GAZETTEER OF INDIA
ASSAM STATE

NOWGONG DISTRICT

COMMISSIONER OF TAMIL NADU
ARCHIVES AND HISTORICAL RESEARCH
21 மார்ச் 1979
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ASSAM DISTRICT GAZETTEERS

सत्यमेव जयते

NOWGONG DISTRICT

BY
Shri D. P. BAROOAH, A.C.S.

GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM
GAUHATI : ASSAM
1978

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ASSAM DISTRICT GAZETTEERS UNIT
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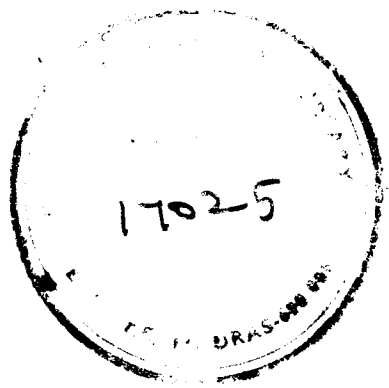


PRICE Rs.— 40·00

Published by the Editor-in-Chief, District Gazetteers,
Government of Assam, Gauhati.

Printed at the Sreeguru Press, Maligaon, Gauhati--781011

FOREWORD

This is a very happy occasion for me to present the Nowgong District Gazetteer which is the third in the series of revised District Gazetteers of Assam to the public finally in printed form. The Gazetteers have been occupying a very important place in the book shelves of the scholars, educationists, researchers and administrators of all the countries of the world since a very long past. I hope, the present volume also will maintain its status and dignity as such and will be a valuable document concerning the district to which it relates.

I am hoping to present the remaining unpublished District Gazetteers within a very short time and expect the hope to be materialised without default.

Gauhati
31-3-78

Shri Lakshya Dhar Choudhury
Minister, Education, Assam.

PREFACE

This is the third volume published under the scheme Revision of District Gazetteers of Assam. As believed, the term Gazetteer has been derived from the term Gazetta which was recognised as the official bulletin or leaflet publishing the important government circulars. The word Gazetteer literally means an alphabetical arrangement of places which serves as a geographical and topographical dictionary comprising statistics, descriptions and historical details. In ancient India, the account of travellers and historians like Megasthenis, Fahien, Hieuen-Tsang, Alberuni, Iban Batuta, Kautilya's Arthasastra, Periplus of Erythsean Sea, Ptolemy etc. served the purpose of the Gazetteer. But none of these works can be termed as Gazatteer in its true sense.

This first Gazetteer of India was prepared by Walter Hamilton in 1815. His work was followed by Edward Thronton's Gazetteer which was published in 1844. The Government of India took up the work of preparation of District Statistical Account in the sixth decade of the 19th century and Sir Richard compiled the District Gazetteer of central provinces in 1867, his work being followed by a number of Gazetteers for other provinces of India. In 1869, Sir William Hunter submitted a scheme for compilation of the different Gazetteers of Indian provinces and in 1881 the first edition of the Imperial Gazetteer of India was published in 9 volumes. In preparing the Imperial Gazetteer of India, Sir William Hunter used Abul Fazal's Ain-E-Akbari and the Military Survey Report of Egypt conducted by the French Government in the first quarter of the 19th century as the model for the Gazetteers of India.

The first revision of Gazetteers was made in 1885-87 and were brought out in 14 volumes. Sir W.W. Hunter published the Statistical Account of Assam in 1879 and his volume dealt with Assam as it was constituted in 1874. The District Gazetteers of Indian provinces were published in persuance of the circular issued by the Govt. of India in 1903 and in Assam, B. C. Allen prepared and printed the District Gazetteers of Assam districts in 1905. After that, some minor supplementary to the Gazetteers were made very sparingly and practically no attempt was made to revise it.

After the independence, the first initiative for revision of District Gazetteers was taken in 1949 by the State of Bombay, being followed by Bihar and Madras in 1952 and 1954 respectively. The Government of India in 1955 resolved to revise the old Indian Imperial Gazetteers on a uniform pattern and accordingly the Gazetteers cell was set up in New Delhi as well as in all the States of India. In Assam,

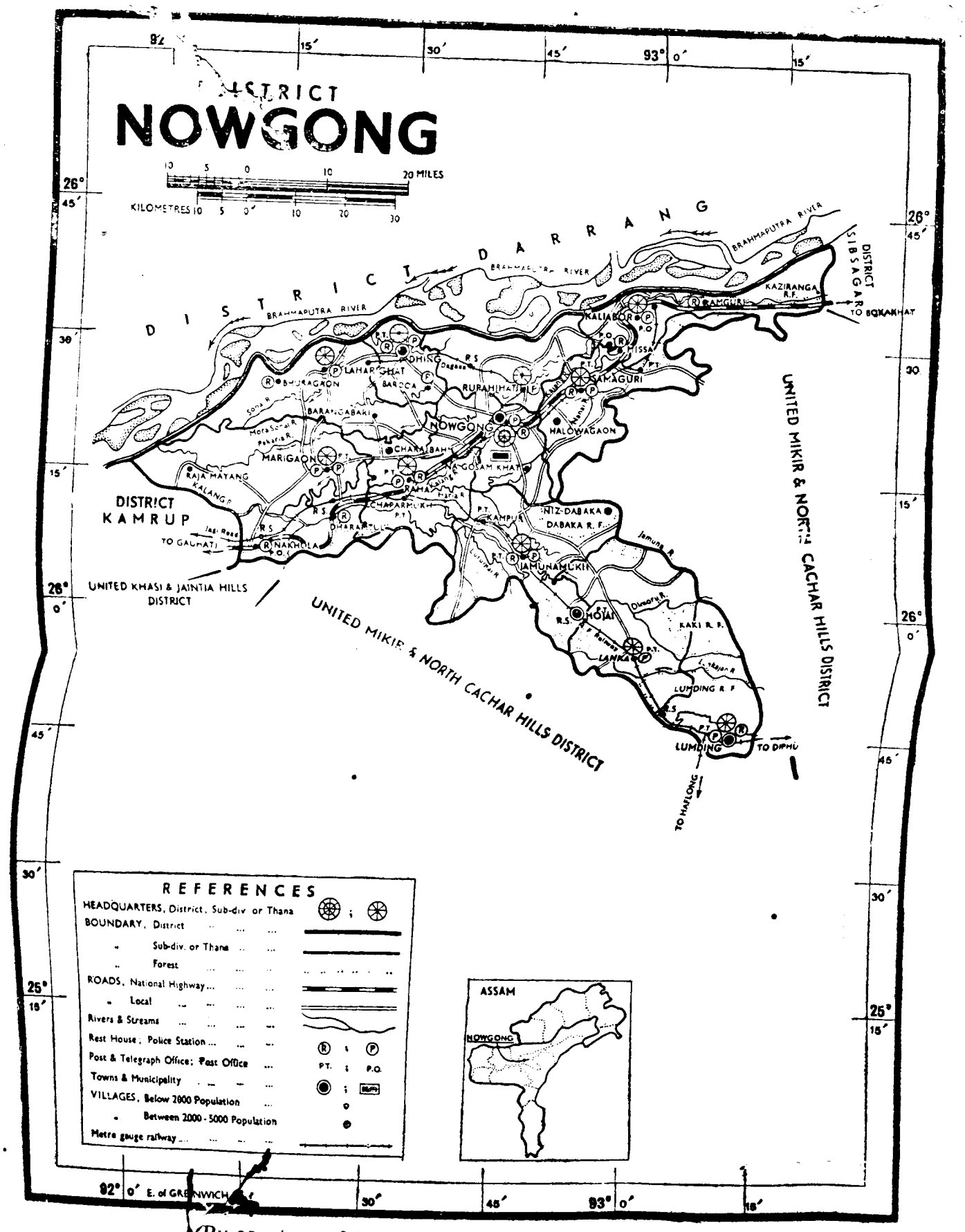
the cell of Revision of District Gazetteers was set up under the department of Education with K. N. Dutt, the noted historian of Assam as its Editor. Simultaneously, district offices for compilation of materials and its drafting were set up in all the district headquarters of Assam which functioned till their final closure in March 1969. The preliminary draft of Nowgong District Gazetteers was prepared by Shri Rudrasen Rajkumar, Shri Milan Saikia and Shri P. K. Barua, who were working as the District Compilers in Nowgong and was finally edited by Shri D.P. Barooah, who submitted the same to the Government of India for approval on 15-2-75. It received approval from the Government of India on 29-9-75 and was sent to press in May, 1977.

Best endeavour has been made to make the District Gazetteer complete with all available upto-date data and statistics ; though we must admit that there accrued some omissions due to non availability of data at the sources. However we believe that this book will serve as a valuable reference book to the interested public, particularly students and scholars, in all their particular fields of interest pertaining to the national life of Assam with special reference to the district of Nowgong. Dr. P. N. Chopra, Editor, Central Gazetteers Unit of Govt. of India has been advancing all possible help in printing out this District Gazetteer in its final form through careful scrutiny and suggestions forwarded by his editorial staff and we are grateful for his every guidance. Shri S. N. Neog, Shri R. Dass, Shri M. C. Bhuyan, and Shri P. K. Barua, Compilers helped in preparing the press copy of Nowgong District Gazetteers and without their able help it would not have been possible to bring out this volume to public within such a short time.

My thanks are due to all my colleagues and office staff.

31st March 1978
Gauhati.

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



By courtesy of Di

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CHAPTER I.

GENERAL

PHYSICAL FEATURES AND NATURAL RESOURCES.

(a) Introductory :

(i) **Origin of the name Nowgong :** The present district of Nowgong was once known as Khagarijan and had its headquarters at Puranigudam. It is said that there was a canal in the heart of the district, which extended from north-east to south-west for several kilometres. This canal was covered by reeds which were locally known as *Khagari*. The district was therefore named Khagarijan. During the reign of the Ahom king Pratap Sinha (1603-1641 A.D.) the Kacharis attacked his kingdom and advanced as far as Kaliabor when the people in the area between Kaliabor and Raha fled in panic leaving hearth and home. Shortly after expulsion of the Kacharis from the Ahom kingdom, the king deputed one officer named Momai Tamuli Barbarua to reconstruct this area. "The Barbarua established new villages, or resettled them with the repatriated fugitives. This new settlement, was therefore called *Na-gaon* or a new village settlement, a name still adopted to designate the district".[1]

(ii) **Location, general boundaries, total area and population :** The district of Nowgong which is situated on the south bank of the Brahmaputra occupies a central geographical position in the State of Assam. The district lies between 25°45′ and 26°45′ North latitudes and 91°50′ and 93°20′ East longitudes. On the north it is bounded by the river Brahmaputra, on the east by Sibsagar and Mikir Hills districts, on the south mainly by Mikir Hills district and by portions of Meghalaya State and North Cachar Hills and on the west by the district of Kamrup and portions of Meghalaya State. In 1971 this district covered an area of 5,561 square kilometres.[2]

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1. S. K. Bhuyan, ed., *Kachari Buranji*, Gauhati, 1951, Introduction, p. XIX.
2. *Census of India*, 1971, *Assam*, *General Population Table*, p. 26. This is at variance with the area figures shown in the *District Census Handbook*, Nowgong, 1961 p-i. It states that according to the Surveyor General of India, the district covers an area of 2,167 sq. miles or 5,613 sq. kms. but that according to the Director of Assam Survey the district has an area of 2,200 sq. miles or 5,698 sq. kms.

The total population of the district in the last Census of 1971 was 16,80,895 (males 8,84,938 and females 7,95,957) against 12,10,761 in 1961 giving a total increase of 4,70,134, the percentage increase being 38.83.

(iii) **History of the district as an administrative unit** : The history of the district as an administrative unit can be traced out only from the time of its annexation by the British. Before it, it is doubtful whether at any period the whole of the area now forming the district of Nowgong was a separate polity under its own rulers. Its history has to be considered in connection with that of the various States of which from time to time it formed a part. It was originally included in the ancient Hindu kingdom of Pragjyotishpur and also in Kamarupa in mediaeval times. The Bhauma Naraka family headed by Pusyavarman ruled over the Kamarupa kingdom from 430 A.D. to 648 A.D. During Pusyavarman's time the northern part of the present Nowgong district along the Brahmaputra became a part of his country. There was also an independent country named Dabaka in the Kopili valley. The kingdom of Kamarupa extended to the extreme eastern part of the present Nowgong district (including Dabaka) during the reign of Bhutivarman. During the later period Salastambha and Pala dynasties ruled over Kamarupa. But even then the contemporary Kachari kings were ruling in the Kopili valley of the district and though they were conquered by the Ahoms in the sixteenth century, they continued to hold it as vassal chiefs till 1826, when the district passed into the British hands.

In the thirteenth century A.D. Arimatta of the Jitari family swept over from the north of the Brahmaputra and conquered Nowgong and extended his kingdom upto Majuli in Sibsagar district. His son Jongalbalahu ruled over the territory which now forms the western part of Nowgong district and erected a fort known as Jongalbalahugarh near Raha. In the middle of the sixteenth century, the northern part of Nowgong began to pass into the sphere of Ahom influence but from time to time it was overrun by the Koches, Muhammadans and Kacharis till about 1685 A.D. when the Ahoms finally expelled the Muhammadans even from Kamrup and extended their supremacy over five districts of the Brahmaputra valley. At first the district of Nowgong was administered directly from the capital Garhgaon by representatives, but along with the extension of the Ahom territory one Barphukan was appointed with his headquarters at Gauhati. He administered the area from Kaliabor to Goalpara as the king's deputy.

During the early period of the British rule Nowgong was first administered with Kamrup and Darrang as the Lower Assam Division. But in 1833 it was formed into a separate district with its headquarters at Puranigudam. Subsequently the headquarters were shifted to Rangagora in 1835 and then to Nowgong in 1839. The district of Nowgong included a considerable portion of the Naga Hills, Mikir Hills and North Cachar Hills till 1853, when North Cachar was formed into a separate subdivision with headquarters at Asalu. Subsequently in 1867, the Naga Hills and a large part of Mikir Hills were formed into a separate district. But in 1898 a large part of the Mikir Hills was again transferred to Nowgong[3] and it continued to be within Nowgong till November 17, 1951, when the Mikir Hills tract was separated to constitute the United District of Mikir and North Cachar Hills.[4] The creation of this new district sliced away an area of 1,707.0 square miles or 4,421.1 square kilometres from the Nowgong district. A brief description of the areas mainly inhabited by the Mikirs and transferred to Mikir Hills subdivision of the erstwhile United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district has been given as Appendix. I

(iv) **Sub-divisions and Thanas** : Till January 1972, it was the only district in Assam consisting of a single subdivision.[5] In 1961 there were eleven *thanas* in the district which increased to fifteen in 1971. The following table shows the area of each *thana* as per the Census of 1971.[6]

Name of the Police Station	Area in sq. kms.
1	2
1. Laharighat	453.2
2. Dhing	204.6
3. Rupahihat	435.1
4. Kaliabor	474.0
5. Marigaon	942.8
6. Mikirbheta	191.7
7. Raha	253.8
8. Nowgong	383.3
9. Samaguri	414.4
10. Kampur	398.9
11. Jamunamukh	279.7
12. Murajhar	207.2
13. Hojai	264.2
14. Lanka	383.3
15. Lumding	411.8
Total ..	5,561.0

3. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol. VI, Nowgong, Calcutta, 1905, p. 55,
4. Vide Govt. Notification No. TAD/R/31/50/150, dated 13-4-51.
5. In January, 1972 one more subdivision viz., Marigaon sub-division comprising Marigaon P. S., Laharighat P. S. and Mikirbheta P. S. was created.
6. *Census of India*, 1971, *series*-3 *Assam, part-II—A General Population Table*, p. 36.

Revenue Circles : There are eight revenue circles in the district. They are Kaliabor, Samaguri, Nowgong (Sadar), Dhing, Raha, Marigaon, Kampur and Lanka. Lanka is the largest circle with an area of 1,114.09 sq. kms., and Raha is the smallest circle with an area of 373.21 sq. kms. For collection of revenue the circles are sub-divided into *mauzas*. There are altogether fifty four *mauzas* in the eight revenue circles of the district. The following table shows the area of each circle.

Circle	Area in sq. kms.
1. Kaliabor	971.48
2. Samaguri	508.79
3. Nowgong (Sadar)	450.77
4. Dhing	803.41
5. Raha	373.21
6. Marigaon	847.03
7. Kampur	794.51
8. Lanka	1114.09

(b) **Topography :**

(i) **Natural divisions, elevation, configuration etc. :**

The greater part of the district is an alluvial plain criss-crossed with numerous rivers and waterways and dotted over with *bils* and marshes. In places like the banks of the Kalang it is densely populated. But the area fringing the south bank of the Brahmaputra which is liable to deep floods is nothing but wide stretches of waste-lands usually covered with tall grasses. On the north-east the Mikir Hills impinge upon the plain and on the south-east there is the fertile valley of the Kopili. On the west the outlying spurs of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills project into the plain. The district may be roughly described "as a tract of level country bounded on the north by the Brahmaputra and surrounded on the three remaining sides by hills".7

Across the centre of the plain there are wide fields of cultivated land extending from Silghat on the north-east to Jagi on the south-west. But on either side of this plain the cultivation falls off and there are wide expanses of grassland on the north-west and of forests and hills on the south and east. "The general appearance of the district is extremely picturesque. On a clear day in winter the view to the north is bounded by the blue ranges of the outer Himalayas, behind which snowy peaks glisten brightly in the sun ; while to the south and east lie range upon range of lower hills whose sides are clothed with the luxuriant vegetation of a tropical forest. The level rice fields, after the crop has been

7. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol. VI *Nowgong*, Calcutta 1905 p. 2.

carried and stubble alone remains, might perhaps seem tame and uninteresting, were it not for the groves of slender palms and feathery bamboos with which they are broken up. During the rains this portion of the district is covered with a rich green carpet which gradually turns to gold, and on every side are swamps and rivers, hills and woods, to lend variety to the scene."8

The plain bordering the south bank of the Brahmaputra is a low-lying area and is deeply flooded in the rains. For the greater part of the year it is covered with grasses and reeds such as *Khagari* (*saccharum spontaneum*), *Ikra* (*saccharum arundinaceum*) and *Nal* (*phragmites roxburghii*) which grow from three to six metres high. The greater part of this tract is too low-lying for the growth of any tree except the *Simul* (*bombax malabaricum*) which grows here and there. The higher land produces *Ulu* (*imherata arundinaceum*) and other kinds of shorter grass used for thatching. Nepali graziers generally keep large herds of buffaloes and cows on the *chars* or sand banks which are formed by the Brahmaputra. In winter the jungle is cut and burnt and the people cultivate mustard and summer rice in fields surrounded by a wall of high reeds. These fields are locally known as *pams*. The villages of these cultivators are generally at a distance from the *pams*. But at the commencement of winter they come down to these *chaparis* and live in little huts made of grass during ploughing and sowing. Some of them may go to their villages while the crop is growing but return for harvesting. But others may stay during the whole cold season. "The mustard fields are dotted about, bright patches of vivid yellow in the dense green jungle, and come as a pleasant change to the inspecting officer who has generally reached them through footpaths, which are almost tunnels, shut in on either side by an impenetrable wall of grass and reeds. There is a pleasant feeling of freshness on these riparian flats on a foggy winter's morning. The soil is light and springy, the partridges are to be heard calling in the jungle, the mustard when in flower has a strong but pleasant smell, and there is a general sense of freedom and an absence of restraint."9

The country south of the Kopili between Dharamtul and the hills is also low-lying. It is also subject to floods and is covered with high grass interspersed with *dolonis* or marshes. These marshes grow the most luxuriant fodder grass where cattle graze knee-deep in winter.

The Kopili valley beyond Jamunamukh is getting gradually filled up though it is mostly covered with marshes and savannah which supports rich growth of thatching grass but is destitute of trees.

(ii) **Hills** : The elevated tracts consist of a range of low hills. The district of Nowgong has two main mountain systems one of which is the Mikir

8. Ibid. p. 2.
9. Ibid pp. 3-4.

Hills on the north-east while the other consists of the outlying spurs projecting from the Assam range into the Brahmaputra valley on the south and west. The major portion of the Mikir Hills lies within the erstwhile Mikir & North Cachar Hills district but the western spurs from Kuthari to Dabaka lie in the Nowgong district. The hills south of Mohandijua and Jamuna river, rise steeply from the narrow valleys with which the hills are intersected. The hills are covered with dense forests. The hill people grow rice, potato, cotton and vegetables on the slope of these hills. The outlying spurs projected from the Assam range are lower in appearance and the general characteristics do not differ much from the Mikir Hills. Over and above these hills there are many other small hills or hillocks which can be seen close to the Jagiroad Railway Station and to its north-west, in the Dabaka Reserved Forest, Lumding Reserved Forest and near Silghat. The heights of the hills and hillocks of the district vary from about 270 metres to 850 metres. The Mayang and the Bura Mayang Hills near the western boundary of the district have heights of about 458 metres each. The summit of the Jagiroad hills known as the Tetelia Sur Parbat rises to a height of 272 metres. The Hatimura Parbat on the north-east rises to 186.5 metres and the height of the Kamakhya Parbat is 244 metres. The highest peak in the district is Bar Kandali which is situated at a distance of 19.2 kms. south of Nowgong town and which rises to a height of 853 metres. There are, besides, other hillocks scattered here and there. These are Mahdupur, Bashundori, Deosal and others which are dedicated to goddesses *Durga* and *Kamala*.

(c) River system and water resources :

(i) Main rivers and tributaries :

The Brahmaputra : The principal river is the Brahmaputra which flows along the entire northern boundary of the district and the whole drainage of the district ultimately finds its way to it. The rocks and hills at Silghat give permanance to the channel of the Brahmaputra but lower down the river spreads itself during the rainy season over the marshy land on either side and, when flooded, the distance between one bank to the other is very great. There is a wide sandy stretch between its main banks in which the river constantly oscillates from side to side for a breadth of about ten kilometres on either side. Divergent channels are thrown out here and there, which after a time rejoin the main stream or get silted up. A huge quantity of suspended matters and sediments is carried by the river. Any obstruction to the current gives rise to an almond shaped *Chapari* or sandbank. Floods may wash off this *Chapari* or may increase its size by fresh deposit of sand. These operations of alluvium and diluvium are continually carried on in a massive scale by the Brahmaputra. Its main tributaries in the district are the Diphlu, Kalang, Sonai, Leteri and Pakaria.

The Brahmaputra river has another name-*Lauhitya*, which is evidently a Sanskritized form of the Tibeto-Burman name *Luhit*. The word *Lauhitya*

means in Sanskrit, 'pertaining to red', but it is in all likelihood just a Sanskritization of the pre-Aryan, Sino-Tibetan name. It is so called because the river takes this colour during the rainy season when it cuts through the red soil 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 Parasuramakunda or Brahmakunda, that the great saint washed off his bloody stains of matricide and regained his sainthood. The river, crimson with his mother's blood, came to be known as the *Lauhitya*.

The other and better known name Brahmaputra, means 'son of Brahma', and the name is quite within the orbit of Sanskrit nomenclature.[10] The Ahoms called the river *Nam-Dao-Phi*. It means the "river of the Star-god". The Brahmaputra is formed by the Dibang and the Luhit rivers on the north-east merging into the Dihang, and joining into one fat stream. The prefix *nam* in the Ahom language, like *di* in the Bodo language means "water" or "river".

The Hindu scriptures hold that the river Brahmaputra rises in the sacred pool known as the *Brahmakunda* in the eastern most 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 the 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 Mansarowar Lake. Rising in these glaciers, this mighty river Brahmaputra, which has a total length of about 2,897 kms. and a drainage area of about 9,35,504 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 northeast, runs through many gorges in a series of 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 724 kms. down the Assam Valley in a vast sheet of water dotted with numerous islands, the chief among them being Majuli and Umananda. The total length of the river within Nowgong district is about 175 kms.

General features of the river basin : The mass of silt brought down from the Himalayas is sufficient to form sand-banks, and even islands in the lower valley, wherever it is blocked by any impediment in the current of the river, which thus alters its channel amidst an intricate network of waterways. Broad

10. Sri Vishnu Rabha has suggested that the word is just a Sanskritization of a Bodo expression, *Bhullumbutter*.

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, Jhanzi 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 kms. joins the Ganga at Goalunda from where the river flows under the name 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 a nd fruit trees.

The tributaries of the Brahmaputra for most of their lengths drain the steep slopes of the Himalayas to the south where rainfall is heavy. Such tributaries gush down the slopes in torrents and especially where the banks are barren and soil-erosion heavy, they carry a large amount of detritus. Some of these materials contribute without doubt, to raising the land surface in the plains by bank spill, but the major portion of the heavily silt-laden waters carried by the tributaries not only aggravates the floods of the Brahmaputra, but also adds to its silt-charge. 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 in considerable tortuosity of the streams, and in frequent shifting of their courses.

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 change which might have occurred cannot be scientifically discussed or analysed. A few cross sections and gauge readings were recorded at certain important stations during the earlier part of this century, but these 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 metres 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 about 1066 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 had been made when the river was surveyed for the purpose of spanning it with a bridge. From some old records which are available we find that the gauge readings and the widths of some of the more important stations have been quoted as follows :—

	Dry Season		Flood Season	
Gauge Station	Width Average	Depth Average	Width Average	Depth Average
Tezpur	3,300 ft. (1005.84 metres)	34 ft. (10.36 metres)	7,700ft. (2346.96 metres)	51 ft. (15.54 metrs)
Gauhati	3,000 ft. (914.40 metres)	23 ft. (7.01 metres)	3,400 ft. (1036.32 metres)	48 ft. (14.63 metres)
Goalpara	1,650 ft. (502.92 metres)	62 ft. (18.90 metres)	..	..
Dhubri	4,000 ft. (1219.20 metres)	28 ft. (8.53 metres)	..	..

Shoals : Shoals are continually being formed, causing serious impediment to navigation. In old records we find mention of eighty four shoals which were in existence between Dibrugarh and Gauhati and forty three shoals between Gauhati and Goalunda. The navigable channels through these shoals were clearly marked by bamboos. Apart from a record of the depths on these shoals each season, no comprehensive data has been collected to enable a study of the reasons for the formation of these shoals or the conditions existing in the vicinity of regular recurring shoals.

Flood : The floods which are so frequent in the Brahmaputra cause tremendous changes in the river courses, and raise the river bed by depositing the detritus carried from the upper reaches. This is a common feature of floods in big rivers flowing across the alluvial soil of north east India.

The fluctuations in river levels begin towards the end of March or early part of April, when the Himalayan snow begins to melt and the annual phenomenon of north westerly storms speeds 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 is experienced. As a general rule this first big rise is of short duration and does little harm to the land or early cultivation. In fact it improves navigation facilities in the river and enables river *ghats* to be moved into their high level sites adjacent to *bazars*, road and rail terminals.

By early June the south west monsoon reaches the Assam Valley and the continuous heavy rains raise the river level rapidly and the Brahmaputra remains in spate, registering a series of high flood levels until October. These floods overtop the main banks and inundate large expanses of land, causing severe damage to railways and roads.

From October onwards till December the levels of the Brahmaputra 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 & Low Water levels at Tezpur.[11]

Danger level	1954		1955		1956	
	H.W.L. on 2.7.54	L.W.L. on 6.2.54	H.W.L. on 28.7.55	L.W.L. on 26.2.55	H.W.L. on 30.8.56	L.W.L. 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)	192.51 ft. (58.37 metres)	217.52 ft. (66.30 metres)	197.48 ft, (60.19 metres)

1957		1958		1959	
H.W.L. on 9.7.53	L.W.L. on 24.2.57	H.W.L. on 28.8.58	L.W.L. on 6.3.58	H.W.L. on 25.6.59	L.W.L. on 28.3.59
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 of the Brahmaputra beggar description. Villages situated on the river banks are submerged, paddy fields are

11. Extract from a report from the Executive Engineer, E.&D. Division, Tezpur.

turned into vast sheets of water, standing crops are destroyed, cattle are swept away and hundreds of cultivators, fishermen and other people living in these areas are rendered homeless. All important lines of communication are snapped and life hinges on the relief provided by the government and public. When the floods subside pestilence may create havoc among men and cattle alike unless prompt preventive measures are undertaken.

The flood of the Brahmaputra in 1954, was 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.

Navigability : The Brahmaputra remains navigable throughout the year. From time immemorial it has been the artery of communication connecting the northern and the southern parts of Assam with each other and with the outside world. The chief means of transport was the countryboat 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, which is about sixty eight kilometres downstream of Dibrugarh. But after the earthquake of 1950, the river bed was silted 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 ferryghats. The ferryghat at Silghat is shifted about ten kilometres downstream to Bhorbandha every winter. Important steamerghats in the district are Silghat, Laharighat and Dhingghat.

Other Rivers :

The Kalang : The Kalang takes off from the Brahmaputra about thirteen kilometres north-east of Silghat and after flowing a tortuous course through the middle of the district passes Kaliabor, Nowgong, Raha, and Jagi. It rejoins the parent stream at Kajalimukh about twenty four kilometres above Gauhati. In its upper reaches it is joined by the Diju and the Missa which collect the drainage of the north-western slopes of the Mikir Hills. Further south, the drainage of the Mikir Hills is collected in the Nanoi or Haria which flows for some distance parallel to the Kalang river and finally falls into it at Raha. Here the Kalang river is joined by a channel with the Kopili which brings the drainage of North Cachar Hills and the eastern slopes of the Jaintia Hills. But the main stream of the Kopili after receiving the waters of the Barapani and Umium or Killing falls into the Kalang river at Jagi. A little to the west of Jagi, the Kalang forms the boundary between Nowgong and Kamrup districts, and not far from its

junction with the parent stream, it receives the Digaru on its left bank. The region in between the Kalang and the Brahmaputra is drained by a large number of water courses forming a network of intricate channels which here and there widen out into *bils* or swamps, the largest ones of which are known as Leteri and Sonai. With a total length of 117 kilometres, the Kalang acts as a receiver for the Brahmaputra filling a very important place in the drainage system of the district. The annual floods of the Kalang river in recent years threatened Nowgong town. So, the Embankment and Drainage Department has blocked the river mouth near the Hatimura Pahar. Now the river is fed by the discharge of the Diju and the Missa rivers only and the Kalang has turned small and shallow.

The Kopili : The Kopili river which rises in the Jaintia Hills (Meghalaya) flows north and northeast winding through the Jaintia Hills and North Cachar Hills. It enters the district of North Cachar Hills at its confluence with Wohkhynriam river and forms the boundary between the district and Jaintia Hills district till its confluence with the Mayalang river. Hence upto Doijanmukh it forms the boundary between the North Cachar Hills and Mikir Hills districts and thence after running entirely within the Mikir Hills district for some distance it runs along the boundary of this district with Nowgong. After meeting the Amring river (known as Mynrain in its upper reaches) at a place near Panimur, it is joined by the Doiang river below the foothills and the combined channel flows in a north-westerly direction. At Jamunamukh in Nowgong district it is met by its eastern tributary the Jamuna and flows past Raha after taking a westerly turn. Here it is joined by a branch channel with the Kalang river and at Jagi it finally meets the main stream of the Kalang after a course of 262 kms. Only 102.5 kms. of its course are within Nowgong district. The combined channel after flowing northwest finds its way into the mighty Brahmaputra near Kajalimukh in Nowgong district. The principal tributaries on the right bank are the Doiang, Lankajan and the Jamuna, which is fed by the waters of the Dimoru, Dighalpani, Horagati and the Buriganga streams. On the left bank the Kopili is joined by the Kolanga, Barapani and the Umiam (Killing) rivers.

The river is navigable upto Panimur by boats of four tons burden during the summer. It is largely used as a trade route for the southern part of the district. The Kopili basin which comprises an area of 500 sq. miles or about 1300 sq. kms. may be described as a rich rice bowl of Assam. *Ahu*, *Sali* and *Boro* paddy and jute are the major crops grown in this basin. Because of its low level the basin is subject to damaging floods quite frequently. High floods occurred in 1931, 1934, 1946, 1948, 1949 and 1956 of which the floods in 1934 have been described as highest in living memory.[12] It is still popularly remembered as

12. *Outlines of Flood Control for Assam*, Vol. I, pp. 64 and 184-85.

the *Balia Pani* (mad flood) of 1934. In that year the Kopili catchment produced a flood of eleven lakh cusecs whereas the discharges of the other floods ranged between 30,000 and 50,000 cusecs. The Kopili affects about 285 sq. kms. of Nowgong district every year. It has a flood slope of 1 in 8,500 ft. (2591 metres). at its discharge site. The Balisora area is overflooded by the spill of the Kopili floods every year and the area is rendered uncultivable. The area between Ahotguri and the railway line at Dharamtul is also inundated by every major flood specially when both the Killing and the Kopili are in spate. The Embankment and Drainage Department, Nowgong constructed along the right bank of the river an embankment from Charaihagi to Jugijan and from the Railway bridge at Jugijan to Azarbari. Similar embankments have also been raised along the left bank from Charaihagi to Tuklatup and from Amlighat to Ganesh hills. Suggestions for further embankments on both sides of the river have been put forward recently. On completion of these embankments 3,27,000 acres (1,32,000 hectares) approximately will be saved from the Kopili flood. The following tables show the maximum and minimum discharges of the Kopili in cusecs from 1956 to 1959 and the silt content of the Kopili from 1955 to 1959.

Year	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
Maximum discharge in cusecs	30,862	47,063	26,604	33,874	35,863
Date	13-3-55	23-6-56	30-6-57	15-5-58	23-6-59
Minimum discharge in cusecs	1,186	1,564	838	815	1,169
Date	18-3-55	22-4-56	30-3-57	28-2-58	16-4-59

Progressive total

Year	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
Kind	Acre. ft.	Acre ft.	Acre ft.	Acre ft.	Acre ft.
Coarse	32.77	92.31	67.37	115.10	122.45
Medium	209.28	356.76	234.66	626.82	314.27
Fine	716.37	1737.24	1383.87	2647.0	2921.51

The Jamuna River : The Jamuna river, the main tributary of the Kopili originates from the Khanbamun hills in Mikir Hills District and flows from east

to west for a length of 120 kilometres and falls in the Kopili near Jamunamukh. The river is fed by several small tributaries namely the Lenghit, Disama, Disa, Dighalpani, Dikharu, Buriganga, Dimaru etc. The river has of late taken a new course through the Nikhari abandoning its old course. The old course serves as an inlet for the backflow of the Kopili. This backflow of the Kopili is mainly responsible for the occurrence of floods in the Jamuna basin but it also helps in forming silt on the river mouth. The Jamuna has a flood slope of 1 in 5,500 ft (abont 1680 metres) at its discharge site and has a bankful capacity of 10,000 cusecs.

The Barapani : The Barapani rises in the Shillong hills and enters the district of Mikir Hills just below its confluence with the Umlew. After flowing through the Mikir Hills district upto Amtreng it forms the western boundary of the district with Nowgong district. It continues to run along the boundary till Lutumari Reserved Forest where it enters the plains of Nowgong, ultimately joining the Kopili near Chaparmukh. As its source lies in a region of heavy precipitation it brings down a large discharge and while passing through low-lying areas, it spills copiously right from the foot-hills. When in flood it also holds up the Kopili floods on the upstream and greatly floods the Kampur area. It is navigable by small boats only upto Amtreng in Mikir Hills district.

The Nanoi : The Nanoi river originates from the Chapanalla Hills and flows through the plains of Nowgong district. After a course in the plains the river flows parallel to the Kalang river for some distance and ultimately falls into the river Haria at Doorigaon at which place both the rivers combine together and flow to meet the Kalang near Raha. The Nanoi river is mild in nature.

The Umiam or Killing : The river Umium or Killing originates from a high altitude of Shillong hills and flows from south to north. In the hilly region the river is stable and carries practically no silt as the bed of the river consists of boulders and gravels. It meets the Kopili river at Naldhara Noa *bil* four kms. upstream of the Railway bridge over the Kopili. The maximum and minimum discharges of water in cusecs and the silt content of the Killing river are given in two separate tables below from 1955 to 1959.

Year	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959
Maximum discharge (in cusecs) and date	9548 27-7-55	11862 6-6-56	5123 24-6-57	6792 21-8-58	3554 14-6-59
Minimum discharge (in cusecs) and date	223 24-4-55	243 20-4-56	178 26-4-57	136 30-3-58	177 23-5-59

	Progressive total			
Year	1956	1957	1958	1959
Kind	Acre ft.	Acre ft.	Acre ft.	Acre ft.
Coarse	4.63	1.90	8.47	13.23
Medium	26.24	5.91	16.06	14.96
Fine	169.47	41.32	65.63	60.44

Other tributaries and sub-tributaries : In addition to the rivers mentioned above, there are other important tributaries, numerous streams and streamlets locally called *Jan* and *Juri*. These carry off the drainage of the hills into the large rivers which finally fall into the Brahmaputra. The north-east corner of the district is drained by the Diphlu, Gatanga and Deopani, the latter being the tributary of the Gatanga. The area in between the Brahmaputra and the Kalang is drained by the Leteri and Sonai which fall into the Brahmaputra. On the extreme west at Hilaikunda, Pakaria channel drains out and falls into the Brahmaputra. There are also some spill channels namely Kodomsuti, Laokhoasuti, Haldisuti etc. which will be allowed a limited inflow of the Brahmaputra water on completion of an embankment from Silghat to Hilaikunda. At Raha the Kalang is linked with the Kopili by a channel over which there is a railway bridge near Chaparmukh Railway junction. In the southern part of the district, the Nikhari-Haria channel runs along the new course of the Jamuna, which serves as a spill channel of the Kopili between Jamunamukh and Dabaka.

(ii) **Lakes and Tanks :** *Bils* and marshes are scattered throughout the district. *Bils* differ from marshes in that the banks of *bils* are high and are generally over-grown with trees. They are also long and narrow and are often quite deep. There are 126 *bils* in the district most of which are public fisheries. Important among them are Mora Kalang and Kachudhara which have formed in the old bed of the Kalang. Other important *bils* are the Pota-Kalang in the Town *mauza*, Lalung *bil* in the Namati *mauza*, the Gakhajowa *bil* in Mikirbheta *mauza*, the Garanga and the Pakaria *bils* in Mayang *mauza*, the Udari Khanagharia *bil* in Ghagua *mauza* and Haribhanga *bil* near Laokhoa opposite to Tezpur town. The water of the *bils* lies in the centre of the depression and the *bils* are surrounded by luxurious grass and reeds. *Bils* and marshes teem with fish and are the haunt of wild birds like the crane, pelican or fish eagle and the king fisher. During the dry season they are very pleasant spots for fishing.

Among tanks the most outstanding in the district is the Jongalbalahu tank situated by the side of National Highway No. 37 in Sahari *mauza*. It is a long narrow tank comprising an area of about 14.6 hectares and is surrounded by a wide elevated embankment. This historic tank is believed to have been dug out by Jongalbalahu who was one of the sons of king Arimatta. It has recently been renovated by the Fishery Department and has been converted into a fish farm.

Tetelipukhuri is situated about eleven kms. to the south-east of Mahamaya Hills. It is about a furlong square. On its east bank lie the ruins of an old temple. There are seven big tanks in the neighbourhood. Among other tanks mention may be made of Jorapukhuri, Barpukhuri and Barpitani which are about 2.03, 2.43 and 0.8 hectares respectively in area.

(iii) **Underground Water Resources** : The district is drained mainly by the Kopili, Jamuna and Kalang rivers and their tributaries. The district forms a part of the alluvial plain of the Brahmaputra valley limited on the south and south-east by Mikir Hills. Small and isolated inselbergs of Archean gneisses are also found in the western part of the district. These inliers extend almost upto the Brahmaputra.

Physiographically the area comprises the foothill zones and the dissected flood plains of the present river system. The foothill zones are narrow and do not extend extensively as in case of districts north of the Brahmaputra river.

Nowgong district is underlain by unconsolidated sediments of Quarternary age. Precambrian gneissic rocks forming the basement occur only as inliers in the form of hills and inselbergs. Rocks of Barail series are also exposed in the southern side of the district. The formations are generally of argillaceous nature.

The terrace deposits along the foothill zone comprise boulders and cobbles intermixed with sand, silt and clay. Ground water occurs under water table conditions. The thickness of the sediments in the foothill zone is not much. At Jagiroad the thickness of the unconsolidated sediments is about ninety metres. Two tubewells, ninety one metres deep, constructed at Bhakatgaon tapped twenty three metres of saturated fine to coarse sand. The yield is 13.5 cubic metres/hr. for a drawdown of 4.57m.

Depth to water in the High Level Terrace deposits varies between five and twenty one metres below land surface. Seasonal fluctuation of water table is also markedly significant i.e. three to four metres.

In the flood plain area, which covers more than three-fourths of the total area of the district, ground water occurs under confined to unconfined conditions. Depth to water level varies between 0.6 and 7 metres below land surface. Seasonal fluctuations vary from two to three metres.

Movement of groundwater is to the north but the master slope of the water table is to the north west.

A number of shallow tubewells have been constructed in both Nowgong and Marigaon subdivisions. These shallow tubewells range in depth from eighteen to twenty seven metres. The sediments down to ten metres are generally fine sand below which medium to coarse sand occurs. The depth of the piezometric surface is within three metres of land surface. The tubewells yield thirty six to forty five cubic metres/hr for drawdown of two to three metres. With greater drawdowns the yields of tubewells can be increased.

In the south-eastern part of the district in Lumding region some deep exploratory drillings have been done at Bhalukmari, Hojai, Kaki and Dabaka. The depth of drilling varies from 144.5 m to 299 m. However, the tubewells have been constructed between the depths of 144.5 and 170.6 m. only because the formation beneath tends to be more argillaceous. The aquifers tapped comprise medium to coarse sand with gravel. The yields of tubewells vary from 126.5 cubic metres/hr at Bhalukmari to 179.6 cubic metres/hr at Hojai for drawdown of 6.2 to 6.4m respectively. The wells at Hojai and Dabaka are artesian wells.

A deep tubewell at Nowgong was drilled down to 215 m. The well ended at 141 m. tapping fifty metres of saturated sand medium to coarse. The yield of the well is 103 cubic metres/hr for a drawdown of 2.9m. Another tubewell at Puranigudam 105m. deep gave a discharge of 79.9 cubic metres/hr for a drawdown of 2.28m.

The younger alluvium of the dissected flood plains is recharged by direct infiltration of part of the rainfall during the monsoon and by the cut-off *bils* which abound the district particularly between the Kalang and Brahmaputra rivers. The presence of sandy formation immediately below the top soil cover permits good infiltration conditions and directly recharges the ground water.

Discharge of ground water is affected by effluent seepages into the Kalang and Brahmaputra rivers and to the cut-off *bils*. Some amount of ground water also escapes to the atmosphere by evapotranspiration at the *bils* and marshes interconnected with the water table.

(d) **Geology** :

(i) **Geological Antiquity** : The ages of the different rocks in Assam have not been determined by radiometric methods. As such only a rough approximation of the age of the rocks can be given. The gneisses and granite being Pre-Cambrian are older than five hundred million years. The Barail Series have been equated with rocks of the oligocene age which are supposed to be forty million years old. Similarly the Surmah Series are about thirty two million

years old. The clay bands of the Dihing Series of Plio-Pleistocene age would not be older than one million years.

(ii) **Geological Formation** : The geological formations of the district as seen from the outcropping rocks are confined mainly to three geological periods viz., Pre-Cambrian, Tertiary and Quarternary ages. The areas at the north are mostly covered by recent alluvium formed by the Brahmaputra and its tributaries. The alluvium soil is mostly loamy and consists of a mixture of clay and sand in varying proportions, ranging from pure sand on the banks of the Brahmaputra to a stiff clay which is quite unfit for cultivation. Marshy soil is chiefly found in the lowlying water-logged areas. These are black in colour. The red soil generally occupies the hill slopes and foot hills formed by the weathering of the Pre-Cambrian rocks. In a few cases lateritic soil of recent age is also found near about Lumding. In the Sibsagar area geophysical exploration has revealed that rocks of the Tertiary age occur at a depth ranging from six to seven thousand feet i.e. about eighteen hundred to twenty one hundred metres below the alluvium. It is not yet known whether the large alluvial tract of the district is also underlain at depth by the Tertiary group of rocks.

Geological Succession : The geological succession exposed in the district is shown in the table below :

Recent :	Alluvium of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries	·01	million years
	Pleistocene : Dihing Series (Unconformity)	1	—do—
	Miocene : Surma Series (Unconformity)	32	—do—
Tertiary :	Oligocene : Barail Series (Unconformity)	40	—do—
	Pre-Cambrian : Gneisses	500	—do—

The Pre-Cambrian rocks are exposed in the hilly areas to the west, southwest and northeast parts of the district. These are continuations of the Shillong plateau. The Pre-Cambrian group of rocks mainly consists of gneisses and granites. In the granites, older rocks such as biotite schist, quartzite, hornblende, and granite are found to occur as xenoliths.

The granite-gneiss as seen near Jagiroad is a medium grained rock, grey to light pink in colour. The gneissic character is developed due to the alternate bands of salic and mafic constituents of the rock. At places granite-gneisses are found in association with porphyritic granites which comprise the most predominant rock types particularly in the Jagiroad area. This is a coarse grained rock, greyish in colour, with large phenocrysts of feldspar. At places isolated outcrops of granodiorite are also found. Medium to fine grained pink granites are similar in composition to the porphyritic granites. The aplitic granite, pegmatites, quartz and feldspar veins seen in the area are intrusive into the older rocks.

Younger rocks belonging to the Tertiary age are seen only near Lumding. East and northeast of Lumding, the Barails become more and more disturbed, and the outcrops are split up into long narrow strips or small inliers by a system of strike faults. In the rocks of the Series, massive current bedded sandstones predominate, argillaceous beds form only a small proportion. In facies the beds of this area are said to be transitional between those of Lower Assam and those of upper portion of the State. Near Lumding, the Barails have been reduced by Pre-Burdigalian erosion.

A large area near Lumding is occupied by the transgressive Surma Series, which dip at very low but variable angles. These are probably not more than about 2,500 to 3,000 ft. i.e. about seven hundred fifty to nine hundred metres in thickness. The beds belong to the Boka Bil Stage, the Bhuban Stage having been over-lapped. The base is often a conglomerate composed mainly of large sandstone boulders set in a ferruginous, sandy matrix. The rest of the Series is made up of very well-bedded rocks. They include very fine sands or silt, sandy shale, shale, clay and alternation of their liminae of soft, fine sand and soft clay. There are many calcareous concretions passing sometimes into thin bands of calcareous sandstone. A thick ferruginous conglomerate within the beds is regarded as a local intra-formational unconformity.

The rocks of the Surma Series lie in a gentle syncline overlapping the Barail Series. But in Dr. Coulson's opinion, however, the geology is far from a simple synclinal overlap of the Barails by the Surmas and possibly there has been considerable faulting in the area specially to the north more or less along the course of the Bara Langpar river.

The unique feature of the geology of the Lumding area is the occurrence of widespread clays. They seem to overlie the shale of the Surma Series unconformably. This mantle of clay is well over fifty feet or about fifteen metres and possibly belongs to the Dihing series. 13

(iii) **Mineral Wealth** : No major minerals of economic importance have so far been discovered in the district except such minor minerals as railway ballast road metal, sands and brick clays. The granites and gneisses near Jagiroad are being quarried for railway ballast and road metal. Granites and gneisses are also being quarried in many other places of the district. The clay found extensively in the alluvial tract of the district is quite suitable for manufacture of bricks and earthenwares. Proper geophysical exploration of the alluvial tract of the district may reveal the continuation of the oil-bearing tertiary formations which

13. Geological report submitted by the Director of Geology and Mining Department, Assam, Shillong.

may ultimately prove to be oil bearing. Proper geological survey and prospecting of the hilly portions of the district may also reveal the existence of economic mineral deposits such as mica, quartz, feldspar and beryl etc.

(iv) **Earthquakes :** The frequent occurrence of earthquakes in Assam is related to the geology of the region. Earthquakes occur in those regions where the crust is markedly unstable, such as mountain belts of geologically recent origin. One such region is formed by the Himalayan mountains and the Naga and Lushai Hills around the northern, the north-eastern and the eastern border of the stable peninsular wedge of the Assam plateau. Though equilibrium has largely been attained, the organic forces which resulted in the rise of the mountains are still in progress. Adjustments taking place intermittently find expression as earthquakes.

Like the rest of Assam the Nowgong district has always been subject to earthquakes as it lies in the zone of seismic disturbances. The great earthquake which occurred on June 12, 1897 had its epicentre in the Shillong plateau. It had a magnitude of 8.5 Richter and was probably one of the greatest earthquakes ever recorded. The shock was felt over an area of 1,75,0.000 square miles i.e. about 45,32,000 sq. kms. and destruction of stone buildings was almost universal in an area of 30,000 sq. miles i.e. about 78,000 sq. kms. including Shillong, Goalpara, Gauhati, Nowgong and Sylhet. Calcutta was also seriously affected. "About 1600 lives lost. Land slips and earth fissures very abundant over the whole of the epicentral area."[14] In Nowgong most of the government buildings including the Circuit House, Court building and the Deputy Commissioner's bungalow were rendered unfit for habitation. Part of the District Jail wall collapsed and the metal road along the side of the Kalang was split up with yawning fissures. Some damage was also done to the masonry buildings in the district. Loss of life in Nowgong was, however, small. Only three deaths were attributed to the quake.

The earthquake of August 15, 1950 had its epicentre at 28.5°N., 96.7°E. and had a magnitude of 8.6 Richter. The estimated area of north eastern Assam over which extensive and heavy damage occurred was 1,900 sq. miles. or about 4,900 sq. kms. Estimated area in Assam which suffered minor damages was 39,000 sq. miles, or about 1,01,000 sq. kms. Estimated area in India, Burma and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) over which the shock was felt was 6,50,000 sq. miles or about 16,83,500 sq. kms. The shock was followed by a train of after-shocks some of which reached destructive magnitude near epicentre. The following is the list of important after-shocks.[15]

14. *A note on the Seismicity of Assam Region* by the Director General of Observatories, Todi Road, New Delhi-3, p. 13.
15. Ibid pp. 1—18.

Date	Epicentre Lat.	Long	Magnitude (Richter)
1. Aug. 16, 1950,	28.6°N.,	95.7°E	7.0
2. Aug. 18, 1950,	26.6°N.,	95.1°E	7.0
3. Sept. 13, 1950,	27.8°N.,	95.5°E	7.0

Fortunately however, Nowgong district was spared by and large from the ravages of the quake. A table showing the date, epicentre and magnitude of some earthquakes which were felt in the district is given below.[16]

Date		Epicentre Lat. (°N)	Long (°E)	Magnitude (Richter)
1. 10-1-1869	..	Near Cachar		7½
2. 12-6-1897	..	Shillong plateau		8.7
3. 31-8-1906	..	27°,	97°	7½
4. 12-12-1908	..	26½°,	97°	7
5. 14-11-1915	..	Near Nowgong	-do-	5
6. 5-12-1915	..	-do-		5
7. 8-7-1918	..	24.5°,	91°	7.6
8. 9-9-1923	..	25¼°,	91°	7.1
9. 3-7-1930	..	25.8°,	90.2°	5-6
10. 4.7.1930	..	-do-	-do-	-do-
11. 27.1.1931	..	25.4°,	96.8°	7.6
12. 30.1.1931	..	-do-	-do-	5-6
13. 14.8.1932	..	25.8°,	95.7°	7.0
14. 15.1.1934	..	26.6°,	86.8°	8¼
15. 16.8.1938	..	23.5°,	94¼°	7.2
16. 21.1.1941	..	27.2°,	92.0°	6¾
17. 23.10.1943	..	26.8°,	94.0°	7.2
18. 12.9.1946	..	23.9°,	96.2°	7½
19. 29.7.1947	..	28.8°,	93.7°	7¾
20. 15.8.1950	..	28.5°,	96.7°	8.6
21. 17.8.1952	..	30.5°,	91.5°	7.5
22. 21.3.1954	..	24.2°,	95.1°	7¼
23. 1.7.1957	..	24.4°,	93.8°	7¼
24. 12.7.1964	..	24.9°,	95.3°	6.7
25. 13.7.1964	..	23.7°,	94.7°	6.5
26. 17.10.1969	..	23.1°,	94.7°	6.0

16. Ibid, Appendix, pp. 1—18.

(e) **Flora :**

Botanically the forests of Nowgong district can broadly be divided into two divisions--tropical evergreen forests and miscellaneous forests. The first category includes climatic climax vegetation such as *Amari*, *Gonsarai*, *Sapa*, *Sam* etc. In the second category such species are included whose top canopies are deciduous and the middle and lower canopies are evergreen in character. Qualitatively the latter forests are inferior to the former and their commercial value is less. The evergreen forests are also picturesque but not the miscellaneous ones.

A more detailed classification of the forests may be made as follows :—

(1) The mixed type of forests contains the top canopy species such as *Sal* (*shorea robusta*), *Bhomora*, *Sida* (*lagerstroemia parviflora*), *Jamu*, *Ajhar* (*lagerstroemia flos reginae*), *Gomari* (*gmelina arborea*), *Sam* (*artocarpus chaplasha*) etc. The middle canopy contains species like *Kumbi* (*careya arborea*), *Gohara*, *Sonaru* (*cassia fistula*), *Kuhir*, *Bandardima* etc., with *Kako* ban.boo.

The undergrowths are mostly shrubs and grasses like thatch and hay and these are the lower canopy species.

(2) The dry miscellaneous type of forests contains the species like *Gomari*, *Amari*, *Bola* (*molus laevigata*), *Bagipoma*, *Gonsarai* (*cinnamomum glanduliferum*), *Sapa*, *Sam* and *Simul* (*bombax malabaricum*) etc. The differentiation of canopies is not well defined in these types of forests.

(3) The wet miscellaneous type of forests is characterised by evergreen and semievergreen species. The top canopy species are *Bhelu*, *Sam*, *Hollock*, *Amari*, *Khokan* (*duobanga soneratioides*), *Korai* (*albizzia procera*), *Jamu Hatipaila* etc.

The middle canopy species are *Ajhar*, *Monaiteleku*, *Singari*, *Marhal*, *Bandardima* etc. and the lower canopies are generally of miscellaneous nature and of moss type.

(4) Riverine type : In this type of forests there are also two sub-types, i.e., Brahmaputra alluvium, and Jamuna-Kopili valley alluvium types. In the Brahmaputra alluvium the principal species is *Simul*. The presence of dense grasses of the genera phragmites, imperata etc. associate with *Korai*, *Siris*, *Jamu*, *Uriam* (*bischoffia javanica*) etc. The Jamuna and the Kopili valley alluvium contains the mixed type of forests and is composed of trees like *Korai*, *Ajhar*, *Uriam*, *Simul*, *Outenga*, *Mukhai* etc. and also in the well drained soils the better species like *Sapa*, *Poma* (*cedrela toona*), *Gonsarai*, *Amari* are to be seen.

(5) Savannah type : The dry Savannah type occurs in open areas in dry miscellaneous forests and are characterised by species like *Ulu* (*imperata arundinaceum*), *Khagari* (*saccharum spontaneum*) and other grasses.

But the Savannah type is characterised by the availability of the type of grasses like *Ikra* (*saccharum arundinaceum*) and *Nal* (*phragmites roxburghii*) etc.

(6) Swamp type : This type includes *bils* and marshes and abandoned river channels. Alpine species are generally associated with this type.[17]

Forest Belt : The forests of Nowgong district have been classified into two divisions- the Reserved Forests and Unclassed State Forests. The Reserved Forests have been constituted under the Assam Forest Regulation, 1891. In 1970-71 the district had a total of 92,455 hectares[18] of Reserved Forests under Nowgong Forest Division, whereas the corresponding figure for 1902-03 was 142 sq. miles or about 36,778 hectares only. Unclassed State Forest is however, simply Government waste land, and does not necessarily possess any of the characteristics which are usually associated with the expression forest. It may be a sandy *char*, or a huge expanse of low-lying land covered with high grass and reeds and almost totally destitute of trees. It may be a small piece of arable land, which has been resigned by its former holder, and has not yet been settled with any other person; or it may be, what its name would naturally suggest; actual tree forest.[19] The area under Unclassed State Forests in 1902-03 was 3,418 sq. miles or about 8,85,267 hectares which dwindled to 6,1470 hectares[20] only in 1970-71. This diminution in the area of Unclassed State Forests may be mainly attributed to the transfer of a sizable portion of Unclassed State Forests to the Mikir Hills district and to the pressure on land caused by heavy influx of immigrants during the last six decades. The following is the list of Reserved Forests under Nowgong Forest Division.[21]

1.	Sonaikushi	13,104	Acres
2.	Kholahat	15,230.5	,,
3.	Barapani	7,840	,,
4.	Latumai	9.216	,,
5.	Habaipur	4,676	,,
6.	Hojai	1,341	,,

17. *Census of India*, 1961, *Assam*, *District Census Handbook*, *Nowgong*, p. 7.
18. *Statistical Handbook of Assam*, 1970-71, Deptt. of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, Shillong, p. 47.
19. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, *Nowgong*, Vol. VI Calcutta 1905 pp. 138-139.
20. *Statistical Handbook of Assam*, 1970-71, Deptt. of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, Shillong, p. 47.
21. *Census of India*, 1961, *Assam*, *District Census Handbook*, *Nowgong*, pp. 7-8.

7.	Laokhoa	17,076	Acres
8.	Kamakhya hill	1,280	,,
9.	Kukrakata	3,936	,,
10.	Bagsar	8,320	,,
11.	Diju valley	5,703	,,
12.	Suang	6,535	,,
13.	Bamuni	384	,,
14.	Dabaka	30,151	,,
15.	Jamuna Maudanga	3,685	,,
16.	Rajamayang hill	2,960	,,
17.	Kaki (part)	32,440	,,
18.	Lumding	55,357.41	,,
19.	Kamarakata	2,685	,,
20.	Kapitalli	721	,,
21.	Deosur	1,450	,,
22.	Barbari	136	,,
23.	Killing	1,107	,,
24.	Dhuadalani	12.5	,,
25.	Pilkhana	310	,,
26.	Kaziranga (part)	(Included in Sibsagar District)	
	Total	2,25,656.51 acres. (1 acre=0.404686 hectare)	

There are altogether thirty seven forest villages including seven non-residential forest villages in the district. The total population of these villages was 2,150 in 1967 as per report of the Forest Department, Nowgong.

Broad effects of Govt. Forest Policy : Since 1891 the Assam Forest Regulation of that year has been enforced. Forests are classified, as per rules into four types : (1) Reserved, (2) Protected, (3) Village, (4) Unclased 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, loping ; tapping or causing injuries by fire or otherwise to any tree, (6) quarrying of stones, or removal of forest produce, (7) unauthorised clearing or breaking up of land for any purpose and (8) poisoning water or in contravention to Govermnent rules hunting, shooting, fishing, setting of trap or snare. The first object of the management of forest is to conserve it 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 kilometres of Reserved Forests have also been deforested and settled with landless people. The unplanned denudations have 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 ones. In this respect sufficient progress has been made during the course of past fifty 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 to enunciate a planned forest policy for providing the saw mills with timber and to meet the local requirements of timber, fire wood, bamboo and cane. Exporting timber to other parts of the country is also under consideration.

The first object of the Government, is to maintain climatic balance by conserving thirty three per cent of forest area in the district in conformity with the universally accepted principle. Prevention of soil-erosion, preservation of the capital value of forests, improvement of the growing stock by enforcing sound silvicultural methods, replenishment of the stock by applying recent techniques of natural regeneration of valuable species and planting of more valuable indigenous and exotic species in poorly stocked areas and grassy lands are other aims of the policy. The annual yield is to be removed in a planned way, on silvicultural principles so that the growing stock in Reserved Forest areas is not depleted and the annual yield is sustained. Attempts are also to be made to utilize the less valuable species in different industrial enterprises so that optimum benefit is derived by society from forests.

During the past twenty years or so many Unclassed State Forests have been deforested and settled for cultivation. This unscientific process has caused soil-erosion and severe floods.

Afforestation of grassy land areas and poorly stocked forest areas in Kaki Reserve has been taken up as an independent project under the direct management and control of a Divisional Forest Officer. This scheme is expected to provide raw materials for forest-based industries like saw mills, hardboard and ply-wood factories.

(f) Fauna :

Fauna of Nowgong district is represented by most of the animals and birds commonly found in other parts of Assam and the adjoining States. They may

be broadly classified as vertebrata and invertebrata from the zoological point of view. Invertebrates which include different kinds of insects, spiders, scorpions and crabs etc. of both aquatic and terrestrial habits are found in the district. As information regarding invertebrates is scanty it has not been possible to discuss these at length. Vertebrates include mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fishes.

Animals of mammalia group are predominant in this district and their habits and habitats are co-related with animals of the neighbouring areas. The most important animal of this group is the Great Indian One-horned Rhinoceros (*rhinoceros unicornis*), a remnant of the prehistoric animal. It is not found in any other part of the world except Assam, North Bengal and certain parts of Nepal. About 150 such animals with laminated skins are found in the marshy grass-lands of Laokhoa Wild Life Reserve situated in the northern-most part of the district on the south bank of the Brahmaputra. Among rhinos, the one-horned Indian rhino is the second largest in the world-the largest being the white rhino of Africa. About a dozen one-horned rhinos are living in the Pabitra Grazing Reserve of Mayang area of Nowgong district. Stray animals are also found in other parts of the district and sometimes kill or injure unwary villagers. The horn of a rhinoceros fixed in the anterior part of its elongated head is nothing but a bunch of matted hair glued together into a compact mass of body. It is highly prized in India and south-east Asian countries for its supposed aphrodisiac value. Other parts of this animal including its body, skin, flesh, teeth, and blood are also considered valuable by people of these countries. Rhino horn is sold at a very high price and its present market-value is Rs. 4000/- per kg.

The forests of this district also teem with elephants. Indian elephants are slightly smaller than their great African counterparts although there is another species of African elephants which are slightly smaller than our Indian elephants. With its peculiar but attractive bodily formation having its nose modified into a trunk which the animal uses as its hand, the Indian elephant decorates our forests with moving beauty of grand splendour. The population of this animal is kept under control by annual elephant-catching. Elephants which kill persons or cause depredation to crops are declared rogue and are permitted to be shot by hunters authorised by the Deputy Commissioner of the district.

Other animals found in the district are animals of cat family like the Royal Bengal Tiger or *Dhekia Patia Bagh* (*Panthera Tigris*), leopard, panther or *Nahar Phutuki Bagh* (*Panther Pardus*), black panther (*Panthera Pardus*) or *Ghong*, leopard-cat (*Prionailurus bengalensis*) and various types of cloven-hoofed animals like Sambar or *Sarpahu* (*Cervus unicolor*), *Barasingha* (*Cervus duvauceli*), Barking deer or *Hugri pahu* (*Cervus muntzac*), Hog deer (*Cervus porcinus*) etc. Among the animals of bovine group it is not uncommon to see some wild

buffaloes (*Bubalus Bubalis*) in Laokhoa Reserve and a few specimens of *Methun* or Bison (*Bos gaurus*) in Lumding and Barapani Reserves towards the foothills of Mikir Hills. Odd animals of various types commonly found in this district are Black bear (*Selenarctos thibetanus*) or *Matibhaluk*, Porcupine or *Ketelapahu* (*Hystrix leucura*), Scally ant eater, Pangolin or *Kentaipahu* (*Manis crassicaudata*), wild dog or *Rangkukur* (*Cuon alpinus*), wild boar or *Banaria Gahari* (*Sus cristatus*) and hare or *Sahapahu* (*Lapus ruficulldatus*) to mention only a few. Among the monkeys the common varieties found in the neighbourhood of human habitation are the Rhesus macaque (*Macca mulatta*) or *Bandar* and *langur* or *Hanuman Bandar* (*Semnopithelus entellus*). They are found in small groups of male, female and young ones. It is also not uncommon to hear the musical sound of *Hollock* (*Hylobales hollock*) or *Halaubandar* in the thick jungles in the early hours of the day. The most interesting animal of the monkey group is probably the Slow Lorris or *Lajuki Bandar* (*Nyeticebus caucang*) which is among the rarest animals of our country. Mongooses, Otters, Weasels, Squirrels, various kinds of mice and rats are also found everywhere in the district.

Birds : Various kinds of colourful land and water birds are seen in this district throughout the year. The beauty and marvel of these winged creatures are consistent with the beautiful surroundings of the countryside. In the forested areas along the foot hills of Mikir Hills and K. & J. Hills, jungle fowls (*Gallus-gallus*) are seen in plenty and Kaliz pheasants are also occasionally seen in small numbers. Crow pheasants or *Kukuha* (*Centropus sinensis*), Seven sisters (*Turdoides somer-villei*), Parakeets or *Bhatau* (*Psittacula cupatria*), Horn bills or *Dhanesh* (*Tockus birostris*), Hill Mynas or *Maina charai* (*Gracula religiosa*), Gray mynas (*Sternia malabarica*), Common Green pigeons (*Treron phoenicoptera Latham*), Doves of various kinds or *Kapou charai*, minivets (*Pericrocotus speciousus*). *Bulbuls* (*Molpastes leucogenys*), *Shamas* (*Copsychus malabaricus*), Tree pies (*Dendrocitta vagabunda*), Green bulbuls (*Chloropsis aurifrons*), Grey shrikes (*Lanius excubitor*), Racket tailed drongos or *Bhimraj* (*Dicrurus paradiscus Linnaeus*), Pied wood-peckers or *Barhoitoka* (*Dryobates mahrattensis*), Golden backed wood peckers or *Barhoitoka* (*Dinopum benghalense Linnaeus*), Rollers or Blue Jays or *Kaw charai* (*Coracias benghalense Linnaeus*). Hopoes or *Gobarkhusara* (*upupa epops*) and common Indian Nightjar or *Deenkana* (*Caprimulgs asiaticus*) are some of the various kinds of other jungle birds and hill birds that are very often come across in the forested areas. Among various birds which are associated in our daily life and which live in the neighbourhood of human habitation are common house crows or *Kauri* (*Corvus splendens Vieillot*), Jungle crows or *Dhora Kauri* (*Corvus macrorhy-*

nchos Wagler). House sparrows or *Ghanchirika* (*Passer domesticus*), Common mynas or *Salika charai* (*Acridotheres tristis Linnaeus*), Pied mynas or *Kankurika* (*Sturnus contra Linnaeus*), Drongos or *Phesu charai* (*Dicrurus adsimilis Beehotenin or Dicrurus Caerulescens or Dicrurus paradiscus*), Gray Wag tails or *Balimahi* (*Motaciela Caspica Gmelin*) and various other species of birds. Birds of prey and scavengers are commonly met both in forested areas and in the neighbourhood of villages and towns. There are vultures or *Sagun* (*Pseudogyps bengalinsis*). King vulture or *Raja sagun* (*Torgos calvus Scopli*), Brahminy kite or *Chilani* (*Haliastur indus Borddaert*), common pariah kite or *chilani* (*Milvus migrans*), Tawny Eagle or *Kuruha* (Aquila rapax *Temmirick*), Crested serpent eagle or *Moukhap* (Spilomis cheela Latham) and so on. Water birds of various kinds of both indigenous and migratory habits are seen in the *jheels* along the Brahmaputra and elsewhere in the district. Storks or *Bartokolas* (*Leploptilos javanicus*) and cattle egrets or *Bagali* (*Bulbulcus ibis Linnaeus*) are seen in plenty fishing in the open *jheels*. Pond herons or *Kanamuchari* (*Ardeola grayii*), Little cormorants or *Panikauri* (*Phalacrocorax niger viellat*), Large cormorants or *Dahikola* (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), Indian darter or Snake bird or *Manihari* (*Anhinga rufa Daudin*), Moor hen or *Kuruha* (*Gallinula chloropus*) Water hen or *Dauk* (*Amaurornis phoenicurus*), Red wattled lapwing or *Rajar guakata* (*Vanellus indicus Boddaert*), Purple moorhen or *Kam charai* (*Porphyrio porphyrio Linnaeus*), Pheasant tailed jacknas or *Dalmara* (*Hydrophasianus chirurgus*), Snipes or *Titioli* (*Rostralula bengalinis*) and River terns or *Ganga Chilani* (*Sterna aurantia*) are some of the water and marsh birds seen in the *jheels* and marshy grass lands. Pelican or *Dhera* (*Pelecanus philippensis*) is a local migrant and is found in the Brahmaputra river bed catching fish on community basis in its peculiar way by the help of its long beak with the lower pouch hanging from it. Various kinds of ducks are found in the *bils* as winter visitors. They come to this part of India during winter and fly as far as Siberia in February and March every year. Brahminy ducks or Ruddy Shel drakes or *Chakai chakua* (*Tadorna ferruginea Pallas*), common teal or *Sarali hanh* (*Anas crecca*) white eyed pochard (*Aythya nyroca Guldenstadt*) and pintail ducks are some of the winter visitors to this district. There are other resident ducks commonly found in the *jheels* and they are Cotton teals, Lesser whistling teals etc. It is not possible to give a detailed list and description of all the local and migratory birds of the district but the above account will probably help in forming an idea of the beautiful and colourful winged creatures of this district.

Reptiles : Tortoises, crocodiles, lizards and snakes are grouped together into a separate class reptilia. Tortoises of various kinds are found in the *jheels* and rivers. They are mostly aquatic in their habit but come to the sandy shore to lay eggs. Crocodiles are occasionally come across in the Brahmaputra

river bed. Among lizards Geckos are found in branches of trees and some times in houses also, chamelions, wall lizards, monitor lizards (*Varanus indicus*), green lizards etc. are found almost in every part of the district. Among the snakes the most common are king cobras (*Naja naja*), adders and water snakes. Pythons are found in the forested areas and are the biggest of all snakes found in this district.

Amphibians : Among the amphibians frogs and toads that are equally at home in both land and water are found in every part of this district. Frogs are rather reptilian in form when they are in adult stage but they evidence affinity with fishes by first passing through a gill breathing larval stage. Eggs are usually laid in water holes of stagnant nature and the larvae are seen swimming in such water in large numbers. Toads are more accustomed to living inland than in water. They give off secretions noxious to foes and sometimes of a highly toxic nature. The common frog (*Rana temporaria*) is found throughout the district. They produce a sort of musical chorus from their vocal sacs during rainy season specially when the countryside is inundated with rain water. Toads are seen under cover of stones and houses whereas tree frogs which are arboreal in nature are come across on the branches of trees near water holes.

Fishes : Fishes of various kinds are found in the *bils* that are mostly situated in Laokhoa Reserved Forest towards the northern side of the district along the Brahmaputra river. The bigger fishes generally found in such *bils* are *Rau*, *Barali*, *Chital*, *Bahu*, *Kalia jara.*, *Saul* and varieties of smaller sized fishes. These *bils* are generally sold on auction to the highest bidder for a term of three years. A list of important fish found in the district is given in Chapter IV.

Wild animals often cause loss of cattle and damage crops. Loss of human life from depredation of wild animals is also not rare. In 1962-63 there were altogether seventeen human casualties of which two were caused by rhinos, one by elephants, two by tigers and twelve by snakes. During the same year loss of about two hundred cattle was also reported.

Elephant catching : Right to elephant catching is sold by auction every year. The successful lessees of the *Mahals* are to pay monopoly fees in addition to the usual rates of royalty which come to Rs. 500, Rs. 425 and Rs. 350 per each capture of tusker, female and *makhna* respectively. The lessee is allowed to hunt only for the period allotted to him. There are two processes for catching 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 that 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, the 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. Outside the gateway, on either side, there are barricades leading away from the stockade and away from each other to form a funnel. These barricades are not too obviously foreign to the surrounding jungle, so that the elephants do not notice them till it is too late.

When all is ready and a herd of wild elephants is reported to be approaching the area, men on tame elephants create a din behind the wild elephants and stampede the herd. In the ensuing scurry 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.

Games law and measures for the preservation of wild life : There are various laws and measures for the preservation of wild life. Shooting, hunting or trapping in a sanctuary is prohibited except under special licences 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 the Assam Forest Manual of 1947. Under Sections 34 (2) (f) and 35(2) of the Assam Forest Regulation, 1891 no rhinoceros shall be killed in the Unclassed State Forests except with the previous sanction of the State Government. Under the Rhinoceros Preservation Act, 1954 killing, capturing or injuring of this animal has been prohibited. There are also provisions for the protection of fish. Under Section 25(g) and 72 of the Assam Forest Regulation, 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 prohibited.

Hunting, shooting or fishing within a Reserved Forest is prohibited except under licence issued in accordance with certain rules. The Conservator of Forests with the previous approval of the State Government may declare any Reserved Forest, or part thereof, to be Class I or Class II Reserve for the purpose of limiting the number 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 fifteen consecutive days to be reopened only after a gap of another fifteen days. No person or member of a party reserving a block shall be permitted to kill in any one year more than two buffaloes, two bisons, four sambars, two deer, and 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 are not to be carried in Reserved Forests.

Measures have been taken to protect and preserve wild life in the district. The world famous Kaziranga Games Sanctuary, abode of the one-horned rhinoceros, is situated in the north-eastern border of the district. This game sanctuary has been declared as a National Park. Wild life week is observed everywhere in the district during the first week of October every year with great enthusiasm. The aims and objects of this are to create public consciousness regarding the necessity of preserving and protecting wild life which is fast diminishing with mounting increase of population and extensive reclamation of forested areas for settlement and other purposes.

(g) **Climate and Rainfall :**

The climate of this district is characterised by a highly humid atmosphere all through the year, the absence of dry hot summer season and plentiful rainfall. The cold season is from December to February. This is followed by the pre-monsoon season of thunderstorms from March to May. The period from June to about the beginning of October is the southwest monsoon season. October and November constitute the postmonsoon season.

Rainfall : Records of rainfall in the district are available for eleven stations for periods ranging from forty to fifty 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 1753.4mm. The rainfall in the district generally increases from the south towards the north. About sixty eight per cent of the annual rainfall is received during the period June to September, July being the rainiest month of the year. Rainfall mostly as thundershowers occurs in the premonsoon months of April and May and in October. The variation in the rainfall from year to year is small. During the fifty year period from 1901 to 1950, the highest annual rainfall which was 130 per cent of the normal occurred in 1948, while the lowest annual rainfall which was seventy three per cent of the normal occurred in 1909. In the same fifty year period the rainfall in the district as a whole was less than eighty per cent of the normal only in two years, the years being not consecutive. However considering the rainfall at individual stations, two consecutive years of rainfall less than eighty per cent of the normal occurred once each at two stations. Even three consecutive years of such rainfall occurred once each at four stations. From table 2 it will be seen that the annual rainfall in the district was between 1500 and 2000mm. in forty one years out of fifty.

On an average there are ninety eight rainy days (i.e. days with rainfall of 2.5mm.or more) in a year in the district. This number increases, from sixty seven at Lanka in the south eastern part of the district to 117 at Kuthari near the north eastern border.

The heaviest rainfall in twenty four hours recorded at any station in the district was 471.9 mm at Lanka on October 6, 1916.

Temperature : There are two meteorological observatories in the district, one at Lumding and the other at Chaparmukh. The records for Lumding are available for a long period while these of Chaparmukh are for a short period. A meteorological observatory also functioned at Nowgong for a short time but was closed down in 1957. The description that follows is mainly based on the available records of observatories at Lumding and Chaparmukh.

The cold season commences in the district by about the end of November when both day and night temperatures begin to decrease rapidly. January is the coldest month with the mean daily maximum temperature at about 24°C and the

mean daily minimum temperature at about 10°C. In association with eastward passage of western disturbances during the winter season, the district experiences spells of cold weather when the minimum temperatures drop to 3°C and 6°C. Temperatures begin to rise from about the beginning of March. The mean daily maximum temperature remains at about 32°C to 34°C from April to the end of September. In common with the neighbouring districts of Assam, there is no summer season as such in this district also. Though the temperatures are not excessive, the weather is often oppressive due to high humidity. With the withdrawal of southwest monsoon by about the first week of October, the weather gradually becomes cool and pleasant.

The highest maximum temperature of 41 .9°C was recorded on two consecutive days at Lumding on April 30, and May 1, 1960 while that recorded at Chaparmukh was 41.2°C on May 1, 1960. The lowest minimum temperature was 2.8°C at Lumding on January 18, 1937 and February 13, 1950 while that at Chaparmukh was 6.7°C on January 3, 1955.

Humidity : The atmosphere over the district is highly humid throughout the year. During the period February to April relative humidities are comparatively low, especially in the afternoons when they are between fifty five per cent and Sixty five per cent.

Cloudiness: Skies are heavily clouded or overcast during the southwest monsoon season. With the withdrawal of the southwest monsoon, the cloudiness decreases and skies are generally clear or lightly clouded during the period December to April. In the cold season, however, skies become cloudy when the district is affected by eastward moving low pressure waves and on some mornings by lifted fog which clears with advance of the day. After April cloudiness again increases.

Winds : Winds are generally light throughout the year. In the post monsoon and cold seasons the direction of wind is variable. In the period March to May, northeasterlies and easterlies are more common. In the monsoon months southwesterlies and westerlies are common, although northerlies and northeasterlies blow sometimes, particularly in the afternoons.

Special weather phenomena : Cyclonic storms and depressions which originate in the Bay of Bengal and move into Assam during May and June seldom reach near enough to affect the weather of the district. During the cold season, western disturbances pass eastward in the neighbourhood of the district and affect the weather over the district. Thunderstorms occur during the period March to October, their frequency being highest in April. The thunderstorms during March to May are sometimes accompanied with hail. Fog occurs on some days during the postmonsoon and winter season, being most frequent in December.

Tables 3, 4 and 5 give the normals of temperature and relative humidity, mean wind speed and frequencies of special weather phenomena respectively for Lumding, based on data for a long period, while averages of temperature and relative humidity and frequencies of special weather phenomena based on data for short period are indicated for Chaparmukh in Tables 3 (a), and 5 (a) respectively.

—1

TABLE

Normals and extremes of Rainfall

Station		No. of years of data		Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sept.	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
Nowgong	..	50	a	15.2	26.9	53.6	131.1	211.8	345.4	439.7	420.2	251.5	102.4	17.5	4.8	2020.3	180 (1918)	57 (1909)	222.3	Jan 16, 1930
			b	1.2	2.6	4.6	10.2	13.0	16.4	18.3	17.1	12.5	5.9	1.3	0.6	103.7				
Salana	..	45	a	15.5	27.7	54.9	147.7	340.6	454.9	454.9	365.5	289.3	120.1	17.8	8.4	2089.7	130 (1911)	70 (1909)	182.6	Jun 13, 1911
			b	1.4	2.8	4.7	10.5	14.6	17.7	19.4	18.3	14.4	7.2	1.5	0.9	213.4				
Kuthari	..	50	a	17.3	31.0	64.0	198.9	276.1	352.5	390.1	362.2	259.6	122.9	25.4	10.9	2110.9	138 (1948)	68 (1909)	161.5	Sep 28, 1939
			b	1.6	3.2	5.5	12.2	15.4	17.7	19.1	17.7	14.6	7.1	1.9	1.0	117.0				
Sekoni	..	50	a	14.5	26.4	54.9	161.3	246.4	339.9	403.6	387.1	276.6	106.9	21.1	6.9	2045.6	133 (1948)	66 (1909)	198.4	Jul 22, 1930
			b	1.4	3.2	5.0	11.2	14.8	17.5	18.5	18.0	14.4	6.8	1.9	0.9	113.6				
Dhing	..	40	a	9.1	23.9	53.1	132.3	225.5	271.0	305.6	279.4	192.3	94.0	12.2	5.8	1604.2	146 (1917)	56 (1943)	206.5	May .. 1950
			b	1.0	2.5	4.1	9.7	13.4	14.1	15.2	12.6	10.0	4.9	1.0	0.7	89.2				
Sukimbari	..	50	a	9.1	21.1	41.4	95.0	160.8	276.3	313.4	321.6	232.4	105.9	21.8	4.6	1603.4	130 (1917)	58 (1909)	159.8	Jun 5, 1941
			b	1.0	2.6	4.2	8.3	11.2	15.5	17.1	16.2	12.9	6.3	1.5	0.6	97.4				
Jaluguti	..	41	a	11.4	24.9	59.1	147.8	234.2	327.1	419.1	369.3	241.8	103.4	17.8	5.1	1954.0	169 (1945)	72 (1914)	161.3	Aug 20, 1936
			b	1.1	2.4	4.5	9.9	12.9	15.5	17.5	15.3	11.1	5.3	1.2	0.5	97.2				
Kulukuchi	..	50	a	8.6	20.3	41.1	106.9	192.0	318.8	400.8	349.3	210.3	96.5	17.3	3.3	1765.2	149 (1931)	62 (1912)	227.6	Jul 27, 1930
			b	0.8	2.2	3.7	8.5	12.5	16.8	18.8	16.5	12.5	5.5	1.3	0.4	99.5				
Kampur	..	41	a	9.7	23.4	41.7	96.0	166.1	281.2	322.8	265.7	207.3	100.3	17.0	3.8	1535.0	153 (1938)	59 (1944)	165.6	May 20, 1936
			b	1.0	2.6	3.8	8.6	12.0	15.7	16.3	14.6	12.4	5.9	1.4	0.6	94.9				
Lanka	..	49	a	5.6	29.0	55.9	108.7	114.1	222.0	177.3	196.3	198.4	111.0	21.8	2.3	1242.4	192 (1917)	57 (1928)	471.9	Oct. 6, 1916
			b	0.7	2.0	3.9	7.0	6.9	11.2	9.6	10.0	8.8	4.9	1.3	0.2	66.5				
Lumding	..	50	a	14.5	30.5	51.8	93.7	158.0	240.0	197.4	193.3	188.5	112.5	33.0	4.8	2318.0	131 (1929)	72 (1923)	166.4	May 29, 1936
			b	1.4	2.6	4.8	10.4	13.4	11.3	11.3	11.0	10.8	6.3	2.0	0.6	82.6				
Nowgong (Dist.)..			a	11.9	25.9	51.3	129.0	203.0	301.3	347.7	319.1	231.6	106.9	20.2	5.5	1753.4	130 (1948)	73 (1909)		
			b	1.1	2.6	4.4	9.5	12.6	15.6	16.5	15.2	12.2	6.0	1.5	0.6	97.7				

(a) Normal rainfall in mm (b) Average number of rainy days (days with rain of 2.5 mm or more). *Based on all available data upto 1970. **Years given in brackets.

TABLE—2.

Frequency of Annual Rainfall in the District
(Date 1901-1950)

Range in mm	No. of years	Range in mm	No. of years
1201—1300	1	1801—1900	6
1301—1400	1	1901—2000	7
1401—1500	1	2001—2100	3
1501—1600	6	2101—2200	1
1601—1700	11	2201—2300	2
1701—1800	12		

TABLE—3.

Normals of Temperature and Relative Humidity
(Lumding)

Month	Mean Daily Maximum Temperature.	Mean Daily Minimum Temperature.	Highest Maximum ever recorded		Lowest Minimum ever recorded		Relative Humidity 0830	Relative Humidity 1730*
	oC	oC	oC	Date	oC	Date	%	%
January	23.9	8.6	33.3	Jan 23, 1922	2.8	Jan 18, 1937	86	73
February	26.2	10.6	33.9	Feb 24, 1952	2.8	Feb 13, 1950	81	59
March	30.9	14.7	38.3	Mar 30, 1958	7.2	Mar 9, 1921	73	55
April	33.0	19.1	41.9	Apr 30, 1960	5.0	Apr 17, 1920	70	55
May	32.5	22.1	41.9	May 1, 1960	10.0	May 1, 1919	75	73
June	32.5	24.2	38.9	Jun 2, 1920	17.2	Jun 11, 1920	79	76
July	33.0	24.8	37.6	Jul 1, 1958	16.1	Jul 8, 1920	79	78
August	32.9	24.7	38.3	Aug 3, 1953	18.3	Aug 14, 1920	82	79
September	32.3	24.1	37.2	Sep 10, 1951	20.0	Sep 15, 1952	83	79
October	30.2	21.3	35.6	Oct 12, 1949	14.4	Oct 26, 1946	85	81
November	27.1	15.4	32.2	Nov 1, 1951	8.3	Nov 29, 1937	85	79
December	24.4	10.6	30.0	Dec 2, 1946	5.0	Dec 6, 1949	87	77
Annual	29.9	18.9					80	72

*Hours I.S.T.

TABLE—3 (a)

Averages of Temperature and Relative Humidity
(Chaparmukh)

Month	Mean Daily Maximum Temperature	Mean Daily Minimum Temperature	Highest Maximum ever recorded		Lowest Minimum ever recorded		Relative Humidity 0830	Relative Humidity 1930*
	oC	oC	oC	Date	oC	Date	%	%
January	24.8	11.2	28.4	Jan 3, 1958	6.7	Jan 3, 1955	78	73
February	26.7	12.0	32.2	Feb 29, 1956	8.9	Feb 19, 1956	69	63
March	15.9	15.9	37.2	Mar 27, 1958	12.0	Mar 5, 1959	64	58
April	33.4	20.7	41.1	Apr 21, 1960	15.6	Apr 19, 1955	63	59
May	32.1	23.4	41.2	May 1, 1960	17.8	May 1, 1955	77	74
June	31.8	24.7	37.2	Jun 8, 1959	21.5	Jun 9, 1957	83	83
July	32.8	25.8	36.2	Jul 18, 1958	23.3	Jul 13, 1956	85	85
August	32.9	25.9	37.8	Aug 31, 1958	24.2	Aug 14, 1959	83	85
September	33.3	25.3	37.3	Sep 11, 1958	20.6	Sep 8, 1959	81	83
October	31.1	22.9	36.1	Oct. 2, 1956	18.3	Oct 30, 1959	80	82
November	28.8	17.6	33.3	Nov 3, 1958	12.2	Nov 30, 1954	78	81
December	25.7	12.1	30.0	Dec 3, 1958	8.3	Dec 29, 1955	81	78
Annual	30.4	19.8					77	75

*Hours I.S.T.

TABLE—4

Mean Wind Speed in Km/hr.
(Lumding)

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
1.3	2.3	3.5	5.1	4.7	3.4	3.1	2.4	1.9	1.3	1.1	1.0	2.6

TABLE—5

Special Weather Phenomena

(Lumding)*

Mean No. of days with	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr.	May	June	July	August	Sept.	Oct	Nov	Dec	Annual
Thunder ..	0.1	0.4	2	4	3	1.1	3	2	3	1.1	0.0	0.3	21
Hail ..	0.0	0.1	0.3	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.7
Dust-Storm ..	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	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	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Fog ..	3	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.4	1.6	4	9

*Occasions more than two are given in whole numbers.

TABLE—5 (a)

Special Weather Phenomena

(Chaparmukh)*

Mean No. of days with	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec.	Annual
Thunder ..	0.2	1.3	7	10	10	7	11	13	9	4	0.0	0.2	71
Hail ..	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.7	1.0	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	3
Dust-Storm ..	0.0	0.3	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5
Squall ..	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.7	0.2	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.4
Fog ..	3	0.7	0.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0.	0.0	1.8	3	7	16

*Occasions more than two are given in whole numbers.

APPENDIX I

STATEMENT SHOWING THE DETAILS OF GAINS IN TERRITORIES AND DETAILS OF LOSS IN TERRITORIES

(SOURCE : CENSUS OF INDIA, ASSAM 1961 :: DISTRICT CENSUS HAND BOOK, NOWGONG 1965, GAUHATI PP. 113-115)

District/ Police Station	1951 Territorial units	Details of gains in territories			Details of loss in territories			Net Area gain '+' loss'—')	
		Brief Description	Area		Brief Description	Area			
			Sq. mile	Sq. Km.		Sq. mile	Sq. km.	Sq. mile	Sq.km.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Nowgong District	Nowgong District	..	..	..	The following areas inhabited mainly by Mikirs transferred to Mikir Hills Subdivision of newly formed United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District :	1,707.0	4,421.1	-1,707.0	-4,421.1
					1. (i) 55 villages of Mauza Duar Salana of Samaguri Thana (ii) 88 villages of Mauza Duar Bamuni of Samaguri Thana (iii) 14 villages of Mauza Duar Bagari of Kaliabor Thana (iv) 128 villages of Mauza Duar Amla of Marigaon Thana (v) 3 villages (Benterangaon, Birangaon and Kari Bangaon) or Marigaon Thana (vi) 33 villages of Mauza Namati of Jamunamukh Thana (vii) 38 villages of Mauza Lanka of Jamunamukh Thana (viii) 503 villages of Mauza Rongkhang of Jamunamukh Thana (ix) 12 villages of Mauza Lumding of Lumding Thana	1,707.0	4,421.1	..	..

District/ Police Station	1951 Territorial units	Details of gains in territories			Details of loss in territories			Net Area (gain '+' loss '—')	
		Brief Description	Area		Brief Description	Area			
			Sq. mile	Sq.km.		Sq. mile	Sq.km.	Sq. mile	Sq.km.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
					(x) 63 villages of Mauza Jamunapar of Lumding Thana (xi) 17 villages of Mauza Longfer of Lumding Thana (xii) B. and C. Hills of Lumding Thana				
Kaliabor Police Station	Kaliabor Police Station	..	..	..	2. 14 villages of Mauza Duar Bagari transferred to Mikir Hills Subdivision of Newly formed United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Marigaon Police Station	Marigaon Police Station	..	..	..	3. (i) 3 villages (Benteranggaon Birangaon and Kari-Bongaon) transferred to Mikir Hills Subdivision of newly formed United Mikir and North Ca-Cachar Hills District. (ii) 128 villages of Mauza Duar Amla transferred to Mikir Hills Subdivision of newly formed United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Samaguri Police Station	Samaguri Police Station	..	..	..	4. (i) 55 villages of Mauza Duar Salana transferred to Mikir Hills Subdivision of newly formed United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
					(ii) 88 villages of Mauza Duar Bamuni transferred to Mikir Hills Subdivision of newly formed United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Jamunamukh Police Station	Jamunamukh Police Station	..	..	..	5. (i) 33 villages of Mauza Namati transferred to Mikir Hills Subdivision of United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
					(ii) 38 villages of Mauza Lanka transferred to Mikir Hills Subdivision of United Mikir and North Cachar hills District	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
					(iii) 503 villages of Mauza Rongkhang transferred to Mikir Hills Subdivision of United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
Lanka Police Station	..	6. Newly formed 199 villages of Jamunamukh Police Station.	242.0	626.8	(iv) 199 villages transferred to form a new Police Station known as Lanka Police Station.	242.0 ..	626.8 ..	—242.0 +242.0	—626.8 +626.8
Lumding Police Station	Lumding Police Station	..	..	..	7. (ii) 12 villages of Mauza Lumding transferred to Mikir Hills Subdivision of United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
					(ii) 63 villages of Mauza Jamunapar transferred to Mikir Hills Subdivision of United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
					(iii) 17 villages of Mauza Longfer transferred to Mikir Hills Subdivision of United Mikir Hills and North Cachar Hills District. (iv) B and C. Hills transferred to Mikir Hills Subdivision of United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.

Note (1) '+' Non-censused area has been derived by substracting the area figures supplied by the Assam Survey Department in 1951 from those supplied by the Surveyor General of India.
(2) 'N.A.' Denotes 'Not Available'.

CHAPTER II

HISTORY

(a) Pre-history :

The neolithic culture in Assam follows a pattern dictated by geographical factors and can best be studied on a regional basis as each group of tools of a particular region shows a distinct kinship in material and form. Though our knowledge of the earlier neoliths is meagre the later neoliths are believed to have been made by the speakers of the Mon-Khmer speech, beginning with 2500 B.C. or a little earlier. J. P. Mills points out that the earliest inhabitants of Assam, the Negritos, "have left behind them an immense number of stone celts, probably blades of digging sticks. These are found on or just below the surface and differ in a most interesting way in different areas of the province."[1]

Certain conclusions can be drawn regarding the extent of neolithic culture in Nowgong district from the few collected specimens, preserved in the Pitt Museum, Oxford. There are 385 specimens in all, and they come from different regions of Assam including Vishwanath and Cachar. "A study of this collection fairly well indicates the regional basis of the culture of Assam".[2] It can easily be judged from the geological formations of Cachar and Mikir Hills just close to Nowgong district and lying close to the find at Vishwanath that the specimens from Assam were locally made.[3] P. C. Choudhury has also supported the view of Coggin Brown and says that the specimens of six grooved hammers found at Vishwanath, are perhaps the rarest of the numerous neolithic stone implements recorded from Eastern Asia.[4] The neoliths and stone celts have been discovered from various parts of Assam. It is now evidently clear from the wide distribution of celts that the neolithic culture was once widespread in Assam and it had distinct links with its neighbouring countries--Burma, Malaya, Central and Southern India. The discovery of monoliths in Kasomari-Jamuguri area proves that megalithic culture was extant in Nowgong district. The origin of this culture is, however, uncertain. According to P.C. Choudhury monoliths

1. J.A.R.S., 1, pp. 3—6, Peal, J.A.S.B., LXIII, III, P. 16.
2. A.H. Dani, *Pre history and Protohistory of Eastern India*, Calcutta, 1960, p. 42.
3. P. C. Choudhury, *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam, to the Twelfth Century*, A. D., Gauhati, 1959 pp. 56-57.
4. Ibid, pp. 58-59.

of Kasomari-Jamuguri area are specimens of non-Aryan workmanship with Hindu influence.[5]

Some scholars are of opinion that the principal races that had migrated into Assam are the Austro-Asiatics, the Dravidians, the Tibeto-Burmans, the Mongoloids and the Aryans. B. K. Kakati opines that according to morphological and linguistic evidences the earliest migrated race to Assam is the Austro-Asiatics. They at first lived in the Brahmaputra Valley but were forced later on, to take shelter in the hills. It is certain that they are the pre-Dravidian Neolithic aborigines who are now represented by the Mon-Khmer Khasis and Syntengs of Assam akin to Mundas of Chota-Nagpur.

Traces of these people in the Brahmaputra Valley can be had from the discoveries of celts used by them particularly two shouldered stone implements, one in Darrang and the other in the Cachar district which are very similar to the stone adzes found in Burma and also in Chota-Nagpur and also as many as six specimens of grooved stone hammers found near Vishwanath which are common in North America and which are the rarest stone implements recorded from Eastern Asia. Besides, "the dolmen stones, sitting stones, flat monoliths and upright menhirs used by these people are still to be found in the plains as well as the hills of Assam".[6]

The next wave of migration to this country brings the Dravidians whose history is as old as the Austro-Asiatics if not older. They were a cultured people belonging to the chalcolithic age, who in the remote past inhabited Northern India supplanting the Austric races. When the Aryans came, they found Dravidian kingdoms not only in Southern India but also in Northern India wherefrom they spread eastward. The Aryans found them more civilised than themselves leaving aside their culture and religion. K. L. Barua asserts that cult of *Linga* and *Yoni* is now admitted to be of pre-Aryan Dravidian origin and the form of their religion is decisively Saivism which seems to be regarded as the most ancient living faith in the world.

The Mongoloid people migrated to this country from their original home in Western China, which was the vast beehive of Mongoloid races and people in the earliest times. Wave after wave of these people moved to different directions in search of new homes. The south-west bound Mongoloid migration descended to the Brahmaputra and spread into the hills and river valleys of Assam. To quote S. K. Chatterjee ; "Different branches of the great Sino-Tibetan speaking people which had their *nidus* near the head-waters of the Yang-tsze-Kiang and the Hoang-Ho rivers, to the West of China, pushed South and West, probably

5. Ibid, p. 74.
6. K. L. Barua, *Early History of Kamarupa*, Gauhati, 1966, p. 12.

from 2000 B.C. onwards, and tribes of these infiltrated into India mostly along the western course of the Brahmaputra."[7] The later Mongolians belonging to the Tibeto-Burman family of the Indo-Chinese race entered into Assam through north-east after the Aryans entered India through north-west, and came into conflict with the Dravidians, whom they defeated at first, but in course of time they were themselves defeated by the Dravidians, who used copper and bronze weapons. These Mongolians were probably Neolithic people belonging to the Tibeto-Burman sub-family of the Indo-Chinese group; their representatives, the Garos, the Kukis, the Chutias etc., are living in the plains of Assam. The Bodo (Boro) speaking peoples were no doubt the *Kiratas* and the *Mlecchas* mentioned in the *Mahabharata*. Different tribes of the Mongolian race particularly the Bodo or the Kachari ruled over different parts of Assam till the beginning of the modern period. The Aryans entered this country through the west and spread into different parts of Assam. Their settlement in Assam appears to have begun earlier than the period of the *Mahabharata* War.

The process of influx of various races across the borders went on through successive waves, and in course of time, different cultures mingled so thoroughly in the composite Assamese culture, that it becomes most difficult to distinguish one from the other. It presents a picture of complete assimilation and synthesis.

Thus, the Dravidian, the Mongoloid and the Aryan races were the original inhabitants of the plains of Assam. The interfusion of the first two races evolved a type, which is aptly called the Mongolo-Dravidian. The Mongoloid influence is predominant in the Brahmaputra Valley. It has been called "the reservoir of Kirata or Mongoloid people in India".

It is doubtful whether at any period the area now comprising the district of Nowgong formed a separate polity under its own ruler. During the pre-historic period it probably formed a part of Pragjyotisha. It is however, evident from the Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudra Gupta (330-380 A.D.) which refers to Kamarupa and Davaka as frontier kingdoms that during the ancient period the former included at least the northern part and the latter the southern part of the district. Subsequently Davaka kingdom was absorbed in Kamarupa. "In the *Kalika Puran* [10th Century A.D.] it is said that the temple of *Kamakhya* near Gauhati was in the centre of Kamarupa, and in the *Vishnu Puran* it is added that the country extended around this temple in all directions for 100 *Yojanas* or about 450 miles."[8] From the above accounts it is obvious that Kamarupa at that time was a big country and the present Nowgong district was

7. S. K. Chatterjee, *The Place of Assam in the History of Civilization of India*, University of Gauhati, 1970, p. 9.
8. E. A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1967 p. 11.

a part of it. "In the *Jogini Tantra*, which is probably a later work, Kamarupa is said to extend from the Karatoya river on the west to the Dikhu on the east and from the mountain of Kanjagiri on the north, to the confluence of the Brahmaputra and Lakhya rivers on the south, that is to say, it included roughly, the Brahmaputra valley, Bhutan, Rangpur, Cooch Bihar, the north-east of Mymensing and, possibly, the Garo Hills."[9] According to the same work (*Yogini Tantra*) the then Kamarupa was divided into four portions viz., *Kampith*, *Ratnapith*, *Subarnapith* and *Saumarpith*. The district of Nowgong fell within two divisions viz., *Ratnapith* and *Subarnapith*.

Traditional rulers : The most powerful traditional ruler was Narakasur who was born of earth by Vishnu in his *Varaha* incarnation. His capital was located at Pragjyotishpur. He was a headstrong prince and grew irreligious and presumptuous under the influence of Banasura of Sonitpur. He was slain by Shri Krishna of Dwaraka and was succeeded by his son Bhagadatta of Mahabharata fame. Another famous traditional ruler was Arimatta whose history 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 Bhagadatta, son of Naraka. Bhagadatta was followed by Dharmapala and Chandrapala whose son was Arimatta.[10] Relying on the account of Kaviratna Saraswati. K. L. Barua, approximately places his reign during 1365-1385 A.D. According to one scholar Arimatta was contemporaneous with Durlavanarayan of Kamata kingdom. Legends say that Arimatta's father Ram Chandra had a beautiful wife who was raped by the Brahmaputra and later she gave birth to a son named Arimatta who afterwards killed his father Ram Chandra while expanding his territory. Arimatta later became enemy of Phengua, king of Kamatapur. There arose a battle between these two kings and Phengua with the help of *Mlecchas* and the Koches killed Arimatta. After the death of Arimatta his son Ratna Singha continued war against his father's enemy Phengua who was ultimately killed in a battle. According to a legend Ratna Singha lost his kingdom due to a curse of a Brahmin with whose wife he had intimacy. His brother, Jongalbalahu ruled over the present district of Nowgong. In the Sahari *mauza* of Nowgong district the remains of an old fort with high embankments known as the *Jongalbalahu Garh* still stands. Jongalbalahu had enmity with the Kacharis with whom frequent clashes took place. He was ultimately defeated by the Kacharis, who pierced him with a bamboo spear at Kajalimukh. The legend goes further to say that Jongalbalahu submerged

9. Ibid. p. 11.
10. P. C. Choudhury : *The History of Civilization of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A. D.*, Gauhati, 1959, p. 127.

himself in Kalang's water and emerged at Raha to quench his thirst and again dived here and emerged at Jagi. From this incident were derived both the names of Raha and Jagi. Many legends cluster around Arimatta and Jongalbalahu but they are most conflicting.[11]

(b) **Ancient period upto twelfth century A.D. :**

This district once formed a part of the ancient Kamarupa ruled by the dynasties like Varman, Salastambha and Palas. We find authentic history of Kamarupa with the beginning of Varman dynasty. The family of Pusyavarman constituted the first historical dynasty of the Bhauma Naraka family said to have ruled in ancient Assam from about 355 A.D. In the Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudra Gupta dated between 330-380 A.D. Kamarupa is mentioned as a foreign kingdom along with Samatata, Nepal, Kartipura and Davaka. According to some historians Kamarupa and Davaka were two different kingdoms which might have submitted to Samudra Gupta although their autonomy remained unimpaired. All these kingdoms were paying tributes to Samudra Gupta.

Davaka and Kadali Kingdoms of Nowgong : Since the fourth century A.D. onwards we find from various sources like epigraphs and literary works traces of existence of small principalities including the two ancient kingdoms of Davaka and Kadali within the modern Nowgong district adjoining the Mikir Hills, where remains of forts, temples and buildings are yet to be seen. Some of these ruins are attributed to the capital of a king named Hansadhaj.[12] The Allahabad Pillar inscription of Samudra Gupta mentions Davaka along with Kamarupa and others as frontier kingdoms. The Tantrik work *Pag Som Zon Zan* mentions the ancient kingdom of Kadali (Kandali) within the bounds of Nowgong along with others. This shows the possibility of some other kingdoms in the same locality. According to R. M. Nath, Davaka was an independent kingdom in the Kopili valley of Nowgong during the time of Pusyavarman (355-380 A.D.). On the basis of existing materials P. C. Choudhury is inclined to say that Davaka was founded shortly before the fourth century A.D. and was not as old as the ancient Pragjyotisha. However, its independence was soon afterwards curbed by the Kamarupa kings. It is evident from the Badganga inscription (Davaka) of Bhutivarman (553-554 A.D.) that Davaka kingdom formed an integral part of his (Bhutivarman's) kingdom of Kamarupa. P.C. Choudhury shows that Davaka was conquered even earlier by Kalyanavarman (420-440 A.D.).

11. E. A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1967, p. 19.
12. P. C. Choudhury, *The History of Civilization of the People of Assam, to the Twelfth Century A. D.*, Gauhati, 1959, p, 248.

According to *Rajamala*, Pratardhana, a king of Tripura twelfth in descent from Yayati conquered the *Kiratas* and founded a kingdom with its capital on the bank of the Kopili river. This kingdom comprised a large area extending to the west of Manipur. Subsequently Drikpati, the Kachari king of Hidimba conquered the Kopili valley and annexed the ancient Trivega, Kopili or Davaka. It is also said in the Chinese account of *Shung Shu* that Yu Chai, a king of the Kopili valley sent a mission to China in 428 A.D. K. L. Barua identifies this king with one Chandrapriya, a Tripura king and places the Kachari annexation at about 500 A.D. after which Kamarupa absorbed Davaka to lose it again to the Kacharis in or after the twelfth century A.D. Disagreeing with Barua P.C.Choudhury states, "The identification of Kalyanavarman with Yu Chai, on the basis of epigraphy seems to rest on a valid ground,and it was he who sometime before the sending of the mission in A.D. 428 conquered Davaka".[13] He further adds that this king united Davaka and Kamarupa perhaps after defeating a Tripura king.

Frequent references to the ancient kingdom of Kadali are found in epigraphs as well as in literary works which point to the early relations between Kamarupa, Davaka, Tripura, Hidimba, Kadali and other small states lying to the south-western and eastern side of Kamarupa. Like Davaka, Kadali was an independent kingdom in the north-eastern part of Nowgong ruled by *Kirata* or Mongolian chiefs and was definitely included in Kamarupa in the sixth century A.D. during the reign of Bhutivarman if not earlier. Though this kingdom lost its independence, it did not lose its entity till as late as the eleventh century A.D. when the Palas ruled in Kamarupa. The antiquity of this kingdom is unknown. It is associated with the activities of Minanath and Goraksanath who flourished shortly after Brahmapala, the founder of the Pala dynasty in Kamarupa. At that time Kadali was ruled by a woman named Kamala with the help of her sister and ministers and was therefore known as *Narirajya*. She was probably a Kachari or Jaintia queen enjoying the liberty accorded to women by Tantrik-Buddhists and ruled possibly as a feudatory of the Palas of Assam.[14] This kingdom of Kadali is identified with Kandali of Nowgong, which place is associated with two noted Assamese writers, Madhava Kandali and Ananta Kandali of the fourteenth century A. D.

It is shown that the entire area of the present Nowgong district formed an integral part of Kamarupa during the reign of Bhutivarman (510-555 A.D.),who was eighth in descent from Pusyavarman of Bhauma dynasty. The discovery of his Badganga inscription near Davaka confirms the fact of its inclusion in Kamarupa. Bhutivarman also known as Mahabhutavarman succeeded his father Narayanavarman and ruled for forty five years. His reign is marked by *digvijaya* which was

13. Ibid, pp. 152,
14. Ibid, p. 248.

glorified by performance of 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. He was followed by Chandramukhavarman, Sthitavarman and Susthitavarman, who, according to Apsad inscription was defeated by Mahasena Gupta, the later Gupta monarch. The most illustrious king of this line was Bhaskarvarman, the second son of Susthitavarman.

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 educated 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."[15] The great king who was endowed with kingly qualities, exhibited devotion to duty, and unfailing love for his people. Hiuen Tsiang, 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 Tsiang 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 of before.[16]

In 643 A.D Bhaskarvarman invited Hiuen Tsiang 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 Tsiang 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.

15. Ibid, p. 182.
16. Ibid. p. 188.

The travel account of Hiuen Tsiang 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* (about 2720 kilometres) 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 Buddhism.[17]

It also mentions that there were hundreds of *Deva* temples in the northern part of Nowgong district as elsewhere in the kingdom.

Kings of Salastambha family : The Bargaon Copper Plate grant of Ratnapala states that after the descendants of Naraka had ruled for several generations, Salastambha, a *Mlecchadhinatha* ascended the throne of Kamarupa and established a new line. His reign is believed to have commenced after the death of 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[18] which is identified with Tezpur. Salastambha was a powerful king as surmised from the Bargaon grant which describes him as a tiger-like king. He was followed by Vijaya, Palaka, Kumara, Vajradeva, Harsadeva, Balavarman II, Pralambha or Salambha, Harjjaravarman, Vanamalavarmadeva, Jayamala, Balavarman III and Tyagasimha. The accession of Harsa (725-750 A.D) to 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 that Harsa conquered *Gauda*, *Odra*, *Kalinga*, *Kosala* and other lands. The discovery of the Hayunthal grant of Harjjaravarman in the Kopili valley points to the fact that Nowgong was an integral part of his kingdom. This grant not only gives the genealogy of the line but also extols the political supremacy of the donor himself. Harjjaravarman assumed the grand epithet of *Maharajadhiraja Paramesvara. Paramabhattarraka* in keeping with his unrivalled prowess over a number of feudatory chiefs. His son, Vanamala had a long period of reign. His own inscriptions prove that he was a mighty monarch and extended his kingdom through conquests. His kingdom comprised almost the whole of modern Assam, parts of south-east Bengal including Sylhet, Tripura, Mymensingh and the neighbouring places and *Pundravardhana* in North Bengal. Like his father, Vanamala also assumed the same high sounding title. His grand-son Balavarman III was also a powerful king (885-910 A.D). His two grants viz., the Nowgong grant found on the bank of the Kalang in Sutargaon near Puranigudam and the Uttarbarbil grant near

17. E. A. Gait, *A History of Assam*. Calcutta, 1967, pp. 28-29.
18. B. K. Barua, *A Cultural History of Assam*, Gauhati, 1969 p. 33,

Howraghat, in Mikir Hills prove that Nowgong formed an integral part of Kamarupa during the tenth century as well. These grants were issued from his ancestral camp at Haruppesvara as referred to therein. From this it appears that Haruppesvara was not the permanent capital but temporary camp or second capital of the kings of this line. In his grant he is described as assuming the imperial title of *Maharajadhiraja Paramesvara Paramabhattaraka* indicating his supremacy. His Nowgong grant refers to his victory over his enemies who might have been tribal chieftains in the neighbouring areas of his capital. We have already referred to the kingdoms of Kadali and Davaka and possibility of some others in the Nowgong area already included in Kamarupa. These kings might have rebelled against his predecessor and were brought under subjugation. By the said grant the king donated land to the Brahmin Srutidhara in *Hensiva* within the *Visaya* of *Dijjina* which lay west of the Karatoya in *Pundravardhana* which fact confirms that he made fresh conquest of North Bengal. From his Nowgong grant we may further know the internal condition of Kamarupa including Nowgong during the reign of Balavarman who "proved himself to be the last of dutiful and energetic rulers of the line of Salastambha managing the affairs of the administration with well-organised government machinery."[19]

Kings of Pala dynasty : According to the Bargaon grant of Ratnapala, Brahmapala (990-1010 A.D) succeeded Tyagasimha, the last of the twenty one rulers of the Salastambha dynasty and founded a new line. It is stated that the illustrious Tyagasimha having died sonless, his officials elected Brahmapala of the line of Naraka and a kindred of the departed king to be the king of Kamarupa. He was the founder of the Pala dynasty whose rulers ruled Kamarupa upto the end of the twelfth century A.D.During his time sway of Kamarupa in the west seems doubtful but in the east it included the greater part of Assam including Nowgong. According to P. Bhattacharya, Brahmapala shifted the capital from Haruppesvara to a place on the bank of the Lauhitya. This new capital after being fortified by his son Ratnapala came to be known as Durjaya (impregnable). But according to P. C. Choudhury Haruppesvara was either a temporary camp or the second capital of the Salastambha line while the permanent capital was always in Pragjyotishpur from the reign of Pusyavarman down to the end of Pala rule or even later and Ratnapala only fortified it and Durjaya stood for Pragjyotishpur. According to the Bargaon inscription its fortifications were fit to cause discomfiture to the enemies, the neighbouring kings and the master of the Deccan. Ratnapala (1010-1060 A.D.) as described in it was a powerful king who made the invading powers retreat and suppressed the hostile chiefs in Kamarupa proper or in North Bengal then within Kamarupa. This may have also some reference to Kadali and Davaka and other small principalities within Nowgong. It has

19. P. C. Choudhury—*The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D. Gauhati*, 1959, p. 242.

been already shown that kingdom of Kadali survived possibly as a feudatory of the Pala rulers. Ratnapala also assumed the imperial title indicating his political supremacy.

The line of Pala kings ruled for about one hundred and fifty years, the last king Jayapala having expired in 1138 A.D. The successors of Ratnapala were Purandarapala, Indrapala, Gopala, Harsapala, Dharmapala and Jayapala. The grants of the family highly speak of Indrapala as a powerful but just and righteous king who was responsible for good government and prosperity all around. Although some parts of the territory of Kamarupa in the west were lost during the rule of Gopala and Harsapala, these were shortly recaptured by Dharmapala, an accomplished king who restored the lost glory of Kamarupa by pushing its boundary to the west of the Karatoya. He had an eventful reign from 1095-1120 A.D. during which besides other events he issued several grants which extol the glory and virtues of the king. His Puspabhadra grant indicates that he was a propagator of *Vajrayana dharma*, a patron of religion and a poet. He proved himself as one of the last great rulers of Kamarupa.[20]

(c) Medieval Period :

Darkness descends on the history of Kamarupa including Nowgong 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, Ram Pal king of *Gauda* conquered Kamarupa between 1125-1130 A.D when Jayapala was the king of Kamarupa. According to P.C. Choudhury, Ram Pal conquered only that portion of Kamarupa which was in Bengal and placed Tingyadeva as his vassal. According to Kamauli 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.[21]

20. Ibid, pp. 250—265.
21. Ibid, pp. 274-275.

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 *Yogini Tantra,* He was probably the king of Kamarupa who had to his credit the repulse of two invasions of Bakhtiyar (1202 A.D) and Ghiasuddhin 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 Ikhtiyaruddin Yuzbak about 1256-1257 A..D and soon afterwards shifted the capital to Kamatapur in 1260 A.D.[22]

The shifting of the capital to Kamatapur in Cooch 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.

The Kacharis : The Kachari kingdom, on the south bank of the Brahmaputra probably extended at least half way across the Nowgong district. There are no records referring to the time when the Kacharis were the dominant tribe in this district. But they survived, however, as a separate entity until the early part of the last century.

The Nowgong copper plate which was dug up on the bank of the Kalang opposite to Puranigudam throws some light on the internal condition of Nowgong, a thousand years ago. It has been ascribed to the later part of the tenth century A.D. It records the grant of a piece of land to a Brahmin by a king called Balavarman, who lived in the camp of Haruppesvara near the Brahmaputra river. The author of the plate sounds a modest note as regards king's capital and other details. There are, however, no remains in Nowgong to suggest that at any time it contained the capital of a really powerful prince, and possibly Balavarman was only a minor *Raja* of no great wealth or influence. The inscription suggests, however, that Nowgong was administered by a well organized and civilized government, though possibly not superior to the Ahom administration. The plate has thrown some light on the condition of Nowgong, but it tells us very little about the history of the district. The date and time of the inscription also suggests that the Kacharis were in all probability an important power, at any rate in the Kopili valley.

Some account must be given about the origin of the Kachari kingdom. The Kacharis or Boro (Bodo) or *Bodofisa* (sons of the Bodos) as they called themselves belong to the great Bodo tribe which is found not only in the Barhmaputra valley but also in the North Cachar Hills where they call themselves Dimasa

22. Ibid, 276-277 and also E. A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta. 1967, p, 85.

and in the Garo Hills. It is generally supposed that the Bodos belong to a section of the Indo-Chinese race, whose original habitat was somewhere between the upper waters of the Yang-tsze-Kiang and the Hoang-Ho. They gradually spread in successive waves of migration over the greater part of Assam. About the origin of the Kacharis, E.A. Gait says : "The Kacharis are believed to be closely allied to the Koches, and also, so far at least as language is concerned, to the Chutiyas, Lalungs and Morans of the Brahmaputra valley, and to the Garos and Tipperas of the southern hills".[23] The wide distribution of the Kacharis and their Bodo language over a large part of Assam and North Bengal seems to indicate that these regions once formed a great Bodo kingdom. Most "of the Mlechha kings mentioned in the old copper-plate inscriptions belonged to the Kachari or some closely allied tribe".[24]

It is very difficult to trace the history of the Kacharis due to the dearth of written records. Fisher points out that the Kacharis once ruled over Kamarupa, and their royal family claimed descent from *Rajas* of that country of the line of Ha-tsung-tsa. The only trustworthy information about the Kacharis is found in the Ahom *Buranjis* which describe the wars between the Kacharis and the Ahoms.[25]

The Kachari kingdom in the thirteenth century extended along the south bank of the Brahmaputra, from the Dikhu to the Kalang. It also extended to the valley of the Dhansiri and to the tract which now forms a part of North Cachar Hills district. These boundary limits remained intact for more than a century till a battle was fought on the bank of the Dikhu in 1490 A.D. with the Ahoms. Though the Ahoms were defeated, they later on compelled the Kachari king to retreat to the Dhansiri region. Again in 1526 and 1531 A.D., the Ahoms and Kacharis fought on the bank of the same river. The Kacharis were completely defeated and king's brother Detcha was killed in the latter battle. The Ahoms pursued them and ransacked the Kachari kingdom and their capital Dimapur. King Khunkhara became a fugitive and one of his relatives named Detsung was placed on the throne. In 1536 A.D., Detsung quarrelled with the Ahoms. Finally, the Kacharis had to leave Dimapur and established a new capital at Maibong.[26] Here they met reverses at the hands of a new enemy headed by Chilarai, brother of Koch king Naranarayan.

Upto 1603 A.D., nothing important happened relating to the Kacharis. During this period, the Kacharis held a greater part of Nowgong district and they had gradually expanded to the plains of Cachar.[27]

23. E. A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1967, p. 300.
24. Ibid, p. 300.
25. Ibid, p. 300.
26. Ibid, p. 301.
27. Ibid, p, 304.

Just at the beginning of the seventeenth century, Prabhakar, the chief of Dimarua, an ally of Kachari king Satrudaman was captured by the Jaintia king Dhana Manik. Prabhakar appealed to his ally. The latter attacked the Jaintia king and defeated and forced him to give tribute and two princesses to the Kachari king. The heir-apparent, Jasa Manik of Jaintia kingdom was brought as a prisoner to Brahmapur (Khaspur). To commemorate the victory, the Kachari king Satrudaman assumed the title of Asimardan.[28]

Dhana Manik died soon and Satrudaman made Jasa Manik (the captive) the king of Jaintia. Satrudaman insisted that Jasa Manik recognise him as his overlord, but the latter resented. As he had no power to resist the Kacharis, he tried to embroil the Ahom king Pratap Sinha with the Kacharis. He made an offer of marriage of his daughter with the Ahom king on condition that the latter should take her through the Kachari country. Jasa Manik's hope was soon fulfilled. Satrudaman did not allow the Ahoms to carry the girl through his dominion. It led to a war between the Kacharis and the Ahoms. The Kacharis were defeated at the first encounter but ultimately, in the subsequent battle at Raha, the Ahoms were completely defeated. Satrudaman celebrated the victory by assuming the title of Pratap Narayan and changing the name of his capital Maibong to Kirtipur. During this period the Kacharis were in possession of a portion of Nowgong district, which lies south of Raha.

Satrudaman was succeeded by his son Narnarayan, who ruled for a short period.[29] He was succeeded by his uncle Bhima Darpa. Bhima Darpa was succeeded by his son Indra Ballabh. They were insignificant rulers. During this period, the Kacharis left the Dhansiri valley and entered into deep jungles.

Indra Ballabh was succeeded by Bir Darpa Narayan in 1644. He opened communication with the Ahom king who resented the style of the letter as unbecoming on the part of a protected king. Bir Darpa Narayan in his turn took exception to the term "protected". The relation between the two neighbouring countries continued to be unsatisfactory thereafter. But when king Chakradhvaj Sinha defeated the Muhammedans in 1667 A.D. Bir Darpa Narayan sent envoys with complimentary messages to the Ahom king thus restoring friendly relations..[30]

After Bir Darpa Narayan, his son Garurdhvaj ascended the throne in 1681 A.D. During his reign (1681-1695A.D.) the relation between the Ahoms and the Kacharis became strained. He was succeeded by Makardhvaj and Udayaditya.

28. Ibid.
29. Ibid, p. 305. Satrudaman is the hero of a Bengali novel named the *Ranachandi*.
30. Ibid, p. 306.

The successive Muhammedan invasions and internal troubles compelled the Ahoms not to interfere with the Kacharis during the last part of the seventeenth century. This proved to be a boon to the Kacharis and during the reign of Ahom king Rudra Sinha, the Kachari king Tamradhvaj asserted their independence. In December 1706, Rudra Sinha sent two armies numbering over 70,000 men, one marching along the bank of the Dhansiri and the other proceeding via Raha and the valley of the Kopili. The Kacharis offered little resistance. They were completely routed and their capital Maibong was ransacked. Tamradhvaj fled away and sent an appeal to Jaintia king Ram Singh. The Ahoms had to retreat due to occurrence of pestilence which took a heavy toll of their soldiers.

Ram Singh, after hearing the appeal from Kachari king took the chance of annexing the Kachari territory into his own kingdom. He captured Tamradhvaj and put him into prison at Jaintiapur. Tamradhvaj, however, managed to send a letter to the Ahom king, requesting him to forgive and release him from imprisonment. Rudra Sinha sent an army to occupy Jaintiapur. In 1708 A. D. Tamradhvaj was released and taken *via* Maibong to Rudra Sinha's camp at Vishwanath. There, in a great *Darbar* he proclaimed his complete allegiance to the Ahom king whom he acknowledged as his overlord. The Ahom force escorted him upto Demera. Soon after reaching Khaspur he fell ill and died in September 1708 A.D. Tamradhvaj was succeeded by his minor son, Sura Darpa Narayan. It is stated that during his reign at the command of his mother Chandra Prabha the *Naradi Puran* was written by one Bhubaneswar Vachaspati.

The later history of the Kacharis after Sura Darpa Narayan becomes indefinite and has little bearing on the history of the district.

The ruins of Dimapur which are still in existence show that the Kacharis had in those days attained a high state of civilisation. The use of bricks as building material was still unknown to the neighbouring people whose buildings were made of timber or bamboo, with mud-plastered walls. From the architectural point of view the Dimapur ruins prove the high standard of civilization, they had attained.

The Bara Bhuyans : While the Chutia kings ruled the country east of the Subansiri and Disang during the thirteenth century, the Kachari kingdom was flourishing in Central Assam on the south bank of the Brahmaputra, and probably extended at least half way across the Nowgong district ; towards the west of the Kacharis on the south bank of the Brahmaputra and of the Chutias on the north, a number of petty chiefs called Bhuyans held sway over the territory. The boundary between the tract ruled by these chiefs and the kingdom of Kamarupa altered from time to time. A powerful prince might bring many

of them under his control, but they regained their independence under weak princes. Gait mentions that these chiefs were remembered in Assamese legends as the Bara Bhuyans, a title which was formerly supposed to indicate a connectionwith the aboriginal tribe of the same designation in Chota-Nagpur. Wise, however, differed and held in connection with Eastern Bengal, where formerly there was a group of chiefs of the same title that the word Bhuyan which is a Sanskrit equivalent of the Persian word *Zamindar* had no connection with caste. However, it was not clear why the number *Bara* (Twelve) was always associated with them, both in Bengal and Assam. Whenever they were enumerated. twelve persons were always mentioned but the actual names varied. It was the practice in Eastern India for kings to appoint twelve advisers or governors. Narnarayan had twelve ministers of State, twelve *Dolois* were in charge of the hilly portion of the Jaintia Raja and there were twelve State Councillors in Nepal. The number thus became connected in the minds of the people with all dignitaries ranking next to a *Raja* and so came to be used in a purely conventional sense.[31]

There were various stories about the Bara Bhuyans, which often refer to entirely different groups of chiefs and they are to a great extent mere legends. The Bhuyans who dominated north of the Brahmaputra and west of Chutia kingdom, during the time of entrance of the Ahoms into Assam had their territory extending from Subansiri in the east to the Barnadi in the west. Another branch of the Bara Bhuyans occupied certain areas of Nowgong district.[32]

They claimed to be the descendants of Samudra, who was a minister of king Arimatta. Samudra was succeeded by his son Monohar and his daughter Lakshmi, who gained the love of the Sun God, by whom she had two sons, Santanu and Samanta. Santanu and his descendants migrated to Rampur in the district of Nowgong and Samanta remained at Lakhimpur. Afterwards, Rajdhar, one of Santanu's descendants settled at Bardowa of the Nowgong district. His son was Kusambar, father of the great religious reformer Sankar deva.[33]

The *Guru Charitra* and the *Sankar Charitra* give another version of the origin of Bara Bhuyans of Nowgong. A *Raja* of Kamatapur namely Durlabh Narayan went to war with another *Raja* named Dharma Narayan who styled himself Gaureswar or Lord of Gaur. The location of the territory of Dharma Narayan was not known but the story goes that after peace was concluded Dharma Narayan sent seven families of Brahmins and seven families of Kayasthas to Durlabh Narayan, who settled them on the frontier as wardens of the

31. Ibid, pp. 39—40.
32. S. N. Rajkumar, *Chutiya, Bhuyan and Matak Rajya*, pp. 42, 52.
33. K. L. Barua, *Early History of Kamarupa*, Gauhati, 1966, p. 186.

marches. The ablest of these seven Kayastha families was Chandibar who subsequently became their leader. Their headquarters were at Paimaguri. Once the Bhutias raided their territory and carried off many people including the son of Chandibar. Chandibar and other Bhuyans pursued the raiders and compelled them to release the captives. Chandibar subsequently settled at Bardowa in Nowgong where his great grandson Sankardeva was born.[34]

In his book *Bara Bhuyanr Chamu Buranji* (a short history of the Bara Bhuyans) Nakul Chandra Bhuyan mentions that after the death of Parikshit, the son of third Pandava, his son Janmejaya became the king of Hastinapur. On his death his three brothers and four sons quarrelled for the kingdom and subsequently divided it into seven divisions. The east division comprising the Kamarupa kingdom was given to Bikramaditya, the fourth son of Janmejaya. After Bikramaditya, Jitari or Dharmapala a relation of Bikramaditya of Kashmir, became the king of Kamarupa. During his time, some Kshatriya families were brought from Kanyakubja or Kanauj. Dharmapala selected the most illustrious one among the Kshatriya families and appointed him as the Commander-in-Chief and Prime Minister. It is said that he was the ancestor of the Bara Bhuyans. Samudra a son of this Prime Minister became the king of the whole domain of Arimatta. His kingdom expanded from the river Barnadi on the west to the border of Chutia kingdom in the east, to the Dafla Hills on the north and to the border of Kachari kingdom to the south. It is said that Samudra administered the kingdom defeating all his rivals with his *Bhuja* or arms. Hence the name Bhuyan. Since then his descendants came to be known as Bhuyans. After Samudra, Manohar became the king with his capital at Vishwanath. Soon he died, leaving a daughter Lakhsmi who ruled for about fourteen years. It is said, when Lakshmi attained maturity she gained the love of the Sun God from whom she gave birth to two sons named Santanu and Samanta. Another account in respect of the birth of these sons to Lakshmi is that a prince named Surya, a scion of Arimatta, came to Lakshmi's palace and the latter accepted him as her husband.[35] Santanu and his twelve sons migrated to Rampur in Nowgong district and their descendants came to be known as Bara Bhuyans. Samanta remained at Lakhimpur and from him sprang the branch of Saru Bara Bhuyans.

Prior to the fifteenth century, these Bara Bhuyans maintained their independence against the Kachari and Chutia kings. But with the entrance of the Ahoms into the power-race the glory of the Bhuyans started declining. From the middle of the fifteenth century the Ahom kingdom expanded towards the west at the expense of the Bara Bhuyans, Kacharis and Chutias. In 1535 A.D. the

34. E. A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1967 pp. 40-41,
35. N. C. Bhuyan, *Bara Bhuyanr Chamu Buranji*, Jorhat 1964.

Ahom king the Dihingia Raja defeated the Bara Bhuyans and ransacked their territory and made them feudatory chiefs.

Taking advantage of Koch invasions of the Ahom territory about the middle of the sixteenth century the Bhuyans discontinued to pay tributes to the Ahoms. In 1623 during the reign of Pratap Sinha (1603-41 A.D.) one of the Bhuyan chiefs named Uday declared independence and his example was soon followed by many others. Uday's capture and execution led others to submission. Thenceforth the Bhuyans between the Subansiri and the Bhareli, were bereft of all their powers.[36]

The Bhuyans made distinct contributions to Assamese socio-cultural and religious life. Sankardeva, the great saint-poet of Assam and the preceptor of the Vaishnava movement in Assam, was a member of the Bara Bhuyan family and was born at Bardowa in Nowgong district in 1449 A.D.

The Ahoms : Sukapha, a leader of one of the branches of the Shans laid the foundation of the Ahom kingdom in Assam. According to the Ahom *Buranjis* the original place from which he came was Maulung across the Patkai hills. Sukapha left Maulung in 1215 A.D. and arrived at Khamajang in 1224 A.D. along with his followers—eight nobles, nine thousand men, women and children. He marched through the Brahmaputra valley upto Charaideo (1253 A.D.), the place which he made later his capital. During his onward march the Nagas, the Morans, the Barahis and some other local people gave him resistance. He, however, overpowered them with his force and established his kingdom in the upper region of Assam.

The Moran king Badancha and also the Barahis fought against Sukapha. But both the Morans and the Barahis were defeated. Sukapha adopting conciliatory measures, treated them as equals and encouraged inter-marriage between the Ahoms and others and thus he welded one people. He made friendship with his brother-rulers and sent them presents of gold and silver. Sukapha died in 1268 A.D. followed by Suteupha, Subinpha and Sukhangpha. Their reigns were not eventful. Sukhangpha was engaged in war with the *Raja* of Kamata for some years in which both the sides suffered heavy losses. At last, the *Raja* sought for peace and thereupon a treaty was concluded. The *Raja* offered his daughter Rajani in marriage to the Ahom king. The Chutias and Kacharis were yet to be subdued. However, they suffered defeat during the reign of Suhungmung (the Dihingia Raja, 1497-1539 A. D.). He assumed the Hindu title Swarga Narayan. His reign was signalised by the Muhammedan invasions. He annexed the whole Chutia country and placed it under the command of Sadiya Khowa Gohain as the Officer of State.[37]

36. E. A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1967 p. 121.
37. Ibid, p. 89.

In 1527 A.D. the Muhammedans first invaded this country. The Ahoms attacked the Muhammedans in front and on both flanks and defeated them. On hearing of the victory of the Ahoms, Suhungmung proceeded to Sala and sent a force to take possession of Duimunisila near Silghat in the Nowgong district. In 1529 he despatched an expedition down the Kalang river and one up the Bhareli. The slaves and booty captured in these forays were made over to the king, who kept a guard at Narayanpur and returned to Dihing. Hostilities were soon renewed with the Muhammedans who advanced up the Brahmaputra and a battle took place at Temani, in which the Ahoms won ; the Muhammedan commander leaving behind his ships, fled away. The Muhammedans attacked the Singri garrison of the Ahoms but they were defeated and pursued as far as Khagarijan (Nowgong) and their commander Bit Malik was slain there.[38] Yet in April 1532, a third Muhammedan invasion under the command of Turbak with thirty elephants, one thousand horses and a large part of artillery as well as a great number of foot-soldiers attacked the country and encamped opposite the Ahom fort at Singri. Suhungmung sent his son Suklen to Singri and he himself proceeded to Sala. Suklen crossed the Brahmaputra and attacked the Muhammedan army, but he suffered a crushing defeat with loss of eight commanders and he himself was severely wounded. The Ahoms retreated to Sala where reinforcements were made and the Barpatra-Gohain was appointed as the Commander-in-Chief.

The Muhammedan army halted at Kaliabor for the rainy season. In October, they took up position at Ghiladhari and in November Suklen recovering from his wounds came to Sala to lead the Ahom army. The enemy's attempts to storm the place were repulsed by the Ahoms. Many encounters took place and at last in March 1533 a naval engagement near Duimunisila brought victory to the Ahoms. Two of the Muhammedan commanders, Bangal and Taju were killed. The invaders suffered a heavy loss of about 1,500 to 2,500 men, twenty ships and many big guns. Subsequently Hussain Khan reinforced Turbak with elephants, horses and foot-soldiers. They waited for several months at the mouth of the Dikrai just opposite to the Ahom garrison. The first attack, however, came from the Ahom side. The Ahoms defeated the Muhammedans in a series of battles. The final battle took place near the Bhareli in which Turbak himself was transfixed with a spear and died. The Muhammedan soldiers then began to flee. The Ahoms chased the Muhammedans and drove them away beyond the river Karatoya where they dug a tank and erected a temple to commemorate their victory. During the pursuit the Ahoms caught and killed Hussain Khan and obtained considerable booty including arms and ammunitions. King Suhungmung returned to his capital Dihing and performed the *Rikkhavan* ceremony.[39]

38. Ibid, p. 94,
39. Ibid, pp. 95-96.

It is stated elsewhere that Suhungmung defeated the Kacharis in 1526 A.D. and 1531 A.D.and in the latter battle the Kachari king Khunkhara, having fled away. Detsung was made the king. In about 1535 A.D. Detsung became hostile towards the Ahoms. The Ahom force marched up along both banks of the Doyang. In the engagements the Kacharis suffered and fled away. Detsung at first took refuge in the Daimari hill and later fled to Lengur and then to his capital Dimapur. From Dimapur too he fled away ; the Ahoms captured three princesses and sent them to their king. Detsung was pursued and caught and put to death at Jangmarang. This victory over the Kacharis brought the whole of Kachari possessions situated north of the Kalang river in Nowgong district under the Ahoms.

Suhungmung was a bold, enterprising and resourceful ruler. During his time the Ahom dominion extended in all directions. The Chutias were subjugated and strong measures were taken against the Nagas and the most important achievement was the shattering of the backbone of the Kacharis. He placed a permanent official known as the Marangi Khowa Gohain to administer the lower valley of the Dhansiri and the greater part of Nowgong district.

Suklengmung or Garhgaya Raja ascended the throne in 1539 A.D. and made his capital at Garhgaon. During the early part of his reign he visited frequently the newly acquired territory in order to bring it under proper administrative control and also to introduce a settled form of government. But the Bhuyan chiefs who occupied the Kopili valley put some hindrances to this process and as such they were transported to a place nearer the headquarters, so that they would be under strict vigilance.

The history of the Ahoms of the seventeenth century was mainly the history of Assam-Mughal conflicts, which arose out of the Mughals' ambition to extend their territory eastwards. In 1603 Susengpha succeeded to his father's throne. He was known as *Bura-raja* as he was advanced in age. For his wisdom he was called *Buddhi-Swarga-Narayan* and for his great deeds and prowess he was called *Pratap Sinha.* Soon after his accession, the Jaintia Raja, Jasa Manik, who was not in good terms with the Kacharis endeavoured to entangle the Ahom king with them by offering his daughter to Pratap Sinha on condition that the Ahom king would fetch her by a route through the Kachari kingdom. The Ahom king asked the latter to give the necessary permission. The Kacharis turned down the request of the Ahom king. Shortly after, the Kacharis raided a village inside the Ahom territory. Incensed by the refusal and by their unprovoked aggression against Ahom territory, Pratap Sinha decided to fetch the girl through their kingdom by force. In June 1606, he sent troops to Raha and thence up the Kopili where a Kachari tributary chief was defeated in an engagement. The Ahom army reached Satgaon and defeated the Kacharis at

Dharamtika. The main garrison of the Kacharis then retreated to Maibong. The Ahoms assaulted the garrison at the junction of the Kopili and Mara Doyang rivers. In October, Pratap Sinha with a new force occupied a fortified position at Demalai. In November, the Jaintia princess was successfully escorted to Garhgaon through Raha. A strong garrison was left at Raha in charge of Sundar Gohain in order to prevent future attacks by the Kacharis. Sundar Gohain demanded tributes from the Kacharis but he later neglected his duties due to differences with the king. Taking advantage of this slackness of Sundar Gohain, Bhima Darpa, the eldest son of the Kachari king attacked the garrison at Raha in which Sundar Gohain and many others were killed. Pratap Sinha in view of renewing hostilities with the Muhammedans took no step against the Kacharis and sent a pacific message to the Kachari king.[40]

In 1615, Ahom-Muslim relations became strained as Pratap Sinha had given asylum to Balinarayan, brother of Parikshit, the Koch king who had been taken captive by the Muslims after his defeat at their hands. About the same time a Muslim trader was murdered at Kaliabor in Nowgong district. As a result the Muhammedans attacked Assam. An engagement took place at Kaliabor where the Muhammedans were totally routed. After this incident the relation between the Ahoms and the Nawab of Bengal, Sheikh Quasim improved to some extent. However, it desteriorated again. A few Muhammedan subjects were killed in the Ahom territory but Pratap Sinha disclaimed all knowledge of these occurrences and refused to give compensation. Pratap Sinha, also refused to meet one of the Nawab's officials. Consequently, in 1635 another engagement took place near the Bhareli river between the two, where the Muhammedans were again defeated. The war was then dragged into the enemy's territory where the Ahoms won decisive victories and captured all strongholds of the Muhammedans in Kamrup driving them out from Assam. But a fresh army from Dacca reversed the position and through a series of victories, over the Ahoms advanced upto Pandu and captured the Ahom forts at Agiathuri and Saraighat. Pratap Sinha sent force to help Dimarua Raja and Hari Deka who were engaged in a battle at Kajalimukh, the mouth of the Kalang river. Some more skirmishes took place between the Ahoms and the Muhammedans. No one could gain an absolute victory. The Muhammedans consolidated their position in Kamrup and in 1638 A.D. they advanced towards Garhgaon and encamped at the mouth of the Bhareli. In these engagements the Muhammedans were defeated and compelled to retire to Gauhati. A treaty was concluded under which Barnadi on the north bank of the Brahmaputra and Asurar ali on the south were fixed as boundaries between the two.

Pratap Sinha was succeeded by Surampha or Bhaga Raja (1641-1644 A.D.) and Sutyinpha or Naria Raja (1644-1648A.D.). Their periods were uneventful.

40. Ibid, p, 109.

On Sutyinpha's deposition, his son Sutamla ascended the throne in 1648 A.D. assuming the Hindu name Jayadhvaj Sinha. He was also known as *Bhagania* as he fled away from Garhgaon at the time of the Muhammedan invasion. Prior to the Mughal invasion, the king had to face many internal troubles. Pramatta Rai of Jaintia was revolting against his grand father Jasa Manta Rai, the king of Jaintia. To realise his ambition the former asked for help from the chief of Gobha who declined it. Thereupon Pramatta Rai destroyed four villages of Gobha. The Gobha chief then asked for help from the Kachari king who came forward to his assistance. Nevertheless, the local Ahom officials intervened and told the chief of Gobha, that he should seek help from the Ahoms the paramount power. The Gobha chief accordingly went to Jayadhvaj Sinha and got help from him. The chief was accordingly established at Khagarijan corresponding. more or less to modern Nowgong district.

Jayadhvaj Sinha's reign was marked by mastery over the whole Brahmaputra valley upto the Sankosh and Mirjumla's invasion of Assam in 1662. Mirjumla captured Jogighopa by storm. The Ahoms retreated to Srighat and Pandu which the enemy captured easily. At this the panic stricken Ahom garrison at Kajalimukh fled to Samdhara where they made fortifications to resist further advance of the Muhammedans. But the fortifications at Samdhara and Simlagarh too were destroyed by the Muhammedans. Mirjumla established a garrison at Samdhara and appointed a Muhammedan official as *faujdar* at Kaliabor ; after three days respite, he continued his march. At last, Ahom capital Garhgaon fell, and Jayadhvaj Sinha fled away. Later, the Ahoms taking advantage of the rainy season cut off communication and supply lines of the enemy and gave constant harassment to them. The Muhammedans facing severe and constant attacks lost about one thousand men. In the mean time, famine occurred in Bengal and so further supplies were not forthcoming. Mirjumla himself fell ill and his soldiers were not willing to stay at Garhgaon to pass another rainy season. Thus Mirjumla was compelled to listen to the Ahom king's overtures and accordingly a peace treaty was agreed upon. According to this treaty, the country west of the Bhareli on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, and of the Kalang on the south was ceded to the Emperor of Delhi. The Mughals imposed a heavy war indemnity on the Ahoms. The Mughals took away one Ahom princess and six sons of the nobles, and also twenty elephants were to be supplied annually to the Emperor by the Ahoms. Jayadhvaj Sinha died in November 1663.

Mirjumla returned through Kaliabor to Kajalimukh by *palki* as he became ill and leaving his main body of army to march back, himself sailed by ship and died on March 30, 1663 just before reaching Dacca[41]

41. Ibid, p. 143.

On the death of Jayadhvaj Sinha the nobles invited the Saring Raja Supungmung and placed him on the throne. His Hindu name was Chakradvaj Sinha. As Chakradhvaj Sinha was determined to drive away the Mughals from Assam, he began to prepare for war. He ordered repairing of forts at important places such as Samdhara and Pota Kalang. He also constructed some more forts and collected war materials for a prolonged war against the enemy. Early in 1667 Saiyad Firuz Khan the *Thanadar* of Gauhati wrote a letter to the Ahom king demanding payment of the balance of outstanding war indemnity on the basis of the treaty made by Jayadhvaj Sinha. On refusal of the payment by the Ahom king, Firuz Khan attacked the Ahom kingdom. The command of the Ahom force was entrusted to Lachit Barphukan. A series of encounters took place between the two at different out-posts and finally the Barphukan was able to drive away the Mughals from Gauhati which was made the headquarters of the Barphukan. The news of the defeat of Firuz Khan and the loss of Gauhati enraged Aurangzeb, and he sent general Ram Singh to restore it. Both Ram Singh and Rashid Khan with a huge army proceeded towards Gauhati from Rangamati.

Chakradhvaj Sinha died in 1670, and was succeeded by his brother Maju Gohain known as Sunyatpha who assumed the Hindu name Udayaditya Sinha. During the early part of his reign he was engaged in war with Ram Singh which had been continuing from the time of his predecessor. The Garos and the Raja of Rani gave assistance to the Ahoms. Ram Singh suffering repeated losses retreated to Rangamati in 1671 and the Mughal army was completely defeated. The Ahom sretook possession of the north bank of the Brahmaputra. Hadira, opposite to Goalpara became the frontier out-post of the Ahoms.

After the cessation of the hostilities with the Mughals the king made enquries with a view to finding out people who were disloyal to him during the war. On enquiry, a priest named Chakrapani, a descendant of Sankardeva was suspected of having complicity with the enemy. After listening to the accounts of his learning and wisdom the king heard him discourse and was so charmed that he gave him a grant of land at Samaguri and made him his spiritual preceptor. By doing so, the king incurred displeasure of the nobles of his court. One night he was seized physically by his brother, who in collusion with the nobles, had him poisoned at Charaideo. His three wives and the priest were put to death in 1673 A.D.

Since then a reign of terror prevailed in Assam. For sometime Debera Barbarua, turned to a king maker. He was a born intriguer and was responsible for the death of three kings including Udayaditya. Debera himself and his last puppet king Gobar were put to death in 1675 by the Buragohain. Still then the political instability and confusion continued for some time more. In

1679 Sulikpha, assuming the Hindu name Ratnadhvaj popularly known as Lora Raja ascended the throne. To secure his position permanently many scions of the royal blood were either killed or wounded. But Lora Raja failed to do any harm to his most formidable rival, Gadapani, the son of Gobar Raja.[42]

Later on, Lora Raja proved himself to be a most unsatisfactory ruler and aroused the resentment of his nobles by his incapacity, utter want of aptitude for administration and tyrannical conduct. In July 1681, Barphukan openly espoused the cause of Gadapani who was at that time known by all for his vigour and energy. Thereupon Lora Raja was dethroned and banished to Namrup, where he was put to death.[43] Gadapani ascended the throne in 1681 and assumed the Ahom name Supatpha and Hindu name Gadadhar Sinha. He shifted the capital to Barkola. He organised a well-equipped army to oust the Muhammedans from Gauhati. He took possession of the forts at Bansbari and Kajali from the Muhammedans without any opposition. The naval victory of the Ahoms near the mouth of the Barnadi alarmed the Muhammedans. Immediately after that the Ahoms fell upon the *faujdar* of Gauhati, who fled away without offering any resistance. The Ahoms pursued them as far as the Manas. This was the last Muhammedan war in the history of Assam. The territory of the Ahoms extended to the river Manas. He was a patron of *Sakta* Hinduism. Gadadhar Sinha died in 1696 leaving two sons of whom the elder succeeded him. "Local tradition has it that the district was colonized by this prince who transported families from Upper Assam to Nowgong."[44]

The next monarch ascended the throne taking the Hindu name Rudra Sinha and the Ahom name Sukhrungpha. He made wars with the Kacharis and Jaintias. He deputed the Barbarua to enter into the Kachari territory through the valley of the Dhansiri while the Pani Phukan advanced *via* Raha and through the valley of the Kopili. The Kachari king Tamradhvaj fled from Maibong to Jaintia where he was captured by Ram Singh, the king of Jaintia. Tamradhvaj sent an appeal to Rudra Sinha asking to forgive his past offences and rescue him from the Jaintia king. Rudra Singha sent a message to Ram Singh through his tributary king of Gobha demanding immediate release of the captive. But Ram Singh refused to carry out his orders. Rudra Sinha, thereupon, sent his commanders to attack the Jaintia kingdom. Ram Singh was captured and along with Tamradhvaj was brought to the Ahom capital.

In the expedition the Jaintias suffered heavy losses both in men and money. The booty seized by the Ahoms included three cannons, 2,273 guns,

42. For details, see S. K. Bhuyan, *Atan Buragohain and His Times*. Gauhati, 1957
43. E. A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1967 (Reprint) p. 170,
44. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol. VI, Nowgong, Calcutta, 1905, p. 33.

109 elephants, 12,00 pieces of silver mints and numerous articles of gold, silver and other metals. Later on, the Kachari king was released with numerous presents but the Jaintia king died of dysentery.[45]

Thereafter Rudra Sinha made perparations to attack the Muhammedans and for that he proceeded personally to Gauhati to organise a great army and a powerful fleet. He collected all his available cannons. The Kachari and the Jaintia Rajas also assisted him. But the king died in August, 1714.

He ruled for seventeen eventful years. Although an illiterate, Rudra Sinha possessed retentive memory and exceptional intelligence and power of initiative. He constructed masonry bridges over the Namdang and Dimow rivers and dug a tank at Jaisagar and also constructed a temple by its side. He made extensive trade with Tibet. He sent envoys to different parts of India and established schools to train local people bringing artificers from Bengal. During his reign the district of Nowgong was surveyed and settlement was made therein. Many other public works for the welfare of the State were done.

On the death of Rudra Sinha his eldest son Siba Sinha ascended the throne assuming the Ahom name Sutanpha. In January 1717 an expedition was despatched against the Daflas who were reduced to submission. Except this expedition the country enjoyed unbroken peace during his reign.[46]

On the death of Siba Sinha, Rudra Sinha's second son Pramatta Sinha ascended the throne under the Ahom name Sunenpha. During 1745 a fresh survey was made and a census was taken in the country. New buildings were constructed at Garhgaon and the Rangghar was built at Rangpur. The Rudreswar and Sukreswar temples were constructed at Gauhati. He died in 1751 A.D.

Rudra Sinha's fourth son Rajeswar Sinha *alias* Surampha ascended the throne in 1751. In 1758, the Daflas committed raids near Ghiladhari. In order to prevent Daflas from entering into the plains, forts were erected along the frontier. The *pusa* system was introduced to pacify the Daflas.

In July 1765, the king undertook an operation against the Mikirs. He sent two forces, one by the route through Chapanalla and the other through the Kopili and the Jamuna rivers. Both the forces, having effected a junction in the hills defeated the Mikirs. Thus the Mikirs were subdued. He also made an expedition against the Kacharis. The Kachari ruler submitted to the Ahom king and was allowed to return to his own country. On request, Rajeswar Sinha also offered help to the Manipuri king Jai Singh, who was ousted by the Burmese.

45. E. A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta 1967 (Reprint). pp. 184-85.
46. Ibid, p. 190

The Ahom army marched through the hills south of Charaideo. The troops failed to reach Manipur as they lost their way in deep jungles. Therefore, the king sent a second force through Raha and through the Kachari country. This army with the help of the Nagas drove out the Burmese usurper Kelemba and reinstated Jai Singh on the throne of Manipur. The Manipuri king out of gratitude offered to Rajeswar Sinha his daughter in marriage. In 1769, the Jaintia Raja sent a troop to the Ahom frontier. The Barbarua marched to Raha and out of fear the Jaintia Raja withdrew from the place and retreated to his own territory. Rajeswar Sinha died in 1769.[47]

After the death of Rajeswar Sinha, Rudra Sinha's youngest son Lakshmi Sinha ascended the throne in 1769. During his reign the Moamarias revolted against the Ahom administration and continued their struggle for a pretty long time. This uprising shook the foundation of the Ahom empire. The decay and the fall of the Ahom kingdom began with his reign. On the death of Lakshmi Sinha who ruled from 1769 to 1780 A.D. his eldest son Gaurinath ascended the throne in 1780. He assumed the Ahom name Suhitpangpha. He inherited the legacy of Moamaria troubles. He was a bitter enemy of the Moamarias who were persecuted during his time. The Moamarias again rose in rebellion in 1782. But Purnananda Buragohain, the prime minister subdued the uprising and expelled them from the capital. This was followed by a general massacre of the Moamarias. This drastic action had further enraged the Moamarias and a conspiracy was hatched at Jaisagar to stage a revolt against the Ahoms, by a *Mahanta* belonging to the Jakhalabandha *Gosain* family. But he was caught and punished by removing his eyes and all of his followers were put to death. Consequently the Morans in the extreme east broke out in rebellion under the leadership of Badal Gaonbura; but they were suppressed.[48]

The most serious revolt of the Moamarias took place in 1786 on the north bank of the Luhit. The rebels marched up to Rangpur overcoming all resistance. Gaurinath Sinha fled away to Gauhati accompanied by some of his officers. The Buragohain with other officers remained at the capital to resist the rebels. From Gauhati, Gaurinath Sinha sent thirteen thousand men to assist Buragohain, but before they could arrive, the Moamarias defeated the royalists and took possession of Garhgaon. They burnt down the palace and destroyed many villages, but Buragohain continued to hold his position on the Namdang and subsequently retreated to Gaurisagar. Inspite of his utmost effort Buragohain could not overthrow the Moamarias. The burning and looting of villages and wanton destruction of crops later led to a terrible famine. Taking advantage of unsettled political situation many petty *rajas* rose their heads.

47. Ibid, p. 192.
48. Ibid, p. 201.

The main body of the Moamarias at Rangpur put Bharat Singh on the throne. He issued coins inscribing his name. Gaurinath Sinha sent an appeal for help to the Kachari and Jaintia kings, but they refused to help. The king of Manipur with a force came to Nowgong for his assistance. But this help was of little use and after some time the Manipuri king returned. In the mean time another uprising broke out at Nowgong, where the king was taking shelter for some time. The rebellious leader, Sindhura Hazarika of Nowgong attacked the king, who lost and fled to Gauhati.[49]

Here also further troubles awaited him. Gaurinath Sinha treacherously seized and killed the tributary Raja Hangsa Narayan of Darrang, and set up in his place another *Raja* named Bishnu Narayan. Krishna Narayan, the son of the late *Raja*, thereupon went to the then Commissioner of Cooch Behar for help from the East India Company to arrest Bishnu Narayan. Failing in his bid, he himself collected a force and threw out Gauri Nath's nominee from Darrang and took possession of the northern part of Kamrup. Gaurinath Sinha, who was at his wits end, appealed to the British and accordingly a detachment under Captain Welsh was sent. Captain Welsh captured Gauhati and compelled Krishna Narayan to submit. Krishna Narayan was, however, allowed to take possession of the ancestral estate on paying regular annual tribute to the Ahom king.

Meanwhile, the Buragohain took shelter at Jorhat and the Moamarias pursued him upto this place. Lieutenant Macgregor was sent by Welsh, with a small force to Kaliabor where he defeated the Moamarias who retreated with a heavy loss. On receiving this news, Captain Welsh set out with all his troops to Rangpur keeping one company at Kaliabor. An engagement took place with the Moamarias at Namdang, and on the first of March his troops proceeded to Rangpur which was already evacuated by the enemy.

With the adoption of the policy of non interference by the East India Company Captain Welsh had to return to the British territory. Consequent upon it, the Moamarias again rose and took possession of the capital. Gaurinath Sinha shifted his headquarters to Jorhat. It was obvious that the administration became weak and as such the people could not live in peace. In 1798, Sadiya was taken by the Khamtis.

On ascending the throne, Kinaram a scion of Gadadhar Sinha's line, took the Hindu name Kamaleswar and the Ahom name Suklingpha. Soon after his

49. Gunabhiram Barua, *Assam Buranji*, Gauhati, 1972, p. 119. Sindhura Hazarika earned the epithet *Raja-Kheda Nowganya* the man of Nowgong who drove away the king.

accession, a serious rebellion broke out in Kamrup. Two brothers Haradatta and Biradatta, with the secret assistance of the Rajas of Cooch Behar and Bijni, declared themselves independent. The Barphukan of Gauhati with some difficulty suppressed the rebellion. Another trouble cropped up when a mixed body of the Daflas and the Moamarias raised a revolt on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. They crossed the river and arrived at Silghat, where they were defeated by the royal army. Thus, this rebellion was also subdued. In 1799, the Moamarias again broke out but were defeated. The Singphos were attacked in 1798 and put to flight. The Khamtis were also defeated in 1800. In 1803, the Kachari king Krishna Chandra objected to the Buragohain's deploying troops to recover the fugitives settling in between the Mikir hills and the Jamuna river. The Ahom army marched to Raha and then to Jamunamukh where they mounted an attack on the Kacharis and the Moamarias, who had burnt and razed villages near Nowgong. The united troops could not be easily defeated by the royal army, as such Buragohain was compelled to send for replenishment to face the rebellion. Then a fight took place near Nowgong. The insurgents lost the battle and fled down the Kalang to Raha. The Ahoms pursued them upto Dabaka and shattered them by burning their villages. In 1805, the Ahoms inflicted upon the Moamarias and the Kacharis a crushing defeat after which the Moamarias lost heart. Prior to this the Kacharis and the Moamarias disputed and quarrelled over some points whereupon some of the Kacharis defected to the Ahom camp. They received as reward land grants in the neighbourhood of Bebejia from the Ahom king. There was another uprising of the Moran-Moamarias in the east of the Dibru river ; their chief Sarbananda Singh styled as an independent king at Bengmara. However, he was subdued by the Buragohain.

On the death of Kamaleswar Sinha his brother Chandra Kanta Sinha ascended the throne assuming the Ahom name Sudinpha. His reign was a turning point in the history of Assam. He saw the end of the Ahom rule and the beginning of a new chapter in Assam's history. As he was a mere boy when he became king, the Buragohain conducted all the administrative business.

Some Burmese invasions took place during the reign of Chandra Kanta Sinha. The first Burmese army, comprising about eight thousand men came to Assam towards the end of 1816, at the invitation of Badan Chandra Barphukan, who took this extreme step to take revenge upon his rival the Buragohain. The Burmese had an easy day, the Ahom army was routed at Ghiladhari and near Kathalbari and the whole administration collapsed. Seizing a rich booty, the Burmese returned to their homeland in about 1817. Chandra Kanta was made a nominal king, while full powers were vested in the Barphukan. But soon Badan Chandra became a victim of the assassin Subedar Rupsing at the instigation of the king's mother. Chandra Kanta subsequently was overthrown as a result of a conspiracy and Purandar Sinha took the throne in 1818. Some followers of the late Barphukan reported the matter to the Burmese king of Ava, who responding to their request sent another invading force under the command of Ala Mingi in 1819 to punish the enemy of his ally. Purandar Sinha's army was defeated, Chandra Kanta was reinstated as a nominal king but Burmese high-handedness made him afraid of his own safety and he fled away to the British territory in 1821. Chandra Kanta, collecting some troops, made futile attempts to oust the Burmese and to regain his lost position.

The easy victories in Assam gained by the Burmese encouraged them to commit various wanton acts of aggression not only along the northern frontier of Bengal but also on the borders of Chittagong and Sylhet. Under the circumstances, the British Governor-General decided to resort to arms. The Burmese were defeated in all engagements. The British army was divided into two divisions and sent upwards, one by the way of the Kalang river and the other up the main stream of the Brahmaputra. The former receiving timely intelligence reports could defeat several Burmese detachments at Raha and elsewhere. Next, the British troops seized Kaliabor. The Burmese were thus compelled to evacuate Nowgong and came to concentrate at Jorhat. The Burmese lost the battle at Jorhat and fled to Rangpur. The British troops occupied Jorhat and afterwards sent troops towards Rangpur. The British again defeated them and compelled them to retreat. After occupation of Rangpur the British defeated the Burmese in several engagements. The Burmese were defeated in Cachar and Manipur also. Finally a treaty was concluded on February 24, 1826, at Yandaboo between the Burmese and the British. By the terms (Article 2) of the treaty of Yandaboo, the King of Ava renounced all claims upon, and agreed to abstain from all interference with the principality of Assam and its dependencies and also with the contiguous states of Cachar and Jaintia.[50]

Ahom administrative system : The Ahom king had a council of five known as the *Patra-Mantries* consisting of the Buragohain, the Bargohain, the Barpatra Gohain, the Barbaruah, and the Barphukan. These appointments ordinarily descended from father to son. They became disqualified only on grounds of incapacity or delinquency. New appointments were made by the king. The *Patra-Mantries* occupied important positions. in the political administration and enjoyed enormous powers. They had the power even to make and unmake a king. The Buragohain usually acted as the Prime Minister and conducted the affairs of the Government with the approval of the king. Each of these officials was supplied with a certain number of families, over whom

50. E. A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1967 p. 340.

no other officer could exercise any power. Each Gohain was allotted ten thousand *Paiks* or freemen.

The post of the Barbarua was filled by a member of some specified families. The Barbarua received the land revenue and administered justice in the eastern provinces from Sadiya to Kaliabor and was also the commander of the forces. He could judge over the criminal and civill cases with the concurrence of the king and the principal ministers.

The Barphukan governed as Viceroy or Deputy to the king, in the tract between the Brahmaputra and the Kalang in Nowgong but after extension of the Ahom kingdom in the westward direction he was put in charge of the country from Kaliabor to Goalpara with his headquarters at Gauhati. He had to conduct diplomatic relations with Bengal, Bhutan and the chieftains of the Assam frontiers. Barphukan was the commander of the army and judge-in-chief within his jurisdiction.

Other local Governors such as, Sadiya Khowa Gohain, Marangi Khowa Gohain, the Solal Gohain of Nowgong, the Kajali Mukhia Gohain, the Rohial Barua etc., were appointed for the administration of the outlying areas of the country. Besides, there were other functionaries, recruited from respectable Ahom families for high posts. Among them, the highest rank was of the Phukan. The Barphukan had a council of six subordinate Phukans. Next in rank were the Baruas including the Bhandari Barua, the Bez Barua or physician to the royal family, the Hati Barua and the Ghora Barua and others. There were twelve Rajkhowas, a number of Katakis and Dolois.[51]

(d) **Modern period :** The condition of the whole of the Brahmaputra valley at the time of the expulsion of the Burmese became very deplorable. The Burmese took away nearly thirty thousand Assamese people as slaves and eliminated more than one half of the total population by their barbarous and inhuman activities. There was no cultivation in successive years, famine and pestilence carried off thousands of lives. Many Assamese people took refuge in Bengal and other hill areas. Some Ahom nobles and a few *Gosains* retired to Goalpara and a large number of common people followed them. They were reluctant to return to their original homes in Assam. After the expulsion of the Burmese from Assam it became a problem for the British to rule the country. Manipur was restored to Gambhir Singh. Jaintia Raja was confirmed in his possessions in the hills and foothills. Gobinda Chandra was reinstated as Raja of Cachar Excluding the two tracts in Upper Assam namely Sadiya and Matak the whole province of the Brahmaputra valley was brought under British suzerainty. David Scott was appointed as Agent to the Governor General to administer the

51, For details see E. A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1967 pp. 239—256.

province of Assam including the district of Nowgong. Rapid changes and improvements in civil, criminal and revenue administration had been carried out in the province. In respect of revenue administration, it may be mentioned, that the districts were divided into several *mauzas*. The Collectors for Darrang, Nowgong and Kamrup were appointed. The land was surveyed under different categories and revenue assessments were made accordingly. In 1832-33 the revenue from Nowgong district was Rs. 31,509/- which was increased to Rs. 1,10,314 in the year 1843-44. This improved type of assessment of land revenue was introduced by David Scott, who died in August 1831.

Later on, for administrative convenience the British Government decided to install one local prince as a ruler to administer the Upper Assam region. Accordingly, Purandar Sinha again ascended the throne to rule as a protected ruler of the Company. In 1833 the British portion of the valley was divided into four districts viz,. Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgong (very often known as Khagarijan). These districts were placed under the Commissioner of Assam with his headquarters at Gauhati. The headquarters of Nowgong district which extended to the Dhansiri river on the east were first established at Puranigudam and then shifted in 1835 to Rangagora. This place was found unhealthy and not centrally situated and therefore in 1839 the headquarters were shifted to Nowgong where they have since remained.

The district boundaries underwent changes since its formation into a separate district in 1833. The Dhansiri river originally formed the boundary in the east and the district included some areas of the present Mikir Hills, North Cachar Hills and Naga Hills. In 1853 North Cachar was separated to form a sub-division and in the next year the territory of Tularam was added to North Cachar sub-division. During 1867, the Naga Hills and a large part of Mikir Hills were combined together into a separate district, and the sub-division of North Cachar was abolished, and considerable area of the North Cachar sub-division was placed in charge of the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar. In 1898 another exchange of areas took place in which, a large part of Mikir Hills was transferred to Nowgong district only to be severed from it in 1951.

The general administration of Assam including justice was vested in the Commissioner of Assam with his headquarters at Gauhati. A Deputy Commissioner was posted there in 1839 to relieve the Commissioner as Civil and Sessions Judge. Each district was placed in charge of a Principal (Senior) Assistant assisted by a Junior Assistant and a Sub Assistant. In 1861 the Deputy Commissioner was redesignated as Judicial Commissioner ; Principal Assistant as Deputy Commissioner ; Junior Assistant as Assistant Commissioner and Sub-Assistant as Extra Assistant Commissioner which designations still continue. There

was a separate Civil Judicial establishment consisting of one principal Sadar Amin, six Sadar Amins and seventeen Munsifs. The separate establishment of Sadar Amins and Munsifs was abolished in 1872 as some of these officers were made Extra Assistant Commissioners. The officers of the ordinary district staff were empowered with civil powers and the Deputy Commissioners became Sub-Judges. The Assistant and Extra Assistant Commissioners were invested with the powers of Munsifs. Nowgong, the headquarters of the district gradually developed on both banks of Kalang river and in order to connect Nowgong and Haibargaon, a bridge was constructed over the river Kalang in 1847.[52]

With the establishment of British administration in Assam, the government faced the problem of acute shortage of English-knowing people to man the various offices. To solve the problem they brought a large number of Bengalis, who had some experience of running offices in Bengal. The Assamese people, who were then enjoying some respite after a long and bitter struggle with the Burmese invaders, were totally unaware of these developments. Besides, there were very few English educated people in Assam. The Bengali people succeeded in convincing the *Raj* that Assamese language was a patois of Bengali and hence it could not be treated as a separate one. As a result, Assamese was abolished from the schools and courts in 1836. For about forty years from 1836 to 1873, Bengali was the court language and medium of instruction in the schools of Assam.

However, the Christian missonaries of Sibsagar, realised the advantage of using the local language for propagation of Christianity. It was Atmaram Sarma of Nowgong who first translated the Bible into Assamese in 1833. In 1839, Robinson published *A Grammar of Assamese Language*. The missionaries, by publishing a paper *Arunudoi* in 1846, further strengthened the cause of the Assamese language. In 1853, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan strongly pleaded for the justice of the cause of Assamese language before Moffat Mills who came from Bengal to study the local problems. Later in 1855, Dhekial Phukan published a book-let, *A few Remarks on Assamese Language*,[53] The relentless efforts of Hem Chandra Barua and Gunabhiram Barua and continuous support from the missionaries, for the cause of Assamese language convinced the government about the genuineness of the claim of the Assamese people. As such, in 1872, George Campbell, the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal ordered reintroduction of Assamese language in Assam. Assamese language was accordingly reintroduced in the schools and courts of this district also since then.[54]

52. Benudhar Kalita, *Phulagurir Dhewa*, Calcutta, 1961, p. 48.
53. Satyendranath Sarma, *Asamiya Sahityar Itibritta*, Gauhati, 1961 pp. 170—181.
54. Government of Assam, *Gazetteer of India, Assam State, Sibsagar District*, Shillong, 1967 p, 346.

In 1835, the population of the district was only ninety thousand, total revenue Rs. 60,475/- and the expenditure Rs. 35,622/-. The revenue collection marked an improvement gradually and it was Rs. 1,31,000/- in the year 1845. Frequent inundation and repeated outbreaks of epidemics like cholera and small pox carried off thousands of its inhabitants.[55]

For a long time poppy cultivation was one of the important occupations of the people of Nowgong. Prabably it was first cultivated in Assam during the reign of Gaurinath Sinha in a strictly limited area ; but in 1793 it was fairly used in common. David Scott said that the Assamese people used enormous quantitics of opium ; and Robinson and other writers including Mills estimated that three-fourths of the total population were opium addicts. Even women and children used the drug alike. Mills further added that the habit of using opium had depreciated the economic standard of the people and affected morale of the nation and he also advocated that something be done to check the immoderate use of the drug at least for the welfare of the younger generation. He, therefore, suggested prohibition of poppy cultivation at home and instead, opium might be issued to all the treasuries of Assam for sale at a high price so that the consumption of the drug could be restricted. This plan was accepted by the government and it achieved some success. Consumption of opium gradually declined

The Indian revolt of 1857 left Nowgong almost untouched It will be wrong to assume that the people were happy and contented under British regime. It may be recalled that the rule of the East India Company ended in 1858 and the whole of India came under the direct control of the British Crown. The assessment of land revenue was increased, and income-tax, stamp duties etc., were also imposed by the new administration. The government carried on trade in opium and salt in the district and earned considerable profit thereby. It seemed the government itself was engaged in exploiting common people. The people felt discontented and their wrath culminated in an uprising at Phulaguri in 1861 known as the *Phulagurir Dhewa* or the battle of Phulaguri. The peasants of this area situated at a distance of about fourteen kilometres from Nowgong vehemently protested to the government through their *mels* against prohibition of poppy cultivation at home and imposition of taxes on incomes and on betel nuts and *pans*. The sentiments of the people went unheeded and no step was taken by government to rehabilitate their economy affected by the abolition of poppy cultivation. The village assemblies met regularly to discuss the new economic measures of the government. These *mels* were largely attended. The police could not suppress these meetings nor they could arrest the ring leaders. On December 18, 1861 Lieutenant Singer, the Assistant Commissioner was sent

55. Benudhar Kalita, *Phulagurir Dhewa*, Calcutta, 1961, p, 48.

from Nowgong to enquire into the whole matter. After his arrival at Phulaguri he faced a hostile mob. He called upon the villagers to disperse and when they failed to do so he ordered the police to disperse them by force. Realising that the officer did not come to rectify their grievances, the people became infuriated and charged him with bamboo-*lathis* and spears. The escorting police deserted the officer. Subsequently, however a sepoy fired a shot and that was enough to disperse the crowd but not before Lt. Singer, in a state of unconsciousness was thrown into the river Kalang by the mob. The Deputy Commissioner, receiving the news asked for military help from Gauhati and Tezpur. After obtaining help, he came to the spot. This time no further opposition was encountered with and the Deputy Commissioner held a judicial investigation into the causes of the riot. Eight peasant leaders were punished with death or transportation for life. The tactlessness and high-handedness of the district officer of Nowgong were mainly responsible for the riot. Subsequent judicial enquiry confirmed that his fault lay first, in not giving a hearing to the people's grievances and second in deputing an inexperienced officer to deal with such an explosive situation. He was temporarily degraded from his post. The people of the district still remember this episode vividly.

The later history of the district was uneventful. During the last thirty years of the nineteenth century the general health of the people of the district was extremely bad and thousands of persons died of various epidemic diseases such as *Kala-azar*, Malaria, Dysentery and Small-pox. On the other hand successive enhancement of revenue and other taxes, abolition of the offices of Phukans, Baruas, Mauzadars etc., and confiscation of their properties had further aggrieved the people. The *raijmel* or village Panchayat, originally constituted as a forum for discussion on social matters gradually developed into an assembly dealing with the socio-political matters. The public grievances were forwarded to the government for consideration through these *raijmels*, The number of *raijmels* grew in this district to such an extent that it alarmed the government. The land revenue assessment which had remained unchanged for last twenty to thirty years was enhanced in 1894 and as such the ryots at different places, viz., Rangiya and Lasima in the Kamrup district and Patharughat in Darrang district rose in revolt.

Another notable event of the period was the great earthquake of June 12, 1897 mentioned in Chapter I which not only changed the topography of the district but also wrought havoc to its economy. In the sphere of administration the most note-worthy event was the creation of the new province of Eastern Bengal and Assam in 1905 with its head-quarters at Dacca. The people of Assam and the people of Bengal vehemently opposed it and as such in 1912 Assam was

again separated from East Bengal and formed into a separate province under the Chief Commissioner.

Freedom Movement : During the last part of the nineteenth century a new national awakening inspired the people of India under popular leadership and Nowgong district did not lag behind. In 1885 the Indian National Congress was formed and became gradually popular among the intelligentsia. In Assam, political consciousness of the people found expression in different *raijmels* or village assemblies as already mentioned and especially in the Assam Association founded in the opening years of the present century. The Assam Association closely pursued the political developments of the time. It may be mentioned here that though there was no separate Congress organization in Assam until 1921, delegates from Assam attended some of the earlier sessions of the Indian National Congress. Japan's victory over Czarist Russia elated the people who interpreted it as the defeat of the west at the hands of the east. In 1917, the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms were introduced. The Congress accepted them, with reservations, with a view to making experiments with British attitude vis-a-vis Indian nationalist demands. But nationalist sentiments were soon belied. The passing of Rowlatt Bills and the news of Jallianwallabagh massacre (1919) left the whole of India with much bitterness and rancour towards the imperialist government. When M.K. Gandhi, the emerging political leader of India gave the call for an all-India *hartal*, he found millions of responsive hearts throughout the country. The country observed massive protest against the brutal acts of the alien government. Many important Indians, like Rabindra Nath Tagore, surrendered their knighthoods and other titles to the British Government, in protest.

The mantle of leadership of the Congress, meanwhile passed to Gandhi. Shifting his political field from South Africa to India, Gandhi proposed to use the same political weapon viz., non-violent non-co-operation measures against the same political foe. In 1920, the Indian National Congress at Nagpur accepted Gandhi's proposals for launching a mass non-violent non-co-operation movement throughout the country. Gandhi's programme included the promotion of *Swadeshi*, particularly the revival of hand spinning and weaving, removal of untouchability, promotion of Hindu-Muslim unity, prohibition of the use of intoxicating drugs and collection of one crore rupees for Tilak Swaraj Fund. Gandhi, however, laid great stress on *Charkha* which he believed to be the key to India's freedom. To fight against the government on the political front he introduced the triple boycott, namely, boycott of legislature, courts, and educational institutions both schools and colleges maintained or aided by the government. He also asked people to surrender their titles, honours etc., Responding to Gandhi's call hundreds of students of schools and colleges left their educa-

tional institutions to join the movement. Lawyers boycotted courts, government officials resigned their posts, and the movement gathered great momentum and pervaded all parts of India. Assamese students mainly studying in Banaras, Calcutta and Gauhati came first under the spell of Gandhi. They spread the message in Assam and launched the school-boycotting campaign. The students of Nowgong boycotted the Government High English School on April 20, 1921. On that very day, Kamalananda Bhattacharya, Jonaram Bora, Atmasing Chetri all school teachers and Haladhar Bhuyan, an employee of the Civil Surgeon's office resigned their posts to join the movement. On April 28, 1921, a Congress Committee was formed with Kanak Chandra Sharma, as President, Haladhar Bhuyan as Secretary and Purna Chandra Sharma as leader of the Volunteer corps, thereafter, they launched an intensive and extensive publicity campaign throughout the district mainly to popularise Gandhi's message.[56] As regards prohibition campaign it was mainly directed against the opium-eaters of the district whose number was very large. The Congress volunteers picketed the opium stalls, the liquor shops etc. The hand spinning and weaving which was widely prevalent in Assam became a popular hobby among the villagers. Both in the urban and rural areas, boycotting of foreign clothes and goods became a common sight.

Gandhi in his first visit to Assam paid a short visit to Nowgong on August 23, 1921. Gandhi addressed a number of meetings and converted hundreds of his listeners to his philosophy. In the public meeting at Nowgong Gandhi spoke mostly in Hindustani and it was rendered into Assamese by Tarun Ram Phukan. Mohammad Ali also spoke in the meeting. In the presence of Gandhi, foreign clothes were burnt in a bonfire. In the evening of the same day he left for Jorhat. Gandhi's visit, though of short duration created great-enthusiasm amongst the masses. Particularly the prohibition campaign against opium, ganja and liquor and propagation of *Khadi* got fresh impetus. The weavers of places like, Kasomari, Dimou, Phulaguri, Raha, Barapujia, Jaluguti etc., took up the cause of *Khadi* in right earnestness.[57] It may be mentioned here that the district of Nowgong supplied the major part of the *Khadi* for the Congress Session hoisted at Pandu in 1926.

In 1930, Gandhi decided to launch the Civil Disobedience movement. He started his satyagraha campaign by manufacturing salt at Dandi.

In Assam, the Civil Disobedience movement made its appearance through violation of the Cunningham circular, which was introduced by the Director of

56. Purna Chandra Sarma, *Mor Atitar Sowarani Aru Nowgong Jilat Mukti Sangram*, Part 1, Nowgong, 1974 Introduction, p. 11.
57. Ibid, pp, 101—103.

Public Instructions, Assam in order to put severe restrictions on students, so that they might not be able to take part in the Congress movement. According to the circular the students had to give an undertaking that they would not take part in any political movement. Everywhere students came out to defy this repressive measure of the government. Many left government educational institutions, and many boycotted them. Many of them took admission in the national educational institutions, run by the Congressmen, mainly for providing academic facilities to these students. In Nowgong, besides the students and others, women also took an active part in picketing and violation of laws. Many of them suffered imprisonment. Arrest and imprisonment, severe beating of men and women, and attachment and confiscation of property by the imperialist authority became the order of the day. This movement, after a short respite during which Gandhi was busy negotiating with the British Government, restarted in January, 1932. It had its echo in Nowgong also.

On August 8, 1942, the All India Congress Committee passed the historic Quit India Resolution in Bombay. Besides Gandhi, the British Government rounded up all the members of the Congress High Command present in Bombay in the early hours of ninth August. This was soon followed by the arrest of top-ranking Congress leaders in various provinces. Hundreds of Congress leaders were clamped down.

The abrupt official action intensified the Quit India Movement. Acting under their local leaders, the people stood up in a massive protest against the government's action.

In Assam, Nowgong played the most important role in the Quit India Movement. A big *Santi Sena* organization was set up under the leadership of local Congressmen. Following the instructions of the Congress Socialists, a few young Congressmen of the district like Mahendra Nath Hazarika and Lakshmi Prasad Goswami built up an underground resistance movement. A *Mrityu Bahini* or death squad was formed under the leadership of Mahendra Nath Hazarika. The party seized about seventeen shot-guns. This squad carried out some serious acts of sabotage throughout the district, in the second half of August, 1942. Railway lines were dislocated. Portions of track were removed, between Kampur and Jamunamukh and at Puranigudam, on the night of August 24. One special train was derailed at Panikhaiti. Railway and post offices were attacked at different places. In many places road-bridges were damaged. The Kathiatoli inspection bungalow, several excise shops and Raha Circle Office were burnt. One or two police officials were murdered as retaliatory measures.

The nature and extent of police repression was serious and widespread. On August 13, Haladhar Bhuyan, the President of the District Congress Committee was arrested. By August 24, most of the leaders were arrested. Under the command of British military officers, police and military began a reign of terror throughout the district. Because of military atrocities, Nowgong earned the sobriquet of "the Midnapore of Assam". The total number of arrests in the district mounted upto 1600, convicted 1200 and security prisoners 60.[58] Some important episodes of the period are narrated below. :

Bebejia firing : On August 26, a military party went to Bebejia to punish the villagers for their alleged involvement in a sabotage case. The Bebejia bridge on the Assam Trunk road was damaged by some people. The whole village was raided by the police and all the occupants were arrested. Another batch of military troops kept themselves concealed under the bridge. While some villagers of the nearby area were passing by the bridge at dusk, the military started firing on them, killing two persons instantaneously and injuring six others.

Jongalbalahu firing : A group of underground activists tried to damage the Jongalbalahugarh bridge on the Assam Trunk road, to immobilise the movement of military troops. The military patrol party appeared on the scene, while they were doing so, and immediately opened fire, killing two persons instantaneously.

Barapujia firing : The Barapujia village had a well-organized and disciplined *Santi Sena* corps. It was the duty of the *Santi Sena* to guard the village at night. On the night of August 27, a batch of military and police men came to raid the village. Tilok Deka, who was guarding the village on that night, seeing their approach towards the village blew the horn to warn the villagers. He was immediately shot dead by an army man. Killing him, the raiding party entered the village at dead of night. The sleeping men and women were dragged out and they were mercilessly beaten. Almost the whole adult male population of the village was rounded up and driven to Raha Thana.

Barhampur firing : It was on September 18, 1942, that about fifteen hundred villagers assembled at a vast field at Barhampur to hold a congregational prayer. The *Santi Sena* camp which was under police custody situated at the same place. The police and military officers suspected that the crowd was gathering there to capture the camp. At the time of arrival of police and militarymen, people were partaking of *Prasads*. A leading Congressman of the area tried to convince the British officials that it was a religious gathering and it had nothing

58. K. N. Dutt, *Landmarks of the Freedom Struggle in Assam*, Gauhati, 1958, p. 97.

to do with the *Santi Sena* organisation. Nevertheless, the particular Congressman and many others were arrested. Thereafter military personnel began kicking the people right and left and the sacred *Prasads* were trampled on by their boots. People got infuriated and started shouting *Bande Mataram*. Hearing the shouting, a group of women came in a procession headed by Ratnabala Phukan, carrying a Congress flag in her hand. One military captain tried to snatch away the flag from her. Saying that she would not allow the national flag to be dishonoured, she boldly resisted. Her mother Bhogeswari Phookanani who was present at the spot came to her rescue. There ensued a scuffle in which the military and police officers present lost their patience, whipped out their revolvers and began shooting at random, killing four on the spot and wounding several others.

Nowgong was at the forefront of the Quit India Movement. To punish the people of Nowgong, the authority imposed heavy collective fines to the extent of Rs. 92,000 of which Rs. 52,000 were realised through coercive methods, mostly from the people of the rural areas.[59]

The Quit India Movement was yet to achieve its goal. India, for some more years remained under the British Raj. By the middle of 1945, most of the Congressmen were released from the prisons. With a view to achieving a settlement with the Congress and the League, Lord Wavell, the Viceroy convened a conference at Simla in June 1945, but it failed to produce any result. In the beginning of 1946, general elections were held throughout the country. The Congress in Assam secured fifty seats out of one hundred and eight and with the help of independent members, it became the majority party and formed government on February 10, 1946, under the leadership of Gopinath Bardoloi.[60] Under his leadership, Assam Congress successfully resisted against Assam's inclusion in the grouping system, introduced by the Cabinet Mission in May 1946. It was believed that acceptance of the scheme would have made Assam a Muslim majority State. However, the Congress and the League finally rejected the scheme.

India's independence, after all became a reality on August 15, 1947. Consequent upon transfer of power, a new era of *Swadeshi raj* came into being.

(e) **Archaeological remains** :

Nowgong district abounds in innumerable big tanks and ruins of temples, forts and buildings, many of which will prove to be of archaeological interest and

59. Nowgong District Congress Committee, *Report of the 1942 August Movement in the District of Nowgong, Assam*, unpublished.

60 K. N. Dutt, *Landmarks of the Freedom Struggle in Assam*, Gauhati, 1956 pp. 100-101.

will reveal the ancient history of the district if properly explored. Only seventeen places having such importance have been so far explored. The following gives an account of some of these remains.

Ruins of several temples and tanks are lying in profusion in Dabaka and its near abouts. In Moudanga, about sixteen kilometres east of Dabaka on the bank of the Jamuna river there is the *Math-Bari* or temple house. Besides, there are seven mounds containing bricks and stones. Two pairs of vertical door beams of stone with snake and foliage decorations on the top and *dwarapals* on the bottom of each, found here, are parallel in sculpture to those found on the Bamuni hills at Tezpur. Another stone contains an image of *Ardha Nariswar* in the centre of lower panel with a lion and a bull at his feet and two flying *Vidyadharas* on both sides at the top. In the centre of the top panel there is the image of *Mahalakshmi* with elephants on both sides pouring water from pitchers held on their raised trunks. On the right there is the image of *Vishnu* with four hands holdig usual weapons and on the left are *Ganesh* and *Lakshmi*. According to R. M. Nath *Siva* temples at Moudanga and other temples of the Kopili and Jamuna valleys definitely belong to ninth to twelfth century A.D. About twenty three kilometres south-east of Nowgong there is the *Baduli Kurung* or bats cave on the Kandali hill. Under a huge rock in the Bamuni Gosainsthan near Kandali there are some other caves said to be associated with *Siddhas* in the past. Ananta Kandali and Madhava Kandali are said to have been born at Kandali. On the samerange of hills about fourteen kilometres to the east there are ruins of bricks and stone built walls, tanks, drains and temples at several places. Traces of old forts and edifices can be seen by the Chapanalla waterfall. This place was supposed to be the capital of a certain ancient king named Hansadhaj. At Na-Bhanga, near Jugijan there is an image lying under a tree. According to Bhattasali, this image is of *Chamunda* of the eleventh or twelfth century A.D. At Kenduguri about one and a half kilometre north-west of Chamunda, there is an image of *Ganga*. The Mahamaya temple is a small stone temple of *Durga* situated on the east bank of a tank in the Mahamaya hill about two kilometres east of Dokmoka. A human figure seated in *Padmasana* is engraved on the western wall of it. There is also a canopy stone with an *astha-dalla Padma* carved on it. An image of *Mahisa-mardini* of the Kamarupi sculpture believed to be of the early ninth century A.D. is located in Bhoi Parbat, about eight kilometres east of Mahamaya hill. A little to the east of it there is an image of *Ganesh* carved on a big boulder lying at the foot of the Mikir Hills range. This is a four-handed image measuring 76.2 cms high 45.72 cms wide and 7.62 cms thick, seated on a mouse 35.56 cms long and 10.16 cms high with a fan and a lotus in the two right hands and a mace and sweets in the two left hands. There are seven big tanks situated about eleven kilometres south-east of the Mahamaya hill. Ruins of an old stone temple constructed about the ninth century A.D. are lying buried on the east

bank of a tank known as Teteli-Pukhuri. One piece of front door contains three human figures of gate keeper, *nartaki* and *pujarini* and another contains the figures of a king with his body-guards and umbrella carrier. The sculptures bear direct relationship with the Dah Parbatia school of Tezpur. Further south-east there is Hemtiru hillock on the bank of the Dighalpani river, having a brick temple with stone lintels and door uprights carved with images of *Vishnu*, *Lakshmi* and *Saraswati*. In Changchauki gaon about four kilometres south-east of Kampur, ruins of an old temple found there are kept in the village *Namghar* near the *Vedi*. One stone door beam with three human figures engraved at the lower part depicts a *dwarapal*, a dancer and a *pujarini*. On a slab of stone is engraved a mithun pair in embrace while a canopy stone has a lotus engraved on it. The remains at Kawaimari include stone pieces bearing various human, animal and floral designs belonging to a big temple. About eight kilometres from Jamunamukh lies Jugijan, which as the name implies, contains a shrine with two big *Siva lingams* and *Yoni pithas* and five small *Siva* temples. There is a big area bounded on all sides by earthen high walls with a big tank inside. It is known as the *Raj-bari*, At Sitajakhala on the bank of the Killing river about two kilometres south of the Trunk Road, traces of a small temple can be seen on the hillock of solid granite stone. There remains now only the corner of a cornice with beads cut out of brown sand-stone and one lintel of door cut out of granite. At Mahadeocal village near Dharamtul there is a *Siva* temple, the door of which contains three fairly big figures of a *dwarapal* with a bow and arrows, a *pujarini* and a *nartaki* at the bottom of it. The figure of *Vasudeva* is also depicted. About two kilometres from here towards Raha there is an old fort known as the Jongalbalahu *garh*. According to tradition this was the capital of Jongalbalahu, son of Arimatta. It was also the fort of the garrison during later Ahom period. At Bashundori than there are two images of *Ganesh* engraved on two rocks and an image of *Jagatdhatri* on another rock. On the bank of the Akasiganga, a beautiful waterfall, there are ruins of three stone temples featuring *Siva lingam* and *Yoni pitham*. There is also a big stone bull, the celebrated *Nandi* in a crouching posture. These images contain new architectural designs. The pillars are round resembling iron shafts. Ruins of a sandstone temple are extant in Bura Gosainr *than* on the bank of the Dikharu river. There are three small figures of *Vishnu*, *Lakshmi* and *Saraswati*.

CHAPTER III

PEOPLE

(a) Population :

(i) **Total Population (male and female) Thana-wise** : According to the Census of 1971 Nowgong district accounted for about 11.2% of the total population of Assam. The total population of the district was 16,80,895 (8,84,938 males and 7,95,957 females) in 1971 as against 12,10,761 persons (6,45,690 males and 5,65,071 females) in 1961. Among the districts of Assam, Nowgong had the highest density (302 per sq. km). of population which was much higher than the all-Assam average of 221 per sq. km. But Nowgong had the lowest population among the plains districts of Assam.

The district consisted of a single sub-division till recently and the *thana*-wise population of the district is given below as per the Census of 1971.[1]

Sl. No.	Police Station	Area in sq. kms.	Male	Female	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Laharighat	453.2	91,878	84,313	1,76,191
2.	Dhing	204.6	51,437	47,340	98,777
3.	Rupahihat	435.1	1,09,094	1,00,513	2,09,607
4.	Kaliabor	474.0	44,256	39,455	83,711
5.	Marigaon	942.8	94,237	85,480	1,79,717
6.	Mikirbheta	191.7	37,808	35,543	73,351
7.	Raha	253.8	38,196	35,342	73,538
8.	Nowgong	383.3	1,15,514	96,988	2,12,502
9.	Samaguri	414.4	56,656	52,171	1,08,827
10.	Kampur	398.9	49,378	45,540	94,918
11.	Jamunamukh ..	279.7	29,034	26,344	55,378
12.	Murajhar	207.2	38,836	34,404	73,240
13.	Hojai	264.2	49,400	42,803	92,203
14.	Lanka	383.3	50,491	45,110	95,601
15.	Lumding	411.8	28,723	24,611	53,334
	Total of Nowgong district	5561.0	8,84,938	7,95,957	16,80,895

1. On January, 26, 1972 a new sub-division known as Marigaon was created.

Among police stations Nowgong (sadar) *thana* had the highest population of 2,12,502 persons in 1971, though it occupied only the eighth position in area. Nowgong *thana* was followed—in order of decreasing population—by Rupahihat, Marigaon, Laharighat and Samaguri *thanas*. Marigaon *thana* was the largest but ranked third in population. Lumding *thana* had the lowest population but was the sixth largest in area.

Density of Population : The density of population of Nowgong district stood in 1971 at 302 per square kilometre which showed an increase of 90 persons per square kilometre over the preceding decade. In 1971 Nowgong was the most densely populated district of Assam.

The density of population since the turn of the century is as follows[2] :

Year	Density per sq. mile	Density per sq. km.
1901	118	46
1911	137	53
1921	181	70
1931	256	99
1941	295	114
1951	403	156
1961	550	218
1971	..	302

In 1901 Nowgong district like the contiguous Darrang district on the opposite bank of the Brahmaputra was sparsely populated except for the central portion. This portion which formed the Nowgong *tahsil* had 149 persons to the square kilometre. The Kalang valley was densely populated and the belt lying on either side of the Kalang river from Kaliabor to Jagi was fairly populous.[3] Mills in describing his voyage up the Kalang river in 1853 remarked, "There is perhaps no part of Assam more populous and prosperous".[4] But the *mauzas* adjoining the Brahmaputra which were liable to heavy floods supported a scanty population. For example Juria had a desity of only 8 over an area of about 320 sq. kilometres. The main reason however for the low density of the district was that the hill *mauzas* and the upper valleys of the Kopili, Jamuna, Dhansiri and Longfer supported a scanty population.

2. *District Census Hand Book, Nowgong*, 1961, p. xx. and *District Census Hand Book, Nowgong*, 1971, p. iii.
3. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, volume VI, *Nowgong*, Calcutta, 1905, pp. 62-63.
4. As quoted by B. C. Allen, Ibid, p. 62.

The average density of population of the district increased by 7 persons to the square kilometre in the decade ending 1911. Since then it began to increase rapidly by 17 persons during 1911-21, 29 persons during 1921-31, giving a net increase of 46 persons to the square kilometre during 1911-31. Wide variations in the density of population in different parts of the district were caused by various factors, mainly the opening of vast tracts of waste lands and riverine areas for accommodating the growing population particularly the large inflow of East Bengal immigrants. The increase of density was rather low during 1931-41. Among the police stations Nowgong, Rupahihat and Dhing comprising only 17.77 per cent of the total area were within the highest density group of 600-750 per square mile or about 232-290 per sq. kilometre and gave sustenance to 39.92 per cent of the population. Jamunamukh and Marigaon *thanas* covering 22.23 per cent of the area and inhabited by 39 per cent of the population were within the low density group of 150-200.

The density changed vastly in the Census of 1951 when it shot up rapidly to 156 adding 42 persons to the square kilometre during the decade. In this respect Nowgong stood second only to Cachar, which had the highest density of any other district of Assam in 1951. The low density pockets filled up fast and reached the next higher density-groups. Nowgong, Rupahihat and Dhing crossed next higher group of 750 persons per square mile or about 290 persons per squaee kilometre and over. Thus in 1951 only one-fifth of the area supported one-third of the total population of the district while the remaining four-fifths of the area sustained two-thirds of the population.[5]

The density of population of the district, which had already grown rapidly shot up to 212 per square kilometre in the Census of 1961 and topped the list among the districts of Assam - the second and third places going to Kamrup and Cachar respectively.

Thus in the Census of 1961 Nowgong district registered a very high increase of density of 56 persons per square kilometre over 1951 figures. Among the police stations Nowgong, Dhing, Rupahihat and Laharighat Police Stations were the most thickly populated areas of the district. The Dhing Police Station was the smallest but in regard to density of population it claimed second place among all others. The Nowgong Police Station with 1,123 persons per square mile or about 434 persons per square kilometre in an area of 143.0 square miles or about 370.37 sq. kilometres was the densest police station and occupied the first place in the district. Rupahihat and Laharighat

5. *Census of India*, 1951, Vol. XII. *Assam, Manipur and Tripura*, Part I-A *Report*, Shillong, 1954, p. 47.

Police Stations holding 930 and 731 persons per square mile or about 359 and 282 persons per square kilometre in areas of 169.2 and 214.1 square miles or about 438.2 and 554.5 sq. kilometres respectively stood third and fourth in density. Lumding and Marigaon with populations of 160 and 334 persons per square mile or about 62 and 129 persons per square kilometre in areas of 178.0 and 370.0 square miles or about 461.0 and 958.3 square kilometres respectively were among the sparsely populated police stations. In regard to area, Marigaon claimed the first place among the other police stations. Jamunamukh and Lanka Police Stations with respective areas of 246 and 242 square miles or about 637.1 and 626.8 sq. kms. and accommodating 485 and 540 persons per square mile or about 187 and 208 persons per square kilometre claimed second and third places among the bigger police stations. But Lanka was comparatively more thickly populated than Jamunamukh and occupied the sixth place in density among the other police stations. Raha Police Station comprising an area of 178.2 square miles or about 461.5 square kilometres had a density of 571 persons per square mile or about 220 persons per square kilometre and stood fifth. Kaliabor and Samaguri Police Stations with densities of 418 and 404 persons per square mile or about 161 and 156 persons per square kilometre covered areas of 164.0 and 217.0 square miles or about 424.8 and 562.0 sq. kms. respectively.[6]

In the Census of 1971 the number of police stations in the district increased to 15 from 11 in the 1961 Census. The density was the highest in Nowgong Police Station (554 per sq. km) and Lumding Police Station had the lowest density (130 per sq. km). The corresponding figures for Dhing and Rupahi stood at 483 and 482 respectively.

Growth of Population : The earliest estimate of population of the district was made in 1841, when the district comprising an area of 3870 sq. miles or about 10,023 sq. kilometres had a population of 90,000 persons. After incorporation of Naga Hills into Nowgong in 1853, its area and population increased to 8,769 square miles or about 22712 square kilometres and 2,41,300 persons respectively, the population being exclusive of about 1,00,00 Angami Nagas. The accuracy of the estimate is however, doubtful.

Regular census operations began in 1872. The population of the district as revealed by this census was 2,60238 and this rose to 3,14,893 in 1881 showing an increase of 21 per cent. The accuracy of the 1872 Census has however been doubted, and the excessive increase that occurred

6. *District Census Hand Book, Nowgong*, 1961, Gauhati, 1965, p. xx.

during the next nine years affords good ground for supposing that it was incomplete. During the next decade of 1881-91 the natural growth rate of population of the district enjoying healthy and prosperous conditions was about 11 per cent. But thereafter the population began to suffer from awful ravages of *kala-azar* aided by severe epidemics of cholera and small-pox, which took a huge toll of human life and resulted in depletion of the total population of the district from 3,47,307 in 1891 to 2,61,160 in 1901. This showed a net decrease of 24.8 per cent.[7] Another cause to which the loss was partly attributed was the great earthquake of 1897 which altered the level of the northern part of the district between the Kalang and the Brahmaputra so greatly as to render this part very prone to floods. The people of the riv. rain tract between the Brahmaputra and the Kalang were compelled to migrate to Darrang.

During the decade 1901-1911 Nowgong showed promising signs of increasing prosperity and the population began to rise. In 1911 the total population stood at 3,03,596 of which 38,966 were immigrants. This gave an increase of 16.2 per cent but the natural population grew by only 14.3 per cent. The total population was, however, still lower than that of 1881. The increase which partly mitigated the large loss of 24.8 per cent in 1901 was due largely to the retirement of *kala-azar* and partly to immigration of people from Dacca, Mymensing and the Surma valley. Concentration of immigrants took place in the Kopili valley especially in the neighbourhood of Lumding junction. Import of over 13,000 labourers for tea gardens also added to the growth during the decade.[8]

During the decade 1911-21 the total population of Nowgong recorded an increase of 31.9 per cent which was the highest in Assam. The total population which stood at 3,97,921 in 1921 exceeded that of 1891, the previous highest. The natural population increased by 26,670 or 9.6 per cent against 14.3 per cent of the previous decade. The low growth rate of the natural population was due to epidemics of cholera and influenza, a recrudescence of *kala-azar*, and disastrous floods in the Kopili valley in 1917-18. The large increase of the population was due mostly to immigration. Five-sevenths of the total increase of 96,266 were due to immigration but the flow of East Bengal settlers was more pronounced in Nowgong than other districts of Assam except Goalpara. Growth in tea garden immigration was less important while immigration from Surma valley accounted for a few thousands. There were regional variations in the growth rate of population. In Dhing and Khatwal *mauzas* the population grew by over 100 per cent and in Juria *mauza* by eight-fold. It was due mainly to heavy concentration of East Bengal settlers there. Namati, Gerua, Bokani, Kasomari and Jamunapar also showed heavy proportionate increases. The Lumding *thana*, the Kopili and Jamuna valleys and western *chaparis* still lagged behind the normal growth.[9] It may be mentioned here that there is a difference in the population figures for 1911 as described in *Census of India*, 1911 and *Census of India*, 1921. The former shows the actual population of Nowgong for 1911 as 3,03,596 consisting of the natural population of 279,871, immigrants 38,966 and emigrants 15,241. The latter shows the actual population of Nowgong for the same year as 3,01,655 consisting of the natural population of 2,77,930, immigrants 38,966 and emigrants 15,241. All figures given in this paragraph are based on the latter figures.

7. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Nowgong*, Calcutta, 1905, p. 65-66.
8. *Census of India*, 1911, Vol. III, *Assam Part-I*, Shillong, 1912, p. 18, 19 & 24.

The population of the district which stood at 5,62,581 persons in 1931 increased by 1,64,574 persons during the decade 1921-31. This increase of 41.35 per cent, was the largest among all districts of Assam. Thus the total population of Nowgong, grew by 79.1 per cent over that of 1881 which was the previous highest. This large increase of population of the district was due almost entirely to continuous and rapid influx of immigrants in still larger batches. Among the *mauzas* Bokani had the highest increase of 295 per cent followed by Laharighat (163 per cent), Laokhoa (140.5 per cent), Dhing (126 per cent), Namati (108 per cent) and Juria (101 per cent). The vital statistics during the decade reveal that the excess of births over deaths accounted for about 25.2 per cent of the total increase. This shows that public health was good on the whole though sporadic outbreaks of cholera, an endemic disease of the district, occurred along the banks of the Kalang river in 1922, 1925 and 1927 while deaths from *kala-azar* decreased by over 91 per cent due to application of modern treatment.[10]

However, the population of the district increased only by 86,491 during the decade ending 1941 when the total population stood at 6,49,072. This showed a percentage increase of only 15.37 per cent (which was less than that of Kamrup, Darrang and Lakhimpur) against the phenomenal increase of the previous decade.

"This is, however, only apparent being entirely due to the omission of 61,728 persons inhabiting the Mikir hills area which are now excluded

9. *Census of India*, 1921, Vol-III, *Assam Part-I*, Report, Shillong, 1923, p. 12.
10. *Census of India*, 1931 Vol. III, *Assam Part-I*, Report, Shillong, 1932, p. 16, 17 and 35.

from the district.[11] If we include them the increase in population of Nowgong during 1931-41 will be to the tune of 1,48,219 against the recorded variation of 86,491, thus giving a percentage increase of 34.25 which will again be the highest among all the districts of Assam, hills or plains, with the solitary exception of the small Balipara Frontier Tract".[12]

During the decade, the district suffered from sporadic occurrences of epidemic diseases as well as natural calamities such as the Kopili floods of 1934, locally known as *Balia Pani* (mad flood).

The total population of the district in 1951 was 8,86,955 persons which showed an increase of 2,37,883 persons during the decade 1941-51 giving an increase of 36.65 per cent. This shows that Nowgong had a population less than that of any other district of Assam Plains Division except Darrang. "This change in Nowgong's rank in the 1951 Census is only apparent being due to the removal of 61,728 persons from the district to be included under the new United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district. Nowgong will retain the same relative position even if we compare the population of the plains districts of Assam minus the displaced persons. The population of Nowgong has increased by 2,37,883 during the last decade (against a seemingly low increase of 86,491 in 1941). This is the largest increase recorded by any district during the present census and is also higher than that recorded by any other district during any of the preceding censuses with the solitary exception of Kamrup whose increase of 2,87,454 during 1931-41 is an all-time record so far. Nowgong retains its present proud position in the matter of over-all increase during the decade even if we compare the total increase minus the displaced persons shown by various districts of Assam."[13] Every *thana* shared the huge increase proportionately excepting the exceptional case of the truncated Lumding *thana* showing the tremendous increase of 382 per cent. Among others Jamunamukh gave the highest increase of 98.1 per cent followed by Kaliabor's 39 per cent, Marigaon's 33.4 per cent, Laharighat's 31 per cent and Raha's 27 per cent. The lowest increase was in Dhing *thana* which showed 18 per cent. The huge increase in Jamunamukh *thana* was due to omission of 29,252 persons from its 1941 population who were transferred to the new district of United Mikir and North Cachar Hills. The high increase was largely due to immigration of about 1,73,000 people including 38,000 refugees from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and partly to

11. The District of United Mikir and North Cachar Hills, came into being on Nov. 17, 1951.
12. *Census of India*, 1951, Vol. XII, *Assam, Manipur and Tripura*, part 1-A, Report. Shillong 1954, pp. 46-47.
13. Ibid, page 46.

natural growth. During the decade the natural health in the district was good though epidemics of cholera and small-pox occurred in the beginning of the decade when the mortality from cholera was 3,361 and 1,214 in 1942 and 1943 respectively and from small-pox 580 in 1943.[14]

During 1951-61 the increase of population was rather steady. The total population stood at 12,10,761 in 1961 showing an overall increase of 3,23,806 persons (36.56 per cent). Though there was a huge increase in absolute numbers, the percentage of increase was slightly lower than that of the 1951 Census. In this respect Nowgong not only lost its highest rank which it occupied in 1951 to Darrang (39.64) but was also reduced to fifth position among the plains districts of Assam. However, in the matter of total population, Nowgong continued to occupy the seventh position as in 1951, among the then eleven districts of Assam.

Among police stations Lumding showed the highest increase of 52.92 per cent followed by Marigaon (40.22), Laharighat (39.43), Raha (32.41), Nowgong (32.11) and Kaliabor (30.25). The lowest percentage increase was registered by Rupahihat Police Station and was as low as 19.88 per cent as against the lowest percentage increase of 18 per cent of Dhing Police Station in 1951.[15]

During the six decades 1901-1961 Nowgong had a tremendous population spurt, registering a net percentage increase of 364.94 which was the highest of any plains district of Assam.[16]

In 1971, the total population of the district as already stated recorded an increase of 4,70,134 persons over 1961, the percentage increase being 38.83 per cent. The following table shows the decennial variations of population of the district since 1901.[17]

District	Year	Persons	Decennial Variation	Decennial percentage Variation	Males	Females
Nowgong District	1901	2,60,411	..	..	1,32,605	1,27,806
	1911	3,01,655	41,244	+15.84	1,53,938	1,47,717
	1921	3,98,007	96,352	+31.94	2,08,731	1,89,276
	1031	5,62,581	1,64,574	+41.35	2,98,585	2,63,996
	1941	6,49,072	84,491	+15.37	3,48,099	3,00,973
	1051	8,869,55	2,37,883	+36.65	4,76,578	4,10,377
	1961	12,10,761	3,23,806	+36.51	6,45,690	5,65,071
	1971	16,80,895	4,70,134	+38.83	8,84,938	7,95,957

14. Ibid, pp. 46, 47. 74.
15. *Census of India*, 1961, Vol. III. *Assam Part-I-A*, General Report, Calcutta 1964 Table 2-14 p. 54.
16. *District Census Hand Book, Nowgong*, 1961, p. XX.
17. *Census of India* 1971, *Assam General Population Table* page—76.

Immigration and emigration : It has been already pointed out in the foregoing pages that immigration is the main factor contributing to the growth of population of the district during the last hundred years or so. The effect of immigration has been increasingly felt since the beginning of the current century, while emigration from the district is quite negligible.

Some of the salient features of migration of people into and within the district are indicated below.

Migration within the district takes place in the form of migration from rural to urban areas and from one rural area to another. The following table shows the movement of people within the district as per the 1961 Census.

Migration of People within Nowgong district.[18]

Duration of residence		Male	Female
Less than 1 year ..	..	(a) 2,847 (b) 779	7,699 221
1 to 5 years ..	..	(a) 15,686 (b) 1,314	22,734 665
6 to 10 years. ..	..	(a) 7,484 (b) 344	14,635 527
11 to 15 years ..	..	(a) 7,141 (b) 180	15,858 218
16 years and above	..	(a) 15,870 (b) 187	31,934 417
Period not stated	..	(a) 9 (b) 231	9 197

(a) Indicates migration from Rural to Rural areas.
(b) Indicates migration from Rural to Urban areas.

The above table reveals that in Nowgong district females outnumbered males in all cases of movement from rural to rural areas. This preponderance of females is largely due to marriage customs according to which the bride is to move to the bridegroom's house to live for the rest of her life. The movement of the people from one village to another is generally caused by agricultural activities such as search for better fields, *pam* cultivation etc. Movement for duration of less than one year is occasioned by marriages and *shraddha* ceremonies in the neighbouring villages.

18. *Census of India*, 1961, Vol. III, *Assam, Part I-A General Report*, Calcutta. 1964, p. 127.

Yet another aspect of such movement for duration of one to ten years is job-migration to places where new industries or development projects have been opened up or movement of agriculturists to places where new areas have been opened up for cultivation.

Migration from rural areas of other districts of Assam into either rural or urban areas of Nowgong is not so heavy, in comparison to Darrang and Lakhimpur districts. Only 34,189 and 3,896 persons from the rural areas of other districts of Assam migrated to rural and urban areas respectively of Nowgong in 1961. The inter-district migration figures reveal that Nowgong occupied the fourth place in respect of inter-district immigration and the first position in respect of inter-district emigration during the decade 1951-61.

The following table shows the percentage of inter-district migration, both immigration to and emigration from Nowgong since 1921.[19]

Year	Density per sq. mile.	Percentage of inter-district immigration to the total population.	Percentage of inter-district emigration to the total population.
1921	181	2.08	2.09
1951	403	2.72	2.23
1961	550	3.34	5.35

The above table reveals that Nowgong gains little from inter-district migration which actually resulted in a loss of 0.01 and 2.01 per cent of population in 1921 and 1961 respectively. The heavy density of the district therefore, suggests other aspects of immigration i.e., immigration from outside the State of Assam.[20]

It has already been pointed out that this type of immigration is the chief factor leading to the population spurt in the district since the latter part of the nineteenth century. The following table shows the trend of immigration from outside the State of Assam.[21]

Percentage of all Immigrants into Nowgong from outside the State of Assam is as follows :

19. *Census of India* 1961, Vol. III, *Assam Part I-A, General Report*, Calcutta, 1964, p. 130.
20. Ibid. p. 131.
21. Ibid. p. 123.

Year	Percentage of Males	Percentage of Females
1921	26.13	20.88
1931	29.78	25.70
1951	24.69	20.92
1961	17.57	12.31

The figures in the above table indicate a downward trend in this type of immigration due to sealing up of the border between India and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) and introduction of the passport and the visa systems. The low percentage of such outside immigrants in 1961 as observed in the Census Report of 1961 is due to the fact that many immigrants particularly from Pakistan did not disclose their birth place obviously to avoid deportation. Subsequent events prove this contention. Since 1961 hundreds of infiltrators from Pakistan have been detected and deported. The following table shows the number of Pakistani infiltrators detected and deported from Nowgong since 1961.[22]

Year	No. of infiltrators detected.	No. of infiltrators deported.	Pending cases
1961	343	343	
1962	4,093	4,094	
1963	8,300	8,300	
1964	30,436	30,436	
1965	20,189	18,843	
1966	5,710	3,321	4069
1967	2,015	1,681	

The flow of immigrant settlers into Nowgong from the erstwhile East Bengal or East Pakistan (the present Bangladesh) started in considerable numbers from as early as 1911. Next to Goalpara, Nowgong became the favourite district of these invaders who by 1921 were much more in Nowgong than in any other district of Assam except Goalpara. Their number increased rapidly from 4,000 in 1911 to 58,000 and 1,20,000 in 1921 and 1931 respectively. The main current of this exodus of immigrants was from the bordering Mymensing district, immigrants from which stood at 1000 in 1911 and subsequently increased to 52,000 and 1,08,000 in 1921 and 1931 respectively.[23] The large tracts of cultivable wastelands of

22. Reported by the Dy. Suptd. of Police, D. S. B. (P), Nowgong, Assam.
23. *Census of India*, 1951, *Assam, Manipur, Tripura, part I-A, Report* Shillong 1954 p. 73.

Nowgong then available proved a veritable 'El Dorado' for these settlers. This immigration began as a result of interplay of economic forces in the erstwhile East Bengal and Assam. The advent of large numbers of East Bengal immigrants whose language, manners and customs differ widely from those of the indigenous people, has affected the economic, political and social structure of the district. They have opened up vast tracts of cultivable wastelands for cultivation, but on many occasions with utter disregard to rules relating to reservation of land for various public purposes. Instances of friction between those people and the people of the neighbouring villages are many. The "line system" which was adopted in 1920 by the Government of Assam sought to reduce the occurrence of such conflicts. Since Independence such immigrants by virtue of their long and permanent residence became Indian citizens. Thus, the total number of persons born in Pakistan and censused in Nowgong stood at 173,000 in 1951 which decreased to 1,36,625 in 1961. The reduction of their number is due to various measures such as the "Passport and Visa systems" introduced to check further illegal infiltrations from East Pakistan and detection and deportation of such illegal infiltrators. This will be clear from the foregoing table. The largest number of 30,436 infiltrators were detected and deported in 1964 immediately preceding the first Pakistani War in 1965. Apart from this, the influx of Hindu refugees from East Pakistan due to communal disturbances there has been quite considerable in this district. According to the 1951 Census out of 1,73,000 persons born in Pakistan and enumerated in Nowgong 38,000 were refugees.

Another factor leading to the growth of the population of the district is the immigration of tea garden labourers which started during the latter part of the nineteenth century. However, the tea industry in Nowgong is not so important as in Darrang, Sibsagar and Dibrugarh and therefore the number of tea garden labourers immigrating to this district is not large.

As recorded in the old District Gazetteer of Nowgong 18,837 and 25,610 tea garden labourers were imported to Nowgong during the decades ending 1890 and 1900 respectively. During the decade, 1901-11 over 13,000 of them were imported. This shows that the importation of garden labourers decreased by about fifty per cent. The total number of persons censused in the tea gardens in Nowgong stood at 23,436 in 1931 against 21,919 in 1921 and of these persons 18,000 in 1931 against 20,000 in 1921 were born in Bihar and Orissa. Inspite of an increase in the total number of garden population there was slight decrease in the total number of persons born in recruiting places outside Assam. In the meantime the

Tea Districts Emigrant Labour Act XXII, 1932 was passed to regulate recruitment policy and service conditions. The birth place statistics of the 1961 Census reveal that out of 42,964 persons born in other States of India and enumerated in various vocations in Nowgong the largest number of 25,383 was born in Bihar, 5,967 in West Bengal, 3,094 in Uttar Pradesh and 2,227 in Orissa while the number of persons born in the rest of other States and enumerated in Nowgong was negligible. This also shows the insignificance of the tea industry in Nowgong and of immigration of tea garden labourers thereto in comparasion with other districts.

In this district the field of immigration has been almost entirely predominated by the immigrants from Pakistan while the number of immigrants from other countries except Nepal is almost negligible. In 1961, 3,329 persons born in Nepal were censused in Nowgong district. The Nepalis who are generally graziers inhabit the *chaparis* on the banks of the Brahmaputra and keep large herds of buffaloes and cows on the *chars* or sand banks which are continuously being formed by the Brahmaputra.

(ii) Distribution between urban and rural areas : At the turn of the current century Nowgong had 1,117 villages. The villages situated on either side of the Kalang river which flows past the middle part of the district were populous and prosperous in those days. We find a very interesting account of these villages in the old Nowgong District Gazetteer which is as follows :

"The villages are not, however, well defined units, clusters of huts which stand out clearly in the centre of the fields tilled by their inhabitants. Rice, the staple crop, is grown in wide plains, dotted over with clumps of bamboos and fruit trees in which are buried the houses of the cultivators. It is groves and not villages that the traveller sees when riding through the more densely populated portions of the district, and not a house can usually be discerned till he has penetrated this jungle of plantains, betel nut trees and bamboos. There is generally no dearth of building sites, there are no communal lands, and there is nothing to keep the population together. It is difficult to tell where one village ends and another begins, or to which of the larger clumps of trees should be assigned the smaller clumps which are freely dotted about amongst the rice fields. The result is that the statistics of villages are of little practical importance, but taking them for what they are worth it appears that villages as a rule run small, three-fifths of the population living in hamlets containing less than 500 persons".[24]

During the last few decades the district has made enormous progress in the fields of industry, agriculture, medical aid, education, communication etc. With the growth of human habitation more villages have sprung up, robbing nature of its wilderness. The villages with undefined boundaries, as described in the old District Gazetteer, have gradually transformed into more homogenic units, having schools, roads and many other basic amenities of modern living.

24. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol. VI, *Nowgong*, Calcutta 1905 p. 64.

The following table shows the number of villages in Nowgong from 1901 to 1971.

	1901	1911	1921	1931	1941	1951	1961	1971
Nowgong	1,117	1,494	1,966	2,325	2,391	1,683	1,716	1,961

It may be noted that in the numbers of villages since 1901 to 1941, villages transferred to the erstwhile United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district were also accounted for. Only inhabited villages in 1951, 1961 and 1971 are taken into account. The number of inhabited villages increased by only 33 in 1961 over 1951. The total number of villages including 116 uninhabited ones stood at 1,832 in 1961 when the district had a total rural population of 11,29,544 persons which accounted for 93.29 per cent of the total population. In 1971 the percentage slightly diminished to 92.90 though the total rural population increased to 15,61,558 persons. In 1961 the villages of Nowgong remained within five village groups done on the basis of population. In the first group having less than 200 inhabitants there were 374 villages having 38,817 persons that accounted for 3.43 per cent of the total rural population. The next group having between 200 and 499 persons comprised 477 villages with 1,68,265 persons who formed about 14.90 per cent of the total rural population. The third group having between 500 and 999 inhabitants had 490 villages with 3,53,661 persons constituting 31.31 per cent of the total rural population. Nowgong had 331 villages in the fourth group of villages where population varied between 1000 and 1,999 inhabitants. This group of villages claimed the largest proportion of the rural population. The number of persons censused in these villages stood at 4,51,759 persons who accounted for 39.99 per cent of the total rural population. There were only 44 villages where population varied between 2,000 and 4,999. These villages claimed 1,17,042 persons who formed about 10.37 per cent of the total rural population. No village in Nowgong had a population above 4,999 persons in 1961. Thus small villages with population less than 500 had 18.33 per cent and these small villages together with large ones with population above 2,000 but below 5,000 had claimed only 28.70 per cent while the medium villages with population above 500 contained 71.30 per cent of the total rural population in 1961.

In 1971 the district had 1961 inhabited villages which were grouped under six categories. In the first group having less than 200 inhabitants there were 370 villages having 35,572 persons who formed 2.28 per cent of the total rural population. In the next group having between 200 to 499 persons there were 442 villages inhabited by 1,52,563 persons who formed 9.77 per cent of the total rural population. The third group having a population of 500 to 999 persons included 572 villages with a population of 4,16,417 persons who formed 26.67 per cent of the total rural population. There were 458 villages having 6,37,516 persons (40.82 per cent of total rural population) in the next group of villages having between 1,000 to 1,999 persons. The fifth group having 2,000 to 4,999 persons included 118 villages with a population of 3,11,320 persons who formed 19.94 per cent of the total rural population. There was only one village which fell in the next group having between 5,000 to 9,999 persons. This had a population of 8,170 persons who formed 0.52 per cent of the total rural population of the district.

The growth of towns in Nowgong on the other hand is conspicuously slow in comparison to other districts. There was only one town namely, Nowgong town in 1901 with a population of 4,430 persons. It was only in 1921 that Lumding was recorded as the second town with a population of 2,654 persons. This led to a total urban population of 9,539 persons in 1921. Though the total urban population of Nowgong rose to 43,535 in 1951 showing an increase of 356.39 per cent over that of 1921, urbanisation made little headway in the district during this period. No new town was declared by 1951 though Hojai had a population of 6,455 persons. It was only during the next decade of 1951-61 that Hojai along with Dhing was declared as town. Thus in 1961 Nowgong had four towns viz., Nowgong, Lumding, Hojai and Dhing with a total urban population of 81,217 persons. The number of towns remained the same in 1971 but the urban population rose to 1,15,887 persons giving an increase of 34,670 over that of 1961. This meant an increase of 42.69 per cent during the decade. The decennial growth rates of urban population for 1901-11, 1911-21, 1921-31, 1931-41, 1941-51, 1951-61 and 1961-71 were 22.60, 75.57, 41.63, 24.60, 158.58, 86.58, and 46.95 per cent respectively. The abnormal growth rate during 1941-51 was caused by the rapid expansion of Nowgong and Lumding towns to which large numbers of displaced persons from the erstwhile East Pakistan flocked in. During the same decade Nowgong town gave a spurt of population increase by 117.83 per cent and Lumding by 295.39 per cent.

The following table shows the decennial growth rates of the towns in Nowgong district since 1901.

District.	Year	Persons	Decade variation.	Percentage Decade variation.	Males	Females
Nowgong Town	1901	4,430	..	..	2,659	1,771
	1911	5,433	+ 1,003	+ 22.64	3,145	2,288
	1921	6,885	+ 1,452	+ 26.73	4,129	2,756
	1931	10,413	+ 3,528	+ 51.24	6,660	3,753
	1941	12,972	+ 2,559	+ 24.58	8,069	4,903
	1951	28,257	+15,285	+117.83	16,599	11,658
	1961	38,600	+10,343	+ 36.60	23,295	15,305
	1971	56,537	+17,937	+ 46.47	33,148	23,389
Lumding Town	1921	2,654	—	—	1,832	822
	1931	3,098	+ 444	+ 16.73	2,101	997
	1941	3,864	+ 766	+ 24.73	2,503	1,361
	1951	15,278	+11,414	+295.39	8,614	6,664
	1961	23,186	+ 7,908	+ 51.76	12,935	10,251
	1971	29,253	+ 6,067	+ 26.17	15,793	13,460
Hojai Town.	1961	12,857	—	—	7,584	5,273
	1971	22,769	+ 9,912	+ 77.09	12,954	9,815
Dhing Town.	1961	6,574	..	..	3,780	2,794
	1971	10,778	+ 4,204	+ 63,95	5,939	4,839

As per classification of towns in 1971 Nowgong town with a population of 56,537 was recorded in the Class II group of towns having population between 50,000 and 99,999 and ranked fourth after Gauhati, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia among the towns of Assam. Lumding and Hojai towns fell in Class III group of towns where population varied between 20,000 and 49,999 while Dhing fell in Class IV group of towns having population between 10,000 and 19,999.

If the distribution of population between urban and rural areas is analysed there will be noticed a slight drift of population towards urban areas from rural areas. Of the total population of the district the urban areas supported 7.10 per cent in 1971 against 1.70, 1.80, 2.40, 2.40, 2.59, 4.91 and 6.71 in 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931, 1941, 1951, and 1961 respectively. There was only an increase of 6.70 per cent in 1961 against 4.50 per cent in 1951. This increase was mainly due to inclusion of two new towns namely Hojai and Dhing. If their figures be excluded from the total urban population the actual increase would come almost to the same level during 1941-51 decade.

(iii) Displaced Persons : In the wake of partition of India large number of Hindu refugees who were victims of communal riots in East Pakistan migrated

into Assam. In the 1951 Census, 38,599 refugees were censused in Nowgong district. Of these persons 10,563 were in the urban areas of Nowgong and Lumding and 28,036 in the rural areas of the district. The largest concentration of refugees took place in the rural tracts of Jamunamukh and Lumding where 13,291 persons forming 45 per cent of them were settled. Rupahihat and Kaliabor had the next largest number (5,238) followed by Laharighat-Dhing (3,755,) Raha-Marigaon (3,448,) and Samaguri-Nowgong (2,304).

There was a fresh influx of refugees in 1952 just before the introduction of the Passport system between India and Pakistan. This led to a total number of 61,797 refugees belonging to 16,628 families in the district. Of these families 1,708 families were rehabilitated in government sponsored colonies, 2,684 families in urban areas and 5,687 families in rural areas by 1960 and the rest were given grants-in aid and loans to rehabilitate in their own way.

(b) **Language and dialects :** According to the 1961 census the people of Nowgong district spoke as mother tongue as many as sixty languages and dialects. 9,29,843 persons constituting 76.80 per cent of the total population spoke Assamese, the language of the soil as their mother tongue. This is an improvement over that of 1951 when Assamese speakers constituted only 69.09 per cent. Next in importance were the people speaking Bengali as the mother tongue which claimed a considerable number of speakers, 2,09,190 forming 17.28 per cent of the total population. In absolute numbers, though there is some negligible increase, in terms of percentage the Bengali speakers suffered a great decrease from 23.37 per cent in 1951 to 17.28 per cent in 1961. People speaking Hindi as their mother tongue numbered only 33,390 constituting 2.76 per cent only. The rest of the people spoke other languages or dialects as their mother tongue and such groups of speakers occupied but little significance in the linguistic map of the district as none of them could claim even one per cent of the total population.

In 1901 Assamese was the mother tongue of 66 per cent of the people, while Mikir, Lalung and Kachari, three other indigenous languages were spoken by 13 per cent, 5 per cent and 2 per cent of the total population of the district. But the numbers of people speaking these three languages as mother tongue have been gradually decreasing and their speakers formed only 0.49, 0.17 and 0.18 per cent respectively in 1961. The decrease is mainly attributable to the transfer of a large tract in the south-eastern part of the district mostly inhabited by these people to the erstwhile United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district. On the other hand many of them due to their long association with the Assamese speaking people in various walks of life adopted Assamese language and culture and have been returned as Assamese speakers. This may be cited as a reason for the gradual

increase of the Assamese speakers whose percentage increased to 69.09 in 1951 and then to 76.80 in 1961. The great increase of Assamese speakers during 1951-61 is largely due to the Muslims who have adopted Assamese as their mother tongue. It may be recalled that in 1961 there were 4,99,320 Muslims constituting 36.61 per cent of the total population. Bengali speakers formed only a little more than 6 per cent in 1901. However, "Bengali" in those days meant little more than foreign language and as such included in it many forms of speech of the Dravidian family. Due to heavy influx of immigrants from Bengal during the subsequent decades the percentage of Bengali speakers enormously increased and stood at 23.37 in 1951 which, however, decreased to 17.28 in 1961 due to reasons stated above. The percentage of Hindi speakers decreased from 5 per cent in 1901 to 2.69 per cent in 1951. However, during 1951-61 the Hindi speakers growing at the rate of 39.93 per cent claimed only 2.76 per cent of the total population. Speakers of other languages such as Manipuri and Nepali, also increased considerably during the decade, 1951-61.

The following table shows the numerical strength of the people of different linguistic groups inhabiting the district.[25]

Distribution of population on the basis of principal languages and dialects spoken as mother tongue.

Language	No. of persons speakings as mother tongue.		Percentage to total population.	
	1951	1961	1951	1961
Assamese	6,12,802	9,29,843	69.09	76.80
Bengali	2,07,254	2,09,190	23.37	17.28
Hindi	23,862	33,390	2.69	2.76
Manipuri/ Meithei	5,180	8,282	0.58	0.68
Nepali	3,319	8,159	0.37	0.49
Mikir	11,387	5,953	1.28	
Oriya	5,015	3,818	0.57	0.32
Kachari	—	2,162	—	0.18
Lalung	2,092	2,069	0.24	0.17

Bilingualism : Although there are numerous linguistic groups in the district bilingualism has blunted the edge of their differences and has brought

25. *Census of India* 1961, Vol. III, *Assam part—I-A General Report*. Calcutta, 1964, P. 214.

about emotional integration of 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 express themselves in broken Hindi. According to the 1961 Census out of 9,29,843 people speaking Assamese as mother tongue, 86,397 people were shown as bilingual speaking any of the three subsidiary languages; Bengali could be spoken by 57,320, Hindi by 15, 253 and English by 13, 824. Among 2,09,190 people whose mother tongue was Bengali 1,47,982 people could speak Assamese, 4,539 English and 3,094 Hindi. Out of 33,390 persons whose mother tongue was Hindi 20,870 could speak Assamse, 800 Bengali and 364 English. Thus it is seen that among speakers of languages and dialects other than Assamese most of the people understand and speak Assamese as a secondary language in Nowgong district. In 1961 Assamese was the mother tongue of 82,207 tribal people in Nowgong district. Only 10,278 of them could speak a subsidiary language or dialect, of which Lalung dialect claimed the largest number of 7,628 persons. A very few tribal people had a tribal language as their mother tongue and almost all such people could speak Assamese. Out of 2,162 Kacharis including Sonowal people having Kachari as mother tongue 1,471 persons could speak a secondary language and except 6 of them all could speak Assamese. 2,069 Lalungs had their dialect bearing the tribe-name as mother tongue and of them 1,498 were bilingual. Of these, except for 31 all could speak Assamese as a secondary language. Among 941 Bodo/Boro speakers 377 could speak Assamese and 109 Bengali. Miri, Deori and Rabha dialect speakers numbered only 153, 4 and 2 respectively and all of them know Assamese except 2 Miris knowing English as a secondary language.

A brief account of the principal languages of the district is given below. The scope of this analysis being limited, a discussion on many languages and dialects, particularly those spoken by the immigrants cannot be included here. Many of these languages display wide variations of 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 what is regarded as chaste Bengali.

Assamese : The origin of Assamese which is the principal language of the district goes back to antiquity. P.C. Choudhury has observed that epigraphs, though written in Sanskrit, prove that as early as the seventh century A.D. and later, some of the Assamese formations are found even in their

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present forms and used in the same sense.[26] Several scholars, including Grierson, S.K. Chatterjee are of the view that Assamese, Bengali, Oriya and Bihari originated from the eastern variety of Magadhan Prakrit.[27] B. Kakati has shown that both Assamese and Bengali "started on parallel lines with peculiar dialectical predispositions and often developed sharply contradictory diosyncracies."[28] He has further illustrated how the Austric, Kolerian, Malayan, Bodo and other elements have enriched Assamese vocabulary. "The substratum of both the Mon-khmer and Tibeto-Burman speech in Assamese vocabulary" observed P.C. Choudhury, "point definitely to the early evolution of their dialects."[29] S.N. Sarma has shown that the evolution of Assamese literature on independent lines took place from the middle of the tenth century.[30]

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.[31] This however, differs from the script that was used in the Ahom period. From the thirteenth century till 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 *Lakhari.* 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 more than thirty five years.

Some of the pastoral ballads, such as *Bihu-geet* which is 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,

26. P. C. Choudhury. *The History of the Civilisation of the People of the Assam to the Twelfth Century* A. D. Gauhati 1959 P. 391.
27. Grierson, *Linguistic Survey of India* : Vol. I. pt. 1, p. 126 ; S. K. Chatterjee : *Origin and Development of Bengali language*, p. 139-40.
28. B. Kakati. *Assamese—Its Formation and Development*, P. 73.
29. P. C, Choudhury : *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century*, A. D. Gauhati 1959 P. 391.
30. S. N. Sarma, *Asamiya Sahityar Itibritta*, p. 6.
31. Ibid. p. 8.

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 are still regarded to be golden chapters of Assamese literature. These *Buranjis* are believed to be the precursors of the modern Assamese prose writings. Bhattadeva (1558-1638) whose superb prose writings constitute some of the priceless gems of Assamese literature is regarded as one of the earliest prose writers of 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 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 dialecticism easily intelligible. They wielded their pen not merely to glean the abstruse philosophical doctrines of the Sanskrit epics and *Puranas*, but to render these into rare gems of poetry.

The Treaty of Yandaboo, which was concluded in 1826, may be regarded as the watershed of the political, social and cultural life in Assam. Apart from bringing an end to 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 the 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". [32] 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 *Arunudoi* 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.

32. A. J. Mills, *Report on the Province of Assam*, Calcutta—1854.

Assam-Burmese branch of Tibeto-Burman linguistic group : Several tribes in Nowgong 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 a large number of people belonging to Boro-Borokachari community in the district, as revealed in the 1961 Census. P.C. Battacharya 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) subsection 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 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 clearcut 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-books 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 of 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 verses and songs always appeal to the reader's ear and heart."[33]

Grierson has also observed as follows, "Their language is a fairly rich one and is remarkable for the great ease with which roots can be 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."[34]

(c) **Religion and caste** : The religious life of the people in Nowgong is now predominated by two religions viz. Hinduism and Islam, claiming 59.70 and 39.39 per cent of the population respectively in 1971 against 57.94 and and 41.24 per cent in 1961. Other religious communities such as Christians, Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains etc. together formed even less than one per cent of the total population in 1961 and 1971.

In this respect Nowgong has a peculiar position. The proportion of Hindus has been largely reduced by the progressively increasing number of Muslim immigrants since the beginning of the current century. On the other hand 30.36 per cent of the people professing other religions including tribal faith in 1901 have been almost entirely lost sight of in 1961. The reduction which is effected primarily since 1951 is due largely to the transfer of the large tract to the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district (defunct). Apart from this it may be mentioned that in some earlier censuses a part of Hindu population was shown as animists primarily because of a wrong notion of their religious beliefs and faiths. Thus in the Census of 1961 out of a total population of 87,362 persons of Scheduled Tribes in Nowgong, only 66 persons were shown as professing tribal faith and 36 persons as animists.

33. P. C. Bhattacharya : *A Few Elements of the Indo-Mongoloid Boro Culture* in the *Journal of the Assam Research Society*, Vol. XVI. 1964.
34. Grierson ; *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. I pt. I. pp. 62-63.

The following table shows the strength of the different religious communities in the district in absolute numbers.[35]

Religious Community	1901		1951*		1961*		1971		Percentage variation during 1951-61	Percentage Decade Variation (1961-71)
	Persons	Percentage to population.	Persons	Percentage to total population.	Persons	Percentage to total population.	Persons	Percentage to total popula-tion.		
Hindus	167,709		5,17,953	58.40	7,01,506	57.94	10,03,506	59.70	35.44	+43.05
Muslims	12,578		3,59,519	40.53	4,99,320	41.24	6,62,181	39.39	38.89	+32.62
Christians	593		4,789	0.54	7,143	0.59	11,879	0.71	49.15	+66.30
Sikhs	214		1,072	0.12	1,348	0.11	1,763	0.11	25.75	+30.79
Buddhists	49		100	0.01	315	0.03	222	0.01	188.99	—29.52
Jains	243		544	0.06	873	0.07	1,344	0.08	60.48	+53.95
Tribal Religion.	79,767		2,952	0.33	66	0.01	..	..	..	..
Others			17	..	190	0.01	..	..	1,017.65	100.00

35 Source from Statistical Hand Book of Assam, 1966. p. 10-18.

The Hindus—their different sects : The Hindu community numbered 10,03,506 in 1971 against 7,01,506 in 1961 showing a decadal variation of 3,02,000 persons or 43.05 per cent. It numbered 5,17,953 in 1951 and 1,67,709 in 1901. This shows an increase of the community by 1,83,553 persons in absolute numbers or by 35.44 per cent during the decade 1951-61 and by 8,35,797 persons or by nearly 500 per cent during the last seventy years. Though the the community increased in absolute numbers their proportionate strength decreased from 64.21 per cent in 1901 to 59.70 per cent in 1971 of the total population. This is due to the large exodus of the Muslims during this period. The Hindus are divided into three principal sects viz., Saktism, Saivism and Vaishnavism.

Saktism : Nearly eight per cent of the Hindus returned as such in 1901 described themselves as followers of *Sakti* or worshippers of the reproductive power as manifested in the female. But almost five-sixths of them were censused in the tea gardens and the railway. The great majority of these persons were no doubt so styled, because they ate meat and drank liquor, but this was in a garden labourer not so much an indication of his adherence to the goddes *Kali* 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 *Kachaikhaiti* temple at Sadiya and other places bear proof of *Tantric* influences in ancient Kamarupa. *Tantric* tituals in their debased forms are known to have been practised in Assam in the centuries preceding the Vaishnava revival. That Saktism was widespread in this district is evidenced by the existence of many *sakti* temples such as *Kamakhya* at Silghat, *Mahamaya* temple, which was the temple of *Durga* on the Mahamaya hill, about a mile and a half to the east of Dokmoka. The worship of *Durga*, had gained ground in Assam due to patronage of the latter Ahom Kings who were inducted to *Saktist* Cult. Now it is observed throughout Assam as the biggest festival of the year inspite of the fact that the followers of the *Mahapurushia* sect, are opposed to idolatry.

Vaishnavism : Ninety percent of the people who specified their sect in 1901 declared their adherence to Vaishnavism which relates to the worship of *Vishnu*. The worship of *Vishnu* was prevalent in Assam in early times. Kings of ancient Kamarupa traced their lineage to *Vishnu* through Naraka and many of them were worshipper of *Vishnu*. Bhaskaravarman is described in Bana's *Harsacharita* as a descendant of the Vaishnava family. Vaishnavism, however occupied a subordinate position in subsequent centuries. Decay and degeneration in the religious field led to the revival of the Vaishnavite faith in the fifteenth century. The leader of the Vaishnava renaissance in Assam was Sankardeva (1449-1568), who was ably assisted by several disciples, chief among whom

was Madhavdeva (1489-1596). Nowgong district takes pride in the fact that Sankardeva, the great apostle of Vaishnavite renaissance in Assam was born in this district.

Sankardeva was the founder of New-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 *Bhagawati Dharma*.

Sankardeva nominated Madhavdeva (1489-1596) as his successor to hold charge of the order. Madhavdeva sent out holy men as apostles of the *Bhakti* faith, the chief among them being Gopaladeva of Bhavanipur, Padma Ata and Gopaladeva better known as Vamsigopal. 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 *satras* are very rich, and each claims a large and widespread laity. Gopaladeva of Bhavanipur (1541-1611) spread the message of the *Bhagavata* among the Ahoms, Morans, Kacharis and Chutiyas in addition to Brahmins, Kayasthas, and Kalitas. Twelve *satras* were established under the auspices of Gopaladeva.

The followers of Gopaladeva formed 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 part 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 *Moamaria* sect and a *Satra* on the bank of *Moamara Bil* 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 *Vaishnavism* in Assam 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 Sankardeva, has brought itself into fulfilment in many ways, and marked out a definite place for Assam, in the cultural map of India.

The chief exponents of the Vaishnavite faith are the *gosains*, who live in *satras*, surrounded by *bhakats* or resident disciples. They preach and spread the message of *Dharma* among the people. Each of the *gosains* claim a number of followings in the villages. The bulk of the Assamese Hindus in Nowgong are

the disciples of one or the other *gosains* of Auniati, Dakhinpat, Garamur Kamalabari, Elengi, Karatipar and Mahara, whose principal seats are located at Majuli of Sibsagar district. The Matak *Gosains* of Lakhimpur and the *gosain* of Nikamul *satra* of Tezpur, also claim certain followings in the district. All these *gosains* have their branches in Nowgong. There are *Kirtan-ghars* in these branches where the *bhakats* and other lay disciples gather and perform *namakirtan*. The *Gosain* of Kuruabahi *satra* in Nowgong has also a large number of followings in and out side Nowgong. This *satra* possesses a calm and serene atmosphere. Besides, there are a large number of *gosains* of petty *satras* in Nowgong who also claim some laity in and outside the district. Celibacy is mandatory in case of the *gosains* of the principal *satras* of Auniati, Dakhinpat and Garamur. This however not enforced in case of other petty *satras* in Nowgong including Kuruabahi, the other principal *satras* in Assam.

The institution of Satras : Sankardeva was the founder of the *Satra* movement in Assam. The *satras* are more or less religious colleges of the Hindus in Assam resembling in some respect the medieval monasteries of northern India. The typical main *satra* consists of a square enclosure with four gates, called *Karapat* and containing the central temple, the prayer hall called the *Namghar* or *Kirtanghar* composite of a shrine called the *manikut* and two to four rows of huts or four long houses divided into rooms called *hatis*. The *namghar* is a large open shed supported on two rows of massive wooden pillars and covered with thatched roofs. The ends of the hall generally point to the east and west. Now-a-days, however, the *namghar* in some *satras* are reconstructed with pucca pillars covered with corrugated iron sheets. "*Asana* (seat) *Simhasana* (seat with lion motif), *guru-asana* (the seat of the *guru*, that is, Sankara or Madhava), or *mahapurusar asana* (the seat of the *guru* identified with the Supreme Being), are a constant feature of the *satra* or *Kirtan-ghars*."

"The *guru-asanas* have a two-fold significance : they represent the worshipful Lord and also stand for the *guru* (Sankara or Madhava) in the form of renderings of the *Bhagavata-purana* by Sankara and Madhava preferably the *Kirtan-ghosa* or the *Bhagavata*, X, Adi, by Sankara, and *Namaghosa* or *Bhaktiratnavali* by Madhava."[36]

At the eastern end of the *namghar* there is often constructed at perpendiculars to it a shrine called *manikut* whose length roughly equals the breadth of the prayer-hall. In it the titular idol of *Jagannatha* or *Syama-raya* is enshrined carefully screening it from vulgar eyes. The installation of *Vigraha* is a later introduction. The *Pujari* alone conducts all worship to the image and the *bhakats* (monks) are in no obligation to pay adoration to it ; the laity can pay a

36. Maheswar Neog, *Sankaradeva And His Times*, Gauhati, 1965, p. 318.

visit to it if it likes. A room is set apart in it as store-houses where valuable properties of the *satra* including *saci-pat* manuscripts, richly decorated *sarais*. other utensils, ornaments etc, are kept.

Another feature of a *satra* institution, is the preservation and worship of relics such as *pada-sila, pira, paduka* etc. which are articles said to have been used by the *Gurus*. Another type of relic is the dust taken from the feet (*pada-dhula*) of the *Gurns*. The Balisatra of Nowgong preserves a little dust from Sankar's feet taken one day by the maid-servant, Candari. Another type or relic is some tree or herb associated with the *Gurus*, At Bardowa there is a *silikha* or myrobalam tree which has grown in the place where stood an older one lending its shadow to Sankardeva. The houses or rooms in the *hatis* or rows of houses or rooms within the enclosure are of equal size and are used as residences by the *Kewaliya bhakats* (celibate monks). Some huts or rooms in these rows are reserved for guests also. The *hati* which is situated on the eastern side contains larger houses or rooms which are the residences of the Superior or abbot, called *Satradhikara* or *Satriya* or *Gosain*, his deputy, the *Deka Adhikar* or *Deka Satriya* and the principal office bearers of the *satra* establishment all or whom are celibates. There are also *hatis* outside the enclosure for residence of the married clerics of the *satra*. Married *Satradhikaras* also reside in the *hatis* outside the enclosure. The different storehouses of *satra* property like rice, salt, molasses, coins etc., are generally constructed near the residence of the *Satradhikara*,

The *Satradhikara* is the head of the *satra* who is considered as *Guru* at the time of initiation of the adult before marriage. The *Gurus* are installed in most cases under conventional rights of succession and inheritance ; only in a few cases selection or election also takes place. The law of prime geniture is usually followed in the house-holding *satras*, while in the *satras* of celibates the *Deka Adhikar* succeeds him ceremoniously. The *Satradhikara* is assisted in the management of the *satra* and *satro* property including *Devottar* and *Brahmottar* lands (*Lakheraj* and *Nisf-kheraj* lands) by the *Deka Satriya* or *Adhikara* besides a number of office bearers such as *Bhagavati* or *Bhagati. Bar-Medhi. Nam-logowa, Deuri* or *Biloniya, Bhorali, Hatimata* etc. The office bearers are generally paid in cash or in kind. Some villages or lands of disciples are pegged to each *Bhakat* who collects from these, gifts of land-produce and gets a share out of it for his maintenance. The system of *Guru-Kar* payable by the lay disciples in the villages is prevalent in the district. Such *Guru-Kar* (religious tax) consists of both cash and kind and is collected by the *Gosain* when he visits the villages or through a local agent or medhi who transmits the collection to the *Gosain*. Another source of income of a *satra* is that from fines imposed upon the guilty.

Through the establishment of the *satra* institution Sankardev brought about a religious, social and cultural revolution in Assam. The *satra* institution

during the last few hundred years of its existence has enriched Assamese life in various spheres, besides religion. It also acts as the repository of the long heritage of Assamese literature, art and culture. One of the most notable contributions of the *satra* institution is the upliftment of the backward classes and tribes by proselytising them into the fold of Vaishnavism. All the principal *satras* used to maintain sanskrit *tols* for spread of learning and education. By performance of religious dramas accompanied by dance and music (*bhaonas*) the *satra* also helps in diffusion of religious knowledge and learning besides providing entertainment to the audience. The *satra* institution also developed and preserved the art of wood and ivory carving. In short, the cultural history of Assam grew up and developed almost entirely till the advent of the British around the satra institution.[37] It has a large say in moulding and remoulding Assamese life and culture.

Bardowa Than : Bardowa, also known as Batadraba is the place of early life and activities of Sankardeva, the great founder of new-Vaishnavism. There he built a *Kirtanghar*. The *bhakats* assembled here to listen to religious discourse from the great saint, Sankardeva, who in collaboration with them performed religious dramas (*bhaonas*) to attract people to the new faith. He had to leave this *than* in about 1516 A.D. at the age of 67 years because of atrocities caused by the Kacharis. It appears that after his departure the *than* was defunct and remained. So for more than 140 years being covered by jungle.

It was during the reign of Jayadhwaj Sinha (1654-63 A.D.) that Damodar, a great grandson of Sankardeva discovered the Bardowa *than*. Damodar was the son of the son of Sankardeva's grand-daughter. Her father was Haricharan. Damodar was aided by Kanaklata (Lakshmi Ai) in identifying the *than*. Kanaklata was also related to Sankardev being the wife of Sankardev's grand-son Chaturbhuj. With royal favour Damodar reestablished the *than* under guidance of Tansu Phukan. No chronological account of the events that took place in this fount of Vaishnavism, during the following period has come to light.

The *than* was jointly managed by the successors of Damodar and Suvadra, daughter of Chaturbhuj who has been already alluded to. It was bifurcated during the reign of Kamaleswar Sinha in 1799 A.D. The part inherited by Damodar's branch was known as Bardowa Barphal or Barhisha and the other as Bardowa Saruphal or Saruhisha. Each constructed separate *Kirtanghars* and followed the law of primogeniture. In place of these two *kirtanghars* a new *Kirtanghar* was erected on modern lines, in 1958 (510 *Sankarabda*).

37, S. K. Sharma, *The Satra Institution of Assam, in Aspects of the Heritage of Assam*, Indian History Congress-Twenty-second session, Gauhati, 1959, p. 54-55.

Saivism : Another cult of Hinduism is *Saivism*, the counterpart of *Saktism*. It is concerned with the worship of the procreative energy as manifested in the male in the form of god *Siva*. Unlike Darrang, there are only a very few *Siva* temples in Nowgong district. This shows that this special form of Hindu religion was not widely practised in Nowgong in the past. According to 1901 census there were only 644 *saivites* in Nowgong district.

The Muslims : In 1971 the Muslim community had 6,62,181 persons in Nowgong forming 39.39 per cent of the total population against 4,99,320 persons forming 41.24 per cent of the total population in 1961. During the decade the community showed the growth rate of 32.62 per cent. It is very interesting to note that the Muslims who had only 12,578 members or less than 5 per cent of the total population of the district in 1901 tremendously increased during the last seventy years by 6,49,603 persons or by more than fifty-two times their total strength in 1901. Large exodus of Muslim immigrants are largely responsible for the high density and the high growth rate in the district.

Nearly all the Muslims in Nowgong are of the *Sunui* sect. At the beginning of the current century the Muslims formed a small community. They were fairly free from Hindu superstitions. However, they consulted Hindu *Pandits* to ascertain auspicious days and also followed some Hindu customs and festivals. B.C. Allen observed as followes : "They also observe the *nowai tolani* and *nowai* ceremonies, when a girl attains puberty or is married, and bathe their cattle on the occasion of the *Bihu*. A class of semi-Muhammadans called *dhakari* worship *Bishohari*, the goddess of snakes. The Morias are a section of the Muhammadans who are said to be the descendants of 900 men who were taken prisoner when Turbak was defeated in 1532. They were first employed to tend the Ahom elephants but offered grass to their tails instead of to their trunks. They were then ordered to grow paddy but they plastered the seedlings over with mud. They were finally made braziers, and at the present day are to some extent looked down upon by their co-religionists. Service is usually held in a small thatched hut, and there is no organised system for the propagation of the faith. In spite of this, conversions occasionally take place."[38]

The Christians : Nowgong had only 593 Christians in 1901. However, their number grew in subsequent years due to conversion of local people particularly the tea garden labourers and other indigenous tribes through efforts of christian missioneries. During the decade 1921-31 they had 5,043 members showing an increase of 72.4 per cent and recording an overall increase of 1,109.4 per cent between 1891-1931. In 1951 the Community suffered a set back due mainly to transfer of a large area inhabited by tribals as already discussed.

38. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Nowgong*, Calcutta 1905 p. 93.

During 1961-71 the Christians showed a growth rate of 66.30 per cent but claimed only 0.71 per cent of the total population of the district with 1,1879 members. Only 508 male and 380 females of the community lived in urban areas. This shows that the great bulk of the Christians are in the tea gardens and tribal villages. It appears that Christianity which claims less than one per cent of the population has not made much impact in Nowgong district during the last seventy years or so.

Other minor Religious Communities : In 1971 only 3,329 persons forming 0.20 per cent of the people of Nowgong belonged to other religious communities such as Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains each claiming 1,763 ; 222, and 1,344 persons or 0.11; 0.01 and 0.08 per cent respectively of the total population of the district. Sikhs and Jains show a growth rate of 30.79 and 53.95 per cent but Buddhists declined by 29.52 per cent during the decade.

Castes, Classes and Tribes : Nowgong 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 central portion 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 limitations. Salient featuresof some of the castes and tribes inhabiting the district are indicated below.

Brahmins : The Brahmins are believed to be the early inhabitants of Assam. The Nidhanpur Grant shows that as early as the 6th century A.D. Bhutivarman (510-555 A.D.) donated lands to as many as 205 Brahmin families. Various other 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 Kamarupa[39] (ancient Assam).

It is interesting to note that Parasurama is believed to have washed his blood stains of matricide at Brahmakunda and regained his sainthood. Traditional account also indicates that Parasuram settled Brahmins near the present

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

Parasuram Kunda. Many of the old temples were constructed by the Bhuyans in the north bank of the district, where deities were worshipped. All these show that from early times the Brahmins inhabited the tract which now comprises the district. The population of the Brahmins possibly swelled up following the influx of Brahmins from other parts of India at various times. However, the Brahmins constitute only, a small fraction of the total population.

Apart from observing the sacramental rites prescribed by *Halayudha* or *Pasupati*. the Brahmins also practise *Sandhya* and *Yapa*, The *Upanayan* 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.

Kayasthas : Kayasthas are believed to be *Kshatriya* and in some *Smrities* such as *Vishnu* and *Yagnavalka Kayasthas* are mentioned as administrative officers and keepers of public accounts. In *Kamrup Sasanavali* it has been shown that in the Nidhanpur Grant the terms *Karanika* and *Kayastha* are used in the sense of officers and scribes.[40] Among the donees of the Nidhanpur Grant there were Kayasthas and Nagar Brahmins with surnames *datta, soma,* and *nandi* etc. The Kayasthas are a distinct caste who, according to P. C. Choudhury, made their way to Assam at an early period.[41] The Baro-Bhuyans who settled in areas which are included in the Darrang and Nowgong districts and North Lakhimpur sub-division were Kayasthas ; but a few among the Bara-Bhuyans were Brahmins as well. Sankardeva, the great saint-poet of Assam was a Kayastha by caste.

The Kayasthas observe some of the sacramental rites such as *Annaprasanam* and *Sudakarana*. The marriage and *Sradha* ceremonies are performed according to the *sastras*, The Kayasthas do not plough the land by themselves and earn their livelihood mostly by intellectual pursuits. There are many *Satradhikars* (heads of religious institution called *Satras*) of this caste. These people have been traditionally associated with preaching *Vaishnavism* and have large numbers of disciples.

Kalitas : According to B.K. Kakati, Kalitas are not indigenous people of Assam.[42] They came to Assam from Mithila, Kanauj and some other places

40. P, N. Bhattacharya, *Kamrup Sasanavali* ; p. 43.
41. P. C. Choudhury, *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam, to the Twelfth Century A.D.* Gauhati, 1959 p. 338.
42. B. K. Kakati, *Kalita Jatir Itibritta* ; p. 2.

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Other minor Religious Communities : In 1971 only 3,329 persons forming 0.20 per cent of the people of Nowgong belonged to other religious communities such as Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains each claiming 1,763 ; 222, and 1,344 persons or 0.11; 0.01 and 0.08 per cent respectively of the total population of the district. Sikhs and Jains show a growth rate of 30.79 and 53.95 per cent but Buddhists declined by 29.52 per cent during the decade.

Castes, Classes and Tribes : Nowgong 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 central portion 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 limitations. Salient featuresof some of the castes and tribes inhabiting the district are indicated below.

Brahmins : The Brahmins are believed to be the early inhabitants of Assam. The Nidhanpur Grant shows that as early as the 6th century A.D. Bhutivarman (510-555 A.D.) donated lands to as many as 205 Brahmin families. Various other 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 Kamarupa[39] (ancient Assam).

It is interesting to note that Parasurama is believed to have washed his blood stains of matricide at Brahmakunda and regained his sainthood. Traditional account also indicates that Parasuram settled Brahmins near the present

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

Parasuram Kunda. Many of the old temples were constructed by the Bhuyans in the north bank of the district, where deities were worshipped. All these show that from early times the Brahmins inhabited the tract which now comprises the district. The population of the Brahmins possibly swelled up following the influx of Brahmins from other parts of India at various times. However, the Brahmins constitute only, a small fraction of the total population.

Apart from observing the sacramental rites prescribed by *Halayudha* or *Pasupati*. the Brahmins also practise *Sandhya* and *Yapa*, The *Upanayan* 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.

Kayasthas : Kayasthas are believed to be *Kshatriya* and in some *Smrities* such as *Vishnu* and *Yagnavalka Kayasthas* are mentioned as administrative officers and keepers of public accounts. In *Kamrup Sasanavali* it has been shown that in the Nidhanpur Grant the terms *Karanika* and *Kayastha* are used in the sense of officers and scribes.[40] Among the donees of the Nidhanpur Grant there were Kayasthas and Nagar Brahmins with surnames *datta, soma,* and *nandi* etc. The Kayasthas are a distinct caste who, according to P. C. Choudhury, made their way to Assam at an early period.[41] The Baro-Bhuyans who settled in areas which are included in the Darrang and Nowgong districts and North Lakhimpur sub-division were Kayasthas ; but a few among the Bara-Bhuyans were Brahmins as well. Sankardeva, the great saint-poet of Assam was a Kayastha by caste.

The Kayasthas observe some of the sacramental rites such as *Annaprasanam* and *Sudakarana*. The marriage and *Sradha* ceremonies are performed according to the *sastras*, The Kayasthas do not plough the land by themselves and earn their livelihood mostly by intellectual pursuits. There are many *Satradhikars* (heads of religious institution called *Satras*) of this caste. These people have been traditionally associated with preaching *Vaishnavism* and have large numbers of disciples.

Kalitas : According to B.K. Kakati, Kalitas are not indigenous people of Assam.[42] They came to Assam from Mithila, Kanauj and some other places

40. P, N. Bhattacharya, *Kamrup Sasanavali* ; p. 43.
41. P. C. Choudhury, *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam, to the Twelfth Century A.D.* Gauhati, 1959 p. 338.
42. B. K. Kakati, *Kalita Jatir Itibritta* ; p. 2.

of India, during the reign of Dharmpala (1095-1120 A.D.). In the *Kathaguru-charita*, we find reference to the *Kalita-desha*. B. K. Kakati has shown that this *Kalita-desha* was located at a distance of about fifteen days walk to Assam plains from the Abor and the Miri Hills. Thus it appears that Nowgong district was once the stronghold of the Kalitas. The traditional account of their origin that they were *Kshatriyas* who concealed their caste for fear of Parusurama has been reflected by some scholars of Assam.[43] That the Kalitas were a powerful caste in the past is proved by the accounts of foreign travellers such as Shihabuddin who divided the people of Assam into two groups -- the Ahoms and the Kalitas. Dalton has described the physical features of the Kalitas as follows. "The Kolitas exhibit a greater variety of complextion, and, on the whole, are not so fair, as the Ahoms and Chutias or as the people of hills, but they have oval faces, well shaped heads, high noses, large eyes, well-developed eye-lids and eye-lashes, and the light supple frame of the pure Hindu.[44] M. Martin, refers to the Kalitas who served as priests of some other castes. B. K. Kakati, however, believes that Martin, might have alluded to the Moamarias of Assam, in this connection.[45]

Where necessary, the Kalitas engage Brahmin priests to conduct religious rites. They have professed various religious faiths and observe several sacramental rites prescribed in the *Dharma sastras*. One section of the Kalitas were known as Barkalitas ; but this sub-division has now lost its earlier significance. Although the Kalitas are mainly agriculturists, they have taken to many more avocations to earn their livelihood.

Rajbansis or Koches : The Koches are one of the race castes of Assam. Originally they were an aboriginal tribe, apparently of Mongolian origin which at the beginning of the sixteenth century rose to power under their great leader Visva Sinha. His son, Nara Narayana, extended his conquests as far as upper Burma, and by the middle of the sixteenth century. Koch 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, and the different groups there are allotted a different status, which is dependent on the time that has elapsed since conversion took place and the extent to which aboriginal habits have been shaken off.

43. Kaliram Medhi, *The Kalitas, in the Journal of Assam Research Society ;* Vol. III, No. 3 ; p. 75.
44. E. T. Dalton, *Tribal History of Eastern India,* Reprint, Delhi, 1973, p. 79.
45. B. K. Kakati, *Kalita Jatir Itibritta* ; p. 16

Keots : While in certain districts, for example, in the Barpeta sub-division of Kamrup, they are generally known as *Kamars* or blacksmiths, in Nowgong this profession of blacksmith has been adopted by even Kalitas. Besides this occupation, they have taken to agriculture and other trades. The observance of sacramental rites is confined only to a few major ones, among the keots.

Barias : The Barias are a caste peculiar to Assam ; the term Baria is said to have been derived from '*Bari*' meaning a widow. In general, they are said to have originated from the off spring of a Brahmin widow by a *sudra* husband. The children of Brahmin girls married to *Sudras* are also called Barias. The marriage of Brahmin girl by a *Sudra*, however does not make the latter Baria now a days, although the sub-caste includes the people who happened to be regarded as Barias in the distant past. Some of the people of this sub-caste call themselves Sut, but Sut is a a different sub caste.

Suts : The appellation is believed to be derived from Sut, the expounder of the *Puranas* who was himself the son of a Brahmin widow. A large section of the Suts are followers of *Vaishnavism*. They observe those customary rites which in manners and customs do not differ materially from those of other castes who till the land by themselves.

Yogis (*Naths*) : 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 *Jugis*. 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".[46] The Jugis wear the holy thread which they call *yogapatra*, but unlike the Brahmins they plough the land by themselves. They observe the permissible and impermssible limits of relationship in marriage. Previously pre-puberty 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 uncleanliness *Sradha* ceremony is performed according to rites codified in the *smritis*.

46. S. B. Dasgupta, *Obscure Religious Cults ;* p. 228.

Kaivarttas or Jaliyas : 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 Sri Sankardeva 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 remanants of other functional groups of the Hindus are found in several sub-castes 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 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 who migrated into Assam in the 13th century from Burma. They entered Assam in the early part of the thirteenth century (1228 A.D.), and gradually extended their sway over the whole of the Brahmaputra Valley. 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 *Handiqui* ; 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 sub-divided into a number of sub-groups 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 *Kendu-guria Barpatra Phoid*, was absorbed in the family of the king, as its founder Kancheng 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*. *Gharfalas* and others, with whom Ahoms of the upper classes

will not inter-marry".[47] 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 inter marriage 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 *Chaklong*, 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 pastroral surroundings. With such a 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 carefully maintained and they were checked in every reign, the 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, Dhoba, Miri, Mogul and Muslims".[48]

The Sikhs : The Sikh people are found to inhabit the villages of Barkola, Chaparmukh and Hatipara of this district in considerable numbers. No definite information is available as to their migration from the Punjab or any historical event that can be connected with their first settlement in these villages. The people claim that they are direct descendants of Chaitanya Singh who was

47. E. A. Gait, *A History of Assam* ; Calcutta, Reprint 1967, p. 257-58
48. S. K. Bhuyan, *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, Gauhati, 1949, p. 15.

an army Commander of Chandra Kanta Sinha (1810—1818 A.D.) and are living in these villages for generations. Some of their people have also migrated from Barkola for permanent settlement in Lanka of this district. Due to their long association with Assamese society they have assimilated in it adopting its language and culture. But they have maintained their identity as Sikhs inspite of absence of inter-communion with the parent state of the Punjab. Of course, this cannot be said of the recent Punjab migrants who have come in course of different trades, professions and services. Sikhism believes in oneness of God and is hence monistic. For all religious, customary and spiritual pursuits, the *Adi Granth* or *Guru Granth Sahib* is the centre of worship and is kept in the *Gurdwara* (temple). The cardinal aspect of this religion is the recital and prayer of this holy *Guru Granth Sahib*, All religious and social customs like *namsanskara* of a newly born child, *saradha* and wedding (*Anand Karaj*) and baptism (*Amrit peacher*) etc., are performed in presence and in accordance with the mandates of the *Adi Granth*, They all begin and end with *ardosa* (prayer) by all, in congregration, in standing position with folded hands. *Sangat*, congregational prayer and eating together from the same kitchen called *Guru-Ka-langar* are the counter-parts of *Namakirtan* and community feasting of the Assamese Vaishnavites.

There is little difference in respect of dress between the Assamese Sikh and other Assamese. Yet their dress has some distinctive features. It is customary that all males must not shave either the hair on the head or beards. The hairs are tied in a knot with a comb towards the fore-head and covered with a turban (*Pagri*) projecting towards the forehead. A steel *bala* is to be worn by every male or female. Another special dress is the *Kvas* worn by the males as underwear. It is also customary that a male should take a *Kripan* (a kind of sword) with him when going out. The females wear in addition to sarees Assamese dress and ornaments. Agriculture is the main occupation of the Sikhs in Nowgong.

Lalungs : The Lalungs who numbered 54,797 and formed 4.5 per cent of the population of Nowgong district in 1961 are concentrated mainly in the south-western tract of the district. They call themselve *Tiua* which in their language means the people who were lifted from below. They are one of the autochthonous people of Assam. It appears that 'Lalung' is a Mikir word formed of two parts, '*Lang*' and '*Lung*' meaning 'water' and 'to sink in it' respectively. The story goes that during the invasion of Assam by *Man* (Burmese) the Lalungs were driven from the eastern part of their habitat in the plains towards the Kalang river of Nowgong district. In their attempt to cross the river they were drowned and were rescued by the Mikirs. After this incident the Mikir people started calling them *lang-lung* which later changed to Lalung.

Certain accounts connect the Lalung with Hindu tradition and myths. There is a belief that the original language of the Lalungs was Sanskrit and that they were *Kshatriyas*. When Parasuram set out to destroy all the *Kshatriyas* to avenge the death of his father at the hand of a king named Sahasrabahu Arjuna, the Lalungs decided to go to hiding and escaped to the Lailung hill on the northern side of the Brahmaputra. They stopped speaking Sanskrit and discarded the sacred thread. Eventually they forgot their original tradition and language. When they returned to their homeland they were not recognised as *Kshatriyas* but were called *Lalungs* after the Lailung hill where they hid themselves so long.

Yet another story attributes their origin to the God *Mahadev* one of the Holy Trinity of the Hindus. One day *Mahadev* fell into a deep sleep after taking a huge quantity of *lao-pani* (rice bear). Saliva rolled down from both sides of his mouth. Since things coming out from the body of a God may not be wasted a man and a women were born of the saliva. They were the first Lalung couple. Tradition also has that as the Lalungs were born from the mouth of *Mahadev* they were endowed with the capacity of keeping in memory their songs and lore.

According to belief their original home land was Helem in the eastern part of Darrang district. After they had lived there for centuries dispute arose between them and the Bodos. Eventually they left that place and after crossing the Brahmaputra settled at Charaideo. They did not live long at this place. They left Charaideo to be occupied by Chutiyas a separate tribe - with whom they claim to have many similarities. They migrated south-west by the fringes of Mikir Hills and entered the Khasi and Jaintia Hills. There they settled at a place called Khyrim and lived many years under the Jaintia king. Again dispute arose among them and a large number migrated to the north to the plains of Nowgong.

This tribe can be divided into two groups - hill Lalungs and plain Lalungs. "In their settlement pattern, there are environmental differences. In the hills, dwelling houses are built on high knoll. Every house has a small patch of kitchen garden and a courtyard well protected on all sides with bamboo stakes. The living house has a rectangular ground plan with thatched gabled roof on the top. The door is at the end overlooking the courtyard. In the plains they build their houses on plinth. The materials used are available in forest. But they always build their granaries on stilts. The houses are generally two-roofed each having a door but no window. In the homestead three houses are often built enclosing a courtyard on three sides. One is for sleeping, one for cooking and eating (which is known as family *Barghar*) and the other is for storing paddy."

Agriculture is their main occupation. They rear pigs and fowls and as such their houses are devoid of fruit trees which are found in Assamese houses.

Their staple food is rice. *Chu* or country liquor prepared and brewed from rice plays an important part in all their rituals. They eat the flesh of all domestic animals except the cow.

According to one account Lalungs have twelve main clans which are named after the places where they lived in originally. Each clan has its own sacred house (*Barghar*) and its presiding deity is *Mahadev*. In the Census of 1961 a list of twenty-seven *phoids* or clans has been given which is said to be not exhaustive. Besides there are numerous sub-divisions of each *phoid*.[49]

Lalung clans are strictly exogamous. Though marriage through negotiation is the usual practice they prefer marriage by elopement. Child marriages are unknown among them and polygamy is not common. A widow can remarry and can claim the hand of her deceased husband's brother. The Lalungs originally formed a matrilineal group and continue to be so even to day in the hills. But those who have settled in the plains tend to be patrilineal.

They cremate their dead in a specially erected pyre. For post-funeral ceremony they do not have any fixed time limit. Generally every three or four years all the members of clan together perform the post-funeral ceremony for all those who died during the period.

Their villages are well organised and all disputes are decided by the village-council (*Bura-khel*). In the hill areas custom of separate sleeping houses for the unmarried youths and maidens is still kept up. But in the plains this institution is not functioning. However, its aims and traditions still survive in the community works by young men. The dormitories is now used as a club-house by the young boys and as meeting place for the village council. The leader of the young men *Changdoloi* plays an important part in community life. The organisation and responsibility of the spring festival *Sagramechewa which* is held in March is borne by him. The *Loro* and *Deuri* are two other important village functionaries who conduct rituals. They perform a number of religious ceremonies like *Magh Pisu* (Magh Bihu) in January, *Sagramechewa* and *Barsela* in March. *Boisag Pisu* (*Boisag Bihu*) in April, *Jongkhong Puja* in May, *Mahadev Puja* in August, *Laiyiu Rakhewana* in September and *Washirawana* in October.[50]

Boro-Kacharis : The Boro or the Bora-Kachari belonged to a distinct racial group of people living in the north-eastern India. According to

49. *Census of India*, 1961, *Vol, III, Assam, part V-A, Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes*, p. 14.
50. N. K. Shyam Choudhury and M. M. Das, *The Lalung Society*, a monograaph, Pub., the Director of Anthropological Survey of India.

S. K· Chatterjee[51] and Fr. Matthias Harmannas they belong to Indo-Mongoloid (*kiratas*) Group which include 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 cheeck 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".[52] The Boros in Assam and Bengal are easily distinguishable from the Assamese and Bengalis in respect of their physical characteristics.

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 primirily 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 provisions of 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 alter 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-Kachari 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 bear 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

51. S. N. Chatterjee, *KIRATA-JANA-KRTI. The Indo-Mongoloids ; their contributions to the History and Culture of India, Calcutta*, 1951, p. 13.
52. Fr. M. Harmannas, *The Indo-Tibetans, Bombay*, 1954, p. 88.

The Kachari women command respect in their community ; their position is never regarded inferior to that of a man. 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 Boro women are expert weavers and weave their weaving apparels.

Another tribe inhabiting the district in notable strength is the Mikir or *Arleng*. A full account of this tribe is found in the Gazetteer of United Mikir and North Cachar Hills district where this tribe inhabits predominantly.

(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. 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 it is found that families tend to break up into smaller units under new socio-economic influences and the joint family system is loosing 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 Nowgong district, as revealed in 1961 Census.

Age group	Total population		Never married		Married	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
All ages ..	6,45,690	5,65,071	4,05,849	3,42,230	2,27,906	2,08,923
10-14 ..	70,666	59,407	70,648	58,826	16	564
15-19 ..	48,024	47,993	45,720	32,374	2,282	15,532
20-24 ..	47,711	49,616	36,866	19,529	10,759	29,916
25-29 ..	55,709	46,802	26,838	9,519	28,725	36,959
30-34 ..	44,749	35,185	9,483	1,256	34,891	33,271
35-39 ..	39,053	25,011	2,997	248	35,192	23,266

The universality of marriage is an important feature of the social life in the district. 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 44% of the married males, fall within the age-group of 25-39 years and 55% of the married females fall within the age group 15-34 years.

Monogamy and Polygamy : Monogamy is common among all sections of people of the district ; but it was not compulsory among the Hindus till the enforcement of the Hindu Marriage Act (1955). The Muslims follow the practice of ploygamy in the manner prescribed by the Muslim law, but it is not usually preferred by many of them. The tribal people of the district are mostly monogamous.

Polyandry is prohibited among all sections of people. Polygamy is allowed by the Kacharis, although monogamy is the general rule among them.

Marriage customs regarding gifts to the bride : Two, three or five days prior to the marriage the Assamese Hindu bridegroom sends some gifts including ornaments, bridal dress,fish, betel-nuts, some other titbits and cosmetics of which scented oil is an essential component. This is known as *jorandiya*. The parents of the bride also present some furniture, utensils and ornaments to the bride when she leaves for the house of the bridegroom. The practice of dowry is not prevalent amongst the local Hindu people ; but those Hindus who hail from other parts of India follow their own customs in this respect. The practice of "*Muhar*" is followed by the Muslims.

Marriage customs and rituals : Among the Hindus, the 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. The practice of *jorandiya* takes place on the commencing day in the manner described above. During the nuptial festivities the bride and the bridegroom take ceremonial baths known as *nowani*. The-night before the day fixed for marriage is is called *adhivasa*, *Gathian-khunda* is the only ceremony that takes place on this night. An aromatic root called *gathian* is ceremoniously powdered and put on the head of the bride. On the marriage day the ceremony of *daiyana* is performed in the following manner. The bride sits in front of the door of her bedroom ; a female relative touches her cheeks, arms and feet with a pair of betel leaves dipped in curd.

On the marriage day the *sradha* ceremony is performed at about 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 proce-

ssion to the bride's house. The ceremony of *swag tola* takes place in the brides' 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-cauldiya* 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 consumated when 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, run-away 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 ; never-theless the inter-caste or sub-caste marriages are infrequent among them.

Drinking and gambling : Total prohibition of opium, *ganja* and *bhang* for oral use has been in force in the district. Prohibition of liquor which was already in force in the Kamrup district has also been extended to Nowgong dis-trict with effect from 1.4.60.

Before the introduction of total prohibition in Nowgong drinking was very common among tea garden labourers, some industrial labourers and the tribal people. Religious taboos scarcely deterred many non-tribals from drinking which they took in a moderate scale. However, the caste Hindus, Budhists, Jains and Muslims generally speaking loathed drinking. It is quite likely that the immitation of the western ways of life as brought in by the Europeans during the British rule induced a section of people other than labourers to take to drinks. The tea industry which is one of the gifts of the British rule, brought in among many others drinking which kept the labour class in a state of penury for decades.

The labourers, tribal people and others of lower strata were used to drink country liquor which they procured from either licensed liquor shops or distilled in their indigenous ways. It is already pointed out that the tribal people were used to drinking rice-beer prepared by themselves. However, the habit of drink-ing among these people is gradually being reduced by total prohibition.

(iii) Home Life : In the past the homestead of a rural family generally consisted of two or more houses with betel-nuts, plantains and vegetable gardens, in front of and at the back of the houses. The whole premises being often sur-rounded by a fence of split bamboo presented a very picturesque scene. They

built their houses almost in the centre of the compound with provision for a front yard (*chotal*) which the females always kept neat and clean. The front house was called the *charaghar* (reception house) the middle one as the *maral-ghar* (living house) and the third as the *barghar* (cookshed) and besides they had *gohalighar* (cowshed), *bhoralghar* (granary) and also in most cases a *gosainghar* (prayerhouse). They built the houses with bamboo, *ekra* and thatch. Wooden posts were also used when found handy in the locality. However, after Indepen-dence many rural people have evinced keen interest in improving their housing conditions. Those who can afford it have constructed their houses on modern lines using corrugated iron sheet and cement. The old houses are now being gradually replaced by *pucca* houses.

Changes have also taken place in furniture. Previously, *chalpira* (woo-den bed), *tamuli-pira* (low wooden stool), various kinds of mat such as *Kath, merdhara, dhara, bardhara, patidhara* etc., were the furniture commonly used. These have been replaced now by bedsteads, chairs, tables, benches etc. Even decorative furniture including costly sofa-sets are in growing use among the affluent people.

Bell-metal and brass utensils such as *bankahi, banbati, kahi, bati. lota, ghati, charia, sarai, bata,* etc. were in common use. Cups, plates and dishes of china clay and of glass, aluminium and plastic utensils and other modern products which are generally used in the urban areas are also in increasing use in the rural areas.

Male dress includes *dhoti, chadar, shirt, trouser* and modern pant and coat. Female dress consists of *riha, mekhela, chadar* and *blouse*, and orna-ments include *keru, mani, kharu, jhangphai-keru, dugdugi bena*, necklace, chain, earring, *balas* etc. Gold and silver ornaments are preferred. Cheap gilded ornaments are also avialable. In ancient times the craftsmen of Assam engaged in enamelling gold and silver jewellery and making jewellery of solid gold and silver were widely known for the high degree of perfection which they attained. The traditional and typical Assamese ornaments found in the district are *dhol-biri*. The *jon-biri, bana, dugdugi, galpata, gamkharu, thuria* and *lokaparo*. 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 *thuria* is worn in the ear. It is made of gold and set with rubies and emerald. However, with the advent of the jewellers from other parts of India, traditional patterns have been virtually wiped out.

Tribal women put 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. Vegetables, 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 : Hindus festival : Many festivals are observed in this district by the Hindus with varying degrees of enthusiasm. As the district is predominated by the *Mahapurushia* sect who are opposed to idolatry, the *Durga puja* and other idol worships are generally of lesser importance except in towns and tea-garden areas. But the *Durga puja* has of late assumed increasing popularity among all people irrespective of sect or religion. It is held in the month of September or October and continues for four days. The people especially in towns and tea-gardens become agog with *puja* festivities from the *Mahalaya* day. Brisk preparations are made for days in all the *puja* centres. The image of goddess *Durga* is installed ceremoniously on the day prescribed by the almanac and the festival continues for the following four days accompanied by *melas*, theatrical performances and cultural shows. On the last of the festival the immersion of the idol into some running water or pool is ceremoniously performed.

Now-a-days, the *sankar-uttsav* observed side by side with the *Durga-puja* has enhanced the festive atmosphere of the *puja* days.

Another religious festival of considerable importance in Nowgong is the *Doljatra*, held in honour of Lord Krishna in February or March. The image of Krishna rested in an *asana* is moved out of the shrine and is mounted on a *doul* which is an elevated earthen pedestal. A *pandal* is constructed for the occasion. After performing necessary rituals, *nam-kirtan* is held followed by *bhaona*. The following day the image of the god rested in the *asana* is carried in a procession and all throwing red powder (*phaku*) at one another. This is in memory of Krishna's amorous exploits with the milk-maids of Brindaban. *Doljatra* styled *fagua* is an occasion of boisterous merry-making among the tea-garden labourers and other immigrant Hindus.

Another religious festival celebrated in this district is the *Sivaratri* which is observed in February-March with much *eclat* in the *Siva* temples. In Burhagohain in the Barkolagaon forest and in Sivasthan near about Rangagora

Lord *Siva* is worshipped and big *melas* with *nam-prasanga*, and *bhaonas* are held. People from far-flung areas flock to these *melas*. This is an occasion for fasting and not feasting. Another such festival is the *Janmastami*, observed in August or September in honour of the birth of Lord Krishna.

Rasa-utsav a festival held in November, in the memory of Lord Krishna's amorous gestures with the milkmaids of Brindaban; is gaining popularity in the district. *Biswa-Karma puja*, *Lakhmi puja*, *Saraswati puja*, etc. are also observed annually. *Saraswati puja* is mainly confined to students. *Kalipuja* coincides with *Diwali*, Houses are illuminated in the evening by small earthen lamps (*chakis*) burning mustard oil. In the towns houses and buildings are often illuminated with culoured electric bulbs. It is a joyous occasion marked by crackers and fireworks. A certain amount of gambling is often indulged in by young people.

The special festivals of the Assamese are the three *Bihus* and *tithis* or death anniversary ceremonies of Sri Sri Sankardev and Sri Sri Madhavdeva, the founders of the *Mahapurushia* sect of Vaishnavism. The Assamese people observe three *Bihus* in the year, the *Rangali Bihu*, *Bhogali Bihu*, and *Kati Bihu*. The 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* (October) and is not an occasion of very much importance. Hymns are sung out-doors in honour of God near *Tulasi* plant and in place of their usual meals of rice and curry,people take curds, molasses, bananas and *chira*. The *Magh Bihu* or the *Bhogali Bihu* begins on the last day 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*, the villagers feast in a grass-hut that has 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's and children's festival and most of the merriment is confined to the youth and smaller boys who sing and dance. Buffalo fights are organised in the rice fields, but these contests are rather tame affairs and the animals very seldom injure one another. The *Rangali Bihu* also called the *Bohag Bihu* begins on the last day of *Chaitra* and the first day of *Bohag* which is the Assamese New Years Day. It is a spring festival, where dance and music is predominant. The cattle are smeared with oil, mixed with *matikalai*, turmeric, and rice and are then taken to nearest stream or river and bathed. The villagers go from house to house singing hymns and pastoral songs and offering greetings. The *Bihu* is now observed as a national festival by the Assamese people and it serves to promote unity among different creeds and communities. The *Bihu-geets* constitute a prolific variety of songs in Assamese literature. The central theme of these songs is love in its different moods.

Social visits is an integral part of the *Bihus*. In the *Rangali-Bihu*. the cattle are bathed in the river. After the bath garlands made of brinjal and bottle gourd pieces are placed on their neck and a pastoral song is sung which in essence seeks to propitiate them to multiply year by year. The death anniversary of Sri Sri Sankardeva is celebrated in August, September and that of Sri Sri Madhavdeva three days before the *Janmastami*. All work is laid aside on these two days and the people devote their time to the singing of hymn and eating *prasads*. The *tithi* of Sri Damodardeva is also similarly observed by the *Bamuniya* sect of the Vaisnavites.

The dates of *Janmastami* and *tithis* of the *Mahapurushas* coincide with the Assamese month of *Bhadra* which in this district is revered with great sanctity and observed with two times prayer (*nam-kirtan*) everyday in the *Namghars*. The *Bhadra Sankranti* is of much significance and is observed with night-long programmes of prayer-service (*nam-kirtan*) followed by a community feast next day. The *Namghar*, a legacy from Sri Sri Sankardeva is the community prayer hall and the meeting centre of the villagers for observance of all the religious festivals. It keeps alive the spirit of co-operative work and unity among the villagers. It also provides shelter for open theatre called the *bhaona*, which is the principal amusement in Nowgong, rather a socio-religio-cultural festival of the villagers. Every *Khel*, a small social unit in the village performs *bhaona* in the *Namghar* as an annual festival in which invitees from other *Khels* or villages are served with light entertainment. Sometimes several *Khels* combine together to perform a *bhaona*, called *baragayan bhaona* which is held in a specially constructed *pandal* or in a *baragayan Namghar* (as in the Ghahigaon *bar Namghar* of the schedule caste people). Most of the Vaishnavite families in Nowgong have also their family prayer houses (*Gosain ghars*) in which also prayers are held particularly in festive occasions. The musical instruments used in the *bhaonas* and *nam-kirtan* are the *Tal* (cymbal), the *Khol* (wooden instrument, the ends of which are covered with leather, and the body being covered with leather stripes-*borati*) and the *Nagara*, (a two piece musical instruments, one big and the other small, earthen and domesized, fitted with leathers).

Exquisite folk songs and ballads such as *biya-nam* (marriage songs), *tokari geet* (songs of the mendicants), *Ai-nam*, (sung in praise of Godess *Durga* to prevent the outbreak of epidemics), *Bihugeet*, and folk songs sung in honour of other deities, reverberate the sky on different occasions. The *Vaishnavite* poets introduced devotional songs, known as *Bargeet*, which form a part of the rural life, and display the musical talent both of the author and the singer. Parties of *Dhuliya* (drum beaters and) *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*, *Bhor-tal*, *Gong*, *Chiphung*, Flute, big *banhi*, (used by the Kacharis), *Daba*, *Dhol* (drum), *Khol* or *Mridanga* and *Pepa* of buffalo-horn etc.

Muslim festivals : Among the Muslim festivals mention must be made of the *Id-Uz-Zuha*, *Muharram*, *Fatiha-i-Duazdaham* 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 *Sunnis*, of whom there are large numbers in the district, observe it. *Taziyas* are brought out in procession which are marked by the display of mock fights. On the occasions of *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-Duazdaham* 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 of Mangaldai of Darrang district in particular. 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.

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 Kacharies. 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, 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), *Khobar* (the deity of the paddy fields), *Hasung Madai* (the god of the travellers), besides a host of others, such as *Dolah Gabang, Sharumaroi, Bura Gohain, Harani Madai* (Gods of woods) and *Daini Madai* (God of water). There are only a few festivals in which these spirits are propitiated.

(iv) Communal Life : Pilgrim centres : There are only a very few old temples and shrines in Nowgong district. All except two, the temple of Kamakhya at Silghat and Sadasib in Sadar-Circle are small temporary structures of reeds and thatch. They are unimportant from the architectural point of view. This dearth of old temples and shrines is due to the fact that neither *Saivism* nor *Saktism* was warmly accepted by the people of Nowgong in the past. The few that were erected were not repaired. The Kamakhya temple at Silghat founded by Kendukalai Borthakur in 1745 A.D. is built of stone and brick in the usual Ahom style. This is an important pilgrim centre where a big *mela* is held every year on the occasion of *Asokastami* in March-April. There are a few other temples such as Ambikanath Nandikisore, Saubhagyamadhab in Barbhagia *mauza* and Dulalmadhab in Pubtharia *mauza*. In the Dulal-madhab temple, *Vishnu Yajna* is performed every year with great solemnity. There are ruins of some other *Siva* temples where people go for making offerings. There is one such *Sibathan* known as *Buragosain than* in the Barkolagaon forest about 2 kms. south-east of Hatigarh village. People of the surrounding villages as well as from other parts of the district visit the *than* to pay offering to the deity which is regularly worshipped by a *pujari*. Each of the neighbouring villages perform *ankiya bhaona* annually in the *Namghar* attached to the brick built shrine. *Siva-ratri* is observed solemnly by the *than* committee by holding a big *mela*. Another pilgrim centre is *Akasi-Ganga* a water-fall in Parakhowa village about eleven kms. from Dabaka. Near it there are ruins of two *Siva* temples made of stone. In the Sahari *mauza* there is an altar to *Mahadev* where local people make sacrifices. *Madhab-Babar-than* is situated about thirteen kms. from Kampur in the Madhab *Parbat* on the bank of the Barapani-river. Both Hindu and Muslim pilgrims visit the *than* for fulfilment of their desires. Some remains of rock sculptures suggestive of primitive form of Bodo worship of *Kachai Khaiti* are found near Silghat. The Hatimuria temple, a brick-built temple dedicated to *Durga* was built in 1667 by Gadadhar Tarun Barua Barphukan at the instance of king Pramatta Sinha. This temple is said to be built on the ruins of an older stone temple of the ninth century. A very big *dao* used in the temple for human sacrifice in the past has now been brought to Gauhati and preserved in the Kamarup Anusandhan Samity. There is one *Bhagavati than* situated in Neli Barpayak village, in which are enshrined four stone images of female deities believed to be *Bhagavati, Mahamaya, Kachaikhati* and *Kanikuji*. The management

of the shrine rests with the Lalung community of the Barpayak village. It is the usual practice for the village king (as he is called) to offer sacrifice of goats, pigeons, ducks etc., every year before the *Bohag Bihu* at the altar of the *than*.

There are numerous *satras* in the district established by the *Vaishnavite* leaders. The important *satras* of the district are listed in the Appendix. A brief description of the Bardowa *satra* has been already furnished. Bardowa as the birth place of Shri Sankardev attracts a large number of pilgrims from all parts of the country.

Community dances and songs : *Rangali Bihu* is the festival where groups of people dance and sing the *bihugeet*. As the girls dance, the boys play on flute and beat drums and blow the *pepa* made of buffaloe-horn and *Toka*, an indigenous musical gadget made by splitting in the middle, about two feet long hollow 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 : Only a few indigenous games played by the young are mentioned here. *Dhopkhela* a game quite popular among children is played with a ball shaped *Dhop*, made of cloth. It is played by two teams. *Ghila khel* is another popular children's game played with *ghila*-tree seeds which are flat and round with a six inch diameter. *Vanta* is played generally by cowherd boys in the open field. *Lucka-bhaku* or *Lucka-churi* (hide and seek), *Dhora-gudu ; Bouchi-gudu. Kheda-gudu* or *Haigudu* are also played by the young children. *Dhora-gudu* resembles *Kabadi*. These games are played between two parties and the success of a party depends upon the physical strength, presence of mind and stamina of the players. There are various indigenous indoor games such as *Cowri khel, Dhal khel, Cheng khel,* & *Khalu guti khel* (a game played with fifty pebbles or seeds of certain trees) which are played on boards like checkers. Swimming, hunting, climbing, high-jump, pole-jump, tug-of-war, wrestling etc. are some other sports and pastimes. Till a few decades back, large tracts of the district were covered with jungle and plenty of deer and birds was found close to human habitation. These provided excellent opportunity for hunting. Professional wrestling is very rare in the district. However, on the occasions of *Rangali Bihu* and *Doljatra*, wrestling among the strong and healthy boys brings about a bundle of fun to the villagers.

Most of the indigenous games have now been replaced by western games and sports. Football competitions are arranged in the towns and in semi-urban centres. In Nowgong town the Nowgong Football Association arranges the annual league competition as well as the Independence Day Cup Tournament. This is one of the most important sporting events of Assam, in which renowned teams from all-over India, take part. The venue of this tournament and of other important matches like the Ranji Trophy cricket test is Jubilee *Pathar*. It is a well-kept field with a pavilion for players and galleries for spectators. This field is located in the heart of the town by the side of the Kalang river and is only a stone's throw away from the Deputy Commissioner's Court building. A sizable section of the spectators in foot-ball matches comprises women who have started evincing keen interest in the game. Cricket is a popular winter game but is played mostly in Nowgong town. Running commentaries on Test Matches attract both young and old. Tennis and Hockey are also confined to Nowgong town. Volley-ball and badminton are played even in rural areas. Indoor games like carroms, cards, chess and table tennis are played in the clubs of the district.

The number of recreation clubs is growing up both in the towns and villages. These clubs not only arrange annual sports but also provide library facilities and observe different festivals. Government also encourages the growth of such clubs providing grants-in-aid and other facilities.

APPENDIX

List of main temples in the district of Nowgong :

S. No.	Name of the temple	Location	Deity worshipped.
1	2	3	4
1.	Saubhagya Madhab	Kaliabor	Vishnu
2.	Dulal Madhab	Kaliabor	Vishnu
3.	Gopal Madhab	Kaliabor	Vishnu
4.	Kamakhya	Kaliabor	Durga-Kali
5.	Ambikanath	Barbhagia Mouza	
6.	Nandikisore	Borbhagia Mauza	Nandikeswar.
7.	Sadasib	Sadar Circle	Siva.
8.	Bura Gosaithan	Bura Gosaingaon	Siva.
9.	Madhab Gosai	Hatisung Godarbari	Saturbhuj Vishnu

List of important Satras in Nowgong district :

1. Ahatguri (Jajari)
2. Ahatguri (Kapahera)
3. Aibheti
4. Alengi
5. Balisatra
6. Balisatra (Kaliabor)
7. Balisatra (Jamunamukh)
8. Balisatra (Nowgong)
9. Baghara (Marigaon)
10. Barkarial
11. Banhbari
12. Bar Alengi (Kakatikata)
13. Bar Alengi (Balibhui)
14. Bar Alengi (Dagaon)
15. Bar Alengi (Majputani)
16. Barbhakati
17. Bardowa or Batadraba.
18. Barhampur
19. Barjaha
20. Bhagavati Satra (Marigaon)
21. Bhetiani Na Satra
22. Bholaguri (Kaliabor)
23. Bhugbari (Dighali)
24. Bihampur (Kuwarital)
25. Brahmachari
26. Charai Khurung.
27. Charipota
28. Chatiyal
29. Chenglai
30. Checha
31. Chipaha-Nanai Kumargaon
32. Chipaha-Kaliabor Sarubhagia
33. Chipaha-Kaliabor, Batbar
34. Chipaha-Kaliabor Barbhagia
35. Chipaha-Marigaon
36. Dahghar (Jelahi)
37. Dahghar (Hatichong Kathalkuchi)
38. Dahghar (Ulurbari)
39. Dahghar (Bhalukmari).
40. Dalaichuba
41. Daukachapari (Senchua)
42. Daukachapari (Kahuatali, Hojgaon)
43. Dhavali
44. Dichiyal, Raidangiagaon
45. Diphalu.
46. Gajala (Amtala)
47. Gajala (Marikalang)
48. Gajala (Bhotaigaon)
49. Gajala (Saukajan)
50. Gonamara
51. Govindamisra (Horosha)
52. Habi Barangabari
53. Harimisra (Puranigudam Bherbheri)
54. Hemarbari (Bagariguri Jajari)
55. Hemarbari (Bhelenguri Hahchara)
56. Hemarbari (Barbheti)
57. Holdhiati (Afaliabari)
58. Holdhiati (Senchua)
59. Holdhiati (Marikalong)
60. Holdhiati (Marikalong Sialsuk)
61. Itakhali
62. Jakhalabandha
63. Kacharipar (Chakalaghat)
64. Kalsila
65. Kalakati
66. Kampur Satra
67. Kangsapara
68. Kathpara (Barbhag)
69. Kathpara (Sarubhag)
70. Khamuchia
71. Khundamara
72. Khaurmochar
73. Kuhimari
74. Kurchung (Raidangia)
75. Kuruabahi
76. Kuji
77. Laiati
78. Latarua or Bhagavati

79. Letugram (Kaliabor)
80. Letugram (Puranigudam)
81. Madarguri Jajori
82. Madarguri Samaguri Khatual
83. Madhatari
84. Mahara (Dimau)
85. Matharbari
86. Mauragubinda
87. Nachanipar (Baligaon)
88. Nachanipar
89. Naokata
90. Nepali (Jajari)
91. Phulbari, Nanai
92. Puranighar.
93. Randhani Bar Alengi
94. Ratanpur
95. Rupnarayan
96. Salmara (Karaiyani)
97. Samaguri
98. Sildubi (Chatabari)
99. Sravani (Kaliabor)
100. Sukdal Barbari
101. Sukdal Sarubari
102. Syamkame (Kaliabor)
103. Talibal
104. Tamulbari
105. Tamulbari
106. Tarabori
107. Upper Chutial.

CHAPTER IV

AGRICULTURE AND IRRIGATION

(a) Land Reclamation and Utilisation :

Agriculture is the mainstay of the district economy and more than three-fourths of its working population derive their livelihood from agriculture. In the latter part of the nineteenth century there were large tracts of government waste-lands which were subsequently opened up with the influx of immigrants. At the same time large tracts of wastelands have also been brought under tea. The followings are the land utilisation statistics of Nowgong district, during 1968-69.[1]

(Areas in hectare)

1.	Total Geographical area according to	(a) Professional Survey ..	5,61,316
		(b) Village paper (Reporting year) ..	5,60,547
2.	Forests ..	.. ..	1,13,677
3.	Land not available for cultivation.	(a) Land put to non-agricultural uses. ..	53,814
		(b) Barren & unculturable land	38,002
		Total ..	91,816
4.	Other uncultivated and excluding Fallow Land.	(a) Permanent pastures and other grazing land ..	30,810
		(b) Land under Misc. tree crops and groves not included in net area.	22,465
		(c) Cultivable waste ..	16,105
		Total ..	69,380
5.	Fallow Land	(a) Fallow land other than current fallow ..	13,338
		(b) Current fallow. ..	14,789
		Total ..	28,127
6.	Net area sown	..	2,57,547
7.	Total cropped area	..	3,18,504
8.	Area sown more than once	..	60,957

1. *Statistical Handbook of Assam*, 1971, Deptt. of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, Shillong, pp. 25—28.

From the above figures it is seen that fallow lands constitute about five per cent of the total cadastral area. These include practically all unsettled lands, vast areas of which are either hills or low-lying areas unfit for cultivation. The total cropped area of the district is about fifty-seven per cent of the cadastral area. About sixteen per cent of the cadastral area is not available for cultivation. Such lands are used for homesteads, roads, factories, towns and villages and are covered by rivers and ponds. Other uncultivated lands excluding current fallows form about twelve per cent of the total cadastral area. Of such lands 30,810 hectares are under permanent pastures and other grazing lands, 22,465 hectares are under miscellaneous tree crops and groves not included in the net area and 16,105 hectares are culturable waste.

(i) Cultivable Waste : The report of the Technical Committee on Cultivable Wasteland (1963-65) reveals that the area of cultivable wastelands in Nowgong district was 1,08,429 *bighas* ((about 14,506 hectares) of which 25,095 *bighas* (about 3,357 hectares) were not suitable for reclamation. The Committee further pointed out that only 3,865 *bighas* (about 517 hectares) of land were available for cultivation after reclamation by manual labour. If reclamation is done with tractors and bulldozers a further area of 29,305 *bighas* (about 3,920 hectares) may be available for cultivation. Unauthorised occupation of government wasteland, grazing reserves etc., has also reduced the area of cultivable wastelands. According to the Committee an area of 48,613 *bighas* (about 6,503 hectares) was under encroachment in Nowgong district.

The task of reclamation and better utilization of land is beset with certain difficulties. There are in Nowgong only 1,220 blocks of cultivable wasteland measuring more than fifteen *bighas* (about two hectares) each. Most of these blocks lie scattered in far-flung areas and are not suitable for reclamation by mechanical processes. As already stated the Technical Committee on Wasteland has found that only 29,305 *bighas* (about 3,920 hectares) of land can be reclaimed by tractors, bulldozers etc. The area of cultivable waste-land that can be reclaimed by manual labour constitutes only a very small fraction of total cultivable wasteland. This lays bare the fact that despite increasing pressure on land, the entire area of wasteland available for cultivation could not be fully reclaimed. The high floods of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries and the frequent changes in the river-course have rendered certain areas unfit for cultivation. However, attempts have been made to reclaim such wasteland for agriculture.

The Kaki Land Reclamation Project in Kaki *mauza* opened in February 1953 is by far the most important project in Nowgong district. It aimed at providing land to the political sufferers, flood-affected and landless people of the district. Initially an area of 40,000 *bighas* (about 5,351 hectares) at Kaki

Forest Reserve was opened for cultivation. Eighteen hundred families were allotted land at twenty *bighas* (about 2.7 hectares) per family keeping four thousand *bighas* (about 535 hectares) for public purposes. However, the allottees left their lands practically uncultivated. Subsequently the Department of Agriculture took up the reclamation work and reclaimed about 29,410 *bighas* (about 3934 hectares). Another 4,753 *bighas* (about 636 hectares) were reclaimed by allottees. An area of about 600 *bighas* (about 80 hectares) was utilized for public purposes like *bazars*, *namghars*, *mosques*, roads etc. Of the reclaimed land 33,411 *bighas* (about 4,470 hectares) were allotted to 1,417 families at twenty four *bighas* (about three hectares) per family—four *bighas* (about half hectare) for residential purposes and twenty *bighas* (about 2.7 hectares) for cultivation. The allottees were required to pay five rupees per *bighas* as development cost and twenty five rupees as reclamation charge.

The Department of Agriculture also undertakes reclamation of wasteland in different parts of the district chiefly for *Boro* paddy cultivation. The Embankment and Drainage Department has also undertaken some reclamation works for agricultural purposes.

(b) **Irrigation :**

(i) Irrigation Facilities : The district of Nowgong receives heavy rainfall during the monsoons and about eighty per cent of the annual rainfall of the district is received during May to September. The average annual rainfall in the decade 1951-61 in the district was 1,759.26 millimetres. Rice and jute which are the principal crops get sufficient rain water but in the high lands of the district , rain water does not accumulate in the fields as most of it drains off. The cultivators , therefore, generally raise bunds at certain points. A serious drawback is that the accumulated water spills over when its level exceeds the height of the *bund* and goes waste as there is no proper drainage system. This problem has been sought to be solved by implementing some minor irrigation schemes.

According to the District Census Handbook 1961 the areas irrigated by government canals and private canals in 1961, totalled 5,550 acres (i.e. about 2,225 hectares) and by other means like tanks and tube-wells totalled 1,21,900 acres (i.e., about 48,760 hectares). The cultivators also resort to indigenous methods of irrigation such as lifting of water by means of *Lahonis* (Swing buckets) which are, however, far inadequate of requirements.

There are three principal agencies in the State engaged in the implementation of the Irrigation Projects. The Agriculture Department takes up the projects which involve an expenditure of less than Rs. 10 lakhs. The Flood Control and Irrigation 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 northern boundary of Nowgong district. 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 per cent to 100 per cent.

During 1961-62 the Agriculture Department undertook thirty minor irrigation schemes at different places of the district at a total cost of Rs. 26,341.07 p. benefiting an area of 5,671 acres (about 2,295 hectares). Lift irrigation with energised pumps was also introduced in 1966—67. In 1967-68, 120 power pumps were installed. Five deep tube-wells and some shallow tube-wells were also sunk in the district in that year.

The following is the list of Minor and Medium Irrigation Schemes undertaken by the Embankment and Drainage Department by 1963 in the district.

Minor Irrigation :

1. Lift Irrigation scheme (1) from the Kopili near Chaparmukh, (2) from the Sonai near Karchung *satra*, (3) from Rupahi *bil* and (4) from Samaguri *bil* at a cost of Rs. 30,93,700/-.
2. Lift irrigation scheme in Kathiatali, Jugijan, Bhurbandha and Mayang Blocks—cost Rs. 5,70,750/-.
3. Lift irrigation scheme from Patali and Haribhanga *bil* and inundation irrigation from Nanoi river in Kaliabor, Laokhoa and Rupahi Blocks. cost—Rs. 2,50,700/-.
4. Lift irrigation Scheme in Batadraba Block..Total cost-Rs. 76,200/-.
5. Marigaon lift Irrigation scheme.
6. Puthikhati lift Irrigation Scheme.
7. Saraihagi lift Irrigation Scheme.
8. Santijan lift Irrigation Scheme.
9. Chalchali lift Irrigation Scheme.
10. Ragenaati lift Irrigation Scheme.
11. Raha lift Irrigation Scheme.
12. Haria lift Irrigation Scheme.
13. Hatlear lift Irrigation Scheme.
14. Nikhari lift Irrigation Scheme.
15. Jamunamukh lift Irrigation Scheme.
16. Mayong lift Irrigation Scheme.
17. Kamrup lift Irrigation Scheme.
18. Jugijan lift Irrigation Scheme.
19. Installation of 70 Bamboo filter points in the district.

20. Installation of 100 G.I. Shallow filter points in the district.
21. Buriganga Irrigation Scheme.
22. Harina Irrigation Scheme.
23. Dikhari Irrigation Scheme.
24. Nanoi Irrigation Scheme.
25. Diju Valley Irrigation Scheme.
26. Missa (Barjuri) Irrigation Scheme.

Medium Irrigation Schemes :— (i) Jamuna Irrigation Scheme (2) Patradisa Irrigation Scheme and (3) Kondali Irrigation Scheme.

Since reorganisation of the Department, a new Irrigation Division covering the whole district has been created in 1974. Besides the existing schemes it has now proposed to undertake some new irrigation schemes in the district.

Jamuna Irrigation Project. It is a medium irrigation project described as the first of its kind executed in the district. The waters of the Jamuna river has been harnessed to irrigate the areas of Langphar *mauza* of Mikir Hills and Hojai, Namati, Jugijan, Kapahibari, Kaki, Lumding and Lanka areas of Nowgong district. Though the headworks of the project are located at Bakulia on Mikir Hills the benefits of irrigation are enjoyed largely by the people of Nowgong district. The gross estimated area under the Jamuna Irrigation Scheme is 27,089.64 hectares and the area benefited by the scheme is 20,200 hectares. The cost of the project was initially estimated at Rs. 195 lakhs in 1962 when construction began. The scheme was completed in 1972 at a total cost of Rs. 356,16,332.25 including the cost of construction of concrete weir over the Jamuna, canal systems and other structures, the colony at Bakulia and other works. The main crops grown in the area are paddy, jute, sugarcane, oil seeds and pulses.

(ii) Protective bunds. It has already been stated that large areas of the district are subject to annual floods. All the rivers of Nowgong district ultimately find their way to the mighty river Brahmaputra which runs along the entire northern boundary. Embankments have been constructed since the late fifties on an extensive scale as a means of protecting the riverine areas from the ravages of floods. In 1957 the Governmenet 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 have been constructed. Although the embankments provide protection to habitation and farm land, yet these 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 the 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 a 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 the Brahmaputra flood. In the tributary basin also reasonable degree of protection has been afforded against normal floods.

STATEMENT SHOWING THE SCHEME-WISE ACHIEVEMENT OBTAINED BY NOWGONG E & D DIVISION FROM 1950-1970.

Sl. No.	Name and nature of scheme	Benefited area in acres	Remarks.
1	2	3	4
	Embankment.		
	(A) Brahmaputra river :		
1.	Brahmaputra dyke from Silghat to Dhing (Left Bank).	1,19,000 Acres	
2.	Brahmaputra dyke along the left bank of the river Brahmaputra from Dhing to Hiloikhunda Phase--I. ..	1,27,532 ,,	
3.	Nowgong Town Project construction of dyke along south bank of the Brahmaputra between Hatimura and Barghop Hills.	43,000 ,,	
	(B) Kalang river :		
4.	Embankment along right bank of the Kalang river from Phulaguri to Haibargaon Ph-1.	5,000 ,,	
5.	Embankment along right bank of the Kalang river from Phulaguri to Malenkata & Raha to Chaparmukh.	7,000 ,,	
6.	Construction of flood embankment along the Kalang river from Raha to Jagi and Azarbari to Rly. Bridge.	10,000 Acres	

Sl. No.	Name and nature of schemes	Benefited area in acres	Remarks.
1	2	3	4
7.	Extension of the Kalang *bund* from Phulaguri to Haibargaon Ph. 11 Nowgong Dakhinpat Road-cum-embankment.	5,000 ,,	
8.	Extension of embankment along left bank of the Kalang from Bagibari to Barbilla in Kamrup District.	8,550 ,,	
	(C) Nanoi river :		
9.	Construction of embankment along left bank of the Nanoi river from Kuruabahi to Telelosora.	5,760 ,,	
10.	Construction of embankment along right bank of the Nanoi river from Tulsimukh to Hariamhat.		
11.	Flood embankment along the left bank of the Nanoi river from Bamuni Road to Dabaka P.W.D. Road.	9,600 ,,	
	(D) Kopili river :		
12.	Brahmaputra tributary dyke along left bank of the Kopili from Charaihagi to Tuklatup.	11,620 ,,	
13.	Closing Kopili spill channel from Kharikhan to Jugijan.	10,000 ,,	
14.	Embankment along right bank of the Kopili river from Chaparmukh to Ahatguri.	8,000 ,,	
15.	Construction of tributary dyke along right bank of the Kopili river from Ahatguri to A. T. Road and A. T. Road to Rly. Bridge.	86,000 ,,	
16.	Construction of tributary dyke along left bank of the Kopili river from Basundhary Hill to Ahatguri Amsoi P.W.D. Road.	8,000 ,,	
17.	Construction of tributary dyke along the left bank of the Kopili river from Ahatguri Amsoi P.W.D. Road to Killing-Kopili Junction.	6,500 Acres	

Sl. No.	Name and nature of schemes	Benefited area in acres	Remarks.
1	2	3	4
18.	Flood Protection of Gobha Dimoria *mauza* in Nowgong district and embankment along the Kopili, Kalang & Killing river from Amlighat to Bagibari.	8,000 ,,	
	(E) Fishery & Irrigation bund.		
19.	Fishery *bund* at Raha & construction of Irrigation *bund* at Dighalijan under Kopili N.E.S. Block Barapujia.	4,000 ,,	The scheme is already handed over to the E. E. Nowgong Irrigation Division, Nowgong on 25.5.71.
20.	Kachadhara Kamargaon road-cum-embankment under Kopili Development Block Barapujia.	3,000 ,,	
21.	Construction of Irrigation *bund* from Marigaon P.W.D. Road to 23/4 mile of Raja Jagi *bund.*	6,000 ,,	-do-
22.	Irrigation for *Bao* cultivation in Marigaon area (construction of embankment along both bank of Basanaghat channel from P.W.D. Road bridge).	7,356 ,,	-do-
23.	Irrigation of Chapanalla area in Nowgong District.	5,000 ,,	-do-
	(F) Drainage Schemes :		
24.	Drainage of water logged area between Chaparmukh and Dharamtul Ph. I, Ph. II, & Ph. III.	4,000 & 2,000 Acres	
25.	Drainage of Reclamation of Joysagar Doloni near Silghat.	5,000 Acres.	
26.	Reclamation of Jamuna *Jallah* in Pakhi-Moria *mauza* in Nowgong District.	5,000 ,,	
27.	Improvement of Basanaghat channel Ph. I & Ph. II.	2,000 & 22,400Acrse	The Scheme is already handed over to the E. E. Nowgong
28.	Improvement of Jugijan channel from Rly. Bridge to its outfall in Dimoria river Ph. 11.	2,000 ,,	

Sl. No.	Name and nature of schemes	Benefited area in acres	Remarks.
29.	Improvement of Jugijan Channel from Dukurkata village to Rly. Bridge Ph. 1.	2,000 ,,	Irrigation Divn. Nowgong on 25.5.71
30	Excavating a drainage channel from Ghebua Chalchali *bil* in the Sonai river of Pachim Laokhoa in Nowgong District.	2,000 ,,	
31.	Drainage of the Sonai Puthikhati Basin in Nowgong District.	8,560 ,,	
32.	Drainage of Dablong Pather area in Nowgong District.	7,600 ,,	
33.	Construction of Protection-cum-Irrigation, from P.W.D. Bridge approach to 5/1 mile & Bhakatgaon Mohoha PWD. Road.	190 ,,	

(c) **Agriculture including horticulture :**

(i) Soil : The general characteristic of the soil of the district is that it is of alluvial origin. It varies from pure sand near the Brahmaputra to clay so sticky as to render it utterly unfit for cultivation. The land best suited for the growth of rice is a clay loam Alatin, the most fertile variety of which is called *Bherbheria* and is particularly deep and soft. This type of soil is found in the lowest part of the rice basin which comprises the area from Silghat in the north-east to Jagi in the south-west of the district, but on either side of this belt cultivation falls off. Pulse is usually grown in the alluvial flats that fringe the Brahmaputra and low-lying areas are mainly used for jute cultivation. The cost of cultivation in the district is described as comparatively low due to the high fertility of the land and natural irrigation from the regular monsoons. The Hojai area of Nowgong district which produces good quality rice is known as the granary of Assam. The statement below gives an analysis of the soil of the district.[2]

Texture/type of soil	Acidity/PH. Value	Availability of Nitrogen (N) %	Availability of Phosphate Acid P_2O5%	Availability of Potash K_2O (%)
Sandy by clayey loams Old and new alluvium.	New alluvium-PH.66 Old alluvium, more acidic PH. 4.9 (Water extract) 4.5 (K No_3)	New alluvium 0.109 Low-0.193	New-0.020-0.004 Fairly High.	New-0.014 Old-0.005

2. *Agriculture Guide Book*, 1968-69, Department of Agriculture, Assam, p. 80,

(ii) Crops : Paddy, Jute, sugarcane, mustard, pulses and tea are the major crops and tobacco, potato, vegetables and fruits like mangoes, oranges, coconuts, bananas and pineapples are subsidiary crops of the district. Rice is the staple food of the district. The farmers depend mainly upon cultivation of wet paddy. In 1971-72 paddy was grown over 2,02,000 hectares comprising nearly two-thirds of the total cropped area of the district.[3] The following table shows the area in thousand hectares, average yield in kgs. per hectare and production in thousand Metric Tons. Production of Jute in bales of 180 kgs. (in thousand).[4]

Sl. No.	Name of the crop.	Area, Average Yield, production.	1955-56	1960-61	1965-66	1970-71	1973-74
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Winter Rice	Area	162.72	166.39	162.68	160.00	203.50
		Average Yield	1,064	1,133	889	1,083	1182
		Production	170.07	185.45	142.46	170.61	236.93
2.	Autumn Rice	Area	35.56	36.04	33.59	48.00	47.50
		Average Yield.	825	713	499	520	602
		Production	28.95	25.31	16.51	24.56	28.14
3.	Spring Rice.	Area	1.31	8.21	2.43	2.00	6.54
		Average Yield.	1,345	840	960	1210	16.00
		Production	1.76	6.90	2.33	2.42	10.46
1.	Rape and Mustard	Area ..	22.34	20.23	23.88		21.88
		Average Yield.	504	322	440		294
		Production ..	11.19	6.53	10.51		6.43
2.	Jute	Area ..	48.61	44.14	37.92		36.02
		Average Yield	1,922	1,376	1,070		1,335
		Production ..	519.24	337.57	225.41		267.15
3.	Sugarcane	Area ..	3.36	3.48	3.48		3.38
		Average Yield.	28,020	26,714	374,69		36,807
		Production ..	9.41	9.29	14.10		13.08
4.	Potato	Area ..	2.02	1.57	1.74		1.55
		Average Yield.	3,413	2,998	742		2,420
		Production ..	6.91	4.71	1.29		3.75

3, *Statistical Handbook of Assam*, 1973, pp. 29—31.
4. *Statistical Handbook of Assam*, 1966, 1971 and 1976, pp. 58—73, pp, 3I—39 and pp, 64-65 respectively.

Statement—'A'

Occupation-wise classification of outstanding credit of Scheduled Commercial Banks in Nowgong.

Figure shown in Lakhs

Agriculture and allied activities	Total	Industry		Total	Trade	Total	Personal loan (including durable consumer).	All other
Agriculture excluding plantation 15.51	24.136	A. Manufacturing industry		105.39	Wholesale	41.96	3.01	18.47
		1. Rice, Flour and Dal Mills ..	24.92		Retail	23.20		
		2. Chemicals and chemical products. (other than heavy industrial drugs and fertilisers). ..	34			65.16		
		3. Manufacturing metal products. ..	51					
		4. Light Engineering ..	15					
		5. Vehicle parts and transport. ..	6.32					
		B. Electricity distributors ..	52					
		C. Transport Storage and Communications. ..	11.91					
		D. Personal professional services. ..	4.16					
		E. Other industries. ..	56.46					

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 usable lands are covered with paddy. Apart from the availability of water, the natural enclosures formed by the drains and canals around the farms provide protection to 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 May. 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. These are only a few of the handicaps peculiar to the district preventing better utilisation of land. The crop-cycle of the district depends upon all these factors so much so that most of the fields practically 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, Badsah Bhog, Joha, Bora* and *Basmati.* The crop is always transplanted. Seedbeds are prepared in relatively high lands and seeds are sown in the month of May and June. The seedbeds are commonly called *Kathiatoli,* Transplantation is done from July to September and harvesting commences from November and continues upto the first fortnight of January.

The table below gives the type 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)	Yield per hectare.
1	2	3	4	5
Improved local variety.				
Monohar Sali	Coarse	White	165	4500 Kg.
Hati Sali	,,	,,	168	3000 Kg.
Lati Sali	,,	,,	165	2800-3000kg
Lau Dumra	,,	,,	165	-do-
Prasadbhog	Medium	,,	157	-do-
Badsah bhog	Fine	,,	170	-do-
Joha	Fine	,,	160	3000 Kg.
Joya	Coarse	White	128	5000 Kg.
Peoha 2-21	Medium	,,	105	4500 Kg.
IR-8	Coarse	,,	135	5000 Kg.

The last 3 varieties are improved high yielding crops which have become very popular with the local cultivators.

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 seed which is selected from the largest ears of the last years' crop, is sown over the bed in May and June. The seed beds are manured with cow-dung and compost. Use of Ammonium Sulphate, Urea in seedbeds is rather rare. The proper area borne by the seed-beds and the area to be transplanted varies according to the fertility of soil, time of transplating and such other factors. The seed rate is generally 300-350 gms. of seeds per 9.29 metres of puddle land. Selected seeds from previous year's crops are steeped in water for two or three days and allowed to germinate and then sown over the beds in May and June. In the meantime, preparation of fields is done for transplanting the seedlings. Ploughing of the land is started as soon as the soil becomes soft after the reception of the spring rain and the process is repeated till it is reduced to a fine 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 *ali* existed. Protection of fields from stray cattle is secured by putting up split bamboo fencing near the roads or village paths. Transplantation starts from the later part of June and continues till the first 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 distances of 0.22 to 0·30 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 seedlings the number of seedlings per hole is increased. Lifting of seedlings from nursery and transplantating operations are generally done by women. The work is of arduous type 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 0.25 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 *dangeri*. A *dangeri* 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 than *Sali*. *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 specie 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*. The crop is very often destroyed by flood or water hyacinth.

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	Coares	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 though the people are taking more to transplanting gradually in the areas with irrigation facilities. 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, and the land is again 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 thirty kilograms 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 again and weeded, and finally harvested about the end of August. 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 *chaparis* in conjunction with mus-

tard, and no jungle cutting is of course required where the soil 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 are unable to find a lodging under the dense growth of *ikra* (saccharum arundinceum), *khagri* (saccharum spontaneum) and *nal* (phragmites roxburghil), 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 troublesome 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 broadcasted *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 the 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, such type of the *ahu* cultivation 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 remain fallow for sometime, 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, *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 of harvest in case of *Boro* paddy, 2-15 days after transplantation till 10-15 days preceding the harvest in case of *Ahu* and *Sali* paddy. Besides the appropriate quantum of fertilizers 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 2,000 kg per acre when grown as *Ahu* and *Sali* paddy, 2,500 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.

Almost in all parts of the district paddy is threshed at home. Only in certain areas inhabited by immigrants paddy is threshed in the field itself. Threshing is done usually in the morning and evening. The *dangaries* 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 *Maranamara*, 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 threshing the paddy is stored in huge drums called *Mer* or *Duli*. They are made of split bamboo and their outer surfaces are 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 pots well above the level of the ground.

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, it is generally left to dry for a few days and then threshed either in the field in a place prepared for the purpose or near the homestead, where it is threshed out by cattle.

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 linn*), *Arahar* (*cajanus cajan*), *Masur-mah* (*lens eseulenta*), *Motor-mah* (*pisum sativum*), *Garo-mah*, (*glycina hispida*), *Lesera-mah* (vigna catjang).

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

Name of the crops.	Time of sowing
(1) *Masurmah* (Lentil)	October, November.
(2) *Matimah* (Black gram)	August, September.
(3) *Magu-mah* (Green gram)	August, September.
(4) *Garo-mah* (Soy bean)	June, July,
(5) *Lesera-mah* (Cowpea)	May—July.
(6) *Motor-mah* (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 threshed out by the cattle ; but certain percentage of seeds do not get separated readily from the pods. The rest are threshed out by a hand threshing implement.

Jute : Since the beginning of the present century, area under jute has grown enormously in the district increasing from about 28 hectares in 1901 to 36,020 hectares in 1970-71. Cultivation of jute, mostly confined among Mymensing immigrants, increased greatly during 1911-1931 when their immigration was at its peak. Area under the crop increased from about 498 hectares in 1911 to about 8,096 hectares and about 18,222 hectares in 1921 and 1931 respectively. Its cultivation has now become popular among other sections of the people also. Two varieties of jute are grown in the district *titamora* (*corchorus capsularies*) grown in comparatively low-lying areas and *mithamora* (*capsularies olitorious*) grown on higher areas. Preparation of land starts from February and six to seven ploughings and harrowings are given to obtain a fine tilth ; seeds are sown and plants are cut in August and 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* (*Bochmaria nivea*) is grown in the gardens. The fibre of *Rhea* is exceptionally strong and is durable and is used in making fishing nets.

Sugareane : 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. Area under sugarcane increased from about 693 hectares in 1901 to about 3,380 hectares in 1970-71. Cultivation of sugarcane became more popular since 1940. Area under the crop increased from about 1991 hectares in 1941 to about 3,234 hectares in 1951. 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 *Teliya* 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 *Megala* is a hard and thin variety of the *mugi*, and where grown, is planted round the edge of the field. The land is hoed up till it is reduced to a fine tilth and the tops planted in trenches between April and June. The patch is fenced with split bamboo, and there is usually a stout edge of *arhar dal* ;

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. While the crop is growing it is continually hoed and weeded and about August the leaves should be tied up round each clauster of canes, which is a troublesome proceeding. 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 or ridge and trench are reversed and the canes stand upon ridges with the trenches in between.

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 (*Kuhiar Sal*) in the recent times ; but both the types are of 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 sugercane is placed between the rollers and crushed or it is forced through. The juice trickles from the trough into a vessel kept below. The juice is first transferred to a small boat scooped out of a log. Twelve or fifteen gallons of juice are boiled in an iron vessel till it is reduced to proper condition. The furnace is hollowed out of ground. The refuse that accumulates at the surface when the juice is boiled is strained out by some small pots made of dried pumpkins, the lower portion of which is emptied and affixed to a long handle.

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 *Monohar, Chenichampa. Malbhog, Bhimkal, Purakol,* and *Jahaji. Purakal* is used as vegetables, *cheni-champa* 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 *Monohar* are by far the best in quality of fruit. These, however, are very extracting in their soil, requiring cultural and manurial 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 rhizmoes from the mother plant and are planted in holes prepared in the field. The size of the holes usually

varies according to the varieties. Generally holes are of 0.45 metres wide and 0.45 metres deep and are manured with cowdung and ash. Young plants take from eighteen months to two years to flower.

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

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* (*betel-vine*) is frequently trained up their stem and the leaf and nuts, which are invariably eaten in conjunction, 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 two to three 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 three 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*. During the year of 1961-62, tobacco cultivation in the district extended to an area of 2,433 acres.

Coconut is another important fruit plant of the district. It is grown mostly in the riverine areas.

Pineapple : Pineapple is also an important fruit grown in the district. The planting of pineapple is from April to September. The fruit matures from June to September. In Kuthori area pineapples are grown on a large scale.

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

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

Tea : Tea is also produced in Nowgong but it is not so important a crop as in the districts of Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Darrang and Cachar. Nevertheless, the following figures testify that there is a gradual expansion of area under tea in the district of Nowgong.

The areas (in hectares) under tea were as follows :[5]

Year	Area in Hectares	Production (Fifiures in thousand kg.)
1951	5,577	3,691
1965	6,007	6,511
1968	6,117	7,349
1969	6,289	7,952
1970	6,323	7,747
1971	6,372	7,423

There were twenty-three Tea gardens in the district in 1971. The following table shows the area and production of tea in Nowgong district, classified according to the size of the estates.[6]

(Area as on March 31,1972 and production during 1971).

Size of Estates	No. of Estates	Area in Hectares	Production in kg.
1. Above 5 hectares and below 50 hectares.	5	203.82	1,04,425
2. Above 50 hectares and below 100 hectares.	2	143.32	1,35,477
3. Above 100 hectares and below 200 hectares.	2	321.28	2,76,831
4. Above 200 hectares and below 400 hectares.	8	2,190.96	23,70,088
5. Above 400 hectares.	6	3,643.42	45,36,594
Total	23	6,502.80	74,23,415

5. *Statistical Handbook, Assam* 1970, p. 67 and *Tea Statistics*, 1972-73, pp. 8, 12, 13.
6. Ibid, page, 12-13.

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 'Comellia' 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 throughout the year (at least 7.52 to 2.03 metres annually) and the absence of strong day 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 gives 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 eight months and in some cases, for the whole year round. As such, need for proper cultivation is of utmost importance and growth of all kinds of weeds and other plants are to be checked, else, it prevents rapid decomposition of organic matter in the soils. It is a well established fact that tea cannot thrive in a 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, the harmful effect of prolonged dry spells, resulting in low water content of the soil, is equally well recognised.

In its natural state in the forest, the tea grows to a height from 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 for one of these reasons, (a) extreme age of the tea, (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 candide, crotolaria anagyroides, Desmodium gyroides* and *Indigofera Taysmanii.*

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

The use of inorganic fertilisers at the time of planting out from the nursery is not recommended. Dry well-rooted cattle manure at the rate of 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 8-12 ozs. per pit may be used as substitute. Sterilized animal meal (without any inorganic additive) is a valuable alternative to either 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. Manures should not be applied after pruning which increases the incidenceof 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, *leguminoseae* 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 breakers and protection against hailstorm etc. The shade trees like *Albizzia procers*, *Alebbel*, A *sinensis*, A *odorotis Simiam*, A *moluccana*, *Dolbergia assamica*, *Derris robusta*. etc. and green crops like *Crotolaria anagyroids*, *Tephrosia Candide*, *Indigofera Taysmanii*, *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 formancy. The new shoot which a bush produces in the spring makes a certain amount of growth and then becomes dormant, the terminal bud at this stage being small and thin which is commonly termed as '*Banjhi*'.

The plucking of tea leaf for manufacture is usually begun after the bushes are about three years old, though a certain amount of light plucking 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 one to three leaves is plucked, and two or three 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 ten or even fifteen 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 thirty or more times in the year.

Plucking is broadly classed as fine, medium and coarse, the plucking of the tips with one or two 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 restored 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 of in allowing the freshly picked leaves to dry somewhat until they lose part of their moisture during which process they become trump and somewhat tough and assume a twist in shape. If the leaves are spread in a thin layer in a well ventilated room overnight or approximately for eighteen 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 throughly.

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-fermetion. 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 desication 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 the different grades already mentioned by appropriate sieves and packing them in the air-tight containers, usually wooden chests lined with alluminium sheet.

The tea bushes are quite often attacked by different kinds of pests and diseases. Some of the major pests are Loopers, Caterpillers, Red Slug Catterpillers, Bunch Caterpillers, Red Borers, Tea Mosquitoes, Tea Leaf hoppers, Red Spiders, Crickets, Termites, Root Rot Nematodes, etc. The disease which occurs in tea bushes are primarily fungus although bacteria, virus and non-parasitic diseases other than fungus are also prevalent. A few major diseases are Charcoal Stump Rot, Brown Root Rot, Violet Root Rot, Branch Canker, Thorny Blight, Thread Blight, Blister Blight etc.

(iv) Progress of Scientific Agriculture :

(i) Agricultural implements : The plough made of jack fruit 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 wood, fastened by rope at right angles to the pole, with pegs affixed to it to keep it from sliding from the necks of the bullocks. The *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 eight feet in length. A man stands on it 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 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. The *hoe* (*kor*) occupies a very important place among the indigenous agricultural implements. It is used to trim the embankments (*alis*) which help to retain 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, harvesting roof crops etc. Sickles (*kachi*), are used for reaping paddy. This implement is to be purchased. In *ahu* cultivation a large wooden rake (*Bindha*) with teeth nearly one foot in length is dragged over the crop by a bullock when the plants are about six inches high. The *nirani*, a kind of trowel with a long handle, is used for weeding *ahu* rice.

The 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 like heavy capital investment and paucity of large blocks of land due to repeated fragmentation of agricultural holdings. Among the improved agricultural implements used in the district following are important ones : (i) iron plough (ii) improved harrows, (iii) improved seed drills, (iv) improved threshers, (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 agricultural machineries and implements in Nowgong district, as revealed by the Livestock census of 1956.[7]

1. Plough	(a) Wooden	.. ..	135,956
	(b) Iron	.. ..	7
2. Carts		.. ..	21,114
3. Sugarcane crushers			
	(a) Power driven	.. ..	7
	(b) Others	.. ..	2,754
4. Electric pumps for irrigation purpose		.. ..	1
5. Ghanies		.. ..	39

The Assam Agro-Industries Development Corporation Ltd., a private company has been floated 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, agricultural engineering equipments like tractors, power pumps, harvesters, combers etc., and to collect, store, transport, distribute, supply, sell or otherwise dispose of all the agricultural prerequisites to the agriculturists of the State for bonafide agricultural purposes. 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 the 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 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 and power tillers under the hire-

7. *Statistical Abstract of Assam*, 1960-61, p. 86.

purchase system. The Corporation proposes to expand its activities on various directions in the coming years i.e., taking over the fruit production factories and operate the same, manufacture of poultry feeds and cattle feeds, starting an engineering workshop and operating repair service of the machineries besides marketing of fertilizers, pesticides and agri-machineries.

(ii) Agricultural diseases and pests : The insects particularly *Gandhi* (*Leptocrisa acuta*). and *Charaha* (*hispa acuesceus*) cause exetnsive damage to the paddy. The traditional methods of controlling the insects were very simple. Bonafires 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 infested areas and allowed to rot. The offensive smell emitted kept away insects. Sometimes dry shoots of bamboo trees and dry twigs of jungle plants such as *Kalera*, *Sonaru* etc. 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. Odd images mostly made of straw decorated with torn cloths and painted with lime were kept in the fields as an antidote to the ominous looks. Some of these traditional methods are still in vogue.

Rough estimates show that ten to twenty five per cent of paddy, potatoes and pulses are lost during storage. The diseases and pests responsible for such damage are either carried from rhe fields with the harvested product or remain in the crevices in the godowns and storage houses. This is prevented by better methods of storage, disinfecting the godowns or *bhorals* and treating the grains and seeds to be stored with chemicals like carbon terachloride, Ethylene dischloride, Hydrocynic acid gas etc.

Swarming 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. Spraying Endrin 20 FC or Diazinon at the rate of 10.cc in 4.5 litres of water at the rate of forty to fifty gallons per acre three times can prevent the swarming caterpillar, rice-bug, stem-borer and rice-hispa from damaging the crop. Spraying of Bordeama Mixture or any copper fungicide is a good control measure against early and late blight that effect the potatoes.

Due to humid climatic condition prevalent in the district the crops generally suffer from bleeding, rotting, and spotting of stems and roots; crawling of leaves and also from diseases like blight. To eradicate these diseases the Government of Assam has taken some research works under the Department of Agriculture and Agriculture University of the State. Rice Research Station of Raha and Jute Research Station of Shillengani are two such research centres of Nowgong district. Besides, through distribution of pesticides like B.H.C., Endrin or diazinon, Basudin, Aldrin and Copper Oxychloride and Copper frungicide are popularly used by the process of dusting and spraying as per prescribed diluting percentage. With the help of Agriculture Extension Officers, the cultivators are being trained through field demonstration and *charcha-mandals* on use of pesticides and prevention of crop-diseases.

(iii) **Activities of the Agriculture Department and other Agencies to secure the use of scientific method of cultivation** :— In the First Five-Year Plan emphasis was given on those schemes which had limited objective of increasing food production only. But the Second Five-Year Plan aimed at attaining a balanced development of food and cash crops. Priority was given to the multiplication and distribution of improved seeds and fertilizers, creation of irrigation facilities etc., when the process of transition from traditional to the improved methods of cultivation gained momentum in the district. During the Third Five-Year Plan attempts to put the agriculture of the district on a better scientific plan were made more intensive and at the same time more diversified. It is the objective of the Fourth Five-Year Plan to increase production of foodgrains 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 the present infrastructure created during the last three Five Year Plans, the Department aims at attaining shortly at least 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 of the infrastructure built up by the Department will highlight 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 Deprtment proposes to take up a scheme for ground water exploration. The Flood Cnntrol and Irrigation Wing of the Flood Control Department has executed some irrigation

projects in the district. The activities of the Flood Control and Irrigation Department in respect of the district of Nowgong have alrady been mentioned.

Soil Improvement Works : Soil testing services have been made available to farmers for rapid soil tests in order to recommend fertilizers on crop-wise 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 Nowgong distrct, Gauhati being only 120 K.M. from Nowgong, the people of the district can easily avail of the services of the Gauhati Soil Testing Laboratory.

Distribution of improved agricultural implements : The Department of Agriculture has provided in recent years tractors and bulldozers with necessary implements at Nowgong. A cultivator can borrow the tractor with required accessories for tilling his land, at a reasonable 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 tractors, which are also used for agricultural purposes. The following statement shows the distribution of tractors, bull-dozers, power pumps and power tillers in Nowgong district, by the Agricultural Department in 1966-67 that is the year preceding the inception of the Agro-Industries Development Corporation.

Distribution of Agricultural Implements. [9]

	Tractors	Power pumps	Deep tube wells	Power tillers
Bull-dozers	Tractors General Purposes			
2	13	120	5	5

Distribution of Fertilizers : Till very recently the use of fertilizers was confined mainly to the tea gardens. The Assam Agro-Industries Development Corporation has made input supplies since 1967-68. But the Agriculture Department started distribution of fertilizers well ahead.

The statement below shows the receipt and disposal of fertilizers in Nowgong district since 1964-65 to 1969-70 (figures in Metric tonnes).

9. *Agricultural Guide Book, Assam*, 1968-69, Department of Agriculture, p. 127.

Receipt and disposal of fertilizers in the Nowgong district are shown below.

Year.	Receipt.				Disposal.				Remarks.
	Ammonium Sulphate	Urea	Super phosphate	Muriate of Patash	Ammonium Sulphate	Urea	Super phosphate	Muriate of potash	
	in Metric tons	in metric tons	in metric tons	in metric tons	in metric tons	in metric tons	in metric tons	in metric tons	
1964-65	171.685	..	167.400	6,855	171.648	..	164.815	2.330	
1965-66	1.150	21.650	30.355	20.000	..	..		..	
1966-67	3077.695	94.000	0.500	184.000	5,407.050	6.500	17.500	80.142	
					17,7,025				
1967-68	20.000	135.000	0.833	123.580	1,097.576	243.150	0.833	122.911	
1968-69	..	..	266.900	3.185	..	..	248.975	3.185	Received from Agro-Industries.
1969-70	23.550	..	57.132	4.072	21.480	..	32.750	4.072	In case of superphosphate the excess distributed stock added from the old stock.

Fertilizers so far distributed in the district are Ammonium Sulphate, Urea, Superphosphate, Bone-meal, and Muriate of Potash.

The quantum of fertilizer input is stated to have gone up during the last few years. The high cost of fertilizers, non-availability of credit and the lack of storage facilities in remote villages and want of distributors in such villages are some of the difficulties faced by farmers. The Agriculture Department has also taken schemes to distribute compost manure and green manure in all parts of the district.

Distribution of improved Seeds : Cultivators usually preserve a portion of their crop to be used as seeds for the next sowing. Needy cultivators can also buy at moderate rates improved seeds of paddy, jute, mustard, sugar-cane etc., produced in Seed Farms opened in several Blocks of the district by the Agriculture Department. Sapling of fruit trees are also made available cheaply at the horticultural nursery started at Kathiatoli near Kaliabor in 1946-47. The Assam Seeds Corporation was set up in 1967 to produce, procure and distribute quality seeds. All seed farms and the horticultural nursery have been handed over to the Corporation by the Agriculture Department. Besides the horticultural nursery at Kathiatoli, the Corporation has the following Seed Farms in Nowgong district.

Name of farm.	Year of starting.	Area in acres	Area under cultivation (Acres)
1. Dhing	1958-59	30.00	25.00
2. Teliabebejia	1958-59	30.00	25.00
3. Darigaji	..	30.00	26.00
4. Kathani	..	..	..
5. Kalaikhowa	1958-59	30.00	25.00
6. Laokhowa	1958-59	30.00	23.00
7. Dimaru	1959-60	30.00	25.00
8. Auguri	1957-58	33.30	27.00
9. Jhargaon	1957-58	30.00	25.00
10. Barpukhuri	1958-59	30.00	25.00
11. Baroma	1957-58	30.00	25.00
12. Senchowa	..	..	..
13. Kathiatoli	1948-49	213.00	83.00

Among the paddy seeds distributed by the government which are gaining popularity mention may be made of '*Monohar-Sali*, '*Prasadbhog*', '*Badsahbhog*', '*Basmati*', '*Negeri bas*', '*Rangadaria*'. Among other improved varieties *I-R* 8, *Taichung Native* 1, *Jaya, Padma pankaj, Jagannath, Kikoa Bao* (Deep water paddy), *Kolangi* etc., are also used.

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 the activities of the Agriculture Department are canalised through these committees. The members receive training in Development Blocks where they attend seminars on various aspects of agriculture. The Agriculture Extension Officers and *Gramsevaks* 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.

Other schemes : The Agriculture Department has taken up plant protection schemes about which reference has been made earlier. Among various other schemes implemented by the Department the following deserve mention.

Jute Package Blocks : In order to increase the production of Jute, five Community Development Blocks have been selected covering an area of 70,200 acres of the district. However, these exclude the areas cultivated by the individual Jute growers elsewhere in the district.

Horticulture Development Scheme : One Horticulture Fruit Nursery is functioning at Kathiatoli since 1946-47. This nursery distributes the plants of cocoanut, orange, pineapple, lemon and other useful fruit bearing trees.

Before concluding this very brief account of the activities of the Agriculture Department mention must be made of the Assam Agricultural University that has been set up at Jorhat (Agricultural Section) and at Gauhati (Veterinary section). Assam has entered a new era of agricultural education with the inception of this University. More emphasis has now been laid on agricultural research, and its full benefits are being enjoyed by this district along with all other districts of the State.

(d) **Animal Husbandry and Fisheries** : The livestock population of the district increased considerably during the period 1945-1966. Whereas in 1945 the livestock population of Nowgong was 5,49,179 it rose to 9,56,025 in 1966 showing an increase of about fifty eight per cent. Cattle consitituted about eighty per cent of the livestock population in 1966. Of the cattle population of 7,57,864, males are 3,20,454 and females are 2,14,681 and 2,22,229 were young stock below three years. Population of cattle has almost doubled since 1945. In the Old Nowgong District Gazetter cattle were described as "half-starved, under sized, ill-bred, and not unfrequently diseased.....The bullock finds it a difficult task to drag even the native plough, and the cows yield but a minimum of milk. The causes of this degeneracy are not entirely clear, but are probably to be found in a total indifference to laws of breeding, in absolute neglect, and partly perhaps in the want of suitable fodder in the rains. No bulls

are set aside to be the sires of the herd and the cows are generally covered by a young and immature animal."[10] This was the state of cattle in the early part of the century. Since then, though much has been done by Government to improve the breed of cattle and their health, there is further scope of improvement in this regard. However in 1972 number of total livestock in Nowgong including cattle but excluding poultry came to 8,98,765. Total number working cattle being 2,54,815, breeding cattle being 2,598, number of milking cow is 1,16,314 and 73840 dry 7". With introduction of improved varieties of breeding males, the district offers plenty of scope for the development of fodder crops especially in the *Chapari* areas.

Goats numbered 1,41,023 in 1966 and came next to cattle. They do not belong to any particular breed and were described in the old Gazetteers published in the first decades of the twentieth century as "almost as degenerate as the cattle". They yield little milk and some Hindus use kids for sacrifice.

Buffaloes in Nowgong district decreased from 43,052 in 1945 to 33,403 in 1966. There was a marked decline of 21.25 per cent of their population during the period 1945-1951 and further decline of 7·08 per cent between 1951 and 1956. Of the total buffaloes in 1966, 14,627 were males, 11,161 were females and 7,615 were young stock below three years. Buffaloes of the district belong to two distinct breeds locally known as Assamese and Bengali breeds. The former is a fine standing animal with wide-spreading horns but the latter is of smaller size and is less imposing. There is a marked difference between the prices of the two breeds.

Other livestock of the district in 1966 were sheep (3,465), horses and ponies (2,682), mules(248) donkeys (20) and pigs (17,320).

Some of the common diseases of the cattle and buffaloes are—Rinderpest, Foot and mouth disease and Anthrox, wherein the effected animal suffers from painless swelling of the neck etc., causing discharge from natural openings resulting death to the animal within 10-35 hrs. Other diseases are Black—quarter, Bovine contagious, pluro—pneumonia, Jhon's disease, Milk fever, Liver fluke, round tape-worm etc.

Poultry : Poultry of the district was censused at 6,02,007 in 1951. It increased to 7,82,280 in 1966 comprising 6,27,350 fowls, 1,56,495 ducks and 83,435 others. Rearing of hens and ducks for the table eggs is becoming more popular. The prejudice against rearing of hens is gradually dying out. Table I shows the livestock population of the district from 1945 to 1961 and Table II is based on the livestock Census of 1966. Diseases common to the poultries are Ranikhet (New Castle disease), Coacidiosis, Fowl Pox, Bacillary White Diarrhoea, Avian, Parasitic diseases like lice and worms.

10. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gezatteers*, Nowgong, Calcutta 1905, p. 128.
* *Statistical Handbook of Assam*, 1976, pp. 87, pp. 91 and pp. 97.

Table I

STATEMENT SHOWING THE VARIATION IN THE NUMBER OF MAIN LIVESTOCK DURING 1945-1961 IN THE DISTRICT.

Source : DIRECTORATE OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND VETERINARY DEPARTMENT, ASSAM.

Sl. No.	Livestock	Population in 1945	Population in 1951	Percentage variation in 1951 over 1945	Population in 1956	Percentage variation in 1956 over 1951	Population in 1961	Percentage variation in 1961 over 1956	Percentage variation in 1961 over 1951
1.	Cattle ..	4,40,342	5,82,059	+32.21	6,00,399	+3.15	7,29,411	+21.49	+25.32
2.	Buffalo ..	43,052	33,092	—21.25	31,502	—7.08	45,484	+44.38	+34.16
3.	Sheep ..	258	471	+82.56	1,738	+269.00	1,968	+13.23	+317.83
4.	Goat ..	64,840	66,304	+2.30	71,888	+8.37	1,47,218	+104.79	+121.93
5.	Horses and Ponies. ..	787	932	+18.42	652	—30.04	767	+17.64	—17.70
6.	Poultry ..	..	6,02,077	..	6,27,181	+4.17	5,10,970	—18.53	—15.13

N.B.— Poultry Census was taken for the first time in 1951, and so figures are not available for 1945 Census.

(+) Sign for increase. (—) Sign for decrease.

Table II.

Number of Livestock and Poultry in Nowgong district (1966 census).

Area	Cattle					Buffaloes					Horses and Ponies				
	Male	Female	Young stock (Below 3 yrs)	Total	Male	Female	Young stock (below 3 yrs)	Total	Male	Female	Young stock (below 3 yrs.)	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Rural	3,20,294	2,12,475	2,20,776	7,53,545	14,623	11,161	7,613	33,397	751	900	944	2,595
Urban	160	2,206	1,953	4,319	4	..	2	6	73	7	7	87

Area	Goats	Sheep	Mules	Donkeys	Pigs	Total Livestock	Poultry			Total Poultry
							Fowls	Ducks	Others	
1	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	33
Rural	1,40,314	3,429	248	20	17,320	9,50,868	6,22,649	1,45,630	8,040	7,75,319
Urban	709	36	..	..	..	5,157	4,701	865	395	5,961

(i) Area under fodder crops : The total area under fodder crops in June 1965 was sixty acres of which sixty two *bighas* were under the Government Dairy Farm at Barhampur and the rest with private individuals under supervision of the Veterinary Department. The fodder crops are both perennial and seasonal. Besides, there are small fodder plots for demonstration purposes in three Key Village Centres-Nakhola, Charaibahi and Barhampur. The main grass cultivated in these centres are Guinea and Napier which are perennial and Rena which is seasonal. A number of Veterinary Dispensaries also held demonstration fodder cultivation. Free distribution of seeds and roots of improved grasses is undertaken by these centres. Sale proceeds of the product of the centres are more than the expenditure incurred in cultivation though all the roots and seeds are distributed free of cost.

(ii) Dairy-Farming : There is only one Government Dairy Farm at Barhampur. This was started by the Department of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary in 1959. At the initial stage there were only eighty-four buffaloes with a daily average yield of 240 lbs. of milk. In September 1964, the livestock population increased to 739 consisting of 127 buffaloes, eighty three cattle, twelve pigs, eleven goats, 283 ducks, 215 poultries and three ponies. The daily average milk production in the said year was in the neighbourhood of 470 lbs. The farm originally a dairy farm was converted into a composite livestock farm in 1964. Murral buffaloes are maintained. The daily output of milk of the Farm is approximately seventy to eighty litres, which are generally supplied to Nowgong Town. Moreover, the district has some milk pockets at Jagiroad and Amlighat wherefrom milk is supplied to Gauhati after collection by Gauhati Town Milk Supply Authority.

There is a proposal for starting a Dairy Farm at Kaliabor Community Development Block. Milk pasteurisation scheme is under consideration and every endeavour is being made to make the farm self-sufficient.

(iii) Poultry : The district had one government Poultry Extension Unit at Barhampur which was subsequently upgraded to a Poultry Farm in 1965. The farm maintains about 807 birds including 109 Khaki Cambal and Nagesway duck. In addition to this, poultry farms are also being established in the Community Development Blocks of the district. One poultry farm is also attached with the Veterinary Hospital at Nowgong town. There are also private individual poultry farms in the district.

(iv) Measures to improve quality of breeds and to secure greater output : According to the Livestock Census of 1966, there were 24,139 male cattle and 2,316 he-buffaloes which were used for breeding and for other purposes in the district. This census showed that only 2,445 bulls and 445 he-buffaloes were

used for breeding purposes. In order to improve the breed of the indigenous creed, various measures have been adopted by the Veterinary Department. It procured and distributed Haryana bulls and R.I.R. bulls in the Panchayats on loan basis. Key village centres, insemination centres and sub-centres, semen collection centres and bull depots were opened. In Bull Depots bulls are made available for natural service to the cows free of cost. Three Artificial Insemination Centres are functioning in the three Key Village Centres and attempts are being made to increase the operation of such centres in the district. To ensure greater output through better breeding, the breeders as well as the farmers are encouraged through exhibitions, meetings and demonstrations where the benefits of adopting scientific breeding, feeding and management are explained.

In view of the fact that various species of livestock are of poor stock, the task of bringing about the improvement of breed appears to be stupendous. In the Fourth Five-Year Plan, emphasis was laid on the expansion of the existing livestock farm, key village scheme and distribution of improved breeding stock on a larger scale.

(vi) Animal Diseases and Veterinary Hospital : Besides the common cattle diseases, contagious and infectious diseases of the livestocks are also prevalent in the district. To protect animals from contagious diseases preventive measures are taken by the Department. Other common diseases are treated in the hospitals and dispensaries and in rural areas in the First Aid Centres. Cases are also treated by the field staff of the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department in their tours. In 1968, there were one Veterinary Hospital, eighteen Veterinary Dispensaries, one Rural Animal Husbandry Centre and ten Veterinary First-Aid Centres in the district. In addition to these there were five Block veterinary dispensaries with eleven sub-centres in the district.

(vii) Fisheries : Although in the past fishing for commercial purposes was confined to only certain sections of the people, no social stigma is now attached to such activity. Pisciculture is becoming popular among all sections of the people irrespective of caste or creed. As in the past the bulk of the fish sold at present in the markets of the district comes from the larger fisheries. The right to fishing in such fisheries is put up to auction by the Government and is settled with the highest tenderer usually for a period of three years. The auction sale of lucrative fisheries is often keenly contested. Only fresh fish is sold in the markets of the district. No industry of canned fish exists. Cured fishes are generally consumed by the tribals viz., Kacharis, Lalungs and Mikirs.

The development of fisheries in Nowgong district was undertaken only after Independence to meet the increasing demand for fish. A Fishery Officer

was appointed at Nowgong in 1949. The main objectives of the Fishery Department is to increase fish production by demonstrating scientific methods of pisciculture with a view to popularise them. The activities of the department having increased, its staff position in the district was augmented and at present the Superintendent of Fisheries heads an expanded district organisation. He is assisted among others by Fishery Demonstrators who guide pisciculturists in rural areas.

Among the major achievements of the Fishery Department in the district special mention may be made of the Raha Fish Seed Producing and Distribution Centre covering a water area of thirty *bighas*, Kathiatoli Fish Seed Raising and Distribution Centre with an area of ten *bighas*, Jongalabalahugarh Fish Farm with water area of 100 *bighas*, Bhalukmari and Jorapukhuri Fishseed Raising and Distribution Centre, Hojai Borpukhuri Fish Seed Raising and Distribution Centre and under the Reclamation of Derelict Fisheries Scheme, a water area of 640 *bighas* was reclaimed and under the Survey Scheme all the important rivers and *bils* fisheries were surveyed. A major break-through in the production of fish seeds on a large scale was achieved during the Second Plan Period when the department successfully induced the major carp to breed in confined water by pituitary hormone injection. The result was that the department obtained sufficient supply of fish seed for departmental stocking and for meeting private demands. During 1966-67,34,53,500 eggs and spawns were collected in Nowgong district of which 16,53,500 eggs survived. Of this, 1,99,205 were stocked in departmental tanks ; 10,80,000 were supplied to Community Development Blocks and 3,34,775 were sold to private parties. Fish seeds of major varieties which are generally found in Nowgong district include *Bhakua, Rahu, Mirika, Mali*, and *Kurhi, Rahu, Mirika* and *Bhakua* in combination are considered ideal for culturing in confined waters. Being herbivorous they do not prey upon one another and all these varieties are fast growing and delicious.

The over-all position is that the immense natural resources of Nowgong district have been boosted up by the schemes of the Fishery Department and at present the district is in a position to supply fish even to consumers of neighbouring districts after meeting its own demands. There are about 190 natural fisheries in the district under the Revenue Department. The Fishery Department successfully developed some selected revenue fisheries including Saran *bil* in Morigaon and Marikollang and Potakollang at Nowgong.

Revenue and Forest Fisheries : In the district of Nowgong there are about 140 revenue fisheries consisting of several *bils*, small tributaries and rivers. Some of these fisheries are sold annually by tender by the Deputy Commissioner (Revenue Branch). There are also some fisheries under the Forest Department but the annual revenue of these fisheries is generally low in comparision with

revenue fisheries. The main catch available in the forest fisheries are cat fish, carps and murrels.

Fishing implements : The nets that are most commonly used include (i) *Ghakata*. a net in the shape of a shovel which is pushed through the water and is generally used to catch *pona* fish ; (ii) *Khewali* (Castnet) 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 cast and then drawn by the rope to a boat or bank. The names, applied to this net as the mesh decreases in size are : *Regh*, *Afalia Duangulia*, *Angtha* and *Ghan Khewali* (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 *tanga 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. (v) *Uthar* is a large *khewali* which is too heavy to be thrown by hand and is therefore spread on the surface of water from a boat. A *Batihal* is a variety of this net with specially large meshed. (vi) *Ghatjal* (Deepnet) is fastened to a bamboo staging above the water and is raised and lowered on the lever principle.

Besides the nets, there are various kinds of water traps in use in Nowgong district. 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 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 *done* with short stem of above six inches diametre open at the top. The diametre at the bottom varies from two ft. to three and a half and even upto four ft. and in height varies from two ft. to three. ft.

Juluki : It is a fishing instrument prepared with bamboo strips and cane in the same manner like *polo*. But its diametre 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*., *khalihana*, *goroi*, *magur*. *kaoi*. and other small fishes.

Jakai : The *Jakai* is a species wicker work shovel which is either dragged along the bottom or placed on the water bed to catch small fishes which take

refuge in it when the weed is trampled. *Jati* bamboo is mainly used for making this particular implement.

(4) **Khalai** : The *Khalai* is also prepared with bamboo strips. The strips required for the weft are very long, while those for the warn are short. The *Khalai* is woven in the shape of an earthen *Kalasi* or pitcher. This is used for temporary keeping of fishes during hand-net-fishing.[12]

Besides the above, conical bamboo traps locally called *dingara*, *thunao*. chepa and *gui* are used to catch fish in small streams or running water near rice fields.

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

Scientific names	Local names
Carps :	
Laheo rohita	*Rohu*
Lalbeo calbasu	*Mali* (mahlu)
Labeo nandina	*Nadani*
Labeo genus	*Kurhi*
Labeo bata	*Bhangan*
Labeo angra	*Anka-nara*
Labeo pangusia	*Nara*
Catla catla	*Bahu*
Cirrhina reba	*Lachim*
Cirrhina mrigula	*Mirika*
Barbus sarana	*Senee*
Barbus tor	*Pithia*
Murrels :	
Ophicephalus maruliss	*Sal*
,, *Striatus*	*Sol*
,, *Punctutus*	*Goroi*
,, *Gachua*	*Sengeli*
,, *Stewarti*	*Senga*
,, *amphibious*	*Barsenga*
Cat fish :	
Wallago attu	*Barali*
Mystus seenghala	*Anari*
,, *oar*	*Bheu*

12. *Census of India*, 1961, *Selected Handicrafts of Assam*, Vol. Part VIII-A. p. 112-113.

Scientific name	Local name
Cat fish	
Mystus cavasius	*Gagal*
,, *tengra*	*Singra*
,, *bleedery*	*Hingara*
Clorias magur	*Magur*
Heteropneustes fossilis	*Singee*
Cullicarous bimaculatus	*Pabha*
Entropichthys vacha	*Bosa*
Pangasius pangasius	*Punga*
Pseudotropious gorua	*Neria*
Silonia silondia	*Kas*
Rita rita	*Ritha*
Bagarius bagarius	*Gorua*
Misc :	
Barbus stigma	*Puthi*
Barbus Ticto	*Puthi*
Notopterus notopterus	*Kandhuli*
Netopterus chitala	*Chital*
Hilsa ilisha	*Ilisa*
Anabas testudeneus	*Kaoi*
Tricogaster chunti	*Bheseli*
Nandus nandus	*Gadgedi*
Glassogobious giurius	*Patimuta*
Gudusia chapra	*Karati*
Rasbora elenga	*Eleng*
Mastacembalus Pancalius	*Tura*
Ambssis nama	*Chanda*
Amblypharayngodon mole	*Moa*
Ambssis ranga	*Chanda*
Esmus doricus	*Dorikana*
Yenonotodon cancila	*Kakila*
Chela Bacila	*Chelkana*
Laubucca laubuca	*Laupatia*
Batia dario	*Batia*
Amphipneus cuchia	*Kuchia*
Barilius bola	*Bariala*

Fish diseases : Like all other living beings fishes also suffer from a number of common and infectious diseases. Some of the common diseases from which the

fishes generally suffers are gill-rot, fin-rot and malnutrition. They are also attacked by internal and external parasites like lice and worms. *Barali* (*wallago attu*) are infected with tape worms. Most probably that is the reason why most of the high born Hindus in the district do not take this kind of fish. Malnutrition in a fish can be detected by its external indication like bigger head and thin anaemic flesh. During monsoon fishes generally suffer from oxygen deficiency and such deficient fishes float on rivers or fisheries in search of more oxygen, ultimately to die. They also suffer from oxygen-excess, which can be externally detected from inflamated skin. The other rare diseases are T.B. and Cancer in fish.

The Fishery Department of Assam, in collaboration with the Government of India are training a number of Fishery Officers for taking up research breeding and also in treatment of fishes. The Fish Farm Development Agencies render all available technical training regarding fish rearing and disease-control.

In rearing fish in a scientific way, by adding line and saline to fishery, and through water-culture and test, fish diseases are being controlled.

(e) Forestry :

(i) Area and character of Forests : The area under the Nowgong Forest Division in 1970-71 was 92,455 hectres. There were 61,470 hectares of Unclassed State Forests. Botanically the forests of Nowgong district can roughly be divided into two divisions - the Tropical evergreen forests and Miscellaneous forests. The first category includes vegetations like *Ameri*. *Gonsarai*. *Sapa* and trees of similar varieties. In the second category such species are included the top canopies of which are deciduous and the middle and the lower canopies are evergreen in character.

Besides these two major divisions other types of forests include mixed type, dry miscellaneous type, wet miscellaneous type, riverine type, savannah type and swamp type. They are also composed of many canopies such as top canopy, middle canopy and lower canopy.

The mixed type of forests contain the top canopy species such as *Sal*, *Bhamora*, *Sida*, *Jamu*, *Ajhar* (*Flos Reginae*), *Gomari* (*Gmelina Arbores*), *Sam* (*Artocarpus Chaplasha*) etc. The middle canopy contains species like *Kumbi* (*Careya Arborea*), *Gohara*, *Sonaru* (*Cassia Fistula*), *Kuhir*, *Bandardima* etc. with *Kako bamboo*.

The undergrowths are generally shurbs and grasses like thatch and hay and these are of lower canopy species.

Similarly, the dry miscellaneous type of forests contained the species like *Gomari*, *Ameri*, *Bola*, *Bagipoma*, *Gonsarai*, *Sapa*, *Sam*, and *Simul*.

But the wet miscellaneous type of forests is marked by evergreen and semi-evergreen species. The top canopy species are *Bhelu*, *Sam*, *Hollock*, *Ameri*, *Khokan*, *Korai*, *Jamu* and *Hatipaila* etc.

The middle canopy species include *Ajhar*, *Monaiteleku*, *Singari*, *Marhal*. *Bandardima* etc. and the lower canopies are generally of miscellaneous nature and moss type.

In the riverine type of forests of Nowgong district there are also two sub types, i.e. Brahmaputra alluvium and Jamuna-Kopili Valley alluvium type. *Simul* is the principal tree in the Brahmaputra alluvium. The Jamuna-Kopili Valley alluvium contains mixed type of forests and is composed of trees like *Korai*, *Ajhar*, *Urium*, *Simul*, *Outenga*, *Mukhai* etc. and also in the well-drained soils the better species like *Sapa*, *Poma*, *Gonsarai*, *Gomari* are also noticed.

The dry Savannah type occurs in open areas in dry miscellaneous forests and are characterised by species like *Ulu*, *Khagari*, *Ikra*, *Nal* and other similar grasses.

The Swamp type includes *beels* and marshes and abandoned river channels. Alpine species are usually associated with this type.

Deterioration of forests has also been noticed in certain forests of the district. In order to prevent further deterioration and to keep the climatic balance the government has taken up a scheme of afforestation. During the year 1964-65 about 750 acres of forest lands were brought under regeneration and afforestation at a cost of Rs. 28,420 in the district. In order to increase trees and their products, the *Vanmohatsava* is also observed in the district. This has become an annual function of the Forest Department when saplings are planted in some areas.

(ii) Importance of Forestry : Forestry plays a significant role in the economy of Nowgong 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 houses. A number of forest based-industries like saw mills, furniture workshops, bamboo and cane industry etc. have also been opened in the district.

The Nowgong Forest Division includes 26 Reserves and this Division annually supplies a considerable number of logs and match wood species to the match factory at Dhubri. Over and above these, railway sleepers are also produced in the district. Besides, boulders, gravels, sands and other forest products also fetch considerable revenue to the government. In 1967-68, the Nowgong Forest Division produced 10,627 cubic metres of timber and 6,567 cubic metres of fuels which goes upto 37,357 cubic metres of timber and 21,631 cubic of fuels in 1972-73. Thus apart from other forest products sale of timber is an important source of revenue of the Department. The revenue earned from

elephant catching is also significant in the Nowgong Forest Division. Royalty is imposed on each catch of elephant at the rate of Rs. 500 per tusker, Rs. 250 per female and Rs. 350 per *makhna*. Monopoly fee is also levied on each captured elephant according to rates offered by successful operators.

People of the forest villages mainly depend upon the forests for their livelihood. Each adult forest villager is allotted ten *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 lann free of revenue. In return for these benefits each adult forest villager renders five days free labour to the Forest Department per annum and twenty days paid labour. Some people earn their livelihood by collecting lac from forests but unremunerative prices have dwindled the number of such persons.

(iii) Measures to secure scientific exploitation and development etc. : The Assam Forest Regulation Act, 1891, prohibits free access to forest produce and destruction of forests. The Forest Department annually sells forest produce like wood, gravel and sands, cane and thatch *mahals*, only on tenders from registered contractors and the revenue so derived goes to the Government. The department also grants permits to individuals and institutions to extract trees in the reserved forest after collecting royalty per tree. On payment of royalty permits to collect sand, gravel, cane, thatch, *ekra* etc., is allowed. The department maintains a regular forest staff in the forest areas to check unauthorised and indiscriminate exploitation of forest produce.

The Department has adopted the following measures for the development of forests ; viz., (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 effective implementation of such measures, the forest personnels are trained in the Assam Forest School, Jhalukbari and also in the forest institutions at DehraDun and Coimbatore.

The following statement shows the expenditure incurred under Nowgong Forest Division by the Forest Department in 1964-65 on measures adopted for exploitation of forest on scientific lines.

Artificial regeneration		Natural regeneration	
Creation of new forestry on scientific lines.	Cost of maintenance of existing plantations.	Cost of year's operation (including controlled, burning and fire protection)	Total area under concentrated natural regeneration at the commencement of the year.
Rs. 28,420.00	Rs. 33,409.74	Rs. 2,178.00	448.00 (Acres)

Forest products and their use : Different qualities of timber, both durable and undurable are available under the Nowgong Forest Reserves. Among the principal forest products of the district are timber of various species such as *Sal, Gomari, Sam, Ameri, Sapa, Hollock, Khokan, Korai, Jamu, Hatipalia, Uriam, Marhal. Bandardima* etc. Minor products like *Khagari* (*Saccharum sponteneum*), *Ikra.* (*Saccharum Arundinaccum*), *Nal* (*Phragmites Roxburghii*), gravels, pebbles and sands 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
	Rs.	Rs.
1. *Bansom* ..	20.00 (per tree)	200.00
2. *Simul* ..	6.00 ,,	60.00
3. Trees other than 1 & 2 above. ..	15.00 ,,	130.00
4. Cane reeds, thatch	1,000.00 ,,	2,25,000.00
5. Elephant *mahals* ..	3,000.00 ,,	55,000.00

(f) **Floods, Famine and Drought :**

No account of famine has been ever recorded in the district of Nowgong. But drought affects the district from time to time. Floods have become an annual feature in the district especially after the great earthquake of 1950.

Severe floods occurred in the district in the year 1931, 1934, 1946, 1949, 1954, 1956, 1960, 1963, 1966 and 1969. As mentioned elsewhere the most severe flood in living memory was that of the Kopili in 1934 which produced a flood of eleven lakhs cusecs. Normal floods of 30,000 to 50,000 cusecs occur almost every year once or twice. Such floods remain for two to three days only. The river Kopili floods about 150 square miles in the district almost every year. The river Kalang affects about 485 square miles in Samaguri and Kaliabor *Thanas* and forty square miles in Raha *thana*. The river Killing affects about ten square miles, Nanoi about ninety-six square miles, Jamuna about eighty square miles and Barapani about fifty square miles every year. Floods in the mauzas near the Brahmaputra area are common. Every year standing crops get damaged, homestead lands get inundated and communication gets disrupted due to high foods.

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 heavy floods of the Brahmaputra are concerned, the flood warning messages were relayed previously through the office of the Flood Control Department from Shigatse, Chusuri and Tsela Dzang stations in Tibet via Darjeeling to the Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur. At present flood warning signals are transmitted to the Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur from some stations at the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra. The Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur in his turn informs other Deputy Commissioners and Sub-divisional Officers of the Brahmaputra valley. On receipt of this flood warning the Deputy Commissioners and Sub-divisional Officers take precautionary measures to meet the situation. 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 ,,

Relief Operations : Prompt relief measures afforded by the Government now-a-days mitigate the hardships of flood affected people. Such measures include evacuation of people and cattle to safer sites and providing for their food and shelter till flood subsides. 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 and can be reached 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. 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 foodgrains, pulses, salt and mustard oil at a given scale. Other commodities distributed include medicine, clothing and fodder for the cattle. The relief parties move mostly by country boats and carry with them the stock of food-grains and other articles for distribution.

Statement Showing extend of flood damage in Nowgoug District from 1947 to 1970.

Year	Time of flood	Area affected (in acres)	No. of villages affected	No. of affected		No. of houses damaged.	No.of human lives lost.	No. of cattle lost.	Damaged to corps		Area eroded		No. of families	
				Families	Population				(in acres)	value (in Rs)	No. of villages	(in acres)	eroded	Property lost (in Rs.)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	13	15
1947 (Kopili flood)	July & Aug.	20,204	184	5,380	26,960	1,000	10	2,350	65,650	25,74,768	..	..	..	..
1948 (Kopili flood)	June & July	24,246	250	10,500	52,500	1,200	Nil	2,210	87,534	30,89,720	..	..	..	..
1949 (Brahmaputra)	August	4,044	235	800	..	900	Nil	200	21,884	5,14,976	..	..	..	..
1951 (Brahmaputra and Kopili)	July	26,941	395	13,200	..	1,200	Nil	1670	1,13,268	45,30952	..	..	..	..
1952 (Kopili flood)	June & July	32,329	280	16,550	87,750	115	3	2000	1,23,571	57,65,864	..	..	..	..
*1953	June & July	10,099	175	134	..	..	Nil	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1954 (Brahmaputra)	June, July & August	..	744	50,219	..	..	6	250	1,60,739	3,15,67,617	35	10,000	648	15,000,00
1955 (Brahmaputra & Kopili flood)	May & June	..	..	..	..	..	Nil	..	24,991.69	52,33,635	..	..	..	..
1956 (Kopili)	June	66,957.39	241	7,273	36,365	100	Nil	..	51,065.44	73,81,138	..	7.75	10	..
1957 (Brahmaputra)	August	33,280	50	1,800	..	101	Nil	8	2,302	2,61,440	9	333.85	60	30,000
1958 (Brahmaputra)	August	42,520	165	..	33,883	110	Nil	..	4,772 (approx)	7,59,180	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
1959 (Kopili)	June	26,975	185	848	4,240	..	..	..	29,280	41,53,494	..	..	..	..
1960 (Kopili)	September	1,34,632	467	16,849	84,249	38	2	39	1,34,632	1,06,68,955	..	6,525	346	..
1961 (Brahmaputra)	July	109	9	294	1,620	7	Nil	Nil	110	27,340	1	100	34	7500
1962 (Brahmaputra)	July	3,91,040	535	53,341	2,66,705	1408 destroyed = 100	7	88	88,965	1,43,67,925	10	911.40	149	8750 (excluding value of land)
1962 (Brahmaputra & Kopili flood)	August	5,87,315.20	1,184	88,851	4,45,880	6658 destroyed =2900	21	1455	2,17,390	6,19,14,909	5	424	106	15,150 (excluding value of land)
1969	..	52,903	422	29,057	1,46,096	2,563 Rs. 3,85,5 525(value)	2	708 Rs.2,12, 400/- (value)	36,400	41,69,434	..	..		..
1970	..	2,66,235	623	41,347	1,73,232	2,537 Rs.2,41,000 (value)	5	236 Rs.17,150 (value)	13,613	7,74,000	..	..	..	..

(In 1970, total damages to crops, houses, including eroded houses, public institutions and cattle was Rs. 43,81,290/- in the district).

*This was not a flood either from Kopili or Brahmaputra but due to rash of Kalang water through the embankment channel at upper Barbhagia villages in Samaguri Circle were flooded.

Additional measures include (1) rehabilitation of the flood and 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) opening of fair price shops to provide rice and wheat to the victims at Government subsidised rates, (4) innoculation of human beings as well as cattle to prevent outbreak of epidemic, (5) disinfecting the flood affected areas, (6) distribution of seeds or seedlings by the Agriculture Department to the farmers of the flood affected areas, where crops have been damaged, (7) issue of agricultural loans and rehabilitation loans to the flood affected people, (8) issue of grant for repairing school buildings or other public buildings, roads and bridges damaged by the flood, (9) remission of land revenue in the worst affected areas, (10) 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 and sluice gates and regulating the river courses. Thus, a concerted effort is made by the district and subdivisional. authorities in conjunction with several departments to mitigate the miseries of the flood affected people. Most of the principal departments of the Government get involved in some way or the other, in combating floods and its after-math. At times Sub-divisional or District Flood Relief Committees are formed comprising both official and non-official members to devise means for providing adequate relief.

The following Statement shows the relief measures adopted in the district from 1951 to 1962 and also for 1969 and 1970.

Flood Rlief in Nowgong district :
(amount in Rupees).

Type of Relief.	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1956
1. Gratuitous relief.	5,000/-	45,000/-	35,063/-	67,500/-	22,728/- and 22,010/- (in kind of cloth, seeds medicines etc.	15,000/
2. Agricultural Loan.	1,92,390/-	..	..	4,47,000/-	99,000/-	..

1957	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962	1969	1970
3,000/- (to eroded families)	100 mds of rice distributed.	4,000	25,000	2,734	5,10,000	1,25,000	1,10,000
..	10,000/-	..	..	..	5,83,000	..	2,73,989

The provision of granting *takkavi* loans is also applied in practice almost every year. The statement below shows the *takkavi* loans advanced to the cultivators in the district from 1950-51 to 1963-64.

Year			Year :		
1950—51	.. Rs.	32,390.00	1957-58 ..	.. Rs..	5,28,800.00
1951-52	.. Rs.	1,60,000.00	1958-59 ..	.. Rs.	2,64,000.00
1952-53	.. Rs.	75.727.00	1959-60 ..	.. Rs.	2,63,000.00
1953-54	.. Rs.	55,500.00	1960-61 ..	..	6,000.00
1954-55	.. Rs.	4,88,912.00	1961-62 ..	.. Rs.	6,000.00
1955-56	.. Rs.	77,500.00	1962-63 ..	.. Rs.	5,67,816.00
1956-57	.. Rs.	53,050.00	*1963-64 ..	.. Rs.	1,31,000.00

(*upto Nov. 1963).

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 Nowgong being a part of the ancient kingdom of Kamarupa shared the glory and fortune of the country in the past. After the break-down of Kamarupa there prevailed a long period of uncertainty. The Ahoms occupied a part of Nowgong in the 16th century ; but it was only in the 17th century that the area came under the subjugation of the Ahom dynasty. During the Ahom period, the cottage industries of Assam reached a high degree of perfection. As Nowgong came under the Ahom rule very late, it did not share in full the industrial excellence of the Ahoms and lagged behind her sister district 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 flourished in Assam from ancient times. It still occupies a place of pride in every Assamese household which invariably maintains a handloom besides other articles from spinning and weaving. The district of Nowgong was noted for the finest kind of cotton cloth made of local thread called *nurkata suta*, It was used in the time of Ahom rule in Assam.[2] Handloom weaving is a universally practised cottage industry by rich or poor alike and has no stigma of caste or creed attached with 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".[3] *Muga Mekhela* and *riha*, beautifully decorated blouse pieces, *Eri chadar* etc., are some of the best

1. P. C. Choudhury, *The History of Civilisation of the people of Assam, to the Twelfth Century A. D.* Gauhati, 1959, p. 363.
2. L. H. Samman, *Monograph of the Cotton Fabrics of Assam*, Calcutta, 1897.
3. *Selected Handicrafts of Assam, Census of India*, 1961, p. 1.

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."[4]

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* and *Harsa Charita* show that fine cotton garments were produced in Assam in the 10th century A.D. 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 Barbarua, 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 has stated that it was customary on the part of the warriors to wear in the morning that piece of cloth which was manufactured on the preceding night after ginning the cotton at midnight. The spinning of the thread and manufacture of the cloth were completed before the day-break. 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. But in the past the people of the high caste regarded the rearing of *Eri* as impure and it was mainly confined to Lalungs, Kacharis, Nadiyals, Haris, Namasudras and other castes. The chief centres of products of this thread in the district are Baropujia, Mikirbheta, Dhing, Kandali and Kathiatali ; Jaluguti, Phulaguri, Gobha and Barpani are some of the places where *Eri* clothes are sold. The Muhammadan historians observed that Assam silks were excellent and resembled those of China. Travernier refers to Assam silk as one "produced on trees" and confirms that the stuff made of them were 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 no less contributed 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 Britishers, came the dark era of the handloom weaving in Assam. Britishers did not evince any interest in the development of this national industry. They were keen only to find markets for their Lancashire products and as such weaving industry faced keen competition from the mill-made cheap goods which dominated the

4. Ibid.—p 1.

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 though mauled of its past glory, 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 womenfolk. Every girl knows the art of weaving and under the ordinary circumstances, she may not be chosen by any bridegroom unless her dexterity in the art of weaving is known. It is still customary among the Assamese, that a grown-up girl makes a present of self-woven *bihuan* (a *gamocha* with design work meant to be presented during the *Bohag Bihu* festival) to her elders as a symbol of respect. It is in this context that Mahatma Gandhi, 'Father of the Nation' once remarked that Assamese women could 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 weaver is not rare. The articles of production generally include *mekhela*, *chadar*, *Riha*, *churia*, *cheleng*, *Borkapor* (khaiea) and *gamocha* (a pieces of cloth about one and half metre long with borders on foursides). The implements of weaving which were and still are common in almost all the Assamese families are quite few in numbers. Besides various types of looms, the *Ugha*, *Sereki*, *rash*, *beam*, *Makoo*, *Jator*, *Neothani* etc., are some of the accessories required for weaving. It may however be noted that there is no common nomenclature for all the parts and accessories and the names widely vary from district to district. About 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 household while the second one is in common use among the hill tribes. The Bengali weavers who have migrated from East Pakistan (Bangladesh) mostly use Pit loom. The Fly-shuttle loom which is of recent introduction, is an improved type of frame which considerably increases the output 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.[5] The number of professional weavers in the district is very small. As per census of 1961 there were only 2,429 professional weavers (out side the co-operative fold) of which

5. Ibid, pp. 4–5.

600 were full-time 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 a 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 solve the baffling problem of ever increasing unemployment and handloom industry is no exception in this regard. This industry, if greared to the commercial exigencies, will provide lucrative employment, especially to the womenfolk as part-time as well as full-time work in their traditional crafts. Keeping this in view various boards i.e., 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, at all-India level have been established. The Directorate of Sericulture and Weaving and the Directorate of Industries of Assam also look after the development of village and cottage industries in the State.

The Directorate of Sericulture and Weaving, Assam comprises two wings i.e., Sericulture and Weaving. Under its weaving wing there is one Superintendent of Weaving with his headquarters at Nowgong to look after the development of weaving in the district. He is assisted by two Inspectors of Weaving in-charge of Nowgong East and Nowgong West circles. Eighteen Demonstrators are in-charge of demonstration centres, at Jankhola, Hatbar, Kaliabor, Kuaritol, Samaguri, Nowgong, Hojai, Kampur, Lanka, Nowgong west, Dakhinpat, Barapujia, Raha, Charaibahi, Laharighat, Jagibhakatgaon, Nellie and Marigaon. These Demonstrators keep the artisans abreast of the latest development of handloom industry and impart training on the new designs and techniques of production and use of improved looms and implements. There are three Weaving Extention Service Centres at Kaliabor, Nowgong town and Barapujia and two Weaving Training Centres at Raha and Hatbor. The Department also arranges supply of improved looms and other weaving implements on subsidy basis varying from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{5}$th of the price to popularise weaving.

(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 a leading producer of the non-mulbery 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.[6]

6. Ibid, pp. 23.

The origin of the silk industry in Assam is still obsecure 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 *Arthasastra*. 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 Thina 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."[7] Chinese records dating as far back as 248 A.D. mention about the trade routes from South China through the Shan States, Brahmaputra river and Kamrup to Pataliputra (present Patna) and through it, to the western part of India. The ancient trade in silk with Bhutan and Tibet, through Udalguri in the Darrang district of Assam still exists.[8]

The unique distinction earned by the fabrics prepared out of *Muga*, *Eri* and *Pat* (Mulberry silk) in the Assamese life and the interest taken by the Ahom nobilities in rearing up the silk industry has 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 stapple of trade of East India Company during this period. In Nowgong district Puranigudam, Barghat, Panigaon, Nanoi, Jajari and Barapujia were famous as centres of *muga* industry. At present Barapujia, Roha and Marigaon are well known for *eri*-production.

Like weaving, silk industry also had its period of crisis during the British regime when even markets situated in farflung 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 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 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 Sericulture.

7. P. C. Choudhury, *The History of Civilization of the people of Assam to the Twelfth Century A, D.*, p. 364, 365.
8. *Facts About Assam Silk*, The Sericulture Weaving Department, Assam, Shillong, p. 2.

The Sericultural activities in Nowgong are under the control and supervision of a Superintendent of Sericulture with his headquarters at Nowgong under the Directorate of Sericulture and Weaving, Assam. He is assisted by one Inspector and other field staff such as Sericultural Reeling Foreman, Marketing Organiser, Cocoon Marketing Inspector and Demonstrator, Supervisors and Operators. There is also one Seed Organisation Officer posted at Senchoa Farm particularly to look after seed matters. The district has one Sericulture Farm at Senchoa, one *Eri* Seed Grainage at Oujari, one *Eri* concentration centre at Kathiatoli, two *Eri* and *Muga* production centres at Kampur and Raha, with their branches at Charaibahi, Marigaon and Ghahi and one Graft Nursery Centre at Marigaon. The activities of the Department have gradually increased to popularise the sericulture industry in the district. Training facilities have been given to local youths for undergoing training in the art of the sericulture industry. Grants-in-aid and subsidies have also been generously provided to individual rearers and reeling associations to encourage them in pursuing the industry. The Department has also supplied *Sum* and *Sualo* seedlings free of cost to the growers and thus several centres have been recently opened under the Panchayats for culture of such *muga* food trees in the district.

Sericulture and Weaving is widely practised in Nowgong district specially among the Kachari and Lalung tribes. Three principal varieties of silk called *Pat*, *Endi* and *Muga* were and still are produced in the district. The first variety is the finest and costliest. *Endi* is coarser quality and is generally used by the common people. The third variety i.e., *Muga* is a stouter, and more durable than *pat* but coarser and less glossy. Of these three varieties of silk worms, only *Eri* and *pat* worms are chiefly reared in the district.[9]

Pat is produced from the cocoons of two species of worms called univoltine or *bar palu* (*bambyx textor*) and the multivoltine or *saru palu* (*bambyx croesi*). Both the species are reared indoors on the leaves of the mulberry tree (*morus indica*) or where mulberry is not obtainable, on the Panchapa. The eggs of the *bar palu* take about ten months to hatch, the worms usually making their appearance in January. The life span of the worms is about thirty to forty days and the cocoons which are of bright yellow colour take about 6 days to spin. The silk after it is boiled in the potash water looks perfectly white. About twelve to fifteen thousand cocoons are needed to produce one pound of thread. The rearing of *saru-palu* is much favoured by the cultivators as it yields four broods in a year although thread obtained from it is regarded inferior to that of the Bor-palu. Pat Silk is used for making *Mekhela*, *Riha*, blouse piece and *Chadar* for females *Enga-chola* and *Chapkan* for males.

Several causes may be attributed to make this silk rare and expensive. First, the worms producing this type of silk are very delicate and a large number

9. *Selected Handicrafts of Assam, Census of India*, 1961, p. 26.

of them die before they spin. Secondly, the supply of mulberry leaves is also 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 and other such communities and even they also regarded it with disfavour. However, this old time prejudice has almost died out and the rearing of the worm has become popular among the members of other communities.

Muga, the golden silk of Assam is produced by a caterpillar, known as "*antheroea Assamea*" which is generally fed on the *sum* tree (mechilus ordoratissima). It is a multivoltine silk worm producing five broods viz *Katia, jarua, Jethuwa, Aharua*, and *Bhadia* in a year, only two broods i.e., *Katia* in October-November, and the *Jethua* in the spring are commonly reared in the district. The complete cycle of insect lasts from fifty-four to eighty-one days, the bulk of which is occupied by the life of the worm. With the hatching of the moths the females are tied to straws inside the house and the males are left free to visit them for three or 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 *Sum* tree. A band of straw or plantain leave is fastened round the trunk to prevent them from descending and providing them night shelter. Proper watch however, is required to protect them from becoming prey of crows, kites, owls, large bats, other pests etc. When they are fully grown, they are about five inches long and their thickness varies from 25.4 mm to thirty-eight mm. 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 waist cloths of this material.

Eri cloth is produced in every part of the district but is mostly cultivated as mentioned earlier by Lalungs, Kacharis, Nadials, Haris and Namasudras and Charals. The *Eri* worm ((*attachus 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 villages. "The worm belonging to the Saturnidae is for all practical purposes habitant of Assam",[10] as fairly heavy rainfall and moist climate is considered ideally suitable to it. In a year five or six breeds are generally reared and those who spin their cocoons in November, February and May yields much silk. Like *Muga*. moth females are tied to pieces of reed while males are left free to visit them. When the worms appear

10. *Glimpses of Silk Industry in Assam*, Sericulture & Weaving Department, Government of Assam, 1956, p. 3,

they are put in a tray or a basket suspended in a place of safety and fed on the leaves of the castor plant. Worms when fully grown look like dirty white or green and varies in length from 76.20 to 88.90 mm. After the final moulting, the worms are transferred from the tray to forked twigs suspended across a piece of wood and as soon as they are ready to spin, they are placed on dried plaintain leaves or withered branches which are hung from the roof of a hut. Before spinning, cocoons are softened by boiling in water with a solution of alkaline and the silk produced by each empty cocoon is just equivalent to the three quarters of its weight. The most useful garment made of *Eri* silk is the *bar kapor*, a large sheet 6.09 metres in length by 1.52 metres wide, which is folded and used as a warp in cold weather by all sections of the people. *Eri* silk is also made into coats and shirts, petticoats, *Eri-chaddar* etc.

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 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, Takli*, boiling pan and loom with accessories.

(iii) Pottery : Pottery, a very ancient industry of Nowgong, has lost much of its past glory and is now confined only to making common earthen wares such as jars and pitchers. The prefix '*Kumar*' appearing before names of villages in different mauzas suggests that pottery flourished once throughout the district. Its practice was confined mainly to two distinct classes of people known as *Hira* and *Kumar*, (a caste peculiar to the valley). 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 earthen wares. Thus there are Kumar Kalitas, Kumar Keots, and Kumar Koches. Potters combined this occupation with agriculture. Principal centres of the industry were at Charalgaon and Kumargaon in Khatowal mauza, Kumar gaon in Kachamari mauza, Putani, Dharamtul and Nanoi.

The state of affairs of the pottery industry in the district is not encouraging. Local pottery has mostly been replaced by superior clay or porcelain goods and metal utensils imported from outside. The profits of the industry are also small and most of the the traditional potters have left the trade and shifted to other lucrative occupations. According to the Census of 1961 the population of persons engaged in manufacture of earthen ware and earthen pottery was 439 only.

The raw materials required for the industry is the glutinous clay and the tools and implements used are the wheel (*chak*), the mould (*athali*), the mallet (*hatiya piteni*) and the polisher (*chaki*). The articles made are the cooking pots, such as *akathiah* and *khola*, *daskathia* (*charu* and *satar*), water jars (*Kalah* and *tekeli*), vessels for boiling rice (*thali*), larger vessels (*hari* and *jaka*) besides the lamps, pipes and drums. In the urban areas there are small groups of potters who specialise in making the images of Goddess *Durga*, *Kali*. *Saraswati* etc. The artisans often display an astute artistic sense in making the images, and are paid a handsome amount. In off season, they make beautiful dolls, toys etc., and sell in the nearby markets or *melas*.

In recent years some schemes were taken up by the State Khadi and Village Industries Board, Assam with a view to encourage 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 training facilities to the artisans. However, impact of these measures on the pottery industry in the district is yet to be felt.

(iv) Bamboo and Cane works : Among the traditional craft, the making of bamboo and cane products is perhaps the most universally practicised by all sections of the people throughout the State. Its products may be termed as 'pure handicraft products' where even elementary mechanical device is not used. Its products have wide range of uses and as such commonly found in every household.[11]

Like other handicrafts, bamboo and cane products of Assam 'earned wide appreciation in the past. We find mention of the use of "well decorated and coloured" *Sital Patis* (cool mats) made of a kind of reed called *patidoi*. As stated by Dr. P. C. Choudhury in his book *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D*,. the abundance of cane in the forests of Assam is testified by the classical writers. Ptolemy, for instance, stated that to the east of Serica, which has been indentified with Assam by the historians, there are hills and marshes 'where canes were grown and used as bridges'. In *Harsa Charita* 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 craft. He states that Bhaskara sent to Harsa baskets of variously coloured reeds, thick bamboo tubes and various birds in bamboo cages[12] From this it may be inferred that the craft was highly developed in the past not only in the production of utility article but also article of great artistic value.

11. *Selected Handicrafts of Assam, Census of India*, 1961, p. 107.
12. P. C. Choudhury, *History of Civilisation of the people of Assam, to the Twelfth Century A. D-*, p. 378.

The craft is now mainly a household industry and occupies an important place among the handicrafts of the district. It provides a subsidiary occupation to the cultivators and full-time occupation to those 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 times as a subsidiary occupation. Its heavy concentration in the rural areas may primarily be attributed to the availability of bamboos in abundance in the villages and the very high demand for the various bamboo products, such as, mats, baskets, fishing contraptions etc., in every rural household.

Mat-making is still prevalent in the district though on a smaller scale than before. The mats are of three kinds, *kath*, *dhari* and *pati*. *Kath* mats are woven in a wooden frame and the better kinds are made from the *Kuhila* plant, (*aeschynomeno aspera*). Cheaper varieties are made from *murtha* (*marantha dichotoma*) and *hogal* (*typha angustifolia*). Bardowa, Barapujia, Dighaldari, Kaliabor, Kathiatoli and Morakalang are famous for *kath* making. *Dhari* mats are made from strips of bamboo and *pati* mats from *patidoi* (*clinogyne dichotoma*). Nowgong, Barapujia, Raha and Kathiatoli were the principal centres of *pati* making. The essential equipments required for the industry are *dao* and knife which are invariably found with every agriculturist family. The manufacturing activities are generally shared by all members of the family, although the male members predominate. Most of the products, manufactured in such households are meant for domestic consumption and only a small percentage of the 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 is made of tiny bamboo strips and *takau* (*livistonia jenkinsiana*) leaves and is produced in various designs and sizes. The *Jhapis* which were ornamented and embroidered with different designs were indicative of the dignity and the high social status of those who used them in the past. Although this practice is no longer in vogue now, yet, the embroidered and ornamented *Jhapis* are still considered to be precious possessions by the rich and the poor alike. The best *jhapis* were made at Kandali, Uriagaon, Jagi and Kathiatoli.

The making of cane products is an important and growing cottage industry of the district which abounds in cane. Extrication of the thorny cane from the thick jungles is a difficult task. The forest authorities grant leases to the *Mahaldars* to extricate cane from the forests. The tools and implements required for the industry are mainly *dao* and knife and it is only in the making of furniture that few hammers, pliers or pincers etc., are required. The industry

requires a certain amount of skill even in producing articles of day to day use but the production of the furniture and other products of artistic value calls for a high degree of skill. Most of the workers engaged in making cane furniture are artisans from East Pakistan and indigenous workers engaged in this trade are few.

The main product of the cane industry is the plucking basket which is required in large numbers every year by the tea gardens. As the tea planters find it convenient to purchase in bulk, and the small establishments of artisans find it difficult to meet their requirements, the supply of the plucking baskets have become the monopoly of the few firms that can afford to produce the baskets on a large scale. Deprived of this market, the petty artisans look to the needs of the individual consumers and manufacture various types of furniture and sundry articles like boxes, cradles, cane-stools (*murrha*), office trays, tiffin baskets, bottle carriers, bicycle baskets, waste paper baskets, cane chairs etc.

The potentiality of making bamboo and cane products on commercial basis is quite considerable in the district. There is a good demand for its products and raw materials required for it is also available in plenty in the district. The dearth of skilled workers or technical guidance has limited the scope of development of this industry to a great extent.

According to the Census of 1961 persons engaged in manufacture of materials from bamboo, cane, leaves etc., numbered 208 of whom 194 were males and 14 females. With little training in artistic designs and use of colour etc., the artisans will be able to produce articles which will have demand not only within the State but also outside the State.[13]

(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 kings. The industry has suffered decay and is confined only to a few places like Konwaritol, Raha, Jagial, Samaguri and mauzas of Barbhagiya and Khaualgaon. According to the Census of 1961, persons engaged in brass and bell-metal industry numbered 216 only. 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

13. *Report on a Survey of Cottage Industries, volume I* by the Department of Economics and Statistics Assam, Shillong, pp. 74-75.

boiling rice), bell-metal spoons, glasses, dishes etc. Mirrors made of shining metals were also in use in the past.

(vi) Blacksmithy : In olden time this 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 these areas in the past. The principal articles of production of this industry include, agricultural implements, domestic tools, weapons besides the tools of the craft like anvil, 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 and forgemen was 342. The present production of the blacksmithy usually includes simple agricultural implements like plough, spade, sickle and various implements of daily use like *dao*. knife, 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.

(vii) Gold and silversmithy : The industry is mainly concentrated in the urban areas. The artisans are from families who have been traditionally associated with the industry. According to the Census of 1961 the number of jewellers, goldsmiths and silversmiths was 931. The survival of this age-old industry may primarily be attributed to the higher rate of profit in the trade. The making of ornaments, suited to the individual taste has placed the industry in an advantageous position and saved it from the competition from the large scale production. The indigenous jewellers exhibit considerable amount of skill and artistic refinement in making golden ornaments such as *dugdugi, galpata, jonbiri, keru, thuria* and *gamkharu* etc. Of these ornaments, the first three have been gradually replaced by necklace fitted with locket, the fourth and the fifth by earings and the last by brace lets which are commonly seen in other parts of India. With change of fashion, modern light Jewelleries have become popular and at present the goldsmiths who have come 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 jewllery are still in the line.

Among other industries or crafts that flourished in the district in the past but are now almost extinct, mention may be made of boat-making, wood-carving, stone-carving and manufacture of dye and ink. The former indigenous methods for sugar-cane crushing and oil-pressing are also almost extinct today.

Reasons for the decay of old-time Industries :

Although cottage industries still play a vital role in the economy of the district, as described above, some of old-time industries have suffered protracted stagnation while some others are now buried under oblivion. The reasons are

not far to seek. The downfall of the Ahom kingdom led to the disruption of the social order. The withdrawal of patronage of kings and nobles that often led to the growth of the industries exposed the cottage industries to the risk of fluctuating demand. Dumping of local markets with cheaper machine-made goods imported from outside by the British, universal weakness for more luxurious goods and the old technique of production are the factors that retarded the steady growth of cottage industries. Many of the traditional artisans finding other avenues of employment more lucrative left their crafts.

(b) Power Supply : Supply and distribution of power in the urban as well as in the rural areas have been undertaken by the State Electricity Board in the year 1958. Prior to this it was under the control of Power Department of Government of Assam. The first electrification scheme was started in the year 1940 by a private company with an installed capacity of 150 k.w. with total length of distribution line of 5 kms. It covered the area from (1) Power House to Haiborgaon and (ii) from Power House to Daccapatty and Amolapatty. The Company had run the scheme for nearly 9 years and during that period only the main roads were electrified with 400 Nos-of consumers. Only one Saw Mill in the town was also supplied with power. It generated, 5,000 K.W.H. only per month.

After taking over the scheme by the State electricity Board, the source of power supply was Diesel generating set which continued till June 1970, and after that some portion of the Nowgong town was connected to Umium Grid Supply through a 33 K.V. Sub-Transmission High Voltage line. After January 1971, the whole system has been connected to the Umium Grid System. In case of its failure power is supplied from the standby Diesel Power Station which is situated near the Nowgong railway station.

During the first plan period the position of the electric power supply in the district of Nowgong was as follows :—

		Nowgong	Hojai.
(1) Sub-Transmission line	..	26 km.	Nil
(2) Distribution line	..	9 km.	2 km.
(3) K.W.H.	..	12,000 (P.M.)	400 per month
(4) Installed capacity	..	900 k.w.	200 k.w.
(5) Number of consumers	..	800	100

During the Second Five Year Plan period Nowgong town was connected by 30 km. Sub-Transmission line. The distribution lines were 14 kms. in Nowgong and 4 kms. in Hojai. During the Second Five Year Plan period, the installed capacity in both of Nowgong and Hojai remained unchanged but the

number of consumers were doubled in both the towns i.e., to 1,600 in Nowgong and 200 in Hojai and the monthly average consumption of electricity increased to 20,000 K.W.H. in Nowgong and 8,000 K.W.H. in Hojai. The number of electrified villages increased to 3 against 1 in the first plan period.

During the third plan Hojai was connected from Nowgong station where the installed capacity was increased to 4,262 K.W. and 35 sub-stations were started under it. The number of sub-stations has increased to 50 while the number of consumers in the district has increased to 6,000 and the monthly consumption of electricity to 8 lakhs K.W.H. approximately.

From the end of the second plan to November, 1971 the Assam Electricity Board, Nowgong under the Rural Electrification Programme electrified 30 villages and during 1972 another 35 villages were added to the list. Four irrigation systems meant exclusively for agricultural purposes were also energised with electricity.The district is not industrially developed and the consumption of high voltage used for industrial purpose is therefore negligible. However, the Board has already proposed to commission high voltage 220 k.v. line soon to cope with the present existing demand in the district such as agricultural load, industrial load, domestic load and also tea garden load. But till 1971 no tea garden in the district was electrified . The workers and employees of the Board under the Nowgong Electrical Division for the entire district numbered 536 including technical staff on November, 1971. During the 3rd Plan period this Division had a financial provision of Rs. 28 lakhs for the development of Electricity in the district. Another amount of Rs. 35 lakhs has been earmarked for such purpose in the Fourth Five Year Plan Budget.

(c) Industries and manufactures of the district :

(i) Large Scale Industries : The tea industry is one of the most important agriculture-based industries of the district. To trace out the history of the tea industry in Assam, we are to look back to the year 1826, when indigenous tea plants growing wild in the hilly tracts of upper Assam came to the notice of the East India Company. In Nowgong, the tea industry was first started in 1859 in the area lying west of the Mikir Hills which then formed a part of the district. In 1872, the area under the mature plant in the district was 1,278 acres with a total yield of 3,63,000 lbs of manufactured tea. During the next 10 years the tea industry in Nowgong made some expansion and in 1882, both mature and immature tea plants covered an area of 9,945 acres giving a net yield of 32,53,000 lbs of manufactured tea. The promoters of the industry in Assam took advantage of Fee Simple Grant Lease Rules of 1861 and received large lease grants for tea cultivation. But instead of promoting the industry they started to sell their estates at high prices as a result of which there occurred a fall in production

of tea. Fortunately this practice was checked and the tea industry began to expand in several districts such as Darrang, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur by leaps and bounds while Nowgong district remained unpopular in planting circles. The industry was mainly dependent upon imported labour who hailed mostly from Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chota Nagpur and other parts of Bengal. In Nowgong district, in 1900, there were only 12,673 acres under plant which yielded 43,30,000 lbs of manufactured tea or a little more than one-seventh of the total production of Sibsagar district. In 1911, the area under cultivation fell to 12, 364 acres with a yield of 60,19,000 lbs. The corresponding figures for 1921 were 12,111 acres and 50,84,000 lbs, which show that there was a slight fall in both the area under plantation and output of tea during the decade 1911-21. During the next thirty years there was little improvement in acreage under tea but improved methods of cultivation and scientific techniques of production yielded a larger out-turn. The area under tea in Nowgong district in 1951 was 12,514 acres (5,064 hectares) with a yield of 81,37,000 lbs. (36,91,000 kgs). From the table given below it will be seen that druing the period 1951-70 there has been an increasing trend in the area under plantation and an appreciable increase in production.[14]

Year	No. of tea estates	Area in Hectares	Total production in thousand Kg.	Average daily No of labour	Labour per Hectare.	Average produce per Hectare Kg.	Produce per labour in Kg.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1951	..	5,064	3,691	NA.	NA.	NA.	NA.
1961	23	5,577	5,643	NA.	NA.	1,012	NA.
1962	..	5,578	5,496	NA.	NA.	976	NA.
1963	..	5,738	5,350	NA.	NA.	NA.	NA.
1964	..	5,866	7,003	NA.	NA.	NA.	NA.
1965	23	6,007	6,511	13,100	2.18	1,084	497
1966	23	6,105	7,139	12,692	2.08	1,169	562
1967	23	6,101	7,227	12,666	2.07	1,184	570
1968	23	6,177	7,349	12,602	2.04	1,190	583
1969	23	6,289	6,557	12,391	1.97	1.043	529
1970	..	6,323	8,235	..	..	1,282	.

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

14. Tea Statistics, Tea Board of India.

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 production technique was vastly improved. In the early thirties, the world-wide depression seriously affected the tea industry. However, the adoption of certain measures, namely the International Tea Agreement 1933, India Tea Act, 1933 and the 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 crashed 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 slump of late 1951 and 1952 were 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 setbacks. 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.

(ii) Assam Spun Silk Mills Ltd. : This is the largest public sector undertaking in Nowgong district and was started with a capital outlay of Rs. 85 lakhs, the subscribed and paid-up capital being Rs. 80,37,700. The construction works started on 31st March 1960 with a loan of Rs. 10 lakhs as its working capital which has been subsequently converted to Govt.'s share contribution during 1968-69. The construction was completed in November 1961 and the mill went into production on 18th December 1960 with the installed capacity of 3,000 spindles for spun silk yarn and 420 spindles for Noil Yarn. The mill was expected while working in two shifts to produce 34,020 kgs. of Spun Silk Yarn and 22,680 kgs. of Noil Yarn annually. The Spun Silk Mill project was set up to find out new markets for *Eri* and *Muga* fabrics by producing standardised yarn

and to ensure reasonable price to the cocoon rearers in the State. The Mill has an essential aspect of welfare ancillary to *Eri* culture, which is the main cottage industry of Assam.

The mill is under the management of a Board of Directors constituted by the Governor of Assam from amongst high officials of the Govt. The General Manager, who is a senior officer is responsible for carrying out the policy and decisions of the Board. He is assisted by eight technical executives and staff, ten other staff and ten fourth grade employees. The total number of skilled and semi-skilled workers was 271 in 1971. The mill is running smoothly under the supervision of local youths who have been trained by Japanese engineers during their short stay at Jagiroad for erection and installation of the plant and machineries.

The mill while working at full capacity requires raw materials estimated at 97,000 kgs. of *eri* cut cocoons or its equivalent of other varieties of silk waste annually. *Eri* and *muga* are procured locally from within the State of Assam and mulberry silk waste from Karnataka. As the mill has also subsequently started production of synthetic blended yarns such as teri-*eri*, teri-*muga* and pure terene yarns which are in great demand, raw materials for these additional yarns in the shape of tassar cocoons and terene fibres are also procured. Wide publicity is given to the procurement price of raw materials through advertisements in newspapers for ensuring that rearers get the actual price and are thus encouraged to produce more. Raw materials procured during the last four years are shown below. :—

Sl. No.	Year	Eri	Muga
1.	1966-67	22,407 kgs	28,398 kgs.
2.	1967-68	45,295 ,,	15,538 ,,
3.	1968-69	44,688 ,,	25,929 ,,
4.	1969-70	54,144 ,,	25,740 ,,

Significant features of the manufacturing process are as follows :—

(1) In the Degumming section it takes less times due to installation of press pan in boiling. Moreover maximum output of silk yarn can be pulled out from the cocoon due to pressure boiling. The system of boiling and degumming the cocoons in small wooden vats provides for easy penetration of Chemicals and removal of sericum.

(2) A circular type of Dressing Frame machine instead of a flat type has been installed to obtain optimum outturn of silk fibres.

(3) In the Noil Department, Noil spinning Frames of the latest type with six draft rolling system have been provided so as to enable spinning into higher count.

(4) Most significant features are noticed in the Preparatory Department. Here all set frames and drawing frames are operated by automatic control system which can be looked after by a single operator.

(5) To minimise waste, pneuma fil-arrangements are attached to the Spinning frames both for Noil and Spun Silk Spinning.

(6) All the Gassing Frames are of box type because of which it can run at higher speed resulting in more production.

To control the quality of products every stage of production from raw materials to the finished stage is carefully supervised and elaborate testing is done to ensure the best quality of products. Some samples of cloth have been manufactured from the yarn produced in this factory by the Handloom Research Station of the Assam Textile Institute, Gauhati, which has proved its high standard of quality.

The output of the mill during 1966-70 is shown below :—

Sl. No.	Year	Spun Silk (in kgs)	Noil Yarn (in kgs).
1	2	3	4
1.	1966-67	20,126	20,980
2.	1967-68	20,705	18,335
3.	1968-69	21,156	20,913
4.	1969-70	22,802	20,265

At the outset the mill had to face serious difficulties owing to non-popularity and inadequate demand for its non-mulberry products such as *eri* and *muga* which were offered for sale for the first time. Subsequently the products became more acceptable to buyers and their demand increased steadily. The mill was able to improve its sales through a network of selling agents spread all over the country. For non-synthetic blended yarn, the selling agents are offered a commission of 1½% on sales.

The financial results of the Mill from 1963 onwards are as follows :—

Sl. No.	Year	Gross Profit in lakhs (Rs)	Net profit (+) or loss (—) in lakhs (Rs)
1.	1962-63	4.74	—3.57
2.	1963-64	1.64	—4.98
3.	1964-65	2.99	—0.12
4.	1965-66	3.55	+0.44
5.	1966-67	2.23	—1.32
6.	1967-68	3.40	+0.34
7.	1968-69	3.94	+1.10
8.	1969-70	4.98	+2.34
9.	1970-71	4.36	+2.31

The Mill has taken up an expansion programme for installing indigenously manufactured Silk Power Looms and there are also plans to utilise its full installed capacity by importing more machinery and spare parts.

(iii) Jute Mill : The importance of Assam as one of the major jute growing States of India needs not be emphasised. Assam produces annually about ten lakh bales of raw jute which form 18 per cent of the country's total production of jute. Average yield per acre is also one of the best in the country and most of the Assam jute is of good quality. In Assam, Nowgong district is the second largest jute producer and ranks next only to Goalpara district. In 1966-67, Nowgong produced 2,37,622 bales (of 180 kgs. each) of jute with an average yield of 1053 kgs. per acre. Immigrants from East Bengal who formed a sizable section of the population of Nowgong district are expert jute cultivators.

Silghat, a river port on the Brahmaputra about 54 kms. by road from Nowgong was selected as the most suitable site for installing a Jute mill in the co-operative sector. Accordingly a co-operative society was organised and registered on 23rd October, 1959 under the name "The Assam Co-operative Jute Mill Ltd." The members enrolled are the State Government, 917 Co-operative Societies and other organisations, 6,297 Jute growers and 1,209 non-growers making a total of 8,424 members. The Executive Committee of the Society consists of 9 members and there are 25 Director s in the Board of Management. The Society raised Rs. 18,89,600 as share-capital from public contributions, the paid up value of which was Rs. 9,44,800. The State Govt. also contributed Rs. 52.5 lakhs in form of share-capital and it has agreed to contribute another Rs. 7 lakhs towards share-capital. Thus the total paid up share-capital

on 31-12-70 was Rs. 61,94,800. Besides these, in 1969, the Mill received a one year loan of Rs. 50 lakhs from the United Bank of India for which the State Govt. stood surety. In the same year, another loan of Rs. 78.50 lakhs was received by the Mill from the Industrial Finance Corporation. The society has not so far, received any loan from the Government except grants-in-aids of Rs. 50,000. In 1962, the society received a licence for setting up the Mills with 150 looms against its initial proposal for 300 looms. Since then it has acquired 75 acres of land at Silghat. Out of this, seventy acres were settled by the Govt. and five acres were purchased by the Mill. The constuction of the mill has so far incurred a capital expenditure of Rs. 135.09 lakhs.

The licensed capacity of the Mill is 6,910 tons annually with 100 Sacking and 50 Hessian looms but inadequate power has compelled the Mill to run at one-fourth of its capacity. The supply of power to the Mill is still limited to two 250 K.V.A. transformers. A 1,000 K.V.A. transformer installed by the Assam State Electricity Board may soon improve the power-position. The mill is then expected to introduce the third shift in addition to the two shifts working at present.

The Mill went into partial production from January 1971 and during that year produced the following :—

(a)	D. W. Floor	..	4,00,000	bags.
(b)	Cement bags	..	1,50,000	,,
(c)	B. Twill	..	30,000	,,
(d)	Hessian	..	3,200	yards.
(e)	Twine	..	60	tons.

The Manager, who is in charge of the mill is assisted by an Assistant Manager, one Construction Engineer, nine Supervisors and three Sub-ordinate Engineers. There are also 450 employees including forty-four machanical and electrical operators. The total strength of staff is expected to rise to 900 when the Mill goes into full production.

With the existing capacity of 150 looms the Mill will be able to make marginal profits only. In order to ensure its economic viability it is considered essential to expand its strength to 300 looms. This is expected to cost an additional expenditure of Rs. 2 crores.

(iv) Paper Pulp Mill : One Paper Pulp Mill near Jagiroad is proposed to be established in the public sector at an estimated cost of Rs. 70 crores. It is expected to produce 750 lbs of Paper Pulp daily from bamboo grown in North Cachar Hills and Karbi Anglong districts of Assam. It is learnt that preliminary survey of the site has been completed and the project report prepared by M/S Hindusthan Paper Corporation.

(v) 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 thirteen saw mills have been established in the district of which eleven are in Nowgong town. The production of these factories mainly goes to meet the demands of the local construction works.

Manufactures of furniture and fixtures : In 1969-70, there were 8 large workshops where furnitures and fixtures were manufactured. Each unit usually employs five to ten persons. Various types of Wooden and Cane furniture and folding steel chairs are manufactured in these workshops.[15] In each town there are a number of furniture marts where local products are sold.

Rice Mills : There are about thirty rice mills in the district most of which are located at Nowgong, Hojai, Jamunamukh and Kampur. Some of these mills are combined rice and oil mills. Permission for setting up new rice mills has been very much restricted. The Government is encouraging hand pounding of rice units under Assam Khadi and Village Industries Board and establishment of small rice hullers due to their employment potentiality.

The capital investment in the rice mills ranges from Rs. 50,000/- to Rs. two and half a lakh 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 procurred and its main product is rice which finds its way into the local markets. Paddy procurement is the monopoly of the State Government and the millers are allotted paddy from time to time for milling on commission basis.

Flour Mills : A roller flour mill was established at Haiborgaon in 1963 at a cost of over Rs. 2 lakhs which employs 69 persons. There are also a number of *chakki* mills in different urban areas of the district. One or two small units are also attached to some rice and oil mills. Wheat is allotted by the State Government and the product which mainly comprises flour is sold locally.

Oil Mills : There are two oil mills at Haiborgaon and one each at Hojai and Jakhalabandha. A number of rice mills also have oil crushing plants attached to them. The oil mills employ 10-40 persons and produce mustard oil. There are also some oil *Ghannis* in the district.

Bakeries : There are a few confectioneries in Nowgong town and a good number of bakeries exist in all the towns and semi-urban areas of the dis-

15. *Directory of Small Industries in the Urban Areas of Assam*, 1969-70 by the Deptt. of Economics & Statistics, Shillong, p, 116.

trict. Their products include cakes, biscuits, loaves and lozenges. But almost all of them are small enterprises and cater to the needs of their own localities only.

Soap factories : All such factories which produce washing soap are located at Nowgong town. With the increase in demand they are having good local markets.

Candle works : There are nine candle works in the district of which seven are located at Nowgong town and one each at Lumding and Dhing. They obtain raw materials from the Government and make candles of various sizes.

Automobile workshops : With the increasing use 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 the spray painting of automobiles. Some firms of Nowgong undertake 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 the old tyres.

Printing presses : 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. There are 16 printing presses of which fifteen are at Nowgong town and one at Raha.

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 in the outskirts of towns are 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 the moulds called *forma* and then burn them in the oval pattern multi-chambered kilns.

Steel furniture : The new and multifarious uses of steel largely contributed to the growth and development of steel furniture industry. The demand for steel furniture for offices, hospitals, shops, factories, and homes is increasing rapidly due to its overall advantage in respect of economy, durability, risk of fire and scarcity of good seasoned timber. Complete furniture sets made of steel tubes in various models and sizes are not easily available in the markets. There are two steel furniture units at Nowgong town.

Besides the above, there are some other small industrial units which do not fit into any of the above categories. Mention may be made here of brass and bell-metal units, *agarbati* works, casting industry, shoe-making and a fruit preservation centre at Kuthori. They specialise in the manufacture of one or two items and cater to local needs only.

Engineering works : There are about twenty engineering works concentrated mostly at Nowgong town which have sprung up in recent years. They manufacture parts of water pumps, sugar-cane crushers, cast wheels, axles, cart wheel rims, wire nails, barbed wire, tea-chest fittings, nuts and bolts, building materials and simple agricultural implements. They generally employ from three to ten persons. There are also two aluminium industries in the district which make utensils.

Trunk factories : There are seven trunk factories two each at Nowgong, Hojai and Lumding and one at Jagiroad. They manufacture and repair trunks, boxes, drums and ridging etc.

(vi) Cottage Industries : Important cottage industries that exist in the district namely, Weaving, Sericulture, Pottery, Bamboo and Cane works, Brass or Bell-metal, Gold or Silver-Smithy and Black-Smithy have already been described as old time industries. A reference may however, be made of the handpounding of rice. It is commonly practised in almost every house hold 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 of it 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 wheel and in the riverine areas, boats are also made in few cases.

Among other industries of the district mention may be made of rope making, fishing implements, 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 very common. In order to encourage *gur*-making the Khadi and Village Industries Board has set up *gur* development centres at Kaliabor, Bhuragaon, Kathiatoli, Lanka and Phulaguri. The sphere of this Board extends to such cottage industries as bee-keeping, match making, *bidi* making, soap-making, oil *ghannies*, rope making etc. 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 of village folk, a number of cycle repairing shops are coming up, even in the rural areas of the district; but their overwhelming number is eminently conspicuous in urban and semi-urban areas.

(vii) Industrial Arts : Weaving has an important aspect namely its artistic value in fine embroidery and decorative floral and creeper designs done over the pieces of cloth made out of cotton, *eri*, *muga* and *pat*. The Assamese *Phulam Gamocha* is widely acclaimed both within and outside India. The accessories or implements which are required by weaving industries are made by the village artisans. It has not developed as a specialised branch of the industries although some units in urban areas, have started making these articles which have also important artistic value. Such articles are : (a) *Ugha*. (b) *Chereki*. (c) *Letai*, (d) *Bo-tula Chunga*, (e) *Sali*, (f) *Toltha*, (g) *Mako*. (shuttle), (h) *Mohura*, (i) *Dorpati*, (j) Decorative *Mahura*. (k) *Bhohary* (l) *Neothani*, (m) *Charkha*,

Jewellery : The most important art is Jewellery which has, however been withering to a great extent, as many highly skilled artisans from West Bengal, Pakistan and Punjab etc., have established jewellery shops in the district with modern instruments. Families of traditional artisans of gold and silver works are still found in Bhotaigaon and Sonarigaon and in a few other villages of the district. The traditional designs on gold and silver ornaments still retain some peculiarity and finesse but seem to have lost their former appeal. However, in recent times, use of traditional ornaments has been noticed amongst Assamese women. Such ornaments are *galpata*, *dugdugi*, *keru*, *kankana*, *thuriya*, *nupura*, *gamkharu*, *muthikharu* etc., which have no doubt their artistic design and beauty.

Metal work : There have been some discussion above about ordinary metal works of silver, brass, copper etc. But manufacturing of utensils with these metals with decorative designs requires extraordinary calibre and skill. A section of artisans is still engaged in these works. These items include *Barsarai* made of bell-metal, *banbati*, *bata* etc. Such utensils with decorative designs may be seen in *satras* and some households.

Wood carving : Wood carving is an industry coming down from ancient time. The village artisan is still continuing with this art of wood carving. Different mythological figures and the *sinhasanas* which are used in *Satras* and *Namghars* are still made by indigenous artisans.

Bamboo works : Besides the *Jhapi* commonly used by the agriculturists and other labourers as head wear, the artisans make also *phulam jhapi* with elaborate designs and decorations. This *phulam jhapi* is used by Assamese Women and was also used by the big officers of Ahom Kings. The *phulam jhapi* is of

two kinds namely *Sarudaiya jhapi* and *Bardaiya jhapi* It requires a great amount of artistic skill.

Hand fans (*bichanis*) :— Hand fans are made by the village artisans with bamboo, cane, cloth, hide etc. The ordinary hand fans which fetch little money are made with bamboo strips. But *phulam bichani* made with intricate designs using different colours and different materials earn appreciation.

Musical instruments : *Dhol. Khol. Gagana. Negera. Daba, Tokari. Bamboo flutes* are all musical instruments and used generally in theatrical performances like *jatras, bhaonas*, and in festivals etc. There are made by the villagers with great skill. They also exhibit rare artistic excellence

Mise. arts : Minor industrial arts like, making of figures of animals, toys, paper flowers etc. may be mentioned. These industries are generally situated mostly in the urban areas. Besides, hair-combs with cow and buffalo horns are also made by some artisans of the district. All such articles require a great amount of skill.

(d) Industrial potentialities and plan for future Development.

The district of Nowgong is practically dependent on agriculture and has not yet assumed a dominant role in industry. Tea manufacturing is the most predominant industry in the district. Agriculture and tea industry absorb four-fifth of the industrial population.[16] Another two large scale industries namely the Jute Mill at Silghat and the Spun Silk Mill at Jagiroad have absorbed some industrial population, about which some discussion have been made above. Except some rice, saw and oil mills which are concentrated around the urban areas, there has not been substantial development of other industries. In 1960-61 the income of the district from agriculture and allied activities was 62.5% of the total district income. The tea industry contributed to it 4.2% cent and other industries 9.3%. The contributions from other sectors of production were; public service 3.5%, other services 6.8% and commerce, transport and communication 13.7%. During the same year the share of this district towards the state income was 8.7% of the total state income.[17] The in-dustrial back wardness of the district is mainly atributed to underdeveloped communication, non-availability of mineral resources like oil, natural gas, coal etc. and inadequacy of power supply.

However, the district has since been developing to some extent in respect of transport and communication. Electric power which is one of the requisites

16. *Techno Economic Survey of Assam*, by N. C, A. E. R, p. 96.
17. *Economic Survey of Assam* by Department of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, p. 31.

of modern industrial development has been extended to the district connecting the district with Umium Grid System of the Assam Electricity Board. All these factors combined together with the existing agricultural and forest resources of the district pave the way for rapid industrial development of the district.

The district is rich in forest wealth. The total area under forest is at present 1,380.64 sq. Kilometres (including an area of 161.00 sq. Kilometres of unclassed forest). The forest resources of the district have not yet been fully exploited. The valuable species of timbers can be utilised for many purposes like construction of buildings and furniture, railway sleepers and ordinary timber as fuels. These forests provide sufficient scope for establishment of more saw mills, timber treatment and seasoning industry, plywood factories, manufacturing of hard-board and for supply of wood to match factories. During 1967-68, timber production was 10,627 cubic metres and fuel production 6,567 cubic metres.

The district is further endowed with enormous resources of jungle bamboos, plantains, reeds & *khagra*, These reeds can be utilised for manufacture of paper (as proved scientifically) and long fibre pulp. The annual out put of *Khagra*, of Nowgong forest division is 7,000 tons. The chemical pulp suitable for the manufacture of good quality of writing and printing papers can be made from *Nal* (*phragmites karka*). The *Nal* reeds and *kgagra* (*Ncyrandia reynandia*) are also suitable for rayon pulp and other allied products.[18]

The annual out put of bamboo in entire Assam is 12,40,000 tons, out of which the district of Nowgong produces 68,000 tons which is sufficient for establishment of a few paper and pulp, rayon and newsprint mills. Moreover bamboo and cane products of the district give ample scope for small scale industries, cottage and house-hold industries for making varieties of furniture like cane furniture, Sofa-sets. baskets, *murrha*, tables, suitcase and other articles of common use. The demand of cane basket is very high in the tea gardens and of cane furniture among the public in general. Few small scale industries can be established in the district using timber, bamboo and cane as raw materials for the manufacture of agricultural implements like yoke, harrow, ploughs, umbrella sticks etc. demand for which is high. Other articles like, mat, *pati, japi* may also be made out of bamboo and cane, which are required for day to day use.

The district has also ample scope for development and establishment of engineering works and shops and industries, big and small. The tea gardens of the district as well as those of other districts provide ready markets for products of light engineering industries. The industries for which vast potentialities exist

18. *Industrial Potentiality of Assam and its Development, Directorate of Industries, Assam*, pp. 21—23.

are metal industries, wire drawing industries, tea garden machineries, steel structure, agricultural implements, hume pipes, G.I. pipes, steel casting, barbed wire fencing, H.S. bars, ferrous and non-ferrous articles like wire, screws, electrical accessories and fittings, domestic articles like baskets, locks, padlocks, pins and clips, railway equipments, wood and steel boats for rivers. Old-time industries like blacksmithy, bellmetal industry, carpentry, pottery etc., which are merely surviving at present may be well developed. Besides, other industries such as umbrella-making, cutlery, building hard-ware, domestic hard-ware, sport-goods, tannery, cycle assembly and components, automobile components, stationery articles, perfumery articles, hospital instruments, paints and varnish, can also be established in the district.

(e) Labour and Employer's Organisation : There are five industrial labour organisations in the district. The Assam *Chah Mazdoor Sangha*, Nowgong Branch and The Assam *Chah Karmachari Sangha* at Salonah comprise of tea garden labourers and other employees. The former organisation looks after the interest of the workers (Labourers) working in the tea gardens of the district such as security of service, leave, sick-leave, wages and other welfare and service facilities as provided by the Labour Welfare Acts. The branch of Assam *Chah Karmachari Sangha* which is a branch of INTUC at Salonah looks after the interest of employees other than labourers in the plantation industry.

Labour interests in the district are looked after by the local branch of the Indian National Trade Union Congress. There is however no forum to discuss labour participation in management of industries and uptill now no effort has been made to improve efficiency of labour and to make them more productivity minded.

The Nowgong *Zilla Mill Mazdoor Union* : It has been formed by the employees engaged in the rice and oil mills of the district. The aims and objects of the Union are mainly to look after the security of services of the *mazdoors*, regular payment to them etc. This Union has a branch at Hojai.

The All Assam Motion Picture's Employees Union, Nowgong Branch : This branch came into being in 1962 to look after the interest of employees working in the cinema industry.

Assam Spun Silk Mill Workers' Union : a labour organisation branch under INTUC is fighting hard for the employees' interest in the industry.

The lists at page 211 to page 213 below shows the industries which are feasible in the district from the view point of industrial potentiality as suggested by the National Council of Applied Economic Research, New-Delhi in the Techno-Economic Survey of Assam.

Industrial Development Possibilities in Nowgong—Summary of Possible Large Scale Industries.

List No. 1

Type	Location	Locational Advantages	Possible Capacity	Possible employments.	Investmen required (Rs. lakhs).
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Forest-based Industries.					
1. Pulp and Paper mill.	Lamsakhong (Nowgong District)	1. Vast bamboo reserves. 2. Water facilities. 3. Limestone and coal in the proximity. 4. Transport facilities (cheap steamship routes).	50 tons per day.	700	260
2. Fertilizer plant (Urea and ammonium sulphate)	Silghat ..	1. Availability of natural and refinery gas. 2. Transport and power facilities.	50,000 tons of urea and 50,000 tons of ammonium sulphate.	2,000	1500
3. Carbon black plant	Silghat ..	1. Availability of natural and refined gases. 2. Transport facilities. 3. Power facilities.	10,000 tons per annum.	200	200
4. Petro-chemical plants.	Silghat ..	1. Availability of natural and refinery gas and petroleum.	15,100 tons of styrene methanol etc., annually. 20,000 tons annually	1,000	137
5. Synthetic rubber plant.	Silghat	Availability of natural gas.	N.A.	500	800
6. Synthetic fibre plant.	Silghat ..			N.A.	N.A.
7. Caustic soda	Silghat ..	Nearness to paper pulp mills which consume the finished products.	30 tons per day	150	150

List No. 2

Industrial Development Possibilities of Nowgong—Summary of Possible Small Scale Industries.

Index	Plant and products	Number of Units	Capacity	Investment (plant & Location equipment)	Location	Labour	Power	Remarks on Location
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
1. AGRO-BASED INDUSTRIES.								
1.	Vegetable and Chrome Tannery.	2	1.2 tons of raw cow hides, i.e., 2,960 sq. ft. of leather finished per day.	Rs. 5.4 lakhs.	1. Nowgong.	70 skilled semi-skilled unskilled.	40 K.W. large water requirements.	1. 1,160 tons raw hides exported in 1957 to Calcutta. 2. Hides and skins 74 tons exported in 1957 to Calcutta. 3. 94 tons of tanned leather imported into Assam in 1957 4. Leather goods & shoes in Assam mostly Flex. Bata or Agra make; price is 30 to 40 per cent higher than that of Calcutta. 5. No modern tannery in Assam. (Continued)
								6. Tannin will have to be imported. 7. Shillong, Nowgong, Gauhati and Jorhat are the principal marketing centres.
2.	Footwear Plants (Western and Indian type)	2	50,000 pair shoes or fractions of shoes chappals, sandals, etc./annum.	Rs. 5 lakhs.	Nowgong	90	45 K.W.	1. Growing urban demands. 2. No large scale local production.
II. LIVESTOCK-BASED INDUSTRIES.								
3.	Bone Mill. (Manufacture of crushed and powdered bone manure)	1	6 tons/day	Rs. 2 lakhs.	1. Nowgong	30	20 K.W.	1. 100 tons of bones exported 2. 5.2 milch-cattle in 1956. At 8 per-cent mortality and 60 lbs. of bones/carcasson theoretically 9,220 tons available per annum. 3. Unlimited demand 4. Organized collection of bones necessary.

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 taken up as the sole occupation by the indigenous people. The peasants could obtain the cash required to pay land revenue or to meet other daily necessities of life by the sale of rice, vegetables and poultry in the nearby markets. People belonging to the higher echelon of the 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 usually 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 also 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 of money required by the garden authorities for a short term. This type of banking transaction was a secondary business of these people during those days. 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 rarely 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. Gradually a sort of *Mahajani* system also sprang up in rural areas wherein some local crop dealers and petty landlords took up as mortgages of lands and ornaments against cash advancement to needy rural folk. The rate of interest was calculated mostly in kind, which, in terms of money was exceedingly lucrative.

(b) General Credit Facilities : There was no bank in the district till 1920 when the Nowgong Central Co-operative Bank was established. The co-

1. E. A. Gait, *History of Assam*, (1967), p. 270.

operative credit societies which were organised earlier than the Central Bank found a source of finance and began to advance credit in the district. Commercial banking facilities became available only after setting up of branch offices of the Gauhati Bank in 1943 and the United Bank of India in 1940 in Nowgong town. The pre-ponderance of the money lender is an important feature of the credit structure of the district. Friends and relatives also meet the credit needs of the people to a great extent. The proportion of the different sources of credit in the district as found by the Banking Enquiry Committee, 1929-30, were-Government, 4 per cent ; village money lenders, 38 per cent ; rural societies, 7 per cent ; buyers of produce, 22 per cent ; other creditors, 29 per cent. The Survey of Rural Economic Conditions in Nowgong, 1956, revealed the insignificant part played by the co-operative societies in this regard. The table given below indicates the proportions of the sources of debts both secured and unsecured as per the survey.[2]

Sources of debts in Nowgong district, year--1956.

Source of loans	Percentage of secured loan	Percentage of unsecured loan
1	2	3
1. Source not recorded. ..	3.79	3.22
2. Co-operative Bank.	1.93	4.67
3. Money lender.	62.54	69.85
4. Land owner.	0.45	1.24
5. Government.	..	0.83
6. Commercial Bank.	..	0.23
7. Others (friends and relatives) ..	31.30	19.96

Although from the statement given above, we get an idea of the sources of debt in the rural sector, it may be erroneous to attribute the same importance to each of those sources at the end of the last decade. Several factors have led to the expansion of the 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 ensure 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. Thus out of the total loans issued by the Co-operative Department through the Primary Agricultural Credit Societies in Nowgong, the total loans outstanding at the end of june, 1968, amounted to Rs. 9,274,000. In addition to increasing co-opera-

2. *A Survey of Rural Economic Conditions in Nowgong*, 1956, p. 56.

tive credit facilities some of the Commercial Banks after Bank nationalisation have opened branches in the rural areas of the district to cater to the credit needs of the rural people. The State Government by providing with increasing facilities for loans for specific purposes in the shape of Agricultural Loan, Rehabilitation Loan, Cattle Loan, Industrial Loan, etc., has played a significant role in expanding the credit facilities.

With the expansion of credit facilities the demand for credit 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 Afganisthan and engage themselves in money-lending 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.

(1) Rural and Urban Indebtedness : There is considerable burden of indebtedness in the rural sector. "Growth of population and stagnation of rural productivity with limitation of employment opportunities are sure to lead to greater indebtedness".[3] It has been observed in the old District Gazetteer of Nowgong, in this regard, as follows : "At the same time the various revenue officers report that more than half the village population are in debt. Indebtedness is said to be quite the exception in Kamrup. In Gobha and Charaibahi only about one-fourth of the population are involved, and in the Raha and Samaguri *tahsils* one-third, but elsewhere the proportion ranges from one-half to three-fourths. But generalizations of this kind must, obviously, be received with caution. The *raiyats* are very ready to descant on their poverty to all who turn an attentive ear, and it is doubtful whether they are as much in debt as they would fain appear. The system of taking advances on the crop, especially on the mustard crop, seems to be very common ; but in many cases, no doubt, the necessity for taking these advances might be avoided by the exercise of a little thrift, industry, and foresight. It is difficult to believe that the indebtedness of the villagers can be very serious, as, apart from the standing crop, they have but little security to offer. The rate of interest charged is said to vary from 37½ to 75 per cent, the lenders being usually *kaiyas* or foreign traders."[4] The magnitude of the problem can be judged from the following table.[5]

3. P. C. Goswami, *The Economic Development of Assam*, p. 60.
4. B, C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Vol. VI, Nowgong*, Calcutta, 1905, pp. 162-163.
5. P. C. Goswami, *The Economic Development of Assam*, 1963, p. 61.

Extent of indebtedness in rural areas of Nowgong district.

Survey conducted by	Per cent of indebtedness to the total families in the sample.	Average debt per family in Rs.	Average debt per indebted family in Rs.
1	2	3	4
1. Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee 1929-30.	78.0	183.00	235.00
2. Rural Economic Survey of Nowgong 1948-50.	39.2	74.4	189.7

The total volume of rural indebtedness of the district as per the Sample Survey stood at Rs. 1,70,906 against Rs. 76,866 as per the Banking Enquiry Committee Report referred to above. Compared to all--Assam figures of rural indebtedness the incidence of debt appears to be less in Nowgong 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 averages 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 the year 1934 to mitigate the hardship caused by the exhorbitant 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 the 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. Although rise in prices of agricultural products has to some extent relieved the agriculturists from the pressure of the inflation of the plan period. such inflation has, on the whole,

6. *Census of India*, 1961, Vol. III, Assam, General Report, Calcutta, 1964, p. 427.

enhanced the demand for rural credit. It is believed that the financial assistance provided by different financial institutions has not been commensurate with needs.

In the survey of Rural Economic Conditions in Nowgong district, the rural indebtedness in the district has been analysed as follows : "Out of 2,296 families as many as 1,394 or 61 per cent families were free from debt. The average debt per family was Rs. 189.47. The percentage of debt-free families was the highest in the Ex-Tea Garden Labour villages and least in the East Bengal immigrant villages. Debt in kind constituted an insignificant proportion. Of the total amount of money debt about 77 per cent was unsecured. The bulk of the debt were of short standing ; more than 75 per cent of cash debt was contracted during four years preceding the enquiry."[7]

The debt in the rural sector is incurred by people for various purposes e.g. repayment of old debt., marriage, *sraddha* etc., famine and failure of crops, purchase of farm cattle, implements, seeds etc., purchase of land or its improvement, education of children, medical expenses, litigation and others. The most striking feature revealed by the above survey was that the majority of the loans were incurred for unproductive purposes. Only 14.19 per cent of the secured and 17.09 per cent of the unsecured debts were incurred for productive purposes such as purchase of farm cattle, implements, lands etc. Famine and failure of crops during the period accounted for 28.16 per cent of the secured loan and 45.74 per cent of the unsecured loan and altogether claimed 41.69 per cent of the total cash loan and 72.72 per cent of the total grain loan. The high proportion of indebtedness under this heading was the natural outcome of crop-failure due to high floods in the district. Such crop failure has been a regular phenomenon in the economy of the district and rural indebtedness on this account has rather assumed greater proportion in recent years of food shortage and high prices. The popular habit of purchasing consumer goods on credit also adds to the burden of indebtedness of the villagers.

The said survey also revealed that the debt-burden mainly fell upon the owner cultivators whose share was Rs. 99,089 out of the total debts of Rs. 170.906 while the burden of debt per indebted family among the non-cultivating owners was relatively higher and accounted for Rs. 213.

Urban Indebtedness : The sources of urban credit are almost the same as those of the 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

7. *A Survey of Rural Economic Conditions in Nowgong*, 1956, p. 82.

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 to industry, trade and commerce. Various sections of urban prople avail of the credit facilities extended by these banks. As a result, new industries are coming up in the towns and the volume of trade is also fast expanding in the urban areas. Figures showing the extent of urban credit in Nowgong district are however not available. The present inflationery trend is believed to have seriously affected the purchasing power and enhanced the debt burden of the people of low income group specially living in the towns ; because they are to purchase all essentials required for subsistence.

(ii) The Role of Private Money Lenders : It was pointed out by the Nowgong sample survey 1956, that the professional and semi-professional money lenders played a dominant role in the rural finance and that their contribution to the total indebtedness was 68.17 per cent. In the past the indigenous money lenders were the only persons to whom people in distress could look for credit. Even inspite of legislations curtailing the earning of the 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 provide on clue to their volume of transaction. The total number of money lenders including indigenous bankers was censused as 3 persons only in Nowgong in 1961 Census.

Rate of interest : We have already discussed about the credit facilities of different sources including the Government and Co-operative societies and the rates of interest thereupon as found by the Provincial Banking Enquiry Committee in 1929-30. After that the position of the Co-operative societies and the Government deteriorated further and the importance of money-lenders increased. The high interest charged for the loans advanced by those money-lenders proved the helpless economic conditions of the rural people, having meagre bargaining powers. The Committee during survey, estimated that 51% in Nowgong district bore interest above 20 per cent per annum.[8]

8. P. C. Goswami, *The Economic Development of Assam*, 1963, p. 63.

The rate of interest charged by the money lender and the land owners 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 present difficulties in the case of loans taken in kind or in cash as advance against the standing crops. The rates of interest charged by the money lenders particularly the *Kabuliwalas* is exorbitant but the terms of repayment appear to be alluring for the poor villagers. The *Kabuliwalas* who formerly confined their business in the tea gardens have now-a-days extended their business into the villages. They 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 year from it.

On the other hand the rate of interest on loans issued by the Industries Department, the Co-operative banks and other commercial banks varies between 4% to 7½%. In spite of the low rate of interest of the bank loans, the private money lenders play an important role in 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 situated in towns and hence, 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 6½ per cent interest as against 7½ per cent of commercial banks do not have sufficient fund to meet the demand for rural credit. On the other hand, the private money lenders are easily accessible and often they 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 incorporated outside the district. There are also branches of the State Bank of India at Nowgong, Raha, Hojai and Dhing. The Gauhati Bank is not a scheduled commercial bank. The United Bank of India is one of the fourteen scheduled commercial banks nationalised in July, 1969. In December, 1969, the Reserve Bank of India has introduced the "Lead Bank Scheme" for setting up adequate banking facilities in the underbanked districts of the country. Under this scheme, Nowgong, Sibsagar Lakhimpur, Dibrugarh and Cachar districts have been allotted to the United Bank of India. The number of branch banks opened by the United Bank of India in the lead districts was 31 as on 30.6.72. On the whole the expansion of banking facilities in Nowgong has been tardy as the total number of scheduled commercial bank offices in the district has increased from 7 in June, 1969 to 12 in June, 1971. In this district the total deposits and advances made by eleven functioning bank offices amounted to Rs. 221 lakhs and Rs. 99 lakhs respectively on June, 1971, (the figures relate to 10 banks only).

The Gauhati Bank Ltd, Nowgong Branch : The Gauhati Bank is a non-scheduled Commercial Bank with its head office at Gauhati. This bank was established at Gauhati in 1920 by some public leaders of Assam as a loan office which continued till 1938. Thereafter it was raised to a commercial bank. Till the establishment of the Purbanchal Bank at Gauhati it was the only Commercial Bank incorporated within the state of Assam. As a non-scheduled bank it has been facing tough competition with the scheduled banks incorporated outside the state. It also fell a victim to the bank crisis in 1950. It revived its business in 1951 and since then has made considerable progress.

The Nowgong Branch office of the bank was opened on December, 30 1943. This branch also undertook to provide agricultural advances in the shape of loans. During 1966-70 this branch office has incurred losses except in 1970 in which year it showed a profit of Rs. 9,135.67.

The United Bank of India : Nowgong Branch : The Nowgong Branch of the United Bank of India was opened at Nowgong town in 1940. This bank had no other pay office in the district till the "Lead Bank Scheme" was undertaken in December, 1969. However, it provided godown facilities at Hojai, Raha, Kathiatoli, Kampur, Jamunamukh, Lanka, Konwarital, Jakhalabandha, Silghat and Rupahi. Under the "Lead Bank Scheme" Nowgong ha sbeen allotted to the United Bank of India for expansion of banking facilities and accordingly, upto 1972, it had opened 31 branch offices in the *lead* districts. This bank now also undertakes agricultural advances in addition to advances for business and industry. The volume of business of this Nowgong Branch of the United Bank of India has considerably increased during recent years. In 1965 its total deposit and total advances amounted to Rs. 65 lakhs and Rs. 37.76 lakhs against Rs. 80 lakhs and Rs. 34 lakhs respectively in 1973.

The State Bank of India : Nowgong Branch : The Nowgong Branch of the State Bank of India was opened at Nowgong town in 1954 as a pay office and was raised to a full Branch Office after the State Bank of India Act, 1955 was passed. Since then there has been gradual expansion of its activities in the district. This bank has also three pay offices at Raha, Hojai and Dhing under the control of the Nowgong Branch Office. It now transacts all types of banking business in addition to Government transactions. The volume of total business of the Nowgong Branch of the State Bank of India has considerably increased in recent years due to expansion of Government activities as well as trade, commerce, business and industries. Total deposit and advances figure on 31.12.65 of Nowgong Branch of State Bank of India is Rs. 38,37,000 and Rs. 27,38,100 respectively. Upto 31.12.70, this Bank has financed 71 agriculturists, 48 Small-Scale industries, 44 small business and professionals and 66 traders.

As per Banking Statistics published by the Reserve Bank of India, in June, 1974--there were altogether 17 offices of Scheduled Banks in Nowgong district. Of this 10 were in rural areas and 7 in semi-rural areas. Nowgong town and Hojai also have been considered as semi-rural areas as per Reserve Bank of India's criterion.

Deposit and advance position of scheduled Commercial Banks in Nowgong district is as follows :—

(Figures are shown in Lakhs)

Rural		Semi-rural		Total	
Deposit	Advance	Deposit	advance	Deposit	advance
72	11	344	148	416	159

Co-operative Credit Societies and Banks : Nowgong district is now served by the Assam Co-operative Apex Bank Ltd--Nowgong Branch, the Nowgong Central Co-operative Bank Ltd. and a network of Co-operative Credit Societies—both agricultural and non-agricultural. At the end of June, 1968 Nowgong had 380 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies and 7 Primary Non-Agricultural Credit Societies. The Nowgong Central Co-operative Bank had three offices including the head office at Nowgong town at the end of June, 1968 and had as members 461 Co-operative societies and 17 individuals. 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 after the enactment of the Co-operative Societies Act of 1904. As elsewhere in Assam, a number of rural agricultural credit societies (*Gaolia Banks*) were organised in this district. Gradually the need to extend the movement to non-credit aspects was felt. Accordingly the Co-operative Societies Act of 1912 was passed. This Act provided for

9. *Banking Statistics*, Vol. 4, Published by the Reserve Bank of India under Committee of Direction on Banking Statistics, pp. 22-23.
10. Ibid, p. 189.
11. Ibid, p. 22-23.

formation of both credit and non-credit societies. The societies formed in this district till 1920 could not make progress for want of a central organisation for financing and co-ordinating the societies. It was only in 1920, that the Nowgong Central Co-operative Banking Union was organised to bridge the gap. Since then this Central Bank has been acting as the supplier of credit to the societies. Under the guidance and supervision of the Central Bank, a number of co-operative societies both credit and non-credit in the field of agriculture, industry and trade were formed.

Unfortunately, the growth and working of these societies were not satisfactory in this district and the movement could not make much headway in Assam as a whole till Independence inspite of Government patronage. The movement received a serious set-back during the great depression of the thirties. However, due to timely efforts of the Government, the movement managed to survive. The Second World War which followed the crisis geared up the co-operative movement in the state and a number of Co-operative Consumer's Stores and Trading Societies were formed and flourished in this district as elsewhere in the state. Thus there was a brief span of prosperity in its history. After the War the movement again suffered from similar crisis. Most of the Consumer's Stores and Trading Societies went into liquidation and the agricultural credit societies groaned under overwhelming burden of overdues. The position further deteriorated at the time of Independence when the movement was virtually on the verge of decay.

After Independence, efforts were made to reorganise the co-operative movement in Assam. The Assam Co-operative Societies Act, 1949, was passed repealing the old Act.

During the First Five-Year Plan efforts were renewed to revitalise the Co-operative Societies with financial assistance from the Reserve Bank of India. The Assam Co-operative Apex Bank was set up in 1948 and was entrusted with the onerous task of supplying credit to the Co-operative Societies and other organisations. During the Second Five-Year 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 3rd and the 4th 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 4th 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.

One of the notable achievements of the co-operative movement in Nowgong district is the installation of the Co-operative Jute Mill at Silghat. Mention may also be made of the tremendous responsibility shouldered by the Apex Marketing Society in connection with the monopoly paddy procurement through the co-operative societies since the beginning of the Third Plan. More important is now, that Government has taken over of food-grains trade in paddy which has been implemented through the co-operatives. To carry out the trade some new types of Co-operatives have been organised through out the state.

Credit Revitalisation Scheme : It my be mentioned that the service co-operatives formed during the last period of the Second Plan were entrusted not only with the task of disbursing credit but also with such other responsibilities as distribution of fertilisers, establishment of effective links between credit and marketing and so on. But these societies emerged out as weak and uneconomic units with overwhelming burden of overdues. Therefore, during the middle of the Third Plan, a credit revitalisation scheme was initiated. Under this scheme weak and uneconomic units were amalgamated with strong and viable ones, and the dormant societies were liquidated. Such reorganised service co-operatives were made co-terminus with a Gaon Sobha areas. Agricultural credit was made production—oriented and crop-loan system was introduced in the areas of operation of the Nowgong, Tezpur and Cachar Central Banks.

Another important development in the co-operative banking sector during the Third Plan was the enactment of the Banking Laws (Applicable to Co-operative Societies) Act, 1965. This Act has brought the co-operative banks within the purview of the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

The Assam Co-operative Apex Bank Ltd. : Nowgong Branch : The Nowong Branch of the Assam Co-operative Apex Bank Ltd. was opened in the month of April, 1949, with only 36 accounts. Since 1956, the Bank has been shouldering the responsibility of rural credit finance from funds available from the Reserve Bank of India and also from its own resources. Accordingly, the Nowgong Branch of the Bank began to finance the Nowgong Central Co-operative Bank for financing the Credit Societies within its area of operation. It also provides direct short-term loans to the societies. Since 1958-59 to 1965-66, the Nowgog Branch issued Rs. 4,13,425 as direct short-term loans of which an

amount of Rs. 3,07,052 was realised. Since 1953-54 to 1965-66, it issued Rs. 1,16,95,424 to the Nowgong Central Co-operative Bank for further issue as short and medium term loans to the affiliated credit societies and out of this an amount of Rs. 1,02,24,994 was realised. It also financed directly the societies in the Mikir Hills district which had no District Central Bank or branch of the Apex Bank. Since 1953-56, it also issued direct finance to the extent of Rs. 3,82,975 as short term loans to the societies of that district. Besides participating in the rural credit scheme, the Apex Bank also participates in the State Trading Scheme. During 1965, it sanctioned through its Nowgong Branch a cash credit accommodation of Rs. 44 lakhs and an initial advance of Rs. 84 lakhs to the Nowgong Co-operative Marketing Society.

The Nowgong Branch of the Apex Bank came at a time when there was a lacuna in the credit structure of the district and since then, it has continued to make steady progress. This branch deals in all sorts of banking business. It had a total deposit of Rs. 77,10,532 at the end of Novemer, 1965, and earned a profit of more than Rs. 1,06,000 during 1964-65.

The Nowgong Central Co-operative Bank Limited: This Bank was set up at Nowgong town on September 3,1920, and had the erstwhile Nowgong district (including a portion of Mikir Hills) under its area of operation. The Bank had to function with a meagre capital through many trials and tribulations for long thirty three years upto 1953, only to maintain its existence. The great economic depression of the thirties, the Second World War and the mad-flood of the Kopili in 1934, completely upset the economy of the district leading to huge accumulation of over dues at the level of the Primary Credit Societies. The Assam *Pradeshik* Co-operative Bank, the financier of the District Central Banks was also closed down after 1940. As a result, the Bank was to survive in a morbid condition till the establishment of the Assam Co-operative Apex Bank in 1948, as the financier of the District Central Banks. The Bank was reorganised in 1954 with a working capital of Rs. 33,000 of which paid-up capital was Rs. 10,000. It received Rs. 75,000 as short-term loan from the Apex Bank and since then it began to develop gradually. Thus, the Bank's working capital increased gradually to Rs. 54,79,000 in 1962-63, in which year, the number of Co-operative Societies affiliated to it rose to 609 from 57 in 1953-54. Since 1964 the Bank has been enjoying a period of prosperity though the number of societies gradually came down, the decrease being mainly attributed to changing policy of the Government. Thus during 1969-70, the Bank had Rs. 18,72,30,000 as working capital and 400 Co-operative Societies. It advanced Rs. 74, 19,000 as loan to the societies during that year.

The Bank is now functioning with four Branch offices at Dhing, Silghat, Marigaon and Hojai and one Branch office attached to the Head office in Nowgong town.

The financial position of the Bank in June, 1970 is indicated below :—

Sl. No.	Particulars	Amount.
1.	Paid-up Capital	Rs. 21.84 lakhs
2.	Working capital	Rs. 193.71 ,,
3.	Reserve Fund	Rs. 3.39 ,,
4.	Deposits	Rs. 21.45 ,,
5.	Borrowings	Rs. 136.90 ,,
6.	Cash-in-hand	Rs. 0.84 ,,
7.	Loans advanced	Rs. 168.71 ,,

The Bank is managed by a Board of Directors consisting of 25 members. The Assam Co-operative Apex Bank has posted one Secretary, one Assistant Branch Manager and one Sub-Accountant. The Co-operative Department has posted one Assistant Registrar and one Senior Inspector. Besides, the Bank has its own employees including one Assistant Secretary and one Assistant Branch Manager to run the administration of the Bank. At present the Bank provides all banking facilities akin to the leading scheduled Banks, and advances loans for increasing agricultural production in the area of its operation and accepts deposits on attractive rates of interest.

The Nowgong Land Mortgage Bank : This Bank was set-up in 1929, in Nowgong town with a total membership of 205 persons and a total working capital of Rs. 13,785 including the paid-up share capital of Rs. 3,908. The Bank was started with a view to advance 15 years and 20 years - long term loans to its members against mortgage of land, such long term loans were not available from other sources of credit. Long term loans are advanced for the purpose of purchasing land, redemption of mortgages, reclamation of lands etc. During the initial years the Bank advanced Rs. 6,700 to its members. The following shows the position of the Bank during recent years.

Year	Membership	Working capital	Borrowings.	Repayment	Loans advanced	Share capital	Deposits	Loss/(—) Profit (+)
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1967-68	753	2,95,058	65,160	59,086	54,800	40,543	1,325	+2,536
1968-69	881	2,79,817	32,600	51,457	42,960	48,109	1,517	+1,132
1969-70	950	3,74,351	1,13,890	20,306	1,12,090	59,850	1,643	— 53

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 a departmental officer. 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, the function, the objects are also finalised in the meeting. The proceedings of the meeting are then forwarded to the Assistant Registrar of 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 : (1) paid-up share capital ; (2) reserve fund ; (3) other funds ; (4) deposits from members ; (5) deposits from non-members ; (6) borrowings from Central and Provincial banks ; (7) borrowing from other Societies ; and (8) borrowing from Government Departments. The first four items constitute the internal, and the other items, the external capital. A Primary Co-operative Society is managed by a Managing Committee consisting of 7 to 9 elected members. The Secretary of the Society is usually appointed by the Society and is responsible for maintaining the accounts of the Society. The Co-operative Department carries out audit from time to time.

In Nowgong district there were 380 Primary Agricultural Co-operative Credit Societies with 50,881 members and 7 Primary Non-Agricultural Co-operative Credit Societies with 776 members at the end of June 1968.

During 1967-68, total loans advanced by the Agricultural Credit Societies amounted to Rs. 44,87,000 against a recovery of Rs. 16,15,000 only. Thus the total loans outstanding at the end of June, 1968, amounted to Rs. 92,74,000 of which Rs. 67,57,000 was overdue and Rs. 11,000 bad and doubtful debts. The value of paddy procured and of goods (fertilisers) distributed by the societies during the year amounted to Rs. 7,18,000 and Rs. 75,000 respectively. During the year 127 societies made a profit of Rs. 59,000 while 202 incurred a loss of Rs. 1,18,000.

The statement 'A' below provides the occupation-wise classification of outstanding Credit of Scheduled Commercial Banks in Nowgong district.

(c) Life Insurance : The Life Insurance business in India was nationalised in 1956 and the Life Insurance Corporation of India was established on 1.9.55 under the provisions of the Life Insurance Corporation Act (1956). Prior to nationalisation, there was no office of any private insurer within the district of Nowgong except a small office of Banglaxmi at Nowgong.

One of the main objectives of nationalisation was to spread the message of Life Insurance to every nook and corner of the country and to offer the benefit of Life Insurance to every eligible person. To render service at the door of the insuring public and to penetrate effectively into rural areas, it was necessary to have offices in all the important places. With this end in view, a Sub-office was set up at Nowgong, the Branch office being situated at Tezpur. The volume of new Life Insurance business progressed yearly and necessitated upgrading Nowgong Sub-office to the level of a full-fledged branch office directly under the Gauhati Divisional Office which operated from October, 25,1958. In a zonal business contest organised by the Eastern Zone L.I.C.I., in 1959, Nowgong Branch secured first position in the Branch category.

A Development Centre was opened in 1960 at Hojai in view of the roaring business this branch has achieved in this district. An officer of the rank of Assistant Branch Manager (Development) has been posted there.

The western part of the Mikir Hills district upto and including Diphu is also included in the jurisdiction of the Nowgong Branch. A Field Officer has been posted with headquarters at Diphu.

There are in all 15 Field Officers working under the Nowgong Branch and out of them 5 are posted at Nowgong and the rest at Raha, Morigaon, Hojai, Kampur, Borbhogia, Dhing, Lumding and Diphu. The number of total agents working under this branch was 369 on 31.12.60.

Business Figures	No. of Policies	Amount.
1957	2186	Rs. 59,48,500/-
1958	3238	Rs. 90,89,950/-
1959	4393	Rs. 121,50,400/-
1960	3984	Rs. 117,38,500/-

General Insurance : As to General Insurance business, there are some branch offices or simply a field officer to collect premiums for their respective companies.

The Oriental Fire and General Insurance Company Ltd. which is a subsidiary to the Life Insurance Corporation of India has got its Divisional Office at Gauhati and the district of Nowgong is under its jurisdiction, where only an Inspector is being kept to look after business in respect of Fire, Marine, Motor and other Miscellaneous General Insurance.

The New India Assurance Company Limited is represented by an Inspector's Unit which was opened here on May 1,1958. This unit collects yearly premium of about Rs. 60,000.

The Henover Insurance Company opened its sole branch office here on February 7, 1962, with Divisional Office at Gauhati and Head Office at Calcutta. It also transacts General Insurance business such as Fire, Marine, Accident and and Miscellaneous.

The Hindusthan General Insurance Society Limited opened its branch office in this district on April, 1,1957. This branch transacted insurance business in respect of Motor, Fire, Marine & Miscellaneous to the tune of about one lakh a year till July, 1963.

There are also other small companies which are too numerous to describe. Recently General Insurance Companies have also been nationalised.

State Assistance to Industrial Development : The Government of Assam has set-up a vast net-work of offices and training centres all over the state with a view to rendering assistance to industries, creating an industrial conciousness and providing an impetus to development of new industries. For this purpose the Directorate of Industries combining the major and cottage industries was set up in 1958, with cottage industries offices at the district level. A techno-economic survey of Assam was completed by the National Council of Applied Economics which prepared project reports for different possible industries. To remove the causes of industrial backwardness such as dearth of capital, raw materials, technical personnel, power etc., the State Government has implemented through its Industry Department, various measures such as training programme, financial assistance, power subsidy, technical guidance, marketing facility for industrial products, establishment of industrial estates etc. Industrial estates have been established under the Industry Department in each district to provide factory sheds for small and cottage industries at concessional rents and to assist the entrepreneurs in securing loans from banks, Industrial Finance Corporation, Industrial Development Corporation etc. State Emporiums have also been set-up in each district to provide marketing facilities. Industrial Fairs have also been organised from time to time to give wide publicity as to available state assistance and facilities and for further development of industries.

Financial assistance is given in the shape of loans, subsidies, grants-in-aid, stipends etc. Loans upto Rs. 2,500 may be sanctioned at the district level and beyond this upto Rs. 20,000 is generally granted by the Cottage Industries Directorate at low rate of interest and easy instalments. Loans beyond Rs. 28,000 are dealt with by the Industrial Finance Corporation. Government may consider loan upto Rs. 50,000 as a special case. During 1962-1971, the Nowgong

district office disbursed Rs. 1,97,800 to 212 persons as general loans ranging upto Rs. 2,500 for development of cottage industries and Rs. 9,48,900 as rehabilitation loan to 778 diplaced goldsmiths during 1963-68. By 1971, the Assam Financial Corporation disbursed Rs. 34.80 lakhs of loans to various industries viz., manufacture of sawn timber, printing press, flour-mills, transport, tea and metal industries of the district. The rate of interest of these loans varies between 7 per cent and 7½ per cent.

During 1960-1971, grants-in-aid given to different institutions and individuals for industrial purpose in the district amounted to Rs. 1,73,678. A total number of 683 persons were benefitted by such grants-in-aid. The Industry Department also grants stipends to trainees of different arts and crafts including cottage industries. Such training facilities are available within and outside the state. In Nowgong district, the department maintains one Cane and Bamboo Training Centre at Kathiatoli and one Blacksmithy training centre at Dharamtul. During 1961-71, 56 trainees in the Kathiatoli Training Centre and 119 trainees in the Dharamtul Training Centre were given stipends amounting to Rs. 14,225 and Rs. 24,001 respectively.

The Department also helps different industries in getting loans from banks. During 1967-70, 64 rice mills and 10 other industries of the district obtained bank loans amounting to Rs. 10,04,446.

One Industrial Estate is being constructed at Senchowa about five kilometres west of Nowgong town. This Industrial Estate when completed will provide sheds for small-scale and cottage industries at concessional rents and help in creating an industrial tempo in the district.

In addition to such assistance, the Government also participates in the share capital of some big industries particularly in the co-operative sector. One co-operative Jute Mill has been already set up at Silghat and the State Government has already contributed Rs. 52.5 lakhs to its share capital. Another sum of Rs. 7 lakhs will also be contributed. Government also undertakes to take up shares with Rs. 7 lakhs. The Industrial co-operatives are encouraged and aided by the Co-operative Department with both loans and grants-in-aid.

Recently the Government has introduced a scheme for developing industries in the industrially backward districts by providing additional facilities and giving greater attention. Nowgong district falls under such category of industrially backward districts. In the public sector one Spun-Silk Mill has been already set-up at Jagiroad and one paper-pulp industry is under contstruction at Sitajakhala near Jagiroad. Under the new scheme it is expected that the district will get more of public sector industries.

(f) 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 Bhaskar Varman of seventh century A.D., bear testimony to 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 (Jaypala 1115-1175 A.D.) 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. Sudangpha alias Bamuni Konwar (1397-1407 A.D.) 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 Suklengmung. This view however, is 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 Suklengmung bear inscriptions in Tai language and character. Jayadhaj Singha and his successor Chakradhaj Singha replaced Tai inscriptions on coins by Sanskrit inscriptions. In all probability, this replacement was a sequel to king Jayadhaj's conversion to Hinduism. King Gadadhar replaced Sanskrit inscription and reintroduced Tai character on coins. Gadadhar Singha was not converted into Hinduism. Rudra Singha (1696-1714 A.D.) introduced an annual issue of coins in 1696 A.D. in Assamese script and Sanskrit language. This was followed nearly every year until the end of the Ahom rule. During the reign of Siva Singha a square coin with Persian script was issued in 1651 A.D. Rajeswar Singha also did the same during the first year of his reign (1674 A.D.) ; but he also issued square coins with Assamese script.

The coin of early Ahom period with exception of that of Suklengmung bears the date of accession of the king who minted it ; 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 a 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 *ratis* (11·66 grams). Half rupee and quarter rupee coins were introduced by Rudra Singha and Siva Singha respectively. This was carried further by Rajeswar Singha who introduced two *annas* (one eighth) and one *anna* (one sixteenth) of coins. There is no mention of the place of mint on the body of Ahom coins, except on these with Persian script issued by

Pramatheswari and Rajeswar Singha. There is evidence to show that coins were minted by different Ahom kings at Gargaon, Rangpur and Desoi at various periods. No copper coins were issued during the Ahom period. Cowries or conch-shells 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 are round in form and bear inscriptions in Sanskrit, in archaic Assamese script. The first Koch king to strike coins in his name was Narnarayan. His son Laksminarayan and his descendents, however, ruled over the western part of the vast kingdom only as vassals of the Moghul 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 Pran-Narayan 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 Raghudeva is known to have issued some rupee coins.

Kachari rulers of Assam also had their own coins. The coins of Yosanarayan Deva and Satrudaman alias Pratap-narayan are still extant. The coins of Tamradhaj 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 'Jaintipur 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 feasible and therefore the scope of external trade was very much limited. Besides, political situation was not conducive to external trade. Adverse diplomatic policies of the ruling kings of different kingdoms were mainly responsible for holding up the growth of such trade though some amount of external trade was carried with Bengal and neighbouring hill tribes during normal times. Trade with Bengal was generally carried on through the Brahmaputra river. There was one *chaki* at Raha in this district to control trans-frontier trade with the Khasi and Jaintia tribes who hurried down to the markets situated in the plains. Internal trade was generally done in the weekly *hats* and *melas* held on festive occasions and such trade was generally done by the barter system.

With the change of the political order in the country along with the British occupation and consequent development of communication both external and internal trade of this district began to grow up and the volume of trade began to expand gradually. W.W. Hunter in his Statistical Account of Assam published in 1879, pointed out that the district trade was carried on in the markets, the principal ones being Nowgong, Puranigudam, Kaliabor, Silghat, Dabaka, Raha and Chaparmukh. Tea, rice, mustard seeds, and cotton formed the principal items of export and salt, sugar, butter and oil were the principal imports in those days. It shows that external trade of the district was yet to make some impact upon the economy of the district. B.C. Allen in his Nowgong Gazetteer also pointed out that trade and commerce of the district were not of much importance even at the beginning of the current century. It was observed, "In addition to tea the principal exports are mustard seed which is raised in considerable quantities on the *chaparis*, cotton, lac, cocoons and chillies which come down from the hills, bamboo mats, thatching grass, wax, and other forest produce. The principal trade routes are the Brahmaputra, the Kalang and the various water courses in the *chaparis* down which the mustard is boated when the river rises. The Kapili affords an outlet to the trade of the North Cachar Hills which comes to Chaparmukh, and is either transferred to the railway there, or continues by boat via the Kalang to the Brahmaputra. The chief imports are pulse and other food grains, cotton thread and cloth, umbrellas, sugar, salt, opium, *ghi*, kerosine, and other oils, and hardwares. Nearly all the export and import trade is in the hands of the Marwari merchants, locally known as *Kaiyas*, who are the great shop-keepers and money lenders of the Assam Valley. They purchase their surplus products from the *raiyats* and supply them in return with cloth, thread, salt, oil and very often opium. There are altogether some 40 shops in Nowgong town and nearly 250 more scattered about the district. The importance of the hill trade is indicated by the fact that, no less than thirty-three of these depots are situated in the Rangkhang mauza.

"In addition to the *Kaiya*, there are a few Muhammadans from Bengal who have opened shops in Nowgong town where they sell furniture, hardware, and general haberdashery. Some of the smaller village shops are owned by Assamese, but the natives of the district have little or no commercial instinct or capacity, and allow almost the whole of the profits of their trade to be monopolised by foreigners."[11]

A considerable amount of retail business was done in the local markets. The articles offered for retail sale in the markets were rice and other grains, fruits, country-vegetables, poultry, earthenwares and metal vessels, oil, molasses, tobacco and cotton cloths.

11. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Vol. VI, Nowgong*, Calcutta, 1905, pp. 176–177,

There was not much change in the trade position of the district during the following years till Independence except in case of import trade. The growth of population, particularly due to immigration of foreigners and with neglect of the foreign administrators towards indigenous industry caused considerable increase in the volume of import trade. Foreign articles such as mill-made cloths and yarns, oil and other necessaries flooded the local markets and sold at cheaper rates, and became more popular. This import trade remained generally confined in the hands of the foreigners who carried the articles by steamer in the Brahmaputra and by rail. A network of railways was already laid in the district. The Assam Bengal Rail line (now North-east Frontier Railway) running through the southern part of the district was fed by two branch lines, one from Chaparmukh to Silghat via Nowgong town and the other from Senchowa to Mairabari via Haiborgaon. The Assam Trunk Road passing through the district also connected the trade centres of the district with important trade towns and centres of the State. Road transport was slowly introduced and some private vehicles plied in the Trunk Road carrying some amount of trade. After Independence, the position began to change rapidly. A vast net-work of road communication was developed in the district during the First Five-Year Plan connecting the important trade centres and markets and a number of public bus routes were opened. State Transport Buses began to ply on the Trunk Road between Nowgong, Gauhati and Jorhat. Express services between Gauhati, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia ran via Nowgong. Regular ferry services plied from Silghat to Bhomoraguri and Panpur in the Darrang district. State Transport Buses now ply on several routes in this district. This has led to the growth of a number of trade centres in the nooks and corners of the district. A considerable volume of business both internal and external is carried on by these routes. It may also be mentioned that development activities during the Five-Year Plans, like construction of roads, bridges, buildings and new industries have increased import of various materials such as ironsheets, cement, bolts and nuts, coal, kerosine, petrol, lubricants, machineries and machine parts, tools and implements, raw materials etc. sports goods, cosmetics, cloths and yarns, garments, fancy and luxury goods, leather and leather products are also imported in larger quantities than before. Assorted tin foods such as milk, butter, ghee, salt, sugar, medicine and numerous industrial products not produced within the district form other items of import. Though Nowgong is an agricultural district, pulses, onion, potato etc. are imported to it. Among its exports, tea, jute, mustard and other oil seeds, rice, molasses (gur), til, cinnamom, medicinal herbs, betel-nuts, timber and other forest products, spun-silk cloths and yarns, raw-hides and bones, may be mentioned.

The following shows the destination of export and places of import of some important commodities :

Name of commodities	destination of export.
Jute, Oil Seeds, Timber	Calcutta
Tea	Calcutta, Gauhati (Tea auction market Since September, 1970)
Foodgrains, Pulses, Ballast, Stone chips	neighbouring districts.
Hides	Gauhati, Calcutta, Kanpur.
Bones, Cinnamon, Medicinal herbs, Betel-nut	Calcutta.
Spun Silk cloth and yarn	All over India, Japan, Places of import.
Cotton piece goods and yarn	Calcutta, Bangalore, Madras, Bombay, Madurai etc.
Hosiery goods	Calcutta, Punjab, Delhi.
Coal	Cherapunji, Ledo.
Spices, Salt, Iron and Steel, Stationery.	Calcutta.

Name of commodities	Places of import
Grains and pulses	Bihar, U.P.
Kerosine oil, Petrol	Digboi, Gauhati.
Medicine	Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi.
Leather and Leather goods	Kanpur, Agra, Calcutta.
Electrical goods	Calcutta, Bombay.
Sugar, Wheat	U. P., Bihar.

For want of data, it is not possible to give a correct account of the volume and value of export and import in the district. We can, however, get some idea about the trade position from a reference to the rail-borne volume and value

of goods traffic in some important stations. The monthly average volume of inward and outward goods traffic at the Nowgong station is 169 wagons and 50 wagons respectively, the value of the former being Rs. 80,455. The position at the Mairabari station is just the opposite, the volume of inward traffic being 1,264 quintals valued at Rs. 6,877 and that of outward traffic being 9,128 quintals valued at Rs. 98.186. The position at the Raha station is inward 3,620 quintals valued at Rs. 20,865 and outward 4,530 quintals valued at Rs. 23,659. The Silghat station transacts also a large volume of outward traffic of 1,983 quintals valued at Rs. 47,129. Its volume of inward traffic is gradually increasing due to setting up of the Jute Mill there. The value of sales of Spun Silk Mills at Jagiroad increased from Rs. 23.63 lakhs in 1966-67 to Rs. 31.65 lakhs in 1960-70.

The gradually increasing amount of sale tax collection in the district also points to the increasing volume of business in the district. The sales-tax collection in the district increased from Rs. 2,58,521.79 in 1960-61, to Rs. 4,48,204.67 in 1966-67. The sales-tax rate on the value of different taxable goods varies between 4 per cent and 10 per cent, and if we calculate at the average rate of 7 per cent, the total value of sales of taxable goods in the district will exceed Rs. 30.00 lakhs in 1966-67.

Trade Centres :

(1) Centres of wholesale business : Nowgong town is the principal centre of wholesale business in the district It is connected by a net-work of roads and rails with all important trade centres and markets inside and outside the district. Salana is the important wholesale centre for tea. As it is both a steamer and ferry-ghat, Silghat is an important wholesale centre for all exportable goods. Other important wholesale centres in the district are Raha, Hojai, Lanka, Lumding, Rupahi, Dabaka, Dhing, Mairabari etc. Hojai is situated in the most fertile rice producing area in the district and is known as the granary of Assam. It is an important rail station on the main line of the North-East Frontier Railways and is connected by good road communications with other towns. Now regular State Transport buses run between Nowgong Town and Hojai. All these trade centres are conveniently situated in areas of abundant agricultural produce and except Dabaka all rail stations are connected by road communications. Dabaka is connected with Nowgong town by a black-topped road which is now being converted to a National Highway extending upto Dimapur and thence to Manipur. Wholesale as well as retail business is growing at these centres during recent years. It has already been mentioned that the rail-borne export trade at the Mairabari station, which is inhabited predominantly by a hard working section of the Muslim people, worths Rs. 98,186 per month. The wholesellers import goods from various trade centres outside the district and purchase locally for wholesale export. Gauhati is the principal trade centre in

the State wherefrom many of the commodities are imported to Nowgong district. The wholesale purchase of some items such as sugar and pulses is done in the production centres, most of which, are located outside the state.

All these centres can be regarded as the distributing points for goods imported as well as locally purchased. Both wholesale and retail business are carried on side by side in these centres. In almost all these centres daily markets and weekly *hats* are held for retail business. It is important to note that there is no wholesale market (*Mandis*) in this district.

(II) Important retail marketing centres : In addition to daily and weekly markets in the whole sale trade centres, a number of retail shops dealing with various consumer goods carry on the retail business. The number of daily bazars in Nowgong town is gradually increasing along with the expansion of the town. Three such daily bazars are held now and more are likely to be opened. Numerous retail trade centres are now growing up in the rural areas due to location of some big industry or office. A number of shops dealing with various items particularly groceries, stationery etc., are growing up in these centres. Each village has got at least one grocery shop which distributes the necessaries to the people. Numerous public bus services facilitate the mobilisation of the business of the district. Every tea-garden is, in a sense, an important centre of retail trade.

The *hats* are important centres where a great deal of retail business is transacted. These *hats* are held either weekly or bi-weekly on particular days. According to the 1961 census, there are 88 *hats* and markets in the Nowgong district and of these 31 *hats* are held bi-weekly and 4 *hats* daily. Here the villagers bring their surplus agricultural products such as vegetables, rice, betel-nuts, poultry, cattle, goats, home-made cloths, *eri* cocoons and cloths for disposal. The sellers also include a section of petty traders who gather here from towns and trade centres with their wares which consist of cotton goods, sugar, pulses, spices, toys, crockery, utensils and various other tit-bits. The petty dealers held licences issued under the Assam Cotton Cloth and Warn Dealers Licensing Order, 1953. The important *hats*, have rows of small temporary sheds mostly of bamboo and thatch.

The Management of the *hats* vested in the Local Board till 1960, and when the Board was replaced by the Mahkuma Parishad the management of the *hats* passed over to the Gaon Panchayats. The daily markets located in the towns are managed by the respective town committees or municipalities.

The importance of the *hat* lies in the fact that it provides marketing facilities for surplus agricultural products including perishable goods at a short distance from the production centres and the articles of daily necessity are made available

to the villagers who have little time to visit distant towns or trade centres. The most important markets are Salana, Jaluguti, Rupahi, Kampur, Raha, Phulaguri, Lanka, Hojai, Dabaka, Mairabari, and Dhing. (A list of markets is appended in the Appendix).

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. These fairs are seasonal and held on particular religious festivals. Apart from the merriment which marks these fairs, a good deal of buying and selling is also carried on. The congregation is generally composed of villagers a section of whom bring their products for sale. Petty traders from towns and trading centres also visit the fairs with their wares. B. C. Allen points out in the old Gazetter of Nowgong, a number of villagers where such fairs were held.[10]

Among the important *melas* held, at present, in the district, are those at Silghat on the *Ashokastami* and at Bardowa on the *Doljatra* (*Fagua*). Visitors from all over the district come to attend these *melas*. The *Siva-Ratri melas* are held in many places where Siva temples are situated. Large number of visitors attend the *Siva-Ratri melas* at Sivasthan in Barbhagia mauza, Buragohain-than near about Hatigarhgaon, Siva mandir at Jogijan, Tekelipotagaon in Rangagarah mauza, Barangabari in Mikirbheta mauza, Laharighat etc. The Durga *puja* is celebrated all over the district in spite of opposition by the *Mahapurushia* Vaishnavas. The Bihu festival is observed throughout the district. The chief attraction of the *Magh* Bihu is the buffalo fights organised in innumerable places in the district and attended by large gatherings. The *Rangali Bihu*, held in mid-April marking the Assamese new year, is an occasion of great rejoicing of the people. *Bihu-melas* besides being held in the rural areas are also held at the *Nehru-Bali* on the Kalong bank in Nowgong town on both Bihu occasions. *Rashotsava* and Sankar-*utsav* are now being widely observed all over the district with two to three days programme. Jonbeel *mela* at Mikirbari in Gobha mauza, Gosain *mela* at Phulaguri and Saragaon, Paruni *mela* at Jogijan, Basundari *mela* on Bhim-Ekadashi may also be mentioned.

(c) Co-operation in whole-sale sale and retail trade (Co-operative marketing) : It has been already pointed out that co-operative consumers stores and marketing societies were functioning during the Second World War for distribution of scarce commodities at controlled price. Almost all such societies went on liquidation during the post-War period. It was in 1958, when the Assam Co-operative Apex Marketing Society was organised. Primary Co-operative Marketing Societies were organised in each district to carry on the trade and

10. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Vol. VI, Nowgong*, Calcutta, 1905, Appendix Statement E p. 6.

wholesale District Co-opeartive Societies were also organised in some paddy growing districts. The Nowgong Wholesale Consumers' Co-operative Society was registered on 18-11-66. Thus in 1966-67, there were one District Co-operative and 18 Primary Co-operative Marketing Societies in the Nowgong district. The total membership of the District Society was, individual members 274, State member 1 and Societies 56. Its Working Capital was Rs. 2,99,500 and paid up capital was Rs. 1,54,485. The eighteen Primary Marketing Societies had a total membership of 4,339 persons and a total paid-up capital of Rs. 10,45,209.

(d) **State Trading :** In 1959, the Assam Co-operative Apex Marketing Society was given the monopoly over procurement of foodgrain (paddy) by the State Government. It started procurement of paddy through the Primary Co-operative Marketing Societies as agents and Service Co-operatives as sub-agents in the district. In 1964, the Government allowed the millers to procure paddy side by side with the Apex Marketing Society. The monopoly was restored again to the Apex Marketing Society in 1965. Except for 1966-67 when the Food Corporation of India obtained the licence for monopoly procurement in the district, the Apex Marketing has been functioning till now. In 1966-67, the Food Corporation Nowgong Branch, procured ten lakh *maunds* of winter paddy and one lakh *maunds* of autumn paddy and distributed about 6.25 lakh *maunds* in the district. The Apex Marketing Society procured paddy as shows below :

1958-59	.. .. ..	10,75,530 *maunds.*
1959-60	.. .. ..	21,84,965 ,,
1960-61	.. .. ..	22,74,737 ,,
1961-62	.. .. ..	8,00,231 ,,
1962-63	.. .. ..	9,45,432 ,,

The Primary Co-operative Societies 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. This price is revised from time to time depending on the fluctuating open market price to induce the producers to sell to the societies.

During 1966-67, the Primary Marketing Societies in the Nowgong district made a total purchase worth Rs. 10,5,76,296. For storing of the paddy these societies have 28 godowns of their own and 4 hired godowns in the district. During 1967-68, the value of paddy procured and sold by the service co-operatives to the marketing societies amounted to Rs. 7,18,000.

Fair Price Shops : In order to secure proper distribution of essential articles at controlled price, fair price shops have been opened throughout the district since the beginning of the State Trading Programme. In 1963, there were 406 fair price shops in the district. The number of such fair price shops

has been increased as to cover each village by at least one such shop. In the urban areas their number has also been increased greatly so that people can easily collect their necessaries. Controlled commodities such as rice, sugar, atta, flour etc., are sold at fixed price in these shops to holders of family identity cards issued by the Supply Department which appoints the fair price dealers. The Department fixes the price also. These fair price shops have been very useful in checking the rise of prices of essential commodities. The officers of the Department regularly inspect the stock and check the accounts of the fair price dealers.

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 was prepared with fine bamboo strips for measuring rice and paddy. Its 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 holds 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*, Land was measured in terms of *bigha*, *katha*, *lecha* etc. Small linear measurement was done in terms of *yab*, *anguli*, *gira*, *muthi*, *beget*, *hat*, *kathi* (Gauz) etc. The English units of linear measurement such as inch, foot, yard, pol, chain, furlong, mile etc., were used side by side. The old system of weighing various stores, gold and Silver in terms of *rati*. *anna*. and *tola* is still in vogue.

The old units of measurement of weight and capacity were *tola*, *chattak*, *powa*, *seer*, *maund* etc. *Tulasani* 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 liquid things. On the basis of recommendations of the Weights and Measures Committee (1913-14), the uniformity of weights and measures was brought into force. 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 October 1961.

Although the Directorate of Weights and Measures have been enforcing the metric system of weights and measures by launching prosecution as well as by arranging supply of standard weights and measures to the needy traders, yet the traditional measures have not altogether fallen into disuse.

APPENDIX--A

LIST OF HATS AND MARKETS IN THE DISTRICT Source : SECRETARIES ANCHALIK PANCHAYATS, NOWGONG DISTRICT.

Sl. No.	Name of Hats and Markets	Place where it is held	Whether Daily/ Bi-weekly/Weekly/ Fortnightly.
1	2	3	4
1.	Mairabari	Mairabari	Bi-Weekly
2.	Laharighat	Borbari Village	-do-
3.	Bhuragaon	Koptimari	-do-
4.	Baralimari	Baralimari	-do-
5.	Garua	Garua	-do-
6.	Dhumkhura	Dhumkhura	-do-
7.	Nagabandha	Nagabandha	-do-
8.	Kampur Hat	At Barpetia Village	Weekly
9.	Dabaka Hat	Niz-Dabaka	-do-
10.	Jamunamukh Hat	Kathkatia Gaon	Bi-weekly
11.	Rangolu Market	Rangolee Gaon	-do-
12.	Bheluguri Market	Bheluguri	Weekly
13.	Kachua Market	Kachua Gaon	Bi-weekly
14.	Kachua Tinali	Satlunga Gaon	Bi-weekly.
15.	Renbeng Market	Renbeng	Weekly
16.	Singimari Market	Singimari	-do-
17.	Kathiatali Market	Niz-Kathiatali	-do-
18.	Kandali Market	Kandali	-do-
19.	Sukanbari Market	Sukanbari	-do-
20.	Jaluguti Bazar	Jalugiti	-do-
21.	Phulaguri Bazar	Phulaguri	-do-
22.	Raha Bazar	Raha	Bi-Weekly
23.	Lawpani Hat	Lawpani	Weekly
24.	Simaluguri Hat	Simaluguri	-do-
25.	Amsoi Hat	Amsoi	-do-
26.	Chaparmukh	Chaparmukh	Daily
27.	Athgaon Hat	Dhing Town	-do-
28.	Kadamoni Hat	Batadrava	Bi-Weekly
29.	Santijan Hat	Bhomaraguri	-do-
30.	Besamari Hat	Besamari	-do-
31.	Doomdoomia	Doomdoomia	-do-

1	2	3	4
32.	Akarabari	Akarabari	Weekly
33.	Katahguri	Katahguri	Bi-weekly
34.	Kandhulimari Hat No. 2.	Kandhulimari	-do-
35.	Juria Bazar	Juria	-do-
36.	Arabari Bazar	Chamdhara	-do-
37.	Singari Bazar	Teliapathar	-do-
38.	Haldia Sutirpar	Haldia Sutirpar	-do-
39.	Boralimari Bazar	Baralimari No. 1.	-do-
40.	Kaladuba Bazar	Uttar Kaladuba	-do-
41.	Kalani Jalah	Kalani Jalah	-do-
42.	Balikatia Bazar	Balikatia	Bi-Weekly
43.	Ambagan Bazar	Soalani	-do-
44.	Garajan Bazar	Garajan	-do-
45.	Kathpara Bazar	Kathpara	Weekly
46.	Lailuri Bazar	Lailuri	-do-
47.	Bhurbandha	Bhurbandha	-do-
48.	Barjuli Bazar	Bhurbandha	-do-
49.	Lawkhowa Bazar	Niz-Lawkhowa	-do-
50.	Saidaria Bazar	Saidaria	Weekly
51.	Jugijan Bazar	Jugijan Bazar	-do-
52.	Nilbagan Bazar	Nilbagan	-do-
53.	Morajhar Bazar	Morajhar	-do-
54.	Debasthan Bazar	Debasthan	-do-
55.	Padumpukhuri Bazar	Dhalpukhuri in Hojai Mauza.	-do-
56.	Ambari Bazar	Ambari	-do-
57.	Garmari	Sarubari	-do-
58.	Mikirbheta	Mikirbheta	-do-
59.	Habi-Barangabari	Habi-Barangabari	-do-
60.	Gupalaghat	Bar-Manipur	Bi-Weekly
61.	Jajari Mangalbaria	Paghali	Weekly
62.	Banglubhete	Silapukhuri	Bi-Weekly
63.	Udali Bazar	Udali	Weekly
64.	Lanka Bazar	Lanka	-do-
65.	Kharikhana Bazar	Kharikhana	-do-
66.	Tinali Bazar	Bamun Gaon	-do-
67.	Jurapukhuri Bazar	Jurapukhuri	-do-
68.	Kapashbari	Kapashbari	-do-

1	2	3	4
69.	Pirshaber Bazar	Barungatal	Weekly
70.	Choudhury Bazar	Pachim Samorail	-do-
71.	Samorail Bazar	Pachim Samorail	-do-
72.	Barbari Bazar	Barbari	Bi-Weekly
73.	Telahi Bazar	Telahi Charali	Weekly
74.	Dharamtul	Dharamtul	-do-
75.	Morigaon	Morigaon	-do-
76.	Ahatguri	Ahatguri	-do-
77.	Jhargaon	Jhargaon	-do-
78.	Baraburi	Baraburi	Bi-Weekly
79.	Nelli Hat	Nelli	Weekly
80.	Baha Hat	Bordoloni	-do-
81.	Nakhola	Nakhola	-do-
82.	Ajarbari	Azarbari	-do-
83.	Dongabari	Dongabari	-do-
84.	Bordoloni Bazar	Bordoloni	-do-
85.	South Dharamtul (Bat Bazar)	South Dharamtul	Daily
86.	Jagiroad Charali	Jagi Road	-do-
87.	Morigaon Charali	Morigaon	-do-
88.	Telahi Charali	Telahi	-do-

CHAPTER--VII.

COMMUNICATIONS

(a) Old-time trade routes, highways and modes of conveyance :

When the British took over Assam, lack of communications was the most serious obstacle for the development of the Province. There is not much information regarding old-time trade routes, highways and modes of conveyance in the period prior to the Ahom days. But, as the present Nowgong district formed the part of various kingdoms in the ancient past, it may safely be assumed that there were means of communications linking this area with other parts of the country. The mighty Brahmaputra which runs along the entire northern boundary of the district with main river-ports at Silghat, Dhing and Laharighat, served as the main trade route from time immemorial. M'Cosh[1] mentions four routes linking Assam with Bengal, one by water and three by land. The only water route he mentioned, was down the river Brahmaputra. Even at present the importance of the Brahmaputra as a trade route for the Assam Valley has not diminished.

During the Ahom times too, more emphasis was laid on the development of water transport and the Ahoms leaned heavily on their naval strength during wars. The naval achievements of the Assamese attained a high pitch of efficiency under the Ahom rulers. That, they possessed an efficient navy is borne out by the reference to their naval engagements, particularly with the Muhammedan invaders. The naval engagements that took place at Kaliabor and Saraighat were really memorable. Although the Assamese were defeated in the first engagement, they fought valiantly. But at Saraighat the Assamese warships routed the Moghul fleet. At the end of the contest even the great Ram Singh had to admit the valour and skill of his redoubtable adversaries : "Every Assamese soldier is expert in rowing boats, in shooting arrows, in digging trenches and in wielding guns and cannon. I have not seen such specimens of versatility in any other part of India".[2]

Land routes in Lower Assam of which this district forms a part was not as developed as in Upper Assam during the Ahom days. There were bridle paths connecting villages and maintenance of these paths was the responsibility of the

1. M. Cosh, *Topography of Assam*, New Delhi, Reprint, 1975, pp. 8—82,
2. Edward Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 253,

villagers. The district of Nowgong had been the battle field of various encounters. It appears that the movement of armed forces took place mainly by river banks. Thus Mir Jumla during his invasion of Assam, while marching towards Kaliabor in Nowgong district, divided his troops into two main divisions. One marched along the south bank of the Brahmaputra while he himself after crossing the Manas led the other division along the north bank. When land routes other than banks of rivers were used by troops, the advancing forces had to clear the jungle and make their own paths. Thus the two forces of Rudra Singha while advancing to the Kachari country one *via* Dhansiri Valley and the other *via* Raha and the Kopili valley had to clear their own way through the Country. "In the meantime the Pani Phukan proceeded down the Kalang to Raha. As there was no road between this place and Demera, forty-one miles distant, the army had to cut its way through dense jungle. This was a most tedious operation, and the rate of progress did not greatly exceed a mile a day."[3]

From the above accounts one must not, however, form the impression that there were no land routes at all during the Ahom days in Nowgong district. The present National Highway connecting Dibrugarh, Sibsagar, Jorhat and Nowgong was constructed mostly during the reign of the Ahom Kings. It remains to this day the main artery of communication of Assam. Other roads from Raha of Nowgong district to Vikrampur of Cachar district and from Kaliabor in Nowgong to Gargaon of Sibsagar also existed during the Ahom period.[4]

The main conveyances used on land in olden times were, horses, elephants and palanquins. But these were generally used by kings and the nobility, and the common people had generally to walk on foot if they were to go from one place to another. That the use of carts drawn by horse, bullocks and buffaloes was in vogue, is supported by historical evidence. Under the officer-in-charge of elephants, known as "*Hati Barua*", the Ahom kings kept a huge number of elephants for war, hunting, journey and for carrying purposes. Similarly, thousands of different types of horses were maintained under an officer known as 'Ghora Barua'. Horses were used in wars, hunting, postal service, and for journey purposes. There was a relay system maintained by means of horses to carry important news and orders from one place to another. Historical records reveal that the Ahom kings possessed a large number of Turkish, Manipuri, Bhutanese and Chinese horses. An officer known as Dulia Barua was in charge of palanquins, used mostly by kings and nobles, which were carried by a class of people. Most of the small rivers were embridged with stone, planks, bridges or culverts. These were known as Pakidalong, Silsako, Pat Sako or Dalong.

3. Ibid., p. 178.
4. Sarbesar Rajguru, *Madhya Jugar Assamiya Samaj*.

When the British took over Assam, lack of communication was the most serious obstacle for the development of the Province. The Brahmaputra was the only highway which connected the Province with Bengal. But the journey in those days was not an easy task. The journey by a large boat according to M, Cosh took from six to seven weeks from Calcutta to Gauhati.

(b) Road Transport :

We have already alluded to the difficulties of communication at the time of the British occupation of Assam. When A. J. Mills visited Assam in 1853, carts and carriages were unknown, and the roads were few and bad. During the early part of the British administration, the construction and repair of roads other than great highways were undertaken occasionally. For want of repairs, the roads became nearly impassable in the rainy season. The Public Works Department was established in the year 1868· This Department could not function efficiently in the early years of its inception due to the paucity of fund and dearth of technical personnal. In 1882, the maintenance of most of the roads was entrusted to the Town Committees and Local Boards. In 1887, all communications of provincial interest were transferred to the Public Works Department. The area of operation of this department was further extended in 1898, when all the projects of repair or construction involving an expenditure of more than Rs. 500/- were entrusted to the Public Works Department. By 1904, the district had some well developed roads. The main road in the dsitrict was the Trunk Road which ran along with the south bank of the Brahmaputra from Dhubri to Saikhowa near eastern frontier of Dibrugarh district. It entered this district a little to the west of Nokhola crossing the Killing river by a ferry at Amalighat and passed through it upto Konwaritol touching many important places namely Jagiroad, Dharamtul, Raha, Phulaguri, Bebejia, Senchowa, Nowgong, Puranigudam, Samaguri, Salana and Missa. From Konwaritol it sharply turned to the east upto Bagari 4.8 kilometres west of the boundary of Nowgong. The Trunk Road thus ran right through the district from the south-west to the north-east covering a total distance of 160 kilometres. From Konwaritol a branch road of 6.8 kilometres went upto Silghat crossing the Kalong river by a ferry. Another road namely Jagiroad was extended from Jagi to Nowgong covering a distance of 59.2 kilometres and touched Aujuri and Barapujia. There were other roads (i) Laokhowa Road from Nowgong to Brahmaputra, (ii) Nowgong to Dhing, (iii) Nowgong to Juria, (iv) Amlaki-Kathiatali road which ran parallel to Trunk road from Kampur to a point beyond Salana upto the Diju valley. There were several branch roads which connected this road with Trunk Road between Nowgong and Kaliabor.

It was only after the constitution of the Road Board in 1926-27 in Assam that the construction of roads made a headway in the State. A separate Board

was constituted for the administration of the Tea Cess Fund, raised out of the additional Local Rate imposed on the tea lands for improvement of roads. In 1928, the Road Development Committee called for a change of the road policy of the Government with a view to take up bigger share of the road building activities. 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 the entire province of Assam. "The conference of the Chief Engineers held in 1943, at Nagpur worked out a plan known as 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 it could get half way through, for want of fund. Thus, till Independence, the development of road communication of the district was rather minimal, except in case of tea garden areas where good roads were constructed connecting important tea gardens with important railway stations and steamerghats. Thus by 1904, the district had a number of roads, the total mileage of which came to 547.20 kilometres or one liner kilometre for every eighteen kilometres of area. All of these roads were described as unmetalled but above flood level. Small rivers and streams were spanned by timber bridges but there were still 48 places where ferries were employed. Bullock and buffalo carts were said to be freely used and numbered 1,100 in 1904 . As the official view was, "it is doubtful whether more roads are required except in the north-west corner of the district"[5] the government did little to expand the net-work of road. Thus after four decades in 1948-49, we find that the total kilometreage of roads in the district was 1,594.11 kilometres only. Of this 645.63 kilometres were under the Public Works Department, Nowgong Division and 954.98 kilometres were under the Local Boards and Municipalities. The condition of roads may well be imagined when we consider that there were only 143.55 kilometres of metalled roads and 49.59 kilometres of gravelled roads. They together formed just about ten per cent of the total road kilometreage of the district. The rest of the roads were *kutcha* roads.

With the introduction of the Five-Year Plan emphasis was laid on the extension and improvement of roads in the district. At the end of the First Five-Year Plan the district had 947.20 kilometres of road under the Public Works Department of which 881.60 kilometres were all-weather roads and 65.6 kilometres fair-weather roads. Black topped roads under the Public Works Department totalled 195.20 kilometres and unsurfaced roads totalled 750 kilometres.

5. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Nowgong, Vol. VI*, Calcutta, 1905, p. 174.

Besides these, there were 1,116.80 kilometres (292.80 kms. all-weather, 76.40 kms. fair-weather and 57.60 kms. non-motorable) of roads under local bodies. Only 9.6 kilometres were black topped, 19.2 kilometres water-bound and 1,030.40 kilometres unsurfaced. Thus the total mileage of roads in the district came to 1,290 miles or 2,076 kilometres at the end of the First Five-Year Plan. This meant 3.74 kilometres of road for every thousand persons. It should be remembered that these figures are exclusive of road kilometreage covered by National Highways.

The following table shows the road kilometreage in the district of Nowgong for the year 1966-67 and 1971-72. [6]

Year	Black topped kms.	Metalled Kms.	Gravelled kms.	Earthen bound kms.	Total kms. (N.H. and State Road)	Total N.H.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1966-67	202.976	1.968	1,074.760	121.700	1,501.404	164.8
1970-71	303.41	..	1,324.32	253.24	1,780.97	164.8
1971-72	296.72	..	1,275.97	364.64	1,937.33	164.8

The Nagpur Plan of 1943 laid down the object of providing a well-balanced road system suitable to the need of the country and the target indicated in the plan was the achievement of an average of 41.60 kilometres of road per 258 sq. kms. of area in twenty years period. The total area of Nowgong district according to the 1971 census is 5,561 sq. kms. and it had 1,780.97 kilometres. of road including National Highways. This shows that the average road length of the district per one hundred sq. kms. is 32 kms. In relation to population the road length per one lakh persons is approximately 130.01 kms. in 1971.[7]

Recently the Nowgong-Namati-Lanka Road upto Dabaka and Dabaka-Parakhowa Road which cover 128 kilometres in total have been taken up for conversion into National Highway No. 36 within the district at an estimated cost of Rs. 3.90 crores. Soil and field survey of the project has already been completed by December 1974 at an estimated cost of Rs. 1,77,768,00.

The difficulties of construction and maintenance of roads in the district are enormous. The swirling currents of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries wash off many bridges and cause extensive damage to the roads. The roads are

6 Source—Chief Engineer, P.W.D. through Director ot Economics and Statistics, Assam.
7 *Statistical Abstract*, 1973—Department of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, Gauhati, 1973, p. 134.

to be constructed to a height of about five feet above the surrounding land to protect them from floods. National Highway No. 37 covers 164.88 kms. of the district. Many bridges along this highway have been raised and widened recently.

Local Board and Panchayat Roads : Till the implementation of the Assam Panchayat Act in 1959 only one Local Board was functioning in the district at the headquarters of Nowgong. Total mileage of roads under the Local Board in 1955-56 was 674.4 miles or 1085.1 kms. There were 7.0 kms. of water bound roads, 6.08 kms. of gravelled roads, 241.60 kms. of earth but motorable all-weather roads, 766.24 kms. earth fair-weather roads and 58.08 kms. of non-motorable roads in the district. Some of the Local Board roads were taken over by the Public Works Department and the rest were transferred to the Panchayats. During the three Five-Year Plans a substantial amount was earmarked for the development of rural communication. But the development of roads under Panchayats did not make much head-way.

The following table shows the achievement of different Blocks in respect of communication in 1969-70. [8]

Sl. No.	Name of the Blocks	New *kutcha* road constructed.	Existing *kutcha* road improved.	Culverts constructed	Culverts repaired
1	2	3	4	5	6
1.	Juria	..	..	..	..
2.	Laharighat	1	..	..	1
3.	Jugijan	..	..	..	..
4.	Lanka	..	..	..	..
5.	Rupahi	..	..	..	..
6.	Batadraba	2	7	..	..
7.	Bhurbandha	8	..		..
8.	Kopili	..	..	1	..
9.	Laokhowa	..	..	..	..
10.	Kaliabor	2	36	1	3
11.	Kathaiatoli	..	..	..	..
12.	Mayong	..	..	..	..

8. *Community Development Programme in Assam*, 1969-70. Department of Economics and Statistics, Govt. of Assam, Shillong, pp. 93-96.

Village Roads : According to the Census of 1961, there were 907 village roads in Nowgong district. Total length of these roads was 2,179.211 kilometres. Most of the village roads are simply field tracks with very irregular alignments and not suitable for vehicular traffic. In the riverine areas they are overtopped by floods. The Panchayats allot some funds for maintenance and development of these roads from time to time.

Roads Under the Municipalities and Town Committees : Municipalities and Town Committees in the district also have their own roads within their respective municipal areas. While Municipalities have their own trained staff, for construction and maintenance of roads, the Town Committees can hardly afford to keep engineers in their pay roll. Paucity of fund is also a great obstacle which, these bodies are to overcome before they undertake any extensive scheme of road development.

(ii) Vehicles and Conveyances : The wheeled cart is indispensable and is the most popular conveyance in the countryside. These are employed for transportation of merchandise from place to place and occasionally marriage parties travel by these carts. The carts are fitted with iron rimmed wheels, wooden spokes and axle and are capable of taking rough handling on unmetalled roads in the rural areas. Usually a pair of stout bullocks can draw a cart with a load of six or seven quintals but the buffaloes which are seldom yoked to these carts can carry much heavier loads on any road. In the agricultural economy of the district the traditional cart plays an important part. Even in the urban areas their importance has not much diminished. They are still the popular means of transportation within the town and over short distances from the towns. Another advantage of carts is that the same pair of bullocks or buffaloes are utilized for ploughing. Carts drawn by horses are also not uncommon in the district especially in the urban areas. Other beasts of burden in the district are elephants which are generally used for extracting timber from the forests.

Bicycles have practically brought revolution in the road transport of the district. It is now an important and widely used means of transport equally in urban and rural areas. Rickshaws in urban areas provide the cheapest means of transport. Gradually Auto Rickshaws are becoming popular as a cheaper means of transport in the urban areas. Taxis are also available in the urban areas but they can only be afforded by the well-to-do. The number of automobiles has also gradually increased with betterment of roads. The statement below shows the increase of different types of automobiles in the district during the period 1956-73.

Statement showing the number of motor vehicles on roads in Nowgong district. [9]

Year—	1956	1959	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973
Motor Cycle	14	28	80	77	95	123	243	243	290
Motor car (other than taxi cab)	220	292	465	505	441	519	532	N.A.	N.B.
Taxi (Cab)	2	2	—	—	10	22	40	34	45
Bus	140	165	192	195	349	315	368	397	401
Private Carrier	200	188	341	237	228	232	717	721	745
Public Carrier	135	167	321	340	376	400	505	505	526
Trailer	47	53	74	88	86	89	119	120	121
Tractor	28	35	21	39	45	51	133	147	151
Vehicles owned by Local bodies	5	8	7	7	7	10	10		
Govt. Vehicles	70	78	12	205	198	210	212	231	234
Auto Rickshaw	—	—	7	6	—		—	3	18
Total—	861	1,016	1,520	1,719	1, 835	1,971	2,879	2,401	2,531

(iii) Public Transport : Road transport was nationalized in Assam as early as in 1948 but it took time for its effects to be felt all over the State. Nowgong district played a leading role as it was on the 120 km. route between Gauhati and Nowgong that the first State Government bus plied on January 16, 1948. Such bus services gradually spread to other routes of the district. The State Transport organisation 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. Some of the important routes on which Corporation buses originating from Nowgong town now ply are shown below.

Sl. No.	Routes	Distance in Km.	No. of daily trips from Nowgong.
1.	Nowgong—Gauhati	123	6
2.	Nowgong—Jorhat	186	2
3.	Nowgong—Diphu	148	2
4.	Nowgong—Jagiroad	68	1
5.	Nowgong—Silghat	63	3
6.	Nowgong—Jakhalabandha	54	1
7.	Nowgong—Bokakhat	117	1
8.	Nowgong—Kampur	31	4
9.	Nowgong—Hojai	56	4
10.	Nowgong—Lanka	66	3
11.	Nowgong—Shillong	190	1

9(a) *Statistical Abstracts of Assam*, Department of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, Shillong, 1958, and 1960-61, p. 405 and p. 147.

9(b) *Transport Statistics of Assam*, 1973, Department of Transport & Tourism, Transport Survey and Planning cell, Dispur, December, 1974, pp. 28—33.

Moreover, all services operated by the Corporation including Super-Express and Express services between Gauhati and towns of Upper Assam like Jorhat, Sibsagar, Dibrugarh, and Tinsukia touch Nowgong town. Important bus-stops in Nowgong district which fall in the routes between Gauhati and towns of Upper Assam are Jagiroad, Raha, Nowgong and Jakhalabandha.

The following is the list of important bus services run by the Corporation which touch Nowgong town.

Sl. No.	Service	Distance in Km.	No. of daily trips.
1.	Gauhati—Tinsukia Super	491	2 (one Up and one Down)
2.	Gauhati—Tinsukia Ordinary.	491	-do-
3.	Gauhati—Dibrugarh Super Express.	443	-do-
4.	Gauhati—Sibsagar	364	-do-
5.	Gauhati—Jorhat	308	-do-
6.	Gauhati—Golaghat	288	-do-
7.	Gauhati—Hojai	179	-do-

The object of the Corporation is to provide an efficient, economic and comfortable service to the travelling public. Modern vehicles, with comfortable seats, without any congestion or over-loading, are provided by the State Transport. 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 served or inadequately 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. Names of some important private Bus Associations of Nowgong and the principal places served by them are given at Appendix 'A'. There are also some public carrier Companies like Air Carrying Corporation, Assam Travels, Assam Bengal Roadways (Private) Ltd., Air Transport Corporation and Assam Roadways which provide booking facilities for goods to and from Nowgong. They maintain a fleet of trucks for quick transportation of goods not only within the State but also outside it.

Administration of Public Buses :— There is one Regional Transport authority, Nowgong. This is a statutary Board with the Deputy Commissioner. Nowgong as its Chairman, the District Transport Officer who is the Secretary and some non-official members. The Board sits from time to time and disposes of applications for contract carriage, stage carriage, bazar bus, taxi and public carrier permits for a period of 3 (three) years. Renewal of permits is done for a period of five years.

The District Transport Officer and his staff including one Motor Vehicles Inspector, two Enforcement Inspectors and some Checkers are responsible for proper maintenance of the records of all the private 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 include registration of vehicle, maintenance of records of transfer of vehicles, issuing driving licences, enforcement, ensuring maintenance of the vehicles in proper condition, realisation and assessment of taxes under the Assam Motor Vehicles Taxation Act 1936, and enforcement of 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 Vehicles Taxes.

(C) Railroad :

The metre gauge line Railway system of Assam forms part of the Eastern Bengal Railway (now renamed as the North-east Frontier Railway). This line was extended from Calcutta to Dhubri in 1902 and then to Amingaon via Golakganj in 1909-10 after formation of Assam-Bengal Railway in 1892, with its headquarters at Calcutta. The Gauhati-Jamunamukh section of the Railway was opened in 1897 but the line was immediately closed because of the great earthquake of 1897. Subsequently the Assam-Bengal Railway was extended to Upper Assam connecting the province with the rest of India. It enters Nowgong district a little to the west of Nokhola near Jagiroad and passes through Jagiroad, Amguri, Dharamtul, Karaguri and Chaparmukh where it turns to the south-east and runs up the valley of the Kopili and finally leaves the district after the Lumding junction. In between Chaparmukh and Lumding junctions, Laopani, Kampur, Jamunamukh, Jugijan, Hojai, Dhalpukhuri, Lanka, Hawaipur, Lamsakhan (Mikir Hills) and Patharkhola (Mikir Hills) are its imtermediate stations. This line was constructed to facilitate transportation of products of Upper Assam, mainly tea, coal, timber and petroleum. A branch line in the district from Chaparmukh to Silghat via Senchowa was constructed in 1921 which ran 82.70 Kms. along the North-eastern portion of the district. As Silghat is connected by regular ferry services across the Brahmaputra with Bhomoraguri in Darrang district this new line has since been benefiting both Nowgong and Darrang districts. Raha, Phulaguri, Bebejia, Senchoa, Nowgong, Puranigudam,

Samaguri, Salana, Misa, Jakhalabandha are the Stations on the Chaparmukh-line. In 1930, another line within the district from Senchoa to Mairabari in the Silghat North west of Nowgong, was constructed to facilitate the jute and paddy growing area of the district. It runs 49.50 kms. and passes through Haibargaon, Rupahigaon, Tarabari, Juriagaon, Da-gaon, Balikatia, Batadrawa road, Dhing bazar and Dhing stations. The district as a whole except for its western region is well served by about 255 kms. of railway.

To facilitate efficient management of the Assam portion of railway lines, a new railway system known as the Assam Railway was established with its headquarters at Pandu in 1947. With the regrouping of railways, the Assam Railway was merged with the North-Eastern Railway Zone with headquarters at Gorakhpur in April, 1952. Again in January, 1958, the management of the railway lines east of Katihar was separated from the North-Eastern Zone, and vested in the newly formed North-East Frontier Railway Zone with its head-quarters at Pandu and then at Maligaon with expectation to take early action for expansion and improvement of the Railway services within and into Assam. From that time the railway lines in Assam are under the management of the North-east Frontier Railway. The divisional scheme of the organisation was introduced in 1969, dividing the zone into 4 divisions with one of its headquarters at Lumding of Nowgong district.

(d) Waterways, Ferries and Bridges :

(i) Course of waterways : As has been mentioned elsewhere the Brahmaputra which flows through the State served as a great highway of trade and commerce in the past when roads and railways were not well developed. M'-Cosh, writing in 1837, stated that "a large boat took from six to seven weeks to come from Calcutta to Gauhati though the post, which was conveyed in small canoes, rowed by two men, who were relieved every fifteen or twenty miles, reached Gauhati in ten days and Bishnath in three days more."[10] The journey 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 River Steam Navigation Company with whom they were associated. The daily Mail Steamer Service was started in 1884 on the

10. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazztteers*, Vol. VI, Nowgong, Calcutta, 1005, p. 166.

Brahmaputra between Dhubri and Dibrugarh as an extension of steamer service between Dhubri and Jatrapur. Till the partition of the country the Brahmaputra continued to be the principal means of communication with the outer world and the great highway of commerce. Steamer plied daily between Kokilamukh and Amingaon touching at Silghat, Laharighat and Dhing-ghat in the Nowgong district. Joint Steamer Companies used to run commercial river service between Calcutta and Assam. The river services had their heydays before the 'Assam Link' in 1950. They continued, however, to carry 80 per cent of the jute and considerable quantities of petroleum produces from Assam to Calcutta till they met three major setbacks. Firstly, the earthquake of 1950 caused considerable changes in the course of the Brahmaputra resulting in the deterioration of the navigable channel, particularly in the upper reaches leading to the 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 the 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 border 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 Borak ..	Rs. 9.37
(iii)	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 and they still serve the purpose of trade and commerce to some extent in absence of steamer services. In 1971-72,

there were about 1,096 private boats and 65 commercial boats in Nowgong district.[11]

Assam set up a Directorate of Inland Water Transport under the Transport Department in 1959, in pursuance of the recommendation of the Gokahle Committee (1959) to look after the development of waterway ferries and for training the Inland Water Transport personnel. The present Directorate is still in its infancy and steps are being taken to strengthen it. It 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 more ferries are under contemplation of being taken over by Inland Water Transport Directorate.

Apart from the Brahmaputra, the other rivers of the district are also used in varying degrees for purposes of trade and commerce. The development of roads has somewhat lessened the importance of river traffic but it is still discernible on the Kalong, Kopili, Jamuna and the Barpani rivers. The Kalong is navigable during the rainy season by country boats from Missa down stream to Kajalichaki. Kopili is navigable throughout the year for about 102 kms. from Kharikhana up to its confluence with the Kalong by country boats which touch Jamunamukh, Kampur, Chaparmukh, Ahatguri and Dharamtul. During the rainy season such boats can even ply as far upstream as Jagigaon. The Kopili affords an outlet to mustard grown in the plains, and to cotton, lac, cocoons and timber from the hills. The Jamuna is navigable during the rainy season by country boats and by dug-outs throughout the year from Howraghat of Mikir-hills to Jamunamukh—a distance of 96 Kms. It touches Howraghat, Dabaka and Jamunamukh. The river Barpani is also used for trade and commerce upto Amtring in Mikir Hills. The river Killing is also navigable for a short distance of about 26 Kms. during the rainy season by country boats and by dug-outs throughout the year from Amlighat to Naldhara.

(ii) Ferries : Formerly the River Steam Navigation Company plied steamers from Silghat to Tezpur via Panpur. Since the closure of the Company the Directorate of Inland Water Transport has taken over ferry services. It now operates ferries on Silghat--Tezpur (Bhomoraguri) and Silghat-Panpur routes across the Brahmaputra. In 1972-73, goods carried by these two services amounted to 6,360 tonnes and 120 tonnes respectively. The service is managed by the River Steam Navigation Company. Silghat lies about 54 Kms. (via Konwaritol) to the north-east of Nowgong. State Transport buses ply regularly between Silghat and Nowgong carrying passengers and goods. Formation of *Chars* by the Brahmaputra necessitates shifting of the ferry ghat at Silghat by about 10 Kms. downstream to Bhurbandha every winter.

11. Source : Transport Department, Govt. of Assam.

Road bridges : According to the Census of 1961, there were 56 bridges on various roads of the district. Construction of these bridges obviated the need for ferry-crossings across many rivers. Many Reinforced Cement Concrete (R.C.C.) bridges have been constructed in the district since then mainly on National Highway No. 37. All such bridges are sufficiently raised above their surroundings so as to be effective even during heavy floods when the adjoining areas are submerged. The construction of a road-cum railway bridge across the Brahmaputra at Silghat to facilitate communication with the north bank of the Brahmaputra including Arunachal Pradesh is a cherished hope of the people of Nowgong.

Air Transport : Except for a small air-strip at Missa at a distance of about 28 kms. from Nowgong town there is no air-field within the district. The Missa air-strip was constructed during the Second World War and was operated by the Assam Travels (Private) Ltd., before being taken over by the Ministry of Defence. People travelling by air have to depend on the Indian Airlines services from Borjhar Airport of Gauhati 140 kms. away from Nowgong town.

(e) Travel and Tourist Facilities :

There is one Circuit House and one Dak-bungalow by the Kalang river at Nowgong town. These are under the control of the Deputy Commissioner, Nowgong but are maintained by the Public Works Department. There are also some hotels and restaurants in Nowgong and other towns of the district but hotels with modern amenities are few. There are a number of Inspection Bungalows in moffusil areas of the district maintained by the Public Works Department, Embankment & Drainage Department and the Forest Department. Most of these Inspection Bungalows have two or three furnished rooms, and are provided with crockery and cooking utensils There is a Chowkider in each Inspection Bungalow who caters to the needs of visitors. The following is the list of Inspection Bungalows/Rest Houses in Nowgong district.

List of Inspection Bungalows in Nowgong district.

Sl. No.	Name of Inspection Bungalow	Distance from Nowgong town (in Kms.)
1.	Amsoi	N.A.
2.	Bardowa (Batadrawa)	14.4
3.	Chaparmukh	25.6
4.	Chapanala	30.4
5.	Dabaka	38.4
6.	Dhing	25.6

Sl. No.	Name of Inspection Bungalow	Distance from Nowgong town (in Kms.)
7.	Hojai (two I.Bs. one under Forest Deptt. and one under P.W.D.)	52.8
8.	Jagiroad	65.6
9.	Jamunamukh	32.0
10.	Jakhalabandha	51.2
11.	Juria	14.4
12.	Kampur	30.4
13.	Kuthari	80.0
14.	Konwaritol	44.8
15.	Lanka	64.0
16.	Laharighat	51.2
17.	Lamsakhang	100.4
18.	Lumding (two I.Bs. one under Forest Deptt. and one under Railways)	120.0
19.	Mairabari	32,0
20.	Mayang	65.6
21.	Missa	35.2
22.	Puranigudam	14.4
23.	Raha	22.4
24.	Rupahi	12.0
25.	Salana	35.2
26.	Samaguri	32.4
27.	Senchoa	6.4
28.	Silghat	54.4
29.	Sitajakhala	56.0
30.	Singimari	N.A.
31.	Simanabasti	N.A.

(f) Post and Telegraph facilities :

It appears that in 1875, there were only six post offices in Nowgong district. Subsequently in 1904 these increased to 11. During the next decade ending 1913 the number of post offices increased only to 19 of which 8 were combined Post and Telegraph Offices. Expansion of postal facilities continued to be slow and interior places were practically devoid of postal services till Independence. It is only with the planning era that much emphasis was laid on extension of postal facilities even to the remotest areas of the district. The number of post offices of different categories in the district in 1958 increased to 154. Out of these there were one Head Post Office, 22 Sub-Post Offices and 131 Branch Offices. Pro-

gress continued to be made and in 1964, their number increased to 214. Almost all the Sub-Post Offices were provided with telegraph facilities,and Savings Bank Accounts were available in all Post Offices.

There are 12 (twelve) telephone exchanges in the district at Jagiroad, Jamunamukh, Kampur, Konwaritol, Lanka, Lumding, Missa, Nowgong, Raha, Hojai, Dhing and Salana. Except for Nowgong and Hojai which are of Central Battery Multiple and Central Battery Non-multiple types, the other telephone exchanges of the district are of the Small Automatic Exchange type. There are 34 Public Call Offices in the district under the above telephone exchanges to facilitate use of telephone services by people who are not regular subscribers. Such public Call Offices are provided in Jagiroad, Jamunamukh, Kampur, Kathiatali, Lanka, Lumding, Puranigudam, Rupahi, Samaguri, Ambagan, Bhakatgaon, Chaparmukh, Dabaka, Dharamtul, Jaluguti, Juria, Morigaon, Murajhar, Raha, Nilbagan, Dhing, Mairabari, Konwaritol, Jakhalabandha, Silghat, Salana, and Missa. Moreover there are four Public Call Offices at Nowgong and three at Hojai. From the above it is clear that Public Call facilities are available to people of an extensive area of the district. There are also proposals for establishment of telephone exchanges at Marigaon and Silghat. The following table shows the number of telephone exchanges in Nowgong district in 1974 along with their capacity and other relevant data. [10]

Name and Location of Telephone Exchange	Type of exchange.	Present capacity of the Exchange	Total no. of telephone connections provided from the exchange.
1	2	3	4
1. Nowgong	CBM	720	634
2. Dhing	50 SAX	50	D 30
3. Hojai	200 CBNM	200	M 102
4. Jamunamukh	25 SAX	25	J 19
5. Jagiroad	25 SAX	25	J. 17
6. Kampur	35 SAX	35	K. 21
7. Konwaritol	50 SAX	50	K. 23
8. Lanka	50 SAX	50	L. 31
9. Lumding	50 SAX	50	L. 39
10. Raha	100 SAX	100	R. 56
11. Salana	25 SAX	25	S. 24
12. Missa-PBX	50 SAX	50	M. 26

10. Data collected from Sub-Divisional Officer, Telephones, Nowgong.

APPENDIX A

SOME BUS ASSOCIATIONS OF NOWGONG AND NAMES OF IMPORTANT PLACES SERVED.

Name of Bus Association :	Important places served
1. South-East Bus Association, Nowgong.	Nowgong, Kampur, Baithalangso, Chaparmukh, Jamunamukh, Sarupathar, Hojai, Howraghat, Chitalmari, Nonoi, Uriagaon, Jalangaon, Hanshapani, Kathiatali, Barhampur, Amoni, Udmari, Singia, Dabaka.
2. Union Motor Service, Nowgong. ..	Lanka, Hojai, Howraghat, Kaki. etc.
3. North-East Bus Association, Nowgong	
4. Nowgong-Dhing-Bhuragaon Transport Association, Nowgong. ..	
5. North-East Transport Syndicate Nowgong. ..	
6. Nowgong Contractory Syndicate, Nowgong (Bazar Bus) ..	Kampur *hat*, Howraghat *hat*

LIST OF POST OFFICES IN NOWGONG (ASSAM)

1. **NOWGONG H. O.**
2. Aibheti
3. Amolapatty ..
4. Bihalangani ..
5. Chotahaibargaon
6. Dekarghat ..
7. Dimaruguri ..
8. Hatizuzua ..
9. Herapati ..
10. Huz-Rangagora ..
11. Kachomariboragaon
12. Mazpathari ..
13. Marikalong ..
14. Natun Bazar ..
15. Palashani ..
16. Senchoa ..
17. Tinsukia Juria ..
18. Uriyagaon ..
19. **AMBAGAN** ..
20. Hatlawkhowa ..
21. Kathpara Bazar
22. Lailuri ..
23. Kachupukhuri ..
24. **BEBEJIA** ..
25. Barchila ..
26. Chakalaghat ..
27. Gosaibari ..
28. Hatichung ..
29. Jajori ..
30. Gahibhatikuri ..
31. **BARHAMPUR** ..
32. Kandali ..

33. **BHURAGAON** ..
34. Azarguri ..
35. Baralimari ..
36. Falamaripathar ..
37. Gagalmari ..
38. Geruabari ..
39. Holowkhanda ..
40. Lengribari ..
41. **CHAPANALLA** ..
42. Kathalguri ..
43. **CHAPARMUKH**
44. Amsoibazar ..
45. Bamunijan ..
46. Gaspara ..
47. Laopani ..
48. Pubguimari ..
49. Salmara ..
50. **DABAKA** ..
51. Hindublock ..
52. Jangalblock ..
53. Karaiguri ..
54. **DHARAMTUL** ..
55. Ahatguri ..
56. Bangaldhara ..
57. **DHING** ..
58. Batadraba (Bardowa)
59. Bechamari ..
60. Chamuagaon ..
61. Dhingbazar ..
62. Dhuniabheti ..
63. Kandulimari ..
64. Tuktuki ..
65. **HAIBARGAON**
66. **HERLONGPHER**
67. **HOJAI** ..
68. Amtola ..
69. Golaghatiabasti ..
70. Hojai R. S. ..
71. Jogijanbazar ..
72. Kumurakata ..
73. Nandapurcharali ..
74. Padumpukhuri ..
75. Telibasti ..
76. **JAGIBHAKATGAON**
77. Barpak ..
78. Kuranibari ..
79. Mayeng Kamarpur
80. Monohakacharigaon
81. Rajamayeng
82. **JAGIROAD** ..
83. Killingvalley ..
84. **JAKHALABANDHA**
85. Amguri ..
86. Bagari ..
87. Burapahar ..
88. Hatbar ..
89. Kuthari ..
90. Konwaritol ..
91. Pubthuria ..
92. Seconee Barhola ..
93. **JALUGUTI** ..
94. Bhurbandha ..
95. Nizdandua ..
96. Samparigaon ..
97. **JAMUNAMUKH**
98. Barapatia ..
99. **JURIA** ..
100. Alifanguri ..
101. Balisatra ..
102. Balikatia ..
103. Gehua Chal Chali
104. Dagaon ..
105. Gorajanbazar ..
106. Jongani ..
107. Kaliadinga ..
108. Keshari ..
109. Mitha Pukhuri-par.
110. Sutirpar ..
111. **KAMPUR** ..
112. Dhakhinsan suki
113. Barpani ..
114. Kachua ..

115. Niznarikali ..
116. Patiapam ..
117. Simaluguri ..
118. Singarimadrassa
119. Tetelisara ..
120. **KATHIATALI** ..
121. Jumu.mur ..
122. Rengbeng ..
123. **LAHARIGHAT**
124. Barangani ..
125. Dhum Kura Bazar
126. Katanigaon ..
127. Tengaguri ..
128. **LANKA** ..
129. Derapathar ..
130. Kherani ..
131. Azarbari Krishnagar
132. Bhalukmari ..
133. Kaki ..
134. Khari Khona ..
135. Lash Kar Pathar
136. Lankeswarigrant.
137. Sankarpur ..
138. **TINALIBAZAR**
139. Udalani bazar
140. **LUMDING** ..
141. Lumdingbazar ..
142. **MARIGAON** ..
143. Bagara ..
144. Kamaraguri ..
145. Sarubari ..
146. Udmari ..
147. **MISSA** ..
148. Barbhagia ..
149. Bengenati ..
150. **MAIRABARI** ..
151. Dalaigaon ..
152. Datialbari ..
153. Sahariagaon ..
154. Satariagaon ..
155. **MURAZARBAZAR**
156. Charing ..
157. Choudhuri bazar
158. Dighaljhar ..
159. Karaiyani ..
160. Maudanga ..
161. Samarili ..
162. **NILBAGAN** ..
163. Ambari ..
164. Joynagarmadrassa
165. Kopashbari ..
166. **NANOI** ..
167. Kandali ..
168. Operauzargaon ..
169. Pathari ..
170. Ranthali ..
171. Tulsimukh ..
172. **NOWGONG BAZAR**
173. **PURANIGUDAM**
174. Barangatali ..
175. Barpani gaon ..
176. Chal Chali ..
177. Halowa gaon ..
178. Kolongpar Halowagaon
179. **RAHA** ..
180. Alikuchi ..
181. Bagariguri ..
182. Baligaon ..
183. Barapujia ..
184. Charaibahi ..
185. Deorigaon ..
186. Dighaldari ..
187. Fulaguri ..
188. Habibarangabari
189. Kapahara ..
190. Malankata ..
191. Mikirbheta ..
192. Nagabandha ..
193. **RUPAHI** ..
194. Lailuri ..
195. Rowmari ..
196. Saidaria ..

197. Singimari ..
198. Solmari ..
199. Tarabari ..
200. **SALANA** ..
201. **SAMAGURI** ..
202. Chakitop ..
203. Geruatibazar ..
204. Kaoimari ..
205. Padumani ..
206. Rangagora (Nowgong)
207. Sibsthan ..
208. Singa ..
209. Udmari ..
210. **SILGHAT** ..
201. Barghuli ..
212. Bhomaraguri ..
213. Kurhimari ..
214. Tinali Panigaon...

CHAPTER VIII

MISCELLANEOUS OCCUPATIONS

An account of the principal sectors of the economy of the district in which the majority of the working population is engaged has been given in other chapters. The economic activity of the district is not confined only to those categories of workers, but also include a large section of the people engaged in various occupations such as public administration, professions like law, medicine, education, religion and fine arts, domestic service, and certain other occupations commending to the social milieu in the urban areas. The last categories of workers include barbers, tailors, laundrymen, milk-men, hoteliers, rickshaw-pullers, hawkers etc. With the growing affluence in the urban sector the demand for as well as the number of people engaged in above mentioned professions and services is steadily increasing.

Public Administration : According to the 1961 census, the total number of persons employed in the public services was 4,554 including 258 females. This account, however, excludes those employees employed under the Government, Quasi-Government bodies and local bodies whose sphere of activities fall outside the administration. Thus those persons who are serving in such fields as transport, communication, information and broadcasting, education and scientific services, health, industries, production, construction, marketing and financial institutions have not been censused under public service. The following table indicates the distribution of persons of the district in various categories of public service (administration) according to the census Report of 1961.[1]

Sl. No.	Category of service	Persons employed		
		Male	Female	Total
1.	Police service	762	X	762
2.	Central Government Service	586	20	606
3.	State Government Service	2,530	17	2,547
4.	Quasi-Government organisation Municipalities, Local bodies including Mahkuma Parishads and Panchayats etc. ..	418	221	639
	Total	4,296	258	4,554

1. *Census of India*, 1961, *Assam, District Census Handbook Nowgong*, 1965, Gauhati, p. 169

The census of Assam Government employees, 1967, shows that on March, 31, 1967, the total number of employees of the Government of Assam in the district was 5,429 which constituted slightly less than 0.45 per cent of the total population of the whole district.

So far as public administration which embraces both the State and Central Government Services is concerned only a small section occupies the higher-salary posts. They are mostly district, divisional or zonal heads, Judges, higher Military Officers and Head of Departments in institutions both technical or non-technical. The following table will show the comparative positions of employees in 1967 the basic-pay wise group.[2]

Pay group (monthly)	Gazetted	Non-gazetted excluding IVth grade.	IVth grade	Total
1. Pay range from Rs. 80/- to 150/-.		..	2617	2617
2. Pay range from Rs. 100/- to Rs. 750/-		2640	..	2640
3. Pay range from Rs. 200/- to Rs. 3000/- and above. ..	172	..	..	172
	172	2640	2617	5429

Government Services are preferred to private employments unless there is better promise in private sectors. The employees in the first 2 groups i.e., 4th grade and non-gazetteds are generally natives of the district--next the gazetteds are mostly from outside, they are being recruited through Assam Public Service Commission or the Union Public Service Commission.

There was a marked difference between the figure of Government employees revealed by the 1961 census and the Assam Government Employees Census of 1967. This difference can be attributed to two main factors namely in the census of 1961 some employees employed under certain categories have been omitted and during the interval more branches as well as offices of Government have been opened. Out of the total employees of 5,429, the number of female Government employees was only 84. There was one Government employee per 223 persons of the district.[3] In 1967, there were 556 Scheduled Tribes (both Hills and Plains) employees and 513 Scheduled Caste employees and

2. *Census of Assam Government Employees*, 1967, pp. 16, 18-19.
3. Ibid, pp. 15 and 17.

1,415 "other Backward Classes" employees in the Nowgong district.[4] The following table will show the total number of administrators and executive officials of the Government in the district.[5]

Groups	Male	Female	Total	Urban	
				Male	Female
Administrators and executive officials Government—Total. ..	78	2	80	36	1
Administrators and executive officials in Central Government. ..	32	..	32	26	..
Administrators and executive officials in State Government ..	33	1	34	10	1
Administrators and executive officials in Local bodies. ..	11	..	11	..	..

Special amenities to the Government employees : Some of the benefits available to the employees of the State Government are : (1) General Provident Fund Benefit, (Special Deposit Fund benefits for those having no P.F. Account), (2) Pensions and Gratuities after retirement, (3) Joint Family pensions, Liberalised Family pension, Commuted pension, (4) Free Medical Treatment for the employee and his family and children, (5) Earned leave for three months with full average pay and for one month with half average pay at a time, (6) Medical leave with full average pay and also maternity leave for females (7) Sickness benefit for treatment of some serious diseases, (8) 15 days casual leave plus 2 days special Casual leave within a Calendar year, (9) 120 days i.e. 4 months preparatory leave for retirement with full average pay at the time of retirement, (10) Provision for a public servant in permanent and temporary employment for going on lien to some other service, (11) Provision for travelling allowance for Government employees going home on either casual or earned 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 rent-free quarters and House rent in some Departments, (15) Provision for free education to children of the Central Government employees. The working hours in the State Government offices, except in the winter season

4. *Representation of Scheduled Caste/Tribe in State Government Servics* (1967) pp. 5, 9 and 14.

5. *Census of India* 1961, Assam, District Census Handbook Nowgong, 1965, Gauhati, p. 175.

is for 6½ hours on weekdays and a holiday on the 2nd Saturday of every month. The offices of the State Government remain closed usually for thirty-one days a year.

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 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 organisation in Nowgong district. These organisations endeavour to fulfil their grievances in 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, and
3. All-Assam Ministrial Associations Strikes in 1965, 1966 and 1973.

The following are some of the Associations of the Government Employees :

1. All-Assam Ministrial Officers' Association (in State Government Service).
2. All-Assam 4th Grade Employees'Association (in State Govt. Service).
3. All-Assam Transport Workers' Union.
4. All-Assam Mandal Kanango Sanmilan.
5. All-Assam Sericultural-Officers' Association.
6. All-Assam Mahurir Association.
7. All-Assam Workers' Union, P.W.D. (Nowgong Branch).
8. A.F.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 (Nowgong Branch).
14. All-Assam Co-Operative Officers' Association.

The activities of gazetted officers' Association are restricted by the Public Service Conduct Rules.

Learned Professions :— Before Independence, the percentage of persons engaged in learned professions such as teaching, medicine and surgery, engineering, legal practice, journalism and different practices of fine arts was very negligible. With the expansion of the educational facilities, and the rise in the field 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 professional, technical and related works was 5,839 out of which 806 were females in the district. Such persons were 1,405 in urban areas including 134 females. They constituted slightly less than 0.5 per cent of the total population. A statement of persons engaged in Medical professions in the district is given below :—

(As in 1971)

Category of persons	Total number
1. Government doctors	83
2. Government nurses, midwives etc.	103

The above figures have been shown in respect of Government doctors and nurses etc. There are many private medical practitioners in the district. The following table is given to show the number of persons (both Government and private) engaged in medical and health services as per census report of 1961.[6]

Categories	Male	Female	Total
1. Physicians, surgeons and dentists ..	434	5	439
(a) Physicians & surgeons, allopathic ..	90	3	93
(b) Physicians, ayurvedic ..	94	..	94
(c) Physicians, others ..	132	..	132
2. Nurses, pharmacists and other medical and health technicians.			
(a) Nurses ..	356	85	441
(b) Midwives and health visitors ..	6	55	61
3. Pharmacists and pharmaceutical technicians. ..	80	25	105
4. Medical and health technicians N.E.C. (Excluding laboratory assistants). ..	150	1	151
	98	..	98

It has been shown above that in the year 1971, there were 83 Government doctors, 103 nurses, midwives etc. Besides these there are a number of doctors and nurses serving in the tea garden dispensaries of the district. The number of doctors, surgeons and dentists was 349 as shown in the above table and out of them 215 including 5 females were in the urban areas, the rest were in the rural

6. *Census of India* 1955, *Assam District Census Handbook, Nowgong*, 1965, Gauhati, pp. 173-74.

areas. Homeopathic and also Ayurvedic method of treatment have been gradually becoming popular all over the district. A department of Ayurvedic method of treatment has already been opened in the Nowgong Civil Hospital. So the number of Homeopaths and Ayurvedic doctors is increasing day by day. The male persons predominate uptil now in the medical field excluding the fields of nursing and midwifery.

Legal Practice : Prior to the establishment of the Gauhati University in 1948 the students of Assam had to study law in Calcutta or in other Universities outside Assam. Now the two Universities of Assam are turning out Law graduates every year. But only a certain percentage of them take up this profession. In 1971,there were 119 Lawyers against 74 lawyers as per census report of 1961, in Nowgong Court.

Teachers : With the opening of primary, middle and high schools every year since Independence, the number of teachers is also increasing annually. A chart is appended below to show the total number of teachers serving in different educational institutions as stood in the years 1961 and 1971.[7]

Year	Categories of educational institutions	Total teachers.			In urban areas		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1961	a. In Middle and Primary education.	2,069	411	2,480	110	31	141
	b. Secondary education	853	54	907	226	27	253
	c. Teachers N.E.C.	295	114	409	65	22	87
1971	a. Primary	2,730	496	3,226	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
	b. Middle	1,565	201	1,766	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
	c. Higher Secondary and High English Schools	1,522	122	1,642	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.

The largest number of women teachers serve only in the Primary and Middle schools. In Secondary education such teachers are small in number. In 1961, there were 592 women teachers out of whom 82 were serving in the urban areas, the rest were engaged in the schools of the rural areas. In 1971, the number of teachers increased to 6,634 from 3,853 in 1961. Of the total teachers

7. Ibid., p. 174.

in 1971, 5,817 were men of whom 2,730 were in Primary Schools, 1565 in Middle Schools and 1,522 in Higher Secondary and High English Schools. Of the 819 women teachers in 1971, 496 served in Primary Schools, 201 in Middle Schools and 122 in Higher Secondary and High English Schools.

Engineers : According to the census of 1961 there were altogether 126 engineers, architects and surveyors in Nowgong district. There were 26 chemists, physicists, geologists and other physical scientists. The number of biologists, veterinarians, agronomists and related scientists was 57. There were no female worker engaged under these three groups. All the chemists, physicists, geologists etc., worked in urban areas. Out of 71 surveyors, 31 worked in rural areas and 36 architects and engineers and surveyors were engaged in rural areas.

As for other branches of learned professions, there is no full-time journalist, writer or dancer in the district. These occupations are taken up only as part-time labour. The number of social scientists and related workers was 234 in 1961, which included 15 female workers also ; 32 male persons of this group worked in urban and the rest in rural areas. There were 22 photographers and related camera operators in the district. In 1961, 265 persons were engaged in sport and recreation service etc.

Jurists, Artists, Writers, Journalists, Religious workers etc : In 1961, there were 150 male persons working as jurists and legal technicians etc., N. E.C * including petition writers. Out of these 70 were in urban areas and the rest were serving in rural areas. The district had 78 artists, writers and related workers. There was no female worker under the group. There is however a good number of female workers amongst the non-ordained religious workers. The table below shows the comparative number of male and female workers engaged in some of these learned professions.[8]

Professions	persons	male	female	Urban male	Urban female
1. Jurists	245	245	..	151	..
2. Legal practitioners and advisers	74	74	..	71	..
3. Jurists and legal technicians etc., N.E.C. (including petition writers)	150	150	..	70	..
4. Artists, writers and related workers.	78	78	..	76	..
5. Ordained religious workers.	116	114	2	66	1
6. Non-ordained religious workers.	108	2	106	2	5

* N. E. C.—Not elsewhere classified.

8. *Census of India* 1961, District Census Handbook Nowgong, Assam, p. 174-175.

Domestic and Institutional Servants : In 1961, the number of persons engaged in household and institutional services like house-keepers, cooks, maids, bearers, matrons, stewards butlers, waiters etc., was 3,407 out of whom 579 were females. Of 243 house-keepers, matrons and stewards (domestic and institutional) there were 155 males and 88 females of whom only 6 males and 27 females were in urban areas. Again cooks, cook-bearers (domestic and institutional) numbered 1,774 of whom 1,610 were male and 164 females. There were 1,265 butlers, bearers, writers, maids and other servants (domestic) of whom 970 were males and 295 were females. Out of them 659 males and 153 females only were employed in urban areas. House-keepers, cook, maids and related workers not elsewhere classified numbered 94 of whom 93 were males. The service conditions of workers categorised under domestic servants, waiters etc. are not apparently good and their monthly wages hardly exceed Rs. 50-70, although their bare necessities of food, lodging including clothing are provided free by their employers.

Barbers : Barbers, as a professional group are found both in towns and rural areas of the district. Formerly barbers used to visit the houses of their customers both in the towns and rural areas, and they were paid both in kind and cash. It is stated that in some cases they accepted clothes and paddy when they worked in the villages. But such cases are now no longer common and barber's shops have now been established mostly in urban areas of the district. The barbers are paid in cash, of course, some of them still visit the houses of aristocratic families, even if they have their own saloons. It has been noticed that in most of the urban areas shops, specially in the bigger shops, the owners employ paid workers and the work is done by the employees under the control of the owner. In the urban areas like Nowgong, Hojai and Lumding the charge for hair cut is Re. 1/- and for a shave it varies from thirty to fifty paise. But in the rural areas the charge for a hair-cut varies from 75 paise to one rupee and a shave costs twenty-five paise. The total number of barbers, beauticians, hair-dressers and other related workers was 766 according to Census Report of 1961, of whom 216 persons were carrying their profession in urban areas. No female person had till then taken up this job.

Washermen : The washermen also constitute an important section among those who are engaged in miscellaneous occupations but most of the washermen are commonly found only in the urban areas of the district, and the number of washermen in the rural areas is very small.

Washing of clothes is usually done on the bank of the rivers, streams and ponds and ironing is done either in the family houses or in the laundries. Now-a-days, the laundries have also been increasing both in rural and urban areas. But the most important thing to note in this connection is that almost all the washermen do the work with the help of the members of their families. The rate of charge for washing of cloth varies from 19 p. to 25 p. per piece. But in case of urgent washing, the charge is higher. According to the 1961 census the total number of persons under the occupational group of "Laundrymen, Washermen and Dhobies" was 363 including 36 females. Out of them 143 including 23 females were working in urban areas of the district. Now-a-days in the urban areas of the district some dry cleaners shops have been set up. They undertake dry cleaning of woollen garments, washing of costly silk and other clothes besides dyeing. In 1961, there were 27 persons engaged in this profession.

Tailors : Tailoring serves as the main occupation of many people in the district. Most of the reputed tailoring shops are located only in the important towns of the district. With the rise of standard of living there has been an increase in the variety of sartorial makes and designs and consequently the number of tailoring shops have also gone up. Owners of the tailoring shops employ workers on the basis of monthly salary to assist them. The difference in the tailoring charges prevailing in urban and rural areas in the district is keenly felt. Stitching charge is much higher in town than in villages. In 1964-65, the stitching charge of cotton trousers by village tailor was Rs. 6/- and warm trousers Rs. 10/- while the charge of warm coat by town tailor was Rs. 40/-. There is however, no uniformity of rates charged by different tailors at different towns. Another important aspect of tailoring in the district is that a large section of the tailors sell their ready-made clothes in the garden 'hats' and other rural 'hats' of the district.

In 1961, the total workers under the group tailors, cutters, furries and related workers were 1,289 including 87 females. Of these, 260 including 11 females were working in the urban areas. Besides, there were 1,165 persons including 79 females who take tailoring dress and garment making as professions. Out of these 258 icluding 9 females worked in urban and the rest including 70 females worked in rural areas. In comparision to other towns of India, tailoring charges is however much higher in Assam, though in rural areas it is lower than in urban areas. In Nowgong it is now 4/5 times above the rate prevailed in 1964. This is due to the inhabitation of modern and the latest style in cutting and design.

Cobblers : Cobblers also perform useful service to the society and according to the census of 1961, there were 75 shoe-makers and shoe repairers in Nowgong district. Some better-off cobblers have established their own samll shops where they manufacture foot-wears while others sit on the road sides in the towns and earn their livelihood by polishing and mending foot-wears.

Rickshaw pullers : Rickshaw pullers also form an important occupational group mostly in the urban areas of the district. Now-a-days along with the increase of various industrial and commercial activities, the number of rickshaw pullers are also increasing day by day and the rate charged by the rickshaw pullers generally varies from town to town. Rickshaw pullers are registered within the municipalities and town committees concerned.

Their general economic condition : Except for a limited few, the general economic condition of the above miscellaneous occupational groups is not at all satisfactory. For instance, the Harijans who are engaged as washermen, *Cobblers*, barbers etc., have no regular or permanent source of income. Some of the Harijans have no permanent employment. They earn their livelihood from their part-time jobs under some contractors or other employers extending to 15/20 days of a month. Consequently, they can hardly manage to meet even the bare necessities for the month. Most of the people of this community have also no permanent dwelling house. Similar conditions hold good in case of washermen, and other people of the miscellaneous groups.

The statements appended in next peges will give an idea about the position of people engaged in different miscellaneous occupation of the district in 1961. Number has increased considerably by now.

Table Showing the number of Population under Miscellaneous occupations as in 1961 Census ; Nowgong District.

Divisions and Groups	Occupational Distribution					
1.No.	In all areas of the district			In urban areas of the dist.		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1 2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. **Professional, Technical / Related Workers.**	5,033	806	5,839	1,271	134	1,405
(a) Architects, Engineers and Surveyors.	126	—	126	90	—	90
(b) Chemists, Physicist, Geologists and other Scientists	26	—	26	26	—	26
(c) Biologists, Veterinarians, Agronomists and Related Scientists.	57	—	57	26	—	26
(d) Physicians, Surgeons and Dentists	434	5	439	210	5	215
(e) Nurses, Pharmacists and other Medical Health Technicians	356	85	441	121	40	161
(f) Teachers	3,261	592	3,853	441	82	523
(g) Jurists	245	—	245	151	—	151
(h) Social Scientists and Related workers	219	15	234	32	—	32
(i) Artists, writers and Related workers	78	—	78	76	—	76
(j) Draughtsmen, Science and Engineering Technicians N. E. C.	16	1	17	15	1	16
(k) Other Professional, Technical and Related workers	215	108	323	83	6	89
2. **Administrative, Executive and Managerial workers**	633	2	635	390	1	391
(a) Administrators and Executive Officials, Government	78	2	80	36	1	37
(b) Directors and Managers, Wholesale and Retail Trade	16	—	16	16	—	16
(c) Directors, Managers and working Proprietors, Financial Institutions.	4	—	4	4	—	4
(d) Directors, Managers and working Proprietors, etc.	535	—	535	434	—	534
3. ***Clerical and Related workers***	*3,210*	*15*	*3,225*	*1,918*	*12*	*1,930*
(a) Book-keepers and Cashiers	110	—	110	59	—	59
(b) Stenographers and Typists	28	2	30	28	1	29
(c) Office Machine Operators	18	—	18	17	—	17
(d) Clerical works, Miscellaneous	2,269	13	2,282	1,473	11	1,484
(e) Unskilled office workers	785	—	785	341	—	341
4. **Sales workers**	15,140	269	15,409	6,303	45	6,348
(a) Working Proprietors, Wholesale and Retail trade	6,843	48	6,891	5,362	45	5,407
(b) Insurance and Real Estate Salesmen, Salesmen of Securities and Services and Auctioneers.	10	—	10	5	—	5
(c) Commercial Travellers and Manufacture's Agents	42	—	42	13	—	13
(d) Salesmen, Shop Assistants and Related workers	8,238	221	8,459	916	—	916
(e) Money-Lenders and Pawn workers	7	—	7	7	—	7
5. **Farmers, Fishermen, Hunters, Loggers and Related workers**	9,837	7,457	17,291	60	4	64
(a) Farmers and Farm Managers	750	23	773	7	—	7
(b) Farm workers	5,305	7,305	12,700	38	3	41
(c) Fishermen and Related workers	672	10	682	—	1	1
(d) Loggers and other Forestry workers	3,110	26	15	—	—	15
6. **Miners, Quarrymen and Related workers**	12	—	12	10	—	1
(a) Miners and Quarrymen	12	—	12	10	—	10
7. **Workers in Transport and Communication Occupations.**	5,950	44	5,994	2,607	2	2,609
(a) Deck Officers, Engineer officers and Pilots, Ship	8	—	8	2	—	2
(b) Deck and Engine-Room Ratings (Ship) Barge Crews and Boatmen.	259	—	259	—	—	—
(c) Drivers and Firemen, Railway Engine	348	—	348	204	—	204
(d) Drivers, Road Transport	2,752	—	2,752	1,295	—	1,295
(e) Conductors, Guards and Brakesmen (Railway)	144	—	144	30	—	30
(f) Inspectors, Supervisors, Traffic Controllers and Despatchers, Transport	544	—	544	147	—	147

Sl. No.		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	(g) Telephone, Telegraph and related Tele Communication operations.	56	1	57	42	—	42
	(h) Postmen and Messengers	282	—	282	65	—	65
	(i) Workers in Transport and Communication Occupations N. E. C.	1,547	43	1,590	822	2	824
8.	**Craftsmen, Production Process workers and Labourers, N. E. C.**	19,064	23,446	42,510	7,471	451	7,922
	(a) Spinners, Weavers, Knitters, Dyers and related workers	1,214	21,893	23,107	210	298	508
	(b) Tailors, Cutters, Furriers and related workers	1,202	87	1,289	249	11	260
	(c) Leather Cutters, Lasters and Sewers (except gloves and Garments) and related workers.	795	2	797	552	—	552
	(d) Furnacemen, Rollers, Drawers, Moulders and Related Metal making and Treating workers	474	6	480	140	—	140
	(e) Precisian Instrument Makers, watch Makers, Jewellers and related workers.	971	1	972	230	—	230
	(f) Tool Makers, Machinists, Plumbers, Welders, Plates and related workers.	1,005	2	1,007	901	2	903
	(g) Electricians and Related Electrical and Electronics workers.	228	—	228	111	—	111
	(h) Carpenters, Joiners, Cabinet Makers, Co-opers and related workers.	2,216	—	2,216	670	—	670
	(i) Painters and paper Hangers.	4	—	4	4	—	4
	(j) Bricklayers, Plasterers and Construction workers, N.E.C.	1,834	148	1,982	248	—	248
	(k) Compositors, Printers, Engravers, Book-Binders and related workers.	*29*	—	*29*	*29*	—	*29*
	(l) Potters, Kilsmen, Glass and Clay Formers and related workers.	571	130	701	33	5	38
	(m) Millers, Bakers, Brewmasters and related Food and Beverage workers.	850	405	1,255	235	20	255
	(n) Chemical and related Process workers	98	3	101	48	2	50
	(o) Tobacco preparers and products makers	51	11	62	28	—	28
	(p) Craftsmen and production process workesr N. E. C.	255	266	521	50	5	55
	(q) Testers, Packers, Sorters and related workers	158	—	158	8	—	8
	(r) Stationery Engine and Executive and lifting Equipment operators and related workers.	63	—	63	63	—	63
	(s) Labourers N. E. C.	7,046	492	7,538	3,662	108	3,770
9.	**Service, Sport and Recreation workers**	7,744	713	8,457	2,691	315	3,006
	(a) Fire Fighters, Policemen, Guards and related workers	3,101	—	3,101	919	—	919
	(b) House-keepers, Cooks, Maids and related workers	2,828	579	3,407	1,043	213	1,256
	(c) Waiters, Bartenders and related workers	65	—	65	65	—	65
	(d) Buildings Caretakers, Cleaners and related workers	330	98	428	292	79	371
	(e) Barbers, Hair Dressers, Beauticians and related workers	766	—	766	216	—	216
	(f) Launders, Dry cleaners and pressers	354	36	390	120	23	143
	(g) Photographers and related Camera operators	22	—	22	16	—	16
	(h) Service, Sport and Recreation workers, N. E. C.	278	—	278	20	—	20
10.	**Workers not Classified by occupation.**	1,025	128	1,173	416	61	477
	(a) Workers Reporting occupations unidentifiable or unclassifiable.	968	147	1,115	413	60	473
	(b) Workers not Reporting occupation	57	1	58	3	1	4

CHAPTER—IX

ECONOMIC TRENDS

Introduction :

The Nowgong district is predominantly agricultural in character. Having been gifted by nature with fertile soil, humid climate and abundant rainfall which are conducive to the luxuriant growth of agricultural crops, Nowgong has been the ideal home for peasants and subject to invasion by hoards of land-hungry immigrants. The preponderance of agriculture provides to a great extent an infrastructure for industries that are growing up after Independence. The tea industry, however, could make but little head-way in this district in the past and therefore has lesser impact upon the economy of the district. Till recently, the district was administered as a single administrative unit. According to the 1971 Census, the district had a total area of 5,561 sq. kms. and a total population of 16,80,895 persons composed of 8,84,938 males and 7,95,957 females who were occupying 2,68,773 households distributed over 1961 inhabited villages and four towns falling under fifteen **thanas** against corresponding figures of 5,613 sq. kms. 12,10,761 persons (6,45,690 males and 5,65,071 females) 2,19,006 households, 1,716 in habited villages, 4 towns and eleven *thanas* in the 1961 census. This shows besides other aspects a diminution of 52 sq. kms. of its total area against its population growth of 38.83 per cent during the decade, 1961-1971.[1] By 1963, the entire district was covered by 13 Blocks of the Community Development Programme. The district contributed 8.7 per cent towards the State's National Income in 1960-61. The total income in the same year was Rs. 31 crores—62.5 per cent of which came from the agricultural sector alone. On the basis of per capita income Nowgong with its figure of Rs.261 in 1960-61 ; occupied the 7th place among the districts of Assam.

Livelihood pattern :

In the analysis of the livelihood pattern of the district a brief review on the basis of classification of the population in the decennial censuses is essential.

Before the 1951 Census, religion was the basis of classification of the population. It was substituted in the 1951 census by economic classi-

1. *Statistical Abstract of Assam*, 1967-68, page 4.

fication on the basis of livelihood. This basis of classification was again substituted by the criteria of actual work in the 1961 census. In the 1951 census, the entire population of 8,86,955 persons was classified into two broad categories on the basis of livelihood pattern viz, agricultural classes and non-agricultural classes claiming 7,57,416 persons and 1,29,539 persons respectively forming 85.51 per cent and 14.49 per cent of the total population. The agricultural population was divided into four classes showing 6,26,211 persons as cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned by them and their dependants, 1,00,938 persons as cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned by them and their dependants, 24,687 persons as cultivating labourers and their dependants and 5,580 persons as non-cultivating owners of land and agricutural rent receivers and their dependants. Among the non-agricultural population 46,824 persons were engaged in production other than cultivation, 29,437 persons in commerce, 14,832 persons in transport and 38,466 persons in other services and miscellaneous occupations. Lastly, each of these eight classes of people was again subdivided into three sub-classes according to their economic status viz, self supporting persons, earning dependants and non-earning dependants. The following table shows the distribution of population into different livelihood classes and sub-classes.

Distribution of population according to 1951 census Report.

Livelihood classes	Self supporting persons	Earning dependant	Non-earning dependant	Total
A. Agricultural classes.				
1. Cultivators of land wholly or mainly owned by them and their dependnats.	1,32,261	79,304	4,14,646	6,26,211
2. Cultivators of land wholly or mainly unowned by them and their dependants.	23,190	12,389	65,359	1,00,938
3. Cultivating labourers and their dependants.	7,129	4,737	12,821	24,687
4. Non-cultivating owners of land, agricultural rent receivers and their dependants.	1,642	426	3,512	5,580
Total agricultural	1,64,222	96,856	4,96,338	7,57,416

Livelihood classes	Self supporting persons	Earning dependant	Non-earning dependant	Total
B. Non-agricultural classes.				
1. Production other than cultivation.	19,402	5,533	21,889	46,824
2. Commerce	8,704	1,787	18,946	29,437
3. Transport	4,302	210	10,320	14,832
4. Other services and miscellaneous services..	14,366	3,642	20,438	38,446
Total Non-agricultural	46,774	10,972	71,593	1,29,539
Total of all classes	2,10,996	1,07,828	5,67,931	8,86,955

An analysis of the above table shows that more than three-fourths of the total population of the district were earning and non-earning dependants. Each class claimed about 12 per cent and 64 per cent of the population respectively. The percentage of the whole-time or self-supporting persons was only about 24 which was even less than one-fourth of the total population. It is interesting to note that about 65 per cent of the total agricultural population consisted of non-earning dependants who out-numbered more than thrice the number of whole-time workers in that sector. In the non-agricultural sector as well, the proportion of non-earning dependants who formed about 55 per cent of the total population in the sector, was also much higher than that of the wholetime workers. Thus in either sector in this district non-earning dependency was the predominant aspect in the livelihood of the people in 1951. Undoubtedly this aspect had a great bearing on the standard of living of the people, particularly in case of small owner-cultivators who had to maintain the largest number of non-earning dependants.

However, these figures do not lend themselves to comparison with those of 1961 census in which the total population was classified into workers and non-workers on the basis of actual work. The total population of Nowgong stood at 12,10,761 persons in 1961. Among them 4,49,058 were workers and 7,61,703 were non-workers. The workers

who determine the economic growth of the district claimed slightly over 37 per cent of the total population and had to shoulder upon the responsibility of maintaining a large number of non-working dependants (63%). The workers were classified into nine occupational categories as follows :— (1) Cultivators 3,25,961 (2) Agricultural labourers 22,552 (3) Workers engaged in mining, quarrying, livestock, forestry, fishing, hunting, plantations, orchards and allied acitvities 17,349 (4) Workers engaged at household industry 23,636 (5) Workers engaged in manufacturing other than household industry 8,825 (6) Workers engaged in construction 2,436 (7) Workers engaged in trade and commerce 15,569 (8) Workers engaged in transport, storage and communication 8,606 (9) other services 24,124.

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 as per the 1961 census Report.[2]

Categories	Rural		Urban		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1. Workers	3,16,863	1,06,266	24,767	1,162	3,41,630	1,07,428
2. Trade & commerce	8,837	224	6,462	46	15,299	270
3. Cultivators	2,51,186	73,281	1,357	137	2,52,543	73,418
4. Constructions	1,876	148	411	1	2,287	149
5. Agricultural labour	21,336	1,113	73	—	21,439	1,113
6. Transport, Storage & communication	3,339	42	5,155	70	8,494	112
7. Mining, quarrying, livestock, forestry, fishing, hunting, plantation, orchard and allied services	9,779	7,450	116	4	9,895	7,454
8. Household industry	1,092	21,849	419	276	1,551	22,125
9. Manufacturing other than household industries	5,091	613	3,054	67	8,145	680
10. Other services	14,297	1,546	7,720	561	22,017	2,107
11. Non-workers	2,81,233	4,25,182	22,827	32,461	3,04,060	4,57,643

2. *Census of India*, 1961, *Assam, District Census Hand Book*, Nowgong District, Gauhati, 1965, pp. 130—147.

The above table shows that cultivators and agricultural labourers jointly claiming 3,48,513 workers formed 77.61 per cent of the total workers in 1961. The percentage would have been slightly higher if the tea garden labourers engaged in plantation and classified as industrial workers were added to it. Among the workers in the rural areas more than 86 per cent were cultivators and agricultural labours. Thus in Nowgong the livelihood of the people had been predominated by agriculture and its economy had yet to be reinforced by industrial development. The total number of workers censused in the industrial sector including services and other miscellaneous workers stood at 1,00,545 workers (from category—III-IX) which formed only 22.39 per cent of the total workers. Among these workers the highest number was in other services immediately followed by household industries and the least numbert in the construction works. This also speaks of the industrial backwardness and the preponderance of agriculture in the Nowgong district.

According to the 1971 Census, out of the total population of 16,80,895 persons of the district only 4,55,849 were workers constituting 27.12 per cent of the total population against about 37 per cent in 1961. The percentage of the female workers to the total female population is less than 2 per cent against 19 per cent in 1961. This does not mean actual depletion of the working force. The reduction in the number of workers particularly of female workers is entirely due to the change of the definition of workers in the last census.[3]

Although statistics reveal that more than three-fourths of the population are sustained by agriculture, the economic condition of these people are not enviable by any standard. The total cultivated area in Nowgong in 1961 was only 3,05,373.63 hectares which meant only 0.93,07,778 hectares per cultivator having six dependants on the average to maintain. The agricultural labourers who generally obtain seasonal works find it difficult even to manage their bare subsistence by daily or monthly rated wages.

The industrial categories of workers numbering 1,00,545 in the 1961 census were divided into sub-groups. Out of 23,636 workers at the household industries only 652 were employees and the rest were selfworkers and family workers. In the non-household industries the workers were divided as employers 1,240, employees 45,091, single workers 19,172 and family workers 11,406.

These workers engaged in the non-agricultural sector were again classified into 11 Occupational Divisions, 75 groups and 331 families according to their occupation as shown below (Division wise workers are only shown).

3. *Census of India*, 1971, Assam, Series 3, Part II-A, p. 174. Provisional population totals p. III.

		Male	Female	Total
1.	Professional, Technical and related workers	5,033	806	5,839
2.	Administrative, Executive and managerial workers	633	2	635
3.	Clerical and related workers	3,210	15	3,225
4.	Sales workers	15,140	269	15,409
5.	Farmers, fishermen, hunters, loggers and related workers	9,837	7,457	17,291
6.	Miners, Quarrymen and Related workers	12	—	12
7.	Workers in transport and communication	5,950	44	5,994
8.	Craftsmen, Production process workers and labourers not elsewhere classified	19,064	23,446	42,510
9.	Service, sports and Recreation workers	7,744	713	8,457
10.	Workers not classified by occupation	1,025	148	1,173

This occupational classification of the industrial workers shows that in 1961, of the total 1,00,545 industrial workers, the highest number of 42,510 were by occupation craftsmen, production-process workers and other workers not classified under any other occupation. The industrial classification of these workers also reveals the fact that the highest number of 32,434 workers were engaged in manufacturing group of industries other than tea manufacture. The tea industry of this district is of little importance and only 1,432 workers were censused in tea plantations. The second highest group of workers were in the services including public service (administrative) and other private and voluntary services, which engaged 22,119 workers. Apart from the classification of population on the basis of primary occupation, classification on the basis of subsidiary occupation also is essential to formulate an idea about the economic condition of different sections of the people. Some of the cultivators particularly fe-

males in rural areas are engaged in household industries and also work as agricultural labourers and vice versa. In the villages, the teachers and other people holding service also help in the cultivation and household industries. Likewise many of the other non-agricultural workers engage themselves in household industries as their subsidiary occupation. According to the 1961 census among cultivators 2,158 males and 27,573 females pursued household industries and 8,945 males and 4,632 females worked as agricultural labourers as subsidiary avocation. Among agricultural labourers 88 males and 25 females worked as household industries and 190 males and 39 females as cultivators. Among workers having household industries as their principal work, 58 males and 1,309 females worked also as cultivators and 28 males and 43 females as agricultural labourers.[4] Thus, in the ultimate analysis of the livelihood pattern of the people it can be said that the present condition of the mixed and difficult economy of the country aggravated by soaring prices, a person is bound to engage himself in various kinds of activities besides the principal one, to earn a living and to maintain a living standard.

Prices : The barter system was prevalent before and during the early British period when the circulation of money in the rural sector was not widespread. "Exchange of product was mainly effected through the system of bartering".[5] Sometimes *Kawris* were also used for small transactions. During the period 1862-1900 the price of rice was subject to market fluctuations. Rice was available to the extent of 20 seers (18.662 kilograms) for a rupee in 1862 but in 1897 price of rice rose to 7 seers (6531 kilograms) for a rupee. The average price during each of the last four decades of the 19th century ending 1872, 1882, 1892 and 1902 was 17, 14, 14, and 11 *seers* for a rupee.[6] The first decade of the twentieth century was a period of extreme depression for the district. *Kala-azar* was widespread taking heavy toll of human lives. Apart from it, season was unfavourable and the harvest was extremely poor. A gradual rise of prices was discernible during the period.

The current century began with a rise in the price of rice after a brief interlude in 1900 when rice was sold at Rs. 2.00 per *maund* (37.324 kilograms). The price of rice remained as high as Rs. 5.71 per *maund* (37.324 kilograms) from August, 1906 to February, 1907 showing almost a triple increase over that in 1900. Since then the price of rice assumed a down-

4. *Census of India, Assam District Census Hand Book*, Nowgong district, Gauhati, 1965, p. 202.
5. Edward Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1933, p. 277.
6. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Vol. VI, Nowgong*, Calcutta, 1965, p. 157.

ward trend and stabilized round about Rs. 4.00 during the following years upto 1912. During this period salt was cheaper but the price of *matikalai* showed a slight increase. The following table shows trend of price rise during the beginning of the first and second decade of the twentieth century.[7]

Prices of food staples in seers obtainable per rupee.

		Common rice.	Salt	Matikalai
1		2	3	4
1900	2nd week of February	20	9	20
	,, ,, August	14	9	12
1910	,, ,, February	12	16	16
	,, ,, August	8	17	16
1912	,, ,, February	13	16	13
	,, ,, August	10	17	9

Prices increased manifold during the First World War after which in 1921, there was a general fall in prices of all commodities. The downward trend in prices was so sharp that it led to the great economic depression in 1929 to 1933. It was observed in the annual report on the Land Revenue Administration of Assam for 1933-34 as follows : "Prices of foodstuffs remained low as in the previous year. The price of paddy rose a little in certain locality but not sufficiently to off-set any benefit to the *raiyat* and there was temporary local rise in prices after March when excise duties on matches and tobacco were announced," and "even village lands ceased to have any sale value and the cultivators were deprived from their source of credit."

The outbreak of the World War II 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 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

7. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gozetteers, Supplement to Vol. VI, Nowgong*, Shillong, 1914, p. 42.

their stocks of rice and paddy. Supply conditions in the State gave cause for concern. At the beginning of the decade various control orders were instrumental in reducing prices, but they also had the effect of driving supplies underground and the problem of shortage of rice in the market was partly due to hoarding. Rationing was introduced in most of the towns in respect of rice, kerosene oil and dal. Sugar, cloth and kerosene oil rationing was later on extended to rural areas also. They had their inevitable repercussions in the form of increased blackmarketing, profiteering and hoarding, depending upon the efficiency of the district authority to enforce the control orders.

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 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. As it was observed in the annual report of Land Revenue Administration in Assam 1950-51, "prices of foodstaffs continued to be high as before".

The year, 1951 witnessed the highest increase of prices of all essential commodities in Assam so far recorded and in Nowgong rice sold at Rs. 0.78 per seer, mustard oil at Rs. 2.96 per seer and masur dal at Rs. 0.96 per seer in the month of October of that year. But the increase in the price of rice in Nowgong was not so severe as in the contiguous Darrang district where rice sold at Rs. 1.3 per seer in the same month. At the end of the year the new harvest of paddy brought down the price of rice and by and large, there set in a declining trend in the general price level in Nowgong.

Since the launching of the Five-Year Plan in 1952 the general price level which already assumed a downward trend came to stabilise at a lewer level. During the period from November 1951 to March 1956, the retail price of rice (along with prices of other articles) came down in this district from Re. 0.76 per seer in October 1951 to stabilise between the lowest price of Rs. 0.38 recorded in December, 1955 and highest price of

Rs. 0.60 per seer in September, 1953. The fall in prices in Assam during the period was mainly due to increased agricultural production, improvement in transport and communication as well as other benefits of planning. In April, 1956 the price of rice began to increase again when there set in a corresponding rise in the prices of other consumer goods such as pulses, mustard oil, sugar, fish etc. The general price level thus resumed upward trend at the end of the First Five-Year plan period.

The upward trend of prices went on unabated during the Second Plan period all over India when the all-India price level increased by 30 per cent as against the decline of 13.04 per cent during the First Plan period. In Assam the wholesale price index (base 1953-100) rose from 117.6 in 1956 to 135.4 in 1961. In Nowgong the wholesale price of paddy (coarse) at Dabaka and Hojai rose from Rs. 9.00 and Rs. 10.00 per *maund* respectively in February 1958 to Rs. 15.00 and Rs. 13.50 per *maund* respectively in June of that year and this high price of paddy continued till the harvesting time of the year when the price of paddy went down to Rs. 7.00 per *maund* in December. This was but a temporary lull in the price of paddy and was immediately off-set at the beginning of the next year. The Chinese aggression in 1962 pushes the price line further up and aggravated the price situation. The following will give an idea of the price situation in Assam in general since 1962 to 1968.[8]

The price situation in Assam is essentially a manifestation of the all-India phenomenon of rising prices. But the uprising 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 per cent 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.

There was a slight fall in prices 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, this being 3.1% above the previous years

8. *Economic Survey of Assam*, 1970, Department of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, p. 70.

level. The following table will show the group indices of wholesale price in Assam since 1956.[9]

Year (Base 1953—100)

Year	Food	Non-food	General (all commodities)
1956	117.9	117.8	117.6
1961	130.9	144.8	135.4
1966	218.1	199.1	211.6
1968	292.3	206.1	63.3
1970	265.8	218.7	2,250.1

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 price has been going on almost unabated. Even in the month of February, 1972 coarse rice sells at Rs. 1.40 per kilogram in the important markets of Nowgong.

The following table will show the wholesale price trend in Nowgong in respect of some of the agricultural commodities since 1964 to 1971.[10]

Wholesale price of Agricultural commodities per quintal.

	Rice		Mug		Masur	
	Jan	Oct.	Jan.	Oct.	Jan.	Oct.
1964 ..	58.94	69.00	88.41	107.17	79.00	128.00
1966 ..	75.02	95.00	00.00	120.00	111.00	122.00
1968 ..	144.00	169.00	135.00	135.00	143.00	166.00
1970 ..	115.00	145.00	115.00	132.00	125.00	230.00
1971 Nov.						
Dabaka	150.00					
Hojai	140.00					
Rupahi	145.00					
Nowgong	140.00		150.00		215.00	

9. *Statistiical Hand Book of Assam*, 1965 *to* 1970.
10. Asstt. Agricultural Marketing Officer, Nowgong.

	Matikalai		Gur		M. Oil	
	Jan.	Oct.	Jan.	Oct.	Jan.	Oct.
1964 ..	64.30	61.62	101.81	104.50	231.25	370.94
1966 ..	70.00	108.00	64.30	100.00	356.25	397.00
1968 ..	100.00	105.0	170.00	225.00	435.00	396.00
1970 ..	85.00	115.00	100.00	100.00	440.00	510.00
1971 Nov.						
Nowgong	160.00		180.00[11]			

During 1972 there was a constant price spurt on all accounts. The following wholesale and retail price of some of the selected articles prevailing in the month of March, 1972 in the Gauhati market will give an idea of the price conditions in its contigous Nowgong district.

	Wholesale in Rupees per qtl.	Retail sale in Rupees per Kg.
Rice (fine)	140.00	1.45
Rice (coarse)	128.00	1.35
Pulse (Masur)	218.00	2.20
Mustard oil (Per 14.900 Lt. tin	72.00	5.40

In the year (1973) prices rather showed higher increases. In Gauhati fine rice sold in the month of July at Rs. 1.60 per Kg., Mug dal at Rs. 3.20 per Kg., Mustard oil at Rs. 7.00 per litre, salt at Rs. 0.40 per Kg., and the like. This reflects similar price situation in the Nowgong district.

The following table will show the price indices of different articles in the respective groups since 1966.[12]

11. Source. Figures collected from whole sale price bulletins of Assam, Nov. 1971, pp. 1—9.
12. *Economic Survey of Assam*, 1970, Published by the Department of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, pp. 72-73.

Group Indices of prices.

Year	Food				
	Cereals	Pulses	Edible oils	Sugar gur	Total food
1	2	3	4	5	6
1966 ..	252.2	187.5	219.5	158.9	218.1
1967 ..	321.4	279.4	249.1	285.8	272.8
1968 ..	360.5	254.1	222.1	377.8	292.4
1969 ..	274.4	212.2	227.1	250.6	248.8
1970 ..	295.6	227.9	252.7	176.4	265.8

Year	Non-food				
	Liquer & Tobacco	Raw-materials	Finished products	Total non-food	All co-mmodities
1	7	8	9	10	11
1966	188.0	244.7	165.6	199.1	211.0
1967	160.8	227.5	176.2	194.7	247.0
1968	244.9	230.6	178.1	205.1	263.0
1969	318.6	267.9	173.9	229.9	242.0
1970	240.4	258.4	151.1	218.7	250.0

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 the 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 liberalisation of the imports, boost to production both in the agricultural and industrial sectors,

limitation of dividends, intensification of the small saving schemes, enforcement of control over selected items of consumer goods, disrtibution of consumers goods at controlled price through fair price shops, dehoarding of the accumulated stocks and rationing of food-stuffs etc. Under the Defence of India Rules the District Magistrate of Nowgong fixed the prices of essential commodities. These prices however ceased to be operative when the emergency was lifted from the country. Sugar of Government stock was sold at the price of 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 irresistable demand for rise in wages and salaries. The Government had to accede to the demands for pay rise. The minimum wages of saveral categories had to be revised upwards and the cost of plan projects have consequently gone up.

As experts remark, ' Prices cannot be expected to remain constant in a growth conscious economy. Rather very often a low but very limited rise in price level is believed to act as an incentive to economic growth. But the prices in India have already reached a level where a continuance of the present trends may well pose a threat to economic growth itself. With a view to imparting a degree of restraint of monetary and credit expansion (without, however, affecting the growth of the priority sectors) and also 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 the Reserve 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 intergrated approach on money supply, wages, productivity and real income seems necessary "[13]

Wages : Wages now form the main source of livelihood of more than one-sixth of the total workers of the district as per the 1961 census. The proportion of wage earners is gradually increasing. As per the 1971 census there were 60,273 agricultural labourers in Nowgong district. Besides the agricultural labourers, most of the other wage earners of the district are employed in the tea garden, trade and commerce, transport

13. Ibid, p. 78.

and communication and services including Government service. According to 1961 census the highest number of 15,789 employees was in the services group. According to the census of Assam Government Employees, 1967 there were 5,429 Government employees in the Nowgong district.

Wages had but little significance in the past when the district had a self-generated economy backed by mutual help and co-operation and there was rarely an occasion for hiring labour. Payment to a hired labourer or a servant who was generally fed, was either a nominal amount in cash or in kind. During the early years of the British administration the advent of the tea industry brought in a regular feature of wages to the tea garden labourers. But it was difficult to obtain labourer locally in the district. As B. C. Allen observes in 1905. "There is really no such thing as a labouring class in Nowgong and in 1891, when no Railway work was going on, only 1,049, persons described themselves as being supported by earth work or general labour."[14]

Daily agricultural wages were very low and varied between five *annas* and six *annas* a day. Of course there had been local variations. Work on the railways commanded higher wage and carpenters and masons got one rupee and blacksmiths thirteen *annas* a day.

The level of wages remained very low during the early part of the current century. The minimum wages paid to the garden labourers varied from Rs. 4.00 to Rs. 5.00 per month for women and from Rs. 5.00 to Rs. 6.00 for men before and after 1903.[15] In this context B. C. Allen has observed, "The daily wage in the more densely populated portion of the district i.e. along the banks of the Kalang from Silghat to Raha, varies from five to six annas, but elsewhere it is generally about one anna lower. Harvest work is paid for at lower rates, while work on the railway commands a wage of at least eight annas a day. This curious difference is probably due to the imperative necessity of getting in the harvest, while railway work is optional, and as it is done for foreigners is probably regarded as rendering a certain loss of social status. In the Garubat mauza, a ploughman who brings his own plough and buffalo gets ten annas, or, if he only uses bullocks, six annas a day, a rate considerably higher than that reported from the neighbouring mauza of Kampur. Carpenters and masons are said to get one rupee, and blacksmiths thirteen 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 mind that

14. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Vol. VI, Nowgong*, Calcutta, 1905, pp. 157-137.
15, *Report on the Administration of Assam* for the year 1921-22, p. 57.

labourers cannot as a rule be obtained at all except through the intervention of some individual possessed of local influence."[16]

"The question of wages earned by tea garden (labourers) has always engaged the attention of Government. It was found that wages had not increased in the same measure as prices,"[17] 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 adversly 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 post-war price spurts.

The wage condition of agricultural field labourers as revealed by the Nowgong sample survey, 1956 is as follows : "During the busy season, monthly wages paid in kind to labourers varied from 5 maunds to 10 maunds of paddy, while in the slack season the same varied from 3 maunds to 5 maunds of paddy. It was also a common custom to provide sometimes free food during the working hours in compensation of reduced wages paid in kind. Clothes were also provided in rare cases. No attempt was made, however, to evaluate these extra amenities in money terms. The wages paid in cash varied from Rs. 30 to Rs. 75 per month during the busy season while in the slack season, the wages seemed to be lower and generally ranged from Rs. 30 to Rs. 45 per month".[18]

Similar rates of wages are also reflected in the 1961 Census Report, which recorded the daily rates of wages of both skilled and unskilled agricultural workers prevailing during 1957-60 in the Topakuchi village. The rates are as follows : a carpenter Rs. 5.00, a blacksmith Rs. 3.50 field and other agricultural labourers—men Rs. 2.00, women Rs. 1.50 and children Rs. 0.75 plus one meal and herdsmen, men Rs. 1.50, Children Rs. 0.75 plus one meal. Only in case of blacksmiths wages increased generally to Rs. 4.00 in April, 1959 to Rs. 4.50 in July, 1959 and then to Rs. 5.00 in July, 1960.

16. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Vol. VI, Nowgong*, Calcutta, 1905, p. 157.
17. *Report on the Administration of Assam for the year* 1921-22, p. 58.
18. *A Survey of the Rural Economic conditions in Nowgong*, 1956, the Department of Economics and Statistics, Assam, p. 68.

The annual economic surveys in Assam conducted by the Department of Economics and Statistics reveal an increasing trend in the average daily wages of agricultural labourers. As per these surveys the average daily wages for carpenters, blacksmiths, field labourers (men), other agricultural labourers and herdsmen rose from Rs. 2.42, Rs. 2.36 and Rs. 1.75 in 1956 to Rs. 6.77, Rs. 6.28, Rs. 3.75, Rs. 4.15 and Rs. 3.29 respectively in 1970. There are some local variations and in Nowgong a carpenter is not available below Rs. 7.00 and field labourer below Rs. 4.00

The following table shows the trend of average daily wages of agricultural labourers in the rural areas of Assam during recent years.[19]

As per day per worker, (amount in Rupees) :—

Year	Carpenters	Blacksmith	Field labourer	Other agricultural labourer (men)	Herdsman
1	2	3	4	5	6
1966	5.28	5.19	3.22	3.33	1.94
1967	5.75	6.25	3.30	3.49	2.47
1968	6.27	5.67	3.39	3.29	2.19
1969	6.75	6.22	5.72	3.73	3.02
1970	6.77	6.28	3.73	4.15	3.29

Relative comparision between the general price index and labour wage shows that though in 1969 there was a general fall of price index of essential goods—rate of wage of agricultural labour registered a distinct and considerable increase in the year.

After 1959 the ordinary unskilled labourers in tea plantations received wages at the following rates.[20]

Assam	Total wages (in Rupees)	(basic wages and D.A.)	
	Men	Women	Children
Zone A (Dibrugarh, Sibsagar)	1.89	1.76	0.91
Zone B (Darrang, Lakhimpur)	1.82	1.70	0.88
Zone C (Mikir Hills, North Cachar Hills, Goalpara, Nowgong, Kamrup)	1.76	1.70	0.88

19. *Tea Statistics*, 1961, p. 76.
20. *Economic Survey, Assam*, 1970, Departments of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, pp. 82, 85-86.

The following rates of basic wages for tea plantation labourers as recommended by the wage Board have become effective since 1.4.66.[21]

	From 1.1.66 to 31.3.66			From 1.4.66		
	Men	Women	Children	Men	Women	Children
United Mikir and North Cachar Hills and Nowgong,	2.06	1.95	1.04	2.08	1.97	1.05

In addition to these rates the labourers 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 per day. This may increase to Re. 0.6 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 employee receives 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 employee and size of plantation are given to certain categories of employees.

Recent trend of wages : Minimum wages : "With a view to root out the economic injustice to the working class people, 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 year (1953-59) to cover agricultural labour and workers under the Public Works Department (road construction) building operation, stone breaking and stone crushing and under local authorities."

21. *Tea Statistics* 1968-69, p. 116.

"The minimum wages for workers under the Public Works Department were revised in 1964 at Rs. 25 per day for unskilled workers and the provisions of the Act were extended to workers engaged in maintenance of roads and buildings 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 of this 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 has been set up to consider the revision of wages in the ply-wood industry.[21]

Standard of living : We have no definite information as to the per capita income and the index of cost of living of the people 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 discussed by E. Gait as follows : "The standard of living was generally higher in Upper Assam, than the Lower Assam. In the former area silk was used by almost everybody 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-Ibriyat 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'."[22]

The district still has an essentially agriculture-based economy. Regarding standard of living B. C. Allen has observed. "There are no rich men amongst the Assamese in Nowgong, and very few who are even moderately well-to-do, but the explanation of this fact is not far to seek. The Assamese is a cultivator and nothing more, and with wholesale trade, crafts, and industries, he has little or no concern. Practically the whole of the profits of the external trade of the district pass into the hands of the Marwari merchants, but it is well removed above the line of poverty, and it is seldom that any villager in Nowgong goes hungry to

21. Ibid, pp. 85-86.
22. Edward Gait, *A History of Assam*, revised, pp. 265-266.

his bed." Most of the garden labourers, factory workers, constructors and traders are from outside the district. Local people are mainly agriculturists living in villages with homestead beed with a good '*bari*' attached to it. So they are a group of lower middle class people in general.

The condition remained nearly the same even after independence, though it has brought in some changes in the outlook of the people for a better standard of living. According to the Sample Survey conducted in Nowgong in 1956, on the average 82.45 per cent of the villagers were predominantly agricultural families and the most desirable units of family sized economic holding was a farm containing an area between 25 *bighas* and 50 *bighas* but only 13 per cent of families owned such farms. On the otherhand such farms engulfed 42.86 per cent of the total holding area in the sample. Of the families, in the sample 13.63 per cent were absolutely landless and 30.71 per cent had only 3 to 10 *bighas* of land. The small percentage of the people having economic holdings had a fair standard of living while the large majority of the people who had a deficit budget lived below the minimum tolerable standard and most of them had to take resort to debt. Of the families in the sample, 39 per cent were in debt and the average burden of debt per family was Rs. 74.44 while debt per indebted family amounted to Rs. 189.47. The bulk of the expenditure of a rural family was covered by food which accounted for 62.25 per cent and very little could be spared for comforts and luxuries. The average per capita income and expenditure per family were Rs. 171.76 and Rs. 186.24 respectively.[23]

There has been no further sample survey of economic conditions in rural areas of the disrict since then. The per capita income of this district stood at Rs. 312 according to the 1961 Census Report on the basis of 1960-61 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 (1969-70) prices decreased from Rs. 290.7 in 1950-51 to Rs. 274.1 in 1955-56 and thereafter increased to Rs. 311.1 in 1960-61 to Rs. 418.2 in 1965-66, Rs. 556.1 in 1968-69 and then decreased again to Rs.545.1 In 1969-70.[24]

As revealed by the National Sample Survey 19th round (State Sample 1964-65), the monthly per capita consumption expenditure of a famliy

23. *A Survey of the Rural Economic conditions in Nowgong* 1956, the Department of Economics and Statistics, Assam, pp. 81, 82.
24. *Statistical Hand Book*, 1970, pp. 127, 128.

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 expendiure in urban areas than in rural areas shows that the standard of living in the former is higher than in the latter.[25]

The average per capita income and expenditure does not indicate the general level of the standard of living. It has already been 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 uplift of the villagers have brought some changes in the course of rural life. Opening of new roads, schools, hospitals and dispensaries, expansion of avenues of employment and such other measures have somewhat improved 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, spices, mustard oil, gur and sugar, milk and milk products. Clothing such as *dhoti* and shirt (sometimes trousers and shirts), and other readymade garments for the grown-ups, women and children, kerosene oil and fuel, tea, tobacco betelnuts, shoes, sandals and umbrellas are now increasingly used. Ornaments and cosmetics are also becoming more popular.

Family budget in the Rural Areas : According to the Nowgong Sample Survey Report, 1956, of the total families in the sample 88.63 per cent derived their income wholly or partly from agriculture and only 11.37 per cent derived their income from sources independent of agriculture. Thus, the average man in the rural areas of the district is nothing more than a cultivator and his farm comprised 15.56 *bighas*. The budget of an average family consisting of 6.8 members was always a deficit one. 78.04 per cent of the cash income of such families was derived from sale of agricultural produce and the rest from trade, service and profession, wages and miscellaneous sources.

The average net annual income and expenditure per family in the sample were Rs. 1,168.21 and Rs. 1,266.46 respectively. Of the gross income 52 per cent was obtained in kind not sold and 48 per cent were cash receipts. Only a small proportion of the families in the sample having a farm of 30 *bighas* and above could maintain a fair standard of living.

25. *Economic Survey of Assam*, p. 110.

The broad pattern of average annual expenditure of an average family of 6.8 members is quoted below from the Nowgong Sample Survey Report, 1956.

Components of the average annual expenditure of families Nowgong Sample.[26]

(Average size of family consisted of 6.8 members)

Item of expenditure	Value of items obtained in kind.	Cash expen-diture	Total expen-diture	Percentage to total of column (4)
1	2	3	4	5
A. Food				
Rice	475.99	124.22	600.21	47.39
Pulses	6.27	22.19	28.46	2.25
Potato and vegetable	9.73	14.69	24.42	1.93
Fish and meat	10.58	15.36	25.94	2.05
Salt and spices	1.18	23.82	25.00	1.46
Mustard oil	2.52	41.35	43.87	3.87
Sugar and gur	4.82	18.45	23.27	1.84
Milk and milk products	13.37	5.16	18.53	1.46
Total	524.46	265.24	789.70	62.35
B. Clothing	4.23	111.99	116.22	9.18
C. Fuel and lighting	8.52	19.75	28.27	2.23
D. Tea, Tobacco and drugs.				
Tea	..	40.52	40.52	3.20
Betelnut	3.52	34.60	38.12	3.01
Tobacco	1.04	20.70	21.74	1.72
Liquor	5.07	8.87	13.94	1.10
Total	9.63	104.69	114.32	9.03

26. *A Survey of the Rural Economic Conditions in Nowgong*, Department of Economics and Statistics, Assam, Shillong, 1956, pp. 76-77.

1	2	3	4	5
E. Miscellaneous				
Medical	..	12.01	12.01	0.94
Interest	..	11.24	11.24	0.89
Repair of homestead	0.19	11.19	11.38	0.90
Education	..	11.64	11.64	0.92
Marriage and ceremonies	0.26	33.27	33.53	2.65
Travelling	..	6.45	6.45	0.51
Litigation	..	4.41	4.41	0.35
Ornaments	..	8.48	8.48	0.67
Wages	..	31.75	31.75	2.51
Others	..	87.06	87.06	6.87
Total	0.45	217.50	217.95	17.21
Grand Total	547.29	719.17	1.266.46	100.00

From the above it appears that the bulk of the expenditure of an average family was incurred in food articles (62.35 per cent) and of the rest 9.18 per cent was incurred in clothing, 2.23 per cent in fuel and lighting and 9.03 per cent in tea, tobacco, betelnut and drugs and 17.21 per cent in miscellaneous items such as medicinal, education, marriage and ceremonies etc,. Of the total expenditure 56.79 per cent was spent on cash purchases and the rest was accounted for the home products. Again, of the total expenditure on food, rice accounted for 76 per cent and other items such as fish, meat, pulses, edible oil, milk etc., for 24 per cent only. This signifies the low standard of living of the average rural family.

The following table gives an analysis of expenditure in different income groups as per the Nowgong Sample Survey.[27] :—

27. Ibid, p. 78.

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Analysis of family expenditure in different income groups, Nowgong sample.

Income groups (in Rs.)	Less than 600	600 to less than 900	900 to less than 1,200	1,200 to less than 1,500	1,500 to less than 1,800	1,800 to less than 2,500	2,500 and above	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Number of families ..	50	53	45	26	16	15	20	225
Average number of members per family. ..	4.9	4.6	6.2	7.2	8.2	12.1	10.6	6.8
Average gross-income per family	441.06	741.04	1,032.94	1,336.18	1,670.12	2,000.45	5,155.25	1,343.94
Average out-lay per family ..	65.37	84.47	138.19	192.65	197.54	391.30	576.70	175.73
Average net income per family..	375.69	656.57	894.75	1,143.53	1,472.58	1,942.48	4,328.48	1,168.21
Average expenditure per family.	797.77	933.77	1,120.78	1,408.11	1,466.62	1,936.28	2,795.91	1,266.46
Proportion of expenditure on								
(a) Food ..	71.87	66.95	61.69	61.98	64.01	60.20	52.20	62.36
(b) Tea, tobacco and drugs ..	10.13	9.12	8.92	10.14	11.02	5.45	7.29	9.03
(c) Fuel and lighting ..	1.33	2.99	2.61	2.14	2.34	1.89	1.71	2.23
(d) Clothing ..	4.97	7.74	10.92	8.92	10.54	9.46	8.46	9.18
(e) Miscellaneous ..	11.70	13.20	15.85	16.82	12.09	23.00	30.42	17.21
Total ..	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

As revealed by the above table "Food was the largest category of expense at every farm-group or income level, demanding about two-third of the average over-all expenditure. Except for slight irrigularities resulting mainly from varying family size, food received gradually declining shares of income and of expenditure as we go up the income scale. Yet there was a marked increase in money out-lays on food at successive higher income levels ; the average expenditure on food for the income class Rs. 600-900 was Rs. 657, while at the income class of Rs. 2,500 and over the average was about three times that amount. This wide range of expenditure was largely a result of increasing number of consumption units in the families of higher income groups rather than of any appreciable large differences in variety palatability and nutritive value of the food consumed.[28]

The significant feature revealed by the Sample Survey was that about 77 per cent of the families had an income less than Rs. 1,500 and had a deficit budget. This does not mean that no family of such income group could live within their means and make some savings annually. Only a few families of higher income could maintain a fair standard of living and make an annual saving.

The budget estimates were made in the sample survey in terms of the then prevailing prices. Price of all commodities have by this time enormously increased affecting the budgetary position of the people in general. Besides the changing social conditions ushered by the Five Year Plans have no doubt some bearing on the budgetary position of different people. As there has been no subsequent sample survey in Nowgong, it is difficult to make an estimate of family budgets of the people in rural areas during current years.

There has been no comprehensive survey of the urban economic condition of Nowgong district. In town areas the money income is believed to be higher than in the rural areas. A sizable section of the people in urban areas consists of the floating population,—an element which is absent in the rural sectors. Naturally this section of population always tries 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).[29]

28. *A Survey of the Rural Economic Conditions in Nowgong*, 1957, Department of Eeonomics and Statistics Assam, Shillong, p. 80.
29. *Economic Survey of Assam*, 1970, Department of Economics and Statistics, Assam, Shillong, p. 110.

Per capita consumption expenditure per month.

	Rural families NSS 19th round (state Samples) (1964-65)		Urban families NSS 19th round (State Sample) (1964-65)	
	Expen-diture	Per cent.	Expen-diture	Per cent.
1	2	3	4	5
1. Foodgrains ..	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
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

General level of employment : According to the 1961 census only 37.1 per cent of the total population were workers, of whom 77.6 per cent were engaged in agriculture and 22.4 per cent in industries other than agriculture. But the figures of the 1971 census show some depletion of the percentage of workers, which is more pronounced in case of female workers whose percentage has decreased from 19.0 per cent in 1961 to less than two per cent in 1971. On the other hand these figures show increase in the percentage of agricultural labourers and other workers.

Some of the salient feature of the general employment are shown below as per 1961 census.

Name of occupation	Nature of employment.	Male	Female	Total
1. Agriculture	1. Cultivator	2,51,186	73,281	3,24,467
	2. Labourers	21,366	1,113	22,479
Total		2,72,552	74,394	3,46,946

Name of occupation	Nature of employment	Male	Female	Total
2. Household industries.	1. Employees	267	385	652
	2. Others	1,244	21,740	22,984
Total		1,511	22,125	23,636
3. Non-household industries including services.	1. Employer	1,217	23	1,240
	2. Employees	36,949	8,142	45,091
	3. Single worker	18,067	1,106	19,172
	4. Family worker	9,904	1,602	11,406
Total		66,137	10,772	76,909

From the above it may be said that in the agricultural sector the self-employed cultivators provided employment to 22,479 labourers consisting of 21,366 males and 1,113 females. The household industries provided employment to 652 employees of whom 267 were male and 385 were female. The non-household industries including services had a strength of 75,669 employees of whom 19,172 were single workers, 11,406 family workers and 45,091 were termed as employees. The tea industry being less important in this district, the largest segment of employment numbering 15,789 was engaged in services followed by 6,773 persons in transport, storage and communication.

The employment market information collected by the District Employment Exchange, Nowgong, shows that the general level of overall employment increased from 40,950 on March, 31,1968 to 44,581 on 31st March 1971 registering a net increase of 3631 persons. The level actually slumped down on 31st March 1969 to record a net loss of 391 persons, but slightly recovered during the next year. For the loss of employment the public sector was largely responsible while the private sector also suffered a loss of 154 persons during that year. In the public sector, this was but a temporary phase. During 1969-70 employment in the public sector showed an upward trend and also compensated the previous year's loss though there was a further fall of employment in the private sector.

The following table shows the position of employment in both the sectors since 1966-67 to 1970-71.

General Level of Employment in Nowgong district as on 31st March of the years.

Sector	1966-67			1967-68			1968-69			1969-70			1970-71		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Public ..	22,189	936	24,125	23,649	942	24,591	23,394	960	24,354	24,295	997	25,292	28,157	1,031	29,88
Private ..	17,197	13,940	3,1137	9,409	6,950	16,359	9,141	7,064	16,205	8,584	6,746	15,330	8,674	6,721	15,395,
	39,386	14,876	54,262	33,058	7,892	40950	32,55	802,1	40,559	32,879	7,743	40,622	36,831	7,752	44,583

Source : Employment Exchange, Nowgong.

Employment of women : The Employment Exchange statistics show that altogether 7,752 women were employed in Nowgong at the end of March, 1971, representing about 17 per cent of the total working force. At the year ending on 31st March, 1967 women employment stood at 14,876 which formed nearly 28 per cent of the total employment. During 1967-68 the overall employment situation received a huge set back due to 50 per cent reduction in employment in the private sector. Not withstanding a continuous increase of women in the public sector during recent years there has been a tendency of fall of women employees in the private sector.

An analysis of the Live Register of the Nowgong Employment Exchange shows that there has been a cumulative increase of jobseekers through the Exchange but their placement is very insignificant. The occupational distribution of the applicants in the Live Register shows that the number of applicants for clerical and unskilled jobs increased manifold far in excess of requirements. But in the technical and skilled spheres the required number of job-seekers are not forthcoming.

Role of Employment Exchange : The Nowgong Divisional Employment Exchange with its jurisdiction over the entire district started functioning from 1.4.57 with its headquarters at Nowgong and is under the administrative control of the Employment Exchange, Jorhat under the Directorate of Employment and Craftsmen Training of the Government of Assam, Department of Labour.

The main function of the Employment Exchange is to register employment seekers. Another function is to collect employment market information on existing and probable vacancies from different employers and establishments, both in the public sector and private sector. They are required to notify vacancies under the Assam Employment Exchange (Compulsory) Notification Of Vacancies Act. 1959.

The Employment Exchange 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 activities in the tea gardens also. A vocational guidance unit is attached to the Employment Exchange.

National Planning and Community Development :— The First Five Year Plan of Assam (1951-56) was preceded by the post-war development activities. The post-war programme, which was responsible for the beginning of educational and training institutions like the Assam Medical College, Assam Agricultural College, Assam Veterinary College, Assam Ayurvedic College and the Assam Foresty School, suffered in 1949 when the Central grants were curtailed or withdrawn as a result of the inflation then prevailing. The State Govenment was hard put to continue 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-equlibrium in the economy following the war and partition and to fulfill the needs of the most essential items of development in which the state was lacking. The programme had a long-range objective of strengthening the economy and to build up institutions which would pave the way for accelerated development in future. High priority was given to agricultural development, setting up of essential institutions of higher education and professional learning, development of communication, etc.

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-such as power generation, economic survey and training of technical personnels etc. Flow of capital from private sector to industries was very shy due to high cost of production resulting from inadequate transport facilities. So the Govt. of Assam undertook some public sector industries by way of share capital contribution and as a result Spun Silk Mill was established in the district of Nowgong in 1960. 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. 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 industrial development in the State suffered a setback as a result of the Chinese aggression and Indo-Pakistan conflict.

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 adhoc plans were 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 stage of development reached at the end of the Third Plan and to prepare the economy for the implementation of the Fourth FiveYear Plans.[30] During the 4th Five Year Plan, Assam Co-operative Jute Mill at Silghat of Nowgong district was set up with major State government contribution towards share capital.

30. *Fourth Five-Year Plan of Assam (proposals)*, pp. 4-5.

The most important major industry to be set up in Nowgong during the 5th Five-Year Plan period is Hindustan Paper Mills at Jagiroad. The main factors that govern the level of development have been summarised as follows.

(a) 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 disruption of the normal channels of trade due to partition of India had put a strain on the economy of the state already suffering from under developed communication. The lower level of development at the initial stages 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.

(b) Investment of Central Projects : Assam is very rich in its natural and mineral resources and there was a great necessity for accelerating industrial development in view of its comparative backwardness. But there was no investment on central industrial projects in Assam during the Five 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.

The following table shows percentage of investment of Central Projects in the north-eastern States in India upto 1968.

Assam	West Bengal	Bihar	Orissa.
1.6	16.7	14.6	17.1

(c) Financial assistance by different financing institutions :— The financial support and assistance provided by the different financial institutions to the State has also not been commensurate with the needs. The financial assistance including refinance facilities given by the Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI), the Agricultural Refinance Corporation and the Industrial Finance Corporation is very meagre in comparision to demand. In 1951, the Assam Financial Corporation was set up by the Govt. of Assam on the strength of the State Financial Corporation Act. 1951. From 1966 upto 1972--this Corporation approved 87 loan applications from Small Scale Industries with promise to issue Rs. 2.13 lakhs as loan of which Rs. 1.73 lakh was already disbursed.

(d) Private Investment : Investment in the private sector is governed by a variety of complex factors. The Chinese aggression and the Indo-Pak

conflict has scared away private capital from the State. It is estimated that capital formation in the private sector in the State was of the order of Rs. 150 crores in the 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 in the state is the insufficiency of private investment during the plan periods.

(e) High Price Index :— The trends in the price situation in Assam have been very disquieting. 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 shows 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 had gone up.

(f) 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.

(g) Agricultural production : The agricultural production in the state could not stabilise and show the expected increase primarily due to the vagaries of nature. During the Third Five Year Plan period food production was affected adversely by floods and the absence of suitable flood-protection measures accentuated the gravity of the situation. On the other hand, lack of adequate irrigation projects in certain high land areas resulted in a fall in agricultural production. As the agricultural sector contributions is 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.

(h) 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 somewhat eased. Nowgong Polytechnic Institute was established during the 2nd Five Year Plan with training facilities in various crafts and technical branches. Three Engineering Colleges, three Medical Colleges and a number of Industrial Estates have been opened in the State. Nowgong has been benefited by all these.

State Income : During the period of 1951-52 to 1965-66 covering the period of the first three Five Year Plans, the State income of Assam at 1950-51 prices rose from Rs. 279.2 crores to Rs. 450.7 crores or at the rate of 3.2 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 setback in agricultural production in 1965-66. It is significant 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 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-India standard 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 being 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 becomes more evident on an examination of the per capita income of the State. In spite of about 61 per cent increase in the State income (at 1960-61 price) over the period 1950-51 to 1965-66, the per capita income of Assam recorded a rise of bare 5 per cent 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 adhoc plans reflects the limitations in achieving the economic development in Nowgong district vis-a-vis Assam. The district figures relating to the 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 agricultue, education, power, industry and health have been shown in respective chapters.

Community Development : The Community Development Programme in India is an integral part of the national planning of the country and aims at all round improvement of rural economic and social conditions by evoking initiative

and securing active support and participation of the people in every sphere of development work. With this noble object 55 original-pattern Community Development Projects were started in India in October, 1952. Each of these Projects covered a fairly large area. In Assam two such projects were taken up for execution. These were Cachar and Darrang Community Development Projects, which were subsequently converted to Community Development Blocks.

Since then the programme has undergone several changes in the light of experience gained in operation. It was found that projects with small areas were more suitable for all-round development. So the National Extension service scheme was introduced in 1953 aiming at developing Blocks with smaller areas. It was then that the Nowgong district came within the fold of the programme. In October, 1953 the Bhurbandha Community Development Block and the Kathiatoli National Extension Service Block were simultaneously started under two parallel series of (1953-54) blocks. During the First Five-Year Plan period no other Block was started in Nowgong.

Each of these Blocks was in-charge of a Project Executive Officer under the Deputy Commissioner. He was assisted by a team of technical officers for agriculture, animal husbandary, health, co-operation, social education and engineering. In addition to this staff at the Block headquarters there was for a convenient number of villages (usually ten or more) a *Grama 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 development programme, spread the co-operative movement in the countryside and more important than anything else, stimulated local leadership and local initiative and harnessed the unutilised resources and human energy 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 local heads of Development Departments, Local members of Parliament and State Legislature, a specified number of representatives of local non-official bodies, such as panchayats, co-operative societies, leading societies etc., leading social workers and progressive farmers as members. The members were nominated by Government. At the village level there was for every village or a group of villages, a Village Development Committee consisting of local leaders as members informally elected by the people themselves.

These Blocks were converted to Community Development Blocks in 1956. Since then it requires each Block to pass through three stages of development viz., Pre-extension stage, Stage I and State II of intensive development and then post Stage II or normalised. The First pre-extension Stage lasts for one year and

during this period preparatory work like survey of the Block and agricultural demonstrations are held by a nucleus staff with a budget of Rs. 18,000/-. Then Stage I of intensive development begins and continues for five years with a budget provision of Rs. 12 Lakhs. Full Extension staff is provided for execution of this stage. This is followed by Stage II for five years with a budget provision of Rs. 5 lakhs. During this stage some of the development works and the staff provided for the same are expected to be taken over by the respective departments and are financed from their budget. Then comes the post Stage II when the Blocks ear completely normalised and all development activities are taken over by the different departments and financed with their normal funds without any special provision under the Community Development budget.

During the Second Plan period another five Blocks were started in Nowgong viz., Mayang in April 1956, and Kapili in October 1966, Kaliabor in April 1958, Lawkhowa in April 1959, and Rupahi in October 1960, raising the number of Blocks to seven. In the meantime the Panchayat system was reorganised under the provision of the Panchayat Act of 1959. Accordingly thirteen Anchalik Panchayats were formed in the Nowgong district, each to be made co-terminus with the Block. Thereafter the seven existing Blocks became co-terminus with seven Anchalik Panchayats and the rest six Anchalik Panchayats functioned as shadow Blocks.

Thus at the end of the Second Plan period the number of Blocks co-terminus with Anchalik Panchayats stood at seven, four in stage II and three in stage I. As per schedule, the rest of the six Anchalik Panchayats Viz; Lanka, Jùria, Batadrava, Laharighat, Khagarijan and Jugijan were covered by the Community Development Programme by 1963-64. At present there are thirteen Community Development Blocks cum Anchalik Panchayats in the Nowgong district, the older ones being already normalised and the next five on due to be normalised.

The following table shows some of the particulars of the Blocks in the district.

PARTICULARS OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCKS IN NOWGONG DISTRICT.

Sl. No.	Name of the C. D. Blocks.	Name of Hd. quarters.	Area in sq. miles.	Population	Name of Mauzas	No. of villages	Date of estt.	Present stage.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1.	Bhurbandha	Bhurbandha	154.91	58,271	1. Silpukhuri 2. Mikirbheta 3. Dandua 4. Ghagua 5. Morigaon	139	Oct/53	Normalised
2.	Kathiatoli	Rengbeng	379.62	80,970	1. Kathiatoli 2. Kondoli 3. Kampur. 4. Gurubat 5. Jamunamukh 6. Singiapotoni	178	Oct/53	Normalised
3.	Mayang	Jagi Bhakat-gaon	227.78	58,594	1. Uttarkhola 2. Mayong 3. Gobha 4. Tetelia 5. Mandha 6. Pakaria	229	April/56	Normalised
4.	Kapili	Barapujia	122.65	66,047	1. Jagial 2. Raha 3. Barapujia 4. Sahari 5. Jorabari 6. Charaibahi 7. Niz Mikirgaon of Silpukhuri Mauza	121	Oct/56	Normalised

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
5.	Kaliabor	Hatbor	162.11	88,593	1. Pubthoria	123	April/58	Normalised
					2. Borbhagia			
					3. Chatial			
					4. Duarbaguri			
					5. Duarsolona			
6.	Lawkhowa	Singimari	66.29	51,393	1. Lawkhowa	57	April/59	Normalised
					2. Saidoria			
7.	Rupahi	Samaguri	135.59	66,768	1. Bheleuguri	134	Oct/60	Normalised
					2. Chalchali			
					3. Khatowal			
					4. Rongagora			
8.	Lanka	Lanka	217.69	33,501	1. Kaki	138	..	Stage 11.
					2. Kapasbari			
					3. Lanka			
					4. Lumding			
9.	Juria	Dagaon	73.10	62,859	1. Juria	75	..	-do-
					2. Alitangani			
10.	Batadraba	Dhing	78.14	63,159	1. Dhing	64	..	-do-
					2. Batadraba			
11.	Laharighat	Laharighat	163.11	88,593	1. Bokani	187	..	-do-
					2. Laharighat			
					3. Moirabari			
					4. Bhuragaon			
12.	Khagarijan	Nowgong	89.40	73,409	1. Nizsahari	106	..	-do-
					2. Kachamari			
					3. Pakhimaria			
					4. Hatichung			
13.	Jugijan	Hojai	212.96	49,048	1. Norati	130	..	-do-
					2. Hojai			
					3. Jugijan	130.	..	-do-

Staff Pattern : The Deputy Commissioner is entrusted with the full responsibility of the Community Development Programme 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, Panchayat, Co-operatives, (3) Social Education Organisers (male and fermale), (4) Medical Officer ; (5) Overseers, (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 over-all executive charge of the Community Development Blocks. 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 Heads 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 and also in collection of vital statistics.

As in other districts of Assam, the District Development Board and the District Development Committee formed in the initial stage were replaced by Sub-divisional 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 functioning till the time was abolished simultaneously and the post of the Sub-divisional Planning Officer was created in each Sub-division, in persuance 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-division level. It discusses and approves the schemes and budget proposals of the different Block-cum Anchalik Panchayats. The Sub-divisional Development Committee is formed with the different District Heads of Departments and Block Development Officers with the Deputy Commissioner or Sub-divisional Officer as the case may be and is responsible for formulating the development schemes and acts as the co-ordinating body.

There are also various other Committees both at the Sub-division and Block levels.

Government Expenditure :— The average expenditure per block (excluding the amount spent on special programmes) worked out is 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
1. Block Headquarters	100.9	112.5	109.8
2. Animal Husbandary and Agriculture ..	32.3	19.4	200.5
3. Irrigation	20.7	5.0	17.9
4. Reclamation	8.3	7.0	10.0
5. Health and Rural Sanitation	8.2	3.6	7.0
6. Education	6.5	2.2	5.2
7. Social Education	4.9	2.7	4.1
8. Communication	13.8	7.2	12.9
9. Rural Arts, Crafts and Industries ..	3.1	1.4	2.3
10. Housing	9.3	9.0	8.1
Total :	208.5	170.0	197.8

The total expenditure incurred by the Government in the Community Development Programme in Assam since 1952-53 to 1969-70 stands at Rs. 3,418.6 lakhs. The average peoples' contribution during 1969-70 stood at Rs. 1.6 thousand per block.

The progress of rural health and sanitation in the Blocks of the district during 1969-70 was slow except in the Kaliabor Block where 324 rural latrines, 45 sinkage pits, 99 smokeless *chullas* were constructed and for drinking water 49 new wells were constructed and 97 old wells were renovated. Kaliabor Block shared 2 Primary Health Centres out of 8 constructed during the year in the district.

The special Development Programme viz., the Applied Nutrition Programme covered the Batadraba Block only of this district out of 31 Blocks in Assam till the end of 1969-70. In 1970-71, Another Nutrition Programme styled Composite Programme for Women and Pre-school Children took up four Blocks namely. Juria, Rupahi, Jugijan and Kathiatali in phase-basis in order to acquaint the rural women folk with local nutritious food.

Blockwise physical achievements during 1969-70 are shown below.

Items	1969-70	1971-72
1	2	3
Distribution of improved seeds.		
1. Paddy (Qtl)	2,906	2,896
2. Others (,,)	1,386	1,386
3. Pulses (,,)	191	192
4. Oil seeds (Kg)	12,298	15,621
5. Vegetables (Pkts)	10,074	6,815
Distribution of fertilizers :		
6. Chemicals (Qtl)	1,767	1,863
7. Green manure (Qtl)	3,155	2,868
Distribution of improved implements :		
8. Iron plough (nos)	83	83
9. Paddy weeders (nos)	82	..
10. Dusters (nos)	46	..
11. Sprayers (nos)	112	..
12. Agricultural demonstration (nos)	553	..
13. Chemical pesticides (kg)	4,675	..
14. Compost manure (tonnes)	24,434	..
15. Seeds drills (nos)	18	..
Animal Husbandary :		
16. He-goats (nos)	10	..
17. Improved birds (nos)	64	..
18. Animal castrated (nos)	13,075	..
19. Artificial insemination (nos)	410	..
20. Land reclamation (hects)	120	..
Village Small Industries :		
21. Value of implements for Traditional crafts (Rs.)	500	..
22. Primary Agril. Credit Societies (nos)	232	..
23. Primary Agril. Marketing	20	..
24. Primary Agril. Processing	32	..
25. Joint/Collective farming	47	..
26. Others	171	..

Items	1969-70	1971-72
1	2	3
27. Moriband defunct Societies	45	..
28. Societies under liquidation process	48	..
29. Area pooled by Joint/Collective farming (hects) ..	294	..
30. Value of Agril. Produce sold (Rs.)	31,162	..
Health and Sanitation :		
31. Rural Latrines (nos)	328	..
32. Sinkage pits (nos)	45	..
33. Smokeless chullas (nos)	101	..
Drinking water :		
34. Wells constructed	69	..
35. Wells renovated	97	..
36. Value of contraceptive	2,208	..
37. Sterilisation (M+F)	1,884	..
38. Primary health centres with doctors.	8	..
Social Education :		
39. Literary centres	220	..
40. Adults made literate (men & Women)	910	..
Communication :		
41. New Kachha roads improved (kms)	13	..
42. Existing kachha roads improved (kms)	43	..
43. Culverts (constructed)	2	..
44. Culverts (repaired)	5	..
Panchayats :		
45. Meeting of Panchayat Samities/ Block Dev. Committees.	78	:
46. Average Nos. of members attending	342	..
47. Gram Panchayat members trained	30	..

CHAPTER X.

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

After the treaty of Yandaboo in 1826, when Lower Assam passed into the hands of the British, Nowgong along with Kamrup and Darrang was administered as the Lower Assam Division. In 1833, Nowgong was constituted into a separate district with its headquarters at Puranigudam. But dearth of suitable highlands at Puranigudam for establishment of headquarters made it necessary to shift the headquarters to Rongagora in 1835. As Rongagora was found unhealthy and not centrally situated, the headquarters were moved to Nowgong in 1839.

The boundaries of the Nowgong district had undergone considerable changes during the period from 1826 to 1951 on various occasions. The Dhansiri was originally selected as eastern frontier of the district, which, then included the present Mikir Hills district and a considerable portion of the North Cachar and Naga Hills. In 1853, North Cachar was formed into a separate sub-division and in the next year the small principality of Tula Ram Senapati was added to it. In 1867, a separate district was formed combining the Naga Hills and a large part of the Mikir Hills. The sub-division as created in 1853, was abolished and considerable portion of it was placed under the administration of Deputy Commissioner, Cachar. Again in 1898, a large portion of the Mikir Hills was re-transferred to Nowgong district. This newly formed district of Nowgong remained unchanged till 1951, when the Mikir Hills tract was taken off from it to form the new district of United Mikir and North-Cachar Hills. Thus the slicing away of the Mikir Hills tract from the Nowgong district caused it to lose approximately an area of 4,421.1 sq. kilometres along with 954 villages and B and C Hills of Lumding Police Station. [1]

Initially when the district was inaugurated, a Senior Assistant was at the helm of affairs of administration of the district. In 1861, the posts of the Senior or Principal Assistant along with the posts of the Junior and Sub-Assistants were redesignated as Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner and Extra Assistant Commissioner respectively. These officers having been invested with magisterial powers in respect of civil and criminal cases, the posts of *Sadar Amin* and *Munsiffs* were abolished sometime later. The same organisational set-up

1. *Census of India*, 1961, *Assam District Census Handbook*, Nowgong district, 1965, Gauhati, pp. 113-115.

continued for some decades. In 1903, the district was administered by the Deputy Commissioner who was allowed two Subordinate Magistrates as his immediate assistants. The total clerical strength then in the Deputy Commissioner's office was 43 who drew altogether Rs. 20,760 in salaries. Separate officers were in charge of the Police, Forests, Public Works and Medical department.[2] The new judicial cadre was constituted in 1956, and the civil suits were decided by the *Munsiffs*, Sub-Judges and the District Judge. 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 the cases, both criminal and civil, are decided by the *Munsiffs* and Judicial Magistrates.

At present, besides the Deputy Commissioner who is the administrative head of the District, there are one Additional Deputy Commissioner, one *Sadar* Sub-divisional 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 Sub-divisional Planning Officer, besides a host of non-gazetted officers. The Deputy Commissioner and the Assistant Commissioner belong to the Indian Administrative Services, the latter being a new recruit placed on probation. The Additional Deputy Commissioner may also belong to the same cadre but generally he is a member of the Assam Civil Service (Senior Grade). The Extra Assistant Commissioners belong to 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 Sub-deputy Collectors are also posted to assist the Deputy Commissioner, as Executive Magistrates.

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 when the character of the administration has undergone a great change. Till the separation of the judiciary, the Deputy Commissioner tried criminal cases and heard appeals from some 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 set-up the Deputy Commissioner is linked up with several departments of the State Government 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 exercises some amount of control in investigation of criminal cases by police although the Superintendent of Police is the head of the Police organisa-

2. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, Nowgong, Vol. VI, Calcutta, 1905, p. 205.

tion in the district. He is also closely associated with the developmental activities carried out by other departments such as Agriculture, Veterinary, Industry, Medical and Public Health etc. Thus the multifarious functions of the Deputy Commissioner form a sprawling net that fringes the area of operation of some departments and overshadow 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 Citizenship, 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 a member of the Assam Civil Service (I). He assists the Deputy Commissioner in the disposal of revenue matters. The Revenue Branch is sub-divided into various other branches such as Settlement, Land Ceiling, *Bakijai* and land sale, *Touzi*, Encroachment, Relief, Fisheries, Grazing Reserves etc. The *Bakijai* Branch deals with the recovery of 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 *Jarikaraks* 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 passport, issue of arms licenses, 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 Compensation Act etc. Till some years back the Treasury was entrusted to some Magistrates 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 concurrent powers of the District Registrar. There is one Sub-Registrar in the district at Nowgong. He is entrusted with the task of registration of documents. He is to act under the control of the Deputy Commissioner but the Registration Department of the Government of Assam regulates the transfer and promotion of the Sub-Registrar.

Other offices under the Deputy Commissioner : The Supply branch is headed by the Deputy Director of Supply in the district. The Officers of this Department belong to Supply Department ; but 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 Deparmtent. It is however an important responsibility of the Deputy Commissioner to conduct elections 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 Relation Officer is to act under the control of the Deputy Commissioner apart from that of his own Department.

The district is divided into eight revenue circles, namely Kaliabor, Samaguri, Nowgong, Dhing, Raha, Marigaon, Kampur and Lanka. 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 the Deputy Commissioner. In normal time, as the district head of the Revenue Department, the Deputy Commissioner acts as the Survey and Settlement Officer of the district.

In each Development Block, there is one Block Development Officer who is a member of the Assam Civil Service (Class II). The Block Development Officer is directly under the control of the Deputy Commissioner. He is also the ex-officio Secretary of the Anchalik Panchayats.

Information and Public Relations Department : Recently the name of the department has been changed from "Information and Publicity Department" to "Information and Public Relations Department".

The District Information and Public Relations Officer, Nowgong is the head of the district unit of this department and is under the control of the Director of Information and Public Relations, Assam, Gauhati. The District Information and Public Relations Officer issues press-releases on governmental activities and acts as Press Liaison Officer of the Government in the district. He gathers information on developmental activities in the Blocks and other departments and focusses public attention on these activities by issuing feature articles to the press. Attached to his office, there is a District Information Centre. This officer also arranges public meetings and group discussions on subjects like Civil Defence, increased production of food, and Family Planning. Fixed loud speaker system has been installed in Nowgong town for wide broadcasting of All India Radio news and important announcements. Arrangements for occasional cinema shows and exhibitions are also regarded as important functions of the department.

The Rural Broadcasting system in the village and in the suberbs 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.

Sub-divisional Administration : The sub-divisional administration is similar to that of the district administration. The Sub-Divisional Officer of the revenue sub-division is responsible for all the executive works of his sub-division to the Deputy Commissioner under which his sub-division falls. As such, approval of the district authority is required for all the policy matters and major issues relating to the sub-division. The Sub-divisional Officer is at the helm of administration in the sub-division and presides over all the boards or committees constituted for execution of the development programmes under the plans. There are two sub-divisions viz., Nowgong and Marigaon in the district of Nowgong.

As in the Sadar Sub-division, the Sub-Divisional Officer is helped in his executive works by the Extra-Assistant Commissioner in the Morigaon Sub-division.

Appendix 3.

A list of officers at the district and sub-divisional level.

1. District Agricultural Officer, Nowgong.
2. District Veterinary Officer, Nowgong.
3. District Information and Public Relation Officer, Nowgong.
4. District Transport Officer, Nowgong.
5. District Health Officer, Nowgong.
6. District Labour Officer, Nowgong.
7. District Social Education Officer, Nowgong.
8. Superintendent of Excise, Nowgong.
9. Settlement Officer, Nowgong.
10. Superintendent of Police, Nowgong.
11. Executive Engineer, (R. & B.) Nowgong, East Division, Nowgong.
12. Executive Engineer (R & B) Nowgong West Division, Nowgong.
13. Executive Engineer (R & B) P.W.D. Lumding Division, Nowgong.
14. Executive Engineer (Irrigation) Nowgong.
15. Executive Engineer, Flood Control, Nowgong.
16. Executive Engineer, Electrical, Nowgong.
17. Executive Engineer, Public Health Engineering, Nowgong Divn. Nowgong.
18. Executive Engineer (E&D) Nowgong Division, Nowgong.
19. Executive Engineer, (Agriculture) Nowgong Division, Nowgong.
20. Superintending Engineer, P.W.D. (R&B), Central Assam Circle, Nowgong.
21. Superintending Engineer, Central Assam Construction Circle, Nowgong.
22. Superintending Engineer, Central Investigation and Irrigation Circle, Nowgong.

23. Executive Engineer, P.W.D. (R&B), National High Way, Nowgong Division, Nowgong.
24. Executive Engineer, National High Way Survey and Investigation Division, Nowgong.
25. Sub-divisional Officer, P.W.D. (R&B), Mechanical Division, Nowgong.
26. Assistant Director, Cottage Industries, Nowgong.
27. Superintendent, Sericulture, Nowgong.
28. Deputy Director, Supply, Nowgong.
29. Divisional Forest Officer, Nowgong.
30. Manager, Government Live-stock Farm, Barhampur.
31. Divisional Forest Officer, Central Assam Afforestation Division, Nowgong.
32. Assistant Jute Development Officer, Nowgong.
33. Assistant Examiner, Local Accounts, Nowgong.
34. District Information and Public Relations Officer, Nowgong.
35. Assistant Employment Officer, Nowgong.
36. Assistant Registrar, Co-operative Societies, East Zone, Nowgong.
37. Assistant Registrar, Co-operative Societies, West Zone, Nowgong.
38. Assistant Town Planner, Town and Country Planning Organisation.
39. Superintendent, Weaving, Nowgong.
40. Fishery Officer, Fishery Department, Nowgong.
41. Inspector of Schools, Central Assam Circle, Nowgong.
42. Deputy Inspector of Schools, Central Assam Circle, Nowgong.
43. Inspector of Weights and Measures, Nowgong.
44. District Social Welfare Officer, Nowgong.
45. Labour Officer, Nowgong.
46. Jute Specialist, Jute Research Station, Shollongani, Nowgong.
47. Unit Officer, M.M.E.P. Nowgong.
48. Statistical Officer, Nowgong.

Most of the district level officers have got subordinate officers in the Morigaon sub-division to help them in the discharge of official duties. Similarly the Divisional and Zonal Officers also in almost all cases have got their subordinates. In some cases officers of equal rank and status are posted in the Morigaon sub-division for smooth running of the administration.

Besides these offices there are semi-Government, quashi-Government as well as autonomous Bodies or institutions functioning in the district.

The Central Government have possessed the following officers in the Nowgong district.

1. Divisional Accounts Officer, Northeast Frontier Railway, Lumding, Nowgong.
2. Divisional Commercial and Operating Superintendent, North East Frontier Railway, Lumding, Assam.
3. Divisional Engineer, 1(p), North East Frontier Railway, Lumding, Nowgong.
4. Divisional Engineer, III(p), North East Frontier Railway, Lumding, Nowgong.
5. Divisional Engineer, (p) North East Frontier Railway, Lumding, Nowgong.
6. Divisional Medical Officer, North East Frontier Railway, Lumding, Nowgong.
7. Divisional Mechanical Engineer(p) North East Frontier, Lumding, Nowgong.
8. Divisional Signal and Telecommunication Engineer, North East Frontier Railway, Lumding, Nowgong.
9. Divisional Security Officer, North East Frontier Railway, Lumding, Nowgong.
10. Superintendent, Post and Telegraph, Nowgong.
11. Field Publicity Officer, Nowgong.
12. Income tax Officer, Nowgong.
13. Offices of the Central Excise and Land Customs, Nowgong.
14. Office of the Food Corporation of India, Nowgong.
15. Office of the Central P.W.D., Nowgong.

There are other Central Government Offices in respect of different banks, Insurance Corporation, Fire Insurance Company etc., in the Nowgong district. Most of the banks have their branches in the important places of the district.

CHAPTER XI.

REVENUE ADMINISTRATION

(a) Land Revenue Administration :

History of land revenue assessment : The history of land revenue administration in the district of Nowgong goes back to the days of the Ahom rule in Assam. There was no land tax, as in British India, under the Ahoms. The nobility had *khels* or *parganas* under their control in which they administered justice and collected revenue in kind subject to the authority of the *Swargadeo*. In fact, under the Ahom rule, personal service was more important than land tax which has been described as follows,—"the system of revenue in force under the Ahom kings was one of personal service. The whole of the adult male population was divided into bodies of three men called *gots*, each individual being styled a *paik*. One *paik* out of the three was always engaged on labour for the State, and while so employed, was supported by the remaining members of his *got*".[1]

"The *paiks* were allowed to hold land for garden and home-stead, called *bari* land, without limitation as to extent and free of assessment, in acknowledgement of which they paid one rupee each annually either as house-tax or poll-tax or as hearth-tax according to the custom of the district concerned. In Kamrup it was a house-tax called *kharikatana* ; in Darrang it was a hearth-tax called *Charoo* (a tax upon every family or person cooking separately) ; and in Nowgong and Upper Assam it was a poll-tax called *gadhan* (body money) on each *paik* of full age. If a *paik* cultivated any rice land in excess of his two *puras* ($2\frac{2}{3}$ acres) he paid one rupee per annum per pura to the State.

Artisans and other non-cultivating classes paid a higher rate of poll-tax, amounting to Rs. 5 per head for gold washers and brass workers, Rs. 3 in the case of oil pressers and fishermen and Rs. 2 in the case of silk-weavers. The aboriginal and other wild tribes cultivating dry or hilly land for cotton etc., and not using plough paid a hoe-tax of Re. 1".[2]

During the Ahom rule the survey and re-survey of lands were also undertaken. In the History of Assam by Mr. Gait, it is mentioned that a survey of the country was carried out and a population census was taken in the reign of Chakradhvaj Singha. A detailed survey, based on the land measurement system of the

1. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Nowgong*, 1905, *page* 182.
2. N. K. Basu, *Assam in the Ahom Age*, Calcutta, 1970 page 153

Muhammadans was started in the reign of Gadadhar Singh and it was finally completed in the reign of Pramatta Singh. In conducting the survey operation during the native rule, the area of each field was calculated by measuring the four sides with a *nal* or bamboo pole, 12 feet long, and multiplying the mean length by the mean breadth. According to that calculation, the unit of area was the *pura*, which contained four standard Bengali *bighas* of 14,000 square feet. The Register or *Pera Kagaz* was also prepared which contained a list of all occupied lands, except homestead with their areas and particulars of rent-free estates.

Besides the regular revenue paying lands there were estates classified as *nisf-khiraj* estates, a class of tenure to be found only in the upper districts. Prior to the conquest of Assam by the British, the owners of *nisf-khiraj* estates held their land revenue free and called themselves *La-khirajdars*. The first British Commissioner of Assam Mr. Scott found that prior to Burmese conquest *La-khiraj* lands, in times of difficulties, had been assessed revenue at 5 *annas* a *pura* by the Assam Rajas. So he disregarded the claims of *La-khirajdars* to hold land revenue free and fixed their revenue at the same rate of 5 *annas* per *pura* and subsequently increased it to 7 or 8 *annas* a *pura* by the imposition of a tax known as police *barangani*.* The word *barangani* means money raised from the public for the public purpose. In 1834, when Jenkins took up as Commissioner, the *La-khirajdars* objected to pay this tax and the matter was referred to the Government of India. The Government of India directed a full enquiry into all such claims of rent free land on the part of Rajas, temples, religious institutions and lands claimed to had been donoted by the Ahom kings for exclusively religious purposes. General Jenkins divided the *la-khiraj* lands into *Debottar* i.e. lands appropriated to temples or religious institutions as *Bhogdhani* and *paikan* and *Brahmottar and Dharmottar* i.e. lands devoted to some religious purposes in form of a gift by a pre-British ruling king to a particular person and his descendants in order to enable them to devote their efforts towards maintenance of a particular deity. Temple or religious institutional lands or *Debottar* lands were gifts towards maintenance of a particular temple or deity and it is deemed as *bhogdhani*, and *paikan* lands were gifts distributed amongst the different temple owners and their dependents attached to that particular temple or deity and it was a part of *Debottar* land gifted out to the religious institutions i.e. *Satra* or temple. In all cases of *Debottar* lands he confirmed grants revenue free, if the claim found to have been bonafide and valid. In the case of bonafide and valid *Dharmottar* and *Brahmottar* grants, he simply confirmed the grantee in possession subject to the payment of the revenue at the rate fixed by Mr. Scott. In 1871 the later class was termed as *nisf-khiraj* land in order to avoid confusion with the word *La-khiraj* i.e. revenue free land.

* The Assam Land Revenue Report, 1874-75, paragraph 125 and letter from Captain Boby to Commissioner of Assam No. 26, dated the 14th June, 1834.

The only *nisf-khiraj* estate in Nowgong is Auniati *nisf-khiraj* estate which covers an area of 3,796 *bighas* of land.

Large estates of *khiraj* lands were called *Chamuas* or *Khats*. *Chamua*-holders or *khat-dars* had the special privilege of paying revenue direct into the Government treasury. Land covered by *Chamua* may lie uncultivated - but *Chaumuadar* had to pay revenue on the entire *Chamua* land. As for *khat* lands assessment of revenue was made annually after measuring the land under cultivation at the time of preparing the *doul*.

There are two such *khats* in Nowgong - one is Auniati *khat* with an area of 6,033 *bighas*, revenue payable on 3,742 bighas of cultivable land in 1929-30. The other was Balikhana khat with an area of 648 *bighas* revenue being assessed only on 506 *bighas* cultivable land in 1929-30. Position now changes with the introduction of land reform measures under the Tenancy and the Ceiling Acts.

With the occupation of Assam by the British, compulsory labour was abolished and *paik* land was assessed to revenue. In 1835 the rates assessed in Nowgong and Kaliabor were four *annas* a *bigha* on *rupit* land and two *annas* a *bigha* on *bao* land and land exposed to floods. *Basti* land was made free of revenue but a poll tax of one rupee was levied on each adult. In Mikir *mahal* the rates of land revenue were five *annas* and two and a half *annas* per *bigha*. In the *chapari*, Raha, Jamunamukh and Morang there was no land revenue but instead a tax of two or three rupees on each plough and one rupee on each man cultivating with a spade was levied. A poll tax of one rupee was also levied on *fisherman* and *Polter* and five rupees on each *Morias* or working brass-smith.

In 1868, according to Colonel Hopkinson's settlement, it was proposed to discriminate between *basti* or garden and other lands and to raise the *bigha* rates to one rupee for *basti*, ten *annas* for *rupit* and eight *annas* for other lands. No discrimination was made between good and bad land in the same class or even between district and district. These rates were made effective from 1868-69 without making detailed enquiries and without estimating the comparative values of the three classes of land. The rates were described as moderate as they were never seriously contended although there was an excess of forty per cent over the previous rates.

The next settlement was made in 1893. In this settlement the three-fold division of land was retained but 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 varied with the grade of the village. The villages were provisionally graded by the Director of Land Records and Agriculture. The class in which each village was placed was determined by the demand for land and not by any intrinsic considerations of the value of the produce, the

fertility of the soil or the profits of cultivation. The demand for land was ascertained taking into consideration the density of population, the proportion of settled to unsettled land and the proportion of fluctuating cultivation. The enquiry was made by the ordinary district staff in a short time and made no pretensions to scientific accuracy as it was considered unnecessary. The principle on which the settlement was based was that "the worst lands were capable of bearing the assessment imposed and that Government alone was a loser by its inequalities."[3] Land in Nowgong town was assessed at a uniform rate of two rupees a *bigha*. The following table shows the rate of rural revenue per *bigha* as per the settlement of 1893-94.

Class	Basti	Rupit	Faringati
1	2	3	4
	Rs. as.	Rs. as	Rs. as.
1st.	1—6	1—0	0—12
2nd	1—4	0—14	0—10
3rd	1—2	0—12	0—9
4th	1—0	0—10	0—8

Most of the land on which the staple crops of Nowgong district were grown was held direct from Government by the actual cultivators on annual or periodic leases. Periodic leases conferred a right of re-settlement and a heritable and transferable title, whereas annual leases only authorised the occupation of the land for a single year though in practice the rights of transfer, inheritance and re-settlement were recognised. The only drawback of the annual lease was that if the land was required by Government, it could be resumed without payment of compensation to the occupant.

During the period 1834-93 there was a gradual expansion of the land revenue and the settled area. But the next decade of 1893-1903 was a disastrous period for the district primarily due to the loss of about one-fourth of the population by *kala-azar*. The great earthquake of 1897 also brought many changes in the configuration of the land. As a result of these natural calamities the amount of land revenue greatly decreased in 1902-1903. The decrease in revenue between 1893-94 and 1900-1901 was 23 per cent. The arrears of revenue in 1900 amounted to twenty per cent of the demand and by 1900-1901, a sum of Rs. 46,691 was written off as irrecoverable. On representation of the local Government, the Government of India granted an abatement of revenue to the

3. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Nowgong*, 1905, p. 185-86.

extent of one lakh rupees and all the first and second class villages were reduced to third and those in the third reduced to fourth class with the rates in force prior to 1893.[4] This unfortunate decennial settlement of 1893 came to an end in 1903 and the reassessments were made on a new principle of soil-unit system introduced by Sir Bampfylde Fuller, the then Chief Commissioner. The following table shows the gradual expansion of land revenue and settled areas in the district since 1834-35.[5]

Year	Rupees	Acres.
1834-35	60,475	N.A.
1852-53	1,53,024	1,76,589
1865-66	1,16,660	2,33,117
1868-69	3,53,147	N.A.
1892-93	5,41,144	3,44,522
1893-94	6,90,980	3,35,469
1902-03	4,67,478	2,65,889
1903-04	4,77,613	2,72,829

The following table shows the classification of land settled in Nowgong district from 1900 to 1904

Particulars	1900-01	1901-02	1902-03	1903-04
	Acres	Acres	Acres	Acres
Total land settled for cultivation of ordinary crops	2,01,509	1,99,570	2,07,079	2,13,844
Held on ordinary tenures ..	1,93,813	1,91,874	1,99,383	2,06,148
Held revenue free or *Lakhiraj*	2,314	2,314	2,314	2,314
Held at half rates or *Nisfkhiraj* ..	5,382	5,382	5,382	5,382
Total land settled for cultivation of special staples.	56,229	56,158	56,161	56,318
Area of fee-simple and commuted grants.	21,349	21,349	21,349	21,349
Area settled under other special rules.	469	469	469	469
Area settled on 30 years lease ..	30,998	30,998	30,998	31,155
Area held under ordinary rules or resettled on expiry of 30 years lease	3,413	3,342	3,345	3,345
Total land settled under other tenures	2,566	2,602	2,649	2,667
Total settled area of the district	2,60,304	2,58,330	2,65,889	2,72,829
Total unsettled area of the district.	21,99,216	22,01,190	21,93,631	21,86,691

4. *Report on the Resettlement of the Nowgong District* during the years 1926 to 1932, Shillong, p. 20.
5. Ibid page 22.

The next settlement of Nowgong district was carried out during 1905-1909. The scheme of classification of land adopted in Nowgong district was said to be a "further simplification of Kamrup system"[6] There was no further classification of irrigated lands. *Rupit* land liable to floods was all put into one class, while the low-lying lands were divided into two classes *baotali* or land which ordinarily grows *bao* and *daloni* or swamp. Thus there were eleven classes of land. *Basti* was divided into three classes viz. *Bhalbari. Bari* and *Takalabari. Rupit* land was divided into eight classes viz. *Salitali* or *Bardhantali, Balia* (sandy) *Salitali, Lahitali, Balia Lahitali, Jalatak, Baotali, Dalani* and *Faringati.* For one group in which cultivation was fluctuating the old classification into *Basti, Rupit* and *Faringati* was retained. The *khiraj* area classed and settled was 5,21,024 *bighas* in the established groups and 86,853 *bighas* in the fluctuating group. Nowgong had suffered more heavily from *kala-azar* than any other district in Assam, and there were no grounds for any enhancement of revenue. The revenue assessed on the attested *khiraj* area was reduced from Rs. 4,30,316 to Rs. 4,22,693 or by 1.77 per cent. The revenue on *nisfkhiraj* estates which are small and unimportant in Nowgong, was reduced from Rs. 3,859 to Rs. 3,577 or by 7.309 per cent. The settlement was for 20 years from the 1st April 1909 ; land taken up after re-settlement was liable to re-classification in the 11th year of the resettlement period. In the previous settlement the *bigha* rate for established cultivation which was 11.63 *annas* was reduced to 11.52 *annas* during this settlement. The *bigha* rate for fluctuating cultivation was also reduced from 9.30 *annas* to 8.69 *annas.*

The rate of revenue assessed on lands held under periodic *pattas* for special cultivation also came up for revision during the re-settlement period. In view of the reduction allowed in the rate fixed for *faringati* land held for ordinary cultivation, the rates for tea-lands were revised to eight *annas* a *bigha* in the districts of Nowgong, Kamrup and Mangaldai Sub-division of Darrang district.

The period 1912-1923 was a prosperous one. The tea industry made rapid strides with the result that the demand for agricultural produce increased greatly. Prices having risen, large areas of land were brought under cultivation and influx of immigrants of Eastern Bengal also led to the settlement of large areas of land especially in Nowgong, Barpeta and Mangaldai. Settled areas in Nowgong district increased from 5,65,035 acres in 1912-13 to 6,09,529 acres in 1917-18, 6,50,591 acres in 1922-23, 6,96,708 acres in 1927-28, 7,86,647 acres in 1944-45 and finally to 8,12,381 acres in 1950-51.

The next settlement in the district was taken up on October 5, 1926 and it continued till January, 1932. The term of settlement was extended from twenty

6. *Assam Land Revenue Manual Vol. I,* Eighth edition, Introduction, p. LXXX.

to thirty years. At the last settlement the district was divided into seven groups and in this re-settlement only two alterations were made. The old *chapari* group was split into two groups viz. immigrant and *chapari.* The Lumding block of villages was previously assessed at a special rate under separate orders but in this settlement, this block was included in the Namati group (old Kopili group).

The re-settlement resulted in a total enhancement of 29.08 per cent with a *Khiraj* revenue demand of Rs. 11,30,358 for the district which was 6.72 per cent of the gross value of the agricultural products of the district. The incidence per settled *bigha* was 12.63 *annas* and that per cropped *bigha* 14.42 *annas.* The largest enhancements in the immigrant and Namati groups were 46.22 per cent and 31.25 per cent respectively. But the incidences per settled *bigha* and per cropped *bigha* were the lowest for the Namati group and nearly the lowest for the immigrant group amongst the established groups. The expansion of cultivation in the immigrant group was in jungle land with assessment at an all round *faringati* rate and in the Namati group land with a nominal assessment of three rupees per house. So the regular soil-classing and application of *bigha* rates of assessment had given the large percentage of enhancement. The application of the rules for deferred enhancement in individual *pattas* with steep rise in revenue demands provided the needed relief. The total surrender of revenue on this account in each of the first five years of the introduction of the new rates amounted to Rs. 44,991. A statement is given below showing the number of villages in each group with different unit rates as finally sanctioned by the Government. The range was between 0.40 and 1.20. The number of villages with unit rates above 1.10 was only 26 mostly in the central group near the towns ; in the Namati group the unit rates were the lowest varying from 1.00 to 0.40.[7]

Number of villages in groups (with different unit rates)

Unit rate	North-East	South-East	Central	North-West	South-West	Immi-grant	Namati	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
0.40	..	..	..	..	..	..	7	7
0.50	..	..	..	..	..	..	8	8
0.55	..	..	..	..	..	..	5	5
0.60	..	..	..	..	..	..	5	5

7. *Report on the Resettlement of the Nowgong District* during the years 1926 (October) to 1932 (January), Shillong, 1933, pp. 30-31,

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
0.65	..	1	..	..	..	..	45	46
0.70	6	3	..	..	4	..	65	78
0.75	12	27	..	..	..	..	13	52
0.80	23	45	1	3	..	34	2	108
0.85	15	31	5	24	26	44	2	147
0.90	40	24	4	37	60	69	2	236
0.95	46	12	23	39	32	59	3	214
1.00	19	2	22	50	8	76	2	179
1.05	21	3	24	35	9	59	..	151
1.10	13	..	28	17	2	25	..	85
1.15	3	..	16	4	..	..	..	22
1.20	..	..	7	..	..	..	..	7
Total	198	148	130	209	141	366	159	1,351

The central unit rate for the district was 0.95 and the *bigha* rates worked out were as follows.[8]

	Basti			Rupit		
	Bhal-bari	Bari	Takla-bari	Sali-tali	Balia-sali-tali	Lahi-tali
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Bigha rate	Rs. a 1 8	Rs. a 1 1	Rs. a 11	Rs. a 1 3	Rs. a 1 0	Rs. a 0 15

	Rupit		Bao		Faringati	
	Balia-lahi-tali	Jala-tak	Bao-tali	Dal-ani	Fari-ngati	Da-Far-ingati
1	8	9	10	11	12	13
Bigha rate in annas	11	12	11	6	10	11
Rs. 1-1-0 (*basti*)		*Annas* 15 (*rupit*)		*Annas* 9 (*bao*)	*Annas* 10 (*Faringati*)	

8. Ibid, p. 31.

In the *chapari* group the villages were placed in three different classes according to their situation and productivity of the soil and the *bigha* rates adopted were as follows[9] :—

Class	Basti	Rupit	Bao	Faringati
1	2	3	4	5
	Rs. a	Rs. a	Rs. a	Rs. a
I ..	1 0	0 14	0 10	0 9
II ..	0 14	0 13	0 10	0 9
III ..	0 12	0 12	0 9	0 8

The factor of the soil class multiplied by the unit rate gives the *bigha* rate in *annas* for each class ; half an *anna* is taken as one *anna* and anything below half an *anna* being neglected. This principle of calculating the *bigha* rate was not strictly followed in the first group i.e. south-west group (Mauzas—Gobha, Uttarkhala and Tetelia) as anything up to half anna was neglected. In all the subsequent groups half an anna was taken as one anna in fixing the *bigha* rates. As such the *bigha* rates differed in the first and subsequent established groups.

The new rates introduced in four groups viz South-west, South-east, central and north-east, were made effective from April 1, 1930 for thirty years. In the north-west group and Laokhowa, Juria and Dhing *mauzas* of the immigrant group the rates were also made effective from April 1, 1931 for thirty years. In Ghagua *mauza* of the *chapari* group the rates were made effective for fifteen years from April 1, 1931. In the *mauzas* of Bokani and Laharighat of the immigrant group and Mayang mauza of the *chapari* group the rates were effective for fourteen years from April 1, 1932 and in Namati group for fifteen years from April 1, 1932. The *mauzas* of Bokani, Laharighat and Mayang suffered badly in the Brahmaputra floods of 1931 and to allow the *ryots* time to recover from its effects the introduction of new rates were deferred by one year.

The next resettlement operation in the Nowgong district was taken in July 1963 and it continued upto June 1971. In this settlement the term of resettlement was also extended to 30 years. In assessing land, its productivity was taken into consideration. The immature areas and the towns were brought under resettlement with effect from 7.11.64 vide Government notification No. RSR. 18/63/78 dt. 5.11.64.

9. Ibid, p. 32.

AREA, IN *BIGHAS*, CLASSED BY TENURES.[10]

1926—32 Settlement Operation (Nowgong) (1 *bigha*=⅓ acre.)

	Settled area.								Unsettled area.						
	Khiraj periodic		Khiraj annual		Total Khiraj		*Nisf-Khiraj*	*Lakhiraj*	Special estate (if any)	Total	Roads and Embankments	Under water	Reserve	Waste	Total	Grand Total
	Ordinary	Special	Ordinary	Special	Ordinary	Special										
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
GRAND TOTAL																
At resettlement	985,147	10,281	446,351*	..	1,431,498*	10,281	18,440*	5,110	52,388	1,517,717	52,295	113,839	198,063	668,186	1,032,383	2,550,100
In the year preceding resettlement. ..	521,147	8,670	879,876	..	1,401,023	8,670	18,518	4,649	52,895	1,485,755	21,097	131,227	157,790	618.517	928,631	2,414,386
At last preceding resettlement.	426,038	5,712	173,467	23	599,525	5,735	15,551	6,853	56,483	684,147	10,627	152,037	..	1,316,735	1,479,399	2,163,546

10. Includes 122,914 *bighas* special annual.
Includes 62,511 *bighas* special annual.
N.B.— For changes in *lakhiraj* and *nisf-khiraj* see paragraph 81 of the Report. (Ibid)

Since 1926—32 the settlement of town lands was taken up separately. The flat rate of two rupees per *bigha* in Nowgong had continued for the preceding fifty years. But the extension of the town boundary had brought within it a large agricultural area changing its rural aspect into urban within the previous twenty years. Besides Nowgong, seven other towns had also been created under the provisions of the Land Revenue Manual. Chaparmukh, an old town had declined very much as a trade centre, Puranigudam also failed to expand as a town contrary to expectations and it was left to agricultural assessment. The following table shows the area and assessment of towns as they stood on January, 31, 1932.[11]

Name	Area (in bigha)						Revenue (in Rs.)			
	Trade	Unutilised trade	Residential	Unutilised residential	Agricultural	Total	Old	New According to final patta	New (1932-33) after allowing deferred enhancement.	Percentage of enhancement.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
							Rs.	Rs.	Rs.	
Nowgong Town ..	224	12	777	337	2,500	3,850	5,891	16,955	11,678	187.81
Dhing Town ..	61	..	..	..	1,247	1,308	805	2,539	1,870	215.53
Kadamani Town ..	12	26	..	..	29	67	42	351	247	735.71
Rupahi Town ..	29	..	..	..	1,340	1,369	779	1,865	1,474	139.41
Puranigudam Town	..	..	..	..	345	345	364	439	438	20.60
Silghat Town ..	9	..	6	..	36	51	67	116	116	74.18
Chaparmukh Town	31	..	20	..	191	242	213	280	280	31.46
Raha Town ..	24	..	11	..	253	288	207	968	687	367.63
Total : ..							8,368	23,513	16,790	181

In this resettlement operation Nowgong district was divided into two groups - established areas and immature areas. The established areas were further divided into four groups, namely, Raha-Kampur group ; Dhing-Marigaon group ; Samaguri-Kaliabor group and Sadar group. The immature group was divided into two- *Chapari* group and *Namati* group. The Tea-garden areas and the towns were formed into separate assessment groups and taken up separately. A large area under Reserved Forests was not cadastrally surveyed. The total area under it was 200.95 sq. miles. The tea garden area was 29.81 sq. miles only in Nowgong district.

11. Ibid, p. 10.

The unsurveyed lands not classified would be classified as and when settled with the settlers. Lands were classified into eight, namely, *Bhalbari, Bari, Salitali, Lahitali, Jalatak, Bao, Faringati* and *Special faringati* abandoning *Takalabari, Basti, Baliasalitali, Balialahitali, Dolani, Da-faringati,* and *Rupit* adopted in the last resettlement.

In the settlement operation of 1963—71, the unit rate and the *bigha* rates have been assessed at different rates in different groups. Such variation was made even mauza-wise. The variations of unit rate ranged from Rs. 4.25 to Rs. 7.50 while *bigha* rates varied from Rs. 1.80 to Re. 0.52.

Areas of settled land under different tenures and of unsettled land, and the comparative result in revenue collection will be evident from the tables A and B in page 339 respectively.

The total number of Revenue Free and New Lease Rules (N.L.R.) grant were 119 in this re-settlement operation. The total area under the grants were 1,18,438 *bighas* 3 *kathas* and 16 *lechas*. Soil factor was not accounted and as such a flat rate of Rs.2·00 per *bigha* was fixed on such land. The term of reassessment has also been extended for 30 years from 1.4.70. The total area under tea gardens in the district was 1,27,532 *bighas* while the area under actual tea cultivation was 49,725 *bighas*. The revenue from tea grants increased to Rs. 2,55,064/- which represented an increase of 218.71 per cent over Rs. 80,027/- of the previous settlement.

Area under different grants in the district is shown below :—

Sl. No.	Grant.	Total No.	Area		
			Bigha	*Katha*	*Lecha*
1.	Fee Simple grant	44	47,935	1	1
2.	N.L.R. grant	66	55,057	1	12
3.	Old grant	2	1,239	2	5
4.	Redeemed grant	7	5,232	3	18
	Total :		1,18,438	3	16

The area and revenue of other grants which were not used for tea cultivation at the preceding resettlement were 6,363 *bighas* and Rs. 3,976.87 respectively. At this re-settlement the area remained the same but the revenue increased to Rs. 6,842.12 ; the increase being 72.11 per cent.

Table—A.

Khiraj land periodic		*Khiraj* Annual		Total *khiraj*		In bigha			
Ordinary	Special	Ordinary	Special	Ordinary	Special	*Nisf-khiraj*	Lakhiraj	Total settled area	Unsettled area
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11,39,909	7,934	9,14,466	88,467	20,54,575	96,401	16,625	5,333	22,23,743	9,69,075

Table—'B'

Name of group	At the preceding resettlement			At the resettlement.			
	Revenue	Old unit rate	Incidence per settled *bigha*	Revenue	Incidence per cropped *bigha*	Unit incidence	New unit rate per *bigha*	Percentage (+) or (—) on present resettlement.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Raha-Kampur ..	2,89,464.78	5.79	0.77	3,48,958.54	0.79	4.88	5.32	+29.5
2. Dhing-Marigaon ..	2,72,777.39	5.95	0.75	3,52,722.43	0.78	4.96	6.41	+29.3
3. Samaguri-Kaliabor ..	3,04,871.94	6.03	1.05	3,95,543.51	1.08	5.14	6.67	+29.7
4. Sadar ..	2,34,658.03	6.63	0.89	3,04,273.63	0.90	5.67	7.35	+34.7
5. Namati ..	4,11,667.14	5.38	1.00	5,54,215.39	1.04	5.49	7.39	+34.6
6. *Chapari* ..	3,43,328.75	5.78	0.89	4,40,712.96	0.89	5.52	7·09	+28.4

In *Chapari* group an area of about 1,075 sq. miles was eroded by the Brahmaputra since the last resettlement of 1926-32. In this resettlement the total area of this group decreased to 332.88 sq· miles. In 1970-71 the settled areas in Nowgong district including town and tea garden lands were 23,07,049 *bighas* with an assessed revenue of Rs. 30,61,240 showing an increase of 48.1 per cent.

There were eight revenue towns in the previous settlement and ten more towns were created under the provisions of the Assam Land Revenue Manual with the growth of trade in the district. These are Mairabari, Bhuragaon, Kampur, Jakhalabandha, Jamunamukh, Lanka, Lumding, Dabaka, Marigaon, and Jagi. The rates per *bigha* of town lands in the year preceding resettlement varied from Rs. 100 to Rs. 300 but at the present resettlement the rates were increased and they varied from Rs. 450 to Rs. 600 while such rates for residential sites varied from Rs. 10 to Rs. 22.

For rural trade sites and for lands held by Oil India Limited, the rate of assessment was fixed at ten times the rate of the highest rated class of the village. Land acquired for Oil India Limited has been exempted from assessment of revenue. But for the purpose of assessment of local rate, such land have been classed as trade site.

The total revenue including local rates of the Nowgong district for the year 1968-69 and 1969-70 are shown below :—

Year	Demand (in Rupees)		Collection (in Rupees)	
	Current	Arrear	Current	Arrear
1	2	3	4	5
1968-69 ..	30,01,938	67,31,576	1,13,358	19,39,788
1969-70 ..	32,31,844	75,85,906	1,09,687	17,49,749

The following table shows arrears of settled lands under different tenures and unsettled land.

Khiraj Periodic		Khiraj Annual		Total Khiraj		*Nisf-Khiraj*	*La-Khiraj*	Total estates	Total settled areas.
Ordinary	Special	Ordinary	Special	Ordinary	Special				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. At resettlement : 11,39,909 ..	7,934	9,14,466	88,467	20,54,575	96,401	16,625	5,333	54,009	22,23,743
2. In the year preceding resettlement : 11,49,134 ..	7,806	9,74,938	89,172	21,24,072	96,978	16,625	53,676	53,676	22,96,684
3. At last re-settlement : 9,79,552 ..	11,199	9,15,897	15,521	18,95,249	26,720	18,440	5,017	54,147	19,99,573

Total unsettled land :

(1) At the settlement— .. .. 9,69,075 *bigha*
(2) In the year preceding resettlement .. .. 8,59,676 ,,
(3) At last resettlement .. .. 10,18,828 ,,

Waste Land Grant Rules : After the discovery of tea, the Government encouraged the opening up of the sparsely populated tracts which were not suitable for ordinary cultivation, for special cultivation on specially favourable terms. In every district of Assam there were many unclassed 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. Under the first rules known as the Special Grant Rules of 1838, no land of the Nowgong district was settled for special cultivation. Next rules were those for leasehold grants of the 23rd October 1854. These were known as the Old Assam Rules of 1854, under which no grant was to be for less than 500 acres and more than 5,000 acres. Afterwards the ceiling was reduced to 200 acres, or even 100 acres in special cases. One-fourth land of the grant was revenue free for ever. Three-fourths of the grant were to be revenue free for 15 years after which the three-fourths were to be assessed at 3 *annas* (0.19 paise) per acre for 10 years and at 6 *annas* or 0.37 paise per 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 469 acres were settled for two estates.

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 these provisions and a fresh set of rules was issued in the month of August, 1862. The rule issued provided for the disposal of the land to the applicant at fixed rate of 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 3,000 acres. Each grant was ordinarily to be a compact area. The upset price was to be not less than Rs. 2.50 an acre and in exceptional localities it might be as high as Rs. 10.00. Provisions were made for survey of land before sale and demarcation of the boundaries of the land in question and protection of proprietory or occupancy rights on land. The purchase money was to be paid either instantly or by instalments within 10 years. In the latter case, a portion of the purchase money not less than 10 per cent was to be paid at the time of sale and the balance within ten years of that date, with interest at 10 per cent per annum on the unpaid portion. The land was liable for re-sale on default of purchase money and interest due thereon. These rules were in force till August 1872, when the Leiutenant Governor of Bengal stopped further grants under them pending revision of the rules. Accordingly the Fee-Simple Rules were revised in February 1874, just before the constitution of the province as a separate administrative unit. The upset price of land was raised to Rs. 8.00 per acre. The Revised Fee-Simple Rules were in force until April

1876 in which year new rules were introduced. Under these rules the grant was issued for 30 years at progressive rates. The upset price was fixed at Re. 1.00 per acre. When the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation was enacted in 1886, these rules were revised and re-issued under sub-sections 12 and 29 of section 1 of the Settlement Rules.

These rules have remained in force until recently, but the extent of their application has been progressively restricted with the extension of cultivation. Land required for special cultivation has been taken up under other Sections of the Settlement Rules i.e. under terms very similar to those under which land is settled for ordinary cultivation. The term of 30 years leases has been extended on their expiry with slight increase of rate of revenue till 1932.

The Fee-Simple Lands and other lands which were allotted at concessional rates of revenue have since been assessed again to full revenue under the Assam Assessment of Revenue-free Waste Land Grant Act of 1948. Under the provision of this Act of 1948 such lands are assessable to full rates of revenue which should not however, exceed the rates assessed on similar type or classes of land in the neighbouring areas. This Act has abolished the concessional rates of revenue which were so long enjoyed by certain classes of land under special cultivation.

A table is appended below to show the settlements under different Waste Land Grant Rules in the Nowgong district.[12]

Rules of 1838		Rules of 1854		Fee-Simple Rules	
No.	Acre	No.	Area in acres	No.	Area in acres
1	2	3	4	5	6
..	..	2	469	42	15,652

Grants under Rules of 1838 and 1854 redeemed		30 year lease rules of 1876 and corresponding Settlement Rules.		Periodic lease for special cultivation.	
No.	Area in acres	No.	Area in acres	No.	Area in acres
7	8	9	10	11	12
13	5,499	71	24,598	65	4,630

(Figures stood in 1950-51)

12. The Assam Land Revenue Manual (Introduction) XII.

(ii) Present system of survey, assessment and collection of land revenue :

(a) Survey : The unsurveyed villages are at first traversed by the theodolite and the internal detailed survey is made on the polygons by chain survey which is known as cadastral survey. For this purpose a village is divided into several small parts which are demarcated by boundary marks. After this is done ; a map is prepared for each village, usually in the scale of 16 inches to a mile showing the roads, rivers, railways and other physical features of the land as well as the homesteads and fields. The fields are serially numbered on the basis of *dag* numbers given in the *chitha* where there is much fragmentation as in urban areas, maps of the scale of 32 inches to a mile are prepared.

(b) 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 population, the pressure on land, economic condition of the people, improvement of the means of communication, trade and commerce, increase in the standard of living, setting 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 such as -(1) the pressure of the existing rates of revenue on the land owners, (2) the probable trend of the future price level and (3) the prospects for the general improvement of the condition of the people in future.

The assessment of revenue is done on the distinct classification of land. In every resettlement operation all the lands are classified into certain groups, depending upon the use of the soil, productivity of the land and the soil properties etc. The soil-factors are taken into consideration and a detailed investigation is made to determine it.

During the pre-Independence days the incidence of land revenue on the lands used for tea cultivation was low; because, the mode of the assessment of land revenue on these lands were entirely different from that which was followed in case of other lands. The need to patronise the tea 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 rates of revenue on the lands used for ordinary cultivation and tea cultivation is quite considerable.

The rate of revenue on land for *sali* crop was assessed at Rs. 1.19 per *bigha* which continued till the resettlement operation of 1964-70. The maximum rate was as high as Rs. 1.50 per *bigha*. On the other hand the revenue paid for a *bigha* of tea land was 0.62 paise; but it has been increased to Rs. 2.00. 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 express exemption provided in the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, have been made liable to land revenue.

(c) Collection of land revenue : The collection of land revenue was first introduced in Nowgong district in 1833-34. Lands were settled directly with the *ryots* but the collection of land revenue was entrusted to an officer who received a commission of 12 per cent. However, he was not held responsible for the payment of the total revenue demand irrespective of the amount that he actually succeeded in collecting. In 1840 a Village Accountant or *Kakati* was appointed. He was given a commission of 2 per cent and this, in addition to the grants of land given to the peons, raised the total cost of collection to 16 per cent of the revenue realised. In 1839-40 a system of making a settlement with the *Mauzadar* for a term of years and holding him responsible for any loss that might occur but allowing him to absorb any profit that occured from the extension of the cultivation was made. But this was also found unsatisfactory and was abandoned. Recourse was again taken to annual settlement under which an officer was made responsible for collection of revenue. Efforts, however, continued to induce *Mauzadars* to take five-year leases of the *chapari mahals* on a commission of twenty per cent. Twenty *chapari mauzas* were thus settled. All but one *Mauzadar* relinquished their leases and accepted only annual settlement at the old rates of commission. The fiscal units were very small at that time and in 1853 there were 158 *Mauzadars* in Nowgong district exclusive of Mikir Hills.

Since then sizes of the *mauzas* were enlarged and in 1867 *Mauzadars* were given 15 per cent of the revenue as commision and were allowed half the revenue of the land reclaimed during the currency of settlement. Three years later the commission was reduced to ten per cent and in 1872 further restrictions were imposed whereby ten per cent could be drawn only on the first Rs. 6,000 of revenue and five per cent on the rest. In 1883, the idea gained ground that the Government would do better by putting the *Mauzadar* aside and employing salaried officials as a collecting agency. Accordingly *mauzas* were amalgamated and placed in charge of an official called the *Tahsildar*. He was exempted from the responsibility imposed upon the *Mauzadar* of paying in the revenue on due dates irrespective of the amounts collected. In 1892 in Nowgong district three *tahsils* were opened at Nowgong, Raha and Samaguri. This arrangement still left the *Mauzadars* with the responsibility of collecting

sixty per cent of the land revenue demand of the district. Subsequently many difficulties were encountered in dealing with the large number of *ryots* and in 1904 *tahsils* were again broken up into *mauzas*.

The *Mauzadari* system for collection of land revenue was re-introduced in the district and it continues till today. For the collection of Land revenue the district is divided into fifty four mauzas under eight revenue circles. Under each Circle there is one Sub-Deputy Collector for the purpose of revenue administration. The *Mauzadar* is appointed and dismissed by the Deputy Commissioner, with the approval of the Commissioner of the Plains Division. 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. His duty is confined to collection of revenue, and he has no concern with its assessment, settlement of land, the checking of maps or assessment papers. In certain cases however, the *Mauzadars* were 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 *ryots* 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 in full. The coercive measures which a *Mauzadar* can legally adopt against the defaulting *ryots* include attachment and sale of the moveable properties. This power can be exercised only upon being duly empowered by the State Government for this purpose. 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 17½ per cent on the first Rs. 15,000/- beyond it is 12½ per cent upto Rs. 40,000/-, and 7½ 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 Books, 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 sub-division 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 appoint 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 Settlement 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 functions 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 Subdivisional 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 sub-divisional headquarter. The Deputy Commissioner is also assisted by the Additional Deputy Commissioner who excercises concurrent powers with the Deputy Commissioner in the revenue matters.

The basis 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 titles and possession of all the fields and 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 holder, 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 subletting of land etc. The *Kanungo* 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 *Kanungos*. The Sub Deputy Collector carries on the revenue administration with the help of the *Mandals* and *Kanungos*.

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 field, 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 Subdivisional Officer, under the disposal of the officer called the Registrar *Kanungo*. 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 *Nisf-khiraj*. The *Jamabandis* are prepared in duplicate, one copy is kept with the recorder and the other, with the Registrar *Kanungo*, who is to maintain it up-to-date. The *Jamabandi* contains the number of the *patta*, name of the settlement holder, his father's name and the address, number of each field, class of each field, area of each field, the amount of revenue assessed on each field etc. The field maps are prepared on the basis of survey on the expiry of the term of settlement. 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 competant authorities.

(d) Income from Land Revenue and special cesses connected with it : Land revenue is an important source of revenue of the district. The following table gives an idea of the land revenue collected in the district.[13]

13. Figure for the period from 1951-52 to 1960-61 from *District Census Handbook* Nowgong, 1961, p. 352 and from 1963-64 to 1967-68 from *Statistical Abstract Assam* 1967-68 p. 226.

Year	Amount collected (in Rupees)
1951-52	1,444,157.00
1952-53	1,459,642.00
1953-54	1,469.870.00
1954-55	1,249,073.00
1955-56	1,886,863,00
1956-57	1,596,954.00
1957-58	232,755.00
1958-59	346,790.00
1959-60	490,813.00
1960-61	488,782.00
1963-64	2,591,998.00
1964-65 .. .. .. :	2,602,705.00
1965-66	3,815,426.00
1966-67	2,734,121.00
1967-68	1,833,915.00

Among miscellaneous land revenue income from fishery also constitutes an important source of revenue of the State Government. The following Statement shows the collection of fishery revenues in the district since 1960-61 to 1970-71 under Fishery Department.

Year	Revenue under Fish Farms Rs.	Revenue under natural fisheries. Rs.	Revenue under Fish Seed Production. Rs.	Total Rs.
1	2	3	4	5
1960-61 ..	17,649.60	4,408.00	2,583.28	24.641.08
1961-62 ..	18,475.97	8,426.25	10,648.86	37,551.08
1962-63 ..	12,043.42	8,800.00	11,478.67	32,322.09
1963-64 ..	13,213.61	9,897.00	2,783.50	22,894.21
1964-65 ..	16,485.41	22,869.08	18,234.00	57,588.49
1965-66 ..	29,631.11	12,560.75	30,429.40	72,621.26
1966-67 ..	17,953.40	20,059.25	17,539.26	65,551.91
1967-68 ..	38,720.21	12,565.75	9,946.70	61,232.66
1968-69 ..	31,947.55	42,454.88	7,053.25	81,455.68
1969-70 ..	45,798.13	39,084.11	..	84,882.24
1070-71 ..	50,335.67	27,908.00	..	78,243.67

(e) Land reforms : During the pre-Independence days certain tenancy Acts were enacted in order to protect the interest of the *ryots*. These enactments became necessary to check the indiscriminate eviction of the tenants and to prevent realisation of heavy rents by the land-lords. Although there are no *Zamindars* in the district, the *lakhiraj*, *nisfkhiraj* and the large *khiraj* holders generally sublet their lands to tenants under various terms and conditions such as *sukti*, *adhi*, *sukani* etc. In order to protect the interest of the tenants the Government of Assam have adopted many land reform measures since Independence. Implementation of these measures have brought vast changes in the agrarian structure of the district. Some of these measures are discussed below :—

Land Settlement Policy (1968) : 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 by the Government 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 latest policy statement of the Government of Assam lays down the principles to be followed in giving settlement of land. This is known as the Policy of Land Settlement (1968). The following are the important features of the aforesaid policy.

(i) Settlement of land will be given on the basis of a family. A family consisting of husband and wife, as the case may be and sons and daughters (excluding married sons and daughters having separate mess) would be treated as one family.

(ii) All settlement of government agricultural land for ordinary cultivation shall henceforward be made with the actual tiller of the soil only, that is to say, with a person who actually cultivates the land himself.

(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*, shall be so much as well, 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* ;
(c) those who have lands between 5 *bighas* and 8 *bighas*.
(d) those who have lands above 8 *bighas*.

(v) Land for homestead purposes may be settled upto a maximum of 2 *bighas* 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* 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 donot 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 the formation of Co-operative Farming Societies, the district authorities shall ensure that no person having lands above 10 *bighas* 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-operation of landless tillers.

(viii) Selection of allottees for settlement of land in any case which involves more than 10 *bighas* will henceforward 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 undertaken 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 : Large areas in the plains districts are inhabited by plains tribal people. Simple in nature, these people were living in primitive conditions, and due to lack of education and material advantages, they could not look after their own welfare and were incapable of protecting their own interest. A large number of out-siders mostly from East Bengal began to pour in large numbers into Assam from the beginning of the present century. They began to spread into the areas occupied by these tribal people. The tribal people being naturally shy and unable to live in peace with these new-comers began to recede into the interior. 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 this 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 the still 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 ;

(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 the following Tribal Belts and Blocks in Nowgong district.

Name of the Revenue Circle.	Name of Tribal Belt/ Blocks.	Area of Tribal Blocks (in bighas)
1	2	3
1. Sadar	Barkacharigaon	22,094
2. Raha	(i) Amsoi	19,916
	(ii) Bagariguri*	24,322
3. Marigaon	(i) Tetelia	58,595
	(ii) Gobha	28,254
	(iii) Palashguri	28,192
	(iv) Ghagua	27,785
	(v) Bhalukjuri	2,546
4. Dhing	(i) Jamadaria	8,343
	(ii) Baranguri pathar	21,471
5. Lanka	(i) Bardalang Lankabheti	23,335
	(ii) Barpathar	17,069
6. Kaliabor	(i) Amgurichang	1,770
	(ii) Phulgurichang	2,823

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 Nowgong district. Bengal Act of 1869 was considered sufficient to meet the requirements of Nowgong 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 liablilites of the agricultural tenants and landlords. It seeks to confer upon certain rights over the land. The tenants enjoyed *lakhiraj* lands or *khiraj* lands as *ryots* 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 sublet the land in question.

*Bagariguri falls under both Raha and Marigaon revenue Circles.

In order to give protection to the non-agricultural tenants in 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 is a temporary legislation which remains in force 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 ejectment 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 properly.

The Assam Adhiar Protection and Regulation Act was enacted in 1948, with a view to give protection to the *adhiars*, who cultivated land on the basis of crop-sharing with the landlord. The arbitary 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 tenent gets three-fourths to four-fifths of the total crop, depending upon the supply of the plough cattle by the landlords. Further there was provision in the Act that from the gross crop, the seedgrains would be paid to the person who contributed it.

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 followings are some of the important legislations implemented in the district.

(i) Ceiling on Agricultural holdings : The State Government has enacted an Act known as the Assam Fixation of Ceiling on Land Holding 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. The State Government shall acquire the possession of any excess land by publishing a notice in the official Gazette and all rights and interest of such persons in such excess lands shall stand transferred to the Government. In case the land is acquired by Government, compensation shall be paid to the owner of the land.

But this Act makes certain exceptions such as (a) lands belonging to any religious or Charitable institution of a public nature, (b) land held for special cultivation of tea purposes ancillary thereto, (c) 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, in 1962 and in 1975. To advise the Government in respect of Land Reforms, there is a Land Reforms Board in Assam consisting of 6 members, namely—(a) two non-official members nominated by the State Government, (b) three Officers of the State Government, namely, (i) the Commissioner of Plains Division, (ii) the Secretary to the Government of Assam in the Revenue Department and (iii) the Land Reform Officer who shall be the Secretary to the Board, and (c) a Chairman nominated by the State Government.

The ceiling was reduced to 75 *bighas* of agricultural land in 1963. As per the latest amendment of the Act (Assam Act IX of 1975), the limit has been further reduced to 50 *bighas*.

(iv) The Assam Land (Requisition and Acquisition) Act, 1948 (Assam Act XXV of 1948) : This 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 persons. The life of the Act was 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 Vinova 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 pure social ownership with village as a unit. The response for *gramdan* movement is confined among a small group of dedicated men and women. It has practically failed to make a dent on the individual ownership

of the rich landlords. However, twenty one villages have been donated under the *Gramdan* scheme so far in the district.

Agrarian movements of early times : There was no agrarian movement in the district of Nowgong except the movement of the people of Phulaguri in the year 1861. In this regard K. N. Dutt's writing depicting the whole picture of the said movement has been quoted from his book "Landmarks of the Freedom Struggle in Assam."

"In 1861, the peasant population of the Phulaguri area in the Nowgong District, mostly tribals, vehemently protested through their *mels* against the prohibition of poppy cultivation in that year and rumours of imposition of taxes on incomes on betel-nuts and *pan*. The authorities paid no heed to the sentiments of the people and promised no measures to rehabilitate or to remove their fears in other respects. In going to supress their demonstrations of resentment made by the people in October, 1861, one English Officer, Lt. Singer, a Junior Assistant Commissioner, lost his life. The people seeing that he had come not to listen to their grievances but to disperse them by force got infuriated and some one from amongst them struck the Officer on his head with a bamboo lathi and he fell down unconscious. The body was then thrown into the Kalong. The Police force accompanying him fled away out of panic. The military was called in by the District Officer from Gauhati and Tezpur after this incident to supress the rising and some eight tribal leaders were subsequently punished with death or transportation. But it was Lt. Scone, the arrogant and inefficient District Officer of Nowgong, whose tactlessness and highhanded proceedings aggravated the discontent of the people and made them militant. It is recorded that he often threw people into jail for merely trying to see him at Court with their petitions of complaint which he considered an offence. The authorities found on a judicial enquiry that he was primarily at fault, first in not giving a hearing to the people's grievance at Phulaguri, and then in deputing an inexperienced officer to deal with an excited crowd. But he was let off with only temporary degradation from his post. The episode is still remembered by the people of the district as the Phulaguri *Dhawa* or 'battle of Phulaguri'."

Rural wages and the condition of the agricultural labour : The villagers cultivate the land mostly by themselves and employ casual labourers only in harvesting and transplanting seasons. Only the rich cultivators can afford to employ labourers permanently. The wages earned by the agricultural labourers are low, compared to the wages of the labourers employed in some industries, such as tea. The category of agricultural labour is not organised. Though wages for agricultural labour have increased during the past few years, yet favourable conditions of work or benefits of service do not exist. The wages are paid either in cash or kind. It has been revealed during the Survey of the Rural

Economic condition of Nowgong district that wages paid in kind to the labourers varied from 5 *maunds* to 10 *maunds* of paddy during the busy season while in the slack season wages varied from 3 *maunds* to 5 *maunds*.

Administration of Other Sources of Revenue : Commensurating with the rise in the per capita incidence of taxation the Central and the State Government have set up a network of offices in all the districts. Some of the sources of revenue are collected in the district 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*. and Methylated spirit etc. There is one Superintendent of Excise in Nowgong. A host of Excise Inspectors and Assitsant 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*. These are sold 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 the 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 of Excise Revenue (in Rupees)
1951-52	6,44,531
1952-53	5,98,429
1953-54	5,02,058
1954-55	5,39,456
1955-56	7,21,851
1956-57	7,74,095
1957-58	7,58,387
1958-59	7,70,103
1959-60	7,67,081
1960-61	33,007
1961-62	N.A.
1962-63	37,692
1963-64	21,232
1964-65	11,844
1965-66	7,395
1966-67	14,710

For the administration of Assam Sales Tax, Assam Amusement and Betting Tax, Motor-Spirit and Lubricant Tax, Assam Professional Tax, Assam Agricultural Income Tax, Assam Finance Sales Tax, Assam Goods carried by Road and Inland Water-ways Tax, Central Sales Tax, Assam Passenger Tax, Assam Urban Immovable Property Tax etc., there is one Superintendent of Taxes at Nowgong. He is assisted by several Inspectors and is under the control of the Commissioner of Taxes, Assam. The following table shows the collection of different taxes in the district.

STATEMENT SHOWING THE COLLECTION OF REVENUE UNDER DIFFERENT TAXATION ACTS FOR THE YEAR 1963-64 to 1970-71 In the DISTRICT

Name of the act	1963-64	1964-65	1965-66	1966-67	1967-68	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. ASSAM SALES TAX ACT. ..	3,03,429	2,62,478	3,89,139	5,12,133	3,92,212	3,91,969	4,17,283	3,87,037
2. ASSAM FINANCE (S) TAX ACT.	1,86,872	2,23,755	2,96,241	4,03,734	6,42,423	6,94,807	6,72,179	7,12,779
3. CENTRAL SALES TAX ACT. ..	13,331	17,584	16,123	20,756	40,565	83,819	83,436	69,334
4. ASSAM MOTOR SPIRIT AND LUBRICANT TAXATION ACT. ..	35,991	8,253	4,055	5,089	4,524	3,896	4,749	7,402
5. ASSAM PROFESSIONS TAX ACT.	62,488	54,732	62,065	55,487	77,113	79,558	74,209	82,550
6. ASSAM PASSENGERS AND GOODS TAXATION ACT. ..	1,12,124	2,45,650	3,57,301	4,54,204	4,32,273	4,04,273	3,84,449	3,98,240
7. ASSAM AMUSEMENT AND BETTING TAXATION ACT. ..	3,04,106	3,46,802	3,82,727	4,48,171	5,56,034	5,10,057	6,74,910	7,29,544
8. ASSAM URBAN IMMOVEABLE PROPERTY TAX ACT. ..	2,674	6,824	21,662	18,393	21,647	21,861	3,530	N.A.
9. ASSAM TAXATION (ON GOODS CARRIED BY ROADS OR INLAND WATERWAYS) ACT. ..	N.A.	N.A.	29,732	N.A.	1,17,469	6,63,157	48,631	38,063
10. ASSAM ELECTRICITY DUTY ACT. .	N.A.	N.A.	19,366	40,866	38,130	60,191	39,569	59,892
TOTAL	10,21,014	11,66,079	15,78,409	19,58,836	23,22,390	29,13,415	24,02,945	24,84,840

The Government of India also levies a number of taxes in the district for the administration of which there is a separate staff. Most important of these taxes is the Income Tax, which has increased from nearly five lakhs rupees in 1952-53 to nineteen lakh rupees in 1970-71. There is an Income Tax Officer at Nowgong assisted by some Inspectors and office staff. The total Income tax collection of the district is shown below :—

Year	Income tax collected (in Rupees)
1951-52	14,85,707
1952-53	5,54,207
1053-54	3,39,440
1954-55	6,50.394
1955-56	6,33,254
1956-57	6,14,427
1957-58	9,87,582
1958-59	3,75,362
1959-60	6,57,613
1960-61	4,73,442
1961-62	7,89,000
1962-63	10,00,000
1963-64	12,22,000
1964-65	12,25,000
1965-66	13,16,000
1966-67	19,20,000
1967-68	19,20,972
1968-69	21,20,992
1969-70	15,92,813
1970-71	19.09,796

Besides Income Tax there are Gift tax, Wealth tax, Death duty etc. Other important sources of the Central Government are the Excise duties which are levied on tea, tobacco, vegetable and non-essential oil, synthetic yarns etc. These are administered by the Central Excise Department. The Excise duties on tea and tobacco are the important sources of Central revenue in the district of Nowgong. The statement below shows the collection of some Central taxes in the district during the years 1968-69 to 1970-71.[14]

Commodity	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71
	Rs.	Rs.	Rs.
1. Tea	32,88,731	28,98,053	41,82,782
2. Tobacco	5,57,898	5,54,942	6,89,534
3. Match	499	2,812	3,000
4. Synthetic yarn	1,525	34,830	33,815
5. Power looms (cotton fabrics)	585	720	117

14. Superintendent, Customs and Central Excise, Nowgong.

CHAPTER XII

LAW, ORDER AND JUSTICE

(a) Incidence of crimes in the district in early times :

It is difficult to assess the incidence of crimes committed in the district of Nowgong in early times and even during the Ahom period. No record of the number of persons tried was maintained. It was supposed to be the sacred duty on the part of a king to protect his subjects, to give them security of life, property and belief. The following instructions given to a Ahom king at the time of coronation give an idea of the duty of the king as to how he adjudicated the criminal cases. "Cherish and protect your subjects as your own children. Employ secret emissaries to ascetain their conditions. Bring capital criminals to condign punishment..... Exterminate traitors root and branch. Let not might prevail over right ; and let the strong who oppresses the weak be punished. Let thieves and robbers be diligently searched out ; thus shall your country be benefited by increased security".[1]

The king was the fountain of justice and was assisted by the three councillors viz, the Burha Gohain, the Bar Gohain and the Barpatra Gohain. The Barbaruah, the Barphukan and the Sadiyakhowa Gohain were the chief judicial authorities within their respective provinces. They had full jurisdiction in all cases, civil and criminal. Death sentence, however, required written approval order of the sovereign. The chief judges or governors of the provinces tried such cases openly and passed sentences with the concurrence of the assessors, who in the province of the Barphukan including Nowgong, were the six Phukans. In fact, they possessed jurisdiction in police and in civil and criminal law without any salary or regular fees. "An appeal lay to them from their subordinates and a second appeal could be made to the sovereign."[2] The officers in charge of King's *paiks* or servants, Choudhuries—the rent collectors and free land holders had charge of the police within their bounds and settled small disputes among their dependents and assumed the right of whipping.

The administration of criminal justice was characterised by sterness that often verged into physical torture. The prevailing law "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"[3] was followed to the extent of inflicting precisely the same

1. S. K. Bhuyan, *Atan Buragohain and his Times*, pp. 13-14.
2. Francis Hamilton, *An Account of Assam*, Gauhati, 1963, p. 50.
3. E. A. Gait, *A History of Assam*, Calcutta, 1967, p. 254.

injury on the criminals as that of the victim of that crime. Punishment for rebellion was of more severe nature varying from flaying and roasting alive, impaling, hanging, cutting throats, grinding between two wooden cylinders, sawing as under between two planks and by applying burning hoes to different parts of the body until they die. Capital punishment was sometimes extended to the whole family of the rebels including parents, brothers, sisters, wives and children. Francis Hamilton who visited Assam in 1807-09, has observed as follows :—

"Except the gang from Bengal, there are few robbers and atrocious housebreakers and pirates. Such persons are punished in a summary manner by thrusting out their eyes or by cutting off knee-paws. Petty thefts are very common and punished by whipping or by cutting off the nose or ears. The first punishment may be inflicted by any considerable officer, such as a Raja or Phukan, but the latter two can only be inflicted by the chief judge of the district."[4]

Inspite of such severity of punishment, the country was not free from rebellious activities as is evident by various uprisings against the Ahom rulers. The condition was mostly anarchical at the 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 desolation and anarchy. Life,property, honour were no longer safe and the people in their misery had even abandoned the cultivation of the soil, on which they depended for their very livelihood. 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."[5]

With the consolidation of the British administration of Assam normalcy prevailed over the country and the anarchical conditions were brought to an end. Criminal and Civil Courts were established at Nowgong. Records relating to the trial of cases were regularly maintained by the district administration. In 1854 while describing the economic condition of Nowgong, John Butler wrote, "In no district in Assam are the people in more prosperous circumstances than in Nowgong. Rice, their common food, is cheap and abundant ; numerous rivers and lakes afford a plentiful supply of fish ; their gardens furnish vegetables and fruit ; and the climate rendering but little clothing necessary, with a trifling revenue to pay, they have every reason to be satisfied and contented."[6] Although the British found the people of the district prosperous and contented, it appears that opium was universally used. Addiction to opium led to upheavals

4. Francis Hamilton, *An Account of Assam*, Gauhati, 1963, p. 50.
5. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Vol. VI, Nowgong*, Calcutta, 1905, p. 53.
6. John Butler, *Travels and Adventures in the Province of Assam*, 1855, p. 245.

at Phulaguri in 1861 when cultivation of opium was prohibited. After this uprising was brought under control, a period of uninterrupted peace prevailed. In 1902, "altogether there were 965 cases under the Penal Code returned as true, the immense majority of which were either offences against property or against the human body. There is little serious crime in Nowgong and most of these offences were petty assaults or thefts of small sums."[7]

(b) Incidence of crimes after independence :

The progress in various fields like industry, agriculture, trade and commerce after independence, has made the people of the district more heterogenous. The old order of the society has totally changed. The deteriorating economic condition of the general mass, acute scarcity and more demand for land, increasing high prices of essential commodities and many other reasons of the present times have added a new dimension to the problem of crimes in the district. Litigants who once shunned the court and bowed down to the decision of the local panchayat now frequently go to the court even for petty matters.

The following table indicates the incidence of crimes during the period of twenty years since 1949.[8]

Year	Rioting or unlawful assembly	Murder, attempt at murder, culpable homicide and murder by dacoity.	Grievious hurt and hurt by dangerous weapon	Robbery and dacoity	House breaking and lurking house trespass.	Theft including cattle theft.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1949 ..	54	30	90	25	470	407
1950 ..	33	25	59	55	348	279
1951 ..	44	21	82	45	358	319
1952 ..	68	35	84	56	426	331
1953 ..	64	41	77	60	368	316
1954 ..	84	30	84	40	392	284
1955 ..	116	33	90	53	281	348

7. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Vol. VI, Nowgong*, Calcutta, 1905, p. 206.
Source ; 8. (a) *Statstical Abstract of Assam*, 1958, p. 506.
(b) Ibid, 1960-61. p. 284.
(c) Ibid, 1967-68, p.p. 98-99.
(d) *Statistical Hand Book of Assam*, 1969, p.p. 130-31,
(e) Ibid, 1970, p.p. 118-119.
(f) Ibid, 1971, p.p. 120-121.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1956 ..	143	51	117	35	369	280
1957 ..	77	40	103	46	356	315
1958 ..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1959 ..	..	44	302	14	364	316
1966 ..	277	35	503	16	330	465
1967 ..	256	36	485	14	474	467
1968 ..	252	45	426	21	399	475
1969 ..	318	50	441	24	376	491
1970 ..	441	67	471	12	449	490

The total number of crimes reported in the district during 1970 was 6,536 only. The number includes 2,169 Non-First Information Report, 1,450 Motor-vehicle and 346 U.D. cases.

Varieties of crimes and their relative importance : The above account indicates only those cases which were registered and investigated, out of which a certain percentage only was finally convicted on proof. There were many unregistered cases in the district. Besides the crimes included in the list, many other cases of forgery, cheating, serious criminal force, receiving stolen property, other serious offences against persons, wrongful restraint and wrongful confinement, criminal intimidation etc. were also lodged and registered in different courts in the district. Hundreds of cases are registered every year under different special Acts namely the Foreigners Act, the Motor Vehicles Act, the Assam Excise Act, the Assam *Bhang* and *Ganja* Prohibition Act, the Essential Commodities Act and rules framed thereunder, the Food Adulteration Act and also the orders promulgated thereunder. In short, the over-all crime picture of the district is a conglomeration of a wide variety of cases registered under different Acts, both Central as well as State. A table is given below showing the total crimes tried and the number of criminals convicted during the period of 10 years from 1951-1960 in the district.[9]

Year	Number of criminal cases tried.	Number of criminals convicted.
1951	607	368
1952	4,127	1,782
1953	4,463	1,289
1954	4,376	1,644
1955	6,159	2,745
1956	4,523	2,634
1958	561	333
1959	547	342
1960	520	385

9. *Census Report, India, Nowgong*, 1961, p. 354.

Another table is appended below showing the total number of criminal cases and the number of cases disposed of and the number of cases pending at the end of each year for the period from 1963-1968.

Criminal cases in the court of Nowgong.

Year	Pending at the end of previous year.	Instituted during year.	Total	Disposed of	Pending at the end of the year.
1963	1,573	11,839	13,412	12,113	1,299
1964	1,299	12,978	14,227	12,599	1,678
1965	1,678	9,442	11,120	9,470	1,650
1966	1,650	9,320	10,970	9,881	1,089
1967	1,089	6,898	7,987	6,476	1,511
1968	1,511	1,724	3,235	1,893	1,342

Offences under the Motor Vehicles Act and the Excise Act have claimed a large share of the total number of cases registered under special Acts and local laws. The offences under the Motor Vehicles Act have assumed an upward trend in consequence of the increase of the large number of vehicles in the district and in the province as well.

(c) Police organisation :

(i) The historical background : Francis Hamilton has observed that, "the officers under whom the Paiks of the crown were placed, the persons (*Choudhuris*) who farm the revenue of the lands which are let for rent; and every one who has received free lands have charge of Police within the bounds which their people cultivate."[10] Such was the mode of raising the police force when he visited Assam in 1807-09. The police organisation of to-day is, however, a legacy of the British administration. To ensure security of life and property of the people of both rural and urban areas in the province, the police force was raised in Assam by the British Government even before 1857. In respect of early police administration, H. K. Barpujari has written as follows :— "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 the headquarters. He was aided in his duties by a *jamadar*, one or more *mohurrers* and a few constables or *Barkandazes*. There were no village watchmen or *Chowkidars* as in other provinces, but the *Chowdhuris*, the *Patgiris* and the *Mauzadars* were expected to assist the

10. Francis Hamilton, *An Account of Assam*, p. 49.

Daroga in the detection and apprehension of criminals. The jurisdiction of the *thanadars*.....extended, in most of the cases, over forty to fifty miles." In a country of jungles and marshes, where mobility was exceedingly slow, this extensive jurisdiction together with an inadequate staff rendered the police utterly inefficient. The usual emoluments received by a *Daroga* hardly exceeded rupees twenty with which he was expected to make both ends meet. This was certainly too inadequate a remuneration with which to demand of him honesty, discipline and efficiency. Far from the control of the higher authorities and vested with the power both of a prosecutor and the judge, the police official of the age had become a by-word of reproach for extortion and oppression."[11]

A table is given below to show the strength of police force for the years 1881, 1891 and 1901.[12]

Strength of police.

Particulars or descriptions	1881	1891	1901
Civil police Subordinate staff.			
1. District and Assistant Superintendents.	1	1	1
2. Inspectors, Subordinate Staff. ..	1	1	1
3. Sub-Inspectors	4	4	15
4. Head constables	8	14	11
5. Constables	86	128	166

The police force in the district was, however, expanded at the beginning of the present century. It appears in the old District Gazetteer of Nowgong that there were 3 police stations, one Road post and 4 out-posts in the district in 1904. The chart as given in old District Gazetteer, Nowgong is reproduced below.[13]

Police Stations and out-posts in 1904.

Name of police station and out-post.	Sanctioned strength			
	Sub-Inspectors.	Head constable	Constables.	Total
1	2	3	4	5
1. Jagi out-post	1	—	6	7
2. Jamunamukh out-post ..	1	—	7	8
3. Kaliabor out-post ..	1	—	6	7
4. Kuthari Road-post. ..	—	1	4	5
5. Nakhola out-post	1	—	5	6
6. Nowgong police station ..	3	—	12	15
7. Raha police station ..	2	—	10	12
8. Samaguri police station ..	2	—	10	12

11. H. K. Barpujari, *Assam in the Days of the Company*, pp. 194-195.
12. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Vol. VI, Nowgong*. Calcutta, 1905, Appendix Table—XVIII.
13. Ibid, Appendix—XIX.

Over and above this force, some more force was maintained in the district headquarters. The sanctioned strength consisted one Inspector, 15 Sub-Inspectors and 177 Constables. The whole police force in the district was under the charge of a District or an Assistant Superintendent of Police. Ninety-one smooth bore Martinis were allotted to Nowgong and a reserve of men was kept up at the district headquarters, who were armed with these weapons and were employed on guard and escort duties. There was very little organised crime in the district and hence the actual police duties were comparatively light. The village headmen or *Gaonburas* and elderly men assisted the police in their duties. Generally the police was to detect crimes. In addition to their normal duties, the police had to check the returns of vital statistics, to manage the pounds, to enquire the cases of unnatural death of human beings and also to serve all processes in warrant cases. The police Force consisted mostly of non-Assamese people. In 1912 there were seven thanas. The Kaliabor, Jagi, and Jamunamukh out-posts were converted into full-fledged Police Stations. Another Police Station was created at Lumding. A table is given below showing number of Police Stations and Police strength in 1912.[14]

Name of Police Stations	Sub-Inspector	Head constables	Constables
1	2	3	4
1. Jagiroad ..	1	1	9
2. Jamunamukh ..	1	1	6
3. Kaliabor ..	1	1	8
4. Nowgong ..	2	2	14
5. Raha ..	2	1	12
6. Samaguri ..	1	1	10
7. Lumding ..	1	3	14
8. Reserve ..	2	8	94

(ii) The present position of the District Police Force : The police organisation has been gradually increasing since the beginning of the century. But 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. The number of Police Stations and Out-Posts in the district has been increased and staff position augmented. Most of the Police Stations have been provided with telephones and Wireless sets. Fire service organisations have also been set-up under the police department since 1955. During the post-independence period there has been marked improvement of residential, recreational and other amenities besides substantial rise in salaries.

14. R. Friel, *Supplement to Assam District Gazetteers, Nowgong*, 1915, p. 67.

The following table shows the expansion of the Police Organisation in the Nowgong District during the period from 1949 to 1971.[15]

Year	No. of Police Superintendent	No. of Assistant Superintendent	No. of Deputy Superintendent.	No. of Inspectors	No. of Sub-Inspectors.	No. of Assistant Sub-Inspector & Head Constables.	No. of Constables.	Total	No. of Police Stations	No. of Police out-post.	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1949	..	1	..	1	5	26	69	480	582	..	..
1950	..	1	1	..	4	26	67	471	570	..	..
1951	..	1	1	..	4	26	67	473	572	..	..
1952	..	1	1	..	4	26	67	463	572	..	..
1953	..	1	1	..	4	27	67	473	573	..	..
1954	..	1	1	..	4	29	97	473	605	..	..
1955	..	1	1	..	4	29	67	473	575	..	..
1956	..	1	1	..	4	29	67	473	575	..	..
1957	..	1	1	..	5	32	70	474	583	..	..
1959	..	1	1	..	6	32	66	485	591	11	13
1966	..	2	2	..	9	82		1,045	1,140	2	19
1967	..	1	4	8	84	109		972	1,179	4	20
1968	..	1	4	8	84	109		972	1,179	5	19
1969	..	1	4	8	84	109		972	1,179	4	..
1970	..	1	4	8	84	109		972	1,179	..	20
1971	..	1	4	8	84	109		972	1,179	5	20
										5	20

15. (a) *Statistical Abstract of Assam*, 1958, pp. 297-304.
(b) Ibid, 1960-61, p. 268-69.
(c) Ibid, 1967-68, p. 84-86.
(d) *Report of the Superintendent of Police*, Nowgong.
(e) *Statistical Handbook of Assam*, 1969, p. 128.
(f) Ibid, 1970, p. 117.
(g) Ibid, 1972, p. 119.

Besides the above given police stations and out-posts, there are now 6 more temporary police out-posts in the district. The armed branch of the District Police force consists of one Inspector, four Sub-Inspectors, seventeen Habildars and two-hundred nineteen constables. At present organisational set-up of the police force in the district is as follows : the Superintendent of the police is the head of the District Police force and is assisted by the Deputy Superintendent of Police and the Additional Superintendent of Police in the district headquarters. Moreover a few Inspectors, Sub-Inspectors and Assistant Sub-Inspectors are posted in the district headquarters and are attached to the office of the Superintendent of Police to assist him in carrying out the administration. One Inspector of Police is placed in charge of East Circle, West Circle and South Circle each. They are to inspect the Police stations that fall within their respective jurisdictions. One Sub-Inspector of Police remains in-charge of the Police station in which he is posted. He is invested with full powers of investigation. He is popularly known as *Daroga*. Some Assistant Sub-Inspectors, literate constables and a batch of constables are placed in each *thana* under the officer in-charge of the *thana*, in order to assist him in his works. The *Daroga* or officer in-charge of a Police Station supervises the works of the out-posts or beat-posts which fall within the jurisdiction of his Police Station. A reserve force of police is generally kept in the headquarters for supplementing or replacing the force posted in the *thana* whenever required. The posts of the Inspector and above are all gazetted ones and lower posts are non-gazetted. All the posts are filled up by direct recruitment but there is provision for departmental promotion also.

In order to maintain law and order, police stations and out-posts are established in the important central places of the district. The out-posts are opened in the interior areas. The names of 15 police stations, and 5 out-posts in the district are, (1) Nowgong P.S., (2) Samaguri P.S., (3) Kaliabor P.S., (4) Rupahihat P.S., (5) Laharighat P.S., (6) Marigaon P.S., (7) Mikirbheta P.S., (8) Dhing P.S., (9) Raha P.S., (10) Lanka P.S., (11) Hojai P.S., (12) Murajhar P.S., (13) Kampur P.S., (14) Lumding P.S., (15) Jamunamukh P.S., (16) Haibargaon O.P., (17) Moamari O.P.. (18) Jagiroad O.P., (19) Debastan O.P., and (20) Panigaon O.P.

One company consisting of about 100 men of the Central Reserve Force has been stationed in the district to assist the regular police Force of the district in time of emergency. The Superintendent of Police deploys them when occasion arises.

State Fire Service Organisation : During the Second World War, Fire Brigade Services were opened in almost all the important towns of Assam under

the Civil Defence Organisation. After the war, all equipments brought for the purpose were disposed of and the organisation was abolished. The Fire Brigade Service was again revitalised in the early fifties. The Government of Assam sanctioned the establishment of the fire station at Nowgong. One Fire Service adviser of the rank of Superintendent of Police was appointed to run this State organisation.

Railway Police : This branch of Police organisation functions under the direct control of the Superintendent of Railway Police, whose headquarters are at Haflong. The main functions of the Railway Police are the prevention and the detection of crimes happening within the Railway areas and also in the running Trains. The Railway Police maintains watch over inter-state criminals and suspicious movement of travellers in trains. The railway Police is not required to perform watch and ward duties for which the Ministry of Railway has its own force known as the Railway Protection Force which provides escorts to treasures and goods trains. The Railway Police in Nowgong has two police stations at Lumding and Chaparmukh and two out-posts at Haibargaon and Hojai. Its strength in the district is 3 Sub-Inspectors, 5 Assistant Sub-Inspectors, 1 Head-constable and 37 constables. During the period from 1956 to 1964, the Railway police detected crimes within the district as follows :—

Year	No. of Crimes	Year	No. of Crimes.
1956	613	1960	641
1957	567	1962	565
1958	258	1963	640
1959	691	1964	758

Anti-Corruption Branch : The Anti-Corruption branch was first started in 1945. This branch is mainly concerned with detection of corrupt practices among the Government employees.

The Village Defence Organisation : The village Defence Organisation was first started in 1950 in the district of Sibsagar. Subsequently other districts were also included under this scheme. The Superintendent of Police remained in over-all charge of the district organisation. It sprung up as a voluntary organisation. The part played by the government to make this effective, has boosted up the organisation. It is a subsidised organisation and aims at creating a condition of order, peace and tranquility in the villages. The village Defence parties have been doing useful work by patrolling villages at night. They guard the vital installations including railway tracks. The members of the Village Defence Party are provided with one lantern, one torch light, one whistle, five blankets,

and five umbrellas. Each Village Defence Party also receives an amount of Rs. 60.00 per annum. This has emerged as a very powerful organisation in prevention and detection of crimes. In 1971, there were 500 registered and 221 unregistered Village Defence Parties in Nowgong district with a total membership of 43,260.

Home Guards : The Home Guard Organisation was abolished in 1949. In the wake of the Chinese agression in 1962, important towns of the Province were brought under the Civil Defence Scheme. There is one Home Guard Commandant at Nowgong who is in-charge of Home Guard organisation of the district. He is to work under the direct control of the Deputy Commissioner, Nowgong and the Director of Civil Defence and Home Guards, Gauhati. Young boys are recruited for training. During the training period and the camp period the Home Guards are supplied with uniforms, ammunitions, food and are also paid wages. When emergency arises they are called for duties. In 1971, there were 2,254 trained Home Guards, 13 *Habildars* and 13 *Jamadars* under the Nowgong district Home Guard Department.

Prohibition Squad : The Superintendent of Excise is the head of the Excise organisation in the district of Nowgong. He works under the immediate control of the Deputy Commissioner of Nowgong and under the Commissioner of Excise, Assam. The Excise Department enforces prohibition laws within the district. The Assam Opium Prohibition Act, 1947, The Assam Liquor Prohibition Act, 1960, The Assam *Ganja* and *Bhang* Prohibition Acts, 1958 have come into force within the district. There are 10 Excise Inspectors, 13 Assistant Excise Inspectors and 81 Constables. The whole district is divided into 9 Excise circles with one Excise Inspector in each circle, namely Lumding, Hojai, Kampur, Chaparmukh, Jagiroad, Marigaon, Dhing, Nowgong and Silghat. Besides these, 3 patrol parties are posted at Lumding, Chaparmukh and Nowgong for checking suspected railway and transport passengers. One Excise Inspector is in-charge of the Railway party posted at Nowgong. The district civil police helps the Excise parties at the time of raids.

(c) Jails :

In 1903 the district had only one jail. It had "accommodation for 49 male convicts and 14 under-trial prisoners. The Jail premises, which cover an area of almost 1.214058 hectares, were originally surrounded by a wall of masonry. Parts of this wall were thrown down by the earthquake of 1897, and the gaps have since been filled up with a bamboo palisade. Most of the wards are built of timber and bamboo with roofs of thatch. Female prisoners are transferred to Tezpur and male convicts sentenced to more than three month's imprisonment to Gauhati. The prisoners are principally employed on gardening and oil

pressing".[16] At present besides the District Jail there is a Special Jail established in 1950 at Nowgong. Both are by the banks of the Kalang river. The total area under the two jails is 62 *bigha* 4 *katha* 12 *locha* (8.417469 hectares) out of which 19 *bigha* 1 *katha* (2.569756 hectares) is used by the District Jail and 6 *bigha* 4 *kahta* 16 *locha* (.929778 hectares) by the Special Jail for gardening purposes. The old District Jail was converted into a Special Jail in 1950 mainly for political prisoners. The Special Jail accommodates 262 males and 4 female prisoners whereas the District Jail can hold 287 convicts including seven females. There is one 12 bedded hospital attached to each jail under the charge of one Assistant Surgeon, Grade I aided by a pharmacist. They are paid by the Jail authorities.

Prison Organisation : The Superintendent of Jail is the head of the staff in each Jail. The Jailor is primarily responsible for maintenance of prison discipline. He is to work under the supervision of the Superintendent of the Jail. The Jailor is assisted in his works by the Assistant Jailors, wardens and other staff in the Jail office.

Prison discipline : Strict discipline is maintained in both the Jails by the jail staff. The wards are locked just before sun-set and unlocked again in the morning. Food is supplied to the jail prisoners as per scale laid down in the Assam Jail Manual, where the provisions regulating the conduct of the prisoners are also laid down.

Average population and annual expenditure in the special Jail, Nowgong is given below :—

Year	Average population		Total annual expenditure	Costs per prisoner daily
	Male	Female		
1968	362.97	4.76	2,37,642.45	1.82
1969 ..	363.04	1.63	3,83,703.74	2.92
1970 ..	176.80	Nil.	3,91,188.44	6.17
1971 ..	170.80	Nil.	4,39,539.67	6.95

The prisoners are engaged in the gardening works. Varieties of vegetables are cultivated in the gardens of the jail. Unlike the prisoners of the District Jail the prisoners of the *Special Jail* Nowgong are not employed in the industry sector of the jail as is evident from the table below :—

Year	Earning from Garden	Earning from Industries.
1	2	3
	Rs.	Rs.
1968	5,217.00	Nil.
1969	2,335.00	Nil.
1970	2,202.00	Nil.
1971	786.00	Nil.

16. B. C Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Nowgong*, 1905, Calcutta, *Vol. VI*, p. 208.

Welfare of Prisoners : Due to occasional over crowding in the jails, sanitation becomes a serious problem for the jail authorities. In the jails, the authorities therefore, take utmost care to keep the jails neat and clean. There are facilities for medical treatment of the inmates of the jail within the jail premises. A doctor regularly visits the jails and there are six beds in the jail hospital for the prisoners. Besides, there are ample facilities for the prisoners for recreation, to hold musical and threatrical performances etc. within the jails. One teacher is engaged in each jail to acquaint the illiterate prisoners with the three R's. It may be mentioned here that there was no mortality in the Speical Jail during 1967-71. In the Special Jail, the prisoners are allowed to study and also to appear in the University examinations with previous permission of the Government. Moreover there are library facilities. Several daily news papers are also supplied to the jail prisoners for their use.

Board of Visitors : In order to inspect the sanitary condition of the jail and the general administration therein, the Government of Assam appoints a Board of Visitors for each District Jail. There are Boards of Visitors for both the jails of Nowgong. The Board of Visitors consists of the official and non-official members. It holds periodical meetings, inspects the jail premises and the wards and hears the grievances of the prisoners. The Board has no statutory powers but is advisory in nature.

Classes of Prisoners : The convicts are divided into three classes, viz., A, B and C. The Magistrates earmark the class of a particular convict. The A and B Class convicts are given some additional benefits. The security prisoners also enjoy some additional facilities including special diet and recreational facilities.

Lock-up : Lock-ups are attached almost to every police station of the district. They are generally meant for keeping the arrested persons for a period not exceeding twenty-four hours after the arrest. The prisoners are then produced before the magistrate of the court having jurisdiction. Such lock-ups are attached to the jails also.

Probation system : The Probation of Offenders Act, 1958 came into force in Assam in 1962, but the Act was given effect in the district of Nowgong in 1963. One District Probation officer who in 1970 has been re-designated as the Welfare Officer was appointed with his headquarters at Nowgong. The Probation of Offender's 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 imprisonment in jail. The Magistrate refers the case to the District Welfare Officer after the guilt has been established. After performing proper enquiry this Officer

gathers information about the guilty person in respect of his socio-economic back-ground, environments, previous records, etc. The Officer tries to ascertain the causes under which the offender committed such offence. The Welfare Officer then prepares a statement and submits the same to the court with his comment as to whether the particular offender may be released on probation or be given institutional treatment. If the court is satisfied it releases the offender on probation. The District Social Welfare Officer assumes reponsibility of putting the convict to some fruitful avocation so that the offender may rectify his conduct. The Officer visits the offender occasionally and gives necessary instructions on the basis of correctional methods. But if the offender on probation violates the rules and regulations or commits further offences, the District Welfare Officer refers his case to the magistrate concerned for taking appropriate action.

(d) Civil and Criminal Court :

Civil : From 1837 to 1860, Assam proper was administered by a Code of rules known as the Assam Code of 1837. These Rules were later supplemented by a few civil and criminal rules of 1839. These rules were extracts from the Bengal Regulations and were nothing but rules of judicial procedure only. In 1860 and 1861, the Civil and Criminal Procedure codes which were already in force in Bengal were extended to Assam also and the Assam Code was taken as repealed. From the 1st of July 1887, the Bengal, Agra and Assam Civil Courts Act (Act XII of 1887) came into force for the whole of Assam except such portions as for the time were not subject to the ordinary civil jurisdiction of the High Court.

Sardar (Dewani) courts were established in the Lower Assam districts which included the Nowgong district also in the year 1835 under Act II of 1835. The administration of civil justice in Nowgong district like other plains districts of the Brahmaputra Valley was under the control of the District Judge, Assam Valley Districts with his headquarters at Gauhati. The District Judge was under the direct control and supervision of the Calcutta High Court.

The administration of civil justice was as follows at the turn of the present century. "Civil work is not heavy, and the Deputy Commissioner acts as sub-judge while one of the Assistant magistrates discharges the function of a *munsiff*. In 1902, the sub-judge heard 5 original cases and 45 appeals, while 1,262 original suits were disposed of by the *munsiff*. Almost all of these cases were simple money suits and nearly three-fourths were disposed of without contest."[17]

Consequent upon the formation of a High Court for Assam, the control and supervision of the Calcutta High Court over all courts of Assam ceased to

17. Ibid, p 206.

exist. The Judgeship of the Lower Assam had jurisdiction over Nowgong, Darrang, Kamrup, Goalpara and Shillong. For sometime the Deputy Commissioner of Nowgong was the ex-officio Sub-Judge with jurisdiction all over the district. At a later stage a Sub-Judge was appointed for Nowgong district and subsequently Darrang district was also brought under his jurisdiction.

At present there is one District and Sessions Judge and one Assistant District and Sessions Judge at Nowgong besides two Munsiffs whose jurisdictions cover the entire district of Nowgong. The pecuniary jurisdiction of the Munsiff extends to all civil suits of value not exceeding 5,000 rupees, as against the previous pecuniary limit of 1,000 rupees. The District and Session Judge's and the Assistant District and Session Judge's pecuniary jurisdictions are unlimited. Appeal lies with the Assistant District and Session Judge from the Munsiff's court. The cases exceeding pecuniary limit of the Munsiff are instituted in the court of the Assistant District and Session Judge. Appeal from the decree of the Subordinate Judge as original court lies with the District and Session Judge. Other appeals lie with the Gauhati High Court. The Subordinate Judge is empowered to exercise the powers which are invested in the District Judge in respect of matters under the Indian Succession Act.

The statements below show the disposal of cases in various Civil Courts of the district during 1969-72.

1969

Name of Court	Pending from previous year	Money suit	Title suit	Rent Suit	Misc. cases	Execution cases	Total	Disposed	Pending
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Munsiff Court. ..	1,125	405	287	14	187	102	2,120	1,092	1,022
Assistant District Judge ..	259	56	173	..	70	51	609	319	290
District Judge ..	78	21	36	..	57	2	194	78	116
1970									
Munsiff Court ..	1,022	234	277	7	223	85	1,848	939	909
Assistant Dictrict Judge ..	290	87	202	..	57	79	715	308	407
District Judge ..	116	12	22	..	63	5	216	103	113

1971

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Munsiff Court ..	909	305	243	..	175	100	1,604	915	689
Assistant District Judge ..	407	96	196	..	65	82	845	510	335
District Judge ..	113	8	17	..	75	..	213	119	94
1972									
Munsiff Court ..	926	207	196	..	175	100	1,604	915	689
Assistant District Judge ..	335	46	107	..	47	61	596	387	209
District Judge ..	94	..	12	..	59	2	167	79	88

Some more tables are given below to show the number of civil suits, execution cases and appeals filed and disposed of under the Judgeship of Nowgong for the period from 1969 to 1972.

1969

Name of Court	Civil Suits			Execution Cases			Civil appeals		
	Total for disposal	No.of cases disposed of	Pending	Total for disposal of	No.of cases disposed of	Pending	Total for disposal	No.of cases disposed of	Pending
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
District Judge ..	77	46	31	8	5	3	48	40	8
Assistant District Judge ..	401	212	189	82	46	36	78	52	26
Munsiff Court ..	703	528	275	195	83	112	..	..	..
1970									
District Judge ..	74	51	23	8	3	5	31	22	9
Assistant District Judge ..	409	201	208	82	64	18	58	43	15
Munsiff Court ..	712	407	305	180	120	60	..	..	..
1971									
District Judge ..	44	35	9	6	4	2	38	29	9
Assistant District Judge ..	374	209	165	114	65	49	66	53	13
Munsiff Court ..	713	401	312	219	100	119	..	..	..
1972									
District Judge ..	106	92	14	8	2	6	38	28	10
Assistant District Judge ..	256	165	91	121	49	72	49	35	14
Munsiff Court ..	753	501	252	161	78	83	..	..	..

Criminal : For the purpose of administration of criminal justice, there were, at the beginning of this century a few magistrates in the district. Only two subordinate magistrates were attached to the Deputy Commissioner. The dispensation of criminal justice in the district was as follows : "Appeals lie to the Deputy Commissioner from orders passed by magistrates of the second or third class, and from the orders of first class magistrates to the Judge of the Assam Valley. Appeals from the Judge lie to the High Court of Fort William at Calcutta. In 1902, there were four stipendary and two honorary magistrates in the district and the former decided 1,072 and the latter 210 original criminal cases. In the course of these proceedings 3,148 witnesses were examined. Altogether there were 965 cases under the Penal Code returned as true, the immense majority of which were either offences against property or against the human body. There is little serious crime in Nowgong and most of these offences were either petty assaults or thefts of small sums."[18]

The volume of work was gradually on the increase and as such the number of magistrates was also increased. The Extra Assistant Commissioners and some of the Sub-Deputy Collectors were invested with magisterial powers of 1st, 2nd and 3rd class. Trials were held under the provision of the Criminal Procedure Code. The magistrates are invested with three classes of powers, viz., first. second and third. A magistrate is, at the initial stage, invested with third class magisterial powers. When he gathers office experience and efficiency, the State Government on the recommendation of the District Magistrate, invests him with magisterial powers of the second class. But at the time of conferring the 1st class magisterial powers, the Session Judge is ordinarily consulted.

The criminal cases are tried, at the first instance, by magistrates in accordance with the powers conferred upon them. In a sessions triable case, it is committed to the court of sessions by a First Class Magistrate, when it is found that a prima-facie case is established. On receipt of such commitments the Session Judge may keep the records with him for trial by himself or he may transfer the same to the Assistant Sessions Judge for trial. All criminal appeals are, at the first instance, filed in the court of the Sessions Judge. Appeals from the decision of magistrates of Second or Third class lie in the Court of the District Magistrate who does not exercise the power to hear appeals against orders of First Class Magistrates. Appeals from the decision of First Class Magistrates lie with the Session Judge. Appeals against the orders of the Session Judge and Assistant Session Judge lie with the High Court. The Session Judge also exercises powers under sections 435 and 528(2) Criminal Procedure Code over all Magistrates.

18. Ibid, pp. 105-206.

Besides trying within the courts, magistrates sometimes hold local trials. The local trial gives the trying Magistrates an opportunity to acquaint himself the actual circumstances under which the alleged offences were committed. Till 1946 many of the cases instituted under Section 100 of Criminal Procedure Code against habitual offenders were locally tried. These trials had a salutary effect on the people of the locality. Characters with criminal disposition felt the hammer of law, while the peace loving local people were doubly assured of their security.

Since 1953 competent courts have taken up holding of trials on open streets to detect offenders on the spot under the Municipal Bye-laws and Motor Vehicles Act. The courts are generally known as mobile courts and the practice is adopted for fostering better civic sense in the minds of all people.

In order to give effect to the quicker disposal of cases lying in different courts of the district, a monthly meeting is held among the magistrates of the court wherein difficulties faced by magistrates in quicker disposal of cases and measures to be adopted to remove them are discussed. Such discussion helps much in taking proper steps for minimising the number of cases pending for a long time.

Whenever the civil file of the *Munsiff* is comparatively light, he is invested with magisterial powers to enable him to try and dispose some criminal cases. Now-a-days *Munsiffs* also try criminal cases besides their normal civil duties. The State-cases in the magistrate's court are conducted by the Prosecuting Inspector who is assisted by an Assistant Public Prosecutor. All the prosecuting officers belong to the Police Department.

For conducting prosecution in sessions cases and for appeals and revisions before the Sessions Court, there is a Public Prosecutor who is assisted by a penal of Assistant Public Prosecutors. They are selected from amongst the lawyers at the station. The Public Prosecutor receives a retainer's fee over and above the fees due to him for the 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 penal of defence lawyers is also maintained to give legal assistance to paupers accused of offences punishable with death or imprisonment for life. Such lawyers also get remuneration as laid down in Assam Law Department Manual.

Separation of Executive and Judiciary : Separation of Executive from Judiciary was effected in Nowgong district in August 1967. A set of judicial officers who are under the direct control of the Gauhati High Court have been posted at Nowgong. These officers are entrusted with the trial of criminal cases.

There is one Additional District Magistrate (Judicial) and five judicial magistrates in the district. The following table shows the number of cases instituted, cases disposed and the cases pending in the courts of Judicial Magistrates of the district during the years 1969-1972.

Year	Cases instituted	Cases disposed of	Pending
1	2	3	4
1969	7,759	4,203	4,114
1970	8,386	5,885	4,364
1971	8,619	5,696	5,725
1972	9,242	4,531	5,400

The tables are given below to show criminal cases in the court of Session Judge from 1969 to 1972.

In the Court of Session Judge, Nowgong, Nowgong.

Year		Total for disposal.	Total disposed of	Pending on 31st December
1	2	3	4	5
1969	Criminal appeals	51	25	26
	Criminal Motion (Revision) ..	132	79	53
	Jail appeals	4	2	2
	Misc. cases	158	158	..
1970	Criminal appeals	72	52	20
	Criminal Motion (Revisions) ..	179	137	42
	Jail appeals	6	4	2
	Misc. cases	196	195	1
1971	Criminal appeals	49	47	2
	Criminal Motion (Revisions) ..	127	96	31
	Jail appeals	..	..	..
	Misc. cases	147	143	4
1972	Criminal appeals	39	35	4
	Criminal Motion (Revisions) ..	86	81	5
	Jail appeals	..	..	..
	Misc. cases	177	177	..

Sessions cases tried in the Court of Session, Nowgong, Nowgong.

District and Session Judge ..	1
Assistant District and Session Judge	1
Total	2

Year	Name of Court	Total cases for disposal	Total cases disposed of	Pending	Convicted	Acquitted
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1969	Session courts	58	25	33	18	60
	Assistant Session court	54	35	19	23	66
1970	Session court	79	59	20	54	215
	Assistant Session court.	38	24	14	5	94
1971	Session Court	39	26	13	11	75
	Assistant Session court.	28	16	12	3	55
1972	Session Court	57	37	20	50	85
	Assistant Session court	35	22	13	16	37

Revenue Court : Over and above the courts mentioned above there are other courts namely Revenue Court and Labour Courts, Adhi Conciliation Board etc. Various revenue courts are constituted under the Assam Land Revenue Regulation. The Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, Extra Assistant Commissioner, 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. 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 : (i) to the Board of Revenue, from the orders passed by the

Deputy Commissioner, Settlement Officer or Survey Officer, (ii) to the Deputy Commissioner, from orders of the Sub-Divisional Officer, Assistant Commissioners, Extra Assistant Commissioners and Sub-Deputy Collectors, (iii) to Settlement Officer from orders passed by the Assistant Settlement Officer, (iv) to Survey Officer from orders passed by an Assistant Survey Officer.

Labour Court : All the industrial disputes or labour disputes under the various Labour Acts are tried by the Labour Court. The Presiding Officer of the Labour Court, Gauhati has jurisdiction over the entire district of Nowgong. Besides this Labour Court there are Industrial Tribunals to which appeals lie from the orders of the Labour Court.

Adhi Conciliation Board : The Assam *Adhiar* Protection and Regulation Act 1948, Act XII of 1948 provided for the formation of the Adhi Conciliation Boards. This *Adhi* Conciliation Board decided disputes between the land lord and the *adhiar*. These Boards have been abolished in December, 1971.

(e) Legal Profession and Bar Association :

The Nowgong Bar Association was formed in the year of 1916 with seventeen members at the initial stage. This has since grown in size during the past 60 years. In 1960, there were 100 members in the Association. In 1971, it came to119 Advocates in the Nowgong Bar Association. The Bar has also got its own library with 1,646 Law books. In the Nowgong Court, there is also one Petition Writers' Association.

CHAPTER XIII.

OTHER DEPARTMENTS.

(I) Public Works Department :

The Public Works Department in Assam came into being in 1861 along with the creation of the Assam Circle under the Superintending Engineer. This officer was vested with the powers 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 1972. Since then the two posts have been entrusted to different persons.

Importance given to construction works under the First Five Year Plan and some massive flood control projects taken up during the early fifties led to the bifurcation of the Public Works Department on January 30, 1956 into two wings Public Works Department (Roads and Buildings Wing) and Public Works Department (Embankment and Drainage wing). At a later stage, the two wings were converted into separate Departments and placed under separate Chief Engineers who acted as the technical as well as the administrative heads of the respective Departments. Pubiic Works Department (Roads and Buildings wing) dealt with roads, bridges and buildings and Public Works Department (Embankment and Drainage wing) dealt with embankments, river training, flood protection and irrigation works. Later on, the Public Works Department (Embankment and Drainage) was re-designated as Flood Control and Irrigation Department. Its nomenclature was further changed to Flood Control Department with the creation of a new Department known as Irrigation Department with effect from January 1, 1974. Matters relating to irrigation and drainage hitherto dealt with not only by the Flood Control and Irrigation Department but also by the Agriculture Department were transferred to the newly created Department.

For administrative convenience each department is split up into circles comprising one or more districts or a part thereof and placed under one Superintending Engineer. Each circle is further divided into Divisions under Executive Engineers and each Division into Sub-divisions under Sub-divisional Officers and each sub-division into Sections under Sectional Officers.

Public Works in the early part of this century in Nowgong district, accor-
ding to B.C. Allen, were "in charge of the Assistant or Executive Engineer, who
is stationed at Tezpur and who has, under his orders, a Sub-divional officer with
two upper and four lower subordinates in Nowgong"[1] The construction works
entrusted to the Department were very light and limited to construction of larger
public buildings and the provincial roads and their maintenance. Also, such
works of the Local Boards as required technical skill and knowledge in Engineer-
ing were made over for execution to the Execuive Engineer who was also to
approve all other Local Board works costing rupees five hundred or more.
Later on, with the increase in constructional activities, a Sub-division was crea-
ted at Nowgong under the Golaghat Division. In April 1943, this Sub-division
was converted into a full-fledged Division under one Executive Engineer with
headquarters at Nowgong. There were three Sub-divisions namely, Nowgong
East Sub-Division, Nowgong West Sub-division and Dabaka Sub-division
under three Sub-Divisional Officers. In 1956, the Public Works Department
under-went further organisational changes and instead of one division, two
Public Works Divisions known as Nowgong East Division and Nowgong
West Division were created.

The National Highway conversion programme also led to the creation of
another new Division known as National Highway Division in 1962. In 1971,
another Public Works Division (Roads & Buildings) was opened at Lumding.
All the four Divisions formed a part of the Central Assam Circle under a Superin-
tending Engineer whose headquarters were at Nowgong. Another division
known as National Highway Survey and Investigation Division was set up on
December 28, 1971, at Nowgong for survey and investigation of National High-
way No. 36. This Division is under the Superintending Engineer, National
Highway Survey and Investigation Circle with headquarters at Diphu. In all,
Nowgong district has at present 5 Public Works (Roads & Buildings) Divisions.
Of these, three divisions namely, Nowgong East Division, Nowgong West Divi-
sion and Lumding Division are for State Roads and National Highway Division
is for conversion of the Assam Trunk Road from Jagiroad to Bagori into a
National Highway. The last division viz., National Highway Survey and Investi-
gation Division dealt with National Highway No 36 which, in Nowgong dis-
trict, extends from Nowgong to Parakhowa.

As mentioned earlier the organisational set-up of the Public Works
(Roads & Buildings) Department at the Divisional level conforms more or less
to the same pattern but the number of Sub-divisions and Sections generally
depends upon the work load. Nowgong East Division has three Sub-divisions

1. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Vol. VI, Nowgong*, 1905, Calcutta. p. 205.

—Nowgong East, Dabaka and Lumding Sub-division and ten Sections. Now-
gong West Division comprises Nowgong West, Marigaon and Kalangghat
Sub-divisions. With the abolition of Local Boards, 51 Local Board roads
covering 306 kilometres were transferred to Nowgong East Division and 54
such roads measuring 766 kilometres were transferred to Nowgong West
Division.

Besides construction and maintenance of roads, the Public Works Depart-
ment has constructed a number of bridges and buildings notable among which
are the R.C.C. bridges over the Kopili at Kampur and Kalangghat, the ware-
house at Hojai costing Rs. 2,90,800, the diary farm at Barhampur costing Rs.
2,19,660, the two-storied building for Constables at Nowgong costing Rs.
2,91,000, the Polytechnic Institute at Nowgong costing Rs. 16,30,218, the staff
quarters of Polytechnic Institute costing Rs. 3,21,898, the hostel of Industrial
Training Institute at Nowgong costing Rs. 6,59,700, the expansion of the Civil
Hospital building at Nowgong costing Rs. 6,74,594, the three-storied hostel
building for Normal School at Nowgong costing Rs. 9,28,500, the Nowgong
Court Building costing Rs. 12,94,000 and the Nowgong Circuit House
costing Rs. 1,57,513.

National Highway Division : With the completion of the works on
National Highway No. 31, the Executive Engineer's office was shifted from Bijni
to Nowgong to undertake the work of National Highway No. 37 from Jagiroad
to Bagari. The length of the National Highway under the division is 155.2
kilometres. The Division consists of three Sub-divisions—Nowgong No. I,
Nowgong No. II and Jagiroad with head-quarters at Nowgong, Jakhalabandha
and Jagiroad. Nowgong No. II Subdivision has been transferred to the Natio-
nal Highway Survey and Investigation Division, Nowgong. The division has
undertaken conversion of Assam Trunk Road into National Highway and has
constructed many bridges and culverts. Important bridges have been cons-
tructed across the Kalang, Kopili, Killing and Deopani at an estimated cost of
Rs. 12,04,147, Rs. 24,64,820, Rs. 16,42,940 and Rs. 8,78,848 respectively by till
March 1974. The total expenditure incurred is about Rs. 13,40,000 on the
conversion project.

National Highway Survey and Investigation Division : It has carried out
survey works for constructing National Highway No. 36 from Nowgong to Para-
khowa. The Nowgong-Namati-Lanka road upto Dabaka and Dabaka-Para-
khowa road covering 128 kilometres are to be improved and widened for con-
version into National Highway No. 36. The total rough estimate of the project
is Rs. 3.90 crores. Soil and field survey of the project have been completed at a
cost of Rs. 1,77,768 in December 1947 and Rs. 6,44,507 have been incurred for

the maintenance and repair of the two roads. The Division consists of National Highway Survey and Investigation Sub-division, Nowgong and Soil Survey and Investigation Sub-division, Nowgong.

Mechanical Sub-division : In 1958, a mechanical Sub-division was established at Nowgong under the control of the Executive Engineer, Mechanical Division, Gauhati with a view to undertaking all repairing works of machineries used by the five divisions in Nowgong district. It comprised of two sections of which one deals with repair works and the other manages the Stores.

Food Control : This Department came into being on January 1, 1974. But we may trace its origin in Nowgong district to 1948, when an Embankment and Drainage Sub-division was created at Nowgong under the Upper Assam Embankment and Drainage division with head-quarters at Jorhat. Prior to this, all the embankment and drainage works were carried out by the Public Works Department (Roads and Buildings). In January, 1954, this Sub-division was tagged to Tezpur Embankment and Drainage division and in July 1954, it was converted into a full-fledged division. Initially it had three Subdivisions viz. Nowgong, Morigaon and Laokhowa. With the completion of the Brahmaputra dyke from Silghat to Dhing, the Laokhowa Sub-division was abolished in 1959. There were six sections under Nowgong sub-division and three under Marigaon sub-division. With the creation of Irrigation Department on January 1, 1974, all matters relating to irrigation and drainage were taken away from it and entrusted to the newly created Irrigation Department. The department till then known as Flood Control and Irrigation was redesignated as the Flood Control Department.

It has completed the construction of the Brahmaputra retirement bund measuring 6 kilometres at a cost of Rs. 41,73,300. Raising and strengthening of the Brahmaputra dyke from Dhing to Hilaikhunda measuring 9.13 kilometres at a cost of Rs. 17,77,000 have also been completed. Another project viz. anti-erosion measures at Hatimura and restoration of flow of Brahmaputra-spill through Kalang has been taken up for execution. The project envisages construction of a tie bund from Barghap hill to Hatimura hill and two land spurs with one sluice culvert of multiple opening across the Kalang river.

Irrigation Department : This department under its new name came into being only on January 1,1974. Prior to it, its activities were the joint responsibility of the Flood Control and Irrigation Department (now known as Flood Control and Irrigation Department) and the Agriculture Department. The Department has two divisions with head-quarters at Nowgong. One division

was created in 1974 and the other was transferred from the Agriculture Department at the time of creation of this new department. The former has four subdivisions viz. Hojai, Jamunamukh, Jakhalabandha and Misa and 25 sections. The latter comprises only two subdivisions—Nowgong and Mayong.

The Department has taken up a number of irrigation schemes. Mention may be made of lift irrigation schemes at Kaliabor, Chaparmukh, Karchung *Satra*, Rupahi *bil* and Samaguri *bil* at estimated costs of Rs. 311 lakhs, Rs. 15.76 lakhs, Rs. 7.9 lakhs, Rs. 4.31 lakhs and Rs. 2.96 lakhs respectively. A detailed list of irrigation projects executed by the Irrigation Department has already been furnished in Chapter IV.

(II) Agriculture Department : During the pre-Second World War period, there was not much emphasis on agriculture. 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 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 Nowgong was started in 1945, with a District Agriculture Officer under the Director of Agriculture who is the technical and administrative head of the Department. Two Irrigation Inspectors and a few Demonstrators and one Plant Protection Inspector were posted in the district in 1946. Their functions were to implement the irrigation programmes and protect the crops against pests and diseases. With the inauguration of the Community Development Blocks, the Agricultural Inspectors were posted at the Block head-quarters under the immediate control of the Block Development Officers. With the increase of agricultural activities during the plan period, one Subdivisional Officer was also posted at Nowgong to assist the District Agriculture Officer.

The District Agriculture Officer at Nowgong heads the district organisation of the Agriculture Department and is fully responsible for implementation of the programmes of agricultural development through his subordinates. The

Subdivisional Officer, Nowgong to whom the financial powers are entrusted is also responsible for the implementation of the agricultural programmes. For implementation of the Grow More Food Scheme, the Jute Development Scheme and Horticulture Scheme, three Inspectors have been posted at the headquarters. 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 Nowgong.

There are thirteen Community Development Blocks in this district—each having one Agriculture Inspector designated as Extension Officer who is placed under the Control of the Block Development Officer subject to technical and administrative guidance of the District Agriculture Officer. In each Block there is also one Additional Extension Officer who is appointed for implementation of the rice and jute package programmes. One Assistant Agriculture Inspector and an Agriculture Demonstrator are also posted in each Community Development Block to assist the Agriculture Extension Officer, if necessity so demands.

The details of the activities and achievements of the Agriculture Department have been discussed in Chapter IV.

(III) Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department : Prior to 1953, it was known as the Civil Veterinary Department and in 1954, there was one Veterinary Inspector for the entire district. He was under the control and supervision of the Veterinary Superintendent whose headquarters were at Gauhati. At that time Nowgong Local Board had also established veterinary dispensaries at Nowgong, *Konwaritol*. Hojai, Raha, Morigaon, Dhing and Kampur each under one Veterinary Surgeon. Veterinary Field Assistants were also appointed to assist the Veterinary Surgeons. There were also one Live Stock Inspector and a few Live Stock Demonstrators in the district under the control of the Local Board, Nowgong.

It was in 1954, that the office of the District Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Officer was established at Nowgong. This officer heads the district organisation. In 1959, the financial powers of the Livestock Inspectors 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 Community Development Block has a veterinary dispensary in charge of a Veterinary Assistant Surgeon. One Extension Officer (Veterinary) and a Field Assistant were also appointed in each Block. During the post-Independence period some more dispensaries were established under the Department.

The district has now one hospital at Nowgong and 24 dispensaries in different parts of the district. The Veterinary Assistant Surgeons and Veterinary Field Assistants work in the Veterinary hospital and dispensaries. There is also one Mobile Veterinary Dispensary at Nowgong with one Veterinary Assistant Surgeon who is assisted by two Veterinary Field Assistants and other staff. The thirteen Veterinary Extension Officers working in the Blocks are assisted by one Veterinary Field Assistants each. The Veterinary staff in the Blocks work under the direct control of the Block Development Officers but the over all control in technical and in other administrative matters is exercised by the District Veterinary Officer.

There are three Farms namely, Poultry Farm, Live Stock Farm at Barhampur and Bull Farm at Kathiatoli. In order to improve the breed of local cattle by artificial insemination, four key Village Centres have been established at Barhampur, Saraibahi, Kampur and Fakali. Each Centre has some sub-centres under it. The Assistant Research Officer who is in-charge of the Central Semen collection Centre at Jagiroad is under the Intensive Cattle Development Programme. For development of cattle, private breeders are helped by financial assistance as well as by improved breeds of heifers by the Veterinary Department.

There are three Managers in-charge of the Farms mentioned above. There are one Milk Procurement Officer in-charge of Milk Supply Scheme at Jagiroad and one Assistant Poultry Development Officer in-charge of Egg and Poultry development scheme in Nowgong. Nutrition Programme has been taken up by the Kopili Development Block and Kaliabor Development Block.

There are one Live Stock Inspector and five Demonstrators who are entrusted with the Goat and Piggery development scheme. For efficient diagnosis and control of disease, one laboratory has also been established in the district during the Fourth Five Year Plan. The Laboratory is manned by one Assistant Research Officer, one technical Assistant and one Laboratory Assistant besides other menial staff.

(IV) Forest Department :

Initially there was one Forest Officer in Nowgong district, who was responsible for the management of Reserved Forests in the district. He worked under the control of the Conservator of Forests. The Unclassed State Forests were under the control of the Deputy Commissioner. There were ten Reserved Forests at the turn of the present century as mentioned in the *Assam District Gazetteers, Nowgong*, 1905. These forests were in charge of one extra Assistant Conservator of Forests. He was assisted by two Deputy Rangers, one Forester and twenty-one head guards and guards.

There has been considerable expansion of the Forest Department during the last six decades or so. There have also been some administrative changes with the creation of the Mikir Hills district. A number of reserved forests namely Rangkhang, Amsing, Junthung, Sildharampur, Selabar etc., have been transferred from Nowgong district to Mikir Hills. Again Burachapori, a unclassed forest lies within the boundary of the Nowgong district but is controlled by Divisional Forest Officer, Darrang Division.

The Divisional Forest Officer is the head of the Nowgong Forest Division at the district level and he is assisted by three Rangers and one Deputy Ranger besides usual office staff.

The Nowgong Forest Division comprises four ranges namely, the Northern range, the Western range, the Jamuna Valley range and the Kopili Valley range with headquarters at Salana, Dharamtul, Dabaka and Hojai respectively. Each range is in-charge of a Forest Range Officer who is assisted by a number of subordinate staff viz., one or more Deputy Rangers, Foresters, and Forest Guards depending upon the importance of the range. Each range is divided into beats and beats into sub-beats. There are altogether eight beats in Nowgong under 4 Forest Ranges. One Deputy Ranger assisted by one Forester, a few Forest Guards and one or two Game watchers, are in charge of a beat whereas a sub-beat is manned by a Forester assisted by one or two Forest Guards.

(V) Industries Department :

The office of the Superintendent of Industries was established in 1958. In 1960, it was upgraded to the office of the Assistant Director of Cottage Industries who was the head of the Industries Department in the district. Two Training centres viz., Carpentry Centre at Nowgong and Blacksmithy Centre at Dharamtul have been established by the Industries Department. The Cane and Bamboo and Tailoring Centre, originally established under the Block Development Officer at Kathiatoli has also been taken over by the Industries Department with the normalisation of the Block. There are thirteen Extension Officers (Industries) working in the Development Blocks for the development of cottage industries.

One Industrial Estate was established at Nowgong in 1970, with all the infrastructure like water, power etc. for the development of various types of industries. Recently Government of India have also sanctioned one Rural Industries Project for the Nowgong district. This office is also presently accommodated in the premises of the Assistant Director, Cottage Industries. The project is in charge of one Project Officer assisted by one Planning Officer, besides other staff. The project mainly aims at developing rural crafts.

The Assistant Director of Cottage Industries 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-aids to the industrial units. Thus his duty is to implement the programmes for the growth and development of cottage industries in the region. He is assisted by the Superintendent of industries and other officers. The Marketing Officer looks after the Government Emporiums and offers marketing facilities to the industrial units. The Extension Officers (Industries) in the Blocks keep the people informed about all industrial facilities and ensure industrial development within their respective areas.

In Nowgong which is an economically backward district, special incentives in the shape of transport subsidies, rebate in electricity charges etc., are provided to intending entrepreneurs desirous of establishing industrial units in the district.

(VI) State Excise Department :

Before creation of the post of the Excise Commissioner, matters relating to Excise were entrusted to the Commissioner of Divisions for the Assam Valley. There were only 3 Excise Inspectors for entire Assam. In 1904, the number of posts of Excise Inspectors was raised to 8 so as to provide one Inspector in each of the plains district of Assam. They worked under the direct control of the Deputy Commissioner of the district.

In 1905, a new state known as Eastern Bengal and Assam was formed and a whole time Commissioner of Excise was appointed. In 1910. the designation of Excise Inspector was changed to that of Superintendent of Excise and also the posts of Sub-Inspectors which were abolished in 1920, were again reintroduced in 1928 to be abolished again in 1948 on recommendation by the Pay Committee 1948.

Gradually the preventive and Inspecting staff were increased. The present departmental strength in the district is one Superintendent of Excise, 10 Excise Inspectors, 13 Assistant Excise Inspectors and 81 Constables with 9 Excise Circles. There are three patrol parties also in the district.

(VII) Co-operative Department :

The Co-operative Department at the district level is headed by a Deputy Registrar of Co-operative Societies, with headquarters at Nowgong. He is assisted by two Assistant Registrars one for the East Zone and the other for the West Zone, who, in turn are assisted by Deputy Co-operative Officers and Assistant Co-operative Officers. Moreover, in each Development Block there is one

Assistant Co-operative Officer under the control of the Block Development Officer. The services of the Co-operative Personnel are also made available to the different Co-operative enterprises viz., Marketing Societies, Consumers' Stores, Farming and Industrial Societies etc., for ensuring better management and control. There is one Liquidation-cum-Bakijai Officer in each zone.

(VIII) Statistics : At the district level, the department of Economics and Statistics is headed by the Statistical Officer, Nowgong, who is assisted by one Inspector. There are 13 Sub-Inspectors, four Primary Investigators, 7 Field Assistants and ministerial staff in Nowgong Sub-division. Among important functions of the office mention may be made of socio-economic survey, crop estimation survey, annual survey of industries, weekly price collection, crop forecast, compilation of crop area and irrigation abstract and collection of tea statistics.

(IX) Publicity : The district agency of the Directorate of Information and Public Relations is headed by the District Information and Public Relations Officer, Nowgong. His main task is to disseminate informations regarding the developmental and other beneficial activities of the Government. This is done by organising film shows, exhibitions and distribution of publicity materials. The district office has a mobile van through which publicity is organised in the interior parts of the district.

Organisational set ups of other departments like Fisheries, Sericulture and Weaving, Handloom, Excise, Health, Post and Telegraph, Tax etc., have already been discussed in detail together in respective preceding chapters dealing with their departmental activities.

CHAPTER XIV

LOCAL SELF GOVERNMENT

(a) History of Local Self-Government in Nowgong :

The present system of local self-government in Assam is a legacy of the British administration. Nevertheless, some form of local self-government was in existence even during the pre-British days. S. K. Bhuyan, noted historian in Assam, terms the *Namghars* established by Sankardeva as village parliaments. The following account depicts the true functions of the *Namghar*, which is regarded both as religious and social institution in Assamese Society.

"With the organisation of *sattras* came their decentralised replica, the institution of village *namghar*, something like the parish church. From the beginning, the *namghar* formed the hub of all village activities. It was the village club and theatre. It exercised a close spiritual control over all members of the community, and held them back from many an evil act. In fact, this institution might be called the village parliament, and a parliament run too on broad democratic principles. It was the village court ; trials of disputes and crimes were held in it, and no one dared disregard the judgement pronounced by the elders of the village. An excommunication could be decreed by this village panchayat, and is the worst thing that a man in society could dread in those days. Only difficult cases were referred to the Superior of the *sattra* to which the delinquent belonged, or to the government judiciary. Thus through the twin institutions of of *sattra* and *namghar* Assamese society was neatly organised ; and the moral tone of the people with such vigilance all around was bound to be very fine indeed."[1]

In the Pre-British days, the *khels* (unit of people) system which prevailed in Assam also played a notable part as an agency of local self-government. There were two *khels* of Sonowal (Gold washers) in the district of Nowgong. These *khels* were often robbed of their gold. So they gave up their profession and took to agriculture.

S. K. Bhuyan, in his *Anglo-Assamese Relations* mentions that Scott, the first Commissioner of Assam instituted panchayats in populous parganas and villages. In his famous *Report on Assam*, Moffat Mills also suggested reconstitution of the village councils and appointment of an influential class of men as

1. M. Neog, *The article, the Vaishnava Renaissance, Aspects of The Heritage of Assam, A Souvenir of Indian History Congress*, Gauhati by M. Neog, 1959, p. 40.

gaonburas for management of local affairs and thereby eliminate the constant interference of Government in the affairs of the village.[2]

In the old District Gazetteer of Nowgong it is stated that prior to the establishment of Local Boards there were District Committees in the various districts of the State. In 1882, the District Committees were abolished by executive orders and their place was taken by Local Board established in each subdivision. Nowgong district being a single subdivisional district at that time, only one Local Board was formed. It was mainly concerned with the execution of works of rural utility like construction and maintenance of roads and bridges and extension of educational facilities in the different parts of the district, while in the urban areas of the district, Municipal Board was entrusted with the execution of such works. The Local Board continued to shoulder responsibilities of providing amenities in the rural areas of the district till the passing of the Assam Panchayat Act in 1959, when the Local Board was abolished and its functions devolved on *Gaon* Panchayats, Anchalik Panchayats and Mahkuma Parishad.

Local Boards : The following account found in the old Gazetteer of Nowgong gives the history of Local Board in the district till 1903-04.[3]

"In the early days of British administration, there was little money available for public works of any kind, and what there was, was generally expended under the control of the Public Works Department of the District Magistrate".

In 1872, the management of the district roads was entrusted to a committee presided over by the Deputy Commissioner. The funds at its disposal were partly obtained from tolls and ferries on local roads and other miscellaneous sources, but principally from grants made by the Bengal Government from the amalgamated district road fund. In 1874, when Assam was erected into a separate Administration, the Government of India assigned one-seventeenth of the net land revenue for local purposes. The district improvement fund was then created, and the administration of its resources was, as before, entrusted to the Deputy Commissioner assisted by a committee. The actual amount placed at their disposal was not large, and in 1875-76 the total income of the district funds of the Province was only Rs. 1,85,000, which was a small sum in comparison with the twelve and a half lakhs of rupees received by the Local Boards in 1903-04. In 1879, a Regulation was passed providing for the levy of a local rate, and the appointment of a committee in each district to control the expenditure on roads, primary education and the district post. Three years later the district committees were abolished by executive order, and their place was taken by Boards established in each subdivision, which were the local

2. V. Venkata Rao, *A Hundred Years of Local Self-Government in Assam*, p. 21.
3. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Vol. VI, Nowgong*, p. 179.

authorities in existence prior to the introduction of Panchayat system of Assam.[4]

There is no doubt that the Committee, so constituted under the Chairmanship of the Deputy Commissioner of Nowgong in 1872, was subsequently known as Local Board. The strength of the Local Board varied between eight to twenty-four. The exact strength of the Board was determined by the government from time to time.

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, but the government of Assam did not agree with many of its suggestions. However, certain important changes were incorporated in the Assam Local Board 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 for elective non-official Chairman and Vice-Chairman sought 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 Local Self-Government Act 1915 brought some important changes on Local Self-Government in Assam. As per recommendation of the Act, the strength of elected members was increased and number of official members for Local Boards was reduced. The Nowgong Local Board, which was the only Board for the district was reconstituted according to the Act of 1915 with seventeen members. Out of the total 17 members of the Board 6 were nominated and 11 elected (planters 5, Headquarter 1, Mercantile 1 and Rural 4). In 1920, the ex-officio members were reduced to two, the Civil Surgeon and Deputy Inspector of schools remained as members.

In 1927, as per amendment of the Local Self-Govt. Act. 1926, for three constituencies viz, Muhammadan, Non-Muhammadan and Planters were created in the Nowgong Local Board.

In 1945, the strength and composition of the Local Boards was further revised to accommodate the Scheduled Tribes (Plains) and Scheduled Castes for

4. Ibid, pp. 179-180.

separate representation. As a result of this revision, seats were reserved for all these communities. The reservation of seats necessitated an increase in the number of elective seats and a reduction in the number of nominated seats. Other important features of this Act, were the abolition of the ex-officio element and the provision for election of the members from the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This was no doubt a landmark in the history of Local Self-Government in Assam.

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 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. The improvement of canals, rivers, maintenance of embankments, bridges, repair of school houses, granting of scholarships, training of teachers, establishment of hospitals, dispensaries, lunatic asylums, tanks, rest houses for travellers were the main functions of the District Committees.

The Local Board 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, rope way 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, *sarai* for travellers and to destroy dangerous animals and stray dogs ; the management and control of fairs and festivals and establishment of veterinary dispensaries, the provision for breeding cattle and horses were also rested with Boards.

Under the Local Board Act, 1953, the Boards lost the powers to construct the railways and rope way, but were entrusted with maintenance and management of the 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 ; general fund and 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 and receipt from fishery. The general fund was utilised for construction of important roads and feeder roads. A portion of it was also utilised for metalling the existing roads.

The principal source of revenue of the District Committee was the local rates on the annual value of land. The rate was 0.12 paise per cultivated acre. Of the total collection from local rates 3/8 th. were left for works of provincial importance, the balance 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 by 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 ropeways, but the Act, 1953 abolished the imposition of these taxes by theBoards. The Boards could levy any tax after obtaining previous permission from the government. It was also authorised to impose taxes on cinema halls, 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. 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 issue of sanctions. The provision of scrutiny of the budget was also made according to the Local Self-government Act, 1915. The Commissioner was the final authority for the acceptance or rejection of the budget. In 1953, the power was vested with Government.

The following table shows the income and expenditure of the Nowgong Local Board for the year 1890-91 and 1900-01.

Income and expenditure of Nowgong Local Board.*

Sources of Income	Income 1890-91	Income 1900-01	Head of expenditure	Expenditure 1890-91	Expenditure 1900-01
	Rs.	Rs.		Rs.	Rs.
Provincial rates ..	33,421	36,692	Post Office ..	1,867	804
Police ..	4,741	3,598	Administration ..	236	236
Tolls on ferries ..	4,439	2,856	Education ..	12,475	10,050
Contributions ..	8,591	6,220	Medical ..	3,113	10,831
Debt ..	..	225	Civil Works ..	26,730	24,583
Miscellaneous ..	112	130	Debt ..	..	310
			Contribution ..	..	2,000
			Miscellaneous ..	2,896	1,732
	51,304	49,721		47,317	50,546

* B. C. Allen, *District Gazetteer Nowgong*, 1905.

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. Nowgong Municipality is the oldest Municipality in the district. It was formed in 1894 under Act V, (B.C.) of 1876. But at that time the area of the Municipality was little more than a village and the total population found within Municipal limits in 1901 was only 4,430. The affairs of the town were managed by eleven Commissioners of whom nine were natives and seven non-officials.

In tracing the growth of Municipalities in the district it may be recalled that in 1846, the Magistrate of Nowgong sought the permission of the Bengal government for the appropriation of Rs. 987-13-4 from the Ferry Funds for Municipal purposes. Evidently, a Town Improvement Committee must have existed there.[6] Thus, it is evident that there were some non-statutory Town Improvement Committees where the magistrates had their headquarters and these might safely be described as "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 the year of 1842. The Act proved in operative as the introduction of it in any town required the consent of two-thirds of householders. The Act was repealed by the Act 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 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 the Act to any town in his jurisdiction, to determine the administrative areas, 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 were 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 Gauhati town. Some minor amendments in the Act were effected in 1867. In 1868, another Act, District Town Act, 1868 was passed. The object of this Act was to provide some special arrangements for improvement of towns which were not fit for the introduction of District Municipal Improvement Act, 1864.

6. V. Venkata Rao, *A Hundred years of Local Self-Government in Assam*, 1947, p. 38.
7. Ibid, p. 36.

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 Dibrugarh in 1878. Later on, in the year of 1914, a union was constituted at Mangaldoi under the same Act. In 1887, the Government of Assam adopted 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 Government did not want to abolish wherever they were established in the State.

Till 1876, two Municipal Acts were in force in Assam and under them there were two types of Municipalities, unions and stations. This caused much administrative inconvenience, besides, some of the provisions of these Acts were also considered absolute. 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 Nowgong has at present two Municipalities at Nowgong and Hojai.

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 the improving the municipal 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 byelaws for ensuing better type of local administration. The same idea persisted in the Municipal Act of 1876. In 1884, some additions and alterations were made on the functions of Municipal Boards. The Act of 1923 further enlarged the activities of the Municipal Boards to provide better amenities to the citizens. The Act of 1956 though replaced the Act of 1923, yet it retained the list of functions laid down in the earlier Act. The present functions of the Municipal Board are multifarious in nature. It includes supply of protected and pure drinking water to its inhabitants, construction and maintenance of roads, waterways, and brid-

8. Ibid, pp. 37—65.

ges. 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 maintian 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 for the marketing facilities for the people, providing for bazars in each locality. It also maintains a sanitary branch to ensure proper hygienic conditions in the town.

Composition : Nowgong Municipal Board : As mentioned earlier the Nowgong Municipal Board was constituted under Local Self-Government Act V (B.C.) of 1876. This Act did not provide for elections of Municipal Commissioner, instead, the affairs of the town were managed by eleven Commissioners of whom 9 were natives and 7 non-officials. Revenue was realised by a tax on persons amounting to 16 per cent of income, a tax on Government buildings and a tax on animals and cars. Besides, there are annual grant from Government, realisation of cattle and goats fine from pounds and cesses collected from markets were other important sources of income. Till 1916, there was not much change in the composition and functions of Municipalities but in that year the Local Self-Government Act III (B.C.) of 1884 was expanded to Nowgong Municipality. The Act made provision for the election of President and Vice-President as well as Municipal Commissioner. In accordance with the provision of the Act, the Deputy Commissioner of Nowgong resigned from the Chairmanship of Nowgong Municipality. However, the Deputy Commissioner and Civil Surgeon remained as ex-officio members of the Board. Since then the Nowgong Municipality has been constituted by elections. Though franchise was limited during the pre-independence period, it has been considerably enlarged after independence. In 1971, the total area of the Municipal Board was 6.22 square kilometres with 56,537 persons with a density of 9,090 persons per square kilometre.

The present Municipal Board is composed of 20 members, of whom 18 are elected and two are nominated by the Government. The Chairman and the Vice Chairman of the Board are also elected. The Chairman is the head of the administration and he presides over the meetings of the Board.

The Municipality has various sources of revenue, and receives annual grants from the government. It levies taxes on holdings, rickshaws, carts, cycles, stalls, open spaces, markets, cinema houses besides receiving taxes on houses, land etc. In 1970-71, the total income of the Nowgong Municipality amounted to Rs. 7,66,613.80 Of this Government grants comprised Rs. 2,56,177.74 and loans amounted to Rs. 92,961. Other major items of receipts were taxes from markets and slaughter houses totalling Rs. 1,45,061.60, taxes on house and land Rs. 79,539.43, licence fees Rs. 67,419.62, rent on house and land etc., Rs.55,190.10,

and lighting rent of Rs. 39,886.26. Other minor receipts were taxes on animals and vehicles, profession and trade, conservancy receipts, fees and miscellaneous receipts. The Board has spent a good amount on roads in the town covering a length of 88.44 kms. It has a drainage system of about 99 kms of which about 98 kms are *pucca*. Other main items of expenditure include street lighting, conservancy, maintenance of parks etc. The total expenditure of Nowgong Municipal Board during 1970-71 was Rs. 6,24,654/-.

Hojai Municipal Board : The present Hojai Municipal Board was started as a Town Committee in 1956 with six nominated members. This Committee was constituted for the second time with six members of whom three were elected by the ratepayers and the remaining three were nominated. Due to the rapid expansion of the town and its population, it was converted to a Municipal Board vide government notification No.LML.372/59/88,B, dated 15.1.64. The first meeting of the Board was held on 31.1.64. The municipal area is divided in 3 wards from which 4 members are elected and two are nominated by the government. The Municipal Board now adopts various development works for the benefit of the people. The Board also took a scheme of town planning at an estimated cost of Rs. 3,57,000.00. The Water Supply Scheme and other public utility services are also being implemented by the Board. According to the 1971 Census, the Board covers an area of 5.28 square kilometres with 22,769, persons with a density of 4,312 persons per square kilometre. The following table shows the income and expenditure of Nowgong and Hojai Municipal Boards for the period 1969-1974.

	INCOME (Rs.)				
	69-70	70-71	71-72	72-73	73-74
1. Nowgong Municipal Board.	5,70,156	7,66,613	6,22,176	7,40,207	7,98,643
Hojai M.B.	3,02,910	4,09,597	2,76,026	3,16,793	3,29,225

	EXPENDITURE (Rs).				
	69-70	70-71	71-72	72-73	73-74
Nowgong Municipal Board. ..	6,44,053	6,24,654	6,96,704	7,26,385	6,86,406
Hojai Municipal Board.	2,44,240	3,09,253	3,35,764	3,26,807	4,22,656

Dhing Town Committee : Dhing, one of the important places of the district was declared a town in 1970. To look after local problems a town committee with six members was also constituted in 1971. In the same year there were 10,778 persons within the jurisdiction of the Dhing Town Committee

which extended over an area of 5 square kilometres. The density of population was 2,156 persons per square kilometre. The town committee had adopted various schemes for the improvement of communication, street lighting, drainage etc. Taxes under different heads and government grants are the main sources of the town committee. The income and expenditure of Dhing Town Committee from 1970-71 to 1973-74 are given below :—

	INCOME (Rs.)				
	69-70	70-71	71-72	72-73	73-74
1. Dhing Town Committee. ..	N.A.	38,039	1,65,504	55,184	1,58,736

	EXPENDITURE (Rs.)				
	69-70	70-71	71-72	71-73	73-74
Dhing Town Committee. ..	N.A.	33,759	1,13,605	1,10,677	1,44,083

Morigaon Town Committee was created in 1973 with six members. No Town Committee has yet been constituted at Lumding.

Panchayats : Panchayats in Assam has a long and chequered history. We have already discussed about some forms of local self-government in ancient Assam. The Panchayats were, however, not officially recognised during the early part of the British administration in Assam. As early as 1871, the Governor General-in-Council vetoed the Municipal Bill which incorporated certain provisions authorising the Panchayats to take up works of water supply and conservancy services. Though some form of Panchayat organisations were formed under the Local Self-Government Act of 1915, they proved to be failure as these were not autonomous bodies. Panchayats so formed in 1926 also failed due to some lacunae in the Panchayat Act of 1926.

For the first time after Independence, the Assam Rural Panchayat Act was passed in 1948, in order to constitute 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 pursuance of the recommendations of the Balvantrai Mehta Commission on democratic decentralisation of powers, the Government of Assam passed the Assam Panchayat Act, 1959 repealing the old Act of 1948. The new Act

was given effect from the 1st October, 1959. The Act provided for three tiers of Panchayat organisation—the Panchayat at the village level, the Anchalik Panchayat at the Block level and the Mahkuma Parishad at the Subdivisional level.

It has been noted earlier that after the enactment of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1959, the existing Local Boards and Rural Panchayats were abolished and their functions devolved upon the three-tier Panchayat system. In the district of Nowgong there are 334 Gaon Panchayats under 13 Anchalik Panchayats with one Mahkuma Parishad covering 1,674 villages. Every Anchalik Panchayat is coterminus with the Community Development Block and the Block Development Officer is the ex-officio Secretary of the Anchalik Panchayat.

Organisation of Panchayats : A Gaon Sabha consists of one or more villages with an average population of about 2,500. It has one President, one Vice-President and 11-13 members who are elected by direct voting by the electors of the concerning Gaon Sabha. The term of office of the President as also of the members is for four years. Open voting for election of members as provided under the original Act was replaced by Secret Voting in 1964.

The representatives of the Anchalik Panchayat are elected directly by the electors of the different Gaon Sabhas constituting that Anchalik Panchayat. One representative is also elected to the Anchalik Panchayat by the Chairman of the Co-operative Societies. All members of Parliament and State Legislative Assembly whose constituencies extend over the Anchalik Panchayat are ex-officio members of the Anchalik Panchayat but they have no right to vote. Officers who may be appointed as members of the Anchalik Panchayat by the State Government also have no right to vote. The Act further provides for co-option of one member each from the Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribe if none is elected.

It may be recalled that the Panchayat Act, 1959, which has since been amended 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, he ceased to be the President of the Gaon Panchayat. But in 1964, the Act was suitably amended and the President of the Gaon Panchayat situated within the jurisdiction of an Anchalik Panchayat was made an ex-officio member of the Anchalik Panchayat. The Panchayat Act, 1959, did not provide for the co-option of women. The Panchayat (Amendment) Act, 1964, fixed the number of co-opted women members at two if no woman was elected and at one if a woman member was already elected. The Block Development Officer, who is the ex-officio Secretary of the Anchalik Panchayat, transacts all official business under the direct control and supervision of the President of the Anchalik Panchayat.

The Mahkuma Parishad consists of the Presidents of Anchalik Panchayats, members of Parliament and Legislative Assembly whose constituencies extend over such Mahkuma Parishad, Chairman of the Municipal Boards, Town Committees and a representative of the Co-operative Central Bank. The Chairman of the Municipal Boards, Town Committees, and the representative of the Central Co-operative Bank are ex-officio members and have therefore no right to vote. If no person belonging to the Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe is a member, the Mahkuma Parishad is authorised to co-opt such member from persons of such communities. The Planning Officer is the ex-officio Secretary of Mahkuma Parishad.

Functions of the Panchayats : The Panchayat Act, 1959, distributed the functions and powers among the Gaon Panchayats, Anchalik Panchayats and Mahkuma Parishads as follows :—

The Gaon Panchayats are entrusted with cleaning and lighting of streets, sanitation 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, development plan and cattle stead.

The Anchalik Panchayats are entrusted with 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 houses, ware-houses, land management, youth clubs, theatres, damages of 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 scrutinises and approves the budgets submitted by different Anchalik Panchayats within its jurisdiction. The decision of the Mahkuma Parishad is final. The Mahkuma Parishad is also responsible for reviewing the works of the Anchalik Panchayats from time to time. The Parishad also advises the Deputy Commissioner/Subdivisional Officer in the distribution of Subdivisional Rural Development Fund. It also advises the Government in the drawing up of the district plans. It is also concerned with the co-

ordination of the work of the Anchalik Panchayats falling under the jurisdiction of the Mahkuma Parishad.

Anchalik Panchayats : The names of the Anchalik Panchayats of Nowgong district are as follows :— (1) Batadraba, (2) Bhurbandha, (3) Juria, (4) Jugijan, (5) Khagarijan, (6) Kaliabor, (7) Kapili, (8) Kathiatali, (9) Laokhowa, (10) Laharighat, (11) Lanka, (12) Mayong, and (13) Rupahi. All the Anchalik Panchayats in the district work as a unit of Local Self-Government. An Anchalik Panchayat has been recognised as the unit of Planning and development. Besides the schemes and programmes under the Community Development Block level, programmes of the different development departments are also to be drawn up and executed by the Block Agency. Officers of the different development departments posted in the Block level are to handle both the types of programmes, under the leadership of the Block Development Officer and control and guidance of the Anchalik Panchayats.

The income of the Panchayats is derived mainly from grants-in-aid, taxation and remunerative assets. 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 pertaining in the villages. Thus, creation of remunerative assets 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 varies from Rs. 1,500/- to Rs. 3,000/-. But considering the volume of works that a Gaon Panchayat is required to execute, this amount falls far short of the requirements. Though the Gaon Panchayats have been empowered to impose taxes, the avenues for elastic taxes are very few. In order to obviate these difficulties, the share of land revenue payable to Gaon Panchayat and Anchalik Panchayat has been raised from 25% to 37%. But the normal share of land revenue to some of the Panchayats are not sufficient even to meet the obligatory expenditure like pay and allowances of staff etc. As such an Equalisation Fund has been created by crediting 2% of the land revenue with a view to help such Panchayats with additional allocations.

Some of the Gaon and Anchalik Panchayats derive the major part of their revenue from *hats* and *bazars*. But formerly, the Anchalik Panchayats and Gaon Panchayats within whose jurisdiction the *hats* were situated appropriated the entire income from it. Now, after the amendment of the Panchayat Act, the Anchalik Panchayats and Gaon Panchayats may get certain portion of the income

of the major hats. Moreover, according to the Assam Panchayat Act, 1959, a Gaon Panchayat can impose taxes on the following (a) brick or concrete buildings, (b) supply of water, (c) sale of firewood and thatch, (d) conservancy, lighting and slaughter houses. It can impose cess or fees on (a) registration of cattle sale within the local area, (b) licence for starting tea stalls, hotels, sweetmeat shops and restaurants, (c) collection of hides and bones, (d) minor *hats*, (e) licence for private *hats* as prescribed (f) surcharge on duty for the transfer of immovable property.

The Anchalik Panchayat can impose taxes on fisheries, recovery of water rate for minor irrigation works, fee for minor *hats*, taxes on cultivable land lying fallow for two consecutive years, tax on brick buildings, water tax, conservancy, and lighting as administered by the Anchalik Panchayat. It can also impose licence fees for cinema halls, circuses, professional variety shows, fairs, confectionary and backery, saw mills & timber depots, bamboo stalls, oil and rice mills and can collect similar fees on tea stalls, hotels, restaurants and sweetmeat shops within the jurisdiction of Anchalik Panchayat.

Similarly, an Anchalik Panchayat can 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, (c) fee for minor *hats* as prescribed. Further, it can 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, (b) tax 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 can impose any fees on license for cinema halls, circuses, professional variety shows, fairs, confectionary and backery, saw mills and timber depots, bamboo stalls, oil and rice mills.

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 is administered by the State Government through the Director of Panchayats, Assam and is held in his personal ledger account.

Payments from the Assam Rural Development Fund may be made to Subdivisional Rural Development Fund, Anchalik Panchayat Fund, Gaon

Panchayat Fund, any organisation or body of individuals, and any individual directly through the Sub-divisional Rural Development Fund.

So far as the Sub-divisional Rural Development Fund is concerned, it is administered by the Deputy Commissioner or the Sub-divisional Officer as the case may be and is held in the personal ledger account at the Treasury or Sub-treasury. In Nowgong there was one Sub-divisional Rural Development Fund administered by the Deputy Commissioner.

Expenditure of Mahkuma Parishad : The expenditure of the Mahkuma Parishad for establishment charges, equipments, contingencies, allowances and honoraria including other incidential charges thereto are charged to the Assam Rural Development Fund.

Gaon Panchayat Fund : Similarly, every Gaon and Anchalik Panchayat has its fund known as Gaon Panchayat and Anchalik Panchayat Fund respectively. A Gaon Panchayat Fund is utilised to meet charges in connection with their duties under this Act. The Fund of the Gaon Panchayat consists of taxes collected by the Gaon Panchayat, contribution from the Government including a share of the land revenue, the entire local rate collected from the area of the Gaon Sabha, contribution from private individuals or local authorities etc.

Anchalik Panchayat Fund : An Anchalik Panchayat Fund is administered by the Executive Officer who is the ex-officio Secretary of the Anchalik Panchayat. He keeps this fund in a current account with a Treasury or Sub-treasury or the State Bank or in Assam Co-operative Apex Bank and also in Postal Savings Bank if so directed by the State Government. The Secretary (B.D.O.) operates the account of the Fund.

An Anchalik Panchayat Fund is 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 agent's commission, public donations and contributions by Local Authorities.

Budget preparation : According to the Assam Panchayat Act, 1959, every Gaon and Anchalik Panchayat is required to submit annual budgets showing the probable receipts and expenditures it proposes to incur and may from time to time furnish a supplementary estimate providing any modification which it may 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 ; in the case of an Anchalik Panchayat to the Mahkuma Parishad. The annual budgets of all Gaon Panchayats are

approved by the concerning Anchalik Panchayat and the budgets of the Anchalik Panchayats are approved by the Mahkuma Parishad.

Priority on agriculture : Agriculture being the common occupation of the rural population, it has always been accorded priority in the Community Development programme. Further, the appearance of the Panchayat in the scene has been added strength to the drive. It has also widened the scope for realisation of the concept of planning from below. Now-a-days, the Panchayats have been associated with the formation and implementation of the village production plan in the village. This plan embraces mainly two groups of schemes, mainly, (1) supply of credit, fertilizers, improved seeds, implements assistance for plant protection, river irrigation etc., for which a measure of assistance has to come from outside the village, (2) programmes such as installation of green manuring plants, preparation of compost pits, digging of field channels, maintenance of bunds which calls for efforts of the village community. It is said that some of the Anchalik Panchayats have prepared and executed the village Production Plants within the Anchalik Panchayat.

Bhurbandha, Mayang, Laharighat and Rupahi Anchalik Panchayats were constituted vide Notifications RDD.148/59/p, 1/2 dt. 18.11.59 & RDD. 143/59/p, 1/265-66 dt. 24.2.60. Brief descriptive accounts of these four Panchayats are as follows :

1. Bhurbandha Anchalik Panchayat : This Panchayat consists of five *mauzas* namely, Silpukhuri, Mikirbheta, Dandua, Ghagua and Marigaon. It covers 139 villages and an area of about 401 sq. kms. It has 22 Gaon Panchayats under it. According to the 1961 census the total population under the Anchalik Panchayat was 58,271. The headquarters of the Anchalik Panchayat are at Bhurbandha.

2. Mayang Anchalik Panchayat : The Mayang Anchalik Panchayat with its headquarters at Jagibhakatgaon is consisted of six *mauzas* namely, Uttar khola, Mayang, Gobha, Tetelia, Mandha and Pakaria. It covers an area of about 591 sq. kms. and has 22 Gaon Sabhas and 229 villages under its jurisdiction. The total population of this Anchalik Panchayat was 58,594 according to the 1961 census.

3. Laharighat Anchalik Panchayat : This Panchayat consists of four *mauzas* namely, Bokani, Laharighat, Moirabari and Bhuragaon and covers 36 Gaon Panchayats and 187 villages. The area covered by the said Anchalik Panchayat is about 420 sq. kms. and it had a population of 88,593 according to the 1961 census. The headquarters of the Panchayat are located at Laharighat.

. Rupahi Anchalik Panchayat : The Rupahi Anchalik Panchayat covers an area of about 352 sq. kms. and had a population of 66,768 persons according to the 1961 census. It consists of four *mauzas* namely, Bheleguri, Chalchali, Khatowal and Rangagora having 134 villages and 26 Gaon Sabhas under it. The headquarters of the Panchayats are at Samaguri.

Rest of the Anchalik Panchayats i.e., Kathiatoli, Kapili, Kaliabor, Lawkhowa, Batadraba, Juria, Khagarijan, Jugijan, and Lanka were constituted vide Govt. order RDB. 143/59 p.1/2 dt. 18.11.59.

5. Kathiatoli Anchalik Panchayat : The Kathiatoli Anchalik Panchayat comprises 6 *mauzas* namely Kathiatoli, Kandoli, Kampur, Garubat, Jamunamukh and Singiapotini and an area of about 984 sq. kms. There are 178 villages and 52 Gaon Sabhas under it. The total population under the Panchayat according to the 1961 census was 80,970 persons. The panchayat is functioning since 1959 with its headquarters at Rengbeng.

6. Kapili Anchalik Panchayat : The Kapili Anchalik Panchayat is consisted of Jagial, Raha, Barapujia, Saheri, Jorabari, Charaibahi and Niz-Mikir Gaon of Silpukhuri *mauza*. There are 27 Gaon Panchayats and 121 villages under it. The panchayat covers an area of about 320 sq. kms. and its total population according to the 1961 census was 66,047. The headquarters of the panchayat are located at Barapujia.

7. Kaliabor Anchalik Panchayat : The Kaliabor Anchalik Panchayat is functioning since 1959 consisting of five *mauzas* namely Pubthoria, Borbhagia, Chatial, Duarbaguri and Duarsalona. There are 18 Gaon Panchayats and 123 villages under it. The said panchayat covers an area of about 421 sq. kms. and its total population according to 1961 census was 88,593. Hatbor is the headquarters of the Kaliabor Anchalik Panchayat.

8. Lawkhowa Anchalik Panchayat : It was formed in 1959 and consists of two *mauzas*, Lawkhowa and Saidoria having total population of 51,393 according to the 1961 census. It covers an area of about 171 sq. kms. having 20 Gaon Sabhas covering 57 villages. Singimari is the headquarters of this Anchalik Panchayat.

9. Batadraba Anchalik Panchayat : This panchayat is functioning since 1959 comprising only two *mauzas* namely Dhing and Batadraba. It covers an area of about 203 sq. kms. having 23 Gaon Sabha and 64 villages under it. The total population under its jurisdiction according to the 1961 census was 63,159. Dhing is the headquarters of this Anchalik Panchayat.

10. Juria Anchalik Panchayat : Juria Anchalik Panchayat consists of only two *mauzas*, Juria and Alitangani. Dagaon serves as the headquarters of this Panchayat. It covers an area of about 189 sq. kms. covering 24 Gaon Sabhas and 75 villages. The total population under this Panchayat according to the 1961 census was 62,859.

11. Khagarijan Anchalik Panchayat : It consists of four *mauzas* namely Nizsahar, Kachamari, Pakhimaria and Hatichung. It covers 106 villages and has an area of about 225 sq. kms. In 1961, the population of the Panchayat stood at 73,409. It was formed in 1959 and the headquarters office is located at Nowgong town. There are 27 Gaon Sabhas within the jurisdiction of this Panchayat.

12. Jugijan Anchalik Panchayat : Jugijan Anchalik Panchayat with its headquarters at Hojai is functioning since 1959. It consists of 3 *mauzas* namely Norati, Hojai and Jugijan and covers an area of about 552 sq. kms. There are 130 villages and 19 Gaon Sabhas under it. The total population of this Anchalik Panchayat stood at 49,048 persons according to the 1961 census.

13. Lanka Anchalik Panchayat : Lanka Anchalik Panchayat was formed in 1959. It comprises Kaki, Kapasbari, Lanka and Lumding *mauzas* and has an area of about 565 sq. kms. In 1961, its total population was 33,501. The headquarters of the Anchalik Panchayat are at Lanka. There are 18 Gaon Sabhas under this panchayat.

CHAPTER XV

EDUCATION AND CULTURE

(a) Historical background :

The system of education which prevailed in ancient times in the area constituting the present district of Nowgong is not definitely known. History is also silent about this. But as it was a part of the ancient kingdom of Kamarupa, which had close relations in all fields of culture as well as in trade and commerce with the rest of India, it can well be presumed that the same system of education also prevailed in this part of the country. This proposition is borne out by the mythological accounts, numerous archaeological remains and a mass of literary evidence. The rulers of Kamarupa were noted for their Sanskrit culture. Many kings of ancient Kamarupa had contributed much towards the growth of literary works. Among them the names of Narayana Varman of Varman dynasty and of Purandarpala of Pala dynasty can be mentioned. Besides these two rulers, some rulers of Pala dynasty like Harsapala and Dharmapala were noted scholars.

The boundary of this kingdom extended far beyond its present boundaries. Though there were geographical barriers for proper communication between ancient Kamarupa and the rest of India, yet they did not stand as a bar in the field of education and culture. Many lovers of education and culture went to Nabadwip and Banaras for studies. Scholars and learned persons under the patronage of the king of this country visited and often permanently settled in this land and worked for the diffusion of Indian culture.

The common education system which prevailed in Kamarupa was Aryan in nature. The evidence of the existence of some *tols* in different parts of this country provides an example of *Gurukula* education in Assam. 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."[1] Sanskrit was the medium of instruction through which education was imparted. They imparted instructions in various branches of classical learning such as grammar, astronomy, law ((*Samhita*), poetry and philosophy (*Vedanta*, *Sankhya*. *Veda* etc.). The students received education in dormitories managed by their *Guru* (teacher). Education was free. The students had not to pay their tuition fees except the voluntary gifts called *Guru*-

1. H. K. Barpujari, *A Short History of Higher Education in Assam* (1826—1900) *in Golden Jubilee Volnme, Cotton College*, Gauhati, 1951-52, p. 3.

dakhina 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.[2] Higher education was generally restricted to the Brahmins. The system of *Gurukulas* and *Tols* further expanded and attained new vitality under the patronage of the Ahom rulers.

With the advent and spread of *Neo-Vaisnavism* in the sixteenth century a new type of institution, called *Satra*, came into being in different places of Assam and gradually became a potent source of educational and cultural activities. As observed by S. N. Sarma--"the cultural history of Assam in respect of 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 the *Vaisnava* movement which in turn found expression through the *Satra* institution"[3] These maintained *Namghars* (Prayer halls) and conducted Sanskrit Schools where reputed scholars imparted instructions to their pupils. A *Satra* was thus not only a religious institution but also a school and library which encouraged the spread of education among the masses. The Vaisnavite leaders propagated their teachings through vernacular medium and also rendered into Assamese a number of Sanskrit works, particularly religious scripture, and gradually Assamese language took the place of Sanskrit as a medium of instruction and expression. The subject of studies in *Satras* and *Tols* were both spiritual and secular. The curriculum of studies included Sanskrit literature, grammar, philosophy, law, astrology, the *Vedas*, the *Bhagavata*, Gita and the *Puranas*. Stress was laid upon memorisation of *Sutras* and commentaries. Along with the increase of Muslim population in Assam, the *Mosques* and *Madrassas* were opened. The Curriculum for both *Tols* and *Madrassas* were generally 3 R's, but in the Madrassas Urdu and Islamic learning were additional subjects. But by the beginning of the nineteenth century the influence of *Satras* was on the wane. They lost royal patronage and gradually their importance as educational institutions dedined.

Beginning of Western education : In the early nineteenth century towards the close of the Ahom rule education system in Assam was at doldrums. Assam was ceded to the East India Company. Culturally the neo-vaisnavite influence was on the wane. Sanskrit culture and traditional learning were also on the verge of decay. These were due to incessant political intrigue, civil dissension, the Moamaria insurrection, the Burmese invasion and the wide scale use of opium. All these led to social and political unrest when the British came and took over charge of the country in 1826. As such, when the British

2. S. C. Majumder, *Education in Assam*, p. 5.
3. S. N. Sarma. *Aspects of the Heritage of Assam*, Indian History Congress, Twenty Second Session, Gauhati, 1959, p. 55.

took over the passession of Assam, education reached its lowest ebb. Only some *tols* existed at that time where *pandits* instructed their pupils. The performance of these *tols* were respectable. At the very outset though the British were enthusiastic about introduction of Western education in the country, they did not oppose the native system of education. In fact, Mr. Scott, the then Agent, to the Governor General, North-East Frontier, obtained sanction from the Government of India for the establishment of a number of Schools in Assam in 1826. Eleven schools were established which were mostly in Lower Assam.[4] The teachers were not paid in cash but in kind. Each teacher had to teach 30 pupils. In return he was given 30 *puras* of rent free land. Sanskrit was the only language taught in these institutions and the curriculum for studies was Arithmetic, Astronomy and Medicine.

Mr. Jenkins, the then Commissioner of Assam, who was passionately concerned about its educational system, felt that education in these existing schools served no useful purpose,. He therefore recommended that the rent free land held by the existing teachers should be withdrawn after their death. He also submitted a scheme for the establishment of English schools in Assam. He estimated that the cost would be nearly twelve thousand per annum. Under the scheme every Sadar station including Nowgong was to get one English school under European functionaries. Accordingly school buildings were built with the help of the convicts of the local Jail. In 1835, the Governor General-in-Council decided that schools should be established for the promotion of European literature and science among the Indians. Meanwhile the proposal of Mr. Jenkins, which reached just at that time, was readily approved by the General Committee of Public Instruction.

In the beginning due to various reasons it could not attract the indigeneous people. The aftermath of the turmoil of the Burmese invasion, the lack of enthusiasm of the Ahom nobility and lastly the introduction of Bengalee in schools and offices retarded the progress of the new system of education. The introduction of Bengalee in offices and schools alienated the indigenous people from the ruling section and the former mostly kept themselves away from the precincts of the schools. Due to the import of large numbers of clerks and petty officials to all the districts of Assam, local people were generally deprived of the benefits of employment. But this did not last long. Gradually the popular zeal for education arose among the local people by seeing the prospect of Government jobs. In the courts also the services of English knowing lawyers and other Government servants became indispensable. After 1857-58, a number of schools were established in the interior areas and the villagers not only erected buildings but also helped in the management of the schools. During the year

4. These were at Gauhati, Nilachal, Naduar, Pateedarrang, Hajo, Bajalee, Seela,, Biswanath, Nowgong, and the rest were in Darrang (Mangaldai).

1857-58, to encourage the growth of schools Government also introduced a scheme of subsidy, under which a grant of Re.1/- per month was made for every ten boys under instruction.[5]

The credit for doing the spade work in propagating western education amongst the Assamese, goes to Mr. Jenkins. He was also successful in achieving his objectives for laying ground to train the local Assamese youth for filling up the vacancies in Govt. offices. He was greatly alarmed at the small number of Assamese employees in Government offices and he therefore wrote to Government of India—"The few (Assamese) in their present uneducated state do not suffice to carry on duties of our courts, the offices in which are mostly filled by the 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".[6] Mr. Jenkins, felt very much for the people of the province and was specially conscious of their educational backwardness. He therefore opined that the responsibility of imparting education in a backward province like Assam, should be shouldered by the State.

Among unofficial organisations the works of the Christian Missionaries for the spread of Western education among the Assamese were invaluable.

They started vernacular schools and encouraged the study of English and Assamese. In this regard the work of the American Baptish Mission can well be recognised. No doubt, their main motive was to spread the Gospel of Christianity, yet they contributed a lot for the growth of education in this district.

Inspired with zeal the Missionaries carried on their activities. Among their main centres of work Nowgong is one. They opened hospitals and started schools still uncommon to the natives. They also supported the cause of Assamese language. N. Brown, Bronson and Farwell laid the foundation of the Christian-Assamese literature. They published text books also. The monumentalwork of Bronson is a *Directory of Assamese Language, Assamese to Assamese and to English*. This is the earliest published dictionary in Assamese.

N. Brown translated the New Testament to Assamese, wrote a grammar of the Assamese language and collected a large number of Assamese manuscripts. Mr. Nidhi Levi Farwell wrote many story books, besides rendering into Assamese the Indian Penal Code. The memorable work of the Missionaries was the publication of "Orunodai", the first Assamese monthly which was published in January, 1846. It was not only the mouth piece of their religious propaganda,

5. H. K. Barpujari, *Assam in the Days of Company*, p. 275—80.
6. H. K. Barpujari, *A History of Higher Education inAssam*, (1826—1900), in *the Golden Jubilee Volume, Cotton College*, Gauhati.

but also a magazine of general interest. "Disseminating Western thought and learning, the Orunodai inspired the younger generation and paved the way of an intellectual awakening".[7] Thus, by the joint effort of both Assamese and non-Assamese and backed by the untiring zeal of the benevolent Commissioner Major Jenkins, the ground for Western education was prepared and it yielded fruits in the next century.

In 1847-48, there was no secondary school in the district, there were only ten primary schools. The state of affairs of education was in a very deplorable condition. In 1853, during Mr. Mill's visit he found only 13 schools of all grades in this district. In the following year, Major Butler found 14 vernacular schools with 836 pupils on the rolls but the state of education in the district presented a gloomy picture. The proficiency attained was very low and very few continued to study after being acquinted to read and write a common petition and acquired a little arithmetic. He observed that the greatest drawback to the spread of education in Assam was the indifference with which the respectable classes received it. During the period 1870-71, there were one Government High School with 91 students and one Government vernacular school with 179 students. The number of Aided English Schools were 3 with an enrolment of 74 students and 31 vernacular schools with 94 students. There was only one Aided Girls' School at that time with an enrolment of 18 students in the district. During the period 1856-57 to 1870-71, the number of institutions rose from 12 to 38 and the enrolment also from 679 to 1,374 students. At the end of 1875, the number of schools in Nowgong district had increased to 109 and the pupils to to 3,519.[8]

In the subsequent years the number of Secondary schools rose to 9 but again it came down to 5 in 1900-01. However, the number of Primary schools during the same period showed an upward trend. The following statement shows the progress made in the educational field in the district of Nowgong upto 1900-021.

Year	No. of Secondary Schools.	Pupils	No. of Primary schools	Pupils	Total No. of Pupils	No. of persons in District to each pupil.	Percentage under instruction to those of the school going age	
							Male	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1874-75	9	487	81	2,316	2,803	92	..	..
1880-81	7	523	100	3,282	3,804	82	11.42	0.42
1890-91	5	539	175	5,138	5,677	61	20.62	..
1900-01	5	430	112	4,063	4,993	58	21.79	0.76

7 H. K. Barpujari, *Assam in the Days of the Company* 1826—6857, pp. 2'9—286.
8. W. W Hunter, *A Statistical Account of Assam*, Vol. I, page 216.

High, Middle English, Middle Vernacular, Upper Primary and Lower Primary were the five distinct divisions of schools of the district. High schools were directly recognised by the Calcutta University and the Entrance Course was prescribed by the said University. English was the medium of instruction of the higher classes of High schools. In the lower classes of such schools and in vernacular schools, vernacular was the medium of instruction. The course of instruction of the Middle English and Middle vernacular schools was the same except that English was taught in the former and not in the latter. Though at the very beginning there was a distinct division of the primary schools into Upper and Lower Primary schools subsequently Upper Primary schools were stated to be dying out. The standard of instruction was not too high and efforts were made to improve it by raising the rate of pay of the teachers to "Rs. 8/- per mensem for the certified and Rs. 5/- per mensem for uncertified teachers, supplemented by capitation grants at rates ranging from 3 annas to 6 annas for pupils in three highest classes. For educational purposes, the district is in charge of a Deputy Inspector of Schools who is assisted by two Sub-Inspectors."[9]

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, 54 males per mile and one female per mile were shown as literates. During the next decade 95 males and 5 females per mile were shown as literates according to the Census of 1911.

A steady rise was maintained in the district since 1911. Literacy among males increased to 80 in 1931 showing a rise of 13 over that of 1921. But literacy among female showed only a slight rise of 3. The following table shows the details of literacy in the district as per censuses of 1921, 1931.[10]

Year	All ages total	Male	Female	Number per mille who are literate							
				0-10		10-15		15-20		20 and above	
				Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1921	67	115	12	31	8	106	21	146	21	140	11
1931	80	135	15	53	12	99	21	162	22	162	13

9. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers, Vol. VI, Nowgong*, p. 211.
10. *Census of India* 1921, *Volume* 111, *Assam part* 1, Report, p. 109 and *Census of India* 1931, *Volume* 111, *Assam Part* 1, Report, p. 160.

In 1951 the percentage of literacy to total population of the district stood at 16.3 and that of male and female at 24.5 and 7.0 respectively. The percentage of literacy further rose to 27.3 per cent in 1961 and that of male and female to 36.4 and 16.8 per cent respectively. In the census of 1971, the district had 28.92 per cent of its population as literates and the percentage of literacy for males was 36.97 and for females it rose to 19.96. The following table shows the percentage of literacy and literates in the district as per censuses as of 1951, 1961 and 1971.

Year	Population			Literates			Percentage of literates		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1951	4,76,578	4,10,377	8,86,955	1,15,785	28,779	1,44,779	24.5	7.0	16.3
1961	6,45,690	5,65,071	12,10,761	2,35,128	94,897	3,30,025	36.4	16.8	27.3
1971	8,84,938	7,95,957	16,80,895	3,27,195	158,846	4,86,041	36.97	19,96	28.92

From the above table it is evident that there was a marked rise of literacy during the decade 1951-61 but the rate of increase slowed down during the decade 1961-71. In respect of literacy the district has maintained a parity with the rest of the plain districts of Assam. The following table shows the growth rate of literacy of the state as a whole and for the district since 1951-71.

Year	Assam			District of Nowgong		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1951	27.4	7.9	18.2	24.5	7.0	16.3
1961	37.7	15.7	27.5	36.4	16.8	27.3
1971	37.19	19.27	28.72	36.97	19.96	28.92

According to the census of 1961, out of 16,76,965 total population 3,30,025 were returned as literates. The sex-wise division of literates were 2,35,128 males and 94,897 females. Of these literates 1,64,392 males and 73,427 females were literates without educational standard, 61,571 males and 20,391 females were educated up to primary or Junior Basic standard.

Matriculates and above constituted 9,165 males and 1,079 females. The appendix 'A' shows the literates with age-group in the district of Nowgong as per the census of 1961.

Spread of women Education : 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*, dowery etc., commonly associated with the Hindu society in early days. However, the idea of educating female 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.[11] The idea of female education took its root only some time after the beginning of the western education and the above analysis reveals that female literacy in the district since 1901 has shown good progress especially during last three decades. It is interesting to note that the rate of growth of female literacy is higher than that of the males ; but the percentage of literates to total population is lower among the females than among the males. However, with the increase in the number of school-going girls, the disparity between male and female is declining and is expected to decline further in the next decades. "The obstacles in the way of progress of female education lie in the very structure of the Indian soicety. Early marriages and difficulty of procuring women teachers are the two notable obstacles, but the greatest is the general spirit of social conservatism which regards the education of women as a dangerous western inonvation which is liable to transform a dutiful affectionate girl into a discontented shrew of a women".[12] This spirit was very much widespread 30 or 40 years ago. Several distinguished people and educationists of Assam, it is reported, had no hesitation in informing the then Census Superintendent, that education particularly higher education was not good for Indian women. Some others were of the opinion that the prevailing system of female education was basically unsound as it made girls unfit for the domestic duties of their home-life. The spirit of demanding emancipation of woman was only just raising its head at that time". 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 marriage are now uncommon in the district. Dearth of female teachers is not a problem. The lofty ideals of emancipation of the motherland which led the great martyr Kanaklata to sacrific her life, has inspired the

11. H. K. Barpujari, *Assam in the Days of the Company*. 1826 *to* 1858, p. 274.
12. *Census of India*, 1951, Vol. XII, *Assam, Manipur and Tripura* part I.A Report. p. 345.

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".[13]

Education among Scheduled Castes and Tribes : It is seen that in the post-Independence period education among these two backward communities made remarkable progress. The reason is that after the Independence the Government has given much emphasis on the spread of education among these people. The Government provided many incentives to the people of Scheduled Castes and tribes by way of liberal financial provisions in the shape of scholarships, free studentship and accommodtion in the hostels etc. According to the Census of 1961, the district had a tribal population of 87,538, of which 45,648 were males and 41,890 females. Out of this total tribal population 18,660 were returned as literates of whom 14,526 were literates without any educational standard. 4,069 were of primary and junior basic standard and 65 were matriculate and above standard.

Spread of education among the Scheduled Castes has also made considerable headway. According to the census of 1961, the district had a total population of 101,395 of whom 25,013 were returned as literates. Of the total literates among the Scheduled Castes, 18,600 were literates without any educational standard, 6,102 were literates with primary and junior basic standard and 311 were matriculate and above standard. Appendix 'C' shows the details of literacy among the Scheduled tribes and scheduled castes as per 1961 census.

(c) General Education :

Primary Schools, Basic Schools, Secondary Schools and Colleges :

Primary Schools : Since independence, the Primary education in the district has made long strides. Facilities have been extended almost to every nook and corner of the district. In the year 1874-75 the district had only 81 Primary Schools which in the year 1880-81 rose to 100. In 1890-91 there were 175 such schools which decreased to 112 in 1900-01. The enrolment of the students during this period increased from 2,316 in 1874-75 to 4,063 in 1900-01.

During the past seventy years there has been a marked progress of Primary education in the district. It was found that in 1954-55 there were 1,075 Primary schools in the district out of which 974 schools were

13. Ibid, pp. 345-46.

for boys and 101 schools for girls. In the same year the total enrolment of these schools stood at 81,874 of which 75,083 were boys and 6,791 girls. In 1955-56, the number of schools for boys and girls increased to 1,023 and 103 respectively. In this context it may however be noted that out of these schools there were also a few Junior Basic Schools in the district. During the next ten years the Primary Schools (both Primary and Junior Basic) in the district registered another phenomenal increase in numbers. Accordingly, the number of schools in 1966-67 rose to 1,211 with a total enrolment of 1,11,300 pupils. In 1970-71 the number of schools further increased to 1,292 with a total enrolment of 11,8,904 pupils.

In the past Primary education was divided into Lower and Upper standards but in course of time Upper Primary schools were abolished in the district as in other districts of Assam. Education at the Primary stage mainly aims at the instructions in the three R's., i.e., Reading, Writing and Arithmetic, though their curriculum now a days have been widened. The course of Primary school runs for five years and the classes consist of A.B.I.II, and III.

Basic Schools : The scheme of Basic Education based on Gandhian philosophy was introduced in the country after its acceptance in the Haripura Congress Session of 1938. It suffered a serious set-back with the outbreak of the Second World War and resignation of Congress Ministries in the Provinces. 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 the establishment of new basic schools and the gradual conversion of existing primary schools into the Basic Schools. The enactment of the Assam Basic Education Act of 1954, has acclerated the expansion of basic education in the state.

Basic Education at present comprises of two sets of schools, namely Junior Basic Schools and Senior Basic Schools. The former is for the age group 6-11 age and the latter for 11-14 years. The gradation of classes in both these types of schools are 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

vely and subjects are co-related as far as possible. Besides learning through the mother tongue, arithmetic, history, geography, nature study and other subjects through activity, children in basic schools are to do cooking, washing, cleaning etc., and self help is fostered."[14]

In 1966-67, there were 130 Junior Basic Schools with 19,820 students and 10 Senior Basic Schools with 2,228 students in the district of Nowgong. After three years, in 1970-71, there was no increase of school of either category, except for a slight increase in students in the said schools.

The Assam Primary Education Act of 1947, repealing the Assam Primary Education Act of 1926 provided for compulsory primary education in selected rural and urban areas for children of the age group of 6-11 years. In the district of Nowgong, Compulsory Primary Education was introduced in 1948. Under this scheme in 1971, there were 267 schools with 28,731 pupils, in the Nowgong Educational Sub-division. Compulsory primary education has also been introduced in Morigaon Educational Sub-division.

The Assam Primary Education Act, 1947 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 Sub-divisional 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 of 1954 which provided for the constitution of State Basic Education Board to advise the Government in all matters concerning 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. The control over primary education in the Autonomous Districts was shared by respective District Councils and the Education Department.[15]

14. S. C. Majumdar, *Education in Assam*, pp. 10—16.
15. Ibid, pp. 21-22.

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 inspection and supervision of schools and provisions of teachers. The Government also excercises exclusive authority to recruit teachers and control their service conditions besides prescribing standards for general education and training and bearing all expenditure on account of teachers' salaries and allowances. Since 1975 the services of the primary School teacher have also been provincialised throughout the State. 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. Under the Assam Elementary Education Act, 1962, which provides for the management and control of elementary education, similar authority devolves on the local authorities which are the Municipal Boards, Town Committees and Gaon Panchayats. 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.[16]

Secondary Schools : Like Primary education, Secondary education has made considerable progress in the district only after Independence. Before that, the progress of secondary education in the district was not only tardy but retrogressive as well, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In 1874-75, we find mention of nine secondary schools with an enrolment of 487 pupils in the district.[17] But the same source indicates that there was a reduction of the strength of schools from 1880-81 to 1900-1901 from nine to five. Thus, the reduction of schools suggests that education in the district was not spreading but receding due to the prevalence of calamities in the said period.

The independence of the country in 1947, provided vast scope for the spread of education at all levels in the district. Thus, it was found that in 1959-60[18] in the field of secondary education, there were three Higher Secondary schools, fifty-five High Schools, twenty-one Sernior Basic and 167 Middle Schools (both M.V. and M.E.) in the district with a total

16. *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 p. 529.
17. *Assam District Gazetteers, Vol.* 6 *Nowgong*, p. 209.
18. *District Census Handbook*, 1961, *Nowgong*, p. 360.

enrolment of 45,633 students. But next year i.e., 1960-61, there was a marked increase in the number of High schools and Middle schools in the district. In that year there were three Higher Secondary schools, seventy-eight High schools, twenty-two Senior Basic Schools and 181 Middle schools with an enrolment of 49,712 pupils. Since 1966-67 there has been a steady progress of Secondary education in the district.

The following statement shows the number of schools and scholars (male and female separately for the last three years) under the Secondary Education Group in the district of Nowgong during the period between 1965-66 to 1970-71.

STATEMENT OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND SCHOLARS

Year.	M. V Schools.		M. E. Schools.		Total of Middle schools.	
	Schools	Students	Schools	Students	Schools	Students
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1965-66 ..	61	10,799	131	12,543	192	23,342
1966-67 ..	73	12,722	206	20,725	279	33,447
1967-68 ..	73	13,370	208	21,798	281	35,168
1968-69 ..	73	Boys 15,240 Girls 1041	216	Boys 19,434 Girls 3010	289	Boys 34,674 Girls. 4051
1969-70 ..	73	Boys 15,388 Girls 1104	231	Boys 20,835 Girls 3244	304	Boys 36,223 Girls 4348
1970-71 ..	75	Boys 15,481 Girls 1010	248	Boys 21,591 Girls 3358	323	Boys 37,072 Girls 4368

Senior Basic Schools		High Schools		Higher Secondary Schools including Multipurpose schools.		Total of Secondary schools.	
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
10	2,430	68	23, 093	6	4,818	294	54,283
27	6,701	92	29,898	8	5,748	306	75,794
27	6,335	99	3,0000	8	5,279	315	76,792
27	Boys 6,105 Girls 3010	101	Boys 27,747 Girls 25,32	8	Boys 4,521 Girls 807	425	81,669
27	Boys 6,234 Girls 550	108	Boys 28,771 Girls 2,556	8	Boys 4,681 Girls 791	447	84,154
27	Boys 6,074 Girls 472	112	Boys 29,089 Girls 2682	8	Boys 4,843 Girls 825	470	85,425

Secondary education at present is imparted in various categories of schools, namely Middle English schools, Middle Vernacular schools, Senior Basic Schools, High Schools and Higher Secondary and Multipurpose schools. The medium of instruction in the Secondary school 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 being 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 an additional subject in the former. A student is taught from class IV to class VI in Middle Schools. Education is free in M.V Schools. In the year 1900-01 the district had only four Middle schools of which one was Middle English school and three Middle Vernacular schools. In that year the number of students in the former school was 2 and in the latter 44. The total number of Middle Schools in the district in 1954-55 was 121 including the schools under private managements.[19]

In 1960-61 the number of Middle Schools increased to 181 with an enrolment of 19,491 students.[20] After four years the total number of Middle Schools rose to 279 with an enrolment of 19,136 students. Again in 1970-71, a further increase of Middle schools was noticed in the district numbering 323 schools with 41.440 students.

Senior Basic schools which are of recent origin in the district are designed to impart practical-cum-theoritical education to the children of the 11-14 age group. Like Middle schools, classes in the Senior Basic schools consist of IV, V, and VI. The district in the year 1959-1960 had twenty-one Senior Basic Schools with 4,418 students in the rolls. In the next year only one school was started and the number of students rose to 4,737. After four years i.e., in 1966-67 the number of Senior Basic Schools stood at twenty-seven with an enrolment of 6,701 students. But the statistics available so far indicate that since 1966-1967 onwards there was no improvement in the field of Basic education in the district. Thus in 1970-71, the number of schools remained at twenty-seven and rather there was a slight decrease of students from 6,701 in 1966-67 to 6,546 in 1970-71.

As against one High School in 1900-01, the district had twenty-one High Schools, nineteen for boys and two for girls in 1949-50, with 7,749 students.[21] The number of High schools rose to fifty-five in 1959-60 and

20. *District Census Hand Book*, 1961, *Nowgong* p. 360.
21. *Statistical Abstract Assam* 1961, p. 50.

it was more than double within a period of ten years. Similarly the number of students also increased to 21,327 in these schools. In 1970-71 the district had 112 High Schools with 31,771 students. Almost all the High schools during the year 1970-71 in the district of Nowgong were Government Aided High Schools and were under the management of the respective Managing Committees. The course of the High school is a seven years one from class IV to class X.

The scheme for introduction of Higher Secondary Schools and Multipurpose Schools in Assam is of recent origin.

It was introduced in the district in 1958 in pursuance of the recommendation of the Secondary Education Commission, 1953. The progress of conversion has been slow for lack of resources and dearth of teaching personnel. Thus, till 1960-61 only three existing High Schools were converted to the Higher Secondary and Multipurpose standard. To remove the shortfall in the way of conversion of High schools to Higher Secondary standard, various measures such as in-service Training of teachers in Science subjects, a larger number of scholarships for higher studies in Humanities, Science, Home Science, Fine Arts and Agriculture and deputation of teachers for Post-graduate studies have been taken up by the State Education Department of the Government of Assam. Till 1966-67, only seven such schools, six Higher Secondary Schools and one Multipurpose school were found in the district and even after three years except the conversion of one High school to that standard this position continued till 1970-71.

Collegiate Education : Till 1943, there was no provision of collegiate education in the district. In 1944, the Nowgong College, the first of its kind in the district came into being with provision to impart education only to Intermediate level in Arts. The establishment of a large number of High schools after independence and the opening of the Nowgong College gave engouragement to start a number of colleges in the district. Among those, mention may be made of the Anandaram Dhekial Phukan College, Nowgong Girls, College, and Lumding College. Except the Nowgong College where there is provision for teaching different subjects in Arts, Science and Commerce upto the Degree standard, other colleges provide facilities of study only in Arts subjects. All the colleges of Nowgong district are affiliated to Gauhati University. The individual accounts of some of the colleges are given below.

Nowgong College, Nowgong : Nowgong College was started on 7.8.44 to meet the public demand for a college in the district. The college

started with the Intermediate Arts course and it was temporarily housed in the premises of the Dawson High School and the classes were held in the morning. The college obtained affiliation from the Calcutta University in 1945. It is located within the Municipal area of Nowgong town and has its own land and buildings. The college imparts education in Arts, Science and Commerce upto Degree standard and has both day and night shifts. After the establishment of Gauhati University, it was affiliated to it. In 1971, it had sixty-four teachers with an enrolment of 1,736 students. The college is maintained out of fee collection and grant-in-aid under the deficit system. Total receipt in the financial year 1970-71, was Rs. 8,02,731.35 and expenditure was Rs. 8,18,295.96. The teachers are paid according to the revised scale of pay on the basis of University grant Commission recommendations. The college has a library with more than 8,215 books on different subjects for the benefit of students and teachers and the students take part in all outdoor and indoor games and sports.

Lumding College : To fulfill the need of collegiate education at Lumding and also of some areas under United Mikir and North Cachar Hills and Nowgong, Lumding College was started with Intermediate course of study in Arts subjects on 14.8.59. The college was started with 102 students and initially it was housed at the local Sanatan Dharma Vidya Mandir. Later on, it was shifted to its present site. In 1971 it has sixteen teachers with 464 students on its rolls. In the same year the receipt and expenditure of the college were Rs. 1,21,499.00 and Rs.1,21,-596.00 respectively.

Anandaram Dhekial Phukan College, Nowgong : This college was established at Haibargaon, within Nowgong Municipal area on 7.9.59. It was named after Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, the great patriot of Assam. The college has both day and night shifts and it developed within a very short period. In 1970-71, it had thirty-three teachers with 1,115 students and in the next year the number of students stood at 1,234. In 1970-71, the total receipt of the college was Rs. 4,02,392.00 and its expenditure stood at Rs. 3,81,286.00. It is affiliated to Gauhati University.

Nowgong Girls College : The necessity for a separate Girls' College at Nowgong was fulfilled by the establishment of the same in 1962. This is the only college for higher education in the district exclusively for girls. It is an Arts College to teach upto Degree standard and is affiliated to Gauhati University. In 1971, the college had thirty teachers with 303 students on the rolls. In the same year the income and expenditure of the college stood at Rs. 2,72,714.65 and Rs. 2,72,238.14 respectively.

Morigaon College : Morigaon Arts College came into being in 1964 with a very small number of students. Till 1971, it had only Twelve teachers and 211 students.

Besides, in the last few years a number of colleges have also been established to impart higher education in the district. They are (1) Hojai College, (2) Raha College, (3) Dhing College, (4) Kampur College, (5) Kaliabor College and (6) Dr. B. K. Barooah College, Puranigudam. Most of these are newly started institutions and are affiliated to Gauhati University.

In 1970-71, the total enrolment in eight colleges out of eleven colleges of the district stoood at 5,370 with 176 teachers. Nowgong College and Anandaram Dhekial Phookan College are the leading insitutions in the district.

The Director of Public Instruction, Assam under the Education Department to the Government of Assam looks after the general education of the state. Some of the powers are delegated to the Inspector of Schools, Central Assam Circle, Nowgong. For administration of Primary Education (including Lower Primary Schools and Junior Basic Schools), Middle Schools (including Senior Basic Schools), there are two Deputy Inspectors of Schools, one at Nowgong and the other at Morigaon. Besides there are twenty-one Sub-Inspectors and Six Assistant Sub-Inspectors of Schools in the district. In this context it may be mentioned here that for administrative purposes of Primary education and upto the Middle school standard, the district is divided into two Educational Sub-divisions, Nowgong and Morigaon. Again for administration of Primary Education there are Twenty-Seven Circles in the district and a Sub-Inspector of Schools generally remains in charge of one or more circles. The Deputy Inspectors of Schools are assisted in their work of inspection and supervision of Middle and Primary schools by the Sub-Inspector and Assistant Sub-Inspectors of schools but the latter have no jurisdiction over Senior Basic schools and Middle schools. The Deputy Inspectors of schools are now also Ex-officio Secretaries of the Primary Education Board at the Sub-divisional level.

The inspection of High Schools and Higher Secondary and Multipurpose Schools is the responsibility of the Inspector of Schools, Nowgong. Prior to 1960, the whole of the state of Assam was divided into two Circles known as the Lower Assam Circle and the Upper Assam Circle. Since 1969, the Inspectorate has been re-organised and Nowgong district falls under the Central Assam Circle with headquarters at Nowgong. This was done for administrative purposes keeping in view the ever increasing number of Secondary Schools and students. In carrying out inspection and supervision of the High Schools and Higher Secon-

dary Schools, the Inspector of Schools is assisted by an Assistant Inspector of Schools attached with the Inspector of Schools.

Colleges in the district are inspected by the Inspector of Colleges, appointed by the University of Gauhati and the Director of Public Instruction mainly looks after the financial aspect of the colleges and considers various types of grants. For management of the local affairs of the colleges, there is a Managing Committee or a Governing Body in each college approved by the Government.

(d) Professional and Technical Schools and Colleges :

The district has five Teachers Training Schools. Three are Basic Training Schools and two non-Basic Training Schools. The Basic Training Schools are located at Raha, Marigaon and Samaguri. The first is for women teachers and the other two for men. Both the non-Basic Training Schools (Normal Schools) viz., the Government Normal School and the Mission's Girls Training School, are located at Nowgong. Considering the number of untrained teachers in Primary Schools and Middle Schools, the facilities provided for teachers' training appear to be limited. The intake capacity of the Basic Training Schools as well as the Normal School is insufficient. In 1970-71, there were 1,109 untrained teachers in Primary Schools and 296 untrained teachers in Middle Schools against the intake capacity of 163 in Basic Training Schools and 137 in Non-Basic Training Schools per session.

For the training of Secondary School teachers, there is one B.T. College at Nowgong. Generally, Secondary School teachers come here on deputation for training for one year. Although there is no other training institution for Secondary school teachers within the district, the teachers can go for training in the Post-Graduate Training College, at Jorhat. The college provides the Teachers Diploma (T.D.) Course for under-graduate and also for graduate teachers. Certificate courses in the method of teaching Geography (T.T.G.) and the method of teaching English (E.T.) are also conducted by the Gauhati University for teachers. These courses are attended by Graduate and Post-Graduate teachers as well. Inspite of these facilities available both in and outside the district, the position in respect of the trained teachers is not very satisfactory as in 1970-71, out of 1,644 teachers in High schools and Higher Secondary schools of the district, only 320 persons (including thirty two lady teachers) were trained.

(e) Technical Education :

Nowgong Polytechnic : Under the Second Five-Year Plan facilities for technical education were expanded in the State of Assam, and along with the establishment of an Engineering College at Jorhat, a centrally sponsored Polytechnic was established in 1960 at Nowgong.

This institute offers Diploma Course in Civil, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering and is under the control of the State Council for Technical Education, Assam. The institute has been recognised by the Government of India.

Industrial Training Institute, Nowgong : This institute was established at Nowgong in 1960. It offers training for craftsmen and skilled artisans such as Carpenters, Blacksmiths, Welders, Fitters, Turners, Machinists, Draughtsmen, Electrician, Steel metal workers, Radio Mechanics, Surveyor etc. This institute provides a certificate course of one and half years duration. The statement below shows the number of students admitted section-wise and who passed from the institute during the years 1968-69 to 1970-71.

Sl. No.	Name of Section	No of students admitted			No. of students passed		
		1968-69	1969-70	1970-71	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71
1.	2	2	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Blacksmithy ..	..	..	..	..	..	..
2.	Carpentry ..	..	..	2	..	..	..
3.	Fitter ..	42	47	55	9	21	15
4.	Turner ..	17	14	15	1	4	10
5.	Machinist ..	12	19	24	3	6	5
6.	Welder ..	13	8	34	1	5	1
7.	Mechanic (Motor vehicle)	60	65	65	7	31	21
8.	Mechanic Diesel ..	29	32	32	13	20	21
9.	Wireman ..	46	48	49	..	16	16
10.	Electrician ..	16	22	34	..	11	2

(f) School for Cultivation of Fine Arts :

Music School, Nowgong : The Music School at Nowgong was established in the year 1951. It is the only Government Aided Music School in the district and it teaches both Instrumental and Vocal music. The following statement shows the number of students admitted and financial assistance received by the school during 1968-69 to 1970-71.

Year	Boys	Girls	Total	Amount received from Government (in Rupees)
1	2	3	4	5
1968-69	18	43	61	Rs. 1,740.00
1969-70	15	40	55	Rs. 1,290.00
1970-71	70	52	122	Rs. 2,084.00

(g) Oriental Schools and Colleges :

Oriental Schools in the district are only Sanskrit schools, popularly known as *Tols* which impart education in Sanskrit and other subjects which form the core of classical learning. The *Tols* are under the Assam Sanskrit Board which prescribes syllabi, conducts examinations and provides grants-in-aid. In 1955-56 there were fifteen schools for Oriental studies in the district but gradually their number reduced to four in 1960-61 with ninety-seven students. Again during the period between 1968-69 and 1970-71 there were five Sanskrit *Tols* with an average of 109 students in each year. The Hatichung Sanjibani Aided *Tol* is one of the most important Sanskrit *Tols* in the district. The subjects taught in this *Tol* are *Kavya, Vyakarana, Smriti* and *Nyaya*, Assamese and Sanskrit are both used as mediums of instruction.

(h) Education for the Handicapped :

Sreemanta Sankar Mission Blind School : The school was established in 1955 at Nowgong, "to implement some of the ideas and teachings of Sankardeva and also to propagate his universal message of love, amity, fellow-feeling, toleration, morality, peace and concord, and service to humanity in the context of present world affairs and life."[22] The Mission has a programme of varied social services ; education, provision of dispensaries, child welfare and establishment of maternity centres.

The programme of social work undertaken by the Mission is wide and varied covering almost every sphere of life, as its aim is to ameliorate the physical, mental moral, spiritual and economic conditions of suffering humanity. In this school the blinds are taught through the Braille Method. It is a co-educational and residential school for the blind upto the High School standard. In 1960-61 it had an enrolment of thirty-six students, of which seven were girls. In 1974. there were Sixty-one students in the school. Besides general education, this school provides lessons in handicrafts and music. This institute for the blind receives grants-in-aid from the government almost every year. During 1968-69, 1969-70 and 1970-71 it received grants-in-aid amounting to Rs. 49,735.00 Rs. 48,830.00 and Rs. 52,000.00 respectively. In addition to this school, an orphanage run by the Mission at Nowgong provides training in crafts and nursing.

(i) Adult Literacy and Social Education :

The problem of adult lieracy has assumed much importance not only in the district of Nowgong but also in the rest of the country in view of the low rate of literacy revealed by the last census. About three-fourths of the population of

22. B. K. Barua, *Sankardeva : Vishnava Saint of Assam*, Preface p. iv,

the district still continue 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.

Although the programme of adult literacy was in operation since the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the drive was intensified only with the formation of the Congress Ministries in 1937. The Second World War caused a setback, but with the attainment of independence the campaign was revived, with zeal and vigour.

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 "R's". This, no doubt remains to be a primary object of social education till to-day ; 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 programmes form a part of the Social Education Programme.[23] Since 1952 the programme has been made an integral part of the Community Development Movement in the district and each Community Development Blocks had one Social Education Organiser and lady Social Education Organiser who look after social education in their respective areas. The District Social Education Officer, Nowgong supervises the works 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 pursuits. The course comprises of pre-literacy and post-literacy phases. In the pre-literacy phase adults are introduced to literacy while "in the post-literacy state 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 competitions, folk dances, games and sports are organised by clubs and community centres."[24] Audio-visual aids such as films are also used in the social education centres. The Department of Social Education is also publishing one quarterly journal *Jana Siksha* as part of the compaign.

23. *The Indian Year Book of Education*, 1961, *Part-I*, National Review of Central Programmes, by National Council of Education Research Training, New Delhi, p. 257.

24. S. C. Mazumdar, *Education in Assam*, p. 101,

It has been noticed that there is variation in the functioning of the Social Education Centres in the district. There were seventy-nine such centres in the district in 1954-55, as against Sixty-eight in 1960-61 and eighty-seven in 1959-60. During 1968, 1969, and 1970 the number of literacy centres organised were 142, 191 and 223 respectively.

The statement below shows the progress of Social Education in the district in the period between 1954-55 to 1960-61.

Progress of Social Education, Nowgong.

Year	No. of literacy centres.		No. of scholars		No. of literates		Remarks
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
1954-55	69	10	5,715	810	4,395	520	
1955-56	62	11	5,559	859	1,956	567	
1956-57*	34	1	1,173	47	764	29*	Figures of Nowgong Sub-division only.
1957-58	58	9	2,188	311	1,667	241	
1958-59	57	11	2,055	290	1,555	227	
1959-60	58	29	1,598	699	1,322	488	
1960-61	48	20	1,206	520	928	362	

Since 1968-69, besides literacy centres, a number of Adult schools are also functioning in the district under the general supervision of the District Social Education Officer, Nowgong. Also a number of schemes for the spread of mass education are being implemented in the district. The following table shows the number of Adult schools and the schemes implemented in the district during 1968-69 to 1970-71.[25]

25. District Social Education Officer, Nowgong.

Year	No. of literacy Centres		No. of Adults Schools		No. made literates.		Name and No. of schemes implemented.
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1968-69	106	36	7	(combined both male and female)	2,215	1,217	(1) Rural Libraries —140, (2) Community Centres —9, (3) Voluntary Organisations 51, (4) Training Camp and Seminar--15 and (5) Cultural Organisation--48.
1969-70	113	78	5	(combined both male and female)	1,610	680	(1) Rural Libraries 159 (2) Community Centres-12, (3) Voluntary Organisation-60, (4) Training Camp & Seminar-17, and (5) Cultural Organisations-51.
1970-71	134	89	8	(combined both male and female)	2,161	1,267	(1) Rural Libraries --160 (2) Community Centres--14, (3) Voluntary Youth Organisations (Regd. under Societies Act) --68, (4) Training camp and Seminers--16, and (5) Cultural Organisations--62.

(j) Cultural, Literary and Scientific Societies :

There are about sixty-eight Cultural and literacy societies usually named after Sri Sankaradeva or Madhavdeva in different parts of the district. Most of these are registered societies and get financial assistance from the Government. A brief review of the important cultural and literary societies is given below :—

Natya-mandir, Nowgong : It was established at Nowgong in 1902. In its early period, a number of Assamese dramas translated from English (mainly from Shakespeare) and Bengali were successfully staged. For the first time co-acting was introduced in the Natya-mandir on September 30, 1948. Its Golden Jubilee was celebrated with pomp and grandeur in 1952. It is regarded as one of the pioneer cultural institutions of the district and it influenced others in establishing similar cultural institutions elsewhere. It has its own land and building.

Binapani Natya mandir : It was established in 1870, at Haiborgaon, on the bank of the Kalong river. During its hundred years, it has contributed much to the development of dramatic culture in the district.

Nowgong is also not lagging behind in the production of Cinematograph along with other districts of the State. In 1950, the *Trishna Film Society* of Nowgong produced the Assamese Film *Biplovi*. Again in 1959, the *Kathakali Film Society*, Nowgong produced an Assamese picture *Puberun*, which has been described as one of the best pictures so far produced in Assam. Two other Assamese pictures, *Manab Aru Danab* and *Upormahala* were produced from Nowgong in 1971.

As regards literary societies, there are branches of the *Asom Sahitya Sabha* in different parts of the district. Among these branches mention, may be made of the Nowgong Branch, Hojai Branch and Dhing Branch. These branches organise literacy campaigns and hold literary discussions from time to time for the development of Assamese literature. Usually the branches of the *Sahitya Sabha* functioning in the district do not publish periodicals of their own. However, the *Asom Sahitya Sabha* from Gauhati publishes one journal *Asom Sahitya Sabha Patrika* thrice in a year. Original writings and research articles are published in this *Patrika*, The Head office of this biggest literary organisation of Assam is located at Jorhat, in Sibsagar district. A list of Cultural and Literary Societies of the district is given in the Appendix.

(k) Libraries, Museums etc : Services rendered by the libraries are regarded as popular means for spread of education in a country. In the Pre-independence days there was no properly developed library in the district. It was only after the establishment of the District Library at Nowgong in 1955 that adequate attention was given for the establishment of libraries in different areas of the district. The District Library has 40,948 books on different subjects and its total membership upto December, 1974 was 2,963. Working days of the library are from Tuesday to Sunday. Monday is a holiday. The average daily attendance of the reading public at the District Library is about 300, and besides books, the library maintains sixty-seven periodicals and newspapers on different languages. In 1970-71, these libraries are getting financial assistance from the Government for their development.

Appendix—A

Literacy in Nowgong District According to Age Group. (source : Nowgong District Census Hand Book, 1961, p. 231, 232).

Sl. No.	Age Group	Total Persons	Population		Illiterate	
			Male	Female	Male	Female
In all areas.	All ages ..	12,10,761	6,45,690	5,65,071	4,10,562	4,70,174
2.	0-4 ..	2,13,144	1,03,266	1,09,878	1,03,266	1,09,878
3.	5-9 ..	2,19,766	1,09,348	1,10,418	69,453	83,330
4.	10-14 ..	1,30,073	70,666	59,407	29,172	35,653
5.	15-19 ..	96,017	48,024	47,993	21,934	35,139
6.	20-24 ..	97,327	47,711	49,616	24,079	40,392
7.	25-29 ..	1,02,511	55,709	46,802	31,459	39,131
8.	30-34 ..	79,934	44,749	35,185	26,044	30,257
9.	35-44 ..	1,17,674	71,307	46,367	43,521	41,254
10.	45-59 ..	98,732	61,472	37,260	38,251	34,037
11.	60- ..	54,455	32,563	21,892	23,113	20,877
12.	Age not stated	1,128	875	253	270	226

	Literate without educational standard		Educational Level			
			Primary and Junior Basic		Matriculate and above	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1. ..	1,64,392	73,427	61,571	20,391	9,165	1,079
2. ..	..	..	..	..	..	..
3. ..	33,607	25,491	6,288	1,597	..	..
4. ..	29,394	16,604	12,089	7,144	11	6
5. ..	13,374	7,471	11,702	4,975	1,014	408
6. ..	13,813	6,281	7,489	2,624	2,330	319
7. ..	15,596	5,799	6,807	1,722	1,847	150
8. ..	13,340	3,894	4,206	939	1,159	95
9. ..	20,168	4,132	6,054	907	1,564	74
10. ..	17,529	2,814	4,791	387	901	22
10. ..	7,072	919	2,047	91	331	5
12. ..	499	22	98	5	8	..

Appendix—A

Literacy in Nowgong District.
According to Age Group. (Source : Nowgong District Census Hand Book, 1961, p. 231, 232)

In all Urban areas only.

Sl. No.	Age Group	Total persons	Population		Illiterate	
			Male	Female	Male	Female
1.	All ages ..	81,217	47,594	33,623	17,628	18,970
2.	0-4 ..	12,026	6,011	6,015	6,011	6,015
3.	5-9 ..	12,560	6,482	6,078	3,201	3,320
4.	10-14 ..	9,055	4,893	4,162	741	985
5.	15-19 ..	7,231	4,317	2,914	705	847
6.	20-24 ..	7,940	4,896	3,044	974	1,244
7.	25-29 ..	7,853	4,970	2,883	1,358	1,275
8.	30-34 ..	6,210	3,926	2,284	1,160	1,107
9.	35-44 ..	8,966	6,262	2,704	1,718	1,563
10.	45-59 ..	6,263	4,124	2,139	1,202	1,486
11.	60- ..	3,074	1,692	1,382	542	1,116
12.	Age not stated	39	21	18	12	5

	Literate without educational standard		Educational level			
			Primary & Junior Basic		Matriculate and above	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1. ..	16,981	9,888	8,713	4,142	3,082	588
2. ..	..	..	..	..	..	..
3. ..	3,053	2,643	228	115	..	..
4. ..	2,241	1,752	1,909	1,425	2	1
5. ..	1,312	939	1,810	917	431	211
6. ..	1,679	1,130	1,193	474	733	179
7. ..	1,887	1,058	988	461	353	80
8. ..	1,567	808	660	306	372	56
9. ..	2,681	829	1,096	259	568	51
10. ..	1,803	484	615	160	335	9
11. ..	753	241	214	24	106	1
12. ..	4	..	2	..	..	..

Appendix B

Statement showing the Literate with Matriculation and above standard in the Urban Areas of the District of Nowgong (source : District Census hand book—1961).

Sl. No.	Age Group	Matriculation or Higher Secondary		Technical Diploma not equal to Degree.		Non-technical Diploma not equal to degree		University degree or Post-graduate degree other than Tech.degree	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.	All ages	3,581	621	19	..	575	1	499	33
2.	0-4	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
3.	5-9	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
4.	10-14	2	1	..	..	..	..	..	..
5.	15-19	431	211	3	..	53	..	3	..
6.	20-24	733	179	4	..	236	..	74	17
7.	25-29	535	80	3	..	93	1	89	8
8.	30-34	372	56	4		66	..	80	6
9.	35-44	568	51	2	..	62	..	115	2
10.	45-59	335	9	2	4	42	..	101	..
11.	60-	106	1	1	..	23	..	37	..
12.	Age not stated.	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL											
Engineering		Medicine		Agriculture		Veterinary & Dairing		Teaching		Others	
Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
7	..	77	1	..	..	1	..	..		..	..
..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..		..	..
..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	2	..
1	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	3	..
1	..	13	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..
3	..	16	1	..	..	..	2	..	..	1	..
1	..	16	..	..	..	..	2	..	..	..	..
1	..	20	..	..	..	1	..	..	..	..	..
..	..	15	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

Appendix—C.

Statement showing the education among Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes in the District of Nowgong as per Census, 1961.

Class	Category	Population			Literate			Literate without educational standard.			Primary or Junior standard			Matriculation or above		
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Scheduled Caste	Urban	2,362	1,692	4,054	1,177	1,285	2,462	785	269	1,054	354	133	487	46	5	52
	Rural	51,566	45,775	97,341	33,807	40,113	73,920	13,203	4,343	17,546	4,311	1,304	5,615	245	15	260
	Total	53,928	47,467	101,395	34,984	41,398	76,382	13,988	4,612	18,600	4,665	1,437	6,102	291	20	311
Scheduled Tribes	Urban	118	58	176	7	42	49	63	8	71	36	7	43	12	1	13
	Rural	45,530	41,832	87,362	30,412	38,417	68,829	11,543	2,912	14,455	3,523	503	4,026	52	..	52
	Total	45,648	41,890	87,538	30,419	38,459	68,878	11,606	2,920	14,526	3,559	510	4,069	64	1	65

APPENDIX 'D'

Sl.No	Name of Institution	Postal Address	Regd.No. & year.
1.	Sankardev *Natya Chora,*	Vill. Letugram Satra. P. O. Borpanigaon.	No. 92 1961
2.	Bhomoraguri Jonaseva Library and Community Centre.	P.O. & Vill. Bhomoraguri.	No. 149 1965
3.	Milon Sangha *Sondhia Chora*	P.O. & Vill. Jakhalabandha.	No. 118 1964-65
4.	Jyoti Tarun *Sangha.*	Vill. Bhotaigaon P. O. Nowgong.	No. 55 1959-60
5.	Anchalik Kendriya Biswa Bharati P. B. & *Yubak Sangha.*	P.O. & Vill. Komoraguri.	No. 65 1963
6.	Sri Sankardev Library & *Kristi Sangha.*	Vill. Morikalong Borghat P. O. Pathori	No. 136 1964-65
7.	Kawaimari Public Library.	P.O. & Vill. Kawaimari.	No. 101 1968-69
8.	Borbhogia Bezbarua P.B.& *Kristi Sangha.*	P.O. & Vill. Borbhogia.	No. 65 1959-60
9.	Bogoriguri Progoti Library.	P.O. & Vill Bogoriguri.	No. 36 1964-65
10.	Madhabdev Library.	Vill. Athgaon. P. O. Dhing.	
11.	Tyagbir Hem Barua Community Centre & *Natya Chora.*	Vill. Majgajori. P. O. Chakalaghat.	No. 54 1964-65
12.	Batadraba Sri Sri Sankardev P. B. & *Kristi Kendra.*	Vill. Saruhisa. P. O. Batadraba.	No. 112 1961-62
13.	Yubak Sangha Library.	P. O. & Vill. Lanka.	No. 2
14.	Polasoni Sri Sri Sankardev *Sangha.*	P. O. & Vill. Polasoni.	No. 11 1970-71
15.	Hatichong Sahitya Sava Socio-Cultural Society.	P. O. Chakalaghat.	No. 53 1964-65

16.	Jagi Kalpataru P. B. & *Krishti Chora.*	P. O. Jagi. Bhakatgaon.	No. 57 1957
17.	Nowgong *Natya Mandir*	P. O Nowgong.	No. 43 1959-60
18.	Hem Chandra Barua *Abasar Binodon Kendra,*	P.O. & Vill. Halwagaon.	No. 16 1970
19.	Kuthori Recreational Club & Library.	P. O. & Vill. Kuthori.	No. 50 1966-67
20.	Sankari *Kristi Sangha,*	Vill Potani Bor Satra. P. O. Uriagaon.	No. 82 1961-62
21.	Lachit *Puthibhoral & Sangha*	Vill. Majpathori, Chakarigaon P.O. Majpathori.	No. 36 1970-71
22.	Demra Dimasa Association.	Vill. Machaga. P. O. Lanka.	No. 14 1970-71
23.	Sri Srimanta Sankardev P.B. &. Com. Centre.	Vill. Gomothagaon. P. O. Uriagaon.	No. 84 1970-71
24.	Nonoi Mumargaon Naba Jyoti Sangha.	Vill. Mumargaon. P.O. Nonoi.	N0. 47 1971-72
25.	Dagaon Rupjyoti Progotisil *Yubak Sangha & Kristi Chora*	P. O. & Vill. Dagaon.	No. 58 1971-72
26	No.1 Pub-Deurigaon *Yubak Sangha.*	Vill. No. 1 Pub-Deurigaon. P. O. Deurigaon Via. Roha.	No. 27 1971-72
27.	New Star Club	P. O. & Vill. Jaluguti.	No. 129 1971-72
28.	Haiborgaon *Yubak Sangha.*	Juria Road Teliapotty P.O. Nowgong.	No. 5 1972-73
29.	Ahatguri Chariali Anchalik *Yubak Sangha & Sarbodai Sangha*	Vill. & P.O. Ahatguri.	No. 43 1972-73
30.	Lotaimari *Krishok Sangha*	Vill. Lotaimari. P.O. Pupohi.	No. 164 1972-73
31.	Sri Ram Chandra Cultural Society.	Vill. Mahrul Juria. P.O. Majpathori.	No. 206 1972-73
32.	Simoluugri *Samuhia Naba Jagaran* Community Centre & & Youth Club.	Vill. Simoluguri. P. O. Ahatguri.	No. 119 1972-73

33.	Arun P. B. and *Yubak Sangha*	Vill Jagial. P. O. Baligaon.	No. 118 1972-73
34.	Prabhat *Samuhia Samajik Sikhya Kendra & Com. Centre.*	Vill. Bihonigaon. P. O. Pathori.	No. 145 1972-73
35.	Joi Hind Library, Raidongia.	P. O. Aibheti	No. 113 1972-73
36.	Kuruabahi Bhaskar P.B. & *Yubak Mandal.*	Vill. Kuruabahi. P. O. Borongatoli.	....
37.	Bhaskor Public Library & Youth Club.	Vill. Telia Pahukota. P. O. Uriagaon.	No. 162 1971-72
38.	Sri Sri Jagatguru *Puthi Bhoral.*	Vill. Khalaigaon Nowgong. P. O. Gosaibori.	No. 89 1973-74
39.	Hatbor Town *Puthi Bhoral.*	P.O. & Vill. Hatbor.	No. Nil.
40.	Kanchanpur Public Library	Vill. Kanchanpur. P. O. Saidaria.	No. 215 1973-74
41.	Passim Baligaon Sonjiboni *P .B Aru Yubak Sangha.*		No. 67 1973-74
42.	Dakhin Haiborgaon *Natya Chora.*	P. O. Haiborgaon.	No. 18 1960
43.	Hatiamukh Jnyanodai *Kristi Sangha P.B.*	P.O. Jagi Bhakatgaon.	No. 206.
44.	Ananta *Yubak Sangha Kristi Chora.*	P.O. Jajari.	No. 258
45.	Manipuri Royal Club.	P.O. Hojai.	No. 244
46.	Mahatma Public Library & Youth Club.	P.O. Dakhin Belguri.	No. 204
47.	Bheleuguri Anchalic *Samuhik Kendra.*	P. O. Samoguri.	No 135
48.	Srimanta Sankardev *Kristi Sangha,* Kaliabor.	P. O. Konwaritol.	No. 220

49.	Shyamkalia Mahatma *P. B. Yubak Sangha.*	P.O. Aibhati.	No. 24
50.	Bharhampur *Yubkalyan Kendra*	P. O. Bharhampur.	No. 22
51.	Sumanta *Samuhik Unnayan Kendra.*	P. O. Karsung.	No. 48
52.	Kaki *Samajkalyan Kristi Kendra.*	P. O. Sankarpur.	No. 107
53.	Usha Library and *Yubak Sangha.*	P. O. Balisatra.	No. 65
54	Hatibor *Kendriya Natya Samaj.*	P. O. Hatibor.	No. 1110
55.	Parghat *Samuhik Kendra Kristi Chora.*	..	No. 79
56.	Alitangni *Yubak Sangha.*	P. O. Alitangni.	No. 118
57.	Digholbali *Mahila Kendra.*	P.O. Kumrakata.	No. 49
58.	Kujidah *Kala Parishad.*	P.O. Hatisung.	No. 100
59.	Dighalbari Anchalic Tribal *Mahila Sangha.*	P. O. Udari.	No. 26
60.	Kaki Adarsha *Yubak Sangha Kristi Chora.*	P. O. Kaki.	No. 102
61.	Janata *Yubak Sangha.*	Vill. Teliabebcjia. P. O. Juria.	No. 124
62.	Charabahi Central *Yubak Sangha.*	..	No 152
63.	Namdharma *Jyoti Silpi Samaj.*	P. O. Kolongpar. Halowagaon.	No. 197
64.	Gatanga *Tarun Sangha.*	..	No. 153
65.	Deuri Chilabandha *Yubak Sangha.*	P. O. Bhomoraguri.	No. 246
66.	Arun *Yubak Sangha*	P. O. Baligaon.	No. 118
67.	Pachim Baligaon *Sanjibani Yubak Sangha.*	P. O. Baligaon.	No. 67
68.	Pradip *Natya Chora.*	P. O. Singia.	No. 21
69.	Maukhati *Yubak Sangha* and *Kristi Chora.*	P. O. Ranthali.	No. 86

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. Mention may be made of Nagarjuna, an alchemist of Kamarupa, whose medicinal remedies are considered to be efficacious even to-day by the common men of Assam.[1] Ralph Fitch who visited the Koch Kingdom in the sixteenth century refers to the existence of hospitals in the kingdom for all living creatures including animals. He observed, "they have hospitals for sheep, goats dogs, cats, birds and for all living creatures. When they be old and lame they kept them until they die."[2] The Ayurveda, the science of medicine was carefully studied. There was a State medical department with the royal physician at the head.[3] The Doobi grant of Bhaskarvarman (594-650 A.D.) mentions that even the kings assiduously cultivated the science of elephant lore. "The original author of the oldest Indian treatise on elephant training and the diseases of elephants, the *Hastyaurveda* ascribed to Palakapya, a work compiled during the Sutra period (600-200 B·C.) is described as a man from where the Lauhitya (Brahmaputra) flows towards the sea."[4] In those days horses and elephants constituted the hard core of the army and as such utmost care was taken for their upkeep.

During the Ahom period the system of indigenous medicine and treatment of all living creatures was extensively prevalent. There were separate departments under trained officers and physicians to look after and prescribe indigenous medicines for patients both human beings and animals. The royal physician was the *Bezbarua* who was also the head of State Department of Medicines. The treatises on diseases and indigenous medicines were known as *Nidan Sastras*, written by Assamese authors. Mention may be made of *Hastividyarnava*, a treatise on elephants, their diseases and treatment written by Sukumar Barkath and *Ghora Nidan*, a treatise on horses, their diseases and treatment written by Sagarkhari.[5] These two scientific treatises reveal the richness and variety of Assamese pharmacopoeia. Similar treatises on horses such as *Aswanidan* of Surjyakhari Daivagya and *Ghorar Vyadhir Puthi* of this period may also be

1. N K. Basu, *Assam in the Ahom Age*, Calcutta. 1970 p. 381.
2. Ibid, p. 332.
3. B. K. Barua, *A Cultural History of Assam*, p. 153.
4. Dimbeswar Neog, *New light on History of Asamiya Literature*, p. 316.
5. Ibid pp. 315—317.

mentioned. Another treatise on training and treatment of hawks known as *Senar Vyadhi* was also compiled during this period.

"Divination was also resorted to for pregnosis and cure of diseases. Incantations and *mantras*, were also practised as specifies. A mass of writings on *mantras* was created both in prose and verse. An idea of the volume of 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. The *mantras* are interesting and important as documents of social history, folk beliefs and superstitions".[6] Incantation of *mantras* are still employed in rural areas of the district particularly as cure for snake bites. Mention may be made of Mayong, a place in the north-west of Nowgong district, which is very famous as the Land of charms, incantations and *mantras*.

It may also be added that herbs were used for treatment of both the human beings and the animal life. The masses had great faith in the Kamrupi system which contributed towards the general health conditions. Shihabuddin in 1662 observed, "The people of this country are free from certain fatal and loathsome diseases which prevail in Bengal. They are free from many other lingering maladies."[7] The *Vaidyas*, *Ojhas* and *Bezas* had the exclusive knowledge of the use of medicinal herbs. They still continue to command high regards in the society particularly in the rural areas.

During the early part of the British rule, the curative side of human ailments was in the hands of *Kavirajas*, *Ojhas*. *Bezas* as in the past. They treated with the indigenous systems of medicine. The preventive side does not appear to have received much attention, so it was but natural that the sanitary condition of the urban and rural areas of Assam was miserable even in the sixties of the last century. The rural and urban sanitation was left in the hands of Municipal Boards and Local Boards, which did not have much resources for the task. Such a state of affairs continued for several decades. The first dispensary was opened at Nowgong town in 1863. In 1889, the Government took steps to improve rural sanitation. Besides placing some fund as the disposal of the Local Boards, Government issued directions to spend the amount on making provision for drinking water and construction of proper drainage system. Likewise Municipal Boards were also given grants for sanitation, water supply and public health. In 1891, the district had four dispensaries located at Nowgong, Dhing, Puranigudam and Silghat. By 1901, six more dispensaries were added to the list. These were opened at Raha, Kampur, Nanoi, Jaluguti, Jagi and Borjaha. The

6. E. A. Gait, *A History of Assam* Calcutta, 1957, p. 282.
7. *Aspect of the Heritage of Assam*—an article by *P.* C. Choudhury published in *Indian National Congress*, pp. 23-30.

patients treated in 1901, in the dispensaries of the district increased fifty times since 1881. The following statement shows the patients treated.[8]

Year	No. of Dispensaries	Patients treated
1881	1	1,857
1981	4	34,939
1901	10	1,01,268

The Civil Surgeon, Nowgong was in-charge of the medical department and the Vaccination department. He was required to visit all the tea gardens in Nowgong district, where the death-rate for the previous year had exceeded seven per cent. The unsanitary character of the villages of Nowgong district has been described by B.C. Allen as follows.

"The conditions under which the people pass their days are far from 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 houses are buried in groves of fruit trees and bamboos, which afford indeed a pleasant shade, but act as an effective barrier to the circulation of the air, and increase the humidity of the already overhumid atmosphere. The water supply is generally bad, and is drawn either from shallow holes, from rivers, or from tanks in which the villagers wash their clothes and persons. All of these are undoubtedly factors which contribute to produce a high mortality and nearly every one of them could be climinated.[9]

(b) Vital Statistics :

Collection of vital statistics was introduced during the British days. In the beginning such statistics were prepared on the basis of reports of birth and deaths from unpaid *gaonburas* or village headmen through the mandals. At present the District Health Officer collects vital statistics through various agencies like the *gaonburas*, mandals, mauzadars, village Panchayats, Chairmen of municipalities and town Committees, managers of tea gardens, railway authorities etc. and finally compiles them for submission to the Director of Health Services. Vital statistics which show the actual growth of natural population are very much useful for preparation and implementation of development schemes particularly maternity and family planning programmes in a district.

In this district between 1891 and 1901, the mean recorded birth rate was 24 per mille and death rate 45 per mille. Both of these figures were said to be

8. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, Vol. VI, Nowgong, Calcutta, 1905, p. 222.
9. Ibid, pp. 211-212.

"much below the truth." However, higher death rate was attributed to the exceptional unhealthiness which "not only killed off the people but had a prejudicial effect on the fertility of the survivors. The number of children under ten to every thousand of the population decreased from 329 in 1891 to 313 in 1901".[10] Other causes of high mortality were *Kala-azar* and fever, cholera and small pox. *Kala-azar* took a heavy toll of life during the last decade of the nineteenth century. Cholera also wrought havoc in 1900 and broke out time and again during the next decade of 1901-11. During the decade the highest of the mortality from Cholera 10.13 per mille and from small pox 3.87 per mille was reported in 1901 in which year mortality from *Kala-azar* and fever was not as high as in the two previous years, the highest 24.8 5 per mille occuring in 1909. Another cause of high mortality was reported to be the unscientific method of midwife. Professional mid-wives were very few among the Assamese and a woman in confinement was looked after by her female relatives, who could help little in case of complications. Assistance was often sought from *Ojhas* who despite their incantations, various ceremonial sacrificies and superior airs proved of little help. In some cases attempts were made to drag the child out by any thing that offered and the abdomen was kneeded in the hope that the foctus might be expelled. It is no wonder that the mother often died. Confinement was usually arranegd in a small hut specially constructed for the purpose and the patient's bed was only an old mat on the floor. Under these circumstances many lives were bound to be lost due to utter disregard of the rules of cleanliness which are of utmost importance in such cases. During this decade of 1901-11 the birth rate per mile varied between 27.70 in 1902 and 40.50 in 1908 while death rate per mille varied between 19.96 in 1905 and 39.41 in 1908.

Even with the passage of time and despite tremendous improvement of medical facilities death during child-birth are not inconsiderable. During 1951-61 the lowest death during child-birth was 70 in 1951 and highest 250 in 1958. The following table shows vital statistics and ratio of deaths per mile from main diseases in Nowgong district.

Year	Ratio of birth per mile.	Ratio of deaths per mile.	Ratio of deaths per mile from			
			Cholera	Small pox	Fever	Bowel Complaint
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1901 ..	29.84	25.36	0.13	0.15	19.84	1.53
1912 ..	27.72	24.80	6.27	0.95	11.99	1.20

10. Ibid, 213,

With the spread of medical and public health facilities in the district the two killers viz., *Kala-azar* and cholera were brought under control. Mass vaccination prevented small-pox from assuming an epidemic form. Spread of education made the public conscious of the benefits of sanitation and modern medical assistance. As a result, there was a marked decline in death rates as reflected by the following three table.

Table—I[11]

Items	1945	1946	1947	1948	1949
1	2	3	4	5	6
Births per thousand population.	12.43	13.42	12.33	19.90	13.65
Deaths per thousand population.	8.40	11.23	6.61	5.60	7.94

Table—II[12]

Year	Total number of births	Total number of deaths	Total increase (+) or decrease (—) of Births over Deaths	Percentage increase of Births over Deaths.
1951	13,238	5,487	+7,751	58.55
1960	10,006	3,885	+6,121	61.17

Table III.[13]

Year	Cholera	Fever	Small-pox	Dysentry & Diarrhoea	Plague	Respiratory Diseases
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1951 ..	59	67	43	175	..	117
1952 ..	49	82	119	360	..	268
1953 ..	38	473	34	571	..	701
1954 ..	..	824	..	591	..	708
1955 ..	15	628	1	530	..	897
1956 ..	13	664	..	705	..	1,150
1957 ..	..	974	8	903	..	1,155
1958 ..	..	1,749	3	908	..	983
1995 ..	..	814	37	800	..	1,007
1960 ..	69	519	13	562	..	821
Total ..	243	6,794	258	6,105		7,807

11. *Statistical Abstract of Assam*, 1951, Department of Economics and Statistics, Government of Assam, Shillong, p.97.
12. *Census of India*, 1961, *Assam District Census Handbook*, Nowgong, p. 287.
13. Ibid, p. 287,

Suicide	Child-birth	Malaria	Kala-azar	Tubercular Diseases	Snake-bites.	Leprosy	Cancer
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
8	70	3,970	61	..	3	1	3
17	180	3,572	57	4	5	..	4
23	145	1,698	86	6	3	1	2
35	84	816	49	2	1		6
58	80	634	25	1	3	2	5
77	132	685	30	4	1	..	3
32	111	1,317	9	..	1	..	1
46	250	790	..	41	..	..	1
105	206	552	19	..	..	..	1
30	95	457	24	3	1	2	3
431	1,353	14,491	360	61	18	6	29

(c) Common Diseases :—

The diseases most common to the district are malaria, dysentery and diarrhoea, respiratory diseases, fever, *Kala-azar*, Small-pox and Cholera. Tuberculosis, Cancer and Leprosy cases are also found. Figures for persons suffering from malaria are not available for the early parts of this century. But there is no doubt that this disease was prevalent in the district and appeared to be included in the term "fever". During the decade 1951-60, highest mortality is reported from cases of malaria. It is specially widespread in mountainous and marshy areas. With the introduction of the National Malaria Eradication Programme in the district after independence, the disease has been brought under control to a great extent. Under the programme extensive spraying of D.D.T. is carried out from house to house and blood samples are tested for malaria in suspected cases. As a result of these efforts mortality from malaria has been reduced from 3,970 in 1951 and 3,572 in 1952 to 552 in 1959 and 457 in 1960. This decreasing trend of the disease still continues.

Kala-azar was described as the most deadly, lethal agent of high mortality. The first case was reported in 1888 at Nowgong. Another case was reported next year at Raha and two years later at Nakhola. From these three centres the disease spread all over the district. During the five years, 1887-91, prior to the spread of *Kala-azar* in the district the annual death rate from fever was 4,405. At this rate total death at the end of 1900 would have been 39,645. But records of this period, imperfect though they were, showed 93,824 deaths due to fever and *Kala-azar*. From this it is clear that *Kala-azar* took a heavy toll of 54,179 lives

out of the total population which in 1891, numbered only 3,47,307. The following account of the then Deputy Commissioner of Nowgong shows the disastrous effects of *Kala-azar* on the district.

"The state of the district can hardly be realised by any one who has not travelled throughout it and been into the villages. Deserted *basti* sites are common ; a few of the people in such cases removed elsewhere but most stuck to their houses till they died. In Lalung and Hojai villages I believe hardly any one went elsewhere and these two tribes lost very heavily. There used to be numbers of Hojais in the neighbourhood of Kharikhana ; almost all have died ; ten twelve Hojai villages at the foot of the hills near Dabaka have completely disappeared and Dabaka itself has shrunk from an important trade centre to a miserable hamlet. *Kala-azar* is not only merciless in the number of its victims, but also in the way it kills. Men rarely died under three months, and often lingered two years sometimes even more. If two or three members of a family were attacked with the disease, all its little savings were spent to support them. *Kala-azar* not only claimed victims in a family but left the survivors impoverished, it not ruined."

"In many instances, an old man or woman, or two or three small children, are all that is left of a large family. In Nowgong, Raha and Puranigudam are empty spaces where formerly houses stood, and the same sort of thing can be seen all over the district. So much land had gone out of cultivation that it has hardly any value except in the town near Silghat and in the Kandali mauza. A man will not buy land when it can be had for the asking."[14]

The disease reoccurred in 1909 and about 86 villages especially the populous villages on the bank of the Kalang were seriously infected. At present *Kala-azar* is no longer a mysterious disease and has been almost eradicated.

Another killer of the times was cholera, which although endemic in the district often assumed a violent form. In 1900 there was a terrible outbreak on the *chapari* from Dhing to Nij-tetelia, Ghugua and Dandua were most seriously affected. The recorded death per thousand during this year was as follows : Dhing, 58 ; Mikirbheta, 73 ; Ghugua and Dandua, 124 ; Charaibahi, 109 and Tetelia, 63. The following table will give an idea about the death rate due to cholera per mile in the district during 1879 to 1912.

Year		Cholera death rate per mile.
1879	..	11.9
1890	..	9.9
1900	..	25.0
1910	..	10.13
1911	..	0.31
1912	..	6.27

14. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, Nowgong district, 1905, Calcutta. Vol. VI.

Isolated cases of cholera are still reported in Nowgong district but timely diagnosis and mass inoculation have prevented its assuming an epidemic form.

Small pox is epidemic in the district and the highest recorded death rate was 8-3 per thousand in 1898. Other years in which small pox took a heavy toll of human lives were 1904, 1909 and 1910 in which deaths accounted for 3.49, 2.88 and 3.87 per cent of the population. With mass inoculation in both urban and rural areas, however, small-pox no longer occurs in epidemic form. In 1960 there were only 13 deaths from small pox.

Diarrhoea, dysentery and instestinal diseases are generally seen among the people of riverain and water-logged areas. Deaths from dysentery and diarrhoea showed an upward trend from 175 in 1951 to 1908 in 1958. However, in 1959 and 1960 such deaths declined to 800 and 562.

Deaths from respiratory disease are also considerable in Nowgong district. From 117 in 1951 deaths gradually rose to the alarming figure of 1,155 in 1957 but fell slightly to 983 next year, rising again to 1007 in 1959. In 1960, such deaths came down to 821. Leprosy is also common amongst hill tribes especially Mikirs and Lalungs. Cases of tuberculosis and cancer are also not uncommon. Mortality from different diseases has already been furnished elsewhere in this chapter.

(d) Public Hospitals and Dispensaries :

(a) Organisation of the Medical Department :— The Public Health and the Medical department were previously separate departments which were combined together to one under the Civil Surgeon of the district in 1958. He is responsible for both curative and preventive aspects of the set-up. With the abolition of the Local Board all dispensaries under it were provincialised and transferred to the Civil Surgeon's Charge.

In 1971, there were four State Hospitals, four Railway hospitals, 57 State Dispensaries, 7 Primary Health Centres and 29 Medical Sub-centres besides one Maternity Home in the district. The dispensaries under the State Government are placed in-charge of Assistant Surgeons Grades 1 & II, who are also empowered to act as rhe food Inspectors to detect cases of food adulteration. In each Civil Hospital and dispensary a peramedical staff is also maintained. All the Hospitals and some of the dispensaries are provided with nurses and mid-wives.

Hospitals :— Of the eight hospitals in Nowgong district, one is the Civil Hospital, two are Jail hospitals and one is a Police hospital, all located in Nowgong town. The other four are Railway hospitals located at Lumding, Chapar-

mukh, Hojai and Jagiroad. Among railway hospitals, Lumding is the biggest where 25 qualified doctors and 23 nurses are appointed and 100 beds are provided for patients. The rest of the railway hospitals are run by one qualified doctor in each. The Police hospital is exclusively meant for police personnel and their families and likewise the two jail hospitals are for inmates of the jails.

The Civil Hospital at Nowgong is the main medical institution of the district and is under the immediate control of the Civil Surgeon, Nowgong. The Civil Surgeon who has also to attend to the administrative matters is assisted by a District Surgeon and fifteen Assistant Surgeons of Grade I & II who attend to both the out-door and in-door patients. The hospital is provided with 110 beds and has a nursing staff of twenty. There are specialised doctors in the departments of Surgrey, E.N.T. and Eye. It is provided with X-ray plants and other modern equipments. There are V.D. and chest clinics attached to it under specialists. There are also six beds for T.B. patients in the Kamala Nehru T.B. hospital run by Sankar Mission, Nowgong. One Ayurvedic section is also functioning since 1947 under an Ayurvedic doctor and one compounder. During 1969, 6,261 indoor patient and 5,78,055 out-door patients were treated in the Nowgong Civil Hospital. The annual expenditure of the hospital was Rs. 3,86,326 in 1967-68, Rs. 5,68,164 in 1968-69 and Rs. 6,05,166 in 1969-70. The hospital also maintains two training schemes one for Auxiliary Nurses and Mid-wives with 30 trainees and another for nurse with twenty trainees.

Primary Health Centres : There are 7 Primary Health Centres at Bhurbandha, Kathiatoli, Jakhalabandha, Barapujia, Simanabasti, Marigaon, Samaguri and 2 Sub-centres at Bamuni and Bhelowguri. Each of these is placed in-charge of an Assistant Surgeon. Each Primary Health Centre covers a population of about 40 to 60 thousand. Each centre takes both curative and preventive measures against disease occurring in the area. Survey of diseases and sanitary measures are also their responsibility. These works are carried out in collaboration with Public Health Engineering Department, Social Education Organiser and respective Block Development Offices. Each such unit has three or four sub-centres to look after the curative and preventive aspects of disease, maternity, Child welfare and family planning services in their respective areas. Besides these the Primary Health Centre, is to look-after maternity, child welfare and family planning services. Each Primary Health Unit is provided with a group of qualified medical personnel, which includes one Medical Officer, one Pharmacist, one Sanitary Inspector, one Public Health Nurse or Lady Health Visitor and four Auxiliary Nurses and Mid-wives. Each centre has also been provided with six beds.

Maternity and Child welfare Services :— The district has altogether 16 Maternity and Child Welfare centres and they are all situated in the rural areas.

except one in Nowgong town. This is known as the Maternity Home and the Child Welfare centre and Auxiliary Nurse-cum-Mid-wifery Training Centre. It was established in 1954, and has, at present, 15 beds. The institution is run by one Assistant Surgeon--1 and 4 Nurses. Other Centres are run by the Medical Officers of the dispensaries to which they are attached. The present staff of each Maternity and Child Welfare centres consists of one Midwife and one *Dhai*. They, besides, attending to hospital duties are to enquire of health and conditions of expectant mothers and children and also to give useful advice for maintenance of health and sanitation.

Ayurvedic Services : The district has four Government subsidised Ayurvedic dispensaries at four different places namely Mayong, Barghat-Tin-Ali, Kampur and Puranigudam. An Ayurvedic section has also been functioning in the Nowlong Civil Hospital since 1947. One qualified Ayurvedic doctor and one Ayurvedic Compounder are in charge of this section.

Leprosy Control Services : Government have taken up Leprosy Control Scheme and as a result of this, one Leprosy Centre has been established at Singimari with 15 beds and is managed by the Health Department.

Kala-azar : There are three Kala-azar wards at Ahomgaon, Laopani and Bhuragaon for treatment of Kala-azar.

V.D. Clinic : There is one V.D. Clinic attached to the Nowgong Civil Hospital to detect V.D. and to give proper treatment to V.D. patients. One specialist is placed in charge of this section.

Malaria Eradication Services : Under the Malaria Eradication Programme a unit was established in the Nowgong town. The unit consists of one District Malaria Officer and several Malaria Inspectors. Spraying of insecticides and surveillance works have been carried out in the district. Spraying of D.D.T. and B.H.C. in the houses, house compound and drainage etc., has frequently been carried out to control and kill the mosquitoes both in rural and urban areas.

(ii) Number and location of Hospitals :—

A table appended at the close of the chapter will show all the hospitals and dispensaries of the district. Their location, number of beds, strength of the medical staff etc., are also shown in the table.

Medical facilities in rural areas :— Health care in the rural areas of Nowgong is of integrated pattern, combining preventive and curative services with the emphasis on the preventive aspect. In persuance of the recommendations of the Health Survey and Development Committee 1945, known as the

Bhore Committee and the recommendations of the C.O.P.P. Committee set up by the Planning Commission, Primary Health Centres were established in rural areas. The W.H.O also endorsed the view that there should be integrated health care through Primary Health Centres in the rural areas. Almost all the Dispensaries are located in rural areas. There are seven Primary Health Centres in thirteen Community Development Blocks. In Assam, there are on average 6 Primary Health Centres per ten Blocks. The number of patients treated in Dispensaries and Primary Health Centres have already been shown elsewhere.

(d) Private Hospitals and Dispensaries :—

The district has no private hospitals except the Shrimanta Sankar Eye Hospital, Kamala Nehru T. B. Hospital, the Leprosy Centre at Kuthori and 5 Government subsidised Allopathic dispensaries and 4 Ayurvedic dispensaries in the district. Shrimanta Sankar Mission, a social-welfare organisation opened an Eye Hospital with 15 beds in Nowgong town in 1950. The State Government has been giving a yearly recurring grant of Rs. 20,000 for this purpose since 1950. This Eye Hospital treated 3,895 eye cases as indoor patients and 54,973 as outdoor patients during the period from 1950-1967. The Mission has also set up a twenty-five bedded T.B. Hospital known as Kamala Nehru T.B. Hospital at Nowgong. There is also one Leprosy Centre established at Kuthori by the Assam Seva Samity. It has forty beds and is aided by Government grants. There are also a number of tea-garden dispensaries, which are managed by the tea-garden authorities and cater to the needs of their employees. Big tea gardens have their own dispensaries whereas smaller ones have joint dispensaries. Some tea-gardens also make arrangements for medical treatment of their employees with local hospitals and dispensaries.

Many private Pharmacies have been established in the urban and semi-urban areas of the district. Some pharmacies have their own clinics where doctors are available for consultation during fixed hours. These clinics often provide facilities for examination of blood, urine etc.

The number of private practitioners and specialised doctors for different ailments has gradually been increasing in the town areas. The specialists in the branches of Dentistry, Opthalmology, Ear, Nose and Throat etc. are now easily available in the Nowgong town. They have their own clinics where large number of people are treated daily.

The Homoeopathic system of treatment has also gained popularity among the people specially for children's ailments. Homoeopathic Pharmacies and practitioners are available to-day both in urban and rural areas. There are also several *Kavirajs* and *Hakims* in the district.

(f) Institutions for disseminating knowledge on Public Health :—

The Health Education Bureau started functioning in the state of Assam with effect from October, 1960 with the objective amongst others, to help people in achieving health by their own actions and efforts encouraging people to fully utilise the health services provided by the Government and collecting base-line data of the prevailing pattern of health habits, attitudes, beliefs, values etc., in respective areas of the state.

The Bureau has started work with three sections, namely Administrative, Materials 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 Autonomus Hills districts of Assam, carrying on with Health Educational activities. Another additional Health Education-Cum Mobile Dispensary Unit is underway to function in the Autonomous Hill district, very soon.

The Health Education Bureau has been undertaking programmes of Health Education for the inservice para-medical 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 Sub-divisional 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 extends 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, mid-wives, 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 Programme. A national programme has already been launched to reduce the birth rate from 40 per thousand to 25 per thousand. The operational means of achieving this objective is to create facilities for the married couples to adopt family 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 have also becoming increasingly popular. One mobile publicity unit is engaged in extending audio-visual aids to the people on birth control measures.

(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 Sub-divisional 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. He was 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 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, Nowgong. It has been mentioned earlier that with the abolition of the Local Boards in 1959, all the Local Boards dispensaries were also taken over by the Government.

After the amalgamation, the Public Health matters have been entrusted to the Civil Surgeon. Besides the Assistant Surgeons 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 Inspector. The Municipal Boards

have their own set of Vaccinators and Sanitary Inspectors. The Health Assistants and the Vaccinators perform vaccination under the supervision of the Medical Officers of their respective areas.

The following table shows the number of persons vaccinated performed during the period from 1966 to 1970[15]

Years ..	Primary vaccination			Re-vaccination		
	Total	Successful	unsuccessful	Total	Successful	unsuccessful
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1966 ..	33,842	30,651	579	1,09,465	38,701	31,162
1967 ..	52,995	49,936	832	1,69,851	56,260	66,556
1968 ..	1,12,499	1,09,677	953	3,45,678	1,13,933	1,51,021
1969 ..	1,10,468	1,04,948	1,781	3,17,564	1,16,132	1,15,242
1970 ..	92,430	9,005	985	2,88,137	83,468	1,02,104

The Public Health Engineering Department of the Government of Assam is engaged in implementation of the Schemes of Rural Water supply. The Executive Engineer, Public Health Engineering, Gauhati Division--1 supervised the works executed in the Nowgong district. However, recently, a Division has been opened at Nowgong town which covers the entire district.

(ii) Activities of health and sanitary organisation :— While in the rural areas improvement of environmental hygiene is a matter of utmost importance emphasis has been given to improvement of the living condition of the Harijans in the urban areas. Some areas of Nowgong town are occupied by scavengers and sweepers. The acute proverty and dearth of housing accommodation of the migratory population have turned certain areas into slums in the towns. The Municipal Boards and Town Committees have taken steps for their removal. Both Hojai and Nowgong Municipal Boards have made provisions for better accommodation to the *Harijans*. In the small but growing towns like Puranigudam, Raha, Jagiroad, and Marigaon such slums are yet to appear.

In the rural areas the Panchayats are entrusted with some aspects of sanitation and Public Health. These Panchayats construct rural latrines, pucca drains, supply of smokeless *chulas* and provide for drinking water by constructing wells, renovating old wells and tanks and by installing hand pumps. In the year 1969-70, 324 rural latrines, 45 soakage pits, 99 smokeless *chulas*, 49 wells

15. Report of the Civil Surgeon, Nowgong.

were constructed and 97 old tanks renovated in the Kaliabor Anchalik Panchayat. During the same year 4 rural latrines, 2 smokeless *chulas* and 3 wells were constructed in the Rupahi Anchalik Panchayat area. Besides, 4 wells in Batadroba, 6 in Kathiatoli and one in Dimow Anchalik Panchayats were constructed during the same year. During the year under review, other panchayats of the district have not recorded any progress in this respect.

Protected water supply : At present there is no protected water supply in the towns of Nowgong district except for the railway town of Lumding. The rivers and streams, ponds and tanks, pucca ring-wells and hand pumps are the chief source of water supply of the people. Local Board provided a ring-well for each group of two or three villages. But *pucca* wells have been constructed by well-to-do families and tube-wells installed by the people individually for their own use. Such measures have also been taken by the Government through the Panchayats in rural areas. During the Third Five Year Plan a protected water supply scheme at Raha was taken under the National Water Supply and Sanitation Scheme (rural). Special emphasis has, however, been given on protected water-supply and sanitation in the Fourth Five Year Plan Programme. Though a considerable portion of the outlay has been earmarked for water-supply and sanitation in urban areas, yet emphasis has also been given to provide protected water supply to the areas endemic with Cholera and Filariasis and areas of water scarcity.

Appendix—A

Hospitals, Public Health Units, Dispensaries of the Nowgong District.

Sl. No.	Name of Hospitals, Dispensaries, P.H.C.	No. of beds.	No. of Doctors	No. of Nurses
1.	2	3	4	5
1.	Nowgong Civil Hospital. ..	110	15	20
2.	Nowgong Police Hospital. ..	18	1	..
3.	Nowgong Jail Hospital. ..	12	1	..
4.	Special Jail Hospital, Nowgong	12	1	..
5.	Maternity Home, Nowgong.	20	1	3
	Other Hospitals :			
6.	Railway Hospital, Lumding.	114	25	23
7.	Railway Health Unit, Chaparmukh. ..	..	1	..

1	2	3	4	5
8.	Railway Health Unit, Hojai	..	1	..
9.	Railway Health Unit, Jagiroad	..	1	..
	Primary Health Centres :			
10.	Bhurbandha ..	6	1	5
11.	Kathiatoli ..	6	1	3
12.	Jakhalabandha ..	6	1	4
13.	Barapujia ..	6	1	3
14.	Simanabasti ..	6	1	4
15.	Marigaon ..	6	1	4
16.	Samaguri ..	6	1	4
17.	Bamuni (Sub-Centre P.H.C.)	..	..	1
18.	Bhelowguri (-do-) ..	..	..	1
	State Dispensaries :			
19.	Hatichung ..	..	1	1
20.	Rupahi ..	..	1	1
21.	Borjaha ..	..	1	..
22.	Dharamtul ..	..	1	1
23.	Juria ..	..	1	2
24.	Bhuragaon ..	..	1	1
25.	Hojai ..	..	1	2
26.	Batadraba ..	..	1	1
27.	Phulaguri ..	..	1	1
28.	Laharighat ..	..	1	1
29.	Laokhowa ..	..	1	1
30.	Kapahera ..	..	1	1
31.	Bogalajan ..	..	1	1
32.	Barhampur ..	..	1	..
33.	Charaibahi ..	..	1	2
34.	Dighalijan ..	..	1	..
35.	Kampur ..	..	1	2
36.	Jamunamukh ..	..	1	2
37.	Silghat ..	..	1	2
38.	Puranigudam ..	..	1	2
39.	Raha ..	..	1	4
40.	Jaluguti ..	..	1	2
41.	Dhing ..	..	1	3
42.	Nanoi ..	..	1	1

1	2	3	4	5
43.	Jagi bhakatgaon ..	..	1	1
44.	Garajan ..	..	1	1
45.	Kochua ..	..	1	..
46.	Kapashbari ..	..	1	..
47.	Meruagaon ..	..	1	1
48.	Panigaon ..	..	1	..
49.	Kohua-ati ..	..	1	..
50.	Udori ..	..	1	..
51.	Lumding ..	..	1	3
52.	Amsoi ..	..	1	0
53.	Sialmari ..	..	1	0
54.	Boralimari ..	..	1	..
55.	Nizgerua ..	..	1	0
56.	Moirabari ..	..	1	..
57.	Kuthori ..	..	1	1
58.	Nokhola ..	..	1	1
59.	Ambagan ..	..	1	0
60.	Monoha ..	..	1	1
61.	Aibheti ..	..	1	1
62.	Lonemati ..	..	1	2
63.	Chapanalla ..	..	1	1
64.	Dabaka ..	..	1	2
65.	Jajori ..	..	1	1
66.	Nellie ..	..	1	1
67.	Lanka ..	..	1	1
68.	Balikatia ..	..	1	1
69.	Mikirbheta ..	..	1	0
70.	Ahomgaon ..	..	1	0
71.	Laopani ..	..	1	0
72.	Singimari ..	..	1	1
73.	Kaki ..	..	1	0
74.	Boghora ..	..	1	0
75.	Kuwaritol ..	..	1	1

CHAPTER-XVII

OTHER SOCIAL SERVICES.

(a) **Labour Welfare** : Organisational set-up and activities :

To look after the problems of Labour Welfare the Labour Departments of the Central and State Governments have been armed with a number of labour legislations passed by the Indian Parliament and the State Assembly. The legislations so far enacted cover both public and private sector establishments in the district. The employers have been brought under the purview of legislations and are expected to adopted necessary welfare measures in their establishments. Some of these Acts and Regulations are : The Workmens' Compensations Act, 1923 ; The Indian Trade Union Act, 1926 ; The Tea District Emigrant Labour Act, 1934 ; The Payment of Wages Act, 1936 ; The Assam Maternity Benefit Act, 1944 ; The Industrial Employment (Standing orders) Act, 1946 ; The Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 ; The Factories Act, 1948 ; The Assam Shops and Establishment Act, 1948 ; The Minimum Wages Act ; 1948 ; The Coal Mines Provident Fund and Bonus Scheme Act, 1948 ; Employees Fund Act, 1948 ; Employees State Insurance Act, 1948 ; The Motor Transport Workers Act, 1951 ; The Plantation Labour Act, 1951 ; The Working Journalist (Condition of Service) and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1955 ; The Assam Tea Plantation Provident Fund Scheme Act, 1955 etc.

These Acts and Regulations cover a wide range of labour welfare measures such as the provisions of housing, medical, education, nutrition (establishment of canteens etc.) rest and recreation, day nurseries, sanitation, holidays with pay and maternity and sickness benefits.

For the enforcement of the above Acts and rules framed thereunder and to deal with other matters relating to labour welfare there is one Labour Officer at Nowgong. He is assisted by one Labour Inspector and their jurisdiction extends throughout Nowgong district. Under the Factories Act of 1948, all the factories of the district are inspected by an Inspector of Factories who is under the control of the Chief Inspector of Factories, Assam.

The enactment of the Plantation Labour Act in 1951 has brought much improvement in the working conditions of the plantation workers in Assam. It is a comprehensive piece of legislation and has put employers under obligation to provide for various facilities to their employees. This Act can be extended to other plantations besides tea by the State Govt. It also provides for setting up of inspecting staff by the State Govt. and penalties for the contravention of the provisions of the Act. Under this Act, the employers are required to provide for drinking water, sufficient numbers of latrines and urinals for men and women,

canteens in every plantation wherein 150 or more workers are employed, creches where 50 or more women are employed. Employers are also to make arrangement for proper medical and educational facilities for the workers and their children. Provision of housing facilities for the workers and their families is also an important aspect of the Act. Besides maternity and sickness benefits, the workers are allowed leave with wages. Children below 12 years are not to work in plantations and night work between 7 P.M. and 6 A.M. is prohibited for women and adolescents. Welfare officers are to be appointed in every plantation where 300 or more workers are employed.

The introduction of the Assam Tea Plantations Provident Fund (And Pension Fund) Scheme Act, 1955 to the labour statute book has ushered in a new era of socio-economic upliftment for the plantation workers in the state of Assam.[1] It extends the statutory guarantee of social justice and social security to the working class of the plantations in the state.

The scheme of Provident Fund under the said Act is applicable to (a) Plantations having 25 or more acres of land under tea with productions of more than 456 bs. of tea per acre, and (b) Plantations having 50 or more acres under tea irrespective of the rate of production. In pursuance of the provision of the Assam Tea Plantations Provident Fund Scheme (Amendment) Act, 1958, some small and uneconomic plantations have been exempted from the purview of the scheme. In the district of Nowgong out of 21 tea gardens 19 have been covered by this Act till March 31, 1973.

The benefits of the Contributory Provident Fund are compulsorily extended to all categories of employees excepting personnel of managerial and executive cadres and other employees whose total (cash) emoluments exceed Rs. 1,000/- per month per head. The rate of contribution to the provident fund has been raised from 6% to 8% of the wages of workers both employers and employees.

The scheme provides for advances, refundable and non-refundable to the members from their provident fund accumulation on specific grounds. Refundable advances are made available for marriage and death ceremony in a members' family and non-refundable advances are available for building a dwelling house, payment of life insurance premium, purchase of shares of co-operative societies and subsistence when famine condition prevails due to natural calamities and unemployment due to closure of garden. The following table shows the extent of the scheme in the state as well as in the district of Nowgong since 1969 to 1972..

1. Compiled from the Annual Reports of the Working of the Assam Tea Plantations Provident Fund and Pension Fund Scheme of years 1968-69 to 1971-72 and Facts About Assam Tea Plantations Provident Fund and Pension Fund Scheme published by the Board of Trusties, Assam Tea Plantations Provident Fund Scheme, Shillong.

Nowgong District — Assam State

Year ending on 31st March	No. of tea gardens covered by the scheme.	Members				No. of tea gardens covered by the scheme.	Members			
		Staff	Adult	Adolescent & children.	Total		Staff	Adult	Adolescant & children.	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1969 ..	19	345	11,543	924	12,812	708	11,931	4,32,826	13,363	4,58,120
1970 ..	19	345	11,199	919	12,463	708	11,916	4,29,813	13,183	4,54,412
1971 ..	19	340	11,054	909	12,303	708	11,802	4,27,179	13,059	4,52,040
1972 ..	19	320	11,000	783	12,103	708	11,693	4,26,141	12,585	4,50,419

The scheme is administred by the Board of Trustees with its head office in Gauhati and the cost of the administration is met from a separate fund created by contributions by the employer @ 2.25% of the gross collection.

Since the introduction of the scheme, its functions and scope have been considerably expanded by adopting other ancillary schemes viz. Life Insurance Scheme through Provident Fund, Old Age Pension Scheme and Family Pension Scheme.

Life Insurance through provident fund was introduced in 1963 with a view to rendering financial protection to the family of the deceased member. While extending this additional benefit it was ensured that no additional financial burden was put upon the member on that account. The lives of the Provident Fund members in the age group of 18 to 40 years are insured for Rs. 1,000/- Rs. 500/- and Rs. 250/- in respect of the clerical staff, male labour and female labour members respectively at their option. According to the scheme, all the insurance policies are assigned to the Board of Trustees who will keep these in their custody and shall prefer claims as and when necessary of life Insurance Corporation. The amount of premium is paid by the Board of Trustees from the provident fund contributions of a member annually and the balance being credited to his Provident Fund account.

The Pension Scheme which provides for old age pension to the workers after retirement was introduced with effect from 2.10.67 covering the entire provident fund members. Its benefits are in addition to the benefit of the contributory Provident Fund and insurance without entailing any extra financial burden on the employees and employers. The fund for the pension scheme was created by diverting the surplus interest earnings from the investment of Provident Fund Contributions. The benefits under the scheme are as follows. :—

(a) 7½% of the Provident Fund credit balance of a member who has put in 25 or more years of membership in Provident Fund on the date of his retirement or death annually for a period of 7 years.

(b) 5% of the Provident Fund credit balance of a member who has put in 10 or more years of membership in the fund on the date of his retirement or death annually for a period of 5 years.

(c) Additional interest of 1% on the credit balance of a member who ceases his membership in the Fund prior to completion of 10 years of membership.

(d) Facility of commutation.

The scope of the pension scheme has been much widened since 1.4.72 to provide family pension to the family of a member in the event of his death while in service. The benefit under the old age pension scheme would continue in respect of the members who retired or died prior to 1.4.72 while the revised pension scheme including family pension has been made applicable in respect of the member who dies or retires on or after 1.4.72. Under the new scheme family pension is granted @Rs. 40/- per month for life or till re-marriage and lump sum of Rs. 1,000/- to the family of the deceased member who dies while in service.

The Family Pension Fund is comprised of the annual contribution made by the Govt. of India and of the amount annually transferred from the General Pension Fund @ 11.6% and 21.3% of the wages of the employees covered under the scheme respectively. Besides, Govt. of India have agreed to bear the entire administrative cost of the Family Pension Scheme.

The enactment of the Assam Tea Plantation's Employees Welfare Fund Act 1959 is another landmark in the history of welfare legislation for the tea employees in the state of Assam.[2] Under the provision of this Act a Fund is to be constituted out of (1) all fines realised from the employees in the course of management of the plantation (2) all unpaid accumulations (3) all grants from the State or Central Govt. or the Tea Board (4) any voluntary donation (5) any sum borrowed under section 8 of the Act and (6) any sum unclaimed or forfeited in the provident fund account of the employees. The Fund shall rest in the Board of Trustees constituted by the State Govt. and shall be applied to meet the expenditure in connection with measures which in the opinion of the State Govt. are necessary for providing the welfare of the employees employed in the State of Assam. As per provision of the Act, the Fund may be utilised for the purpose of adult education, community and social education centres, games and sports tours and holiday homes, recreational facilities and other forms of activities which are considered necessary for the welfare of the Labours. There is a State Govt. Labour Welfare Centre (Plantations Labour Community Centre) at Salonah Tea Estate in Nowgong district under the management of the State Labour Department. Here one school for adult literacy has been established. Some crafts including tailoring and carpentry are also taught. The expenses are borne by the State Government.

In the matter of industrial disputes the Labour Department endeavours to promote industrial harmony through peaceful settlement of disputes. The Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 is applicable to all the industrial establishments

2. Compiled from the Annual Reports of the Working of the Assam Tea Plantations Employees Welfare Fund Act 1959 for 1970.

of the State. In cases where conciliation fails they are referred to the Industrial Tribunal for adjudications. To try industrial disputes the State Govt. has two Industrial Tribunals one for Upper Assam with headquarters at Dibrugarh and the other for Lower Assam including Nowgong district with headquarters at Gauhati

(b) Prohibtion :

(i) Opium : References have been made in various accounts to the large consumption of opium by the people of the Brahmaputra Valley. Captain Welsh in 1792 reported to Lord Cornawallis that the king Gaurinath Sinha was intoxicated with Opium. Its wide spread use and consumption of opium was reported by Robinson and other writers. A. J. Mill wrote in 1853 "three-fourths of the population are opium eaters, and men, women and children alike use the drug."[3] The *Burkandazes* who were brought to Assam, were said to be addicted to opium. They after creating a reign of terror in Kamrup for sometime remained with the Koch kings at Beltola, near Gauhati where they grew the opium poppy for the first time in Assam. It was during Lakshmi Sinha's reign in about 1895 A.D The following remark reproduced from Mills Report on the Province of Assam., (1853) testifies that poppy seeds were first introduced in Assam during Lakshmi Sinha's reign.

"In Lukhmee Sing Rajaha's days poppy seeds were first introduced from Bengal and first cultivated at Beltullah, but during his time opium was used only by a few respectable persons and not by the lower orders". [4]

Captain Butler in his book *Travel and Adventures in the Province of Assam* published in 1855 writes that opium was first introduced into Assam in 1794, when the British troops assisted the Rajah against the Muttocks.

It is proved therefore that the cultivation of the poppy was practically unknown in Assam before it was introduced by the *Rajput* troops who were brought into Assam either by the Koch chiefs or by the British. But it was not so widely cultivated then as in later years. Its cultivation, was however put down with a very strong hand by the high officers of the Ahom rulers. This suppression of poppy cultivation at the beginning of the nineteenth century was effected by imposing a tax of Rs. 12/- per *pura* of land under poppy cultivation.

When finally the British in 1826 took possession of Assam, they turned their first attention to the establishment and consolidation of their power. From 1826 to 1860 they practically followed a policy of drift on the question of opium

3. E. Gait, *A History of Assam*, 1967, p. 382
4. *Report on the Province of Assam*, p. ixxvi.

for revenue purposes in order to undersell the indigenous product. Government opium was sold at Rs. 5/- per *seer* in 1835. The new administration did nothing to check the opium habit or even the cultivation of the opium poppy. It allowed the terrible evil to spread amon g the people, who had just come under their power after nearly a century of feuds and internecine wars. This attitude of indifference continued for about thirty years till the publication of Mr. Moffat Mills Report of 1853. Mr. Mill though emphatic in his condemnation of the opium habit was not inclined towards a total prohibition of it. Accordin g to him "its use has, with many, almost become a necessary of life and in a damp climate like Assam, it is perhaps beneficial if taken with moderation."[5] As such he recommended that its home cultivation should be prohibited in Assam and opium should be sold from treasuries at a price which though may not be prohibitive but act as a deterrent to those who indulge in its excessive consumption. However, nothing was done till 1860 when its cultivation was prohibited and the drug also came to be issued through the treasury. The prohibition of opium cultivation in 1860 was greatly resented by the people of the district. As already described elsewhere prohibition led to the Phulaguri uprisings.

Even in those days the Indian leaders of prominence denounced the indifferent attitude of the Govt. At the same time they did not countenance the establishment of a Government monopoly in opium. In his petition to the Government in 1853 Moniram Dewan gave expression to contemporary opinion on the subject in the following words :— "The introduction of the Government opium into the province will have to be put a stop to and the people allowed to grow their own drug. But some method ought to be invented by the *Mohamuntree Saheb* (i.e., Kings' representative) for the eventual eradication of opium cultivation by a gradual reduction at the rate of one in twenty per annum."

About the same time, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, another patriotic Assamese leader from Nowgong of that time wrote thus :— "The extensive introduction of Government opium, however, leads us to conclude that the measure will be productive of consequences other than the extirpation of the drug from the country." The introduction of the government opium and the effort to undersell the local product did indeed have consequences other than the extirpation of the evil. In answer to arguments for a monopoly, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan had said "that by abolishing the production of opium in the country and rendering it dearer to the people, the use will be rendered less universal." But he added : "We would beg to submit that the people will never shrink from the use of the drug as long as they continue to obtain supplies of it ; and whatever

5. E. Gait, *A History of Assam*, p 382.

be the price put upon it they would seldom consider themselves too poor to purchase it."[6] Government monopoly was at last introduced and poppy cultivation as stated above was abolished in 1860.

Thus the first restriction on opium was imposed in 1860. This took the shape of Prohibition of cultivation and manufacturing, prohibition of unclicensed sale, imposition of duty, imposition of license fee and gradual reduction of retail shops in opium.

The first issue price of opium from treasury was at Rs. 12/- per seer or 0.9331 kg. It was subsequently raised to Rs. 20/- in 1862 Rs. 22/- in 1863, Rs. 23/- in 1873, Rs. 24/- in 1875, Rs. 26/- in 1879, Rs. 32/- in 1883 and Rs 37/- in 1890. Inspite of sixty per cent rise in issue prices of opium and other restriction there was not any marked decline in consumption of opium. In 1873-74 there were in the district 867 shops for the retail vend of opium which came down to 134 only in 1903-04. The total consumption of opium in the district in 1873-74 was 284 *maunds* or 106.000728 quintal in 1879-80, it was 179 *maunds*, or 66.810318 quintal in 1889-90, it was 243 *maunds*, or 90.697806 quintal in 1899-1900, 168 *maunds* or 62.704656 quintal in 1902-03, 191 *maunds* or 71,289222 quintal. As per Report of Royal Commission on opium volume II consumption of opium in the district Nowgong confined among various castes and tribes including Chutiya, Ahom Kalita, Keot, Lalung, Mikir, Miri, Jugi, Koch and other scheduled caste people.

Assam was declared a black spot in the Geneva Convention and it was from 1925 that the pass system was first introduced. In 1928, a further cut of 10% in the opium ration was effected and finally the Congress-coalition government in 1939 introduced total prohibition of opium in Dibrugarh and Sibsagar Subdivisions. So long the opium offences were dealt under the provisions of opium Act of 1878 but with the enactment of the Assam Opium Prohibition Act of 1947, a total prohibition of opium was introduced throughout the State. The Act prohibits the production, manufacture, possession, exportation, importation, transportation, purchase, sale consumption and use of this narcotic, except on medical ground.

(ii) Liquor : Consumption of liquor is quite common among the tribal population and tea-garden labourers of the district. People of other sections of society partake liquor but among them drunkenness earns social disapprobation. During the period 1873-1900 the number of shops as well as excise revenue increased considerably. In 1873-74 there were only four shops and the amount of

6. Mills, *Report on the Province of Assam*, 1854, p. xivii.

revenue was only Rs. 2,944/-. These increased to nine and Rs. 4,063/- in 1873-80 and to fifteen and Rs. 5,782 in 1889-90 and further increased to nineteen and Rs. 25,292/- in 1899-1900. Most of the important Liquor shops of the district in the period between 1873-74 to 1899-1900 were situated at Lumding, Jakhalabandha, Nowgong and Borjuri. Outstill system i.e. right to manufacture and sell spirits at a particular locality was put up to auction and no revenue was levied on the actual quantity of spirit distilled. Rise in consumption of liquor was also attributed to the large increase in foreign population most of whom were drinkers. The aboriginal tribes, however, preferred a strong beer which they brewed themselves from rice to the ordinary country spirit.

Country spirit is manufactured by native methods which are described by B. C. Allen as follows :[7]

"The apparatus employed consists of a large brass or copper retort, which is placed over the fire, to the top of which is fitted the still head, a compound vessel, part of which is made of earthenware and part of brass. The wash is placed in the retort, and as it boils, rises in the form of vapour into the still head, over the outer surface of which a stream of cold water is continually kept flowing. As the vapour cools, it is precipitated in the form of liquid, and is carried off by a bamboo tube into a vessel placed at the side. The mouth of this tube is open, and the spirit trickles from it into the vessel beneath, so that the outer air has access by this channel into the still head and retort in which the process of distillation is going on. In the closed still, the vapour passes down two tubes into two receivers, where it is cooled and condenses into liquid. These tubes are so fixed to the receivers that the air cannot have access to the spirit, and, though distillation does not proceed so rapidly, the liquor produced is stronger than that obtained from the open still.

Material employed : The material employed is generally the flower of the mohwa tree (bassia latifolia) which contains a very large proportion of sugar, but its place is sometimes taken by molasses and rice. The following are the proportions in which these ingredients are generally mixed ; mohwa 30 *seers* and water 60 *seers* ; or mohwa 25 *seers*, molasses 5 *seers*, and water 60 *seers* ; or boiled rice 20 *seers*, molasses 10 *seer* , and water 80 *seers*. Bakhar, a substance composed of leaves, roots, and spices, whose actual ingredients are not divulged by the villagers who manufacture it, is frequently added to the wash, which is put to ferment in barrels. Fermentation takes three or four days in summer and a week in the cold weather, and the wash is then considered to be ready for the still.

7. B. C. Allen, *Assam District Gazetteers*, Nowgong, pp. 200—203.

The process of distillation takes about three hours. A retort of 40 gallons yields two gallons of spirit in an hour and three-quarters, three gallons in two hours and a quarter, and four gallons in three hours. The best and strongest spirit comes off first, and in the case of a brew of 30 *seer* of mohwa the first 3½ gallons will be classed as *phul* if they are at once drawn off from the receiver. If they are allowed to remain while two more gallons are distilled the whole 5½ gallons will be classed as *bangla*. The exact proportions vary, however, at the different shops, some distillers taking 4½ gallons of *phul* or 5 gallons of *bangla* from 30 *seers* of mohwa. Occasionally only two gallons of spirit are distilled from 30 *seer* of mohwa, and the liquor is then called *thul*, is very strong, and is sold for one or two rupees a quart. *Thul* is also sometimes made by redistilling *bangla*, Only one kind of liquor is generally taken from each distillation as if the *thul* or *phul* were removed, the spirit subsequently distilled would be not only weak but impure. Strong liquor watered to reduce it to a lower strength is not considered palatable, and it seems to be the usual practice to distill the liquor at the actual strength at which it will be sold. One disadvantage of the cheaper kinds of liquor is that it will not keep, and in four or five weeks it is said to lose all its spirituous qualities.

Laopani : *Laopani*, or rice beer, is the national drink of the unconverted tribes, and a special name, *modahi*, is applied to those who have to some extent attorned to Hinduism but have not yet abondoned their ancestral liquor. It is also taken by some of the humble Hindu castes, and is largely used by garden coolies if facilities are not afforded to them for obtaining country spirit. The following is the usual system of manufacture followed :— 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 earthern 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 a 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 the following 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 to 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 State Government has enacted the Assam Liquor prohibition Act, 1952 and total prohibition is in force throughout Nowgong district.

(iii) Ganja and Bhang : Ganja and Bhang are primarily associated with a section of the people who are devotees of Lord *Siva*. The wild *ganja* grows very freely in the district but it is not relished by the invetrate *ganja* smokers. Ganja is usually mixed with water kneaded till it becomes soft and cut into small strips and smoked. Preparation of *ghota*, a delicious beverage served on the *Shivaratri* night contains some *Bhang*, The Assam *Ganja* and *Baang* Prohibition Act, 1958 prohibits possession and consumption of *ganja* and *bhang* except for social, religious, medical and scientific purposes.

(c) Advancement of Backward Classes :

The term "Backward Classes" is commonly applied to Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes Communities formerly described as crminal classes and other socially and educationally backward classes. There is now no declared criminal community in Assam. According to the censuses of 1961 and 1971 the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are present in considerable numbers in the district as shown below :—

Name of the Community	1961			1971		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Scheduled Castes	53,928	47,467	1,01,395	N.A.	N.A.	167,263
Scheduled Tribes	45,648	41,890	87,538	N.A.	N.A.	125,115

People belonging to *Kaivarta* or *Jalia*. *Namusudra*. *Hira*. *Brittial Bania* or *Bania*. *Patni*. *Bhuinmali* or *Mali*. *Dhupi* or *Dhobi*. *Bansphor*. *Dugla* or *Dholi*. *Jhalo Malo*. or *Jhalo-Malo*, *Mehtar* or *Bhangi*. *Sutradhar*. *Jalkeot*. *Mahara* and *Muchi or Risht* are regarded as Scheduled Castes in the district. According to 1971 Census the Scheduled Caste population constituted 9.95% over the total population of the district. *Kaivarta* or *Jalia* (35,282) and *Namasudra* (31,331) constituted about two-thirds of the Scheduled Caste population of the district in 1961.

Scheduled tribes of the district are *Lalung*, *Kachari* including *Sonowal*, *Miri*. *Boro-Boro Kachari*. *Deori*. *Hojai*. *Rabha* and *Mech*. In 1971 the Scheduled tribe population constituted 7.44% over the total population in Nowgong

district Lalung with a population of 54,797 formed more than half of the Scheduled tribe population of the district in 1961. Another important tribe of the district is *Kachari* including Sonowal with a population of 20,394. Among other backward classes are *Ahom Chutiya*. *Koch*. *Yogi* (Nath) *Kumar*. *Napit*, besides the tea garden labourers and tribes. It is not possible to give the relative strength of these communities as no Census figures are compiled for them. During the British period they were left to their own devices Proselytisation by Christian missionaries among the backward classes opened the flood-gate of progress for the converts.

It was only after Independence that attempts were made to bring an all round development to the standard of living of the people belonging to backward classes. One of the Directive Principles of the State Policy of the Constitution of India solemnly declares that the state shall promote with special care educational, social and economic interest of the weaker section of the people and in particular Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect 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 steps taken to ameliorate the conditions of the backward classes since 1947 are briefly described below :—

(i) Reservation of seats in the Legislative Assembly and Panchayats : Out of the thirteen Assembly constituencies in the district, *Bokani* is reserved for the Scheduled Castes and Marigaon is reserved for the Scheduled Tribes. In the Anchalik and *Gaon* Panchayats also a number of seats are reserved for the Scheduled tribes and scheduled castes to secure their fair representation in these elective bodies.

(ii) Reservation of posts in 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 to members of the Scheduled Castes and Schedueld Tribes in making appointments to services in connection with the affairs of the State Government as indicated below :—

(1) Scheduled Castes ... 7 per cent.
(2) Scheduled Tribes (Plains) .. 10 per cent.
(3) Scheduled Tribes (Hills .. 12 per cent.

Prior to August 1963, only 5 per cent of posts were 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 Govern-

ment subject to other terms and conditions as laid down in the Notification issued on the 24th August, 1963.[8]

(iii) Education : An analysis of the level of development reached by the people belonging to the backward classes has been made earlier in chapter XV. Since the beginning of the First Five-Year Plan efforts were made to eradicate illiteracy among the plains tribals. With this end in view Primary and Middle Schools were 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 by private initiative. A number of secondary schools and hostel buildings were 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 schemes both in the secondary and collegiate stages and by free education scheme in the secondary stage. There are reservation of seats in the technical and professional institutions of the state for the Scheduled Caste & Tribes.

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. In the field of water supply grants-in-aid have been given to the tribal people of the district for installation tube wells and digging of tanks. In the same way the Agriculture, Industry, Sericulture and Weaving departments of the Government of Assam are implementing numerous schemes in keeping with the declared policy of the Government to ameliorate the condition of the weaker section of the society. More over in the Fourth Plan, Programmes of the Government of Assam have been redesigned so as to bring the under priviliged into the fabric of enlightened community.

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8. Assam Government Notification No. AAP, 66/63/482, dated August 24, 1963.

CHAPTER XVIII

PUBLIC LIFE AND VOLUNTARY SOCIAL SERVICE ORGANISATION.

(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.

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. She 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 an 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 with 51 members (39 elected and 12 nominated) of which three were officials and nine non-officials. It was formed in 1912 under the Government of India Act, 1919. The Legislative Council held its first sitting on the 3rd January, 1921 and his Excellency Mr. Nicholas Dodd Beatson Bell, then Governor of Assam took the seat. Shri Bishnu Charan Bora represented Nowgong from the general constituency of Nowgong and Khan Bahadur Mohibuddin represented from the Muhammadan constituency which comprised Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgong. The Assam Valley Planting Constituency which included Nowgong and other districts of the Brahmaputra Valley elected three members. The Commerce and Industry Constituency elected one member. The Province of Assam was represented in the Council of States by one member elected by the Assam Muhammadan and General Constituencies alternately. Assam was represented in the Central Legislative Assembly by six members--two nominated and four elected.

This system of representation continued till 1937, when the first Legislative Assembly was formed in Assam with 108 members under the 1935 Act, intro-

ducing provincial autonomy. Out of the 108 seats 34 were reserved for Muhammadans ; 9 for Europeans, European Planting and European Commerce and Industry ; one for woman ; 14 for Indian Christians, Backward Tribal (plains), Backward Areas (Hills) and Labour and the remaining 50 seats were general. For General Constituencies Nowgong was divided into three constituencies of Nowgong West, Nowgong South-West and Nowgong North-East. For Muhammadan constituencies Nowgong was divided into two constituencies of Nowgong West and Nowgong East. There were also two more constituencies, of which one was Nowgong Tribal Constituency and the other which was reserved for Scheduled Castes had the same boundary as that of General Constituency of Nowgong East. The following were the first seven members elected from the respective Constituencies.

Name	(General) Constituency	Extent of Constituency
1. Sjt. Haladhar Bhuyan	Nowgong West.	Laharighat, Dhing Marigaon (excluding all areas in the Mikir Hills) plus Juria *Mauza*.
2. Sjt. Mohi Chandra Bora,	Nowgong South-East.	Raha, Jamunamukh thana (excluding all areas in the Mikir Hills) plus Lumding *Kheraj* Block.
3. Sjt. Purna Chandra Sarma,	Nowgong North-East.	Nowgong, Kaliabar, Samaguri *thanas* (excluding all areas in the Mikir Hills) plus Rupahihat thanas less Juria *Mauza*,
4. Dr. Mahendra Nath Saikia (for reserved seat). (Muhammadan)	-do-	-do-
5. Maulavi Sheikh Osman Ali.	Nowgong West	Dhing, Laharighat, Raha, Marigaon and Jamunamukh *thanas* (excluding all areas in Mikir Hills) plus Lumding Kheraj Block.
6. Maulavi Md. Amiruddin.	Nowgong East.	Nowgong, Samaguri, Rupahihat, and Kaliabor *thanas* (excluding all areas within the Mikir Hills).
7. Sjt. Dhirsing Deuri	(Backward tribal (Plains) Nowgong (tribal)	Raha, Marigaon, and Jamunamukh *thanas* (excluding all areas in Mikir Hills).

The names of the persons elected from the European community could not be ascertained.

The number of members of the Provincial Legislative Council was reduced to twenty-one.

Assam was represented in the Council of States by five members including communal representatives and by ten members in the Federal Assembly.

The Provincial Legislative Assembly which was elected in April 1937 functioned for about nine years instead of the normal period of 5 years on the basis of an amendment to Sec. 62(2) of the Act, made in view of exigencies arising out of the Second World War. There was however, interregnum of eight months extending from December 25, 1941 to August 24, 1942 due to the suspension of the Constitution in the Province under Sec. 93 of the Act and the Governor assumed all powers of the administration himself. The Constitution was restored on August 25, 1942. The Assembly functioned till its dissolution with effect from 1st October 1945. General elections were ordered to take place by February 2, 1956. Elections to the Central Legislature were held along with the Provincial Legislature in 1946. Constituencies remained the same as in the elections of 1937 and all the sitting Members of the Legislative Assembly from Nowgong district were re-elected.

On August 16, 1946 the Legislative Assembly elected the following representatives to the Constituent Assembly.[1]

(a) Candidates elected by the General part of the Assembly—

(1) Gopinath Bordoloi.
(2) Rohini Kumar Choudhury.
(3) Basanta Kumar Das.
(4) Rev. J. J. Nichols Roy.
(5) Omeo Kumar Das.
(6) Dharanidhar Basumatari
(7) Akshay Kumar Das.

(b) Candidates elected by the Muslim part of the Assembly—

1. Sayed Sir Md. Shadulla.
2. Mlv. Abdul Hamid.
3. Mlv. Abdul Matin Choudhury.

1. *Assam Gazette No.* 10, *August* 21, 1946.

(ii) After Independence : The First General Elections of independent India were held in 1952 to elect representatives to the Assam Legislative Assembly and to the House of the People of the Union Legislature. The constituencies of Nowgong district were determined in accordance with the Delimitation of Assembly Constituencies (Assam) Order 1951. The district was divided into seven Assembly Constituencies of Laharighat, Marigaon-Dhing, Nowgong-Raha, Jamunamukh, Samaguri, Kaliabor and Rupahihat to elect nine members to the Assam Legislative Assembly. Marigaon-Dhing and Nowgong-Raha were double-member constituencies one seat being reserved for Scheduled Tribes and the other for the Scheduled Castes. For the Lok Sabha elections the whole of Nowgong district comprised one single-member Constituency.

In the Second General Elections of 1957 the constituencies were delimited and the number of Assembly constituencies was increased from seven in 1952 to eight in 1957 and named as Laharighat, Dhing, Rupahihat, Kaliabor, Samaguri, Nowgong, Jamunamukh and Lumding. Laharighat and Nowgong were double-member constituencies one seat being reserved for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes respectively. There was no change from the previous elections so far as the Lok Sabha constituency of Nowgong district was concerned.

The Two-member Constituencies (Abolition) Act, 1961 was enacted with a view to abolishing two-member Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies. In pursuance of clause (a) of Section 4 of this Act, the question of splitting up two-member constituencies formed under the Delimitation of Parliamentary and Assembly Constituencies Order, 1956, was taken up in the first part of 1961. As a result the double-member constituencies of Laharighat was bifurcated into Laharighat and Marigaon and similarly Nowgong Constituency into Nowgong and Raha. Marigaon constituency was kept reserved for Scheduled Tribes and Raha Constituency for Scheduled Castes. The number of Constituencies thus increased to two to elect ten representatives to the Assam Legislative Assembly, for the Third General Elections. There was no change in the Lok Sabha Constituency from Nowgong district.

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 (i) 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 the number of Assembly Constituencies in the district increased from ten to thirteen viz., Marigaon, Bokani, Laharighat, Raha, Dhing, Rupahihat, Nowgong, Barhampur, Kaliabor, Samaguri, Jamunamukh, Hojai and Lumding.

Morigaon was reserved for Scheduled Tribes and Bokani for Scheduled Castes. For these elections Nowgong district formed parts of the two Lok Sabha Constituencies of Nowgong and Kaliabor. This arrangement of the constituencies both in regard to Assembly and Lok Sabha Constituencies is still continuing.

(b) Political Parties and their hold upon the district at different times and as reflected in the elections :

First General Elections 1952 : Legislative Assembly: Nine representatives were elected from the seven constituencies of the district which included two double-member constituencies. Eight of the nine elected members belonged to the Indian National Congress and the other was an Independent candidate. All seats were contested and the main contesting parties were the Indian National Congress, Socialist Party, Krishak Mazdoor Praja Party, Bolshevik Party and a number of Independent candidates. The Indian National Congress which put up nine candidates in the seven constituencies and got eight of its candidates elected secured 20,367 and 20,846 valid votes in Marigaon-Dhing Constituency, 12,409 and 16,286 valid votes in Nowgong-Raha Constituency, 15,993 valid votes in Jamunamukh, 5,808 valid votes in Samaguri, 11,867 valid votes in Kaliabor and 13,585 valid votes in Rupahihat Constituency. The total number of valid votes polled in these constituencies were 75,245, 81,248, 30,003, 18,433, 22,881, and 21,039 respectively. In the Laharighat Constituency an Independent candidate was elected. He secured 7,764 valid votes out of 20,167 valid votes polled in the constituency.

Lok Sabha : In the Nowgong Lok Sabha Constituency there were three contesting parties viz. the Indian National Congress, Socialist Party and Krishak Mazdoor Praja Party besides one Independent candidate. The Congress candidate won the seat by securing 79,673 votes against 46,829, 33,818 and 13,512 votes secured by the Socialist, Krishak Majdoor Praja Party and Independent candidate out of the total valid votes of 1,73,832.

Second General Elections 1957 : Legislative Assembly : In these elections the main contesting political parties in the district were the Indian National Congress, Communist Party of India, Socialist Party, Praja Socialist Party of India, Revolutionary Communist Party of India and Bolshevik besides a number of Independent candidates in each constituency. The Congress party swept the polls winning all the ten seats from the eight Constituencies. Details of votes polled by different parties are given in the Appendix.

Lok Sabha : The seat for Nowgong Lok Sabha constituency was contested by a Congress candidate and two Independent candidates. The Congress

won the seat by securing 61.74 per cent of valid votes polled against his rivals who secured only 10.27 and 27.99 per cent.

Third General Elections 1962 : Legislative Assembly : Due to the abolition of double-member constituencies the number of Assembly Constituencies increased from eight to ten. The Congress Party captured all the seats barring the seat of Lumding Constituency which went to an Independent candidate. Other parties who contested were the Praja Socialist Party, Socialist Party Of India, Communist Party of India and Bharatiya Jana Sangha who made its debut.

Lok Sabha : Nowgong Lok Sabha Constituency continued to be the hold of the Indian National Congress. There were four candidates in the field, one each put up by the Indian National Congress and the Socialist Party of India and two were Independent candidates. The Congress candidate won by polling 97,942 votes against 30,149 polled by the Socialist Party of India candidate and 72,967 and 38,080 vote secured by the Independent candidate out of the total valid votes of 2,50,915.

Fourth General Elections 1967 : Legislative Assembly : These elections brought in its wake many surprises and the hold of the Congress party over the electorate slackened greatly. Out of the 13 candidates elected, Congress could secure only 6 seats and the rest of the seats went to other parties viz. the Communist Party of India (2), Socialist Party (1), Swatantra Praty of India (1) and Independent (3). Congress candidates were returned in the constituencies of Bokani (Scheduled Caste), Laharighat, Raha, Samaguri, Jamunamukh and Lumding by securing 61.86, 62.36, 33.81, 45.64, 51.50 and 44.46 per cent of the total valid votes polled which numbered 28,129, 28,796, 27,766, 18,974, 24,462 and 24,342 respectively. The Communist Party of India won in the Nowgong and Barhampur Constituencies by polling 53.42 and 53.56 per cent of the total valid votes of 25,026 and 23,943 respectively. Kaliabor Constituency returned the Samyukta Socialist Party candidate who polled 56.09 per cent of the total valid votes of 25,286. The Swatantra Party which made its first appearance put up five candidates but could secure only one seat from the Hojai Constituency by polling 32.44 per cent of 28,051 votes polled. Independent candidates were elected from Marigaon (Scheduled Tribe), Dhing and Rupahihat by securing 63.56, 48,88 and 45.79 per cent of the total valid votes of 21,784, 24,415 and 23,498 respectively. Other parties who participated in the elections were the Praja Socialist Party, Bharatiya Jana Sangh and Communist Party (Marxist) of India.

Lok Sabha : In the Lok Sabha the Nowgong district was represented by two Members of Parliament one from Nowgong Parliamentary Constituency

and another from Kaliabor Parliamentary Constituency. In the first, there was a four-cornered contest between the Indian National Congress, Communist Party of India and two Independents .The Congress candidate was elected by securing 43.79 per cent of votes against the Communist candidate who polled 24.09 per cent of 2,36,948 valid votes. The two Independent candidates polled 24.05 and 8.07 per cent. In the triangular contest for the Kaliabor Parliamentary Constituency, the Congress candidate won the seat by securing 49,34 per cent over his rivals of Samyukta Socialist Party and Communist Party of India who polled 27.19 and 23.48 per cent of the total valid votes of 2,16,215.

Fifth Elections to the Lok Sabha : The Fifth Elections to the Lok Sabha were held in March, 1971. The Nowgong Parliamentary Constituency seat was retained by Indian National Congress (Ruling) in a heptagonal contest by securing 1,32,209 votes out of 2,27,522 valid votes. The Communist Party of India candidate polled 49,392 votes, the Revolutionary Communist Party of India polled 32,619 votes, Indian National Congress (Organisation) secured 4,885 votes and the Samyukta Socialist Party obtained 2,458 votes. Two Independent candidates who also contested polled 4,580 and 1,384 votes. In the Kaliabor Parliamentary Constituency there was a pentagular contest amongst Congress (R), Congress (O), Communist Party of India, Samyukta Socialist Party and Ujani Asom Rajya Parishad candidates. The Congress (R) candidate won the seat by polling 1,28,263 votes out of the total valid votes of 1,95,136. The candidates of other parties respectively polled 10,787, 27,580, 18,865 and 9,599 votes.

Fifth Elections to the State Legislature : The Fifth elections to the State Legislature were held in March 1972 and the Congress now known as Congress (R) retrieved its position by winning 11 seats out of 13 seats in the district. From the Marigaon constituency an Independent candidate was elected and the seat of Barhampur constituency went to a Communist Party of India (Marxist) candidate. The Congress (R) was victorious in all other constituencies of the district. Of all the political parties, Indian National Congress is the strongest having a well organised net work of workers throughout the district ; and except in 1967, from 1952 to 1972 this is the only party which won all the seats in the State as well as in the Union Legislature, from this district.

(c) News Papers :

The history of Assamese news papers and magazines began with the publication of the *Arunodai* by the Baptist Mission in 1846 from Sibsagar. The Editor

was Mr. Oliver Cutter. This magazine ushered a new era in Assamese literature and journalism. The next Assamese Magazine *Jonaki* published in 1889 from Calcutta was the mouth-piece of the Assamese Language Improvement Society. In 1902 *Bijuli*, another publication was published from Calcutta for a very short period. Lakshmi Nath Bezbarooah, the famous literateur published *Banhi* from Calcutta in 1909. These magazines were the mirror of the Province of Assam and made deep impact on the people. After this several magazines and papers were published but they continued only for a short period. *Amar Swasthya* was published from Haibargaon, Nowgong. In 1945 another fortnightly magazine namely *Bihlangani* was published from Haibargaon. The magazine published all important news of the district but was rather critical of the then Government policies. *Ganatantra*, a weekly published from Nowgong is still in circulation. Another two weekly magazines namely *Akashi Ganga* and *Sachipat* were published from Nowgong.

A number of School and College magazines are published from different educational institutions of the district. Presently people's inclination towards reading of news papers is on the increase and as such many news papers and magazines are bought to the district. Among the widely circulated news papers in the district are— *The Assam Tribune*. *Dainik Asom*, *Natun Asomiya*. *Asom Bani*, *Nilachal*, *Janambhumi* etc. Besides these some Calcutta and Delhi papers are widely circulated in the district. They are the *Hindustan Standard*, *Jugantar*, *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, *Statesmen*, *Times of India*. *Blitz* etc. The *Assam Batori*, *Nilachal*, *Sangram*, *Amar Pratinidhi*, *Desh*, *Dharmayug*, *Illustrated Weekly of India* and various cine and sports magazines are also widely circulated in the district.

(d) Voluntary Social Service Organisations :

Sreemanta Sankar Mission : The Sreemanta Sankar Mission was founded at Nowgong in January 1950 to implement some of the ideas and teachings of the Great Vaishnava leader Sri Sri Sankardeva and "also to propagate his universal message of love, amity, fellow-feeling, toleration, morality, peace and concord and service to humanity in the context of present world affairs and life."[2] The Mission under the able guidance of its first President Late Haladhar Bhuyan, has undertaken many humanitarian works throughout the State and has a programme of varied social services especially in the fields of education and health with emphasis on child and materinity welfare. The activities of the Mission mainly

2. B K. Barua. *Sankardeva : Vaishnava Saint of Assam*, preface p. IV.

concentrated in Nowgang and Mikir Hills district. There is an Executive Committee of thirteen members to manage the affairs of the Mission.

For the cause of education, the Mission established one Middle English School and one Junior Basic School at Ouguri in Mikir Hills in 1953. Both the schools are located in the backward tribal areas in consonance with its philosophy of creating better understanding between the people of the hills and the plains. Both the Schools provide hostel accommodation where tribal boys are given free food and lodging. A co-educational High School with residential facilities for blind students was established at Nowgong in 1955. Besides general education, the school provides lessons in handicrafts and music.

Another noble cause espoused by the Mission is its anti-leprosy campaign. In Mikir Hills district where leprosy is very widespread, the Mission runs seven clinics with twelve sub-centres. There is one leprosy hospital at Ouguri and three charitable dispensaries at Ghillani, Tumpreng and Ouguri. With the help of grants-in-aid from the Central Social Welfare Board, New Delhi, a Preventoria to segregate the children of leprous parents has also been established at Tumpreng. The Mission also runs three Maternity Centres at Diphu, Tumpreng and Ghillani with one midwife and one female attendant. An orphanage run by the Mission at Nowgong provides training in crafts and Nursing. Sankar Mission also conducts mobile eye-relief camps throughout the State where patients are treated free of cost. Such camps are mainly organised in the backward areas and tea gardens of the State. The Mission is assisted in its welfare activities by grants-in-aid provided by Christian Missionaries. We have already mentioned that Christian Missioneries inspired by their proselytising spirit did laudable work for the cause of education and Assamese language. The trio, Brown, Bronson and Farewell, laid the foundation of Christian Assamese literature. The Missionaries established hospitals, churches and schools for boys and girls. In the schools, although they taught the Bible openly, the missionaries espoused the cause of vernacular.

The Orphan Institution established at Nowgong in 1843 by Bronson was a major institution of its kind in North East India at the time. It was established to provide care and education to the orphans who are said to have been in a miserable state on account of prevalence of disease and lack of medical facilities. Many of the graduates of this Institution were employed by the Government. An important feature of social significance was that the Institution was co-educational. It was closed down in 1856.[3]

3. F. S. Dawans : *The Mighty Works of God*, 1971, Gauhati, pp. 34-36.

Mahila Samity : In the wake of the struggle for independence many *Mahila Samities* came to be organised and took part in the freedom movement. They picketed against use of foreign goods and organised mass spinning. Nowgong *Mahila Samity* was affiliated in 1947 to the Provincial Womens' Organisation. It has established branches in urban and semi-urban areas of the district. The Samity runs one Montessori School in Nowgong town and two Maternity Centres at Nowgong and Samaguri. It has also organised a diploma course on tailoring for girls. The course includes training in knitting and dyeing also.

State Home for Destitute Women : The State Home for destitute women and children of Nowgong was founded in April 1958 under the after-care Scheme by the Government of Assam for the benefit of women released from the correctional institutions and their children.

This organisation was first started in a hired hourse but it has now its own buildings. The expenditure for the State Home at Nowgong is borne both by Central Government and State Government on 50% basis. This institution provides to the destitutes food, clothing, lodging and other necessary amenities and give them facilities for educational and vocational training.

APPENDIX–A.

STATEMENT SHOWING THE RESULTS OF THE FIRST GENERAL ELECTIONS OF 1952 IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCIES IN THE NOWGONG DISTRICT.

Sl. No.	Name of the constituency	No. of contesting candidate	Total electors	No. of valid votes polled		No. of invalid votes.	I.N.C.		Socialist		K.M.P.P.		Indepen-dent		Commu-nist		Bolshevik Party.		Total No. of polling stations	Name of the party winning the seat.
				Total	P.C. votes		Total	P.C. votes	Total	P.C. votes	Total	P.C. votes	Total	P.C. votes	Total	P.C. votes	Total	P.C. votes		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1.	Laharighat (General)	6	42,270	20,167	N.A.	1,140	N.A.	7,319	N.A.	829	N.A.	2,013	N.A.	570	N.A.	..	..	..	..	49	Indepen-dent.
														7,764	N.A.						
														1,672	N.A.						
2.	Marigaon-Dhing (one reserved for Scheduled tribes) Total seats-2	9	74,523	75,245	N.A.	3,305	N.A.	20,367	N.A.	4,072	N.A.	7,237	N.A.	742	N.A.	..	..	..	..	84	Congress
								20,846	N.A.					7,810	N.A.						
														4,655	N.A.						
														4,987	N.A.						
														4,529	N.A.						
3.	Nowgong-Raha (one seat is reserved for Scheduled Castes). Total seat-2	11	86,629	81,248	..	2,408	..	12,409	..	7,232	..	9,109	..	1,816	..	9,527	..	..	..	90	Congress
								16,286	..	8,200	..	8,743	..	2,168	..						
														3,619	..						
														2,139	..						
4.	Jamunamukh (General) Total seat-1.	6	61,172	30,003	..	23	..	15,993	..	2,422	..	3,343	..	1,203	..	..	..	3,648	..	70	Congress
														3,394	..						
5.	Samaguri (General) Total seat-1.	10	35,704	18,433	..	4	..	5,808	..	5,509	..	825	..	1,116	..	..	..	..	..	39	Congress
														586	..						
														269	..						
														2,649	..						
														1,053	..						
														275	..						
														343	..						
6.	Kaliabor (General) Total seat-1.	4	41,105	22,881	..	9	..	11,867	..	6,156	..	1,903	..	2,955	..	..	..	..	..	48	Congress
7.	Rupahihat (General) Total seat-1.	4	43,217	21,039	..	6	..	13,585	..	..	..	3,354	..	1,148	..	..	..	..	..	52	Congress
														2,952	..						

APPENDIX "B"

STATEMENT SHOWING THE RESULTS OF SECOND GENERAL ELECTIONS OF 1957 IN THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCIES IN THE NOWGONG DISTRICT.

Sl. No.	Name of the constituencies	No of contesting candidate (after retirement).	No. of electors.	Total of valid votes polled in the constituencies	Percentage of col 4 to col 5	Votes polled by the political parties. Congress Total votes	Congress P.C.	Proja Socialist party Total votes	Proja Socialist party P.C.	Communist Total votes	Communist P.C.	Socialist Total votes	Socialist P.C.	Independent Total votes	Independent P.C.	Bolshevik Total votes	Bolshevik P.C.	R.C.P.I. Total votes	R.C.P.I. P.C.	Name of the political party winning the seat.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1.	Laharighat (2 seats, reserved for Scheduled Tribes)	4	86,571	80,054	46.23	29,671	37.06	10,093	12.61	..	..	..	..	Retired	..	..	..	..	..	(2) Congress.
2.	Dhing (General)	4	35,302	17,053	48.30	9,933	58.25	..	..	..		..	..	1,580 1,923	9.27 11.28	..	..	1,154	6.77	(1) Congress
3.	Rupahihat (General)	1	37,578	..	..	..	..		..	..		..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	(1) Congress (uncontested)
4.	Kaliabor (General)	4	41,274	21,705	52.58	15,945	73.46	..	..	..	..	1,942	7.57	2,285	10.53	..	..	1,533	7.06	(1) Congress
5.	Samaguri (General)	3	45,327	23,016	50.77	16,201	73.43	..	..	..	..	5,863	25.43	952	4.14	..	..	..	..	(1) Congress
6.	Nowgong (2 seats, one reserved for Scheduled Castes)	5	93,047	94,727	50.90	26,996 27,000	28.50 28.50	14,020	14.80	25,377	26.79	..	..	..	..	1,336	1.41	..	..	(2) Congress
7.	Jamunamukh(General)	4	45,441	22,696	49.94	12,601	55.52	7,338	32.33	2,367	10.43	..	..	..	..	390	1.72	..	..	(1) Congress
8.	Lumding (General)	6	43,697	21,738	49.74	11,269	51.84	5,180	5.46	4,053	18.69	774	3.56	2,089	9.61	2,367	10.89	..	..	(1) Congress

APPENDIX 'C'

STATEMENT SHOWING THE RESULTS OF THE THIRD GENERAL ELECTIONS OF 1962 OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCIES IN THE DISTRICT OF NOWGONG.

Sl. No.	Name of the constituency.	No.of contesting candidates.	Electorates Men	Electorates Women	Electorates Total	No. of voters who voted Men	No. of voters who voted Women	No. of voters who voted Total	No.of valid votes polled	No. of rejected ballot papers	P.C. of poll	P.C. of rejection	Votes polled by the political parties I.N.C.	C.P.I.	P.S.P.	S.P.I.	S.S.P.	Independent	J.S.	Name of the political party winning the seat	Numbers of polling stations in each constituency.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1.	Marigaon (S.T.)	3	26,452	21,850	48,302	14,973	6,139	21,112	19,130	1,982	43.70	9.39	12,361	..	4,899 5,165	..	..	1,604	..	I.N.C.	57
2.	Laharighat	3	31,463	24,141	55,604	20,646	8,390	29,036	26,456	2,580	52.21	8.89	11,114	..	14,141	..	..	1,201	..	I.N.C.	63
3.	Dhing	2	27,651	18,402	46,053	18,775	4,637	23,412	22,256	1,156	50.83	4.94	18,734	..	..	..	..	3,522	..	I.N.C.	49
4.	Rupahihat	4	25,508	21,575	47,083	16,549	2,122	18,671	17,734	937	39.66	5.02	12,670	..	..	..	..	2,943 1,676 445	..	I.N.C.	52
5.	Kaliabor	4	25,499	15,512	14,011	14,707	7,596	22,303	20,155	2,148	54.38	9.63	8,465	..	..	3,403	..	6,814 1,473	..	I.N.C.	44
6.	Samaguri	4	27,455	19,135	46,591	15,533	8,395	23,928	21,689	2,239	51.36	9.35	12,257	..	7,855	..	..	1,051 526	..	I.N.C.	54
7.	Nowgong	3	32,056	25,532	57,588	23,637	13,695	37,332	35,475	1,857	64.83	4.97	25,102	9,586	..	..	..	787	..	I.N.C.	63
8.	Raha (S.C.)	2	31,707	27,959	59,666	19,222	9,871	9,093	27,584	1,509	48.76	5.19	16,921	..	10,663	..	..	..	..	I.N.C.	68
9.	Jamunamukh	5	33,845	21,325	55,170	21,189	9,840	31,029	29,053	1,976	56.24	6.87	14,687	..	..	..	..	4,396 4,190 1,010	4770	I.N.C.	59
10.	Lumding	3	38,794	21,541	60,335	24,182	14,148	38,330	36,890	1,440	63.53	3.76	15,882	2,649	..	..	..	18,359	..	Indpt.	62

Abbreviations :—
I.N.C. : Indian National Congress.
B.J.S. : Bharatiya Jana Sangha
S.S.P. : Samjukta Socialist Party.
S.W.A. : Swatantra Party.
C.P.I. : Communist Party of India.
C.P.M. : Communist Party of Marxist.
P.S.P : Praja Socialist Party.

APPENDIX—

'D'

STATEMENT SHOWING THE RESULTS OF THE FOURTH GENERAL ELECTIONS OF 1967 OF ALL THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCIES OF THE DISTRICT OF NOWGONG.

Sl. No.	Name of the constituency	Electors	Votes polled		Valid votes	Rejected votes		Votes polled by the political parties.																Name of the political party winning the seat.
			Total	P.C.		Total	P.C.	I.N.C.		B.J.S.		S.S P		S.W.A		C.P.I		C.P.M		P.S.P		Indpt.		
								Total votes	P.C.	Total voets	P.C.	Total votes	P.C.	Total votes	P.C.	Total votes	P.C.	Total votes	P.C.	Total votes	P.C.	Total votes	P.C.	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
1.	Marigaon	40,785	23,451	57.50	21,784	1,667	7.11	6,605	30.32	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	13,845 1,334	63.56 6.12	Indpt.
2.	Bokani (S.C)	45,997	33,885	67.15	28,129	2,756	8.92	17,402	61.86	..	..	504	1.70	7,916	28.14	..	..	..	..	..	..	2,308	8.21	Congress
3.	Laharighat	44,202	31,184	70.55	28,796	2,383	7.66	17,957	62.36	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	4,787	16.62	4,312 1,740	14.97 6.04	Congress
4.	Raha	52,676	30,261	57.45	27,766	2,495	8.24	9,383	33.81	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	7,250	26.11	7,071 4,057	25.47 14.61	Congress
5.	Dhing	36,393	26,324	72.33	24,415	1,909	7.25	10,928	44.76	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	11,933 1,554	24.88 6.36	Indept.
6.	Rupohihat	41.527	25,704	61.90	23,498	2,206	8.58	8,535	36.54	..	..	1.084	4.61	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	10,759 3,069	45.79 13.06	Indpt.
7.	Nowgong	42,702	26,753	62.65	25,026	1,727	6.46	8,217	32.83	1,385	5.53	..	..	601	2.40	13,370	53.42	..	..	..	..	972 481	3.88 1.92	C.P.I.
8.	Barhampur	45,313	25,473	56.22	23,943	1,530	6.01	9,532	39.81	..	..	776	3.28	..	..	12,824	53.56	..	..	..	..	811	3.39	C.P.I.
9.	Kaliabor	43,413	27,361	63.02	25,286	2,075	7.58	11,104	43.91	..	..	14,182	56.09	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	S.S.
10.	Samaguri	35,317	20,972	59.38	18,974	1,998	9.53	8,659	45.64	..	..	827	4.36	3,697	19.48	..	..	..	..	..	..	5,688 103	4.36 0.54	I.N.C.
11.	Jamunamukh	40,738	26,356	64.70	24,462	1,894	7.19	12,597	51.50	5,455	22.30	5,751	23.51	659	2.69	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	I.N.C.
12.	Hojai	44,829	30,314	67.62	28,051	2,263	7.47	8,680	30.94	4,684	26.70	..	..	9,099	32.44	4,563	16.27	1,025	3.65	..	..	..	..	S.W.A.
13.	Lumding	39,933	26,090	65.33	24,342	1,748	6.70	10,822	44.46	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	6,432	26.42	..	..	7,088	29.12	I.N.C.

Abbreviations : I.N.C. : Indian National Congress.
B.J.S. : Bharitiya Jana Sangha.
S.S.P. : Samjukta Socialist Party.
S.W.A. : Swatantra Party.

C.P.I. : Communist Party of India.
C.P.M. : Communist Party of Marxist.
P.S.P. : Praja Socialist Party.

APPENDIX 'E'

STATEMENTS SHOWING THE RESULTS OF THE GENERAL ELECTIONS OF 1972 OF ALL THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCIES OF THE DISTRICT OF NOWGONG.

Sl. No.	Name of the constituency	Electors	Votes polled Total	Valid votes.	Rejected votes Total	Votes polled by the Political parties: I.N.C. Total	J.S. Total	S.P. Total	S.W.A. Total	C.P.I. Total	C.P.M. Total	P.S.P. Total	Independent Total	Name of the Political Party winning the seat.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1.	Marigaon	48,611	31,296	30,193	1,103	14,334	..	..	..	..	..	..	15,057 802	Indpt.
2.	Bokani	63,559	42,300	40,747	1,553	24,603	..	..	..	..	..	..	15,016 1,128	I.N.C.
3.	Lahorighat	53,697	38,138	36,589	1,279	16,908	..	..	..	..	..	..	8,114 4,262 7,575	I.N.C.
4.	Raha	62,242	37,142	36,040	1,102	16,810	..	9,364	..	..	..	..	4,286 2,645 1,979 956	I.N.C.
5.	Dhing	52,244	35,589	34,663	926	17,824	..	..	..	..	..	..	16,639 1,240 200	I.N.C.
6.	Rupahihat	58,574	36,032	35,172	860	24,110	..	427	..	..	..	..	1,248 7,272 2,079	I.N.C.
7.	Nowgong	56,697	31,667	30,997	670	17,188	..	..	..	..	12,415	..	900 598 166	I.N.C.
8.	Barhampur	54,737	31,332	30,318	1,014	13,255	..	..	..	..	14,230	..	1,501 1,332	C.P.M.
9.	Kaliabor	54,988	34,745	33,412	1,333	16,913	..	14,280	..	..	..	..	774 1,445	I.N.C.
10.	Samaguri	47,576	25,057	24,028	1,029	15,140	..	2,911	..	..	..	..	1,772 3,765 440	I.N.C.
11.	Jamunamukh	57,900	34,636	33,273	1,363	15,745	7,740	8,271	..	..	..	..	1,517	I.N.C.
12.	Hojai	63,488	43,251	42,119	1,132	27,677	..	193	..	4,432	1,490	..	8,327	I.N.C.
13.	Lumding	67,983	39,095	38,722	1,373	17,074	..	..	..	4,280	4,925	..	2,403 9,040	I.N.C.

Abbreviations :— I.N.C. : Indian National Congress. J.S. : Jana Sangha. C.P.I. : Communist Party of India. C.P.M. : Communist Party of Marxist.

APPENDIX "F"

STATEMENT SHOWING THE RESULTS OF THE HOUSE OF PEOPLES CONSTITUENCIES IN THE GENERAL ELECTIONS OF 1952, 1957, 1962, 1967 AND 1972 IN THE DISTRICT OF NOWGONG.

Sl. No.	General Elections	Name of the House of the people constituencies.	Electorates in the House of people constituency.	Votes polled in the constituency Total	P.C.	Invalid or rejected votes. Total	P.C.	Valid votes polled Total	P.C.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.	General Election of 1952	Nowgong	3,42,855	1,73,945	N.A.	113	N.A.	1,73,832	N.A.
2.	General Election of 1957	Nowgong	3,92,935	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	1,92,740	49.053
3.	General Election of 1962	Nowgong	4,71,350	2,50,915	N.A.	11,777	4.69	2,39,138	53.23
4.	General Election of 1967.	Nowgong	3,88,255	2,51,522	64.78	14,570	5.79	2,36,948	N.A.
		Kaliabor	3,94,501	2,27,658	57.71	11,444	5.03	2,16,215	N.A.
5.	General Election of 1971	Nowgong	4,32,645	2,38,329	N.A.	10,804	N.A.	2,27,525	N.A.
		Kaliabor	4,30,839	2,65,269	N.A.	1,070	N.A.	1,95,099	N.A.

Abbreviations :— I.N.C. Indian National Congress. I.N.C.(R) Indian National Congress (Ruling) I.N.C.(O) Indian National Congress (Organisation) S.P.I. Socialist Party of India. K.M.P.P. Krishak Mazdoor Praja Party. P.S.P. Praja Socialist Party. C.P.I. Communist Party of India.

APPENDIX—F (Contd.)

No. of votes polled by the different political parties											
I.N.C		S.P.I		K.M.P.P		P.S.P		C.P.I		R.C.P.I	
Total	P.C.	Total	P.C.	Total	P.C.	Total	P.C.	Total	P.C.	Total	P.C.
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
79,673	N.A.	46,829	N.A.	33,818	N.A.	..	..	..	..	..	..
1,19,002	61.74	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
97,942	..	30,149	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
1,03,752	43.79	..	..	..	..	..	..	57,086	24.09	..	..
1,06,672	49.34	..	..	..	..	..	..	50,760	23.48	..	..
1,33,207	N.A.	..	..	..	..	..	..	49,392	N.A.	..	..
1,28,268	N.A.	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..

APPENDIX 'F' (Contd)

S. S. P.		B. J. S.		S. W. A		Independent		I.N.C.(O)	
Total	P.C.	Total	P.C.	Total	P.C.	Total	P.C.	Total	P.C.
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	31	32	33
..	..	..	..	..	..	13,512	N.A.	..	..
..	..		..	..	..	19,791 53,947	10.27 27.99	..	..
..	..	..	..	..	..	72,967 38,080	N.A. N.A.	..	..
..	..	..	..	..	..	56,992 19,118	24.05 8.07	..	..
58,783 2,453	27.19 N.A.	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
						4,585 1,389 32,619	N.A. N.A. N.A.	4,885	N.A
18,865	N.A.	..	..	..	..	9,599 27,580	N.A. N.A.	10,787	N.A

C.P.I.(M) — Communist party of India (Markist)
R.C.P.I. — Revolutionary Communist Party of India.
S.S.P. — Samjukta Socialist Party of India.
B.J.S. — Bharatiya Jana Sangha.
S.W.A. — Swatantra Party.
U.A.R.P. — Ujani Asom Rajya Parishad.
P.T.C. — Plains Tribal Council.

CHAPTER XIX

PLACES OF INTEREST

(Places have been arranged in alphabetical order)

Bardowa or Batadrava : Bardowa or Batadrava in the *mauza* bearing the same name under Dhing Police Station is situated at a distance of about fourteen kilometres from Nowgong. It covers three villages viz., Batadrava Barhisa, Batadrava Borbheti and Batadrava Saruhisa ; the first one being the birth place of Sri Sankaradeva-- the famous Vaishnava reformer of Assam of the fifteenth to sixteenth century. Bardowa is the fount of neo-Vaishnavism. It is famous as a religious centre mainly because of its *satra* or *than* which was originally constructed by the great apostle and later reconstructed by Damodar-- the son of his grand daughter Sreemati Govinda Priya Ai.

The newly constructed *Kirtan Ghar* (prayer hall) with the *Manikut* (sanctum) is the central building of the Bardowa *than*. In front of this prayer hall, there is a *Silikha* (terminalia) tree under which Sri Sankardeva composed his immortal works. Bardowa *than* has been described in Chapter III.

To the south of the premises of this prayer hall, there is the *Doul* where people offer worship and *Fagua* festival is held every year with great grandeur. Akashiganga, a sacred pool which is believed to have been excavated under the direction of Sri Sri Sankardeva lies to the north of the *than*.

Bardowa is held in high veneration by the people of the *Mahapurushia* sect. The birth and death anniversaries of Sri Sri Sankardeva and those of his disciple Sri Madhavdeva are held at *Bardowa* every year with due eclat. There is an Inspection Bungalow by the side of the Haibargaon-Dhing road which is about a kilometre from the *than*. Electricity is provided both in Batadrava Barhisa and Saruhisa. Among other public amenities there are a hospital and a post office at Batadrava Barhisa where a weekly market is held on every Thursday.

Barapujia : Barapujia, about four kilometres north of Raha and twenty eight kilometres from Nowgong town, is the headquarters of the Kopili Community Development Block. It is a centre of *muga* and *eri* cultivation and is also noted for its mat-making. It is within the jurisdiction of Raha Police Station. Besides *Kuccha* roads, it is connected by a *pucca* road with other important places and is served by electricity, a public health centre and a Post Office.

Chapanalla : Chapanalla is surrounded by tea gardens, and is about twenty-two kilometres from Nowgong town. It is connected both by road and

rail to Nowgong. Chapanalla is one of the few places of the district, which can boast of a water-fall. It is a favourite picnic place specially during winter. Some remains of old temples and forts have been found at Chapanalla hill. It is believed that Chapanalla was the capital of a certain King Hamsadhvaj in olden days. There is an Inspection Bungalow at Chapanalla.

Chaparmukh : About twenty-eight kilometres west of Nowgong Town, Chaparmukh is a Railway Junction of the North-East Frontier Railway. A Railway Hospital is situated here. Chaparmukh is also a trading centre specially of *til*. Barbed Wire, Tea-Chest fittings, Jem Clip and Nail Making Factories and a few Rice Mills are also located at Chaparmukh. A Government shellac factory was set-up at Chaparmukh in 1953-54.

Dabaka : Debaka is in Namati mauza under Jamunamukh Police Station and lies about thirty-four kilometres south-east of Nowgong town. Some historians are of the opinion that the present Dabaka area was the Dabaka kingdom mentioned in the Allahabad inscription of Samudra Gupta. Dabaka and its neighbourhood are littered with ruins of ancient temples dedicated mostly to *Vishnu* and *Siva*.

Near Akashiganga stream about eleven kilometres from Dabaka some ruins of *Siva* temples, a few architectural remains of the 10th century A.D., and fine stone images have been discovered. The water-fall named Akashiganga is also a favourite picnic place. Some ancient remains of a *devi* temple are also found near Urdhaganga—waterfall—about two kilometres east of Akashiganga. At Gachtal, about three kilometres from Dabaka, lie ruins of a *Siva* temple belonging to the tenth to eleventh century A.D. A pillar containing inscriptions of a king of 1149 A.D. has also been discovered here. Sixteen kilometres to the east of Dabaka more ruins of an old tank and several temples have been discovered at Mathabari (Maudanga village) on the bank of the Jamuna river. Among the ruins are stone images of *Siva* and *Vishnu*. Some *Siva lingas* have also been found here. More ruins of temples may be seen at Gosainguri, Mikirati, Devasthan and Burhagosain *than* near Dabaka.

About two kilometres to the north-east of Dabaka there is a hillock named Mahamaya. There is a tank on the east bank of which there is a small stone temple. Bhoi-Parbat area lies about eight kilometres east of the Mahamaya Hill. There is an image here of *Mahisa-Mardini*, of the Kamrupi sculpture. About a kilometre and a half to the east of Bhoi-Parbat there is an image of *Ganesh* carved on a big boulder lying at the foot of the Mikir Hills range. There is another small hillock locally called Hemtiru about nineteenth kilometres south-east of the Mahamaya Hills. The hillock has a brick bulit temple with stone lintels and door uprights. The door contains three sets of images—Vishnu, Lakshmi and Saraswati.

1. M. Neog, *Pabitra Asom* Gauhati 1969 P. 110.

Dabaka, an important trade centre, is situated in a paddy-growing area. A big weekly *hat* is held here. It is well connected by a black-topped road with Nowgong, on which buses ply regularly. Dabaka is also well connected by roads with Jamunamukh, Hojai, Lanka and Diphu. Visitors to Dabaka may stay at the Inspection Bungalow.

Dhing : About thirty kilometres away from Nowgong, Dhing was created as a town for the first time in the 1951 Census. In 1971 Dhing had a population of 10,778. Dhing *mauza* produces jute, rice and mustard and Dhing is an important trade centre. It is well served by road and rail. Till a few years ago it was also a steamerghat. Even now milk and agricultural products are exported from Dhing to Darrang district by boats across the Brahmaputra. Dhing has one Arts College, four Secondary, four Middle and nine Primary Schools. Besides, it also has two Cinema halls. A pay office of the State Bank of India was established here recently. Dhing has a *thana* and is the headquarters of Dhing Revenue Circle. There is also an Inspection Bungalow here.

Hojai : Hojai is renowned as the granary of Assam. It is the principal whole-sale market for rice in Assam. Hojai Railway Station serves as the outlet for its fertile hinterland which besides rice grows sugarcane, mustard, jute and vegetables in abundance. The rice and oil mills provided impetus to its growth. According to the Census of 1971, Hojai Municipality had a population of 22,769. State buses ply between Hojai and Nowgong which are about sixty-one kilometres apart. Hojai which is the headquarters of Jugijan Community Development Block has a Police Station, a cinema hall, five High Schools and one State Bank pay office. The Inspection Bungalows, of which one belongs to the Forest Department, provide accommodation to visitors. At Amtal, near Hojai, there are ruins of *Siva* temples and a number of sculptured blocks of stone bearing divine animal and floral designs. There are also remains of temples dedicated to *Vishnu* and *Siva* in Hojai.

Jagiroad : Jagiroad is a Railway Station on the main rail line from Gauhati to Tinsukia. The Assam Trunk Road also goes through it. It is situated at a distance sixty-five kilometres west of Nowgong. Jagirorad is gradually developing as an important commercial place of Nowgong. The Assam Spun Silk Mill set up recently in the public sector at Jagiroad has increased its importance. A paper mill, land for which has already been acquired, will be set up shortly in the public sector near Jagiroad. There is an Inspection Bungalow at Nokhola near Jagiroad.

The name of the place is associated with the story of Jongalbalahu, who was defeated in battle by the Kacharis. In order to escape from the Kacharis

who gave him hot pursuit, Jonagalbalahu is said to have jumped into the waters of the Kalang river and surfaced at Jagi. 'Jag' in Assamese means awake.

Jaluguti : Jaluguti is about thirty-seven kilometres south-west of Nowgong town and is noted for its weekly *hat* which is considered one of the largest in the district. Agricultural products such as paddy, mustard, pulses and vegetables are found in the *hat*. A special feature of the hat is its *eri* cloth.

Jamunamukh : It is a rice-producing area, which also grows some cotton. An important bi-weekly *hat* is held at Kathakatiagaon near Jamunamukh. It is about thirty-five kilometres from Nowgong town and is famed for its earthen ware. It is an important Railway Station wherefrom rice, cotton and rice products like *chira*. *muri* etc. are exported. It is also connected by roads and served important towns and business places and served by regular bus services. It has also a police station.

Jugijan : It is about six kilometres from Hojai. Recently the remnants of a fort and three stone temples decorated with carvings and bas-reliefs have been discovered. The temples were dedicated to *Siva*. Seven *Siva lingas* have also been excavated and preserved at Jugijan Na-nath *than* under the care of a *Sadhu*.

About two kilometres from these remnants, there is a village named Navanga, where an idol of the goddess *Chamunda* with six hands and elevated belly wearing a garland of human beads has been discovered. The idol is dated to the eleventh or twelfth Century.

Kaliabor : Kaliabor is a historic place by the side of the Kalang river in Barbhagia *mauza* under Kaliabor Police Station. It was initially the headquarters of Barphukan during the Ahom days and was the scene of several battles against the Moslems. It is connected by bus with Nowgong which is about forty-eight kilometres west of it. There are a few ancient temples in Kaliabor area such as Saubhagya Madhab, (built about 1730 A.D. by Kadamba Sarma), Dulal Madhab (built about 1730 A.D. by Kalia Thakur) and Gopal Madhab. All were built during the reign of the Ahom king Siva Singha. *Vishnu Yajna* is held with great enthusiasm every year in Dulal Madhab. Another temple near Kaliabor is Basudev Bari *Devalaya*. The year of its construction is not known. There are several other *Siva* temples in Kaliabor area such as Baneswar, Chitra Sankar, *Siva than*, Nandakeswara, *Buragosain than* and Nagasankara.

Kampur : It lies on the north bank of the Kopili river and is about twenty-three kilometres from Nowgong. The neighbouring area produces rice, sugarcane and mustard. It is an important trade centre and has a few rice mills.

Milk which is abundant in the adjoining Rongkhang area of Mikir Hills district finds its way to Nowgong town *via* Kampur. Kampur is also an important Railway Station on the main line between Gauhati and Tinsukia. Kampur has a Police Station, the Sub-Deputy Collector's office, and educational institutions including a college. There is an Inspection Bungalow at Kampur. A big weekly *hat* is held on Friday. Near Kampur there is a *Bura-buri than*. About 4 kilometres from Kampur there are ruins of an old temple in Changchauki village the south bank of the Kopili river. A Cinema hall provides recreational facility.

Kathiatoli : It is situated in a fertile rice-growing area about Twenty-one kilometres south of Nowgong town and lies on the Nowgong-Dabaka road. There is a Government Seed Farm at Kathiatoli. Rengbeng which is the head-quarters of a Community Development Block lies near Kathiatoli.

Kuwaritol : This is a place of local interest in Kaliabor circle. There is a tank which is known as Bharali Barua *Pukhuri* (tank) which was built by Jayadhwaj Bharali Barua, a religious man of the locality. The legend goes that Bharali Barua was told in his dream that water would come up in the tank only if the youngest of his seven wives, Kamala Konwari was offered to *Jal-Konwar*. Accordingly, she was offered with due respect to *Jal-Konwar*, and the tank was filled up with water. There is a lucidly composed Assamese ballad which tells the story how Kamala *Konwari* was offered to *Jal-Konwar*.

The place is about forty-five kilometres from Nowgong town and it derives its name from the seven wives of Bharali Barua. *Konwari* means princess and *Tols* means abode). The Kaliabor Police Station is located here. It is served by electricity, one Dispensary, one Hospital, one post office and educational institutions.

Kuthori : It is on the Trunk Road about eighty kilometres east of Nowgong town. There are some tea gardens here and pine apples are also grown. There is a Leper-asylum under the Assam Seva Samity. A Fruit preservation Factory for making Jam, Jelly and other fruit products is to be seen here.

Laharighat : About fifty-one kilometres north-west of Nowgong town, Laharighat is a paddy, jute and mustard growing area which is predominantly inhabited by immigrant Muslims from erstwhile East Bengal. It is the head-quarters of Laharighat Block and has a Police Station. It is about 11 kilometres from Mairabari which is the terminal Railway station of the Senchowa Mairabari branch line.

Lanka : Together with Hojai, Lanka accounts for the major portion of the rice grown in Nowgong district. There are four rice mills at Lakna. Be-

sides rice, jute, mustard, pulses and vegetables are grown in bulk in its neighbourhood. Warehousing facilities are available here. A weekly *hat* bears proof of the large produce of the area. The Circle Office, the Block headquarters office and the Police Station are situated at Lanka. It is also a Railway Station. Lanka is now connected by State Transport buses with Nowgong. There is an Inspection Bungalow at Lanka which is about 64 kilometres by road from Nowgong.

Lumding : Lumding, an important junction of North East Frontier Railway and administrative headquarters of the Lumding Railway District is situated in the south-eastern corner of Nowgong district. A branch line runs from Lumding in the hill Section to Badarpur in Cachar district and thence to Dharmanagar in Tripura. The place derives its name from two Kachari words *Lum* meaning water and *ding* meaning not available.[2] There is no natural water source within a radius of about twelve kilometres of the town. Lumding is 110 kilometres from Nowgong town.

Lumding is the second biggest town in Nowgong district and is under a Town Committee. In 1971 its population was 29,253 comprising a large section of immigrants from East Bengal. From the point of view of trade and commerce Lumding occupies an important place in the district. Its main exports are timber and cotton. Various small scale industries such as one Candle works and two Trunk factories are growing up at Lumding. There is a daily bus service between Lumding and Diphu which is the headquarters of Mikir Hills district. It is also connected by a jeepable road with Haflong, the headquarters of Norh Cachar Hills district. Besides Schools there is also a College at Lumding. There are two Inspection Bungalows at Lumding belonging to the Railways and the Forest Departments.

Mahadeosal : It is a little village about thirty kilometres west of Nowgong town and eight kilometres from Dharamtul Railway station. In the northern part of this village there are some ancient ruins of sculptured stones believed to be the remnants of a Siva temple. At the village *Namghar* is preserved a door-frame depicting *Basudev*, a female worshipper, a dancing-girl and a gate-keeper armed with bows and arrows. About two kilometres from the village is the historic fort of Jungalbalahu, which has been mentioned elsewhere in the Chapter.

Mairabari : It lies thirty two kilometres to the north-west of Nowgong town, and is a Railway terminus of Senchowa-Mairabari branch line. Mairabari is famed for its jute and fresh vegetables. A bi-weekly *hat* is held here.

2. Census of India 1961, *District Census Handbook*, Nawgong, Gauhati 1965, P. 400.

Marigaon : Marigaon lies about forty-five kilometres west of Nowgong and has now been declared as the Sub-divisional headquarters of Marigaon Civil Subdivision. Marigaon has a Police Station, a Revenue Circle Office and a Post and Telegraph Office. Educational institutions include a College. It is an agricultural area inhabited mostly by people of backward classes. There is a network of roads connecting Marigaon with different parts of the district. Besides a daily bazar a weekly *hat* is held at Marigaon. It is expected that Marigaon will soon develop into a full-fledged town with modern amenities. There is an Inspection Bungalow at Marigaon to cater to the needs of visitors.

Mayong : Mayong lies about sixty-seven kilometres west of Nowgong town to which it is connected by public bus. In Mayang *mauza* at the foot of the Baha hill and by the side of the Kopili river there is an image of *Ganesh* measuring about ten feet in height. The people worship the idol on the occasion of *Ganesh-Puja*. Mayang is famous for its *mantras*, charms and incantations.

Mikirbheta : Mikirbheta in the *mauza* bearing the same name is about sixteen kilometres to the west of Nowgong town to which it is connected by public bus. It is famous for its *eri* production which is on display in the weekly *hat* held here. There is a Police Station at Mikirbheta.

Misa : Misa lies on the Assam Trunk Road about thirty-five kilometres east of Nowgong town. It has a small airstrip. The Misa Polo Club is a remnant of the British times.

Nowgong town : Nowgong town, is the headquarters of the district. The town lies within latitudes 26·20.15" and 26·21 45" North, and longitudes 92·41' and 92·41 58" East and is situated on both banks of the Konlang at a distance of 123 kilometres from Gauhati and 180 kilometres from Jorhat.

Formerly Nowgong was known as Khagarijan. Nowgong is a mispronounciation of *Na-Gaon*, meaning newly established village. As to other details of the establishment of district headquarters, the introductory chanpter of this Gazetteer may be referred to.

Nowgong town was constituted a municipality in 1894. According to the 1971 Census it had an area of 6.22 square kilometres and a population of 56,537 persons and ranked as a class II town.

It is the principal wholesale trade centre in the district. Three important export items from Nowgong are Jute, rice and tea. At present there are three Municipal markets at Nowgong - one at Marwaripatti, one at Dhakaipatti, and the other at Haibargaon. Except the Municipal Market of Dhakaipatti, the other two are miniature markets.

In the municipal (Marar) Park near the railway station sculptural remains of great archaeological importance which were collected from the Dabaka area can be seen.

State Transport buses run from Gauhati, Shillong, Golaghat and Jorhat through Nowgong. Two branch lines connect Nowgong and Haibargaon to Chaparmukh, a station on the main rail line from Gauhati to Tinsukia. Nowgong is well connected by bus services to important places such as Silghat, Dabaka, Lanka, Hojai and Marigaon. Tourists to Nowgong town may be accommodated at the Circuit House and the Dak-Bungalow. A few Indian style hotels are also there. Taxis are very limited in the town, but rickshaws are found as substitutes.

The town is advanced from the cultural point of view. At present there are three affiliated colleges, one of which is exclusively for girls. Another college has recently been started to cater to the needs of the increasing number of students. Recreational facilities are provided by three theatre halls and five cinema halls. At Jubilee field near the Deputy Commissioner's Office different games of inter-district and inter-state importance are held. Among other games the Independence Day Foot-ball Cup Competition is worth mentioning. On the Nehru *bali* on the bank of the Kolang river the Magh *Bihu* festival is observed with great eclat. On the occasion of Siva-Ratri a mela is held at *Smashanghat* Siva-mandir.

The welfare organisation of Nowgong that deserves special mention is the Sreemanta Sankar Mission, set up in 1950. The Mission consists of an Eye Hospital, an Orphanage, an a School for the blind. The activities of the Mission are spread all over Assam. There is one State Home for destitutes in this town.

Phulaguri : The great Peasants' Uprising of 1861 took place here. Lieutenant Singar, the Assistant Commissioner lost his life while trying to subdue the sentiments of an aggrieved peasantry. It is about fourteen kilometres west of Nowgong town and is known for its bellmetal industry. It lies in a sugarcane growing area. A weekly *hat* is held here every Saturday which is famed for local Gur and specially prepared tobacoo used for chewing with betel nuts. *Eri* cloth is also sold here. It lies on the Assam Trunk Road and is also a Railway Station on the Chaparmukh-Silghat branch line.

Puranigudam : This was the firsts eat of district headquarters, from 1832 to 1835 when the headquarters were shifted to Rangagara and then to Nowgong in 1839. It is about thirteen kilometres east of Nowgong town and lies on the Assam Trunk Road. It is also a Railway Station on the Chaparmukh-Silghat

branch line. Besides three High Schools, a College has been recently established here. Paddy and jute are grown in the adjoining areas.

Raha : Raha is situated on the Assam Trunk Road at a distance of about twenty-two kilometres west of Nowgong, and lies on the bank of the Kolang river. There are six rice mills, two oil mills, one saw mill, a brick field, a printing press, a Nail Making Factory, and a few weaving and tailoring centres. There is also Ware-Housing arrangement for agricultural produce under the Assam State Ware-Housing Corporation. Besides the thana, Raha has the Sub-Deputy Collector's Office and a host of other State Government Offices. Educational institutions include a College, a Basic Training School for wmen, a Higher Secondary and Multipurpose school and a Girls' High School.

The name of the place is associated with Jongalbalahu who took rest there during his flight from the battle with the Kacharis. The remains of Jongalbalahu's fort about three kilometres west of Raha are still to be seen. A big State Government Fish Farm is now located in this fort-area. Some other fishery tanks are also located within the town. During the Ahom days Raha was an important *Chowki*. Raha is still an important trade centre for agricultural produce such as paddy, mustard and jute. Besides the daily market a bi-weekly *hat* is also held at Raha.

Visitors to Raha may stay at the local Inspection Bungalow or in any one of the several hotels.

Rupahi : Situated about twelve kilometres to the north-east of Nowgong town, Rupahi is famous for its weekly *hat* which is the largest in the district and one of the biggest in Assam. The *hat* is held every Wednesday and rice, *chira*. jute, mustard, pulses and fresh vegetables are the main items sold here. Rupahi is a Railway Station on the Senchowa-Mairabari branch line. It has a Police Station.

Salona : Salona is known as a tea producing centre. It also produces cane and timber. It is about thirty-five kilometres to the east of Nowgong and a Railway Station on the Chaparmukh-Silghat branch line.

Samaguri : It is a paddy growing area. There is a Basic Training Centre for male teachers. It is about twenty-two kilometres east of Nowgong town and lies on the Assam Trunk Road. Samaguri is also a Railway Station on the Chaparmukh-Silghat branch line. The Police Station at Samaguri is one of the oldest in the district. It is the headquarters of the Samaguri Revenue Circle. There is an Inspection Bungalow at Samaguri.

Senchowa : About six kilometres west of Nowgong, Senchowa is a Railway junction and a paddy growing area. The Government Sericultural Farm is located here along with one Agricultural Farm. Many brick fields are to be seen here. An industrial estate also situates here. Senchowa is also the headquarters of Khagarijan Community Development Block.

Silghat : Silghat is situated in the north-eastern region of the district on the south bank of the Brahmaputra at a distance of about fifty-three kilometres by road from Nowgong. It is an important river Ghat. The communication link between the two districts, Darrang and Nowgong is maintained through this river-port by regular ferry services across the Brahmaputra. It is the terminal Railway Station of the Chaparmukh-Silghat branch line and there are State and public bus services between Silghat and Nowgong. The importance of the place has been enhanced by the installation of the Assam Co-operative jute Mills Ltd. with a capital out-lay of Rs. 61.94 lakhs.

Silghat presents a panoramic view and its tourist attraction includes the Kamakhya temple, *Dui Muni Sila* and the surrounding tea-gardens. The Kamakhya temple situated at the top of the *Samantagiri* about 244 metres above sea-level was constructed in 1745 during the reign of the Ahom King Pramatta Sinha. It is dedicated to goddess Durga. A big *mela* is held here on the occasion of *Ashokastami* when pilgrims from all over the State come to have a dip at the sacred Brahmaputra and have a *darsana* of the goddess. *Dui Muni Sila* - two massive rocks lying on the sandy banks of the Brahmaputra near Silghat - is associated with two *munis* (hermits) viz. Kumud and Koustuva. These hermits are believed to have had their *ashrams* at Silghat. They are said to have turned into stone by a curse of Lord *Siva*. Visitors to Silghat may stay at the local Inspection Bungalow.

Sita Jakhala : There is a hill of granite on the bank of the Killing river about half a kilometre from the 36th mile post on the Assam Trunk Road between Nowgong and Gauhati. Some steps resembling a ladder or *Jakhala* are seen on this hill. Tradition connects this ladder with Sita of the *Ramayana*. It is a popular site for picnics.

Vasundhari : This place is situated at a distance of about two kelometres from the confluence of the Barapani and the Kopili which is called the Vasundhari Hill. On the north-east corner of the hill, two images of *Ganesh* are engraved on two rocks and an image of the goddess *Jagatdhatri* on the third.

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A. GLOSSARY

Adhi	: A system of crop sharing by the tenant with the landlord.
Ahu	: A kind of paddy, harvested during summer.
Alatiya	: A loam
Ali	: An embankment.
Baki-jai	: A list of defaulting ryots filed by Mauzadar for recovering arrear of revenue.
Bala	: An ornament for the wrist.
Bali-chaiya	: Sandy land.
Bam	: A high land.
Bao	: A kind of paddy sown in flooded land.
Bil	: A swamp.
Ban-bati	: A bellmetal cup-like utensil with a foot.
Ban-kahi	: A bellmetal dish-like utensil with a foot.
Baradhan	: Glutinous paddy.
Bari	: A homestead.
Basti	: A homestead.
Bata	: A small tray with a foot made usually of silver, bellmetal and brass used for keeping arecanut and betel vine.
Bati	: A bellmetal cup-like utensil.
Bhalbari	: A high waste land of good quality.
Bhaona	: A vaisnava dramatic performance
Bihu	: Assamese national festival.
Bhur (Bhel)	: A raft made of bamboo or pieces of banana tree.
Bhar	: A load of paddy in particular carried on a shoulder suspended from either end of a bamboo pole.
Bhata	: A kiln.
Bherbheria	: A soft-clay.
Boro	: A kind of paddy grown in low lying areas.
Chadar	: An upper garment used by a female.
Chaklong	: An Ahom marriage ceremony.
Changghar	: A dwelling house built on a raised platform.
Charia	: A bowl made usually of brass.
Chapari	: A high land formed by silt deposit on the bank or inside of a river.
Char	: An alluvial land.
Charpara	: Land raised by silt or natural manure.
Chepa	: A kind of bamboo fish trap.
Chereki	: A contrivance for winding thread.

Dainik Amdani (Register) : Daily collection register.
Dangari : A large sheaf of paddy.
Dargah : A Muslim shrine.
Daul : An annual statement of demand of land revenue.
Dhara : A bamboo mat.
Dhenki : A paddle for pounding rice.
Dhol : A big bamboo container for holding approximately 19 kilograms of paddy.
Dingaru : A kind of square bamboo fish trap.
Dol : A Hindu shrine.
Don : A basket for holding five *seers* of grain, 1/4th of a *pura* of land, a bigha.
Dong : A small depression in a cultivated land used for irrigation.
Dolonis : Marshes.
Dorpati : The battern of loom.
Dugdugi : A pendant attached to a necklace.
Endi : A species of silk, the cocoons of which are fed on castor plant.
Faringati : A high land where Ahu paddy and other grains like mustard and sugarcane are grown.
Galpata : A flat necklace.
Ganja (bhang) : An Indian hemp.
Ghar : A dwelling house.
Ghat : A landing stair or a bathing place on a river bank.
Got : An aggregate of three or four *paiks* during the Ahom rule.
Gur : Molasses.
Hangdang : A sword used during the Ahom rule by kings, nobles, and an Ahom bridegroom.
Hat : A market place.
Hati : A row of dwellings of the resident Vaisnava monks.
Hola : A shallow ravine.
Jakai : A kind of bamboo scoop used in catching fish.
Jalatak : A flooded land or land liable to flood.
Jamabandi : A register holding the names and other particular of land owners.
Jama wasil : Land revenue collection register.
Jan : A brooklet.
Japi : A wicker.
Juluki : A kind of fishing instrument.
Juvali : An yoke.
Kahi : A bellmetal dish.
Kakoi : A comb, made usually of animal horns and elephant tusk and of bamboo.
Kataki : A royal messanger or envoy of the Ahom and contemporary rulers of Assam.
Kath : A mat made of grass or cork.
Katha : A measure of land standing for 1/5th of a *bigha*.
Kathiatoli : A paddy seed-bed.
Keru : Ornament used in ears.
Khar (Kala) : An alkaline preparation extracted usually from banana tree ashes.
Kharu : Ornament worn in wrist.
Khat : A small estate including arable land.
Khedashikar : A process employed in catching elephant.
Khel : A division of people made by the Ahom rulers for specific profession.
Khiraj : Revenue paying land.
Kundi : A hunting elephant.
Kunwaree : A queen, a princes.
Lahi : A fine variety of paddy.
Lahoni : A swing basket.
Lecha : A measure of land standing for 1/20th of a *katha*.
Lota : A kind of water pot, narrow in the middle portion made of bellmetal and brass.
Mako : A shuttle.
Mani : A kind of beads used as ornaments.
Meji : A pile made of bamboo pieces, straw etc., raised on the eve of the *Magh-bihu* festival.
Mekhela : A girdle.
Mela : A public show ; an exhibition.
Melashikar : A process employed in catching elephant.
Muga : A variety of Assam Silk, the threads of which are usually yellow with the tinge of gold.
Namghar : A place of worship in a Vaishnava Satra in perticular.
Neothoni : A cotton gin.
Paik : A ryot during the Ahom rule whose duty was to render service to the king or the state.
Pat : A fine variety of Assam Silk, the yarns of which are prepared from mulberry fed cocoons.
Polo : A kind of bamboo basket trap for catching fish.
Powa : 1/4th of a *seer*.
Pathar : A paddy field, an orchard.
Pati : A kind of fine mat.
Pona : Young fish.
Pukhuri : A pond.
Pura : A measurements of land standing for four *bighas* of land or four to five *dons* of grains.

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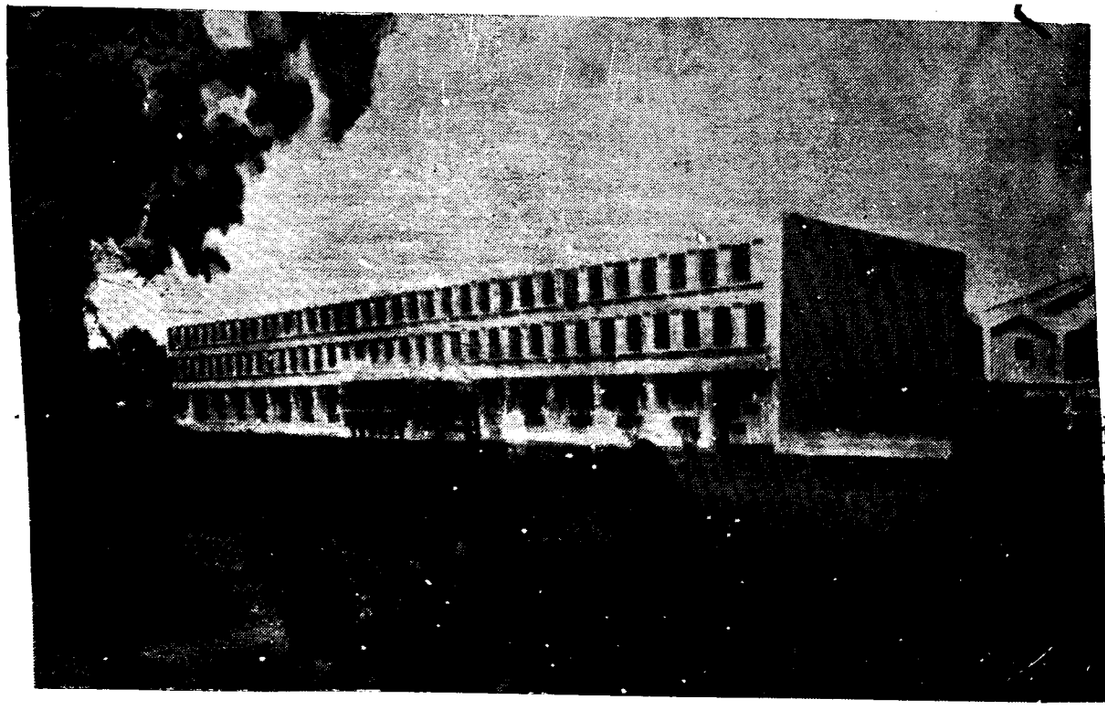
We regret it very much that inspite of the sincerest attempt from all quarters connected with the printing of this book, the 'ghost of press' could not be escaped.

VISNU, KAWAIMARI, NOWGONG DISTRICT :

It is an image of Trivikrama, one of the twenty-four aspects of Visnu, the God of preservation. Carved in black basalt, with its stele profusely illustrated, it is a fine piece of 12th century sculptures of the Pala-Sena style.

VISNU, BURHA-BURHI
NOWGONG DISTRICT

Another Trivikrama aspect of Visnu, collected from Burha-Burhi and now preserved in the Assam State Museum, Gauhati, it is a fine 11th century sculptural piece of the Pala-Sena style.



Factory building of Spun Silk Mill, Jagiroad.

தமிழ்நாடு ஆவணக்காப்பக நூலகம்,
எழும்பூர், சென்னை-600 008.

தவணைத்தாள்.

சே. எண் : ப. எண் :

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