

AHOM-TRIBAL RELATIONS

(A POLITICAL STUDY)

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**Thesis approved by the University of Gauhati
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (D. Phil.)**

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PREFACE

The object of the present book is to describe the relations of the Ahom kings with the tribal peoples of Assam both plains and hills in the light of the indigenous Buranjis or the Chronicles of the Ahoms maintained both by the Ahom rulers and the leading Ahom personalities and priests. In spite of enough indigenous materials available for the Ahom period, the number of works covering the whole Ahom period are extremely meagre. As a matter of fact till recently Sir E. A. Gait's "History of Assam" was the only authoritative book which made for the first time a scientific and systematic study of the Buranjis. Although Gait's book is primarily a book on the Ahom period, yet his treatment of many aspects of the Ahom period are rather sketchy and leaves many gaps to be filled up. The subject that I have taken up (specially the relations of the Ahom rulers with the hill tribes) comes within this category. Any way, up till now Gait's book is the only reliable book dealing with the whole Ahom period. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan's "Anglo-Assamese Relations" (1771-1826) deals with the reigns of the last five Ahom rulers only, viz., Lakshmi Singha, Gaurinath Singha, Kamaleswar Singha, Chandrakanta Singha and Purandar Singha, who ruled from the last quarter of the eighteenth to the first quarter of the nineteenth.

For collecting the original materials for the subject I had to consult, besides the published Buranjis, many unpublished Buranjis and rare books collected and preserved in the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies (D.H.A.S.), Gauhati. Thus after a strenuous and persistent effort for several years I completed my research work and submitted my thesis on the aforesaid subject to the University of Gauhati on December 1958. The book was approved in February 1960 for the D. Phil degree in History in the Faculty of Arts. The examiners were Dr. S.K. Bhuyan, at that time the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Gauhati, Prof. S. Bhattacharya, M.A., formerly Head of the Department of History, Gauhati University and my guide and Prof. C.H. Philips of the School of Oriental and African Studies, London University. The thesis as submitted to the Gauhati University in 1958 bore the title "The Relations of the Ahom Kings with the Tribal peoples of Assam"; it has now been shortened into the present form "Ahom-Tribal Relations". The book has since been revised on the lines of suggestions made by Dr. S.K. Bhuyan and Prof. S. Bhattacharya at the time of Viva-voce examination.

(ii)

I have tried my best to critically examine every topic on the basis of genuine indigenous evidence supplemented by secondary sources of information and have endeavoured to arrive at the conclusions as an impartial historian. It is however for the reader to judge whether I have succeeded. It may be mentioned that this book represents the first attempt at research covering an important aspect of the whole Ahom period. Hence the evaluation of many topics may bear traces of a pioneer attempt. I do not claim to say the last word on any subject and invite the future scholars for further investigation.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge my indebtedness to my teacher and guide Prof. Sachchidananda Bhattacharya, M.A., under whose able guidance I completed my research work. I am extremely grateful to the late Dr. S. K. Bhuyan, formerly Vice-Chancellor of Gauhati University and Director of the D.H.A.S., Gauhati, and to the late Dr. B.K. Barua, formerly Head of the Dept. of Assamese and Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Gauhati University, for the valuable instructions and advice which I often received from them. I am also grateful to Shri Umakanta Sarma, M.A., B.T., formerly Secretary, Text Book Production and Research, Govt. of Assam for valuable advice in getting financial aid for the publication of the book but for which the book would not have seen the light of day. Thanks are also due to Shri Nagendra Nath Choudhury, assistant teacher, Cotton Collegiate Higher Secondary School, Gauhati, and to Shri Dulal Chandra Goswami, M.Sc., Lecturer, in the Department of Geography, Cotton College, Gauhati, for drawing up the maps for the book.

The book was first sent to the Gauhati Press, Bharalumukh in May 1966. But as they could not progress in the work I took away my book from the said Press and gave it to Lakshmi Printing Press, Panbazar, Gauhati in July 1967. Major portion of the book was printed in this press. I am indeed grateful to the authorities of Lakshmi Printing Press for promptly printing the major portion of the book. I am also thankful to my husband Shri Dharanidhar Sharma for taking great pains in seeing the book through the Press.

Finally, I crave the indulgence of the reader for the irregularities which may be found here and there in spite of my best efforts.

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CHAPTER—I.

Introduction.

(a) Land and the people—Physical and ethnological peculiarities of Assam :—

Assam, the north-east frontier state of India is bounded on the north, east and south by great mountain ranges inhabited by different hill tribes, mostly of Mongolian Stock. These different tribes, speaking different dialects, representing different social and political institutions, manners and customs give rise to the ethnological peculiarities of the state of Assam. The different offshoots of the great Himalayan range on the north of the valley of the Brahmaputra are named after the various hill tribes inhabiting them, e.g., the Bhutan, Aka, Dafla, Miri and the Abor hills. On the north-east lie the Mishmi hills, the habitat of the Mishmi tribe, which sweep round the head of the Brahmaputra valley. The eastern hills are inhabited by the Khamtis and the Singphos. The Patkai range on the south-east which forms the natural boundary between Burma and Assam is inhabited by the aboriginal Nagas and merges itself in the mountains of Burma. Though the summits of the range rise to several thousand feet, yet, the geographical barriers between Burma and Assam are not insuperable. Several passes cross this range which are actually not very difficult. The Ahoms entered Assam from Burma through the Pangchou pass over the Patkai via the Nongyang lake and the Tirap Frontier Division of NEFA, and throughout the entire period of their rule in Assam they maintained their communications with their kith and kin in Burma through this pass. On the south of the Brahmaputra valley, beginning from the extreme south-west, the mountain chains take the name of the Garo, Khasi and Jaintia, North Cachar and the Naga hills. This mountain system is collectively known as the Assam range. To the south of the Assam range lies the Surma valley through which flows the river Barak. As a result of the independence of India and the consequent division of the country into India and Pakistan, only the district of Cachar and a very small portion of Sylhet have been included in the modern state of Assam. To the south of Cachar and the Nagaland (i.e. the Naga hills) lie the Mizo hills (formerly Lushai hills) and the state of Manipur, the latter occupying the rich alluvial valley of the Manipur river, a tributary of the Chindwin branch of the Irrawaddy. The state of Manipur is isolated from the neighbouring states by an encircling zone of mountains inhabited by Naga and Kuki tribes. To the south-west of Cachar lies the state of Tripura.

Besides the hill-tribes inhabiting the great mountain ranges on the north, east and south mentioned above, there is another hill-tribe known as the Mikirs inhabiting the Mikir hills which are insulated from the southern mountains by the valley of the Jamuna river and cover the eastern part of Nowgong and a greater part of Sibsagar district on the west. The Mikir hills cover an area of 2000 sq. miles and contain peaks upwards of 4000 ft. in height.¹

Assam is therefore divided physically into two main parts, the hilly tracts on the north, east and the south, and the plains below. The plains consist of the great river valley of the Brahmaputra and a part of the Surma valley comprising the present district of Cachar. The Brahmaputra valley forms an alluvial plain to the extent of about 450 miles in length with an average breadth of about 50 miles, lying almost east and west in its lower portion, but in its upper portion it trends somewhat to the north-east.²

The Brahmaputra flows through the centre of the Brahmaputra valley and receives in its course the drainage of the Himalayas on the north, and the Assam range on the south. In Assamese the river is called Lohit or Luit. It is the chief gateway of Assam. The valley as a whole is a plain of fairly uniform breadth except in the centre, where the Mikir hills project from the main mass of the Assam range, almost up to the southern bank of the Brahmaputra. Low hills are also found on both sides of the river between Tezpur and Dhubri, but elsewhere there is little to interrupt the even level of the plain. Numerous swamps abound in the valley. The modern districts of Goalpara, Kamrup, Darrang, Nowgong, Sibsagar and Lakhimpur comprise the whole of the Brahmaputra valley. The Brahmaputra valley is thus a compact geographical unit and the whole history and culture of Assam, from time immemorial, flourished on the fertile plains of this valley. Because, due to geographical situation the Surma valley could never play the dominating role in shaping the history and culture of Assam.

The climate of the Brahmaputra valley is damp and relaxing. This is mainly due to heavy rainfall in the country in the summer season which disrupts communication and often leads to heavy flood and inundation resulting in epidemic of dysentery, small-pox, kalazar, malaria and others, which were once endemic. At the same time, however, Nature has lavishly bestowed all her beauties on Assam. The huge abundance of green hills and forests, rivers and streams have bestowed upon her unparallel natural beauty hardly to be met with anywhere in India. Besides enhancing beauty, the hills supply many kinds of valuable timber and varieties of

1. Imperial Gazetteer of India, Eastern Bengal and Assam, p. 2
2. Ibid, p. 18.

other natural resources. The country is rich in some mineral resources also like, coal, oil, lime-stone, iron ore etc. At present, Assam is known to the outside world mainly as a land of tea and oil. The soil of the Brahmaputra valley is fertile—it is well adapted to all kinds of agricultural purposes and people here need not work hard for a living. Under these circumstances, the inhabitants are naturally bound to be ease loving and averse to hard work. As remarked by Sir Edward Gait—"Any race that had been long resident there, though rising in the scale of civilisation and gaining proficiency in the arts of peace would gradually become soft and luxurious and after a time, would no longer be able to defend itself against the incursions of the hardier tribes behind them."³

(b) Types of Tribes the Ahoms had to deal with :—

The Ahoms had to deal with two kinds of tribes in Assam—the plains tribes and the hill tribes. The plains tribes, consisting of the Morans, the Borahis, the Chutiyas, the Kacharis and the Koches, although retained their tribal customs and institutions, did not live in isolation like the hill tribes. Consequently they were not outside the civilising influence of Hinduism and other religious reform movements of the plains of later times, like Vaishnavism. All the plains tribes came under the influence of Hinduism to a greater or lesser degree. The Koches and the Chutiyas had succumbed to the influence of Hinduism some four or five centuries ago. From the beginning of the 17th century the Kacharis (at least the royal family, if not the whole tribe) had also come under the influence of Hinduism. The Morans and the Borahis, who were the first plains tribes with whom the Ahoms came into contact, did not seem to have come under the influence of Hinduism in the beginning of the 13th century as was shown by the tribal names of their rulers, Badaucha (Moran king) and Thakumtha (Borahi king). Still, as they had lived in the plains, they also cannot be said to have lived completely outside the civilising influence of Hinduism. The Borahis lost their identity as a separate tribe. The Morans, however, were able to keep their identity as a separate tribe, and subsequently they came under the influence of Vaishnavism. These plains tribes cannot be said to have lived in their primitive stage when the Ahoms came into contact with them. The Ahoms, in dealing with them applied force as well as diplomacy. When most of the territories belonging to these tribes were occupied by the Ahoms, they found very little difficulty in assimilating with them and maintaining diplomatic relations with the king of Koch-Bihar and the Kachari king of Maibong and Khaspur as the Ahoms themselves were succumbing to the influence of Hinduism in course of time.

³ Gait, E. A., A History of Assam, P. 7.

With the hill tribes, however, the Ahoms were faced with a different problem. Here, Hinduism did not seem to have penetrated into the hills and all the hill tribes, with the exception of the Jayantias or the Syntengs* and the Khasis of the Khairam or Khyrim** seem to have been outside the civilising influence of the plains (i.e. of Hinduism) when the Ahoms first came in contact with them. Towards the close of the Ahom reign, a few of these tribes like the Noctes (Nagas)⁴ of the Tirap Frontier Division of the North-Eastern Frontier Agency (NEFA), and the plains Miris⁵, who had probably begun to settle themselves in the plains from about the latter part of the 15th century towards the close of the rule of the Chutiya kings*** seem to have come under the influence of Vaishnavism which became a great force in Assam with the establishment of the Vaishnava Satras in Majuli of Upper Assam.

During Ahom rule therefore, most of the hill tribes lived in isolation in their hills away from the civilising influence of the plains. Consequently, they retained much of their primitive instincts intact. In dealing with these hill tribes the Ahom rulers experienced great difficulty as they often flouted their agreements with the Ahom government and raided Ahom territories, sometimes for economic reasons and sometimes for mere pastime.

(c) Political condition of the Brahmaputra valley in the first half of the 13th century :—

Towards the beginning of the second quarter of the 13th century when the Ahoms first penetrated into the south-eastern corner of Assam from Burma, the political condition of the Brahmaputra valley was such as encouraged an adventurous person to seek his fortunes there. The glorious days of the ancient kingdom of Kamarupa had passed away and the country was divided into a

*The Ahoms first came in contact with the Jayantias in the beginning of the 17th century. Before that time (according to Gait from about 1500 A.D.) the Jayantias came under the influence of Hinduism. (History of Assam, PP-261-62).

**Of the 25 Khasi states, only the state of Khairam or Khyrim had established relationship with the Ahom Government. The name of the Khairami king who had submitted to the Koch general Chilarai in the 16th century was Virjyavanta. This suggests that the Khasis of Khairam or Khyrim had come under the influence of Hinduism.

⁴ Neog. Dr. Maheswar. "The Noctes", an article inserted in Assamar-Janajati", edited by Dr. P. C. Bhattacharya.

⁵ Tarun Chandra Pamegam, "The Miris or Myshing", an article inserted in "Assamar Janajati", edited by Dr. P. C. Bhattacharya.

***The rule of the Chutiyas came to an end in 1523 A.D. with the conquest of the Chutiya kingdom by the Ahoms. The Ahoms at that time found some Miris resident of the Chutiya Kingdom whom they named as "Chutiya-Miris" (Assam Census Report, 1881, P-86).

number of small states most of which were ruled by tribal chiefs. It has been universally accepted that Sukapha, the founder of the Ahom kingdom in Assam, entered Assam in 1228 A.D. The south-eastern corner of the present Sibsagar district and the south-western corner of the present Lakhimpur district between the rivers Dikhow and the Buri-Dihing was the place in which the Ahoms made their first settlement. This place was then almost uninhabited in as much as only a few settlements of Kacharis and Borahis scattered here and there.⁶ The territory to the north of the settlements made by the Ahoms was at that time in the possession of the Morans whose king was Badaucha and of the Borahis, who were then ruled by Thakumtha. The Morans and the Borahis were also the legal owner of the territory occupied by the few Kacharis and the Ahoms. A line of Chutiya kings ruled the country east of the rivers Subansiri and the Disang, with the exception of a strip to the south and south-east, where several small Bodo tribes enjoyed a precarious independence. Further west there was a Kachari Kingdom on the south bank of the Brahmaputra extending from the Dikhow to the Kalang or beyond. It included about three-fourths of the present Sibsagar district and probably half of Nowgong district on the south. West of the Kacharis on the south bank and of the Chutiyas on the north, were a number of petty chiefs called Bhuyans. These Bhuyan chiefs were nominally feudatories of the kings of Kamarupa or Kamata whose dominions actually comprised only the Goalpara and Kamrup districts of the modern Assam valley besides a portion of northern Bengal and a portion of Mymensing to the east of the Brahmaputra then flowing through that district.⁷ The actual government of eastern Kamarupa as far as the Subansiri on the north and Kopili on the south, was in the hands of petty Bhuyan chiefs. "Each (i.e. Bhuyan) was independent of the others within his own domain, but they seem to have been in the habit of joining their forces whenever they were threatened by a common enemy. The boundary between the tract ruled by these Bhuyans and the kingdom of Kamarupa doubtless varied from time to time; a powerful prince would bring many of them under his control, but they would again become independent when the sceptre passed into the hands of a weaker ruler."⁸

To make matters worse the Muhammadan general Bakhtiyar Khalji who had conquered Bengal early in the 13th century, invaded Assam from the west in 1206 A.D.⁹ Bakhtiyar Khalji was beaten back from Assam, but he had showed a course

6 Assam Buranji, Tr. No. 82 Vol. IV, P. 242, D.H.A.S.; Bhuyan, S. K., Deodhai Assam Buranji, PP. 90-91.

7. Barua, K. L., Early History of Kamarupa, pp. 146 & 242.

8. Gait, E. A. History of Assam 2nd edition, p. 38.

9. Barua K. L., Early History of Kamarupa, pp. 199 & 206.

of action which soon brought the Muhammadans to the western frontier of Assam and threatened Assam with domination by a band of foreign invaders who differed in every respect from the people of Assam.

Thus in the beginning of the second quarter of the 13th century Assam seemed to be disintegrating and was threatened simultaneously by foreign invasions from the west as well as from the east. The Ahoms, who invaded from the east, ultimately proved triumphant and gradually imposed their rule over the whole of the Brahmaputra valley from Sadiya to the Manah (or Monas) by supplanting the rule of the Morans and Borahis, the Chutiyas, the Kacharis and the Bhuyans who ruled over the major portions of the Brahmaputra valley from Sadiya to the western boundary of the modern Kamrup district at the time of their advent into Assam, and last but not the least the Koches, who had carved out an extensive kingdom in the beginning of the 16th century over the ruins of the old kingdom of Kamarupa or Kamata which came to an end in 1498 A.D. This process of expansion of the Ahom kingdom in the Brahmaputra valley by wresting from the tribal people who held the major portions of the plains territory was slow but steady and it took a long time to complete. It was attended with much blood-shed, but diplomacy and statesmanship also played an important part. The Ahoms were, however, burdened with the additional responsibility of protecting their gradually expanding kingdom from the inroads of the rapacious hill-tribes who lurk on the frontier of Assam on three sides.

The Ahom kingdom in Assam was expanding from the east towards the west. Because of these circumstances the Ahoms came in contact with the western hill tribes of Assam at a much later date. As a matter of fact they did not at all come in contact with the Garo tribe living in the Garo hills bordering the south of the present Goalpara district and south-west of the Kamrup district. The Ahoms came in complete possession of the present Kamrup district only in 1682 A.D. during the reign of king Gadadhar Singha (1681-96 A.D.). The present Goalpara district remained outside the Ahom domain. These circumstances explain clearly why there is no mention in the Buranjis about the Ahoms having ever coming in political contact with the Garos. But this does not mean that they were unfamiliar with the Garos. As a matter of fact the Ahoms often referred to the Jayantias, living to the east of the Garos in the Assam range as 'Garos'. * The Ahoms also did not come in contact with the Mizos (formerly called Lushais) as the Ahom Kingdom did not expand beyond the Assam range up to the Surma valley.

*Refer Bhuyan, S. K., Jayantia Buranji. ✓

To have carved out an extensive kingdom by subjugating the various plains tribes was no mean an achievement and to have kept them as well as the various hill tribes on the bordering hills under their control for six hundred years, as the Ahoms did, was an achievement of which any people may be legitimately proud. An attempt has been made in the following pages to narrate how the Ahoms made this marvellous achievement.

(d) A short summary of the political history of the Ahoms from Sukapha to Purandar Singha.

The foundation of the Ahom kingdom in Assam was laid by Sukapha in 1228 A.D. in the south-eastern corner of the present Sibsagar district and the south-western corner of the Lakhimpur district between the rivers Dikhow and the Buri-Dihing. It was Sukapha (1228-1268 A.D.) again, who won over the Morans and the Borahis, the two plains tribes occupying the territory lying between the Dikhow and the Disang rivers, to the north and north-east of the territory occupied by the Ahoms, by applying diplomacy as well as force. He administered the country with the help of two ministers named Burhagohain and Bargohain. Sukapha's son and successor Suteupha (1268-1281 A.D.) extended the western boundary of the Ahom kingdom up to the Namdang river (a tributary of the Dikhow) by applying diplomacy with the Kacharis. For two hundred years this river appears to have formed the western boundary of the Ahom kingdom.

Suteupha was succeeded by his son Subinpha (1281-1293 A.D.). From Subinpha, the third king, to Supimpha (1493-1497 A.D.), the 13th king, the boundary of the Ahom kingdom remained unaltered. During this period practically nothing of importance took place save the conflict of the Ahoms with the kingdom of Kamata in the reign of the fourth Ahom king Sukhangpha (1293-1332 A.D.), and the treacherous murder of the sixth Ahom king Sutupha (1364-1376 A.D.) by the Chutiyas in 1376 A.D. It was Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.), the 14th Ahom king, who took up with earnest the task of expanding the Ahom dominion both in the direction of the east as well as in the west. In 1523 A.D. the Chutिया kingdom was annexed to the Ahom kingdom by king Suhungmung by defeating the Chutiyas in several engagements. It was again he, who extended the western boundary of the Ahom kingdom upto the Kalang river by 1536 A.D. by defeating the Kacharis in a series of battles. He compelled them to desert Dimapur, their capital by the side of the Dhansiri river and retreat further south to Maibong on the bank of the Mahur river where they established a new capital. The reign of this king witnessed the creation of the post of the third

cabinet minister of the Ahom government viz., the Barpatra Gohain, and also the invasion of the Ahom kingdom by the Muhammadan general Turbak in 1532 A.D.

In the meantime, the political condition of western Assam also changed much. In 1498 A.D., Hussain Shah, the Nawab of Bengal destroyed the kingdom of Kamata and by the beginning of the 16th century, the Koches under Biswa Singha (1515-1540 A.D.) established the Koch kingdom on the ruins of the old Kamata kingdom. In the reign of the next Ahom king Suklenmung, the Garhgayan Raja (1539-1552 A.D.), the Ahoms came in hostile contact with the Koches, but nothing of importance took place. In the reign of the next Ahom king Sukhampha Khora Raja (1552-1603 A.D.), Chilarai, the brother and general of the Koch king Nar-Narayan (1540-1587 A.D.) invaded the Ahom kingdom in 1562 A.D., sacked the Ahom capital Garhgaon, compelled its ruler Sukhampha to acknowledge the overlordship of the Koch king and also to cede a large portion of the territory on the north bank of the Brahmaputra to the Koches. The Ahoms of course, soon recovered their territories ceded to the Koches and again extended the western boundary of the Ahom kingdom on the north bank of the Brahmaputra up to about the Bhoroli river. The Koch invasions of the Ahom kingdom did not make any alteration of the western boundary of the Ahom kingdom on the south bank of the Brahmaputra which had already extended up to the Kalang river in Nowgong district.

The reign of the next Ahom king Pratap Singha (1603-1641 A.D.) is one of the most critical periods of Ahom rule in Assam. The division of the Koch kingdom in 1581 A.D. into Koch Behar and Koch Hajo had led to the infiltration of the Moguls into Koch politics; and by the annexation of the kingdom of Koch Hajo (the eastern Koch kingdom) by the Moguls in 1614 A.D. to their own kingdom, the Ahom kingdom came within the pale of the imperialistic designs of the Moguls. Then began the series of Ahom-Mogul conflicts which continued with occasional breaks from 1615 to 1682 A.D. in course of which both parties suffered heavy losses and in 1662 A.D., the Moguls under Mir Jumla even succeeded in sacking the Ahom capital Garhgaon during the reign of king Jayadhvaj Singha (1648-1663 A.D.). Subsequently, however, the Ahoms succeeded in extending their western boundary up to the Manah river by inflicting the final blow on the Moguls at the battle of Itakhuli in 1682 A.D. during the reign of king Gadadhar Singha (1681-1696 A.D.).

During the long period of Mogul invasions of the Ahom kingdom (1615-1682 A.D.) the Ahoms found practically no time to interfere in the affairs of the Kacharis and the Jayantias. This non-interference in their affairs by the Ahoms for a long time emboldened them to try to secure the recognition of independent

status for themselves from the Ahom kings and this became evident from their correspondence with the latter. But Gadadhar Singha's son and successor Rudra Singha (1696-1714 A.D.), having been freed from the menace of Mogul invasions not only brought the Kacharis and the Jayantias to submission, but also compelled the former to cede further plains territories in the southern part of the present Nowgong district and declared the formal annexation of both the Kachari and the Jayantia kingdoms to the Ahom kingdom in 1708 A.D. The reign of king Rudra Singha thus witnessed the climax of Ahom rule in Assam. But from the reign of his son and successor Siva Singha (1714-44 A.D.) the power of the Ahoms began to decline. Siva Singha's queen regnant Phuleswari committed the greatest blunder in matters of administration by forcibly trying to make the Vaishnava Mahantas, including the Mayamara Mahanta, bow down their heads before the goddess Durga and by smearing their fore-heads with the bloods of the offerings made to Durga. This constituted a departure from the policy of religious toleration hitherto observed by the Ahom rulers which ultimately proved to be disastrous for the Ahom kingdom. The Mayamara Mahanta was the most powerful of all the Vaishnava Mahantas who had received insult at the hands of queen Phuleswari. This, together with the other insults subsequently received by him in the reigns of Rajeswar Singha (1751-69 A.D.) and Lakshmi Singha (1769-80 A.D.) goaded him to rebel against the Ahom government. By this time two Moran leaders Ragha Neog and Nahar Khora Saikia, both disciples of the Mayamara Mahanta received ill-treatment at the hands of Kirti Chandra Barbarua during the reign of king Lakshmi Singha. They became infuriated with rage, went to their spiritual leader the Mayamara Mahanta for obtaining sanction to rebel against the Ahom government and received his ready sanction. The result was the famous Moamaria rebellion which broke out in November, 1769 and lingered till the beginning of the 19th century. From Lakshmi Singha (1769-80 A.D.) to Kamaleswar Singha (1795-1811 A.D.), the Ahom monarchs had to engage themselves in quelling this Moamaria rebellion which gave a death blow to the power and resources of the Ahom government. Chaos and confusion ensued in the Ahom kingdom as a result of this Moamaria rebellion, which prompted the dissatisfied elements in the Ahom kingdom, especially in Lower Assam, to rebel against the authority of the Ahom government and strike a blow at its decaying power. The rebellion of the Darrang prince Krishna Chandra Narayan and of Haradatta and Birdatta Choudhury of Kamrup may be placed in this category. King Gaurinath Singha (1780-95 A.D.) could suppress this rebellion only to some extent and that too, with the help of the British East India company. It was Purnananda Burhagohain who succeeded in quelling this rebellion completely during the reign of king Kamaleswar Singha

(1795-1811 A.D.). His grand success in quelling this rebellion was due to his untiring energy and statesmanship. Peace was restored in the Ahom kingdom. He brought back the fugitives who had fled in different directions during the turmoils of the Moamaria rebellion and resettled them in their places. This marvellous achievement of his was attributable to his lenient treatment of the rebels who made their submission (e.g. the Moran section of the Moamarias who were given the rule of the Matak country south of Sadiya under the Ahom Government by giving the title of Bar Senapati to their chief) and to his wise and equitable system of administration. He restored Rangpur to something like its former condition and did much to improve the newly established Ahom capital Jorhat. The Ahom rule in Assam was, however, destined to come to an end as subsequent history reveals.

Kamaleswar Singha was succeeded by his brother Chandrakanta Singha (1811-1818 A.D.). As he was a minor, Purnananda Burhagohain administered the country. The appointment of Badan Chandra as the Barphukan or Viceroy of Lower Assam in Gauhati by Purnananda after the death of Koliabhomora Barphukan, proved to be disastrous for the country, and was destined to involve the country in even greater troubles than those from which it had only recently emerged. Before long, reports began to come in of his oppressive behaviour upon the people and gross exactions from them. At last matters reached such a climax that the Burhagohain became determined to remove Badan Chandra. Men were sent to arrest him, but, being warned in time by his daughter, who had been married to the Burhagohain's son, he escaped to Bengal. He proceeded to Calcutta and endeavoured to persuade the then British Governor-General to despatch an expedition to Assam in aid of the Ahom king by alleging that the Burhagohain was subverting the Government and ruining the country. Having failed in his attempt to procure the intervention of the British, Badan Chandra struck up a friendship with the Calcutta Agent of the Burmese Government, went to the court of the Burmese king with him, reported to the king against the Burhagohain and succeeded in obtaining a promise of help for the Ahom king. The result was the first Burmese invasion of Assam in 1816 A.D. which was followed by the occupation of Jorhat, the Ahom capital, by the Burmese. At this juncture the Burhagohain died or, as some say, committed suicide by swallowing diamonds. The Burmese retained Chandrakanta as king, appointed Badan Chandra as the prime minister, and then returned to Burma in April, 1817, taking with them an Ahom girl for the royal harem and a large indemnity for the trouble and expense of the expedition.

Soon after the departure of the Burmese, Badan Chandra was murdered at the instigation of the king's mother and some other nobles in 1818 and Chandra-

kanta was also dethroned and mutilated, and an Ahom prince named Purandar Singha (1818-1819 A.D.) was placed on the throne.

The friends of the murdered Barphukan and king Chandrakanta fled to Burma and informed the Burmese king the course of events in Assam. A fresh Burmese force was despatched under a general named Ala Mingi, which reached Assam in February, 1819. He defeated the Ahom force sent by king Purandar Singha and occupied Jorhat. Purandar Singha at once fled to Gauhati and Chandrakanta, who had joined the Burmese was formally reinstated.

This time, the Burmese made Chandrakanta only a nominal ruler, and from 1819 to 1824 A.D. Assam was really under Burmese rule. In the meantime, Chandrakanta quarrelled with the Burmese and fled first to Gauhati and then to British territory in April, 1821. Having failed to induce Chandrakanta to return, the Burmese set up another prince named Jogeswar Singha on the throne. Chandrakanta tried to oust the Burmese but could not, and in the meantime a third Burmese force arrived in Assam in the spring of 1822 under Mingi Maha Bandula and compelled Chandrakanta to escape to British territory. The whole of Assam (i.e. the Ahom kingdom) came under the occupation of the Burmese. At last when the proud Burmese, being intoxicated at their recent successes entered into British territory by crossing the Kamrup boundary and carried on depredations there, the British government, who had hitherto maintained the policy of non-intervention in the affairs of Assam, took up arms against the Burmese. In the resulting conflict the Burmese were defeated and forced to conclude the treaty of Yandabo on the 24th February, 1826, by which the Burmese king was compelled to abstain from all interference in the affairs of Assam. In this way the British came in possession of Assam.

After the expulsion of the Burmese, the British also, like the Ahoms, left the Matak country to the south of Sadiya between the Brahmaputra and the Buri-Dihing under its own chief called the Bar Senapati as a tributary ruler under the British. Similarly the Sadiya tract was left under the control of the Khamti Chief and the level tract of country extending eastwards from the Matak country across the Noa-Dihing and Tengapani rivers under the Singpho Chief as tributary rulers under the British. The rest of the country began to be administered as a British province and David Scott was appointed the first Agent to the Governor-General to administer this tract. David Scott had made a plan for reinstating Purandar Singha in the country east of the Dhansiri river. This plan was recommended to Government by his successor Mr. T. C. Robertson, and early in 1833 the whole of upper Assam, except Sadiya and Matak was

formally made over to that prince on condition of paying a yearly tribute of Rs. 50,000/- to the British. But his administration proved a failure in all respects and he failed to pay the stipulated amount of tribute to the British. So in October 1838, Purandar Singha was deposed and pensioned and his territories were placed once more under the direct administration of British officers.

(e) Sources of information :

The original sources of information upon which this work is based are the chronicles of the Ahom kings known as Buranjis. The Ahoms were endowed with a highly developed political sense which actuated them to record the chief events of the reigns of sovereigns in officially compiled chronicles or Buranjis. This system can be traced to Sukapha's command that "the Pandits should write down all particulars, whenever an incident takes place when a person dies and when we acquire new followers"⁷ Besides the official chronicles kept by the government, the Ahom priests and the leading Ahom families also possessed Buranjis or histories which were periodically brought up to date. The Buranjis were written on oblong strips of sanchi bark, and were very carefully preserved and handed down from father to son. This system of compiling Buranjis has conferred upon the Assamese the unique distinction of possessing historical masterpieces in prose.

During the early period of Ahom rule in Assam when the Ahom language was the mother tongue amongst the Ahoms, the Buranjis were written in the Ahom language. But later on, when the Assamese language came to occupy the place of mother tongue amongst the majority of the Ahoms, most of the Buranjis came to be written in Assamese and the knowledge of the Ahom language came to be confined to the Deodhai or priestly caste amongst the Ahoms. Chiring Phukan, the head of the Ahom priestly class, was employed at the Court to maintain correspondence in the Ahom language with the Shan kingdom of Mogaung or Nara on the other side of the Patkai mountain. Under him worked a number of men versed in the Ahom language who had to read the ancient Ahom scriptures and copper plates and were thus the custodians of the Ahom language. The Ahom language therefore continued to be cultivated at the Ahom court till the end of Ahom rule in Assam and this is confirmed by the existence of copper plates and coins in the Ahom language of the reigns of the later Ahom kings. The Deodhai Pandits continued to write the Buranjis in the Ahom language till the advent of the British.

Because of these circumstances we get Buranjis written both in the Ahom and the Assamese languages. Unfortunately, however, as the Ahom language is unintelligible to us, we are to depend exclusively on the few translations of Ahom Buranjis made by Ahom scholars either into English or into Assamese. The English translation of one such Buranji "From the earliest times to the end of Ahom Rule" by the late Golap Chandra Barua with the help of some Deodhai Pandits was published by the Government of Assam in 1930. The same writer translated several other Buranjis also, and all those Buranjis were used by the late Sir Edward Gait in compiling his *History of Assam*. Unfortunately, however, except the published Buranji under the title "Ahom Buranji" the other translated Buranjis used by Gait are lost. The Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Gauhati has preserved some other transcripts of Ahom Buranjis translated into Assamese by an Ahom scholar named Nandanath Deodhai Phukan. The majority of the transcripts of manuscript Buranjis of the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies that I have gone through are in Assamese. Except the Ahom Buranji of Golap Chandra Barua, the English version of the Tungkhungia Buranji made by Dr. S. K. Bhuyan and the Account of Assam of J. P. Wadé, edited by Shri Benudhar Sarma, all the other published Buranjis are also in Assamese. The credit for the publication of most of these Buranjis must go to the late Dr. S. K. Bhuyan who took great pains in editing them. The task of editing manuscript Buranjis written in the old style upon oblong strips of sanchi bark is not an easy one. In spite of his preoccupation in other fields Dr. Bhuyan, by his untiring energy and immense sacrifices brought about not only the publication of these Buranjis which have proved to be of immense help to the present day historians and Research scholars, but also collected from every nook and corner of Assam many unpublished historical and other literary manuscripts and transcripts and preserved them with great care in the Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies (D.H.A.S.), Gauhati, Assam. Under his able guidance again, transcripts of many of these manuscripts were made in modern lines which has facilitated easy reading. In short, Dr. Bhuyan may be said to have nurtured the D.H.A.S. like a mother nourishing her baby.

Regarding the Buranjis of the Ahoms, Gait remarked as follows :—"The historicity of these Buranjis is proved not only by the way in which they support each other, but also by the confirmation which is afforded by the narratives of Muhammadan writers, wherever these are available for comparison. Their chronology is further supported by the dates on various records which have been collected and collated for the purpose of checking it. including those on

about 70 Ahom coins, 48 copper plates, nine rock and 28 temple inscriptions and six inscriptions on cannon".⁸ This remark of Gait, ofcourse, cannot be applied indiscriminately to all the Buranjis that I have gone through, both published and unpublished. In the first place, there is much discrepancy in several Buranjis in regard to dates given in the Saka era. Secondly, there are some Buranjis wherein some unhistorical facts have been incorporated in the midst of historical facts and again there are some Buranjis in which the events have not been narrated in chronological order. The discrepancy of dates generally occur in the first half of Ahom rule in Assam. Even the date of Sukapha's entrance into Assam from Burma is not the same in all the Buranjis. This chronological defect of the Buranjis written in Assamese most probably arose due to the fact that the system of writing Buranjis in Assamese came into vogue at a much later period of Ahom rule, presumably when Assamese came to occupy the place of mother tongue amongst the majority of the Ahoms.* The latter writers writing in Assamese, therefore, had to depend regarding the reigns of the earlier Ahom kings, on the interpretations of the Ahom Buranjis made by the Deodhai Pandits. But the dates of the Ahom Buranjis were given in Ahom Laklis** and the Assamese Buranjis generally dated events according to Saka era save a few where Ahom Laklis were also used. It is most probable that many of the errors in dates that crept into the Assamese Buranjis was the result of mistakes committed by the new writers in converting the Ahom Laklis into dates in the Saka era. As the Buranjis used to be largely copied from one to another, these chronological errors also automatically passed from one Buranji to another. From the 17th century, the dates of the different Buranjis are generally found to be correct.

This suggests that the system of compiling Buranjis in the Assamese language came into vogue most probably either towards the end of the 16th or the beginning of the 17th century. As Dr. B. K. Barua says—"The dates of the composition of all these Buranjis have not definitely been ascertained; they were perhaps compiled over a long period, beginning from the late sixteenth to the early nineteenth century."⁹ Because of these circumstances some unhisto-

8. Gait, Sir Edward, A history of Assam, second edition, 1926, Introduction to first edition, p. XII.

*It is not possible to say definitely when the Assamese language came to occupy the place of mother tongue amongst the majority of the Ahoms.

**For an explanation of the Ahom Laklis, refer Gait's History of Assam, Appendix B, pp. 367-68; Bhuyan, S. K., Deodhai Assam Buranji, pp. 219-222.

9. Barua, B. K., Early Assamese Prose, an article written in Aspects of Early Assamese Literature, edited by Dr. B. Kakati. p. 133.

rical facts, which were most probably written from oral reports, found their place in the Buranjis along with historical facts. These circumstances also explain to some extent why the chronological order has not been maintained in several Buranjis in describing the events. In regard to dates therefore, I have generally followed the Ahom Buranji of Golap Chandra Barua and the History of Assam by Sir Edward Gait, and where necessary I myself have converted the Laklis into dates in Saka era and Christian era with the help of the conversion table given in the Deodhai Assam Buranji.

The Buranjis are thus the chief and the original sources of information and the main materials have been collected from them. But occasionally reference has to be made to the secondary sources of information, specially, in order to locate the habitats of the different tribes and to identify many of them who are mentioned in the Buranjis by Assamese names and also to supplement some facts which are referred to in the Buranjis in vague terms.

CHAPTER—II.

The Reduction of the Nagas of Patkai by Sukapha and subsequent Ahom— Naga Relations :

It has been already said that the Ahoms entered Assam from Burma through the Pangchou pass over the Patkai via the Nongyang lake and the land of the Nagas of the Tirap Frontier Division of the North East Frontier Agency (NEFA). The first tribal people with whom the Ahoms came into Contact were the Eastern Nagas, as the European writers like Gait, Hutton and others have designated them.¹ The Wancho, Nocte and the Konyak Naga tribes fall within this group. Of all the tribes inhabiting the enormous tract of mountainous country hemming in Assam on the south, the "Nagas" are the most numerous ethnic units. Although the term 'Naga' is applied loosely to a set of people living mainly in the modern state of Nagaland which came into existence on December 1, 1963, there is a sizeable minority in Manipur (1,25,000) and the Tirap Frontier Division of NEFA, (40,000). Nagaland comprises an area of 4,366 sq. miles mainly consisting of rugged mountainous terrain and its total population, according to the latest estimate is little over 3,70,000². It is divided into three districts—Kohima, Mokokchung and Tuensang. The Naga tribes are many in number and they differ from one another in physique, culture and language. In spite of these differences they have enough in common which make it possible to group them under the generic name of Naga. Roughly speaking the Nagas extend from the Buri Dihing river and Singpho country of Lakhimpur district in the east, to the Kopili river in Nowgong in the west. They thus occupy the whole hilly tract bordering upon the plains districts of Lakhimpur, Sib-sagar and Nowgong. They are also to be found along the northern slopes of the Patkai range.

¹ Gait, E.A., A History of Assam, PP.324-25 : Hutton, J.H., The Angami Nagas, Appendix III, P. 351

² Nagaland Feature, issued by the Directorate of Information and publicity, Nagaland, December, 1, 1963.





Their Divisions :

Though in popular parlance the term 'Naga' is used as a generic name the Nagas are actually divided into many tribes and sub-tribes inhabiting different parts of the mountainous country mentioned above, speaking different dialects and having different manners and customs. Bitter feuds existed amongst the different Naga tribes and sub-tribes until very recent times. The name of the major tribal groups living in Nagaland are the following—Angamis, Chakhesangs, Khinmungans, Lothas, Semas, Phoms, Rengmas, Aos, Changs, Konyaks, Sangtams, Yimchungres, Zeliang (i.e. the former Kacha Nagas) and Kukis and other minor groups³. The Konyak Nagas are the most numerous of all the Naga tribes (70,000). Next to them are the Aos (57,000). The Angamis are known to be the most turbulent, warlike and powerful. They inhabit the tract lying between the Dayang river on the north and the Barail range and the Diphu river on the south. South of the Angami land lies the home of the Zeliang and Kuki Nagas and to the east of the Angamis live the Chakhesangs. To the north of the Angami land lies the habitation of the Rengmas. The Semas live to the north-east of the Angamis and to the north of the Rengmas live the Lothas. To the north-east of the Lothas live the Ao Nagas who extend up to the river Dikhow on the South-east. To the north-east of the Ao Nagas live the Konyak Nagas. To the south of the Konyaks live the Phoms and to the south of the Phoms live the Changs and Sangtams. To the south east of the Sangtams live the Yimchungres.

The Naga tribes with whom the Ahoms had to deal constantly were the Nagas of the northern slopes of the Patkai mountain in the neighbourhood of the Pangchou pass and Naga tribes living to the south of the Sib-sagar and Lakhimpur districts. The Nagas of the Patkai mountain with whom the Ahoms had to deal were the Wanchos who live in the Tirap Division of NEFA and extend southerly up to the summits of the Patkai range. The tribes of this area bordering on the plains are the Lothas and the Aos between the Dayang and the Dikhow and the Konyaks and the Noctes between the Dikhow and the Buri-Dihing. Except the Noctes who live in Tirap Division of NEFA, the other three tribes belong to the state of Nagaland. L

³ Nagaland Feature, Issued by the Directorate of Information and Publicity, Nagaland, December 1, 1963,

The Nagas as known to the Buranjis :

The Buranjis of the Ahoms, however, refer to those Naga tribes with whom they came into contact not by these names but by Assamese names like Khamjangias, Aitonias, Tablungias, Namchangias etc. In some places they do not mention the name of the Naga tribe or clan, but state the names of several villages against which expeditions were sent, and again in some places they refer to them by the general term 'Naga' (Pronounced Noga).

Commencing from the west, between the Dayang and the Dikhow rivers the Naga tribes are known as follows:—the Panihatias (i.e. those who come by water) the Torhatias or Dayangias (i.e. those who come by land), the Hatighorias, Assyringias, Dupdorias and the Namchangias. The first two are the sub-divisions of the Lotha Nagas and the rest of the Aos⁴.

Between the Dikhow and the Buri-Dihing the Naga tribes are known as follows:—The Tablungias, Jaktoongias, Mooloongs, Changnois (also known as Bhitar Namchangias)⁵ Jobokas (or Abhaypurias), Banferas, Mutonias (or Kooloongs), Paniduarias, Barduarias and the Namchangias (or Jaipurias) who were in no way connected with the Namchangias (division of Ao Nagas) who inhabit the low border hills on the left bank of the Dikhow⁶. Between the Mooloongs and the Changnois S.E. Peal places another tribe known as the Lakmas⁷. Some of these tribes are more extensively placed spreading over several villages (e.g. the Tablungias with 13 villages), but some tribes spread over only four or five villages (e.g. the Jobokas, Banferas, and Mutonias, each with 4 villages only). These Naga tribes are the Konyak and Nocte Naga tribes who live between the Dikhow and the Buri-Dihing bordering the plains. The Assamese names of these Naga tribes originated either from the duars or passes through which their inhabitants descended into the plains or from the important Naga villages or places of the plains situated at or near about the entrance of the passes.

4 Mackenzie, Alexander, North-East Frontier of Bengal, PP.85 and 94.

5 Physical and Political Geography of the province of Assam, Printed at the Assam Secretariat Printing Office, 1896, P.224 ; Mackenzie Alexander, North East Frontier of Bengal P.93 : Ahomar Sesh Yugar Buranji, Tr. No. 248, Vol. 56, PP.2-3, D.H.A.S.

6 Mackenzie, Alexander, North East Frontier of Bengal, PP. 85, 91 and 93 ; Physical and Political Geography of the Province of Assam, 1896, P. 224.

7 Peal, S.E., Notes on a visit to the tribes inhabiting the hills south of Sib-sagar, Assam, J.A.S.B., 1872, No. 1, P. 25.

Seclusion of the Naga tribes :

For thousands of years, the different Naga tribes seem to have lived almost untouched by higher civilisations. Neither Hindu culture of the plains of Assam nor Buddhism of Burma did ever spread into these hills where primitive races have lived up to this day in their ancient types of culture. It was only by the early part of the 18th century that the Noctes, who have had intimate business connections with the merchants of Margherita, seemed to have come under the influence of Vaishnavism.⁸ It is said that early in the 18th century, between 1699 and 1745 A.D., Latha Khunbao of the Namchangia Nocte Nagas came down from the hills with his men, paid a visit to Shri Ramadeva, the Vaishnava saint of Bali Satra in Naharkatiya and prayed for ordination. The saint at first refused, but subsequently he granted the prayer and initiated the Khunbao and his men into the Vaishnava faith. After initiation Latha Khunbao was given the name "Narottama" (i.e. the best among men). Subsequently Vaishnavism spread among the other Nocte clans also. But they have adopted, as Verrier Elwin says, a very elementary form a Vaishnavism which may be said to be a compromise between the rules followed by the Vaishnavas and the tribal ways, for, the adoption of Vaishnavism did not prevent them from practising their favourite game of head-hunting, which, it is said, was in vogue amongst the Noctes till 1945 A.D.⁹ This did not put an end to their inter-tribal quarrels also, as subsequent history reveals. During Ahom rule only a small fraction of the tribe seemed to have come under the influence of Vaishnavism.

The other Naga tribes, however, seem to have remained uninfluenced by civilising influence from outside till the advent of the British, when the Christian Missionaries began to penetrate into the hill areas of Assam and preach Christianity amongst the tribal people.

The economic condition of the Nagas :

~~✓~~ The Naga tribes bordering the plains were in constant communication with the plains for trade purposes during Ahom rule. They carried on trade in their hill products like cotton, betel-leaves (or Pan), ginger, Taro (or Kachchu) and salt and in exchange for them carried back the articles in which their hills were

8 Neog, Dr. Maheswar, "The Noctes", an article incorporated in "Asamar Janajati, edited by Dr. P. C. Bhattacharya, PP. 245-46 ; Elwin, Verrier, A. Philosophy for N.E.F.A., PP-4 and 25.

9 Neog, Dr. Maheswar, "The Noctes", incorporated in "Asamar Janajati", P. 243.

deficient.¹⁰ Brine springs are found in the low hills of the Nocte Nagas between Borhat and Jaipur. The volume of trade, however, seemed to be very small, because, as S.E. Peal says, 'The tribes are too poor to be able to trade, and constant state of warfare renders commerce impossible.'¹¹ These tribes are termed by the Assamese as "Bori" or dependent. Beyond them in the recesses of the Patkai are many "Abor" or independent clans; but they are kept from access to the plains by the Bori or subject Nagas of the outer regions who thus keep the trade in their hands. The border tribes thus act as most effectual barrier to all attempts at commercial transactions with those beyond.

The Naga Political Organisation :

Every sort of political organisation is found among the Nagas. There is the autonomy of the Angs or Chiefs (known as Khunbaos in the Assamese Buranjis) among the Konyak, Nocte and Wancho Naga tribes. The Ao community is controlled by a council of elders and democracy prevails among the Angamis.

Head Hunting :

Originally the practice of head-hunting prevailed amongst all the Naga tribes. This is one of the main characteristics which differentiates the Nagas from the other hill tribes of Assam. The origin of this practice is shrouded in mystery. Very likely, it arose, as Hutton suggests, from "a vague idea of the benefits accruing from human sacrifice," and was also, "connected in no small degree with ordinary, everyday, human vanity."¹² The Nagas considered that by killing a human being in certain cases they performed the most effectual thing to avert the displeasure of some evil spirits. It is said that their women refused to respect men who had not taken heads or demonstrated their valour by participating in raids.¹³ This practice was, however, gradually discontinued by the Nagas living within the administrative area during the British regime. In the unadministered and unexplored areas, however, the practice was continued until very recent times.

10 Peal, S.E. Notes on a visit to the tribes inhabiting the hills south of Sibsagar, Assam, J.A.S.B., 1872, No. 1, P. 27 ; Physical and Political Geography of the province of Assam. 1896, P. 224 ; Robinson, William, A Descriptive Account of Assam, P. 244.

11 Peal, S.E., Notes on a visit to the tribes inhabiting the Hills south of Sibsagar, Assam. J.A.S.B., 1872, No. 1, P. 27.

12 Hutton, J.H., The Angami Nagas, PP. 156-57.

13. Shakespear, L.W., History of Upper Assam, PP. 198-99.

Amongst the Noctes it is said to have been in vogue till 1945 and amongst the Wanchos till 1956.¹⁴ Because of the existence of this practice of head-hunting amongst the Naga tribes, each tribe had to depend almost exclusively on its own resources. In spite of it, however, they were thoroughly able to maintain themselves. We may ascribe the existence of numerous dialects differing from one another amongst the Naga tribes to this practice of head-hunting which kept isolated one tribe from the others.

Importance of the Naga Hills * to the Ahoms :

The Buranjis of the Ahoms reveal that clashes of the Ahom rulers with the Nagas which began from the very beginning of their rule in Assam, continued throughout the entire period of their rule in the land. This fact shows that the land of the Nagas had strategic importance to the Ahom rulers. It was through the land of the Nagas of Patkai and the Tirap Division of NEFA that the Ahoms came to Assam from Burma over the Patkai mountain and it was this route that they had to use in maintaining their relations with their kith and kin in Burma, the Naras, who lived beyond the Patkai mountain in the tract around Munkong in the Hukong valley, known in the Shan Chronicles as the kingdom of Mogaung. On the other hand, there was the danger of foreign attack from the east through this route. As a matter of fact the Naras, in spite of their friendly relations with the Ahom rulers whom they addressed as 'Bhai Rajas' (i.e. brother kings), entered into Assam several times through this route with the intention of conquering the Ahom kingdom. Later on, the Burmese also came to Assam through this route. The Ahom rulers, therefore, had to be on constant guard on this frontier in order to avert foreign attack. Therefore, in order to ensure safety of this frontier of the Ahom kingdom, the Nagas on the immediate frontier, who generally committed raids into the Ahom kingdom and revolted from time to time had to be kept under control. That was why the Ahom rulers were ever vigilant on this frontier and took prompt action whenever any disturbance took place on this frontier.

From the economic point of view also the land of the Nagas had its importance to the Ahom rulers. There were several salt wells in the land of the Nocte Nagas of the Tirap division of NEFA. As Alexander Mackenzie says "From the records of 1840 it appears that the Nagas living near Jaipur, the

14. Neog, Dr. Maheswar, "The Noctes" and "The Wanchos", two articles incorporated in "Asamar Janajati", edited by Dr. P. C. Bhattacharya, P. 243 and P. 251.

* By the term 'Naga Hills' we refer both to the state of Nagaland and the Tirap Division of NEFA.

Namsang, the Paniduar and Borduar lived chiefly by manufacturing salt which they retailed to the people of the plains. There were in the lower hills eighty five salt wells in all, of which the government was allowed to be the absolute owner of only three, enjoying merely a right to a certain number of flues or fire places at each of the others. These rights Purandar Singh had regularly asserted."¹⁵ The Ahoms no doubt obtained possession of these salt wells by fighting with the Nagas. Until the westward expansion of the Ahom kingdom made it possible to open up trade relations with Bengal when large quantities of salt began to be imported annually (about 10,00,000 maunds),¹⁶ salt was a scarcity in Assam (i.e. in the Ahom kingdom)* and the Assamese no doubt had to depend on the supply of the local salt of the Naga hills and also of Sadiya which possessed brine springs.¹⁷ But the latter brine springs must have lain outside the possession of the Ahom rulers until the overthrow of the Chutiya kingdom in 1523 A.D. during the reign of Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539).

Ahom Naga Relations :

The chronicles of the Ahom kings, or the Buranjis as they are called, report that it was through the land of the Nagas that in the beginning of the 13th century, Sukapha, the founder of the Ahom kingdom in Assam, came with his army over the hilly country of the Patkai range. The country from which Sukapha came was called 'Maolung' according to the Buranjis.

Sukapha is said to have left Maolung in 1215 A.D. with a following of fifteen nobles, 9,000 fighting men, one tusked elephant, a female elephant, an elephant keeper and three hundred horses with covered eyes.¹⁸ On the way he halted

15 Mackenzie, Alexander, North-East Frontier of Bengal P. 92.

16 Bhuyan, S.K., Anglo-Assamese Relations, P. 53.

* In ancient days the people of Kamarupa or Assam made an alkaline preparation called "Khar" from the plantain trees and used it as a substitute for salt.

17. Sen, Surendranath, Prachin Bangala Patra Sankalan, Introduction, P. 70; Robinson, William, A Descriptive Account of Assam, PP. 33-34.

18 Bhuyan, S.K., Doedhai Assam Buranji, pp. 5-6; Barua, Golap Chandra, Ahom Buranji, p. 44. The number of nobles and soldiers who had accompanied Sukapha vary from one Buranji to another. According to some Buranjis eight nobles and 3,000 soldiers accompanied him; while according to others only 1080 soldiers and a few nobles (number is not stated) accompanied him. These figures, however, seem to be too small. In view of the hazardous journey that he had to undertake through the hilly country of the Pakkai by fighting with the wild Naga tribes, the number of soldiers seemed to have been much greater than these Buranjis state. I have therefore accepted the figures given in Deodhai Assam Buranji and Ahom Buranji.

for a few days in the kingdom of the Nara Raja of Mogaung or Mungkong and after stealing the 'Somdeo', the tutelary god of the Shans, from him fled towards Assam.¹⁹ In the course of his westward migration towards Assam, Sukapha [wandered about many places for about thirteen years till at last he arrived at the principal pass to Daikham hill. Therefrom he came to the boundary of the Naga country. He then came to Namtilikkangtai. He crossed the river Khamjan and halted near a lake (the Nongnyang lake). Here Sukapha gave orders to fight with the Nagas."²⁰

Here the question naturally arises—why did Sukapha give order to his followers to fight with the Nagas? Probably some of the Nagas had attempted to resist his advance. Gunabhiram Barua says that they resisted the advance of the Ahoms to Assam.²¹ So the Ahoms had to force their way through the land of the Nagas. The Buranjis further say,—“The Nagas of the villages Kharukhu, Pungkang, Tithang, Binglao, Latema, Lampang and Taru acknowledged submission. The two villages Luknam and Luka were destroyed. Then Sukapha conquered the Nagas of Taputapa.* He placed Kangkhrumung (belonging to the family of the Bargohain who accompanied him) in charge of the country Khamjang.” Thus was created the post of the Khamjangia Gohain. The great king Sukapha ordered Kangkhrumung, the Khamjangia Gohain, to pay regular tributes to him with the articles produced in the surrounding Naga villages conquered by him and then left the place.²² “He arrived at Daikaorang (a collection of nine hills; it was

Sukapha and the Nagas of Patkai.

the ancient name of the Patkai) where he stopped. Here Sukapha ordered his chiefs to conquer the Nagas of both up and down countries. The Nagas of the villages Papuk, Teng-kham, Khunkhat, Khuntung, Tangching and Jakhang gave

battle. A great number of the Nagas were killed and many more were made captives. Some Nagas were cut to pieces and their flesh cooked. Then the king made a younger brother eat the cooked flesh of his elder brother and a father of his son's. Thus Sukapha destroyed the Naga villages. The inhabitants of other villages being very much afraid acknowledged his suzerainty. Then Sukapha expressed his wish to leave Daikaorang.” Here also, the conquered Naga chiefs were

19. Barua, *Harakanta, Assam Buranji*, pp. 10-11.

20. Barua, *Golap Chandra, Ahom Buranji*, p. 45; Bhuyan, S.K., *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp. 6—7.

21 Barua, *Gunabhiram, Assam Buranji*, p 24.

* According to *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, Tapa & Tapu were two villages.

22 Naobaicha Phukan, *Padmeswar Singh, Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 109, Vol. IX, pp. 177-78. D.H.A.S.: Barua, *Harakanta, Assam Buranji*, pp. 11-12.

ordered by Sukapha to pay regular tributes to him with the produce of their hills.²³ Then Sukapha again began to move on. He marched down and arrived at Khamnangnangpu. Therefrom he came to Namruk (i.e. Namrup) by the side of the Disang river. Then he wandered about many places in search of a suitable site for the capital of his new kingdom between the Buri-Dihing and the Dikhow rivers. The places that he visited and in some of which he stayed for several years were—Tipam, Abhoypur, Habung, Mungrinmungching, Simaluguri and at last Charaideo (in Sibsagar district) adjacent to a small hill in 1253 A.D. where he constructed a town.²⁴

It was thus through the land of the Nagas that the Ahoms made their way into Assam from Burma. The first contact with them, as it appears from the description mentioned above, was violent and not peaceful. The first Naga tribes with whom Sukapha fought were the Nagas of Patkai and the Tirap Frontier Division of NEFA. The Naga tribes of this area are the Wanchos, the Tangsas and the Noctes. These Nagas resisted the advance of the Ahoms into Assam through their land and the Ahoms had to fight with the Nagas in several places. The resistance that the Nagas gave to the Ahoms was natural on their part, because the Ahoms forced their way through their land and all human beings, whether civilised or uncivilised, would naturally try to protect their own territory, their hearths and homes from foreign attacks. Sukapha's treatment of the Nagas cannot be justified on the plea that the Nagas had resisted him. The treatment meted out by Sukapha to the Nagas has been termed by Sir Edward Gait as 'ghastly barbarity'.²⁵ Indeed the fact that Sukapha compelled the Nagas to eat human flesh, the flesh of their relatives, cannot be described otherwise than as barbaric. Though the practice of head-hunting had been widely prevalent among the Nagas in ancient times and continued to be practised in the interior and unexplored areas until very recent times, we do not find anywhere any reference to them as cannibals. As F. Haimendorf observes—"The Nagas do not lack the taste for a gay and thrilling raid or the cutting off of a few enemy heads, but they certainly did not appreciate such refinements of Ahom civilisation: in the years to come they often stood out in open rebellion."²⁶ If Sukapha had the ulterior aim of terrorising the Nagas by such brutal means and make them submit for all time to come, he

23 Assam Buranji, Tr. No. 109, Vol. IX, p. 178.

24 Barua, Golap Chandra, Ahom Buranji, pp. 45-46.

25 Gait, Sir, Edward, History of Asam, p. 77.

26 Haimendorf, Furer, The Naked Nagas, pp. 32-33.

cannot be said to have achieved that end, as later history revealed. Indeed clashes between the Ahom rulers and the Naga tribes of this area were matters of common occurrence throughout the entire period of the Ahom rule in Assam.

The terrible punishment that Sukapha inflicted upon the Nagas kept them quiet for two centuries. In the eighties of the 15th century, however, during the reign of Susenpha (1439-1488 A.D.) the Nagas of Tangsu (or Tangasu) village revolted in 1487 A.D. and an expedition was sent against them which defeated the Nagas,²⁷ but one hundred and forty men along with the two dangarias (i.e. ministers) on the Ahom side fell in the battle. According to some Buranjis however, some Khampa Nagas requested the help of the Ahom king against the Tangsu Nagas who were giving them trouble.²⁸ They further confirm the fall of the two * dangarias and 140 men, but they do not say which party won the battle. There is still another version which says that the Tangsu Nagas made a present of swords as a token of their submission and killed a great number of men on the Ahom side who were not on guard.²⁹ The Ahoms, therefore, on this occasion did not seem to have won the battle, as the Ahom Buranji says. That was why perhaps in the reign of the next king Suhenpha (1488-1493 A.D.) war was renewed with the Tangsu Nagas who were in the end defeated.³⁰ But at the commencement of hostilities, the Nagas routed a detachment of the Ahoms and cut off the head of the Bargohain named Chaokanbanruk who was in command. In the second encounter however, the Nagas were routed and some Naga children, spears and other things along with three Tangsu Naga families were taken as booty by the Ahoms. These Tangsu Nagas were most probably the 'Tangsa' Naga tribe living in the Tirap Division of NEFA on the Assam-Burma border.³¹ Only a section of the tribe, who were probably conquered by Sukapha on his way from Burma to Assam, seems to have revolted against Ahom authority. Up to the end of the 15th century therefore, the Nagas had maintained a hostile

27 Barua, Golap Chandra, *Ahom Buranji*, p. 52.

28 Goswami, Hemchandra, *Purani Assam Buranji*, p. 50; Bhuyan S. K., *Assam Buranji* (obtained from the family of Sukumar Mahanta; henceforward reference to it will be made as *Assam Buranji S. M.*), p. 8.

* According to *Assam Buranji S. M.*, three dangarias fell in the battle.

29 Bhuyaa, S. K., *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, p. 13.

30 Barua, Harakanta, *Assam Buranji*, p. 21; Tamuli Phukan, Kasinath, *Assam Buranji*, p. 18, *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 109. Vol. IX, pp. 230-231.

31 Neog, Dr. Maheswar, 'Tangsa',—an article inserted in 'Asamar Janajati'. edited by Bhattacharya, Dr. P. C.

attitude towards the Ahoms who tried to keep them forcibly down. The Tangsu Nagas, in spite of their defeat, did not conclude a peace with the Ahoms.

But the Nagas living on the northern slopes of the Patkai mountain round about the country of Khamjang gave much more vigorous and constant trouble to the Ahoms than others. These Nagas were conquered by Sukapha on his way to Assam from Burma by the most important low pass over the Patkai mountain via the Nongnyang lake,³² and it was Sukapha who instituted the post of the Khamjangia Gohain to rule the country of Khamjang which stood just on the way on this pass on the other side of the Patkai mountain and also its neighbourhood. The Ahom rulers thus regarded those Nagas as their subjects and required them to pay annual tributes. But these Nagas, partly perhaps out of their hatred against the Ahoms for the treatment meted out by Sukapha to them, and partly perhaps due to their love of freedom, resented their subordinate status and rebelled against the authority of the Ahoms several times. The first of these took place in the beginning of the 16th century. When Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.) was on the Ahom throne, the Aitonia (or Itania) Nagas revolted in A.D. 1504, and an army was sent against them. The Aitonias, being defeated, made peace and offered four elephants and a girl.³³ According to some Buranjis, however, one elephant was offered.³⁴ After the failure of their first revolt the Aitonias thus made friendship with the Ahoms not only by offering elephants, but a girl also, which is regarded as the best symbol of friendship. But this friendship they did not maintain long, as later history revealed.

During the reign of the same king in A.D. 1535, the Khamjangia Gohain reported to the Ahom king that the Nagas of several villages around him were joining together to attack him and that he would be compelled to leave the place.³⁵ These villages were : Malan (or Man), Pangkha (or Pangu), Kheokha, Lukna and Taru of lower regions and Papuk, Khamteng, Shiteng (or Shitu) and Shireng (or Shiru) of the higher regions. Taru was one of the villages which acknowledged the suzerainty of Sukapha. Thus informed king Suhungmung sent

³² Shakespear, L. W. History of Upper Assam, Upper Burma and North-Eastern Frontier, p. 253.

³³ Barua, Golap Chandra, Ahom Buranji, p. 54.

³⁴ Bhuyan, S. K. Deodhai Assam Buranji, p. 15; Bhuyan, S. K. Assam Buranji S. M., pp. 9.

³⁵ Barua, Golap Chandra, Ahom Buranji, pp. 73-74; Bhuyan S.K. Deodhai Assam Buranji, p. 32-33; Assam Buranji, Transcript No. 82, Vol. IV, part II, pp. 266-67, D.H.A.S.

Chaolung Shuteng, Thaomungkhru and Shangkungren in the company of Chaolung Shuleng, the Saring Raja, against the Nagas of Jakhang (or Jakhrang). Jakhang was one of the Naga villages on the lower regions of the Patkai mountain which gave battle to Sukapha along with other villages. Chao Shenglung (the Barpatra Gohain) was directed to proceed against the Nagas of the Phakai (or Phrakai), Tashiteng and Shireng on the higher regions of the Patkai mountain. The former group of officers sent against the Naga village of Jakhang under Chaolung Shuleng, the Saring Raja, encamped in Namrup by fortifying a fort and then fought with the Nagas of Jakhang and defeated them. Chaolung Shuteng being ill came back. Then king Suhungmung despatched Chaolung Shuleng with other higher officers against the Nagas of the villages Lukna, Taru, Pangkha, Malan and Pangpangta of the lower regions. Accordingly they entered into the above mentioned villages and routed the Nagas. Thereafter Chaolung Shuleng came to Khamjang. The Khamjangia Gohain brought eight horses and some gauze cloth and despatched them to king Shuhungmung. Chaolung Shuleng* then proceeded to Mungjang. From Mungjang he came to Mungkhlang, then to Kangteo and then to Phakai. Chaolung Shuleng sent a Kataki (i.e. envoy) to the Phakai king to induce the Nagas to come to Khamjang. The Kataki succeeded in his mission and brought the Nagas to Khamjang and made them submit. After this Chaolung Shuleng along with the officers left Khamjang and paid homage to king Suhungmung by offering one hundred methons (a species of wild cows) which was taken from the Nagas as a fine. ** But in the reign of Sukhampha, Khora-Raja (1552-1603 A.D.) an expedition against the Nagas of Hatikhok, Aiton, Papuk, and Khamteng, near the country of Khamjang, was again sent.³⁶ Probably these Nagas had again shown signs of rebellion. The Nagas of the above mentioned villages left their villages at the approach of the Ahom army. As a result of this a large booty in the shape of methons fell into the hands of the Ahoms. At Khamteng Thaomunglung, the Bargohain, fell ill. So he came back from Khamteng. The Nagas of Aiton, Papuk and Khamteng joined together and assaulted Thaomunglung on the hill Tadaibungmung *** and killed the men who carried

* In the Ahom Buranji (p. 74) king Suhungmung is stated to have proceeded to Mungjang from Charaideo. But this seems to be wrong and the Deodhai Assam Buranji does not support it. According to the latter Buranji it was the Saring Raja who proceeded to Mungjang.

** In Deodhai Assam Buranji the term 'Khamjangia Nara' is written in place of 'Khamjangia Gohain' of the Ahom Buranji.

¹ 36 Ahom Buranji, pp. 82-83; Deodhai Assam Buranji, p. 40

***The Deodhai Assam Buranji states the name of the hill as Daimung.

Thaomunglung. Thaomunglung was made a captive. Chao-Shuban and Chao-Shamchu, the two princes advanced with their armies and fought with the Nagas on Tadaibungmung hill. The Nagas of Aiton, Papuk and Khamteng were completely routed and Thaomunglung was made free and conveyed on an elephant. The Nagas this time did not make their submission. On the contrary in A.D. 1573, the Aitonia Nagas again revolted. The expedition that was sent against them this time made captives of the wives and children of the Aitonias and thereby inflicted heavy punishment on them.³⁷

In the 17th century however, relationship of the Ahoms with these Nagas improved much. During the reign of Suchingpha, Nariya Raja (or Sutyinpha, 1644-1648 A.D.) some Khamjangia Nagas came to the Ahom king at the capital Garhgaon and kneeling down before him asked the help of the Ahom king against some Naga villages viz. Khamteng, Sikidu, Titu, Khama and Luma who were harassing them.³⁸ The Ahom king, in compliance with their request, instructed the Namrupia and Tipam Rajas to do the needful and asked the Khamjangias to go back. The expedition that was sent against the Nagas was a successful one and the main brunt of the expedition was directed against the Khamtengia Nagas. This was probably done due to the fact that they had rebelled against Ahom authority several times before. At first the Nagas wanted to fight, but they were frightened at the vast number of the invaders. They did not fight and the Nagas of the villages Thaokhen, Rukhru, Latema, Khampin, Chaokha along with Khamteng made their submission. They sent several men with two goats, two cages of fowls and two pots of liquor as tributes. They asked pardon for offending the great king. The Ahom army however, on the information of the Katakis who were sent to watch the movement of the enemies, marched forward and attacked the Khamtengia Nagas* who fled away. The Ahoms obtained possession of twenty methons, one hundred and sixty Naga caps, six blankets, sixteen women and two young men of the enemies in the shape of war booty. Twenty persons were presented before the king. The king placed them in a dungeon near a market place and later on they were punished. At the instance of the king the Hatibarua enchained many of them and put them in a prison near Pukhurikhana

37 Ahom Buranji, p. 92; Deodhai Assam Buranji, pp. 47-48.

38 Ahom Buranji, pp. 134-39.

* In the Buranji the Ahom army is said to have marched against the Khamjangia Nagas. But this must be either a printing mistake or a mistake with the Buranji. In the succeeding pages, however, Khamtengia Naga is written.

near Khamteng. Two of them were fettered in Jangna field. The Khamtengia Nagas then offered the king two gongs, a packet of poison and some other things. This time the brother of the Khamtengia Raja also came to the Ahom king at Garhgaon. He along with others were given present by the Ahom king at Garhgaon. As the Ahom Buranji relates—"Tithaorai and Tithaokhen were presented with coats, caps and silver earrings. Thaobanthaona (he was probably the brother of the Khamtengia Raja) was also presented with many things. They came to take their presents from Itanagar. The heavenly king spread two gorgeous cloths and having seated thereon, taught them rules. The king wished them to drink. On the day Raicheu they drank with fear. The great king drank with them with drooping head and placing one leg upon the other."³⁹ Thus, for the first time, one of the restless Naga tribes of the Patkai mountain, who gave trouble to the Ahom rulers many times, visited the Ahom king at his capital and established friendly relations with him. The Ahom king also on his part, received these Nagas cordially inspite of their repeated rebellions against Ahom authority. The next Ahom king Jayadvaj Singha (1648-1663 A.D.), soon after his accession to the throne, had to send three envoys with proper instructions along with a letter to the Khamjangia Gohain Tyaorai Thaokhen on receiving reports of the refusal of the local Nagas to obey the order of the latter.⁴⁰ The envoys went to Khamjang, and according to the instructions given them, they collected the Khamjangia Nagas and told them that they had been sent by the Ahom Swargadeo (i.e. king) to charge them for their offence of disobeying the order of the Khamjangia Gohain Tyaorai Thaokhen to build his house and also for not making any conversation with him. In reply to the charge the Nagas expressed their sentiments of loyalty by declaring themselves to be the servants of the Swargadeo and therefore bound to do everything commanded by him. They explained that the former Khamjangia Gohains were strangers to them and the Gohains also did not consider them (i.e. the Nagas) to be their servants. This problem arose due to the fact that the Ahom king did not hand over the responsibility of the Khamjangia Nagas to the Khamjangia Gohain declaring the latter to be their head. Because of this they did not care much for the Khamjangia Gohain. They begged pardon of the king and requested him not to molest them considering them to be the slaves of his ancestors. In return for this favour begged for, the Nagas promised to take care of the Khamjangia Gohain. They even said that if the king would not believe their words, they were ready to prove their loyalty to the Ahom Swargadeo by taking the crumbs

39. Ahom Buranji, p. 139.

40 Dutta, S.K., Assam Buranji (1648-81 A.D.), pp. 4-5.

thrown off from the dishes of the Ahom officers sent by the king to them. The envoys came back to the king and reported to him everything told by the Nagas. Jayadvaj Singha then sent a son of one Na-Bora and two Deodhais (i.e. Ahom priests) to Khamjang to make the Nagas eat the crumbs thrown off from their dishes. After this was done, the Khamjangia Nagas along with the Khamjangia Gohain Tyaorai Thaokhen came to the king to pay their homage. They brought with them many presents consisting of gold vessels, silver vessels, varieties of cloth, red Japis (caps), black Japis, and feathers of a species of wild bird known as Kairangcha. They bowed down before the king with these presents. Jayadvaj Singha also in return sent them back with proper instructions and valuable presents. This shows that by the middle of the 17th century the Nagas of this locality became thoroughly submissive and from this time they did not seem to have given any more trouble to the Ahom rulers in later times. They remained in peace and maintained friendly relations with the Ahom rulers by regularly paying their annual tributes. Thus after one and half a centuries of fighting from the beginning of the 16th century these Nagas of Khamjang were humbled down and forced to submit.

But it was not alone with the Nagas of this locality that the Ahom rulers had to deal up to the middle of the 17th century. Other Naga tribes, living close to the plains also gave them trouble. During the reign of Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.), soon after the expedition against the Nagas of the several villages round about Khamjang, another expedition was sent in 1536 A.D. against the Tablungia, Jaktoongia and Namchangia Nagas, divisions of Konyak Naga tribes living on the eastern side of the Dikhow river.⁴¹ These Namchangias were undoubtedly the "Bhitar Namchangias" or the 'Changnois' inhabiting the low border hills on the right bank of the Dikhow river on the Sibsagar border, and not the Namchangias living beyond the Sibsagar frontier, that is to say, in the Lakhimpur district, who are also known as Jaipurias. Expedition against the Tablungia, Jaktoongia and Namchangia Konyak Nagas. Because we know it definitely that the Tablungia Nagas live on the east bank of the Dikhow river and the Jaktoongias are their neighbours on the east. It is stated in the Buranjis that the Nagas of the villages Jaktoong, Changnan (i.e. Changnoi or Bhitar Namchang), Janphan (Jenphan), and Chantai (or Shanchai of Ahom Buranji) joined together and in a body entered the village of the Tablungia Nagas and together attacked the Ahom army. So, these Namchangias must be the Bhitar Namchangias (or Changnois) living on the Sibsagar border. These Naga tribes inflicted a

⁴¹ Ahom Buranji, pp. 74-75; Deodhai Assam Buranji, p. 33.
Assam Buranji, Tr. No. 82, Vol. IV, part II, p. 267, D.H.A.S.

reverse on the Ahom troops who were compelled to retreat by leaving four guns in the Naga land. Shortly afterwards, however, they made their submission and made peace with the Ahoms by returning the guns.

According to some Buranjis, in this year (1458 saka—1536 A.D.) the Ahoms obtained possession of one salt well in Mohong by defeating the Nagas.⁴² The Borduarias and Paniduarias, living at the eastern extremity of the Sibsagar district are also called Mohongias.⁴³ Probably Mohong lies in their land which has given this name to them and it is likely that Mohong is one of the most important salt producing places of the land of the Nocte Nagas. Thus, economic interest of the Ahoms also compelled them to fight against the Nagas living between Borhat and Jaipur. The Ahoms in course of time obtained exclusive possession of several salt wells, and, as the Buranjis reveal, they had to send several expeditions against the Nagas to retain their rights in the salt wells in tact.

Though the Nocte and the Konyak Nagas living near the plains fought with the Ahoms like the Nagas of the Patkai mountain, yet some of them established close relations with the Ahoms; and some of them established friendly relations as soon as they were defeated. It is probable that these Naga tribes accepted the overlordship of the Ahom ruler and were in the habit of giving presents to the Ahom king which might be regarded as annual tributes. There is a story that a Banfera (Banpha or Banpara) Naga Khunbao (i.e. chief) had made close friendship with king Shupimpha (1493-97).⁴⁴ His name was Karangpa. One

42 Tamuli Phukan, *Kasinath, Assam Buranji*, p. 20; Barua, *Harakanta, Assam Buranji*, p. 25.

43 Grierson, G.A., *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. 1., p. 68; Peal, S.E., *Notes on a visit to the tribes inhabiting the hills south of Sibsagar, Assam*, J.A.S.B., 1872, No. 1, p. 29.

44 Barua, *Harakanta, Assam Buranji*, pp. 25-26; Goswami Hem Chandra, *Purani Assam Buranji*, pp. 40-41, In *Harakanta Barua's Buranji*, neither the name of the Khunbao, nor the tribe to which he belonged is given. In *Purani Assam Buranji* the Naga Khunbao is stated to have been a Banfera chief and his name is given as Karangpa. But the latter Buranji stated the name of the Ahom king in whose reign the incident took place as Suhungmung (1497-1539 A.D.) and not Supimpha (1493-97). This, however seems to be wrong. According to Gait also the incident took place in the reign of Supimpha (*History of Assam* pp. 85-86.) The latter Buranji differs from *Harakanta Barua* and *Gait* in another respect also. According to it, Supimpha's queen gave birth to a son of the Naga Khunbao one year after her arrival in the Naga village. The boy was named Chengkan. King Suhungmung took Chengkan from the Naga Khunbao

day when Karangpa came to pay his tribute to king Supimpha, one of Supimpha's wives (married from the 'Chamua class'—a class of people below the nobility and above the rank of labourer) happened to see the Banfera Naga Khunbao from inside the palace and when the king went inside, the queen praised the beauty of the Naga Khunbao in the presence of the king. The latter was so incensed at this that he gave her to the Khunbao who took her to the Naga village. She was pregnant at that time and subsequently gave birth to a son in the house of the Khunbao. In the reign of the next king Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.), that boy used to come to pay tribute to the Ahom king. Suhungmung was struck by his high-bred appearance and conversation and learning that his mother was already pregnant before Supimpha gave her to the Naga Khunbao, he took him into favour and as he was not the son of a queen of a higher rank so Suhungmung created for him the new post of Barpatra Gohain, which he made equal to those of the Burahag-hain and the Bargohain. He named the boy Kancheng Barpatra. As Kancheng was born and brought up in the Naga village, his family came to be known as "Naga Barpatra's ghar" or house. This incident serves as an example of intimate friendship with the Ahom king that was established by the Banfera Nagas, one of the Nocte Naga tribes, living near the plains in the Tirap Frontier Division of NEFA.

By the middle of the 16th century, these Banfera Nagas apparently on the strength of the close friendship with the Ahom kings, went to the extent of inviting the help of the Ahom king Suklenmung alias the Garhgayan Raja (1539-52 A.D.) the successor of Suhungmung in their inter-tribal quarrels. In 1549 A.D. the Nagas of the village Banchang attacked the Nagas of Banpha (i.e. Banfera). The Banfera Nagas being unable to hold their ground sent Katakis to the Ahom king with an offer of some methons, buffaloes and hunting dogs to request his help.⁴⁵ The help was given and the Banchang Nagas were defeated. Their Khunbao (i.e. chief) was made a prisoner and some methons, buffaloes

and brought him up. When he came of age, Suhungmung married him a girl. A boy was born of Chengkan as a result of this marriage. This boy was also brought up by Suhungmung and he gave him the name Kancheng. In a battle with the Nagas this Kancheng showed unusual vigour and as a reward for it Suhungmung made him the Barpatra Gohain. The account of the Purani Assam Buranji must be wrong. Because king Suhungmung certainly would not have shown so much favour to the son of a Naga as to create for him a new post equal to those of the two ministers. Moreover according to the law prevalent in the Ahom kingdom, all the higher posts in the kingdom must be filled up from the noble Ahom families that accompanied Sukapha from Burma to Assam.

⁴⁵ Ahom Buranji, pp. 81-82; Deodhai Assam Buranji, p. 39.

and a large coral bead was taken as spoils of war by the Ahoms. The Banchang Nagas, inspite of their defeat did not make their submission. In the 17th century, during the reign of Chakradhvaj Singha (1663-1669 A.D.) the Banchang Nagas again attacked the Banfera Nagas in 1665 A.D.⁴⁶ The Banchang Nagas killed the son of the Raja of Banfera. The Banfera Nagas this time also invoked the aid of the Ahom king. In compliance with their request an expedition was sent against the Banchang Nagas under Lanmakbru Rajkhowa. The Rajkhowa, however, could not overcome the Banchang Nagas. A messenger informed the king of the matter. The king then ordered another expedition to proceed against the Nagas under Kandukhamon and Parbatia Dekka. The Banchang Nagas fought for some time with the Ahom army. But in the end they had to give way and flee away. Their houses and granaries were destroyed by the Ahoms. The Ahom army then came back. With the return of the Ahom army the Banchang Nagas again attacked the Banfera Nagas and the latter again came to the Ahom king for help.⁴⁷ An Ahom army was sent against the Banchang Nagas. This time the Banchang Nagas gave strong resistance to the Ahom army by making a stockade and putting barricades on their way. But when guns and cannon were brought in, they could no longer resist the Ahoms. Their stockade was destroyed and they fled away. They took shelter in the intricacies of the hill. The Ahom army set fire to the houses and granaries of the Banchang Nagas. The Banchang Nagas then brought two buffaloes, one goat, two wild cows (i.e. methons) and twenty spears and came to the Ahom king who was at Borhat, to ask his pardon. This time these warlike Banchang Nagas seemed to have been humbled to some extent. They said to the Ahom king as follows—"Our forefathers acknowledged you as our head, but you have sent your armies to destroy us. Now we pray your Majesty to take us into favour."⁴⁸ Then the Ahom King Chakradhvaj Singha took them into favour and ordered the Ahom army to come back. These Banchang (or Banhchang i.e. Bamboo platform) Nagas were one of the Abor Nocte Naga tribes living south of the Banfera Nagas.⁴⁹ From what they said to king Chakradhvaj Singha it appears that they had acknowledged the supremacy of the Ahom sovereign long before.

About the year 1563 A.D. the Ahom king Sukhampha, Khora Raja (1552-1603) rewarded the Tablungia Nagas, one of the Konyak Naga tribes living by the

46 Ahom Buranji, pp. 190-91.

47 Ahom Buranji, pp. 193-94.

48 Ahom Buranji, p. 194.

49. Peal, S.E., Notes on a visit to the Tribes inhabiting the Hills south of Sibsagar, Assam, J.A.S.B., 1872, No. 1. p. 25.

side of the Dikhow, with beels (i.e. fishing waters) on the plains in recognition of some valuable services rendered by them to the Ahom king.⁵⁰ Along with the beels they were also assigned fishermen paiks (Dom-bahatia) to supply them dried fish from the beels assigned to them.

The occasional raids of the Nagas still continued. Consequently the next king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.), with a view to stop the raids of the Naga tribes on the borders of Sibsagar and Lakhimpur constructed a rampart called "Naga-garh" and forbade the Nagas to enter inside that rampart unaccompanied by chaotangs or interpreters.⁵¹ As most of the Naga tribes were deficient in the supply of foodstuffs, king Pratap Singha granted the chiefs of these tribes

Grant of lands to the Nagas by Pratap Singha khats or lands along with retainers in order to put a stop to their raiding operations upon the Assamese villages bordering on the hills.⁵² These estates were called Naga-khats and were managed by Assamese Agents called Naga-katakis and the products of those lands were used to supply the tribes with foodstuffs. In return for the lands granted to the tribes the Nagas of each pass (or duar) had to pay annual tribute to the Ahom king in the shape of methon (wild cows), painted goats, red hair, red cane, salt and various other articles produced in the different passes.

During the reign of Jayadhwaj Singha, the Bhagania Raja (1648-1663 A.D.) we hear for the first and last time of the Lakma Nagas, one of the Konyak Naga tribes living between the Mooloongs and the Changnois. They made raid into the Ahom dominion in 1650, and cut off the heads of two men and four Children.⁵³ In other words, they practised head-hunting. An expedition was sent against them. The Lakma Nagas came down to plunder the Ahom army. But they were defeated and the Ahoms set fire to their houses. This punishment, however, did not seem to have acted as a deterrent. For, four years later, by the beginning of the year 1655 a second expedition had to be sent against them. One section of the army was sent through the Tiru pass (or duar), and another through Namchang. The Lakma Nagas armed with spears and other weapons made unexpected attack on the Ahom troops and wounded many of them by

⁵⁰ Naobaicha Phukan, Padmeswar Singh, Assam Buranji, Tr. No. 109, Vol. IX, p. 267, D.H.A.S.; Barua, Harakanta. Assam Buranji, p. 33.

⁵¹ Barua, Harakanta, Assam Buranji, p. 41; Assam Buranji S.M., p. 68.

⁵² Barua, Harakanta, Assam Buranji, p. 41.

⁵³ Ahom Buranji, pp. 145-152; Dutta, S. K., Assam Buranji (1648-81), pp. 3, 6-9; Shakespear, L.W., History of Upper Assam, upper Burma and North Eastern Frontier, p. 211.

hurling spears. But subsequently the Lakmas were driven off by a detachment of Dafia archers that accompanied the expedition. The Nagas took to their heels leaving behind their lances, spears and swords. The Ahoms got seven spears, two swords and seven lances of the Nagas as war booty which were sent to the king. While the Ahom army was advancing by clearing a path through the jungles, the Lakmas suddenly fell upon them. A hand to hand fighting went on for some time in which the Lakmas were ultimately worsted and the Ahoms captured a Naga alive. The Ahom army pursued the Nagas and succeeded in taking one of their forts and killing two of its defenders. One head of a Lakma Naga was sent to the king along with the message that the Ahoms had kept the Nagas sorrounded. The king became so delighted on receiving the message that soon afterwards he himself proceeded to Namchang. About this time the Ahom force was again surprised by the Lakmas who, coming stealthily from the jungle killed a man and took away the heads of another two which were produced before their Raja. But the Lakmas failed to drive home their attack and took refuge in the hills whither the Ahom solders found it difficult to follow them on account of the stony ground on which their feet were hurt and swelled. The king heard the news. He ordered one Luthuri Chaodang Barua to march against the Nagas immediately. He proceeded accordingly. But the other officers delayed fighting. The news of this delay reached the king and he became very angry. He sent immediately other officers to lead the army. The Nagas now got afraid and asked for cessation of hostilities. Their Raja expressed his desire to offer a girl and sent the girl to the king in the company of two Nagas. The king at this said that the Nagas should come down on friendly terms to offer the girl. A Kataki was sent to the Lakma Raja to talk the matter over with him. But the Lakma Raja did not come to terms and wanted to kill the Kataki treacherously. The Kataki however, managed to escape. The Nagas attacked the Ahom army and compelled them to retreat. Reinforcements, however, soon arrived and the Ahoms renewed their advance and attacked the Nagas. The Lakmas, being unable to stand the Ahom attack, fled in all directions and concealed themselves in the intricate parts of the hill. The Ahom army therefore set fire to their dwellings and granaries. Eventually the Lakma Raja came to the Ahom king and made his submission, offered tributes to him and requested him to grant the Lakma Raja the possession of the hill Shangdoimlandoi. The king granted his prayer and peace was restored.

Up to about the middle of the 17th century the Ahoms had to deal mostly with the Nagas living between the Dikhow and the Buri-Dihing. This

was because of the fact that the Ahom kingdom was expanding from the east to west. In the beginning of the 13th century when the Ahoms established their kingdom in the eastern corner of Assam "the Kachari kingdom extended along the south bank of the Brahmaputra, from the Dikhow to the Kallang or beyond and included also the valley of the Dhansiri and the tract which now forms the North-Cachar sub-division".⁵⁴ The Ahoms therefore in the westward expansion of their dominion along the south bank of the Brahmaputra had to fight with the Kacharis, and the series of wars that followed from the last part of the 15th century (1490 A.D.) resulted in the withdrawal of the Kacharis further west and then south before the onward march of the Ahoms.⁵⁵ The Ahom kingdom extended up to the valley of the Dhansiri in the year 1536, when the Kacharis deserted Dimapur and the valley of the Dhansiri after their defeat at the hands of the Ahoms and retreating further south, established a new capital at Maibong on the bank of the Mahur river. This westward expansion of the Ahom kingdom went on gradually till the time of Gadadhar Singha (1681-1696 A.D.) when the Ahoms succeeded in fixing the river Manah (or Monas, the boundary between modern Kamrup and Goalpara districts) as their western boundary by defeating the Moguls in 1682 A.D. at the battle of Itakhuli. This westward expansion of the Ahom kingdom brought the Ahoms in the 17th century into contact with the Nagas living between the Dikhow and the Dayang rivers.

In the last part of the 17th century during king Gadadhar Singha's reign (1681-96 A.D.), we hear for the first time of the Nagas making raids upon the inhabitants of the Dayang valley.⁵⁶ An expedition was sent under Tam-cheng Chinghai Phukan. The Phukan searched the houses of the Nagas for two days but could not find them out. When he set fire to their dwellings then the Nagas came out to talk with the Ahoms and said to the Phukan,— "We are your slaves. Our forefathers were protected by the heavenly king. We, your slaves, do not know what is right and what is wrong. We are abors (i.e. ignorant). We have given the king cause of offence. Now we shall offer two girls to the king with two female slaves and other articles. We hope, the Phukan will save us."⁵⁷ The Phukan accepted the offer

⁵⁴ Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p.248.

⁵⁵ Refer, post ch.V. "The pushing back of the Kacharis"

⁵⁶ Ahom Buranji, pp.267-68 & Bhuyan, S. K. Tungkhungia Buranji, pp.25-26.

⁵⁷ Ahom Buranji, p. 268.

The Lotha Nagas commit raid in the Dayang Valley

and promised them safety. Some days later the Nagas offered their promised tributes to the Phukan who brought them to the king accompanied by the Nagas. King Gadadhar Singha pardoned the Nagas and sent them back to their village.

These Nagas were undoubtedly Lotha Nagas who live by the side of the Dayang river close to the plains. In their first contact with the Ahoms they showed their sentiments of loyalty to the Ahom king, accepted him as their overlord and agreed to pay an annual tribute. Thus the Nagas west of the Dikhow were easily brought to submission.

Namchangia Nocte Nagas commit raid in the Ahom salt mine—1692

The Nagas between the Dikhow and the Buri-Dihing, however, continued to give trouble to the Ahoms. In 1692 A.D., during Gadadhar Singha's reign the Namchangia Nagas cut twenty three persons at the salt mine.⁵⁸ The king sent Tamcheng Chinghai Phukan, the commander of the former expedition to proceed to the Borduar (i.e. main pass) of the Namchangia Nagas, and another Laling Phukan was ordered to go to the Borduar of Borhat. Both the Phukan took joint action. The Nagas were defeated and many Nagas including their Raja were made captives. All of them were beheaded near the Jamuna in the village Langkek. According to the Ahom Buranji the brother of the Khunbao (Naga Raja) named Latha was made Raja. The Tungkhungia Buranji on the other hand says that Latha Khunbao was beheaded near the Jamuna and the other Nagas who reaffirmed their allegiance to the Ahom King by personally visiting him were sent back by the latter with presents. The statement of the Tungkhungia Buranji, however, seems to be wrong. Because one Latha Khunbao of the Namchangia Nocte Nagas is said to have come down from the hills, paid a visit to Shri Ramadeva, the Vaishnava saint of Bali Satra in Naharkatiya and prayed for initiation between 1699 and 1745 A.D. The saint at first refused, but ultimately granted the prayer and initiated the Khunbao and his men into the Vaishnava faith.⁵⁹ After his initiation Latha Khunbao was given the name "Narottama" (i.e. the best among men). This Latha Khunbao alias Narottama then must have been the same person who was made king by Gadadhar Singha in 1692 A.D. Dr. S. K. Bhuyan identifies these Namchangia Nagas with the Namchangias living by the side of the Dikhow who are a branch of the Ao Nagas.⁶⁰ But an examination of the

58 Ahom Buranji, p. 269; Bhuyan, S. K. Tungkhungia Buranji, p. 25.

59 Neog, Dr. Maheswar, The Noctes, an article incorporated in "Asamar Janajati", edited by Bhattacharya, Dr. P. C. P.P. 245-46.

60 Bhuyan, S.K., Anglo Assamese Relations, P. 42.

routes taken by the Ahom armies which subdued them suggests that they were the Namchangias (Nocte Nagas of the Tirap division of NEFA) living beyond the eastern frontier of the Sibsagar district, that is to say, in the Lakhimpur district and they are also known as Jaipurias. Moreover, the raid being committed in the salt mine and the fact that Laling Phukan was ordered to go to the Borduar (i.e. main pass) of Borhat which stands high up on the Disang river in the extreme frontier of Sibsagar district further go to support this view.

In the reign of the next Ahom King Rudra Singha (1696-1714 A.D.) in the beginning of the 18th century in December, 1701 A.D. (Paush--December + January) a Jugi merchant of Bandarkhel killed some sixty Nagas at Borhat who had entered the Ahom fort guarding the salt mine there. During the confusion which followed the Nagas also killed a large number of persons on the Ahom side at the Lonsal or salt mine.⁶¹ King Rudra Singha was then away from the capital and was staying at Biswanath on his return journey from Koliabar. He was apprised of the incident there. He resumed his journey upstream the Brahmaputra towards the beginning of March, 1702 A.D. (latter part of Phalgun) and reached Garhgaon on 16th March (second day of Chaitra). In consultation with the Dangariass * and the Phukan the king sent an army under Basang Phukan to fight with the Nagas. The Phukans proceeded and halted in the plains to the north of the Dilih opposite Borhat; from there he sent some men to the Naga villages to persuade the Nagas to come to terms. They succeeded in their mission and brought with them several Nagas who bowed down before the king. The king pardoned them and sent them back with presents. These Nagas were Nocte Nagas no doubt; but whether they were Borduarias, Paniduarias or Namchangias cannot be decided definitely. The policy of persuasion employed by Basang Phukan proved to be very successful, for we do not hear of any Nagas' raid until the beginning of the 19th century when the Ahom Kingdom had already begun to decline.

Towards the last part of the 18th century the famous Moamaria rebellion which began in November 1769 A.D. and lingered till the early part of the 19th century, drained away most of the resources of the Ahom government and almost broke its back. The great confusion that ensued as a consequence of this re-

61 Bhuyan, S. K. Tungkhungia Buranji, P. 30.

*Dangaria was a title applied to the three cabinet Ministers, the Burhagohain, Bargohain and Barapatra Gohain. Its use was strictly confined to these three.

bellion loosened the grip of the central government on the outlying provinces and lowered the prestige and influence of the Ahom government in the eyes of the neighbouring hill-tribes.⁶¹ The result was that a series of insurrections followed both in the plains and in the hills. Among the rebellious hill tribes were the Daflas, Singphos and the Khamtis. The Nagas also did not fail to take advantage of the growing weakness of their Ahom overlords and early in the 19th century they resumed their raiding operations from which they had refrained during the 18th century.

Thus in A.D. 1807, during the reign of Kamaleswar Singha (1795-1811 A.D.) the Nagas of Borhat* made inroads into the villages within the Ahom Kingdom and robbed the people of their properties.⁶² This necessitated an expedition against them. The Patar Saru Gogoi Rajkhowa and Saru Abhoypuria Rajkhowa proceeded against the Nagas with an army consisting of one company of Sepoys and other fighting men. The Nagas gave battle to the Ahoms, but being unable to defeat the Ahom army they retreated. Then the Ahom army climbed up the hill and set fire to the granaries and dwelling houses of the Nagas. The Nagas with their women and children took shelter in the deepest part of the forest on the hill. The Gogoi Rajkhowa captured a number of strong built Nagas and beheaded them. According to the Ahom Buranji, the passage to Borgaon (probably Borhat) was closed. Then the Ahom army came back and stopped at Borhat⁶³ where three Naga Chaotangs (interpreters) came to the Ahom officers and prayed for peace. The Chaotangs were received kindly and peace was made. These Nagas were undoubtedly Nocte Nagas. It was the closure of the passage through which these Nagas had descended on the plains that compelled them to submit.

*In the Ahom Buranji, the raid is stated to have been committed by the 'Baklu' Nagas, and in Ahomar Sesh Yugar Buranji by the Borhat Bagas. It is not possible to say which of the two is correct. The former name being quite unfamiliar, I have accepted the latter name i.e. the Nagas of Borhat, which is familiar. Which-ever may be the correct name, it is, however, certain that the raid was committed by the Nagas of the present Tirap Division of NEFA.

62 Ahomar Sesh Yugar Buranji, Tr. No. 248, Vol. 56, pp. 15-16, D.H.A.S.; Ahom Buranji, p. 372. In the Ahom Buranji the Ahom Lakli is given as Lakli Taongi which, converted into Assamese Saka becomes 1729 saka (Refer, Deodhai Assam Buranji, p.221). But in the Ahom Buranji the English date is given as 1803 A.D. This is definitely wrong.

63. Ahomar Sesh Yugar Buranji, Tr. No. 248, Vol. 56, p. 16. In the Ahom Buranji the name of this place is given as Bakhi.

In 1809 A.D. the Nagas of Tiru duar or pass (i.e. the Moonloongs) revolted.⁶⁴ They entered into the villages of the plains, murdered a number of people and robbed the people of their properties. A few companies of Sepoys and other fighting men proceeded against the Nagas under one Jati Gharphalia Bora. The Bora with his army arrived at Daipatang hill where he constructed a stockade and halted. Then he renewed his march and came to the river Tiru. The Bora took his station at Bhatbari. Here the Tirualia Nagas gave battle to the Ahoms. Having failed to win a victory they retreated and again entered into Ahom villages and murdered and pillaged the people. For many days they devastated the villages and destroyed the peace of the people. Then the Ahom army began to climb up the hill by clearing a path and making stockades for halting stages. The Tirualia Nagas called in the Sema Nagas to their assistance. While the Sema Raja was taking a view of the Ahom force peeping from the top of the hill, one of the Sepoys fired at him. A bullet struck the Sema Raja and he died. This enraged the Nagas who stealthily entered into Ahom villages and killed one hundred men as reprisal. The Tirualia Nagas were attacked by the Ahom army and the former being unable to hold their ground, retreated. The Ahom army made a hot pursuit after them and burnt down the granaries and dwelling houses of the retreating Nagas. The Nagas left their villages and did not submit. The Ahom army was then compelled to return. These Tirualia Nagas were a branch of the Konyak Naga tribe living close to the plains of the Sibsagar district and they were also known as Mooloongs'. Alexander Mackenzie states that the Mooloong Raja was the head of the Tiru duar or pass and he was the most powerful of the Naga chiefs between the Dikhow and the Buri-Dihing.⁶⁵ These defeats of the two Naga tribes kept the Nagas quiet for some years.

After the Burmese invasion, however, they again began their raiding operations. Thus, during the reign of the last Ahom king Purandar Singha (1832-38 A.D.) who was installed as the king of the whole of upper Assam except Sadiya and Matak by the British after the repulse of the Burmese invasion, the Malauthupia (or Malanthupia) Nagas, who are now heard of for the first time, killed a

⁶⁴ Ahom Buranji, p.373; Ahomar Sesh Yugar Buranji, Tr. No. 248, Vol. 56, pp. 16-17, D.H.A.S. In the Ahom Buranji the Ahom lakli is given as lakli Kapshi which in Assamese Saka era becomes 1731-32 (1809-10 A.D.) But in the Ahom Buranji the English date is given as 1805 A.D. which is definitely wrong. (Refer Deodhai Assam Buranji, p. 221).

⁶⁵ Mackenzie, Alexander, North-East Frontier of Bengal p. 93.

Raid of the Malauthupia Nagas—1836 number of villagers in the Ahom kingdom and pillaged their properties in 1836 A.D.⁶⁶ The news reached the king and the three Dangarias. They held a council and decided to send an expedition against the Nagas. They ordered a number of Hazarikas, Saikias and Baras with a number of fighting men of good families and a company of Sepoys under Chatrasing and Rupsing Subedars to proceed against the Nagas. Bhawanand Phukan of Konwar family was made Neog Phukan. All the men assembled together and marched off. They arrived at Dopdar where they constructed a stockade and took their station. The Neog Phukan summoned a Naga Katak and asked him to go to the Malauthupia Nagas and persuade them to come to him. The Katak accordingly went up the hill and returned with a number of Nagas. The Neog Phukan made an enquiry and found the Nagas implicated in rebellion. He fettered the Nagas. But sometime after the Malauthupia Nagas suddenly fell upon the Ahom army and killed a number of men. The Sepoys also opened fire on the Nagas and killed a number of them—the remaining fled away. When the king heard of this disaster he ordered the Sepoys to arrest the Neog Phukan who was accordingly arrested and heavily chained.

Just after this disaster the Namchangia and Borduaria, two Nocte Naga tribes living side by side fought with each other in May (Jaistha—May-June) 1837 A.D.⁶⁷ The Borduaria Khunbao was killed. The Namchangia Lathong Deka fled away. The news of the rising of the Nagas was communicated to the king and the three Dangarias who ordered the Sepoys to arrest the Naga Khunbao. The Sepoys accordingly arrested the Naga Khunbao (named Angulikata* and made him over to the king. The king ordered the Naga Khanbao to be heavily chained.

Soon afterwards king Purandar Singha sent a second expedition against the Malauthupia Nagas. The army included some companies of Sepoys and the Namchangia Khunbao, called Tengeshi.** The army marched against the Nagas and began to ascend the hill. They passed through the Naga villages of Assyringia, Shela and Lakhu-

66. Ahom Buranji, pp. 386-88; Ahomar Sesh Yugar Buranji, Tr. No. 248, Vol. 56, pp. 31-32, D.H.A.S.; Lit Buranji, Tr. No. 23, Vol. XIV, part V, pp. 176-77.

67. Ahom Buranji, p. 387; Ahomar Sesh Yugar Buranji, Tr. No. 248, Vol. 56, p. 32, D.H.A.S.; Lit Buranji, Tr. No. 23, Vol. XIV, part V, p. 176 D.H.A.S.

* In the Lit Buranji Angulikata is said to be the son of the Namchangia Khunbao and he is stated to have rushed forward against the Sepoys. It does not mention that he was arrested. As the narrative given in that Buranji is not systematic, I have accepted the narrative given in the Ahom Buranji.

** In the Lit Buranji the Naga Khunbao Tengeshi is stated to have rushed forward and entered into the midst of the Sepoys. It does not mention that he accompanied the Ahom expedition.

Fresh expedition against the Malauthupia Nagas
 tigayan and at last arrived in the country of the Malauthupia Nagas. The Nagas gave battle but were defeated and fled away. They entered into a deep forest with their womenfolk and children. The Ahom army set fire to their dwelling houses and granaries and came back. These Malauthupia Nagas were probably a branch of the Nocte Nagas. *

By the time of Gadadhar Singha and his son and successor Rudra Singha, all the Naga tribes—the Noctes, Wanchos, Tangsas, Konyaks, Aos and Lothas—seem to have remained peacefully submissive to the Ahom rulers, for we do not hear of any rising of the Nagas throughout the 18th century. It was the Moamaria rebellion and, later on, the Burmese invasion that ruined the prestige of the Ahom government in their eyes. The miserable plight of thousands of plains people who had fled to the neighbouring hills and the chaos and confusion that prevailed in the Ahom kingdom for decades, prompted the Nagas to make use of the golden opportunity by taking a few heads of the plainsmen—a trophy prized most by the Nagas above everything else and also to enrich themselves by robbing the people of their property—a feature unheard of in their earlier inroads. The tottering Ahom government no doubt punished the Naga tribes by sending expeditions against them, but none of these tribes could be subdued and the Nagas had to be reconquered by the British government of India.

Summary and Conclusion :—

As the foregoing study of Ahom-Naga relations show, sporadic clashes of the Ahoms with the Nagas was one of the main characteristics of the history of Assam throughout the entire period of Ahom rule. Most of these were with the Naga tribes living on the Patkai mountain round about the country of Khamjang and the Nagas living between the rivers Dikhow and the Buri-Dihing. Several reasons seem to have contributed towards this development. It was with the Naga tribes living on the Patkai mountain that the Ahoms first came into hostile contact and it was with these Naga tribes that the Ahom rulers had to deal constantly till the middle of the 17th century. These Naga tribes were claimed by the Ahom rulers as their subjects and the post of the Khamjangia Gohain was created to look after them. But these Naga tribes often stood out in open rebellion against

* In the Lit Buranji (p.177) the Naga village called Lakhutigayan through which the Ahom army had to pass to reach country of the Malauthupia Nagas is mentioned along with the Nocte village like Banfera, Joboka etc. Moreover, the fact that the Namchangia Raja was asked to accompany the expedition suggest that the Malauthupia Nagas were Nocte Nagas.

the Ahom authority and this necessitated numerous expeditions to be sent against them. The brutal measures that Sukapha adopted against some of these Naga tribes on his way to Assam embittered rather than intimidated the Nagas who were driven to desperation. They did not seem to have forgiven Sukapha for his cruelties upon them. Another cause which contributed towards this development, however, must be found in the intense love of independence of the hillmen. They resented very much their subordinate status. On the part of the Ahoms, however the route that lay through the Naga country to Burma was very much important both for strategic and other reasons. That was why they did never allow the disturbances of this region to gain gigantic proportions so as to jeopardise their kingdom. They took prompt action in every case, though it was very difficult to fight in the hills and there was very little to gain in the shape of war booty save some methons, buffaloes, etc.

Economic considerations were largely responsible for the hostility with the Nocte Nagas of the Tirap Frontier Division of NEFA who lived on the low hills close to the plains of Sibsagar and Lakhimpur districts. This region had its economic importance to the Ahoms as it possessed several salt wells. The Ahoms obtained exclusive possession of some of these salt wells and also the right to certain other wells by fighting with the Nagas. But the Nagas resented this very much and seem to have reluctantly agreed to share with the Ahom government the produce of the salt wells. The Nagas occasionally committed raids upon the people of the salt mines under the control of the Ahoms and the Ahom government on its part had to send punitive expeditions against them to retain their rights on these salt mines. This economic interest of the Ahoms in the salt mines thus stood as one of the most important barriers in the way of establishing friendly relations between the Ahoms and the Naga tribes of this area possessing salt wells in their territories.

Friendly relations however developed between the Ahom rulers and some of these Naga tribes whose chiefs were in the habit of visiting the Ahom Kings at their capital and also of inviting the armed intervention of the Ahom government against one another in their own inter-tribal conflicts. As already stated, the Banfera Nagas were in close friendship with the Ahoms and on the strength of that friendship, in the 16th and 17th centuries they invited Ahom help against the Abor Nagas of Banchang living to their south. The other Naga tribes also, after their defeat acknowledged the supremacy of the Ahom rulers and established friendly relations by offering presents and agreed to pay annual tributes, though of course, they often flouted their agreements.

Most of these tribes, as already stated, were deficient in some of the necessities of life which compelled them to commit raids in the plains below in order to fill up those deficiencies. King Pratap Singha who clearly grasped the situation allotted to the Naga chiefs of this area small plots of revenue-free land called "Naga-Khats" along with retainers (or bahatias) to be managed by Assamese Agents called Naga Katakis, for the benefit of the Naga tribes. Some of the tribes were assigned fishing waters also. In return for these assignments, however, king Pratap Singha made the Naga chiefs (i.e. Khunbaos) acknowledge the supremacy of the Ahom king by regularly paying annual tribute with their hill-products. The introduction of this system proved to be very successful specially in the area between Disang and the Dikhow where there were no salt mines. For we do not find the Nagas of this area committing raid in the plains save the single instance of the Lakmas in the middle of the 17th century during the reign of king Jayadhvaj Singha (1648-1663 A.D.), till the beginning of the 19th century when the Ahom power was on its decline. Since that time most of the Naga Khunbaos seemed to have been in the habit of visiting the Ahom capital annually to pay their annual tributes, and some of them (i.e. the Banfera Khunbao) seemed to have established close friendship with the Ahom king. Indeed, the Nocte and the Konyak Naga Khunbaos became so familiar with the Assamese people that the writer of the Tripura Buranji, in order to make his readers understand the political organisation of the unknown and unfamiliar Kuki tribes who were found along the way to Tripura, had drawn a comparison of the Kuki chief who is called Halamcha and a tributary of the Tripura Raja, with the Naga Khunbaos.⁶⁸ The Nocte Naga tribes possessing salt mines, who were compelled to share reluctantly the produce of some of their salt wells, however, continued to give trouble to the Ahom rulers inspite of the assignment of paiks and lands in the plains as their economic interests were at stake.

So long the Ahom government was strong enough to maintain their dignity in tact by quelling disturbances within the kingdom and repelling foreign invasions, these Naga tribes remained peacefully submissive to the Ahom rulers and regularly paid their annual tributes. The outbreak of the Moamaria rebellion towards the last part of the 18th century which lasted for about three decades till the first decade of the 19th century completely changed the situation. The rebellion not only brought about chaos and confusion within the Ahom kingdom, but ruined the prestige of the Ahom government in the estimate of the Nagas as well. This state of affairs not only prompted these Naga tribes who had been forced to submit to

68 Bhuyan, S. K., Tripura Buranji, pp. 21-22.

the Ahom government and to acknowledge its suzerainty by paying annual tribute, to throw off their allegiance to their Ahom overlord, but also to practice their most favourite game viz., head-hunting from which they had refrained so long and to enrich themselves by robbing the plainsmen of their properties.

Before the Ahom occupation and conquest of the Brahmaputra valley commenced these Nagas appear to have been left entirely to themselves and to have maintained their independent status. It appears that once the Kachari kingdom extended up to Mohong⁶⁹ which lies in the land of the Borduaria and Paniduaria Nocte Naga tribes. But the Nagas drove them out of Mohong long before the advent of the Ahoms. The Kachari kingdom "in the 13th century appears to have extended towards the east up to the Dikhow only."⁷⁰ It appears therefore, that the Kacharis who had temporarily occupied Mohong, which possessed the most important salt wells, could not retain their hold upon it permanently and consequently the Kachari kings could not exercise suzerainty for long time over the Naga tribes living between the Dikhow and the Buri-Dihing. The Chutiya kings whose dominion extended up to the Disang only, did not seem to have exercised any suzerainty over the Nagas living between the Dikhow and the Buri-Dihing. Because, the Chutiya kings, who possessed brine springs of their own in Sadiya did not seem to have felt the necessity of taking possession of any of the salt wells lying in the land of the Nocte Nagas contiguous to the south-western extremity of their kingdom. These facts indicate that the Naga tribes living between the Dikhow and the Buri-Dihing were outside the political control of both the Kacharis and the Chutiyas. Because of these circumstances they resented very much the newly established political suzerainty of the Ahom kings over them which not only compelled them to share the produce of some of the salt wells with the Ahom government, but also compelled them to acknowledge the overlordship of the Ahom kings by paying annual tributes to them. The compensation that they received in lieu of it from the Ahom government in the shape of lands and fishing waters along with retainers on the plains was considered by them to be too insignificant in comparison to their loss of independence. So long the Ahom government was sufficiently powerful to keep their prestige in tact by displaying their valour in repelling foreign invasions and quelling disturbances within the kingdom, these Nagas remained peacefully submissive to their Ahom overlords. But the moment the weakness of the Ahom government was revealed to them as a result of the Moamaria rebellion they threw off their allegiance to the Ahom overlords and assumed an independent sta-

69 Deodhai Assam Buranji, pp. 90-92.

70 Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 248.

tus by withholding the payment of tributes to the Ahom king and indulging in head-hunting and robbing the plainsmen of their properties. Though the tottering Ahom government sent expeditions against them and punished them, yet none of the Naga tribes made their submission and re-affirmed their allegiance to the Ahom king. Visiting the tribes inhabiting the hills south of Sibsagar between the Disang and the Dikhow in 1872, S.E. Peal remarked, "...The Nagas about here are reported to have paid allegiance to the Rajahs of Assam....As far as I can see, the tribes about here now forget this, and consider themselves defacto free, and any attempt on our part to remind them of their former allegiance by active measures, such as taxation or surveys, would lead to serious complications and to a combined action on their part."⁷¹

Contrary was the case with the Ao and Lotha Nagas who committed but a few raids on the Ahom territory. These two tribes, living between the Dayang and the Dikhow surely came in contact with the Kacharis and some of them were most probably claimed by the Kachari kings as their subjects. With the overthrow of the Kachari power by the Ahoms these Naga tribes also passed under Ahom rule. At any rate, during Gadadhar Singha's reign, the Lothas who committed raid upon the inhabitants of the Dayang valley, proved to be submissive after their defeat and established friendly relations with him by offering presents which included, among other things, girls also—the best symbol of friendship. The Ahom government rewarded these Nagas by giving them lands in the plains. As Mills observes, "They (i.e. the Lothas) have long been in contact with the Assamese. Many villages even possess grants of land in the plains given by the Ahom Rajas, on the understanding apparently that the Lothas in return for the land would refrain from taking Assamese heads. This agreement was loyally kept, and villages such as Khoro, who had no hostile Naga neighbours whom they could raid, used to content themselves with waylaying and killing an occasional Mikir on his way to or from market in the plains."⁷² The Aos, however, from the beginning of their contact with the Ahoms proved to be meek and submissive. As Mills observes,—“For long the Aos had maintained friendly relations with the Ahom Rajas, and several villages received grants of land in the plains in exchange for presents and promises to refrain from raiding.”⁷³ He further says—“For as far

71 Peal, S.E., Notes on a visit to the Tribes inhabiting the hills south of Sibsagar, Assam, J. A. S. B., 1872, No. 1, pp. 23-24.

72 Mills, J.P., The Lotha Nagas, p. 1.

73. Mills, J.P., The Ao Nagas, p. 11.

back as they can remember the Aos have been friendly with the rulers of Assam, and the plains have never been used as a happy hunting ground for head-seekers."74

The Ahom rulers, who had to deal constantly with the Nagas had certainly a well conceived policy behind their actions. What was that policy ? In the first place, as the Buranjis reveal, their policy was no doubt a policy of conciliation backed by the display of force. Though they sent punitive expeditions against the Nagas which destroyed their properties yet they pardoned the Nagas whenever the latter made their submission, acknowledged the suzerainty of the Ahom king and agreed to pay annual tribute to him. In most cases the Ahom kings rewarded the rebellious Nagas, when they made their submission, with presents.

Secondly, the Ahom rulers did never envisage the plan of the complete subjugation and annexation of the territories of any one of the Naga tribes to the Ahom kingdom and to take part in their internal administration. Probably they thought that such a policy would be hazardous and never be successful. In the expeditions that were undertaken against the Nagas, the Ahom armies had to face great trouble as it was very difficult to fight in the hills where guerilla tactics could be easily employed by the Nagas. Again in many cases the Nagas, when they were defeated, fled from the battle-field and concealed themselves in the intricate parts of the forests, thus making it impossible for the Ahom armies to pursue them. The Ahom rulers considered it enough to receive the submission of the Nagas and to allow them to enjoy their tribal autonomy so long as the Nagas, living near the plains, who were granted revenue free lands and fishing waters along with retainers in the plains, did not raid Ahom territories and the Nagas on the Indo-Burma frontier did not ally themselves with the enemies of the Ahoms beyond the Patkai range to jeopardise the Ahom kingdom.

74. Mills, J.P., The Ao Nagas, p. 5.

CHAPTER—III

The subjugation and conciliation of the Morans and the Borahis :

The Nagas of the Patkai range and the Tirap Frontier Division of NEFA were the first of the hill-tribes of Assam with whom the Ahoms under Sukapha, the founder of the Ahom kingdom in Assam, came in hostile contact on their way to Assam from Burma through their land. On entering the south eastern corner of the Brahmaputra valley, the Ahoms came in contact with the Morans and the Borahis, the two plains tribes who were at that time living side by side in the territory between the Dikhow and the Disang rivers. There seems to have been a considerable amount of confusion regarding the Morans. Because the terms Moran, Matak and Moamaria are often used indiscriminately, but as pointed out by Gait, they are in reality quite distinct.¹ Moran is the name of a tribe, and Moamaria that of a sect which is universally applied to the disciples of the Mayamara Satra, * while Matak refers to the people residing in the country south of Sadiya between the Brahmaputra and the Buri-Dihing once ruled by the Bar Senapati.² When the Singphos began to raid the extreme south-eastern frontier of Assam towards the close of the 18th century during the weak rule of king Gaurinath Singha (1780-95 A.D.) by taking advantage of the Moamaria rebellion which was in its full swing, they (i.e. the Singphos) found the people of this tract better able to defend themselves than those residing under the decayed power of the Ahoms, and so called them Matak i.e. strong, as distinguished from the Mullong or weak subjects of the Ahoms. The term 'Matak' is now applied in reference to a man with a robust and vigorous physique, but lacking in refinement and not easily amenable to reason.³ It is also applied to the Morans,

1 Report on the Census of Assam, 1891, p. 236.

* For a detailed history of the Mayamara Satra and the Moamaras, refer S. K. Bhuyan's Anglo-Assamese Relations, Ch. VI, Part I.

2 Refer Gait's History of Assam, pp. 291-92.

3 Bhuyan, S. K., Anglo-Assamese Relations, p. 221 footnote and p. 255.

and loosely to the Moamarias. The Moamarias derive the term 'Matak' from two words, Mat, opinion, will or creed, and Ek, one; and they believe the epithet is justly applied to them as they pride themselves in being of one persuasion, will and mind.⁴ The Moamarias were all disciples of one Satra or its branches; but they belonged to separate tribes and communities like those of the Morans, Chutiyas, Kacharis, Bihias, Ahoms, Kaivartas and Brittials; and many caste Hindus, Brahmans, Kayasthas and Kalitas were found among the Moamarias. The Morans, whose affinities with the Bodo group of tribes have been well established on linguistic grounds, are supposed by some to be the autochthons of the Assam valley.⁵

Ahoms and the Morans and the Borahis :—

At the time of Sukapha's advent into the south western corner of the present Lakhimpur district and south-eastern corner of the present Sibsagar district in the Brahmaputra valley, the Morans and the Borahis were side by side in occupation of the territory lying between the Dikhow and the Disang rivers, north of the territory occupied by the Ahoms. East of them (i.e. the Ahoms and the Moran-Borahis) lay the territory of the Chutiyas. By entering the Brahmaputra valley across the Patkai range in 1228 A.D. Sukapha made his first settlement at a place called Namrup, by the side of the Disang river, a tributary of the Buri-Dihing.⁶ He did not stay there for a long time. Proceeding northwards he ascended the Dihing and arrived at Munglakkhenteusha. But finding the place unsuitable, he retraced his steps and proceeding downstream reached Tipam. This place was also subject to inundation by the waters of the Dihing river. So he left a person named Kanngan in charge of the place Tipam in 1236, and proceeding downstream the Dihing river arrived in Abhoypur where he stayed for five years. As the place was thinly populated he did not like to remain there. So he again proceeded downstream the Brahmaputra and arrived in Hahung where he stayed for three years. As this place was very often flooded by water so he again proceeded downstream the Brahmaputra and continued his journey till he reached the mouth of the Dikhow river. He advanced upstream the Dikhow river and came to the mouth of the Dilih river. He touched the water of the Dilih with his hand and came to know that the water was flowing

4 Ibid, pp. 254-55.

5 Report on the Census of Assam, 1891. p. 236; Endle, S., The Kacharis, p. 87.

6 Barua, Golap Chandra, Ahom Buranji, p. 45; Deodhai Assam Buranji, p. 7.

from Tipam. He advanced upstream the Dikhow river and arrived in a valley called Mungrimungching. He measured the water of the river there and found that one volume of water of the river weighed double the volume of water of the Dikhow river, hence the king named the river as Sangtak (two tolas). He stayed there for two years. There Sukapha left one Takhunlak in charge of the place Mungrimungching in 1246 A.D., proceeded downstream the river Dikhow and arrived at Simaluguri.⁷ There he halted and offered a feast to his nobles and followers by killing cows. From this place Sukapha enquired about the neighbouring country and found that there were three thousand ghats at the Namdang river (a tributary of the Dikhow) and three thousand ghats at the Saring,* from which the inhabitants used to draw water. He dared not attack the people inhabiting the valley of the Namdang finding how numerous they were (i.e. the Kacharies). So he sent a body of men to enquire about the Morans and the Borahis who were their nearest neighbours on the north of the territory under their occupation.⁸ The men came and informed Sukapha that the Morans and the Borahis would together constitute about 4,000 people, while the Kacharis living west of the Dikhow as reported before, would be much more numerous than the Morans and the Borahis. Hearing this the followers of Sukapha proposed to him that they should first attack the Morans and the Borahis whose number was small and then the Kacharis. At this Sukapha replied that it would be better to win over the Morans and the Borahis by kind treatment instead of fighting. Because in case of an attack the two tribes might combine and triumph over the Ahoms whose number had been considerably decreased by that time as they had left many of their followers in several halting places. The suggestion of Sukapha was accepted by his followers and accordingly messengers were sent to the Morans and the Borahis by Sukapha with the following message,—We come from the east and they are the Sthanagiris (i.e. original settlers), and we are their guests. They should therefore come forward to meet us and acquaint us with the villages and the inhabitants.⁹ The Morans and the Borahis asked the messengers for details of the whereabouts of the Ahoms. They

⁷ Ahom Buranji, pp. 45-46; Deodhai Assam Buranji, pp. 7-8; Assam Buranji, Tr. No. 82. Vol. IV, pp. 241-42, D.H.A.S.

* According to the Ahom Buranji (p. 46) there were three thousand and three hundred ghats at the Namdang river only.

⁸ Deodhai Assam Buranji, which incorporates Atan Burhagohain's chronicle, pp. 91-92.

⁹ Deodhai Assam Buranji, p. 92.

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the Borahis by
Sukapha

became surprised at what they thus learnt about the Ahoms who had migrated from across the frontier and came to see the Ahom king Sukapha with many presents. Badaucha, the king of the Morans and Thakumtha, * the king of the Borahis, were accorded a cordial reception by Sukapha.¹⁰ The diplomacy of Sukapha served its purpose for the majority of the Morans and the Borahis were completely won over by him and they acknowledged him as their overlord. Some of them, however, refused to acknowledge the suzerainty of Sukapha. Sukapha therefore fought with and defeated those people in turn. He then served the headmen of these reluctant families with rice and beer and when they became intoxicated, he cut off their heads. This made their followers to acknowledge Sukapha's suzerainty. Sukapha then managed to engage the Matakas (i.e. Morans) as fuel-suppliers and orchard-keepers, while the Borahis were employed as wood cutters, valets, cooks, store-keepers, casket bearers, physicians and poultry-keepers. These Borahis went on saying amongst their own people,—'Though this prince (i.e. Sukapha) and his followers have made us so many servitors yet we do not feel any resentment in our hearts; on the other hand, we long for serving and attending on them, and for meeting as frequently as possible. They are therefore men of divine origin and nobody is sama or equal to them, and they can be designated as asama or unparalleled.'¹¹ Some people believe that the word 'Assam,' the name of the province, is derived from this fact.

At Simaluguri Sukapha did not reside for a long time.** Being a little afraid of the Kacharis, the western neighbour of the Ahoms, Sukapha proceeded to a place called Dimou (or Timou of Ahom Buranji), a few miles north-east of Simaluguri and stopped there. Finding the place subject to inundation and the earth full of clay, he left that place too. He dwelt there for six years

* Atan Burhagohain mentions Thamithuma as the king of both the Morans and the Borahis (Deodhai Assam Buranji, pp. 92-93) But this seems to be wrong. Because the two tribes were separate and distinct. Harakanta Barua mentions the names Badaucha and Thakumaha as the kings of the Morans and the Borahis respectively (Assam Buranji, p. 12).

¹⁰ Barua, Harakanta, Assam Buranji, pp. 12-13; Deodhai Assam Buranji, pp. 92-93; Assam Buranji. Tr. No. 82, Vol. IV, P. 242, D.H.A.S. Assam Buranji. S.M., p. 5.

¹¹ Barua, Harakanta, Assam Buranji, pp. 12-13.

** According to Deodhai Assam Buranji (p. 8) and Assam Buranji, Tr. No. 82, Vol. IV (p. 242) Sukapha is stated to have resided at Simaluguri for six years. At the same time it is stated that he left that place in favour of Dimou (Timou of Ahom Buranji) being afraid of the Kacharis, his western neighbours.

(1246-51 A.D.). Then he advanced to Timak and made a city at Mungtinamao* in 1252 and with his followers remained there. That place was low and subject to inundation too. So Sukapha collected all his followers and left the place. In 1253, he constructed a town at Charaideo adjacent to a small hill amid great rejoicings.¹² It is stated in some Buranjis that Sukapha obtained permission from Badaucha, the king of the Morans to build the town at Charaideo hill.¹³ Because the territory from the Disang to the Dikhow legally belonged to the Morans and the Borahis.

In course of his wanderings from place to place on the plains of the Brahmaputra valley, Sukapha met many people of Borahi and Moran origin (Chutiyas also) and developed, as Atan Burhagohain, prime minister of Assam from 1662 to 1679 observed, a "greater regard for the abilities and personal qualities of the (Chutiyas) Borahis and Morans whom he met at different places, than towards his own followers. Since that time there was an admixture of blood, and children were of mixed origin as the Ahoms had not brought their wives when they first came from Nara, and as they accepted wives only when they came here."¹⁴ It is said that Sukapha married four princesses from the Moran and Borahi royal families.¹⁵ The people who came to escort the princesses

Sukapha marries
Moran & Borahi
princesses

Naturally therefore, the question arises how could he live there for six years in perpetual fear of the Kacharis? The Ahom Buranji on the other hand states (p. 46) that Sukapha did not reside at Simaluguri for a long time. He left that place very soon being afraid of the Kacharis and went to Dimou (or Timou of Ahom Buranji), north-east of Simaluguri where he stayed for six years (1246-52 A.D.) The statement of the Ahom Buranji being much more convincing than the other two Buranjis, I have accepted the former to be correct.

* According to Deodhai Assam Buranji (p. 8) and Assam Buranji Tr. No. 82, Vol. IV, (p. 242) the city was made at a place called Langtepha.

¹² Ahom Buranji, pp. 46-47; Deodhai Assam Buranji, pp. 7-8; Assam Buranji, Tr. No. 82, Vol. IV, p. 242, D.H.A.S.

¹³ Assam Buranji, Tr. No. 82, Vol. IV, p. 242, D.H.A.S.

¹⁴ Deodhai Assam Buranji which incorporates Atan Burhagohain's chronicle, p. 91. Padmeswar Singh Naobaicha Phukan, however, says that the Ahoms brought with them a very small number of women (Assam Buranji, Tr. No. 109, Vol. VIII, p. 45).

¹⁵ Deodhai Assam Buranji, p. 93; Barbhandar Barua, Maniram Dewan, Buranji Viveka Ratna, part II, Tr. No. 108, Vol. VIII, pp. 18-19. According to Buranji Viveka Ratna Sukapha married the daughter of the Borahi Raja only and invited his father-in-law to dine with him. It is said that after taking his meal the Borahi Raja remarked that the food that was served to him was not well cooked. Hearing this Sukapha at once ordered the appointment of the

to Sukapha were sent back by him after they had been served with their meals. In order to hear the remarks made by these people about the Ahoms Sukapha sent spies after them. The Morans did not say anything, but the Borahis remarked that the Ahoms were ignorant of the art of cooking and spoiled good things.

When this remark was conveyed to Sukapha he asked one of his
 Appointment of
 Borahis as cooks
 Borahi queens to prepare a meal for him. It was done and the king became very pleased with the meal and from that day he ordered the appointment of the Borahis as his cooks.

The treatment meted out by Sukapha to the Morans and the Borahis has been termed by Edward Gait as most judicious.¹⁶ From the very beginning the Ahoms thus adopted a very liberal policy in their social dealings which were dominated mainly by considerations of practical necessity and political expediency. About nine thousand (9,000) followers is stated to have accompanied Sukapha from Burma to Assam.¹⁷ Of these, many must have died on the way in their fight with the Nagas that the Ahoms had to wage in several places. Moreover, Sukapha had left many of his followers at Khamjang with the Khamjangia Gohain and also at the several halting places. Therefore, by the time Sukapha laid the foundation of the Ahom kingdom by establishing his capital on the Charaideo hill in 1253 A.D., the number of Ahoms with him must have considerably decreased. The great conqueror Sukapha, who had left his native land for good with the intension of permanently residing in Assam (Mungdunshunkham of the Ahoms) by establishing a new kingdom, realised the impossibility of maintaining his newly established kingdom in a place peopled and surrounded by heterogeneous races and tribes with the small number of followers left with him. Moreover, as the Ahoms did not bring their womenfolk with them (or even if they brought women, the number must have been very small), they were compelled to take wives from the Morans, the Borahis and also the Chutiyas who were their immediate neighbours on the north and the east. These circumstances compelled the Ahoms to become liberal in their social outlook and to increase their community by admitting members of other tribes to their own fold from the very beginning of their rule in Assam. This liberal social outlook initiated by Sukapha was continued by his successors also.

Borahis as the cooks of the king. But Assam Buranji, Tr. No. 82, Vol. IV, pp. 242-43, D.H.A.S. and Deodhai Assam Buranji, p. 93, both state that Sukapha married princesses of both the Moran and Borahi royal families.

¹⁶ Gait, Sir Edward, History of Assam, p. 79.

¹⁷ Refer ante, Chapter II, "Ahom-Naga Relations", pp. 22-23.

The non-Ahom families who were admitted to the Ahom fold generally owed thier affiliation to some heroic or meritorious act done by the founders. For example, while Sukapha was residing at Tipam by the side of the Dihing river, a Moran man used to supply him brinjal.¹⁸ In Ahom language brinjal is called "Makkhru" This Moran showed unusual vigour in fighting the Nagas along with the king's soldiers. As a reward for this meritorious service king Sukapha handed over him to Kang-gnan Bargohain and named him Lanmakkhru. Similarly the descendants of another Moran family brought by Sukapha from Tipam were admitted into the Tingkhangia Hatimur* of the Ahoms under the Bargohain during the reign of Sukhampha Khor Raja (1552-1603 A.D.) on account of meritorious service.¹⁹ The records of these affiliated families were very carefully maintained and they were checked in every reign. These non-Ahom families were thoroughly assimilated with the old Ahoms in course of time, and no disabilities were attached to their enjoyment of the privileges which the older Ahoms were entitled, or to their holding offices of rank. The Ahom Buranjis bear numerous examples of people of Moran and Borahi origin enjoying equal privileges with the Ahoms and holding offices of rank.

As a result of the kind and equal treatment extended to the Morans and the Borahis by king Sukapha and of inter-marriages with the Ahoms they wholeheartedly accepted the suzerainty of the Ahom kings. The Borahis in course of time lost their identity as a reparate tribe. Some of them were assimilated with the Ahoms by intermarriages and affiliation to the Ahom fold. The Morans, however, kept their identity as a separate body and they still survive as a separate tribe. So long the Ahom kings followed their liberal policy in social matters and treated them kindly and equally they regularly performed their customary duties to the Ahom government. As already stated, the first Ahom king Sukapha employed the Morans as fuel-suppliers and orchard-keepers. But subsequently in the reign of the later Ahom kings the list of their services to the state increased. According to custom the

18. Goswami, Hem Chandra, Purani Assam Buranji, pp. 31-32 ; An Account of Ahom Phoids and clans, Tr. No. 131, Vol. XIV, part II, p. 35.

* A row of houses.

19. Goswami, Hem Chandra, Purani Assam Buranji, pp. 30-31.

Morans did not pay to the state any revenue but in lieu thereof they used to supply the king's household with different articles. They were divided into several units or khels according to the nature of supplies they had to furnish.²⁰ Thus the Hati chungis supplied the king with elephants, the Rangjoganias with the colouring vegetable matter known in Assam as Rang, the Dharibowas with mats, and the Mau-joganias with honey and so forth. During the closing period of Ahom rule the Morans were in occupation of the territory between the Dangori and Dibru rivers.²¹ On September 15, 1769, in the reign of king Lakshmi Singha (1769-80 A.D.) Ragha Neog and Nahar Khora Saikia, the two leading Hati-chungi Morans delivered to Kirtichandra Barbarua the usual supply of elephants due to the Ahom king.²² They knew the haughty and irritable character of the Barbarus, and for his pacification they brought this time the best elephants. The Barbarua, however, could not be easily satisfied. He found the elephants defective and ordered Ragha-Neog and Nahar Khora Saikia to be flogged. They were driven home after their ears had been cut off and hair cropped. The two Moran leaders became extremely mortified and at once determined to take revenge. Accordingly they went to their Guru or spiritual preceptor, the Mayamara Mahanta to obtain his approval of their rebellion against the Ahom government and for proper advice and guidance regarding their future course of action.

The Mayamara Mahanta was also waiting for an opportunity to strike a blow at the Ahom government as a reprisal of the series of insults which he had been receiving at the hands of the Ahom government since the time of Siva Singha (1714-44 A.D.) when queen Phuleswari forcibly besmeared the foreheads of the Vaishnava Mahantas, including the Mayamara Mahanta, with the blood of the offerings made to the goddess Durga, on account of the refusal of the Mahantas to bow down their heads before the goddess.²³ From the very beginning of their rule in Assam the Ahom rulers had been maintaining a liberal outlook in religious matters and were

20 Bhuyan, S. K. *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 207.

21. Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 78.

22. Bhuyan, S. K., *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 207 ; Barua, Golap Chandra, *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 293-94.

23. Bhuyan, S. K., *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 203. For the details of the insults received by the Mayamara Mahanta, refer pp.203-207

extremely tolerant of the views of others.²⁴ They were not bigoted adherents of their faith and they did not force their religion on any one. The rulers kept their minds open to new influences, and yielded to them ungrudgingly if they were found to possess any practical value. In course of time Hinduism penetrated into the Ahom court. The first Ahom monarch to accept Hinduism formally was king Jayadvaj Singha (1648-63 A.D.). Jayadvaj Singha and his successors up to Sulikpha Lora Raja (1679-81 A.D.) took their initiation into Vaishnavism which was the predominant faith in Assam at that time.²⁵ From the time of Gadadhar Singha (1681-96 A.D.), however, Saktism came to influence the Ahom court. He had decided leanings towards Saktism. His son Rudra Singha (1696-1714 A.D.) became towards the end of his reign an open supporter of the Sakti cult, and from his death onwards that faith became the creed of the Ahom sovereigns and of the principal nobles and officers.

In spite of the adoption of Saktism by the later Ahom kings, they, with a very few exceptions, continued to show due respect and courtesy to the Vaishnava monks, and made grants and endowments for the maintenance of the Vaishnava Satras or monasteries. In the reign of Rudra Singha's son and successor Siva Singha (1714-44 A.D.) his queen regnant Phuleswari departed from the liberal policy followed by the Ahom rulers in religious matters by forcibly trying to make the Vaishnava Mahantas bow down their heads with the bloods of the offerings made to Goddess Durga. This departure by queen Phuleswari from the hitherto observed policy of toleration and liberalism in religious matters of the Ahom rulers constituted one of the greatest blunders committed by the Ahoms in matters of administration. The humiliation suffered by the Vaishnava Mahantas at the hands of queen Phuleswari confirmed them in their belief that religious toleration which had been the characteristic of the Ahom rulers of Assam was now a thing of the past and that Vaishnava cult was threatened with extinction.

The Mayamara Mahanta was the most powerful of all the Mahantas who had received insult at the hands of queen Phuleswari. This, together with the other insults that were subsequently heaped upon the Mayamara Mahanta in the reigns of Rajeswar Singha (1751-69 A.D.) and Lakshmi Singha (1769-80 A.D.) goaded him to rebel against the Ahom government. The much desired opportunity came when

24. Bhuyan, S. K., *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p.p.17-22.

25 Bhuyan, S. K., *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 18.

Ragha Neog and Nahar Khora Saikia, the two leaders of the Morans, the most numerous and influential sections of the followers of the Mayamara Mahanta, receiving illtreatment at the hands of Kirtichandra Barbarua, apparently for no offence, sought for vengeance against the Ahom government and came to their spiritual leader, the Mayamara Mahanta for the sanction of the rebellion and for advice and guidance. This was granted and the famous Moamaria rebellion

The Moamaria rebellion. broke out in November, 1769. It lasted for more than three decades and gave a death-blow to the power and resources of the

Ahom government. The lead of this Moamaria rebellion was taken at the outset by the Morans under the leadership of the two Moran leaders Ragha and Nahar. That is why the rebellion is sometimes termed as "Moran rebellion." But subsequently other disciples of the Mayamara Mahanta belonging to other tribes and races also joined in the rebellion. From Lakshmi Singha (1769-80 A.D.) to Kamaleswar Singha (1795-1811 A.D.) the Ahom monarchs had to engage themselves in quelling this Moamaria rebellion in which the Moran tribe took the most active part.* From 21st of November, 1769 to 11th of April, 1770, for about five months, the Morans even succeeded in keeping the government of the country in their own hands by expelling the ruling monarch Lakshmi Singha from the capital Rangpur. King Gaurinath Singha (1780-95 A.D.) could suppress this rebellion to some extent and that too, with the help of the British East India Company. It was Purnananda Burhagohain who succeeded in quelling this rebellion completely during the reign of king Kamaleswar Singha (1795-1811 A.D.). His success in quelling this rebellion was mainly due to his lenient treatment of the rebels who made their submission. The Burhagohain not only relaxed his severity to the Morans, the leader of the Moamaria rebellion, but also gave them the rule of the Matak country south of Sadiya between the Brahmaputra and the Buri-Dihing by conferring the title of Bar-Senapati to their chief, who, on his part agreed to rule as a tributary chief under the Ahom government.

The effect of this Moamaria rebellion proved disastrous for the Ahom government. In the first place, it exhausted most of the resources of the Ahom government and made the government almost bankrupt. Secondly, the temporary usurpation of power by the Morans by expelling the reigning Ahom king Lakshmi Singha showed the vulnerability of Ahom authority and prompted the neighbouring hill-tribes and states who had been kept under control by the show of pomp, grandeur,

Effect of the Moamaria rebellion.

* For the details of the Moamaria rebellion, refer S.K. Bhuyan's *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, Ch. VI and VII.

force and intimidation, to rise against the authority of the Ahom government by committing raids in the plains as well as by usurping power to themselves (for example the Khamtis). Thirdly, the chaos and confusion which ensued in the Ahom kingdom as a result of the Moamaria rebellion, prompted the dissatisfied elements in the Ahom kingdom, specially in Lower Assam, to rebel against the authority of the Ahom government and strike a blow at its decaying power. The rebellion of the Darrang prince Krishna Chandra Narayan and of Haradatta and Birdatta Choudhury of Kamrup may be placed in this category.* An act of official indiscretion, and a change of the policy of toleration in religious matters thus drove into opposition and rebellion a people, who had been won over by a policy of peaceful conciliation.

* For the details of the rebellion of Krishna-chandra Narayan and Haradatta and Birdatta Choudhury, refer S.K. Byhuyan's Anglo-Assamese Relations, part III of Ch. VI and part I of Chapter VII.

CHAPTER IV :

The conquest and assimilation of the Chutiyas

When the Ahoms established their kingdom in the south-eastern corner of the Brahmaputra valley in the present Sibsagar district and a small portion of the Lakhimpur district on the south-west between the rivers Buri-Dihing and the Disang in the early part of the 13th century, one of their immediate neighbours was the Chutiya tribe, who ruled the country east of the rivers Subansiri and the Disang, with the exception of a strip to the south and south-east * where several small Bodo tribes enjoyed a precarious independence. Very little is known regarding the early history of the Chutiyas, although of all tribal peoples in Assam the Chutiyas alone had a written language.¹ But unfortunately they made no use of it in recording events.

The Chutiyas are one of the most numerous sections in Lakhimpur and Sibsagar districts of Upper Assam and numbered 87,691 at the census of 1891.² From the physical appearance of the Chutiyas Gait opines that, "they have in their frames a considerable infusion of Shan blood. They occupied a tract not far removed from the home of the Shans and the probability is that they absorbed a considerable infusion of the early immigrants of that race, just as in more recent times they have intermarried with the Ahoms to such an extent that, at the census of 1891, one third of those who recorded their sub-tribe described themselves as Ahom-Chutiyas.³ But from the affinity of their language with that of the Kacharis, Colonel Dalton held that the Chutiyas were related to the Kacharis.⁴ The Chutiyas are divided into four main divisions—Hindu, Ahom, Borahi and Deori.⁵

* It was in this strip of land between the Buri-Dihing and the Disang rivers that the Ahoms under Sukapha first landed in the Brahmaputra valley, established an Ahom outpost in Tipam and placed it in Charge of a person named Kaungan.

1. Shakespear, L.W., History of Upper Assam, P. 11. Sarbananda Rajkumar, however, doubts the existence of a written language amongst the Chutiyas in the ancient days mainly due to the non-discovery of any book or plate written in that language and the absence of any script for that language spoken by the Deoris of to-day. (Refer his article on 'Chutiya-Rajya', inserted in the book Chutiya, Bhuyan Aru Matak Rajya, 1965).

2. Report on the census of Assam, 1891, P. 233.

3. Gait, Sir Edward, History of Assam, P. 40.

4. Waddel, L.A. Tribes of the Brahmaputra Valley, J.A.S.B., 1900, No. 1, P. 42.

5 Report on the census of Assam, 1881 PP. 75-76 and 1891, PP. 233-23 4.

The first two of these classes have been Hindus for some generations and are practically on a level, though the Hindu-Chutiyas asserted a nominal superiority over the rest of the Chutiyas as representing the earliest converted branch of their kinsmen as distinguished from those who changed their religion with the Ahoms some centuries later. The Borahi-Chutiyas were in the process of conversion until very recent times. These divisions of the Chutiyas, of course, no longer hold good to-day and all of them (except the Deoris) are now-a-days known simply as "Chutiyas". The Deori-Chutiyas are the representatives of the priestly or Levite class among the Chutiyas. The main interest attached to the Deories is that they have preserved the language, religion and customs which presumably have descended to them with comparatively little change from a period anterior to the Ahom invasion. The Chutiya language, indeed, may fairly claim to be the original language of Upper Assam. 6 In the Census Report of 1891, Gait observed that Hinduism has made great progress amongst the Chutiyas—even the Deori-Chutiyas are succumbing to the attractions of that religion. In short, though possessing some cultural traits of their own, the Deoris are perfect Assamese and they know Assamese very well. At present the Deoris have no connection with the other Chutiyas. Now they are known simply as Deori.

Early contact between the Ahoms and the Chutiyas :—

According to the Buranjis of the Ahoms it was about the middle of the 14th century, during the reign of Sutupha, the sixth Ahom king (1364-1376 A.D.) that the Ahoms first came into contact with the Chutiyas. Sutupha made friendship with the contemporary Chutiya king,* whose name unfortunately is not mentioned

6 Brown, W.B., Deori-Chutiya Grammar, Introduction, p. III.

* The Chutiyas have several traditions regarding the establishment of their kingdom in Sadiya in which history and legend are mixed up. According to these traditions the founder of the Chutiya kingdom was a chief named Birpal, who claimed descent from Bhirmok (obviously the mythical Bhismak, the father of Rukmini, the consort of Sri Krishna). Taking advantage of the absence of a king over sixty Chutiya families who used to live on a hill called Sonagiri, Birpal entered into their midst and began to rule over them under the name of Gayapal. This happened in Saka 1111, corresponding to A.D. 1187. Birpal's wife Rupavati offered penances to Kuber, the Hindu god of wealth, who appeared before her assuming the shape of her husband. A child was conceived as the result of the eventual union. The husband of Rupavati was rewarded by the god with the gift of a sword and shield together with a golden cat. A son was born of Rupavati who was named Gauri Narayan. Gauri Narayan brought under him the Chutiyas of the hills Rangaluguri, Kalaguri, Dhavalgiri, Nilagiri and Chandragiri, his victories, according to the traditions, being mainly due to his father's divine weapons which the son wielded. Gauri Narayan now assumed the name of Ratnadhvajpal. He marched in 1146 Saka (A.D. 1224) against one Bhadrāsena, Raja, of Swetagiri hill and defeated him. He established there a city named Ratnapur. From Ratnapur the Chutiya chief marched against a neighbouring sovereign named Nyayapal, who averted the evil by giving his daughter in marriage to Ratnadhvaj with a large

in the Buranjis, but the latter, it seems, feared the growing power of the Ahoms. He therefore, pretended to be a true friend, paid a visit to the Ahom king Sutupha and invited him to witness a boat race on the Safrai river, a tributary of the Disang.⁷ When Sutupha came to attend the regatta in compliance with his friend's request, the Chutiya king seized and killed him treacherously while they were rowing in a boat. Sutupha's successor Tyao-khamti (1380-1389 A.D.) led an army against the Chutiyas to revenge the treacherous murder of Sutupha. The Ahoms were victorious in their campaign against the Chutiyas and the Chutiya king fled at the approach of the Ahom king.⁸ After this there was no further hostilities between the Ahoms and the Chutiyas till the beginning of the 16th century when the latter tried their strength in a final struggle.

In 1513 A.D. the Chutiya king Dhir Narayan (also called Dhitnarayan, the ninth king according to the Chutiya traditions) made a hostile march against the Ahom king and cut his way through Seyrooakutta (or Shiraati) and arrived at the mouth of the Dikhow river.⁹ The cause of the

dowry. It is alleged that he also marched to Kamatapur and compelled the Raja of that country to hand over a princess to him. Ratnadhvaj was followed by nine kings of his line, the eighth of whom Dhir Narayan, had a daughter but no son. The girl was given in marriage to a Chutiya lad of low origin, who had beaten all his rivals in the contest prescribed for her hand. Dhir Narayan afterwards had a son named Sadhak Narayan. While the boy was still a minor, Dhir Narayan abdicated the throne and made his son-in-law Juvaraj (i.e. regent), to whom was also entrusted the care of his minor son. The regent assumed the royal power under the name of Nitipal or Nityapal. But he proved to be a very incompetent ruler. It was during his reign that Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.) conquered and annexed the Chutiya Kingdom to the Ahom kingdom. Phrasenmung Bargohain was the commander of the Ahom army by which the Chutiyas were subdued. Nitipal was killed by the Ahoms, but they spared the life of Sadhak Narayan, the minor son of Dhir Narayan, and gave him an estate in lower Assam, bounded by the Kobiror Ali on the north, Brahmaputra on the south, Rota on the east and by the northern Dhansiri of Darrang on the west on condition of paying an annual tribute to the Ahom king. Thus far the Chutiya traditions.—(Deodhai Assam Buranji pp. 178-185; Brown, W.B., Deori-Chutiya Grammar, pp. 75-84).

⁷ Ahom Buranji, p. 49; Tamuli Phukan, Kasinath, Assam Buranji p. 14; Deodhai Assam Buranji, p. 10.

⁸ Tamuli Phukan, Kasinath, Assam Buranji, p. 14; Barua, Harakanta, Assam Buranji, p. 16.

⁹ Ahom Buranji, pp. 54-58; Deodhai Assam Buranji, pp. 15-18; Goswami, Hemchandra, Purani Assam Buranji, pp. 51-55; Tamuli Phukan, Kasinath, Assam Buranji, pp. 23-24; Wade, J.P., An Account of Assam, pp. 22-26; Assam Buranji, Tr. No. 82, Vol. IV. pp. 249-252. D.H.A.S.

Commencement of hostilities between the Chutiyas & the Ahoms

invasion of the Ahom kingdom by Dhirnarayan is not stated in the Buranjis.* On receipt of the news of the hostile march of the Chutiya king the Ahom king Suhungmung despatched against the invaders a contingent of soldiers which proceeded both by land and water. A pitched battle was fought at the mouth of the Dikhow river in which a large number of the Chutiyas was killed, the rest retreated and the Ahoms came out victorious. The Chutiyas did not attempt any reprisal till 1520 A.D. This time the scene of battle shifted to the east from the mouth of the Dikhow to the mouth of the Dihing where the Chutiyas attacked the Ahom fort at Mungkhrang. The Ahom commander Khenmung rushed out of his fort and attacked the Chutiyas. But he fell dead in the struggle and the Chutiyas came out victorious. The Ahom garrison was compelled to retreat from the mouth of the Dihing.

Two years later, the Chutiyas again invaded the Ahom kingdom in 1522 A. D. The cause of the invasion of the Ahom kingdom by the Chutiyas in 1522 A. D. as given in one Buranji appears to have been trivial.¹⁰ One day a big 'barali fish' came floating by the river Dihing which touched the boundary of a portion of the Ahom kingdom in the east. A few men of the Ahom kingdom captured the fish with the help of a boat. One Manik Chandra Barua of the Chutiyas (a high officer of the Chutiya kingdom) ordered his men to snatch away the fish from the hands of the Ahoms.** As a result of this there ensued

* According to one authority (Naobaicha Phukan, Padmeswar Singh, Assam Buranji, Tr. No. 109, Vol. VIII, pp. 235-237, D.H.A.S.), before the invasion of the Ahom kingdom by the Chutiya King Dhirnarayan took place in 1513 A.D., Suhungmung had arranged the people of the frontier areas like Sologuri, Tipam, bank of the Buri-Dihing (on the frontier of the Chutiya Kingdom) and Abhaypur (on the Naga hills frontier) in different Khels or units for war purposes and placed them under several commanders called Rajkhowas. The Chutiya king Dhirnarayan probably came to know about these war preparations made by the Ahoms and so attacked the Ahom kingdom without waiting to be attacked by the latter.

¹⁰ Assam Buranji S.M., pp. 9-10.

** According to the Chutiya tradition given by the late Mr. H.F. Kellner (Deori-Chutiya Grammar, pp. 81-84) from one Vamsavali, the Ahom king Suhungmung spared the life of Sadhak Narayan, the minor son of Dhirnarayan and allowed him to rule over a tract of country, the boundary of which was fixed by him. Sadhak Narayan and his successors did not possess the royal dignity and came to be known as Rajkhowas or Baruas. But the Ahom Buranjis do not confirm the statement. Moreover, the existence of Manik Chandra Chutiya Barua during the reign of king Suhungmung in connection with the cause of war between the Ahoms and the Chutiyas which ultimately led to the downfall of the independent Chutiya kingdom suggests that, the Chutiya Baruas were not the descendants of

a quarrel between the two parties and the Chutiyas succeeded in snatching away the fish in a fractured condition. The Ahoms in their turn succeeding in capturing two Chutiyas. This was reported by Manik Chandra Barua to the Chutiya king Nitipal alias Chandra Narayan.* This was the signal for a war.

Relations between the Ahoms and the Chutiyas must have been already strained for reasons which are not known. Consequently this slight incident was used as a justification for a war and towards the close of the year 1522 A.D. Chutiya King Nitipal alias Chandra Narayan invaded the Ahom country and pitched his tent at the mouth of the Sessa river (a tributary of the Dihing.) This was intimated by the Bargohain through one Lashaitai to king Suhungmung who was at Nangkamung (unidentified). Gathering all information from Lashaitai about the Chutiyas, king Suhungmung ordered Pharsenmung Bargohain and Klinglun Rajmant'i (prime minister) to proceed upstream the Brahmaputra to the mouth of the Dibru river with their whole force and construct a fort there. In the month of Kartik (Oct.-Nov.) the two ministers proceeded to the mouth of the Dibru river and constructed a fort there. King Suhungmung came to Charaideo to offer his sacrifices to the gods. In 1522 A.D. in the month of Aghon (Nov.+Dec.), king Suhungmung himself collected a large army and marched to the mouth of the Sessa river. The Chutiyas laid seige to the Ahom fort at the mouth of the Dibru river but were defeated both on land and water. Next morning king Suhungmung, taking with him all his forces then available in the fort and working in the navy proceeded to the mouth of the Dibru river. The nobles along with the king chased the Chutiya king Chandra Narayan both by land and water

Invasion of the
Ahom kingdom by
the Chutiya king
Nitipal—1522

the Chutiya Rajas, but of a family holding high office under them. It is most probable that after the death of the Chutiya king and his son (i.e. Sadhak Narayan of the Chutiya traditions), as the Ahom Buranjis relate, the line of Chutiya kings came to an end and the Chutiya Baruas henceforth took over the responsibility of paying the annual tribute to the Ahom king.

* In the Buranjis the Chutiya king is mentioned as the son-in-law of Khuntu, Raja. According to another tradition of the Chutiyas, Sadhani's father was one Khuntu Raja and not Dhir Narayan (Deodhai Assam Buranji, pp. 186-188). Then obviously, his son-in-law was Sadhani's husband Nitipal alias Chandra Narayan, who, according to the Chutiya traditions reigned only for two or three years. It is therefore, most probable that the Chutiya king Dhirnarayan, after returning from his victorious campaign against the Ahoms in 1520 A.D. gave his daughter Sadhani in marriage to Nitipal, abdicated the throne and appointed his son-in-law as Regent as mentioned in the Chutiya traditions. He was also entrusted with the care of Sadhak Narayan, the minor son of Dhirnarayan.

as far as Sadiya, the capital of the Chutiya kingdom.* At this stage, the Chutiya king sent an ambassador to king Suhungmung with many valuable presents to sue for peace. But king Suhungmung would accept nothing less than the heirlooms of the Chutiya king (viz., the golden couch, the golden standard or shield, the golden cat etc.). These being refused by Chandranarayan the war was continued. The Chutiyas in the meantime had fortified a position at the mouth of one of the rivers near Sadiya. But they were easily dislodged by the Ahoms who crossed the river on a bridge of boats and pursued the retreating Chutiyas as far as the Kaitara hill** (said to be in the vicinity of the Dibong river). The Ahom force could not overtake the Chutiya king there and the Chutiyas ascended the hill Chautan (also called Chandragiri or Chandangiri) and for some time kept the Ahoms in check by rolling down stones. The Ahoms found it impossible to win the position by a frontal attack; so they decided to take the enemy in the rear. By holding on to creepers a party of the Ahom army arrived at the summit and attacked the Chutiya king's people who fought with bows and arrows. But the Chutiyas repulsed the Ahom army and killed most of them. Jangmungkhen (or Jangmukhang),*** the master of the king's elephants (i.e. Hati Barua) who had witnessed the defeat of the former

Defeat of the
Chutiyas

party advanced to the attack with an army.**** An engagement with bows and arrows ensued between the two parties in which the Chutiyas were soon defeated and compelled to flee. Jangmungkhen struck the Chutiya king with a spear. The king fell dead.

The same hand also killed the person who was believed to be the son of the Chutiya king, but who was really his brother-in-law, Sadhak Narayan. On the following morning the heads of the Chutiya king Chandra Narayan alias Nitipal and his brother-in-law Sadhak Narayan (whom the Ahoms mistook to be his son) were conveyed by Jangmungkhen and produced before the nobles and all others. The nobles then plundered the heirlooms of the Chutiya royal family which the Chutiya king had refused to hand over to the Ahom king. The princes and the princesses were also made captives by them. Some of them were killed. The Ahoms got a rich war booty. The captives and the loot (including the royal heirlooms) were presented to king Suhungmung together with the heads of the Chutiya king and his brother-in-law. The heads were buried under the steps of the temple as Charaidco, so

* The Deodhai Assam Buranji refers to it as Kangkham, which probably situates near about Sadiya.

** The Purani Assam Buranji mentions it as Rangathangasal hill.

*** The Ahom Buranji (G.C. Barua) refers to Jangmungkhen as the name of the place where the battle was fought. But the other Buranjis refer to Jangmungkhen as Hati Barua or master of the king's elephants.

**** According to the history of J. P. Wade, two thousand men accompanied him.

that the Ahom king might walk over them whenever he entered the temple.* The other members of the royal family along with the leading men amongst the Chutiyas were deported to some other place.**

The whole Chutiya country was now annexed to the Ahom kingdom. King Suhungmung wished to turn it into an integral part of the Ahom kingdom and would not like to allow any descendent of the Chutiya king to govern the country. Accordingly he sent Thao-mung Nangshung and Thaomunglung to put the Chutiya country in order. The above two officers were provided with three hundred and three men.¹¹ A new officer of state known as the Sadiyakhowa Gohain was appointed to administer the country and Phrasenmung was made the first Sadiyakhowa Gohain.

Shortly afterwards, about the middle of 1524 A.D. the Sadiyakhowa Gohain was attacked by Phukloimung, the Nara king.¹² The latter was defeated and made his submission, but not before he had himself killed one of the Ahom commanders with his spear. Most probably, due to the occurrence of this trouble in one of the frontiers of the newly conquered Chutiya kingdom king Suhungmung appointed officers to administer the frontier provinces of that country. He certainly thought that it would be difficult for one officer to run the administration of a large country like that of Sadiya (i.e. the old Chutiya kingdom), efficiently and smoothly without the help of some subordinate officers placed specially on the frontiers. The first appointment was made in May, 1524 A.D. (Jaistha=May+

* According to some Buranjis the heads of the Chutiya king and his brother-in-law (referred to as son) were exposed on lofty poles on the temple of Charaideo hill. —Wade, J. P., *An account of Assam*, p. 26; Deodhai Assam Buranji, p. 18.

** According to one Buranji (Bibidh Khanda Buranji, inserted in Deodhai Assam Buranji, p. 185), the Ahoms spared the life of Sadhak Narayan and allowed him to rule over an estate in lower Assam. The Chutiya traditions also support it. According to Harakanta Barua (*Assam Buranji*, p. 24) the Chutiya royal family was deported to Pakariguri (Nowgong). It is not possible to say whether the Ahoms spared the life of Sadhak Narayan. If they did, he was established in Mangoldoi, which had been conquered by the Ahoms from the hands of the Bhuyans by that time. Because, Nowgong was at that time under the control of the powerful Kacharis and the Bhuyans.

¹¹ Ahom Buranji, p. 57; According to Deodhai Assam Buranji three thousand men and three elephants were sent.

¹² Deodhai Assam Buranji, pp. 18-19; Ahom Buranji, p. 58. Sir Edward Gait refers to Phukloimung as a chief of one of the neighbouring hill tribes (*History of Assam*, p. 89. The name is given by him as Phukangmung). But the Deodhai Assam Buranji definitely refers to him as the Nara king. The description of the battle along with the names of the places and rivers support this statement. The Ahom Buranji on the other hand, refers to him as the Kachari king. But this must be wrong. The two narratives, however, agree in all other respects,

June), while the war against Phukloimung was going on. Chao Shenglung Klingkham was given the name Thaomung Bangen (Sadiyakhwa Gohain) and offered the rule of the country from Kangkham to the source of the river Tilao (Lohit).¹³ The next appointment followed in 1526 A.D. when king Suhungmung appointed officers to administer the frontier territories of the province of Sadiya viz., Habung, Dihing and Banlung.¹⁴ These officers had to work as subordinate officers under the Sadiyakhwa Gohain.

Results of the annexation of the Chutiya kingdom to the Ahom Kingdom :—

The first and foremost result of the annexation of the Chutiya kingdom to the Ahom kingdom was that the Ahom kingdom became larger in area by acquiring a vast territory in the north and north-east of the State. Thus the country represented by the present district of Lakhimpur came under the control of the Ahoms. Secondly, a strong rival power which had wielded much influence upon the neighbouring states and which was strong enough to repel foreign attack till about the middle of the 14th century was brought under subjugation for the first time. To the Ahoms the acquisition of the Chutiya kingdom was their first victory over an independent and organised tribe ruling in the Brahmaputra valley, possessing a territory large enough to invite foreign attack. Thus the defeat of the Chutiyas and the consequent annexation of their kingdom by the Ahoms was a great step taken by the latter in the expansion of their kingdom. This was a signal to the other ruling powers of the Brahmaputra valley of the imminent danger facing them. The Ahoms, who had appeared on the political scene of Assam in the beginning of the 13th century would try their strength one after another with all the ruling powers of the plains. Thirdly, the annexation of the Chutiya kingdom brought the Ahoms in contact with the hill tribes like the Miris, Abors, Dafias, Mishmis etc. living on the north and north-east of the Chutiya kingdom.

From the economic point of view also the annexation of the Chutiya kingdom was a great gain for the Ahoms. Sadiya, the capital of the Chutiya kingdom was the only place in the plains of Assam which produced salt. Thus as a result of the annexation of the Chutiya kingdom an important but rare commodity like salt came within the easy control of the Ahoms and an officer named Mohanghat

¹³ Ahom Buranji, p. 61; Deodhai Assam Buranji, p. 21. The Ahom Buranji says that he was made Sadiyakhwa Gohain. In that case, the post of the Sadiyakhwa Gohain became a joint post. But this is not convincing in view of the small size and location of his administered territory in the extreme north-eastern frontier. Like other appointments that followed he was also made a frontier officer under the Sadiyakhwa Gohain.

¹⁴ Ahom Buranji, pp. 58-59.

Barua was subsequently placed in charge of salt production of Sadiya.¹⁵ The revenue derived from the brine springs of Sadiya in 1809 A.D. amounted to about Rs. 40,000/- per annum, and the salt obtained from the springs was said to be purer and more highly prized than that imported from Bengal. But the method of manufacture was wasteful and consequently it was by no means less expensive than the salt imported from Bengal.

Subsequent Ahom-Chutiya Relations :—

The Chutiyas, however, did not readily accept their subordinate status under the Ahoms. They greatly resented their downfall, the loss of their kingdom and above all, the overthrow of their ruling dynasty from power and prestige. Their resentment found expression in a series of revolts that marked the post-annexation period.

Early in 1527 A.D. in the month of Falgun (February+March) the Chutiyas revolted.¹⁶ The king sent the Dihingia Gohain, one of the frontier officers of the province of Sadiya, to reinforce Phrasenmung. The Chutiyas advanced and surrounded the Ahom fort. The Dihingia Gohain and Paipam (or Plaipam), the elephant belonging to Phrasenmung Bargohain were killed in the battle. The Ahoms, however, in the end, won the battle.

In 1529 A.D. in the month of Puh (Dec.+Jan.) the Chutiyas again rose against Thaomung Phrasenmung and Thaomung Bangen, the Sadiyakhwa Gohain and one of the frontier officers of Sadiya in the extreme north-east.¹⁷ King Suhungmung ordered the Tipam Raja to go to and remain with Phrasenmung in the fort and Chao-Shuleng, the Saring Raja was also sent to strengthen the force of Thaomung Bangen at Kangkham. Thaomung Phrasenmung then marched to attack the Chutiyas at Chandragiri hill.* and sent words to Thaomung Bangen to join him. They advanced on and halted in the town of Sadiya.** Suklenmung Tipam

15 Sen, Surendranath, Prachin Bangla Patra Sankalan, Records in Oriental languages, Vol. I, Bengali letters, part I, p. 70; Robinson, William, A Descriptive account of Assam, pp. 33-34.

16 Ahom Buranji, p.p. 60-61; Deodhai Assam Buranji, p. 21; Assam Buranji, Tr. No. 82, Vol. IV, p. 256, D.H.A.S.

17 Ahom Buranji, pp. 62-64; Deodhai Assam Buranji, pp. 22-23; Assam Buranji, Tr. No. 82, Vol. IV, pp. 257-58, D.H.A.S.

* The Deodhai Assam Buranji mentions the hill as Thaokang.

** The Ahom Buranji refers to the town as Nangkao.

Raja was put in charge of the capital. Then king Suhungmung, with all other great officers proceeded to the country of the Chutiyas and arrived in Kangkham. Thaomung Bangen, Chao-Shenglung and Shengshanan (or Chaolung Hanan) were despatched by the king against the Chutiyas living on the side of the Dibong river. King Suhungmung then entered into Sadiya, the capital of the country and stopped there. Suklenmung Tipam Raja, who was in charge of the capital, was ordered by the king to fight against the Chutiyas on the Doithang hill * with some other high officers. Shuleng Saring Raja was ordered to go to and remain in the temple at Sadiya near the Kundil river. The Chutiyas on the Doithang hill were vanquished by the Ahom army. Then the Ahom army got a complete victory over the Chutiyas at Marankao. The king again ordered his army to attack the enemies at Chandragiri hill. The Bargohain proceeded to Chandragiri and commenced fighting. But the Ahom army was compelled to retreat when the Chutiyas rolled down large blocks of stones from the top of the hill. Then the Deodhais examined the legs of fowls and found the calculations favourable. Thereupon the king again ordered his officers to climb up the hill Chandragiri and surround the enemies. They ascended the hill and arrived at the city on the hill Chandragiri, but they could not make their way further. They came down bringing with them some boys and old men whom they could get hold of. Shuleng Saring Raja stopped at Banphi (Deyaliagaon). ** Then the high officers came back and joined with the king. The king left Barnagar (Sadiya) for Kangkham and halted there. The king then proceeded upstream the Tilao and stopped at the mouth of the Tikali river. Shuleng Saring Raja left Banphi and as he proceeded to meet the king who was at Tikalimukh, he was attacked by a body of the Chutiyas near the Tilao (Lohit). The king then rowed back to Kangkham and remained there. Thaomung Bangen, Chao Shenglung and Chaolung Hanan (Shengshanan), going downstream the Dibong, defeated the enemies and liberated Shuleng Saring Raja who had been made a captive by the Chutiyas. They came back and offered the king the spoils of the battle. Then king Suhungmung returned to his capital leaving Phrasenmung Bargohain and Thaomung Bangen in charge of Sadiya with necessary instructions.

Ten years later king Suhungmung died and the Chutiyas had not disturbed him during the last decade of his rule. But the reign of his successor Suklenmung Garhayan Raja (1539-52 A.D.) again witnessed Chutiya raids. Thus in A.D. 1542, in the month of Baisakh (April+May), the Chutiyas fell upon Hanan (i.e. Chaolung Hanan who was despatched in the reign of the former king to fight

Chutiya raid—
1542 A.D.

* The Deodhai Assam Buranji mentions it as Thaokang hill.

** The Deodhai Assam Buranji refers to it as Deogarh.

against the Chutiyas along with other nobles. He was no doubt one of the frontier officers of the province of Sadiya) near the Disang river and killed him.¹⁸ They carried away his wife and son. As a reprisal for this Chaolung Tima devastated the Chutiya territory in 1543 as well as in 1544 A.D. King Suklenmung then called back Chaolung Tima.

The Chutiyas, however, did not remain quiet for long. Six years later they again revolted. The territory of Habung in the western part of the province of Sadiya was ruled by Brahman Bhuyans inspite of the fact that one frontier officer was put in charge of that territory, who had to serve under the Sadiyakhowa Gohain, the Ahom Viceroy of Sadiya. King Suklenmung became very angry at this and killed the Ahom Viceroy of Sadiya * for having allowed the Brahmans to assume ruling power.¹⁹ This was in 1550 A.D. Taking advantage of the weakness

Rebellion of Kanka
Patra—1550

of the Ahom administration of Sadiya, the Chutiya leader Kanka Patra said, "I myself am all," and organised a conspiracy for overthrowing the suzerainty of the Ahoms and make himself the Raja of the Chutiyas. Several Ahom princes also joined Kanka Patra, but the uprising was promptly suppressed. Kanka Patra along with many Chutiyas perished in the fight with the Ahoms.

But the failure of this organised effort to overthrow the suzerainty of the Ahoms and the death of their leader did not seem to have diminished the rebellious spirit of the Chutiyas. For, they again began their raiding operations in the reign of the next Ahom king Sukhampha, Khora Raja (1552-1603 A.D.). In 1565 A.D. the Chutiyas entered into Namruk (i.e. Namrup) and Kheram and plundered the people of the places.²⁰ The Tipam Raja was sent against them. He met the enemies with his men. A battle ensued. Three of the arrows discharged by the enemy struck the elephant of the Tipam Raja who had to retreat crossing the river Sessa. * The Ahoms thus sustained a defeat. But the Chutiyas evidently could not follow up their victory.

Chutiya raid—
1565 A.D.

18 Ahom Buranji, p. 79; Deodhai Assam Buranji, p. 37.

* The Viceroy of Sadiya is mentioned in the Buranji as the 'Barpatra of Sadiya. This term was apparently used for Sadiyakhowa Gohain.

19 Assam Buranji S.M., pp. 30-31.

20 Ahom Buranji, p. 89.

* The Deodhai Assam Buranji mentions it as the Dihing river.

In 1572 A. D. the Chutiyas again revolted.²¹ At that time the Ahom king Sukhampha was capturing elephants at the mouth of the river Tibang (i.e. Dibong) near Sadiya. The rising was organised by a Senapati (commander). The king ordered the Saring Raja, Chao Phrangmung (the Burhagohain) and Thaomung Bangen to capture the Chutiya Senapati. On the approach of the Ahom army the Senapati took to his heels and entered into Kantai (or Kanchai). The Ahoms made a hot pursuit after the Senapati and reached Kantai and afterwards came to a place called Pukhuri-khana. There they captured the Senapati along with a great number of Chutiyas. The captives were produced before the Ahom king and must have been either executed or transferred to some other parts of the Ahom kingdom by his order.

For the next one hundred years there was lull in the hostilities between the Chutiyas and the Ahoms till the reign of king Udayaditya Singha (1669-73 A.D.). Some Lukteng Chutiyas (so called most probably either after the territory they occupied or after their clan) devastated two Miri villages Dimauan and Rupia, cut down many Miris and took away the king's Mar-Boats * which the Miris used to surrender as annual tribute to their overlord, the Ahom sovereign.²² As a result of this the Miris refused to pay their annual tribute to the Ahom king. So Jayanand, the grandson of Tamulidoloi (evidently he was a frontier officer of the Ahom kingdom) sent some Ahom Katakis (i.e. envoys) with Miri Chautangs (Katakis or interpreters) to Chutiya Villages to ask the Chutiyas if they had taken away the king's Mar-boats by force from the Miris. The Chutiyas replied that when they plundered the two Miri villages, they took some Mar-boats and distributed them amongst themselves. They further added that the Ahom king would not get the boats as they had taken them by plundering the Miri villages. On receiving this report the king asked Jayanand Tamulidoloi to examine the boats of the Chutiyas. The king further said that if the Chutiyas would not allow his men to examine the boats, he would lay their country waste. Hearing this the Chutiyas of Deori (or Deori-Chutiyas) and the Chutiyas of other villages concealed their boats in a secret lake and when the king's men examined the boats, they

21 Deodhai Assam Buranji, p. 47; Ahom Buranji, pp. 91-92; The Ahom Buranji refers to it as a Muttak (or Matak) rising. But this must be wrong. The two narratives, however, agree in all other respects.

* Mar-boats=two boats lashed together side by side.

22 Ahom Buranji, pp. 224-227.

did not find any trace of the king's boats. Then the Taikaphi Chutiyas called in the Taikateng Chutiyas (these Chutiyas were also most probably named either after the territories they occupied or after their clan). Being asked by the king's men about the boats, these Chutiyas re-iterated that they know nothing about them. Then the king, consulting with the Barbarua sent Katakis to capture and bring the Taikaphi Chutiyas to Taimung. But before the arrival of the king's men, the Chutiyas came to know of the king's order and being very much afraid, fled away with their boats. When the king came to know everything, he sent strict orders to Jayanand to find out the place of their concealment. Jayanand accordingly sent men to search out the Taikaphi Chutiyas. After making a search they informed Jayanand that the Chutiyas had taken shelter in the Deyalia village. Then Jayanand persuaded the Chutiyas to come to him and asked them the cause of behaving in that manner. When this matter was communicated to the king he ordered Jayanand to appoint some men to re-examine the boats of the Chutiyas in the remote places of the river. **Jayanand accordingly sent two men who entered into Miri villages taking some Miris with them.** They plundered the properteis of a Chutiya named Naraigam* in a Miri village who was putting up there. The news was sent to Tamulidoloi who sent it to the king. The king then ordered some officers to proceed to and remain at Tinimukhia.** The king then ordered the Sadiyakhwa Gohain and Marangikhwa Gohain to proceed to and construct a fort at the mouth of the Sessa river. Then Naraigam was chained and placed at Tinimukhia (Tinsukia?). The king sent Tamulidoloi to Tinimukhia giving him necessary instructions. Then two men were ordered to proceed to the villages of the Chutiyas to induce them to pay their annual tribute to the Ahom king and to bring the Taikaphi Chutiyas to the king's presence. But the king's men could not bring the Taikaphi Chutiyas and came back. Then Jayanand ordered some Miri Katakis to proceed to the Chutiya villages to tell the Taikaphi Chutiyas that if they would not come down from Deyaliagon (or Banphi) and if they would not send anybody, then the Ahoms would not allow the Taikaphi Chutiyas to come to their homes and their houses would be destroyed by them. Hearing the news, the Taikaphi Chutiyas held a council among themselves and said that they asked Naraigam to come back, but he had not done so. Soon afterwards, the Taikaphi Chutiyas made over eight men to the Ahoms and allowed two Miris to bring them. These eight Taikaphi Chutiyas were sent to the Ahom side with Naraigam. The Miris came back and informed Basa Barua of the matter. The Basa Barua fettered the Taikaphi Chutiyas at Tinimukhia and sent the news to the

* Naraigam was most probably a messenger or spy sent by the Chutiyas to inform about the Ahoms.

** The place Tinimukhia is most probably modern Tinsukia.

king. The king ordered the Barua to send up the eight Taikaphi Chutiyas. He also sent one Gandhia Barua to tell Jayanand and Basa Barua that if the Chutiyas and the eight Taikaphis would offer the king's Mar-boats they might be allowed to go unmolested.

Ramdhvaj Singha
continues the policy
of his predecessor

In the meantime, in 1673 A.D. in the month of Bhadra (Sept. + Oct.) king Udayaditya Singha had been deposed and murdered by his brother the Deka Raja and his associates. The Deka Raja became king under the title Chao-Shuklengpha alias Ramdhvaj Singha (1673-75 A.D.). The new king became anxious for enforcing the order of the deceased king against the Chutiyas. So the Baruas, who were at Tinimukhia proceeded by the river Dihing in boats and arrived at Tiru.²³ They got on land and hurried towards the villages of the Chutiyas. Then the Chutiyas came to the Miri village with their bows and arrows and remained there. The Ahom army assembled in the Chutiya village. Then the Miri Barua* and the king's men coming to a field near the Dihing river made a fort and stopped therein. In the north, the Chutiya Barua** spoke to the Miri Chautangs (Kataki or interpreter) in a very rough manner. The Chautang informed Jayanand of the affair. Then Basa Barua sent Miri Katakis with the king's men to the Taikaphi Chutiyas wishing them to bring the Chutiya Barua. The Churiya Barua said to the Miris—"In the ancient time the Heavenly king (i.e. the Ahom King) did not use to send Katakis to our country, but now he has done so." ²⁴ Then the Katakis replied that they had been sent by the Heavenly king to ask them to acknowledge him as their sovereign. The king had said to them that the eight Taikaphi Chutiyas would not be killed if the Taikaphi Chutiyas would supply the Ahom king with some elephant tusks, wild cows, Sikaradaos (a kind of knife), Jin cloths and some female slaves as tributes. The Chutiyas did accordingly and the Miris offered the tributes to Jayanand. But the Basa Barua found fault with the Chutiya Barua, suspected him to have incited the Chutiyas to rebel against the Ahom king and therefore expressed his willingness to behead him. He said to him, "I wish to kill the Chutiyas to a man to set an example for the others not to behave in this way. However, I will not kill you. If you, however, act in this way

²³ Ahom Buranji, pp. 229-230.

* Miri Barua was the officer who was in charge of the Sadiyal or Chutiya Miris living in the plains of the old Chutiya kingdom.

** The Chutiya Baruas were the descendants of a family holding high office under the Chutiya kings. After the overthrow and annexation of the Chutiya kingdom by the Ahoms in 1523 A.D. the Chutiya Baruas took over the responsibility of paying the annual tribute to the Ahom king.

²⁴ Ahom Buranji, p. 229.

in future, I shall not allow you to go with impunity."²⁵ This news was sent to the king who in return sent orders to Basa Barua to cut the goats, dogs, cats, fowls, ducks and pegions belonging to the Chutiya Barua and to make him promise by drinking to be loyal and offer tributes to the king. The Chutiyas were accordingly made to pledge fidelity by drinking liquor. The Basa Barua placed them in their respective places and made the Taikaphi Chutiyas pay tributes to the Ahom king. Then Naraigam also pledged fidelity to the Ahom king by drinking liquor. He was ordered to pay tributes of mar-boats every year. Naraigam consented to do so. He was then rewarded and sent back. Then Basa Barua with his men came back to the king who was at Garhgaon. The strong and the robust male persons amongst the Chutiyas were made prisoners. The suppression of this rebellion which spread over the reigns of two kings, evidently convinced the Chutiyas of the futility of rising against a mighty power like the Ahoms. Henceforth therefore the Chutiyas continued to live peacefully under Ahom rule.

Summary and Conclusion

It was from about the middle of the 14th century that the Ahoms came in contact with the Chutiyas. The fact that the Ahom king Sutupha made friendship with the contemporary Chutiya king shows that up to that time most probably friendly relations existed between the Ahoms and the Chutiyas as the Chutiya king paid a friendly visit to the Ahom king and invited the latter to attend a regatta. But the Chutiya king proved unfaithful by killing his royal guest treacherously. This was the signal of the beginning of hostile relations of the Ahoms with the Chutiyas. It was no doubt that the Ahom kings would have attacked the Chutiya kingdom in expanding their own kingdom even if their king Sutupha would not have been murdered by the Chutiya king. The only thing was that it might have been delayed for a few years and the murder hastened it. The Ahoms would never have allowed a rival power like the Chutiyas to wield sovereign power in the extreme east of the Brahmaputra valley with a vast plains territory under their possession and possessing a most important commodity like salt which was scarce in Assam, even if the Chutiyas had continued their peaceful relations with the Ahoms. From the middle of the 14th century up to the reign of Ramdhvaj Singha for nearly three centuries, the relations of the Ahoms with the Chutiyas were hostile. The annexation of the Chutiya kingdom to the Ahom kingdom by Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.) in the beginning of the 16th century was very much resented by the Chutiyas. That was quite natural for any power enjoying an independent status for a long time. That was why, even after the annexation of their kingdom, the Chutiyas revolted against Ahom authority from time to time, raided Ahom territories and withheld the payment of annual tributes fixed by their overlord, the Ahom king. After the annexation of the Chutiya kingdom to the Ahom kingdom and appointment of officers to govern the Chutiya territory, the Ahoms, had to send several expeditions against the rebellious Chutiyas. The Ahom army had to face great troubles in fighting with them as they generally fought from the hillocks that abounded in the Chutiya territory.

The Ahoms annexed the whole Chutiya territory to their own kingdom and deprived the Chutiya royal family of its ruling power and prestige. They not only killed the ruling Chutiya king Chandra Narayan and his minor brother-in-law, but killed many members of the Chutiya royal family and deported the rest along with the leading men amongst the Chutiyas to some other place. This made the Chutiyas leaderless and left them without any strong bond of racial unity. Then again, the Ahom kings, from time to time planted colonies of conquered people in different parts of Assam. This was made in case of the Chutiyas also. In the reign of king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.) many of the conquered Chutiyas were settled in different places.²⁶ According to Allen's Gazetteer of the Lakhimpur district, a number of Chutiya families "were deported to a place a little to the east of the Bhoroli river which bears the name Sootea or Chutiya to the present day."²⁷ This was a wise policy followed by the Ahoms to destroy their nationality and prevent them from uniting to recover their independence.

Moreover, the Ahom conquest of the Chutiya country was followed by intermarriages between the Ahoms and the Chutiyas, and it was in this period that the distinction between the Ahom-Chutiyas and Hindu Chutiyas arose. The victorious Ahoms, instead of hating the conquered Chutiyas, began to mix up with them socially. It was really a subtle policy followed by the Ahoms in the gradual expansion of their kingdom. The Ahoms considered political and military achievements as the only path to fortune and to fame. They were endowed with a keen sense of values in political matters which enabled them to consolidate their power in Assam and maintain it for such a long period (about six hundred years). The Ahoms were liberal in their social outlook. They were dominated in their actions mainly by considerations of practical necessity and political expediency. As already observed, the number of Ahoms who had accompanied Sukapha from Burma to Assam as a conquering nation was small, and those who came in later were also not great in number.²⁸ With such small numbers the Ahoms found it impossible to maintain their gradually expanding dominion in Assam which was peopled by heterogeneous races and tribes. Moreover, the Ahoms were not accompanied by their womenfolk in their migrations from Burma to Assam.²⁹ So, they had to take wives from the aboriginal settlers in Assam viz., the Morans, the Borahis, the Chutiyas etc. Over and above these, the powerful Muslim and Koch rulers on the west formed a source of perpetual danger to the Ahoms. They had therefore no other alternative but to increase their community by admitting into the Ahom fold members of the old martial races of Assam viz. Borahi, Moran, Chutiya, Kachari, Miri etc. It is probable that in course of time some Chutiyas were admitted into the ranks of the Ahom nobility in recognition either of their services or of their merit and were allowed to hold respectable posts under the Ahom kings. Thus, during the reign of king Suhungmung (1497-1539 A.D.) after the annexation of the Chutiya

26. *Assam Buranj* S. M., p. 47.

27. Quoted by U. N. Gohain in his book "*Assam under the Ahoms*," p. 18.

28. See ante, Chapter II, p. 22.

29. See ante, Chapter III, p. 52.

kingdom, when Phrasenmung Bargohain was made the Sadiyakhowa Gohain to administer the newly conquered Chutiya country, a Chutiya (Chutiya king's store keeper) made his submission to the Bargohain by making over to him a 'dao' and a spear.³⁰ The Bargohain admitted him to his own khel.* That Chutiya had two sons named Langimui and Langi Thapak (or Khapak). When Tankham Bargohain's daughter Nangchang Gabharu was given in marriage to the Khora Raja (1552-1603 A.D.), Langimui was sent to the Ahom court as a part of the dowry. The king took fancy for him and named him 'Bhandari Gohain Bhandari Chetia' (that is to say he was made a treasurer). His family served as domestic servants to Bargohain. His brother Langi Thapak remained as the keeper of horse in the house of Bargohain. This example illustrates the process of admixture between the Ahoms and the Chutiyas by interdependence of services.

The non-Ahom families were allowed to enjoy all the privileges of the Ahoms and no disabilities were attached to their holding offices of rank. This was done in the case of the Chutiyas as well. Thus, in the reign of either Suhempha (1488-93 A.D.) or Supimpha (1493-97 A.D.) Chaokang Banduk Bargohain brought a Chutiya by devastating a Chutiya village. The Bargohain took a fancy for him and insisted on his accompanying him. The king came to know of the Chutiya and had him brought to the court by the Bargohain. The king became pleased with his works and named him 'Hanhan Patar.' In the reign of the next king Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.) he rendered such valuable services in the fight against Turbak that the king became very much pleased with him and named him 'Luktudung.' In the reign of Sukhamphar, Khora Raja (1552-1603 A.D.) his great grandson was named 'Haridhang Duara' in recognition of some valuable services rendered by him to the state. In the reign of the next king Susengpha alias Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.) this Haridhang Duara caricatured as a jackal while the king went to Jaikhamdang farm. The king became very much pleased with him and named him 'Srikali' i.e. jackal. His grandson Langi Panisiya distinguished himself in the battle of Hajo against the Muhammadans by rallying the fugitive soldiers and restoring order amongst them. He was rewarded for this by the king appointing him to the newly created post of Barphukan or governor of the conquered provinces west of Koliabar.³¹ Thus a Chutiya became the first incumbent to the very important post of the governor at Gauhati. Such a policy helped in diminishing the alien nature of the Ahoms in the eyes of the ancient inhabitants of Assam who had been gradually brought under their subjugation. This policy greatly helped in pacifying the Chutiyas also, who were deprived of their long cherished independence. After about one and half a centuries of fighting (after the annexation of their kingdom by the Ahoms) the Chutiyas seemed to have been completely reconciled to their lot, for we do not hear of Chutiya revolt, after the year

30. Goswami, Hem Chandra, *Puraní Assam Buranjí*, p. 38.

* A 'Khel' was like a guild to which lands were allotted for cultivation by the constituent members, free of rent in return for the service they rendered to the state. The strength of a khel varied from 3000 to 100. - Bhuyan, S. K. *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 10.

31. Goswami, Hem Chandra, *Puraní Assam Buranjí*, p. 31;
Deodhai *Assam Buranjí*, p. 107; *Assam Buranjí*, S. M., pp. 61-62.

1673 A.D. till the end of Ahom rule in Assam. Even in the last part of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries when the decline of the Ahom power set in and when most of the unruly hill tribes availed themselves of the opportunity to plunder Ahom territory and enrich themselves, the Chutiyas did not make any disturbance or ally themselves with the enemies of the Ahom sovereigns. The Ahoms had completely assimilated the Chutiyas. In this capacity of the Ahoms to assimilate the conquered people lay the secret of their long rule lasting about six hundred years over a province in which they were conquering outsiders.

CHAPTER V

The Pushing back of the Kacharis

The Kacharis were another tribe who were ruling over an extensive territory west of the Morans and the Borahis on the south bank of the Brahmaputra. The Kacharis may perhaps be described as one of the earliest aboriginal tribes or earliest known inhabitants of the Brahmaputra valley.¹ By the beginning of the 13th century the Kachari kingdom was stretching probably half way across the modern Nowgong district and included about three fourths of the present Sibsagar district. As Gait observes,— “In the thirteenth century it would seem that the Kachari kingdom extended along the south bank of the Brahmaputra, from the Dikhu (i.e. Dikhow) to the Kallang, or beyond, and included also the valley of the Dhansiri and the tract which now forms the North Cachar subdivision.”²

There are no written records of Kachari rule. There are, however, several traditions on the accuracy of which it is impossible to rely as history and legend are mixed up in these traditions.³ According to these traditions, there were two branches of Kacharis, one ruling at Sadiya and the other, the southern branch, who established themselves with capitals at Dimapur, Maibong and Khaspur. The southern branch of the Kacharis claimed their descent from Ghatotkacha, son of Bhima on Heramba Rakshashi. The only trustworthy information which we can gather from these traditions is that prior to the advent of the Ahoms in Assam, the boundary of the Kachari kingdom towards the east extended beyond the river Disang up to Namchang in the Naga hills. There is a reference in one of the traditions that one of the Kachari kings named Bicharpati-pha conquered Borhat and Namchang (beyond the Disang in the Naga hills) and included them within his kingdom. The Kachari tradition on this point is corroborated by one Buranji also.⁴

Ahom Buranjis refer only to the southern branch of the Kacharis and our study here is confined to the relation of the Ahoms with the southern Kacharis.

1. For details about the origin and racial affinities of the Kacharis with other tribes, see Report on the Census of Assam, 1891, pp. 224-28 ; Gait, Sir Edward, *A History of Assam*, pp. 247-48 ; Endle, S., *The Kacharis*, pp. 3-5.

2. Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 248.

3. Bhuyan, S. K., *Kachari Buranji*, pp. 1-10 ; *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp. 162-68.

4. *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp. 90-92.

Ahom-Kachari Relations :

Before the advent of the Ahoms in Assam in the beginning of the 13th century, as it appears from the Buranjis of the Ahoms, the boundary of the Kachari kingdom in the east extended beyond the Dikhow river. The first Ahom conqueror Sukapha, after placing Kangkhrumung (or Kangchungmung) in charge of the country of Khamjang (beyond the Patkai hills) crossed the Patkai hills and made his way into Assam through the land of the Nagas. At the foot of the Naga hills (i.e. the present Tirap Division of NEFA) he encountered a great number of Kacharis.⁵ From them he came to learn that the Kachari king, being defeated in an engagement with the Nagas had to surrender Mohong *to the latter and to retreat to the side of the river Dikhow. The Buranjis of the Ahoms also thus confirm the statement of the Kachari tradition that prior to the advent of the Ahoms in Assam, the eastern boundary of the Kachari kingdom extended up to Mohong or up to Namchang beyond the river Disang as the Kachari tradition relates. There was no conflict between Sukapha and the Kacharis. The great adventurer Sukapha perhaps realised the impossibility of overcoming the great number of Kacharis with their organised government extending over a vast territory with his limited number of followers. That was why he concentrated his energy in subduing the comparatively small number of Morans and Borahis living to the north and north-east of the territory occupied by the Ahoms and left the task of subduing the Kacharis to his descendants.

At the time of the advent of the Ahoms in Assam the eastern boundary of the Kachari territory extended up to the Dikhow and the western boundary extended up to the Kalang. "The Kachari aggressions did not evidently then advance westward further than the present district of Nowgong, for we find powerful Bhuyan Chiefs holding Owguri, Luki, Pandu and Gauhati, on the south bank of the Brahmaputra, till the beginning of the sixteenth century."⁶

Pushing back of the Kacharis :

Sukapha's son and successor Suteupha (1268-81 A.D.) felt the need for expansion westward and sent ambassadors to the Kachari king demanding the surrender of the territory up to Namdang (a tributary of the Dikhow) to the former.⁷ The Kachari king* refused to comply with the demand of the Ahom king and replied that the Kacharis had been residing there for several generations and so the territories demanded by the Ahom king belonged to them. He asked the Ahom ambassadors to prove that the territories belonged to the Ahoms. The Ahom king Suteupha at this proposed to the Kachari king that the disputed territories would belong to that party whose people would be able to dig a canal of 1500 feet long and 30 feet wide up to the Dikhow in the course of a single night. The Kachari king readily agreed

Ahoms demand
surrender of Kachari
territories up to
Namdang.

5. *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp. 90-92.

*Mohong was one of the great salt producing areas in the land of the Borduarua and Pantduaria Nocte Naga tribes.

6. Barua, K. L. *Early History of Kamarupas*, p. 145.

7. *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 82, Vol. IV, pp. 243-44, D.H.A.S., *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, p. 94.

* Unfortunately the name of the Kachari king is not mentioned in the Buranjis.

to the proposal of the Ahom king and people of both the parties engaged themselves in digging the canals. King Suteupha was determined to take possession of the disputed territories even by applying foul means and accordingly asked some of his people to conceal themselves in the forest with some cocks and instructed them to cause the cocks crow before dawn in case they apprehended a defeat. The Ahoms did accordingly and resorted to the foul means as prearranged when they found that the Kacharis were sure to win in the contest. As it was a moonlit night the Kacharis also mistook the cock's crow to be the signal of dawn, stopped digging the canal and left the place long before actual dawn. The Ahoms then completed their canal and the Kacharis, according to the terms of the agreement, surrendered the territories up to Namdang to the Ahoms.**

Ahoms occupy
Kachari territories
by foul means.

Thus the Ahoms came into the possession of these territories belonging to the Kacharis by diplomacy. About the end of the 13th century the river Namdang thus came to be recognised as the boundary between the Ahom kingdom and the Kachari kingdom. For about two hundred years this river appears to have formed the boundary between the two kingdoms.*** During this long period, there is no mention of any conflict between the Ahoms and the Kacharis. The subjugation of the Morans and the Borahis by the Ahoms was followed by a long period of peace in which the Ahoms greatly increased in numbers not only by natural growth, but also by admission to their tribe of many local recruits. Their numbers increased probably also by the arrival of fresh emigrants from their old home. The result was a succession of wars which eventually made the Ahoms master of the whole of the Brahmaputra valley. But they first tried their strength not against their immediate neighbours the Chutiyas and the Kacharis but against the Raja of Kamata who then ruled over the western part of the old kingdom of Kamarupa, the eastern boundary of which extended up to the Barnadi on the north bank of the Brahmaputra and the Digaru on the south. Most probably, the apparent weakness of the Kamata rulers prompted the Ahoms to fight with them first.

About the end of the 15th century in 1490 A.D. during the reign of Suhempha (1488-93 A.D.), a war with the Kacharis broke out.*

War between the
Ahoms and the
Kacharis—1490

None of the Buranjis, however, mention the name of the Kachari king, the ruler of a vast territory covering both plains and hills.

The Ahom army that was sent against the Kacharis, crossed the Dikhow, halted on its western bank and erected a fort at Dampuk to meet the enemies.

** According to Gait the Kacharis abandoned to the Ahoms the country east of the Dikhow (i.e. Dikhu) river (*History of Assam*, p. 79.). But it has been already stated that before the arrival of the Ahoms under Sukapha, the Kacharis retreated to the western side of the Dikhow.

*** In the north-westerly direction, however, the Ahoms seem to have further advanced up to Saring which lies between the Namdang and the Janji rivers. This is proved by the appointment of Chao-Pulai, the brother of the fifth Ahom king Sukhrangpha (1332-1364 A.D.) as the Raja of Saring. (*Deadhai Assam Buranjil*, 2nd edition, 1962 p. 10. The post seem to have been created by Sukhrangpha.

8. *Ahom Buranjil*, pp. 52-53 ; *Deadhai Assam Buranjil*, pp. 13-14 ; *Purani Assam Buranjil*, p. 50 ; *Assam Buranjil* (obtained from the family of Sukumar Mahanta, hereafter references to it will be made as S. M.), p. 9.

The Kacharis fell suddenly upon the Ahom army and pressed them so hard that the Ahom army was compelled to retreat. The Kacharis made a hot pursuit after them and succeeded in killing one hundred and twenty Ahom soldiers. The Kacharis chased the Ahoms up to Tangsu, which lies on the eastern side of the Dikhow. The Ahoms

then sued for peace and a girl was sent to the Kachari king with two elephants, one male and the other female and twelve female slaves as her dowry.*

The first attempt of the Ahoms to penetrate into the land of the Kacharis thus proved disastrous to the former. This defeat of the Ahoms at the hands of the Kacharis undoubtedly emboldened the latter not only to try to reclaim their territories between the Namdang and the Dikhow which were ceded to the former in the 13th century, but to go further and occupy the territories on the eastern side of the Dikhow also. The pursuit of the retreating Ahom army by the Kacharis across the Dikhow undoubtedly facilitated the latter to establish a few settlements on the eastern side of the Dikhow. The strength of the Ahoms was, however, rapidly growing and Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.) who defeated the Chutiyas and annexed their kingdom to the Ahom kingdom in 1523

A.D., took up in earnest the task of expanding his dominion in the direction of the west also. With that end in view he sent Kancheng Barpatra Gohain at the head of a force against the Kacharis.⁹

In the first place, he reclaimed the territories up to the Dikhow. For a time this river remained as the boundary between the two kingdoms. The Kacharis were next pushed back to Namdang (a tributary of the Dikhow). From Namdang they were pushed back to a place called Shilpukhuri (cannot be identified), then Gabharu Parbat (a hill between Jangi river and Teok river) and then beyond Shitalnegheri (cannot be identified) which was occupied by the Ahoms. The victorious Ahoms then claimed Dergaon, but the Kacharis, in spite of their defeat, refused to cede Dergaon to the Ahoms. The Ahoms this time, perhaps apprehending to meet a reverse, took resort to diplomatic methods for subduing the Kacharis. They contrived to bring the Kacharis into an agreement for ascertaining the mutual boundary by the result of a living sacrifice to the god. It was agreed that the party whom the omen might favour should receive Dergaon. The Kacharis, having received an untoward result in the sacrifice, gave up Dergaon to the Ahoms. The victors then claimed Marangi. This time also the Kacharis refused. The Ahoms then proposed that Marangi should belong to that party whose workmen would first find water in the tanks to be dug on the Marangi hill. The Ahoms succeeded in showing water to the Kacharis by applying unfair means and compelled the latter to cede Marangi to the former and made the Kacharis to retire to the other bank of the Dhansiri. Thus the Ahoms succeeded gradually to thrust back the Kachari boundary to the Dhansiri by applying force as well as diplomacy. The fact that the Ahoms

* This is the version given in most of the Buranjis. Kasinath Tamuli Phukan (*Assam Buranjis*, p. 18) and Harakanta Barua (*Assam Buranjis*, p. 27) say that the battle was indecisive and that, when peace was made with the offer of a girl, the Kacharis ceded territories up to Marangi to the Ahoms. This, however, does not seem to be correct in view of the later developments.

⁹ *Kochari Buranjis*, pp. 11-13; *Assam Buranjis* S. M., p. 13; Wade, J. P., *An Account of Assam*, pp. 62-63.

succeeded in gaining territories by applying diplomatic methods suggests that the Kacharis at that time were either preoccupied with some internal trouble or the attack on them was so sudden that they were quite unprepared to make any counter attack. Anyway, the fact remains that by the year 1526 A.D. the boundary of the Ahom kingdom towards the west had extended up to the river Dhansiri. When war broke out again with the Kacharis that very year, the neighbourhood of this river was the scene of battles.

In 1526 A.D. in the month of Aghon (Nov.+Dec.) the Kacharis made inroads within Ahom territory¹⁰. According to one authority, the Kacharis entered Dergaon which then belonged to the Ahoms and took away three elephants by spearing to death three Ahoms—apparently the Mahouts (i.e. elephant keeper).¹¹ Hearing this king Suhungmung ordered two of his officers to proceed before him against the Kacharis with their men. Then the king and his son followed them and by going upstream the river Dhansiri arrived at the principal gate of the city of the Kacharis. The king ordered some of his men to repair the path to the river to enable the army to fetch water. At the order of the king a brick fort was constructed in front of the principal gate of the Kachari city. The king with his son were welcomed into it after the completion of the fort. The king with his son and men then left the fort and came back to the town of Marangi where they passed several nights. The Ahom officers then advanced in a body and arrived at Dergaon where they were joined by the king. There the king left his navy and marched on land with the officers into the Kachari country. The leaders of the Ahom army were mounted on elephants. When the Ahom army entered the Kathkatia village of the Kacharis, the vanguard was here surprised by a sudden attack from the Kacharis and put to flight with the loss of 40 men killed. The Kacharis reoccupied the Kathkatia village. Thus the Kacharis were victorious in the first engagement.

The Ahoms, however, soon rallied round three officers and delivered a united attack on the Kacharis. This time, although the Kacharis defended themselves valiantly with bows and arrows, they were at last overpowered by the Ahoms. A great number of Kacharis fell dead on the field of battle and others took to their heels. They were closely followed by the Ahoms and a fresh engagement was forced on them at the Deoghar (temple) of Marangi in which they sustained a decisive defeat leaving 1700 dead upon the field. The Kachari Deka Raja, (i.e. Yuvaraja) fled away on a horse. The Kacharis were completely defeated. The Ahom army, with the king and his son then rowed upstream the Tilao (Lohit or Brahmaputra) and returned to the Ahom capital. The Kacharis, in spite of their defeat, did not make their submission to the Ahoms.

10. *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 59-60 ; *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp. 19-21.

11. *Assam Buranji*, S. M., p. 13.

In 1531 A.D. king Suhungmung despatched Chaolung Suklengmung (Tipam Raja), Chaolung Saring (Saring Raja), Chao Shukhring, Thaomung-
 Renewal of war with the Kacharis and their defeat— 1531 A.D. lung Phrasenmung (who returned from Sadiya in 1530 A.D.), Chao Shenglung Klangsheng with a large force to construct a fort at Marangi.¹² They accordingly proceeded there, threw up a fort and put up in it. This gave offence to Khunkhara (or Khuntara), the Kachari king. The Ahoms had wrested Marangi from the Kacharis by a stratagem and the Kacharis naturally resented it very much. So Khunkhara sent his brother Detcha* to drive the Ahoms out of Marangi. A battle was fought in which the Kacharis were defeated and Detcha was killed by Saring Raja who took possession of some swords, brazen pots and cloths. The news reached king Suhungmung who despatched Thaomung Katak to reinforce the fort at Marangi. Then the king himself proceeded up the Dhansiri, arrived at the mouth of the Dayang and Dhansiri rivers. The army then again advanced upstream the river Dhansiri and halted on a high sand bank. At the dead of night a body of Ahoms advanced from the sand bank and set fire to a town of the Kacharis. The Ahoms then advanced to a place called Dengnut **where the army was divided into two divisions, one ascending the right and the other the left bank of the Dhansiri. Another battle was fought with the Kacharis and the latter were again defeated. The Ahoms pursued them as far as their capital Itanagar (i.e. Dimapur) on the left bank of that river. The Kachari king Khunkhara fled with his brother, the Deka Raja. King Suhungmung then left Dimapur and first came to and halted at Malipathar (or Manipathar ?) and then he removed his camp to Dengnut.

A claimant to the Kachari throne now appeared in the person of Detshung (or Neoshung). Nothing is known of his parentage, but his brother who came as his envoy to the Ahom king Suhungmung claimed the dominion of the Kacharis as 'their ancestral dominion'. Detshung sent his brother with an offer of two hundred rupees to king Suhungmung at his camp at Dengnut to pray to the latter to help the former in regaining his father's dominion which had been wrested from him by force by Khunkhara (the former Kachari king). ***He proposed that if his brother Detshung would be accepted by the Ahom king as the ruler of the Kachari kingdom, Detshung would offer his sister to the Ahom king and come personally to pay his respect to the latter. The Ahom king in return sent an envoy to the

12. *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 64-66 ; *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp. 24-25 ; *Assam Buranji*, S. M., pp. 13-14.

* His name is variously given as Detcha, Dercha, and Neochoa.

** In *Deodhai Assam Buranji* the place is named as Nenguria.

*** Herein we find the reason why the Ahoms under Kancheng Barpatra Gohain in the reign of king Suhungmung, soon after the conquest of the Cnutyas, succeeded easily by applying force as well as diplomacy in pushing back the eastern boundary of the Kachari kingdom up to the river Dhansiri. From the statement of Detshung's brother, it seems that Khunkhara (or Khorapha) was not the legal claimant to the throne, or it may be that there were several claimants to the throne but Khunkhara occupied it by force. This must have caused confusion in the country, made the governmental machinery weak and prevented the Kacharis from taking up any effective resistance against Ahom aggressions.

Kachari king with the message that if the Kachari Raja would give him his sister, one thousand rupees and an elephant, he might then come to terms.*

Three or four days later, the Kachari king and his brother came to the Ahom king with their sister and the things demanded by the Ahom king. Besides the things demanded by the Ahom king, they brought many swords, cloths, napkins and Doolies (Sendans) for the Ahom king. With these offers both the brothers greeted the Ahom king and said, "We, your Majesty's subjects salute thee." Then the Ahom king Suhungmung, taking off a gold ring from his finger presented to the Kachari Raja and said, "We are now friends. You must not quarrel with us any longer and should be straightforward in your action."¹³

King Suhungmung then presented the Kachari king Detshung with an elephant, a royal umbrella, a sword and a saddled horse. He also taught them rules befitting the descendants of a royal family. The Kachari king was directed to surrender to the Ahom monarch his gold standard, gold sofa, gold jars, large gold plates etc. and three of the queens. The chief queen was allowed to be kept

The Kachari king Detshung becomes a tributary ruler under the Ahoms

for the Kachari Raja. Detshung promised to make over the things to the Ahom king. Thus the Kachari king acknowledged the supremacy of the Ahom king and the former was confirmed in possession of his ancestral kingdom by the latter. Henceforward the Kachari kings came to be looked upon by the Ahom kings as 'thapita-Sanchita' or established and preserved by them.

Five years later, in 1536 A.D. the Kachari king Detshung showed signs of hostility.¹⁴ Hearing this, king Suhungmung sent Chaolung Shuleng (Saring Raja), Thaomung Katak, Sheng Hanan, Sheng Kungren and Taimungklang with an army against the Kacharis.

Chaolung Shuleng was made the commander-in-chief of the army. The king accompanied the army up to Marangi. The army then advanced via Hamdoi to Banphu (or Banphru). Chaopha Suklenmung, Thaomunglung Chankham (Bargohain)* and Taimunglung joined the king at Marangi. Chao Shenglung (Kancheng Barpatra) also left Naga's war and joined with the king. At the command of the king, all of them joined the army at the village Banphu, from which place troops were sent up both banks of the Dayang. The force which marched along the right bank drove back the Kacharis, but that on the left bank was held in check until reinforcements were pushed forward, whereupon the Kacharis fled and suffered heavy losses in the pursuit that followed. Detshung at first took refuge in a fort on the Daimari

* The list of the things demanded by king Suhungmung differs from one Buranji to another.

13. *Ahom Buranji*, p. 66. According to the Assam Buranji S. M. the Dihingia Raja, presenting the gold ring to the Kachari Raja said as follows — "You should not entertain any ill will towards me until this ring is converted into an alloy of lead."

14. *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 75—77, *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp. 33-35

* Thaomunglung Chankham or Tankham was made Bargohain after the death of Phrasenmung Bargohain in the battle against Turbak in 1532 A. D.

hill (or Dalsigiri), but on the approach of the Ahoms, who advanced up the Dhansiri, he fled to Dengnut (or Nenguria) and then to his capital at Dimapur.

The Ahoms continued to press forward, but by the time they reached Dimapur, Detshung had again fled. His mother and three queens were found in the city. The former was put to death, but the queens were sent to the king's harem. The Ahoms

ultimately found out the Kachari Raja at Jangmara and put him to death. After this the officers came back with their army and made over to the king at Kuliarbari all the spoils of the war consisting of a gold sofa, a silver sofa and a considerable quantity of gold and silver. The king then returned to the capital with all the officers and men. At the order of the king, the head of the Kachari Raja Detshung was buried on the Charaideo hill by the side of Turbak's tomb.*

Thus by defeating the Kacharis the Ahoms became masters not only of the Dhansiri valley, which they never attempted to occupy and which soon relapsed into jungle, but also of the whole of the Kachari possessions north-east of the Kalang river in Nowgong.¹⁵ The Kacharis deserted Dimapur and the valley of the Dhansiri and retreating further south, established a new capital at Maibong on the bank of the Mahur river. A permanent official known as the Marangikhowa Gohain was appointed by the Ahom government at Marangi to hold the lower valley of the Dhansiri. The greater part of Nowgong, which belonged to the Kacharis was annexed to the Ahom kingdom.

Practically nothing is known of the Kachari kingdom till the beginning of the 17th century save the reference recorded in the Koch accounts that after the defeat

* In some other Buranjis (*Kachari Buranji*, pp. 16-20 ; *Assam Buranji*, S. M., pp. 14-22) a different account is given regarding the relations of the Kacharis with the Ahoms in the reign of the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.). The story in brief is as follows. Susuddhi, the daughter of the Raja of Gaur had been married to the Kamata Raja. She had been expelled from her husband's palace for misconduct, whereupon she made secret advances to the Kachari Raja who was named as Dersongpha. The Kachari Raja admitted her into his harem where she assumed the role of the Raja's chief consort. When the Ahoms invaded the Kachari kingdom, the Kachari king was killed in the course of his flight by Ahom soldiers, Susuddhi and her son by the Kachari Raja named Madan Konwar were captured and made over to the Dihingia Raja at his camp. Enamoured of her enchanting beauty, the Dihingia Raja dallied in his camp for six months and forgot about returning to his capital. The Ahom nobles then devised means for procuring the king's return to the capital. Accordingly Kancheng Barpatra pretended madness, set fire to the royal camp and as prearranged transported the Raja bodily to the other bank of the Dhansiri. After the death of Dersongpha, Cachar went without a ruler for some years. The Kacharis then sent delegates to the Ahom king and got Madan Konwar appointed as their ruler with the name Nirbhay Narayan. The new Raja promised an annual tribute to the Ahom king. Henceforward the Kachari kings came to be called 'thapita-sanchita' of the Ahoms which implied a degree of subordination. This story cannot be accepted as true for many reasons. In the first place, susuddhi could not be married to the Kamata king in the thirties of the 16th century, because the kingdom of Kamata came to an end in 1498 A.D. Secondly, in the *Kachari Buranji* it is definitely stated that Phrasenmung Bargohain was made the C-in-C of the army that was sent against the Kacharis after his return from Sadiya in 1530 A. D. The *Kachari Buranji* and *Assam Buranji* S. M., both mention Kancheng Barpatra as the deliverer of the king from the embraces of Susuddhi. But the *Ahom Buranji* and *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, which describe in detail the expedition of 1531 do not mention the name of Kancheng Barpatra as accompanying that expedition. He accompanied the expedition of 1536 A.D. But at that time Phrasenmung Bargohain was no longer living ; he was killed in 1532 in the battle against Turbak.

15. Tamuli Phukan, Kasinath, *Assam Buranji*, pp. 21-22 ; Barua, Harakanta, *Assam Buranji*, pp. 25-28.

of the Ahoms in 1562 A.D. by Chilarai, the Koch general, and the sack of their capital Garhgaon, Chilarai marched against the Kachari kingdom at the command of Nar Narayan, defeated its king (unfortunately his name is not given), compelled him to acknowledge the Koch king Nar Narayan as his overlord and pay annual tribute to him.¹⁶ This story of the invasion of Cachar by the Koches is confirmed by a tradition current amongst the Dehans, a small tribe of that district, who claim to be descended from the Koches who invaded the district. It has been already observed that

The Ahoms fail to give protection to the Kacharis against Koch invasion in 16th century

since the acknowledgment of the supremacy of the Ahom king by the Kachari king Detshung in 1531 A.D. during the reign of Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.), the Kachari king came to be looked upon by the Ahom kings as 'thapita-sanchita or established and preserved by them. But the Ahom

government could not discharge their duty towards a protected state as they failed to give protection to the Kacharis against the invasion of the Koches who were made tributary to the latter. It may be conjectured therefore, that this circumstance coupled with the defeat of the Ahoms at the hands of the Koches prompted the Kacharis to despise the power of the Ahoms leading gradually to the recovery of the greater part of the Nowgong district from the control of the Ahoms following the invasion of the Koches. The Kachari kings also held the North Cachar Hills and gradually extended their rule into the plains of Cachar. The failure of the Ahom government to give protection to the Kacharis against the Koches which made them tributary to the latter naturally put to an end to the overlordship of the Ahoms over the Kacharis. In spite of their failure to discharge their duty towards the Kacharis against foreign invasion, the Ahom kings continued to claim their suzerainty over the Kacharis and looked upon them as 'thapita-sanchita'. The Kacharis, however, resented this very much. Ahom-Kachari relations of the 17th century mainly centred round the dispute over the right of the Ahom kings to consider the Kachari kings as their subordinates and the refusal of the latter to accept the former as their overlords.

In the beginning of the 17th century, when Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.) was on the Ahom throne, a king named Jasa Narayan was on the Kachari throne. The change of the tribal name into a Hindu name suggests that by that time Hinduism had come to influence the Kacharis, if not the whole tribe, at least the royal family.

At the beginning of the 17th century, the Kachari king Jasa Narayan invaded the neighbouring Jayantia kingdom and defeated its ruler Dhan Manik.¹⁷

Defeat of the Jayantias by the Kacharis

The latter thereupon submitted and agreed to pay tribute. He also agreed to give two princesses to the Kachari king and made over his nephew and heir apparent Jasa Manik as a hostage. To

16. Gait, E.A., *The Koch kings of Kamarupa*, J.A.S.B., 1893 No. 4, p. 289 ; Gait's *History of Assam*, p. 251.

17. *Kachari Buranji*, p. 21 ; *Jayantia Buranji*, p. 13 ; *Assam Buranji*, S.M., pp. 48-49.

commemorate his victory, Jasa Narayan assumed the title 'Arimardan'* and renamed Brahmapur where Jasa Manik was kept as a hostage as Khaspur.

Soon afterwards the Jayantia king Dhan Manik died. Jasa Narayan thereupon released Jasa Manik from captivity and made him king of Jayantia. It is certain that Jasa Narayan insisted that Jasa Manik should recognise him as his overlord. Jasa Manik resented this very much. But as he himself was unable to offer any effective resistance to the Kacharis, he endeavoured to embroil them with the Ahoms, and thereby take revenge on them. With that end in view he proposed to offer his daughter in marriage to Ahom king Pratap Singha, but requested that he should fetch her not by the usual route of Gobha, but through Satgaon which lay within the Kachari territory.¹⁸ Pratap Singha sent two messengers named Shitalial and Shrikanta to the Kachari king Jasa Narayan, who was regarded as the 'thapita-sanchita' of the Ahom king, to give a passage through his territory to bring the Jayantia princess. The Kachari king refused to give a passage on the plea that the Jayantia king would then find his country accessible and might attack and destroy him. Jasa Narayan moreover detained the Ahom envoys.

Things happened as Jasa Manik desired. The refusal of the Kachari king to give a passage through his territory led to a war between the Ahoms and the Kacharis. Pratap Singha determined to clear a road by force. In 1606 A.D. in the month of Jaistha (May+June) he sent Khamchen Bargohain, Sundar Gohain, Madnokhowa Hazarika and others with an army against the Kacharis. They proceeded up the Kalang to Raha and thence up the Kopili, where they defeated a tributary chief of the Kacharis. They then proceeded via Hanan to Satgaon and devastated it. There the Ahom army got possession of many guns, swords and spears of the enemy. The Ahoms then made an assault on the Maridayang fort of the Kacharis but were repelled with two men killed. The Ahom army then arrived at the junction of the two rivers Dayang and Kopili and halted there where they raised a fort and informed the king of the disaster. In the month of Kati (Oct.+Nov.), king Pratap Singha marched down and halted at Thekerabari. He sent the Burhagohain, the Saring Raja, the Barchetia and many others, putting Lako-Barpatra at the head. They proceeded by the Dhansiri and approached the brick town (i.e. Dimapur) of the Kacharis. Thence they marched on and came to Namalai, a place very near to the first gate of the Kachari capital Maibong. There they stopped and erected a fort. In the month of Aghon (Nov.+Dec.) the Jayantia princess was successfully escorted by Madnokhowa Hazarika

* The Kachari king Jasa Narayan twice changed his name first, after defeating the Jayantia king Dhan Manik and secondly, after defeating the Ahom expedition sent against him. In the former case, he assumed the title 'Arimardan' (meaning 'destroyer of enemies', *Assam Buranji* S. M. p. 49). This Jasa Narayana alias Arimardan was undoubtedly 'Satrudaman' of Gait (*History of Assam*, p. 252). The title Arimardan and Satrudaman mean the same thing. In the latter case, after the defeat of the Ahom expedition, the same Jasa Narayan alias, Arimardan alias Satrudaman assumed the name 'Pratap Narayan'.

18. *Kachari Buranji*, pp. 21-25 ; *Assam Buranji* S. M., pp. 49-53 ; *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 95-96 ; *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp. 51-53 ; *Assam Buranji*, TR. No. 213, Vol. 56, pp. 20-25. }

from Jayantipur to Raha from where the king sent men to escort the princess. The king then returned to his capital, but he left at Demera a strong garrison in charge of Sundar Gohain.

Sundar Gohain afterwards sent messengers to Pratap Singha asking him about his future action. The king desired the complete subjugation of the Kacharis and therefore asked him to attack the Kacharis again. The Pratap Singha orders Sundar Gohain to attack the Kacharis ministers were, however, not in favour of renewing the attack on the Kacharis on the ground that the Kachari Raja had been established and preserved by the ancestors of the Ahom king. Pratap Singha at this replied, "A householder keeps a dog, if it becomes mad and bites men, will not the householder kill such a dog?" Pratap Singha thereby meant that as the Kachari Raja, being his 'thaṛ ita-sanchita' had disobeyed him, he should be punished and that past friendship should not be a hindrance to the adoption of vigorous measures to subdue a refractory vassal chieftain.

Receiving such order Sundar Gohain made preparations to attack Maibong, the Kachari capital. He advanced along the Kopili, stopped at a place by the side of the river and erected a fort there. The Kachari king Jasa Narayan, consulting with his brother Bhimbal Konwar and the nobles decided to stop the advance of the Ahoms by sending peace proposals to them. Accordingly they sent messengers to the Ahoms with proposals of peace. The Ahoms demanded the surrender of Bhimbal and an elephant named Paban. Jasa Narayan, agreed to comply with the demand within a few days. But his brother Bhimbal Konwar opposed the peace proposals and wanted to attack the Ahoms.

In the meantime Sundar Gohain, the commander of the Ahom force became heart-broken having received reports of the king's liaison with his wife. When the Bargohain sent message to him asking him to prepare for war as the stipulated time of the Kacharis was over, he wrote back to the Bargohain as follows—"You should get ready, and I am ready on my part. We dedicate our body and life in the service of His Majesty only for the protection and maintenance of our wives. If we cannot give them protection, what is the good of our exertions here ?.....

.....I am not going to retrace my steps to Garhgaon."¹⁹ Sundar Gohain thus became indifferent to his duties. Taking advantage

of the slackness which now prevailed in the Ahom fort, the Massacre of Sundar Gohain and others by the Kacharis Kacharis, coming stealthily in the night time entered into the Ahom fort and massacred a great number of persons, including Sundar Gohain and the Bargohain. The rest of the Ahom force fled.

19. *Assam Buranjī S. M.*, p. 51.

In *Assam Buranjī S. M.* (p. 53) Bhimbal Narayan is referred to as the uncle of Nar Narayan, the son of Jasa Narayan. The other Buranjis, however, do not mention the relationship.

20 *Assam Buranjī S. M.*, p. 52.

Receiving the news of such a disaster king Pratap Singha ordered his men to retreat and return. The Kachari king Jasa Narayan celebrated his success by assuming the name Pratap Narayan and changing the name of his capital Maibong to Kirtipur. He declared his independence. The Ahom envoys Shitalial and Shrikanta who were at the Kachari court were sent back home by Jasa Narayan with much insult. They were asked to tell their Raja to ask for the heads of the two Gohains to perform their funerary rites.

Jasa Narayan died soon after. He was succeeded by his son Nar Narayan. The latter also died after a very brief reign and was succeeded by his uncle Bhimbal Konwar alias Bhimbal Narayan who had served as commander in chief during the war with the Ahoms. At this period the Kacharis were still in possession of the portion of the Nowgong district which lies to the south of Raha.

In the meantime, the Ahom kingdom was threatened with a Muhammadan invasion in 1615 A. D.²¹ Pratap Singha therefore, inspite of his defeat at the hands of the Kacharis, was unwilling to weaken his resources by continuing the struggle with the Kacharis.²² After due consultation with the three Gohains, king Pratap Singha asked the Saringia Raja and the Barchetia (the Marangikhowa Gohain) to send letters in their name to the Kachari Raja to restore friendly relations between the Ahoms and the Kacharis. Five men were accordingly sent by the Dangarias (i.e. ministers) to bring about a peaceful understanding with the Kacharis. Their efforts succeeded and friendly relations were established between the two kingdoms. The Ahoms were thus relieved of the additional duty of guarding the frontiers on the Kachari side at a very critical moment when a Muhammadan invasion demanded their attention.

The Ahoms then began to make preparations to repel the Muhammadan invasion. Just at that time, the Kachari king Bhimbal Narayan asked for an Ahom girl as a token of friendship. Pratap Singha agreed to give a girl on condition that the Kachari king should come forward up to the Singhaduar* to fetch the girl. Bhimbal Narayan agreed to the proposal. Pratap Singha then sent the daughter of Saringia Sandikoi to Bhimbal Narayan under the escort of the Burhagohain. But the Kachari king did not come to fetch the girl, according to the agreement. So the Burhagohain, according to the advice of the king sent her to the Kachari king in the company of an envoy. The envoy handed over the girl to Bhimbal Narayan. The latter became very glad on receiving the girl. He returned the Ahom envoy with rich presents. Thus friendly

21. The Mohammadan invasion under Saiad Hakim and Said Aba-Bakr—Gait's *History of Assam*, pp. 107-111.

22. *Assam Buranjī* S. M., pp. 56-58 ; *Kachari Buranjī*, pp. 26-29.

* The principal entrance to a city.

relations between the two countries were cemented through matrimonial alliance—the best symbol of friendship.

While the war with the Muhammadans was going on, the Kachari king Bhimbal Narayan, in 1617 A. D. sent two envoys named Ramananda and Samdhara in the company of two Ahom envoys Shrikanta and Shitalial, to the Ahom king with letters and presents.²³ The Kachari king requested the Ahom king through the envoys to hand over the Dimarua king* to him, as the latter had proved unfaithful to him and consequently to the Ahom king also. But Pratap Singha refused to hand over the Dimarua king to the Kachari king on the ground that the former had been 'established and preserved' in his dominions like the latter. When Bhimbal Narayan heard from the envoys that he had been referred to by the Ahom king as 'established and preserved', he became very angry. Because, it implied that the Kachari king was subordinate to the Ahom king. He asked the Ahom envoys when did the Ahom king establish and preserve them. Moreover, he demanded that as the Ahom king had used the term to him, he should fulfil it by offering him a girl. King Bhimbal Narayan sent two envoys in the company of the two Ahom envoys to the Ahom king Pratap Singha demanding a girl for the second time. The application of the term 'thapita-sanchita' by the Ahom king to the Kachari king thus led to quarrel between the Ahoms and the Kacharis.

The Kachari envoys came to the Ahom king Pratap Singha and asked again for a girl to their king. At this, Pratap Singha charged the Kachari envoys for their failure to fetch the girl offered formerly in the proper way and refused to offer another girl for the second time. Thus saying the king sent back the Kachari envoys. The Kachari king Bhimbal Narayan became offended at this, and soon afterwards attacked and conquered a village named Baghargauon within the Ahom kingdom by crossing the

23. *Assam Buranji* S. M., pp. 60-61, 63-64.

* The history of the Dimarua Rajas may be described as follows —In the sixties of the 16th century, between 1562 to 1568 A.D. Pranteswar (or Pantheswar), the Raja of Dimarua, a tributary chief of the Kacharis, owing to their oppression, fled with his followers (14,000) to Nar Narayan, the Koch Raja. Nar Narayan established him on the Jayantia frontier (Jayantia was made tributary to the Koch king Nar Narayan between 1562 to 1565 A. D.) with jurisdiction over a tract ruled by eighteen petty Rajas. Pranteswar regularly paid his tribute to the Koch king. His son Chakradhvaj was imprisoned by Nar Narayan for neglecting to pay tribute for twelve years. To obtain his release, Chakradhvaj sought the protection of Raghu Dev, the nephew of Nar Narayan. On the intercession of Raghu Dev, Chakradhvaj was released and was restored to his principality when the latter became the ruler of the eastern Koch kingdom. His descendants Poal Singha, Ratnakar and Prabhakar paid tribute to Raghu Dev's son Parikshit. Subsequently the Jayantia king Dhan Manik arrested Prabhakar and confined him at Jayantipur. Prabhakar invoked the aid of the Kachari king Jasa Narayan who demanded his release and failing to obtain it, attacked Dhan Manik and defeated him. After the death of Dhan Manik, his son Jasa Manik released Prabhakar and presented him an elephant and one thousand rupees and established him on his principality. Prabhakar's son Mangal, in order to escape from the oppression of the Jayantia king Jasa Manik, sought and obtained the protection of the Ahoms in September 1616 A.D. (Aswin, 1538 saka) during the reign of Pratap Singha (1603-41 A. D.). Thus Dimarua became a protected state under the Ahoms. It was this circumstance that led the Kachari king Bhimbal Narayan to demand the restoration of Dimarua to him.

Assam Buranji S.M., p. 55. ; *Assam Buranji* Tr. No. 259, Vol. 56, pp. 11-12, D.H.A.S.; Gaits' *History of Assam* p. 109.

**Conquest of Baghar-
gaon by the Kacharis
and rupture in Ahom
Kachari Friendship**

Dhansiri.²⁴ Hearing this king Pratap Singha suggested the ministers to erect ramparts at the Kachari frontier to stop repeated incursions of the Kacharis. The ministers, however, did not agree with the proposal of the king and said that the ancestors of the Swargadeo* attacked and killed the enemy and thereby expelled the enemy from this land, but they did not erect any wall as that would have served as an unalterable boundary between the Kacharis and themselves. The ministers further suggested that the best method of fixing the boundary between one territory and another was the establishment of villages along the boundary line, because these could be contracted or expanded according to convenience. According to the advice of the ministers, the king established new villages by the side of the Dayang. Some years later, king Pratap Singha transferred a great number of inhabitants from Abhaypur, Dihing and Namdang to Marangi and established them there for the protection of the country on the Kachari frontier.²⁵ Thus the friendship between the Ahoms and the Kacharis, which was resumed in the reign of the Kachari king Bhimbal Narayan, was again destroyed in the reign of the same king and it was not resumed till his death in 1637 A.D.

Bhimbal Narayan was succeeded by his son Indrabal Narayan.²⁶ The latter, on his accession to the throne sent a friendly message and presents to the Ahom king Pratap Singha.²⁷ They were received by the Barphukan and when they were asked the cause of their visit, they replied that they had been sent by their king to know whether it was true that the Muhammadans, headed by Nawab Mirza Zahina and others had come to invade the Ahom kingdom. When the arrival of the Kachari envoys was reported to the king by the Barphukan, the former asked the latter to bid good-bye to the Kachari envoys asking them to come afterwards to resume friendly relations as the Ahoms were then busy in their fight against the Muhammadans (the Muhammadan invasion of 1638. A.D.). The Kachari king was informed accordingly. This time the Kachari envoys had to come to the Ahom kingdom not by the usual route through Marangi along the Dhansiri valley, but by the route through Raha and Koliabar and henceforth this new route came to be used in all subsequent communications between the two kingdoms. By this time the valley of the Dhansiri had been almost entirely deserted by the Kacharis. That valley had been depopulated in the course of the repeated wars and it was already overgrown with the jungle which now forms the Nambor forest. The opening of this new route to Cachar was followed by the creation of outposts at Raha, Jagi and Kajali. The frontier governors of these three places were known respectively as Rohial Barua, Jagalia Gohain and Kajalimukhia Gohain.²⁸ There were two incumbents to the post of Kajalimukhia Gohain.

24. *Assam Buranji*, S. M., pp. 63-64 ; *Kachari Buranji*, p. 29 ; *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 213, Vol. 56, p. 25 and pp. 79-80. D.H.A.S.

* The Ahom kings were addressed by this title the meaning of which was 'God of Heaven'.

25. *Ahom Buranji*, p. 111 ; *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, p. 65.

²⁶ Gait has referred to him as Indra Ballabh (*History of Assam*, p. 254.)

26. *Assam Buranji* S.M., pp. 71-72 ; *Kachari Buranji*, p. 30. *Assam Buranji* Tr. No. 213, Vol. 56, pp 87-88.

27. Barua, Harakanta, *Assam Buranji*, p. 42 ; Burhagohain Naobaicha Phukan, Padmeswar Singh, *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 109, Vol. IX, p. 321.

The war with the Muhammadans came to an end in 1639 A. D.²⁸ by the conclusion of a treaty under which the Bar Nadi on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, and Asurar Ali on the south were fixed as the boundaries between the Ahoms and the Muhammadan territories. The Ahoms thus did not suffer any territorial loss by the conclusion of this treaty. Here lies the statesmanship of king Pratap Singha. By giving priority to the Muhammadan invasion of 1615 A. D. over that of retaliating the defeat of the Ahoms at the hands of the Kacharis, Pratap Singha proved himself to be one of the ablest statesmen ever ascending the Ahom throne. By his wise decision of patching up his quarrel with the Kacharis by any means in order to fight wholeheartedly with the Muhammadans, he succeeded in saving the Ahom kingdom from passing into the hands of the Muhammadans. By sending peace overtures to the Kacharis and concluding matrimonial alliances with them, he succeeded in keeping the Kacharis under control at a time when the security of his kingdom was hanging in the balance.

Statesmanship of king
Pratap Singha

The conclusion of peace with the Muhammadans again led the Kachari king Indrabal Narayan to try to resume friendly relations with the Ahoms. Naturally he feared that the Ahoms, being freed of Muhammadan invasions might now renew their attack against the Kacharis in order to avenge the defeat and murder of Sundar Gohain and the capture of Baghargaon by Bhimbal Narayan. Accordingly he sent two envoys named Kasinath and Ujandoloi to Momai Tamuli Barbarua, the then Barphukan at Koliabar to resume friendly relations with the Ahoms which had remained strained since the capture of Baghargaon by his father Bhimbal Narayan.²⁹ Unfortunately, however, peace could not be restored this time as the Kachari envoys offended the Barphukan by their oral versions which implied him to be the servant of the Kachari king. However, as the Kachari envoys had come on a peace mission, he asked them to come with formal letters and presents as before and then drove them out of his court.

Kacharis try to re-
sume friendly relations
with the Ahoms

During Momai Tamuli Barbarua's Barphukanship the former Kachari envoys were again sent by the Kachari king Indrabal Narayan to resume friendly relations with the Ahoms.³⁰ This time the Kachari king addressed the Barbarua as 'Namjani Raja', or the Raja of Lower Assam. The loyal Barbarua, considering the use of this designation as a great insult to his liege-lord king Pratap Singha, reported the matter to him. Pratap Singha assured the Barbarua that no offence was involved in the use of the appellation and asked him to receive the envoys in the proper way. The envoys

28. *Kamrupur Buranji*, p. 40.

29. *Assam Buranji S.M.*, p. 75 ; *Kachari Assam*. pp. 30-31 ; *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 213, Vol. 56, p. 98, D.H.A.S.

30. *Assam Buranji S. M.* pp. 77-78 ; *Kachari Buranji*, pp. 31-32 ; *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 213, Vol. 56, pp. 92-93. D.H.A.S.

accordingly went to the Ahom capital and paid their homage to the king and the Dangarias (i.e. three ministers). The Ahom king said to the Kachari envoys that they (i.e. the Ahoms) were in peace terms with the Kachari kings as the latter were 'established and preserved' by his forefathers. He further assured them that if the Kachari king continued to remain in peace, then peace would surely be established. A letter in reply was also written in the same way. When the Kachari king Indrabal Narayan came to learn that he had been called 'established and preserved' by the Ahom king he became very angry and again sent envoys to the Ahom king Pratap Singha demanding a girl for him, as he was called 'established and preserved'. Pratap Singha agreed to give a girl on condition that the brother or son of the Kachari king should come forward to fetch the girl. Thus saying, the Kachari envoys were sent back along with two Ahom envoys. Before they reached the Kachari capital Pratap Singha died.

Pratap Singha was succeeded by his son Surampha, Bhaga Raja (1641-44 A.D.). Hearing of the death of Pratap Singha and of the accession of Surampha on the throne, the Kachari king Indrabal Narayan sent envoys to the Ahom court asking for a girl.³¹ The letter which the envoys brought was sealed with the seal of a Singha and not of a Phukan, i.e. of an independent ruler and not of a subordinate chief. It is seen that since the time of the Kachari king Bhimbab Narayan, the Kachari kings had been taking objection to the application of the appellation 'established and preserved' to them by the Ahom kings as they implied some degree of subordination. So long the powerful king Pratap Singha was no the Ahom throne, they did not dare to proclaim their independent status in their correspondence with the Ahom court. The death of Pratap Singha emboldened them to take this step. But Surampha, who was not ignorant of the diplomatic procedures that were observed in the reign of his predecessor, did not tolerate the assumption of the independent status by the Kachari king and boldly asserted his right to regard him (the Kachari king) as his subordinate chief—being established and preserved in his dominions by his ancestors. He also caused the destruction of the letter brought by the Kachari envoys and expelled them from the court.

In 1644 A. D. the Ahom king Surampha was dethroned and was succeeded by his brother Sutyinpha, Nariya Raja (1644-48 A.D.). In the meantime, the Kachari king Indrabal Narayan also died and Birdarpa Narayan succeeded him. Birdarpa Narayan re-opened communication with the Ahom king Sutyinpha with the hope of establishing friendly relations.³² But as Birdarpa also assumed the status of an independent king like his predecessor Indrabal Narayan, he was told that the style of his letter was unbecoming on the part of a protected prince. Birdarpa objected to the application of the appellation 'protected' and demanded a girl from the Ahom king as it was custo-

31. *Kachari Buranji*, p. 33. ; *Assam Buranji S.M.*, pp. 78-79 ; *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, p. 79.

32. *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp. 83-86; *Assam Buranji S.M.*, pp. 81-82 ; *Kachari Buranji*, pp. 33-36.

mary to offer a girl to a protected prince. The Ahom king Sutyinpha asked the opinion of his ministers whether it would be wise to offer a girl to the Kachari king. The ministers replied that as the Kachari king Bhimbal Narayan did not fetch the Ahom girl offered by king Pratap Singha in a befitting manner, it would be unwise to offer a girl again. It would be wise to make mere promise of a girl without carrying it into practice. The king also became delighted at the advice of his ministers as he had also the secret motive of conquering the Kacharis and accordingly wrote letter to the Kachari king promising him a girl.

Soon afterwards, Nariya Raja died and Jayadhvaj Singha alias Bhagania Raja (1648-63 A. D.) ascended the Ahom throne. Soon after his accession, the envoys of the Kachari king Birdarpa came.³³ But Jayadhvaj Singha refused to accept the letter as it was addressed to his predecessor. The Kachari envoys were sent back to their country along with two Ahom envoys to bring new letters and presents.

Birdarpa Narayan accordingly sent new letters and presents to the Ahom king Jayadhvaj Singha asking for an Ahom bride. Jayadhvaj Singha agreed to offer a girl to him, provided he would convey the bride under the escort of his brother or son. Birdarpa Narayan expressed his inability to comply with the Ahom king's request as both his brother and son were minors.* This led to the ignominious expulsion of the Kachari envoys from the Ahom court. Thus the Ahoms maintained their claim to consider the Kachari king as a subordinate without giving him an Ahom bride in return.

Ahom-Kachari relations after the conclusion of the treaty of 1639 A. D. between the Ahoms and the Muhammadans was nothing but a dispute over the right of the Ahom kings to consider the Kachari kings as their subordinates and the refusal of the latter to recognise the former as their overlords. Just on the eve of the Muhammadan invasion of 1615 A. D. it was the Ahoms who were anxious to cultivate friendship of the Kacharis in order to save their kingdom from the clutches of the Muhammadans. Because it would have been really a suicidal policy on the part of the Ahoms to carry on the war against the Kacharis at a time when a much more powerful enemy than the Kacharis was waiting at the gate to devour their kingdom. The conclusion of the treaty of 1639 A. D., however, completely changed the situation. In place of the Ahoms, the Kacharis now became much more eager to cultivate the friendship of the Ahoms apparently, as stated before, to avert an attack on their kingdom. But all their attempts ended in failure. Because, the Ahoms in the first place, seem to have felt secured regarding the safety of their kingdom for some years at least by the conclusion of the peace with the Muhammadans in 1639 A. D. Secondly, the Ahoms did never want permanent peace with the Kacharis. They only wanted to keep them in good humour by promising to offer them girls while keeping the secret motive of conquering them afterwards.

33. *Assam Buranji S.M.*, pp. 84-85 ; *Kachari Buranji*, pp. 37-38.
According to *Assam Buranji S.M.* he had no brother.

In the meantime, Jayadhvaj Singha (1648-63 A.D.), taking advantage of Emperor Shah Jahan's illness and the war of succession, expelled the Moguls (or Muhammadans) from Gauhati in 1658 A.D. and chased them down beyond the river Manah. He also devastated the territory near Dacca and carried off to Assam a large number of Mogul subjects as captives. Koch Behar had also declared its independence. But Aurangzeb soon consolidated his position on the throne of Delhi, appointed Mir Jumla as the governor of Bengal and ordered him to invade Koch Behar and Assam in order to re-establish Mogul prestige in Eastern India.

A renewal of the war against the Moguls was again apprehended. Consequently, in about the year 1660 A.D. Pikkhai Chetia Neog Barphukan, the successor to Monai Tamuli Barbarua, attempted to restore friendly relations with the Kacharis by any means. Thus, with the change of circumstances, the Ahoms again took the initiative to establish friendly relations with the Kacharis. The new Barphukan combined threat with temptation while he warned the Kachari king Birdarpa Narayan that if he failed to send the usual envoys his country would be invaded. He also held out the bait of an Ahom bride if the Kachari king would resume friendly relations.³⁴ This succeeded and friendly relations were re-established between the two kingdoms which had remained strained for many years. In the course of the exchange of embassies between the two kingdoms, the Kachari king asked for an Ahom girl. The Ahom king also promised to comply with the request of the Kachari king as the latter was his protected chief. In the meantime, at the beginning of 1662 A.D., after occupying Koch Behar, Mir Jumla invaded Assam. So, when a new batch of Kachari envoys arrived at the Ahom capital Garhgaon, king Jayadhvaj Singha sent them back with presents.

For the next twenty years Jayadhvaj Singha and his successors remained completely engrossed in the war with the Moguls. After many ups and downs during which the Ahom capital was for a time occupied by the Moguls, the Ahoms succeeded in checking their advance and in 1682 A.D. king Gadadhar Singha (1681-96 A.D.)³⁵ finally recovered Gauhati from the hands of the Moguls. It had been a struggle for the very existence of the Ahoms and it had at last ended in their triumph. The Kachari king Birdarpa Narayan was not unaware of this deadly conflict in which the Ahoms were engaged, but so great was the prestige of the Ahom state that, even in this hour of distress the Kacharis refrained from taking any effective steps for recovering either their lost territories or frantically disowning the claim to supremacy that the Ahoms had consistently maintained in relation to the Kacharis. Their king Birdarpa Narayan now became anxious for restoring friendly relations with the Ahoms and accordingly sent some envoys to king Gadadhar Singha.

34. *Assam Buranji* S.M., pp. 88-89 *Kachari Buranji*, pp. 39-50. *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 213, Vol. 56, pp. 108-9, D.H.A.S.

35. *Kachari Buranji*, pp. 56-58.

But the Kachari envoys were sent back from Gauhati by the Barphukan at the command of the king and were ordered to come back again with formal letters and presents from the Kachari king in order to resume friendly relations.

Soon after the return of the envoys, Birdarpa Narayan died in 1681 A.D. and was succeeded by his son Garurdhvaj Narayan. He sent a messenger to the Barphukan asking him to send an envoy for establishing friendly relations with the Ahoms. But he was told in reply that peace would not be restored until the Kachari king had himself sent envoys with letters and presents in the usual form to the Ahom king and his chief nobles. Thus saying the messengers were sent back. The success of the Ahoms over the Moguls and the fixing of their western boundary no doubt placed them in a position to belittle the friendship with the Kacharis which was considered to be of much importance during the period of Mogul invasions beginning with 1615 A.D.

During the period of non-interference (1615-82) in the affairs of the Kacharis by the Ahoms, the former seemed to have gradually forgotten their defeats at the hands of the Ahoms and became more and more self-confident and reluctant to accept the hegemony of the Ahoms. The Ahoms, however, in spite of their pre-occupations with the Muhammadan invasions, constantly reminded the Kacharis of their being 'thapita-sanchita', and always resented any move on the part of the Kacharis to assume independent status by repudiating their obligations to the Ahom kings. But the Kacharis, who had been emboldened by the failure of the Ahoms to counter-attack them in the occupation of 'Baghargaon' by the Kachari king Bhimbal Narayan about the year 1617 A.D. and the pre-occupation of them in the repeated Muhammadan invasions of the ahom kingdom since 1615 A.D. tried to violate the conditions of a 'thapita-sanchita territory, and their kings tried to assume the role of independent sovereigns in the course of their peace negotiations of this period with the Ahoms. Moreover, they resented very much the application of the appellation 'protected prince' to them. But matters reached a crisis, when Tamradhvaj Narayan, the Kachari king assumed the role of an independent ruler during the rule of Gadadhar Singha's successor Rudra Singha (1696-1714 A.D.) and wrote his name above the name of Rudra Singha in a letter addressed to the latter in 1699 A.D.³⁶ This resulted in the expulsion of the Kachari envoys from the Ahom court. The Kachari envoys expressed their regret for their ignorance as to the irregularity and discrepancy in the letter. They were, however, received with due honour by the nobles who asked them to come again with customary letters and presents.

The Muhammadan invasions of the 17th century prevents the Ahoms to interfere in Kachari affairs

This leads Kachari king Tamradhvaj to declare his independence

But Tamradhvaj Narayan, instead of acknowledging the overlordship of the Ahom monarch, sent an ambassador to him demanding the restoration of the territory up to Mohong which formerly belonged to the Kacharis.³⁷ King Rudra Singha, considering the demand to be an unwarranted one, expressed "how could the servile Kachari venture to make such a proposal?" The Kachari ambassador was turned out by the order of the Burhagohain.

King Rudra Singha, who was relieved of the trouble of the Mogul invasion of his predecessors' reigns, and inherited the resources of an organised and strengthened government from his father, resolved to reduce the Kachari king to submission, and in 1706 A.D. in the month of Jaistha (May+June), he asked the opinion of his chief nobles in this regard.³⁸ They supported the king's proposal on the ground of hereditary enmity between the two kingdoms. They also felt that an Ahom victory would efface the remembrance of the defeat of Sundar Gohain at the hands of the Kacharis.

A huge army was marshalled out to invade the Kachari kingdom and the whole army assembled at Biswanath in November 1706 A.D. In December 1706 A.D. the expedition against the Kacharis started from Biswanath in two divisions—one under the Dihingia Deka Barbarua through the Dhansiri route, and the other under Pani Phukan through the Kopili route.³⁹

The Barbarua, starting from Biswanath arrived Naga Choki near Dhansiri with his army and formed entrenchments there. From Naga Choki the army proceeded through Deopani, Dilao, Kakajan and Tinimuani to Samaguri fort on the Dijea hill. At each of these places the Barbarua constructed a fort and placed a garrison of troops, in order to maintain communications and facilitate transmission of supplies. In spite of this precaution, the Nagas, who infested in the wilds in the vicinity of the road followed by the Barbarua, gave great trouble by constantly plundering the carriers of supplies on their way to Samaguri. New forces were therefore sent to strengthen the garrisons of the intervening forts to Samaguri which put a stop to the raids of the Nagas. It was particularly the Miri soldiers, which formed part of the army, that defeated the Nagas in several engagements with their bows and arrows.

The march was continued through Marnai, Bagmara and Gerekani to the Namira fort on Nomal hill. In the valley below this hill, about three hundred

37. *Tungkhungia Buranji*, O.U.P., p. 34. The name of the Kachari king is given as Jai Singha, which must be wrong.

38. *Kachari Buranji*, p. 68.

39. *Kachari Buranji*, pp. 89-113; Wade, J.P., *An Account of Assam*, pp. 91-125. There are two accounts of the Kachari expedition given in the *Kachari Buranji*. Here I have accepted the second account which agrees with the account given in Wade's *Account of Assam*.

Barbarua's march to Maibong Kacharis made their first stand. The Ahom forces proved too strong for them and they fled after a very feeble resistance to the hill. One hundred of the Kacharis perished in this skirmish. At Lathee hill, the Kacharis ambuscaded several small parties sent against them and succeeded in killing several Ahom soldiers with their musket balls. But when the Ahoms also began to fire and discharge arrows at them, surrounding from all sides, the Kacharis were defeated with considerable loss and retreated, carrying their dead with them. The Kacharis next took up a position on the Amlakhi hill, but fled on the arrival of the Ahoms at Tarang. The Ahom army continued to pursue the enemies via Nadereng, to the Kachari capital at Maibong. The Ahoms entered Maibong without any opposition and occupied it which was already deserted by its inhabitants. The Ahoms here obtained a good deal of booty, consisting of 700 guns, some of them ornamented with figures in brass, 220 maunds of sulphur, 10 pots of copper, six large copper drums, 120 suits of steel armour, twelve elephant's teeth, 500 swords, 60 buffaloes, 800 cows, 320 persons of different ages and sexes. Many of these articles lay concealed underground.

Having thus achieved his immediate object, the Barbarua entrenched a position at the eastern side of Maibong fortress.

In the meantime the Pani Phukan, the commander of the second division of the Ahom army proceeded from Biswanath by the Kopili route to Raha. As there was no road from this place to the Kachari country, Pani Phukan sent forward some men to clear a road through the jungles. Four Kachari merchants were seized by the Ahoms on their way to Dimarua. They declared their ignorance of the route by land, but offered to show the route by water up to Teteliguri. Pani Phukan accordingly proceeded from Raha to Teteliguri. Then the Ahom army proceeded to Demera via Jamuna, Kotoha, Deodubi and Saralpani. On the way to Demera, the Ahoms sacked several villages belonging to the Kacharis. The Kacharis had also made preparations to repel the invasion, but they were frightened seeing the strength of the hostile army. The Ahoms occupied Demera without any opposition, and as they proceeded further, the inhabitants of the villages along the line of march deserted their homes and fled towards Maibong. After leaving a garrison there the army then entered the hills and continued its arduous march to Nadereng by clearing a road through the jungles and erecting forts at Gelemu, Langla and Garajuri. It took thirteen days to reach Nadereng. Here a letter was received from the Barbarua informing the Pani Phukan that he had already occupied Maibong. The Pani Phukan then proceeded to join the Barbarua at Maibong and covered the remaining portion in two days. He reached Maibong in February 1707 A.D. During his long march he had taken in all 322 prisoners and a small quantity of loot. The Kachari king Tamradhvaj had, however, already fled to Khaspur.

Barbarua had sent report of his victory to king Rudra Singha. But when the king heard that the Kachari king had fled to Khaspur, he ordered the Pani Phukan to stay at Maibong and the Barbarua to march to Khaspur in pursuit of the Kachari Raja.

At Maibong, the Ahom troops suffered greatly from the pestilential climate, and many, including the Barbarua fell ill. The king, who was at Raha, sent repeated orders to the commanders to press on to Khaspur, but they expressed their unwillingness to march to Khaspur on the plea that provisions were running short and many persons had fallen ill. At last, in obedience to very peremptory orders from the king, the Pani Phukan marched as far as Sampani and sent messengers to the Kachari Raja asking him to submit. In the meantime, the Barbarua, who was seriously ill, died on his way to Demera. At last, about the end of March 1707 A.D., the king was compelled to abandon his project of taking Khaspur. He sent order to the Pani Phukan to return from Maibong and keep a garrison at a suitable place by fortifying a fort. The Pani Phukan returned to Demera and a strong garrison, consisting of 31,000 men was left there after constructing a fort. But when the rainy season set in and mortality amongst the troops became serious, the king was obliged to order them to withdraw. A garrison of one thousand was left at the Raha outpost.

While these events were in progress, the Kachari king Tamradhvaj, who had fled to Khaspur was taken a prisoner by the Jayantia king Ram Singha, who at first pretended friendship with him and promised to make a common cause against the Ahoms. Ram Singha kept Tamradhvaj a prisoner at his capital Jayantipur along with some members of his family.

Just at that time, two Assamese Bairagis* or spies entered Jayantipur in course of their wanderings. Tamradhvaj managed to communicate the treacherous conduct of Ram Singha to the Ahom king through the Bairagis. He acknowledged the overlordship of the Ahom king through them, asked forgiveness for his past offences and begged deliverance from his captor. **

Rudra Singha, who was no doubt delighted at the submissive tone of the Kachari Raja's message, coupled with the opportunity thus afforded him to display

* The Bairagis were a class of Spies employed by the Ahom kings. They constituted a distinct 'khel' of their own. Their duty was to visit different countries in disguise of a Samyashi or Fakir (a holy man) and report everything that they saw in those countries, such as, the laws and customs of a country, costumes and ornaments worn by men and women etc.

** According to the first account of the Kachari expedition given in the *Kachari Buranji* (pp. 83-84) and the account given in *Deodhai Assam Buranji* (pp. 125-126), it was the consort of the Kachari Raja Queen Chandraprova who sent letter and presents to king Rudra Singha begging the deliverance of her husband from the hands of his captor.

his power in a new direction, at once sent messages to Ram Singha demanding the immediate release of king Tamradhvaj in order to maintain the peaceful relationship between the two kingdoms. But Ram Singha, on receiving the message, became indignant and refused to comply with the demand of the Ahom king. Two armies were therefore despatched against jayantia by two different routes—one under the Barbarua was to proceed via the Kopili valley and the Kachari country, while the other under the Barphukan was to proceed by the direct route through Gobha and the Jayantia hills. The army started against Jayantia in December 1707 A.D.*

The Ahoms invade the Jayantia kingdom

Interviews between Rudra Singha and Kachari and Jayantia kings

All resistance was overcome by the Ahoms and Jayantipur was occupied by them. Tamradhvaj and Ram Singha were both made prisoners by them. Rudra Singha directed the two captive kings to be produced before him. They were accordingly brought to the Ahom kingdom and were received by Rudra Singha at a Durbar at Biswanath. Tamradhvaj confirmed his allegiance to the Ahom king and ceded the territory up to the Jamuna river. He agreed to pay an annual tribute to the Ahom king consisting of elephants and horses. He also promised to send forty men with two Baruas to serve under the Ahom king. The Kachari king was then given formal permission to return to his own country and was dismissed from the Durbar with numerous presents. He was then escorted to Khaspur by Ahom troops. Henceforth Khaspur came to be the Kachari capital.

King Tamradhvaj Narayan died soon afterwards. He was succeeded by his son Suradarpa Narayan, a boy of nine. He was installed on the throne by some Ahom officers deputed for the purpose by king Rudra Singha.⁴⁰

Rajeswar Singha & the Kachari king Sandhikari

After this, the Ahom records contain no further reference to the Kachari kings for nearly sixty years. In November 1765 A.D. king Rajeswar Singha (1751-69 A.D.) sent messengers to the Kachari king Sandhikari asking the latter to appear before him⁴¹. The Kachari king expressed his unwillingness to receive the messengers and kept them in confinement. When the news reached king Rajeswar Singha, he consulted with his ministers and ordered the Barbarua to proceed with an army against the Kachari king. The Barbarua stopped at Raha with his army and after consulting with the other officers, decided to send envoys to the Kachari king. The Kachari king was greatly terrified hearing the news of the Barbarua's march against him. He ordered to receive the envoys and offer them provisions. Then three Kachari Princes came to the Barbarua with presents and paid him homage by falling prostrate at his feet.

* For the details of the Jayantia expedition, see the *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 80-105 and Gait's *History of Assam* pp. 175-180.

40. Gait, Sir Edward, *A History of Assam*, p. 256; *Jayantia Buranji*, p. 107.

41. *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 286-87.

Subsequently, the Kachari king also came to the Ahom capital at Rangpur with the Barbarua to make his submission to his Ahom overlord. He was accompanied by Raja Jai Singha of Manipur who had taken shelter in the Kachari country, owing to the invasion of his country by the Burmese. Both the rulers were taken before the Ahom king. The Kachari king offered four tusks, eight elephants, two pieces of cloths and many other things as tributes. King Rajeswar Singha, after admonishing the Kachari Raja, allowed him to return to his country. The king gave him gold, silver and some jars as presents.

During the turmoils of the Moamaria insurrection, many Moamarias and other Ahom subjects had taken shelter in the Kachari territory chiefly in the country along the upper reaches of the Jamuna. These Moamarias, in league with the Kacharis living in Nowgong had carried on depredations in Assamese villages. Bijay Barmura Gohain, the grandfather of king Purandar Singha also joined the ranks of the rebels. In the reign of Kamaleswar Singha (1795-1811.) the Ahom king sent a letter to the Kachari king Krishnachandra Narayan, asking him to repatriate Barmura, the fugitives and the Moamarias who had taken shelter in his country. The Kachari king was even given warning that if he did not restore Barmura, the fugitives and the Moamarias, the consequences would be seen with his own eyes. The Kachari king replied in reassuring terms as follows—"From the moment when king Rudra Singha established paternal relationship, attended by all the solemnity of a sacred covenant, by seating Siva Singha on his right thigh and Tamradhvaj Raja on his left, at the holy site of Biswanath, after having rescued Tumradhvaj from among his enemies who were no other than his own kith and kin, the uninterrupted friendship between the two kingdoms has flowed, as it were, in the majestic pace of the Ganges. We still cherish in our heart the same old feelings of amity, though the condition of our respective kingdoms is not what it was in previous years, which has occasioned slight violation of the friendly terms in which we were placed before. Still amicable relationship should be re-established by interchanging letters by meeting the circumstances of the time; and this is the desire of my heart. Let it be said that some of my subjects living at Dharampur did what they ought not to have done out of greed for wealth. But my commands became powerful and the old relationship of father and son became revived, and the two countries have now become as if they are one."⁴² In spite of these protestations of friendship by the Kachari king, he did not abandon his hostile attitude towards the Ahom king and did not give any command to his Kachari subjects to refrain from allying themselves with the fugitive Moamarias in their rebellion against the Ahom government. The Ahom government was compelled to send expeditions against them when the combined forces of the Kacharis and Moamarias burnt down several peaceful villages on the banks of the Kopili river.⁴³ Haripada

42. *Tungkhungia Buranjī*, O.U.P., pp. 144-45.

43. *Ahom Buranjī*, pp. 367-372; *Tungkhungia Buranjī*, O.U.P. pp; 155-158, 161, 170—176, 199-200.

Hostilities with Moamaris and Kacharis in Nowgong Deka Phukan conducted the operations against the insurgents from his headquarters at Narikalguri and Chang-choki. But in the first encounter with them, the insurgents succeeded in killing a large number of the Ahom soldiers and compelled the Deka Phukan to flee with the remnants to Gauhati.

The rebels appeared again at Bebejia and Khagarijan in the north bank of the Kalang. They were aided by the local militia and the Lalungs. The Bacha Rajkhowa and captain Gohain marched against the rebels, and halted at a fort erected at Birah-Bebejia. The rebels came out in a body and burnt down the villages Pathari, Potani-Sijia and Bheleguri. The captain Gohain and Bacha Rajkhowa refrained from fighting and sent the news to the king and the Burhagohain. The Deka Phukan who had been absent from the scene of war now joined the captain Gohain and Bacha Rajkhowa at Birah-Bebejia and together they took their march up the Kalang and arrived at the border of the Kachari country. There they made a stockade and halted. The Deka Phukan renewed his march till he arrived at Charaisaghi near the Kapiili river, where a body of Kacharis coming stealthily in the night time opened fire and succeeded in killing several men and compelled the Ahom army to retreat downstream the Kapiili. The Ahom army was then joined by a new force sent under one Brahmachari Gohain. This time the enemies were defeated and compelled to retreat. The Ahom army then advanced up to Davaka and stopped there by erecting a fort. By advancing upward from Davaka the Ahoms burnt down a number of villages belonging to the enemies. The Kacharis fled away and took shelter in the deepest part of the forest at Demera. The Deka Phukan was then at Davaka. The captain Gohain and Bacha Rajkhowa, who conducted the operations against the enemies proceeded with their armies at first to a fort on the bank of the Jamuna river and then joined with the Deka Phukan.

In the meantime, the Matakas i.e. Moamaris dwelling in the village Barthal came out and pillaged the Demera village. A quarrel then ensued between the Matakas and the Kacharis, precipitated by the refusal of the latter to join the ranks of the former. The Deka Phukan seized this opportunity and escorted the Kacharis to Birah-Bebejia near the Kalang river where they were properly established. This was followed by an unexpected encounter with a separate wing of the combined forces at the mouth of the Kalang river where the rebels were repulsed with heavy casualties. The survivors lost heart and dispersed. Some of the Moamaris and refugees escaped into Khaspur and Jayantipur. Then the Deka Phukan, the Bacha-Rajkhowa and captain Gohain returned with their army to Jorhat. The Kachari-Moamaria war came to an end in 1805 A.D. This marked an end in Ahom-Kachari relationship. The Ahom records do not contain any further reference to the Kacharis till the end of Ahom rule in Assam.

Eight years later the Kachari king Krishna Chandra died and was succeeded by his brother Govinda Chandra in 1813 A.D. Govinda Chandra was the last Kachari

king who had a most chequered career, but that is a different story. On his death in 1832 A.D. without any heir, his state was annexed to the British Indian dominion.

Summary :

The Ahoms appeared on the political scene of Assam in the beginning of the 13th century. But they did not try their strength with the Kacharis, their western neighbour, till the end of the 15th century. The Kacharis were the most important and organised tribe of Assam at that time ruling over an extensive territory covering from the Dikhow in the east to the Kalang on the west. The Kachari kingdom in the 13th century thus included the major part of the Sibsagar district, about half of the Nowgong district and also the district of Cachar. The Ahoms therefore, dared not attack such a strong power till they gathered sufficient strength. But to become the master of the Brahmaputra valley, they must try their strength with the Kacharis who held vast plains territory in their possession.

In the first encounter with the Kacharis that took place about the end of the 15th century, the Ahoms were defeated at the hands of the Kacharis and were compelled to sue for peace. This defeat of the Ahoms made them to proceed very cautiously in dealing with the Kacharis in expanding their dominion towards the west. Therefore, the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.) who had defeated the Chutiyas and annexed their kingdom to his own and thereby extended the boundary of the latter towards the north-east, employed both diplomacy and force with the Kacharis in expanding his dominion towards the west. This policy was rewarded with success and the Kacharis were ultimately defeated and were compelled to recognise the Ahom king as their overlord. Henceforth the Ahom kings looked upon the Kachari kings as 'protected princes' and used the appellation "thapita-sanchita," i.e. "established and preserved" in their communications with them. Unfortunately, however, the Ahom government could not give protection to the Kacharis against the invasion of the Koches in the sixties of the 16th century and thus failed to fulfil their duties towards a protected state. In spite of this the Ahom kings did not give up their claim to consider the Kachari kings as their 'protected princes'. But the Kachari kings resented this very much and tried to regain their independent status whenever the Ahom government was involved in some sort of trouble. This was quite natural on the part of any power enjoying an independent status for a long time.

Thus in the beginning of the 17th century, during the reign of king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.), the Kachari king Jasa Narayan not only disobeyed the order of the Ahom king, but succeeded in winning victory over the Ahom forces sent against him and declared his independence. The Ahom government could not retaliate this defeat by sending another expedition as the Ahom kingdom was threatened with a Muhammadan invasion. But the Ahoms who were endowed with a keen sense of values in political affairs soon patched up their quarrel with the Kacharis by sending

peace-overtures to them in order to fight wholeheartedly with the Muhammadans. In spite of the defeat of the Ahoms, they did not try to renew the quarrel with the Kacharis and followed the policy of peace at any cost with them practically throughout the 17th century when the series of Muhammadan invasions demanded their utmost attention. By giving priority to the Muhammadan invasion of 1615 A.D. in place of the Kachari affairs king Pratap Singha showed his political wisdom at a very critical moment of the history of Assam. Because the invasion of 1615 A.D. was followed by a series of invasions culminating in the sack of the Ahom capital Garhgaon by Mirjumla in 1662 A.D. during king Jayadhwaj Singha's reign (1648-63 A.D.), when the latter was compelled to conclude the humiliating treaty of 1663 A.D. by which the Ahom government agreed to pay annual tribute to the Mogul government. This was a great humiliation to the Ahom power who had carved out an extensive dominion in the Brahmaputra valley by defeating and subduing the aboriginal settlers—the Borahis, Morans, Chutiyas, Kacharis etc. The whole of this dominion along with the very existence of the Ahoms as an independent nation was threatened by the Muhammadan invasions. This threat continued till 1682 A.D. when at last king Gadadhar Singha (1681-1696 A.D.) inflicted the final blow on the Muhammadans at Itakhuli in 1682 A.D. and relieved the Ahom kingdom of further Muhammadan invasions by compelling the latter to recognise the river Manah (the boundary between Kamrup and Goalpara) as the western boundary of the Ahom kingdom. During this period of stress the Ahom control over the Kacharis had been necessarily largely relaxed. In spite of this, however, the Ahom kings did not give up their claim to regard the Kachari kings as their subordinates and kept in tact their prestige as overlords by rigidly enforcing the observance of the legal procedures in their communications with the latter. Even at this hour of distress they did never allow the Kachari kings either to deviate from the observance of the legal procedures or to assume an equal and independent status with the Ahom kings in their dealings with them. This factor was largely responsible for restraining the Kachari kings from taking any effective measure for recovering their lost territories against the Ahoms even at the time when the latter were in dire distress. The Kacharis tried to secure merely the recognition by the Ahom kings of the status of independent kings for themselves. But Gadadhar Singha's son and successor Rudra Singha (1696-1714 A.D.), being freed from the menace of Mogul invasions not only brought the Kacharis to submission but compelled them to cede further plains territories in the southern part of the present Nowgong district. The shrewd policy of the Ahoms thus enabled them to keep the Kacharis under their control even when their very existence was threatened and later on to extend the boundary of the Ahom kingdom towards the west and south. If the Ahoms did not give priority to the Mogul invasion of 1615 A.D. over that of retaliating their defeat at the hands of the Kacharis, the history of Assam certainly would have taken a different turn. The calculations of the Ahoms proved to be correct. They had already occupied the major portions of the plains territory that belonged to the Kacharis and their defeat at the hands of the latter just on the eve of the Mogul invasion of 1615 A.D. did not deprive them of those possessions. But the

Mogul invasions threatened the very existence of their rule in those territories that they acquired through centuries of hard fighting

The policy that the Ahoms followed in dealing with the Kacharis was quite clear. They tried to occupy the fertile plains territory in the Brahmaputra valley that belonged to the Kacharis. They succeeded in achieving their object and wrested almost the whole plains territories in the Sibsagar and Nowgong districts from the Kacharis, save small portion of the southern part of the Nowgong district over which the Kacharis retained their hold. They, however, allowed the Kacharis to rule over their hilly tracts subject to paying annual tribute to the Ahom king and thereby recognise him as overlord. The Ahoms never envisaged the plan of annexing any of the hilly regions to their own kingdom. The immense difficulty that they had to face in sending expeditions to the hills and the heavy expenses that they had to incur as a result of these, must have convinced them of the impracticability of keeping the hilly regions under their control. So, they remained satisfied with receiving allegiance and annual tribute from the hilly regions. This policy was followed in the case of the Kacharis also.

Ahom policy
towards the
Kacharis

Though circumstances compelled the Kacharis to recognise the hegemony of the Ahoms and abandon their plains territories to them, they did not give up their hostile attitude towards the Ahoms till the end of Ahom rule in Assam. This was clearly proved during the time of the Moamaria rebellion when, inspite of repeated appeals from the Ahom king Kamaleswar Singha (1795-1810 A.D.), the Kachari king Krishnachandra Narayan did not try to dissuade his subjects from allying themselves with the fugitive Moamarias who had taken up arms against the Ahom government.

It should be remembered in this connection that the migrations of the Kacharis from one place to another at the pressure of the Ahoms were shared in only by their king and a few of his followers. The great bulk of the Kacharis remained behind and became subjects of the Ahom government. The Ahoms were naturally liberal in their social outlook. So intermarriages between the Ahoms and the Kacharis naturally took place in course of time as in the case of the conquered Chutiyas. But the number of such inter Ahom-Kachari marriages was not so large as in the case of the Chutiyas. This was probably due to several factors. In the first place, while the Kacharis were gradually pushed back from their plains territories by the Ahoms the Chutiyas were conquered at one stroke. Secondly, the Kacharis were neither deprived of their whole possession nor was their royal family ousted from ruling power over the hilly tracts (also a small portion of the plains territory) that usually remained in their hands. But this was not the case with the Chutiyas. Their whole country was annexed by the Ahoms and along with it their royal family was deprived of its power and prestige. The Chutiyas therefore could not reconcile their lot to such a sudden change of circumstances easily and rebelled against Ahom autho-

rity several times. So the Ahoms, it seems, had to adopt a policy of free mixing and intermarriages with the Chutiyas as a policy in order to pacify them and reconcile them to the changed circumstances. The annexation of the Chutiya kingdom and the deprivation of their royal family of power and prestige and their forced migration from Sadiya, made the Chutiyas leaderless and left them without any practical bond of racial unity. The absence of these things on the one hand and the liberal policy followed by the Ahoms in social and political matters on the other hand made the Chutiyas identify their lot with the Ahoms. But in the case of the Kacharis the continued existence of their kingdom with a king of their own notwithstanding his more limited resources and a subordinate status, served to perpetuate the memory of their glorious independent days and kept their racial unity in tact. That was why, as Dr. S.K. Bhuyan has pointed out, the Kachari kingdom with its capital at Dimapur, Maibong and Khaspur was looked upon by the scattered Kacharis as the lingering symbol of their racial unity; and wherever they lived they maintained some sort of allegiance to the Kachari monarch and paid tribute to him.⁴⁴ Dr. Buchanan Hamilton mentions the existence of the custom in every Kachari family of contributing a few rupees annually to the ruler of Cachar not as a tax but as a pecuniary token of their racial identity. He wrote in 1808,—“The Kacharis derived their name usually given to them from the name of their territory—Cachar; for my people* say that the proper name of the people is Boro. Although long separated from their prince, and scattered through dominions of more powerful sovereigns, they still retain their loyalty and every year contribute to give them support. Each family, wherever settled, gives from one to five rupees, which are collected by persons regularly deputed from Cachar.”⁴⁵ Buchanan Hamilton found 200 such families in the Bengal district of Rangpur, which comprised in those days a large portion of modern Goalpara. The Ahom policy of absorption was not however ineffective. The issues of the mixed marriages as well as individual Kacharis of ability were treated with consideration and were given their due weight in the Ahom state. Some of them were even admitted into the rank of the Ahom nobility. Thus in the reign of king Rudra Singha (1696-1714 A.D.), for example, we find a descendant of Kachari holding the post of Bargohain.⁴⁶ Reduction of the recalcitrant and reconciliation of those who submitted and remained loyal were the guiding principles that regulated the relations of the Ahoms with the Kacharis.

44. Bhuyan, S.K., *Kachari Buranji*, Introduction, p. XV.

* The term ‘my People’ referred to the people of Goalpara and Rangpur where Buchanan Hamilton stayed from 1807—1809 and carried on his survey of Assam. Hamilton, Francis, *Account of Assam*, edited by Dr. S.K. Bhuyan, p. VI.

45. Montgomery Martin’s *Eastern India*, Vol. III, p. 549; Quoted by Bhuyan, S.K., in his *Kachari Buranji* in the Introduction, pp. XV-XVI.

46. Barua Golap chandra, *Ahom Buranji*, p. 31.

CHAPTER VI

(A). Protectorate over the Jayantias

The Khasi and Jayantia hills district is split up into two divisions,—the Khasi hills proper and the Jayantia hills. The Khasi hills form the western portion of the district and the Jayantia hills the eastern. The Khasis inhabit the Khasi hills proper, and a Khasi tribe called Syntengs (or Panar or Pnar) the Jayantia hills. The kingdom of Jayantia, the western neighbour of the Kacharis, included two entirely distinct tracts of country, viz., the Jayantia hills and the plains country south of these hills and north of the Barak river in the Sylhet district, now known as the Jayantia Parganas. Its capital Jayantipur was situated at the foot of the Jayantia hills on the southern side of the plain between the Surma river and the hills.¹

Ahom-Jayantia Relations :

The Ahom kingdom was extending from the east to the west. By the first half of the 16th century, during the reign of Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.), the Ahoms had succeeded in extending their western boundary up to the Kalang river in the Nowgong district by defeating the Kacharis. To the west of the Kachari kingdom lay the land of the Jayantias and at the beginning of the 17th century when king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.) was on the Ahom throne, the Ahoms first came in contact with the Jayantias or the kingdom of Jayantia. The Jayantia king himself took the initiative for establishing friendly relations with the Ahom king. There are two versions describing the circumstances that led the Jayantia king to aspire for the friendship of the Ahom king. According to one version, the Kacharis had trade relations with the Bangals * at Syrat, (i.e. Sylhet) which they reached via Mulagul, within the Jayantia region just a few miles to the southeast of Jayantipur.² The Jayantias took objection to it, demanded payment for the use of it and plundered the commodities of the Kacharis in lieu of such payments. Hearing this the Kachari king

1. For further details about the Jayantias refer Sir Edward Gait's *History of Assam*, pp. 259-60; Waddell, L.A., *Tribes of the Brahmaputra valley*, J.A.S.B., 1900, No. 1, pp. 45-46, 66

* The word 'Bangal' in Assamese stands for 'foreigners' in general.

2 Bhuyan, S.K., *Jayantia Buranj*, pp. 10-12. One important point to be remembered in this connection is that in the *Jayantia Buranj*, the name 'Garos' is used in several places while speaking of the Jayantias and the inhabitants of Khyrim. The name Garos is still used by the inhabitants of Kamrup in speaking of their Khasi neighbours to the south. Refer Gurdon, P.R.T., *The Khasis*, Introduction, p. XV.

Jasa Narayan marched against the kingdom of Jayantia. In the first encounter with the Jayantias, the Kacharis were defeated. But in the second encounter the Jayantias were defeated and Mulagul was fixed as the boundary between Cachar and Jayantia. But the dispute between the Kacharis and the Jayantias continued. The Kacharis, by assuming a friendly attitude towards the Jayantias invited them to a feast on the bank of the Kopili and treacherously murdered a great number of them. Soon afterwards the Kachari prince named Bhimbal Konwar, brother of king Jasa Narayan, attacked Jayantia, defeated its king Dhan Manik and made him a prisoner. Dhan

The Kacharis
defeat the Jayan-
tias

Manik, however, mysteriously escaped from the prison after some time and made peace with the Kachari king Jasa Narayan by making over to him his two sisters named Mukta Rani and Amar Sena and nephew Jasa Manik (son of Mukta Rani) as hostages.** On the

death of Dhan Manik, Jasa Manik was released from his captivity along with his mother and was made king at Jayantipur.***

The second version of the cause of quarrel between the Kacharis and the Jayantias is as follows : At the beginning of the 17th century, the Jayantia king Dhan Manik seized Prabhakar, the chief of Dimarua. A brief history of the Dimarua Rajas is indispensable in order to understand the subsequent developments in the relationship between the Kacharis and the Jayantias and between the Ahoms and the Jayantias. In the sixties of the 16th century, between 1562 to 1568 A.D. Pranteswar, the Raja of Dimarua, who was a tributary chief of the Kacharis, being exasperated at the oppression of the Kacharis (the name of the Kachari king was Megh Narayan) fled with his followers (14,000) to Nar Narayan, the Koch king.* Nar Narayan established him on the Jayantia frontier (Jayantia was made tributary to the Koch king Nar Narayan by Chilarai between 1562 to 1565 A.D.) with jurisdiction over a tract ruled by eighteen petty kings.* Pranteswar regularly paid his tribute to the Koch king. His son Chakradhvaj was imprisoned by Nar Narayan for neglecting to pay tribute for twelve years. To obtain his release, Chakra-

** There is a slight discrepancy on this point on which there are two versions. According to one Dhan Manik's daughter Sandhyawali was sent to the Kachari king, while according to the other his two sisters Mukta Rani and Amarsena and his nephew Jasa Manik were sent.—(*Jayantia Buranji*, p. 13). The second version seems to be correct in view of the fact that it is supported by other Buranjis where we get another version of the cause of quarrel between the Kacharis and the Jayantias.

*** In another Chronicle, portions from which have been published as additional matter in the *Jayantia Buranji*, we are told that the Jayantia king who suffered defeat at the hands of the Kacharis and was made a prisoner, was Jasa Manik and not Dhan Manik. (*Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 164-166). But the lists of Jayantia kings given in the *Jayantia Buranji* (pp. 7 and 9), by Sir Edward Gait (*History of Assam*, pp. 261 and 263) and also reference made to the Jayantia kings Dhan Manik and Jasa Manik in other Buranjis show that it was Dhan Manik and not Jasa Manik who suffered defeat at the hands of the Kacharis. (*Assam Buranji S. M.*, pp. 48-49).

3. *Assam Buranji*, S.M., p. 55; *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 259, Vol. 56, pp. 11-12, D.H.A.S.

* According to Gait Pranteswar was established on the Jayantia frontier with jurisdiction over a tract inhabited by about 18,000 people. (*History of Assam*, p. 109). But none of the Buranjis dealing with the history of the Dimarua kings, which I have followed, supports the statement of Gait. (*Assam Buranji S.M.*, p. 55; *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 259, Vol. 56, pp. 11-12, D.H.A.S.)

dhvaj sought the protection of Raghu Dev, the nephew of Nar Narayan. On the intercession of Raghu Dev, Chakradhvaj was released and was restored to his principality when the latter became the ruler of the eastern Koch kingdom in 1581 A.D. His descendants Poal Singha, Ratnakar and Prabhakar paid tribute to Raghu Dev's son Parikshit. The Jayantia Raja Dhan Manik subsequently arrested Prabhakar and confined him at Jayantipur. Dhan Manik arrested Prabhakar most probably due to the fact that the establishment of the Dimarua king on the Jayantia frontier had proved to be a stumbling block to Jayantia's scheme of territorial expansion towards the Brahmaputra valley and that it also hampered commercial intercourse with the plains. The quarrel between Parikshit and Lakshmi Narayan, successors to Raghu Dev and Nar Narayan respectively, undoubtedly offered the opportunity to Dhan Manik to seize Prabhakar, the Dimarua king.* Prabhakar invoked the aid of the Kachari king Jasa Narayan the former overlord of his family. Jasa Narayan demanded the release of Prabhakar.⁴ But the Jayantia king Dhan Manik refused. Failing to obtain the release of Prabhakar, Jasa Narayan invaded the Jayantia kingdom, defeated Dhan Manik and compelled him to sue for peace. Dhan Manik acknowledged himself a tributary of the Kachari monarch and made over to him two princesses named Mukta Rani and Amersena along with his nephew and heir-apparent Jasa Manik as hostages.

Soon afterwards the Jayantia king Dhan Manik died. Jasa Narayan, the Kachari king, thereupon released Jasa Manik from his captivity, presented him an elephant and a sum of one thousand rupees and established him on his principality. Prabhakar's son Mangal, in order to escape from the oppression of the restored Jayantia king Jasa Manik (1605-1625 A.D.), sought and obtained the protection of the Ahoms during the reign of king Pratap Singha (1603-41) in September 1616 A.D. (Aswin, 1538 saka). From this time Dimarua became a protected state under the Ahoms in place of the Kacharis. This became one of the causes of quarrel between the Ahoms and the Kacharis in the 17th century. The Kachari kings demanded the restoration of Dimarua to them while the Ahom kings refused to concede their demand on the ground that Dimarua was a protected state.

It is certain that the Kachari king Jasa Narayan, after making Jasa Manik the king of Jayantia, insisted that Jasa Manik should recognise him as his overlord.

* According to the *Assam Buranji* S.M., p. 55, and *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 259, pp. 11-12, D.H.A.S. Dhan Manik seized the Dimarua king Prabhakar when Parikshit was taken a prisoner by the Moguls about 1614 A.D. This statement, however, must be wrong, because in 1614 Dhan Manik was no longer living. He died in 1605 A.D. and was succeeded by Jasa Manik (1605-1625).—Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, pp. 261-63. Gait's chronology is supported by the *Ahom Buranji* (p. 95) according to which the Ahom king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.) sent men to escort the Jayantia princess offered to him by the Jayantia king Jasa Manik in May, 1606 A.D.

4. *Assam Buranji* S.M', pp. 48-49.

5. *Assam Buranji*. Tr. No. 259, Vol. 56, pp. 11-12, D.H.A.S.

Jasa Manik resented this very much. He became determined to take revenge on the Kacharis. But as he himself was unable to offer any effective resistance to the Kacharis, he endeavoured to embroil them with the Ahoms and thereby take revenge on them. With that end in view, he proposed to offer his daughter in marriage to Ahom king Pratap Singha, but requested that he should fetch her not by the usual route of Gobha,* but through Satgaon and Tcteliguri which lay within Kachari territory. The Ahom king Pratap Singha thereupon sent messenger to the Kacharis king Jasa Narayan asking him to give a passage to his messengers and troops through his territory to bring the Jayantia princess. The Kachari king refused a passage through his kingdom on the plea that the Jayantias were his enemies and consequently war broke out between the Ahoms and the Kacharis. The Kacharis were defeated in the first encounter with the Ahoms and the Jayantia princess was conveyed to the Ahom kingdom through the Kachari territory in 1606 A.D. But subsequently the Ahoms were badly defeated at the hands of the Kacharis and were compelled to establish friendly relations with them without attempting at retaliation on account of the Muhammadan invasion which threatened the Ahom kingdom in 1615 A.D.**

In order to strengthen the bonds of friendship with the Ahoms, the Jayantia king Jasa Manik offered to king Pratap Singha another princess who was escorted by Lai Sandikai through the usual Gobha route.⁷ Thus by matrimonial alliances the Jayantia king Jasa Manik established friendly relations with the Ahoms and on the strength of this friendliness he requested king Pratap Singha to give him a plot of land with the Kalang river as the boundary in order to establish a fair at Phulaguri (north of the Kalang).⁸ When Langi Panisiya (1618-1631 A.D.), the first incumbent, to the newly created post of Barphukan or viceroy of the territory west of Koliabar was asked by king Pratap Singha to give his opinion on this matter, he agreed to give permission to the Jayantias on condition that they would supply fish and fuel to the Barphukan at Kajalimukh. The Jayantias agreed to comply with the condition and the Ahom government gave them the permission to establish the fair at Phulaguri. This was the beginning of commercial intercourse between the two kingdoms on governmental basis. So long the office of the Barphukan was at Kajalimukh the Jayantias complied with the condition imposed on them. When the office of the Barphukan was

* The province of Gobha was one of the main entrances or passes leading to the Jayantia kingdom.

6. *Assam Buranji* S.M., pp. 49-53; *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 13-17; *Deodhal Assam Buranji*, pp. 51-53 *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 95-96.

** For the details of Ahom-Kachari war, refer. ante, chapter V on "Pushing back of the Kacharis"

7. *Jayantia Buranji*, p. 17.

8. *Ibid.* p. 17 and p. 168.

shifted to Gauhati in 1667 A.D. this agreement expired.* Thus the early relations of the Jayantias with the Ahoms were all in favour of the Jayantias who had exploited these relations, first, to wreak vengeance on the Kacharis and secondly, to establish commercial relations with the Ahom kingdom.

The Jayantias, however, very soon proved to be unfaithful friends. In the reign of king Pratap Singha, taking advantage of the absence of the Ahom guard at the Kalang outpost on the other side of the river, the Jayantias set fire to it. But they reconstructed it on receiving threats from Sandikai Barphukan (1631-36 A.D.), the successor to Langi Panisiya.⁹

Establishment of protectorate over the Jayantias by the Ahoms :

The establishment of commercial intercourse between the Ahoms and the Jayantias in the reign of king Pratap Singha was followed by the appointment of frontier officers, one at Jagi and the other two at Kajalimukh.¹⁰ The former was known as Jagalia Gohain. He was appointed from the family of the Burhagohain and one of the latter two, from the family of the Bargohain and the other from the Barpatra Gohain. The latter post was thus a joint post. They were known as Kajalimukhia Gohains. The duty of the former was to inform the Ahom government about the jayantias, and of the latter was to watch over the Jayantias and the province of Dimarua alike. Thus friendship with the Ahoms imposed upon the Jayantias some degree of subordination too.

In the reign of Sutamla alias Jayadhvaj Singha (1648-63 A.D.) the relations between the Ahoms and the Jayantias suddenly took a different turn. In 1648 there was a palace revolution in the Ahom capital and Sutamla alias Jayadhvaj Singha usurped the throne. Thinking evidently that the usurper's hold upon the throne would not be strong, the contemporary Jayantia king Jasamattarai sent envoys to the Ahom king Jayadhvaj Singha soon after his accession to the throne to offer his felicitations coupled with a request to give back the provinces of Dimarua, Gobha, Neli and Khala.¹¹

* The office of the Barphukan was first established at Kajalimukh in 1618 A.D. and it remained there till the end of 1637 A.D. when it was shifted further east to Koliabar at the pressure of the Muhammadans who succeeded in capturing the Kajali fort temporarily. By the treaty of 1639 the Bar Nadi on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, and the Asurar Ali on the south, were fixed as the boundaries between the Ahom and the Muhammadan territories. During the next thirty years (1637-67) the country west of this boundary line remained in undisputed possession of the Muhammadans.

9. *Jayantia Buranji*, p. 17 and p. 168.

10. Barua H.K., *Assam Buranji*, p. 42; Naobaicha Phukan, Padmeswar Singha, *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 109, Vol. IX, p. 321, D.H.A.S.

11. Dutta, S.K., *Assam Buranji* (1648-81 A.D.), pp. 3-4; *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 146-47. In the *Ahom Buranji* the names of the provinces are given as Dumarua, Kuphanali and Kaoban which were obviously Dimarua, Gobha, Neli and Khala as given in the *Assam Buranji*. Gait, however, has followed the *Ahom Buranji* and has accepted Kuphanali as given in that *Buranji* in place of Gobha and Neli. (Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 125) Evidently he has committed an error, because there is no place named Kuphanali on the Jayantia frontier. All the three provinces of Gobha, Neli and Khala lay a few miles south-west of Raha at the foot of the Khasi and Jayantia Hills which now fall within the Nowgong district.

These provinces of Gobha, Neli and Khala, situated at the entrances of the three passes of the same name leading to the Jayantia kingdom, formerly belonged to the Jayantia king. But during the period of Muhammadan invasions of Assam the chiefs of these provinces also made their submission to the Ahom king and the latter subsequently established them in their ancestral possessions and thereby made them tributary to the Ahom government. But on account of their being situated at the entrances of the three important passes leading to the Jayantia hills the Jayantias resented the Ahom domination over them. Therefore the Jayantia king Jasamattarai requested the Ahom king Jayadvaj Singha to give back those provinces. But the Ahom king declined to give them back and said, 'It has been a tradition that the kings make friendship by exchanging princesses, elephants, horses and other presents and not by ceding territories.'¹² The king further said that these provinces were merged in his territory and were distributed amongst some frontier chiefs, so it would not be possible to return the provinces. He asked the Jayantia envoys to take some gold instead. With this the Jayantia envoys were sent back.

The Jayantia king demands the return of Dimarua, Gobha, Neli & Khala

Most probably as a reprisal for this, the Jayantia king Jasamattarai in 1648 A.D., seized an Assamese trader named Jaihari Mudoi, who had been granted permission by the Ahom government to go to the Jayantia frontier for trading purposes.¹³ He was made a prisoner and his properties were confiscated. Jaihari Mudoi was subsequently released * on the representation of the Ahom king, but his property was not given up on the plea that the trader was not the subject of the Ahom king as the latter did not write for the property in the letter addressed to the Jayantia king. Jayadvaj Singha thereupon retaliated by arresting a number of Jayantia traders at Sonapur and closing the passes and market places for the Jayantia traders. This led to a cessation of all intercourse between the two countries for about eight years.

Capture of an Ahom trader by the Jayantias leads to the closure of the passes & markets by the Ahoms

The closing of the passes and the market places by the Ahom government led the Jayantia king Jasamattarai to take the initiative to re-establish friendly relations with the Ahoms. With that end in view in 1655 A.D. he sent two envoys to the Barphuka at Koliabar.¹⁴ With the permission of king Jayadvaj Singha the Barphukan asked the Jayantia envoys to come formally with letters and presents as before and sent back the Jayantia envoys accompanied by two Ahom envoys. But

12. Dutta, S.K., *Assam Buranji* (1648-81 A.D.) p.4.

13. *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 19-20; *Assam Buranji S.M.*, pp. 85-86.

* Gait says that as the Jayantia king refused to release Jaihari Mudoi, Jayadvaj Singha retaliated by arresting a number of Jayantia traders at Sonapur. (*History of Assam*, p. 126). But neither the *Jayantia Buranji*, nor the *Assam Buranji*, S.M., support the statement of Gait. According to these *Buranjis* the trader was released, but his properties were not given up.

14. *Jayantia Buranji*, p. 20; *Assam Buranji S.M.*, p. 86.

the Jayantia king sent back the Ahom envoys as they did not bring the Jayantia traders with them. Subsequently, when the Jayantia traders were released by the Ahom government, friendly relations were re-established between the two kingdoms.

In order to understand the subsequent developments in the relationship between the Ahoms and the Jayantias it is necessary to review the political situation of western Assam early in the 17th century. In the 17th century, from 1615 to 1682 A.D., suzerainty over western Assam fluctuated between the Ahoms and the Moguls. According to the treaty concluded in 1639 A.D. between the Ahom general Momai Tamuli Barbarua and the Mogul commander Allah-yar-Khan, western Assam from the Barnadi on the north bank of the Brahmaputra and Asurar Ali on the South bank, including Gauhati, passed into the hands of the Moguls. The Moguls remained in undisputed possession of these territories till 1667 A.D. Taking advantage of the war of succession that ensued amongst the sons of emperor Shah Jahan, when the Mogul emperor fell ill in 1658 A.D. king Jayadvaj Singha expelled the Moguls from Gauhati (1658) and chased them down beyond the river Manah (or Monas). He also devastated the territory near Dacca and carried off to Assam a large number of Mogul subjects as captives. Koch Behar also declared its independence. Having consolidated his position on the throne of Delhi Aurangzeb ordered Mir-Jumla, the governor of Bengal to invade Koch Behar and Assam and to re-establish Mogul prestige in Eastern India. Mir-Jumla occupied Koch Behar by the close of the year 1661 A.D. and then, by January 1662 A.D. he set forth on his invasion of Assam. The feeble resistance offered by the Assamese at the several garrisons was easily overcome by Mir-Jumla who at last entered Garhgaon, the Ahom capital, on the 17th of March, 1662. King Jayadvaj Singha had fled to the hills of Namrup. The

Mogul army remained in occupation of Garhgaon for nine months when it was withdrawn after a treaty was concluded by the Ahom government with Mir-Jumla on the 9th January, 1663 A.D. According to the terms of this treaty the Ahom government agreed to pay a large indemnity to the Moguls as compensation. They also agreed to pay an annual tribute and ceded to the Mogul Emperor of Delhi the country west of the Bharali river on the north bank of the Brahmaputra and the Kalang on the south.

During the occupation of Eastern Assam by the Moguls the Jayantia king Jasamattarai had sent envoys to the Ahom king; but they were captured by the Moguls. After the withdrawal of the Imperial army from Garhgaon in January 1663 A.D. king Jayadvaj Singha returned to the capital and wrote a letter to the Jayantia king expressing his regret at the capture of the Jayantia envoys by the Moguls.¹⁵ King Jayadvaj Singha also wrote a letter to Manik Singha, the Raja of

Nartang and the vassal chief of Jayantia, asking him to send the Ahom envoys safely to Jayantia. The letters were written on 20th March, 1663 A.D.

In reply to king Jayadvaj Singha's letter the Jayantia king Jasamattarai wrote to him expressing his profound sorrow at the discomfiture of the Ahoms at the hands of the Moguls.¹⁶ However, he consoled Jayadvaj Singha by saying that the Moguls had simply invaded his country, but they could not hold it permanently under their domination. He further said that Jayantia and Garhgaon were not separate and divisible and asked the Ahom king to organise more effective co-operation between the Ahoms and the Jayantias in order to wreak vengeance upon the Moguls.

Jayantia king desires to co-operate with the Ahoms against the Moguls

The Raja of Nartang, the vassal chief of the Jayantia king, went a step further in expressing his sorrow at the attack of the Ahom kingdom by the Moguls. He wrote that king Jayadvaj Singha had regretted in his letter of the capture of two of their subjects by the Moguls, but they would not have been sorry even if they had lost ten or twenty thousand men for his sake.¹⁷ He was rather sorry that he could not render any assistance to him in his dire distress. Like his overlord, the Jayantia king, he also asked the Ahom king to make co-operation with the Jayantias to take revenge upon the Moguls—their common enemy. The letters were written on 24th May, 1663 A.D. and reached Garhgaon on 28th August of the same year.

The Jayantia king no doubt posed himself as a true friend of the Ahom king in his letter addressed to the latter. But he tried all the same to exploit the weak position of the Ahom king* to his own advantage to assert his equality with the latter (i.e. the Ahom king). This was clearly indicated in the oral message that he communicated to king Jayadvaj Singha through his envoys. He requested the Ahom king to write thenceforward to him and his ministers write to the ministers of the former (i.e. the Jayantia king) instead of writing to the Jayantia king.¹⁸ Ordinarily this was a simple request. But in diplomacy it had greater significance. Since the establishment of friendship between the Ahoms and the Jayantias the Ahom kings claimed their supremacy over the Jayantia kings and because of this not only he, but his ministers also wrote to the Jayantia king instead of writing to his ministers. Now, if the request of the Jayantia king was complied with it would mean that the Ahom king had recognised the Jayantia king as his equal. But even after Mir-Jumla's victory over the Ahoms, the Ahom government was determined to uphold their supremacy over the Jayantias. Therefore king Jayadvaj Singha expressed his unwillingness to

But he tries to assert his equality with the Ahom king

16. *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 22-23.

17. *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 24-25.

* Invasion of Mir-Jumla, sack of Garhgaon and the conclusion of the humiliating treaty of January 1663 A.D. all betrayed the weakness of the Ahom king.

18. *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 25-26.

comply with the request of the Jayantia king and asked his ministers to dismiss the Jayantia envoy without giving him any present and an Ahom envoy to accompany him.

In the meantime, in November 1663 A.D. king Jayadvaj Singha died and Chakradhvaj Singha was placed on the Ahom throne. Rukma Burhagohain, the prime minister, said to the new king that there was no irregularity in the letter of the Jayantia king. So the Jayantia envoy should be sent back formally.¹⁹ Accordingly letters were written by king Chakradhvaj Singha (1663-1669 A.D.) to the Jayantia king Jasamattarai and to the chief of Nartang expressing his gratitude for the sympathy shown to him in his distress. He also reminded them of the long existing friendship between the two kingdoms and asked them to continue the hitherto observed formalities in order to maintain the same. The three ministers also wrote to the Jayantia king stating that on account of their indissoluble friendship, Garhgaon and Jayantipur have been considered to constitute a single house. Such friendship was not established with any other state. Therefore they also requested him to observe the hitherto observed formalities in order to maintain the long established friendship. Jasamattarai and his vassal, the chief of Nartang also wrote in return to the Ahom king and three ministers soliciting the continuation of friendship between the two kingdoms, so that they might unite to defeat the Moguls—their common enemy.²⁰ But

Non observance
of diplomatic
procedure leads
to temporary
breakdown of
relationship

Unfortunately, as the letter addressed to the Ahom king by the chief of Nartang did not contain the usual designations generally used in addressing a superior, Chakradhvaj Singha, pointing it out to be a great mistake, asked the prime minister to dismiss the Jayantia envoys with letters from the Gohains (i.e. the three ministers) and the Barphukan only. This led to cessation of intercourse between the two kingdoms for some time.

In March 1666 A.D. the Jayantia king Jasamattarai took the initiative to break the deadlock and accordingly wrote letters to the Ahom king Chakradhvaj Singha, his ministers and the Barphukan, expressing his regret at the sudden stoppage of the exchange of diplomatic correspondence with him by sticking to a minor error.²¹ He requested them to act in such a way as would strengthen the friendship between the Ahoms and the Jayantias.

In reply to the above letters, in November 1666 A.D. king Chakradhvaj Singha, his ministers and the Barphukan wrote back to the Jayantia king Jasamattarai stating that it was he who had been responsible for the breakdown of friendship

19. *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 26-28.

20. *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 28-30.

21. *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 31-32; Historical letters of the Ahom period, Transcript No.1, Vol. 1, pp. 108-112, D.H.A.S.

between the two kingdoms by failing to observe the usual formalities* in addressing a superior.²² They requested him to follow the old procedure so that the old friendship between the two kingdoms could be maintained.

In the meantime in August 1667 A.D. the Ahoms re-occupied Gauhati from the hands of the Moguls and gradually drove them across the Manah (or Monas) river. The success of the Ahoms against the Moguls changed the attitude of the Jayantia king Jasamattarai towards the Ahom king. Instead of trying to secure an equal position with the Ahom king, which he had been trying to establish since the defeat of the Ahoms at the hands of Mir-Jumla in 1662 A.D., he now became anxious for re-establishing friendly relations with the former by any means. With that end in view, in October 1667 A.D. he wrote letters to the Ahom king Chakradhvaj Singha and his ministers communicating his desire to offer his niece in marriage to Chakradhvaj Singha in order to strengthen the bonds of friendship between the two kingdoms.²³ Moreover, he expressed his extreme delight in re-occupation of the lost territories by the Ahoms from the hands of the Moguls and informed them that he had kept completely ready for despatch a contingent of soldiers by the Dimarua route. He was only waiting for definite instructions from king Chakradhvaj Singha.

In December, 1668, king Chakradhvaj Singha, the three ministers and the Barphukan wrote in reply to the Jayantia king that they were still maintaining the long established friendship between the two kingdoms.²⁴ Regarding the proposal made by the Jayantia king offering his niece in marriage with the Ahom king, they replied that he should have offered his niece only if he had no daughter, because he certainly did not nourish the same affection for his niece as for his daughter. As regards the proposal of sending a contingent of soldiers to the assistance of the Ahom king against the Moguls by the Dimarua route they wrote that they did not follow any assigned route in the past. They, however, asked him to despatch immediately twenty or thirty thousand soldiers and to inform them of the fact and they would bring them by any route which might be expedient to them, so that they might be employed to construct forts and ramparts. It should be noted in this connection that the Jayantia king wanted to send his troops to the Ahom kingdom by the Dimarua

* It should be remembered in this connection that though the mistake was committed by the Raja of Nartang, yet the Jayantia king was held responsible for this as the former was a vassal of the latter.

22. *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 33-34; Historical letters of the Ahom period, Tr. No.1, Vol. 1, pp. 113-116, D.H.A.S.

23. *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 34-36; Historical letters of the Ahom period, Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 117-120, D.H.A.S.

24. *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 36-38; Historical letters of the Ahom period, Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 121-124, D.H.A.S.

route because Dimarua stood on his way of territorial expansion. Moreover, the passage of the Jayantia soldiers through Dimarua would have served the additional object of retaliating its humiliation at the hands of the Kacharis. But the refusal of the Ahom government to follow the Dimarua route upset the hopes of the Jayantia king.

✓ Before the Ahom envoys reached Jayantia, the Jayantia king Jasamattarai died and his grandson Man Singha ascended the throne in 1669 A.D. That very year, the Ahom king Chakradhvaj Singha also died and Udayaditya Singha (1669-1673 A.D.) ascended the Ahom throne. Man Singha received the Ahom envoys sent by Chakradhvaj Singha. But he was deposed six months after his accession to the throne by one (apparently a relative) named Pratap Singha who came from Bengal.

This makes the Jayantia king to revive his claim over Dimarua

Failing to take revenge upon Dimarua by sending troops to the Ahom kingdom through that state, the new Jayantia king Pratap Singha again revived the old claim of Jayantia over Dimarua, apparently on the strength of the seizure of its king Prabhakar by the Jayantia king Dhan Manik at the beginning of the 17th century during the reign of king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.), and despatched envoys to the Ahom court with a letter to the Ahom king Udayaditya Singha demanding the return of Dimarua to Jayantia.²⁵ The death of the powerful king Chakradhvaj Singha who had recovered Gauhati from the hands of the Moguls, undoubtedly prompted him to revive this claim of Jayantia over Dimarua. This change of attitude on the part of Jayantia towards the Ahom government revealed the fact that she was not actuated by any good motive in making the proposal of sending soldiers in aid of the Ahom government against the Moguls. Before, however, the Jayantia envoys reached Koliabar, the Jayantia king Pratap Singha had been killed by his son-in-law Lakshmi Singha who then became king of Jayantia. The Ahom king Udayaditya Singha, therefore, declined to read the Jayantia letter as its author was dead. The envoys were asked to come with letters from the new king. In June 1671 A.D. the Jayantia king Lakshmi Singha thereupon sent letters and envoys to king Udayaditya Singha, the three ministers and to the Barphukan proposing to give his daughter in marriage to the Ahom king and also demanding the return of Dimarua to Jayantia.²⁶ But the Ahoms refused to cede Dimarua, first, on the ground that Dimarua was a protected state of the Ahom government.^{*} Secondly, it had been conquered by the Moguls but the Ahoms had recovered it again by defeating the Moguls. Evidently the Ahoms held that if Dimarua belonged to Jayantia, then Jayantia should have recovered it from the hands of the Moguls. Letters were then sent from the Ahom king, the ministers and the Barphukan to the Jayantia king Lakshmi Singha soliciting his friendship, and ornaments and cloths were sent from the Ahom king

25. *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 38-39.

26. *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 39-42; Historical letters of the Ahom period, Tr. No. 1, Vol.1, pp. 125-129, D.H.A.S.

* Refer ante the history of Dimarua in the reign of king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.) in Ch. V.

Udayaditya Singha for the daughter of Lakshmi Singha, whom her father had proposed to give in marriage to him. But Lakshmi Singha refused to accept the ornaments and cloths sent for the Jayantia princess as the Ahom king Udayaditya Singha, to whom the princess was proposed to be married had died in the meantime." The Ahom envoys pressed the Jayantia king to accept the cloths and ornaments in the name of the new king Ramdhvaj Singha (1673-1675 A.D.), the brother of the late king and took the responsibility on their shoulders if anything untoward happened. But Lakshmi Singha did not agree with them and sent letters to the Ahom king, the ministers and the Barphukan demanding again for the cession of Dimarua to them. He asked the Ahom envoys to accompany the Jayantia envoys to Jayantia provided, the Ahoms agreed to cede Dimarua to Jayantia. Rukma Barhagohain, along with the two other ministers and the Barphukan sent replies to the Jayantia king stating that Dimarua, along with Darrang and Beltola was annexed to the Ahom kingdom by virtue of the defeat inflicted by the Ahoms upon twenty-two Omraos headed by Syed Babakār (i.e. Aba Bakr). Later on Dimarua was saved by the Ahoms from the attack of Syed Piroj (i.e. Firoz Khan). Jayantia had therefore no claim over Dimarua. The Jayantia envoys were dismissed unaccompanied by Ahom envoys as desired by the Jayantia king.

In the meantime, in 1675 A.D. king Ramdhvaj Singha died and between 1675 to 1679 A.D. four kings ascended the Ahom throne one after another. The Jayantia king Lakshmi Singha repeatedly made his claims on Dimarua during this period; but the Ahoms, even during this period of quick change of royalty declined to accept the claims of Jayantia over Dimarua every time till at last they broke off all relations with Jayantia in 1678 A.D." The Jayantias thus failed to establish their claim on Dimarua.

Since the death of king Chakradhvaj Singha in 1669 A.D. till the accession of Gadadhar Singha on the Ahom throne in 1681 A.D. i.e. in the short space of about twelve years, there had been seven kings on the Ahom throne not one of whom had died natural death. Taking advantage of the internal corruption and dissension that ensued in the Ahom kingdom as a result of this, the Jayantia kings Pratap Singha and Lakshmi Singha repeatedly made their claims on Dimarua. The Ahom government of course, dismissed their claims every time. With the accession of Gadadhar Singha on the throne in 1681 A.D. the era of weak and incompetent rulers came to an end, internal corruption and dissensions ceased and the Ahoms became once more able to present a united front against their external foes. It was king Gadadhar Singha (1681-1696 A.D.) who dealt the final blow to the Mogul powers in 1682 A.D. at the battle of Itakhuli and relieved the Ahom kingdom from further Mogul invasions. The change of circumstances led to a change in the policy of the Jayantia king Lakshmi

27. *Jayantia Buranjī*, pp. 43-44; Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 130-31, D.H.A.S.

28. *Jayantia Buranjī*, pp. 45-52; Tr. No.1, Vol. 1, pp. 132-145, D.H.A.S.

Singha towards the Ahom government. Instead of trying to establish the claim of Jayantia over Dimarua, he now became anxious for re-establishing friendly relations with the Ahoms. During the years 1684 to 1696 A.D. seven letters and their replies were interchanged between the Jayantia king and the Ahom Barphukan at Gauhati stressing the long established friendship between the two countries, and desiring that friendly relations between the two countries should not be destroyed for petty differences. Lakshmi Singha requested Sandikai Barphukan to send Ahom envoys as a mark of renewal of friendly relations.²⁹

Gadadhar Singha's success against the Moguls make the Jayantias anxious for friendship of the Ahoms

In the reign of Rudra Singha (1696-1714 A.D.) Duara Barphukan, the successor of Sandikai Barphukan, sent envoys to the Jayantia king Lakshmi Singha in November 1697 A.D. re-asserting the long established friendship between the two countries and desiring the continuation of the same.³⁰ The Ahom envoys were returned by the Jayantia king three years later along with Jayantia envoys. The Jayantia king also through his letters and envoys acknowledged the existence of indissoluble friendship between the two countries. The Jayantia envoys were at first received by the Barphukan at Dopdar* and then they were sent to Garhgaon where they were received by the king and the ministers and were sent back to the Barphukan at Gauhati again. Thus after an interval of twenty-two long years (1678-1700 A.D.) diplomatic relations between the Ahom and Jayantia kings became normal. The Barphukan wrote a letter to the Jayantia king Lakshmi Singha affirming the long-existing friendship between the two countries. He asked the Jayantia envoys to report orally to their king that of late reports had been pouring into his ears that some 'Bairagis' ** of the Ahom kingdom, who used to go on pilgrimage to other countries through the Jayantia kingdom had been oppressed by the Jayantias. He reminded them that the route through Jayantia was used only because Jayantia happened to be a friendly country. Therefore he asked the Jayantia envoys to take immediate measures to put a stop to these things.

Friendship between the two kingdoms restored

But about this time friendly relations between the Ahoms and the Jayantias threatened to break down on account of a friction that took place between the two kingdoms. A prince of Dimarua named 'Bairagi Konwar', who had fled to Jayantia along with some Dimarua people during the

Affairs of the Bairagi Konwar

29. *Jayantia Buranjil*, pp. 52-63; Tr. No.1 Vol.1, pp. 146-171, D.H.A.S.

30. *Jayantia Buranjil*, pp. 63-70; Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 172-177, D.H.A.S.

* The Council-chamber, and loosely the Secretariat of the Barphukan at Gauhati.

** The Bairagis constituted a distinct khel of their own. They performed the duty of spies. They visited different countries in the disguise of Sannyashis or Fakirs and reported everything that they saw or heard in those countries—such as, the laws and customs of a country, costumes and ornaments worn by men and women etc. of a country.

time of the Mogul invasion of Assam (apparently Mir-Jumla's Assam invasion of 1662 A.D.) had been established by the Jayantia king at Bangaon.³¹ During the reign of king Rudra Siagha (1696-1714 A.D.) when Duara Barphukan (1697-1703 A.D.) was holding the office of Barphukan at Gauhati, some Dimarua nobles secretly sent invitation to the Dimarua prince known as Bairagi Konwar and proposed to make him the king of Dimarua. The reigning Dimarua king, who had been put on the throne by his suzerain the Ahom king, got terrified at this and fled away with his two sons to Duara Barphukan. The Barphukan then said that the Dimarua prince* was killed by the Moguls and the people of Dimarua, recognising his dead body cremated it and performed his funeral rites. Still as the Dimarua people had brought Bairagi Konwar with the assurance of making him the king of Dimarua, he should be allowed to become king. Subsequently, the clever Barphukan managed to send a message to Bairagi Konwar through the mediation of some Dimarua nobles to the effect that the Ahom government would acquiesce in the accession of the Bairagi Konwar to the Dimarua throne as the former had put the present Dimarua king on the throne in the absence of any relation of the former Dimarua king. Encouraged by such a message, Bairagi Konwar along with many of his Dimarua subjects came to the Barphukan at Gauhati to pay his homage as Dimarua was a protected state of the Ahom government. The Barphukan availed himself of the golden opportunity to imprison the Bairagi Konwar and subsequently sent him to king Rudra Singha at Garhgaon who banished him to the wilds of Namrup.

Just at that time the Jayantia envoys sent by Lakshmi Singha reached Gauhati. A few days later they were received formally by the Barphukan and were sent back to the Jayantia kingdom along with two Ahom envoys. The Jayantia king kept the Ahom envoys at Jayantipur for one year. After one year the three kings of the three subordinate provinces of Jayantia viz., Gobha, Neli and Khala sent messengers to the Chokial Barua or the frontier officer in charge of the Ahom outpost on the Jayantia frontier, asking him the whereabouts of Bairagi Konwar, the Dimarua prince, who had been established at Bangaon by the Jayantia king and whom the Dimarua people had taken away to Dimarua with the permission of the Jayantia king by declaring him to be the son of the former Dimarua king. The Chokial Barua, in consultation with the Barphukan, refused to give any answer to the inquiry on the ground that the Jayantia king did not hand over the charge of Bairagi Konwar to the Chokial Barua. Moreover, as Dimarua was an "established and protected" state of the Ahom government, the person nominated by the Ahom king should be the ruler of that state. The Jayantia king had no right to select a king for Dimarua. If the Jayantia king would attack Dimarua on this account the Ahom government would retaliate by closing the market

31. *Jayantia Buranj*, pp. 70-72.

* His name is given as 'Deu Rajkonwar'

places and occupying Gobha, Neli and Khala.* A review of the whole incident reveals the fact that as Jayantia failed to establish her claim on Dimarua by repeated efforts since the death of king Chakradhvaj Singha in 1669 A.D., she resorted to this under-hand means of establishing her claim on Dimarua by placing a nominee of her on the throne of Dimarua. But the Ahom government flatly refused to acknowledge the claim of Jayantia over Dimarua. In spite of this the Jayantia king again sent envoys to the Chokial Barua asking for the return of Bairagi Konwar in order to establish him at Dimarua. This time also the Chokial Barua, on the advice of the Barphukan said to the Jayantia envoys that they should not ask him anything about Bairagi Konwar as the Jayantia king did not hand over the latter to him.

Failing to obtain the release of Bairagi Konwar, the Jayantia king asked the reigning Dimarua king who had been put on the Dimarua throne by the Ahom king to pay tribute to him in the shape of ducks, goats, pigeons, golden cloths etc. for the performance of religious rites. At the instigation of the Barphukan the Dimarua king refused to pay tribute to the Jayantia king on the plea that he had ceased to pay tribute to him for many years. Moreover, he would not find a way of escape if the Barphukan somehow would come to know of it. The reply of the Dimarua king put an end to the Dimarua affairs and the Ahoms thus finally came out successful in retaining their claim on Dimarua.

It has been already mentioned that the Ahom envoys who were sent to the Jayantia kingdom in December 1691 A.D. had been kept in Jayantipur by the Jayantia king Lakshmi Singha on account of the friction that was going on between the two courts over Dimarua. When the Dimarua affairs came to an end in 1703 A.D. the Ahom envoys were returned in October 1703, along with Jayantia envoys, by the Jayantia king Ram Singha who had succeeded Lakshmi Singha on the throne of Jayantia in July 1703 A.D.** Thus the friendly relations that were re-established between the Ahom kingdom and the Jayantia kingdom in 1697 A.D. remained unbroken till 1707 A.D. and letters affirming the long established friendship between the two kingdoms and desiring the continuation of the same were interchanged between the two courts. By the end of 1707 A.D. the friendly relations seemed to break down when the Ahom envoys sent to Jayantia on 22nd September, 1707 A.D. did not return in due time. At the same time news were received by the Ahom government that two Ahom Bairagis

* The three subordinate provinces of Gobha, Neli and Khala stood at the entrances of the three important passes of that name leading to the Jayantia kingdom. During the time of the Mogul invasions of Assam, as mentioned in the previous pages, the chiefs of these provinces made their submission to the Ahom govt. in order to protect themselves from the attacks of the Moguls. This led to a long correspondence between the Jayantia king Jasamattarai and the Ahom king Jayadhvaj Singha (1648-63 A.D.) for the return of the provinces to Jayantia. The Ahom government at first declined. Ultimately however, as the subsequent histories reveal the Ahom govt. had to acquiesce in the old arrangement of the overlordship of the Jayantia king over these three provinces.

32. *Jayantia Buranjil*, pp. 72-78; Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 178-82; D.H.A.S.

had been kept confined in the Jayantia kingdom.³³ In spite of repeated requests the Jayantia king did not return the Ahom envoys and set free the imprisoned Bairagis. King Rudra Singha became very angry at this and sent messengers to the kings of Gobha, Neli and Khala, the three subordinate provinces of Jayantia. The messengers were asked by the king to give their versions on behalf of the Barphukan. They accordingly stressed the long existing friendship between the two kingdoms which resulted in the exchange of embassies, establishment of markets and the use of the route through Jayantia by the pilgrims and Bairagis of the Ahom kingdom. They demanded the immediate release of the Ahom envoys and the Bairagis in default of which they threatened to close the markets and the passes for the Jayantia traders. At this the three kings and Laskar (apparently the corruption of *Lyngskar* who acts as the Siem's or king's deputy governor) said that as the Jayantia king was absent from his capital, so there was delay in returning the envoys and Bairagis. They however, assured their return within a few days and requested the Ahom government not to break up the long existing friendship by closing the markets and the passes. Having been informed of these developments, the Jayantia king Ram Singha immediately released the Bairagis.

King Rudra Singha, who had been relieved of the trouble of the Mogul invasions which had so much disturbed the reigns of his predecessors and who now had the resources of an organised and strengthened government, invaded the Kachari kingdom in December 1706 with a view to reduce the Kacharis to submission. The Kacharis were defeated at the hands of the Ahoms and by February 1707 A.D. the Ahom troops succeeded in occupying Maibong, the Kachari capital.* The Kachari king Tamradhvaj Narayana fled to Khaspur in the plains of Cachar. From there he was taken a prisoner by the Jayantia king Ram Singha who at first pretended friendship with him and promised to make common cause against the Ahoms. Tamradhvaj was kept a close prisoner at Jayantipur, but at last he managed to communicate the treacherous conduct of Ram Singha to the Ahom king Rudra Singha through Ahom Bairagis who had been at Jayantipur in the course of their wanderings. In the letter addressed to king Rudra Singha, Tamradhvaj acknowledged the overlordship of the Ahom king, asked forgiveness for his past offences and begged deliverance from his captor.³⁴

Tamradhvaj
taken prisoner
by Ram Singha
—appeals for
help to the Ahom
king

Rudra Singha became delighted at the submissive tone of the Kachari king's letter as well as with the opportunity thus afforded him to display his power in a new direction. He at once sent a message to Ram Singha through the Barphukan demand-

33. *Jayantia Buranjī*, pp. 78-79.

* For the details of the Kachari expedition, refer ante, Ch. V on "Pushing back of the Kacharis".

34. *Kachari Buranjī*, pp. 89-113; *Jayantia Buranjī*, pp. 79-80.

ing the immediate release of Tamradhvaj Narayan. But Ram Singha refused to comply with the demand of the Ahom king. Rudra Singha thereupon despatched two armies against Jayantia in December 1707 A.D., one under the Barbarua and the other under the Barphukan.* The Barbarua proceeded by the Demera route which lay through Kachari territory, while the Barphukan proceeded by the direct route through Gobha and the Jayantia hills. The Barbarua proceeded through the Kachari territory without any opposition from them and the Jayantia outposts of Baleswar and Mulagul were easily taken by him. From Mulagul he sent messengers to Ram Singha calling upon him to surrender the Kachari king Tamradhvaj Narayan. Seeing that resistance was hopeless, Ram Singha complied with the demand of the Barbarua, and at the same time requested the Barbarua to stay his advance and to direct the Barphukan who was also rapidly drawing near, to do the same. The Barbarua replied that unless the family of Tamradhvaj was also given up, he would continue his march the next day. The second demand was also complied with by Ram Singha. The Barbarua then demanded the surrender of his treasures and other things captured by the Jayantias. At this third demand Ram Singha became very angry and sent messengers to the Barbarua that he was prepared to give battle to the Ahoms and accordingly placed cannon on the walls of his capital. But his nobles who from the beginning had tried to dissuade him from incurring the enmity of the Ahoms, compelled him to make his submission to the Barbarua by threatening that if he would not submit of his own accord, they would hand him over to the Barbarua. At this Ram Singha proceeded with an escort of thirty elephants,* his eldest son and the nobles towards the camp of Barbarua. On approaching it he was made to dismount and proceed on foot** to the tent of the Barbarua. Having interviewed the Barbarua, who received him in state, Ram Singha wanted to return to his capital but was not allowed to do so by the Barbarua. News of his detention was sent by the Barbarua to his king who became extremely glad and directed the Barphukan to join the Barbarua at Jayantipur.***

The route taken by the Barphukan direct through the Jayantia hills was a difficult one. He had to proceed rather slowly than the Barbarua as he had to fight with the rebellious Jayantias in many places till he reached Pamanai (or Pavanai) where he heard of the arrival of the Barbarua at Jayantipur and hastened to join him there.

35. *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 80-105; *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 75, Vol. 79, pp. 53-54, D.H.A.S.

* *Jayantia Buranji*, p. 89. According to Gait, twenty elephants accompanied the Jayantia king. (*History of Assam*, p. 176).

** *Jayantia Buranji*, p. 89. Gait says that on approaching the tent of the Barbarua, Ram Singha was made to dismount and ride on horseback, unattended. (*History of Assam*, p. 176).

*** In the *Kachari Buranji* (pp. 84-85) we get a different but interesting episode regarding the capture of the Jayantia king Ram Singha. The Barbarua contrived a plan to capture Ram Singha. He decorated his camp at Nartang and led the Jayantia king to believe that a beautiful girl had been brought there to be given in marriage to him. Ram Singha then accompanied his eldest son and the Kachari king Tamradhvaj Narayan went to meet the Barbarua where both the kings and the prince were made captives.

Rudra Singha directed the two captive kings to be produced before him—Tamradhvaj to be taken via Maibong and Ram Singha across the Jayantia hills by the Gobha route. He also ordered the Jayantia king's three daughters and the various images, including that of Jayanti Devi, to be brought to him and his jewels, treasure and war materials were ordered to be examined carefully. The Ahom subjects who had fled to Jayantia during the period of Mogul invasions of Assam, and the Manipuri subjects taken by the Jayantia king by defeating the Manipuris were ordered to be brought back. An army under the Barbarua and the Barphukan was directed to remain at Jayantipur. These orders were carried out in February 1708. So glorious

Proposed annexion of Jayantia & Kachari kingdoms was the victory of Rudra Singha over the kingdoms of Jayantia and Cachar that it led the Thanadar of Sylhet to send envoys to the Ahom king with a friendly letter. The Ahoms in return sent envoys to the Thanadar of Sylhet announcing the formal annexation of the Kachari and Jayantia kingdoms to the Ahom kingdom.

These measures greatly irritated the Jayantia nobles who felt great humiliation at the deportation of their own ruler and the image of Jayanti Devi. They were quite willing to permit the rescue of the Kachari king, but they were not at any cost prepared to allow their own ruler to be carried off, which meant the subversion of

Fresh rising of the Jayantias their independence, without a far more strenuous resistance than hitherto attempted by them. Accordingly the Bardoloi* and the younger prince of Jayantia induced the Rajas of Nartang, Khyrim and Rani to expel the invaders from their soil. A simultaneous attack was made by them on the eight forts on which the Barphukan had left garrisons on his way through the Jayantia hills. These forts were taken by the Jayantias who put a great number of the defenders to death. They also succeeded in rescuing the image of Jayanti Devi from the hands of the small detachment which was carrying it. On hearing of the rising, Rudra Singha promptly sent up reinforcements. The Ahoms attacked the Jayantias wherever they could find them, killed and imprisoned many of them; but in the end they were compelled to retreat. The Barbarua and the Barphukan somehow managed to reach Gobha without molestation by the route taken by the Barphukan.**

On the conclusion of the expedition Rudra Singha removed his camp from Bijaypur to Sala, while the Jayantia and the Kachari kings were kept in separate camps near Biswanath. Rudra Singha received both the kings in a grand durbar at Biswanath, surrounded by all his chief nobles. Tamradhvaj was submissive and confirmed his allegiance

Interviews between Rudra Singha and the Kachari & Jayantia kings

* The Dolois were officers elected by the people who corresponded most probably to our present ministers. Bardoloi was undoubtedly the chief amongst the Dolois corresponding to the prime minister. When the British annexed the Jayantia hills in 1835, they divided into twenty Doloiships to maintain the indigenous system of administration. They were assisted by officials known as Pators, Basons and Sangats. —Gurdon, P.R.T., The Khasi p. 75.

** For the details of the Jayantia expedition, refer Gait's *History of Assam* pp. 175-179.

to the Ahom king; but Ram Singha was recalcitrant at first and refused to bow down before king Rudra Singha. Ultimately of course, he had to give way. He was told that if his nobles would appear, make their submission and ask for their king, he would be allowed to return to his own kingdom. Meanwhile Ram Singha succumbed to an attack of small pox. ** Barkonwar, his eldest son, gave two of his sisters in marriage to king Rudra Singha. *** Rudra Singha thereupon sent the Jayantia Barkonwar to Gauhati directing the Barphukan to send him to Jayantipur provided the Jayantia nobles would make their submission and ask for their king. ** But the nobles, being afraid to appear in person, repeatedly sent submissive messages to king Rudra Singha. At this Rudra Singha became very angry and ordered the Jayantia Barkonwar to be kept at Bardowa (in Nowgong district) along with his men and make an attack on Jayantia.

Rudra Singha made his camp at Bardowa and sent two forces against Jayantia—one by the Gobha route and the other by the Kopili route. ** Both the forces arrived at Nartang after devastating several villages on their way. When the Ahoms began to attack the villages round about Nartang, some people came forward and implored the Ahoms not to kill them as they also belonged to the Ahom king. They asked the Ahoms to show the Jayantia Barkonwar and if that would be done, they promised to procure the submission of the Jayantia nobles with presents. The Ahoms then asked the Jayantias to come to them and make their submission. But inspite of the assurance of their personal safety being given to them by the Ahoms, the Jayantias did not show any inclination to make their submission. On the contrary, they began to shoot arrows at the Ahoms. Thereupon the Ahoms also made their counter attack, killed and captured some Jayantias by devastating several villages and obtained possession of a considerable amount of booty.

Just at that time the Barkonwar arrived at that place and requested the Ahoms to stop devastating the Jayantia villages. He promised to procure the submission of his nobles. If they would not submit, then he himself would help the Ahoms in devastating the villages. Accordingly news were sent to the Jayantia nobles of his arrival and they were asked to come forward, make their submission, beg for his enlargement and to escort him to Jayantipur. He took the responsibility on his shoulders if anything untoward happened to them. Despite the assurance given to them by the Barkonwar the Jayantia nobles refused to come forward for the fear of being captured by the Ahoms and cited the previous examples when their men had been treacherously slain by the Ahoms. Barkonwar was thereupon again sent back to king Rudra Singha

** According to Gait (*History of Assam* p. 120), Ram Singha died of dysentery. But according to the *Kachari Buranji* (p. 87) he died of small-pox.

*** Gait's account of Ahom-Jayantia relations during the reign of Rudra Singha ends here.

36 *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 105-109.

37 *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 109-121.

at Bardowa from where he was escorted down to Shahburuj.* From Shahburuj messengers were sent to Jayantia asking the Jayantia nobles to make their submission and come forward to escort their king. This time the wife of the Barkenwar along with the Jayantia nobles sent messengers praying the Ahoms to send their king to Phulaguri from where they agreed to escort their king to Jayantia. The wife of the Barkenwar sent appealing prayers to the Barphukan through the three Dolois (high officers) of Gobha, Neli and Khala declaring herself to be the daughter of the Barphukan as her husband had accepted him as his father. She reminded him that it was the duty of a father to return the son-in-law to his daughter. She requested the Barphukan to send back her husband and thus grant the prayer of the nobles by establishing their king on the vacant throne.

When the Barphukan communicated this message to king Rudra Singha, the latter asked the messengers to say to the Barphukan that the men sent by her did not belong to Jayantia. If representatives of Jayantia would come and pray at the feet of the king for the Barkenwar, then only the prayer would be granted. When the wife of the Barkenwar received the demand of the Ahom king, she sent three men of Jayantia to the king requesting him to send Barkenwar to Jagi and show the Jayantias the proof of his arrival there. On the fulfilment of this condition the people of both the hills and the plains would go to Gobha, make their submission to the king and accept their prince as king.

Rudra Singha now agreed to send the Barkenwar to Jagi with presents and according to the request of his (Barkenwar's) wife, sent messengers ahead of Barkenwar to circulate the news over the hills and plains of Jayantia. Subsequently, many noble men representing Jayantia and her subordinate states came as far as the Kalang river with many presents for the Ahom king and the Barphukan and saluted king Rudra Singha. Rudra Singha then handed over Barkenwar to them with the warning that they would be liable to be punished if they would not comply with their promise made to the king.

The Barkenwar, at the time of his departure from the king and the Barphukan acknowledged the overlordship of the Ahom king and promised to pay an annual tribute of six elephants to the king and one elephant and some cloths to the Barphukan. He also promised to send some men to serve under the Ahom king. The Barkenwar was escorted up to the Kalang river (i.e. Phulaguri) by the Ahoms, from where he was escorted to Jayantia by his own men.*

* Shahburuj was another name of Manikarneswar hill of North Gauhati. There is a temple of Siva. (*Kamrupar Buranjī*, p. 129).

* There is, however, another version given in the *Kachari Buranjī* (p. 87) according to which the Jayantia prince, arriving Phulaguri up to where he was escorted by the Ahoms, left his royal sedan and umbrella given by the Ahom king and went to his kingdom naked saying as follows "I deny here all the promises made to the Ahom king." He withheld the payment of elephants and horses promised to the Ahom king, but continued the exchange of letters.

In pursuance of his promise to king Rudra Singha the Jayantia Barkonwar sent several men from Gobha to serve under the Ahom king and through them he requested the Ahom king to open the markets and the passes as before and also repatriate the captive Jayantias including the Senapati or commander. The prayer of the Barkonwar was granted by Rudra Singha who sent an envoy to the Barkonwar accompanied by the Senapati and other captive Jayantias. The envoy was given order to open up the markets and the passes and asked the Jayantia king to maintain friendly relations between the two kingdoms by keeping his promise. **But Barkonwar, however, proved to be an unfaithful person. Soon after the resumption of commercial intercourse by the Jayantias with the plains, he broke his promise made to king Rudra Singha and the Barphukan by refusing to pay the annual tribute. As a reprisal of this Rudra Singha again launched an expedition against Jayantia, defeated its ruler Barkonwar, kept him imprisoned for fourteen years and closed the markets and the passes for the Jayantia traders."

Barkonwar breaks his promise & the Ahoms retaliate by closing the passes & markets

It should be noted in this connection that the Hill Jayantias were largely dependent for their supplies of necessities on the markets of the plains. So the closing of the markets and the passes through which they came down to the plains caused great economic hardship to them. On the part of the Ahom government it was an important means for bringing them to submission. So the closing of the markets and the passes to the Jayantia traders by king Rudra Singha compelled the Jayantias to be submissive before the Ahom government. But they feared to enter into the Ahom kingdom and approach the Barphukan for that purpose during the reign of king Rudra Singha who had invaded their kingdom twice and also imprisoned their king Barkonwar.

This causes economic hardship to the Hill Jayantias

In the reign of his son and successor Siva Singha (1714-1744), the Jayantia envoys, being afraid of entering into the Ahom kingdom approached an Ahom envoy named Ratan Kandali who went to the Kachari kingdom, to pray to the Ahom government on their behalf for the opening up of the markets at Phulaguri." Ratan Kandali agreed to report their prayer to the Barbarua and asked them to come to the Jagi outpost with presents. He assured them that if the Barbarua would allow him he would come to Jagi and escort them to Garhgaon. When the Barbarua was informed by the envoy he allowed the

Jayantias pray for opening up the markets at Phulaguri

** After this some pages of the manuscript of the *Jayantia Buranji* are lost. Therefore, we are left in the dark as to the developments immediately after the conclusion of peace. We are therefore to depend upon other sources of information for connecting the missing link.

38 *Tungkhungla Buranji*, O. U. P., p. 47 ; *Jayantia Buranji*, p. 126 ; *Assam Buranji*. Tr. No. 75, Vol. 79, pp. 63-64, D.H.A.S. In all these Buranjis there is a reference that the Jayantia king Barkonwar was kept imprisoned for 14 years by Rudra Singha as he failed to ratify the terms of the agreement made with him.

39 *Jayantia Buranji*, p. 138.

envoy to come to Jagi to escort the Jayantia envoys. It should be mentioned in this connection that in the reign of king Rudra Singha, during the Barphukanship of Dihingia Phukan (1703-4) the charge of the Jagi outpost with the seven subordinate kings under its care was given over to Sandikai Barbarua. That was why when the Ahom envoy Ratan Kandali was requested by the Jayantia envoy to pray on their behalf to open the markets at Phulaguri, he agreed to report their message to the Barbarua instead of to the Barphukan as usual.

King Siva Singha, considering it unsafe to have unfriendly neighbours in case of foreign invasion, expressed his desire to remain in peace and amity with the neighbouring states.⁴⁰ He referred to the fact that inspite of the defeat of the Jayantias at the hands of the Ahoms twice they could not be brought to submission. Therefore, it was better to cultivate the friendship of that country for the welfare of the Ahom kingdom. With that end in view he dismissed the Patra Barphukan from his post of Barphukanship and appointed the Sarujana Duara as Barphukan as the former belonged to the days of king Rudra Singha in whose reign he had invaded the Jayantia kingdom as the commander of the Ahom forces. The removal of the old Barphukan had the desired effect, for the Jayantias soon afterwards opened their negotiations with the Ahoms for the opening up of the markets and the passes. With the appointment of Sarujana Duara as Barphukan the charge of the Jagi outpost again came under the Barphukan.

It has been already mentioned that the Jayantia king Barkonwar had been kept imprisoned by the Ahom government for 14 years (1709-1723 A.D.) as he failed to ratify the terms of the agreement made with the Ahom king Rudra Singha in 1708 A.D. at the time of his appointment as the king of Jayantia. During the period of Barkonwar's imprisonment his younger brother Sarukonwar carried on the administration of the country. So long Rudra Singha was on the Ahom throne and Patra Barphukan was holding the office of the Barphukan, the Jayantia Sarukonwar did not dare to open negotiations with the Ahoms for the opening up of the passes and the markets inspite of the economic hardship felt by the Jayantias. The dismissal of Patra Barphukan from his office by Siva Singha removed the barrier in the way of peaceful negotiations and this led the Jayantia Sarukonwar to open up negotiations with the Ahom government for a peaceful settlement of the dispute between the two kingdoms through the mediation of the Dimarua Raja, the established and protected king of the Ahom government on the Jayantia frontier. Accordingly, he sent envoys to the Dimarua Raja requesting him to pray to the Barphukan on behalf of Jayantia for the opening up of the Gobha duar or pass.⁴¹ The Dimarua Raja was directed

⁴⁰ *Jayantia Buranjil*, pp. 138-139.

⁴¹ *Jayantia Buranjil*, p. 139

by the Barphukan to ask the Jayantia king to come formally with presents to pray for the opening up of the passes and the markets. The Khala Raja, another subordinate ruler under the Jayantia king also sent an envoy to the Burhagohain with the same prayer. The Burhagohain in reply asked the envoy to send the three Dolois representing Gobha, Neli and Khala as before for the opening up of the markets and the passes.

According to the command of the Burhagohain, on 22nd June, 1716 A.D. the three Dolois of Gobha, Neli and Khala came to the Jagi outpost and prayed to the Chokial Barua to negotiate with the three Rajas for the opening up of the passes and the markets. They were in reply asked to send a good man from the Jayantia king.

At this the Jayantia Sarukonwar sent a good man named Binanda to the Jagi outpost.⁴² But unfortunately he died at Jagi within a few days of his arrival there. Thereupon, the Chokial Barua again asked the Jayantia king to send another good man in place of Binanda. This time Raghunath was sent.⁴³ The three frontier kings at first declined to escort the Jayantia envoy Raghunath to the Ahom outpost on the other side of the Kalang. But ultimately they had to abide by the command of the Chokial Barua. When Raghunath was asked by the Chokial Barua who had sent him and for what purpose, he replied that he had been sent by the Sarukonwar (the younger brother of Barkonwar) to pray to the Barphukan to re-establish the devastated Jayantia kingdom and to open up the markets and the passes to facilitate trade relations between Jayantia and Assam.

Raghunath was subsequently received by the Barphukan at his court. The Barphukan in reply to the prayer of Raghunath reminded him of the circumstances under which the Jayantias of hills and plains together prayed for the establishment of Barkonwar on the vacant throne of Jayantia and the promise made by the Barkonwar to the Ahom king at the time of his departure from the Ahom kingdom. It was the failure of the Barkonwar to keep his promise that led the Ahom government to close the markets and the passes. Therefore, it would have been proper to pray for the opening up of the markets and the passes by offering at least such presents as lay within the capacity of the Jayantia government. It was highly improper to pray for a thing with bare hands.⁴⁴

In reply to it the Jayantia envoy said that a devastated country like Jayantia had practically nothing worthy to offer to the Ahom king. Still, he promised to bring in future some pairs of antlers and horns of rhinoceros. At this the Jayantia envoy was told that of all the countries round about the Jayantia kingdom she alone was known to be prosperous. The Barkonwar sent two elephants when he was made king. Therefore she should now offer according to her capacity. Thus saying

⁴² *Jayantia Buranji*, p. 122.

⁴³ *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 122-126.

Raghunath was bidden farewell with many presents. He was escorted up to Jagi on 24th January, 1719 A.D.

Barkonwar was released from his captivity by the Ahom government after fourteen years by the beginning of 1723 A.D. In the same year in the month of Aswin (September-October), he sent an envoy named Dhemelia with three elephants, two horses and other things to pray to the Ahom king for the opening up of the markets and the passes.⁴⁴ The Jayantia king Barkonwar through his envoy prayed to the Ahom king as follows—"All are well. Darkness reigned over the Jayantia kingdom for fourteen years (this referred to the imprisonment of Barkonwar for 14 years) Now the Sun and the Moon have given their light upon it (this referred to the release of Barkonwar). I, the son of the Ahom king, pray to his father to open up the markets and the passes in order to remove the fear from the minds of the Jayantias and the Mikirs* and for the welfare of the cows and the Brahmans. This will enhance the prestige of the Ahom king and he will be rewarded by God with a seat in the paradise."⁴⁵ The Jayantia envoy was told in reply that the things brought by him did not constitute even half the quota agreed upon.

On January 11, 1724 A.D. the Jayantia envoy was given farewell by the Barphukan by receiving him at Dopdar (i.e. council chamber). He was asked to tell the Jayantia king as follows—"Considering the unsettled state of the Jayantia kingdom and the incessant prayer of its ruler, the Ahom king has agreed to open up the passes and the markets. But the term of the settlement arrived at the time of the confirmation of the Jayantia king on the throne of Jayantia, and the promise he committed swearing by religion, have not been maintained by him. Therefore, in order to acquire the favour of the king and to make the arrangements with regard to the markets and the passes permanent, he should render his allegiance to the Ahom king annually through worthy persons. Failure to comply with this condition will result in the discontinuance of everything."⁴⁶

In reply to the above speech of the Barphukan, Dhemelia again prayed for the opening up of the markets at Phulaguri so that the Jayantias and the Mikirs might earn their livelihood. The Barphukan thereupon emphasised the fact that for the fulfilment of the prayer of the Jayantia king, he must send the three kings (i.e. kings

⁴⁴ *Jayantia Buranj*, pp. 126-128.

* The reference is to the Mikirs who live in the low hills to the north and north-east of the Khasi and Jayantia hills.

⁴⁵ *Jayantia Buranj*, p. 126.

⁴⁶ *Jayantia Buranj*, p. 127.

of Gobha, Neli and Khala) along with his Laskar* to Jagi. But the Jayantia envoy declined to shoulder the responsibility by citing the previous examples of the murder of Jayantia people by the Ahoms. The Barphukan became very angry and kept Dhemelia confined for one year. Dhemelia died in captivity. The Jayantia king did not take any step to revive the negotiation with the Ahoms by sending any new envoy.

The policy of Siva Singha of cultivating the friendship of the Jayantias by making a peaceful settlement of the dispute over the question of the payment of annual tribute to the Ahom king promised by the Jayantia king Barkonwar to his father Rudra Singha in 1708 A.D. thus ended in failure. The negotiations covered a period of about eight years (1716-1724) and it was about to succeed as both the parties were willing to put an end to the dispute. But the refusal of the Jayantia envoy Dhemelia to shoulder the responsibility of complying with the additional demand of the Ahoms viz., sending the three subordinate kings of Gobha, Neli and Khala together with the Laskar of the Jayantia king to the Ahom king as the custom demanded led to the break down of all negotiations between the two governments. Because the Ahom Govt., who did not relax the observance of all formalities in their diplomatic correspondence with the state of Jayantia even during the period of Mogul invasions considered the flat refusal of the Jayantia envoy to comply with their demand to be a great insult. Therefore, on the advice of Duara Barphukan, king Siva Singha decided to apply force to make the Jayantias submit and accordingly ordered the invasion of Gobha, Neli and Khala, the three subordinate provinces of Jayantia with the hope that the Jayantia king would come to terms with the Ahom king for the preservation of these three provinces.⁴⁷ Because these three were the most important passes through which the Hill Jayantias descended into the plains for trading purposes.

Just at that time, the Dimarua Raja prayed to king Siva Singha for honours like the Rajas of Darrang and Beltola, the two other subordinate kings of the Ahom government. Siva Singha, consulting with his ministers granted the prayer of the Dimarua Raja in view of the importance of his state being situated on the frontier of Jayantia and Khyrimand also the part of a middleman played by him between the Ahoms and Gobha, Nel and Khala.

Thereafter the Ahom army marched against the three states of Gobha, Neli and Khala accompanied by the Dimarua Raja. On the advice of the Dimarua Raja the Ahom army was divided into three parts so that the enemy

* Laskar was an Agent of the Jayantia king appointed to govern a collection of villages. The proper term was 'Lyngskar'.

47 *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 129-137.

Ahom army proceeds against Gobha, Neli & Khala might not get afraid at the sight of the huge number of soldiers and flee away. The three wings proceeded by three different routes by fortifying forts on their way and at last they assembled at a place by the side of the Kuling river (Kiling) and remained there after fortifying a fort. At this the Gobha Raja sent two princes—one Gobha prince and the other Nagayan prince accompanied by three men to the Dimarua Raja. The Dimarua Raja produced them before the Barphukan. When the Barphukan asked them the object of their visit they replied that they were also subordinate to the Ahom king like the Dimarua Raja. They were extremely terrified at the construction of the forts at their entrances. The three kings of Gobha, Neli and Khala prayed for the destruction of the forts. The destruction of the forts would remove fear from their hearts and then only they could come forward to render their allegiance. The Barphukan in reply assured the personal safety of the three kings and asked them to come to him to offer their prayer.

Accordingly the Barphukan waited for a few days for the arrival of the three kings. At last, when none of them came, he ordered his men to set fire to their villages and capture the cows and buffaloes. The order was put into practice immediately.

Just at that time the wife of the Barphukan died of small pox and the king sent information to him giving him permission to go home. But the Barphukan declined to go leaving the forces in an unsettled condition. Soon after this a fugitive from Gobha informed the Barphukan that about 700 Jayantias had placed themselves under the three Bardolois of Gobha, Neli and Khala to attack the Ahom forts. They had sent him (i.e. the fugitive) to enter the Ahom forts along with the rice and water carriers and pour water into the mouths of the guns, thus making them ineffective. The Barphukan got frightened on receiving this news and ordered the retreat of the Ahom forces to Jagi by shifting the forts. The forts having been shifted, the Jayantias rushed forward against the Ahoms, but had to retreat at the counter attack made by the Ahoms. The Ahom forces crossed the Kalang, and came to Jagi. Receiving this news, king Siva Singha charged the Barphukan with the offence of ordering the retreat of the forces and shifting of the forts. The Barphukan replied to the king that he ordered the shifting of the forts from the entrances of the passes at the advice of the Dimarua Raja who said that the existence of the forts in front of them had prevented the Jayantias and the three kings of Gobha, Neil and Khala from coming to terms with the Ahoms.

Again, in order to induce the Jayantias to come to terms, the Dimarua Raja advised the Barphukan to send the two imprisoned princes of Gobha and Nagayan from Gauhati to Dimarua. The Barphukan did according to the advice of the Dimarua Raja, but the princes made their escape from the hands of the latter. The Dimarua

Raja was thereupon kept in prison for one month. Soon afterwards, the Duara Barphukan died of small pox.

The Jayantias then began their raiding operations on Dimarua and killed several persons. Hearing this king Siva Singha ordered the Dihingia Barphukan, successor to Duara Barphukan to attack Gobha, Neli and Khala and loot their cows and buffaloes by devastating their villages. The order of the king was immediately put into practice. The Barphukan then warned the Jayantias not to carry on trade with the Assamese secretly without the necessary permission of the Ahom government. He asked them to pray to the Ahom king for the opening up of the markets and the passes and thus obtain the legal permission of the Ahom government to carry on trade with the plains. This threatening of the Barphukan had the desired effect. After a month three Dolois of Gobha, Neli and Khala came to the Jagi outpost and said that they had been sent by the Jayantia king and the three subordinate kings with presents to pray for the opening up of the markets and the passes. When they were formally received by the Barphukan on 27th July, 1729 A.D. they again offered the same prayer to the Barphukan, agreed to pay tributes and send men to serve under the Ahom king according to the terms of the agreement of 1708 A.D. The Barphukan agreed to comply with their prayer and asked them to send men to serve under the Ahom king and pay annual tributes to him regularly in order to have permanent arrangements with regard to the markets and the passes. The negotiations between the two parties being concluded on the conditions mentioned above, the markets and the passes were declared open. But this time the markets were allowed to be held at Hatiarmukh, on the south of the Kalang instead of at Phulaguri, on the north of the Kalang.

No further mention is made of the Jayantias in the Buranjis till the reign of Rajeswar Singha (1751-1769 A.D.). Towards the end of the year 1768 A.D. the Jayantia king (the name is not mentioned)* came to the boundary of the Ahom kingdom (apparently with a body of troops).⁴⁸ Kirtichandra Bakatial Barbarua, the most important and influential person in the reign of Rajeswar Singha proposed to the king to send some Katakis to the Jayantia king to ask him the cause of coming to the boundary of the Ahom kingdom. When the king consulted the three ministers and other nobles, majority of them did not agree with the proposal of the Barbarua on the ground that, if the Jayantia king came with the Katakis, everything would go

* In the absence of the mention of the name of the Jayantia king in the Buranji, we may take him to be Bar Gosain (1729-70) given by Gait from the Jayantia Settlement Report written by Loch in *History of Assam*, p. 266.

⁴⁸ *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 291-292.

on well, but if he did not, it would be very bad and their action would lower their prestige. But the Barbarua overruled all of them and he and his son marched to Raha with a force. The Barbarua put cannon at the boundary. Hearing the news, the Jayantia king got alarmed and returned to his own country. This Jayantia king was undoubtedly Bar-Gosain (1729-1770 A.D.), as suggested by Gait.

During the turmoils of the Moamaria rebellion which broke out towards the last part of the 18th century (November, 1769 A.D.) and lingered till the early part of the 19th century, many Moamarias and other Ahom subjects had taken shelter in the Jayantia kingdom. By the beginning of the 19th century, during the reign of Kamaleswar Singha (1795-1811 A.D.) the Ahom government had almost suppressed the Moamaria rebellion. Purnananda Burhagohain made constant efforts to induce the fugitive cultivators to return to their homes and thereby establish peace in the kingdom by restoring pre-revolutionary conditions as far as possible. Accordingly he offered a free pardon to those who had fought on the side of the rebels and many such persons came back. But a number of Moamarias and refugees who had taken shelter in the Jayantia territory (also in the Kachari territory) preferred to remain where they were rather than place themselves in the power of the Ahom government, their old enemy. This led to a long correspondence with the Jayantia Raja Ram Singha II (1789-1832 A.D.)⁴⁹ for the repatriation of the fugitives and the Moamarias who had taken shelter in his territory. Sivanath Nam Dayangia Rajkhowa, the younger brother of the Kuoigayan Mahamantri Purnananda Burhagohain, was commanded by the king to trace out the fugitives and the Moamarias who had taken refuge in the Jayantia and Cachar states. Accordingly he despatched the Jayantia envoy Ramchandra to the Jayantia chieftain Ram Singha.⁵⁰ Ramchandra came back with an epistle and presents from the chief of Jayantia by the early part of 1802-A.D. He was sent by the Barphukan to the presence of the king at his Dichoi encampment. The Jayantia ambassador was formally received by the Duara Barbarua. In the letter addressed by the Jayantia king Ram Singha II to the Ahom king Kamaleswar Singha, he expressed his extreme delight at the suppression of the Moamaria rebellion by the Ahom government. At the same time, he declared that he was still cherishing the old bonds of friendship towards the Ahom king. He assured the latter that he would try his best to bring to submission his frontier chiefs and his rebellious subjects who were carrying on depredations in the Ahom kingdom in league with the Moamarias and also try to repatriate the fugitives who had taken shelter in his kingdom. After giving assurance to the Ahom king to comply with his request, the Jayantia king charged him (i.e. Kamaleswar Singha) as an aggressor as he had transgressed the boundaries

Many Moamarias and other Ahom subjects take shelter in the Jayantia kingdom

The Ahom Govt. demands repatriation of the Moamarias and the fugitives

⁴⁹ Gait's History of Assam, pp. 267-268.

⁵⁰ Bhuyan, S. K., *Tungkhungia Buranj*, O. U. P. pp. 158-167.

of the Jayantia kingdom and taken away some men who were sheltered in his territories. He warned that such acts were not justifiable on the part of a friendly neighbour.

In reply to the letter of Ram Singha II to Kameleswar Singha, the Barbarua wrote to the former that the Ahom government was greatly pleased with receiving the news that the Jayantia king had promised to try to bring to submission his rebellious subjects and also try to settle up the matter relating to the refugees. But actions belied this statement. The subordinate chiefs of Jayantia as well as the Jayantias proper had given shelter to the Moamarias in spite of the warning given to them by the Ahom government that the Moamarias should not be given shelter as they were hostile to the Ahom monarch. Moreover, they had committed depredations within the Ahom kingdom in league with these Moamarias. The Barbarua charged the Jayantia king of his complicity in these acts by saying that these ordinary people could not have ventured to perpetrate these acts if they had not been secretly aided by some powerful ally behind the scene. He requested the Jayantia king to give command to his subjects of those places where the refugees and the Moamarias had taken shelter, to release and repatriate the refugees in recollection of their old friendship. He warned the king that if he failed to comply with the request the consequences would be bad. As regards the charge of transgressing the boundary of his kingdom brought by the Jayantia king against Kameleswar Singha, the Barbarua wrote that the allegations had no foundation at all. If they had violated the terms of the old covenant, so many of their subjects would not have remained there so long. The Ahom government had received only those Moamarias and refugees who had been sent back by the Jayantia officers under the command of the Jayantia king. These officers, together with the subordinate chiefs of Jayantia had gone back after making promises to send the remainder as well. But they had not as yet fulfilled their promises, nor the Ahom government was in a position to recover them by violating the territorial limits. He concluded the letter with the hope that the Jayantia king would see to the speedy restoration of the fugitives. The letter was written on 11th February, 1804 A.D.

The Jayantia king Rani Singha had in the meantime sent two other envoys named Doloi Rupai and Hari Ligira to the Ahom king while Ramchandra was still in the Ahom kingdom. They were also formally received by the Barbarua and sent back to Jayantia in the company of Ramchandra. The Jayantia envoys were accompanied by two Ahom envoys Jaydeo and Jay Bara.

In October 1805 A.D., the Ahom envoys deputed to Jayantia returned with two Jayantia envoys, Ramchandra and Sarkar Hari.⁵¹ The Jayantia envoys were

⁵¹ *Tungkhungla Buranjil*, O.U.P., pp. 178, 188-191.

Offence of the
Jayantia envoys
and their expul-
sion from the
Ahom kingdom

duly received by the Barbarua. He charged Ramchandra for his failure to expatriate the Moamarias¹ and the fugitives who had taken shelter in the Jayantia kingdom in the custody of the Ahom envoys who accompanied him to Jayantipur. He further charged the Jayantia envoys with the offence that the Jayantia king did not accord an honourable reception to the Ahom envoys Jaydeo and Jay Bara. When the Barbarua asked the Majinder * to read the letter brought by Ramchandra, it transpired on the examination of the superscription of the letter that it was addressed to the Burhagohain by the general of the Jayantia king. When Ramchandra was asked why he had brought the letter in such an irregular way, he replied that through mistake it was delivered there. He asked for the return of that letter and promised to send the letter of the Barbarua next day. But the second letter was also found defective. The matter was reported to Kamaleswar Singha who ordered for the ignominious expulsion of the Jayantia envoys from the Ahom kingdom. This led to an abrupt termination of the Jayantia controversy.

Summary

The westward expansion of the Ahom kingdom by pushing back the Kacharis from the plains of the Brahmaputra valley to the southern hills, brought the Ahoms in contact with the Jayantias, the western neighbour of the Kacharis in the beginning of the 17th century. The first contact with them, as it appears from the Buranjis was peaceful. The Jayantia king Jasa Manik, in order to punish his powerful neighbour, the Kacharis, cultivated the friendship of the Ahom king Pratap Singha (1603-1641 A.D.) by matrimonial alliances with him. Subsequently taking advantage of the friendship with the Ahoms he obtained the legal permission of the Ahom government to establish markets in the plains within the Ahom kingdom for the Jayantia traders. This was a great gain for the Jayantias. The greater proportion of the population in the Khasi and Jayantia hills subsists by agriculture. The term agriculture however, includes the cultivation of potatoes, oranges, betel-nuts and betel-leaves.² A considerable number of them earn their livelihood as porters, carrying potatoes to the markets on the Sylhet side from whence the crop is conveyed by means of country boats to the different places of call of river steamers in the Surma valley, the steamers carrying the potatoes to Ccutta. In the same way till the occupation of Assam by the British which was followed by the construction of the road from Shillong to Gauhati, leading ultimately to the making of Shillong the most important business centre in the Khasi and Jayantia hills, where the hill products are largely carried by porters to be bought by Marwari merchants who load it in carts (nowadays in trucks) to be conveyed by road to Gauhati, from which place these are

* Majinder - a secretary.

52 Gurdon, P.R.T., *The Khasis*, pp. 26-27.

shipped to Calcutta and upper Assam, the Khasi and Jayantia traders used to bring down their hill products to the plains of the Brahmaputra valley through the passes and sold them in the markets of the plains and bought other necessities of life in which their hills were deficient. Thus the trading facilities with the plains of the Brahmaputra valley that the Jayantias obtained from the Ahom government was of great importance to them as the discontinuance of it would lead to the unemployment of many and deficit supply of many necessities of life. That was why, whenever they proved to be disobedient to the Ahom government, the latter retaliated by closing the passes and the markets which paralysed their economy. This was an important instrument in the hands of the Ahom government to bring them to submission.

In the course of the exchange of embassies and letters between the two kingdoms the Jayantia king declared times without number that Jayantia and Garhgaon were inseparable and indivisible. During the period of the occupation of western Assam by the Moguls the Jayantia king Jasamattarai expressed his profound regret at the discomfiture of his friend at the hands of the Moguls and his inability to render assistance to him in the shape of soldiers in his distress. At the same time, however, he wanted to assert his equality with the Ahom monarch by requesting the latter to write to him (i.e. the Jayantia king), and to direct his (Ahom) ministers write to his (Jayantia) ministers. But the Ahom king did not agree to his proposal pointing it out to be a departure from the hitherto observed formalities. In October 1667, after the re-occupation of Gauhati by the Ahoms in the August of the same year, the Jayantia king Jasamattarai even went so far as to propose to despatch a contingent of soldiers to the assistance of his friend, the Ahom monarch, by the Dimarua route. The success of the Ahoms against the Moguls no doubt prompted him to strengthen the bonds of the much coveted friendship of the Ahom king by offering him assistance. But his proposal of sending the troops by the Dimarua route suggests that he was actuated more by the desire to take vengeance upon Dimarua, which stood on his way of territorial and also of commercial expansion, by marching troops through Dimarua than by a sincere desire to help his friend.

Between 1669 to 1681 A.D., taking advantage of the internal corruption and dissensions that ensued in the Ahom kingdom due to quick succession of kings on the Ahom throne, the Jayantia kings Pratap Singha and Lakshmi Singha repeatedly made their claims on Dimarua. The Ahom government refused their claim every time and at last broke off all relations with Jayantia in 1678 A.D. With the accession of Gadadhar Singha in 1681 A.D. the era of weak rulers came to an end and internal corruptions and dissensions ceased. It was Gadadhar Singha who dealt the final blow to the Mogul powers in 1682 at the battle of Itakhuli and relieved the Ahom kingdom from further Mogul invasions. The change of circumstances again led the Jayantia king Lakshmi Singha to attempt at re-establishing the friendly relations with the Ahom government instead of

making a claim on Dimarua. Accordingly he wrote several letters to the Barphukan stressing the long established friendship between the two kingdoms and desiring the renewal of the same. At last, in the reign of the next king Rudra Singha (1696-1714 A.D.) about the year 1700 A.D. friendly relations were re-established between the two kingdoms after twenty two years of interval. Lakshmi Singha's successor Ram Singha I, however, again incurred the enmity of the Ahom king Rudra Singha, the strongest of the Ahom kings, by refusing to obey his command demanding the release of the Kachari king Tamradhvaj Narayan, who had been treacherously made a prisoner by the Jayantia king Ram Singha. The result was the invasion of the Jayantia kingdom by the Ahoms in December, 1707 A.D. and the capture and deportation of Ram Singha along with his eldest son to the Ahom kingdom. Ram Singha died of small pox in captivity.* His eldest son Barkonwar was subsequently released and established by Rudra Singha on the throne of Jayantia as a 'thapita-sanchita' i.e. established and preserved ruler of the Ahom king on condition of paying an annual tribute to the Ahom king. Barkonwar, however, refused to pay the annual tribute to the Ahom king promised by him ; whereupon he was kept imprisoned for fourteen years (1709-1723 A.D.) by the Ahom government and the markets and the passes were closed to the Jayantia traders. At the repeated requests and representations of his brother Sarukonwar and the Jayantia nobles, Barkonwar was at last released and the markets and the passes were also opened.

In spite of the invasion of the Jayantia kingdom by the Ahoms several times within a short period of 22 years (1707-1729 A.D.), the Jayantia kings did not become submissive and loyal. During the Moamaria rebellion, the Jayantia king Ram Singha II (1789-1832 A.D.) did not try to dissuade his subordinate frontier provinces and subjects from allying themselves with the Moamaris against the Ahom government and also giving them shelter in their places when they could not stand the vigorous counter attack of the Ahom forces. As a friend of the Ahom king, as he professed to be through his letters, it was his duty to do it. On the contrary, Ram Singha did not pay heed to the repeated requests, made by the Ahom king Kamaleswar Singha to him to repatriate the Moamaris and the fugitive Ahom subjects who had taken shelter in his kingdom during the turmoils of the Moamaria rebellion. Thus a review of the Ahom-Jayantia relations of about two hundred years, from the beginning of the 17th century to the beginning of the 19th century reveals the fact that the Jayantia kings were never actuated by any sincere desire in making their professions of friendship towards the Ahom government. Their main concern was the continuance of commercial relations with the Ahom kingdom at any cost. When as a reprisal of their untoward attitude the Ahom government retaliated by closing the passes and the markets, then only they became submissive and acknowledged the overlordship of the Ahom king.

* According to Gait he died of dysentery.

The policy that the Ahoms followed in dealing with the Jayantias is quite clear. Unlike the kingdom of the Kacharis, the Jayantia kingdom did not extend to the plains of the Brahmaputra valley. As already stated, economic considerations compelled the Jayantia kings to cultivate the friendship of the Ahom kings. The Ahom kings exploited this economic need of the Jayantia kingdom to establish their overlordship over it. They did never try to occupy the hilly portions of the Jayantia kingdom which bordered on the Ahom kingdom to the south. The Ahoms never envisaged the plan of annexing any of the hilly regions to their own kingdom on account of the immense difficulty of keeping these under control. It was the refusal of the Jayantia king Ram Singha I to obey the command of the Ahom king Rudra Singha that led to the invasion of the Jayantia kingdom by the Ahoms. In spite of his victory over the Jayantias Rudra Singha, however, did not annex their kingdom. He allowed the Jayantia kings to rule over their kingdom without any interference from the Ahoms, subject to the payment of an annual tribute to their Ahom overlord. Rudra Singha's successors also followed the same policy initiated by their predecessor. They punished the refractoriness of the successive Jayantia kings by closing the markets and the passes and also by sending punitive expeditions against the frontier provinces of Jayantia whose safety was indispensable for the maintenance of commercial as well as political relations with the Ahom kingdom. The Ahoms gave the Jayantias autonomy to rule themselves but chastised all attempts at their expansion and independence.

Ahom Policy towards
the Jayantias

CHAPTER VI.

(b) Protectorate over Khyrim.

Of the numerous Khasi states into which the Khasi tribe was split up from time immemorial the state of Khyrim or Khairam, the capital of which was at Nongkrem, not far from Shillong, was the most important. From the chronicles of the Ahoms it appears that the Ahom government had relations with the state of Khyrim which, like those with the state of Jayantia, were mainly of commercial nature. Khyrim is still one of the Khasi states ruled by a Siem, who is called a Raja by the plains people.* The Siem of Khyrim resides at Nokshee. It is surmised that, like the state of Jayantia, the state of Khyrim

Trade relations with the plains leads to the establishment of protectorate over Khyrim by the Ahoms

also obtained legal permission from the Ahom government to trade with the plains and establish markets there, and the Ahom government availed itself of this opportunity to establish its protectorate over Khyrim. Like the king of Jayantia, the king of Khyrim also used to exchange diplomatic correspondence with the Ahom king. But for some reasons not

stated in the Buranjis the exchange of diplomatic correspondence between the two states came to cease. The trade connections of the Khyrimis with the plains, however, did not stop with the stoppage of the exchange of diplomatic correspondence.

The first reference to the state of Khyrim that we get in the Buranjis of the Ahoms was during the reign of king Rudra Singha (1696-1714 A.D.) when a trader named Santosh Bangal who was trading at Pandua in Sylhet, on the border of the Jayantia kingdom, fled from Pandua and took refuge in Dimarua.¹ The loss in his trade with Bengal most probably led to the flight of Santosh Bangal from Pandua and actuated him to try his luck by trade with Assam. The province of Dimarua, as already mentioned, stood on the frontier of the states of Jayantia and Khyrim and became tributary to the Ahom government from 1616 A.D. In order to establish trade connections with Assam Santosh Bangal requested the Raja of Dimarua to hand him

Affairs of Santosh Bangal and Kina Barua

* After independence a District Council was formed with the representatives of the different Khasi and Jayantia States which received much of the power of administration.

1 *Jayantia Buranjil*, p 140

over to Kina Barua, the merchant of Khyrim so that he might begin his trade with Assam under his (i.e. Kina Barua's) patronage. The Raja of Dimarua did accordingly. Santosh began his trade with Assam under the patronage of Kina Barua and within a short time he became rich and prosperous through his trade. Santosh's patron Kina Barua, the Khyrim merchant, now became jealous of Santosh's prosperity and wanted to oust him from the Assam trade in which he had become Barua's rival. With that end in view he endeavoured to send Santosh to the Raja of Khyrim, apparently with the hope that the Raja would keep him in confinement as he was trading with Assam from Khyrim along with the Khyrim traders without having the necessary permission from the Raja of Khyrim and thus evading the payment of taxes to the Raja. When Santosh came to know of it, he became very much afraid, fled from Kina Barua and again sought refuge in Dimarua. The Dimarua Raja agreed to keep him in his custody on the ground that he had come from the Jayantia frontier and if in future the Jayantia king would ask him to repatriate Santosh he must do it. Kina Barua as well as the other Khyrim merchants considered the shelter given by the Dimarua Raja to Santosh to be an act of undue harassment and interference on the part of Dimarua* in the affairs of Khyrim, and during the period from October 1703 to April 1704 A.D. (from Agrahayan to Chaitra, 1625 Saka), the merchants of Khyrim attended the markets on the Assam frontier properly armed to oppose any eventual interference in their trading activities by Dimarua. These circumstances naturally resulted in the relaxation of trading activities between Assam and Khyrim.

The Ahom viceroy of Gauhati Patra Barphukan thereupon advised the Duaria i.e. the Assamese officer guarding the Kshetri duar or pass leading to the state of Khyrim, to ask the Khyrim merchants to persuade their king to seek the protection of the Barphukan like the Kachari and Jayantia kings by offering presents to him in order to get rid of the oppression of Dimarua and other neighbouring Khasis.¹ At this the Khyrim merchant Kina Barua said that they were also eager for it and expressed his willingness to collect the necessary articles of present for the Barphukan by informing the Khyrim Raja, provided the Duaria would agree to escort the Khyrim envoys to the Barphukan.

The Khyrim merchants show eagerness for the protection of the Ahom Govt.

After a few days a 'bason' * of the Raja of Khyrim approached the Duaria and said as follows "Jayantia has got passes and markets, we also do possess them. But while Jayantia is allowed to go to the Ahom king and the Barphukan, why are

* According to Dr. S. K. Bhuyan the other Khyrim merchants considered this incident to be an act of undue harassment and interference on the part of Kina Barua.—(Anglo-Assamese Relations, p. 30). The subsequent developments of the incident, however, prove his statement to be wrong.

2 *Jayantia Buranjī*, pp. 140-41.

* 'Bason' is a class of officer who assist the king in the administration of the territory.

we deprived of that favour ? You please escort us to the place of the Barphukan so that we may go to the place of the king also.”³ The Duaria intimated the message of the ‘bason’ to the Barphukan and the Barphukan intimated it to king Rudra Singha. Rudra Singha ordered the Barphukan to make correspondence with the Raja of Khyrim through the mediation of the Duaria. Accordingly the Barphukan sent an envoy named Haridhan Dulia to the Duaria instructing him to ask whether the news that besides Kina Barua a ‘bason’ of the Raja of Khyrim also came to the Duaria was true. The Barphukan thereby wanted to mean that he was completely ignorant of these facts. Haridhan was further instructed to say as follows—“We have heard that formerly the Khyrim Raja and the Ahom Raja used to exchange embassies on friendly terms. Now also, if he revives it he might get back Santosh Bangal who was captured by the Dimarua Raja. Moreover, if he can establish friendship with the Barphukan, he might get rid of the troubles from other Khasis (i.e. belonging to other states).”⁴ From the speech of Haridhan Dulia, Kina Barua inferred that the Duaria did not inform the Barphukan that a ‘bason’ of the Khyrim Raja had come to him. He therefore charged the Duaria why did he not inform the Barphukan about the arrival of the ‘bason’. Kina Barua expressed his anxiety if the ‘bason’ who had gone back to his kingdom would not come again. However, he expressed his determination to establish friendly relations between Assam and Khyrim.

Eight days after this incident, three Khyrim envoys viz., a Sangat, * one named Phalmeleng and Kina Barua, the merchant, approached the Duaria with proposals of friendship between Assam and Khyrim.⁵ Hearing this, the Barphukan deputed two envoys named Bharath Tamuli and Haridhan Saikia to the place of the Duaria with the instruction to remind the Khyrim envoys that formerly also there was friendship between the Ahom Raja and the Khyrim Raja which was proved by the existence of the pass and the markets up to that time. They would really get pleasure if the Khyrim Raja resumed it again. Let this friendship grow to such an extent that Garhgaon and Khyrim would become inseparable and indivisible like Garhgaon and Jayantia.

At this the Khyrim envoys Kina and Phalmeleng replied that formerly the friendship between Assam and Khyrim was established only when the Kshetri Duaria (guard of the Kshetri pass) went to their king with two hundred men and the three Khyrim envoys named Labu, Umai and Sangat accompanied him to the Ahom kingdom in return. Therefore now also the Khyrim Raja insists that the Duaria should first go to Khyrim to receive the peace proposals and thus re-establish friendly relations between the two states.

³ *Jayantia Buranji*, p. 141.

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 141.

* Sangat is a class of officer who assist the king in administration.

⁵ *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 142-45.

When the Barphukan was intimated the message of the Khyrim envoys, he advised the Duaria to tell the Khyrim envoys that the demand for the Duaria's presence at Khyrim should be made to him personally at Gauhati. At this the Khyrim envoys replied that they dared not go to Gauhati alone. They further said that if the Ahoms did not believe them let the Duaria keep the brother or son of Kina Barua as a hostage and then come to Khyrim. The Duaria this time became very angry and ordered the Khyrim merchants to stop their trading operations with Assam. The Khyrim merchants then began to accuse Kina Barua for his failure to establish friendly relations with the Ahoms. When Kina Barua approached the Duaria to get rid of this trouble, the latter again insisted on the proceeding of the Khyrim envoys to Gauhati to obtain the permission from the Barphukan to take the Duaria to Khyrim. The Duaria even proposed that his brother or son might be kept as a hostage if they feared to go to Gauhati alone unaccompanied by the Duaria.

Despite the assurance given by the Duaria the Khyrimis did not send envoys to Gauhati. The Duaria thereupon contrived the appointment of Santosh Bangal as Barua by the Dimarua Raja and allowed him to sit before the Duaria on a mat—a distinction, denied to an ordinary man.* Kina Barua and other Khyrim merchants became jealous of Santosh's distinction and proposed to go down to the Barphukan at Gauhati to obtain permission to bring the Duaria to Khyrim and thus establish friendship and revive trade facilities with Assam. The trick of the Duaria served its purpose.

Soon afterwards Kina and Phalmeleng handed over to the Duaria six Khyrim envoys named Yong, Dukhia, Gharburah, Lapit, Jani and Janur.⁶ The Duaria in his turn despatched them to Gauhati. The Khyrim envoys arrived at Gauhati on June 11, 1704 A.D. where they were formally received at Dordor (i.e. the council chamber) by the Barphukan three days later. They offered the presents brought from their Raja to the Barphukan. When they were asked the object of their visit to Gauhati, they replied that they had been sent by their king to the Barphukan to get the permission from him to take the Duaria to Khyrim to re-establish friendly relations between the two states. Because formerly also it was through the medium of the Duaria that friendly relations had been established between the two states. They also expressed their desire to have an interview with the Ahom king at the capital.

The Barphukan assured the Khyrim envoys that the prayer of the Khyrim Raja would be fulfilled provided he was earnest in cultivating the much coveted friendship of the Ahom king by sending formal embassies. In the meantime Barmanik, the Raja of Khyrim died in June (Ashar=June+July) 1704 A.D. The Ahom king

* During the Ahom period, people of inferior rank had to sit on the bare ground before the officers superior in rank to them.

6 *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 145-48.

thereupon demanded confirmation of the previous proposals by the new Raja of Khyrim.

The Khyrim envoys left Gauhati by the first week of July and returned within a short time with proper instructions from their new Raja. They were again received by the Barphukan on August 3, 1704 A.D. and left Gauhati on August, 5, accompanied by the Duaria along with many valuable presents for their Raja. The Ahom envoys in return were received by the Khyrim Raja with proper ceremony and they assured him of the Ahom king's friendly attitude towards Khyrim. Thus the need of having commercial intercourse with the plains led to the establishment of friendly relations between the kingdoms of Assam and Khyrim.

Establishment of friendly relations between Assam and Khyrim

During the Moamaria rebellion when king Gaurinath Singha (1780-95 A.D.) having fled from upper Assam was residing at Gauhati, another embassy from Khyrim came to Gauhati in 1786 A.D. In spite of the disturbances that were prevailing in the kingdom on account of the Moamaria rebellion, Gaurinath Singha ordered the Barphukan to receive the Khyrim envoys with due honour and ceremony. The Barphukan accordingly cleared nine acres of land for the purpose near the western gate of Gauhati. Two big houses were erected for the reception of the envoys the posts of which were draped with costly cloths, and the floor was covered with velvet.

Reception of the Khyrim embassy at Gauhati - 1786

The ceremony was attended by all the officers, civil and military, attached to the Barphukan's establishment, as well as by the Rajas of Darrang, Beltola and Rani. There, the Khyrim envoys were formally received by the Barphukan on 11th May, 1786. The Khyrim embassy consisted of one named Kharkonwar, six Baruas of the different frontier outposts of Khyrim and three envoys. The embassy was led by Manurai. When the Barphukan asked the envoys the purpose of their visit to Assam the leader of the embassy Manurai replied that they had come to inform the Barphukan that their king had agreed to become a protected prince under the Ahom king according to the terms of annual tribute demanded by the predecessors of Gaurinath Singha. They further said that in return for the acceptance of the Ahom king's conditions by the Khyrim Raja, the latter urged the Ahom king to see that the Khyrim Raja could live in peace and prosperity. From the speech of Manurai it appears that during the reigns of the predecessors of Gaurinath Singha the Khyrim Raja had sought the protection of the Ahom king apparently against the oppressions of the neighbouring Khasis. As the Khyrim Raja did not agree to pay annual tribute to the Ahom king fixed by the latter, the protection sought by the Khyrim Raja was not given during their reigns. In the reign of Gaurinath Singha the oppressions of the neighbouring Khasis most probably grew severe and it must have hampered the trading activities of the Khyrimis with the plains considerably. The Khyrim Raja, being unable to stand against it, agreed to place

himself under the protection of the Ahom king and pay the annual tribute to him demanded by the predecessors of Gaurinath Singha apparently to get rid of the oppressions of the neighbouring Khasis as well as to ensure uninterrupted commercial relations with the plains. The Barphukan in reply to the message of the Khyrim envoys assured them of the protection of the Ahom king, if the Khyrim Raja, throwing himself under his protection would remain loyal to him.

CHAPTER VII

Ahom-Mikir Relations

The Mikirs who call themselves 'Arlengs' (meaning 'men') are one of the most numerous and homogeneous of the Tibeto-Burman races inhabiting the state of Assam. They are chiefly found in the low forest clad hills called after them, which fill the triangle between the Brahmaputra on the north, the Dhansiri valley on the east, and the Kopili and the Jamuna valley on the west and the south. This tract is now divided between the Nowgong and Sibsagar districts. They are also found in considerable numbers on the northern skirts of the Assam Range in Nowgong, the Khasi and Jaintia Hills and Kamrup. They were once numerous, as testified by local place and river names, in North Cachar. They have also settled in the plains and taken to plough cultivation in Nowgong and Kamrup. Across the Brahmaputra there is practically no Mikir, save a few recent colonies of the race in Darrang. It is in the hilly country and in the plains at its base described above that the Mikir people are found. The great bulk of the race, however, remains a hill tribe, practising the shifting methods of cultivation in the forests by axe, fire and hoe. The region inhabited by the Mikirs is continuous, and spreads over the districts of Sibsagar, Nowgong, North Cachar, the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, and Kamrup. Side by side with the Mikirs dwell, in the Mikir Hills, the Rengma Nagas (who are recent immigrants from the eastern side of the Dhansiri); in the Jamuna and the Dayang valleys, the Dimas or Kacharis; in the Jaintia Hills, the Kukis and the Syntengs; and in the Khasi Hills and along the Nowgong and Kamrup borders the Lalungs and a few settlements of Khasis.

The Mikirs — a
Tibeto-Burman
tribe

The Mikirs are divided into three sections, viz., Chintong, Ronghang and Amri. The first two rank rather higher than the third, because, it is said that the Amri excused themselves from sending a man to the Ahom king in Sibsagar, when a representative was required from each of the three sections of the tribe.¹ Hence the Amri is excluded from

Division of the
Mikirs

¹ Waddell, L. A., *Tribes of the Brahmaputra valley*, J. A. S. B., 1900, No. 1, pp. 29-35; Stack E., and Lyall, C. J. "The Mikirs", pp. 1-5; Mackenzie, Alexander, *The North-East Frontier of Bengal*, pp. 213-14; Report on the census of Assam, 1881, pp. 77-82.

² Report on the Census of Assam, 1881, p. 81.

sharing the liquor at a sacrifice and are held in contempt by the western Mikirs specially. There is, however, a different account.³ According to it, in the days of migration eastward from the Kopili region, Amri stayed behind, or loitered, and Chintong and Ronghang waited for them as they moved from stage to stage. At last when they reached the Dhansiri river, Chintong and Ronghang resolved to be the only two sections in future. The laggard Amri afterwards arrived, but were not received back into full fellowship. They have no honour at the general festival, and in the distribution of rice beer they get no gourd for themselves, but have to drink from those of the other two. These are the conditions as they exist in the Mikir Hills and Nowgong (Duar Baguri). In Ni-hang (the region of the Kopili), however, the Amri are on an equality with the others. The Mikir Hills are chiefly inhabited by the Chintong section, North Cachar and hilly parts of Nowgong by the Ronghang and the Khasi and Jayantia Hills by the Amri; but individuals of all three are found dwelling among the others.

There is a fourth section of the tribe called Dumrali by the Mikirs and Thalua by the Assamese.⁴ These are the Mikirs who have settled in the plains of Nowgong and have taken to plough cultivation. It is said that these Mikirs acted as interpreters to the mission which visited the Ahom king at Sibsagar. From this we may presume that these Mikirs had been settled in the plains long before the migration of the tribe into the Ahom kingdom in great numbers.

According to their own tradition, the ancestors of the Mikirs originally came from the Khasi and Jayantia Hills, bordering on the Kopili river (where many still remain).⁵ They speak of this region as Ni-hang in contradistinction to Nilip, the Duar Baguri or Nowgong region which they now inhabit. But according to Colonel Dalton, they went to Jayantia, only on their expulsion from the low hills which were afterwards included in Tularam Senapati's (1829-1850 A.D.) country⁶ in the North Cachar Hills and from which they were driven out by the Kacharis.⁷ Not being satisfied with their new quarters, they eventually placed themselves under the protection of the Ahom king.

Ahom-Mikir Relations :—

There is a reference to the migration of the Mikirs from the Khasi and Jayantia Hills to their present abode in the Nowgong district in one Buranji.⁸ During the

3 Stack, E. and Lyall, C. J., "*The Mikirs*," p. 15.

4 *Ibid* pp. 16-17.

5 *Ibid* p. 5.

6 Sen, Surendranath, *Prachin Bangala Patra Sankalan* pp. 79-80 (Preface) ; Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, pp. 257-58, 303-5. Tularam Senapati's country was bounded on the north by the Jamuna and the Dayang, on the south by the Mahur river and the Naga Hills, on the east by the Dhansiri and on the west by the Dayang.

7 Quoted by Mackenzie, Alexander in *The North-East Frontier of Bengal*, p. 213 ; Report on the *Census of Assam*, 1881. pp. 77-78.

8 *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp. 120-23.

reign of king Jayadvaj Singha (1648-1663 A.D.), in order to stop incursion of the Kacharis into the Ahom kingdom, outposts were established at Raha and Jagi. The king's father-in-law, Teleka Sandikai was deputed to Raha as the Rohial Barua or the Ahom governor,* with four trusted nobles and a great number of people. Sometime later on, Teleka Sandikai saw a fire on the tops of the neighbouring hills. He despatched his officers to survey those places. They came upon villages with active settlers. The inhabitants fled to different quarters at the sight of the Ahom army. The Ahom soldiers took the food that they could recover from the deserted houses. The old and the decrepit hillmen who were left behind at home on account of their infirmity were extremely pleased to see that the Ahom soldiers had eaten their food. From that they concluded that they were of the same caste as themselves. These people, being assured of their safety, procured the return of the fugitives. The Ahoms asked them about the customs of their country. The hillmen reported that according to the custom that was in vogue in their country, a son was debarred from succession and an estate was inherited by the son of a daughter. They also said

Circumstances leading to the migration of the Mikirs to the Ahom kingdom

that the son of a Chief had to earn his bread by service under another person. When they were asked why they had migrated to Ahom territories, they replied that in order to escape from the operation of the matriarchal law of inheritance, they had migrated to the Ahom kingdom. The Ahom officers exposed the inequity of the matriarchal custom and assured them of a more popular mode of inheritance in which the son inherits his father's property, if they would place themselves under the domination of the Ahoms. As a result of this negotiation, twelve families of Mikirs (and also twelve families of Lalungs) migrated to the Ahom kingdom. Their leaders were taken to the presence of the Ahom king Jayadvaj Singha who promised them protection and the benefit of equitable usages of his country according to which a son could inherit his father's property. When they were asked whether they had any son of their king, they replied in the affirmative and said that a son of the Ranghangpo dynasty was entitled to become king.** Then according to the command of the Ahom king a son of that dynasty was made king. The Mikir king, in recognition of his gratitude towards the Ahom king sent five daos and five spears as presents to him. The Ahom king in return sent the following things as presents to the Mikir king—a sedan, a girl,

The posts of Rohial Barua and Jagialia Gohain had been created by king Pratap Singha (1603-41). The absence of outposts at these two places in the reign of king Jayadvaj Singha, as mentioned in Doodhai Assam Buranji suggests that the outposts were most probably withdrawn sometime afterwards.

There is an account of the early history of the Mikirs in which history and legend are no doubt mixed up. According to this account, at one time, they were a powerful race who were ruled by a line of powerful kings of their own. Chat Raja was their last king, who being subjected to harassment by his subjects, cursed them that they would have to live for ages without the protecting hand of a sovereign. The Mikirs are still said to be awaiting the termination of this curse. Taking advantage of the absence of a leader among the Mikirs, a king from the plains subjugated their territory. This was perhaps the conquest of the Mikir territory by the Kacharis mentioned above, when they fled in all directions and some of them settled themselves in the land of the Khasis. (*Doodhai Assam Buranji* pp. 209-214.)

a drum, one kali (a clarion), a dao and a dish. King Jayadvaj Singha thanked his father-in-law and the other officers for procuring the migration and homage of subjects of another country and establishing villages by settling them in the Ahom kingdom. This is the account given in the Buranji.

The story of their first appearance in Assam according to the Mikir tradition is that, being driven out of the Khasi and Jayantia Hills into the present district of Nowgong, the Mikirs sent emissaries to seek protection of the Ahom governor of Raha (Nowgong district).⁹ These unfortunate persons, being unable to make themselves understood, were straightway buried alive in the embankment of a tank which the governor was excavating. The hostilities that ensued were concluded by an embassy to the king himself in Sibsagar and the Mikirs have ever since been living peacefully in the territory assigned to them.

The version of the Buranji differs from the traditions of the Mikirs in this that the former do not mention the fact that it was the Mikirs who voluntarily sent emissaries to the Ahom governor at Raha and that they were buried alive by the latter. It is better to accept the version of the Buranji which is more trustworthy than the oral traditions of the Mikirs.

According to the account given in the Buranji it appears that the Mikirs emigrated into the Ahom territory about the beginning of the 17th century, but they came to the notice of the Ahoms about the middle of that century. The westward expansion of the Ahom kingdom towards the direction of the Kachari kingdom probably led to the driving out of the Mikirs from their original habitat in the low hills of north Cachar Hills forming afterwards, part of Tularam Senapati's country. That they came to the Ahom kingdom from the Khasi and Jayantia Hills is proved by the existence of the matriarchal system in their country mentioned by them and which system is still in vogue in the Khasi and Jayantia Hills. Further, the Mikir tradition refers to the existence of Rohial Barua, the Ahom governor of Raha. But that post was created first during the reign of king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.)¹⁰ though of course, the Ahom kingdom had extended up to Kajalimukh, north of the Kalang river, during the reign of king Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.).¹⁰ Gradually the valley of the Kopili also came under Ahom occupation. On the other hand, it is also equally true that the Mikirs came to settle in their present habitat in the Nowgong district before the reign of Jayadvaj Singha. Because, the Ahom officers, on their visit to the Mikir Hills, found villages with active settlements. Considering all these factors we may conclude that the Mikirs emigrated into the Ahom kingdom in the early part of the 17th century and that they settled down in their present habitat in the Nowgong dis-

9 Report on the census of Assam, 1881, pp. 77-78; Stack, E and Lyall, C. J., *The Mikirs*, pp. 4-5.

10 Barua, Harakanta, *Assam Buranji*, p. 42.

strict without the permission of the Ahom king. But subsequently, when they came in contact with the Ahoms, the latter received them kindly and allowed them to live within the Ahom kingdom, apparently on condition of paying annual tributes to the Ahom king. As Mackenzie says, "The Assam Rajas claimed their (i.e. Mikirs) principal allegiance, appointed their chiefs, and took a tribute in cotton, mats, & C., valued at about Rs. 300/-. The Mikirs received permission from the Assamese authorities to cultivate a strip of land under the hills, and an assignment of the proceeds of certain fisheries and ferries. These they farmed out, and received their rents in the shape of dried fish and rice when they brought down their tribute".¹¹ Since then, the Mikirs have been living peacefully in the territory assigned to them.

In the reign of king Rajeswar Singha (1751-1769 A.D.), however, in July 1765, an expedition had to be sent against the Mikirs as they flouted the agreement with the Ahom king by withholding the payment of annual tribute to him.¹² Two forces were sent against them—one under the Nyaisodha Phukan of Jalambala family on land by Chaparala and the other under the Dayangia Rajkhowa of Sandikai family by the Kopili. The result was most effective. The two forces, having effected a junction in the hills, set fire to the dwellings and the granaries of the Mikirs. They obtained a large number of daggers, caps, hoes, spears, goats and many other things as spoils. They then came back and halted at Raha. Then the Mikirs came down in a body to Raha with many things as tributes and asked for peace. The Nyaisodha Phukan and the Dayangia Rajkhowa consulted between themselves and sent the news to the king. The king ordered them to offer presents to the Mikirs and establish them in their old village. Accordingly they offered presents to the Mikirs and established them in their old places. This was the first and the last expedition sent by the Ahoms against the Mikirs.

Summary :—

The first contact of the Ahoms with the Mikirs which took place about the middle of the 17th Century in the reign of king Jayadhwaj Singha (1648-63 A.D.) was peaceful and not hostile. The Ahom king received their deputation kindly, accorded them a cordial reception, premised them the benefits of the laws of his country and allowed them to settle within Ahom territory on condition of paying an annual tribute to the Ahom king, whom they had to accept as their overlord. This pacific manner in which the Ahoms treated the Mikirs helped in establishing peaceful relations between the Ahoms and the Mikirs. The Mikirs did never break their terms with the Ahoms, save only on one occasion when they withheld the payment of annual tribute to the Ahom king in the reign of Rajeswar Singha

11 Mackenzie, Alexander, *The North-East Frontier of Bengal* p. 213.

12 *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 285-86.

(1751-69 A.D.). This time also, they very soon came to terms with the Ahoms. Unlike the other hill-tribes, who were of rapacious nature and who committed raids within Ahom territory, the Mikirs did never commit any raid. "They are a mild and unwarlike people, and are said to have given up the use of arms when they placed themselves under the protection of the Ahom kings."¹³ The Mikirs practically gave no trouble to the Ahom rulers.

¹³ Stack, E. and Lyall, C. J., "*The Mikirs*, p. 5.

CHAPTER VIII

Ahom-Manipuri Relations

The state of Manipur, consisting of a small but rich alluvial valley, is isolated from the neighbouring kingdoms by an encircling zone of mountainous country inhabited by wild and warlike tribes. It is almost entirely a hilly country, the exception being the valley of Manipur in its centre. The state lies between Burma on the east, the Naga hills on the north, Cachar on the west and the territory of the Kukis on the south. It has got a record of long independent existence. It was known to the Shans as Ka-Se and to the Burmese as Ka-the, a corruption of the same word; the Ahoms called it Mekheli, and the Kacharis Magli, while the old Assamese name for it is Maglau.¹ The physical feature of the Manipuris clearly show that they belong to the Mongolian stock, and their language is closely allied to those of the Kuki tribes which border them on the south. But the process of Hinduisation has been going on very rapidly among the Manipuris and they are fast becoming Hinduised into a caste, claiming to be Kshatriyas, and their king tracing his descent to Arjun, the hero of the Mahabharata.²

Ahom - Manipuri Relations :—

As regards the relation of the Ahoms with Manipur, the first reference we get during the reign of Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.). In 1537 A.D. king Suhungmung offered a girl of Lanmakhru family, named Khukdang to the Raja of Keshi (i.e. Manipur).³ The Manipuri Raja* also in return sent a princess to the Ahom king. The object of this matrimonial alliance between the two kings is not stated in the Buranjì.

The establishment of this matrimonial alliance was, however, not followed by the exchange of diplomatic correspondence between the two kingdoms. For we do

1 Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 269.

2 Waddell, L.A., *Tribes of the Brahmaputra valley*, J.A.S.B., No. 1, 1900, p. 60.

3 *Ahom Buranjì*, p. 77.

* The name of the Manipuri Raja is given as Chaomen.

not find any reference to Manipur in the Buranjis till about the middle of the 18th century, when in 1765 A.D. the king of Manipur Jai Singha, who had fled from his kingdom on account of the Burmese invasion and occupation of his kingdom and had taken shelter under the Kachari king, went to visit the Ahom king Rajeswar Singha (1751-69 A.D.) along with the Kachari king Sandhikari under the escort of the Barbarua.⁴ The deposed king Jai Singha offered king Rajeswar Singha a long plate of gold and two gold Maihangs* and fell prostrate at his feet by keeping the latter's feet on his head. He urgently requested the help of the Ahom

The fugitive Manipuri king Jai Singha seeks Ahom help against the Burmese

king to expel the Burmese who had occupied Manipur. He declared to place himself as a vassal of the Ahom king and pay annual tribute to the latter, if he would succeed in regaining his lost territory with the help of the Ahom king. Rajeswar

Singha, consulting with his ministers, agreed to send an army to Manipur to reinstate him. A force was collected, but several officers in succession refused to accept the command on the plea of ill health. All these persons were dismissed from service and deprived of all their property. At last a commander was found in the person of Hara-nath Senapati Phukan, the father of Badanchandra Barphukan. He was given specific orders to re-establish Jai Singha on his lost throne. At the time of departure, the Manipuri Raja was given instruction to maintain communication with the Ahom king through envoys and letters. The army proposed to march to Manipur direct through the jungles south of the Charaideo hill by cutting and clearing the jungles. They entered into a deep dense forest in the middle of the Charaideo hill where they confounded the way. They could not find out any way to Manipur and roamed about in the forest. They suffered great hardships for want of food.

Lata-Kata Ran or the creeper cutting expedition

The Nagas also refused passage to the soldiers and killed a great number of them, while many more died of fever and dysentery, and others by the bite of snakes and spiders. The state of things was reported to the king who ordered the troops to return. Two-thirds of the men and provisions were

lost, only a third could come back. This expedition was termed as Lata-Kata Ran or the creeper cutting expedition.

About the end of the year 1767, the king gave Khangia Phukan,** the son of Kirtichandra Bakatial Barbarua, the command of the army and ordered him to proceed to Manipur with Raja Jai Singha. In January 1768 (Magh=Jan.+Feb.) he proceeded with his army and arrived at Raha where he put his camp. In the month of February, one Naga Manmath Bara was given the command of ten thousand men and ordered to accompany Jai Singha as far as the Mirap river. The Naga Bara accordingly started with his army accompanied by

4 Ahom Buranji, pp. 286-90 ; Barua, Harakanta *Assam Buranji* pp. 74-75 ; Tamuli Phukan, Kasi-nath, *Assam Buranji*, pp. 53-54 ; *Tungkhungia Buranji*, O.U.P., pp. 52-58.

* Maihang—a metallic plate used by Ahoms of rank.

** According to Harakanta Barua Kirtichandra Barbarua was given the command.

Raja Jai Singha up to the Mirap river via the Kachari country. The Ahom army halted there and engaged themselves in the construction of forts. The Ahom army halted by the side of the Mirap river until Jai Singha raised a force of Nagas and went to Manipur. The Burmese had already left Manipur on hearing of the arrival of Ahom troops. Sometime after, the army left the fort near the Mirap river and came back to Raha via the Kachari country and intimated the news to the Khangia

Jai Singha regains the lost throne with the help of the Ahoms

Phukan. The Manipuri Raja Jai Singha, on reaching Manipur arrested and put to death the persons who stood against him with the help of his supporters. The usurper named Bairang* who had been placed on the throne of Manipur by

the Burmese was put to death with his sons and grandsons.

When Rajeswar Singha was informed everything, he sent a Kataki to Khangia Phukan asking him to send some Katakis to Raja Jai Singha to see what he was doing. Khangia Phukan accordingly sent Mannath Naga Bara with 200 men to Raja Jai Singha. They arrived Manipur via the Kachari country and Naga villages. When Jai Singha was informed of the arrival of the Katakis he sent some respectable men to welcome them. The Katakis were produced before Jai Singha and the Naga Bara intimated the latter with the message of the Ahom king. Jai Singha then expressed his gratefulness to the Ahom king for the help given to him in regaining his lost throne. He promised to remain faithful to him (i.e. the Ahom king) and send annual tributes without failure. As a mark of gratitude to the Ahom king, Jai Singha offered his daughter named Kuranganayani in marriage to king Rajeswar Singha with one elephant, one horse, two hundred male and female slaves and many other things as dowry. The number of Manipuris, accompanying Kuranganayani were subsequently settled near the Dichoi river. As the Manipuris are called Maglau by the Assamese, the place came to be known as Magalukhat. Later on, Kuranganayani excavated a tank in this place which also came to be known as the tank of the Magalu princess. During the Moamaria rebellion, queen Kuranganayani played a very gallant part in rescuing king Lakshmi Singha (1769-80) the successor of king Rajeswar Singha from his confinement at the hands of the Moran insurgents and restoring him on the Ahom throne which had been usurped for a few months by the Moran leader Ramakanta.*

Manipuri princess Kuranganayani given in marriage to Rajeswar Singha

In the reign of the next Ahom king Lakshmi Singha (1769-80 A.D.) the Manipuri Raja Jai Singha proposed to give his grand daughter (son's daughter) in

* Gait mentions the name of the usurper who had been placed on the throne of Manipur by the Burmese as Kelemba accepting the story told by Dr. Brown in his Statistical Account of Manipur. (*History of Assam*, p. 188).

* For the part played by Kuranganayani in the restoration of king Lakshmi Singha, refer, S. K. Bhuyan's *Anglo-Assamese Relations*.

§ *Ahom Buranjis*, p. 314.

marriage to Lakshmi Singha.⁶ She was the daughter of the elder brother of Kurangayani. Lakshmi Singha agreed to marry her and offered land for her residence. A large number of Manipuris were putting up there who afterwards went back to Manipur.

In the reign of the next king Gaurinath Singha (1780-95 A.D.) when the Moamaria rebels compelled Gaurinath to flee from upper Assam and take shelter at Gauhati, Gaurinath sent an appeal for help to the king of Manipur Jai Singha along with the kings of Cachar and Jayantia to fight the Moamaria rebels. Letters were handed over to an envoy named Bishnuram Bahbaria Kataki and he was instructed to convey to the Manipuri Raja an oral message to the following effect,—“The Moamarias have caused disturbances in our country. The Manipuri Raja should come to help us in recollection of old friendship; if not, he should send some warlike men.” The Manipuri Raja Jai Singha, who was mindful of the services rendered him a few years previously by Gaurinath’s uncle Rajeswar Singha, at once sent a Manipuri troop under Dharmadhi, the spiritual preceptor of the Manipuri Raja with the Ahom envoy Bishnuram Bahbaria to fight against the Moamarias.⁷ The priest as well as his companions were left at Raha Choki and the four Manipuri envoys Gauranga, Khagendra, Abhimanyu and Nimai were despatched to the presence of the king at Gauhati with letters and presents. They intimated king Gaurinath Singha that they had been deputed by their Raja with the mandate that they should fight in concert with the Barbarua. But Gaurinath refused to place them under the Barbarua and commanded them to go to upper Assam to join the Burhagohain at Dichoi and participate in the war. Accordingly they were sent to upper Assam in company of two officers. This contingent in their journey up plundered Assamese villages and took with them the spoils. But the Manipuris left the company of Ahom officers and returned all on a sudden to their country by the route through Raha.

In July 1790 A.D. (Sravan=July+August) Gaurinath again sent three envoys with letters and presents to fetch the Raja of Manipur.⁸ They proceeded by the route through Raha and arrived at the capital of the Manipuri Raja, who accorded them a reception according to the approved procedure. The Manipuri Burha-Raja realised the situation from the letter and from the oral statements of the envoys. The Ahom envoys returned in the month of December (Pous=Dec.+January)

6 *Tungkhungia Buranji*, O. U. P., p. 106.

7 *Ibid*, pp. 121-22

8 *Tungkhungia Buranji*, O. U. P., pp. 123-24, 126-28

with the old chief of Manipur accompanied by a detachment of four thousand soldiers and his son Madhuchandra Juvaraj. The Manipuri Raja was accommodated in temporary quarters near the Ahom king's camp at Khutarmur in Nowgong, and he stayed there. Sometime after when the Dhekial

Phukan said to him that Gaurinath Singha had commanded him to proceed to join the company of the Burhagohain at Dichoi, Jai Singha became offended as he was commanded to join in the war without having an interview with king Gaurinath Singha. The offended chief dashed out of his house and reached Hatipara beyond Khagarijan. He was subsequently brought back and was allowed to have an interview with the Ahom king. Then he was despatched to the company of the prime minister at Dichoi. There also the Burhagohain accorded him a gorgeous reception. After the reception ceremony, the Burhagohain appointed men to erect two stockades in the vicinity of the Teok river where-to he marched with the Raja of Manipur. It was from this camp that the Mahamantri Burhagohain Dangaria despatched the Manipuri Raja with a large force to Rangpur in the company of a detachment of the Burhagohain's force.

The Raja chased the Moamaras with his army, and halted at some distance down Gaurisagar. The next morning Madhuchandra Juvaraj marched towards Rangpur with a detachment of warriors, and was followed by the old Raja with his army. The Moamaras, who had been cunningly lying in wait along the road concealing themselves in the woods, ambushed upon the Manipuris and made them to fight for some time. But being unable to stand the Manipuris were compelled to retreat in numerous directions. Many were killed during the fight and more in the pursuit that followed. The Moamaras seized all the goods of the Raja. The Manipuri Raja met the Burhagohain at Teok and communicated to him all the particulars. The martial ardour of the Manipuri Raja was so effectually quenched that he lost no time in hastening back to Manipur. He left a force of one thousand with the Burhagohain, but they also proved quite useless. When the Moamaras attacked the Ahoms on the other side of the Dichoi, the Burhagohain sent the Manipuri soldiers to that engagement. They went out; but instead of going to fight they returned abruptly to their own country. After this there is no trace of any diplomatic correspondence between Assam and Manipur.

Jai Singha at Dichoi

Jai Singha proceeds to fight

CHAPTER IX

RELATIONS OF THE AHOM KINGS WITH THE TRIBES OF THE NORTH EASTERN FRONTIER

(a) Relations of the Ahom kings with the Miris and the Abors or Adis

By the annexation of the Chutiya kingdom to the Ahom kingdom in the beginning of the 16th century (1523 A.D.) during the reign of Suhungmung, the Dihungia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.), the Ahoms had come into possession of the territory on the north bank of the Brahmaputra up to the river Subansiri. This brought the Ahoms in contact with the Miris and the Abors, the two hill tribes living on the northern border of the old Chutiya kingdom. The Miris and the

Miris and the Abors
—two Mongoloid
tribes

Abors are two vigorous Mongoloid tribes—the former occupying the plains and lower hills along the north bank of the Brahmaputra from the Subansiri (Somdiri or Sundri) river on the west, as far as the Dihong river on the east, and the latter occupying the north-eastern end of the Brahmaputra valley, mostly the hilly country between the Dihong and the Dibong.¹ Though they bear different names there is so much affinity between them as to justify the inference that they belonged originally to the same tribe who migrated in two batches—the earlier being known as the Miris and the latter as Abors. As Mackenzie observes, “coming no doubt originally from the same habitat, they are still so alike in all material respects as to warrant us in calling them earlier and later migrations of the same tribe—the Abors as the last comers retaining more of their pristine savagery and hardihood, while the Miris have been to some extent influenced by free association with the plains and the settled habits of civilisation. The intercourse between the Abors and the Miris is nevertheless constant and intimate.”

The Miris are divided into two main sections viz., the Hill Miris who live in the hills west of the Dijmoor and to the north of the Sisi and Dhemaji moujas of the Lakhimpur district, and the plain Miris who are found along

¹ Mackenzie, Alexander, *the North-east Frontier of Bengal*, pp. 33-36 ; Waddell, L. A., *Tribes of the Brahmaputra valley*, J. A. S. B., 1900, No. 1, 12-17 and 57-59.

² Mackenzie, Alexander, *The North-east Frontier of Bengal*, pp. 33-34

the course of the Subansiri. The Hill Miris are divided by the Assamese into Pani-botia (Pani=water, botia=way) and Tor-botia (Tor=land, botia=way). The names suggest that the former descend into the plains by water and the latter by land which gave rise to these Assamese names. Similarly the plain Miris are divided by the Assamese into Barahgam and Dohgam (or Do-gam) that is, the Miris living under twelve and ten Gams or chiefs respectively. Waddell, however, says that these Assamese names given to the Hill Miris and the plain Miris by the Assamese do not seem to be of any structural or other importance.³ The Barahgam Miris have only two phoids or clans, viz., Pegu and Dore, both of which are exogamous, so that a Pegu man must marry a Dore woman and vice versa.⁴ The list of their khels appears to be the following—(i) Dambukujal, (ii) Saengia, (iii) Moiengiyal, (iv) Oenial, (v) Lasonggoya, (vi) Dohutiya, (vii) Bongkual, (viii) Tamaragoya, (ix) Jongoya, (x) Pangoya, (xi) Pani-Pau (xii) Yourang-goya. These khels chiefly take their names from places in the Assam valley, only Oenial, Saengia and Moiengiyal appear to be genuine Miri names, and these three are claimed by the Dohgam Miris also.⁵ The Dohgam or Oringam (as they call themselves, Oring being the Miri word for 'ten') Miris are divided into the exogamous phoids of Nora, Milli, Paien, Kardho, Koman, Pogak and Sinte. There is still a third appellation of the plain Miris called Chutiya-Miris which they say, was given to them by the Ahoms, and which seems to denote that they were found resident in the Chutiya dominion at the time of their conquest by the Ahoms.⁶ Dalton mentions another tribe called Anka Miris or Tenaë living to the north-west of the Hill Miri country on a stream which is probably an upper course of the Subansiri (Sundri) river.⁷

As regards the Abors, that section of the tribe to the east of the Dihong river, that is to say, up to the Dibong river, which divides the Abors from the Mishmis and who occupy the inner and more lofty ranges calls itself Padam Abors.⁸ These Padam Abors are the Bor Abor or great Abor of the Assamese. While the sections to the west of that river bordering the plains are called Mi-Yong, Pasi and Doba. To the westward of the Dihong, Abor villages may be found here and there among those of the upper Hill-Miris. No Miri villages are, however, situated between the Dihong and the Dibong, and no Abor villages exist among the Miri settlements on the plains near Lakhimpur. The Abors are known to be the most backward and least accessible of all the tribes.

3 Waddell, L.A., *Tribes of the Brahma-putra valley*, J.A.S.B. 1900, No. 1, p. 58.

4 Report on the *Census of Assam*, 1881. p. 86.

5 Ibid, p. 86.

6 Report on the *Census of Assam*, 1881, p. 86. According to Sarbananda Rajkumar the Chutiya Miris or Miri-Chutiyas are the result of union between the Chutiyas and the Miris—(Chutiya, Bhuyan Aru Matak Rajya, pp. 21—22)

7 Quoted by Mackenzie, Alexander, in *The North-east Frontier of Bengal*, p. 34.

8 Mackenzie Alexander, *The North-east Frontier of Bengal* pp. 33—34

The Hill Miris, commanding by their position the cultivated tracts of Bordoloni, Sisi and Dhemaji had acquired an acknowledged right to 'posa' similar to that asserted by the Daflas, Akas and Bhutias. But the Abors, though much more powerful than any of these tribes, had no such rights to 'posa'. The word 'posa' literally means a collection or subscription for a common purpose.....

Posa system explained In its special sense of payment to a hill tribe, it strictly denotes the subscription which the village raised in order to meet the customary demands of their visitors from the hills, in other words, blackmail.⁹ The reason of the Abors not possessing the right to 'posa' was most probably due to their comparatively remote situation, cut off as they were by the great river Dihong from the cultivated country along the Brahmaputra valley. They had, however, rights of a somewhat different kind which were more difficult to settle even than those arising out of the 'posa'.

The Abors claimed something like absolute sovereignty over the Miris of the plains whom they considered as their dependents and runaway slaves. During Ahom rule in Assam the Miris acted as go-betweens of the Abors and the traders of Assam. The term 'Miri' which is an Assamese word signifying a go-between originated from this circumstance. The Abors also claimed a right to all the fish and gold found in the rivers flowing in their territories. The Ahom government, who was always anxious to conciliate their highland neighbours accepted this claim and exempted these Miris of all revenue charges and thereby acknowledged the subjection of the Miris to the Abors. The Abors compelled the Beeahs or Beheeahs, the Hindu gold washers and fishermen, employed by the Ahom government, who were wont to frequent the Dihong, Dibong and other tributaries of the Brahmaputra in the pursuit of their avocation, to deliver to them if not regular blackmail, atleast frequent conciliatory offerings and acknowledgments of superiority.

The Buranjis of the Ahoms, however, do not explicitly mention the relationship that existed between the Abors and the Miris of the plains. On the contrary, they state that during the reign of king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.), like the Akas, Daflas and the Miris, the Abors were also given by the Ahom government some villages in the plains whose inhabitants had to cultivate paddy for their masters, the Abors.¹⁰ To supply the highlanders and the villagers with fish, some beels (i.e. fishing waters) along with some fishermen were also given over to the Abors. These cultivators and fishermen were exempted from paying taxes to the Ahom government. In recognition of this privilege the Abors had to pay annual tributes to the Ahom government. This arrangement was probably the recognition given by the Ahom government of the claim of the Abors over the plain Miris and the Chroniclers had

9 *Physical and Political Geography of the province of Assam*, Printed at the Assam Secretariat Printing office 1896, p. 216.

10 Barua, Harakanta, *Assam Buranji*, p. 40; Naobaicha Phukan, Padmeswar Singha, *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 109, Vol. IX, p. 318, D.H.A.S.

probably mistaken it to be the introduction of 'posa' system that was arranged with the other neighbouring tribes.

No direct relation was, however, established between the Abors and the Ahoms. It was through the intermediary of the Miris, who were officially recognised as the interpreters of the Abors that they carried on their trade with the plains people. The Ahom Buranjis are silent about any Ahom-Abor conflict.

Ahom-Miri Relations :

The first reference to the Miris, in the Buranjis of the Ahoms we get in the reign of king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.). In order to stop the acts of oppression committed by the Miris, king Pratap Singha appointed Katakis to watch them and keep the authorities informed of their movements.¹¹ With that end in view he introduced the 'posa' system* in order to conciliate them. In recognition of this privilege

granted to them, he arranged for the payment of annual tribute by the Miris to the Ahom government and thereby compelled the Miris to recognise the overlordship of the Ahom kings.

This arrangement made by king Pratap Singha with the Miris remained in tact till the end of Ahom rule in Assam.

In spite of the introduction of the 'posa' system by the Ahom government, the Miris did not refrain themselves from raiding villages within the Ahom kingdom in the plains. In the middle of the 17th century during the reign of Sutamla alias Jayadhvaj Singha (1648-63 A.D.), in 1655 A.D. the Saengia Miris,** a khel of the Barahgam plains Miris killed two men of the Ahom kingdom.¹² Hearing the news

king Jayadhvaj Singha sent in the month of Baisakh (April+May) one Kalia Katak, the grandson of Tamuli Doloi, with the men of the Sadiyakhwa and Marangikhwa Gohains against the Miris. The Miris assembled under a peepul tree and three

hundred Miris of several villages including the Saengia Miris decided to meet the army sent against them. Kalia, the grandson of Tamulidoloi, consulting with all others, sent a body of soldiers to fight with the Saengia Miris. The Miris dispersed and fled away. Twenty four Miris lay dead on the field of battle and two *** were captured alive. After this a chosen body of men were sent to fight with the other

11 Barua, Harakanta, *Assam Buranji*, p. 40 ; Tamuli Phukan Kashinath, *Assam Buranji*, p. 32 ; Naobaicha Phukan, Padmeswar Singha, *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 109. Vol. IX, p. 318. D.H.A.S., Barua, Gunabhiram, *Assam Buranji*, p. 107.

* Refer ante p. 158.

** In the *Assam Buranji* (1648-81 A.D.) edited by S. K. Dutta the Miris are referred to as 'Saragawa Miri' which I have accepted to be Saengia Miri khel belonging to the Barahgam Miris (*Assam Buranji*, p. 9). In the *Ahom Buranji* (p. 153) the Miris are, however, referred to as the Miris of the village Marakabat. As far as the description of the battle is concerned, I have followed the *Ahom Buranji* which describe the events in detail.

12 Dutta, S. K., *Assam Buranji*, pp. 9-10 ; *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 153-54.

*** According to *Assam Buranji* of S. K. Dutta (p. 9) twelve Miris were captured alive.

Miris. The Ahom army proceeded by the river Dihong* and arrived at a place called Dika. The Miris of the villages Narik, Pajina, Pijam and Shilaona plundered one hundred boats belonging to the Ahoms and Miris of villages Langi and Kara-naaka fell upon two villages within the Ahom dominion and devastated them. Then the Miris, being afraid at the approach of the Ahom army, assembled together and consulted amongst themselves to make peace with the Ahoms. They sent Katakis to Kaliadoloi whom they addressed as follows : "We have offended you by plundering and devastating the villages. Now we wish to make peace, and we shall offer tribute to the great king".¹³ Then Kaliadoloi said to them in reply as follows : "In the olden time the Chutiya Raja used to offer four men for Hatighahis (grass suppliers to elephants. He meant thereby that these Miris served as Hatighahis under the Chutiya king, and therefore they were not men of consequence). But when Chaopha Suhungmung defeated the Chutiya Raja and wrested the country from him, he established your forefathers in the place with the condition of offering him annual tributes. You have now broken the rule, so the king has sent me to teach you to be peaceful. Moreover, you have severed our two men. The king has ordered you to give ten men in their place."¹⁴ The Miris consented to give ten men. They then paid tributes of twenty methons (wild cows), thirty horses, twenty tortoises and seven wreaths of jewels, besides twelve men in place of the two killed. They beat drums as a sign of peace. They were then told to offer annual tributes of wild cows, horses, twenty tortoises, yellow pebbles, Miri blankets and Shikaradao (a kind of knife).¹⁵ The Miris thus acknowledged the supremacy of the Ahom king. From the speech of the Tamulidoloi it is clear that these Miris were claimed by the Chutiya kings as their subjects who had to serve under them. As mentioned before, the Ahoms applied the term 'Chutiya Miris' to the Miris of the plains as they found them resident of the Chutiya kingdom at the time of its conquest by the Ahoms. As a result of the conquest and annexation of the Chutiya kingdom by the Ahoms these plains Miris also naturally passed under Ahom rule and the Ahom king Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.) allowed them to reside in their place on condition of paying annual tribute to the Ahom government. These Miris who committed the raid lived near about Sadiya and that was why their another name was Sadiyal Miris. In one Buranji it is stated that king Jayadhvaj Singha defeated the Miris of Sadiya or Sadiyal Miris in battle.¹⁶ After defeating them king Jayadhvaj Singha decided to employ these Sadiyal

** The *Assam Buranji* edited by S. K. Dutta (p.9) refers to the river as Dihong and I have accepted it to be correct. The *Ahom Buranji*, however, refers to the river as Dikrang which lies in the extreme west of the Lakhimpur district beyond the Subansiri river (*Ahom Buranji* p. 153). But the statement must be wrong, because there is no Miri settlement in the Dafia hills, through which the river Dikrang flows.

13 *Ahom Buranji*, p. 153.

14 *Ahom Buranji*, p. 153.

** According to S. K. Dutta's *Assam Buranji* (1648-81 A.D.) the Miris offered to the Ahom king twelve Miris, thirty methons, thirty cows, twenty deer-hunting dogs, five wreaths of Jewels, twenty Miri-Jims (i.e. blankets) and twenty Shikaradaos as compensation for the raid committed by them. They agreed to pay as annual tributes eight methons, twenty deer hunting dogs, five wreaths of Jewels, twenty Miri Jims and twenty Shikaradaos. (*Assam Buranji*, p. 10).

15 Naobaicha Phukan, Padmeswar Singha, *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 109, Vol. IX, p. 335, D.H.A.S

Miris (i.e. the Barahgam Miris) or a section of the Chutiya Miris as they were better known to the Ahoms, as soloiers in the Ahom army in order to fight against the foreign invaders.¹⁶ Accordingly, as they were experts in

Miris appointed as archers in the Ahom army

fighting with bows and arrows he ordered to establish these Miris in the Kanri or Archery khel* of the Ahom army. Moreover, the king ordered the Barbarua to employ other Miris living in the plains within the Ahom dominion in the Kanri khel. The Sadiyal Miris were placed under the Sadiyakhwa

Gohain and a new officer known as Miri Barua was appointed to look after them who was made subordinate to the Sadiyakhwa Gohain. But the Barbarua remained as the chief officer over the Miris in regard to wars and other important matters of the royal court. There were several Kanri khels of the Miris such as, Ayangia (Yorang-goya ?) Chamaguria, Chutiya, Saengia, Abor-Miri, Jongoya, Dambukial (i.e. Dambukujal), Tamara-goya, Doitiyal (i.e. Dohutiyal), Nirang, Lasong-goya etc.

Though the Miris made peace with the Ahoms and agreed to pay annual tributes, they did not remain quiet for a long time. The reign of the next king Chakradhvaj Singha (1663-69 A.D.) again witnessed the Miris on the north bank of the Brahmaputra plundering Assamese villages in 1665 A.D.¹⁷ Hearing

Miris Commit raid and an expedition sent against them—1665 A.D.

the news king Chakradhvaj Singha sent six Hazarikas as Katakis to Lapet Landaomi and Kham Deka of Chapaguria family to direct them to proceed to the north of the Brahmaputra and

construct a fort there. One Lanshai, the son of Maubarua and one Jabuka Kachari were sent to erect a fort at the mouth of the river Uya. One Langi, grandson of Ibun and one Malaka, grandson of Ankrai Hilaidari were stationed at the village called Dalai. The Miris heard the news and in a body attacked the son of Maubarua. The son of Maubarua was killed with his thirty-four men. Having heard the news the king became very angry and exclaimed, "In the ancient time the forefathers of the Miris were established there by my forefather Chaopha Shusheng (i.e. king Pratap Singha).¹⁸ My brother Chaopha Shutamla (i.e. Jayadhvaj Singha) favoured them also.¹⁹ I now see, the Deoris have also joined with the Miris".²⁰ From the speech of the king it appears that the Deori-Chutiyas, the priestly class among the Chutiyas also joined with the Miris in their revolt against the Ahom overlord. The king then

16 Ibid.

* The adult population of Assam was divided into khels having to render specific service to the state, such as arrow-making, boat-building, house-building, provision supplying etc. Sometimes khels were composed on a territorial basis. Each khel was like a guild to which lands were allotted for cultivation by the constituent members free of rent in return for the service they rendered to the state. The strength of a khel varied from 3000 to 100. Each khel was placed in charge of a Phukan if it was an important one, and of a Rajkhowa or a Barua if it was of less importance.—Bhuyan, S. K., *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 10.

17 *Ahom Buranj*, pp. 192-94.

** King Chakradhvaj Singha referred to the arrangements made by king Pratap Singha with the Miris.

*** By this Chakradhvaj Singha referred to the conclusion of peace made by Jayadhvaj Singha with the Barahgam Miris of the plains.

18 *Ahom Buranj*, p. 193.

despatched Pelan Phukan to punish the Miris. Pelan Phukan accordingly proceeded against the Miris and attacked them. The Miris called in the Chungis (i.e. Daffas) to their assistance and five hundred Miris and seven thousand Chungis assembled together to counter attack the Ahom army. The Chungis entered in Namdeng and the Miris in Tangshang. The king despatched the Deka Phukan and Laluk Guimelia to collect the inhabitants of the side of the Tilao. They then proceeded accordingly and the king also followed them. They devastated the territory of the Miris and made captives many of them. It seems that the Miris, inspite of the aid given to them by the Daffas, were overawed by the strength of the Ahom army and dispersed without fighting. They did not make their submission and come to terms with the Ahoms in spite of the devastation caused to their territory by the Ahom army.

In the reign of the next king Udayaditya Singha (1669-73 A.D.), the latter sent one Chengdhara Barbarua's son Shimaluguria Phukan to fight with the Miris.¹⁹ There is no reference of any raid being committed by the Miris upon the inhabitants of the Ahom kingdom. Therefore it seems that king Udayaditya

Udayaditya Singha
sends fresh expedition
against the Miris

Singha sent the expedition against those Miris who had committed raid during the reign of his predecessor, and it was most probably sent on account of the fact that the Miris, inspite of the

devastation caused to their territory by the Ahom army sent by king Chakradhvaj Singha, did not make their submission and conclude peace with the Ahom king. This time the Phukan fought with the Miris and defeated them. He made the Miris to eat the crumbs thrown off from the dishes of the Ahoms and afterwards he gave them instructions. He brought some Miris with him and made them to bow down before the Ahom sovereign—their overlord. The Miris brought for the Ahom king the following things—several wreaths of Jewels, Shikardao, Miri Jims and deer hunting dogs. These were the things that the Miris agreed to pay as annual tributes to the Ahom king in the reign of king Jayadvaj Singha.

During the reign of king Gadadhar Singha (1681-96 A. D.) the Miris proved to be more turbulent than before. In 1683 A.D. in the month of Sraavan (July-August) the Sadiyal Miris set fire to the house of Kanu Gohain Rup Sandikai, the Sadiyakhowa Gohain (i.e. the Ahom governor of Sadiya) and burnt to death his wife, children and the inmates.²⁰ The Sadiyakhowa Gohain alone, however, escaped death. The Miris also killed two hundred Assamese subjects of the neighbouring villages and pillaged their villages. Hearing of

Sadiyal Miris raid
Ahom territory—1683
A.D.

this disaster, the king consulted with his ministers and sent Maupia Naobaicha Phukan, the grandson of Baghchowa Neog Gohain at the head of a strong force against the Miris. He succeeded in killing three or four Miris and carried their heads

19. Dutta, S. K., *Assam Buranji* (1648-81 A.D.), p. 32.

20. Goswami, Hem chandra, *Purani Assam Buranji*, pp. 160-62 ; Bhuyan, S. K., *Tungkhungla Buranji*, O.U.P. pp. 24-25 ; *Ahom Buranji*, p. 267.

away. A great number of Miris, old and young, females and children were made captives. The Ahom army obtained possession of a large number of swords, copper vessels, wild cows (methons) and household articles of the Miris. At the command of the king, the Phukan, by making Dihong as the boundary, constructed an earthen rampart enclosing the villages inhabited by the Assamese and entrances were also constructed. The wall had its terminuses at the Brahmaputra. He also re-arranged the allotment of paiks, that is to say, the 'Posa' system and regulated the payment of tribute by the Miris. It transpired afterwards that this time, the Sadiyal Miris had been instigated to rebel by Bih Gohain who wanted to see the destruction of Kanu Gohain Rup Sanditai. For this offence Bih Gohain was executed. The king also dismissed Kanu Gohain from office. The son of the Dihingia Phukan, a member of the Miri Sandikai Bargohain family was appointed governor of Sadiya. The Naobaicha Phukan completed the regulation of Sadiya with the new governor of Sadiya in 1687 A.D.

From the middle of the 17th century, up to about the end of that century, the Miris living near about Sadiya rebelled against Ahom authority several times and committed raids upon Assamese villages. Almost all the expeditions that were sent against them as reprisals of the raids committed by them resulted in the defeat of the Miris and the subsequent conclusion of peace between the two contending parties. It was the rebellion in Gadadhar Singha's reign that took gigantic proportion. But this time also, their defeat at the hands of the Ahoms probably convinced them of the impossibility of winning over the mighty power of the Ahom sovereign. Moreover, the construction of the earthen rampart by Naobaicha Phukan at the command of king Gadadhar Singha made it somewhat difficult for them to commit raids upon Assamese villages bordering their habitats in future; and the regulation made by the Phukan seemed to have satisfied them. For we do not hear of any Miri rising from this time till the end of Ahom rule in Assam. On the contrary, we find these Sadiyal Miris who had been engaged in the Ahom army as archers since the days of Jayadhvaj Singha (1648-63 A.D.) rendering good services to their Ahom overlord during the reign of king Rudra Singha (1696-1714 A.D.), the son and successor of king Gadadhar Singha (1681-96 A.D.). In the beginning of the 18th century

(1706 A.D.) Rudra Singha sent an expedition against the Kaoharis.²¹ The army that was sent against the Kaoharis proceeded by two routes—one under the Barbarua was deputed to enter the Kachari country by way of the Dhansiri valley with a force which numbered over 37,000 men, while the Pani Phukan with another 34,000 strong, was to march via Raha and the valley of the Kopili. The army of Barbarua proceeded through Naga Chokey, Deopani, Dilao, Kakajan, Tini-

The Miris render valuable service to the Ahoms as soldiers

21 *Kachari Buranj*, pp. 94-97; Wade, J. P., *An Account of Assam*, pp. 99-102.

muani, Samaguri and so on. The Barbarua left a detachment at the Kakajan fortress under the command of one Chetia Gohain when he proceeded via Tinimuani to Samaguri. While the Barbarua remained at Samaguri by raising fortifications, people were employed to bring grain from Kakajan fortress. These people were plundered and massacred by the Nagas who infested the wilds in the vicinity of the road. The king became enraged on hearing the news and ordered the Burhagohain* to proceed to Deopani with a detachment with orders to raise fortifications in the vicinity of the former and to afford protection against attacks of the Nagas. This detachment, however, was found inadequate for the purpose. So seven hundred and thirty-five men** were sent to reinforce the force. This new force included two hundred and twenty Miris*** who rendered marvellous service to the Ahoms. The new force joined the Barchetia Gohain at the Kakajan fortress. The Barchetia had scarcely received the reinforcement, when a party of the Nagas advanced to the very wall of the fortress. The Miris rushed forward to attack them and used their bows and arrows with such success that the Nagas were compelled to flee away. They were vigorously pursued by the Miris who succeeded in cutting the head of one Naga. The Nagas were chased beyond the Dhansiri where they made a stand, but they fled as soon as they beheld the fall of one of their companions by the arrow of a Miri. The Nagas, however, still continued to infest the roads and prevented all communications with the Barbarua's army. The king, sensible of the services of the Miris, garrisoned several fortresses towards the Naga land with the soldiers of that country. He despatched a considerable force to the Burhagohain to garrison the different forts and preserve a communication with the grand army.....

The Barbarua now advanced on till he reached the fortress of Lathee hill which was wrested from the Kacharis. When provisions ran short in this fortress the Barbarua sent intelligence to the king to send rice to him. The king did comply with the Barbarua's request. This time also the Nagas appeared on the scene and destroyed four hundred carriers of rice and compelled them to return. The king, being informed of these things issued orders to the Burhagohain to reinforce his force and diminish the distance of the posts. The Burhagohain did according to the advice of the king. He stationed one hundred and forty Miris with the Barchetia Gohain. Still the Nagas continued to molest the carriers of grain to the army. It was the brave Miris again who attacked the Nagas, destroyed many of them and compelled the remainder to flee to their mountain. The king rewarded the services of these brave Miris by presenting them with money, earrings, cloths, Bhutia blankets and bracelets. Thus the Miris rendered valuable services to the Ahom king—their overlord, at a very critical moment. These strong and stout people proved quite competent a match for

* According to Wade, the Bargohain was sent.

** According to Wade, six hundred and thirty five men were sent.

*** According to Wade, the new force included 120 Miris.

the turbulent and warlike Nagas. The Miris served as soldiers in the Jayantia expedition of king Rudra Singha also.²²

It was the Miris living near about Sadiya that gave trouble to the Ahom government in the 17th century. By the time of Rudra Singha, however, that is to say, by the beginning of the 18th century, these Miris became submissive and peaceful and continued to be so till the end of Ahom rule in Assam. During the time of the Moa-maria rebellion even, which resulted in great chaos and confusion within the Ahom kingdom and which prompted many of the hill tribes to commit raids within Ahom territory, the Miris remained loyal in their fidelity to their Ahom overlord.

Conclusion :—

It was practically throughout the whole of the 17th century that the Ahom rulers were confronted with the problems of the Miris. It was, however, only a section of the Miris viz. the Chutiya or Sadiyal Miris living near about Sadiya that gave trouble to the Ahom government. By the beginning of the 18th century, these Miris, by their repeated defeats at the hands of the Ahoms at last proved to be loyal to their Ahom overlords and did not disturb the peace of the country till the end of Ahom rule in Assam. They did not give any trouble to the British government also, the successor to the Ahoms.²³ Compared to the Nagas and some other hill tribes the Miris gave less trouble to the Ahom rulers. Several factors must have contributed towards this development. In the first place, the introduction of the 'posa' system by king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.) was really a very wise policy taken by the Ahoms to stop their raids within the Ahom dominion. Most of the hill tribes of Assam were deficient in labourers and certain necessities of life. So they committed raids on the fertile plains below to fill up their deficiencies. As stated by Mackenzie, "the Hill Miris commanding by their position the cultivated tracts of Bordoloni, Sisi and Dhemaji, had acquired an acknowledged right to posa",²⁴ and the Ahom government recognised it. Unlike the land of the Nagas, the land of the Miris had neither strategic nor economic importance to the Ahoms which might have prompted them to take a different course of action. Therefore, to protect the country from their inroads and maintain peace and order within the country, the introduction of the Posa system by king Pratap Singha, which stabilised and regularised the supply of the deficiencies of the Miris from certain specific villages of the plains below set apart for that purpose, was perhaps the best policy invented by the genius of the Ahom king Pratap Singha who was also known as Buddhishwarga Narayan on account of his extraordinary intelligence. The effectiveness of this policy is proved by the fact that the British government—the successor to the Ahoms, did not do away completely with the 'posa' system. They induced them (i.e. the Miris) to commute

22 *Jayantia Buranj*, p. 80.

23 Gait, Sir Edward, *A History of Assam*, p. 321 ; Shakespear, L. W., *History of Upper Assam, Upper Burma and North-Eastern Frontier*, p. 105.

24 Mackenzie, Alexander, *The North-East Frontier of Bengal*, p. 34.

their claims for a fixed money payment. Secondly, unlike the eastern Nagas, the Daffas and other hill tribes, the Miris (plain Miris) had been under the civilising influence of the plains long before the advent of the Ahoms in Assam. As mentioned before, the plain Miris, specially those living near about Sadiya served under the Chutiya kings. Naturally therefore, they did not remain in complete isolation in the hills like most of the other hill tribes. These Sadiyal or Chutiya Miris living in the plains no doubt gave trouble to the Ahom government practically throughout the whole of the 17th century by committing raids on Assamese villages and rising in rebellion against the Ahom kings—their new masters. But when they were convinced of the mighty power of their new overlords by repeated defeats in battles, they became quite submissive by the end of that century during the reign of king Gadadhar Singha (1681-96 A.D.), and during the reign of his son and successor king Rudra Singha (1696-1714 A.D.) these turbulent Miris, who had been enrolled as soldiers in the Kanri or Archery khel of the Ahom army by king Jayadhvaj Singha (1648-63 A.D.), rendered valuable service to the Ahom army that was sent against the Kacharis and the Jayantias in the beginning of the 18th century. Lastly, another factor which made these Miris to be submissive and peaceful was the trading facilities offered by the Ahom government with the plains and the part of middlemen played by them in the trade of their powerful neighbour, the Abors, with Assam. The introduction of the 'Posa' system together with the trading facilities offered by the Ahom government with the plains must have been the main factors in refraining the Hill-Miris, who were more backward than the plain Miris, from committing raids on Assamese villages in the plains below. In this connection, it is interesting to notice what Dalton, who paid a visit to the territory of the Hill-Miris by the side of the Subansiri observed : "I suppose there are no people on the face of the earth, more utterly ignorant of everything connected with the arts than are the Hill-Miris. With the sole exception of the bands and other articles of bamboo, cane and fibres above mentioned, which the women are everlastingly making, everything they use is imported ; were their communication directly with the plains, and indirectly by means of the intervening tribes, with the civilised countries on the other side of the great range cut off, the use of metal and of women's clothes would be lost to them. The Abors can forge themselves daos, but the Miris know not the art. The most distant tribes manufacture coarse cotton cloths ; but though the Miris are in constant communion with us (i.e. the plainsmen) they have not the remotest idea of weaving."²⁵

Besides these factors, the policy of non-interference in the internal administration of the tribal people, coupled with the policy of non-annexation of their territories to the Ahom kingdom that was followed by the Ahom rulers, greatly helped in establishing cordial and peaceful relations with the Miris.

25 Dalton, E.J.T., *Visit to the hills near the Subansiri river*, J.A.S.B., 1845 No. 160, p. 266.

Another reason of the success of the Ahoms in their dealings with the tribes, and specially with the Miris was their liberal social outlook—their immunity from caste prejudices and equal privileges that were accorded to the new entrants into their fold. In the reign of Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.), in 1526 A.D., in the month of Ashar (June-July), the king gave the name "Thaomung-Mungtao" to one Taosunglung-kungring and ordered him to sit in front of all i.e. the Ahom nobles. This man was a Miri by caste.²⁶ Again, during the reign of king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.), one Bhokola Gohain a member of the Bargohain family, who had no child, adopted a Miri boy as his son. This boy subsequently received the name of 'Miri-Sandikai' and his descendants came to be known as members of the Miri-Sandikai family.²⁷ It was one of the descendants of this Miri-Sandikai family that was made governor of Sadiya during Gadadhar Singha's reign.²⁸

²⁶ *Deodhai Assam Buranjī*, p. 19.

²⁷ Goswami, Hemchandra, *Purani Assam Buranjī*, pp. 43-44.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

CHAPTER IX.

(b) Relations of the Ahom Kings with the Akas and the Daffas

The Akas and the Daffas are two other vigorous Mongloid tribes occupying the hills on the northern border of Assam between the Towang principality of Lhasa on the west to the upper courses of the Subansiri river on the east. As already stated, the Ahoms had come into possession of the territory on the north bank of the Brahmaputra up to the river Subansiri in the beginning of the 16th century by virtue of the annexation of the Chutiya kingdom to the Ahom kingdom in 1523 A.D. The territory lying between the rivers Subansiri and Bar Nadi was ruled by a number of petty chieftains called Bhuyans at the time of the advent of the Ahoms into Assam in the beginning of the 13th century. Although these Bhuyans were nominally feudatories of the kings of Kamarupa, actually they were independent chiefs as the later Kamarupa kings could exercise very little authority over them. The founder of the Koch kingdom Biswa Singha brought the Bhuyan chiefs of Kamarupa and also of Mangaldoi subdivision of Darrang district up to about the Mara-Dhansiri river under his subjugation in the beginning of the 16th century.¹ The Ahom king Suhungmung also, soon after annexing the Chutiya kingdom to his own kingdom, tried to bring under his subjugation the Bhuyan chieftains living between the Subansiri and Mara-Dhansiri rivers. Some of these Bhuyan chiefs were easily brought to submission, but against some drastic measures had to be taken. In order to break their unity and crush their power, king Suhungmung followed the policy of divide and rule in regard to the subjugated Bhuyans and accordingly settled the most powerful of them at Bardowa in Nowgong in the hope that they would repel incursions of the Kacharis. He hoped further that the spirited and enlightened Bhuyans, when exposed to the ravages of the marauding Kacharis would not find time to organise any opposition towards the Ahom government.² The drastic measures adopted against some of the Bhuyans at last made them realise that the

1 Refer post, Chapter XI on Ahom-Koch Relations.

2 Bhuyan, S. K. *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 239.

Ahoms were invincible and merciless. Therefore they offered their submission and agreed to rule their territories under the name of the Ahom king.³ Thus the western boundary of the Ahom kingdom on the north bank of the Brahmaputra had extended up to about the Mara-Dhansiri river by the thirties of the 16th century and king Suhungmung stationed garrisons at Narayanpur, Phulbari and Rönta-Temoni (by the side of the Jiya Dhansiri river) in order to prevent foreign invasions.⁴ But as the administration of the territory was left in the hands of the Petty Bhuyans, whose loyalty to the Ahom king was of doubtful nature, this tract of country became vulnerable to foreign invasions.⁴ During the reign of Sukhampha, Khora Raja (1552-1603 A.D.), when the Koches under Sukladhvaj alias Chilarai, the brother of the Koch king Nar Narayan (1540-1587 A.D.), invaded the Ahom kingdom in 1562, many of the Bhuyan chieftains of this region offered their submission to the Koch king Nar Narayan who had accompanied the land-army which had proceeded along the north bank of the Brahmaputra by the newly constructed road known as Gohain Kamal Ali. The Daflas also offered their submission to king Nar Narayan and joined the ranks of the Koch army.⁵ This is for the first time we get reference of the Daflas in Ahom Buranji when they played the part of an enemy of the Ahom government by joining hands with the invading Koches. In the encounter that took place between the Ahoms and the Koches, the former were defeated and were compelled to cede all the territories on the north bank of the Brahmaputra to the Koches by the conclusion of the treaty of 1563 A.D. The Ahoms, of course, soon afterwards reclaimed the territories up to the river Bhoroli from the hands of the Koches.⁶ Then king Sukhampha decided to bring this tract of country directly under Ahom administration and accordingly created the new post of Salal Gohain to administer this territory.⁷ His special duty was to protect the province under him, i.e. the eastern part of the Tezpur sub-division of the present Darrang district and the extreme western portion of the Lakhimpur district on the north bank of the Brahmaputra from the inroads of the Akas and the Daflas.⁷ He was assisted in this special duty by the guards of the passes called "Duarias" on this frontier.^{**} Although the territory ruled by the Salal Gohain fell under the jurisdiction of the Barbarua.^{***} and consequently the Salal Gohain was a subordinate officer under him, yet he was given much

Creation of the post of Salal Gohain to check Aka and Dafla inroads

3 *Assam Buranji* S. M., pp. 12-13 ; Barua, Harakanta, *Assam Buranji*, pp. 24-25.

4 *Ahom Buranji*, p. 61.

5 'Khan Choudhury, Amanatullah Ahmed, Koch Beharer Itihas, p. 108 ; *Assam Buranji* S.M., p. 39.

* Refer post, Chapter XI on Ahom-Koch Relations.

6 Naobaicha Phukan, Padmeswar Singh, *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No 109, Vol. IX. p. 265, D.H.A.S. ; Barua Harakanta, *Assam Buranji*, p. 30.

7 *Ibid.*, pp. 286-87.

** In the *Buranji* Naobaicha Phukan mentions only six 'Duaris'. (Tr. No. 109, Vol. IX, p. 287). But actually the number must have been more than six. Because at the Lakhimpur frontier of this province alone, there are six duars.

*** In the *Buranji* Padmeswar Singh states as Barphukan. But this is certainly wrong, for the territory from Kohabar to Sadiya was under the jurisdiction of the Barbarua and not of the Barphukan.

liberty to administer his territory as he had to remain always alert to prevent the [Akas and the Daflas from committing raids in the plains territory under his jurisdiction.

The next Ahom king Susengpha alias Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.) finally crushed the Bhuyans of this territory. Their leader Uday was executed, and his principal adherents transferred to the south bank of the Brahmaputra. The Bhuyans were forbidden to cross to the north bank on penalty of death.⁸

(i) **Ahom-Aka Relations :**

The Akas are a small tribe who call themselves Hrusso. They occupy the tract of country between that of the Daflas or the Bhoroli river and the Towang principality of Lhasa.⁹ They are divided into two subtribes—the Kapahchors (or Kpaschors) or cotton thieves and the Hazari-khowas or eaters of a thousand hearths. They are one of the most energetic and savage tribes. Both clans of Akas together did not, however, in 1844 number over 260 families. Like all the tribes on the northern frontier of Assam, the Akas were also granted by the Ahom government the right of 'posa'* or the right to share in the produce of the Charduar areas in the plains. Certain paiks** were assigned to the hillmen who were made liable to pay to them instead of to the state their fixed annual contributions. It was king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.) who introduced the 'posa' system in regard to all the tribes on this frontier, viz., a section of the Bhutias (Charduar Bhutias), Akas, Daflas and the Miris.¹⁰ The Hazari-khowas were the only branch who were entitled to receive 'posa'. The Kapahchors had no such rights and anything that they received from the cultivators was simply extorted from them. The names Hazari-khowas and Kapahchors are both Assamese names. The first of these names probably arose out of the circumstance that a thousand gots of paiks or individual groups of revenue payers were set aside for the collection of 'posa' by the Akas. The second class of Akas known as Kapahchors or cotton-thieves who had no right to collect 'posa' but extorted them from the cultivators by their night attacks, in which they lurked in the cotton fields with a primitive sort of dark lantern, waiting their opportunity for theft, and thus received their name.

According to the records of 1825, the Hazarikhowas were entitled to receive from each house of their allotted paiks "one portion of a female dress, one bundle

8 Bhuyan, S. K., *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 239.

9 Report on the census of Assam, 1881, p. 223 ; Mackenzie, Alexander, *The North-East Frontier of Bengal*, p. 21

* Refer ante chapter IX (a) Relations of the Ahom kings with the Miris and the Abors.

** 'Paiks' were adult males whose names were registered for state service ; four Paiks constituted a unit called a 'got'.

10 Naobaicha Phukan, Padmeswar Singh, *Assam Buranj*, Tr. No. 109, Vol. IX, p. 318 D.H.A.S.

of cotton thread, and one handkerchief".¹¹ At this period the Kapahchors were probably not looked upon as a separate clan, for, it is recorded that the Hazarikhawas were expected to give "a part" of their collections to the Kapahchors. Thus it would seem that although originally the Kapahchors were not entitled to receive any 'posa' from their nature of extorting them by night attacks by lurking in the cotton fields, they also subsequently asserted their right to collect it and compelled the Hazarikhawas to share a part of their collections with them. Besides the above mentioned things, the Akas also no doubt received paddy from the cultivators assigned to them like the other tribes. As Naobaicha Phukan definitely states, the paiks were allotted to the hillmen to cultivate paddy for them.¹²

The collection of 'posa' to which most of the hill tribes bordering on the plains on the north were entitled, was thus a well-defined exaction and not an uncertain or ill-defined exaction. As Alexander Mackenzie says, —'It is a mistake to suppose that the posa, which as we have seen, was paid to most of the hill tribes bordering on the plains, was an uncertain, ill-defined exaction, depending in amount upon the rapacity of the different hordes who might descend to levy it. It was really a well ascertained revenue payment, on account of which a corresponding remission was made in the state demand upon the ryot satisfying it. It may have had its origin in encroachment, or it may have been based upon customary and primeval rights asserted by the hillmen; but it was a distinct feature in the revenue system of the country when the British annexed Assam.'¹³

The Ahom Buranjis are, however, silent about any Ahom-Aka conflict throughout the entire period of Ahom rule in Assam.

(ii) Ahom-Dafia Relations :

The Dafias are one of the wild and little known tribes inhabiting the hills on the northern border of Assam. They occupy the hills situated between the Bhoroli river on the west and the upper courses of the Subansiri (Somdiri or Sundri) river on the east—the hills north of Nao-duar (the nine passes) in Darrang and Chai duar (six passes) in Lakhimpur district.¹⁴ Their country is thus situated between the country of the Akas on the west and that inhabited by the Hill Miris and the Abors on the east. As Waddell says, the name Dafia appears to be an Assamese name, though its meaning is not apparent.¹⁵ As pronounced in Lakhimpur, it would be written as "Dompbila."¹⁶

11 Mackenzie, Alexander, *The North-East Frontier of Bengal*, p. 22.

12 Naobaicha Phukan, Padmeswar Singh, *Assam Buranj*, Tr. No. 109, Vol. IX, p. 318, D.H.A.S.

13 Mackenzie, Alexander *The North-East Frontier of Bengal* p. 21,

14 Mackenzie, Alexander, *The North-East Frontier of Bengal*, p. 27; Waddell, L.A., *Tribes of the Brahmaputra Valley*, J.A.S.B., 1900, No.1, pp. 42-43.

15 Waddell, L.A., *Tribes of the Brahmaputra valley*, J.A.S.B. 1900 No. 1. p.43,

16 *Report on the Census of Assam*, 1881, p. 89

The eastern members of the tribe, i.e. those on the border of North Lakhimpur seem to call themselves Ni-Sing (or Nyising), and are differentiated by the Assamese as 'Tagin Daflas;' whilst the western and specially those settled near the plains and foot of the hills on the border of Darrang, call themselves Bag-ni or Bang-ni, and the Assamese call them "Paschima Daflas" (meaning western Daflas). They are not a single tribe, but a collection of petty clans independent of each other, and generally incapable of combined action. The chiefs or heads of the clans are known as 'Gams'. To show the extent of inter-tribal subdivision among them, Dalton noted that two hundred and thirty eight Dafla Gams or Chiefs were in receipt of compensation for loss of 'Posa', which they were entitled to receive during the reigns of the Ahom kings, amounting altogether to only 2,543 Rupees." Their form of government is Oligarchical, there being sometimes thirty or forty Chiefs in a clan.

The Daflas acknowledge no relationship with the Miris, but they are very ready to claim close relationship with the Abors, although they are separated from them by the whole breadth of the Miri country. The Daflas and Abors have a number of tribes in common, speak the same language and are free to intermarry."

Abom-Dafla Relations :

The first reference of any contact between the Ahoms and the Daflas that we get was in the beginning of the 17th century during the reign of king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.). In 1614 A.D. in the month of Falgun (Feb. March), the king ordered Lako Barpatra and Bharali Gohain the two officers to proceed against the Paschima Daflas i.e. the Daflas on the frontier of Darrang opposite Sala." Probably the Daflas had committed raid in the plains. The officers accordingly proceeded to Dihadarua by way of Sala with a contingent of soldiers and stopped there. From Dihadarua they sent soldiers to fight with the Daflas. But the Daflas succeeded in cutting a sufficient number of men on the way. One Bar-Chiring* of Sadiya (or Barechiring as written in the Buranjis) died at the hands of the Daflas. Both Lako Barpatra and Bharali Gohain were obliged to beat a retreat. Thus in the first contact with the Daflas, the Ahoms sustained a severe defeat and came to know of the ferocious nature of the Daflas.

Most probably after this incident, in order to stop the acts of oppression committed by the Daflas, king Pratap Singha constructed the 'Dafala-garh' (a forti-

17. Quoted by Mackenzie, Alexander in his *North-East Frontier of Bengal*, p. 27

18. Report on the census of Assam, 1881, pp. 89-90.

19. Deodhai *Assam Buranji*, pp. 54-55; *Assam Buranji S.M.*, p. 48; Goswami, Hem chandra, *Purani Assam Buranji*, p. 73.

* Barchiring was the head of the temples where gods were prayed and sacrifices offered according to Ahom religious customs.

fication) and introduced the 'posa' system in regard to the Daflas also.²⁰ This 'Dafalagarh' was constructed in the eastern part of the Grant of 'Posa' to Tezpur subdivision of the Darrang district on the Gohain the Daflas Kamal Ali and was known by the name of 'Rajgarh' (i.e. royal fortification) also.²¹ In return for the enjoyment of 'posa', the Daflas were made to pay annual tribute to the Ahom king and Katakis were appointed to regulate them. By introducing the 'posa' system, the Ahoms attempted to conciliate the Daflas who were deficient in many necessities of life, by assigning to them a number of paiks in the duar areas in the plains who were made liable to pay to them certain necessities of life demanded by them. The paiks who were assigned to the Daflas came to be known as 'Dafala-bahatias', or serfs of the Daflas, and an officer called 'Dafalaparia Phukan' was appointed to look after these men.²² From an account bearing the date of 13th May, 1825, it appears that Dafalaparia Phukan the Daflas were entitled to receive every year from every ten houses of 'Dafla-bahatias', one double cloth, one single cloth, one handkerchief, one dao, ten heads of horned cattle and four seers of salt.²³ In addition to these things the Daflas must have received paddy or rice for Padmeswar Singh Naobaicha Phukan definitely states that the paiks were specially assigned to cultivate paddy for the Daflas * Because of this, each got (i.e. unit of four paiks) of Dafala-bahatia paiks paid to the Ahom government

20. Barua, Harakanta, *Assam Buranji*, p. 40; Tamuli Phukan, Kasinath, *Assam Buranji*, p. 32; Naobaicha Phukan, Padmeswar Singh, *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 109, Vol. IX, p. 318. D.H.A.S.

21. Khan Choudhury, Amanatullah Ahmed, Koch Beharer Itihas, (or A History of Koch Behar), p. 106.

22. Naobaicha Phukan, Padmeswar Singh, *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 109, Vol. XI, p. 811, D.H.A.S. In Vol. IX, p. 241, the author Padmeswar Singh states that this post was created by Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.). But this cannot be true. The same author, however, says that the 'Posa' system was introduced by king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.). According to Dr. S.K. Bhuyan the innovation of 'Dafala-bahatia' assignment was first made by king Gadadhar Singha (1681-96 A.D.). -Anglo-Assamese Relations, p. 38. The Buranjis, however, do not support his statement and unfortunately Dr. Bhuyan also has not quoted his authority. In Colonel White's Historical Miscellany, 1834, Vol. II, Tr. No. 57, Tr. Vol. VII, D.H.A.S., pp. 120 and 127, there is a reference that king Gadadhar Singha (1681-96 A.D.) solicited the aid of the Daflas in his wars against the Kacharis and the Jayantias.. In return for this service and promise on any future emergency, Gadadhar Singha permitted them to collect 'posa' from the produce of the lands lying below the hills occupied by the Daflas and assigned to them permanently a number of 'paiks called Dafala-bahatias to supply the 'posa' to the Daflas. Dr. Bhuyan has most probably accepted the statement of Colonel White without proper scrutiny. But Colonel White's statement is not supported by any of the original Buranjis. Moreover, Gadadhar Singha did not launch expeditions against the Kacharis and the Jayantias as stated by Colonel White. In was his son and Successor Rudra Singha (1696-1714 A.D.) who brought the Kacharis and the Jayantias under his subjugation and it was in his Jayantia expedition that some Daflas served as soldiers in the Ahom army. (Jayantia Buranji, p. 82). But there is no reference of any meritorious service being rendered by the Dafla soldiers as stated by Col. White. Moreover, according to the Buranjis it was king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.) who first introduced the 'posa' system in regard to all the tribes on the northern frontier.—Burua, Gunabhiram, *Assam Buranji*, p. 107; Barua, Harakanta, *Assam Buranji* p. 40.

23. Mackenzie, Alexander, North-East Frontier of Bengal, p. 27.

* Col. White also mentions rice as one of the articles the Daflas received as 'Posa'.—Col. White's Historical Miscellany, 1834, Vol. II, Tr. No. 57, Tr. Vol. VII, p. 120. D.H.A.S.

only Rs. 3/- instead of Rs. 9/-, the balance being remitted to enable them to meet their engagements with the Daflas. As Alexander Mackenzie says,—“The different clans of Daphlas (or Daflas) did not interfere with each other on the plains. Each knew the villages to which they had to look for posa. But they claimed to collect from their allotted paiks wherever these might migrate, and they demanded full dues whether the paiks could pay or not. This exacting spirit made them very difficult to deal with.”²⁴ This statement proves that the ‘posa’ system was a well ascertained revenue payment and not an uncertain, ill-defined exaction.

In spite of the introduction of the ‘posa’ system, however, the Daflas could not be refrained from committing raids in the plains and in 1646 A.D. during the reign of Shuchingpha (or Sutyinpha), Nariya Raja (1644-48 A.D.) an expedition had to be sent against them as a reprisal of the raids committed by them.²⁵ This time the raid was committed by the eastern or Tagin Daflas. At the command of the king, the Burhagohain, Barpatragohain and Bargohain proceeded with their men by the river Dikrang and arrived at Maghnowa. The Burhagohain sent one Ruprai Hazarika with seven hundred men to go in front and cut some bamboos to construct a fort. The Ahoms entered into the territory of the Daflas* and plundered their maket (a kind of plant), a bundle of straw and a load of bamboos. The Daflas shot arrows at Ruprai who fell dead. Some of his men were also killed. After this incident a few Daflas entered into the Ahom fortress and said to the three Gohains (i.e. ministers) that they had been sent by the queen to know their welfare. The Gohains bade farewell to them by presenting each of the Daflas with a pair of clothes. The Daflas coming out of the fort remarked—“The Gohains could not recognise us. How they would be able to kill us? Let them return.”²⁶ Saying this the Daflas fled away. The nobles then proceeded onward, halted at many places and fought with the Daflas. The Ahom army looted several villages in the course of their onward march till at last they arrived at the bank of the Dikrang river. The granaries and dwellings of the Daflas on the right hand side of the Dikrang were set on fire. The Ahom army was however, much harassed by the Daflas who fought with bows and arrows. Then the three ministers going down with their men by the side of the Bandar hill set fire to the houses of the Daflas and halted at Athiabari. They could not capture any Dafla so they looted their properties. Then the Ahom army entered into a Dafla village where a great number of them was killed by the Daflas. The remnants were compelled to take to their heels and enter into their fort where they remained for nine days. Then

24. Mackenzie, Alexander, *North-East Frontier of Bengal*, p. 27.

25. *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 132-136; Bhuyan, S.K., *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp. 82-83; Goswami, Hem-chandra, *Puranji Assam Buranji*, pp. 162-64; *Assam Buranji* S.M. pp. 80-81; *Assam Buranji* Tr. No. 213, Vol. 56, pp. 53-54, D.H.A.S.; *Assam Buranji* Tr. No. 259 Vol. 56, pp. 30-31 D.H.A.S.

* In most of the Buranjis the name of the Daflas tribe is generally given as ‘Chungi’. The Daflas, as already stated, call themselves, ‘Nyising’, and the locality described in the Buranjis is that now inhabited by the Daflas. Therefore, I have assumed that the term Chungi means Daflas.

26. *Assam Buranji*, S.M., p. 80.

Palanga Rajkhowa and Gutimali Salaguria Rajkhowa sent one Batahgila and one Langu Hazarika with their men to the Burhagohain to consult about the affairs of the Daflas. The Daflas, lying in ambush fell suddenly upon them and killed a great number of them including Batahgila. Langu Hazarika managed to escape. Having heard the news, king Sutyinpha expressed his willingness that all should proceed at once against the Daflas and destroy them. Palanga Rajkhowa and Gutimali Salaguria Rajkhowa marched against the Daflas to destroy their fort. They met no opposition on the way as they advanced. They, by force, entered into the fort of the Daflas and fired guns at them. Six of the Daflas were shot dead and the rest retreated. The Burhagohain and the Dihingia Bargohain and all others proposed to destroy the fort of the Daflas at the Bandar hill, but they could not find a way leading to the fort. So the whole body of Ahom army retreated and all of them coming by the Brahmaputra (Tilao) halted at first on Rangachapori and then the whole body

Failure of the Dafla expedition

of men came up and halted at the mouth of the Dikhow river. The king ordered the Burhagohain, the Barpatragohain and all others to remain at the mouth of the Dikhow by fortifying the passages near the river Brahmaputra. But they did not act as desired by the king and came back. The king became infuriated with rage at the failure of the expedition and deposed both the Burhagohain and the Barpatragohain, and to complete their disgrace, made them appear in public in female attire. The Bargohain, however, evaded punishment by saying that he was compelled to come back as both the Burhagohain and the Barpatragohain proposed to come back leaving him alone.

After the failure of the first expedition a second expedition was sent against the Daflas in 1648. The king, consulting the high officers, collected all the men and ordered one Lasai Phukan and other Baruas and Negs to remain at the ghats of the Brahmaputra near Aital. The king despatched the Burhagohain downward at the head of an army.

Second expedition against the Daflas—1648.

Laitema Barpatragohain was sent to Dikrang. At the command of the king, the warboats and the ferryboats were brought to the ghats at Aital. The Ahom army then advanced on and entered into the Dafla villages. The Daflas came out and attacked the Ahom army. A terrible battle was fought. The Daflas aided by the Miris, their eastern neighbour, fought with the Ahom

The Miris come to the assistance of the Daflas

army for some time but at last, being unable to stand, took to their heels. The Ahom army captured four Miris and produced them before the king. The king sent order to all to repair the roads. Accordingly the roads were repaired and some new roads were made by clearing the jungles. At length the Ahom army arrived at the foot of a hill where they threw up a fort and put up therein. At the approach of the Ahom army, the Daflas and the Miris fled away. The Ahom army burnt down their dwelling houses and the granaries and feasted themselves on the flesh of cows and hogs which they killed. They got five hundred stray cows of the Daflas and made them over to the king. Then Daflas of twelve villages came to the Ahom king who was at Aital and paid him their

homage by falling prostrate before him. King Sutyinpha then returned to the capital with the captured Miris and sent them back by giving suitable presents. The ministers and other high officers sent the guns, swords and bows to the king at Garhgaon along with the news of the conquest of the Daflas. The king then sent Katakis to call back the ministers and others to the capital. The second expedition thus resulted in the conquest and submission of the eastern or Tagin Daflas. But the Daflas submitted only at the last moment when they had been harassed by the Ahom army to such an extent that no food was left for them to live upon. They had given sufficient proof to the Ahoms that it was not an easy task to subdue them.

Conquest and submission of the Daflas

Just as the Miris helped the Daflas in their fight against the Ahom king, similarly the Daflas also rendered help to the Miris in their rebellion against their Ahom overlord during the reign of king Chakradhvaj Singha (1663-69 A.D.).²⁷

In the reign of the next king Udayaditya Singha (1669-73 A.D.), in the early part of the year 1672, one Haragam, one Radhagam, and one Tarigam or Tamigam the three Tagin Dafla chiefs, consulting amongst themselves determined not to pay tributes to their overlord, the Ahom king.²⁸ One day they came down and cut three

The Tagin Daflas commit raid and an expedition sent against them—1672 A.D.

men of the village Taiban at Gagaldubi in the north of the present Lakhimpur district, and took away forty inhabitants including girls, boys and infants. According to some Buranjis, they committed the raid on the plea that they had nothing to eat.²⁹

The inhabitants of Taiban came to and informed the king. The king thereupon called in the ministers and other high officers, held a council with them and asked their opinion about sending a punitive expedition against the Daflas under the Barbarua. Atan Burhagohain was not in favour of sending an expedition against the Daflas. So he remarked as follows—"The Dafla miscreants can be traced and captured only if an elephant can enter into a rat hole."³⁰ Thereby he meant that the difficulties of communication coupled with the hardships to be faced in conducting expeditions in the hilly regions and above all, the ferocious nature of the Daflas would make any attempt to coerce them an unpractical task. But the king did not listen to his advice. He sent Katakis to the Barbarua, the grandson of Lahon, ordering him to march against the Daflas with one thousand men. The Barbarua accordingly marched against the Daflas in May 1672. He proceeded by the river Subansiri with his men and arrived at Rangamati where he put his tent. Thence he advanced on and arrived at the mouth of the river Dulung, where he erected a fort and put up therein.

27. *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 192-93; Refer the chapter on Ahom Miri Relations.

28. *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 218-21; *Assam Buranji S.M.*, pp. 124-25; Dutta, S.K., *Assam Buranji*, pp. 31-32; *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 259, Vol. 56, pp. 68-70, D.H.A.S. In some of the Buranjis the Dafla chiefs are termed as 'Paschima' Daflas, i.e. the Daflas of the west. But this is definitely wrong.

29. *Assam Buranji S.M.*, p. 124; *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 259, Vol. 56, p. 68. D.H.A.S.

30. *Assam Buranji*, S.M., p. 124.

The Barbarua at first wanted to bring the Daffas to submission through negotiation and accordingly sent two envoys named Tita and Tuba to talk with the Daffas. Hearing the news, the Daffas sent three of their headmen to converse with the Ahom Katakis. They came down and said to Tita and Tuba, "We remain in the forest of the hill with the monkeys. Being angry, we have committed the offence to the heavenly king. The king has sent his men to disturb us again even at our home. Now we have left our boats and remained safe in the jungle of the hill."³¹ Then Tita and Tuba said to the Daffa chiefs that they must bring back the men they had captured along with other presents and offer them to the Barbarua to make him believe them. The Barbarua would then forgive them and leave their country and they would be allowed to remain unmolested in their country as they had been before. But if they did not wish to yield, they would be killed to a man and their hilly abode would be destroyed. The Daffas then said in reply that they did not fear the Barbarua even though he might be very angry. They cared very little for the Barbarua. The speeches of the Daffas proved that they were not willing to submit. Still Tita and Tuba remained with the Daffas making negotiations and sent one Rardhan Hatkhowa Phikan to the Barbarua asking him to attack the Daffas. He came to the Barbarua and informed him everything. The Barbarua accordingly proceeded with his army and halted at the mouth of the river Sikling. According to the advice of Tita and Tuba the Ahom army began to pursue the Daffas. The Daffas ascended up the hill and the Ahom army could not see them. So they came back to a safe place in the valley.

Tita and Tuba tried to make the Daffas come to terms, but none of them paid heed to their advice who had taken shelter in the jungle. When the king was informed of it, he became very angry and sent a Kataki to tell the Barbarua to fetter both Tita and Tuba as they had failed to make the Daffas come to terms. He asked him to release them provided they could make the Daffas come down and return the men they had captured and find out a route for the army to climb up the hill. The Barbarua was informed of this by the Kataki and he complied with the king's order. The Barbarua proceeded from that place and after halting at many places arrived at the mouth of the river Pati. There he made a stockade and put up in it. The Barbarua held a council with the other officers and after proper discussion sent one Lao Deka, the grandson of Barchetia to construct a fort by the side of the Tilani and remain there. One Khaga Hazarika and one Kharagam came to the side of the river Patarhing and erected a fort there. Then the Chutiya and Chungi Hazarikas set free Tita and Tuba and the Barbarua ordered the Hazarikas to climb up the Daffa hill with Tita and Tuba and Hari Bara and devastate their villages. The Barbarua halted in the fort near the Pati river.

Now the Hazarikas and the Saikias held a council and sent a body of men to ascend the hill. The Ahom army climbed up the hill and arrived in a village of the

³¹ *Ahom Buranji*, p. 219.

Dafas where they put to death two Dafia Katakis and carried their heads. A Dafia chief named Kabakaragam, collected all the Dafas to attack the Ahom army. The Ahom army retreated at the sight of the enemies. The Dafas surrounded them and made a general massacre. Khaga and Kharagam Hazarikas fell dead in the struggle. A great number of archers on the Ahom side were killed. The son of Rangai Hazarika and the son of Dhakuaru Hazarika were captured alive and made prisoners. Hearing the news of such a disaster the Barbarua retreated and halted at Anglung. When the news reached the king, he sent one Papang Chaodang Kataki to arrest the Barbarua naked and put him to death. The king's mother intervened at this and asked the king not to put the Barbarua to death. But she said that if the king could not pardon the Barbaura, he might depose and banish him. The Barbarua was accordingly deposed. The Dafia expedition thus ultimately ended in failure and it clearly proved the statement of Atan Burhagohain, viz., the impracticability of subduing the Dafia hillmen. According to some Buranjis, however, in the winter season, these Tagin or eastern Dafas surrendered to the Ahoms everything that they had taken, including the men.³²

It was the Tagin or eastern Dafas who had given much trouble to the Ahom government in the 17th century than the western or Paschima Dafas. In the beginning of the 18th century, however, during the reign of king Rudra Singha (1696-1714 A.D.), we find both the eastern and western Dafas giving trouble to the Ahom government. Just before his death king Rudra Singha proposed the invasion of Bengal and for that purpose proceeded to Gauhati where he organised a great army.³³ The corps from the northern parts of Assam presented a petition to the king in which they expressed their readiness to attend the standard of Swargadeo and their confidence in the success of his arms, but suggested that they had left their personal possessions defenceless against the irruptions of the savage hillmen, the Dafas.³⁴ The Barbarua presented the petition and received a reprimand, for it was his peculiar duty as governor of that part of the country to repress the incursions of these troublesome neighbours. A detachment of eight thousand men were immediately despatched under the command of the Naobaicha Phukan and Nyaya Sodha Phukan against the western and eastern Dafas (Tagin). Messengers were sent to both the Dafia tribes. The Dafas received the messengers, but expressed apprehensions for their personal safety if they should venture to attend the summons of the Phukans. They desired the messengers to return and intercede on their behalf, and promised to follow in a few days with the usual presents. They protested their innocence and attributed the king's displeasure to the malicious representations of their enemies, and requested a regular trial and expressed their ready

32. *Assam Buranji*, S.M., p. 125; *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 259 Vol. 56, p. 70, D.H.A.S.

33. Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, pp. 180-81. Wade, however, says that the army had assembled at Rangpur (An Account of Assam, p. 125).

34. Wade, J.P., *An Account of Assam*, pp. 125-128.

submission to the most exemplary punishment, should they be found guilty of the crimes laid to their charge.

When the messengers returned to the Phukans with the message of the Daflas they were charged with a traitorous neglect of their duty. They were condemned to be punished and remanded with a peremptory summon for the immediate attendances of the Daflas. The latter received the messengers and accompanied them back to the Phukans with presents of methons, pepper, potatoes and a variety of other articles. They were informed by the two Phukans that instructions had been received from the king to inflict punishment of death on the two Katakis, on the individuals of the several guards of the frontier passes, and on the natives of Daflas who had dared to descend from the mountains and commit depredations in the plains. The Daflas declared their implicit obedience to the orders of the king, that they had not in any instance failed in their fidelity as subjects, and that they should strictly confine themselves to the mountains in future. The Phukans promised them the king's pardon, provided they would furnish six hundred Daflas for the invasion of Bengal, four hundred from the western mountains (Paschima Daflas) and two hundred from the eastern mountains (Tagin Daflas). The Daflas kept their promise and supplied the promised six hundred soldiers. But the preparations of Rudra Singha were in vain, for he died soon afterwards in his camp at Gauhati. Thus by the beginning of the 18th century king Rudra Singha not only forced the Daflas to submission, but compelled them to furnish a reasonable number of soldiers to the Ahom army in order to bring new countries under Ahom subjugation.

Rudra Singha brings to submission both the eastern and western Daflas

But no sooner did the mighty king Rudra Singha die than the Daflas again took to raiding. In the reign of the next king Siva Singha (1714-44 A.D.), the Tagin or eastern Daflas committed raids in the plains and in January 1717 an expedition was sent against them.* After they had been reduced to submission, an embankment was constructed along the foot of the hills inhabited by them as a protection against future inroads by these turbulent and restless mountaineers.*

Expedition against the eastern Daflas 1717 A.D.

In the reign of king Rajeswar Singha (1751-69 A.D.) however, the Paschima or western Daflas on the Darrang frontier committed several

35. Dutta, S.K., *Assam Buranji* (1648-81 A.D.), p. 62, Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 183.

* In the *Assam Buranji* (1648-81 A.D.) the embankment is stated to have been constructed in 1717 A.D. and the expedition against the Daflas in 1721 A.D. But according to Gait, the embankment was constructed after the raid committed by the Daflas. Gait's statement being much more convincing and reasonable I have accepted it to be correct.

raids near Ghiladhari.³⁶ As a reprisal, the Ahom government closed the passes leading from the Dafila hills to the plains by erecting forts along the frontier and prohibited the Dafilas from descending the plains.

The western Dafilas The blockade had the desired effect. A deputation of the
commit raid Dafilas came down from the hills and gave up the captives.

They brought presents for king Rajeswar Singha. The king, however, was not satisfied and caused members of the deputation to be arrested. Their relatives thereupon retaliated by seizing thirty-five Ahom subjects and two cannons. This led to an exchange of captives, and an agreement was made whereby the Dafilas were permitted to levy yearly from each family in the duar areas, a pura of paddy (i.e. $\frac{1}{2}$ maunds) and twenty cowries on condition of their refraining from other acts of aggression. In other words, they were allowed to levy 'posa' from the duar areas as before.

In spite of all the measures adopted by the Ahom government at their disposal to satisfy the Dafilas, they could not be prevented from committing raids in the plains. In the last part of the 18th century, when the famous Moamaria rebellion broke out in November 1769 A.D. during the reign of Lakshmi Singha (1769-80 A.D.) which lingered till the early part of the 19th

The Dafilas again take to raiding during the Moamaria rebellion

century, the Dafilas, encouraged by the weakness of the Ahom government rebelled against the latter and took to raiding. During the weak rule of Gaurinath Singha (1780-1795 A.D.), and Kamaleswar Singha (1795-1811 A.D.), the Dafilas and the 'Dafala-bahatias'* in league with the Moamaris revolted in several places in the North bank of the Brahmaputra and perpetrated many misdeeds in the country by devastating a couple of villages.³⁷ In the reign of Kamaleswar Singha, once they proceeded as far as Duimuni-sil in Koliabar. They were there met by the Ahoms and were defeated. Many of them were killed and others were drowned while trying to get into their boats. A few others of the rebels were captured alive. They were subsequently beheaded near the two celebrated rocks of Duimuni-sil as a warning to others. After this the Dafilas of Naduarua and Chaiduarua khels (i.e. the Dafilas of Darrang and Lakhimpur districts respectively) offered their submission.

In 1796 A.D. the Dafala-Bahatias and the fugitives in the North bank again united themselves under one 'Phofai', a Bahatia.³⁸ The rebels despatched one Madhu-

36. Bhuyan, S.K., an article published in *Banhi*, Vol. XV, No. 9, 1847 saka (1925 A.D.), p. 482; Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, pp. 186-87.

* In the *Tungkhungia Buranji* the Dafilas and the Dafala Bahatias both were stated to have rebelled against the Ahom government, while in the *Ahom Buranji* only the term Daffa is used. It is most probable that the Dafilas and their Bahatias both rebelled. That is why I have accepted the statement of the *Tungkhungia Buranji*.

37. *Tungkhungia Buranji*, O.U.P. pp. 95, 98-100, 128-29, 141-43; *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 340-41.

38. *Ibid*, pp. 145-46.

Revolt of Phofai—
a bahatia—1796

ram Bairagi to Bengal to fetch a detachment of Barkandari (i.e. Barkendaz) sepoys. After this they ravaged numerous villages in a spirit of hostility with the aid of these mercenaries. It was the prime minister Purnananda Burhagohain Dangaria of the Kuoigayan family who quelled the disturbances in the North bank. He sent six companies of Sepoys to seize the person of Phofai Senapati. Phofai Senapati was struck with a bullet and he lost his life. After his death, his followers deserted the field of battle. Some of them were captured by the Sepoys and handed over to the Burhagohain Dangaria, who after trial, hocked or pressed them to death. After the suppression of Phofai's revolt, there was no further trouble from the Daffas till the end of Ahom rule in Assam. The revolt of the Dafala-bahatias along with their masters the Daffas, conclusively prove that by constant intercourse with the Daffas, these people gradually imbibed the rough manners of the hillmen and almost forgot their Assamese origin.

Conclusion :

It was in the beginning of the 17th century, during the reign of king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.) that the Ahoms first came in contact with the Daffas and the first contact with them was hostile. In the first contact with them the Ahoms came to know of their ferocious nature and realised them to be dangerous neighbours. They also experienced the difficulty of sending an expedition against them. That was why king Pratap Singha introduced the 'Pesa' system in regard to the Daffas also in order to put a stop to their raids within Ahom territory. He also made them to pay to the Ahom rulers annual tributes in return for the enjoyment of 'posa', and thereby proclaimed the suzerainty of the Ahom rulers over them. This was no doubt a wise policy taken by the Ahoms in their dealings with the rapacious Daffa hillmen. Because, the territory of the Daffas had no economic or strategic importance which might have prompted them to take a different course of action. The only important article which forms a considerable amount of the trade of the Daffas is munjit. It grows in great abundance on their hills and it is of a very superior quality.³⁹ On the other hand, the maintenance of peace and tranquility in the country and the protection of its inhabitants from foreign attack is the prime objective of every government. The Ahom government of Assam in this respect was confronted with the additional responsibility of protecting their subjects from the incursions of the rapacious hill tribes who inhabit the hills on the immediate borders. In the first place, as already stated, most of the hill tribes of Assam were deficit in labourers and certain necessities of life. The Daffas were also no exception to this. Therefore, they resorted to raiding in the fertile lands of the plain at the foot of their hills which produced various crops in abundance and which were highly valued by the neighbouring hillmen. Whenever the hillmen were in need of labourers and other

39. Robinson, William, *Descriptive Account of Assam* p. 355.

necessaries of life, they swept down on the plains on marauding excursions and carried off property and men from the plains. That these tribes were deficit in labourers as well as other necessities of life is proved by the fact that unlike the Nagas, whose raids were characterised by the practice of head-hunting, the raids of these tribes were mostly characterised by the capture of people and looting of property. As narrated above, according to the testimony of the Buranjis in the reign of Udayaditya Singha (1669-1673 A.D.), the three Dafla Chiefs committed raid within Ahom territory on the plea that they had nothing to eat. This was particularly true in the case of the Daflas who were deficit both in labourers and necessities of life. According to the census Report of Assam, 1881, "The Daflas are less laborious cultivators than the Miris. Their villages are not so well stocked, nor so comfortable..." "The Report further says, "The Daflas, like the Abors, are recent settlers. Of late years they have been coming down in small communities of five or six families at a time, driven by scarcity of food or by the oppressions of the Abors. Some of these little colonies suffer terribly from sickness and a Dafla hamlet too often presents a sad array of tenantless and decaying houses."⁴⁰ Again, the census Report of Assam, 1891 testify to the fact that the Daflas were deficit in labourers. It says, 'the Daflas purchase slaves from the Abors, and in former times also carried off into bondage persons captured in their raids in the plains. These persons are called Hatimorias, and are really serfs, rather than slaves. They are extremely well treated, are never sold and failing other heirs, inherit the property of their Dafla masters or Gams'.⁴¹ This factor explains clearly why the 'paiks' in the Duar areas who were made liable to pay 'posa' to the Daflas by the Ahom government came to be known as 'Dafala-bahatias' or serfs of the Daflas—a fact which testify that besides supplying the specified articles to their Dafla masters, they had to do manual labour for them. This was, however, not the case with the other tribes. In spite of all these precautions taken by the Ahom government the Daflas could not be deterred from committing raids in the plains. Muhammad Kasim, a historian of the days of Aurangzeb wrote : 'The Daflas are entirely independent of the Assam Raja and whenever they find an opportunity plunder the country contiguous to their mountains'.⁴² However, it must be said in favour of the 'posa' system that it limited the number of raids compared to the ferocious nature of the Daflas. Even the British government—the successor to the Ahoms, with their modern methods of administration could not do away with the 'posa' system of the Daflas for a long time. Ultimately, however, they succeeded in inducing them to commute their claims for a fixed money payment.

Again, unlike the Miris, their eastern neighbours and the Bhutias, their western neighbours, the Daflas, till their contact with the Ahoms, seem to have been entirely left to themselves. Because, the Bhuyans, who ruled the

40. Report on the *Census of Assam*, 1881, p. 89.

41. Report on the *Census of Assam*, 1891, p. 222.

42. Quoted by Mackenzie, Alexander in *North-East Frontier of Bengal*, p. 27.

plains territory from Subansiri to Bar Nadi, each independent of the others, did hardly seem to have been able to exact obedience from the ferocious Daffas, and resist them descending from their mountains to the plains on marauding excursions. Therefore, when the Ahom rulers claimed suzerainty over them, the Daffas were unwilling to accept it and defied it whenever they found any opportunity and did not make their submission till they were compelled to do so by circumstances. In the reign of Udayaditya Singha (1669-73 A.D.), all attempts to make them submit through negotiation without resorting to war failed and they expressly defied the authority of the Ahoms. Not only this, in the reign of Gaurinath Singha (1780-95 A.D.), taking advantage of the weakness of the Ahom government, they, together with their 'Bahatias' meddled considerably in the internal affairs of the Ahoms in collaboration with the Moamaria rebels. The successor to the Ahoms, the British, found the Daffas committing frequent raids on the plains prior to 1852 A.D. when the 'Posa' question was finally settled.⁴³

Despite these circumstances, king Rudra Singha (1696-1714 A.D.) was able to procure the services of some Daffa soldiers in his Jayantia expedition,⁴⁴ and also compelled both the eastern and western Daffas to supply soldiers to his grand army that was organised to invade Bengal. This, it seems, the Daffas did out of fear rather than out of any regard for their Ahom overlord, and the credit for this must go to the energetic and capable king Rudra Singha.

The policy of the Ahom rulers towards the Daffas, like all other hill tribes, was one of conciliation backed by the display of force when occasion demanded it. They did never envisage the plan of complete subjugation and annexation of the Daffa territories to their own, and refrained from interference in the internal administration of the tribal territory.

43. Gait Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, pp. 320-21.

44. Bhuyan S.K., *Jayantia Buranji*, p. 82.

CHAPTER—IX

(C) The Mishmis and their relations with the Ahom kings :-

The Mishmis are the close neighbours of the Abors occupying the hills to the east of the Abor country, but are in no way kin to them. Roughly speaking it may be said that the whole of the hills which close the northeast corner of Assam valley is occupied by this tribe.¹ As Waddell says "This tribe is of special interest not only on account of its inveterate barbarism, but also because it blocks the direct route through the upper end of the Brahmaputra valley to China—a route which must inevitably come into commercial prominence by and by."² The Mishmis are divided into four clans viz., Chulika (or Chulkata) or crop haired, Tain, Mezho and Maro.

Division of the Mishmis The most dangerous of all the Mishmi clans are the Chulikatas, who inhabit the region from the Dibong to the Digaru, in the ranges to the north of Sadiya. They derive their name from their fashion of cutting the hair square across the forehead. The Tain or Digaru Mishmis live to the west of the Du river, an affluent of the Brahmaputra above the Brahmakurd and are in the habit of constant intercourse with the plains. They act as guides to Hindu pilgrims to the sacred spring, the Brahmakund. To the north-east of the Du are the Mezho or Miza Mishmis who trade only with Tibet. The Maro are those to the south of the Brahmaputra whose settlements are scattered and mixed up with those of the Khamti and Singpho villages.

Ahom-Mishmi Relations :—

The first reference to the Mishmis in the Buranjis, we get, during the reign of Shuchingpha or Sutyinpha Nariya Raja (1644-48 A.D.). It is merely stated that a rampart which was known as 'Mishmi-garh' was constructed during the reign of this king. Though the cause of its construction is not stated in the Buranji, we may presume that the rampart was most probably constructed as a precaution against the inroads of the Mishmis.

Construction of the Mishmigarh or rampart

1. Mackenzie, Alexander, *The North-East Frontier of Bengal*, pp. 47-51; Waddell, L.A., *Tribes of the Brahmaputra valley*, J.A.S.B., No.1, 1900, pp. 59-60.
2. Waddell, L.A., *Tribes of the Brahmaputra valley*, J.A.S.B. No. 1, 1900, p. 59.
3. Barua, Harakanta, *Assam Buranjil*, p. 46.

It was during the reign of king Ramdhvaj Singha (1673-75 A.D.), we find the Mishmis committing raid within the Ahom dominion for the first and the last time. In June 1675 A.D. in the month of Jaistha (May+June) the Mishmis* killed four Ahom priests (Lakang-Chiring) in the Deoghar (i.e. temple) of the king's mother in Sadiya.* The Sadiyakhowa and Hatkhowa Gohains informed the king of the raid. They asked the king to send some guns so that they might go in search of the Mishmis. **Mishmi raid—1675** The king sent one hundred Hilaidari Konwars.** Then the Mishmis with the Doanias*** joined with their two headmen and erected a stockade near a deep sheet of water. The two Doania headmen with their men and the Mishmis drank liquor to confirm their friendship and then marched against them. The Sadiyakhowa and the Hatkhowa Gohains were obliged to beat a retreat to the side of the river with their provisions at the approach of the large body of the enemies. The Mishmis advanced with great fury. The Sadiyakhowa and the Hatkhowa Gohains did not come out of their fort to resist the enemies. Afterwards, they proceeded to and made a fort by the side of the river Jiri. But the enemies surrounded their fort and captured two men. They also set fire to the dwellings and the granaries of the Assamese villagers and compelled them to flee away from their homes.

The Sadiyakhowa and the Hatkhowa Gohains informed the king of the inroad of the Mishmis. The king sent a body of men to reinforce the two Gohains. He then ordered the Barphukan to proceed against the Mishmis. At the command of the king, the Barphukan marched against the Mishmis in disguise. The Sadiyakhowa Gohain, the Hatkhowa Gohain and all other Phukans and Baruas erected a fort at Tisbing and put up therein. Some days after they held a council and after proper discussion sent one Chaodang Kataki to ask the Mishmis the cause of inroads. The Chaodang Kataki went to the Mishmis and brought two hundred of them with him. Then the Barphukan said to the Mishmis that he wished to find out and capture the Mishmis who had rebelled against the Ahom king and killed his men. Then four Mishmis humbly declaring themselves to be slaves said that they had not done any wrong and committed any offence. But Pude, Mirishang, Bajing and Phakushi were the men who had murdered the men. Then the Sadiyakhowa Gohain realised tribute from some Mishmis. After this the Sadiyakhowa Gohain and the Barphukan consult-

* In the *Ahom Buranji* (p. 231) the term is used as 'Naga Mishmi'. It is not clear why this term is used. In the *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 259, Vol. 56, (p.75), the raid is stated to have been committed by a Mishmi Gam or Chief named Suchang. This statement also seems to be wrong. It is more likely that the raid was committed by the Mishmis at the command of this Suchang Gam. Because of these ambiguities I have simply stated the Mishmis to have committed the raid.

4. *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 231-33; *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 259, Vol. 56 pp. 75-76, D.H.A.S.

** Hilaidari konwars means musketeer princes.

*** The Doanias are half-breeds of the Singhphos with their Assamese slaves, and are chiefly found on the Noa-Dihing near the Makum coal mines. L.A. Waddell, *Tribes of the Brahmaputra valley*, J.A.S.B., 1900, No. 1, p. 40.

ing among themselves proclaimed that they would put to death all those men who had killed and captured their (i.e. Ahom) men, without discrimination. At this, the Mishmis, being terrified sent envoys to the Barphukan with a promise to make over the murderers to the Barphukan. The Barphukan sent them to the king who, after making an enquiry, ordered that the murderers should be beheaded and dismissed the other Mishmis. The Mishmis offered the tributes to the Barphukan. Two of the murderers had fled away and concealed themselves in the village Taiban. They were afterwards captured and put to death. After this up to the end of Ahom rule in Assam, the Mishmis did not commit any raid within the Ahom dominion.

A stone pillar of octagonal shape found on the bank of the Deopani river, about seven miles north of Sadiya, bears an inscription in Ahom by the 'Dihingia Bar Gohain', confirming the Mishmis in the possession of the hills near the Dibong river on the payment by them of tribute, including four baskets of poison.⁵ The Dihingia Bargohain of the inscription was probably the son of the Dihingia Phukan, a member of the Miri Sandikai Bargohain family, who was appointed governor of Sadiya in 1687, and described in old chronicles as "Bargohain of Sadiya."⁶ The regulation with the Mishmis was undoubtedly completed in 1687 when Maupia Naobaicha Phukan completed the regulation of Sadiya with the Dihingia Bargohain, the governor of Sadiya.

Conclusion :—

The Mishmis committed raid within the Ahom dominion only once throughout the entire period of Ahom rule in Assam. In the first contact with this new tribe, inspite of the murder committed by them and the devastation caused to Assamese villages, the Ahoms did not take any drastic measure against them. The policy of persuasion employed by the Barphukan and his persistent demand to surrender the murderers proved to be very fruitful indeed. Because, they not only did surrender the murderers, but also offered tributes to the Barphukan and thereby acknowledged allegiance to the Ahom sovereign. The principles of punishing the guilty followed by the Ahom rulers in dealing with all the hill tribes was really a very wise policy —being based on the principle of equity. Moreover, if it could bear fruit, it was advantageous for both the parties concerned. The Ahoms, in their dealings with the stubborn hill tribes were conciliatory no doubt, but they did not hesitate to employ coercive measures when necessary. The policy of conciliation was always backed by the display of force. But it was a great credit to an officer or noble who could bring a refractory tribe to submission by the minimum application or without the application of force. The Ahom policy towards the hill tribes anticipated the policy of their British successors

5 Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 8 footnote; Bhuyan, S. K., *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 39.

6. Goswami, Hemchandra, *Purani Assam Buranji*, pp. 160-62.

which was embodied in the command to frontier officers and commandants ; "Conciliate these savages if you can. Be persistent in demanding surrender of murderers, but endeavour so to approach the tribes, that a basis may be opened for friendly intercourse."

One important factor to be noted in connection with the Mishmis was that unlike the Dafias, Akas, Miris and the Bhutias, they did not enjoy any 'posa' i.e. the right to levy tribute from certain villages in the plains set apart for that purpose by the Ahom government. This automatically leads to the conclusion that they did not suffer from scarcity of food. Moreover, the Mishmis are known to be great traders and they often visit the plains for trading purpose. "The Tain Mishmis are keen traders, and they appreciate so highly the advantages of our markets that they never give any trouble to the authorities of Lakhimpur."⁷ The Ahom government also interested itself in the trade of the frontier tribes, though of course, it was conducted on a small scale. They chiefly trade in musk, various skins, a bitter medicinal root known as 'Mishmitita', some ivory and other articles with Tibet and Assam.⁸ These things are brought down to the plains in the cold months and bartered at a cheap rate for salt, gram, and beads. The trading facilities offered by the Ahom rulers must have been greatly appreciated by the Mishmis. Most probably, it was the existence of this factor which persuaded them to refrain from committing raids in the plains in the time of the Ahom rulers. Because, if they would have indulged in raiding operations, it would have resulted in the closing to them of all trading facilities with the plains.

The advantages of trade offered by the Ahoms, coupled with the policy of non-interference in the internal administration of the hill tribes and non-annexation of their territories to the Ahom kingdom helped in establishing peaceful relations between the Ahom rulers and the Mishmis.

7. Mackenzie, Alexander, *The North-East Frontier of Bengal*, p. 369.

8. Mackenzie, Alexander, *The North-East Frontier of Bengal*, p. 49.

9. Colonel White's Historical Miscellany, 1834. Vol.1, Tr. No. 56, Tr. Vol. VI. pp. 39-60 D.H.A.S.

CHAPTER—IX

(d) Ahom-Khamti Relations :

The Ahoms “were an offshoot of the great Tai or Shan race, which spreads eastwards, from the border of Assam over nearly the whole of Further India, and far into the interior of China. The special section to which they belonged, or the Shans proper, occupied the northern and eastern hill tracts of upper Burma and western Yunnan, where they formed a group of states for which, according to Ney Elias, there is no collective name”.¹ These states or provinces were, however, dependent on a central kingdom, the ruler of which held paramount power over all. The paramount kingdom being the home of the Mau branch or tribe of the Shans, this region was known to themselves as Mung-Mau, or the country of the Mau, and as the kingdom of Pong to the Manipuris; and in some instances, the latter term possibly may have been used in the more extended sense for the entire country or collection of states.² The central state of Mung-Mau stood in the valley of the Shweli river in upper Burma. The most important province or section of the Mau kingdom under the central state of Mung-Mau was that known at the present day as Mogaung, which lay north of Mung-Mau. Not only was it the most extensive but it was usually also more powerful than the other sections, and its history as an independent state outlasted that of Mung-Mau by some 150 years.³ It was with this Shan state of Mogaung that the Ahoms maintained some sort of regular intercourse practically throughout their entire rule in Assam. The Mogaung annals claim for their first chief or tsaubwa the government of eight separate races, such as (i) the Naras, (ii) the Khang (i.e. the Khyens or Nagas), (iii) the Singhphos or Kachyens, (iv) the Pwons, (v) the Kadus, (vi) the Yaws, a tribe of Burmans on the right bank of the Irrawaddy, (vii) the Kunbaw (a Burmese tribe), (viii) the Mishnis.⁴ Ney Elias, however, says that this might be an exaggeration. In the Ahom Buranjis this Mogaung state is referred to as the Nara state and its king as the Nara king—a fact

1. Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 70.

2. Elias, Ney, *History of the Shans*, pp. 2-3.

3. *Ibid*, p. 39.

4. *Ibid*, pp. 40-41.

which shows that the Naras were the dominating race. Major Pemberton also says—"The Shan chieftain of Mogaung is also called the Nara Rajah by the Singphos, and it appears that the term is also applied to the Shans between Hookong and Mogaung."⁵ The Ahom kings regarded the Naras as their close kinsmen and the Nara kings also looked upon the Ahom kings as 'Bhai Rajas' or brother kings as they were descended from the same Shan stock.

Ahom-Khamti Relations :

Of all the Shans, the Khamtis are probably the nearest kinsmen of the Ahoms.⁶ The original seat of the Khamtis, as of the Ahoms, was the ancient Shan kingdom of Pong. The date of their migration northwards to Borkhamti (which is called Khamti Long by the Burmese), the mountainous region between the eastern extremity of Assam and the valley of the Irrawaddy, where, they say, they have been settled for centuries, is unknown. They are an intelligent and literary folk and Shakespear claims them to have been far more civilised than the Assamese.⁷ According to Ney Elias, the territory of the Khamtis was included in the Shan state of Mogaung or the Nara kingdom.⁸

Mogaung was occupied and made tributary to the Burmese about the middle of the 16th century and its tsaubwas (i.e. Nara kings) began to rule their kingdom as tributary chief of the Burmese. From this time the history of Moganug is nothing but the history of wars carried on by its rulers against the Burmese to regain their independence.⁹ But they could not regain their independence except for short intervals during periods of weakness or dissension in Burma. As a result of these wars great confusion ensued in the kingdom and about the middle of the 18th century, stray parties of Khamti emigrants, pushed forward by pressure from the south, began to appear on the borders of Sadiya.¹⁰ They were permitted by the Ahom government (either in the reign of king Pramatta Singha 1744-1751, or of Rajeswar Singha 1751-69 A.D.) to settle on the Tengapani river in 1751 A.D.

Khamtis settle on the
Tengapani river -1751

They brought with them the religion of Buddha and found the Ahoms completely Hinduised. The great Moamaria rebellion which broke out in November 1779 A.D. and lingered till the beginning of the 19th century brought about great chaos and confusion in the Ahom kingdom and weakened the hold of the Ahom government on the outlying provinces. Taking advantage of the weakness of the Ahom government the Khamtis crossed the Brahmaputra and about the year 1794 A.D., during the weak rule of Gaürinath Singha (1780-1795 A.D.) they ousted the Sadiyakhowa Gohain, the Ahom

5. Major Pemberton, *Eastern Frontier*, Quoted, by Ney Elias in the *History of the Shans*, pp. 39-40 footnote.

6. Gohain, U.N., *Assam under the Ahoms*, p. 7.

7. Shakespear, L.W. *History of Upper Assam, upper Burma and North-Eastern Frontier*, p. 149.

8. Elias, Ney, *History of the Shans*, p. 40.

9. *Ibid*, pp. 42-43.

10. *Assam Census Report*, 1881, p. 84; Gohain, U.N., *Assam under the Ahoms*, pp. 7-8.

governor of Sadiya and usurped his title and dignity. They began to rule the Sadiya tract with two chieftains, one known as Burha Raja and the other as Deka Raja.¹¹ The weak government of Gaurinath Singha was compelled to acquiesce in the arrangement. The Khamtis, however, did not remain content with their recent usurpation. They further wanted to extend their authority and the still continuing Moamaria rebellion helped them in realising their ends. About 1799 A.D. in the reign of Kamaleswar Singha (1795-1811 A.D.), the Burha Raja of the Khamtis came down with a large army and waited with hostile intentions at Nibok on the north bank.¹² According to other Buranjis, the Khamtis were helped in this battle by other Shan tribes, such as Pani Naras* and Phakials** and also by the Miris, Mishmis, Muluks*** Tekelia Nagas and Abors.¹³ Purnananda Burhagohain, the prime minister of Gaurinath Singha sent against the enemies a large force which proceeded up the Brahmaputra and arriving at Sadiya, halted there. The Ahom army attacked the enemies and killed a great number of them. The enemy made a furious attack upon the Ahom army but the latter remained firm and got complete victory over the enemies. The Ahom army captured the Khamti Burha Raja and a large number of Naras, Phakials and Muluks. With the spoils of the war and the captives the Ahom army came back to Jorhat. Sometime after Kamaleswar Singha, consulting with the Burhagohain, decided to re-establish the captives instead of killing them. Accordingly orders were passed to erect Bapu Changs**** for the Nara Bapus or monks near the Simaluguri Parghat (i.e. Ferryghat) of the Dichoi river. The Pani Naras were established at Titabarhat and others were also similarly established at different places.

The Burha Raja of Khamti was kept under guard near the royal camp to the east of the Dichoi. The Khamtis who were his followers were settled at the Tokolai forest to the south of the camp. Those Khamtis were attached to the two Hatimurs*, Labang and Lalim, forming part of the Burhagohain's khel.

11. Bhuyan, S.K., *Tungkhungia Buranji*, O.U.P. p. 120.

12. *Tungkhungia Buranji*, O.U.P., pp. 147-48.

* The term 'Pani Nara' signifies little or inferior Nara. As the Buranjis reveal, many people from Nara came to reside in the Ahom kingdom during the period of the exchange of friendly intercourse between the Ahom kingdom and Mogaung. Some Nara people accompanied the first Ahom king Sukapha also (An Account of different Ahom Phoids and clans, Tr. No. 131, Vol. XIV, part II, p. 35. D.H.A.S.)

** The Phakials are said to have left Mogaung for Assam about 1760 A.D. (Gohain U.N., Assam under the Ahoms, p. 8.)

*** It is not possible to say who were the Muluks. The Tekelia Nagas, were most probably halting somewhere from the Paktai mountain or its neighbourhood.

13. *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 364-65; *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 248, Vol. 56. pp. 7-8, D.H.A.S.

**** Bapu Changs (i.e. buildings with raised platforms for the residence of Nara Bapus or monks) were schools for teaching the Shan language and for imparting education in the tenets of the Shan faith. —Bhuyan, S.K., *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 43.

* Hatimur—a row of houses.

The Sadiya tract was thus freed from the control of the Khamtis by the Ahoms. In the same year (1799 A.D.) a person known as Barir-Putek (son of a widow), belonging to the family of Purnananda Burhagohain was made Sadiya-khowa Gohain. After their defeat at the hands of the Ahoms the Khamtis seemed to have remained subdued for a time. But they again rose to power during the subsequent commotions caused by the Burmese invasion of Assam (1816-1824 A.D.). For, the British on their occupation of Assam in 1825 A.D. found the Sadiya tract entirely under Khamti control.¹⁴

Conclusion :

The Khamtis (and also the other Shan tribes, such as Naras, Phakials etc.) obtained the permission of the Ahom government to settle within the Ahom kingdom in consideration of the fact that they belonged to the same Shan race as the Ahoms. But the Khamtis (along with other Shan tribes) proved unfaithful to their benefactors—the Ahom government who had given them shelter at the time of their distress. Instead of coming to the aid of the Ahom government against the Moamaria insurgents, they took advantage of the weakness of the Ahom government to arrogate power to themselves. In spite of their open rebellion against the Ahom government, the latter did not take any drastic measures against the Shan captives brought from war, including the Khamti Burha Raja. The consideration of several factors might have induced the Ahom king Kamaleswar Singha to pardon his rebellious kinsmen. In the first place, the Ahom government was already involved in the internal trouble caused by the Moamaria rebellion which drained away most of the resources of the Ahom government. Moreover, most of the hill tribes had taken the opportunity of the confusion to rise against the Ahom government. In these circumstances the Ahom government perhaps thought that any drastic measure against the rebellious captives might involve them in further trouble. That was why they took the policy of appeasing these rebels by re-establishing them within the Ahom dominion. Another factor which induced the Ahom government to take such a measure was undoubtedly their sense of kinship to the Khamtis, Naras and Phakials who constituted the bulk of the captives. This was clearly visible in the establishment of 'Bapu Changs' for the Nara Bapus or monks. Any way, the policy adopted by the Ahoms in this particular case was prudent both from the point of view of the security of their kingdom and of their regard for their kinsmen.

14. Shakespear, L.W., *History of upper Assam, upper Burma and North Eastern Frontier*, p. 148; Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 292.

CHAPTER IX

(e) Ahom-Singpho Relations

The Singphos are another vigorous warlike tribe on the Sadiya frontier. Colonel Hannay, whose knowledge of the North-East frontier and Burma was singularly extensive, considers them to be identical in race with the Kakus or Kakhyens of Burma.¹ The Singphos of Assam, however, would never call themselves Kakus or Kakhyens, though they do in fact call their eastern and southern brethren by that name. They also maintain the same family titles and division of clans as prevail among the more remote tribes. The Singphos of Assam, with the exception of a few, belong to the Tesan clan of the Kakhyens. The chief habitat of the Kakhyens was on the great eastern branch of the Irrawaddy. With the break up of the northern Shan kingdom, the Kakhyens entered on a career of conquest and aggression, which practically placed in their hands the whole country lying between upper Assam and Bhamo.

The Singphos first came to prominence in Assam during the weak rule of Gaurinath Singha (1780-95) when the Moamaria rebellion was in its full swing.² They drove out the Khamtis from the lowlands under the Patkai hills, and settled themselves on the Tengapani, east of Sadiya, and on the Upper Buri-Dihing in the tract called Namrup. They thus brought under them the whole country watered by the Buri-Dihing, the Noa-Dihing and the Tengapani rivers. The soil of this tract occupied by the Singphos is extremely fertile, consisting almost entirely of rich alluvial earth.³ It yields two crops annually and is adapted in an admirable degree to rice cultivation, being watered by numerous streams.

The Moamarias found ready allies in the Singphos. In the reign of Kamaleswar Singha (1795-1811) in 1797 A.D., the Singphos, in conjunction with the Moamaria rebels who had fled to Namrup being defeated at the

1. Quoted by Mackenzie, Alexander in *North-East Frontier of Bengal*, p. 61.

2. Mackenzie, Alexander, *North-East Frontier of Bengal*, p. 62.

3. Colonel White's Historical Miscellany, 1834, Vol. I. Tr. No. 56, Tr. Vol. VI, p. 53, D.H.A.S.

The Singphos ravage Assamese villages in —1797

hands of the Ahoms, ravaged a number of villages in the eastern part of Assam.⁴ They also imported troops from Burma.

Receiving the news of the ravages caused by the Singphos to Assamese villages, Kamaleswar Singha, in consultation with his ministers and other higher officials, commanded the Deka Phukan and some other officers to march against the Singphos. The Ahom army besieged the enemy in their fort who remained inside the fort by mounting guns round the palisade. In the first attempt the Ahoms could not win over the enemy and they had to disperse with the loss of fifteen sepoy. But subsequently, the Ahoms renewed their attack with great vigour and succeeded in breaking the fort of the Singphos by causing explosion to one of the guns mounted on the surrounding palisade of the fort. At this, the Morans and the Singphos formed themselves into two separate groups and dispersed in opposite directions. The Ahom soldiers then entered into the fort of the enemy, destroyed the houses that were within the fort and looted the properties. The spoils obtained consisted of men, provisions, buffaloes, cows, copper, brass and cloths. The Singphos appeared on this occasion as tame and submissive. In order to placate the Singpho leader Bichanong, Prime minister Purnananda Burhagohain presented to him an Ahom girl named Rangili, together with numerous slaves and attendants.⁵ She was the sister of Baram Duara Barua's father. Bichanong in his turn presented Rangili to the Burmese king Bodawpaya with the object of strengthening his friendship with the Burmese monarch. The Singphos, however, violated their pact with Purnananda Burhagohain. During the Burmese invasions of Assam, they made constant raids on the hapless Assamese, carried off thousands as slaves and reduced the eastern part of the country to a state of depopulation.⁶ About 3,000 of these Assamese subjects, carried off by the Singphos, were subsequently recovered by captain Neufville, the first British political Agent of upper Assam.

Rangili

4. *Tungkhungla Buranji*, O.U.P., pp. 150 and 207; Ahomar *Sesh Yugar Buranji*, Tr. No. 248, Vol. 56, pp. 5-6, D.H.A.S. In the *Tungkhungla Buranji* (p. 150) the date of the Singpho war is given as 1723 saka i.e. 1801 A.D. In the same *Buranji* (p. 207) it is said that Purnananda Burhagohain, in order to placate the Singpho leader Bichanong presented to him a girl named Rangili. Bichanong in his turn gave Rangili to the Burmese king Bodawpaya who arrived at the Burmese capital on June 17, 1797. This proves the date 1801, given previously to be wrong. That is why I have accepted the date given in the Ahomar *Sesh Yugar Buranji* (saka 1719—1797 A.D.)

5. Bhuyan, S.K., *Tungkhungla Buranji*, O.U.P., p. 207.

6. Mackenzie, Alexander, *North East Frontier of Bengal*, pp. 62-64.

CHAPTER—X

Ahom-Bhutia Relations :

The Bhutanese are a Tibeto-Burman race inhabiting the sub-Himalayan ranges from east of Darjeeling in Bengal up to the river Bhoroli in the Darrang district of Assam. The Bhutan hills, as they are called after the name of the tribe, are approximately more than 240 miles in length.¹ The width is, however, very inconsiderable. The mountainous tract occupied by the real Bhutias, probably does not on an average of horizontal distance, exceed 40 or 50 miles in width. South from that is a hilly, but lower tract of perhaps 10 or 15 miles horizontal distance in width which is occupied by Kacharis, Mech and other rude tribes ; and south from thence is a plain which in different parts varies from 10 to 20 miles in width, which is chiefly occupied by Koch or Rajbangsis.²

Of the tribes on the northern frontier of Assam, the Bhutanese alone possess a systematic government. The government of Bhutan is said to be a theocracy, that is to say, in the hands of a person who is considered as an incarnation of God, and who is called Dharma Raja. He is the nominal head of government. But the actual administration of the country is carried on by his vice regent called Deva Raja with the advice of his counsellors, and in some cases, with the concurrence of the Dharma Raja.

The Bhutanese has kept up their intercourse with the plains through the duars or passes leading from the hills to the plains. Along the frontier of Bhutan proper there are eighteen such duars, eleven on the frontier of Bengal and Koch Behar and seven on that of Assam.³ Of these seven duars, five are in Goalpara and Kamrup—Bijni, Chapakhmar, Chapaguri, Baksa and Gharkola, and two on Darrang—Buriguma

1. Hamilton, Francis, *An Account of Assam*, p. 67. Hamilton supposed the Bhutias to have extended from the Tista on the west to the Panchneyi in the east; and on the strength of that supposition he calculated the length of the Bhutan hills to be about 240 miles. But actually the Bhutias extend beyond the Panchneyi up to about the Bhoroli river.

2. Ibid, p. 68; Mackenzie; Alexander, *North East Frontier of Bengal*, pp. 9-10.

3. Mackenzie, Alexander, *North-East Frontier of Bengal*, pp. 9-10.

and Killing. East of Darrang there is another duar known as the Kariapar duar, which is more or less in direct subjection to Tibet and independent of the Bhutanese government of Punakha.⁴ The Kariapar duar is by far the most extensive and valuable division. It contains an area of about 15,000 puras of land.⁵ The duar is divided into seven subdivisions which are placed under the management of seven respective Rajas known as the 'Sath Rajas' (or Sat Rajas), and who call themselves subordinate to Towang Raja, a tributary of Lhasssa. All the

Importance of the Kariapar duar

Assam trade with Tibet passed through this Kariapar duar via Chouna, a place, two months' journey from Lhasa where a mart was established. The Assam merchants used to be stationed with their commodities at a place called Geegunshur, four miles distant from Chouna. The Assam merchants carried the following things—rice, Tussa cloth, a kind of coarse silk cloth woven by Assamese women, iron and lac, skins, buffalo horns, pearls and corals. In 1809 this trade amounted to two lakhs of rupees, although Assam was then itself in a most unsettled state. The imports from Tibet consisted of rock salt, woolens, gold dust, horses, chowries, Chinese silks etc. The protracted troubles of Assam ultimately affected the traffic, but even in the year before the Burmese invasion, the Lhasa merchants were said to have brought down gold amounting in value to Rs. 70,000/-. The Burmese occupation put a stop to this annual Fair* for a time.

Eastward of Kariapar duar lies the extensive division of Char-duar or "the four passes," the Bhutias of which place claim to be independent of Towang.⁶ Their

Enjoyment of Posa by the Charduar Bhutias

chiefs like those of Kariapar duar, are called "Sath Rajas", the principal one having the title of Durji Raja., In common with all other tribes on this frontier, these Bhutias also claimed a tribute or 'posa' to be collected annually from the plains.

It has been already stated that along the base of the Bhutan hills and sloping downwards to the plains there stretches from west to east a narrow tract of fertile land which varies in breadth from ten to twenty miles. The possession of this tract of land has always been a matter of importance to the inhabitants of the barren hills above and the inhabitants of the plains. Cotton, rice and other staples are grown there, the value of which was always greatly appreciated both by the Bhutanese and the governments of the plains.

Amongst the people of Bhutan there is a tradition that prior to the present Bhutanese government tributary to Lhasa, Bhutan was ruled by the Koches. Whatever might be the historical value of this tradition, it is however certain that

4. Mackenzie, Alexander, *North-East Frontier of Bengal* pp. 15-17.

5. Robinson, William, *A descriptive Account of Assam* pp. 293-94.

* A great periodical market.

6. Mackenzie, Alexander, *North-East Frontier of Bengal*, pp. 18-19.

the founder of the Koch kingdom Biswa Singha had considerable influence in Bhutan and the whole hilly but lower tract of about 10 or 15 miles width south of the Bhutan hills, which is inhabited by Kacharis, Mech and other rude tribes, together with the plain fertile tract of about 10 or 20 miles width below that hilly tract which is chiefly occupied by Koches, was under the occupation of Biswa Singha. This is proved by the existence of a fort named after Biswa Singha

Koch influence in
Bhutan

(Biswa Singhar Killah), about ten or twelve miles north of Chikanagram, the capital of Biswa Singha's father Haridas Mandal.⁷ The passes leading from the hills to the plains were therefore under the occupation of the Koch government of

the plains below and the Bhutias, who had to keep regular communication with the plains for trading purposes through the passes undoubtedly had to pay tribute to the Koch government. The officers who were in charge of the passes were known as Subahs. The tributary nature of the Bhutias to the Koch government was clearly brought about during the Koch invasion of the Ahom kingdom in 1562 A.D. in the reign of the second Koch king Nar Narayan under the commander in chiefship of his brother Sukladvaj alias Chilarai. The Koch infantry against the Ahom kingdom had proceeded along the Gohain Kamal Ali on the north bank of the Brahmaputra which had been constructed from west to east through the territory lying between the Bhutan hills and the Brahmaputra just on the eve of the expedition of 1562. King Nar Narayan, accompanied by his queen Bhanumati followed the Koch infantry. On the way the Bhutias offered their submission to the Koch king Nar Narayan and joined the ranks of the Koch army.⁸ In the Darrang Raj Vamsabali it is stated that after crossing the present districts of Goalpara and Kamrup, at the halting place named Chandikabehar near Bhramarakunda in the Mangaldoi subdivision of Darrang district, Nar Narayan ordered the construction of a hill fort and a temple.⁹ When the temple was completed, he placed an image of Goddess Durga and appointed a Kachari as its priest. Then he collected all the Mongoloid people, viz., the Bhutias of seven duars (i.e. of Goalpara, Kamrup and Darrang), Kacharis and Meches living between the Bhutan hills and the Gohain Kamal Ali and ordered that the former could follow their tribal customs in the territory up to Gohain Kamal Ali, but in the country south of the Gohain Kamal Ali, Brahmanic rites must be preserved. The Bhutias were further instructed to pay him tributes of gold, horse, skin, musk and kingkhap.¹⁰ These facts conclusively prove the tributary nature of the Bhutias to the Koch government. Throughout the 16th century the Koch kings held considerable influence over the Bhutia country. It should be remembered in this connection that although Nar Narayan extended the boundary of the Koch kingdom towards the east up to the Dikrai river on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, he could not retain his hold permanently on the whole territories. The Ahoms

7. Khan Choudhuri, Amanatullah Ahmed, *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 90.

8. Bhuyan, S.K., *Assam Buranji*, S.M., pp. 38-39; *Koch Beharer Itihas*, pp. 106-108.

9. *Durrang Raj Vamsavali*, pp. 64-65.

10. *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 107.

soon afterwards, reclaimed the territories up to the Bhoroli river from the hands of the Koches.*

The division of the Koch kingdom in 1581 into two parts, viz., Koch Behar (the western) and Koch Hajo (the eastern) was followed by bitter rivalry between the rulers of the two kingdoms. This paved the way for the entrance of the Moguls and the Afghans into Koch politics which greatly undermined the influence that the Koch kings held over Bhutan. It is said that towards the end of his reign, Lakshmi Narayan (1587-1627 A.D.) had no influence over Bhutan.¹¹ The division of the Koch kingdom automatically led to divided jurisdiction of the respective kingdoms over the territories and the passes lying on the south of the Bhutan hills and north of the two kingdoms. The territory lying between the Sonkosh and the Bhoroli together with the passes passed under the control of the eastern Koch kings (i.e. Koch Hajo) Raghu Dev and Parikshit and the territory lying to the west of the Sonkosh together with the passes passed under the control of the western Koch kings (i.e. Koch Behar). Consequently the Bhutias were compelled to pay tribute to both the rulers of the Koch kingdoms. The Bhutias, however, both on the frontiers of Koch Behar** and Koch Hajo took advantage of the weakness of the Koch government to push their northern boundary across the hills proper into the plains. In 1612 A.D. the kingdom of Parikshit was invaded by the Moguls and in 1614 A.D. Parikshit was defeated and taken a prisoner to Delhi and his kingdom as far as the Bhoroli river was annexed to the Delhi empire of the Moguls and came to be governed by Mogul officers.

Ahom-Bhutia Relations :

On the annexation of the dominion of Parikshit to the Mogul empire, a brother of Parikshit named Bali Narayan fled to the Ahom king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.) for protection who received him with great cordiality.¹² This happened in the beginning of 1615 A.D. Subsequently when war broke out between the Ahoms and the Moguls shortly afterwards, Bali Narayan fought bravely on the Ahom side and with the aid of the Ahoms he recovered the territory lying between the Bhoroli and the Bar Nadi from the hands of the Moguls by repulsing the Mogul expedition under Syed Hakim and Syed Aba Bakr. In 1616 the victorious Ahoms installed

Dharma Narayan
—the tributary Raja
of Darrang

Bali Narayan over this territory as a tributary Raja of Darrang with the title of Dharma Narayan. Dharma Narayan at once proceeded to the province of Darrang where he secured his residence by the usual fortification of the country. Soon afterwards an ambassador from the Deva Dharma Rajas (i.e. the religious and political

* For details refer the Chapter XI on Ahom-Koch Relations.

11. Koch Beharer Itihas, p. 150.

** For the details of the relations of the Koch Behar kings with the Bhutias, refer Koch Beharer Itihas, ch. XVII, pp. 334-372.

12. Kamrupar Buranjī, pp. 13-14; Assam Buranjī S.M. p. 55.

rulers) of Bhutan came to Dharma Narayan, the Raja of Darrang.¹³ The messenger demanded the restoration of the district of Nagamatee on the ancient confines of Bhutan which, the messenger said, the princes of Darrang had formerly seized and still continued to withhold from his masters the Deva-Dharma Rajas of Bhutan. Hostilities were declared to be the certain consequence of a refusal. But as Dharma Narayan was now a tributary king under the Ahom Swargadeo, to whom the territory ruled by him legally belonged, he pleaded his inability to comply with the request of the Deva-

The demand for restoration of Nagamatee to the Govt. of Bhutan leads to war between the Bhutias and the Ahoms

Dharma Rajas of Bhutan without the permission of the Swargadeo. He pleaded the orders of the Swargadeo relative to the limits of his government and declared his readiness to accept the alternative of war. When the Bhutia messenger returned to Bhutan with the answer of Dharma Narayan, the Deva-Dharma Rajas of Bhutan immediately despatched seven

hundred men against Dharma Narayan. The latter intimated the Ahom king of their approach. He received a reinforcement from king Pratap Singha which he led with his own people against the invaders. Dharma Narayan himself directed the battle by mounting on his horse in which seven hundred warriors of Bhutan are reported to have perished.

Receiving the news of the disaster of the Bhutia forces the Deva-Dharma Rajas of Bhutan realised their inability to combat the combined forces of the Koches and the Ahoms and resolved to solicit their friendship. Dharma Narayan agreed to accept the terms forwarded by the government of Bhutan provided the former consented to resign Bhramarakunda (or Bhcirabkunda)

The Govt. of Bhutan concludes peace with the Ahom Govt. through Dharma Narayan

which had formerly belonged to his ancestors. The Deva-Dharma Rajas of Bhutan at once agreed to relinquish one half of Bhramarakunda and the proposal was accepted by Dharma Narayan. The division being completed, Dharma Narayan proceeded to the place to erect habitations for the people and to cultivate the soil. This is for the first time that

the Ahoms indirectly came into contact with the government of Bhutan through their tributary chief of Darrang, Dharma Narayan. From the above narrative, it is clear that taking advantage of the chaos and confusion that ensued in the kingdom of Parikshit during the Mogul invasion of his kingdom, the Bhutias had gradually begun to extend their southern boundary by absorbing the territories on the northern frontier of Koch Hajo. On the frontiers of the province of Darrang which came under the possession of the Ahoms in 1615 A.D., this transgression was temporarily checked by the combined forces of the Ahoms and the Koches, and consequently the two important duars on the frontiers of Darrang, viz., Buriguma and Killing remained in possession of the Ahom government. In

13. Wade, J.P., *An Account of Assam*, pp. 221-22.

spite of it, however, the Bhutias succeeded in retaining their hold on a small portion of the territory lying south to their hills as far as Bhramarakunda. Dharma Narayan demanded the restoration of Bhramarakunda which had been recently taken possession of by the Bhutias on the ground that it had belonged to his ancestors. The Bhutias, however, handed over to him only a half of Bhramarakunda. These Bhutias, whose aggression towards the plains south of their hills was temporarily checked by the Ahom government in the early part of the 17th century were subjects of the Bhutanese government of Punakha headed by the Dharma Raja and the Deva Raja.

With the Bhutias of Charduar the Ahom government had adopted a different policy. King Pratap Singha, who had introduced the 'posa' system in regard to the Akas, Daffas, and the Miris who lived in this frontier region, most probably* introduced the posa system in regard to these Bhutias also apparently with a view to keep uniformity of the relations of all the tribes on this frontier with the Ahom government. The independence of the Bhutias of Charduar from the Bhutanese government of Punakha must have facilitated the Ahom government to accord different sorts of treatment to these Bhutias. The Bhutias of Charduar claimed to be independent of Towang Raja, a tributary of Lhasa.

The war between the Ahoms and the Moguls, however, went on. Elated by his victory over the enemies (i.e. the Moguls) in 1615, the Ahom king Pratap Singha prepared himself to renew the conflict with the Moguls, and in November 1617, accompanied by Dharma Narayan, he proceeded with an army towards Hajo to attack the Mogul headquarter. The Ahoms captured some Mogul forts in Kamrup, but they were soon defeated in their attack on Hajo. Soon after the Ahoms led by the Barphukan and Dharma Narayan defeated the Moguls at Hajo and captured their garrisons in Kamrup. Their commander Abdussalam was taken to the Ahom capital Garhgaon with a considerable portion of his forces. In a great part of Goalpara district also, the Mogul yoke

* I have said 'most probably' due to fact that none of the Buranjis I have gone through definitely state that king Pratap Singha introduced the 'posa' system in regard to these Bhutias. I am inclined to place it in the reign of king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.) in consideration of two important factors. In the first place, it was in the reign of king Pratap Singha that the territories west of the Bhoroli river i.e. up to Bar Nadi came into the possession of the Ahoms. It was he who introduced the 'posa' system in regard to the Akas, Daffas and the Miris. Therefore, it was likely to be the same monarch who introduced the 'posa' system in regard to the Bhutias of Charduar. Secondly, Chandra Narayan (Sundar Narayan of Wade) who succeeded Mohendra Narayan in 1643 as the Raja of Darrang, soon after his appointment summoned the principal people of Charduar where the tribute from Bhutias, Akas, and Daffas was usually collected to attend on his person with a declaration that the Swargadeo had conferred the charge on him (Wade's Account of Assam, p. 225). This suggests that the 'posa' system in regard to these Bhutias was also introduced by king Pratap Singha. In return for the enjoyment of 'posa' by the tribes, they had to pay annual tribute to the Ahom government.

The Ahoms capture Koch Hajo from the Moguls and give it to Dharma Narayan

was thrown off. Many of the Chiefs on the north bank of the Brahmaputra made their submission to the Ahoms. A chronicle mentions that Abdussalam was escorted to Garhgaon by Raja Dharma Narayan and that the Ahom king Pratap Singha gave him the government of Dhekeri Rajya or Koch Hajo.¹⁴ The conferment of Koch Hajo on Dharma Narayan on this occasion (1635 A.D.) became afterwards the basis of the Darrang Rajas' claims to Kamrup.

The Ahoms, however, could not retain their hold on the territories conquered from the Moguls. In the wars that followed in 1637-38, they were defeated in several engagements in the vicinity of Gauhati. Dharma Narayan, who had fought on the Ahom side with zeal and vigour fled to Darrang, but being hotly pursued by the Moguls he retreated to Singri (or Singari) where he died subsequently. The Moguls then consolidated their rule in Kamrup. A treaty was concluded in 1639 between the Mogul commander Allah Yar Khan and the Ahom general Momai Tamuli Barbarua under which the Bar Nadi on the north bank and Asurar Ali on the south near Gauhati were fixed as the boundary between the Ahom and Mogul territories.

After the death of Dharma Narayan in 1638, his son Mohendra Narayan * succeeded him as the Raja of Darrang. His jurisdiction extended also to a portion of Kamrup consisting of the narrow strip of land between Asurar Ali and Kajalimukh on the south bank.¹⁵ It could not have extended to the whole of Kamrup which was then in the hands of the Moguls. Mohendra Narayan died in 1643 and was succeeded by his son Chandra Narayan. He fixed his residence in Mangaldoi. Taking advantage of the pre-occupation of Dharma Narayan in the Mogul wars as an ally of the Ahoms and also of the Moguls who were in possession of the whole of Koch Hajo except the province of Darrang, in their wars against the Ahoms, the Bhutias took possession of the whole fertile plains south of their hills as far as the Gohain Kamal Ali. Chandra Narayan, who proved to be a very daring, wanton and oppressive ruler proceeded to re-capture the lands occupied by the Bhutias and accordingly plundered the villages and seized the lands occupied by them.¹⁶ The

14. Bhuyan, S.K., *Kamrupar Buranjī*, p. 27.

* Sundar Narayan is mentioned as Dharma Narayan's successor both by J.P. Wade in his *Account of Assam*, p. 224 and Gait in his *History of Assam*, p. 69. But Dr. S.K. Bhuyan in his *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 265, and Khan Choudhury Amanatullah Ahmed in his *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 238, have stated that Mohendra Narayan was the successor of Dharma Narayan. I have accepted the latter view on the ground that it is supported by the genealogical tree prefixed to H.C. Goswami's *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*. It is more probable that Wade omitted the reign of Mohendra Narayan and put the reign of Sundar Narayan just after Dharma Narayan, which was probably the English form of Chandra Narayan as suggested by Dr. S.K. Bhuyan.

15. Bhuyan, S.K., *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 265.

16. Wade, J.P., *An Account of Assam*, pp. 225-246

Encroachment of territories by the Bhutias results in war between the Bhutias & the Ahoms

passes* were also not exempt from his depredation. A message, however, was soon despatched by the Chiefs of the passes informing the prince that he must surrender the plunder and the lands he had seized or prepare for war. Chandra Narayan

proudly answered that his ancestors had vanquished the Bhutan slaves and established land marks to ascertain the limits of the two countries ; and that he would not resign the acquisition of his progenitors, but was ready to encounter the arms of Bhutan. The Bhutia messenger thereupon declared that the people of the passes were assembled to assert their rights. They only claimed the districts within the limits defined by the Gohain Kamal Ali and they were ready to offer the usual presents of musk and cowtails (Sowar) to the Raja of Darrang and to pay the stipulated tribute of horses, cowtails, musks and blankets to the Ahom Swargadeo. The tributary articles were immediately presented by the messenger to Chandra Narayan. The latter, acknowledging his dependence on the king of Assam, promised to forward their tribute and requisition to Swargadeo and to abide by his orders. The Ahom king Jayadvaj Singha (1648-1663 A.D.)**, however, informed Chandra Narayan that the principalities of Darrang and Kamrup*** were conferred by the Ahom government on Dharma Narayan and his descendants in recognition of their high descent with the hope that they might contribute to the glory and advantage of the Ahom kingdom. He refused his assent to the alienation of the territories to the Bhutias and ordered a party of armed men to proceed to Darrang to oppose any hostile attempts from the people of Bhutan. The Ahom messenger was instructed by the king to charge Chandra Narayan with the offence of agreeing to alienate a part of the king's dominion and that his crime deserved to be punished with extreme severity. Jayadhaj Singha was induced to pardon the Darrang prince Chandra Narayan only in consideration of the services rendered by his predecessor Dharma Narayan. But he directed that Chandra Narayan should immediately join the king's party with his own men and take possession of the country as far as Bhramarakunda. In the event of a defeat he was ordered to despatch immediate intelligence to the Ahom sovereign. Chandra Narayan denied the actual alienation of the territories. He said that he had transmitted the request of a great prince, the Raja of Bhutan (the Deva Raja) to Swargadeo to whom the former offered tribute ; but he was ready to lead his own and the men of his overlord, the Ahom king against the enemies. In compliance with the order of king Jayadvaj

* In the Buranji seven passes are mentioned which include the four passes of Kamrup also. But as Kamrup was at that time in possession of the Moguls the statement cannot be accepted to be correct. It must be only the three passes on the frontier of Darrang viz., Buriguma, Killing and Kariapar.

† In the Buranji the name of the Ahom king in whose reign the incident took place is not mentioned. I have placed it in the reign of king Jayadvaj Singha due to the fact that according to the narrative given in the Buranji, Chandra Narayan did not seem to have survived long after the arrangement made with the Bhutias. (Wade's *Account of Assam*, p. 231). Chandra Narayan died in 1660 A.D. (Bhuyan S.K., *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 265).

‡ This referred to the conferment of Kamrup on Dharma Narayan in 1635 by the Ahom king Pratap Singha.

Singha, Chandra Narayan proceeded with his armed men to the confines of Bhutan, formed intrenchments and placed guns all round at the distance of three feet from one another. The Bhutia forces advanced on horseback armed with bows and arrows and gave battle to the forces of the Ahom king led by Chandra Narayan. A bloody battle ensued between the two parties in which the Bhutias were

worsted. The Bhutias at last sent a messenger to Chandra Narayan to explain the treatment meted out by him to the Bhutias inspite of the offer of presents to him and payment of annual tribute to the Ahom king. They further said that they had acknowledged themselves as the subjects of the Swargadeo, but they could not conceive that it was the duty of a sovereign to destroy those who had submitted to his power. They promised to confine themselves to the former limits of their country and requested Chandra Narayan to call back the Ahom forces sent against them and expressed a desire to remain on terms of friendship with the prince (i.e. Chandra Narayan) in future. Chandra Narayan replied that he was not an independent prince, he was acting only under the order of his overlord, the Ahom sovereign. Therefore he suggested that the Bhutias should send presents to the officers sent by the Ahom king against them who might be induced to join with him in recommending their request to the Swargadeo. The Bhutias thereupon immediately sent presents of gold, cowtails and horses to the Swargadeo's officers and requested their mediation to procure from the Ahom king Jayadhvaj Singha a grant of the passes* and the districts adjacent to the passes in the plains which had been seized by the Bhutias recently. If they would succeed in procuring the grant of the prayer of the Bhutias the latter promised more considerable

The Bhutias pray for the grant of the passes and the plains territories from the Ahom king

rewards to the Darrang prince. The officers promised immediate compliance with their request, but they requested the prince also to address the Swargadeo on behalf of the Bhutias in order to remove any suspicion from the mind of the Swargadeo who might suspect them to have taken bribes from the Bhutias to plead in favour of them. The prince, however, who had remembered the reproach of the Swargadeo on the previous occasion declined to take part with them. The Ahom officers thereupon consulting amongst themselves, agreed to place the prayer of the Bhutias before king Jayadhvaj Singha. In an address to the Ahom king Jayadhvaj Singha they said that at his order they had been engaged in a war of seven months against the Bhutias and had been victorious. The Bhutias had fled away. They suggested that the Bhutias might be allowed to possess half the conquered country, that the other half be reserved for the king and that limits be formed between the two

* Here also the seven passes and seven districts are mentioned. But this must be wrong. This error most probably arose due to the fact that the Kariapar duar is divided into seven subdivisions and placed under the management of seven respective Rajas who are subordinate to Towang Raja, a tributary of Lhasa. But the word 'passes' must have referred to all the three passes and not merely the Kariapar pass which was independent of the Bhutanese government of Punakha (i.e. Deva-Dharma Rajas of Bhutan.) Otherwise, the Deva-Dharma Rajas would not have sent the forces against Chandra Narayan.

kingdoms. They further said that if the Swargadeo ordered, the Bhutias were ready to pay annual tribute to him for their division.

Jayadhvaj Singha expressed his satisfaction at the services done by his officers. He suggested that in conjunction with Chandra Narayan they would impress upon the Bhutias his power and then grant their request. The officers communicated to Chandra Narayan the message of the Swargadeo and requested his sanction to carry them into effect. Chandra Narayan, however, declined to take part in the transaction saying that if king Jayadhvaj Singha should ultimately disapprove of any part of their proceedings the officers might be induced to accuse him as the author. At this the officers requested him to comply with their request and they promised to act according to his direction and never to misrepresent his conduct to the king. The Bhutias were also informed that they must pay annual tribute to the Swargadeo, annual presents to the Raja of Darrang and make immediate presents to the king's officers who had come on this expedition. The presents were immediately sent by the Bhutias and an agreement in writing was drawn up with the usual formalities. The Bhutias agreed to pay the annual tribute for the ceded territory as far as the Gohain Kamal Ali which was prescribed as

Prayer of the Bhutias
granted by a written
agreement

the limit. The Raja of Darrang was directed to receive the tribute and to manage all transactions with the Bhutias. Thus by the middle of the 17th century, in the reign of king Jayadhvaj Singha (1648-1663 A.D.) the control of the passes on the frontiers of Darrang and Kamrup (the seven passes) passed into the hands of the Bhutias and they also permanently came to occupy the plains territory adjacent to the passes as far as the Gohain Kamal Ali.

Although the arrangement made with the Bhutias referred to the seven passes, it should be remembered that at that time Kamrup was not in the hands of the Ahoms. Therefore it is more probable that at the time (by the middle of the 17th century) when the arrangement was first made, it concerned only the three passes* and the plains districts on the frontiers of Darrang. Subsequently, when the Ahoms came in possession of Kamrup in the latter part of the 17th century (1667 A.D.)** the Ahom government was compelled to acknowledge the Bhutias as the owner of the four passes on the frontier of Kamrup together with the plains districts as far as the Gohain Kamal Ali which the Ahoms found under the occupation of the Bhutias. Because of these circumstances we find the anomaly in the arrangements of the three duars on the frontier of the present Darrang district. As Darrang was in the hands of the

* That the agreement made with the Darrang duars included the Kariapar duar also is explicitly stated by Colonel White. (Colonel White's Historical Miscellany, Vol. 1, 1834, pp. 24-25, D.H.A.S.)

** In 1658-59, the Ahom king Jayadhvaj Singha, taking advantage of the war of succession amongst the sons of Shah Jahan had taken possession of Kamrup from the Moguls. But in 1662 it was again reconquered by the Moguls. The short interval of two years and a half certainly did not afford the Ahoms to pay attention to Bhutia aggression on the north of Kamrup.

Ahom government, it was most probably arranged by the Ahom officers who had conducted the negotiation with the Bhutias and had made the written arrangement with them that the Darrang duars were to be annually surrendered to the Ahom government from Ashar to Aswin (i.e. from the 15th of June to the 15th of October.)¹⁷ In the Buranji of course the particulars of the arrangement are not mentioned. As Kamrup was in the hands of the Moguls, no such arrangement could be made regarding the duars on its frontier which were to remain in the hands of the Bhutias all the year round. In consideration of the grant of the passes and the territories adjacent to them to the Bhutias, the latter had to pay an annual tribute to the Ahom government which was to consist of Yaktails, ponies, musk, gold-dust, blankets and knives, the total value of which was established at Rs. 4785/1/.¹⁸

The arrangement made with the Bhutias (regarding the Darrang duars) by the Ahom officers definitely went in favour of the Bhutias. Because, at the outbreak of the war with the Bhutias when Chandra Narayan intimated to king Jayadvaj Singha that the Bhutias had requested the Ahom sovereign to grant them the possession of the passes together with the plains territories up to the Gohain Kamal Ali, king Jayadvaj Singha flatly refused to grant the prayer of the Bhutias and sent a body

The Bhutias benefited by the arrangement

of officers with an army to oppose the aggression of the Bhutias and ordered Chandra Narayan to join the king's party with his men and take possession of the country as far as Bhramarakunda. When the Bhutias, being defeated in their fight with the combined forces of the Ahoms and the Koches made their submission and requested the Ahom officers and Chandra Narayan to procure from the Ahom king a grant of the passes and the territories occupied by them, the Ahom officers informed the king that the Bhutias had requested the Ahom Swargadeo to grant them the possession of only half of the territory occupied by them (i.e. not up to the Gohain Kamal Ali) and that the other half be reserved for the Ahom Swargadeo. But when the actual arrangement was made, the Ahom officers, taking bribes from the Bhutias, sacrificed the interest of their own master in favour of the Bhutias and granted the whole territories up to Gohain Kamal Ali to the Bhutias. They were, however, certainly sensible of the injustice done to their own master, and that was why they inserted the clause of the annual surrender of the Darrang duars to the Ahom government in the agreement made with them. Soon after the conclusion of the agreement with the Bhutias the Barphukan of Gauhati sent information to king Jayadvaj Singha that Chandra Narayan had been bribed to favour the claims of the Bhutias. The king immediately summoned the Darrang prince to attend him. He was accused of alienating the king's domains. He deserved to be deprived of the whole of his possessions. Considering the worth of his ancestors the

17. Mackenzie, Alexander, *North East Frontier of Bengal*, p. 10; Colonel White's *Historical Miscellany* 1834, Vol. I, pp. 24-25, D.H.A.S.

18. Mackenzie, Alexander, *North East Frontier of Bengal*, p. 10.

king was inclined to forgive him.* The Darrang prince was immediately put under the charge of the Barphukan. Chandra Narayan replied that the Ahom Agents had acted as they had thought best on the occasion, but that he had incurred the blame. Thus saying he returned to Darrang.

The Bhutanese government of Punakha thus came into possession of the duars and the plains territory as far as the Gohain Kamal Ali by the middle of the 17th century. The Bhutanese government also retained the posts of Subahs as the governors of the passes to defend them. Thus the supposition of some scholars¹⁹ that the Bhutias came into possession of the seven duars and the territories up to Gohain Kamal Ali during the turmoils of the Moamaria rebellion is wrong. If the Bhutias would have taken possession of them during the turmoils of the Moamaria rebellion, then the written agreement with the Ahom government regarding the terms of the control of the duars, specially in regard to the Darrang duars which had to be surrendered annually to the Ahom government for four months, and the fixed amount of tribute to be paid by the Bhutias to the Ahom government for the possession of the duars and the territories adjacent to them could not have been made. That the Bhutias had entered into a written agreement for the duars and the adjacent territories with the Ahom government is confirmed both by the late Mr. William Robinson and Mr. Colonel White.²⁰ Mr. White states that when the British took over Assam in 1825-26 A.D. and appointed Mr. David Scott as the Agent to the Governor General in Lower Assam, the latter found the treaty with Bhutan from the pera papers²¹ of one Jugoo Ram Majinder (probably Jain Ram) who was living at Gauhati, and he reserved to the British the same amount of tribute and period of jurisdiction over the tract of country known by the name of the seven duars or passes as were enjoyed by the kings of Assam. He further says that at the time of the conquest of Assam by the British, Mahodar Barua was collector and police officer of the Bhutan duars during the four months the king of Assam or rather the Burmese held jurisdiction over the three Darrang duars viz. Buriguma, Killing and Kariapar.

Towards the end of the 17th century, in the reign of king Gadadhar Singha (1681-1696 A.D.), the Ahoms again came into conflict with the Bhutias on the frontier of Darrang district. In 1688 A.D. the Ahom officer named Parbatrai

* In the Buranji it is stated that the king would deprive him only of the province of Kamrup. This however, cannot be true. Because Kamrup was then in the hands of the Moguls.

19. Mackenzie, Alexander, *North East Frontier of Bengal*, p. 9; Bhuyan, S.K., *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 34.

20. Robinson, William, *A Descriptive Account of Assam*, p. 292; Colonel White's *Historical Miscellany*, 1834, vol. 1, pp. 24-25, D.H.A.S.

21. In olden days all valuable articles from ornaments and cloths to government papers used to be kept by the Assamese people in a kind of box made either of wood or of cane known as 'pera'. The term 'pera papers' was derived from this circumstance.

who had been deputed to collect taxes from the Kachari Moholias (i.e. traders in betel nuts) of the Kariapar duar areas during the four months the Ahom government held jurisdiction over the three duars, reported to the Barphukan that the

Controversy between the Bhutias and the Ahoms over collection of taxes in the duar areas—1688

'Sat-Rajas' of the Kariapar duar had withheld the payment of taxes of the Kachari Moholias due to the Ahom government, and that he would not be able to collect them without armed assistance.²¹ Receiving the news the Barphukan sent an army under some officers who proceeded to the frontier

and encamped at a place called Ghoramara by raising a fort. The Bhutias suddenly attacked the Ahom fort at night. An engagement took place between the Ahoms and the Bhutias in which the Bhutias succeeded in killing ten men of the Ahom side while the Ahoms killed only one Bhutia. The Bhutias also took away four men from the outpost of the Darrang Raja by the side of the Barnadi. One of them escaped somehow and the other three were released by the Bhutias. Subsequently the Bhutias compromised the dispute with the Ahoms through the mediation of the Duaria or the guard of the pass by paying Rs. 2000 to the Ahom Swargadeo and Rs. 1000 to the Barphukan.

In 1690 A.D. however, the Bhutias again killed Baidyanath Choudhury* when he went to collect taxes from the Kachari Moholias of the Kariapar duar areas who had fled to different places. The Sandikai Barphukan

Bhutias kill Baidyanath Choudhury in 1690 A.D.

charged the two Hazarikas of the two Ahom outposts and the Duaria for their failure to give protection to the Choudhury and imprisoned them for their offence. The Duaria then captured the Bhutias who had killed the Choudhury and made them over to the Barphukan. The Bhutias as well as the Duaria both confessed their guilt and paid Rs. 1000 as compensation to the Barphukan which the latter sent to the Swargadeo.

In 1691 A.D. when the Bhutias again did not allow the Ahoms to collect taxes from the Kachari Moholias of the Kariapar duar areas who had fled to Buriguma and Batahkuchi within the jurisdiction of the Darrang Raja, the Barphukan suspected complicity of the Raja with these Bhutias and accordingly charged the Darrang Raja to pay the amount due to the Ahom Swargadeo. The Darrang Raja obeyed the order of the Barphukan and after paying the money he informed the Bargohain and the Barphukan that the Bhutias did not allow to collect taxes. Moreover, they had transgressed their former boundary and had taken possession of the territories up to the middle of the Gohain Kamal Ali which they claimed as their boundary. Hearing this the Bargohain and the Barphu-

21. *Assam Buran*⁴, Tr. No. 78, Vol. 79, pp. 3-5, D.H.A.S.

* A Choudhury is a person who received the grant of a parganah (a division of the Kamrup district). The parganah system was introduced by the Moguls and it was retained by the Ahoms when they conquered Kamrup from the hands of the Moguls from the king for one to five years in consideration of the payment of rent to the Ahom king.

kan intimated the news to king Gadadhar Singha. The king asked the Darrang Raja to construct a fort. The latter did accordingly, but the Bhutias killed several men of the Darrang Raja by attacking the fort. The Darrang Raja also in turn captured about thirty Bhutias and transported them to Gauhati. Subsequently reinforcements were sent by the Ahom government to the Darrang Raja who constructed forts at several places. Seeing the construction of the new forts the Bhutias fled away. The Ahoms then captured the fugitive Kachari Moholias and the Duaria and exacted from them their dues. Thus came to an end the Ahom-Bhutia controversy over the collection of taxes from the duar areas of the Darrang frontier in the reign of Gadadhar Singha.

End of the Controversy

From this time the Bhutias did not seem to have given any more trouble to the Ahom government and maintained peaceful relations with the latter by regularly paying their annual tribute for the passes and the ceded territories and confined themselves within the limits bounded by the Gohain Kamal Ali fixed by the Ahom government the violation of which might have necessitated the latter to launch punitive expedition against the former. During the disturbances caused by the Moamaria rebellion, however, the Bhutias carried off to their hills a large number of Assamese subjects for employment as slaves. Captain R.B. Pemberton during his visit to Bhutan in 1838 received numerous applications from Assamese captives to effect their release and to restore them to their own country.²² The Bhutan duars offered a ready asylum to many Moamaria rebels who had to flee in different directions in the neighbouring hills when the Ahom government took strong measures to suppress them.²³ The duars also offered an asylum to Assam princes and potentates who rebelled against the Ahom government or who wanted a safe retreat to mature their plans of revenge. Thus in 1792-93, when Captain Welsh defeated the rebellious Darrag Prince Krishna Narayan and his ally and chief adviser Haradutta Choudhury of Kamrup, both of them took shelter in Killing duar of Bhutan on the Darrang frontier with the remnant of their forces.²⁴ Similarly the greater part of the Burkendazes who had been recruited by Krishna Narayan from Bengal to fight against the Ahom government, after being expelled from Assam, instead of returning to Bengal, took refuge in Bhutan and led sporadic incursions into the Assam plains.²⁵ Besides these, the Deva Raja of Bhutan had assisted Krishna Narayan with Bhutanese soldiers to fight against the Ahom government.²⁶ All these factors strained the relations of the Ahom government with the government of Bhutan.

Causes of strained relationship between Bhutan and Assam

22. Quoted by Bhuyan, S.K., in *Anglo-Assamese Relations* p. 35.

23. Bhuyan, S.K., *Tungkhungla Buranji*, O.U.P., p. 95

24. Bhuyan, S.K., *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 315.

25. Bhuyan, S.K., *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 315.

26. *Ibid*, pp. 279-80.

These developments led the Ahom government to send the first formal embassy from Assam to Bhutan in 1802 A.D. to adjust the mutual relations which had become strained due to the causes mentioned above. The embassy which was composed of Pankaj Choudhury, a Brahman of Pubpar Pargana and Athir Bora and Kapchiga Lekharu, both of Kharangi, was sent by Pratapballabh Barphukan.²⁷ The Deva Dharma Rajas of Bhutan

First formal embassy
exchanged between
Assam and Bhutan
—1802

sent with the Assamese envoys to the Swargadeo two zeenkoups or messengers named Jiva and Dindu with two letters, one written in Persian and the other in Bengali along with many valuable gifts such as, a silver box, blankets of various colour and quality, some other kinds of valuable cloths such as, Gomcheng, kilmij, a gilded saddle, Yaktails, several cows and ponies. Two other Bhutanese Chiefs known as Jadungs, subordinate to the Deva-Dharma Rajas sent two other envoys named Khupa and Burukdewa with similar presents. The Bhutanese envoys complained to the Ahom king Kamaleswar Singha (1795-1811 A.D.) that inspite of the payment of the stipulated tributes consisting of musks, cowtaits gold, ponies, blankets, Chepchongs etc. by the Deva-Dharma Rajas of Bhutan at the seven passes fixed by the Ahom government, the officers of the Ahom government of the border—the Bujarbaruas, Barkaiths and Choudhuries had committed oppressions upon the people of the locality. As the Tungkhungia Buranji says—“The Deva Dharma Rajas have commanded us to say that seven hundred Gelans (i.e. Gylons or Gelengs, the Bhutanese priests)

Complaint of the
Bhutia messengers be-
fore the Ahom King

had previously solicited the permission of the Swargadeo to settle in the area bounded by the Gohain Kamal Ali, for the purpose of rearing betel nut trees and leaves i.e. for earning their livelihood. The permission was granted by the Swargadeo and the Gelans accordingly settled at the place prayed for. But the people living on the other side of the road have transgressed the line of demarcation, and have captured our men after crossing that road. Our kings solicit the favour of the Swargadeo's protecting the former boundaries.”²⁸ The message of the Bhutia messengers brings forth clearly how the unfortunate peasants living in the plains territory south of the Bhutan hills were oppressed both by the subordinate collecting agencies of Assamese and Bhutias. This anomaly arose due to the fact that the tribute paid by the govt. of Bhutan to the Ahom government was paid in kind while its value was fixed in terms of money. This arrangement opened out an annually recurring topic for dispute and bargaining as the subordinate collecting agencies, whether Assamese or Bhutias, were not very careful in giving effect to the stipulation.²⁹

27. *Tungkhungia Buranji*, O.U.P., pp. 151-155 and 167-169 *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 152-158.

28. Bhuyan, S.K., *Tungkhungia Buranji*, O.U.P., pp. 152-53.

29. Mackenzie, Alexander, *North East Frontier of Bengal*, p. 10.

The Bhutia messengers further communicated the following message of the Deva Dharma Rajas of Bhutan—"There had existed cordial and indissoluble friendship between the previous Swarga Maharajas (of Assam) and the ancient Deva-Dharma Rajas (of Bhutan) on the strength of verbal messages and communications, though unlinked by any physical sight. There had, however, been no exchange of embassies and epistles. Now, as commanded by the Swarga Maharaja, the Barphukan Barnawab of Barpani (i.e. the governor of lower Assam) had despatched envoys and letters making enquiries about our prosperity and welfare. From this the Deva Dharma-Rajas have been convinced of the presence of inseparable ties of friendship between the two kingdoms. They have been exceedingly happy at the fulfilment of their hearts' desire caused by the pleasure arising from personal sight. We Zeenkoups have in consequence been sent by the Deva-Dharma Rajas to enquire about the peace and happiness of the Swargi-Maharaj along with letters and presents".³⁰ The Bhutia envoys were subsequently sent back to their kingdom with a reply to the letters brought by them as well as with many valuable presents. In reply to the verbal message the messengers were told that the Nawab of Barpani stationed at Gauhati, i.e. the Barphukan, had been commanded by the king to square up the matter.

In compliance with the request made by the Bhutanese government through their envoys, the Ahom government shortly afterwards seemed to have carried on investigations regarding the transgression of the Bhutanese boundary by officers of the Ahom government. But on investigation the contrary was most probably found, i.e. taking advantage of the disturbances of the Moamaria rebellion, the Bhutias had transgressed their southern boundary demarcated by the Gohain Kamal Ali and had taken possession of some territories belonging to the Ahom government. The task of protecting the Assam subjects from the inroads of the Bhutias devolved mainly upon the Raja of Darrang.* In 1805, Krishna Narayan and Hay Narayan, the Bar Raja and Saru Raja of Darrang, having fallen into disfavour was superseded by their relative Samudra Narayan.** The newly appointed Darrang Raja Samudra Narayan was instructed "to push back the Bhutias to their original limits," as report had been received of "the Bhutias occupation of some portion of His Majesty's dominions by transgressing the old boundaries."³¹ This suggests that the Bhutias, and not the Ahoms, had transgressed their boundary limits.

30. *Jayantia Buranji*, p. 156.

* The first Darrang Raja Dharma Narayan had been conferred the principality of Kamrup in 1635 by king Pratap Singha when the Ahoms temporarily occupied Kamrup from the hands of the Moguls. But when the Ahoms were subsequently defeated, they were compelled to hand over Kamrup to the Moguls by the treaty of 1639. The control of the Darrang Raja over Kamrup also came to an end. When the Ahoms again came in permanent possession of Kamrup in 1667, they did not confer its rule to the Raja of Darrang but directly put it under the Barphukan. This circumstance produced discontent amongst the Darrang princes and ultimately led to the rebellion of the Darrang Raja Krishna Narayan towards the close of the 18th century when the Ahom government was compelled to hand over the rule of Kamrup to the Rajas of Darrang in 1793. (Refer S.K. Bhuyan's *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, pp. 328-29).

** From 1728, the Rajaship of Darrang was held jointly by two Darrang princes.

31. *Tungkhungia Buranji*, O.U.P., pp. 179-81, 186-87.

CHAPTER XI

AHOM-KOCH RELATIONS

The Koches were the most energetic and powerful of the numerous tribes who had appeared in the kingdom of Kamata after its fall in 1498 A.D.¹ The destruction of the Kamata kingdom by Hussain Shah was followed by the rise of small independent principalities under numerous Bhuvan chiefs* whose power was gradually extinguished by the Koches under Biswa Singha who, by the beginning of the 16th century laid the foundation of the Koch kingdom on the ruins of the old kingdom of Kamarupa or Kamata. From an examination of the names of the different Chiefs and principalities brought under subjugation by Biswa Singha it appears that his rule extended towards the east along the north bank of the Brahmaputra up to about the Mara-Dhansiri river of Mangaldoi subdivision in Darrang district and along the south bank of the Brahmaputra up to some parts of Nowgong district.² Towards the west his rule extended up to the river Karatoya.³ According to Gait, he rose to power about 1515 A.D.⁴

Ahom-Koch Relations :

The Ahom kingdom was extending from the east towards the west. By the conquest and annexation of the Chutiya kingdom to the Ahom kingdom in 1523 A.D. by Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.), the Ahom kingdom had extended towards the west along the north bank of the Brahmaputra up to the river Subansiri. The tract between the Mara-Dhansiri river and the Subansiri thus lay outside the jurisdiction of both the Ahom kingdom and the Koch kingdom. Some

1. For details about the racial origin of the Koches, refer Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, pp. 46-47 ; Bhattacharyya S. N., *Mughal North East Frontier policy*, pp. 20-21.

* The Bhuyans were nominally the feudatories of the kings of Kamata or Kamarupa, but they were actually independent Chiefs. For details about the Bhuyans, refer Gait's *History of Assam*, pp. 38-40 ; Barua, K. L., *Early History of Kamarupa*, pp. 277-283.

2. For the names of the different Chiefs and principalities, refer Ahmed, Amanatullah, *Koch Beharer Itihas* pp. 88-89 ; Barua, Gunabhiram *Assam Buranji*, p. 58.

3. Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 48. Gait says that Biswa Singha's rule extended towards the east up to Barnadi. But actually it extended beyond the Barnadi.

4. Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 48 ; K. L. Barua has also accepted the date given by Gait (Barua, K. L. *Early History of Kamarupa*, pp. 286-87.).

powerful Bhuyan chieftains still held sway over this tract. Similarly in the beginning of the 16th century the tract lying between Koliabar and Kajalimukh on the south bank of the Brahmaputra in the northern part of the present Nowgong district was in the hands of some Bhuyan chiefs. The Kachari kingdom which extended up to the Kalang in the nowgong district thus lay south of the territory controlled by the Bhuyans. The Bhuyans on the south bank of the Brahmaputra gradually became extinct as a result of Kachari aggression from the south on the one hand and Ahom aggression from the east on the other hand. By the thirties of the 16th century king Suhungmung succeeded in extending the western boundary of the Ahom kingdom on the south bank of the Brahmaputra up to the north of the Kalang river by defeating the Kacharis in a series of battles.⁷ The movements of the Bhuyans on the north bank who still continued to rule were therefore closely watched by the Ahoms. After their subjugation, king Suhungmung settled most of them at Bardowa in Nowgong in the hope that they would repel the incursions of the Kacharis. He further hoped that the spirited and enlightened Bhuyans when exposed to the ravages of the marauding Kacharis, would not find time to organise any opposition towards the Ahom government. The Bhuyans continued to rebel from time to time till they were finally crushed by king Pratap Singha.⁸

The westward expansion of the Ahom kingdom under Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja brought him in contact with Biswa Singha, the founder of the Koch kingdom; but the accounts differ as to what happened. According to the Koch chronicles it was Biswa Singha who undertook the invasion of the Ahom kingdom and proceeded by water as far as Singri hill (or Singari, in Nowgong district), but was compelled to retreat on account of the exhaustion of provisions for soldiers and the difficulty of obtaining them.⁹ The Ahom Buranjis on the other hand give a completely different account of this incident. Moreover, the accounts of all the Buranjis are not similar. According to some Buranjis the Ahom king Suhungmung sent in 1533 A.D. an army in aid of one fugitive Kamata king (whose name is not given) in order to establish him in his territory.¹⁰ Chankham or Tankham Bargohain was made the commander-in-chief of the army. After establishing the Kamateswar in his kingdom the Ahom army proceeded as far as the Karatoya river where their commander is said to have erected a temple and excavated a tank. Before returning

5. Neog, Maheswar, *Shree Shree Sankar Dev*, p. 45.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

7. Barua, Harakanta, *Assam Buranji*, p. 28. For the details of the Ahom-Kachari wars see chapter V: on Pushing back of the Kacharis.

8. Bhuyan, S. K. *Anglo Assamese Relations*, p. 239.

9. Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 49; Koch Beharer Itihas, p. 89.

10. Goswami, Hem Chandra, *Purani Assam Buranji*, pp. 61-63; *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, p. 99 *Assam Buranji*, S. M. pp. 23-24 and 28. In *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, the date is given as 1505 A. D. (1427 Saka) while in *Assam Buranji* S. M. no date is given. I have accepted the date (1533 A. D.) given in *Purani Assam Buranji* due to the fact that the expedition is said to have been sent under the C-in-C of Chankham or Tankham Bargohain (or Gharsandikai as given in some Buranjis) who, we definitely know, became Bargohain in 1532 A.D.—(Barua, Harakanta *Assam Buranji*, p. 25.)

the Ahom commander established friendship with the king of Gaur by sending him an envoy and obtaining for the Ahom king a daughter of the king of Gaur with five districts of his kingdom as her dowry. On his way back to Assam Chankham Bargohain is said to have attacked Biswa Singha and the latter made his submission by offering him presents and acknowledging the overlordship of the Ahom king. In recognition of his submission the Ahom Bargohain made over to Biswa Singha the five districts given by the Raja of Gaur to the Ahom king. This statement of the Ahom Buranjis does not seem to be convincing. The Kamata kingdom came to an end in 1498 A.D. and Nilambar was the last Kamata king. It is therefore difficult to accept the statement of these Buranjis that Suhungmung sent an army in aid of the Kamata king in 1533 A.D. when the Kamata kingdom was no longer in existence and a Koch kingdom was already established in its place. Evidently the compilers of the Buranjis confused the second expedition against Turbak which took place in 1532-33 A. D. (from the end of '32 to the beginning of '33) under Kancheng Barpatra Gohain and Chankham Bargohain to be the army sent in aid of the unknown Kamata king. The Ahom army completely defeated the Muhammadan army under Turbak and followed hard on the fugitives as far as the Karatova river, where Chankham Bargohain, the Ahom commander, erected a temple and excavated a tank in commemoration of his victory.¹¹ It is further stated that before returning, the Ahom commander established friendship with the Raja of Gaur by sending an envoy and obtained for the Ahom king a princess of the family of the Raja of Gaur.*

It is most probable that on his way back to Assam from this expedition, Chankham Bargohain marched against Biswa Singha when the latter made his submission without fighting, presented gold and silver and acknowledged the supremacy of the Ahom king. The Bargohain then confirmed him

Submission of Biswa
Singha to the Ahom
king

in his possession as the tributary Raja of the Ahom king and enjoined on him to pay an annual tribute to the Ahom king.

Biswa Singha offered his submission to the Ahom Bargohain most probably due to the fact that the attack on him was so sudden that he could not make preparations to resist the Ahom invasion and as such there was no other alternative but to make his submission to the Ahom general and acknowledge the supremacy of the Ahom king. The growing power of the Ahom king undoubtedly brought home to Biswa Singha the danger of incurring the hostility of the Ahom king at the infant stage of his kingdom. In 1537 A.D. the Koch

11. Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, pp. 93-94; Barua, Harakanta, *Assam Buranji*, p. 26.

* The Raja i.e. the ruler of Gaur at this time was a Muhammadan. Because Gaur passed under Muhammadan rule by the beginning of 1203 A.D.,—(Sarkar, J. N., *The History of Bengal*, Vol. II, p. 8, 1948). The *Purani Assam Buranji* (pp. 62-63) mentions the name of the Gaur princess given to king Suhungmung as Rajani. It is further stated that the Gaur Raja gave five districts as the dowry of the princess. But this is definitely wrong. It was the Kamata Raja who gave five districts as the dowry of his daughter Rajani who was given in marriage to king Sukhangpha (1293-1332 A. D.)—*Kamrupar Buranji*, p. 244.

king Biswa Singha and his brother Shishu came to the Ahom court to offer their annual tribute consisting of horses and many other valuable things to king Suhungmung.¹² By offering the tribute to king Suhungmung they declared them to be the slaves of the Ahom king, requested the latter to help them in times of difficulty and promised to pay an annual tribute to him in return. The Ahom king also in return offered them some cows and buffaloes and escorted them back by a guard of honour. Subsequently, however, Biswa Singha most probably did not send the stipulated amount of tribute to the Ahom king enjoined on him by the Bargohian. When the enquiry came from the Ahom court why the quantity of the annual tribute sent by him was small, he felt ashamed and at once resolved on the invasion of the Ahom kingdom in order to remove the slur of being a tributary ruler under the Ahom king.¹³

Unsuccessful Assam expedition of Biswa Singha—1537 A.D. This was undoubtedly the unsuccessful expedition of Biswa Singha against Assam mentioned in the Koch chronicles when he was compelled to return to his own kingdom proceeding by water as far as Singri hill on account of exhaustion of provisions for his soldiers and the difficulties of obtaining them.

Biswa Singha died about 1540 A.D. after a reign of twenty five years.¹⁴

Nar Narayan—1540-1587 A.D. He was succeeded by his son Malla Dev, better known as Nar Narayan. In the Ahom kingdom Suhungmung was succeeded by Suklenmung, also known as the Garhgayan Raja in 1539 A.D. (1539-1552 A.D.). The reign of king Suklenmung witnessed

the commencement of a series of conflicts with the Koch king Nar Narayan who was rapidly becoming the most powerful ruler in the eastern part of India. Soon after his accession to the throne Suklenmung had to engage himself in subduing some of the unruly Bhuyans of the north bank of the Brahmaputra. After subduing the Bhuyans he proceeded to attack the Koch garrison guarding the eastern frontier of the Koch kingdom on the north bank of the Brahmaputra.¹⁵

Commencement of hostilities between the Ahoms and the Koches—1543 A.D. In 1543 A.D. the Ahoms drove away the Koch soldiers of the garrison to Sala, on the south bank of the Brahmaputra (in Nowgong district).¹⁶ At that time, three brothers of Nar Narayan viz., Dip Singha, Hemadhar and Ram Chandra were engaged at the eastern part of the Koch kingdom in different sorts of duties. They thereupon, accompanied by an army of three thousand soldiers proceeded to Bhramarakunda (or Bhoirabkunda)* on the pretext of a pilgrim-

12. *Ahom Buranji*, p. 77 ; *Deodhiat Assam Buranji*, p. 35.

13. Barua, Harakanta, *Assam Buranji*, pp. 30-31.

14. Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 49.

15. *Assam Buranji*, S. M., p. 29.

16. *Assam Buranji* S. M., pp. 29-30 ; *Koch Beharer Itihas* p. 102.

* Bhramarakunda is in the Mangaldoi subdivision of the Darrang district by the side of the Mara-Dhansiri river.

mage. From there they proceeded to Sala to join the other garrison. The contest ensued between the Ahoms and the Koches when the Koch soldiers captured a boat of the Ahom Bar Sandikoi along with five men. In the first engagement between the two parties the Ahoms were defeated and had to retreat and the Koches succeeded in killing one hundred Ahom soldiers. In January 1546 A.D. the Koches further advanced towards the east up to Changinimukh. The Ahoms then assumed the offensive by constructing forts at Changinimukh and defeated the Koches. Prince Dip Singha along with many soldiers fell in the battle. His wife and fourteen elephants belonging to him fell into the hands of the Ahoms. The other two princes Hemadhar and Ramchandra were also killed by the Ahoms

Koches launch expedition against Assam in 1546 A.D.

when they advanced against them. This led Nar Narayan to launch his expedition of 1546 A.D. against the Ahom kingdom along the north bank of the Brahmaputra. The Koch army advanced as far as the Dikrai river (in Darrang district) where it was met by the Ahoms.¹⁷ The Ahoms crossed the

Dikrai twice and attacked the Koches but were repulsed. A battle ensued in which the Koches, whose chief weapons were bows and arrows succeeded in killing several of the Ahom leaders, whereupon the common soliders fled and were pursued with great slaughter. They retreated to a place called Karanga whence they proceeded by the Brahmaputra and halted at Koliabor, on the opposite side of the Brahmaputra in Nowgong district. There a second but less decisive action was fought between the combatants. The Ahoms fled being pursued by the enemies. They subsequently took up a position at Sala (beyond Koliabor in Nowgong district) where they were again attacked by the Koches and put to flight with the loss of twenty of their chief officers. The Koches, however, soon afterwards began to waver being attacked by the Ahoms with elephants. Some of them entered into forest, some into ships and nine fell dead in the field of battle. The Koches thereupon fled in the direction of the Brahmaputra.

Failure of the Koch expedition

In 1547 A.D. the Koches erected a fort at Narayanpur (in Lakhimpur district, above the Majuli island) and stopped therein. King Suklenmung ordered his officers to strike in behind them and entrench themselves on the banks of the Pichala river. The Ahoms thus cut off the communications of the Koches and forced them to assume the offensive. The result was a disastrous defeat for the Koches

Massacre of the Koches by the Ahoms —1547 A. D.

who were repulsed with heavy losses and in the disorderly retreat which followed, large numbers were surrounded and killed by the Ahoms. By this single victory Suklenmung regained the whole of his lost territory north of the

Brahmaputra. It is said that the Ahoms stored up five thousand heads of Koch soldiers killed in this battle at a place in Sibsagar district which

17. *Ahom Buranj*, pp. 79-80 ; *Deodhai Assam Buranj*, pp. 37-38,

came to be known as 'Mathadang'.* By the beginning of 1549 A.D. (Saka 1470 month of Magh=January+February) all the Koch armies in the eastern frontier of their kingdom were completely defeated at the hands of the Ahoms.¹⁸

This decisive defeat of the Koches led to a cessation of hostilities for some years. At last Nar Narayan himself took the initiative to cultivate the friendship of the Ahom king who was rapidly becoming the powerful ruler in the extreme eastern corner of India by gradually defeating the ruling powers of the Brahmaputra valley and occupying their territories. In June 1555 A.D. (1477 saka, month of Ashar=June+July), the Koch king Nar Narayan sent six envoys (named Sata-nanda Karji, Rameswar Sarma, Kalketu, Dhuma Sardar, Udbhanda Chaonya and Shyamrai) with letters and presents to the Ahom king Sukhampha, Khora Raja (1552-1603 A.D.) with the hope of renewing the old friendship which was established by his father Biswa Singha, with Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.).¹⁹ The Koch envoys were received at the Ahom capital

Nar Narayan tries to
renew his friendship
with the Ahoms

Garhgaon. Nar Narayan through his envoys reminded king Sukhampha of the old friendship that was established by his father Biswa Singha with the then Ahom king Suhungmung and regretted the murder of the three Koch princes Dip Singha, Hemadhar and Ramchandra in spite of the maintenance of friendly relations by Nar Narayan. Through his letter addressed to the Ahom king he again expressed his desire of maintaining friendly relations between the two kings and requested the latter to act to that effect. Along with the letter, Nar Narayan sent the following things as presents to the Ahom king viz., one pillow, one bow, one *Cheng fish*, a mare and her colt, one Jakoi,* five embroidered Saris of Barnagar, gomcheng or China silk, five khagaris (a kind of reed), ten pieces of black hides and twenty pieces of white hides.

In reply to the oral message of the Koch envoys complaining of the murder of the three Koch princes the Ahom Bargohain, who received them on behalf of the king, replied that relations between Kshatriyas was bound to be of such nature. Therefore the death of the princes should not cause an infringement in the old bonds of friendship between the two kingdoms. He further told the envoys that everything would be accomplished if he was intent on continuing friendly relations with the Swargadeo (i.e. the Ahom king). They were further told that the articles brought by them for the Ahom king were all ordinary articles. In reply to the letter of the Koch king addressed to king Sukhampha,

* Matha= head, dang=store (Koch Beharer Itihas, p. 103).

18. *Assam Buranjil*, S. M. p. 30 ; Koch Beharer Itihas, p. 103.

19. Historical letters of the Ahom period, Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 1-4 ; *Assam Buranjil* S. M. pp. 34-36; Koch Beharer Itihas, pp. 104-105.

* Jakoi=A triangular shaped instrument of bamboo used for catching fish.

the latter in his letter to the former wrote that he marked with special gratification the reference that the former, (i.e. Nar Narayan) had made of 'the cordial relation subsisting between them. If he would conduct himself as honourably as before there was no reason why their friendship should not bear fruits and flowers. Regarding the articles Sukhampha wrote that they were quite unworthy of being' displayed in the court. He further wrote a bit sarcastically that those who were in the habit of using objectionable articles did not see the impropriety of sending them to others (In other words, he meant thereby that the Koch king was in the habit of using them). Two envoys named Chandibar and Damodar Sarma were sent along with the Koch envoys with two rolls of Nara cloth, four elephant tusks and two bags of gathions** as presents for the Koch king Nar Narayan. The envoys were sent back on the 25th of June, 1556 A.D. They were told to ask their king to send formal letters and envoys if he was really willing to cultivate the friendship of the Ahom king.

The Ahom King belittles the friendship of the Koch King

The Koch envoys then returned to their own kingdom with a broken heart. When Nar Narayan received the Ahom king's reply to his letter and came to learn everything about the attitude of the Ahom king through his envoys, his brother Sukladhvaj alias Chilarai, the prime minister and commander-in-chief of Nar Narayan, proposed an invasion into the Ahom kingdom. King Nar Narayan supported the proposal and engaged himself in war preparations.²⁰ He ordered his brother Gohain Kamal to construct a road on the north bank of the Brahmaputra from Koch Behar to Habung (above Majuli island) along the foot of the Bhutan and Dafila hills.²¹ In order to meet scarcity of water on the way he ordered the digging of tanks at a distance of every half a day's journey. Parts of this road are still in existence and are known to this day as 'Gohain Kamal Ali' or Gohain Kamal's road. This great undertaking being completed, Chilarai marched against the Ahoms at the head of sixty thousand soldiers in 1562. A.D.²²

** Gathion—a kind of fragrant root.

20. Koch Beharer Itihas, p. 106 ; *Assam Buranji* S. M. p. 36.

21. Barua, Harakanta, *Assam Buranji*, p. 31 ; *Assam Buranji*, S. M. p. 36. According to Darrang Raj Vamsavali (pp. 62-63) and Koch Beharer Itihas (p. 106) the road was ordered to be constructed upto 'Parsu kuthar' i.e. Parasuram kunda, in the eastern limit of Assam. This, however, does not seem to be convincing. Gait says that it was constructed up to Narayanpur in the north western corner of Lakhimpur district above the Majuli Island (*History of Assam*, pp. 51- & 98). He, however, says that it was constructed in the course of the operations of 1546 A.D. The statement of Gait seems to be wrong. It is most probable that the experience of 1546-47 A.D. when the Koches were disastrously defeated at the hands of the Ahoms as a result of cutting off the communications of the Koch army of Narayanpur with their kingdom, made them realise the necessity of a road in order to maintain regular communications with the capital and led them to construct the road before the second expedition against Assam was launched in 1562 A.D.

22. Koch Beharer Itihas, pp. 106-10 ; Darrang Raj Vamsavali, pp. 63-73 ; *Assam Buranji* S. M. pp. 37-40 Barua Harakanta, *Assam Buranji*, pp. 31-35 ; Barua G. C. *Assam Buranji*, pp. 84-88 ; *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp. 41-42.

Sukladhvaj arranged the invasion of the Ahom kingdom both by land and water. The navy was placed in charge of two generals named Bhaktamal (Bukutumlung of Ahom Buranji) and Tepu (or Tipu) and the infantry was placed in charge of Bhimbal and Bahubal Patra. King Nar Narayan,

Koch invasion of the
Ahom Kingdom by
land & water—1562
A.D.

accompanied by his queen Bhanumati, followed the expeditionary force. On the way all the Bhuyan chieftains offered their submission to the Koch king Nar Narayan who halted at several places. The Bhutias and the Daflas also offered

their submission and joined the ranks of the Koch army.²³ In the Darrang Raj Vamsavali it is stated that after traversing the districts of Goalpara and Kamrup, at a halting place named Chandikabehar near Bhramarakunda in the Mangaldoi subdivision of Darrang district, Nar Narayan ordered the construction of a hill fort and a temple.²⁴ When the temple was completed he placed an image of Goddess Durga and appointed a Kachari as its priest. Then he collected all the Mongoloid people (viz., the Bhutias of seven duars, Kacharis and Meches) living between the Bhutan hill and the Gohain Kamal Ali and some Bhuyans and ordered that the former could follow their tribal customs but in the territory between the Gohain Kamal Ali and the Brahmaputra, Brahmanic rites must be preserved. The Bhutias were further instructed to pay him tributes of gold, horse, hides and other things.²⁵ Nar Narayan also fixed the territory to be occupied by the Daflas who had joined the ranks of the Koch army. From Chandikabehar Nar Narayan proceeded to Singri. In all Vamsavalis of Darrang it is stated that in this expedition against the Ahom kingdom, Sukladhvaj earned the name 'Chilarai' by crossing the Bhoroli river on horseback. About this time the descendants of the Chutiya royal family who had been dethroned and expelled from their kingdom in 1523 A.D. by Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja, took shelter under the Koch king Nar Narayan and the latter established them at a place called Banhbari (in Darrang District).²⁶ Thus Nar Narayan and Chilarai marched up to Narayanpur with their infantry without any opposition from the Ahoms. At Narayanpur, a Brahman Bhuyan made his submission to Nar Narayan by offering an elephant.

The Koch naval force under Tepu and Bhaktamal ascended the Brahmaputra and after occupying Sala and Makalang advanced as far as the mouth of the Dikhow river without any resistance being offered by the Ahoms. It was at the mouth of the Dikhow river that the Ahom naval force met the Koch naval force. The Koches coming down in the night time fired guns at the Ahom army which killed several of them. Then the Koches proceeded down and halted at the mouth of the river Handia. The Ahoms advanced forward and fought with the enemies

Koch victory in the
naval battle of the
mouth of the river
Handia

23. *Assam Buranji* S. M. pp. 38-39 ; *Koch Beharer Itihas* pp. 107-108.

24. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, pp. 64-65.

25. *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 107.

26. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, pp. 70-71 ; *Koch Beharer Itihas* p. 108

at the mouth of the river Handia. The Ahoms were worsted in the battle, several of their high officers fell dead in the field of battle and one was captured alive.

The infantry of the Koches under Chilarai in front and Nar Narayan at the back had advanced up to Narayanpur. It is said that the Ahoms, being aware of the fact that the Koches did not kill Brahmans and cows, dressed many of their non-Brahman soldiers as Brahmans with sacred thread and caste mark on their foreheads and being seated on cow's back sent them to the battlefield to meet the land force of the Koches.²⁷ The Koch brothers, considering them to be real Brahmans, withdrew their forces for the fear of the consequence of slaughtering cows and Brahmans. Subsequently when Chilarai came to know of the real fact, he himself took the field in the following January (i.e. 1563 A.D.) and advanced with a large force up the Brahmaputra as far as the mouth of the Dikhow river.²⁸

In the battle that ensued between the two parties, the Ahoms were routed. King Sukhampha with his nobles fled to Charaikhoroug²⁹ in the Naga hills. Nar Narayan was then residing at Majuli. Subsequently the Ahom capital Garhgaon fell into the hands of the Koches. Numerous Ahom subjects, including some nobles and princes (Tamol Nokhowa Gohain, a brother of Sukhampha) went over to the side of the invaders.³⁰ This circumstance as well as the submission of numerous Bhuyans and the Daflas made Sukhampha conscious of his own weakness. By consulting with his ministers, he proposed to make peace with the Koch king and accordingly a few months later, Burhagohain Aikhek was deputed to sue for peace with an offer of two gold vessels, two silver vessels³¹ and a large silver jar. Aikhek came to the Koch king Nar Narayan who was in Majuli, offered him those things and prayed for peace. Nar Narayan agreed to leave the Ahom kingdom provided the Ahom king would hand over to him the sons of his chief nobles as hostages.

Aikhek accepted the proposal and accordingly in July 1563 (Sraavan=July+August) five sons of the chief Ahom nobles were sent to Nar Narayan by Sukhampha who acknowledged the overlordship of the Koch king. According to the terms of the same treaty the Ahom king handed over to the Koch king sixty elephants,

27. Barua, Harakanta, *Assam Buranji*, p. 32 ; Tamuli Phukan, Kasinath, *Assam Buranji*, pp. 25-26 ; Barua Gunabhiram, *Assam Buranji*, p. 103. In the *Assam Buranji* S. M. (p. 39) it is stated that the Brahmans of Habung themselves contrived this plan in order to escape from the attack of the Koches and many non-Brahmans also joined with them assuming the role of Brahmans in order to protect themselves from Koch attacks. This statement, however, does not seem to be convincing in view of the fact that almost all the Bhuyans, who were dissatisfied under Ahom rule, including the Brahman Bhuyans of Habung joined the ranks of the Koch king Nar Narayan by offering their submission to him.

28. *Ahom Buranji*, p. 85-88 ; *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp. 41-44 ; *Koch Beharer Itihas*, pp. 108-110.

²⁹ According to some *Buranjis* he fled to Namchang in the Naga hills.

29. *Assam Buranji* S. M. p. 39.

³¹ According to *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, four silver vessels.

sixty beautiful girls, three hundred men, a red royal standard and a large quantity of gold and silver as war indemnity.* Further, the whole territory lying to the north of the Brahmaputra was ceded to the Koches and the latter left a garrison at Narayanpur to hold the ceded territory.

As soon as the Koches left the Ahom capital Garhgaon, Sukhampha came back to his capital from the place of his retirement and at once took up vigorous steps to repair the losses and restore order. In the first place, he put to death a great number of persons who had made their submission to the Koches.³⁰ Burhagohain Aikhek was also most probably dismissed from his office on account of the reverses the Ahoms met at the hands of the Koches and which the king concluded were due to the gross negligence of the Burhagohain to take effective measures for the defence of the country.³¹ One Kankham was appointed in his place. A strong fort was erected at the mouth of the Dikhow river and soon afterwards Narayanpur was recovered by the Ahoms from the hands of the Koches. Sala was next occupied by a strong force and a fort was constructed there. In 1564 A.D. the hostages taken by the Koch king returned to their own kingdom.³²

The Ahoms recover the lost territories very soon

The circumstances which led to the release of the hostages were as follows : After the return from his victorious campaign of Assam, Cachar, Manipur, Tripura, Jayantia and Khyrim, Chilarai went to war against the Badshah of Gaur but was defeated and kept imprisoned.³³ The shrewd Chilarai, apprehending an attack from the Ahom king at this critical juncture, secretly sent a letter to his brother king Nar Narayan to obtain the friendship of the Ahom king by releasing the hostages and at the same time to avert an attack from the latter at a time when resistance would have been impossible. The advice of his brother convinced Nar Narayan. But he thought that if the hostages were released without any cause, the Ahom king would surely come to realise, his weakness. Therefore Nar Narayan proposed to Sundar Gohain, the leader of the hostages that if the latter could defeat him twenty times in a game of dice he would set him free along with his men. Sundar Gohain readily

Imprisonment of Chilarai at Gaur leads to the release of the Ahom hostages by Nar Narayan

agreed to the proposal. It is said that Nar Narayan willingly met his defeat at the hands of Sundar Gohain and according to the terms of the agreement he released him with his men. This circumstance affords an explanation of the ease with which the Ahoms recovered their lost territory on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. Nar Narayan not only released the Ahom hostages, but he took advantage of the situation to send a Koch envoy named

* Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 101.

30. *Assam Buranjī* S. M., . 41.

31. *Ahom Buranjī*, p. 89 ; Gait Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 101.

32. *Ahom Buranjī*, p. 88.

33. *Assam Buranjī* S.M., pp. 45-46 ; Barua, Harakanta, *Assam Buranjī*, pp. 35-37 ; Koch Beharer *Ithas*, p. 115.

Gaja Singha or Patal Singha* along with a Koch princess and a number of Koch artisans to the Ahom king Sukhampha. The Ahom king subsequently settled the Koch artisans sent to him by Nar Narayan at a place by the side of the Namdang river which came to be known as Bhatiapar.** Sukhampha also in return sent an Ahom envoy named Ratna Kandali along with the Koch envoy Gaja Singha alias Patal Singha to the Koch king Nar Narayan. When Sukhampha came to know of the prevalence of the worship of the earthen image of Goddess Durga in the Koch kingdom from the returning Ahom hostages, he also became anxious to perform the same in his kingdom and with that end in view he sent an Ahom artisan to the Koch kingdom along with his envoy to learn the art of making earthen image of Goddess Durga. After the return of the man deputed for the purpose the worship of Goddess Durga came into vogue in the Ahom Kingdom.***

The diplomacy of Nar Narayan to keep his overlordship over the Ahom king and at the same time to avert an attack on his own kingdom from the latter by obtaining his friendship did not bear any fruit. The Ahom king Sukhampha tried his utmost to break the chain of his subordination to the Koch king and as already stated, he had recovered Narayanpur and Sala from the hands of the Koches soon after the return of Nar Narayan and Chilarai from the Ahom kingdom. This led Nar Narayan to send a fresh naval expedition against the Ahoms in July 1566 A.D.

Further Koch invasions and their defeat
 Sravan=July+August) under the Koch commander Tepu." He advanced up the Brahmaputra and halted on its banks for two months. In the month of October (Kati=October+Nov.), he was attacked by the Ahoms and was decisively beaten with a great number killed and one Mohon was captured alive. The Ahoms obtained many ships, guns and other things as spoils of war and Tepu was compelled to flee away.*

About the end of 1571 A.D. (Puh=December+January) Tepu and one Bhitaraal again invaded the Ahom kingdom.* An Ahom force was despatched

* Amanatullah Ahmed mentions Gaja Singha and Patal Singha as two persons. (*Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 115) But actually the two names belonged to one man - Barua Harakanta, *Assam Buranjī* p. 36; *Assam Buranjī* S. M. pp. 45-47).

** Bhatiapar means residing place of the people of the country lying down the river. Brahmaputra.

*** In most of the Buranjis these incidents, i.e. the return of the Ahom hostages from the Koch kingdom and the prevalence of Durga Puja in Assam are stated to have taken place in the reign of king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A. D.) Barua, Harakanta. *Assam Buranjī*, pp. 35-37; *Assam Buranjī* S. M., pp. 44-46; *Purani Assam Buranjī*, pp. 67-70; Barua, Gunabhiram, *Assam Buranjī*, p. 105. But this statement of the Buranjis must be wrong. Because neither Nar Narayan (1540-1587 A.D.) nor Chilarai (1540-71 A. D.) was living till the reign of king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.) in the early part of the 17th century. Gait also shares the same view and has placed the incidents in the reign of king Sukhampha. *History of Assam*, p. 101. The description of the circumstances also reveal the fact that it happened soon after the return of Chilarai from his Assam campaign.

34. *Ahom Buranjī*, p. 90; *Deodhai Assam Buranjī*, pp. 46-47.

* Gait says that this expedition took place in July 1563 A.D. (*History of Assam*, p. 102) But this is definitely wrong. The treaty between the Ahoms and the Koches by which the Ahom king acknowledged the supremacy of the Koch king and ceded the territories north of the Brahmaputra was concluded in July 1563 A.D. Therefore, there is no room for a Koch invasion in July 1563.

35. *Ahom Buranjī*, p. 91; *Deodhai Assam Buranjī*, p. 47.

to repel the invaders. A battle ensued between the two parties at the mouth of the river Dhansiri (Namtima) in which the Koches were defeated and fled with the loss of many men, boats and cannon. This was the last Koch invasion of the Ahom kingdom. Thus by the defeat of the Koches in 1571 A.D. the Ahoms succeeded in re-establishing their hold on the territories ceded to the Koches on the north bank of the Brahmaputra which they had already occupied. The western boundary of the Ahom kingdom on the north bank of the Brahmaputra again extended up to about the Bhoroli river** of Tezpur subdivision of Darrang district. The modern Mangaldoi subdivision and a part of the modern Tezpur subdivision thus remained in the hands of the Koches. The Koch invasions did not make any alterations of the western boundary of the Ahom kingdom on the south bank of the Brahmaputra which had extended up to the Kalang river by the thirties of the 16th century.

Chilarai, the brother of Nar Narayan, with whose assistance the latter had become the master of a vast kingdom in Eastern India died of small pox in 1571 A.D. on the banks of the Ganges in the course of his second expedition against Gaur.³⁵ He left a son named Raghu Dev. Nar Narayan, who married at an advanced age, had no son till late in life. He had brought up Raghu Dev like his own son and nominated him to be heir presumptive.³⁶ Raghu Dev thus expected to succeed Nar Narayan. But the birth of a son to Nar Narayan named Lakshmi Narayan blasted the hope of Raghu Dev. Ambitious Raghu Dev decided to secede from Koch Behar and carve out of it a separate principality for himself. He gathered round him some of his father's old faithful followers, and under the pretext of making a journey, Raghu Dev collected his family and all his adherents and proceeded towards the east to Barnagar on the Manah (or Monas) river, near which he erected a fort called Ghilajaypur or Ghilabijaypur.* Nar Narayan sent men to recall him to the capital but he refused to go. All attempts, at first peaceful and afterwards hostile, on the part of Nar Narayan to put down his rebellious nephew having failed, he thought it expedient to divide the kingdom into two halves,

Division of the Koch Kingdom into two parts—1581 A.D.

keeping the portion west of the Sonkosh for himself and his successors and giving up to Raghu Dev the tract east of that river provided, he agreed to stamp the name of Nar Narayan on his coins and pay an annual tribute to him consisting of horses,

gold and cloth.³⁷ This division of the Koch kingdom took place in 1581 A.D.

** We have accepted the Bhoroli river as the western boundary of the Ahom kingdom on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, because it is said that the dominion of Parikshit extended up to the Bhoroli river (*Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 141, footnote.)

36. *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 119 ; Gait Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 55.

37. *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 120 ; *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, pp. 119-120 ; Gait Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 56

* According to Amanatullah Ahmed, the fort Ghilajaypur or Ghilabijaypur was constructed by the side of the Gadadhar river. (*Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 120) This view is untenable because the distance between Koch Behar and the river Gadadhar is very short.

38 Gait, Sir, Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 56 ; *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 121.

Muhammadan writers refer to the two kingdoms as Koch Behar (the western half) and Koch Hajo (the eastern half) respectively; the former still survives, but of the latter, only a trace exists in the town called Hajo, a few miles north west of Gauhati. The kingdom of Raghu Dev thus included the modern districts of Goalpara and Kamrup, the Mangaldoi subdivision and a portion of Tezpur subdivision (up to the Bhoroli) of Darrang district. His dominions stretched southwards from the Goalpara boundary and included the country between the old course of the Brahmaputra and the Garo Hills which now form the northern part of the district of Mymensingha.³⁹

The partition of territories not only diminished the moral prestige and the material prosperity of the Koch state but also gave rise to discord and ill-will between the two branches. The result became disastrous for both. The enmity between the two rival states led them to seek allies. The way for

Foreign intervention
in Koch politics

foreign intervention in the Koch politics was thus prepared which profoundly affected not only the history of the two Koch kingdoms but of the Ahom kingdom also. The evil

effect of the partition was, however, postponed during the life-time of the Koch Behar king Nar Narayan. Though Raghu Dev had definitely broken off with Nar Narayan, he did not wage any more war during the remaining years of Nar Narayan's reign. Nar Narayan died in 1587 A.D.⁴⁰ On his death, his son, Lakshmi Narayan ascended the throne of the western Koch kingdom which included Koch Behar and parts of the modern districts of Dinajpur, Jalpaiguri and Rangpur in East Pakistan.⁴¹ Raghu Dev, who had refrained from proclaiming formal independence so long, now did so. He struck coins in his own name to symbolise the assumption of his independent royal dignity.⁴² Lakshmi Narayan could not bear in silence this bold defiance of his authority by Raghu Dev. He went to war against him, defeated him and came into possession of his royal standard.⁴³ Raghu Dev thereupon determined to invade Koch Behar and with that end in view he established friendship with Isa Khan, the famous Pathan (or Afghan) chief of Eastern Bengal.⁴⁴ The conclusion of friendly alliance by his opponent Raghu Dev with the powerful Afghan chief Isa Khan brought home to Lakshmi

39. Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 62; *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 141 footnote.

40. *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 135; According to Gait Nar Narayan died in 1584 A.D. But in the footnote he again says that the correct date may be three years later i.e. 1587 A.D. (*History of Assam*, p. 57).

41. Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 63.

42. *Ibid*, p. 63; *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 136.

43. *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 137; *Kamrupar Buranjī*, p. 7.

44. Bhattacharyya, S. N., *Mughal, N. E. Frontier policy*, p. 118; *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 137. Lakshmi Narayan's father Nar Narayan had established friendly relations with the Mogul Emperor Akbar in 1578. Clever and clear sighted Raghu Dev therefore realised that on the basis of hereditary friendship, Lakshmi Narayan would hold fast to the Mogul alliance of 1578 A.D. That was why, in order to meet the inevitable growth of Koch-Mogul union he threw in his lot with the Pathans (or Afghans), the enemies of the Moguls. (For further details on this point, refer Bhattacharyya, S. N. *Mughal, N. E. Frontier policy*, pp. 108-118.)

Narayan the necessity of some assistance from another power to meet the Koch-Afghan alliance. He decided to acknowledge the formal supremacy of the Mogul Emperor Akbar and with that end in view approached the Mogul governor of Bengal, Raja Man Singha of Ambar and established friendship with him by giving his sister in marriage to Man Singha in 1596 A.D.⁴⁵

Strengthened by the new alliance, Raghu Dev, who had been for a long time past anxious to gain possession of the fertile tract of Bahirbund, led a vigorous assault on Bahirbund (on the south-eastern border of the Koch Behar state) and captured it without great difficulty.⁴⁶ He followed it up by an attack on Lakshmi Narayan himself, who was compelled to take shelter in a fortress.

Lakshmi Narayan solicited the armed help of the Mogul governor of Bengal Raja Man Singha on the strength of the marriage alliance of 1596 A.D. The latter promptly sent help to the former. Raghu Dev, unaided by his Afghan ally Isa Khan, was at first successful, but in the end was severely defeated. No sooner had the Afghan chief Isa Khan received the disquieting news of the defeat of his ally Raghu Dev than he gathered his army hastily and moved to the help of Raghu Dev, but could not proceed far. Raja Man Singha, who was determined to prevent a junction of the two forces, hit upon an ingenious device. This was to keep Isa Khan too busy near at home to turn his attention abroad. Accordingly a well planned combined attack by land and water was made on Isa's main stronghold. Isa fought hard and drove back the enemy with great loss. The success achieved by Isa Khan against the Mogul forces, however, did not improve the position and prospects of Raghu Dev. The aim of Man Singha was realised in spite of the defeat of the Mogul forces at the hands of Isa Khan. Isa Khan could not proceed to help Raghu Dev and the latter could not fulfil his cherished desire to wipe out the stain of his last defeat at the hands of Koch-Mogul alliance.

It appears that there was no further conflict between Lakshmi Narayan and Raghu Dev till the death of the latter. Meanwhile Isa Khan, the Afghan ally of Raghu Dev died in 1599 A.D. His death removed the only possible ally who could effectively checkmate the powerful Koch Mogul alliance formed against Kamrup i.e. the king of Koch Hajo or the eastern Koch kingdom. For a moment its king Raghu Dev stood isolated and friendless. He found himself between the

45. Bhattacharyya, S. N., *Mughal, N. E. Frontier policy*, pp. 109-110; *Koch Beharer Itihas*, pp. 137-38. According to Gait, however, Lakshmi Narayan gave a daughter (not sister) in marriage to Man Singha, the Mogul governor of Bengal, in 1597 A. D. (*History of Assam*, pp. 64-65.)

46. *Koch Beharer Itihas*, pp. 138-39; Bhattacharyya, S. N., *Mughal N.E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 119-20.

devil and the deep sea. On the west there was the danger of a renewed Koch-Mogul attack against him and on the other hand, there was the prospect of Koch-Ahom alliance which might jeopardise the security of his kingdom from the east. The latter alliance seemed probable due to the fact that with Nar Narayan's death the era of enmity of Koch Behar with the Ahom kingdom had ended. Raghu Dev feared that Nar Narayan's son and successor Lakshmi Narayan might conclude a diplomatic marriage alliance with the Ahom king.*

Raghu Dev was thus called upon to solve two problems at the same time: the one was to find out a good substitute for Isa Khan and the other was to prevent the establishment of the Koch-Ahom friendship (i. e. between Koch Behar and the Ahom kingdom). In order to solve these problems Raghu Dev decided to court the friendship of the Ahom king Sukhampha by matrimonial alliances. He sent an envoy to king Sukhampha offering his daughter Mangaldoi in marriage to him." The offer was accepted and princess Mangaldoi was given in marriage to the Ahom king Sukhampha. **Thus the way was paved for the infiltration of Ahom influence into the land of the Koches. The new Koch-Ahom alliance was based on a community of interests. The growing intervention of the Moguls in Koch politics was looked upon with suspicion and alarm by the Ahom government as well and it also seems to have felt the necessity of strengthening Kamrup as a buffer state.

In 1603 A. D. Raghu Dev died and Parikshit Narayan ascended the throne of the eastern kingdom. It is said that on the death of Raghu Dev, the mother of Indra Narayan (step brother of Parikshit) endeavoured to place her own son (i.e. Indra Narayan) on the throne, but the ministers objected and sent word to Parikshit who lost no time in hastening to the capital and assumed sovereignty.⁴⁸ That was why, soon after

* According to Purani *Assam Buranj* (pp. 69-71) Nar Narayan promised a daughter to Sukhampha, but died before she could be sent. That was why Raghu Dev feared that Lakshmi Narayan might fulfil his father's promise and conclude a diplomatic marriage with the Ahom king. Amanatullah Ahmed says that Lakshmi Narayan proposed to give one of his daughters in marriage to the Ahom king Sukhampha, but the Ahom king died before the marriage could be performed. (*Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 153).

47. *Assam Buranj* S.M. p. 47 *Purani Assam Buranj*, p. 71 Barua Harakanta, *Assam Buranj*, p. 37. Gait has referred to princess Mangaldoi to be the daughter of Parikshit (*History of Assam*) p. 107 Majority of the Buranjis both published and unpublished, however, mention Mangaldoi as the daughter of Raghu Dev, Amanatullah Ahmed (*Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 139) and S.N. Bhattacharyya (*Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, p. 121) have also accepted this.

The Ahom Buranj (p. 94) and *Deodhai Assam Buranj* (p. 50) mention that in 1595 A.D. the Koch king Raghu Dev gave his daughter Shao-Kala (or Chand-Kala) in marriage to Sukhampha. Gait has accepted this statement to be correct (*History of Assam*, p. 103) This, however, appear to be doubtful. It was after Isa Khan's death in 1599 A.D. Raghu's friend and ally in his early career that he felt the necessity of establishing friendship with the Ahom king—Refer Bhattacharyya, S.N. *Mughal, N. E. Frontier Policy*, p. 121 footnote.

48. Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 64.

his accession to the throne. Parikshit killed Indra Narayan by engaging a man of 'Mech' Community.⁴⁹ His another brother Man Singha, being terrified at this, fled with some of his followers to the Ahom king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.) who had ascended on the Ahom throne in 1603 A.D. after the death of Sukhampha. The latter, recognising him to be a prince of the royal blood, established him at Namrup with the title of Namrupia Raja.⁵⁰ Parikshit Narayan requested the Ahom king Pratap Singha to send back Man Singha to him, but the latter refused to comply with the request on the ground that he was a 'protected prince'.

The demise of Raghu Dev did not improve the relation between the two Koch kingdoms. On the contrary it turned from bad to worse. Like his father Parikshit also refused to acknowledge the supremacy of Lakshmi Narayan. He revived his father's hostile policy against Lakshmi Narayan and attacked Bahirbund.⁵¹ This greatly enraged Lakshmi Narayan. An obstinate battle took place between the two which ended in the defeat of Lakshmi Narayan with great loss of men, including his brother Bali Narayan.⁵²

This was a great humiliation for Lakshmi Narayan and he resolved to avenge it as soon as possible. He turned to his old ally, the Moguls. In June 1609 A.D. the new Mogul Viceroy of Bengal, Nawab Islam Khan asked Lakshmi Narayan to accept Imperial vassalage. The latter, whose heart was burning with a desire for revenge readily responded and sealed the acknowledgement of vassalage with the payment of an annual tribute.⁵³ Lakshmi Narayan requested Islam Khan to invade the kingdom of Parikshit. Lakshmi Narayan offered to render personal service in an attack on the domain of Parikshit by the Moguls and it was agreed between the two that Lakshmi Narayan would be allowed the possession of Kamrup (i.e. the domain of Parikshit) after its occupation. The acceptance of Imperial vassalage by the state of Koch Behar threatened the Eastern Koch kingdom as well as the Ahom kingdom with serious consequences. It symbolised the dawn of a new era of aggressive imperialism on the part of the Moguls with systematic and persistent attempt at territorial expansion as its main characteristics.

Parikshit was also not at all unmindful of the need for strengthening his own position by foreign alliances. In 1608 A.D. he had renewed the Koch-

49. *Kamrupar Buranjī*, p. 7; Wade, J.P., *An Account of Assam*, pp. 214-15.

50. *Assam Buranjī*, S.M. p. 47; *Purani Assam Buranjī*, p. 72.

51. Darrang Raj Vamsavali, p. 139; *Koch Beharer Itihas* p. 139; Bhattacharyya, S. N., *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, p. 125.

52. *Kamrupar Buranjī*, pp. 7-8; *Koch Beharer Itihas*, pp. 139-40. In *Kamrupar Buranjī* it is stated that when confusion took place in the eastern Koch kingdom as a result of the murder of Indra Narayan, Lakshmi Narayan entered 'Ghila' (i.e. Ghilajhar on the west side of the Gadadhar River.—refer *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, p. 141 footnote). This was followed by a severe battle between the two in which Lakshmi Narayan was worsted.

53. Bhattacharyya, S. N., *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 126-27; *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 141.

Ahom alliance established by his father Raghu Dev with the Ahom king Sukhampha by offering a daughter in marriage to king Pratap Singha.⁵⁴ This marriage alliance with the Ahom king, however, did not bear any fruit and Parikshit should be blamed for it. In 1610 A.D. Parikshit offended the Ahom king Pratap Singha by harbouring a political offender named Ikhek who had escaped from the Ahom state.⁵⁵ His tactless and arrogant demeanour soon after the conclusion of the marriage alliance with the Ahom king, strained his relation with the latter and greatly weakened his position.

Parikshit exasperated Lakshmi Narayan by his repeated attacks on Bahirbund.⁵⁶ At last at the request of Lakshmi Narayan,^{*} the Mogul governor of Bengal Islam Khan sent a Mogul army under the command of Makarram Khan against Kamrup (or Koch Hajo) by the end of the year

Makarram Khan invades Koch Hajo, defeats Parikshit and reports him to Delhi

1612 A.D. A severe fighting took place in Dhubri where Parikshit had erected a fort. Parikshit now sent an envoy to the Ahom king Pratap Singha requesting him to come to his assistance.⁵⁷ He suggested to king Pratap Singha that as

his dominion lay between the Mogul's on the one hand and the Ahom's on the other as a buffer state, the Mogul governor Makarram Khan might invade the dominion of the latter also if he would succeed in conquering Kamrup. In other words, he meant that the occupation of his dominion by the Moguls would inevitably react on the political security of the Ahom kingdom. Unfortunately however, king Pratap Singha failed to realise the gravity of the situation and persisted in his impolitic attitude. Instead of coming to the assistance of Parikshit against the Moguls he asked the latter to the dominion of the former (apparently with his forces) where they might form a junction and then proceed with their combined forces against the Mogul general Makarram Khan. Parikshit refused to accept the proposal of the Ahom king and carried on the struggle alone. The battle was obstinate. But Parikshit was at last defeated both by land and water and was compelled to surrender to the Mogul general Makarram Khan by July 1613.⁵⁸

54. *Ahom Buranji*, p. 97; *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, pp. 53-54. The *Purani Assam Buranji* (p. 79) refers in general terms to the conclusion of an alliance with the Ahom king Pratap Singha by Parikshit. Gait has mentioned this Koch princess, the daughter of Parikshit as Mangaldahi (i.e. Mangaldoi)—*History of Assam*, p. 107. But the *Buranjis* mentioned above do not mention the name of the daughter of Parikshit. On the contrary, most of the *Buranjis*, both published and unpublished mention Mangaldoi as the daughter of Raghu Dev.

55. *Ahom Buranji*, p. 97; *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, p. 54. Apparently the refusal of the Ahom king Pratap Singha to hand over the political refugee Man Singha to Parikshit led the latter to retaliate by harbouring political offender from the Ahom state.

56. *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 141; *Kamrupar Buranji*, p. 9. *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, p. 139.

* According to *Darrang Raj Vamsavali*, pp. 139-41; *Kamrupar Buranji*, p. 9 and *Assam Buranji* S.M. pp. 53-54. Lakshmi Narayan went to Delhi and begged the help of the Mogul Emperor Jahangir against Parikshit by giving his sister (or daughter) in marriage to him.

57. Wade, J.P. *An Account of Assam*, pp. 215-16; *Assam Buranji* S.M., p. 54; *Purani Assam Buranji*, pp. 79-80.

58. Bhattacharyya, S.N., *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 145-48.

He was sent at first to Jahangirnagar (i.e. Dacca) the seat of the Mogul Viceroy of Bengal where he was kept in confinement for some years by Shaikh Qasim Khan, the successor of Islam Khan. Later on, he appears to have been sent to Delhi, the Mogul capital.*

In fulfilment of his promise, Lakshmi Narayan had rendered good service to the Moguls and as a reward he was temporarily put in charge of the eastern part of Kamrup (the territories east of the Manah river) by the Mogul commander Makarram Khan.** It was settled that as soon as practicable Lakshmi Narayan would pay his respects to the Mogul Viceroy Islam Khan at Dacca and would be formally invested with his charge. But the sudden demise of Islam Khan at this time which led to a change in the Bengal Viceroyalty spoilt the chance of Lakshmi Narayan for ever. When Lakshmi Narayan went to Dacca in compliance with the command of the new Mogul Viceroy Shaikh Qasim Khan, he was treacherously confined there in August 1614 A.D. Lakshmi Narayan thus paid the price of his foolish act of courting foreign help to feed his grudge cherished against Parikshit Narayan and to satisfy his greed for territorial expansion. This incident, though small in itself, gave rise to serious complications and shook Mogul authority in the northeast frontier region to its very foundation. Subsequently Lakshmi Narayan, along with Parikshit were despatched to Delhi to the Mogul Emperor Jahangir.

These high handed acts of the Moguls led to formidable insurrections both in Koch Behar and Kamrup.** The Koches were by no means prepared to accept Mogul domination. The rebellion in Koch Behar was however suppressed by the Moguls soon with comparative ease** but that of Kamrup continued for a long time under several rebellious Koch chiefs.** Early in April 1617, Qasim Khan, the Mogul Viceroy of Bengal was removed from his office for his failure to quell the disturbances in Kamrup and Ibrahim Khan Fathjang, the governor of Bihar was appointed in his place.** This new Viceroy interceded with the Mogul Emperor Jahangir for the release of Parikshit Narayan and Lakshmi Narayan. The Emperor, who was already dissatisfied in receiving the news of

* A great deal of confusion and obscurity prevails with regard to the end of Parikshit's career. This has been discussed in details by S.N. Bhattacharyya in his *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 145-46 footnote.

59. Bhattacharyya, S.N. *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 128-30; Koch Beharer Itihas, pp. 141-42.

60. *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 143.

61. Ibid, p. 143; Bhattacharyya, S.N. *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, p. 130.

62. Bhattacharyya, S.N. *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 170-189.

63. *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 143; *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 147-48; 158-59.

the disturbances in Kamrup decided to grant the prayer of Ibrahim Khan. This led to the release of both Lakshmi Narayan and Parikshit Narayan from confinement at the Mogul capital. Lakshmi Narayan was allowed to return to his own kingdom with various presents. Parikshit was also allowed to return to his own kingdom on his undertaking to pay a sum of seven lakhs of rupees and to send his four sons viz., Dhir Narayan, Darpa Narayan, Bhim Narayan and Sur Narayan as hostages to serve under Jahangir.⁶⁴ But Parikshit died on his way at Allahabad.*

The dominion of Parikshit extending from the river Sonkosh and Brahmaputra in the west to the Bhoroli river (in Darrang district on the north bank) and western borders of Nowgong in the east (on the south bank), Bhutan in the north to the western limit of the present Mymensingh district in the south,⁶⁵ was now declared annexed to the Mogul empire. With the annexation of Parikshit's dominion, the Moguls turned from irresponsible conquerors into serious administrators and began to introduce administrative reforms.⁶⁶ A brother of Makarram Khan named Abdussalam was left in command of the Mogul garrison which was at first stationed at Gilah (or Khelah of Gait) on the west side of the Gadadhar river, about 10 miles from its confluence with the Brahmaputra.⁶⁷ Subsequently, the Mogul head-quarter was shifted to Hajo. A brother of king Parikshit named Bali Narayan, considering it unsafe to remain in the Kcch kingdom in view of its occupation by the Moguls, fled to the Ahom king Pratap Singha for protection who received him with great cordiality. This happened in the beginning of the year 1615 A.D. (Phalgun or Chotira=Feb. + March + April).⁶⁸

64. *Assam Buranji* S. M., p. 54; *Kamrupar Buranji*, p. 13. According to *Assam Buranji* S. M. Parikshit promised to pay an indemnity of four lakhs of rupees.

* A mystery hangs round the life of Parikshit Narayan subsequent to his release from the Mogul court. He appears to have failed to pay the stipulated amount to the Bengal Viceroy and consequently was not reinstated to power. Wade's *Account of Assam* (pp. 217-18), *Kamrupar Buranji* (p. 13), and *Darrang Raj Vamsavali* (pp. 144-46), all agree generally that Parikshit was not allowed to take possession of his kingdom owing to the opposition of the then Bengal Viceroy, who is erroneously named as 'Islam Khan', and that he started back for the Mogul court at Delhi to secure redress from the Emperor, but died on the way at Allahabad. It seems probable that the failure of Parikshit Narayan to pay the promised sum led Ibrahim Khan to refuse his reinstatement to power.

65. *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 141 footnote. S. N. Bhattacharyya however, relying on Persian chronicles says that the kingdom of Parikshit did not extend beyond the river Barnadi in the east (*Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, p. 151). The statement of Amanatullah Ahmed, which is based on the authority of an unpublished *Assam Buranji* is much more reliable and authoritative than the Persian chronicles who were new comers to the Koch kingdom. *The Purani Assam Buranji* also confirms the statement of Amanatullah Ahmed (p.80) But Gait, like Bhattacharyya has supported the statement of the Persian chronicles (*History of Assam*, p. 66).

66. Bhattacharyya, S.N. *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 164-69.

67. *Ibid*, pp. 168, 176 ; Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 66.

68. *Kamrupar Buranji*, pp. 13-14; *Assam Buranji* S.M., p. 55. *Ahom Buranji* p. 98; *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, p. 34.

The absorption of the kingdom of Parikshit (i.e. Koch Hajo or Kamrup) in the Mogul Empire brought the Moguls into direct and close contact with the Ahoms. Ever since the advent of the Moguls in the north-eastern Indian politics, the Moguls and the Ahoms, as already observed, fought against each other under the thin veneer of auxiliaries to the rival dynasties of Koch Behar and Koch Hajo respectively. With the disappearance of Koch Hajo (or Kamrup) as a buffer state between the Ahom kingdom and Mogul India, the way was paved for the direct and undisguised enmity between the two powers. It was indeed an irony of fate that the prophetic warning of Parikshit suggesting that the conquest of his kingdom by the Moguls would inevitably lead to a deadly attack by the Moguls on the Ahom kingdom, came to be too true so soon after it was sounded.

First Mogul invasion
of the Ahom kingdom
—1615 A.D.

For, in less than three years' time, the first gigantic and systematic attempt at a conquest of the Ahom kingdom was made by the Moguls in 1615 A.D. under Syed Hakim, an imperial officer and Syed Aba Bakr.* The Ahoms met the invading army at the mouth of the Bhoroli river* and by a surprise night attack completely defeated the Mogul army both by land and water. By this defeat of the Moguls the Ahoms came into the possession of the territory lying between the river Bhoroli and Bar Nadi which correspond to the western half of the present Darrang district.

In 1616 A.D. the victorious Ahoms installed Bali Narayan as a tributary Raja of Darrang with the title of Dharma Narayan on account of his religious disposition.⁶⁹ Receiving the news of the installation of Bali Narayan as the tributary Raja of Darrang, the sons of Parikshit Narayan, headed by Chandra Narayan and Rup Narayan also came to the Ahom kingdom and sought protection of the Ahom king Pratap Singha by paying their homage to him.⁷⁰ Pratap Singha received them kindly and established some of them at Janji (in Sibsagar district, by the side of the Janji river) by conferring upon them some villages along with the presents of girls and domestics. Thus by giving shelter to Bali

69. Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam* pp. 107-8 ; Bhattacharyya, S.N. *Mughal N. E. Frontier policy* pp. 152-56. For the details of Ahom-Mogul conflict refer these two sources of information.

* S. N. Bhattacharyya, relying on Persian chronicles states that at the time of the contact of the Ahom kingdom with Mogul India, Gauhati, which then stood on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, opposite to Pandu, appears to have been an important Ahom town on the west (*Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy* p. 148 footnote). But this statement does not seem to be convincing. Because in that case the Moguls would not have been able to proceed to the Bhoroli river via north Gauhati without meeting any opposition from the Ahoms (*Purani Assam Buranjil*, p. 83).

70. *Kamrupur Buranjil*, p. 19 ; *Assam Buranjil* S. M., p. 60. In Wades' Account of Assam (pp. 219-21) it is stated that he was installed as the Raja of Darrang soon after his arrival and paying allegiance to king Pratap Singha, i.e. in 1615 A.D. But this is certainly wrong. Because the Ahoms were then not in possession of the territory lying between the Bhoroli and the Bar Nadi.

71. *Assam Buranjil* S. M., p. 60 ; *Kamrupur Buranjil*, p. 19 ; *Purani Assam Buranjil*, p. 88.

Narayan and the sons of Parikshit, the Ahom king Pratap Singha sought to compensate his short sighted and selfish policy of keeping aloof from the warfare between Parikshit and the Moguls. His self-confidence was enhanced and his military position strengthened as a result of his victory against the Moguls.⁷² His military resources were also augmented by the rich booty secured in elephants, horses, guns, warboats and munition.⁷³

The Assam war of 1615 taught the Moguls a good lesson. Instead of trying to expand, they now seriously engaged themselves in the task of consolidation of their authority in Kamrup. Henceforward they became very careful not to give any offence to their powerful neighbour, the Ahom king, so as to provoke him into open hostility. The evil consequences of the Assam disaster was soon bitterly felt. Rebellions broke out in Kamrup under the leadership of numerous Koch chieftains and hill Rajas of Dakhinkol (i.e. south bank of the Brahmaputra) who naturally looked up to the Ahom king for sympathy and support. The Ahom king, whose moral and material position was greatly strengthened as a result of the last victory, took advantage of the prevailing political confusion in Kamrup to attempt the subversion of Mogul Imperial authority there. He fomented insurrections himself. His court became the asylum of all hostile elements, and he readily responded to all appeals for men and money made by the disaffected Koch chieftains, as well as the turbulent hill-Rajas of Dakhinkol, in course of their frequent conflicts with the Imperial officers.⁷⁴

The first interference of the Ahom king in the internal affairs of Kamrup, occurred in the spring of 1617 on behalf of a rebel Mogul revenue officer named Shaikh Ibrahim.⁷⁵ But it was thwarted.

The second and the more ambitious and well-planned hostile move on the part of the Ahom king was made in 1618 in aid of Bali Narayan alias Dharma-Narayan, the tributary Koch Raja of Darrang. The victory of the Ahoms against the Moguls led many hill-chiefs of the Duar areas (i.e. lands adjacent to the passes into the hills) on the south bank of the Brahmaputra (i.e. Dakhinkol)⁷⁶ to make their submission to the Ahom king.⁷⁷ The chief among them was the Dimarua Raja, who occupied the region south of the confluence of the Kalang with the Brahmaputra. Accompanied by these hill-chieftains of Dakhinkol, Dharma Narayan laid siege to Pandu, but at first

72. Bhattacharyya, S. N. *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, p. 157.

73. *Purani Assam Buranji*, p. 88 ; *Assam Buranji S. M.*, p. 60.

74. *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 246-47.

75. *Ibid.*, pp. 189-91, 247-48.

76. The names of all the hill-chiefs of Dakhinkol and the location of their territories are given by S. N. Bhattacharyya in his *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 183-86.

76. *Kamrupar Buranji*, p. 19 ; *Purani Assam Buranji*, p. 88.

Dharma Narayan attacks the Moguls with Ahom aid.

failed to capture it." Ultimately he succeeded in capturing it without a blow by taking advantage of the temporary withdrawal of the Mogul garrison from Pandu as a result of a bitter internecine feud in the Mogul camp. In order to retain the prize Dharma Narayan appealed to the Ahom king for help. The latter, who was waiting for an opportunity for overthrowing Mogul power in Kamrup readily responded to the appeal and sent it without delay and Pandu thus came into the hands of the Ahoms which was strongly fortified. Then a gigantic attack on Hajo, the imperialist headquarter was made by Dharma Narayan aided by the Ahoms both by land and water. But they sustained a severe defeat at the hands of the Moguls with a great number of soldiers killed and wounded. In this battle of Hajo one Langi Panisiya distinguished himself by rallying the fugitive soldiers who had been closely followed by the Moguls, and restoring orders amongst them. For this he was rewarded by king Pratap Singha with the newly created post of Barphukan or governor of the conquered territories west of Koliabor with his headquarter at Kajalimukh.⁷⁸

The great discomfiture of the Ahoms at the hands of the Moguls in the battle of Hajo, had a deterrent effect on the Ahom king and he desisted from interfering in Kamrup politics for the next two years. But he was only bidding his time and was anxious to wipe out the stain of his last defeat at the earliest convenience. At last the autumn of 1619 offered him the opportunity. Since March 1618, Mirza Nathan, the Imperial Thanahdar had been busy in subduing the rebel element in Dakhinkol and consolidating Imperial authority there.⁷⁹ The hill-chiefs of Dakhinkol, who were sick of the dogged tenacity and untiring energy of Mirza Nathan at their subjugation, and were also deeply humiliated by the nasty treatment meted out to two of their compeers, made a bold venture to capture the strategic hill-fort of Ranihat. Their early attempts to make a fortification (May, 1619) in front of it having proved futile, they appealed to the Ahom king for help on the plausible ground of community of interests. The latter readily responded and sent a large army to their assistance. Raja Dharma Narayan of Darrang, who had already taken refuge under the Ahom king to evade capture at the hands of the Moguls also accompanied the Ahom army. In spite of the reinforcement the fort could not be taken by assault owing to the bold defence of Mirza Nathan, and it was then laid under a siege. After five months of protracted warfare (May to

Defeat of the Moguls

77. *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 191-98. According to Gait it was Pratap Singha, who accompanied by the hill chiefs and Dharma Narayan occupied Pandu (*History of Assam*, p. 109). He makes Dharma Narayan playing only a subordinate part in it. I have accepted the statement of S. N. Bhattacharyya which is primarily based on the Persian sources where a more detailed account of the Ahom-Mogul wars is given. In his article "The Koch king of Kamarupa", J.A.S.B., 1893 No. 4, pp. 299-300, however Gait also makes Dharma Narayan the real hero.

78. *Assam Buranjī* S. M., pp. 61,-62; *Kamrupar Buranjī*, p. 20.

79. *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 199-211.

September) Ranihat was conquered by the Ahoms in September 1619.* In the engagement that followed between the two parties, the Moguls were worsted; large numbers were killed and the rest fled to Hajo, leaving behind many weapons and animals.

Thus after five months of hard fighting, the Moguls under Mirza Nathan were defeated by the hill-chiefs, aided by the mighty power of the Ahom king. This was their serious reverse since the disastrous Assam campaign of 1615. After the battle of 1619, Dharma Narayan once again paid his homage to king Pratap Singha. Some of his brothers and a number of frontier chiefs also paid their homage to Pratap Singha about this time.**

It is said that about this time Pratap Singha endeavoured to induce Lakshmi Narayan, the Raja of Koch Behar, who was busy in subduing the Koch rebel elements in Kamrup in collaboration with the Moguls, to make common cause with him against the Moguls." But Lakshmi Narayan refused to side with the Ahoms against the Moguls. On the contrary when both the Ahoms and the Moguls grew tired of war, Lakshmi Narayan, apparently encouraged by the prospect of regaining his ancestral domain (i.e. Kamrup), began negotiations with the Ahoms for the conclusion of peace and friendship between the two parties through his agent Biro Karji." But Pratap Singha detained him as a hostage and declared that he would set him free provided Lakshmi Narayan could succeed in putting a stop to the war by negotiating peace. Peace therefore could not be established and war continued.

The Moguls however, regained their lost ground immediately. Undaunted by the last defeat, the indefatigable and indomitable Mirza Nathan gathered together a fresh army for a second trial of strength with the Ahoms." He marched to Dakhinkol and after defeating a local rebel chieftain named Jadu Naik in November 1619, he reached Minari (about 2½ miles south of Haligaon, dt. Kamrup) in the vicinity of which he encountered Raja Dharma Narayan and his lieutenant Shomarood Kayeth with a huge Ahom army at their back. An obstinate struggle ensued between the two parties which ended in the defeat of Dharma Narayan early in January 1620. Imperial authority was re-established in the hilly region south of the Brahmaputra, within four months of its overthrow.

Mogul authority re-established in the hilly regions

* For the details of the Ahom-Mogul wars refer S. N. Bhattacharyya's *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*.

80. *Ahom Buranji*, p. 106 ; *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, p. 62.

81. Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 111 ; *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 145.

82. *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, p. 62-63 ; *Ahom Buranji*, pp. 107-8 ; *Purani Assam Buranji*, pp. 91-92 ; *Kamrupar Buranji*, pp. 20-21.

83. *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 221-23, 249-50.

Thus all the attempts of the Ahom king Pratap Singha to overthrow Mogul power from Kamrup by giving aid to the rebellious Koch chiefs and hill chieftains proved ultimately to be fruitless. The Ahom king was at last convinced of the futility of his policy and gradually withdrew from the arena of Kamrup politics. No further intervention is heard of till the exigencies of political circumstances cleared the way for the resumption of formal hostilities in the early thirties of the 17th century. During this period Pratap Singha witnessed the gradual weeding out of the rebel elements and the slow but steady consolidation of the Imperial authority in Kamrup.⁸⁴ The change of circumstances paved the way for open and direct warfare between the Ahoms and the Moguls in the thirties of the 17th century, which, henceforward dragged on, with periodic intervals, till the issues were finally settled about the end of the 17th century.

Pratap singha withdraws from Kamrup politics

Direct warfare between the Ahoms and the Moguls

The Defeat of Dharma Narayan at the hands of the Moguls in January 1620 and the subsequent consolidation of Imperial authority in Kamrup led Chandra Narayan, the son of Parikshit Narayan, who had been established by king Pratap Singha at Janji (in Sibsagar dist.) to fly away to Kamrup in Nov. 1621 leaving his wives on account of a trifling quarrel with the son of king Pratap Singha and ultimately joined hands with the Moguls.⁸⁵ He was given jagirs by the Moguls in the Karaibari region (west of the Garo hills).⁸⁶

His another brother Rup Narayan, who had also been established at Janji by Pratap Singha, however, remained faithful to the Ahom king and in December 1632 he came and paid homage to Pratap Singha at Thekerabari by falling prostrate at his feet.⁸⁷ Pratap Singha offered him a present of two thousand pieces and sent him back.

Rup Narayan

The warfare which broke out between the Ahoms and the Moguls early in 1636 symbolised the beginning of the new phase in Ahom Mogul politics—a phase of undisguised hostility between the two powers on account of the political and commercial rivalry and jealousy.⁸⁸ There were many causes of friction, both political and commercial, between the Moguls and the Ahoms.⁸⁹ The first phase of the war began with Raja Dharma Narayan's attack on Uttarkol in the month of March.

Renewal of hostilities between the Ahoms and the Moguls

84. *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 223-246, 250.

85. *Assam Buranji* S. M. p. 65; *Purani Assam Buranji*, p. 94.

86. *Purani Assam Buranji*, pp. 174-76.

87. *Ahom Buranji* p. 111.

88. *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 260-62.

89. *Ibid.* p. 262; Gait Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 112.

1636.⁹⁰ Crossing the river Bar Nadi, he reached Pthalikuchi,^{*} and moving further to the south-west, captured the Imperialist stronghold of Nowmati.^{**} Subsequently the Moguls having been defeated in several successive engagements both on the north and south bank of the Brahmaputra made their last stand at Hajo.^{***} The Ahom Barphukan and Dharma Narayan now closely invested the Moguls at Hajo which fell after a gallant defence. The capture of Hajo was followed by the speedy disruption of Mogul power in Kamrup both on the north as well as on the south bank of the Brahmaputra. The whole country west of the Bar Nadi i.e. the present district of Kamrup and great part of Goalpara district now fell into the hands of the Ahoms. Many of the zaminders (i.e. Bhuyan chiefs) on the north bank of the Brahmaputra made their submission to the Ahoms. A chronicle mentions that Abdussalam, the Mogul governor of Hajo was escorted to Garhgaon by Raja Dharma Narayan and that the Ahom king Pratap Singha gave to that Raja the government of Dhekeri Rajya or Koch Hajo. The conferment of Koch Hajo on Dharma Narayan on this occasion became afterwards the basis of the Darrang Rajas' claims to Kamrup.⁹¹

Chandra Narayan, the son of Parikshit Narayan, who had been given jagirs by the Moguls in the Karaibari region in 1621, again transferred his allegiance to the Ahom king Pratap Singha by taking advantage of the discomfiture of the Moguls at the hands of the Ahoms.⁹² The Ahom king Pratap Singha in spite of his former betrayal to him, readily offered asylum to Chandra Narayan in order to consolidate his power in Dakhinkol and installed him as a vassal in Dakhinkol.

Chandra Narayan at first lived in Solmari Parganah. When the people of Karaibari pargana, sick of the oppression of the local Mogul thanadar rose in rebellion and appealed to Chandra Narayan to come to rescue, the energetic and ambitious Koch prince at once responded and with the aid of a detachment of Ahom and Koch troops, easily occupied the Karaibari region and then established a strong fortified camp at Hatsilani.⁹³ Thus the whole of Dakhinkol, from Karaibari in the extreme south-west to Pandu in the south-east, gradually slipped away from the hands of the Moguls.

90. *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, p. 263.

* Pthalikuchi is about 10 miles away from the right bank of the Bar Nadi.

** Nowmati is about 10 miles south-west of Pthalikuchi.

*** For the details of Ahom-Mogul wars refer Bhattacharyya, S. N., *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 263-270 and Gait, Sir, Edward, *History of Assam*, pp. 112-15. According to Gait the war between the Ahoms and the Moguls was renewed in 1635 A.D.

91. *Kamrupar Buranjī*, p. 27.

92. Bhuyan, S. K., *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 264.

93. *Assam Buranjī S.M.*, pp. 67-68 ; *Purani Assam Buranjī*, pp. 99, 174-76 ; *Assam Buranjī*, Tr. No. 213 Vol. 56, p. 85, D.H.A.S. ; *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 270-71.

94. *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, p. 271.

About this time, king Pratap Singha endeavoured to win over the Koch Behar king Pran Narayan (1633-1666 A.D.)⁹⁵ from his alliance with the Moguls and accordingly sent a messenger named Ratna Kandali to the latter, requesting him to make common cause with the Ahom king against the Moguls.⁹⁶ The proposal of the Ahom king was as follows : the combined armies of the Koches and the Ahoms should drive away the Moguls from Kamrup and then divide the territory occupied by them between the two parties. Pran Narayan, however, on the advice of his minister Ram Chandra Karji not only rejected the proposal of the Ahom king, but when a fresh Mogul expedition was sent up against Assam in

1637 A.D., Pran Narayan also accompanied that expedition with a detachment of his own troops as an ally of the Moguls.⁹⁷ Pran Narayan marched against Chandra Narayan, who had made himself the master of the Karaibari region

on the south bank of the Brahmaputra with the aid of the Ahoms. Chandra Narayan fled without waiting to be attacked and all the Goalpara zaminders on the south bank of the Brahmaputra then submitted to Pran Narayan. He then crossed over to the north bank and after obtaining the submission of the leading Bhuyan chieftains retraced his steps to Dhubri.⁹⁸

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Meanwhile the Ahoms and their ally Dharma Narayan were preparing to resist the advance of the Mogul army. Several engagements took place between the two parties in which the Ahoms were defeated. Chandra Narayan⁹⁹, who had been a stubborn enemy of the Moguls in Dakhinkol, died of small pox about this time. The Ahoms and their ally Dharma Narayan were gradually driven back from Kamrup. A decisive defeat was inflicted on them at Kajali near the mouth of the Kalang river. Dharma Narayan fled and was hotly pursued by a Mogul detachment. At last he reached Singri, where he died of a pestilence.¹⁰⁰

Defeat of the Ahoms and Dharma Narayan with two sons and followers.* The Ahoms, being defeated at the hands of the Moguls, soon removed themselves far into the interior of their own dominion, leaving the Moguls in undisputed possession of Kamrup. The Moguls however, did not remain satisfied there. Intoxicated with the rapid success of the army, they determined to carry the war into the heart of the Ahom kingdom which ultimately ended disastrously for them.

95. *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy* p. 252.

96. *Assam Buranji* S. M., p. 62 ; *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 155. *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 213, Vol. 56, pp. 36-37 ; D.H.A.S.

97. *Assam Buranji* S. M., p. 73 ; *Kamrupar Buranji*, p. 39 ; *Assam Buranji*, Tr. No. 213, Vol. 56, p. 97 ; D.H.A.S. ; *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, p. 254.

98. Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, p. 115.

99. Bhattachayya, S. N., *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, p. 276. According to Gait, however, Chandra Narayan died in battle (*History of Assam*, p. 115).

100. *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, p. 281. According to Gait Dharma Narayan and his two sons were eventually killed (*History of Assam*, p. 118).

* For the details of Ahom-Mogul wars, refer *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 263-282 ; Gait, Sir Edward, *History of Assam*, pp. 115-18.

In October 1638 a Mogul force, accompanied by Pran Narayan, the Raja of Koch Behar, advanced up the Brahmaputra to its junction with the Bhoroli and halted there, opposite to Samdhara.¹⁰¹ The Ahoms entrenched themselves at Samdhara. Hostilities continued for some time, but eventually the Moguls were defeated and were compelled to give up the contest with a great loss of men. But they did not retire from the contest and soon afterwards advanced up the Brahmaputra, and crossing it over to Dakhinkol, encamped at Duimunisila, a place above Koliabar, and there got ready for a fresh encounter. The Ahoms at once moved from Samdhara and attacked the enemy at Duimunisila with all their might. A bloody battle followed in which the Moguls were completely defeated and were compelled to beat an ignominious retreat down the Brahmaputra. After their victory, the Ahoms reoccupied Kajali, but the prolonged campaign had exhausted their resources and so they were eager to conclude a peace with the Moguls. The disastrous defeat at the hands of the Ahoms made the Moguls also anxious to come to terms with the Ahoms. A treaty was concluded between the two parties in February 1639,* by which the country west of the Bar Nadi on the north bank of the Brahmaputra and the Asurar Ali on the south bank was given to the Moguls and the Ahoms were left in undisturbed possession of the rest of the kingdom formerly ruled by Parikshit (i.e. the country between the Bar Nadi and Bhoroli). Dharma Narayan's son Mohendra Narayan¹⁰² was installed by the Ahom king Pratap Singha as the tributary Raja of Darrang.

Victory of the Ahoms
and conclusion of treaty
—Feb 1639

Mohendra Narayan in-
stalled as Raja of
Darrang

His jurisdiction extended also to a portion of Kamrup consisting of the narrow strip of land between Asurar Ali and Kajalimukh on the south bank.¹⁰³ It could not have extended to the whole of Kamrup much of which was then in the hands of the Moguls. Pratap Singha instructed Mohendra Narayan to consult the Barphukan on all important matters.¹⁰⁴ Mohendra Narayan made his headquarters at Mangaldoi. From this time the eastern Koch kings can no longer be regarded as independent rulers. They still administered a tract which was more or less contiguous with the Mangaldoi subdivision; but they did so as subordinates of the Ahoms and their position differed but little from that of the Saring Raja, the

101. Bhattacharyya, S. N. *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 283-86; Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 118.

* *Kamrupar Buranjī*, p. 40; *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 285-86. According to Gait, however, the peace was negotiated in 1618 (*History of Assam*, p. 69).

102. Koch Behar *Itihas*, p. 238; Bhuyan, S. K. *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 265. Gait (*History of Assam*, p. 69) and Wade (*An Account of Assam*, p. 224), however, mention Dharma Narayan's successor as Sundar Narayan.

103. Bhuyan, S. K. *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 265. In Wade's *Account of Assam* (p. 224) Pratap Singha is stated to have appointed Sundar Narayan (i.e. Mohendra Narayan) the son of Dharma Narayan, as the Raja of Darrang and Kamrup. This statement, however, cannot be accepted to be true due to the fact that the whole of Kamrup (save the narrow strip of land between Asurar Ali and Kajalimukh) extending from Asurar Ali was then in the hands of the Moguls.

104. Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 69; Wade, J. P. *An Account of Assam*, p. 224.

Sadiyakhwa Gohain and other local governors under the Ahom king.¹⁰⁵ The main duty of the Darrang Rajas was to protect the subjects of the Ahom kingdom from the inroads of the Bhutias.¹⁰⁶

The western Koch kings continued to rule as vassals of the Moguls and their kingdom still survives, though with narrower limits, in the state of Koch-Bihar, which at present forms part of the state of West Bengal.

Pran Narayan (1633-1666 A.D.),¹⁰⁷ the king of Koch Behar, who had sided with the Moguls against the Ahoms in dis-respect of the friendly proposal of the Ahom king Pratap Singha, with the hope of regaining the dominion of Parikshit as his reward, ultimately came to realise his folly of making friendship with the Moguls when he was reduced to the position of a subordinate king under the Mogul Emperor. He sought to make correction and about the end of the year 1656 A.D. (Saka 1578) Pran Narayan sent an envoy named Gokul Chandra with a letter duly inserted within an envelope and presents to the Ahom king Jayadhvaj Singha (1648-1663 A.D.) with a view to establish friendly relations with him.¹⁰⁸ Jayadhvaj Singha, who was aware of the previous happenings, did not show much eagerness for the friendship of the Koch king and gave the reply to Pran Narayan in an ordinary paper without an envelope in the hands of two envoys named Bhabananda and Abhay. Pran Narayan was greatly enraged in receiving the uncovered letter of the Ahom king, tore off the letter into pieces and expelled the envoys from his court. Subsequently however, Pran Narayan again tried to effect reconciliation with the Ahom king through the mediation of one Banamali Gosain of Madhupur (within Koch Behar), a former resident of Assam.¹⁰⁹ But his attempt proved to be fruitless and when the Koch messengers with letters and presents went to the Ahom court, the Ahom king Jayadhvaj Singha also retaliated by tearing off the letter into pieces and driving away the Koch envoys (saka 1578, Magh=1657 A. D. Jan.+Feb.).

In 1657 A.D. the Mogul Emperor Shah Jahan fell seriously ill and a terrible civil war broke out amongst his four sons for the throne of Delhi. As a result of fratricidal war great chaos and confusion took place in the Mogul Empire and the grip of the central government over the out-lying provinces became weak. For about three years Bengal was practically reduced to a state of anarchy. During this

Civil war amongst
the sons of Shah
Jahan—1657

105. Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 69.

106. Bhuyan, S. K., *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 36.

107. *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, p. 252 ; Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 365.

108. *Assam Buranjis*, S.M., pp. 86-87.

109. *Ibid*, p. 87 ; *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 156.

110. *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 157.

confusion Pran Narayan, the king of Koch Behar, saw an opportunity for throwing off the Mogul yoke as well as for regaining the territories of his ancestors east of the Sonkosh which were lost to the Moguls. As a first step, taking advantage of the weak state of the Mogul frontier in the north-east, Pran Narayan made a series of plundering raids into the Ghoraghat region, carrying off a number of Imperial subjects.¹¹¹ Next he stopped the payment of the stipulated tribute to the Mogul Emperor and set himself up as an independent king.

Not satisfied with this assumption of independent status Pran Narayan made a bold bid for regaining possession over Kamrup. He at first tried peaceful measures and made overtures to Durlabh Narayan (son of Uttam Narayan), zaminder of Budhnagar, and a vassal of the Mogul Emperor, to join hands with him in overthrowing Mogul authority in Kamrup. But Durlabh Narayan refused to listen to Pran Narayan. Foiled in his attempt at peaceful negotiations, Pran Narayan, who was already displeased with Durlabh Narayan for the addition of the suffix 'Narayan', the hereditary title of the Koch kings of the descendants of Biswa Singha to his own name, sent Vizier Bhabanath Karji against Durlabh Narayan to capture him and occupy his territories. Durlabh Narayan, along with another chieftain named Hari Narayan fled to Beltola (a few miles south of Gauhati) where the Koch ruler Mahidhar Narayan took them under his protection. When the king of Beltola intimated the news to the Ahom king Jayadhwaj Singha, the latter sent many presents to Durlabh Narayan to Beltola.* As a result of this most of the territories that fell within the jurisdiction of the kingdom of Koch Hajo easily passed into the hands of Pran Narayan. Mir Lutfullah Shivaji, the Mogul Faujdar of Kamrup (i.e. Koch Hajo) tried to oppose and sent his son against Bhabanath Karji. In the battle that ensued between the two parties the Mogul army was defeated at the hands of the Koch army under Bhabanath Karji and the Mogul Faujdar himself along with his army was compelled to retreat to Gauhati. In the meantime, the Ahom king Jayadhwaj Singha, who was also alert to take advantage of the dissensions amongst the Moguls, assembled a strong army, threw two bridges over the Kalang and advanced towards Gauhati.¹¹² Mir Lutfullah, the Mogul Faujdar, who was at Gauhati, being hemmed in by the Koches on the one side and the Ahoms on the other became extre-

Success of Pran
Narayan and Jaya-
dhvaj Singha against
the Moguls—1657

111. *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 298-99.

112. *Ibid.* p. 299 ; Dutta, S. K. *Assam Buranji*, pp. 13-15 ; *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 157 ; *Kamrupar Buranji*, p. 52 ; *Assam Buranji S. M.*, p. 89 ; *Purani Assam Buranji*, p. 115. *Ahom Buranji*, p. 158.

* The fact that the Koch ruler of Beltola sent the news of Durlabh Narayan's arrival to Beltola to king Jayadhwaj Singha in spite of the fact that his territory fell within the jurisdiction of Mogul Kamrup shows that he was most probably in secret correspondence with the Ahom king for overthrowing Mogul authority in Kamrup. By sending presents to Durlabh Narayan the Ahom king Jaydhvaj Singha also indirectly promised his protection to him.

113. *Assam Buranji*, S. M. pp. 89-90 ; *Purani Assam Buranji*, pp. 115-17 ; Dutta, S. K. *Assam Buranji*, pp. 15-16 ; *Kamrupar Buranji*, pp. 52-53 ; *Koch Beharer Itihas*, pp. 157-58 ; Gait, *History of Assam*, pp. 127-28.

mely terrified and left Gauhati without waiting to be attacked. The Ahoms thereupon took instant possession of Gauhati, Pandu and Sharaighat in February 1659¹¹⁴ and the Koches who had advanced by the north bank of the Brahmaputra under Bhabanath Karji took possession of Hajo.

At this juncture Pran Narayan, the king of Koch Behar, proposed to the Ahom king Jayadhwaj Singha through his minister Bhabanath Karji, an offensive and defensive alliance against the Moguls and a friendly division of their territories in Assam, he taking the tract lying on the north bank of the Brahmaputra and the Ahoms that on the south. But Jayadhwaj Singha rejected this belated proposal of the Koch king. Soon afterwards the Ahom troops marched against the Koch army at Hajo and after a week's struggle, compelled Bhabanath Karji to retreat from that place and to flee to Koch Behar in July 1659 (saka 1581, month of Sravan=1659 A.D. July+Aug).*

About this time, Jay Narayan, the son of Chandra Narayan and grandson Parikshit returned to Kamrup from Bengal and sought refuge under the Ahom king Jayadhwaj Singha.¹¹⁵ The latter received him kindly and established him as the Raja of Kamrup with his capital at Ghila Bijaypur by the side of the Manah river. Soon afterwards in February 1660, the Koch forces under Bhabanath Karji again advanced up to the Manah river. The Ahoms also thereupon made their stand on the other side of the Manah river. At this juncture, Jay Narayan, the Koch prince offered his services as a mediator between the two warring parties and tried his best to effect reconciliation. But unfortunately he could not succeed in his mission and was reproached by the Barphukan for his failure. Jay Narayan thereupon again fled to Bengal in March, 1660 (Choitra=March+April) and Ghila Bijaypur was occupied by Ahom troops. In the battle that ensued between the Koches and the Ahoms, the Koches were defeated and Bhabanath Karji was compelled to flee away.

In the meantime, Pran Narayan, the king of Koch Behar had advanced to Dhubri at the head of an army and had taken possession of Dhubri by defeating the brother of the Mogul Faujdar of Kamrup.¹¹⁶ But the Ahoms would give the Koch king no respite. After defeating Bhabanath Karji the Ahom forces advanced to Dhubri and completely defeated the Koch troops under Pran Narayan. A large quantity of war booty in the shape of war implements and boats fell into the hands of the victorious Ahoms. Pran Narayan was at last driven back to his own domain to the west of the river Sonkosh. The aspirations of the Ahom king

114. The date is given in *Assam Buranji* S. M. (p.90) and *Kamrupar Buranji* (p. 53).

* The date is given in *Puranī Assam Buranji* (p. 117)

115. *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 158 ; *Assam Buranji*, S. M., pp. 90-91 ; *Puranī Assam Buranji*, pp. 117-18 ; *Kamrupar Buranji*, pp. 53-54 ; Dutta, S.K. *Assam Buranji* pp. 17-18 ;

116. *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 158 ; *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, p. 302.

were now realised. The Moguls abandoned Kamrup and the western Koch kings were forced to give up their pretensions to it, leaving him in absolute authority. King Jayadhvaj Singha soon followed up his victory by extension of his sway over the whole of the western Brahmaputra valley and established a military station at Hatsilah, near Karaibari.¹¹⁷ Towards the south he pushed his boundary as far as Sherpur in the north-western part of the Mymensing district and Sri Surjya (northern part of the modern Sylhet) and the latter place was fortified and garrisoned. The whole of the Brahmaputra valley, from Sadiya on the east to the river Sonkosh on the west was thus brought under the rule of the Ahoms and the Ahom kingdom now attained its greatest territorial expansion. Nearly three years elapsed before the Moguls made any effort to regain their lost territory

The whole Brahmaputra valley comes under Ahom rule

About this time, Durlabh Narayan, the zamindar of Budhnagar, who had taken shelter under the Koch king of Beltola in 1658 A.D. just on the eve of Ahom-Koch conflicts, came and paid homage to the latter by falling prostrate at his feet.¹¹⁸ Jayadhvaj Singha welcomed him and offered him presents. Then the king ordered him to go to and govern Nowgong. In July 1660 A.D. Kandarpa Narayan, a son of Bir Narayan and grandson of Lakshmi Narayan (kings of Koch Behar) came to king Jayadhvaj Singha.¹¹⁹ The latter gave him the rule of Koch Beltola under the name Gandharba Narayan.

The victorious Ahoms then sent Mahidhvaj Narayan a son of Dharma Narayan alias Bali Narayan to rule the country of Bijaypur (i.e. Ghila Bijaypur).¹²⁰ But Mahidhvaj Narayan, being unable to reach the place came back in two days and remained at Darrang.

By June 1660, the war of succession finally ended in Aurangzeb's triumph. Having consolidated his position on the throne of Delhi, Aurangzeb turned his attention towards the east. In 1661 he ordered Mir-Jumla, who was appointed governor of Bengal, to invade Koch Behar and Assam and re-establish Mogul prestige in eastern India. Mir Jumla occupied Koch Behar by the end of the year 1661, and then by January 1662, he set forth on his invasion of Assam. The feeble resistance offered by the Ahoms at the several garrisons was easily overcome by Mir Jumla who at last entered Garhgaon, the Ahom capital on the 17th of March 1662 A.D. King Jayadhvaj Singha fled to Namrup in the Naga hills. The

117. *Purani Assam Buranjī*, p. 118 ; *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy* p. 320.

118. *Ahom Buranjī*, pp. 160-61.

119. *Ibid*, p. 161 ; Dutta S. K. *Assam Buranjī*, p. 17. At this time most probably, the kingship of Beltola was vacant and that was why Jayadhaj Singha gave Kandarpa Narayan, the Koch prince the rule of Koch Beltola.

120. *Ahom Buranjī*, p. 161 ; *Koch Beharer Itihas*, pp. 158-59.

* According to *Assam Buranjī*, S. M. p. 91 and *Assam Buranjī*, Tr. No. 259, Vol. 56, p. 41, D.H.A.S., Jay Narayan, who had fled to Bengal in March 1660, reported to Mir Jumla the occupation of Kamrup by the Ahoms.

Mogul army remained in occupation of Garhgaon for nine months when it was withdrawn after a treaty had been concluded by the Ahom government with Mir Jumla on 9th January, 1663 A.D. According to the terms of this treaty, the Ahom government agreed to pay a large indemnity to the Moguls. They also agreed to pay an annual tribute and ceded the country west of the Bhoroli river on the north bank of the Brahmaputra and Kalang on the south to the Mogul Emperor of Delhi.¹²¹ The territorial loss of the Ahoms thus became much greater than at the treaty of 1639 A.D. This time the western part of the present Darrang district which had come under the possession of the Ahoms and over which Bali Narayan alias Dharma Narayan had been made the tributary Raja under the Ahoms, also passed into the hands of the Moguls.

The defeat of the Ahoms at the hands of the Imperialist army of the Moguls under Mir Jumla resulted in a complete change in the hitherto maintained attitude and relation between the Ahom kings and the Koch Behar kings. It brought home to Jayadvaj Singha the folly of despising the co-operation of Pran Narayan, the king of Koch Behar against the Imperialistic designs of the Moguls. The result had proved to be disastrous for both the kingdoms. Though Pran Narayan succeeded in recovering his state from the occupation of the Moguls after a few months, he could not regain complete independence. He retained his kingdom as a vassal of the Moguls till his death. Similarly the Ahom king was also made tributary of the Moguls.

The Koch Behar king Pran Narayan also realised his mistake of despising the friendship and co-operation of the Ahom king at a time when it was voluntarily offered to him by the latter. Had the armies of the Ahoms and the Koches combined together against the Moguls, the results of the war might have been different. The realisation of their mistakes seem to have made both the kings desirous for the friendship of the other. The lead was most probably taken by the Koch king Pran Narayan who sent a messenger to the Ahom king Jayadvaj Singha in February, 1663 enquiring after his welfare.¹²² In reply to the enquiry of the friendly verbal message of Pran Narayan, king Jayadvaj Singha wrote a letter to the former stating his misfortune at the hands of the Moguls on account of the treachery of his officers and seeking his friendship against the Moguls for the protection of the country, the cows and the Brahmans.¹²³ In reply to the letter of Jayadvaj Singha, Pran Narayan

121. Gait, *History of Assam*, pp. 138-39.

122. Historical letters of the Ahom period, Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 5-6, D.H.A.S. ; Historical letters of the Ahom period exchanged between the Ahom and Koch Behar courts, Tr. No. 18, Vol. V, part VI, pp. 358-60, D.H.A.S.

123. *Ibid.*

Development of friendship and exchange of letters between the kings of Koch Behar & Assam wrote a letter to the former stating the history of the old friendship between the two kingdoms from the days of the founder of the Koch kingdom Biswa Singha. He further wrote that it was the violation of the old friendship that had led to temporary losses for both the kingdoms and ultimately making them tributary to the Moguls.¹²⁴ In the course of the description of the former history of the Koch rulers, Pran Narayan referred to the protection given to various Koch princes of the eastern Koch kingdom by the Ahom kings beginning with the installation of Bali Narayan as the tributary Raja of Darrang in 1616 A.D. by Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.) down to the protection given to Jay Narayan, the grandson of Parikshit by Jayadhvaj Singha (1648—1663 A.D.) in 1659 A.D. But both Jay Narayan and Makardhvaj, (or Mahidhvaj Narayan, son of Bali Narayan) proved treacherous to the Ahom king, their benefactor and joined the side of the Moguls against the Ahoms in the invasion of Assam by Mir Jumla in 1662 A.D. Pran Narayan therefore requested Jayadhvaj Singha to render no further assistance to Jay Narayan (Makardhvaj* i.e. Mahidhvaj Narayan, had already died) in order to revive the old friendship between the two kingdoms. On his part he also promised to render him no assistance. Then he concluded the letter by instructing him to stock three years provisions for his soldiers, make necessary arrangements for the collection of arms and ammunitions and proposed the plan of making simultaneous attacks against the Moguls from both sides. For the success of the plan he requested Jayadhvaj Singha to keep themselves informed of each other's movements. The defeat of the Ahoms at the hands of the Mogul general Mir Jumla thus put to an end the traditional hostility between the Ahom kings and Koch Behar kings since the days of the Koch king Nar Narayan (1540-1587 A.D.) and ushered in the dawn of a new era in their relationship with mutual co-operation and goodwill against the Imperialistic designs of the Moguls as its main characteristics.

The Koch Behar king Pran Narayan wrote another letter to the Raja Shashur Raj Mantri or prime minister of Jayadhvaj Singha along with the letter to Jayadhvaj Singha praising his political wisdom and requesting him to consolidate the friendly relations between the two kingdoms.¹²⁵ Both the letters (i.e. of Jayadhvaj Singha and his minister) were written on 20th June, 1663 and were received at the Ahom court on 14th August, 1663. In reply to the letter of Pran Narayan,

124. Historical letters of the Ahom Period, Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 8-19, D.H.A.S. Historical letters of the Ahom period exchanged between the Ahom and Koch Behar courts, Tr. No. 18, Vol. V, part VI, pp. 361-77.

* Apparently Makardhvaj meant Mahidhvaj Narayan, the son of Bali Narayan, who was offered the rule of Bijaypur (i.e. Ghila Bijaypur) by Jayadhvaj Singha. But he, being unable to reach the place, came back to Darrang. It was most probably he, who made his submission to Mir Jumla as stated by Gait (*History of Assam*, pp. 130-31 and footnote of p. 131) and the Muhammadan Chroniclers had certainly mistaken him to be the Raja of Darrang. The name of the Raja of Darrang of this period was Surya Narayan.

125. Historical letters of the Ahom period, Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 27-29 ; D.H.A.S. ; Historical letters of the Ahom period exchanged between the Ahom and Koch Behar courts, Tr. No. 18, Vol. V, part VI, pp. 378-79, D.H.A.S.

Jayadhvaj Singha also wrote to him referring to the long existing friendship between the two kingdoms since the days of Biswa Singha.¹²⁶ In conclusion, he also agreed to the plan of making a joint attack against the Moguls and admitted that the success of the plan depended on the happy cooperation between the two parties. His prime minister Raja Shashur also wrote to Pran Narayan desiring the growth of friendship between the two kings. The letters were written on September 12th, 1663 A.D. In reply to king Jayadhvaj Singha's letter, Pran Narayan expressed his eagerness of maintaining cordial relations between the two kingdoms and agreed to make joint preparations for war against the Moguls.¹²⁷ In November, 1663 Jayadhvaj Singha died and Chakradhraj Singha (1663-1669) succeeded him to the throne.

About the middle of 1664 A.D. Pran Narayan sent one Ram Chandra Kataki (i.e. envoy) to the Ahom king Chakradhraj Singha communicating to him the news that the Moguls were enjoying his wealth and capturing elephants in his forests.¹²⁸ Chakradhraj Singha* in reply wrote a letter to him expressing his profound sorrow at the troubles given to Pran Narayan by the Moguls. However, he advised him to try his best to overcome the troubles and resist the enemy. The prime minister Rukma Burhagohain also wrote a letter to the Koch king Pran Narayan stressing the old friendship between the two kingdoms and desiring the strengthening of the same.¹²⁹ This letter was accompanied by two similar supplementary letters from Bargohain and Barpatra Gohain. In October and December 1665, two letters, one from Pran Narayan and the other from Kavi Mandal (minister) were sent to the Burhagohain. In both the letters the writers requested the Burhagohain to try to promote the friendly relations between the two countries.¹³⁰

The new Ahom king Chakradhraj Singha was a capable, energetic and ambitious ruler. Soon after his accession to the throne he made a firm resolve to

126. Ibid Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 33-35 & 37 ; Tr. No. 18, Vol. V, Part VI, pp. 381-83.

127. Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 44-49, D.H.A.S. ; Tr. No. 18, Vol. V, part VI, pp. 387-91, D.H.A.S. The letter is stated to have been written on 4th March, 1664. Then it must have been addressed to Chakradhraj Singha (1663-69) ; because Jayadhvaj Singha died in November 1663.

128. Tr. No. 1, vol. 1, pp. 39-40, D.H.A.S. ; Tr. No. 18, Vol. V, part VI, pp. 384-85 ; *Ahom Buranjis*, p. 189. In the *Ahom Buranji* the Koch envoy Ram Charan referred to a former treaty made between the Ahom king and the Koch king (neither the names of the kings nor the time is mentioned) by which the latter was given the rule of the two countries of Beltola and Darrang on condition of supplying elephants to the Ahom king. Formerly also, four Musalmans asked the permission of the Koch king to catch elephants but their request was refused. In the meantime, the Moguls took possession of Beltola and Darrang and began to capture elephants. A Kutaki was sent to the former king (i.e. Jayadhvaj Singha) who prohibited the Koch king from taking any action. In spite of that, the Koches resisted the Moguls but without any effect. This statement of the *Ahom Buranji* is not supported by the other Buranjis. We know from the other Buranjis that Beltola and Darrang were given by the Ahom government to two Koch princes on condition of paying annual tributes to the former.

* In the *Buranji* the letter is stated to have been written by Jayadhvaj Singha. But this is wrong.

129. Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, p. 52, D.H.A.S., Tr. No. 18 Vol. V, part VI, p. 392, D.H.A.S.

130. Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 59 & 61, D.H.A.S. ; Tr. No. 18, Vol. V, part VI, pp. 396-97.

shake off the humiliating legacy of foreign domination by ousting the Moguls from Kamrup altogether. For four years, king Chakradhvaj Singha played a game of great duplicity. He kept up an appearance of submission and good faith and refrained from rupturing diplomatic intercourse with the Moguls. At the same time, however, he steadily and patiently devoted himself in preparing the country for a fresh struggle with the Moguls. He had already strengthened his position by sending friendly overtures to the Koch king Pran Narayan. In February, 1666 Chakradhvaj Singha sent a letter to the Koch king Pran Narayan acknowledging his gratitude to the latter for conveying him the report that some of the provincial governors had risen against Aurangzeb, and that Pran Narayan had made preparations to attack the Moguls.¹³¹ The Koch king thereby apparently indicated to the Ahom king that it was proper time to attack the Moguls. A few months after, early in 1666, Pran Narayan died and his son Mod Narayan (1666-80) succeeded him to the throne.¹³² Mod Narayan also continued the friendship with the Ahoms. He sent two envoys named Nanda and Bhima with a letter to the Ahom king Chakradhvaj Singha in January 1667.¹³³ Through that letter he intimated to the former the news of the recovery of Fathpur pargana* by him from the clutches of the Moguls. He approved the plan of simultaneous attack against the common enemy of both which he considered to be a sound political maxim. The messengers were duly received at the Ahom court.

On 13th of August 1667, Chakradhvaj Singha, just on the eve of his attack on the Mogul garrisons at Gauhati and other places in Kamrup, sent a letter to the Koch king Mod Narayan requesting him to make a simultaneous attack on the Moguls near his boundary.¹³⁴

In August, 1667, a well equipped Ahom army set out to wrest Gauhati

131. Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 63-64. D.H.A.S. ; Tr. No. 18. Vol. V, part VI, pp. 398-99, D.H.A.S.

132. *Mughal N.E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 310 & 312.

133. *Koch Behar's Itihas*, p. 169 ; Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, p. 66-68 D.H.A.S. Tr. No. 18, Vol. V, part VI, pp. 400-01, D.H.A.S. In the transcript Buranjis the name of the Koch king is given as Pran Narayan. But this must be wrong.

* It should be remembered in this connection that though Mir Jumla easily occupied Koch Behar, he could not retain it longer. After a few months' occupation, Koch Behar was recovered by its king Pran Narayan, who retained it in vassalage till his death. Meantime the Assam campaign had ended in a disaster, and this necessitated a revision in Imperial policy which was marked by a defensive attitude towards Assam and aggressive Imperialism towards Koch Behar. The change in policy towards Koch Behar became more discernible under the weak successors of Pran Narayan. Already, Askar Khan, who had been appointed by Mir Jumla just on the eve of his death to renew hostile operations against Koch Behar, succeeded in retaining the hold of the Moguls on the chakla of Fathpur (i.e. Fathpur Pargana) outside the walls of Koch Behar which had been seized by the Moguls early in the war. Under the weak successors of Pran Narayan, the Moguls explicitly adopted the policy of territorial expansion at the expense of the anarchic and defenceless state of Koch Behar. One by one, the outlying districts in the south and the west were annexed to the Imperial domain till its dismemberment was completed by the first quarter of the 18th century.— *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 298, and 308-311.

134. Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, p. 70, D.H.A.S., Tr. No. 18. Vol. V, part VI, p. 402.

from the hands of the Moguls. After two months, both Gauhati and Pandu were captured by the Ahoms. Early in November, a number, of war-ships arrived with reinforcements for the Moguls who renewed the conflict, but still without success. They were driven from Agiathuti and suffered a series of defeats as they gradually fell back on the Manah river. Here they made a stand but were again defeated by the Ahoms. The victorious Ahoms then chose Gauhati as the headquarter of the Barphukan.

The Ahoms recover Gauhati & make it Barphukan's headquarter

In the meantime, in October, 1667, a Koch messenger named Bhima had arrived at the Ahom court while the war with the Moguls was still continuing. But the Ahom king Chakradhvaj Singha returned the letter of the Koch king unopened as the latter did not send letter to his prime minister like before.¹³⁵ He further asked the Barphukan to charge the Koch envoy with that offence. The Barphukan complied with the order of the king and then sent a letter to the Koch king asking him to observe the custom of sending supplementary letters to the prime minister and the Barphukan along with the letter to the Ahom king if he desired to maintain friendly relations with the Ahom king. In spite of the pre-occupation of the Ahoms in their war against the Moguls, they did not allow the state of Koch Behar to depart from the observance of the diplomatic procedures in their correspondence with the Ahom court, although their friendship, goodwill and if possible co-operation also was highly necessary to inflict defeat on the Imperialist Moguls.

The news of the defeat of Firuz Khan and of the loss of Gauhati reached Aurangzeb in December, 1667. He at once resolved to wipe out the disgrace and with that object appointed Raja Ram Singha of Amber to the command of an Imperial army which was to be strengthened by troops of the Bengal command. Ram Singha therefore had to spend some time in collecting his army which included 15,000 archers from Koch Behar.¹³⁶ Ram Singha did not reach Rangamati until February, 1669. In the series of engagements that took place between the Ahoms and the Moguls, the Ahoms had at first some reverses at the hands of the

Moguls. But subsequently they succeeded in defeating the Moguls both by land and water and by March 1671, Ram Singha was so weakened by repeated losses that he was forced to retreat to Rangamati.* In the meantime Chakradhvaj Singha

Invasion of Assam by Raja Singha and his defeat, 1669—1671 A.D.

135. Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, p. 72, D.H.A.S.; Tr. No. 18, Vol. V, part VI, p. 403, D.H.A.S.; *Assam Buranji* S. M., p. 106. In the first two sources of information, the name of the Barphukan is given as Garhgayan Sandikoi Barphukan. But at that time Lachit Barphukan was the Barphukan. In the *Assam Buranji* S. M. the Koch envoy Bhima is stated to have been accompanied by Nanda. But this is certainly wrong. Nanda accompanied Bhima on the previous occasion in January 1667 and not in October, 1667.

136. *Koch Behar Itihas*, p. 169.

* For the details of Ahom-Mogul wars, refer Gait's, *History of Assam*, pp. 154-57 and Bhattacharyya, S. N., *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 362-388.

had died in 1669 and Udayaditya Singha (1669-1673 A.D.) succeeded him to the throne.

The news of the departure of Ram Singha was conveyed to Udayaditya Singha who received it with great joy and loaded Lachit Barphukan with presents. Hadira, opposite Goalpara, now became the Ahom frontier outpost. Udayaditya Singha then engaged himself in reorganising the administration of the country. Accordingly, Surya Narayan** was installed as the tributary Raja of Darrang (Raja of Uttarkol) on the north of the Brahmaputra and Gandharba Narayan***, as the Raja of Beltola (Raja of Dakhinkol).¹³⁷ The Barbarua and the Bargohain were entrusted with the arrangements for the defence of upper Assam. But the Moguls showed no desire to renew the contest and for some years there was peace between the two warring camps.

Chakradhvaj Singha died by the middle of 1669 A.D. During the period of twelve years that intervened (1669-1681) between his death and accession of Gadadhar Singha in 1681, there were no less than seven kings, not one of whom died a natural death. This period was marked by intrigue amongst the high officials of the state who set up their own nominees on the throne to serve their own purposes. The rulers merely played into the hands of the unscrupulous and ambitious ministers. Taking advantage of the weakness of the administration of the centre Laluk Sola Barphukan, the Ahom Viceroy of Gauhati (1669-1679 A.D.) entered into treasonable correspondence with the Mogul Nawab of Bengal, who arranged to send prince Muhammad Azam in the following February (1679) to take possession of Gauhati, which the Barphukan agreed to deliver into his hands. The plot was divulged to the reigning king Sudaipha (1677-79 A.D.) who at once took steps to frustrate it. He hastily raised an army and sent it towards Gauhati. But it was too late to save Gauhati which was surrendered to the Moguls by the Barphukan early in March, 1679.

Surrender of Gauhati
to the Moguls--March
1679 A.D.

With the accession of Gadadhar Singha (1681-96 A.D.) on the Ahom throne in 1681, the era of weak and incompetent princes and of unscrupulous and ambitious ministers came to an end. His first act was to equip an army to oust the Moguls from Gauhati. He easily succeeded in driving away the Moguls across the Manah

Recovery of Gauhati
by the Ahoms 1682
A.D.

** In the Buranjis his name is given as Chandra Narayan but the correct name seems to be Surya Narayan. Chandra Narayan was the name of the son of Mohendra Narayan, grandson of Bali Narayan who died in 1660.—Bhuyan, S. K., *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 265.

*** Gandharba Narayan was the son of Bir Narayan and grandson of Lakshmi Narayan. His former name was Kandarpa Narayan. When the Ahoms for the first time succeeded in extending their western boundary temporarily up to the Sonkosh by the beginning of 1660, Kandarpa Narayan was given the rule of Beltola by king Jayadvaj Singha under the name of Gandharba Narayan

137. *Ahom Buranjis*, p. 217; Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 157.

river by defeating them at the battle of Itakhuli in 1682. Manah was accepted by the Moguls as the western boundary of the Ahom kingdom. The Moguls again made their stand at Ringamati. But they dared not invade Assam again. The warfare of 1682, which resulted in the recapture of Gauhati by the Ahoms, brought to an end the longdrawn conflict between the Ahoms and the Moguls which ended in the triumph of the former.

It has been already mentioned that Mir Jumla could not retain his hold on Koch Behar permanently. After a few months' occupation, it was recovered from the hands of the Moguls by Pran Narayan, who retained it in vassalage under them (i.e. the Moguls) till his death. Pran Narayan realised late in life his folly of siding with the Moguls and tried to correct himself by establishing friendly relations with the Ahom king against the Moguls with a view to making Koch Behar free from the vassalage under the Moguls. His son and successor Mod Narayan (1666-80 A.D.) also followed in the foot-steps of his father, and soon after his accession to the throne he revived friendly relations with the Ahom king Chakradhvaj Singha by sending envoys and letters to him. In spite of the maintenance of friendly relations with the Ahom king, Mod Narayan, being a vassal* of the Mogul Emperor, was compelled to assist the Mogul army of Ram Singha in his campaign against Assam in 1669, with 15,000 archers. This incident was followed by a discontinuance of diplomatic correspondence between the two courts for several years till it was revived in the eighties of the 17th century.

On 30th May, 1684 A.D. (16th Jeth, 1606 saka) the Koch king Mohendra Narayan (1682-93 A.D.), with a view to revive the friendship with the Ahoms, wrote a letter to Garhgayan Sandikoi Barphukan at Gauhati intimating him with the news that the son of the Nawab of Dacca had come to him with many presents to induce him to make an alliance with them and to mediate between the Moguls and the Ahoms in order to make a

The king of Koch-Behar tries to revive friendship with the Ahoms

According to Amanatullah Ahmed, however, during the time of Mod Narayan, Koch Behar was not a vassal state under the Moguls like his predecessor Pran Narayan. In support of his statement he puts forward the theory that though the assistance was given to the Moguls, the Raja of Koch Behar (Mod Narayan) did not accompany the Mogul army under Ram Singha like his predecessor Pran Narayan. The Raja of Koch Behar gave assistance to Ram Singha merely on friendly terms. He further puts forward the argument in support of his statement that, if Koch Behar would have been a tributary state under the Mogul Emperor, the Mogul invasions of the Koch Behar state in 1685, 1687 and 95 would not have taken place. The noted historian, has, however, evidently fallen into an error in making this statement. Because the subsequent letters that were exchanged between the courts of Koch Behar and Assam reveal the fact that Koch Behar was tributary to the Moguls at least up to the eighties of the 17th century. (Koch Boharer Itihas, p. 172). The three Mogul invasions of Koch Behar state were, as stated by S. N. Bhattacharyya, the result of the evolution of a new phase of aggressive Imperialism by the Moguls after Pran Narayan's death.—(*Moghul N. E. Frontier Policy*, pp. 302 & 311).

settlement.¹³⁸ But the Koch king did not agree with their proposal on the grounds of their demanding an indemnity of ten lacs of rupees from the Ahom king and also not making the Koch king free from liabilities due to the Moguls. Then in the usual style he stressed the old friendship between the two kingdoms and desired the continuance of the same. He further wrote that the Moguls were the common enemy of both the kingdoms. Therefore he requested the Barphukan to attack the Mogul garrison at Rangamati with the permission of the Ahom king and then proceed to Dacca via Ghoraghat. He said that if they made simultaneous attacks on the Moguls, then Dacca would surely fall into their hands. He further said that he had commenced his preparations and asked the Barphukan to take action on the lines suggested by him without any loss of time.

King Mohendra Narayan being a minor at that time (about seven years old),* the above letter was certainly written by his ministers in his name whose aim was to obtain the co-operation of the Ahom king against the Moguls who still kept Koch Behar under their vassalage. Taking advantage of the minority of the Koch king, Jagat Narayan and Jaina Narayan, the two surviving sons of the Nazir Mahi Narayan (Pran Narayan's uncle) constantly disturbed the peace of the kingdom and oppressed the people.¹³⁹ The ministers of state were powerless to oppose them. This weakness of the royal power and the consequent political confusion afforded the Moguls the golden opportunity to carry on aggressive expeditions against Koch Behar for extending their sway over the southern and western portions of the Koch Behar kingdom.

✓ About the end of 1684 A.D. Bhabani Das, son of Todar Mal and a deputy of the Mogul Nawab of Bengal launched a campaign against Koch Behar.¹⁴⁰ The capital of Koch Behar was seized and Raja Mohendra Narayan was compelled to flee to the hills. But subsequently, Kumar Jaina Narayan, the Chhatra Nazir turned out the Moguls from Koch Behar with the help of the Dharma Raja (spiritual head) of Bhutan and put to death the rebellious persons of the country. Then the king returned to the capital from the hills. The people of Bhitarbund sided with the Koch king and Dharma Raja in driving away the Moguls and suppressing the rebellion within the kingdom. But Bahirbund, extending from the Bagduar,

138. Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 74-76, D.H.A.S. ; Tr. No. 18, Vol. V part VI, pp. 404-5. The name of the Koch king is given as Mo1 Narayan (1666-80). But Mod Narayan died in 1680 and was succeeded by Basudev Narayan (1680-82) who ruled only for two years and then Mohendra Narayan (1682-93) succeeded him. Therefore it must be Mohendra Narayan and not Mod Narayan (*Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, p. 312 ; *Koch Beharer Itihas*, pp. 173-75).

* Mohendra Narayan is stated to have been five years old by S. N. Bhattacharyya (probably) at the time of his accession.—*Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, p. 12.

139. *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, p. 312 ; *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 175.

140. *Koch Beharer Itihas*, p. 175 ; *Mughal N. E. Frontier Policy*, p. 312. Both Amanatullah Ahmed and S. N. Bhattacharyya (the latter on the authority of Prof. Sarkar's *History of Aurangzeb*, Vol. III, p. 219) state that Bhabani Das attacked Koch Behar in 1585 A.D. But from the letter given in Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 78-7 and Tr. No. 18, Vol. V, part VI, pp. 406-7, it appears that he invaded Koch Behar about the end of 1584 A.D.

passed into the hands of the Moguls.* The Moguls did not wish to part with it. They asked the Koch king to come to Dacca to negotiate for it. But the latter decided to give up his territory rather than make friendship with the Moguls. The Raja of Koch Behar Mohendra Narayan wrote a letter to Sandikai Barphukan in March 1685 A.D. describing all these things. He again requested the Barphukan to attack the Mogul garrison at Rangamati which would facilitate him to attack the Mogul force stationed at Bagduar. He further intimated to the Barphukan that the Moguls were contemplating to invade Assam after bringing Koch Behar into their clutches.

In reply to the above letter Garhgayan Sandikai Barphukan wrote a letter to the Koch king Mohendra Narayan in October, 1685, expressing his sorrow at the discomfiture of the latter at the hands of the Moguls. Unfortunately for difficulties on the way this letter could not reach Koch Behar and was brought back.

After this for several years there was no correspondence between the two kingdoms. In 1714 A.D. during the reign of the Ahom king Rudra Singha (1696-1714) it was revived again. It appears that the Ahom Barphukan at Gauhati took the initiative (apparently at the instruction of Rudra Singha) of reviving the old friendship by sending a letter to the Koch king Rup Narayan (1704-14). The motive of the Ahom king Rudra Singha to revive friendship with the Koch Behar King was undoubtedly to obtain the friendship and co-operation of the latter in his proposed campaign against Bengal. In reply to the letter of the Barphukan, Raja Rup Narayan sent a letter to the Barphukan in May, 1714 A.D. which was received by the Barphukan on July 13th, 1714, when Rudra Singha was camping at Gauhati on his way to invade Bengal. In the letter Rup Narayan stated that the Koch kings, inspite of the existence of friendly relations between the two kingdoms, had to stop sending out envoys to the Ahom court owing to the impassable condition of the roads. As the difficulties were now over he wished the Barphukan to revive the friendship again.

The preparations made by Rudra Singha for the invasion of Bengal were in vain. Before the completion of his preparations he was seized with a mortal illness and died in August, 1714 A.D.

His successor Siva Singha (1714-44), being deficient in courage and

* The submission of some of the southern provinces (chaklas) to the Moguls is mentioned in the Koch Behar Itihas, p. 175.

141. Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 78-79, D.H.A.S.; Tr. No. 18, Vol. V, part VI, pp. 406-7, D.H.A.S.

142. Ibid, pp. 81-82; and pp. 408-9.

** The letter is stated to have been written in Saka 1635, in the month of Jeth (1713, May). This seems to be an error of the copyist. The letter was most probably written in May, 1714, as I have stated & received in July, 1714.

143. Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, p. 84, D.H.A.S. Tr. No. 18, Vol. V, part VI, p-411, D.H.A.S.

ability to undertake arduous expeditions, abandoned the plan of his father to invade Bengal. In September, 1714, he wrote a letter to the Koch king Rup Narayan intimating to him the preparations made by his father to invade Bengal according to the lines suggested by him (i.e. Rup Narayan), which had to be abandoned at the sudden demise of his father.¹⁴⁴ He wrote further to say that he was still holding fast to the friendly relations established by their ancestors between the two kingdoms. After this we no longer find any correspondence being made between the two courts.

Relations of the
Ahoms with the east-
ern Koch Kings

As regards the relations of the Ahoms with the eastern branch of Koch kings it has been already stated that after the death of Dharma Narayan in 1637 A.D. the Ahom king Pratap Singha appointed his son Mohendra Narayan as the ruler of Darrang and asked him to consult the Barphukan on all important matters. Mohendra Narayan established his head-quarters at Mangaldai. From this time the Darrang Rajas can no longer be regarded as independent rulers. Their main duty was to protect the subjects of the Ahom kingdom from the inroads of the Bhutias. Mohendra Narayan died in 1643 and was succeeded by his son Chandra Narayan.¹⁴⁵ Chandra Narayan opposed the inroads of the Bhutias with the help of the Ahom army. They were subdued and were made to pay an annual tribute to the Ahom king and confine themselves to the Gohain Kamal Ali. Chandra Narayan died in 1660 and was succeeded by his son Surya Narayan.* Surya Narayan is said

144. Tr. No. 1, Vol. I p. 86, D.H.A.S. Tr. No. 18, Vol. V, part VI. p. 411, D.H.A.S.

145. Bhuyan, S. K. *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, pp. 265-68 Gait, *Koch kings of Kamrupa*, J.A.S.B. 1893, No. 4, pp. 307-8; Wade, J. P. *An Account of Assam*, pp. 224-46.

* Relying on Muhammadan Chroniclers both Mr. Gait and Dr. Bhuyan refer to the fact that when Mir Jumla marched against Assam, and reached Gauhati in the beginning of February, 1662, "Makardhvaj, the Raja of Darrang, who is subject to the Raja of Assam, came and paid his respects to the Nawab and presented an elephant to him. He in return received a khelat from the Nawab, promised protection and was ordered to travel with the army."—Gait *History of Assam*, pp. 130-31 & footnote of p. 131, and Bhuyan, S. K. *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 26 including the footnote). But the name of the Darrang Raja of this period was Surya Narayan. The contemporary Rani Raja was also named Makardhvaj and Gait supposes that it was this Chief who was referred to by the Muhammadan Chroniclers. Bhuyan on the other hand, holds the view that Makardhvaj might have been an alternative name of the Darrang Raja Surya Narayan. Unfortunately, however, both these noted historians are mistaken in their identification of Makardhvaj. In the first place, Makardhvaj was definitely not the Raja of Rani as supposed by Gait: Because in that case the Koch king Pran Narayan certainly would not have referred to him in his letter addressed to Jayadvaj Singha in June, 1663 (Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 8-19; Tr. No. 18, Vol. V, part VI, pp. 361-77, D.H.A.S.) The Rani Raja was not a Koch Raja. On the other hand Makardhvaj was not an alternative name of the Darrang Raja Surya Narayan as supposed by Dr. Bhuyan. Because in the letter written by Pran Narayan to Jayadvaj Singha he had referred to the fact that Makardhvaj had already died. But Surya Narayan was ruling in Darrang till 1682 when he was taken captive to Delhi by Mansur Khan. Therefore it is most probable that Makardhvaj was Mahidhvaj Narayan, the son of Bali Narayan (or Dharma Narayan) as I have already stated. He was offered the rule of Bijaypur (i.e. Ghila Bijaypur) by Jayadvaj Singha when he temporarily succeeded in extending the western boundary of the Ahom kingdom up to the Sonkosh in 1659-60. But Mahidhvaj (or Makardhvaj), being unable to reach the place came back to Darrang. It was most probably he, who made his submission to Mir Jumla and the Muhammadan Chroniclers had certainly mistaken him to be the Raja of Darrang.

to have been worsted in battle by Mansur Khan who invaded Darrang in 1682, captured its Raja and took him as a captive to Delhi. He was succeeded by his brother Indra Narayan, who at that time was only five years old. Towards the end of 1682 Mansur Khan was expelled from Gauhati and the Ahoms recovered possession of Kamrup. During the minority of Indra Narayan (son of Chandra Narayan and brother of Surya Narayan) the Ahoms took advantage of dissensions amongst his councillors to strengthen their hold on the country. The six thousand 'mul' * levies of Darrang, commanded by six Hazarikas or Chiliarchs were transferred to the establishment of Gauhati and placed at the disposal of the Barphukan. The inhabitants who were exempted from personal service had to pay taxes in gold, blankets and cowtails of Bhutan. The subjects of Darrang were placed under the Barbarua. The Raja was deprived of all territories which

Raja of Darrang
deprived of power
and territories in
Kamrup

formed part of Kamrup. Darrang alone remained in his possession, and even for this he had to pay an annual tribute. During the reign of Indra Narayan Darrang is said to have been surveyed under the orders of the Ahom Raja Rudra Singha in 1707, presumably with the object of ascertaining the amount of tribute which Indra Narayan would be able to pay. In the meantime Surya Narayan escaped from captivity, and on his return to Darrang he expressed his surprise at the reduction of the Darrang Raja's powers during his absence. He recalled the 'mul' from Gauhati; but Raja Indra Narayan and the Barphukan reported the matter to the Ahom king who immediately despatched the Naobaicha Phukan (i.e. the admiral) with a number of gunboats to destroy Surya Narayan. Subsequently the prince was taken to the Ahom court where he complained "that Swargadeo formerly deprived him of Camroop and had now rendered the prince of Darrang still less independent by transferring the mool of that province to the department of the Burroo Fokun."¹⁴⁶ He desired that his brother Indra Narayan should retain possession of Darrang provided the grievances were redressed. As Indra Narayan did not insist on his rights Surya Narayan came back to Mangaldoi with 80 men granted to him by the Ahom king to prepare the intoxicating herb (Bhang) for him, and established his residence on the eastern side of Mangaldoi. His father's personal property was equally divided between the two brothers.

Indra Narayan died in 1725 and was succeeded by his son Aditya Narayan. His territories now consisted only of that portion of the present

* 'mul'—An adult male whose name was registered for state service was called a 'paik' and four "paik" constituted a unit called a 'got'. The levy of one man from each got was called the 'mul', of two the 'dowal', and of three the 'tewal'.—Bhuyan, S. K. *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, pp. 10-11.

146. Wade, J. P. *An Account of Assam*, pp. 236-37.

* Gait has given his name as Madhu Narayan (Koch kings of Kamarupa, J.A.S.B., 1893, No. 4, p. 308.)

Mangaldoi subdivision which lies south of the Gohain Kamal Ali. Three years later in 1728, his younger brother Mod Narayan* seized upon two-thirds of the little kingdom and proclaimed himself Burha or senior Raja relegating

Aditya Narayan to the position of the Deka or junior Raja.

**Two rulers in Darrang
—Burha Raja & Deka
Raja**

From this time onwards Darrang was ruled by two rulers, one called the Burha-Raja and the other called the Deka Raja.

From the time of Aditya Narayan and Mod Narayan the ruling family of Darrang, "Sank into comparative insignificance. They were now mere subordinates of the Ahoms, and exercised no powers except such as were conferred on them by the Ahom Prince."¹⁴⁷

The Darrang Rajas resented very much the gradual reduction of their territories including Kamrup. They also chafed under the gradual reduction of their power, position and prestige. To the disaffection of the Dar-

**Causes of discontent
in Darrang**

rang Rajas was added the discontent of his subjects. First, they resented very much the higher rates of assessment introduced by the Ahom Government after surveying Darrang twice, once in 1707, during the reign of Rudra Singha and secondly, during the reign of his successor Siva Singha. To it was added the oppression carried on by the refugees of Upper Assam (i.e. the people who had left their homes during the troublous reign of Gaurinath Singha (1780-1795 A.D.) and had taken shelter in Darrang) upon the people of Darrang by plundering their articles of daily use. The people of Darrang seized the golden opportunity to rise in rebellion against the Ahom government during the weak rule of Gaurinath Singha when the latter was compelled to flee to Gauhati for the rebellious Moamarias who occupied Rangpur, the then Ahom capital. As a protest against the oppressions of the refugees from Upper Assam, the Darrangis recalled their 6,000 'mul' from Gauhati and also their two Rajas Hanga Narayan I, Burha Raja and Hanga Narayan II, Deka Raja, who were engaged in quelling the rebellion of the Moamarias at the command of Gaurinath Singha, to their own country Darrang to assist their countrymen in opposing the tyranny of the people of Upper Assam. Gaurinath Singha failed to bring them back from Darrang.¹⁴⁸

In the meantime, the people of Kamrup also, who were regarded by the Ahoms with suspicion and distrust, showed signs of rebellion under a Choudhury*, their leader, named Haradatta Bujarbarua of Jikeri. Taking advantage of the weakness of the Ahom Government and the dormant

147. Gait, *Koch kings of Kamrupa*, J.A.S.B., 1893, No. 4, P. 308.

148. For details, refer Bhuyan, S.K., *Anglo-Assamese Relations* PP. 268-271.

* A Choudhury was the ruler of a parganah into which Kamrup was divided during the time of the Moguls and which system of administration was retained by the Ahoms as well. He wielded great influence in his locality and at times eclipsed the paramount power of the Ahoms.

disaffection of the Kamrupis, Haradatta organised secret manoeuvres to expel the Ahoms from Gauhati who had now organised themselves more firmly at that place round the person of Gaurinath Singha.* Not finding any opportunity in Kamrup he crossed over to Darrang and instigated the two Rajas Hangsa Narayan I & II to commence hostilities promising to put them soon in possession of Kamrup. The Deka Raja Hangsa Narayan II agreed to Haradatta's proposal. But in the conflict with the Ahoms, he was defeated and fled to Kaliapani at the foot of the Bhutan hills from where he was seized by the Ahoms and put to death (in January or February, 1790). His son Krishna Narayan who was then seventeen years old, was deprived of the Deka Rajaship of Darrang. At the instigation of Haradatta Choudhury and several other experienced and aged leaders who entertained deep hatred of the Ahom government, Krishna Narayan planned to rise in rebellion against the Ahom government. He entered the company's territory of Rangpur in Bengal and collected there a force called "burkendazes", which included Sikh, Rajput and all manner of men from Bengal to Lahore. This force was augmented by Assamese recruits. In December 1791, Krishna Narayan entered Assam with his army by way of Bhutan and Bijni and easily took possession of Darrang. He left there a detachment to guard his conquest and then marched towards Kamrup where he was joined by Haradatta Choudhury. They entered North Gauhati with their burkendazes, plundered the villages, oppressed the defenceless inhabitants and laid waste the country. The Ahom government, not being in a position to drive away the burkendazes and put a stop to their depredations, appealed to Lord Cornwallis, the British Governor General, asking for the despatch of Sepoys to his assistance to expel the burkendazes by force. In compliance with his request Lord Cornwallis sent six companies of sepoy (sixty sepoy in each) in September 1792 under the command of Captain Welsh to Assam in order to expel the burkendazes from Assam and to restore order in Assam by composing the differences of the Ahom king with Krishna Narayan. Captain Welsh succeeded in achieving his mission. Krishna Narayan was defeated by him and his remaining mercenaries were sent off under escort to Rangpur, where they were given their arrears of pay amounting to nearly six thousand rupees. Through his mediation reconciliation was brought about between the Ahom king Gaurinath Singha and Krishna Narayan, by which the latter took the customary oath of allegiance to Gaurinath Singha and was formally installed as the Raja of Darrang. The claims of the other members of the Darrang Raj family were also similarly considered.¹⁴⁹

Rebellion in Kamrup

Rebellion of Krishna Narayan

Expedition of Captain Welsh—1792

Krishna Narayan was installed as the Raja of Darrang

* In January 1788, the rebellious Moamaras had compelled Gaurinath Singha to flee to Gauhati and occupied Rangpur the Ahom Capital (*Anglo-Assamese Relations*, P. 226).

149. For details refer Bhuyan, S.K., *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, PP. 271-330.

During the remaining years of Gaurinath's reign, Krishna Narayan did not give any trouble. But in the reign of his successor Kamaleswar Singha (1795-1811 A.D.) when he was sent against Bijay Barmura Gohain* who was carrying on war against the Ahom government in league with the Moamarias, the fugitives from Assam (i.e. those fugitives who had taken shelter in the Kachari kingdom) and the Kacharis, Krishna Narayan proved to be a traitor to the Ahom government by joining hands with Bijay Barmura Gohain.¹⁵⁰ For this offence Krishna Narayan fell into disfavour with the Ahom government and was superseded by his relative Samudra Narayan in the Rajaship of Darrang.¹⁵¹ The latter was enjoined by the Ahom government to do his utmost to recover the fugitives who had fled from the Ahom kingdom during the turmoils of the Moamaria rebellion and had taken shelter in the neighbouring hill territories and settle them in their old villages, a matter in which Krishna Narayan appears to have been somewhat remiss. He was also told to prevent the Bhutias from encroaching.

The Darrang Rajas thus ruled their territory as an agent of the Ahom king till the advent of the British. In return for managing Darrang they were allowed the lands which were cultivated by their personal slaves and servants and which were surveyed and carefully recorded in the state records of the Ahoms.¹⁵²

Summary and Conclusion :

The Koches under Biswa Singha came to power about 1515 A.D. The Ahoms came in hostile contact with them in 1533 A.D., but shrewd Biswa Singha who had not yet gathered sufficient strength to resist the mighty powers of the Ahoms, averted his impending ruin by making his submission to the commander-in-chief of the Ahom force the Ahom Bargohain, acknowledging the overlordship of the Ahom king and by agreeing to pay annual tributes to him.

The westward expansion of the Ahom Kingdom again brought the Ahoms in hostile contact with the Koches under Nar Narayan (1540-87 A.D.) the son and successor of Biswa Singha in the forties of the 16th century. In the several

* Bijay Barmura Gohain was the great grandson of king Rajeswar Singha (1751-69 A.D.) and the grandfather of Purandar Singha (1833-38 A.D.). He had been implicated in the conspiracies of 1775 in the reign of Lakshmi Singha (1762-83) for which he was punished with the removal of an eye and an ear. On the death of Gaurinath Singha in 1795, Barmura Gohain, whose claims to succession, but for his mutilation, were superior to those of Kamaleswar, had attempted to seize the throne. But being repulsed by Purnananda Burhagohain Barmura fled with his family to Cachar and then to Manipur. From the latter place he tried to launch an expedition against the Ahom Government with the help of a Burmese force. But he was foiled in his attempt by the East India Company. Barmura then organised a confederacy of Moamarias, the fugitives and the Kacharis and instigated them to wage war against the Ahom government in the reign of Kamaleswar Singha.

150. *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 443.

151. Gait, *History of Assam*, p. 222.

152. Gait, *Koch kings of Kamrupa*, J.A.S.B., 1893, No. 4, p. 308.

engagements that took place between the two parties the Koches were defeated at the hands of the Ahoms. The defeat of the Koches led to a cessation of hostilities for some years. At last in 1555, the Koch king Nar Narayan changed his policy and instead of fighting against the Ahoms he tried to cultivate their friendship by sending envoys and presents to the Ahom king Sukhampha (1552-1603 A.D.). Unfortunately, the powerful Ahom king, who was rapidly expanding his dominion in the Brahmaputra valley first by defeating the Chutiyas, and then the Kacharis and some of the petty Bhuyan chieftains, did not show much eagerness for the friendship of the Koch king Nar Narayan whom he had defeated in battle several times. Another factor which induced king Sukhampha to undervalue the friendship of the Koch king Nar Narayan was undoubtedly the fact that friendship with him would stand as a barrier to the further expansion of the Ahom kingdom towards the west as the latter held vast plains territory under his possession. The result was the invasion of the Ahom kingdom by the Koches under Sukladvaj alias Chilarai the brother of king Nar Narayan in 1562. This time the Ahoms were not only defeated but were compelled to cede to the Koches a large part of their territory on the north bank of the Brahmaputra and were made tributary to them.

Unfortunately, however, fortune did not smile for long time on the Koches. The defeat and imprisonment of Chilarai at the hands of the Padshah of Gaur completely changed the situation and made the Koches anxious for cultivating the friendship of the Ahom king. The result was the release of the Ahom hostages handed over to Nar Narayan in 1563 as a condition of the treaty concluded between the two parties. They were accompanied by a Koch envoy along with a Koch princess and a number of Koch artisans as presents to the Ahom king Sukhampha. But the diplomacy of Nar Narayan of preventing the Ahoms from attempting to release their territories ceded to the Koches at this critical juncture and to regain their independence did not succeed. Because the Ahoms had made extensive preparations for the recovery of lost territory soon after the return of the Koch brothers Nar Narayan and Chilarai from Garhgaon and lost no time in recovering them. The Koches later on sent expeditions to reoccupy these territories but in vain.

The division of the Koch kingdom in 1581 A.D. into Koch Behar and Koch Hajo was followed by a dual relationship of the Ahoms with the two Koch kingdoms. Ahom influence may be said to have begun to infiltrate into Koch politics when Raghu Dev, the ruler of the eastern Koch kingdom, established matrimonial alliance with the Ahom king Sukhampha (1552-1603) by giving his daughter Mangaldoi in marriage to the latter after the death of Isa Khan, the Afghan ally of Raghu Dev, in 1599. Following Raghu Dev, his son and successor Parikshit Narayan also strengthened the bonds of friendship with the Ahom king Pratap Singha (1603-41) by giving a daughter in marriage to him apparently

with a view to obtain his help against Lakshmi Narayan aided by the Moguls. On the strength of this matrimonial alliance, Parikshit Narayan in 1612, sent an envoy to Pratap Singha requesting him to come to his assistance against the Moguls. Parikshit Narayan pointed out to king Pratap Singha the danger to which the Ahom power would be exposed if the Moguls succeeded in defeating him and occupying his dominion which was serving as a buffer state between the Ahom kingdom and the Mogul kingdom. Unfortunately, however, Pratap Singha failed to realise the gravity of the situation and instead of coming to the assistance of Parikshit against the Moguls, invited him to come to his dominion with his army to join the Ahom forces and prepare for a combined attack against the Moguls. Parikshit did not agree to the proposal of king Pratap Singha, carried on the struggle against the Moguls alone, was defeated and carried away as prisoner by the Moguls. His dominion was annexed to the Mogul Empire which, as predicted by Parikshit, brought the Ahom kingdom within the pale of Mogul Imperialism. Then began the series of Ahom-Mogul conflicts which continued from 1615 to 1682 in the course of which both parties suffered heavy losses and in 1662, the Moguls under Mir Jumla even succeeded in sacking the Ahom capital Garhgaon. Subsequently, however, fortune favoured the Ahoms and they succeeded in extending their western boundary up to the Manah river by defeating the Moguls.

When the dominion of Parikshit was annexed to the Mogul Empire, one of his brothers named Bali Narayan fled to the Ahom kingdom and took shelter under the Ahom king Pratap Singha. The latter received him kindly and in 1616, when the Ahoms succeeded in occupying a part of the dominion of Parikshit lying between the rivers Bhoroli and Bar Nadi by defeating the Moguls, he installed Bali Narayan as a tributary Raja of Darrang under the title of Dharma Narayan. Subsequently many of the Koch princes of the eastern Koch kingdom took shelter under the Ahom government and the latter received all of them kindly and established them in different places as tributary Rajas under the Ahoms. As a reward for the protection given to them, some of the Koch princes, especially Bali Narayan alias Dharma Narayan and his brother Chandra Narayan distinguished themselves by fighting for the Ahoms against the Moguls. Dharma Narayan died of pestilence in 1637 while fighting against the Moguls. After his death his son Mohendra Narayan was installed as a tributary Raja of Darrang. But from this time, the position of the Darrang Raja became more or less like that of a local governor under the Ahom king as he was asked to consult the Bar-phukan on all important matters.

The western Koch kings, however, continued to rule in a large tract of country west of the Sonkosh. In 1617 A.D. the Ahom king Pratap Singha endeavoured to induce Lakshmi Narayan, the Raja of Koch Behar to make common cause with him against the Moguls. But unfortunately Lakshmi Narayan, believing

in the false promises of the Moguls, sided with them against the Ahoms with a view to obtain possession of the territories belonging to the eastern branch of Koch royal family. His successors Bir Narayan (1627-1632) and Pran Narayan (1633-66) also followed in the footsteps of their predecessor Lakshmi Narayan in their relations with the Ahom kings. About 1635 A.D. Pratap Singha again proposed to the Koch king Pran Narayan friendly co-operation between them in driving away the Moguls and then divide the territory occupied by the latter between them. Pran Narayan, however, with the vain hope of recovering the territories of the eastern Koch kings by siding with the Moguls like his predecessor Lakshmi Narayan, rejected the proposal of the Ahom king and in 1637 accompanied the Mogul expedition against Assam. The Ahoms were defeated and by the treaty of 1639 compelled to cede the whole territory west of the Bar Nadi on the north bank of the Brahmaputra and Asurar Ali on the south, i.e. the whole dominion ruled by Parikshit except the Mangaldoi sub-division of Darrang district to the Moguls. The Moguls, however, proved false to the Koch king Pran Narayan. In contravention of the promises given to him to hand over the territories ruled by Parikshit to him (i.e. Pran Narayan,) the Moguls began to rule over it themselves. The treachery of the Moguls made Pran Narayan realise his mistake in choosing friends and led him to change his relationship with the Ahoms. Accordingly in 1656, he sent an envoy with a letter and presents to the Ahom king Jayadhvaj Singha (1648-63) to establish friendly relations with him. But the Ahom king Jayadhvaj Singha, who was aware of the refusal of the proposal of friendly co-operation between the Ahoms and the Koches against the Moguls made to Pran Narayan by his predecessor Pratap Singha, retaliated by rejecting the proposal of friendship offered by Pran Narayan.

In 1657, taking advantage of the war of succession amongst the sons of Shah Jahan, both Pran Narayan and Jayadhvaj Singha tried to take possession of the Mogul possessions in Kamrup (i.e. Koch Hajo). The former proceeded from the west towards the east along the north bank of the Brahmaputra and the latter from the east towards the west along the south bank. The Mogul Faujdar at Gauhati being terrified fled without waiting to be attacked. The Ahoms thereupon took instant possession of Pandu, Gauhati and Sharaighat and the Koches took possession of Hajo. At this juncture, Pran Narayan again proposed to the Ahom king an offensive and defensive alliance against the Moguls and a friendly division of their territories in Assam. But this time also the Ahom king Jayadhvaj Singha rejected this belated proposal of the Koch king, marched against the Koches and by defeating them at Hajo and Dhubri drove them across the Sonkosh in 1659. Thus by defeating the Koches the Ahoms became the masters of the whole of the Brahmaputra valley from Sadiya in the east to the Sonkosh river in the west. But the hold of the Ahoms on the newly acquired territories did not become permanent. Aurangzeb, having consolidated his position on the throne of Delhi sent Mir Jumla to invade Koch Behar and Aassm and re-establish

Mogul prestige in Eastern India. Mir Jumla easily performed his task. He occupied Koch Behar by the close of 1661, and by March, 1662 occupied Garhgaon, the Ahom capital. By the treaty of January, 1663, the Ahoms were not only compelled to cede the whole territory west of the Bhoroli river on the north bank of the Brahmaputra and the Kalang on the south to the Moguls, but were made tributary to the Moguls. Koch Behar was also made tributary to the Moguls.

This defeat of the Ahoms and the Koches at the hands of the Moguls made both of them realise their mistakes of despising each other's co-operation against the Moguls, their common enemy. The change of circumstances led to a change of policy in the relationship of both the kingdoms. Both the Ahom king Jayadhwaj Singha and the Koch king Pran Narayan became anxious for the friendship of the other in order to fight unitedly with a common programme against the Moguls. The much needed friendship was established between the two by the middle of 1663, by which the Koch king, whose dominion lay near the Mogul Empire, agreed to supply information to the Ahom king about the internal condition of the Mogul kingdom, and requested the latter to prepare himself for a simultaneous attack against the Moguls on the information supplied by the former in order to free Koch Behar and the Mogul possessions in Assam (i.e. the territories included in eastern Koch kingdom) from the clutches of the Moguls. The establishment of friendship was followed by the exchange of diplomatic correspondence between the two courts. This correspondence proved to be of great help to the Ahoms in recovering their lost prestige by occupying the territories ceded to the Moguls. It was mainly on the information supplied by the Koch king Mod Narayan (1666-80) about the dissensions in the Mogul kingdom due to the rising of some provincial governors against the Moguls that king Chakradhwaj Singha succeeded in driving away the Moguls from Gauhati and other places in Kamrup and extending the western boundary of the Ahom kingdom up to the Manah river. Unfortunately, the Koches could not recover their independence from the hands of the Moguls. On the contrary, in spite of the maintenance of friendly relations with the Ahoms, the Koch king Mod Narayan was compelled to supply 15,000 archers from Koch Behar to the Mogul army of Raja Ram Singha who was sent by Aurangzeb in 1669 to recover the territories occupied by the Ahoms. But the Moguls could not recover their lost territory. As the result of the final defeat of the Moguls at the battle of Itakhuli in 1682, they were compelled to accept the river Manah as the western boundary of the Ahom kingdom. The Moguls then made their stand at Rangamati. After this there was cessation of diplomatic correspondence between Koch Behar and Assam for several years.

The Koch king Mohendra Narayan (1682-93) at last himself took the initiative to revive the friendship with the Ahoms with a view to obtain their co-operation in freeing Koch Behar from the hands of the Moguls. Accordingly

in May, 1684, he wrote a letter to the Ahom Barphukan at Gauhati requesting him to attack the Mogul garrison stationed at Rangamati with the permission of the Ahom king and then proceed to Dacca via Ghoraghat.

About the end of 1684 A.D., taking advantage of internal dissensions in the Koch Behar kingdom, Bhabani Das, a deputy of the Mogul Nawab of Bengal attacked Koch Behar and occupied Bahirbund. In spite of this new territorial loss, the Koch king Mohendra Narayan did not lose heart and carried on secret correspondence with the Ahom Barphukan at Gauhati requesting him to attack the Mogul garrison at Rangamati which would facilitate his attack on the Mogul forces stationed at Bagduar. The Ahoms, who were able to free themselves from the continuous warfare of the Moguls since 1615, by compelling them to recognise the river Manah as the western boundary of the Ahom kingdom, did not show any inclination to renew the conflict with the Moguls by attacking their garrison at Rangamati. Instead, king Gadadhar Singha engaged himself in reorganising the internal administration of the country. His son and successor Rudra Singha (1696-1714) also followed his father's policy during the early part of his reign. When the western boundary was fixed by his father, he turned his attention towards the south which was still in an unsettled condition. First he launched his campaign against the Kacharis and then the Jayantias, the two most important and organised tribes of the south, and ultimately brought them under his subjugation by 1708. Then he turned his attention towards the internal reorganisation and improvement of his country. Thus king Rudra Singha who was relieved of both foreign (i.e. Mogul invasions of his predecessors' reign) and domestic troubles and at the same time inherited the resources of an organised and strengthened government from his father which was further strengthened by himself, proposed the invasion of Bengal (i.e. the Moguls) in 1714, following the suggestion given by Rup Narayan (1704-14 A.D.), the king of Koch Behar, and began to make vigorous preparations for it at Gauhati. But unfortunately Rudra Singha died in August 1714 and his successor Siva Singha (1714-44), being a weak personality, abandoned the plan.

It thus appears that the change of policy made by the Ahoms in their relationship with Koch Behar after Mir Jumla's invasion of Assam was a wise one as it was rewarded with success. From the diplomatic letters exchanged between the two courts, it is clear that the Ahoms succeeded in recovering the territories ceded by them to the Moguls and extending their western boundary up to the Manah river mainly on the strength of the information supplied by the Koches about the internal situation of the Mogul kingdom.

As regards the relationship of the Ahoms with the eastern branch of Koch kings which was mainly represented by the Darrang Raj family, the Ahom kings

followed the policy of gradual reduction of the powers and privileges of the Darrang Rajas since the appointment of Mohendra Narayan, son of Dharma Narayan as the ruler of Darrang after the death of the former in 1637 A.D. The dual kingship of Darrang since 1728, further helped the Ahoms to pursue their policy against the Darrang Rajas. This policy, however, proved to be disastrous for the Ahoms in the end as it produced great discontentment in the minds of the Darrang Rajas and alienated their sympathy and co-operation from their liegeland, the Ahom kings. They waited for an opportune moment to strike at the power of the Ahom government. The Moamaria rebellion offered them the opportunity and Hanga Narayan II, the Deka Raja of Darrang, instead of coming to the aid of his liegeland king Gaurinath Singha in quelling the disturbances of the Moamaria rebels, rose against him in collaboration with the discontented Kamrupis. But he was defeated at the hands of the Ahom forces and put to death. His son Krishna Narayan was also deprived of the Deka Rajaship of Darrang. This however, further worsened the situation. The young Krishna Narayan in league with the Kamrupi rebels determined to wrest by force of arms the hereditary Raj of the Darrang Rajas which included according to him Darrang and Kamrup, from the hands of the Ahoms. The confusion in the Ahom kingdom which ensued as a result of the Moamaria rebellion offered him the golden opportunity to strike a blow at the decaying power of the Ahom government with the help of a force of burkendazes recruited in Bengal which, by that time had become the company's territory. The failure of the Ahom government to quell the rebellion of Krishna Narayan and to put a stop to the depredations caused by his burkendazes upon the people of Assam compelled the Ahom government for the first time to take the help of a foreign power viz., the British to restore order in the country. Had the Ahoms followed a more liberal policy towards the Darrang Rajas and allowed them to retain much of their coveted hereditary powers and privileges, they might easily have been converted into useful allies of the Ahom government and employed in quelling the Moamaria rebellion. The relations of the Ahoms with the Koches thus simultaneously reveal the strength and weakness of the tribal policy of the Ahoms.

CHAPTER XII

AHOM DIPLOMACY---ITS AGENTS AND PROCEDURE :

Ahom diplomacy :

Like all governments, ancient and modern, the Ahom government also had to maintain regular diplomatic relations with the states contiguous to their immediate frontier and also occasionally with the States situated at a distance from the Assam boundaries. These diplomatic relations generally sprang from the Ahom government's treatment of foreign demands for political and commercial concessions with the Ahom kingdom. Sometimes, however, diplomatic relations sprang out of mutual wishes of both parties for establishing bonds of friendship and alliance, and for strengthening them, if such relations had existed before. Again in some cases, the desire for friendship was inspired by a hidden motive or it was dictated by the requirements of neighbourliness.

The Ahoms had become the masters of the whole of the Brahmaputra valley from Sadiya to the Manah river (i.e. Monas), first, by subjugating and conciliating the Morans and the Borahis, secondly, by defeating and supplanting the rule of the Chutiyas in the present Lakhimpur district in the beginning of the 16th century (1523 A.D.), and then gradually wresting from the Kacharis, the Koches and the Moguls the territories lying between the Dikhow and the Manah river by defeating them in a series of battles. In expanding their dominion towards the west, the Ahoms had to employ great diplomatic skill along with force many times as they had to deal with powerful enemies having enormous resources of both men and money at their command. The Ahoms generally held that in dealing with a powerful enemy, the enemy should not be irritated or provoked by tactlessness or harsh treatment, but should be pacified as far as possible by promises and in some cases even by the acceptance of terms, however, humiliating they might be, and when opportunities permitted the treaty terms should be defied and hostilities resumed to remove the enemy from the land or to bring the enemy under subjugation. In diplomacy the Ahoms were generally guided by the political maxim that promises made under duress, or the treaty terms exacted by the enemy from them by taking advantage of their weakness or unfavourable circumstances, need not be fulfilled if such fulfilment puts the promising state in a serious disadvantage. Thus in 1562-63 during Koch occupation of the Ahom capital Garhgaon, and in 1662-63 during Mir Jumla's occupation of Garhgaon, the Ahoms in order to remove the enemy from the land, had accepted the most humiliating terms, such as, paying an annual tribute, ceding large parts of territory to the enemy, sending the sons of nobles as hostages to the enemies' country, paying huge war indemnities, etc. On both the occasions they flouted their agreements at the earliest convenience

when they found their enemies in a disadvantageous position. Similarly, during the Mogul invasion of the Ahom kingdom in 1638, when the Mogul force ascending the Brahmaputra had encamped at the mouth of the Bhoroli river, the Ahoms, whose war preparations were not yet complete, were compelled to take resort to diplomatic methods in order to gain time to make them complete. Accordingly, they sent Katakis to the Mogul camp who were instructed to say as follows—"For what purpose the Nawabs have come here? If they have come with the intention of war, let them inform it to us. But war is waged between the Padshahs (i.e. kings) and not between the common people like you and us. Therefore, we are ready to give you whatever you demand."¹ At this the Moguls said to the Ahom Katakis that they would not wage war upon the Ahoms if the latter promised to give them elephants, Agar-wood (*aquilaria agallocha*), chillies, gold etc. The Ahom Dangarias, in order to make their war preparations complete (such as, construction of forts), made the false promise to comply with the demand of the Moguls by informing their Swargadeo (i.e. the Ahom king). Thus by employing diplomacy they acquired time to make their war preparations complete; and when these were completed they sent Katakis to the Mogul camp with the message that they had informed their Swargadeo, but he did not agree to comply with their demand. Contravention of treaty terms and promises was therefore a common feature of Ahom diplomacy. They flouted the promises and agreements as expediency demanded, if they could support such violation by the application of force.

The states with which the Ahom government had to maintain political or diplomatic relations were Mogul India including the Subah of Dacca and the Thana of Rangamati, Koch Behar, Bhutan, Cachar, Jayantia, Dimarua, Khyrim, Manipur, Tripura and Mogaung or the Nara kingdom.

The Agents :

The Agents through which the Ahom government conducted the diplomatic correspondence with the foreign governments were the envoys known as Katakis. They were a highly intelligent and educated class of persons, and upon their powers of advocacy and exposition depended the settlement of grave issues involving political matters. These Katakis were a disciplined, erudite and astute body of persons. The Ahom government used to maintain some diplomatic procedures in conducting their diplomatic correspondence with the different states. The Katakis were given regular training in these diplomatic procedures so that they might represent their government in the foreign countries in a befitting manner. They were strictly enjoined to follow the diplomatic procedures in conducting their diplomatic correspondence with the states and were punished if they were found to violate any of them. The messages which they carried were embodied in written epistles, but they had always to elucidate and supplement the contents of the letters by mukhjewan or oral explanations. This left enough room for the originality and inventiveness on the part of the Katakis. The Katakis were expected to be strictly honest and dignified in their behaviour in the foreign lands, and were punished if they were found to be dishonest and undignified. King

1. *Assam Buranji* S.M. pp. 72-73.

Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.) executed several of them for receiving gratification in the shape of money, cloths and brass vessels, from the Mogul commander Sattrajit.² During the Mogul invasion of Assam under Ram Singha in 1669, the Ahom general Lachit Barphukan punished some Katakis for their offence of accepting such tiny presents as wooden birds from the Mogul camp.³ According to the usages of diplomatic negotiations the Katakis were immune from the consequences of the messages they carried. But there were instances when some angry, irritable or peevish monarchs mishandled the Katakis for carrying bad, unpalatable or displeasing news.

The diplomatic service of the Ahom government was placed on a proper footing by king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.) who replaced Ahom Katakis by shrewd Brahmans, the latter being gifted with speaking faculties and persuasive ways of speaking.⁴ He once explained to the Katakis the importance of their duties in the following words,—“I am highly pleased with the manner in which you have conducted yourselves and asserted your views in a foreign place (court of the Mogul commander Allah Yar Khan). Katakis should be like shieldmen. Your words alone constitute your rice and cloth ; more specially the relations between ourselves and yourselves are like gold and borax ; the former is refined with the help of the latter. You have been able to vindicate your cause in a foreign Durbar, and thereby protect the interests of your government without paying any heed to your own personal safety. Therefore, O Bamuni-puteks (Katakis), have I got any one dearer to me than yourselves ?”⁵ From the time of king Pratap Singha Brahman ambassadors were as a rule appointed in embassies to the states of western India. But non-Brahman ambassadors were not completely done away with. In conducting negotiations with the hill-tribes of the border areas sturdy tribal experts were sent who were recruited from non-Brahman families, both Ahom and non-Ahom. Because in dealing with the unsophisticated tribesmen there was greater need of a spirit of tolerance and understanding, of sincerity and straightforwardness than of subtle logical arguments of the Brahman ambassadors.

Diplomatic procedure :

The diplomatic procedures observed by the Ahom government in their diplomatic correspondence with the different states had certain common characteristics. These were—(i) The letters, whether addressed to the king, or to the ministers or other officers had to be duly inserted within an envelope and must be properly sealed.⁶ The letters of the Ahom government also similarly had to be inserted within an envelope. Ordinary letters were not accepted, often leading to estrangement of relations between States. The Koch king Pran Narayan (1632-65 A.D.) tore off the letter of the Ahom king Jayadhwaj Singha (1648-63) into pieces and expelled the Ahom envoys from his court in 1656, as the latter had sent the letter in an ordinary paper without an envelope.⁷

2. *Assam Buranji* S.M., p. 63.

3. *Assam Buranji* S.M., p. 114, Goswami Hemchandra, *Purani Assam Buranji*, p. 141.

4. Barua, Harakanta, *Assam Buranji*, p. 36.

5. Bhyuan, S.K., *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 31.

6. *Assam Buranji* S.M., PP. 86-87.

7. *Ibid*, p. 87.

(ii) The letters of all governments (including the Ahom govt.) must be accompanied by some valuable presents as credentials of the letters.⁸ When the Koch king Nar Narayan sent some ordinary articles along with the letter addressed to king Sukhampha (1552-1603 A.D.) in 1556, he was not only ridiculed at the Ahom court in presence of his envoys, but in the letter written in reply to king Nar Narayan's letter also, king Sukhampha sarcastically wrote that those who were in the habit of using objectionable articles did not see the impropriety of sending them to others (in other words, he meant thereby that the Koch king was in the habit of using them).⁹ (iii) The letter to the Ahom king must be accompanied by supplementary letters either to his prime minister, the Burhagohain, or to all the three ministers.¹⁰ In October 1667, king Chakradhvaj Singha (1663-69 A.D.) sent back the letter of the Koch king, Mod Narayan (1666-80) unopened as the latter did not send supplementary letter to his prime minister like before.¹¹ (iv) The envoys who carried the letters and the presents that accompanied them must be mentioned in the letters.¹² Otherwise, the envoys were not recognised as the representatives of their governments and the presents were also not accepted. (v) All the letters had to be carried by the envoys of the respective governments and the Ahom envoys were strictly enjoined never to carry the letters of other states. In the reign of king Chakradhvaj Singha (1663-69 A.D.), two Ahom Katakis, named Ram and Laluk, were imprisoned by the order of the king for their offence of bringing the letters and presents of the Kachari king Birdarpa Narayan to the Ahom king as it constituted a departure from the established diplomatic procedure, according to which Kachari envoys should have brought the letters and presents of their king to the Ahom king.¹³ (vi) As the person of the Ahom king was held to be sacred, being regarded as descended from heaven, hence addressed as Swargadeos (Swarga = heaven, deo = god or lord) no direct approach to him was allowed to the envoys of any state, whether independent or subordinate. All the states except Mogaung or the Nara kingdom stood contiguous to the territory under the jurisdiction of the Barphukan viz., from Koliabar to the Manah river, the western boundary of the Ahom kingdom. As such, all diplomatic correspondence of these states with the Ahom government had to be made through the mediation of the Barphukan who served as a liaison officer between the Ahom king and the governments of these states.¹⁴ The envoys of all these states first of all must approach the Barphukan with customary letters and presents and pray to him to obtain permission from the Ahom king on their behalf to have an interview with the sacred person of the Swargadeo at the capital. Thus, after the conclusion of the treaty of 1639 A.D., between the Ahom general Momai Tamuli Barbarua and the Muhammadan general Allah Yar Khan, when the Kachari king Indrabal Narayan, the successor of Bhimbal Narayan, became anxious to re-establish friendly relations with the Ahom government which had been ruptured by his prede-

8. *Historical letters of the Ahom period* exchanged between the courts of Delhi, Dacca, Koch Behar, Jayantia, Cachar and Sylhet etc. Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, D.H.A.S.; *Jayantiya Buranji*, the letters exchanged between the Ahom kingdom and Jayantia.

9. *Assam Buranji*, S.M., pp. 34-36.

10. *Historical letters of the Ahom period*, Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, D.H.A.S.

11. *Historical letters of the Ahom period*, Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, p. 72. D.H.A.S.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Assam Buranji* S.M., p. 108.

14. *Historical letters of the Ahom period*, Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, D.H.A.S.; *Jayantia Buranji*.

ensor, he sent envoys to the Ahom Barphukan Momai Tamuli Barbarua with formal letter and presents requesting him to obtain permission from king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.) for an interview of the Kachari envoys with him and his ministers in order to resume friendly relations between the two kingdoms.¹⁵ Similarly, during the reign of king Gadadhar Singha (1681-96 A.D.), after the final defeat of the Moguls in 1682, when Jayantia king Lakshmi Singha became anxious to resume friendly relations with the Ahom government which had remained estranged since 1678, he addressed seven letters to Sandikai Barphukan requesting him to re-establish friendly relations between the two countries.¹⁶ At last it was established in the reign of Gadadhar Singha's son and successor Rudra Singha (1696-1714 A.D.) through the mediation of Duara Barphukan, the successor to Sandikai Barphukan.¹⁷ It was therefore customary for the states (except Mogaung) to write letters to the Barphukan in their diplomatic correspondence with the Ahom king.¹⁸ Because of this circumstance, the office of the Barphukan was considered to be of higher importance than that of the Barbarua. (vii) At the capital, the envoys were given an interview with the Ahom king only after they were duly received by the three ministers separately and sometimes by the Babarua also at the command of the king.¹⁹ The envoys from Mogaung also, who directly went to the capital, were given an audience with the king after they were duly received by the ministers or by the Barbarua or by the Chiring Phukan.

These were the main features of Ahom diplomatic procedures. In some minor details, however, almost all the states differed from one another according to the rank and status of the states in relation to the Ahom government. The Ahom government strictly adhered to the observance of the diplomatic procedures by the states, and any deviation from them was seriously taken into consideration by them—often leading to cessation of diplomatic correspondence.

The diplomatic relations between the state of Koch Behar and Assam was systematic and continuous and became more so after the subjugation of the two states by Mir Jumla in 1662-63 A.D. when both the states, realising their own mistakes of despising each other's co-operation against the Imperialist Moguls, became anxious to have friendly relations. Since the submission of Biswa Singha, the founder of the Koch kingdom to Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.) in 1533 A.D., and the subsequent confirmation of the former in his dominion by the latter as a 'protected' king,²⁰ the Ahom kings looked upon the Koch Behar Raja as belonging to the category of 'thapita-sanchita' rulers, a name applied to the rulers who were first settled by the Ahoms in the government of a particular state on condition of acknowledging the overlordship of the Ahom king and paying annual tribute to him. This claim formed the basis of Ahom-Koch relations of the subsequent ages. Though

15. *Assam Buranji* S.M. pp. 75-78.

16. *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 52-63.

17. *Ibid*, pp. 63-64.

18. *Historical letters of the Ahom period*, Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1. D.H.A.S.

19. *Deodhat Assam Buranji*, pp. 83-85.

20. *Ahom Buranji*, p. 77; *Deodhat Assam Buranji*, p. 35.

Nar Narayan, the son and successor of Biswa Singha, repudiated this claim and even vanquished the Ahom king Sukhampha Khora Raja in 1562, and compelled him to sue for peace, still the proud Ahom rulers of succeeding ages did not recognise the Koch Behar kings as their equals. Because of this circumstance, when after Mir Jumla's invasion the Koch king Pran Narayan became anxious to establish friendly relations with the Ahom king Jayadhvaj Singha (1648-63 A.D.) with a view to wrecking vengeance on the Imperialist Moguls by the united efforts of the two kingdoms, he had to recognise the Ahom king to be his superior and as a token of it, along with the letter to the Ahom king and the Barphukan, he had to write a letter to the Burhagohain, the prime minister of the Ahom king.²¹ The Ahom prime minister thus had the privilege of addressing the king of Koch Behar along with his master, the Ahom Swargadeo. Throughout the entire period of the exchange of diplomatic correspondence between the two states there is not a single instance of any Ahom king writing a letter to the prime minister of the Koch Behar king and any prime minister of the Koch Behar king writing a letter to the Ahom king.²² Letters were of course exchanged between the prime ministers of the two states also. The later Ahom kings also strictly adhered to these established procedures and any deviation from it was seriously taken into consideration by them.²³

Next to Koch Behar, the Ahom government maintained regular diplomatic correspondence with Cachar, i.e. the kingdom of the Kacharis. The Ahoms had obtained the greater portion of the plains territory belonging to the Kacharis by the thirties of the 16th century by defeating the Kacharis in a series of engagements. Since the establishment of the Kachari king Detshung on his ancestral throne by Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.) in 1531 A.D., the Kachari kings also came to be looked upon by the Ahom kings as 'thapita-sanchita, i.e. established and preserved in their dominion by the latter. The diplomatic procedure that they had to observe in their diplomatic correspondence with the Ahom government varied in some respects according to their subordinate status in relation to the Ahom king. In the first place, as a subordinate chief the Kachari king had to seal his letter with the seal of a Phukan and not of a Singha (lion) like an independent chief. Secondly, in the letter addressed to the Ahom king, he had to write the name of the Ahom king above his own name with two prefixes (Shree-Shree). Thirdly, besides writing letters to the Barphukan and the king, the Kachari king had to write supplementary letters to the three ministers of the Ahom king.

During the pre-occupation of the Ahoms with the Muhammadan wars of the 17th century (from 1615 to 1682 A.D.) the Kachari kings tried to assume their full independent status by defying the authority of the Ahom king. In the course of the diplomatic correspondence of this period they tried to declare themselves as independent sovereigns by violating the diplomatic procedures several times. The Ahom kings,

21. *Historical letters of the Ahom-period*, Tr. No. 1, Vol. 1, pp. 8-19, 27-29, D.H.A.S.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ante*, pp. 263-64.

however, inspite of their pre-occupation with the Muhammadan wars, strictly adhered to the observance of the diplomatic procedures with the states and did not relax them. Thus, in the reign of Surampha, Bhaga Raja (1641-44), the Kachari king Indrabal Narayan tried to declare his independence by giving the seal of a *Singha* (lion)* in place of a Phukan upon the envelope of the letter addressed to the Ahom king.²⁴ King Surampha, however, resented this departure of the Kachari king from the observance of the hitherto maintained diplomatic procedure, and ordered the destruction of the letter and the expulsion of the Kachari envoys from the Ahom court.

Similarly, in the reign of king Rudra Singha (1696-1714) also, when the Kachari king Tamradhvaj Narayan, in contravention of the hitherto maintained diplomatic procedure wrote his name above the name of king Rudra Singha in the letter addressed to the latter, it resulted in the expulsion of the Kachari envoys from the Ahom court.²⁵ Freed from the Muhammadan wars of his predecessors' reigns, king Rudra Singha re-subjugated Cachar and allowed its ruler to retain his territory as a protected prince under the Ahom king.

Jayantia, the neighbour of Cachar, also used to maintain regular diplomatic correspondence with the Ahom government. It has been already observed that Jayantia established diplomatic relation with the Ahom government for economic interests. Jayantia was not a protected territory like Cachar. Still the Ahom government took advantage of this economic dependance of Jayantia on the Ahom kingdom to exact some degree of subordination of the Jayantia king to the Ahom king. That was why, the Jayantia king also had to observe almost all the diplomatic procedures observed by the Kachari kings in their diplomatic correspondence with the Ahom kings save the seal of a Phukan. Like the Kachari king he had also to write five letters, one to the Barphukan, one to the king and three to the three ministers of the Ahom king. Like the Kachari king, the Jayantia king also resented this overlordship of the Ahom king. During the Mogul invasion of the Ahom kingdom, though the Jayantia kings had declared times without number that 'Jayantia and Garhgaon are not separate and divisible,' Jayantia's professions of friendship were not serious, and after the sack of the Ahom capital Garhgaon by Mir Jumla in 1662-63, the Jayantia king Jasamattarai tried to assert his equality with the Ahom king by making a change in the diplomatic procedure hitherto observed by Jayantia. Accordingly, in August, 1663, the Jayantia king Jasamattarai through his envoys requested the Ahom king Jayadvaj Singha to write to him alone, while his ministers write to his (i.e. Jayantia king's) ministers.²⁶ King Jayadvaj Singha became very angry at the request of the Jayantia king which was a departure from the hitherto observed diplomatic procedure. Because of this offence the Jayantia envoy was dismissed without any present and no Ahom envoy accompanied him as the custom required.

* Symbol of independent sovereignty.

24. *Kachari Buranji*, p. 33; *Assam Buranji S.M.*, pp. 78-79; *Deodhai Assam Buranji*, p. 79.

25. *Kachari Buranji*, pp. 59-67.

26. *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 25-26.

CHAPTER XIII.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Relations of the Ahom kings with the tribal peoples of Assam may broadly be classified under two heads viz., relations with the plains tribes and relations with the hill tribes according to the policies that they adopted with regard to these two kinds of tribes.

With regard to the plains tribes, viz. the Morans and the Borahis, the Chutiyas, the Kacharis, and the Koches who held political sway over the major portions of the plains territory of the Brahmaputra valley, the policy of the Ahom rulers was to occupy their territory gradually by employing force as well as diplomacy. The majority of the Morans and the Borahis, as related already, were won over by Sukapha, the founder of the Ahom kingdom in Assam, by diplomacy by according to them a kind and equal treatment. The rest, who refused to submit to his authority, were brought to submission by force. The organised Chutiya kingdom was annexed to the Ahom kingdom by Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539 A.D.) in 1523 A.D. by employing force. Then by adopting a liberal social and political outlook in their dealings with the conquered Chutiyas, the Ahoms succeeded in assimilating the Chutiyas, the possessor of an independent kingdom with a distinct social and cultural heritage into their Ahom fold and thereby paving the way for the growth of a new sub-tribe of the Chutiyas—the Ahom-Chutiyas. The same king extended the boundary of the Ahom kingdom towards the west up to the Kalang river in Nowgong by 1536 A.D. by wresting from the hands of the Kacharis the whole of the present Sibsagar district commencing from the Dikhow river and about half of the Nowgong district in the north, by employing force as well as diplomacy. The Ahoms, however, allowed the Kacharis to rule over their hilly tracts (and also a small portion of the plains territory on the southern part of the Nowgong district) on condition of paying an annual tribute to the Ahom king, whom the Kachari king was compelled to recognise as his overlord. The Ahoms did never attempt at ousting the Kacharis from their political sway over the hilly tracts. Though the Ahom king Rudra Singha brought to submission the refractory Kachari king Tamradhvaj Narayan in the beginning of the 18th century by leading an invading force into his kingdom, and made a formal declaration of the annexation of the Kachari kingdom to the Ahom kingdom, he did not appoint any Ahom official to administer the newly acquired country as king Suhungmung had done after the annexation of the Chutiya kingdom to the Ahom kingdom. On the contrary, when the Kachari king made his submission and ceded further plains territories to the Ahom king Rudra Singha and promised to pay annual tributes to the latter, he was re-instated

on his ancestral throne and allowed to rule his kingdom as a tributary king under the Ahoms.

Relations with the Koches, however, took a completely different form according to the change of political circumstances. In the beginning the Ahoms, who had become sufficiently strong by the thirties of the 16th century and had successfully resisted the Muhammadan invasion of their kingdom by Turbak in 1532 A.D., compelled the founder of the Koch kingdom Biswa Singha to recognise the overlordship of the Ahom king and agree to pay annual tribute to him. But Nar Narayan, the son and successor of Biswa Singha, defeated the Ahom king Sukhampha in 1562, compelled him to cede all territories on the North bank of the Brahmaputra and even pay annual tribute to the former. The Ahoms, of course, soon reclaimed the territories up to the Bhoroli river.

The division of the Koch kingdom in 1581 A.D. into two parts, viz., Koch Behar (western) and Koch Hajo (eastern) and the consequent entrance of the Moguls into Koch politics and occupation of Koch-Hajo by them in 1614 A.D. completely changed the situation. This made the Ahoms change their hitherto maintained indifferent attitude towards the friendly overtures made by the eastern branch of Koch kings, Raghu Dev and Parikshit. The Ahom king Pratap Singha (1603-41 A.D.) gave ready asylum to Bali Narayan, the brother of Parikshit Narayan, who fled to the Ahom kingdom on the occupation of Koch Hajo by the Moguls. In the Ahom-Mogul conflicts that followed soon afterwards, Bali Narayan bravely fought against the Moguls aided by the Ahoms and recovered the territories lying between the Bhoroli and the Bar Nadi from the hands of the Moguls, and king Pratap Singha established him as the tributary Raja of Darrang with the title of Dharma Narayan. But the subsequent policy of gradually reducing the power and privileges of the Darrang Rajas and the refusal to confer the rule of Kamrup upon the Darrang Rajas which the Ahoms occupied by defeating the Moguls and over which the Darrang Rajas claimed a hereditary right, followed by the Ahom rulers, ultimately proved to be disastrous for them as it produced great discontentment in the minds of the later Darrang Rajas and gradually turned them from allies of the Ahom kings into their enemies. It was the rebellion of the Darrang prince Krishna Narayan that compelled the Ahom government for the first time to take the help of a foreign power, viz., the British.

But the friendly relations and the exchange of regular diplomatic correspondence that the Ahom rulers maintained with the western branch of Koch rulers, i.e. the kings of Koch Behar, after Mir Jumla's invasion of Koch Behar and Assam in 1661-62, respectively proved to be of great help to the Ahoms. It was mainly on the strength of the information supplied by the kings of Koch-Bihar that the Ahoms succeeded in recovering their territories ceded to the Moguls and extending their western boundary up to the Manah (Monas) river.

With the hill tribes, however, relations of the Ahom rulers took a completely different form from those of the plains tribes. There was no question of occupying the territories of the hill-tribes. On the contrary, the existence of these hill tribes,

who, in the estimation of the modern civilised society are backward and uncivilised as they are holding fast to their archaic tribal system and lack the modern scientific amenities of life, created new problems for the Ahom government. Because, each of these tribes with their different manners, customs and languages, and above all with their most rapacious nature waiting for opportunities to carry on raids in the plains, just on the immediate borders of the state of Assam on three sides (i.e. north, south and east), burdened the Ahom rulers with the additional responsibility of protecting their subjects from the inroads of the hillmen, besides protecting them from foreign attacks which constitute the common objective of every Government.

The whole brunt of tribal ferocity fell upon the inhabitants of the tracts lying between the foot of the hills and the extremities of the plains. This belt of land was very fertile and produced in abundance rice, cotton and other staples which were valued by the neighbouring hillmen. A number of duars or passes intersected this belt of land through which the hill people maintained their contacts with the plains. Most of the hill tribes were lacking in certain necessities of life as well as in labourers. Their hill countries did not produce in sufficient quantities all their requirements, and consequently they had to look to other quarters to fill up their deficiencies. This circumstance resulted in the occasional raids of the hill people upon the inhabitants of the fertile lands at the foot of their hills whose crops, cattle and other properties were constantly at the mercy of the rapacious hillmen. Sometimes some of these duar people were forced into compulsory servitude in the hills.

Another factor which lay at the root of the incursions of the hillmen into the plains below was their isolation from all kinds of formative influences of the plains whether economic, social, political, religious or cultural. Whereas life in the plains was rapidly changing in all respects, these hill people used to live during the Ahom period as they used to do thousands of years ago. As a result of these circumstances they retained their primitive instincts in tact to the highest degree possible which often prompted them to resort to raiding in the villages of the plains as a sort of mere pastime. The Ahom government therefore were compelled to be ever vigilant to prevent the incursions of the hill people which were undertaken mainly to acquire the goods which their hills did scarcely produce or produced in insufficient quantities, and partly to gratify their marauding propensities resulting out of their primitive instincts.

In order to put a stop to the inroads of the hill people and give protection to the inhabitants of the border areas and thereby maintain peace and tranquility in the kingdom, the Ahom government introduced the 'posa' system with regard to a section of the Bhutias (the Bhutias of Charduar), Akas, Daflas and the Miris, the tribes on the northern frontier by which several villages in the duar areas were assigned to the different hill tribes and the paiks of these villages were made liable to meet the demands of the visitors from the hills above which were fixed for each of the tribes separately. For fulfilling the demands of the hill people these paiks were granted a corresponding remission by the Ahom government in the state demand upon them. The introduction of the 'posa' system thus regularised the demands of the hill people upon the inhabitants of the duar areas and thereby recognised the claim of the hill people to share in the

produce of the fertile lands of the duar areas. The 'posa' system thus formed a distinct feature in the revenue system under the Ahom government.

With regard to the Nagas, the most numerous tribes on the southern frontier, the Ahom government adopted a system similar to that of the 'posa'. Revenue free lands and fishing waters (beels) along with paiks were granted to the Noctes, Konyaks, Aos and the Lotha (or Lhota) Naga tribes living on the southern borders of the Lakhimpur and Sibsagar districts on the understanding that the Nagas in return would refrain from raiding Assamese villages in the plains. These lands were called Naga-Khats and they were managed for the Nagas by Assamese Agents appointed by the Ahom government known as Naga-Katakis.

In return for the enjoyment of these privileges by these tribes, viz., the Bhutias (of Charduar), Akas, Daflas, Miris and the Nagas, they had to recognise the overlordship of the Ahom king and pay annual tributes to him with their hill products. The duars or the passes through which the tribes descended into the plains were managed by officers known as Duarias. If the tribes indulged in robberies and other outrages and could not be brought to submission easily by persuasion or by the minimum application of force, then the passes were blocked and no one was allowed to come down or go up. This system did hardly fail to produce the desired result, viz., the submission of the hill people.

On the frontier of Bhutan proper, however, the fertile lands along with the passes were taken possession of by the Bhutias about the middle of the 17th century and the Ahom government by a written agreement had to acknowledge the Bhutias as the owner of the lands and the passes, save the three passes on the Darrang frontier which had to be annually surrendered to the Ahom government for four months (from Ashar to Aswin i.e. from the middle of June to middle of October). The Bhutanese governments of Punakha and of Kariapar duar, however, had to pay annual tribute to the Ahom government in return for the occupation of the lands and the control of the passes which geographically belonged to Assam.

With the Mishmis and the Jayantias, however, the relations of the Ahom rulers was of a completely different nature. These two tribes did not enjoy any right to 'posa' like their other hill brethren living on the borders of the plains. This suggests that their territories were not barren like those of their brethren which might have prompted them also to claim a right in the produce of the plains below. On the contrary, both these tribes were active traders and they carried on considerable amount of trade in their hill produce with the plains of Assam and in exchange for their hill products they carried back from the plains to their hills the things in which their hills were either deficient or which were not produced at all. It has been clearly observed that the economy of the Hill Jayantias depended solely upon their trading activities with the plains of the Brahmaputra valley. The Ahom rulers exploited this economic need of the Jayantias and the Mishmis with the plains of Assam to establish their overlordship over them and compelled them to pay annual tributes. The other hill tribes also, who enjoyed 'posa' and other rights carried on regular trade, though

of course on a minor scale, with the plains of Assam. The facility offered by the Ahom government to the hill people to carry on trade with the plains undoubtedly produced a considerable amount of revenue to the former.

The unwarlike Mikirs who had been permitted by the Ahom government to settle down within the Ahom kingdom in the hill called after them, received grants of lands and fishing waters in the plains from the Ahom government in return of which they had to pay an annual tribute. With the kingdom of Manipur the relations of the Ahom rulers were of a purely political nature.

The relations of the Ahom rulers with the various hill tribes were conducted by frontier wardens or officers duly appointed by them. Thus, the Sadiyakhwa Gohain was in charge of conciliating the tribes of the Sadiya country, viz., the Abors, Miris and the Mishmis. The Miri Barua, who was in charge of the Miris of the plains had to work under him. Similarly, the Solal Gohain was in charge of conciliating the Akas and the Daflas; the Barphukan and the Darrang Raja of the Bhutanese; the Marangikhowa Gohain and the Rohial Borua of the Kacharis and the Mikirs; the Jagiyalia Gohain and the Kajalimukhia Gohain of the Jayantias. They were helped in their duties by the Duarias or the guards of the passes on the different frontiers.

The policy of the Ahom rulers towards these hill tribes was in the first place, one of conciliation backed by the display of force when occasion demanded it and when it could be employed effectively. Most of the hill tribes, as it is seen, were deficient in certain necessities of life and labourers. In order to conciliate them and prevent them from committing raids in the plains which were mainly resorted to fill up their deficiencies, the Ahom rulers introduced the 'posa' system and granted some of the tribes lands and fishing waters along with paiks in the plains. Some of the tribes again depended solely for their livelihood upon their trading activities with the plains, and the Ahom rulers offered them trading facilities with the plains on condition of good behaviour and payment of annual tributes. In spite of the concessions made to the tribes in various ways, most of them often violated their agreements, indulged in raiding villages within the Ahom kingdom, withheld the payment of annual tribute, and compelled the Ahom rulers to send punitive expeditions against them which often resulted in the destruction of granaries and dwelling houses of the hill people. But the Ahom rulers pardoned the tribes whenever the latter made their submission, agreed to pay annual tributes and to abide by the conditions imposed on them.

Secondly, the Ahom rulers did never envisage the plan of the complete subjugation and annexation of their territories to the Ahom kingdom and to take part in their internal administration. The expeditions that were undertaken against the tribes brought home to the Ahom rulers the futility of such an attempt which would make the tribes recede further and further into the backwoods leaving the conquerors masters of unpeopled hills and forests. The difficulties of communication within

the hill areas and between the hills and the plains also stood as a barrier in the way of annexing the hill areas to the Ahom kingdom. The Ahom rulers, therefore, considered it enough to receive the submission of the hill people and the payment of annual tributes by them in return of the concessions made to them, and allowed them to enjoy their tribal autonomy and the privileges granted to them so long as the tribes did not violate their agreements.

That the Ahom policy towards the hill tribes was on the whole successful can be inferred from their uninterrupted enjoyment of sovereignty for six hundred years in a country where ferocious hillmen with their greedy eyes fixed on the fertile plains below their hills were lurking on the immediate borders in the hills. In spite of the precautions taken by the Ahom rulers against their inroads, occasional frontier troubles were unavoidable as some of the tribes, such as the Nagas, sometimes resorted to headhunting in the plains, and some of the tribes often committed raids on the plains by violating the agreements. The Ahom rulers, however, suppressed these troubles with tact and diplomacy and also by the application of force as the circumstances demanded. They did not allow these troubles to take gigantic proportions so as to jeopardise the security of their kingdom. On the contrary, the Ahom rulers harnessed the valour and dash of both the plains tribes and the hill tribes such as the Chutiyas, Kacharis, Miris, Nagas and the Daflas in martial enterprises against foreigners as well as against other tribes. A British officer wrote in 1883,—“The Assamese army appears at this time (1660) to have been largely recruited from Nagas and Miris, and it is evident that they were quite able to hold their own against the well-trained armies of Hindustan.”¹

One of the causes of the success of the Ahoms in their dealings with the tribes was their immunity from caste prejudices. This is clearly illustrated in their dealings with the Mikirs. During an expedition against the Mikirs in the reign of Jayadhwaj Singha (1648-63 A.D.) when they came to the notice of the Ahoms for the first time, the Ahom soldiers partook of the food and drink obtained by them in the houses of the Mikirs. Seeing this the old tribesmen who had remained behind at home said, “These men eat the things we eat ; they are therefore men of our fraternity”. These old people then recalled the younger folk amongst the Mikirs who had fled to the forests on the approach of the Ahom army and negotiations soon took place between the two parties by which twelve families of Mikirs and Lalungs migrated to the Ahom territories (i.e. in the plains) and the Mikir tribe as a whole was confirmed in the possession of the hill tracts within the Ahom kingdom and they placed themselves under the protection of the Ahom king and agreed to pay annual tribute.² The Ahoms admitted the Borahis, a tribe allied to the Kacharis, as their cooks which no Hindu ruler would ever have thought of doing. These Borahis are reported to have said, —“These Ahoms have by contrivance made us their slaves; still we do not feel aggrieved at our

1 Bhuyan, S.K. *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, p. 47.

2. Refer the chapter VII on Ahom-Mikir Relations.

subjections. On the other hand we feel happy if we can associate with and work for them.”³ It was this immunity from caste prejudices that endeared Ahom rule to the original tribal settlers. The Ahoms were dominated in their actions mainly by considerations of practical necessity and political expediency. The number of the Ahoms as a conquering nation was very small. With such small numbers they found it impossible to maintain their gradually expanding dominion. They were therefore compelled to increase their community by admitting members of both the plains and hill tribes into their racial fold. These new entrants were allowed to enjoy all the privileges and prerogatives of the ruling class and they were thoroughly assimilated with the old Ahoms. The records of these affiliations, as the Buranjis reveal, were very carefully maintained and they were checked in every reign. But no disabilities were attached to their holding offices of rank. The Ahom Buranjis are full of numerous examples of such new entrants from the tribes holding offices of rank. Thus Langi Panisiya, a man of Chutiya origin became the first incumbent to the newly created post of Barphukan or Viceroy of Lower Assam in the reign of king Pratap Singha;⁴ one Banfera Naga's son succeeded Langi Panisiya as Barphukan in the reign of the same king.⁵ A descendant of Miri Sandikai family enjoyed the governorship of Sadiya in the reign of king Gadadhar Singha.⁶

It is therefore seen that the Ahoms regulated their tribal policy in a very realistic and judicious manner. They generally followed the policy of conciliation and as far as practicable they tried to maintain friendly relations with the tribes by furnishing them their necessities of life as far as possible and by granting them trading facilities with the plains. But they did not hesitate to employ coercive measures against the tribes whenever they violated their agreements, lest the offer of friendship and goodwill might be interpreted as manifestation of weakness and imbecility. In the punitive expeditions undertaken against the tribes they followed the principle of equity and persistently demanded the surrender of the miscreants who were heavily punished for their misdeeds so as to serve as a deterrent to the other members of the tribe. The tribal policy of the Ahom rulers may be summed up as follows—“conciliate these tribes by promising to furnish them their necessities of life as far as possible on condition of paying annual tribute. If they violate the agreements and indulge in raiding Assamese villages, try to bring them to submission by employing force as well as persuasion and capturing the miscreants, but never overstep the limits.” The tribal policy of the Ahoms was thus essentially the same as embodied in the command of frontier officers and commandants during British rule,—“conciliate these savages if you can. Be persistent in demanding surrender of murderers, but endeavour so to approach the tribes that a basis may be opened for friendly intercourse in the future.”

A review of the relations of the Ahom kings with the tribal peoples of Assam, both plains and the hills, reveals the fact that the Ahoms who were conquering outsi-

3. Barua, Harakanta, *Assam Buranji*, p. 12.

4.. Goswami, Hemchandra, *Purani Assam Buranji*, p. 31; *Assam Buranji S.M.*, pp. 61-62.

5. *Purani Assam Buranji*, p. 39.

6. *Ibid*, p. 161.

7. Mackenzie, Alexander, *North East Frontier of Bengal* p. 369.

ders carved out an extensive kingdom in Assam by gradually supplanting the rule of the aboriginal tribes of the plains, viz., the Morans and the Borahis, the Chutiyas, and the Kacharis who held political sway over the major portions of the plains of the Brahmaputra valley at the time of their advent into Assam in the beginning of the 13th century and the Koches who carved out an extensive kingdom in the west in the beginning of the 16th century over the ruins of the old Kamarupa or Kamata kingdom which came to an end in 1498 A.D. They maintained that kingdom for about six hundred years (1228-1824 A.D.) in the midst of the rapacious hill tribes bordering it on three sides by judiciously regulating their tribal policies and establishing friendly relations with them as far as possible. The Ahoms, who were an offshoot of the great Tai or Shan race which spreads eastwards from the border of Assam over nearly the whole of Further India, and far into the interior of China, had their own language and religion when they came to Assam. But subsequently in course of time, when reinforcements from their original Shan homeland in Burma ceased to come and gradually they came in possession of larger tracts of land by supplanting the rule of the original settlers leading to the increased size of their kingdom, the dependence of the Ahoms upon the conquered people gradually increased as their number as a ruling race compared with the size of their kingdom was very small. This circumstance compelled the Ahoms to adopt the language (Assamese), customs and religion of the conquered people leading to free social intercourse between the conquering Ahoms and the conquered peoples of Assam and thus enabling the Ahoms to maintain their rule over Assam for about six centuries.

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