CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION ; HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
There are various versions about the origin of the name Goalpara. These are as under: (1) During the reign of the Deva Kings of ancient Kamarupa Goalpara was under the administration of a deputy, named Iswara Ghosa. It is said that he was influenced by the religious ethics of Buddhism and became too generous to his subjects. He granted a plot of land to a Brahmin of the then Gwalitippika district, which, it may be presumed, formed a part of the modern district of Goalpara. There is a general belief that the present name Goalpara is, perhaps, derived from Gwalitippika, which literally means Gwali village or milkmen's village; (2) there was a big Char or re-formation of alluvial land on the bed of river near the confluence of the river Manas with the mighty Brahmaputra, which, in course of time, became a suitable place for the cowherds. Many cowherds, goals as they are called, settled in the Char referred to for grazing their cattle, and the place came to be known popularly as Goaltuli, a colony of the milkmen.

It is believed that the name Goalpara is derived from the term Goaltull in the corrupt form\(^2\); (3) the district was named after the Goalpara town which became the headquarters of the district during British regime\(^3\). Taking all these together, we may come to the conclusion that the place came to be known as such as the goals lived there. Thus, the name Goalpara is associated with the vernacular term qwalli or goal, which means milkman.

**Revenue history of the Goalpara Zamindaries:**

The region referred to by the term Goalpara includes three modern districts, viz., Goalpara, Dhubri, and Kokrajhar. These three districts formed the old district of Goalpara, which lies at the western part of the modern State of Assam. Goalpara went under the Moghul administration in the middle of the Seventeenth Century, and formed the eastern part of the Moghul Empire till it, with the rest of Bengal, was ceded to the British by the Emperor’s Forman of the 12th August, 1765.

Under the Moghuls, the whole of this border region of Bengal was divided into great estates, and were held, for

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3. Ibid.
the most part, by their original owners, the Zamindars, who were practically independent. As acknowledgement of fealty to the Moghul Emperor, they paid a small tribute to the Muhammadan Faujdar of Rangamati in kind, viz., a certain number of elephants or a small quantity of the precious wood, Agar, to support certain garrisons, and to contribute to the maintenance of the Dacca Artillery Park.

When the British obtained the Diwani in Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa by virtue of the Forman referred to, this region of Goalpara district passed over to the administration of the East India Company. But things continued in this region on the same footing as before. The Zamindars were left almost independent, and the British used to accept the tribute they paid to the Moghul Government as land revenue. The contribution of revenue in kind was changed for money payment some time before the Decennial Settlement. During the time of Decennial Settlement this tribute-money was converted into land revenue demand, and the revenue fixed as such was made permanent by the Bengal Regulation I

4. Appendix V, Extract from a Memorandum on the North-East Frontier of Bengal by Sir A. Mackenzie, 1869, pp. 30-37, in Major Hurst, F.C. & Mr. Smart, A.B., A Brief History of the Surveys of the District of Goalpara, Shillong, 1917, pp. XXII-XXIX.
of 1793 promulgated by Lord Cornwallis, the then Governor General of India. From 1765 to 1822 these estates comprising the old police circles of Goalpara, Dhubri, and Karaibari formed a part of the permanently-settled Rangpur district, known as Rangamati district. The Zamindars of these permanently-settled estates were in constant struggle with the neighbouring Garos for the maintenance of their supremacy over the latter. It is to be noted here that the Garos may be divided into three classes—dependent, tributary and independent. The Garos who lived in the plain portion of the hills attached to these border estates were brought to the control of the Zamindars. They were dependent. The Garos who lived in the upper spurs of the hills adjacent to these estates were subjected to pay tribute to the Zamindars. They were tributary. Beyond these, the Garos, who lived in the high mountains in the interior, were out of the reach of the Zamindars. They were independent. It is said that the Zamindars of Karaibari and Mechpara, in their bid to bring the independent Garos to their control, were engaged

6. Major Hurst, F.C. & Mr. Smart, A.B., Op cit., p.1
7. Physical and Political Geography of the Province of Assam, Shillong, 1896 (Reprinted from the Report of the Administration of the Province of Assam for the year 1892-93 and published by the authority), p.83
in wars with them, and at this stage the British decided intervention on behalf of the mountaineers. David Scott, the acting judge-magistrate of Rangpur, was deputed to make an inquiry into the Garo-Zamindar affairs. He recommended to separate all the tributary Garos from the Zamindars' control, and to introduce a new special system for the inhabitants of the frontier areas. Mr. Scott sent a draft resolution (Paragraph 24) incorporating his views:

"The authority of the special commissioner shall extend from the Berhampooter eastward over all lands occupied by Garos or other hill tribes formerly considered as tributary to or dependent upon the Zamindars of Habraghat, Mechpara, Kaloomaloopara, and Karaibari. The Governor General in Council will, however, exercise his discretion in releasing the inhabitants of any of the above villages from the control of the British Government. He will also exercise similar discretion in extending its authority over other Garo communities to that effect by order of Government shall suffice without any further special enactment."

The Governor General of India passed Regulation X of 1822, by which Goalpara, as comprised in the permanently-

9. Appendix V, Extract from a Memorandum on the North-East Frontier of Bengal, Op cit., p. XXV.
Settled areas in the thana jurisdiction referred to above was separated from the district of Rangpur and tacked on to Garo Hills to form a separate district.\textsuperscript{10}

Preamble II,

"The tract of the country now comprised into thana jurisdiction of Goalpara, Dhoobre (Dhubri) and Kurzebree (Karaibari) in the district of Rangpur, is hereby declared separated from the said district, and the operation of the rules for the administration of the police and of civil and criminal justice, as well as those for the collection of the land revenues, together with all other rules, contained in the Regulation printed and published in the manner prescribed by Regulation XLI, 1793 are suspended, and shall cease to have effect therein from the date of the proclamation of this Regulation except in so far as may be hereafter provided.\textsuperscript{11}

A Commissioner was appointed for the administration of justice in all matters. The office of the Deputy Commissioner or as he was then styled, Principal Assistant Commissioner, was first established in February 1825. Mr. David Scott was the first official entrusted with the Charge.\textsuperscript{12}


After the expulsion of the Burmese from Assam and of the cession of Assam proper to the British in 1826, Goalpara district was annexed to it. Its administration was placed in the hands of the Commissioner and Judicial Commissioner of Assam. Rules laid down in Assam Code were followed in respect of civil and criminal justice. But in revenue matters, until the Assam Land Revenue Regulation was passed in 1886, the district was administered according to the spirit of the Bengal Regulation, being included in the permanently Settled tract.\[13\]

From 1826 to 1866, Goalpara district remained a part of Assam. By the Bhutan war (1864-66) a strip of the country, extending from Kamrup on the east and Darjiling on the west, known as Bhutan Duars, was acquired by the British in 1866. This strip was divided into two districts, the Eastern and the Western Duars. Eastern Duars was adjacent to the northern part of the district of Goalpara. In 1867, the Kuch Bihar Commissionership was formed and by the provision of Government notification of the 3rd of December, 1867, the district of Goalpara including the newly created Eastern Duars and Garo Hills were separated from the province of Assam, and was placed under the Commissionership of Kuch Bihar; and, thus, Goalpara became a part of Bengal again.

But this arrangement did not continue. Because of the inconvenient distance of the tract from the headquarters of the Commissioner of Kuch Bihar, by another notification by the 10th of August, 1868, the civil and criminal jurisdiction was transferred back again to the Judicial Commissioner of Assam; but the executive control remained as before with the Commissioner of Kuch Bihar\textsuperscript{14}.

In 1869, Garo Hills were separated from the district of Goalpara to form a new district by the Act XXII of 1869, which repealed the Regulation of 1822 referred to above. But the district was still exempted from the operation of the General Regulation. In the same year, the Eastern Duars were deregularised by Act XIV of 1869\textsuperscript{15}.

In 1874, Assam was made a separate administration, and Eastern Duars with the tract comprising the thana jurisdiction of Goalpara, Dhubri and Karaibari were again transferred to Assam as Goalpara district\textsuperscript{16}. Since then this district remained as a unit of Assam administration till 1905. In 1905, Bengal was partitioned, and Eastern

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15. \textit{Physical and Political Geography of the province of Assam}, Op cit., p.79.

Bengal was tacked on to Assam to form a new province, the Province of Eastern Bengal and Assam. Accordingly, Goalpara formed a part of this newly created province. But in 1912, consequent on the Swadeshi movement that arose out of the partition of Bengal, the partition of Bengal was annulled and the district of Goalpara was reverted to Assam. Since then Goalpara district remained an integral part of Assam.

In matters of revenue, the district of Goalpara consisted of two portions, viz., the permanently Settled area and the temporary Settled area. Prior to 1822, the permanently Settled portion was regarded as "Regulation tract"; from 1822 to 1869, it was a "Non-Regulation tract". From 1874 onwards, the district became a "Scheduled tract".

Evolution of the Zamindaries in Goalpara:

Zamindary system in Goalpara, like other parts of the country, had its origin in feudalism. The feudal landlords, the Bhuiyas, as they were called, flourished in this part of the country under the Kamata Kingdom towards the later part of the fifteenth century. That the feudal

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Chiefs in Assam were known as Bhuiyas can be ascertained from the views expressed by the late Dr Wise, according to whom the word Bhuya or Bhulya is a Sanskrit equivalent to Persian word zamindar\(^\text{19}\). These Bhuiyas flourished in Eastern Bengal and Assam. There were twelve Bhuiyan Chiefs in Assam, and one of them Durlabh Narayan ruled over Kamata at the end of the thirteenth century. The last representative of the Kamata dynasty, Nilambar, extended his kingdom eastward to Barnadi and westward as far as the Karatoya. He was overthrown by Hussain Shah in 1498 A.D. But he did not retain a permanent hold on the territory he acquired, and the Bhuiyas took upper hand of the situation; they parcelled out the country into numerous petty states, each of which, under its own chief, was to all intent and purposes, independent of the rest. These Bhuiyas were known as the Baro Bhuiyas, and were exercising sovereign power. These feudal chiefs were subjugated by Viswa Singha—the founder of the Koch dynasty—who rose to power in the beginning of the Sixteenth century. The Koch Kingdom founded by Viswa Singha reached zenith of its power during the reign of Nar Narayan. But internal feuds crept in, and Nar Narayan made his nephew Raghudeb Narayan, vassal over the eastern portion of his kingdom, stretching from

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the river Sonkosh on the west to the river Barnadi on the east. But Raghudeb's son, Parikshit Narayan refused to pay tribute to the reigning king Lakshmi Narayan, the son of Nar Narayan.

Thus arose the friction between the two branches of the Koches, and it dragged them into war, in which Lakshmi Narayan was worsted. Eventually, Lakshmi Narayan begged intervention of the Moghuls, and the Noab of Bengal despatched Mukarram Khan against Parikshit Narayan. In the engagement that followed Parikshit Narayan was defeated. He surrendered to the invaders, and he was taken to Dacca, from where he was sent to Delhi. The Emperor Jahangir promised to restore him to his kingdom on payment of Peskash of Rupees four lakhs. According to Khan Choudhury, the amount of the Peskash was Rupees seven lakhs. Parikshit acquiesced in it, and was returning home. But he died on his way home. And his kingdom, later came to be known as Koch-Hajo, was annexed to the Moghul Empire. Sheikh Ibrahim Karori was deputed from Delhi to carry out the Settlement of the conquered territory on the lines of the system existing in Bengal. The whole area was designated as Villayat Hajo, which was divided into four Sarkars.

The Moghul revenue officials were employed for the collection of the revenue. But the Koches who were not prepared to accept Moghul domination, rose in rebellion under the leadership of several Koch princes such as, Sanatan, Parasuram, Madusudhan etc. They withheld payment of revenue in cash, which was introduced by the Moghuls. Because the ryots were not adapted to the system of cash payment, as the Paik system was prevalent in Goalpara as in other parts of Kamrup.23

Thus, the collection of revenue directly from the peasants received a serious setback at the initial stage. Indeed, this led to the change over of the collection of revenue direct from the peasant to the middleman. Parikshit Narayan's son Chandra Narayan, alias Vijit Narayan, was however, confirmed by the Moghuls the zamindary of the territory between the rivers, the Sonkosh and the Manas, at the payment of an annual Peskash of Rs.5998/-24.

By the time when the Moghuls had taken away Parikshit Narayan to Delhi as a prisoner of war, his brother Bali Narayan fled away to the Ahom kingdom. Ahom King Pratap Singha gave him political asylum. This led the invaders


to decide on the invasion of the Ahom territory. Thus began the Ahom-Moghul conflict which continued till 1638, when a peace was concluded between the Ahoms and the Moghuls. In the beginning of the war between the Ahoms and the Moghuls, the Moghuls were defeated, and the north-eastern part of the Koch Kingdom besieged by the Muslim invaders was cleared off the Moghuls. Bali Narayan was installed as a ruler in that part of the Koch Kingdom, later came to be known as Darrang, under the suzerainty of the Ahoms. Thus, the Koch Kingdom fell into three pieces: (I) the eastern part ruled by the Darrang Raj family under the protection of the Ahoms; (2) the western part covering Koch Bihar, which was ruled by the descendants of the line of Nar Narayan, and (3) central part in between the river Manas and the river Sonkosh under Bijni Raj as tribute paying chief.

After its annexation to the Moghul Empire, Farikshit's kingdom was split into two portions, viz., an area of 1005 square miles, consisting of the Duars—Bijni, Sidli, Cherung, Ripu and Guma—was made khas, the remaining area of 2384 square miles was divided into 12 parganas, viz.; (1) Habraghat, (ii) Khuntaghat, (iii) Mechpara, (iv) Chapar, (v) Parbotjoar.


The portion known as Bijni Duar was passed over to the administration of the Bhutan Government. It should be mentioned that in ancient times Bhutan formed, occasionally at least, part of the Kingdom of Kamarupa;

"Apparently the Bhutias have not possessed Bhutan more than two centuries; it formerly belonged to a tribe called by the Bhutias Tephu; they are generally believed to have been people of Koch Bihar. The Tephu were driven down into the plains by some Tibetan soldiers, who had been sent from Lhasa to look at the country"²⁷. — As matters stood, at the death of Viswa Singha, his two sons, Far Farayan and Sukladhvaj, were away at Benaras to prosecute studies there. Their brother, Nar Singha, taking advantage of their staying away from home country, proclaimed himself King of the Koch Kingdom. Having heard of the news, Nar Farayan and Sukladhvaj hastened home; and raising an army, defeated Nar Sing. It is said that Nar Sing subsequently became the ruler of Bhutan²⁸. The portion which was within Bijni

²⁸. Ibid.
Chieftainship went under the Bhutias probably during the Ahom-Moghul conflict that arose out of the quarrel between the Koch Kings. As stated in the History of the Bijni Dynasty referred to, Bijni Raj surrendered the portion in question to the Bhutias during the administration of Sib Narayan. According to Francis Hamilton, the Koches lost it to the Bhutias during the lifetime of Bijni Raja Mukunda Narayan.

Thus, the process of dismemberment started. Most of the Parganas comprising the Bijni Raj estate went out of it, and were set up as semi-independent chieftainship under the suzerainty of the Moghul Empire. Bijni retained only two Parganas Habraghat and Khuntaghat.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, Mechpara, Kalumalupara, and Karaibari were separated from Bijni to form them into separate zamindaries. The Moghuls recognised them, probably, for administrative expediency. For, these zamindaries comprised the tract bordering the Garo Hills. The Garos were in the habit of making frequent incursions in the plains, and the zamindars were entrusted with the responsibility to protect the people of the plains.

29. Sen, T.P., Bijni Rajbangsa, Goalpara, 1876, pp. 70-76.
from the raids of the Hill tribes. They were border chiefs, and were called the Choudhuries. They paid no revenue to the Moghul Government, but tribute to defray the expenses to the Dacca Artillery Park. Thus, the Choudhuries were, in all intent and purposes, independent in internal administration. To quote Walter Hamilton:

"This arrangement probably originated partly from the wild and uncultivated state of the country, which did not admit of a regular assessment, and partly from an adherence to a favourite maxim of the Mughal Policy, that of conciliating the goodwill of the Chiefs possessing local influence on distant frontier."32.

Parbot-joar zamindary came into existence as a result of a grant made about 12 generations ago to one Hatibar Choudhury. The founder of the Chapar zamindary was one Jay Narayan Sarmah. It should be mentioned that the manner in which the zamindaries of Parbot-joar and Chapar was created is not definitely known due to paucity of source-materials. Although old valuable records of these zamindaries have been in darkness, there is no doubt about their origin in the Badshahi grant. In 1130 B.S. Jay Narayan

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Sarmah Choudhury who hailed from Kishenganj Sub-division of Mymonsing district, was in possession of five Choudhuries. He used to pay nominal tribute to the then Muhammadan Faujdar at Rangamati. From the manner in which the zamindars were functioning it can conveniently be said that the zamindars of Parbot-joar and Mechpara were raised from local zamindars to Badshahi zamindar in the rank of Choudhury, and they were in the same footing as their counterpart in Bengal.

Gauripur zamindary originated from the Nankar grant received from the Moghul Emperor, Jahangir by one Kabindra Patra, who is said to have accompanied Parikshit Narayan to Delhi. It has already been referred to that Parikshit Narayan was returning home, agreeing to pay Peskash to the Moghul Emperor. Kabindra Patra was left at Delhi as his agent. On the death of Parikshit Narayan Kabindra Patra was appointed Naib Kanungo of the thana Rangamati. It should be mentioned that under the Moghuls, the Kanungo being a revenue official, performed the duty of attesting and registering grants and transfers of landed property.


Besides, he maintained the genealogy of zamindars. From the time of emperor Akbar, a chief Kanungo with the power to control and supervise the conduct of his deputies had been attached to every district and pargana. The office of Kanungo, like other offices, became hereditary.  

Kabindra Patra's son Kabisekhar received sanad from Emperor Jahangir in 1620 A.D., which endowed him with the title Raja. He gave satisfaction to his royal master, who granted him again a sanad in 1635 A.D., by which extensive estates were added to his possession. For three generations after Kabisekhar, father was followed by son in succession. Bul Chandra Barua, who succeeded to the headship of the family in 1778 A.D., acquired the zamindaries of the five parganas of Ghurla, Aurangabad, Makrampur, Jamira, and Gola-Alamganj. Bul Chandra's grandson, Dhir Chandra Barua, purchased parganas of Kalumalupara, Noabad Futuri, and Dhubri.  

Thus, 12 parganas comprising the Bijni fief were grouped into six separate zamindaries, viz., Bijni, Sauripur, Parbot-joar, Chapar, Mechpara, and Karaibari, and were held

by the descendants of the founders of the respective zamindaries. Karalbari zamindary of Mahendra Narayan Choudhury was sold for arrears of revenue in 1809. It was purchased by Rama Nath Lahiri, the Dewan of Koch Bihar and held as such by the Lahiri family till its acquisition by the State Government\(^\text{37}\).

At the time of the permanent settlement, there were altogether twelve permanently settled estates in the district of Goalpara, and they were included in the six zamindaries mentioned earlier. Seven estates came into being subsequent to the permanent settlement. These seven estates consisted of the lands originally held revenue free on non-valid title; these had been resumed by the Government and were settled with the zamindars at rates fixed in perpetuity\(^\text{38}\).

Thus, there were altogether 19 permanently settled estates in the old district of Goalpara in Assam. The following statement will give details with regards to the various permanently settled estates:

\(^{37}\) Infra, Chapter VI.

\(^{38}\) Baden Powell, B.H., Op cit., pp. 430-32
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Proprietor</th>
<th>Name of Estate</th>
<th>Area in acres</th>
<th>Revenue</th>
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<tr>
<td>Bijni</td>
<td>1. Habraghat</td>
<td>60,3283.20</td>
<td>2,355-10-0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Khuntaghat</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauripur Raj</td>
<td>3. Ghurla, Jamira, Makrampur, and Aurangabad</td>
<td>27,1065.20</td>
<td>3,299-11-0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Kalumalupara</td>
<td>3,5187.20</td>
<td>1,706-11-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Gola Alangonj</td>
<td>8473.60</td>
<td>21-6 -0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Kayarpar</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13-8 -0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Noabab Futuri</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11-10-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Dhubri</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>5,078-10-0</strong></td>
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<td>Mechpara</td>
<td>9. Mechpara</td>
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<td></td>
<td>10. Taluk Goalpara</td>
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<td>59-14-0</td>
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<td>11. Dekdhoya</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25-0 -0</td>
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<td></td>
<td>12. Dhar Brahmaputra</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>2,235-8 -0</strong></td>
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<td>Chapar</td>
<td>13. Chapar Kasbagilla</td>
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<td>14. Kajipara</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>626-3 -0</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parbotjoar</td>
<td>15. Karaibari 12 annas share</td>
<td>3,7120.00</td>
<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. Karaibari 4 annas share</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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<td><strong>98-7-0</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,53,0100.20</strong></td>
<td><strong>11,410-9-0</strong></td>
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</table>

Source: Forecast Report, Resettlement of erstwhile permanently settled areas of Goalpara District, Dhubri, 14-10-77.