



## HUMAN-LANDSCAPE INTERACTION IN ASSAM UNDER COLONIAL PERIOD 1826-1900

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### **Abstract**

The colonial landscape of Assam was profoundly shaped by British imperial interests from the nineteenth century onward, transforming the region into a strategic economic and administrative frontier. The discovery and expansion of tea plantations became the cornerstone of colonial intervention, leading to the establishment of vast tea estates that altered the natural environment and socio-economic structure of Assam. Plantation economies attracted migrant labourers from central India, creating new demographic and cultural patterns.

To facilitate commercial extraction and military mobility, the British developed an extensive transport and communication network. Railways connected tea-producing districts with river ports and commercial centres, while waterways along the Brahmaputra and Barak rivers served as vital channels for trade and administration. Tramways within tea gardens enhanced the movement of tea leaves and industrial materials. Telegraph lines further strengthened colonial control by enabling rapid communication between administrative headquarters, military outposts, and commercial centres. Institutional architecture emerged as another defining feature of colonial Assam. Jails were constructed in major administrative towns. Simultaneously, schools and educational institutions were introduced to produce a class of educated intermediaries who could assist in governance and clerical work.

**Keywords:** Jain iconography; Archaeology; Literature; Mathura art; Kankaltila



## INTRODUCTION

The colonial association of Assam dates back to 1765 when British received *diwani* right of the region specifically the Goalpara region with *duar* areas still being controlled by Bhutanese. The Assam valley experience British boots for the first time on its ground under Captain Thomas Welsh of Bengal army when he was sent to Assam to help King Gaurinath Singha who sought help from Governor General Cornwallis for his help against Moamaria rebellion. On the king's request Captain Welsh was sent with six companies of sepoy (each having sixty men). The whole contingent was of around 550 men including small medical corps under Dr John Peter Wade. This army came into contest with *Darrang* king Krisnanarayan, defeated him and occupied northern *Kamrup* and later the *Darrang* king accepted vassalage of Ahom king. The British forces also crushed the Moamarias and reinstated Gaurinath Singha and hence started the British intervention in Ahom court and politics. Arrival of British completely changes the rule of engagement and since the days of Welsh they have been seen as invincible due to their weapon and fighting style. It was not the same Bengal army that the warriors of Assam fighting for centuries and defeating on every occasion. Captain Welsh arrived through boat from Barrackpur and a detachment joined at Goalpara. As the whole engagement took place at *Gowhatty* at that time as recorded by Colonel Johnstone is that the Kamakhya hill was surrounded by a ditch and a narrow pass. It also mentions that no fortification was there in *Gowhatty* with exception of a place where troops were stationed, oblong in shape and 100 yards from the river, enclosed by a brick wall six feet in height, with a narrow wet ditch inside and out. In the centre was a thatched building enough to hold the whole detachment and outside this structure but in an enclosure there was officer's tents making an ideal place for station of troops (Johnstone, 1877: 14-15). The structure was doubtedly a *namghar* occasionally found in every village of Assam. The town of *Gowhatty* was narrated to be "very extensive and irregular full of people and surrounded by hills". On some portion of the river bank there was a rampart seems to be reference of *Momai Kata Garh*. The town was also extended to the north bank. Welsh was leading a contingent to *Gowhatty* and asking for another as reserve to be stationed at *Bijnee* and further asked authorities for boat loads of salt and opium to procure provisions locally, suggesting scarcity and demand for the articles. Initially the British were concentrated in the three places *Goalpara*, *Bijnee* and *Gowhatty*. There was a *chowkey* (post) known as *candahar* (ruin) opposite to *Goalpara*. The expedition of Welsh was basically



through water route and they reached up to *Koliabor, Jorhat, Dergaon* (Deorgaon) *Namdang* (Rangpur) via *Mangaldoi* (Johnstone, 1877: 34).

## TEA LANDSCAPE

Tea was an unintentional discovery of Chinese when Emperor Shen Nung consumed it in 2737 BC (Laloi, 1997: 136). Chinese became pioneer of using tea also for medicinal purposes. The word tea came from Chinese word 'tay' and *cha* from word 'chah' (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1960). By the close of 6<sup>th</sup> century, Chinese considered tea as beverage and also world's most widely used drink after water (Costa, 2002: 313-318) and drank by 2/3 of world population. Tea was discovered in India during early 18<sup>th</sup> century. Before the start of commercial cultivation of tea in India, tea was growing in the wilds of Assam. British created the vast tea empire of India who discovered tea in Assam. Robert Bruce, an employee of East India Company first discovered tea plant in India at upper Assam district (Pettigrew, 2000). Bruce commanded a division of gunboats in upper Assam during Burmese war and brought some shrubs and seeds in 1826 and sends to officials of botanical garden in Calcutta (Baruah, 1994: 48). In 1834 East India Company had taken up tea cultivation in India after losing its monopoly in China. The first tea garden in India was opened by British at *Lakhimpur* district in 1835. Commercial tea ever produced outside China arrived England in 1838 from India. In 1839 British parliament formed "The Assam Company" in England. First batch of tea produced in Assam sent to Calcutta in year 1836 (Mann, 1918). The tea reaching London in 1838 found to be equally good to Chinese tea (Roy, 2011). Tea plantations in Assam are located in two valleys Brahmaputra and Barak. A native has discovered tea plants in wilds of Cachar district in 1855 and reported to G. Verner, Superintendent of Cachar. In 1855 Williamson of Assam Company applied for forest land for cultivation of tea and got a land rent free for one year. First tea cultivation took place at *Barsangan mauza* since 1856 in Cachar.

Since the establishment of tea gardens many people came to Assam from various parts of India to work as labourers known as *coolies* in ever increasing proportion. The reason being that natives don't want to work as resources were ample for them and a settler being far from their native lands allows lower wages and maximum exploitation of all sorts. The workers of the tea plantation are most oppressed and were brought by British planters by luring false promises and being oppressed by zamindars of Orissa, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh previously Central and Bengal province of British came to Assam in the hope of better life lately to find



the situation same here. Another misery being they were let to live in small cottages which were covered with straws and garbage. The cottage lines were in deep forest areas without proper sanitation and health facilities which are continuing even to this day.

*Sadiya* was one of the early regions where tea was planted. The *Kundilmukh* at *Sadiya*, a tea seed nursery was established but proved to be a wrong location and abandoned towards the end of 1836. The surviving plants were replanted at *Jaipur*. In 1837 a new plantation was established at *Chabua* which proved successful. Tea plantation then extended to *Buri Dihing*, *Phakial*, *Tingri*, *Matak* country, *Namsang*, *Tipam*, *Jaipur*, neighbourhood of *Rangpur*, *Gabru*, *Chabua*, *Chota Tingnai*, *Hukanpukri* (Harler, 1933:228-247). Lt. Colonel F. S. Hannay opened a garden near *Dibrugarh* in 1850-51 and another one by *Wagentreiber Henry Burkinyoung* began to plant tea in *Numaligarh* area in 1851-52. In 1853 there were three private garden in *Sibsagar* district and six in *Lakhimpur* district. In 1853 *Williamsons* began cultivating of tea at *Cinnamora* area and produced 45000 lb of tea in 200 acres in 1857. By 1859 there were 51 private tea gardens in Assam. Ten in *Lakhimpur*, 15 in *Sibsagar*, 3 in *Darrang* rest in *Kamrup* and *Nagaon* district. The tea gardens individually imported labours from Bihar and Chota Nagpur areas through *Calcutta* contractors earlier, but from 1859 the labour recruitment was done by the industry collectively. The *Jorhat Tea Company* formed in 1859 brought *Cinnemara*, *Oating* and *Kaliabor* gardens from *Williamsons* and *Numaligarh* from *H. Burkinyoung*. In 1855 indigenous tea was found in *Chandkani hills* in *Sylhet* and expanded to various places in *Khasi* and *Jaintia* hills bordering *Surma* valley (Harler, 1933). In 1862 there were 160 gardens including 57 private companies and 5 public companies namely *Assam Company*, *The Jorehaut (Jorhat) Tea Company*, *The East India Tea Company*, *The lower Assam Tea Company* and the *Central Assam Tea Company* (Griffiths, 1967: 75). Tea gardens in *Cachar* were established at *Bursagon* and *Gungurpar*. Planting was done on hill tops stretched from *Barail* range to *Barak* River. The *teelas* (mounds) were next planted and in 1875 the first *beels* (swamps) were drained and planted (Harler, 1933). In 1872 there were 80 tea gardens in *Cachar*. Introduction of tea plantation had tremendous impact on natural as well as cultural landscape of Assam. Vast expanses of mountainous and elevated lands were cleared of native vegetation for purpose of plantation which had serious bearing on ecology. Roads were developed to connect the gardens with the highways and trading centres. In the gardens



line of huts were constructed for the stay of labourers and also for officials concerned for managing the tea gardens. The conditions of huts for labourers are deplorable whereas for officials big bungalows were built with all the amenities. In 1838 Bruce published a pamphlet which contained a map where he showed the extent of his discoveries at wild tea. He located 80 tea tracts in Matak country, 12 in the Singphos, 28 in the west of *Buri Dihing* at *Namsang, Tipam, Jaipur, Rangpur* and *Gabru*. Migration reported are from tribes of Chota Nagpur Plateau, southwest part of Bengal, Jaharkhand, Chhatisgarh, part of Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Maharastra and Uttar Pradesh. Average annual recruitment was 30000 between 1859-1909, 200 minimum and maximum 1.10 lakh, till 1910 total number of migrant numbered 15.60 lakh (Tanti, 2009). Planters clear virgin lands and jungles on it and employ local people like Kacharis, Chutias and Nagas, but these people desert plantations during the plucking seasons for their paddy cultivation in their villages leaving planters with heavy losses due to non-harvesting of tea (Chakraborty, 1997: 30). The tea industry filled imperial coffers and gave the colonial state an opportunity to transform a jungle-laden frontier into a cultivated system of plantations leading to transformation from jungle to garden making it “Empires garden”.

## ROADWAYS

The earliest commercial relation was established with Bengal, through river route mainly. M’Cosh mentions of the existence of three overland routes to Bengal (M’Cosh, 2000):

- 1) via Mushidabad, Malda, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Bugwah and Goalpara.
- 2) via Decca, *Dumari Pacualoes, Jumalpur, Singimari, Goalpara*.
- 3) via *Sylhet, Cherra, Mophlung, Nungkhlow, Ranigodown, Caneemookh* and *Gauhati*.

Internal communication within Assam was maintained through an excellent network of roads built by Ahom and Koch kings. As M’Cosh states “*very few provinces in India have been provided with such a splendid system of public roads as in Assam and from the great highways, which were carried uninterruptedly through the whole country to the great cross-roads, between the principal towns and their minute ramification, which connected the villages*” referring possibly *Gohain Kamal Ali/ Bangal Ali*. These roads for over half a century had been sadly neglected, most of them being over-grown with jungles thus making it obsolete. Of the roads constructed in medieval period, special mention may be made of the *Gohain Kamal Ali*,



*Dhodar Ali, Dhai Ali and the Bar Baruah Ali* (Bhattacharjee, 2005: 114). The intention of road alignments of early British period was military feasibility, for speedy movement of troops and provisions in case of resumed Burmese attack and incursion of frontier tribes. In 1840 there was a report that Burmese were trying to make inroads through Naga hills from the *Kyendween* (Chindween) river and making roads for the purpose which forced British also to improve the line of communication between the Mottock country and the troops reserve at *Sibsagar* (LIG, 4<sup>th</sup> May 1840) and repairing of *Bar Baruah Ali*, the highway from *Sibsagar* towards *Dibrugarh* through *Chokey Hat* on the *Buri Dihing*. Stretch of Highway between *Jaipore* and *Sibsagar* was opened. This road was to be “of great importance, as affording the means of moving troops and of controlling the Nagas as well as highly valuable as one of the roads of internal communication on a line, by which much traffic in salt is conveyed (LIG, 28<sup>th</sup> August 1840). There was road from *Dibrugarh* to *Saikhowa* and *Jaipore* facilitating mainly movement of troops. There was bund road from *Sibsagar* to *Dikhumukh* highly useful for military and political purpose. There was road from *Nagong* (Nagaon) via *Samuguting* to *Dimapur*, the other from *Golaghat* to *Dimapur* (LIG, 21<sup>st</sup> September 1850). A road for communication with frontier posts was constructed between *Dum-Duma* and *Makum* (LIG, Vol no. 15, No. 152. 28<sup>th</sup> November 1850). A small road also was in existence between *Golaghat* and *Nagorah* and it was “frequenting by the Angami Nagas and our (British) traders and troops” (LIG, Vol no. 15, No. 152. 28<sup>th</sup> November 1850). M’Cosh mentions of an open road from upper Assam to Burma and thence into China by which a considerable trade in Chinese and Burmese manufacturers is carried on. The route from China and Assam was highly tedious it passes through *Noa-Dihing* enters the *Lohit* and *Sadiya* (M’Cosh, 2000). Travel time to and from *Gauhati* to *Dibrugarh* was more than 15 days.

The tea industry around which all the developmental activities of Assam centred played vital role in the growth and development of roadways. In 1845 Assam Company claimed that it had made and repaired around 1280 kms of public roads and constructed bridges and established several ferries across the rivers (Guha, 1991: 160). Initially tea industry was completely depended on existing broken roads and few on roads they have constructed and repaired. Tea industry of *Cachar* severely hit because of the bad road condition forcing tea garden owners to contribute for the construction of roads with labour and resources (Report, 1868: 100). The



roads mostly linked the gardens with landing places on the Brahmaputra, as well as to steamers, where from boats shipped to Calcutta. These roads were employed to improve the condition of the labourers by connecting with the nearby centres giving access to various amenities. The government also opened various connecting by lanes to highways and docks on Brahmaputra. In the district of *Sibsagar* few roads like *Dhai Ali* between *Sibsagar* to *Buri Dihingmukh*, *Barpatra Gohain Ali* from *Sibsagar* to *Disang* and the *Sologuri Ali* from *Disang* to *Buri Dihing* were constructed (Mills, 1854)

In 1902-03, Lakhimpur district had 25 miles of metalled and 723 miles of un-metalled roads maintained by PWD or local boards. The roads are well bridged with larger rivers crossed by ferries, as they are raised above flood level and cut up heavy traffic passes over them in the rains as only a very short length was metalled. The South Trunk Road enters the district from *Sibsagar* 24 miles west of *Dibrugarh*, passes through that town, runs along the *Dibru-Sadiya* railway line as far as *Talap* and finally ends at *Sadiya* 66 miles from *Dibrugarh*. There are rest houses at *Lepatkata* (9 miles) and *Dehing* (20 miles), west of *Dibrugarh* while east of that town they are situated at *Tinsukia* on 30<sup>th</sup> mile, *Dumduma* on the 44<sup>th</sup> mile, *Talap* on 51<sup>st</sup> mile, *Saikhowa* on 60<sup>th</sup> and *Sadiya*. From *Sadiya* there is a fine road running north to the frontier outpost at *Bomjur* 25 miles away, but it is only required for military and strategic purposes and carries little traffic. At *Lahool* another important road takes off from the trunk road six miles east of *Dibrugarh* and runs through the *Madarkhat*, *Tengakhat* and *Jaipur mauzas* to *Jaipur*, a total distance of 30 miles. There are rest houses at *Madarkhat* 8 miles and *Tengakhat* 18 miles from *Dibrugarh* and at *Jaipur* also. All rivers except *Dihing* were provided with bridges whereas *Dihing* was crossed with ferries. North of *Dibru-Sadiya* railway, the *Rangagora* road runs for 26 miles east of *Dibrugarh* through *Rohmorja* and *Bagdang mauzas* to *Guizan*. Branch roads at 9<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> mile connect it with *Dibru-Sadiya* road. A road from *Guizan* reaches *Tinsukia* along river *Tingrai* a total distance of 20 miles and joins *Jaipur* road at the 16<sup>th</sup> mile. The *Horubal Ali* connects *Jaipur* road with *Kenduguri* (21 miles). The *Sologuri Ali* connects *Kenduguri* to *Khowang* and *Jaipur mauzas* (21 miles). Apart from these there are numerous roads linking a village with other and nearby towns and tea gardens. On the north bank, the north trunk road connects *Darrang* via *Narayanpur*, *Laluk* and *Nabaicha mauzas* to north *Lakhimpur* a distance of 34 miles. Most of the streams are spanned by

bamboos or timber bridges, but four miles west of the sub divisional headquarter station, the *Ranganadi* is crossed by a ferry and so is the *Dikrang* 22 miles further west. There is a rest house at this place and another one at *Laluk* 14 miles west of North *Lakhimpur*. It was further connected with *Kamalabari* by a road 27 miles in length and *Luhit* is crossed by ferry near the point where it meets *Subansiri* and there is a rest house in this route. The other roads of the district are *Lakhimpur* to *Gogamukh* (26 miles) with rest houses at *Gogaldubi*, N. *Lakhimpur* to *Dhakuakhana* (23 miles) with rest houses at *Dhakuakhana* and *Bebejia*, road from *Dhakuakhana* to *Bardalani* about 15 miles due north and thence another 8 miles to *Gogamukh* (Allen, 1905).

Various types of roads mentioned by Ahoms, *Hathi Pothi*, meaning elephant hunters track. *Raj Ali*, raised roads made by kings, mostly Ahoms in upper Assam. The roads of Goalpara district are *Goalpara-Singamari*, *Dhubri-Kherbari* to *Sankosh* and *Koch Behar*, *Goalpara-Koraibari*, *Goalpara- Jira*, *Goalpara-Laskhmipur* (Lakhipur), *Jogigopa-Dotma*, *Bijni-Raha*, *Jogigopa- Bijni*, *Damra-Dhupdhara*, *Damra-Salmarā*, *Goalpara-Nalbari*, *Kitkibari-Jira*, *Jogogopa- Raha*, *Salmarā- Bijni*, *Jogigopa- Salmarā*, *Jogigopa- Bilasupara* via *Salemcha* and *Hakma*, *Bilasupara-Gauripur*, *Dhubri-Kherbari* road. Road from *Raha* to *Bijni* was extended to *Haldibari* in western dooars (Hunter, 1879: 72-73).

*The statistical account of Assam* by William Hunter informs us of principal routes of Assam to be Assam Trunk Road connecting *Gauhati-Agia* (81 miles), *Gauhati-Kallang* (15 miles), *Gauhati-Shillong* via *Byrnihat* and *Nongpo* (65 miles). Old *Nagaon* or *Sonapur* road connecting *Gauhati-Dibru* river (16 miles), *Gauhati Maflang* via *Nonklau* (82 miles), *Kharghuli* road (2 miles), *Greenwood* road (4 miles), *Amingaon-Hajo* (14 miles), *Hajo-Nalbari* (18 miles), *Kamalpur-Jhargaoon* (20 miles), *Remgia-Nalbari* (12 miles), *Nalbari-Boraina* (12 miles), *Boraina- Bajali* road (12 miles), *Boraina-Tamulpur* (20 miles), *Bajali-Bhabanipur* (12 miles), *Bhabanipur-Barpeta*(12 miles), *Barpeta* strand road, *Barpeta-Basiaghat* (20 miles), *Barpeta-Roha* (10 miles), old *Khanamukh* Road (5 miles), *Palasbari-Gohainkhant* road (8 miles), *Khanamukh- Gohainkant* road (10 miles), *Myrapur-Bardwar* road (14 miles), *Amchang* Road (5 miles) (Hunter, 1879). The roads mentioned in the Darrang district are *Gauhati- Karuaghat* (6 miles), *Karuaghat-Sipajhar* (15 miles), *Sipajhar-Mangaldoi* (9 miles), *Mangaldoi-Dolgaon* (12 miles), *Mangoldoi-Rangamati* (25 miles),



*Dolgaon-Aurang* (15 miles), *Aurang-Godhajuli* (10 miles), *Aurang-Udalguri* (15 miles), *Udalguri-Bhairabkunda* (9 miles) *Godhajuli-Gabru* (9 miles), *Gabru-Tezpur* (12 miles), *Tezpur-Bhoroli* (9 miles), *Bhoroli-Chutia* (9 miles), *Chutia-Burigang* (9 miles), *Burigang-Behali* (11 miles), *Behali- Helem* outpost (9 miles), *Helem-Gohpur* (9 miles), *Gohpur-Kolapuri* (9 miles), *Kolapuri-Moramornoi* (1 mile). These roads in Darrang mostly pass through jungle and cultivated lands with settlements around the fields.

The important roads of Nagaon district are *Nagaon-Kahikuchi* (40 miles), *Nagaon-Raha* (13 miles), *Nagaon-Dihing* (54 miles), *Kaliabor-Silghat* (4 miles), *Nagaon-Doboka* (24 miles), *Nagaon- Lakshya ghat* (17 miles), *Kahargaon-Kaliabor* (35 miles), *Raha-Doboka* (24 miles), *Puranigodam-Bamunij* (6 miles). The major centres in *Nagaon* are *Nagaon*, *Puranigodam*, *Kaliabor*, *Silghat*, *Dobka*, *Kherni*, *Raha*, *Chapari* much. In Sibsagar district important towns like *Sibsagar*, *Rangpur*, *Garhgaon*, *Jorhat* and *Golaghat* are well connected. The river *Dhansiri* on which *Golaghat* is located is navigable throughout the year with small and medium boats. In the *Lakhimpur* district *Dibrugarh*, *Lakhimpur*, *Sadiya*, *Jaipur* were important towns and were well connected with various roads. The important roads were *Rangagara* Road (8-25 miles), *Rongdoighat* road (12 miles), *Sologuri* Ali (20 miles), *Gorumur* (15 miles), *Kuchujan* (36 miles), *Pathalipam* (18 miles), *Dhakuakhana* (10 miles), *Kherketia* (36 miles), *Dhodar Ali* (20 miles), *Makum* (20 miles) (Hunter, 1879: 378). Apart from the mentioned roads there existed many smaller roads connecting smaller settlements and frontier towns. The term *Ali* is common for roads in northern bank specially denoting minor roads. In Assam ferry boats ply at all the important connecting roads and on numerous streams. Principal landing depots for steamers are located all along the Brahmaputra River from *Dhubri* to *Sadiya*. The imports of Assam are overwhelmingly large than exports during colonial period (Hunter, 1879). Exports consist largely mustard, rape and canes and few forest products which constitute major chunk of exports (Hunter, 1879).

Road was also constructed between *Udalguri* and *Keriapara duar* and *Mangaldai* on the banks of Brahmaputra, with the object of trade with Bhutias who come down to *Mangaldai* for taking part in annual trade fairs. A road was also there in *Goalpara* to the eastern hats of *Jirah*, *Damrah* and *Nibari*. The repair works of various roads are also reported from time to time. The road connecting *Goalpara* to *Gauhati* and there from to Bengal, portion of *Gosain Kamal*



*Ali* from Manas to Barnadi, high bund road from *Gauhati* to *Raha* via east *Dimoria*, across the Kallang along its right bank crossing *Nowgong* continuing up to *Jorhat* and *Sibsagar* restored (BJC, 1835: No. 4, 13<sup>th</sup> October). In the first half of 19<sup>th</sup> century various roads were constructed connecting with frontier tribal kingdoms of Khasi, who were important trading community, who frequented the frontier hats as far as *Nowgong* to barter their merchandise chiefly, iron implements, for cattle, goats, rice, salt, tobacco, clothes etc. (Mills, 1853). A road was proposed *Sylhet-Milliem-Khyrim-Gauhati*. The road from *Sylhet* to *Gauhati* was discussed upon and was in halt for some time on account of disagreement with Khasi chiefs through whose territory the road was supposed to pass but when the Khasi kingdom was finally annexed in 1832 the alignment of route was finally decided in 1863 which was to from *Gauhati* via *Shillong* to *Chattak* on river *Surma* a distance of 104 miles. A route connecting *Rangpur* with *Gauhati* was also there. A trunk road connecting *Rangpur* to *Malda* via *Gauhati*, *Dhubri* was in conception but could not be realized due to financial restrictions placed on PWD in 1870. This route was conceived in such an alignment that in future a rail line could be laid. Beal mentions of old Burma Road over *Patkai*, via *Nongyang* believed to be most feasible and direct route from India to China. The travellers on the route should accompanied by load carrier. The term consists of coolies' men with arms, cooks used to camp, a boatman a guide etc. the team carries along them tents and poles for camping. Author mention village which grew to fort now very strong located on a bank of river Dihing. The route from upper Assam to *Nongyang* lake traverse through

*Makum*→*Bhaigirot*→*Tirapmukh*→*Wadoi*→*Hongtam*→*Rangnam*→*Yungbhi*  
→*Gadakbum*→*Nam-yang* village→*Duania* village→*Saiko*→*Kherimpani* (old bed of *Dehing*)  
→*Yugli* →*Insa*→*Hukong*→*Sambiang* (Singpho village) →*Nmbai Muk* (Naga country begins)  
→*Sitkha*→*Dopha bum*→*Manchi* (*Bor Khamti*) on the *Mlikha* branch of the upper Irawaddy→*Mganto muk*→*Namtsik*→*Sonkap*→*Tkak* (village of ten houses facing *Nambong Valley*) →*Nunki*→*Nongyang* lake.

The route was largely in a Singpho and Naga country (Beal, 1881). Dalton mentions a river route in Subansiri River starting at *Pathalipam ghaut* (ghat), next ghat being *Siploo ghaut* (ghat) on their way they came across gold washers. With deposition of sands on beds washers are forced to abandon. *Pathalipam*→ (6 miles) *Siploo*→*Paboghaut* (Dalton, 1845).



## WATERWAYS

Use of waterways for communication is an old practice evident from the boat burial practice extant in Gauhati region. Brahmaputra River is considered as highway of Assam and its tributaries and navigable streams which facilitates internal trade. It is also known that Vaishnava Saints travelled in country boats to Nabadwipa for pilgrimage down to Brahmaputra system. A *setubandha* (dock) is reported from *Alichiga Tengani* by Dutta belonging to 5<sup>th</sup> century (Dutta, 2012). A fleet of boats also mentioned in 9<sup>th</sup> century epigraph from *Haruppeswara*. Throughout few castes were identified carrying fishing activity well versed with boating. According to M'Cosh large boat took 6-7 weeks to come from Calcutta to *Gauhati*. From *Gauhati* to *Dibrugarh* it was month's journey and in rainy season against the current it took much longer time. In 1848 a steamer service was introduced between *Gauhati* and *Calcutta* and from *Dibrugarh* to *Dhubri* in 1884 (Allan, 1905) which gave huge impetus to communication between Assam and outer world. Travel in large steamers are comfortable but its progress was slow and uncertain upto days of expected travel day. The traveller could not select time and date of travel but to rely on the date a steamer was expected at the nearest ghat and remain by the bank waiting for the steamer (Allan, 1905).

The river transport was made in small boats (canoes), Budgerows and steamers however steamers anchored at night always (Ward, 1884) to avoid collision or any untoward incident. Trade of Cachar suffered immensely during the dry season as steamers could not ply beyond *Fenchuganj*, a distance of 70 miles off *Silchar* and during the same season that large number of tea garden labourers were transported which demanded for the need of railways. The alternative to road communication was the river route by Brahmaputra, giving access to all the districts and offered excellent means of transportation throughout the year. In spite of perennial nature man powered traditional boats (large and small) employed in transporting good to and from Assam, was too lethargic and takes too much of time and energy to reach their destinations and insufficient to meet the requirements of the expanding industries of Assam. In 1841 Assam Tea Company authorized to take the service of steamer named "the Asom" for transportation of its products (Barpujari, 1963: 253). Beginning of steam boat eased the overburdened and complicated different means of transportation. Tea industries located at different regions of *Dibrugarh*, *Jorhat*, *Tezpur* are well served by the river ports at *Dibrugarh*, *Kokilamukh* and *Tezpur*. But with the extension of tea plantation to the interior regions and

further away from river ports, difficulties arose in getting to the interior plantations for movement of product to gardens and out of Assam. During 1841-1858 steamer service was disrupted and becoming irregular in *Calcutta*, *Gauhati* and *Dibrugarh* resulting in losses to such proportion that the service was suspended in 1858 (Records, Assam Secretariat, 1858). This was a severe blow to the tea planters. It is found that absence of internal feeder lines and roads connecting the river ports and tea plantations were one of the reasons of disappearance of steamer service. Budgerow journey was popular among high officials and elites in early days because of the comfort but was time consuming however canoes are safest and speedy mode of travelling. An itinerary of Budgerow journey as given

Table 1: Itinerary of Inland Waterway Journey

| From       | To                                    | Days |
|------------|---------------------------------------|------|
| Calcutta   | Decca                                 | 12   |
| Decca      | Goalpara                              | 19   |
| Goalpara   | Gowhatty                              | 6    |
| Tezpore    | Bisnath                               | 3    |
| Bisnath    | Dikhoomukh                            | 6    |
| Dikhoomukh | Dibroogarh                            | 7    |
| Dibroogarh | Suddeah/ Saikhowa                     | 6    |
| Dhubri*    | Dibrugarh (by steamer, in rainy days) | 5    |
| Dibrugarh* | Dhubri –do-                           | 3    |

Source: A Sketch of Assam

\* Allen, 1905, District Gazateer, Lakhimpur

## RAILWAYS

Railways was introduced in India in 1854, in Assam railway is almost constructed last in whole of India, reason being except for tea industry there was no initiating factor. From 1868-1873 there was correspondence between government of Assam and Government of Bengal (PWD Railway Branch) for the introduction of railway in Assam. However, the commissioner of Assam did not favour the opening of railway into the province as was not considered economically viable. According to Henry Hopkinson construction of railway for tea only was



a bad idea. To him the only reason, which could make a railway viable, was the mining of coal in upper Assam, to supply mineral fuel for steam navigation and railroads in Bengal. Till 1860s a proper survey of coal fields and the economic viability of having a railroad to draw out the coal reserves not been made. It was not before 1874 that the authorities responded positively and favoured a railway project for Assam. During 1865-77 three surveys of GSI was conducted to check the prospect of localities including upper Assam. Dehing river and in view of low ash content of Assam coal he considered it superior to coal from rest of India (PPGPA: 53). Survey was also carried out from *Tirap* to the Desoi rivers. The five coalfields identified were *Makum* and *Jaipur* in *Lakhimpur* and *Nazira*, *Jhanzi* and *Desoi* in *Sibsagar* district. During the rainy season of 1878 it was reported that the condition of roads was deplorable and communication between tea factories and the steamer ghat at *Dibrugarh* was also not functioning well due to the broken roads to ghats which will render both imports of labour as well as export of produce not possible for the planters (Gawthrop, 1951). On the concerns of planters' British thought of introducing light tramway from banks of Brahmaputra at *Kokilamukh* to *Jorhat* a distance of 12.5 miles. Surveys were taken up to ascertain the alignment for a 2 feet gauge tramway connecting most of tea gardens in the area. The alignment was decided to be from *Jorhat* along the *Garh Ali* to *Titabor* and a branch line 7.25 miles along the *Hatigarh Ali* to *Mariani* and named *Jorhat-Kokilamukh* tramway (PWD, 1883). Another tramway of 20 miles between *Tezpur* ghat and *Balipara* covering 17 out of the 21 gardens on the 2 feet 6 inches' gauge also proposed. In 1882 reconnaissance survey was conducted aimed at connecting the port of Chittagong to the districts of *Sylhet* and *Cachar* to *Makum* Junction in upper Assam with Branch line to *Gauhati*.

The chief imports of Brahmaputra are rice for tea gardens, tea seed and sugar for Surma Valley. The exports however are uncleaned cotton, lac and oranges. The whole of cotton and lac was exported through boats from Brahmaputra Valley and all the oranges went from Sylhet. The major chunk of trade of Chittagong division was with *Sylhet* and *Cachar*. The main imports being sheep, goats, bricks, tiles, turmeric, coconut, wheat and tobacco. Amongst the exports canes, rattens, oranges, rice, paddy mats, bamboo (mostly from Surma Valley). Of the rice and paddy sent to *Chittagong* the whole is from the Surma Valley (Report, 1885). A railway alignment connecting Assam, through the North Cachar Hills and the Surma Valley to Chittagong was perceived on the ground of trade in the circuit. Two railway routes were



proposed as Mr. William Ward differed on the issue of having single railway connecting Assam and East Bengal to the port of *Chittagong*. He opposed to the route across the North Cachar Hills and instead favoured two independent systems of Railways on both the valleys, one between *Chittagong* and *Cachar* and another in Brahmaputra valley with an extension to *Fakirganj* from *Gauhati* for it was closest to Calcutta. Planters and other groups including administrators were also demanding both the routes and there was lot of discussions and deliberations including ensuring steady supply of coal to the sea going steamers from upper Assam coal fields. An alternative route also will be provided to *Gauhati* to *Sylhet* via *Shillong* and *Cherrapunji* only overland route connecting the two provinces, if railway constructed, would reduce the tedious journey by this road and serve as an alternative route would be very effective for transport of troops.

The railway line was laid from steamer ghat near Dibrugarh towards Sadiya with three branch lines (Report, 1914):

- The first line was laid from *Dibrugarh* to *Nagogolie*, distance of 8 miles.
- Second line was from *Panitola* to *Hopewell* on the *Rangagora* road.
- Line from *Makum* to *Doomdooma* on the *Dehing* bridge.
- *Dehing* bridge in *Margherita* on main line to coal fields (8.5 miles).
- *Ledo-Tikak-Margherita* Colliery line, 1883.

The whole length of railway including colliery line opened in 1884. The Dehing Bridge connected the colliery line with main line, *Dibru-Sadiya* railway extended and terminates at *Saikhowaghat* but further extended to *Talap*, the farthest tea garden on the line. The main line of the Dibru-Sadiya Railway was laid with 50 lb flatfooted steel rails on Uriam (*Bischolia Jvanica*) sleepers and cart-iron plates on Denham Olpherts (Gawthrop, 1951: 16-24). The lines were partly ballasted with stone chips as local ballasting materials were not available. The sleepers were extracted from local forests on both sides of railway line. The daily output being about 1000 sleepers and 2400 sleepers required for a mile-long line.

The Dibru Sadiya railway was established in 1885 running from *Dibrugarh* past *Dibrugarh bazaar*, *Lahoal*, *Dikam*, *Chabua*, *Panitola*, and *Tinsukia* junction to *Makum* junction 35 miles east of *Dibrugarh*. Here it divides into two branches one turns to north and runs past *Barhapjan*, *Hansara*, *Dumduma* to *Talap* a distance of 16 miles and will soon be extended to

the Brahmaputra at *Saikhowa*. The main line runs east and then south past *Tingrai*, *Digboi* and *Powai* to *Margherita* 59 miles from *Dibrugarh* (Allen, 1905). In 1884 railway was to extend along *Garh Ali* in *Jorhat* to *Titabor* on the *Dhodar Ali*. A branch line was proposed to be constructed along *Hatigarh Ali* to *Mariani*, a distance of 7.25 miles and further to extend *Noa-Kachari* tea Gardens, *Jhanji* and *Nazira* and cover all the plantation of Assam Tea Company (R. C. 'A'. 1884).

Cherra-Companyganj Mountain Tramway was in plan, a line laid out to tap the coals produced in *Cherapunji* tract. The mountain inclines of Cherra-Companyganj state railway completed in Nov. 1887 but when tested it gave very discouraging results in 1888-89 therefore arising debate whether to continue or abandon the project. The earthquake of 1897 cause severe damage to the tramway, and the rains which followed earthquake washed away the whole line on hill section. The financial aspect of the railway was not encouraging therefore it resulted in the closure of hill section of the railway but plain section continued.

Tezpur-Balipara Tramway: this stretch of 20 km between *Tezpur ghat* and *Balipara* continued some of finest tea gardens and containing 17 of 21 gardens of the district and three large weekly markets. The line constructed was 2 feet 6-inch gauge with 2200 sleepers laid per mile by 1896 the construction was completed on the section including two miles' tramway construction by Borjuli Tea Company in *Darrang* between *Rangapara* and *Borjuli*.

Trunk route (Assam Bengal Railway)

This railway comprises of port of *Chittagong* to *Makum* including:

- a) Branch line from *Lakshan*, 80 miles from *Chittagong*
- b) *Badarpur* to *Chittagong* (254 miles) with branch line to *Silchar* (18 miles)
- c) *Lumding* to *Chittagong* (370 miles) with branch line to *Gauhati* (110 miles)

Assam valley line extending to *Fakiragram* was in proposal and connection of *Lumding* with *Badarpur* was termed unprofitable and expensive passing through a barren country and no population (PWD, 1887). It is also asserted that *Dibrugarh* to *Gauhati* and *Dhubri* line would be un-remunerative unless it was linked with Bengal. During the close of 19<sup>th</sup> century railhead to *Dimapur* was proposed extending from *Golaghat* connecting with *Gauhati* mainly because of the political instability and intervention of company in Manipur affairs, the line will reach easily to *Kohima* and thence to *Imphal* through road head. The hill section also later taken up for consideration, the railway from 117 feet in *Damcherra* rises to elevation of 1800 feet

between *Jatinga* and *Mahur* and gradually descends to plains of Brahmaputra. To make the line permanent *Sal* (*Shea Robusta*) and *Pyinkadu* (*Xylia Xylocarpa*), *Nageswar* (*Mesua Ferrea*), *Jarra* wood (*Eucalyptus Marginata*) and chipped stone ballasting (Medhi, 1978: 71). The hill section was fully ballasted, the entire hill section consisted 37 tunnels measuring 15,569 feet with longest being measuring 1922 feet and in addition there were 560 bridges both major and minor. It is said that every mile of sleeper laid a man also laid his life.

Feeder lines (Report 1915-1916: 42):

- a) *Kulaura* or *Tilagaon* to *Sylhet*.
- b) *Noakhali* with Assam Bengal Railway (34.9 miles).
- c) *Akhaura* to *Ashuganj* on *Meghna* river opposite *Bhairab bazaar* a distance of 19 miles in 1905.
- d) *Kulaura* to *Kushiara* (*Kulaura-Sylhet* Branch) 13 miles in 1912.
- e) Two branch line from *Chaparmukh* and *Katakhal*.
- f) *Chaparmukh-Nagong-Silghat* surveyed in 1908, *Lappini* tea gardens enroute and linking railway to steamer and also to extend.
- g) *Katakhal-Hailakandi-Lalabazar* sanctioned in 1915 but stopped due to world war.

A tram line connecting tea plantation of *Langai* and *Chargola* valleys connecting to *Karimganj* railway station. A line was also laid between *Karimganj* and *Chandrika* in the *Longai* valley. The length of line on *Longai* and *Chargola* was 23.5 and 19.5 miles respectively (Playne, 1917).

The eastern Bengal railway passes through the rich plains of Bengal and connects the province with Assam on the east and with the central United Provinces and Bombay on the west however the big rivers like Brahmaputra and Ganges were posing difficulties in laying lines necessitating shipment through boats or steamers. Assam-Bengal railways constructed for optimum exploitation of resources of Assam *i.e.* tea, coal, jute, grain, salt, kerosene oil and other natural products and to connect to rising part of Chittagong. Three main lines of Assam are:

- a) South of North Cachar hills.
- b) Hill section (more than 100 miles).
- c) Assam valley (total length being 866 miles).



Once the superintending engineer wrote on hill section that “*the line went through an unhealthy, inhospitable country which afforded neither labour nor supplies. We have been connected with a hundred miles of railway which presented more difficulties of construction than any similar length in India possibly in the world*”. Company had 110 locomotives, good wagon over 3000 (18 feet in length) covered bogie goods wagon and coal trucks. Railway line from *Kalaura* junction runs along main road from *Karimganj* and *Habibganj*. *Karimganj* located on Kusiara river which is crossed by boats carrying various goods. The town of *Silchar* was on left bank of river Barak lined with grooves of palm and upon the water of Barak seen large number of native craft engaged in a prosperous trade in the transport of local produce. The town of *Silchar* have pleasing appearance with buildings of Church, court house, superior private residences. Fairs and bazaars are also reported where exchange of various goods took place. In a railway line from *Silchar* to *Badarpur* there is a bridge on river Barak whose piers were carried to the depth of 80 feet below. The hill section of Assam-Bengal commences from *Bihara* (262 miles from *Chittagong*) and extends to *Lumding* Junction (110 miles) situated in the Nambor forests. The line after *Bihara* through *Jatinga* valley and *Haflong* to *Lumding* with steepest grade is 1 in 37-40 for 9 miles. It is said that for the labourers working on the line all the supplies and transport had to be obtained through Gauhati more than 150 miles distant by boat or pack animals. The important places of the hill section are *Haflong* (2400 ft. MSL) with Sub divisional magistrates court, *Maibong* (326 miles from *Chittagong*) and associated with Ahom-Dimasa conflict which ruined the city. On completion of Assam Bengal Railways *Dibrugarh* is reached on 4<sup>th</sup> day from *Dhubri*.

### **COAL MINING ON THE LANDSCAPE OF ASSAM**

Coal is the fuel for machines and engines which triggered the industrial revolution. Coal initially was imported from Britain; few attempts to use local coal did not satisfy the engineers. With the introduction of steamer ship the demand for local supply strengthened. By 1830s *Raniganj* was only major colliery and because of its location transportation was costly, therefore continued to be mainly imported (Roy, 2008: 272-277). The coal fields in Assam are located at the foot of Naga hills, *Namchik*, *Namphuk*, *Borjan* and *Jhanji-Disai*, *Makum* coalfields also known as Margherita coalfields in *Tinsukia* district of Assam is the major coal producer. *Makum* produces 95% of coal of Assam Valley, *Makum* coalfields comprises of



*Borgolai, Tikak, Tirap* and *Tipong* colliery. The mining activities in Assam confined to *Makum* coalfields. Though there were roads in existence but were in deplorable condition mentioned already posing serious problem for developing various industries specially tea.

The existence of coal in *Makum* was known to British by 1825 and the geologists discovered mineral oil at *Naharpung* near *Jaipur* in 1866. However, no any attempts made to extract them was made due to the transportation bottleneck. Coal was in demand as it was required to run tea factories, therefore they have to import it from Bengal at high costs (Report ALRA, 1875-76: 20) the tea industry also have to import different other products also. The freight from Raniganj to upper Assam raised the cost of coal to more than ten times its value at pithead. This paved the way of discovery and extraction of coal in the vicinity of the tea industries of Assam. Coal discovered at Safari in 1828, *Makum* in 1865. Soon coal is struck at Garo hills in 1882, Khasi and Jaintia hills in 1889-90 by T. D. La Touche, upper Assam Areas in 1874-76 by F. R. Mallet. F. H. Smith made first reference of coal in Mikir Hills in 1898. The first colliery was opened by M/S Assam Railways and Trading Company in 1882 at Ledo, while they were laying meter gauge railway line. Owing to their ever increasing demand collieries were started subsequently at *Tikak* in 1884, *Namdang* in 1896, *Ledo* new west in 1903, *Ledo* new east and *Namnang Dip* in 1904, *Borgolai* in 1909, *Tipong* in 1924, *Tirap* in 1940.

Introduction of tea and steamer navigation opened an era of exploitation of the region. Finding of coal and petroleum completed the full cycle of exploitation. In 1840 at *Jaipur* mines in upper Assam quarry began by the Assam Company. Coalfields of upper Assam were connected to railway lines in 1883

## **OIL LANDSCAPE**

The earliest discovery of petroleum in the province of Assam is believed to have been made in the year in 1828 by Mr. C. A. Bruce. Various activities official and field were carried out since then. Various studies, reports and survey were carried out in upper Assam for oil specially in *Namchik* basin, *Makum* basin, *Bapuso pung*, *Buri Dihing* river, *Nao Dihing* river, *Cherraphong* hill, *Terap*, *Jugloo* and *Terok* river, *Digboi*. By 1916 from 35 oil producing bore holes of the company's estates, which are yielding 250 gallons to 3000 gallons a day and these are exclusive of some old wells which only accumulate oil occasionally. The company however was so satisfied as to the almost inexhaustible supply of oil upon their estates that



they are at the present time largely extending boring operations in easterly and westerly directions from *Digboi*. Oil conveyed from the wells through metal pipes to several large storage tanks, whence it is pumped to the refinery at *Digboi* erected in 1902-03 having three boilers separating crude oil, benzene, kerosene, heavy oil and petrol and graded to suit market requirements.

### **LIMESTONE CRUSHING**

Limestone crushing was also done for various purposes specially for agriculture. The quarries are situated at Theria (37 miles from Sylhet) in the Khasi hills. A factory was built on the bank of river Surma in Sylhet equipped with the most modern machinery and claimed to be purest in India. It was also continuously carried out on the traditional sites around *Gauhati* and *Sibsagar*.

### **CONFLICT AND DEFENSE LANDSCAPE OF COLONIAL ERA**

This section heavily quotes from Colonel Shakespear's *History of Assam Rifles* (1929). It speaks of dug outs in small streams, roughest road, bridle path, tracks to the interior. In 1901 railway extension from *Lumding* to *Guwahati* begin making movement of troops swift. *Sadiya* and *Rangarora* was retained by British and held by Assam Light Infantry to prevent possible incursions by Burmese or Chinese. From the close of Burmese war, a large number of troops were stationed to maintain order at *Goalpara*, *Bijni*, *Gauhati*, *Golaghat*, *Nagaon*, *Tezpur*, *Jorhat*, *Sibsagar*, *Lakhimpur* and *Sadiya* in Assam Valley and at *Sylhet*, *Cherrapunji*, *Jaintiapur* and *Silchar* in Surma valley. With the country being settling down and increased expenses on keeping large force in 1840 it is decided to reduce the force into 4 regiments namely:

- a) 1<sup>st</sup> Assam Light Infantry.
- b) 2<sup>nd</sup> Assam Light Infantry at Sadiya.
- c) Sylhet Light Infantry at Sylhet.
- d) Bengal Stationary Battalion at Silchar.

There are many regiments served entirely in Assam and Burma until 1899 (Shakespear, 1929: 07) like Rungpur Light Infantry (erstwhile Cuttack Legion), 42<sup>nd</sup> and 43<sup>rd</sup> Bengal Infantry (Goorkhas), Assam Seebundry Corps, 44<sup>th</sup> Sylhet Light Infantry, Jorhat Militia at Jorhat,



Cachar Levy at Nowgong and Silchar. The Cachar levy held posts at *Barpathar*, *Dimapur*, *Nohan Dijoa*, *Mahurmukh*, *Maibong*, *Hosang Hajoo*, *Guilon*, *Gumaigajoo*, *Hangrung*, *Baladhan* and *Jirighat* and at *Asaloo* (east of Haflong) situated Levy's strongest detachment. After 1850 most important military installations are at *Dimapur*, *Mahurmukh*, *Maibong* and *Asaloo*. There were frontier posts for check of depredations by various hill groups and for watch purpose. The frontier posts were usually earthworks with a ditch outside and a loopholed palisading along the top of the parapet with some of the best of the examples at *Jirighat* and *Charduar* in *Baliapara* in Tezpur. These posts were provided with defensive timber stockades with a deep fringe of abattis work running around to prevent enemy from entering the station.

In 1839 when Cachar Levy moved for expedition to Naga hills (against Angami Nagas) they moved through *Doboka*, *Mohun Dijoa*, *Gumaigajoo* (N. C. Hills), *Semkhor*, *Henema* reached *Berema*. The route lay along rough tracks demanding much climbing through forest clad mountains over 5000 feet and returned through *Jalookama*, *Samaguting* and *Dimapur*. When another expedition was launched against the *Mezama* Naga clan a strong force formed with participant from Cachar levy, *Jorhat* Militia and Assam Light Infantry was despatched to *Poplongmai* via *Raziphima*, *Chatthe Valley*, *Barail* range, *Lemhama*, *Chama*, *Paona* ridge, crossing *Zulhein* valley. In 1841 after a conflict with Angamis and having them defeated made *Dimapur* a frontier post and stockade was built at the *Dunsiri* (Dhansiri) river. The decade of 1840s is occupied with combating the hill tribes of frontier region mainly Nagas and Lushais (Kukis). In 1849 to link Surma valley with the upper Assam a cart road was proposed passing through *Jatinga* valley, *Damcherra*, Nambor forest. At *Samaguting* a new market and post was created in 1846. Stockade base built at *Mozema*. British forces are occupied in engagements in various Naga villages located on Naga Hills and Cachar Hills and it was getting hard for British to control them because of the nature of march which was very toiling through unfriendly and highly uneven terrain sometimes with meagre supply and the casualties were often high and march and return too hard. Therefore, being hard to control, long line of border posts stretching from *Barpathar* to *Jirighat*, the Cachar levy was split in two parts and stationed at *Asaloo* and *Nowgong*. The Garo hills and Goalpara region are quite peaceful and troops are stationed at the old *Jogigopa* fort since 1765. British interference began in Garo hills and Garos gave some resistance but subdued. On the northern frontier also there were



few border posts. A large market and fair at *Udalguri* is mentioned (Shakespeare, 1929: 31-34). British here entangled in conflict with the Bhutanese in 1864, Akas in 1884, Daflas in 1871, Abors in 1848 and also with Khamtis and Singpos. The area around *Sadiya* had a garrison and a gunboat mounted with 12 pounder gun. The barracks and houses for officials at Sadiya are huts of Wattle and daub and in the centre of the place stands the fort a fair sized earthwork enclosure with ditch, surmounted by a timber palisade while inside are masonry buildings for magazine, treasury, stores and barrack for the detachment on duty there. An old fort exists at this place, an old church in memory of Colonel while is mentioned at *Dibrugarh*. An old map of Sadiya of 1829 is mentioned in the narrative having barracks and officers' house and a race course. Abors had a long conflict with British but they have lost and suffered numerous casualties, they have left their hills and occupied *Pasi* where they built strong stockades therefore a large expedition was launched against them, in the conflict ensued both the sides received large number of casualty and they made peace which lasted for few years and conflict begin again. To check the Abors, strong military posts were established at *Nizamghat* and *Bomjur* in 1876 (Shakespeare, 1929: 40-45)

During 1860 suddenly Khasi and Jaintia hills became troublesome, known as 'Synteng Rebellion' due to taxation imposed on the inhabitants and police restriction upon burning of their deaths. To suppress the uprising troops from *Nagaon* and *Cachar* were mobilised comprising of detachments of Punjab Infantry, Native Infantry, Assam Light Infantry (ALI), Sylhet Light Infantry (SLI), Kamrup Regiment, Sikh Military Police and Frontier Police. Owing to the situation at *Jowai* a military detachment was held till 1885 (Shakespeare, 1929: 49-50). Initially *Cherrapoonji* was the place of choice for Britishers for its location overlooking the plains of *Sylhet* one of their most resourceful districts but the problem with the place was its rainfall which was at average was 450 inches and in 1861 it was recorded over 800 inch making it a place too wet for health and comfort of troops. However, they found place 30 miles from *Cherrapoonji* with about 84 inches' rainfall at *Shillong*, with all conditions favourable buildings were build, roads were laid and communication with *Gauhati* was established. In 1866 *Cherrapoonji* was abandoned for *Shillong* and seat of government transferred from *Gauhati* to *Shillong* which became one of best kept headquarters of provinces in India. In Gunjong which was higher and healthier. The 42<sup>nd</sup> and 43<sup>rd</sup> ALI and 44<sup>th</sup> SLI had

headquarters at *Gauhati*, *Shillong* and *Dibrugarh* with strong detachments at *Golaghat*, *Sibsagar*, *Tezpur*, *Jaipur* and *Sadiya* while a Bengal regiment stationed at *Silchar*. The numbers of frontier posts were 50 upto 1875. The Assam borders were protected by four regular battalions of Indian army aided by frontier and Armed Civil Police. Posts held by each battalion were (Shakespear, 1929: 50-55):

Table 2: Posts held by various battalions of Assam

| <b>Naga Hills Battalion</b><br><b>HQ Kohima</b> | <b>Lakhimpur Battalion</b><br><b>HQ Dibrugarh</b> |             | <b>Surma Valley Battalion</b><br><b>HQ Sihar</b> |                |
|---|---|-------------|--|----------------|
| Barpathar                                       | Daimara   | Baliapara   | Adampur  | Oliviacherra   |
| Dimapur   | Lalukdoloni                                       | Bordoloni   | Langai   | Jatinga valley |
| Nichuguard                                      | Dijmur  | Dikrang     | Mainadhar  | Hangrung       |
| Piphima   | Disoi   | Diphoo      | Gunjong  | Aisacherra     |
| Wokhavishwema                                   | Sonpura   | Sadiya      | Baladhan   | Jirighat       |
| Henema  | Behubar   | Makumjaipur | Jaipur   |                |
|   | Geleki  |             | Alinagar   |                |

Detachments are also to be placed at *Tezpur*, *Sibsagar* and *Tura*. Only posts held by military were *Pobamukh*, *Sesseri*, *Bomjur* and *Nizamghat* in *Sadiya*. *Cherra*, *Jaluacherra*, *Doar band* and *Monierkhat* at Surma Valley. From 1865 to 1868 raids by Kukis led to an armed conflict with British resulting in Lushai hills becoming part of Bengal in 1890. At Cachar the bamboo made bridges were mentioned and are common there (Shakespear, 1929: 56-69). “*The Lushais like Nagas perch their villages high on the top of spurs and ridges for sake of health and defence*” (Shakespear, 1929: 73). In 1880 the Lakhimpur Frontier Police Battalion was having series of posts on *Darrang* border to *Sadiya* to *Geleki* (at the foot of Naga Hills), *Sibsagar* district and posts at *Borhat*, *Jaipur* and *Rangagura* also (Shakespear, 1929: 114). Military police Battalion stationed at *Dibrugarh* as its headquarter and also Native Infantry Regiment stationed here and its strongest detachment was at *Sadiya*. Its posts were at *Barpathar*, *Laluk Doloni*, *Bhebelesuk*, *Lakhimpur*, *Mekum*, *Dijmur*, *Pobo*, *Sissi*, *Dibong*, *Dikrang*, *Disoi*, *Diphoo*, *Hajul*, *Sonpura* and *Rangarora* however, these posts were closed in next ten years. Abor raids on Mishmi villages are very common and frequent



On the Darrang frontier, posts were reported from *Udalguri, Gagrapara, Daimara* and *Dikul* and reserves at *Tezpur* (Shakespear, 1929: 123). The military affairs in Assam carried out in similar fashion like before in the twentieth century which is not under the purview of present study. By the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the help of huge infantry and its detachments and posts, British were successful to establish their rule firmly over the native though sporadic incidents appeared time to time but were all put down successfully because of their control of strategic positions, routes and swift communication. By the second decade of twentieth century all major centres of Assam and northeast were connected through railway further enhancing their ability for troop movements.

### **General/Public Landscape**

Ward speaks of temples lying in dilapidated condition and no efforts being made to reconstruct these massive and costly structures and still many hidden in forests and speaks of absence of newly built temples (Ward, 1884: 3). Ward referred the place to be “*termed facetiously the Happy Valley, the last end of creation, the jumping off place*”. Coffee was noticed on lowland hills of Assam, ratan grows wild throughout Assam and used in suspension bridges. Plantain and rubber plantation was carried and extracted here. Gold dust found in all mountain streams and coal on the bed of Kallang river and shell lime from channel of river Nambor (M’Cosh, 2000).

From *Dhubri* to *Goalpara* lies picturesque place with its lofty wooded hill with a bungalow and from the top of the hills extensive view of many miles Bhutan hills on north, Garo hills on south is visible (Ward, 1884). *Goalpara* and *Paglatek* mentioned to be the western boundary of Assam (PPGPA, 1896) George Barker writes about the station at *Dhubri* and during the cold season the points of call for the station below *Dhubri* are scarcely discernible, all that is visible on the banks being a few bamboo struck in the ground with an apology for thatch, or a worthless worn-out old Tarpaulin thrown over to form a roof, the whole rigged up roughly, as a point where cargo must be stowed after it is landed (Barker, 1884). From Manas (confluence of Manas river and Brahmaputra) on north bank and hill of *Nughurbera* (Nagarbera) 16 miles east of Goalpara to the foothills of Himalayas are inhabited by numerous ethnic group possibly reference to Rajbangsi and Rabha community. The preferred route to Assam is through the river but the river has crumbling shores and during the rain it is hard to



travel. At *Goalpara* there was a small society of native Christians of Portuguese descent numbering fifty to sixty (M'Cosh, 2000). M'Cosh also mentioned house on the summit of *Goalpara* hill, 320 feet high and its 3 miles in circumference. The town of *Goalpara* as he mentions stands on a low plain to the westward of the hill. It has one long street of bazaar such not seen elsewhere in Assam. The town is almost entirely built of grass, mats and bamboos and frequently burnt down. A custom house was also established at *Goalpara* to levy duty upon the articles of trade. There was a road between *Goalpara* and *Gauhatty* covered in horseback (M'Cosh, 2000). It was reported in *Burpettah* (Barpeta) in June 1867, the government buildings were in danger of being swept away by river which was defying the banks and mentions of *Tara-Barie ghat* and *Basiah ghat* (Pollok and Thom, 1900). There was mention of a godown at *Ranee* 18 miles from *Gowhatty* and individual canoes ply in *Gauhatty* (Griffith, 1847). The population of *Burpettah* was estimated at about 3000 persons, their houses built irregularly on artificial mounds possibly to avoid inundation. It also speaks of long building supported by wooden posts carved with emblems of Hindoo deities with grass roof and mat walls called *Shuster* (*Sattra*) or temple and is a religious endowment where holy texts were chanted and offerings made. Regarding the dwellings, the author observes that, in regard to homes "Assamese are of the meanest description imaginable there are no stone or brick houses (in exception of old temple, forts and its ruins) in the country; a simple hut, ten feet by twenty, divided into a couple of rooms for sleeping and sitting in, or not uncommonly one solitary room, from the only accommodation a man, wife and family possess. The hut is about ten feet high, with a grass roof and the walls are made of reeds plastered outside and sometimes inside also, with mud and cow dung. A small platform of bamboos, two feet high, serves as a bedstead and a *seetul pattee* or grass mat, constitutes the amount of bedding, without any other covering than the clothes that are worn during the day. "Many Assamese however prefer the bare ground, with a simple mat or a bed. The earth floor is daily plastered with mud and cow dung". The houses annual repairs but peasants are reluctant to spend upon it except for materials like posts, reeds and grass available at jungles (Anonymous, 1847). After 1897 earthquake sub-divisional station from *Barpeta* removed to *Barnagar* 8 miles north on account of *Barpeta* being flood plain (Report, 1901). The district of *Goalpara* consist of 3 sub-divisions and 8 *thanas* namely *Goalpara*, *Fakirgaon*, *Salmarā*, *Dhubri*, *Agmani*, *Puthimari*, *Singimari*, *Karaibari*. The district was inhabited largely by Rajbangsis, Cacharies,



Rabhas, Bhutias and caste Hindus. *Goalpara* is the civil headquarter on the south bank and is principal seat of commerce. There was a guard station at *Hadira* during Ahom period opposite *Goalpara* interfering in the trade with Bengal resulting in the settling of merchants at *Goalpara* or at *Jogigopa*. The civil station was built on an oblong hill, 258 feet high and 600 feet above sea level. There were a few private houses on the hill, occupied by officials of the district and the missionaries. From the summit both Bhutan Himalayas and Garo hills were visible. The native town of *Goalpara* was situated on the western side of the hill. In the main street, close to the river are all the shop and the whole town, with exception of few masonry houses, is built in wooden posts, bamboo mats and thatching grass. There was a large market at the top of the main street of daily consumables. The vicinity consists of area under cultivation, small hills and marshes and during the rains the town gets inundated. The other towns of the district being *Gauripur* (Golo Alamganj Pargana) having residents of rich traders and fair held in September or October every year and its population in 1872 was 1805 people. *Dhubri* was the headquarter of *Dhubri* sub-division, seat of subordinate judges Court, headquarter of Executive Engineer of Lower Assam Division, steamer ghat for passengers of western duars and Koch Behar. Other important towns being *Lakshmipur* (Lakhipur), *Bilasupara* (Bilasipara), *Bagribari*, *Rupsi*, *Gauripur*, *Simlabari*, *Maijanga* and *Marnai*. The places are known for timber trade. The other settlements are *Mankachar* (southwest of district at Karaibari Pargana), *Patamari*, *Agamani*, *Sidli* and *Bijni*. The *haats* were organised at *Jira*, *Nibari*, *Damra*, *Porakasua*, *Dalo*, *Mahendraganj* and *Rajabala*. The temples and archaeological remains reported are Durga temple, *Habraghat* known as Thakeswari temple, *Dudhnath* at *Jogigopa* with others already mentioned in previous chapters. The roads of the district are Assam Grand Trunk road from *Kamrup*, *Dhupdhara* in *Habraghat Pargana* upto 1871. The Assam trunk road was only completed as far as *Agia* in *Mechpara pargana*. Since Assam became chief Commissionership road from Bengal were made. Sarais, rest houses, shops were provided for travellers along the road making communication and transport easy to and from *Goalpara*. The places important from the commercial point of view in the district are *Goalpara*, *Bilasupara*, *Bijni*, *Dhubri*, *Jogigopa*, *Dumaria*, *Gauripur*, *Patamari*, *Agamani*, *Simlabari*, *Kherbari*, *Dimakari*, *Bagribari*, *Marnai*, *Rangjuli*, *Damra*, *Jira*, *Nibari*, *Singimari*, *Rajabala*, *Putimari*, *Manikachar*, *Karaibari*, and *Dalo*. The local *haats* are reported from the villages of *Damra*, *Jira*, *Nibari*, *Patamari* etc. from Garo frontier. Fairs are reported from

*Dolgoma* (Hebraghat pargana), Kathalmari at Dhubri. Steam-ferry service has been established between *Goalpara* town and *Dhubri*. Ferry service was also on Manas river, where the road crosses it little below the point where it forms a junction with the *Dalani*. Three ferries were also reported on Sankosh at *Haldibari*, *Bhalka* and *Saguncherra*, limited navigation was also noted in *Dalani*, *Pakajani*, *Aie*, *Kana-Makra*, *Champamati*, *Gaurang*, *Saralbhanga*, *Gangia*, *Gurupala* and *Gadadhar* (Sankosh). The settlements are also reported from *Sidli* Dooar areas, *Goraimari*, *Palangbari*, *Patiladaha*, *Patkata*, *Barbila*, *Manikpur*, *Maankhasya*, *Jhanbari*, *Abadi* and *Nawagram* (Hunter, 1879).

Kamrup district has an area 3858 sq miles, bounded by Bhutan on north, *Darrang* and *Nagaon* on east *Goalpara* in west and Khasi Hills on south. The district is mostly plain, south is hilly, some hills not part of ranges also present in the district rising up to 1000 feet. The district is densely populated plain with wide expanse of rice fields, bamboo grooves concealing houses of cultivators. *Kamrup* contains two towns *Gauhati* and *Barpeta* and 1716 villages and the population of the district being 561681 in 1872 and 589187 in 1901. The foreigners form less than three percent of population in 1901 numbering 14152 of whom 8139 from Bengal others from Ranchi Santhal Pargana, *Saran*, *Decca*, Nepalese and Kaiyas or merchants from rajputana. *The Gohain Kamal Ali* passes through the district. The Kacharies abound the northern part of the district where on certain social grounds Assamese Hindus reluctant to make their homes amongst unconverted tribesman. The Kachari hamlets dotted the district. There are lot of isolated peaks and ridges in the plains south of Brahmaputra. The sacred hills of the district are: *Buragohain Parbat* (Chamaria Mauza) with temple of Siva at its feet, *Buragohain hill* (*Chaygaon*), *Gobardhan* (*Chaygaon*) consecrated to Vishnu, Parvati hill (*Boko*) also known as Buragohain with temple of goddess on it, *Dakhola hill* (*Palasbari*) consecrated by the presence of Lingam, *Duni* and *Muni hills* (*Hajo*), *Siddheswar* and *Sanpara* (*Sualkuchi*) dedicated to Siva, *Kedar* or *Kameswar* (*Hajo*) revered by both Hindus and Buddhists, *Umachal Kamakhya*, *Maliata* hill dedicated to *Bageswari* and *Dhomora* hill. The other sacred places being hills at *Thakurpara*, *Tiniboini*, *Buragohain*, *Chilali Barua*, *Chamua*. Animism was followed by tribals of Kamrup; Buddhism also is reported from Kamrup mostly followed by Bhutia traders visiting the plains and Nepalese sawyers and herdsman. The Buddhist and Bhutia village was present at British territory at *Dewangiri* bordering Bhutan.



The villages are mentioned along various streams passing through the district. The houses they built for living are hut shaped with locally available material. The Bhutias *jhum* the hill sides in the neighbourhood and raise crops rice, maize, millets, chillies, cotton, pumpkins, sweet potatoes and arums (Allen, 1905)

*Kamroop* district sometimes synonymous with the town of Gauhati contained 54 Parganas, 5 Deshas, 9 Dwars (dooars) and 7 Choumooas. The district contains of Khiraj, Bautullie and Furringuttee land and the revenue officers Thakurias, Choudhuris and Patgiris. In the district 1/10 of country is village and plantain lands, 2/10 are under rice cultivation and 7/10 is wasteland in the form of jungle, hills and rivers (M'Cosh, 2000). Gauhati is mentioned as prettiest station where river flow through the foot hills of Khassia (Khasi) hills and mentions it to be seat of early royalty and till the headquarter shifted to Shillong was the station of highest officials but since European residents are few and the native town to be large and busy (Ward, 1884). Scenery around *Gauhati* is most charming. A large number of hills are strudded with the tea bush, the bright green of whose leaves, covering the hills giving visual of chess board. There was a large bazaar and temples built of red bricks with their wonderfully carved figures in alto-relievo and quaintly shaped gods chipped out of the face of the solid rocks. At peacock island there was a Buddhist temple and few old priest also live there and preserve the temple from desecration and collect the alms. Bazaars are also found on the station of *Gowhatty* (Barker, 1884: 57-60). Kamakhya, stone bridge (*silsako*) of north Gauhati and *Gohain Kamal Ali* in mentioned. From *Kamroop* at least 37 temples were reported all endowed, along with some temples at *Hajo* and existence of practice of *Aghorpant* (cannibalism). A jail close to river like Goalpara and one mile from jail lays hospital. At *Gauhati* most of the public buildings are built with cheapest and most perishable materials requiring constant repairs and to be built anew every seven to eight years. The building presently extant were built long back were needing rebuilt at a new site at similar expense (M'Cosh, 2000). At *Gauhati* some of the some of the public buildings and officers' houses are built with bricks and it was expected that in few years *pucca* (concrete) buildings will be common as bricks can be made at trifling cast and material and can be prepared abundantly. However, lime was procured from Sylhet and Sadiya region especially during dry months (Mcloed, 1837). According to Colonel Pollok and W. S. Thom, *Gowhatty*, formerly the capital



of the province is a very unhealthy place, but since Assam has become a Chief Commissionership, the head quarter has been fixed at Shillong. “*Gohatty was not a pleasant place to live in and there was not even a house to be got when I arrive*”. The commissioners’ clerks occupied the public bungalow. Mr. Campbell the Assistant Commissioner lived in dilapidated house and had placed half of it to the disposal of author. When the author visited the places *Nagong-Darrang*, *Goalparah* and *Cossyah* (Khasi Hills) and *Jynteah* divisions in addition to *Kamroop* and reported there were military buildings to erect in the station, surveys and levels to be carried out with two assistants (Pollok and Thom, 1900). The lower Assam Company had a bungalow in the station (*Gowhatty*). There was a good deal of jungle about its vicinity and twice Fisher, their able manager, had shots at tigers from the back of verandah, but failed to bag and several leopards were caught there in traps. There was a road of 5 miles from *Gowhatty* to *Beltolah* and have the best snipe ground. Hunting was also carried out at *Myung* (Mayong) and wild game abounded the place. Hunting is also reported from *Rangiah* (Rangia) and *Loqwa ghat*. It seems during this period the hunting was in vogue all over the landscape of Assam but “*there was no zyats in Assam, so tents had to be carried and namghurs (namghar) usually located at the heart of village was not best of the place to put up in*” (Pollok and Thom, 1900). A ghat at *Ameengaon* (Amingaon) opposite *Gauhati* was mentioned (Griffith, 1847). Road from *Gauhatty* to *Bhootan* via *Hazoo*, (Hajo) 13 miles, *Nolbaree* (17 miles) a highly cultivated country, crossing four streams, *Dum Dummia* (10 miles) then crossing *Noa Nuddee*, *Hazareegounge* to *Ghoorgounge* 8 miles and through *Dewangiri* at distance of 8 miles and come across river bed of the *Durunga* stream and mentions of 3 Buddhistic temples made of slate entirely and are white washed. The place is occupied with temples with squarish base and inscriptions were visible and the pagodas are surrounded with long banners. The houses of the settlement are pacca and walls are thick. The houses are of three storeys with middle being mostly occupied by owner, windows are narrow. The cooking was carried on the ground floor much to the edification of the residents above, dirt abounds in every direction. However, the king or the rajah house was different and better than the others. The number of house mentioned are about 130 but these forms two or three detached villages (Griffith, 1847). House tax is rated Rs. 2 per house and there were two jails in the *Kamroop* main at civil station and lock up at Barpeta. A total of 66 schools of various types were reported from Kamrup in 1870-71, 146 in 1872-73. Police circle (*thana*) are located at *Bajali*, *Barpeta*,



*Raha* three magisterial and revenue courts, 64 Nisf Khiraj estate, 74 revenue circles, 116 revenue units (Hunter, 1879).

On the east of Gauhati a *chowkee* is reported named *Jagi Chowkee* rose during the Ahoms and discussed in earlier chapters. A sadar station was at *Nagaon* earlier removed to *Rungagora* because of its location on elevated land to avoid flooding. From the description by M'Cosh it seems there was a jail and jail bazaar nearby to get food and other condiments. It also indicates to the presence of sati system and human sacrifice at *Goomsur* (M'Cosh, 2000). *Nungklow* is one of station of British and there exist a path from *Nungklow* to *Nagaon* via *Gowhatty*, off *Mangaldai* and there was Bamboo Bridge on the way and there were two roads for buggies from *Gauhatty* to *Nagong* (Griffith, 1847). Butler mentions of a road from *Koteeatollee* (Kathiatoli) to *Dubboka* around 24 miles through a level country, strudded with flourishing and populous villages, gardens and intersected by Streams and large lakes. The road passes through rice fields and small patches of sugarcane and crossed Jamuna river in small boats to south bank to Tooleeram Senaputtees territory followed by a jungle and two villages *Katkutea* and *Deohore*, situated in extensive plains of high reed jungle but only small area was cultivated. There was an encampment at *Howraghat* though the distance is ten miles only but it took much time as sometimes the jungles had to be cleared before marching. *Kachoomaree* is mentioned as place on *Jamoonah* (Jamuna) river. It was mentioned that Jamoonah river was navigated through canoes. He also informs that four *beels* (stagnated lake like wetland) granted to Meekirs by Rajah of Assam i.e. *Moree Kallung*, *Maharool*, *Pathoree* and *Jamugoorie* in addition to the lakes, ferries across the Kullung were also granted by Rajah of Assam rent free to induce the tribes to resort to the plains for the purpose of trading with Assamese in grain and dried fish namely *Depholoo ghat*, *Sanchoa much*, *Ooneehattee*, *Meekirhath* and *Nikamolee*. The revenue settlements effected with Meekirs for 1837-38 are *Koteeatollee*, *Ramonee* (Amoni ?), *Salonah*, *Dehooa* and *Moorung* with addition of *Deekaroo* and *Deesa* in 1839-40. In 1851-52 few more settlements are added namely *Kukurakata*, *Hurluk Parbat*, *Amla Parbat*, *Thereho Parbat*, *Kantee Parbat*, *Singeemaree*, *Joonthong Baguree*, *Chargeemee*, *Rebur*, *Dikanoo*, *Runkae*. The estimated population of Meekirs in 1851-52 are 1494 in Meekir Hills and 356 in Northern *Cachar* putting rough estimate of population to be around 9250 persons. Though seems not exact but it remains the only estimation of population of Meekirs to that period. *Bamoonee*, *Koteeatollee* and *Dubboka* dooars are mentioned



suggesting their areas either hilly and forested lands used for passing to places, and inhabited by Meekirs scattered with average settlement of six or seven houses and not exceeding twenty houses. Their houses are built on bamboo platforms, supported by innumerable bamboo posts, eight or ten feet high with a ladder attached on often with single pole cut into notches or steps, removed at according to the number of family members and only the Mikirs living in plains are converted to Hinduism (Butler, 1855).

The district of Nagong consists of *thanas Dabka, Jagi, Kaliabar, Raha and Nowgong*. The agricultural lands in 1849-50 consist of 131178 acres and 116876 acres in 1875-76. The natural calamities were reported in the years 1822, 1840 and 1858 mostly locust attacks and blight attack in 1870. Occurrence of flood reported at annual basis, in 1825, 1842 and 1869 experienced a great flood and drought in 1835. Two routes from *Gauhati to Nowgong* were reported apart from riverine route. The first route from *Nagaon to Gauhati* via *Raha* (13 miles) crossing Kallang by ferry, crossing Dimal river (26 miles from Nowgong). From *Dimal* road takes a turn to Amlaghat (Amlighat), along Kahikuchi (44 miles from Nowgong) on foothills to *Gauhati*. Another route to *Gauhati* along the crest of watershed between *Sonai* and *Kallang*. The other roads are from *Nowgong to Kallang* (54 miles), *Kaliabar to Silghat* (4 miles), *Nowgong to Dabka* (24 miles), *Nowgong to Laskhoya ghat* (17 miles), *Kahargaon to Kaliabar* through *Khatwalgaon* (35 miles), *Raha to Dabka* (24 miles), *Purani Godoun to Bamunij* (6 miles). There was one jail at the civil station; district in total had 85 schools in 1872-73, 109 in 1875. It had 127 parganas (collection of village), a charitable dispensary (Hunter, 1879). A route for *Nagaon to Roleabur* (Koliabar) were passed by *Palki* by affluent class through the road was forest infested and needs timely cleaning of jungle. A village named *Katoree* lay on this way having namghar and building for travellers and general assemblies. The catching of elephants was popular in the area. They passed cleaning jungles each day halting at a suitable place. *Golaghat* out post established for Sub Assistant. The place contained few merchant shops and a considerable trade in grain and other articles. There was thanas at *Jamoonah mooch* and *Jagee* a military post was established in the village of *Sumokhoo-Ting*. About the *Nowgong* he writes that Headquarter of the Zillah of *Nowgong* removed to three different places since it became a substantive division. It was established first by Lt. Rutherford in 1833 at *Puranaah Godoun* (Puranigodam) in the midst of village of *Mikir Hatt* on left bank of



Kullung. In May 1835 it was shifted to *Rangagora* for earlier headquarter being continued and no spare land for new public buildings to be erected. The third station was selected in June 1839 at *Kuggereajaan* (Khagarijan) (Reed Stream) on the small stream forcing its way out of Kullung river. At *Nowgong* there was a circle carriage road and road winding along *Moree-Kallang* lake, beautiful gardens, agricultural fields, numerous hamlets. The road to *Deemooroogooree*, east of the stations and leading on to *Belogooree* 9 mile in distance. An extensive bund road protects and secures the entire front of the station from annual inundations but the soil being sandy water enters and inundates the land a common phenomenon of Assam. The public buildings of *Nowgong* include a *Kachurry* or court occupied by various British and Indian officials. A brick goal and circuit house, a brick thanah and a record office erected in 1845-46. There are two ghats on river, a bridge with *Sal* posts over the Kallang river 202 yards long, 30 feet high and 16 feet wide in 1847 on the same year churchyard wall was also erected of brick 150 sq feet. There was exposed Christian graves and seven private bungalows, three of brick and four of lath and plaster occupied by Principal Assistant, Junior Assistant, Sub Assistant, Apothecary and missionaries. The population of district estimated by Captain Butler stands at 248,905 exclusive of Angahmee and Rengmah Naga amounting to 104,140. The Mehals of Now-Gong in 1851-52 are *Now-Gong*, *Koliabor*, *Meelirpur*, *Chaporee*, *Raha*, *Jumoonahmookh*, *Morung*, *Dantipur*, *Meelir Hill*, *Julkur*, *Perbutjooar* and *Baze Mahal* (Butler, 1855).

The Darrang district located in northern bank of Brahmaputra is covered with lot of reserve forests. It also consists of rubber plantation at *Chardwar* of an area 80 sq Km. Police Circles (*thanas*) in *Darrang* are located at *Tezpur*, *Chutia*, *Gohpur*, *Kariapara*, *Chatguri*, *Mangaldai*. The next station to *Gowhatty* was *Tezpore* on the north bank with bungalows on the hill top along the bank. (Ward, 1884). Barker describes *Tezpore* being most beautiful town with beautifully carved stones and *Mungeldye* (Mangaldai) being an important centre of trade of local animals (Barker, 1884: 61). At *Darrang* in 1833-34 number of person killed by wild animals was 52 suggesting of human penetration towards forests. A station of Assam Light Infantry is reported from *Charduar* (M'Cosh, 2000). Tezpur the administrative head quarter of *Darrang*, houses of Europeans are located on hills in the town, the bazaars formerly made of thatched huts, but now the masonry shops with tiled or corrugated iron roofs were a



becoming a common practice, an ancient ruin is noticed in the court house (Hunter, 1879). At *Mangaldai*, the head quarter of the sub-division, 400 miles west of *Tezpur*, like *Tezpur* at *Mangaldai* also the iron corrugated roofs were replacing the thatched roofs rapidly. The other important towns are *Bisnath* or *Biswanath* (26 miles east of *Tezpur*), *Hawala Mohanpur* (2 miles from *Mangaldai*), *Nalbari* (20 miles north of *Mangaldai*) containing store depots or *golas* of several Marwari merchants, *Karuagaon* (southwest of the district, opposite *Gauhati*). The total cultivated area of the district is 198254 (182174 acres of rice) acres (Hunter, 1879). A road was noted from *Bihalmukh* to northwards, an elephant path from *Barnadi* to *Moramornai* rivers in *Lakhimpur*. The major landing stations of the district are *Rangamati*, *Tezpur*, *Biswanath*, *Behalmukh*. Trade was carried through weekly markets or hats in several locations at *Kaligaon*, *Singumari hat*, *Gronlund*, *Karupati* in *Mangaldai* sub-division. English goods in *Mangaldai* come from *Gauhatty*. At *Tezpur* markets are organised at *Gabru*, *Depota*, *Bindakuri*, *Balipara*, *Sobah* and *Behali* they are at the vicinity of some tea gardens. Some fairs are also reported from *Bangalagarh*, *Rangamati*, *Harinkhoja*, *Hindughopa*, *Sopijhar*, *Chopara*, *Silpata* and *Chatguri* doar. In 1874-75, 94 tea gardens were reported from *Darrang* district (Hunter, 1879). The landing station next to the *Tezpur* on east was *Bishnath*. The station of *Bishnath* was described situated on a bold rocky point which was jutting out into the river a short distance above and on a high bank, chiefly composed of primitive rock (gneiss) from 30 to 60 feet above the highest rise of the river, stand the bungalows of the European officers and the regimental hospital having the lines of the corps behind to the north and the Bazaar to the east along the banks of the small *nullah*. These bungalows are constructed of stout timbers and walls made of species of reed (*kungra*) covered outside with grass and inside with bamboo mats. The houses made are inferior to bungalows common in most cantonment are nevertheless very well adapted to the country as they can be erected within a month or six weeks at the expense of Rs. 200-400 and last for three years with repairs and these houses are adorned with glass windows and doors. The magazine house was built with bricks and tiled, all the public buildings and Sergeant houses also are made with bricks (Macleod, 1837). At *Bishnath* regimental hospital was located with the capacity of 80 patients who are ranged on bamboo benches along the sides, upon which they place their usual bedding or mats. The hospital also consists of medical store room and place for native doctors, opposite to this is the guard room and a small apartment for the accommodation of native officers who may wish



to be in private with eight feet verandah all round. The location was suitable for sick for their speedy recovery as it was clear and free from jungles. The sudder (sadar) bazaar at *Bishnath* consists of about 140 houses consisting six hundred to seven hundred inhabitants. The men of the regiment, camp followers & C., usually at headquarters may amount to 1000 giving of total of Seventeen hundred individuals. The bazaar was highly crowded and cramped up area however the condition of regimental bazaar was better, the proposed transfer of the bazaar cannot all at once be effected. The houses in the bazaar and those all over the country are made of bamboo, reeds and grass a few are plastered over with clay and resembles huts from Bengal (Macleod, 1837). Cultivation is largely carried around Tezpur, with paddy being principal crop. The capital city of Muttok Rungagurrah also described as situated on a high ground (Griffith, 1847). Ten dooars to the Dufflah country was mentioned namely *Charduar, Bihalee Dooar, Gong Dooar, Bagmara Dooar, Sakhoo Mata Dooar, Chooteah Dooar, Kuchlahbaree Dooar, Chandhur Dooar, Guree Dooar, Bakula Dooar* etc. Few new routes also were opened for commerce.

Sibsagar district is drained by rivers Brahmaputra, Dhaneswari, Buri-Dihing, Disang, boats with carrying capacity of two tons can navigate in Kakodanga, Disai, Kokila, Janji, Dwarika and Dimu. The whole district is navigable during the rains. The police stations of the district were located at *Sibsagar, Birtola, Jorhat* and *Golaghat*. The number of villages and towns are 203 and number of houses being 55604. Around 83 sattras were known in the district. The town of *Sibsagar* located around tank named *Sibsagar* around which civil buildings, courts and residences of European officials are constructed along its bank. A great temple also is seen on its bank. The town of *Rangpur* consist of many old dilapidated buildings specially Ahom, as reported it is “*a dark dismal looking brick building, nearly covered over with jungle and enclosed by a brick wall. Roof has fallen in several places*” (Hunter, 1879). Forts and palaces were reported from *Garhgaon* in Dikhu river, some distance to the south-east of *Sibsagar*. The fort had bastions at the corners, but they are now destroyed. The magazine was situated a short distance east of the fort. The royal palace, one of the oldest buildings in the province surrounded by a brick wall about two miles in circumference, the whole town with suburb extends over many square miles of country. The ruins of gateways, built chiefly of masonry are still to be seen within the fortified circumvallation which surrounded the town.



The gateways were made of large stone blocks bearing iron clamp marks. *Jorhat* is the Head quarter of sub-division of same name, on the bank of river *Disai* and in the vicinity of important tea gardens. In 1865, the bazaar contained 160 shops of which 28 belonged to Marwari merchants involved in trade of goods imported from *Calcutta*, *Sirajganj* and *Goalpara*. The other important town of the district was *Golaghat* situated on river *Dhaneswari/Dhansiri*, on a high and undulating land. *Golaghat* contains 377 houses; steamers are able to proceed up the *Dhaneswari* as far as *Golaghat* from May to September and small boats throughout the year. The agricultural land of *Golaghat* is 259200 acres of which 192559 are of rice. The important roads in *Sibsagar* district are:

The Trunk Road, *The Seoni Ali* (in whole district): 133 miles

The *Dhodar Ali* (in whole district): 115 miles

*Kamargaon* to *Titabor* (part of *Dhodar Ali*): 35 miles

*Garh Ali*, from *Jorhat* to *Kamargaon*: 14 miles

*Nawa Ali*, *Titabor* to *Jorhat*: 13 miles

Continuation of *Dhodar Ali*, *Titabor* to *Sapkati*: 80 miles

*Bar Ali*, *Nazira* to *Dikhowmukh*: 22 miles

*Dikhowmukh* to the temples of *Dergaon* (*Deorgaon*)

Commissioner *Ali*, *Jorhat* to *Kokilamukh* on *Brahmaputra*: 12 miles

*Akar Ali*, *Golaghat* to *Negheriting*: 20 miles

The total length of roads in the district of *Sibsagar* in 1872-73 was 404 miles (Hunter, 1879). In 1850, three magisterial, civil and revenue courts are reported while in 1875 it was 5 magisterial, 11 civil and 11 revenue courts. Three jails were also in the district with principal jail at *Sibsagar* and lock ups at *Jorhat* and *Golaghat*. The total number of aided and unaided schools in 1872-73 was 49 and there were charitable dispensaries at *Sibsagar* and *Jorhat* (Hunter, 1879)

The district of *Lakhimpur* is bounded by *Himalayas* in north, *Himalaya* and *Darrang* in west, hilly tracts in east and *Sibsagar* and *Naga Hills* on south. Physiologically it consists of broad plain lying on both banks of *Brahmaputra*, bounded by hills on three sides, large portion of district is covered in forest, *jheels* and marshes, it remained mostly inundated in rainy season. The major rivers being *Subansiri*, *Dihing* etc. mostly originating from *Tibet* and *Arunachal*



Pradesh and major tribes being Matak, Khamtis, Miris etc. agriculture being mainstay of the people of the district, the variety of rice cultivated are Sali (84%), Ahu (14%) Bao (2%). Sali is transplanted winter rice sown in May and June, Ahu is summer rice grown either on highland or on lowland near the Brahmaputra and Bao sown about the end of March.

The houses in the district are small, dark and ill-ventilated, and must be very hot in summer and as they are built on low mud plinths are extremely damp in rainy season. The walls are made of reeds plastered with mud or of split bamboo. All the materials can be obtained free of cost. Such style of houses is common among Bengalis and Assamese. *Lakhimpur* district occupied important place during the time of Ahoms who deputed officer Sadiya Khowa Gohain to look after the region inhabited mostly by Khamtis, Miris, Hill Miris. It was mostly a rural district with only major town at Dibrugarh. Houses were built according to tradition known as *Changghar* (raised houses on strong timber posts) to avoid inundation. The houses are nearly same with 50X20 feet with modest verandah and no inner enclosure. From *Tezpur* to *Dibrugarh* there was no station or even villages directly on the banks and on each side lay the grasslands and marshes with dark hills on backdrop. The author mentions the destructive nature of Brahmaputra by “*instead of being called a son of Brahma (the creator) more properly might be termed the son of Shiva (the destroyer); for the destruction is its constant work breaking away embankments and piling up sandbars that obstruct navigation*” (Ward, 1884: 05). The rapid currents seem quickly changing its course forcing steamers to employ pilots changing them frequently and anchor at sunset and even with such precaution often get detained for hours and days in sand. In cold season fog limits visibility till 10-11 o'clock when steamers proceed. This unpredictable nature of the river ascribed to the absence of human habitation nearby and records of garden of plantain and betel nuts tumbling into the currents. During the rainy season river is navigable till *Sadiya* 62 miles north from the terminal *Dibrugarh* and elephants termed *sine qua non* for overland travelling. The description was so lively it speaks about every aspect like health, hygiene, topography, magic, local practices of medication and magic there is rarely a family without buried children and western medicine be their last resort (Ward, 1884: 16-17). At *Saikhowa* and *Sadiya* cottages were mentioned built with mud and few brick built buildings (Anonymous, 1847). *Dibrugarh* is mentioned as only urban area in the district, the western end of the town has rows of cottages along the river bank occupied by Nadiyals and other low caste population merging into vetch street, the great



commercial centre. There is a big daily bazaar (*Digli Bazaar*) on the bank of river. There are tailor shops and other shops run by Decca *Beparis*. There are wealthy Kaiyas engaged in trade in all sorts piece goods, salts, oils etc. The Dibru river was encroaching the banks pushing the Kaiyas to move back towards the railway station. Towards the end of vetch is European Quarter, most of the houses are on red road along the bank of *Dibru*. Behind the road situated the maidams on which the cutcherry was situated and other public offices and recreation ground. On the rear of the maidams are graham bazaar, the medical school, the jail and police lines. On the eastern side of the town is cantonment. The town also boasts of a large masonry fort used as arsenal for the volunteers, a church, four printing press, a high school and workshop of *Dibru-Sadiya* railway. The population enumerated to be 3870 in 1872, 7153 in 1881, 9876 in 1891 and 11227 in 1901. The town was well laid out and streets were broad and no slums and sanitary arrangements leave little to be desired. Fine shops by Kaiyas and comfortable houses for gentry, twenty wells for drinking are reported. Terminal of *Dibru-Sadiya* railway and Gauhati was connected with the railway. Trunk road from Dhubri to Sadiya runs through the town. At Lakhimpur bridges are reported over *Tikra Disai*, *Dinjan*, *Dholajan*, *Rangagora* Road, over the *Tingrai*, *Hingrijan*, *Balijan* on *Tingrai Hingrijan* road, over *Kakojan*, *Mamochikajan*, on *Dhodar Ali* over *Sesa* on *Mankata* road (Allen, 1905).

Normal schools, station schools, Mohemeddan teachings at schools, primary schools in villages (Ward, 1884: 20). Mission schools, girl schools at *Gauhati*, *Tezapore*, *Nagaon* and *Sibsagar*. A costly boarding school at *Shillong* in 1881 for European and Eurasian children. Industrial school for native youths opened in *Jorhat*. Abors, Bor-Abors and Mishmis, they basically are settled along two precipitous shores of the two great northern branches of the Brahmaputra the Dihong or Sampo and the Dibong. The houses are so constructed that the perpendicular side of the rock forms one wall, the floors made of bamboo with one side supported on the rock and the other on beams driven into the ground. The space underneath is inhabited by the cattle and the interstices in the floor afford the double advantage of showering down all the excretions to the herd below and preventing the accumulation of filth and nastiness (M'Cosh, 2000), similar huts are in use to this day. There was a ghat at *Lowqua* (*Sibsagar*) signifying existence of use of ghat/station for transportation of freight etc. (Pollok and Thom, 1900). *Sadiya* being a land full of river streams and on the *Toranee mookh* copper



temple is situated and one at *Tingalee mooch* on which *Lattow* is situated (Griffith, 1847). A fortress very extensive is reported between gorges of Dikrong and Dihong rivers about 24 miles north of *Suddyah*. Traditions ascribed this fort to Bismuck (Bhismak raja) some miles to the east is said to be the fort of Sisooopal.

Letters from *Calcutta* to *Dibrugarh* reach in 8 days, up to *Dhubri* by train and from there by runners for 8 miles continuously day and night. The mails reach regularly even from UK and USA. The head offices of Assam circle of postal service are established at *Dhubri*, *Gauhati*, *Shillong*, *Tezpur*, *Nowgong*, *Golaghat*, *Jorhat*, *Sibsagar* and *Dibrugarh*. The introduction of money order system improved the saving who otherwise spend or buried their valuables which went lost if one dies. The telegraph communication from *Calcutta* to *Guwahati* established in 1869 but *upper Assam* seven years later (Ward, 1884: 25). The main offices were extended with lines *Gauhati* with *Shillong*, *Golaghat* with *Kohima*, *Sibsagar* with *Nazerah*, *Dibrugarh* with *Makum* and brick houses were built for offices. At Assam the presence of courts are reported with numerous litigations (Ward, 1884: 28). The writer narrate various rites, ritual and way of life of natives, their behaviour etc. which otherwise have minimal effect on landscape therefore not visited in detail however in the disposal of deceased Mohemeddans always bury but Hindus cremate their deceased except young children and if the deceased and near ones too poor for funeral pile the face of the deceased is blackened with a wisp of straw, the body weighted with a stone and thrown into nearest river to be devoured by sharks and alleigators. Poor coolies of garden were wrapped in mats and shallowly buried in jungles soon to be exposed and consumed by jackals.

A small steamer plies between *Dhubri* and the railway terminus for conveyance of passengers and luggage, which shortens considerably the travel time between *Calcutta* and *Assam*. *Goalpara* initially was important point with numerous structural build up and bungalows and later it was deserted for *Dhubri* as offices were moved and American Baptist missionaries removed to *Tura* on the *Garo Hills*. It is an important trading centre. *Goalpara* has the largest number of small feeder boats which brings native products to be shipped to big boats and steamers heading to *Calcutta* (Ward, 1884: 58). The trunk road from *Goalpara* to *Gauhati* (distance of 90 miles) passes through tea gardens and Cachari villages. There were numerous betel trees in *Gauhati* therefore deriving its name. At *Gauhati* a strongly fortified town the



remains of costly buildings probably the fragments of ancient temples were noticed (Ward, 1884: 59). *Gowhatty* remained the seat of British administration till 1873 when the headquarters relocated to *Shillong*. At the bank at “*Gowhatty located chapel and bungalows of the American Baptists mission and further up, the government buildings church and officers’ bungalows on the riverside, the undulations of hill and valley dotted with tea bushes gave variety to the pleasing scene*” (Ward, 1884: 59). *Gowhatty* was vulnerable to epidemics and there were undrained swamps at the back of the town, is the chief cause of insalubrities of the place. In the description of *Gowhatty* appears, numerous temples, sacred resorts of pilgrims, Nilachala hill, Kamakhya temple, numerous pilgrims visiting the temple and in former times location of monasteries filled with priests and nuns, it is noticed that obscene dances and filthy recitations took place at the shrine (Ward, 1884: 60). She describe the temple of Kamakhya in length stating that earlier at the place there were Buddhist temples with beautifully carved reliefs with figures, flowers and scrolls and the stairway to the temple from eastern side is built with the remnants of those temples. The temple of *Hajo* lies six miles north of northern bank over a hill 300 feet high and presence of idol “*Mohamuni*” highly venerated by Brahmins and Buddhists and people as far as from Tibet and China visit the place taking weary journey. The island adjacent to *Gowahatty* known as Peacock Island, as lot of peacock were there in former times and as sandbank connect it with the *Gowahatty* station, peacocks left the place. It is estimated that population of *Gowahatty* was 11500 and large part of whom are Mohemeddans. Assamese service is held in mission chapel conducted by ordained native preacher.

The town of *Shillong* situated in Khasi hills with pleasant climate termed as “*paradise of Assam*”. The journey to *Shillong* is tedious and can be completed through “*Tonga*” a cart drawn by ponies or by bullock train. *Tonga* takes 10-12 hours while bullock cart two days (Ward, 1884: 63). The road to *Shillong* was skilfully made. At *Tezapore* mentioned carved granite blocks piled up possibly a reference of *Bamuni Pahar*. At *Mungledye* (Mangaldai) annual fair is recorded where sturdy ponies from Bhutan were brought to sale. A streamer landing place at *Kaliabor* and here lies a telegraph office. *Nowgong* is clean kept level plain with government buildings, offices and mission bungalows scattered over it. In *Nagaon* there are numerous rural population and villages lie thickly on both sides of *Kullung* (Kallang



River). In the district found large quantities of betel nut, pan leaf, sugarcane and silk. The rice crop exceeds that of any district and tea gardens are many. The next landing places of steamer above *Koliabor* are at *Negheriting* and *Dhunsirimukh* both connected with Kohima. Both the places became important in the light of Naga campaign to Naga Hills having been the landing place of officers, troops, bullocks, ponies, mules and elephant and other supplies of war.

Jorhat 35 miles southwest from Sibsagar connects with steamers at *Kukula-mukh* ten miles distant. The town of *Sibsagar* is described in length with tank (Ward, 1884: 68), no bathing and washing is allowed to keep water pure for drinking purpose. The bunds of the tank provide high airy situation suitable for government buildings and bungalows of European residents. A bazaar lies along the bank of the Dikho, half a mile from the tank. Some residents even possess boats and enjoy sailing at Sibsagar tank and part of temple land is made lawn tennis ground. On the banks of Dikho lies remnants of ancient capital *Rungpore* and other remains were also discussed in details including the ruins of Rangghar (amphitheatre) and palace of Ahom raja.

Another very interesting account of Assam though short was made by Jessie T. Moore. She mentioned of tiger hunting carried in Assam, and that the temple of Kamakhya was injured in 1897 earthquake and rich Hindus paying for its repairs and observed some standardization in Assamese language, 60 churches and 6000 converts (Moore, 1907: 34-40). She writes *Goalundo* to Calcutta takes 10 hours by train, it seems she was travelling frequently to Calcutta, *Gauhati*, *Nowgong*, *Lakhimpur* it seems that the places were well connected and people frequently travel this place with ease however, to Calcutta it's a time consuming but not cumbersome and exhausting. It also depicts how enthusiastically and industriously they are engaged in missionary and church services.

She writes Aden on Red Sea belongs to India and therefore Indian postal stamps valid there. There was considerable European population at Mikir Hills and a school at *Chapanala* (Moore, 1907: 59). She observes the Europeans learning Assamese in schools and conversion of tribal or coolies (Munda and Santhali etc.) and destitute working in the tea gardens. Mentions of goat sacrifices at Kamakhya with crocodiles in tank. Some of these brick temples were injured in 1897 quake but it was being repaired with money provided by Hindu rajah of *Durbanga* (possibly Darrang raja). Individuals described travelling from *Gowhatty* to



*Sibsagar* and from there to *Tura* and they attended and helped the function of native Christians. Mentions of bound volumes of Assamese old testaments (Moore, 1907: 83).

An account by Major John Butler concentrates on the expedition of upper Assam especially hilly areas occupied by Angamis, Kukis, Mikirs, Rengmas and being a man in uniform his account focuses on areas expedition are directed and perspective being from a military man (Butler, 1855).

Barker described an Assamese bungalow to be lightly constructed in inexpensive manner mostly with locally available organic materials along with brick and mortar with no ornamentation and look like pigeon roost. But for most parts of Assam planter's bungalows are built entirely of wood, thatch and mud, brick was not easily prepared on account of friable character of soil unsuitable for brick making. The structure made of country bricks were not durable and crumble rapidly however Assam being earthquake prone the wooden bungalows suited most. The construction of houses and bungalows follows native architectural style which suited the inhabitants in every way. The roof is made of straight trees for main beams with bamboo rafters and the top is laid with thatch and a coarse specie of jungle grass bound up in bundles and latched together with cane (*bet*) which was most popular material to bind in Assam. At a distance of 20-30 yards lies the *bawarchee khana* (cook house) where servants live and rest. The author speaks of absence of hotels, in such a circumstances Dak Bungalows are only option for the travellers. On the banks of Brahmaputra few areas are dotted with hamlets of raised huts standing on bamboo and tree stands occupied by fishing caste called *Dhooms* (Dom). The tea gardens include tea houses, bungalows and out-houses must lie tolerably high and close together to enable the planter to get from bungalow to tea house rapidly an immense advantage for looking sharply after coolies during delicate firing process. The author states "*the usual way of getting rid of timber jungles to enter into a contract with Assamese*" to clear it at cost per acre agreement. "*these men are accustomed to the work and having a contract quickly get through their job; whereas a large party of coolies would have to be told off, to the detriment of the cultivation of the rest of the garden, in order to do what half the same number of Assamese can more readily accomplish*" (Barker, 1884)



By the close of 19<sup>th</sup> century the landscape had witnessed an unprecedented change. Every human landscape features were extended to places unoccupied earlier like deep forests, riverine areas and hills. The reasons behind this expansion was optimum exploitation of resources for the purpose of laying of tramlines, river transport networks, road links etc. were expanded to carry out the extraction of resources like timber, wildlife, minerals etc. The places not mentioned in documents earlier appeared since 1900s extending the spectrum of human-landscape interaction. In 1900 the total area under tea cultivation was 337,327 acres, the wastelands taken up for tea plantation up to 1900-01 was 114306 acres. After 1897 earthquake sub divisional station of *Barpeta* relocated to *Barnagar*. The total Assistant Commissionership in Assam was six. The total population of province including *Manipur* and *Lushai hills* stands 6126343 with total number of immigrants in 1900 was 62,733. Rubber plantations about the hilly and rugged tracts. The civil buildings made in the province in the last decade of 19<sup>th</sup> century were residence of Civil SDO, North *Lakhimpur*, Bungalow for the Executive Engineer at *Dibrugarh*, residences of Civil Surgeon and Superintendent of Berry White Medical School at *Dibrugarh* and District Superintendent of Police at *Dibrugarh*. At Shillong, Assam-Bengal Railway offices were build. The administrative buildings like Deputy Commissioners and Sub-Division Courts and Circuit Houses, Tehsil *Cutcheries* were built also Public Work Department offices. Jails were in every district numbering three to four. The other public buildings included educational and ecclesiastical buildings. The roads were constructed from Bogapani river to Sylhet plains via *Laitlyngkot*, Maulvi bazaar to *Salutikar* road; *Balajan* to *Kochugaon* road. Dak and Inspection Bungalows (IBs) were built, between 1899-1900 IBs at *Patgaon*, *Garubhasa*, *Chapaguri*, *Aujhari* and *Dalgaon*. A floating Dak Bungalow at Dikhow Mukh was build and an IB at *Khonoma* village in 1900-01. About the roads, the only main metalled cart roads in the province was road from *Gauhati* to *Shillong* 11<sup>th</sup> mile to 63.5 miles (52 miles), *Mauphlang* road (9 miles), *Cherra* road (6 miles), Strand road in *Gauhati* (1.5 miles), Assam Trunk Road 14 miles totalling to 83 miles of metalled road. The railway lines at the close of 19<sup>th</sup> century were Jorhat State Railway (30 miles), *Cherra-Companyganj* State Railway (8 miles), *Dibru-Sadiya* Railway (77.5 miles), *Tezpur-Balipara* railway (20 miles). The imperial postal service had 280 post offices, with new offices in 1900-01 at *Tipling* ghat, *Delli*, *Pallanghat*, *Derby*, *Dalu*, *Kailashahr*, *Rajniganj*, *Kukicherra*, *Madna*, *Gopeya*. Six post offices were also closed at *Bokajan*, *Kayangmukh*, *Jaleswar*, *Barnighat*, *Dharumtal* and



*Gaurang*. The total of telegraph line in 1900-01 was 5416 miles. The telegraph lines also expanded to considerable lengths including activities:

Realigning the line *Gankul* junction to *Gankul*, Construction of line from *Silchar* to *Derby*, *Gauhati* to *Dimapur*, *Badarpur* to *Silchar*, *Manipur* to *Tammo*, *Palasbari* to *Goalpara*, *Rahabari* (*Gauhati*) to *lower steamer ghat* (suggesting of two steamer ghat at *Gauhati*), *Badarpur* junction to *Comilla*, *Nazira* to *Tinsukia*, *Bengabari* office to *Panerighat*, *Gauhati* railway station to *ghat* (*Uzan bazaar* or *Pandu* possibly), shifting *Nazira* town lines from road to railway, shifting lines at *Bilasipara*, *Harangajao* to *Diyak*, extension of *Dibrugarh* steamer ghat line, shifting *Kokilamukh* railway office to *Barghap*, shifting *Kokilamukh* combine office line to *Barghap*, erecting railway through wire *Lumding* office to *Dimapur* railway junction, extension of *Dibrugarh* steamer ghat temporary line, erecting a loop from *Nazira-Tinsukia* line to *Lakwa*. As for schools, in 1899-1900 there were total 3480 schools of which 3177 were public and 303 private and in 1900-01 the total was 3458, 3196 public and 262 private. The printing press in 1899 was 42 and 1900 was 28 for the reason of decline unknown. In the sphere of archaeological activities *Tokreshwari hill* temple near *Goalpara* was repaired, caves of *Goalpara* remained out of repair, protection of *Ananta Sajya* at *Aswakranta* near *Gauhati* initiated, the temple of *Chinnamasta* at *Kamakhya* and its storehouse repaired, cleaning of the ruins of *Dimapur* was done, temples at *Gaurisagar* and *Jaysagar* cleared of jungle, approach to *Karengghar* was repaired and the *Bamuni* hill cleared of jungle (Report, 1901)

In conclusion, the colonial transformation of Assam was driven by the intertwined objectives of economic exploitation, administrative consolidation, and military security under British imperial rule. The expansion of tea plantations not only integrated Assam into the global capitalist economy but also reshaped its social and demographic composition through the migration of labourers from different parts of India. At the same time, the development of railways, waterways, tramways, and telegraph networks facilitated the smooth extraction of resources and strengthened colonial control over the region. The British also reorganized Assam administratively by establishing district headquarters, courts, police stations, and revenue offices, thereby extending their authority into remote areas. Defence infrastructure such as cantonments and military roads reflected the strategic importance of Assam's frontier location. Furthermore, institutions like jails and schools became instruments of discipline and



governance, ensuring political control while producing an educated class loyal to colonial administration.

Together, these developments transformed Assam into a carefully structured colonial space where economic interests, communication systems, administrative efficiency, and social regulation worked in harmony to sustain British power. The legacy of these colonial interventions continues to influence Assam's economic patterns, cultural diversity, urban growth, and institutional framework even in the postcolonial period.

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