The district of Kamrup is one of the eight plains districts of Assam and lies between 25°43' and 26°53' North and 90°39' and 92°11' East. This district covers an area of 3311 sq. miles with the rural population of 25,62,572 (1971 census). It is bound on the North by Bhutan, on the east by the Darrang and Newgong districts, on the south by the United Khasi and Jayantia Hills district of the Meghalaya State and on the west by the Bealpara district. The mighty Brahmaputra river which is flowing a straight course from east to west in Assam divides the Kamrup district into two distinct parts popularly known as Uttarpar (North Bank) and Dakhinpar (South Bank). The area of northern portion of the district is about twice the area of the southern portion. The district has a number of small hills within a range of 3 to 5 Kilometres on both sides of the Brahmaputra and their hill height ranges from 500' to 2000'ft. above the sea level. A little portion of the Himalaya range to the south of Devangiri falls within the northern boundary of the district. The southern boundary consists of spurs of the Khasi Hills. There are some small hills in the western Kamrup adjoining the Garo Hills range, mostly covered with Sal and Teak plantation. This district being one of the religious centres of the ancient and medieval India, most of its hills are associated with mythology and they are the
pilgrims places of the Hindus for generations. There are the famous temples of the Kamakhya and Nilachal, Aswaklanta, Navagrah, Hajo, Gopeswar Madan Kamadev, Kameswar, Sidheswar etc. The Hajo Hills being also associated with the Buddhist Mahamuni Monastery and the Muslims shrine of Poa Mucca.

The north bank of the river Brahmaputra is usually subject to inundation during the rainy season due to heavy floods caused by the Brahmaputra and its principal tributaries namely Manas, Barnadi and Pagladia. These tributaries are directly flowing from the Himalaya mountains traversing a short distance. That is why these tributaries become much turbulent with heavy rush of a great volume of water during the rainy days. This has been badly affecting the normal life of the people in this region every year causing destruction of houses, crops, cattle, etc. Besides there are some other tributaries which also add to the fury of Brahmaputra to a great extent. These tributaries have a peculiar habit of changing their course very frequently. On the other hand the south bank is considerably less liable to floods, except a small portion of the west Kamrup. The average annual rainfall of the district is 1752.94 mm (69") which is more or less similar to the other plains districts of the State. The physical aspects of the Kamrup district has greatly influenced the social and economic conditions of the people in the district. The south bank and the central belt of the north bank due to its favourable conditions of agriculture are densely populated and the land is fully used for the purpose
of cultivating paddy, mustard, jute and pulses. Along the Char areas on both sides of the Brahmaputra the people cultivate short duration crops and vegetables in abundant quantity and thus maintaining a low price of such produces in this district.

Though agriculture is the main occupation of this district, there are many traders, craftsmen and industrialists. The people of this district are generally more enterprising in comparison to some other districts in the State. The village Hajo, and the towns Soalkuchi Sarthebari and Bapeta are the important centres of Cottage industries. In the Soalkuchi town almost all the people both male and female keep themselves engaged in spinning yarn and weaving pat, muga and endi cloths of superior qualities and designs. These products due to their fine texture and durability is unique in the whole of India. The density of population in the district of Kamrup is the highest in Assam. Soalkuchi was the only village in Assam where due to its thick population the cadastral village map had to be prepared in the same scale of that of the town maps, long before it was declared a town. The village Hajo and Sarthebari towns are famous for bell metal and brass metal industries and the Bapeta town is famous for its ivory works.

ADMINISTRATIVE DIVISIONS.

The district of Kamrup has three sub-divisions for civil administration. These sub-divisions are Gauhati,
Barpeta and Nalbari. Each sub-division has been divided into several Police Stations for the purpose of Police administration, several revenue circles for the purposes of revenue administration and several Development Blocks for the purposes of rural development and Panchayat administration. As such there are 7 Police Stations, 7 Revenue Circles and 9 Development Blocks in the Gauhati Sub-Division; 5 Police Station, 5 revenue circles and 8 Development Blocks in the Barpeta Sub-Division, 4 Police Station, 4 revenue circle and 8 Development Blocks in the Nalbari Sub-Division. Every revenue circle or Development Block consist of several Mauzas and each Mauza* consist of several revenue villages and each revenue village generally consist of more than one gaon, suba or para (village hamlets).

Under the Assam Panchayat Act, 1959 each civil subdivision in the plains districts of Assam was declared to be an administrative area of a Mahkuma Parishad established under the act. There were 18 Sub-Divisions and 18 Mahkuma Parishads established in the 7 plains districts of the State. Within the jurisdiction of every Mahkuma Parishad, Anchalik Panchayats were established whose jurisdiction was co-terminus with a Development Blocks. Under the same Act a Development Block or Anchalik Panchayat area was divided into several gaon sabha areas with an average population of 3,000 in each Gaon Sabha. Out of 2602 Gaon Sabha established within 121 Anchalik Panchayats (Development Blocks) in 7 plains districts
of Assam 561 gaon sabhas were established within 25 Anchalik Panchayats (Development Blocks) in the Kamrup district. (The particulars of the Anchalik Panchayats and the Gaon Sabha are given in appendix I).

In Kamrup district there are four Municipalities at Gauhati, Barpeta, Nalbari and Palasbari and eight town committees at the Barpeta road, north Gauhati, Sarthebari Kangla, Kamalhya, Tihu, Pandu and Sualkuchi. In August, 1973 the Gauhati Municipal area along with some other areas of Greater Gauhati was declared as a city corporation under the Gauhati Corporation Act, 1972.

THE VILLAGE SETTINGS.

In the district of Kamrup, like that of the other plains districts in Assam, the villages were generally located on the high lands as far as available in between the paddy fields. From a distance we can see that by the side of the paddy fields graves of bamboos, arecanut, coconut and other fruit bearing and fuel plants appear like a jungle island but which is actually a village with dwelling houses. Taking a road or a village path as the main thoroughfare of the villagers they established their homestead with distinct compound of each family either on both the sides or on one side of such road or village path.

The village hamlets also have the similar settings along with the feeder roads or paths leading from
the main road or path of the village. Every household has a compound demarcated either by fence, drains or hedge plants. Each such compound generally contains plantation area-nut, coconut, bamboo and other useful plants. Besides, the dwelling houses of each family within such a compound there are separate kitchen house, granary, cow-sheds and other extra houses for the purposes of paddy husking, keeping country looms, fuel storage etc. Many families have their own tank or pond within their respective compound. This kind of village settings is found in most of villages in the plains districts of Assam except some thickly populated villages and haphazard settlements.

The area of one or more such villages with its hamlets and adjoining cultivable fields forms a revenue village for the purpose of Government revenue records, as prepared by the cadastral survey with convenient boundary demarcation by the survey staff. In the areas where the cadastral survey has not been completely done, a village is known by its traditionally recognised boundaries including the paras, subhas etc. The Superintendent of Census for Assam Shri R.H. Pakyntein, I.A.S, (Census Report, 1961) gave a definition of the villages in Assam as below:-

"In Assam a village means a cadastral village where there has been cadastral survey. In the plain districts where there has been no cadastral survey, it is taken to be
a gaon together with its adjacent tolas, paras etc., provided that none of these independent collections of houses are so large or so distant from the central village with distinct individual names. In the hills, the most convenient definition of a village is a collection of houses bearing a separate name and situated with in certain boundaries, traditionally recognised by the villagers."

This definition of the village in Assam appears to be the reproduction of the definition given in the 1951 Census report with a little modification. In the 1951 Census report the then Superintendent of Census, Assam, Shri S.R.B. Veghaiwalla, I.C.S. defined the village as a non-cadastral area in the plains as a gaon or gram together with the adjoining tolas, paras etc. provided that none of these independent collection of houses are so large or to form by themselves true villages with distinct individual names. The Census Superintendent also remarked - "The villages of Assam are not true villages as ordinarily understood. A cadastral village the unit of the revenue survey is locally a very well known unit; it has been surveyed and mapped and the ordinary villagers understand it well. It is, however, by no means a village in the ordinary sense of the word, it merely happens to be the most convenient Unit on which to base the frame work of the Census." (12)

A village is basically the collection of dwelling houses with a distinct name and boundary of its own, whether

it is recognised as a basic unit of administration or not. This hold good in respect of the villages in Assam, the boundaries and the names of which have been traditionally recognised by the villagers themselves. The villagers in many parts of India are found to be collection of dwelling houses clustered together over compact areas with distinct boundaries. Such village settings are not seen in the villages of the Plains district of Assam. Here the dwelling houses in a village appears to have settled by rows stretching over a long strip of land and along with a village road, instead of clustering round over a compact area. In such settings of a village of family compounds adjoining each other are very much distinct rather than the village boundaries. Such a village settings in Assam has it own convenience of privacy and independent living of the families.

Except some villages scattered in the newly settled areas with new names, all the old villages are known by their traditional names. The names and boundaries of the revenue villages are also well known to the villagers as the cultivators have been greatly concerned with their records of rights over land, prepared on the basis of such revenue villages. All the administrative works of the Government in the State are based upon these revenue village units, rather than the traditional villages.