

## Journey through Time: Mapping Cachar's Nineteenth Century Roadways

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### Abstract

Nestled in the southern part of Assam, Cachar holds a fascinating and rich history. This remote area, situated in the northeastern corner of India and endowed with abundant natural resources, proved to be an enticing prospect for the British colonial administration. The tumultuous conditions prevalent in Cachar during the latter part of the Cachari rule under Govinda Chandra provided an opening for the British. Following the tragic assassination of Govinda Chandra in 1830, the English East India Company annexed Cachar on 14th August 1832. Subsequently, with an aim for administrative efficiency, the British government embarked on various developmental initiatives, including the construction and improvement of infrastructure such as roads and bridges, as part of their colonization endeavors in the region. This initiative indirectly contributed to the overall well-being of the people of Cachar. This paper aims to highlight the advancements made in the development of road networks in Cachar, essential elements that not only facilitated internal and external trade and commerce but also created avenues for new markets. The progress in infrastructure played a pivotal role in the expansion of the tea plantation in Cachar. Furthermore, these developments proved crucial for British administrators in Cachar, empowering them to effectively govern the region.

**Keywords:** Cachar; Roadways; Colonialism; Administration; Tea plantation.

### 1. Introduction

Cachar, a district in southern Assam, boasts mountainous terrain, dense forests, abundant rainfall, massive rivers, diverse wildlife, and is home to various tribes who uphold environmentalist values. The region has experienced environmental depletion due to British colonialism, the exploitation of its natural and mineral resources, significant cross-border migration and settlement, the introduction of plantations resulting in forest loss, and agricultural activities. Formerly known as Hairumbo, Cachar was ruled by the Cachari Rajah, also known as Dimasa Cachari. Until 1832, it was under British governance, subservient to the Bengal presidency [1]. Cachar's territory was much larger before British annexation when it was an independent state governed by a hereditary dynasty. Geographically, it is situated between latitudes 24° and 27° North and longitudes 92° and 94° East, bordered by Assam to the north, Cassay to the east, Tipperah to the south, and Sylhet and Jyanthia to the west. Its length from north to south is approximately 140 miles [2]. Before Mr. Vereist led a small force into Cachar in 1763, the

British had no knowledge of the region. In 1774, the Burmese attacked, making Cachar a tributary. The Rajah of Munipoor was placed on the throne in 1810, leading to a civil war between him and his brothers from 1818 to 1823. The Yandaboo Treaty of 1826 granted British protection to Cachar, reinstating the rightful raja. However, after his death in 1830 and the absence of an heir, Cachar was fully incorporated into British territory in 1832. Cachar, located in southern Assam, holds significant historical importance both before and after British colonialism. Pre-colonial Cachar was characterized by its rich cultural heritage, diverse tribal communities, and strategic geographical location [3].

#### 1.1. Pre-Colonial Era and Colonial Era

Before British intervention, Cachar was known for its lush mountainous terrain, dense forests, and abundant natural resources. The region was home to various indigenous tribes, including the Dimasa Cachari, who ruled over the area under the leadership of the Cachari Rajah. Cachar enjoyed a degree of autonomy as an independent state governed by a hereditary dynasty.

The pre-colonial period saw Cachar engaged in trade and cultural exchanges with neighboring regions, including Burma and China, facilitated by extensive river networks and trade routes. The region flourished economically through agriculture, particularly tea cultivation, and the cultivation of other cash crops. The arrival of the British in the early nineteenth century significantly altered the political and socio-economic landscape of Cachar. British colonialism brought about territorial annexation, administrative reorganization, and the introduction of new economic systems, fundamentally changing the dynamics of power and governance in the region. British intervention led to the exploitation of Cachar's natural and mineral resources, including timber, tea, and coal, for the benefit of the colonial economy. The establishment of plantations and the introduction of new agricultural practices transformed the traditional livelihoods of the indigenous population.

### 1.2. The Road Network of Cachar in the Nineteenth Century

In the early nineteenth century, T. Fisher, Deputy Assistant Quarter Master General, provided insights into the road network in Cachar during his 1826 tour. He noted the lack of roads suitable for wheeled carriages or artillery, but compensated by the Soormah River, serving as an internal navigation channel from Kala Naga to Budderpoor. Throughout Cachar, there were paths connecting villages, especially between Budderpoor and Sonapoor, which were considered passable for infantry, cavalry, and light guns during the dry season. The southern bank of the Barak River had settlements extending about three hours from the river, while on the northern side, cultivation reached the mountains, and a thriving area called Dhurmpoor extended to the Asian frontier [4]. In the nineteenth century, Cachar's roadways underwent significant developments that played a crucial role in shaping the region's historical landscape. As a district situated in the southern part of Assam, Cachar possessed a rich history and abundant natural resources, drawing the interest of the British colonial government. The strategic development of roadways in Cachar during the nineteenth century played a dual role. Firstly, it proved essential for internal and external trade and

commerce, providing improved connectivity and facilitating the opening of new markets. Secondly, the progress in road infrastructure played a pivotal role in the growth of the tea industry in Cachar, further impacting the economic landscape of the region.

### 2. Objectives

1. Assessing the historical road infrastructure in Cachar district during the nineteenth century to comprehend its impact on regional colonization dynamics.
2. Scrutinizing the underlying motives and strategic considerations that drove colonial authorities to invest in the development and expansion of the road network in Cachar.
3. Quantifying and analyzing the financial investments made by colonial powers in the establishment and maintenance of the nineteenth century road network in Cachar, providing insights into the economic implications of such infrastructure development.

### 3. Road Management

Indeed, road management rested solely in the hands of the Magistrate, who, being heavily engaged in addressing the judicial and administrative issues of the district had little time to dedicate to the enhancement of communication routes. Consequently, in 1864, the Cachar District Road Committee was formed, chaired by the Deputy Commissioner, with the Civil Surgeon, Sub-Divisional Officer of Hailakandi, and seven European civilians, predominantly tea planters, serving as members [5]. In 1872, following the suggestion [6] of O.G.R. McWilliam, Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, Rai Bahadur Haricharan Roy and Babu Baikunta Chandra Gupta, described as 'two local Bengalee gentlemen of intelligence and position,' were appointed as members of the Committee [7]. This Committee was tasked with managing funds allocated for road and communication expenditures and overseeing the general supervision of works financed by these funds [8]. In 1881, the newly established Local Boards were assigned the responsibility of maintaining roads within their respective jurisdictions, while the Public Works Department took charge of Provincial Roads

and the construction and upkeep of significant public buildings. The Public Works Department, led by an Executive Engineer supported by an Assistant and five Subordinate Engineers, oversaw these tasks [9]. Additionally, a Ferry Fund Committee, formed in 1864, with the Deputy Commissioner, Executive Engineer, Civil Surgeon, and five European residents, managed ferries, roads connected by ferries, and the associated bridges. The executive staff included a Superintendent of Roads, an English Writer, and six Overseers, with revenue generated through ferry leasing [10]. The Table 1 below displays the revenue generated by the Committee through ferry leasing from 1868 to 1873.

**Table 1 Leasing out the ferries in 1868-73 [11]**

Year	Revenue		
	Rs.	As.	P.
1868-69	11,656	8	0
1869-70	11,986	0	0
1870-71	11,986	0	0
1871-72	12,682	0	0
1872-73	9830	0	0

Various organizations in Cachar worked collaboratively to improve communication infrastructure. By 1853, there was only one major road, but by 1866, the Ferry Fund Committee alone controlled six roads [12]. Under the guidance of the Deputy Commissioner, road construction projects were funded through the Amalgamated District Road Fund, which was managed by the Ferry Fund Committee since 1864. Donations were also contributed by proprietors of tea gardens, showcasing a collective endeavor to improve connectivity and infrastructure in Cachar for the community's welfare. [13].

A. Chatlahowar road	B. Nugdirgram road
C. Doorganugger road	D. Tarapore-road
E. East Hylakandy Road	F. Monacherra road
G. Katlakhhal road	H. Sonai Road
I. Baladhun road	J. Burkhola road
K. Natwanpore road	L. Monirkhal Road

The following roads are under the Public Works Department:

1. Sylhet and Cachar road
2. Hylakandy road
3. Luckipore road

### 3.1. Development of Road Infrastructure

In Cachar, a major road known as Rajar Sarak originated from Khaspur, connecting significant locations like Udharband, Dalu, Katigorah, Badarpur, Jainanagar, Burhibail, Ganirgram, and Haritkar [14]. It was presumed to have been built during the era of Raja Krishnachandra Narayana [15]. Three direct routes between Cachar and Manipur were identified: one from Banskandi to Jainanagar via Aquee, another from Banskandi through Kala Naga territory to Sanuyachil in Manipur, and a third from Jirighat to Imphal. The total distance from Banskandi to Sanuyachilghat was 203 miles, with an additional route from Sanuyachilghat to Ava through the Ninghee and Irrawadi rivers covering 300 miles [16]. This facilitated communication between Cachar, Burma, and, subsequently, China and other Southeast Asian countries. Pemberton also mentioned a route from Bikrampur pass in Cachar to Raha chouki in Assam, covering 150 miles. Additionally, he referred to a direct road between Sylhet and Cachar, starting from Sylhet and extending eastward via Karimganj and Badarpur, ultimately reaching Silchar. This road served as a crucial link for Cachar, connecting the district with the rest of India through Sylhet [17]. The British Government played a role in either constructing or improving these roads during the nineteenth century. All these roads were either or improved by the British Government in the nineteenth century. The road system in Cachar Valley during the nineteenth century was notably underdeveloped, posing challenges to both material progress and administrative efficiency [18]. The second road extended from Banskandi to Lakhipur and then to Manipur, incorporating kutchra road sections with embanked earthwork in plains and scarped portions in hilly terrain. The Sylhet Road, initially circuitous, had partial bridging, while an old Banskandi Road was no longer usable. A proposed shortcut to Sylhet was constructed up to Hathia, temporarily joining the old Sylhet Road. Another proposed road from Jainagar to Sylhet was surveyed

but not constructed. The road from Silchar to the Assam Co.'s factories and the one from Panchgoan to Luckinagar were developed. Seven kutcha roads from tea factories joined the Panchgoan-Luckinagar Road. The Silchar-Barkhola Road, serving North Cachar, was kutcha and unbridged. Roads from the Valley of Madhura to Durgapur and Silchar to Sonaimukh were in general use but not officially constructed. Overall, the road infrastructure in Cachar faced significant deficiencies and challenges to its functionality and maintenance [19].

**Chatlahowar Road:** The road from Silchar to Doarbund, near the north-western spur of Rengti Pahar, was initiated in 1862 under the supervision of Major Stewart. Spanning three miles from Silchar, it traversed flat paddy fields and numerous streams, utilizing masonry or timber and masonry bridges. Crossing low tillahs to Silcoori beel, a bund was present, leading over additional tillahs and the challenging swamp at Doorgakoona, bridged at considerable expense.

**Table 2 Expenditure on Construction of Chatlahowar Road**

Year	Expenditure			Number of Miles Open
	Rs.	As.	P.	
1862-63	10,678	3	-	14 $\frac{1}{2}$
1863-64	3,948	5	-	
1864-65	2,552	12	6	
1865-66	2,655	9	8	
1866-67	2,890	9	10	
1867-68	3,997	2	3	
1868-69	6,575	4	1	3 $\frac{1}{2}$
1869-70	5,300	6	4	
1870-71	8,655	8	11	
<b>Total</b>	47,253	13	7	18

Beyond Doorgakoona, the road spanned Ikar beel and traversed high tillahs for about two miles to Bara Jallingah Garden. In 1869, a new road was established, avoiding Ikar beel and high tillahs, taking a direct route from Irungmarah to Jallingah bazar. The entire distance from Silchar to Jallingah is 14 miles, with a subsequent nearly straight path to

Doarbund covering 18 miles, passing through villages destroyed by Looshais in 1849? The Chatlahowar road connected Ambicapur, Meherpur, and the adjoining Tea Garden with Silchar. [20] The annual maintenance cost is £598 [21]. The total expenditure since the road's inception is as follows in Table 2.

**Nugdirgram Road:** The Nugdirgram road, starting near the point where the Rukni meets the Sonai, diverges from the Chatlahowar road approximately a mile from Silchar. Passing through a level plain, construction commenced in 1862, reaching Sonaimukh (10 miles) and extending further to Nugdirgram (additional four miles) in 1863. Masonry bridges span all streams from Silchar to Sonaimukh, with only two unbridged streams between Sonaimukh and the Rukin. The road from Sonaimukh to Nugdirgram covered a distance of four miles and was well-maintained.

**Table 3 Details of Expenditure of Nugdirgram Road since Commencement**

Years	Expenditure			Number of Miles Open
	Rs.	As.	P.	
1862-63	1321	1	2	10
1863-64	4619	10	5	4
1864-65	1307	4	11	
1865-66	1441	6	10	
1866-67	1723	9	11	
1867-68	3276			
1868-69	2088	9	6	
1869-70	3158	10	2	4
1870-71	5007	11	6	2
<b>Total</b>	24,934		5	20

Another road from Nugdirgram to Monierkhal began in 1869 but was not sufficiently elevated for use during the rainy season. In colder weather, it was easily passable for four miles from Nugdirgram to Dermiakhal. A phari was under construction from Dermikhal to Monierkhal. As a temporary measure, a path was cut from where the new road crossed Dermiakhal along the nullah's banks to an old

planters' path between Nugdirgram and Monierkhal, parallel to the new road shown in Table 3. The old path was utilized from the nullah to Monierkhal garden, with the forest cleared for the new road up to about half a mile from Monierkhal garden [22].

**Doorganugger Road:** The Doorganugger road, spanning eight miles through the Madura valley, traverses a prosperous and densely populated section of the district. Doorganugger road connected Rongpur, Bahadurpur and Udharbond with Silchar. Annual cost of maintenance was £129,4S.0D. It was well-maintained, featuring masonry culverts and bridges throughout are shown in Table 4 [23].

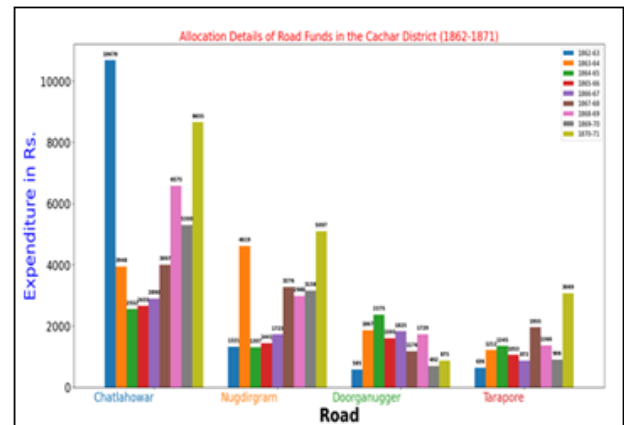
**Table 4 Details of Expenditure of Doorganugger Road since Commencement**

Year	Expenditure			Number of Miles Open
	Rs.	As.	P.	
1862-63	585	4	4	4 $\frac{1}{2}$
1863-64	1867	7	10	2
1864-65	1345	10	10	
1865-66	1053	2		
1866-67	875	2	11	
1867-68	1955			
1868-69	1366	5		1 $\frac{1}{2}$
1869-70	906	14	10	
1870-71	1065	3	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>11020</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>8</b>

**Tarapore Road:** The Tarapore road, stretching from Banskandy to Labac, north of Luckipore, was in excellent condition. The annual cost of maintenance was £97 4s 0d. Its construction began in 1862, and the following amounts were invested in its development shown in Table 5 [24]. The depicted Figure 1 insight into the substantial financial commitments directed towards the development of various roads within Cachar throughout the nineteenth century. Notably, roads such as Chatlahowar and Nugdirgram appear to have garnered considerable attention and investment, possibly due to their strategic significance or higher usage levels.

**Table 5 Details of Expenditure of Tarapore Road since Commencement**

Years	Expenditure			Number of Miles Open
	Rs.	As.	P.	
1862-63	636	8		3
1863-64	1212	9	8	2
1864-65	506		11	
1865-66	717	9	3	
1866-67	1164	2	3	
1867-68	1840	8	10	
1868-69	1403	11	5	
1869-70	2093	11	11	2 $\frac{3}{4}$
1870-71	872	12	7	
<b>Total</b>	<b>10447</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>7<math>\frac{3}{4}</math></b>



**Figure 1 Analysis of Expenditure on Road Infrastructure Development in Cachar (1862-1871)**

The fluctuations observed in expenditure over the years suggest dynamic project priorities, fluctuating fund availability, or the completion of distinct phases of road construction. This visualization underscores the concerted efforts and significant resources allocated to bolstering the region's road infrastructure, underscoring the colonial administration's concerted focus on enhancing connectivity and transportation networks. Further analysis could delve into the nuanced factors driving expenditure variations across different roads, shedding light on their implications for regional

development strategies and colonial governance approaches.

**East Hylakandy Road:** The eastern Hylakandy road, departing from Doarbund, traversed a range of hills that separated the Hylakandy sub-division from the rest of the district. It connected Samaikona and Matijuri with the sub-divisional station of Hylakandy, and its annual cost of maintenance was £245, 16s, 0d. [25] The road featured an easily navigable pass with minimal ascents, spanning approximately four miles. While the road was generally in good condition, it inclined slightly at the pass, yet remained suitable for a pony to be ridden at a canter throughout. Moving forward, it crossed the Katlakhall at Matijuri, historically served by a ferry, and concluded near the sub-divisional cutcherry. Initiated in 1868, the road had incurred a total cost of Rs. 16,187 1 a. 8 p. up to the present. Temporary bridges were present along its entire length, and it was well-maintained, measuring a length of 12 miles are shown in Table 6. [26].

**Table 6 Details of Expenditure of East Hylakandy road since Commencement**

Year	Expenditure			Number of Miles Open
	Rs.	As.	P.	Miles
1868-69	7057	1	8	12
1869-70	5145	8	10	
1870-71	3984	7	2	
<b>Total</b>	16,187	1	8	12

**Monacherra Road:** The Monacherra road originated in Hylakandy and served as an extension of the Public Works Road connecting Panchgram to the sub-division. Its construction began in 1868-69, with an initial opening of five miles in that year, followed by an additional two miles the following year. The total expenditure on the road to date was Rs. 5,366 1 a. 5 p. It was well-maintained and featured temporary bridges along its entire length shown in Table 7 [27].

**Table 7 Details of Expenditure of Monacherra road since Commencement**

Year	Expenditure			Number of Miles Open
	Rs.	As.	P.	Miles
1869-70	3229	5	6	5
1870-71	2395	3	5	2
<b>Total</b>	5624	8	11	7

**Katlakhall Road:** The Katlakhall road diverged from the east Hylakandy road, situated approximately halfway between the Hylakandy sub-divisional station and Doarbund. Heading in a southerly direction, the road had been completed up to Goglacherra, where it intersected with the Katlakhall. From there, a road was envisioned to extend toward Jhalnacherra, the southernmost inhabited place in Hylakandy. However, the preferable route along the east or west bank of the Katlakhall after passing Rupacherra remained uncertain. At that time, seven miles of the road were open, with an expenditure of Rs. 5,624, 8 a, 11 p, and an annual cost of maintenance was £254. About 30 miles separated the furthest point reached from Jhalnacherra, with passable tracks and planters' roads during the dry season. In March 1871, 750 rupees were allocated for the repair of planters' bridges between Goglacherra and Jhalnacherra from the previous year's amalgamated fund grant to maintain communication with Jhalnacherra are shown in Table 8 [28].

**Table 8 Details of Expenditure of Katlakhall Road since Commencement**

Year	Expenditure			Number of Miles Open
	Rs.	As.	P.	Miles
1868-69	1789	1	4	5
1869-70	1650	5	3	2
1870-71	1926	10	10	
<b>Total</b>	5366	1	5	7

**Sonai Road:** The Sonai Road was relatively a late addition, extending from Sonaimukh in a southeast

direction to Haticoori and then turning north toward Luckipore. The purpose of this road was to connect the tea gardens of Haticoori and Binakandi and its maintenance cost was £251, 6s 0d [29]. Temporary bridges were in place on this road, and it had not undergone adequate elevation in the lower-lying areas of the region shown in Table 9 [30].

**Table 9 Details of Expenditure of Sonai Road since Commencement**

Year	Expenditure			Number of Miles Open
	Rs.	As.	P.	
1868-69	2997	9	2	5
1869-70	2439	7	5	2 $\frac{1}{2}$
1870-71	3069	15	11	2 $\frac{1}{2}$
<b>Total</b>	8507		6	10

**Baladhun Road:** The Baladhun road, linking Luckipore to Baladhun, was highly beneficial in connecting North Cachar with the sudder station. The Baladhun road connected Kamranga and the adjoining tea garden with Luckipore. The annual maintenance cost was £237, 16s, 0d [31]. Only a minimal amount was allocated for the development are shown in Table 10. [32].

**Table 10 Details of Expenditure of Baladhun Road since Commencement**

Year	Expenditure			Number of Miles Open
	Rs.	As.	P.	
1870-71	2893	11		10
<b>Total</b>	2893	11		10

**Burkhola Road:** The Burkhola road spanned a length of nine miles and was in excellent condition, with the only improvement needed being the construction of a masonry bridge over a significant nullah. There were plans for this bridge to possibly be built within the current year. This road held great significance as it served as the main route to North Cachar. It connected Tarapore, Jaynagar, and Burkhola with Silchar. The annual maintenance cost was £133, 2s, 0d [33]. Starting from its endpoint at

Burkhola Bazaar, it initiated the path leading to Semkors, Assaloo, Hengroom, and Ninglow are shown in Table 11 [34].

**Table 11 Details of Expenditure of Burkhola Road since the Commencement**

Year	Expenditure			Number of Miles Open
	Rs.	As.	P.	
1864-65	2875	15	4	
1865-66	1595	3		
1866-67	1825	8	7	
1867-68	1176	1		
1868-69	1729	11		
1869-70	692	11	10	
1870-71	1871	11	10	
<b>Total</b>	11266	5	5	9

**Natwanpore Road:** Initiated in 1869, the Natwanpore road cut through a district that previously lacked any roads. It connected Natwanpore and other tea gardens with Jainagar with an annual cost of £571, 4s. 0d. [35] the absence of roads in this area meant it was not as well-managed, and its Mirashdars were not as familiar to Britishers as those in other parganah linked by roads to the Sudder Station. All bridges on this road were temporary. Nineteen miles of the road had been opened, and efforts continued to advance the construction that year ar shown in Table 12 [36].

**Table 12 Details of Expenditure of Natwanpore Road since Commencement**

Year	Expenditure			Number of Miles Open
	Rs.	As.	P.	
1869-70	8403	9	3	16
1870-71	5559	14	5	3
<b>Total</b>	13,963	7	8	19

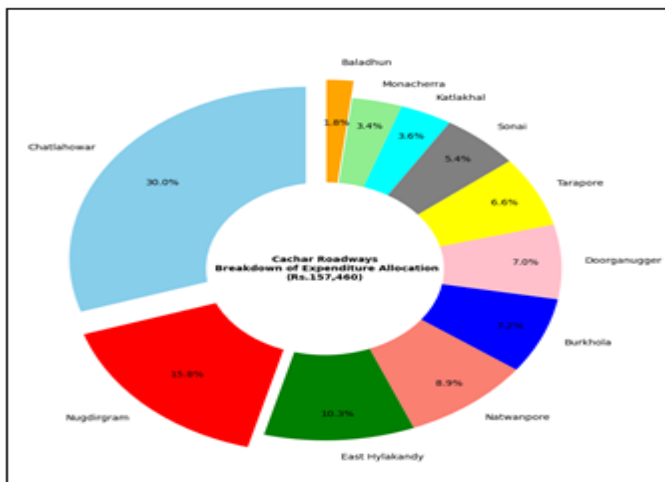
**Monirkhal Road:** The Monirkhal road connected monirkhal tea garden with nudhigram whose length was 9 miles and cost of maintenance was £298 [37].

- **Kaya or Mona Road:** The Kaya or Mona Road connecting Gangpur and Dumkar with Rajesarpur having length 8 miles and annual cost of

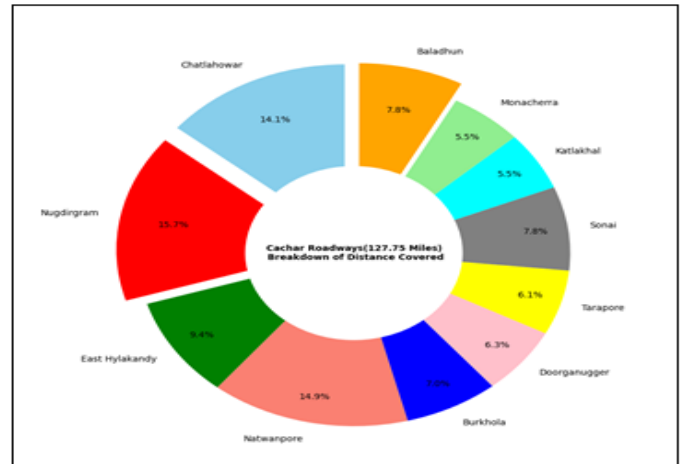
maintenance £198,6s [38]. The road was further intended in 1873, to continue this road to Jahaluachara, a further distance of 25 miles.

- **Hylakandy Road:** The Hylakandy Road connected Panchgram, Kashinagar and Rafinagar having length 13 miles with annual cost of maintenance £125 [39].
- Connected through Barkhula and other tea gardens with Mashimpur, having a length of 10 miles with an annual cost of maintenance of £121, 4s. 0d.

The Figure 2 is allocation of expenditure to different roads in Cachar reveals distinct spending patterns and priorities of the colonial administration during the nineteenth century. Roads such as Chatlahowar, Nugdirgram, and East Hylakandy received substantial investment, suggesting their strategic importance or the need for extensive development to enhance connectivity. Conversely, roads like Baladhun, Monacherra, and Katlakhal received lower expenditure, possibly due to shorter lengths or lower priority compared to others. This distribution of funds reflects the administration's focus on improving transportation networks connecting major towns and tea gardens, thereby facilitating trade and economic activities. Overall, the expenditure distribution underscores the strategic planning and resource allocation strategies employed by colonial authorities to develop infrastructure in Cachar, shaping its historical landscape and economic dynamics.



**Figure 2 Expenditure Distribution across Roads in Cachar District**



**Figure 3 Proportional Breakdown of Road Distance Coverage in Cachar District**

The Figure 3 depicts a visual breakdown of the distance covered by various roads in the Cachar district, enabling a comprehensive analysis of their respective contributions to regional connectivity. Notably, roads such as Nugdirgram, Chatlahowar, and Natwanpore emerge as pivotal arteries, encompassing a substantial portion of the total distance. Their prominence suggests a strategic significance, likely serving as vital conduits linking key destinations within the district. Conversely, roads like Katlakhal, Monacherra, and Baladhun exhibit comparatively lower distance coverage, potentially influenced by factors such as their shorter length or relatively lower priority in development initiatives. This distribution underscores the diverse landscape of road infrastructure, reflecting varying levels of importance and investment across different routes. Overall, the allocation of distance highlights the pivotal role of extensive road networks in fostering regional development and economic growth. Roads connecting crucial destinations or tea gardens may have garnered greater distance allocation, underscoring the concerted efforts to ensure efficient transportation and connectivity throughout the district's diverse terrain. The construction of the Sylhet and Cachar road commenced in 1864, with the section within Cachar was in suboptimal condition. The total incurred cost remains undisclosed, urging the allocation of funds for jungle clearance near the Pola and Dullessur rivers. The Hylakandy road,



managed by the Public Works Department, is anticipated to attain excellent condition by 1872 following a 15,000 rupees allocation. Conversely, the Luckipore road, initially overseen by the Deputy Commissioner and later transferred to the Public Works Department in 1864, which stands as the district's poorest quality road [40]. The Assam administration report for 1875-76 delineates the communication mileage in Cachar: 361 miles of navigable rivers, 208 miles of second-class roads, and 300 miles of third-class roads [41]. In 1853, Mr. Mills noted only one road in Cachar that had not been repaired for several years. However, significant progress has since been made, especially when compared to neighboring regions like Sylhet District. This improvement is largely attributed to the efforts of tea planters who have established a well-developed network of roads. Motivated by the need for efficient communication between tea gardens and the Barák River, where tea is shipped and supplies are received, these planters have played a crucial role. While foreign trade relies heavily on waterways, local traffic benefits from the well-maintained roads supervised diligently by the planters. Despite the advantages, road development has led to deforestation, including the construction of the Chatlahowar road through an elephant corridor, as observed by O.G.R. Mac William, the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar. Over a span of thirty years starting from 1870, the Public Works Department (P.W.D.), along with the District Road Committee and other local organizations, undertook the construction of several roads in the Cachar district. One significant route was the Cachar Trunk Road, entering at Badarpur and crossing the Manipur Frontier at Jirighat, playing a vital role in national connectivity. Another key road linked Silchar to Hailakandi via Chatla Haor, serving as a lifeline for the district. Additionally, the Dwarband-Aijal Road facilitated communication with the Mizo Hills. Numerous minor roads and bridle paths branched out, catering to the tea gardens in the region. Notable routes included the Maniarkhal Road, Natwanpur Bridle Path, and various paths like Damchara, Nemotha, Siberband, and Baladhan. Border roads connecting outposts received special attention,

bolstering communication and security along the southern frontier. Stockades and barracks were strategically erected at key outposts to fortify defense and administrative infrastructure [42]. In 1872, a scheme submitted by the Deputy Commissioner for the improvement of the border roads was approved by the Government of Bengal. The scheme provided for the construction of military from Nagdigram to Maniarkhal, Maniarkhal to Moinadar, Dwarband to Noarband, Noarband to Maniarkhal, Jafferband to Jalnachara, Jalnachara to Chattachura, Kalashib to Jalnachara, and involved a project of Rs. 27,190. The District Road Committee was entrusted with the project and the special fund was placed at the Committee's disposal by the Government Bengal. Some of these roads were completed during the next few years, but most of them were abandoned due to paucity of funds [43].

### Conclusion

The historical evolution of road infrastructure in Cachar district reflects a concerted effort by both local initiatives and colonial administrations to enhance connectivity and facilitate trade and administration. From the initial challenges outlined by Mr. Mills in 1853 to the substantial developments witnessed over the subsequent decades, the district has witnessed remarkable progress in road construction and maintenance. The involvement of tea planters, alongside governmental initiatives such as the construction of the Cachar Trunk Road and various border roads, highlights the multifaceted approach to road development. However, this progress has not been without its challenges, including environmental concerns like deforestation and financial constraints leading to project abandonment. Nevertheless, the significant investment and strategic planning underscore the importance of road infrastructure in driving economic growth and regional development, shaping the historical landscape of Cachar and laying the foundation for its future prosperity.

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