As has been referred to, the tenure prevailed in Kamrup was officially known as *rayotary*. It was fixed on the individual plots of land and the actual occupants became liable for its payment. The special tenures like *likhiraj*, *nisfkhiraj*, fee-simple etc. occupied a considerable portion of land in Kamrup, but they did not fundamentally differ from either of the two major systems, viz, the *rayotary* and *Zamindari*. Like other *rayotary* areas in India, unprotected tenancy developed on large scale in the district. With the growing expropriation of small peasant proprietors the bigger holdings got expansion.

The British land reforms were applied mainly to the *Zamindary* tenure. *Rayotary* tenure by and large remained unaffected. The land reforms initiated by the British hardly gave any protection to the tillers of the soil. Prior to the enactment of the Assam land and Revenue Regulations, 1886, the primary rights over land were governed and
regulated by different Acts, Regulations and Rules in the province. All these Rules and Regulations were consolidated with one enactment, namely the Assam Land and Revenue Regulations, 1886. It defined the rights of the different classes of owners of land in the province as a whole. According to this Act, the principal Primary rights over land were of two categories viz., (a) rights of proprietor and (b) rights of settlement holders. Proprietors included three categories of persons viz,

(i) *Lakhirajdars* or owners of land dedicated or appropriated to idols or temples by the Ahom Rajas;

(ii) Persons who were granted settlement of estates under the provision of the Bengal Decennial Settlement Regulation of 1773;

(iii) *Owners* of grants under the provision of the Fee Simple Grant Rules of 1862 and the Revised Fee Simple Rules of 1874.

Therefore, the very common estates or interests in the land of Kamrup were of three types:

1) The Lakhiraj estates,

2) The temporarily settled estates held directly from the government —
   — on periodic lease. Such estates included—
   (i) The *nisfkhiraj* or half-revenue paying estates,
(ii) Khiraj or revenue paying estates taken up under the special waste Land Rules,

(iii) The Khiraj or full rate paying estates,

(iv) The townlands.

(3) Temporarily settled khiraj estates held directly from the government on annual lease.

The proprietors or settlement holders generally belonged to the non-agricultural community. They used to sublet their lands. As a result, a huge number of tenants were there in the district. But the status of the tenants and their rights were not defined till 1935 when the Assam (Temporarily Settled Areas) Tenancy Act was passed. In case of permanently settled districts of Assam, the Goalpara Tenancy Act, 1929 and the Sylhet Tenancy Act, 1936 were enacted. All these Acts define the term ‘tenant.’ Accordingly, tenant means “a person who cultivates or holds land of another person under an agreement, expressed or implied and is or but for a special contract, would be liable to other persons and includes a person who cultivates the land of other person on condition of delivering a share or quantity of the produce of such land to that person.” It also includes his
heirs and legal representatives and person or persons deriving rights from such persons. The definition of tenant did not cover the following persons-

(a) An ijaradar, viz., a person who is primarily a farmer of rent. It is to mention that in Kamrup district, there was no ijaradar.

(b) A person holding land on condition of rendering service.

(c) A person who holds land under the Government in the temporarily settled areas.

(d) A person who cultivates the land of other person under the share cropping system generally known as *adhi*.

The Acts clearly recognized the following persons as tenants-

(i) Tenure holders inclusive of the under tenure holders.

(ii) Jotedars

(iii) *Rayots*, and

(iv) *Under-rayots*

(i) Tenure holders: Tenure holder means a person who has acquired land from a proprietor or from another tenure holder a right to hold land for the purpose of collecting rent or bringing it under cultivation by establishing tenants on it and it includes the

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1 Report of the Assam Land Reform Commission, Sept 1981, Govt of Assam, Department of revenue, Guwahati.
successor-in-interests of persons who have acquired such right. The tenure holders were in fact rent receivers in the permanently settled areas.

(ii) Jotedars: *Jotedar* means primarily a person who has acquired from a proprietor or a permanent tenure holder or from another *Jotedar* a right to hold land for the purpose of bringing it under cultivation, either wholly or partly by establishing tenants on it, but is not himself a permanent tenure holder in respect of land, and includes the successors in respect of person who has acquired such right.

(iii) Rayots: *Rayot* means a person who has acquired from a proprietor or a permanent tenure holder or a jotedar or holder of an ijara, under any of these preson or a landholder or a settlement holder, a right to hold land for the purpose of cultivating it by himself or by the members of his family or by servants or labourers or with the aid of partners it includes also the successor-in-interests of a person who has acquired such a right.
Rayots were prominent in the Kamrup district in different status.

1. Privileged rayots: The tenants of lakhiraj estates were usually privileged rayots. They were tenants entitled to hold land at rates of rent not-exceeding the Government revenue rate. One could acquire the status of privileged rayot after continuous occupation of a plot of land for not less than twenty years. Such occupation of land might be either in payment of khiraj or nisfkhiraj rate of rent or on payment of bhog. A privileged rayot enjoyed the right of transfer or subletting.

2. Occupancy rayots: An occupancy rayot is a tenant having a right of occupancy in the land held by him. Such right was acquired by a rayot if the land was continuously occupied for a period of twelve consecutive years. The rent of an occupancy rayot could be enhanced by a written and registered contract between the landlord and the rayot or by a suit or an application to the court.
by praying for the enhancement of rent. An occupancy rayot was liable to ejectment for arrears of rent, but his holding was liable to sale in execution of a decree for the arrear of rent. In the rayotary areas, an occupancy rayot could transfer or sublet his right with the consent of the landlord.

3. Non-occupancy rayot: Non-occupancy rayot was a tenant not having a right of occupancy in the land held by him. The rent of his land was fixed by an agreement between the landlord and himself. His rent could not be increased without written agreement and one such agreement remained in force at least for five years. A non-occupancy rayot could not transfer or sublet his land without a written consent of the landlord.

4. Rayot Holding: A rayot holding of a fixed rate is a tenant holding immediately under a proprietor or a permanent tenure holder either rent free for all
time or at a rate of rent fixed in perpetuity. His holding could be ejected on the same grounds as applicable in the case of non-occupancy rayot.

5. Under-Rayot

An under-rayot held land under a rayot. The under rayot usually paid much higher rate of rent than the rayot under whom he held the land. In the rayotary areas, an under-rayot had to pay such rent as was agreed upon from time to time. His right was heritable only for the unexpired period of the lease. An under-rayot had no right of subletting. He could be ejected by the landlord on the same ground as applicable in the case of the non-occupancy rayot.

Before the enactment of the Assam (Temporarily Settled Areas) Tenancy Act, 1935, the tenancies in force in Kamrup were of different kinds i.e. lakhiraj, nisfkhiraj and khiraj. A special incidence was attached to them.
TENANCY IN KAMRUP BEFORE THE INTRODUCTION OF THE ASSAM
(TEMPORARILY SETTLED AREAS) TENANCY ACT, 1935

It appears that as regards the extent of tenancy in the district of Kamrup adequate information was not available till 1880. It was only after the cadastral survey (1883-1893) that some dependable informations became available in this aspect.

There is no doubt that tenancy as a form of labour in Kamrup and in Assam proper had pre-British origin. The state administration commonly granted land and labour to the grantees. The people who served the grantees formed a section of subject population and rendered service to the grantees instead of the state. In due course they became the tenants-at-will. The practice of granting land of dhols referred to, paved the way of transfer of royal rights over a portion of land as well as subjects to the donee.\(^2\)

At the time of the advent of the British, large number of tenants were found in compact blocks in different landed estates. They commonly owed labour services or payment in kinds to their landlords. However the mode of payment had changed with the passage of time. A significant development was that throughout the British period the incidence of

tenancy was in the increase inspite of the fact that land was plentiful. The reasons are not far to seek-

(1) It has been pointed out, particularly by the British, that excessive indolence of the Assamese and their strong dislike to anything involving the least labour was responsible for the increase of incidence.³

(2) A good number of well-to-do persons such as pleaders and government servants had their ready money which they preferred to use in accumulation of leases. Needless to mention that they did not belong to the agricultural community. As a result, there was great demand of tenants for the new landholders.

(3) Middlemen like mauzadars preferred to meet their growing demand of labour for their newly acquired land.

(4) Liberated slaves, run-away tea garden labourers and dispossessed indebted peasants also welcomed tenancy.⁴

³ Darrah, H. Z., Note on the condition of the people of Assam, State Archives, Dispur, P-6
(5) Many rayots were in the habit of making fictitious transfer of their patta to influential middlemen or landlords. They considered such landlords as their patron and thus tried to avoid the tax-gatherers.\(^5\)

(6) Sometimes government encouraged the privileged landholders to make their estates compact by exchanging some of their plots with the government. In such cases of exchanges, the erstwhile government rayot lost their occupancy rights.\(^6\)

**Tenantry in Lakhiraj Estates:**

As has been referred to, Captain A. Bogle was the first British administrator of Kamrup to have a revenue settlement in the district. He prepared an elaborate report on the revenue settlement of the district in 1834-35. This report may be considered as an important document though its authenticity is not above suspicion in many instances.

According to this report, in 1834-35 Kamrup possessed an area of Lakhiraj land measuring 92,636 *pura*, 1 *dun*, 3 *Katha* and 12 *lecha* while


\(^6\) Ibid
total land of the district was 245,253 pura, 2 Dun 2 katha and 10 lecha. It is to note that rents were collected from such lands in the pretext of imposition of Kharikatana tax from time to time. Lakhiraj land mentioned in the Bogles report included all categories, viz., Debottar, Brahmottar, Dharmottar and Pirpal. A distinction of these categories was made only after the enquiry of Jenkins, referred to, and a new division, i.e., nisfkhiraj came into being. The question arises as to what was the status of the Lakhiraj estates in the early days of the British rule. Bogles throws a flood of light in this aspect. The size of Lakhiraj areas in the district was not negligible. The history of lakhiraj tenure shows that those were the properties of some well-to-do and influential persons, mostly Brahmins. There was a good number of population in the Lakhiraj whose primary duty was to serve their immediate lord, i.e., the landlord and not the state. Bogle estimated that Kamrup had 1,03,947 Lakhiraj population scattered in 29,174 families. Such figures indicate that huge number of tenants were in the personal service under different landlords in the lakhiraj sector.

By the time of the advent of the British, the number of shastars was 385 in Kamrup. Out of these, 381 shastars remained under the administrative authority of Shastaria Baruah having a large area of 9588

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7 Bogle, A., Report on the Judicial and Revenue Administration, Assam, 1835, State Archives, Dispur; P- 91, (See Appendix – III)
pura and 1 Dun. Four other shastars i.e., Charia, Katneswar, Barpeta and Auniati had an area of 2366 Pura 15 Dun and 8 Katha of land. Those were considered as dharmottar. Besides these, there were 37 debottar mahals in the district under the lordships of Dalais, Brahmins and priests etc. The following statement shows the total assessed land possessed by the lakhiraj mahals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No</th>
<th>Name of Shastars or devalayas</th>
<th>Name of mangers or proprietors</th>
<th>Total Assessment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>381 Shastars of Kamrup ....</td>
<td>Dayaram Shastaria ....</td>
<td>9,588 9 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shastar of Chumuria ....</td>
<td>Sururam ....</td>
<td>288 12 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>&quot; of Katansor ....</td>
<td>Dehingar Gosain ....</td>
<td>174 12 1 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>&quot; of Barpeta ....</td>
<td>Beekram Shastaria ...</td>
<td>786 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>&quot; of Uniahatti Dobutar mahal</td>
<td>Uniahati Gosain ....</td>
<td>1,098 7 7 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nilachal Dowal ....</td>
<td>Kallicharan Bhattacharji ....</td>
<td>1,895 13 19 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ramanad &quot; ....</td>
<td>Mohimroy Pani Phukan ...</td>
<td>1,416 5 6 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Ushwakranti &quot; ....</td>
<td>Somedatta Bardoloi ...</td>
<td>628 0 3 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Biloshar &quot; ....</td>
<td>Lakhi Datta Barkatki ...</td>
<td>802 10 5 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ugrutra &quot; ....</td>
<td>Ranuram Barua ....</td>
<td>324 14 12 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Chattrakar &quot; ....</td>
<td>Dibar Bardoloi ...</td>
<td>420 15 2 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Madhab &quot; ....</td>
<td>Lakhibullab Gosain ...</td>
<td>3,789 13 1 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Barmukam &quot; ....</td>
<td>Silamut Mulla ...</td>
<td>229 0 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Puriharreshar &quot; ....</td>
<td>Govindram Barua ...</td>
<td>559 6 17 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Monikarnickashar &quot; ....</td>
<td>Runukanath Deka Barua ...</td>
<td>184 14 0 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{7(a)}\) Ibid, P 98
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Sukreshar</td>
<td>Parbatli Phukan</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Janardun</td>
<td>Barkatki</td>
<td>518</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Ugnibanesar</td>
<td>Branchal</td>
<td>218</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Dirgheshari</td>
<td>Jagguram Majumdar</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Baneshar</td>
<td>Sudhadhar Gosain</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Kumada Madhab</td>
<td>Rudraram Dolloi</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Rudrassar</td>
<td>Sarmah</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Pandunath</td>
<td>Kalli Charan Bhattacharji</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Ghopessaror Jogeswar</td>
<td>Narain Bhandari Barua</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Pinguleshar</td>
<td>Srikant Gijpura Barua</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Dhareshar</td>
<td>Bistoo Khatania</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Bringeshar</td>
<td>Prionath Phukan</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Deepteshar</td>
<td>Kishen Ram Kutkee</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Siddheswar</td>
<td>Joggoram Sarma</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Gauripattar</td>
<td>Lakhibullabh Gosain</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Joyduraga</td>
<td>Gangaram Mazumdar</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Mudden Kamdeb</td>
<td>Mihiram Barua</td>
<td>84</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Bussista</td>
<td>Hernkant Kutki</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>Derbaraguri</td>
<td>Gangatope Dolloi</td>
<td>117</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>Chitrachal</td>
<td>Uma Mohessar Gossain</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Siddheshari</td>
<td>Digambar Deka Barua</td>
<td>67</td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Chandika</td>
<td>Ruggananth Kutki</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Uttar Bageshuri</td>
<td>Joggeshar Gosain</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Chander Sckhin</td>
<td>Rajut Chander</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Saruoy</td>
<td>Bholanath Chowdri</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Second Deobahauguri</td>
<td>Kishenram Chowdri</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Under the lakhiraj tenure, there was 9 brahmottar mahals which had accumulated huge landed wealth.

Therefore, in the lakhiraj tenure having 385 shastars, 37 devalayas and 9 brahmottar mahals there was an assessed area of 37,507 pura, 8 dun 6 katha and 2 lecha. This extensive size of lakhiraj land suggests to believe that there were a large number of tenants under this sector. The landlords used to sublet their lands to cultivators of different categories and at different agreements. They mostly sublet their land on adhi system. Tenants holding land on this system handed over to their landlord half the

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8 Ibid P-100
actual produce of the field. The landlords followed different tactics in making adhi tenure. Accordingly, in chukti-adhi system, a fixed quantity of grain was given to the landlord irrespective of the total yield. By dal-adhi system, the crop was divided before it was threshed out and under yuri-adhi system, grains were divided after threshing. Chukani system based on the basis of cash rent was predominant in Lakhimpur, Darrang and Nowgong districts. It was not unknown in Kamrup too. One variation of the system was khandua i.e., leasing out for one crop season only. In case of cash rent, the money rates or rent did not usually exceed the government khiraj rates except in case of valuable land. Such provision was helpful to the lakhirajdars and subsequently, nisfkhirajdars. Because, they could preserve the capacity to convince the rayots about the quality of land. Besides this, the landlords had other opportunities. In fact, under British rule, the landlords would extort the tenants, who were entirely dependant on them. Government’s apathy towards the peasantry was also a factor responsible for it. On the other hand the tenants readiness to serve the landlords on any pretext was very common. It is found that the poor and illiterate tenants had fear psychosis towards the government officials; they preferred to live under the landlords umbrella. As a result, the landlords pretended to be the protector of the tenants and imposed some other additional taxes, typically called cesses like salami, camp expenditure,
puja-expenditure, wedding cost etc. Salami was a kind of rent which was to be paid by the tenant as an honour to the landlord. In several occasions the landlord used to travel throughout his estates. During his travel, he used to stay somewhere for rest or shelter. So the tenants had to pay a camp expenditure on a regular manner. The landlords, usually celebrated different pujas and the tenants had to pay tax for it. In case of other celebrations in the landlords house, the payment of tax in different forms was an established tradition.

With the passage of time, the alien government became very much irritated on the continuation of revenue free status of a large number of estates in the district and it determined to minimize it. Accordingly, an investigation was made as to the validity of all claims to hold land free from the payment of revenue. During the investigation, the land was first classified according to the purpose for which it was granted. The land dedicated to deities called debottar was considered to be a valid case. Bhogdani land was granted for providing bhog or food offerings to the idol. The paikan land was granted for providing the services for the individuals, sebaits as well as the paiks in the temple. The upshot of the investigation was that only the bhogdani debottar land was confirmed as revenue free and the remaining land of lakhiraj sector was declared liable to
assessment at half of the *khiraj* rate of rent. As a result, towards the end of
the nineteenth century, total settled area of *lakhiraj* tenure was considerably decreased, while reverse was the picture in case of the *khiraj*
and *nisfkhiraj* tenures. For instance in 1905, total settled area of *khiraj*
sector was 315,223 *bighas* and that of *nisfkhiraj* sector was 145,234 *bighas* in Barbhag group. As a result, *lakhiraj* land reduced to 13,692 *bighas*.9

Prior to cadastral survey, it was found that the land of several grantees was scattered all over the district. The government considered it inconvenient and as such, took measure to consolidate the scattered areas into block as far as possible. The measure was taken up with the consent of the landlords. Rest of the grant area was resumed and in exchange for it, adjoining areas of the government land were made over to them. The areas were demarcated afresh and confirmed to the grantees. As a result of this exchange, some government tenants came under the tenancy of the landlords. They came to be known as *thakbhukta* tenants. The landlords however accepted the condition laid down by the government that the *thakbhukta* tenants should not be asked to pay more than the *khiraj* rate of revenue10. It was a matter of course only that the landlords

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9 Assessment Report, Barbhag group, 1903-04, State Archives, Dispur, P 5
indulged in making no difference between the thakbhukta tenants and the personal tenants.

It is a matter of importance to note that agricultural population of the district had taken enormous growth in comparison to the other districts of the Brahmaputra valley. In 1881 total population of Kamrup was 6,44,960; while its agricultural population was 6,02,712 forming 93.45 percent.¹¹

Be that as it may, the history and incidence of tenantry of the district may conveniently be dealt groupwise as follows-

(2) BARBHAG GROUP:

In 1904, there were 47 lakhiraj estates in Barbhag Group, two belonging to Auniati Gossain and the remainders dedicated to different temples.¹² Altogether 13,692 bighas of land were settled in lakhiraj sector. Almost seventy percent of it was cultivated by the under-tenants on terms laid down by the landlords.¹³ The mode of sub-tenancy was as follows.¹⁴

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¹¹ Gad, E. A., Note on the Moral and Material Condition of Assam during 10 years ending 1891, State Archives, Dispur, P 3,
¹² Ibid, P. 12
¹³ Barnes, H. C., Assessment Report, Barbhag Group, 10th Nov. 1904, State Archives, Dispur, P 12
¹⁴ Ibid,
The figures show that the landlords were mostly dependent upon the *rayot*, so far as the cultivation was concerned. The landlords who cultivated their land by themselves or by the agency of servants formed a large group in Upar Barbhag, Pokowa, Dharampur and Paschim Barbhag *mauzas*. It is notable that such type of landlords figured only thirty percent in the district.\(^{15}\)

While the *lakhirajdars* were practically freed from the burden of land revenue, they, in their turn, collected rent from their tenants. In this case the common practice was that the landlords rarely fixed a cash rate per *bigha*. They took government rate, but measured the land with shorter pole.

The *lakhirajdars* of Barbhag group were not unknown to this unfair policy. Some typical examples may be cited here. Guakuchi, situated in Pub-Banbhag *mauza* was considered as one of the best villages of the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOTAL SETTLED AREAS (BIGHAS)</th>
<th>AREA SUBLET (BIGHAS)</th>
<th>ON CASH RENT</th>
<th>ON GRAIN RENT</th>
<th>ON MIXED RENT</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13,692</td>
<td>9,281</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>9,463</td>
<td>69.26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

group. In this village, the *bigha* rates were *basti* Re. 1 and 8 *annas*, *rupit* Re. 1 and 6 *annas* and *farangati* Re. 1 and 1 *anna* along with 9 to 12 days service to the owner plus rupees two per lease as a gift. In another village Niz- Borigog of Banbhag *mauza*, the landlords took the rent of first class rate and measured land with 7 *hat* pole.\(^{16}\)

The landlords while applying government rates treated *farangati* land as *rupit*. In addition to it, the landlords collected local rates from the tenants at the rate of 3 *annas* in a rupee, the authorised rate being 2 *annas* in a rupee for *lakhiraj* estates.

**(2) SOUTH BANK GROUP:**

There were twenty *lakhiraj* estates in the South Bank Group as was figured in the Assessment Report of the South Bank Group (1904-05). Total settled area of *lakhiraj* sector in this group was 3,431 Bighas. About sixty percent of this land was sublet on terms of different rates shown in the table below\(^{17}\)

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\(^{16}\) Barnes, H. C., *op. cit.*

\(^{17}\) Barnes, H. C., Assessment Report of South Bank Group of Kamrup District, 1905, State Archives, P P. 34
The group comprised the territories, which were ruled by local chiefs, such as Rajas of Dimarua, Rani, Luki and Beltola. Subsequently, these territories were brought under mauzadari System. But a feudalistic atmosphere was very much available in such mauzas. Be that as it may, various rates of rent were imposed in those mauzas. In some mauzas, the cultivable land was considered as third class. But the landlords sublet such land at first class government rate. Besides this, the tenants had to assist the landlords in reaping the grain from the field of landlord. The landlords thus enjoyed the service of the tenants on different pretexts. Of course, the lakhirajdars used eight hat pole in measuring land\textsuperscript{18} in this group.

(3) **BARPETA CHAPORI GROUP**:

Barpeta *chapori* group had 9 *lakiraj* estates with an area of 1,892 *bighas*. In this group, the quantity of *Basti, rupit* and *faringati* land was

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid, P-5
91,56,165 bighas and waste land 1,580 bighas. This group had a small number of tenants in exception to Barpeta town. In Barpeta and Sundaridiya Satra, the bhakats had to pay no revenue. They could dispose of their land to any one and passed over the privilages of bhakat. The government demand was paid up from the Satra fund. The Bhakats of Jania Satra in Rupasi mauza fared in the same way as those of Barpeta.

The usual bigha rate of rent was retained in fourth class village, i.e., Re. 1 for basti, 10 annas for rupit and 8 annas for faringati. The local rate was 3 annas per rupee. Furthermore the tenant had to serve their landlords in different ways. In Sarukhetri mauza a fee of Re. 1 called matipura was imposed upon the tenants for having marriages in their families. In Paka mauza, in lieu of matipura and mukhchoani i.e., premium on new tenants, a sarkari rate charged at eight annas to a rupee was levied. In Chenga mauza, the tenants were exempted from mukhchoani, but they had to act as palki bearers or dolabhari to the landlords. In Bhawanipur mauza, local rate was charged at only two annas per rupee. But matipura was levied at Re. 1 to Rs. 3 and a sevekara or salami was imposed annually at the rate Rs. 3 to Rs. 5.19

(4) **CHAMARIA CHAPORI GROUP:**

Chamaria *chapori* possessed 10 *lakhiraj* estates. But it is seen that in this group of *lakhiraj* land the number of under-tenants was very small. There was no *lakhiraj* estate in paschim Chamaria. The number of under tenants in Dakhin Saru Bangsar was 3010 and in Pub- Chamaria was 1,644²⁰.

The Chamaria Group had as a whole, very little experience of subletting. In the *lakhiraj* sector, however there were a sizable number of tenants. Grain rent was very common and the level of cash rent was higher. The tenants had to serve their landlords physically on different occasions.²⁰(α)

(5) **PATI DARRANG GROUP:**

There were 28 *lakhiraj* estates in the Pati-Darrang group, along with a settled area of 5061 *bighas*. Number of tenants was larger in Panduri and Pati Darrang *mauzas* than in Kaurbaha and Pub-Kachari *mahal*. The

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²⁰(α) Ibid
Sub-tenancy statement placed in the margin below shows the prevalence of cash rent system in the lakhiraj sector of the group\textsuperscript{21}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TENURE</th>
<th>TOTAL SETTLED AREA (BIGHA)</th>
<th>AREA SUBLET (BIGHAS)</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ON CASH RENT</td>
<td>ON GRAIN RENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lakhiraj</td>
<td>5061</td>
<td>2,756</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The area of this tenure in the group was reduced to 5035 bighas in the resettlement of 1927. As a result, the number of lakhiraj estate was also reduced to 25.

It has been assumed that during the period of twenty years i.e. from 1904-05 to 1924-25 the number of tenants also decreased and the bulk of the land was settled with actual cultivators. It is significant that cash rent was prevalent in the group. Besides this, the landlords made profit by levying an uniform extra-rate of rent for all classes of land. Furthermore,

\textsuperscript{21} Barnes, H C , Assessment Report, Pati Darrang Group, Nov., 1904, State Archives, Dispur, P.P. 76
land lords secured physical service from the tenants varying from 2 days to 10 days. Occasionally land was given out on adhi terms.22

(6) BAJALI GROUP:

In Bajali Group, total area of lakhraj land was 1,371 bighas. The land was bhogdani and let out to tenants. The tenants were expected to offer a ‘bhog’ out of their produce from every three and half bighas of land. It is notable that the land of almost the whole of Sariha mauza belonged to Parihareswar Devalaya of Dubi. Each bhog consisted of 11 seer of rice, 1½ seer of pulse, 1 seer of oil, 10 tolas of ghee, 1 powa of salt 5 gandas of tamul (betel nut), and two muthas of pan23.

(7) BANGSAR GROUP:

From religious point of view Bangsar group has special importance. Almost every hill of the group was ornamented by temples and each temple had landgrants donated by ancient kings. Its total lakhraj area was 73,074 bighas. As subletting was the rule in lakhraj land, a good number of tenants were there in the group. They served the landlords in different ways. The level of rate of rents in temple land was low. The paiks paid half

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22 Ibid.
23 Barnes, H. C., Assessment Report, Bajali Group, Kamrup District, 1904, State Archives, Dispur, P P.3-8 (see Appendix-III)
the khiraj rate of rent and rendered physical service. Non-paiks paid rent at full khiraj rates, but rendered no physical service as such. Some landlords preferred cash rent and measured their lands with a 7 hat pole.24

(8) BIJNI GROUP:

There was no lakhiraj land in the Bijni group.

(9) RAMDIA CHAPORI GROUP

In Ramdia Chapori group lakhiraj land covered an area of 940 bighas. The number of estates was five.

In this group, the tenants were accustomed to physical service. The landlords used to measure land by shorter pole.

(10) BASKA GROUP:

Baska Group had only one lakhiraj estate covering an area of 865 bighas. The cultivatable land in the estate was classified for the purpose of local rate of taxes.25 Number of sub-tenant was insignificant.

TENANTRY IN NISFKHIRAJ ESTATE:

The history and origin of the nisfkhira\text{j} tenure has been referred to in earlier chapter. In 1875, British administration of Assam ordered a survey of the la and nisfkhira\text{j} and tea grants in Kamrup. Babu Fatik Chandra Barua was appointed the civil officer and after a comprehensive enquiry he prepared the outstanding Report on the la and nisfkhira\text{j} holdings in the district of Kamrup in 1883. The statement follows, gives a clear picture on the nisfkhira\text{j} holding of Kamrup district in 1886.\textsuperscript{26}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class of Estate</th>
<th>Number of Estate</th>
<th>Number of Blocks</th>
<th>Average Area of Estate (Acre)</th>
<th>Total Area</th>
<th>Details of cultivation and waste (Bighas)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nisfkhira\text{j}</td>
<td>1,424</td>
<td>2,547</td>
<td>153,412</td>
<td>35,643</td>
<td>Basti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,56,191</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is seen that, prior to the decennial settlement of 1893, there were large number of nisfkhira\text{j} estates under different landlords. The total number of nisfkhira\text{j} estates was 1,424, which included 37debottar non-

\textsuperscript{26} Assam Secretariat, G.D., File No. 62 R., 1883, State Archives, Dispur, P. 24
bhogdani estates, 152 dharmottar estates, 1229 personal estates like brahmottar and nankar and 6 pirpal estates.\textsuperscript{27} It is notable that usually the nisfkhiraj estates were not merged into one compact block like the lakhiraj estate. Each of abovementioned nisfkhiraj estates had different blocks, i.e., nisfkhiraj debottar (non-bhogdani) 533, nisfkhiraj dharmottar 159, nisfkhiraj brahmottar and nankar 1,848 and 6 nisfkhiraj pirpal blocks.\textsuperscript{28}

Some nisfkhirajdars paid their revenue direct into the treasury, while some others paid it either through mauzadars or superior nisfkhirajdars. It was found that the nisfkhirajdars paying revenue through the mauzadars numbered 986, through the superior nisfkhirajdars 345 and direct to the treasury 93. In such cases the nisfkhirajdars might be considered as government tenant. But when some petty nisfkhirajdars paid their revenue to the government treasury through dalais or superior nisfkhirajdars, prima facie, it seemed that they were the dalais or superior nisfkhirajdars tenants. But the fact was that the government settled land with the petty nisfkhirajdars and not with the dalais or superior nisfkhirajdars. The statement follows shows the status of different classes of nisfkhiraj estates.\textsuperscript{29}

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid, P. 32
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CLASS OF ESTATES</th>
<th>PAYING DIRECTLY (NO OF ESTATES)</th>
<th>PAYING THROUGH DALAIS OR SUPERIOR NISF/KHIRAJ/ADARS (NO OF ESTATES)</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Paying revenue less than Rs. 10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Paying revenue Rs. 10 and less than Rs. 50</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>477</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Paying revenue Rs. 50 and less than Rs. 100</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>389</td>
<td>399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Paying revenue Rs. 100 and less than Rs. 1000</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Paying revenue Rs. 1000 and over</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>1,331</td>
<td>1424</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Kamrup the cultivators holding land directly from the government in 1891, numbered 3,84,528. The number of sub-tenant in the district was 77,162 constituting 15.7 ½ percent. It is detailed out in the following statement.\(^{30}\)

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\(^{30}\) Guha, A.,op cit. p. 255
As a matter of fact, most of these tenants belonged to the *nisfkhiraj* estates. The *nisfkhirajdars of debottar paikan* estate, *dharmottar, brahmottar, nankar* and *pirpal* estates usually sublet their lands. On the other hand there was no tenancy law in the province till 1935. Therefore, such a huge number of tenants had to live under the socalled umbrella of protection of the landlords. They had to pay rents as well as render physical service to their landlords. Rents were determined by relative positions of the landlords and the tenants. In *paikan dharmottar* and *pirpal* land, tenants paid the government share i.e. half the revenue at *khiraj* rate and in addition to it, rendered physical service. Sometimes in lieu of physical service, the tenants paid the other half of the revenue to the funds of the temple, *satra* or mosque.\(^{31}\) Most of the important *brahmottar* grants in Kamrup were granted to the Parabatiya Gossains, for they were the *gurus* of the Ahom Kings. Subsequently, the Gossains family was split up into three branches. The grants were thus split up into three branches which were further subdivided. It is found that Gossains hailing from Bengal were

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Persons holding land</th>
<th>Cultivating</th>
<th>Non Cultivating</th>
<th>Tenants Occupying Land but Status Unspecified</th>
<th>Farm Servants</th>
<th>Field Labour</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>3,84,528</td>
<td>8,108</td>
<td>77,162</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>18,819</td>
<td>3,009</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{31}\) Desai, S P., Report on the Land and Revenue Administration of Kamrup District, 1928, State Archives, Dispur, P 12
heavily indebted and involved in litigation. It is to note that their estates were looked after by unscrupulous agents. As a result, the tenants of Parbatiya Gossains had to suffer a lot. Several serious complaints were lodged by tenants against their landlords.\(^\text{32}\) They realized taxes sometime in cash and sometime in kind. Besides the normal tax, they used to collect other amounts from the tenants on different pretexts like cost of rent receipts, \textit{puja celebrations}, grazing etc. New tenants had to pay \textit{salami} or \textit{mukhchowani} in addition to it.\(^\text{33}\) Two big \textit{brahmottar} landlords, the \textit{maharaja} of Darbhanga and Babu Upendra Nath Sen, realized government rate of revenue. On the other hand, petty brahmottar landlords were mostly local who ruthlessly collected rents as much as possible in different forms. Inferior land was let out on government rate. But in case of average quantity of land, a margin of profit was bargained. Good land was let out as \textit{guti-adhi} and in populated areas on \textit{chukti-adhi}. In \textit{guti-adhi} system the grains were divided equally between the landlords and the tenants after getting it threshed out. In the system of \textit{chukti-adhi}, a fixed quantum of grain was handed over to the landlords. Entire risk of failure of crops was taken by the tenants. He was bound to pay off the contracted quantity which was usually an estimated half of the normal yield of the land. The usual \textit{chukti-adhi} rate for \textit{sali} paddy land varied from two to three \textit{mounds}

\(^{32}\) Barnes, H C , Assessment Report, Bajali Group, 1905, State Archives, Dispur, P. 16  
\(^{33}\) Desai, S P., op cit, P.12
of paddy per *bigha*. At the same time, the landlords who let out land on cash rent sought their tenants to have rendered physical service for a few days during the time of festivals held in their family. Besides this, the practice of using shorter pole in measuring land was also common criteria of subletting in the *nisfkhiraj* estates.\(^4\) Another characteristic as accused by different government officials was that the landlords commonly concealed facts relating to the subletting of land. Therefore, in most cases, the correctness as to the incidences of the under-tenants was found to have been something else.

An elaborate picture of *nisfkhiraj* settlement, arrangement of subtenancy, conditions of the tenants and incidence have been presented below group wise:

1. **Barbhag Group**

There were 891 *nisfkhiraj* estates in Barbhag group. Majority of the *nisfkhiraj* estates were *paikan* grants to temples and grants to the individual Brahmins as well as other persons. However, many of those *nisfkhiraj* estates were insignificant in size. In 1904, total settled area of *nisfkhiraj* land in the group was 145,234 *bighas*. About 51 percent of the

\(^{34}\) Ibid.
total land of nisfkhiraj sector was sublet. The following statement made on subtenancy indicates the nature of incidence in a nutshell.\textsuperscript{35}

\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
 Tenure & Total Settled Area (bighas) & Area Sublet (bigha) & & & \\
 & & On Cash Rent & On Grain Rent & On Mixed Rent & Total & Percentage \\
\hline
 Nisfkhiraj & 145,149 & 66,427 & 6,467 & 1,039 & 73,933 & 50.90 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}

All the characteristics of nisfkhiraj tenancy was available in this group, viz., measuring poles were shorter by 7 ½ cubits, 7 cubits and 6 ½ cubits which gave to the landholders an unaccounted profit of 14 to 30 percent respectively. The tenants were accustomed in rendering physical service to the landlords in ploughing, reaping, pressing sugarcane, thatching houses etc. Subtenancies were the result of hard bargaining between the landlords and the tenants. In the process of bargaining, both were guided by their respective necessities and demand for land. For instance, in Nambarbhag mauza the Parbatiya Gossains had large nisfkhiraj estates. They sublet their land on cash rent varying from rupee 1 to Rs. 1-8-0 per bigha. On the otherhand, local landlords of brahmottar estates used to sublet their land on adhi system. Some landlords indulged in having extra

\textsuperscript{35} Barnes, H C., Assessment Report, Barbbag Group, 10th Nov, 1904, State Archives, Dispur, P.5
income by charging a higher local rate of tax or by charging an anna for each revenue receipt issued. Some landlords realised rent for all rupit land at a rate equal to the government rate for best rupit land. When paddy land was given out on adhi, the term was usually guti-adhi. Dal-adhi was not common in the group and chukti-adhi was also not widely prevalent. The landlords share varied between 2 ½ and 3 mounds of grains per bigha.

As a matter of fact, the rents of niskfhiraj tenants varied from village to village and from nisfkhirajdars to nisfkhirajdars. In Burinagar village of Natundehar mauza a landlord letout nisfkhiraj lands at Rs. 3 and 8 annas per bigha. The same landlord realized in nisfkhiraj baotoli land in Bhawanipur of UparBarbhag mauza Rs. 8 per pura measuring the land with a pole of 7 ½ cubit plus Rs. 1 as pekkhosa, and Rs. 1 for rasad from each family.

The local rate of tax which was fixed at 1 ½ annas for nisfkhiraj was also made a matter of burgain by various landlords.

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37 Ibid, P. 29
2. **South Bank Group:**

In South Bank Group, there were 271 *nisfkhiraj* estates. The total settled *nisfkhiraj* land of this group was 26,552 *bighas* in 1904 and 26,181 *bighas* in 1927.\(^{39}\)

Very few *nisfkhirajdars* used to cultivate their land. As a result subletting was very common in the *nisfkhiraj* sector of the group. Like other groups of the district, the rate of rent of subtenancy varied. In Dimarua *mauza* subletting was less in quantity. In Panbari *mauza* land was sublet at first class *sarkari* rate of rent, though the villages had third class land. Besides this, the tenants had to assist the landlords in reaping, grazing etc. In Ramsa and Beltola, the rates varied from Re. 1 to Rs. 8 per *bigha* and the tenants had to render physical service in addition to it. In Rani, Barduar and Chyani the rates of rent ran as high as Rs. 2 per *bigha*. In Chaygaon and Kharija Baranti, rent varied from Re. 1 and 4 *annas* to Re. 1 and 12 *annas* per *bighas*. However the measuring pole used in the area was usually eight hats.\(^{40}\)

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\(^{39}\) Barnes, H. C., Assessment Report, South Bank Group of Kamrup District, 1905, State Archives, Dispur, P. 3

\(^{40}\) Ibid, P. 5
3. **Barpeta Group:**

This group comprised 163 nisfkhiraj estates with an area of 60,392 bighas. Subtenancy was very common in the nisfkhiraj sector. The usual bigha rate of rent was the revenue demand in fourth class village i.e., Re. 1 for basti, 10 anna for rupit and 8 annas for faringati. Three annas per rupee was fixed as local tax. Furthermore, the tenants usually had to render some physical services for their landlords. The extra charges of cesses were also not uncommon. For instance, in Sarukhetri a fee of Re. 1 called *matipura* was levied on marriage. In paka mauza third class sarkani rates were charged in place of *matipura* at Re. 1 and *mukhchoani* at 8 annas to a rupee were levied. In some cases, the tenants had to supply two bhares or loads of paddy per year and in some cases supply of fuel was exacted. In Barpeta, the Bhakats or inhabitants of satra, Sundaridia and Barpeta, did not pay any revenue. Like the lakhiraj estates, the landlords of nisfkhiraj estates could also dispose of their land to any one they pleased. The government demand was paid from the satra fund. Same was the case with Jania satra. In Chenga, the system was more peculiar. Like the lakhiraj tenure of the area, in the case of nisfkhiraj tenure, there was no charge of premium from the new tenants; but the tenants had to act as dolabhari or palki bearers of their landlords on public occasions. In Bawanipur local tax was charged at two annas in the rupee.
and matipura was levied at Rs. 1 Rs. 3 Besides this, a sevakara or salami was annually levied at the rate of Rs. 3 to Rs. 5.\textsuperscript{41}

4. **CHAMARIA CHAPORI GROUP**:

In 1904, Chamaria group consisted of 28 nisfkhiraj estates which were reduced to 19 in 1927.\textsuperscript{42} According to the assessment of 1904, total area of nisfkhiraj estates in the group was 2,732 bighas which remained intact till 1927.

It is to note that under-tenancy was the common feature in the nisfkhiraj estates. Generally they paid revenue at half of the khiraj rate. Grain rents were very rare in the group and cash rent seldom differed far from the government rate of revenue. Like other groups of the district, the tenants of Chamaria had also to serve their landlords with physical labour on different occasions.

5. **PATI DARRANG GROUP**:

Pati Darrang Group had altogether 206 nisfkhiraj estates of different size. It comprised an area of 65,452 bighas as per the settlement of 1904.

\textsuperscript{41} Mc Swiney, J., Assessment Report, Barpeta Group, 1905, State Archives, Dispur, P P 2-6
\textsuperscript{42} Desai, S.P., Re-assessment Report, Chamaria Group, January, 1927, State Archives, Dispur, P 5
During the time of re-settlement, it decreased to 65,239 bighas.\textsuperscript{43} Partly, the \textit{nisfkhiraj} areas belonged to the temples and \textit{satras} and partly to the Brahmins attached to such institutions or their transferees. In most cases, the \textit{nisfkhirajdars} were non-cultivators.

Be that as it may, more than 50 percent of \textit{nisfkhiraj} land in the group was sublet on different terms\textsuperscript{44}.

The \textit{Paiks} of the temples or \textit{bhakats} of the \textit{satras} had to pay rent half of \textit{khiraj} rate. But the agricultural \textit{rayots} had to pay it at full of \textit{khiraj} rate. Old tenants in the lands pertaining to the Maharaja of Darbhanga, Babu Upendra Nath sen, and a few others had to pay rent at full \textit{khiraj} rates. The tenants under the Parbatiya Gossains had to pay certain other cesses. Physical service was also not uncommon. The measurement of land was normally made with a 7 \textit{hat} or 7 1/2 \textit{hat} pole. Everywhere in the \textit{nisfkhiraj} sector burgaining was very common between the landlords and the tenants on the question of terms and conditions of the rental.

The classification of \textit{nisfkhiraj} land had been done in the same system as \textit{khiraj} land. Unit rate had been assigned to predominantly \textit{nisfkhiraj} villages in the same conditions as \textit{khiraj} village.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{43} Desai, S P, Re-assessment Report, Pati Darrang Group, 1927, State Archives, Dispur, P 6
\textsuperscript{44} Barnes, H C, Assessment Report, Pati Darrang Group, 1903, State Archives, Dispur, P 6
\textsuperscript{45} Desai, S P, Op cit, PP, 11-12
6. **BIJNI GROUP**

In this group, the number of *nisfkhiraj* estates was only three which covered an area of 389 *bighas* as per the settlements of 1893 and 1904.\(^4^6\)

Probably government demand was the basis of fixation of rents. But the landlords were in the habit of collecting rent in excess to the government demand viz., three *annas* in each *bigha* of land. Besides this, the landlords demanded physical labour of the tenants on different occasions like repairing of their houses, collection of firewood etc.

7. **BAJALI GROUP**:

*Nisfkhiraj* estates in the Bajali Group numbered 125 and the area settled was 41,512 *bighas*.\(^4^7\) Except in Chapaguri *mauza*, there were *nisfkhiraj* land in all the *mauzas* of the group. Some *nisfkhiraj* land belonging to temples were known as *paikan* and land belonging to Satras or religious institutions, were known as *dharmottar*. But greater portions of the *nisfkhiraj* tenure in the group were *brahmottar*. The biggest *brahmottar* landholders were the Parbatiya Gossains.

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\(^{4^6}\) Barnes, H.C., Assessment Report of Bijní Group, 1904, State Archives, Dispur, P. 3

\(^{4^7}\) Barnes, H.C., Assessment Report, Bajali Group, 1905, State Archives, Dispur, P-6
The bulk of the nisfkhiraj land was sublet. In case of the paikan debottar and dharmottar land, the old rayots who rendered physical services to temples and satras were allowed to pay revenue at half the khiraj rate. But those who did not render physical service, had to pay the revenue at full khiraj rate. On the other hand, the new rayots had to pay much more. In the brahmottar estate subletting was made on huge bargaining and each landlord made his own term agreements with the tenants. So far as the tenancies under Parbatiya Gossains were concerned, the khiraj rates of revenue varied from place to place. The exaction on account of sevakara was almost universal. Re.1 to Rs. 3 were charged as sevakara. The puja subscription of an anna was widely spread. A paise or two was levied for every rent receipt issued to the tenants. In some villages, each tenant had to give five seers of rice as rasad whenever the Gossains or their agents visited the villages. However it seemed that initially ordinary Assamese nisfkhirajdars accepted the rate of revenue fixed by the government. But as the days rolled on, the Assamese landlords ceased to be modest. They used to fix a uniform rate of cash rent which often exceeded the full khiraj rates. They frequently insisted on adhi terms and extorted physical service. The principles of classification of land in nisfkhiraj estates were same as in the khiraj land.

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48 Ibid
8. **Bangsar group:**

This group had a vast settled *nispkhiraj* area of 80,735 *bighas* as per the settlement report of 1903-04. But the same was increased to 84,447 *bighas* in 1927. Such increase was not due to any new settlement of areas, but to traversing the existing non-cadastral areas and bringing them on to a cadastral basis.\(^49\)

As subletting was the established rule of *nispkhiraj* land, there were large number of tenants under the group. Existence of numerous temples in the area was an important characteristic of the group. Most of the important temples were and are situated at Hazo. Extensive *lakhiraj* and *nispkhiraj* land was granted to the Hayagriba Madhav temple. Large areas of land were also endowed to the temple of Umananda. Besides this, there were a huge number of *dharmottar* and *brahmottar* estates scattered in different groups of the district.

So far as the tenants were concerned, the rate of rent in temple land was low. The *paiks* paid it at half the *khiraj* rate and rendered physical services to the landlords. The non-*paiks* paid rent at full *khiraj* rate, but rendered no physical service.

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\(^{49}\) Desai, S.P., Re-assessment Report, Bangsar Group, State Archives, Dispur, P. 6
The tenants under Maharaja of Darbhanga and Babu Upendra Nath Sen used to pay rent at full \textit{khiraj} rate. On the otherhand, Parbatia Gossains levied additional cesses which differed from place to place. The petty landholders tried to collect as much as they could insist on the tenants. Therefore, they charged cash rent often exceeding the full \textit{khiraj} revenue by 25 to 30 percent or ever more. Sometimes a few landlords extracted their profit by using shorter measuring rod of 7 cubits or even less.$^{50}$

9. \textbf{Ramdia Group}:

Ramdia Group had a settled \textit{nisfkhiraj} area of 6,131 \textit{bighas} in 1904. And it was increased to 6,225 \textit{bighas} in 1927.

Subletting was common in the \textit{nisfkhiraj} areas of the group. \textit{Chuktiadhi} was rare and \textit{gutiadhi} was occasionally met with.

Though \textit{nisfkhiraj estates} were assessed at half the \textit{khiraj} rates, the landholders commonly sublet their land at a rent in excess of the government

\hspace{1cm}$^{50}$ Ibid, P 10
revenue. For instance, the mauzadar of Barkhetri collected four annas in excess of the government revenue rate.51

10. **BASKA GROUP:**

Baska Group had 29 nisfkhiraj estates, one in Pub Baska mauza and the others in Betna mauza.52

Total settled nisfkhiraj area of the group as per the settlement of 1904 was 8057 bighas, while the same underwent a slight diminution in Betna owing to acquisition of land for railway purposes and reduced to 7,931 bighas in 1927.

Rents realized by the landlords were usually the same as in the case of khiraj land in the neighbourhood. However some landlords compelled the tenants to render physical service of 8 or 9 days in the year in addition to paying high cash rent.53

**TENANCY IN KHIRAJ ESTATES:**

As referred to, the land settled for ordinary cultivations in Kamrup fell under three sectors i.e., lakhiraj, nisfkhiraj and khiraj. The former two

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51 Desai, S.P., Re-assessment Report, Ramdia Group, 1927, State Archives, Dispur P P 3-7
52 Desai, S.P., Re-assessment Report, Baska Group, 1927, State Archives, Dispur, P 18
53 Ibid, P. 11
tenures were not benificiaf to the alien government. That is why in course of time, it started paying more attentions to the third sector. In fact, as there was no ready source of income except land revenue the alien government gave more stress to enhance khiraj areas at the cost of lakhiraj and nisfkhiraj. The British government spent a lot of time and energy in executing the plan of reducing la and nisfkhiraj estates. As a result, with the passage of time government was able to get increasing trend in the khiraj areas. The khiraj areas were fully settled under ordinary rules that had been in force from time to time.

Khiraj estates were of two types i.e., the temporarily settled estates held direct from the government on periodic lease and temporarily settled estates held direct from the government on annual lease. In 1883, decennial settlement was introduced in the areas where land was not held permanently. This settlement conferred on the holder a permanent, heritable and transferable right in land. As settlement was made for a specific term of years, the settlement holders had to apply for re-settlement on the expiary of the lease. In Kamrup district, such estates covered the largest areas. Besides this, there was a good number of temporarily settled full revenue paying estates which were held direct from the government on annual lease. The annual settlement holder had no heritable and
transferable rights, though in practice they enjoyed such opportunity without the interference of the government. Ordinarily, on the expiary of the term of settlement, the annual settlement holders were given re-settlement. With the passage of time, annual leases were being converted gradually into periodic leases in order to give incentive for the improvement of land.

Apparently it seems that the *mauzadar* was the approved authority of fiscal management of each *paragana*. But in practice, things were different. The *Chamuadars, Khatdars* and *Doubledars* who possessed large estates in the *khiraj* sector had the option of paying rent direct to the collector. It is worth noting that soon after the possession of the state, the British found a few *khiraj paiks* in Kamrup. They mostly consisted of the oil manufacturers of Ramdia and silk weavers of Soalkuchi. The *paiks* had to pay taxes which varied from Rs. 2 to 3. Bogle, mentions in his report that in Kamrup district there were altogether seventy six *khiraj mahals* and one separate *Jalkar mahal*. He estimated that the total land assessed at *khiraj* rate was 2,12,447 *puras*, 4 *bighas*, 15 *Dun* and 3 *kathas*. On the other hand, total population of the *khiraj* sector figured as 139,370 and the

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54 The term "doubledar" signify that the proprietors of private estates who paid revenue less than Rs. 100 and direct to the collector, presented two challans. One of this challan was to give to the *mauzadar* in whose mauza the estate was situated.

number of *charus* or kitchen fire was 35,941. So far as subtenancy was concerned while the *lakhiraj* and *nisfkhiraj* sectors had experienced heavy load, the *khiraj* sector was almost out of such pressure of subtenancy. However this does not indicate that subtenancy was unknown to the *khiraj* sector itself. There was the presence of the landlords who did not belong to the cultivators class. Most of the *mauzadras, chamuadars, khatdars* and *doubledars* were landlords of the *khiraj* sector and they used to sublet their land. It is found that in the district there were 151 *mauzadars*, 18 *khatdars*, 61 *chamuadars* and 110 *doubledars*.

A groupwise verification of the tenantry of *khiraj* tenure would help in getting a picture of it.

1. **BARBHAG GROUP:**

According to the Assessment Report of 1891-92, the *khiraj* area of Barbhag group had 47, 180 *bighas* annually settled and 277,142 *bighas* decennially settled land, the total being 324,322 *bighas*. But after ten years (1903-04) *khiraj* area slightly reduced to 318,414 *bighas* of which 74,878 *bighas* annually settled and 243,538 *bighas* decennially settled.

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56 Ibid, P. 58
57 Mills, A.J.M , Op cit, P 317
58 Barnes, H.C., Assessment Report, Barbhag Group, 1904, State Archives, Dispur, P 3
The statement follows shows that in comparison to lakhiraj and nisfkhiraj sectors subletting was low in khiraj sector in the group.\(^{59}\) viz.,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TENURE</th>
<th>TOTAL SETTLED AREA (BIGHAS)</th>
<th>AREA SUBLET (BIGHAS)</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ON CASH ON GRAIN ON MIXED TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RENT RENT RENT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khiraj</td>
<td>318,414</td>
<td>47,558 8,023 923 56,504</td>
<td>17.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the assessment of 1927, on the other hand, total settled khiraj area was increased to 396,401 bighas. Surprisingly the percentage of subletting decreased by 9 per cent,\(^{60}\) which is shown in the statement bellow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TENURE</th>
<th>TOTAL SETTLED AREAS (BIGHAS)</th>
<th>AREA SUBLET (BIGHAS)</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ON CASH ON GRAIN ON MIXED TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>RENT RENT RENT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khiraj</td>
<td>396,401</td>
<td>30,602 4,285 1,554 36,441</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{59}\) Ibid.
\(^{60}\) Desai, S.P., Re-assessment Report, Banbhag Group, 1927, State Archives, Dispur, P. 28
Regarding the correctness of percentage of subtenancy, doubt had been raised. It had been suspected that the tenants acting often in collusion with landlords gave incorrect information to the Government officers. As a result, the whole truth regarding subletting did not come out. In fact it was a common practice of the landlords to insist on the tenants to conceal facts from the Government officers. The tenants who regarded their landlords as their saviour, did not hesitate to do so. Some landlords realized rent for all rupit land at an all round rate which approximated to the Government rate of revenue for the best rupit. I.e., athaletia baotoli. As a result, they received a profit of about 25 percent in addition to short measurement as in the cases of nisfkhiraj and lakhiraj, besides the benefit of physical service of the tenants. The margin of profit on homestead land sublet was generally very little. Paddy land was sublet on term of guti-adhi. Chukti-adhi was not widely prevalent in the group. In this system the landlords share varied from 2½ to 3 mounds per bigha according to the yield of the crop. For instance, in Fulguri, an average village in Dharmapur mauza, lands were sublet in terms of, chukti-adhi at 2½ mounds, guti-adhi at half produce and chukani varied from Rs. 1 to Rs. 1 and 8 annas per bigha. In another village, Barmakhibaha in Nambarbhag mauza, a landlord charged rents for kathiatoli or Ahutoli at the rate ranging from 12 annas to Re. 1 and per bigha.; for ahu growing

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61 Ibid. 135
land *chukti-adhi* at 2½ *mounds* and for *Bardhantoli* land *Chuktiadhi* at 3 *mounds* per *bigha*.\(^{62}\)

Nine-tenth of the *khiraj* area in this group was owned and cultivated by the same persons. In the remaining portions, the undertenants cultivated land on the terms of the landlords. In most cases, they had to abide by the will and interest of the landlords.

2. **SOUTH BANK GROUP:**

According to the settlement Report of 1904-05, the south Bank had a settled *khiraj* area of 2,52,682 *bighas* of land, of which 1,07,100 *bighas* annually settled and 1,45,582 *bighas* decennially settled.\(^{63}\)

Subletting in this group was not minimal in 1904-05,\(^{64}\) viz.:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TENURE</th>
<th>TOTAL SETTLED AREAS (BIGHAS)</th>
<th>AREA SUBLET (BIGHAS)</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>ON CASH RENT</td>
<td>ON GRAIN RENT</td>
<td>ON MIXED RENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khiraj</td>
<td>2,52,182</td>
<td>30,234</td>
<td>3,479</td>
<td>1,432</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^{62}\) Ibid, P. 29
\(^{63}\) Barnes, H.C., Assessment Report, South Bank Group, 1904-05, State Archives, Dispur, P. 35
\(^{64}\) Desai, S.P., Re-assessment Report, South Bank Group, 1927, State Archives, Dispur, P. 12
But twenty years later, subletting in the *khiraj* sector of the group was decreased to nearly 7 percent inspite of the enhancement of the total settled land,\(^{65}\) viz.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TENURE</th>
<th>TOTAL SETTLED AREAS (BIGHAS)</th>
<th>AREA SUBLET (BIGHAS)</th>
<th>ON CASH RENT</th>
<th>ON GRAIN RENT</th>
<th>ON MIXED RENT</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khiraj</td>
<td>408,885</td>
<td></td>
<td>22,129</td>
<td>3,588</td>
<td>2,213</td>
<td>27,930</td>
<td>6.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This decrease of subtenancy probably was the outcome of the fact that the eastern and western portions of the group had vast non-cadastral areas. Such areas were cultivated by *pattadars* themselves. This non-cadastral area had become cadastral during the next twenty years and thus decreased the percentage on subletting.

The extent of subletting varied from *mauza* to *mauza*. In the villages under Panbari *mauza* near Gauhati, subletting was thirty percent while in Beltola it was twenty-six percent.\(^{66}\)

*Adhi* was the main term for *rupit* and good *baotoli* lands. Inferior land was let out on *chukani* or cash rent. The *chuki-adhi* rate for *rupit* land

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65 Ibid, P. 13
66 Ibid, P. 14
varied from 15 to 25 pura of paddy per pura of land. The land let out for cash rent normally allowed a profit as high as hundred percent. In case of low profit of the landlords, some other considerations such as additional physical service etc. took place. In realizing cash rent different methods were adopted. For instance, during the period of resettlement of 1927, it was found that the landlords of Namati realized Rs. 8 per pura, besides this physical service for 8 days from the tenants within the period of contract. In Amcheng Village cash rent was realized in kind, i.e., six duns per pura of land in addition to physical service.

3. BARPETA CHAPORI GROUP:

Khiraj area of Barpeta chapori group had as per the settlement Report of 1893-94 was 1,32,001 bighas of land. Of this, annually settled land was 1,29,200 bighas and decennially settled 2,801 bighas. But settled khiraj areas were reduced to 76,144 bighas in 1903-04. Of this, 72,832 bighas were annually settled and 3,312 bighas decennially settled. The decrease of settled area of khiraj sector was due to devastating earthquake of 1897. But in the resettlement of 1927, the settled khiraj area
was considerably increased to 346,546 bighas, of which 321,328 bighas were annually settled and 20,007 bighas decennially settled.\textsuperscript{69}

Sub-tenants were available in the *khiraj* sector under Barpeta Group with exception to the Barpeta town.\textsuperscript{70} As referred to, in the town, the *bhakats* could dispose of their land to any one they pleased and the Government demand was paid from the *satra* fund. However, it is hardly believable that subtenancy was absent in the town. Probably the fact was not presented to the Government officers.

4. **CHAMARIA CHAPORI GROUP:**

According to the Assessment Report of 1904-05, Chamaria group had 36,918 bighas of settled *khiraj* land. Of this 28,929 bighas were annually settled and 7,989 bighas decennially settled.\textsuperscript{71} Obviously, the quantity of settled *khiraj* area fixed in 1893-94 was found to have decreased in 1904-05 due to devastating earthquake. In 1927, on the other hand, it increased to 72,710 bighas (annually settled).\textsuperscript{72}

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{69} Mc Swney, J., Assessment Report, Barpeta Group, 1905, State Archives, Dispur, P 4
\textsuperscript{70} Desai, S. P., Re-assessment Report, Barpeta Group, 1927, State Archives, Dispur, P 11
\textsuperscript{71} Barnes, H. C., Assessment Report, Chamaria Group, 1905, State Archives, Dispur, P 3
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid, PP. 4-5
A very insignificant part of the *khiraj* land under this group was sublet. The subtenancy statement follows\(^73\) -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tenure</th>
<th>Total Settled Areas (Bighas)</th>
<th>Area Sublet (Bighas)</th>
<th>Cash Rent</th>
<th>Grain Rent</th>
<th>Mixed Rent</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khiraj</td>
<td>63,481</td>
<td></td>
<td>170</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In case of subtenancy, the grain rent was rare and cash rent seldom differed from Government rate of revenue.

5. **Pati Darrang Group**:

In 1891-92, Pati-Darrang group had settled *khiraj* area of 83,163 bighas of land, with 21,063 bighas being annually settled and 62,100 bighas decennially settled. In 1903-04, the figures were found enhanced and annually settled land increased to 40,876 bighas and decennially to 55,357 bighas to a total of 96,233 bighas. In the settlement of 1927 annually settled *khiraj* land became 40,851 bighas and periodically settled 87,895 bighas.\(^74\)

In several *mauzas* under this group, large areas of land were sublet. According to the settlement report of 1904-05, 18 percent *khiraj* land were

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\(^73\) Ibid, P 9

\(^74\) Desai, S P., Re-assessment Report, Pati Darrang Group, 1927, State Archives, Daspur, P.6
sublet in the group. But, in the Reassessment Report of 1927, when settled khiraj land increased by 55 percent, the area sublet appeared to be little over 7 percent. Subletting was greater in Panduri and Pati Darrang mauzas.

Cash rent was predominant in this group. Some landlords made profit by levying uniform rate of rent for all classes of land while some others applied the Government rate and realized about four annas in the rupee in excess. Most of the landlords secured their object to gain more and more profit by using a measuring rod of 7 cubit. Besides this, the landlords compelled the tenants to offer extra physical service varying from 2 to 10 days within the period of contract. Occasionally land was given on adhi terms.

6. BIJNI GROUP

As per the Settlement Report of 1904-05, Bijini group had an area of 49,096 bighas of khiraj land. Of this, 33,851 bighas annually settled and 15,245 bighas decennially settled. In 1893 the area was , 26,509 bighas only.

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77 Mc Swiney, J., Assessment Report, Bijini Group, 1905, State Archives, Dispur, P.3
Be that as it may, there was subletting in the khiraj sector under Bijini group. In Bijni mauza, 108 bighas and in Damka Chakabousi mouza, 3,869 bighas were sublet. It formed 14 percent of the total khiraj land.\textsuperscript{78}

As in most part of Kamrup district, the Government demand formed the basis for fixation of rents in the area. But the landlords were in the habit of collecting rent in excess of the Government rate. Sometimes, they collected the exact amount of revenue from the tenants in consideration of the fact that they wanted to keep command over the tenants for exacting physical labour from time to time.

Half of the gross produce was the general grain rent for the rupit land. Sometimes rice seedlings were supplied by the landlords.

7. **Bajali Group**:

In 1902-03, Bajali Group had 119,675 bighas khiraj settled land. Out of this, annually settled land was 53,579 bighas and periodically 66,149 bighas.\textsuperscript{79} In 1927 khiraj area got enhancement to 167,614 bighas. (annually settled 33,330 bighas and periodically settled 134,284 bighas.)\textsuperscript{80}

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid
Subtenancy was not uncommon in the *khiraj* sector of the group. About 6.28 percent of the total *khiraj* area was sublet. Subletting was concentrated in the centrally located *mauzas*, i.e., Uttar Bajali and Pub-Bajali. In the centrally located *mauzas*, most of the landlords had other sources of income. *Basti* and inferior paddy land was usually let out on cash rent allowing a margin of profit of about 25 percent over the Government rate. Besides this, liability to render personal service for the landlords at the time of sowing, reaping and on festive occasions was obligatory on the part of the tenants. Fertile paddy lands were given generally on *adhi* term, making it more convenient to the landlords. In this group the system of *daladhi* was in vogue. The grains were divided between the landlords and the peasants before threshing and in case of *gutiadhi* the grains were divided in between the landlords and peasants after threshing. The system of *chukti* was also prevalent there. The tenants had to take all risks of crops and were kept binding to pay to the landlord a fixed quantity of grain, even if there was a failure of cropping. The average rate of *chukti-adhi* was 2½ mounds of paddy per *bigha* annually.

8. **BANGSAR GROUP:**

This group had a vast settled *khiraj* land of 120,179 bighas in 1904-05.81

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81 McSwiney, J., Assessment Report, Bangsar Group, Op cit., P. 3
In 1925, the settled *khiraj* area increased to 198,317 bighas, of which 55,262 bighas were annually and 142,383 bighas decennially settled.\(^8^2\)

In 1904-05 *Khiraj* area subletting was 13 percent. This percentage came down to 5 in 1927.\(^8^3\) Earthquake of 1897 was an important factor for which large number of people had lost cultivable land. Thus there was decreasing trend in the percentage of subtenancy. But this condition did not last long. There was gradual improvement of land which caused upward trend in subletting.

*Adhi* system was prevalent in the areas, having *rupit* land. In non-*rupit* land, rent was realized from 25 to 50 percent in excess of the government rate. Method of levying rents in the whole group was not uniform. The landlords who sublet their land generally gave priority to his own convenience at the cost of the tenants. For instance, in Katanipara, a village under Modertola *mauza*, rent was realized at *sarkari* rate. In Chutiapara village also, rent was realised at *sarkari* rate, but land was measured with 7 *hat tar*. In Boregaon village, the rate of rent was 4 *annas* in excess of the government rate. In this village half of the land was settled.


\(^8^3\) Ibid, P. 9
at chukti-adhi and half at 1 rupee per bigha for all classes of land. In Sila-Sendurighopa half of the land was given out on chuktiadhi at 4 puras per bigha and half at cash rent, but 8 annas in excess of the government rate of rent. In the Barbangsar mauza, in some places rent was realised at a rate of 25 percent in excess of the government rate. Besides this, land was measured with shorter pole (7 cubits) and two or three days service for the contracted period was exacted in favour of the landlord. 

9. **Ramdia Group**

According to the assessment of 1904-05, Ramdia group had 46,132 bighas settled khiraj land, of which 4,2,520 bighas were annually settled and 3,612 bighas periodically settled. In 1924-25, the settled area was increased to 114, 212 bighas. Of this, 98,950 bighas were annually settled and 15,262 bighas periodically settled.

In Ramdia group, practically there was no record of subletting in the khiraj sector. Probably government officers could not collect proper record of subletting in the sector. In 1927, subletting was found to be .71 percent. The bulk of the land was let out on cash rent which was usually the same

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84 ibid, P 10
as the government rate of revenue. Grain rent was found to be an exception only.

10. **BASKA GROUP**

In 1903-04, Baska group had 112,467 bighas khiraj land. This figure increased to 195,427 bighas in 1927.

In *khiraj* sector, subletting was 4.4 percent. Five sixth of the area sublet was leased out on cash rent or mixed rent, i.e., both case and kind. The margin of profit obtained by cash rent was about 25 percent over the government rate. Rates of grain rent followed suit. *Samanadhi* and *chuktiadhi* rate varied from 1 1/4 to 2 1/2 mounds.86

It appears from the above resumption that in a rayotary district like Kamrup there was huge amount of land kept under sub-tenancy. Subletting was almost equally available in all the three sectors. The result was that the number of tenants who in course of time turned to be tenants-at-will was considerably increased. The alien government took steps to reduce the areas of *lakhiraj* and *nisfkhiraj* tenures. To a considerable extent, this effort of the government was fulfilled. But the incidence of sub-tenancy was not reduced to the desired extent. There were two distinct classes of tenants among the rural masses in Kamrup; one consisting with

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the non-cultivating landholders and the other consisting with the landless peasantry. Terms of tenant landlord relationships were made according to the suitwill of the landlords. The tenants had nothing to do anything in this regard.

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