Chapter - I

Goalpara District - - A Profile

In the dim mist of the past where mythology and history coalesce, Ranpur was included in the kingdom of Kamrupa, and the Kurutiyar was the boundary between Kamrup and Matsya or Bengal. From Karatoya to Dikrai river the kingdom of Kamrup extended. Cooch Behar, Rangpur and Jalpaiguri were included in Assam. The Assamese Mahabharata and Ramayana were written in the court of the Koch Kings in the court language. The Guru of the Kings was Shri Shankar Dev of Assam and even today the priests of the Koches are Assamese. The villagers of the district speak a dialect grammatically Assamese if infections and verbs really indicate to which the language belongs. History proves that the kingdom broke up when Ahoms drove back the Koches. The Koches were conquered by Mahamadans and the Ahoms conquered as far as Goalpara. The Mahamadans fought 19 battles to subjugate the whole of Kamrup, but they were unsuccessful and could not dislodge the Ahoms. The result was that when the British took Bengal from Mahamadans, Coochbehar, Rangpur and Goalpara became a part of Bengal.

Mir Jumla remained 16 days at Coochbehar and began his invasion of Assam on January 4, 1662. Fort after fort was occupied. Jogighopa at the mouth of the Manas river (Opposite Goalpara) on Jan.20, Gauhati, Sarighat at the mouth of the

Bar Nadi (Feb.5) Pandu, Beltola and Kajali at the mouth of the Kallang - most of which the enemy evacuated" (1).

Rangamati: In the Goalpara district on the bank of the Brahmaputra but lying above it. Isa Khan, Musnad-i-Ali, the Bhuiya King of Khizarpur (circ.1584) is said to have built a frontier fort there. It was the seat of a foudar until the British period. "Rangamati was formed into a separate collectorate and transferred from Rangpur previous to the Decennial Settlement. (Glasier, Notes on Rangpur Records) The District of Rangamati and Dhubri which had formerly been known as North Rangpore, lay on both sides of the Brahmaputra and extended eastwards to the then independent kingdom of Assam (2).

Goalpara district had once become the hot subject of controversy because of its geo-political importance. The district of Goalpara in the province of Assam continued to enjoy the status and powers it had enjoyed under the Mughal rule even after the acquisition of the Seway by the East India Company.

The province of Assam was constituted as a separate unit of local administration in 1874. Goalpara was retransferred to Assam. In 1905 when the province of East Bengal and Assam was formed, Goalpara became a part of the new province only to revert to Assam after seven years in 1912. With the amendment of the partition of Bengal, it is manifest from this brief resume that the district has since its acquisition by the British been a

(2) P-12, ibid, Mir Jumla's invasion of Assam by a contemporary Dutch chronicle.
victim of administrative necessity and expediency to the neglect of the special needs and requirements of the district.

H.E. the Governor of Assam in his speech in the opening session of the Assam Legislative Council in 1924 made a reference to the movement for the reunion of Goalpara with Bengal. Indeed, there was a considerable volume of opinion in favour of the reunion of the district with Bengal. The whole body of Zamindars and a pretty large number of ryots and others were quite anxious to have the retransfer of Goalpara to Bengal, made an accomplished fact. Another section of the people headed by the District Association was, however, against its retransfer to Bengal.

While admitting that the case for the reunion of Goalpara as to linguistic and racial affinity of its people to the neighbouring Bengal districts and also as to the land tenure incidents was almost on a par with that of Sylhet and Cachar, this latter section of the people asserted that without Sylhet and Cachar they were likely to fare better in Assam than in Bengal. That seemed to be the chief argument that the anti-reunionists advanced in support of their attitude. However, fallacious their argument might seem to be to the existence of that party had made it impossible for the people of this district to present a united front with regard to that question.

The allegation that coercive measures were even adopted by the Zamindars in getting the people's Memorial to Lord Chelmsford signed by the ryots was incorrect.

The question of amalgamation of Assam with a portion of Bengal and reconstitution of the provinces of Bengal and Assam created a great deal of controversies.
With the advent of the British into Assam, Goalpara came back to Assam whilst Rangpur, Goochbehar and Jalpaiguri remained in Bengal. Further there was a move for the amalgamation of Rangpur, Jalpaiguri and Goochbehar with Assam. The inhabitants of Rangpur, Goochbehar, and Jalpaiguri and some parts of Bogra district are identical in race, religion and language with Goalpara district and Goalpara district has many such affinities with Assam proper which is contiguous to them. The existence of the Bholadhoa, Haripur, Madhupur and other "Satras" of the Mahapurushia sect in Goochbehar and other districts of the East Bengal is itself a proof of the cultural unity which Assam has or had with them. Then there can be no doubt that Goalpara district which is a district east to those districts of Bengal belonged politically and culturally to Assam even in ancient times.

The Raja of Gauripur is a Barua and his relatives are inhabitants of Kamrupa district and Goalpara district. The Raja of Gauripur along with some other Zamindars of Goalpara did not want to be identified as Kamrupis nor their language was Assamese. This was because the 'Great Zamindars' wanted to be associated with the 'Great Zamindars' of Bengal, further the Goalpara Zamindars had been stripped of from any privileges while their counterparts in Bengal remained. Many Zamindars made matrimonial links with the Bengalis in order to prove their close link. But the case is reverse in the case of non-Zamindar inhabitants of Goalpara. They used to take "Dhemais" (widow) by the customary marriage as their wives. Their Gurus were Assamese.
Further the Officers in different Zamindaries were either from Sylhet or Bengal and they were afraid of the cry "Assam for Assamese" and that was why they wanted to take the Goalpara Zamindaries into Bengal as well as its amalgamation. It was mainly for that reason that the Goalpara Land Lords Association had been agitating since 1920 to get the district of Goalpara to be incorporated in the province of Bengal. Those officers from outside Assam loved Goalpara money and Goalpara post but were not much in love with the Goalpara people. The Assamese were not vocal or vociferous. All the Zamindary Estates were full of outside officers. The local people got small jobs now and then but the bigger loaves and fishes were the monopolies of the outsiders.

In the Goalpara literary Conference in the month of Oct. 1927 nearly 8000 men declared in one voice that they were Assamese. About 50 men under Bengal leadership being financed by a Zamindar held a quite meeting to protest against the introduction of Assamese in Goalpara. The meeting broke up as soon as a local man raised a voice of protest. But the pecuniary influence of the Zamindars was so great that the Calcutta Papers had given prominence to the small and makeshift meeting but did not give prominence to the real meeting held for two days with great enthusiasm. So the problem depended upon whether the Assamese people wanted to reclaim or claim the people of Goalpara as their own brethren.

The indigenous people of the district were the Jogis, the Meches, Rabhas, Garos, Bodos, Rajbanghis and other Hindus and Mahmadans speaking Goalparia dialect. An indigenous in Assam was
defined in the Census Report as a person belonging to the state of Assam and speaking the Assamese language or any tribal language of the region (1).

That definition gave rise to some apprehension among some sections of the people of Goalpara whereas it was vehemently represented by certain other sections of the people in the Assam valley. That was due to the clarification given by the State Government that indigenous persons would not merely include persons who speak Assamese at home. The words "at home" were deliberately committed by the state Government, to expand scope of the definition. All assurances to the effect that the collection of these statistics would not be a bar to any rights of any citizen or national of India failed to assuage this apprehension or resentment. On the top of it all, some people in Goalpara insisted on returning their mother-tongue as Goalpara. When some of them insisted on recording their mother-tongue as Goalpara inspite of the explanation, the Census staff had no option except to record the answers exactly as given by the citizens. Since Goalpara language is not recognised (as it is a colloquial, dialect or offshoot of Assamese), those persons were included under Assamese as directed by the Registrar General, after consulting the state Government. Later on, clarification given by the then Revenue Minister (later Chief Minister) of Assam Sri Bisnu Ram Medhi, was conveyed to all charge.

Superintendents of Dhubri Sub-division. When some persons, in Dhubri Sub-division of Goalpara Division, insisted on returning their mother-tongue as Goalparia, such persons were also included indigenous persons. (1). However, if a person insisted on his mother-tongue to be recorded as Goalparia, even if it was explained to him that there was no such recognised language, his wishes were respected and the language was recorded as Goalparia. Later on, all such persons had been included under Assamese after the tabulation was completed.

Inspite of sharing the greater Assamese culture, Goalpara retained the distinct characteristic of her own. Goalpara can definitely claim for contributing the socio-economic and political development for the greater Assamese society.

A glance at the map of Goalpara district will show that the western boundary of Assam for the matter of that Goalpara district is almost in a straight line and further it will reveal that the 5 Thanas go into the very heart of the province of Assam like a wedge, and there would be no means what ever to protect the borders of Assam, in case those Thanas went out of the province. There would have been no possibility of preventing infiltration of land hungry people of east Bengal and it would be very difficult to prevent the evasion of custom duties and smuggling of paddy, rice and other commodities to East Bengal with flourish. The line of communication from Assam to Indian Union would also have been seriously jeopardised.

These Five Thanas, viz. Manikarchar, South Salmara, Lakhapur, Dhubri and Bilasipara historically, culturally and administratively form one unit with the rest of the province of Assam. There was a move to cut off these 5 Thanas but there was no justification of these 5 thanas being severed from the rest of the province. The area of the 5 Thanas was 1,138 sq.ms. and the area of the District was 3979 sq.ms. The population of the district which was 462052 in 1901 has risen to 600643 according to census 1911.

The Goalpara district constituted a part and parcel of Assam and its indigenous population had unanimously and unmistakably expressed their opinion to live in and share the sorrows and joys with Assam which is their homeland from pre-historic times.

There are numerous old shrines and temples. There is a Sikh Gurudwara at Dhubri dating from 1668 A.D. This was founded by Guru Teg Bahadur and is regarded as one of the principal Gurudwaras of the Sikhs, and is held in great esteem and veneration by the Sikh community. This Gurudwara enjoys grants from Sikh States like Patiala and others. Within Bilasipara Thana there are many places of worships and pilgrimages for the Hindus, the most prominent among them being the famous Jundith temple near Bilasipara, Mahamaya Dham in Bagribari. A very large number of pilgrims from near and far visit these temples.

Goalpara district seems to have been the meeting of various forces of ancient civilisation having political significance. Goalpara is at the frontier end of Bengal and Assam(1). or.

(1) Dr. Surendra Nath Sen, C.U., 1942, Paschim Bangla Patra Sarkar
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On the North of the district is Bhutan, on the south Garo Hills, on the East Kamrupa district and on the West West Bengal.

The enervating climate of the place had rendered the people less arduous and hard working, while the Zamindars paid only nominal revenue to the Government their income had within a century, or so multiplied by thousands. The rents of the tenants in Karaihari and Gauripur had been enhanced about 25 per cent. (1). The Jotedari units and spread over the district from the neighbouring Bengal tracts. The Zamindars had found that system convenient to work, because under that practice the whole estate was divided into a number of holdings or "Votes" of considerable extent which were settled with a body of tenants known as Jotedars. Those Jotedars were practically middlemen and the Zamindars were thus saved the trouble of dealing directly with the innumerable cultivators, who could get their lands only from the Jotedars.

In Goalpara, the settlement is what is known in ordinary official language as a "Zamindary Settlement" (2).

The land settlement problem assumed great complexity during the pre-independence days and it has not lost its edges even to-day. The movements of immigrant population from East Bengal in the pre-partition days was not only economic but also political. Immigration, particularly of Muslims from East Bengal

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(2) P. 425, Census of India, 1951, Vol.XII, Part I-A.
into Assam, began in 1911. In the Census Report of 1911 the number of immigrant residents in the district had been given 1,18,236. The number of natives of the district who were residents in other districts at the same time was found to be 17,315. The main factor contributing towards the increase in the foreign population was the migration of cultivating Muhammadans from the neighbouring districts of Bengal. They were chiefly attracted by the waste and the "Char" lands which they could obtain under comparatively favourable terms from the Zamindars(1).

The Zamindars of Goalpara in the year 1911 invited a few persons of the Muslim community to settle in their land on better conditions than were available in East Bengal; since then, the flood of immigration has not abated.

About the increased pressure on land due to immigration of those people and the conditions arising out of that, Mr. Mullan writes in his Census Report of 1931 thus: "Probably the most important event during the last 25 years, an event, moreover, which seems likely to alter permanently the whole future of Assam and to destroy more surely than did Burmese invaders of 1820 the whole structure of Assamese culture and civilisation, has been the invasion of a vast horde of hungry Bengali immigrants, mostly Muslims, from the district of eastern Bengal and in particular from Mymensingh. I have already remarked that by 1921 the first

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army corps of the invaders had conquered Goalpara. The second army corps which followed them in the years 1921-1931 has consolidated their position in that district and has also completed the conquest of Nowgong. The Barpeta subdivision of Kamrup has also fallen to their attack and Darrang is being invaded. It is sad but by no means improbable that in another 30 years Sibsagar district is the only part of Assam in which an Assamese will find himself at home.

The Muslim population of the Assam Valley districts, excluding Garo Hills, was 365,330 in 1911. There was a rapid increase in the is population and it rose to 585,965 in 1921, to 943,252 in 1931 and to 1,365,902 in 1941. The result of it was that 20 lakhs Bighas of best cultivable land were settled by the immigrants; six lakhs bighas were acquired by them through trespass, and all other available lands were being gradually swallowed up and converted into their possession. Of late, there has been a considerable infiltration of those people from East Pakistan, imposed and still poses a new problem.

In the post independence Assam, this problem of immigrants was further complicated and made more acute by the movement of thousands of Hindu Bengali refugees into this State from East Bengal. They were the victims of the division of India; they are sorry a spectacle.

The problem of relief and rehabilitation of those displaced persons was a stupendous one. The nature of the problem can be understood from the following speech delivered by Sri Jairam Das Daulatram, the Governor of Assam in the Budget session of the
Assam Assembly on 2nd March, 1955: "While further progress in rehabilitation has been made during the year, the fresh influx has added to the problem of formulation of firm plans for expedient rehabilitation. It has been estimated however, that by the 30th Sept. 1954, nearly two and quarter lakh refugees have been rehabilitated through Government's help and one and half lakh bighas of land was provided to them by Government or through Government's assistance. During this year over 33 lakhs were issued as loans to the displaced persons making grant total of nearly ₹340 Lakhs issued as loans in the State up to the end of 1954.

In modern times, landlordism in its typical form, was the creation of Lord Cornwallis who in the permanent settlement of 1793 declared Zamindars to be the permanent and hereditary proprietors of the soil. The customary rights enjoyed by the peasants since time immemorial were swept away by this single declaration. A long chain of sub-infeudation was started by some of the bigger Zamindars with the result that between the state and the actual tiller of the soil several categories of intermediaries came into existence whose only job was to collect revenue from their immediate subordinates and to transmit the same to their immediate superiors, after retaining a sizeable portion as their income. This is how landed aristocracy came into existence in modern India. About 50% of the total cultivated area was covered by the Zamindary system prior to independence.
The Zamindars were left to make their own terms with their tenants. The land revenue fixed at the time of permanent settlement was rather excessive and many landlords failed to pay their dues to the State with the result many Zamindars changed their hands in the first few years. But with the passage of time and growth of cultivation, in the absence of any provision regarding the protection of the tenant's rights, the Zamindars' income began to swell.

Some of the Zamindars were a parasitic class of landed aristocracy. They did not even care to live in the country side and began to live a life of luxury in big towns and cities, leaving the task of collection to their officials like Dewans, Naibs or Gomosthas who behaved like a petty tyrants in the Zamindary Estates.

Not all Zamindars were equally wealthy. But they all benefited from the growth of agricultural income at the expense of both State and the actual cultivator.

General Condition of the people:

Broadly speaking, the condition of the local people in some areas, particularly in 'Churs' was far from satisfactory and there was hardly any family who did not live hand to mouth. The main reason was that those people were easy preys in the hands of the Bhatias (immigrants) and any surplus left in the hands of indigenous would automatically go into the pockets of the 'Charus' or local Mahajans by way of interests or for some other account. There were a very few people who had a large tract of land in one stretch, to cultivate or if they had, they had not on the other side sufficient means to purchase or maintain a pair of
bullocks or buffaloes and other implements for the purpose, after payment of their dues rents, or clearing the interest or part of their capital taken from Mahajans. In fact, there were very few houses who were not free from those vices. They were credulous, simple and whimsical and would never like to go into any sort of botheration. They would take people in trust very easily and would never hesitate to make any sort of monetary transaction verbally or with any receipt to substantiate their demands in future. Any sale or mortgage of lands was done on a white piece of paper and if a receipt stamp was attached and crossed, the purpose of a documentary evidence, was served. And the result was that they were the loser in the long run.

The Conditions of the Bhatias (immigrants) were altogether reverse. They were all business like and thus always maintained an unanimous idea of ousting the original local tenants by advancing monies on mortgage or purchases of lands, no matter whether it be a non-occupancy holding or an Util Pit land. The peculiarities lied in the fact, that they would never make an outward show of their solvency and would always make a convincing display of their impoverishment.

As far as information goes the raiyats in the Zamindary Estates were much better off than those in other parts of Assam. Their two rice crops supplied them with sufficient food for the subsistence of themselves and their families, and generally left something over and above that for sale. From the sale of other crops, such as tobacco, jute, oil-seeds, sugar cane, etc., they could with ease pay their rent and supplied themselves with all necessaries, and, in many cases, with such articles as to them
were luxurious. The condition of the Estate as far as I have been able to ascertain by moving freely about the Estates and mixing with the old raiyats appears to me to be comparatively much better than that of their brethren in other parts of Assam. The rents being low and the lands generally fertile, the tenants enjoyed as a rule much larger profits than the raiyats of other districts of Assam, especially as the facilities of export afforded by the opening of railways and Steamer Services had contributed to a general rise in the prices of the agricultural produce in this part of the country.

Formerly, however, the wants of the people were limited and they live a simple, contented peasant's life. Although they were well off and far better than their brethren in the neighbouring districts, they gradually became luxurious and unprovident, in their way of life. With the opening of Railway and the increased facilities of communication, cheap and worthless foreign articles of various kinds then easily found their way to the door of even the remotest villager. He was easily taken by their charming outside, lightly parted with his small savings to buy such useless things as trinkets, beads, combs, mirrors, and other nameless but equally worthless commodities although he had no real necessity for them. In that way an artificial want was being gradually created, and the poor peasant failed to distinguish between the necessaries and false luxuries. Life thus gradually became artificial even among the peasantry, and the old ease and comfort of domestic life slowly but surely disappeared from the midst.
The contact with foreigners had served to create a change in their old mode of life which was not to be altogether regretted. They were then better dressed and better fed than before. Salt was then largely used, and the old "pelka" and the special preparations fast disappeared even from among the lowest class of the people. Earthen and brass water pots had in a manner driven out "bosh" or "Lac-shell", and plates and utensils of metal were not an uncommon sight in a farmer's household. The taste of good curry was formerly unknown, and the people had no knowledge of the condiments. The curry stone was nothing if not rare in a household. The people then began to learn to make good dishes, and gradually adopted the foods of their more refined neighbours in East Bengal.

Mode of living: - The "Alwa" had largely given place to "Mala" or tobacco moistened with sugar. Long ago only the riches among the farmers could boast of a "Khuta" or large wooden box as the most respectable place to sleep on. There was then scarcely a village where one did not come across with "taktaposh" or co's stools, and benches and sometimes even chairs and tables. The very mode of construction of houses had undergone a total change. In the place of wretched huts with one opening in the only door, one could find grandly shaped "ghars", and even tin houses, furnished with regular doors and windows. All those bespeak material prosperity at first sight.

Those concomitants of luxury were, however, very ephemeral in their nature, and were very often missed in a household.
only after a few years, clearly indicating that on the whole the people had not become richer than their forefathers. Still those were signs of improvement, and there was nothing inherently bad in them. It would be sufficient if the people did not exceed the proper bounds, which unfortunately was always the case.

Moral deterioration: The people had greatly lost their simplicity, and with it many of their virtues. Drunkenness had increased and the use of "Ganja" and opium also was gradually becoming more extensive. The muflosil people were not so reliable then as they were before. They were fond of litigation, and took great interest in legal intelligence. They were, however, the better informed, and were gradually parting with their superstitions. They had formerly a dread of the European system of medicine, which they were gradually overcoming, as was evident from the larger attendance at the hospitals and charitable dispensaries every year. The formerly avoided new branches of agriculture or new modes of cultivation with an obstinacy simply astonishing. Though the bulk of the people tenaciously adhere to their old ways, yet there were then many who took kindly to practicable suggestions and followed good examples in matters connected with agriculture or horticulture. It was no uncommon sight then in the muflosil to find grafts of mangoes, liches, etc, regularly planted, and even foreign vegetables, such as cabbages, cauliflower and the like, had began to be raised.

In short, the people were not lagging behind, but like their brethren in other parts of Assam and Bengal were largely imbibing both the good and evils of modern times.
PEOPLE: The population of the district was 462,052 in 1901 and had risen to 600,643 according to the Census of 1911. The number of villages had similarly risen from 1,401 to 2,136, and the density from 117 to 152 to the square mile.

According to Census Report of 1911 the number of immigrants resident in the district has been given at 118,233. The number of natives of this district who were resident in other districts at the same time was found to be 17,815. The main factor contributing towards the increase in the foreign population was the migration of cultivating Muslims from the neighbouring districts of Bengal. They were chiefly attracted by the waste and the "Chur" lands which they could obtain under comparatively favourable terms directly from the zamindars.

LANGUAGE: A mixed language of western Assam and Rangpur or rather Goalpara district was spoken in most of the zamindary area, and Boro and other tribal languages were spoken also. A long list might be procured, giving terms peculiar to the district, which were probably derived from Assam dialects. The main peculiarities in the pronunciation of the people were the elision of initial R, and the substitution of the aspirate h for the initial s.

Religion and Caste: The people were mainly divided into two classes - Hindus and Muslims. Besides, those there were certain animistic tribes as Garos, Meches, Santhals, Kock, Boros, etc.

The majority of the Muslims of Goalpara were the descendants of the original converts to the faith of Islam.

Different Hindu Castes:—Among the high caste Hindus were the Brahmins and the Kayasthas. Brahmins were mostly of Maithili sect, whose forefathers were brought into this country by the Khen Kings of Kamrupa and also by some of the earlier kings of the Kotch Dynasty. The number of Kayasthas was also limited.

Among the other Hindus, by far the most predominating was the Rajbanshis. They belonged to the Kotch tribe, and had gradually adopted Hinduism. The Rajbanshi was numerically the strongest community in this district. They are called Kotch in other parts of Assam valley. They were socially and morally more advanced than other communities. They had also got a communal Organisation under the leadership of Babu Panchanan Barman, M.A., LL.B., M.L.C. of Rangpur.

Others were purely functional castes, such as Goelas, Kamars, Sutradhars, Napits, Kshtra and Tantis.

The Jugis, Kapalis, Namasuiras or Chandals, Bhopas and Bhumalis were the chief among the impure functional castes. There was a caste also called Morthas. These people performed multifarious duties and thus played an important part in the Social Economy of the people.

The Upper Assamese lived in a compact area in contiguous parts, whereas the Bhatias (Muslim Immigrants) were scattered all over the Mahals where they could conveniently settle up. The ingress was so rapid that they already affected the whole district. In some "Churs" the Bhatias had made the
Mehals a Colony of their own trying to monopolise everything, by keeping the indigenous people at a bay since their migration.

Other than Bhatia Mahmadans, different sects of Assamese were found in the remotest corners of the district and they were very long settlers with humble living, e.g. Brahmans, Kalitas, Keot, Jugi, Nadia, Jhalo, Sutar, Mech, Madashi, Napit, Adwikary, Nepali and indigenous Mahmadans. Of these the Adwikaries only kept influence among the Assamese.

DRESS: The women of the common people wore the old Kamrupi Dress, which offered a marked contrast to the common Sari of Bengal. It consisted of a square piece of coloured cloth, indigo-striped, passed under the arms and round the back, so as to cross in front, where the upper corners were tucked in, leaving the head and shoulders bare, and reaching to the knees below. All the women, Hindus and Muslims alike, dressed in that fashion; and they also attended the markets and transacted the buying and selling, to the almost to the total exclusion of the men. (†). Later on, in the matter of dress quite a revolution had taken place. In the past of "Legiti", one often found 'Jhutis' shirts, coats, baniyan, and even the use of socks shoes was not rare. The females had already thrown off the 'Patani', taken to the Sari and Mekhela. They had also passionately attached themselves to vests and bodies. The cumbersome and wide 'Shanka' was no longer a favourite armlet with them, and trinklets and 'Ghooris' were better liked. Even the babies were not without

their pinna-forces and caps. The old bamboo sunshade was also reserved for accompanying the dead to the burning ground, and umbrellas with the latest improvements had taken their place. It was no uncommon sight to find a carter, dressed in a smart coat or a coloured vest, with an umbrella, over his head, nagging his bullocks with the rod, and puffing away the 'birds eye'.

INFLUENCE OF SANKARDEVA :- Goalpara which was a district east to the adjoining districts of Bengal belong politically and culturally to Assam even in those ancient times.

The 'Namghar' institution was a blessing to the Assamese people could be realised nowhere except by sitting quickly in a village in the district of Goalpara.

A class of people belonging to the Mahapurushia sect in Goalpara and Rangpur had to speak a dialect different from the language in which 'Kirtan', 'Namghosa', etc. of the Mahapurushia religious texts were written. That had led to those people to appoint some interpreters from other districts of Assam. *Shatrasal Chatra* in Dhubri Sub-Division of Goalpara district had to keep many interpreters for explaining 'Kirtan' 'Namghosa' etc. from Assam.

Agriculture and Forests: - Jute : The growing of jute was gradually gaining ground. The rise in the jute market had made that cultivation a lucrative enterprise.

Live-Stock : There had been an enormous increase in the number of Nepalese cattle in the Eastern jews.
An important cattle market was held at Gauripur at which a large number of imported up-country bullocks were disposed of.

The occupation of fallow lands by immigrants had made pasture land scarce in some parts of the district. Later grazing grounds were reserved for the use of village cattle.

The total area covered by reserved forests was 884 sq. miles. In 1909 a reserve was constituted in the Al river known as the Al Reserve and covering an area of 61,919 acres (*).

The Zamindary forests were usually worked by the issue of permits at a fixed rate to gangs of wood cutters under the leadership of a 'Jhar-Dafather'. When the timber was ready, the zamindar had it checked, but did not realise the price payable to him, until after the timber had been sold. In some Zamindary Estates rent was charged for the ground used for stacking the timber. In Mechpara Zamindary Estate, a certain contribution was levied in the name of the family God of the zamindars, who in addition even then exercised the primitive right of appropriating the best pair of poles in a stack for their personal use. Of the ultimate sale proceeds of the timber the zamindar usually received a 6 anna share, the balance went to the actual cutters.

OCCUPATION - (Ordinary Pursuits Of Life) - The main occupation of the people is agriculture. In addition to agriculture, but only as a subsidiary pursuit, people take to trade, manufacture, and also personal service. A man sometimes had a double profession - he was both a cultivator and a mechanic.

(*) District Gazetteer, 1914, Goalpara Supplement.
tilling his land in the cultivating season, and working as a laborer in the recess, or dividing his time between works of agriculture and manufacture. He might also till the land and carry on a trade or business. Those ordinary pursuits were for the most part the work of a tailor, carpenter, gunny-maker, oil-crusher, blacksmith, 'Moodi', 'Paikar' or broker, and the like. Those occupations were not confined to any class of the people. It was only the 'Goalas', 'Napits', 'Kumars', 'Shopas', 'Kars' and 'dones' who might be said to have anything like a hereditary pursuit, which did not attract other castes or classes. It sometimes also happened that one man of a joint family took to mechanic's work, or opened a shop, or carried on the business of a 'Paikar' or dealer in fibres, grains or tobacco, with funds supplied by the family, while other members attended to the fields. In a case like that the family, like the individual, might be said to have plurality of occupations.

The following were the chief among professions followed by the people:


Short notes on some of the most important of these occupations are given below:

AGRICULTURE - Almost every man who was not a beggar was either a land owner, cultivator or agricultural labourer.

CONFECTIONERS - The native confectioners were called 'Bhujari', 'Baldis', a functional caste, whose water could be used by the higher class Hindus.

COTTON - Weavers. Cotton weaving was done by 'Dargis' both Hindus and Muslims performed that job. The cloth made by these men were generally rough.

TAILORS - The tailors or 'Dargis' sometimes turned out excellent 'Sajnis' and 'Sambanias'. The Sajni was a sort of very thin and fine quilt with ornamental needle works on it. Some places turned out good sacks and gunnies in large quantities.

CARPENTERS - There were some men who prepared coloured 'Barkos' tripod, octagonal 'Chowki', coloured sandal etc. But that industry was on the wane, and was fast disappearing.

FOREST PRODUCE DEALERS - The aboriginal tribes, such as the Garos, Santhals, Meches, etc. carried on a large business in
gathering and selling honey, 'mahua', fire wood etc.

PALKI BEARERS - Besides the 'beharas', the 'domes' and 'dayis' also carried the palamalwin and the 'duli'. They were also pig breeders and dealers.

BAND PLAYERS - The native band players carried on quite a multitude of professions. They sold fish, prepared bamboo mats and baskets, played the band, acted as menials, cleanse men's house, washed cloths, shave people of their own caste, served as 'meters', begged, swept and did other nameless jobs.

NATURE OF SOIL AND CULTIVATION:

All through the area, the soil was a mixed one. The local people in general treated the lands in three grades and their cultivation depended on their own classification of lands, i.e. low land, High land and 'Bhita' lands. Low lands were very low, and near about some old 'Beels' or old bed of streams. Second grade lands were high lands where water could not stand for a considerable period and the third grade of land was always near about homestead. In low lands, they generally transplanted 'Amar' or 'Sali' paddy or jute in alternative years and in high lands, 'Aus' paddy was broadcasted and sometimes jutes were planted where there was convenience of water supply. In Bhita lands the people used them as Orchads, for betel trees, betel creepers, tobacco, plantains and bamboos. Owrtturn crops generally depended on the labour done by the tenants. In these kinds of soil, they were to labour hard to get the soil completely fit for sowing. But that tilling up of the grounds mainly depended upon the rain water. And their energies of cultivation sprang with such rain-fall
and they would never fail to take advantage of occasional showers.

The local people generally started their cultivation from the month of 'Jal restricted and completed their transplantation by 'Sravan', when there was abundance of water. Local people were not so laborious as 'Bhatias' and on best easier methods, they finished their field work once for all sorts of lands and sat tight on their luck, till harvesting which came up in the month of 'Kartik' or after. Their main crops of cultivation were Aman, Ashu and other vegetables on Bhatia lands. In certain low lands, they tried jute cultivation but that was not always successful, as they were reluctant to take so much trouble for its cultivation. Of the Rabi crops, they preferred much 'Kalai' and 'Sarisa' which they broadcasted in the month of Kartik and Agrahan.

As regards the Bhatia tenants, they never sat idle and always tried to make best use of their lands. Even in spite of the rainfalls, they would try utmost to cultivate their low lying lands, where they would get little trace of water or where they would find that they could supply water easily from the neighbouring marshy beel. Their all energies were first directed towards the jute cultivation which required much patience and trouble. That cultivation took much time and anxieties until it had taken a fair growth. From 'Falgun' they commenced to prepare the soil for the jute plantation, which was done almost in the month of Chaitra or so.

After they had finished with the jute, they turned their energies for paddy lands. Months of Chaitra and Bysak were completely engaged for Aman cultivation. As regards Ashu they were
not very particular. The broadcasting was done in the month of Falgoon and Chaitra on the rejected jute lands.

They paid equal attention with regard to the Rabi crops, Chief crops were Jab, Kalai, Masur, Matar, gram, Sarisha and Footi. The period of cultivation was about Kartik and Agrahan and the removal of such crops from the field was done by Magh and Falgoon.

Harvesting of Aman paddy was done in the month of Pous, Aus in the month of Shravan, jute in the month of Bhadra. Removing fibres from jute sticks was generally done within 10 days after they had been removed from field and steeped in water.

Tobacco was generally done on Bhatia lands near about homesteads. In short, the Bhatias got all food stuff for their consumption from their own fields.

Cost of cultivation and Implements: The cost for cultivation though heavy was not recurring. On the first start, besides a pair of bullocks or buffaloes the following implements were necessary eg. (1) Plough, (2) Changa/Md (ladder), (3) Nangal (Comb), (4) Hand Nangal (Nangal), (5) Ita-Mugur.

Irrigation and Flood: Irrigation system was unknown in this side of the country, but the Bhatias tried to introduce it when made small 'bunds' along the 'ails' of their fields to retain the rain water and flood water. Though the tenants spoke much of flood but in their hearts they welcomed it very much for the fertilisation of their lands. In the month of Jaiistha or Ashar they expected floods from the neighbouring rivers and they did not think it much prejudicial to their interest as the flood water went down after a couple of days or so. Settling of flood
water for a longer period, of course, created anxieties and loss of crops.

BATHARDS: Foreign people came with a large herd of cattle and camped conveniently by the side of river or beel, where they could have better facility of grazing. Probably they took Char side for their purpose. They came generally in the month of Bysak and after a stay of four or five months made for some other country. They moved by season from place to place according to their own routine; some Bathards continued their sojourn for a year or more in the same place if they found it convenient for their purpose.

Fish Bathards were also found by river side or by the side of a village channel. Their camping mainly depended on the nature of nets. Fishermen with big nets would generally prefer to camp by river side, where they could conveniently dry up their haul in open Char. Their movements were not regular.

JUNGLE AND GAMES: Thick patches of 'Nal' and 'Jhond' huts are still found in many parts of the district. Tigers, leopards, elephants, wild bears, deers etc. were the games. The local mode of hunting was by stretching nets, and they took much pleasure in it. Game birds were abundant in almost all rivers and beels of the district. The animal life was large and varied in the zamindary estates; but depredations from the wild animals were less here on account of their remonreness from the hills and tamar jungles. Snakes were plenty and brown cobras were found in large numbers.

Of the wild animals the following species made up the large game: Tiger, leopard, wild buffalo, bear, wild hog, and large stags. Among the smaller kinds of game were deer of different
species, hares, foxes, porcupines, jackals, mongoose, otters and
in some places, monkeys and 'hulluks'. Wild pigs were found in
large numbers. Among the birds, pigeon, partridge, quail, peacock,
bustard, bittern, plover, snipe and duck were found in abundance.
The jungle owl was common in the woods. Malnas, parakeets,
bulbuls, saliks and daliylas were among the chief singing birds.
The common crow was plenty. Owl also very common. Fishes were
numerous in the becis and rivers. Reptiles were abundant. River
turtles and tortoises were found in large numbers; the former was
called by general name of 'Pan-Macw', and the latter as 'dura'.
The fish-eating crocodile called 'Gharyal' was generally seen in
the rivers. The man-eater was rare. The 'Gosap' was very common.

LOCAL INDUSTRIES: The male members of the local
community wore typical cloths. They kept little concern with any
home industry. Their duties ended with cultivation, fuel cut-ting
and animal hunting or fish-angling. The female members were very
laborious and they never wasted their time. They weave cloths
and make fishing nets and prepare 'Dahit', butter, ghee if they
had sufficient supply of milk. The following were the chief
things which they sold in Hats eg. butter, ghee, 'mathur', betel,
betel leaves, banana, vegetable of rare kinds, ginger and also
earthen pots and basins of different kinds.

Mandi cloths, Gamochas, nets were always found for sale in
their houses.

Strictly speaking they did nothing on commercial basis.
They could have done this if the male members had been more
painstaking. But they after sowing paddy in their fields left
all other works even harvesting for the female members.
ROADS AND HALATS:— Though there was a trunk road from Whubri to Gauhati, it was almost abandoned and not maintained.

Halats or village paths were plenty in different areas. They were so broad and nicely kept that motor cars could run at any speed and at any direction without any physical trouble. The different parts of the Zamindari Estates, which were formerly so remote from each other for want of rapid communication, had then came within easy reach owing to the opening of the railways. There were good cart-roads all over the Estates joining different parts with each other, as well as with the nearest railway stations. There was either a Dak-bungalow or Rest House, at every important station. The ordinary conveyance was cart drawn by a pair of bullocks or buffaloes furnished with good tops. Palarquins might also be had in some places.

MONEY LENDING BUSINESS AND EXCHANGE SYSTEM:— This custom was unknown here, but became later on during the month of Ashar and Kartik the Bhatias got plenty of money in their hands by the sale of jute and in the months of Falgoon and Chaitra by the sale of Sarisha. In those two periods their solvency came to much boiling point that they hunted for creditors to dispose of their wealths. That they did by lending amongst themselves or amongst needy locals. Monies advanced to locals were generally on mortgages. Locals also had money in their hands by the month of Magh and Falgun by the sale of paddy and betel. But they spent what they got or by lending small amounts to their own relatives, sometimes with nominal interests or without interests.

There were a number of 'Goalas' in the Estates dealing
with Kerosene, salt, mustard oil, paddy, sarisha but their main business was lending money on high interests. Their creditors were both Bhatias and locals.

Exchange business was also prevalent. The Mahajans of these Goalas would accept paddy, Sarisha, Kalai, Mug in lieu of interest or capital. But the rate in their case was always higher than the market rate. Amongst the local people in exchange purchase the rate was always the market rate, sometimes a little higher on account of the dearth of things wanted. Exchange could be made with paddy for any other stuff as salt, mustard oil, kerosene, rice, dal, fish even earthen basins on any other things of daily requirements.

Mandirs And Mosques:— Pucca Mandirs (temples) could be seen here and there in this area. Mandirs were permanently built by Big Houses and the rest were small huts. Mosques were plenty and scattered round the area, where there was a Bhatia Basti or a muslim populated area. There was no fixed place reserved for graveyard. The Muhamdans buried the dead bodies of their relatives within their respective Jotes. Hindus cremated bodies by the side of Khal or Beel or river.

LABOUR:— There was no distinct class of day labourers for there were very few who did not have recourse to agriculture as a means of subsistence. Only the near the towns and 'bandars', a class of men solely depended upon personal service. In other places the poor people generally worked as day labourers out of cultivation season, Skilled labour could not be had for hire in every place, and whereever available it was mostly confined to
carpenters and tailors. Domestic servants and agricultural labourers or people whose services were availed of in the wedding season and at the harvest time, got their food from the employer, over and above the daily wages. The scale of wages varied in different parts of the Estates. For the cultivation or other purpose, daily labourers could be engaged on 10/- per diem in 1937. Bhatias preferred more to work on that system than the locals. During the period of cultivation or before that period up-country Coolies were found camping near about the villages and worked on labour system for the tenants who were either ease-loving or could not manage their affairs. Their wages varied from 8/- to 12/- annas per day per man (1937).

**CRIMES AND CONVICTS** :- Serious dacoity or burglary in zamindary area was unheard of. But thefts and simple dacoities were numerous; but there was little or no professional crime properly so called. The number of men who were denounced as living by dishonest practices were legion; but there were no known gangs who held together, made raids for plunder, and carried on occupation systematically. Dacoities with murder seldom occurred; and equally rare were severe riots, attended with loss of life. In fact, though there were murders and crimes of violence from private malice here and elsewhere, the crime of this district, generally speaking, was of a petty-fogging, rather than violent character; litigiousness was largely developed, false cases counting by hundred. Reports of grievous assaults amongst Bhatias were an every day affair. The Bhatias had got their respective parties to fight with each other for a strip of land or for any social fracas. They would
not even hesitate to murder for their self interest. Many such souls had undergone sentences of life, transportation for murdering co-tenants for a small piece of land only.

**EFFECT OF SADAR ACT** : Thousands of marriages were celebrated within the month of March irrespective of age and caste. It was a talked about news that a baby of 17 days was married to a baby of a year.

Peculiar was the 'Mei' system found amongst the local people in some parts of the Zamindary Estates. That 'Mei' was nothing but a congregation of young and old holding their conferences under a shade of a tree or any conspicuous place of the village to exchange their views and found out procedure with regard to an open conspiracy to thwart the existing or non-existing system of an Act which they did not approve in general. In short the result of that 'Mei' system was nothing but violent and non-violent non-cooperation and Civil disobedience against the Zamindary Estate or any particular man or community of their society.

**LOYALTY TO ZAMINDARS** : It was noteworthy that tenants had great regard and respect for the proprietors of the Raj Estates. They were very loyal and persons who had once had the fortune to see some Zamindars personally, particularly the Raja Bahadur of Gauripur Raj Estate, could not forget his behaviour towards them and would always carry in their mind his kindness. Though they had great respect for the Zamindars, they were equally afraid of some of them (Raja of Gauripur deserved special mention) and never pretended to do any wrong against the interest of the Estates.
when they would think that they won't be able to stand such wrongs.

TENANCIES: Usually Jotes and 'Util-Patit' were the two systems prevalent throughout. Every settlement on temporary basis was 'Util' and that system was coming down from a very long time. Locals generally preferred the idea of 'Util-Patit' and did not like the idea of coming under a strict contract. Those Util Patit tenants had enviable Bastus and orchards under their settlements, which many Jotedars could not conceive of.

Bhatias did not prefer such shifting rights and they took settlement of lands from the Zamindary Estates under Jote system from the very start on a higher rate.

KORFA SYSTEM: Bhatias made an attempt to introduce Korfa system under their tenure. The actual spirit of Korfa system was not taken by the Jotedars and what they did, was a system of 'Bhag' Chas'. The Jotedars did not spare themselves in ignoring and concealing the Korfa rights. The Korfa arrangement was confined amongst their own creatures.

DAMHILA SYSTEM: All realisations were being made by rent receipts. The rent receipts granted to Jotedars had got entries with regard to their lands, but in Util Patit system no entries of lands were ever made. The realisation of local rate was also noted on the Damhilas.

AWSBS: Besides the actual rent there were other kinds of extra realisations amounting to Rs.2/- for which a separate receipt was issued to the tenants under Util Patit system. That was sometimes realised according to the discretion of the Tehsil dar in certain cases. Puja charge was realised from every tenant under Util Patit. Jotedars only paid 'purva' and shikhaya santra.
over and above their actual rents, and that was a compulsory payment. A separate receipt was maintained for the realisation of Aksha Samity fund. There existed another kind of realisation 'Nabanna Bheti'. There was a custom in some parts that every household would store a beer or half of fine rice of their first crop for Bhog during Doli Puja at the Kutchery. What rice was spent during Puja festival in feeding the mass present after Bhog. Any surplus of such rice was sold and the proceeds went to the Estates.

BEGAR SYSTEM: Begars or Begaris were given by certain class of people during Pujas. Only Nadials and Rajvanshis were supposed to give Begars (free service) during the festivals. Besides that, Nadials were supposed to supply fishes also. 'Bathards' would supply Dahl. That was a very old custom.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS:

Rent Law: It was in contemplation to supersede Act VIII of 1869 which was then (1914) in force by a more comprehensive Tenancy Act. Civil litigation was on the increase. The immigration of people from the neighbouring districts, the rise in the price of land and the better appreciation by the people of their rights and interests were the main causes influencing that increase. Within years the rents of the tenants in Karaibari and Gaurnpur Zamindary Estates had been enhanced by about 20%. The Jotedari units had spread over this district from the neighbouring Bengal tracts. The Zamindars had found that system convenient to work, because under that practice the whole estate was divided
into a number of holdings or Jotes of considerable extent which were settled with a body of tenants known as Jotedars. These Jotedars were practically middlemen, and the Zamindars were thus saved the trouble of dealing directly with the innumerable cultivators, who could get their lands only from the Jotedars.

The Santhal Colony: In 1913, the area reserved for those colonists was 30,000 bighas, of which they had brought a little over half under actual cultivation. The Santhals were no longer allowed the concession of holding land on favourable terms for the first few years of occupation. They were then liable to pay revenue even for their homestead land. (*1).

Wages: The increase in the daily wages of a coolie was enormous. The rate then ranged from eight annas to a rupee per diem. Domestic servants likewise charged from 8 to 10 per pensem in addition to their food. Menials servants came mostly from up-country and Kamrup.

Prices: Prices had similarly risen. The average number of seers of common rice which could be purchased for a rupee in the decade 1908-1912 being only 9'8 as compared with 11'9 seers for the preceding decade and 20'5 seers for the period 1863-1872(1*). Pulse was then selling at Rs. 42.6 per maund as compared with Rs. 22. in 1903.

Means of communications: The steamers did not carry the mails then, and there was only one daily passenger service between Dhubri and Gauhati.

The Golakgunj Extension of the Eastern Bengal State

(*1) Assam District Gazeteers, Supplement to Vol. III, Goalpara, 1914

(1*) Assam District Gazeteers, Supplement to Vol. III, Goalpara, 1914
Hallway to Amingaon was opened in 1910. Two trains ran daily each way and one of them carried the mails. Both the trains connected with the Assam-Bengal Railway at Gauhati.

Roads on the north bank: There were four roads on the North Bank maintained by the Public Works Department. The Trunk Road passed through the Duars, commencing from the Sankosh and running up to Raha in the Kamrup district, the total length being nearly 62 miles. There were inspection bungalows on the road at the following places, the figures within brackets indicating the length of the stage in miles: Sankosh, Dainamari, Kachugaon (14½), Patgaon (11), Sidli (14½), Champaguri (7), Bijni (10), and Raha (11). A road from Dhubri met the Trunk road at Kachugaon at a distance of about 50 miles. There were inspection bungalows on that road at the following places: Balajan (10), Paglahat (9½), Tamarhat (7), Gossaigaon (13½) and Kachugaon (10½). A road from Jorhat 23½ miles long, met the Trunk Road at Chapaguri with inspection bungalows on it at Kabaituri (14½), North Salmara (10), and Chapaguri (12½). Another road from Chapar, 16 miles long, met the Trunk road at Sidli. There were a large number of roads maintained by the Local Boards, the total mileage being 250.45. The longest was known as the Gauripur-Raha Road. There were inspection bungalows at Manipur (17½), Bilasipara (9½), Salkocha (8½), Chapar (9), Moli:ason (7), North Salmara (9), and Raha (17½). In addition the following inspection bungalows on several minor roads were maintained by the Dhubri Local Boards: Kokrajhar, Agomoni, Sasargaon, Datma,
Tikrai and Golakgunj. The continuation of the Gauripur-Rama road beyond Champamati was maintained by the Goalpara Local Board, the distance being 29 miles within the limits of the subdivision. The inspection bungalows at Moligaon, North Salmara and Goalpara on the Brahna Road were maintained by that Board.

Roads south of Brahmaputra:— There were inspection bungalows on the South Trunk road running from Kakripara to Dhubdhara at the following places: Singhimari (15 miles from Kakripara), Patakata (11), Pakirgunj (11), Lengrabhita (9), Lakhipur (9), Agia (10), Krishnai (8), Mangjuli (13) and Dhubanara (11).

The Goalpara Local Board maintained 161 miles of road on the southern bank with inspection bungalows at Baruara, Marnai, Durnai and Dalgoma.

Post & Telegraphs:— The following are combined figures for this district and the Garo Hills district for the year 1912-13:

Number of Post Offices 34 (of which 4 were in the Garo Hills)

Number of letters and post cards delivered — 1,304,500 during 1912-13.

Number of Savings Bank Accounts — 2550

Balance at the credit of the depositors — Rs. 3,73,435 (**).

TRADE: Two Calcutta Firms Messrs. Ralli Bros. and Apkar & Co., had opened collecting Agencies at Manikachar and Gauripur respectively. Manikachar was gradually growing in importance on account of its being the only trade centre for the Garo Hills.

An office was maintained at Dhubri by the Forest Department for registering trade concerning the department.

COWS:— Dhubri—There were 11 members in the municipality, of whom 2 are ex-officio. The municipal receipts in 1912-13 amounted to Rs. 15043. The house rate was 6½% and latrine tax was 7½% of the annual value. There were 6 public and 24 private wells. There were 32 lamps within Municipality which comprised an area of 362 sq. miles. The total length of roads was about 5½ miles, of which 3 were metalled. The health of the town had been good in general.

Goalpara: There were 10 Municipal Commissioners including an ex-officio member. The total municipal receipts in 1912-13 amounted to Rs. 937.

Gauripur:—The Raja of Gauripur had built a fine dwelling house on a rocky eminence commanding a view over an extensive tract of country, which is known as Matiabag Palace.

There were 16 members of the Dhubri Local Board, who were ex-officio, 5 elected and the rest nominated. The total revenue of the Board in 1912-13 was Rs. 72192.

The Goalpara Board had 17 members, of whom 4 were ex-officio and the rest nominated. The revenue of the Board was Rs. 69453 in 1912-13.
RELATION BETWEEN THE ZAMINDARS AND THE RAIYATS.

The relation between the Zamindars and the tenants was by far cordial. But it could not be said that they had no grievances against their Zamindars. It might be that their grievances against their Zamindars in matters of land revenue assessment and collection were not so numerous as with those which the people of the temporarily settled areas had against the Govt. The rate of assessment might be little lower there, but the raiyats had to pay so many "Chelamis" under different denominations which, when taken together, almost amount to that in the temporarily settled areas. In some Zamindari Estates where there were several claimants for a plot of waste land, it was settled with the highest bidder and over and above what he had to pay in the bid, he had to pay a fee called "Katoa Chelam". Sometimes the Zamindars were too exacting in the case of the temporarily settled areas, the land revenue administrators were too callous to popular demands and too much given to favouritism.

There were many other things which were highly taken exception to by the raiyats in the Estates. The attempt by Maulavi Abuel Masshars (1925), M.L.C. of Dhubri to amend the Bengal Tenancy Act to meet the demands of the people of Goalpara is evidence to show that the people had legitimate grievances against their Zamindars.

The raiyats were for the most part refractory and insubordinate. The relations between the Zamindars and the tenants were not always satisfactory. The jotedars for many years past had been in the habit of allowing their rents to fall into
arrears, and there was great difficulty in endeavouring to compel them to pay their rents regularly as each instalment fell due. There was no open feud between the Zamindars and their tenants, but the latter offered every where a strong resistance to the former if any attempt was made to enhance their rents. The Jotedars' rents were generally very light, as they had not been enhanced for many years past. They had succeeded in greatly raising their under-tenants' rents and had increased the extent of their tenures in many cases by encroaching on the Zamindar's Khushland, the quality of which rapidly diminished gradually in all the Zamindaries. The Jotedars had in fact succeeded in appropriating for themselves the whole of the benefit resulting from the great rise in rents during many years past and object to Zamindar's claiming to share in that benefit as he was perfectly entitled to do. The independence of many of the Jotedars was so great that they sometimes refused to appear when summoned by the Zamindars to settle their accounts, and ignored all the 'parwans' issued to them, then the Zamindars had to use force.

Later on cordial... During the last years the Zamindary Estates had followed a kind and conciliatory policy. They had avoided causing the raiyats any undue inconvenience, discouraged harsh treatment by their own officers, and protected the raiyats from oppression from outside. They very liberally spent money on their education and medical treatment, and assisted them when in distress or when visited by natural calamities, by pecuniary aid, advance, remission of arrears and the like. There was no illegal exaction
by the zamindary Estates, and nothing but the rent was demanded from the tenants. Litigation was avoided as much as possible, and was had recourse to only as a last resource, when the rayats willfully neglected to pay, or when the claim for rent was in danger of being barred by limitation. The rayats had fully appreciated those benefits, and had been gradually won over. Sometimes only a few rayats remained who showed bad spirit; but then they were bad men themselves.

COURT OF WARDS ES\*

There were two Court of Wards Estates in 1926 in this district; one the Lakhipur (Mechpara) Estate to the south of Brahmaputra and the other the Bijri Estate on both sides of the river. Bijri was the biggest Estate of Assam and in area it was as much as about 1000 sq. miles and so bigger than some smaller sub-divisions of Assam.

In the former Estate the Court of Wards Act had to be enforced owing to the deficit which the owners of the Estate had to face due to mismanagement or otherwise. But in the later Estate, the Court of Wards Act was enforced after the death of the late lamented Rani Abhoyeshwari due to the fact that there were several claimants for the ownership of the Estate and the one adopted by the late Rani and installed as the Raja by the Govt. led was of unsound mind, the people appeared to be little happier than they were under the Rajas some of whom were benevolent autocrats, and their Dewans were of the same category. The Administration of the Estate under some zamindars (Rajas) was not so efficient, the assessment and collection of land revenue was
far from satisfactory, and that was to some extent due to an absence of proper 'records of rights'. The Estate had not been surveyed for many years last and there were no proper maps kept in the office for settled areas. Land revenue was assessed on the report of the 'mandanabhish.' The 'tankinavis' were what 'mandals' were in the permanently settled areas. There was too much highhandedness on the part of the 'tankinavis and navis in the Estate. That was the state of affairs prior to take over by the Court of Wards management.
III. EARLY HISTORY OF THE DISTRICT.
(Or. Previous Revenue History)

The District of Goalpara consists of two Tracts, viz., (1) the three Thanas of Goalpara, Shubri and Keraibari, (2) and the Eastern Duara.

The District of Goalpara in Assam which, included Gara Hills but excluding Eastern Duara, was originally a part of the exclusive collectorate of Rangpur and as such formed part of the province of Bengal which by the Mughal Emperor's Firman of the 12th August, 1765, was transferred to the East India Company (2). From 1765-1822 the old Thanas of Goalpara, Shubri and Keraibari formed part of the Rangpur District, known as the Rangamati district. Under the provisions of Regulation X of 1822 these Thanas were cut off from Rangpur and formed into a separate District with headquarters at Goalpara (3).

The area covered by the three Thanas was exempted from the operation of the General Regulations and subjected to a special system of Govt., along with the Gara Hills. The tract of the country so separated was called North-East Rangpur, and Mr. De-vit Scott was the first Civil Commissioner appointed under the above Regulation to administer it.

(*1) Regulation X of 1822, Sec-2.
After the cession of Assam proper in 1826 by the
Burma to the East India Co., the Goalpara District attached
to Assam (comprising the above Estates) was attached to Assam
but for revenue purposes, was, administered according to the
spirit of the Bengal Regulations, till 1866 when the Assam
Land & Revenue Regulation was emplaced.

A strip of the country extending from Kamrup on the
East to Serjeshing on the West, known as Bhutan Duars, was
divided into two districts called respectively, the Eastern
and Western Duars, a D.C., being originally appointed to each.
By the Bhutan War, Eastern Duars including the Bijnī and Sīd-
li Duars, over which the descendants of the old Bijnī and Sīd-
li Chieftains were held to possess certain property rights,
were acquired in 1866.

In 1867 the Kuch Behar Commissionership was formed,
and the Goalpara District, including the Eastern Duars which
were attached to Goalpara and the Gara Hills, was separated
from Assam and made a part of the new Commissionership(*1).

In 1868 the judicial administration of Goalpara and
Gara Hills were taken away from the Commissioner of Kuch-Beh-
har, and placed in the hands of the Judicial Commissioner of
Assam, but the Executive control remained as before with the
Commissioner of Kuch Behar (*2).

In 1869 the Gara Hills were formed into a separate
District by Act XXII of 1869, which repealed Regulation X of
1822.

(*1) Calcutta Gazette -1866, PP 2127.
(*2) Letter from the Govt. of Bengal to the Commissioner,
Kuch Behar, No.4443, St.19 Aug.1868.
Finally, when Assam was made a separate administration in 1874, the District of Goalpara, including Eastern Duars, was transferred to Assam, and with the rest of Assam was "Deregulationised" by the Laws Local Extent Act of that year.

In 1905 when the province of Eastern Bengal and Assam was formed, Goalpara became a part of the new province, but in 1912, when partition was annulled, Goalpara District reverted to Assam.

From this resume it will be seen that prior to 1922, Goalpara District was regarded as a "Regulation" tract.

From 1922 to 1869 it was a "Non-Regulation tract", from 1869 -1874 it was again regarded as a "Regulation tract" and from 1874 onwards it became a "Scheduled tract".

**The Eastern Duars**

The Eastern Duars comprise five tracts or Duars in the North of the District, viz., Bijni, Sidli, Chirang, Rups and Guma, covering an area of 1,004,748 acres or 1,569.92 Sq. miles, and extending from the Ranas river on the east of the Sankesh on the West. The Duars were exempted from the operation of the General Regulations of Act XVI of 1869, but their revenue administration was governed by the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, which has been extended to the whole of the Goalpara district, including the Duars, and by Rules issued under the Regulation. Of the five tracts above mentioned, the last three are the sole property of the Govt.
and the revenue system applied to them was the same as that in force in the temporarily settled tracts of the five upper districts of the Brahmaputra valley, the only difference being that all Estates, except one, were held under annual leases, and that the revenue rates were, as a rule, lower than those prevailing in the upper districts of the valley, the Chief Commissioner being empowered, under the settlement Rule, to assess land taken up in the eastern Buars for ordinary or special cultivation at such special rates as he may from time to time determine (*1).

Bijni and Sidli stand on a different footing from the other three Buars. When the Buars were ceded to the British in 1866, it was found that the Raja of Bijni, who was at that time Zamindar of Paraganas Habraghat and Khuntaghat in the district of Gealpara, claimed to hold lands in the Bijni Buars by reason of his having held them under the Bhutan Govt. The Raja of Sidli similarly laid claim to the whole of Sidli Buars; he (*1), however, held no lands in the Gealpara District.

(*1) p. Lii - Introduction.
In 1887 the Bengal Govt. decided that the Rajas of Bijni and Sidli should be regarded as "hereditary Zamindars" entitled to a settlement of the "acknowledged Estates" they respectively were in possession of in those Duars under Bhutan Govt., and a periodic settlement should be made with them, including proper conditions protective of the raiyats (*2).

In 1882, the Govt. of India determined what areas were to be regarded as included in the "acknowledged Estates" of the two Rajas. The Raja of Bijni was assigned 130,000 acres, and to the Raja of Sidli 170,000 acres; The Sidli Estate, as thus determined was ordered to be made over to the Rajas's son, at that time a minor, as soon as he was considered capable of managing it. The Bijni Estate was ordered to be kept under the direct Management of the B.C. In neither case was the period of settlement to exceed 10 years. (*3). On receipt of these orders the Chief Commissioner, in 1882, directed that settlement of the "acknowledged Estates" should be made in accordance with the provisions of Act XVI of 1869 (later on repealed), the settlement to include a record of rights of the cultivators, to be recorded in a "Chitta" and "Jamsbandi" in the farms in force under the settlement rules of Assam proper, which were issued in 1870, while the rights of the Rajas as proprietors.

(*2) From Bengal Govt. to Board of Revenue No. 3594, dt. 20.9.1867.
(*3) From Govt. of India to the Chief Commissioner, Assam, No. 395R, dt. 9.8.1882.
entitled to settlement were to be recorded in a "rubakari" or proceeding assessing the revenue at 80 p.c. of the rental. A 10 years settlement was in 1885, offered to the Raja of Sidli and Rani of Bijnj at a revenue of 80 p.c. of the rental, the estates to remain under the management of Govt. as neither the Raja nor the Rani was considered capable of managing them themselves.

The chequered jurisdictional history of the district produced injurious results on the internal administration of the district. There was continuous uncertainty as to what laws or regulations were actually in force with the district. Although Assam Land and Revenue Regulation had been passed in 1886, but it was intended to apply to the permanently settled area of Goalpara, it proved in actual practice to be a rent law.

The Act VIII of 1869 had been in force in Goalpara but it was admittedly proved quite inadequate to meet the needs of the district.
ADMINISTRATIVE FEATURES:

(Permanently Settled Tracts)

Before the British obtained the possession of the Dewani in Bengal in 1765, the Zamindary Estates of Gaulpura were under the central of the Mughuls, but the administration of the district was left in the hands of the border Chiefs who paid a nominal tribute only to the Mughul Emperors. When the British acquired the Dewani, this tribute was accepted as Land Revenue. No settlement in detail was made at the decennial settlement and the permanent settlement of 1795 practically fixed the old assessment in perpetuity. Twelve Paraganas so settled in perpetuity were originally held by the border Chiefs above referred to (*1) and now constitute nine separate Estates.

The present Zamindars of Gaulpura are the descendants and representatives of these Chiefs and held their estates under a mere peppercorn revenue though they have long ceased to perform the duties of “Lords of the marches” which was the original justification for the lenowness of their tribute and revenue. These Chiefs in the old days kept order on their frontiers by means of considerable bodies of “Paika” which constituted a sort of territorial militia.

The control of the relations between landlord and tenants has always been a matter of considerable difficulty in this district. On the one side there are several powerful families, some of whom are the direct descendants of independent or semi-independent Chieftains with the autocratic pride of position and resentment of interference which is traditional in such families, and on the other there is a mixed peasantry, mostly illiterate, composed partly of obstinate aborigines, partly of the descendants and partly of the less reputable surplus population of the litigious districts of Eastern Bengal (new Bangladesh). To add to the difficulties of the position, within nearly every Zamindary family there have unusually been grave dissention, in which the mal-contents, either directly or through influential underlinks, have fermented intrigues and stirred up the tenants against the management in order to embarrass their rivals.

The relations between the landlord and tenants in Goalpara, therefore, have never been really good. For instance, Naffat Mills in 1853 noted that the Bijni rayats in Habraghat under the "evil influence of a designing person called Prem Narayan, are in league together against the Bijni Zaminder and will not come to an adjustment of their rents. The quarrel has been going on since 1823 and has caused not only great trouble, but has led to violence and bloodshed, and kept the whole country in a state of fermention". As a result of his enquiry, Naffat Mills formed the opinion that "the case of the Raja is one of much hardship and that he has been subjected to great losses by the contumacious proceedings of the rayats though at the same ..."
time I think that he has been ill-advised, especially by his Late Dewan, in endeavouring to enforce his demands by harsh measures and thereby exasperating the rayats. A settlement of the Paraganas was commenced by Mr. Scott, but was not concluded. The rayats rely on Mr. Scott's proceedings as showing that "Sali" (Winter rice land) land only was taxed and all other lands exempted from assessment. Mr. Maffet Mills found that the rayats extensively cultivate the land which they allege are excluded from assessment & less of the lands subjected to it, while their assumption that the "Sali" land rate was fixed with reference to the capabilities of the entire holding is entirely unfounded.

Soon after this the Bijni Raja came under the court of Wards and from 1858-1862 a Govt. Officer carried out a survey and settlement of the Bijni Paraganas fixing rates of rents for each class of land. On the death of the Late

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("#1) A. J. M. Mills' " Report on the Province of Assam" published in 1854 (throws a flood of light on the Political, economic culture and Sociological history of Assam during the early part of British rule. The report was addressed to Cell Beadan, the then Secretary to the Govt. of Bengal, and was prepared in course of the official survey undertaken by A. J. M. Mills in his capacity as Judge of the Dudder Dewany and Nizamutt Adaulut.)
Raja the quarrel between the two Raniis fomented the agrarian agitation and led to several riots and murders. Though there was secession of deeds of violence on the occasion of the present Rani, the old agitation has never died out and has broken out afresh from time to time in the form of the organised withholding of rent, more particularly in Habraghat and in the Beitamari Sihi of Khuntaghat and in the submission of countless memorials.

Similarly in the Karaibari Estate, the relations between landlord and tenants were for a long time a strained, owing to the fact that in the first instance the original members of the Zaminder family (Lahiri family) had considerable difficulty in getting possession of the estate, and no sooner had they gained possession, then they started quarreling among themselves and engaged in a partition suit which lasted about 30 years.

The Parbatjuer estate has had similar trouble and at one time the quarrel between the co-shares was so acute the the D.C. was obliged to imprison one of them in Jail.
In the Machpura Estate, the long past history has a
one of perpetual family squabbles which have utterly ru­
ined the management and involved the tenants in all kinds
of difficulties. Govt. has repeatedly attempted to induce
the Machpura Zamindars to compose their differences, but
there has never been a lasting reconciliation, and Govt.,
was compelled to extend Sections 93 to 100 of the Bengal
Tenancy Act to the district in order to provide the requ­
ite machinery for compelling the Zamindars to introduce
some reasonable form of united management.

In addition to this trouble there have been a number
of agrarian movements caused by the encroachment or fanc­
ied encroachment by each estate on the lands of the neigh­
bouing estates or on Govt. land, peopled mainly by abe­
originals.

The well-known "Sena Ram" Gara agitation is an ines­
tant in point, and other instances are connected with the
"Bibhagnama" (A special grant of land to Gara Laskars,
made in 1826 by Davit Scott in settlement of certain cla­
ims). Grants along with the foot of the Garo Hills, etc.
the demarcation of estate boundaries which led to the So­
called Campbell Agreements in 1878 to 1880, the abolition
of "Sayrat" duties (Tell formerly realised in Gara Duars)
on the south bank, etc.
This kind of friction between the Zamindars and the tenants is not entirely due to the introduction or defects of Act VIII of 1869, but is largely due to the causes which were in operation in the district long before this act was extended to it.

The gradual but persistent introduction of the Bengali system of Zamindary management by Bengal trained officers in all the Estates, has also been largely responsible for the periodic recrudescence of agitation, as the centralisation of power and the tapping of new resources of revenue which are characteristics of this system are entirely foreign to the old Assamese easy-going system of collecting a moderate revenue by means of Mauzadars, Patgiris, Mandals, and other officers of local influence.

The Jetadar units have spread over this district from the neighbouring Bengal tracts. The Zamindars have found their system convenient to work, because under this practice the whole estate is divided into a number of holdings or "Jetes" of considerable extent which are settled with a body of tenants known as Jetadars. These Jetadars are practically middlemen, and the Zamindars are thus saved the trouble of dealing directly with the innumerable cultivators, who can get their lands only from the Jetadars (*1).

In the province of Assam the Zamindars of Gauhati district only enjoyed the benefit of permanent settlement. As the rest of the province was temporarily settled areas, and as the Govt. of Assam under British Rule was accustomed to deal mostly with the Khas Mahal condition, they, it is apprehended have imbibed a mentality which was ill-suited to be appreciative of rights and legal privileges of the Zamindars enjoying the permanent settlement.

The district of Gauhati radically differs from the rest of the province from points of view of language, culture and revenue system.