

## Origin of Dolohat Weekly Market and its Role in Socio-Cultural Development in Dolohat District of Lakhimpur, Assam

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### Abstract:

This research paper aims to explore the origin of Dolohat Weekly Market and its role in Socio-Cultural and Socio-Economic development in Dolohat of Lakhimpur, Assam. Weekly market centers, frequently known as “haats” or “Bazar” play a vital role in the development of Socio-Economic and Socio-Cultural aspects of rural as well as urban communities. The present study investigates the origin, status, and Socio-Cultural relationships between the buyers and sellers of this market centers and their contribution to the overall development of the region. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, including primary and secondary methods of data collection. To gather primary data from the market participants, local authorities, and community members will be taken under consideration. The findings provide valuable insights into the socio-cultural dynamics of the Dolohat weekly market centers and their potential for adopting development in Dolohat of Lakhimpur, Assam.

**Keywords:** Haats, Bazar, Socio-Cultural, Socio-Economic, Buyers, Sellers, Income Generation.

### Introduction:

Weekly market centers, commonly known as "haats," have been a significant aspect of rural communities worldwide, playing a vital role in their socio-Cultural development.

These markets serve as essential hubs for economic activities, social interactions, and cultural exchange. A weekly market is one which is organised on a specific day of the week. Shopkeepers do not have permanent shops; they set up shops for the day and close them in the evening. Then they set them up in a different place on the next day. A weekly market is common both in villages and cities. Things of day to day necessity are sold in a weekly market. Shops in Indian weekly market are of traditional nature. There are different types of shops in a weekly market of which maximum were temporary. They sell household utensils, footwear's, milk products, snacks and sweets. Beside these shops, there are hawkers in the weekly market who sell different items of daily needs and have good opportunity to have a great business.

Age-old traditional weekly markets, which have been in existence even in 21st Century, are the exchanges centres of goods and services, which flow from rural to urban, urban to rural and within the rural areas. The network system of the market is very large and popular and the partners of this system are producers of agricultural products, traders of various manufacturers, artisans, and service providers. Here farmers represent the biggest group either as sellers or as buyers. At the same times, farmers retail their product & become traders also. Besides, goods, that are not produced locally, are brought by smaller & occasional traders to retail to local population. These markets, through their interconnections, are a farmer's main connection point with the inter and intra-regional marketing system. In Assam, more than 80% of population living in rural areas sells their products in nearby weekly markets and therefore weekly market plays a major role in Assam's economy.

### **Area of Study:**

Lakhimpur district is situated in the Eastern corner of Assam lies between 26°48' and 27°53' northern latitude and 93°42' and 94°20' eastern longitude. The district is

bounded on the North by Arunachal Pradesh and on the East by Dhemaji district. Jorhat district stands on the South and Sonitpur district is on the West. The district covers an area of 2,977 sq km. Lakhimpur district is inhabited by many small and large ethnic groups and communities. The study is mainly related with the Dolohat market, which is situated in Nowboicha circle of Lakhimpur district. The study area is at 17 Km west away from Lakhimpur town. Majority of the inhabitants of the area are Tea tribes (Adibasi), with many migrants communities like Bengali, Bihari, Marwari and Nepali. Local inhabitants of the area are the Ahom, Kalita and some SC tribes.

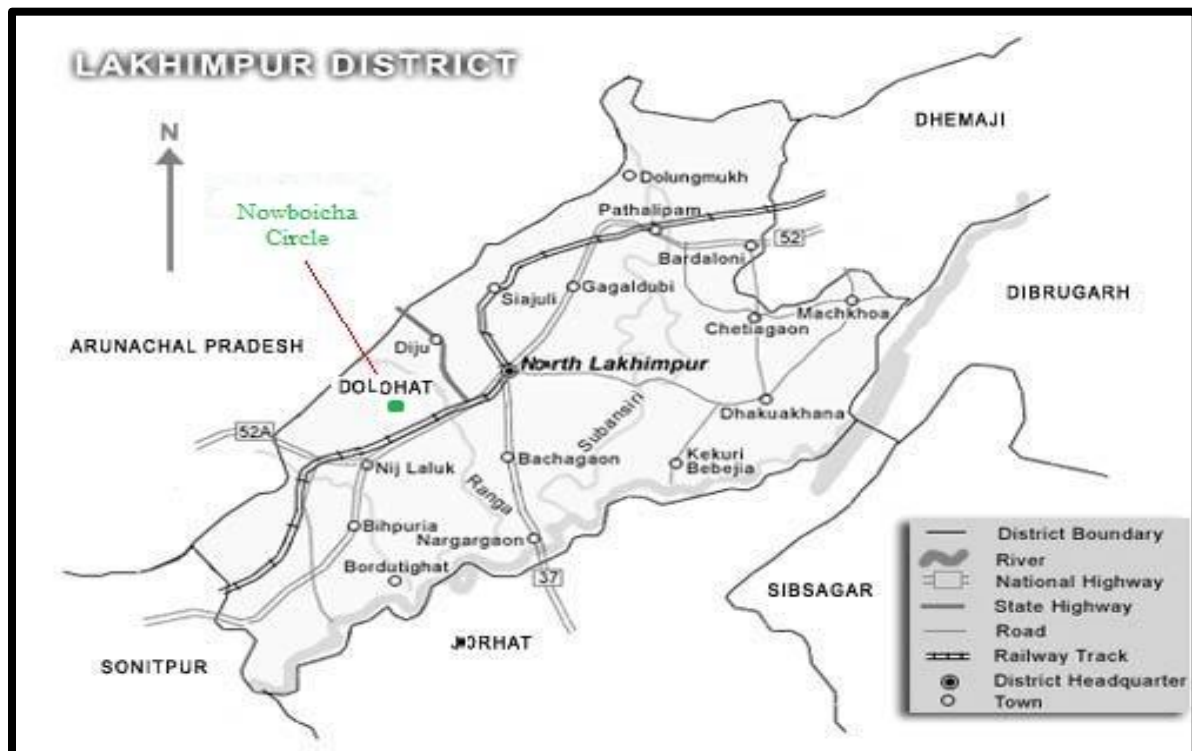


Fig 1: Lakhimpur district Map showing study area. (Map not to scale)

(Source: Google maps)

## Literature Review:

Many scholars and geographers have been continuously focusing on the various aspects of markets, but little attention has been paid on the role of periodic markets in rural

development. The specific observation has been made by Wanamali in 1981 on tribal economies and also studied about the spatial behaviour patterns of urban-rural interaction, rural service centres in India, market centres and their distributions and in 1987, focused on the periodic markets, periodic marketing and rural development in India with special reference to Singhbhum district. The most important work has been done by Dixit (1979), highlighted the market centres and their spatial development in the Umland of Kanpur. Hugar (1982), analysed the role of weekly markets in the development of rural areas of Gadag taluk and in (1984), concentrated on spatial analysis of market system in Dharwad district. Fogg (1932): focused on the village, tribal and towns market and some consideration concerning their development in the Spanish and international zones of Morocco. Hodder (1961), contributed significantly to the field of marketing geography by throwing light on the rural periodic markets in a part of Yorubaland. Deshpande (1941), studied about the market villages and periodic fairs of Bombay Karnatak. Taylor in 1968 concentrated on spatial aspects of Kinya's rural development strategy in spatial aspects of development. Bromley (1971), throws light on the markets in developing countries and in 1987, he examined the periodic markets and their role in rural development policy. Eighmy (1972), has observed in the case of west Nigerian periodic markets – the lowest order central places. Later pointed out that the evolving transport nets extend the reach of metropolitan centres, rudimentary urban places evolve from their rural matrix and technological innovations diffuse across areas and down the urban hierarchy. Saxena (2004), observed role of market towns in regional development of Rajasthan state and focused on regional planning. Hodder (1965) stated that, the markets are important elements of the social and economic landscape and the study of market is essential for the real understanding of the life of the communities and it reflects the socio- economic traditions of the people. These markets serve as essential platforms for rural producers and consumers to exchange goods, contributing to local economic growth and development (Adhikari & Hoblely, 2018). They facilitate direct transactions between

producers and consumers, eliminating intermediaries and ensuring fair prices for agricultural products (Hazra & Dhar, 2015). Weekly market centers also provide opportunities for small-scale entrepreneurs to showcase their products and expand their customer base (Islam et al., 2020). Weekly market centers hold deep socio-cultural and socio-economic significance in rural communities. They act as meeting places for individuals from diverse backgrounds, fostering social interactions, and cultural exchange (Saxena & Gupta, 2017). These markets provide a platform for community members to come together, strengthen social ties, and engage in traditional practices and celebrations (Rasool et al., 2020). Haats also serve as venues for cultural performances, showcasing local arts, crafts, and traditional skills (Mishra & Panda, 2017). Studies highlight the positive impact of weekly market centers on livelihoods and the local economy. These markets provide income generation opportunities for small-scale producers, artisans, and traders (Hazra & Dhar, 2015). They contribute to employment creation, both directly and indirectly, by supporting various market-related activities (Adhikari & Hoble, 2018). The multiplier effect of income generated through haats stimulates local economic development, benefiting other sectors in the region (Rasool et al., 2020).

### **Research Objectives:**

1. To study the origin and development of Dolohat weekly market.
2. To bring out a brief profile of the Dolohat weekly market.
3. To find out socio-cultural function of the market other than buying and selling.

### **Research Methodology:**

The researcher will employ a mixed-methods approach, combining both the quantitative and qualitative techniques to gather comprehensive information on the origin of

Dolohat weekly market centers and their role in socio-cultural and socio-economic development in the Dolohat of Lakhimpur, Assam. This approach will provide a holistic understanding about the origin of the market and socio-cultural impact of this market centers. For data collection the selected weekly market centers will be studied in-depth through case studies. These case studies will involve detailed observations, interviews, and documentation of market dynamics, success stories, and information about market participants. The qualitative and quantitative data from interviews and case studies will be analysed systematically. The analysis will involve coding, categorization, and interpretation of the data to draw meaningful conclusions. Ethical considerations will be ensured throughout the research process. Informed approval will be obtained from participants, and their confidentiality and anonymity will be maintained. The research will adhere to ethical guidelines, respecting the rights and well-being of the individuals involved.

### **Interpretation:**

- a) Origin and Development of Dolohat weekly market:** Dolohat weekly market was established in the year 1942 and is almost 80 years old now. At the early time the market was under Dolohat Tea Estate and was at the place known as “Purana Hatkhola”. The market was under Dolohat Tea Estate as the Estate was under the British rule. Now the place is known as No. 30 PC Grant which is near the water supplier of Dolohat. After Independence the market was shifted to a place known as “Kinar Banglow” in 1953 as there was no any influence of the British rule. Now the area “Purana Hatkhola” is occupied by Adibasi tribes which inhabited nearby the market when it was there. As the market was displaced to “Kinar Bunglow” the tribe occupied the area and get settled. After a few years, the name of the area “Purana —Hatkhola” was changed to No. 30 PC Grant.— Some of the senior most persons of Nowboicha get together in a meeting and discussed that the market should be a large

market and should be weekly where cattle's as well as many other things could be considered in a sufficient amount and the farmers should get benefit by selling different items in the market once in a week which is beneficial to an extent. The Sub-Divisional officer discussed with the Tea Company and gets 16.5 Bigha (417332.07 sq. mtrs.) area in name of the market. After that the market was finally established in 1953 but there was no memorial stone erected regarding the establishment of the market. A committee was also established known as "Bazar Committee" and its function was to look after the management of the market. The committee is formed by following a general meeting organised by the shopkeepers of the market. The committee consist of president, vice-president, general secretary and members who were selected as per their interest in performing their role initiatives in the committee. The bazaar committee of Dolohat market was formed in the same year when the market was established (1953) after a long discussion among the stakeholder and the shopkeepers. Every year the market is place in tender and the person who gets the tender is known as the "Mahaldar". The tender of the market is done by the Lakhimpur Zila Parishad. The mahaldar divides the market in various parts such as vegetable market site, grocery site, jewellery site etc. He also appoints persons for collecting rent of every shop. The collected money from the shop holders were sent to the government annually through standard formal procedure by the Mahaldar. The bazaar committee follows their duties in maintaining and managing the market. He take all possible steps to prevent adulteration and promote grading and standardisation of the agricultural produce, provide facilities in the market, agricultural produce with which it is concerned. The duty of collecting and maintaining information relating to market intelligence as prescribed and supply the same to Government whenever required is done by the Dolohat bazaar committee.

- b) Profile of the Market:** Market Profile demonstrates the developing market dynamics of price and volume over time. Dolohat market comprises an area of 16.5 bigha. To its east encompasses Purana Hatkhola and Dig pukhuri, Dolohat gaon to its west, Shastry School to the North and Kathal Pukhuri gaon to the South. The market organizes apparently disordered price movement and provides the trader with a means to determine where and how buyers and sellers are interacting within the market. Market Profile can identify prices that are acceptable and unacceptable to the buyers and sellers. The function of the market is to facilitate trade. The Dolohat market explores high prices to attract sellers and low prices to attract buyers. An imbalance of buyers drives prices higher until sellers are attracted to the higher prices. The sellers enter the market, compete, and move prices lower. This imbalance of sellers drives prices lower until buyers are again attracted to lower prices. Buyers enter and compete, moving prices higher again. The result of this rotation process is the discovery of prices that are acceptable to both the buyers and the sellers. Market Profile organizes withdraws and flow of buying and selling by price and time to create profiles of market activity.
- c) Socio-Cultural function of the market other than buying and selling:** Other than buying and selling goods the Dolohat market also plays other functions. The market committee by collecting donations brought circus, theatre etc. to the area. The collections were taken from the shop holders of the market and also from designated persons. Besides these the market attracts many people by organising various festivals. Different tribes of people inhabit in Dolohat and for different tribes different festivals existed. So the market tries every possibility in organising different festivals. People from outside the locality come to Dolohat for enjoying the functions and

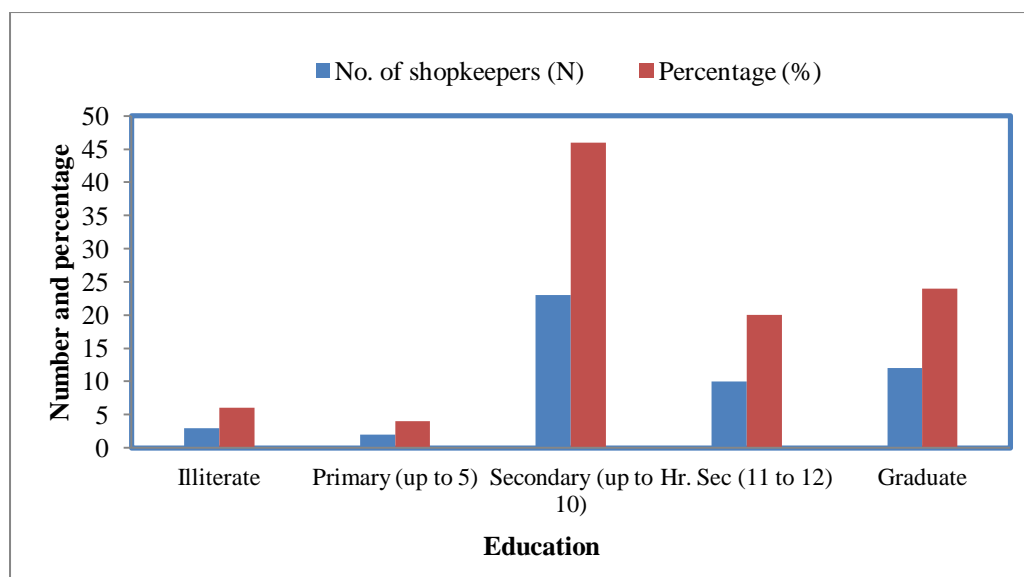


festivals and by the time they also approach the shops for buying goods and the shopkeepers as well as the market is benefited from these selling goods.

During the survey it has been found that there are 50 numbers of shops are present out of which 29 are permanent and 21 are temporary. It is observed that there are 51 shopkeepers among them only 3 were female and maximum were married and are of general caste. Almost all the shopkeepers are local inhabitants and a few were from outside the area. The outsiders are from Laluk, Phulbari, No. 2 Phulbari and Nowboicha. It is also observed that among the shopkeepers, maximum were having their own shop and as of includes different kinds of shops in the market. Almost every type of goods are available for which customers need not have to go another market to buy the particular goods. Highest family members of the shopkeepers found is 13 members and lowest is 3.

**Table 1: Educational status of the shopkeepers**

Education	No. of shopkeepers (N)	Percentage (%)
Illiterate	3	6
Primary (up to 5)	2	4
Secondary (up to 10)	23	46
Hr. Sec (11 to 12)	10	20
Graduate	12	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>

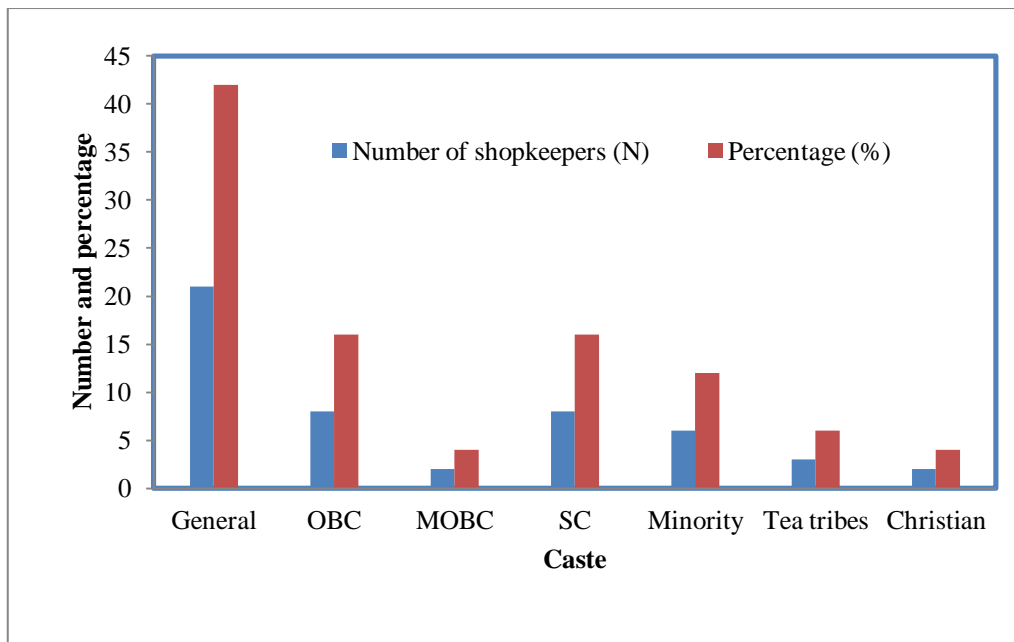


**Fig 2: Figure showing percentage and number of shopkeepers with educational status.**

From table 1 and figure 2, it is observed that among the shopkeepers the literacy rate is 94%. The illiterate is only 6%. Maximum of the shopkeepers were taken education only at the secondary level which occupies a percentage of 46% and minimum at primary level which occupies 4%. Graduation level is placed at the second highest which occupies 24%.

**Table 2: Caste of the shopkeepers**

Caste	Number of shopkeepers (N)	Percentage (%)
General	21	42
OBC	8	16
MOBC	2	4
SC	8	16
Minority	6	12
Tea tribes	3	6
Christian	2	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100</b>



**Fig. 3: Figure showing percentage and number of shopkeepers**

From table 2 and figure 3, it is observed that among the shopkeepers that maximum of the shopkeepers are of general tribes occupying 42% and lowest by Christian and MOBC tribes having only 4%. OBC and SC tribe occupies 16% among the shopkeepers and 6% by Tea tribe and 12% by the Minorities.

**d) Economic condition of the shopkeepers:** Economic condition plays a vital role in shopkeeper's day to day life. Majority of the shopkeepers in Dolohat market are qualified up to secondary level (up to 10<sup>th</sup> standard). The qualification is not sufficient for jobs in present world therefore maximum were involved in business line by opening shops of different types, some were temporary and some were permanent. During the survey, some shopkeepers were came across who have qualified their graduation but due to poor economic condition of their family they were not able to complete their higher education and get involved in income for the family. Those who were engage with temporary shop mostly the secondary passed shopkeepers, they used to sell minor items such as household utensils, foot Wears, small grocery etc. Their houses was not made of bricks and cement but slowly by doing hard work such

as by side business like working in the Dolohat Tea Estate, driving truck as part time etc., they were now building cemented houses which proves their economic condition were improving day by day. Average annual income of the shopkeepers of Dolohat market ranges between Rs. 60,000/- to Rs. 100,000/-

## Conclusion:

Contrary to the stereotyped image of their isolation from trade and markets, the rural poor are already closely involved in local, national and to some extent global markets. Rural households earn much of their income from non-farm activities and are active in non-farm labour markets and food markets. Many farming households appear willing to accept the new opportunities of commercialization in the hope that they will be released from poverty, but are constrained from doing so fully. The rural poor see that commercialization and globalization can bring increased employment opportunities and income-generating activities. By surveying the Dolohat market it has been found that the market is a very old market and various types of goods are available. The market is competing with other markets day by day. Various tribes of people are found in buying and selling goods, most of them are local inhabitants. Today, the rural development is one of the important aspects in the development of Indian economy. The rural economy is largely depends not only on the agricultural productions but also on the rural agricultural markets. The functions of periodic markets are dynamic forces directly related to the life style of the rural folk in particular and the rural development in general. Weekly markets provide an outlet for rural produce, a source of local supplies, and a focus for periodic service provision where a full range of fixed services would not be viable (Clark, 1968). In order to ensure a balance development process in rural as well as urban areas, it is necessary to provide basic services in rural areas to stimulate the rural economy and the levels of incomes and employment opportunities in the same. Such a development strategy requires the establishment of rural service centres as basic nodes to

articulate the rural economy and to link it in to the national hierarchical order of settlements. The settlements which are rapidly emerging as central places are those which have markets on or near by them. Without market the settlement cannot grow to the expected level. Therefore, the spatial hinterland gap may exist between the settlement and market. The establishment of a successful weekly market in a suitable location provides a basis for the development of an integrated rural service centre incorporating both fixed and periodic service facilities and growing in to a substantial nucleated settlement. Without a market, many other services are unlikely to be established, and if they are, they may fail or languish for lack of custom (Taylor, 1968 and Bromely, 1987). The Dolohat market is showing an impressive growth largely due to changing lifestyle patters, better communication network and rapid changing demand structure of the consumer of rural areas.

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