

Pattern of Landholding Structure in Morigaon District of Assam: A case study of selected villages

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Abstract

Morigaon district is mainly dominated by four major social groups scattering over all the mouzas of the district. There is a wide variation in the size of operational land holdings among the different social groups. There is also spatial variation in the size of land holding in the district. The farm size of the majority of the peasant families is extremely small. Such a situation is certainly a great hinderance against the successful implementation of any kind of plans and programmes for the agricultural development and elevation of poverty among the social groups. Therefore, a micro-level study of landholding structure in the district is of great importance not only to the academicians but also to the planners for formulation of strategy and plan separately from mouza to mouza as well as community to community.

In this paper an attempt has been made to study the pattern of landholding structure in the district by selecting 28 villages from different mouzas of the district. The study reveals that the average size of landholdings and operational areas varies greatly from mouza to mouza as well as community to community in the district.

KEYWORDS: Landholding structure, Successful implementation, Farm size, Plans and programmes.

INTRODUCTION

Structure of the landholdings is the indicator of the nature and standard of development of an area with its different natural attributes and farming system (Morgan and Munton, 1971). The term landholding simply means the total of all land held by an owner or proprietor. It includes both cultivated and uncultivated land under the same technical unit. An operational holding is defined as the land which is used wholly or partly for agricultural production and is operated as a single technical unit by one person alone or with others without regard to the type of tenure (Das, 1995). An operational holding includes land- owned and self-operated as also the land leased in but excludes the land leased out. The owned lands are those where the holder has the right of permanent heritable possession.

The agricultural landscape of Morigaon district is divided in to innumerable tiny holdings surrounding the settled area. Such tiny sized landholdings are the result of the subdivision and fragmentation of paternal landholding among the inheritors in each succeeding generation. There is also great variation in the size of operational landholdings among the different social groups. The average size of total land holding and the total operational holding of the district are found to be 1.72 hectares and 1.46 hectares respectively.

STUDY REGION

The present Morigaon district, centrally located in the state of Assam, covering 16 mouzas was upgraded from sub-division to a new district carving out of

the old Nagaon district in 1989. It is bounded by the mighty Brahmaputra and Darrang district in the north, Nagaon district in the east, Karbi-Anglong and Meghalaya in the south and Kamrup district in the west and south-west.

Its landmass extends between $26^{\circ} 2' 24''$ N and $26^{\circ} 28' 12''$ N latitudes and between $91^{\circ} 58' 57''$ E and $92^{\circ} 34' 48''$ E longitudes. The total geographical area of the district is 1559 sq. km. accounting for 1.99 percent of the state's total geographical area. According to 2011 census, the total population of the district is 9,57,853 of which 50.67 percent are males and 49.33 percent are females. About 92.35 percent of the total population of the district are rural while the remaining 7.65 percent are urban population.

The greater part of the district is covered with highly fertile alluvial plain. The district can be divided in to three physiographic divisions- (i) the north-western low-lying plain, (ii) the central and eastern built-up plain and (iii) the south-western plain interspersed with hillocks. The district is a traditionally backward agrarian region which is constituted by the people of different social groups, viz., indigenous general group of people including both Hindu and Muslim, indigenous scheduled tribes including both Hindu and Christian, indigenous scheduled caste belonging to Hindu and immigrant Muslim.

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this study are:

- (i) To study the spatial variation of land holding structure of the study region.
- (ii) To analyse the community wise variation of landholding structure of the district.

METHODOLOGY

This micro level study is primarily based on empirical observation and primary data on land holding structure. The primary data are collected through a scheduled from 28 representative villages of 16 mouzas of the district. These villages are selected in that way that they represented four major social groups – indigenous general group of people including both Hindu and Muslim, indigenous scheduled tribes including both Hindu and Christian, indigenous scheduled caste belonging to Hindu and immigrant Muslim. 20 percent households in each village are selected for the collection of primary data with the help of stratified random sampling. The collected data and information are tabulated and then analysed.

SPATIAL VARIATION OF LANDHOLDING STRUCTURE

The total landholding area of the selected 28 villages is 482.62 hectares and out of this area, 408.74 hectares accounting for 84.69 percent constitute operational area. The total landholding area and operational holding areas varies greatly from mouza to mouza. The highest landholding areas operational areas are found in the Tetelia mouza which is dominated by scheduled tribe community. It is lowest in the Pokaria mouza which is dominated by scheduled caste community.

The average size of landholding and average size of operational holding are also varies from mouza to mouza. The highest average size of landholding areas is found in the Tetelia mouza (3.16 hectares) and the lowest (0.96 hectares) is found in the Pokaria mouza. The former is dominated by scheduled tribe community and the

later is by scheduled caste group of people. Generally average size of operational holding is found higher in the mouzas having higher density of rural population and is lower is found in the mouzas having higher density of urban population. But it is exceptionally different in the Pokaria mouza because the inhabitant of this mouza is not traditionally cultivators. They are more interested in the allied activities other than agriculture (table-1).

Out of the total landholding area of the mouzas about 97.45 percent are total own land. It varies from 92.99 percent in the Bhuragaon mouza to 102.84 percent in the Dandua mouza. On the other hand the percentage of the total cultivated area of the total landholding area of the mouzas is 83.38 percent while the percentage of cultivated own land of the total own land is 75.06 percent. The highest percentage of cultivated own land of the total own land is found in the Tetelia mouza and lowest is found in the Morigaon mouza (table-2).

Table-1
SPATIAL VARIATION OF LANDHOLDING STRUCTURE, MORIGAON DISTRICT

Mouza	No. of Villages Surveyed	No. of total land holding	Total land holding area (in hectares)	Total operational area (in hectares)	Average size of land holding (in hectares)	Average size of operational land holding (in hectares)
Dandua	1	10	19.73	17.13	1.97	1.71
Morigaon	3	26	34.12	24.83	1.31	0.96
Tetelia	2	18	56.84	50.41	3.16	2.80
Uttarkhola	1	10	20.69	18.09	2.07	1.81
Charaibahi	2	20	30.66	25.46	1.53	1.27
Mikirbheta	1	10	17.23	14.63	1.72	1.46
Silpukhuri	1	10	17.98	15.38	1.80	1.54
Laharighat	2	20	36.68	33.35	1.83	1.67
Moirabari	3	30	42.63	37.63	1.42	1.25
Bhuragaon	2	20	37.36	34.02	1.87	1.70
Bokani	2	24	34.57	28.01	1.44	1.17
Gova	1	10	15.87	13.27	1.59	1.33
Manaha	1	10	22.36	19.76	2.24	1.98
Mayang	2	24	31.90	25.34	1.33	1.06
Niz-Ghagua	3	26	52.47	43.18	2.02	1.66
Pokaria	1	12	11.53	8.25	0.96	0.69
Total	28	280	482.62	408.74	1.72	1.46

Source: Calculated on the basis of the primary data collected by the author.

Table-2
SPATIAL VARIATION OF LANDHOLDING STRUCTURE, MORIGAON DISTRICT

Mouza	Total Owned Land (in	Total Cultivated area (in	Cultivated owned land (in	Total own land as percentage	Total cultivated area as	Cultivated owned land as	Cultivated owned land as

	hectares)	hectares)	hectares)	of total land holding area	percentage of total land holding area	percentage of total owned land	percentage of total cultivated area
Dandua	20.29	17.04	15.91	102.84	86.37	78.41	93.37
Morigaon	33.11	22.63	18.63	97.04	66.32	56.27	82.32
Tetelia	55.14	48.89	46.12	97.01	86.01	83.64	94.33
Uttarkhola	21.18	18.00	16.87	102.37	87.00	79.65	93.72
Charaibahi	31.38	25.28	23.02	102.35	82.45	73.36	91.06
Mikirbheta	17.64	14.54	13.41	102.38	84.39	76.02	92.23
Silpukhuri	18.41	15.29	14.16	102.39	85.04	76.91	92.61
Laharighat	34.13	32.78	27.87	93.05	89.37	81.66	85.02
Moirabari	39.69	36.76	29.40	93.10	86.23	74.07	79.98
Bhuragaon	34.74	33.44	28.54	92.99	89.51	82.15	85.35
Bokani	33.04	28.95	23.98	95.57	83.74	72.58	82.83
Gova	16.25	13.18	12.05	102.39	83.05	74.15	91.43
Manaha	22.89	19.67	18.54	102.37	87.97	81.00	94.26
Mayang	30.48	26.27	21.30	95.55	82.35	69.88	81.08
Niz-Ghagua	50.91	40.99	36.98	97.03	78.12	72.64	90.22
Pokaria	11.02	8.72	6.23	95.58	75.63	56.53	71.44
Total	470.30	402.43	353.01	97.45	83.38	75.06	87.72

Source: Calculated on the basis of the primary data collected by the author.

COMMUNITY WISE VARIATION OF LANDHOLDING STRUCTURE

So far the social groups are concerned; the schedule tribe people possess the highest average size of total landholding and also highest average size of operational landholding with 2.05 hectares and 1.69 hectares respectively. It is followed by indigenous general population with 1.81 hectares and 1.55 hectares respectively. The immigrant Muslim community possesses 1.67 hectares and 1.5 hectares in both the cases respectively. The average size of total landholdings and total operational holdings are lowest among the scheduled caste community with 1.30 hectares and 1.03 hectares respectively (Table 3). As the former three communities in the rural areas are mainly engaged in primary occupation, their sizes of landholdings and operational holdings are not of economic size. On the other hand, though the scheduled caste people are engaged in primary occupation, they are not traditionally cultivators. They are more interested in fishing, pottery making or such types of activities. So, their extremely small sizes are not of much concern.

It is also observed that the total owned land as percentage of total landholding areas varies from community to community. Among the social groups, the indigenous general people have the highest (102.44) percentage of it and the lowest (93.05) percent in the case of the immigrant Muslim community. The indigenous general people generally lease out lands, and hence, it makes the percentage of owned land higher than the area of their operational landholdings. On the other hand, immigrant people lease-in lands. That is why their percentage of owned land to the total operational landholding is less in comparison to the other communities. It is 97.02 percent and 95.56 percent in the case of schedule tribe and scheduled caste community respectively. The total cultivated area as percentage of the

total landholding area is highest (88.27 percent) in the immigrant Muslim inhabited villages and lowest in the case of the scheduled tribe communities. It is mainly because of the fact that the immigrants Muslims are traditionally agriculturalists. They do not like to prefer to keep any plot of their agricultural land fallow. On the other hand, the percentage of fallow land among the tribal community is more because they participate in such allied activities of agriculture, such as poultry farming, cattle rearing, pig farming etc., which can compensate their poor income from small size of agricultural fields. The cultivated owned land as percentage of the total owned land is almost same as in the case of total cultivated areas as percentage of total landholding area (Table 4).

The cultivated owned land as percentage of total cultivated area is the highest (92.65 percent) in the case of the indigenous general community. It is relatively lower both in the immigrant and scheduled caste communities. It means that the indigenous general people have a tendency to cultivate their owned land more than leased-in lands whereas the immigrant and scheduled caste communities have no sufficient amount of land to cultivate. The people of the scheduled caste community are not traditionally cultivators. They earned their livelihood by selling their traditional products or by fishing. However, for the large scale supply of comparatively less expensive factory products, their crafts are almost dying out and thus they have turned to agriculture for their livelihood. Therefore, the people of these two communities are compelled to cultivate in the lands of other communities also.

Table 3
COMMUNITY WISE VARIATION OF LANDHOLDING STRUCTURE,
MORIGAON DISTRICT
Including Surveyed Villages
(Based on field Survey)

Community	No. of Villages Surveyed	No. of land holding	Total land holding area (in hectares)	Total operational area (in hectares)	Average size of land holding (in hectares)	Average size of operational land holding (in hectares)
Indigenous General	8	80	144.52	123.72	1.81	1.55
Immigrant Muslim	7	70	116.67	105	1.67	1.50
Scheduled Tribe	8	70	143.43	118.42	2.05	1.69
Scheduled Cast	5	60	78	61.6	1.30	1.03
Total	28	280	482.62	408.74	1.72	1.46

Source: Calculated on the basis of the primary data collected from the field.

Table 4
COMMUNITY WISE VARIATION OF LANDHOLDING STRUCTURE,
MORIGAON DISTRICT
(Based on field Survey)

Community	Total Owned Land (in hectares)	Total Cultivated area (in hectares)	Cultivated owned land (in hectares)	Total own land as percentage of total land holding area	Total cultivated area as percentage of total land holding area	Cultivated owned land as percentage of total owned land	Cultivated owned land as percentage of total cultivated area
Indigenous General	148.04	123	113.96	102.44	85.11	76.98	92.65
Immigrant Muslim	108.56	102.98	85.81	93.05	88.27	79.04	83.33
Scheduled Tribe	139.16	112.51	101.73	97.02	78.44	73.10	90.42
Scheduled Cast	74.54	63.94	51.51	95.56	81.97	69.10	80.56
Total	470.30	402.43	353.01	97.45	83.38	75.06	87.72

Source: Calculated on the basis of the primary data collected from the field.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing analysis is concluded with the following major findings and suggestions.

1. There is socio-spatial variation in the operational holdings and operational areas of the district.
2. The pressure of population on agricultural land in all the mouzas of the district decreases the average size of holding and increases the number of fragmented plots.
3. Among the social groups, the indigenous general people generally lease-out lands which makes the percentage of owned land higher than the area of operational holding while the immigrant Muslim people lease-in lands which reduces their percentages of owned land to the total operational holding.

The problem of small peasantry can be removed only by organizing cooperative farming. In order to solve the problem of excessive pressure of population on agricultural land, the surplus labour in agriculture should be diverted to other allied activities (Das. 1984). As the agricultural practices in different regions inhabited by different communities are different according to their socio-cultural traits, separate agricultural planning strategies should be adopted for each community.

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