CHAPTER II

GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY REGION

2.1 Introduction to the Study Region

The study region includes the whole district of Darrang in Assam, India. Darrang is a plain district of Assam and is a part of Brahmaputra river valley (fig. 2.1). It is extending from 26°9′ North to 26°45′ North latitude and 91°45′ East to 92°22′ East longitude. It is surrounded by Udalguri district in the north; Morigaon district and a part of Kamrup District in the south; Zia Dhansiri River and a part of Udalguri district in the east and Kamrup and Baksa district and Barnadi in the west. It has a geographical area of 185058 hectares and a population of 908090 persons according to 2011 census. The district has one administrative subdivision, namely Mangaldai subdivision. It was bifurcated to Darrang and Udalguri district with effect from 4th April, 2004. There are altogether eighteen mouzas, four police stations, six revenue circles and seven community development blocks. The community development blocks are the lowest level spatial units for the meaningful study of such a topic of socio-spatial variations of agricultural development in Darrang district. The seven development blocks are Sipajhar, Pub-Mangaldai, Pachim-Mangaldai, Dalgaon-Sialmari, Bechimari, Kalaigaon (part) and Khairabari (part). Only six villages of Khairabari development block are under Darrang district and other villages are under Udalguri district (BTAD) and only 57 villages of Kalaigaon development block are under Darrang district and rest are under BTAD.

2.2 Physiography

Physiographically, the district of Darrang is a part of the Brahmaputra river valley. It is bounded on the north by the Udalguri district (BTAD) and the southern bank of the
Brahmaputra on the south (the river Brahmaputra is included within the district). A general slope appears towards the south and the rest of the district is a large open stretch of plain from the alluvial deposits. The south western corner of the district is dotted with some low hills of maximum height upto 100 metre above mean sea level. The plain district slopes to about 54 metre near the Brahmaputra from the built up region. The 60 metre contour is found from east to west in the built-up region above mean sea level (fig2.2). The district has an average north-west extension of 50 kms. Although it is a plain area, local differences in elevation are found in several blocks.
LOCATION MAP OF THE STUDY AREA

STUDY AREA MAP
DARRANG DISTRICT
SHOWING DEVELOPMENT BLOCKS

UDALGURI  MORIGAON
KAMRUP  SONITPUR

SL.No.  Block Name
1  KHAIRABARI BLOCK
2  KALIGAON BLOCK
3  SIPAJHAR BLOCK
4  PACHIM MANGALDAI BLOCK
5  PUB MANGALDAI BLOCK
6  BEGHIMARI BLOCK
7  DOLGAON SIALMARI BLOCK
Among the development blocks, Dalgaon-Sialmari, Bechimari and Pub-Mangaldai development blocks have some high grounds. The Southern part of all the development blocks near the Brahmaputra is easily prone to flood.

The district can be divided into three physiographic divisions (fig. 2.3).

1. Active flood plain and Char lands.

2. The marshy and low lying areas separated by low hills.

3. The built-up region.

1. **Active Flood Plain and Char Lands**

   This is a riverine zone lying between the high water marks of the Brahmaputra and the built-up region. The region in its east-west direction extends over 80 kms approximately from the mouth of the Zia Dhansiri tributary to the mouth of the Bornadi River. The low lying flood plain area of the extreme south bordering the river Brahmaputra has an average width of 8 to 10 km. It stretches from Kurua in the west to the Rajib Gandhi Wild Life Sanctuary, Orang in the east. Formed by the annual sand and silt deposits of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries, this zone is extremely fertile, but is liable to frequent flooding. There are a number of chars or river islands in these regions. In summer, when water comes down from the Himalayas, the water channels of the river Brahmaputra extends from 10 to 15 km in width, but the low water marks during winter narrow it down to 3 to 5 km only. A number of chars or chaparies are formed in this region as a result of the frequent shifting of the courses of tributaries at their confluences with the Brahmaputra.

   The char and chaparies are Bheheni Chapari, Bhokelimari Chapari, Dhariakhaiti Chapari, Bandia Chapari, Baghpari Chapari, Kharpari Chapari, Gerimari Chapari, Mowamari Chapari, Chereng Chapari, Piyajhar Chapari, Athakhata Chapari, Kayamari Chapari, Nangli Char, Gorpari Chapari, Magurmari Chapari, Gadhua
Chapari, Baralimari Chapari, Kherani Chapari, Sitalmari Chapari, Arimari Chapari, Choulkhowa Chapari etc. Channels of this region change their course from time to time after flood which is common in this region. Besides these, river islands of this region seem to be both permanent and temporary. Some of them remain permanent while others are purely temporary or migratory. At the beginning, the islands of this region were covered by reeds and grasses and became good grazing grounds for the herds men. Gradually the grazing grounds have been occupied by the Muslims of immigrant origin for their settlement and agricultural activities. In the past some pam dwellers
settled temporarily for cultivation of rabi crops and sometimes boro paddy. At present the pam dwellers are replaced by permanent residence. Towards the end of the twentieth century the government of Assam adopted a political decision to grow more food by bringing hardworking Muslim cultivators from then East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). In course of time, these Muslim cultivators settled in the vacant places of Dalgaon-Sialmari, Pub-Mangaldai and Bechimari development blocks. Since then and even after the partition of East Pakistan(now Bangladesh), Muslim cultivators from erstwhile east Pakistan have been coming unabatedly occupying char areas of the Brahmaputra and even middle and upper part of the district, the vacant high lands of the Pub-Mangaldai development block and in the Dalgaon-Sialmari development block. In the late 1960’s, a large number of Muslims of immigrant origin, infiltrated into the area illegally and made their settlement throughout the char areas of the Brahmaputra. As a result, land areas occupied by the local indigenous non-tribal people have been gradually occupied by immigrant farmers. Muslims of immigrant origin are mostly found in Dalgaon-Sialmari and Bechimari developments blocks. They have established weekly markets, L.P., M.E. and High Schools to uplift their socio-economic standards. The modes of their livelihood are to some extent different from that of the indigenous people inhabiting in the built-up region.

Generally the entire char area is covered with many beels and swamps and uneven lands. Two important hillocks mainly Aparia and Dhalpur are found here. In the north bank of the Brahmaputra, an important hill named Kurua is located in the extreme south-west corner of the district. Towards the south eastern corner of the district there lies a high ground and the Orang reserve forest is located on this high ground. The region is narrow in the lower part near Kurua and there is no prominent
char fit for human habitation. Other char areas of this region are inhabited by the Muslims of immigrant origin. Agriculture is the main occupation of these people and they cultivate boro paddy, a small amount of sali paddy, jute, oilseeds, black gram, lentil, sugarcane and different types of vegetables. This area is severely affected by flood every year and there is also lack of communication and transportation facilities. In summer, mostly country boats and steamers, carts drawn by bullocks and buffaloes and tractors are used as the main means of transportation.
2. The Marshy and Low Lying Areas Separated by Low Hills

The marshy and low-lying area lies to the south west of the district near the Brahmaputra. This area covers beels, dobas and marshes. Some hills and hillocks namely Kurua, Dhalpur, Aparia, Baman Parbbat, Ganesh Pahar, Gadhia pahar and Khalihai lies in this region to the extreme corner and in between the Nanai River and the Barnadi River. There is an ancient Ganesh temple on the Ganesh hill and a Kali temple is found to exist on Mailata hill. This south western part of this area, within Sipajhar block has a sprinkle, a pre–Cambrian hillock, detached from the Meghalaya plateau. Formed by a granite and gneisses, this area has altitude varying from 150m to 200m. This region covers a large numbers of small beels and marshes which are shallow pools of ancient days and depressions formed by the Nanai river and the Barnadi river. These two rivers shifted their courses where they get obstruction and created the beels in the misfit parts of the rivers.

About 8 km. away from the Kurua hills, lies a hillock named Dhalpur in the Char area. According to historical evidence, it is known that the king Dharmanarayan established his capital on this Dhalpur hillock. Some stone pillars of that period were discovered here. In addition to these, Shiva Linga and other engraved rocks and images are also found in these hills. Flood is the major problem here. Every year, people of this region have been struggling hard to survive against the flood. During the rainy season i.e. in summer, the width of the Brahmaputra from the Jia Dhansiri to near Kurua Hills becomes ten Km. in average. On the other hand, from Kurua to Amingaon or Pandu, the width of the Brahmaputra hardly reaches 2 Km. It is important to note that the large body of water of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries causes serious problems in the upstream regions from the narrow passage of the Brahmaputra between Guwahati and Rajaduar. As a result, there is a backward pushing of waters through
channels of the tributaries in the South-western part of the district during summer resulting in regular overflowing of water on the embankments and dykes. This problem is however not found in the southern bank tributaries as they are flowing through the hills.

3. The Built-up Region

An extensive plain between the high water marks of the Brahmaputra in the south and the Tarai Zone in the north is known as the built-up region. The region extends over 60 Kms. in length from Barnadi to Zia-Dhansiri and in north-south direction it is about 60 Km. in width. The slope of the region is towards the south. Higher grounds are seen in the south-eastern part in the Dalgaon-Salmari community development block and in the north-east of Mangaldai town within a distance of 10 km.

The region is drained by some tributaries and *nalas* coming down from the Himalayas. These streams deposit sediments every year and thereby making the region a fertile plain. Yet difference is found in respect of texture, porosity, ingredients, and fertility of soil in different parts of the region. These differences may be brought about by the nature of sediments carried down by the individual stream.

The region has certain higher grounds or mounds made up of unassorted debris like gravel, sand, silt etc. found in the river terraces which are however not flooded at the summer season. The built-up region is generally inhabited by different social groups, mainly by indigenous people. The soil of the region is highly fertile and multiple farming practices can be done profitably. As this region is mostly plain area, transportation and communication is easy and so this region is densely populated and weekly village markets and daily markets have also grown up here. Due to constructional bottleneck bridges over the turbulent drainages, roads are constructed generally in the south-west direction.
Sixty five percent of the total population of the district comprise of indigenous non tribal both Hindu and Muslims. In addition to these, Muslims of immigrant origin is another group of people living in this region. It may be noted that number of tribal population is less in this region. The main social groups inhabited in this region are indigenous Hindu and indigenous Muslims, Santhalis, Nepalis, Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, Bengali speaking Hindus, Hindi speaking Hindus and Muslims of immigrant origin.

It is worth mentioning that the settlement pattern of different social groups is related to the topography and the characteristics of soil are different in different areas. Generally the indigenous Hindu and Muslim people prefer to live in the built-up area where soil is clayey loam and favourable for cultivation of rice, sugarcane, mustard, pulses etc. while the low-lying areas and char lands are generally occupied by Muslims of immigrant origin and they prefer to cultivate jute, rice, etc. in summer and vegetables in winter. As such areas are flooded annually, the soil is enriched by the depositing silt and so production of winter vegetables is maximum within the whole district. Farmers also use irrigation for such cultivation during dry winter months.

2.3 Climate

The physical factor, climate determines the agricultural land use and agricultural pattern of farm activity and crop production. The success or failure of the crop cultivation is determined by the climatic condition. The distribution of crops and the agricultural pattern of Darrang district are also mainly determined by different climatic factors. Like in other parts of Assam, monsoonal climate prevails in the district. Climate plays an important role in agricultural setting and arrangement of crop season in the district. There is heavy rainfall in summer and continuous drought in
winter. These two seasons are separated by pre monsoon and retreating monsoon which are transitional in characteristics between the former two seasons.

Like any part of North East India the climate of the study area is influenced by (a) The north-east monsoon wind which blows in winter from north-east and (b) South-west monsoon wind which blows from south-west in summer to the study area. The winter monsoon is mostly dry but the summer monsoon is hot and humid. The summer monsoon rainfall determines the water supply round the year and it effects in the agricultural production of the district. Accordingly two crops – *kharif* and *rabi* are closely related to the summer and the winter monsoon seasons respectively. However irrigation is another factor influencing cropping pattern. The dry period comprises from November to May and the wet summer comprises the remaining months of the year, i.e. June to September.

Depending upon the variations of climate, the study area may be divided into (a) The Cold Season (December-February), (b) The Hot Season (March-May), (c) The Rainy Season (June-September) and (d) The retreating monsoon (October-November).

(a)  **The Cold Season (December-February)**

The cold season comprises of months from December to February. The temperature of the district begins to fall from the end of November and is lowest in January and then slightly increases. The average rainfall is 0.62 cm. in the month of December and 3.38 cm. in February. From North-east to South-west cold and dry winds blow over the region and in November relative humidity remains least. The winter rains are important for rabi crops. The number of rainy days in the season is three to six only. Sometimes the thunderstorms are accompanied with hails and it affects on rabi crops.
(b) The Hot Season (March-May)

From March to May, the temperature begins to increase and the weather is hot during these months. The mean maximum temperature in May is between 29.8° C and 34.1° C and the mean minimum ranges from 17.5° C to 23.1° C. The weather is hot and dry for high temperature and the relative humidity is comparatively less in this season.

Table 2.1: Rainfall in cm in Darrang District, 2004-11

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>District Average for 7 years</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Month</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>1.22</td>
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<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>7.75</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
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<td>6.08</td>
<td>7.04</td>
<td>0.43</td>
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<td>5.67</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>4.66</td>
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<td>April</td>
<td>25.15</td>
<td>29.05</td>
<td>15.11</td>
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<td>21.77</td>
<td>18.43</td>
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<td>June</td>
<td>55.10</td>
<td>38.59</td>
<td>25.39</td>
<td>37.07</td>
<td>34.2</td>
<td>40.76</td>
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<td>38.59</td>
<td>25.39</td>
<td>37.07</td>
<td>19.4</td>
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<td>August</td>
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<td>27.53</td>
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<td>23.06</td>
<td>19.09</td>
<td>12.41</td>
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<td>October</td>
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<td>9.75</td>
<td>10.59</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>....</td>
<td>9.54</td>
<td>11.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>....</td>
<td>1.72</td>
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<td>December</td>
<td>0.83</td>
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<td>0.10</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>....</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Darrang*

Wind *Bordoichila* blows with great velocity of 30 to 40 Km. per hour over the region during the season. The rainfall in March is generally prejudicial to the ripening of *rabi*
crops. From the rainfall data of the district for 7 years from 2004 to 2011 given in table (2.1), it is seen that the rainfall does not occur in the same proportions always. From table (2.1) it is clear that in 2004 the rainfall was 6.08 cm. in the month of March, but in 2011 it is 5.35 cm. This indicates that it varies from year to year also. Thus rainfall is erratic in nature with high variation and it is not fully reliable.

(c) The Rainy Season (June-September)

During these months (from June to September) the weather changes abruptly for the monsoon. Due to the increase of humidity, the temperature falls gradually from June to August. The rainfall rises from April onwards and in the month of June it reaches the peak in amount of rainfall.

From the rainfall data of the district for 7 years from 2004 to 2011 given in table 2.1, it is seen that the amount of rainfall varies from month to month and year to year. The underground water level increases during the month of April and May. The level of underground water rises gradually and in the last of May, rain water accumulates in the dry beds and low lying areas. Heavy and incessant downpour begins from the first week of June and it overflows the rivers and drainages and as a result of which flood occurs in the low lying areas and the active flood plain region of the district. The flood damages the cultivation of Ahu, Jute and also Sali paddy. From the month of September the relative humidity decreases with the decrease in rainfall. In this month, small rainfall helps the maturity of kharif crops (e.g. pulses, mustard, luffa-gourd, snake-gourd etc.) and growing of rabi crops (e.g. pea, wax-gourd, pointed-gourd etc.). If the rainfall occurs continuously in the month of September then flood occurs and destroys the standing crops and even destroy the life and property.
(d) The Retreating Monsoon (October-November)

From the last of September to November, the retreating monsoon starts. The south-west monsoon is known as retreating monsoon. The season continues up to the middle of November. In this season, the intensity of rainfall and number of rainy days decrease. The moderate rainfall and temperature favour the sowing of rabi crops.

Though the study area is not a big one, the spatial variation of climatic characteristics is distinct in the district. The agricultural activities of the farmers are conditioned by the seasonal and spatial variations in the distribution of climatic elements. Accordingly, the cropping pattern varies from block to block and season to season. The amount of rainfall varies from block to block to a certain amount.

There are also some invariable characteristics of the monsoon which hamper timely operation of agriculture by the farmers in the district. These are as (i) Heavy and delayed monsoon causing damage of kharif crops and sowing of rabi crops uncertain, (ii) Prolonged breaks of rainy days in the summer damaging crops, (iii) Continuous drought prevailing throughout the winter months, (iv) Erratic monsoon rain sometimes falling in heavy downpour for several days together leading to flood havoc, soil leaching and soil erosion resulting in the removal of soil fertility, (v) Occasional light and inadequate rainfall. Therefore, it may be said that irrigation is essential for assumed supply of water to the crops for regular supply of water.

2.4 Drainages and Water Bodies

A brief description of the drainages and water bodies of the district is incorporated here as these are related to the agricultural development in the region. The river Brahmaputra is the master stream of the study area which is flowing along the southern boundary of the district, from north-east to south-west covering a distance of nearly fifty-five kms. The river remains navigable throughout the year. From time
immemorial it has been the line of communication connecting the Darrang district with the districts on the southern bank and other parts of the state.

The network of other rivers and streams originating from or near the Bhutan Himalayas, flow through the district from north to south and discharge their water to the Brahmaputra. Most of the rivers carry huge volumes of water during the summer months from June to October, when heavy rainfall occurs along the Bhutan foothills and create frequent flood havoc and soil erosion, causing extensive loss of crops and other properties of the inhabitants of the nearby localities. All the tributaries crossing over the district have been depositing detritus over the plain of the district. The important tributaries of the district from east to west are Nanoi, Kulsi, Mangaldai Noi, Noanoi, Galandi, Moradhansiri, Ziadhansiri, Sukhjani, Daifang, Bega and Saktola. (Fig.2.4)

**Nanoi River**

The river Nanoi has its origin in the Tongsa province of Bhutan at an elevation of 1220 meters above mean sea level. This river, at present, is the longest tributary of the Brahmaputra River within the study area. It enters the district through the Khalinduar forest and is now shifting its course towards west from its original channel. It has trespassed and divided into several channels, oxbow lake and swamps on its abandoned course and has sent out a new branch to the Bornadi river. After entering into the plains, the Nanoi river flows for about 53 km. through the Darrang district.
which ultimately joins the Brahmaputra River. The lower reach of the river from the Dalonghat down to its outfall is subject to heavy flood that causes extensive damage to crops on both banks. The flood control department has constructed embankments along both the banks on the Nanoi as flood control measures. The total area benefited by these embankment measures to about 400 hectares of land. This river flows through the Sipajhar community development block and farmers have been growing different types of crops using water of this river in some places. The river is navigable for 32 km. only in the rainy season. However the flood areas produce many crops during summer.

**Kulsi River**

This river originating in Bhutan with the name Deosunga joins a branch of the Nanoi River within the Khalingduar forest. This river flows through or along the areas of Tangla, Harisinga, Kalaigaon, Mangaldai, Sipajhar etc. and joins the Noanadi River in the char areas. This is an ancient river. The farmers of Sipajhar, Pachim-Mangaldai and Kalaigaon development blocks cultivate summer rice using the water of this river.

**Mangaldai River**

This is one of the ancient rivers of the study area. This river has been a complex combination of the names of Singimari, Batiamari, and Kawadanga etc. in its upper reach and Mangaldai in the lower reach. It joins the river Bega and flows to the west after passing the Mangaldai town and then to the south-west till it joins the Noanadi and later, a stream of the Brahmaputra River after a complex course of about 9 km. It passes through the Kalaigaon and Pachim-Mangaldai development blocks and the farmers have been growing different types of crops using water of this river.
Noanadi

This river originating in Bhutan runs for about 72 km. within the study area till it joins a stream of the Brahmaputra River. It flows between the two royal establishments of Howly Mohanpur and Gakhirkhowa to the west. In its upper reach, the river has joined the rivers like Lakmi, Bhola, and Mora Bhola etc. and in low reach, the river Mangaldai.

Galandi River

It has been a very complex and destructive river. The river assumes different names at different reaches. In its lower reach, it is known as Galandi and Tangni. It joins the Brahmaputra River at a point about 25 km. to the east of Mangaldai, with the name Tangni. It is flanked by prosperous villages like Baruajhar, Sialmari, Ojhagaon, Jogipara, Bahbari etc. It has also been a water route for the Darrangi and Bhutia traders.

Mora Dhansiri River

This is one of the ancient streams of the Dhansiri River, referred to as ‘Dhaneswari in the Darrang Rajvansavali. The upper reach of this dried up stream cannot be traced at present. In the lower reach, the course can still be traced along the eastern side of the town of Dalgaon. An ancient Shiva temple on its bank still declares its antiquity. It is not known as to when the river had shifted eastward, but it was perhaps the earliest stream of the river and the shifting had occurred in the 15th century. After a very round about course of about 46 km., the stream joins the Brahmaputra river at a point about 10 km. to the north east of the present Dalgaon town.

Zia-Dhansiri River

The Zia-Dhansiri river is one of the important tributaries of the river Brahmaputra. It originates from the Bhutan hills, flowing from the Tashi gorge of
Bhutan and it enters to Darrang district through Bhairabkunda, the tri junction of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Bhutan. It passes through the Bechimari and Dalgaon-Sialmari Community Development Blocks. On its downstream, many streams have joined with this river and the river flows in a south easterly direction, against the general slope of Assam valley. It is still migrating towards east. During the last two centuries, it has migrated towards east from its original confluence with the Brahmaputra, at a place to the south of Mangaldai town, leaving many abundant channels of the Dhansiri river of which Tangni, Mora Dhansiri are important. The former is flowing along the eastern margin of the Tangni Tea Estate and the later along the Lakhmi Seeds farm, Lalpool. The total length of the Zia-Dhansiri is approximately 80 km. from its source to the confluence with the Brahmaputra. Its bed is shallow and has a tendency of frequently changing its course, especially during the flood seasons, causing havoc of flood and destroys life and property. The government of Assam undertook a project known as “Dhansiri Irrigation Project” at Bhairabkunda during the 1970’s to control the annual floods and to utilize the abundant water resources. The construction of dams, sluice gate, embankment etc. with a network of irrigation channels is now nearing to completion. An area of about 800 sq. Kms. to the east of Mangaldai has been left ravaged by the Zia-Dhansiri River resulting in the growth of very sparse settlement due to frequent occurrence of devastating floods. The numerous abandoned channels of the Zia-Dhansiri river lying east of Koupati, which can still cause menace during the summer months. It is only during the recent period that the Muslims of immigrant origin have occupied all these vacant lands and utilise the land for production of crops especially for vegetables.
Beels and Tanks

There are a large numbers of beels and tanks in this region. The important beels include Pukhuria beel, Batha beel, Dimila beel, Rowmati, Chitalmari, Bherpari, Nanai beel, Mailata Borhgup and Bhanganamari. Water of these beels are generally not used by the farmers during summer season. However during the winter season when rabi crops are cultivated, farmers use water of these beels by using power pumps to lift the water to the agricultural fields. Besides, there are also a large number of swamp areas in the south western parts of Sipajhar development block area.

A good number of ancient tanks are available in this area. These tanks were excavated during the Barman kings. The Barman kings were Saivite. It is observed that each of the oldest tanks had one Siva temple on its bank. In the later periods, during eleven to seventeen century AD, the Polas, the Bhuyans and also the Koch kings excavated big tanks which are located all over the district. Some of them are Dologuri (3.0 ha), Padumpukhuri (1.3 ha), Burhi Nagar Pukhuri (10.0ha), Jaipal Pukhuri (6.0 ha), Baldev Pukhuri (6.2 hec), Lakhimpur Pukhuri (22.0 hec), Rajapukhuri (10.5 hec), Rani Pukhuri (911.0 hec), Abhoy Pukhuri (8.0 hec), Poskia Pukhuri (11.0 hec), Upahu Pukhuri (11.0 hec) and Pota Pukhuri (8.0 hec). These ponds were excavated mainly for the purpose of drinking water for the people in the thickly populated nearby villages. Some of them are still used for good drinking water. Many of these ponds are cleared for using pisciculture. But a good number of them has still remained unused.

2.5 Soil and Vegetation

Soil is the hard substance of the earth’s surface. It is the mixture of mechanical and chemical compound. Soil plays an important role in sustaining plants, animals and human beings. Moreover, the cropping of an area is largely determined by the quality of soil. The quality of soil of Darrang varies from more acidic to less acidic or in
neutral in nature. The soil is also seen to vary from medium deep to deep soil with sandy loam to silty clay texture. The land in the district is characterized by flat low land in old flood plain, away from deeply submerged active flood plain. Its altitude is 80-100 m above the sea level. The soils of hilly areas of Assam are more acidic in nature and the soils of plains less acidic in nature. Generally, soil of Assam is divided into three types, namely alluvial soil, laterite soil and hilly soil.

The soil of Brahmaputra valley is formed by silt and sands carried by the river Brahmaputra and its tributaries. So, the soil of this valley is alluvial and fertile. As Darrang district falls on the Brahmaputra valley, the soil of the district too is alluvial and fertile. The drainage action, climate and the geological stage of formation of the landscape have been affecting the soil of this region. Hence, more or less of similar ingredients with slight different in qualities is found in this region. The district has a considerable slope from the north towards the south. The drainages of the entire district flow from the north towards the south due to the slope. These drainages carry out materials from the Himalayan foot hills. These materials are deposited on the region from the foothills to the bank of the Brahmaputra. Big boulders and stones are deposited just near the foot hills and finer particles are carried to distant places. Silts and sediments are also deposited by the Brahmaputra River on the areas towards the south of the region.

On the basis of the period of genesis, alluvium soils again can be divided into old alluvium and new alluvium. In the river banks the soil is less acidic. It is sometimes neutral or slightly alkaline. The soil of the entire district as a whole is fertile and so extensive agriculture is done in the whole region of the district. (fig.2.5)

Soil is one of the most important physical factors for agriculture. It constitutes the physical base for any agricultural enterprise. Fertility of soil plays a leading role for
the agricultural productivity of the study area. For the purpose of study, the soil of the study area is divided into seven types as- old alluvial soil of higher plain ,black and laterite soil, blackish soil rich in humus content, new alluvium soil, sandy soil and recent alluvium. These soils are formed from the deposits carried by the different tributaries of the district.

Old alluvium soil is found towards the south of the rocky region. This type of old alluvium soil is found in Dalgaon-Sialmari community block area up to Kopati in middle part to Dhula Tangani on one side and Banglagarh near Mangaldai on the other. Flood water can never reach to this type of soil. So this soil is suitable for tea plantation. Besides, Tea plantation, rice, pulses, potatoes, sugarcane, citrus fruits like orange, pine apple etc. are grown.

New alluvium soil is found to the south of old alluvial soil up to the bank of the Brahmaputra. This soil is frequently invaded by flood water. Hence, this soil is composed of silt, clay and humus. It is suitable for growing various types of crops such as rice, jute, oilseeds, sugarcane, pulses and fruit trees like banana, bettlenut and coconut.

Dark blackish soil with rich humus content covers both sides of the Nanai River. This soil is found in the western part of the district. It covers some areas of Khairabari community development block, Kalaigaon community development block and Sipajhar community development block respectively. Generally black soil is highly fertile and suitable for growing crops like oilseeds, rice, sugarcane, potatoes, pulses and fruits.

Blackish rich soil and laterite soil is found in the south western part of the district between the Barnadi in the west to the Noanai in the east and the Brahmaputra on the south. This type of soil is found in the blocks of Kalaigaon, Sipajhar and Pachim
Mangaldai. Different types of crops such as winter paddy, summer paddy, autumn paddy, vegetables and oilseeds are grown on this type of soil.

Sandy soil covers from Dhula to the east of Dalgaon in the district. It is constituted with coarse sand of slightly higher mounds. This soil is not affected by flood water. Sandy soil is not continuous in this region. As a result, crops like oilseeds, ahu paddy, jute, pulses, are cultivated here. It covers the areas of Pub-Mangaldai and Dalgaon-Sialmari community development blocks.

The char areas of the Brahmaputra and some adjoining areas of Dhansiri and other big tributaries are occupied by alluvium of recent origin. Every year silts are deposited layer after layer. So this part of the region is most fertile for the cultivation of oilseeds, pulses, ahu paddy, onion, maize, and jute etc. Paddy crops are profitably cultivated here. Formerly the area had many vacant places covered with tall reeds and grasses and were used by cattle and buffaloes reared by the farmers of the nearby areas. Especially these areas have professional grazing reserves (PGR). Muslims of immigrant origin farmers have been occupying this type of soil areas. They cultivate rabi crops in large scale for the domestic as well as commercial purpose. This type of soil is found in the development blocks of Dalgaon-Sialmari, Pub Mangaldai, Pachim Mangaldai and Sipajhar.

Natural vegetation affects the productivity of soil. It also influences the overall natural environmental condition of human habitation. Ecological balance too is greatly dependent on natural vegetation of the region. The natural vegetation of the study area can be broadly divided into three types as – (i) Darrang Forest Division, Mangaldai, (ii) Mangaldai Wild Life Division and (iii) Darrang Social Forest Division.
The Darrang Forest Division has three reserved forests. (Table 2.2)

### Table 2.2: Forest Divisions of Darrang District

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the reserved forests</th>
<th>Total area in hectares</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Khalihai</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Baman</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Kurua</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All forest total</td>
<td>804</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: District Forest Office, Mangaldai, Darrang.

The undivided Darrang comprises of 285 km² reserve forest including the Wild Life Sanctuary of Orang in Darrang district. Out of the total area 277 km² falls under Udalguri district in BTAD. The rest 8 km² remain under Darrang district.

### 2.6 Population Structure

In Assam, the total population is 31169272 in 2011 census. The total population of the new Darrang district stands at 9, 08, 090 persons in 2011 accounting for 2.91 percent of the total population of Assam.

### Distribution of Population

The distribution of population is, however, not uniform throughout the whole region. It varies from one community development block to the other reflecting the variation in physical environment, agricultural land use and socio-economic conditions of the people. The agriculturally prosperous built up mid-plain region has been the most populous since the historical past as agriculture has been possible here throughout the year. Table 2.3 shows the distribution of population of different development blocks in the new Darrang district.
Table 2.3: Distribution of Population in Different Community Development Blocks of Darrang District, 1971-2011.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the blocks</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>1971</th>
<th>1991</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Sipajhar</td>
<td></td>
<td>118934</td>
<td>164714</td>
<td>200663</td>
<td>227309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Pub-Mangaldai</td>
<td></td>
<td>60762</td>
<td>88593</td>
<td>145028</td>
<td>152657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pachim-Mangaldai</td>
<td></td>
<td>25620</td>
<td>57532</td>
<td>84936</td>
<td>91582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Dalgaon-Sialmari</td>
<td></td>
<td>73162</td>
<td>37915</td>
<td>169483</td>
<td>196129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Bechimari</td>
<td></td>
<td>35756</td>
<td>60773</td>
<td>83303</td>
<td>152951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Kalaigaon</td>
<td></td>
<td>39426</td>
<td>31383</td>
<td>69893</td>
<td>79893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Khairabari</td>
<td></td>
<td>4520</td>
<td>5870</td>
<td>6552</td>
<td>7569</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>District Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>358180</td>
<td>546780</td>
<td>759858</td>
<td>908090</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2.3 reveals the increasing trends in population among the different community development blocks during the period from 1971 to 2011. It shows that total population in all the development blocks have been increasing gradually through the last forty years. It is seen that total population of Sipajhar development block was 118934 in 1971 which increased to 227309 in 2011. There has been continuous increase in population in this development block during the last four decades. Similarly in all the development blocks there has been gradual increase in population during the last four decades. Thus, it is seen that the total population of the district was 358180 in 1971 which increased to 908090 in 2011.

**Density of Population**

Density of population is an important factor for agricultural development of a region. In a region, density of population is determined by the interaction of historical, physical and socio-economic factors. The variable nature of land use and socio-
economic development of a region depends to a great extent on density of population. In Darrang district, there is a distinct spatial variation of population density resulting in the variable nature of land use and socio-economic development in different development blocks of the district. Table 2.4 reveals the population density of the district.

Table 2.4 Density of Population in Darrang District, 1971-2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population Density (per sq. k.m.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Darrang</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>241</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>373</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>491</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


During the 1971 census, the population density in the district was 241 persons km$^2$ as against the state’s average of 186. The availability of abundant wastelands in the Chars and Chaparies of the Brahmaputra River, development of growth points and service centres in the district, de-reservation of former grazing lands in the north etc. were the main factors responsible for this increase of population density.

In 1991, the population density of the district was 373 as against the state’s density of 286 and in 2001 the density was 432 as against the state’s density of 340. The unabated influx of Muslim peasant immigrants from Bangladesh has brought into being this high density in the district population. The density of population in the district is 491 persons per km$^2$ and 397 persons per km$^2$ in Assam in 2011.

Growth of Population

Darrang district is facing a formidable problem of alarming growth of its population. Across the region, there has been also significant spatio-temporal variation in respect of population growth. According to census year 1971 the total population of
the new Darrang district was 358180, according to 2001 census the total population of new Darrang district was 759858 whereas according to 2011 census, the total population of the new Darrang district is 9, 08,090. The Darrang district experienced persistently a high rate of population growth since the year 1971. The decadal growth of population is higher in comparison to that of the state as a whole. During the decade 2001-2011, the growth rate of population is 19.51 percent as against 16.93 percent in the state. Table 2.5 reveals that the populations record a phenomenal growth during all the succeeding periods after 1971.

This tremendous spurt in population during this period is a common feature, not in Darrang district, but also all over the plains districts of Assam.

**Table 2.5: Trend of Decadal Growth of Population in Darrang District, 1971-2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census year</th>
<th>Total population of Darrang</th>
<th>Total population of Assam</th>
<th>Percentage of the total population of Assam</th>
<th>Decadal Growth of population in percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>358180</td>
<td>1,46,25,152</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>546780</td>
<td>22,41,4322</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>52.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>759858</td>
<td>26,65,5528</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>38.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>9,08,090</td>
<td>3,11,69,272</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>19.51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Literacy**

Literacy is considered to be the basic ingredients of economic growth and development. Literacy of the farmers may bring changes to the agricultural activity. It is important for the application of modern methods of agriculture. If the rate of literacy is increased among the farmers, they will be acquainted with the modern methods of agriculture such as use of HYV seeds, proper use of agriculture, use of irrigation facilities etc.
It will increase the productivity and create a condition that will make agriculture more efficient. According to 2011 census report, the literacy rate of the district is 66.86 percent. The male literacy is 66.64 percent while literacy among the females is 67.10 percent. According to 2011 census, the literacy rate of Assam is 88.83 percent where 91.84 percent is male literacy and 85.71 percent is the female literacy.

There are spatial and sex-wise variations of literacy within the different development blocks of the district (table 2.6). Pachim-Mangaldai development block records the highest percentage of literacy, which is 92.4 percent. Dalgaon-Sialmari development block records the lowest with only 45.6 percent. Pachim-Mangaldai development block is an urbanized and socio-economically advanced block while in Dalgaon-Sialmari development block, the Muslims of immigrant origin constitute a considerable proportion of the total population.

Table 2.6: Literacy Rates in Different Community Development Blocks of Darrang district, 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the blocks</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Total literate person</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Literacy rate ( in percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Sipajhar</td>
<td>227309</td>
<td>201819</td>
<td>104910</td>
<td>96909</td>
<td>88.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Pub-Mangaldai</td>
<td>152657</td>
<td>79360</td>
<td>44998</td>
<td>34362</td>
<td>51.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Pachim-Mangaldai</td>
<td>91582</td>
<td>84622</td>
<td>42010</td>
<td>42612</td>
<td>92.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Dalgaon-Sialmari</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sialmari</td>
<td>196129</td>
<td>89708</td>
<td>56062</td>
<td>33646</td>
<td>45.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Bechimari</td>
<td>152951</td>
<td>81141</td>
<td>53462</td>
<td>27679</td>
<td>53.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Kalaigaon</td>
<td>79893</td>
<td>65019</td>
<td>34408</td>
<td>30611</td>
<td>81.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Khairabari</td>
<td>7569</td>
<td>5484</td>
<td>3078</td>
<td>2406</td>
<td>72.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistical Office, Darrang
Sex Ratio

Sex ratio has indirect impact on the agricultural development of a region. In the district, females seem to be more active in agricultural work. They are engaged in many kinds of agricultural works such as transplanting of rice, harvesting of rice and other crops etc. The sex ratio of the district is 923 in 2011. Sex ratio is higher in the district than some other districts of Assam.

Occupational Composition

The predominance of the agrarian economy of the district is reflected in its occupational structure of the working population. It is found that most of the working populations of different development blocks are engaged in agriculture (cultivators and agricultural labourers). This is mainly because of lack of any other alternative employment for the population. It may be noted that the slow progress of the industrial sector has not been able to generate job opportunities in accordance with the rising population in the different development blocks of the district.

The total workers of the district are 404428 in 2001. The male workers are 343108 and female workers are 61320. The total agricultural labourers are 80853 in the district. (Table 2.7)

Table 2.7: Distribution of Main Workers and Non-Workers in Darrang District, 1991-2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Total Workers</th>
<th>Cultivators</th>
<th>Agricultural Labourers</th>
<th>Other Workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>332712</td>
<td>73031</td>
<td>106711</td>
<td>36402</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>343108</td>
<td>61320</td>
<td>183636</td>
<td>55896</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Directorate of Economics and Statistical Office, Darrang
2.7 Historical Background of Different Social Groups inhabited in Darrang District

The present Darrang district was known as the Mangaldai sub-division till June 30, 1983. It lies to the western part of the erstwhile Darrang district. In 1983, Mangaldai sub-division was upgraded to a district which was named as Darrang district, because of the historical significance of the region attached to the name Darrang, while Tezpur sub-division was upgraded to another district by the name of the Sonitpur district.

There are different views regarding the origin of the word ‘Darrang’. According to one view, the name “Darrang” seems to have originated from the Sanskrit word “Dwaram” meaning a gate of pass. In ancient time, there were several Dwarams on the northern border of the district, just below the foothills of Bhutan and Arunachal Himalayas. Through these Dwarams the Bhutanese people could enter the plains from the north for trade and pilgrimage. The most important Dwarams are Kaulingadwar, Debadharma Dwar, Chari dwar, chaydwar and Nadwar. According to the second view, the word “Darrang” came from “Dauranga” which means the land of pleasure (Rangabhumi) of gods. Some scholars have the opinion that once the hilly states of Bhutan, Tibet and the Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh were “Ranga” and the plain situated on the south of this land was lowland. So the name of the low land was called “Da-Ranga” and hence the name “Darrang” came into being. According to another view, the word is an Austric derivation of “dorr” meaning a bridge and “hong” or “ong”, meaning water and the name Darrang was originated.

The name Mangaldai also said to have derived from the name of Mangala Devi – the daughter of Koch king Parikshit Narayan, who ruled over the region in the 17th century. But many scholars have different opinions regarding the origin of the name.
Mangaldai. They do not agree with earlier view and opine that the name Mnagaldai has been derived from the name of the river Mangala, the mythological name of the Bornadi River, which forms the western border of the present Darrang district.

The history of Darrang is as old as the history of Assam. From the ancient time, the District was ruled by many non-Aryan kings of different dynasties like Danava or Asura, Burman, Salastambha, Pala, Bhuyan, Koch and Ahom. Darrang district was a part of ancient Kamrupa in the past, the boundary of which extends from the Karatowa river in the west to the river Dikrang in the east. So far history goes, Mahiranga Danava (C.1700 BC) of Kirat dynasty was the first king of Kamrupa. He was succeeded by Hatakasura, Sambarasura, Ratnasura and Ghotakasura (C.1600 BC).

It is known from the Bishnu Puran that a love episode took place between Usha, the daughter of Bana and Anirudha, the grandson of Krishna. This dragged the two parties into a bloody war at Sonitpur. Lord Shiva participated in the battle on Bana’s side as Bana was a saivite. Lord Krishna who was also called Hari blew conch shell on the way from the Dwarka to Sonitpur, indicating his readiness to fight with the opposite side. Harisinga was thus named after the name of Hari. Near Harisinga, the soldiers took position by constructing a “garh” (Rampart) which was later on called “Raonagarh”. Both the places are located in Darrang district.

The district of Darrang has two racial groups of people- the Austro-Asiatic and Mangoloid which is known as the Tibeto-Burmese of Indo-Chinese stocks. The Indo-Aryans who entered the area in the third phase was another predominant group. From the ancient time, the district had been influenced by four migration routes of mankind, namely (1) Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan Route, (2) The Ganga and the Brahmaputra route, (3) The Bay of Bengal Route crossing over Bengal and Burma and (4) Assam Burma Route through Patkai Hills. Through these routes different groups of people at different
times entered into Assam. The original home of the Tibeto-Burman group of people were the upper courses of the Yantse and the Hoag-ho rivers in north-west China. They entered into Assam through the Brahmaputra and rivers of China, Burma and Indo-China (1500 B.C.). Important tribes of the Tibeto-Burman groups are the Bodos, Garos, the Kacharies, the Rabhas, the Lalungs, the Meches, the Hajong, the Hojai, the Dimasas and others.

The speakers of the Tibeto-Burman language belonging to the Mangoloid group were the chief inhabitants in the early part of history. Bonasura, the earliest known king of Darrang was a non-Aryan who founded his capital at Sonitpur. According to the late Bishnu Prasad Rabha, the noted tribal leader and artist of Assam, Bonasura was a king of Koch Rabha dynasty of Bodo origin. Although reference to Sonitpur in the literary works and epigraph is meagre, there is enough evidence to show that this portion of the territory formed a part of ancient Kamrupa. It is not exactly known when the Indo- Aryan began to settle in Darrang district. Enough references in the Hindu scriptures like the Rig veda, the Mahabharata, the Bhagawata, the Puranas etc about various places even now identifiable within the district. One such example is the Dhalpur, near Kurua hill, south-west of Mangaldai, which is said to be the capital town Dharmapur of king Shribatsha of the Mahabharata fame. Only a few years back, some remains of “Jopa” bamboo or cane containers with lids meant for keeping cloths containing silk clothes and other valuable utensils were found in the excavation at Dhalpur hill near Mangaldai.

Kurua, located on the north bank of the river Brahmaputra, 30 kms south-west of Mangaldai, is said to be camp site of the Mahabharata fame Kauravas, who came to attend the marriage ceremony of Bhanumati, the daughter of king Bhagadutta.
After Bhaskar Barman, Avanti Barman became the king of Kamrupa and established the Salastambha dynasty. His succeeding kings ruled over Kamrupa till A.D. 1000. As indicated by the Horjara Rock inscriptions, under the Salastambha dynasty, the capital of Kamarupa was shifted from Pragjyotishpur to Harupeswar, near the present Tezpur. Several kings of Salastambha dynasty ruled over Kamrupa from 650 to 990 A.D.

From about 1000 A.D., Kamrupa including Darrang district was administered by the kings of different dynasties like the Palas, Jitterys, and Bhuyans etc. Joypala was the last king of Pala dynasty. The famous Joypala Pukhuri, a very large tank in the north-west of Mangaldai, is said to have been excavated by him. The Jittery king had passed through the north bank of the Brahmaputra and left some memorable marks in Darrang district. The famous Burhinagar pukhuri, one of the largest tanks of Assam, was excavated by Jittery king of Arimatta to satisfy his mother.

After these dynasties, Kamrupa was administered by a few other kings from 1138 A.D. onwards, when the kingdom had to face the Muslim invasion. Ikhtiaruddin Bakhtir Khilji was the first among the Muslim invaders to attack Kamrupa in 1206 A.D. To resist the Muslim attack, king Sandhya shifted his capital to Kamatapur in the west. Subsequent to this shifting of capital, the administration in the eastern part became weak and the Kachari king Miganka of Arimatta’s dynasty, died childless and the chiefs of the Bhuyan dynasty came to the power from about 400 A.D. to about 600 A.D. The term ‘Bhuyan’ means landlord. From A.D. 1300 to 1600, when the western part of Kamrupa was administered by the Koch kings and the eastern part by the Ahom kings, Darrang was administered by many feudal lords of Bhuyan dynasty. These Bhuyan chiefs were very popular among their subjects, who undertook a lot of work for social welfare. They excavated many large tanks in the densely populated built up
zone for providing water for domestic and irrigational purposes, many of which still exist. Some such tanks of the Bhuyan period, still in use are the Barampur tank, Baghmara tank, Boldev tank, Deoraj tank, Dighirpar tank in Sipajhar community development block, Lakhimpur and Somleswari tank in Kalaigaon development block and Jaljali tank in Pachim Mangaldai community development block. In addition to these tanks, there are many other tanks in different parts of Darrang district, which are supposed to be excavated by the Bhuyan feudal lords. A rampart called “Bhurargarh” was constructed to obstruct the Bhutias who attacked several times the reign of Barabhuayan in the Kalaigaon development block.

Since 1206 onwards many Mughal invasions were encountered by the king of Kamrupa and those Mughal infantry and artillery solders that were brought under captivity, were allowed to settle between Hajo and Sipajhar. Thus, the western part of present Darrang district has been supporting a large Muslim population since the early 13th century. Moreover, many of the Koch kings of Darrang invited some Muslims artisans from the west to come and settle in the district. The descendents of this Muslims have now become an intrugal part of the indigenous Assamese population of Darrang district.

It becomes apparent from the above discussion that Darrang district was initially settled by the Tibeto-Burman people, followed by the people of Indo- Aryan origin. Both the groups settled in the built up region and practised agriculture.

In 1826, after the treaty of Yandaboo, Assam, including Darrang district came under the British rule. Darrang was made a district by the British commissioner Mr. Robertson in 1832-33, which included the undivided Darrang and Sonitpur district. Some British companies started tea plantation in the district in 1835. After 1878, the number of tea gardens increased and accordingly more and more tea garden labourers
came from Chottanagpur and from some other states of India and settled in the highland of the built up region of present Darrang.

The built up region of the district was mainly inhabited by the indigenous agrarian people, who avoided the forested and infertile soils of the northern Torai Bhabar zone which is located in present Udalguri district. And the extreme southern flood plains were often inundated by the seasonal flood of the Brahmaputra. Therefore, the built up region from Patharighat towards Kalaigaon area was densely settled by indigenous non tribal and tribal people.

From the first decade of 19th century, the Muslims of immigrant origin began to settle in the southern flood plain area of the district. This influx of large number of Muslim population from the East Bengal (present Bangladesh) was partly responsible for the increase of district population. They introduced many new crops like jute, vegetables, spices etc. on commercial basis especially in the southern part of the district. Mangaldai was an administrative sub-division of the old Darrang district, with its headquarters at Mangaldai town. For a short period, the district headquarters of the entire undivided Darrang district were established at Mangaldai and it remains so from 1833-1835. In 1983, Darrang district was divided into two separate districts- Sonitpur with Tezpur as its headquarter and Darrang with Mangaldai as its headquarter, consisting of the same area as the former Mangaldai sub-division has two sub-divisions as Mangaldai and Udalguri. Again in 2004, Mangaldai sub-division became a separate district which is known as Darrang district. The population of the district is heterogeneous consisting of different groups of people belonging to different sects, races, languages and religions. The people of the district can be classified into five social groups-Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, General Caste Hindu, General Caste Indigenous Muslims and Muslims of Immigrant Origin.
Scheduled Tribes

In the district different types of Mongoloid groups have inhabited for centuries mainly in the some scattered villages of built up region. Boro is a language of the major tribal group of people. They use Assamese languages in offices, schools and colleges. The religion of the majority of the tribal is Hinduism and their affinity to a common Assamese culture and a similar mode of living. They practice same kinds of agriculture with same method. The tribal people of the district are the earliest settlers of the district. Generally the tribal people are lethargic in nature but they are simple living and peace loving. Majority of them are cultivators and produce one crop on an agricultural year especially rice is cultivated by them. They prepare country made liquor with rice and majority of them drink this liquor.

Scheduled Castes

Scheduled Caste social group are the lowest stratum of the caste hierarchy in the Hindu society. It is further sub-divided into 16 castes groups like Kaibotra, Namusudra, Thalomats, Dhubi, Hira, Mochi and others. The scheduled caste people are mostly landless and they have their own traditional occupation and interest for production of crops. The Kaiborta are traditionally engaged in fishing and fish trade, Hira in making ornaments and pottery making, Dhubi in cloth washing etc. Their dressing and eating habits and also languages are similar to common Assamese. Some scattered villages of this group of people are found in the middle part of the district. At present some of the scheduled caste populations have been working as agricultural labourers. A small section of them are also engaged in agricultural activities.

Indigenous Hindu

The indigenous general Hindu are mostly found in the north and south western part of the district. The people belonging to the general Hindu are again sub-
divided in hierarchical order into the following caste- Brahmin, Kayastha, Kalita, Ganak, Keot, Chaloi, Sut, Jogi, Koch and others. People belonging to the Brahmin, Kayastha and Ganak castes do no plough the land themselves, though they may supervise the agricultural operation for which they depend on bonded or hired labourers. Some of them do all other agricultural works themselves accept ploughing the soil. There are some of the socio-cultural problems responsible for the slow growth and development of agriculture among the indigenous group of farmers.

**Indigenous Muslim**

The Muslim rulers of Bengal came to invade Assam from early part of the 13th century A.D. The Muslim and the Mughal rulers of Bengal and Delhi respectively attacked Assam several times. Each time, some of their Muslim soldiers and civilians stayed back in different parts of Assam. Moreover, during the short span of time of their rule over some parts of Assam, they converted some people into Islam with the help of religious preachers. In this way, the number of Muslim population had increased in the whole state of Assam as well as in the district of Darrang. Along with the Hindus, the Muslims who came prior to the British rule are regarded as indigenous people of the district. They have been settling in the north-western and middle part of the district in the built-up areas. The mode of living of the indigenous people is simple. They follow both the traditional and modern method of cultivation. Some, indigenous Hindus were imported by the British tea planters from the states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Orissa etc. as labourers for tea gardens who are called as tea garden labourers.

During the British time, people came from different parts of India for employment in different jobs, such as office clerks and professionals from West Bengal, traders from Rajasthan, artisans, porters, daily wage labourers and small
traders from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and soldiers and office attendance from Nepal have settled in the district. These groups of immigrants have been still coming unabatedly to Assam. Although some of them have earned their livelihood by engaging themselves in small scale industries like goldsmith, carpentry, hotel keeping, running of different shops, carrying out trade and commerce in hats and bazaars, in the urban and semi-urban areas, yet a major portion of them are engaged in agriculture and have settled permanently in the district. Though they are regarded as tribals in their own state, in Assam they are not getting the tribal status. So they are known as tea tribes but not regarded as tribals in Assam by the constitution of India. Some of the ex-tea garden labourers are engaged in cultivation of crops in all such areas.

**Muslims of Immigrant Origin**

Since the early part of the 20th century, there has been tremendous influx of Muslim of immigrant origin to the district. Due to the acute shortage of food crops in Assam during the time of First World War, the then government of Assam adopted colonization scheme and a policy of “grow more food”. In order to implement this policy, the government had imported farmers from the erstwhile East Bangal i.e. present Bangladesh, specially from Maimonsing district and as a result lakhs of Muslim people migrated to Assam, they had freely settled in the fallow and wasteland of the Brahmaputra valley, particularly in the Char areas and active flood prone areas of Nagaon district, Darrang district and the old Kamrup district of Assam. The magnitude of the influx was so serious in between 1911 to 1941, that there was a conspicuous increase in the Muslim population in the Brahmaputra valley districts. Most of the Muslims of immigrant origin settled in Dalgaon–Sialmari community development block, Bechimari community development block, eastern part of Kalaigaon community development block, southern part of Pachim and Pub Mangaldai
community development blocks and south eastern part of Sipajhar community
development block of the study area. Besides, being concentrated in these blocks influx
of fresh immigrants from Bangladesh entered unabatedly and occupied the whole char
areas of the Brahmaputra from Zia-Dhansiri on the east to Kurua on the west.
However, it is observed that more than 90 % of the people of this community are
directly or indirectly engaged in cultivation. They are laborious and efficient
agricultural workers and they produce almost all kinds of crops suited to the local
climate. In fact, they are the real cultivators of the district. They apply chemical
fertilizers, insecticides, high yielding varieties of seeds, modern implements and other
modern techniques in the agricultural fields. They also produce winter crops mainly
vegetables using irrigation facilities.

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