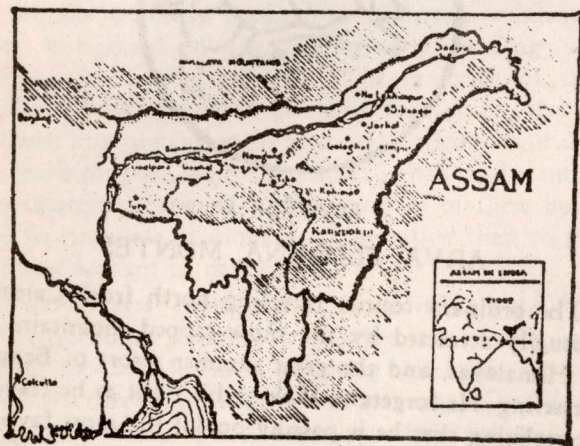


eight degrees of latitude, and between the ninetyth and ninety-sixth degrees of longitude. It covers an area of 67,334 square miles,¹ which is about the size of England, Wales, and one-third of Scotland. The province falls naturally into three well defined divisions: (1) the Brahmaputra Valley to the north; (2) the Surma Valley to the south of the Assam range of



mountains; and (3) the hills on either side of the Brahmaputra Valley. From an atlas point of view, this division is correct, but persons living in the Surma Valley, or in Sylhet, often refer to the Brahmaputra Valley as Assam.

The rhinoceros which is placed at the beginning of this chapter represents the Coat of Arms of Assam, although it is not very well known even to those who call themselves inhabitants of the Province. It is a pity that there is no motto attached, as a very good one was suggested, namely, *Arva, Flumina, Montes*,² — culti

[16]

vated plains, rivers, and mountains. This is a most appropriate description of Assam, as there is scarcely a valley to be found that is more fertile than Assam. The majestic Brahmaputra River, or "Son of Brahma", bisects the entire valley from Sadiya to the Ganges. It carries the melting snows of the Himalayas two thousand miles to the ocean, making a channel from one to three miles in width. A legend among the inhabitants is that the circular basin, called Brahmakund, or "Brahma's well", in the extreme northeast of Assam, is its sacred source. It is fed on the north by six tributaries* getting most of their water from the melting snows of the Himalayas; on the south it is fed by eight rivers** that carry the torrential summer rains from the hills lying between Burma and Assam. These tributary rivers, as well as the Brahmaputra itself, occasionally overflow their banks and deposit in the valley a silt which makes the soil extremely rich and fruitful. Some one has called this portion of the Province a "pocket of gold". According to records, Assam never has known a famine. The current of the Brahmaputra is rapid. The descent for the four hundred and fifty miles from Sadiya to Dhubri is over three hundred feet. Its banks are unreliable, and people dwelling along-side the river often are forced to move back as much as a mile in order to avoid being carried away with the falling banks.

Beside the great agricultural wealth in Assam, there are also mineral resources of no mean proportions. Oil has been discovered and wells producing petroleum are continually being drilled. Large coal mines are also being opened up; and Assam produces practically

* Dibong, Dihong, Subansiri, Boroli, Bornadi, and the Manas.
** Dibong, Disang, Disoi, Dhansiri, Kallang, Kuls, Krishni, and the Jinjiram.

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