



**INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY GUWAHATI
SHORT ABSTRACT OF THESIS**

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SHORT ABSTRACT

Tea plantations in Assam brought about significant modifications in the physical environment along with the well-documented socio-economic and political transformations. The thesis explores the making and un-making of tea plantations' environments in colonial Assam, India from 1830s to the 1930s. The emergence of tea as an industry in Assam coincided with the simultaneous initiation, growth and influx of intellectual or scientific discourses which included agricultural expertise, practical "on-field" expertise, and various scientific and technological researches. Built around the narrative of tea cultivation prevalent among this colonial tea "expertise", who implicitly dictated how the environment in these plantations would be manipulated, the thesis explores a common thread that binds the themes under study- deforestation, soil degradation, pest occurrences and the corporeal degeneration of its labourers. This study endeavours to explore the inter-connectedness between human actions in the tea environs and its unforeseen and long-lasting consequences in the plantation environments.

Through this exploration, the thesis seeks to situate the rapidly transforming plantation environment within the tea expertise's discussions and debates surrounding a few of the biggest concerns of planters of colonial Assam, i.e. declining soil productivity, rise of pests and the ill-health of the plantation labourers. The study brings to the forefront how the cycle of human actions and consequent environmental repercussions continuously changed the tea expertise's opinions and strategies in managing these troubles