Chapter III
Change of Official Policy 1911 Onwards

Immigrants from Mymensingh had been infiltrating into Assam particularly into the Barpeta and Nowgong subdivision since the beginning of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{1} It became a rapid and steady process, the first of which is traceable in the Census Report of 1911. The Census Commissioner in his report first pointed out the dangers of immigration by calling it “………… a peaceful invasion of Assam by the advancing hoards of Mymensinghia army…..”\textsuperscript{2}

Inspection made in Nowgong from 1920 to 1925 revealed that the Land record of that district was in a state of chaos owing to the pace at which settlement of immigrants had taken place. There had been previously a very large area entirely occupied by thick jungle and only occasionally cleared by \textit{pam} cultivators.\textsuperscript{3} The indigenous cultivators used to cultivate the same area for two or three years and then moved elsewhere for new cultivation. So long as plenty of land existed that system continued. But later on such fluctuating cultivation of indigenous cultivators had been brought under survey and assessed to Government revenue. But \textit{pam} surveys were more or less

\textsuperscript{1} Line System Enquiry Committee Report p.2
\textsuperscript{2} M.Kar p.2
\textsuperscript{3} \textit{Pam} was a general system of cultivation practiced by the indigenous Assamese in the low-lying riverine areas fit only for cold weather crops like mustard, pulse etc.
tentative. All this changed with the coming of the Mymensinghia immigrants who settled and cleared jungles permanently because their main cultivation was jute and such riverine land was eminently suitable for jute cultivation. The immigrants were prepared to pay what the indigenous people considered fabulous prices for land. All sorts of speculators, Assamese, older immigrants, members of the land record staffs were busy selling to immigrants Government lands or land belonging to others.4

Their hunger for land was so great that in their eagerness to grasp as much as they could cultivate, the immigrants not only encroached on Government reserves but also lands belonged to the local people from whom they could be evicted only with great difficulty. From available primary source it appears that the settlement of East Bengal cultivators went sufficiently well as long as they were engaged in filling up the vacant spaces in the riverine area. But as they drew nearer to the areas held by the indigenous people signs soon became apparent of the clashes of interests between them and the local people and of the dangers to the internal life and habits of the latter.5

For the first time in 1913 the problem of agricultural immigrants and the need for preventing interference with the Assamese had begun to attract the attention of colonial officials. At that time the immigrants in the Brahmaputra valley numbered at around twenty thousand and the government policy was to encourage immigration.6

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4 The Assam Gazette Part VI, 1936 p.1527
5 ASF RD23/43.p.5
6 ASF Rev.A September 1926 No.1-22
The local Assamese people did not like the advent of these people in their midst which is evident from the report of Deputy Commissioner of Nowgong. In 1913 the Deputy Commissioner went to Geruabokoni mauza of Nowgong district to enquire about the objections of local indigenous people of Hatimuria and its neighborhood regarding the settlement of some twenty houses of Mymensinghia immigrants there. He observed that the Mymensinghia immigrants were excellent cultivators but more aggressive than the indigenous Assamese. The indigenous cultivators were afraid of these immigrants on account of their litigious character. Personally the Deputy Commissioner was not in favour of discouraging immigration from Mymensingh in Assam.\footnote{ASF S/139R of 1913}

The colonial rulers in Assam were considering some amendment in the land revenue settlement on account of annulment of Bengal partition. In June 1912 W.M Kennedy wrote to the Director of Land Records and Agriculture that owing to the dissolution of Eastern Bengal and Assam, the alteration was necessary to the new draft rules under Assam Land Revenue Regulation.\footnote{ASF Rev. A February 1915 Nos-124-143}

Consequently in September, 1915 the Colonial Government in Assam proposed a consolidated set of rules and published it in 1915. The new rule empowered Deputy Commissioners to make settlement subject to the approval of Chief Commissioner. By the new rule all the settlements were to be made on an annual patta basis which conferred on the settlers only the right of users and no right of inheritance and
transfer. After a reasonable period that annual patta would be converted into a periodic one by the district authority concerned.  

Another important provision of the new law was under section 12 which empowered Deputy Commissioner to eject any person from land over which such person had not acquired the rights of a proprietor, landholder or settlement holder, within three months of the notice.  

It was an important modification in respect of transfer of land as under previous rule landholder had a permanent, heritable and transferable right of use and occupancy.

These new set of rules were intended to benefit the indigenous Assamese people, to prevent them from transferring lands to immigrants, a curtailment of Assamese right to sell and transfer. It was unavoidable and essential as immigration could not be stopped by Provincial Government.

Many objections rose from many quarters but the Chief Commissioner rejected all objections and declared no change in the policy. Finally by the Revenue Department Resolution No.2905 R dated the 26th August 1916, declared the rules as finally approved and enforced.

By 1916, the problem of agricultural cultivators from Bengal district of Mymensingh became more serious. J.McSwiney, Director of Land Records and Agriculture by a letter dated 19th December, 1916 informed the Commissioner, Assam Valley Districts that it

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9 M.Kar.op.sit.p.17
10 ASF, Rev.A January,1917 Nos-107-139
11 ASF, Rev. A February 1915,Nos.124-143
12 M.Kar.op.sit.p.17
13 ibid.p.17
had become a difficult task of assimilating the new Mymensinghia immigrant settlers in the general economy of the province.\textsuperscript{14}

McSwiney observed that in Nowgong and in Rangpur these Mymensinghia settlers were called Bhatials and the general impression of the local officials was that these immigrants were turbulent and mischievous people with whom contact was distinctly difficult. The mandals and the local Gaonburas were afraid of them and preferred to keep a considerable distance from them. According to him specific government orders were needed to control them. At the same time he put forward a proposal of appointing a Muhammedan Sub-Deputy Collector from Sylhet as Special Colonisation Officer who would be able to map out areas for their colonies and encourage a greater immigration.\textsuperscript{15}

P.R. Gurdon, Commissioner, Brahmaputra valley in his note dated 20th March 1917 expressed his desire that the immigrants should be encouraged to merge their custom and language with that of the people of Assam valley, for which he preferred the appointment of Muhammedan Sub Deputy Collector and Kanungos in those villages, which were inhabited by large number of Muhammedan settlers. At the same time, Gurdon suggested for discussion with the Assam Association before taking any decision regarding local administration and passing of any order. He considered that it was not only important from the point of land records but also possess an important political aspect. Moreover, according to him, it raised a

\textsuperscript{14} ASF Rev. Deposit R(A) September, 1920 Nos.1-12
\textsuperscript{15} ibid
sociological problem in Assam valley Division from the view point of Assamese population.\textsuperscript{16}

From the available primary sources it has become clear that the immigration in the early 20th century experienced hardship and confrontations from among official circles on the one hand and the earliest immigrants on the other. It is evident from the confidential letter of Debendra Kumar Mukherjee, Assistant Director of Land records dated 25th February, 1920, who visited certain villages under Geruabokoni and Dihing Mauza for official enquiry. While witnessing the inflow of immigrants, he was informed by new coming immigrant settlers that they were at the mercy of the mandals who levy blackmail more or less for pointing out available lands. No land was available to immigrants without paying money firstly to matbars (village headman among old immigrants who settled their earlier), secondly to the mandal and thirdly to the mauzadar. Everyone was to be satisfied in order to prevent rival claimants for the same land. It had become a source of income to shrewd people among the earlier Mymensinghia immigrant settler. He also stated that the Deputy Commissioner of Nowgong in his latest order had directed that the allotment of land to the new immigrants should not exceed 10nals\textsuperscript{17} in width and 100 nals in length for each family. The settlement should be made by the Sub-Deputy Collectors and in his absence by Kanungoes.\textsuperscript{18}

Assistant Director of Land Records, therefore, considered the appointment of a Special Colonisation Officer not only to save the new coming Mymensinghia immigrants from the hands of low paid colonial officials but also to safeguard the interest of indigenous

\textsuperscript{16} ibid
\textsuperscript{17} 1nal or bamboo pole= 12 ft (3.7mtr), 1sq.nal=144 ft (3.7mtr)
\textsuperscript{18} ibid
population. From the same source it has been informed that there was an order of Mr. Dawson, Director of Land Records to the effect that no land within a mile of any village inhabited by Hindus or Kachari people should be settled with the immigrants, but that rule was not observed anymore.\textsuperscript{19}

Moreover, he observed that the system of cultivation practised by the indigenous cultivators was totally different from that of Mymensinghia cultivators, who never relinquished lands after cultivating it for a short period of time. He was informed that the Mymensinghia cultivators preferred to get settlement on those lands which were abandoned by indigenous cultivators, and for which they offered good prices. The colonial officials realized that it was not possible for indigenous cultivators to adopt similar method of cultivation, practiced by immigrants. Therefore, the colonial officials considered it necessary to reserve large area of jungle lands near the villages of indigenous cultivators, to enable them to carry out their old method of fluctuating cultivation.\textsuperscript{20}

After carefully observing the situation Assistant Director of Land Records put forward some proposals for consideration in the Brahmaputra valley. He recommended for written application to be made to the Deputy Commissioner or the Sub-Deputy Collector for settlement of new land with the immigrants. The land should be allotted by the Sub Deputy Collector after personal enquiry. He also proposed not to entertain any application for settlement of immigrant in those areas reserved for indigenous cultivators. It was also proposed that other than periodically settled land, no sale transactions should be

\textsuperscript{19} ibid
\textsuperscript{20} ibid
recognized by the Deputy Commissioner. The Deputy Collector should prevent same person from possessing land more than his own requirement.\textsuperscript{21}

Meanwhile, from the different correspondence of the colonial officials it appears that the settlement of wasteland by immigrants was going through haphazardly and the Government realized the need to control the settlement. It also appeared that to avoid collision between the local inhabitants and the immigrants specific areas were to be marked by district authorities by drawing a line beyond which movement of immigrants were prohibited.

It is evident from a letter of W.J. Ried, Commissioner Assam who addressed the Government in March, 1920 with the suggestion for appointment of a Colonisation Officer on the subject of the settlement of Mymensinghia immigrants in the Assam. In that letter it appears that he had sympathy with the idea of Gurdon to induce immigrants to the Assam valley to merge their custom and language with the customs and language of Assam, but to him it was an impractical idea. According to him Special Colonization Officer might be appointed for a brief period and be placed under the Deputy Commissioner of the district. For the purpose, like McSwiney he suggested for appointment of one Lutfur Rahman as Special Colonisation Officer in the Assam Valley.\textsuperscript{22}

From the letter of A.H.W Bentinck, Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup dated 26th February, 1920 it appears that the proposal of drawing a line across which new immigrants were not permitted to settle had already begun in the Barpeta Division. Though the

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid.p.26,27
\textsuperscript{22} ibid
settlement of immigrants in Goalpara district continued without any prohibitory measures as it falls under the zamindari settlement. In his letter Bentinck admitted the presence of a large number of immigrants in Nowgong district. It has been pointed out that in Barpeta subdivision the rush of immigrants for lands reached to far extent. The immigrants were not only found settling in the riverine tract they made inroad well inside the subdivision. Bentinck observed that the arrival of new Mymensinghia immigrants had been watched throughout with apprehension and disliked by the Assamese villagers. Therefore, to avoid collisions between the two communities some administrative steps should be taken on the part of the local administration. As a part of that measure a line had been drawn by the Circle Officer, in Chenga-Bogribari Mauza of Barpeta subdivision the south of which the immigrants were allowed to settle, while the north of that line was reserved for the extension of the cultivation by indigenous people. Similarly, in Rupasi and Bhawanipur Mauzas the immigrants had been allowed south of the Trunk Road but not north of it.  

Since the relationship between the new immigrant settlers and the local inhabitants were far from cordial and local gaonburas (village headman) preferred to leave them unvisited. Bentinck, therefore, urged upon the need of early appointment of an officer to regulate the existing settlements of Mymensinghia immigrants and revise if necessary the boundaries already lay down. He also suggested for selection of village officers from among the immigrants who would be asked to cooperate with the local officials for the ultimate absorption with the people of Assam.  

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23 Ibid., p.34  
24 Ibid
From a similar letter from the Deputy Commissioner of Nowgong C.G.G Helme to W.J.Reid, Commissioner Assam Valley Division dated 5th March 1920; it appears that there already existed similar lines in some villages in Nowgong which was intended to restrict indiscriminate settlements by Mymensinghia immigrants. According to Helm, the whole matter came to his notice by two ways—(1) police reports and (2) information from Land Records Staff. He was also informed about few cases of rioting both between opposite parties of immigrants and between immigrants and indigenous Assamese people. Helm considered other aspect of the problem more serious which involved (i) malpractices on the part of the mandal and others, (ii) Sale of annual pattas both by Assamese and other older to claim possession of comparatively large areas with a view to speculation.25

It is evident from the letter of the Deputy Commissioner, Nowgong that there were some stipulations for the settlement of Mymensinghia immigrants in Nowgong at that time. According to such stipulations an immigrant family was allowed to settle only in twelve bighas of land, and settlement was to be made only by the Sub-Deputy Collector. The settlement of land by immigrants was to be determined by possession and actual cultivation. In case of any collision between Assamese and immigrants, a line was to be demarcated between them and settlement to be refused to a trespasser who he had acquired the land by purchase or otherwise.26

25 ibid
26 Ibid, p.39
Helm realized that the work of colonization was too heavy a task for a single Sub-Deputy Collector, and therefore he advocated for the appointment of a Special Colonization officer. Before sending up proposals for Special Colonisation Officer Helm decided to discuss the matter with the Chief Commissioner at Hojai, who advised him to inform the situation of Nowgong to the Commissioner.\textsuperscript{27}

It should be mentioned here that the device by drawing line to separate the immigrants from the indigenous people with the plea to avoid collision developed entirely with the district officers and not adopted in execution of any government orders. The Government, however, did not interfere and the system gradually developed although not on parallel lines in all district.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|l|l|l|l|l|l|l|}
\hline
\textbf{Mauzas} & \textbf{Settled Area} & \textbf{Revenue assessed} & \textbf{Remarks} \\
 & Bighas & Bighas & Rupees & Rupees & Year & Area & Revenue \\
\hline
1. Juria & 41539 & 51956 & 22030/- & 27325/- & 1915-16 & 22702 & 12107/- \\
2. Khatowal & 45901 & 52000 & 28566/- & 32000/- & 1915-16 & 38,982 & 23859/- \\
3. Geruabokoni & 38161 & 42250 & 18683/- & 20571/- & 1915-16 & 26943 & 13432/- \\
4. Dhing & 42318 & 45345 & 24254/- & 25906/- & 1915-16 & 31975 & 18762/- \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Table 3.1 Mauzas in which the Mymensingh Immigrants are mostly settling down in 1920 as reported by C.G.G Helms, Deputy Commissioner, Nowgong}
\end{table}

Source (ASF.Rev R (A) September, 1920 Nos-1-12.p.41)

By 1921 nearly 90,000 acres had been settled with Mymensinghia immigrants in the Assam Valley districts and the matter started attracting the attention of both Government and the Council. Meanwhile, a Colonisation Officer had already been appointed for Nowgong. By the end of 1922-23 it was reported that

\textsuperscript{27} ibid
the numbers of immigrants had increased to nearly 1,35,000, of whom about half in Nowgong; the increase was about 20,000 a year.\(^{28}\)

The matter became serious in 1923 when the colonial officials noticed that the immigrants had begun to put pressure for settlement on some old established Assamese villages. So, the Colonial Government began to consider some sort of restriction on haphazard settlement of the immigrants. Accordingly, the Government decided to separate the settlement of both Mymensinghia immigrants and indigenous inhabitants by an official order.

The first standing order was passed by J.C Higgins, Deputy Commissioner, Nowgong in 1923, who classified the villages in Nowgong into seven different classes. The Colonisation Officer, in consultation with the Circle Sub-Deputy Collector concerned had prepared lists of all the villages in the Mauzas open to settlers from eastern Bengal, namely – (1) Loakhowa, (2) Khatowal (3) Juria (4) Dhing (5) Mikirbheta (6) Geruabokoni (7) Mayang (8) Charaibahi.\(^{29}\)

According to plan of Mr. Higgins villages were classified under the following heads: (1) Villages in which there were at present only Mymensinghia settlers. In these villages the Mymensinghia settlers could be permitted to take up land without hindrance. In these villages Assamese people should not be allowed to take up land without the sanction of Deputy Commissioner.

(2) Villages in which there were at present only Assamese and where there was land available for Mymensinghia settlers. In all these villages the Colonisation Officer or the Sub-Deputy Collectors would

\(^{28}\) ASF Rev-A September 1926 Nos 1-22

\(^{29}\) Line System Committee Vol III, p.12
fix lines between Assames and the immigrants for settlement, reserving sufficient land for the Assamese for future expansion.

(3) Villages in which there were at present only Assamese, and where Mymensinghia settler should not be permitted to settle. The Colonisation Officer, Sub-Deputy Collectors and Revenue staffs would be held responsible for any Mymensinghia footings in these villages.

(4) Villages in which there were at present both Assamese and Mymensinghia settler, a line had been fixed. The Revenue staff would be held responsible if Mymensinghia settlers are found encroaching into the portion of the village reserved for Assamese.

(5) Villages in which there were at present both Assamese and Mymensinghia settler, in which no line had been fixed. But a line might be fixed where possible in future.

(6) Villages in which there was at present no cultivation that should be kept reserved for Assamese.

(7) Villages in which there was no cultivation at present and where Mymensinghia settlers might be permitted to settle. There were not many of these kinds of villages except in Mayang mauza, but the Government considered that Mayang should to be kept in reserve until no more land was available in Geruabokoni.30

It was also decided by the Government that the settlement of Mymensinghias in various mauzas other than above mentioned mauzas would not be authorized. The Mymensinghia settlers in the following villages of the following mauzas who had been in

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30 ibid.p.13
possession of lands for a considerable period would not be disturbed but further colonization by the new coming immigrants should not be permitted to settle.\textsuperscript{31}

### Table 3.2 Villages under Mymensinghia settlement

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mauzas</th>
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<td>Nij-Sahar</td>
<td>Kaachlukhowa</td>
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<td>Gendhua Pathar</td>
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<td>Chota Hoiborgaon</td>
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<td>Kuhumtoli</td>
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<td>Kachomari</td>
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<td>Baropujia</td>
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<td>Rangagora Huj</td>
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<td>Dakhin Gomariati</td>
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<td>Katimari Pathar</td>
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<td>Herapati</td>
<td>Town</td>
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<td>Itapara</td>
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<td>Town Hoiborgaon</td>
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<td>Roumari</td>
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<td>Kenduguri</td>
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Further, by the order of Higgins, in Mauza Pubthoria Mymensinghias might be permitted to settle in the area between the Borghuli bil and the stream which drained it on the north, and the Luhit Suti on the south. All those who had squatted north of the Borghuli bil, and in Bhakuvami, Hatibandha, Dolpani and Bihbubi would be ejected. In Mauza Borbhogia Mymensinghias, who started to squat in Naltali, Kurimari and Kulidonga would be ejected and no colonisation would be allowed in those mauza.\textsuperscript{32}

\textsuperscript{31}Ibid.p.13
\textsuperscript{32}Ibid.p.13
It was also declared by Higgins that in Mauza Kampur Mymensinghias in Barpatiagaon would be permitted to stay, but no newcomer immigrants would be allowed to settle. The immigrant settlers in Pub Saloibhanga would be rejected and no further colonization would be allowed in that mauza. In Kothaitali the Mymensinghias in west Kawaimari would be ejected and no colonization would be allowed in that mauza.33

In partial modification of the above order of Higgins another standing order was passed by F.A S Thomas, Deputy Commissioner Nowgong on 22nd August 1924.34 According to which, the term “Mymensinghias” would be dropped in future and the word immigrant would be substituted in its place in all official papers. The word immigrants would include persons from all districts of Bengal and Surma Valley except tea garden labourers and ex-tea garden labourers. It was also declared that for the purpose of land settlement the immigrants would not be allowed to acquire domicile rights like that of Assamese raiyats.35

In addition to these there were certain villages on other mauzas where the immigrants hold periodic pattas, and it was decided that they should remain undisturbed. However, the immigrants would not be allowed to extend their holdings by squatting purchases or any other means. The settlement new coming immigrant on any pretext was declared strictly prohibited.36

33 Ibid. p.13
34 Ibid
35 Ibid p.14
36 Ibid p.14
The effect of the classification was to divide the whole district into blocks for the use of the indigenous Assamese and for the immigrants respectively.\textsuperscript{37}

Meanwhile, Thomas the Deputy Commissioner of Nowgong, approved all existing lines already fixed by the Colonisation Officer or Sub-Deputy Collector and declared that the new restrictions were imposed under Rule 1A of the Settlement rules framed under the Assam Land and Revenue Regulations.”\textsuperscript{38}

Thus the official policy of the colonial government marked a change with such steps aimed at confining the immigrants within certain boundaries. But such executive steps failed to solve the problem of settlement as the Colonization Officer complained that the Assamese were found subletting their lands to immigrants in restrictive areas. It should be mentioned that these executive orders issued by Deputy Commissioner could only be effective as far as new settlements of wastelands and land under annual leases were concerned. But in case of those lands which were held under periodic lease, such executive orders would have no effect. As from various primary sources and corresponding letter it appears that the Assamese people had continued to transfer lands within the lines of restriction as under the provision of the then existing law there was no bar for the sale of any periodic patta to an immigrant, which made the problem more complex.

Debendra Kumar Mukherjee, Assistant Director of Land Records, who went for an inspection in Dihing circle in April, 1924 found that lands belonging to the Assamese people were fast

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.p.15
passing into the hands of the immigrants in those areas where there existed no line of division. He apprehended that if transfer of land continued in such a rate then within a few years all such villages would be held exclusively by the immigrants. Therefore, until the Deputy Commissioner took special measures by marking out the blocks of land held by the Assamese people and prevents further transfer of land to the immigrants, there was no hope to protect the Assamese people. 39

While giving the reason behind the transfer of lands to immigrants the Assistant Director of Land Records, in his report pointed out that the Assamese people could not resist themselves from temptation of high prices offered by the Mymensinghia immigrants and thereby sold their possession. He realized that the Assamese people failed to foresee the result of such an action and if such thing continued they would be compelled to leave their ancestral place sooner or later and migrate elsewhere. 40

Therefore, considering the situation he submitted a proposal with the suggestion that the mixed villages should be divided into blocks as far as possible. It also proposed that no more immigrants should be allowed to acquire land by purchase or by any other means in the Assamese blocks without the special sanction of the Deputy Commissioner. Moreover, if any Assamese was found selling or subletting his land to the immigrants within such block his patta should be cancelled and that immigrant should be evicted at once. The Land Record Staff should be held responsible for bringing to the notice of the Deputy Commissioner all such transfer and

39 ASF Rev-A, September 1926 Nos-1-22
40 ibid
possession. Further, the dividing line between Assamese and immigrants once fixed should not be altered in future and should be maintained at all costs.\textsuperscript{41}

In the opinion of Assistant Director of Land Recordsthose lands which had been already cleared and cultivated by the immigrants, in that case the old settlements should be cancelled and the new pattas should be issued in the names of the actual occupants.\textsuperscript{42}

On the other hand, the Assamese people resented such proposal as infringement of their rights to transfer land. Though the policy of eviction was not yet a hard and fast one, W.L. Scott, Director of Land Records, strongly advocated the idea of prohibition of transfer to non-Assamese. But to him, the idea dividing villages in blocks would be useless. He also added that the non-Assamese might be kept out of Assamese blocks so long as pattas remain annual but there would be constant demand to convert them into periodic and as soon as this was done, the Assamese would sell.\textsuperscript{43}

The Government officials through their notes had reacted regarding the matter of transfer in their own way but considered that certain legislation was necessary if any useful restriction was to be imposed and enforced.

J.E Webster, Secretary to the Governor considered that the note of the Assistant Director of Land Records gave rise to very important question which would need careful examination. Therefore he called for opinion of Commissioner of Assam on that question.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{41} ibid
\textsuperscript{42} ibid
\textsuperscript{43} ibid.p.22
\textsuperscript{44} M.Kar.p.22
In a separate note dated 2nd September, 1924 G.E.Soames, Second Secretary to the Government of Assam stated that so long squatting system was recognized in Assam it would be difficult to enforce any prohibition on immigration from occupying lands. He apprehended that any eviction by force might lead to serious troubles.\textsuperscript{45} J.E.Webster wrote in 5th September, 1924 that prohibition of immigration was impossible but the Government would consider any means of controlling the settlement of immigrants on lands to prevent the Assamese being molested and ousted.\textsuperscript{46}

These views of Webster were supported by all Government members as well as the Governor Sir J.H Kerr. The Commissioner of Assam valley admitted that the problem of transfer was not as acute in Darrang as was in Nowgong and Barpeta. According to him, in Nowgong all the proposals of Assistant Director of Land records had already been adopted and in Barpeta the Sub Divisional Officer was giving his attention to the subject.\textsuperscript{47} It appears from the note of colonial officials that the Government was considering the proposal for insertion of a clause in the form of periodic patta for restricting the right of transfer of land. The Government Legal members found no objection to the modification of all new periodic pattas.\textsuperscript{48}

Meanwhile, W.G.Reid held the view that the prohibition of immigration and transfer of land must be done by legislation. According to him, the responsibility would rest with the Council and unless the Council was prepared to give effective power then there

\textsuperscript{45} A.S.F Rev-A September, 1926 Nos-1-22
\textsuperscript{46} ibid. p. 7
\textsuperscript{47} ibid
\textsuperscript{48} M.Kar. op. cit. p. 23
was no use in legislating at all.\textsuperscript{49} He also argued that if the council allowed any person the right of domicile for residing in the province for ten years then the matter of settlement might be solved with a separate blocks for both Assamese and immigrants in ten years.\textsuperscript{50}

The Governor, John H Kerr in his note dated 27th October, 1924 mentioned that he had some experience of similar problems in Sonthal Parganas and Chota Nagpur, where special measures had been taken to restrict the aboriginal population from selling their land to foreigners. He was of the view that the only effective remedy to such problem was to give the district authorities power to evict illegal transferees and nothing short of that would stop transfers.\textsuperscript{51}

From the statement of the Governor of Assam it appears that it was not an easy task to implement such plan as the executive officers might face vigorous opposition while evicting the illegal transferees. Therefore, the issue was to understand the seriousness of the situation.\textsuperscript{52}

Meanwhile the views of the Government members got divided over the immigration issue and transfer of land. According to Kutub Uddin Ahmed, legislative member, the immigration could not be stopped. He suggested for some sort of powers to be given to the Executive officers by legislation to colonize the immigrants. He considered that such steps would not only protect the interest of the Assamese themselves but also to legalize the actions taken by the Government officers from time to time.\textsuperscript{53} He also stated that the Government should take the initiative in that matter immediately.

\textsuperscript{49} A.S.F Rev-A, September, 1926 Nos-1-22, p.10
\textsuperscript{50} ibid, p.10
\textsuperscript{51} ibid
\textsuperscript{52} ibid
\textsuperscript{53} A.S.F Rev-A, September, 1926 No-1-22
because of evil of land grabbing for speculative purposes by both Assamese and old immigrants settlers.\(^{54}\)

On the other hand Ministers like Syed Muhammed Saadullah and Promod Chandra Dutta were opposed to the modifications of pattas and observed that any restrictive clause in the patta would be greeted with curses as encroachment on the liberty of the people.\(^{55}\)

From the note of A.W Botham dated 1st November, 1924 it is clear that no decision emerged from the Government meeting held on 31st October, 1924, regarding the question of preventing the Assamese cultivators from being swamped by Mymensinghia immigrants. It was also not decided whether legislation should be undertaken to forbid the transfer of land to immigrants. Later, it was decided that members of the Government should discuss the matter in course of their tour in the Assam valley and ascertain what was generally desired.\(^{56}\)

After the tour of Nowgong, in the early part of 1925 W.J. Reid stated that he heard the most divergent views among the public.\(^{57}\) M. Saadulla in his letter dated 6th February 1925 stated that opinions were divided among of people regarding the immigrants. One section of the people viewed the immigrants as criminals whom must be removed bag and bagages, while the other section claimed them as savior of Nowgong. They said that before the coming of immigrants they suffered from floods, but since these immigrants settled on the land there had been no flood at all. There could be absolutely no doubt

\(^{54}\) ibid
\(^{55}\) M.Kar.op.sit.p.25
\(^{56}\) A.S.F Rev-A, September, 1926 No-1-22.p.11
\(^{57}\) ibid
that these immigrants had added greatly to the prosperity of the
district.\textsuperscript{58}

On the other hand, Kutub Uddin Ahmed observed that the tide
of Assamese public opinion was very strong in favour of certain
legislation. In order to restrict the encroachment of immigrants in the
neighborhood of their settlement, the Assamese people thought the
legislation necessary. Moreover, he was informed at Barpeta that a
public meeting was arranged to approach Government for taking steps
to protect the “children of the soil” as the question of land grabbing
had become acute in Barpeta sub-division.\textsuperscript{59}

Thus public opinion differed from place to place. In the
meantime, H.C Burnes, Revenue member, in his note, dated 26th
May,1925 observed that if the periodic patta was not to be altered in
the restricted areas, then the question might arise whether it was fair to
continue issuing annual pattas for permanent cultivation, for the
prevention of transfer. He further wrote that if the Government was
going to restrict the right of transfer, and confine Mymensinghias to
certain areas, then the Government must provide the necessary legal
basis for such orders.\textsuperscript{60}

S.N.Mackenzie, Commissioner, Assam Valley Division, was
confused regarding the immigration policy of the Government. He did
not consider such executive orders wise and beneficial which was
intended to check the flow of immigration and the method of
settlement of land with the immigrants in Assam. Moreover, he was
not in favour of any measures which were intended to make any

\textsuperscript{58} ibid
\textsuperscript{59} ibid
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.p.12
alteration in the form of periodic pattas.\textsuperscript{61} It seemed illogical to Mackenzie that immigrants should be issued only annual pattas which he thought would deprive the immigrants of having the right enjoyed by an Assamese. He admitted that the immigrants had undoubtedly developed the country, which might have been done by the Assamese years ago if they had possessed the same initiative and industry like that of immigrants. Personally Mackenzie was in favour of a policy of non-interference with a view to forcing an issue. But he considered that if the question was acute then there should be a demand of legislation.\textsuperscript{62}

Mackenzie was informed by H.C Barnes that the policy of the Government was not to restrict immigration from Mymensingh. But when the indigenous people demanded control, Government preferred to intervene and apply methods of control.\textsuperscript{63}

In the meantime, the demand for settlement of lands by immigrants was intensified when the immigrants wanted much more land than the existing allotment. In Juria, Laokhoa, Khatowal, Dihing and Geruabokoni mauzas only 25,920 bighas remained for them but the average annual demand by immigrants for new land was approximate 33,500 bighas. Therefore, H.C. Barnes wrote to the Governor on 4th August 1925 that the Government had to decide whether to continue the existing policy of settlement of land with immigrants in Nowgong, or open the whole district to them.\textsuperscript{64}

Meanwhile, J.H. Kerr, the Governor was himself doubtful that the Government could get such legislation through the Council while

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., p.13
\textsuperscript{62} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., p.14
admitting that the transfer of periodic pattas could not be prevented without legislation. He also apprehended of public reaction which would not be unanimous in that issue. So, Kerr in a note dated 7th August, 1925 declared that the Government was not prepared to initiate new policy at present regarding the land settlement with Mymensinghia immigrants.  

Accordingly, G.T. Lloyd, officiating Second Secretary to the Government of Assam communicated with the Commissioner, Assam Valley about the declaration on the subject of settlement of land with Mymensinghia immigrants. According to that in Nowgong district no further settlement was to be made available for settlement of the Eastern Bengal immigrants without the approval of the Government. When the areas for immigrants would be filled up, new immigrants might be allowed to settle in the north bank of the Brahmaputra.

Secondly, the Government was not at present ready to initiate legislation to prevent the transfer of periodic lease to the immigrants. It was also instructed not to prohibit immigrants from obtaining settlement of wastelands outside the areas reserved for the Assamese. If the Assamese people were desirous for legal prohibition of transfer of land to immigrants, then they had to take initiative through their representatives in the Council.

Thirdly, in areas reserved for Assamese those immigrants who had already obtained periodic leases either from the Deputy Commissioner or by purchase could not be evicted.

But if any immigrant under annual lease made an effort to obtain land by squatting method, the Deputy Commissioner had the right to

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65 A.S.F Rev-A, September, 1926 No-1-22, p.14
66 Ibid, p.16
refuse him for renewal of his leases and if necessary to eject the person under his jurisdiction. In such cases the discretion remained with the local officers and no instructions were necessary. If the immigrants encroach on grazing reserves, it was under Deputy Commissioner’s duty to evict.\textsuperscript{67}

These instructions were forwarded to the Director of Land Records Assam for information and guidance of the settlement staff. Thus with these line of actions the Government accorded sanction to the Line System in Revenue Department under letter No.2132,R, the 14th August,1925. Henceforth it became a government policy in place of mere executive orders.\textsuperscript{68}

However, it did not settle the matter of transfer and purchase of land which continued to engage official attention. While inspecting the problem of land classification in opening the large areas for jute classification by the immigrants, W.L Scott, Director of Land Records, Assam visited Nowgong in the early part of 1926. He expressed his satisfaction that the Line System was generally successful there. Though he admitted that some mistakes occurred by the land record staff in demarcating the line of division, he noticed that in some villages the line of division between the two communities was very close marked. But what appeared to be of more concern to him was that of the value of land. In his report he mentioned that the value of land was Rs.100 per bigha in immigrant villages while it was only Rs.10 per bigha in Assamese villages. Therefore, he apprehended that as soon as the annual patta be converted into periodic under the rules, immigrants would buy the land by offering tempting prices. Sohe

\textsuperscript{67} ibid
\textsuperscript{68} M.Kar.op.sit.p.28
considered that the only way to protect the indigenous people by providing them only annual patta and the restriction on transfer, while the immigrants should be given periodic\textsuperscript{69}.

But from the same sources it appears that the Colonial Government was not interested to initiate any legislation by themselves at that direction. H.C Burnes, Commissioner, Assam Valley Division, in his note dated 5th March, 1926 criticized the Government policy for doing nothing to safeguard the interest of the indigenous people. He, therefore, put forward a suggestion for its immediate solution involving both the Assamese people and the Government. According to that all the inhabitants of a village must agree to surrender their rights of transfer of lands by a deed of agreement for a particular period and at the same time must agree not to introduce any immigrants into their village as tenant or resident labour. The Government in their turn must take steps to exclude Mymensinghias and other foreigners from settlement in that village and further guarantee to evict any trespassers if necessary.\textsuperscript{70}

Mr. Burnes also put forward another scheme, according to that there must be two parties to every agreement. One party would be the pattadar and the other party, the Secretary of State for India in Council. The pattadar had to give undertaking not to transfer or sublet his land. In return, the Secretary of State for India in Council would undertake to exclude Mymensinghias and other foreigners from settlement using force if necessary. But the Legal Remembrancer, Assam B.N Rau thought that the undertaking and contract suggestion of

\textsuperscript{69} A.S.F Rev-A December, 1926 Nos-94-130, p.2
\textsuperscript{70} ibid
Burnes would be invalid under section 23 of the Indian Penal Code without legislation.

But all these suggestions seemed to be no effect to the Government. The Second Secretary to the Government of Assam, G.T. Lloyd, in his letter on 27th April, 1926 informed the Commissioner, Assam that the Government considered such action would not be possible unless the executive authorities were vested by legislation with special powers which they did not possess at present. Lloyd was of opinion that the restriction of these kinds lessened the value of land and it would arouse opposition both among Assamese and the immigrants. In other provinces such legislation had been undertaken only in response of strong public opinion but in Assam no such manifestation was witnessed by the Government so far. Therefore, the Governor in Council was not entirely satisfied to justify any legislation to be passed and enforced in that direction.  

From another available primary source it appears that the immigrants opened up the land on their sides of the Line more quickly than the indigenous people on their side. It also appears that even after the immigrant settlement had become established, the indigenous villages adjoining it still contained much waste land, on which the immigrants often proceeded to encroach. Lines were withdrawn in many villages after a certain period but the settlement of immigrants never kept pace with the stream of newcomers and encroachment still continued.

Meanwhile, over the subject of control of the settlement of Mymensinghia immigrants in Nowgong and Kamrup, W.L. Scott, 

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71 Ibid, p.4
72 ASF RD23/43
Director of Land Records, Assam was of opinion that the problem of intrusion was not acute in both the places. According to him, there were two different kinds of soil generally used for rice cultivation and jute cultivation in Assam. While the Assamese people preferred to cultivate rice and other homesteads in their villages in fairly heavy clay lands, on the other the immigrants preferred sandier soil of the chapories (char) or riverine belt for jute cultivation. Moreover Scott was informed by Sub-Deputy Collector that the immigrants had never intruded in the established Assamese villages, the soil of which was not attractive to the immigrants. But the problem started when the immigrants had chosen land in the chapories to settle for jute cultivation. As a result the pressure began to rise on few Assamese settlements where which were the only available source of bamboos. According to Scott, in the chapor areas where the land was mainly under annual lease the Government could protect the Assamese cultivators as land under annual lease was not transferable under law. Therefore, he suggested that immigrants might be issued periodic lease while refusing the same to Assamese. On the other hand the immigrants should not be allowed to hold land under annual lease bought from Assamese cultivators. He considered such steps would be sufficient and might be approved by the Council in protecting indigenous cultivators. In his opinion legislation might be avoided for a few years.\(^{73}\)

But H.C Burnes, the Commissioner did not accept the interpretation of B.N Rau or W.L. Scott and insisted on his own interpretation of things and scheme.\(^{74}\)

\(^{73}\)ibid.p.5
\(^{74}\)M.Kar.op.sit.p.29
At this juncture Government proposed to hold informal conferences at Shillong on 12th July to ascertain public opinion for legislation to prevent alienation of land to immigrants. But the idea of the conference had to be abandoned for lack of response from the non-official quarters of the district.\textsuperscript{75}

In 1926, A.W. Botham, Revenue member, Assam Executive Council was of opinion that the Government should not attach much importance to the comparatively small extent to which pattas had hitherto been transferred by Assamese to Mymensinghias. According to him so far the Mymensinghias had taken those lands which were most suitable for jute cultivation and left unoccupied by the Assamese. Botham considered that the stream of immigration was desirable.\textsuperscript{76}

From the note of Botham of 27th July, 1926 it is clear that the Deputy Commissioners were instructed to continue the existing policy of controlling new settlements with Mymensinghias immigrants either by lines within villages or by the exclusion of them from whole mauzas of villages depending upon the circumstances of the particular localities. Moreover, in those areas where new settlements were allowed only with the Assamese, no steps should be taken hurriedly for converting annual pattas into periodic pattas. The annual pattas which were purchased by Mymensinghia immigrants should be declared cancelled.\textsuperscript{77}

J. Hazlett, Commissioner, Assam Valley also shared the same view like Botham over the subject of preventing the transfer of periodic pattas to immigrants. According to him the area transferred to immigrants was much less than expected, which was about seventeen

\textsuperscript{75} A.S.F Rev-A December, 1926 Nos-94-130
\textsuperscript{76} A.S.F Rev-A December, 1926 Nos-94-130 p.8
\textsuperscript{77} ibid. p.9
thousand bighas only. The biggest area transferred was in Goalpara but considering that the immigrants had been settling in that district for the last fifteen years, the area was not so large. The areas transferred in Kamrup and Darrang were insignificant and in Nowgong the area transferred was only four thousand five hundred bighas.\textsuperscript{78} Hazlett submitted the following statement of such transfers to the Government.

**Table No. 3.3 Transfer of periodic pattas to the Mymensinghia immigrants:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>No and areas of periodic pattas transferred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of patta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goalpara</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamrup</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darrang</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nowgong</td>
<td>688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,329</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: A.S.F Rev-A December, 1926 Nos-94-130.p.13)

In 1926, H.M. Prichard, Deputy Commissioner, Nowgong mentioned in his note that till then immigrants had taken up unoccupied and fluctuating areas and had hardly encroached any land settled by the Assamese. He was of the opinion that the immigrants were to welcome into the waste places of the district and to regulate them in right direction. Prichard forwarded the following statement in

\textsuperscript{78} ibid.p.12
connection to the expansion of immigration in the settled area of the Nowgong District (annual and periodic) during the last five years.\(^79\)

### Table No.3.4 Expansion of immigrants in settled areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Area in bighas held by Mymensinghias</th>
<th>Area in bighas held immigrants from other Bengal districts</th>
<th>Percentage of total settled areas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1921-22</td>
<td>140.163</td>
<td>4,199</td>
<td>13.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922-23</td>
<td>171.669</td>
<td>4,825</td>
<td>15.23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923-24</td>
<td>190.834</td>
<td>6,082</td>
<td>16.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924-25</td>
<td>217.231</td>
<td>6,637</td>
<td>17.49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925-26</td>
<td>255.086</td>
<td>7,136</td>
<td>18.86%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: A.S.F Rev-A December, 1926 Nos-94-130, p.14)

On the other hand, the Assamese middle class tried to draw the attention of the Government on the issue from the perspective of Assamese interest. It is evident from the letter of Rai Bahadur Krishnacharan Choudhury of Gauhati to the Deputy Commissioner of Kamrup updated 8th June, 1926. It appears that the Assamese people were very much concerned over the availability of culturable wasteland which was decreasing regularly due to immigrations. On the one hand the indigenous people were shifting to other places due to bad harvest and with a view to opening up waste lands or pam cultivation. On the other hand the Mymensinghia immigrants were paying fabulous price for even worst kinds of land thus creating a temptation among the local people to transfer lands to them only. Under the circumstances the indigenous people in near future would be sort of available lands in their own district. Moreover, the transfer

\(^{79}\) ibid
of lands to immigrants would be in long run proving suicidal to their interest. Therefore, the Assamese people considered it necessary for some sort of legislation to check transfer of land to the immigrants.\textsuperscript{80}

However, J.A. Dawson, Deputy Commissioner of Darrang did not consider that any clause could be inserted in the existing periodic patta. In his report in July, 1926 he clearly mentioned that under section 9 of the Assam Land and Revenue regulation a landowner and owner of a periodic patta had a permanent, heritable and transferable right of use and occupancy of the land, though to restrict the transfer of land to non-agriculturist, a clause was inserted in the pattas issued after 1919. According to Dawson the land of a permanent patta belongs to a pattadar and not to the Government at least so long he fulfilled the condition of the lease. Therefore, if the object of a restrictive clause was to keep away the immigrants as undesirable neighbor then it could not be achieved as the pattadar had the full right to sell them whom they please.\textsuperscript{81}

Being failed to reach any solution, the Government called for a Conference, which was held at Government House in Shillong on 20th and 21st April, 1928 under the Chairmanship of Governor Sir H.L. Hammond. It was attended by 1) A.W Botham 2) A.J. Laine 3) A.H.W Bentinck 4) Mackenzie 5) W.L Scott 6) B.N. Rau 7) H.M. Prichard, 8) C. Gimson 9) C.S. Gunning 10) S.P. Desai 11) Patton 12) D.K. Mukherjee.

In the conference so called Assamese-Mymensinghia lines were considered successful in Nowgong but it failed in some parts of Kamrup. It was decided in the Conference that the number of lines

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid. p.18
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid. p.22
should be reduced as far as possible. It should be simplified and straightened with the object of allotting considerable blocks of land to each community. It was also decided that the pattas in an area where line existed should be kept annual in case of the Assamese and other indigenous races so as to prevent them from transferring their land.  

On the question of protection of Kacharies and other backward races it was decided that in some Kachari areas new pattas containing a clause prohibiting transfer without the sanction of the Deputy Commissioner should be given in place of old pattas.

It was also considered that a Colonisation area as proposed by A.G. Patton, Deputy Commissioner Nowgong might be opened as an experimental basis and the settlement within it would be made on application only and on payment of a premium per bigha. The pattas would be at first given out of annual terms but when the land had been cultivated and properly surveyed, periodic pattas would follow in due course. It was decided that in order to prevent speculation in land under new lease a clause might be included in patta, forbidding separation of land without the consent of the Deputy Commissioner.

Further in the Conference the interpretation of the term immigrant remained unchanged which was earlier placed upon the term in Nowgong which included Sylhetis and other all persons coming from Bengal and the United Provinces, but excluded ex-tea garden labourers.

Botham said in the Conference that the income realized from the premium would enable the Government to give local boards

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82 A.S.F Rev-A September, 1929 Nos 218-257
83 ibid
84 ibid
85 ibid
grants for initial expenditure on roads, water supply in immigrant areas, which was very much needed.\textsuperscript{86}

The last question discussed was the utility of clause 7 which was added to the periodic patta in 1919 and forbade transfer to a person who was not a professional cultivator without the sanction of the Deputy Commissioner. D.K. Mukherjee pointed out that the main trouble was not the actual transfer but the mortage which the Marwari merchants took on the cultivator’s crops and clause did not affect the latter. Finally it was decided that it was unworkable and better be omitted.\textsuperscript{87}

On 20th September, 1928 a conference of official and un-official members of the Council under the Chairmanship of A.W Botham, Member, Finance and Revenue formally endorsed the general policy of the Colonization Scheme for immigrants in Nowgong, Mangaldai and Barpeta on payment of premium at the rate of Rupees twenty five per bigha. The Conference was attended by 1) A.W Botham 2) Saiyid Muhammed Saadulla 3) W.L. Scott 4) H.M Prichard 5) C.Gimson 6) Nabin Chandra Bordoloi 7) Kameswar Das 8) Bishnu Charan Bora 9) Maulavi Keramat Ali.\textsuperscript{88}

Nabin Chandra Bardaloi in that meeting stressed that every colonization area should be compact and that fresh immigrants should not be allowed to settle outside the colonization area. He also argued that it was essential to leave enough land for the future expansion of the Assamese.\textsuperscript{89}

\textsuperscript{86} ibid
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.p.3
\textsuperscript{88}Ibid.p.13
\textsuperscript{89}ASF Rev.A, September, 1929. Nos.218-257 p.13
Kameswar Das wanted to know that what would happen if new immigrants purchased a periodic patta in a settled area outside the colonization scheme. In reply Botham said that it was impossible to prevent that without legislation. He also added that such immigrant would not be allowed to extend his holding by squatting method in those areas where settlement with immigrant was prohibited.\(^{90}\)

H.M Prichard, then Secretary to the Government of Assam, Revenue Department by an official letter dated 23rd January, 1929 announced certain rules under the Colonization Scheme which the Governor in Council had passed under Rule 33 under the Assam Land Revenue Regulations.\(^{91}\) According to which, no settlement would be granted except on application made to the Colonisation Officer who would personally allot lands to the applicants.

Secondly, a premium of Rs.25 per bigha would be charged of which Rs. 2 would be payable on allotment of land, Rs.3 when the first annual patta would be issued, and Rs.20 when the periodic pattas would be issued. The areas allotted would be normally 30 bighas to each family.

Thirdly, no land revenue would be charged in the first three years. In the fourth year land revenue would be charged on the whole area allotted and annual patta would be issued. Transfer of pattas would not be recognized except that if a pattadar died, then the patta would ordinarily be granted to their heirs.

Fourthly, a condition of settlement would be that the pattadar must have to reside in the block in which he was allotted land.

\(^{90}\)ibid
\(^{91}\)Ibid.p.20
Fifthly, in the fifth year resettlement operations would be taken up. Periodic pattas would be issued in the sixth year for all lands which had been cleared, cultivated and demarcated in accordance with the Colonisation Officers orders.

Sixthly the Colonisation Officer would have the powers of an Assistant Settlement Officer and would be under the orders of the Settlement Officer. C. Gimson was made the Settlement officer in Nowgong Colonization Scheme.

Table 3.5 List of villages to be included in the Colonisation Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAUZA LAHARIGHAT</th>
<th>Approximate area open to settlement (in bighas)</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tengaguri (Non-Cadastral)…</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>Some Assamese pam cultivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Tengagurigaon …</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Kaorehagi…</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>About 12 Assamese houses and some cultivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Kasipari Bargaon…</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ASF Rev A, September, 1929 Nos-218-257.p.6
### Table 3.5 List of villages to be included in the Colonisation Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>---</th>
<th>Approximate areas open to settlement (in bighas)</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>MAUZA BOKONI</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Subhaibheti…</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Makharighila…</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Kherkatabari</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Kherkati…</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Bamunmara…</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. Kherkhatta</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pathar…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Baralimari bil…</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Mirikamari</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Jurbil</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. Pakariabil</td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11. Barunguri Pathar</td>
<td>1,400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12. Kherkatagaon</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. Haibargaon</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14. Ejarguri</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. Khetripara</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Borunguril)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>16. Kubartali</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>17. Merbilhabi.</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18. Merbil</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19. Kichamguri</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20. Kahitoli</td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21. Janghalblock</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>22. Bihubari</td>
<td>1,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kacharigaon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23. Salmora</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24. Kathpari</td>
<td>900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25. Sandhakhhaiti</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total:</strong></td>
<td><strong>28,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: ASF Rev A, September, 1929 Nos-218-257,p.7)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl No</th>
<th>Name of the villages</th>
<th>Total approximate area of the village in bighas</th>
<th>Approximate area included in pattas in bighas</th>
<th>Approximate Sarkari area</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>Nakara Habi</td>
<td>2,206</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>2,206</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>Kukurianigaon</td>
<td>543</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>543</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>Kuranibari</td>
<td>2,579</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2,575</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>Buraburigaon</td>
<td>1,639</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>1,557</td>
<td>Settled area scattered. There are basti of 5 or 6 families of Mikirs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>Pakaria Mikirtup</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>Mustard. No basti, Pam of Hatiutha, Settled area in a compact block on the bank of Pakaria river in eastern part of village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>Kaurhagi N.C.</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1,278</td>
<td>Mustard. Pam of Kumai, Kacharigaon, Khola gaon almost compact. No basti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>Pakaria Pathar</td>
<td>394</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>374</td>
<td>Mustard. Pam of Kholagaon, Bhakatgaon, Hatiutha in 2 blocks at two extremity of the village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>Bardhaba N.C.</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>1,685</td>
<td>Mustard. Pam of Hatiutha Kumai Bhakatgaon, Dayangiagaon, Koargaon, Manaha. Scattered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>Patekibari</td>
<td>2,334</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>2,251</td>
<td>Mustard. Pam of Kumai, Koargaon, Hatiutha, Kholagaon, Barampur, Scattered along the boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Marisuititup</td>
<td>1,528</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>1,348</td>
<td>Mustard. Pam of Kumai, Bhulukjari, Kacharigaon, Ghagna</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Sidhaguri</td>
<td>1,986</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,984</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Garakhaidhap N.C</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>900</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Buragaon Pam</td>
<td>1,769</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1,734</td>
<td>11 dags only. Scattered towards the south. Pam of Manaha, Koargaon, Bharampur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Buragaon N.C</td>
<td>1,700</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,697</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Chakhaki N.C.</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>1,202</td>
<td>Settled area scattered in three blocks. Pam of Kumai, Kuargaon, Kholagaon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Gogalmari</td>
<td>4,384</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>3,833</td>
<td>Settled area mostly included immigrants, about 50 bighas are held by Assamese of Kuurgaon and Kumai within the proposed line and the rest of the settled area falls mostly outside the line proposed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 29,967 2,194 27,773

(Source: ASF Rev A, March, 1931 Nos-83-134.p8,9)
Therefore, since the introduction of the Line System, the attempt to relieve pressure of population on land in the immigrant areas led to the introduction of Colonisation Scheme in 1929. About 28,000 bighas of waste land in 29 villages of Bokoni and Lahorighat in the Nowgong district were included in the scheme. Another area of about 25000 bighas in sixteen cadastral and non-cadastral villages was also brought under the Scheme. All these areas were earlier considered not suitable for cultivation by the indigenous people. More than one thousand families were settled in nearly 16000 bighas of land and a total premium of rupees 32250 was collected by the end of June, 1930.  

A similar scheme was also put into operation in Mangaldai and Barpeta Sub-Division. In Mangaldai, a Special Colonisation Officer was in charge of 62 villages exclusively occupied by immigrants. The premium was levied at a flat rate of rupees ten. About 24000 bighas were reportedly allotted to the immigrants but half of which was considered unattractive to the immigrants. In Barpeta, on the other hand, the immigrants were so poor that it was found impossible to get the premium and the scheme had to be abandoned in 1932.  

In 1935 the premium of Rupees twenty five had to be reduced to rupees ten under compulsions of general economic depression. Thus the Colonisation scheme in Nowgong and Mangaldai succeeded well but the Barpathar Scheme failed to achieve much and consequently it was to be abandoned during Saadullah’s Government.  

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92 N.Dhar.p.145  
93 Ibid.p.146  
94 M.kar.p.30
Thus the initial policy of the Colonial Government was to tackle the immigrant problem through indulgence and executive authority. But the attempt failed because of the dimension it assumed due to cross currents of Assamese interests. With the development of public feelings regarding land settlement which the Colonial Government did not consider strong enough, left the question to be dealt with by the popular representatives. The Line System and the Colonisation Scheme, the only steps taken by the colonial Government to solve the problem but it failed and only perpetuated it by the gradual induction of communal, racial and political question into it.\(^95\)

It is evident appears from a primary source that immediately after establishment of the Provincial autonomy in Assam under the Government of India Act of 1935, various steps which had been taken earlier by Colonial Government for administrative reasons began to be measures by communal and political standards. The Line system was interpreted as being an unfair and perhaps illegal method of control and the eviction which were an inevitable part of it were subjected to criticism. It resulted into the appointment of an Enquiry Committee by the first Saadulla Ministry which came into power after the election of 1937. The Committee submitted a report with a general conclusion to support the policy of evictions and also recommend a reform of the Line System.

Apart from the Colonization Scheme, another plan was introduced after 1937 to appease all the needy persons including immigrants. The Government decided to start a Development Scheme in as many areas as possible where large blocks of uncultivable lands

\(^{95}\) Ibid. p.31
for settlement were available.\textsuperscript{96} It was decided that in these areas after reserving 30 percent for the expansion of the existing population all squatting would be prohibited and smaller blocks would be created and allotted for settlement of all communities who were in need of land. It included the indigenous Assamese both Hindus and Muslims, tribal people and immigrants. \textsuperscript{97}

In course of time this problem became all together political especially with the emergence of Muslims League as strong political party in Assam. The Government resolution issued in June 1940 put a ban on settlement of waste lands with any immigrants, who had entered Assam after 1 January, 1938. It also decided to go ahead with the Development scheme. In the development areas a premium at the rate of ten rupees per bigha would be levied on all settlers. Of that rupees two would be payable at the time of allotment and the balance within next five years in equal installments. The settlers would enjoy the existing exemption from land revenue for the first two years.\textsuperscript{98}

The Government also agreed that the whole of the money thus realized would be spent for provisions of amenities and improvement of the areas concerned. At the end of five years when in the existing colonization area lands would be usually regarded as fit for the issue of periodic pattas, the opinion of settlers would be assessed. If 75 percent of them wanted periodic pattas these would be issued to all. Otherwise pattas would remain annual without any right of transfer. Besides, the Development scheme would be started as early as possible and until it was fully in operation, the restrictions would remain in force. In cases of the tribals and scheduled castes,

\textsuperscript{96} Nripen Dhar.p.147
\textsuperscript{97} ibid
\textsuperscript{98} A.S.F RD 23/43
restrictions would not cease on the allotment of land but would continue so long as the Government deemed necessary for the protection of their interests.99

Thus the colonial handling of the problem of land settlement with the immigrants and the introduction restrictive measure like Line System gave rise to communal consciousness and the matter was taken up by the public representatives. In course of time it drifted towards political and communal tension which embittered the relation between the two major communities in the province.