharai, Borakata, etc. Villagers generally depend upon the *bils* for their fish.

Tanks : The district abounds in tanks many of which are ascribed to some kings of the ancient times. Many of the tanks situated in and around Tezpur are associated with Usha and king Banasura who ruled at Sonitpur (modern Tezpur). It is commonly believed that the Ahoms who ruled in the eastern part of Darrang district, and Koch kings who ruled in the western part constructed some temples and excavated tanks. Some tanks are also associated with petty local rulers.

Tanks in Tezpur town : Padum Pukhuri, an old tank in

the town, covers an area of about 2.5 hectares. It is adjacent to the George Pukhuri or Bar Pukhuri which covers an area of about 9 hectares, and is separated by a State highway from the Padum Pukhuri. Both these tanks appear to be natural ponds being portions of a dead channel of the Brahmaputra, although tradition connects these two tanks with Bana's daughter Usha who is said to have caused their excavation. The George Pukhuri or Bar Pukhuri still bears the name of Kumbhanda, Bana's Prime Minister and is situated near the Tezpur Railway station. The Municipality has constructed a bridge from the western bank of Padum Pukhuri to the tiny elevated foreground (*Dhip*) that is seen in its centre. This *Dhip* looks like an islet standing in its singular beauty in a steady pool of water.

Hajara Pukhuri : West of the Tezpur town and close to the railway line is the Hajara Pukhuri which covers an area of about 33.5 hectares including the banks. The water level remains several metres below the high bank. The total area under water is approximately 7.8 hectares. The tank is surrounded by high embankments known as *Garh* covering an area of about 5.46 hectares. There are about 2.7 hectares of land in between the embankment (*Garh*) and the water area and this portion was used as a race course by the British people. This great tank is named after the king Harjjaravarman of Salastambha dynasty, who is said to have excavated the tank.

Panipota tank : It is situated near Balipara and covers an area of about 5.2 hectares. The renovation work of this tank was completed by the Fishery Department during 1957-58.

Balipukhuri : It is a big old tank situated in Charduar area. It seems to be associated with Bali and Bana.

Kowaripukhuri : It is a fairly big tank situated at a distance of about 5 kilometres west from Vishwanath Charali covering an area of 48 *bighas* or about 6.2 hectares. It was reclaimed in 1959-60 by the Fishery Department for pisciculture.

Barpukhuri : It is situated in a village known by this name, near Haleswar. It is said that in course of fishing in this big tank several stone images were found on the net. Note-worthy among these were two slabs of stone, about one to one and a half metres in height, with the image of God *Brahma* carved on one and of *Siva* on the other. These are now preserved in the local *Namghar* by the people.

Town Pukhuri : In Mangaldai town there is a big tank on the western side of the market which is now maintained by the

municipality. For years it has been the source of water supply in Mangaldai town.

Dologuri Pukhuri : This tank is situated at a distance of about 29 kilometres west of Mangaldai town. It covers an area of about 1.9 hectares. The renovation work was completed by the Fishery Department in 1957-58 for pisciculture.

Padumpukhuri : The tank is situated near Dologuri and covers an area of about 1.3 hectares and is now used for pisciculture. Its renovation was completed during 1958-59.

Burinagar pukhuri : This vast and serene tank is located about 24 kilometres north-west of Mangaldai town and lies near an all weather road. The total area of the tank exceeds 6 hectares. One dispensary, one post office and some other buildings have been constructed on its banks. It is said that the tank was excavated some seven hundred years ago by Arimatta. He built a town here for his old mother who refused to accompany him to the palace of his father whom he had killed unknowingly.

Jaipal tank : This tank is located in the Kaliajhar village of the Rainakuchhi *mauza*. Jaipal Bhuyan who ruled in that area is said to have excavated the tank some five hundred years ago. Now the tank has been renovated. It is the source of drinking water of the local people.

Baldev tank : It is believed that Darrang Raja Dharmanarayan who was also known as Baldevnarayan, excavated this tank covering an area of about 6.2 hectares. It is situated at the village Nayakpara of Mangaldai sub-division.

Lakhimpur Pukhuri : It is situated about 2 kilometres east of Burinagar tank and is bigger than that. Some ruins of a monastery and a temple are still to be seen on its banks. These include one slab of stone on which a lotus with eight petals are carved.

There are many other old tanks in the Mangaldai sub-division most of which have now dried up. These tanks are believed to have been excavated by either the Darrang Rajas or by the Bhuyans who ruled over the country before the Darrang Rajas.

In the Tezpur sub-division there are a few other big-tanks near Pratapgarh tea estate and in the Charali area. Most of the tanks are associated with the legendary king Pratapnarayan. Some others are associated with the later Ahom kings.

(d) Geology :

Barring the isolated hillocks exposing the Archaean gneisses in the southern part and occasional outcrops of the Upper Tertiary sandstones at places over the northern boundary, the entire district is covered by alluvial deposits of Recent and sub-Recent origin. The Archaean gneisses represent a complex group of biotite and hornblende gneisses with occasional small granitic and pegmatitic bodies intrusive into them. The Upper Tertiary sandstones mainly covering the foothills across the northern boundary consist of fine to medium grained, bluish to greenish grey ferruginous sandstones with partings of dark grey splintery shales and occasional lumps, streaks and fragments of lignite and carbonised wood and thus resemble the Tipam sandstones of Upper Assam. Along the base of the foothills, these sandstones are covered by a thick accumulation of unstratified and unconsolidated terrace deposit of the Sub-Recent age.

The terrace deposit, also known as the older or high level alluvium, consists of a thick accumulation of unassorted sub-rounded to rounded boulders, pebbles and cobbles of quartzite, sandstone, shale, slate and gneisses embedded in a coarse sandy clay matrix. The deposits form relatively higher relief in the northern part of the district and are well exposed around the debouchment of each river into the plain. At places, the deposits extend over the outer flanks of the foothills upto a considerable height. Near Kherkheria ($26^{\circ}52' : 91^{\circ}57'$), the older alluvium attains a thickness of more than 40 m; it is the thickest known outcrop in this district.

The older alluvium referred to above is of fluvial origin being carried down by the Himalayan rivers and deposited along their original area of inundation which has later been raised to its present position. Besides this, there are a few outlying patches of elevated ground composed of sand, clay, loam and rounded shingles and pebbles apparently resembling the older alluvium, within the plain between Kherkheria and Mijikajan. These disconnected high grounds, mostly sought after for tea plantation, are seen north of Mangaldai, north of Tezpur and in Vishwanath areas. The outcrops show irregular boundaries with scarp-faces to the south. These deposits, known as high banks, or red banks, are distinguishable from other alluvial deposits of the district by their texture and semi-lateritic reddish colour. It is interesting to note that the red bank lands are invariably characterised by ground water of good quality as compared to other parts of the

district where water contains relatively large amount of iron in solution. Earlier, it was presumed that these isolated patches of elevated ground are the relics of older alluvium which has disappeared elsewhere. A detailed study by A.L. Coulson of the Geological Survey of India (1942; Memoir G.S.I., Vol. 75) confirmed that the present outcrops of the red bank are the remnants of an old terrace of the Brahmaputra most of which has been removed by the erosive activities of the river and its tributaries during attainment of their present state of maturity after the regional uplift of this part of the Assam Valley.

The recent alluvium covering the major part of the district consists of loosely consolidated sands, clays and single beds with occasional accumulation of vegetation. The deposit shows coarse to very coarse sands with rock fragments in the foothill region, sandy clay and sand in the proximity of the river channels and fine silts consolidated into fine clay in the flatter part of the river plains.

(i) **Mineral Wealth** : Being almost entirely covered by a vast alluvial tract, the district does not possess any mineral of much economic value except for the alluvial clays, sands, gravels and boulders and the gneissic rocks in the isolated hillocks which provide suitable construction materials. Boulders of quartzite, gneisses and hard sandstones and slates form conspicuous deposits along the main Himalayan rivers and their branches in the northern part of the district. The deposits are suitable for roads and construction materials, railway ballasts and in embankments. The gneisses exposed in low hillocks in the southern part make excellent building stones.

The alluvial sands in small pockets along the course of the Dhansiri, Belsiri, Pachnai, Nanai and other rivers are suitable for use in constructions.

Thin bands of dark grey and reddish brown somewhat streaky clays, occurring in small pockets along the courses of some of the rivers, may be suitable for brick making and potteries.

The tertiary sandstones along the Himalayan foothills across the northern boundary of the district include occasional lumps, fragments and nests of lignite formed due to alteration of drift wood enclosed within the sandstones. Pieces and lumps of lignite found in the beds of the Bargang and Dikal rivers in the Behali Reserved Forest and in Dhansiri and Nanai in the Paneri Reserved Forest area are evidently carried down from the foothills by the rivers and have no economic importance.

Gold, used to be washed from the sands of the Bhareli, Burai and Dhansiri rivers in the days of the Ahom rule, became no longer paying and the process has been abandoned since the area came under the British rule.²³

(ii) **Earthquakes** : Darrang, like the rest of Assam, is a seismic area and the crust of the earth from time to time gives evidence of its instability. The Ahom chronicles not infrequently refer to serious earthquakes; and it is said that the army advancing under Mir Jumla to the invasion of Assam was alarmed by the occurrence of one of these earth tremors.

A list of dates of occurrence of some big earthquakes during the last 500 years has been furnished below :-

1. In the year	1548.	8. In the year	1759.
2. -do-	1598.	9. -do-	1770.
3. -do-	1601.	10. -do-	1838.
4. -do-	1642.	11. -do-	1842.
5. -do-	1660.	12. -do-	1875 (September).
6. -do-	1696.	13. -do-	1897.
7. -do-	1732.	14. -do-	1950.

Among recorded earthquakes, the most severe, according to B. C. Allen, was the one which took place on June 12th 1897. It was perceived over an area of 45,32,000 sqr. km. from Rangoon in the South East to Kangra in the North West, from the Himalayas to Masulipatam. Extensive damage was done to masonry building over an area of 78,000 sqr. km. According to him the area of maximum disturbance was a tract of country of the shape of a cocked hat, whose base line ran from Rangpur to Jaintiapur, while the top of the crown was near Barpeta. Mangaldai was seriously affected. The Dak Bungalow and the Sub-divisional officer's bungalow perished, the walls of the Court building and the treasury collapsed and raised roads were shaken down to the level of the fields. In Tezpur, the Deputy commissioner's Bungalow, the Dak Bungalow and the Planters' Club suffered seriously. Some of the walls of the jail perished as also a wall of the church. The treasury and court were both damaged. The shock was so severe that on the Tezpur Balipara railway the permanent way between Sessa and Rangapara is said to

23. Report of the Director Geological Survey of India, Assam circle, Shillong.

have been shaken level with the plain in places. The rails were bent and twisted out of position. However, there was no loss of life and according to B. C. Allen the actual damage was small in comparison with those in Gauhati and Shillong.²⁴

The earthquake of August 15, 1950, with the epicentre about 320 kms. north of Sadiya, practically left no sign of damage in the district of Darrang. The intensity of the shock at Tezpur, according to the Rossi Forrel (R. F.) Scale was VIII. In Tezpur, some buildings suffered minor cracks and some pucca walls of the Tezpur Government High school collapsed. No loss of life was reported in this district. From 1950 to 1960 as many as forty five earthquake shocks were experienced in this district, but there was no loss of life or property.

Previously, Darrang suffered little from destructive floods. But after the earthquake of 1950, floods have become a common phenomenon in this district. The course of several rivers have undergone changes and the beds of many rivers have become shallow due to the deposits of debris brought down after landslides in hills. The rivers in spate cause numerous breaches in the railways, roads and embankments and wash out bridges dislocating lines of communication.

(e) Flora or Botany :

(i) Botanical division of the district : The total area under the Darrang Forest Division in 1970-71 was 2,39,371 hectares of which 1,89,339 hectares were under Reserved Forests and 50,032 hectares under Unclassed State Forests.²⁵ There were altogether eighteen Reserved Forests under the Darrang Forest Division and of these twelve fell within Darrang District as shown below.²⁶

Name of the Reserved Forest		Area in acres
		(1 acre = 0.404686 hectare)
1. Gohpur	...	32,888
2. Behali	...	34,570
3. Vishwanath	...	27,097

24. B. C. Allen ; *Assam District Gazetteers Vol. V, Darrang*, Allahabad, (1905) P. 13.

25. Statistical Hand Book of Assam, 1971, Deptt. of Economics and statistics, Assam Shillong, 1972, p.47.

26. Working Plan of Darrang Forest Division 1961-62 to 1976-77, Part I & II, P.9.

Name of the Reserved Forest		Area in acres
		(1 acre=0.404686 hectare)
4. Nauduar	...	68,975
5. Balipara	...	46,891
6. Singlimara	...	840
7. Charduar	...	1,13,931
8. Rawta	...	19,130
9. Garoimari	...	245
10. Bhomaraguri	...	386
11. Singri	...	1,200
12. Orang	...	15,656

The forest reserves of Bengbari, Khalingduar, Barnadi and Noanadi situated on the western part of Mangaldai Sub-division and covering an area of 99.03 sq. kilometres fall under North Kamrup Forest Division.

The Unclassed State Forests are simply Government waste lands which do not necessarily possess any of the characteristic, 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 relinquished by its former holder and not yet settled with any other person, or it may be, what its name would naturally suggest i.e. actual tree forest.

(ii) Forest Belt : The main Forest belt is situated in the sub-montane tract at the foot of the Bhutan, Aka, and Daffla Hills from the Barnadi on the west to the Marnadi in the east (Common boundary of Darrang district and Lakhimpur district). The Noanadi, Orang, Singri, Bhomoraguri Reserved Forests are on the southern side near the Brahmaputra river.

All these forests fall within the geographical limits of $92^{\circ}7\frac{1}{2}'$ and $94^{\circ}30'$ East Longitudes and $26^{\circ}30'$ and $27^{\circ}25'$ North latitudes.

The forest of this district can be divided into the following types :-

1. Evergreen and semi-evergreen forests.
2. Mixed deciduous forests.
3. Sal forests.
4. Riverine forests.
5. Savannah forests.
6. Bamboo and Cane forests.

Evergreen and semi evergreen forests : These forests flourish in alluvial soil having capacity to retain much water. Heavy rainfall exceeding 254 cms. a year is required for their growth. Such forests are found in Kakoi, Vishwanath, Rowta, Pachnai, Charduar, Behali, Reserved Forests. The main species found in these forests are—*Sam* (*artocarpur chaplasha*), *Gunserai* (*cinnamomum glanduliferum*), *Titasapa* (*michelia champaca*), *Makai*. (*shorea assamica*), *Nahar*. (*mesua ferrea*) *Khair* (*accaciacatechu*), *Ajhar* (*lagestraemia reginee*), *kathal* (*artocarpus integrifolia*), *Sanalu* (*cassia fistula*), *Gomari* (*gmelina arborea*) and *Uriam* (*bischoffia javanica*). They are used for posts, planks, scantlings and sleepers.

Mixed deciduous forests :- This type of forest is found in the Singri, Bhomoraguri and Bhairabkunda Reserved Forests. South Western part of Rowta Reserved Forest, along the Panchnai and Belsiri Rivers in Charduar Reserved Forest and along the Buroi river in Behali Reserved Forest. Important species of this type of forest are *Jia*, *Poma*, *Paruli*, *Simul*, *Bhelu*, *Gomari*, *Bola*, *Hatipolla*, *Udal*, *Sonaru*, *Kohir* *Outenga* etc.

Sal forests : There is no compact area under *Sal* forests. This vegetation is found in the Reserved Forests of Singri, Singlimara, Balipara and Gohpur with *Sida*, *Kum*, *Gamari*, *Poma*, *Udal*, *Paruli* etc.

Riverine Forests : This type of forests is found along the bank of the rivers on the alluvial soil, throughout the district. The important species of this type of forest are *Koroi*, *Sisso*, *Khair*, *Simul*, *Khakon* etc.

Savannah Forests : This type of forests is found in the following Reserved Forests—viz. Orang, Balipara, Naudua, Gohpur, Rowta, Charduar and Sonai Rupa wild life sanctuary. *Kum*, *Bihmona*, *Amluki*, *Simul* and *Udal* are found scattered in these forests.

Bamboo Forests : *Jati* and *Kako* Bamboos are found all over the district. *Bijuli* bamboos are found in Sopai Panchnoi Block of Charduar Reserved Forests, and in Nauduar Vishwanath and Behali Reserved Forest.

Cane Forests : Canes are found throughout the whole evergreen, semi-evergreen and mixed deciduous forest.

Government Forests policy : Since 1891 the Assam Forest Regulation (VII of 1891) has been enforced in Assam. Forests are

classified, as per rules into four types : (1) Reserved, (2) Protected, (3) Village, (4) Unclassed State Forests. Reserved Forests have been constituted under provisions of the Act under which the following acts are mainly prohibited—(1) trespassing, or permitting cattle to trespass, or allowing cattle to pasture; (2) causing any damage to forest Reserves by unauthorised extraction of timber, (3) clearing of forest land without permission, (4) setting, kindling, or leaving any fire in the forest, (5) felling, cutting, girdling, marking, looping, tapping or causing injuries by fire or otherwise to any tree, (6) quarrying of stones, manufacturing process or removal of forest produce, (7) unauthorised 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. The first object of the management of forest is to conserve forest for the maintenance of climatic balance and to provide protection from erosion. 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 Forests have also been deforested and settled with landless people. The unplanned denudation has deprived most of these forests of the power to resist erosion of the swirling flood waters.

The avowed forest policy of the government 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. On the basis of scientifically prepared working plans superior species are naturally regenerated and plantation is carried on very systematically.

Endeavours have also been made, by enunciating a planned forest policy to provide the veneer industry and saw mills with timbers and to meet the local requirements of timbers, fire wood, bamboo and canes, besides exporting timber to other parts of the country.

(f) Fauna or Zoology :

(1) Zoological types found in the District : There are two wild life sanctuaries in the district namely Sonai - Rupa wild life sanctuary lying along the foothills between the Pachnai and Dibru rivers and the Orang game sanctuary on the bank of the Brahmaputra between Tezpur and Mangaldai.

In the Sonai-Rupa wild life Sanctuary there are herds of elephants and bisons and some rhinos and numerous deer. The zoolo-

gical types found in the district are shown below :-

Mammals : The species common in Darrang are wild elephants, buffaloes, Tigers, leopards, bisons, mithuns, bear, and few numbers of Rhinos, wild pigs, monkeys, parkapiens, common langoors, hoo-looks, ant-eaters, hares and different kinds of deer of which the principal varieties are the sambar, the swamp deer, the hog deer, the barking deer and the spootted deer. Elephants are common in the forests near the foot hills. These animals inhabit large wastes of reed and grass jungles and occasionally do damage to the crops.

Various species of birds such as peacock, pelican, hornbill, jungle owl, pheasant, quails, partridge, parrot, woodpecker, king-fisher, moina, adjutant, cane, florican, scarlet, wild goose, wild duck, pigeon, etc., are found in the forests of the dsitric. Other minor species of birds common in other district are also found here.

Reptiles : Monitor Lizards and Pythons, King Cobras, lizards of various other species are also found in the district of Darrang.

Amphibians : Crocodiles and Tortoises are also seen in the rivers particularly in the Brahmaputra.

Fishes : All kinds of fish common in Assam such as *Rohu*, *Gagal*, *Chital*, *Mirka*, *Gorai*, *Sal*, *Kai*, *Pithia* (Maheseer) *Silgharia* etc., are found. In the streams near foot hills *Silgharia* and *Trouts* are found. A list of differnt kinds of fish found in the district will be seen in the Chapter IV.

Zoological types which are vanishing : Before the last world War spotted deer were abundant, and were found in herds of dozens but they have now become scarce, probably due to large scale hunting following the liberal issue of gun licences.

The wild buffaloes are scarcely found in herds of one to two dozens in the forest but some 15 years ago many of these animals roamed in the jungles of this district.

Elephant catching : For catching elephants, the reserved forests are divided into different elephant *mahals*. Each *mahal* is put to auction and sold to the highest bidder. The lessee is allowed to hunt only for a period allotted to him. There are two processes for catching of wild elephants one is *Mela Shikar* and the other is *Kheda Shikar*, both of which are in vogue though the method of *Mela Shikar* is more popular in this district. In *Mela Shikar mahouts* mounted on well trained elephants pursue the herd which generally takes to flight. The task is arduous and

exciting in character. The great animals go crashing through the thickest jungles and over rough and treacherous ground at a terrific pace and the hunters are liable to be torn by the thorny cane or to be swept down from their seats by the boughs of an overhanging tree. After a time younger animals begin to flag and lag behind and it is then the opportunity of the pursuer comes. Two hunters single out a likely beast, drive their elephants on either side and deftly throw a noose over its neck. The two ends are tightened to the *Kunkis*, as the hunting elephants are called and they close in on either side, the captured animal is unable to escape or to do much injury to his captors who are generally 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 *Mela Shikar* was introduced in the time of Ahom king 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, a trap of 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 together. 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. Out-side 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 trouble 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 prowess when struggling to break its bounds; and also so that the elephant is at a slight stretch all the time and, therefore, tires much more quickly.

In this district 49 elephants were captured in 1955-56, 40 elephants in 1956-57 and 62 elephants in 1957-58.

Game laws 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. Under the Rhinoceros Preservation Act, 1954 killing, capturing or injuring of this animal has been totally prohibited. There are also provisions for the protection of fish. Under Section 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 licence 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 licence issued in accordance with certain rules. The Conservator of Forest 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 sambars, (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 to be carried in reserved forest.

Measures have already been taken to protect and preserve wild life in the two wild life sanctuaries of this district viz., Sonai Rupa wild life sanctuary covering an area of 220 sq. kilometres and stretching along the foot hills between the Pachnai and Dibru rivers and Orang wild life sanctuary covering an area of about 51,614 hectares and lying along the north bank of the Brahmaputra between Tezpur and Mangaldai. Some other measures for protection of wild lives have been taken within and outside the other reserved forests. To give sufficient protection to the rhinoceros in the Orang Reserved Forest, Government has ordered addition of about 650 hectares of land from the Barchola Professional Grazing Reserve and Non-Cadastral areas of the eastern side of the Dhansiri river.

(g) Climate and Rainfall :

The climate of this district is similar to that in the neighbouring districts of upper Assam and is characterised by the absence of a dry hot summer season, the highest temperatures being experienced during the southwest monsoon season along with abundant rains, and a highly humid atmosphere throughout the year. The cold season is from December to February. This is followed by a season of thunderstorms 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.

Rainfall : Records of rainfall in the district are available for a good network of 15 stations for periods ranging from 43 to 94 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 2,181.7 mm. The rainfall increases from the Brahmaputra in the southern border of the district to the hills of the outer Himalayas in the north. Rainfall mostly as thundershowers, amounting to about a fifth of the annual rainfall is received in the pre-monsoon months of April and May. The southwest monsoon arrives over the

district by about the beginning of June. The rainfall in the period June to September accounts for about two-thirds of the annual rainfall. Although June, is generally the rainiest month, during July, rainfall is almost the same and the number of rainy days the same as those in June. The year to year variation of rainfall is small. In the fifty year period from 1901 to 1950, the highest annual rainfall occurred in 1949 when it was 133 per cent of the normal. 1922 was the year with the lowest rainfall which was 80 per cent of the normal. From table 2 it will be seen that the annual rainfall was between 1,900 and 2,400 mm in 33 years out of fifty.

The heaviest rainfall in 24 hours accorded at any station in the district was 284.2 mm at kherkheria on 1915 July 10.

In the district as a whole, rainfall less than 80 per-cent of the normal has not been experienced during the fifty year period. However, at some individual stations rainfall less than 80 per-cent of the normal has occurred and in some cases, in two consecutive years once or twice in the fifty-year period.

On an average there are about 107 rainy days (i.e., days with rainfall of 2.5 mm or more) in a year. This number varies from 94 at Mangaldai to 122 at Bedetti.

Temperature : There are meteorological observatories at Tezpur, Majbat, Gohpur and Tangla in the district. While Tezpur has records extending to a long period, the other observatories which were started relatively recently have data for short periods except Majbat, for which data are meagre. The cold season starts towards the end of November when both day and night temperatures begin to decrease. January is the coldest month of the year with the mean daily maximum temperature at about 24°C. and the mean daily minimum at 9° to 11°C. In association with low pressure waves passing eastwards, during the winter season, the district experiences cold spells of a day or two when the minimum temperature may fall below 5°C. Temperatures begin to rise from the beginning of March. The rise in temperatures continues well into the south-west monsoon season, when temperatures are higher than even in the period March to May. The highest mean daily values of temperatures are experienced in July and August when the mean daily maximum temperature is about 32°C and the mean daily minimum, 25.0°C. This, together with quite high humidity (highest during the year) makes the south-west monsoon season rather unpleasant, particularly when not rain-

ning. With the termination of the monsoon season the weather becomes gradually cooler.

The highest maximum and lowest minimum temperatures ever recorded at each observatory with dates is given below :

	Highest Max.	date	Lowest Min.	date
	°C		°C	
Tezpur	38.9	2.5.1960	5.6	8.1.1945
Gohpur	37.0	29.5.1964	3.3	28.12.1962
Tangla	39.6	5.7.1964	4.3	30.1.1964

Humidity : The air is highly humid throughout the year, except during the period February to April when the relative humidities are comparatively less, particularly in the afternoons (less than 70 per cent).

Cloudiness : Skies are heavily clouded to over cast in the south-west monsoon season.. There is a decrease in cloudiness after the withdrawal of the monsoon and in the period December to April skies are usually clear or lightly clouded. But on some days particularly in the cold season cloudiness sets in, in association with passing western disturbances. After about mid April the cloudiness generally increases.

Winds : Winds are light throughout the year except for short spells of strong winds during thunderstorms in the period, March to May. Northeasterly or easterly winds are most common throughout the year.

Special Weather Phenomena : Cyclonic storms and depressions from the Bay of Bengal which move into Assam, do not reach near enough to affect the weather of the district. Thunderstorms generally occur throughout the year though the frequency is more during the period March to September. Those during the period March to May are sometimes accompanied with high winds like the norwester of Bengal. Fogs occur on some days during the postmonsoon and winter seasons.

Tables 3, 3 (a), 3 (b), 4, 4 (a), 4 (b) and 5, 5 (a), 5 (b) give the temperature and humidity, mean wind speed and frequency of special weather phenomena respectively for Tezpur, Gohpur and Tangla.

**TABLE
Normals and**

Station	No. of years of data	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Tezpur	50 a	15.0	25.9	51.1	157.7	268.2	304.3	341.4	325.4
	b	1.5	2.6	4.8	11.0	15.6	16.3	16.6	15.8
Boreli	50 a	18.0	29.5	51.8	142.5	279.4	433.8	432.3	375.2
	b	1.8	2.8	4.9	10.3	14.4	18.5	18.7	16.9
Balipara	50 a	17.0	29.0	50.3	143.3	269.2	418.9	431.8	373.6
	b	1.9	2.9	4.8	10.1	14.2	18.0	18.4	16.9
Bedetti	50 a	20.1	38.6	61.5	178.1	309.6	430.5	476.0	419.1
	b	2.2	3.7	5.7	11.7	16.0	18.0	19.9	17.5
Gohpur	50 a	19.8	41.4	60.2	180.3	295.7	411.7	423.2	402.6
	b	2.1	3.8	5.7	12.1	15.4	17.9	18.2	16.5
Mangaldai	50 a	15.2	24.1	66.0	175.0	295.7	340.9	298.7	269.2
	b	1.3	2.4	4.7	11.8	14.6	15.0	14.3	12.7
Kopati	50 a	12.9	24.1	61.0	172.5	283.2	326.4	301.0	265.7
	b	1.4	2.4	4.9	11.6	14.8	15.2	15.0	13.3
Singrimari	50 a	13.2	25.4	64.3	192.8	302.8	370.8	317.3	249.7
	b	1.3	2.4	5.2	11.9	15.9	15.1	14.2	12.9
Atharikhat	50 a	14.0	25.9	65.0	216.4	371.1	512.6	367.3	292.3
	b	1.3	2.4	4.9	11.7	15.9	15.6	15.1	13.2
Orangajuli	50 a	15.2	27.9	68.1	184.1	338.1	538.0	426.0	338.6
	b	1.7	2.6	4.9	10.8	15.0	16.9	16.1	14.0
Kherkheria	50 a	18.0	34.5	72.6	190.7	344.4	623.1	538.2	463.0
	b	1.8	3.1	4.9	9.8	15.0	18.0	18.0	16.4
Majbat	50 a	13.7	27.2	51.8	149.9	283.0	405.9	366.5	297.4
	b	1.4	2.8	4.6	10.3	14.8	16.4	15.6	14.1
Barpukhuri	50 a	18.8	31.0	55.9	169.4	288.3	384.1	422.1	376.7
	b	2.0	3.1	5.4	11.8	15.5	17.6	18.7	17.1
Charduar	50 a	21.1	33.5	50.3	154.2	281.2	445.3	489.2	403.3
	b	2.0	3.1	4.7	10.2	14.5	18.6	19.3	17.2
Kabira	23 a	13.2	30.5	70.1	205.5	292.6	397.8	398.5	279.4
	b	1.3	2.2	4.9	12.6	14.5	14.4	14.6	13.1
Darrang (District)	a	16.3	29.9	60.0	174.2	300.2	422.9	402.0	342.1
	b	1.7	2.8	5.0	11.2	15.1	16.8	16.8	15.2

a) Normal rainfall in mm. (b) Average number of
*Based on all available data up to 1960. ** Years

extremes of Rainfall

Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual	Highest annual rainfall as % of normal & year**	Lowest annual rainfall as % of normal & year**	Heaviest rainfall in 24 hours*	
							Amount (mm)	Date
221.0	108.5	21.8	6.9	1847.2	156 (1918)	72 (1919)	202.7	1898 Aug 31
12.4	6.4	1.8	0.7	105.5				
347.2	129.5	30.2	10.2	2279.6	131 (1918)	82 (1908)	232.9	1950 Aug 26
15.6	7.4	2.3	1.2	114.8				
335.9	134.1	36.3	9.9	2269.3	127 (1904)	78 (1923)	221.2	1929 Sep 16
15.3	7.2	2.5	1.1	113.3				
333.6	146.8	32.0	12.5	2463.4	129 (1949)	75 (1909)	221.2	1895 Sep 7
15.3	8.3	2.4	1.4	122.1				
322.6	134.9	30.5	12.2	2335.1	151 (1928)	76 (1942)	228.6	1895 Jul 8
14.1	7.0	2.2	1.4	116.4				
178.1	82.8	20.8	5.8	1772.3	193 (1929)	66 (1950)	217.7	1925 Jul 27
9.7	4.9	1.6	0.6	93.6				
193.5	85.6	21.8	7.6	1755.3	130 (1911)	61 (1928)	152.4	1924 Jul 10
11.1	5.0	1.7	0.8	97.2				
190.5	86.9	19.6	6.6	1839.9	132 (1943)	74 (1928)	186.7	1899 Aug 21
10.9	5.3	1.6	0.7	97.4				
254.0	90.7	19.6	6.9	2235.8	161 (1911)	64 (1933)	278.4	1918 Jun 6
12.2	5.7	1.6	0.8	101.3				
293.6	111.8	19.3	9.9	2370.6	141 (1921)	59 (1908)	281.4	1911 Jul 24
13.5	6.4	1.8	1.2	104.9				
395.5	136.4	27.4	10.7	2855.5	139 (1931)	60 (1928)	284.2	1915 Jul 10
15.6	7.3	2.2	1.3	11.3				
273.6	91.9	23.6	7.6	1992.1	14.8 (1911)	65 (1928)	178.6	1911 Jun 13
12.8	5.9	1.9	1.0	101.6				
326.9	131.1	30.0	9.7	2244.0	136 (1949)	72 (1919)	175.3	1912 Jul 9
15.3	7.2	2.2	1.2	117.1				
375.7	154.4	35.1	11.7	2455.0	148 (1912)	77 (1947)	185.9	1897 Sep 16
16.1	7.6	2.5	1.2	117.0				
209.0	88.9	16.5	8.1	2010.1	154 (1911)	57 (1922)	241.1	1914 Jun 12
10.7	5.2	1.2	0.9	95.6				
285.1	114.3	25.6	9.1	2181.7	133 (1949)	80 (1922)		
13.4	6.5	2.0	1.0	107.5				

rainy days (days with rain of 2.5 mm or more),
given in brackets.

TABLE-2
Frequency of Annual Rainfall in the District
(Data 1901-1950)

Range in mm	No. of years	Range in mm	No. of years
1701-1800	2	2301-2400	7
1801-1900	6	2401-2500	2
1901-2000	44	2501-2600	1
2001-2100	6	2601-2700	5
2101-2200	9	2701-2800	0
2201-2300	7	2801-2900	1

TABLE-3
Normals of Temperature and Relative Humidity
(TEZPUR)

Month	Mean Daily Maximum Temperature	°C	Mean Daily Minimum Temperature	°C	Highest Maximum ever recorded	°C	Date	Lowest Minimum ever recorded	°C	Date	Relative Humidity 0830 1730*
											% %
January	23.7		11.4		27.8		1961 Jan 31	5.6		1945 Jan 8	84 72
February	25.4		13.7		31.7		1964 Feb 29	6.1		1905 Feb 13	77 63
March	29.0		17.1		36.7		1923 Mar 30	10.0		1927 Mar 1	68 55
April	30.3		20.2		38.3		1960 Apr 30	13.3		1905 Apr 2	71 61
May	30.3		22.5		38.9		1960 May 2	17.2		1963 May 3	81 76
June	31.6		24.7		36.7		1953 Jun 21	19.4		1907 Jun 7	85 80
July	32.1		25.3		36.7		1962 Jul 16	21.2		1962 Jul 3	87 80
August	32.2		25.4		37.2		1953 Aug 13	20.3		1962 Aug 1	86 81
September	31.7		24.7		36.7		1961 Sept 14	20.6		1959 Sep 8	86 82
October	30.2		21.8		36.1		1956 Oct 2	14.5		1962 Oct 31	81 80
November	27.6		16.5		33.3		1952 Nov 1	10.6		1953 Nov 23	79 79
December	24.7		12.4		31.5		1965 Dec 6	6.1		1913 Dec 31	84 78
Annual	29.1		19.6								81 74

* Hours I. S. T.

TABLE 3-(a)
Normals of Temperature and Relative Humidity
(GOHPUR)

Month	Mean Daily Maximum Temperature °C	Mean Daily Minimum Temperature °C	Highest Maximum ever recorded °C	Date	Lowest Minimum ever recorded °C	Date	Relative Humidity	
							0830 %	1730* %
January	23.0	8.2	26.6	1961 Jan 31	3.8	1963 Jan 21	86	76
February	24.6	11.3	29.9	1963 Feb 28	4.9	1963 Feb 2	81	69
March	28.0	14.2	33.2	1962 Mar 22	7.7	1962 Mar 1	76	66
April	29.5	18.5	36.6	1962 Apr 26	11.5	1965 Apr 6	79	71
May	29.7	20.8	37.0	1964 May 29	15.3	1965 May 5	85	78
June	31.6	23.4	36.6	1961 Jun 27	19.4	1962 Jun 3	88	82
July	32.4	24.7	36.6	1964 Jul 5	21.1	1962 Jul 8	89	81
August	32.1	24.8	36.0	1959 Aug 31	20.5	1965 Aug 18	90	84
September	31.8	23.8	36.3	1963 Sep 11	20.5	1959 Sep 8	89	84
October	30.2	20.5	34.6	1964 Oct 4	13.3	1952 Oct 6 days	86	83
November	26.9	14.0	31.7	1958 Nov 3	8.3	1965 Nov 22	83	76
December	23.6	9.7	27.7	1960 Dec 5 days	3.3	1962 Dec 28	90	82
Annual	28.6	17.7					85	78

* Hours I. S. T.

TABLE-3 (b)
Normals of Temperature and Relative Humidity
(TANGLA)

Month	Mean Daily Maximum Temperature °C	Mean Daily Minimum Temperature °C	Highest Maximum ever recorded °C	Date	Lowest Minimum ever recorded °C	Date	Relative Humidity	
							0830 %	1730* %
January	25.2	10.0	31.7	1963 Jan 12	4.3	1964 Jan 30	79	75
February	26.5	12.2	32.3	1963 Feb 28	5.3	1964 Feb 7	73	69
March	29.4	15.5	35.4	1958 Mar 29	9.3	1965 Mar 5	66	63
April	31.1	19.7	37.9	1960 Apr 30	13.9	1960 Apr 8	70	66
May	30.8	21.9	38.9	1960 May 1	15.7	1962 May 1	82	79
June	31.6	24.2	39.5	1961 Jun 13	21.0	1963 Jun 12	87	81
July	32.8	24.9	37.6	1964 Jul 5	20.9	1960 Jul 8	86	81
August	32.6	25.1	36.6	1960 Aug 14	21.0	1962 Aug 12	85	80
September	32.6	24.7	38.8	1965 Sep 6	20.3	1959 Sep 8	84	82
October	30.9	21.3	35.1	1962 Oct 1	15.2	1962 Oct 25	80	83
November	28.6	14.8	33.2	1965 Nov 9	9.2	1961 Nov 25	75	81
December	25.9	11.7	29.5	1964 Dec 1	5.2	1961 Dec 28	79	78
Annual	29.8	18.8					79	77

* Hours I. S. T.

TABLE-4
Mean Wind Speed in Km/hr
(TEZPUR)

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
2.4	3.2	5.0	6.7	4.5	2.8	2.5	2.3	2.3	1.9	2.1	2.1	3.1

TABLE-4(a)
Mean wind Speed in Km/hr
(GOHPUR)

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
2.7	3.8	4.9	5.3	5.0	4.3	3.6	3.8	3.1	2.8	2.7	2.2	3.7

TABLE 4--(b)
Mean Wind Speed in Km/hr.
(TANGLA)

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
1.7	2.5	3.1	4.0	3.7	2.8	2.5	2.1	2.3	1.6	1.5	1.3	2.4

TABLE-5
Special Weather Phenomena
(TEZPUR)

* Mean No. of days with												
Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Thunder	0.4	0.7	4	7	9	6	6	6	3	0.3	0.6	49
Hail	0	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.2	0.1	0	0	0	1.5
Dust-Storm	0	0	0.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.2	0.7
Squall	0	0	0.1	0.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.3
Fog	3	0.9	0.1	0	0	0.5	0	0.1	0.3	1.8	4	11

* No. of days 2 and above are given in whole numbers.

TABLE-5(a)
Special Weather Phenomena
(GOHPUR)

* Mean No. of days with	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Thunder	0	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6	0	1.1	1.0	0.8	0.1	0.1	0	5
Hail	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dust-Storm	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Squall	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fog	4	0.5	0.1	0	0	0	0	0	0.2	0.3	5	7	17

* No. of days 2 and above are given in whole numbers.

TABLE-5(b)
Special Weather Phenomena
(TANGLA)

* Mean No. of days with	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Thunder	0.1	0.1	0.3	1.0	2.0	1.1	1.1	0.5	0	0.1	0.1	0.1	7
Hail	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dust-Storm	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Squall	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fog	0.6	0.2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.2	0	1.0

* No of days 2 and above are given in whole number.

CHAPTER—II

HISTORY

(a) Pre-history :

Certain conclusions regarding the extent of neolithic culture in Darrang district can be drawn on the basis of the stone tools so far collected. W.Penny, a teaplanter of Vishwanath discovered some of these tools while digging a ditch in his estate. These were transmitted in 1908 to the Indian Museum, Calcutta, through the Viceroy, Lord Curzon, who received these pieces as presents from the owners. "These have been listed by Coggin Brown in his *Catalogue* (1917, pp.131-33); and on them two separate articles, one by Coggin Brown himself (1914 a, pp.107-9), and the other by H.C. Dasgupta (1913, pp.291-93), have been published."¹ Among other scholars who have made notable contributions to the study of neolithic culture in Assam, mention may be made of J. H. Hutton, J. P. Mills, G. D. Walker, J. H. Grace, C.R. Pawsey K.L. Barua and P. C. Choudhry.

There are 385 specimens of stone tools including those discovered from Vishwanath region of Darrang district, in the Pitt Rivers Museum Oxford. The majority of tools discovered by Penny in Darrang district are of sandstone. A good number are in quartzite, slate and a rock described as "decomposed volcanic ash"² while there is one of gneiss and one of porphyrite. The sandstone samples are mostly smoothed fragments and pebbles.³ Grooved hammerstones have been discovered from one site at Vishwanath in Darrang district. "It has not been found anywhere else in Assam, nor is it known from South East Asia except for one example from kim-Bang in Annam⁴. Commenting on the find of two shouldered implements one at Vishwanath in Darrang and the other at Kanarpara

1. A.H. Dani, *Pre-history and Protohistory of Eastern India*, Calcutta, 1960. p.41.
2. Ibid, p.46.
3. Ibid, p.46
4. Ibid, p.54.

in Cachar, P.C. Choudhury states "To judge from the geological formations of the Cachar and the Mikir Hills lying close to the find at Vishwanath the specimens from Assam were locally made."⁵ Quoting Caggin Brown, P. C. Choudhury has supported the view that those six grooved hammers discovered from Vishwanath, "are perhaps the rarest of the numerous neolithic stone implements recorded from Eastern Asia."⁶ The neoliths and the stone-celts have been discovered from various parts of Assam. It shows that the neolithic culture was once widespread in Assam and it had links with Burma, Malaya, Central India and Southern India.

The area now known as Darrang once provided to different peoples an important migration route to this part of the world. The mountain passes north of the district which we now call *Duars* are believed to have been important migration routes connecting Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet with the Brahmaputra Valley. P. C. Choudhury, however, doubts if these routes helped much in the migration of racial elements; but believes that these mountain passes were important trade routes.⁷ However, being a part of the fertile Brahmaputra valley the area now known as Darrang was inhabited by the people of various racial elements. It is believed that while this State absorbed the waves of immigrants "from South-east Asia and the Oceanic world, as from India and the West, some elements of the inhabitants were probably indigenous, and that some people were at times sent out from this region."⁸ It is now confirmed by the scholars who have carried out extensive research on the history of Assam, that the principal races who migrated into Assam in the twilight age of her history are the Austro-Asiatics, the Dravidians, the Tibeto-Burmans, the Mongoloids and the Aryans.

Of special interest to this district is the influx of the Tibeto-Burmans. Large number of Bodos or Kacharis still inhabit certain areas now under Darrang district and some portions of the adjoining districts. They belong of the Indo-Chinese group which includes the Kacharis, Koches, Rabhas, Meches, Lalungs, Garos, Nagas, Kukis and Chutias. They are Mongolians who, according to K.L. Barua, poured through the north-east after the appearance of

5. P. C. Choudhury; *The History of Civilisation of the people of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.*, Gauhati, 1959, pp.56-57.

6. Ibid, pp. 58-59

7. Ibid, pp. 60-61.

8. Ibid, p.81.

the Aryans in India. The impact of the Mongolian thrust, observes Barua, had to be borne by the Dravidians who occupied the plains; but the latter ultimately regained their supremacy as the ruling race.⁹ However, the Dravidians were pushed to southern Assam by the Aryans who entered the Assam plains from various directions. The hill tribes like the Mikirs, Daflas etc., who live in some parts of the district, belong of the North Assam branch which provides a link between the Tibeto-Himalayan and the Assam Burmese Branches. The North Assam Branch migrated into Assam at different periods of history. Although the area now covered by Darrang district was the abode of various racial elements, the Tibeto-Burmans of the Indo-Chinese stock were predominant in early part of her history. Even Bana, the earliest known king of the tract, was a "non-Aryan, or probably an Alpine chief who founded another kingdom in *Sonitapura*, modern Tezpur and took to non-Aryan habits."¹⁰ The Aryan stock is represented by the Brahmins, Kayasthas, and Kalitas and a few other offshoots from these communities who settled in this tract at different periods of history.

Geography of ancient Darrang : The extent of the territory of Bana, the first legendary king of Sonitpur is not known. Except the story of Bana, reference to Sonitpur in the literary works and epigraphs relating to the early period is very meagre. On the contrary, there is enough evidence to show that this part of the territory now known as Darrang, possibly formed a part of the ancient Kamarupa. On the basis of the copious references to the hills of northern Kamarupa and her rivers in the epics, Pargiter points out that Pragjyotisha touched the Himalayas and stretched southwards along both sides of the Lauhitya which is now known as the Brahmaputra.¹¹ However, it is difficult to put much reliance on the geographical description given in the epics. Tezpur Rock Epigraph of Harjjara and his Hayunthal grant prove that during the early part of the 9th century A.D., Darrang lay within Kamarupa. The *Tiksa kalpa* states that Kamarupa was triangular in shape, 100 *Yojanas* in length, and 30 *Yojanas* in breadth, extending from the east.¹² The *Dikkaravasin* is the river Dikrang which now flows east of Darrang

9. K. L. Barua; *Early History of Kamarupa, Gauhati*; 1956. p.13.

10. P.C. Choudhury; *The History of Civilisation of the people of Assam to the Twelfth Century, A.D. Gauhati*, 1959, p. 125

11. Ibid, p.44.

12. Ibid, p.48.

district. The *Yogini Tantra* (circa 1600 A.D.) traces the frontiers of Kamarupa thus:¹³ :-

“ *Nepalasya Kancanadrim Brahmaputrasya sangamam
Karatoyam samarabhya yavad Dikkaravasini
uttarasyam Kanjagiri Karatoya tu pascime
tirthasrestha Diksu nadi purvasyam giri Kanyake
daksine Brahmaputrasya Laksayah sangamavadhih
Kamarupa iti khyatah sarva sastresu niscitah* ”

“From the mountain Kancana in Nepal upto the confluence of the Brahmaputra, from the Karatoya to Dikkaravasini, the northern limit is the mount Kanja, in the west the Karatoya, in the east the Diksu, in the south the confluence of the Laksa with the Brahmaputra; this is the territory which all treatises call by the name of Kamarupa.” Undoubtedly, the western boundary of the ancient Kamarupa was far beyond the western boundary of Assam. On the north bank of the Brahmaputra the eastern boundary extended upto the Dikkaravasini which is now known as the Dikrang river. This river flows east of Darrang district. The area between the Bhairavi and the Dikrang was known as *Saumarpitha*, bounded on the west by *Svarnapitha*. The tract of land now known as Darrang thus formed a part of the ancient Kamarupa.

The archaeological ruins found in the district also throw light on the extent of this country. P.C. Choudhury ascribes the remains of the Bamuni hill near Tezpur to the 8th-9th century A. D., those of Dah-Parvatia to the 5th-6th century A. D. and the remains found at Tezpur to the 10th-12th century A. D.¹⁴ K.L. Barua holds that the ruins of the stone building dug up in the *kutchery* compound of Tezpur may be of the palace of Vanamala which he erected in the 9th century A.D.¹⁵ It is on record that this king built a city temporarily at Haruppeswara as the second capital. Haruppeswara is identified by some scholars with Tezpur,¹⁶ the present headquarters of Darrang district. K.L. Barua further observes that the temple at Dah-Parvatia was built by a predecessor of Bhaskaravarman, the famous king of Kamarupa in the 5th or 6th century A. D.¹⁷ The Tezpur Rock Inscription of Harjjara, Tezpur Grant of Vanamala Varman,

13. Ibid, p. 48.

14. Ibid, pp. 461—465.

15. K.L. Barua; *Early History of Kamarupa, Gauhati, 1966, p. 112.*

16. Maheswar Neog; *Pavitra Asom, Gauhati, p. 173.*

17. K. L. Barua; *Early History of Kamarupa; Gauhati, 1966, p. 117.*

the Parvatiya plates of Vanamala found near Tezpur, the Bargaon Grant found in Bargaon near Tezpur also support the contention that the tract of land now known as Darrang was a part of ancient Kamarupa, till it was fragmented in the 12th century A. D. From time to time some petty kings might have established themselves in this part of Kamarupa now known as Darrang; but they could not have set up independent kingdoms for long overthrowing the king who ruled over Kamarupa.

(b) Legendary Kings of Kamarupa :

The *Bhagavat Purana*, *Vishnu Purana* and some other mythological accounts mention the names of different princes of ancient Assam. They bore *Asura* or *Danava* titles. King Bana is one such ruler. The mythological accounts associate Bana with Sonitpur, *Agnigarh*, *Agni-parvata*, the Mahabhairav temple. Bhairavi temple, Vishwanath temples, are all located in Tezpur subdivision. It has, however, been observed by P. N. Bhattacharya, that like Narakas there were also Banas,¹⁸ Tradition has it that there was only one Bana who ruled at Sonitpur, known to modern Tezpur of Darrang district. From the *Kalika Purana* and a number of other sources it appears that Bana was a contemporary of Naraka who ruled in Pragiyotishpura, the capital of ancient Kamarupa. Disputing the theory propounded by N.N. Basu that Sonitpur was located somewhere in Sind and that Bana came to Saumara in Assam, P.C. Choudhury has shown that none of Basu's contentions are tenable and that the historicity of Bana is established by the remains of *Agniparvata* and others already mentioned. In the *Vishnu Purana*, Bana's origin has been traced from Marici, Kashyapa, Hiranya Kasipu, Prahlada, Varocana and Bali. Dineswar Sarma attributes the origin of the name of the Bamuni hill near Tezpur, to the sacrifice held by Bali of mythological fame. Vishnu is believed to have attended the sacrifice in the garb of a dwarf (*Vamana*).¹⁹ Mere association of place names with mythological rulers, hardly earns any credence. Yet, if the genealogy as given in the *Vishnu Purana* is to be believed, Sarma's surmise appears to be of some value.

The legendary king Bana constructed his fortress known as Agni-garh at Sonitpur, besides the famous temple of Mahabhairav and the shrine of goddess Bhairavi. The Akas also claim descent from the

18. P. N. Bhattacharya, *Kamarupa Sasanavali: Intro-pp. 2-3 and footnotes.*

19. Dineswar Sarma, *Mangaldair Buranji* Mangaldai, 1961 p.13.

mighty prince Bana, through his grandson Bhaluka, the remains of whose capital are still to be seen near the gorge of the Bhareli at Bhalukpong. It is however, doubtful if the fort at Bhalukpong and the temple at Tezpur were erected by the same dynasty or at the same Period.

According to tradition Bana had several sons and one beautiful daughter named Usha. Bana being a *Saivite*, dedicated the temple known as Mahabhairav, to his family deity *Siva*. Like the *Danavas* and *Asuras* of mythology, Bana did not countenance the worship of *Vishnu*. He unleashed his fury upon anything that was connected with the worship of *Vishnu*.

As the story goes, the love episode of his daughter Usha dragged him into a bloody war with Lord Krishna of Dwaraka, in which Bana suffered a crushing defeat. From that time the city came to be known as Sonitpur, the city of blood. "Siva's participation in the war on the side of Bana not only adds a religious *motif* to the story of love but also exhilarates with the shade of light and spiritual colour".²⁰ Bana is associated with two big tanks at Sonitpur, one of which was named after his prime minister Kumbhanda. A belief still persists that the two big tanks of Tezpur town were dug by Bana himself.

The story has been recounted by Ananta Kandali, a great Vaishnava poet of medieval Assam in his poetical work *Kumar Haran* "If, therefore, the story of Bana is to be regarded as historical, it would seem that during the time of Naraka and Bhagadatta, eastern Assam Valley was outside Pragjyotisha but subsequently the kingdom extended towards the east even beyond the Dikhoo river."²¹ Bhagadatta was followed by Dharmapala, Kamapala and others who ruled for nineteen generations. There then came another dynasty from the west. This was founded by Madhava whose son Laksmipala invaded Gauda. He was succeeded by his minister Sumati who was followed by others including twenty-one kings. Then came another dynasty founded by a Kshatriya named Jitari from the *Dravida* country. He assumed the name of Dharmapala and brought to Assam several Brahmin and Kayastha families from Kanauj and Gauda. His dynasty ruled for eight generations and the last king was Ramachandra whose son was Sasanka or Arimatta. Arimatta was a powerful king who ruled over a vast kingdom. The ram-

20. Hem Barua; *The Red River and the Blue Hills*, 1962, p.17

21. K.L. Barua, *Early History of Kamarupa*, Gauhati 1969, pp.3-4.

part in Vaidargarh near Betna in Kamrup district is associated with him. He was killed by Phengua who in turn was killed by Arimatta's son Gajanka. He was succeeded by Sukranka and Mriganka. With the death of Mriganka the kingdom disintegrated. This account has been narrated in *Hara-Gouri Samvada* and other manuscripts²².

The history of Arimatta is shrouded in mystery. His name is associated with different places of Assam and is mentioned in many traditional accounts. According to one account Arimatta was a descendant of the famous Kamarupa king Bhagadatta, son of Naraka. Bhagadatta was followed by Dharmapala and Chandrapala whose son was Arimatta.²³ According to *Yogini Tantra*, Arimatta belonged to the Nagakhya line ruling between 3rd and 7th century A. D. Their capital was at Pratapgarh near Vishwanath. Arimatta is said to be the grandson of Pratapa also known as Bhaluka or according to another account was born by the union of Pratapa's wife with the Brahmaputra. Thus this version connects Arimatta with Bana, grandfather of Bhaluka. According to the genealogy of the *Rajahs* of Dimarua Arimatta's father was the Brahmaputra and his mother was Harmati wife of one Somapala of Pratappura. It was also mentioned that Arimatta had killed his own father. According to *Bhunyar puthi* Arimatta's forefathers were the descendants of Yudhis-thira of Mahabharata fame. Arimatta and Nagamatta were two brothers who shared their father Mayamatta's territory. The capital of the kingdom was at Ratnapura. It was said that Arimatta's minister Samudra built the town at Vishwanath. This source also referred to Arimatta as a patricide who in order to atone for his sin gave his kingdom to his minister and after a pilgrimage drowned himself in the Dikhau river. According to another source, Arimatta belonged to Mayurdhvaja line who had their territory between Vishwanath and Subansiri with capital at Ratnavatipura. Arimatta's father was Pratappuriya who married Harmati. She gave birth to Arimatta after her union with the Brahmaputra. He was born at Vishwanath and extended his kingdom to Bhutan and Nepal. According to this account also, he killed his father and afterwards committed suicide through repentance.

According to P. C. Choudhury, traditional accounts of his birth and patricide appear to be myths. "The extensive conquests

22. P. C. Choudhury ; *The History of Civilization of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A. D.*, Gauhati, 1959, p. 120.

23. Ibid, p. 127.

made by him in Assam and Bengal and the establishment of his capitals at Vishanath and Ratnapura in Upper Assam along with the erection of a fortification, called Vaidargarh, make us believe that he was the same as Vaidyadeva, who established himself in Assam after dethroning Tingyadeva.....The three rulers mentioned after Arimatta : Gajanka, Sukranka and Mriganka, must have been the descendants of Vaidyadeva, or may be related to the family of Vallabhadeva, whose existence in Assam in A. D. 1185 with his three ancestors, Bhaskara Rayarideva and Udayakarna, is testified by his plates²⁴.

According to K.L. Barua, Arimatta's another name was Gajanka and he usurped the throne of Indranarayan who ruled at Kamatapur, Aimatta defeated Phengua and slew him. He also overthrew Ramachandra, a local chief ruling somewhere in the Darrang district. Arimatta was succeeded by Ratnasinha alias Sukaranka, Sutaranka, and Mriganka and their kingdom extended as far as the Karatoya river on the west. Relying on the account of Kaviratna Saraswati, Barua approximately fixed the dates of the rulers of Arimatta's line in the following order :—

Arimatta (1365-1385 A.D), Sukaranka (1385-1400 A. D.)
Sutaranka (1400-1415 A. D.) and Mriganka (1415-1440 A. D.)²⁵

(c) Dynastic Rulers of Early Times (upto the twelfth century A.D.)

This district which once formed a part of ancient Kamarupa, was ruled by three dynasties, viz., the Varmans, the Salastambhas and the Palas. D. R. Bhandarkar has classified the rulers of Kamarupa as follows- (1) the Pushyavarman family of Pragjyotisha, (2) the Bhaumas of Haruppesvara, (3) the early Salastambha family of Haruppesvara, (4) the later Salastambha family of Pragjyotisha, (5) the Bhauma Palas of Durjaya. P.C Choudhury, however, disputes this classification and has shown that there were only three main lines, all tracing their origin from a common ancestry and using the same epithet *Pargjyotishadhipati*.²⁶

The Bhaumas trace their origin from Naraka, the legendary king of Pragjyotisha, later known as Kamarupa. The Nidhanpur Grant, and the second of the three clay seals of Nalanda give the genealogy

²⁴. Ibid, p.134,

²⁵. K.L. Barua, *Early History of amarupa, Gauhati*, 1966, pp. 168-178.

²⁶. P.C. Choudhury, *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam. to the of twelfth Century A.D Gauhati*, 1956, p.141.

of the line of Pushyavarman who was the first important ruler of this dynasty. According to some scholars Pushyavarman flourished in the middle of the fourth century A.D. while others like Bhattasali place Pushyavarman in the early part of the same century.²⁷ P. C. Choudhury, places Pushyavarman's accession in about 355 A.D. when Kamarupa merged, after a long period of obscurity, as an important kingdom of the ancient Indian polity. Pushyavarman is believed to be a contemporary of Samudragupta, but was not his vassal king.²⁸ This view is supported by the fact that Pushyavarman assumed the title *Maharajadhiraja*, alluding to his independent status. Doobi Grant states that Pushyavarman born in the line of Naraka, was equal to Siva in honour and fame, equal to Indra in sacrifices and an annihilator of enemies. According to R.C. Majumdar, the title *Maharajadhiraja* assumed by Pushyavarman has hardly any significance. "The effective hold of the Guptas on this kingdom is indicated by the currency of the Gupta era in this kingdom for nearly five hundred years"²⁹.

Kings of Varman line: The dynasty founded by Pushyavarman ruled over Kamarupa for about three hundred years. The kingdom of Kamarupa flourished during the rule of Samudravarman, Balavarman, Kalyanavarman, Ganapativarman, Mahendravarman and Narayanvarman who descended lineally from Pushyavarman. The second clay seal of Nalanda refers to Mahendravarman as the 'performer of two horse sacrifices'. However, it is not clear from the seal whether the epithet 'performer of two horse sacrifices' is meant for Mahendravarman or his successor Narayanvarman.³⁰ Narayanvarman was succeeded by his son Mahabhutavarman, who is also known as Bhutivarman (510-555.A.D) The Budganga inscription states that this king performed an *Aswamedha* sacrifice. According to Nidhanpur Grant Bhutivarman had a number of feudatory kings. He is believed to have conquered *Pundravardhana* in about 550 A.D. After Bhutivarman his son Chandramukhavarman ascended the throne of Kamarupa. He was succeeded by Sthitavarman, then by Susthitavarman who according to Apshad inscription, was defeated by Mahasenagupta, the later Gupta monarch.

²⁷. P.N. Bhattacharya, *Kamarupa Sasanavali*, Introd, pp. 13-14

²⁸. P. C. Choudhury, *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam, to the Twelfth Century, A.D. Gauhati*. 1959, p. 147.

²⁹. R.C. Majumdar Gen. Ed.; *The History and Culture of the Indian People. The classical Age, Vol. III, Bombay*, 1970, P. 90.

³⁰. Ibid, p.91.

Susthitavarman had two sons, namely Supratisthitavarman and Bhaskarvarman. The former ruled only for a few years.

Bhaskarvarman, (594-650 A.D.) who was the greatest monarch of the Bhauma family, revived the sunken fortunes of his family and carved a niche in the temple of fame for himself among the most remarkable rulers of ancient India. Bhaskarvarman was well versed in *sastras*. According to Doobi Grant, Bhaskarvarman "acquired through eloquence and poetic genius, mastery of all styles, possessing sweet wordings with clear and superb ornamentation."³¹ The great king who was endowed with kingly qualities, exhibited devotion to duty, and unflinching love for his people. Hiuen-Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim who visited Kamarupa during the reign of Bhaskarvarman, recorded that the king was fond of learning and men of high talents came to his dominion from distant places aspiring after office.

Bhaskarvarman's alliance with Harsa that has been recorded in the *Harsacharita* by Bana, is a landmark in the history of Kamarupa. Both the monarchs found a common enemy in the king of Gauda. It is evident from the Nidhanpur Grant and from the account of Hiuen-Tsang that Bhaskarvarman was in possession of Gauda and with it Karnasuvarna. According to R.C. Majumdar, Bhaskarvarman made himself the master of Eastern India, pitched his victorious camp in the capital of his late rival Sasanka and thus increased power and prestige of the kingdom of Kamarupa to an extent never dreamt before³².

In 643 A.D. Bhaskarvarman invited Hiuen-Tsang to his capital. The latter came from Nalanda to Kamarupa in the same year and stayed for about a month. The king of Kamarupa showed him utmost respect and desired that the Chinese pilgrim should extend his stay in the capital. Harsa, who was greatly attracted by his discourses with the pilgrim invited both Hiuen-Tsang and Bhaskarvarman to the great Buddhist assemblies at Kanauj and Prayag. Harsa marched to Kanauj along the south bank of the Ganga and Bhaskarvarman who was the most important of the visiting kings proceeded by the opposite bank. In both the functions held at Kanauj and Prayag, Kumar Bhaskarvarman was received by Harsavardhana with due honour.

31. P.C. Choudhury ; *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam, to the Twelfth Century A.D. Gauhati*, 1959, p.182.

32. *Ibid*, p. 188.

The travel account of Hiuen-Tsang affords a momentary glimpse of the conditions of the people of Kamarupa. According to it the extent of the country was about 10,000 *li* (nearly 1700 miles) in circuit. It was then a flourishing country much advanced in civilization. The people were simple, honest, upright and studious. Although the king himself was a devout *Saivite* Brahmin he was not opposed to the spread of Buddhism³³.

Kings of Salastambha family : According to Bargaon Copper Plate Grant after the descendants of Naraka had ruled Kamarupa for several generations, Salastambha, a *Mlechadhinatha* ascended the throne of Kamarupa, and established a new line. His reign is believed to have commenced from the death of Kumar Bhaskarvarman. Like the kings of the Bhauma dynasty, the kings of this line also claimed descent from Naraka. Bhandarkar calls them the Bhaumas of Haruppesvara.³⁴ As mentioned earlier, Haruppesvara is identified with Tezpur. The Nowgong grant of Balavarman states that this grant was issued from the "ancestral camp" (of Haruppesvara). This old city must have extended over a wide area, including the Bamuni hills on the east to Dah-Parbatia on the west, during the reign of Vanamala (835-865 A.D.). King Harjjaravarman (815-835 A.D) constructed magnificent temples and stately buildings in this city which was built by him. The remains of the stone building excavated at Tezpur Court compound is believed to belong to the place of Vanamala, who possibly constructed the lofty temple of Hataka Sulin. Thus, it appears that after long obscurity following the death of the traditional king Bana, Tezpur regained its prominence during the reign of the kings of Salastambha dynasty.

Salastambha was a powerful king as can be surmised from the Bargaon Copper Plate Grant in which he has been described as "a tiger like king". He was succeeded by Vijaya, Palaka, Kumara, Vajradeva. Harsadeva, Balavarman-II. Other important rulers of this line were Harjjaravarman, Vanamalavarmandeva, Jayamala, Balavarman-III and Tyagasimha. The reign of the first four successors of Salastambha was uneventful. The accession of Harsa (725-750 A.D.) on the throne of Kamarupa, marked an era of prosperity and territorial expansion. He was a powerful king and gave his daughter Rajyamati in marriage to the king of Nepal. The Pasupati epigraph of Nepal records

33 E.A. Gait, *A History of Assam, Calcutta*, 1967, pp. 28-29.

34. B.K. Barua, *A Cultural History of Assam, Gauhati*. 1969, p.33.

that Harsa conquered *Gauda, Odra, Kalinga, Kosala* and other lands. Harjjaravarman assumed the grand epithet *Maharajadhiraja Paramesvara Paramabhattaraka* in keeping with his unrivalled prowess. He had a number of feudatory kings under him. His son Vanamala enjoyed an unusually long reign. He is known for the skill he displayed in the arts of peace as well as in war.

The Pala Dynasty : The kingdom of Kamarupa passed into the hands of Brahmapala, the founder of the Pala family after the death of the last king of Salastambha dynasty towards the end of the 10th century. The Bargaon grant of Ratnapala records that when Tyagasimha, the last king of Salastambha family departed from this world his subjects elected Brahmapala as their monarch. His grandson Ratnapala fortified his capital Durjaya. According to Bargaon inscription its fortifications were fit to cause discomfiture to the master of the Deccan country. According to B. C. Allen, Durjaya was located at the site of the present Tezpur town.³⁵ P.C. Choudhury has observed that Durjaya, meaning impregnable, stands for pragjyotishpura.

The line of Pala kings ruled for about one hundred and fifty years, the last king Jayapala having expired in 1138, A.D. The immediate successors of Ratnapala were Purandarapala, Indrapala, Gopala, Harsapala, Dharmapala and Jayapala. The epigraphs of Kamarupa of this period record the glories of these rulers. The invasion of Kamarupa by the Chalukya king Vikramaditya VI (1076-1126 A.D.) possibly occurred during the reign of Harsapala. Although some parts of the territory of Kamarupa were lost during the rule of Gopala and Harsapala, their successor Dharmapala restored the lost parts of the kingdom pushing its boundaries to the west of the Karatoya.

(d) Medieval Period :

Darkness descends on the history of Kamarupa including Darrang after the downfall of the Pala dynasty ending in Jayapala (1120-1138 A.D.). Then followed a climacteric period of dynastic rule. According to *Ramacharita* of Sandhyakara Nandi, Rama Pal, king of Gauda conquered Kamarupa between (1125-1130 A.D.) when Jayapala was the king of Kamarupa. According to P.C. Choudhury, Rama Pal conquered only that portion of Kamarupa which was in Bengal and placed Tingyadeva as his vassal. According to Kamauh Grant of Vaidyadeva (1142 A.D.) when Tingyadeva, prince of Kamarupa revolted,

Vaidyadeva, minister of Kumara Pal of Gauda was sent against him. Vaidyadeva defeated and killed Tingyadeva and subsequently declared his independence. Vaidyadeva then conquered the eastern part of Kamarupa by about 1138 A.D. when the Pala rule in Kamarupa ended. P.C. Choudhury identifies Vaidyadeva with Arimatta and Jayapala with Ramachandra of the Assamese chronicles. Vaidyadeva's reign ended in about 1150 A.D. but there is uncertainty about the genealogy of his successors. The Tezpur grant of Vallabhadeva (1185 A.D.) mentions Rayarideva, Udayakarna and Vallabhadeva. P.C. Choudhury surmises that Rayarideva might have been a feudatory king in the Tezpur region of Kamarupa, under Vaidyadeva. Vijayasena of Vanga overthrew Vaidyadeva but was in turn defeated by Rayarideva. Thus Rayarideva established himself as an independent ruler of Kamarupa and was followed by Udayakarna and Vallabhadeva.³⁶

Visvasundaradeva recorded in the Gachtal inscription of Nowgong (1227 A.D.) was probably Bartu or Prithu, an important king of Kamarupa who might have been the successor or son of Vallabhadeva and the same ruler mentioned as Jalpesvara in the *Yoginitantra*. He was probably the king of Kamarupa who had to his credit the repulse of two invasions of Bakhtiyar (1202 A.D.) and Ghiasuddin Iwaz (1226 A.D.) and was finally overthrown by Nasiruddin. The next important king of Kamarupa was probably Sandhya mentioned in the *Gurucharita* of Ramacharan Thakur. He repulsed the invasion of Khutiyaruddin Yuzbak about 1256-1257 A.D. and soon afterwards shifted the capital to Kamatapur in 1260 A.D.³⁷

The shifting of the capital to Kamatapur in Koch Behar resulted in slack administration over the eastern part of the kingdom where petty local rulers rose to power and subsequently came to rule independently in small principalities. The Bara-Bhuyans were the most important of all such rulers.

Bara-Bhuyans : Various accounts of the Bara (twelve) Bhuyans are found in local legends which often refer to different groups of chiefs. According to one account, the Bara-Bhuyans who set up principalities, north of the Brahmaputra and west of Chutiya kingdom in the 13th century, were the descendants of Samudra, a minister of king Arimatta. Samudra was succeeded by his son Monohar

36. P. C. Choudhury, *The History of Civilization of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A. D.*, Gauhati, 1959. pp. 274-275.

37. Ibid, pp. 276-277 and also E.A. Gait, *A History of Assam*; Calcutta, 1967; p. 35.

35. B. C. Allen ; *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol. V., Darrang, Allahabad, 1905, P. 22.

whose daughter Lakshmi gained the love of the Sun-God. She had two sons named Santanu and Samanta. Santanu and his sons embraced Vaishnavism and shifted to Rampur in the district of Nowgong. Samanta became a Sakta and remained on the north bank of the Brahmaputra at Lakhimpur. Samanta was succeeded by his sons who could maintain their independence against the Kacharis who were then ruling in Central Assam and against the Chutiya king of Sadiya. However, they were eventually defeated by the Ahoms.³⁸

The title Bhuyan was formerly supposed to indicate a connection with the aboriginal tribe of the same designation in Chota Nagpur. E. A. Gait observes in this connection as follows: "This, of course, is not the case; and the late Wise has clearly shown in connection with Eastern Bengal, where there was also in former times a group of chiefs bearing the same title, that in this connection, the word "Bhuya" or "Bhuiya" has nothing to do with caste, but is merely the Sanskrit equivalent of the Persian word 'Zamindar'. It is not clear why the number "twelve" should always be associated with them, both in Bengal and Assam. Whenever they are enumerated, twelve persons are always mentioned, but the actual names vary, just as in the case of the Muhammadan "Panch Pir", different saints are counted by different people. It seems to have been the practice in this part of India for kings to appoint twelve advisers or governors. Nar Narayan had twelve ministers of State; twelve chiefs or *dolois* administered the hilly portion of the Raja of Jaintia's Dominions, and there were twelve State Councillors in Nepal. The number may thus have become connected in the minds of the people with all dignitaries ranking next to a Raja, and so have come to be used in a purely conventional sense".³⁹

Harinarayan Dutta Barua gives a different account about the origin of the Bara-Bhuyans. According to him the petty chieftains were known as *Bhowmik* during the time of Pala kings. Their domain was called *Bhuma*. The word *Bhuyan* thus originated from the term *Bhuma*. This view is supported by the fact that Chandibar who came from Kanauj became a *Bhowmik* under king Durlabhnarayan of Gaur. Subsequently, he came to be known as Siromani Bhuyan. The term Bara-Bhuyan does not indicate exactly twelve persons. This numeral as observed by H.N. Dutta Barua, was vaguely used to indicate an

indefinite number.⁴⁰ The king of Gaur conferred the title Bhuyan on seven Brahmins and seven Kayasthas who settled in his kingdom. These fourteen Bhuyans were subsequently known as Bara-Bhuyans. They came to the kingdom of Kamata when Durlabhnarayan became its ruler. Being not content with their position as regional rulers they lost no time to declare independence when the sceptre passed into the hands of a weaker king. This account may be applicable in case of the Bhuyans of the south bank. The same author observes that when Biswa Sinha occupied the western part of Kamarupa, some of the Bhuyans migrated to the east and settled in Darrang district and North Lakhimpur area. We find a similar account in the *Asom Buranji* written by Padmanath Gohain Barua. According to him twelve Kayastha families and seven Brahmin families left Kanauj following the invasion of Kanauj by Sahabuddin. They came to Gaur and then to Kamata kingdom where king Durlabhnarayan provided for their shelter. Chandibar Bhuyan was made the administrator of the eastern region. All these families were known as Bhuyans.

According to Sarbananda Rajkumar a branch of the Bara Bhuyans set up numerous petty kingdoms on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, extending from the Subansiri in the east, down to the Barnadi in the west.⁴¹ Another branch of the Bara-Bhuyans ruled over certain areas which now form part of Nowgong district, south of the Brahmaputra. Rajkumar believes that the boundary between the territories of the Bhuyans and the Chutiyas passed through Lakhimpur town and Dhemaji mauza.⁴² These petty rulers were independent and had their own territories but whenever hostilities broke out between some of the Bhuyans and other kings the Bhuyans fought under one banner.

According to *Gurucharita* written by Ramacharan Thakur, Chandibar, the great grandfather of Sankardeva and other Bara Bhuyans ruled the land of Kamarupa under king Dharmapala. Chandibar finally settled at Rowta in Darrang district. His second son Gadadhar Bhuyan carried on an expedition against the Khamtis and the Chutiyas as far as Sadiya, but it proved disastrous and he was taken captive; but was later set free.⁴³ The stronghold of Gada-

40. H. N. Datta Barua, *Pracin Kamrupiya Kayastha Samajar Itibritta*, Nalbari 1941; P.33.

41. S. Rajkumar, *Chutiya, Bhuyan aru Matak Rajya*; PP.42-52.

42. Ibid, P.12.

43. N.N Basu, *The Social History of Kamarupa*. PP. 23-25.

38. E. A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1967, P. 39.

39. Ibid, PP. 69-40.

dhar Bhuyan was at Singri in Darrang district. Tradition has it that Kusumbar, the father of Sankardeva had a cow which swam across the Brahmaputra every night and came to Singri hill in Darrang district. The secret habitat of the cow was later discovered by Kusumbar who found a *Sivalinga* at the spot. He worshipped Siva here, considering the place to be sacred. During the childhood of Sankardeva, Madhava *daloi*, a Bhuyan chief ruled at Singri in Darrang district.⁴⁴

Shri Sankardeva, the great saint poet of Assam who stepped up the epoch making Neo-Vaishnavism movement in Assam, was a member of *Bara-Bhuyan* family. The Ahom king Suhungmung *alias* Dihingiya Raja occupied the territories of the *Bara-Bhuyans* on the north bank in 1505 A.D. From this time, some of the articles commonly used by the *Bara-Bhuyans* constituted part and parcel of the Ahom apparel.⁴⁵ In the *Ahom Buranji* preserved by Sukumar Mahanta, the Ahom victory over the Bhuyans of the north bank has been described as follows. Utoi and Tomai were two Bhuyans who mounted upon an elephant that was painted white with lime. They declared that the Ahoms who defeated the Chutiyas would never be accepted as the rulers of the Bhuyans. The Ahom king was piqued at the intransigence of the Bhuyans and attacked their territory. The Bhuyans knew very well that the nemesis had come down on them and tamely surrendered to the Ahoms. Lalowa, Utabar, Chapa, Sonabar, Bhedai, Utoi, Kalisk, Somdar Uzir and Tomai were brought before the Ahom king along with the other male members of their families. Utoi and Tomai were slaughtered for their arrogance.⁴⁶

It was Pratap Sinha (1603-1641 A.D.) who finally subdued the Bhuyans whose domain extended between the Bhareli and the Subansiri. The Bhuyan chiefs discontinued to pay tribute to the Ahom king from the time of the Koch invasion under Sukladvaj. In 1623 A.D. one of the Bhuyan chiefs declared himself independent and was joined by several other chiefs. He was arrested and executed and thus the Bhuyans were bereft of all their power.

The Koch kings : According to M. Neog, Biswa Sinha, the first Koch king conquered Darrang together with other principalities viz; Dimarua, Beltala, Rani, Luki, Bako, Chaygaon, Barnagar, Karabari, Athiabari etc.⁴⁷ Gait, however, holds that the river Barnadi

44. M. Neog, *Sankardev and His Times*, P. 68.

45. S.K. Bhuyan ed. *Satsari Asom Buranji*, P. 135.

46. S. Rajkumar; *Chutiya, Bhuyan aru Matak Rajya*; PP.12-13,15.

47. M. Neog, *Sankardev and His Times*, P.60

formed the eastern boundary of Biswa Sinha's territory.⁴⁸ The Barnadi flows west of the present Darrang district. S.K. Bhuyan also confirms this view and holds that the kingdom of Biswa Sinha extended from the Karatoya in the west to the Barnadi in the east⁴⁹. Biswa Sinha rose to power in about 1515 A.D. when the Bhuyans were ruling in small principalities in several parts of Darrang district. It is, however, doubtful if Biswa Sinha could consolidate his rule over the eastern part of his kingdom. Hostilities broke out between the Ahoms and the Muslims during the reign of Biswa Sinha and the Ahom chronicles say that the Muslims who advanced as far as Kaliabar were pursued by the Ahoms as far as the Karatoya. Had Biswa Sinha brought this part of his kingdom under his direct administration, he would have been involved in the war.

Biswa Sinha died in about 1540 A. D. and was succeeded by his eldest son Malladeva, who assumed the name Naranarayan. Sukladvaj who was better known as Chilarai was appointed the Commander-in-Chief by the Koch king. Both the brothers proceeded on a career of conquest and extended their territories upto the river Dikrai on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra, besides occupying a vast tract of land to the south of this river as far as Tipperah. The entire region now covered by Darrang thus passed into the hands of the Koch kings. The Koch expedition is believed to have taken place in 1546 A.D. when they ascended the north bank of the Brahmaputra. This expedition was the sequel of an unsuccessful attempt on the part of the Ahom king Suklenmung to attack the Koch territory after giving shelter to a petty Bhuyan chief who conspired against Naranarayan. In 1546 the Ahoms suffered reverses near Dikrai and at Kaliabar and finally were defeated by the Koches at Sala. The reign of Naranarayan represents the zenith of Koch power and the rulers of Manipur, Jaintia, Tipperah, Sylhet, Khyrim and Dimarua were all brought under subjugation, besides the Ahom king who was also subdued by the Koches.

The Gohain Kamala Ali, parts of which still exist in Darrang district was constructed by the Koch king as a part of the military strategy. The road ran a distance of about 560 kilometres from Koch Behar in West Bengal, along the north bank of the Brahmaputra to Narayanpur in Lakhimpur district of Assam. The road was named after Gohain Kamala, the brother of Naranarayan, under whose supervision

48. E.A. Gait, *A History of Assam* 1951 P. 4.9,

49. S. K. Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese Relations; Gauhati*, 1949 P.260

the road was constructed. Naranarayan died in 1584, after ruling the vast kingdom for about fifty years. The temple of Mura Dev, the remains of which are still found in a village about six kilometres to the north of Kalaigaon, is said to have been constructed by king Naranarayan.

Chilarai died in 1577 A.D. leaving a son named Raghudev. For a long time Naranarayan had no male offspring and Raghudev was regarded as his heir; but after the king had a son named Lakshminarayan Raghudev's claim to the throne became precarious. He left the palace of Koch Behar with his family and adherents and settled at Barnagar in Barpeta subdivision and built a fort at Ghila-Bijoypur. Not intending to wage war against Raghudev who behaved like an independent king, Naranarayan divided the kingdom into two parts. The portion east of the river Sonkosh was given to Raghudev who thereafter, remained loyal to the great king.

When Naranarayan died in 1584 A.D., the tie of mutual affection and love between Raghudev and Lakshminarayan was snapped once for all. Lakshminarayan and Parikshit who succeeded Raghudev soon became involved in hostilities as a sequel to which Lakshminarayan sought the help of the Nawab of Dacca to subdue the refractory Parikshit. Being defeated by the army of the Nawab at Dhubri Parikshit turned to the Ahom king Pratap Sinha for help; but he declined to accept the terms of the Ahom king. The Mughals again attacked Parikshit's territory in 1614 and chased him upto Pandu. Parikshit surrendered himself and all his possessions. He was taken to Delhi as a prisoner. Emperor Jehangir agreed to restore him to his kingdom on his undertaking to pay a sum of rupees four lakhs. Parikshit died at Allahabad on his way home, and his kingdom was annexed to the Mughal empire.

In 1615 A.D. Parikshit's brother Balinarayan fled away and sought shelter under the Ahom king Pratap Sinha. He was cordially received by the latter. In 1616 A. D. the Ahom king Pratap Sinha inflicted a crushing defeat on the invading Muslims on the banks of the Bhareli in Darrang district.

Dharmanarayan : The region, known as Darrang extending from the Barnadi to the Dikrai having been cleared of the Muslims, the Ahom king appointed Balinarayan as the tributary Raja of Darrang with the title Dharmanarayan in 1616 A.D. Some areas south of the Brahmaputra formed a part of Darrang and Balinarayan's capital was established on the southern bank.⁵⁰

50. E. A. Gait, *A History of Assam, Calcutta, 1967*, P. III.

In 1617 A.D. king Pratap Sinha proceeded towards Hajo under occupation of the Muslims. Dharmanarayan accompanied him and their combined force was successful in capturing some Mughal forts in Kamrup. However, their attack on Hajo ended in failure. The Ahoms renewed their assault on Hajo under the leadership of the Barphukan and Dharmanarayan and were successful in avenging their earlier defeat. According to some chronicles, Dharmanarayan escorted the captive Muslim general to Garhgaon, the Ahom capital. Pratap Sinha gave Dharmanarayan the territory of Koch Hajo, the erstwhile kingdom of Parikshit.⁵¹ The struggle between the two powers continued for some years with varying fortunes. In 1637 A.D. the Ahoms were defeated by the Muslims who advanced as far as Kajali at the mouth of the Kallang. The victorious Muslim commander sent a detachment in pursuit of Dharmanarayan who retreated to the Singri hill where he was killed with his two sons.

In the counter offensive the Ahoms, however, met with some success after which a treaty was concluded with the Muslims. Under the terms of the treaty the Barnadi on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra and the *Asurar Ali* on the south bank were accepted as the boundary between the Ahom and the Muhammadan territories. Thus Darrang again threw out the yoke of the Muslim subjugation.

Mahendranarayan : Dharmanarayan was succeeded by his son Mahendranarayan whose territory extended to the area between Kajalimukh and *Asurar Ali* on the south bank of the Brahmaputra, which formed a part of Kamrup. But According to Gait Dharmanarayan was succeeded by his son, Sundarnarayan, who made his head-quarters at Mangaldai.⁵²

Chandranarayan : He succeeded Mahendranarayan who died in 1643. Chandranarayan shifted his capital to Mangaldai and successfully resisted the onslaughts of the Bhutias who harried the tract from time to time. The Ahoms rendered him adequate assistance in defeating the Bhutias.

Suryyanarayan : He became the *Raja* of Darrang in 1660 A.D. on the death of Chandranarayan. According to the Muslim chronicles, the Ahom's protectorate *Raja* of Darrang made his submission to Mirjumla during his invasion of Assam in 1662 A.D. His name was Makardhvaj. The Muslim general who invaded Assam

51. S.K. Bhuyan, *Kamrupar Baranji*, P. 27.

52. E.A. Gait, *A History of Assam, Calcutta, 1967*, P.70.

offered a *Khelat* to the *Raja* and assured protection. But according to Gait Suryyanarayan was the Darrang Raja at that time. It is also mentioned that at the ceremony of installation of Ahom king Chakradvaj Sinha, the Darrang Raja, who sided with Mirjumla conveyed his congratulations to the king and thus friendly relationship was restored. The treaty that was concluded between the Ahoms and the Muslims stipulated that Darrang bounded by Gauhti on the west and the river Bhareli in the east would be ceded to the Muslims. After the expulsion of the Muslims from Kamrup in 1667 A.D. the Ahoms regained Darrang. In 1682. A.D. the *Fauzdar* of Kamrup invaded Darrang and defeated Raja Suryyanarayan who was sent to Delhi as a prisoner and placed Indranarayan, the five year old brother of Suryyanarayan on the *masnad* of Darrang. In the same year Mansur Khan was defeated by the Ahoms who recovered possession of Kamrup.

Indranarayan : It was during his reign that the Ahoms greatly curtailed the powers of the king of Darrang, whose army of six thousand troops was transferred to Gauhati and placed under the Barphukan. The territory of the king of Darrang was greatly reduced by placing all his territories that formed part of Kamrup under the direct administration of the Barphukan. The people of Darrang also were placed under the Barphukan. The inhabitants of Darrang had to pay taxes in kind and the king paid an annual tribute to the supreme government. Meanwhile Suryyanarayan who escaped from prison arrived at Darrang and was stunned to find the miserable plight of the people of Darrang. He recalled the army of six thousand *mul* which had been transferred to Gauhati ; but he was quickly subdued.

Adityanarayan and Modnarayan : Indranarayan died in 1725 A.D. and was succeeded by his son Adityanarayan. Only the area now covered by Mangaldai subdivision, bounded on the north by the Gohain Kamala Ali formed the kingdom of Adityanarayan, the rest having been annexed to the Ahom territory. In 1728, his younger brother Modnarayan established himself as the ruler of two thirds of the kingdom and proclaimed himself to be *Barha* (senior) *Raja* and made Adityanarayan the *Deka* (junior) *Raja* of Darrang. From this time the rulers of Darrang, shorn of all their powers, were kings only in name.

The dual monarchy : The *Deka-Rajaship* of Adityanarayan was continued after him by Dhvajnarayan, Durlabhnarayan and Hangsanarayan II, while the *Burha Rajaship* was enjoyed consecutively

by Dhirnarayan, Mahatnarayan, Kirtinarayan and Hangsanarayan I. Thus the dual monarchy which came into being in Darrang in 1728 continued till the days of two *Rajas* both named Hangsanarayan in the early ninties of the eighteenth century. The notable event of this period is banishment of Dhvajnarayan on some flimsy ground by the Barphukan,

Darrang under the Ahoms : It has been mentioned earlier that the Ahom king Suhungmung *alias* Dihingiya Raja (1497-1539 A.D.) occupied the territories of the *Bara-Bhuyans*, on the north bank of the Brahmaputra in 1505 A.D. The Bhuyans suffered such a crushing defeat in the hands of the Ahom king that they lost all hope of rising in revolt against the Ahoms.⁵³ The western boundary of the Ahom kingdom on the north of the Brahmaputra extended up to the *Mara-Dhansiri* river, during the reign of the Ahom king Suhungmung. The Ahoms stationed one garrison at Rowta-Temoni in Darrang district to prevent invasion.⁵⁴ The Ahoms thus became the supreme power in the eastern part of Darrang, although the Bhuyans still had a few semi-independent principalities in Darrang. In 1523 A.D, the Ahom king also finally defeated the Chutiyas whose kingdom extended from the east of the territories of the Bhuyans upto Sadiya. A large number of Chutiya families were deported to a place east of the Bhareli river in Darrang district. This place is known as Chutia or Sootea till this day. Early in 1527 A.D. the Chutiyas revolted, but they were soon reduced to submission.

The Ahom territory on both the banks of the Brahmaputra was soon exposed to the Koch and the Muslim invasions. During the reign of Suhungmung the Muslims invaded the Ahom territory thrice and many decisive battles were fought in Darrang. The first Muhammadan invasion was led by the great Vazir in 1527 A.D. The Ahom army defeated the invaders and chased them as far as the Burai river in Darrang district. Forty horses and twenty to forty cannons were captured from the Muhammadans by the victorious army. On hearing of the victory the Ahom king Suhungmung came to Sala, and constructed a fort at the mouth of the Burai river. He sent filibustering expeditions up the river Bhareli in Darrang district and the Kalang in Nowgong district.

The second Muhammadan expedition took place in 1531 A.D. when the invaders were defeated by the Ahoms at Temani. The latter

53. M.Neog; *Sankardev and His Times*, P.60.

54. L. Devi; *Ahom-Tribal Relations*, P. 169.

stationed garrisons at Sala, on the bank of the Bhareli and at Singri. The Muhammadans made one attempt to occupy the Ahom fort at Singri, but were beaten back.

However, the Ahom fort at Singri fell to the Muhammadans in 1532 A.D. when a commander named Turbak invaded the Ahom territory with thirty elephants, 1,000 horses, a large army and a large park of artillery. The war between the two powers continued for some months. Although the Muhammadans gained initial success, the Ahoms earned a great victory over them in the naval engagement near *Duimunisila*. The final battle was fought on the Bhareli river in Darrang district. The Muhammadans were defeated and their commander was killed. The Ahoms chased the fugitives as far as the Karatoya river in the west.

Suhunmung was succeeded by Suklenmung (1539-1552 A. D.) who got his father stabbed by a Kachari servant named Ratiman. The great Koch king Naranarayan was his contemporary. In 1546 A.D. the Koch force invaded the Ahom territory on the north of the Brahmaputra. Entire Darrang upto the river Dikrai in the east came under the Koch rule. The Ahom army was put to flight in the engagements at Sala and on the bank of the Dikrai river. Undaunted by these failures, the Ahoms collected reinforcements on the bank of the river Pichala in Lakhimpur district. The Koches were worsted and were forced to make a disorderly retreat. Suklenmung regained the lost territory in Darrang as a result of this great victory. He was succeeded by Sukhampha (1552-1603 A.D.)

Chilarai, the great Koch general avenged this defeat in 1563 A.D. when he inflicted an overwhelming defeat on the Ahoms in a naval engagement near the Dikhau. The Ahom king and his nobles fled to Namrup and the Koches occupied the Ahom capital. Thus the Ahom territory again passed into the hands of the Koches. Under the terms of the treaty that was concluded the Ahoms ceded the entire territory north of the Brahmaputra to the Koches, besides paying the war indemnities, sixty elephants and other valuable articles as tribute. Chilarai returned with Ahom hostages to Koch Behar leaving a garrison at Narayanpur in Lakhimpur district to the east of Darrang.

Darrang, however, did not remain under the Koch rule for long. The Ahoms made vigorous attempts to recover their lost territories. They recovered Narayanpur and Sala from the Koches. In 1564 A.D. the Ahom hostages were set free by the Koch king Naranarayan, possibly to gain friendship of the Ahom king.

Sukhampha died in 1603 A. D. when Susengpha who assumed the name Pratap Sinha ascended the Ahom throne. He decided to bring this part of the country under the direct administration of the Ahoms. The post of Salal Gohain was created and the officer was put in charge of the administration of the areas which now form the eastern part of Tezpur sub-division and the extreme western part of Lakhimpur district. Pratap Sinha also installed Balinarayan as the protectorate king of Darrang. The history of Darrang after Balinarayan centres mainly round the Ahom kings who began to strengthen their hold upon the Darrang Rajas. The important events that took place in the territory of the Koch kings of Darrang have been narrated in the preceding pages. The eastern part of Darrang which was directly governed by the Ahoms shared the fluctuating fortunes of the Ahom kings. In 1623 A. D. Pratap Sinha subdued the Bhuyan chiefs who occupied the tract between the Bhareli and the Subansiri as they discontinued payment of tribute from the time of Koch invasion under Sukladhvaj.

Mir Jumla's Invasion of Assam : On the 4th January, 1662, Mir Jumla, the Mughal governor of Bengal made an attack on Assam. He easily captured the fort at Jogighopa, followed by Srighat and Pandu. On the 4th February 1662, he took Gauhati. The Ahoms, who were at Kajali, fled to Samdhara, at the mouth of the Bhareli river. According to Muhammadan chronicles Darrang Raja came and made his submission to Mir Jumla. However, the identity of the *Raja* is not established. The name of the *Raja* mentioned by the Muslim chroniclers as Makardhvaj, whereas the Darrang Raja at that time was Suryanarayan. As the enemy advanced towards the capital, the Ahom king Jayadvaj Sinha fled away and the Mughal army took Garhgaon on the 17th March 1662. Later, both the sides concluded a peace treaty. On the 9th January 1663, Mir jumla started his return journey. Soon afterwards, the Ahom king Jayadvaj Sinha died in November 1663 A.D. He was succeeded by Chakradhvaj Sinha (1663-1669 A. D.). The Koch Raja of Darrang who sided with Mir Jumla, came and paid obeisance to the new Ahom king, and thus restored the old friendly relationship.⁵⁵

During the reign of Chakradhvaj Sinha in 1667 A.D. the Ahoms captured Gauhati from the Muhammadans and extended their territory to the Manas river. On learning this Aurangzeb sent a big army against the Ahoms under the command of Ram Singh accompanied by

55. E.A. Gait, *A History of Assam, Calcutta, 1967*, PP. 132-137, 142, 155.

Rashid Khan, the former *thanadar* of Gauhati. The invaders reached Rangamati in Feb. 1669 A. D. and advanced without resistance as far as Tezpur near which the first two battles of the campaign were fought. After several engagements between the two armies with varying fortunes, the Ahoms gained a decisive victory over the Mughals in the naval encounter at Saraighat in 1671 A. D. during the reign of Udayaditya (1669-1673 A.D.). The Mughals retreated to Rangamati. In 1679 A.D. Gauhati was retaken by the Muhammadans only to be captured by the Ahoms during the reign of Gadadhar Sinha (1681-1695 A. D.) and from then onwards Goalpara remained the frontier outpost of the Muhammadan dominions. The zenith of Ahom power was reached during the reign of Rudra Sinha (1695-1714 A. D.). It was during his time that successful wars were waged against the *Rajas* of Cachar and Jaintia and they were deported and detained in camps near Vishwanath. Several temples including Haleswar, Phulbari, Jogeswar, Dhandi, Nandikeswar and Saubhagya Madhab temples in Darrang are attributed to him. "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".⁵⁶ But his son Siva Sinha (1714-1744 A.D.) was a weak prince much under the influence of his wives. The construction of an embankment named Daflagarh along the foot of the hills inhabited by the Daflas kept this turbulent tribe in check after the successful expedition against them in 1717 A. D. Both he and his two successors Pramatta Sinha (1744-1751 A.D.) and Rajeswar Sinha (1751-1769 A. D.) erected numerous temples including Rudrapad, Basudeb, Bauramadhab, Purbasankar and Uma temples in Darrang district. During the reign of Rajeswar Sinha the Daflas committed in 1758 several raids near Ghiladhari. To prevent them from entering the plains Rajeswar Sinha constructed a blockade along the frontier. This had the desired effect and ultimately led to an agreement between Rajeswar Sinha and the Daflas whereby they were permitted to levy yearly from each family in the *Duars*; a *pura* of paddy and three hundred and twenty cowries, on condition of their refraining from future acts of aggression. This is known as the *posa* system. The reign of his successor Lakshmi Sinha (1769-1780 A. D.) was marked by the outbreak of the first Moamaria rebellion. Although the rebels gained initial success including capture of Lakshmi Sinha, they were ultimately crushed and Lakshmi Sinha was formally installed on the throne.

56. S.K. Chatterjee, *The Place of Assam in the History and Civilisation of India, Gauhati, 1970*, p.51.

Discontent In Darrang : The Ahom king Gaurinath Sinha ascended the throne in 1780 A.D. and his reign continued till 1794 A.D. In 1787 A.D. Darrang was conjointly ruled by two *Rajas*; both of them were named Hangsanarayan. Darrang seethed in discontent for various reasons. As already described the territory of Darrang Raja was reduced, and 6,000 *paiks* were transferred by the supreme government and were placed under the disposal of the Barphukan at Gauhati. The inhabitants of Darrang grudged the higher rates of revenue imposed following the survey carried out under the orders of the Ahom king, by an Ahom officer named Dhaniram in 1707 A.D. The rates of assessment were further raised in subsequent surveys. The popular discontent found expression in angry demonstrations at the Ahom capital. About 4,000 inhabitants of Darrang marched to the Ahom capital Rangpur to set forth their grievances before the Barbarua. They defied the ban on their entry into the Ahom capital and appeared before the palace gate. A skirmish ensued and the king ultimately suspended the settlement of Darrang in deference to the wishes of his subjects. The people of Darrang who thus earned an important concession from the Ahom monarch did not enjoy a long spell of peace and tranquillity. Following the disturbances in Upper Assam many refugees came and took shelter in Darrang. They lived by plundering and there was no authority to check them.

Following the Moamoria uprising king Gaurinath Sinha fled from his capital Rangpur to Gauhati and from there ordered the two *Rajas* of Darrang Hangsanarayan I and Hangsanarayan II to march with their forces against the rebels. They accordingly proceeded to Ghiladhari and sent detachments from there against the rebels. The Moamarias informed the two rulers about their reluctance to take arms against the descendants of Naranarayan and offered half of Assam to them. While the two rulers were vacillating, king Gaurinath Sinha issued fresh orders to proceed. Before they could execute the orders of Gaurinath Sinha, a momentous decision taken by the assembly of the heads of villages of Darrang changed the course of events. The assembly recalled 6,000 *paiks* of Darrang serving at Gauhati and took an oath not to render assistance in any form to the Ahom king. It was decided that the slightest deviation from this, would entail excommunication and expulsion from Darrang and even death if the political turncoat attempted to re-enter. The two princes, in deference to the will of the people decided to leave the field; but was ordered by the Salal Gohain, the Ahom governor of Darrang to

stay. The princes refused to comply with his orders, whereupon the Gohain imprisoned some of their men. The two princes retaliated by putting some of the Gohain's men into the prison. The Gohain ultimately released the prisoners and the princes reciprocated. The six thousand *paiks* returned to Darrang in response to the call of the village elders. Gaurinath Sinha sent an emissary to enquire about the condition of Darrang. The emissary reported to the king that the princes of Darrang were not well disposed to the Ahom king. Hara-datta Bujarbarua, a Chaudhuri of Kamrup, persuaded the two princes of Darrang to rise in revolt against the Ahom king. The Ahoms, however, quickly subdued the uprising, imprisoned *Deka-Raja* Hangsanarayan II and produced him before the Ahom king at Gauhati. The king ordered confiscation of the property of the prince and sentenced him to death. The prince was impaled on a stake and his body was floated in a raft down the river Brahmaputra. Krishnanarayan, son of Hangsanarayan II was deprived from the *Deka-Rajaship* to which Bishnunarayan was appointed. All these took place in February, 1790.

Rebellion of Krishnanarayan : Krishnanarayan, the son of Hangsanarayan II was eager to avenge the murder of his father and his own deprivation. Several aged and experienced leaders, including Haradatta Chaudhury of Jikiri of Kamrup took his side and persuaded him to take some bold action. Daniel Raush, a British merchant who had considerable business in Goalpara offered his assistance to Krishnanarayan when his agents approached the merchant for help. Raush sent sepoys to Darrang and brought Krishnanaraya to Goalpara wherefrom he conducted the prince to Koch-Bihar. *Maharaja* Harendranarayan of Koch-Bihar offered his assistance to Krishnanarayan.

The Darrang prince sought for British aid through Douglas, the Commissioner of Koch-Bihar, and he offered to pay a tribute of 5,001 *Rajmohrai* rupees to the East India Company and to hold the principality as their vassal. When the Supreme Board decided not to interfere with the affairs of Darrang, the prince himself collected a force of Hindusthanis and Bengalis in Rangpur and Koch-Bihar. These were popularly known as *Brakandazes*, most of whom were vagabonds or dacoits having no ostensible means of livelihood. The army thus raised also included Sikhs, Rajputs, some troops disbanded by the *Zamindars*, some ascetics and even *Fakirs*. In December 1791, Krishnanarayan, entered Assam with the *Barkandazes*

force consisting of 3,000 men including 60 musketeers. The king of Bhutan also assisted him with some troops. With the help of this army Krishnanarayan conquered his lost territory of Darrang and annexed a part of Kamrup, including North Gauhati.

The atrocities committed by the *Barkandazes* compelled many people to seek for the help of the East India Company. King Gaurinath Sinha also appealed to them for help. All the attempts of Daniel Raush to induce Krishnanarayan, on behalf of the Ahom king to desist from hostilities ended in failure. Lord Cornwallis, the Governor General entertained the view that peace should be restored in those areas where the mercenaries from the British territory caused trouble. Thus, in response to the appeal of Gaurinath Sinha, the Company sent Captain Welsh to the succour of the Ahom king, in September 1792. While Captain Welsh was advancing by the Brahmaputra, Gauhati was raided by one Bairagi and his men. King Gaurinath Sinha escaped from Gauhati at midnight by the Brahmaputra, Captain Welsh brought him back to Gauhati, and imprisoned Bairagi with his men.

Captain Welsh opened negotiations with Krishnanarayan and the leaders of his mercenaries; but their response was not encouraging. On the 6th December 1792, Captain Welsh crossed the river Brahmaputra and inflicted a crushing defeat on the troops of Krishnanarayan who thereafter rallied his men near the estuary of the Barnadi. A detachment of British troops pursued the *Barkandazes* and defeated them at Khatikuchi. In May 1793 Krishnanarayan surrendered at Gauhati with four hundred *Barkandazes*. Captain Welsh found that only 270 of these troops were in the regular pay-roll of Krishnanarayan. These were sent to Rangpur where they were disarmed and disbanded after paying their dues. Prince Krishnanarayan took oath to *Swargadeo* Gaurinath Sinha and was formally installed as *Raja* of Darrang. He refunded the entire amount paid to his disbanded troops and agreed to pay an annual tribute of fifty eight thousand rupees in lieu of feudal obligation to supply soldiers and labourers. Under the terms of the agreement his position was that of a landlord and not of a ruling chief. The Barphukan remained in charge of the political and administrative affairs. On conclusion of the formalities of the agreement Krishnanarayan went to Mangaldai and took formal possession of his estate.

The Moamaria Rebellion : While the western part of the present Darrang district witnessed the tide of fortunes of the Koch

kings of Darrang during the reign of Gaurinath Sinha, the Moamaria rebellion that swept Upper Assam also broke out in the eastern part of the district, in the same period. Early in 1786 the Moamarias on the north bank of the Brahmaputra rose in revolt and defeated the royalist force that was despatched to quell the uprising. The Moamarias crossed the Brahmaputra and conquered Rangpur, the capital of the Ahom king. A group of Moamarias proclaimed independence, under Bairagi Raja at Vishwanath in Darrang.

Helimeli Salal Gohain was in charge of the tract comprising the eastern part of Tezpur subdivision. He tried his utmost to suppress the rebels and to restore peace in the area. We have already referred to the infructuous attempts made by the Koch rulers Hangsanarayan I and Hangsanarayan II to subdue the Moamarias, under the orders of Gaurinath Sinha. The Gohain made a treaty with the Daflas on payment of Rs. 28,000 and with their assistance attacked the Moamaria ruling chief Bairagi Raja at Vishwanath. He was killed and his ears and right arm were sent to king Gaurinath Sinha. Helimeli Salal Gohain was one of those few officers whose loyalty to the Ahom king never failed even during the most miserable part of the latter's life.

Affairs of Darrang from 1795 till the British occupation : On the death of Gaurinath Sinha, Kamaleswar Sinha, succeeded to the Ahom throne in 1795 A.D. In the year of his accession there was a series of insurrections in several parts of the Ahom territory. The Daflas and the Moamarias rose in rebellion in the north bank of the Brahmaputra and crossed the mighty river at Silghat, south of Bhomoraguri in Darrang district. In the encounter with the Ahom army many of the rebels were killed and others were drowned while trying to cross the river. Sometime later Buragohain Purnananda crossed the Brahmaputra near the present town of Tezpur and restored peace in the entire tract.

During the reign of Kamaleswar Sinha, Krishnanarayan, the Darrang Raja was superseded by his relative Samudranarayan, who was called upon to recover the fugitives, to settle them in their old villages and to prevent the onslaughts of the Bhutias.

The darkest period of the history of Assam is from 1818 to 1824 A. D. when the Burmese invaded Assam and let loose a reign of terror. In 1810 A. D. the Ahom king Kamaleswar Sinha was succeeded by his brother Chandra Kanta Sinha. Chandra Kanta was nominated by the Buragohain or Prime Minister Purnananda. As he was still in his teens, Chandra Kanta could not take up the reins of

administration in his hands and the Buragohain became the defacto ruler. The Ahom Governor of Kamrup Badan Chandra Barphukan whose tyranny and oppressoin had no parallel in the history of Assam soon became the anathema to Buragohain who solely devoted himself in restoring peace and order in the country that was laid bare by the waves of Moamaria insurrections. Being aware of the preparations for his arrest Badan Barphukan fled away 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 A.D. and reinstated the Barphukan the Buragohain having died at this critical hour. Shortly after withdrawal of the Burmese troops 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 A. D. 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 martial 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 A. D. 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, burnt, and the people were compelled to seek shelter in the jungle. Even women, children and the old had to suffer immensely. The misery of the people knew no bounds. After conquering Assam the Burmese intruded upon British territory. It immediately led to British intervention. War was declared by the Company in 1824 A. D. against the Burmese and a force was sent up the Brahmaputra valley which occupied Rangpur in January 1825, and compelled the Burmese to retire to their own territories. In the following year, by the treaty of Yandabo, February 24, 1826, the king of Ava renounced all claims on Assam and her dependencies. It led to the eventual annexation of Assam to the dominions of the East India Company.

(e) The Modern period :

The British rule : The history of the district under the British

rule was uneventful but for implementation of some very significant steps effecting the administration of the areas from which the hill tribes collected *posa* and the areas which were partly under their control.

On the north-west frontier of Darrang lie two *duars*, Khaling and Buriguma for the possession of which the Ahoms and their protectorate kings of Darrang came into conflict with the Bhutias. The Ahoms held these *duars* until the reign of Gaurinath Sinha during whose time they came under dual control. At the time of the British occupation this dual control was prevailing and the British Government inherited this system. Accordingly they occupied the two *duars* from July to November and received rent for this tract. This arrangement was found unsatisfactory as the Bhutias oppressed the villagers and the *duars* became infested with criminals who retired to the hills during the four months of British occupation. In 1841 these two *duars* along with five in North Kamrup were definitely annexed and compensation of Rs. 10,000 per annum was paid to the Bhutias. The sum was subsequently merged in one of Rs. 25,000 which was sanctioned after the Bhutan war of 1864 when the *duars* north of Goalpara and Koch Behar were also annexed. The Kariapara *duar* which lies east of the Bhutan *duars* at the foot-hills of the Himalayan range was annexed in 1844 A.D. and the local officials known as Gelengs agreed to accept Rs. 5,000 per annum as perpetual quit rent. The Charduar Bhutias occupied an area between the Rowta river and the Gabharu river, further to the east of Kariapara *duar* and gave little trouble to the rulers of Assam. In 1826 A.D. compensation to be paid to them was fixed at Rs. 2,526. The amount was reduced to Rs. 1,740 in 1839. Similarly the Thebengia Bhutias were given compensation of Rs. 146 per annum.

The Akas who live between the Bhareli river in the east and the Bhutias on the west are a small war-like tribe divided into two sections, the Kapaschors and the Hazarikhawas. During the time of the Ahoms the Akas harried the inhabitants of the plains. Of the two sections, the Kapaschors had no right to *posa*, but the Hazarikhawas were permitted by the Ahoms to collect from each family living in the specified area "one portion of a female dress, one bundle of cotton thread and one cotton handkerchief".⁵⁷ For many years the chief of the Kapaschor tribe, Tagi Raja, violated the boundaries, and in 1829, A. D. he was captured and lodged in the Gauhati

jail. In 1832 A. D., he was released, but immediately resumed his attacks, and in 1835 A.D., massacred all the inhabitants of the police outpost and British village of Balipara. Six years later he surrendered, and an agreement was made by which both sections of the tribe received a yearly allowance, subsequently increased to Rs. 668, in consideration of good conduct. In 1883 A.D. Medhi, the Kapaschor Chief, detained a mauzadar who had visited his village, while his brother carried off from Balipara a clerk and a ranger in the employ of the Forest Department. A punitive expedition was despatched which occupied their territory and recovered the captives, with the exception of the mauzadar who had already died. Since that date they had given little trouble, but in 1900 A.D., a party of armed Akas forcibly entered the shop of a trader at Balipara, to exact the amount which they alleged was due to them for rubber taken from their hills. A fine was imposed on the tribe, but, in order to minimize the chances of friction, it was decided to discontinue the practice under which labourers had been sent into the hills to tap rubber, and to leave the hillmen to bring down this product themselves.

The Dafla country lies between the Bhareli river and the Sumdiri, north of Lakhimpur. They frequently committed raids on the people of the plains and in 1615 A.D. Ahom king Pratap Sinha sent an unsuccessful expedition to their hills. The Daflas continued to be troublesome and the Ahom kings sent several expeditions against them. It has already been mentioned that during the reign of Rajeswar Sinha (1751-1769 A.D.) an agreement was reached whereby the Daflas were permitted to collect annually from each family in the *duars*, a *pura* of paddy and three hundred and twenty *Cowries*, on condition of their refraining from future acts of aggression. But this agreement was violated by the Daflas who during the reign of Lakshmi Sinha committed raids in the plains even across the Brahmaputra. It is, therefore, natural that the Daflas resisted the efforts of the British Government to subjugate them. They committed frequent raids prior to 1852 A.D. when their claims to collect their dues from the submontane villages were commuted for a money payment of Rs.

The British Government's relations with the Daflas had been tinted with anxiety till 1900 A.D. As early as in 1835 A.D. the British Government despatched a small expedition to the Dafla Hills to recover the captives carried by the Daflas in a raid from Balipara. In 1870 A.D. the Hill Daflas raided some villages of Nauduar of Darrang district.

57. E. A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1967, P. 364.

There were further Dafla raids in Amtola village near Gohpur in 1872-73 A.D. The Government at first tried to put up a blockade but as it proved ineffectual, a military expedition was sent in 1874-75 A.D. The troops succeeded in recovering the captives, and in punishing the offenders. A considerable number of Tagin Daflas soon afterwards settled in the plains of Darrang and Lakhimpur.⁵⁸

Immediately after the British annexation of Assam the territory from the Barnadi in the west to Vishwanath in the east of the present Darrang district was brought under their administration. It was tagged with Lower Assam and administered from Gauhati till 1833 when it was separated and erected into a district known as Darrang with headquarters at Mangaldai. In 1835 the headquarters of the district was removed from Mangaldai to Tezpur. This town was centrally situated and afforded an excellent opportunity to control the Daflas who inhabited the hills to the north of this town. We find in the old District Gazetteer an interesting account of the condition of Tezpur and Darrang district during the early part of the British administration.

"For many years the station was considered most unhealthy, and in the eleven years between 1842 and 1853 no less than five European officers died of diseases contracted while they were resident at Tezpur. This unhealthiness is unfortunately not confined to the headquarters town, but seems to be a characteristic of the district as a whole. The development of Darrang has been hampered by the stagnation of the population. In 1853, Mr. Mills stated that the people had been supposed to be decreasing in numbers during the four preceding years; and in the thirty years between 1842 and 1872 the total censused increase was only 27 per cent, a large part of which was, doubtless, due to the superior accuracy of the later enumeration. In the twenty years ending in 1901 the indigenous population decreased considerably in numbers, and had it not been for the existence of a flourishing tea industry, the district would still have been in a very undeveloped state. The administration of Darrang does not seem to have been hampered by the want of officers. In 1841, a junior assistant, a sub-assistant, a sadr amin and two munsifs were stationed in the district, and a similar number of officers were employed on judicial work in 1853. In those days there was little of hurry or bustle in Assam, and the administration of justice, if sure was distinctly slow. Matters seem to have been particularly bad in the court of

the joint magistrate, but that officer, when called on for an explanation protested with some show of indignation that, the detention of witnesses seldom exceeded eight days. As a matter of fact, it appears from the returns that, in 1852, no less than 36 unfortunate persons were detained from 16 to 22 days before they could get their evidence recorded"⁵⁹

During the period from 1900 to 1947, the decennial censuses revealed high rate of growth of population particularly during the thirties and the forties. The settlement operation was completed twice in the district once in 1905-09 and then in 1927-33. The district participated in the Legislative Council election since 1923, and in the Legislative Assembly election in 1937. The last election to the Legislative Assembly during the British rule was held in 1946 and the voters of the district evinced keen interest in electing the members of the national government. The economy of the district was seriously effected by the two World Wars and the great depression of the thirties.

(f) The freedom Movement :

We have no definite information about the alignment of the people of this district in the earlier struggles for liberation waged by the princely and upper class people in Upper Assam from 1828 to 1857. The district played a glorious role in the freedom movement of the country since the middle of the nineteenth century. Popular discontent against the avowed policy of repression and exploitation pursued by the foreign rulers soon expressed itself in various forms. The gradual enhancement of the land revenue at every new assessment and imposition of new taxes stretched their sullenness to the point of outburst in the form of agrarian outbreaks.

The first *Rajmel* or People's Assembly was held at Patharughat in the Mangaldai subdivision in 1868, which was followed by the epoch making second *Rajmel* of 1894, known as the *Patharughatar Ran*. In 1868, the people of Patharughat *gheraoed* the Deputy Commissioner, the Subdivisional officer, the Superintendent of Police in the local rest house but no untoward incident took place. The great resentment of the people culminated in the *Rajmel* of January, 1894 after reassessment of the Assam valley. The people having already declined to pay the enhanced rates of revenue, the Deputy Commissioner proceeded to Patharughat Inspection Bungalow with twelve military police and nineteen armed police to control the situation. As already

58. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol. V., Darrang, Allahabad, 1905 PP. 58-59 and Birendra Chandra Chakravorty, *British Relations with the Hill Tribes of Assam since 1858*, Calcutta, 1964, P. 142.

59. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol. V., Darrang, Allahabad, 1905, PP. 59-60.

organised, the people assembled in large numbers in the premises of the Inspection Bungalow to express their resentment but the people were forcibly dispersed by the police. This was followed by skirmishes between the armed police and the angry crowd which pelted sticks and clods. Finally the police resorted to firing killing and wounding a number of people. According to the official version fifteen men were killed and thirtyseven wounded in this firing.⁶⁰

The incidence of mortality and of the wounded in this riot was much higher according to the popular version. It is said that 140 persons lost their lives and 150 were wounded.⁶¹ This *Patharughatar Ran* is the landmark in the freedom movement in this district. It is still remembered as the *Doli Ran* described in the popular ballad, known as *Doli Puran*.

With the spread of the western education during the last part of the nineteenth century a new awakening surcharged the patriots of the land. A few years before the birth of the Indian National Congress in Bombay in 1885, the Tezpur *Ryot Sabha* was formed by a group of enlightened people primarily to protest against the enhancement of land revenue and to ventilate other public grievances. It was a well-organised body compared to the earlier *Rajmels* and adopted a new line of action in tune with the trend of the nationalist movement in other parts of India. The Tezpur *Ryot Sabha* sent Kalikrishna Barkakati as its delegate to the National Congress in 1885 and continued to send delegates to the subsequent sessions. It also undertook other public works and utilised its funds for the construction of the Tezpur Town Hall in 1887.⁶²

The Tezpur *Ryot Sabha* was associated with the Assam Association formed in 1903. The Assam Association closely pursued the political developments of the time. The Association adopted the resolution on Non-Co-operation Movement for achievement of *Swaraj* at its special session held at Gauhati on the 11th October, 1920. This was in conformity with the resolution of the All India National Congress session at Nagpur in 1920. The meeting further confirmed its decision at the plenary session held at Tezpur in December, 1920. The Assam Association merged with the Assam Provincial Congress.

60. Ibid, PP. 60-61.

61. Dinesh Sarmah. *Patharughatar Ran*, Mangaldai, 1957, P. 14.

62. K. N. Dutt ; *Landmarks of the Freedom Struggle in Assam*, P. 36, and Report from Shri Omeo Kumar Das, Ex-minister of Assam.

The leaders of Darrang also plunged headlong into the struggle for liberation of India under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.⁶³

In June, 1921, the Tezpur District Congress Committee was formed under the presidentship of Chandra Nath Sarma, a student leader. The All Assam Student's Conference was formed in 1916 and functioned in this district under the leadership of Chandra Nath Sarma, Omeo Kumar Das and Hem Chandra Baruah, who later assumed the leadership of the Assam Congress. They led the Congress organisation of the district throughout the period. The people responded vigorously to the clarion call of Mahatma Gandhi who visited Tezpur in August, 1921 and recorded his impressions of the visit in the columns of *Young India* in the article "From the bank of the Brahmaputra". While the movement gained momentum leaders courted arrest and were thrown behind prison bars.

Next came the Civil Disobedience Movement, 1930-32 involving defiance of the repressive laws and ordinances and boycott of British goods. Cunningham, the Director of Public Instructions in Assam introduced a circular with a view to suppressing student's participation in political movement. According to the circular guardians of the students had to give an undertaking about the future good conduct of their wards while they remained as students. Students as well as guardians opposed this measure. Under the leadership of Hem chandra Barua, the Assam Congress decided to defy the Cunningham circular. Students played a predominant role in the movement. Hundreds of students left their educational institutions. The Government adopted repressive measures to suppress the movement. As an alternative many nationalist educational institutions were set up in Assam.

The Congress Sevalal played an active part in the second phase of the Civil Disobedience Movement during 1932-1934. Mahatma Gandhi revisited Tezpur in April, 1934 in connection with the removal of untouchability movement and expressed his satisfaction at the performance of the people of the district.

The final phase of the freedom struggle was marked by the historic Quit India Movement. The abrupt arrest of congress leaders like Gandhi, Nehru, Azad and others-including the Provincial leaders on the 9th August, 1942, caused a spontaneous popular reaction, throughout the country against the British Government. Everywhere, the people stood up in a massive protest against the Government's

63. Ibid, P.36.

action. Gandhi's message of "Do or Die" gave great inspiration to the multitudes to take part in the movement. Devoid of recognised Congress leaders at all levels, the movement at the hands of youths and a few Congress Socialists soon took a violent turn. Like other places of Assam, Darrang played an important role in the Quit India Movement. Places like Tezpur, Chutia, Behali, Gohpur, Dhekiajuli, Jamuguri etc., were prominent centres of the movement. As the whole Congress organisation with its branches and allied associations were declared illegal and unlawful by the Government a few Congress leaders like Jyotiprasad Agarwala, Gahon Chandra Goswami went underground and carried out sabotage activities at various places. Their main intention was to interrupt the war supplies and to dislocate the administration. On the other hand, leaders like Omeo Kumar Das refused to follow the extremist line. The whole Congress movement was directed by Hem Chandra Barua from his sick-bed at Gauhati. In Darrang, the *Santi Sena* organisation was formed and was entrusted to keep peace and order in the rural areas. The underground leadership formed the *Mrityu Bahini* (Death Squad) for sabotage activities. Suddenly the village Panchayats became more active in the rural areas and in some places, a few of them even tried to run parallel government. Holding of big meetings and processions, attempts to unfurl the Congress flag on Police Stations, Court buildings and other government buildings were the common features. At various places, government properties were damaged and burnt. Even attempts were made by the people to capture the Police Stations at Chutia, Gohpur and Dhekiajuli.

To suppress the movement, the police resorted to severe form of violence, never heard of before. Firing was resorted to on many occasions, large scale physical assaults on Congress workers including women and children. Bayonet injuries, mass arrest, imposition of collective fines, confiscation of properties etc., might be cited as instances of official violence.

The Gohpur Firing : On the 20th September, 1942, a big procession of unarmed people with Congress flags in their hands, led by Kanaklata Barua—a girl of fourteen years of age of Barangabari village entered the Gohpur Police Station and faced a battery of armed Police. As soon as Kanaklata unfurled the Congress flag, she and her helper Mukunda Kakati were shot down by the armed police, and many suffered bullet and bayonet injuries. K. N. Dutt remarks, "The way Kanaklata braved the police bullet to hoist the National

Flag on the Gohpur Police Station makes an immortal story of Martyrdom, for the cause of Freedom."⁶⁴

The Dhekiajuli Firing : On the same day, another firing took place in front of Dhekiajuli Police Station, when a big procession of unarmed people tried to enter it and hoist the Congress flag. This firing caused the death of eleven people. Among them there were three teen aged girls—Tilswari, Numali and Khahuli. Many victims of this indiscriminate firing became invalid for life.

It will not be inappropriate to mention here that the police firing was not justified at Dhekiajuli and Gohpur. "The judgement in the Dhekiajuli firing case contained severe strictures on the police which even the High Court saw no grounds to relax."⁶⁵

The stormy days of the Quit India Movement passed over. The message of the movement failed to convince the British Government about the necessity of leaving the shores of India soon. By the middle of 1945, Gandhi and some other leading Congressmen were released. In June, 1945, the British Government through Lord Wavell, the Viceroy made an abortive attempt at Simla to reach an accord with the Congress and the Muslim League. In the beginning of 1946, general elections were held throughout the country. The Congress in Assam captured fifty seats out of 108 and with the help of the Independents formed the second Congress Ministry on 10th February, 1946, under the leadership of Gopi Nath Bordoloi. Then came the Cabinet Mission to India. With a view to settling the Indian problem, the Mission introduced the Grouping System in May, 1946. The Assam Provincial Congress rose enblock to resist against Assam's inclusion in the Grouping System which would have made Assam in future a Muslim majority State. Finally, the Indian National Congress and the Muslim League rejected the Cabinet Mission's proposals and thus saved the fate of Assam.

Independence did not remain a far cry. On the 15th August, 1947, India became divided into India and Pakistan and got freedom amidst tragedy and comedy of newly born Indians and Pakistanis. A new era dawned upon the Indian Sub-continent. The district of Darrang participated along with the rest of the country in the Independence Day celebrations which marked an end to foreign domination. The martyrdom of Kanaklata and others had not been in vain, the

64. K. N. Duta, *Landmarks of The Freedom Struggle in Assam*, PP. 94-95.

65. Ibid,

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. The post-independence period has kindled new hopes and aspirations in the hearts of people, for a richer and more varied life through various measures—economic, social, cultural and political—aimed at all round betterment.

(g) Archaeology : The archaeological wealth of the district shows the rich cultural heritage of the people of this region. The remains of old temples, fortifications, images etc., make it clear that architecture reached a high degree of perfection during the early period of its history.

The temple ruins at Dah-Parvatia which are dedicated to Siva and Vishnu, are described as "one of the earliest specimens of architecture and stone carving in Assam."⁶⁶ Its door frame is "the finest and the oldest specimen of sculptural or iconoclastic art in Assam" and its carving is characteristic of the style of the early Gupta schools of sculpture. The two goddesses, Ganga and Jamuna stand with garlands in hands in artistic pose and elegant posture. The door jambs are decorated with beautiful ornamental foliage. The artist's sense of proportion, the beautiful symmetry of the figures and ornamental devices, and the excellence of execution tend to prove, that this door lintel belongs to the same period as the great schools of sculpture which existed at Pataliputra and Benares in the fifth and sixth century A. D."⁶⁷ The following is the detailed description of Dah Parvatia ruins in the words of late R. D. Banerjee :—

"Close to the modern civil station of Tezpur is the small village of Dah Parbatia which possesses the unique distinction of having within its limits the ruins of the oldest temple in Assam. The ruins consist of the remains of a brick-built temple of Siva, of the Ahom period, erected upon the ruins of a stone temple of the later Gupta period, Circa sixth century A. D. The former collapsed, during the earthquake of 1897, revealing the stone door frame of the older structure. At some subsequent date the local villagers built a crude hut on the mound, which had collapsed at the time of my visit. The mound is nearly 20' above the surrounding ground and is entirely covered with large rubber trees and small under growth. The door-frame stands in front of a large block of stone with a square cavity in its centre.....Most probably the older *linga* was fixed in this hole. The carving on the door-frame is characteristic of the style of the early Gupta schools

66. P.C. Choudhury, *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century, A.D., Gauhati*, 1959, P. 461.

67. *Ancient Treasures of Assam* : Assam State Museum, Gauhati, P. 15.

of sculpture of which so many examples have been discovered at various sites excavated by Sir John Marshall in northern India. As in the case of the Gupta Temples at Bhumra in the Nagod State, Nachna-Kuthara in the Ajaigadh State and at Deogarh in the Jhansi district, the lintel is larger in size than the door-frame extending a little on each side of the jambs. Two of the inner bands of carving on the jambs are continued as horizontal bands at the bottom of the lintel and exhibit in the centre in high relief a beautiful flying male figure holding a garland in its hands. Above these two ornamental bands is another band in higher relief containing a number of Chaitya windows so common in the Gupta temples at Bhumra and Deogarh.The artist's sense of proportion, the beautiful symmetry of the figures and ornamental devices and the excellence of execution tend to prove that this door lintel belongs to the same period as the great schools of sculpture which existed at Pataliputra and Banaras in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D.

"The temple at Parbatia is therefore not only the oldest but the finest piece of architectural work in Kamarupa. This temple must have been built by a predecessor of Bhaskarvarmana in the fifth or the sixth century A.D. During the clearance of the ruins of this temple a number of terracotta plaques, showing a seated human figure in each were discovered. According to Mr. Banerji the moulding of the torso and the general technique proves beyond doubt that these plaques cannot be later in date than the sixth century A. D. Two of these plaques reveal the existence of modified form of the *acanthus motif* in Assam in this early age. This device has been noticed in some of the Gupta temples of other parts of northern India notably at Bhumra and Nachna Kuthara. Another striking feature of this piece of work is the pose of the figures of Ganga and Jamuna which seems to be characteristically Greek, while in their anatomical correctness these figures resemble Hellenic art more than anythings else." ⁶⁸

Another important treasure of architectural remains in the district is the Bamuni Hill to the east of the present town of Tezpur. The ruins belong to a group of seven shrines and like the remains of Dah Parvatia are dedicated to different gods like Siva, Vishnu etc. The specimens of the sculptures of these ruins are ascribed to "not later than the 8th-9th century A.D."⁶⁹ A detail descriptive account of

68. K. L. Barua : *Early History of Kamarupa*, Gauhati, 1966 pp. 113-116.

69. P.C. Choudhury, *The History of the Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A. D., Gauhati*, 1959, P.462.

Bamuni hill ruins was given by late R.D. Benerjee.

The discovery of ruins in and around the present town of Tezpur which are considered to be "more extensive and varied in character",⁷⁰ came by chance in 1906 when foundations were being laid to construct some additional buildings for the Deputy commissioners office, Tezpur. While digging the foundations, excavators came across an ancient stone building. A large number of carved and sculptured stones were discovered and majority of them were transferred to the compounds of the then European officers and Tea Planters' Club for decoration. However, some of these carved and sculptured stones were brought back and arranged in Cole Park.⁷¹

According to T. Bloch, present town of Tezpur stands on large mounds and contains ruins of temples and buildings. Dalton opined that shrines were either left unfinished or demolished and on seeing some of the beautifully executed and decorated blocks of stone, he made a remark that the art had reached its culminating point.⁷² The ruins are dedicated to various gods like Suryya, Siva and possibly also to the Buddha and are ascribed to the period ranging "from at least 10th to the 12th century A.D."⁷³ The late R.D. Banerjee, wrote as follows about these ruins in the Annual Report for the Year 1924-25. :—

"On examination of the remains in the park at Tezpur and those preserved in the Planters' Association or Club at the same place I find that the carvings belong to three different periods of history and therefore must have belonged, at least, to three separate buildings. The most remarkable sculptures of the first group are two shafts of pillars at the entrance to the Planters' Club and a heavy lintel of a stone door-frame now lying in the public park. The shaft of one these pillars is sixteen sided, the upper end being ornamented with a broad band having *kirtimukhas* at the top and the lower with dentils. Over this band the shaft is round and appears to be lathe-turned like the upper parts of the Western Chalukyan columns of the Bombay Presidency. In the second pillar the upper part of the shaft is dodecagonal and near the top is divided into three raised horizontal bands two of which contain *kirtimukhas* and the

third a series of diomond-shaped rosettes. In style, both of them belong to the same period and appear to have come from one and the same building. The lintel of the stone door-frame in the public park also belongs to the same period and most probably to the same building. It appears from the nature of the carvings that the temple to which these three architectural specimens belong was erected late in the tenth century A.D. The length of the lintel is 6'10" and the breadth 1'5½".

"The second group of sculptures of Tezpur consists of specimens from a massive temple on the ruins of which the office of the Deputy Commissioner has been built. On each side of the entrance of the Planter's club at Tezpur lie the door-sill and the lintel of the principal entrance to this enormous temple. The size of the lintel enables us to determine the size of the door-frame and consequently of the principal entrance to the sanctum. The enormous lintel is 10'3" in length and 1'8" in breadth. There are three raised panels on it, one in the centre and one on each side and each of them is divided into a large niche in the centre with a smaller one on either side. The panel on the left contains a standing figure of Brahma in the central niche with an attendant on each side. The central panel is occupied by a figure of Surya with two attendants while the panel on the extreme right contains a standing figure of Siva with an attendant in each of the side niches. According to the general practice in Hindu temples, the central niche or panel of the lintel of the stone door-frame of the sanctum is generally occupied by the presiding deity of the temple. It appears certain, therefore, that this gigantic temple was dedicated to Surya or the Sun-god. The large jamb in the public park appears to belong to a much later period. It is impossible therefore to deduce the height of the door-frame correctly, but it is obvious from the length of the lintel and the sill that the height of this door-frame could not have been less than 15' ... leaving us to imagine the total height of the spire or *s'ikhara* of the original temple, which must have been considerably over 100'. The majority of the carved stones in the public park at Tezpur are taken from the plinth mouldings and string-courses of the gigantic temple, the door-frames of which have been described above. The outlines of the plinth mouldings show that the mediaeval architects of Assam employed the same motifs and figures as those in other provinces of northern India. Another slab bears on it a conventional representation of the Chaitya-window pattern, so common in the temples of Central India, especially those in the Rewa State and at Khajuraho. The interior of the sunken panels is entirely covered with geometrical patterns with a half rosette

70. K. L. Barua : *Early History of Kamarupa*, Gauhati, 1966, p. 108.

71. Ibid, P. 108.

72. P.C. Choudhury, *History of the Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.* Gauhati, 1959 p.463.

73. Ibid, p.463-64.

in the centre. The second group of sculptures at Tezpur belongs to a temple erected in the twelfth century A.D. if not later."⁷⁴

Besides these, "extensive ruins of temples at Singri belong to Buddhist, *Siva* and *Durga* shrines of about the 9th century A.D. and some of the specimens bear close resemblance to those at Deopani and Numaligarh".⁷⁵ Similar ruins of temples exist at Vishwanath, Behali, Gamiri, Charduar and the neighbouring places.⁷⁶

Among the other remains which have been discovered in the district are the ancient relics of pottery, terra cotta figures, fortifications and embankments. "The best specimens from the historical period are found in Dah Parbatia. The terra cotta plaques from the area show a close similarity with the art of Bengal. They resemble those from Birhat, Raypur and Paharpur in the Rajshahi district. The best one shows a human figure in each case. "The moulding of the torso and the general technique proves beyond doubt that these plaques are contemporay with, if not older than those discovered at Paharpur and cannot be later than the sixth century A.D. One fragment shows that human figures reveal the existence of a modified form of acanthus motif in this distant corner of Assam. This device has been noticed in the Gupta temples at Bhumara, Nachnakuthara and Deogarh." Dalton noticed from the ruins at Tezpur some urns of black pottery ornamented with flowers."⁷⁷

Remains of ancient fortifications have also been found at Tezpur. "The fortress of *Agni parvata* in Tezpur, attributed to Bana, throws "a side light on the method of architecture or the skill of the masons in those far away days of antiquity".⁷⁸ Ruins of a few tanks have also been discovered in and around Tezpur, of which one at Tezpur is attributed to Kumbhanda, minister of Bana. Another tank, Hajara *pukhuri* paved with stones is ascribed to King Harjjara of the 9th century A.D. and to the north west of it there is another tank known as Balipukhuri. A number of tanks and earth embankments attributed to Arimatta, exist in Vishwanath area. The embankments ran from Pratapapura to the Daffa hills for about 19 kms. There are remains of earth embankments at Pratapgarh extending over several kilometres. "In the centre of the enclosure of

74. K. L. Barua, *Early History of Kamarupa Gauhati*, 1966, pp-108-111.

75. P. C. Choudhury ; *History of the Civilization of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.*, Gauhati, 1959 p. 465.

76. Ibid, p. 465-66.

77. Ibid, p. 473-74.

78. Ibid, P. 474.

about $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles there is a large fort consisting of exceedingly high earth-works. It appears that this was the citadel of the town; to the north-east of the citadel is an enclosure of about 160 square ft. laid with bricks and with carved stones inside. Similar remains of fortifications are lying at Mayapura and Ratnapura, ascribed to Ramachandra. "These, like those at Vishvanatha and Ratnapura "were intended to enclose the table land at the foot of the hills and thus form a place of refuge in time of invasion". The whole work of the rampart, laid without cement or fastening shows great skill in masonry and engineering".⁷⁹

From the above, it appears that architecture of Darrang was a highly developed art in the past. The masons, engineers and artisans showed great skill in erection of monuments and the execution of artistic designs. "Close parallels have been noticed between Assamese art and those from Pataliputra and Banaras schools of the Gupta Age, and those of Bihar, Orissa, Central and Southern India (Chalukyan), Ceylon and even of distant places like Java".⁸⁰

The plinth mouldings from the Tezpur ruins have the same motifs and figures as were discovered in other parts of Northern India and bear close similarity in ornamentation to the designs from Orissa. One beautifully carved stone slab from Tezpur with the pattern of Chaitya-windows, bears similarity in design to those from Central India especially from Rewa State and Khajuraho. "One of the shafts of pillars from Tezpur shows marked similarity with the Chalukyan columns. The shaft is decorated beautifully with a band at the upper end and over it the shaft is round and appears to be lathe-turned like the upper parts of the Western Chalukyan columns."⁸²

On the basis of the archaeological wealth of Darrang certain conclusions regarding the cultural link between Darrang and the rest of India can be drawn. "Though the heaps of ruins of our period do not help us much in rightly assessing the aesthetic achievement of the Assamese artists, it is evident that the fine arts of Assam tended to be closer to the art of the Guptas and those of the schools of Bihar and Orissa rather than to the contemporary Pala school of Bengal. This was mainly because Assam's cultural relations have been intimate with Bihar and Orissa."⁸²

79. Ibid, P. 475-76

80. Ibid. P. 506.

81. Ibid, P. 507-08.

82. Ibid, P. 508.

CHAPTER—III

P E O P L E

(a) Population :

Total population (male and female) according to Sub-divisions : According to the 1971 Census Darrang district accounts for 11.61% of the total population of Assam. The total population of the district is 17,36,188 persons including 9,19,635 males and 8,16,553 females and it occupies the fifth place among the districts of Assam.

The following table shows the population of the Sub-divisions and Thanas.¹ of the district according to the 1971 Census.

Sub-division or Thana	Area in sq. kms	Male	Female	Total
1	2	3	4	5
Mangaldai Sub-division	3,465.3	4,37,738	3,96,836	8,34,574
1. Paneri P.S	813.2	95,315	84,369	1,79,684
2. Udalguri P.S	391.1	50,072	44,928	95,000
3. Majbat P.S	380.7	30,841	27,004	57,845
4. Kalaigaon P.S	422.1	69,191	64,694	1,33,885
5. Dalgaon P.S	525.8	68,585	62,877	1,31,462
6. Mangaldai P.S	932.4	1,23,734	1,12,964	2,36,698
Tezpur Sub-division	5,255.2	4,81,897	4,19,717	9,01,614
7. Dhekiajuli P.S	1,266.5	1,09,524	96,381	2,05,905
8. Tezpur P.S	733.0	1,01,274	82,388	1,83,662
9. Rangapara P.S	852.1	55,661	47,718	1,03,379
10. Chutia P.S	945.4	1,03,025	91,097	1,94,122
11. Behali P.S	865.1	63,403	57,768	1,21,171
12. Gohpur P.S	593.1	49,010	44,365	93,375
Total of Darrang district	8,775.0	9,19,635	8,16,553	17,36,188

1. Census of India, 1971. Assam, General Population Tables, Shillong, 1972, pp. 34-36.

Of the two Sub-divisions, Tezpur is larger than Mangaldai in area and also holds a larger population, as indicated in the table above. Among the police stations, the population is the highest in Mangaldai thana where 2,36,698 persons were censused in 1971. Dhekiajuli thana occupies the second place with its population of 2,05,905 persons. Majbat thana has the smallest population of 57,845 persons.

Density of population : The density of population in Darrang district stands in 1971 at 198 per sq. kilometre which shows an increase by 51 persons per sq. kilometre over that of the preceding decade.

The density of population since the turn of the century is as follows:-

Year	Density Per Sq. miles.
1901	100
1911	112
1921	143
1931	175
1941	221
1951	274 (106 per sq. kilometre)
1961	383 (147 per sq. kilometre)
1971	— (198 per sq. kilometre)

The district with highest density of population in Assam as per the 1971 Census, is Nowgong (302 persons per sq. kilometre), followed by Kamrup district where the density stands at 289 persons per sq. kilometre. Darrang with 198 persons per square kilometre occupied the sixth place among the districts of Assam in respect of density. Tezpur subdivision has a density of 172 persons and Mangaldai 241 persons per square kilometre.

In 1901 the district was sparsely populated except in the central portion of Mangaldai. Roughly speaking, the Kalaigaon and Patharughat Tahsils in 1901, supported a population of 209 to the sq. mile (i.e. about 81 per sq. kilometre). Population was fairly dense in the belt which runs northward from Tezpur town to the hills and which was included in the Tezpur Tahsil and Balipara Mauza.² Wide variation in the density of population in different parts of the district was caused by various factors such as opening of a vast tract

2. B. C. Allen, Assam District Gazetteers, Vol. V, Darrang, Allahabad, 1905, P. 72.

in the northern belt of the district, occupation of riverine tracts by the immigrants and the growth of small towns and trade centres. In 1951 Darrang took a unique place among all the plains districts of Assam having its population entirely confined within the middle density group of 77-114 per sq. km. and 114-171 per sq. km. No part of the district had a density below 77 per sq. km. or higher than 171 per sq. km. This shows that the pressure of population in Darrang was then neither too low nor too heavy and was evenly spread throughout the district. In 1941 also no part of the district had density higher than 171 per sq. km. or lower than 150 per square mile³ (57 per sq. km.). There are striking differences in respect of distribution of people in these two decades. First, Udalguri thana occupying 5.07 per cent of the total area of the district was in 1941, in the lower density group of 150-200 (57-77 per sq. km.) from which it shot upto the higher group of 200-300 (77-114 per sq. km.) at the 1951 Census. The 1941 Census showed that 68.31 per cent of the total area inhabited by 69.32 per cent of its population was in the density group of 200-300 (77-114 per sq. km.). In 1951 only 39.77 per cent of the total area with only 32.05 per cent of the population remained in this group while the rest of the area had density of the next higher group of 300-450 (114-171 per sq. km.) the highest attained by any thana of the district.⁴ The density of the district gradually increased in the following decade.

The density of population of the district has been described in the 1961 Census as follows. "The district has eleven police stations of which six are in the Mangaldai subdivision and the five are under the Tezpur subdivision. The police stations of this district can be classified under two distinct groups with relation to their densities, i.e. police stations having densities of more than 400 persons and below 400 persons per square mile [154 per sq. km.]. The police stations of Paneri, Udalguri, Kalaigaon, Dalgaon, Mangaldai and Chutia fall under the first group, (i. e. density of more than 400 persons) [i.e. 154 per sq. km.] and the remaining police stations, viz. Majbat, Tezpur, Dhekiajuli, Behali and Gohpur fall under the second group (i. e. density below 400 persons) [154 per sq. km.]. The Kalaigaon police station of the Mangaldai subdivision is the most populated area with a density of 568 persons per square mile [about 216 per sq. km.]. The

3. *Census of India*, 1951, Vol, XII, P. 45,

4. Figures are based on 1951 census report which did not take into account the transferred area of 500 sq. miles and its population.

Mangaldai police station with an area of 372.05 square miles [i.e. about 963.6 sq. kms.] claims a density of 479 persons [about 182 per sq. km.] and occupies the fourth place on point of density. The second most populated police station in the district is Chutia police station of Tezpur subdivision which registers a density of 495 persons per square mile [about 188 per sq. km.] and embraces an area of 317.05 square miles [about 821 sq. kms.]. The Dalgaon police station with an area of 1203.10 square miles [about 526 sq. kms.] accommodates 97,646 persons, which claims to be the third densest place by holding a density of 481 persons per square mile [about 183 per sq. km.]. The police station of Paneri comes to the sixth place regarding density by registering 402 persons per square mile [about 152 per sq. km.]. Gohpur police station with 184.18 square miles [about 479 sq. kms.] in area holds a density of 397 persons [about 150 per sq. km.] and ranks seventh in respect of density. The police stations of Behali and Dhekiajuli comprising respective areas of 255.93 sq. miles [662.9 sq. kms.] and 401.32 square miles [1039.4 sq. kms.] hold the density of 395 persons per square mile [about 150 per sq. km.] and occupy the eighth place in this regard. Tezpur police station, though biggest in area, occupies the lowest place regarding density with 232 per square mile [about 88 per sq. km.]"⁵

The following table shows the *thana*-wise density of population in the 1971 Census⁶.

Police station	Density per sq. km.
1. Paneri	221
2. Udalguri	243
3. Majbat	152
4. Kalaigaon	317
5. Dalgaon	250
6. Mangaldai	254
7. Dhekiajuli	163
8. Tezpur	251
9. Rangapara	121
10. Chutia	205
11. Behali	140
12. Gohpur	157

5. *Census of India*, 1961, Assam, *District Census Handbook Darrang*, Gauhati, 1964, p. 10.

6. *Census of India*, 1971 Assam, *General Population Tables*, Shillong, 1972 pp. 34-35.

Growth of Population : The earliest estimate of the population was made in 1835 when the population of the district, excluding the Bhutan Duars was 89,519 persons. The accuracy of this figure is however doubtful. In 1841-42 another enumeration of the people of the district took place. The district population was 1,85,569 persons, according to the second enumeration.

Regular census was taken since 1872 in which year the total population of the district was 2,35,720 persons. The population of the district increased by 15.3 per cent during the decade 1871-81. In 1881, 2,73,012 persons were censused within the district. The rate of growth during the decade 1881-91 was 12.6 per cent as against 9.7 per cent during the decade 1891-1901. According to these two censuses the total population of the district was 3,07,440 persons and 3,37,313 persons respectively. An important feature of the growth of population during the decade 1881-91 is that there was no increase in the number of persons born and censused in the district during this decade. Thus the increase of population during this decade is attributable to the influx of people particularly tea garden labourers from other provinces of India. During the following decade the number of indigenous people decreased by 8 per cent. This decrease was perhaps due to *Kala-azar*, an acute and contagious form of fever, which broke out in epidemic form from time to time. The stagnation or decrease of population was not a new feature in the district demography. As early as in 1853, the then Civil Surgeon expressed his indignation over the lack of salubrity of Tezpur, when Mr. Moffat Mills visited the country. It was further reported by the local officers that the population had been decreasing during the four preceding years.

According to the census of 1911, the population of the district was 3,77,314 persons of whom 1,21,305 persons were immigrants.⁷ During this decade population increased by 11.9 per cent; but 3.1 per cent of this was due to immigration. In Tezpur subdivision the growth rate was as high as 24.24 per cent; but in Mangaldai subdivision population decreased by 0.25 per cent as against 9.2 per cent in the previous decade. Within Mangaldai subdivision, the decrease in population occurred mainly in the *Kala-azar* infected northern mauzas where cholera epidemic also broke out in 1906. In the southern part of Mangaldai subdivision, population increased by 15.16 per cent in Mangaldai *thana*. This

7. *Census of India*, 1911, Vol.III, Assam Part-I, P.19.

increase is largely attributable to immigration. Due to colonisation of ex-tea garden labourers, the population increased by 82 per cent in Behali *thana* in Tezpur subdivision. The slowest rate of increase was noticed in Gohpur *thana* in the eastern part of the district. It was due to absence of tea gardens and the tendency of the ex-garden labourers to travel westward in search of settlement. Thus the regional variations in the rate of growth of population during this decade were very much pronounced.

The population of the district increased by 27.69 per cent during the decade ending in 1921 when it stood at 4,77,935.⁸ However, the natural increase of population was only 10.1 per cent which was an improvement on the figures of the last census. Although the outbreak of cholera in 1912, 1916, and 1919 and influenza in epidemic form in 1918 and 1919 took toll of human lives, yet the climate of the district remained cool, humid and conducive to health. The incidence of *Kala-azar* also decreased and the natural condition of the people was found satisfactory. Mangaldai subdivision which had shown a decrease at the two preceding censuses showed, during this decade an increase in density from 124 to 140 (about 47 to 53 per sq. km.) as against 101 to 157 (about 38 to 59 per sq. km.) in Tezpur subdivision. Part of this increase was due to transfer of 500 sq miles (about 1295 sq. kms.) almost uninhabited, to Balipara Frontier Tract. The mean density of the district stood in 1921 at 164 (about 62 per sq. kms.) slightly exceeding that of Sibsagar.

During the decade, 1921-31, the district showed an increase of population by 22.6 per cent. Except in 1921 and 1922 when there were outbreaks of cholera and small-pox, the general health of the people was good during this decade and the mortality from *Kala-azar* was enormously reduced. The total population of Tezpur subdivision increased by 20.7 per cent as against 38.5 per cent in 1921, and that of Mangaldai subdivision increased by 25.3 per cent as against 11.6 per cent in 1921. Five-sevenths of the large increase in 1911-21 were due to arrival of the new immigrants, mostly tea garden labourers and East Bengal (now Bangladesh) settlers. This flow continued in the decade ending in 1931. This census also indicated that there were 25,000 Nepalis in the district. According to C. S. Mullan, the increase in the population of the district was apparently due to two main causes—(i) the immigration of East Bengal (now Bangladesh) colonists who settled in large numbers particularly in Mangaldai and (ii) the

8. *Census of India* 1921, Vol. III, Assam, Part-I, Shillong 1923 P. 11.

natural growth of population.⁹ The greatest increase took place in Dalgaon mauza in Mangaldai subdivision. The population of this mauza increased by 151 per cent, as against only 5.4 per cent increase in Kalaigaon. The slow increase of population in Kalaigaon *thana* was in striking contrast with decrease of 9.9 per cent in 1911-21 and 19.1 per cent in 1901-11.

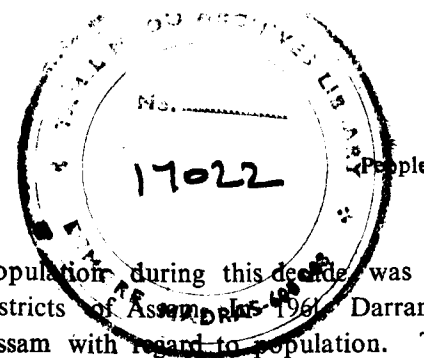
The population of the district increased by 1,53,724 persons during the decade ending in 1941 when 743,303 persons were censused. It showed an increase by 26.07 per cent over the population of 1931. There was wide difference in the rate of increase of population in the two subdivisions during the decade, 1931-41, when the population of Mangaldai subdivision increased by 35.3 per cent as against 19.5 per cent in Tezpur. The reason of this disparity in the growth rate is attributable largely to the influx of immigrants into Mangaldai subdivision.

According to 1951 census, the population of the district excluding Balipara Frontier Tract Transferred Area was 9,13,841 persons which showed an increase of 1,77,050 persons during the decade, 1941-51. This overall increase was the largest ever recorded by the district within fifty years since 1901. The percentage increase in Darrang district stood at 24.03 which was higher than that of any other district of Assam, except Nowgong (36.6 per cent) and Cachar (24.7 per cent). The rate of growth in both the subdivisions was nearly at par. It was 23.9 per cent in Tezpur subdivision and 24.1 per cent in Mangaldai subdivision. Every *thana* shared the high increase registered by the district. Contrary to its earlier trend, Kalaigaon *thana* registered the highest increase of 51.7 per cent. Udalguri and Dalgaon *thanas* respectively registered 35.4 and 35.3 per cent increase of population. These three *thanas* topped the list of high rate of growth among the *thanas* of the district. Not a single *thana* of the district showed lesser rate of increase than 18.7 per cent of Majbat. Nearly even distribution of the people all over the district is revealed by the fact that no part of the district had density below 200 or higher than 450 per sq. mile (i. e. below 77 or higher than 171 per sq. km.).¹⁰

During the decade 1951-61, there was an overall increase of population by 39.64 per cent. Total population of the district was 1,289,670 persons in 1961. It showed that during the last six decades population increased by 283.39 per cent. The tremendous spurt in

9. Census of India, 1931, Vol. III, Assam, Part.I. Shillong, 1932, P.16.

10. Census of India, 1951, Vol. XII, Assam, Manipur & Tripura part-I-A, Report, Shillong, 1954 pp. 45-46.



population during this decade was a common feature in the plains districts of Assam. Darrang occupied the sixth place in Assam with regard to population. The growth of population was much higher in Mangaldai subdivision (44.75 per cent) than in Tezpur subdivision (35.69 per cent). During this decade the highest rate of growth was recorded in Udalguri *thana* where it was 75.84 per cent followed by the Kalaigaon *thana* where it was 62.61 per cent. The Mangaldai *thana* registered the lowest rate of increase i.e. 24.52 per cent. Thus the increase of population in the northern belt of Mangaldai subdivision was more pronounced than anywhere in the district.

During the next decade the district registered a percentage growth of 34.62 registering, as in earlier censuses, a high rate of growth. The population of Tezpur subdivision increased by 27.52 per cent as against 43.24 per cent recorded by Mangaldai subdivision. The following table shows the decennial variation of population of the district since 1901.

Growth of population of Darrang district, since 1901.

District	Year	Persons	Decade variation	Percentage decade variation	Male	Female
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Darrang	1901	3,36,382	—	—	1,75,560	1,60,822
District	1911	3,76,374	+ 39,992	+ 11.89	1,98,106	1,78,268
	1921	4,80,579	+ 1,04,205	+ 27.69	2,55,098	2,25,481
	1931	5,89,579	+ 1,09,000	+ 22.68	3,20,117	2,69,462
	1941	7,43,303	+ 1,53,724	+ 26.07	3,98,203	3,45,100
	1951	9,23,562	+ 1,80,259	+ 24.25	4,79,480	4,26,082
	1961	12,89,670	+ 3,66,108	+ 39.64	6,94,927	5,94,743
	1971	17,36,188	+ 4,46,518	+ 34.62	9,19,635	8,16,553

Thanawise population as per last three Censuses.

Thana Subdivision	Total Population		
	1951*	1961	1971
Tezpur Subdivision.	5,11,340	7,07,046	9,01,614
1. Dhekiajuli P.S.	1,07,627	1,58,461	2,05,905
2. Tezpur P.S.	1,60,582	2,17,310	1,83,662
3. Chutia P.S.	1,12,969	1,56,912	1,94,122
4. Behali P.S.	80,546	1,01,194	1,21,171
5. Gohpur P.S.	49,616	73,169	93,375
6. Rangapara P.S.	—	—	1,03,379
Mangaldai Subdivision.	4,02,501	5,82,624	8,34,574
1. Paneri P.S.	73,130	1,11,544	1,79,684
2. Udalguri P.S.	33,430	58,782	95,000
3. Majbat P.S.	29,070	42,311	57,845
4. Kalaigaon P.S.	57,971	94,269	1,33,885
5. Dalgaon P.S.	65,890	97,646	1,31,462
6. Mangaldai P.S.	1,43,010	1,78,072	2,36,698
Total of Darrang District.	9,13,841	12,89,670	17,36,188

Immigration and Emigration:— It has been discussed briefly in the foregoing pages how immigration has inflated the population of the district during the last one hundred years. Some of the salient features of the migration of people into and within the district are indicated below. The extent of emigration is, however, not very considerable.

Migration from the rural areas to the urban areas and from rural to rural areas is a common feature in all the districts of Assam. The following table indicates the trend of movement of people within the district, as revealed by 1961 census.¹¹

*Exclusive of the population of 9721 of Balipara Frontier Tract comprising an area of 531.27 sq. miles, transferred to Darrang District on 1st. March 1951.

11. Census of India, 1961, Vol. III, Assam, Part-I-A. p.126.

Migration of people within the Darrang district.

Duration of residence	Male	Female
(1) Less than 1 year	(a) 10,496 (b) 551	6,422 141
1 year to 5 years	(a) 26,694 (b) 1,275	24,946 645
6 years to 10 years	(a) 12,287 (b) 580	19,754 280
11 years to 15 years	(a) 12,202 (b) 203	21,451 161
16 years and over	(a) 29,378 (b) 306	41,964 251

(a) indicates migration from Rural to Rural areas.

(b) indicates migration from Rural to Urban areas.

The preponderance of female migrants indicated in the above table is largely due to marriages. According to local customs the females have to move to the homes of their husbands after marriage. The migration of large number of males shows the extent of movement of people in search of better fields for cultivation and for seasonal or permanent employment. New areas have been opened up for cultivation and the employment opportunities have vastly increased with the growth of towns. This type of job migration is reflected in the long duration of residence in the villages to which the migrants have moved. The movement of people from rural areas outside the district of Darrang to the urban areas of the district was not very considerable according to the 1961 Census. The total number of migrants of this category was only 3,053 persons.

The inter-district migration figures reveal that Darrang occupied the third place in Assam in respect of inter-district immigration during the decade 1951-61. This type of immigration was the highest in the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills (11.53 per cent), followed by Lakhimpur (7.39 per cent). The following table shows the extent of inter-district migration to Darrang district.¹²

12. Census of India, 1961, Vol. III, Assam, Part-I-A. p.130.

Inter-district migration in
Darrang district.

Year	Density per sq. mile.	Percentage of inter-district immigration to total population	Percentage of inter-district emigration to total population
1921	143	2.62	0.68
1951	274	3.99	0.73
1961	383	6.63	2.50

Analysing the salient features of migration, E. H. Pakyntein, the Superintendent of Census operations, Assam 1961 has observed that there had been a big influx of people into Darrang and Lakhimpur districts from other districts of Assam.¹³

The immigration from outside Assam has been an important cause of the population spurt in the district since the later part of the 19th century. We have already discussed briefly about some of the trends of immigration into the district. The following table shows the extent of immigration into the district from outside the State, since 1921.¹⁴

Immigration into Darrang district from outside Assam.
(percentage of immigrants to the total population).

Year	Male	Female
1921	39.60	36.53
1931	37.11	32.01
1951	21.41	20.89
1961	17.43	13.14

Although the figures show a downward trend during the last two decades, yet, it is believed that the number of immigrants was possibly very high during these two decades as well. It has been observed in the Census Report of 1961 that during the census operation of 1961 many immigrants did not disclose their true birth places obviously to avoid detection.¹⁵

The flow of immigrants into Darrang district, from the erstwhile East Bengal or East Pakistan has been quite considerable. Large areas

of wasteland in Assam have been veritable "El Dorado" for the East Bengal settlers, of whom seven thousand in 1911, twenty thousand in 1921 and forty-one thousand in 1931 were found in Darrang.¹⁶ Mymensingh district has the largest share of the source of this influx. During the decade 1921-31 nearly thirty thousand persons have migrated into Darrang district from Mymensingh. This immigration began as a result of interplay of economic forces in East Bengal now Bangladesh and Assam. The advent of large numbers of migrants whose language, manners and customs differ widely from that of the indigenous people affected the economic, political and social structure of the district. They have opened vast tracts of fallow land for cultivation, but on many occasions with the utter disregard to rules relating to reservation of land for various public purposes. Instances of friction between these people and those of the neighbouring villages are many. The "Line system" which was adopted in 1920 by the Government of Assam sought to reduce the occasion of such conflict. Since Independence various measures were adopted to protect the interests of those immigrants who became Indian citizens and to drive out the foreigners. Apart from the Muslim immigrants, influx of Hindu refugees from East Pakistan since 1946 till 1965 has been quite considerable. During the 1951 Census, 18,853 Hindu refugees were censused in Darrang district.

Immigration of tea garden labourers is also one of the factors that contributed to the growth of the total population of the district. From the later part of the nineteenth century large number of tea gardens were opened in the district. This was followed by large influx of tea garden labourers into the district. As recorded in the old District Gazetteer of Darrang there were 79,513 tea garden labourers born outside Assam, in this district in 1901. An enormous rush of immigrant labourers from Bihar and Orissa took place in 1918-20 when 1,05,000 tea garden labourers of Bihar and Orissa were censused in Darrang. Since then, recruitment of labourers to tea gardens from Bihar and Orissa began to decrease and their number stood at 93,000 in 1931. At the same time the total number of tea garden labourers born outside the district increased to 1,32,498 in 1931 from 1,22,749 in 1921. The reasons for the decrease of labour immigration from outside Assam and the increase in the number of labourers born outside the district may be attributed to local recruitment of the children of ex-tea garden labourers as well as exodus

13. Ibid, p. 131.

14. Ibid, p. 133.

15. Ibid, p. 134.

16. *Census of India, 1951* Vol, 11, Assam, Manipur and Tripura, part-1-A p. 73.

of labourers from Karimganj (then Sub-division of Sylhet) due to troubles and distress that afflicted the tea industry there. In the meantime the tea Districts Emigrant Labour Act. XXII of 1932 was passed to regulate recruitment policy and their service conditions. Thus the flow of labourers to tea gardens from outside the state of Assam came down and in 1961 the number of persons born in Bihar and Orissa pursuing various avocations in Darrang district was 67,148 persons, whereas in 1931 the number of tea garden labourers born in those two provinces and censused in Darrang stood at 93,000.

Nepalis constitute a considerable part of the immigrants into the district. Most of the Nepalis prefer the sub-montane tract where they get sufficient grazing land, in addition to cultivable lands. The number of Nepalis in the district steadily increased during the early part of this century. There were 18,997 Nepalis in 1921, and 24,862 in 1931 in the district. In 1952 only 10,000 Nepal born Nepalis were censused in Darrang, and in 1961 this number stood at 19,019.

(ii) Distribution between urban and rural areas :-

The middle and the southern part of Darrang district present a panorama of extensive paddy fields dotted with tiny villages, which lie hidden beneath the luxuriant betel-nut, plantain and bamboo groves. At the turn of the century, however, there were only 1275 villages. We find a very interesting account of the villages in the Darrang District Gazetteer.¹⁶ These villages in those days were not well defined units, but clusters of huts which stood out clearly in the centre of fields tilled by their inhabitants. Rice, the staple crop was grown in wide plains, interspersed with clumps of bamboos and fruit trees in which were buried 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

16. B.C. Allen; *Assam District Gazetteers* vol.v, Darrang; Allahabad, 1905. p. 73.

assigned the smaller clumps which were freely dotted about amongst the rice fields. The result was that the statistics showing the size of villages were of little practical importance; but taking them for what they were worth, it appeared that in 1901 about two-thirds of villages were small hamlets with less than 500 inhabitants.

During the last few decades the district has made enormous progress in the fields of industry, agriculture, medical aid etc. With the growth of human habitation more villages have sprung up, robbing the nature of its wilderness; the villages with undefined boundaries, as described in the old Gazetteer, have gradually transformed into the more homogenic units, having schools, roads and many other basic amenities of modern living. A cross-country sojourn, even now, becomes an occasion of unrelieved tedium, except for the scenic beauty which all the tracts of this district possess in abundance.

In 1961, the district comprised 2,441 villages which supported 96.10 per cent of the population. These villages were classified into six groups based on population. The first group comprised 611 villages the population of which was less than 200 in each, and which held 5 per cent of the total rural population. In the second group there were 970 villages with population between 200 to 499 claiming 27 per cent of the total rural population. The third group consisting of 608 villages, where the population varied between 500 and 999 constituted 33 per cent of the total rural population. 196 villages came under the fourth group with population between 1,000 and 1,999 constituting 22 per cent of the total rural population. Of the 55 villages under the fifth group, the population was between 2,000 and 4,999 accounting for 12 per cent of the total population. There was only one village with population varying from 5,000 to 9,999 which fell under the sixth group.

In the 1971 Census the number of villages of the district increased to 2,538 supporting 1,632,445 persons which form 94.02 per cent of the total population of the district. These villages have been classified into seven groups as in the 1961 Census but unlike that census this time one village ranks in the highest group having population of 10,000 and above, the total population of the village being 11,384. The group next below it also claims only one village with 7,094 persons. The other groups in group I to V claim 458, 806, 856, 330 and 86 villages with 3.02, 17.64, 36.99, 27.33 and 13.89 per cent respectively of the total rural population. The largest concentration of the rural population is in the group III villages ranging

between 500-999 persons, the total population in the group being 6,03,799 persons.

In 1901, Tezpur with a population of 5,067 souls was the only town of the district. It was only since 1921 that Mangaldai with a population of 1,023 persons became its second town. Seven towns are shown in the Census of 1971. Tezpur is the biggest town inhabited by 39,870 persons. Although the urban population has increased manifold in the district, during the last seven decades, yet urbanisation has made very little headway in Darrang. Only 5.98 per cent of the total population of the district are censused in the towns in 1971. This indicates an increase of the urban population by 2.08 per cent over the corresponding figure of 1961. It is however, interesting to note that the urban population of Darrang registered 106.27 per cent growth during the decade 1961-71. A.K. Saikia, Director of Census operation, Assam, has observed that the higher growth of urban population in Darrang is due to inclusion of new towns in the decade 1961-71¹⁴. Only Rangapara and Vishwanath Charali having population of 11,974 and 9,301 persons respectively have been declared as towns during this decade. Total urban population of the district in 1961 was 50,294 persons as against 1,03,743 persons in 1971. Obviously the high growth of urban population can not be solely attributed to inclusion of new towns with a population of about twenty one thousand souls. On the other hand, population has increased by 65.03 per cent in Tezpur, 42.16 per cent in Mangaldai, 51.29 per cent in Kharupatia and 63.88 per cent in Dhekiajuli during the decade 1961-71. Thus the growth of urban population in the district is mainly due to influx of people in large numbers into the towns. The growth of urban population since 1901 is indicated in the following table.

Growth of Urban Population in
Darrang District, since 1901.

Name of the Sub-division	Name of the town	Year	Persons	Percentage of decennial variation
1	2	3	4	5
Tezpur	Tezpur	1901	5,067	+ ...
		1911	5,355	+ 5.68
		1921	7,341	+ 37.09

14. Census of India, 1971, *Provisional Population totals*. p.2.

Name of the Sub-division	Name of the town	Year	Persons	Percentage of decennial variation
Tezpur	Tezpur	1931	10,268	+ 39.87
		1941	11,879	+ 15.69
		1951	18,880	+ 58.94
		1961	24,159	+ 27.96
		1971	39,870	+ 65.03
	Rangapara	1971	11,974	
	Dhekiajuli	1961	6,363	
		1971	10,428	+ 63.88
	Vishwanath Charali.	1971	9,301	
	Mangaldai	Mangaldai	1921	1,023
1931			1,696	+ 65.79
1941			2,093	+ 23.41
1951			3,571	+ 70.62
1961			8,547	+ 139.34
1971			12,150	+ 42.16
Kharupatia		1961	6,906	
		1971	10,488	+ 51.29
Tangla		1961	4,319	
	1971	9,572	+ 121.63	

In the 1971 Census towns have been divided into various classes according to population. Tezpur, which is the biggest town in the district, falls in class III group of towns, each having a population of 20,000 to 49,999 persons. Mangaldai, Kharupatia, Dhekiajuli and Rangapara fall in the class IV group of towns each holding a population of 10,000 to 19,999 persons. Tangla and Vishwanath-Charali come under the class V group of towns where population varies from 5,000 to 9,999 persons.

(iii) Displaced persons: In the wake of the partition large number of Hindu refugees migrated into Assam. In the 1951 Census 18,853 persons were censused in Darrang district. 17,902 refugees settled in the rural areas and only 951 of them lived in towns. The largest concentration of the refugees was found in Paneri and Udalguri which together accounted for 6,670 persons while Kalai gaon and Mangaldai thanas accounted for the next slice of 5,082 persons. 2,704 displaced persons were found in Dhekiajuli thana,

2,068 in Tezpur and 839 in Chutia. Behali and Gohpur area accommodated only 539 refugees.

(b) Languages and dialects:—

According to the 1961 Census, the people of Darrang district spoke as mother tongue as many as seventy-nine languages and dialects. 8,39,788 persons constituting 65.11 per cent of the population spoke Assamese. The second largest group which spoke Bengali, formed only 9.84 per cent of the total population. Having regard to the big waves of influx of the Bengali speaking immigrants from East Bengal since 1921 into Darrang, it may be presumed that many of these immigrants after years of association, assimilated with the indigenous people whose language and culture forged the bond of lasting friendship between these two linguistic groups. It is interesting to note that some families who hailed from Rajasthan and lived in Tezpur for some generations produced eminent Assamese writers whose contributions have immensely enriched Assamese language and culture.

In 1901, Assamese and Bodo or Kachari were regarded to be the only two forms of speech natural to the indigenous inhabitants of the district. Assamese was spoken by 51 per cent of the population and the latter by 16 per cent. The bulk of the Kachari speakers lived in the grassy plains at the foot of the Himalayan ranges on the northern part of Mangaldai. They could understand and speak Assamese well. Bengali was returned by 19 per cent of people. However, it is doubtful if Bengali indicated, in many cases, more than a foreign language. A foreigner in those days was commonly termed as 'Bangal' and their language as "Bengali". Only 4 per cent of the total population spoke Hindi and 2 per cent Mundari. The following table shows the numerical strength of the people of different linguistic groups, inhabiting the district. ¹⁵

Principal languages and dialects spoken by the inhabitants of Darrang district.

			P.C. to the total	
	1951	1961	1951	1961
Assamese	7,11,110	8,39,788	77. %	65.11 %
Bengali	63,985	12,6,987	7 %	9.84 %
Nepali	29,648	68,885	3 %	5.34 %
Hindi	30,232	65,355	3 %	5.07 %
Oriya	19,014	44,083	2 %	3.41 %
Bodo or Boro	7,210	37,618	0.78 %	2.91 %
Mundari unspecified	—	33,759	—	2.61 %
Kachari	—	17,859	—	1.38 %
Miri	—	10,389	—	—
Oran	—	8,232	—	0.63 %

The rest of the languages and dialects are spoken by an infinitesimal fraction of the total population.

(c) Bilingualism :—

Although there are numerous linguistic groups in the district, bilingualism has blunted the edge of their difference and has brought about emotional integration among the people. The spirit of tolerance and the urge to live a life of love, friendship and co-operation have forged unity among different linguistic groups. Hindi and English are taught in the secondary schools having Assamese or Bengali as the medium of instruction. Hindi is understood in every nook and corner of the district, and a large section of people can speak in Hindi, though not very correctly. According to the 1951 Census, out of 7,11,110 people speaking Assamese as mother tongue, only 3,239 people were returned as speaking a subsidiary language. Bengali could be spoken by 4,123 Assamese speaking people; Hindi by 3,531 and Nepali by 400. Out of 63,985 persons whose mother tongue was Bengali 36,697 were bilingual of whom 36,393 could speak Assamese, 300 Hindi and 4 Nepali. Out of 39,643 Nepali speaking people 19,872 were returned as bilingual of whom 19,872 could speak Assamese, 504 Hindi and only 2 Bengali.

Most of the tribal people in this district know a subsidiary language besides their own. According to the 1961 Census 71,111 tribal people spoke Assamese as their mother tongue and of them only 6,444 persons were bilingual of whom 3,643 spoke the Bodo/Boro as a subsidiary language. But in case of other tribal people speaking their own dialects as mother tongue, most know Assamese and a very few know other languages. 37,618 tribals belonging to the Bodo linguistic group viz, Boro & kachari, Kachari including Sonowal and Rabha people spoke the Bodo/Boro dialect as their mother tongue and of them 33,064 were bilingual. 32,890 persons of this group spoke Assamese as a secondary language. The next dialect in importance was the Kachari which was used as mother tongue by 17,859 persons belonging to the same linguistic group and of them 15,665 were bilingual, almost all of whom except 62 persons spoke Assamese as a secondary language. The Miri dialect was spoken by 10,389 Miris as their mother tongue and of them 7,910 were bilingual who spoke Assamese as a secondary language. 337 Hojai people spoke the Mikir dialect as their mother tongue and of these people 292 were bilingual, all speaking Assamese as their secondary language. 408 Deoris spoke

15. *Census of India, 1961. Assam, District Census Handbook Darrang ; Gauhati, 1964 pp. 263-268 and Statistical Abstract of Assam, 1958, pp. 35-43.*

their dialect Deori as mother tongue and of them 222 were bilingual. Among them only 170 persons spoke Assamese.

From the above analysis it is clear that more than 50% of the people belonging to the scheduled tribes spoke Assamese as their mother tongue. Only a small percentage of these people spoke their own dialect as mother tongue. The Bodos are, however, an exception. Boro dialect was spoken by more than 26 per cent of the total tribal population. Among these tribes about 46 per cent were bilingual and of them about 94 per cent spoke Assamese as a secondary language. Following table indicates the extent of bilingualism in the district.¹⁶

Scheduled Tribes.

	Persons	Males	Females
Scheduled Tribes	1,40,298	73,082	67,216
Rural —	1,39,706	72,752	66,954
Urban —	592	330	262

Bilingualism among Scheduled Tribes

Mother tongue	Total No. of tribals speaking the mother tongue	Bilingual	Speaking as subsidiary language.	
			Assamese	Bodo
1	2	3	4	
Assamese	71,111	6,444	—	3,643
Bodo/Boro	37,618	33,064	32,890	—
Deori	408	222	170	—
Kachari	17,859	15,665	15,603	—
Lalung	4	1	1	—
Mikir (spoken by Hojais)	637	292	292	—
Miri	10,389	7,910	7,902	—
Rabha	2,273	1,764	1,710	—

16. Census of India, 1961, Assam, District census Hand Book Darrang, Gauhati 1964, pp. 335-336.

A brief account of the principal languages of the district is given below. It is but natural that the scope of analysis is so limited, that a discussion on many languages and dialects, particularly those spoken by the immigrants cannot be covered here. Many of these languages display wide variation in pronunciation and terminology. For instance, the immigrants from East Bengal speak Bengali, which is akin to that spoken in East Bengal, but the intonation of the Bengalis of the old stock comes closer to Assamese than to Chaste Bengali.

Assamese : The origin of Assamese which is the principal language of this district goes back to antiquity. P.C. Choudhury has observed that epigraphs, though written in Sanskrit, prove that as early as in the 7th century A.D. and later, some of the Assamese formations are found even in their present forms and used in the same sense.¹⁷ Several scholars, including Grierson and S.K. Chatterji are of the view that Assamese, Bengali, Oriya and Bihari originated from the eastern variety of Magadhan Prakrit.¹⁸ B.K. Kakati has shown that both Assamese and Bengali “started on parallel lines with peculiar dialectical predispositions and often developed sharply contradictory idiosyncracies.”¹⁹ He has further illustrated how the Aust-ric, Kolerian, Malayan, Bodo and other elements have enriched Assamese vocabulary. “The substratum of both the Mon-khmer and Tibeto-Burman speech in Assamese vocabulary” observes P.C. Choudhury, “points definitely to the early evolution of their dialects.”²⁰ S.N. Sarma has shown that the evolution of Assamese literature on independent lines took place from the middle of the tenth century.²¹

The present Assamese script is not an outcome of natural evolution but is the product of certain historical factors. The earliest specimen of Assamese script is provided by the copper plates and various inscriptions of Assam. S.N. Sarma has observed that the ancient Assamese script was the corrupt form of the East Indian script of the Gupta period.²² This, however differs from the script that was used in the Ahom period. From the thirteenth century till

17. P.C Choudhury, *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.*, Gauhati, 1959, P. 391.

18. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*; Vol.I. Pt.1, P. 126; S. K. Chatterji, *Origin and Development of Bengali language* P. 139-40.

19. B. Kakati, *Assamese—Its Formation and Development* Gauhati, 1972 P.7

20. P.C. Choudhury, *History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century, A.D.*, Gauhati, 1959, P.391,

21. S.N. Sarma, *Asamiya Sahityar Itibritya*, P. 6.

22. Ibid, P.8.

the nineteenth century the bark of the aloe wood (*sancipat*) was used in place of paper. The books were written in early Assamese script which S. N. Sarma has divided into three categories, *Gargayan*, *Bamuniya*, *Kaytheli* or *Lahkari*. Assamese script which is currently in use differs widely from its earlier specimen. The Missionaries brought out several books in Assamese in the nineteenth century from Bengal and used the same script for both Bengali and Assamese books. During this period, Bengali was taught in schools for about thirty six years. The present Assamese script has several letters such as '৳' (ra) and '৳' (wa) which are absent in Bengali script.

Some of the pastoral ballads, such as *Bihu-geets* which are so popular among the Assamese speaking people of the district, represent the early specimen of unwritten Assamese poetry. However, the Buddhist *dohas* and the writings of the Tantrik Buddhist *Siddhas* are supposed to be the earliest forms of Assamese written literature. The Ahoms who ruled this district for several centuries patronised Assamese literature not only by maintaining poets, writers and scholars on their staff but also endowing on many of them land grants and liberal largess. Large number of chronicles which were known as *Buranjis*, written during this period is still regarded to be a golden chapter of Assamese literature. These *Buranjis* are believed to be the precursor of the modern Assamese prose writings. Bhattadeva (1558-1638 A.D.) whose superb prose writings constitute some of the priceless gems of Assamese literature is regarded as one of the earliest prose writers among all the regional languages of India. Assamese literature of this period was prodigious and variegated. Not only Sanskrit epics and *Puranas* were translated but also many valuable treatises on cattle diseases, astronomy, dance poses, sexology, dramas and biographies etc. were written in Assamese during this period. Besides the royal patronage, the Vaishnavite movement which swept the land during the mediaeval period immensely contributed to the growth and development of Assamese literature. Sankardeva (1449-1568 A.D.) and his disciples composed literary works based on Sanskrit *Sastras*, with a view to propagating religious doctrines and tenets. They possessed wonderful gift of translation and their writings were couched in terms which rendered tough didacticism easily intelligible. They wielded their pen not merely to glean the abstruse philosophical doctrines of the Sanskrit epics and *puranas*, but also to render these into rare gems of poetry.

The Treaty of Yandaboo, which was concluded in 1826 A.D., may be regarded as the watershed of the political, social and cultural

life in Assam. Apart from bringing an end of the ancient regime, it also ushered in a new era of Assamese literature which derived a large fund of inspiration from western literature. In 1836, Bengali was made the court language and medium of instruction in Assam, following manoeuvres repugnant to the basic needs of the indigenous people. The myth of efficacy of this arrangement was exploded by several scholars including A.J. Moffat Mills who observed in 1853 as follows "An English youth is not taught Latin until he is well-grounded in English, and in the same manner an Assamese should not be taught a foreign language until he knows his own."²³ Being deprived of its legitimate place in the courts and in educational institutions, Assamese lost its initiative to grow during this period. The rejuvenation of Assamese literature started in new vigour when Assamese was restored to its legitimate place in 1873. Meanwhile the American Baptist Mission most judiciously gave this language a fresh fillip and brought out scores of books and the first Assamese magazine, the *Arunodai* which marked the beginning of the modern phase of Assamese literature. The phenomenal progress which Assamese literature has made in all its branches since then has not only earned her a place in the constitution of India as a major regional language, but also put her at par with all other sister languages of India, both in respect of its depth and expansiveness.

Assam-Burmese branch of Tibeto-Burman linguistic group :

Several tribes in Darrang district have dialects of their own. Some of the scholars have regarded these dialects as languages. A few of these are discussed below.

Boro : There are large number of people belonging to Boro-Borokachari community in the district, as revealed in the 1961 Census. P.C. Bhattacharya has observed, "The Boro (Bodo) language belongs to the western branch of Barish section under Baric division of the Sino-Tibetan family, as per the classification given by Robert Shafer. The Linguistic Survey of India describes the Boro or the Boro-Kachari as a member of the Boro (Bodo) sub-section under the Assam-Burma group of the Tibeto-Burman branch of Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese speech family.

"The Boro speaking areas of Assam at present are stretching from Dhubri in the west to Sadiya in the east. In N.E.F.A., Tripura

23. A.J. Mills; *Report on the Province of Assam*, Calcutta-1854.

and Nagaland also we have a small number of the Boros or Boro-Kacharis. In Jalpaiguri and other adjacent districts of Bengal, the Boros are known as Mech. The Boro language of Assam has at least four clear-cut dialect areas with a sufficient number of dialectal variations; these may be called north-western, south-western, north-central and southern dialect areas with phonological, morphological and glossarial differences.

"The Boro language is said to have no inherited script at present. Shri Bishnu Prasad Rabha, the famous artist of Assam, told me that in ancient times there were a kind of Deodhai scripts among the Kacharis (Boros and Dimasas). Shri Rabha gathered a few specimens of Deodhai alphabet from an informant of Dimapur area which was noted for the Kachari reign and remains representing the art and architecture. At present the Boros make use of the Assamese alphabet and the Roman alphabet as modified to suit their need. The Boro Christians only usually write their text-books and religious matters in the medium of Roman scripts; other Boros forming a clear majority write in the modified Assamese scripts. The Boro Sahitya Sabha has accepted the modified Assamese scripts for use in their text-book and literature. Since 1963 the Boro language has been introduced as the medium of instructions in the Boro predominant primary schools of Kokrajhar Sub-division in the district of Goalpara. The literacy is slowly but steadily increasing. In 1954 there were eighty seven graduates of Arts, Science, Medicine and Engineering among the Boros.

"The Boro literature consists of the vast amount of oral literature including folksongs, folktales, ballads, and proverbs and of the considerable amount of written and published literature in Assamese and Roman scripts. The published literature comprises books relating to prayers and songs, poems, stories on the one hand and journals and magazines with different types of prose and verse on the other hand. There are unpublished novels and dramas too so far my knowledge goes. The themes and beauties of Boro literature will reveal their mode of life and attitude towards nature. The rhyming metres of Boro verse and songs always appeal to the reader's ear and heart."²⁴

Grierson has also observed as follows, "Their language is a fairly rich one, and is remarkable for the great base with which

24. P. C. Bhattacharya; 'A few elements of the Indo-Mongoloid Boro Culture' put in the *Journal of the Assam Research Society*, Vol. XVI, 1964.

roots can be the compounded together, so as to express the most complex idea in a single "Portmanteau" word. For instance, the sentence "go and take, see and observe carefully" is indicated by a single word in Kachari. Of all the languages of the group it is most phonetically developed, and here and there shows signs of the commencement of that true inflexion which is strong to most agglutinative languages."²⁵

Deori :— The number of Deoris inhabiting the Darrang district is slightly over four hundred according to the 1961 Census. U.N. Goswami has recently made an elaborate analysis of Deori language showing its distinctive characteristics.²⁶ He has observed that only the people of Dibongiya *khel* speak it at present, and in the field of phonology the language possesses seven vowels and eighteen consonants with two semivowels.²⁷

Ahom language :— There are four main linguistic families in Assam. These are, — (1) Austro-Asiatic, (2) Tibeto-Chinese, (3) Dravidian and (4) Indo-European. The second is divided into two sub-families, Tibeto-Burman and Siamese-Chinese. Only the Tai group of the Siamese-Chinese linguistic sub-family is found in Assam. The Tai group includes the language of the Ahoms, the Khamtis, the Turungs, the Phakials, the Noras and some other kindred group. People belonging to this language group, though scattered in several parts of Assam, are mostly found in Lakhimpur and Sibsagar districts.

The Ahoms who ruled Assam for about six hundred years used their own language which had a script of its own. Besides being the language of the ruling section, it was also a storehouse of invaluable chronicles known as *Buranjis* which contained careful, reliable and continuous narrative of the Ahoms. In the latter period *Buranjis* came to be compiled in Assamese. In course of time Ahom language ceased to be popular among the Ahoms and came to be confined to a section of their priestly caste. Hem Barua has thus observed, "The Ahoms no doubt built kingdom here, but the pressure from the bottom enmasse was such that the captors, so far as linguistic and cultural history is concerned, became ultimately the captives. Finally, in course of time, they abandoned their own language

25. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. 4, pt. 1, pp. 62-63.

26. U.N. Goswami, 'A note on Deuris and their language' put in the *Journal of the University of Gauhati* Vol. X, No 1, Arts 1959. An analysis of the Deuri language put in the *Journal of the Assam Research Society*, vol. XVII, 1966.

27. U.N. Goswami; *Some socio-linguistic aspects of the Deuris*, put in the *Journal of the Assam Research Society*, Vol. XVII, 1966.

and adopted and assimilated the language of the people they ruled; the only people who know their language today to some extent are the *deodhais* and *bailungs*, tribal astrologers and priests."²⁸

Miri :— The Tibeto-Burman sub-family of languages which comes under the Tibeto-Chinese family has been subdivided into three branches like Tibeto—Himalayan, North Assam and Assam Burmese. The Abor-Miri group of language which has stemmed from the North Assam branch was spoken by 56,794 persons in Assam in 1911.²⁹ Miri is the mother tongue of 10,389 Miris of Darrang district according to the 1961 Census. They have a wide range of pastoral ballads and folk tales most of which are yet to come out in print.

Darrang district is a melting pot of many tribes and races. The multiplicity of dialects of the people of this district has so far eluded a comprehensive study. We have discussed above only a few of these, not because these are richer or more popular than their sister dialects, but because materials on others are rather scanty and the dividing line between many of these dialects is too thin to afford an exclusive treatment.

(c) Religion and caste :—

The religious life of the people has been moulded mainly by three principal religions—Hinduism Islam and Christianity. Hinduism is professed by more than three-fourths of the total population, Islam by less than one-fifth and Christianity by one-twentieth, as per the 1961 Census.

Other religions viz., Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism altogether account for less than 0.50 per cent of the total population of the district. The scheduled tribe population stands at 1,40,298 persons according to the 1961 Census which shows only 78 persons professing tribal faith. This tribal population has been converted either into Christianity or they have embraced some form of Hinduism. The following table shows the religion-wise distribution of the people and the relative proportion to the total population, as revealed during the last census. It may be mentioned here that in some earlier censuses, a part of the Hindu population was shown as Animists primarily because of a wrong notion of their religious beliefs and faiths.

28. Hem Barua ; *The Red River and the Blue Hills*, (1962) pp 99-100.

29. *Census of India*, 1911, Vol. 111 Assam, pt. 1, Report, Shillong, 1912, pp.96—104

Distribution of people on the basis of religion.

(a) indicates population.

(b) indicates percentage to total population.

Religious Community	Year		
	1951	1961	1971
1	2	3	4
Hindus	(a) 7,26,369	9,76,563	13,61,974
	(b) 78.65	75.72	78.45
Muslims	(a) 1,57,262	2,49,585	2,81,085
	(b) 17.03	19.35	16.19
Christians	(a) 37,216	59,861	87,946
	(b) 4.03	4.64	5.06
Buddhists	(a) 811	1,524	2,886
	(b) 0.09	0.12	0.17
Jains	(a) 510	1,107	1,264
	(b) 0.06	0.09	0.07
Tribal	(a) 1,135	78	Nil.
	(b) 0.12	0.01	Nil.
Others	(a)	37	Nil.
	(b)	—	Nil.
Sikhs	(a) 214	915	1,023
	(b) 0.02	0.07	0.06.

Hindus : An analysis of the above table shows the preponderance of the Hindus in the district whose percentage to the total population of the district increased from 75.72 in 1961 to 78.45 in 1971. The percentage decadal growth rate of Hindu population during the period was 39.47.

Different sects of Hinduism :

Saktism : Twenty seven 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. Two-fifths of these *Saktists* were, however, from the tea plantations, and a considerable number of those living in the villages were probably

ex-tea-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 *Kachalkhati* temple at Sadiya and other *Sakta* temples at Dergaon, North Lakhimpur and other places bear proof of *Tantric* influences in ancient Kamarupa. That *Saktism* was widespread in the district in the past is evidenced by many *Sakta* temples which still stand in various parts of the district. The antiquity of *Saktism* in Darrang is borne out by the fact that Bana's daughter Usha, of *Pauranic* fame worshipped the goddess *Durga*. The Darrang *Rajas* who ruled over certain parts of Darrang district were also followers of *Saktism* and celebrated the *Durga Puja*, which is now the biggest festival of the year. The two manifestations of *Sakti* are *Durga* and *Kali*. *Kali* is worshipped on the night of *Shyama Puja* by the devout *Saktas* of the district. *Maroi Puja* which is a form of worship of *Sakti* or *Kali* is observed by the *Saktas* on special occasion. Animal sacrifices form an important part of the *Maroi Puja*. Goddess *Padmavati* who is regarded to be the daughter of Lord *Mahadeva* is widely worshipped, particularly by the *Saktas* of Mangaldai subdivision. This *Puja* is associated with a dance known as "*Deodhani*" dance and singing of a popular ballad by "*Oja Pali*". Other forms of worship of *Sakti*, prevalent till today in the district are the worship of *Uma*, *Bhairabi*, *Chandi* etc. It was from human sacrifices, it is commonly believed that *Manukata* hill near Tezpur has gained its name. However, it is not known if human sacrifices actually took place in this hillock. *Saktism* still commands a large following even today, as is evidenced by the observance of above religious practices. The *Bhairabi* temple near Tezpur and *Chandi* temple and *Uma than* in Vishwanath mauza are important centres of worship of *Sakti*.

Vaishnavism :— The worship of *Vishnu* was prevalent in Assam from early times. Kings of ancient Kamarupa traced their lineage to *Vishnu* through Naraka, and many of them were worshippers of *Vishnu*. Bhaskara-Varman is described in Bana's *Harsacharta* as a descendant of the *Vaishnava* family. *Vaishnavism*, however, occupied a subordinate position in subsequent centuries. Decay and degeneration

* B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*. Vol. V, Darrang, Allahabad, 1905. p. 96.

in the religious field led to a revival of the *Vaishnavite* faith in the fifteenth century. The leader of the *Vaishnava* Renaissance in Assam was Sankaradeva (1449-1568), who was ably assisted by several disciples chief among whom was Madhavadeva (1489-1596).

Madhavadeva was born at Letekupukhuri in Narayanpur area of North Lakhimpur. The exact location of the place of birth of this great saint-poet is still a matter of controversy. Two separate *Satras* have been set up in two separate villages on the basis of some proofs about the place of birth of Madhavadeva. Whatever may be the exact location, it is certain that Madhavadeva was born somewhere in this region and received his early education. At Dhuwahat, the *Sakta* youth Madhava, came to have a religious disputation with Sankara, as he found that the *Vaishnava* 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 occupation 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 *Vaishnava* order in Assam.

Sankaradeva was the founder of Neo-*Vaishnavism* 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 *Vishnu* 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 A.D.) 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 and Padma Ata Gopaladeva was better known as Vamsigopala. The nomination of Vamsigopala, a Brahmin, was also approved by Damodaradeva, another Brahmin saint. These three apostles and their deputies established *Satras* mostly in Assam, that is the Ahom kingdom as it then was. Some of their *Satros* are very rich, and each claims a large and widespread laity. Gopaladeva of Bhavanipur (1541-1611 A. D.) 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.

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 where the Tibeto-Burman population was predominating and brought under its fold large number of people from animistic practices. His disciple, Aniruddha founded Moamara sect and a *Satra* on the bank of Moamarabil of North Lakhimpur. The followers of this sect rose in revolt as one man against royal oppression (1769) and succeeded in subverting Ahom power for some time. The history of Assam *Vaishnavism* 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 brought itself into fulfilment in many ways, and marked out a definite place for Assam in the cultural map of India.

The institution of Satras : There are only a few big *Satras* in Darrang district. These *Satras* are more or less religious colleges of the Hindus resembling in some respects the mediaeval monasteries. There is a head called *Adhikar* in each *Satra* who is considered as *Guru* at the time of initiation by adult 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 house holding *Stras*, while in the *Satras* of celebrities one *Deka Adhikar* succeeds him ceremoniously.

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* land, 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 collections 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 kind, or in both.

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 *Vaishnavism* 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 gaiety. The *Satras* are also treasure houses of beautiful articles.

Saivism : *Saivism* is the counterpart of *Saktism* and is concerned with the worship of the procreative energy as manifested in the male. This religion was probably widespread in Darrang, as it appears from the preponderance of the *Siva* temples. The worship of *Sivalingam* is also prevalent in every nook and corner of this district. The legendary king Banasura of ancient Sonitpur was a *Saiva*, and he built the Mahabhairab Temple at Tezpur placing *Sivalingam* as his family deity. It is also believed that many of the *Siva* Temples were built by Bana for propagation of *Saivism*. But during the post-epic period the Hindu kings were *Saktas* and therefore *Saivism* lost its former glory; but was not utterly discarded by the people. In 1901, only 1,658 persons were censused as *Saivas* in the district.

The Muslims : The great bulk of the Muslims were living in Mangaldai subdivision at the beginning of this century. The old District Gazetteer of Darrang contains the following account of the Muslims. "In the seventeenth century A.D., the Muhammadans were, from time to time, in possession of Gauhati and the whole of Kamrup, and were able to make their influence felt immediately beyond their borders. But the expeditions they despatched up to the Bhareli would naturally have no permanent effect, and in the eastern part of the district they did not make any converts. After the expulsion of the Musalmans from Kamrup in 1681 A. D.; the simple villagers who had been converted to the faith of Islam, began to forget the principles of their religion, and to be gradually affected by the customs of their Hindu neighbours. They practised circumcision and offered prayers after the Muhammadan fashion it is true, but they could not read the *Koran*, and service was held in the open fields, as there were no building set apart for the purpose. They dressed, shaved, and worshipped idols like Hindus, they eschewed beef and declined to kill a cow, and in times of sickness and trouble endeavoured to obtain relief by reciting *mantras* and singing hymns. This state of affairs is said to have continued till 1880, when a revival of the true Muhammadan faith was inaugurated by a preacher called Zalkad Ali or Safi Saheb, who came from Gauhati and spent some years in the subdivision of Mangaldai"³⁰.

30. B. C. Allen: *Assam District Gazetteers*, vol. V, Darrang, Allahabad, (1905) pp. 100-101.

According to the census of 1961 there were 2,49,585 Muslims in the district including 1,33,265 males and 1,16,320 females. The Muslims constituted 19.35 per cent of the total population. The growth rate of the Muslim population in the district was 58.71 per cent during the decade 1951-61, as against 38.56 per cent in Assam as a whole. Among the plains districts the highest decadal increase was noticed in the erstwhile Lakhimpur district followed by Darrang district. The increase of Muslims in Assam was caused by waves of immigration.

In the 1971 Census the Muslims constitute 16.19 per cent of the total population of the district showing a decadal growth of 12.62 per cent only.

The Christians : According to the census of 1961, the total population of the Christian Community in the district was 59,860 persons including 30,616 males and 29,245 females the percentage being 4.64 to the total population of the district. 36,390 Christians including 19,718 males and 16,672 females constituting 3.98 per cent to the total population were censused in 1951. Till 1941 there were only 245 Europeans and 3 Anglo-Indians in this district of whom 220 persons were living in the tea gardens alone and 23 in the towns. Thus there were 6,400 local Christians who were convert to Christianity. In the tea gardens and the tribal areas, the Christian Missionaries could successfully engage themselves in proselytization. Several Missionaries set up educational institutions and hospitals in these areas.

In the 1971 Census the Christians account for 5.06 per cent of the total population of the district showing decadal increase of 46.92 per cent.

Other Minor Religious Communities : The Buddhists, the Jains and the Sikhs constitute only a small fraction of the total population. They had altogether only 3,546 members in the district according to the 1961 Census there were Buddhists 1,524 persons, 1,107 per Jainss ons and Sikhs 915 persons, their percentage to the total population of the district being 0.12, 0.90 and .07 respectively. Only 20 males and 8 females of the Buddhists, 530 males and 247 females of the Jains and 140 males and 43 females of the Sikhs lived in the urban areas. In the census of 1971, the Buddhi sts, Jains and the Sikhs accounted for 2,886 , 1,264 and 1,023 persons forming 0.17, 0.07 and 0.06 per cent respectively to the total population of the district.

Principal Communities, Castes, Classes and Tribes :

Darrang has been a melting pot of tribes and races. Waves of people belonging to various ethnic groups pouring into this region from time immemorial, have effaced the isolation of racial groups, inhabiting this northern part of Assam. The functional classification of the tribes which is supposed to be the root of the caste system gradually gave way to a more fluid type of social set-up and the rigidity of caste distinction markedly receded with the passage of time, particularly, during the last few decades. In the context of the changed social pattern, an account of castes and tribes is bound to have its own limitation. Salient features of some of the castes and tribes inhabiting the district are indicated below.

Brahmins : Various epigraphical and literary evidences clearly indicate that the Brahmins had a privileged position in Assam from the 5th-6th century A. D. The kings of Varman and Pala dynasties of ancient Kamarupa performed *Yajnas* (sacrifices), presumably engaging the Brahmin priests. During the mediaeval period we find ample references to Brahmins in the Assamese literary works many of which were composed by erudite Brahmin scholars of Assam. According to P. C. Choudhury, "the orthodox Brahmanical culture made a strong hold in Kamarupa³⁰ (ancient Assam).

Apart from observing the sacramental rites prescribed by Halayudha or Pasupati, the Brahmins also practise *Sandhya* and *Yapa*. The *Upanyan*, or the ceremony of investiture of the holy thread is strictly observed by the Brahmins. Although they do not eschew meat or fish in general, the widows are not expected to touch these things. Worship of various Hindu gods and goddesses in the private prayer-halls forms an important part of the religious activities of the Brahmins. Usually a Brahmin maintains a family deity. The Brahmins do not plough the land by themselves ; but work with the spade. In Darrang district the Brahmins constitute only a small fraction of its total population. The majority of them are found in Mangaldai and Patharughat areas.

Kayasthas : The Kayasthas constitute but a small fraction of the population of the district. They 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

30. P. C. Choudhury , *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A. D.*, Gauhati, 1959, p. 427.

families holding charge of *Vaishnavite 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 were the social scale. Traditional accounts of their origin, such as, that they Kshatriyas 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. 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 Kamrup and 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.

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 Biswa Sinha. His son, Naranarayan extended his conquests as far as upper Burma, and by the middle of the sixteenth century the Koches had attained a position of such power that the aboriginal people were anxious to be enrolled as members of their 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. In Sibsagar and Lakhimpur these converts still retain their tribal names and the Koch is a caste which has not broken up into various sub-divisions. This is not the case in Lower Assam, where different groups 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.

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 subdivision of Kamrup, they are generally known as Kamars or blacksmiths, in Sibsagar this

profession of Blacksmithy has been undertaken by Kalitas even. 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.

Yogi (Nath) : They are known as Naths, Nath-Yogis or Jugis and Katanis in various places of Assam. In Upper Assam, however, there are many Katanis who at one time were weavers by profession. In the *Ballala Charitam*, a Sanskrit book, supposed to be written in the 12th Century A. D., we find mention of a sect of people who lived on the banks of the Brahmaputra and were known as *Jungis*. They were drum-beaters, whose descendants are still found in some parts of Assam and are known as *Kendra-Jugis* (Yogis). Their original profession was drum-beating, palanquin-bearing, quackery, snake-charming etc. They have now taken to agriculture. "Judging from literary records and legends still prevalent amongst the Yogis of the Nath order, it appears that the Nath-cult has grown with general air of *Shaivism*."³⁷ The Yogis wear the holy-thread which they call *yogapatra*, but unlike the Brahmins they plough the land by themselves. They observe the permissible and impermissible limits of relationship in marriage. Previously the prepuberty marriage and widow marriage were prevalent among the members of this community. However, the former practice is now totally obsolete. People of this sect living in Cachar follow the practice of burial of the dead body; but those of the Brahmaputra valley follow the practice of cremation. They observe only ten days as the unclean period after the death of an adult, and three days in case of a minor. After the period of uncleanness, *Sraddha* ceremony is performed according to rites codified in the *smritis*.

37. S. B. Dasgupta ; *Obscure Religious Cults* ; p. 228.

Kaivartta or Jaliya :— 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 many essential tenets of Hinduism. It is interesting to note that most of the members of this community are followers of the *Vaishnavism* preached by the followers of Sankaradeva and Madhavadeva. In the observance of marriage and other customary rites they have many things in common with other castes. It has been mentioned elsewhere that they have been given a place among the Scheduled Castes.

The remnants of other functional groups of the Hindus are found in several subcastes and classes, such as *Mali* (gardener), *Kumar* (potter), *Sonari* (goldsmith), *Hira* (potter), *Napit* (barbar), and *Dhoba* (washerman), which are more or less functional. Of these castes, *Kumar*, *Mali*, *Sonari* and *Dhoba* and *Napit* have been enlisted among the Other Backward Classes, and *Hira* comes under the Scheduled Castes. Although most of these people have abandoned their traditional professions yet amongst them there are some who carry on the same.

Ahoms :— The Ahoms are the descendants of the Shan tribe and migrated into Assam from Burma in the early part of the thirteenth century (1228 A.D.) They gradually extended their sway over the whole of the Brahmaputra Valley. Their social set-up has been described as follows. "There were seven principal Ahom clans or *Phoids* who were well known under the name of Satgharia Ahoms or the Ahoms of the seven houses. Although opinions seem to differ with regard to the last four houses, there is unanimous opinion as regards the first three to which belonged the royal family and the families of the Burha Gohain and the Bar Gohain. Four of these *phoids*, according to one opinion, were Duara, Dehingia, Lahan, and Handique; according to another they were the Deodhai, Mohan, Bailung and Siring families of priests and astrologers. The families of Satgharia Ahoms were exogamous groups, each family being derived from one common ancestor. The *phoids* were further subdivided into a number of subgroups which were named after the places where they settled. Thus we have seven sub-houses of the royal family; eight of the Burha Gohain family, sixteen of the Bar Gohain family, twelve of the Deodhai, seven of the Mohan and eight of the Bailung family. The original Barpatra Gohain's family, known as Kenduguria Barpatra Phoid, was absorbed in the family of the king, as its founder Koncheng was a prince of royal blood. The non-royal

Barpatra Gohain families were Kalugayan or Gargayan Patar and Moran Patar.

"The whole of the superior exogamous groups are divided further into two main divisions called Gohains and Gogois, but there are some decidedly inferior *phoids*, such as Chaodangs, who were the public executioners in old days, as well as Likchous, Ghar-falas and others, with whom Ahoms of the upper classes will not intermarry." ³⁸ The Ahom priests called *Deodhais*, *Mohans* and *Bailungs* conserved the original Ahom tradition in the past and conducted worship at the Ahom shrines according to their own beliefs. The Ahoms are further divided into four sections, the *Chamuas* or gentry, the *Kheluas* or functional sections, 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.

Their complexion is fair, the cheek bones high and the face usually broad. The Mongoloid features are prominent among the Ahoms. Though their original religion approached Taoism, most of them have embraced Hinduism 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. Some other important aspects of their language and marriage system, have been briefly discussed elsewhere in this chapter. The Ahoms have traditionally displayed the ardency for assimilation. S.K. Bhuyan observes, "The number of Ahoms who had come with the first conqueror Sukapha was very small, and those who came in later were restricted in number as Shans are reluctant to leave their homes where there is plenty of food and happiness in their own self-sufficient villages situated amidst pastoral surroundings. With such small numbers the Ahoms found it impossible to maintain their comparatively extensive dominions in Eastern India, peopled by heterogeneous races and tribes, with the powerful Muslim and Koch rulers on the west as a source of perpetual danger. The Ahoms were therefore compelled to increase their community by conferring upon the new entrants the status and privileges of the members of the ruling race. The records of these affiliations were very caefully maintained and they were checked in every reign, the

38. E.A. Gait. *A History of Assam*; Calcutta, 1967 p. 257-58.

most exhaustive scrutiny being carried out during the reign of Swargadeo Pratap Singha. From these records, some leading Ahom families appear to have been founded by patriarchs belonging to the following non-Ahom races, tribes and communities,—Barahi, Chutia, Garo, Koch, Kachari, Moran, Hindu, Kalita Hindu Dhoba, Miri, Mogul and Muslim.”³⁹

The Miris : The Miris, also known as Mishings, were originally a hill tribe living in the hills between the Dafla and the Abor territory in the present Arunachal Pradesh and came down to the plains in the reign of the Ahom kings in Assam. In the plains they settled near the banks of the Brahmaputra and the Subansiri rivers and their tributaries taking to agriculture as their principal occupation. They belong to the Tibeto-Burman family of Mongoloid people that followed the Austro-Asiatic races in India and are akin to the Bodo. The Miris claim certain ethnological affinities with the Padams and Pasi-Mayongs of Arunachal Pradesh. The Abors and the Miris are of a distinctly Mongoloid type. 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 sects : (a) *Baregam* (Twelve gams) and (b) *Dahgam* (Ten gams) which are again sub-divided into large number of minor groups. The main clans which fall within the category of *Baregam* are : *Pegu*, *Doloi*, *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 subclans such as *Pamegam* or *Gam*, *Padl*, *Medak*, *Keman*, *Panging*, *Ngate*, *Mipen*, *Polong*, etc.

But inter-group marriage and inter-dining are prevalent amongst both the groups. Their houses are built on bamboo platforms raised one and half metre or sometimes two metres above the ground according to the flood level, and are sometimes as much as 36.57 metres in length. A single house will often contain a family of sixty to eighty persons living in one great room without any partition,

39. S.K. Bhuyan, *Anglo Assamese Relations*, Gauhati, 1949 p, 15.

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 beer) 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 marriage is a costly affair, entailing considerable expenditure upon food, 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 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 Darrang district in particular have, due to the influence of the teachings of *Mahapuruṣa* Sankaradeva embraced Hinduism. But though Hinduised and they claim themselves as Hindus, they have been still retaining their old forms of worship, culture, manners and social customs. Their old religion conforms to the 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 bury them and the funeral ceremonies include a sumptuous feast. In the matter of inheritance the Miris appear to have followed principles enunciated in the Dayabhaga system of Hindu Law.

The Miris have their own *Kebang* which is a village assembly that functions as a judicial institution. 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 who excel in designing. 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.

Boro-Kachari :— The Boros or the Boro-Kacharis belonged to a distinct racial group of people living in the northeastern India. According to S.K. Chatterjee⁴⁰ and Fr. Matthias Harmannas they belong to Indo-Mongoloid (Kiratas) group which includes the Boros and their allied tribes. "As is the case with the Meche (Mech)" says Fr. M. Harmannas "so also with the Kacharis (Boros) the Mongoloid features are very prominent, the strong cheek bones, slit eyes, a slight growth of hair in the body and scant beard. They are shorter and more stocky than the Indians of the north-east".⁴¹

The Boro kingdom extended along the south bank of the Brahmaputra from the Dikhu to the Kalang in the thirteenth century. The Kacharis retreated further south when their old capital

Dimapur was sacked by the Ahoms in 1536 and they established a new capital at Maibong, in the North-Cachar Hills. These people are known as Dimasa which means "sons of the great river." The ruins of Dimapur which are in existence till now exhibit the degree of perfection which the Kacharis attained.

The social structure of the Boros is primarily patriarchal in character. Nevertheless, the matriarchal element is also not totally absent among the Boros. They maintain certain definite rules in respect of their houses and maintenance of their homestead. They generally construct their main house to the northern side of their homestead and this house stretches from west to the east. There are also three divisions of the main house with provision for a door facing to the south. The eastern-most portion of the main house is meant for cooking and worship. The courtyard also accommodates the altar of the *Bathow*, the supreme God of whom a *Sizu* tree is the emblem. Although the Boros are worshippers of *Bathow*, the supreme God, yet they worship certain gods and goddesses. The Boros believe in ghosts and spirits and their malignant influence upon human society.

The Boro-Kacharis are agriculturists and they live in villages. They observe certain ceremonies and festivals on the occasion of birth, wedding, and death. The most important festival of the Boros is the *Baisagu* or the spring time festival in which singing, dancing drinking and holding feasts mark the day. They dispose of the dead bodies either by cremation or by burial. Drinking occupies a vital place in the social life of these people. The rice beer is prepared almost in every family and they rejoice in drinking collectively during their festivals. Of course, drinking is common among other tribal people of the district.

The Kachari women command respect in their community; their position is never regarded inferior to that of a man. However, birth of a daughter is not favoured as much as that of a son. In cases of marital separation the woman is denied of her rights to have a share of the property of her husband, although she is allowed to take her ornaments. During their maidenhood they enjoy the liberty to participate in singing, dancing and merry-making on the occasions of marriages and festivals, but married women generally refrain from outdoor exhilarations. The Boro women are exceedingly industrious and they spend much of their time in the fields working side by side with their sun-burnt husbands. The

40. S.K. Chatterjee ; *KIRATA-JANA-KRTI*. The Indo-Mongoloids ; their contributions to the History and Culture of India, Calcutta, 1951. p. 13.

41. Fr. M. Harmannas ; *The Indo-Tibetans* Bombay, 1954. p. 38.

Boro women are expert weavers and can weave all their wearing apparels.

(d) **Social life :**

(i) **Family system :** Among the Hindus the property is generally held by the head of the family, who manages it as its custodian. After the death of the father, the sons and daughters inherit the property along with their widowed mother. In the matter of inheritance and succession Dayabhaga system holds good in this district. The joint family system was common in the past. There are cases even now where it is found that several brothers live jointly and have a common kitchen. But now-a-days there is a trend for joint families to break up into smaller units under new socio-economic influences and the joint family system is losing its hold. Joint family system is not prevalent among some of the tribes of the district.

(ii) **Marriage :** The table below indicates the age and marital status of the people of Darrang district, as revealed in the 1961 Census.

Age group	Total population		Never Married		Married	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
All ages	6,94,927	5,94,743	4,01,270	3,09,749	2,75,228	2,54,041
10-14	77,913	67,359	77,884	66,299	11	1,018
15-19	52,116	51,259	47,827	19,294	4,105	31,389
20-24	52,447	53,068	31,991	4,884	19,985	47,275
25-29	63,429	52,369	19,389	1,922	43,021	48,965
30-34	52,478	39,568	6,372	491	44,726	37,192
35-39	45,983	28,438	2,276	256	42,358	26,066

Infant marriage is practically unknown. The average age of marriage for males as well as females has been rising gradually owing largely to the spread of education and change in the social outlook. The economic hardship of many parents has also compelled them to postpone the marriage of their children. About 47 per cent of the married males fall within the age group of 25-39 years and 64% of the married females fall within the age group of 15-34 years.

Monogamy and Polygamy : Monogamy is common among all sections of the Hindus of the district ; but it was not compulsory among them till the enforcement of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. The Muslims follow the practice of polygamy in the manner prescri-

bed by the Muslim law ; but it is not usually preferred by many of them. The tribal people of the district are mostly monogamous. However, Polygamy is allowed by the Kacharis, although monogamy is the general rule among them. Polyandry is prohibited among all sections of people.

Marriage customs : Among the Assamese Hindus, marriage by negotiation is common. The horoscopes of both the bride and the bridegroom are consulted before the marriage. This is known as *rahi-jorachowa*. The nuptial festivities begin at five, three or two days before the day fixed for wedding. On the commencing day a party from the bride-groom's house leaves for the bride's house with clothes, ornaments, foodstuff and a sacramental jar of water. The bride is presented with the bridal dress and ornaments. This ceremony is called *joran-diya* or *tekeli-diya* or *telar bhar*. During the nuptial festivities the bride and the bridegroom take ceremonial baths known as *nowani*. The night before the day fixed for marriage is called *adhiyasa* which is followed by a local rite known as *Gathiyan-khunda*. An aromatic root called *gathiyan* is ceremoniously powdered and put on the head of the bride. On the dawn of the marriage day the ceremony of *daiyana* is performed in the following manner. The bride sits at the door of her bed-room ; a female relative touches her cheeks, arms and feet with a pair of betel leaves dipped in curd.

On the marriage day the *sraddha* ceremony is performed before noon in the houses of the bride and bridegroom and guests are treated to light refreshment. At an auspicious moment in the evening the bridegroom goes in procession to the bride's house. The ceremony of *suag-tola* takes place in the bridegroom's place before the departure of the bridegroom and in the bride's house when the groom arrives. The marriage ceremony is performed observing the rituals as prescribed in the *sastras*. The *homa* and *saptapadi* are two essential elements of these rituals. After solemnisation of the marriage, the bride and the bridegroom are taken inside the bride's house where the ceremony of *ag-chaul-diva* is performed. In a sense it is a ceremony of invocation of the bridegroom to the house of his father-in-law and bidding farewell to the bride. The marriage is consummated after the bride and the bridegroom together make an offering to two demons known as *Khoba-Khubuni*, on the evening of the third day after marriage.

Inter-caste marriages: The Miris are exogamous with regard to sub-clans. Within these sub-clans they have prejudices against endogamy and will not countenance it. Although there are clans which do not inter-marry, runaway marriages are prevalent and the parties are not excommunicated. Among the Hindus the caste distinction is not as rigid as it was a few decades ago; nevertheless the inter-caste or sub-caste marriages are not very frequent among them.

Widow remarriage: Although permitted by law remarriage of widow is not looked upon with favour by the high caste Hindus. But it is not usually discouraged by some sections of people. Even among the high caste Hindus widow remarriage is gaining ground with the change in the conservative outlook of society and spread of education.

Economic dependence of women: According to the 1971 Census, out of the total female population of 8,16,553, only 44,333 are workers. Many of these workers are engaged in agriculture—2,743 cultivators and 1,842 agricultural labourers. 32,320 females are engaged in such activities as mining, quarrying, forestry, plantation etc. Household industries provide employment to 506 female workers and 4,466 find employment in other services. Other pursuits such as manufacture, construction, trade and commerce, transport-storage and communication absorb 1,956, 166, 295 and 39 females respectively. From the above it is clear that women of agricultural class and those employed in plantation and household industries are economically more active than their counterparts in other pursuits. But, by and large, women are still economically dependent upon their men-folk. Even in the rural economy women of well-to-do families rarely engage themselves in any economic activity except such as are confined within the household. Spread of education and emancipation of women have encouraged women to participate on an equal footing with men in various walks of life. Women are now taking to such professions as doctors, teachers, engineers etc.

Drinking: Prohibition in respect of *opium*, *ganja* and *bhang* but not for liquor is in force in the district. The excise revenue of the district is considerable.

Drinking is common among the tea garden labourers, some industrial and colliery labourers besides the tribal people of the district. Religious taboos scarcely deter the non-tribals from drinking which they take in a moderate scale. However, the caste

Hindus, Buddhists, Jains and Muslims, generally speaking loathe drinking. It is quite likely that imitation of the western ways of life, as reflected in the manner and customs of the Europeans who had served in tea gardens and various other concerns, slowly induced a section of people, other than labourers to take to drinks. Thus the tea industry brought in its wake among many other things, drinking which kept the labour class in a state of penury for decades.

(III) **Home life:** In a rural family the following are the houses generally found—*Choraghar* (Reception house), *Barghar* (living house) *Bhoralghar* (store house), *Gosainghar* (house of worship) and *Gohalighar* (cowshed). These houses in most cases have thatched roofs, mud plastered *ikra* (reed) walls and bamboo or wooden posts. At present many people have constructed their houses with *pacca* plinth and C. I. Sheet roofing with up-to-date fittings.

Previously *chalpira* (wooden sofa), *tamulipira* (low wooden stool) and mats such as *merdhara*, *dhara*, *bardhara* and *patidhara* were the common furniture. Their places now-a-days have been taken by wooden benches, tables and chairs and other modern furniture. *Bankahi*, *Banbati*, *Kahi*, *bati*, *lota*, *gilach*, *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*' (comb) 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 decorations are prevailing.

Male dress includes *dhoti*, *chadar*, shirts, trousers and modern pants and coats. Female dress consists of *riha*, *mekaela*, *chgdar* blouse, and ornaments include *keru*, *mani*, *kharu*, *jhgngphai-keru*, *dugdugi*, *bena*, necklace, chain, earring, *bala* etc. Gold and silver ornaments are preferred. Cheap gilded ornaments are also available. In ancient times, the craftsmen of Assam engaged in enamelling gold and silver jewellery and in making jewellery of solid gold and silver widely known for their high degree of perfection. The traditional and typical Assamese ornaments found in the district are *dhol-biri*, *jon-biri*, *bena*, *dugdugi*, *galpata*, *gamkharu*, *thuriya* and *loka-paro*. The hollow tube of gold covered with gold leaves, rubies and emeralds, made in the shape of a *dhol* (drum) is called *dhol-biri*. The *jon-biri* is also made of gold and resembles the half moon in

shape. The *galpata* which is a necklace, made of gold generally contains three to four tolas of gold. The large sized locket made of gold is usually attached to *galpata*. The *thuriya* is worn in the ear. It is made of gold and set with rubies and emeralds. However, with the advent of the jewellers from other parts of India, traditional patterns have been virtually wiped out.

Tribal women wear the *mekhela* 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. Vegetable, dal, fish, egg, meat, milk, curd, fruit, etc., form the subsidiary items of food. Besides these, Assamese people take *khar*, an alkaline preparation and *tenga* a sour preparation made out of sour fruits or vegetables.

(IV) Festivities :

(i) Hindu festivals : Colourful festivals observed in the district enliven the lives of the people. The Hindus who constitute the bulk of the total population of the district observe many festivals, ritualistic and others, of local nature. The biggest festival of the year is the *Durga Puja*; the towns, tea gardens, even thickly populated villages become agog with the *puja* festivities from the *Mahalaya* day. Brisk preparations are made for days in all the community *puja* centres to invoke the Mother Goddess. The image of goddess *Durga* is installed ceremoniously on the *puja*-pandal on the day as fixed in the almanac and the festival continues for four days. On all these nights theatrical performances or cultural shows are held in the community *puja* centres. On the last day of the festival, the idol is mounted upon some vehicle and thereafter ceremoniously immersed in some river or running water. The *puja* and the immersion ceremony attract large number of people from distant places. No other festival observed in the district can equal the *Durga puja* in pomp and grandeur.

Another religious festival celebrated widely in this district is the *Sivaratri* which is observed with much *iclat* in the Siva temples. Large number of devotees collect at the Mahabhairav temple in Tezpur town. Singri temple, Vishwanath temple, Nijhaleswar temple, Jogeswar temple, and Madhagosain temple on the occasion of the *Sivaratri*. In the village *Namghars* and in some *Vaishnavite satras*, *Nam-kirtan* is held, fast is observed and hemp is offered to Lord

Siva. *Ghota*, a preparation of milk, puddled rice, banana, sugar, and ghee mixed with a few grains of *Bhang* (hemp) is also served amongst the devotees at some places. Thus an atmosphere of gay abandon prevails during this festival. The *Janmastami* is observed in honour of the birth of Lord Krishna. In all the *Vaishnavite Satras* of the district and the village *Namghars* the day is observed by holding night-long prayer services. The *Pacheti* festival is observed in Khatara *satra* in Mangaldai subdivision on the *sankranti* day of the months of *Bhadra* and *Ahin*. Large number of people come from distant places to witness this festival. Mention must also be made of the popular *mathani* festival held on the *sankranti* day of the months of *Ahin* and *Kati*, at Devananda *satra* in Mangaldai subdivision. This is a festival which is observed to celebrate the churning of the ocean by the gods and the demons, and the birth of the Goddess Lakshmi.

The *Dol-jatra* is a festival held in honour of Lord Krishna in February or March. The image of the deity is moved out of the shrine and is mounted on a *Dol* which is an elevated earthen pedestal. The people merrily indulge in throwing red powder or coloured water on one another in memory of Lord Krishna's frolicking with the milkmaids of Vrindavan. The festival is popular in the urban as well as in rural areas. The festivities include also recitation of *Nam-kirtan*, *oja-pali* and *bhaona* performances. This festival of throwing colour at each other, is also called *phagua*. The tea garden labourers and those persons who hail from the northern India, observe the day with pomp and grandeur. The *Dol Jatra* festival of Ghorabandha and Rudreswar temples attract large number of people.

The *Visvakarma puja*, *Saraswati puja*, *Lakshmi puja*, are also becoming gradually more and more popular. The *Kali puja* coincides with the *Diwali*. The sky is red with crackers and the towns assume wonderful looks when hundreds of houses are illuminated in the evening. The *Manasa puja* is celebrated in various parts of the district during the rainy months of *Jaistha*, *Asada*, *Sravana* and *Bhadra*. The *oja pali* is an essential part of the *Manasa puja* particularly in the Mangaldai subdivision. The popular ballad of Beula-Lakhindar forms the central theme of the *oja-pali*, a popular dance drama or folk-play. The *oja-pali* comprises a group of six singers led by the principal singer called *oja*. They dance and sing the popular ballads or certain passages from the old Assamese poetical works. The only musical instrument which they use is a few pairs

of *Khuti-tal*. At regular intervals the music is interposed by some witty dialogue between the *Oja* and a member of the party, in course of which the passages are explained to the audience in a very lucid manner. The *oja-pali* is considered to be the precursor of *bhaona* introduced by Sankaradeva, the saint-poet of Assam. When the *Manasa puja* lasts for five days, it is called *Maroi puja*. The *Deodhani* dance is another important feature of the *Maroi puja*. The *Deodhani* is a female dancer believed to be possessed of the deity. Through her dance poses she represents herself as an awe-inspiring prototype of some mythical spirit, capable of recognising the shadows of the events to come. The *Deodhani* dance is accompanied by the drum beating of the *Dhuliya* (drum beater). Goddess *Manasa* or *Padma* is worshipped in the *Padma* temple located in *Bonmaza mauza*, and at *Mukteswari* temple located at *Odola* village in *Ambagaon mauza* of *Mangaldai*, subdivision.

The special festivals of the Assamese of the district are the three *Bihus* and the death anniversary ceremonies of Sri Sri Sankaradeva and Sri Sri Madhavadeva, the founders of the *Mahapurusha* sect of Vaishnavism. They observe three *Bihus* in the year—the *Rangali Bihu*, *Bhogali Bihu* and *Kati Bihu*. These festivals are traced to the remote past and are associated with the cycles of cultivation. The *Kati Bihu* is celebrated on the last day of *Ahin* (about October 14th) and is not an occasion of very much importance. Hymns are sung out-doors 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* begins on the last day of the month of *Puh* (January 13th or 14th). A few days ahead of the festival a *Meji* which is a tall heap of rice straw piled around a central pole, is constructed. On the *Uruka* night, preceding the *Bihu* day, the villagers feast in grass huts that have been constructed for this purpose. At the dawn of the *Bihu*-day, the villagers bathe and warm their chilled bodies at these bonfires. The *Magh Bihu* is to some extent a youth and childrens' festival and most of the merriment is confined to the youth and smaller boys who sing and dance. Buffalo fights are organised in the fields, but these contests are rather tame affairs and the animals very seldom injure one another. The *Rangali Bihu* also called the *Bahag Bihu* begins on the last day of *Chaitra* (about April 14) and marks the Assamese New Year. It is a spring festival, in which dance and music predominate. The cattle are smeared with oil mixed with *matikalai*, turmeric, and rice and are then taken to the nearest stream and bathed. After the bath

garlands made of brinjal, turmeric and bottle-gourd pieces are hung on their necks and a pastoral song wishing them to multiply year by year is sung. *Huchari* parties go from house to house singing hymns and pastoral songs and offering greetings. The *Bihu* is observed as a national festival by the Assamese people and it serves to promote unity among different creeds and communities. The *Bihu gits* constitute a prolific variety of songs in Assamese literature. The central theme of these songs is love in its different moods. Social visits are an integral part of the *Bihus*. The merriments of the pastoral festivals now pervade urban areas also and *Bihu melas* are widely organised in towns. In such functions best dancers (*Bihu Kuwaris*) are selected and awarded prizes. The death anniversary of Sri Sri Sankaradeva is celebrated in August-September and that of Sri 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 the *Vaishnavites*.

The *Namghar* is the community prayer-hall of the villagers, who hold prayer services known as *Nam-Kirtan* during religious festivals. The villagers also hold *Nam-kirtan* in their own houses. The musical instruments used here are the *Tal* (cymbal) and *Nagra* a two-piece musical instrument one big, and the other small, earthen and dome-shaped. Simple theatrical performances called *bhaonas* are often held in *Namghars*. They are also held in temporary sheds constructed by the road-side. Mention may be made of the *Bara-khelia bhaona* held at *Jamuguri* in *Tezpur* Subdivision during March every year. Open air operas called *Yatras* are very popular in the *Mangaldai* sub-division.

Exquisite folk songs and ballads such as *biya-nam* (marriage songs), *tokari git* (songs of the mendicants), *Ai-nam* (song in praise of Goddess Durga to prevent the outbreak of small-pox epidemics), *Sibar-git*, *Durgavari nam*, *Suknanni*, *Bihu git*, *Durgar git* and folk songs sung in honour of other deities reverberate the sky on different occasions. The *Vaishnavite* poets introduced devotional songs, known as *Bargi*, which form a part of the rural life, and display the musical talent both of the author and the singer. The *oja-pali* is very popular in *Mangaldai*. The *oja-palis* put up shows not only in the *Durga puja* and *Maroi puja* but also in the social gatherings. Parties of *Dhulia* (drum beaters) *Khuliya* (those who play on *Khol*, a type of musical instrument), are invited to the

- marriage ceremonies ; but they have gradually been replaced by the Band parties.

The musical accompaniment to the wide variety of songs is provided by indigenous musical instruments like *Bin*, *Tokari*, *Dotara*, *Khanjari*, *Cymbals*, *Khuti-tal*, *Bhoral*, *Gongs*, *Drums*, *Flutes*, *Chiphung Flute* (used by the Kacharis), *Daba*, *Dhol*, (drum) *Khol* or *Mridanga* and *Pepa* of buffalo-horn etc.

(ii) Muslim festivals :— Among the Muslim festivals mention must be made of the *Id-uz-zuha*, *Muharram*, *Fatiha-i-duaz-daham* and *Id-ul-fitre*. The *Muharram* is observed to commemorate the tragic episode of Imam Hussain, the grandson of the Prophet who was slain on the banks of the Karbala. Although this is a Shia festival, the *Sunis*, of whom there are large numbers in the district, observe it. *Taziyas* are brought out in procession and are marked by the display of mock fights. On the occasions of the *Id-uz-zuha* and *Id-ul-fitre* or *Bakrid*, the Muslims don their new white attires and go to the local *Idgahs* to hold prayer services. *Id-uz-zuha* is also an occasion of alms giving. *Fatiha-i-duaz-daham* and *Shab-e-barat* are two other festivals widely observed by the Muslims. It is interesting to note that the *Jikir*, a kind of folk song, couched in Assamese language is popular among the Muslims. The main object of these folk-songs is to convey His word to all the believers. Several scholars are of opinion that the *Jikir* shows the influence of the *Nam-kirtan* of the Hindus on the local Muslims.

(iii) Kachari festivals : The religious festivals of the Kacharis of the district are different from those observed by the Hindus. The impact of the Hindu proselytisation is noticeable among them. Some of the Hindu gods and goddesses such as goddess *Lakshmi* or *Kali*, are believed by the Kacharis. They believe in *Bathau* or *Siju* who is looked upon as the tutelary "deity of the house." This is commonly represented by a species of cactus, sometimes called *Siju-Gohain* which is generally found in the courtyard of the well-to-do Kachari families. The *Siju* worship involves the slaughter of goats, chickens etc., and at times eggs are also offered to the deity. The Kacharis believe in the supernatural power and at times make some offerings to ward off the evil spirits. The *Deori* is supposed to have the power of finding out the god who has caused the particular disease and of ascertaining the type of offering required to drive away the evil spirit. The incantation of the priest is also believed to have

the powers to heal the ailments caused by the offended deity. The Kacharis have no religious festivals properly so called; *Kherai puja*, *Habajanai*, *Natpuja*, *Bugrumba* and *Maigainai* are some of their traditional festivals. The *Deodhani* dance is a common feature of the *Kherai puja*. Large number of people gather at times about the end of November or beginning of December, and again in April. These congregations are not for distinctly religious purposes but provide some occasions for merry making. The former is known as the eating of new rice (*mekham gadan Zanai*) and is marked by very liberal consumption of rice beer. Among the spirits which are believed by the Kacharis mention must be made of *Mainau* (the deity who provides food and drink), *Khober* (the deity of the paddy fields), *Hasung madai* (the god of the travellers), besides a host of others, such as *Dolah Gabang*, *Snarumaroi*, *Bura-Gohain*, *Hgrani Madai* (Gods of woods) and *Daini Madai* (Gods of waters). There are only a few festivals in which these spirits are propitiated.

National festivals :— Besides the three *Bihus* mentioned earlier, the Republic Day, the Independence Day, the Martyrs' Day, teachers' Day Flag Day, the birth and death anniversaries of national leaders are observed throughout the district in a befitting manner.

(iv) Communal life :

(i) Pilgrim Centres : There are large number of old temples and *satras* which attract the pilgrims. Tradition associates the Mahabhairav temple located in Tezpur with king Bana of mythological fame. He is believed to have constructed this temple to propitiate lord *Siva*. Large number of people visit this temple during the *Sivaratri* festival. The present temple was perhaps constructed during the Ahom rule. The Bhairavi temple where goddess Bhairavi is worshipped is also an important Pilgrim centre. The Rudrapad shrine is located near the Bhomoraguri hills about eleven kms. east of Tezpur. It is so called because there is a rock in the bed of the Brahmaputra bearing the imprint of *Sivas (Rudrsa)* foot print. It is believed that a temple was built here by the Ahom King Siva Sinha in 1700 A.D. The Niz Haleswar temple was built by the Ahom King Rudra Sinha in 1705 A.D. This is a Siva temple located near Tezpur town. The *Vishwanath-kshetra* is a great religious centre of the Hindus. It is believed that King Bana worshipped Lord *Mahadeva* and succeeded in obtaining his consent to stay in his kingdom. Thus Lord *Mahadeva* came to stay at Vishwanath where a *Siva* temple was constructed. Various

other stories are associated with Vishwanath-kshetra which consists of a cluster of temples around the main *Siva* temple. *Suryamadhav Chandi*, *Baneswar*, *Uma* and *Kamaleswar* temples are located near the main temple. The *Siva* temple is the central temple and is known as *Bardol*. "The Biswanath temple was built by Gadadhar Singh in 1685 A.D., and a copper plate records the grant of four Brahman and forty Sudra *paiks*, eight dancing girls, and twenty *puras* of land with various ornaments to the idol. In 1815, a further grant of twenty four *puras* of land was made by Chandra Kanta Singh; but the temple was long ago swept away by the Brahmaputra, and even the *lingum*, which is carved on a big rock, is only visible in the dry season. About 1730 A.D., Sib Singh constructed at Bishnath the Sivanath moth, a temple about 40 feet high which has now fallen into disrepair; but this is not so fine a specimen of Ahom architecture as the Bordol temple which was erected by Gaurinath Singh about 1790 A.D. There are two small temples standing on rocks in the river, and four other places sacred to Basudeb, Kamaleswar, Muktinath, and Surjya Madhab; but worship is here conducted in a thatched hut, and from an archaeological point of view they possess but little interest. Local tradition avers that Sati's breast fell near Bishnath when her body was hewn in pieces by Vishnu, and though this tradition is not supported by the *Yogini Tantra*, which is the great authority on the subject, it possibly accounts for the unusual degree of reverence with which Bishnath was regarded by the Ahom kings."⁴² The Singri hill has been referred to as the *Sringatak* hill in the *Kalika Purana*. Hryshyasringa Muni is believed to have built the *Siva* temple here. The deity is known as Gupteswar. The Bhutias also visit this temple in the dry season. Innumerable visitors come to attend the *Sivaratri mela* held here every year.

The Basudev temple, situated at Kamdewal village of Gohpur mauza is believed to be the largest of all temples in Darrang district. The temple is, however, nearly in ruins. It was built in 1758 A.D. The temple is the property of Dakshinpat Gosain. The Nagsankar temple is believed to have been constructed by kings Nagsankar or Nagaksha towards the close of the 4th century A.D., and was rebuilt by the Ahom king Suchengpha in 1480 A.D. In the Nagsankar mauza, exists the temple of Dulal Madhab. It is not known who established these temples.

42. B. C. Allen : *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol—V, Darrang, Allahabad 1905, pp.66-67.

The Rudreswar temple is situated at village Mahalipara of Dipila mauza in Mangaldai subdivision. It is believed to be of recent date. The Mukteswari temple is one of the two seats of *Manasa puja* in this subdivision; the other being Padma *Than* in Bonmaja mauza. The Madha Gosain temple located in Pub-Dalgaon mauza is believed to have been constructed in the 14th or 15th century. The temple has been very badly damaged in the great earthquake of 1897. The priest of this temple belongs to the Hindu Chutiya caste. The Sanpara temple is situated at Lokrai mauza near Sipajhar. It is believed to be a very ancient temple. In the month of *Jeth* large number of people assemble here and observe the *Pani-tola* festival. A list of temples is given in the Appendix.

There are numerous *Satras* established by the *Vaishnavite* leaders in the district. The important *satras* of the district are given in the Appendix. The Biswa Satra established during the reign of the Koch kings of Darrang is a *Sakta-satra* where *Durga puja*, *Lakshmi puja*, *Saraswati puja* etc., are held. Hundreds of devotees gather in the temples and *satras* on certain occasions. Other *satras* are all *Vaishnavite* ones.

(ii) Communal dances and songs :— *Rangali Bihu* is the festival where groups of Assamese people dance and sing the *bihugit*. As the girls dance, the boys play on flute and beat drums, and blow the *pepa* made of buffalo-horn and *taka*, an indigenous musical gadget made by splitting in the middle, about two feet long whole bamboo. The *satriya* dances are of classical type, introduced by the *Vaishnava* leaders. The *satriya* dance is a galaxy of dances, such as *Sutradhari Nritya*, *Dasavatar Nritya*, *Kaliyadaman Nritya* etc. Mention has already been made of *Oja-pali* dance. The tribal people of the district perform a variety of dances. The Kacharis have *Kherai* dance, *Bugrumba* dance and *Maigainai* dance, besides the *Bihu* dance. The tea garden labourers have their traditional *Jhumur* dance. The exquisite and colourful tribal dances are reminiscent of their glorious traditions.

(iii) Public Games and Recreation Clubs :— *Dhop Khela* is quite popular among the children. It is played with a ball-shaped *Dhop*, made of cloth, between two parties. *Vanta* game is played with some sticks by the cowherd boys. The *Hugudugu* in which a boy is to run and touch some of his opponents and return to the starting point, in the same breath requires good deal of agility. The opponents are expected to touch this boy after he

exhales but before he reaches the starting point. *Dhara Hau* resembles the Kabadi game. Although *Dhara Hau* is confined among the children, at times the grown-ups also try their strength in it. Swimming, hunting, long race, tug-of war, and wrestling are some of the sports and pastimes of the grown-ups. Till a few decades ago, large tracts of the district were covered with jungles full of deer and other wild animals which provided excellent opportunity for hunting. Professional wrestling is very rare in the district. However, on the *Rangali Bihu* days, wrestling among the strong and healthy youths brings about a bundle of fun to the villagers. Indoor games consist of *cowri* and some games played on boards resembling the checkers. Most of the indigenous games have been replaced by the western games and sports. Foot-ball is now the most popular game in the district. People evince keen interest in the foot-ball matches and competitions. In Mangaldai and Tezpur towns foot-ball competitions are arranged during the monsoon days. The Dugar Shield Competition held in Tezpur every year attracts teams not only from various parts of Assam, but also from the neighbouring States. Cricket is also becoming popular; but is confined mostly to town areas. Among other outdoor games tennis and hockey have not yet gained wide popularity. There are only a few tennis clubs in the district. Badminton is more popular than tennis; but hockey does not seem to have interested many as yet. Various games of cards, carrom, table tennis are some of the indoor games which are common. The Northern Assam Circle Zonal Tournament held among the students of the secondary schools, and Inter-University Foot-ball Competition organised by Gauhati University have greatly enthused the school and college students of the district, as is evident by the large number of school and college students taking part in these competitions.

There are only a few Recreation Clubs of the tea planters of the district. Besides the arrangements for holding indoor and a few outdoor games, there is also provision for bars in these clubs. Some other sports and literary clubs have been opened in the towns; due to paucity of funds very few of them have been able to have their own buildings and other amenities. The names and location of the clubs are given below.

1. Attareekhat Indian Club, Attareekhat T. E. & P. O. Darrang, Assam.
2. Vishwanath Gymkhana Club, Mijikajan P. O. Darrang, Assam.
3. Barchola Gymkhana Club, Dibru-Darrang, T.E., P.O. Panbari, Dist. Darrang, Assam. Club days-Thursday & Sunday.

4. East Burai Club, P. O. Helem, Darrang, Assam.
5. Gohpur United Club, P. O. Gohpur, Darrang, Assam. Estd-1941.
6. Indian Staff Social Club (Bargang & Borbell) Estd-1940. Kettela Tea Estate, P. O., Dargang, Assam.
7. Mangaldai Polo & Gymkhana Club, Panerihat, P. O., Darrang, Assam. Clubs days-Thursday & Sunday.
8. Orang Staff Club-Orang Tea Estate, Majbat, P. O., Darrang.
9. Rangapara Union Theatre Club, P. O. and T. O.-Rangapara, Darrang Assam. Tea Garden employees' recreation Club, Estd.-1920
10. Chopai Union Club, P. O. & T. O.-Panbari, Darrang.
11. Tarajulie Staff Club, Tarajulie Tea Estate, P.O. & T.O.-Barjuli District Darrang, Assam, Estd. 1950.
12. Tezpur Stn. Club Ltd.-Estd. 1875, affiliated to Shillong.
13. Thakurbari Club Ltd., Thakurbari P. O. & T. O., Darrang, Assam.
14. Thomson Club (Indian), Estd.-1931, Dibru-Darrang Siding, Dhekiajuli P. O., & T. O., Rly. Station-Dhekiajuli Road.

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 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.

APPENDIX

(1) List of main temples in the district
(a) Tezpur Sub-division.

Sl. No.	Name of temple	Location	Deity worshipped
1	2	3	4
1.	Mahabhairav temple	Tezpur	Siva
2.	Bhairavi temple	-do-	Bhairabi
3.	Rudrapad temple	Bhomoraguri	Siva
4.	Bhairavpad temple	Bhairabpur mauza	"
5.	Tingeswar temple	do-	"
6.	Henguleswar temple	do-	"
7.	Ketekibari temple	Ketekibari village	"
8.	Haleswar temple	Haleswar mauza	"
9.	Sukleswar temple	-do-	"
10.	Nandikeswar temple	Chilabandha mauza	Nandini Bhairav
11.	Saubhagya Madhab temple	Barbhogiya mauza	Madhava
12.	Nagsankar temple	Nagsankar mauza	Siva
13.	Vishwanath temple	Vishwanath mauza	Siva. There are other small temples nearby for other gods and goddesses
14.	Gupteswar (Singri) temple	Barchola mauza	Siva
15.	Basudev temple	Gohpur mauza	Basudev
16.	Baneswar temple	Barbhogiya mauza	Siva and his consort
17.	Jogeswar temple	-do-	Siva
(b) Mangaldai Sub-division.			
1.	Rudreswar temple	Dipila mauza	Siva
2.	Tamreswar temple	Near Khoirabari	Tamreswar
3.	Padma temple	Bonmaza mauza	Padma
4.	Mukteswari temple	Ambagan mauza	Padma
5.	Madhagosain temple	Pualgaon mauza	Siva
6.	Sanpara temple	Lokrau mauza	Siva and Durga

(2) List of main Satras in the district
(a) Tezpur Sub-division.

Sl. No	Name of Satra	Location
1	2	3
1.	Kalabari Satra	Kalabari
2.	Kaliagosain Satra	Balipara
3.	Kamdewal Satra	Kalabari
4.	Kawaimari Satra	Gohpur
5.	Kundarbari Satra	Dekapukuri
6.	Gatanga Satra	Gatanga
7.	Chipaha Satra	Ketekibari
8.	Chupaha Satra	Rangagara
9.	Tengabaria Satra	Muradal
10.	Diphalu Satra	Kalabari
11.	Doukachapari Satra	Jamuguri
12.	Teteliguri Satra	Barbhogiya
13.	Disiyal Satra	Kalangpur
14.	Dhopabar Satra	Panigaon
15.	Namati Satra	Bahadonga
16.	Nauduar Satra	Nauduar
17.	Narowa Than	Nauduar
18.	Naharkhat Satra	Barbhaniya
19.	Nikamul Satra	Ketekibari
20.	Bar-Elengi Satra	Muradol
21.	Boralimara Satra	Da-ati
22.	Bakari Satra	Puthikati
23.	Balipukhuri Satra	Dekargaon
24.	Bali Satra	1. Mahabhairav mauza 2. Jamugurihat mauza
25.	Bahbari Satra	Behali
26.	Madarguri Satra	Becheria
27.	Mauragovinda Satra	Nauduar
28.	Madhav Ata Satra	Lehugaon
29.	Murari Satra	Mahabhairav mauza
30.	Randhani Satra	Khanapar
31.	Salguri Satra	Salaguri
32.	Saudkuchi Satra	Da-ati
33.	Sundaridiya Satra	Naleswar Tangani

Sl. No.	Name of Satra	Location
1	2	3
34.	Takalabari Satra	Takalabari
35.	Anna-Nokhowa Atar Satra	Dekasundar
36.	Ahatguri Bagakudha Satra	Muradol
37.	Engarpar Than	Barbhogiya
38.	Guadhara Than	Gobaghariya
39.	Gunamora Satra	Salalgaon
40.	Govinda Elengi Satra	Gohpur
41.	Checha Satra	Barbhogiya mauza
42.	Cheuni Bardowa Than	Chilabandha mauza

(b) Mangaldai Sub-division.

1.	Khatara Satra	Dipila mauza
2.	Salguri Satra	Dipila mauza
3.	Kapili Satra	Kapili in Chapai mauza
4.	Devananda Satra	Hindughopa mauza
5.	Bamundi Satra	Lokrai mauza
6.	Haripur Satra	Dipila mauza
7.	Bhavadev Satra	Lokrai mauza
8.	Dihing Satra	Kurua
9.	Supuha Satra	Chinakona mauza
10.	Outola Satra	Outola
11.	Bhagavati Satra	Hindughopa mauza
12.	Khoirabari Satra	Khoirabari
13.	Palabhitha	Baberigaon, Sarabari mauza
14.	Bonmaza Satra	Bonmaza mauza
15.	Barangajuli Satra	Barangajuli
16.	Patharughat Satra	Patharughat.

CHAPTER—IV

AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION.

(a) Land reclamation and utilisation

Agriculture is the chief occupation of eighty two per cent of villagers of Darrang district, according to the *Survey of Rural Economic Conditions in Darrang District*.¹ The area of the government waste land was very large till the later part of the 19th century, but with waves of influx of immigrants a large chunk of the virgin soil has been upturned. At the same time large tracts of waste land have also been taken up for tea cultivation. However, an analysis of the land utilisation figures shows that the area of land lying fallow is still quite considerable. The following table shows the salient features of land utilisation in the district.

Land utilisation in Darrang district :

Year—1968-69 (Area in hectares)

Total Geographical area	Professional survey area	8,72,498
	Village papers area	8,61,449
Forest		1,58,901
Not available for Cultivation.	Land put to non-agricultural uses.	1,63,947
	Barren and uncultivable land.	69,382
	Total ...	2,33,329
Other non-cultivated land excluding Fallow Lands.	Permanent pastures & other grazing land.	43,665
	Land under the Misc. trees, crops and groves not included in net area.	30,512
	Cultivable waste	32,320
	Total	1,06,497
Fallow Land	Fallow land other than current.	27,724
	Current fallow	26,784

1. *A Survey of Rural Economic Conditions in Darrang*, Shillong, 1950, P.ii.2. *Statistical Handbook of Assam*, Shillong 1971 ; P 25—28.

Total	54,508
Net area sown	3,08,214
Total cropped area	3,59,515
Area sown more than once	51,301

As per table given above, the total area of fallow land constitutes approximately 6.4 per cent of the total cadastral area. This includes practically all unsettled lands, the vast area of which are known to be either hills or low-lying areas, which are unfit for cultivation. The total cropped area of the district is about two-fifths of the total cadastral area. About one fourth or 27 per cent of the cadastral area is not available for cultivation. Such land is used for homesteads, roads, factories, rivers, ponds, towns, villages and so on. Other uncultivated lands excluding current fallows constitute approximately one-eighth of the total cadastral area. 30,512 hectares of land are used only for growing bamboos or various other kinds of trees or for works other than cultivation.

Gully erosion : Gully erosion has become a serious problem in the northern part of Mangaldai subdivision. This has been described by the Director of Soil Conservation Department of the Government of Assam, as follows : "The imperceptibly sloping tract adjoining the Bhutan and Arunachal foot hills is inherently susceptible to soil erosion because of the peculiarities of soil and some biotic factors. The soil here consists of recently transported materials mostly coarse sand and pebbles and boulders. It is shallow and highly porous and very easily erodable. Till recently this tract was under forest and grass cover providing fire wood, inferior timbers and thatching grass to the concentrated population few miles south. But the land has now been brought under cultivation without taking any anti-erosion measures. The craze is to grow winter paddy for which water is brought from the rivers through crudely aligned channels (locally called *Dongs*) having no regulatory head works. Removal of protective cover, unsuitability of the soil for irrigation and the faulty irrigation channels have all combined to erode away and form gullies over alarmingly increasing areas every year. Many of these *dongs* have turned into rivers because of lack of proper regulatory head works. Rough estimates indicate that approximately 20,000 acres or more have already been affected by gully erosion in the North Bank"³. Check dams, diversion channels and contour

3. Shri P. Goswami, Director Soil Conservation Department Assam, *Soil Erosion in North East India* ; (article published in the Souvenir of the 40th Research Session—1970 of the Central Board of Irrigation and Power.)

bunding techniques are being employed for controlling gully erosion. Afforestation of stream banks is taken up where land is available.

(i) **Cultivable Waste :** The report of the Technical Committee on Cultivable Waste Land (1963-65) revealed that the area of waste land in Darrang district was only 1,58,710 *bighas*⁴ of which 48,061 *bighas* were not suitable for reclamation. The Committee further pointed out that only 78,69 *bighas* of land were available for cultivation after reclamation by manual labour. If reclamation is done by mechanised process, a further area of 30,918 *bighas* will be available for cultivation. Unauthorised occupation of Government waste land, grazing reserves etc., has also reduced the area of the cultivable waste land available for settlement. According to the Technical Committee an area of 69,988 *bighas* was under encroachment in Darrang district. More than ninety-two per cent of the total cultivable waste land fall within Mangaldai subdivision. It is interesting to note that the total area of cultivable waste is much less than what has been shown in the *Statistical Handbook of Assam*, 1971, of the Department of Economics and Statistics. Thus the figures furnished by the Technical Committee show that there were only about 14,800 hectares of cultivable waste land in Darrang district in 1963-64 whereas the *Statistical Handbook of Assam*, 1971, shows that there were 32,320 hectares of such land in the district in 1968-69. The Committee has observed that prior to the survey the term cultivable waste land was erroneously and loosely used by people and by some Government agencies to include practically all unsettled lands, the vast areas of which were known to be either hills, low-lying areas or rocky lands.

However, attempts have been made to reclaim such waste lands for agriculture. The Forest Department has also taken up afforestation schemes in an area covering 18.73 sq. kms.

(b) Irrigation :

(i) **Irrigation facilities :** Darrang receives heavy rainfall during the monsoon and even during the post-monsoon period there occurs some rain from the northeasters. More than 70 per cent of the annual rainfall is received in this district from May to September. The average yearly rainfall during the decade 1951-61 in the district was 2,334.07 mm. Rice, jute and tea which are the three principal

4. *Land Settlement Policy, 1968*, Annexure-A. One bigha is equal to 0.13378 hectare.

crops of the district require sufficient water. The farmers and the tea gardens have to depend largely on rain water, which is uncertain. In the high plains of the district, rain water does not accumulate in the fields as most of it flows rapidly in small streams or in shallow rivulets. The peasants very often raise bunds at certain points; but for want of a network of drainage system, the accumulated water spills over and is wasted when it crosses the height of the bund. These problems have been sought to be solved by implementing some minor irrigation schemes.

According to 1961 Census, an area of 44,155, hectares was irrigated by private channels. Some of the tribal people inhabiting the northern part of Mangaldai subdivision irrigate the paddy fields by constructing small channels locally called *jan* or *dong*. Normally the length of the *jans* is less than a kilometre and is only about 0.61-0.91 metre wide and about 0.33-0.45 metre deep. Financial assistance has now been provided for such *dong* construction by the Community Development Blocks which earmark certain amounts for minor irrigation.

There are three principal agencies in the State engaged in the implementation of the Minor Irrigation Projects. The Agriculture Department takes up the projects which involve an expenditure of less than Rs.10 lakhs. The Flood Control and Irrigation Wing of the Public Works Department executes bigger projects. The Brahmaputra Flood Control Commission is entrusted with the task of controlling the flood in the Brahmaputra river which forms the southern boundary of Darrang district. The implementation of the minor irrigation projects involve construction of (i) bunds across the streams and rivulets, (ii) drainage channels and (iii) silt channels to obtain silt deposits in low lying areas. For flow irrigation works under Minor Irrigation programmes, the Panchayats are given grants-in-aid in various proportions from 40% to 100%.

Lift irrigation with electric pump sets has also been introduced since 1966-67. In 1970, 55 pump sets each of 20 H P capacity were installed. 6 more deep Tube Wells have also been sunk in the district till 1970. An area of about 400 hectares is likely to be benefited from these tube wells. A large number of shallow tube wells have been sunk in the flanks of the Brahmaputra. The irrigation capacity of these shallow tube wells is very limited.

The following is the list of Minor Irrigation Projects executed in the district. The *Mora Dhansiri* Irrigation Project is the only Medium

Irrigation Project of the district. It was started in 1961-62 and involved the total cost of Rs. 20 lakhs.

Minor Irrigation Projects of
Darrang District.
Year—1967.

Name of Schemes (Irrigation)	Length (in km.)	Area benefited (in acre) 1 acre =0.404686 hectare
1. Jinjia Irrigation Scheme	3.22	2,000
2. Gelapukhuri Irrigation Scheme	7.40	3,000
3. Sadharu Irrigation Scheme	6.44	4,000
4. Kalany Irrigation Scheme PH-II.	4.02	1,000
5. Kalany Irrigation Scheme PH-I	5.31	4,078
6. Kalany Irrigation Scheme PH-I (Extension)	12.39	3,000
7. Panbari Irrigation Scheme	13.84	5,600
8. Pachnai Irrigation Scheme	12.39	3,063
9. Barchola Irrigation Scheme	11.26	2,000
10. Sakhajani Irrigation Scheme	10.46	3,600
11. Irrigation of Kalaigaon, Chopai & Rangamati Mauzas in Mangaldai Subdivision	8.04	4,833
12. Extension of Noanadi Irrigation Scheme	13.93	10,112
13. Improvement of Kulsi Irrigation Scheme,	7.24	12,000
14. Extension of C.M. Dutta's Irrigation Scheme	12.31	2,800
15. Behali Irrigation Scheme, PH. I.		9,700
16. Smarna Irrigation Scheme, PH. I.		11,040
17. Sirajuli Irrigation Scheme, PH. I.		17,713
18. Behali Irrigation Scheme, PH. I.	16.89	6,400
19. Dering Irrigation Scheme	8.11	3,000
20. Dering Irrigation Scheme, PH. I.	6.93	9,000
21. Burigang Irrigation Scheme	7.14	4,000
22. Bengenajuli Irrigation Scheme		4,000
23. Dighaljuli Irrigation Scheme	13.60	4,672
24. Barnadi Irrigation Scheme		3,000
25. Sakomatha Irrigation Scheme		3,000

DRAINAGE

D-1. Prevention of Flood and Drainage of Narikali
area in Mangaldai Sub-division. 14.40 kms.

(ii) Protective bunds : The riverine areas of Darrang district are almost annually exposed to high floods not only of the Brahmaputra, but also of its tributaries such as the Nanai, the Dhansri, the Belsiri, the Noanadi, the Gabharu etc., and spill channels such as the Daparbatia *suti*. Flood embankments have been widely used only from the late fifties. In 1957, the Government of Assam set up a Committee to review the Embankment and Drainage Projects of Assam. The Committee recommended drawing up of a detailed and comprehensive Master Plan for flood control in the State and making provisions for sufficient number of controlled openings wherever embankments are constructed. Although the embankments provide protection to the habitation and farm land, they also affect the fertility of the land. Generally speaking, in riverine areas, where the depth of soil-cover over the substratum of sand is thin and the soil is light being composed of fine river silt, the annual inundation of flood water has been the major fertilising and regenerating agent from year to year. Naturally therefore, when the river spill is prevented from inundating cultivated land with silt laden water by the embankment, not only flood irrigation is denied to the crop, but the natural fertility of the land also goes down. This adverse effect of embankments is corrected by systematic construction of large number of sluices or controlled openings. These embankments have benefited large areas not only by providing protection against flood, but also making some areas fit for double cropping and reclamation. Previously *Ahu* paddy which is harvested in June-August was an uncertain crop in the riverine areas. In case of early floods, *Bao* and jute seedlings were also damaged. The Brahmaputra embankment has rendered these crops reasonably safe in areas which were subject to floods. In the tributary basin also reasonable protection has been afforded against normal floods.

The following list indicates the Embankment Schemes executed in the district.

Embankment Schemes executed
Darrang District
(Year -1967)

Name of Schemes (Embankment)	Length (in kms.)	Area benefited
		acre) 1 acre = 0.404686 hectare
E-1. Construction of embankment along the River Ghiladhari from Bangaligaon to Ghiladharimukh.	14.04	2,900 acres
E-2. Construction of Dyke along the Brahmaputra from Vishwanath to Panpur PH. 1 & 11.	24.12	3,800
E-3. Construction of Dyke along the River <i>J/a</i> Bhareli from Buragaon to Kajalinepalikhuti.	3.22	1,000
E-4. Construction of Dyke along the River Bhareli from old North Trunk Road to the outfall.	4.82	4,200
E-5. Construction of <i>J/a</i> Bhareli Embt. to protect paddy fields in Silabandha Mauza.	14.46	5,000
E-6. Construction of flood Embankment along Gabharu River for protection of Bahbari Mauza and Bihaguri Mauza	16.09	1,900
E-7. Gabharu Embankment from Kalakuchi to Gabharughat on its right bank and Gabharughat to Gabharumukh on its left bank.	16.09	1,900
E-8. Construction of Dyke along the River Brahmaputra from Tezpur to Gabharumukh.	14.32	7,000
E-9. Belsiri Embankment along both banks from Thelamara Singri Rd. crossing to its outfall.	11.07	4,500

Name of Schemes (Embankment)	Length (in kms.)	Area benefited (in acre) 1 acre— 0.404686 hectare
E-10. Construction of Dhansiri Embankment along left bank from upper crossing to lower crossing.	9.66	6,400 acres
E-11. Construction of Dhansiri Embankment along right bank from upper crossing to lower crossing.	7.72	4,048
E-12. Construction of an Embankment along the western side of Noanadi from Bengabari to Alaghari village.	10.46	4,500
E-13. Saktala Embankments on both banks.	20.43	6,570
E-14. Improvement on Nanai Embankments	5.95	590
E-15. Construction of Dyke along the both banks of Nanai River from North Trunk Road but against Brahmaputra Dyke to its outfall.	9.66	5,100
E-16. Construction of Embankment along the right bank of the Brahmaputra from Rangamati to Kurua Public Health 1 & II.	32.98	3,000
E-17. Jia Bhareli Ring bund.	5.14	
E-18. Drainage of Dipota Basin.	13.35	1,600
E-19. Protection measure against diversion of Bordikarai into Bahithara.	3.22	
E-20. Construction of Dyke along both banks of Nanai from Patharughat Public Works Department road to North Trunk Road Public Health-PH. II.	27.20	1,600
E-21. Construction of Dyke along both banks of Nanai from Railway line to Patharughat Public Works Department Road Public Health -PH. III.	59.60	3,000

Name of Schemes (Embankment)	Length (in kms.)	Area benefited (in acre) 1 acre =0.404686 hectare
E-22. Construction of Barnadi Lt-Embankment from Patharughat to Khanapara.	9.88	547 acres
E-23. Construction of Tributary Dyke along both banks of Noanadi from Upper stream of North Trunk Road to Out-fall.		

(c) Agriculture including horticulture :

(i) Soil : Acidity is the general characteristic of the soil of the district and is more so in the older alluvium soil. There are a few outlying patches of elevated ground the texture of which resembles the older alluvium. These disconnected high grounds, patches of which are seen north of Mangaldai and Tezpur and in Vishwanath areas are considered to be alluvial soils. New alluvial soils representing the lands of the river banks are less acidic. These are often neutral and even alkaline. The phosphoric content is good in the riverside of the Brahmaputra where tea is grown. Acidic alluvial soils are suitable for cultivation of tea. Heavy clays with high percentage of nitrogen in low-land areas give a good return of rice, while sandy loams above inundation level give a good yield of crops. The productivity of the land, particularly of the rice growing areas is very high. Overflowing of the rivers replenishes the soil every year by depositing silt.

The statement below gives an analysis of the soil of the district.⁵

District	Texture type of soil.	Acidity PH. Value	Availa- bility of Nitrogen (N) %	Availa- bility of Phosphatic Acid P ₂ O ₅ %	Availa- bility of Potash K ₂ O (%)
1	2	3	4	5	6
Darrang	Sandy to Clayey Loams	Acidic	High	Medium	Moderate to Low

It should also be noted that the content of available K_2O is low in some soils and moderate in others, but that of P_2O_5 is very high. Nitrogen content is also high.⁶

(ii) Crops : Paddy, jute, sugarcane, tea, pulses and mustard are the major crops and tobacco, potato, vegetables and fruits like mangoes, oranges, cocoanuts, banana, pineapples etc., are subsidiary crops of the district. Rice is the staple food. The farmers mainly depend upon cultivation of wet paddy. Among the cash crops jute is grown on the low lying areas of the bank of the Brahmaputra. In the year 1966-67, paddy was grown over 2,28,797 hectares of land out of 3,55,628 hectares of the total cropped area. Thus more than two-thirds of the total cropped area are covered with paddy. The following statement shows the area, average yield and production of principal crops of the district.⁷

Area, Average yield and Production of Principal Crops in Darrang District.

Area in '000 hectares, Production in '000 tonnes, Average yield in Kg. per hectare.
Production of jute in bales of 180 Kg. in '000 bales.

	1955-56	1960-61	1965-66	1969-70
1	2	3	4	5
Sali and Bao (Winter rice)				
Area	167.58	173.48	174.47	180.89
Average yield	1155	1041	1099	9800
Production	190.09	177.67	188.86	174.62
Ahu paddy (Autumn rice)				
Area	48.70	53.94	54.41	61.72
Average yield	1190	762	1000	789
Production	57.64	40.50	53.59	47.90
Boro paddy (spring rice)				
Area	0.01	0.60	0.28	0.81
Average yield	1345	1062	1065	1108
Production	0.02	0.63	0.30	0.90

6. Farmers of India, Vol.III,I,C.A.R., New Delhi 1964 P.14.

7. Statistical Hand book Assam, 1970.

	1955-56	1960-61	1965-66	1969-70
1	2	3	4	6
Rape and Mustard.				
Area	17.22	22.32	22.41	21.33
Average yield	448	456	584	334
Production	7.72	10.18	13.03	9.26
Jute				
Area	16.50	16.68	14.17	16.19
Average yield	1364	1474	1333	16.62
Production	125.13	136.63	104.92	149.46
Sugarcane				
Area	2.19	1.78	2.16	2.73
Average yield	224.16	32685	469.79	542.36
Production	4.92	5.82	10.99	15.24
Potato				
Area	3.48	3.59	3.97	4.05
Average yield	48.79	40.33	41.94	25.49
Production	16.96	14.49	16.66	10.32

Flood, rainfall, textural peculiarities of the soil, and above all, the farming practices are the factors upon which cultivation of the crops largely depends. During the rainy season all the arable lands are covered with crops. Besides providing water, the drains and canals around the farms form natural enclosures which protects the crops from stray cattle. In the winter season, however, when the fields become dry; cattle, goats, and buffaloes are allowed to graze in the fields most of which are without any permanent enclosures. As a result Rabi crops are grown only in small fields which are properly fenced. The dry season sets in from October and lasts till April. During this period most of the tributaries of the Brahmaputra either go dry or become absolutely shallow. Minor irrigation projects have been taken up to augment the water supply only in some areas, whereas the large areas of the district are yet to derive the benefit from such projects. From time to time draught has seriously affected the western part of the district. The crop cycle of the district still depends so much so on rain water that most of the fields practi-

cally lie fallow from December to early April. A brief account of cultivation of some of the crops is given below.

Paddy : It falls under three main heads—*Sali*, *Ahu* and *Bao*. Cultivation of *Boro* paddy has been lately introduced in the district.

There are various types of *Sali* paddy such as *Monohar Sali*, *Hati Sali*, *Lati Sali*, *Lau Dumra*, *Prasad bhog*, *Badsh bhog*, *Joha*, *Bora* and *Basmati*. The crop is always transplanted. Seedbeds are prepared in relatively high lands and seeds are sown in the months of May and June. The seed beds are commonly called *Kathiatoli*. Transplantation is done from July to September and harvesting commenced from November and continues upto the first fortnight of January.

The table below gives the types of the grain and duration of the crop of each variety of *Sali* paddy.

Name of the Variety.	Grains	Colour of Kernel	Duration of crop (in days)
1	2	3	4
Monohar Sali	Coarse	White	165
Hati Sali	"	"	168
Lati Sali	"	"	165
Lau Dumra	"	"	165
Prasad bhog	Medium	"	157
Badsah bhog	Fine	"	170
Basmati	Fine	"	120

With the onset of the monsoon the seedbeds for *Sali* paddy are prepared by ploughing and harrowing the land five or six times after which the land is reduced to puddle. The seeds which are selected from the largest ears of the previous year's crop, are sown broadcast over the beds in May and June. The seed beds are manured with cow-dung and compost. Use of Ammonium Sulphate and Urea in seedbeds is rather rare. The proper area borne by the seed-beds and the area to be transplanted vary according to fertility of soil, time of transplanting and such other factors. The seed rate is generally 300-350 gms. of seeds per 9.29 sq. metres of the puddle land. 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. Ploughings 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*) 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 is secured by putting up split bamboo fencing near the roads on village paths. Transplantation starts from the later part of June and continues till the second week of September. To avoid damage by flood, transplantation is done lately in low-lying areas but the yield of the late variety is poor. Local method of transplanting is 4-5 seedlings per hole at varying distance of 0.2—0.3 metres or more. The number of seedlings per hole and distance from plant to plant vary with the fertility of land, water supply to the land and time of transplantation. In case of late transplantation and transplantation of comparatively aged seedling, the number of seedlings per hole is increased. Lifting of seedlings from nursery and transplanting operations are generally done by women. The work is of arduous nature and involves stooping for hours in a field of mud under the rays of the burning tropical sun.

After transplantation the plants are left practically unattended. No interculture is done except weeding, when the grass grows thickly. The crop becomes ready for harvest from November and the operation continues till the middle of January. The reaper grasps a handful of the ears and cut them off about 0.2 metres below the hand. These handfuls (*muthis*) are each tied up with a piece of straw, and strewn over the field as the cutting process goes on. Six to eight *muthis* make a *thor* or *Jhap* and five or six *thors* a *Dangori*. A *dangori* is then affixed to either end of a sharp pointed bamboo called *biriya*, and the load which is called a *bhar* and carried across the shoulder, is taken to homestead by the men.

The finer variety of *Sali* is commonly called *Lahi* which ripens earlier. *Lahi* is grown in higher fields which dry up first at the conclusion of the rains. The *Joha* is the finest Variety of rice commonly grown in the district. *Boradhan* which is a species of *Sali* paddy is good for making *chira* and cakes called *Pitha*.

Baodhan : It is grown in some low-lying areas of the district. The paddy field is prepared ploughing the land for four to five times and *baodhan* is sown broadcast in March and April. It ripens in the beginning of January and harvesting is done in the same way as *Sali*.

Ahudhan : Like *Sali*, there are several varieties of *Ahu* paddy such as *Dubarichinga*, *Rangadaria*, *Kasalath* etc.

VARIETIES OF AHU PADDY

Name of the variety	Grains quality	Colour of kernel	Duration of crop (in days)
1	2	3	4
Rangadaria	Coarse	Red	100
Dubarichinga	Medium	Red	112
Kasalath	Medium	Red	110
Gerem	Medium	White	110

Although *Ahudhan* can be sown broadcast or transplanted, the broadcast type is more popular. It is sown relatively on higher areas as its water requirement is the least among all the cultivated paddies. The preparation of the field starts in January when ploughing begins. The field is ploughed three times and harrowed, and the clods are broken up by a mallet. Another ploughing and harrowing follow, the seed is sown during March-April and the land again is ploughed and harrowed to ensure that the grain becomes thoroughly mixed with the soil. The seed rate is high, 30-35 kg., of dry seeds per acre for broadcast variety and 30 kg. of wet seeds per acre for transplanted variety are required. Thick growth obstructs the weeds with which these fields are found replete. When the plants are about six inches high and catch the wind (*botah boloah*), they are harrowed with indigenous spike-tooth harrow (*Bindha*) and weeded and finally harvested in June and July. The crop is however a precarious one and is liable to be destroyed by a sudden rise of the river. The plants can live under water for as much as a week, but if ; after this time the floods do not retire, they are permanently destroyed. *Ahu* is often grown on the *chapolis* in conjunction with mustard, and no jungle cutting is of course required where the land has been already cleared for the oil seed crop. The same field is seldom cropped for more than three years in succession. The weeds, which were unable to find a lodging under the dense growth of *ikra* (*saccharum arundineum*), *khagari* (*saccharum spontaneum*) and *nal* (*phragmites roxburghii*), with which the land in its natural state is covered, soon spring up when the jungle has been removed. After the third year, it is less trouble-some to burn fresh jungle than to

clean the old fields of weeds, and by a change of site the peasant gets the further advantage of the manure of ashes for his next year's crop.

High land *Ahu* is grown on land which is too high for transplanted rice, and is fairly common in the country near the foot of the Himalayas. In its natural state this land is covered with a scrubby forest, and as the same field is not cropped for more than three years in succession, the *ahu* cultivation of Darrang resembles in a way the, *jhum* cultivation of the hill tribes. It is significant that this high land *ahu* is seldom combined with pulse and mustard, though there is no reason why one or other of these crops should not be taken from the field in the cold weather. After the land has remained fallow for some time, the villagers grow *Ahu* paddy on it again.

Boro paddy : It grows in low-lying areas which remain under one or two feet deep water in December and January when transplantation is done.

High yielding varieties of paddy, namely *IR-8*, *Pusha*, *Native Taichung-1* and *CH.63* are becoming increasingly popular throughout the district. These varieties are grown in the manner described above, as *Ahu*, *Sali* and *Boro* paddy in the corresponding seasons. There should be irrigation facilities that ensure 0.04-0.06 metres of water in the field from transplantation till 10-15 days before harvest in case of *Boro* paddy, from 2-15 days after transplantation till 10-15 days preceding the harvest in case of *Ahu*, *Sali* paddy. Besides the appropriate quantum of fertilisers in the field, much depends upon timely transplantation. *IR-8* and *TN-1* are not transplanted beyond August and *CH-63* beyond September, when grown as *Ahu* and *Sali* paddy. During the *Boro* season *IR-8* and *TN-1* require spacing of 0.08-0.22 metres and only two seedlings per hole. Average yield of *TN-1* and *IR-8* is 2000 Kg. per acre when grown as *Ahu* and *Sali* paddy, 2500 Kg. per acre when grown as *Boro* paddy. The output of the local varieties of paddy varies from 850 Kg. to 950 Kg. per acre.

The indigenous method of thrashing paddy : Unlike in some other states, paddy is thrashed at home. In Mangaldai subdivision thrashing is done soon after these are brought from the field. In some parts of Tezpur subdivision, the stock with the ears are stored in the granary (*bhorai*). When it is required for use the sheaves are brought out and then thrashed. The immigrants mostly thrash the paddy in the field itself. This saves

them from carrying the load of the stock home. The thrashing is done particularly in the evening. The *dangories* are spread in the courtyard in thick layers and bullocks are driven over these layers for some hours till the last ears separate from the stem. This process is known as *Morona mara*. 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 cow-dung. The larger portion of paddy is stored by many cultivators in *Bhoral* which unlike the houses of the villages, is raised on posts well above the level of the ground.

In 1970-71 areas covered in Darrang district by Autumn rice Winter rice and Spring rice were 62,320, 1,79,680 and 850 hect ares respectively.

Mustard : 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 at the rate of 9.331 Kg. 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, is 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, where it is thrashed out by cattle. In 1970-71 area covered in Darrang district by rape and mustard was 23,270 hectares.

Pulses : Pulse is grown mainly in alluvial flat lands near the Brahmaputra. Several kinds of pulses are grown, the most important variety is *Mati-mah* (*phaseolus mungo*). Other kinds of pulses are *Magu mah* (*phoseolus aureus*), *Arahar* (*cajanus cajan*), *Masur-mah* (*Lentil*) *Motor-mah* (*pea*) *Garomah* (*soy bean*), *Lesera-mah* (*cowpea*) etc.

The time of sowing of different kinds of pulses are as follows :—

Name of the crops.	Time of sowing
1) <i>Masurmah</i> (Lentil) ...	October, November.
2) <i>Matlmah</i> (Black gram) ...	August, September.

Name of the crops.	Time of sowing
3) <i>Magumah-</i> (Green gram) ...	August, September.
4) <i>Garomah</i> (Soy bean) ...	June, July.
5) <i>Lesera-mah</i> (cowpea) ...	May-July.
6) <i>Motor-mah</i> (pea) ...	September-November

Occasionally pulses are grown in conjunction with summer rice. To grow it separately, it is sufficient to plough the land for three or four times if the site is not covered with jungles. Sometimes seeds are sown on the river flats as soon as the floods subside. Pulse is sown broadcast amongst the rice stubble or between the Sali plants if the ground is still soft; but this method is not generally in use. When the crop is ripe, *mati-mah*, *masur-mah*, *magu-mah*, are pulled out by the roots and left in the field for a few days to dry. The seeds are thrashed out by the cattle; but certain percentage of seeds do not get separated readily from the pods. The rest are thrashed out by a hand thrashing implement. Rabi pulses covered 13,000 hectares in the district in 1970-71.

Jute : In recent years area under jute has increased considerably in the district but in the past the cultivation of jute was almost negligible and the small acreage under this crop was mainly confined to the villages where East Bengal migrants settle. Two varieties of jute are grown in the district, *titamora* (*corchorus capsularis*) grown in comparatively low lying areas and *mithamora* (*C. olitorius*) 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 or 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 of *Rhea* (*Hehmerisnivea*) is grown in the gardens. The fibre of *Rhea* is exceptionally strong and durable and is used in making fishing nets. Jute was grown over 20,610 hectares in the district in 1970-71.

Sugarcane : Sugarcane is an important crop of the district. It is grown on high lands. Tiny patches of sugarcane fields are seen almost in every circle of the district. Sugarcane is grown in small

plots. Government is advancing loan and subsidy to the cane growers to extend the area under sugarcane.

Sugarcane (*saccharum officinarum*) is propagated from the tops of the best canes, which are cut off at harvest time and kept in a shady place. One of these tops yields on the average about five canes, and as they contain but little juice, the cultivator does not sacrifice much of the gross product of his fields in the cause of reproduction. Four principal varieties of the plant are recognised. The *bagi* or white stands about seven feet high and has yellow canes of a soft juicy texture. The *teliva* is shorter, harder, and thinner, and the canes are of a deep red or even purple colour. The *Bangala* or *Bam* foreign variety, is larger and more juicy than the indigenous kinds, but yields a smaller proportion of sugar. The *molaha* is a hard and thin variety of the *mugi*, and where grown, is planted round the edge of the field. Ploughing of the land begins in early October and the land is ploughed till it is reduced to a fine tilth. Setts are planted in trenches between mid-January and mid-March. The patch is fenced with split bamboo, and there is usually a stout hedge of *arahar dal* (*Cajanus Indicus*); but constant watching is required to scare away jackals and other animals, and an empty oil tin with a clapper is generally to be seen suspended over each field. The earth from the ridges is heaped about the roots to strengthen their hold upon the soil, and this process is continued; until the relative positions of ridge and trench are reversed and the canes stand upon ridges with the trenches in between. While the crop is growing it is continually hoed and weeded, and about July-August the leaves should be tied up round each cluster of canes, which is a troublesome proceeding.

Preparation of Gur: An indigenous form of mill was generally used for the extraction of the juice from sugarcane in the past. It consisted of two wooden rollers fixed side by side in a trough hollowed out of a heavy block of wood. This machine has been replaced by crushing machines (*Kuhlar Sal*) in recent times; but both the types are of the same model. The crushing machines contain three iron rollers, one with very sharp teeth and other two with soft teeth. At the top of the machine a stout bamboo pole is so fixed that the movement of the rollers is regulated by the pole. The motive power is supplied usually by the villagers themselves, but buffaloes are also used. Handful of sugarcane is placed between the rollers and crushed or it is forced through. The juice trickles from the through into a vessel kept below.

The juice is then transferred to a big iron cauldron kept on the furnace. When 50-60 litres of juice are collected, boiling is started. The refuse that accumulates on the surface of the juice when boiling is strained out by a small bamboo sieve (*Jakki*) fixed with a long bamboo handle. Another similar sieve is constantly used for controlling the boiling juice. When the juice is reduced to the proper state it is transferred to a small boat (*Gholani*), scooped out of log and stirred for some time to cool it. The finished *gur* is stored in earthen pots or tins.

This crop covered an area of 2,670 hectares in Darrang during 1970-71.

Banana: An important garden crop of the district is the Banana (*Musa, Sapientum*) known as *kal* in Assam. As many as ten varieties of this crop are grown, but most important are those locally known as *Manohar*, *Chenichampa*, *Malbhog*, *Bhimkal*, *Purakal*, and *Jahaji*. *Purakal* is used as vegetable; *Chenichampa* is the high yielding variety and hardier; *Malbhog* is medium yielder and has very pleasant flavour; *Bhimkal* is considered cool and wholesome. *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 underground 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 0.45 metre wide and 0.45 metre 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 vegetable, the leaves and sheath used as substitute for dishes; from the sheath tumblers (*khol*) are made for serving food. The plant in general is used for decorating gates etc., in various ceremonies. The *Kalakhar* is indigenous alkaline preparation and is commonly used in prepa-

ration 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.

Arecanut (areca catechu) is grown almost as universally as the banana and with the bamboo forms the great trinity of trees among which the houses of the Assamese are usually embeded. The plantation is hoed up, and kept clear of weeds and the trees are most liberally manured with cowdung. The *pan* vine (betelpiper) is frequently trained up their stems, and the leaf and nut, which are invariably eaten together, are thus grown side by side.

Tobacco : Tobacco is grown 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 into 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 3 months later. If required for chewing, they are either dried in shed or else pressed into hollow bamboos (*chunga*) and allowed to ferment. When the tobacco is destined for a pipe, leaves are piled in heaps till they ferment, then cut into pieces and mixed with molasses when it is ready for *hookah*. Tobacco was grown over an area of 1230 hectares in Darrang during 1970-71.

Pineapple and Orange : Pineapple is also an important fruit grown in the district. The planting of pineapple is done from April to September. The fruit matures from June to September. The exact area under pineapple in the district is not known.

Other varieties of fruit bearing trees grown in the district are Mango, Jackfruit, Litchi, Assam Lemon etc. Almost in each compound of a farmer some of these trees are generally found.

Vegetables : The common vegetables grown are, spinach, *Lal*, Radish, *Lafa*, *Suka*, Cabbage, Cowliflower, Tomato, Onion etc.

Tea : Darrang is one of the principal tea growing districts of Assam. Both in area and total production of tea, Darrang occupies the third place in Assam, the first and second place being occupied by Lakhimpur and Sibsagar districts respectively. There has been gradual expansion of the area under tea since 1921 and in the said year tea covered an area of 22,587 hectares

of land in Darrang district. The tea acreage during the last three decades was 24,726 hectares in 1931, 24,549 hectares in 1941 and 25,320 hectares in 1951. In 1967, the total area under tea was 29,148 hectares and the total production reached the all time high figure of thirty four lakhs and seventy thousand kilograms.⁷ There were 98 tea gardens in the district in 1967. The following table shows the area and production of tea in Darrang district, classified according to the size of the estates.⁸

Area and production of tea in Darrang district according to the size of estates.

(Area as on the 31st March, 1968, Production-during 1967.)

Area of Estates	No. of Estates	Area in Hectare	Production in kgs.
1. Above 5 hectares and below 50 hectares.	4	96.03	24,989
2. Above 50 hectares and below 100 hectares.	5	355.41	196,518
3. Above 100 hectares and below 200 hectares.	17	2,448.80	2,209,850
4. Above 200 hectares and below 400 hectares.	47	13,891.28	16,473,710
5. Above 400 hectares	24	12,763.57	15,371,297

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 ever-green of the 'Camellia' family, which flourished in warm, 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 thro-

7. *Statistical Abstract of Assam, 1967-68* ; P.163-164.

8. *Tea Board, India, Tea Statistics (1968-69)* ; P.9-10.

throughout the year (at 1.52 to 2.03 metres 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 luxurious growth of a tea plant depends upon general care in cultivation, pruning, plucking and control of pests and diseases.

The 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 water-logged 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, 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 4.57 to 9.14 metres or more,—a height and an extent of foliage under which 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 shoots where growth has become too dense.

In all questions of pruning as well as other operations, 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 to 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 certain area arises when an area of tea has become unproductive due to (a) extreme age of the tea, and (b) death or debility through disease, impoverishment 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 plant 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 candida*, *crotolaria anagyroides* *Desmodium gyroides*, *Indigofera Teysmanica* etc.

The object of manuring of tea gardens is to maintain in the soil a sufficiency of 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 a planting out from the nursery is not recommended. Dry well-rooted cattle manure at the rate of 101 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 substitute. Sterilized animal meal (without any inorganic additive) is a valuable alternative to either cattle manure or oil-cake, 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 months 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 with nitrogen and to increase its fertility, shade trees and green crops belonging to the family 'leguminosae' are grown with great advantage. 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 hailstorm etc. The shade trees like *Albizia procera*, *A. lebbel*, *A. sinensis*, *A. odorata* Simiam, *A. moluccana*, *Dalbergia assimica*, *Derris robusta*, etc., and green crops like *crotalaria anagyroides*, *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 a 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 without deterioration. The most efficient method of plucking the crop from the tea bush will be that which obtains the crop of the 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 usually begins 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 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 plucking and the bushes are gone over 30 or more times in the year.

The number of gardens 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 the 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 coarse 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 tramped and somewhat tough and assume a twist in shape. If the leaves are spread in a thin layer in a well ventilated room over night 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 cell contents, including the much prized oil, flow over and wet outer surface of leaves, there to undergo the fermentation or olivation of the next stage more 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 of 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 tea and sorting it into different grades by appropriate sieves, and packing them in the 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, caterpillars, Red slug caterpillar, Bunch caterpillar, Red Borers, Tea Mosquitoes, Tea Leaf hopper, Red Spiders, Crickets, Termites, Root rot nematodes, etc. The diseases which occur 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.

iii Progress of Scientific Agriculture

(i) Agricultural implements: The plough made of jack fruit tree or some other hard wood is the age old implement still very common in the district. It consists of three parts; the handle and the body which are usually 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 bamboo 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 *Phal* (spear) affixed to the sharp end of the front portion of the body pierces the ground. 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 tilth attained by wooden plough is generally 0.07 to 0.10 metres. Not more than the area of two-fifths of an acre can be ploughed in one day with the wooden plough and a good pair of bullock.

The harrow (*moi*), which is generally used to crush the clods after ploughing the land is about 2.4 metres in length. A man stands as it is drawn across the field by a pair of bullocks. Two pieces of bamboo are clogged together in the shape of a ladder. Bullocks are tied with yoke and the harrow is attached with the yoke with the help of a rope. 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. Clods are broken by a mallet (*Doli-mari*) which is also made at home. The hoe (*kor*) occupies a very important place among the indigenous agricultural implements. The hoe is used to trim the embankments (*alis*) which help to retain the water. It is also used in upturning the soil of such fields which plough cannot easily move, and to culture that part of the field where plough cannot go. It is a multipurpose implement used for many agricultural operations, such as forming ridges, bunds, water courses and channels, preparing small seed beds and removing slumps of crops, digging out root crops etc. Sickles (*kaci*), with which paddy is reaped, have also to be purchased. In *ahu* cultivation a large wooden rake (*Bindha*) with teeth nearly 0.30 metre 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 bullock carts are used to carry harvested paddy or pulses from the fields and at times to carry manure to the field, although its chief use is to carry merchandise to and from the market.

Except in tea gardens, the use of improved agricultural implements as in other districts of Assam is rather infrequent. In some areas tractors have been used to reclaim waste lands. However, this does not find favour with the ordinary cultivators for several reasons such as heavy capital investment, paucity of large blocks of land etc. Among the improved agricultural implements used in the district following are important ones (i) iron plough (ii) improved harrows and cultivators, (iii) improved seed drills, (iv) improved thrashers, (v) rotary chaff cutters, (vi) sprayers and dusters, (vii) sugarcane crushers worked by power, (viii) oil engines with pumps for irrigation purposes and (ix) electric pumps for irrigation purposes.

The following table shows the number of the agricultural machineries and implements in Darrang district,⁹ as revealed by the Livestock census of 1956.

9. Statistical Abstract of Assam, 1960-61; P. 86.

Darrnag District Gazetteer

Agricultural machineries and implements
in Darrang district.

1. Plough	(a) Wooden	—	1,41,867
	(b) Iron	—	31
2. Carts	—	—	22,709
3. Sugarcane crushers	(a) Power driven		9
	(b) Others		1,190
4. Electric pumps for irrigation.	—	—	5
5. Ghanis	—	—	121

The Assam Agro-Industries Development Corporation Ltd., has been sponsored by the Government of Assam during the year 1967-68. The authorised capital of the company is rupees two crores divided into two lakhs. Equity shares of rupees one hundred each. The main object of the Corporation is to purchase or otherwise acquire all agricultural produce and pre-requisites such as fibres, fertilizers, pesticides, plant protection equipments, lime, and agricultural engineering equipments like tractors, power pumps, harvesters, combers etc. The Corporation also stores, transports, distributes, supplies, sells or otherwise disposes of all the agricultural pre-requisites to the agriculturists of the State. The Corporation has since taken over the stocks of fertilizers from the Agriculture Department.

The Corporation is now distributing fertilizers to the agriculturists and also helping some tea gardens in procuring their requirements from the existing stock of the Corporation. The Corporation proposes to distribute all agricultural inputs like fertilizers, pesticides, small equipments etc., through a network of retail depots throughout the State. For this purpose, the Corporation is going ahead with the appointment of the retail agents. About one hundred such retail agents are now functioning in the State. The Corporation has also undertaken the task of issuing tractors, power pumps, power tillers etc., under the hire-purchase system. The Corporation proposes to expand its activities on various directions in the coming years, such as, taking over of the fruit production factories and its operation, manufacturing of poultry feeds and cattle feeds, starting of engineering workshop and operating repair service of the machineries etc., besides marketing of fertilizers, pesticides and agricultural machineries.

(2) Agricultural diseases and pests : The insects particularly *Gandhi* (*Leptorisa acuta*), and *Charaha* (*hispaacuesceus*) cause extensive damage to paddy. The traditional method of controlling insects was very simple. Bonfires were lit at night and the insects were either attracted to the fire or driven away by the smoke. 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. Use of light traps to protect the crops from adult insects was not uncommon. Occasionally the barks of some trees and herbs were scattered in the field. The pungent smell of these barks repelled insects. The outer skins of various fruits such as *citrus grandis* were scattered over the pest-infected areas and allowed to rot. The offensive smell emitted kept away insects. Sometimes dry shoots of bamboo trees and dry twigs of jungle plants were kept standing on the fields at short distances so that carnivorous birds may perch on these and eat the destructive insects. Sometimes ashes were scattered over plants to prevent insects from harming winter crops. Crop failure was also attributed sometimes to the ominous glances of some persons. Old images, mostly made of straw decorated with torn cloths and painted with lime, were kept in the fields as antidote to the ominous looks. Some of these traditional methods are still in vogue.

Storage diseases and insect pest of paddy, potatoes and pulses are equally menacing and rough estimates show that they destroy 10 to 25 per cent of these products in storage. The diseases and insect pests which cause damage during storage are either carried from the fields with the harvest product or remain in the crevices in the godowns and storage houses. This is prevented by better method of storage, disinfecting the storage houses and godowns, and treating the grains and seeds to be stored with chemicals like Carbon tetrachloride, Ethylene dischloride, Hydrocyanic acid gas etc.

Caterpillars are serious pests of paddy noticed in the district. Stem borer is also equally harmful to the crop. These pests generally appear in localised areas. Unless immediately controlled, these may cause extensive damage to crops. Spraying Endrin 20 EC or Diazinon at the rate of 10 c.c. in 4.5 litres of water at the rate of 40 to 50 gallons per acre three times can prevent the swarming caterpillar, rice-bug, stem borer and rice hispa from damaging the crop. Spraying of Bordeans Mixture or any copper fungicide is a good

control measure against early and late blight that effect potatoes.

Following statement shows the agricultural diseases prevalent in the state and control measures recommended by the Agriculture Department for some of the selected crops.¹⁰

IMPORTANT CROP PESTS AND DISEASES OF ASSAM AND THEIR CONTROL.

(1) Name of the crop—Rice.

Pests and Diseases	Control Measures.
Brown Spot ...	Treat the seeds with Agrosan G. No @ 3 gm. per 1 Kg. of seed, or immerse the seeds in solution of 1 gm. of Ceresan in 1 litre of water for 12 hours and dry them in shade.
Blast ...	Spray 5: 5: 50 Bordeaux Mixture or spray 0.4% solution of Ferenox, Shell Copper, Cupravit.
Foot Rot and Elongation. ...	Treat the seeds as in the case of Brown Spot; uproot and destroy the affected plants.
Stem Rot ...	Destroy stubble, allow water to drain out from the field to cake the soil and treat with any copper oxychloride fungicide, viz. Fytolan; Blitox, Coppessan etc.
Bunt and False Smut, Ufra ...	Uproot and destroy the affected plants. Burn affected plants. Treat the seeds in hot water for 10 minutes in 140°F.
Case Worm and Gally Fly. ...	(1) Dust 10% B.H.C. or (2) Spray Endrin or Diazinon @ 10 C.C. in 4.5 litres of water 3 times @ 40-50 gallons per acre if there is incidence.

10. Agricultural Guide Book, 1968-69, P. 101-110.

(1) Name of crop—Rice

Pests and Diseases	Control Measures
Grasshoppers and Jassids ...	Dust 10% B. H. C. or 2% Aldrin.
Leaf Roller, Army Worms ...	Dust 5% B.H.C.
Mealy Bug ...	Dust 10% B.H.C. or spray Parathion 0.05%
Swarming Caterpillar, Rice-Bug, Rice-Hispa. ...	(1) Spray Endrin 20 E.C. or Diazinon @ 10 C.C. in 4.5 litres of water @ 40-50 gallons 3 times. (2) Dust 10% B.H.C. at 7 Kgs. per acre.
Stem Borer --	(1) Dip treat the seedling blades on 50% (W.P.) D.D.T. @ 1 lb. in 25.28 gallons of water before transplanting. (2) Spray the crop with Endrin or Diazinon 3 times.

(2) Name of crop—Sugarcane

Termites and Red Ants ...	Dust 5% Aldrin and incorporate it into the soil @ 25 Kg. per hectare or 10 Kg. per acre.
Steam Borer, Early Shoot Borer, and Top Shoot Borer. ...	Spray Phosphamidon 3 times @ 20 C.C. in 100 litres of water for the 1st spray and 30 C. C. in 100 litres of water for the 2nd and the 3rd sprays. Or Spray Endrin 20 E.C. thrice @ 2.50 Kg. in 675 litres of water for the 1st spray 3.75 Kg. in 870 litres of water for the 2nd and the 3rd sprays per hectare. Or Spray Guesarol 550 or Hexidole 950-3.

Pests and Diseases	Control Measures
	50 Kg. in 570 litres of water per hectare. Repeat twice at 15 days' interval upto 3 months of the crop.
Mealy Bug and White Fly....	Spray Basudin 20 @ 1 Kg. in 660 litres of water per hectare.
Leaf Hopper	... Spray 0.25% B.H.C. or dust 10% B.H.C.
White Borer	... Spray 0.400.5% B. H. C.
Red-rot	... Plant disease-free setts. avoid water stagnation, uproot and destroy the affected plants. For leaf infection spray 0.5% Copper Oxychloride or 0.4% Dithane Z-78.
Leaf Spot	... Manure the crop, adopt improved cultural practices and irrigate when necessary and spray 0.5% copper fungicide when infection is observed.
Mosaic, Smut and Top-Rot	... Rogue out the affected canes and destroy them by burning, plant disease-free setts.
Wilt and Collar-Rot	... Plant healthy setts, adopt crop rotation and avoid ratooning.

(3) Name of crop — Maize

Leaf Spot and Blight	... Use disease-resistant varieties, Practise crop rotation.
Borer	... Spray Nicotine Sulphate.
Aphis	... Spray Endrin or Diazinon or D.D.T. (50%).

(4) Name of crop — Potato

Early and Late Blight	... Spray B. M. or any copper fungicide, viz.- Captan 406. Dithane Z-78, Shell
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(4) Name of crop — Potato

	Copper or Fytolan or Blitox @ 2-4 lbs. in 100 gallons of water at an interval of 15 days. Use diseased-free seeds.
Brown-Rot	... Plant disease-free tubers.
Scab	... Dip tubers in hot Formalin, 1 part in 100 parts of water for 4 minutes in 122°F. or Hydro-chloric Acid before planting.
Leaf Roll and Mosaic	... Plant disease-free tubers.
Tuber Moth	... Dust 5% B. H. C.
Greasy Surface	... Dust 5% B.H.C. at 7 Kgs. per acre.
Caterpillar cut worm	... Spray Aldrex 30 E.C.

(5) Name of crop — Tobacco

Wilt	... Disinfect the seed-bed.
Caterpillar and Thrips	... Dust 5% B. H.C.

(6) Name of crop — Cruciferous :
Cabbage, Cauliflower,
Knol-Khol, Turnips etc.

Black-Rot	... Treat the seed with Mercuric Chloride (1 in 1000) for 30 minutes in 122°F.
Damping off	... Spray 2: 2:50 B. M. or drench seedbed with Streptocycline or Ceresan.
Club Root	... Sterilize seed-bed with Formalin (1:50) or Mercuric Chloride 1:2000 @ 2 gallons per sq. yard. Lime the field @ 1500-2000 lbs. per acre. Treat the plants with 1:2000 Mercuric Chloride $\frac{3}{4}$ @ 1b. per acre.
White Rust	... Practise crop rotation.
Leaf Spot	... Treat the seed with hot water for 30 minutes (122°F) and spray 4:4:50 B.M.

Pests and Diseases	Control Measures.
Brown Rot	— Apply 20 lbs. of Borax per acre or spray 0.3 % solution of Borax.
Aphids	— Spray 40% Nicotine Sulphate (5 to 8 oz. in 50 gallons of water).
Caterpillar, Thrips, Jassids, Semi.	— Spray Malathion-I. 5 C. C. in 1 litre of water.
Looper and Butterfly	— Dust 5% B. H. C.
Painted Bug	— Spray soap solution (1 lb. of soft soap in 6 gallons of water).
Cricket	— Use Malathion dust or Aldrin 5% dust.

Name of crop — Jute.

Stem-Rot, Root-Rot, and Seedling Blight.	— Treat the seeds with Agrosan G. N. or Ceresan or Flit 406, apply Lime @ 20-30 quintals per hectare, apply usual dose of Potash and follow crop rotation. Spray 0.40% Copper Oxychloride.
Black Band	— Use disease-free seeds, spray 5: 5: 50 B. M. or Blue Copper or Cuman or Blitox.
Hairy Caterpillar	— Dust 5% B.H.C. or spray Endrin 20 E.C. twice.
Mites	— Dust Lime Sulphur (3.1).
Cricket	— Apply Endrin 5% at soil preparation @ 45 Kg. per hectare or spray Endrin 20 E.C. and bait.
Semi Looper	— Spray 5% B.H.C. (W.P) or Endrin (20 E. C.) or Thiodin.

Name of crop — Mustard.

Downy Mildew	— Spray 4:4:50 B.M. or any copper fungicide.
Leaf-Spot	— Treat the seeds with hot water for 30 minutes (122°F), and spray 4:4:50 B.M.

Pest and Diseases	Control Measures
White Rust	— Practise crop rotation.
Aphis	— Spray 40 % Nicotine Sulphate (5.8 oz. in 25 gallons of water) or spray Basudin 20 E.C. or Malathion (50% W.P) @ 1 litre in 450 litres of water.
Caterpillar and Sawfly	— Dust 5% B.H.C. @ 6 Kg. per acre.
Name of crop — Pulses :	
Matimah and Mugmah.	
Anthracnose, Leaf Spot.	— Spray 4:4:50 B.M. or Perenox or Cuprocide.
Mosaic	— Sow disease-free seeds, control insect vectors by spraying Nicotine Sulphate or Basudin or Dimecron.

(3) Activities of the Agriculture Department and other agencies to secure the use of scientific method of cultivation :—"Agriculture cannot wait" has been the motto of the Agriculture Department during the plan period. In the First Five Year Plan emphasis was given on those schemes which had limited objective of increasing food production only. The approach of the Department, during the Second Five Year Plan was to attain a balanced development of food and cash crops. Priority was given to the multiplication and distribution of improved seeds, distribution of fertilizers, creation of irrigation facilities etc. During the Third Five Year Plan attempts were made to put agriculture of the district on a better scientific plan. The objectives of the Fourth Five Year Plan were to increase production of food grains at an average annual rate of 5 per cent in the State, to arrest the decline in production of jute by increasing the average yield rather than the area and to increase the production of wheat, oilseeds, pulses, fruits and other plantation crops.

With these objectives in view, the Agriculture Department has set upon itself the task of building up an infra-structure, capable of ushering in the green revolution in the State. With the present

infra-structure created during the last three Five Year Plans, the Department aims at attaining atleast 120 per cent cropping intensity as against 110 per cent in the State, at the end of the Third Five Year Plan. A brief analysis will reveal the measure of success achieved by the Agriculture Department in bringing about an era of prosperity and self sufficiency.

Irrigation : We have already discussed about the Minor Irrigation Schemes implemented by the Agriculture Department. The Department has laid emphasis on permanent types of headworks for flow irrigation and a nucleus "Irrigation Cell" has been set up in the Agriculture Department. The Department proposes to take up a scheme for ground water exploration. The Flood Control and Irrigation Wing of the Flood Control Department has executed some irrigation projects in the district. During the first two plans the performance of this Department in Darrang district was as follows.¹¹

Scheme	Expenditure Rs. in lakhs.		Achievement of target in acres		Achievement in kms.	
	1st Plan	2nd Plan	1st Plan	2nd Plan	1st Plan	2nd Plan
	1	2	3	4	5	6
(1) Minor Irrigation Scheme.	24.44	18.09	59,500	20,500	128.18	35.10
(2) Improvement of Scarcity areas	2.82	1.84	8,000	55,00	28.64	17.80
(3) Flood Control Scheme	10.63	38.60	5,000	45,100	0.32	75.90

Soil improvement works : Soil testing services have been made available to the farmers for quick soil tests in order to recommend fertilizers on cropwise basis. At present there are three Soil Testing Laboratories in Assam, one each at Silchar, Jorhat and Gauhati. The annual capacity of testing is 30,000 samples in each laboratory. Although there is no such laboratory in Darrang district, Gauhati being only 64 kms. from Mangaldai, the people of the western part of the district can easily avail of the services of the Gauhati Soil Testing Laboratory. The reconnaissance survey of soils

11. Census of India 1961, Assam, District Census Handbook, Darrang; P.11.

of the Sukla Irrigation Project of Darrang district has been completed.

Distribution of improved agricultural implements : The Agriculture Department has provided a fleet of more than 200 tractors and bulldozers with necessary implements in the subdivisional headquarters. A cultivator can borrow tractors with required accessories for tilling his land, at a reasonable hire-charge. In addition to this the State Agro-Industries Development Corporation has also distributed a number of tractors and power tillers on easy hire-purchase terms. In the tea gardens there are large number of tractors which are also used for agricultural purposes. The following statement shows the distribution of tractors, bulldozers, power pumps, power tillers etc., in Darrang district by the Agriculture Department, in 1966-67, the year preceding the inception of Agro-Industries Development Corporation.

Distribution of Agricultural implements.

Tractors		Power Pump	Deep tube wells	Power tillers
Bulldozers	General purposes			
1	2	3	4	5
1	14	5	6	8

Earlier in 1962-63, the Agriculture Department distributed in the district 1,470 pieces of iron ploughs, 2,021 pieces of bullock driven sugarcane crushers, 18 oil engines, 21 power pumps and 130 tractors.

Distribution of fertilizers : Till a few years back the use of fertilizers was confined mainly to the tea gardens. The Assam Agro-Industries Development Corporation has made input supplies since 1967-68. The following statement shows consumption of fertilizers in the district.

**Distribution of fertilizers
(in tonnes)**

Year	Darrang District	Tezpur Sub-division	Mangaldai Sub-division
1	2	3	4
1965-66			
A/Sulphate	803	220	583
Urea	38	28	10
1966-67			
Supper phosphate	568	234	334

The amount of fertilizer used is stated to have gone up during the last few years. However, the high cost of fertilizers, non-availability of credit, lack of storage facilities in remote villages and want of distributors in the interior areas are some of the factors for which fertilizers have not been widely used. The Agriculture Department has also encouraged the use of compost manure and green manure in all parts of the district.

Distribution of improved seeds : The cultivators preserve a portion of their previous year's crop for seeds. The Agriculture Department also supplies improved seeds of paddy, jute, mustard, pulses, maize, sugarcane etc., to the cultivators. Seedlings of fruit bearing trees are also supplied to the cultivators from the horticultural nursery located at Ketekibari in the Tezpur sub-division. This horticultural nursery was started in 1946-47 in an approximate area of 5 acres. For the purpose of distribution of improved varieties of seeds, the Agriculture Department has established a number of farms in different parts of the district. The particulars of the seed farms are given below.

	Name of the farm	Area in acre	Year of establishment.
Tezpur Sub-division.	1. Dipota	27.00	1958-59
	2. Dhekiajuli	20.00	1956-57
	3. Jamuguri	33.00	1958-59
	4. Gohpur	33.30	1956-57
	5. Charduar	28.30	1957-58
	6. Baghmari	256.00	1954-55
Mangaldai Sub-division.	7. Sarbaherua	997.00	1965-66
	8. Chamuapara	25.00	1957-58
	9. Majikuchi	30.00	1957-58
	10. Habigaon	25.00	1957-58

Among the paddy seeds distributed by the Government through various agencies *Monohar Sali*, *Prosadbhog*, *Basmati*, *Negbui Bao*, *Rangadoria* etc., are gaining popularity in the district. Among other improved varieties *I.R.-8*, *Taichung Native 1*, *Jaya*, *Padma*, *Pankaj*, *Jagannath*, *Kalyan Sona*, *Sarbati Sonara*, *Safed Larma*, *dwarf Maxican* wheat etc., have been grown in the district on a moderate scale.

Sarbaherua is one of the biggest State farms managed by the Assam Seed Corporation. It covers an area of 997 acres of cultivable land. Five tractors, two units of sprinklers and a number of modern farm machineries have been pressed into service in this farm. Some experienced officers of the Agriculture Department have been engaged here. Among crops, paddy and jute are grown extensively. Wheat, mustard and some other crops, and vegetables are also produced here. In 1970 the performance of the farm was as follows :

Sarbaherua State Farm

Crop	Area (in acres)	Production (in qntls.)
Paddy	115	661.88
Jute	80	112
Sesam (Til)	33	36.40
Mustard	260	302

Although during the first two years the farm did not earn profit, its profit has now taken an upward turn. In 1967-68, the net profit of the farm stood at Rs. 18,130.58 which rose to Rs. 1,24,583.93 in 1969-70. It is expected that Sarbaherua State Farm will meet the normal requirements of seeds in the State.

Mechanised cultivation has been adopted at the Dalgaon Seed Farm now managed by the Assam Seed Corporation. It produced 629 quintals of paddy, 120 quintals of mustard seeds, 20 quintals of potatoes, besides some pulses in 1971. In the nursery attached to the farm, fruit bearing trees such as mangoes, areca-nuts, bananas etc., are also grown. In 1970 this nursery sold 3,000 grafts of lichi and 17,000 seedlings of areca-nuts of the improved variety.

Field Management Committees : In order to enthuse each and every cultivator to develop along progressive and scientific lines, Field Management Committees have been formed all over the State since 1959-60. These committees are formed from among the actual tillers. All activities of the Agriculture Department are channelised through these Committees. The members of these committees receive training in Development Blocks where they attend seminars on various aspects of agriculture. There were 580 Field Management Committees in Tezpur subdivision and an almost equal number in Mangaldai subdivision in 1961-62.

Intensive Programme : 75 per cent of the Blocks in the district have been brought under the Intensive Agricultural Area Programme, at the end of Third Five Year Plan. It is proposed that during the Fourth Five Year Plan, high yielding variety programme will be superimposed on these Blocks.

Agriculture Extension Officers and Gramsevakas are engaged in giving proper guidance to the farmers, in respect of improved methods of cultivation. Demonstrations by these trained officers on various aspects of improved techniques of production have encouraged the farmers in adopting such techniques.

The Agriculture Department has also taken up plant protection schemes about which reference has been made earlier. Among various other schemes implemented by the Department the following deserve mention :—

1. **Jute Development Scheme :** It has been implemented throughout the district. Apart from distribution of improved types of jute seeds, subsidies are given to the jute growers to construct rotting tanks.

2. **Horticulture Development Schemes :** Horticulture Fruit Nursery was established at Ketekibari in 1945. Dalgaoon Farm also has a nursery section.

3. **Coconut cultivation scheme :** This scheme was taken up at Ketekibari in 1958. It has been producing more than five thousand coconut saplings every year.

4. **Arecanut cultivation scheme :** An arecanut cultivation nursery was opened at Baghmari near Vishwanath Charali in 1958. Performance of this nursery has been satisfactory.

Before concluding this very brief account of the activities of the Agriculture Department mention must be made of the Agricultural University that has been set up at Jorhat. Assam has entered a new era of agricultural education with the establishment of this University. More emphasis has been laid on agricultural research than ever before. Although the University is not within Darrang district yet it has derived immense benefits from it.

(d) Animal Husbandry and Fisheries

(i) **Area under fodder crops :** The Tezpur (Mission Charali) Key Village Centre is an important fodder-producing centre. This centre has been opened under the Fodder Development Scheme. 63 *bighas*

of land have been successfully brought under perennial fodder cultivation. Roots and seeds of improved grasses are freely distributed in the centre. Every veterinary dispensary in the district has one demonstration fodder farm attached to it. The livestock section of the Animal Husbandry Department has been encouraging the cultivation of grass among the farmers.

The implementation of such schemes is necessitated by the fact that the cattle, buffaloes, sheep and goats of the district rarely get anything but grass, gruel and green leaves of some trees. Livestock are generally grazed on the rice fields after crops have been carried off and in swamps and marshes. In the flood affected areas the villagers experience some difficulty in obtaining fodder for their cattle during the rainy season. Stall feeding usually does not find favour with the villagers. However, the herds are carefully watched and grazed on fallow lands when the cultivable fields are covered with paddy. Stray cattle which cause damage to standing crops, are lodged in the public cattle pounds by the aggrieved party and the owners of those cattle are obliged to pay certain amount to secure the release of the confined cattle.

(ii) **Dairy farming :** The quinquennial livestock census held in 1966, revealed that the total number of cattle and buffaloes in the district stood at 8,03,007 and 95,854 respectively including 2,37,001 cows and 29,444 she-buffaloes. The average lactation yield of a local cow is only 64 kgs. and that of a she-buffalo 143 kgs. a year. The corresponding all India figures are considerably higher and stand at 187 kgs. and 500 kgs. respectively. The low productivity is due to malnutrition and poor breed.

Government of Assam opened a Livestock Farm at Napam near Tezpur in 1964. The farm covers an area of 317.7 acres of land, its livestock population was 95 cattle (both Haryana and Sahiwal), 59 buffaloes (Murrah breed) and 5 ponies. This farm was first started as a small breeding unit. It now produces milk on commercial basis.

(iii) **Measures to improve quality of breeds and to secure greater output :** As per Livestock Census of 1966, there were 27,612 bulls which were used for breeding and for other works in the entire district. There were also 6,658 he-buffaloes of the same category. Only 5,657 bulls and 2,255 he-buffaloes were used for breeding only. In order to improve the breed of the indigenous variety, various measures have been taken by the Veterinary Department which

has procured and distributed Haryana bulls and R.I.R. bulls in the panchayats on loan basis. Other measures to improve the quality of breeds include opening of Key-Village Centres, insemination centres, semen collection centres and Bull Depots. In 1968 there were five Key-Village Centres in the district, located at Mission Charali (Tezpur), Jamuguri, Dhekiajuli, Mangaldai and Bhergaon. The sub-centres were located at Dipota, Goraimari, Barjhar, Parbatia, Samdhara, Parhigaon etc. Every Development Block has an artificial insemination centre. There are three *Gosals* in the district, one each at Helem, Udalguri and Atharikhat.

As many species of livestock are of poor stock, task of bringing about improvement of breed appears to be difficult. In the Fourth Five Year Plan, emphasis was laid on the expansion of the existing livestock farms, key village schemes and larger distribution of improved breeding stock.

(iv) 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 diseases, rinderpest and parasitic diseases. During 1957-58 rinderpest epidemic broke out in a virulent form. A team of vaccinators was engaged for eradication of the disease. About 5,28,527 heads of cattle were vaccinated against rinderpest and about 2,587 poultry were vaccinated against Ranikhet disease during the year.

There are three Veterinary Hospitals, 15 Veterinary Dispensaries and 18 sub-centres in the Darrang district. These are shown below sub-divisionwise :—

Tezpur Sub-division : Veterinary Hospitals — 2 (Tezpur and Helem). Veterinary Dispensaries — 9 (Dubia, Behali, Charali, Chutia, Jamuguri, Charduar, Rangapara, Khelmati, Bihaguri). Veterinary sub-centres — 11 (Gohpur, Lohitmukh, Jinjia, Pabhoi, Panibharalgaon, Siparia, Itakhal, Rangachakua, Missamari, Barchola and Thelamara).

Mangaldai Sub-division : Veterinary Hospital — 1 (Mangaldai). Veterinary Dispensaries—6 (Dalaigaon, Dalgaon, Tangla, Deuri, Paschim-patala, Dalaipara). Veterinary sub-centres—7 (Hangalpara, Dumnichauki, Rangamati, Paneri, Jonaram Chouk, Sipajhar, Bhakatpara).

In addition to these there is one Mobile Dispensary with headquarters at Tezpur. The following table shows the Livestock population of the district according to quinquennial Livestock Census.¹²

12. Census of India, 1961, Assam, District Census Handbook, Darrang, Gauhati, 1964 P. 414 and Statistical Abstract of Assam, 1967-68, P.134.

Live-stock population of Darrang district.

Livestock	Popula- tion in 1945	Popula- tion in 1951	Popula- tion in 1956	Popula- tion in 1961	Popula- tion in 1966
1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Cattle	5,40,003	6,93,332	7,12,899	8,14,902	8,03,007
2. Buffaloes	91,108	87,081	86,606	1,06,792	95,854
3. Sheep	1,350	3,632	6,719	7,441	5,180
4. Goat	1,08,543	1,24,166	1,59,455	2,79,024	2,23,635
5. Horses and ponies	1,359	1,284	1,522	1,259	5,006
6. Other livestock including poultry.	—	6,60,052	6,44,358	10,14,929	9,94,305

(v) Poultry : Development of poultry has been engaging the attention of the State Government. The birds are, by and large, of indigenous variety and their yield in terms of eggs and meat is poor. On an average the local hen lays only 50 to 150 eggs a year. There are several poultry farms in the district now. The District Poultry Farm was established at Barikachuburi near Tezpur in 1965-66. This farm had 1,500 birds in 1968. There is one Intensive Egg and Poultry Production cum Marketing Centre at Tezpur. It was started in 1967-68. Improved varieties of poultry are distributed from the Development Blocks for the purpose of rearing.

(vi) Fisheries : The bulk of the fish sold in the market comes from the larger fisheries. Fishing, is, however, not confined only to such fisheries. Large number of people irrespective of caste and creed collect fish from rivulets and other water-logged areas. At the beginning of this century, only *Nadiyals* monopolised in fishing on a commercial scale. At present fishery *mahals* are put on auction sale by the Government. The right of fishing in the larger fisheries is sold to the highest bidder for a period of three years. Actual fishing is done by experts. The auction sale of the fisheries is often marked by keen competition among the *mahaldars* and the contenders usually offer a huge amount in a bid to secure the most profitable fishing. Only fresh fish is sold in the market. No industry of canned fish has yet sprung up in the district.

Due to the shortage of fish in the natural fisheries, government fisheries were started after Independence to meet the increasing demand. Fishing is now a growing industry and is welcomed by all sections of people.

The Fishery Department came into being in this district in 1950, when only a Fishery Officer with headquarters at Tezpur was appointed. The main function of the department is to increase the fish production in the district and to demonstrate scientific methods of pisciculture so as to make pisciculture popular among the interested persons. In course of time, the activities of the Fishery Department increased manifold and with it the staff position has also been augmented. The Superintendent of Fisheries is the head of the district establishment of the Fishery Department. One Fishery Demonstrator is appointed in each Development Block, in order to guide the pisciculturists of the locality. Fish farms have been started in the following Development Blocks namely Dhekiajuli, Majbat, Khairabari, Vishwanath Charali and Sipajhar. The Fishery scheme has been financed both from State revenue and loans obtained from the Government of India.

Revenue and Forest Fisheries : In the district of Darrang there are as many as thirty important revenue fisheries comprising several bils, small tributaries, and segments of the Brahmaputra. These are sold annually in auction by the Deputy Commissioner (Revenue Branch). The annual revenue of these fisheries ranges from Rupees two to three lakhs.

Besides, there are some forest fisheries under the Forest Department but the annual revenue of these fisheries is limited from Rs. 2,000.00 to Rs. 3,000.00. The main catch available in the above fisheries are cat fishes, carps and murrels. Most of the catch is locally consumed and a portion of it is transported to Kamrup and Lakhimpur districts. But several bils under revenue fisheries are gradually deteriorating due to silting up of their beds and encroachment of bil-fisheries by the cultivators for growing crops, particularly Jute and Boro paddy.

Fish Farms : Being sponsored by the government many pisciculturists have opened fish farms in various parts of the district. The government fish farms have been successfully exploited to produce fish. Fingerlings of carps and other types of bigger fishes are stocked in these farms. Besides five tanks in Tezpur subdivision, two

tanks of Mangaldai subdivision have been converted into fish farms by the Fishery Department.

Till 1958-59, the Fishery Department collected fish seeds in spawn and fry stage in rivers and tributaries by operating conical net made of mosquito netting cloth, known as *Behundi* net. In addition, fingerlings were collected in *ghat jals* from *hollas* in Tezpur town. But the mortality of fingerlings in transit was found to be very high due to absence of quick transport.

From 1959-60 the Department has succeeded in breeding major carps by inducing them with pituitary hormone. During 1960-61, the Department obtained nearly seven lakhs of fish seeds of which about five lakhs survived. The Fishery Department has been taking measures for meeting the demand of fish seeds in the district. Renovation of old tanks has also been taken up for establishment of more fish farms in the district.

Fishing implements : The nets that are most commonly used include (i) *Ghakota*, a net in the shape of a shovel which is pushed through the water and is generally used to catch *pona* fish; (ii) *Khewali*, a piece of netting to the centre of which a rope is attached, while all round the edges there are weights. The net 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*; (iii) *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, (iv) *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.

Besides the nets, there are various kinds of fishing contrivance prepared out of cane and bamboo and used in different parts of Assam. The descriptive accounts of some of the instruments are noted below.

Polo : This fishing instrument is prepared with the small bamboo strips fastened with fine and flexible cane slips. This is

used for fishing in shallow water. The man who uses it holds it by the side of the stem, presses its rim on the mud, then pulls it back and lifts above or up to the level of water and again presses it as before while moving on through water and whenever any fish is caught, the man puts his hands inside the *polo* to catch hold of the fish. It resembles the shape of a dome with short stem of about 6" diameter open at the top. The diameter at the bottom varies from 2 ft. to 3½ ft. and even upto 4 ft. and in height varies from 2 ft. to 3 ft.

Juluki : It is a fishing instrument prepared with bamboo strips and cane in the same manner like *polo*. But its diameter both at the bottom and top is smaller and in preparing the *juluki*, the bamboo strips are used thickly than *polo*. This instrument is more suitable to catch smaller variety of fish, *puthi*, *khalha*, *goroi*, *magur*, *kaoi* etc.

Jakai ; The *jakai* is a species of wicker work shovel which is either dragged along the bottom or placed on the water bed to catch the small fishes which take refuge in it when the weeds are trampled. *Jati* bamboo is mainly used for making this particular implement.

(4) **Khaloi :** The *khaloi* is also prepared with bamboo strips. The strips required for the weft are very long, while those for the wrap are short. The *khaloi* is woven in the shape of an earthen *kalah* or pitcher. This is used for temporary keeping of fishes during hand-net fishing.

(5) **Chepa :** The *chepa* is made of some prepared bamboo rods according to required size. These are woven in a roundish fashion with soft cane slips. A bamboo valve locally known as *ka* is fitted in the middle of the *chepa* to allow the fishes to enter inside with no scope for going out.

All these implements mentioned above are generally used in catching fish in shallow water. Apart from these contrivances, there are some other implements made of bamboo and cane and are used in catching fishes in deep waters. These are locally known as *gui*, *jhupi*, *dingara*, *thupa*, *hogra* etc.¹³

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

13. Census of India 1961, Selected Handicraft of Assam, Vol. Part. VIII-A, pp. 112-113.

Scientific name	Local name
<u>Carps</u>	
<i>Labeo rohita</i>	.. <i>Rahu</i>
<i>Labeo calbasu</i>	.. <i>Mali (mahlu)</i>
<i>Labeo nandina</i>	.. <i>Nadini</i>
<i>Labeo genius</i>	.. <i>Kurhi</i>
<i>Labeo bata</i>	.. <i>Bhangan</i>
<i>Labeo angra</i>	.. <i>Anka nara</i>
<i>Labeo panpangusia</i>	.. <i>Nara</i>
<i>Catla catla</i>	.. <i>Bahu</i>
<i>Cirrhina reba</i>	.. <i>Lachim</i>
<i>Cirrhina mrigula</i>	.. <i>Mirika</i>
<i>Barbus sarana</i>	.. <i>Senee.</i>
<i>Barbus tor</i>	.. <i>Pithia</i>
<u>Murrels</u>	
<i>Ophiocephalus marulius</i>	.. <i>Sal</i>
.. <i>Straitua</i>	.. <i>Sol</i>
.. <i>Punctutus</i>	.. <i>Goroi</i>
.. <i>Cachual</i>	.. <i>Sengefi</i>
.. <i>Stewarti</i>	.. <i>Senga</i>
.. <i>amphibious</i>	.. <i>Barsenga</i>
<u>Cat fish</u>	
<i>Wallago attu</i>	.. <i>Barali</i>
<i>Mystus seenghala</i>	.. <i>Anari</i>
.. <i>oar</i>	.. <i>Bheu</i>
.. <i>cansius</i>	.. <i>Gagal</i>
.. <i>tengra</i>	.. <i>Singra</i>
.. <i>bleedery</i>	.. <i>Hingara</i>
<i>Clarius magur</i>	.. <i>Magur</i>
<i>Heteropneustes fossilis</i>	.. <i>Singee</i>
<i>Callichrous bimacoulatus</i>	.. <i>Pabha</i>
<i>Entropichathys vacha</i>	.. <i>Bosa</i>
<i>Pangasius pangasius</i>	.. <i>Punga</i>
<i>Pseudotropious gorua</i>	.. <i>Neria</i>
<i>Silonia silonia</i>	.. <i>Kasa</i>
<i>Rita rita</i>	.. <i>Ritha</i>
<i>Bagarius bagarius</i>	.. <i>Gorua</i>

Scientific	Local name
<u>Misc.</u>	..
Narbus stigma	.. Puthi
Narbus Ticto	.. Puthi
Natopterus natopterus	.. Kandhuli
Natopterus chitala	.. Chital
Hilsa ilisha	.. Ilisa
Anabsas testudeneus	.. Kaoi
Tricogaster chuna	.. Bheseli
„ faciatus	.. Khalihana
Nandus nandus	.. Gadgedi
Glassogohious giurius	.. Patimutra
Gudusia chapra	.. Karati
Rasbra elenga	.. Eleng
Mastacembalus Pancalius	.. Tura
Mastacembalus armatus	.. Bami
Rhynobdella aculeata	.. Tura
Ambssis nama	.. Canda
Amblypharayngodon mola	.. Moa
Rashora donricus	.. Dorikana
Ambssis ranga	.. Chanda
Esmus donricus	.. Dorikana
Yenonotodon cancila	.. Kakila
Chela Bacila	.. Chelkana
Laubucca laubuca	.. Laupatia
Rohtee cotio	.. Hapha
Batia dario	.. Batla
Amphipneus cuchia	.. Kuchla
Barilius bola	.. Bariala

Forestry : Forestry occupies a significant place in the economy of the district. A considerable section of the people of the district depends upon forests for fire-wood, for domestic consumption and for timber, bamboo, *ekra*, reed, thatch, *tokopat*, cane, gravels etc., for building of houses. A number of forest based industries such as saw mills, ply-wood factories, match industry, furniture workshops, bamboo and cane industry etc. have been opened in the district. The Darrang Forest Division annually supplies a considerable number of logs of Simul and other match wood species to the match factory at Dhubri. In addition to these, railway sleepers are also produced in

the district. Boulders, gravels, sands and other forest products also fetch considerable revenue to the Government. In 1957-58, Rs. 5,05,839 were earned from major products and Rs.11,72,688 from minor products of the forests. The outturn of timber and fuel produce from the district forest resources is quite considerable. In 1967-68, the Darrang Forest Division provided 18,137 cubic metres of timber and 10,774 cubic metres of fuel.

The revenue earned from elephant catching stands approximately at Rs.55,000.00 every year. Royalty is imposed on each catch of elephant at the rate of Rs.500.00 per tusker, Rs. 250.00 per female and Rs.350.00 per *makhna*. Monopoly fee is also levied on each captured elephant according to rates offered by successful operator. The economy derived from forests by way of forest villages is also significant. The forest villages are generally occupied by local Miri, Kachari, Deori, Mikir and ex-tea garden labourers and these people depend upon wet cultivation. They meet their other expenses from daily wages when they are engaged for plantation and other forest works of the department or contractors. Each adult forest villager is allotted about 10 *bighas* of *rupit* land for cultivation at a nominal rate of revenue by the Forest Department. They are also allowed to occupy upto five *bighas* of homestead land which is free from land revenue. In return for these concessional benefits each adult forest villager renders five days' free labour to the Forest Department per annum. But they are also bound to give 20 days' paid labour to the department every year.

Measures to secure Scientific exploitation and development etc. : According to the Assam Forest Regulation Act, 1891, free access to forest produce and destruction of forests are prohibited. The Forest Department sells the forest produce like wood, gravels and sands, cane and thatch mahals, etc., only on tenders annually from registered contractors and the revenue so derived goes to the Government. Thus, the contractors cannot exploit the forest produce in any manner they like and they have to follow the terms and conditions as prescribed by the department. The department also grants permits to individuals and institutions to extract timber in the reserved forest after collecting royalty under similar conditions and on payment of royalty to collect sand, gravel, cane, thatch, *ekra* etc. The department maintains a regular forest staff in the forest areas to check unauthorised indiscriminate exploitation of forest produce.

During the first and second Five Year Plan periods, the Department adopted the following measures for the development of forests : (a) afforestation, improvement and extension of forestry, (b) development of communications in the forest areas, (c) development of forest industries and (d) survey and demarcation. Further, for exploitation and development of forests on scientific lines, the forest personnel require proper education and training such as those imparted at Forest School, Jalukbari and Research Institutes at Dehradun and Coimbatore.

The statement below shows the expenditure incurred in the district by the Forest Department during the Second Plan period on measures adopted for exploitation of forests on scientific lines.

Improvement on communication.	Development of forest village	Regeneration of 743 acres of forest lands.	Match wood plantation.	Khoir and cane plantation
Rs.1,11,420.00	Rs.4,000.00	Rs.51,150.00	Rs.1,29,050.00	Rs.60,920.00

Forest products and their use : It has been mentioned earlier that the principal forest products of the district are timber of various species, such as *bonsum*, *amari*, *titasopa*, *hollock*, *khair*, *simul* etc. Minor products like cane, bamboo, thatch, reeds etc., are also available almost in all the forests. The statement below shows the present sale price of various kinds of trees and other forest products. The difference between the current price, and the price that prevailed about a quarter century ago reveals some interesting features;

Species	Govt. sale value of a tree or mahals in the past. (Annual sale).	Present Govt. sale value of a tree mahals (Annual sale)
1	2	3
1. Bansum	Rs. 20.00 (per tree)	Rs. 200.03
2. Simul	" 6.00 "	" 60.00
3. Trees other than 1 & 2 above	" 15.00 "	" 130.60
4. Cane reeds, thatch mahals etc.	" 1,000.00 "	" 2,25,000.02
5. Elephant mahals	" 3,000.00 "	" 55,000.00

(f) Flood, Famine and Drought : Famine is unknown in the district. Drought affects the district from time to time. The western part of the district was seriously hit by drought in 1970. The Government of Assam took several steps including installation of deep tube wells, and implementation of Test Relief schemes in the drought affected areas. Widespread flood has become a regular phenomenon in the district. Floods in the tributaries of the Brahmaputra, viz., the Barai, the Bargang, the Ghiladhari, the Dikrai, the Gabharu, the Bhareli, the Belsiri, the Dhansiri, the Pachnai, the Nanai, the Noanadi and the Barnadi cause heavy damage to crops almost annually. The incidence of flood and erosion is rooted in the typical physiographical features and meteorological conditions obtaining in this part of the country. The river Brahmaputra dissects the valley and picks tribute from the principal tributaries, which have considerable hill catchments. Meteorologically, the State experiences copious rainfall ranging from 190 cm. to 700 cm. annually, more than 80 per cent of the precipitation being concentrated in four months from June to September. The heavy water and silt discharges occurring in the upper region during the peak monsoon find their way through numerous streams and rivulets resulting in excessive spilling on the banks of the rivers and their tributaries and consequent water logging in extensive areas in the plains region. Moreover, the large-scale denudation of forests in the hill areas giving, as it does, a further momentum to the peak discharges has certainly contributed towards aggravation of the flood situation in Assam over the past years. Another factor adding a new dimension and greater severity to the problem is the great earthquake of 1950. There have been extensive hill slides in the catchments of the Brahmaputra and the north-eastern tributaries. The beds of the rivers got silted up in varying degrees.

Flood Warning System : In order to enable the district authorities to take timely steps a system has been evolved to transmit flood warning messages. So far as the heavy floods of the Brahmaputra are concerned, the flood warning messages were relayed previously through the office of the Flood Control Department from Shigatsa, Chusuri, and Tsela Dzong stations in Tibet v/a Darjeeling to the Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur. At present flood warning signals are transmitted to the Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur, from some station at the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra. The Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur, on his turn informs other Deputy Commissioners and Subdivisional Officers of the Brahmaputra

valley. The time lag in flood in the Brahmaputra between various stations from Dibrugarh is as follows :—

	Distance from Dibrugarh	Time of flood travel	
		Minimum	Maximum
North Lakhimpur	96.56 Kilometres	9 hours	1 day
Sibsagar	96.56 "	9 "	1 "
Jorhat	121.27 "	15 "	2 "
Tezpur	331.52 "	34 "	3 "
Opposite Nowgong	386.24 "	39 "	3 "
Gauhati	489.24 "	51 "	4 "
Goalpara	624.42 "	64 "	6 "
Barpeta	595.45 "	61 "	6 "
Dhubri	714.54 "	74 "	7 "

On receipt of this flood warning message, the Deputy Commissioners and Subdivisional Officers take precautionary measures to meet the situation arising out of the flood.

Extent of flood damage and flood relief measures :
The damage caused by flood in both the subdivisions is quite extensive. Following table shows the extent of flood damages in Tezpur subdivision.

Statement showing flood damages in
Tezpur Subdivision
(area is given in acres and value is in terms of rupees).

No. of villages affected	Total area affected	Damage of crops		Damage of House		Loss of Cattle	
		Total area	Value	Number	Value	No.	Value
1968-69 4	44,900	12,800	59,970	590	3,000	Nil	Nil
1970-71 182	95,117.93	44,868.59	10,92,812	3,432	3,22,872	305	71,050

Relief operations : As soon as the flood submerges the low-lying areas and the flood level continues to rise, relief operations are started with full vigour. These measures include (1) evacuation of people and cattle whenever necessary to safer places and providing for their food and shelter till the flood recedes, (2) distribution of gratuitous relief in those flood affected areas where evacuation is not necessary. At times the flood level rises very rapidly and the swirling currents make it extremely risky to move from one place to another. Very often the villages appear to be isolated islands negotiable only by boats. In some *char* areas the roofs of houses are swept away and only the tree tops remain visible above the water. Unless evacuation is done in a planned manner, the loss of human life under such circumstances may be very high. The evacuation and distribution of gratuitous relief are supplemented by other measures such as (1) rehabilitation of the erosion affected people, (2) execution of test relief schemes so that the people of the flood affected areas secure some amount of purchasing power, (3) inoculation of human beings as well as cattle to prevent outbreak of epidemic, (4) disinfecting the flood affected areas, (5) distribution of seeds or seedlings by the Agriculture Department to the farmers of the flood affected areas where crops have been damaged, (6) issue of agricultural loan and rehabilitation loans to the flood affected people, (7) issue of grants for repairing school buildings or other public buildings, roads and bridges damaged by the flood, (8) remission of land revenue in the worst affected areas, (9) issue of educational loans or grants to help the students of the flood affected areas. These measures are by nature short term ones. Long term measures include permanent flood control measures, such as construction of dykes, dams, culverts, sluice gates etc., and regulating the river courses. Thus a concerted effort is made by several departments to mitigate the miseries of the flood affected people. Most of the principal departments of the Government, in some way or other, have got something to do in respect of the flood. In steering relief operation, the district and the sub-divisional authorities secure complete co-operation from other departments of the Govt. as well as from the local public. At times Sub-divisional or District Flood Relief Committees are formed comprising both official and non-official members to devise means of providing adequate relief to the flood affected people.

Apart from evacuations of people and cattle, whenever necessary, the immediate relief made available to the flood affected people is the

gratuitous relief. Relief parties visit the villages and distribute food-grains, pulses, salt and mustard oil at a given scale. Other commodities distributed include medicine, clothing and fodder of the cattle. The relief parties move mostly by country boats and carry with them the stock of food-grains etc. meant for distribution. Cheap grains and fair price shops are opened at various places to sell rice or paddy to the flood affected people at reduced rate, the difference of which is subsidised by the Government.

Following is the statement showing relief measures taken up in Tezpur sub-division during the last few years.

Flood relief in Tezpur Sub-division :

Type of relief	1966-67 Rs.	1968-68 Rs.	1968-69 Rs.	1969-70 Rs.	1970-71 Rs.
1) Gratuitous relief	1,000.00	1,000.00	3,700.00	3,275.00	1,275.00
2) Rehabilitation Loan	3,500.00	3,400.00	10,000.00	7,000.00	4,500.00
3) Rehabilitation grants-in-aid	25,000.00	11,100.00	19,200.00	2,600.00	N.A.
4) Flood Relief.	28,813.00	8,118.00	9,400.00	10,000.00	20,000.00
5) Seed Grant	...	20,000.00	25,000.00	...	1,38,720.00
6) Seed Loan	...	...	...	12,470.00	

(g) State Assistance to Agriculture : The steps taken for the increase of agricultural production and the area under cultivation have been discussed earlier. The State Government also gives various types of loans to the cultivators every year. The total amount of these loans including the arrear loans is indicated in the table below :—

Various types of agricultural loans issued in Darrang district.

Rehabilitation Loan :

Year	Principal (in Rupees)	Interest (in Rupees)
1968-69	1,47,426.11	23,765.43
1969-70	1,60,584.35	36,752.00
1970-71	16,991.68	56,200.33

Land Improvement Loan

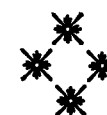
Year	Principal (in Rupees)	Interest (in Rupees)
1968-69	N. A.	N. A.
1969-70	1,17,358.43	61,106.99
1970-71	1,15,457.43	66,879.83

Agricultural Loan

Year	Principal (in Rupees)	Interest (in Rupees)
1968-69	3,60,165.64	51,470.45
1969-70	3,72,550.64	66,380.05
1970-71	3,64,142.75	77,012.75

Cattle Loan

Year	Principal (in Rupees)	Interest (in Rupees)
1969-69	62,598.00	822.11
1969-70	61,377.00	62,64.47
1970-71	60,830.44	9,437.47



CHAPTER - V

INDUSTRIES

(a) Old-time Industries

The finesse and exquisite workmanship of a wide variety of industrial products of ancient Assam earned universal acclamation, as is evident from many literary and historical records. "Whether in the art of weaving and sericulture or working in metal, ivory, wood, leather, clay, cane, bamboo and the like ; their reputation was equal to that of the craftsmen of other parts of contemporary India."¹ The district of Darrang being a part of the ancient kingdom, shared the glory and fortune of the country in the past. After the disintegration of Kamarupa, there prevailed a long period of uncertainty. The Ahoms occupied one part of Darrang in the 16th century ; but it was only in the 17th century that the entire district came under the subjugation of the Ahomdynasty. During the Ahom period, the cottage industries of Assam reached a high degree of perfection. As Darrang came under the Ahom rule very late, it did not share in full the industrial excellence of the Ahoms and lagged behind her sister districts like Sibsagar in respect of development of industries. This backwardness was further aggravated during the British period. The stiff competition which the indigenous industries faced from the mill-made cheap goods, imported from outside, quickened the decay of many cottage industries and brought others nearly to a point of extinction. An account of some of the old-time industries that flourished in the district is given below :—

(i) Weaving : Handloom weaving is an important cottage industry that has been flourishing in Assam from ancient times. It still occupies a place of pride in every Assamese household which invariably maintains a handloom besides other articles for spinning and weaving. It is a universally practised cottage industry by rich and poor alike and has no stigma of caste or creed attached to it. Most of its products are of utility value but "some of them which are used for certain occasions are of exquisite beauty, durable quality,

delicate weave, dainty designs and delightful colours".² *Muga mekhela* and *riha*, beautifully decorated blouse pieces, *Eri chadar* etc., are some of the best specimen of handloom products which show the creative genius of the weavers in Assam. Indigenous weavers are widely known as producers of "fabrics of delicate textures and designs".³

Ample references to the handloom weaving industry that flourished in this region in the past are found in many epigraphic, literary and foreign accounts. The *Kalika Purana* of the 10th century A. D. and *Harsacarita* show that fine cotton garments were used in Assam. The *Kalika Purana* also refers to woollen garments, *Kambala* used and manufactured in this country. During the Ahom period handloom weaving was at the peak of its glory. It was rare to find an Assamese family without a loom. Momai Tamuli Bar Barua, a Minister of King Pratap Sinha, ordered that before the sunset every woman must spin a certain number of hanks of yarn. This rule was scrupulously followed in the Ahom kingdom to avoid punishment. In his book *An Account of Assam*, J. P. Wade, observed : "Warlike cloth is made in the following manner. At midnight the cotton is ginned, pressed into rollers, spun into thread, manufactured into cloth and worn by the warriors in the morning". It is an old custom that the mother gives three pieces of silk garment to her daughter at the time of latter's marriage and a complete silk dress to her son-in-law when welcoming him. From early times, *Eri* cloth has been serving the purpose of woollens particularly amongst the less affluent section of the Assamese people. Muhammadan historians observed that Assam silks were excellent and resembled these of China. Tavernier refers to Assam silk as one "produced on trees" and confirms that the stuff made of them was very brilliant. Like the nobilities of Japan, the Ahom kings in Assam took personal care and interest in the silk industry and the royal patronage contributed a lot in attaining the high degree of its perfection. The fabrics prepared out of *Muga*, *Eri* and *Pat* (mulberry silk) became the national dress of the Assamese and formed a common costume of the women of Assam Valley.

With the downfall of the Ahom Kingdom and the advent of the British, came the dark era of handloom weaving in Assam. The British did not evince any interest in the development of this national industry. They were keen only to find markets for their Lancashire

1. P. C. Choudhury—*The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam, to the Twelfth Century A. D.*, Gauhati, 1969 p. 363.

2. *Census of India, 1961, Volume III, Assam; part VIIA, Selected Handicrafts of Assam*, Delhi, 1966, P.I.

3. *Ibid.*

products and as such weaving industry faced keen competition from the mill-made cheap goods which dominated the markets situated even in the remote areas. The traditional weavers could not withstand the competition and left their age-old occupation to find employment in other sectors. However, the industry was so deeply rooted in the substratum of the Assamese life that it could save itself from the total annihilation inspite of the competition that throttled its growth. It still continues to be an important occupation, especially of the women-folk. Every girl is expected to know the art of weaving. It is still customary among the Assamese that, on *Bihu* occasions a grown-up girl makes presents of self-woven '*bihuan*' (*Phulam gamosa*) to her near and dear ones as a token of love and respect. It is in this context that Mahatma Gandhi once remarked, "Assamese women are born weavers, they can weave fairy tales in their cloths."

The Assamese women, as in the past, pursue the industry as a part-time occupation to produce the cloth required by each family, but they detest production on commercial basis. Among the immigrants, however, professional weaving is not rare. The articles of production generally include *mekhela*, *chadar*, *riha*, *churia*, *cheleng*, *borkapor*, *gamosa*, and piece cloths, etc. The implements of weaving which were and still are common in almost all the Assamese families are quite few in number. Besides, various types of looms, *ugha*, *chereki*, *mako*, spinning wheel, *neothani* etc., are some of the accessories required for weaving. As many as twelve types of looms are said to be in use in the district which may be broadly grouped under four categories i.e., Throw shuttle loom, Loin loom, Pit loom, and Fly shuttle loom. The first one is found in almost every Assamese house-hold while the second one is in common use among the hill tribes. The Bengali weavers who have migrated from East-Pakistan (now Bangladesh) mostly use Pit loom. The Fly shuttle loom which is of recent introduction, is an improved type of frame which considerably increases the out-put of the weavers.

Raw materials required for weaving industry are mainly cotton, *muga*, *pat*, *eri*, and silk yarn. Various counts of yarn ranging from 10" to 80" are generally used by the weavers. The yarn is mostly purchased from the markets and only a few do the spinning at home. Almost whole of the cotton yarn and a greater part of the silk yarn are imported from outside the State.⁴ The number of professional weavers in the district is very small. As per census of 1961 there were only 2,429 weavers (outside the co-operative fold) of which 600 were

full-time weavers and the rest part-time weavers. Of the full-time weavers three-fourths were female weavers and of the part-time weavers numbering 1,829, male weavers constituted a very insignificant number of 79 only. Besides, there were 2,899 weavers in the co-operative sector forming 146 co-operative societies. Of these artisans also, females constituted the majority.

Since the Second Five Year Plan much emphasis has been laid on the development of village handicrafts and cottage industries with a view to solving the baffling problem of ever-increasing unemployment and handloom industry is no exception to it. This industry, if geared to the commercial exigencies, will provide lucrative employment, especially to the womenfolk as full-time as well as part-time workers in their traditional craft. Keeping this in view, various boards viz., the Khadi and Village Industries Board, the All India Handicrafts Board, the All India Handloom Board, the Central Silk Board, the Coir Board, and the Small Industries Board, have been established at the national level. The Directorate of Sericulture and Weaving and the Directorate of Industries of Assam look after the development of village and cottage industries in the State.

The Directorate of Sericulture and Weaving, Assam, which comprises two wings i.e., Sericulture and Weaving, looks after the development of weaving in the State. Under its weaving wing, there is one Weaving Inspector, posted in each of the two sub-divisions. Each sub-division has been divided into small circles and placed in charge of one Demonstrator. In the district of Darrang, there are 24 such circles of which 13 are in Tezpur Sub-division and 11 in Mangaldai sub-division. The demonstrators keep the artisans abreast of the latest development of the handloom industry and impart training on the latest designs and technique of production and use of improved looms and implements. The Department also arranges the supply of improved looms and other weaving implements on subsidy basis varying from $\frac{1}{4}$ th to $\frac{1}{5}$ th of the price to popularise weaving.

Three Weaving Training Centres have been established at Chutia, Thelamara and Bengbari by the Directorate in the district with an intake capacity of 15 girls every year in each of them. The term of the training is of one year duration. Deserving trainees are awarded a monthly stipend. The Department also provides

4. Ibid, PP. 4—5,

grants-in-aid to the trained artisans, who are desirous of establishing themselves in the industry.

Besides the above training centres, there is one Weaver's Extension Service Centre at Dhekiajuli in the Tezpur sub-division. This centre keeps a stock of looms and other weaving accessories, yarns, dyeing chemicals etc., for sale at the subsidised rates to the public. The Khadi and Village Industries Board is also maintaining one Khadi and Endi production centre at Sipajhar in the Mangaldai sub-division besides a number of Khadi Bhandars at Tezpur and other important places to provide ready markets to the weavers of the district.

(ii) **Sericulture** : Next to weaving, sericulture is the most important cottage industry not only of the district but also of the State of Assam. Extensively practised during the agricultural off-season as a subsidiary occupation, it occupies an important place in the rural economy of the State. Assam is the leading producer of the non-mulberry silk and produces about two-thirds of India's total output and so far as the production of *Muga* silk is concerned, the State virtually holds a monopoly of it.⁵

The origin of the silk industry in Assam is still obscure but there is hardly any doubt of its antiquity. P. C. Choudhury observes, "The art of sericulture, and rearing of cocoons for the manufacture of various silk cloths were known to the Assamese as early as the *Ramayana* and the *Arthashastra* The classical writers beginning at least with the 1st century A.D., make important mention of the production of silk and the silk trade in and through Assam. The *Periplus* refers to both raw and manufactured silk, which were from China or Assam..... As the industry was mainly confined in the past to the Tibeto-Burman elements in Assam, it is not unlikely that along with their migration to Assam they introduced some ideas from China; but the manufacture of *Muga* silk has been confined to Assam alone, and this land, like China, had a world-wide reputation for the manufacture of varieties of silk cloths, and had a profitable foreign trade in such articles."⁶ Chinese records dating as far back as 248 A.D. mention about the trade route from South China through the Shan States, Brahmaputra river and Kamarupa to Pataliputra (present Patna) and through it, to the

5. Ibid, p. 23.

6. P.C. Chaudhury ; *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A. D.* 1959, PP. 364-65,

western part of India. The ancient trade in silk with Bhutan and Tibet, through Udalguri in the Darrang district of Assam still exists.⁷

The unique distinction earned by the fabrics prepared out of *Muga*, *Eri* and *Pat* (Mulberry silk) in Assamese life and the interest taken by the Ahom nobilities in nurturing the silk industry have already been described in the preceding paras under 'Weaving'. It is due to this royal patronage during the Ahom days that the industry reached its high peak of perfection. During the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth century, Assam silk especially *Muga*, was much in demand in Europe and formed the staple of trade of East India Company during this period.

Like weaving, silk industry also had its period of crisis during the British regime when even markets situated in far-flung areas were flooded with foreign mill-made artificial silk cloths. But the industry has stood the test of time having survived and risen from ravages. The Department of the Sericulture and Weaving which came into being in 1948-49 (after it was separated from the Cottage Industries Department) and the various schemes undertaken by it since then for the development of sericulture provided it a fresh lease of life and the industry appears to be making a steady progress. The Central Silk Board of India has also been of great assistance to the State by providing finance for the effective implementation of various schemes for the development of the sericulture.

The office of the Superintendent of Sericulture under the Directorate of Sericulture and Weaving, Assam, was established at Tezpur in 1956, having jurisdiction over the whole of the District of Darrang, North Lakhimpur and the Majuli area of the Sibsagar district with a number of subordinate staff consisting of three Inspectors, one Organiser and 20 Demonstrators. During the last three Five-Year Plans the schemes implemented by the Department for the development of sericulture in the district comprised establishment of Sericulture Farms, rearing, reeling and spinning Centres, and distribution of mulberry seedlings, silk worms, eggs etc.

One Sericulture Farm was established at Banglagarh in Mangaldai sub-division in 1948 with a view to supplying mulberry seeds, *muga* cocoons as well as high yielding silkworm food plants. The

7. *Facts About Assam Silk*, The Sericulture and Weaving Department, Assam, Shillong, P. 2.

farm covers an area of 150 acres (about 63 hectares) and the annual out-turn of mulberry silk worm laying is 90,000 and the production of raw silk varies annually from 7.5 kgs. to 10 kgs. Lakhs of mulberry seedlings and grafts are annually distributed from this Farm.

In 1958, one Chouki Rearing Centre was established at Udalguri with an area of 10 *bighas* (about 1.4 hectares) to rear small mulberry silk worms on Japanese system of rearing. Here worms are reared upto 2nd moult *enmasse* by the village rearers under the expert supervision of the Departmental staff and then worms are distributed among the rearers. About 8,000 to 10,000 mulberry layings are annually reared in the centre.

One concentration centre of Mulberry Silk Worms Rearing was established at Kapurpora (Udalguri) in 1958 with contribution from the Central Silk Board of India to assess and gauge the sericulture activities in a concentrated place. It covers a few potential villages for the concentrated development of sericulture and looks after the successful rearing of silk worm of the rearers. It also distributes silk worms received from the Chouki Rearing Centre and silk worm seeds in egg stage among the rearers covered by the centre. There are about 98 mulberry silk worm rearers are under the centre who own a total mulberry acreage of 160 *bighas* (about 22 hectares) of land. Annually about 200 Lbs. (about 90 kgs.) of raw *Pat* silk is also produced by the centre. A Reeling Unit has also been established towards the end of 2nd plan to turn out better quality of raw *Pat* silk.

Another Reeling and Spinning Centre is functioning at Majbat. This centre was originally established at Dhekiajuli during the 1st Plan but with the normalisation of the Community Development Block, it was shifted to Majbat Sericulture Farm originally established under the auspices of the Community Development Block. It covers an area of 15 *bighas* of which $11\frac{1}{2}$ *bigha* are under the silk food plants. The centre is now confined to preparation and distribution of seeds and mulberry leaves. In 1961-62 the centre distributed 2,700 *Eri* layings and 1,500 Lbs. (about 675 kgs) of mulberry leaves. To impart training on sericulture, a *Boakata* Society has been functioning since the first plan at Bhergaon. The Department has also granted a sum of Rs. 28,604.52 as subsidies and contributions to about 409 individuals and organisations in the district, during the Second Plan period.

Sericulture and Weaving is widely practised in the Darrang district specially among the Kachari people. Three principal varieties of silk called *Pat*, *Endi* and *Muga* were and are still produced in the district. The first variety is the finest and costliest. *Endi* is of coarser quality and is generally used by the common people. The third variety i.e., *Muga*, is stouter, and more durable than *Pat* but coarser and less glossy. Of these three *Eri* and *Pat* worms are chiefly reared in the district.⁸ Formerly *Pat* silk could be easily obtained at Becheria and Bihaguri in Tezpur and at Sipajhar and Patharughat in Mangaldai and considerable quantities of *Eri* cloth and yarn were and, still are on sale at Kalaigaon market.

Pat is produced from the cocoons of two species of worms called univoltine or *bar-palu* (*bombyx textor*) and multivoltine or *saru palu* (*bombyx croesi*). Both the species are reared indoors on the leaves of the mulberry tree (*morus indica*) or where mulberry is not available on the *Panchapa*. The eggs of the *bar palu* take about ten months to hatch, the worms usually making their appearance about the beginning of January. The life span of the worms is about thirty to forty days and the cocoons take about 6 days to spin. The cocoons are of a bright yellow colour but the silk after it is boiled in potash water becomes perfectly white. About twenty five to thirty thousand cocoons are needed to produce one kg. of thread. The rearing of *saru-palu* is much favoured by the cultivators as this worm yields four broods in a year although the thread obtained from it is regarded inferior to that of the *bar-palu*. *Pat* silk is used for making *Mekhela*, *Riha* and *Chadar* for women and *Kurta* for men.

Several are the causes which make this silk rare and expensive. First the worms producing this type of silk are very delicate and a large number of them die before they spin. Secondly, the supply of mulberry leaves is limited. Thirdly, the rearing of this worm in the past carried a stigma of impurity and as such its rearing was confined only to the members of the Jugi Community and even they regarded it with disfavour. However, this old-time prejudice is dying and the rearing of the worm has become popular among other communities also.

Muga, The golden yellow silk of Assam is produced by a worm known as *antheroea assamoea* which is generally fed on the

8. *Selected Handicrafts of Assam*, Census of India, 1961, Vol-III, Assam, part VII (A) Delhi, 1966, p. 26.

sum tree (*machilus adoratissima*). It is a multivoltine silk worm producing five broods in a year of which only three broods i. e., *katia* in October-November, the *jarua* in December-February and the *jethua* in the spring are commonly reared in the district. The complete cycle of the insect lasts from 54 to 81 days, the bulk of which is occupied by the life of the worm. With the hatching of the moths the females are attached to straws inside the house and the males are left free to visit them for three to four days. Each female generally produces about 250 eggs. These eggs are kept in dark place and as soon as the worms appear, they are shifted to the *sum* tree. A band of straw or plantain leave is fastened round the trunk to prevent them from descending and for providing them night shelter. Proper watch however, is required to protect them from becoming prey of crows, kites, owls etc. After they are fully grown they are about 12 cms. long and nearly as thick as the fore finger. Their colour is green with a brown and yellow stripe extending down each side, while red moles with bright gold bases are dotted about the surface of the body. Worms descend from the tree as soon as they become ready to spin and are immediately placed inside the house. The silk is produced by reeling the cocoons and about 250 cocoons are required to produce one ounce of thread. Most of the Assamese women possess one or more garments of *Muga* silk and well-to-do men ceremonially wear weistcloths of this material.

Eri cloth is produced in every part of the district but the greater concentration of the industry is in the areas inhabited by the Kachari tribe, north of the Mangaldai subdivision. The *Eri* worm (*attacus ricini*) derives its name from the *Eri* or castor plant (*ricinus communis*) on which it is usually fed. Patches of this plant are commonly seen in the gardens of most of the villagers. "The *Attacus Ricini*, belonging to the Saturniidae, is for all practical purposes, habitant of Assam,"⁹ as fairly heavy rainfall and moist climate are considered highly suitable to it. In a year, five or six broods are generally reared and those which spin their cocoons in November, February and May yield much silk. Like *Muga* moth, females are tied to pieces of reed while males are left free to visit them. When the worms appear they are put in a tray or a basket suspended in a place of safety and fed on the leaves of the castor oil plant. Worms when fully grown look like dirty white or green and vary in length

9. *Glimpses of Silk Industry in Assam, Sericulture & Weaving Department*, Government of Assam, Gauhati, 1955, p.3.

from 7.5 to 7.6 cm. After the final moulting, the worms are transferred from the tray to forked twigs suspended across a piece of reed and as soon as they become ready to spin, they are placed on dried plantain leaves or withered branches hung from the roof of the hut. Before spinning, cocoons are softened by boiling in water with a solution of alkali and empty cocoons produce about three quarters of their weight in thread. The most useful garment made of *Eri* silk is the *bar kapor*, a large sheet about 6 metres in length by about 1½ meters wide, which is folded and used as a wrap in cold weather by all sections of the people. *Eri* silk is also made into coats and shirts.

Sericulture is mainly a household industry and generally the rearing of worms is done by the female members of the household in their idle hours. Mostly, the rearing is done to meet the requirements of the family though there are a few professionals who practise it more or less on commercial lines. The tools and implements required for the industry are few and simple, and almost all of these are made by the artisan himself and by the members of his family or can be had from the market at a moderate price. The tools generally required are : bamboo tray (*dala*), bamboo *chandrakiful*, thread net, *charkha* (*nidhiram*), *Takli*, boiling pan and loom.

(iii) *Pottery* : Pottery, a very ancient industry of Darrang, has lost much of its past glory, and is now confined only to making common earthen wares. The art of making pottery was known to the people of Assam from the early times and "some of the best specimens of pottery with artistic and decorative designs, belonging to the 5th-6th century A.D., have been discovered from Dah Parvatia; some specimens also have been found in Tczpur and near Sadiya. The clay seals of Bhaskaravarman also point to the fact that the art of clay modelling was developed in ancient Assam. Moreover, Bana mentions among the presents of Bhaskara "drinking vessels embossed by skilful artists, molasses in earthen pots and cup of *ullaka* diffusing a fragrance of sweet wine."¹⁰

The existence of some *chubas* or villages bearing the prefix *kumar* to their names such as *Kumar chuburi*, *Kumargaon* etc., is perhaps reminiscent of the pottery that once flourished in these regions. In the Brahmaputra valley of Assam making of earthen wares

10. P.C. Choudhury, *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A. D.* Gauhati, 1959, p. 378

was practised by two distinct classes of people, known as *Hira* and *Kumar*. The word *kumar*, derived from *kumbhakar* (maker of pots) does not connote, in the Brahmaputra valley, any caste or sub-caste, but those who make or whose ancestors are remembered to have made some earthen wares. Thus there are Kumar Kalitas, Kumar Keots, and Kumar Koches and the people so designated continue to retain their old caste status. In a few instances persons other than *Hira* and *Kumar* are also found engaged in the pottery industry. In Tezpur sub-division a few people of Kaivarta caste made large earthen pots which were once used for boiling gur. The principal centres of the pottery industry were at Tezpur, Chutia, Vishwanath, Becheria and Haleswar in Tezpur subdivision and at Salmara in Mangaldai sub-division,

The state of affairs of the pottery industry in the district is not very encouraging; local pottery has mostly been replaced by the superior clay or porcelain goods and metal utensils, imported into the district from outsiders. The profits of the industry are also small and most of the traditional potters have left the trade and shifted to other lucrative occupations. In the old Gazetteer of Darrang of 1905, the population of potters in the district was estimated at "not more than six or seven hundreds" but according to the census of 1961 it dwindled to 366 of which 270 were males and 96 females.

The raw materials required for the industry are the glutinous clay and the tools and implements used are the wheel (*chak*), the mould (*athali*), the mallet (*hatiya piteni*) and polisher (*chaki*). The articles made are the cooking pots (such as *akathiah* and *khola*, *das-kathia*, *charu* and *satar*), water jars (*kalah* and *tekeli*), vessels for boiling rice (*thali*), larger vessels (*hari* and *jaka*) besides, lamps, pipes and drums. In the urban areas there are small groups of potters who specialise in making the images of *Durga*, *Kali*, *Saraswati* etc. The artisans often display an astute artistic sense in making the images, which fetch them handsome amounts. In off season, they make beautiful dolls, toys etc., and sell in the nearby markets or *melas*,

In recent years some schemes have been taken up by the State Khadi and Village Industries Board, Assam with a view to encouraging the village potters to switch over from their traditional items of products to the production of glazed pottery wares, bricks and tiles which have better marketing potentiality. The Board has been providing for training facilities to the artisans. However, impact of these

schemes on the pottery industry in the district is yet to be felt on a wide scale,

(iv) **Bamboo and Cane works** : Among the traditional crafts, the making of bamboo and cane products is perhaps most universally practised by all sections of the people throughout the State. Its products may be termed as 'pure handicraft products' in which even elementary mechanical device is not used. Its products have wide range of uses and as such commonly found in every household.

Like other handicrafts, the bamboo and cane products of Assam earned wide appreciation in the past. We find mention of the use of "well decorated and coloured *Sital pati* (Cool mats)" usually made of cane. Ptolemy stated that canes were grown and used as bridge. In *Harsa-carita*, there is a mention of stools made of cane. Likewise there is mention of bamboo cultivation and its uses for various purposes. "Bana testifies to this highly developed crafts. He states that Bhaskara sent to Harsa baskets of variously coloured reeds, thick bamboo tubes and various birds in bamboo cages."¹¹ From this it may be inferred that this craft was highly developed in the past, not only in the production of utility articles but also of the articles of great artistic value.

This craft is now mainly a household industry and occupies an important place among the handicrafts of the district. It provides a subsidiary occupation of the cultivators and full-time occupation to these highly skilled artisans who produce only fine decorative baskets, furniture and mats etc., on commercial scale.

The making of bamboo products is mainly a rural industry. It is commonly pursued by the agriculturists in their spare time as a subsidiary occupation. Its heavy concentration in the rural areas may primarily be attributed to the availability of bamboos in the villages and the very high demand for various bamboo products, such as, mats, baskets, fishing contraptions etc., in every rural household. The essential equipment required for the industry is *dao* and knife which are invariably found in every family. The manufacturing activities are generally carried out outdoors and all the members of the family, both male and female, take part in it; however, the male members of the family, predominate. Most of the products, manufactured in such households, are meant for domestic use and only a small percentage of the

11. P.C. Choudhury ; *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam, to the Twelfth Century*, A. D. Gauhati 1959, P. 378.

products are sold in the markets. The professional artisans who follow this trade as a whole-time occupation sell their products in the markets. *Jhapi* the headgear, which is produced on commercial scale, are of various designs and sizes. The *Jhapis* ornamented and embroidered with different designs were indicative of the dignity and the social status of those who used them in the past. Although use of such *Jhapis* is no longer in vogue now, the embroidered and ornamented *jhapis* are still considered as precious possessions by the rich and poor alike. A village named Japisagia situated at a distance of about 5 kms. from Tezpur is famous for their production.

The making of cane products is an important and growing cottage industry of the district which abounds in canes. Manufacture of cane furniture requires a high degree of skill. Most of such artisans are from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and indigenous workers are few.

Plucking baskets made of cane are required in large numbers by the tea gardens. Taking advantage of the inability of small firms to cater to such large demands, some big firms have monopolised the manufacture of plucking baskets. The petty artisans generally confine themselves to individual needs like furniture and miscellaneous articles such as boxes, cradles, canestools (*murrha*), office trays, tiffin baskets, bottle carriers, bicycle baskets, waste paper baskets etc.

Judging from the demand for bamboo and cane products and the availability of necessary raw materials in the district, it appears that there is considerable potentiality for their manufacture on commercial basis. With a little training in artistic designs and the use of colours, the artisans will be able to manufacture various bamboo and cane products suited to modern taste.¹² In 1961, only a small number of workers, numbering 849 were censused under this head in the district. Of them 680 were males and 169 were females.

(v) Brass and bell metal industry : The brass and bell metal industry was highly developed throughout Assam in the past. The skill of artisans who worked on metals in the past is well proved by the existing remains of copper temple at Sadiya and copper plates issued by the rulers. The industry has suffered decay and is confined only to a few places like, Chutia, Becheria, Modopi, Bihaguri in Tezpur Sub-division and Mangaldai and Patharughat in Mangaldai Sub-division. The number of artisans engaged in the industry is very small. Bell metal

utensils are cast in moulds but brass vessels are made of thin sheets which are beaten out and pieced together. The articles manufactured by artisans mainly consist of utensils, vessels and other articles of day-to-day domestic use such as, *lota* (flatish bowl with narrow neck), *kalah* (jars for holding water), *sarai* (high tray), *temi* (small container to carry lime), *thali* (large vessel for boiling rice), bellmetal spoons, glasses, dishes etc. Mirrors made of shining metals were also in use in the past.

(vi) Black smithy : In olden times the industry was concentrated in some localities of the district, as is evident from the place names prefixed by the term *Kamar* which means a blacksmith. Kamar Chuburi, Kamar-gaon etc., are indicative of the concentration of the industry in the past in these areas. The principal articles of production include agricultural implements, domestic tools, defence weapons besides the tools of the craft like anvils, bellows, hammers, chisels etc. The industry has suffered decay and very few indigenous artisans are found in the trade. According to the Census of 1961, the number of blacksmiths, hammer-smiths, forgers engaged in the craft throughout the district were 255 of which only 3 were females. The present production of blacksmithy usually includes simple agricultural implements like ploughshare (*phal*), spade, sickle, and various implements of daily use like *dao*, knife, axe etc. The raw materials required for the industry are steel and soft iron imported from outside the State. A considerable demand for raw materials is also met from scrap iron. The industry needs rapid modernisation.

(vii) Gold and Silver smithy : The industry is mainly concentrated in the urban areas. The artisans are from families who have been traditionally associated with the industry. The main centres in the district in the early part of the twentieth century were Becheria and Sarubhugia in the Tezpur Sub-division. The survival of this age-old industry may primarily be attributed to its higher rate of profit and its adaptability to individual tastes. The indigenous jewellers exhibit considerable amount of skill and artistic refinement in making golden ornaments such as *dugdugi*, *galpata*, *jonbiri*, *keru*, *thuria*, *gamkharu* etc. Of these ornaments, the first three have gradually been replaced by necklaces fitted with lockets, the fourth and the fifth by earrings and the last by bracelets. The goldsmiths hailing from Bengal constitute the bulk of the artisans engaged in this industry. Among the indigenous goldsmiths only those who have adopted themselves to the changing pattern of the jewellery, are still in the line.

12. *Report on a Survey of Cottage Industries, Volume 1*, Department of Economics and Statistics, Assam, Shillong, 1958, pp.74-75.

Among other industries or crafts of the district that flourished in ancient times but are now almost extinct, mention may be made of gold washing, stone carving, manufacture of aromatics etc. Gold was said to be extracted from the Bhareli and Dhansiri rivers in the district. According to Tezpur Grant, "the river Lauhitya carried down gold dust from the gold bearing boulders of the Kailasa mountain"¹³. It is also recorded that Vanamala rebuilt the fallen golden temple of Siva (Hataka Sulin) in Haruppesvara. It is probable that the reference in the *Arthasastra* (11,XII) to a variety of gold called *Hataka*, extracted from the mines of the same name, has a bearing on this and that such a mine might have existed in the mountains lying to the north of modern Tezpur or at the foot of the Himalayas.¹⁴ According to Riyaz-Us-Salatin, the gold image in the temple weighed one thousand maunds.¹⁵ Gold washing industry flourished during the Ahom rule and thousands of persons were engaged in the industry. It was done by a guild known as the *Sonowal Khel* who paid the Government a tax at four annas weight or five rupees worth of gold per annum. In the early part of the British rule, gold washing industry thrived for some time but was given up ultimately as being expensive and unprofitable.

Numerous remains of temples and buildings, found throughout the district are specimen of the archaeological wealth of the district. These ruins show that a section of sculptors, skilled in stone carving and chiselling, flourished in the district. Among the wood works, boat making was a flourishing industry in the past. The Tezpur Grant mentions that a large number of boats in the Brahmaputra were carved with ornaments.¹⁶ Wood was also used for making of icons, boxes, stools, trays, chairs and numerous other articles. In describing the workmanship of the artisans of the Ahom days, Shihabuddin Talish, a Persian historian who accompanied Mirjumla, wrote, "my pen fails to describe in detail, other arts and rare inventions employed in decorating the wood work. Probably nowhere in the world can wooden houses be built with such decoration and figure carving as by the people of this country."¹⁷ The Tezpur Grant of Vanamala also makes a mention of

13. P.C. Choudhury, *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam, to the Twelfth Century, A.D.* Gauhati. 1959 p. 370-71.

14. Ibid, 371

15. Ibid, p. 371.

16. Ibid, pp, 374-377.

17. An article "*Assam and Ahoms in 1660 A.D.*" by Professor Jadunath Sarkar M. A. published in the *Journal of the Bihar & Orissa Research Society*, Vol. no. 1, part I, September, 1915, pp 179,-195.

actual use of perfumes by women and the *Arthasastra* gives an exhaustive list of such perfumes.¹⁸

Reasons for the decay of old time Industries : Although cottage industries still play a vital role in the economy of the district, some of the old time industries have suffered stagnation while some others are now buried under oblivion. The reasons are not far to seek. The downfall of the Ahom Kingdom followed by political insecurity led to the disruption of the social order. The patronage of kings and nobles that often led to the growth of the industries ceased. Dumping of local markets with cheaper machine-made goods imported from outside by the British, preference of people for such goods, and outdated techniques of production are other factors that retarded the growth of cottage industries. Many of the traditional artisans finding other avenues of employment more lucrative left their old crafts.

(b) Power : Power supply and its development in the district are of very recent date. Prior to the formation of the Assam State Electricity Board in 1958, there was only one diesel power station at Tezpur to supply power to the town. It was run by the Tezpur Electric Supply Company (PVT) Ltd. It used to supply D.C. current and had a plant capacity of 206 K.W. in 1950 which in 1955 was increased to 454 K.W. In 1958, the Assam State Electricity Board took over this company and subsequently in 1959 installed 3 more diesel sets in the district, one each at Dhekiajuli, Charali and Mangaldai towns. For the mangement of power supply in the district, the Assam State Electricity Board has now opened one Electrical Division at Tezpur and three electrical construction sub-divisions at Dhekiajuli, Balipara and Mangaldai. Following the completion of the long distance 132 K.V. double circuit transmission line crossing over the Brahmaputra at Pandu in 1967, the Assam State Electricity Board has begun to supply hydro-electricity to Tezpur Station since January 1968, through one 12.5 M.W.A. transformer from Barapani Umtru grid and the Tezpur Station supplies hydro-electricity to the different sub-stations through its grid sub-station at Depota. The diesel power stations were kept as stand-by from that time. Some particulars of the power stations are given below.

The initial generating capacity of the diesel power house at Tezpur was 430 K.W.D.C. in 1958. The D.C. system was gradually converted into A.C. system from 1960, firstly generating 200 watt A.C.

18. P. C. Choudhury, *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam, to the Twelfth Century A. D.* Gauhati 1959 P. 376.

and subsequently increasing to 1.680 M.W.A.C. in 1961 with consumption of 3.8 K.W. (peak load). The capacity remained the same till 1968. The total number of industrial connections increased from 68 in 1966 to 77 in 1967 and domestic connections from 2,901 in 1966 to 2,093 in 1967 and 2,847 in 1968 with a monthly average consumption of 35,000 K.W.

In January, 1959, Assam State Electricity Board installed at Dhekiajuli a diesel set with 75 K.W. generating capacity and added another 50 K.W. on the 15th November, 1960 raising the total capacity to 125 K.W. It generated 10,51,893 K.W. till April, 1968 from which date this thermal power station has been converted into a transformer of Hydro-electricity supplied by the Tezpur Divisional Station through the grid sub station at Depota. Under it there are 292 domestic connections including street lights and 19 industrial connections. The total consumption of power was 14,37,815 K.W. till June, 1968.

One diesel set was installed at Charali in July, 1959 with a generating capacity of 74 K.W. and further capacity of 100 K.W. was added to it in 1964 raising its total capacity to 174 K.W. It was running upto 1968 and since then power is being supplied from the grid sub-station at Depota under the control of the Executive Engineer (Electrical Division) Tezpur and managed through the Sub-divisional Officer (Electrical), Balipara Construction Sub-division. The total number of electric connections including domestic industrial, commercial etc., under this station during 1967-68 was 356 showing total consumption of units of 3,02,401 K.W. There is also a transformer sub-station at Balipara where 352 numbers of domestic as well as industrial connections were given till April, 1968. The connections consumed 41,091 units of electricity.

The Mangaldai Power Station with an initial generating capacity of 125 K.W. A.C. has become a hydro-electricity transformer station since January, 1968. Rural electrification is gradually expanding in the district. Till the end of the 3rd 5 year plan, 82 villages have been covered and 4 electric lift irrigation pumps have been set up. It was proposed in the 4th Five Year Plan period to extend electricity to 129 more villages covering 240 kms. by 32 K.V. lines and 475 kms. by 11 K.V. lines and to set up 347 electric lift irrigation pumps in this district.

(c) Industries and Manufactures of the District :

(i) Large Scale Industries

Tea Industries : The history of the tea industry in

Assam dates back to the year 1826 A.D. when indigenous tea plants growing in the plains of Assam came to the notice of the East India Company. The credit for pioneering tea industry in the district of Darrang goes to Mr. Martin who, in 1854, opened a plantation at Balipara and in 1857 started a garden at Haleswar. The Assam Company also started its plantation at Singri Parbat and these were the only plantations till the year of 1859.¹⁹ The next four years were a period of steady growth and after this the tea industry went through a severe crisis when the speculating class came in. Many of the promoters took advantage of Fee Simple Rules of 1861 whereby an applicant could have larger estates for tea cultivation. Thus instead of promoting the industry, the speculators used to sell their estates at exorbitantly high prices. By, 1878, this trend was checked and the tea industry began to grow.

As in other tea growing districts in the State, the expansion of tea plantations led, on the one hand to the continuous influx of large number of labourers from various parts of India mainly from Chota Nagpur, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Madras. On the other hand, it also brought about the progressive development of methods of cultivation and manufacture of tea. The increase in the quantity of the produce boosted up the fast expanding tea market. By 1900, the tea industry began to grow by leaps and bounds. The total area under tea in the district during the year was 41,708 acres (about 16,892 hectares) with a total production of 153,11,000 lbs. (about 68,89,950 kgs).

The tea industry enjoyed a state of boom till the end of the First World War and thereafter faced a crisis of heavy fall in prices due to release of tea stocks built up during the war period. As a result, plucking in the tea gardens of Assam was stopped in 1920 to curtail the output in order to arrest further fall of tea prices. A poor crop in 1921 helped the industry to recover and a period of prosperity that followed lasted upto 1927. During this period rapid strides were made in the modernisation of factories and the production technique was vastly improved. In the early thirties, the worldwide depression seriously affected the tea industry. However, the adoption of certain measures, namely the International Tea Agreement 1933, India Tea Act, 1933 and Institution of Indian Tea Licensing Committee and other allied steps saved the industry from virtual collapse. During the World War II and a few years thereafter, the industry passed through a period of prosperity until 1952 when tea prices cras-

¹⁹ B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Vol V, Darrang*, Allahabad, 1905, p.136

AREA AND PRODUCTION OF TEA IN DARRANG DISTRICT :

Year	No. of tea estates	Area in hectares as on 31st March	Total production in thousands and kg.	Average daily No. of labour	Lab. per hectare	Average prod. per hectare in kg.	Prod. per labour in kg.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1951	—	25,320	26,909	—	—	—	—
1956	—	25,859	30,229	—	—	—	—
1960	—	26,506	26,861	—	—	—	—
1961	—	26,509	31,194	—	—	—	—
1962	97	26,583	29,429	75,161	2.80	1,107	391
1963	97	26,818	30,536	74,903	2.79	1,139	408
1964	—	27,420	33,715	—	—	—	—
1965	98	28,106	33,004	72,972	2.60	1,174	452
1966	97	28,707	33,045	73,197	2.55	1,221	797
1967	98	29,148	34,276	71,643	2.45	1,176	478
1968	97	29,555	36,616	69,231	2.34	1,239	529
1969	97	30,016	35,906	68,935	2.30	1,196	521

Source : Tea Statistics issued by the Tea Board of India.

hed again to an extent below the cost of production. Among the causes that attributed to this depression in prices, the most potent was the over-production of tea. Meanwhile several tea producing countries, such as Indonesia, Japan, Formosa and East Africa offered stiff competition to Indian tea in the world market. Production of tea in India and Ceylon increased so much that it out-stripped the demand in the world market. The glut in medium and other different grades of tea which could not find ready market owing to the cessation of bulk purchases in U. K. coupled with an impact of downward trend in commodity prices during the post-Korean war of late 1951 and 1952 was no less responsible to precipitate the crisis. However, the conditions improved considerably in the next year and since then the tea industry has not suffered serious set backs. The drought of 1960 again affected the output of the tea industry.

The opening of Tea Auction Centre at Gauhati on 25th Sept. 1970, augurs a new era for the tea industry of Assam. Marketing of tea has always been a problem for the tea producers of this region. Previously the Tea Auction Centre at Calcutta was the only centre of sale for Assam tea. The imposition of West Bengal Entry Tax on Assam Tea, transport bottlenecks and many more difficulties involved in arranging the sale at Calcutta Auction Centre, necessitated the opening of the Tea Auction Centre in Assam which produces the bulk of it.

The tea industry in the district is little more than a century old and inspite of all the stresses and strains that it came across, the industry continues to make rapid strides both in production and acreage. The industry in the district made its beginning with its first tea garden in 1854, and by 1882, had 14,289 acres (about 5,787 hectares) under tea and produced 43,56,000 lbs. (about 19,60,200 kgs.) of tea. It continued to make steady progress and its area under tea in 1900 increased to 41,708 acres (about 16,892 hectares) and the total out-turn of tea stood at 1,53,11,000 lbs. (about 68,89,950 kgs.). In 1951, the tea industry in the district occupied an area of 253,20 hectares and the total production of tea was 2,69,09,000 kgs. As regards tea production, the district of Darrang ranks third among the tea producing districts of Assam. In 1967-68 out of the 19,08,89,714 kgs. of tea produced in the State of Assam, the share of the district was 34,27,63,364 kgs. coming next only to Lakhimpur and Sibsagar whose production of tea during the same year amounted to 7,50,93,903 kgs. and 4,80,96,000 kgs. respectively. Tea industry in the district is also the largest employer of the labour. The following tables give various data on tea industry of the district.

LABOUR IN TEA FACTORIES OF DARRANG DISTRICT

Year	Males	Females	Adolescents	Children	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6
1967	R 6,917	629	67	47	7,660
	O 388	59	—	17	464
	T 7,305	688	67	64	8,124
1968	R 7,217	1,224	54	139	8,634
	O 359	100	14	4	477
	T 7,576	1,324	68	143	9,111
1969	R 6,766	779	81	27	7,653
	O 412	49	14	—	475
	T 7,178	828	95	27	8,128

R=Resident, O=Outside, T=Total

(Source : Tea Statistics 1970-71 issued by the
Tea Board of India).

(ii) Small Scale Industries :

Saw Mills :— The district is rich in forest resources and offers ample opportunity for the development of the timber industry like saw mills, plywood factories etc. But till now only a few saw mills have been established in the district. The production of these factories mainly goes to meet the demands of the local construction works.

Manufacture of furniture and fixtures :— In 1969-70, there were 8 large workshops where furniture and fixture were manufactured. Of these units 6 were located at Tezpur and one each at Mangaldai and Dhekiajuli. Each unit usually employed five to ten persons. Various types of wooden and cane furniture and folding steel chairs are manufactured in these workshops²⁰. In each town there are a number of furniture marts.

Rice Mills :— In 1960-61, there were 32 rice mills of which 10 were combined rice and oil mills. All these mills in the district were established before the fifties except one at Jamuguri, est-

20. *Directory of Small Industries in the Urban Areas of Assam, 1969-70*, by the Deptt. of Economics and Statistics, Shillong, page, 116.

ablished in 1957. The permission for setting up new rice mills is very much restricted. The Govt. is encouraging hand pounding of rice under the Khadi and Village Industries Board and the establishment of small rice hullers. A number of licences to install rice-hullers have been issued in recent years.

The capital investment in the rice mills ranges from Rupees fifty thousand to Rupees two and half lakhs depending upon the financial resources of the proprietors. Average number of labour employed in each mill varies from 30 to 50 though a lesser number is also found in very small establishments. The raw material required for the industry is paddy which is locally procured and its main product is rice which finds its way into the local markets. Paddy procurement is the monopoly of the State Govt. and the millers are allotted paddy from time to time for milling.

Flour Mills: There are 6 small units of flour mills in the district with an annual capacity ranging from 35 metric tonnes to 45 metric tonnes and in average employing 3 to 5 persons. Wheat is allotted by the State Government and the product which mainly comprises flour is sold locally.

During the last part of the Second Five Year Plan, a roller flour mill involving the capital investment of Rupees nine lakhs was established at Tezpur. It provides employment to 50 persons both as full-time and part-time workers.

Oil Mills : There are only four units of oil mills which manufacture edible-oils in the district. Of these, two are located at Tezpur and one each at Tangla and Kharupatia. Besides, a number of rice mills are also having oil crushing plant attached to the main factories.

Bakeries : There are about thirty bakeries in the district. Besides producing the cakes, biscuits and loaves, some of them are also producing lozenges. A great majority of the units are however small establishments catering to the requirements of their respective locality.

Soap factories : About 15 units are engaged in manufacturing washing soap in the district and almost all of them are concentrated at Tezpur except two at Dhekiajuli and one each at Vishwanath Charali and Chutia. The average annual production of these units varies from 40 metric tonnes to 180 metric tonnes.

Ice factory : There is only one ice factory located at Tezpur.

Engineering Industries : Tea industry of the district offers

ample scope for the development of light engineering industries in the district. Its demand for various types of implements, machineries and their spare parts, wire fencing etc., has led to the establishment of a few factories which manufacture wire products, steel trunks, buckets, drums, cans etc. Facility of casting of ferrous and nonferrous metals is also provided by one or two establishments. branch of M/s Steelsworth Ltd. is engaged in the manufacture of tea garden machinery and its components, and other products like trailers, water tanks, gates etc. It employs about 30 skilled and 20 unskilled personnel.

Automobile Workshops : With the increase of motor cars, trucks, stage-carriages etc., a number of automobile repairing workshops have come up in the urban areas of the district. These are mainly repairing and servicing centres. Some of them also undertake spray painting of automobiles. There is one firm at Tezpur which undertakes body-making of trucks.

Vulcanising and tyre retreading : Growing use of automobiles has also led to the development of another category of repairing workshops known as tyre retreading and vulcanising shops. These are mainly located in the urban areas of the district. There are 5 retreading and 10 vulcanising firms. Scarcity of new tyres in recent years has enhanced the demand for retreading old tyres.

Printing Presses : A few of these are located in the urban and semi-urban areas of the district and most of them are small units catering to the local requirements of printing books, pamphlets and magazines etc.

Brick making : With the increase in the tempo of constructional activities and urge for higher standard of living, the brick making industry has come to occupy an important place in the economy of the district. The brick fields, scattered mostly on the out-skirts of towns present a common sight, though a few can be noticed even in the interior villages. The normal practice in the brick kilns is to make the bricks by manual process with the help of moulds called *forma* and then by burning them in the oval pattern multi-chambered kilns.

Shoe making : In addition to several individual shoe makers (cobblers) in the urban areas, three units one each at Mangaldai, Tezpur and Tangla are engaged in making shoes and other leather goods. Besides the preceding small scale industries, one cotton yarn mill has been installed at Charduar. It is considered to be a fairly large sized

cotton mill, producing cotton yarn of different counts, which is the main raw material required for the weaving industry in Assam. It is expected that this mill will provide much impetus to the weaving industry in the district as well as in the State.

The North Assam Co-operative Sugar Mill is also in the offing in the district. The foundation stone of this mill was laid on 27.11.70 at Lehugaon near Vishwanath Charali. The estimated capital investment of the mill is of the order of Rs. 5 lakhs of which Rs. 2 lakhs will be contributed by the State Government, as share money. The mill will also have its own farm of sugarcane for which land measuring 5,555 *bighas* (about 771 hectares) have already been allotted by the State Govt. and another 15,000 *bighas* (about 2,100 hectares) will be provided at a later stage.

(iii) **Cottage Industries :** Important cottage industries that exist in the district namely weaving, sericulture, pottery, bamboo and cane works, brass and bell metal, gold or silver smithy and black-smithy have already been described as old-time industries. A reference may however, be made to the handpounding of rice. It is commonly practised in almost every household in the rural areas of the district. Every rural family has got a wooden instrument called *Dhenki* to husk paddy by pounding it with the foot. The rural population regards it as an essential part of their family requirements and about three-fourths of the entire husked rice of the rural areas are processed in the *dhenki*.

Carpentry in the rural areas, is more or less a subsidiary occupation. Village carpenters do not specialise in any branch and generally do all types of works like furniture making, house building etc. Wooden agricultural implements like plough, harrow, yoke etc, are the main items manufactured by the village carpenters. Cart wheels and boats are also made.

Among other industries of the district mention may be made of rope making, fishing net making, bee keeping, leather tanning, oil crushing etc., practised by the individuals here and there in the district. in the sugarcane producing areas *gur* making is also very common. Two school units, one of Dhekiajuli H.E. School and another of Tangla H.E. School are manufacturing hand-made paper pulp. In recent years, tailoring also appears to have made large inroads into interior areas of the district. Due to increasing use of bicycles, the cheapest means of conveyance, number of cycle repairing shops are coming up, both in the urban and rural areas of the

district. They are mostly concentrated in urban and semi-urban areas.

(d) Industrial Potentialities and Plan for Future Development :

The district of Darrang is primarily an agricultural district and has not assumed a dominant role in the industrial arena of the State. Tea manufacturing is the main industry of the district and absorbs 92 per cent of its total factory workers.²¹ Barring few other manufacturing units like rice, oil and saw mills which are concentrated around the towns of the district, there has not been substantial development of other industries. In 1960-61, the bulk of the total income of the district came from the agriculture and allied activities which contributed 54.9% of the total district income. Its industrial sector i.e., tea industry and other manufacturing industries contributed only 20% and 6.1% of the total district income. The contributions from other sectors of production were as follows; commerce, transport and communication 8.7%, public services 3.5% and other services 6.8%. During the same year the district's share to the State Income was only 11.1% of the total State Income and it ranked fifth, only next to Nowgong district,²² among six plains districts of Assam. The industrial backwardness of the district is primarily attributed to the fact that until recently "two-thirds of the district"²³ were quite undeveloped in respect of both rail and road communication. The district is also not naturally gifted with mineral resources like oil, natural gas, coal etc.

However, in recent years substantial investment has been made to provide the infra-structure required for the industrial development in the district. There has been considerable improvement and expansion in road communication during the last two decades. The Rangia-Rangapara section of the Northeast Frontier Railway has been reconstructed and extended by about 172 kms. upto North Lakhimpur. Its further extension upto Murkongselek was also completed in 1963. In electric power which is considered to be the prime requisite of modern industrial development, the district is now fed by the Barapani-Umtru grid system of the Assam State Electricity

21. *Techno-Economic Survey of Assam, National Council of Applied Economic Research, New Delhi, 1962 p.94*

22. *Economic Survey of Assam by Department of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, Shillong, 1963, p.31.*

23. *Techno-Economic Survey of Assam, National Council of Applied Economic Research, New Delhi, 1962, p.94.*

Board. All these factors combined with the existing rich forest and agricultural resources of the district provide ample opportunity for the industrial development of the district.

The forest resources of the district have not been fully exploited. The district abounds in forest resources and more than one fifth of its total area is covered by the reserved forests. Its valuable species of timber can be utilized for constructional purposes and for making railway sleepers. These forests provide ample scope for the establishment of a number of saw mills, timber seasoning plants and plywood factories for making tea chests etc., the demand for which already exists in the tea gardens of the district.

The district is endowed with enormous resources of reeds which can be utilized for the production of long fibre pulp. The estimated annual output of reeds from the Darrang Forest Division is 72,000 tons of *Khagra* and 1,48,000 tons of *Nal* reeds. This is the highest production of reeds compared to any other district of Assam.

Chemical pulp suitable for the manufacture of good quality writing and printing papers can be made from the *Nal* reeds (*phragmites Karka*). The *Nal* reeds and *Khagra* (*Neyraudia Reynandiana*) are also found suitable for rayon pulp and other allied products.²⁴

There is no *Nahor* seed oil industry in the State though sufficient seed is available here. The Darrang Forest Division alone can supply about 400 M. tonnes of *Nahor* seeds annually. In view of the growing soap industry in the State, there is a good demand for this product.

Khoir can be extracted from the *Khoir* trees (*Acacia Cat-echu*) which is found in the gregarious patches in the Darrang district as well as in the district of Goalpara and to some extent in North Kamrup. Possibility of extracting *neem* oil may also be investigated.

Bamboo and Cane resources of the district provide ample scope for the development of small-scale establishments as well as the cottage and household establishments for the manufacture of cane furniture, baskets and other articles of day-to-day use. The cane baskets are in good demand in the tea gardens of the district. The demand for cane furniture is also growing with the gradual improvement in standard of living.

24. *Industrial Potentiality of Assam and its Development by the Directorate of Industries, Assam, pp.22-23.*

A number of small industrial units can be established using timber, bamboo and cane as raw materials to make those agricultural implements, the demand for which is rather high. These include making of *Jhapi*, *Rash*, *Patl*, *Dhari*, umbrella-handle, improved types of ploughs and a host of other sophisticated items.

The district also offers enough scope for the development of the light engineering industry. The tea gardens of the district as well as of the neighbouring districts provide a ready market for the products of the light engineering industries. The industries which have vast potentialities are expanded metal industry, wire drawing industry, tea garden machinery, steel structures, agricultural implement, hume pipe, G. I. Pipes, steel castings etc. Following light engineering industries are specifically suited for establishment at Tezpur (i) one agricultural implement manufacturing unit based on scrap iron with an installed capacity of six tons per day, (ii) one unit for manufacturing fencing and barbed wire to meet the demand of local tea plantation, (iii) one plant for manufacturing bicycle parts with an average employment potential of 20, (iv) one surgical instrument plant employing 30 persons, (v) one plant for manufacture of hand-looms, power-looms, towel-looms, bobbins, and warping machines.²⁵

The other industries which can be developed in the district are weaving, sericulture, village pottery, blacksmithy etc., which have already been described. These are traditional industries and large number of people are well aware of the technique of production. Only a little encouragement, improvement in technique of production and better financial and marketing facilities will make these industries economically viable. Among other industries which can be developed are sugar and jute industries and oil-*ghanis*, tanneries, beekeeping etc.

(e) Labour and Employers Organisations :

The district of Darrang has a number of labour organisations or trade unions in the different industrial establishments.

Tea Industry : In the tea industry there are mainly three labour organisations viz., Assam Chah-Mazdoor-Sangha, affiliated to Indian National Trade Union Congress, Akhil Bharatiya Chah-Mazdoor Sangha affiliated to All India Trade Union Congress and Assam Chah-Sramik Union affiliated to Assam Tea Labourers Association.

²⁵ *Techno-Economic Survey of Assam*, by National Council of Applied Economic Research, New Delhi, 1962 P-111-112, and Appendix 3, pp. 260-262.

Most of the tea garden labourers of Darrang district are members of these trade unions.

Rice and Oil Mills : Labour force in Rice and Oil Mills is also organised under three trade unions. The Darrang Mill Mazdoor Union is an independent union with its headquarters at Tezpur. The other two unions, namely, Tezpur Oil & Rice Mills Mazdoor Sangha with their respective offices at Tezpur and Tangla are affiliated to Indian National Trade Union Congress.

Transport : In the transport industry, two trade unions are functioning. The Assam State Transport Workers' Union, Tezpur is affiliated to All India Trade Union Congress and the River Steam Navigation & Indian General Steam Navigation and Railway Workers' Union have their branch offices at Tezpur.

Electricity : Tezpur Electric Supply Employees' Association is affiliated to the Indian National Trade Union Congress.

Shops and Commercial Establishments : The workers serving in the shops and establishments have their own unions known as Tezpur Byabasaii Karmachari Sangha with head office at Tezpur.

Miscellaneous Industries : Tezpur Industrial Employees' Union is affiliated to Indian National Trade Union Congress. Its head office is located at Tezpur and Assam Sramjivi Sangha has its office at Tezpur.

The tea garden owners of the district are members of either of the following organisations. :—

- (a) Assam Branch Tea Association.
- (b) Assam Tea Planters' Association.
- (c) Indian Tea Planters' Association.
- (d) Assam Bengal India Tea Association.
- (e) Bharatiya Cha-Parisad.

(f) **Welfare of Industrial Labour:** The importance of industrial labour welfare measures in the context of promoting cordial relationship between employees and employers for maintaining industrial peace and increasing the efficiency of the working class can hardly be over emphasised. With the attainment of Independence and the declared objectives of setting up a Welfare State, both the Central and State Governments have initiated a number of welfare measures for ameliorating the conditions of the working people and bringing out healthy changes in the outlook of the employers and employ-

ees. The first Labour Act was passed in 1863 and since then the tendency has been to make a number of labour welfare items enforceable through legislation so that employers have no option but to carry them out. With this end in view, new legislative measures were adopted and suitable amendments to some of the old Acts were carried out. The Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923, Indian Trade Union Act, 1926, the Payment of Wages Act, 1936, the Assam Maternity Benefit Act, 1944, the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, the Factories Act, 1948, the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, the Plantation Labour Act, 1951, the Assam Tea Plantation Employees' Provident Fund Scheme Act, 1958, are some of the landmarks in the history of labour legislation. The overall impact of these legislations is that the general condition of the industrial labour in the district has been fast improving. As a whole, they are now enjoying better social security, better wages and amenities and are better organised to ventilate their grievances than they were in the pre-Independence days. The Labour Department of the Central and State Governments look after the implementation of the labour welfare provisions of the various Acts.

Labour welfare in the tea industry has made significant progress. The Plantation Labour Act, 1951 has provided for the much needed welfare measures to the workers of the tea industry. It is a comprehensive piece of legislation and has introduced a legal compulsion on tea garden employers to provide for various facilities to their labourers. In most of the tea estates free education upto Lower Primary standard is provided by tea garden managements. Housing facilities are also provided free of cost and a certain percentage of standard type quarters are to be built every year for the labourers. Drinking water, improved sanitation, recreational facilities, creches with necessary equipments and medical facilities are the other statutory provisions under the Plantation Labour Act. In nearly all the large tea estates there is a dispensary or a hospital manned by requisite medical staff. The small estates have made arrangements with nearby hospitals for treatment of their workers. Maternity benefits under the Assam Maternity Benefit Act are also provided to the expectant mothers. Under the Assam Tea Plantation Provident Fund Scheme, the Contributory Provident Fund benefit is extended to all the tea garden workers. Under the Tea Plantation's Employee's Welfare Fund Act, a fund is constituted out of the unpaid accumulations, sums unclaimed or forfeited in the provident fund accou-

nts of the employees and fines realised from the employees. Grants from this fund are made to the various labour welfare organisations for doing labour welfare work in the tea gardens. The Employees' Provident Fund Act, the Workmen's Compensation Act and the Assam Maternity Benefit Act are applicable to all factories employing 20 or more workers.

During the Second Five Year Plan period four plantation labour welfare centres at Rangapara, Pratapgarh, Dhekiajuli and Dejoo and one Urban Labour Welfare centre at Tezpur with an estimated cost of Rs.8000/-each were constructed in Darrang district.

In short, there has been commendable labour welfare work in the tea industry, but the state of affairs in many industries like saw mills, rice, oil and flour mills and other small industrial establishments needs improvement.

CHAPTER-VI.

BANKING TRADE AND COMMERCE

A. Banking and Finance.

(a) History of indigenous Banking : As observed by the Assam Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee in 1929, the history of indigenous banks in Assam is shrouded in obscurity. During the pre-British days, money lending was not much in vogue amongst indigenous people. The peasants could obtain the cash required to pay land revenue or to meet other daily necessities of life by sale of rice, vegetables and poultry in the nearby markets. People belonging to the higher echelons of society were in the habit of hoarding cash and valuable ornaments in their own houses. On the other hand "those in acute poverty could count upon the help of their co-villagers in the shape of doles of paddy or facilities for cultivation."¹ Usury was frowned upon.

With the expansion of the tea industry, the credit structure of the district took a concrete shape. A section of *Marwari* businessmen who hailed mostly from Rajasthan established shops in all trade centres of the district. They had branches of their commercial establishments in the tea gardens where the demand for short-term loan was very high. The *Marwari* businessmen could easily afford to lend, at a profitable rate of interest, the amount required by the garden authorities for a short term. This type of banking transaction was the secondary business of these people. Some of the businessmen succeeded in mobilising the savings in the rural sector. They used to accept deposits from the villagers. The sense of security which the *Marwari* firms could instil in the minds of the depositors, encouraged the latter to entrust these firms with their savings. The deposits were of the nature of deposit-at-call. Pass books were not used, though receipts were frequently granted to the depositors. The peasants took loans from the *Marwari* firms in the shape of advances against their standing crops. The rate of interest was calculated mostly in kind, which in terms of money was exceedingly lucrative.

There was no bank in the district till 1907 when the Mahabhairab Co-operative Bank was established. With the limited resources at its disposal, this bank opened a new vista for the banking industry in the district. The Tezpur Industrial Bank and the Tezpur Central Co-operative Bank were established in 1918 and 1919 res-

pectively. Besides these two banks, some commercial banks also have set up branches in various parts of the district.

(b) General Credit Facilities : The preponderance of money-lenders is an important feature of the credit structure of the district. The Rural Credit Survey undertaken in 1948 revealed the insignificant part played by the co-operative societies in this regard. The table below indicates the sources of debt, both secured and unsecured.²

Source of loans	Year-1948.	
	Percentage of the secured loan	Percentage of the unsecured loan.
1	2	3
1. Co-operative bank.	0.4	0.5
2. Money lender.	61.9	63.4
3. Land owner.	3.5	1.8
4. Government.	—	5.8
5. Commercial bank.	20.8	7.8
6. Others.	13.4	21.1

From the statement given above, we get an idea of the sources of debt in the rural sector, but it will be erroneous to attribute the same importance to each of those sources at present. Several factors have led to the expansion of credit facilities during the last two decades. The co-operative societies have come in a big way to meet the credit requirement in the rural sector. With a view to ensuring steady flow of credit the entire organisational set-up of rural credit has been refashioned with the Assam Co-operative Apex Bank at the top and the Primary Co-operative Societies at the base. In 1963, the outstanding loan issued in Darrang district by the Co-operative Department through the Primary Agricultural Societies amounted to Rs. 4,67,6,000.00. After nationalisation of banks the commercial banks have also set up a few more branches in the district and have advanced loans to both agricultural and industrial sectors. The advances made by the Tezpur Branch of the United Commercial Bank since its inception till 1970, amounted to Rs. 31,42,000.00. The loans issued by the State Government for specific purposes, in the shape of Agricultural Loans, Rehabilitation loans, Cattle loans, Industrial loans etc., have played a significant role in expanding the credit facilities.

With availability of more credit facilities the demand for credit

1. E.A. Galt, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1967, p. 270.

2. A Survey of Rural Economic Conditions in Darrang, Shillong, 1950, p.-8.

has also steadily gone up. It is difficult to ascertain the proportion of the credit provided by different sources mentioned above. The *Kabuliwalas* who hail from Afghanistan and engage themselves in moneylending are still noticed in the district. The volume of transaction of these people, and that of the village *Mahajans* who lend money are not known.

(i) Rural and Urban indebtedness

Rural indebtedness: There is a considerable burden of indebtedness in the rural sector. "Growth of population and stagnation in the rural productivity with limitation of employment opportunities are sure to lend to greater indebtedness".³ It has been observed in the old District Gazetteer: "Most of the revenue officers consulted are of opinion that a considerable portion of the villagers are in debt, but it is difficult to believe that indebtedness can have assumed serious proportions, though a certain amount of petty borrowings goes on. The rates of interest charged vary from two pice to one anna in the rupee per mensem for small loans for short periods, but loans for larger sums can be obtained at lower rates."⁴ The magnitude of the problem can be judged from the following statement showing the extent of indebtedness in rural areas of the district.⁵

Survey conducted by	% of indebtedness to total families in the sample.	Average debt per family	Average debt per indebted family.
1	2	3	4
1. Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee 1929-30.	81.5	188	229
2. Rural Economic Survey 1948-49	42.2	96.0	217.0

Compared to the all-Assam figures of rural indebtedness the incidence of debt appears to be lower in Darrang district. In 1929-30, the average debt per family in Assam was estimated at Rs. 205.00 and per indebted family at Rs. 242.00, by the Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee. The All-India Rural Credit Survey fixed the all-Assam average of the debt burden at Rs. 219 per family. The all-India Rural Debt and Investment Survey conducted by the Reserve Bank of India in 1961 indicated that 20.1 per cent of the rural households reported borrowing during the period of survey as against 49.1 per

cent for all-India. The average amount borrowed per rural family was Rs.33/-, the average for cultivators and non-cultivators being Rs. 36/- and Rs. 23/- in Assam, as against the corresponding all India averages of Rs. 180/-, Rs. 205/- and Rs.111/- respectively.⁶

With the economic depression in 1931-32 the debt burden of the people increased considerably. The Assam Money Lenders Act was enacted in 1934 to mitigate the hardships caused by the exorbitant rate of interest. During the period from 1936 to 1939 several Debt Conciliation Boards were formed under the Assam Debt Conciliation Act of 1936. The Second World War opened ample avenues of employment and vastly improved trade and commerce of the province. The burden of debt in the rural sector is believed to have been materially affected by the soaring prices. The rise in prices of agricultural products has greatly relieved the agriculturists from the burden of debt. At the same time this inflationary trend has enhanced the demand for rural credit. It is believed that financial assistance provided by different institutions are not commensurate with needs.

In the Survey of Rural Economic Conditions in Darrang, the rural indebtedness in the district has been analysed as follows., "Out of the 2,613 families constituting the sample survey of 1949, as many as 1,511 or 58 per cent have been found to be free from debt. Thus compared with 1930 the proportion of debt-free families to the total has increased. This has contributed to a lowering of the average debt per family from Rs.188 to Rs.96 between the two dates. Per indebted family the average debt is now Rs. 227 while in 1930 it was Rs.229. The percentage of debt-free families is the highest in the ex-tea garden labour villages and lowest in the villages of East Bengal immigrants. The volume of debt per family is highest in Assamese villages. Of the total debt of Rs.2,50,511 in the Sample, nearly 93 per cent was taken in cash. Secured debt accounts for 22.8 per cent of the money debt. Only 2.40 per cent of the secured and 16.9 per cent of the unsecured money debt is outstanding for five years or more. This is an indirect evidence of the reduction of debt during the years of high agricultural prices. More than half the money debt was contracted during the two years previous to the enquiry a fact which deserved special attention."⁷

The debt in the rural sector is incurred by the people for various purposes e. g., repayment of old debt, marriage, *shradha* etc., famine and failure of crops, purchase of farm cattle, implements, seeds etc.,

6. Census of India, Vol. III, Assam, part 1-A, General Report, p.427.

3. P.C. Goswami, *The Economic Development of Assam*, Calcutta, 1963, p.60.

4. B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers Vol. V, Darrang*, Allahabad, 1905, P.-170.

5. P.C. Goswami ; *The Economic Development of Assam*, Calcutta, 1963, P.-61.

purchase of land or its improvement, education of children, medical expenses, litigation and others. The above survey revealed that only 30.24 per cent of the secured and 20.21 per cent of the unsecured debt were incurred for productive purposes e.g., purchase of farm cattle, implements, land etc. Marriage, *sraddha* and other social ceremonies, repayment of old debt and litigation account for 25.22 per cent of the secured debt and 21.14 per cent of the unsecured debt. Besides the habit of purchasing consumer goods on credit from the grocers inflates the indebtedness of the villagers. Thus, it is evident that the bulk of the rural indebtedness was unproductive. The professional and semi-professional money-lenders play a predominant role by supplying about 65 per cent of the total loans in cash and kind. It was also revealed in the above Survey that the debt burden mainly fell upon the owner cultivators while indebtedness per family was higher among non-cultivating owners.

(ii) **Urban Indebtedness** : The sources of urban credit are almost the same as those of rural credit ; but the role of each of those organisations is different in these two sectors. While the *Mahajans* or landowners play a significant role in providing loans in the rural areas, the businessmen, particularly wholesale dealers occupy an important place in providing credit in the urban areas. They allow credit to the trusted retailers. No interest is usually charged on the outstanding amount for a certain period. In most cases the transaction is completed on the basis of some entries in their registers, usually called *Rokar*. Total amount of credit provided in this way is believed to be more than what the petty dealers secure from other sources. The commercial banks have also set up branches mostly in the urban areas. Various types of loans are advanced by these banks for industry, trade and commerce. Various sections of urban people avail of the credit facilities extended by these banks, as a result of which new industries are coming up in the towns and the volume of trade is fast expanding in the urban areas. Figures showing the extent of urban credit in Darrang district are however not available. The present inflationary trend is believed to have seriously affected the purchasing power and enhanced the debt burden of the people of low income group living in the towns ; because they are to purchase all that they require for their subsistence.

ii) **The role of private money lenders** : In the past the indigenous-money lenders were the only persons to whom people

in distress could look for credit. Even in spite of legislations curtailing the operation of money-lenders, expansion of banking institutions and Co-operative credit societies etc., the money-lender continues to be an important source of rural credit. According to the Census Report of 1891, there were only 1,792 professional money lenders in the whole of the Brahmaputra Valley. In the 1961 Census, the figures of professional money-lenders are not available, presumably because money-lending is only a side-business of the rich merchants. However, the only perceptible business of the *Kabuliwalas* is money-lending, but they shift the area of operation frequently and they provide no clue to their volume of transaction. The total number of money-lenders including indigenous bankers was censused as 508 persons in Darrang in the 1961 Census.

Rate of Interest : The rate of interest charged by the money-lender and the land owner varies from a minimum of 10 per cent to more than 50 per cent and sometimes to 100%. The calculation of the rates of interest presents difficulties in the case of loans taken in kind or in cash as advance against standing crops. The rates of interest charged by the money-lenders particularly the *Kabuliwalas* is exorbitant. The *Kabuliwalas* who formerly confined their business to the tea gardens have now-a-days entered the villages. They charge monthly interest and do not pay to the loanee the full amount of the loan but only a part of the principal deducting the interest for the first month on it.

On the other hand the rates of annual interest of loans issued by the Industries Department, the co-operative banks and other commercial banks vary between 4% to 7½%. In spite of the low rate of interest of bank loans, the private money-lenders continue to play an important role in the rural finance. The reasons for this predominance are not far to seek. Firstly, the rural people are ignorant about the complex procedure of securing loans from the commercial banks. Secondly, these banks are mostly situated in towns and hence are not easily accessible to villagers. Thirdly, the potential borrowers of villages scarcely have tangible assets to hypothecate at the time of obtaining loans. Fourthly, the co-operative banks, though they charge lower rates than the commercial banks, do not always have sufficient fund to meet the growing demand for rural credit. On the other hand the private money-lenders are easily accessible and often issue loans simply on personal acquaintance.

(iii) **Joint Stock Banks** : There is no Joint Stock Commercial Bank incorporated in this district. There are only a few branches of commercial banks such as the Gauhati Bank, the United Bank of India, the United commercial bank of India, which are incorporated outside

the district. There are also branches of the State Bank of India at Tezpur, Mangaldai and Kharupatia, of which the first two branches perform business in addition to normal banking business.

The Tezpur Industrial Bank : Till a few decades back, the only Joint Stock Bank in the district was the Tezpur Industrial Bank Ltd., which is now liquidated. It was established in 1918 as a private limited company but in 1921 it was converted into a public limited company. It was the first commercial bank of the province of Assam. After the first Great War there was an economic depression when as many as 800 loan offices had to close their doors in Bengal but this Bank inspite of its considerable advances against agricultural land could overcome the crisis. During the Tea crisis of 1920-30, the worst crisis the industry ever had, the bank had 75% of its eggs in one basket i. e., in Tea (both block mortgage and crop hypothecation) but the Bank could keep its nose above water. Again in the bank crisis of 1948-49 when as many as 4 scheduled and a dozen of non-scheduled banks closed their doors at Tezpur, the working capital of the bank stood at 21 to 22 lakhs but subsequently came down to 13 to 14 lakhs. The State Bank of India and the United Bank of India Ltd., meanwhile opened their branches at Tezpur. Moreover, the public deposits are now being channelled to the Postal Savings Bank and National Plan Certificates. All these factors reduced the financial strength of the bank and it went into liquidation.

Tezpur Branch of Gauhati Bank : The head office of this bank is located at Gauhati. It has branches in several towns of Assam including Tezpur. The Gauhati Bank was promoted by some public leaders and was established in 1926. It fell a victim of the Bank crisis, 1948-49. The Bank was revived in 1951 and gradually it has made considerable progress. Besides meeting the old liabilities it has taken up new business. The Tezpur branch of Gauhati Bank was opened in 1961. The following table shows the performance of the Tezpur branch of the Gauhati Bank.

Advances							
Year	Total Advances	Purpose of Advances (in Rupees)					
		Small scale Industries		Small Business Profession		Trade and Commerce	
		No. of Units	Amount Sanctioned	No. of Units	Amount Sanctioned	No. of Units	Amount Sanctioned
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1968	1,13,624.91	1	9,967.60	4	53,369.82	2	50,287.49
1969	2,72,271.68	2	45,248.11	4	1,21,034.56	2	1,05,389.01
1970	3,79,699.75	2	81,507.45	3	1,60,525.13	3	1,37,667.17

Deposits :

Year	Total of Deposits	Demand Deposits	Time Deposits	Saving Deposits
1	2	3	4	5
1961	99,046.66	25,216.70	—	73,829.95
1962	70,649.25	16,141.09	15,000.00	39,508.16
1963	95,203.55	29,666.43	16,000.00	49,537.12
1964	1,40,670.19	64,837.48	18,000.00	57,832.71
1965	1,67,350.40	58,274.76	10,000.00	99,075.64
1966	1,69,302.63	67,761.05	20,000.00	81,541.58
1967	1,73,669.04	67,561.87	21,000.00	85,107.17
1968	1,93,945.36	64,110.51	32,500.00	97,334.85
1969	2,62,299.25	1,09,262.35	29,950.00	1,23,086.90
1970	2,49,658.42	67,491.38	36,585.00	1,45,582.04

Tezpur Branch of the United Bank of India :

This was opened at Tezpur in 1952. It is mainly engaged in providing finance to various industries and petty businessmen. The following two tables show the amount of deposits received and the amount advanced by this branch in the last few years.

Year	Total Deposits	Demand Deposits	Time Deposits	Savings Deposits	Deposits Other
1	2	3	4	5	6
1961	27.37	781	550	1,249	157
1962	24.98	727	395	1,003	373
1963	43.24	1,565	390	1,538	831
1964	52.67	2,238	484	2,141	404
1965	48.14	1,314	788	2,443	269
1966	45.24	810	1,067	2,549	98
1967	45.82	654	987	2,803	138
1968	57.60	1,178	1,601	2,829	102
1969	63.70	1,191	1,589	3,349	241
1970	67.29	1,182	1,877	3,597	73

Tezpur branch of the United Commercial Bank :

This bank also receives deposits and makes advances against small scale industries, petty traders and agriculturists. The following two tables indicate the performance of this branch.

Advances : since the date of inception.

(Rupees in thousands).

Year-1970	Amount	Units
Total Advances	Rs. 3,142	-
Agriculture	Rs. 7	3
Industry	Rs. 1,559	6
Small Business	Rs. 356	18
Trade & Commerce	Rs. 1,220	10

Deposits ; since the date of inception.

(Rupees in thousands)

Year-1970	Amount
Total Deposits	Rs. 3,622
Demand	Rs. 1,167
Time	Rs. 1,237
Savings	Rs. 1,166
Other	Rs. 52

State Bank of India : This bank has branches at Tezpur and Mangaldai and Sub-offices at Vishwanath Charali and Kharupatia. The State Bank of India transacts Treasury business at Tezpur and Mangaldai. The volume of other banking business is quite heavy in these two branches. Since its inception, the Mangaldai branch advanced till the 30th June '71, an amount of Rs. 6,36,057/- of which Rs. 1,96,409/ was agricultural advances made to 11 units. In addition to that a sum of Rs. 54,648/- was advanced to 5 units of small-scale industries and Rs.1,80,000/- was advanced to 19 units of small business and professions. The same branch has advanced Rs. 2,05,000/- for trade and commerce during the aforesaid period. On the above mentioned date the total deposits of this bank amounted to Rs. 31,93,034/- of which Rs. 11,22,393/- was savings bank deposits, Rs. 6,75,000/- was time deposits, Rs.13,10,433/- was demand deposits and Rs. 85,207/- was other deposits. The total deposits of the Vishwanath Charali branch of the State Bank of India, on the 30th June '71, amounted to Rs. 8,07,800/-.

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Deposits and Advances made by the United Bank of India, Tezpur Branch since its date of inception upto 1970.

(Rupees in thousands)

Year	Total Advances	Purpose of Advances									
		Agriculture		Industries		Small scale industries		Small business and professions		Trade and Commerce	
1	2	No. of Units	Amount Sanctioned	No. of Units	Amount Sanctioned	No. of Units	Amount Sanctioned	No. of Units	Amount Sanctioned	No. of Units	Amount Sanctioned
1961	1,078	x	x	4	369	x	x	x	x	33	679
1962	1,262	x	x	7	473	x	x	8	243	29	546
1963	1,563	x	x	7	452	x	x	12	496	31	615
1964	1,491	x	x	4	389	x	x	17	593	29	609
1965	2,686	x	x	7	484	4	120	16	673	35	1,409
1966	1,493	x	x	5	365	4	127	18	592	31	409
1967	1,519										
1968	1,699	x	x	5	329	4	131	28	523	29	616
1969	1,331	2	45	5	442	17	189	30	493	13	162
1970	2,460	2	42	5	523	17	147	30	463	11	1,285

Mention may be made of the "Lead Bank Scheme" introduced by the Reserve Bank of India in December, 1969. It is a co-ordinated scheme for mobilising deposits on a large scale throughout the country and stepping up of lending to weak sectors of the economy through setting up of adequate banking facilities in the underbanked districts of the country. The scheme is expected to greatly facilitate the expansion of banking facilities through the opening of new offices as well as through functioning of the existing offices in a more intensive manner. In this scheme, the district of Darrang has been allotted to the United Commercial Bank.⁸

(iv) Co-operative Credit Societies and Banks : At the end of June 1968, there were 22 Primary Non-Agricultural Credit Societies and 281 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies in Darrang District. The Tezpur Central Co-operative Bank had six offices in the district at the end of 1968 and had as members 707 Primary Co-operative Societies and 32 individuals and some institutions. Before we discuss the organisational set-up and the performance of the Co-operative Credit Societies in respect of rural credit, it will be interesting to trace briefly the growth and development of the Co-operative Societies in the district.

The Co-operative Movement in Assam started with the passing of the Co-operative Societies Act of 1904. The first Co-operative Society of the district is the Mahabhairab Co-operative Bank which came into being in January, 1907. It formed the nucleus of the Co-operative organisation of the district. However, the co-operative movement could not make much headway in the district till Independence. The reasons for slow development of the Co-operative Societies are many. After enactment of the Co-operative Societies Act of 1912, a few Co-operative Societies were organised in the district, but the exact number is not known. The Co-operative Societies Act of 1912 permitted organisation of noncredit societies along with their credit counterparts. The main difficulty faced by the rural Co-operative Societies during this period was the paucity of working capital. The Tezpur Central Co-operative established in 1919 was to act as the supplier of credit and supervisor of village societies. The Act further divided the primary societies into agricultural and non-agricultural. These were again subdivided into credit and other types. The Co-operative movement suffered a serious setback during the great depression of the thirties

and during Second World War. After the Second World War, many *Gaonlia Banks* (Rural Banks) and Co-operative Trading and Consumers' Stores were opened in the district. The first Consumers' Co-operative Store in the district, is the Tezpur Co-operative Stores Ltd. which was established in 1930.

During the First Five Year Plan efforts were made to revitalise the Co-operative Societies with the financial assistance from the Reserve Bank of India. The Assam Co-operative Apex Bank was set up in 1948 and was entrusted with the task of supplying credit to the Co-operative Societies and other organisations. During the Second Five Years Plan the Co-operative organisation was reoriented on the lines of recommendations of the Rural Credit Survey Committee of the Reserve Bank of India. During this plan period the Warehousing Corporation was also formed, facilitating storage of agricultural produce. Several Warehouses have since been built in the district. As years rolled on the co-operative organisation of the district grew in size and strength. During the Third and the Fourth Five Year Plans the emphasis has been placed on the rationalisation of the credit structure at primary level on the basis of viability. During the Fourth Five Year Plan the policies and procedure of credit Co-operative Societies and land development banks are proposed to be oriented in favour of small cultivators.

The Co-operative Societies have made a phenomenal progress during the plan period. Besides the Primary Credit Societies, various categories of Service Co-operative Societies, Industrial Co-operative Societies, Farming Co-operative Societies, Co-operative Marketing Societies and Producers' Co-operatives have been established in the district.

Credit Revitalisation Scheme :- A programme for revitalisation of the credit structure in the district of Darrang has been taken up since 1963-64. The Scheme envisages establishment of one primary Credit Society (now called as Service Co-operative) within the limit of each Gaon Panchayat with an average membership of 300 families with a view to making the Primary Societies of the villages viable units. It is believed that ultimately these units will be self-supporting in all respects. These societies are expected to help the members by issue of production credits for improved methods of cultivation, marketing of the agricultural produce and supply and distribution of commodities like seed, fertilizers, agricultural implements and essential articles of foodstuffs. For this purpose it has been decided to weed out the weaker socie-

8. *Economic Survey of Assam*, 1971, Department of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, p. 78.

ties either by liquidation or by merging them with the stronger ones. When this scheme is fully implemented some existing Primary Credit Co-operative Societies will cease to function. The Reserve Bank of India has also come forward to channelise their funds for the agriculturists for improved methods of cultivation through the Co-operative Apex Bank and the District Central Co-operative Bank.

The Tezpur Central Co-operative Bank Limited :- This Bank came into being on the 26th January, 1919. It had only 10 members at the outset and was registered on the 4th day of February, 1919. The area of operation was initially confined only to Tezpur Sub-division. Subsequently its area of operation extended all over the Darrang district and North Lakhimpur. The Bank suffered serious setbacks at the time of Great Depression of the thirties and also during the Second World War. The paucity of fund, and financial losses incurred from irrecoverable loans also retarded its growth. However in sixties the Bank showed remarkable progress in providing finance to the Co-operative Societies. Since 1954 one officer of the Co-operative Department has been holding the post of the Secretary of this Bank. The Bank opened branches at Mangaldai and North Lakhimpur on the 1st April, 1957 and at Rangapara on the 2nd June 1965. The other branches are located at Tangla and Dhekiajuli. The number of its branch offices increased to eight at the end of 1970.

The present financial position of the Bank is indicated below :-
Assets and liabilities of the Central Co-operative Bank Ltd., Tezpur as on 30. 12. 70.

Sl. No.	Particulars	Amount
1	2	3
1.	Paid up Capital	Rs. 15,11,100.00
2.	Deposits	Rs. 52,54,621.00
3.	Borrowings	Rs. 53,56,803.00
4.	Total liabilities	Rs. 1,37,32,325.23
5.	Total Assets	Rs. 1,37,32,323.23
6.	Investment	Rs. 1,7,55,754.60
7.	Loans outstanding	Rs. 100,71,000.00
8.	Loans and Advances	Rs. 100,71,785.00
9.	Profit and Loss	Rs. 32,911.00 (P)

Of the deposits, demand deposits constitute 4.38%, Time Deposits 4.10%, Savings Deposits 26% and Other Deposits 65%. The

Bank has advanced a sum of Rs. 18,16,350.00 for the purpose of agriculture out of its total advances amounting to Rs. 1,00,71,000.00 in the year 1969-70.

The Bank is under the management of a Board of Directors consisting of seventeen members as follows :- (1) nine representatives of Primary Societies, (2) three representatives who are individual members, (3) two nominees of the State Bank of India, Tezpur, (4) one representative of the Assam Co-operative Apex Bank Ltd. The Secretary is the ex-officio Director of the Board. At present the Bank provides all banking facilities akin to the leading scheduled Banks, advances crop-loan for increasing agricultural production in the area of operation of the Bank and accepts deposits on attractive rates of interest.

Land Mortgage Banks :

There are two Land Mortgage Banks in the district, one at Tezpur and the other at Mangaldai. The first has 160 members and the second has 150 members. In 1966-67 the paid-up capital of the former stood at Rs. 13,153/- and that of the latter at Rs. 8,575/-. The financial position of these two banks in 1966-67 is indicated in the following table :-

Tezpur Land Mortgage Bank			Mangaldai Land Mortgage Bank.	
1. Paid-up capital	Rs.	13,153.00	Rs.	8,575.00
2. Statutory Reserves	Rs.	77.00	Rs.	445.00
3. Borrowings	Rs.	68,245.00	Rs.	88,079.00
4. All other liabilities.	Rs.	153.00	Rs.	9,268.00
5. Total liabilities	Rs.	82,031.00	Rs.	1,05,158.00
6. Investment	Rs.	15,648.00	Rs.	5,200.00
7. Loans outstanding	Rs.	64,925.00	Rs.	88,079.00
8. Interest	Rs.	1,574.00	Rs.	3,703.00
9. Total assets	Rs.	82,982.00	Rs.	1,05,367.00
10. Loans advanced	Rs.	10,150.00	Rs.	34,865.00
11. Profit (+) or Loss (-)	Rs. (-)	248.00	Rs.	(+) 209.00

Primary Co-operative Credit Society : In order to open a primary Co-operative Society, 15 or more persons should meet in an 'Inaugural General Meeting' which is also attended by an officer of the Co-operative Department. The model bye-laws provided by the Department are accepted in the meeting and the general body

elects the functionaries of the Society, particularly the Chairman and the members of the Managing Committee. The area of operation of the Society, its functions and objects are also finalised in the meeting. The proceedings of the meeting are then forwarded to the Assistant Registrar, Co-operative Societies. The Society is then registered by the Department and the former immediately comes under purview of the Co-operative Societies Act. The working capital of a Primary Society, whether agricultural or non-agricultural, is composed of paid-up share capital, reserve fund, other funds, deposits from members, deposits from non-members, borrowings from Central and Provincial banks, borrowings from other Societies and borrowings from Government Departments. The first four items constitute the internal and the other items, the external capital. The Primary Co-operative Society is managed by a Managing Committee consisting of 7 to 9 elected members. The Secretary of the Society is responsible for maintaining accounts of the Society. The Co-operative Department carries out audit from time to time.

In Darrang district there were 281 Primary Agricultural Co-operative Credit Societies and 22 Primary Non-Agricultural Co-operative Credit Societies at the end of June 1968. The subdivision-wise break-up shows that there were 132 and 149 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies and 13 and 9 Primary Non-Agricultural Credit Societies in Tezpur and Mangaldai subdivision respectively. There were then 33,906 members of the Primary Agricultural Societies. The financial position of these societies was as follows :

Statement of financial position of the Primary Agricultural Credit Societies, as at the end of June, 1968.

(Rupees in thousands).

1. Total liabilities	Rs. 6,716
2. Working Capital	Rs. 6,201
3. Paid-up Capital	Rs. 1,038
4. Borrowings	Rs. 4,213
5. Total assets	Rs. 6,641
6. Cash Balance	Rs. 5,023
7. Investment	Rs. 1,009
8. Loan outstanding	Rs. 4,676

From the above statement it appears that loans amounting to forty-six lakhs of rupees are still outstanding. Many Agricultural Credit Co-operative Societies have gone on liquidation. The accumulation of overdue and inability to realise the outstanding dues have seriously

affected the growth of the Co-operative Societies. Both persuasive and coercive measures have been taken to recover overdue. On the other hand, with a view to ensuring larger flow of funds to the cultivators, the rural credit has been made production oriented instead of security oriented and with this object crop-loan system of credit was introduced in the areas of operation of some revitalised Central Co-operative Banks.⁹ It may also be said that the fullest development of the Co-operative Societies can be expected only when people at large become co-operative minded.

The financial position of the Non-Agricultural Credit Societies is given below :—

Primary Non-Agricultural Credit Societies as at the end of June, 1968.

(Rupees in thousand.).

1. Total members	1, 227
2. Total liabilities	Rs. 151
3. Working Capital	Rs. 131
4. Paid-up Capital	Rs. 32
5. Total assets	Rs. 140
6. Cash balance	Rs. 44
7. Total investments	Rs. 13
8. Loan outstanding	Rs. 52

Most of the Non-Agricultural Credit Societies have been formed amongst the people who have similar interest and temperament. They know the procedure and the repayments are usually regular, prompt and overdue small. As such, the performance of these societies is usually better than their counterparts.

Small Savings : In the matter of mobilisation of small savings the progress made by the district has not been upto expectation. Among the districts of Assam, Darrang held the last position in respect of gross collections during 1966-68. Since then, however, it has raised its position above Goalpara district. The following table shows the small savings collection in the district since 1966.

Years	Gross (Rupees in crores)	Net (Rupees in crores)
1966-67	0.85	0.22
1967-68	1.05	0.09
1968-69	1.16	0.16
1969-70	1.57	0.33
1970-71	1.76	0.33

⁹. Ibid, p. 34,

Facilities for Small Savings Accounts exist in all Head Post offices, Sub-Post-offices and in some Experimental Departmental Branch Post offices. According to a recent Government circular such facilities should be made available in all Experimental Departmental Branch Post-offices.

(C) General and Life Insurance :

Life Insurance : Prior to the nationalisation of life insurance some private Ltd , Companies were carrying out the Insurance business in the district. The important companies were the Oriental Life Assurance Company, National Indian, Empire of India, Bhaskar Insurance, etc. In those days, the premium paid by the people who took Insurance Policies was rather high. Moreover, the common people were not enthusiastic about the Life Insurance Policies. After the Nationalisation of the Life Insurance Companies in 1956, the life Insurance Corporation set up several offices in different parts of the State. The Divisional Head Office of the Corporation for North-eastern region is located at Gauhati in Kamrup district.

One Branch office has been set up at Tezpur and two Development offices, one at Mangaldai and the other at North-Lakhimpur have also been set up under Tezpur Branch. The performance of the Life Insurance Corporation in the district is given in the table below :

Tezpur Branch of Life Insurance Corporation, India.

Year		No. of Policies	Sum assured
1965-66	U	2,661	1,12,92,250
	R	2,176	76,99,750
1966-67	U	2,676	1,21,08,750
	R	1,808	68,10,750
1967-68	U	2,507	1,12,33,500
	R	1,614	75,24,500
1968-69	U	2,366	1,35,04,099
	R	1,116	56,55,000
1969-70	U } R }	3,361	1,84,82,250
1970-71	U } R }	3,872	2,35,37,500

General Insurance : General Insurance business against risks of fire in tea garden factories and other installations, and against theft and pilferage of tea in transit are generally done in Calcutta with foreign concerns. Local petty cases of fire and motor insu-

rance are however, accepted by the New Indian Assurance Company, Ruby General Insurance Company of India, etc. General Insurance business has now been nationalised. The following statement shows General Insurance business in the district.

Year	Fire	Marine	Motor	Other Misc.	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6
1964-65	1,469.98	—	2,167.75	351.16	3,988.89
1965-66	5,653.78	11.25	3,951.76	1,577.86	11,194.65
1966-67	12,210.65	—	3,756.54	2,050.00	18,017.19
1967-68	18,250.95	—	11,914.38	1,455.00	31,620.33

(d) State Assistance to Industrial Development :

The Government of Assam has set up a network of offices and training centres all over the State for rendering assistance to both small and major industries. One Industrial Estate has been set up at Dhekiajuli in Darrang district. It provides accommodation for factories at low rents, arranges for hirepurchase of machineries and assists the industrialists in securing loans from Industrial Finance Corporation, Industrial Development Corporation etc. Fifteen per cent of the articles produced by the Cottage Industries in the Industrial Estate are purchased by Government. Technical experts are employed by the Government to render assistance to these industries. The Project reports prepared by the Government give a very good idea about the prospective industries.

During the First Five Year Plan a sum of Rs. 89,00.00 was issued as Industrial loan to five loanees of Darrang district. During the Second Plan period a sum of Rs. 3,31,180.00 was issued to 241 loanees and during the Third Five Year Plan a sum of Rs. 6,68,480.00 was issued to 411 loanees of the district.

Financial assistance in the shape of grants-in-aid amounting to Rs. 57,514.00 was issued to ex-trainees, artisans and institutions during the Third Five Year Plan. The Industries Department also issued rehabilitation loans to 218 goldsmiths.

In order to promote the industrial development of the district, the Co-operative Department has set up a few industries in the district. The important industries are the Sugar Mill established at Vishwanath-Charali and the Co-operative Rice and Oil Mill established at Rowta. There are 28 Industrial Co-operative Societies all of which are getting loans from the Government.

Training facilities are provided by the Government in various training centres. During the Second Five Year Plan following Training Centres have been opened, one Carpentry Training Centre at Bhergaon, one Soap and Umbrella Making Training Centre at Tezpur, one Carpentry and Cane and Bamboo Production Centre at Charduar and one Pilot Production Centre at Orang. During the Third Five Year Plan one Cottage Industries Training Institute with facilities to impart training in Carpentry, Ceramics, Blacksmithy, Tailoring, Sheet-metal Works and Bee-keeping has been opened at Majbat. The old production centre at Dhekiajuli has been renamed as the Training cum Common Service Facility Centre and it has been attached to the Dhekiajuli Industrial Estate. This Centre extends service facilities to the industrialists of the Industrial Estate, Dhekiajuli and to the local people.

(e) Currency and coinage : Numismatic evidence of the pre-Ahom period is very meagre ; but there is distinct proof of the use of coins even in the ancient times in Assam. The Nalanda Seal and the copper plate inscriptions of Bhaskarvarman of seventh century A.D., bear testimony of the art of melting metals and impressing seals on melted metal. The king presumably struck coins of his own. It is also mentioned in the Silimpur Stone Slab Inscription, that the king Jayapala (1115-1125) offered 900 gold coins together with other gifts to a learned Brahmin, Prahasa by name. However, no coins of this period have yet been discovered.

Ahom Coins :- As early as the fourteenth century A.D. Suda-ngha *alias* Bamuni Konwar (1397- 1407) struck coins in his own name at the time of his accession to the throne. Since then it was a practice to issue coins in the name of the Ahom king at the time of ascending the coronation building known as *Singarighar*. In this building a throne of gold was kept for the new monarch who ceremonially mounted on it. In his book *Catalogue of the Provincial Coin Cabinet Assam*, A.W. Botham ascribed the credit of minting the first Ahom coin to Suklenmung. This view is however, not accepted by some other historians. During the Ahom period, both gold and silver coins were in circulation. These coins were octagonal in shape. The coins of Suklenmung bear inscriptions in Tai language and character. Jayadhvaj Sinha and his successor Chakradhvaj Sinha replaced Tai inscriptions on coins by Sanskrit inscriptions. In all probability, this replacement was a sequel of king Jayadhvaj being converted to Hinduism. King Gadadhar replaced Sanskrit inscription and re-introduced Tai character on coins. Gadadhar Sinha was not converted into Hin-

duism. Rudra Sinha (1696-1714) introduced an annual issue of coins from 1696 in Assamese script and Sanskrit language. This was followed nearly every year until the end of the Ahom rule. During the reign of Siva Sinha a square coin with Persian script was issued in 1651. Rajeswar Sinha also did the same during the first year of his reign (1674) ; but he also issued square coins with Assamese script.

The coins of early Ahom period with exception of that of Suklenmung bear the date of accession of the king who minted them ; but with the annual issue of coins only the year of issue of the coins was indicated on the obverse side together with the name of the king while the reverse contained an impression on the king's devotion to the particular deity. The deities most commonly mentioned are *Indra* and *Siva* (with or without his consort). The standard coins of Ahom kings weighed one *tola* or 96 *ratīs* (11.66 grams) Half rupee and quarter rupee coins were introduced by Rudra Sinha and Siva Sinha respectively. This was carried further by Rajeswar Sinha who introduced an eighth and sixteenth both of *rupee* and *muhar*. There is no mention of mint place on the body of Ahom coins, except on those with Persian script issued by Pramatheswari and Rajeswar Sinha. There is evidence to show that coins were minted by different Ahom kings at Garhgaon, Rangpur, and Desoi at various periods. No copper coins were issued during the Ahom period. *Cowries* or conchshells were issued for minor transactions.

Koch Coins : The Koch kings struck their own coins. The kingdom of Koch king Naranarayan extended over the whole of Assam valley. Coins of Koch kings are round in form and bear inscriptions in Sanskrit, in archaic Assamese script. The first Koch king to strike coins in his name was Naranarayan. His son Laksmi-narayan and his descendants, however, ruled over the western part of the vast kingdom, only as vassals of the Mughal empire. The right of minting full rupees was denied to them and their coinage consisted only of half rupees with incomplete inscriptions known as *Narayani Rupees*. But there are two or three full coins of Pranarayan now preserved in the British Museum dated Saka 1556 (1633 A. D). The Koch kings of the western part of the Koch kingdom struck coins in their own name upto the last part of the 19th century, but out of several kings of the eastern Koch kingdom only Raghudev is known to have issued some rupee coins.

Kachari rulers of Assam also had their own coins. The coins of Yasonarayan Deva and Satrudaman *alias* Pratapnarayan are still

extant. The coins of Tamradhvaj show that one series of coins was issued during his reign for a period of twenty years.

Jaintia kings also issued coins. Their rupee coins bore the inscription *Jayantipura Purandara* on the obverse without the names of the kings. Their coins bearing *Saka* era 1591, 1592, 1630, 1653, 1695, 1707 and 1772 have been found. Presumably these dates indicate dates of accession of Jaintia kings who issued these coins.

B. Trade and Commerce :

(a) *Course of Trade* : In early times a good overland communication system was not developed and this affected the scope of external trade. With the development of communication following the British occupation of the district, the volume of trade and commerce expanded by leaps and bounds. The transfrontier trade with the Bhutias, Akas, Daflas, etc. which is believed to have been in existence from early times continued through the *duars*. In Darrang district there are several places near the northern border such as Chaiduar, Nauduar, Charduar, Khallingduar and Burigumaduar through which access was gained to various passes into the hills. The Udalguri fair attracted large number of Bhutias during the 19th century. The Bhutias came down in batches during the winter season through Daimara Amtola, Bhairabkunda route to Udalguri market. The imports from Bhutan mainly consisted of cattle, sheep, small shaggy ponies, musk, woolen blankets etc. They purchased paddy, rice, cotton and other fabrics in the local markets. Rubber was imported from the Dafia and Aka hills.

In the latter part of the 19th century the external trade of the district was mostly with Calcutta as we find in the old Gazetteer. "External trade is carried on almost entirely with Calcutta and most of it enters and leaves the district by steamers. The principal exports are tea, mustard seed, rubber hides, and canes, while the articles received in exchange are rice, gram, and other grains, kerosine and other oils, piece goods, machinery, hardware and salt. Apart from tea nearly all the export and import trade is in the hands of the *Marwari* merchants, locally known as *kaiyas*, who are the great shopkeepers and money-lenders of the Assam Valley. They purchase the surplus products from the *raiya*s, and supply them in return with cloth, thread, salt, oil, and very often, opium. Tezpur is the principal trading centre of the district, and after Tezpur but *longo intervallo* comes Mangaldai. In these two places there are a certain number of Muhammadan shopkeepers from Eastern Bengal, who deal in

general haberdashery and oilman's stores. Each tea garden is also a small centre of trade, and on every estate there are one or two *Kaiya* shops.¹⁰

Retail business was to a great extent transacted in the village markets which were held either weekly or bi-weekly. The articles offered for sale included rice and other grains, fruits and country vegetables, poultry, earthenware and metal vassels, oil, molasses, tobacco and cotton cloth. Important markets of the late 19th century were Amori-bari and Binduguri. Other considerable markets were those at Paneri, Kalaigaon, Barangajuli, Mangaldai and Chutia. The traders from Tezpur came with their carts to make purchases at Udalguri and Orang.

The above account gives a picture of the trade and commerce of the district at the beginning of the 20th century. The position has vastly improved during the last few decades. There has been enormous expansion of road communication and extension of the railway line from Rangapara to Morkongselek in Lakhimpur district. With the construction of the rail-cum-road bridge over the Brahmaputra direct link between Darrang and the trade centres on the south bank of the Brahmaputra have been established. The number of shops has been steadily increasing all over the district. Almost every village has a shop where articles of daily necessities are sold. In the towns and important villages the volume of trade is quite considerable. One can have an idea of the volume of trade in the district from the figures furnished by the Darrang Chamber of Commerce.

Principal exports and imports : (Tezpur subdivision) Year-1961.

Exports

Tea.	7,60,00,000	Ibs. —	Rs.	19,00,00,000/-
Rice.	22,000	tons—	Rs.	1,23,20,000/-
Jute.	2,60,000	Mds.—	Rs.	52,00,000/-
Oil-cake.	75,000	Mds.—	Rs.	45,00,000/-

Imports

Piece goods	...	Rs.	2,00,00,000/-
Sugar.	...	Rs.	64,00,000/-
Oil, <i>ghee</i> , Vegetable Oil.	...	Rs.	35,00,000/-
Tobacco, <i>Bidis</i> , Cigarette etc.		Rs.	22,10,000/-

10. B.C. Allen : *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol. V. Darrang, Allahabad, 1905, p.181.

Imports

Wheat and Wheat product.	Rs. 67,20,000/-
Misc. Consumers' goods.	Rs. 1,60,00,000/-

The figures relating to import of certain commodities in the year 1963 also indicate the volume of trade in Tezpur subdivision. The following table shows the volume of imports as per records of the Darrang Chamber of Commerce.

Volume of imports to Tezpur subdivision
(Year-1963)

Item	Value
	Rs. 3,10,00,000/-
Piece goods.	Rs. 78,00,000/-
Sugar.	Rs. 33,00,000/-
Pulses.	Rs. 41,00,000/-
Oils, <i>Vanaspati</i> .	Rs. 75,00,000/-
<i>Bidi</i> , Tobacco, Cigarettes.	Rs. 87,00,000/-
Motor parts, Spares, Machineries.	Rs. 1,20,00,000/-
Petroleum products.	Rs. 2,20,00,000/-
Miscellaneous Consumers' goods.	

The figures relating to Mangaldai subdivision are not readily available, because most of the articles are imported from Gauhati and other trade centres, but the volume of trade is believed to be considerable. Thus the district is basically an exporter of rice, paddy, jute, tea, oil-cakes, etc. The imports are pulses, sugar, cloths, piece-goods, machineries, hard-ware and building materials, oils and fats, tobacco, salt, vegetables etc. Sugar, pulses, vegetables are usually imported from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The hard-ware and building materials are imported from Calcutta and other industrial towns of Eastern India. Garments are also mostly imported. The leather goods are imported from Kanpur and some other industrial towns of Northern India. Paddy is exported from the district mainly to Gauhati wherefrom it reaches various parts of Assam. Previously Tea Auction Centre at Calcutta was the venue of the bulk purchase and sale of tea produced in various parts of Assam including Darrang district. The inception of the Tea Auction Centre in Gauhati on September 25, 1970, has marked the dawn of a new era in the marketing of tea. Till recently, there was no Jute mill in Assam, and as such the jute produced in the district was exported to Calcutta.

(b) Trade Centres :

(i) Centres of wholesale business : Tezpur and Mangaldai are

important centres of wholesale business. From Tezpur bulk of the commodities are despatched to Lakhimpur district by road. In the western part of the district, Mangaldai is the main trade centre which supplies articles to various parts of the district. Kharupatia, Rangapara, Dhekiajuli and Tangla are some other important towns where wholesale business has been growing during the last few decades. Kharupatia was, till 1965, an important steamer station. Tangla is an important railway station, connected with other important trade centres with good roads and flanked by sprawling tea gardens and fertile paddy fields. There are rice-mills in both the towns. Gauhati is the principal trade centre from where many of the commodities are imported to Darrang. The wholesale purchase of some items such as sugar, pulses is done directly in the production centres, most of which are located outside the State.

A number of trade centres in the district serves as distributing points for goods imported as well as locally produced. All the trade centres mentioned above can be regarded as distributing points, because the wholesale and retail business are carried on side by side in each of these towns. It is important to note that there is no wholesale markets (*Mandis*) in the district.

(ii) Important retail marketing centres : Retail business is transacted in towns, important villages and weekly markets locally called *hats*. In the old District Gazetteer we find mention of 19 important villages of Tezpur subdivision, and 15 important villages of Mangaldai subdivision, each having three to five shops. At present almost every village has a shop. The towns and semi-towns are also full of shops of various categories. Every tea garden is, in a sense, an important centre of retail trade.

Hats are important rural marketing centres where a great deal of retail business is transacted. Each *hat* is held on a particular day of the week. Here the villagers sell their surplus agricultural produce such as vegetables, rice, betelnut, poultry, cattle, sheep, home-spun cloths etc. The sellers also include some petty traders who move with their wares from one *hat* to the other. These wandering retailers deal in garments, sugar, pulses, spices, toys, crockeries, utensils and various other tit-bits. *Hats* owe their popularity to their proximity from both buyers and sellers alike. In the year 1964 the number of licensed cloth dealers in each subdivision, according to Textile Department, was as follows :-

Subdivision	No. of cotton cloth dealers.	No. of yarn dealers.	Joint dealers.	Whether importer, wholesale or retail-sale dealers.	Remarks
1	2	3	4	5	6
Tezpur	22	11	—	Wholesale dealers	
	452	35	—	Retail dealers	
	—	—	—	47 Importers.	
Mangaldai	295	42	—	12 wholesale	
	272	—	—	Retailsale 47 Importers.	

There are 73 markets (*hats*) in the district. Only four of these are held bi-weekly. The management of the *hats* was vested in the Local Boards till 1960. Thereafter the *hats* located in the rural areas have been managed by the *Panchayats* and those located in the towns are managed by respective Town Committees and Municipalities.

(iii) Fairs and Melas : Many fairs are held in different parts of the district, most of which go on for some days and are attended by a large concourse of people. Apart from the merriment which marks these fairs, a good deal of buying and selling is also done. Of the old fairs, mention must be made of the Udalguri fair, which was held annually in connection with payment of customary *Posa* to the hill tribes. The payment of *Posa* to the hill tribes has since been discontinued. Previously this fair was held in Tezpur where it was largely attended by the Bhutias, Akas, Daflas and other hill tribes.

Among the important *Melas* held at present in the district, the more notable ones are those held at Vishwanathghat, Singri, Khatarasatra and Mahabhairab (Tezpur town) on the occasion of *Sivaratri*. These four *melas* attract large number of people from distant places. The *Durga puja* is celebrated all over the district. Large number of people congregate in the *puja* sites. Similarly the

Bihu festival is also observed throughout the district. The *Rangali Bihu* which is held in mid-April is an occasion of great rejoicing of the Assamese people who attend these fairs in large numbers. The number of places where fairs and *melas* are held in a smaller scale is numerous. A list of some places where fairs are held is given in the Appendix.

(c) State Trading :

In 1959, the Assam Co-operative Apex Marketing Society was given the monopoly over procurement of foodgrains by the State Government. The Society opened branches in Tezpur and Mangaldai and started procurement of paddy since 1959, through the service Co-operative and Primary Co-operative Societies. In 1964 the Government allowed the millers to procure paddy side by side with the Apex Marketing Society. The monopoly was restored to the Apex Marketing Society in 1965. Except for 1966-67 when the Food Corporation of India, obtained the license of monopoly procurement in the district, the Apex Marketing Society has been enjoying the monopoly. The Food Corporation of India, procured 20,810 tonnes of paddy in Darrang district in 1966-67. The Apex Marketing society has so far procured paddy as indicated below:-

Year	Mangaldai subdivision in quintals		Tezpur subdivision in quintals	
	Sali paddy	Ahu paddy	Sali paddy	Ahu paddy
1	2	3	4	5
1964-65	3,98,153.09	2,21,645.01	3,45,988.73	15,234.33
1965-66	2,48,274.55	51,384.82	2,76,473.50	3,004.74
1966-67	64,391.63	934.76	62,145.67	Nil
1967-68	56,165.90	1,37,419.94	1,35,984.42	6,118.62
1968-69	2,81,009.64	88,211.16	2,62,269.78	9,130.72
1969-70	84,070.56	25,050.37	1,24,225.60	Nil
1970-71	1,33,308.38	638.20	1,81,353.00	335.60

The Apex Marketing Society is a Co-operative organisation which has been entrusted with procurement of foodgrains in certain districts of Assam. Some of the salient features of the financial position of this society, in 1966-67 is indicated below.

Assam Co-operative Apex Marketing Society Ltd.
(1966-67)

(Amount in thousand of rupees)

1. Paid-up share capital—	Rs. 2,190
2. Reserve and other funds—	Rs. 469
3. Deposits—	Rs. 1,835
4. Borrowings—	Rs. 9,040
5. Total liabilities—	Rs. 14,572
6. Stock held—	Rs. 690
7. Fixed Assets—	Rs. 597
8. Loans Outstanding—	Rs. 3,684
9. Total Assets—	Rs. 14,450
10. Value of purchase—	Rs. 35,731
11. Value of sales—	Rs. 48,863

In Darrang district, the Apex Marketing Society operates through its agents, the Primary Marketing Societies. The Service Co-operative Societies act as sub-agents. These Co-operative Societies are to procure paddy directly from the farmers at a price fixed by the Government and certain amount of commission is allowed to these societies out of the sale price.

Fair Price Shops: In order to secure proper distribution of essential articles and to regulate the price of these commodities fair price shops have been opened throughout the district. There were 468 fair price shops in Tezpur subdivision and 411 fair price shops in Mangaldai subdivision in 1965. Controlled commodities such as sugar, salt, rice and *atta* etc, are sold in these shops to the ration card holders, or consumers of a particular locality, at the scale and rates fixed by the Government which appoints the fair price dealers. These fair price shops have been found to be very useful in checking the rise of prices of essential commodities. The officers of the Supply Department inspect the stock and check the accounts of the fair price dealers from time to time.

(d) **Merchant and Consumers' associations :** The Darrang Chamber of Commerce is an important organisation of the businessmen of the district. The owners of the rice-mills of the district are members of the All Assam Millers' Association. These two Associations play a significant role in the trade and commerce of the district.

(e) **Weights and Measures :** Till the introduction of the

metric system of Weights and Measures in 1959, the inhabitants of the district followed the age-old system of weighing and measuring which very often lacked standardisation. Specimen of the old weights and measures are still found in some remote villages. The *doon* which is a bamboo container of almost conical shape prepared with fine bamboo strips was used for measuring rice and paddy. Its holding capacity varies from 2 *seers* to 3½ *seers* from place to place. A ring is attached at the bottom to enable it to stand on the ground. The *dhol* looks like the *doon* but is of much bigger size and contains approximately 20 *seers* of paddy. It was used for measuring paddy only. Liquid molasses locally called *gur* was measured in terms of *kalah* which is a big earthen *jar*. The equivalents of land and other measures are given below.

Area measures

(1 hat=18 inches, 1 acre=4840 sq.yards)

4 sq. hats	...	= 1 sq.yard or 1 <i>kani</i> .
4 <i>kanis</i>	...	= 1 <i>powa</i>
4 <i>powa</i>	...	= 1 <i>lecha</i>
20 <i>lechas</i>	...	= 1 <i>katha</i>
5 <i>kathas</i>	...	= 1 <i>bigha</i>
4 <i>bighas</i>	..	= 1 <i>pura</i> .

Linear measures.

12 inches	..	= 1 foot
3 feet	..	= 1 yard
25 links	..	= 1 <i>pol</i> (30¼ sq. yard)
4 <i>pol</i> s or 66 feet	..	= 1 chain
10 chains	..	= 1 furlong
8 furlongs	..	= 1 mile
80 chains	..	= 1 mile etc..

Measures used for measuring tiny pieces of cloth or the like.

3 <i>yabs</i>	..	= 1 <i>anguli</i>
3 <i>angulis</i>	..	= 1 <i>gira</i>
4 <i>angulis</i>	..	= 1 <i>muthi</i>
3 <i>muthis</i> or 4 <i>giras</i>	..	= 1 <i>begets</i>
24 <i>angulis</i> or 2 <i>begets</i>	..	= 1 <i>hat</i>
2 <i>hats</i>	..	= 1 <i>goz</i> (yard)
		= 36 inches.

The measures mentioned above was gradually replaced by the English measures. However, land is still measured in terms of *bigha*, *katha*, *lecha*, etc, notwithstanding the introduction of the metric system of measures. Gold is measured, till today in terms of *Ratl*, *Anna*, and *Tola*. Six *Ratls* make one *Anna*, four make one *Siki* and four *Sikis* make one *Tola* which is one-eightieth of one *seer*.

Till the introduction of the metric system of weights in April, 1960, the measures of capacity to weigh dry goods was as follows :-

5 <i>tolas</i>	..	= 1 <i>chatak</i>
4 <i>Chatak</i>	..	= 1 <i>powa</i>
4 <i>Powas</i>	..	= 1 <i>seer</i> (0.93 kilograms)
5 <i>seers</i>	..	= 1 <i>palla</i>
8 <i>pallas</i> or 40 <i>seers</i>	..	= 1 <i>maund</i> (37.32 kilograms)

Tulasoni was the weighing scale commonly used in the village *hats*. This is of two circular bamboo trays which are suspended with strings from both the ends of a round wooden pole. Bamboo *sungas* were used for measuring capacity of liquids. On the basis of recommendations of the Weights and Measures Committee (1813-14), the uniformity of weights and measures was brought into force. However, accuracy of the indigenous weights and measures including some of those mentioned above was always doubtful. The lack of uniformity in weights and measures also exposed many illiterate villagers to cheating by unscrupulous traders. The metric system of weights was introduced in the district on the 1st April, 1960, and the metric system of measures on the 1st October, 1961.

CAPACITY

1 pint	..	= 0.56824 litre
1 quart	..	= 1.13649 litres
1 gallon	..	= 4.54596 litres
1 litre	..	= 0.87990 quarts
1 litre	..	= 0.219976 gallon

Although the Directorate of Weights and Measures has been enforcing the metric system of weights and measures by launching prosecution as well as by arranging for the supply of accepted weights and measures to the needy traders, yet the traditional measures have not altogether fallen into disuse. The following table gives the conversion factors of the basic units of measurement.

Length		
1 inch	...	= 25.4 millimetres
1 foot	...	= 30.48 centimetres
1 yard	...	= 0.9144 metre
1 mile	...	= 1.609344 kilometres
1 centimetre	...	= 0.393701 inch
1 metre	...	= 1.09361 yards
1 kilometre	...	= 0.62137 mile
Area		
1 sq. inch	...	= 6.4516 sq. centimetres
1 sq. foot	...	= 9.2903 sq. decimetres
1 sq. yard	...	= 0.83613 sq. metre
1 acre	...	= 0.406486 hectare
1 sq. mile	...	= 2.58999 sq. kilometres
1 hectare	...	= 2.47105 acres
Weight		
1 ounce	...	= 28.3495 grams
1 pound	...	= 0.4535924 kilogram
1 ton	...	= 1.01605 metric tonnes
1 kilogram	...	= 2.20462 pounds
1 metric ton	...	= 0.98420 ton

APPENDIX

LIST OF THE IMPORTANT FAIRS HELD IN DARRANG DISTRICT

1. Sivaratri Mela : Sivaratri is observed in all the Siva temples of the district. Fairs are held in this connection at the following places : Singri temple, Mahabhairab temple (Tezpur), Vishwanath temple, Nijhaleswer temple, Jogeswar temple, Sipajhar, Khatar, Mangaldai and Madha Gosain *Than* (Mangaldai subdivision, Pub-Dalgaon *Mauza*). The Singri *Mela* lasts for several days.
2. Fairs held in connection with Durga Puja : *Durga Puja* is observed in almost all the important places of the district. Fairs are also held in every centre of worship and attended by large number of people and last for four days.
3. Fairs held in connection with Rash Puja : This festival is observed at several places of the district. Fairs are held in this connection at Tezpur, Basudev *Than* (Tezpur subdivision), and

Dighi-Pukhuri (Danhi *Mauza*). The fairs are held for 2 to 3 days and are attended by large number of people.

4. Fairs held in connection with Dol Jatra : Although the *Dol Jatra* festival is observed throughout the district, fairs are held in this connection only at Rudreswar temple (Dipila *Mauza*) and Ghora-Bandha (near Sipajhar in Mangaldai subdivision). People of the neighbouring areas attend these fairs.
5. Pacheti Mela : This festival is observed in connection with the birth anniversary of Lord *Krishna*. A *mela* is held in this connection at Khatara Satra on the *Sankranti* day of the months of *Bhada* and *Ahin*.
6. Mela of Devananda Satra : On the *Sankranti* day of the months of *Ahin* and *Kati* a festival known as *Manthani Utsav* is observed here, to celebrate the appearance of goddess *Lakshmi* when the ocean was churned by the gods and demons. A fair is held in this connection. It lasts for two days and is attended by large number of people many of whom come from distant places.
7. Baisakhi Melas : These are small fairs held throughout Mangaldai subdivision on different dates in the month of *Bohag*.
8. Udalguri Mela :- This was originally held when the Bhutias came to collect tributes. Now it is observed for one day only.
9. Asokastami Mela : On the *Asokastami* day, a *mela* is held in Tezpur town on the bank of the Brahmaputra.

CHAPTER-VII

COMMUNICATIONS

(a) Old time routes :

As a part of the ancient kingdom of Kamarupa, the present district of Darrang had close cultural and trade links with the rest of India and other neighbouring countries. Its geographical position also favoured such ties. The mighty Brahmaputra along its southern boundary was a natural waterway to other parts of India and the *duars* or passes on the north-west were outlets to Tibet and China. Tradition also associates Sonitpur—modern Tezpur, with the great battle fought between Bana and Lord Krishna who is believed to have come all the way from Dwaraka to Sonitpur. Mention may also be made of the Tezpur Rock Inscription of Harjara - builder of the city of Hadappesvara or Haruppesvara on the bank of the Brahmaputra near Tezpur, which indicates that during his reign in the ninth century A.D. he had a large fleet of boats. So numerous were the boats that even in so wide a river as the Brahmaputra, traffic regulations were necessary to prevent collisions between royal boats and those of fishermen. ¹ Tributaries of the Brahmaputra were also used to some extent for trade, and communication by mountain passes to Bhutan and Tibet also flourished. According to the *Tabaquat-i-Nasiri*, there were as many as thirty five passes between Assam and Tibet and through them horses were brought to Lakhnauti. Rutherford also states that Lhasa traders had commercial relations with Assam. Chinese goods were brought by them for sale to Assam. ²

During the reign of Koch king Naranarayan (1534-1584 A.D), the Gohain Kamala *Ali* connecting Coch Behar in Bengal with Narayanpur in Lakhimpur district was constructed under the supervision of the king's brother, Gohain Kamala. This great *Ali* (road) ran across the Darrang district and was completed in 1547 A.D. A few *Raj Alis* or

1. P. C. Choudhury, *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.*, Gauhati. 1959, P. 379.

2. *Ibid*, P. 383.

3. W. W. Hunter. *A Statistical Account of Assam*, Vol. 1, Reprint, Delhi, 1975, P. 137.

raised - roads or embankments were also constructed by the Assam Rajas in the district. Generally speaking, road communication in Darrang district did not make as much headway during the Ahom period as it did in Sibsagar district.

The old accounts of Assam suggest that most of the travellers used horses, ponies, elephants, bullock-drawn carts, palanquins, country-boat and rafts for their cross country sojourns. Big boats which carried merchandise, were called *dingas*. The palanquin (*dola*) and the chariot (*rath*) were used by the royal families in early times, but the chariots gradually fell into disuse. The palanquin was a popular mode of conveyance even till the early part of the present century in the district. The horses were used not only by the cavalry, but also by the royal messengers and ordinary travellers.

(b) Road transport :

When the British came into occupation of the district, difficulty of communication proved to be a serious obstacle to its development. When A.J. Mills visited Assam in 1853, the roads were few and bad. Although the Public Works Department was established in 1868, roads were the concern of the Deputy Commissioner assisted by a Committee. The Assam Local Rates Regulation of 1879 provided for the levy of a local rate and the appointment of a Committee in each district to control the expenditure on roads etc. Such Committees were replaced in 1882 by Subdivisional Local Boards which were entrusted with the maintenance of all roads within their jurisdiction except a few main lines. It was only in 1890 that provincial roads and ferries were taken over by the Public Works Department which were also to execute all works costing more than Rs. 500/-.

It was only after the constitution of the Road Board in 1926-27 in Assam that the construction of roads made some headway. A separate Board was constituted for the administration of the Tea Cess Fund for improvement of roads. Classification of roads into metalled, gravelled and unsurfaced was proposed and adoption of mechanical means of construction was recommended. It was also proposed to finance construction of bridges over 300' in length by raising separate loans.⁴ In 1928, the Road Development Committee called for a change of the road policy of the Government, and suggested taking over of a bigger share of the road building activities.

4. P. C. Goswami, *The Economic Development of Assam*, Bombay, 1963, PP. 192-193.

On the basis of the recommendations of the Committee, the Government of India set up in 1929, a Central Road Fund with the proceeds of the surcharge of two *annas* a gallon of petrol in order to enable them to make annual block grants to provinces out of this Fund. From 1929-30 onwards Assam received a substantial amount from the Central Road Fund. During the Second World War, the road building activities were stepped up in Assam but being war-oriented such activities were mainly confined to the south bank of the Brahmaputra. The conference of Chief Engineers held in 1943 at Nagpur worked out a plan known as the Nagpur Plan wherein the targets of road mileages were fixed for the provinces of India. Though an elaborate scheme to reconstruct roads was prepared under the Post-War-Development Scheme, the programme had to be dropped even before it could get half way through, for want of fund. Thus till Independence, the development of road communication of the district was rather negligible, except in case of tea garden areas where good roads were constructed connecting tea gardens with railway stations and steamerghats.

Roads under Public Works Department: After Independence in 1948-49 there were only about 100.7 kilometres of metalled roads, about 675 kilometres of gravelled roads, and about 77 kilometres of natural-soil motorable roads under the Central Assam Division of the Public Works Department. This Division comprised Darrang district, a part of Lakhimpur and Balipara Frontier Tract.⁵ These figures indicate the paucity of roads in Darrang district at that time. Some progress was made during the First Five Year Plan at the end of which there were about 957 kms. of all weather roads, about 35 kms. of fair weather roads and about 3 kms. of non-motorable roads giving a total of 995 kms. of road under the Public Works Department in Darrang district.⁶ Roads in the district further increased during the Second Five Year Plan. According to the Census of 1961 the total roads in Darrang district under the Public Works Department stood at 1,371,726 kms. consisting of 217,868 kms. of black topped roads, 968,616 kms. of gravelled roads, 181,218 kms. of earth roads and 4,024 kms. of bridle paths. The following table indicates further

5. *Statistical Abstract of Assam*, 1951, Department of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, p. 105.

6. *Statistical Abstract of Assam*, 1958, Department of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1960 p. 384

development of road in Darrang district under the Public Works Department for some subsequent years.⁷

Length (in kilometres)

Year	Black Topped	Metalled	Gravelled	Motorable (in fair weather) i.e earth	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6
1966-67	527.64	—	1,248.70	140.94	1,917.28
1967-68	528	11	1,335	115	1,989
1968-69	528	11	1,342	259	2,140
1969-70	478.47	nil	1,362.90	119.61	1,860.98
1970-71	510.81	nil	1,345.11	149.58	2,005.50

The Nagpur Plan laid down the objective of providing a well balanced road system, suitable to the needs of the country and the target indicated in the Plan was an achievement of an average of 26 miles (about 42 kms) of road per 100 sq. miles (about 259 sq. kms.) of area in 20 years period. The total area of Darrang district, according to the 1961 Census is about 8,720 sq. kilometres, and it had about 1,371 kilometres of road under the Public Works Department of the Government of Assam. This shows that the target was well within reach.

The difficulties of construction and maintenance of roads in the district are stupendous. The swirling currents of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries wash away many bridges and cause extensive damage to the roads. The roads have to be well raised above the surrounding land to protect them from the flood. The non-availability of suitable materials in the plains for metalling roads entails heavy transportation cost and hampers expeditious execution of the construction works. Till recently, ferry crossings had to be arranged on numerous rivers, as it was not possible to construct bridges on these rivers. The following table shows the roads under each division of the Public Works Department in Darrang district as on 1.1.72 (excluding the North Trunk Road).

7. *Statistical Abstract of Assam, 1967-68*, Department of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, 1970, pp. 318-19 and *Statistical Hand Book of Assam, 1971*, pp. 107-108.

(Length in kilometres)

Name of the division	Number of roads	Black topped	Gravelled	Earth (Motorable)	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6
Tezpur division	94	107.075	308.89	57.802	473.747
Charali division	96	47.53	379.78	73.26	499.59
Mangaldai division.	69	39.50	635.53	16.52	692.55

(Source : Superintending Engineer, Northern Assam Circle, Tezpur)

In the Municipal areas also some roads are maintained by the Public Works Department. The position on 1.1.72 is given below.

Public Works Department roads within Municipal Area.

(Length in Kilometres)

Name of the Municipality	Number of roads	Black topped	Gravel	Earth	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6
Tezpur	18	17.8370	1.98	x	19.81
Mangaldai	11	18.88	7.73	x	16.61

The North Trunk Road which stems from the National Highway No.31 connects Darrang with Kamrup and Lakhimpur districts. Total length of this road in Darrang district is 233.561 kilometres. The North Trunk Road Construction Circle with headquarters at Tezpur was created in 1965, in order to develop it to provide for increasing motor traffic and load-tonnage. Of the four Divisions under this Circle only two are located in Darrang,—one at Tezpur and the other at Mangaldai.

The importance of the North Trunk Road that runs across the district can hardly be over-emphasised. In the absence of National Highways in the district, it shoulders the heaviest motor traffic in the district. The arterial routes connecting various parts of the district with the North Trunk Road have been gradually improved during the last two decades.⁸

Roads under the Municipal Boards and Town Committees : We have already stated that the Public Works Department maintains some roads within the Municipal and Town Committee

8. Darrang being a border district, a more detailed account of roads has not been given here

limits. Besides these, there are other roads within the areas under their direct management. In 1963-64 there were only 53.73 kms. of motorable roads under the Municipalities and Town Committees of the district. While the Municipal Boards have their own trained staff for construction and maintenance of roads, the Town Committees can hardly afford to keep engineers in their pay-rolls. Paucity of funds is also a great obstacle which these bodies are to overcome before they undertake any extensive scheme of road development.

Local Board and Panchayat roads : Till the implementation of the Assam Panchayat Act in 1959, some minor district roads and important village roads were under the management of Local Boards at Tezpur and Mangaldai. Total length of Local Board roads in 1955-56 was 815.89 kilometres out of which 346.96 kilometres were in Tezpur subdivision and 478.93 kilometres in Mangaldai subdivision. After implementation of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1956, some of the Local Board roads were taken over by the Public Works Department and the rest were transferred to the Panchayats. According to the Census of 1961 there were 1031 village roads with a total length of 2455.728 kms. Since then a substantial amount was earmarked by the Panchayats for development of rural communications. Following table shows the progress of roads in different Blocks cum Panchayats in 1969-70.⁹

Achievement of the Development Blocks in the field of village communication in the year 1969-70.

Name of the Block	New Katcha roads constructed in kms.	Existing katcha road improved in kms.	Culverts constructed (number)	Culverts repaired (number)
1	2	3	4	5
1. Sipajhar	—	—	—	—
2. Behali	—	—	—	—
3. Gabharu	1	3	—	4
4. Kalaigaon	—	—	—	—
5. Dolgaon-Sialmari	2	8	3	—
6. Chaiduar	—	—	—	—
7. Majbat	—	16	1	—
8. Dhekiajuli	2	5	—	—
9. Vishwanath	10	5	1	—
10. Udalguri	25	198	—	—

9. Community Development Programme of Assam, 1969-70, Department of Economics and Statistics, pp. 91-100.

(ii) Vehicles and Conveyances :

In the agricultural economy of the district, the traditional cart plays an important role. The carts have open wheels, fitted with iron rims, wooden spokes and axles and are capable of rough handling on kutchra roads. Usually a pair of stout bullocks can draw a cart with a load of six to seven quintals. These are used for transporting the bundles of harvested paddy (*dangaris*) or of jute from the field and also for carrying merchandise from place to place. According to the Livestock Census 1956, there were 22,709 carts in Darrang district. The same Census carried out in 1966 revealed that there were 19,709 carts in Darrang, 9,609 in Tezpur subdivision and 10,100 in Mangaldai subdivision. Horse drawn carts are also not uncommon in the district and are used for goods traffic. Bicycles are now an important and widely used means of transport in both rural and urban areas. Automobiles have also increased with improvement of roads. These provide prompt transportation of both passengers and goods.

The statements in page 174 show the number of motor vehicles on road in Darrang district from 1965 to 1973 and the total number of Vehicles registered during 1968 to 1972 in the district.¹⁰

(iii) Public Transport :

Road transport was nationalized in Assam as early as in 1948 but it took time for its effect to be felt all over the State. In the early part of 1957, the State Transport buses plied mainly on the North Trunk Road that passes through Darrang district and their operation was gradually extended to other routes in the district. The State Transport organization was converted into a Corporation named the Assam State Road Transport Corporation on August 31, 1971. Subsequently with the creation of the new State of Meghalaya, the Corporation has been renamed as the Assam and Meghalaya State Road Transport Corporation. The following table shows the routes initially nationalised in the district.

Sl. No.	Description of the route	Approx distance in kms.	Operation of State Transport service with effect from
1.	2	3	4
1.	Tezpur-North Gauhati	167	1.1.57
2.	Tezpur-North Lakhimpur	220	1.1.57

10. Transport Statistics of Assam, 1973, Department of Transport and Tourism, Govt. of Assam, Dispur, 1974, PP. 25-38.

MOTOR VEHICLES ON ROAD-BY TYPES AND REGISTERED IN DARRANG DISTRICT DURING 1965 TO 1973.

Year	Buses	Private Carriers	Public Carriers	Motor cycles	Taxi cabs	Motor cars & Jeeps		Trailers	Govt. vehicles	Auto rick-shaws		Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1966	225	1103	318	331	32	1217	493	527	233	—	—	4479
1966	254	1222	489	342	51	1209	561	601	237	—	—	4956
1967	262	1250	390	401	38	1271	629	658	—	—	—	4899
1968	256	1127	398	439	42	1231	627	667	348	—	26	5161
1969	227	745	373	454	37	1103	485	403	329	—	13	4170
1970	232	762	416	504	43	1165	498	408	349	4	—	4381
1971	195	766	433	554	65	1225	503	426	277	—	11	4446
1972	199	779	457	679	75	1280	536	445	316	15	11	4792
1973	222	764	486	777	100	1327	555	462	316	40	16	5056
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1968	6	17	24	85	29	1	41	33	25	3	—	264
1969	9	26	48	74	71	3	54	17	23	1	—	326
1970	5	32	43	67	80	6	5	—	42	20	—	300
1971	9	4	17	60	95	13	32	18	39	—	5	292
1972	4	17	29	60	160	19	33	35	32	15	6	410

Sl. No.	Description of the route	Approx distance in kms.	Operation of State Transport service with effect from
1	2	3	4
3.	Tezpur-Rangapara	50	1.1.57
4.	Tezpur-Jamuguri via Chowkighat	19	1.1.57
5.	Chagalihat-Thelamara via Lower-Gabharu	14	10.5.60
6.	Jamuguri-Panpur	8	10.5.60
7.	Vishwanath Charali Vishwanath ghat	11	10.5.60
8.	Dolgaon-Dhansirighat	16	10.5.60

The object of the Corporation is to provide an efficient, economic and comfortable service to the travelling public. Modern type of vehicles, with comfortable seats are provided to avoid congestion or over-loading. The journey hours in long distance routes are reduced by introducing express services. Facilities such as waiting rooms, advance booking and canteens have been extended by the Corporation.

Besides Corporation buses there are privately owned public buses which ply between various important places of the district not covered by the former. *Bazar* buses convey passengers and goods to and from *hats* and thus play a vital part in rural life. Such privately owned buses, however, do not generally compare favourably with Corporation buses in respect of punctuality, comfort and fares. Some important routes covered by such buses are given below. :—

Stage Carriage Routes

1. Panpur-Jamuguri-Chaibari-Dipolonga-Pabhai, Charali Vishwanath and upto Behali & Daflagarh route.
3. Tezpur-Johamari-Thelamara route.
4. Dhekiajuli-Dhekiajuli Road Station (Mail) service
5. Dhekiajuli.-Singri-Sirajuli-Borchola-Orang-Majbat route.
6. Dhekiajuli T. E to Dhekiajuli School via Julia T. E. (School Bus).
7. Mangaldai-Tangla-Bhutiachang route.
8. Mangaldai-Patharughat-Khoirabari route.
9. Rowta-Udalguri route.
10. Mangaldai-Tangla-Hatigarh route (Mail cum passenger service).

11. Mangaldai-Udaiguri via Kalaigaon and Harisinga route.
12. Mangaldai-Majikuchi route.
13. Tezpur town and its suburbs.
14. Mangaldai town and its suburbs.

Contract Carriage Routes :

1. Tezpur-Bindukuri-Borjuli route covering the following Bazars : Panchmile, Bindukuri, Borjuli, Bandarmari. Khelmati and. Goraimari.
2. Jamuguri-Charali, Bijuti route covering the following Bazars : Dikrai, Pabhoi, Pratapgarh, Majuligarh, Mizikajan, Jingia, Jamuguri; Darrang, Dhuli, Vishwanath and Bijuti.
3. Borjuli-Rangapara-Lokhra Charduar route covering the following markets : Borjuli, Phulbari, Amaribari, Balipara, Khelmati and Charduar.
4. Tangla - Kalaigaon-Singrimari route covering the following Bazars - Gogra, Dimakuchi, Bhergaon, Kherkheria, Kalaigaon, Singrimari and Orangjuli.
5. Mangaldai-Kharupatia route covering the following Bazars : Banglaforh, Dhula, Kherkheria, Kalaigaon, Singrimari
6. Kharupatia-Kaupati route covering the following Bazars : Kaupati, Lalpool, Dalgaon and Chikonmati.
7. Dhehijuli-Orang-Majbat route covering the following Bazars : Orang, Majbat, Batashipur, Singri, Sopai, Dumduma, Bargaon, Faizabad, Narayanpur, Tinkhoria, Lamabari and Hirajuli.
8. Gohpurarea covering the following Bazars : Gohpur, Kauripathar, Helem etc.

Administration of Public Buses : There is one Regional Transport Authority at Tezpur which is a statutory Board consisting of the Deputy Commissioner as its Chairman, the District Transport Officer as the Secretary and some members. The Board sits from time to time and disposes the applications for Contract Carriage, Stage Carriage, Bazar bus, Taxi and Public Carrier. Permits for such vehicles are issued for a period of 3 (three) years.

The District Transport Officer aided by his staff including the Motor Vehicles Inspector is responsible for proper maintenance of the records of all vehicles of the district, enforcement of the provisions laid down in the Motor Vehicles Act 1939 (as amended) and rules framed thereunder. The multifarious functions of the District Transport Officer includes registration of vehicles, maintenance of records of transfer of vehicles, issuing driving licences, enforcement,

maintenance of the vehicles in proper condition, realisation and assessment of taxes under the Assam Motor Vehicles Taxation Act 1936, and enforcement of the regular bus services on the routes for which permits are issued. He can suspend or revoke the registration certificates of the vehicles for non-payment of motor vehicle taxes.

There are number of Bus-Associations formed by the bus owners of the district. The list of these associations is given below.

Name of Bus Association :

1. East Bhareli Bus Association--P. O. Jamugurihat.
2. Charali Contract Carriage Bus Association--P.O. Charali.
3. Contract Carriage Association--Gohpur.
4. Rangapara Contract Carriage Association--P. O. Rangapara.
5. Tezpur-Foot-hills Bus Association--P. O. Tezpur.
6. Tezpur-Thelamara Bus Association--P. O. Tezpur.
7. Tezpur City Bus Association--P. O. Tezpur.
8. Tezpur Contract Carriage Corporation.
9. Dhekiajul Contract Carriage Association--P. O. Dhekiajuli.
10. Dhekiajuli-Orang-Majbat Bus Association--P. O. Dhekiajuli.
11. Kharupatia Contract Carriage Association--P. O. Kharupatia.
12. Mangaldai-Tangla-Bhutiachang Bus Association- P.O. Mangaldai.
13. Mangaldai-Patharughat Bus Association, P. O. Mangaldai
14. Tangla Contract Carriage Association--P.O. Tangla.
15. Tangla Public Carrier Association- P. O. Tangla.

(c) Railways :

The first railway line of the district was the 39 kms. long Tezpur-Balipara narrow gauge line constructed in 1895 by a private Company to afford an outlet to tea manufactured in the district through the river port at Tezpur. It ran from Tezpur, passing through Dekargaon, Bindukuri, Sessa, Thakurbari and Rangapara. From Rangapara there was a branch line to Barjuli. It was constructed at a cost of Rs. 4.87 lakhs. There was also another small line about 25 kms. from Orang to Singri on the Brahmaputra to cater to the needs of the tea industry. It was only in 1912-13 that the Eastern Bengal Railway extended the metre gauge railway track upto Tangla in Darrang district from Rangia in the Kamrup district. This small line covered a distance of about 38 kilometres. Again in 1930, the Rangia-Tangla section of the Eastern Bengal Railway (now North Frontier Railway) was further extended upto Rangapara an intermediate station of the Tezpur Balipara line. This was a major Railway project in Darrang and including this the total length of railways in the district came to 160 kilometres.

The Tezpur Balipara Railway continued to function as a separate line till September, 1952, when Tezpur was directly connected with the Rangia-Rangapara-North Section. The conversion of the line from narrow gauge to metre gauge was completed by 1953-54. But the eastern part of the district remained unconnected by the railway system till 1960 when the Government of India undertook the project of extending the North-east Frontier Railway from Rangapara North to North Lakhimpur, a total length of about 173 kilometres. Later on, this line was further extended upto Murkongselek and named as Rangapara North-North Lakhimpur-Murkongselek Railwayline covering a total length of about 331 kilometres. The construction work was started in January, 1960, and was completed in phases at an estimated cost of about Rs. 28.89 crores. The Chinese aggression of 1962 hastened the completion of the project.

This new railway line was opened to passenger traffic on phases from Rangapara-North to Dhalaibil in March 1962 and Dhalaibil to North Lakhimpur on 15th. January, 1963.

The total distance of the section from Rangapara North to Dubia, falling within the district of Darrang is about 114 kilometres and its estimated cost of construction was about Rs. 9.20 crores.

The following are the railway stations on the Rangia Junction-Rangapara-Tezpur section in Darrang district :

1. Khoirabari, 2. Tangla 3: Harisinga, 4. Udalguri, 5. Rowta Bagan,
6. Majbat, 7. Hugraajuli 8. Dhekiajuli Road, 9. Belsiri, 10. Misamari,
11. Rangapara North, 12, Thakurbari, 13. Bindukuri, 14. Dekargaon,
15. Tezpur.

The following are the Railway stations on the Rangapara-North Lakhimpur Section within Darrang district : 1. Balipara, 2. Jia-Bhareli 3. Dhalaibil, 4. Nagsankar, 5. Nijchutia, 6. Vishwanath Charali, 7. Monabari, 8. Nij-Bargang, 9. Bedetti, 10. Helem, 11. Brahmajan 12. Gohpur and 13. Dubia.

Most of these stations on the new line within the Darrang district are situated near tea gardens and rice fields and therefore, tea, rice, raw jute, timber etc. are the main goods from these stations. The important stations of this new line like Balipara, Nij-Chutia, Vishwanath Charali, Monabari, Helem, Gohpur etc., are provided with facilities of water supply, waiting hall for passengers and goods platforms.

Earning & Expenditure of Tezpur-Rangapara-North
Section (In Rupees)

	1963-64	1964-65	1965-66	1966-67
Expenditure	10,74,435	13,11,695	13,69,554	1,77,73,344
Earnings				
(a) Passenger	1,77,705	99,092	80,685	90,623
(b) Other coaches	17,933	5,283	7,493	1,076
(c) Goods	1,31,292	1,53,369	1,39,463	2,31,980
(d) Sundry	15,831	13,441	6,712	6,100
Total	3,42,765	2,71,185	2,34,353	3,29,779

(d) Waterways, ferries and bridges :

(i) Course of waterways : As has been mentioned elsewhere the Brahmaputra which runs across the State served as a great highway of trade and commerce in the past when roads and railways were not developed. Large boats were plied in the Brahmaputra. "Mc 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 fifteen or twenty miles, reached Gauhati in ten days and Bishnath in three days more." ¹¹ The journey up the river from Calcutta to Gauhati continued to be time consuming till 1848 when Government steamers began plying between Calcutta and Gauhati and only in 1853 Dibrugarh was reached by steamer. The up and down journey from Gauhati to Dibrugarh took about 15 days. The country boat could never cover this distance within such a short period. In 1860, the Indian General Steam Navigation Company entered into a contract with the Government to run a pair of vessels every six weeks provided the Government boats were withdrawn from the line and since then steam navigation of the Assam valley was in the hands of the Indian General Steam Navigation Company and the River Steam Navigation Company with whom they were associated. The daily Mail Steamer Service was started in 1884 on the Brahmaputra between Dhubri and Dibrugarh as an extension of Steamer Service between Dhubri and Jatrampur. Till the partition of the country the Brahmaputra continued to be the principal means of communication with the

11. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol V, Darrang, Allahabad, 1905 p. 172.

outer world and the great highway of commerce. Steamers plied daily between Kakilamukh and Amingaon touching at 7 stations in Darrang district viz., Gamiri, Vishwanath Kathanibari, Tezpur, Sialmari and Kharupatia. Joint Steamer companies used to run commercial river service between Calcutta and Assam. The river services had their hey-day before the 'Assam Link' in 1950. They continued, however, to carry about 80 per cent of the jute and considerable quantities of petroleum products from Assam to Calcutta till they met with three major setbacks. Firstly, the earthquake of 1950 caused considerable changes in the course of the Brahmaputra resulting in deterioration of the navigable channel, particularly in the upper reaches resulting in closure of river services by the Joint Steamer Companies from 1954 onwards. Secondly, the construction of the rail-cum-road bridge known as Saraighat bridge across the Brahmaputra at Pandu in 1962 greatly improved the overland road and railway transport system, and thus it dealt a great blow to river services. Thirdly, due to Indo-Pak hostilities in 1965, the Inland Steamer Service connecting Assam with the rest of the country was closed down. Consequently the River Steam Navigation Company went into liquidation and in its place the Government of India set up the Central Inland Water Transport Corporation Limited to resume river services in place of River Steam Navigation Company in 1967. But this Corporation could not make any headway in Assam mainly because it failed to attract sufficient cargo either from public sector or private sector. Therefore the Government of India set up a Committee known as the Bhagabati Committee for studying the existing water transport problems of the country and to suggest a phased programme for development. This Committee held the view, that the river transport being confined within the borders of Assam, it would be desirable to maintain the services within Assam waters. It recommended the following schemes :-

	(Rs. lakhs)
(i) Criss-Cross Service on the river Brahmaputra	Rs. 30.00
(ii) Commercial River Service on the Barak	Rs. 9.37
(ii) Subansiri River Service	Rs. 5.00

It also recommended construction of a dry dock in Assam at a cost of Rs. 50 lakhs during the 4th Plan period.

In the month of May, 1971, the Government of India sanctioned a sum of Rs.5 lakhs for the Subansiri Scheme but the two other service schemes were under consideration.

It may be mentioned here that boats which supplemented Steamer Services on the Brahmaputra are still used extensively and they still serve the purpose of trade and commerce to some extent in absence of steamer services. In 1971-72 there were about 434 private boats and 238 commercial boats in Darrang district.¹²

Assam set up a Directorate of Inland Water Transport under the Transport Department in 1959, in pursuance of the recommendation of the Gokhle Committee (1959) to look after the development of waterways ferries and for training of Inland Water Transport personnel. This Directorate took over six ferries in 1968, five ferries in 1969, and two ferries in 1970 from public Works Department and Development (Panchayat and Community Development) Department. Some ferries are under contemplation of being taken over by Inland Water Transport Directorate. The Directorate also proposed to introduce passenger hovercraft service between Gauhati and Dibrugarh in the Brahmaputra. This service is expected to cover a distance of 440 kms. in about 7 hours with intermediate stoppage at Tezpur, Arimora near Kaziranga and Neamati.¹³

Moreover, the rivers change their courses and overflow their banks, a habit which tends to prevent the growth of villages in the immediate neighbourhood. In the rains a certain amount of traffic goes up the Dipota to Bindukuri, and up the Ghiladhari and Manrai; in the cold weather these rivers are not navigable for boats of four tons burden. A vessel of that size can proceed up the Bhareli as far as Balipara in the cold weather, and upto Namiri in the rains, but, as this river flows most of its course through jungle, it carries little traffic. The Nanai and the Barnadi in Mangaldai are used to some extent as trade routes, and in the rains a large boat can proceed up the latter river, as far as Malmaraghat, though in the cold weather it cannot generally get above Sonarighat.

(ii) Ferries : Formerly the River Steam Navigation Company plied steamers from Tezpur via Panpur to Silghat in Nowgong district. Due to silting, the Tezpur ghat was abandoned in favour of Bhomoraguri ghat about 11 kms. further east. Since the closure of the Company in 1965, the Directorate of Inland Water Transport has taken over ferry services over the Brahmaputra. It now operates fer-

12. Source : Transport Department, Govt. of Assam.

13. *Economic Survey of Assam*, 1971, Department of Economics & Statistics, Govt. of Assam p. 40.

ries on Tezpur (Bhomoraguri) Silghat and Panpur-Silghat routes. In 1972-73, goods carried by these two services amounted to 6,360 tonnes and 120 tonnes respectively.

Other Ferries : There are some other ferry services over the tributaries of the district which are maintained by the Public Works Department. Such ferry services ply at lower Gabharughat over the Gabharu river, Silanighat over the Bhareli river, Chowkighat over the Bhareli river near its confluence with the Brahmaputra river on Tezpur-Jamuguri road. In turbulent rivers, the ferries are propelled by engines. Prior to the construction of the bridges over the major tributaries there were marboats for transshipment of goods and passengers.

Under the Charali Public Works Department Division there are also four ferries viz., lower Bargang and lower Burai ferries on Monabari-Borangabari road, Pichala ferry on Kalabari-Subansiri road and Panpur on Panpur-Jamuguri road. These are all either marboats or handdriven single boats except one at Panpur where engine boat has been arranged.

(iii) Bridges : There are thirty important bridges on the North Trunk Road, within Darrang district. Construction of these bridges has obviated the ferry crossings across the rivers. The bridges on the river Jia-Bhareli and the Dhansiri have contributed to the growth of trade and commerce of this region. The total length of the bridge on the Jia-Bhareli is 2,052'-6" and that of the Dhansiri bridge 665 feet. The bridge on the river Burai is 1,056 feet long. Six are Reinforced Cement Concrete bridges and the rest are either screw-file or timber bridges or timber bridges with R. S. J. beams and timber decking. These bridges have been gradually converted into Reinforced Cement Concrete bridges, following the widening of the road. There are also important bridges over rivers on other routes and the railway line. Among important railway bridges in the district mention may be made of the Jia-Bhareli, Burigang, Bargang and Burai bridges. Fair weather bridges are constructed over the rivers where permanent or semi-permanent bridges are yet to be erected.

(e) Transport by Air :

The only airfield of this district is at Saloni which is about eleven kilometres north of Tezpur. The Indian Airlines Corporation maintains the flight connection of this aerodrome with other stations. The table at page 284 shows passenger, freight and mail traffic to and from Tezpur airport from 1965-66 to 1970-71.¹³ Two other airfields

13. Source : Civil Aviation Department, New Delhi.

ACHIEVEMENT OF INDIAN AIRLINES CORPORATION
IN DARRANG DISTRICT.

Year	PASSENGER		FREIGHT (in kgs.)		MAIL TRAFFIC (in kgs.)		
	To Tezpur	From Tezpur	To Tezpur	From Tezpur	To Tezpur	From Tezpur	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
11,532	42,483	51,122	1965-66	3,138	4,005	60,788	
14,251	73,673	62,045	1966-67	5,554	6,061	85,800	
20,423	82,030	60,216	1967-68	5,930	5,975	1,02,774	
15,740	79,655	52,000	1968-69	6,260	7,068	94,401	
17,363	95,633	51,084	1969-70	7,173	7,836	1,06,412	
15,702	83,234	48,545	1970-71	5,701	6,299	9,300	

of limited use are located at Misamari and Kalabari.

(f) Travel and Tourist facilities :

There is one Circuit House at Tezpur under the Deputy Commissioner and a Circuit House cum Dak-Bungalow at Mangaldai under the Sub-divisional Officer (Civil). There is a separate Dak-Bungalow at Tezpur with an Inspection Bungalow attached to it. These are also managed by the Deputy Commissioner. There are Mahkuma Parishad lodges one each at Tezpur and Mangaldai. There is also a Rest House at Tezpur under the Embankment and Drainage Department which maintains some rest houses in the mofussil areas also. The Forest Department also maintains some Rest Houses in the forest areas. There are about 20 Inspection Bungalows in the district which are situated in the mofussil areas and are managed by the Public Works Department. Generally Sectional Officers remain in-charge of the Inspection Bungalows within their respective jurisdiction. The following table shows the location of Circuit Houses, Dak Bungalows, Inspection Bungalows, Rest Houses etc., in Darrang district.

Circuit Houses at

1. Tezpur
2. Mangaldai

Dak Bungalows at

1. Tezpur
2. Mangaldai (combined with the Circuit House)

Inspection Bungalows at

- | | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| 1. Sipajhar | 6. Tangla. |
| 2. Dalgaon | 7. Kalaigaon. |
| 3. Orang | 8. Balipara. |
| 4. Patharughat | 9. Gabharu. |
| 5. Khoirabari | 10. Dhekiajuli. |

Inspection Bungalows at.

- | | |
|--|---------------|
| 11. Charduar. | 16. Burigang. |
| 12. Rangapara. | 17. Ketla. |
| 13. Dharikati (Forest Inspection Bungalow) | 18. Gohpur. |
| 14. Jamuguri. | 19. Dekarai. |
| 15. Chutia. | 20. Udalguri. |

Rest Houses at.

- | | |
|---------------|--------------|
| 1. Charali | 8. Kalabari |
| 2. Dhekiajuli | 9. Lohitmukh |

Rest Houses at.

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|
| 3. Gabharu | 10. On Gobagoria
Bilotia Road. |
| 4. Orang | 11. Borachuba |
| 5. Batashipur | 12. C.M. Dutta's Bund. |
| 6. Vishwanath | 13. Tezpur. |
| 7. Behali | 14. Panbari. |

There are many hotels and restaurants in the towns of Darrang but hotels with modern amenities are quite few. There is one Marwari Dharmasala at Tezpur.

(g) Posts and Telegraph facilities :

In 1876, in the entire district there were only 2 post offices and subsequently in 1904 the number of post offices of all grades rose to 22. Again during the period between 1904 and 1960 there was adequate expansion of postal services and in 1960, as many as 138 post offices were functioning in the district. Thus in 1960, there were one Head Post Office, 43 Sub-Post Offices, and 94 Branch Post Offices in the district. In 1961-62, there was one Departmental Telegraph Office at Tezpur, and 29 Sub-Post Offices were provided with telegraph facilities. On July 1, 1966, the Mangaldai Sub-Post Office was raised to the status of a Head-Post Office and accordingly redistribution of Sub-Post Offices and Branch Post Offices were made under each Head Office. The number of Post Offices of all categories in the district in 1965-66, stood at 183. This shows the enormous expansion of postal facilities during the last 60 years in the district. Expansion of postal facilities continued and by 31st March, 1969, there were in Darrang district 26 Sub-Post Offices and 57 Branch Post Offices under the Tezpur Head Post office and 20 Sub-Offices and 91 Branch Post Offices under the Mangaldai Head Post Office. The list of post offices in the district is given in Appendix-A.

Almost all the Sub-Post Offices are provided with telegraph facilities controlled by the Head Telegraph Office at Tezpur. Out of these Sub-Post Offices the following twenty seven Sub-Offices are provided with Public Call facilities. They are Balipara, Behali, Vishwanathghat, Bargang, Charali, Charduar, Gohpur, Helem, Hawajan, Jamugurihat, Lokra, Pabhoi, Rangapara, Chutia, Dalgaon, Darrang Panbari, Dhekiajuli, Kalaigaon, Kharupatiaghat, Khoirabari, Kopati, Majbat, Misamari, Orang, Sipajhar, Tangla and Udalguri. There are also Public Call Offices at Thelamara and Rowta Charali Branch Post Offices. Savings Bank facilities exist in Sub-Post Offices and are provided in many Branch Post Offices.

In 1964-65 there were seven Telephone Exchanges in this district at Tezpur, Dhekiajuli, Charali, Rangapara, Mangaldai, Kharupatiaghat and Tangla. In that year the capacities of three Exchanges viz. Tangla, Mangaldai and Tezpur were increased in order to give better service to the Public. Since then more telephone exchanges have been established and in 1970 there were 19 telephone exchanges, the new ones being opened at Balipara, Bhutiachang, Bargang, Jamugurihat, Kalaigaon, Khoirabari, Kaupati, Majbat, Orang, Rowta, Chutia and Udalguri.

(h) Radio and Wireless Stations : There is no Radio Station in Darrang district. The Posts and Telegraph Department maintains one Wireless Station at Tezpur which maintains a very high frequency Radio Telephone link between Tezpur and Nowgong, and Wireless Telegraph Circuit connecting Tezpur to Bomdila, Towang and Sepla.

Appendix—A

LIST OF POST OFFICES IN DARRANG DISTRICT

Under Central Assam Division, Tezpur.

Tezpur H.O. (Second Class) :

Balichapari	TBO	ND
Bandarmari		
Bapubheti		E
Bihaguri		S
Besseria		
Bhojkhowachapari		S
Da-Parbatia		E
Dipota		S
Ghoramari		S
Hazarapar	TBO	ND
Haleswar		
Kamengbari		
Ketekibari		S
Khalihamari		
Mansiri		E
Panchmile		S
Pithakhowa		
Salanibari		E
BAKOLA E. D. S. O.		
BALIPARA CO PCO		
Amaribari		S E

Nonkey Patgaon		S
BARANGABARI		CO
BARJULI		CO
BEDETI		CO
Janata		
BEHALI	PCO	CO
BINDUKURI		CO
Dekargaon		S
VISHWANATHGHAT	PCO	CO
BARGANG	PCO	CO
Gangmauthan		
Gingia		S
CHARALI	PCO	CO
Burigang		S
Geruabari		
Monabari		E
CHARDUAR	PCO	CO
GAMIRI E. D. S. O.		
GOHPUR	PCO	CO
Dubia		
Gobinda Elengisatra		
Kalabari		S
Mazukuchi		E
HELEM	PCO	CO
Balijan		S
Deparpukhuri		
Ghahigaoncharali		S
Kuaripathar		E
Mailbazar		E
HAWAJAN	PCO	CO
Kamdewal		
Lohitmukh		E
JAMUGURIHAT	PCO	CO
Gemeripal		S
Nandikeswar		S
Panpur		
KACHARIGAON TSO		ND
LILABARI AIR FIELD @		
LOKRA	PCO	CO
MIJKAJAN		CO

MAHABHAIRAB	EDSO TSOND
NAHARBARI	CO
Itakhola	S
Rangachakua	
Seijosa	E
Sepla	
PABHOI	PCO CO
RANGAPARA	PCO LSG CO
Chutia	PCO CO LSG
Balisang	
Barpamtiniali	S
Chamardalani	E
Chengamari	
Corpa	
Nagsankar	S
Solal Sonari	E
Tewaripal	
Tetenbari	E
TEZPUR BAZAR	TSO ND LSG
THAKURBARI	CO
Mangaldai H.O.	PCO. (Second Class) :
Central Assam Division (Tezpur)	
Aulachawka	E
Balabari	E
Barampur	E
Bhakatpara	
Burhinagar	E
Chamuapara	
Deomarnai	S
Dhula	S
Dighirpar	
Jonaramchawka	
Patharughat	
Mangalanagar	E
Rangamati	
Shyamtilla	E
ALISINGA	E.D.S.O.
ATHARIKHAT	CO
Khagrabari	
DALGAON	PCO CO

Aminpara	E
Jangalpara	E
Lapulbazar	
Rowtacharali	SM PCO
DARRANG PANBARI	CO PCO
Mejengjuli	S
DHEKIAJULI	PCO LSG CO
Batasipur	E S
Bhangamandir	E
Barchola	S
Ghatua	E
Ghogra	
Johamari	
Kacharison	
Keheruknanda	
Orientali	E
Rangagora Darrang	
Silikhabari	
Singri	
Sirajuli	
Teliagaon	
Thelamara	S PCO
Ulubari	
Upper Panbari	
DIMAKUCHI	
Kalikhola	E
Pachimpatla	E
DUNI	
Andherighat	E
Burha	
Dipilachawka	
Kenduguri	
HARISINGA	
Barigaon	
HATIGARH	CO
Ajedhyapur	E
KALAIGAON	PCO CO
Barkhalachowka	
Bhekulikanda	E

Beerberibil	E
Chamuakhata	S
Kabiali	
Outala	S
Ranipukhuri	E
Tengaburi	E
KHARUPATIAGHAT	PCO LSG
Daipam	
Galandi	
Ghansimuli	E E
Kharupatiaghatbazar	ND
Kuaripukhuri	S
Punia No.1	
KHOIRABARI	PCO CO
Bhergaon	S
Deodhanighat	
Santipukhuri	
Thakuriapara	E
KAUPTI	PCO CO
MAJBAT	PCO CO
Hoograjuli	
Pathakpur	
Rakhyasmari	E
Rowta	S
MISAMARI	PCO CO
Bashbera	
ORANG	PCO CO
Barjharbazar	S E
Dhansiribazar	S
Mazrowmari	
PANERIHAT	CO
Bengabari	E
Ghuriajhar	
Kachubilhat	
Ratanpur	E
SIPAJHAR	PCO
Dhekipara	E
Ganeshkuwari	E
Garkuhuti	

Kazarikapara				
Kurua				
Maroi				
TANGLA	PCO	LSG	CO	
Doionghat			E	
Murmela			E	
Palagarh			E	
Puran Tangla				
UDALGURI	PCO	CO		
Bandarguri				
Ekrabari				
Goroibari				
Mazkhuti			E	
Mohanpur				
Nalkhamara			E	

CO	=	Combind Office
E	=	Experimental
TSO	=	Town Sub-Office.
TBO	=	Town Branch Office.
S	=	Branch Office vested with savings Bank power.
ND	=	No Delivery Office.
DB	=	Departmental Branch office.
PCO	=	Public Call Office.
RS	=	Railway Station.
*	=	Cash Office.
H.O.	=	Head Office.

CHAPTER VIII MISCELLANEOUS OCCUPATION

(a) Public Administration : According to the 1961 census, the total number of persons employed in public services, in Darrang district was 9,150, including 70 females. This figure, however, does not include those employees of the Government, Quasi-Government bodies and Local Authorities, whose sphere of activities fall outside administration. Thus, those persons who are serving under transport, communication, information and broad-casting, education and scientific services, health, industries, production, construction, marketing and financial institutions, have not been censused under public service. The following table shows the distribution of persons in various categories of public services as per 1961 census.¹

Sl. No.	Category of service	Persons employed		
		Male	Female	Total
1.	Police Organisation	2,347	x	2,347
2.	Under Central Government	3,075	29	3,104
3.	Under State Government	2,635	24	2,659
4.	Under Quasi-Government, Municipalties, Local bodies	1,023	17	1,040

The Census of Assam Government Employees reveals that on the 31st of March 1966, the total number of employees of the Government of Assam, constituted only 0.35 per cent of the total population of the district. The distribution of the State Government employees according to status is shown below.²

State Government Employees of Darrang district in 1966

Status	Total number of employees	Permanent	Temporary
Gazetted ...	87	41	46
Non-gazetted ... (excluding grade IV)	2,428	807	1,621
Grade IV ...	2,057	1,160	897
Total	4,572	2,008	2,564

1. Census of India, 1961, Assam, District Census Handbook ; Darrang, P.195.

2. Census of Assam Government Employees, 1966, P. 15, 18.

The difference between the figure of the State Government employees in 1961 and that of the Census of Assam Government Employees 1966, is largely attributed to the omission of the employees belonging to certain categories in 1961 census and expansion of the branches of departments of the Government of Assam in the last few years. It is also interesting to note that the 1966 Census of Assam Government Employees revealed that the females constitute only a small percentage of the total population of those employees. There were only 90 female employees serving in the district under the Government of Assam in 1966 out of 4,572 employees. In Darrang district, there is one Government employee per 282 persons of the district. In 1967, there were 439 scheduled tribe employees and 513 scheduled caste employees in Darrang district serving under the State Government.³ 835 employees of the Government of Assam belonged to "Other Backward Classes." as revealed in the same census.⁴ The following figures will show the total number of administrators and executive officials of Government in different sub-Groups.⁵

Description	Male	Female	Total	Urban	
				Male	Female
Administrators and executive officials, Govt.	1,390	—	1,390	193	—
Administrators and executive officials, Central Govt.	412	—	412	57	—
Administrators and executive officials, State Govt.	132	—	132	107	—
Administrators and executive officials in Local bodies.	537	—	537	1	—
Village officials	123	—	123	—	—
Administrators and executive officials, Govt. N.E.C.	167	—	167	9	—

Some of the benefits available to the employees of the State Government are : (1) General Provident Fund Benefit, (2) Pensions and Gratuities after retirement, (3) Joint Family pensions, Liberalised

Family pension, Commuted pension, (4) Liberalised medical treatment benefit for the employee and his family and children, (5) Earned leave for six months with average pay and for one month with half average pay, (6) Medical leave with half average pay and also maternity leave for females, (7) Sickness benefit for treatment of some serious diseases, (8) 15 days' Casual Leave with in a calendar year, (9) 4 months' preparatory leave for retirement with average pay, (10) Provision for a public servant for going on lien to some other service, (11) Provision for travelling allowance for officers going home on earned or casual leave, once in a period of two years, (12) House Building advance, (13) Conveyance advance for purchasing motor cars, motor cycles, cycles etc., (14) Provision for quarters or House rent in lieu thereof, (15) Provision for free education to children of the Central Government employees (16) Provision for holidays for important festivals.

Public Employees Organisation : In order to safeguard the interests of the Government employees and to promote their well-being, several categories of employees serving under the State Government and the Central Government have formed some associations. The organisations of central government employees are formed on All-India basis, while those of the State government employees are formed on All Assam basis. There are district units of both these types of organisations in Darrang district. These organisations endeavour to fulfil their grievances in a peaceful manner. Time to time some of the organisations for non-gazetted employees also resort to strikes. More notable of these strikes are :—

1. The All India Postal Union's Strike in 1968,
2. All India Railway Union's Strike in 1967,
3. All Assam Ministerial Association's Strike in 1965, 1966 and 1973.

The following are some of the Associations of the Government employees :—

- 1) All Assam Ministerial Officers' Association (in State Government service).
- 2) All Assam 4th Grade Employees Association (in State Government service).
- 3) All Assam Transport Workers' Union.
- 4) All Assam Mandal Kanango Sanmilan.
- 5) All Assam Sericultural Officers' Association.
- 6) All Assam Mohurir Association.
- 7) All Assam Workers' Union, P.W.D. (Tezpur Branch)

3. *Representation of Scheduled Caste/Tribe in State Government Services ; (1967)*, pp 59.

4. *Ibid*, p. 14.

5. *Census of India, 1961, Assam District Census Handbook, Darrang*, p. 201.

- 8) A.E.S., S.E.S. & S.A.S. for Officers of the P. W. D.
- 9) Abkari Karmachari Sangha.
- 10) Assam Civil Service (class I) Association.
- 11) Assam Civil Service (class II) Association.
- 12) All India Postal Union-(Under Central Government).
- 13) Employees Association of Electricity Board-(Tezpur Branch.) The activities of gazetted Officer's associations are restricted by the Public service Conduct Rules.
- 14) All Assam Co-Operative Officers' Association.

b) Learned Professions : Before Independence, the percentage of persons engaged in learned professions, such as teaching, medicine and surgery, engineering, legal practice, Journalism, different branches of fine arts was very negligible. With the expansion of educational facilities, and the rise in the level of literacy during the last few decades, the district has made considerable progress in this regard. According to the 1961 census, the total number of persons engaged in technical professions and related works was 10,270, including 9,371 males and 899 females. They constituted 0.8 per cent of the total population.

Statement of persons engaged
in learned professions in
Darrang District.

(As in January, 1972)

Category of persons	Total number
1. Government doctors	82
2. Government nurses	90
3. Government Pharmacists	130
4. Lawyers	82
5. Teachers	
(a) Primary Schools	3,400
(b) Middle English and Vernacular Schools	1,240
(c) Higher Secondary and High Schools	1,545
(d) Teachers Training Centres	62
(e) Vocational Training Centres	116
(f) College teachers	170
Total number of teachers -	6,533

In 1961 there were only 5,052 teachers (all categories), in the district. Thus there has been an increase by 1,481 persons during the last decade. It is significant that the preponderance of males is an

important feature in these professions. The above figures relating to the medical practitioners does not relate to the private practitioners, nor the medical staff employed in the tea gardens.

Medical practitioners : According to the 1961 census, there were large number of medical practitioners in the district as shown below :-

	Male	Female	Total
1. Physicians, surgeons and dentists	2,033	3	2,036
(a) Physicians and surgeons, allopathic	909	3	912
(b) Physicians, Ayurvedic	401	x	401
(c) Physicians, Homeopathic	664	x	664
2. Nurses, Pharmacists etc.	831	320	1,151
(a) Nurses	540	110	650
(b) Midwives and Health visitors	160	108	268
(c) Nursing attendants and related workers	3	102	105

It has been shown above that the total number of Government doctors was only 82 in January 1972. A large number of physicians employed in tea garden dispensaries and hospitals, the mission hospitals, private practitioners and dentists are not government doctors. Out of 2,036 physicians and dentists only 116 were in towns and the rest were in rural areas. Homeopathic treatment is gradually becoming popular all over the district. Therefore, the number of homeopaths is also increasing. Except in nursing, the males predominate in the profession of medical practice.

Legal Practice : Prior to the establishment of Gauhati University in 1948, the students of Assam had to study law in Calcutta or other Universities, outside Assam. Now the two Universities of Assam are turning out Law graduates every year. Only a certain percentage of the Law graduates take-up this profession. In January 1972 there were only 82 lawyers in the district ; of them 27 are members of Mangaldai Bar Association and 55 are members of Tezpur Bar Association.

Teachers : With the implementation of Compulsory Primary Education scheme, the number of schools has been steadily increasing. The total number of teachers serving in different educational institutions in 1961, is given below, as shown in the 1961 Census Report.⁷

Type of Educational institutions	Total population			Urban areas		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
a. Secondary Schools.	798	58	856	92	10	102
b. Middle and Primary Schools.	2,416	442	2,858	97	18	115
c. Teachers, N.E.C.	1,227	4	1,231	65	4	69
d. Total Teachers	4,539	513	5,052	281	32	313

6. Census of India, 1961, Assam, District Census Handbook Darrang, p. 200.

7. Ibid pp. 200-201

The majority of female teachers serve only in Primary and Middle English or Vernacular schools.

Engineers, Scientists etc : The total number of architects, engineers and surveyors in the district was only 99 in 1961. There were 539 biologists, veterinarians, agronomists and related scientists of whom 519 were veterinarians. Not a single female worker was found in the engineering services. While all the architects, engineers and surveyors were employed in the urban areas, only 6 veterinarians and 11 biologists and agronomists etc., were serving in the towns.

In 1961 census, 821 persons have been censused as social scientists and related workers. Of them, 760 are males and 61 are females. 800 persons belonging to this group live in rural areas. There were only 18 draughtsmen, science and engineering technicians in the district in 1961.

Photography and cinema etc. : There were 33 photographers and cinema operators, in the district in 1961. 420 persons were engaged in the services such as sports and recreation etc.

Artists and Journalists : These two groups of professions also claim a very few persons in this district. In 1961, the former claimed 57 persons and the latter only 9 persons in this district.

(c) Domestic and Personal services : The caste system has shown gaping fissures now-a-days and as such no account of the professional castes is available. The decennial censuses of the post Independence period have not taken into account the different sub-castes of the Hindus. The account of the occupations in the old District Gazetteer of Darrang shows that there was a complete absence of the occupational castes in Darrang District while some others like goldsmiths (*Sonaries*), potters (*Kumars*), blacksmiths (*Kamars*), fishermen (*Nadiyals*), silkworm rearers (*Jugis*) etc. which were said to exist in remote days were losing their importance as occupational castes due to their diversion towards agriculture. The main reason for such diversion was that traditional occupational castes were always looked down upon in the social scale. The occupations also became uneconomic. B.C. Allen has observed in this connection as follows, "There is, moreover, an almost complete absence of the functional castes. There is no village barber or *dhobi* in the Assam Valley, and, though there are a considerable number of *Jugis* in Darrang, they no longer earn their living at the loom. It would hardly be correct to say that they have forsaken their

traditional occupation, as they, in common with most of the villagers in Darrang, are weavers. The work is, however, carried on by the women; and only enough clothing is produced to satisfy the requirements of the family, or perhaps to leave a few silk cloths over to sell when money is wanted to satisfy the land revenue demand. Occupation has not been specialised in the Assam Valley, and each household supplies almost all its simple wants. The fishing and boating castes are not strongly represented, and many of their members have either abandoned their traditional occupation for agriculture, or have at any rate, preferred to return it as a more respectable avocation on the census schedules. The number of priests in Darrang is also small. The occupations returned at the census of 1901 were divided into 520 separate classes, and the figures for each class will be found in part 11 of the Report on the Census of that year. These figures do not, however, lend themselves readily to review, as agriculture is practically the beginning and end of all things in Darrang".⁸

The occupational pattern, particularly in the field of miscellaneous occupations involving manual labour have not undergone much change during the last seven decades. The predominance of the non-Assamese people in this sector is very marked in the District.

Barbers : It is said that there were professional barbers among the Assamese in the past. But during the British administration the village barbers gave up their occupation. There was no village barber in the Assam valley in 1901 as mentioned in the old District Gazetteer of Darrang. Hair cutting was generally done in the villages by the people themselves. Now a days, barbers move from village to village and particularly present themselves in the weekday *hats*. Barbers' shops or saloons and Beauty shops are growing up in numbers in the urban areas. Even in some village centres such saloons are found. The minimum rate of hair cutting is 75 paise in a saloon and 50 paise outside. Most of these barbers are the immigrant Bengalis, or Biharis. The total number of barbers, beauticians, hair dressers and other related workers was 1,769, according to the 1961 Census of whom 181 were censused in the urban areas. No female has taken up this job.

Washermen etc. : In recent years, not only big establishments of washermen are growing up but laundries, dry-cleaning and pressing establishments are also being set-up in urban areas. In the village centres also washermen have started their business. Almost all the

8. B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers Vol. V, Darrang*, Allahabad 1905 pp. 104-105

professional washermen are non-Assamese. The indigenous people have not yet been drawn to this occupation. According to the 1961 census, the total number of laundrymen, washermen and *dhobis* was 899 persons, including 695 males and 204 females. There were 548 dry cleaners and pressers, all males. The rate of dry-cleaning of a pair of woollen suit is Rs. 5.00. The total number of building caretakers, cleaners, sweepers etc. was 803 persons including 785 males and 18 females. Almost all these workers are non-Assamese people. Sweeper colonies are established in the towns where housing and other facilities are provided to them. Harijan Seva Samitis are formed for upliftment of this depressed class. Untouchability is now regarded as a social crime.

Tailors : Tailoring is a lucrative profession and its importance is increasing. A number of tailoring establishments are growing up in the towns besides tailors attached to most of the cloth dealers. Tailors are also found in important village centres. In the 1961 census 2,228 persons including 198 females were found to be tailors, dress and garment makers in this district.

Vegetable sellers : Vegetable selling is also a small business enterprise. In the town of Tezpur and Mangaldai, most of the vegetable sellers are people from Kamrup district. Among them, are a few wholesalers. Vegetable sellers are also found in semi-urban centres. Most of them are agriculturists who often sell their surplus vegetables.

The number of hawkers, pedalers and street vendors as per the 1961 census was 608 (males only) in the district.

In addition to such occupations, mention may be made of a large number of casual labourers mostly engaged in loading and unloading of goods. According to the 1961 census, the number of labourers not elsewhere classified stood at 7,069 including 46 females,

Domestic and Institutional servants : The total number of workers engaged in both household and institutional service like house keepers, cooks, maids, bearers, matrons, stewards etc. was according to 1961 census 6,921 persons including 4,302 males and 2,619 females. Of them house-keepers, matrons, and stewards (domestic and institutional) were 637 males and 577 females of whom only 39 males and 11 females were found in the urban areas. Again the number of butlers, bearers, waiters, maids and other servants in domestic service was 863 males and 473 females of whom 565 males and 27

females only were employed in urban areas, 1,641 persons coming under this category were not classified into any sub-group. The service condition of this category of person is the least enviable of the lot. The monthly wage of servants hardly exceeds Rs. 30.00, although their bare necessities of free fooding and lodging are fulfilled by their employers. There is no limit of working hours for this group of workers.

Rickshaw pullers : They constitute an important group of workers of the urban areas. Rickshaw has provided the cheap transport within the town areas. In all the towns large number of rickshaws are seen on the roads from the morning till night. The rickshaw pullers charge, 50 paise as fare for the distance of one mile or any fraction thereof. The rate varies depending upon the demand and the condition of the road. The rickshaws are mostly owned by the local people. The rickshawpullers take these on hire on condition to pay the owner Rs. 4.00 to Rs. 5.00 per day, as hire-charges. According to the 1961 census, the number of rickshawpullers in the district was 587 (males only) of whom 240 were in the urban areas.



CHAPTER-IX ECONOMIC TRENDS

Introduction :

Though Darrang is an agro-industrial district of Assam ; agriculture is the chief occupation of its people. It comprises an area of 8,775 square kilometres and has a total population of 17,36,188 souls (9,19, 635 males and 8,16, 553 females) occupying 2,92,487 households (as per the 1971 Census Report), distributed over two sub-divisions, six revenue circles, thirteen police stations, thirteen community development blocks, seven towns and 2,538 villages. The district contributed 11.70 per cent towards State's National Income in 1960-61. The total income of the district in the same year was Rs. 32.62 crores, 54.9 per cent of which came from the agriculture sector. On the basis of per capita income which stood at Rs. 312 in 1960-61, Darrang occupied the fourth place among the districts of Assam.

(a) Livelihood pattern of the District :

In an analysis of the livelihood pattern of the district, a brief review of the basis of classification of the population in decennial censuses is essential. Before the 1951 Census the basis of classification of the population was religion which was substituted in the 1951 Census by the economic classification on the basis of livelihood. This basis of classification again was substituted by the criteria of actual work in the 1961 Census. In the 1951 Census, the entire population of 9,13,841 persons was classified into two broad categories on the basis of livelihood pattern, viz., agricultural classes and non-agricultural classes, each claiming 6,44,733 and 2,69,108 persons respectively, forming 70.55 per cent and 29.45 per cent respectively to the total population. The agricultural population was divided into four classes ; 4,18,190 persons were cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned and their dependents; 2,06,316 persons were cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned and their dependents; 13,720 persons were cultivating labourers and their dependents and 6,507 persons were non-cultivating owners of land. Among the non-agricultural population 1,82,450 persons were engaged in production other than cultivation; 29,909 in commerce ; 5,386 in transport; 51,363 in other

services and miscellaneous occupations. Lastly, each of these eight classes was further sub-divided into three sub-classes according to their economic status viz., self-supporting persons, earning dependents and non-earning dependents. The following table will show the distribution of the population into different livelihood classes and sub-classes.

Classification of the people according
to the 1951 Census Report.

Agricultural Classes :	Self-Supp.	Earning Dep.	Non- earr. Dep.	Total
1. Cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned	1,12,018	79,535	2,26,633	4,18,190
2. Cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned.	48,779	33,850	1,18,687	2,06,319
3. Cultivating labourers.	5,723	1,619	6,378	13,720
4. Non-cultivating owners of land or agricultural rent receivers.	1,881	558	4,068	6,507
Total Agricultural	1,68,401	1,20,566	3,95,766 (55.18%)	6,44,733 (70.55%)
Non-Agricultural Classes :				
5. Production other than cultivation.	90,419	14,679	77,352	1,82,450
6. Commerce	10,340	2,572	16,997	29,909
7. Transport	2,495	143	2,748	5,386
8. Other Services and Miscellaneous	21,593	3,789	25,981	51,363
Total-Non-agricultural	1,24,847	21,183	1,23,078	2,69,108 (29.45%)
District Total	2,93,248	1,41,749	4,78,844	9,13,841

An analysis of the above table shows that more than 52 per cent of the total population of the district is purely non-earning dependents while the percentage of the whole-time workers to the

total population barely exceeds 32 per cent and the remaining 16 per cent of population is part-time workers like school and college-going boys and girls and the like. It is interesting to note that in the agricultural sector the percentage of non-earning dependents (55.18 of the total agricultural population) was more than twice of the actual whole-time workers. A stark contrast to this position was provided by the non-agricultural sector where the proportion of the non-earning dependents to the total population of the sector was less than that of the whole-time workers. Every landless cultivator was to maintain about three non-earning dependents per head.

However, these figures do not lend themselves to the comparison with those of the 1961 census which classifies the total population into workers and non-workers on the basis of actual work. The analysis of the livelihood pattern as per the 1961 Census Report is shown separately below.

The total population of Darrang was 12,89,670 persons as per 1961 census, Among them 6,06,394 were workers and 6,83,276 non-workers, the classification having been made on the basis of actual work. The workers who determine the economic growth of the district claimed slightly over 47 per cent of the total population who had shoulder the responsibility of maintaining a large number of non-working dependents (53%).

The following table will show the sex-wise distribution of all the nine categories of workers as well as non-workers in both urban and rural areas of the district as per the 1961 Census Report, classification.

Category	Rural		Urban		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
A. Workers	3,74,801	2,12,635	17,639	1,319	3,92,440	2,13,954
1. Cultivators	2,55,129	1,56,848	822	105	22,55,951	1,56,953
2. Agricultural labourers.	17,751	3,332	64	—	17,815	3,332
3. In mining Quarryin, live-stock, forestry, fishing, hunting & plantation, orchards and allied activities.	43,253	34,707	117	2	43,370	34,709

Category	Rural		Urban		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
4. At household industries.	1,220	12,770	20	656	1,240	13,426
5. In manufacturing other than household industry.	6,672	577	2,713	193	9,385	770
6. In construction.	6,571	48	423	—	6,994	48
7. In trade and commerce.	11,512	319	4,898	45	16,410	364
8. In transport, storage and communication.	4,442	11	1,623	3	6,065	14
9. Other services	28,251	4,023	6,959	315	35,210	4,338
B. Non-Workers	2,89,035	3,62,905	13,452	17,884	3,02,487	3,80,789

Cultivators and agricultural labourers jointly claiming 4,34,051 workers formed 71.52 per cent of the total workers as per the 1961 Census. The percentage would have been slightly higher if the tea garden labourers engaged in cultivation of the plantation crops (included in the third category of workers in the industrial sector) were added to it. It is shown in the Sample Survey Report, 1949 that 82 per cent of the villagers on the average were predominantly agricultural.¹ On the other hand, the total number of workers engaged in the industrial sector including services and miscellaneous works (from category 3-9) stood at 1,72,343 constituting nearly 28.48 per cent of the total workers. This also shows the preponderance of the agricultural occupation. In other words, the largest number of the people earn their livelihood from agriculture having required to support the largest number of non-working dependants.

Although agriculture sustains more than three-fourth of the total population, the economic condition of this group was nonetheless unenviable by any standard. The total cultivated area in Darrang in the 1961 Census was 7,87,605 acres (about 3,18,732.72 hectares). This shows that each cultivator got, on the average only 1.9 acres (about 0.77 hectares) of land to cultivate. The Report on "A Survey of Rural

1. A Survey of the Rural Economic Conditions in Darrang, Department of Economics & Statistics, Govt. of Assam, Shillong, 1950. p. 11.

Economic Conditions in Darrang 1949² also points out that the average holding per agricultural family in the sample area was only 14.3 *bighas* (about 1.91 hectares) and that the typical holdings in the district were those between 5 and 16 *bighas* (between about 0.67 and 2.14 hectares). It also shows that 18.48 per cent of the families of the sample area were without land, about 25 per cent held between 6 and 16 *bighas* (between 0.80 and 2.14 hectares), and only 12.6 per cent held more than 30 *bighas* (about 4 hectares) of land per family,³ and that the average net-income per family in the sample area was Rs.1,055 in a year.³

Of the total industrial workers numbering 1,72,343 in the 1961 Census 1,57,677 were engaged in non-household industries and 14,666 at household industries. The first category of workers was divided into four classes on the basis of employment, viz., employers, employees, singleworkers and family-workers; each group contained 1,231; 1,06,416; 23,474 and 26,556 persons respectively. The second category of workers was divided into two groups, viz. employees and others. There were only 921 employees in this sector.

The industrial workers in both household and non-household industries were sub-divided in the 1961 Census into ten occupational divisions, 75 groups and 331 families (or minor groups) as shown below (divisions only).

	Male	Female	Total
1. Professional, Technical and Related workers.	9,371		
2. Administrative, Executive and managerial workers.	2,199	899	10,270
3. Clerical and Related workers.	3,553	8	2,207
4. Sales workers.		21	3,574
5. Farmers, Fishermen, Hunters, Loggers, and Related workers.	16,462	333	16,825
6. Miners, Quarrymen and Related workers.	38,637	34,631	73,268
7. Workers in Transport and Communication	5,045	78	5,123
	5,755	14	5,769

2. Ibid. P. 16.

3. Ibid. P.37.

	Male	Female	Total
8. Craftmen, Production Process workers and labourers not elsewhere classified.	22,563	14,274	36,837
9. Service, Sports and Recreation workers.	12,613	3,162	15,775
10. Workers not classified by occupation.	2,476	219	2,695

Of the industries, mention may be made of the tea industry which provided the means of livelihood to 71,549 persons. It is nearly 50 per cent of the total industrial workers in 1961. Of these persons only 23 were shown as employers. Apart from the classification on the basis of the primary occupation, classification on the basis of subsidiary occupation is also essential to formulate an idea about the economic condition of different sections of people. Some cultivators particularly females in the rural areas are engaged in household industries and also work as agricultural labourers and vice-versa. Teachers and some other village people holding service are engaged in cultivation. It is also evident from the Sample Survey Report 1949 that 50.4 per cent of Assamese agricultural population pursued services as their subsidiary occupation besides those who were engaged in other trade and professions of miscellaneous nature.⁴

According to the 1971 Census, Darrang has a total population of 17,36,188 persons, of whom 5,05,485 persons are workers. 2,83,880 persons constituting 56.14 per cent of the total workers had been censused as cultivators. This shows that the percentage of cultivators to the total workers had gone down by 11.96 points during the last decade. It may be recalled that as per the 1961 Census, the total population of cultivators formed 68.1 per cent of the total number of workers. The number of agricultural labourers had gone up from 3.5 per cent in 1961 to 8.4 per cent in 1971. The total number of agricultural labourers, according to the 1971 Census stood at 42,621 persons. 1,78,984 workers had been censused in other occupations. They constitute 35.46 per cent of the total workers as against 28.4 per cent in 1961.

The above comparison is however, subjected to different connotations attached to the 'work-participation' in these two censuses. On the depletion of the working population in Assam, in the 1971 Census, the Director of Census Operation of Assam comments as follows: "This unusual fall in the work participation rate is not due to any

4. Ibid. P 11

depletion in the working population but on account of a change in the approach of the economic conditions and in the definition of worker in the 1971 Census. As a matter of fact, owing to this change, the comparability of figures of work participation in the two Censuses is lost'.⁵ The following table shows the distribution of workers by sex and occupation as per the 1971 Census.

Category	Rural		Urban		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
A. Workers	4,29,394	43,173	31,758	1,160	4,61,152	44,333
1. Cultivators.	2,79,328	2,704	1,809	39	2,81,137	2,743
2. Agricultural labourers.	40,403	1,801	376	41	40,779	1,842
3. Livestock, forestry, fishing, hunting, & plantations, orchards and allied activities.	39,854	32,299	423	16	40,227	32,315
4. Mining & quarrying.	272	5	25	-	297	5
5. Manufacturing processing, servicing and repairs.						
a) Household industry.	2,663	462	1,067	44	3,730	506
b) Other than household industry.	10,601	1,931	4,215	25	14,816	1,956
6. Construction	3,225	149	1,151	17	4,376	166
7. Trade & commerce.	13,714	204	11,007	91	24,721	295
8. Transport, storage and communication.	3,112	12	3,896	27	7,008	39
9. Other services.	36,222	3,606	7,789	860	44,011	4,466
B. Non-workers	429,533	730,345	28,950	41,875	4,58,430	7,72,220

5. A. K. Saikia, *Census of India 1971, Assam, Provisional Population Totals*, P. (iii).

Prices: Before the occupation of Darrang by the British, all the bare necessities were locally produced, except salt. "Exchange of products was mainly effected through the system of bartering".⁶ Salt was obtained from Bhutias who "bartered it for rice with the villagers at rates which were very favourable to themselves".⁷ Sometimes cowries or conch-shells were also used for small purchases.

The barter system was more or less prevalent during the early British period when the circulation of money in the rural sector was not widespread. The earliest estimate of prices in Darrang was done by Lieutenant Mathie in 1835. He reported that rice was sold for 12 annas a maund. Since 1880 till 1905, substantial rise in prices was not noticed. B.C. Allen observed; "They vary largely in accordance with the character of the harvest, and rice is naturally much dearer in August than it is in February. Prices, too, are much lower in Mangaldai where there is a comparatively small garden population, than they are in the markets near Tezpur. Salt is considerably cheaper since the reduction of the duty in 1904."⁸ He also quoted the prices of food staples in seers obtainable per rupee in the selected markets of Darrang since 1880 to 1905.⁹ It is interesting to note that a consumer could purchase upto 24 seers of rice for a rupee in Mangaldai in February of 1890 and 1900. However, there was some rise in prices of rice in the hard season during the period.

The average retail price of rice in the beginning of the year 1912 was Rs. 3.497 per maund; but it came down to Rs. 3.299 at the end of the year. Prices increased manifold during the First World War after which in 1921 there was a general fall in prices of all food-stuffs. The downward trend in prices was so sharp that it led to the great economic depression from 1929 to 1933. It was observed in the annual report on the Land Revenue Administration of Assam for 1933-34 as follows: "Prices of food-stuffs remained low as in the previous year. The prices of paddy rose a little in certain locality but not sufficiently to effect any benefit to the *raiya* and there was a temporary local rise in prices in March when Excise duties on matches and tobacco were announced" and even "village lands ceased to have any saleable value and the cultivators were deprived from this source of credit".

6. E.A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1967 P. 277,

7. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers* Vol. V, Darrang, Allahabad, 1905 P. 182.

8. Ibid, P. 167.

9. Ibid, P.155,

With the beginning of the Second World War in 1939, prices of all essential commodities spiraled. The position has been described in 1951 Census as follows :

"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 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 kerosine 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 obtaining supplies on control prices became more acute. Shortage of rice in the market was partly due to hoarding, but a good deal of the 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. The rationing was introduced in most of the towns regarding kerosine oil, cloth, sugar, mustard oil and *dal*. Sugar, cloth, and kerosine 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 authorities to enforce the control orders".¹⁰

There was virtually no check to the galloping prices in the post-war years. The all India wholesale price index (base 1939-100) shot up from 245 in 1945 to 389 in August, 1949. The increase was still higher in Assam where the wholesale price index (base 1939-100) for rice increased from 283 in October, 1946 to 469 in October, 1949 just before the devaluation of the Indian Rupee in November, 1949.

During the post-devaluation period, the outbreak of the Korean war in June, 1950, decontrol of goods and natural calamities like heavy floods, earthquake of August, 1950 in Assam, plethora of

10. R. B. Vaghaiwalla : *Census of India, 1951*, Vol XII, Assam, Manipur and Tripura Part I-A Report, Shillong 1964, P.36.

paper currency leading to inflation were responsible for adding fuel to the fire and no wonder, the price index for rice reached 648 in October, 1950. It was observed in the annual report of Land Revenue Administration in Assam 1950-51, that "prices of foodstuffs continued to be high as before." In the following year of 1951 prices of all the essential commodities recorded the highest increase, and in Darrang district rice sold at Rs. 1.31 per seer in October, 1951, a price that was never heard of before.

Since the launching of the First Five Year Plan in 1952 the price seemed to stabilise and assumed a downward trend. As illustrated in the retail price list in the Census Report of 1961,¹¹ the retail price of rice along with prices for other articles came down gradually from Rs. 1.31 per seer in October 1951 to Rs. 0.42 in December, 1952 and moved round about with slight variations till February, 1956. Fish was becoming gradually dearer in the district. The fall in prices was due mainly to increased agricultural production in Assam as well as improvement in transport and communication etc.

But at the beginning of the Second Five Year Plan prices again assumed an upward trend all over India. The all India price level increased by 30 per cent as against the decline of 18.4 per cent during the First Five Year Plan period. In Assam, the wholesale price index (base 1953-100) rose from 117.6 in 1956 to 135.4 in 1961. In Darrang district the wholesale price of paddy (coarse) rose from Rs. 10.00 per *maund* in February, 1958 to Rs.15.00 during September-November of the year. The Chinese aggression in 1962 pushed the price line further up. The following observation in the Economic Survey of Assam, 1970 gives an account of the price situation in Assam since 1962.

"The price situation in Assam is essentially a manifestation of the all India phenomenon of rising prices. But the upswing of the price level in the State has been more pronounced due to certain factors like rapid growth of population, transport bottlenecks and a virtual dependence on outside supply for the essential consumer goods. The general index of wholesale prices for Assam (base 1953-100) rose by 82.4 percent during the period 1961-67 from 135.4 in 1961 to 247.0 in 1967. In 1968, while the all India index indicated a declining trend of wholesale prices, in Assam prices rose by another 6.6 per cent over the previous year."¹²

11. *Census of India 1961 Assam, District Census Hand Book, Darrang, Gauhati* p. 964, p. 406-413.

12. *Economic Survey of Assam, 1970*, Department of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, p.70.

There was a slight fall in price in 1969, when the general wholesale price index slumped by 7.9 per cent due mainly to fall in price of food articles by 14.9 per cent against a rise in prices of other non-food articles by 11.5 per cent. This was but a brief interlude as the position was reversed in 1970 when food price rose by 6.8 per cent. Non-food prices, however, declined by 4.9 per cent. The general wholesale price index shot up from 229.5 in January to 264.2 in November of 1970, showing an average of 250.1 in the year. The following table will show the group indices of wholesale prices in Assam since 1956.¹³

Year	Food	Non-food	General (all commodities)
1956	117.9	117.9	117.6
1961	130.9	144.8	135.4
1966	218.1	199.1	211.6
1967	272.8	194.7	247.0
1968	292.3	206.1	263.3
1969	248.8	229.7	242.5
1970	265.8	218.7	250.1

In 1971 the economy of Assam was seriously affected by the aftermath of the Indo-Pak war and influx of refugees from Bangladesh. The general wholesale price index in Assam (base 1953=100) started at 237.3 in January, increased gradually to 253.3 in May and then to 268.4 in September. The rise in prices has been going on almost unabated. Even in the month of February, 1972 coarse rice was sold at Rs.1.40 per kilogram in the important markets of Darrang.

The following table showing the prices prevailing since 1963 in Darrang district will show the trend of prices in respect of important food articles till 1971.

13. *Statistical Hand Book of Assam 1965 and 1970* : Department of Economics & Statistics, Govt. of Assam, pp. 166 & 76 respectively.

11. *Census of India 1961 Assam, District Census Hand Book, Darrang, Gauhati 1964*, pp. 406-413.

Prices of important commodities in Darrang district (food only)

Year	Coarse		Rice		Dal (masur)		Sugar		Mustard oil		Fish	
	Whole sale	Retail	Whole sale	Retail	Whole sale	Retail	Whole sale	Retail	Whole sale	Retail		
	Per qtl.	Per Kg.	Per qtl.	Per Kg.	Per qtl.	Per Kg.	Per 100 litre	Per litre	Per qtl.	Per Kg.		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11		
1963	62.50	0.66	78.18	0.85	128.00	1.30		2.69	—	—		
1964	60.80	0.62	102.81		135.69	1.38	325.00	3.50	—	4.80		
1965	65.45	0.67	129.94	1.37	137.00	1.40	360.00	3.87	—	4.40		
1966	115.00	1.18	125.00	1.28	155.37	1.56	350.00	3.75	—	4.50		
1967	88.34	0.95	235.00	2.60	154.38	1.57	478.00	5.00	600.00			
1968	145.00	1.50	180.00	1.75	155.00	1.75	350.00	3.75				
*1971												
Mangal-dai	140.00		225.00				560.00					
Tezpur	125.00		—	2.00	—	2.15	540.00	5.50		4.00		
Khoirabari	—	1.50	—	2.00	—	3.00	—	5.50		3.50		
Chutia	—	1.37	—	2.10	—	2.75	—	5.50		1.75		
Dalgaon	—	1.60	—	2.25	—	3.50	—	6.00		2.00		

*Figures taken from *Wholesale Price Bulletin* of Assam, November, 1971 and *Retail Price Bulletin* of Assam, October, 1971 published by the Department of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, Shillong.

The following wholesale and retail prices of some selected food articles prevailing in the month of March, 1972 in the Gauhati market will give an idea of high prices in the adjacent district of Darrang because the prices in both the districts are almost the same.

Whole sale in Rupees per Qtl.		Retail sale in Rupees per Kg.	
Rice (fine)	140.00	—	1.40
Rice (coarse)	128.00	—	1.35
Pulses—			
Masur	218.00	—	2.20
Mustard oil	72.00	—	5.40
(per 14.900 litre per tin)			

Consumer Price Index : The consumer price index number in terms of 1949 prices for working classes in the urban centres of Assam during the last few years follows more or less rising trend of wholesale prices as discussed above. The index for Assam as a whole rose to 239 in 1968 over 173 in 1966 and came down to 213 in 1969 and then rose to 230 again in 1970. This reflects the continuous upward trend in the cost of living of the working class as a whole in the urban areas. The consumer price index number based on 1944 prices for rural population in the plains districts of Assam as a whole recorded a continuous rise during 1966-1970 except for decrease by 1 point in 1969 from the consumer price index of 278 prevailing in 1968. Still it was 48 points higher than that of 1966. In 1970 the index number stood at 288, surpassing all previous figures of the cost of living of the rural population.

The high price index has led the government, both the State and the Union to adopt many remedial measures, such as liberalising the imports, increasing the production both in the agricultural and industrial sectors, limitation of dividends, intensification of the small savings schemes, enforcement of control over selected items of consumer goods, distribution of consumers, goods at controlled price through fair price shops, dehoarding the accumulated stocks and rationing of foodstuffs etc. When the Defence of India Rules were enforced, the District Magistrate of Darrang fixed prices of essential commodities under those rules. These prices however, ceased to be

The index of whole sale prices in Assam since 1966¹⁴ (Base 1953 = 100)

Food											Non-food										
Year	Cereals		Pulses		Edible oils		Sugar		Total food		Tobacco		Raw-materials		Finished products		Total non-food		All commodities.		
1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11										
1966		252.2		187.5		219.5		158.9		218.1		188.0		244.7		165.5		199.1		211.6	
1967		321.4		279.3		249.1		285.8		272.8		160.8		227.5		176.2		194.7		247.0	
1968		360.5		254.1		222.1		377.8		292.4		244.9		230.6		178.1		205.1		263.3	
1969		274.4		212.2		227.1		250.6		248.8		318.6		267.9		173.2		229.9		242.5	
1970		295.6		227.9		252.7		176.4		265.8		240.4		258.4		151.1		218.7		250.1	

14. *Economic Survey of Assam 1970*, Department of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, p.72-73.

operative when the Emergency was lifted from the country. Sugar of government stock was sold at the price Rs. 2.25 per kilogram in March 1972, but in the open market sugar was not available at a price less than Rs. 3.25 per kilogram. As a result of the persistent pressure of increasing prices there has been irresistible demand for rise in wages and salaries. The government had to accede to the demands for pay rise, the minimum wages of several categories had to be revised upwards and the cost of plan projects have consequently gone up.

With a view to imparting a degree of restraint on monetary and credit expansion which posed a threat to economic growth of the country (without however affecting the growth of the priority sections) and also for putting a curb on hoarding and speculative rise in prices, the Reserve Bank of India has recently raised the Bank rate from 5 per cent to 6 per cent. It has also increased the minimum net liquidity ratio for purposes of determining the penal rate of interest chargeable on the excess borrowing of a bank from 33 per cent to 34 per cent. Though it is early to hazard a prediction on the possible impact of the above and other measures like selective Credit control, nevertheless, in view of a large segment of the economy being outside the organised money market, the Reserve Bank's actions alone are not likely to be adequate to meet the situation. Therefore, a further streamlining of efforts by the Union and the State Governments through an integrated approach on money-supply, wages, productivity and real income seems necessary.¹⁵

Wages : The level of wages was very low during the early part of the current century. The minimum wages paid to tea garden labourers varied from Rs. 4.00 to 5.00 per month for women and from Rs. 5.00 to 6.00 for men before and after 1903.¹⁶ B.C. Allen observed in the old District Gazetteer of Darrang as follows : "The normal daily wage is 4 or 5 annas in Mangaldai and 6 annas in Tezpur. Servants are generally fed and receive 5 or 6 rupees per mensem as wages. In Mangaldai, it is the practice to give a servant an advance, which is gradually worked off.

Carpenters and masons are said to get from twelve annas to one rupee and blacksmith from one rupee to one rupee eight annas a day. The number of these artisans is however, quite insignificant and in quoting a rate of wages for the district it must always be borne in

15. *Economic Survey of Assam*, 1970, Department of Economics & Statistics, Govt. of Assam P. 78.

16. *Report on the Administration of Assam* for the year 1921-22, Shillong 1923. p. 57.

mind that labourers cannot as a rule be obtained at all except through the intervention of some individual possessed of local influence¹⁷. "The question of wages earned by tea garden coolies (labourers) has always engaged the attention of Government. It was found that wages had not increased in the same measure as prices"¹⁸ and this led to a number of strikes and riots in 1921 when a committee was appointed by Government.

Wages in general were still low before and after the general economic depression in 1929. During this period, besides other commodities, even land lost its saleable value. Though the low level of prices was advantageous for the wage earner, yet the loss of employment exposed them to great distress. The inflationary trend generated by the Second World War adversely affected the material condition of the wage earners of all categories and the demand for more wages became persistent. Their condition was further aggravated during the postwar price spurts. Wages of agricultural labourers in the rural areas after Independence were as follows: "During the busy season monthly wages paid in kind to labourers vary from 4 *maunds* to 4.83 *maunds* while in the slack season, the variations are between 3.5 *maunds* and 3.75 *maunds*. The main reason for the difference in each season is the facilities and comforts which the labour gets in addition to his wages. No attempt is made to calculate the money value of these comforts. Wages paid in cash vary from Rs. 23 per month in the slack season to Rs. 40.6 in the busy season"¹⁹ The daily wage rates in the busy season during 1957-62 were Rs. 2.00 for men, Rs. 1.50 for women and children (without meal)²⁰ The same rates of wages were also reflected in the Census Report of 1961 according to which, the daily wage of skilled labourer was Rs. 5.00 for carpenter and Rs. 3.00 for blacksmith. The rising prices brought in its wake higher wages. The Indo-Pakistan war in 1965 altered the all Assam average wages of skilled labourers. For instance, the blacksmith earned almost Rs. 6.45 per day and the wage of carpenters increased to Rs. 5.70 from Rs. 4.74 prevailing in the previous year. Wages of unskilled field labourers (men) increased to Rs. 3.00; of agricultural labourers (men) to 3.01 and herdsmen to Rs. 2.58 from Rs. 2.54, Rs. 2.40 and Rs. 2.48 respectively prevailing in the previous year.

17. B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol. V, Darrang, Allahabad, 1905, p.166-167.

18. *Report on the Administration of Assam*, for the year 1921-22, Shillong 1923, P.58.

19. *A Survey of Rural Economic Conditions in Darrang*, Department of Economics & Statistics, Govt. of Assam, Shillong p.33

20. *District Statistical Abstract, Darrang*, 1964-65, p.64,

The following table shows the trend of average daily wages of agricultural labourers in the rural areas of Assam in recent years.²¹

Daily wage As per day per worker

(amount in Rupees.)

Year	Carpenter	Blacksmith	Field labourer	Other agri-cultural labourer (Man)	Herdsmen
1	2	3	4	5	6
1966	5.28	5.19	3.22	3.33	1.94
1967	5.75	6.23	3.30	3.49	2.47
1968	6.27	5.67	3.39	3.29	2.19
1969	6.75	6.12	3.72	3.73	3.02
1970	6.77	6.28	3.73	4.15	3.29

After 1959 the ordinary unskilled labourers in tea plantations received wages at the following rates.

Assam	Total wages (basic wages and D. A.) in Rupees		
	Men	Women	Children
Zone A	1.89	1.76	0.91
Zone B	1.82	1.70	0.88
Zone C	1.78	1.70	0.88

The following rates of basic wages for tea plantation labourers as recommended by the Wage Board have been effective since 1.4.66.²²
(in Rupees)

Place	From 1-1-66 to 31-3-66			From 1-4-66		
	Men	Women	Children	Men	Women	Children
Tezpur Sub-division						
1. (i) Tea Plantations of 150 acres and above	2.16	1.99	1.05	2.18	2.01	1.06
(ii) Other Plantations	2.13	1.96	1.04	2.15	1.98	1.05
2. Plantations in Mangaldai Sub-division	2.13	1.96	1.04	2.15	1.98	1.05

21. *Economic Survey, of Assam, 1970-Department of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, p 82.*

22. *Tea Statistics, 1968-69, P.116*

In addition to these rates the labourers in tea plantations can obtain cereals at concessional rates of Rs. 53.58 per quintal. Over and above, they are entitled to dearness allowance at the rate of Rs. 0.4 paise per day. This can be increased to 0.6 paise if the All India Price Index exceeds 170. It may be noted that the wages paid to the factory labourers are slightly higher.

As regards the pay of other employees there are three scales of pay for clerical staff, medical staff, artisans and technicians and other subordinate staff. The minimum pay is Rs. 60/- and the maximum pay is Rs. 250/- fixed for the medical staff in gardens with an area over 300 acres, and Rs. 220/- in smaller ones. The employees receive 20% of the basic pay as Dearness Allowance. The basic pay is increased by 0.4 to 0.8 per cent against every point of rise in the all India Price Index above 170. A variable Dearness Allowance and servant allowance ranging between Rs. 15.00 to Rs. 55.00 according to grade of employees and size of plantations are given to certain categories of employees.

The following list will give an idea of wages of clerical staff in 1968 excluding managers in different firms and factories (private) in the Tezpur town.

(in Rupees).

Name	Daily wage of		Monthly wage of employees	
	Unskilled labourer	Skilled labourer	Minimum	Maximum
1. SriKrishna Rice and Oil Mill.	3.00	9.00	—	200.00
2. B.R.Kalita Saw Mill.	3.00	6.00	90.00	200.00
3. Assam Valley Trading Company	—	—	65.00	177.00

Recent trend of Wages:

Minimum Wages: In order to protect the working class from economic injustice, the Minimum Wages Act was introduced in the State in 1952. To start with, the workers in tea plantations, public motor transport and rice and flour mills were covered by the Act. The Act was extended during the subsequent years (1953-59) to

cover agricultural labour, workers engaged in building operations under the P.W.D. and labours under local authorities.

The minimum wages for workers under the P.W.D. were revised in 1964 at Rs. 3.25 per day for unskilled workers and the provisions of the Act were extended to workers engaged in maintenance of roads and building operations. The workers engaged in steamerghats were brought under the Act in 1965 and the rate fixed for unskilled workers was Rs. 85.00 per month. In 1966, the minimum wages for workers in the engineering and the ply-wood industries were fixed at the rate of Rs. 3.25 per day for unskilled hands. The Minimum Wages Act was extended to the *bidi* making industry in 1966 and to the jute baling industry a year later. The rates of wages were Rs. 2.75 per thousand *bidis* for the former industry and Rs. 85.00 per month for unskilled workers in case of the latter.

In 1970, the wages in the plantation industry were revised and as a result the wages are likely to go up about 20 per cent by 1972. The wages in the engineering industry also underwent upward revision during the year. Besides, a tripartite body had been set up to consider the revision of wages in the plywood industry.²³

Standard of Living : We have no definite information as to the per capita income and the index of cost of living of the district to measure the standard of living in the past. The standard of living of the people during the Ahom period has been described by Gait as follows.

"The standard of living was generally higher in upper Assam than in Lower Assam. In the former area silk was used by almost every body and gold ornaments were found in most of the houses. In Lower Assam most people used cotton clothes and silver ornaments. Fertility of the soil made it easy for an average Assamese villager to produce his necessities in plenty. As the *Fathiah-i-Ibriyah* says "Eatables are not sold in our markets; but, each man keeps in his house stores for a year, and no one either sells or buys."²⁴

The district has an essentially agriculture based economy. B.C. Allen recorded six decades ago that the Assamese in Darrang had no other source of income except agriculture and among them there were only a very few moderately well-to-do people and that capital accumulated in the hands of a few capitalists from outside. The stan-

23. *Economic Survey of Assam, 1970*, Department of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, pp. 85-86.

24. E. A. Gait : *A History of Assam* : Calcutta, 1926 pp. 265-266

dard of living was low, nevertheless it was fairly above the line of poverty. "The rayats are said to obtain the cost required to pay their revenue and buy their little luxuries by sale of rice, vegetables and poultry for which they have a market at their very door".²⁵

The condition remained nearly the same even after Independence. According to the Sample Survey Report of 1949, eighty two per cent of the villagers in Darrang were, on the average, predominantly agricultural families and the most desirable unit of family sized economic holding was a farm containing an area of 31 *bighas* or more, but such farms constituted only 12.3 per cent of the total holdings while small holdings below 10 *bighas* constituted 43.6 per cent. The families having such economic holdings constituted only 12.6 per cent of the total and had a fair standard of living. The average annual income of these families was Rs. 2,357 and the average expenditure was Rs. 2,299.4 of which food constituting fish, meat, milk, sugar etc., accounted for Rs. 1,487 and the rest was spent on other conventional necessities and requirements of progressive life such as education, medical treatment, travelling etc., as well as on some luxuries. Their expenditure on the whole, is confined to the minimum requisite for a tolerable living standard. But the largest percentage of the people in the rural areas live below the minimum standard of living. The average annual income and expenditure of a family of 6.2 members in the rural areas were Rs. 1,073.71 and Rs. 1,161.68 respectively.²⁶

There has been no further sample survey of economic conditions in rural areas of the district since then and none at all in case of urban areas. The per capita income in this district stood at Rs. 312 according to 1961 Census Report on the basis of 1969-61 prices.

An idea however can be made about the trend in the standard of living of the people in general with a brief reference to the state per capita income and expenditure. The state per capita income at current prices decreased from Rs. 299.7 in 1950-51 to Rs. 274.1 in 1955-56 and thereafter increased to Rs. 311.1 in 1961 to Rs. 418.2 in 1965-66, Rs. 556.1, in 1968-69 and then decreased again to Rs. 545.1 in 1969-70.²⁷

25. B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Vol. V. Darrang*, Allahabad, 1905, pp. 170-71.

26. *A Survey of the Rural Economic Conditions in Darrang*, Department of the Economics and Statistics, Govt. Of Assam, Shillong, 1950, pp. 11, 16, 35, 44 and 45.

27. *Statistical Hand Book ; Assam, 1970*, Department of Economics & Statistics, Govt. of Assam, pp. 127-128.

As revealed by the National Sample Survey 19th Round (State Samples 1964-65), the monthly per capita consumption expenditure of a family both in the urban and rural areas of Assam was Rs. 32.79 and Rs.25.54 respectively.

Food covered the higher percentage (74.71) in a rural family than in an urban family (67.21). The fact that non-food articles covered higher percentage of expenditure in urban areas than in rural areas shows that the standard of living in the former is higher than in the latter.²⁸

The average per capita income and expenditure does not indicate the general level of the standard of living. It is already shown that only a small fraction of the people in this district is moderately well-to-do while the vast majority have below the minimum income. The average budget of a rural family in this district is always a deficit one which enhances indebtedness in the rural sector. The measures taken by the Government for the upliftment of the villagers have vastly changed the course of rural life. Opening of new roads, schools, hospitals and dispensaries, expansion of the avenues of employment and such other measures have contributed to the rise in the standard of living of the villagers.

The common items of consumption of an average family of the rural areas consist of rice and rice products, pulses, vegetables, fish, meat, eggs, salt and spices, mustard oil, *gur* and sugar, milk and milk products. Clothings such as *dhoti* and shirt (sometimes pants and shirts), and other ready made garments for the grown-ups, women and children, kerosine oil and fuel, tea, tobacco, betelnuts, shoes, sandals and umbrellas are now increasingly used. Ornaments and cosmetics are also used by women.

Family Budget in the Rural Area : According to the Sample Survey Report, 1949, "the average man" in the rural area was nothing more than a cultivator and the average size of his farm constituted 14.3 *bighas*. A family could maintain a fair standard of living out of the income from a farm comprising about 30 *bighas* of land. The average budget of the average family as recorded in the sample survey was always a deficit one, the average annual income being Rs. 1,073.71 and the average expenditure being Rs. 1,161.08.

28. *Economic Survey of Assam*, 1970, Department of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, p. 110.

More than 50 per cent of the average income of a family was obtained in kind not sold. The main source of cash income was agricultural produce followed by trade, service, professions etc. Wages came third in order of importance and cottage industries last.

The broad pattern of average annual expenditure of a family consisting of 6.2 members is quoted below from the Sample Survey Report.²⁹

Item	Value of items obtained in md.	Cash expenditure in Rs.	Total in Rs.	Percentage to total.
1	2	3	4	5
A Food—				
1. Cereal ...	487.16	75.69	562.85	48.19
2. Pulses ...	6.12	30.07	36.19	3.10
3. Vegetables ...	11.88	23.47	35.35	3.03
4. Fish, etc. ...	—	26.53	26.53	2.27
5. Salt, spices, etc.	0.51	22.52	23.03	1.97
6. M.Oil. ...	1.22	40.83	42.05	3.60
7. <i>Gur</i> and Sugar	8.58	30.60	39.18	3.35
8. Milk and milk products.	28.55	7.30	35.85	3.07
Total food ...	544.02	257.01	801.03	68.58
B. Clothing ...	3.05	89.00	92.05	7.88
C. Fuel and lighting.	—	21.32	21.32	1.83
D. Tea, tobacco and Drugs.				
1. Tea	—	21.74	21.74	1.86
2. Betelnut, etc.	16.58	15.03	31.61	2.71
3. Tobacco ...	3.41	33.16	36.57	3.13
4. Liquor ...	33.73	1.34	35.07	3.00
Total tea, tobacco and drugs.	53.72	71.27	124.99	10.70

29. *A Survey of Rural Economic Conditions in Darrang*, Department of Economics & Statistics, Govt. of Assam, Shillong, 1950 p. 38.

Items	Value of items obtained in md.	Cash expendi- ture in Rs.	Total in Rs.	Percentage to total.
1	2	3	4	5
E. Miscellaneous				
1. Medical ...	0.59	12.18	12.77	1.09
2. Interest ...	4.24	7.54	11.78	1.01
3. Repairs of Homestead.	4.17	15.53	19.70	1.69
4. Education ...	0.17	4.84	5.01	0.43
5. Ceremonies ...	4.03	40.55	44.58	3.82
6. Travelling ...	—	6.91	6.91	0.59
7. Litigation ...	—	5.31	5.31	0.45
8. Ornaments ...	—	11.02	11.02	0.94
9. Others ...	—	11.61	11.61	0.99
Total Misc	13.20	115.49	128.69	11.02
Grand total	613.99	554.09	1,161.8	—

It will be seen that 68.58 per cent of the expenditure was incurred for food. As in the case of income, consumption of articles produced at home was also valued for the purposes of the budget. Of the total average family expenditure on food, as much as 67 per cent was accounted for by food articles obtained in kind. In other words, in the case of land owning cultivators the family obtained the bulk of its food requirement from its own farm and in the case of labourers wages were received in kind. As for clothing the value of purchased items was higher than that of items produced at home. The comparatively small expenditure on fish and milk speaks of a low average standard of living. Tobacco and betelnuts were consumed in substantial amounts compared to milk or fish. The low expenditure on ornaments was perhaps due to the fact that gold was still beyond the reach of the average villager. Ceremonies entailed proportionately heavy expenditure; but it will be wrong to describe this expenditure as wasteful in view of the social frame work.³⁰

The average budget of a rural family of Darrang was a deficit budget at the prices prevailing in 1945-49. In the highest income

30. Ibid: p. 38

the group with an average income of Rs 2,357 per year there was some balance available for saving and that in the low income group with an average income of Rs. 535 there was persistent tendency to deficit which no price condition could effectively change unless their land holdings be increased or cultivated in scientific manner. In the early seventies the deficit gap is believed to be wider, because of the soaring prices.

The following table will show the difference in respect of the pattern of expenditure among different classes of people belonging to the highest income group in the rural area as recorded by the Sample Survey.

	Assamese	Tribal	Ex-Tea-garden labourers.	East Bengal immigrants
Food	67.00	63.03	72.43	73.70
Tea, Tobacco & Drugs.	8.75	18.87	8.83	7.70
K. Oil & fuel.	2.02	1.48	1.52	1.40
Clothing	7.43	6.72	7.38	10.94
Miscellaneous.	14.80	9.90	9.85	6.25

It will be seen that compared to other people, the tribal people spend less on food and more on tea, tobacco and drugs. The habit of drinking liquor has made the tribals as a whole mostly impoverished. The East Bengal immigrants spend more of their income on food and clothing and less on miscellaneous items while such expenditures cover a large percentage of income of the Assamese families. The total expenditure of an East Bengal family in different income groups is much lower than that of others.

There has been no comprehensive survey of the urban economic condition of Darrang district. In town areas the money income is believed to be higher than in the rural areas. A sizable section of the population consists of the floating population, an element which is absent in the rural sector. Naturally this section of population always try to make some saving for their families whom they keep elsewhere.

The following table shows the broad pattern of expenditure in the urban and rural areas, as revealed by the National Sample Survey

19th Round (State Sample 1964-65).³¹ per capita consumption expenditure per month.

	Rural families (State Samples) (1964-65)		Urban families (State Sample) (1964-65)	
	Expenditure	Per-cent	Expenditure	Per-cent
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1. Foodgras	11.64	45.58	11.30	30.75
2. Milk and milk products.	1.30	5.09	2.56	6.97
3. Other food items.	6.14	24.04	10.82	29.49
Total food.	19.08	74.71	24.68	67.21
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
4. Fuel and lighting.	2.11	8.27	2.80	7.63
5. Clothing.	1.38	5.40	2.28	6.81
6. Other non-food items.	2.97	11.62	6.96	18.95
Total non-food.	6.46	25.29	12.04	32.79
Total	25.54	100.0	36.72	100.0

(b) General Level of Employment : According to the 1961 Census only 47 per cent of the total population were workers, of whom 71.53 per cent were engaged in agriculture and the rest in industries other than agriculture. But in the Census of 1971 percentage of working population to the total population dwindled to 27.61 of whom 68% were engaged in agriculture and the remaining in industries other than agriculture. However this dwindling in the working population is ascribed to adoption of a more restricted definition of worker in the 1971 Census.³²

31. *Economic Survey of Assam*, 1970, Department of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, p.110.

32. *Economic Survey of Assam*, 1971, Department of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, pp. 58-59.

Some of the salient features of the general employment are shown below on the basis of the 1961 Census.

Name of Occupation	Nature of employment.	Male	Female	Total
1 Agriculture.	1. Cultivator.	2,55,951	1,56,953	4,12,9
	2. Labourer.	17,815	3,332	21,147
Total		2,73,766	1,60,285	4,34,051
2 Household industries.	1. Employees.	180	741	921
	2. Others.	1,060	12,685	13,745
Total		1,240	13,426	14,666
3. Non-household industries including services.	1. Employee.	1,213	18	1,231
	2. Employees.	72,128	34,288	1,06,416
	3 Single-worker.	21,524	1,950	23,474
	4. Family worker	22,569	3,987	26,556
Total Workers.		1,17,434	40,243	1,57,677
Total 2 & 3 Workers.		1,18,674	53,669	1,72,343

From the above it may be said that in the agricultural sector the self employed cultivators also provided employment to 21,147 laboures consisting of 17,815 males and 3,332 females. The nonagricultural sector provided employment to 921 employees including 180 males and 741 females in the household industries, to 1,06,416 employees in the non-household industries. This was in addition to employers, self engaged single workers and family workers, censused in the non-agricultural sector. Thus the total number of employees, as per the 1961 Census stood at 1,07,337 including 72,308 males and 35,029 females in the non-agricultural sector. Of these employees the largest segment numbering 65,554 worked in plantation industry, and 21,629 were engaged in private services. Of the rest, public service provided employment for 9,150 employees. The trend in the general level of employment as reflected by the figures obtained at the Divisional Employment Exchange at Tezpur was as follows : The general level of employment both in the public and non-agricultural private sector including plantation in Darrang rose from 84,286 on 31.3.61 to 94,926 on 31.3.67, showing an increase of 10,640 employees during the period. This rise showed an uneven trend. The level of

employment slumped down to 97,303 on 31.3.66 registering a net loss of 1.4 per cent. Though it rose to 1,03,535 on 30.6.66 and then to 1,05,393 on 30.9.66, it came down to a still lower level of 94,962 on 31.3.67 registering a net loss of 2.4 per cent during the year ending on 31.3.67. It may be noted that the general level of employment began to rise during the second quarter of a year and reached the peak in the third quarter ending on 30th September and thereafter assumed a downward trend. The primary factor effecting the swings in the curve of employment was the plantation industry which employed casual labourer during the peak harvesting time and discharged them in the slack season. The loss of employment during 1966-67 was primarily affected by the discharge of labourers in plantations and in the cotton spinning industry, inspite of increase in other fields particularly in the public sector. The public sector which has been maintaining an upward trend since 1960, showed an increase of 9,451 employees during the years.

The following table shows the overall changes in the general level of employment since 1960.

General Level Of Employment Showing Changes in The Volume Of Employment In Both Private And Public Sector Since 1960.

Type of establishment.	31.3.60	31.12.60	31.8.61	31.3.62	31.12.62	31.9.63
Public Sector	6,403	7,874	9,402	11,800	11,853	11,814
Private Sector	—	—	74,884	82,854	87,409	92,353
Total	6,403	7,874	84,286	94,654	99,262	1,05,667

Type of establishment.	31.3.64	31.3.65	31.3.66	31.3.67	31.3.68	31.3.69
Public Sector	13,996	13,947	13,978	15,430	15,954	17,384
Private Sector	85,807	84,765	83,325	79,533	N.A.	N.A.
Total	99,803	98,712	97,303	94,962	—	—

Private Sector Employment : The private sector has been mainly responsible for affecting the changes in employment situation in the district. In this sector the largest industry is the Plantation

industry employing about 98 per cent of employees in the sector. The Plantation industry maintained an increasing trend till 30.9.64 contributing to the rise in the general employment level but due to the crisis in the industry, the level of employment gradually assumed a downward trend. The net loss of employment on 31.3.67 affected 6,442 persons since 31.3.64. Both manufacturing industry and trade and commerce showed some improvement till 31.3.65 and thereafter there occurred the loss of employment in both the fields. The number of employees in private services gradually rose from 967 on 31.3.64 to 1,272 on 31.3.67. The following table will illustrate the position.

Description	31.3.61	31.3.62	31.3.63	31.3.64	31.3.65	31.3.66	31.3.67
1. Plantation	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	83,273	81,898	80,618	76,831
2. Manufacturing	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	1,362	1,441	1,279	1,243
3. Trade & Commerce.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	206	186	186	187
4. Services.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	967	1,208	1,242	1,272
Total	74,884	82,854	86,226	85,807	84,765	83,325	79,533

Public Sector Employment : Unlike in private sector, the level of employment in the public sector recorded a gradual increasing trend since 1960 as revealed by the figures available at the Employment Exchange, Tezpur. It rose from 6,403 on 31.3.60 to 15,429 on 31.3.67 showing an increase of 9,026 persons. There was only a loss of employment of 49 persons on 31.3.65 from 13,996 on the corresponding date of the previous year, when the private sector had a heavy loss. This loss was due to the discharge of 225 temporary workers by the Public Works Department of the State Government. The loss was however, reduced to 49 by increases in the other wings of the public sector, viz., Central Government (+64), Quasi Government (+25), Local Bodies (+87). The State Government wing once more suffered a loss of employment of 225 persons in the last quarter of 1962 due to dismissal of temporary workers, mainly of the Malaria Eradication Programme (160), but the sector showed a total increase over the position of the previous year due to increase in the other wings.

This favourable trend of public sector employment is due to

various development programmes executed under each of the four wings of it. Tremendous expansion of the activities in the public sector brought in its wake a rise in the level of employment. The following table will illustrate the wingwise expansion of employment in the public sector.

Wings	31.3.62	31.3.63	31.3.64	31.3.65	31.3.66	31.3.67
1. Central Govt.	N.A.	N.A.	2,514	2,578	2,659	3,041
2. State Govt.	N.A.	N.A.	7,520	7,304	7,245	8,074
3. Quasi Govt.	N.A.	N.A.	213	238	238	272
4. Local Bodies	N.A.	N.A.	3,740	3,827	3,836	4,02
	11,800	11,963	13,096	13,947	13,978	15,429

Employment of Women : As per records of the Employment Exchange, Tezpur altogether 38,837 women were found employed at the end of March 1965. They represented nearly 40 per cent of the total working force. Their number stood at 36,613 on 31.3.67 against 38,385 on 31.3.66 and formed 39 percent of the total. They were distributed as 35,410 in tea industry, 149 in cotton spinning industry, 180 in administrative services, 165 in medical and health services, 625 in educational institutions, and 10 in other industries and services.

It is already noted that in the 1971 Census, the percentage of actual workers to the total population of Darrang depleted to 27.6 from 47 in 1961. This indicates an increasing trend of nonworkers and consequently of unemployment though the classification of workers in both the censuses materially differs. As recorded in the Employment Exchange Tezpur, the number of job seekers increased on the Live Register from 5,201 in 1961-62 to 6,443 in 1967-68 showing a net increase of 1,242 job seekers during the period. The number of job-seekers registered in 1965-66 being 7,104 was the highest. The placement of job-seekers could barely exceed 19 per cent of the total registered in a year. Thus a cumulative increase as recorded in the Live Register stood at 1,409 at the end of 1964 and it increased to 1,816, 2,094, 2,589 in 1965, 1966 and 1967 respectively.

The following table shows the number of job-seekers registered in the Live Register of the Tezpur Exchange and their placement since 1961-62.

Years	Total of Registration.	Total applts. placed in employment.	Percent of people engaged.
1961-62	5,201	944	18.15%
1962-63	5,091	578	11.35%
1963-64	5,958	837	10.69%
1964-65	5,542	562	10.14%
1965-66	7,104	655	9.22%
1966-67	6,649	578	8.69%
1967-68	6,443	721	11.19%

An analysis of the Live Register of the Tezpur Employment Exchange shows that the number of applicants for the posts of clerical and unskilled jobs increased manifold far in excess of the requirement. On the other hand, in the technical and other skilled works required number of job-seekers are not forthcoming. The number of educated job-seekers is increasing. Their number increased from 450 on 31.3.64 to 558 on 31.3.65. This indicates the trend of increases of educated unemployment.

Role of Employment Exchange : Divisional Employment Exchange with its headquarter at Tezpur started functioning from 16.12.57. It is under the administrative control of the Employment Exchange Jorhat under the Directorate of National Employment service, of the Government of Assam Department of Labour. The expenditure of this Employment Exchange is shared between the Central Government and the State Government in the ratio of 60 : 40.

The main function of the Employment Exchange is to register employment seekers. Another function is to collect employment market information on existing and possible vacancies from different employers and establishments, both in the public and private sectors. They are required to notify vacancies under the Assam Employment Exchange (Compulsory Notification of Vacancies) Act, 1959. Besides, the Employment Exchange acts as a connecting link between demand and supply of employment. The Employment Exchange submits the names of suitable candidates to the employer for employment from among the registered unemployed. Recruitment to fill up vacancies is now to be made through the Employment Exchange.

Another function of the Employment Exchange is to collect information on the change of the level of employment, current and

prospective demand for labour, shortage of various categories of personnel and the disposition of labour force in regard to different occupations and industries.

In short, it registers the names of employment seekers, collects and analyses data on man-power, employment opportunities and the employment level and its trend and prepares statistical returns. It has expanded its area of activity in the tea gardens also. A vocational guidance unit is attached to the Employment Exchange.

(c) National Planning and Community Development : The First Five Year Plan of Assam (1951-56) was preceded by the post-war developmental activities. The post-war programme which was responsible for the beginnings of educational and training institutions like the Assam Medical College, Assam Agricultural College, Assam Veterinary College, Assam Ayurvedic College and the Assam Forestry School, languished in 1949 when the Central grants were curtailed or withdrawn as a result of the inflation then prevailing. The State Government was hard put to continuing the institutions which had been started, but soon after with the setting up of the Planning Commission, the First Five Year Plan was formulated to continue the tempo of development generated during the Post war years and to take up development activity in other spheres.

The First Five Year Plan of Assam was conceived as a modest effort designed to remove the shortages and dis-equilibrium in the economy following the war and partition and to fulfil the needs of the most essential items like communication, agriculture, education, technical and vocational training of development in which the State was lacking.

The Second Plan of Assam sought to carry this process further, accelerate the rate of growth and to strengthen the institutional set-up designed to make the State's economy more progressive in terms of defined economic and social needs. It aimed at a balanced distribution of outlays between different sectors of development with particular emphasis on development of agriculture, irrigation, power, transport, education and health services.

During the Third Plan, while agriculture was given high priority, the requirements for accelerating the industrial development of the State as well as the development in social services, transport and power were kept in view. A special emphasis was placed on flood control. The three-tier Panchayat organisation was built up and strengthened

with a view to serving as an institution for participation of the people in the process of development.

The agricultural sector showed an upward trend in production but due to the occurrence of floods and absence of suitable flood protection measures and other factors, the expected progress was not achieved. The industrial development in the State suffered a setback as a result of the Chinese aggression and Indo-Pakistan conflict. The achievement in physical terms in other sectors was also not entirely satisfactory.

Pending the finalisation of the Fourth Five Year Plan and the determination of well-defined strategy for development, during 1966-67, 1967-68, and 1968-69, ad-hoc plans have been taken up. These annual plans were formulated broadly on the basis of assumptions and concepts as indicated in the approach to the Fourth Five Year Plan and were designed to carry forward the state of development reached at the end of the implementation of Fourth Five Year Plan.³³ The main factors that govern the level of development have been summarised as follows.

(I) A Comparatively less-developed base : Unlike some other advanced and more developed States in the country, Assam embarked on her programme of plan development with a weak and less developed economy. The State had not received due attention in regard to the development of communications and other spheres of development during pre-independence days. The partition and the disruption of the normal channels of trade had put a further strain on the economy of the State. The lower level of development at the initial stages of the start of the planning process has been one of the reasons for accentuation of the difference in level of development in the State as compared to the other parts of the country.

(II) Investment on Central Projects :— There was no investment on central industrial projects in Assam during the First and Second Plan periods. During the Third Plan the investment amounted to Rs. 32.8 crores and the total investment as provisionally assessed upto 1968 would amount to Rs.40.2 crores which forms 1.6 per cent of the total investment of the Central Government on industrial projects in various States. As compared to this, the invest-

33. *Fourth Five Year Plan of Assam (Proposals)*; Department of Planning & Development, Govt. of Assam, pp.4-5.

ment in Orissa was 17.1 per cent, in West Bengal 16.7 per cent and in Bihar 14.6 per cent.

(III) Financial Assistance by Different Financing Institutions : The Financial assistance including refinance facilities given by the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) was only 0.10 per cent of the total assistance disbursed. Similarly Assam received 2.87 per cent of total assistance given by the Agricultural Re-finance Corporation so far as against 74.64 per cent received by Andhra Pradesh and 10.17 per cent received by Tamilnadu. Assam received 2.28 per cent of the net financial assistance sanctioned by the Industrial Finance Corporation so far as against 15.11 per cent received by Tamilnadu and 18.48 per cent received by Maharashtra. The State Banking Co-operative sector did not receive finance for long from the Reserve Bank of India since 1961.

(IV) Private Investment : Investment in the Private sector is governed by a variety of complex factors. The Chinese aggression and the Indo-Pak conflict acted as deterrents to private capital investment of the State. It is estimated that capital formation in the private sector in the State was of the order of Rs. 150 crores during the first two plans and of the order of Rs. 136 crores in Third Plan period. No accurate estimate of the anticipated private investment during the Fourth Plan period can be made yet. It is clear that one of the reasons for low level of development the State is the insufficiency of private investment during the plan periods.

(V) High Price Index : The trends in the price situation in Assam have been very disquieting. The index of wholesale prices in Assam (base 1953-100) rose from 131 in 1960 to 136 in 1962, 149 in 1963, 212 in 1966 and to 247 in 1967. The high prices prevailing in the State had an obvious impact on the cost of living and neutralised the impact of rise in income. The consumer price index number series show that there was a rise of 33.3 per cent in the consumer price for the general working class during the Third Plan period. As a result of the persistent pressure of increasing prices there has been an irresistible demand for rise in wages and salaries. The Government had to accede to the demands for pay rise, the minimum wages of several categories of workers had to be revised upwards and the cost of the plan projects has gone up.

(VI) High Rate of Population Growth : As already pointed out the rate of growth of population in the State has been the highest in

the country and a greater effort and larger investment is needed to raise the level of development of the State.

(VII) Agricultural Production : The Agricultural production in the State could not stabilise and show the expected increase primarily due to the vagaries of nature. The floods affected adversely food production during the Third Five Year Plan period and the absence of suitable flood protection measures accentuated the gravity of the situation. On the other hand, drought affected certain areas in the State and lack of adequate irrigation projects resulted in a fall in agricultural production. As the agricultural sector contributes more than 48 per cent to the total state income, the adverse trends in agricultural production have affected the state per capita income and consequently the level of development.

(VIII) Shortage of Technical and Administrative Personnel : In the first two plans the State faced a serious shortage of technical and administrative personnel. In the Third Plan the difficulty had some what eased. In the Fourth Plan, the manpower difficulties have been considerably removed.

With a view to overcoming this difficulty, training facilities in various crafts have been expanded. Three Engineering Colleges, three Medical Colleges and a number of Industrial Estates have been opened in the State. Darrang has been benefitted by all these.

State Income : During the period 1951-52 to 1965-66, covering the period of the first three Five year Plans, the State income of Assam at 1960-61 prices rose from Rs.279.2 crores to Rs.450.7 crores or at the rate of 8.2 per cent per year. The Third Five year Plan sought to secure an annual growth rate of about 5.1 per cent per annum. The growth rate during 1961-66 of the State income stands around 4 per cent. The shortfall in the target was solely due to a set-back in agricultural production in 1965-66. It is of significance to observe that over the first four years of the Third Plan ending with the year 1964-65, when agricultural production was at its normal level the annual growth rate of the State's economy was of the order of 5 per cent which is very close to the desired rate envisaged in the Third Plan.

A study of the composition of the State's income during the

fifteen years of planning will show that the economy of the State has started revealing the structural changes which are quite significant and will indicate that it has reached the "take-off" stage. From 63.3 per cent in 1950-51 the income from the agricultural sector, as percentage of the total State income, has come down to 49.2 per cent in the year 1965-66. The percentage share of income from mining, manufacturing and construction has risen from 17.6 per cent in 1950-51 to 24.1 per cent in 1965-66. This high rise in percentage share is attributable mainly to the increased production of crude oil and oil refining industry. Income from factories other than tea and oil refining has also shown increase. However, compared to all-Indian standards these figures are rather low. In 1965, Assam accounted for only 1.90 per cent of the employment in factories in India. The income from factory industries in the State was still lower—only 2 per cent of the all-India figure in 1964-65. Similarly, the income from small enterprises in Assam was barely 2.8 per cent of that of all-India for 1964-65.

Per Capita Income: The disparities and low level of development of the State become more evident on an examination of the per capita income of the State. In spite of about 61 per cent increase in the State incomes (at 1960-61 price) over the period 1950-51 to 1965-66, the per capita income of Assam recorded a rise of bare 5 percent over the 15 year period. The annual rate of growth of per capita income at constant (1960-61) prices in the State comes to 0.3 per cent which is evidently very low.

The above analysis which highlights the generalities involved in the Five Year plans and ad-hoc plans reflects the limitations in achieving the economic development in Darrang district vis-a-vis Assam. The district figures relating to plan outlay and achievements not being available in full, the review has been confined only to the broad features of planning. However, main achievements in the field of agriculture, education, power, industry and health have been shown in respective chapters.

Community Development: In October 1952, 55 original pattern Development Projects were started all over India. Each of these projects covered a fairly large area. In Assam two such projects were taken up for execution. These were Cachar Community Development Project and Darrang Community Development Project.

Darrang Community Development project was inaugurated on the second October, 1952. Its headquarters were located at Majbat and it covered an area of 2010.02 square kilometres, inhabited by

nearly two lakh persons; 685 villages situated in 10 mauzas were included in this project. These mauzas were Udalguri, Harisinga, Dakua, Ambagan, Borsilajhar, Dalgaon East and Orang in Mangaldai Subdivision and Dhekiajuli, Misamari, and Barchala in Tezpur Subdivision. The entire area was delimited into three constituent Development Blocks viz., Udalguri Development Blocks covering the first five mauzas with its headquarters at Udalguri, Majbat Development Block covering the next two mauzas with its headquarters at Majbat (the project headquarters) and Dhekiajuli Development Block covering the rest of mauzas with its headquarters at Dhekiajuli. After introduction of the National Extension Service Scheme in 1953 these blocks were converted into N.E.S. Blocks. During this stage preliminary survey and extension works were done in some selected villages. Under the Pilot Project (industries) schemes, the Darrang Pilot Project was instituted in 1955 within the project area for intensive development of cottage industries. The major achievement of this project was the establishment of the Cottage Industries Training Institute at Majbat on the 15th August, 1956 to impart training in blacksmithy, carpentry, tinsmithy, tailoring and ceramic. It was subsequently taken over by the Cottage Industries Department in 1958.

Each of the N.E.S. Blocks was in charge of a Project Executive Officer who was assisted by a team of technical officers for agriculture, animal husbandry, health, co-operation, social education and engineering. In addition to this staff at the headquarters of a Block, there was for a convenient number of villages (usually 10 or more) a Gram Sevak or a multipurpose Village Level Worker. This Organisation functioned as a team and brought to the rural people the result of scientific research in agriculture and other fields, organised supplies and services needed for the development programmes, spread the Co-operative movement in the countryside, and more important than everything else, stimulated local leadership and local initiative and harnessed the unutilised energy of the people for all round development of rural life.

At the Block level, there was a Project Advisory Committee consisting of the Deputy Commissioner as Chairman and with the local heads of the various Development Departments and leading representatives of local non-officials as members. All Local members of Parliament, the State Legislature and the local Boards as well as a specified number of representatives of Rural Panchayats, Co-operative societies, leading social workers and progressive farmers were also mem-

bers of this Committee. At the village level, there was for every village or convenient group of villages, a Village Development Committee consisting of a number of local leaders informally elected by the people themselves.

These Blocks were converted to Community Development Blocks in 1956. It requires each Block to pass through three stages of development viz., pre-extension stage, stage I and stage II of intensive development and then post-stage II or normalised. Accordingly the Darrang Community Development Project became defunct and three constituent Development Blocks obtained separate entity on 1-4-57. Subsequently under the revised delimitation of Block area, the Borsilajhar mauza was transferred to Majbat Block from Udalguri Block. Thus, a new era of progress of the Community Development Programme was ushered in Darrang district. These three Blocks which were due to cross the stages as per the revised pattern at the time of separation, were normalised in 1965.

At the beginning of the Second Five Year plan two more Blocks were started in the pre-extension stage. These are Vishwanath Development Block inaugurated on 2.10.56. and Khoirabari Development Block opened on 1.10.57. With the formation of new Anchalik Panchayats under the 1959 Act, two more Blocks viz., Balipara and Dalgaon-Sialmari were started in the pre-extension stage in October 1960.

Thus at the end of the Second Five Year Plan the number of Development Blocks, co-terminus with the Anchalik Panchayats, stood at only 7, 4 in stage II, 1 in stage I and 2 in the pre-extension stage. The remaining 6 Anchalik Panchayats viz., the Chaiduar A.P., Behali A.P., Nauduar A.P., Gabharu A.P., Kalaigaon A.P., and Sipajhar A.P., not being covered by the C.D. programme operated as shadow Blocks which were converted to P.E. Blocks at the beginning of the 3rd Plan when entire district was covered by the Community Development Blocks by 8.2.63 in the following manner.

Behali A. P. and Nauduar A. P. were converted to C. D. Block in pre-extension stage on 1.4.61, and Kalaigaon A. P. and Chaiduar A. P. on 1.4.62. These Blocks were converted to stage I from 1-4-63. The Gabharu A.P. was converted to C. D. Block in pre-extension stage on 1.10.62 and converted to stage I from 1-4-64 while the Sipajhar A.P. was last covered by the C.D. Programme in pre-extension stage by 8.2.63.

Some important particulars of the Blocks including the present stages are shown in the appended Table A.

Staff Pattern : The Deputy Commissioner is entrusted with the full responsibility of the Community Development Programmes in the district. The staffing pattern of the Block at present is as follows : (1) one Block Development Officer who heads the organisational set-up of the Block, (2) Extension Officers, one each for Agriculture, Veterinary, Industry, Panchayats, Co-operatives, (3) Social Education Organisers-(male and female) (4) Medical Officer, (5) Overseer, (6) Veterinary field Assistants, (7) Gram Sevaks and Gram-Sevikas, (8) Agriculture Demonstrators, (9) Sanitary Inspector, (10) Lady Health Visitor, (11) Cinema operator and besides other ministerial staff, and Grade IV Staff.

The Block Development Officer remains in overall executive charge of the C. D. Block. He is also the Secretary of the Anchalik Panchayat, which is the planning body at unit level. The Extension Officers are entrusted with the development works in the respective fields. The Extension Officers are also put under the supervision and technical guidance of their respective Head of Departments. The Gram Sevak plays a crucial role in planning and development at the village level, as he is the main instrument of execution of the schemes.

As in other districts of Assam, the District Development Board and the District Development Committee formed in the initial stage were replaced by Subdivisional Development Boards and Sub-divisional Development Committees, which were again replaced by the Mahkuma Parishads in 1960. The post of the District Rural Development Officer was abolished simultaneously and the post of the Sub-divisional Planning Officer was created in each Sub-division in pursuance of the provision of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1959. The Sub-divisional Planning Officer acts as the Ex-officio Secretary of the Mahkuma Parishad, which is the Planning Body at the sub-divisional level. It discusses and approves the schemes and budget proposals of the different Blocks cum Anchalik Panchayats. The Sub-divisional Development Committee formed with the different District Heads of Department and Block Development Officers with the Deputy Commissioner or Sub-divisional Officer as the case may be as the chairman is responsible for formulating the development schemes and acts as the co-ordinating body.

There are also various other Committees both at the Sub-divisional and Block levels.

Government Expenditure : The average expenditure per Block

(excluding the amount spent on special programmes) worked out to Rs. 1.98 lakhs during 1969-70 as compared to Rs. 1.70 lakhs in 1968-69 and Rs. 2.08 lakhs in 1967-68. The average expenditure per Block distributed on ten major heads of expenditure during the period is as follows :—

(Rupees in thousand)

Major Heads	1967-68	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71	1971-72
1. Block Headquarters	100.9	112.5	109.8	95.7	96.2
2. Animal Husbandry and Agriculture.	32.3	19.4	20.5	12.2	16.3
3. Irrigation.	20.7	5.0	17.9	7.5	9.5
4. Reclamation.	8.3	7.0	10.0	2.5	1.6
5. Health and Rural sanitation.	8.2	3.6	7.0	18.8	5.0
6. Education.	6.5	2.2	5.2	2.2	2.8
7. Social Education.	4.9	2.7	4.1	2.5	3.1
8. Communication.	13.8	7.2	12.9	6.9	8.5
9. Rural Arts, crafts and Industries.	3.1	1.4	2.3	2.1	2.4
10. Housing.	9.3	9.0	8.1	2.1	1.0
Total	208.5	170.0	197.8	152.5	146.4

The total expenditure incurred by the Government in the Community Development programme in Assam since 1952-53 to 1969-70 stands at Rs. 3418.6 lakhs. The average people's contribution during 1969-70 stood at Rs. 1.6 thousand per Block. The following table shows the proportion of people's contribution in the execution of Special Programme in some Blocks of the district during the year (1969-70)

Name of block	Govt. expenditure in Rs.	People's contribution (Value in Rs.)
1. Behali	1,200	425
2. Gabharu	6,975	3,488
3. Kalaigaon	10,753	5,776
4. Dalgaon Sialmari	4,615	4,615
5. Majbat	5,320	5,320

A review of the achievement of the C.D. Blocks which exerts a strong influence in regulating economic trend of the country during the year 1969-70 throws some light on their functioning. Physical achievements of the Community Development programme in the district in certain fields such as agriculture, traditional crafts and industries,

co-operation, social education etc., were quite considerable. More than 6 thousand quintals of improved seeds and ten thousand quintals of fertilisers were distributed during the year 1969-70. Distribution of improved implements except iron ploughs was very negligible rather nil in certain Blocks. In case of animal husbandry no other improved animals except a few he-goats and a few birds were supplied during the year 1969-70, 12,625 numbers of animals were castrated during the year.

Rural health and sanitation also made some progress in case of construction of rural latrines, wells, sinkage pits etc., 6 primary Health Centres, 12 maternity centres and 14 family planning centres per 10 C.D. Blocks and 3 units of rural dispensaries per Block were functioning during 1969-70.

During the year 1969-70 a sum of Rs. 17,184.00 was distributed for development of traditional industries in the rural areas.

Of the Special Development Programmes, the Applied Nutrition Programme was in operation in the Gabharu Block, During 1969-70. It is one of 31 Blocks in the Plains and Hills covered by the programme. In that year, 10 villages were covered under the programme. One Mahila Samiti and one Youth Club in each village were associated with the programme. 7 poultry and 15 horticulture farms, 10 school, 50 kitchen and 5 community gardens were set up during that year. The feeding programme covered 427 child-days and under it 50 kg. fish, 30 kg. vegetables and 427 kg. eggs were supplied.

The following table shows the physical achievements in different fields under the Community Development Programme in Darrang district. It is indicative of growing hybrid consciousness amongst rural mass of district.

Items	1969-70	1971-72
1	2	3
A. Agriculture Distribution of		
Improved seeds.		
1. Paddy (Qtl.)	3,623	9,488
2. Other (do)	2,579	4,503
3. Pulses (do)	220	365
4. Oilseeds (kg.)	10,795	31,178
5. Vegetables	31,128 pkts.	904 kgs.
Distribution of		
6. Chemical fertilisers (Qtl.)	5,315	11,457

Items	1959-70	1971-72
1	2	3
7. Green manure (Qtl.)	5,866	686 kgs.
8. Iron Ploughs (Nos.)	568	351
9. Paddy Weeders (Nos.)	21	—
10. Dusters (Nos.)	134	52
11. Sprayers (do)	197	67
12. Chemical pesticides (kg.)	5,847	17,811
13. Compost Manure (Tonnes)	42,833	15,741
14. Agricultural Demonstration (Nos.)	675	852
15. Area under package programme (Hects.)	2,939	11,229
16 Land reclaimed (Hect.)	590	770
B. Animal Husbandry.		
17. He-goat (Nos.)	103	—
18. Improved birds (Nos.)	1,111	3,124
19. Animals castrated (Nos.)	12,625	12,708
20. Artificial insemination (Nos.)	935	761
21. Hatched eggs supplied (Nos.)	590	4,079
C. Village Small Industries		
value of tools distributed		
22. Blacksmithy (Rs.)	875	—
23. Carpentry (Rs.)	1,281	—
24. Traditional crafts (Rs.)	17,184	—
D. Co-operation.		
25. Primary agriculture credit	177	311
26. Primary agriculture marketing (Nos.)	11	69
27. Primary agriculture processing (Nos.)	1	6
28. Joint collective farming (Nos.)	24	54
29. Others (Nos.)	85	218
30. Moribund defunct societies (Nos.)	91	28
31. Societies under liquidation process (Nos.)	36	9
32. Area pooled to collective farming (Hectares)	229	208
33. Value of agriculture produce	9,37,493	30,50,000
E. Health and Sanitation.		
34. Rural Latrines constructed (Nos.)	318	923
35. Soakage pits constructed (Nos.)	384	264

	1	2	3
36. Smokeless chullas installed (Nos.)	191	15	
37. Wells constructed (Nos.)	138	191	
38. Wells renovated (Nos.)	157	91	
39. Hand Pumps installed (Nos.)	20	61	
40. Value of contraceptive distributed (Rs.)		208	
41. Sterilisation (Nos)	220	1096	
42. Primary Health Centres with Doctor (Nos.)	4	12	
43. Primary Health Centres without Doctor (Nos)	5	—	
F. Social Education.			
44. Literacy centres (Nos.)	67	79	
45. Adult men made literate (Nos.)	1,435	1,482	
46. Women made literate (Nos.)	578	533	
G. Communication.			
47. New Kaccha roads (kms.)	40	59	
48. Existing Kaccha roads improved (Kms.)	235	405	
49. Culverts constructed (Nos.)	5	78	
50. Culverts Repaired (Nos.)	4	58	
H. Panchayati Raj			
51. Samiti Members trained (Nos.)	5	3	
52. Gram Panchayat members trained (Nos.)	9	14	

CHAPTER-X

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

In 1833, Darrang district was formally constituted by the British rulers, with its headquarters at Mangaldai. Two years later the headquarters were shifted to Tezpur bifurcating the district into—Tezpur and Mangaldai subdivisions. The Pachnai formed the boundary between the two subdivisions. This same frame-work continues till to-day.

Initially when the district was inaugurated, a senior Assistant was in the helm of affairs of the administration of the district. Mangaldai was at first the seat of the district administration; but it yielded this position to Tezpur with the transfer of the headquarters in 1835. Since then a Junior Assistant was entrusted with all the responsibilities of administration of Mangaldai subdivision. The Senior Assistant and the Junior Assistant were assisted by a Sub Assistant, Sadar Amin and a Munsiff. In 1861, the post of the Senior or Principal Assistant was redesignated as the Deputy Commissioner, the Junior Assistant as the Assistant Commissioner, and Sub Assistant as the Extra Assistant Commissioner. These officers having been invested with the powers of a magistrate and with powers to decide civil suits, the posts of Sadar Amin and Munsiffs were abolished sometime later. The same organisational set-up continued for decades. The new Judicial cadre was constituted in 1956 and the civil suits were decided by the Munsiffs, Sub Judges and District Judges. We shall discuss separately about the Judicial set-up of the district. It may however be mentioned that since 1967 judiciary has been completely separated and since then all cases both criminal and civil are taken up by the Munsiffs and Judicial Magistrates.

At present besides the Deputy Commissioner there are one Additional Deputy Commissioner, one Sadar Subdivisional Officer, one Assistant Commissioner, two or three Extra Assistant Commissioners, one Treasury Officer, one Deputy Director of Supply, one Superintendent of Excise (State) and one Subdivisional Planning Officer, besides a host of gazetted and non-gazetted officers. Except the Deputy Commissioner and the Assistant Commissioner as a probationer, most of the Revenue Officers posted in the district or

subdivision belong to the Assam Civil Service (Class I). From time to time one or two officers of the lower rank belonging to the Assam Civil Service (Class II) designated as the Sub-Deputy Collectors are also posted as Executive Magistrates to assist the Deputy Commissioner. The Deputy Commissioner is the executive head of the district in the sphere of civil administration, development, panchayats, local bodies and co-ordination of all governmental activities in the district. In the subdivision, the Subdivisional Officer heads the team of officers including two to three Extra Assistant Commissioners and at times one or two Sub Deputy Collectors and he exercises almost all the revenue administrative powers pertaining to the subdivision without interference with the overall appellate and administrative authority of the Deputy Commissioner as the ultimate controlling and executive head of the district. One Superintendent of Supply, one Election Officer, one Subdivisional Planning Officer and a few non-gazetted officers assist the Subdivisional Officer in day-to-day administration.

The Deputy Commissioner and his office : The Deputy Commissioner is the pivot of the district administration. The functions of the Deputy Commissioner have increased tremendously during the post Independence period where the character of the administration has undergone a great change. Till the separation of the judiciary in 1964 the Deputy Commissioner tried criminal cases and heard appeals from of the lower courts in the capacity of the District Magistrate. The Deputy Commissioner still exercises the magisterial powers primarily under the exigencies of his executive functions. Under the present administrative setup the Deputy Commissioner is linked up with several departments of the State Govt., though these departments are not directly under him. Thus he is the Chairman of the Regional Transport Authority in which capacity he presides over the meetings of the Regional Transport Authority. He is the Ex-officio-Chairman of various educational institutions. The Deputy Commissioner also exercises some amount of control in investigation of criminal cases by police although the Superintendent of Police is the head of the Police organisation in the district. He is also closely associated with the developmental activities carried out by other departments such as Agriculture, Veterinary, Industry, Medical, Public Health etc. Thus the multifarious functions of the Deputy Commissioner form a sprawling net that fringes the area of operation of some department and overshadows entirely that of a few others.

The office of the Deputy Commissioner is a miniature secretariat. Important branches in the office of the Deputy Commissioner are Revenue, *Nazarat* Magistracy, Election, Land Acquisition, Excise, Passport and Citizenships, Textile, Supply, Housing, Treasury and Accounts, Development, Establishment, Registration and Confidential. The Excise, Supply, Election, and Registration are separate branches of the State Departments but the district offices of these departments are under the immediate control of the Deputy Commissioner. Various subjects that are dealt with in various branches show the multiplicity of the functions of the Deputy Commissioner.

The Revenue Branch is headed by a Revenue *Shirastadar* who is a senior member of the ministerial staff. There is one Principal Revenue Assistant who is the member of the Assam Civil Service (I). He assists the Deputy Commissioner in the disposal of the revenue matters. The Additional Deputy Commissioner enjoys equal and same revenue power as the Deputy Commissioner in the district. Revenue Branch is sub-divided into various other branches such as Land Ceiling, *Bakijai* and land sale, *Touzi* Settlement, Encroachment, Relief, Fisheries, Grazing Reserves etc. The *Bakijai* Branch deals with the recovery of the loans and advances and various other arrears of Government dues. *Touzi* branch deals primarily with the collection of revenue through *Mauzadars*. The encroachment branch deals with eviction of the encroachers from Government lands, reserves etc. The main function of the Relief Branch is to make necessary arrangements for relief in the event of any natural calamity in any part of the district and to maintain proper accounts thereof. The land Ceiling branch deals with the implementation of the Land Ceiling Act. The Land Acquisition branch deals with acquisition and requisition of land for public purposes. Besides these, the implementation of other land reform measures is processed through the Revenue Branch of the office of the Deputy Commissioner. The branch under the Registrar *Kanango* who is a member of the ministerial staff maintains permanently the records of land settlements.

Other important branch of the office of the Deputy Commissioner is the *Nazarat* headed by a member of the ministerial staff designated as *Nazir* and assisted by one or two Assistant *Nazirs*. The *Nazir* is the cashier of the office of the Deputy Commissioner. The *Nazir* serves all processes issued from various revenue courts located in the office of the Deputy Commissioner through a group

of peons designated as *Jarikarak* or process servers. The other functions of the *Nazir* is to maintain the accounts of stores and receipts of the Circuit House and the Dak Bungalow under the Deputy Commissioner and to assist the revenue officers in execution of the orders of eviction passed by the Deputy Commissioner or some other revenue officer subordinate to him.

The Magistracy branch under the Deputy Commissioner deals with issue of arms licences, matters relating to law and order situation in the district, disposal of criminal cases in the various courts of the Magistrates, matters relating to the compensation under Workmen's Compensation Act etc. Till some years back the Treasury was entrusted to some Magistrate who in addition to trying cases had to do all the works of the Treasury. The Treasury Officer of the Finance and Accounts Service has been appointed recently. The Treasury not only deals with all Government bills and vouchers but also maintains a huge stock of various kinds of stamps which are distributed among various agencies.

The Deputy Commissioner and the Additional Deputy Commissioner exercise the concurrent powers as the District Registrar. There are two Sub-Registrars in the district, one at Tezpur and the other at Mangaldai. They are entrusted with the task of registration of documents. The Sub-Registrars are to act under the control of their respective Deputy Commissioner or Subdivisional Officer, but the Registration Department of the Government of Assam regulates their transfer and promotion etc.

Other offices under the Deputy Commissioner :- The Supply branch is headed by the Deputy Director of Supply in the district. Formerly the officers of this Department belonged to Supply Department; at present one A.C.S.I. in the rank of the Addl. D.C. is placed as the Special Officer, Supply to help the D.C. in the supply matters of the district. The ministerial staff of this branch is of the amalgamated establishment of the Deputy Commissioner. The Deputy Commissioner exercises control over the supply matters through the officers of the Supply Department. When the Defence of India Rules were in force, the Deputy Commissioner was empowered to fix prices of essential commodities and to control the distribution. This power is exercised in some cases till now under various laws in force at the time,

The Election Branch is headed by an Election Officer who belongs to the Election Department. It is however, an important responsibility of the Deputy Commissioner to conduct election to the State

Assemblies and the Parliament assisted by the Election Officer and other officers.

The Housing branch under the Deputy Commissioner deals with applications for housing loans. The Textile branch deals with the issue of permits to textile dealers and the enforcement of the Government orders relating to sale and distribution of the textile goods in the district. The Development Office headed by the Sub-Divisional Planning Officer deals with the Community Development Blocks. The District Information and the Public Relations Officer is to act under the control of the Deputy Commissioner apart from that of his own Department.

The office of the Subdivisional Officer is largely a prototype of the office of the Deputy Commissioner. However, the Subdivisional officer is not the final authority in respect of many revenue and miscellaneous matters and the responsibility of the administration of the district devolves on the Deputy Commissioner. In the Subdivisional headquarter, there is no Deputy Director of Supply but only one Superintendent of Supply who assists the Subdivisional officer in supply matters.

The district is divided into six revenue circles. One Sub-Deputy Collector is posted in each revenue circle. He is a revenue officer who is invested with requisite powers to dispose of important revenue matters on behalf of the Deputy Commissioner. Where the pressure of work is heavy the Sub-Deputy Collector who remains in charge of the revenue circle is assisted by one more Sub-Deputy Collector. When these officers are entrusted with the works connected with the Settlement Operation that takes place usually after a period of thirty years, they are designated as Assistant Settlement Officers whose services are placed under the disposal of the Settlement Officer of the district. The Sub-Deputy Collectors are subordinate to their respective Subdivisional Officer and the Deputy Commissioner.

In each Development Block there is one Block Development Officer who is a member of the Assam Civil Service (Class II). The B.D.O. is directly under the control of the Deputy Commissioner. He is also the Ex-officio Secretary of the Anchalik Panchayat.

Administration of the Transferred Area :— There is one Transferred Area in the district as mentioned in the first chapter. The Assistant Political Officer posted at Charduar, is responsible for the administration of the Transferred Area. He is to act under

the control of the Deputy Commissioner who acts as the Political Officer of the Transferred Area. Under the Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulation, 1945, the Assistant Political Officer and the Political Officer are authorised to try criminal cases and also decide the civil suits. In dispensing with the justice, these officers are to be guided more by the customary rules than by the legal technicalities. Engaging of lawyers by the litigants is usually disfavoured. Petty civil suits are also decided by the village authorities, by conciliation. This arrangement has been made to give some amount of protection to the tribal people of the area which would otherwise have been a veritable ground of exploitation by the shrewd business people.

A few words may be put forth regarding the administration of civil Justice in this area. Civil Justice is administered by the Political Officer, the Assistant Political Officer, and by the village authorities. The Political Officer may try suit of any value. The Assistant Political Officer may try suits not exceeding Rs. 1,000 in value. The powers and functions of the Deputy Commissioner, Darrang are the same as those of the Deputy Commissioners of other plains districts of Assam. But the Deputy Commissioner of other districts of Assam except Lakhimpur and Dibrugarh do not exercise any power as Political Officer, whereas the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang does so as the political officers of the Transferred (State) Area within his jurisdiction. This imposes an additional responsibility upon the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang with regard to the general administration of the district.

Information and Public Relations Department : Recently, the name of the Department has been changed from Information and Publicity Department to that of Information and Public Relations Department.

The District Information and Public Relations Officers, Darrang is the head of the Department of Public Relation, office at the district level. But he does not possess full controlling power over the Subdivisional Information and Public Relations Officer at Mangaldai. Director of Information and Public Relations Assam, Gauhati is the head of the Department.

The District Information and Public Relations Officer, and the Sub-divisional Information and Public Relations Officers issue press releases on Governmental activities and act as press liaison officers

of the Government in the Tezpur and Mangaldai Sub-division respectively. They gather information on developmental activities in the Blocks and other Departments and focus public attention on these activities by issuing features, articles, to the press. Attached to the District Information and Public Relations Officer, there is a District Information Centre which gives useful information to those who seek it.

Moreover, during the time of Chinese aggression, this Department tried to channelise all media of publicity and propaganda such as oral, written, visual and audiovisual through the district and Sub-divisional Officers respectively. As regards oral publicity, the District and Sub-divisional Information Officers arranged public meetings, group discussions etc., on subjects like civil defence, increased production of food etc. During the emergency, with a view to broadcast widely All India Radio news and other important announcements, fixed loud speaker system has been installed in Tezpur. All India Radio news and other announcements are broadcast in the town with the help of the loud speakers fixed in various parts of the town. Arrangements for occasional cinema show, holding of exhibition etc., are also regarded as important functions of the Department. The other functions of the District Public Relations Officer include the effective distribution of the publicity materials relating to Five Year Plans, making arrangements for press conferences etc.

The Rural Broadcasting system in the village and in the suburbs of the town is managed by the District Information and Public Relations Officer. The Community radio sets are installed in the village Libraries and *sanghas* by this Department to popularise the Governmental and other nation developing activities in the villages. Generally 25% of the total price of the radio is borne by the Honorary Keepers of the radio and the rest is being paid by the Government. These radios are repaired when it goes out of order by the technician of the Department at Tezpur free of cost.

The general administration of the district has expanded very fast with the expansion of the functions of the Government. Numerous departments and offices have sprung up commensurating the expansion of activities of the Government. The organisational pattern of some of the important departments such as Education, Agriculture, Police, Co-operative, Veterinary, Forest, Industries and the Judiciary has been discussed in detail in relevant chapters. However,

the functions of the Information and Public Relations Department have been briefly narrated here,

List of Officers (State and Central Government) at the district, subdivisional and divisional level in Darrang district.

A. District/Subdivisional Heads of Departments (State Government.)

1. Deputy Commissioner, Darrang, Tezpur.
2. Superintendent of Excise, Darrang, Tezpur.
3. Deputy Director/Special Officer, Supply, Darrang, Tezpur.
4. Assistant Development Commissioner, Darrang, Tezpur.
5. Superintendent of Police, Darrang, Tezpur.
6. Inspector of Schools, Northern Assam Circle, Tezpur.
7. Superintendent of Sericulture, Darrang, Tezpur.
8. Assistant Director of Cottage Industries/District officer Industries Darrang, Tezpur.
9. District Agriculture Officer, Darrang, Tezpur.
10. District Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Officer, Darrang, Tezpur.
11. District Transport Officer, Darrang, Tezpur.
12. Deputy Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Darrang, Tezpur.
13. District Health Officer, Darrang, Tezpur.
14. Employment Officer, Darrang, Tezpur.
15. District Information and Public Relations Officer, Darrang, Tezpur.
16. District Labour Officer, Darrang, Tezpur.
17. Superintendent of Fisheries, Darrang, Tezpur.
18. District Social Welfare and Probation Officer, Darrang, Tezpur.
19. District Statistical Officer, Darrang, Tezpur.
20. Unit Officer, National Malaria Eradication Programme, Darrang, Tezpur.
21. Inspector of Weights and Measures Tezpur.
22. Superintendent of Weaving, Darrang, Tezpur.
23. Subdivisional Officer (Civil) Mangaldai.
24. Subdivisional Planning Officer, Tezpur.
25. Subdivisional Planning Officer, Mangaldai.
27. Assistant Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Tezpur.
27. Assistant Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Mangaldai.
28. Subdivisional Information and Public Relations Officer, Mangaldai.
29. Superintendent of Taxes, Tezpur.

30. Superintendent of Taxes, Mangaldai.
31. Election Officer, Tezpur.
32. Election Officer, Mangaldai.
33. Assistant Town Planner, Town and Country Planning Organisation, Tezpur.
34. Assistant Political Officer, Charduar.
35. Superintendent of Mental Hospital, Tezpur
36. Subdivisional Agriculture Officer, Mangaldai.
37. Subdivisional Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Officer, Mangaldai.
38. Deputy Inspector of Schools, Mangaldai.
39. Deputy Superintendent of Police, Mangaldai.
40. Fishery Officer, Mangaldai.

B. Zonal/Divisional level Officers (State Government).

41. Divisional Forest Officer, Darrang Forest Division, Tezpur.
42. Superintending Engineer, P.W.D (R & B) Northern Assam Circle, Tezpur.
43. Superintending Engineer, P.W.D (National Highway Conversion Programme) Northern Assam Circle, Tezpur.
44. Executive Engineer, P. W.D (R & B) Tezpur Division, Tezpur
45. Executive Engineer, P.W.D (R & B), Charali Division, Charali
46. Executive Engineer, P.W.D (R & B) Mangaldai Division, Mangaldai.
47. Executive Engineer, Tezpur Mechanical Division, Tezpur.
48. Executive Engineer, E & D Tezpur Division, Tezpur.
49. Executive Engineer, E & D., Mangaldai Division, Mangaldai.
50. Executive Engineer, P. W. D., N. T. Road Division, Mangaldai.
51. Executive Engineer, P. W. D., N. T. Road Division, Tezpur.

C. Heads of Central Government Offices in Darrang.

52. Income Tax Officer, Darrang, Tezpur.
53. Superintendent of Central Excise and Land Customs, Darrang Tezpur.
54. Superintendent of Post Offices, Central Assam Division, Tezpur.
55. Field Publicity Officer, Darrang, Tezpur.
56. District Manager, Food Corporation of India, Tezpur.
57. Branch Manager, Life Insurance Corporation of India, Tezpur.

It may be noted that details of organisational set-up and administration of most of the departments in the district are given in chapter XIII and in other relevant Chapters. For smooth running of administration of departments there are Subdivisional Officers in most cases under district heads. Some departments, however, have posted Subdivisional Officers of equal status in order to give viability to departmental procedure and to take prompt action in departmental matters.

In addition to the above, local bodies, banks, corporations etc., have also Officers in the district. Accounts of these are given in relevant chapters. Both public and Governmental activities are expanding in all fields and new offices are in the offing.

CHAPTER-XI

LAND REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

(a) Land Revenue Administration :

(i) History of land revenue administration and management : We have mentioned in Chapter II that a part of Darrang district was ruled by the Ahoms from early sixteenth century. The western part of the district virtually came under their control about one hundred years later when the Koch became the protectorate of the Ahoms. The Koch kings of Darrang had a unique system of revenue administration of their own. The subjugated Koch kings of Darrang are believed to have patterned their revenue administration after that of the Ahoms. "Darrang was surveyed once in 1707 by an Ahom officer named Dhaniram. A new rent-roll of the revenues of Darrang was drawn up again during the reign of Rudra Singha's successor Siva Singha (1714-44). The higher rates of assessment which these successive surveys and settlement operations introduced told very heavily upon the taxpaying power of the poor subjects of Darrang.¹" Prior to that, in 1685 also some areas of Darrang were surveyed under the orders of the Ahom king Godadhar Sinha.

The Ahom system of land revenue which prevailed in the district was based on the *paik* system. According to the laws of the country, the land and the subjects were equally the property of the State and therefore not only the houses and the lands, but the cultivators also were assessed.² Apart from the grants made to the *satras* temples and learned people, all other lands belonged to the Ahom king who allowed them to be cultivated by *paiks*. "With the exception of the nobles, priests and persons of high caste and those engaged in replaceable occupation, the whole adult population were liable to render service to the State as labourers and soldiers. They were known as *paiks*."³ The entire population was divided into several *khels* of 1,000 to 5,000 persons and each *khel* was divided into

gots which consisted of 3 or 4 *paiks*. Each *paik* of a *got* was called upon to serve in turn for the State. While so employed in king's service, the remaining *paiks* of that *got* were to maintain his family so long as he was in the State service. In return each *paik* was allowed 8 *abighs* (about 1.07 hectares) of land known as *guamati*, free of rent. In addition, he was allowed a piece of land for his house and garden, which was called *basti*; for which he was assessed Rs. 1.00 annually as house tax or poll tax except in Darrang where a hearth tax of the same amount was levied upon each family using a separate cooking place. Further, he could cultivate waste land subject to payment of one or two rupees per *pura* (about 0.535 hectares) until required by the State.

During the Ahom administration two distinct categories of land rights were in existence—one was absolute proprietary rights of *Lakhirajdars* who enjoyed land free of revenue and the other was some kind of occupancy rights of *paiks*, who were the actual cultivators of land.

The *paiks* who were not in service of the State had to pay higher rate of tax i.e. Rs. 2.00 per *pura*. They were known as *chamuaders*. The non-cultivating section, of the community paid a higher rate of poll tax, while the *pam* cultivators paid a tax on their plough. Some royal officers enjoyed some land as personal estates. The *posa* system was also introduced during Ahom days in order to protect the people in the *Duar* areas in the northern frontier from the onslaughts of the hill-tribes like the Charduar Bhutias, Daflas, etc. According to this system, the *paiks* of the *duar* areas had to pay annually a fixed quota of goods in kind to each of the hill-tribes for which remission of revenue due to the Ahom Govt. was granted to these *paiks* in proportion to the amount of *posa*. Thus the Ahom Govt. admitted the right of the hill-tribes to claim their shares of the produce in the fertile *duar* areas. The *paik* system as well as the *posa* system were the two special features of the Ahom administration. During the Ahom rule, the Bhutan *duars* (Buriguma, Khilling, Kariapara etc. in the Darrang district) were handed over to the Bhutias according to a treaty concluded between government of Punakha and the Ahoms. As per terms of this treaty the Bhutias had to pay annual tributes to the Ahoms.

The types of tenure prevalent under the Ahom kings were *Khiraj* and *Lakhiraj* which included *Brahmottar*, *Debottar*, and *Dharmottar* lands. For the purpose of revenue administration various categories of offi-

1. S.K. Bhuyan : *Anglo Assamese Relations*, Gauhati, 1949, p.269.

2. E. A. Gait : *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1967 ; P.254.

3. Ibid page p249.

crs such as, *Kakati*, *Baruah*, *Saikia*, *Hazarika*, *Rajkhows*, *Saharias*, *Phukans* etc. were appointed by the Ahom king. The Koch kings of Darrang had to place 600 *paiks* under the disposal of the Barphukan, the Ahom Viceroy of Western Assam. British rulers brought about many important changes in the revenue administration of all the districts of Assam including Darrang. In 1834, by a resolution of the Government of India, the Commissioner of Assam was put under the control of the Sadar Board of Revenue in respect of the revenue matters. Act. 11 of 1835 placed all functionaries in the districts of lower Assam under the control and supervision of the Board of Revenue and declared that such superintendence should be exercised in conformity with the instruction which the functionaries might receive from the Government of Bengal. From 1837 to 1860 Assam was administered under a code of rules known as the Assam Code of 1837, which were extracts from the Bengal Regulations. It had no specific provision for revenue administration in Assam and directed the officers to conform to the provisions of the Bengal Regulations as far as circumstances of the provision would permit. Section XII of the Assam Code directed all officers to refer all doubtful questions of a fiscal nature to the Board of Revenue. In 1860-61 the Assam Code was repealed and the officers administered revenue matters according to the spirit of the Regulation. In 1870 after much discussions with the Board of Revenue and the Commissioner of Assam the rules of 1870 were passed. Decennial Settlement Rules of 1883 had done away with the *mauzadars* and introduced the *tahsildar* system which brought about a new class of officers. The *tahsildari* system was again replaced by the *mauzadari* system after 1903 in an amended form. Revenue circles were created under Sub-Deputy Collectors, a new class of revenue officers. The Province of Assam was placed under a Chief Commissioner in 1874. This officer wielded enormous power in revenue matters. The Assam Land and Revenue Regulation was passed in 1886.

This Regulation forms the basis of the revenue administration of Assam till today. Although it has been amended partly and supplemented from time to time, it continues to be the fountain-head of revenue law in Assam. After the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation was passed, steps were taken to frame and issue rules under its various provisions in respect of settlements, allotment of grazing grounds, surveys, registration, arrears of revenue and its mode of recovery, partition and union of estates, procedure of serving process and process fees, rights of entry by mining licences on settled land.

Chapter X dealing with formation of Tribal Belts was added in 1947.

Types of estates : Soon after annexation of Assam, in attempts to realise land revenue from the proprietors of vast revenue-free estates granted by the former rulers of Assam. Mr. Scott assessed the first half of these estates at $\frac{1}{3}$ rd. and the second half at $\frac{1}{2}$ and the regular *Khiraj* rate. But The proprietors of these estates objected. Subsequently the Government ordered an enquiry as regards the rights and privileges enjoyed by the holders of these estates. Major Jenkins, the then Commissioner who completed the enquiry in 1861 came to the conclusion that the *Debottar* (land grants made in honour of the deity) should be rent-free. This class of land is known as the *Lakhiraj* (revenue-free) estates. Two other types of land, the *Dharmottar* (land dedicated for religious purposes) and *Brahmottar* (land grants made to the priests) were subjected to half the ordinary rates of revenue. This category of land came to be known as *Nisf-khiraj* or half revenue paying estates. In 1879, the Government of India declared the *Nisf-khiraj* lands as heritable and transferable, and recognised these estates as half revenue paying ones.

The Darrang Raj families enjoy a special class of *Nisf-khiraj* estates. These lands do not come under any of the three categories of land, i.e. *Debottar*, *Dharmottar*, and *Brahmottar*. In consideration of the status held by the descendants of the former Koch kings, the cultivated portion of their lands were settled with Darrang Raj families at half the ordinary assessment, leaving the waste land portion revenue-free. On alienation, these lands become liable to full assessment at full *khiraj* rates.

There are some temple lands in Darrang owned by Auniati *Gosain* and Dakhinpat *Gosain*, who enjoyed these lands revenue-free from the Ahom kings. The Daflas who descended on the plains from the northern hills used to carry on raids on the people inhabiting these tracts. Ultimately the *Gosains* paid the Daflas certain amount at the rate of 6 *pies* per *bigha* of all cultivated land, not as revenue, but to secure peace. The British Government paid some amount to the Daflas in lieu of the amount they collected from the *Gosains* who in turn made the payment to the British Government. These estates are known as 6-*pie Lakhiraj* estates. The fourth class of estate is known as *Khiraj* or full revenue paying lands held by the land owners directly from the government under a periodic or an annual lease.

By enacting the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1886, the British government recognised and defined four categories of

rights enjoyed by the owners of all settled lands. These are as follows :—

1. The rights of proprietors, land holders and settlement holders other than land holders and other rights acquired in the manner provided under the Regulation.
2. Rights legally derived from any rights mentioned under 1.
3. Rights acquired under sections 26 and 27 of the Indian Limitation Act.
4. Rights acquired by tenants under Rent Laws in force in the province.

These four categories of land rights are still enjoyed by different categories of land owners in the state, with the exception that the proprietorial rights have been curtailed to a great extent with the enactment of various land laws during the last two decades.

The general character of all settlements of temporarily settled estates of Darrang is described as *rayatwari* in the sense that the middlemen between the government and the settlement holders are not legally recognised. This is the system that was introduced by British authorities. In practice, however, the actual cultivators had to take land on lease or on *Adhi* terms from the *Lakhirajdars*, *Nisf-khirajdars*, or even from the *khirajdars* enjoying large estates. Thus subletting was rampant and protection against the arbitrary eviction or enhancement of revenue by the land owners was very meagre. After Independence, various laws have been enacted giving protection to the cultivators, reducing the area of the estates and acquiring land held by the *Lakhirajdars*.

(b) History of revenue assessment and land in the district : At first the British Government adopted the traditional system of revenue administration in the district. The only alteration was the imposition of a poll-tax of Rs. 3.00 per *paik* in lieu of personal service to the State. The system of revenue collection by the old staff of *khel* officials soon proved unsatisfactory and therefore was changed; the *paik* system was abolished and their lands were measured and assessed and settled annually. The districts were divided into *mauzas* or *mahals* in charge of officers called *Choudhuries*, *Mauzadars*, *Bishayas*, *Patgiris* or *Kakatis* who collected the revenue in their respective areas on commission basis. However, this system also bred discontentment among the people as they were harassed

by the Commission-agents. At the same time, three-fifths of the collections were retained by the commission-agents. This system was replaced by the *Mauzadari* system of collection in 1835. The *mauzas* were settled with the *Choudhuries* or *Mauzadars* who took upon themselves all risks of loss; but enjoyed the additional rents which occurred from extended cultivation. At the early stages of land revenue assessment the lands were divided into three main classes, viz., (i) *basti* or *bari*, or homestead; (ii) *rupit* or low rice land; and (iii) *faringati* or high lands.

The rates varied from time to time; but prior to 1865 it did not exceed 6 annas (37 paise) per *biga* for *rupit* and 4 annas and 6 pies (30 paise) for other kinds of land. In that year Lieutenant Colonel Hopkinson, the Commissioner of Assam proposed to raise the *biga* rates to Re. 1.00 for *basti*, 10 annas (62 paise) for *rupit* and 8 annas (50 paise) for other lands without any discriminations of class or value. "Colonel Hopkinson was of opinion that the existing assessment was ridiculously low, and in support of his opinion pointed out that in 1864-65 the receipts from opium were about 4 lakhs of rupees more than the total land revenue of his division, an excess which in those days represented a difference of about 40 per cent. The new assessment was successfully introduced in 1868-69, and in spite of the enormous enhancement the revenue was collected without difficulty"³

From 1861 to 1867 there was considerable discussion at the highest level of the Bengal Government who controlled the affairs of Assam about enhancement of land revenue and assignment of permanent, heritable and transferable rights to the cultivators. Finally, the following principles were formulated by the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal. (1) The fields were to be measured; (2) settlement was to be carried on ordinarily for ten years with the occupant cultivators; (3) such settlement was to be regarded as permanent, heritable and transferable holding; (4) land brought under cultivation newly was to be given on annual lease, and (5) the land revenue was to be collected by *mauzadars* on commission basis. The rate of revenue as assessed by Hopkinson was to continue upto 31st March, 1893.

On the basis of the above principles the Settlement Rules were framed by the Bengal Government in 1870 and these rules came into

4. B.C. Allen ; *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol. V. Darrang, Allahabad, 1905. P. 189-190.

force immediately. According to the new rules, the Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Extra Assistant Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners, *mauzadars* and *mandals* were regarded as revenue officers who were empowered with necessary powers to implement the provisions of the aforesaid rules. Further, the district was divided into several *mauzas* and one *mauzadar* was appointed for each *mauza*. Each *mauza* was sub-divided into villages and each village was placed under a *mandal* who was a *mauzadar's* assistant. The *mandals* correspond to the Patwaris of Upper India. The *mauzadar* was to take actual measurement of the land prior to settlement and to record its result in the field register (*chitha*) from which *Khatian* and *jamabandi* were prepared. Although the *mauzas* were created in the district much earlier, yet, from this time the *mauzadari* system took a concrete shape.

All the cultivable lands were classified into two groups— (a) fixed cultivation and (b) fluctuating cultivation. The *rupit* and *basti* lands were brought under the former and high paddy lands and the lands where mustard and pulses were grown were grouped under fluctuating cultivation. Under the Settlement Rules of 1870, the Settlement was to be completed by issue of a *patta* or lease to a person and taking from him a *kabuliyat*, or acceptance in the prescribed form. Holdings so settled were declared to be heritable and transferable. The landholders were allowed the option to relinquish the land thus settled on 3 months' notice. In case of "settled assessment", or lands held permanently, the cultivator was allowed the option of taking the land for any period not exceeding three years. Lands, so settled are known as *khiraj* lands, as against *lakhiraj* lands which were held permanently.

Lease for any period not exceeding 10 years in case of fixed cultivation was allowed. In case of fluctuating cultivation, the Settlement Rules allowed issue of annual lease only and if the government required such land for public utility, it could take back the land from the possessors without paying any compensation except for the loss, if any, of crops and houses on it.

Periodic settlement, however, did not find favour with Colonel Hopkinson, the then Commissioner of Assam and majority of Deputy Commissioners and as such the Bengal Government took no decision on it. The Commissioner was authorised to apply his own discretion in enforcing long term settlements. Till the creation of the Chief Commissionership in Assam in 1874, there were very few long term settlements.

Another attempt was made in 1883 to introduce a long term settlement of more or less permanently held *khiraj* lands under the Decennial Settlement Rules of 1883. Accordingly, the ten years, lease was prescribed which conferred on the holder permanent, heritable and transferable rights over the land. Later, the enforcement of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation in 1886, followed by enforcement of a new set of Settlement Rules, in 1887, in supersession of the Settlement Rules of 1870, gave a concrete shape to the land revenue administration.

The decennial settlements were due to end in the year 1893, and therefore new re-assessment and re-settlement operation had to be taken up. For this purpose a new set of Settlement Rules were framed and published in 1892. Under these Rules the demand for land was the sole criterion of the assessment of value of the land and the rate of revenue,

The excellent village maps prepared by the cadastral survey and settlement party in the above settlement afforded to bring out a very fair idea as to where the land was most valuable. The Director of Land Records classified the village lands in the cadastrally surveyed area into first, second and third class villages on the basis of demand for land in each village, density of population, the proportion of the settled area of the village to its total area and the proportion of fluctuation to total cultivation. Provisional rates of assessment on different descriptions of land in each class of village, were published and the District Officers were directed to make a thorough local enquiry into the circumstances of their local areas. The District Officers were further called upon to suggest modifications in respect of the rates or classification, where necessary.

During the settlement operation of 1893-94, the threefold division of land, as adopted in the earlier settlements was retained. Instead of imposing the same rate on all lands of the same class throughout the district, the villages were divided into four grades and the rates assessed on different classes of land were as follows :—

Rates assessed per bigha.

Class	Basti		Rupit		Faringati	
	Rs.	a.	Rs.	a.	Rs.	a.
1st class	1	6	1	0	0	12
2nd class	1	4	0	14	0	10
3rd class	1	2	0	12	0	9
4th class	1	0	0	10	0	8

1 anna=6 paise

The enquiry for the purpose of ascertaining the rates of assessment and value of the land on the basis of the list furnished by the Director of Land Records was completed in one cold season, and in its results, scientific accuracy was considered to be unnecessary, as the Government had no desire to assess upto its fair share of the value of the produce of the soil. It was taken for granted that the worst lands even were capable of bearing the assessment imposed.

On expiry of the term of decennial settlement of 1893-94, a settlement operation was carried out by Mr. J. McSwiney, I. C. S in 1905, and was completed in 1909. The classification scheme adopted in this settlement followed fairly closely that of Kamrup district. Flooded (*banotia*) and irrigated (*dongtali*) qualification for *khermatali* were dropped. The better soils (clayey and loamy) were called *athalua* or *maulelia* and the worst *kathua* or *baliseria*. *Basti* classes were reduced to three categories as in Sibsagar district. Thus the total number of classes was 25, as shown below :-

Main class	Sub-class		
<i>Basti</i> —	<i>bhal, madhyam</i>	and <i>naram</i>	3 classes
<i>Athalua</i> —	} × { <i>Bardhantali</i> or <i>Salitali</i> <i>Lahitali</i> }	} × { <i>Sadharan</i> <i>Dongtali</i> <i>Banotia</i> }	... 12 „
<i>Baliseria</i>			
<i>Athalua</i>	} × { <i>Kharmatali</i> or <i>Pharmatali</i> }	} × { <i>Sadharan</i> <i>Dongtali</i> }	... 4 „
<i>Baliseria</i>			
<i>Athalua</i>	} × <i>Ahutali</i>	...	... 1 „
<i>Baliseria</i>			
<i>Baotali</i>	} × { <i>Sadharan</i> <i>Banotia</i> }	...	... 2 „
<i>Jalatak</i>	—	...	... 1 „
<i>Faringati</i>	—	...	... 1 „

During the settlement operation of 1905-09, 7,06,122 *bighas* (about 93,466 hectares) of *khiraj* estates and 38,603 *bighas* (about 4,495 hectares) in *nisf-khiraj* estates were settled in the district. Unsettled lands in surveyed villages were to a certain extent classed, but

9,55,038 *bighas* (about 1,27,765 hectares) out of 12,00,027 *bighas*, (about 1,60,540 hectares) were left unclassified. The classification of the fluctuating area was made into *basti*, *rupit* and *faringati* as usual ; 27,135 *bighas* (about 3,630 hectares) were classed as *khiraj* lands and 77,938 *bighas* (about 10,427 hectares) were left unsettled and unclassified. The result of the assessment was the increase in revenue from the settled *khiraj* area from Rs. 6,06,769 to Rs. 6,07,361 or by 0.01 per cent. The disparity between the two subdivisions, in respect of increase in revenue was quite glaring. Mangaldai suffered a heavy enhancement in 1893 and had subsequently suffered severely both from *kalazar* and from the earthquake. The assessment on the attested *khiraj* area here was reduced from Rs. 3,08,419 to Rs. 2,89,884 or by 6.02 per cent. The land revenue in Tezpur subdivision was not so heavily enhanced in 1893, nor did this subdivision suffer from *kalazar* and the earthquake. Its *khiraj* revenue was enhanced from Rs. 2,98,350 to Rs. 3,17,527 or by 6.43 per cent *nisfkhiraj* revenue was reduced from Rs. 17,773 to Rs. 16,622 or by 6.47 per cent. The settlement was for 20 years from the 1st April, 1909 ; land taken up after settlement was to be liable to reclassification in 11th year of the settlement period.

The following table gives the result of this settlement regarding *khiraj* area only.

District	Description	Previous (in rupees)	Rate per settled bigha (in annas)	New Revenue (in rupees)	Rate per settled bigha (in annas)	Percentage increased.
Darrang	Established	Rs. 6,06,769	13.42	6,07,361	13.39	0.10
	Fluctuating	—	10.33	—	—	—

1 anna=6 paisa

The rate of assessment on lands held under periodic lease for special cultivation of tea was also revised and fixed at 8 *annas* (50 paisa) per *bigha* in Mangaldai subdivision and 10 *annas* (62 paisa) per *bigha* in Tezpur subdivision.

During the period from 1912-1923, various factors such as the increase of the prices of agricultural products, the expansion of the tea industry, as well as the growth of the working population following the influx of the Eastern Bengal immigrants since 1915 accelerated the rate of economic development of the district. As a result

the area under cultivation began to increase. The immigrants brought large areas of fluctuating cultivation under paddy and jute cultivation in the Mangaldai subdivision.

The next resettlement operation in the district was taken up in 1927 and it continued till 1933. In this settlement, the term of resettlement was extended from 20 years to 30 years. The important stages of this resettlement were preliminary record writing, classification of land, record attestation, revenue attestation and offer of settlement. In assessing the land revenue, the productivity of the agricultural land was taken into consideration. The land was classified into 11 main classes adding *beperua* or trade site into the original list of 10 and 25 sub-classes of the earlier settlement operation was maintained abolishing *ahutali* including a new rupit class known as *baotali* having the same characteristics with *faringati*. Trade sites were differently evaluated and assessed.

In the fluctuating area the existing classifications of *basti* and *faringati* were retained. A fourth class namely *baotali* was added to cover the permanent bao-growing lands. The table in Appendix A shows the *bigha* rate for each class of land in the assessment group.

The unit incidence of revenue per settled *bigha* of *ahiraj* lands for ordinary cultivation fixed at resettlement operation of 1927-33 in the established villages of the district as a whole was 13.75 annas* against 13.31 annas in the previous resettlement. In Tezpur subdivision it was 14.22 annas against 13.84 annas and in Mangaldai subdivision it was 13.13 annas against 12.75 annas in the earlier resettlement operation. At this rate of assessment, the increase in revenue in the different groups of villages varied from 10.97 to 24.34 per cent. However, the per *bigha* incidence came to decrease to 11.58 annas as a whole in the preceding year of the last resettlement for *ahiraj* lands for ordinary cultivation. The total revenue of the district for *ahiraj* land (both established) and fluctuating and *nisf-Khiraj* estates for ordinary cultivation in surveyed villages amounted to Rs. 1,243,618. The rate of assessment slightly increased during this resettlement. This increase in revenue was mainly due to accurate survey and proper classification as well as increase in the settled areas. The heavy influx of immigration led to the opening up of the vast areas of fallow land for cultivation.

* One anna is equal to six nayapaise.

The *nisf-khiraj* estates were assessed on the same principles of *khiraj* lands at half rates, excluding the waste lands. Alienated areas of such estates held by the Darrang Rajas were liable to full assessment on cultivated portions, the waste being assessed at one-fourth of the *khiraj* rates of their class. *nisf-khiraj* estates covered 91,000 *bighas* (about 12,174 hectares) and were situated mostly in Mangaldai subdivision. The largest *nisf-khiraj* estate belonged to the Darrang Raj family. The results of assessment of *khiraj* and *nisf-khiraj* lands are shown below :—

Group	Existing revenue of attested area before 1927-31 settlement (in Rs.)			Revised revenue of attested area after 1927-31 Settlement (in Rs.)			Percentage+or-
	khiraj	Nisf-Khiraj	Total	Khiraj	Nisf-khiraj	Total	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Total for the District	10,29,839	16,353	10,46,193	12,22,510	21,108	12,43,618	+ 18.87

Non-cadastral *khiraj* lands were assessed at the existing rate of 9 annas (56 paisa) per *bigha* in Tezpur subdivision and 8 annas (50 paisa) per *bigha* in Mangaldai subdivision except in Dalgaon mazua and Chapari groups where the lands were assessed at 10 annas (62 paisa) and 9 annas (56 paisa) respectively. Out of 89,154 *bighas* (about 11,927 hectares) of non-cadastral *khiraj* area 67,234 *bighas* (about 8,975 hectares) were surveyed in blocks.

The unsettled waste lands in surveyed villages were classified excepting jungle lands which remained unclassified. The classified waste lands when occupied were to be assessed according to their class, and unclassified wastes were to be assessed at the *faringati* rate.

The rates per *bigha* of tea *khira* lands, fixed earlier at 10 annas (62 paisa) in Tezpur subdivision and 8 annas (57 paisa) in Mangaldai subdivision, were raised to 12 annas (50 paisa) and 10 annas (62 paisa) respectively. *Nisf-khiraj* tea lands existing in Mangaldai subdivision were assessed at half rates for *khiraj* lands. The position was as follows :—

Area held for special cultivation (in *bigha*)

Name of sub-division	Khiraj			Nisf-khiraj	
	Surveyed	Unsurveyed	Total	Surveyed	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Tezpur	19,692	30,116	49,808	—	—
2. Mangaldai	18,833	52,396	71,229	3,941	3,941
Total	38,525	82,512	1,21,037	3,941	3,941

1 *bigha* = 0.13378 hectares

Waste lands taken up for tea cultivation, after the resettlement were also to be assessed at 12 *annas* in Tezpur subdivision and 10 *annas* in Mangaldai subdivision.

Trade sites were assessed at high rates which varied from 5 to 10 times the ordinary *faringati* rates according to their relative importance. The total area classed as trade sites was 377 *bighas* (about 45 hectares) in the district and the revenue assessed thereon amounted to Rs.1586 against Rs. 220 existing before the resettlement.

Town lands in Tezpur and Mangaldai were broadly divided into trade sites, residential sites and agricultural sites, the first two being subdivided into several classes and were assessed according to their annual value while the other class of land was assessed on the soil-unit system. The same formula was applied to the smaller towns of Vishwanath, Dhekiajuli and Khoirabari. After the resettlement the revenue at Tezpur and Mangaldai towns rose from Rs.6,032 to Rs. 20,813 and in small towns the assessment was roughly doubled. The settlement was made for 10 years only for the smaller towns.

The term of settlement sanctioned for *khiraj* and *nisf-khiraj* lands was for 30 years except only in Dalgaon and Samabari *mauzas* in Mangaldai subdivision where a shorter term of 15 years was sanctioned and in case of a few villages lying west of the Barnadi which were to be transferred to Kamrup for 15 years. In case of *nisf-khiraj* lands Government reserved the right to revise assessment after the 16th year to accommodate changes. The new assessment was introduced with effect from the 1st April, 1931 in Tezpur subdivision except in Barchola *mauza* where it was given effect from 1st April, 1932 as in the case of whole of Mangaldai subdivision.

At this resettlement, *khiraj* settled area held for ordinary as well as for special cultivation in the district increased to 5,09,632 and

40,816 acres (about 2,06,241 and 16,518 hectares) respectively from the corresponding figures of 2,83,074 and 11,456 acres (about 113,463 and 4,536 hectares) in the year 1909-10. Total *khiraj* settled area increased by more than 86 per cent.

Fluctuations in *khiraj* area in acres.

(1 acre = 0.404686 hectares)

Year	Ordinary cultivation	Special cultivation.
1	2	3
1909-10	2,83,074	11,456
1910-11	2,97,827	11,268
1915-16	340,754	11,824
1920-21	389,747	15,667
1925-26	460,737	30,060
1930-31	509,632	40,816

The following will give an idea about the total *khiraj* settled area in the district from 1940-41 to 1960-61.

Year	Total <i>khiraj</i> settled area (in acres)
1940-41	...
1945-46	...
1950-51	...
1955-56	...
1958-59	...
1960-61	...

The term of settlement had been over in 1960-61 and the next resettlement operation commenced from 1966-67. In the meantime, immature area settlement was operated in 1956 in 4 *mauzas* of the Mangaldai Circle viz., Dalgaon Pub, Dalgaon Pachim, Sialmari, Samabari excluding Chapari areas. A unit rate of assessment was fixed at 1.20. Besides, Dhekiajuli town in Tezpur subdivision, and Dalgaon and Khoirabari towns in Mangaldai subdivision were re-settled and reassessed as town lands in 1954, and 1955 respectively. The new rates came to effect from the 1st April, 1955 and the term of settlement would expire concurrently with that of the district settlement.

The total settled area of the district vide settlement Forecast Report 1965 comprising both revenue paying estates and revenue free grants was 10,00,666 acres i.e about 404956 hectares while the total

khiraj area became 7,83,754 acres (about 313174 hectares) in 1961 against 550,448 acres or about 2,22,758 hectares in 1930 showing an increase of about 42 per cent. The increase was due to extension of cultivation largely by immigrants and partly by indigenous people. The entire area as mentioned above was due for resettlement.

The Assam Local Rates Regulation : This regulation was enforced from 1879. In addition to the ordinary land revenue assessment all revenue-paying and revenue free estates assessed to the local rates under the provisions of the aforesaid Regulation. The whole of these rates were made over to the Local Boards for relief and prevention of famine, or for local purposes, such as public works, education and medical facilities etc. On abolition of the Local Boards in 1959 this amount is now apportioned to the Anchalik Panchayats. By the Assam Local Rates and Local self-Government (Amendment) Act (Assam Act VI of 1926), an extra rate was levied on all lands actually under tea. The amount so realised was to be credited to a 'Road Fund' to be administered under the orders of the provincial government. This fund has since been abolished, although the levy continues.

Waste Land Grants for cultivation of tea : After the discovery of tea, Government encouraged opening up of the sparsely populated tracts which were not suitable for ordinary cultivation, for special cultivation on specially favourable terms and conditions. In every district of Assam there were many unclassified and uncultivated areas which were suitable for tea cultivation. There was no competition between the ordinary cultivators and those who sought land for growing tea, so special waste land rules were subsequently framed to encourage the investors to take up land easily for such purposes. The first rules, known as the 'Special Grant Rules' were enforced in 1838. Under these rules land ranging from 100 acres to 10,000 acres (about 40.46 to 4047 hectares) were granted in Darrang and other districts of Assam for special cultivation of tea, coffee etc. One fourth of the grant was to be held revenue-free perpetually and the remaining three-fourths revenue was charged after 5 years in case of grass land, 10 years in case of reed land and 20 years in case of forest land. After expiry of these terms land was to be assessed at the rate of 9 annas (56 paisa) per acre for three years after which this was to be increased to Rs.1/2- (Rs. 1.12 per acre. After expiry of this period, the three fourths were to be assessed at the rate of revenue fixed on the cultivable land.

Next rules were those for leasehold grants of the 23rd October, 1854. This was known as the "Old Assam Rules" of 1854. Under these rules no grant was to be less than 500 acres (about 202 hectares) and more than 5,000 acres (about 2,023 hectares) Afterwards the ceiling was reduced to 200 (about 81 hectares) or even 100 acres (about 40.46 hectares) in special cases. One-fourth of land of the grant was revenue-free for ever. The three-fourths of the grant were to be revenue free for 15 years after which that three-fourths were to be assessed at the rate of 3 annas (19 paisa) per acre for 10 years and at 6 annas (37 paisa) an acre for 74 years. After expiry of 99 years the remaining three-fourths were to be assessed at the rate applicable to other lands. Under these rules 293 acres (about 119 hectares) for tea cultivation were granted in the Darrang district.

Fee Simple Rules : The first Fee Simple Rules were 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 in the month of August 1862. The rule issued thus provided for disposal of the land to the applicant at fixed rate or rent ranging from Rs. 2.50 to Rs.5.00 per acre. The rules provided further that the lot should be put up to auction, grants were to be limited except under special circumstances to an area of 3000 acres (about 1214 hectares). Each grant was ordinarily to be a compact area. The upset price ranged from Rs. 2.50 to Rs. 10.0 per acre, according to the localities. Provisions were made for necessary survey of land before sale and the cutting of boundary lines of the land in question and protection of the proprietary or occupancy rights on the land. The purchase money was either to be paid instantly or in instalments within a period of 10 years. In the latter case, not less than 10% of the purchase value was to be paid at the sale and the rest within 10 years from the date of sale with interest of 10% annually on the portion remaining unpaid. The land was liable to re-sale on default of the purchase money and the interest due thereon. The Fee Simple Rules of 1862 were in force till August 1872, when the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal stopped further grants under them, pending the revision of the existing rules.

In accordance with the above, the Revised Fee Simple Rules were introduced in 1874 just before the constitution of the province as a separate administrative unit. The upset price was raised to Rs. 8.00 per acre. The Revised Fee Simple Rules were in force upto April 1876, in which year another set of rules was introduced. Under these

rules the grant was issued for 30 years at the progressive rates. The upset price was fixed at Re. 1 per acre. When the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation was enacted in 1886, these Rules were revised and re-issued under section 12 and 29 of section I of the Settlement Rules.

These Rules remained in force until recently. The application of these rules were gradually restricted with the extension of cultivation. Land required for special cultivation was allotted under the Settlement Rules. The term of all 30-year leases was extended on their expiry till 1932 with nominal increase of rate of revenue. In that year the period of leases was further extended. All lands held under the Fee Simple Rules and all other lands allotted to cultivation of tea under concessional rates of revenue were again fixed at a full revenue rate under the Assam Assessment of Revenue Free Waste Land Grants Act of 1948. This Act abolished the concessional rates of revenue which was enjoyed by certain classes of land which were granted for special cultivation.

(a) Present system of survey, assessment and collection of revenue :—

(i) Survey : Under the present system of survey the village boundaries are fixed by a survey based on the odolite observations, which are connected with two or more points fixed by previous surveys. For each village a map of 16 inches to a mile is prepared, showing the roads, rivers, railways and other physical features as well as the homesteads and other fields. The fields are serially numbered on the basis of *dag* numbers given in the *chitha*. Where fragmentation is rampant as in the urban areas, maps of the scale of 32 inches to a mile are prepared.

(ii) Assessment of land revenue : The land revenue is reassessed at every resettlement operation and the rate of revenue remains the same till the expiry of the term of resettlement. Generally, after every resettlement operation the land revenue is enhanced, taking into consideration various factors such as the growth of the population, the pressure on land, quality, productivity and use of the soil, economic condition of the people, improvement of the means of communication, trade and commerce, increase in the standard of living, value of land and prices of agricultural goods etc. The increase in the rate of land revenue is, however, governed by different clauses of the Assam Land and Revenue Reassessment Act, 1936 (Assam Act VIII of 1936). Such increase must be limited by several factors as the pressure of the existing rates of revenue on the land owners, the probable trend

of the future price level and the prospects for the general improvement of the condition of the people in future.

During the pre-Independence days, the need to patronise the industry in which the British capital was invested and to promote the industry which had an unlimited prospect of promotion were the two factors which led to the assessment of land revenue at a low rate. The disparity between the rate of revenue between the lands used for ordinary cultivation and tea cultivation is quite considerable. The rate of revenue for a *bigha* of (*sadharan*) *Sali* land was 19 *annas* (Rs. 1.19) till the commencement of the current resettlement operation. The maximum rate was as high as 23 *annas* (Rs. 1.43) per *bigha*. On the other hand the revenue paid for a *bigha* of tea land was, 12 *annas* (75 Paisa) in Tezpur subdivision and 10 *annas* (62 paisa) in Mangaldai subdivision. On the completion of the current resettlement operation it will be known if the lands used for tea cultivation will be subjected to the equal or higher rate of land revenue. Under the Assam Assessment of Revenue Free Waste Land Grants Act, 1948 (Assam Act XXIV of 1948), those lands which were held revenue free under expressed exemption provided in the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, have been made liable to land revenue.

(iii) Collection of land revenue : The Collection of ordinary land revenue was first introduced in Darrang in 1833. The lands in each village were measured up by an *Amin*, leases were issued to the *rai-yats* and an officer, called the *patgiri*, was made responsible for the collection of the revenue. In 1841-42, settlement was made with the *patgiri* for a term of years, and he was held responsible for payment of the land revenue. This system having failed, recourse was again had to the former system. The *chapor* mahals were farmed out to the highest bidder, but later on cultivators were given settlement direct on their holdings for which they paid land revenue to the *patgiri*. The *patgiri* or fiscal officer, was paid 10 per cent of the collections. He was assisted by a *kakati* who received 5 per cent. He was assisted by a considerable number of *chawkidars*, each of whom received 16 *bighas* of rent free land.

Mauzadari system : It has been already mentioned that the *Mauzadari* system of collection came into being in 1835 and had been in operation with some changes from time to time till 1883 when the *Tahsildari* system was introduced. In 1867, the *mauzadars* received 15 per cent of the revenue as commission, and were allowed half the revenue of land reclaimed during the currency of the

settlement. Three years later their commission was reduced to 10 per cent, and in 1872 was further reduced allowing 10 per cent on the first Rs.6,000 of revenue, 5 per cent being allowed on revenue in excess of that sum. Under the *Tahsildari* system salaried officials called *Tahsildars* were appointed as collecting agency. *Mauzas* were accordingly amalgamated and placed in charge of a *tahsildar*, who was exempted from the responsibility imposed upon the *mauzadars* of paying the revenue on the due dates, irrespective of the amounts actually collected by him. The first *tahsil* was opened at Tezpur in 1884. Then, in 1886, came Hindughopa, subsequently transferred to Patharughat; Kalaigaon in 1888; and Mangaldai in 1892. These three *tahsils* were all situated in the southern and central part of the Mangaldai subdivision. The last *tahsil* to be opened was the one at Chutia, east of the Bhareli, in 1893. This arrangement left about 30 per cent of the land revenue demand to be collected by *mauzadars*.

The *mauzadari* system of collection of revenue was reintroduced in the district in 1903. The same system continues till today. On certain occasions, such as the suspension of the *mauzadars*, the task of collection of land revenue is assigned to the Sub-Deputy Collector.

The *mauzadar* is appointed and dismissed by the Deputy Commissioner, with the approval of the Commissioner of the Plains Division. A *mauzadar* is selected from among the indigenous population, and the residents of the *mauza*. The financial stability and the family claim of the person who offers his candidature for the post of a *mauzadar* are also taken into consideration. The *mauzadar* is to reside in his *mauza* permanently. He is to furnish security for a quarter of the amount realised through him as land revenue and local rate. However, this amount may be enhanced or reduced with the sanction of the Commissioner.

The primary duty of the *mauzadar* is to collect land revenue and other Government dues with the collection of which he is entrusted. He has no concern with assessment of revenue, settlement of land, and the checking of maps or assessment papers. In certain cases however, the *mauzadars* have been invested with the powers of settlement of waste land.

Every year a *daul* for each *mauza* is prepared by the Land Records staff. A *daul* is an annual statement of demand of land revenue. The *mauzadar* is to collect land revenue, local rate and *touzi bahir* revenue on the basis of the annual demand. The land revenue can be paid in two instalments (*kists*), one instalment on the 15th

March and the other on the 15th November. Revenue is due from the *mauzadar* one month after the instalments become due. The *mauzadar* is not required before the 1st May to make good balances uncollected by him. The usual practice with *raiya*s is to pay the annual revenue in one instalment, preferably after the harvest of the winter crops. Many of the *mauzadars* fall in arrears owing to their inability to realise the entire revenue. The coercive measures which a *mauzadar* can legally adopt against the defaulting *raya*s include attachment and sale of the moveable properties and thereafter attachment and sale of immovable properties. This power can be exercised only upon being duly invested with by the State Government. Moreover, various restrictions have been imposed upon the *mauzadars* barring them from the indiscriminate use of their power.

The *mauzadars* are entitled to commission on the land revenue collected by them. The rate of commission is $17\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on the first Rs. 15,000/-, beyond it is $12\frac{1}{2}$ per cent upto Rs. 40,000/-, and $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent on the balance. There are 52 *mauzas* in the district at present. The *mauzadar* is to maintain the accounts properly. These are inspected by the Revenue Officer once or twice a year. The *mauzadar* is to maintain several registers, such as the *Jama Wasil*, *Dainik Amdani*, Counter-foil receipt book, Daily Register of Process-fee realised, Cash Book, *Bakijai* Register, Pass book for forest produce.

Revenue Officers: All the Revenue Officers of the district are subordinate to the Deputy Commissioner. Subject to the general supervision of the Deputy Commissioner, the Revenue Officers of a subdivision are subordinate to the Sub-divisional Officer, who is also a Revenue Officer. The Extra Assistant Commissioners, Sub-Deputy Collectors and the *mauzadars* are the Revenue Officers of the district. For the purpose of carrying out the resettlement operation, the government appoints one Settlement Officer, for the district. Two Senior Settlement Officers, and one Assistant Settlement Officer for each revenue circle are also appointed for the purpose of resettlement. The Resettlement Officer and the officers subordinate to him function only during the period for which the resettlement operation continues. During the period intervening two resettlement operations, one Sub-Deputy Collector is appointed in each revenue circle. At times two Sub-Deputy Collectors are also appointed in a revenue circle, depending upon the volume of work. The function of each category of Revenue Officer and the procedure of appeal against their orders

are governed by the provisions of the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation.

The Deputy Commissioner and the Sub-divisional Officers are assisted in the revenue administration by a number of Extra Assistant Commissioners and the Sub-Deputy Collectors, who are posted at the district and the subdivisional headquarters. The Deputy Commissioner is also assisted by the Additional Deputy Commissioner who exercises concurrent powers with the Deputy Commissioner in revenue matters.

The base of the land revenue system is the *mandal*, a village surveyor who is appointed from among those who have undergone successfully a course of survey training. The *mandal* is to regularly inspect the fields of the groups of villages, collectively called a *lot*. He is to report cases of unauthorised occupation of the government land, test the boundaries of the fields which have been taken up in recent years to see whether they are in accordance with the map, survey land which has been broken up for regular settlement or for which a formal application has been filed. He is to maintain a complete record of all the title and possession of all the fields of villages of his lot and to calculate the land revenue to be paid for each plot of land. The record of all the lands that are relinquished by some land holders, or those which are thrown up by the rivers while changing their courses or eroded by the rivers are also maintained by the *mandal* whose additional responsibility is to collect the crop statistics, and sub-letting of land etc. The *kanango* supervises the works of the *mandal*. Each revenue circle is divided into two or three sub-circles, the revenue works of which are allotted to the *kanangoes*. The Sub Deputy Collector carries on the revenue administration with the help of the *mandals* and *kanangoes*.

Maintenance of records of rights : Three important sets of records of rights are maintained by the Land Revenue Department. The *chitha* is the field index of a village prepared after survey and demarcation in course of a resettlement operation. It contains the number of the fields, area of the field, name of the settlement holder, his father's name and residence, tenure, name of the tenant, his father's name and residence, assessment class or classes of the field etc. The *mandal* maintains the *chitha* and makes necessary corrections in respect of the change of the ownership, possession, partition, relinquishment of land etc., with the help of this register. The *chitha* is replaced from time to time, when the old *chitha* becomes unfit for use due to overwriting.

The second set of registers is the *jamabandi*, a copy of which is maintained in the office of the Deputy Commissioner and the Sub-divisional Officer, under the disposal of the officer called the Registrar *Kanango*. The *jamabandi* is prepared on the basis of the *chitha* and the field map. Separate *jamabandis* are prepared for (a) periodic *patta* and (b) annual *pattas*, the former at regular intervals and the latter annually. In addition, there are separate *jamabandis* for special tenures, such as *lakhiraj* and *nisfkhiraj*. The *jamabandis* are prepared in duplicate, one copy is kept with the recorder and the other, with the Registrar *Kanango*, who is to maintain it up-to-date. The *jamabandi* contains full particulars of the land and its owner showing all the details of situation, class, occupation and revenue along with *patta* and *dag* number. The field maps are prepared on the basis of survey. These maps indicate the fields by the number as recorded in the *chitha*. The area of each field indicated in the map is to correspond with the area shown in the *chitha* and *jamabandi*. The maps are corrected by the *mandals* who are the recorders on the basis of orders of the competent authorities.

Income from land revenue and special cesses connected with it : Land revenue is an important source of revenue of the district. The following statement gives an idea of the land revenue of the district.⁴

Land revenue collected

Year		
1951-52	—	Rs. 2,094,201.00
1955-56	—	Rs. 2,305,200.00
1960-61	—	Rs. 1,431,681.00
1963-64	—	Rs. 3,013,948.00
1964-65	—	Rs. 2,941,739.00
1965-66	—	Rs. 4,538,624.00
1966-67	—	Rs. 3,508,242.00
1967-68	—	Rs. 3,272,484.00

The above figures also includes the local rate, fishery revenue grazing tax etc. An important feature, of the collection of land revenue is that a part of the total demand remains unpaid almost every year. Many of the *mauzadars* have been empowered with necessary powers by the government of Assam to realise the land revenue through attachment and sale of movable properties of the

4. *Statistical Abstract of Assam, 1967-68* ; p. 226; *Census of India, 1961, Assam District Census Handbook, Darrang, Gauhati 1964* ; p. 434.

defaulters. The *Bakijai* branches of the Deputy Commissioner and the Sub-divisional Officer, Mangaldai also realise the arrears of land revenue.

(d) Land Reform :—

During the pre-Independence days certain Tenancy Acts were enacted in order to protect the interests of the *raiylas*. These enactments became necessary to check the indiscriminate evictions of the tenants and realisation of heavy rent by the landlords. Although there was no Zamindari in the district, the proprietors of large estates used to sub-let the land to the tenants on various terms. During the post-Independence days various land reform measures have been adopted by the government of Assam. The implementation of these schemes have brought vast changes in the agrarian structure of the district. Some of these measures are discussed below.

Policy of land settlement : Under the settlement rules incorporated in the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, all the waste land under the disposal of the government can be settled with any citizen of India. Under these rules a large section of the non-agricultural population became the owners of the bulk of the cultivable land. The government of Assam formulated certain land settlement policies, keeping in view the interests of the actual tillers of the land. These policies were implemented by the officers who were authorised to make settlement of land. The Policy of Land settlement (1968) of the Government of Assam lays down the following principles to be adhered to in giving settlement of land :

(i) Settlement of land will be given on the basis of a family consisting of husband and wife, as the case may be and sons and daughters (excluding married sons and daughters having separate mess).

(ii) All settlement of Government agricultural land for ordinary cultivation shall be made with the actual tiller of the soil only.

(iii) No person already having more than 10 *bighas* of agricultural land either in his own name or in the name of any member of the family will be allotted new Government land for the purpose of cultivation.

(iv) The area to be settled per family, whose existing total holding is less than 10 *bighas*, (about 1.3 hectares) shall be so much as will, together with any land already held make the total holding equal to 10 *bighas*, but priorities in settlement shall be

determined in the following order :—

- (a) those who have no land ;
- (b) those who have lands below 5 *bighas* (about 0.6 hectares) ;
- (c) those who have lands between 5 *bighas* and 8 *bighas* (between about 0.6 and 1.04 hectares);
- (d) those who have lands above 8 *bighas* (about 1.04 hectares).
- (v) Land for homestead purposes may be settled upto a maximum of 2 *bighas* (about 0.3 hectares) with a homeless rural family. This would be exclusive of the land mentioned in (iv) above.

Besides, for the purpose of settlement of homestead lands, settlement-holders who have been rendered landless due to flood, erosion, requisition or acquisition, will get preference over other landless persons.

(vi) In case of all new planned settlements in large blocks of 100 *bighas* (about 13 hectares) or more, except those which have already been taken up under the Five Year Plans, Gram Sabha will be formed on the line of a Gram Sabha under the Gramdan Act to manage and plan the pattern of cultivation in general and also to watch that allottees do not make any transfer of their allotment without the permission of the Gram Sabha. However, cultivation on co-operative or collective basis will be encouraged even in lands under such Gram Sabhas. In giving settlement on the Gramdan pattern the names of individual allottees should be distinctly recorded and possession of their lands clearly demarcated.

Further, it should be ensured that facilities for co-operative finance to the allottees on the Gramdan pattern are made available, as otherwise due to non-transferability of land, such allottees may find difficulty in raising finance for agricultural operation. For that purpose, the members of the Gram Sabha should be encouraged to form Co-operative Credit Society.

(vii) While encouraging formation of Co-operative Farming Societies the district authorities shall ensure that no person having lands above 10 *bighas* (about 1.3 hectares) may get new land by being a member of any such society. Such person may, however, be allowed to join such Co-operative Society only when he agrees to pool his own cultivable lands with the co-operative of landless tillers.

(viii) Selection of allottees for settlement of land in any case which involves more than 10 *bighas* (about 1.3 hectares) will hen-

ceforward be made in consultation with the local land Settlement Advisory Committee. A panel of landless cultivators should be prepared by every Gaon Sabha formed under the Panchayat Act and this panel should be consulted when selecting allottees for settlement of land in rural areas. Government, however, reserves the right to earmark special areas of homestead and cultivable lands for settlement with people rendered homeless due to flood, erosion, requisition or acquisition and with displaced persons whom Government undertake to rehabilitate.

(ix) When surplus lands from tea gardens are requisitioned and acquired for cultivation by landless cultivators, an area upto 50% of such land should be allotted to the unemployed tea garden labourers who have no land for cultivation.

Tribal Belts and Blocks : Since the beginning of the present century, large number of outsiders mostly from East Bengal began to pour in large numbers into Assam. They began to spread into the areas occupied by these peace loving unobstructive tribal people. The tribal people though purely agriculturists, being shy by nature began to recede into the interior to face gradual material decay. To protect these people from the onslaught of these land hungry outsiders, imaginary lines were drawn dividing the areas occupied by the tribals from the areas occupied by these outsiders. This was known as the Line System, which, however, did not work satisfactorily. Later, colonisation schemes and development schemes were taken up. But these also did not give the necessary protection to these tribal people and their lands were passing into the hands of the outsiders and they were gradually driven into more interior places. In order to give them necessary protection, therefore, the Tribal Belts and Blocks were constituted. The principle followed in constituting them is that the majority of the population in these areas must be tribals and that there should be sufficient waste lands available in that area. When these conditions are fulfilled in a continuous stretch of land, a Belt is constituted; otherwise Blocks can be disposed of only after taking into consideration,

- (a) The bonafide needs of those who are permanently residing within the areas;
- (b) The bonafide needs of those who are temporarily residing as settlement holders of land but who are likely to become permanent residents;

5. The Assam Land Revenue Manual, Vol. I. Eight Edition, Shillong, 1958: p. 75.

- (c) The bonafide needs of the tribals who were living elsewhere in the district.

Along with the tribals, the cultivators pertaining to the following classes are also notified as persons entitled to protection, namely tea garden tribals, Santhals, Nepali cultivator-graziers and Scheduled Castes vide Notification No. RD. 69/46/19 dated 5th December, 1947.

There are following Tribal Belts and Tribal Blocks in Darrang district.

Name of Tribal Belts or Blocks	Area in <i>bighas</i>
Gohpur Tribal Block	5,666
Balipara Tribal Belt	19,36,000
Kalaigaon Tribal Belt.	11,16,336
Tetelibhangura Tribal Block	10,117
Dalgaon Tribal Block.	28,306
Kacharipara Tribal Block	9,656
Tezial Tribal Block	8,867
Bhuyankhat Tribal Block	9,299
	31,24,247 „

Relation between the landlord and tenant : The Tenancy Acts which have been enforced throughout the district are of relatively recent origin. Goalpara Tenancy Act was enacted in 1929; but it had no application in Darrang district. Bengal Act of 1867 was considered sufficient to meet the requirements of Darrang and other plains districts of the Brahmaputra valley where tenancy was known to be common. In 1935, the Government of Assam enacted the Assam (Temporarily Settled Districts) Tenancy Act with a view to regulate the rights and liabilities of the agricultural tenants and landlords. It seeks to confer upon the tenants certain rights over the land. The tenants who enjoyed *lakhiraj* lands or *khiraj* lands as *raiya's* under certain agreements, express or implied, on payment of rent. This Act has since been repealed and a fresh Act, known as the Assam (Temporarily Settled Areas) Tenancy Act of 1971 (Assam Act XXIII of 1971) which seeks to confer the right of use and occupancy of land on the tenant who is in continuous occupation of land for a period of three years. This Act also abolishes the right of the tenants to sub-let the land in question.

In order to give protection to the non-agricultural tenants of the urban areas the Assam, Non-Agricultural Urban Areas Tenancy Act was enacted in 1955. Adequate protection has been sought to be given to the tenants against eviction by the landlords. At the same time this Act makes it obligatory on the part of the tenants to pay fair rent to the landlords.

The relationship between the landlord and the tenant who is in occupation of any house on payment of rent, is regulated by the Assam Urban Areas Rent Control Act, 1966. This was a temporary legislation valid for a period of five years only. The Governor of Assam, has promulgated an Ordinance known as the Assam Urban Areas Rent Control Ordinance, 1972 (Assam Ordinance III of 1972) regulating fair rent of houses situated within the limits of urban areas in Assam. Besides fixing the 'fair rent' and the "standard rent" of a house, this Act seeks to provide adequate protection against ejection of the tenants from rented houses. This Act also makes it obligatory on the part of the landlords to maintain the existing essential supplies and services of the house property.

The Assam *Adhiar* Protection and Regulation Act was enacted in 1948, with a view to giving protection to the *adhiars* who cultivated land on the basis of crop-sharing with the landlord. The arbitrary eviction of the *adhiars* has been sought to be checked under this Act. *Adhi* Conciliation Boards have been constituted in all the revenue circles. The Sub-Deputy Collector is the Ex-officio Chairman of this Board and the members are nominated by the Government. Besides abolishing the intermediary landlords, this Act has regulated the rent payable by the tenant. Roughly speaking, the tenant gets three-fourths to four-fifths of the total crop, depending upon the supply of the plough cattle by the landlords.

Other legislative measures on land reform : Various Acts have been implemented in the district to bring about the land reforms in respect of conferring virtual ownership of the agricultural land on the actual cultivators and to reduce the holding of the owners of vast estates. The following are some of the important legislations implemented in the district:

(i) Ceiling on Agricultural holdings : The State Government has enacted the Assam Fixation of Ceiling on Land Holdings Act, 1956. The main object of this Act is to make the actual tillers of the soil the owners of the land. It extends to the districts of Lakhimpur, Sibsagar, Nowgong, Darrang, Kamrup, Goalpara, and Cachar within

the State of Assam. According to this Act, no person either by himself or through members of his family shall be entitled to hold as owner or tenant, lands which exceed the limit of one hundred and fifty *bighas* in aggregate. For the excess land acquired by Government, compensation is to be paid to the owner of the land.

But this Act makes certain exception with regard to land belonging to any religious or charitable institution of a public nature; lands held for special cultivation of tea or purposes ancillary thereto; lands exceeding 150 *bighas* utilized for large scale cultivation of citrus in a compact block by any person before the 1st January 1955 etc.

This Act was amended in 1957. To advise the Government in respect of Land Reforms there is a Land Reforms Board in Assam consisting of 6 members, of whom two are non-official members nominated by the State Government, three State Government officers, namely the Commissioner of Plains Division, the Secretary to the Government of Assam in the Revenue Department and the Land Reform Officer who shall be the Secretary of the Board, and a Chairman nominated by the State Government.

The Ceiling has since been reduced to 75 *bighas* of agricultural land. Till January, 1972, 48536 *bighas* (about 6493 hectares) of land have been acquired as excess land in Mangaldai subdivision since 1956. Out of these, 2504 *bighas* (about 326 hectares) of land have been allotted to the landless people of the subdivision.

(ii) Acquisition of Land belonging to Religious or Charitable Institutions of Public Nature : By enacting the Assam State Acquisition of lands belonging to Religious and Charitable Institutions of Public Nature Act, 1959, the Government wanted to remove one more set of intermediaries not brought within the ambit of Land Ceiling Act by acquiring excess land of *Satras*, *temples*, *Maths*, etc. This Act was enforced with effect from 18-1-63 but being challenged in the High Court of Judicature in Assam and Nagaland by some head of religious institutions, all further proceedings under the Act had been stayed under the order of the High Court. The Civil rules have since been discharged by the High Court. The Act is now in force in the district.

(iii) The Assam Assessment of Revenue Free Waste Land Grants Act, 1948 (Assam Act XXIV of 1948) : By this Act the expressed exemption contained in the Assam Land Revenue Regulation, 1886 (Regulation I of 1886) from assessment under the terms of any waste

land grant was made liable to assessment of revenue on and from 1st April 1948 in addition to the local rates and local cesses, if any. But other terms and conditions of those grants remained as before.

The aforesaid Act was amended in 1949 by the Assam Assessment of Revenue Free Waste Land Grants (Amendment) Act, 1949 (Assam Act XV of 1949).

(iv) The Assam Land (Requisition and Acquisition) Act, 1948 (Assam Act XXV of 1948) : The Act provides for requisitioning and acquiring surplus waste lands of Grant holders to provide land to the landless, flood affected or displaced persons or to Co-operative Societies formed for the purpose of cultivation. Though the Act has other objectives in view, in practice, it was found more useful for the purpose of acquiring surplus lands fit for cultivation (specially of unutilised tea grants) and allotting these to the landless, flood-affected and displaced person. The life of the Act was for 5 years and then extended for 5 years in 1953 and for another term of 5 years in 1958.

Bhoodan movement : In pursuance of the Bhoodan movement launched by Acharya Vinoba Bhave, throughout the country the Assam Gramdan Act, 1961 was enforced in all the plains districts of Assam with effect from 10.2.62. This Act aims at affecting a revolutionary change in the land tenure system through peaceful and voluntary surrender of individual ownership in favour of establishing pure social ownership with village as a unit. The response for *Gramdan* in Darrang district is not considerable. The *Gramdan* movement is confined among a small band of dedicated men and women and it has practically failed to make a dent on the individual ownership of the rich landlords.

Rural wages and the condition of the agricultural labour : The villagers cultivate the land mostly by themselves and employ labourers only in harvesting and transplanting seasons. Only the rich cultivators can afford to employ labourers permanently. The wages earned by the agricultural labourers is low, compared to the wages of the labourers employed in some industries, such as tea. The wages are paid either in cash or in kind. It has been revealed in the Survey of the Rural Economic Conditions of Darrang district that during the busy season monthly wages paid in kind to the labourers vary from 4 *maunds* to 4.83 *maunds* while in slack seasons the variations are between 3.5 *maunds* and 3.75 *maunds*.⁵ The main reason for the

5. A Survey of Rural Economic Conditions of Darrang District, p.33, Shillong, 1950.

difference in each season is the facilities and comforts which the labourer gets in addition to his wage. It is difficult to work out the money value of the comforts extended to labourers. In the aforesaid survey it was shown that the average cost per farm and wages of the labourers comes to about rupees seven. This calculation possibly includes the wages of the owner cultivator who is however not paid wages separately.

The daily wages of the casual labourers are generally speaking, as follows :-

	Adult		Minor
	Male	Female	
1. For all operations connected with cultivation of paddy.	Rs.1.50 to Rs.2.00	Rs 1.25 to Rs.1.50	Rs.1.00
2. For all operation connected with jute cultivation, diary farming etc.	Rs.2.50	—	—

(e) Administration of other sources of revenue :

Commensurate with the rise in the per capita incidence of taxation the Central and the State Governments have set up a net work of offices in all the districts of Assam. Some of the sources of revenue are discussed below :

Excise revenue : The Government of Assam has imposed Excise duty on various items, such as the country spirit, foreign liquor, medicated wine, *Tari*, Methylated spirit etc. There is one Superintendent of Excise in Tezpur for the district and one Deputy Superintendent of Excise is stationed in Mangaldai sub-division. A host of Excise Inspectors and Assistant Inspectors of Excise assist the Superintendent and the Deputy Superintendent in realising the Excise revenue as well as in detecting Excise cases. There are several country liquor shops called *Mahals* in the district. These are leased out in auction for a stipulated period by the State Government. This constitutes the bulk of the Excise revenue of the district. The lessee is bound to keep proper accounts of sale, and to follow certain restrictions in respect of the sale of liquor. He is also bound to sell liquor of certain strength, permitted by the Government. The following statement shows the Excise Revenue of the district :

Year	Amount
1953-54	Rs. 15,19,774.00
1954-55	Rs. 21,93,551.00
1955-56	Rs. 24 62,092.00
1956-57	Rs. 23,09,120.00
1957-58	Rs. 23,91,729.00
1958-59	Rs. 23,32,763.00
1959-60	N. A.
1960-61	Rs. 23,93,178.00
1961-62	N. A.
1962-63	Rs. 25,06,821.00
1963-64	Rs. 27,05,536.00
1964-65	Rs. 26,92,351.00
1965-66	Rs. 27,51,227.00
1966-67	Rs. 30,47,643.00
1967-68*	Rs. 31,68,408.00
1968-69**	Rs. 28,03,282.00
1969-70*	Rs. 27,39,762.00
1970-71*	Rs. 26,66,026.00

Sales Tax : This constitutes an important source of revenue. For the purpose of administration one Superintendent of Taxes is posted at Tezpur and another at Mangaldai. These two officers are assisted by a number of Inspectors of Taxes. Total collection of taxes in Darrang district is given below :-

(Amount in Rupees)

Year	Source of collection			
	Sales Tax	Amusement and Betting Tax	Motor spirit and lubricant tax.	Professional tax.
1	2	3	4	5
1952-53	6,93,066.00	1,30,585.00	2,42,071.00	29,496.00
1953-54	6,57,194.00	1,39,272.00	2,63,139.00	41,654.00
1954-55	6,38,473.00	1,05,640.00	3,11,045.00	41,393.00
1955-56	7,44,266.00	1,48,624.00	3,24,330.00	52,286.00
1956-57	11,82,458.00	2,07,659.00	3,79,196.00	84,708.00
1957-58	15,36,401.00	2,62,848.00	5,13,922.00	1,11,396.00

* Superintendent of Excise-Tezpur.

Year	Source of collection			
	Sales Tax	Amusement and Betting Tax	Motor spirit and lubricant tax	Professional tax
1	2	3	5	5
1958-59	11,02,185.00	2,21,019.00	5,47,251.00	1,04,986.00
1959-60	8,43,596.00	2,40,582.00	6,14,510.00	1,13,378.00
1960-61	9,35,540.14	2,57,933.78	7,26,987.17	1,10,789.00
1961-62	9,67,959.63	2,99,583.99	3,58,033.95	1,09,346.00
1962-63	9,95,804.14	2,70,678.60	54,346.68	1,10,681.00
1963-64	8,43,335.97	3,80,413.61	41,523.86	1,20,520.00
1964-65	9,38,314.07	2,87,727.62	43,057.79	1,23,251.00
1965-66	9,77,136.36	4,27,379.18	55,320.33	1,53,410.00
1966-67	11 48,813.27	4,73,578.33	31,879.06	1,68,245.44

Sales tax is imposed on various items of consumers' goods. The taxes imposed on petroleum and petroleum products including motor spirits and lubricants, are also assessed by the Taxation Department.

Agricultural Income Tax : The amounts collected under this head in Darrang district is indicated below :-

Year	Amount collected in Rupees
1951-52	23,13,503.00
1952-53	30,94,757.00
1953-54	26,01,136.00
1954-55	15,84,308.00
1955-56	27,87,541.00
1956-57	82,35,383.00
1957-58	42,18,693.00
1958-59	43,86,617.00
1959-60	52,60,710.00
1961-62	44,40,267.60
1962-63	53,57,262.08
1963-64	54,55,771.95
1964-65	25,25,341.53
1965-66	52,40,189.27

The average annual revenue earned as licensing fee and taxes on motor vehicles is about rupees eight lakhs per annum. The sale

of judicial stamps yields approximately fourteen lakhs of rupees a year. Other important revenues collected from the district include taxes on grazing, the fishery revenue, the forest revenue, toll on ferries, and bazars taxes levied on bicycles and carts etc.

Taxes collected by the Central Government : The Income Tax collected in the district has gone up from nearly rupees eight lakhs in 1952-53 to rupees eighteen lakhs in 1961-62. There has been substantial increase of the Income Tax during the last few years. The Income Tax Officer, Tezpur assisted by his staff makes assessment of Income Tax in the district.

The district has been divided into circles for the purpose of collection of the Central Excise taxes. The Tezpur circle also includes some areas of Lakhimpur district. The bulk of the Central Excise revenue comes from tea. In 1959-60, tea produced in the district yielded more than seventy six lakhs of rupees as Central Excise revenue.

CHAPTER - XII

LAW, ORDER AND JUSTICE

(a) Incidence of crimes in the district

It is difficult to assess crimes in Darrang district in early times and even during the Ahom period, as no such record was maintained. It was the sacred duty of a king to protect his subjects, to give them security of life, property and belief. The following instructions given to an Ahom king at the time of coronation give an idea of the duty of the king in the administration of justice "Cherish and protect your subjects as your own children. Employ secret emissaries to ascertain their condition. Bring capital criminals to condign punishment. Exterminate traitors root and branch. Let not might prevail over right ; and let the strong who oppress the weak be punished. Let thieves and robbers be diligently searched out ; thus shall your country be benefited by increased security".¹

The administration of criminal justice was characterised by sternness that often verged on torture. The prevailing law "an eye for eye and a tooth for a tooth" was followed to the extent of inflicting precisely the same injury on the criminal as suffered by the victim. Rebellion was viewed with even more sternly and major corporal punishment including flaying, burning alive, impaling, hanging etc., were inflicted on the offender. Capital punishment was sometimes extended even to the whole family of the rebels including parents, brothers, sisters, wives and children. Francis Hamilton who visited Assam in 1807-09 observed as follows : "Except the gang from Bengal, there are few robbers and atrocious house-breakers or pirates. Such persons are punished in a summary manner by thrusting out their eyes, or by cutting off the kneepans. ...Petty thefts are very common and are punished by whipping or by cutting off the nose or ears. The first punishment may legally be inflicted by any considerable officer, such as a Raja or Phukan ; but the two latter can only be inflicted by the chief judge of the district".²

In spite of such severity of punishment, the country was not free from rebellious activities as is evident from various uprisings against the Ahom rulers. The condition was mostly anarchical at the

1. S.K. Bhuyan : *Atan Buragohain and His Times*, Gauhati, 1957. pp. 13-14.

2. Francis Hamilton : *An Account of Assam*, Gauhati, 1963, p.50.

time of the advent of the British. This has been described in the old Gazetteer as follows : "The condition in which we found the country was lamentable in the extreme. For full fifty years, the Province had been given over to disolation and anarchy. Life, property, and 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. The hill tribes were no longer kept in order, and the Daflas descended and harried the submontane tracts, and even extended their depredations to the south of the Brahmaputra".³

With the consolidation of the British administration of Assam, normalcy was restored. Criminal as well as civil courts were established at Tezpur and Mangaldai and records relating to the trial of cases were maintained by the district administration in the headquarters as well as in Mangaldai sub-division. B. C. Allen stated that in 1902 "altogether there were 1,159 cases under the Indian Penal Code returned as true, the immense majority of which were either offences against property or against the human body. The people are as whole law-abiding and there is not much serious crime in Darrang, and most of these offences were either petty assaults or thefts of small sums".⁴ During the next four decades crimes showed an increase mainly due to growth of population primarily through influx of immigrants, development of communication facilities including the railways, political upheavals, wartime price spurt, economic depression of the thirties etc. Thus in 1944 number of serious crimes alone against person and property returned as true was 796 in the district. The position worsened in the following years when the corresponding figures rose to 884 in 1945, 1244 in 1946 and 1319 in 1947. Post-Independence economic planning and development and rapid growth of population have added a new dimension to the problem of crime in the district. Litigants who shunned to appear in the court and bowed down to the decision of the village panchayat have forgotten the past tradition and have inculcated the habit of going to the court.

The table (A) indicates the number of true criminal cases of serious crimes in Darrang district during the period from 1949 to 1957.

The total number of crimes registered in the district during the years 1970 and 1971 was 2758, and 3430 respectively.

3. B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Vol.V Darrang*, Allahabad, 1905, p.51-52.
4. Ibid, p.211.

The following table shows the number of serious criminal cases reported and convicted in Darrang district during the period 1959-1970.

Year	Offences against the State and Public tranquility		Murder		Other serious offence against the persons		Dacoity		Cattle theft		Ordinary theft		House trespass & house breaking with intention to commit offence.	
	Reported	Conviction obtained	Reported	Conviction obtained	Reported	Conviction obtained	Reported	Conviction obtained	Reported	Conviction obtained	Reported	Conviction obtained	Reported	Conviction obtained
1959	—	—	32	19	280	78	12	4	35	18	344	82	381	40
1962	97	20	42	11	407	67	23	3	24	8	408	75	414	41
1966	90	18	44	6	463	69	17	2	39	21	508	109	341	76
1967	153	12	38	19	457	77	7	2	51	17	618	127	411	84
1968	165	12	38	12	444	51	27	1	39	18	728	137	468	59
1970	208	12	51	6	537	36	47	1	75	15	803	70	572	49

Source: Statistical Hand Book, Assam, Department of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, Shillong for 1960, 1963, 1967, 1968, 1969 and 1971.

Varieties of crimes and their relative importance :

From the above statements it is clear that though there are a variety of crimes, there is no particular crime which is peculiar to the district. Among offences against property, theft including cattle theft, house-trespass and house-breaking are the most common. Generally speaking, offences against the person have shown increase after 1960. But cases of murder have not shown any appreciable change. Sex-crimes are not too many in the district although some such cases are reported at Dalgaon *thana* during May to August. Law and Order problems, have been on the rise since the late sixties. Over and above these crimes, cases of forgery, cheating, defamation etc., are also registered in different courts of the district. Hundreds of cases are registered every year under various special Acts such as the Foreigners Act, the Motor Vehicles Act, the Assam Excise Act, the Assam *Bhang* and *Ganja* Prohibition Act, Essential Commodities Act, and orders promulgated thereunder. In short, the over-all crime picture of the district is a conglomeration of a wide variety of cases registered under numerous Acts, both Central and State. The following table shows the subdivisionwise crime position of the district from 1951 to 1962.

Year	Tezpur Subdivision	Mangaldai Subdivision
1951	1,110	439
1952	986	403
1953	1,028	440
1954	831	448
1955	827	541
1956	817	556
1957	832	552
1958	787	259
1959	789	507
1960	1,024	504
1961	987	471
1962	1,072	430

From the list it appears that crime position of the Mangaldai sub-division is better than that of the Tezpur sub-division.

Among cases registered under special Acts offences under the Motor Vehicles Act and the Excise Laws constitute the bulk. The incidence of offences under the Motor Vehicles Act has assumed an upward trend consequent to increase of number of vehicles in the district. The statement below shows the excise cases in the district for the period from 1968-69 to 1970-71.

Year	Cases instituted	Convicted	Fines realised
1	2	3	4
1968-69	1,834	1,571	Rs. 27,131.00
1969-70	3,017	2,379	Rs. 30,960.00
1970-71	2,036	1,021	Rs. 25,449.00

(b) Organisation of Police :

The Historical background : As Francis Hamilton observed in 1807-09 : "The officers under whom the Paiks or servants of the crown are placed, the persons (Choudhuris) who farm the revenue of the lands which are let for rent ; and everyone who has received free lands have charge of the police within the bounds which their people cultivate".⁵ The police organisation of the present days is, however, a legacy of the British administration. In order to ensure security of life and property of the people the police force was raised in Assam by the British administration even before 1867. H.K. Barpujari states : "The thana, the unit of the organisation was in charge of a *thanadar* or the *Daroga*, who was empowered to arrest suspected persons, to detain them and even to hold preliminary trials before sending them to headquarters. He was aided in his duties by one *Jamadar*, one or more mohurrers and a few constables or *Barkandazes*. There were no village watchmen or *Chowkidars* as in other provinces, but the *Choudhuries*, *Patgiris* and the *Mauzadars*, were expected to assist the *Daroga* in the detection and apprehension of criminals".⁶

The strength of the police was increased at the beginning of this present century. It appears in the old District Gazetteer of Darrang that in 1904, there were 4 police stations in Tezpur subdivision and 3 in Mangaldai subdivision which had also one out-post namely Karia-para. The table below shows the position, as it was in 1904.⁷

5. Francis Hamilton, *An Account of Assam*, Gauhati, 1963, p. 49

6. H.K. Barpujari, *Assam in The Days of The Company*, p. 195.

7. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Voi V Darrang*, 1905, Allahabad Appendix table- XX.

Name of Police Stations & out-posts	Sanctioned strength			
	Sub-Inspector	Head Constables	Constables	Total
1	2	3	4	5
Tezpur Sub-division				
1. Behali P.S.	1	—	7	8
2. Chutia P.S.	2	—	8	10
3. Gohpur P.S.	1	—	5	5
4. Tezpur P.S.	3	1	16	20
Mangaldai Sub-division.				
5. Kalaigaon P.S.	1	—	7	8
6. Kariapara O.P.	—	1	6	7
7. Mangaldai P.S.	2	1	15	18
8. Paneri P.S.	1	1	7	9

Besides the above some more strength was maintained in the district headquarters. The total sanctioned strength consisted of 2 Inspectors, 16 Sub-Inspectors and 221 constables. The whole Civil Police Force was in charge of a District or Assistant Superintendent of Police. One hundred and two smooth bore Martinis were allotted to Darrang district, and a reserve of men was kept up at the district and sub-divisional headquarters who were armed with those weapons and were employed on guard and escort duties. The district was fairly free from serious crimes and the rural police were not employed. The village Gaonburas and elderly men assisted the police in their work. Although the assigned duty of the police was prevention and detection of crimes, they were also engaged to check the returns of vital statistics, manage pounds, enquire into cases of unnatural death, to furnish guards and escorts and also to serve all processes in warrant cases.

The Police Department has gradually been expanding since 1904. Since then new police stations and outposts have been established in rural areas as necessitated by new developments. Dhekiajuli Police Station was opened in 1914, Udalguri Police Station which was burnt down accidentally in 1910 was shifted to its present site in 1920. Colonisation scheme of the Government and extension of railways led respectively to the establishment of new thanas at Dalgaon (1928)

and Majbat (1935) which were formerly under Udalguri thana. Rangapara police station was carved out of the old Tezpur thana in 1962. The rapid expansion of the department is largely a post-Independence phenomenon. Specialised wings have been established to bring about improvement in the field of scientific investigation, better communication, prevention and control of hazards, modernisation of training methods, prevention and detection of corrupt practices, collection of local intelligence etc. In addition to the Rangapara Police Station several out-posts have been created and staff position augmented. Most of the Police Stations have been provided with telephone and wireless sets. The Fire Service organisation has also been set up under the Police Department since 1955. The services of this wing are available in the district and subdivisional headquarters. During the post-Independence period, there has been marked improvement in respect of the residential, recreational and other amenities to police personnel besides the rise of their salaries.

The following table shows the expansion of the police organisation in Darrang district during the period from 1949 to 1970.⁸

Year	Police Superintendent	Assistant Superintendent	Deputy Superintendent	Inspectors	Sub-Inspectors	Assistant Sub-Inspectors & Head constables	Constables	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1949	1	..	2	4	31	69	478	585
1950	1	..	3	3	27	69	478	580
1951	1	..	2	5	27	79	458	572
1952	1	..	2	3	27	69	468	570
1953	1	..	2	3	27	67	463	563
to 1955								
1956	1	..	2	3	27	69	468	570
1957	1	..	2	5	41	105	778	932
1958	1	..	2	5	30	72	519	629
1959	1	..	2	6	37	78	551	675
1966	2	1	2	9	69	—	1297	1380
1970	2	1	2	9	68	134	933	1149

8. Census of India, 1961, Assam District Census Handbook, Darrang. Gauhati, 1964, p. 431.

No. of Police Stations and out-posts :⁹

Year	No. of Police Stations	No of police Out Posts	Total
1	2	3	4
1959	12	1	13
1966	12	10	22
1969	12	10	22
1970	12	13	25
1971	12	15	27

The total strength of the armed branch of District Police Force in 1970 was 740 including one Inspector, 13 Sub-Inspctors, 55 Head Constables and 671 constables. The Superintendent of Police is the head of the district police force. The Deputy Inspector General of police of the Western Range and the Inspector General of Police supervise the works of the Superintendent of Police who is assisted by the Additional Superintendent of Police and the Deputy Superintendent of Police in the district headquarters. The Deputy Superintendent posted in the Mangaldai Subdivision is to work under the Superintendent of Police. A few Inspectors, Sub-Inspectors and Assistant Sub-Inspectors are posted in the district head-quarters and are attached to the office of the Superintendent to assist him in carrying out the administration. The Deputy Superintendent of Police posted in the Mangaldai civil subdivision remains in charge of the Police force in the Sub division. The Circle Inspectors are posted in each sub-division of the district and they are to inspect the Police station that fall within their jurisdiction. One Sub-Inspector of Police remains in charge of the Police station in which he is posted. He is invested with the full powers of investigation. He is popularly called *Daroga*. He is assisted in the Police Station by one or two Sub-Inspectors and a few Assistant Sub-Inspectors, literate Head constables called Havilder Constables. The *Daroga* of a Police station supervises the works of the police out-posts. A reserve force of police is also maintained in the headquarters for supplementing or replacing the force posted in *thanas*, as and when required. The posts of the Inspector and above, are gazetted ones. All the lower posts are non-gazetted. All the posts are filled up by direct recruitment ; but there is provision for departmental promotion from every category of posts.

Statistical Hand Book of Assam, 1960-61, 1967-68 and 1969-1970.

To maintain law and order in the district Police Stations and out-posts are established in the important places. The out-posts are opened in the interior areas. There were 12 police stations, 15 out-posts and four Beat Posts in the district in 1971 as shown below :-

- | | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| (1) Tezpur P.S., | (2) Rangapara P.S., | (3) Dhekiajuli P.S. |
| (4) Chutia P.S., | (5) Behali P.S., | (6) Gohpur P. S., |
| (7) Mangaldai P.S., | (8) Kalaigaon P.S., | (9) Dalgaon P.S., |
| (10) Udalguri P.S., | (11) Paneri P.S., | (12) Majbat P.S., |
| (13) Barghat O.P., | (14) Bihaguri O P , | (15) Lalmati P.S., |
| (16) Bsebejia O.P., | (17) Charali O.P., | (18) Misamari O.P., |
| (19) Barchola O.P., | (20) Charduar O.P., | (21) Jamuguri O.P., |
| (22) Hawajan O.P., | (23) Khoirabari O.P., | (24) Rowta O.P., |
| (25) Tangla O.P., | (26) Kharupatia O.P., | (27) Mahabhairab |
| (28) Jinjia B.P., | (29) Salani B.P., | (30) Ghahigaon B.P., |
| (31) Burhagoan B.P., | | |

One Company consisting of about 100 men of the Central Police Reserve Force has been located in the district to assist the regular local police in time of emergency. Their deployment is done by the Superintendent of Police.

Darrang State Fire Service Organisation : During the 2nd World War, Fire Brigades were opened in almost all the important towns in Assam under the Civil Defence Organisation. On cessation of hostilities equipments brought for the purpose were disposed of and the organisation was disbanded. The organisation was revitalised in the early fifties. The Government of Assam sanctioned the establishment of the fire station at Tezpur. One Fire Service Adviser of the rank of the Superintendent of Police was appointed to run the State organisation. Subsequently the Fire Service Scheme has been extended to include all the subdivisional towns of the district. At present there are two fire service stations in the district, one at Tezpur and the other at Mangaldai.

Assam Police Radio Organisation : 9 wireless stations were installed in the district headquarters of Assam in 1946. The network of the Assam Police Radio Organisation has since been extended to all the districts and sub-divisional headquarters, in addition to some important places within the district. There are 6 W/T stations in the district located at Tezpur, Mangaldai, Udalguri, Majbat, Charali and Gohpur. These are manned by one Sub-Inspector, 8 Assistant Sub-Inspectors and 16 Operators.

Traffic Control : The flow of traffic has increased considerably in the main towns with the growth of commercial and industrial activities. Traffic control has posed a problem to the police in towns. A section of the police has now been trained in the use of modern traffic signals and equipments. "Road Safety Week" is observed to educate pedestrians and motorists to inculcate road sense amongst them. The number of motor vehicle accidents in Darrang district was 57,41 and 56 in 1970, 1971 and 1972 respectively.

Training of Police Personnel : Police personnel are imparted training at the Assam Police Training College, Dergaon in Sibsagar district. The College which was at first established at Salonibari in Darrang district was shifted to Dergaon on the 15th August, 1952. Invariably all the police officers of every category are sent to the training College at Dergaon for training within the first five years of their recruitment.

The Village Defence Organisation : This organisation which was introduced in Darrang district in 1952 is under the supervision of the Superintendent of Police who is the district Village Defence Officer and Secretary of the Advisory Committees of the organisations. By organising night patrolling in the villages, the Village Defence Parties render immense help to police in detection and prevention of crimes. Each party is provided with one latern, one torch-light, one whistle, five blankets, five umbrellas and an annual amount of Rs. 60 to Rs. 70 by Government. At present there are 400 registered and 353 unregistered Village Defence Parties in the district.

The number of Parties thana-wise is shown below :

Name of Police Station	No. of unregistered V.D.Parties.	No. of registered V.D.Parties.
	2	3
Tezpur	28	24
Dhekiajuli	45	43
Rangapara	12	21
Chutia	14	30
Behali	12	24
Gohpur	11	40
Mangaldai	32	34
Kalaigaon	81	32
Udalguri	31	47
Paneri	19	53
Dalgaon	62	30
Majbat	6	22

Railway Police : This is a branch of the Police organisation, which functions under the control of the Superintendent of Railway Police, Haflong. The function of the Railway Police is mainly the prevention and detection of crimes within the Railway areas and in the running trains. The branch keeps watch over the inter-state criminals and suspicious movement of the travellers. It works in co-ordination with the district Police organisation in detection and investigation of crimes. The Railway Police is not required to perform watch and ward duties for which the Railway Ministry has its own force known as the Railway Protection Force which provides escorts to treasures; goods trains etc.

Anti-corruption Branch Assam : The Anti-corruption branch was first started in 1946. This branch is mainly concerned with detection of corrupt practices among the Government employees.

Home Guards : This Home Guards organisation was abolished by the Government of Assam in 1949. In the wake of the Chinese Aggression in 1962, important towns of the Province were brought under the Civil Defence Scheme. There is one Home Guards Commandant at Tezpur who is in charge of the Home Guards Office. He works under the control of the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang and the Director of Home Guards at Gauhati. Young boys are recruited for training. They are given paramilitary training. During the training period and the tamp period, the Home Guards are supplied with dresses and ammunitions and also paid wages. When emergency requires their service, they are called for and engaged in duties regularly till the emergency is over.

Prohibition Squad : The Superintendent of Excise at Tezpur is the head of the Excise organisation in the district. He works under the supervision of the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang and is under the overall Control of the Commissioner of Excise, Assam Gauhati. The Excise Department enforces prohibition laws within the district. The Assam opium Prohibition Act came into force in 1947 and the Assam Ganja and Bhang Prohibition Act in 1958. One Deputy Superintendent of Excise remains in charge of the enforcement of prohibition laws in Mangaldai subdivision. He works under the control and supervision of the Superintendent of Excise.

(c) **Jails :** There are two Jails in the district of Darrang ; one at Tezpur and the other at Mangaldai. B.C. Allen's description of jails reads as follows ; "There is a jail at Tezpur with accommoda-

tion for 226 convicts. The prisoners generally enjoy fairly good health, and in the twenty years ending with 1900 there were only three years in which the number of deaths exceeded 10 and the death rate 70 per mile. Convicts sentenced to hard labour are usually employed on oil pressing, bamboo and cane work, carpentry, weaving, brick-making and gardening. The jail premises cover an area of nearly two acres. Most of the wards have three walls of brick and the fourth of whole bamboos; the roof is generally of thatch. At Mangaldai there is a small jail with accommodation for 26 convicts. The prisoners are generally employed on gardening or oil pressing and are not detained in this jail for more than three months; convicts with a longer term being sent to Tezpur.¹⁰

The Tezpur jail which is one of two oldest jails in the State is situated in between Kalibari and the Deputy Commissioner's office and comprises about 14 hectares of land of which only about 3.94 hectares of land fall inside the jail walls. The jail contains 18 association barracks for accommodation of 745 prisoners at a time. Several additional wards have been constructed as the number of convicts has been gradually increasing. Thus the old and the additional wards accommodate altogether 745 prisoners including 22 females. It has however, been found inadequate for the ever increasing prison population. At present the jail staff includes one Superintendent, one Jailor 5 Assistant Jailors, 42 wardens and other staff.

In Mangaldai sub-division there was only one lockup at Mangaldai town till 1896 and sometime later a small subsidiary jail was established there with accommodation for a few prisoners only. This jail is now a class III jail with a capacity to accommodate 112 convicts. It is situated just near the Mangaldai court. The total area of the jail is about 1.96 hectares. The area within the brick walls of the jail measures about 0.286 hectares where office building and wards are situated. The jail staff includes one Superintendent, one Jailor, two Head warders, 10 warders and 3 temporary warders, one of which is for female. Within the jail area there are one tank, a few buildings and a garden. There are 5 wards including one for female and 2 cells for males and 1 for female.

Prison Discipline : Strict discipline is maintained in the jail by the jail staff. The wards are locked just before sun-set and unlocked in the morning. Food is served to the prisoners as per scale

10. B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Darrang, Vol. V. Anahabed*, 1905, p. 213-14

laid down in the *Assam Jail Manual*. The Manual provides necessary rules and regulations for the conduct of the prisoners. The affairs of the jail are conducted according to the Manual.

Average jail population in the Tezpur jail for last four years is shown below :

Year	Male	Female	Total	P.c. of
1968	702.47	28.11	750.58	1.33
1969	814.17	39.07	853.34	0.35
1970	672.46	24.09	695.55	0.29
1971	678.43	21.34	699.77	0.57

Year	Total expenditure in jail maintenance	Cost per prisoner daily
1968	6,63,240.00	Rs. 3.17
1969	6,92,474.00	Rs. 3.37
1970	7,21,921.00	Rs. 3.00
1971	7,08,095.00	Rs. 3.25

The convicts are engaged mainly in the agricultural works. They cultivate varieties of vegetables in the Jail garden and make furniture and other things with bamboo and cane. The following table shows the earnings from these two works for 3 years.

Year	Earning from Gardening	Earning from Industries
1968	Rs. 7,652.00	Rs. 54,887.24
1969	Rs. 6,997.90	Rs. 55,206.85
1970	Rs. 7,574.30	Rs. 60,689.86

Average jail population in the Mangaldai jail for three years is shown below : -

	1968		1969		1970	
	U.T.P.	All Total	U.T.P.	All Total	U.T.P.	All Total
1. Inmates of the Jail at the beginning of the year.	109 M 2 F	149 M 2 F	195 M 4 F	158 M 7 F	182 M 3 F	209 M 5 F
2. Received during the year.	1510 M 20 F	1720 M 31 F	1158 M 55 F	1322 M 72 F	1289 M 32 F	1427 M 40 F
3. Discharge in the year.	1424 M 18 F	1612 M 26 F	1171 M 56 F	1371 M 34 F	1244 M 34 F	1373 M 50 F
4. Remaining at the end of the year.	195 M 4 F	258 M 7 F	182 M 3 F	209 M 5 F	227 M 1 F	263 M 1 F
5. Daily average of the year.	196.82 M 1.45 F	243.74 M 3.81 F	209.85 M 3.15 F	247.58 M 6.67 F	204.29 M 3.29 F	237.71 M 4.56 F

N. B. M.-Male; F.-Female.

Net cost for entire prisoners was Rs. 1,13,271.00 in 1965 and per capita expenditure for the same year was Rs. 3.53 per day.

Welfare of Prisoners : Due to overcrowding, the sanitation has become a serious problem for the jail authorities. In both the jails, the authorities take sufficient care to keep the jails neat and clean. Sanitary condition in both the jails is satisfactory, as reported by the jail authorities. There are facilities for medical treatment of the inmates of jail within the jail premises. A doctor regularly visits a jail and there are a number of sick beds for the inmates of a jail. Facilities for recreation are also provided in the jails. The prisoners are allowed to hold theatrical performances within the jails, at the expense of the government. They are also provided facilities for indoor games like playing cards, ludu, carrom, volley ball etc. Juvenile and adolescent prisoners are given education in the three R's—reading, writing and arithmetic inside the jails by a paid teacher. The prisoners in Tezpur jail are given training in various crafts such as bamboo and cane works, carpentry, blacksmithy, etc. Books and newspapers are also supplied to them from the jail library. The convicts are divided into three classes, viz., A, B, and C. The magistrates earmark the class of the particular convict. The convicts A and B classes are given some additional facilities. The security prisoners also enjoy some such facilities including special diet and recreational facilities.

Board of visitors ; In order to inspect the sanitary condition and the general administration of the jails, the Government of Assam appoints a Board of Visitors for each jail. The Board comprises both official and non-official members. It holds periodical meetings, inspects the jail premises and the wards and hears the grievances of the inmates of the jails. The Board has no statutory power but is advisory in nature.

Lock-ups ; Lock-ups are attached almost to every Police Station of the district. It is generally meant for keeping the arrested persons for a period not exceeding twenty-four hours after the arrest. These prisoners are then produced at court before the magistrates. Besides the lock-ups in Police Stations there are two more lock-ups attached to the two jails at Tezpur and Mangaldai.

Probation system : The Probation of Offenders Act was enforced in Darrang since 1965. One District Probation Officer who has been designated as the Welfare Officer in 1970, is appointed with his headquarters at Tezpur. The Probation of Offenders Act is an attempt

to reform the first offenders of tender age, The Act provides for the release of the offenders of tender age, on conviction, accepting a guarantee of good conduct as an alternative to the imprisonment in jail. The Magistrate refers the case after the guilt has been established to the Welfare Officer who by applying probable means gathers information about the said guilty person in respect of his socio-economic background, home, surroundings, previous records etc. and submits to the courts his report as to whether the offender may be released on probation or be given institutional treatment. If the court is satisfied it releases the offender on probation ; the Welfare Officer assumes the responsibility of putting the convict to some fruitful avocations. When such probationer violates the rules and commits further offences and on report from the Welfare Officer the probationer is appropriately punished by the court.

(d) Civil and Criminal Courts :

Civil : From 1837 to 1860 Assam proper was administered by Code of rule known as the Assam Code of 1837. These rules were subsequently supplemented by a few civil and criminal rules in 1839. 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 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 for the areas which, at that time, were not subject to the ordinary civil jurisdiction of the High Court. However, with extension of jurisdiction of the High Court, operational area covered by the Act also has increased.

Sadar (Dewani) Courts were brought into being in the Lower Assam districts including a part of Darrang in 1835 under Act 11 of 1835. The administration of civil justice in Darrang district of the Brahmaputra Valley, was under the control of the District Judge Assam Valley Districts with headquarters at Gauhati, who was in turn under the control and supervision of the High Court at Calcutta.

The administration of civil justice was as follows at the turn of the current century. "The civil work in Darrang is lighter than in any other district in the plains and the Deputy Commissioner acts as sub-judge, while one of the assistant magistrates in each subdivision discharged the functions of a munsif. In 1902, the sub-judge heard three original cases and seven appeals, while 1,098 original suits were disposed of by the munsifs. Almost all of these cases were simple

money suits and more than three-fourths of them were disposed of without contest".¹¹

Consequent upon the formation of a High Court for Assam the control and supervision of the High Court at Calcutta over all courts of Assam ceased to exist. The Judgeship of the Lower Assam had jurisdiction over Nowgong, Darrang, Kamrup, Goalpara and Shillong.

Till 1964 the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang was the ex-officio Sub-Judge with jurisdiction over the entire district. Two Munsifs were posted at Tezpur and Mangaldai. The powers of the Sub-Judge were however withdrawn from the Deputy Commissioner with effect from 27.6.64 but no Sub-Judge was appointed in the district. The cases filed at the court of the ex-officio Sub-Judge of Tezpur were after the interlocutory stage transferred to the file of the Sub-Judge at Nowgong to whom Tezpur sub-division was attached then. Similarly Mangaldai sub-division came under jurisdiction of Sub-Judge at Gauhati.

Separation of Judiciary : On 14th August 1967, the judiciary was completely separated from the executive, and a District Judge was posted at Tezpur. At present there are one District and Session Judge and one Assistant District and Session Judge at Tezpur with jurisdiction over the whole district. There are two Munsifs at Tezpur and Mangaldai. The pecuniary jurisdiction of the Munsifs in all the civil suits extends to the value of Rs. 5,000.00 in the maximum as against the former pecuniary limit of Rs. 1,000.00. Appeal from the orders of the Munsif lies with the Assistant District and Session Judge whose pecuniary jurisdiction is unlimited. The cases, the pecuniary value of which is beyond the jurisdiction of the Munsif are instituted in the court of the Assistant District and Session Judge. An appeal from the decree of the Subordinate Judge as original court lies with the District Judge. Other appeals lie with the High Court. The Subordinate Judge is authorised to exercise the powers of the District Judge in respect of the Indian Succession Act.

The statement below shows the disposal of cases in various civil courts of the district.

Year	Money	Title	Rent	Misc.	Exn.	Total	Dis- posed	Pending
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1959	265	99	36	185	81	666	466	200
1960	389	152	85	54	208	888	426	203
1961	359	237	57	34	182	869	272	597
1962	396	175	24	56	186	837	590	247
1963	393	170	32	202	326	1023	622	401

11. Ibid. pp. 211-12.

Another table is given below indicating the number of civil suits, execution cases and appeals filed and disposed of under the Judgeship of Darrang during the years, 1969, 1970 and 1971.

Statement of Civil Suits, Execution Cases and Appeals as filed and disposed of during the years 1969 to 1971 under Judgeship of Darrang.

Name of Court	Civil Suits			Execution Cases			Civil Appeals		
	Total for dis- posal	Total dis- posed of	Pend- ing	Total for dis- posal	Total dis- posed of	Pend- ing	Total for dis- posal	Total dis- posed of	Pend- ing
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
District Judge.									
Darrang, Tezpur	56	39	17	2	—	2	135	102	33
Misc. Cases	66	27	39						
Assistant District									
Judge, Tezpur	97	56	41	35	11	24	111	13	98
Misc. Cases	41	28	13						
Munsif Tezpur	1,251	660	591	292	169	23	—	—	—
Misc. Cases	366	193	173						
1970									
District Judge,									
Darrang, Tezpur	23	16	7	2	—	2	203	179	24
Misc. Cases	93	58	35						
Assistant District									
Judge Tezpur	76	26	50	31	16	15	184	98	100
Misc. Cases	44	24	19						
Munsifs Tezpur									
and Mangaldai	1,132	595	537	308	193	115	—	—	—
Misc. Cases	397	211	176						
1971									
District Judge,									
Darrang, Tezpur	19	12	7	3	—	3	35	27	8
Misc. Cases	87	60	27						
Assistant District	88	31	57	27	11	16	181	79	102
Judge, Tezpur									
Misc. Cases	76	45	31						
Munsifs Tezpur									
and Mangaldai	1,004	444	550	292	176	116	—	—	—
Misc. Cases	362	261	101						

Criminal : Regarding administration of criminal justice in the district at the beginning of the present century, B.C. Allen observed as follows :

"In 1902, there were six stipendiary and two honorary magistrates in the district, and the former decided 943 and the latter 101 original criminal cases. In the course of these proceedings 2,847 witnesses were examined. Altogether there were 1,159 cases under the Indian Penal Code returned as true, the immense majority of which were either offences against property or against the human body. The people are as whole law-abiding and there is not much serious crime in Darrang, most of these offences were either petty assaults or thefts of small sums".¹²

Powers and jurisdiction of the criminal trial and appellate courts were regulated by the Criminal Procedure Code and Government notifications thereunder. To cope with the increased volume of work, the Extra Assistant Commissioners and some of the Sub-Deputy Collectors were invested with the powers of the magistrate on recommendation from the District Magistrate and trials were held under the provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code. But the 1st. class magisterial power is conferred only in consultation with the Sessions Judge.

Besides trying 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 local trial of criminal cases under the Excise Department is also in vogue. 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 courts 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 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 Tezpur are conducted by the Prosecuting Inspector who is assisted by an Assistant Public Prosecutor. All the prosecuting officers belong to Police Department.

For conducting prosecution in sessions cases and for appeals and revisions before sessions 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.

The subdivisional and district level criminal courts which were under the supervision and control of the District Magistrate who is the Deputy Commissioner of the district as its executive head are now under the control of the Chief Judicial Magistrate of the district who was originally designated as the Additional District Magistrate (Judicial). Besides the Chief Judicial Magistrate in the district headquarters, there is one Sub-Divisional Magistrate (Judicial) and four Judicial Magistrates in the district. The following table shows the number of cases instituted, cases disposed of and the cases pending in the courts of the Judicial Magistrates of the district during the years 1969, 1970 and 1971.

Year	Cases instituted	Cases disposed of	Pending
1	2	3	4
1969	6,315	3,324	2,091
1970	5,093	2,947	2,146
1971	5,283	3,376	1,907

12. Ibid, p. 211

Two tables are given below to show criminal cases in the Court of Sessions Judge for the period from 1969 to 1971.

In the Court of Sessions Judge,
Darrang, Tezpur.
1969

	Total for disposal	Total disposed of	Pending on 31-12-69
Criminal Appeals	143	97	46
Criminal Motion (Revisions)	119	66	53
Jail Appeals	4	3	1
Misc. Cases	98	80	18
1970			on 31.12.70
Criminal Appeals	157	121	36
Criminal Motions (Revisions)	114	81	33
Jail Appeals	1	1	0
Misc. Cases	64	45	19
1971			on 31.12.71
Criminal Appeals	113	67	46
Criminal Motions (Revisions)	113	76	37
Jail Appeals	1	0	1
Misc. Cases	150	127	23

Sessions Cases tried in the Court of
Sessions : Darrang, Tezpur.

1969

	Total for disposal	Total Disposed of	Pending	Persons Convicted	Persons Acquitted	Remarks
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sessions Courts	81	40	41	14	64	Out of these 17 Sessions Cases were tried by Sessions Judge and 23 by Asstt, Session Judge.

1970						Out of these 27 cases were tried by Sessions Judge and 26 cases by Asstt. Sessions Judge.
Sessions	Courts	78	53	25	12	
108						
1971						Out of these 44 cases were tried by Sessions Judge and 28 cases by Asstt. Sessions Judge.
Sessions	Courts	115	72	43	23	
121						

Administration of Justice in the transferred areas :

It has already been mentioned earlier that in the district of Darrang there is one transferred area namely Balipara Transferred Area. The Assistant Political Officer administers both criminal and civil justice in that area which is inhabited mostly by tribal people. Before 1951 this area was under the direct administration of the Government of India. In 1951 the administration was transferred to the State Government and the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang has since been administering the area with the help of one Assistant Political Officer posted at Charduar. The Deputy Commissioner exercises the powers of the Political Officer in respect of administration of this area. The Assistant political Officer is invested with the powers of the magistrate of the 1st class and he decides both criminal and civil cases in accordance with provisions laid down in the Assam Frontier (Administration of Justice) Regulation, 1945 (Regulation of 1945). No pleader is allowed to appear in any case tried by the Political Officer or the Assistant Political Officer except with the special permission of the Political Officer and such permission is generally granted when the applicant is to appear on behalf of the person accused of murder.

Civil Justice is also administered by the Political Officer, Assistant Political Officer and by village authorities. The Political Officer may try suit of any value. The Assistant Political Officer may try suits of the value exceeding Rs. 1,000.00

Revenue Court : The Board of Revenue is the highest authority in the State in revenue matters. Various revenue courts are constituted in this district under the Assam Land Revenue

Regulation. The Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, Extra Assistant Commissioners, Settlement Officer, Assistant Settlement Officer, Survey Officer, Assistant Survey Officer, Sub-Deputy Collector hold courts to dispose various revenue matters within the limits of their local jurisdiction. Normally the Deputy Commissioner of the district is the Survey Officer and the Settlement Officer of the district for all purposes in revenue matters ; but for specific settlement operation an independent Survey and Settlement Officer from the rank of the Senior State Revenue Officers and a host of Assistant Settlement Officers from the junior revenue Officers headed by a Senior Assistant Settlement Officer are appointed. Invariably all the Assistant Settlement Officers are vested with the power of an Assistant Survey Officer. In deciding the revenue cases the presiding officers of the revenue courts may summon any person whose physical attendance before the court is considered necessary. Various revenue courts decide matters relating to mutation, settlement, partition of estates and other matters. The appeals against the orders of the Revenue Officers lie as follows :- to the Board of Revenue from the orders passed by the Deputy Commissioner, Settlement Officer or Survey Officer ; to the Deputy Commissioner from orders of the Sub-divisional Officer, Assistant Commissioners, Extra Assistant Commissioners and Sub-Deputy Collectors ; to settlement Officer from orders passed by the Assistant Settlement Officer ; to Survey Officer from orders passed by an Assistant Survey Officer.

Labour Court : Industrial disputes are tried under various Labour Acts either by the Labour Courts, Industrial Tribunals or the National Tribunals. The Labour Courts have jurisdiction to adjudicate on industrial disputes relating to such matters as property or legality of an order passed by an employer, discharge or dismissal of employees and illegality or otherwise of a strike or lockout. Industrial Tribunals have jurisdiction on matters of wages, hours of work, bonus, rationalisation and retrenchments. National Tribunals have jurisdiction over matters of national importance and matters involving more than one State. The Labour Court, Gauhati and Industrial Tribunal, Gauhati have jurisdiction over the entire district of Darrang.

Adhi Conciliation Board : The Assam Adhiar Protection and Regulation Act 1948, (Act XII of 1948) provided for the formation of the Adhi Conciliation Boards. The Adhi Conciliation Boards as provided under the Act decided disputes between the landlord and the adhiars. These Boards were abolished in December, 1971.

(e) Legal profession and Bar Associations :

The Tezpur Bar Association was formed in or about the year 1904 with only four members at the initial stage. This has since grown in size during the last seven decades. In 1964, there were 40 members in the association. In 1972, there were 55 members in the Tezpur Bar Association. In Tezpur Court, there is also one petition writers association which has 64 members at present.

A Bar Association was formed in Mangaldai in 1925. The association has only 27 members at present.

CHAPTER-XIII OTHER DEPARTMENTS.

(I) Public Works Departments :

The Public Works Department in Assam came into being in 1861 along with the creation of the Assam Circle under a Superintending Engineer. This officer was vested with the power of the Chief Engineer and he acted as the Secretary to the Commissioner in the Public Works Department. His headquarters, located initially at Gauhati were subsequently shifted to Shillong. The convention of the Chief Engineer acting as the Secretary of the Department was followed till recently. Initially there were four Divisions in Assam, each comprising two or more districts. This organisational pattern remained virtually unchanged for long. Darrang district formed a part of an Executive Engineer's division at the beginning. B.C. Allen recorded in 1905: "Public works are in charge of an Executive or Assistant Engineer, who acts as Engineer of the Nowgong district and is usually assisted by two upper and four lower subordinates".¹ The construction works entrusted to the Department were very light and limited to construction of large public buildings and the provincial roads, which were the road from Mangaldai to the Steamerghat and a section of the North Trunk Road about 243 kilometres from Dumnichauki to Hawajan in this district. Besides local Board works which required professional skill and knowledge in engineering had to be made over for execution to the Executive Engineer who was also to approve all other Local Board works costing Rs. 500 or above.

With the increase in construction works a separate Executive Engineer's Division was created for Darrang with headquarters at Tezpur under a Superintending Engineer's Circle viz., the Northern Assam Circle, Public Works Department. This Circle was composed of Darrang, North Lakhimpur and North Kamrup and its headquarters were located at Tezpur. The Darrang Division of the Public Works Department was functioning with two sub-divisions at Tezpur and Mangaldai each comprising the respective civil subdivision. At the time of Independence in 1947 another temporary subdivision was created at Charduar. Till that time the Darrang Division was also entrusted

with the task of execution of flood control and irrigation works which were rather very negligible. In 1947, a separate Embankment and Drainage subdivision was created at Tezpur, under the Lower Assam Embankment and Drainage Division, Gauhati. From that time, Darrang Division of the Public Works Department has been engaged in construction and maintenance of roads and buildings only.

Reorganisation of the State Public Works Department had to be effected in view of the weightage given to the construction programmes under the First Five-Year Plan. On the other hand some massive flood control projects were taken up since early fifties to reduce the flood damages in Assam. This led to the bifurcation of the Public Works Department into two different departments in 1956, and thus came into being a new Department, called the Flood Control and Irrigation Department. This department opened many divisions and subdivisions in the districts of Assam.

In 1956, the old Darrang Public Works (Roads and Buildings) Division was reshuffled and bifurcated into three divisions, Tezpur, Charali, and Mangaldai. Another temporary division viz, the Bhareli Bridge Construction Division was created in 1960 and was abolished after completion of the bridge.

The National Highway Conversion Programme resulted in creation of a separate Superintending Engineer's Circle at Tezpur in 1965. The two Superintending Engineers have equal territorial jurisdiction. The reconstruction of the North Trunk Road for conversion into National Highway has been placed under the exclusive charge of the new circle. It is sub-divided into four divisions of which two viz., Tezpur North Trunk Road Division and Mangaldai North Trunk Road Division fall within this district. The Tezpur North Trunk Road Division has three subdivisions at Tezpur, Colderghat and Charali.

The Tezpur Division, Tezpur :- It covers the area between the Pachnai in the west and the Bhareli in the east and is divided into three subdivisions viz., Tezpur A, Tezpur B, and Tezpur C. Tezpur A subdivision comprises seven sections and the other two have five sections each. Four sections of Tezpur A subdivision, three sections of Tezpur B subdivision and two sections of Tezpur C subdivision are located at Tezpur, Salanipam and Rangapara and Charduar section falls under Tezpur A subdivision while Thelamara and Dhekiajuli sections come under Tezpur B subdivision. The Tezpur C subdivision has other sections at Dhekiajuli, Balipara and Charduar. Each section is

1. B.C. Allen- *Assam District Gazetteers Vol. V. Darrang*; Allahabad 1905, p.210.

divided into beats incharge of *Muharirs*.

Special Achievements :- The annual expenditure incurred by this division ranges from Rs.30,00,000 to Rs.33,00,000. The amount is expended in maintenance and improvement of existing roads and buildings and construction of new roads, bridges and buildings. It had to its credit the construction of the 641 metres long reinforced cement concrete bridge on the Bhareli river at the cost of Rs. 90 lakhs. The construction of the new court building has now been partly completed.

Charali Division, Charali :- This division was created in November, 1956 and extends from the Bhareli river in the west to the eastern boundary of the district. It has two subdivisions at Charali and Gohpur. The Charali subdivision comprises four sections, two of which are located at Charali and the other two at Chutia and Jamuguri. Similarly Gohpur subdivision comprises three sections, located at Gohpur, Burai and Bargang. Each of the sections are divided into beats in charge of a *Muharirs*.

Special Achievements :- The division has to its credit the construction of the 323 metres long reinforced cement concrete bridge with eleven spans on the Burai river at an approximate cost of Rs. 24 lakhs, in addition to the improvement of the North Trunk Road by blacktopping and construction of other state roads and a number of public buildings.

Mangaldai Division :- This division was also created in November, 1956. It covers the entire area under the Mangaldai subdivision (civil). It has two subdivisions at Mangaldai and Tangla. Each of these two subdivisions is divided into sections and each section in its turn is divided into beats.

This division also has to its credit construction and maintenance of a number of roads, both old and new, and a number of new buildings. The new court building at Mangaldai has been already completed. Mention may also be made of the construction of about 202 metre long reinforced cement concrete bridge on the Dhansiri river at the cost of Rs. 14 lakhs.

The administrative pattern and duties of the officers of the Public Works Department are the same all over Assam. The Superintending Engineer of the Northern Assam Circle is responsible for the implementation of all the programmes in the entire Circle, composed of 5 different divisions. The Executive Engineers who remain

in charge of the divisions in their turn are entrusted with execution of the works within their divisions. The Subdivisional Officers remain in charge of the subdivisions. Under them there are Sectional officers who hold the charge of sections and supervise the works of the subordinates, the Beat *Muharirs* in the lowest rung. The officers of the rank of the Subdivisional Officer and above are authorised to make payment of bill.

Tezpur Mechanical Division :- This Mechanical Division was created on 28.2.62 under an Executive Engineer. Formerly it formed a part of the Gauhati Mechanical Division. The area covered by this division is co-terminus with that of the Northern Assam Circle. This division is composed of two subdivisions viz., North Lakhimpur Mechanical Subdivision and Tezpur-Mangaldai Mechanical Subdivision. The Central workshop of this division is situated at Tezpur which is under direct supervision of the Sub-Divisional officer Tezpur Mechanical Subdivision. There is also a small workshop at North Lakhimpur. This division is responsible for proper maintenance and repair of the machinery used by different wings of the Public Works Department within its jurisdiction. The Executive Engineer in charge of the division supervises the works of the Subdivisional Officers of the two mechanical subdivisions.

(ii) The Embankment and Drainage Department in Darrang :

It has already been pointed out that the flood control works including construction of embankments, drainage and irrigation were entrusted in 1947 to the Tezpur Embankment and Drainage subdivision, the headquarters of which were at Tezpur. This subdivision covered the entire Darrang district including the area beyond the Burai river in the east under the Lower Assam Embankment and Drainage Division at Gauhati which was under the Chief Engineer of the Public Works Department. In 1949 it was raised to a division and its jurisdiction was extended to the North Lakhimpur subdivision (now Lakhimpur district) which was formed into a new subdivision including the eastern part of the Darrang district, beyond the Burai river. Thus there were two subdivisions, the existing Tezpur subdivision and the new North Lakhimpur Subdivision. In 1952 another subdivision was created at Gohpur by slicing off certain areas from both the subdivisions. This was abolished in December, 1953. In January, 1954 the jurisdiction of the division was extended to Nowgong district and the division was renamed as the Central Assam Embankment and Drainage Division. Nowgong district was formed into a subdivision and at the same time, another subdivision was

created at Mangaldai covering entire Mangaldai subdivision. But in the month of July of the same year the North Lakhimpur subdivision and the Nowgong subdivision were separated to form new divisions and the Central Assam Division was redesignated as Tezpur Embankment and Drainage Division, comprising the Tezpur and Mangaldai E&D subdivisions. A temporary subdivision at Dhekiajuli was created ; but it functioned from April, 1958 to April, 1959.

After 1967, the two Embankment and Drainage subdivisions were raised into two separate divisions under two Executive Engineers. Now this district is served by two Embankment and Drainage Divisions at Tezpur and Mangaldai and one subdivision at Gohpur under the North Lakhimpur Division.

The Tezpur Embankment and Drainage Division is composed of two subdivisions at Tezpur and Charali. Tezpur subdivision has three sections, two at Tezpur and one at Gabharumukh. Charali subdivision has three sections, at Charali, Jamuguri and Silanipam.

The Mangaldai Embankment and Drainage Division has two subdivisions and altogether 6 sections at Dhekiajuli, Orang, Charali, Mangaldai, Rajghat, Sipajhar and Barachuba. The headquarters of the State Embankment and Drainage—Flood Control and Irrigation Department were already shifted to Gauhati.

Along with the creation of the Brahmaputra Flood Commission in 1970 the State Department has been bifurcated into two separate wings viz., Embankment & Drainage and Flood Control and Irrigation under two Chief Engineers, the former remaining under direct control of the State Government and the latter transferred to the control of the Brahmaputra Commission. Accordingly reshuffling of the Department at the district level is now in the offing.

The achievements of this Department in respect of implementation of flood control and irrigation measures have been discussed earlier in Chapter IV.

(III) Agriculture Department :- During the pre-Second World War period, the emphasis on agriculture was rather meagre. Only one Agriculture Inspector and one Demonstrator had the responsibility of looking after the agricultural activities in the district. Their services were placed under the Deputy Commissioner. The staff position was gradually augmented and some Inspectors and Demonstrators were posted in some important places. Till 1945 there was, however, no noticeable increase in the strength of officers and the

staff. The officers were mainly placed in charge of some Government farms. Village level demonstrations, distribution of improved seeds and technical advice to the cultivators formed a part of their duty.

To cope with the food shortage and unprecedented rise of prices during the Second World War, the Government launched the Grow More Food Campaign with a seven point integrated programme to increase agricultural food products. Accordingly, the Agriculture Department was reorganised and expanded. The District Agriculture Office at Tezpur was started in 1945 with a District Agriculture Officer under the Director of Agriculture, who was the technical and administrative head of the department. The strength of the field staff was increased. One Irrigation Inspector and a few Demonstrators were appointed and posted to each subdivisional headquarters in 1950. Their function was to implement the irrigation programmes. It was only in 1956 that Subdivisional Agriculture Officer was posted at Mangaldai. With the inauguration of the Community Development Blocks, the Agriculture Inspectors were posted at the Block headquarters under the immediate control of the Block Development Officers. With the increase of the agricultural activities during the plan period, one subdivisional officer was also posted at Tezpur to help the District Agriculture Officer in Tezpur subdivision.

The District Agriculture Officer, Tezpur heads the district organisation of the Agriculture Department and is fully responsible for implementation of the programmes of agricultural development through his subordinates. There are two Subdivisional Agriculture Officers at Tezpur and Mangaldai who work under the control of the District Agriculture Officer. The office of the Subdivisional Agriculture Officer at Tezpur is attached to the District Agriculture Office.

The Subdivisional Agriculture Officer at Mangaldai to whom financial powers are delegated is responsible for implementation of the agricultural programmes. For implementation of the agricultural programmes of the Grow More Food Scheme, the Jute Development Scheme and the Horticulture Development Scheme three Inspectors have been posted at each subdivision. One Inspector of Agriculture (general) and one Inspector for Agricultural Marketing having jurisdiction over the whole district have been attached to the District Agriculture Office at Tezpur. In 1964-65, one Assistant Plant Protection Officer and one Agronomist were attached to the Dist-

district Agriculture Office at Tezpur. These two Officers have jurisdiction over the whole district.

There are thirteen Community Development Blocks in this district and to each Block is appointed one Agriculture Inspector designated as Extension Officer who is placed under the control of the Block Development Officer subject to technical and administrative guidance by the District Agriculture Officer. In each Block there is also one Additional Extension Officer who is appointed for implementation of the rice or jute package programmes. One Assistant Agriculture Inspector is also posted in each Block to assist the Agriculture Extension Officer. Under the Agriculture Extension Officers, Agriculture Demonstrators are also posted in the Blocks.

Agricultural Engineering :- One Assistant Agriculture Engineer was posted at Tezpur and attached to the office of the District Agriculture Officer in 1961. One Foreman, one Mechanic, a few operators of power pumps and tractors work under him. This section was engaged in supplying agricultural implements to the farmers. It also deals with all technical aspects of the minor irrigation projects, purchase and use of agricultural implements and machineries, construction works of seed farms, fertiliser godowns etc. The Agro-Industries Corporation now deals with these matters.

The details of the activities and achievements of the Agriculture Department have been discussed in chapter IV.

(iv) Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department :-

Prior to 1953 it was known as the Civil Veterinary Department, headed by a Superintendent whose headquarters were at Gauhati. Only four Veterinary Inspectors were posted at Gauhati, Jorhat, Dhubri and Silchar. The department posted one or more Veterinary Field Assistants in the district and subdivisional headquarters of other districts. There were only a few Veterinary hospitals and dispensaries in the towns in charge of Veterinary surgeons in Assam.

In 1942 one Live-stock Inspector was posted at Tezpur. A few Live-stock Demonstrators were also posted in the district and they were to work under this officer. The entire staff had to work under the Local Boards.

It was in 1953, that the office of the District Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Officer was established at Tezpur. This officer was at the head of the district organisation of this department. In 1959 the financial powers of the Live-stock Inspector were withdrawn

and invested in the district officer.

Along with the inauguration of the Community Development Blocks, the district organisation of this department was also expanded to cover all the blocks. Each block had a Veterinary dispensary in charge of a Veterinary Assistant Surgeon. One Extension Officer (Veterinary), and a Field Assistant were also appointed in each block. Some other Veterinary dispensaries were also established under the department.

One Subdivisional Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Officer was posted at Mangaldai in 1961-62. He worked under the control of the District Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Officer. He was responsible for implementation of the development programmes of the department in Mangaldai subdivision.

There is one Livestock Officer whose jurisdiction is all over the district. In all, there are 36 Veterinary Assistant Surgeons, 76 Veterinary Field Assistants, one Assistant Research Officer, two Farm Managers, one Project Officer, 13 Veterinary Extension Officers in the Blocks, besides other office staff and field attendants. The organisational set-up is as follows:

Thirty two Veterinary Assistant Surgeons and 55 Veterinary Field Assistants work in the Veterinary hospitals and dispensaries. There are now three Veterinary hospitals at Tezpur, Helem and Mangaldai. Each of the three hospitals and 28 dispensaries is in charge of a Veterinary Assistant Surgeon. Four Veterinary Field Assistants are attached to each hospital at Mangaldai and Tezpur, each dispensary at Charali and Rangapara. Two Veterinary Field Assistants are attached to Helem Hospital and to each dispensary except the thirteen dispensaries under the Blocks, only one Field Assistant is attached.

There is also one Mobile Veterinary Dispensary at Tezpur with one Veterinary Assistant Surgeon who is assisted by one Field Assistant and other staff. This Surgeon works under the direct control of the District Officer.

The thirteen Veterinary Extension Officers working in the Blocks are each assisted by one Veterinary Field Assistant. The Veterinary staff in the Blocks works under the direct control of the Block Development Officer and is paid from the block budget. The overall control in technical and other administrative measures is exercised by the District Officer.

The Live-stock Inspector at Tezpur looks after four Breeding Operation Centres at Tezpur, Karsontala, Dhekiajuli and Mangaldai with the help of one Demonstrator in each centre.

The Assistant Research Officer, who is in charge of the Central Semen Collection Centre at Tezpur is assisted by two stockmen, one Laboratory Assistant and other attendants. He is responsible for the successful implementation of the Key Village Scheme. There are five Key Village centres at Mission Charali (Tezpur), Jamuguri, Dhekiajuli, Mangaldai and Bhergaon, each in charge of a Veterinary Assistant Surgeon. There are also eight sub-centres managed by eight stockmen.

There are two Managers, one is in charge of the Government Live-stock Farm at Napam, Tezpur, and is assisted by a regular office staff and about 40 daily casual labourers and the other is in charge of the District Poultry Farm at Barikachuburi, Tezpur, and is assisted by one Poultry Assistant and other employees.

There is a Project Officer in charge of the Intensive Egg and Poultry Production cum Marketing Centre at Tezpur and is assisted by a regular office staff. He is responsible for the successful implementation of the scheme in the district.

(V) Forest Department : There was initially one Forest Officer in charge of Darrang district. He was entrusted with the management of the reserved forests in the district. He worked under the control of Conservator of Forests. There were seven reserved forests at the turn of the present century, as mentioned in the old District Gazetteer of Darrang. These were grouped under three ranges viz., the Western Range comprising the Khalingduar Reserved Forest, the Central Range—Singrihill, Bhomoraguri, Garaimari, Charduar and Bali-para Reserved Forests, and the Eastern Range—Nauduar Reserved Forest. Each range was managed by a few subordinate range officials. The unclassified State Forests were looked after by the Deputy Commissioner through his Revenue Officials. There has been considerable expansion of the Forest Department during the post-Independence period. The Darrang district now forms the Darrang Forest Division, covered under its jurisdiction the North Lakhimpur subdivision and Darrang district except for a small area in the west of the Mangaldai subdivision which falls under the North Kamrup Forest Division. The Divisional Forest Officer who is the administrative head in the division is assisted by a Ranger, a Deputy Ranger and a Forester besides the regular office staff in carrying out

normal office administration.

This Darrang Forest Division has now been divided into three Forest Ranges viz., the Western Range, the Central Range and the Eastern Range and each of these ranges is in charge of a Forest Ranger assisted by a Deputy Ranger, a Range Assistant, one or two Foresters and two Forest Guards. A Range is subdivided into beats and sub-beats. Besides, there is one separate beat Office at Tezpur in charge of a Deputy Ranger who is assisted by a Forester and five Forest Guards.

The Western Range has one beat at Batashipur and six sub-beats at Belsiri, Dhekiajuli, Hugrajuli, Jhingabel, Rowta and Orang. The Central Range has three beats at Gamani, Dharikhati and Kacharigaon. The Eastern Range has two beats at Gabharu and Pabhoi and two sub-beats at Hawajan and Dubia.

Each of the 6 beats under the 3 ranges is in charge of a Deputy Ranger who is assisted by a Forester, one or two Forest Guards, one or two Gamewatchers etc. A sub-beat is managed by a Forester who is assisted by one or two Forest Guards.

(VI) Industries Department :- Till the launching of the First Five Year Plan in 1951 there was no organisation of the Industries Department in this district. It was only in 1955 that the Darrang Pilot Project (Industries) was started under the Darrang Community Development Project and a Community Project Officer (Industries) was posted at Majbat, the headquarters of the Project. In 1956 three block level Extension Officers (Industries) were posted at Majbat, Dhekiajuli and Udalguri, the headquarters of the three Constituent Blocks of the Darrang Community Development Project. At the same time, the Cottage Industries Training Institute was established at Majbat. It was manned by one Superintendent and seven Instructors for different crafts and one Demonstrator besides other office staff. One production centre was also started under the charge of a Commercial Manager assisted by a Master Craftsman, a Welder, an Electric Mistry, a Machinist, a skilled Black-smith and other office staff.

Along with the division of the Darrang Community Development Project into three separate National Extension Service Blocks on 1.4. 1957, all industries projects and the staff were taken over by the State Cottage Industries Department. The post of the Community Project Officer was redesignated as the Assistant Director of Cottage In-

dustries, in charge of the Darrang Pilot Project and his headquarters were shifted to Dhekiajuli. The Production Centre at Dhekiajuli, was amalgamated with the Industrial Estate, Dhekiajuli started during the year and was redesignated as the Training-cum Common Service Facility Centre.

During the same year (1957), one Superintendent of Cottage Industries for Darrang district and the erstwhile North Lakhimpur subdivision was appointed at Tezpur.

In December 1969, one Assistant Director of Cottage Industries was appointed at Tezpur with jurisdiction over the entire region. This office was amalgamated with the office of the Superintendent. Along with the creation of Community Development Blocks, the number of Extension Officers (Industries) was also increased. During the last three plan periods four more training-cum-production centres were established and consequently more officers have been appointed.

Under the Assistant Director of Cottage Industries, Darrang and Lakhimpur districts, there are one Superintendent of Cottage Industries for Darrang district at Tezpur, one Assistant Director of Cottage Industries in charge of the Darrang Pilot Project at Dhekiajuli, thirteen Extension Officers (Industries) at the Block headquarters, one Commercial Manager in charge of the Training-Cum-Common Service Facility Centre at Dhekiajuli and five Superintendents in charge of the five training centres at Bhergaon, Majbat, Orang, Tezpur and Charduar. There is also one Marketing Officer at Tezpur attached to the office of the Assistant Director.

The Assistant Director of Cottage Industries, Tezpur is the administrative head of the department in the region and is invested with financial powers of the organisation which he heads. He is responsible for registration of industrial units, supply of raw-materials to entrepreneurs on hire-purchase basis, distribution of scarce building materials, and loans and grants-in-aid to the industrial units. Thus his duty is to implement the programme for the growth and development of cottage industries in the region. In his work, he is assisted by the Superintendent in the district and also other officers in their respective charges. The Marketing Officer is to look after the Government Emporiums and to offer marketing facilities to the industrial units. The Extension Officers (Industries) in the Blocks are to keep the people informed about all industrial facilities and to ensure

industrial development within their respective areas.

(VII) Co-operative Department :- The frame work of the district organisational set-up of the Co-operative Department is constituted by a sub-division. Each of the two civil subdivisions viz., Tezpur subdivision and Mangaldai subdivision is placed in charge of an Assistant Registrar of Co-operative Societies with their respective headquarters at Tezpur and Mangaldai. They work under the control of the Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Gauhati. The Assistant Registrar of Co-operative Societies is assisted by the Senior and Junior Co-operative Auditors who were previously known as Deputy Co-operative Officers and Assistant Co-operative Officers. One Junior Co-operative Auditor is posted to each Block under the control of the Block Development Officer. The Senior Co-operative Auditors are placed in charge of different Co-operative schemes such as marketing, credit-revitalisation, Consumers' Stores, Pilot Project, Farming, Industrial Societies, Statistics etc. In each Sub-division there is one Deputy Handloom Officer in charge of the Co-operative Handloom Societies.

Till some time back one Deputy Co-operative Officer functioned as the Secretary of each of the different branches of the Central Co-operative Bank, Tezpur as well as at the head office of the Bank at Tezpur, and they worked under the control of the Assistant Registrar. Now the Central Co-operative Bank is in charge of a separate Assistant Registrar who manages its branches with the help of Senior Co-operative Auditors.

There is one Liquidation Cum Bakijai Officer in each subdivisional headquarters, who works under the control of the respective Assistant Registrar.

A separate Assistant Registrar has been posted to the newly established Co-operative Sugar Mill at Lehugaon, near Vishwanath.

It may be added here that the departments which are connected with the general administration of the district have been dealt in the foregoing chapter-X in which a list of other district and subdivisional officers, under both Central and State Governments has been appended. Moreover, some departments have been already treated in relevant chapters and some follow discussion in succeeding ones wherein they are related.

CHAPTER-XIV

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT

(a) History of Local Self-government in Darrang :

The present system of local self-government is a legacy of the British administration. However, some forms of local self-government were in existence even during the Pre-British days. Among the Assamese Hindus (Vaishnavites) the institution of *Namghar* was something like a village parliament run on broad democratic principles. It exercised a close spiritual control over the members of the community and held them back from many evil acts. It was a village court; trials of crimes and disputes were held in it.¹ V. Venkata Rao describes the old system of local self-government in Assam as follows: "The population in Darrang was divided into *khels* which consisted of one caste or calling. Every *khel* was divided into *gots* which consisted of three *paiks* or ryots designated as the *Moul*, *Dual* and *Tewal*. Every *khel* was devoted to the supply of wants of the State. These *khels* took the names from their calling such as *nao-sulleeyar* (boat-builder) *khar-gurria* (gun-powder maker), *kath kattea* (timber-cutter) and *puttia* (mat-maker). The *khels* were placed under the control of officers of the State called *Phukans* and *Baruahs*, *Hazaris*, *Sykeas* and *Borahs*. These officers did not receive any pecuniary salary for their services but a specific number of *paiks* and rent free land."²

In their travelogues many foreign visitors have made mention of the local self-government in Assam in the pre-British days. But Hamilton's *An Account of Assam*, and Wade's *An Account of Assam* are silent on the subject. Dr. Suryya Kumar Bhuyan has observed in his *Anglo-Assamese Relations* that Scott, the first Commissioner of Assam instituted *Panchayats* in populous *parganas* and villages. In his famous *Report on Assam*, Moffat Mills suggested reconstitution of the village councils and appointment of an influential class of men as *gaonburas* for management of local affairs and thereby to eliminate the constant

interference of Government in the affairs of the village.³

The Boro-Kacharis of Darrang, North Kamrup, Kokrajhar subdivision and Dhubri subdivision elect a *Deuri* in each village to decide the petty disputes among the villagers. Those Boro-Kacharis who observe *kherai puja* have a peculiar system of selecting the *Deuri*. On completion of the *puja* the *Deodhani* (female dancer) pours water on a particular person who then becomes the *Deuri*. In those Kachari villages where *kherai puja* is not celebrated, the *Deuri* is selected in their *Garja puja*. The *vichar* (trial) among the Kacharis commences after the aggrieved party deposits certain amount with the assembly of persons who are invited to settle the dispute. This amount is called *Sabhri*. The opposite party is required to deposit twice the amount deposited by the first party. The amount deposited by the losing party is forfeited and distributed among the members of the assembly. The *Deuris* get no fixed salary, but they are offered something in kind.⁴ The antiquity of this system is difficult to ascertain; but the rigidity of the system has been mellowed by the lustre of the present day courts.

In the early years of the British administration civil and criminal duties of Assam were performed by councils of village elders called *Panchayats*. Two or three such *Panchayats* existed in each district. Since 1872, the management of the district roads was entrusted to a committee presided over by the Deputy Commissioner. They obtained their funds partly from ferries, tools and mainly from Government grants. After erection of Assam into a separate administration in 1874, these committees were assigned one seventeenth of the net land revenue for local purposes with which the district improvement fund was then started. The Regulation of 1879 provided for the levy of a local rate and appointment of District Committees to control the expenditure on roads, primary education, and the district post. Three years later these committees were abolished by executive order, and their place was taken by Boards established in each subdivision.⁵

The Boards so constituted in 1882, were known as Local Boards. The strength of the Local Boards varied between eight to twenty-four. The exact strength of the Board was determined by the Government from time to time. Initially the majority of members in both

1. M. Neog, *Aspects of Heritage of Assam*, (1959), The Vaishnava Renaissance, p. 40

2. V. Venkata Rao, *A Hundred Years of Local Self-Government in Assam* Calcutta, 1907, p. 26.

3. Ibid, p. 12.

4. Bhaben Narjee, *Baro Kacharir Samaj aru Sanskriti*, Gauhati, 1966, p. 138-140.

5. B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Vol. V, Darrang*, Allahabad, 1905, pp. 185-187.

the Local Boards of Darrang district were officials and Europeans.

A Royal Commission was appointed in 1907, with Hobhouse as its Chairman to evolve a process of democratic decentralisation. The Commission submitted its report in 1911, and the Government of Assam did not agree with many of its suggestions. However, certain important changes were incorporated in the Assam Local Self-Government Act of 1915. This piece of legislation was a landmark in the history of Local Self-Government in Assam. Under this Act, Local Boards were authorised to appoint District Engineers, Health Officers and Sanitary Officers. It prohibited the salaried government officials from contesting the office of the Vice-Chairman. The Act provided for appointment of committees consisting of persons who were not members of the Board. The provision was made for electing non-official Chairman and Vice-Chairman with a view to give greater degree of democratic decentralisation to the local bodies. The elected members were divided into four classes, being elected by an electorate of its own. The four classes were the planters representatives, headquarter members who were elected by residential voters of the headquarters, mercantile representatives and rural members who were elected by the general electorate. The Act also retained the provision for ex-officio nominated members. Accordingly, two Local Boards at Tezpur and Mangaldai were reconstituted under the Act of 1915 with 17 and 16 members respectively. In the year 1920, the ex-officio members were reduced to two, the Deputy Inspector of Schools and Civil Surgeon alone remained as members.

The Assam Legislative Council approved a committee to suggest amendments to the Local Self-Government Act, 1915. On the basis of the suggestions of the said committee the Local Self-Government Act, 1926 was passed.

In 1927 the strength and composition of the Local Boards were revised in conformity with the Local Self-Government (Amendment) Act of 1926, which provided for three constituencies—Muhammadan, non-Muhammadan and Planters. Under this Act the total strength of Tezpur and Mangaldai Local Boards was raised to 23 each. The strength of the two Local Boards in 1927 was as follows,—Tezpur Local Board: Nominated 4, elected planters 13, Scheduled 6, Non-Muslims 11, Muslims 2; Mangaldai Local Board: Nominated 3, elected planters 20, Scheduled 6, non-Muslims 12, Muslim 2. In 1945 the stren-

gth and composition of the Local Boards were further revised to accommodate the scheduled tribes (plains) who were demanding persistently for more seats. As a result, the number of elected seats was increased and that of the nominated seats was reduced. Other important features of this Act were abolition of the ex-officio element and provision for election of the members from the scheduled tribes.

The Local Self-Government Act, 1953, again revised the composition and strength of the Local Boards. Under this Act Government could nominate not more than two members from among those sections of people who were so far unrepresented. The Government also had the power to reserve some seats for the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes but the proportion of reservation was subject to population strength of the subdivision concerned. The Assam Panchayat Act 1959 which came into force in 1960, abolished the Local Boards.

Functions of Local Boards : Under Local Rates Regulations, 1879, the District Committees were entrusted with different public utility works. The main functions were construction, repair and maintenance of roads and other lines of communication. Improvement of canals, rivers, maintenance of embankment, bridges, repair of school houses, granting of scholarships, training of teachers, and establishment of hospitals, dispensaries, lunatic asylums, tanks, rest houses for travellers were the main functions of the District Committees.

The Local Self-Government Act, 1915 empowered the Local Boards to construct, repair and maintain roads, embankments, bridges, and water canals. Boards were also entrusted with planting of trees by the roadside and removal of the branches of trees hanging over the roads, construction and maintenance of railways and rope ways, and establishment of steamer services as cheap means of communication. They were vested with the power of management of primary and middle vernacular schools. Local Boards could appoint vaccinators and make provisions for sanitation, conservancy protected water supply and drainage system.

The Local Boards had the power to construct and maintain travellers bungalow and destroy dangerous animals and stray dogs. They had also powers of management and control of fairs and festivals, establishment of veterinary dispensaries and of making provision for breeding cattle and horses.

Under the Local Self-Government Act, 1953, the Boards lost the powers to construct the railways and rope ways, but were entrusted with maintenance and management of ferry services.

Sources of Revenue : Before 1874 there was only one amalgamated fund for the welfare of the public. Later on, it was divided into two (i) general fund and (ii) local fund. The local fund consisted of the collection from ferry collection, net tolls from district roads, balance of the convict labour fund, balance of the cattle trespass fund, receipt from fishery, one per cent of the road fund of certain districts, and balance of fund for the improvement of certain government estates. The general fund was utilised for construction of important road and feeder roads. A portion of it was also utilised for metalling the existing roads.

The principal source of revenue of the District Committee which was constituted under Local Rates Regulations of 1879 was the local rates on the annual value of land. The rate was 2 annas per cultivated acre. Of the total collection from local rates $\frac{3}{8}$ th were left for works of provincial importance and the balance $\frac{5}{8}$ th were spent in the district subject to the Government of India's requirement for famine etc. Besides local rates the other sources of revenue of the Local Boards were rents, tolls on ferries, pounds and grants from the government. The Act of 1915 empowered the Local Boards to impose taxes on construction of railways and rope-ways, but the Act, 1953 abolished imposition of these taxes by Boards. The Boards could levy any tax after obtaining previous permission from Government. It was also authorised to impose taxes on cinema hall, circuses, variety shows, tea stalls etc.

Budget : Under the Local Rates Regulations, 1879, the District Committee had to prepare the budget for the Local Boards. In every financial year before the 15th October, they had to submit the budget estimate showing the detailed income and expenditure to the Civil Secretariate. After receiving the approval of the government the District Committees had to prepare a detailed expenditure statement showing expenditure incurred on the improvement of roads and had to submit it to P.W.D. Secretariate. The Chief Commissioner had the right to reject or accept the budget. Before preparation of the budget, the District Committee had to consult the appropriate authority. In 1899, a slightly different procedure was evolved for scrutiny of the budget and issuing sanctions. The Local Boards were to submit the budget first to Deputy Commissioner for his approval

The latter suggested modification but the former had the liberty to follow or reject. The final authority for rejection or acceptance was the Chief Commissioner.

In 1915 some elaborate arrangements were made for scrutiny of the budget. The budget had to be submitted to the Deputy Commissioner who could suggest modification or could despatch it to the Commissioner. If the budget was returned, the Board would meet at special meeting for consideration. The final authority for the rejection of the budget was the Commissioner. In 1953 the power was vested with Government.

Municipalities : The most important institution of local self-government in the urban areas is the Municipality, which has played a significant part in fostering among the people a sense of participation in administration. At present there are two Municipal Boards in Darrang district at Tezpur and Mangaldai.

The first Municipality in Darrang district was Tezpur Municipality, which was formed on 20-12-1893 with an official as its Chairman under the Local Self Government Act, V (B.C.) of 1876. Earlier, in 1849, the Commissioner of Assam sought the permission of Bengal Government for the levy of Municipal tax in certain stations including Mangaldai. The Bengal Government having agreed in principle referred the matter to the Board of Revenue which pointed out to the absence of legislative sanction for the levy of such tax and hence the proposal had to be dropped. These facts, however, make it evident that there were some non-statutory Town Improvement Committees functioning in some towns of Assam where the Magistrates had their headquarters.⁶ These may safely be described as the genuine type of Local self government institutions.⁷

With a view to enable the inhabitants of any place (excluding Calcutta) to establish a Municipal Board, the first Municipal Act, Bengal Act X was passed in 1842. The Act proved inoperative as its introduction in any town required the consent of two-thirds of the householders. The Act was repealed by the Act of XXVI of 1850. This Act was also permissive in nature ; but its introduction in any town was subject to the consent of the inhabitants. Under this Act, on the petition of 113 inhabitants of Gauhati praying for the introduction of the Act, the first statutory Municipal Board at Gauhati

6. V. Venkata Rao, *A hundred years of local-Self Government in Assam* Calcutta 1967, p.37

7. Ibid, p.37.

was established. The Act was not extended to any other town in Assam.

In 1864, the District Municipal Improvement Act, was enacted. Under this Act, Lt. Governor was authorised to extend operation of the Act to any town at his discretion, to determine the administrative area, amount of tax to be levied and to appoint Chairman and Vice-Chairman. The Municipal Board should consist of not less than 7 members and the Executive Engineer and the District Superintendent of Police would be appointed as the Ex-officio members of the Board. The proceeds of the tax were to be utilised for the maintenance of the Police force and improvement of sanitation. After a long discussion as regards to its introduction in the State of Assam, it was extended to the Gauhati town. Some minor amendments in the Act were effected in 1867 after which the District Towns Act, 1868 was passed. This Act aimed at improvement of sanitary condition of towns which were not fit for introduction of District Municipal Improvement Act, 1864.

In 1876, the Government of Assam adopted the Bengal Municipal Act, 1876. Urban areas, under this Act, were categorised into four classes i.e., first and second class municipalities, stations and unions. Under this Act, a second class municipality was established at Tezpur in 1893 and a union at Mangaldai in 1914. In the meantime, the Government of Assam adopted in 1887 the Bengal Municipal Act of 1884 but retained the Municipal Act of 1876 as the new Act did not provide for the establishment of stations and unions which the government did not want to abolish wherever they were established in the State.

Thus the position in Assam was that two Municipal Acts were in force and under them there were three types of institutions viz, municipalities, unions and stations. This caused much administrative inconvenience besides some of the provisions of these Acts were also considered obsolete. Hence a need to simplify the Municipal laws was felt and as a result for the first time, Assam enacted its own Municipal Act of 1923. This Act was substituted by the Assam Municipal Act of 1956.⁸ All the municipalities and towns, now are run in accordance with the provisions laid down in Assam Municipal Act of 1956 and subsidiary rules framed thereunder by the government from time to time. The district of Darrang has at present two Municipalities at Tezpur and Mangaldai.

⁸. Ibid, pp.37-65.

Functions : In the 19th century, the Municipal Boards were entrusted with a few items of works relating to the civic amenities of the people of the urban areas. The area of its activities were gradually expanded particularly during the current century. Under the provisions of the Town Improvement Act, 1850, the Municipal Board was entrusted with the task of making, repairing, cleaning, lighting or watching any public street, road, drain and tank or for the prevention of any sort of nuisance or for improving the said town or its neighbouring areas. The Board had also the power to appoint or manage its officers and could determine the property liable for taxation. The Board also had the power to enter into contracts. The Municipal Act, 1864, retained the same list of functions of the Board and added a few other items. It empowered the Board to remove encroachment and pull down dangerous structures and to frame bye-laws for ensuring better type of local administration. The same idea persisted in the maintenance of police, the payment for its establishment and repayment of interest of the loans taken from the government. In addition to these, it entrusted the Board to undertake all the works of public utility which were calculated to promote the health and comfort for the inhabitants of the town. Accordingly the Board could establish schools, hospitals and dispensaries and run the administration of vaccination. In 1884 the Municipal Boards were relieved of their police functions. More function were enlisted in the existing list which include construction of tramways, laying out of parks, establishment of veterinary dispensaries, libraries, fire brigades and the establishment of benches for trial of offence under Municipal Act. The supply of protected water promoted the health and hygienic conditions of the inhabitants. The Act of 1923 further enlarged the scope of rendering more amenities to the public by the Board. It had entrusted the Municipal Boards the planting and preservation of trees, the maintenance and construction of town-halls and payment of gratuity to its servants. The Act of 1956, though replaced the Act of 1923, retained the list of functions of the Municipal Boards which is multiferious in nature. These include supply of protected and pure drinking water to its inhabitants, construction and maintenance of roads, waterways, and bridges. The Board is entrusted with the maintenance of the proper drainage system. The Board is to arrange for the street lighting, to provide for medical and public health facilities, to maintain proper conservancy and to keep the records of

births and deaths. Besides, the Municipal Board maintains and establishes some schools, libraries and community halls and arranges marketing facilities for the people by providing bazars in each locality. It also maintains a sanitary branch to ensure proper hygienic condition in the town.

The Tezpur Municipal Board was constituted on 20.12.1893 under the Local Self-Government Act V (B.C) of 1876. This Act did not provide for election of municipal commissioners. Instead, the committee was formed with 19 nominated members 8 of whom were nominated by the Chief Commissioner. The Deputy Commissioner who acted as the Chairman, and Civil Surgeon as a general member, were the two ex-officio members of the Board. The Municipality levied tax on houses and lands and collected fees from markets. Tolls from pounds also yielded some revenue. However, the proportion of revenue raised by direct taxation was very small. It provided for four masonry wells and constructed about 14.40 kms of metalled roads and about 9.60 kms of unmetalled roads.

Till 1916 there was not much change in its composition and functions; but in the same year the Local Self Government Act III (B.C) of 1884 was extended to Tezpur Municipality. This Act provided for election of the President and Vice-President as well as municipal commissioners. Accordingly on 4.12.1916 the Deputy Commissioner of Darrang resigned from the Chairmanship of Tezpur Municipality. The Deputy Commissioner and Civil Surgeon remained as ex-officio members of the Board. Since that time the Municipality has been constituted by elections. Although the franchise was very much limited during the pre-Independence days, it has been enlarged after Independence. According to the 1971 Census, Tezpur Municipality had an area of 7.10 sq.kms against 5.10 sq.kms in the 1961 Census. The population of this municipality was 39,870 persons, (males 23,531 and females 16,339) in 1971 against 24,159 persons, (males 15,260 and females 8,899) in 1961, registering a decadal growth of 65.03 per cent.

The present Municipal Board is composed of 14 members of whom 12 are elected by the ratepayers and two are nominated by the Government. It has now one elected Chairman and a Vice-Chairman. The Chairman is the head of the administration. He presides over the meetings of the Board. He is entrusted with the implementation of the schemes taken up by the Board. He is also invested

with the financial powers to manage the affairs of the Municipality. To discharge his duties he maintains a regular office.

Source of Revenue :- The Municipality has various sources of revenue. It regularly receives annual grants from the government. Besides, it levies taxes on holdings, rickshaws, carts, cycles, stalls, open space markets, cinema houses etc.

Mangaldai Municipality : The Mangaldai Municipality is of recent growth. Though Mangaldai was the first district headquarters of Darrang and has been the Sub-divisional headquarters since 1835 nothing worth mentioning was done towards its improvement and it remained a small village on the left bank of the Mangaldai river as late as the early part of the current century. As described by B.C. Allen, it had a population of only 711 persons in 1901. It was only in 1921 that a town committee was formed at Mangaldai. Prior to that there might have been a non-statutory town improvement committee as mentioned earlier to look after its civic affairs.

The Mangaldai Town Committee was converted to a Municipality with effect from 10.4.56. It had 10 wards. The first Municipal Board was constituted with 14 members,—10 elected, 2 nominated and two ex-officio members. The present Municipal Board also has the same strength.

The area of Mangaldai Municipality remained the same 4.95 sq. kms. in the last two censuses of 1971 and 1961, its total population was 12,150 persons (7,048 males and 5,102 females) according to 1971 census.

The following statement shows the income and expenditure of the two Municipalities in the district since 1961-62.

Year	Tezpur Municipality		Mangaldai Municipality	
	Income	Expenditure	Income	Expenditure
1956-57	Rs.2,47,409	Rs.6,41,808	—	—
1957-58	Rs.2,57,554	Rs.6,44,808	—	—
1958-59	Rs.4,06,503	Rs.6,90,149	—	—
1959-60	Rs.4,07,448	Rs.5,91,369	Rs.24,842.49	N.A.
1960-61	Rs.4,41,026	Rs.3,79,935	Rs.20,773.49	N.A.
1961-62	Rs.4,41,026	Rs.7,65,887	Rs.16,182.43	N.A.
1962-63	Rs.6,07,381	Rs.6,18,955	Rs.19,655.93	N.A.
1963-64	Rs.4,63,003	Rs.5,69,536	Rs.10,5653.46	Rs.11,7377
1964-65	Rs.8,73,244	Rs.6,02,694	Rs.98,556	Rs.79,407

Year	Tezpur Municipality		Mangaldai Municipality	
	Income	Expenditure	Income	Expenditure
1966-66	Rs.5,43,273	Rs.7,04,905	—	—
1966-67	Rs.5 75,860	Rs.5,68,192	Rs.99 906	Rs.91,422
1967-68	Rs.6,04,738	Rs.6,60,898	Rs.125912	Rs.11,7814
1968-69	Rs.6,45338	Rs.6,07,391	Rs.12,6000	Rs.14,2769
1969-70	Rs.5,61,165	Rs.29,315	N.A.	N.A.
1970-71	Rs.10,04,539	Rs.7,69,186	N.A.	N.A.

Dhekiajuli Town Committee : Dhekiajuli Town Committee is one of the important town committees of Darrang district. It was constituted on adhoc basis in 1958 with six members nominated by the Government. Regular election was held on 18th April, 1960 for election of 4 members from 4 wards. Two members were nominated by the Government. The total strength of membership of the Town Committee was six. The chairman and the Vice-Chairman were elected by the members. According to the 1971 census it had an area of 5.18 Sq. Kms. with a total population of 10,428 persons, consisting of 6,212 males and 4,216 females. The town Committee has implemented several schemes such as water supply, construction of roads and footpaths and some others for the betterment of the public health.

Kharupatia Town Committee : Kharupatia Town Committee was constituted on 13.12.60 with six members. The town is divided into 4 wards. Four members of the Committee are elected and two are nominated. The Chairman and the Vice-Chairman are elected by the members. The town area comprises 2.36 sq. Kms. The population of the town according to the 1971 census is 10,448, consisting of 6,005 males and 4,443 females.

Tangla Town Committee : 1961 a town committee was constituted at Tangla. It is one of the important marketing centres of Darrang district. The present town area comprises 3.19 sq. kms. According to 1971 census, the town has a populations of 9 572 consisting of 5,675 males and 3,897 females.

Rangapara Town Committee : Rangapara Town Committee was constituted in 1960. The first committee was formed with six members including the Chairman and the Vice Chairman. The commercial importance of Rangapara is quite considerable. According to 1971 Census, its area was 9.07 sq. kms and its population was 11,974 per-

sons 7014 males and 4,960 females.

Vishwanath Charali Town Committee :- It was constituted in 1970 with six members including the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman. According to the 1971 Census the town had an area of 6.02 sq.kms and a total podulation of 9,301 persons of whom 5,223 were males and 4,073 females.

The nature, functions and sources of revenue of the Town Committees are more or less the same as those of the municipalities. The Town Committees also derive their income from taxes levied on holdings, cinema halls, rice mills, flour mills, hotels, restaurants, bakeries, bamboo, firewood and timber godowns, pony carts, rickshaws, markets, etc. The Town Committees receive recurring and non-recurring grants from the Government.

One important duty of the Town Committee is to maintain roads and bridges under its jurisdictions and to look after the sanitation and public health. All the Town Committees are now run in accordance with provisions laid down in the Assam Municipal Act, 1956 and subsidiary rules framed thereunder by the Goverhment from time to time. The following table shows the income and expenditure on the Town Committees in the district (in rupees).

Year	Name of Town Committee									
	Kharupatia		Tangla		Dhekiajuli		Rangapara		Vishwanath Charali	
	Inco-me	Expen-diture	Inco-me	Expen-diture	Inco-me	Ex-pendi-ture	Inco-me	Ex-pendi-ture	Inco-me	Ex-pendi-ture
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1966-67	90370	111570	67431	57586	115476	96134	—	—	—	—
1967-68	76692	79533	67578	77586	104625	106833	—	—	—	—
1968-69	112613	78366	78366	55150	134900	83073	—	—	—	—
1969-70	97270	111670	72007	92843	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	—	—
1970-71	139516	136950	94621	91085	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	—	—

(The two town Committees of Rangapara and Vishwanath Charali were established recently in 1968 and 1970 respectively).

Panchayats : Panchayats in Assam have a long and chequered history. We have already discussed about some forms of local self-government in ancient Assam. The Panchayats, however, were not officially recognised during the early part of the British adminis-

tration in Assam. As early as in 1871, the Governor-General in-Council vote the Municipal Bill which incorporated certain provisions authorising the Panchayats to take up works of water supply and conservancy services. The Governor-General in-Council believed that time had not arrived for creation of the administrative machinery for the villages. It was only in 1915 that provisions were made under the Local Self-Government Act for the formation of the really effective village organisations requiring co-operation and sympathy of the Local Boards. The Panchayat system established under the Act of 1915 proved to be failure as these were not autonomous bodies in the true sense of the term. The Panchayat Act, 1926, removed some of the difficulties faced by the Panchayats. The objects of this Act was to provide a machinery capable of giving a scope to the villagers to participate in the administration of the village. However these Panchayats also failed to become effective for various reasons including some lacunae of the Act.

For the first time after Independence, the Assam Rural Panchayat Act was passed in 1948. In order to constitute the truly effective Panchayats, the districts were divided into some Rural Panchayats, comprising a number of villages. Each village had a Primary Panchayat. Election to the Panchayats was held on the basis of adult franchise.

In Darrang district the first Rural Panchayat was established at Chutia in the Tezpur Subdivision in 1949. The Chutia Rural Panchayat had 13 Primary Panchayats under it. Some other Rural Panchayats were also constituted in the district. In the district level there were a District Development Committee and a District Development Board. Like wise in the Subdivision level there were a number of Development Committees and Boards. The State Government decided to rationalise the Boards and Committees by reducing the number of Boards and Committees and decided that there should be two Boards in place of many on subdivision level viz. the Subdivisional Development Committee and the Sub-divisional Development Board. The first one consisted of the official members only but the other consisted of both official and non-official members.

Two Sub-divisional Committees in Darrang district in both the subdivisions were formed in 1954. The Rural Panchayats were reconstituted on *Mauza* basis. The reconstituted Rural Panchayats, with numerous Primary Panchayats started functioning since 1955-56.

In accordance with the instruction from the Planning Commission the State Government of Assam reconstituted the existing District and Subdivisional Development Boards in 1957. The District and Subdivisional Development Committees were allowed to continue as before. This time the Development Boards were made more broad-based comprising the members from many official and non-official organisations.

Three-tier Panchayat System : The three tier *Panchayati Raj* in Assam was under the Panchayats Act, 1959, in pursuance of the 'Balwantrai Mehta Commission' and Assam was the first state in India to introduce it in all the plains districts. The main object of the Act was to launch a state wide programme of democratic decentralisation. With this end in view, the Act was given effect to from 1st October, 1959. The Act provided for three-tier Panchayat organisation; (1) the Gaon Panchayat at the village level, (2) the Anchalik Panchayat at the Block level and (3) the Mahkuma Parishad at the subdivisional level.

It has been noted earlier that after the passing of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1959 the erstwhile Local Boards and Rural Panchayats were abolished and their functions devolved on the three-tier Panchayat system. Under this Act Darrang had 302 Gaon Panchayats, 13 Anchalik Panchayats, and 2 Mahkuma Parishads, one at Tezpur and the other at Mangaldai. Out of the total 302 Gaon Panchayats 143 were in the Tezpur subdivision and 159 in Mangaldai subdivision and of 13 Anchalik Panchayats, Tezpur subdivision had 7, and Mangaldai 6. It should however, be noted that almost every Anchalik Panchayat was co-terminus with one Development Block and the Block Development Officer was the ex-officio Secretary of that Anchalik Panchayat. The particulars of the Anchalik Panchayats have been given in the appropriate place.

Organisation of Panchayats : Under the Act of 1959 Gaon Sabha consisted of one or more villages having a population of about 2,500 on the average. The Gaon Panchayat was an elected body consisting of one President, one Vice-President and 11 to 13 members elected by direct voting. The term of the office of the President as well as of the members was for four years. The Panchayat Act, 1959 introduced at the initial stage the system of open voting which was found defective and therefore was replaced by the secret voting. Since 1964, the marking system or secret voting had been introduced in the district for Panchayat elections. The president of the Gaon Panchayat is responsible for due maintenance of the office;

The representatives of the Anchalik Panchayats were elected directly by the electors of the different Gaon Sabhas falling under the jurisdiction of the concerning Anchalik Panchayat. One representative is to be elected to the Anchalik Panchayat by the Chairman of the Co-operative Societies. All members of the State Legislative Assembly as well as the members of the Parliament whose constituency fell under the jurisdiction of the Anchalik Panchayat were ex-officio members without having any right to vote. Further, the State Government also could appoint officers as members of the Anchalik Panchayats but such ex-officio members had no right to vote. In addition to the above, there was also provision under the Act, for co-option of one member each from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, if none was elected.

In this context, it may however, be recalled that the Panchayat Act, 1959, prohibited the President of a Gaon Panchayat from being a member of the Anchalik Panchayat. Thus, if a President of a Gaon Panchayat was elected to the Anchalik Panchayat, automatically he ceased to be the President of the Gaon Panchayat. But in 1964, the Act was suitably amended and the Presidents of the Gaon Panchayats situated within the jurisdiction of the Anchalik Panchayat were made ex-officio members of the Anchalik Panchayat. Again the Panchayat Act, 1959, did not provide for the co-option of woman. In order to secure proper representation of women, the Panchayat (Amendment) Act, 1964, provided that there should be at least two co-opted women members in the Panchayat, if no women was elected.

The Mahkuma Parishad consisted of the Presidents of the Anchalik Panchayats, Deputy Commissioner/Sub-divisional Officer as the case may be, Member of Legislative Assembly, Member of Parliament and Chairmans of the Co-operative Central Bank. The Chairmans of the Municipal Boards/Town Committees and the representative of Central Co-operative Bank were ex-officio members, and therefore, have no right to vote or the right to office. Further, if no person belonging to the Scheduled Castes or Scheduled Tribes as the case may be, was a member, the Mahkuma Parishad was authorised to co-opt such member from amongst such communities.

Functions of the Panchayats : The Panchayat Act, 1959 distributed the functions and powers between the Gaon Panchayats and Anchalik Panchayats as follows :

The Gaon Panchayats were entrusted with the cleaning and

lighting of streets, and conservancy, burial and burning grounds, play grounds and other public recreational centres, control of public latrines, control of communicable diseases, medical relief, reclamation of unhealthy places, maternity and child welfare, grazing grounds, vaccination, control of buildings, planting of trees, cattle pounds, construction of roads, control of fairs, land management, community listening, public radios, library and reading rooms, education upto middle school, youth clubs, theatres, watch and ward, fairs and festivals, maintenance of land records, census of all kinds, births and deaths, distribution of relief, and other development works.

The Anchalik Panchayats were entrusted with the sanitation and conservancy, anti-malaria operation, control of communicable diseases, medical relief, reclamation of unhealthy places, maternity and child welfare, vaccination, cattle pounds, control of buildings, planting of trees, construction and maintenance of roads control of fairs, dharmasalas, irrigation works, control of slaughter house, ware-house, land management, youth clubs, theatres, damages and offensive trades, supervision of Gaon Panchayats, approval of budgets of Panchayats, agency functions, relief of the distress and education above the Middle School.

The Mahkuma Parishad scrutinised and approved the budgets submitted by different Anchalik Panchayats within its jurisdiction. The decision of the Mahkuma Parishad was final. The Mahkuma Parishad was also responsible for reviewing the works of the Anchalik Panchayats from time to time. The Parishad also advised the Deputy Commissioner/Sub-divisional Officer in the distribution of Sub-divisional Rural Development Fund. It also advised the Government in drawing up of the district plans. It was also concerned with the co-ordination of the work of the Anchalik Panchayats falling under the jurisdiction of the Mahkuma Parishad.

The names of the Anchalik Panchayats of the district, subdivision-wise are given below ; in Tezpur subdivision- (1) Vishwanath Anchalik Panchayat, (2) Nauduar Anchalik Panchayat, (3) Gabharu Anchalik Panchayat, (4) Dhekiajuli Anchalik Panchayat, (5) Balipara Anchalik Panchayat, (6) Chayduar Anchalik Panchayat, and (7) Behali Anchalik Panchayat; in Mangaldai subdivision (8) Udalguri Anchalik Panchayat, (9) Khoirabari Anchalik Panchayat, (10) Sipajhar Anchalik Panchayat, (11) Kalaigaon Anchalik Panchayat. (12) Dalgaon

Anchalik Panchayat, and (13) Majbat Anchalik Panchayat. All the Anchalik Panchayats in the district worked as a unit of local self-government.

(1) Nauduar Anchalik Panchayat : The Nauduar Anchalik Panchayat was formed in May 1960. The said Panchayat consisted of 5 mauzas, namely, Chutia, Nagsankar, Borbhagia, Chillabandha, and Morhadal, and covered 117 villages and an area of 671.54 sq kms. It had 22 Gaon Panchayats under it. According to the 1961 Census the total population under this Anchalik Panchayat was 63,551 persons. The headquarters of the Anchalik Panchayat were at Jamuguri.

(2) Behali Anchalik Panchayat : Behali Anchalik Panchayat was formed in 1959. The Panchayat consisted of two mauzas namely Behali and Baghmara. It covered 16 Gaon Panchayats, 106 villages and an area of 515.05 sq kms. The total population of this Panchayat was 59,229 persons in 1961. The headquarters of the Anchalik Panchayat were at Bargang.

(3) Dhekiajuli Anchalik Panchayat : The Dhekiajuli Anchalik Panchayat was formed in 1960. It comprised three mauzas, namely, Dhekiajuli, Barchola and Misamari. The area of the Panchayat was 824.39 sq kms. and its total population was 88,695 persons, according to the Census of 1961. Within the jurisdiction of this Anchalik Panchayat there were 24 Gaon Panchayats and 246 villages. The headquarters of the Anchalik Panchayat were at Dhekiajuli.

(4) Gabharu Anchalik Panchayat : The Gabharu Anchalik Panchayat covered an area of 693.13 sq kms. and had a population of 61,177 persons. It consisted of five mauzas namely Bhairavpad, Mahabhairav, Bihaguri, Naharbari, and Bargaon having 146 villages and 24 Gaon Panchayats under it. It was constituted in 1960. The headquarters of the Panchayat were at Bihaguri.

(5) Balipara Anchalik Panchayat : The Balipara Anchalik Panchayat comprised 5 mauzas, namely Haleswar, Garaimari, Balipara, Bahbari and Charduar, and an area of 752.05 sq kms. There were 173 villages and 22 Gaon Sabhas under it. The total population under the Panchayat according to the 1961 Census was 10,478 persons. Out of the total population 37% were tea garden population and 6% tribals. The headquarters of the Panchayat were at Dekargaon. The Panchayat was functioning since 1960.

(6) Vishwanath Anchalik Panchayat : The Vishwanath Anchalik Panchayat was formed in 1960 consisting of Vishwanath and Sakom-

atha mauzas. There were 12 Gaon Panchayats and 77 villages under it. The Panchayat covered an area of 331.35 sq kms. and its total population according to the 1961 census was 53,415 persons. The headquarters of the Panchayat were at Burigaon.

(7) Chayduar Anchalik Panchayat : It was formed in 1960 with four mauzas namely - Gohpur, Kalangpur, Brahmajan, and Helem. It covered an area of 603.16 sq kms. 23 Gaon Sabhas and 173 villages. The total population of the Panchayat, according to the 1961 Census was 69,668 persons. The headquarters of the Panchayat were at Helem.

(8) The Kalaigaon Anchalik Panchayat : The Kalaigaon Anchalik Panchayat was formed in the year 1960 with Rangamati, Dahi, Chopai, and Kalaigaon mauzas. Its headquarter were at Mangaldai. The area covered by the Anchalik Panchayat was 570 sq. kms. In 1961, total population of this Panchayat was 61,697 persons. There were 25 Gaon Panchayats and 180 villages within the jurisdiction of this Panchayat.

(9) Dalgaon Sialmari Anchalik Panchayat : The office of the Dalgaon Sialmari Anchalik Panchayat was located at Kharupatia and it covered an area of 573.53 sq kms. Three mauzas namely—Dalgaon, Sialmari, and Samabari fell within the jurisdiction of this Panchayat. 194 villages and 31 Gaon Sabhas were under this Anchalik Panchayat. According to the 1961 Census, there were 83,774 people under the jurisdiction of the Panchayat.

(10) Sipajhar Anchalik Panchayat : Sipajhar Anchalik Panchayat consisted of Dipila, Bonmajha, Lokrai, Rainakuchi, Hindughopa and Sipajhar mauzas of Mangaldai subdivision covering 144 villages and an area of 401.55 sq kms. There were 23 Gaon Panchayats under this Anchalik Panchayat which has a population of 39,328 persons according to the 1961 Census. Its headquarters were at Sipajhar.

(11) Khoirabari Anchalik Panchayat : It consisted of five mauzas namely-Sekhar, Chinakuna, Sarabari, Majikuchi and Silpota. It covered 234 villages and an area of 666.83 sq kms. In 1961, the total population of the Panchayat stood at 73,218 persons. It was formed in 1959 with its headquarters at Khoirabari.

(12) Udalguri Anchalik Panchayat : Udalguri Anchalik Panchayat was formed in 1960. It comprised Harisinga, Dakua, Ambagan, Udalguri mauzas, and covered 223 villages and an area of 691.35 sq kms. predominated by plains tribal people. In 1961 its total population

was 60,334 persons. The headquarters of the Panchayat were at Udalguri. There were 22 Gaon Panchayats under this Panchayat.

(13) Majbat Anchalik Panchayat : This Anchalik Panchayat with its headquarters at Majbat was formed in 1960 and covered three mauzas namely Orang, Barsilajhar, and Dalgaon-East. It had an area of 511.43 sq. kms. with 216 villages and 30 Gaon Sabhas. According to the 1961 Census, the total population of it was 61,826.

The above analysis shows that the thirteen Anchalik Panchayats of the district covered 7787.23 sq. kms., 2,230 villages, and 302 Gaon Sabhas. It may be noted here that the Panchayat Act, 1959 has now been replaced by the new Panchayat Act 1972, which has introduced two-tier system in place of the three-tier system with the object of ensuring greater democratic decentralisation of power and of building leadership in rural areas.

Under the Act of 1959 the Panchayats derived their income mainly from grants-in-aid, taxation, and remunerative assests. Though grants-in-aid is comparatively easy to obtain for augmenting resources, it cuts at the root of the ideas of self-help which is the essence of the Community Development Programme. Further, grants-in-aid always entail certain restrictions in respect of the addition to the funds of the Panchayats. Taxation also cannot obviously bring considerable income in view of the conditions obtaining in the villages. Thus creation of remunerative assests is the only dependable way of ensuring the permanent source of income to the Panchayats.

Income of Gaon Panchayats : It has been noticed that the average annual income of Gaon Panchayats varied from Rs. 1,500/- to Rs. 3,000/-. But considering the volume of works that a Gaon Panchayat was required to execute this amount fell far short of the requirement. Though the Gaon Panchayats were empowered to impose taxes, the avenues for elastic taxes were very few. In order to obviate these difficulties, the share of land revenue payable to Gaon Panchayats and Anchalik Panchayats was raised from 25% to 37%. Even then some of the Panchayats could not meet the obligatory expenditure like pay and allowances of staff etc. As such an Equalisation Fund was created by crediting 2% of the land revenue with a view to helping such Panchayats with additional allocations.

In the district of Darrang, some of the Gaon and Anchalik Panchayats derived the major portion of their revenue from *hats* and

bazars. Moreover, according to the Assam Panchayat Act, 1959, a Gaon Panchayat could impose taxes on brick or concrete buildings, supply of water, sale of firewood and thatch, conservancy, lighting, and slaughter houses. It could impose cess or fees on registration of cattle sale within the local area, licence for starting private *hats*, tea stalls, hotels, sweetmeat shops and restaurants, collection of hides and bones, minor *hats*, surcharge on duty for the transfer of immovable property.

Similarly, an Anchalik Panchayat could impose the following taxes and charges in addition to the existing local rates collected from the area directly administered by the Anchalik Panchayats : (a) tax on fisheries allotted to the Anchalik Panchayat, (b) water rate for recovery of cost of minor irrigation works taken up within an Anchalik Panchayat and such levy as may be necessary for the purpose of the maintenance and repair of such works, and (c) fee for minor *hats* as prescribed. Further, it could impose tax on (a) cultivable land unnecessarily lying fallow for two consecutive years, at a rate not exceeding twenty five paise per standard *bigha* being payable jointly or severally by those who are in possession of such land, (d) on brick or concrete buildings, supply of water, conservancy and lighting, at such rate as prescribed in the area directly administered by the Anchalik Panchayat. An Anchalik Panchayat could impose any fee on licence for cinema halls, circuses, professional variety shows, fairs, confectionary and bakery, saw mills and timber depots, bamboo stalls, oil and rice mills in addition to licence fees for tea stalls, hotels, restaurants, sweetmeat shops and collection of hides and bones within the jurisdiction of the Anchalik Panchayat in the manner as prescribed.

In discussing the financial aspects of the Panchayats mention must be made about the Assam Rural Development Fund constituted under section 64 of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1959. The Fund was administered by the State Government through the Director of Panchayats, Assam and was held in his personal ledger account at the Shillong treasury.

Payments from the Assam Rural Development Fund was made to :-

- 1) Subdivisional Rural Development Fund,
- 2) Anchalik Panchayat Fund,
- 3) Gaon Panchayat Fund,

- (4) Any organisation or body of individuals, and
- (5) Any individual directly through the Subdivisional Rural Development Fund.

So far as the Subdivisional Rural Development Fund is concerned, it was administered by the Deputy Commissioner or the Subdivisional Officer as the case may be and was held in the personal ledger account at the treasury or sub-treasury. In the district of Darrang there were two Subdivisional Rural Development Funds, one at Tezpur and the other at Mangaldai and they were administered by the Deputy Commissioner and Subdivisional Officer respectively.

Expenses of Mahkuma Parishad : The expenses of the Mahkuma Parishad for establishment charges, equipments, contingencies, allowances and honoraria including other incidental charges thereto were charged to the Assam Rural Development Fund.

Gaon Panchayat Fund : Similarly, every Gaon and Anchalik Panchayat had its fund known as Gaon Panchayat and Anchalik Panchayat Fund respectively. A Gaon Panchayat Fund was utilised to meet charges in connection with their duties under this Act. The Fund of the Gaon Panchayat consisted of taxes collected by the Gaon Panchayat, contribution from the Government including a share of the land revenue, the entire local rates collected from the area of the Gaon Sabha, contribution from private individuals or local authorities etc.

Anchalik Panchayat Fund : An Anchalik Panchayat Fund was administered by the Block Development Officer who was the ex-officio Secretary of the Anchalik Panchayat. He kept this fund in a current account with a treasury or the State Bank or in the Assam Co-operative Apex Bank and/or also in the Postal Savings Bank, if so directed by the State Government.

An Anchalik Fund was generally made up of all sums collected by the Anchalik Panchayat through taxation or assigned to the Anchalik Panchayat by State Government as well as grants from the Union or State Government, including share of the land revenue which shall not be less than ten per cent of the net receipts after providing for the agents' commission, public donations and contributions by Local Authorities.

Budget preparation of the Gaon and Anchalik Panchayat : According to the Assam Panchayat Act, 1959, every Gaon and Anchalik Panchayat was required to submit annual budgets showing the pro-

bable receipts and expenditures it proposed to incur and might from time to time furnish a supplementary estimate providing any modification which it might deem advisable to make in the distribution of the amount so revised and expended in each financial year in the case of a Gaon Panchayat to the Anchalik Panchayat and in the case of an Anchalik Panchayat to the Mahkuma Parishad for approval. The new Panchayat Act, 1972 has come into operation from 5th May, 1973. It has changed over to two tier system of Panchayats instead of the former three tier system, the intermediary Anchalik Panchayat having been abolished. It envisages in the sphere of preparation and execution of development schemes democratic decentralisation of powers. Under this Act, the State Government can transfer any work of local institutions as development schemes of different development departments such as Public Works Department, Public Health, Education, Industry Welfare, Veterinary, Agriculture with minor irrigation, Co-operative and Revenue with Forest together with fund, officers and staff to the Mahkuma Parishad for execution supervision and maintenance. The Mahkuma Parishad within its territorial jurisdiction and will be a superior body to be formed with elected councillors from each constituency in the Gaon Panchayats besides other ex-officio members and will have a President and a Chief Executive Councillor elected by the councillors. The Chief Executive Councillor will be the executive head and will be invested with the requisite financial powers. He will be assisted in execution of his duties by a State Government Officer as the Secretary of the Mahkuma Parishad. In Darrang district there will be two Mahkuma Parishads at Tezpur and Mangaldai and a number of Gaon Panchayats as will be determined by the Deputy Commissioner or the Subdivisional Officer of Mangaldai within their respective jurisdiction as empowered by the Act.

CHAPTER—XV

EDUCATION AND CULTURE

(a) Historical background :

History is silent about the system of education that was prevalent in ancient times in the area constituting the present district of Darrang. As a part of the ancient kingdom of Kamarupa, this region had a close cultural link with the rest of India. This proposition is borne out by the mythological accounts, numerous archaeological remains and a mass of literary evidence.¹ The rulers of Kamarupa were noted for their Sanskrit culture. According to Nidhanpur inscription, Narayanvarman (484-510 A.D.) of the Varman dynasty, was a scholar. The Gauhati grant (V.II) eulogises Purandara-pala with the epithet 'Sukavi'. The *Nitikusuma*, a work on the statecraft based on *Sukraniti* was composed by him.² Other rulers of the Pala dynasty like Harsapala were also noted scholars. The names of the rulers of Kamarupa were also associated with the district of Darrang. People from this part of the country visited far off places like Navadwip and Varanasi which were centres of classical learning. Scholars and learned men from the rest of the country visited and often settled permanently in this land and worked for diffusion of the Aryan culture. The physical barriers no doubt stood on the way of free communication between Kamarupa and the rest of India; but there was no barrier to the spread of knowledge and culture.

The people of this region basked under the sunshine of the Aryan culture and civilisation and the *Gurukula* system of education was common both in Kamarupa and other parts of India. Existence of some *Tols* in different parts of the State provides an example of *Gurukula* education in Assam.³ Here "those who had a thirst for knowledge 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."⁴ Sanskrit was the vehicle of thought and expression, and lessons were imparted in various branches of classical learning such as grammar, astronomy, law (*samhita*), poetry and philosophy (*Vedanta*, *Sankhya*, *Veda* etc.). The students received their education in the dormitories managed by their *Guru* (teacher). Education was free. The pupils were not required to pay the tuition fee but usually offered voluntary gifts called *Guru Dakshina*, on completion of their studies. Education was not a matter of state policy but a voluntary enterprise of teachers and free from any official interference.⁵ But higher education was generally restricted to the Brahmins. These *Gurukulas* or *Tols* further expanded and assumed popular forms during the Ahom days.

With the spread of Neo-Vaishnavism in the sixteenth century, a new institution called *satra*, gradually developed in different parts of the State and became a potent source of education and cultural activities. In the words of S. N. Sarma, "the cultural history of Assam in respect of the fine arts and crafts of education and learning since the beginning of the sixteenth century till the advent of the British, largely developed centering round *Vaishnava* movement which in turn found expression through the *satra* institution".⁶ Besides *Namghars* (prayer halls), these *satras* used to maintain Sanskrit schools and the services of reputed teachers were requisitioned to run these schools. Thus a *satra* was not only a religious institution but also a school and library and encouraged the spread of education among the masses. *Vaishnavite* movement also gave fillip to the development and study of Assamese language. A number of Sanskrit works, particularly religious scriptures, were rendered into Assamese and gradually Assamese language took the place of Sanskrit as a medium of instruction and expression. In the *tols* and *satras* education on the subjects, both secular and spiritual, was generally imparted. The curriculum of studies included Sanskrit literature, grammar, philosophy, law, astrology, the *Vedas*, the *Bhagavata*, *Gita* and the *Purans*. Much stress was laid on memorisation of *sutras* and commentaries. Subsequently with the increase of the number of Muslim population *Madrasahs* were opened. Both in *tols* and

1. For details see the History Chapter.

2. P.C. Choudhury : *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.*, Gauhati, 1959. p. 396.

3. There were 11 Nos. of *Tols* for Sanskrit teaching in Darrang district in 1970-71.

4. H.K. Borpujari, an article, *A short History of Higher Education in Assam (1826-1900)*, published in Golden Jubilee Volume, Cotton College, Gauhati, 1951-52. p.3.

5. S.C. Majumdar : *Education in Assam*, p.5.

6. S.N.Sarma—*Aspects of the Heritage of Assam*, p.55.

Madrassas, the three 'Rs' were also taught but in the *Madrassas* Urdu and Islamic learning were additional subjects.

But by the beginning of the nineteenth century these *satras* due to the decline of former royal patronage ceased to be important educational institutions. "The history of the *satra* institution since the beginning of the nineteenth century was marked by a growing spirit of conservatism and orthodoxy in place of catholicity which characterised the early history of the institution. Women and so called socially backward people were debarred from entering the prayer-halls of the *satras*."⁷ Intolerance towards the beliefs of other sects, undue emphasis on anything bearing the stamp of tradition, superstition, lack of missionary zeal on the part of *Satradhikars* and their assistants and similar trends were the causes of the malice from which the institution suffered, despite the brilliant contributions it made in the cultural life of the people. The *satra* no longer enjoys the same enviable status which it used to do formerly.

Beginning of Western Education : Education in Assam at the close of the Ahom rule was in doldrums due to the confusion created by civil strifes, insurrections, Burmese aggression, and depredations of the hill tribes. As such, when the British took over the possession of Assam, education reached its lowest ebb. No doubt there were some *to/s* where instructions were imparted by the *Pundits* and the attainments of some of these *to/s* in the words of Prof. Lidden, on the whole were 'respectable'. Initially the British government were not enthusiastic about the introduction of English education but were inclined to promote indigenous system of education. Accordingly Mr. Scott, the then Agent to the Governor General, North East Frontier, obtained in 1826 the sanction of the Government of India for the establishment of a number of schools in Assam. Eleven schools were established which were mostly in lower Assam.⁸ Each teacher was required to teach 30 pupils in return for which he was given 30 *puras* of rent free land. In these institutions ordinarily the only language taught was Sanskrit and the curriculum consisted of the study of arithmetic, astronomy and medicine. In 1833 Lieutenant Mathie, the Collector of Central Assam, found in a school in "Desh Darrang (Mangaldai) the curriculum consisting of the *Ratnamala* (grammar), *Kubhee* (poetry), *Streety* (smrity), *Bhagavat*, *Silabati*

7. Ibid, p. 55.

8. These were at Cauhati, Nilachal, Naduar, Patee Darrang, Hajo, Bajali, Seela, Vishwanath, Nowgong and Desh Darrang (Mangaldai).

(*Lilabati*), and *Batis* (Medicine)."⁹

Mr. Jenkins, the then Commissioner of Assam felt that education in these schools served no useful purpose and he recommended the resumption of rent free grants of the death of existing teachers. He submitted a scheme for the establishment of English school in Assam. The estimated cost of maintenance was rupees twelve thousand per annum. Under this scheme every Sadar Station—Gauhati, Tezpur Nowgong and Vishwanath, was to get one English School under European functionaries. School buildings were to be constructed with the help of the convicts of the local jails. Meanwhile in 1835. Governor-General-in-Council decided that schools should be established for the promotion of European literature and science amongst Indians and the proposal of Mr. Jenkins which reached just at this time was readily approved by the General Committee of Public Instruction.

However, for various reasons these schools could not attract the indigenous people at the beginning. The aftermath of the turmoil unleashed by the Burmese invaders had led to the virtual closure of all the traditional educational institutions. The Ahom nobility was also not very much enthusiastic about the modern education imparted in the English schools. One more important feature of the educational system of the period was the introduction of Bengali in schools as well as in offices. This measure alienated the indigenous people from the ruling section and the former mostly kept themselves apart from the precincts of the schools. The British rulers inducted a large number of Bengalis as clerks and petty officers in all districts of Assam and the local people were generally deprived of the benefits of employment. Gradually the popular zeal for education was whetted up by the prospects of Government jobs such as *Mandals*, who were petty Government officials. In the court also the services of English knowing lawyers were indispensable. According to the report of the Public Instruction, 1857-58, a number of schools were established in the interior area, and the villagers not only erected buildings but also helped in the management of the schools. The number of pupils in these schools in the Darrang district, according to the Report was 86 in 1857-58. During the same year, to encourage these institutions Government also introduced a scheme of subsidy, under which a grant of Re-1-per mensem was made for every ten boys under instruction.¹⁰

9. H.K. Borpujari, *Assam in the Days of the Company, 1826-1858*. p. 276,
10. Ibid pp. 275-80

Thus Mr. Jenkins did the pioneering work in propagating western education amongst the Assamese. He was also successful in achieving his objectives of paving the ground of training local Assamese youths for filling up the vacancies in government offices. In this he was primarily motivated by the needs of administration that required expertise in English. He was greatly alarmed at the sight of non-Assamese in almost all the Government offices and wrote to the Government of India.

"These few (Assamese) in their present uneducated state do not suffice to carry on the duties of our courts and the offices which are mostly filled by natives of Sylhet and Rangpore. So that the old families of Assam are still losing influence in their own native province from being elbowed (out from) those situations which lead to power or decent maintenance. This state of things appear to me pregnant with evil and I know no other method by which it could be remedied than by the Government taking some active measure to provide instruction for the Assamese youths unit."¹¹ Mr. Jenkins was also of the view that the responsibility of imparting education in a backward province like Assam, should be shouldered by the State. "To entrust the diffusion of knowledge," he observed, "to the natives who were universally poor, would approach nearly to parental neglect of children."¹²

Among the unofficial organisations, the Christian Missionaries rendered invaluable service to the cause of spreading of western education among the Assamese. A number of vernacular schools were established by these Missionaries to encourage the study of English as well as the Assamese language. In this regard, the contribution made by the American Baptist Mission is notable. No doubt in it they were mainly inspired in propagating the gospel but their efforts were no less responsible in spreading education in the district.

Inspired by their proselytising spirit the Missionaries carried on their activities. Gauhati, Sibsagar and Nowgong became the important centres of their activities. They opened hospitals and schools for boys and girls which were uncommon in those days. They also espoused the cause of Assamese language. Brown, Bronson and Farewell, the trio laid the foundation of Christian Assamese literature.

11. Shri H.K. Borpujari, An article, *A short History of Higher Education in Assam* (1826-1900), published in the *Golden Jubilee Volume*, 1951-52, Cotton College, Gauhati, p.6.

12. Ibid. p.7.

They published various text books for school children besides those meant for propagating the message of Christ. Bronson's monumental work is a *Dictionary of Assamese language; Assamese to Assamese and to English*. This is the earliest Assamese dictionary. Brown translated the *New Testament* into Assamese, wrote a Grammar of the Assamese language, and collected a fairly good number of Assamese manuscripts. Nidhi Levi is credited with a historical work, a number of story books and the rendering of the Indian Penal Code into Assamese. The Missionaries published in January, 1846, the *Arunodai*, the first Assamese monthly which was not merely a vehicle of their religious propaganda but also a magazine of general interest. "Disseminating western thought and learning, the *Arunodai* inspired the younger generation and paved the way of an intellectual awakening"¹³. The contribution of these and few others both Assamese and non-Assamese backed by the untiring efforts of the benevolent Commissioner Major Jenkins prepared the ground and sowed the seeds which germinated and bore fruit early in the next century.

In 1835 the district had only three small public schools besides a few numbers of private schools, and the state of affairs of education was stated to be 'deplorable'. By 1847-48, the number of primary schools rose to 8 and the next few years showed very little progress. Mill was deputed by the Governor of Bengal to visit different Sadar Stations of Assam and submit a report dealing with education among other things.¹⁴ The value of Mr. Mill's report is enhanced by his impartial and sympathetic comment on some of the problems which vitally affected the interest of the Assamese people. At the time of his visit there were only 9 schools of all grades in the district. However, the position began to improve slightly and by 1874-75, the district had 84 schools with an enrolment of 2,231 students. Of these 84 schools, 6 were in the Secondary group and the rest 78 were primary schools with an enrolment of 315 and 1,916 students respectively. In the subsequent years the number of secondary schools rose to 8 but again came down to 5 in 1900-01, while the number of students in these schools increased to 599 in that year. The number of primary schools during the same period almost doubled and the number of students increased to 4095 in that year. Thus in 1900-01, the percentage of school-going boys and girls to the total of their age also increased, boys showing an increase from 14.56% in 1880-81 to 17.62% in 1900-01,

13. H.K. Borpujari, *Assam in the Days of the Company, 1826-1857*, pp. 269-285.

14. S.K. Bhuyan, *Early British Relation with Assam*, 1949, pp.33-35.

and girls from 0.28% to 0.43% respectively.

The schools of the district were divided into five distinct grades, viz., High, Middle English, Middle Vernacular, Upper Primary, and Lower Primary. High Schools were recognised by the Calcutta University and they prepared the students for the Entrance Examination. The boys were taught from the earliest stage of their education upto Entrance course as was prescribed by the University of Calcutta. English was the medium of instruction in the first four classes of High Schools. In the lower classes and other schools, vernacular was the medium of instruction. The course of instruction in the Middle English and Middle Vernacular schools was the same except that English was taught in the former and not in the latter. Primary schools were divided into upper and lower but the former was stated to be dying out. The standard of instruction was not upto the mark and efforts were made to improve the same by raising the rates of pay of the teachers to Rs.8/-per mensem for certificated and Rs. 5/-per mensem for uncertificated teachers supplemented by capitation grants at rates ranging from 3 annas to 6 annas for pupils in three highest classes.¹⁵

(b) Literacy and Educational Standard :

As discussed earlier the conditions prevailing in the 19th century were less than congenial for the growth of literacy in the district. Although schools were opened in different parts of the district, the orthodox Hindus were sceptical about the outcome of education that was divested of the long cherished social values. To the tribal people the education did not appear to be need oriented. However the 20th century witnessed a remarkable change in the social outlook and phenomenal growth of literacy in the district.

In the Census of 1901, 52 of the male population and 3 of the female population per mille were returned as literate. Prior to this census the population was classified into learning persons, literate persons and illiterate persons. As this classification was beset with loopholes, it was abandoned in the Census of 1901, which indicated a slight rise of literacy as a whole in the district since 1881.¹⁶

A steady rise is maintained in the district since 1911. During the decade of 1901-11, there were 34 literate persons per mille in the district. Literacy among males increased to 62 showing a rise of 10

over that of 1901 but the literacy among female remained static. In the two subsequent decennial censuses literacy per mille as a whole rose to 52 and 65 and that of male and female to 91 and 7, and to 109 and 11 respectively. The following table shows the details of literacy in the district as per census of 1911, 1921, 1931.¹⁷

Number per mille who are literate											
Year	All ages total	Male	Fe- male	Male	0-10 Fe- male	10-15 Male	Fe- male	15-20 Male	Fe- male	20 & above Male	Female
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1911	34	62	3	8	1	53	4	86	7	87	3
1921	52	91	7	24	4	73	10	120	14	109	6
1931	65	109	11	41	9	79	16	141	18	126	10

During the next two decades of 1931-51 male literacy per mille in the district increased from 109 in 1931 to 252 in 1951 and female literacy from 9 to 53 females. In 1951, the percentage of literacy in the district was 16.09 and that of male and female 25.31 and 5.33 respectively. This percentage of literacy further rose to 22.9% in 1961 and that of male and female to 31.7% and 12.6% respectively. In the census of 1971 the district returned 23.4% of its population as literates and the percentage of literacy for the males slumped to 31.2; thus registering a slight fall. Female literacy however rose to 14.5%. The following table shows the number of literates of males and females separately in the district as per census of 1951, 1961 and 1971.¹⁸

Year	Population			Literates		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1951	4,97,480	4,26,082	9,23,562	1,24,112	22,385	1,46,497
1961	6,94,927	5,94,743	12,89,670	2,20,195	75,268	2,95,463
1971	9,16,570	8,16,741	17,33,311	2,86,328	1,18,784	4,05,112

In respect of literacy, the district of Darrang continues to occupy since 1951 the lowest position among the plains districts of Assam excluding Goalpara. The position was not better even in

15. B.C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Vol.V., Darrang*, Allahabad, (1905), P. 214-16.

16. *Census of India*, 1911, Volume II, Assam Part I Report, Shillong, p. 93.

17. *Census of India 1921*, Volume III, Assam, Part I Report p. 109 and *Census of India 1931*, Volume III, Assam, Part I Report, p. 160.

18. *Census of India 1971*; *Assam Provisional Population Total*, p. 14-15.

earlier censuses. Another disturbing feature of the growth of literacy since 1951 is the widening gulf between the average rate of literacy for the State and that of the district of Darrang. This will be evident from the following table which shows the growth in the rate of literacy of the State as a whole and for the district during 1951-71.

Year	Assam			District of Darrang		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1951	27.4	7.9	18.2	25.31	5.33	16.09
1961	37.7	15.7	27.5	31.7	12.7	22.9
1971	37.7	18.9	28.8	31.2	14.5	23.4

Analysing the cause of the protracted backwardness of the districts, Mr. C.S. Mullan observed in 1931 as follows : "Darrang had only 65 literates per mille and was the worst plains district of Assam from the point of view of literacy. It was also the worst in 1911 and 1921. The apparent reason for the long continued backwardness of Darrang was stated to be that a large number of its inhabitants belong to the 'coolie caste', and in addition, it has a large Kachari population among whom literacy was almost negligible. I can only add that since 1931, a huge number of Muslim immigrants have come to settle in this district thereby adding to the number of illiterates."¹⁹

According to the census of 1961, the district had 2441 villages of which only 921 villages were without any school and of the rest of the villages, 674, had single-teacher primary schools and 846 multi-teachers primary schools.²⁰ The rise in the number of persons having completed the secondary and collegiate education is the silver lining in the otherwise drab view of progress of education in a decade. As per census of 1961, the district had a population of 12,89,670 persons of whom 2,95,463 were returned as literates. The sex-wise division of the literates was 2,20,195 males and 75,268 females. Of these literates, 1,62,679 males and 56,011 females were literates without any educational standard; 49,446 males and 18,427 females were literates of primary or junior basic standard and rest of the literates, 8,070 males and 830 females were literates of Matriculation standard and above. The Appendix (A) shows the literates.

19. *Census of India, 1961, Vol. III, Assam Part-1-A, General Report.* p. 169.

20. *Ibid*, p.180.

The overwhelming majority of the literates comes from the rural areas of the district. The details of the educational standard of the literates living in rural areas are not available, except for those who live in urban areas. The figures relating to the level of education in urban areas, as per 1961 Census, revealed that only 338 females were matriculates or of equivalent educational standard as against 2,185 males who come under this category. Only 25 females and 552 males were censused as receiving education higher than the secondary stage, 15 persons were technical diploma holders, 21 non-technical diploma holders and 429 degree holders, 20 persons held degrees in Engineering, 24 in Medicine, 1 in Agriculture, 60 in teaching and 4 in other fields Appendix 'B' shows the details of educational standard above matriculation in the urban areas of the district.

Considering the fact that the bulk of the total population of the district is constituted by the tea garden labourers, tribal population, immigrant Muslims etc. whose progress in the field of education is very slow, the growth of literacy in the district has been regarded as remarkable. Considerable progress has been recorded in expanding as also in diversifying the facilities for all stages of education during the Plan-period. The Fourth Five Year Plan of Assam envisages a functional approach in formulating and implementing the educational programme and aims at diversification so as to dovetail them with the requirement of the expanding economy of the country.

Spread of education among women : Early writers speak highly of the position of women in the Assamese society which never became the victim of cruel rites such as infanticide, *sati*, dowry etc., commonly associated with the Hindu society in early days. However, the idea of educating females was not in tune with the time. Even the cultured families evinced little desire to impart some instructions in the rudiments of education to their daughters and wives. Greater emphasis was however, given on inculcating such virtues as would make them hospitable, religious minded and dutiful wives.²¹ The idea of female education took its root only some time after the beginning of the western education. It has been already shown that female literacy in the district has shown some progress since 1901 and especially during last three decades. It is interesting to note that rate of growth of female literacy is higher than that of the males; but the percentage of literates is lower among the females than among

21. H. K. Barpujari ; *Assam in the Days of the Company, 1826 to 1858*, p.274.

the males. However, with the increase in the number of school-going girls, the disparity between male and female literacy is declining and is expected to decline further in next decades. "The obstacles in the way of progress of female education lie in the very structure of the Indian society. Early marriages and difficulty of procuring women teachers are two notable obstacles, but the greatest is the general spirit of social conservatism which regards the education of women as a dangerous western innovation which is liable to transform a dutiful affectionate girl into a discontented shrew of a woman."²² This spirit was very much widespread some 30 or 40 years ago. "Several distinguished people and educationists of Assam had no hesitation in informing the then Census Superintendent that education, particularly higher education, is not a good thing for Indian women. Some others considered that present system of female education was radically unsound as it made girls unfit for the domestic duties of their home life. The spirit demanding emancipation of woman was only just raising its head at that time"²³. But the changes in the social milieu during the last two decades have inspired the protagonists of the female education to intensify their activities. The child marriages are now uncommon in the district. Dearth of female teachers is no problem. The lofty ideals of emancipation of the mother land which led the great martyr Kanaklata to sacrifice her life, has inspired the women of the district to seek freedom from the bondage of illiteracy. Gone are the days when the patriarchs sought subterfuges in the futility of female education. Consequently the female literacy has made remarkable progress within the period 1941-1971. In 1961, there were 7 High Schools and one multipurpose school in the district exclusively for girls with an enrolment of 2,506 students. The appendix (c) shows the number of boys and girls in the educational institutions of the district since 1965-66.

Education among the scheduled castes and tribes : In the history of education in the district, the rapid rise in the level of education of these people, in the post-Independence period, is an important event. As mentioned elsewhere, Mr. C.S. Mullan while analysing the causes of low rate of literacy in the Darrang district in 1931 observed that the district had a large Kachari population among whom literacy was

22, *Census of India, 1951, vol.XII, Assam, Manipur & Tripura, part I. A. Report*, p. 345-46.

23. *Ibid*, p. 346.

almost negligible.²⁴ But since then much change in social out-look took place and these people have made long strides in the field of education. The Government also has provided ample incentive for the spread of education among the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes by making liberal financial provisions in the shape of scholarships, free studentship etc. According to the Census of 1961, the district had a tribal population of 1,40,298 persons of whom 73,032 were males and 67,216 females. More than 18 per cent of the tribal population were literates, as against the district average of 23.4 per cent. A great majority of the tribal literates, numbering 19,741, were literates without any educational standard and 6,122 were literates of primary standard. Only a small fraction of tribal literate population numbering 241 were matriculates or of higher educational standard. The number of female literates, (1) without any educational standard. (2) primary standard and (3) secondary and collegiate standard was 3898, 1116 and 52, respectively.

Education among Scheduled castes is also making steady headway. In the Census of 1961, the district had a scheduled castes population of 62,727 persons of whom 32,724 were males and 30,056 females. Out of these persons 8,002 males and 2,680 females were literates without any educational standard, 1902 males and 752 females with primary standard and 200 males and 31 females with Matriculation and above standard. The appendix (D) shows the details of literates among the Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes as per the Census of 1961 and Appendix (E) shows the enrolment of Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in educational institutions in the district since 1964-65.

General Education : Primary schools : Since Independence, the primary education in the district has made long strides and facilities for the same have been extended almost to every nook and corner of the district. In 1874-75 the district had only 78 primary schools which rose to 95 in 1880-81 and then to 149 in 1900-01. The enrolment of the students during this period increased from 1,916 in 1874-75 to 4,095 in 1900-01. During the next forty seven years, the number of schools in the district rose to 629. Since Independence, the primary education expanded both in respect of the number of schools and enrolment. In

24. *Census of India; 1961, Volume III Assam Part 1-A General Report*, p-166.

1949 there were 928 schools with an enrolment of 47,944 students. In 1960-61, the number of schools further rose to 1,557 of which 1,394 were Lower Primary Schools, 162 Junior Basic Schools and one Pre-Primary Schools. The total enrolment of these schools stood at 96,167 of which 79,219 students were under instruction in the Lower Primary Schools, 16,948 in Junior Basic Schools, and 21 in Pre-Primary Schools. During the next ten years the primary schools in the district registered another phenomenal increase in their numbers. The number of schools in 1970-71 rose to 1,810 with a total enrolment of 1,43,342 students. Of these schools 1,648 were Lower Primary Schools, 158 Junior Basic Schools and 4 Pre-Primary or Nursery Schools with enrolment of 1,22,306; 20,889 and 147 respectively.

In 1960-61, out of the total of 1,558 schools, 687 single-teacher schools and 156 multi-teacher schools were located in the rural areas of the district and the average rural area served by a school came to about 5.68 sq. kilometres. The rural area had 74 scholars per thousand of its population and only 921 of the villages were without schools out of the total villages numbering 2,441, in the district. The rising curve of the primary education is believed to have maintained its upward trend during the decade ending in 1971.

As stated earlier, primary education in the past was divided into Lower and Upper Standard. But in course of time the upper primary schools were abolished in the district as in other districts of Assam. Education at the primary stage primarily aims at the instruction in three R's, i.e., Reading, Writing and Arithmetic, though curriculum now-a-days has become much wider with an emphasis on other activities such as making of fans, baskets etc., with bamboo and cane, work in the garden, preparation of models of different kinds of fruits with mud and a host of others. Learning by working has become the basic principle of primary education. The course of primary schools runs for five years and the classes consist of A,B, I,II, and III.

Basic Schools : The scheme of Basic Education is based on Gandhian philosophy. The National Plan of Education was accepted in the Haripura Congress Session in 1938. In pursuance of it Congress Governments in several Provinces initiated steps to implement the scheme of basic education in their respective Provinces. But the fall of the Congress Ministries in the provinces thereafter led to the withdrawal of the official support and the cause of Basic Education suffered a serious set-back before it could be fully

implemented. The War ended in 1945 and the Congress again came to power in Assam in 1946 and took upon itself the task of implementation of the scheme of basic education as a part of the national system of education. Emphasis was given on the gradual introduction of free, compulsory and universal basic education for the children of the age group 6-14 years. Provisions have been made in the various Five Year Plans for establishment of new basic schools and gradual conversion of existing primary schools into Basic Schools. Enactment of Assam Basic Education Act 1954, has accelerated the expansion of basic education in the State.

Basic Education at present comprises two sets of schools, namely Junior Basic Schools and Senior Basic Schools. The former is for the age group 6-11 years, and the latter for 11-14 years. The gradation of classes in both these two types of schools is close to that of the primary schools and middle schools. The difference lies in the method of instruction which in Basic Schools is given through crafts, such as spinning and weaving, gardening, and agriculture, cane and bamboo work, and physical and social environment is used to make teaching concrete and lively, and subjects are co-related as far as possible. Besides learning through the mother tongue, arithmetic, history, geography, nature study and other subjects through activities. Children in a basic school are to do cooking, washing, cleaning etc., and self-help is fostered.²⁵

Basic Education in the district made much headway between 1949-50 to 1960-61 but since then the number of Basic Schools in the district remained almost static though enrolment registered an upward trend. In 1960-61, there were 162 Junior Basic Schools and 12 Senior Basic Schools with enrolment of 12,022 and 2,105 students respectively. The number of Junior Basic School in 1970-71 declined to 158 but the enrolment increased to 20,889 students. The number of Senior Basic Schools and enrolment therein remained more or less static.

The following table shows the growth of Primary Education in the district since 1875 to 1970-71.

Year	L. P. School		Jr. B. Schools		Pre-Primary Schools		Total of Primary Schools.	
	No. of Schools	Students	No. of Schools	Students	No. of Schools	Students	No. of Schools	Students
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1874-75	78	1,916	—	—	—	—	78	1,916
1880-87	95	2,540	—	—	—	—	95	2,540

25. S.C. Majumdar: *Education in Assam*, p.15.

Year	L. P. Schools		Jr. B. Schools		Pre-Primary Schools		Total of Primary Schools	
	No. of Schools	Students	No. of Schools	Students	No. of Schools	Students	No. of Schools	No. of Students
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1890-91	126	3,013	—	—	—	—	126	3,013
1900-01	149	4,095	—	—	—	—	149	4,095
1947-48	629	N.A.	—	—	—	—	629	N.A.
1949-50	9284	7,944	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	928	47,944
1959-60	1,260	72,839	163	12,022	N.A.	N.A.	1,423	84,868
1960-61	1,394	79,219	162	16,948	1	21	1,557	96,188
1965-66	1,599	1,06,493	159	19,713	1	94	1,759	1,26,300
1966-67	1,651	1,10,070	159	19,447	2	66	1,812	1,29,583
1967-68	1,644	1,15,519	159	20,134	2	69	1,805	1,34,722
1968-69	1,650	1,14,945	159	20,758	2	112	1,811	1,35,815
1969-70	1,638	1,17,719	159	20,951	4	157	1,801	1,38,827
1970-71	1,648	1,22,306	158	20,889	4	147	1,810	1,43,342

The Assam Primary Education Act, 1947, repealing the Assam Primary Education Act, 1926, provided for the compulsory primary education in selected rural and urban areas for children of the age group 6-11 years. The Act also provided for the constitution of the Provincial Advisory Board for Primary Education for the regulation, control and development of primary education in the province with the Director of Public Instruction as the ex-officio Chairman. Similar Boards were to be constituted at the subdivisional level and all the primary schools were taken over from the local bodies and transferred to the new authority.

The above Act was repealed by the Assam Basic Education Act, 1954 which provided for the constitution of State Basic Education Board to advise the Government in all matters concerning the primary education in the State. The Minister of Education and Director of Public Instruction were made the ex-officio Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Board respectively. Under the Act, Regional Boards were constituted with a non-official Chairman and the respective Inspector of Schools as the ex-officio Secretary. The control of primary education was entrusted to the Regional Boards and the Department of Education advised by the State Education Board

was entrusted only with general powers of control and supervision over primary education.²⁶

By enacting the Assam Elementary Education Act 1962, the State of Assam has evolved a new pattern of administration of primary education in the State, which is very similar to the French system where the Government remains exclusively responsible for supervision of schools and provisions of teachers. The Government also exercises exclusive authority to recruit teacher and control their service conditions besides prescribing standards for general education and training and bearing all expenditure on account of teachers' salaries and allowances etc. The local authorities are entrusted only with responsibility of the non-teacher part of the expenditure on elementary education and for that also they are provided with grants-in-aid. There is a State Board for Elementary Education to advise the Government for the development, expansion, management and control of elementary education in the State. The Act covers all the institutions providing instruction basic or non-basic and seeks to enforce free and compulsory elementary education in the State. The Act also repeals the Assam Basic Education Act of 1954.²⁷

Secondary Schools : Like primary education, the secondary education has also made considerable progress after Independence. Before that the progress of secondary education in the district was not only tardy but retrogressive as well, particularly during the last quarter of the nineteenth century as has been already pointed out. The number of such schools though increased to 8 in 1880-81 from 6 in 1874-75, began to decrease again and came down to 5 at the end of the century. It may be added that even during the early part of the current century there was no public enthusiasm for western system of secondary education and opening of the secondary schools was almost a government business. It was only after the Nationalist Movement started in 1930, that public leaders took initiative in opening secondary schools upto higher classes under public management. The first High School in rural areas of Darrang was established at Chutia.

Till 1949, the progress of Secondary schools in the district was very slow registering in average not even two schools per year. Since

26. Ibid, p. 22.

27. *The Indian Year Book of Education 1964, Second Year Book, Elementary Education*, by National Council of Educational Research of Training, New Delhi, pp.444-45 and 529.

The table A on next page shows the details of the progress of the secondary education in the district during the last two decades ending in 1970-71.

Secondary education at present, is imparted in various categories of schools namely, Middle English Schools, Middle Vernacular Schools, Senior Basic Schools, High Schools, Higher Secondary and Multipurpose Schools. The medium of instruction in the secondary schools is mother tongue of important linguistic communities and study of Hindi is also being made progressively compulsory in all the secondary schools. Special State grants are given to schools for teaching Hindi.

The classes and syllabi in the Middle English and Middle Vernacular Schools are the same except that English is taught as additional subject in the latter. A student is taught upto class VI from class IV in a Middle school. In 1900-01 the district had only one Middle English School and three Middle Vernacular Schools. The number of middle schools in 1949-50 rose to 65 but by 1960-61, it rose to 154 showing an increase of more than two and a half times over that of 1949-50. During next five years there was an addition of another eight middle schools and in 1970-71 the number of middle schools in the district came to 203. Of these schools 124 were Middle English Schools and the rest 79 Middle Vernacular Schools. The enrolment however was equal in both the types of schools. From the table A it will be evident that the number of Middle Vernacular Schools has almost remained static since 1966-67 except addition of one school in 1969-70 whereas the number of Middle English Schools is maintaining an upward trend every year.

Senior Basic Schools which are of recent origin in the district are designed to impart practical *cum* theoretical education to the chi-

Table—A
Statement showing number of Secondary schools and students since 1949-50 in the district of Darrang.

Year	M.V. Schools			M.E. Schools			Total of mid- dle Schools			Senior Basic Schools.			High Schools			Vocational, Secondary schools including Multipurpose schools.			Total of Seco- ndary schools.		
	Scho- ols.	Students	Schools	Schools	Students	Scho- ols.	Students	Schools	Schools	Students	Scho- ols.	Students	Schools	Students	Schools	Students	Schools	Students			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15							
1949-50	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	65	8,735	—	—	16	6,251	—	—	81	14,986							
1959-60	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	137	16,089	12	2,154	50	16,122	4	2,678	203	73,043							
1960-61	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	154	16,476	12	2,057	56	17,526	5	1,427	227	37,486							
1965-66	73	12,647	90	7,116	163	20,363	12	2,105	80	23,552	8	6,793	263	52,813							
1966-67	78	13,159	90	8,003	168	21,162	12	2,097	84	25,363	8	6,798	272	55,420							
1967-68	78	13,143	103	9,014	181	22,157	12	1,995	88	27,045	8	6,728	289	57,925							
1968-69	78	13,405	109	10,079	187	23,484	12	1,965	91	28,548	8	6,627	298	60,624							
1969-70	79	13,538	121	12,060	200	25,598	12	2,031	97	30,144	8	6,617	317	64,390							
1970-71	79	13,352	124	13,039	203	26,319	12	2,104	101	32,725	8	6,683	324	67,831							

Idren of the 11-14 years age group. Like Middle Schools, classes in the Senior Basic Schools consist of IV, V and VI. In 1959-60 the district had 12 Senior Basic Schools and since then their number has remained static without showing any noticeable change in the number of students under instruction.

As against only one High School in 1900-01, the district had 16 High Schools in 1949-50. The number of High Schools rose to 50 in 1959-60 and it got almost doubled during the next decade. In 1970-71, the district had 101 High Schools with 32,725 students and almost all of these High Schools were Government Aided High Schools under the management of the respective Managing Committees. The course of the High School is a seven year one, from Class IV to class X.

The scheme of Higher Secondary schools and Multipurpose High Secondary Schools has been introduced in the district recently. The first conversion of High School into Higher Secondary Schools in the district took place only in 1958. In 1959-60, there were 4 Higher Secondary Schools which increased to five during the next year. In 1965-66, there was an additional of only 3 Multipurpose Higher Secondary School, and this position continued till 1970-71. The classes in both types of schools are from IV to XI and only training in some crafts are imparted in the latter.

Colleges : The era of collegiate education commenced in the district only from the 25th July 1945, when the first college, known as Darrang College was established at Tezpur. The college was started on a modest scale as an Intermediate Arts College, with 112 students on its roll and eight teachers. It was accommodated in the residential buildings of Late Mr. Duchin. The monthly grant of Rs.200/ came from the Government in 1946. In 1947, the College was shifted to the American Military Hospital building which it acquired on payment of Rs. 10,000/. Within a few years, the college grew in size and strength. It was upgraded to a Degree college having facilities for graduation both in Arts and Commerce. In the field of Science education, the Intermediate Science classes were opened during the first phase of development of the college. On 6th April 1948, the cyclone caused heavy damages to its newly acquired buildings and ultimately it was shifted to its present site in Mahabhairab field in October 1951. The college now runs on deficit grants received from the Government of Assam, and has opened degree classes in science.

In 1951 another college, known as Mangaldai College was established at Mangaldai. For a few years it was accommodated in the buildings of Mangaldai Government High School and in 1955, it was shifted to its present site. In 1958, the college received affiliation of the Gauhati University for Intermediate Arts standard and in 1960, it was affiliated for the B.A. Degree Course. The deficit grants received from the State Government supplements the financial resources of the college.

Four more colleges have been established in the district of Darrang within the last two decades. The Vishwanath College was established at Charali in 1960, T.H.B. College at Jamugurihat and Chayduar College at Gohpur in 1967. All the colleges of Darrang came into being, out of public donations. In 1970-71, the total enrolment in the six colleges stood at 3,559, of whom 1,540 students were in Darrang College, 786 in Mangaldai College, 440 in Vishwanath College, 342 in Tezpur College, 230 in T.H.B. College and 221 in Chayduar college. The following statement shows the enrolment of collegiate education in the district.

Colleges and Students.	Y		E		A		R		
	1949-50	1959-60	1960-61	1965-66	1966-67	1967-68	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
No. of colleges		2	3	4	4	4	6	6	6
No. of students		992	1,071	2,003	2,151	2,236	2,943	3,107	3,559

The Director of the Public Instruction, Assam under the Education Department to the Government of Assam looks after the general education in the State. In Darrang district, for the administration of the Primary Education (including Lower Primary Schools and Junior Basic Schools), Middle Schools (including Senior Basic Schools), there are two Deputy Inspectors of Schools, one in each of the two subdivisions of the district. The Deputy Inspectors are assisted in their work of inspection and supervision of Middle and Primary Schools by the Additional Deputy Inspector, Sub-Inspectors and Assistant Sub-Inspectors of Schools but the latter two have no jurisdiction over Senior Basic Schools and Middle Schools. The Deputy Inspector of Schools is now also the ex-officio Secretary of the Primary Education Board at the subdivisional level.

High Schools and Higher Secondary Schools are the responsibilities of the Inspector of Schools. Initially, the whole of the State of Assam was divided into two circles known as the Lower Assam Circle and the Upper Assam Circle. The district of Darrang came under the purview of the Inspector of Schools, Upper Assam Circle, Jorhat. After Independence, to cope with planned development of education another circle viz. the Central Assam Circle with headquarters at Nowgong was opened and Tezpur subdivision was tagged with it. One Assistant Inspector Schools was posted at Tezpur. In 1960 the Northern Assam circle with its jurisdiction over Tezpur subdivision of Darrang and North Lakhimpur subdivision of the erstwhile Lakhimpur district was created with headquarters at Tezpur. Mangaldai subdivision remained under Lower Assam Circle. Since 1969, the Inspectorate has been reorganised and the whole of the Darrang district now falls within the jurisdiction of the Inspector of Schools, Northern Assam Circle, Tezpur. In carrying out inspection and supervision of the High Schools and Higher Secondary Schools, Inspector of Schools is assisted by some Assistant Inspectors of Schools.

Colleges in the district are inspected by the Inspector of Colleges, appointed by the Gauhati University and the Director of Public Instruction mainly looks after the financial aspect of the colleges giving various types of grants etc.

(d) Professional and Technical Schools and Colleges :

Teachers' Training Schools : The district has three Teacher's Training Schools of which one is Normal Training School at Chutia and two Teachers' Training Schools at Charali and Mangaldai. The Training School at Charali in Tezpur subdivision is meant for imparting Junior Basic Training to the female teachers only. The Hindi Teachers' Training School which functioned till 1962 at Misamari in Tezpur subdivision has been shifted to Diphu in the Mikir Hills District.

Industrial Training Institute : There is one Industrial Training Institute at Tezpur. It was first started as Technical School by the Local Board. In 1954, it was taken over by the State Government and renamed as Junior Technical School. In 1959, it was converted into a Industrial Training Institute which provides training in eight different trades.

Sericulture and Weaving Department of the Government of Assam is also maintaining two Weaving-cum-production centres at

Thelamara and Chutia in Tezpur Sub-division besides one Sub-centre at Bengabari in Mangaldai Subdivision where Training in Weaving is imparted. The Tezpur Mahila Samiti is also running one study-cum-training centre with facilities for training in weaving and social education. Besides these institutions, there are a few Type-writing Schools in the towns of the district. The following table shows the enrolment in the Teachers' Training Schools and Industrial Training Institute in the district since 1965-66.

Type of Institute	1965-66	1966-67	1967-68	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Basic Training School	176	204	128	157	126	129
2. Non-Basic Training School.	105	121	124	135	158	163
3. Industrial Training Institute.	283	256	260	318	N.A.	N.A.

(e) Schools for Cultivation of Fine Arts :

There is one Art School named 'Jyoti Kala Kendra' at Tezpur. This was established on 1.5.57 after the amalgamation of Jyoti Music School (1940) and East Indian Art School (1954) in memory of Late Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, an eminent citizen of Tezpur popularly known as 'Rupkonwar' who was a man of versatile genius. It is registered under the Societies Registration Act and affiliated to both the Assam Sangeet Natak Academy and Assam Lalit Kala Academy. The chief aim of the institution is to popularise and propagate Indian dance and music. Occasionally, some exhibitions of the works of arts and crafts produced by the trainees are organised. The State Government and Tezpur Municipal Board have offered some financial assistance to this institution. With the financial help received from the Central Social Welfare Board, this organisation opened a training centre in crafts for women, in 1958, to secure economic upliftment of the poor and destitute women. The annual enrolment of the institutions is around fifty.

(f) Oriental Schools and Colleges :

Oriental Schools in the district are only Sanskrit Schools, popularly known as *to/s* which impart education in Sanskrit and other subjects which form the core of classical learning. The *to/s* are under the Assam Sanskrit Board which, prescribes syllabus, conducts examination and renders grants-in-aid. The number of schools and scholars studying there are declining gradually as is evident from the following table.

Schools/ Students	1959-60	1960-61	1965-66	1966-67	1967-68	1968-69	19-69 70	196-70 71
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Schools	15	15	15	13	12	12	11	11
Students	261	264	237	222	217	233	252	252

(g) Adult Literacy and Social Education :

The problem of adult literacy has assumed much importance not only in the district of Darrang but also in the rest of the country in view of the low rate of literacy revealed by the 1961 Census. About three fourths of the population of the district still continues to be illiterate. The task of mass literacy is stupendous and is being tackled from two fronts, namely, by rapid implementation of the programmes of compulsory primary education and by organising mass literacy campaigns. In the country much emphasis has been laid on the former though latter one has not been ignored.

The programme of adult literacy though in operation since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the drive was intensified only with the formation of the Congress Ministry in 1937. The Second World War caused a set back but with the attainment of Independence the campaign was revived, infusing greater amount of zeal and vigour in its execution.

After Independence the whole concept of social education has undergone a tremendous change. In the pre-Independence days the chief aim of social education was to acquaint the adults with the three "Rs". This no doubt remains to be a primary object of social education till today ; but its scope has been enlarged to impart education in all those subjects which make him an ideal citizen. Thus literacy, education in citizenship and health, understanding of science as applied to every day life, acquisition of information and skills that improve vocational efficiency, development of hobbies

and organisation of cultural and recreational activities, form a part of the Social Education Programme.²⁸ Since 1952 the programme has been made an integral part of the Community Development Movement in the district and each Community Development Block has two Social Education Organisers including one Lady Social Education Organiser who look after the social education. The District Social Education Officer, Tezpur, who acts under the State Social Education Officer, supervises the work of the officials of the district.

Social education centres are organised for a duration of three months at a time of the year when adults are free from agricultural operations. The course comprises pre-literacy and post-literacy phases. In the pre-literacy phase adults are introduced to literacy while in the post-literacy stage instructions in the advance studies are imparted. At the post-literacy level, libraries, clubs, and community centres, are organised and literature for new literate adults and audio-visual aids are provided. Recreational and cultural activities including dramatic performances, *bhaonas* music competition, folk dances, games and sports etc., are organised by clubs, and Community Centres.²⁹ The audio-visual aids such as films etc., are also used in the social education centres. The Department of Social Education is also publishing one quarterly journal, *Jana Siksha*, as a part of the campaign.

Some fluctuations in the number of Social Education Centres has been noticed in the last few years. There were only 45 such centres in the district in 1959-60, as against 36 in 1960-61 and 92 in 1968-69. The lowest ebb was reached in 1966-67, when there were only 20 social education centres in the district. The largest number of these centres were organised in 1967-68 when the number stood at 174. The number of social education centres organised during the year 1968-69, 1969-70 and 1970-71 were 135, 93 and 90 respectively. The following table shows the progress of social education in the district for the last few years.

Year	No. of Social Education centres.	No. of Adults made literates.		
		Male	Female	Total.
1	2	3	4	5
1959-60	46	—	—	1308
1960-61	36	—	—	961

28. Ibid, p. 257.

29. S.C. Majumdar : *Education in Assam*, p. 101.

Year	No. of Social Education centres.	No. of Adults made literates.		
		Male	Female	Total
1	2	3	4	5
1965-66	92	1,875	570	2,445
1966-67	20	454	55	499
1967-68	174	4,021	1,051	5,072
1968-69	135	1,986	1,268	3,254
1969-70	93	1,763	1,087	2,850
1970-71	90	2,047	627	2,674

(i) Cultural activities :

The district has a number of cultural societies with activities like dramatic performances, dance, songs, *Bhaonas* and similar activities relating to fine arts and culture. A brief account of these societies is given in tabular form.

List of Cultural Institutions in the District of Darrang

Name of institutions and their location.	Membership	Main objectives	Significant contribution.
1	2	3	4
1. Kamrupia (Naty Samaj) Mandal, Tezpur.	No limited membership.	1. Spiritual development by observing important religious functions including <i>Tithis</i> of Mahapurushas. 2. Observation of important national days & functions. 3. Development of finer sense of art & culture by organising dramas, exhibitions, discussions, <i>namkirtan</i> etc.	Constructed a large auditorium & a stage which includes rooms for stores, <i>Mandir</i> etc. Rendered help to the flood affected people in recent floods and language disturbances.

Name of institutions and their location.	Membership	Main objectives	Significant contribution.
1	2	3	4
		4. Removal of illiteracy & establishment of a library. 5. Assistance to the needy & economic development of the people.	
2. Baan Ranga Tezpur.	Mancha, 500(app).	To develop art & culture & produce stage dramas, cinemas etc.	Several members of this organisation have contributed a lot towards development of dramatic culture. A large number of actors & actresses of repute are the products of this institution. <i>Jaymati</i> , <i>Dhumuha</i> , <i>Piyali Phookan</i> etc. are films produced by this institution.
3. Tarun Assam Sangha, Tezpur.	50 (app).	Development of culture with provision for recreational activities of life, observation of important functions, and outdoor games and sports etc.	A large and beautiful hall and library of medium size.
4. Bengali Natya Mandir	N. A.	Spiritual, mental & cultural development.	Constructed a spacious stage cum auditorium, <i>Mandir</i> etc. for occasional dramatic performance,

Name of institutions and their location.	Membership	Main objective	Significant contribution.
1	2	3	4

- variety entertainments, celebration of *Puja* etc.
5. Jyoti Kala Kendra, Tezpur. General To develop a sense of fine arts, music, drawing, painting etc. among the adults and children. Organised one music School, one Arts School and trained several hundreds of students since its establishment. Some of the students figure prominently in several inter-district competitions.
6. Assam Kri sti Sangha 22 form a P.O. Jamuguri group Dt. Darrang estd. in 1956. General Development of classical, modern & folk dances and music of Assam & exhibit them outside Assam and conduct research work. Demonstration and exhibition of music and 'dances in hills & plains of Assam. A group of artists toured the important places of India giving successful exhibition.
7. Chutia Pragati, P.O. Chutia. 200 (approximately) Literary and cultural Development. Organised Natya Samity, constructed a stage cum-hall (Nilima hall). Established a library and recreation centre.
8. Binapani Natya Sangha. P.O. Charali. Estd. 1-11-31 459 Literacy, cultural & economic development of the people. Constructed a stage-cum-public Hall, a library house, runs a Co-op. society since

Name of institutions and their location	Membership	Main objective	Significant contribution.
1	2	3	4

1943. Organised a recreation club. Awarded scholarship to two promising artists for studying in Music College.
9. Majgaon Sankar Mandir Committee, P.O. Tezpur. 250 (Approximately,) Development of Culture especially *Sankarika*, literacy, spiritual aspect, cottage industries and economic conditions. Constructed a stage-cum-public hall at Majgaon, organised a Co-op. store, collected materials to establish a cane (sugar) thrashing plant through co-op. effort, organised a soap factory on co-op. basis. Estd. library, Yubak Sangha, Mahila Samity etc.
10. Dekargaon Natya Samity. P. O. Dekargaon. 100 (approx.) To develop specially dramatic faculty among the members and cultural and literary development in general. Constructed a stage-cum-auditorium, established a library.
11. Karmabir Chandra-nath Ranga Mancha. P.O. Pithakhowa. 150 (approximately) Cultural and mental development of the people. Constructed a stage cum-hall. Estd. one library.
12. Dipota Natya Samity. P.O. Dipota. 150 (approx.) Cultural and spiritual development. A stage has been constructed and a library & club are also on way of completion.

Name of institutions and their location.	Member ship	Main objective	Significant contribution.
1	2	3	4
13. Dhekiajuli Cultural Committee, P.O.Dhekiajuli.	50	Cultural, recreational, literary and physical development.	Plan has been taken to construct a stage cum auditorium and a library house.
14. Udalguri Kristi Sangha P. O. Udalguri	Not available.	Development of art & culture, music etc.	A library cum-recreation centre has been constructed and collected few equipments for stage.
15. Boro Kristi Sangha.	-do-	Development of Boro art and culture.	The organisation has its members from different places. Organised occasional shows of dramas, meetings etc.
16. Mangaldai Kristi Sangha.	-do-	Development of art & culture, literature, music etc.	Established a stage cum public hall. Hold regular discussions on arts and literature. Produced a few reputed artists.
17. Sipajhar Cultural Committee (approximately) P. O. Sipajhar.	100	Development of art and culture, musical talents, physical, economic and mental aspect.	Established a temporary stage, a library, a club and produced several artists, literatures and sports man of repute.
18. Duni Cultural Club.P.O. - Duni.	150	All round development of Assamese literature, language ; mental, physical, cultural and social development of the locality.	Established library, Club, stage, reading room, musical training etc.
19. Sanjibani Natya Samaj. P.O.Jamuguri.	200	Cultural, spiritual and educational development.	Established library, stage cum public hall, Produced several dramas & artists of repute.

(ii) **Literary Societies** : In the district of Darrang there are a number of literary societies, the most famous being the *A-Bha-U-Sa*. Most of these societies are affiliated to the *Asom Sahitya Sabha*. In the Mangaldai sub-division alone there are five literary-cum-cultural societies which are affiliated to the *Asom Sahitya Shbha*. The principal aim of these societies is to develop Assamese language and literature. These societies arrange meetings to observe death anniversary of literateurs and saints of Assam and India, and hold debates and symposia on various topics.

Library, Museums etc. : The District Library at Tezpur is the biggest library in the district. It is a big and beautiful R.C.C. building with two separate parts. One part is the auditorium with a stage and the other part is a two-storied building housing the library and the reading room. This library has sponsored the development of a number of rural libraries in the district. There is also one public library in the Tezpur Town Hall. There are also about 120 government aided and unaided medium and small libraries in the district.

There is no public museum in the district. However, in the information centres of four Development Blocks, namely Udalguri, Dhekiajuli, Majbat and Vishwanath Block there are four small museums.

CHAPTER-XVI.

MEDICAL AND PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES.

(a) Survey of Public Health and Medical Facilities in early times :

Information about the medical facilities available in early times is very meagre. Literary works of the mediaeval period refer to *Kavirajas* and *Ojhas* who attended to the ailments of the people. The *Ayurveda*, the science of medicine, was carefully studied. There was a state medical department with the royal physician at the head.¹ Ralph Fitch who visited the Koch kingdom in the sixteen century refers to the hospitals for sheep, goats, cats, birds, and for all living creatures. The Doobi grant of Bhaskarvarman (A.D. 594-650) mentions that even the kings assiduously cultivated the science of elephant lore. In those days, the horses and elephants constituted the hard core of the army and as such utmost care was taken for their upkeep.

During the Ahom period, there were separate departments under trained officers and physicians to look after and prescribe indigenous medicines for the patients, both human beings and animals. The indigenous medicine books are *Nidan Sastras*. The *Ghora Nidan*, compiled during the same time reveals an aspect of Assamese pharmacopoeia. A treatise on the training and treatment of hawks known as *Senor Vyadhi*, compiled during the mediaeval period has been recovered.

"Divination was also restored to for prognosis and cure of diseases. Incantations and *mantras*, were also practised as specifics. A mass of writings on *mantras* was created both in prose and verse. An idea of the volume and variety of *mantra* literature can be had by reference to a few of the more important titles : *Sapar Dharani mantra*, *Karati mantra*, *Sarvadhak mantra*, *Kamaratna tantra*, *Bhutar mantra*, *Khetra mantra* etc. These *mantras* are interesting and important as documents of social history, folk beliefs and superstitions."²

1. B. K. Barua, *A Cultural History of Assam, Gauhati*, 1969, p. 153.
2. E.A. Gait, *A History of Assam, Calcutta*, 1967, p.282.

Incantation of *mantras* are still employed in rural areas of the district, particularly to cure from the snake bites.

During the early part of the British rule, the curative side of human ailments was still in the hands of *Kavirajas*, *Ojhas* and *Bezars* who practised indigenous system of medicine. The preventive side did not receive much attention. The sanitary condition of the urban and rural areas of Assam was miserable. With the establishment of the Local Boards and Municipalities, the work of sanitation was entrusted to them. But due to paucity of funds, no appreciable change in the unsanitary conditions, especially in the rural areas could be brought. The unsanitary character of the villages of the district has been described by B.C. Allen as follows:-

"There may be something in the climate, the sub-soil level of the water, or some other factor which for the present remains obscure, which is prejudicial to life and health, but there can be no doubt that the conditions under which the people pass their days are not conducive to a long mean duration of life. Their houses are small, dark, and ill-ventilated, and the rooms in summer must be exceedingly close and oppressive. They are built upon low mud plinths, and are in consequence extremely damp The water-supply is generally bad, and is drawn either from shallow holes, from rivers, or from tanks in which the villagers wash their cloths and persons. All of these are undoubtedly factors which contribute to produce a high mortality, and nearly every one of them could be eliminated."³

Fever and bowel complaints used to take heavy toll of life. Cholera and small-pox also appeared in virulent form from time to time. Deaths due to small-pox was as high as 3 per mille in 1897. *Kalaazar* was another deadly killer which appeared in 1890 in Mangaldai and soon broke out in epidemic form in Patharughat, Mangaldai, Kalaigaon, Ambagan and Harisingia *mauzas*. Dysentery, diarrhoea, malarial fever etc., were other common diseases of the district. Many lives were also lost owing to the lack of knowledge of mid-wifery. In the words of B.C. Allen, "there are very few professional midwives amongst the Assamese, and a woman in her confinement is generally attended by her relatives or friends. In difficult cases they can render little help, and recourse is had to Heaven for assistance."⁴

3. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol V, Darrang, Allahabad, 1905, pp. 217-218.
4. *Ib.d.*, p.222.

It was the same all over India. Some rituals and *mantras* were taken resort to in case of acute complications. Otherwise, herbal medicines were in use to remedy the common diseases.

Modern scientific medical facilities available were far from satisfactory. By 1881, the district had only two dispensaries, one at Tezpur and the other at Mangaldai. Four more dispensaries by 1900 were established at Chutia, Sipajhar, Jaljuli and Panerihat. In 1901, another four dispensaries were opened at Behali, Balipara, Kalaigaon and Rangamatighat and one more at Gohpur in 1904.

(b) Vital Statistics: Vital statistics in the districts of the Brahmaputra valley including the district of Darrang, was compiled from the *Hat-Chitas* maintained by *Gaonburas* or village headmen. The *hat-chitas* were submitted monthly to the *Mauzadars*. If the area of the *Mauza* exceeded about 256 sq.kms. then the statistics were copied in the register of a *Mandal*. From these statements, a monthly statement was compiled and submitted to the District Medical Officer.

With the enactment of Assam Panchayat Act, 1959, the collection of vital statistics has been entrusted to the Secretary of the Gaon Panchayat. He submits monthly return to the Block Development Officer who in turn submits a consolidated return to the District Health Officer (formerly known as District Medical Officer and Civil Surgeon).

In the urban areas vital statistics are received from the Chairmen, Municipal Boards and Town Committees. In the tea gardens where registration of vital statistics is compulsory, garden managers maintain registers of births and deaths and report monthly to the District Health Officer. Finally District Health Officer submits return of the whole district to the Director of Health Services. Station Masters of the Railway Stations keep registers of births and deaths within their jurisdictions and report monthly to the Chief Medical Officer, Northeast Frontier Railway, who in turn submits the returns to the Director of Health Services.

However, the collection of vital statistics in the State is admitted to be defective. The figures indicating the natural increase of population according to vital statistics do not tally with those of the censuses. Natural increase of population is not fully reflected in the vital statistics. It is reported that births are more often omitted than deaths. The main drawback with the collection of vital statis-

tics in the State is that registration of births and deaths is not compulsory except in the tea gardens. Reporting of birth or death is not an obligation on the part of the house holders. Formerly its prime collecting agents were *Gaonburas* who were very often illiterate, invariably low paid and burdened with many other duties. Even the change of collecting agents from *Gaonbura* to Secretary of the Gaon Panchayats did not bring any appreciable improvement in registration and collection of vital statistics.

The following statement shows the figures of vital statistics for the period 1951-1971.⁵

Year	Total number of birth	Total number of death	Total increase of birth over death.
1	2	3	4
1951	14,882	8,113	6,769
1952	17,038	7,661	9,377
1953	16,931	6,637	10,298
1954	15,179	7,173	8,006
1955	16,978	6,153	10,825
1956	15,653	5,683	9,970
1957	13,767	4,690	9,077
1958	13,759	4,319	8,440
1959	13,199	4,152	9,047
1960	12,765	4,041	8,724
1961	12,958	3,484	9,472
1962	11,352	3,093	8,259
1963	14,519	4,345	10,174
1964	10,829	3,417	7,412
1965	9,726	3,562	6,164
1966	9,470	3,402	6,068
1967	8,396	3,139	5,257
1968	8,465	2,928	5,537
1969	9,148	3,287	5,861
1970	8,221	2,983	5,238
1971	7,872	2,911	4,961

Among the important causes of mortality, in the fifties, deaths due to malaria were the highest. It was followed by fever, dysen-

5. Figures collected from the Office of the Civil Surgeon, Tezpur, Darrang.

tery, diarrhoea, respiratory diseases. Child birth was also an important cause of death. But due to anti-malarial measures, incidence of death due to malaria almost became negligible in the sixties. Only fever, dysentery, diarrhoea, respiratory diseases, continued to be the major causes of mortality in the district. Besides, deaths due to snake bites, rabies, wild animals etc., are also not uncommon. The dust nuisances, malnutrition, the high humidity of climate, want of requisite minerals in water are said to be some of the factors that have affected the health of the people. The water borne diseases, generally occur after floods.

The following tables show the important and selected causes of death in the district of Darrang.

TABLE-I

(1951-1959)

(Source : Distriet Census Handbook,
Darrang. 1961, p.350.)

Cause of death	YEAR								
	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Cholera	60	23	1	—	—	—	6	—	—
Fever	2,440	1,593	184	216	120	152	118	1,181	1,310
Small-pox	20	4	1	1	-	-	-	1	-
Dysentery and									
Diarrhoea	608	653	536	852	602	505	392	387	475
Plague	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Respiratory									
Diseases	315	384	407	488	353	283	325	342	296
Suicide	29	28	28	32	32	16	19	22	20
Child birth	249	270	247	264	185	163	152	143	138
Malaria	3,187	3,247	3,722	4,107	3,548	3,103	2,282	931	558
Kala-azar	51	22	54	47	26	23	23	10	19
Tuberculosis	1	1	-	-	7	4	-	-	1
Snake bite	16	10	20	17	20	17	8	4	8
Leprosy	3	1	1	-	-	-	2	-	1
Cancer	2	1	2	-	6	11	2	-	2

Table-II

(1960-1967)

(Source : Civil Surgeon, Darrang)

Cause of death	YEAR							
	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
Cholera	-	-	-	-	-	2-9	13	27
Small-pox	3	6	1	2	-	27	50	
Plague	-	-	—	-	-	-	-	
Cerebro								
Spinal fever	3	1	—	2	3	—	—	1
Typhoid fever	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Malaria	68	43	—	1	—	—	—	—
Enteric								
Fever	2	2	—	—	2	5	3	18
Measles	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Relapsing fever	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	11
Kala-azar	14	23	-	12	16	4	6	1
Influenza	34	40	-	70	33	11	6	12
Black water fever	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other fever	1,716	1,361	1,279	4,041	1,332	1,164	1,152	1,086
Dysentery	336	323	297	326	737	221	259	183
Diarrhoea	71	40	5	76	100	228	94	97
Pneumonia	9	10	-	25	37	66	63	48
Pulmonary								
Tuberculosis	4	9	-	13	17	4	20	16
Whooping cough	4	-	-	3	-	-	1	1
Other Res-								
piratory								
diseases.	202	221	225	246	195	185	166	137
Death from								
child birth	123	94		102	85	70	64	45
Suicide	15	25	-	27	13	17	24	15
Wounds and								
accidents	65	52	81	63	51	46	67	57
Snake bite	1	5	-	8	4	6	3	4
Wild animal	5	1	-	1	8	3	2	-
Rabies	4	2	-	6	2	6	2	1

Cause of death	Y E A R							
	1960	1961	1962	1963	1964	1965	1966	1967
Beri-beri	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Acute polio-myelitis.	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
Diphtheria	-	1	-	-	1	-	3	-
Chicken-pox	19	46	-	19	10	13	5	18
Mumps	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
T.B. of joints	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	4
Other Tubercular diseases	1	7	-	5	3	22	32	40
Leprosy	1	-	-	1	-	2	1	3
Cancer	2	2	-	6	9	9	8	6
All other causes	1,221	1,167	1,139	1,272	1,196	1,187	1,275	1,266

The following table indicates the deaths from some selected diseases from 1968 to 1971.

Year	Titanus	T.B. and other respiratory diseases	Typhoid	Cholera	Dysentery and Diarrhoea	Diphtheria
1968	5	224	11	-	242	4
1969	-	325	-	62	299	4
1970	-	350	2	10	232	-
1971	-	236	-	26	226	-

(c) Diseases common to the district : The most common diseases at present are Dysentery, Diarrhoea, Tuberculosis, Influenza, Cancer, Rheumatism, Typhoid, Bronchities, Measles, Cholera, Gastro-enteritis, Respiratory diseases, skin diseases etc. In early times *Kala-azar*, malaria and small-pox, broke out in epidemic form and took heavy toll of human life. Malaria was almost a common disease of the district specially in the northern part. Implementation of the National Malaria Eradication programme and expansion of modern medical facilities have controlled the out-break of these diseases. However, with the increase of traffic the contagious diseases appear in some areas in virulent form.

Diarrhoea, dysentery intestinal diseases, hookworm etc., are generally noticed among the people living in the riverine areas. These break out in epidemic form during the autumn and the spring seasons and also after continuous rains and floods. Goitre is a common disease especially among the people living in the hilly areas. In the months of July and August, 1971, large number of people suffered from conjunctivitis. There was also an epidemic of gastro-enteritis in 1969, 1970 and 1971 and about 1,81,000 persons were inoculated in 1969.

(d) Public hospitals and dispensaries :

(i) Organisation of the Medical Department : The District Health Officer (formerly known as Civil Surgeon) heads the district organisation of the medical department. He is responsible for both curative and preventive aspects of the set-up. In Mangaldai subdivision there is one Subdivisional Health Officer who is entrusted with the affairs of the medical department in the subdivision. He is to work under the control and supervision of the District Health Officer posted at Tezpur.

There were fifty three State Dispensaries and seven Public Health Units in the district in 1971. The dispensaries are placed in charge of Assistant Health Officers of whom there are two grades I and II. All the Medical Officers are concurrently empowered to act as the Food Inspectors to detect cases of food adulteration. In each Civil Hospital and dispensary a paramedical staff is also entertained. All the hospitals and some of the dispensaries are also provided with nurse.

Public Health Units : There are seven Public Health Units in the district. Each of these is placed in charge of one Assistant Health Officer I. Each Primary Health Unit covers a population of about 40 to 60 thousands. Each of them is required to attend to both curative and preventive aspects of diseases occurring in the area, survey of diseases and other sanitary measures. 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 and a few Auxiliary Nurse Midwives.

Maternity and Child Welfare Services : The district has 10 such

centres which are located at Niz-Haleswar, Dumduma, Tangla, Helem, Bhakatpara, Misamari, Rangamati, Harisinga, Kalaigaon and Tezpur. There is a Lady Assistant Health Officer II attached to the Maternity and Child welfare Centre at Tezpur. Other centres are run by the Medical Officer of the dispensary to which the centre is attached. The sanctioned strength of each Maternity and Child Welfare Centre is one Midwife and one *Dhai*. They are also to enquire of health and conditions of expectant mothers and children and to give useful advice for maintenance of health and sanitation,

Family Planning Services : Family Planning Services are rendered at the Family Planning Centres ; needed contraceptives, Jellys, etc. are supplied free of charge in indigent cases. Cases requiring operations are referred to the District or Subdivisional Hospitals.

There are twenty nine Family Planning Centres in the district. The Additional District Health Officer (Family Planning) is responsible for implementation of the Family Planning Schemes. Besides, insertion of loops, public meetings are organised in these centres from time to time. Seminars and *Gram Laxmi* camps are also organised in the Community Development Blocks. 2,489 loops were inserted in 1968-69 in the district 2,202 of these were utilised in the rural areas. In the same year 2,573 persons were sterilised in rural areas and 543 in urban areas.

Tuberculosis Services : T. B. Clinic attached to the Tezpur Civil Hospital has been already up-graded into a T. B. Hospital which is now situated at the Dhenukhana hills on the bank of the Brahmaputra, at a distance of about one and a half mile from the court. The bed strength is very limited.

Ayurvedic Services : There are 4 Government subsidised *Ayurvedic* dispensaries functioning in the district at Bargang, Barbatia, Chengelipara and Devmarnai. One *Ayurvedic* dispensary is attached to the Civil Hospital at Tezpur town.

Leprosy Control Services : Government have already taken up Leprosy Control Scheme and have established some Leprosy colonies and subsidiary centres in the State for survey and treatment of Leprosy cases. One such Leprosy colony was constructed at Harisinga with 15 beds at a cost of Rs. 95,290/-. Besides, there are 10 centres attached to different dispensaries with some sub-centres.

Allopathic Subsidised Dispensaries : There are 4 Government subsidised dispensaries functioning in the district at Balisang, Vishwa-

nath, Bandarmari and Bhergaon and annual recurring grant of Rs. 1460/- has been allotted to each dispensary.

Malaria Eradication Services : Under the Malaria Eradication Programme two units were established in the district in 1957, one at Tezpur and the other at Tangla. The medical staff of each unit comprises, besides the unit Malaria Officer, one Assistant Unit Officer and a number of Malaria Inspectors.

(ii) Number and location of hospital: The following table shows the location, the strength of the medical staff and other details of the Civil Hospitals and dispensaries of the district in 1971.

Hospitals, Public Health Units, Dispensaries of
Darrang district.

Sl. No.	Name of Hospitals, Dispensaries. P.H.C.	No. of beds.	No. of Inpatient treated	No. of outpatient treated	No. of			
					Doctors	Nurses	Paramedical staff	Others
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Hospitals								
1.	Tezpur Civil Hospital	100	4,044	42,435	13	19	12	37
2.	Mangaldai Civil Hospital.	58	-	-	6	15	9	11
3.	Charduar Civil Hospital.	23	236	20,012	1	1	1	8
Other Hospitals								
1.	Tezpur Jail Hospital.	85	16,439	65,880	1	-	1	-
2.	Tezpur Police Hospital	12	320	14,772	1	-	1	-
3.	Rangapara Railway Hospital	25	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Health Centres								
1.	Charali	6	46	31,333	1	5	3	5
2.	Dhekiajuli	8	418	48,818	1	6	3	11

Sl. No.	Name of Hospitals, Dispensaries, P.H.C.	No. of beds.	No. of Inpatient treated	No. of out-patient treated	No. of			
					Doc-tors	Nur-ses	Para-medi-cal staff	Othe-rs.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
3.	North Jamuguri	6	70	18,952	1	4	2	4
4.	Orang	6	76	17,596	1	5	4	5
5.	Patharughat	-	-	38,096	1	4	2	5
6.	Sipajhar	6	-	1,20,008	1	2	4	6
7.	Udalguri	22	559	33,898	1	6	5	11

State Dispensaries

1.	Bargang	-	-	7,169	1	-	1	1
2.	Bihaguri	-	-	10,759	1	2	2	1
3.	Balipara	-	-	8,721	1	-	3	1
4.	Behali	-	-	14,851	1	-	3	1
5.	Vishwanath	-	-	7,605	1	1	1	1
6.	Bhakatpara	-	-	7,889	1	-	2	2
7.	Burhinagar	-	-	-	1	-	2	2
8.	Chamuapara	-	-	25,351	1	-	1	1
9.	Bhokelikanda	-	-	3,554	1	-	1	1
10.	Bhergaon	-	-	8,177	1	-	2	2
11.	Baruajhar	-	-	-	1	-	-	2
12.	Dumduma	-	-	5,704	1	3	1	2
13.	Dumnichuki	-	-	18,249	1	-	1	1
14.	Dalgaon	-	-	11,299	1	-	2	2
15.	Gophuar	-	-	-	1	1	3	1
16.	Garukhoti	-	-	7,662	1	-	1	1
17.	Helem	-	-	23,050	1	1	2	1
18.	Haleswar	-	-	8,167	1	1	-	1
19.	Hengalpara	-	-	13,522	1	-	1	2
20.	Harisinga	-	-	9,020	1	2	4	2
21.	Jinja	-	-	10,147	1	-	1	1
22.	Jamuguri	-	-	28,824	1	-	2	1
23.	Jaljali	-	-	4,466	1	-	2	2
24.	Kauripathar	-	-	2,020	1	1	1	1
25.	Kalabari	-	-	22,547	1	1	1	2
26.	Khoirabari	-	-	21,249	1	2	2	2

Sl. No.	Name of Hospitals, Dispensaries, P. H. C.	No. of beds	No. of Inpatient treated	No. of out patient treated	No. of			
					Doc-tors	Nur-ses	Para-medi-cal staff	Others
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
27.	Kurua	-	-	-	1	-	1	2
28.	Kalaigaon	-	-	23,779	1	-	5	2
29.	Kharupatia	-	-	8,576	1	1	3	1
30.	Kenduguri	-	-	5,356	1	-	-	1
31.	Majikuchi	-	-	-	1	1	1	1
32.	Majbat	-	-	3,702	1	1	2	2
33.	Nagsankar	-	-	12,860	1	1	2	1
34.	Namkhola	-	-	19,801	1	-	1	1
35.	Pabhoi	-	-	4,780	1	1	1	1
36.	Puthimari	-	-	10,292	1	1	1	2
37.	Paneri	-	-	-	1	1	3	2
38.	Pauripota	-	-	-	1	-	1	1
39.	Pakribari	-	-	2,002	1	-	1	1
40.	Pachimpatala	-	-	6,598	1	-	1	1
41.	Panihali	-	-	-	1	-	1	1
42.	Rangapara	-	-	18,347	1	1	1	2
43.	Raumari	-	-	4,328	1	1	1	1
44.	Rangachakua	-	-	-	1	1	1	1
45.	Rangamari	-	-	10,214	1	-	1	2
46.	Rowtacharali	-	-	4,866	1	-	1	1
47.	Singri	-	-	40,245	1	-	1	1
48.	Chutia	-	-	-	1	1	3	1
49.	Sarabari	-	-	8,500	1	-	1	1
50.	Singlimari	-	-	1,922	1	-	1	1
51.	Tangla	-	-	19,577	1	-	2	2
52.	Ulubari	-	-	6,344	1	-	1	1
53.	Kharasimalu	-	-	3,443	1	-	1	1

Tezpur Mental Hospital : This is the first institute of its kind in the north east corner of India and was started on 1st April, 1876, as a Lunatic Asylum. The first batch of inmates included 21 lunatics received from the Dacca Lunatic Asylum and 43 brought from different parts of Assam during the year. Till 1912, the lunatics of the Surma Valley were lodged at Dacca Lunatic Asylum but since 1913

patients from these areas were also received at Tezpur. In 1922 its name was changed from Lunatic Asylum to Mental Hospital.

The hospital covers an area of about 43 hectares and is located on a raised plateau overlooking the *Mora Bhareli* river near its confluence with the Brahmaputra. Patients are entrusted with ward management, cooking, cultivation etc. They are provided with one workshop which has 60 shuttle looms, 16 table looms, 13 sewing machines. Blacksmithy, mechanical, electrical and sericulture sections have also been recently added to it.

The hospital also provides facilities for out-door and indoor games. Periodically, patients are taken for cinema, for a walk in the town and for picnic etc. There is a big auditorium with a fully equipped stage where patients can perform drama etc.

The first Medical Officer known as Health Assistant was appointed in 1898. The post of Deputy Superintendent was created in 1910 and a full-time Superintendent was appointed in 1932. Presently its staff consists of one Superintendent, 2 Deputy Superintendents, 2 Medical Officers, 6 Nurses and 170 other staff. All modern *rantquilli-*ser drugs are made available to the patients. Electro Convulsion Therapy (E.C.T) is also provided since 1952. The hospital can accommodate upto 950 persons at a time and every year 1,500 cases are admitted and more than 1,450 are discharged.

Medical facilities in rural areas : Health care in the rural areas of Darrang is of integrated pattern combining both preventive and curative services with emphasis on the preventive aspect. In pursuance of the recommendations of the Health Survey and Development Committee 1945, known as the Bhow Committee, Primary Health Centres were established in rural areas. The World Health Organisation also endorsed the view that there should be integrated health care through Primary Health Centres in the rural areas. There are seven Primary Health Centres in the thirteen Community Development Blocks in the district. In Assam there are in average 6 Primary Health Centres per 10 Blocks. Fifty three State Dispensaries and seven Health Centres are functioning in the rural areas of the district. The number of patients treated in these dispensaries and health centres has been shown earlier in this chapter.

(e) **Private Hospitals and Nurshing Homes :** The district two private hospitals, one is the Baptist Mission Hospital at Tezpur which has 3 doctors, 12 nurses and the other is the Mission

Hospital at Harisinga. The district has also 96 tea garden hospitals and dispensaries under the management of the tea garden authorities. The following shows the strength of beds in these hospitals.

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| 1) Baptist Mission Hospital at Tezpur | 62 beds. |
| 2) Mission Hospital, Harisinga. | 8 beds. |
| 3) 96 Tea-garden hospitals and dispensaries. | 2 693 beds. |

There are some private Pharmacies in the district run by registered doctors who take cases for treatment privately. They have generally clinics of their own. One Medical Store is run on Co-operative basis at Vishwanath Charali. Mention may also be made of the following institutions which are managed by private organisations.

- (1) Chandranath Laxidhar Chest Hospital, Tezpur.
- (2) Kedarmal Charitable Ayurvedic Hospital, Tezpur.
- (3) Ram Krishna Charitable Dispensary, Tezpur.

The Homeopathic system of treatment has also gained some popularity among the people and there are Homeopathic pharmacies and practitioners both in urban and rural areas. There are also several Ayurvedic pharmacies in the urban areas.

The number of private practitioners and specialists has been increasing in the urban areas. The specialists in the branches of Dentistry and Ophthalmology and E.N.T. etc., have opened their own clinics.

(f) **Institutions for disseminating knowledge on public health :** The Health Education Bureau started functioning in the State of Assam with effect from October, 1960. One of its objectives was to help people in building health by their own actions and efforts. People were also encouraged to fully utilise the health services provided by the Government. It also aimed at collecting base-line data of the prevailing pattern of health habits, attitudes, beliefs, values etc., of the people.

The Bureau has started work with three sections, namely Administrative, Material, and Field Demonstration under one Assistant Director of Health Services.

There are already six Health Education *cum* Mobile Dispensary units, five for the Plains Tribal Areas and one for the Autonomous Hills districts of Assam, carrying on with Health Education activities.

The Health Education Bureau has been undertaking programmes of Health Education for the inservice paramedical personnel, medical officers deputed for orientation course, vaccinators, nurses, health visitors etc. The Bureau has been conducting seminars, group talks etc., for the workers engaged in Malaria Eradication and other health programmes from time to time.

The Material Section which was started in November, 1960 had successfully participated in an international Health Exhibition organised at New Delhi in February, 1961 on the occasion of World Health Assembly and at Jorhat in the 6th All Assam Ayurvedic Mahasabha. It also brought out two publications on the progress of health on the above occasions. The material section also is responsible for catering the District and Subdivision Health Services and other voluntary organisations with audio-visual aids on health and sanitation. The aforesaid section has been participating in a number of small exhibitions organised by the Health and other Departments both official and voluntary.

With the appointment of an Anthropologist in the month of June, 1961, the State Health Education Bureau has extended its activities in Field Demonstration in the selected areas of the State.

Apart from the aforesaid activities, documentary film shows on health and sanitation are exhibited in the rural areas of both the Hills and Plains districts of the State.

The Family Planning Clinics, hospitals, dispensaries, Maternity and Child Welfare Centres, Primary Health Centres and Community Development Blocks have been playing a significant role in disseminating knowledge on birth control. A short course for doctors, Health visitors, Midwives, and Nurses is imparted in the Regional Family Planning Training Centre at Shillong. In the Fourth Five Year Plan emphasis has been given on the Family Planning programmes. A national programme has already been launched to reduce the birth rate from 40 per thousand to 25 per thousand. For achieving this objective is to create facilities for the married couples to adopt family planning by anyone of the following means :

- (i) Group acceptance of a small sized family.
- (ii) Personal knowledge about family planning methods.
- (iii) Ready availability of supplies and services.

The I.U.C.D programme was introduced in the State in 1965-66

The Fourth Plan envisages expansion of the training facilities and intensification of the Family Planning Programmes. Sterilisation facilities have been made available in the Civil Hospitals and Primary Health Centres. Use of condoms has also become increasingly popular. One mobile publicity unit is engaged in extending audio-visual aids to the people on birth control measures.

There is one Nurse Training Centre attached to Tezpur Civil Hospital where 20 trainees receive training in each batch.

(g) Sanitation :

(i) Administrative set-up for maintenance of public health and sanitation : Prior to February 1958, Public health activities were carried on by one District Medical Officer of Health and one Subdivisional Medical and Health Officer with a number of rural dispensaries under their charge. Each of the hospitals and dispensaries had one Medical Officer for treatment of all diseases, survey of diseases, control of epidemic and sanitation. They were also entrusted with the responsibilities of detecting the cases of food adulteration. The Medical Officers were assisted by Auxiliary Health personnel, such as the Rural Health Inspectors, Health Assistants, and Vaccinators. This set of officers confined their activities primarily to the rural areas. In February, 1958, the Public Health Services were amalgamated with the Medical Services and all the dispensaries managed by the Public Health Department came under the control of the Civil Surgeon (now District Health Officer), Darrang. It has been mentioned earlier that with the abolition of the Local Boards in 1959, all the Local Board dispensaries were also taken over by the Government.

After the amalgamation, the Public Health matters have been entrusted to the Civil Surgeon now redesignated as District Health Officer. Besides the Assistant Health Officers having the charge of the dispensaries, public health centres or hospitals ; a number of other officers posted in all the areas of the district, are entrusted with the public health affairs. There is one Rural Health Inspector in each police station, and a few Health Assistants under each of the Health Inspectors. The Municipal Boards have their own set of vaccinators and Sanitary Inspectors. The Health Assistant and the Vaccinators perform vaccination under the supervision of the Medical Officers in their respective areas.

The following table shows the number of vaccination performed during the last four years.

Year	Primary	Revaccination	Successful (Primary)	Successful Revaccination
1968	50,009	2,49,037	-	-
1969	49,190	1,82,658	33,242	4,334
1970	52,502	1,39,821	38,603	34,775
1971	56,892	1,75,839	44,148	48,142

The Public Health Engineering Department of the Government of Assam is engaged in implementation of the schemes of water supply both in urban and rural areas. The office of the Subdivisional officer of this department is located at Mangaldai. The jurisdiction of the officer extends all over Darrang district. The Executive Engineer, Public Health Engineering, Gauhati Division I supervises the works executed in the district. The office of the S.D.O., Public Health Engineering, Mangaldai, was established in the year 1963.

(ii) Activities of health and sanitary organisations : While in the rural areas improvement of environmental hygiene is a matter of utmost importance, emphasis has been given on improvement of the living conditions of the *Harijans* in the urban areas. The acute poverty and dearth of housing accommodation of the migratory population have led to the growth of tiny slums in the towns. In fact, these can be termed as *bastis* rather than slum which is a by-word of squalor. The Tezpur Municipal Board has taken some steps to provide better accommodation facilities to the *Harijans* and the people living in these areas. In other towns such as Tangla, Rangapara, Kharupatia, and Dhekiajuli, no slum of considerable size have yet grown, though the housing conditions in the industrial and commercial areas of these towns are typically congested and unhealthy.

In the rural areas the Panchayats are entrusted with certain aspects of sanitation and public health. These Panchayats construct rural latrines, *pucca* drains, supply smokeless *chullahs*, and provide for drinking water by constructing wells, renovating old wells and tanks, and installing hand-pumps. In 1969-70, 244 rural latrines were constructed in Behali Anchalik Panchayat area, 25 in Chayduar, 11 in Dalgaon-Sialmari, 19 in Dhekiajuli, 10 in Vishwanath, and 9 in Udalguri. During the same year, 164 soakage-pits were constructed in Behali Panchayat, 185 in Gabharu and 35 in Dalgaon-Sialmari. Following table shows the achievement of some of the Panchayats in providing drinking water facilities in 1969-70.

Name of the Panchayats	Wells constructed	Wells renovated	Hand-pumps installed
1	2	3	4
1. Behali	52	57	16
2. Chayduar	7	29	—
3. Dalgaon-Sialmari	7	29	—
4. Majbat	7	—	—
5. Dhekiajuli	42	34	—
6. Vishwanath	5	6	—
7. Udalguri	54	62	—

During the year under review, i.e. 1969-70, other Panchayats of the district have not recorded any progress in this respect. During the Second Five Year Plan two major projects of water-supply and sanitation were executed in Udalguri and Tangla. The Udalguri project involved an expenditure of Rs. 4.05 lakhs, covered 204 villages and was expected to benefit nearly forty thousand people. The other project executed at Tangla involved an expenditure of Rs. 2.90 lakhs, covered eight villages and was expected to benefit nearly eight thousand people.

Protected water supply : Tezpur was the first town in the district to get protected water. It was in 1917, that the first water-works known as the Earle Water Works was commissioned at Tezpur. Initial expenditures incurred on this project is, however, not known. Tezpur Municipal Board received a substantial grant amounting to Rs. 30,160/- as early as 1913 when the schemes prepared by the Sanitary Engineer were approved by the Government. Tezpur Municipal Board again received a special grant of Rs. 16,000/- in 1933-34 for improving its water supply. Some more grants have been sanctioned to this Board since then for the same purpose. The earnings of the Municipal Board from the water-tax amounted to Rs. 72,412.71 in 1968-69 and Rs. 68,590.13 in 1969-70.

Protected water was supplied for some years in Mangaldai town. The water-supply scheme was taken up in this town in 1960-61 and involved an expenditure of five lakhs of rupees. Due to the mechanical break-down, the water works were closed down in 1965-66. Dhekiajuli Town Committee which came into being in 1958, has executed water-supply scheme in the town.

Special emphasis has been given on protected water-supply and sanitation programmes during the Fourth Five Year Plan. A

substantial portion of the outlay has been earmarked for urban water-supply and sanitation programme, particular attention has been given during the Fourth Plan to provide protected water-supply to areas epidemic with Cholera, Filariasis and areas of chronic scarcity.

Malaria Eradication Programme : This programme is expected to be completed during the Fourth Plan. Under the National Malaria Eradication Programme, the Tezpur Unit was opened in 1957. One more unit was opened at Tangla in the same year. These two units are taking various measures including investigation, surveillance operation and spraying,

Before starting the operation, an assessment in selected areas of different malariometric condition is undertaken by the following method.

- (a) Spleen rate—About 20,000 children between 2 and 10 years.
- (b) Parasite rate—About 10,000 children of the same age.
- (c) Infant parasite rate—About 100 infants below 1 year of age.

In order to assess the result of operation, the epidemiological assessment was carried out every year in the same areas.

Indoor Residual Spraying was done in the following manner.

All roofed structures (inside surfaces) of the area were sprayed twice a year with D.D.T. at 100 mg. deposit or sq. ft. of surface area. Surveillance operation includes detection of fever cases and radical treatment of persons harbouring Malarial infection and their epidemiological investigations. Under this operation every house is visited once in a fortnight by Surveillance workers and blood smears are collected along with simultaneous administration of a single dose of 4 aminoquinoline tablets as presumptive treatment. The blood slides are sent to the Unit laboratory for examination. Any person found harbouring Malarial parasite in his blood is quickly treated by the Surveillance Inspector.

As a result of indoor residual spraying since 1958, the incidence of Malaria has markedly come down. By Medical treatment of persons harbouring malarial parasites, the reservoir of infection has also been brought down and as such chances of transmission of Malaria from man to man is declining from residual cases where present.

CHAPTER—XVII

OTHER SOCIAL SERVICES

(a) Labour welfare :

Plantation labourers constitute an important part of the total population of the district. It also plays a vital role in the economy of the district. The number of average daily labourers employed in the district, stood at 50,938 resident and 9,869 outsider in 1969¹. During the same year, 76,362 tea garden labourers worked in 97 tea estates of the district. There were 1,07,150 bonafide dependents of the resident labourers on the roll on the 31st. December, 1969². Darrang occupies the third place among the districts of Assam having large plantation labour population. Tea industry plays an important part in the economy of the district as the highest foreign exchange earner, biggest employer, and also as the biggest source of excise revenue for the government.

The distress of the plantation labourers scarcely drew the attention of the legislators till the later part of the nineteenth century. During the initial stage of the development, the tea industry was beset with a number of problems of which the scarcity of labour was the foremost one. The employers left practically no stone unturned to bring labour from distant areas with a view to build up a cheap and permanent labour force. A series of Acts passed between 1864 and 1901 gave rise to a system of indentured labour. The Assam Labour and Emigration Act was passed in 1901. It regulated the recruitment and employment of indentured labour in Assam and subjected the worker to penal contracts. The principle of indentured labour was withdrawn in 1915 and the penalties for breach of contract were removed from the statute in 1927. The Tea District Emigration Act, 1932, is the milestone in the history of plantation labour legislation in Assam. Under this Act, the emigrants were given the right to be repatriated at the employer's expense on completion of three years' service, or even within one year, if the work did not

1. *Tea Statistics*, 1970-71, p. 109

2. *Ibid*, p. 121.

suit the health of the labourer. Among other measures incorporated in this Act to control the recruitment of emigrant labourers, mention may be made of the prohibition on employment of persons below 16 years of age, unaccompanied by their parents and guardians, and of the women whose husband did not consent. The Plantation Labour Act, 1951, provided for reasonable amenities such as supply of drinking water, medical and educational facilities, canteens and creches etc., regulation of working hours and weekly holidays. Prior to this, there was virtually complete absence of the regulation of conditions of work in plantation. The following Acts which aim at ameliorating the condition of the labourers are in force in Darrang district.

- (1) The Workmen's Compensation Act, 1923.
- (2) The Indian Trade Union Act, 1926.
- (3) The Tea Districts Emigrant Labour Act, 1934.
- (4) The Payment of Wages Act, 1936.
- (5) The Assam Maternity Benefit Act, 1947.
- (6) The Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946.
- (7) The Industrial Dispute Act, 1947.
- (8) The Factories Act, 1948.
- (9) The Assam Shops and Establishment Act, 1948.
- (10) The Minimum Wages Act, 1948.
- (11) The Plantation Labour Act, 1951.
- (12) The Assam Tea Plantation Provident Fund Scheme Act, 1958.
- (13) The Motor Transport Workers Act, 1961.

Since Independence, it has been the endeavour of the Government to raise the standard of living of the working class and to bring about all-round improvement in their conditions of living. With this end in view, Government in 1951 undertook a Labour Welfare Scheme for the general welfare of the plantation labours. The purpose of the Scheme is to instil in the workers the ideas of clean living, sanitation, health hygiene, social education, and the like in order to improve the general condition of the workers. Three voluntary social welfare organisations well known for their social service in the State have been entrusted with the implementation of the scheme and regular grants-in-aid are being given to them by Government for this purpose. Upto 1960-61, five centres for men, four for women and nine for ex-tea garden labours have been opened by the three organisations doing labour welfare work among plantation labourers in the State. Apart from providing recreational facilities in the above centres, vocational training in blacksmithy, wea-

ving, knitting and spinning, basket making etc., is also given.

In 1960-61, Rules 58 and 64 of the Plantation Labour Act, 1951 were amended making every employer liable to provide houses of the prescribed standard to at least 8 per cent of the resident workers annually. Other amendments of the Act provided for medical facilities to the workers and to their families. In 1961, about 63 tea gardens of the Darrang district were inspected by Medical Inspectors to find out the availability of medical facilities in the gardens. By the end of 1961, it was found that about 20 estates of Darrang were deficient as regards provision of medical facilities. According to the Plantation Labour Act, 1951, the government constituted two Boards, viz. the Medical Advisory Board and the Housing Advisory Board to examine the details of providing medical and housing facilities to the tea garden labourers. Both the Boards meet at least twice in a year to lay down the standards of medical and housing facilities required to be provided in the plantations under the Act. The Chief Inspector of Plantations also visited the representative estates and met the employers to impress upon them the necessity of making an all-out effort to provide housing, medical and other facilities as per rules of the Act. The statement below indicates the number of resident houses provided under the Act in the district of Darrang as on the year ending 31st December, 1969.³

(i) Total requirement of houses for the families of the resident workers on the plantations :

(a) Labour	...	33,854
(b) Artisans	...	711
(c) Clerical and other medical staff.	...	1,493

(ii) Total number of houses of approved standard existing on 1st day of the year, 1969.

For Labour	Pucca	Semi-pucca	Total
1	2	3	4
(a) As per 1968 specification.	14,824	7,004	1,8894
(b) As per 1968 Revised specification.	1,305	104	1,409
(c) The clerical, medical and other staff covered under the Act prior to 1960.	1,277	206	1,483

3. Figures collected from the District Labour Officer, Darrang, Tezpur.

For Labour	Pucca	Semi-pucca	Total
1	2	3	4
(d) Houses as per specification vide Govt. Notification No. LR. 333/59/20/ dt.31.12.60			
	221	35	256
(iii) Total number of standard Houses built during the year as per 1968 revised specifications :			
For Labour	Pucca	Semi-pucca	Total
1	2	3	4
(a) By new construction	330	-	330
(b) By adoption	28	-	28
(c) The clerical, medical, and other staff covered U/A prior to 1960	1,277	206	1,483
(d) Houses as per specification as above under H (d)	221	35	256
(e) By new construction	103	16	119
(f) By adoption	6	5	11

Under the same Act of 1951, facilities for creches, education, and recreation have been provided for the plantation labour of the district.

Benefits of higher wages : The standard of living primarily depends upon the level of wages. Before Independence the wages of the tea garden labourers were hardly at par with the subsistence level. The condition of living was also, generally speaking, deplorable. In order to secure reasonable wage for the labourers, the government took some legislative measures. In this connection mention may be made about the Payment of Wages Act, 1936, which has covered plantation, motor omnibus service, inland steam vessels etc. Prior to 1936, there was no law in the country except the Employers' and Workmen's Disputes Act, 1860, to regulate payment of wages to the labourers. Minimum wages were first fixed in the year

1952, in respect of workers of tea plantations, public motor transport and rice and oil mills. The minimum wages of the tea garden workers are to be fixed from time to time by the Wage Board. The constitution of the Wage Board in 1958 with the workers' representatives and the employers to decide the minimum rate of wages was also an important event in the history of labour legislation in Assam. The rates of daily basic wages of the tea plantation labours in Darrang district is as follows.⁴

(In Rs.)

Subdivision	Effective from 1.6.66			Concessional foodstuff.
	Men	Women	Children	
Tezpur	2.18	2.01	1.06	Cereals are made available at Rs. 46.89 per quintal.
Mangaldai	2.15	1.98	1.05	

The Bonus Act, 1965, has been extended to tea and other allied industries of the district.

Leave with wages has also been allowed in tea industry of the district. The statement below gives some indications in this respect.

Year	No. of workers granted leave during the year	Total days-leave granted.	No. of workers to whom leave allowed amounted to 30 days.
1	2	3	4
1969	75,390	9,47,022	532

The statement below also gives some idea about the sickness benefit granted to the tea and other allied workers of the district.

Year	No. of persons granted sickness benefit.	Amount paid as sickness benefit (in Rs.)	No. of claims for sickness benefit rejected.
1	2	3	4
1969	56,883	6,95,412.41	153

Medical facilities : In 1947 Dr. E. Lloyd Jones conducted an enquiry about the health conditions of the plantation labour in Assam, Bengal and South India. His investigations revealed that in Assam

4. Tea Statistics, 1970-71.

the state of the health of the workers was poor and most of them were suffering from under nourishment, general weakness and lack of vitality. He recommended that the provision for medical services should be made in two stages. In the first stage government hospitals and dispensaries should be established. This was to be followed by construction of group and central hospitals in the second stage. The second session of the Industrial Committee on Plantations held in New Delhi accepted his recommendations in 1948. Various steps in this direction have been taken since then. The following list indicates the existing facilities and gives some idea about medical facilities enjoyed by the tea plantation workers of the district.⁵

(1) Hospitals/dispensaries	- 96
(2) Beds	- 2,625
(3) Visiting Doctors	- 83
(4) Qualified medical practitioners	- 91
(5) Compounders and Pharmacists	- 102
(6) Trained Dhais	- 80
(7) Qualified Midwives	- 62
(8) Trained Nurses	- 61
(9) Health Assistants	- 33
(10) Dressers	- 116

In this context, it may be noted here that out of the 96 hospitals and dispensaries there are provisions for treatment of serious diseases in 79 hospitals. In 1969, altogether 623 serious cases were treated in the hospitals.

It has been mentioned earlier that educational facilities are also available in the tea estates of the district. The following figures indicate the extent of educational facilities provided in the district, among the tea garden workers, till the end of the year 1969.⁶

(1) No. of children between the ages of 6 and 12 in the plantations	24,661
(2) No. of schools maintained,	107
(3) No. of students enrolled	5,406
(4) No. of teachings staff	119

About 142 Recreational Centres have been opened in the tea estates of the district. Most of the tea gardens also maintain canteens for the benefit of the workers. In 1969, the average daily attendance of the workers in the canteens of the district stood at 2,002.

5. Figures collected from the District Labour Officer, Darrang, Tezpur.

6. Ibid.

The Assam Maternity Benefit Act, 1944, is applicable to the plantations and factories. Prior to the implementation of the Act, the female workers on maternity leave did not get wages ; but after the implementation of the said Act a woman worker earns maternity leave to the extent of twelve weeks, with pay at the rate of seventy five paise per day or maternity aid whichever is preferable. The Field Officers usually investigate cases of complaints relating to non-payment of maternity allowance or refusal to provide medical benefit as prescribed.

The Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946, as extended under section 1 (3) of the Act is applicable to all industrial establishments (excepting mines, quarries, oil fields or Railways of the State) in which 10 or more workers are employed or were employed. The Labour Commissioner is the certifying officer under the Act. This Act has made it obligatory on the part of the employers to provide adequate medical care, recreational and housing facilities, to the plantation workers. The Labour Department ensures implementation of this Act.

Similarly, in the field of industrial disputes, the Labour Department has been able to promote industrial harmony through peaceful settlement of disputes in tea gardens and other establishments of the district. The statement below shows the performance of the Labour Department in the implementation of the Industrial Disputes Act, in the district since 1962 up to 1971.⁷

Year	Total cases	Disputes settled through conciliation proceedings including arbitration	No. of disputes sent for adjudication.
1	2	3	4
1962	83	68	15
1963	135	114	21
1964	71	69	12
1965	74	61	13
1966	85	77	8
1967	96	85	11
1968	71	62	9
1969	98	85	13
1970	33	27	6
1971	42	33	9

7. Ibid.

Besides, there are three Community Centres for plantation labourers, at Pratapgarh, Panbari and Hattigarh. There are three Labour Welfare Organisers, three Welfare Assistants, three Lady Welfare Assistants, three Tailoring Inspectors, three Carpentry Inspectors, three Part-time Teacher *cum* Librarians and three Chowkidars, evenly distributed among three centres. In these centres various facilities such as recreational and educational training in crafts like tailoring, carpentry, blacksmithy, sewing, knitting, weaving etc. are provided for the workers and their dependents.

Administration : The Assistant Labour Commissioner *cum* Deputy Chief Inspector of Plantations, whose Jurisdiction extends over both the districts of Darrang and Lakhimpur, is entrusted with the implementation of various labour legislations in the district. The Assistant Labour Commissioner is assisted by one Labour officer, one Labour Inspector for Plantations and two Labour Inspectors (General) for Tezpur Subdivision. The jurisdiction of the first two officers extend over Darrang and Lakhimpur. There is also one Labour Inspector at Mangaldai. The entire subdivision falls within his jurisdiction.

Other Labour Welfare measures : The Assam Tea Plantations Provident Fund Scheme is also an important legislation enforced in the district for the welfare of the tea workers and the staff. The scheme was first brought into operation on the 12th September 1955. The scheme now covers all categories of employees employed in Tea Plantation in Assam. After amendment in 1960, the Act covers the adolescents and children who were previously outside the purview of the scheme.

The Statement below indicates the progress of the Scheme in the district of Darrang and North Lakhimpur (present Lakhimpur district) upto March, 1962.

Total estates	No. of estates covered by the scheme.	No. of members.		
1	2	3		
		Staff	Adult workers	Adolescents & Children.
104	103	1,657	74,067	9,910

To look after the implementation of the scheme there is one Fund Control Officer at Tezpur, whose area of activity covers all the gardens of the district as well as the gardens of the present Lakhimpur district.

In addition to these, the Assam *Seva Samiti*, a non-official organisation has been serving mainly the backward and ex-tea garden labourers of the district in pursuance of the decision of the Labour Welfare Board, Assam. Under this organisation four Labour Welfare Centres have been opened in the district of Darrang. These Centres are (1) Majbat Labour Welfare Centre, (2) Dhekiajuli Labour Welfare Centre, (3) Ghoramari Labour Welfare Centre and (4) Behali Labour Welfare Centre. All the Centres are educational-*cum*-vocational Centres. The brief descriptive accounts of the centres are given below.

(1) Majbat Labour Welfare Centre : It was established in 1962 at Majbat. There is provision of hostel accommodation for students in the Centre and the inmates are imparted training in educational *cum* vocational matters. The Centre is manned by one Organising Secretary, one Carpentry Inspector and other staff.

(2) Dhekiajuli Labour Welfare Centre : It is an important Centre in the Tezpur subdivision and is located near the North Trunk Road of the district. It is also an educational *cum* vocational centre and the activities of the Centre are mainly confined to three important sections, namely, Cattle Section, Poultry Section and the Agriculture Section. This Centre has about 1.34 hectares of land at its disposal. The students of the Dhekiajuli H.E. School also attend the vocational training classes in the Dhekiajuli Labour Welfare Centre.

(3) Ghoramari Labour Welfare Centre : The Centre is located at Ghoramari near the North Trunk Road at a distance of about sixteen kilometres from Tezpur.

(4) Behali Labour Centre : It is situated at Behali, near the North Trunk Road of the district. The Centre has maintained one L.P. School and a Vocational Training Centre for Carpentry and Blacksmithy.

Workers' Education Centre, Tezpur : The Government of India, in the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Rehabilitation constituted in 1957 the Central Board for Workers' Education. This Board consists of the representatives from National Trade Unions, Employers' Organisations, University Grants Commission and State

and Central Governments. In order to implement the programme of workers' education, the Board has established regional and sub-regional Centres, in different parts of the country.

The Regional Workers' Education Centre at Tezpur is one of the 30 Regional Centres in the country and was established in the month of December, 1965. Its area of operation extends over the districts of Kamrup, Darrang, Goalpara, North Lakhimpur, K & J Hills, Mizo Hills, Garo Hills and Arunachal Pradesh.

The training programme at the Regional Centre is carried out at stages - (i) Regional and (ii) Unit Levels.

(i) Regional Level : This consists of imparting training to select workers selected from different industrial units scattered throughout the region for a period of three months. During the period of training at the centre the selected workers are considered as on duty and are entitled to all the benefits as enjoyed by other workers on duty. The curriculum of the training includes the role of trade union, employment and earnings, social security and labour welfare, industrial relations, planning and industrial development etc. For the later part of the training period, the workers are taken out to important industrial towns, outside the State to study industrial relations, working conditions in different factories and also of the activities of a Trade Union for a fortnight.

The Worker-Teachers Training course was inaugurated in the Centre in May, 1966, and by the middle of that year two batches completed their training. Two batches of 45 workers selected from different industrial units received training under this scheme.

(ii) Unit level : Those workers who complete the training at the Regional Centre are called Worker-Teachers and they are sent back to their units of employment. They are required to conduct unit level classes to impart similar training to their co-workers for a period of three months. This is a continuous process and after every three months, new batches of about 25 workers are selected for training. The garden authorities furnish all teaching materials, such as note books, pencils, visual aids etc. Every worker who attends the class at least for 90% of the working days is given as incentive award of Rs. 5.00. The curriculum at the Unit Level training broadly covers the following subjects, (i) workers and the factory, (ii) workers and the industry, (iii) workers and the Union and (iv) workers and the country.

The Regional Centre is headed by the Regional Director who in turn is advised by a Local Committee consisting of representatives from Unions, Employers Educational Institutions and Government of Assam. The Labour Commissioner, Government of Assam is the Ex-officio Chairman of the Local Committee and the Regional Director is the Ex-officio Secretary.

There are five Education Officers, who are entrusted with the responsibility of imparting training at the Regional Centre. The Government of India bears all the expenses for implementing the scheme at all levels.

(b) Prohibition :

(i) Opium : The poppy cultivation is believed to have been in vogue during the reign of the Ahoms in Assam. In 1793 Captain Welsh found Ahom king Gourinath completely abandoned to the opium habit. A few years later, David Scott remarked on the enormous quantity of opium consumed by the inhabitants of Assam. In 1837, M'Cosh Assistant Surgeon of Assam also found opium culture in Assam. In 1853, Maniram Dewan mentioned in his petition before Mills that opium was first cultivated in the reign of Raja Lakshminath Sinha (1769-1780 A.D.). Poppy cultivation was, however, strictly limited till the Burmese invasion when a reign of terror was let loose on the people by the invaders and the authority of the central Government was shattered. The opium soon became the popular narcotic drug among the inhabitants of the Brahmaputra Valley. Mills who visited Assam in 1853 recommended that while some of home consumption should be prohibited, opium should be issued to all the treasuries in Assam for sale to persons who might require it. The price, it was further recommended, should not be prohibitive, but sufficiently high to act as deterrent on its excessive consumption. B.C. Allen states that prior to 1860, restriction was imposed on the cultivation of poppy. It was in that year that poppy cultivation was prohibited and the drug was issued from the treasury at Rs. 14 a seer. The price was raised to Rs. 20 per seer in 1862. It was progressively raised in subsequent years to be fixed at Rs. 37 in 1890. Licence fee for retail vend of opium was levied from 1874 when it was fixed at Rs. 12 per annum per shop. The number of retail opium shops decreased from 856 in 1873-74 to 100 in 1903-04. The general policy of the Government was to discourage free consumption of this injurious drug by increasing its price and reducing easy excess. But even then

opium continued to be an important source of revenue claiming three-fourths of the excise revenue of Darrang in 1900-01.

The following figures of consumption show the extent to which the use of opium was effected by the raising of the duty ; 1873-74, 237 *maunds* ; 1879-80, 275 *maunds* ; 1889-90, 207 *maunds* ; 1899-1900, 179 *maunds* ; 1879-80 showed a large increase over the figures of 1873-74, but some exceptional cause was apparently in operation in the later year as the average annual consumption between 1875 and 1880 was only 248 *maunds*.

The quantity of opium issued in 1899-1900 was 28 per cent less than this average of 20 years before. This decrease was probably due to a reduction in the number of shops, to an increase in the rate of duty by 13 rupees a *seer* and to the fact the price of opium was by then so high that non-consumers had a very distinct inducement to abstain from taking to such an expensive habit.⁸

In 1835, the retail price of opium was Rs. 5 per *seer*. Since 1890, it had ranged from Rs. 40 to Rs. 50 a *seer* and it was obvious that such an enormous increase in the price must have had a very perceptible effect upon consumption.

With the spread of education and the national consciousness, the popular resentment against the cultivation and sale of opium manifested in an organised movement. The workers of the National Congress Party spearheaded the movement, and agitated against the sale of opium from the government treasuries besides persuading the addicts to give up this harmful drug. In his budget speech delivered on the 9th March 1939, Gopinath Bardaloi, the then Premier of Assam expressed the intention of the Government for introducing prohibition on consumption of intoxicants by phases and elimination of outsiders from the opium business.⁹ In accordance with this declaration, the Assam Prohibition Bill, 1939, was presented by the Bardaloi Ministry on 12th May 1939, before the Assam Legislative Council. The next ministry headed by Maulavi Sayid Sir Muhammad Saadulla did not place much emphasis on prohibition, on the success of which they entertained a sceptical view. In his budget speech, Mr. Saadulla declared on the 22nd February, 1940, "It is a very debatable proposition whether opium addicts could ever be successfully weaned away from this habits in as much as opium is a habit forming

8. B.C.Allen, *Assam District Gazetteer, Vol.V, Darrang*, Allahabad, 1905 pp.201-203.

9. *Assam Gazette*, April, 26, 1939.

drug and addicts are known to suffer from excruciating pangs if they are deprived of their ration and medical science has not yet discovered any remedy to help these miserable men. It must be remembered that the total number of registered opium consumers in the province at the end of 1939, was 17,720."¹⁰ However, this Ministry continued the experiment for one year. The provisions of the Prohibition Bill, 1939 in respect of other intoxicants, however, did not find favour with Saadulla Ministry. In the above speech, Mr. Saadulla further declared, "The Congress Coalition Ministry had also thought of introducing prohibition of liquor and other exciseable articles; and to this end, they had a Bill introduced in the Upper House which the Council passed with certain amendments. In view of the fact that there are immense difficulties due to the presence of 16 lakhs of labour population in our Tea estates and in their neighbourhood who take, and sometimes illicitly brew *pachwai* and also on account of the presence of over 6 lakhs of Hill population who also are in the habit of drinking liquor, the prohibition of such an article will require a tremendous preventive staff which is beyond the competence of the present day finances even if we can ignore the loss of a very considerable amount of revenue. The receipts from country spirits at the end of the year 1938-39 stood roughly at 18½ lakhs. The present Ministry has, therefore, been reluctantly compelled not to proceed with the said Prohibition Bill."¹¹ The attempts of the National Congress Party to root out the use of intoxicants through legislation and social disapprobation of the act and propagation of ideals of moral upliftment yielded very good results in reducing the number of opium addicts.

After Independence, the Congress Government passed the Opium Prohibition Act in 1947. The Directive Principles of the Constitution of India has specifically laid down that the State shall endeavour to bring about prohibition on consumption, except for medical purposes, of intoxicating drinks and drugs which are injurious to health.

In 1954 the Prohibition Enquiry Committee recommended that schemes of prohibition should be integrated with the country's development plans and that prohibition should become the law throughout the country. This was affirmed by a resolution in the Lok Sabha on 31st March, 1956. A programme has accordingly been formulated by

10. *Assam Gazette*, March, 13, 1940, p. 47-48.

11. *Ibid*, p. 48.

the Planning Commission. The Commission has left to each State to fix a target date and to formulate its policy in accordance with local conditions and circumstances. The Commission have, however, recommended the adoption of certain measures like discontinuance of advertisements and other inducements, stoppage of drinking in public premises, setting up of commission etc. A Central Prohibition Committee has been set up in pursuance of recommendation of the Prohibition Enquiry Committee to review the progress of prohibition programme and co-ordinate the activities in different States.

In the implementation of the Opium Prohibition Act, the Prohibition Committees, formed with the non-officials in different localities render assistance to the official organisation. Two Prohibition Committees were formed in the district of Darrang, one at Tezpur and the other at Mangaldai. Their duties are to organise public meetings in the rural areas specially where the number of addicts is fairly large. Some of the members of the Prohibition Committees have also been appointed as Prohibition Officers and these officers are empowered under the Act to conduct search and seizure.

Under this Act, two Opium Addicts Treatment Centres, one at Dhekiajuli and the other at Tangla were opened to treat the opium addicts. The Prohibition Officers are engaged in persuading and bringing the opium addicts to the Treatment Centres to cure them from the habit of opium eating. The course of treatment varies from 30 to 60 days generally. In case of old and habitual addicts, the course of treatment takes a longer period which may cover even 90 days in some cases.

The combined efforts of the Government and the public in general have gone a long way in wiping out opium from every nook and corner of the district. The following table shows the number of opium cases detected in the district.

Years	No. of Cases.
1953-54	63
1954-55	67
1955-56	59
1956-57	56
1957-58	71
1958-59	86
1959-60	88

Years	No. of Cases.
1960-61	50
1961-62	61
1962-63	62
1963-64	67
1964-66	44
1965-66	37
Total Cases	811

(ii) Liquor : Consumption of liquor is quite common among the tribal population and the tea garden labourers, people of other sections of the society also partake liquor ; but among them the drunkenness earns social disapprobation. The British Government did not attempt at enforcing prohibition of liquor. The excise revenue gradually rose rapidly during the years from 1874 to 1900. In the year 1873-74 the number of liquor shops was only 11 and net revenue was Rs. 1,457 ; but in 1899-1900 it rose to 15 shops and revenue upto Rs. 48,327. B.C. Allen gives an account of consumption of liquor in the district in the later part of the 19th century.

In those days, the 'outstill system' was in force in the district, that is to say, the right to manufacture and sell spirit at a particular locality was put up to auction, without levy of duty on the actual quantity of spirit distilled.

The foreigners were then the consumers of the bulk of country spirit sold. Facilities for obtaining liquor were, however, reduced. On the other hand revenue from liquor depended upon competition of auction bidders who were few in Darrang. Towards the end of the century efforts were made to ensure that the liquor vendors should pay a substantial sum for their licenses, though the number of shops was reduced by 29 per cent. Some measures had been also introduced with the object of reducing as far as possible the evils attendant on the liquor trade. A special excise establishment had been entertained, the vendor was required to arrange for an abundant supply of good drinking water near his shop, and his licence could be withdrawn if he was twice convicted of allowing drunkenness and disorderly conduct near the still. The liquor shops which did the largest business in those days were situated at Bindukuri, Balipara, Tezpur, Haraka and Sakomati.¹²

12. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Vol. V, Darrang* Allahabad, 1905, pp, 203-505.

Sale of liquor is not prohibited, but restricted under the Assam Excise Act. Liquor of measured strength is sold to the public in the liquor shops, locally called *Mahals*. The shops are settled for a period of three years by the Government. The Excise Department ensures that the shop-keepers sell only the liquor obtained from the Government distillery. The Assam Excise Act prohibits illicit distillation of liquor. The possession of *tari*, *pachwai* or *laopani* is also regulated under the same Act. Kacharis, Miris and the garden labourers are fond of *laopani* or rice beer. It is manufactured in the following manner.

The rice is boiled and spread on a mat, and *bakhar* is powdered and sprinkled over it. After about twelve hours it is transferred to an earthen jar, the mouth of which is closed, and left to ferment for three or four days. Water is then added and allowed to stand for few hours, and the beer is at last considered to be ready. The usual proportions are 5 seers of rice and 3 *chattaks* of *bakhar* to some 8 or 10 quarts of water, and the liquor produced is said to be much stronger than most European beers. Liquor is often illicitly distilled from *laopani* or boiled rice, by a simple method. An earthen pot with a hole in the bottom is placed on the top of the vessel containing the *laopani* or rice and the whole is set on the fire. The mouth of the upper pot is closed by a cone-shaped vessel filled with cold water, and a saucer is placed at the bottom of the pot over the hole. The vapour rises into the upper of the two jars, condenses against the cold cone with which the mouth is closed, and falls in the form of spirit on the saucer beneath. Care must, of course, be taken to see that the various cracks are closed against the passage of the spirituous vapour but this can easily be done with strips of cloth.

The following table show the consumption of liquor in the district in 1966-67.

Country Spirit.	Foreign Liquor		Commercial spirit		Foreign liquor imported.	
	Spirit in gross litres	Malt Liquors in gross litres.	Rectified spirits in imperial litres.	Denatured spirits in imperial litres.	Spirits in gross litres.	Malt liquors in gross litres.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3,20,050	25,379	26,675	18	4,799	25,379	26,675

(iii) *Ganja* : It is associated primarily with a section of people who are devotees of Lord Siva. The wild *ganja* grows very freely in the district; but it is not relished by the inveterate *ganja* smokers. *Ganja* is usually mixed with water, kneaded till it becomes soft, cut into small strips, and smoked. Preparation of the *ghota*, a delicious beverage, served on the *Sivaratri* night contains some quantity of *ganja*. The Assam *Ganja* and *Bhang* Prohibition Act prohibits possession and consumption of *ganja* and *bhang* and its smoking apparatus except for social, religious, medical, and scientific purposes.

(c) Advancement of Backward Classes and Tribes.

The description "Backward Classes" is commonly applied to the following four sections of population :-

- (1) Scheduled Tribes
- (2) Scheduled Castes
- (3) Communities formerly described as criminal tribes.
- (4) Other socially and educationally backward classes.

There is no community known as criminal tribe in Assam. According to the 1961 Census Report the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes population constituted an important part of the total population of Darrang district, as shown below.

	Male	Female	Total
1. Scheduled Castes	32,734	30,095	62,790
2. Scheduled Tribes	73,395	67,586	1,40,980

People belonging to Kaivartta or Jaliya, Brittil Bania or Bania, Bhuimali or Mali, Hira, Jalkeot, Namasudra, Sutradhar, Mech, Jhalo-Malo. Dhobi, Bansphor communities are regarded as the Scheduled Castes. The Boro, Borokachari, Deori, Kachari, Lalung, Mech, Sonoal, and Miri communities constitute the Scheduled Tribe population of the district. In Darrang there are people of some communities belonging to "Other Backward Classes"; but their total population figures are not readily available.

As the alien Government did nothing worth mentioning towards advancement of these people, they lagged far behind their brethren of the advanced communities.

It was only after Independence that attempts were made to bring an allround development of the standard of living of the people belonging to backward classes. One of the Directive Princi-

ples of the State Policy of the Constitution of India solemnly declares that the State shall promote with special care educational, social and economic interests of the weaker section of the people, and in particular Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and exploitation. Article 275 of the Constitution of India provides for grants-in-aid from the consolidated Fund of India to meet the cost of development schemes taken up for the welfare of the backward classes. Some idea about the level of development reached since 1947 is briefly described below.

(i) Constitution of Tribal Block/Belt : In order to protect the interest of the tribal people over their land, the Government of Assam carved out certain blocks comprising of areas predominantly inhabited by the tribal people. In Darrang the following Tribal Blocks/Belts have been constituted.

	Area covered in bighas
1) Gohpur Tribal Block	5,666
2) Balipara Tribal Belt	19,36,336
3) Kalaigaon Tribal Belt	11,16,336
4) Tetelibhanguria Tribal Block	10,117
5) Dalgaon Tribal Block	28,306
6) Kacharipara Tribal Block	9,656
7) Tezail Tribal Block	8,867
8) Bhuyan Khat Tribal Block	9,299

In the Tribal Belts/Blocks, the first preference is given to the tribal people in the settlement of Government waste land, and some restrictions are imposed upon the transfer of land from the tribals to the non-tribals.

(ii) Reservation of posts in the Government Services : In pursuance of the provisions of Articles 16 (4) and 335 of the Constitution of India the Government of Assam decided that there would be reservation of vacancies for members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in making appointments to services in connection with the affairs of the State Government, as indicated below.¹³

1) Scheduled Castes	— 7 per cent.
2) Scheduled Tribes (Plains)	— 10 per cent.
3) Scheduled Tribes (Hills)	— 12 per cent.

13. Assam Government Notification No. AAP. 66/63/482 dated August 24th. 1963.

Prior to August 1963, only 5 per cent of posts was reserved for the Scheduled Castes. This policy of reservation of vacancies has been followed by all the departments in making appointments to services or posts of the State Government, subject to other terms and conditions as laid down in the Notification issued on the 24th August 1963.

(iii) Education and Culture : An analysis of the level of development reached by the people belonging to the Backward Classes has been made earlier in Chapter XV. From the beginning of the First Five Year Plan, efforts have been made to eradicate illiteracy among the plains tribals. Primary and Middle Vernacular Schools have been set up in the areas predominantly inhabited by the tribal people. The State Primary Education Board took over a large number of venture schools which were set up at private initiative. A number of secondary schools and hostel buildings have been constructed for the welfare of the tribal people. The students belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other Backward Classes have been benefited by the scholarship scheme both in the secondary and collegiate stages and by Free Education Scheme in the secondary stage.

(iv) Reservation of seats in the Legislative Assembly and Panchayats : Out of the thirteen Assembly constituencies of the district, Rangamati is reserved for the Scheduled Castes and Udalguri for Scheduled Tribes. In the Anchalik and Gaon Panchayats also a member of seats are reserved for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to secure their fair representation in these elective bodies.

(v) Miscellaneous : Almost all the departments of the State Government earmark a portion of their total allotment for the development of the Backward Classes including the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. The Co-Operative Department offers grants-in-aid towards the share capital and expenses on management of the Co-operative Societies in the areas inhabited by the tribal people. In order to provide adequate medical facilities, Public Health Units and Dispensaries have been opened in those areas. The scourge of leprosy is a stigma to the nation. The incidence of leprosy is not negligible in the tribal areas. The Government has offered grants-in-aid to the Assam Seva Samity to implement the scheme of leprosy treatment. In the field of water supply, grants-in-aid have been given to the tribal people of the district for installation of tube wells and digging of tanks. In the same way the Agriculture, Industry, Sericulture and Weaving Departments of the Government of Assam are implemen-

ting numerous schemes in keeping with the declared policy of the Government to ameliorate the condition of the weaker section of the society. The self-help schemes which encourages pooling up the voluntary labour to supplement the grants-in-aid received from the Government have been implemented in the tribal areas of the district. In the Fourth Five Year Plan, programmes of the government of Assam have been so designed as to bring the under-privileged into the fabric of the enlightened community. Above all, programmes have been conceived with a view to promote greater amount of voluntary effort in the task of integrated development and social reconstruction. A list of development schemes implemented in the Community Development Blocks for the welfare of these people is given below.

Development Schemes executed in the Community Development Blocks for the welfare of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in Tezpur Subdivision.

Name of the Scheme	Amount (in Rupees)		
	1970-71	1969-70	1968-69
1. Rural Water Supply Scheme for the Scheduled Castes.	7,625.00	9,500.00	3,000.00
2. Rural Water Supply Scheme for Plains Tribal	8,350.06	8,000.00	1,240.00
3. Grants-in-aid for self-help schemes for Scheduled Castes	4,000.00	4,000.00	2,015.00
4. Grants-in-aid for self-help schemes for Scheduled Castes	2,925.00	2,700.00	—
5. Grants in-aid for organising welfare works among the Plains Tribal people.	8,085.00	5,364.00	4,000.00
6. Grants-in-aid for cultural activities for Plains Tribals.	5,450.00	9,954.00	750.00

CHAPTER-XVIII

PUBLIC LIFE AND VOLUNTARY SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANISATIONS

(a) Representation of the district in the State and Union Legislatures :

(i) British period : The principle of non-official representation in the Indian Council as well as in the Provincial Councils was recognised under the Indian Councils Act, 1861, which was subsequently amended by the Indian Councils Act, 1892, providing for indirect election for the first time to the Indian Council. These Acts had no impact on Darrang.

During the early part of the British administration, Assam formed a part of the Presidency of Bengal. In 1874 Assam was raised to the status of a Chief Commissioner's province. It was again tagged with East Bengal to form a separate province with its capital at Dacca in 1905 for a brief period till 1912. During this period Assam was represented by three Assamese and one European in the Council at Dacca as envisaged under the Morley-Minto Reforms Act of 1909. Assam was separated from East Bengal in 1912. The Assam Legislative Council was formed in January, 1913, with eleven elected and 14 nominated members. The Assam Valley was represented by five members including one representative of the Muhammadans in this Council, the members of which in turn elected representatives to the Indian Council at Delhi.

When Assam was raised to the status of Governor's province in 1920, the new Legislative Council was formed in 1923, under the Govt. of India Act, 1919, with 53 members—39 elected and 14 nominated, including the Executive Councillors. Darrang district was represented in this Council by two members elected from two non-Muhammadan constituencies of Tezpur and Mangaldai. The district formed a part of the Kamrup-Darrang-Nowgong Muhammadan constituency electing one member. The Assam Valley Planting constituency which included Darrang and other districts of the Brahmapu-

This system of representation continued till 1937 when the first Legislative Assembly was formed in Assam with 108 members as envisaged under the 1935 Act, introducing **provincial autonomy**. Out of these 108 seats, 34 were reserved for the Muhammadans, 9 for Europeans, European Planting, and European Commerce and Industry, 1 for women, 14 for Indian Christians, Backward Tribals (plains) Backward Areas (Hills) and Labour and the rest 50 seats were general ones. Darrang district was divided into four general constituencies as follows — Mangaldai (North), Mangaldai (South), Tezpur (East) and Tezpur (West). Besides these seats, the entire Darrang district elected one Muhammadan representative. One seat reserved for Indian Christians, Backward Tribals etc., was allotted to this district which also had a share of seats reserved for the Europeans.

The next election for the Provincial and Central Legislatures were held in 1946 in the same lines as in the elections of 1937 held under the 1935 Act. The constituencies remained the same. All seating Members of Legislative Assembly were re-elected in this election.

(a) Seven candidates were elected by the general part of the Assembly.

1. Assam Gazettee. No. 10, August 21, 1946.

The arrangement of constituencies was not effected by the final order of the Delimitation Commission constituted under the Delimitation Commission Act, 1952 and published on 22nd, January, 1955, nor by the revised Order, published on the 15th December, 1956 in pursuance of the Sub-section (2) of Section 47 of the States Reorganisation Act, 1956. There were, however, some minor adjustments and some of the old constituencies of this district were redesignated,² Mangaldai, Paneri, Dalgaon, Dhekiajuli, Barchola, Balipara, Tezpur, Vishwanath and Gohpur were the constituencies which were finally notified. Therefore, in the Second General Election of 1957, Darrang district was represented by ten representatives in the House of the People, as in 1952 elections.

2. Results of Second General Elections to the Assam Legislative Assembly and the House of the People (1957), p. 3-4.

3, Report on the Third General Elections (1962) to the Assam Legislative Assembly and the House of the People, p.2.

member constituency of Paneri in the Mangaldai subdivision was bifurcated into Paneri and Kalaigaon (General) constituencies for the purpose of the Third General Election 1962. Thus, in this election the number of constituencies increased from nine to ten although the number of seats remained the same.

The next important step to increase the number of constituencies in view of the increase in the population of the district was initiated following the enactment of the Delimitation Commission Act, 1962 (61 of the 1962 Amendment Act). In pursuance of Sub-section (1) of the Section 10 of this Act, the final order was published under Delimitation Commission's Notification, New Delhi, the 20th April, 1966 for the purpose of the 4th General Elections, 1967 in Assam. Accordingly, in Darrang the number of single-member Assembly constituencies was increased from ten to thirteen, creating three more constituencies by redistribution of areas viz., Rangamati (SC), Udalguri (ST) in Mangaldai subdivision and Misamari in Tezpur sub-division. The number of Parliamentary constituencies was also increased to two by reallocating Assembly constituencies to each of them. These were Mangaldai and Tezpur Parliamentary constituencies, the former being not fully confined within the territorial jurisdiction of the district as out of its nine components Assembly constituencies namely, Hajo, Nalbari East, Borbhag, Rangia, Kamalpur, Paneri, Kalaigaon, Rangamati (SC), and Mangaldai, the first five fell within Kamrup district. The Tezpur Parliamentary constituency comprised nine Assembly constituencies viz. Dalgaon, Udalguri (ST), Dhekiajuli, Misamari, Tezpur, Balipara, Chutia, Vishwanath and Gohpur. This Parliamentary constituency was fully confined within Darrang. This arrangement of constituencies is still continuing.

(b) Political Parties : their hold upon the district at different times and as reflected in the elections :

First General Election, 1952 : Of the 10 representatives elected in the First General Election, 1952, 9 belonged to the Indian National Congress, and only 1 to Socialist Party. Of the total valid votes in each constituency, the successful Congress candidates polled about 47.98% in Mangaldai, 47.33% in Paneri (General), 76.12% in Dhekiajuli North, 56.06% in Dhekiajuli South, 60.03% in Tezpur North, 46.28% in Tezpur South, 52.16% in Chutia and 49.70% in Gohpur constituencies respectively. The Congress candidate of the

Paneri reserved seat for Scheduled Tribes was elected uncontested. The Socialist Party candidate returned from the Kalaigaon constituency polling 46.46% of the total valid votes, defeating his nearest rival by a narrow margin. The Congress candidate who trailed behind polled 43.33% of the total valid votes.

From the results of the First General Election it is clear that the political scene in Darrang district was dominated by the Indian National Congress, particularly in the Tezpur subdivision. Next in importance was the Socialist Party which contested for 7 seats of which only one seat viz., the seat of the Kalaigaon constituency of the Mangaldai subdivision came to their hold. Though the Congress party suffered a reverse in that constituency its candidate polling 43.33% against 46.46% of the total valid votes polled by the winning Socialist candidate lost by a very narrow marginal difference of 3%. In this election the Communist party of India contested only for one seat namely, the seat of the Tezpur South constituency where the highest number of 6 candidates including 3 independents contested and candidate of the Communist Party secured the 4th position by polling about 11.5% of the total valid votes, the second and third positions being held by the Socialist and independent candidates respectively. The Socialist Party held the second position in the five lost constituencies namely Mangaldai, Dhekiajuli South, Tezpur North, Tezpur South and Gohpur securing only 13.04 ; 27.92 ; 25.21 ; 14.53 and 27.78 per cent in the respective constituencies and third position in the Chutia constituency securing 18.09 per cent of the total valid votes polled. It may be mentioned that at the election of 1952 fourteen independent candidates contested for nine seats of the district. The independent candidate polled 35.33 per cent of total valid votes of Paneri constituency, but was defeated by the Congress candidate. The Independent candidate in the Chutia constituency also secured the second position. The rest of independent candidates did not fare well in this election.

Lok Sabha : One candidate of the Congress Party, one of the Socialist party and an independent candidate were locked in a triangular contest for the Lok Sabha seat of the Darrang Parliamentary constituency. The Congress candidate won the seat securing 50.44 per cent of the total valid votes. The Socialist candidate occupied the second position with 29.17 per cent of the total valid votes to his credit and the rest went to the independent candidate. In the Gauhati Parliamentary constituency which included Mangaldai and

Kalaigaon Assembly constituencies of Darrang, three candidates entered into the arena. The Congress candidate polled 47.44 per cent of the total valid votes and won. The Socialist candidate occupied the second and K.M.P.P. candidate the third position.

Second General Election, 1957 : It appears that in this election the position of the Indian National Congress Party was further consolidated in all constituencies in comparison to that of other parties; although the opposition wrested three seats.

The Congress candidates suffered defeat polling 22.05% of valid votes in the (ST) reserved seat and 16.80% in the general seat in the Paneri constituency. In Dalgaon constituency the Congress candidate polled only 27.65% of the total valid votes. An independent candidate was returned in this constituency. In all other seven constituencies the Congress candidates won with a clear majority securing 44.81% in Mangaldai; 79.23% in Dhekiajuli; 63% in Barchola; 73.02% in Balipara; 63.44% in Tezpur and 74.31% in the Gohpur constituencies.

The absence of the Socialist Party and emergence of the Praja Socialist Party are the important features of this election. The Praja Socialist Party fielded its candidatures in three and the Communist Party in two constituencies. None of these parties could secure any seat. The Praja Socialist Party candidates secured 16.08% of total valid votes in Mangaldai, 20.77% in Dhekiajuli, and 25.69% in Gohpur constituencies. Only in the Mangaldai constituency the candidate of this party was locked in a quadruple contest and secured the 3rd position. In the two other constituencies they faced a straight contest with the candidates of the Congress party. The Communist party candidates contesting in Balipara and Vishwanath constituencies polled 26.98% and 27.22% of the total valid votes respectively, but lost to the Congress candidates in a straight contest. This shows that the Congress party definitely improved its hold upon the district over 1952 position. The Revolutionary Socialist Party of India candidate secured the third position in Dalgaon constituency, polling only 8.13% of the total valid votes. As regards independents, altogether nine candidates tried their strength in 6 seats, and won 3 seats.

Lok Sabha : In this election the Congress candidate retained the Lok Sabha seat of the Darrang Parliamentary constituency without contest while the Congress candidate lost the seat of the Gauhati Parliamentary constituency (including Mangaldai and

Dalgaon) polling 40.24% as against 59.76% of the total votes polled by the P.S.P. candidate who won the seat.

The Third General Election, 1962 : This time four All-India Political Parties and 14 independent candidates contested for the Assembly seats. The Indian National Congress party captured all the seats to the exclusion of the other party candidates and even wrested those seats which were found to be strongholds of the independent candidates in the previous election. It is interesting to note that the sitting Members of Legislative Assembly of those constituencies fought the election on Congress ticket during this election. The Congress candidates had to their credit 63.01% of total valid votes in Paneri (S.T.), 65.25% in Kalaigaon, 51.51% in Mangaldai, 83.41% in Dalgaon, 70.13% in Dhekiajuli, 51.51% in Barchola, 60.43% in Balipara, 49.46% in Tezpur, 69.12% Vishwanath and 61.29% in Gohpur constituencies. In the Mangaldai and Barchola constituencies, it was a hard-earned victory of the Congress candidates over the independent rivals, though the former polled 48.48% and 32.44% respectively. In Tezpur constituency the Congress candidate won in a neck to neck fight with the Praja Socialist party candidate who secured the second position with 40.36% of the total valid votes to his credit.

This time there was the largest number of independent contestants who fought in several cases but failed to win a single seat. The Praja Socialist party contested only for five seats and only in one constituency secured the second position, as mentioned above. The Communist Party of India contested only for the seat of the Balipara constituency and their candidate secured the third position with only 14.70% of the total valid votes to his credit. The Socialist Party of India, which did not enter into the election-arena in the Second General Election of this district, contested this time for two seats of Barchola and Vishwanath constituencies but in both the constituencies the party was badly mauled. These two candidates polled only 5.62% and 2.45% of the total valid votes in these two constituencies respectively. Thus the Indian National Congress Party obtained this time clear mandate from the electorate.

Lok Sabha : During this election there was triangular contest for the seat of the Darrang Parliamentary constituency among three candidates of the Indian National Congress, Praja Socialist Party and the independent. The Congress candidate won the seat polling 68.12% of the total valid votes. The other party candidates trailed behind

securing the second position with 20.63% to his credit. The rest of the valid votes went to the credit of the independent candidate. In the Gauhati Parliamentary constituency including Mangaldai and Dalgaon Assembly constituencies, the Congress candidate could not improve his position against the formidable Praja Socialist Party candidate, who retained the seat.

4th General Election 1967 : Unlike the previous General Election of 1962, the Indian National Congress Party could claim this time only ten seats out of thirteen. Three seats of Paneri, Mangaldai, and Tezpur were won by the independents. In these constituencies the candidates of the Congress polled only 22.62%, 20.15% and 41.12% respectively of the total valid votes. They suffered clear defeat in Paneri and Mangaldai while in Tezpur the defeat was only by a narrow margin of 1.54%. In three other constituencies, namely, Kalaigaon, Dalgaon and Gohpur the Congress candidates faced keen contest with independents and succeeded by narrow marginal differences. They had to their credit 25.09%, 44.81% and 38.54% against 22.09%, 37.61% and 35.26% of the total valid votes polled by their immediate independent rivals in Kalaigaon, Dalgaon and Gohpur constituencies respectively. In the rest of the constituencies the Congress candidates won clear mandate of the people polling 64.71%, 63.18%, 67.09%, 56.83%, 69.60%, 53.82% and 52.50% in Rangamati (SC), Udalguri (ST), Dhekiajuli, Misamari, Balipara, Chutia and Vishwanath constituencies respectively.

The next important political party that claimed some hold over the electorate in the previous elections as well as in the 4th General Elections was the Praja Socialist Party. This party put candidates in ten seats, namely, Kalaigaon, Rangamati (SC), Mangaldai, Dalgaon, Udalguri (ST), Misamari, Tezpur, Balipara, Chutia, Gohpur, but lost everywhere. The Praja Socialist Party candidate secured second position in four constituencies polling 30.95% in Rangamati (SC), 19.69% in Udalguri (ST), 29.21% in Misamari and 37.00% in Chutia while in others they ranked third or fourth.

The Communist Party of India contested only in the Chutia constituency and its candidate secured only 7.31 per cent of the total valid votes.

Lok Sabha : In the Tezpur constituency the candidate of the Indian National Congress Party was involved in a straight contest with the Socialist Party candidate. The former won polling 63.53%.

as against 36.47% of the total valid votes secured by the latter. In the Mangaldai constituency which has been reconstituted as mentioned above, there was quadrangular contest among the Congress, Praja Socialist Party and two Independent candidates. The Praja Socialist Party candidate retained the seat this time also securing 50.80% while the Congress candidate secured the second position with 33.35% of the total valid votes to his credit.

A by-election to the Legislative Assembly was held on the 1st March, 1970, for the Tezpur Assembly constituency which fell vacant due to the premature death of its seating member Bishnu Prasad Rabha. Four candidates, one belonging to Indian National Congress Party, one to the Communist Party of India and two Independents contested for the seat. The Indian National Congress Party candidate won the seat with heavy margin. Out of the total 22,323 valid votes the Congress candidate secured 13,620. The second place was occupied by Communist Party candidate who secured 4,535 and the Independent candidates secured 1,340 and 2,828 votes respectively.

The fifth General Election for the Lok Sabha was held a year ahead of the expiry term of the Lok Sabha which was dissolved by the President of India in December 1970. The election in Assam was held for the Lok Sabha constituencies only in March, 1971. In the meantime the Indian National Congress was divided in 1969 into two, namely, Congress (R) led by Shri Jagajiven Ram and Congress (O) led by S. Nijalingappa. The Tezpur Parliamentary Constituency of the district was retained by the Congress (R). In this constituency there were 4,27,600 voters, out of which 2,38,133 (55.69%) exercised their franchise of which 18,346 (7.58%) were found invalid. The Congress (R) candidate who retained the seat secured 1,33,673 (60.78%) of the total valid votes. Among other political parties only the Praja Socialist Party of India fought in this election, with the Congress (R) candidate. Its candidate secured only 33,227 (15.12%) of total valid votes. There were two Independent candidates who polled 16,664 (7.72%) and 36,223 (16.48%) votes respectively. Like the previous elections the other parliamentary constituency of Darrang district, Mangaldai is tagged with five Legislative Assembly constituencies of Kamrup district, only two Legislative Assembly constituencies of Darrang district falls under this constituency. The Congress (R) candidate defeated the Socialist Party candidate who represented the constituency nearly for a decade.

Fifth General Elections, 1972 : The fifth General Election was held in Assam in March, 1972. Unlike the 4th General Election 1967,

this district was to elect thirteen representatives to the Assam Assembly from the thirteen single-member constituencies. The Indian National Congress (R) claimed the majority of seats. Out of thirteen seats of this district the Indian National Congress won eleven seats. The rest two went to the Socialist Party of India and one Independent candidate, who wrested Vishwanath and Gohpur seats from the Indian National Congress. In the Vishwanath constituency the sitting M.L.A. who was a member of the Assam cabinet was defeated by one Independent candidate by a margin of 903 votes. The Congress (R) candidate secured 12,071 while the Independent got 12,974 out of the total 34,311 votes polled. In the Gohpur seat the Congress candidate yielded its place to the candidate of the Socialist Party of India by a clear margin of 596 votes. The Congress (R) candidate secured 9,338 votes against 9,934 votes polled by his rival. In total 34,076 votes were polled. Out of the six seats of the Mangaldai subdivision, all were retained by the Indian National Congress (R) candidates. The Paneri constituency was won by the Congress (R) candidate who defeated the Independent rival, a sitting member of the Assembly by a clear margin of 7,773 votes. Out of the 35,183 total valid votes polled, the Congress candidate secured 21,432 whereas his only rival the Independent candidate secured only 13,699 votes. In Kalaigaon, Rangamati, Mangaldai, Dalgaon and Udalguri constituencies the Congress (R) candidates defeated their respective rivals by clear margins. In Kalaigaon constituency the Congress (R) candidate secured 11,360 out of the 83,075 total votes polled. Six Independents and one Socialist Party candidate contested for this seat; the Congress (R) candidate won by a comfortable margin. In Rangamati (S.C) also the Congress (R) candidate defeated five candidates including one of Socialist Party and four Independents. Out of the 30,203 total votes polled the Congress candidate secured 14,799. In Mangaldai the Congress candidate had to face three Independents and one Socialist Party's candidate. Out of the 37,563 total votes polled, the Congress candidate secured 18,234. Six candidates fought for Dalgaon seat; except the Congress (R) candidate, the rest were Independents. Out of the 34,372 total valid votes polled, the Congress candidate secured 13,618. In Udalguri constituency, the contest was confined to five candidates, three Independents, one of the Socialist Party and one of the Congress (R). The Congress (R) candidate retained the seat with a clean margin. Out of the 37,067 total valid votes polled, the Congress candidate got 16,470. In Dhekiajuli out of the

37,119 total votes polled, the Congress candidate secured 16,624. There were two other candidates who stood as Independents and whose scores were negligible. Four candidates one each from Congress (R) and Congress (O), and two Independents contested for the Misamari seat. The Congress (R) candidate retained the seat. Out of 32,442 total votes polled, the Congress (R) candidate secured 12,295, closely pursued by an Independent candidate who secured 11,891 votes. In Tezpur proper, there were six candidates—three Independents, one Congress (R), one Congress (O) and one Socialist Party. The Congress (R) candidate retained the seat securing 12,724 out of 29,046 total votes polled. In the Balipara constituency out of 35,629 total votes polled the Congress (R) candidate alone secured 18,538. There were five other candidates including Communist Party (Marxist) and Congress (O) candidates and three Independents. In Chutia there were five candidates, one Independent, one Socialist Party, one Communist Party (Marxist) and one each from Congress (R) and Congress (O). Out of the 37,772 total votes polled, the Congress (R) candidates secured 15,366 votes. The individual score of the other four was much less than that of the Congress (R) candidate.

(c) Magazine and News-papers : The history of Assamese magazines and newspapers begins with the publication of the *Arunodai* by the Baptist Mission in 1846

Jonaki, an important Assamese magazine published in 1889 from Calcutta served as the mouth-piece of the Assamese Language Improvement Society. Another magazine named *Usha* published from Tezpur in 1907 followed the *Bijuli* published from Calcutta in 1902. But it had a very brief life. The publication of the *Usha* was stopped in 1916. This magazine contained short stories, poems, and topics on ancient Assamese literature, articles on contemporary language and literature and social problems and had all the characteristics of a contemporary magazine. The *Banhi* was published in 1909 from Calcutta. *Chetana* was published from Gauhati. These magazines were the mirrors of Assamese thinking and made deep impact on the people of Assam. *Asam Banti*, a newspaper, published from Tezpur was in circulation for several years. One current weekly Assamese paper published from Tezpur is the *Mahajati*. It was published for the first time in 1964. Its circulation now is about 6,634 copies. Other two Assamese magazines are the *Bishnujyoti* and the *Sonit Prava* which are published from Tezpur. The *Bishnujyoti* is a yearly pub-

lication of the *Bishnujyoti Sanskritik sangha*. This magazine was first published in 1970. The *Sonit Prava* is a monthly mouth-piece of *Asom Sahitya Sabha*, Tezpur Branch. A fortnightly Assamese news magazine *Agradoot* has been published from Mangaldai since 16.1.71. Its circulation in 1972 stood at 3,000 copies.

Though a few magazines are published in the district, it is yet to have a daily newspaper. The fortnightly, *Tezpur Batori* had a very brief life. The *Assam Sevak*, a purely Congress paper which came into circulation from 1938 suffered the same fate and its publication was discontinued in 1955.

A number of School and College magazines are published from different institutions of the district. Among the widely circulated newspapers in the district are : *The Assam Tribune*, *Dainik Asam*, *Natun Asamiya*, *Asam Bani*, *Nilachal*, etc. Some Calcutta and Delhi papers are also widely circulated in the district. These include the *Hindusthan Standard*, *Jugantar*, *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, *Statesman*, *Blitz* etc. *The Asam Batori*, *Sangam*, *Amar Pratinidhi*, *Desh*, *Dharmayug*, *Illustrated Weekly of India*, various cine and sports magazines are also widely popular in the district. *Deka Asom* a views weekly published from Gauhati also was popular amongst the patriotic people of the district.

(d) Voluntary Social Service Organisations :

The *Tezpur Mahila Samity* : It was formed in 1928. The objectives of this organisation are to promote unity among the women and to bring about social, cultural and political upliftment, not of a particular segment of the society but of the people as a whole. It was registered in 1958 under the Societies Registration Act, 1860. The *Samity*'s area of operation is confined to Tezpur town. Till 1946 the *Samity* had nearly one hundred members, but the number has since steadily gone up. Its Working Committee consists of seventeen members. It maintains a regular office in its own buildings, situated near the Municipality office. The first office building was constructed in 1954 at a cost of Rs. 26,000/—. One more building has since been constructed at a cost of Rs. 40,000/. The approximate value of assets including tools, implements, furnitures etc. stands at Rs.5,000/—.

The *Samity* raises its fund from the admission fees, collections, commissions, earned on the sale of saving-certificates, benefit-show and exhibition sale proceeds and house rent etc. It also receives

liberal grants-in-aid from the State Government as well as the Central Social Welfare Board.

The *Samity* has implemented various development schemes since its inception and has earned the unique distinction of being one of the biggest and the most active branches of the Assam Mahila Samity.

Among the development schemes, mention may be made of its Industries Section engaged in weaving, sewing, embroidery, wool-knitting, modelling and doll making. It maintains eleven fly-shuttle looms in its office buildings and employ eight women weavers on remuneration basis. The products are sold in its own sale depots. On occasions the *Samity* accepts orders for supply of its products on contract basis. The Industries Section is registered as a co-operative society under the name, *Nari Silpa Samabay Samity*. It also provides training facilities in weaving and for this purpose holds a regular weaving training class. Its training course runs for two years for old and widowed women as per programmes of the Central Social Welfare Board. The women successfully completing the training course are deputed for one year training as *Gram sevika*, nurse or instructress. It offers hostel facilities for the trainees. It has to its credit one Nursery School (*Sishu Bharati School*) with two trained teachers. Nearly 250 students have received their early education in this school. The library of the *Samity* contains large number of books. A part of its compound is utilised by the children as a playground. It also organises from time to time seminars on various problems and invites distinguished persons to participate in it. It managed one *Rastrabhasa* School since 1941 to 1953 when it was taken over by the *Rastrabhasa Prachar Samity* of Assam. It also conducted a mass literacy campaign in the town since 1947 till the Government took over the scheme.

The *Mahila Samity* functions as a social service organisation. Among its multifarious social services, mention may be made of flood and earthquake relief works, voluntary service rendered in Burma Refugee camp after the Second World War, fund collection for the local Darrang College, Kasturba Trust, humanitarian services rendered to the Tibetan refugees in 1959 etc. During the emergencies in 1962 the *Samity* raised funds, collected articles of daily necessities for the wounded soldiers.

The *Harijan Sevak Sangha*, Tezpur : Under the inspiring leadership of Mahatma Gandhi, many distinguished social workers engaged themselves in works connected with the upliftment of the conditions of the *Harijans*. Accordingly the Tezpur branch of

this *Sangha* came into being when this organisation opened branches all over India.

By the efforts of the Tezpur branch of the *Sangha* some schools were opened amongst the tea garden labourers, sweepers and cobblers of the district. The buildings of these institutions were constructed by the people themselves and were maintained by public donations and government grants. The Social Education Department has taken over these institutions.

The establishment of schools at the following places goes to the credit of the Tezpur branch of the *Harijan Sevak Sangha*. Lakhani Basti (in Sakomotha mauza), Tezpur *Harijan* Colony (within Tezpur municipality), Harigaon (in Haleswar mauza), Thelamara, Raumari etc. The institutions were visited by Late A.V. Thakkar, the then General Secretary of the All India *Harijan Sevak Sangha*. The *Harijan Sevak Sangha*, Tezpur is managed by a Committee of 8 members including the president and the Secretary. There is no provision for enlisting members. Its activities are now confined to implementation of a few programmes.

It has a proposal to establish an ideal monastery for the *Harijans* in the Harigaon village of Nij Haleswar on the bank of the Mara-Bhareli river : but no progress is made in this regard so far.

Shree Rama Krishna Sevashram, Tezpur : In the later part of the year 1939 this institution was founded under the name of *Darrang Ram Krishna Sevashram*. Its main objectives are to preach the ideals of Swami Ram Krishna Param Hansa and to offer humanitarian services to the people in general. This institution was registered in 1959 by the Registrar of Societies under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.

The *Sevashram* is managed by a committee of 12 members. Its accounts are annually checked by an Auditor. All followers and sympathisers of the ideals of the Rama Krishna Mission are eligible for membership subject to payment of monthly subscription of Rs. 0.50. The monthly subscriptions and public contribution as well as occasional grants-in-aid by the State Government, Central Social Welfare Board and the Tezpur Municipality constitute its fund. The premises of the *Sevashram* covers about 0.4 hectares of land in the mid-town and hold two R.C.C. buildings constructed at a cost of about Rs. 60,000/—.

This institution has performed various social services since its

inception, such as antimalarial campaign during the World War II, nursing of the sick and disposal of the dead bodies. It also offered financial help to the needy and the poor and arranged food and shelter to the displaced persons. The *Sangha* has organised handloom training among the women folk, established some schools, a student home, an orphanage, and a charitable dispensary. Mention may be made that in 1964 the *Sevashram* provided for shelter, food and clothings of about 5,000 refugees from East Pakistan for about 3 months till the Government shifted them to the Barguri Camp. The primary school constructed by the *Sangha* in its premises, has since been taken over by the School Board. It has taken up the work of construction of a new School building in the north western corner of the *Sevashram* premises at an estimated cost of Rs. 20,000.00. It maintains a library containing a number of religious and other books written in English, Assamese and Bengali, which are lent to the members for home study. The *Sevashram* maintains a charitable homeopathic dispensary with an attending qualified homeopath as well as a charitable hospital with a well-equipped clinical laboratory under an expert. The hospital has been accommodated in the building used as a student home and orphanage which was constructed in 1961 with the grant of Rs.15,000.00 received from the Central Social Welfare Board. The hospital has ten beds as fixed by the Government and is managed with the help of the local physicians and maintained with public charity fund. It has constructed a temple of Shri Shri Thakur with the donation of a local man. In the premises of the temple it holds occasional religious functions and meetings largely attended by the public and religious talents and intellectuals.

Christian Missionaries- As per Statute 53 of king George III after annexation of Assam into British Empire in 1926, the province of Assam together with the Chittagong Division of Eastern Bengal was constituted into the Diocese of Assam and a Bishop was appointed to it. His pay was provided by an Endowment.⁴ The ecclesiastical establishment maintained entirely or in part by the Provincial Government of Assam consists of the Chaplaincy of Shillong and the State aided Chaplaincies of Silchar, Sibsagar, Darrang and Lakhimpur.

The American Baptists were the first to establish permanent work in North East India, they were not the first to preach here.

4. Report on the Administration of Assam, 1921-22, Shillong, 1923. p. 125.

For some years before they came, the British Baptist and Serampore Missions started their activities in this region. Though the Serampore Mission was established by the Baptist Missionary of England, it operated independently of that society from 1816 to 1838.⁶ Serampore Mission translated the Bible into Assamese. In 1819 the New Testament was published and in 1833 the entire Bible. Various Missions were engaged in the Evangelical works in Assam, till the early part of the nineteenth century. In the tea garden areas the Roman Catholics succeeded most in spreading Christianity among the tea garden labourers. The Germans of this Mission were replaced by French and Belgium fathers in the early part of the present century. Among the Protestant sects, the Church of England has large number of adherents in Darrang district. Among other Missionaries which were at work in the district, in 1950, the American Baptist Assam Mission and the Council of Baptist Churches in Assam formed themselves into one association known as the Council of the Baptist Churches in North East India.

Apart from propagating Christianity in Assam the Missionaries have set up various educational institutions all over Assam, including Darrang. The more notable ones are the Mission schools established at Tezpur and Dhekiajuli and the Don Bosco High School located at Paneri. Two big private hospitals, one at Harisinga and the other at Tezpur are maintained by the Christian Missions.

There are several other Social Organisations like Sankar Mission of Nowgong, which hold occasional eye-treatment and operation camps in different parts of Darrang district.

The district branch of *Asom Sahitya Sabha* which has a very imposing building in Tezpur town, is a centre of literary and cultural activities and discourses of the district.

5. F.S. Downs, *The Mighty Works of God*, Gauhati, 1971 p.10.

CHAPTER—XIX

PLACES OF INTEREST

Amaribari : It is situated in Balipara *mauza* at a distance of about 29 kms. north of the Tezpur town. A very big weekly market (*hat*) is held here every Sunday where brisk business in poultry, rice and other rural produce is transacted. Even at the turn of this century it was an important trading centre.

Amtala : It is a village situated near Gohpur and is about 134 kms. east of Tezpur. During the later part of the 19th century it was inhabited by the Daflas who were raided by the hill-men in 1872. Forty-four persons were kidnapped and two were killed. The British Government at first instituted a blockade which proved ineffectual, thereupon they despatched an expedition in 1874-75 and recovered the captives.

Barangabari : It is situated at a distance of 47 kms. from Vishwanath Charali within Gohpur Police Station. There is a Manasa image and also an image of Goddess Kali in Kalyani Devalaya situating in Barangabari. The stone image of Goddess Manasa situated in Lalitasana is carved in black basalt and belongs to the Pala Sena School of 10th century A.D. It is one of the very few images of Manasa ever discovered in the State of Assam. The image of Goddess Kali is in gold and belongs to a period not earlier than that of 17th century A.D. It is a place of interest for the scholars and researchers in sculpture and iconology.

Bargon : It is situated at a distance of about 28 kms. west of Tezpur town. The Bargaon Copper Plates of the eleventh century A.D. records the grant of land on the north bank of the Brahmaputra to a Brahman and extols the great virtues and magnificence of the donor king, Ratnapala.

Behali : Behali (Lat. 26°47' N. and Long. 93°22' E) is situated by the North Trunk Road in a thickly populated agricultural area and once the Revenue Circle Office was located here. But later on, this Circle office was bifurcated into two viz. Helem and Vishwanath (now

Nauduar Circle) Circles. Bagalimukh is a steamerghat from which mustard, paddy and other agricultural produce are exported.

There is one *Siva than* at Behali and also another *than* at Gangmau which were established by Shri Shri Sankaradeva. Sankaradeva is stated to have resided at Gangmau for seven years. Visitors can stay at the local Inspection Bungalow (Ketla).

Bhairavkund : This famous pilgrim centre of Mangaldai subdivision lies by the side of the historic Gohain Kamala *All* and is only about 14 kms. from Udalguri Railway Station. Bhairavkund is a natural pond at the confluence of the Dhansiri and the Rowta and is surrounded by the Amarigiri hills. Tradition associates Bhairavkund with the Pandavas who are believed to have bathed in this pool en-route to heaven. Koch king Naranarayan built a *moth* on its bank. It is regarded as sacred by the Bhutias as well as by the Hindus. This holy and picturesque place attracts tourists and picnic parties.

Bhomoraguri : It is situated on the bank of the Brahmaputra about 11 kms. east of Tezpur to which it is connected by *pucca* road. Valuable trees are found in the forest on and around the hills by the same name. The Tezpur steamerghat *cum* ferryghat was shifted here a few years ago. As such, it is a commercially important place. During the Ahom administration Kalia Bhomora Barphukan made an attempt to construct a bridge over the mighty Brahmaputra connecting Bhomoraguri with Silghat on the opposite bank. The remains of the posts for the bridge are believed to be lying scattered in the deep jungle. Near the Bhomoraguri hills lies *Rudrapad* imprint of Siva's (Rudra's) foot on a rock in the bed of the Brahmaputra.

Charduar : It is the headquarters of the Balipara Frontier Tract Transferred Area and is about 34 Kms. north of Tezpur. Besides the office of the Assistant Political Officer, other public buildings include the Beat Police Station, one Inspection Bungalow, one Hospital and one Higher Secondary School. During the nineteenth century the rubber tapped at Charduar yielded handsome revenue. The forest products of Charduar are exported to various parts of the State. A cotton spinning mill has been started here a few years back. K.L. Barua has mentioned in the *Early History of Kamarupa* that Muhammad Bin Bukhtiyar, the Muslim general who invaded Assam in the year Saka 1127, possibly advanced to Charduar, but made a hasty retreat due to some operational difficulties. There is a big old tank named Bali *pukhuri* situated in Charduar area and

people associate this tank with the mythological kings—Bali and Banasur.

Besides remains of ancient stone temples there are several stone images of deities like Vishnu, Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati etc. From palaeological point of view, period assigned to them is between 11th to 12th Century A.D. There is also a *than* of *Burhagosain* at Charduar.

Chutia : The headquarters of the Nauduar Revenue Circle are located here. It is a railway station and an important commercial centre on the North Trunk Road about 63 kms. east of Tezpur. A big weekly *hat* is held here. It was once a famous centre of pottery and brass and bell-metal works. There are now a number of educational institutions like one High School, one Normal School, Weaving Training School, and a number of other schools. The Chutia High School is stated to be the first rural High School established by the public in Darrang district. There is one Inspection Bungalow for providing accommodation to visitors. It is said that in 1523 A.D. a large number of Chutia families were deported to this place by the Ahom king Suhungmung.

Dalgaon : About 22 kilometres east of Mangaldai town on the North Trunk road lies Dalgaon (26°33'N, 92°12'E) in Dalgaon mauza. This place which was covered with jungles was reclaimed and made fit for cultivation of jute and other crops by the Muslim immigrants in the first half of this century. It owes its importance largely to its proximity to Kharupatia—a principal jute centre lying about eight kilometres south—west of Dalgaon. There is one Police Station, one Inspection Bungalow, some schools and an agricultural Seed Farm at Dalgaon. A daily *bazar* is held here.

Dhekiajuli : Dhekiajuli (26°42' N, 92°27' E) is an important centre of trade and commerce on the North Trunk road about 43 kms. west of Tezpur. The town is connected by roads with Singri Steamerghat and railway station at Dhekiajuli Road. The Dhekiajuli police firing on 20th Sept, 1942 is a landmark in the history of freedom movement in Assam.

Along with the improvement of communications, the commercial importance of the town also has gone up considerably. In May, 1958, it became the headquarters of a new Revenue circle. The town was electrified in January, 1959. The Dhekiajuli Town Committee was constituted in 1958. A telephone exchange has also been installed

in the town. A big weekly market is held on Sunday in addition to the daily market. It is also an industrial area and various types of cottage and small scale industries, four rice mills, and one sawmill have been established here. The Industrial Estate has also been functioning for several years at Dhekiajuli. The total population of Dhekiajuli, according to 1971 Census is 10,424. Besides some schools there is an Inspection Bungalow and Cinema hall in the town.

Of special interest to visitors is the Singri Hill which lies about eleven kms., to the South of Dhekiajuli. On its southern slope by the side of the Brahmaputra is a Siva temple known as Gupteswar or Gopeswar. The cavity in the temple in which the image of Siva reposes is very deep and is connected by a Subterranean conduit with the Brahmaputra so that water in it rises and falls with the water in the river. According to tradition it was founded by Singri (or Rishyasringa) *rishi*. It is also associated with the birth story of Sri Sri Sankaradeva. According to Dalton, a Hindu temple was erected upon the ruins of Buddhist one. Hindus and Buddhists alike regard Singri as a place of pilgrimage. Bhutias continue to pay homage here in winter. During *Siva Ratri* a big *mela* is held for several days.

During the Ahom times there was a fort at Singri. It was near Singri hill that Darrang Raja Dharmanarayana was killed in 1637 A.D. by the Muhammadans.

Gohpur : Gohpur (26°52' N, 93°37' E) is a railway Station situated at a distance of about 134 kms. east of Tezpur town. The martyrdom of Kanaklata Barua who was killed by police firing while attempting to hoist the national flag at Gohpur Police Station on 20th September, 1942, is a part of glorious struggle of the people of Gohpur for the freedom of the country. There are one Police Station, one Inspection Bungalow, one State Transport Station, one High School and a number of Primary Schools at Gohpur. A weekly *hat* is held at Gohpur Tea Estate.

Gupteswar temple, Singri : At Singrighat situating at a distance of 13 kms. from Dhekiajuli, the temple of Sri Sri Gupteswar situates. It is a Siva temple. The linga inside the cella is submerged in water through out the year and hence is the name Gupteswar (one hidden away from the reach of the eyes) is derived. It appears to be a pre-Ahom temple belonging to 11th/12th century A.D., but which have been extensively repaired during the late mediaeval period.

Haleswar: The chief interest of this village lies in the Haleswar temple which is a *Siva* temple said to have been erected under order of Ahom King Rudra Sinha. The temple is believed to be so named as a *Siva Lingam* was found at the spot while ploughing (*hal*). It is about 9 kms. north of Tezpur town. It was once noted for its pottery. There is a very big tank by the name of Bar-pukhuri near Haleswar wherein two stone images of god *Brahma* and *Siva* were found while fishing.

Harisinga: Harisinga (26°44' N, 92°E) is a Railway station situated at a distance of about 45 kms. north of Mangaldai town. Tradition associates the place with lord Krishna who sounded the war note to his followers at this place to fight with king Bana. The Mission Hospital at Harisinga is big and well-equipped. A weekly *hat* is held here.

Helem: Helem (25°49' N, 92°31' E) is a railway station about 116 kms. east of Tezpur by the North Trunk Road. It is the headquarters of Helem Revenue Circle which is an agricultural area. The State Transport Bus Station, one Veterinary Dispensary, Schools, Inspection Bungalow etc., are there at Helem. A weekly *hat* is held at Helem Tea Estate.

Jamuguri : Jamuguri (26°43' N, 92°56' E) is situated to the east of Tezpur town at a distance of about 52 kms. via North Trunk Road and about 19 kms. via Silanighat, Jamuguri is a commercial centre. There is a College at Jamuguri besides other educational institutions. Two rice mills, one Inspection Bungalow, one State Transport Bus Station, one Cinema hall, daily and weekly markets are other notable features of Jamuguri. The place is connected with Panpur ferryghat and can be reached by roads from Tezpur.

Kalabari: Kalabari is situated by the North Trunk Road at a distance of about 145 kms. east of Tezpur. There is a large temple dedicated to Basudev. The image of the godhead in the temple is of a typical late mediaeval architectural piece. This abandoned temple which situates near Kheraimari in Kalabari mauza has been conserved by the State Archaeological Department of Assam. The name of the builder of this temple which is 22 metres in height is not known definitely. This temple is owned by the Satradhikar of Dakhinpat Satra. It was built in 1758 A.D. There are a High School, a Post office

and other educational institutions in Kalabari. At nearby Deulagaon, *Bihu mela* is celebrated annually. There is one Inspection Bungalow at Kalabari.

Kalaigaon : Kalaigaon ($26^{\circ}34' N, 91^{\circ}59' E$) is the headquarters of the Local Revenue Circle and is situated on the Mangaldai Bhutiachang road at a distance of 17 kms. to the north of Mangaldai town. It was named after the leading priest Kendukalai who worshipped at the shrine of Goddess Kamakhya. He was the royal priest of king Naranarayan. It is a commercial centre and one big weekly *hat* is held here on Sundays. It is noted for *eri* cloths and was noted for lac. Besides a Police Station and a Dispensary here are one High School and few Primary Schools. There is one Inspection Bungalow which provides accommodation for visitors.

Kharupatia : Kharupatia town ($26^{\circ}3' N, 92^{\circ}0' E$) is situated along the North Trunk Road at a distance of about 16 kms. east of Mangaldai town. The Kharupatia steamerghat is located at a distance of only 4 kms. from the town and the nearest railway station at Rowta is about 28 kms. to its north.

The importance of Kharupatia lies in its jute market which is the biggest in the district. Other items of export from Kharupatia include rice, mustard seeds and vegetables. The headquarters of Dalgaon Sialmari Community Development Block are located at Kharupatia. There are one rice mill, one oil mill, one jute mill, one Branch of State Bank of India, two High Schools, one Cinema house and a number of Primary Schools in the town. There is a town committee at Kharupatia. Its total population has gone up from 5,906 in 1961 to 10,448 in 1971 which is due to influx of refugees.

Majbat : Majbat ($26^{\circ}48' N, 92^{\circ}17' E$) is about 66 kms. west of the Tezpur town and can be reached by road from Tezpur via Orang. It is an important railway station of the Rangia-Rangapara North Section of North-East Frontier Railway. The headquarters of the local Anchalik Panchayat are located at Majbat. There is a Cottage Industries Training Institute at Majbat.

Mangaldai : The subdivisional headquarters of Mangaldai are located at Mangaldai town. It lies at Lat. $26^{\circ}26' N$. and Long. $92^{\circ}2' E$. The town is situated on the either banks of the Mangaldai river and the Bega river, at a distance of about 113 kms. west of Tezpur town. Immediately to the south there is a large *chapari* of wide stretch of marshy country, reaching the Brahmaputra. The main artery of commu-

nication of northern Assam is the North Trunk Road which passes through this town. Mangaldai-Tangla Road stems from Mangaldai and winds through the green valleys and important villages. Tangla is the nearest railway station situated at a distance of about 25 kms. to the north of the Mangaldai town and is linked up by a regular bus service. Corporation buses now regularly ply between Mangaldai and other important places such as Tezpur, Dhekiajuli, Orang, Rowta, Dalgaon, Kharupatia, Dhansiri, Sipajhar, Dumnichauki, Udalguri, Gauhati, Barpeta, Nalbari etc. Private bus services ply regularly from Mangaldai to Tangla, Kalaigaon, Harisinga, Hatigarh, Khoirabari etc.

Tradition associates Mangaldai with Mangala Devi, the daughter of Darranga Raja Parikshit Narayan, who was married to Ahom king Pratap Sinha. The ancient capital of Darrang Rajas was located at Hauli Mohanpur about five kilometres north of Mangaldai town. Immediately after the British occupation of the kingdom of Darrang, the district headquarters of the newly formed Darrang district were established at Mangaldai but were shifted to Tezpur in 1835 relegating it to subdivisional headquarters.

Mangaldai was constituted into a Municipality only in 1956. The total population of the town has gone up from 1,696 in 1931 to 12,150 in 1971. As the subdivisional headquarters, it is the seat of several Central and State Government offices. The Subdivisional Officer's Court building, constructed recently, deserves special mention. Besides Mangaldai College, there are two big High Schools and a number of other educational institutions.

The Mangaldai Club, one Cinema house and a theatre hall provide facilities for recreation. There is a combined Circuit house and Dak Bungalow at Mangaldai.

Misamari : Misamari is an important railway station situated about 33 kms. north-west of Tezpur town. The place hummed with feverish war activities during the Second world war. During the post-war period many institutions like a Co-operative Colony and a Hindi Training Institute have sprung up here, the latter being already shifted to Diphu in the Karbi Anglong district.

Paneri : Paneri ($26^{\circ}44' N, 91^{\circ}55' E$) is about 161 kms. to the west of Tezpur town and thirty-five kms. north of Mangaldai. The Don Bosco High School near Paneri run by the missionaries is one of the biggest educational institutions of the district. The Paneri Club is an important recreational centre managed by the tea planters.

Paneri is a Police Station and an important *hat* is held here on Sundays. It was once famed for its lac.

Patharughat : This village is about 15 kms, west of Mangaldai town. Under the British administration Patharughat was a tahsil up to 1903-04. In December, 1894, the local people put up a demonstration before the Deputy Commissioner to protest against the enhancement of land revenue and imposition of local rate. Instead of giving audience to the grievances of the people, the British Officer displayed the typical autocratic overbearing and ordered the armed police to open fire. According to the old District Gazetteer of Darrang (1902) fifteen persons were killed and thirty seven were wounded. This figure is, however, doubtful and casualties were possibly much more. This popular revolt was the climax of a **no-tax agitation** launched by the peasants for quite sometime.

There is one Inspection Bungalow and a High School at Patharughat. A weekly *hat* is held here on Thursdays. It was noted for bell-metal works.

Pratapgarh : A historical rampart said to have been built by Pratap of Nagasankar dynasty which ruled between third century and seventh century A.D. The embankment, remains of which are still found in Chutia Mauza is about six metres in width and runs for more than three kilometres north of the Trunk Road, and then meets the Majuligarh. A weekly market is held here.

Rangapara : Rangapara (26°49'N, 92°41'E) is about 36 kms. to the north of Tezpur town. Its chief importance is as a big railway junction of the North East Frontiers Railway, which has forked here into two directions. One line runs towards the south and reaches Tezpur; while the other line has been extended upto Murkong Selk via North Lakhimpur. As an ancillary, a railway colony has sprung up here.

It is an important commercial centre of the district and a big weekly *hat* is held here. With the rapid development of the town in the last two decades the number of educational institutions has gone up.

It is connected by road with Tezpur and Bomdila in Arunachal Pradesh. The total population of the town according to the 1971 Census is 11,974. There is one Police Station, a State Transport office and a power house of the State Electricity Board. Rangapara Telephone Exchange caters to the needs of some of the neighbouring tea

estates, besides the town itself. The United Commercial Bank and Tezpur Central Co-operative Bank have branches at Rangapara. There is only one Cinema house in the town. There is a Town Committee at Rangapara. Visitors can have accommodation in the local Inspection Bungalow.

Rowta : Rowta is situated about 43 kms. east of the Mangaldai town on the North Trunk Road. Rowta Bagan is its rail-head. It is said that some 550 years ago the forefathers of Shri Sankaradeva established their capital here. Shri Sankaradeva, the great saint-poet of Assam also stayed here for six months for propagating *Neo Vaishnavism*. In early times, it was a centre of oriental learning. A weekly *hat* is held here on Tuesdays.

Sipajhar : Sipajhar (26°23'N 91°54'E) is a densely populated village about 15 kms. west of Mangaldai town on the North Trunk Road. In the past it was noted for lac and *Eri*, *Pat* and *Muga* rearing. One *Khadi* and *Endi* production centre is functioning at Sipajhar under the Khadi and Village Industries Board, Assam. The headquarters of the local Development Block and Anchalik Panchayat are located at Sipajhar. There are one Public Health Centre, two High Schools and a few Primary Schools in this village. Visitors can stay at the local Inspection Bungalow.

Tangla : Tangla (26°40'N 91°54'E) is a town situated about 32 kms. north of Mangaldai. It is an important railway station which is linked by roads with Mangaldai, Udalguri, Harisinga, Khoirabari and other important places of the northern part of Mangaldai Subdivision. Two important roads, viz., the Mangaldai-Bhutiachang road and the Udalguri-Tangla-Khoirabari road pass through Tangla. A town Committee looks after its civic affairs.

According to the 1971 Census the area of the town is about 3.19 sq. kms. and its population 9,572. As regards educational facilities there are two High Schools, besides a number of Middle Vernacular and Primary Schools. A College has also been recently started here. Several Government offices including Post and Telegraphs, State Dispensary etc., are functioning there. Tangla Telephone Exchange caters to the needs of Tangla, Paneri and Khoirabari.

The town occupies the key position in respect of trade and commerce in the northern part of Mangaldai Subdivision. It provides for the outlet of the bulk of tea produced in the tea gardens north of Tangla. Here, both whole-sale and retail trade are done in rice

and jute which are grown extensively in this region. There are one oil mill, five rice mills and one saw mill at Tangla. It has a branch office of the Tezpur-Central Co-operative Bank and a Pay office of the State Bank of India. Local Inspection Bungalow accommodates visitors.

Tezpur : Tezpur (29°37 'N 92°48 'E) the headquarters of the district, is situated on the right bank of the river Brahmaputra. The town is fringed by picturesque low hills along the river bank.

The name Tezpur is a corrupt form of Sonitpur of *pauranic* fame. (Tez or Sonit means blood and pur means city and Tezpur or Sonitpur, therefore, means city of blood.) King Bana, a contemporary of Naraka of Pragjyotishpur had his capital here. Tradition has it that his fortress stood on the site now occupied by the Deputy Commissioner's office, and that he built the magnificent temples, the ruins of which are still to be seen in the immediate vicinity of the town. The life episode of Usha, daughter of Bana and Anirudha, grandson of Krishna of Dwaraka led to a grim battle between Bana and Krishna. The profusion of blood in this battle led to the name Sonitpur. This story forms the central theme of an Assamese poetical work, called *Kumar Harana*. The other name by which Tezpur was known in early times were *Debikut*, *Ushaban*, *Kotibarsha* and *Banpur*.

Tezpur is also identified with the Harruppeswar, the capital of the rulers of Salastambha dynasty. The Harijara Pukhuri in the western part of the town still preserves the glory of its excavator Harijara-varman of this line. Though in early times Tezpur was a place of considerable importance, it never became the capital of the Koch or Ahom kings.

Architectural remains which are found lying in and around Tezpur are associated with the names of Bana and his daughter Usha. The Agnigarh hill, the Bamuni hill, the Bhairavi Temple, the Mahabhairab temple and the twin tanks Bar Pukhuri and Padum Pukhuri still preserve their memory. Both these tanks are said to have got excavated by Kumbhanda, the Prime Minister of King Bana in compliance with the wish of Usha, the daughter of Bana. The Bamuni hill about 1½ kms. to the east of the town is also associated with Lord Vishnu's *Vamana* incarnation during the reign of Bali, father

of Bana. The archaeological remains found on this hill are believed to be a group of seven temples belonging to 8th to 10th century A.D. Some of the beautiful specimens are preserved in the Cole Park in the western vicinity of the Deputy Commissioner's court. Ruins of stone temples including a door-frame have been discovered at Da-Parbatia about five kms. west of Tezpur. These ruins of temples dedicated both to *Siva* and *Vishnu* are ascribed to the 5th-6th Century A.D., and are one of the earliest specimens of architecture and stone carving in Assam.

Since 1835 when the British Government selected Tezpur as the headquarters of Darrang district it has continued to be the nerve centre of administrative, educational, cultural and other activities as well as of trade and commerce. The town was constituted a municipality in 1893. Since then it has been growing both in area and population. According to the 1971 Census, its area is 7.10 sq. kms. and population 39,870 persons.

Tezpur, which was mainly a steamerghat on the Brahmaputra in the past, is now well served by road, rail and air. The North Trunk Road which runs through Tezpur is the artery of road communications. Corporation and public buses ply between Tezpur and important places both within and outside the district. There is also a daily bus service between Tezpur and Bomdila in Arunachal Pradesh. Direct rail link was established with Tezpur in 1952 when it was connected to Rangapara. Salani airfield is only about eleven kms. from Tezpur. Formerly, it was an important steamerghat cum ferryghat directly connected by ferry service with Silghat on the south bank in Nowgong district. At present the ferry service between Bhomoraguri about 11 kms. upstream from Tezpur and Silghat in Nowgong district connects the north and south banks of the Brahmaputra. Direct road and rail link between Tezpur and Gauhati and other important towns on the south bank was established with the construction of the Saraighat bridge over the Brahmaputra at Pandu. The development of communication and transport facilities has further enhanced the importance of the town as the nerve centre of trade and commerce. The most important commodities of import are paddy, sugar and fine cloths and of export are tea, jute and mustard seed. The town has now various modern facilities like banking, electricity etc., which have facilitated the growth of industries particularly small and cottage industries in and around it.

Besides two Colleges and a number of Schools, the Industrial

1. Census of India, Darrang 1961, p.77.

Training Institute is also located in the town. Special mention may be made of mental hospital at Tezpur, which is the only institution of its kind in the State. The famous Ban Stage is one of the oldest theatre halls of the State.

Besides the local Circuit House, Dak Bungalow, Inspection Bungalow and the Guest House at Tezpur there are a number of hotels which can accommodate visitors.

Udalguri : Udalguri (26°46'N 92°7'E) is a railway station situated about 32 kms. north of Mangaldai. It is the headquarters of Udalguri (Tribal Development) Block which is an important paddy producing area. Udalguri was once a lac producing area. It is an important place of tribal life and culture.

A big fair was held here annually in the nineteenth century, during the winter season when at the annual *Durbar Posa* was paid to the Bhutias, Akas, Daflas and other hill tribes. The Bhutias come down from the hills with their merchandise to attend the fair. They attend the fair even now. At the weekly *hat* various commodities including hill products are transacted.

During the early part of the British administration they maintained a fort at Udalguri with military police. Udalguri is also connected by roads with Tangla, Harisinga and Mangaldai and other important places of the district. There are two rice mills, one Police Station and a number of educational institutions at Udalguri. Visitors to Bhairavakund which is about 14 kms. from here may be accommodated at Udalguri Inspection Bungalow.

Vishwanath Charali : Vishwanath Charali (26°40'N 93°11'E) is a town on the North Trunk Road about 76 kms. east of Tezpur. According to the 1971 Census the town comprises an area of 6.02 sq. kms. with a total population of 9 301. A number of State Government offices are located here. The Vishwanath College has been recently opened here. Besides other industries there is also a Co-operative Sugar Mill at Lehugaon near it.

About nine kilometres to the south of the town lies Vishwanath, a pilgrim centre with a rich tradition and glorious history. Tradition has it that the breast of *Sati*, the wife of Lord *Siva* fell here when her dead body was hewn into pieces by *Vishnu*. According to one tradition Arimatta built a town here. According to another Bana built a shrine here equal to Kashi Kshetra in sanctity,

Some scholars also identify Vishwanath with Durjaya, the capital of the Pala kings of Assam. In 1685 A.D. Ahom king Gadadhar Sinha built a *Siva* temple known as the Vishwanath temple near the confluence of the *Bridha* Ganga or *Buri* Ganga and the Brahmaputra. Although this temple was eroded long ago and there is no permanent temple now, a temporary shed is erected every winter for worshipping *Siva* when the water dries up. An annual *mela* (fair) with a large gathering is held here on the third day of the Assamese New Year. The Sivanath *math* was built by Siva Sinha in 1730 A.D. and the Bordol temple is a typical Ahom temple built during the reign of Swargadeo Rejeswar Sinha in 1751-69 A.D. The *mandapa* of the temple is of *Sal* design in imitation of the Assamese thatch cottage. In fact the entire area bounded by Nangalbhairav in the east to Kalbhairav in the west and Birbhairav in the North to the Brahmaputra in the south is known as Vishwanath Kshetra and is littered with temples and *moths*. Of these mention may be made of Basudev, Buramadhav, Chandi, Kamaleswar, Purbasankar, Surjya-madhav, and Uma temples. There is a very big old tank by the name of Kuwaripukhuri excavated by the Ahom kings at about 5 kms. west from Vishwanath Charali.

Vishwanath was a steamerghat on the Brahmaputra. Visitors can be accommodated at the Burigaon Inspection Bungalow and hotels in the town.

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A. GLOSSARY

- Ahu : A kind of paddy, harvested during summer.
 Alatiya : A loam.
 Ali : An embankment across a rice field.
 Apang : A Miri word for rice beer.
 Bala : An ornament for the wrist.
 Bali-cahiya : Sandy land.
 Baki-jai : A list of defaulting *rayots* filed by Mauzadar for recovering arrears of revenue.
 Bam : A high land.
 Ban-bati : A bell-metal cup-like utensil with a foot.
 Ban-kahi : A bell-metal dish-like utensil with a foot.
 Bangal : An outsider.
 Bao : A kind of paddy sown in flooded land.
 Baradhan : Glutinous paddy.
 Bari : A homestead ; a plot of high waste land, an orchard.
 Baro : A kind of spring paddy grown on water-logging low land.
 Basti : A homestead.
 Bata : A small tray with a foot made usually of silver, bell-metal and brass used for keeping areca nut and betel leaves.
 Bati : A bell-metal cup-like utensil.
 Ba-tula-chunga : A bamboo pipe to furnish with healds in a loom.
 Bena : A gem-set gold necklace shaped like a new-moon.
 Bhakat : A disciple ; a resident monk in the premises of a Vaishnava satra.
 Bhal-bari : A high waste land of good quality, a prosperous orchard.
 Bhaona : A Vaishnava dramatic performance.
 Bhar : A load of paddy in particular carried on shoulder suspended from either end of a bamboo pole.
 Bhata : A kiln.
 Bherbheria : A deep and soft clay.
 Bigha : A measure of land standing for $\frac{1}{4}$ th of a *pura* of land.
 Bihu : An Assamese national festival.

- Bihuan** : A kind of towel woven by a female with foliage design and presented to near and dear ones on the occasion of the Rangali Bihu.
- Bihu-geets** : Assamese folk-songs connected with Bihus.
- Bil** : A shallow pool of water ; a small lake.
- Bhur (Bhel)** : A raft made of bamboo or pieces of banana tree.
- Cecukiya** : A damp land.
- Chadar** : A garment used to cover the upper part of the body.
- Chaklang** : An Ahom marriage ceremony.
- Chang-ghar** : A dwelling house built on a raised platform.
- Chapari** : A high land formed on the banks and in the beds of a river by sand and silt deposits.
- Char** : A highland formed by sand and silt deposits of a river.
- Chariya** : A bowl made usually of brass.
- Chepa** : A kind of bamboo fish trap.
- Chereki** : A contrivance for winding thread.
- Chunga** : A hollow bamboo ; sometimes the knot is retained at the (sunga) bottom for using as container or measuring liquid.
- Churia** : Lower garment used by males.
- Dangori** : A large sheaf of paddy.
- Deodhani** : A devotee dedicated to a temple who use to perform worship to the particular deity through dance under divine spell.
- Dhara** : A bamboo mat.
- Dhenki** : A paddle for pounding rice.
- Dhip** : A raised plot of land.
- Dingara** : A kind of square bamboo fish trap.
- Dhol** : A big conical shaped bamboo basket containing twenty seers of grain.
- Dholbiri** : A drum-shaped locket made of gold.
- Dol** : A Hindu shrine, a Vaishnava temple.
- Doloni** : A plot of watery land covered with dol (*daj*) grass which grows in watery land.
- Doon** : A conical shaped bamboo basket for measuring five seers of grain.
- Dong** : A small depression in a cultivated land used for irrigation.
- Dorpati** : The batten of loom.
- Duar** : Gate-way or pass on the foothills.

- Dugdugi** : A pendant attached to a necklace.
- Eri** : A species of silk, the cocoons of which are fed on castor plant.
- Faringati** : A high land on which *Ahu* paddy and other grains like mustard and sugarcane are grown.
- Galpata** : A flat necklace, worn just around the neck above its base.
- Gamkharu** : A broad bracelet more or less heart-shaped made of silver or gold.
- Ganja** : An Indian hemp.
- Garh** : An embankment.
- Gathiyan** : An aromatic root.
- Ghar** : A dwelling house.
- Gilach** : A metal tumbler.
- Ghat** : A landing stair or a bathing place on a river bank.
- Got** : An aggregate of three or four *paiks*.
- Gur** : Molasses.
- Hangdang** : A sword used during Ahom rule by kings, nobles and Ahom bridegrooms.
- Hat** : A market place.
- Hati** : A row of dwellings of the resident Vaishnava monks.
- Hola** : A shallow ravine.
- Huchari** : A group musical dance performance done door to door expressing new-year's blessings.
- Hukuma** : A kind of bamboo fish trap.
- Jakai** : A kind of bamboo scoop used in catching fish.
- Jalatak** : A flooded land or land liable to flood.
- Jamabandi** : Revenue register which records details of lands and owners.
- Jan** : A brooklet.
- Japi** : A wicker hat, used as an umbrella.
- Jonbiri** : A new-moon shaped gold pendant usually set with gems.
- Juluki** : A kind of fish basket.
- Juvali** : An yoke.
- Kahi** : A bell-metal dish.
- Kakoi** : A comb made usually of bamboo wicks and sometimes of animal horn and elephant tusks.
- Kalah** : A pitcher.
- Kalpataru** : A sacred scripture written by Sri Sri Sankaradeva ; a sacred tree which grants one's wish.

- Kataki : A royal messenger or envoy of the Ahoms and contemporary rulers of Assam.
- Kath : A mat made of grass or cork.
- Katha : A measure of land standing for $\frac{1}{8}$ th of a *biga*.
- Kathiatali : Paddy seed-bed.
- Kebang : Village Judicial assembly of the Miris.
- Keru : Ornaments meant for ears and worn in the holes in earlobes. It is usually set with gems.
- Kala Khar : An alkaline preparation extracted usually from banana plant ashes.
- Kharu : Ornaments used in wrist.
- Khat : A small estate including arable lands donated to Gosains, Priests and in the name of an established deity by the Ahom kings.
- Khedāshikar : A process employed in catching elephant.
- Khel : A division of people made by Ahom rulers for specific profession.
- Khiraj : Revenue paying estate.
- Khokha : A conical bamboo fish-trap.
- Khol : A sort of musical drum played with devotional songs in particular.
- Khuti-tal : A tiny cymbal made of bell-metal.
- Kund : A natural pond.
- Kunkis : A hunting elephant.
- Kunwori : A queen, a princess.
- Lahi : A fine variety of paddy.
- Lahani : A swing basket, used to remove and throw water from low land to high land ; it is usually used as a fishing contrivance and for watering seed-beds.
- Lecha : A measure of land standing for $\frac{1}{20}$ th of a *Katha*.
- Letai : A kind of long bamboo reed used for winding boiled yarn
- Lota : A kind of water pot narrow in the middle and made of bell-metal and brass.
- Mahal : A division of forests different purposes.
- Mahura : A piece of reed where threads are wound for weaving.

- Mahout : An elephant driver.
- Maidam : A funeral vault of the Ahom rulers and nobles.
- Maina (Kanan, Mel, Parijat) : A children's organisation.
- Makhana : A male elephant without tusk.
- Maku : A shuttle.
- Mani : A kind of beads used as ornament.
- Meji : A pile made of bamboo pieces, straw etc., raised on the eve of the *Magh-bihu* festival.
- Mekhela : A lower-wear for female worn down at the waist.
- Mela : A public show, an exhibition, a fete.
- Melashikar : A process employed in catching elephant.
- Muga : A variety of Assam silk, the threads of which are usually yellow with the tinge of gold.
- Nachani : A part of a loom.
- Namghar : A prayer-hall in a Vaishnavite Satra and in the villages of Assam.
- Nam-kirtan : Prayer in conjunction with sounding cymbal and other instruments of the Assamese Vaishnavas.
- Neothani : A cotton gin.
- Nirmali : Flowers or offerings made to a deity and distributed among the votaries.
- Oja-pali : Assamese folk-dance accompanied by songs.
- Paik : A *rayot* during the Ahom rule whose duty was to render service to the king or the State.
- Palnam : A Vaishnava devotional prayer (*nam-kirtan*) lasting continuously for days.
- Pan : Betel-vine left .
- Pat : A fine variety of Assam silk, the yarns of which are prepared from mulberry fed cocoons.
- Pathar : A field or open space used for cultivation, assembly, sports etc.
- Pati : A kind of fine mat.
- Pepa : A flute.
- Peteri : A cane basket with a lid.
- Pitha : A cake prepared with rice powder.
- Pona : Young fish.
- Posa : A system of fixed levy per household in the border-areas in the north for each tribe in the hills.

Powa	: $\frac{1}{4}$ th of a <i>seer</i> .
Pukhuri	: A pond.
Pura	: A measure of land standing for four <i>bighas</i> of land or four to five <i>dons</i> of grains.
Riha	: A kind of long wrapper used by the Assamese females round the waist and the breasts; a long draper used as a girdle, even brassier.
Rupit	: Land on which winter crop or transplanted paddy is grown.
Ryot sabha	: An assemblage or meeting of cultivators paying land revenue.
Salidhan	: A principal variety of transplanted paddy.
Sanci	: A kind of tree (<i>Agaru</i>) from which leaves were prepared for writing manuscripts in olden days.
San	: Fibre of hemp or flex.
Santi Sena	: Peace squads.
Sarai	: A tray with foot, made usually of silver and bell-metal.
Satra	: A Vaishnavite religious institution.
Sayambara	: A system of princely marriage in the past, in which a princess selected her husband from amongst the assembled princes through garlanding.
Takalabari	: A barren land, a deserted homestead.
Tal	: Assamese cymbal.
Tarapat	: Leaves of wild cardamom.
Tari	: Indigenous liquor prepared by fermenting date-palm juice.
Toltha	: A beam of the Assamese handloom.
Tongali	: A kind of dress wrapped round the waist, girdle of cloth used by males.
Thor (Jhap)	: Five, six or eight bundles of paddy.
Thuriya	: An ornament used in ears.
Tulapat	: Cotton paper.
Tulashi	: A sacred and medicinal herb.
Tulasoni	: Old-time weighing scale.
Tauzi	: A revenue register.
Ugha	: A kind of reel for winding thread.
Ural	: A wooden mortar used for pounding paddy and rice.
Uruka	: The eve of Bihu day.
Utsav	: A festival.
Yatras	: Open-air opera.

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C. PRINCIPAL TABLES.

1. Subdivisionwise Area and Population, (Rural and Urban) of Darrang District.

District/ Subdivision	Area in Sq. kms.				Population											
	1941	1951	1961	1971	1941		1951		1961		1971					
					Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13				
Darrang district.																
Rural	7,233.32	7,233.32	8,699.4	8,737.0	3,85,027	3,37,792	4,77,284	4,14,106	6,63,836	5,75,540	8,58,927	7,73,518				
Urban	6.16	6.16	20.8	38.0	9,387	4,585	14,334	8,117	31,091	19,203	60,708	43,035				
Tezpur subdivision																
Rural	3,953.64	3,953.64	5,414.5	5,227.8	—	—	2,63,280	2,29,180	3,64,897	3,11,627	4,39,917	3,90,124				
Urban	4.08	4.08	10.3	27.4	7,946	3,933	12,032	6,848	19,182	11,340	41,980	29,593				
Mangaldai subdivision.																
Rural	3,279.68	3,279.68	3,284.9	3,454.7	—	—	2,14,004	1,84,926	2,98,939	2,63,913	4,19,010	3,83,394				
Urban	2.08	2.0	10.5	10.6	1,441	652	2,302	1,269	11,909	7,863	18,728	13,442				

III. Subdivisionwise Scheduled Castes and Tribes (Rural and Urban) of Darrang District.

Scheduled Castes/ Tribes.	District/Subdivision	1951		1961		1971	
		Male		Female		Male	
		1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Scheduled Castes.	Darrang district.	T.	16,925	14,706	32,734	30,056	39,848
	R.	15,757	13,894	30,671	28,449	36,277	34,478
	U.	1,168	812	2,063	1,607	3,572	2,777
	Tezpur subdivision	T.	—	—	20,168	18,709	21,735
	R.	—	—	18,998	17,886	19,645	18,720
	U.	—	—	1,170	823	2,090	1,629
	Mangaldai subdivision	T.	—	—	12,566	11,347	18,114
	R.	—	—	11,673	10,563	16,632	15,758
	U.	—	—	893	784	1,482	1,148
2. Scheduled Tribes.	Darrang district.	T.	48,362	41,526	73,082	67,216	94,425
	R.	48,012	41,356	72,752	66,954	94,044	90,930
	U.	350	170	330	262	381	285
	Tezpur subdivision.	T.	—	—	23,364	21,403	29,538
	R.	—	—	23,235	21,304	29,375	27,471
	U.	—	—	129	99	163	137
	Mangaldai subdivision.	T.	—	—	49,718	45,813	64,887
	R.	—	—	49,517	45,650	64,668	63,459
	U.	—	—	201	163	218	148

N.B.—T—Total, R—Rural and U—Urban.

IV. Fairs

Place	Name of fair or its association with	English month of the year in which it is observed	Duration in days	Average daily attendance.
1	2	3	4	5
Vishwanath	Asokastami	April	1	5,000
	Durgapuja	September /October	5	10,000
	Bihu	January and April	2	10,000
	Kalipuja	September/October	1	5,000
	Ambubashi	June	7	5,000
	Sivaratri	February	1	7,000
	Rash puja	October	1	5,000
Basudev	Rash puja	October	3	10,000
than	Balikuchi Mela	January	2	7,000
Bonmajha	Jagadhatri puja	October	1	5,000
Dipilaghat				
Dighi				
pukhuri	Rash puja	October	1	7,000
Haleswar	Sivaratri	February	1	5,000
Jogeswar				
temple	Sivaratri	February	1	6,000
Khatara	Sivaratri	February	1	5,000
	Pacheti puja	August/September	1	2,000
Kharu-				
patia	Buddha Purnima	May	1	5,000
Mangal-				
dai	Sivaratri	February	1	7,000
	Jhulanjatra	August	5	5,000
	Buddha purnima	May	1	3,000
	Shri Panchami	January	1	8,000
	Ram Navami	March	1	3,000
	Muharram	July	1	1,000
Pub-Dal-				
gaon	Sivaratri	February	1	3,000
Singri	Sivaratri	February	1	5,000
Sipajhar	Doljatra	March	3	7,000
Tezpur	Asokastami	April	1	10,000
	Doljatra	March	3	5,000
	Jhulanjatra	August	3	7,000
	Jagadhatri puja	October	1	3,000

IV. Fairs

Place	Name of fair or its association with	English month of the year in which it is observed	Duration in days	Average daily attendance.
1	2	3	4	5
	Ambubashi	June	7	5,000
	Dusserah	September	1	2,000
	Kalipuja	October	1	5,000
	Basanti puja	March	3	12,000
	Durga puja	September/October	5	5,000
	Ram Navami	March	1	2,000
	Bihu	January/April	2	5,000
	Sivaratri	February	1	2,000
	Shri Panchami	January	1	8,000
	Lakhmi puja	October	1	5,000
Udalguri	Bhutan Mela	January	1	7,000

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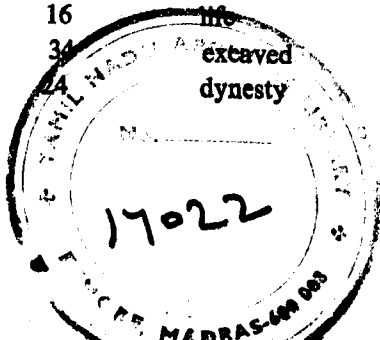
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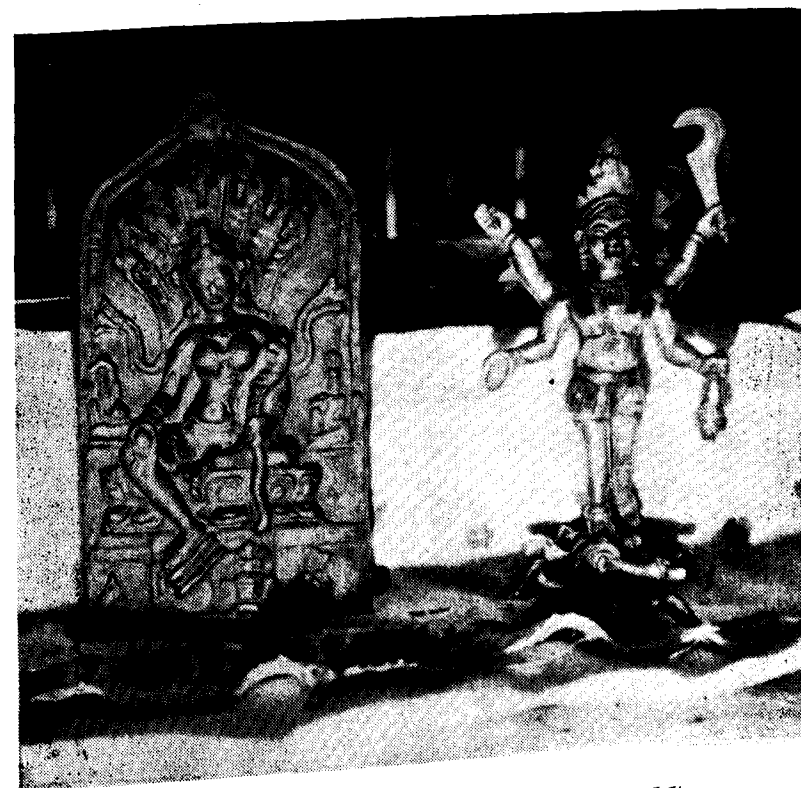
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539	24	dynesty	dynasty





**Manasa (stone) and goddess Kali (gold),
KALYANI DEVALAY
Barangabari Darrang District**

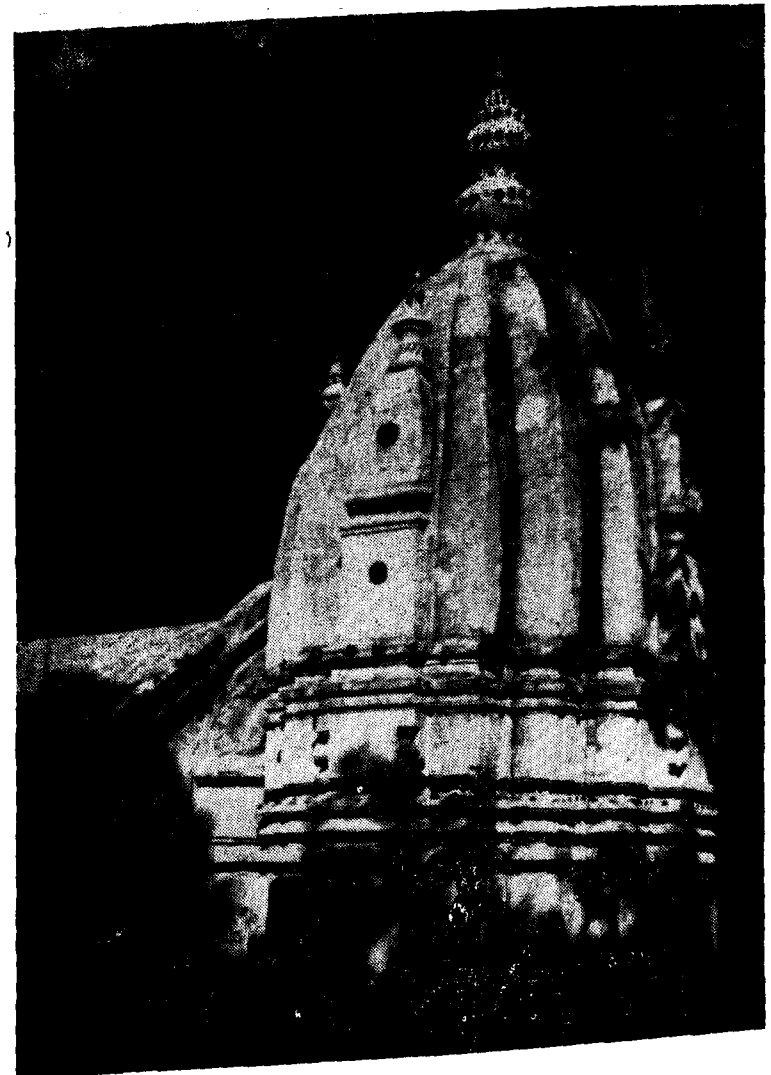
Seated in Lalitasana, the Manasa image is carved in black basalt and belongs to the 10th century A.D. of the Palasena school. It is one of the very few images of Manasa ever discovered in the State of Assam.

The image of the goddess Kali on the left is in gold and belongs to a period not earlier than the 17th century A.D.



**Temple door-frame, Da-parvatia, Tezpur,
Darrang District**

The frame is one of the finest pieces of Gupta art discovered so far in the entire country. It is assigned to the 5th-6th century A.D.



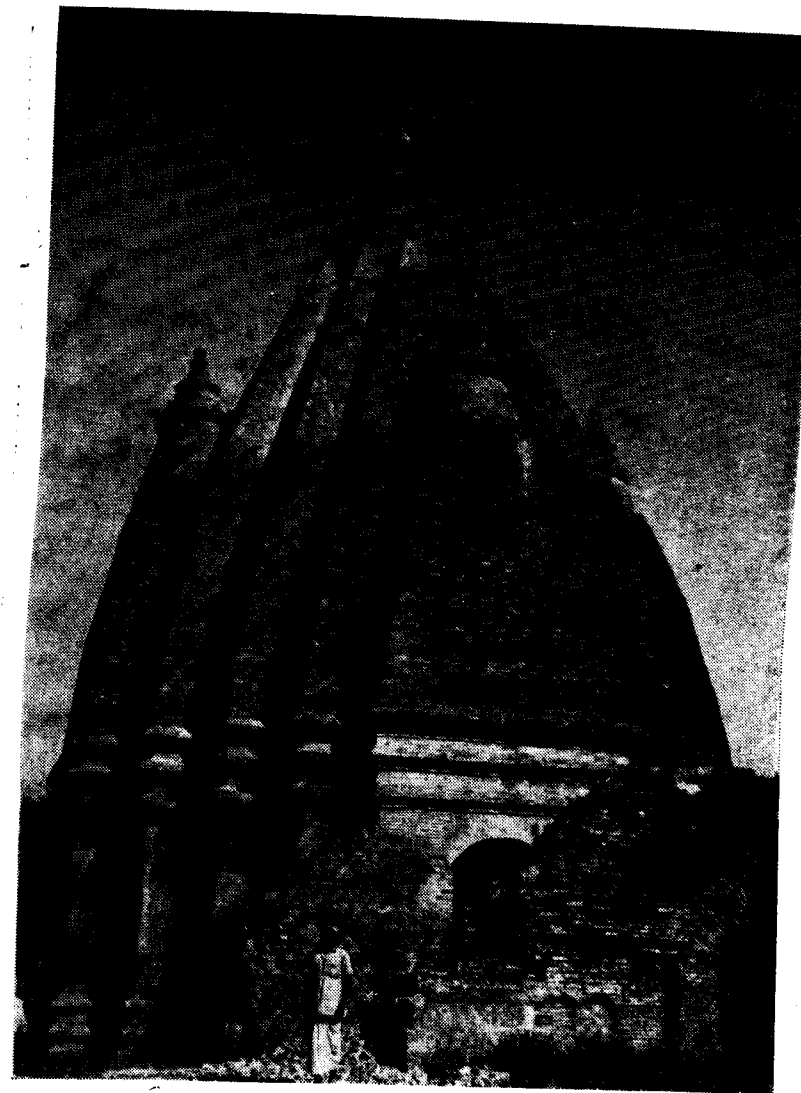
Guptesvar temple, Singri, Darrang District

It is a Siva temple. The Linga inside the cella is submerged in water throughout the year,—a fact from which the name Guptesvar (one hidden away from the reach of the eyes) is alleged to have been derived. It appears to be a pre-Ahom temple belonging to C. 11th/12th century A.D., but must have been extensively repaired during the late-medieval period.



Bar Dol, Biswanath, Darrang District

A typical Ahom temple built during the reign of Swargadev Rajeswar Sinha (1751-69). The *Mandapa* is of Sala Design in imitation of the Assamese thatched cottage.



Basudev temple, Kalabari, Darrang District

A typical late-mediaeval architectural piece, this abandoned temple has been conserved by the State Archaeology Department. It is about 22 metres in height. The name of the builder of this temple is not definitely known. As the very name signifies, this is a Vishnu temple and was owned by the Satradhikar of the Dakshinpat Satra. The devakosthas (niches) in the temple wall contain image-panels of different deities which, however, have badly ravaged by the vagaries of time. No deity exists inside the modern Manikut (temple) built nearby with C.I. Sheets and timber.

Architecturally it is similar to the Nagara (North Indian) type, except for the Mastaka (Pinnacle) part which is indigenous in design.



**Sculptural ruins from Naksaparat
Darrang District**

These typical sculptures, the exact nature of which are not known, are carved on stone pillars and were probably done under the patronage of some local potentates of the pre-Ahom Bodo-Kachari tribe. That some of these sculptures are secular in character is obvious.