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## LAND REVENUE AND PATTA PROBLEMS IN THE CHAR AREAS OF ASSAM : A STUDY

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**ABSTRACT :** *In Assam , there is no separate land tenure system for the char areas. The present land tenure system is the outcome of the land system introduced by the British to suit their colonial exploitation and later on the land laws which were enacted by the Govt. in the post independence period. The Assam Land and Revenue regulation, 1886 is the main foundation of the land revenue policy and land administration in Assam. Through this land act covers all the matters a relating to land revenue, it does not deal with the rights of the raiyats who took agricultural land directly from the Govt. Thus , to serve the rights of raiyats on land three different Tenancy Acts Viz (i) the Goalpara Tenancy Act, 1929 (ii) The sylhet tenancy Act, 1936, and (iii) The Assam , Tenancy Act, 1935 were enacted. The Security provided under the tenancy acts was not adequate and hence, to give security to tenancy and proper justice to tenant's rights, the earlier acts were replaced by the new Assam Tenancy Act of 1971. Since this act gives the adhiar the status of a tenant , the Adhiar Protection and Regulation Act of 1948 was also replaced by it.*

**Keywords :** Char areas, land system, colonial, Assam , Agriculture.

**INTRODUCTION :** Generally char means a river Island. Large number of char , big and small have emerged in the bed of the river Brahmaputra. In the nineteen century when immigrants of East Bengal come to Assam, the number of char in the Brahmaputra was few and their size was also very big. But after the earthquake of 1950, the river bed come up; the number of char also has increased to a great extent in Lower Assam. According to the report of the Directorate of Assam Char areas development the number of char villages in the district of lower Assam is 1516 and the land area covered by them is 239000 hectares.

The Char area in Assam are not properly surveyed and hence, their exact figures in area are not available. However, according to Assam Land Records Department , approximately 159203.21 hectares of land are covered by char areas in the four undivided district of Goalpara , Kamrup, Darrang and Nowgaon. Out of this, an area of 13316.74 hectares are professional and village grazing reserves , 25474.57 hectares are under regular settlement, 12975 hectares are occupied by persons who have not been given any pattas but who are required to pay tauzi – bahira revenue and 15655.81 hectares are under un-authorized occupation of the total area ( 25474.57 hectares ) under settlement , 365415 hectares are under annual leases and 21820.35 hectares under periodic lease. The periodic leases relate mostly to lands which were previously chars but later on become joint with the main banks after gradual silting up of the intervening channel.

**Methodology :** The Present work is purely field work. For the purpose of the study, both primary and secondary sources have been used. Primary sources include report and survey data from Assam state archives, newspapers, journals etc. Secondary sources include various book related to the theme of the present study.

**Discussion and Result:** Up to the end of 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the char areas did not assume much importance from the revenue administration department. It is only after 1920s, the attention of the revenue administration was turned to these river islands. Appreciating the complexities of the administration of these newly gained tracts mainly in the context of Lower Bengal , the British Government had enacted what is known as the Bengal Alluvion and Dilution Regulation, 1825 , wherein the char areas were defined as “small islands in the river bed which are formed by either frequent changes of the river or by shifting of the sands which lie on beds of those rivers”.

Before the coming of the East Bengal firm settlers, the char area of Brahmaputra were covered by grass and forests. The milk– men of Pubna, Rangpur used these waste lands as grazing reserves during the winter months. In 1879, in the report of Hunter, it was stated that from Rangpur





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