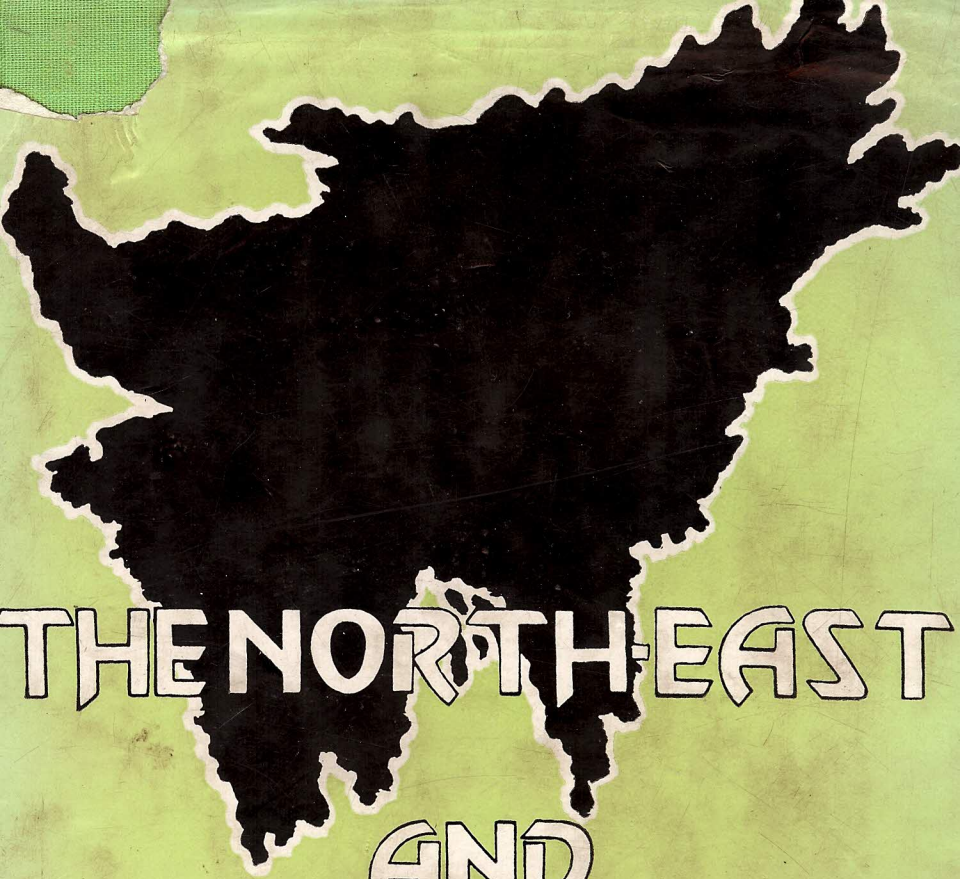

THE NORTH-EAST AND THE MUGHALS

Sushil Chandra Dutta

THE NORTH-EAST AND THE MUGHALS

The book offers a comprehensive and critical analysis of the Mughal relations with North-East India from 1661-1714, that is, from the time of Mir Jumla's campaign to the death of Rudra Singh (1696-1714), the Ahom ruler who united the chieftaincies and monarchies in the North-Eastern region to resist the expansionist policy of Aurangzeb.

The value of the book lies in the simple fact that it is the first of its kind. Authorities, such as Sir Edward Gait, S.N. Bhattacharya, Sir J.N. Sarkar have earlier dwelt with the historical importance of the problem but they have treated it partially. No attempt was made by them to project the nature of Mughal contacts with the monarchies in the eastern division of the North-East, namely, Jayantia, Cachar and Tripura and the chieftaincies in the foothills of the Garos and the Khasias that lie on the borders of Bengal.

Dr. Dutta has studied the Mughal relations with the North-East more comprehensively than did his predecessors. To do so he has treated the North-East India, as one single geographical-historical unit, and has revalued the path covered by the earlier authorities. All this has been achieved within eight chapters.

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(Contd. from 1st Flap)

Dr. Dutta's interpretation is based mainly on local chronicles—Ahom, Assamese, Bengali and Manipuri that are available both in published and manuscript forms. Additionally, he has made up of the inscriptions, coinage and other records wherever necessary.

An outstanding research work, Dr. Dutta's book will be greatly valued by the advanced students of Indian history, whereas the research students will find in this book enough guidance for further research in this field.

Rs. 150
$ 30

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Sushil Chandra Dutta (*b.* 1936) is a double M.A. (History and English) from the University of Gauhati. A painstaking researcher, he obtained his Ph, D. degree from the North Eastern Hill University in 1982. The present book is the revised version of his thesis for his Ph. D. degree. Dr. Dutta is associated with a number of learned historical societies like the Indian History Congress, Institute of Historical Studies, The Asiatic Society, and North-East India History Association. Currently he is teaching history at the Lady Keane Girls' College in Shillong.

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(1661-1714)

S. C. Dutta

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Dedicated to

The Sacred Memory

OF

MY PARENTS

Dr. SURJYA MOHAN DUTTA (1896-1938)

and

Mrs. HIRONMOYE DUTTA [KASHIMONI] (1902-1952)

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

The peoples and societies in the north-eastern region of India did not evoke much interest among the historians until very recently; and although some works are by now available on the modern and contemporary periods, the pre-colonial period continues to be virtually neglected. One simply wonders, how a fascinating subject like "The North-East and the Mughals" could wait for Dr. S.C. Dutta to research on. Some scholars have no doubt written on the Mughal relations with the region; but their studies were limited to political relations with the Ahom and Cooch Behar states and, barring Dr. S.N. Bhattacharya's, the discussions on Mughal contacts casually formed part of the central theme.

Dutta's study is a pioneering contribution on many counts. He discusses a period of North East's history which was crucial not only for the Mughal expansionism but also due to the socio-economic changes that occurred in the region. He deals with Mughal relations with the North-Eastern region as a whole, identifying two distinct flanks of connections with clusters of territories, and social and economic impact of the relations. In his attempt to probe into the concerned measures of the North-Eastern monarchies and chieftaincies to resist the Mughal expansionism, what he describes as the "North-Eastern Challenge", the author introduces a new dimension in approach to region's history by way of suggesting that it ultimately contributed to a process of regional understanding. The author has also identified several areas of lasting effects of Mughal invasions and suggests that these invasions had indirectly created conditions for revitalisation of the indigenous institutions and larger social formations in the region. An extensive use of the local sources is another feature to add to the merit of the work.

I am confident that this book shall provide basis for further research in the history of North-East India, besides being information to all those interested to understand this region, and do recommend to all readers.

J.B. BHATTACHARJEE

PREFACE

The North-Eastern region of India, as it is designated today, came into contact with the Mughals ever since the latter rose to power in Bengal during the reign of Akbar. Attempts were made by the successive Mughal emperors during their reigns, Jahangir from 1605 to 1627 and Shah Jahan from 1627 to 1658 to extend their imperial hold over the monarchies bordering Bengal. The accession of Aurangzeb (1658-1707) to the Mughal throne experienced a desperate forward policy in the North-East during the early years of his stewardship. The more formidable challenges of the Marathas, Rajputs, Sikhs and the Jats in the later years, however, forced the Emperor not to attempt his expansionist endeavours beyond Bengal. To make matters worse, disloyalty, plots and rebellions were noticed on the part of imperial officers, local chieftains and *Zamindars* and the European Factors in Bengal. The monarchies in North-East also passed through internal strifes and dissensions. A new spirit was inspired by Rudra Singh (1696-1714), the Ahom monarch who succeeded in bringing the chieftaincies and monarchies in the North-East together to invade the Mughal province of Bengal. Although the death of Rudra Singh marked the end of the challenge of the North-East, the Mughals too thereafter, made no attempt to renew their aggressive frontier policy mainly due to the decaying condition of their empire, the earlier expeditions and the continued commercial contacts with Bengal had generated lasting political and social and economic impact for the North-East.

In spite of the historical significance of the problem, no serious attempt has so far been made at an integrated study

of the Mughal relations with North-East India and its impact on the region. Sir Edward Gait in his '*A History of Assam*' (London, 1905) briefly discussed the history of Mughal relations with Assam. S.N. Bhattacharya's '*A History of Mughal North-East Frontier Policy*' (Calcutta, 1929), confined itself to such relations with Cooch Behar and Assam. The works of Sir J.N. Sarkar '*The History of Bengal*' (Patna, 1973), Jagadish Narayan Sarkar's '*The Life of Mir Jumla*' (Calcutta, 1951) etc. also cover mainly this western division of the region. Besides these and other works, including the articles that have appeared in various journals all are mainly concerned with political relations alone. No. attempt has virtually been so far made to project the nature of Mughal contacts with the monarchies in the eastern division of the North-East viz., Jayantia, Cachar and Tripura and the chieftaincies in the foot-hills of the Garos and the Khasis which were located directly on the borders of Bengal. The Mughal impact in the territories beyond the borders were also beyond the comprehension of the historians so far.

The object of the present research is to provide a comprehensive and critical analysis of the Mughal relations with North-East India in a common perspective for the whole region from 1661 to 1714, i.e. from Mir Jumla's campaign to the death of Rudra Singh. Attempt has heen made particularly to throw new light on the relations with the eastern division of the region and the Mughal impact on the North-East as a whole. The Mughal relations with Assam and Cooch Behar, which were covered by the learned historians earlier, have been re-discussed in the context of their North-East frontier policy covering the region from Cooch Behar to Aracan. The North-East India, as it stands today, has been visualised as a geographical-historical unit for the purpose of this treatment.

Chapter I opens with the geographical, ethnological and historical background of the North-East and covers briefly the history of Mughal relations with the region before the accession of Aurangzeb. The character of the frontier

policy of Aurangzeb, his attitude towads the North-East and campaign of Mir Jumla, along with its objectives and consequences, have been discussed in Chapter II and Chapter III. The next Chapter deals with the campaign under Ram Singh, the Mughal defeat in the historic battle of Saraighat and its aftermath, and the causes and consequences of the debacle suffered by the Mughals. The years of inaction on either side in the years following the battle of Saraighat, the facts behind such inaction and the minimal contact maintained by the Mughals with Cooch Behar, Bijni, Darrang, Sherpur, Susang, Laur, Jayantia, Cachar and Tripura are dealt with in Chapter V. Chapter VI deals with the problems faced by Aurangzeb during his encounters with the militant races of North-West India and their repercussions in the eastern province of Bengal, and how the successive Ahom monarchs—Gadadhar Singh and Rudra Singh planned a confederacy of the North-East to lead a campaign against the Mughals, its modus operandi and the nature of response of the rulers and chieftains in the region to this scheme that faild to effect its objectives due to sudden death of Rudra Singh. The political, economic and social impact of the Mughal contacts has been discussed in the Chapter VII. And finally, Chapter VIII sums up the problem in retrospect and prospect.

The work is based mainly on local chronicles—Ahom, Assamese, Bengali, and Manipuri—that are available both in print as well as in manuscripts with the record offices and research departments. The inscriptions, coinage and other records pertaining to the period under review have been taken cognizance of and utilised. The Mughal chronicles have been used from their published English versions. Portions of '*Fathiya-i-Ibriya*', a Persian chronicle by Shihabuddin Talish who accompanied Mir Jumla in his Assam campaign, were translated for the author by Maulavi Md. Khalique of the Asiatic Society, Calcutta. The records of the Dutch Factors have also been used from their published English translation. A large number of contemporary and semi-contemporary as well as secondary works

have been consulted and utilised. These details are appended in the Bibliography towards the end of the volume.

I am deeply indebted and grateful to Dr. J.B. Bhattacharjee, Professor and Head, Department of History, North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong for his supervision throughout the course of my investigation and for his valued criticism and suggestions without which I would have fallen into too many errors and flaws. My acknowledgements are also due to such authors whose works I have consulted, and to the Director of the National Archives, New Delhi, Director of Archives, Government of West Bengal, Calcutta, Director of Historical and Antiquarian Studies, Government of Assam, Gauhati, and the Librarians and staff of the Central Library, North-Eastern Hill University, State Central Library, Shillong and The Asiatic Society and National Library of Calcutta, for allowing me access to the material in their custody.

I am also immensely grateful to Late Dr. S.P. Sen, Director, Institute of Historical Studies, Calcutta, Dr. J.N. Sarkar of Jadavapur University, Calcutta, Dr. Amalendu Guha of CSSS, Calcutta and Late Dr. Padmeswar Gogoi, Late Dr. J.R. Basu of Gauhati University, Late Dr. C.D.S. Devanasen, founder Vice-Chancellor of Noth-Eastern Hill University, Prof. L.P. Dutt, the then Rector of Dibrugarh University for their academic guidance. I also pay my homage to respected professor Late Dr. Bhupendra Narayan Chaudhury of Gauhati University, Late Sri Sarbananda Rajkumar the then Aditional District Magistrate of Kamrup, Gauhati and also to Holy Mother Vidyagiri of Juna Akra, Kasi (Varanasi) U.P. for their encouragement.

Finally, I acknowledge the services of my wife, Pranati Dutta (Mitu) and affectionate son Sudip (Ranju) and daughter Indrani (Krishna) who took upon themselves a lot of unspeakable stress and strain until the completion of this thesis.

The errors and shortcomings of the book are, of course mine, and I would ungrudgingly crave the indulgence of the esteemed readers for the mistakes and flaws that may have crept in spite of my best precautions and meticulous efforts.

S. C. DUTTA

ABBREVIATIONS USED

B.P.P.	Bengal : Past and Present.
B.R.C.	Bengal Revenue Consultation.
D.H.A.S.	Director of Historical and Antiquarian Studies.
E.F.I	English Factories in India.
I.H.Q.	Indian Historical Quarterly.
J.A.S.	Journal of Asiatic Society.
J.A.S.B.	Journal of Asiatic Society of Bengal.
J.A.R.S.	Journal of Assam Research Society.
J.B.O.R.S.	Journal of the Bihar and Orissa Research Society.
J.I.H.	Journal of Indian History.
J.I.C.	Journal of Islamic Culture.
I.H.R.	Indian Historical Review.
J.N.E.I.C.S.S.R.	Journal of North-East India Council for Social Science Research.
K.M.	Kilometre.
M.S.S.	Manuscripts.
Q.R.H.S.	Quarterly Review of Historical Studies.

1

Introduction

THE GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES of the North-Eastern Region of India is of special significance in understanding its historical evolution. Geopolitics or the relation of geography to political processes has of late been receiving more and more attention in explaining any historical phenomenon on global basis. It is crystal clear by now that environmental factors and the natural resources besides other situations affecting human life were at the back drop of social formation and historical development. Researches have firmly established that the concepts of geography could affect and mould the political thinking in a fundamental manner. The economic integration makes the areas mutually dependent and is equally important.[1]

In respect of sea power, there is nothing like a vacuum. However, there is one saving factor with regard to sea power. It is wholly ineffective against organised land masses.[2] While North-East India has no sea in its immediate vicinity, this land-locked region had experienced waves of immigration of races and people through ages from adjoining South-East Asia and the mainland of India, because of its natural resources, despite hostile climate, geographical barriers and invasions of various imperial forces. No wonder, the imperial Mughals ever since their mastery over Bengal and repeated expansionist endeavours to subjugate the region on the immediate north-east of the *Subah*, bore no fruit.

Geographical Sketch

The geographical concept attained a more distinct identity because of the North-Eastern Council constituted by an Act of the Parliament in 1973 to ensure faster economic

development in the otherwise backward frontier region. This specific isolated region during the period under review has been peculiarly honeycombed by natural barriers like adverse calamities of uneven nature. Even though, unlike other parts of India, this isolated tract contains maximum quantum of fertility. Moreover there are lesser remarkable potentialities of immediate and usual demographic transformations, especially in this inaccessible section. This is due to the established fact of hazardous communication bottle-neck. However, there have been innumerable *Rajas* and chieftains who according to their respective norms and codes have run the affairs of their kingdom and domain—the subjects of which covered both plain and hill tribes of varied ethnic groups speaking different languages and varied dialects. It is desirable to recall the whole topography under review by the introspective and comparative study of the nineteenth and twentieth century's geo-political changes with a break of caution. In fact, most of the European authors of modern age have given a sketchy topographical description of this region only after their spot study but that too of later period. The graphic note of Ahom capital of the seventeenth century as written by the contemporary Mughal chronicler Shiabuddin Talish of Fathiya-i-Ibriya does neither tally in exact form with the topographical note of the European authors nor does this leave a vivid and accurate geo-political detail of this isolated region and as such this vacuum exists in sketching the topography of North-East India as a whole. In view of the above unavoidable flaws, it seems to be safer to have a scientific glance with analytical view of this as narrated by various European scholars like W. Robinson, J.P. Wade without any pre-conceived prejudice or dogmas and thereby not to be confused of to-day's nomenclature in respect of certain places and newly formed political units which have already been mentioned for assertion and identification in the present work.

The north-eastern region of to-day's India as defined in the constitution of India consists of five States and two Union Territories. The five States are Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya,

Nagaland and Tripura while the two Union Territories are Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram. The whole region is situated between latitude 29° and 20° North and longitude about 90° and 97° East and covers an area of about 24,099 square kilometres with a projected population of about 24,099,000 in 1979, as per the figures of 1971, census report. This accounts for about 8 per cent of India's total geographical area and about 3.7 per cent of the country's total population.[3] This region has a long international boundary with Bangladesh on the south-west, Burma in the east, China on the north and north-east and is connected with the mainland by the 'Silliguri neck' in West-Bengal.

The classification of land in the entire north-eastern region is variable because of its peculiar natural hindrances. However, according to one school of thought this region can be classified into five physiographic units like the Assam : The Himalayas, the Brahmaputra Valley, the Shillong plateau, the Barak Valley and the south-eastern Hill region.[4] Again William Robinson divides the land of Assam into three categories, according to the level of the waters of the Brahmaputra. With abruptly varying altitude (Agartala 35 metres, Aizawl 1,115 metres, Imphal 78 metres, Pasighat 155 metres, Kohima 145 metres, Shillong 1,525 metres, Tura 400 metres) above mean sea level the region is gifted with the monsoon winds which blow in a north-easterly direction. Consequently the whole region lies exposed to this Cherrapunji (Moushinram) which has the prestige of receiving the rainfall of over 1,125 centimetres, highest in the world. As R. K. Mukherjee describes,[5]

> This region like other parts of the country was thus easily and naturally grasped by the national thought as a geographical unit whose strength and fervour triumphed over the physical difficulties of pre-mechanical ages in the way of having an intimate knowledge of different parts which were welded into a whole; they have created those hydrographical conditions which have made India pre-eminently the land of agriculture and one of the best-watered regions of the world.

The region is however, not free from recurring natural calamities. Heavy rains, earthquakes, natural curses and varied topography, have made most of the rivers capricious and destructive during high floods, which at the same time leave behind rich fertile soil while receding. Though the country is in all seasons generally swampy and intersected with half-filled channels and stagnant lakes, yet in the dry season it is susceptible of cultivation, and amply repays all labour and experience bestowed upon it by producing abundant crops.[6] The soil of the Brahmaputra valley is fertile, but its climate is damp and relaxing, so while the people enjoying great material prosperity, there is a "strong tendency towards physical and moral degradation".[7]

The means of communication between North-Eastern India and Bengal have been entirely maintained by water because the road communication was very backward prior to the rule of East India Company. There was a free communication between the Brahmaputra and the Ganges and boats with the largest burden could pass by different inosculations from one into the other throughout the year.[8] Likewise, the Barak in Cachar Valley divided into Surma and Kushiara on the Sylhet (now Bangladesh) border confluenced with river Meghna, served a link line with the ports of the Ganges. The then Tripura Kingdom was connected by river routes, particularly by Gumati and other tributaries of Meghna, but during post-independence period, river Khowai is the main artery of modern Tripura State.

With regard to humidity, the region may be considered as enjoying the maximum. The rains are of long continuation which generally commence in March, and last about the middle of October. The average annual temperature is 67.2°F, the average of the four hottest months being 80°F, and that of winter to about 57°F.[9] The ultimate effect of the climate on the general masses seems to be injurious even though the physical structure of the highlanders was comparatively stronger than the people living in the valleys. On the whole, the prevailing diseases are fever,

bowel complaints, cholera, smallpox, leprosy, etc. On the whole, the poorer classes seem to be the greatest sufferers from dysentry.[10]

People

The process of migration of the races from the mainland of India on the one side and from south-east Asia on the other, passing through the region left their substratum in both the hills and the plains, beginning from the earliest time. In fact, the culture of India is extremely complex in its roots and implications; it is perhaps more complex than any other.[11] While *Arya-Dravida* and *Nisada* were engaged in building up a complex culture under joint Aryan and Dravidian leadership, another racial element came on the scene—the *Kirata* or Mongoloid, with its various Sino-Tibetan dialects. Leaving aside the Chinese and Siamese, who are far away from India, and the Tibetans and Burmese who only touch its frontiers, there are the following Sino-Tibetan-speaking people in the country, grouped according to their dialects : (a) the sub-Himalayan peoples of the west, of whom the most important are the Newars; (b) the speakers of sub-Himalayan Sino-Tibetan dialects showing an Austric substratum, like the Kanawaris; (c) the tribes of northern Assam like the Abors and Mishmis; (d) the great Bodo people, who at a time occupied the greater part of north and east Bengal and the entire Brahmaputra Valley; (e) the Nagas, in the Naga Hills; (f) the Mikirs, a mixed Naga-Kuki groups; (g) the Kuki-Chin tribes, the most advanced of whom are the Meitheis of Manipuris; and finally, (h) the Ahoms, who came late in Assam.[12]

In this context, Dr. B.S. Guha, an eminent anthropologist writes,[13]

> Those races who came from East-ward direction and thence occupied this country but very soon they had been compelled to migrate towards Eastern and Southern part only after clash and confrontation with varied races belonging to the

group of new migrants. Therefore, it is evident that there exist various aboriginal tribes of innumerable ethnic groups. Some of those tribes took shelter either in hills or in the lap of dense forests. One of the good results of this even distribution is that the sub-races groups could not remain in a position to keep up their traditional customs in pure form. For these reasons, there is no such oldest and multifarious race of distinctive ethnic group in other parts of the world except in Indian sub-continent. However, human races of India can broadly and mainly be classified into six-divisions as well as nine sub-divisions.

In view of the above analysis, it is pertinent and reasonable to observe that although very recently the entire north-eastern region has been demarcated into seven units, but nonetheless the very age long geography, history, economy, tradition and cultural streams often transcend the political boundaries and bring the whole composite region, despite its certain unavoidable drawbacks, into a single conception with a common destiny to share with the mainstream of India, and this is the established legacy of the bygone ages.

Economic Background

The economic organisation of the region centres around its ecological factors. The hills and valleys, the rivers and streams, the marshy and swampy tracts, high rainfall, unwholesome climate, the technological backwardness in the hills, the extension of the artisan and agrarian methods of Eastern India to the valley regions, the availability of the raw materials and adaptability of the craftsmen influenced the occupational patterns. As in the rest of India, in this region too, the village had been the backbone of economic life of the people. The technological backwardness standing on the way of any large scale utilisation of the industrial material and mineral resources, agriculture was the mainstay of economy. Rice cultivation was the chief employment and since it required co-operation in ploughing, irrigation, harvesting and cattle grazing, it necessarily demanded con-

centration and grouping of dwellings and so led to the formation of villages. This compact form was also convenient for defence and social organisation.[14]

Among the hill tribes, however, *Jhum* or shifting cultivation was the prevalent practice. The people were also craftsmen at leisure. The extensive trade between the tribal groups and villages and between the hills and plains in the region as well as with Bengal and cross-country trade with Bhutan, Tibet, China and Burma enabled the people to exchange their surplus produce through the prevalent barter system to balance the deficit of articles of essential consumption.[15] The trade also played a crucial role in the exchange of ideas and technology, contributing to the process of social formation since ancient times. The epigraphic records conclusively probe large landed holdings by non-agrarian Brahmins and the existence of artisan castes in a rudimentary feudal pattern of production in ancient Assam.[16] The economic condition of the region was nevertheless believed to be on the whole satisfactory. The tradition which is current throughout Assam, in particular acclaims it as a land of abundance. As Sir Judunath Sarkar gives the economy of Assam during pre-Mir Jumla invasion,[17]

> The chief crop of the country was rice, but the thin and long varieties of the grain were rare. Wheat, barley and lentils were not grown. The soil was fertile, whatever they sow or plant grows well.

Industry in terms of cottage also developed in the Ahom period. There are references to weavers, spinners, goldsmiths, potters and workers in ivory, bamboo, wood, hide and cane.

To quote E. Gait,[18]

> According to Muhammadan historians the people were very skillful in weaving of embroidered clothes. Assam enjoyed a high reputation for production of silk of fine texture. Another industry of Assam was gold washing and manufacture of jewellery. According to the Buranjis, the

art of brick-making was continued with all perfection down to their time.

During the seventeenth century the rulers of Assam seem to have adopted a policy of isolation and forbade people to enter or leave their territories; and trade was carried on by people which proceeded to Assam *Chauki* with gold, musk, *agarwood*, salt-petre, pepper, sulphur and other articles.[19] The urban centres were then very few. The towns were adorned with many temples; the temple was the centre of many attraction and amusement.[20] In the valley regions of north-eastern India, the cottage-industries were more or less in line with the rest of other parts of India, whereas the technology in terms of crafts and loom were comparatively underdeveloped, particularly in the hilly areas. Moreover, the inhabitants of the hill areas were devoid of many essential commodities, the surplus indigenous produces of the hill areas like cotton, zinger, potato, *tezpat*, hide, timber, cane, limestone and other minerals used to be bartered with the trading people of the plains for getting essential commodities like salt, oil, molasses, dried fish, rice, utensils, cloth etc. The various hill units in this region were inter-dependent and thus the extensive internal market system used to facilitate the trade and commerce which also regulated the economic structure. Most of the rulers of the period under review granted certain areas to the hill tribes bordering the foot-hills, known as *Khat* or *hat*, for exchange of goods under certain conditions.[21]

The glimpses of life and condition in these hills also suggests the economic inter-dependence. In the Jaintia Hills, the cattles were reared and driven down to the plains where they found a ready market in Sylhet.[22] The spinning and weaving on a limited scale was also resorted to by the Khasi-Jaintia in commercial line. The Mughals had trade contact with Khasi Hills primarily for the supply of limestone quarries and all the limestone being procured from the northern hills across Surma river. The lime trade of Sylhet was the monopoly of Mughal Government.[23] The Garos seem to be allowed a free trade in the territories of the frontier *zamindars* who were

tributary to the Mughals in Bengal. They brought salt from northern markets of Sylhet and Mymensing and cotton from their own hills.[24] In Arunachal Pradesh, the north-east Frontier of Ahom Kingdom, most of the tribes depended on jhumming. The unit of social organisation was the patrineal family, unlike the Khasis and Garos whose organisation was of a matrilineal society. In accordance with the variation in rainfall and gradient of terrain, agriculture in Arunachal Pradesh, land of Mikirs, Mismis, Daflas, etc., could be classified into three categories such as permanent or sedantry, shifting or *jhum*, and mixed type of agriculture, shifting in part and semi-permanent. Throughout Arunachal Pradesh, various tribal groups, clans, and sub-clans of villages exercised the right of cultivation over large tract of land in the valleys and mountain slopes as demarcated by natural features. Womenfolk of those tribes were expert in weaving and handicraft.[25]

The Nagas and Bhutanese also carried on trade with Assam valley and Barak valley through North Kachari kingdom in a similar fashion.[26] The people in Cachar, especially those in the North Cachar hills, carried on trade through the famous medieval market Mulagul and through Jaintia with Bengal.[27] The entire volume of trade between Bengal and Manipur passed through Cachar Valley controlled by the Raja of the State.[28] The trade relation between the people of Cachar and the Mizo hills is indeed very old.[29] Similar trade relations prevailed between the peoples of the hills and plains and with Bengal and Burma in Tripura.[30]

Historical Background

The Mughal relations with modern North-East India began in the sixteenth century, although during the Sultanate period many attempts were made since thirteenth century to expand the north-east frontier. Assam, or the valley of Brahmaputra, was then ruled over by the Ahoms, a branch of the Shan race.[31] In the early decade of the thirteenth century, Sukapha, the founder of the Ahom Kingdom, crossed the

Patkais and carved out a principality of his own in the south-east corner of the present district of Sibsagar. In the next three centuries the conquerors reduced to submission the Morans, the Borahis and the Nagas and other inhabitants of the region and brought under effective control the greater part of the valley of Brahmaputra. However, the emergence of the Koches in the early sixteenth century called to a halt in respect of the forward policy of the Ahoms; but the most formidable enemy which challenged their authority in the west was the Mughals.[32] The Age of the Ahoms in the far eastern India and the Age of the Mughals in India were memorable in many ways as the Tudors in England, Bourbons in France and Hapsburg in Spain and Austria. These parallels, striking as they are, may not be possessed too closely because the comparison or contrast was not between the individuals but primarily between the general circumstances and achievements of the respective dynasties and countries. Aurangzeb and Cromwell, despite their differences, had many a stern traits in common that evoked natural revulsion and reaction in each case.[33] The history of the Ahoms of the seventeenth century was mainly the history of the Ahom-Mughal conflicts which arose out of the ambition of the Mughals to extend territories further to the east because of intervention of the Ahoms in the affairs of the rival princes of Cooch-Behar, and the violation by the Ahoms in respect of terms of the treaties entered by them with the Mughals.[34] The weak point of the Ahom kingdom was its diversity of population. Early in the seventeenth century, the Mughals, after annexing Koch-Hajo (c. A.D. 1612) had a long war with the Ahoms, who had harboured a prince of the deposed dynasty.[35] The leader of the *Vaishnava* renaissance in Assam was Sankardeva (1449-1568). The *Sattra* institutions had played a great role in the social life of the people, and as a social force, this institution was greatly strengthened by the acceptance of the *Vaisnava* faith by the Ahom monarchs and nobles.[36] According to an account of Auniati *Satra* of Assam, Jayadhvaj Singh (c. 1648-63) became the disciple of Niranjan Dev, the first *Satradhikar* of that *Satra*, in the Saka 1576 (A.D. 1664) that is, in the sixth regnal year of his reign but he came

undoubtedly under the Brahmanic influence at a much earlier date.[37] Another author writes that Rudra Singh (1696-1714) was the first Ahom ruler to announce publicly his intention to become the disciple of a Hindu priest. Therefore, the above controversial issue can be judiciously solved in the light of the then creative forces of the philosophy of Sankardeva as referred to. Above all, by the end of the sixteenth century the Ahoms became Hinduised, and fifty years later we find their rulers beginning to adopt Hindu name in addition.[38] But in the course of their stay in Assam, they began to be changed under the spell and influence of Indian civilization as well as the Hindu religious fervour. Ahom monarchs had married into the Kamata and Cooch Behar families, and Hindu priests and artisans had entered Ahom domain in the train of these queens.[39] The relations with the neighbouring Hindu kingdoms were far from friendly because of its aggressive policy of expansion based on natural frontiers being the order of day.

Further, "the Ahom king was nominally placed at the head of the constitution. Immediately under him in rank were three great council of States, called Gohains, whose duty was to give advice to the king. With them, the king was expected to consult on the affairs of the Government; even he was not permitted to issue any orders without their approval, or enter into any negotiations without consulting them."[40] This did not exactly coincide with the pretentions to the 'divine origin' of the royal family. The 'divine origin' of the royal family was most likely not thought of until the Rajas had become powerful, and had embraced Hinduism, when the Brahmins in gratitude to their devoted royal patrons invented a genealogy in accordance with their sacred books.[41] The ritual practices of Ahom worship continued, down to the end of their rule in the Brahmaputra Valley with diminishing attraction after the acceptance of the creed concerning Hinduism by the Ahom monarchs in the middle of the seventeenth century.[42] The organisation of the Ahom Government, both in centre and provincial level was quite elaborate in form, and this issue will be discussed in the relevant

chapters in comparison with the Mughal system of Government. An excellent description of Ahom kingdom was given by Muhammed Qazim who also accompanied the Muhammedan army in 1662, when they ventured to conquer this country.[43] The dwelling houses of both the rulers and the subjects were made of wood and bamboos; during the Ahom rule all people were not allowed to use variety of dress and ornaments.[44] An author rightly remarked in this context that Assam served as a transmitter of Aryan civilization to lands like Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal and Burma and could be considered as the frontier outpost of Indian civilisation. And Sankardeva, the religious saint was truly the medium through whom the spiritual light of Medieval India as a whole shone upon the life of Assam.[45]

Edward Gait refers to one very important Assamese source of information containing an account of the political geography of Brahmaputra valley in the seventeenth century which was unlocked by Hem Chandra Goswami. The source of information was in the possession of Babu Surendra Nath Barkakati of North Gauhati. According to him,[46]

> The *Puthi* (Assamese chronicle) opens with a description of the various Ahom forts, their size and garrison, and the number of guns and other weapons mounted in each. A short account was given of the war with Raja Ram Singha and the *Puthi* then describes the river system and gives a list of princes tributary to the Ahoms with the outposts held in their country as a protection against the Kachari and Khairam Rajas (modern Khasi hills of Meghalaya). It is stated that the chiefs of Khala, Neli, Gobha, and Nagoan (modern Nowgong), whose country was bounded on the north by the Kallang (river) and west by the Killing, were tributary to the Rajas of Jaintia (present Jaintia Hills of Meghalaya and Jaintia parganas of Bangla Desh). The Daphlas, Akas, and Bhutias are referred to, the tribute paid by them being noted and the passes by which they descended to the plains described. The eastern part of Gosain Kamalar Ali is said to be known as the Kabirar

Ali. The *Puthi* closes with the description of the Mikirs and Miri villages under Ahom rule.

The Ahoms thus ruled over an extensive territory and also exercised some control over bordering tribal chiefs and principalities, but their declining powers caused mainly due to internal strife and impact of Hinduism and incessant hostilities with the monarchs of Cooch Behar, Cachar and Jayantia was on the surface at a time when they were called upon by the circumstances to reckon with the challenge of the powerful Mughals who in turn had to consolidate their position in Bengal and posed to a carrier of further imperial expansionism in the north-east.

The territory, mutually exposed to the Ahoms which served as a buffer in later's relation with the Mughals was the Cooch Behar State which was organised by Viswa Singha into a powerful monarchy by subjugating the various chiefs and principalities in Lower Assam and North-Bengal in the sixteenth century on the ruins of the former kingdom of Kamata. The prowess of the monarchy was at its zenith during the reign of Naranarayan (1540-87) whose illustrious brother and valiant general Chila Rai reduced the Ahom monarch along with the Rajas of Dimarua, Khyrim, Jayantia, North-Cachar (Maibong), Manipur and Laur (Sylhet) to submission, wrested Cachar valley from Tripura and thereafter led ambitious campaigns against the Mughals in Bengal. The reverses faced by the Koches in Bengal, however, enabled the north-eastern States to reassert themselves, and the death of Chila Rai in Bengal obliged Naranarayan to surrender to the Mughal suzerainty in 1578.[47]

After the death of Chila Rai, his son Raghu Dev laid his claim on the throne of Cooch Behar and rebelled against Naranarayan. Ultimately the part of the State, east of river Sankosh, had to be assigned to Raghu Dev. This part of Cooch Behar State came to be known as Koch-Hajo or Kamrup. The death of Naranarayan was followed by incessant conflicts between his son and successor, Lakshmi-

narayan and Raghu Dev. Thereafter, Lakshminarayan had to enter into an alliance with the Mughals to put a check on the aggression from the eastern Koch kingdom. The Mughals, on the other hand, on the strength of the alliance in A.D. 1578 treated Cooch Behar as a vassal state but pursued an aggressive policy towards Kamrup.[48] Raghu Dev formed an alliance with Isha Khan of Sonargaon and other Afgan chiefs to combat the hostile Koch-Mughal alliance. Raja Parikshit Narayan, son and successor of Raghu Dev, inherited from his father this unfriendly relations with Lakshminarayan and thus incurred the wrath and vengeance of the Mughals. He strengthened his fortification and raised a powerful army and launched an attack upon Cooch Behar. The attitude of the Raja resulted in Mughal expedition in A.D. 1612 and in that campaign or expedition Parikshit was defeated and taken as prisoner to the Mughal court and his territory annexed to Mughal dominion.[49] Bali Narayan, brother of Parikshit, was thereupon installed by the Ahoms as a vassal ruler in Darrang and that is to be used as a buffer against the Mughals and the western Koches.[50]

Thus the political condition of the kingdom during the seventeenth century was in a fluid state full of chaos and confusion; because two imperial powers—Ahom on the east and Mughal in the west—vigorously followed the policy of expansionism and met with direct confrontation for the possession of Koch kingdom.[51] The rivalry began with the second decade of the seventeenth century and continued till 1682. In fact, the partition of Koch territories not only diminished the material prosperity of the Koch State but also it gave rise to discord and ill-will between the two branches; the result became disastrous for both, leading to imperial intervention in Koch-politics.[52] The Ahom relations with the Kacharis was no more better. The hostility between the two came into confrontation in the early part of the sixteenth century. Meanwhile the Ahom ruler sacked Dimapur and forced the latter to take shelter at new capital of Maibong in the North Cachar Hills.[53] Political despatches continued to be inter-changed with the Ahom courts, and the Kachari Raja was desirous of maintaining his hold on his country in

the Kopili-Jamuna and Doyung-Dhansiri Valleys on friendly terms of equal status with the Ahom monarch, but the Ahoms always persisted on the vassalage of Kachari Raja.[54] By 1562, the Koch expedition under Chila Rai forced almost all the kingdoms of North-East India to acknowledge the Koch suzerainty and agree to pay annual tributes, besides war indemnities and valuable presents.[55] The Koch authorities made an administrative centre at Brahmapur (Khaspur) in Cachar valley in order to maintain diplomatic relations with the adjoining subsidiary States and the collection of tributes. Accordingly, Kamalnarayan, popularly known as Gosai Kamal, another brother of Naranarayan, was appointed as the Governor of Cachar who was also called the first Dewan Raja.[56] After the decline of Koch prowess when the North-eastern states reasserted their independence, Khaspur came to be considered as a separate Koch kingdom. The Kacharis from Maibong succeeded in extending their limit to Cachar valley bordering Sylhet but the Jayantias were still dominating the political scene. During the seventeenth century, the Ahoms and Kacharis were in conflict with some intervals, while the paramount supremacy of the Ahom monarchs was being denied by the Kachari rulers.[57]

The Kingdom of Jayantia, which then included the modern Jaintia Hills, Jayantia Parganas of Sylhet and parts of Nowgong district in Assam Valley, enjoyed a conspicuous geographical position because of having bounded by the Ahom and Kachari territories and Bengal respectively. The Rajas of Jayantia clashed with the rulers of Maibong over the jurisdiction in Kapilli Valley and had to reckon with the Ahom challenge. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Jayantia Raja, Dhan Manik, seized Probhakar, the chief of Dimarua*, whose family had formerly been the vassals of the Kacharis.[58] After the hostilities between Jayantia and Cachar, Mulagul the seat of frontier trade was fixed as the boundary between Jayantia and Cachar.[59] E. Gait confirms that by *saying* "after the war, the boundary was fixed at Mulagul in the Jayantia parganas and there was peace for sometime, although occasional disputes seem to have occurred."[60] The establishment of commercial inter-

course between the Ahoms and the Jaintia during the reign of Ahom monarch Pratap Singha (1603-14) was followed by the appointment of frontier officers.[61]

In the west of the Jaintias, the Khasi Hills enjoyed comparative political isolation. The Khasi State of Khyrim, however, maintained political relations with the Ahoms[62] and was also one of the States subdued by Koches under Chila Rai.[63] The Khasis, however, maintained trade relations with Bengal and some of the Khasi States extended up to the southern plains.[64] Then the Garos in the western extremity of the hill-range maintained their own affairs but they were under the nominal control of the feudal *zamindars* in the plains whose estates encircled the Garo Hills from three sides and paid nominal tribute to the Mughal Government.[65] The hill tribes of the then Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, enjoyed splendid political isolation but maintained extensive commercial contact with the plains and limited political relations with the rulers in the bordering areas.[66]

Manipur was an ancient monarchy but did not have so much political relations with the neighbouring States or with Bengal because of its peculiar geographical situation, before or even during the period under review.[67] Tripura at the extreme end of the region was also an ancient monarchy, but because of its peculiar geographical location on the border of Bengal when the kingdom included a vast area of present Bangladesh, the rulers of Tripura used to maintain political relations and in certain occasion had hostilities with the political authorities in Bengal.[68]

Early Mughal Relations

The history of the Mughal relations with north-east India began practically with the reign of Emperor Akbar when Bengal was almost annexed to the Mughal Empire. The predecessors of the Mughals in Bengal, the Turko-Afgans had made unsuccessful attempts to extend their hegemony in the region.[69] Muhammad Bin Bukhtiyar, a Turk of the Khilji

tribe, invaded Kamrupa about A.D. 1205-06,[70] and this was followed by several raids up to the middle of the sixteenth century.[71] These however, failed to achieve any permanent result. In Sylhet, that was the eastern *Sarkar* of Bengal, however, the Afgan rule was fairly established along with the rest of the province and the Mughals had to reckon with considerable difficulties in dispossessing the Afgan chiefs.[72] The position in Sylhet, on the other hand, exposed Jayantia, Cachar and Tripura in the eastern division of North-East India, on its immediate vicinity to the Afgans in Bengal. While the nature of relationship with Jayantia and Cachar is not definitely known, the contacts with Tripura are corroborated by several sources. As a matter of fact, Cachar was not a distinct territory at that time being part of Tripura. The fact that the river Surma constituted the boundary between Jayantia and Bengal, and that Jayantia on the other side of the river was one of the *Mahals* in the Sylhet *Sarkar*[73] at the time of Tudormalla's revenue settlement in Bengal is perhaps suggestive of the fact that this *Mahal* earlier formed part of Jayantia but was taken over either in the Afgan or in the early Mughal period. The historical records in Tripura suggest that Ratna Manikya could be installed as the Raja of Tripura at the military support extended by the Sultan of Bengal.[74] The army of Gaur helped him in recovering the fort of Jamir Khan and conquering Rangamati.[75] The relation with the Sultans of Bengal during the reign of the subsequent rulers was, however, not free from hostilities. A portion of Tripura was probably conquered by Sultan Jalaluddin of Bengal towards the close of the fifteenth century during the reign of Maha Manikya.[76] However, Dhanya Manikya conquered some parts of Bengal such as Patikera, Gangamandal, Meherkul, Khandal and other places when Hussain Shah was the Sultan of Bengal as known from his coin dated A.D. 1505.[77] The Sonargaon inscription of A.D. 1513 indicates that a portion of Tripura was conquered by Hussain Shah[78]. Another coin of Dhanya Manikya, dated A.D. 1513, describes him as the conqueror of Chittagong. On the authority of *Rajmala*, the Tripura chronicle, it is known that Hussain Shah sent an expedition to Tripura in A.D. 1514 and a fierce battle continued till 1518 in which

some parts of Tripura were annexed to Bengal.[79] The coins, inscriptions, historical records and relevant chronicles also suggest that the hostility between Tripura and the Sultans of Bengal resulting in frequent border clashes and war continued till the Afgans were succeeded by the Mughals in Bengal.[80]

The determination of the Afgan Chiefs in the frontier areas of Bengal to resist the Mughals and the conflicts of interest between the monarchies in the North-East India had added to the almost definite possibility of expansionist and imperial Mughal intervention in the affairs of the region. The alliance between Raghu Dev of Kamrup and Isha Khan, the famous Pathan chief of Sonargaon in eastern Bengal, compelled Lakshminarayan of Cooch-Behar to accept the formal supremacy of the Mughals.[81] The latter thus got a stepping stone in its new vassal state on the north-east frontier of Bengal that geographically provided the door way to Assam or the western division of north-east India. Raghu Dev was defeated, and Isha Khan abruptly made peace with Lakshminarayan and offered submission to the Mughal Emperor.[82] Raghu Dev was now obliged to make a new alliance with the Ahom monarch[83], who looked upon the growing intervention of the Mughals in Koch-politics with suspicion and alarm and realised the necessity of strengthening Kamrup as a buffer state.[84] Due to the death of Raghu-Dev in A.D. 1603, however, he could not see the Eastern Koch-Ahom alliance through its maturity.[85] Nevertheless, the son and successor of Raghu Dev, Parikshitnarayan was a more determined antagonist of the western Koch and the Mughals. As a result, the reign of Jahangir as the Mughal Emperor witnessed greater participation and extension of the Mughal political influence and authority towards the North-East frontier of the Empire; Islam Khan, the viceroy of Bengal, in June, A.D. 1609 sent an ultimatum to Lakshminarayan, Raja of Cooch Behar, demanding his total submission. Lakshminarayan, accordingly acknowledged the formal Mughal suzerainty and agreed to render all assistance in his power to the Mughal viceroy in latter's campaign against the Kingdom of Parikshitnarayan on the understand-

ing that Parikshit's territory would be handed over to Lakshminarayan.[86] Having thus prepared the ground for an aggressive imperialism against the western division, the Mughal viceroy turned his attention towards the Eastern division of North-East India through its Sylhet gateway.

Islam Khan knew that Sylhet was the stronghold of the Afgans and that Bayizid Karrani, the Afgan Chief of north and central part of district, was their acknowledged leader. He had also extended asylum to Usman Afgan, the rebel *zamindar* of Bukainagar in Mymensing district, and if Usman was to be finally crushed, Bayizid must be subdued simultaneously. Accordingly, two-fold expeditions were sent on an imperial scale, one against Bayizid under Shaik Kamal and another against Khwaja Usman under Mirza Nathan. By April 1612, Islam Khan succeeded in annexing the domain of Usman.[87] Meanwhile, Shaik Kamal and Raja Satrajit* crossed the river Surma in their campaign against Bayizid. The position of the Afgans in Sylhet was strengthened by the arrival of a large number of force from the Raja of Cachar, but the news of the fall of Usman came as a fatal blow to Bayizid and his allies. The resistance was collapsed and they begged for peace. Sylhet was formally annexed to Bengal *Subah* as a unit of *Sarkars* and the administrative arrangements made tentatively by Shaik Kamal were approved.[88] Bayizid, his brother, and the leading Afgan chiefs were deprived of their personal liberty and kept in close confinement. Mubariz Khan, the Mughal general, remained at Sylhet in charge of the imperial forces.[89]

The establishment of Mughal supremacy in Sylhet brought the two neighbouring kingdoms of Cachar and Jayantia on a common boundary with the Mughals. Islam Khan next turned his attention towards Cachar and sent Shaik Kamal for the conquest of that country. The latter at the outset came down to Sylhet, made it the base of his operations, and with additional officers and men, including Mubariz Khan and twenty-two *amirs* from Bihar, proceeded against the Raja of Cachar[90] named Satrudaman, alias Pratapnarayan (c. 1605-28) who was then the Dimasa Raja of Maibong in North

Cachar Hills, and whose territory then extended to Cachar Valley that intervened between Sylhet and the Koch State of Khaspur, who also determined to offer a strong resistance. His capital, Maibong or Kirtipur situated in the midst of the North Cachar hills, about 50 miles (90 K.M.) north of Silchar town, was inaccessible to the invaders. But unfortunately, the Imperial forces captured the defensive forts of Pratapgarh and Asuratekar in the Cachar Valley. The loss of the two frontier forts cooled down the military ardour of the Cachari Raja, and he offered to come to terms with the Mughals. An agreement was made between Shaik Kamal and the Cachari Raja. The Emperor Jahangir, however, disapproved Islam Khan's hasty peace with the Cachar and asking him to renew the campaign by revoking the contract under the command of Mubariz Khan, an imperial officer, in the place of Shaik Kamal.[91]

The Mughal general now occupied the Cachari territory, adjoining the fort of Pratapgarh (c. Nov. 1614). Mubariz Khan also subdued a group of people occupying an area intersecting Cachar and Jayantia who claimed themselves as the descendants of the soldiers left in charge of his conquest by Timur, a Mughal adventurer.[92]

Qusim Khan, the new Mughal viceroy, was gratified at the success of Mubariz Khan and exhorted him to continue his expedition against Cachar, where the Raja had evidently shaken off his allegiance during the period of interregnum. Satrudaman offered a strong resistance as he had done before, causing heavy casualty in the imperial campus by his repeated night attacks. But Mubariz Khan's persistence at last yielded fruits, and the fort of Pratapgarh was stormed and Asuratekar was attacked. Unable to bear the privations of the seize, the Raja again sued for peace. He gave up the fort of Asuratekar, reaffirmed his allegiance to the Emperor, offering him 40 elephants and a tribute of 1,00,000 rupees in cash, and prayed for exemption from personal attendance at the court. He also sent presents for the *Subahdar* and the Mughal commander. Meanwhile these terms were accepted by Quasim Khan. The sudden end of Mubariz Khan at

this critical juncture, however, compelled the Mughals to withdraw to Sylhet, and the Cachar campaign failed to produce any conquest with concrete dividend.[93]

The broken morale of Mughal soldiers in Sylhet was, however, greatly roused when Mukram Khan, the Mughal commander who had already proved his worth in Kamrup campaigns, and he thenceforth was sent to Sylhet sector to proceed against Tripura where an earlier raid upon the fort of Kaliagarh had failed.[94] The expedition in A.D. 1618 was particularly ordered by Emperor Jahangir in order to secure a suitable base for military operations against Arakan. Two divisions of the Mughal army under Nurulla Khan and Ispinder Khan entered Tripura from the north-west and western borders. Added to this, a naval force was also put into operation. After a fierce land and naval confrontation, Josadhar Manikya, the Raja of Tripura, was captured and sent to Dehli where he died.[95] The Mughal army held the country under military occupation but after about three years, they were forced to retreat due to the outbreak of epidemic, when Kalyan Manikya ascended the throne of Tripura. As known from the royal chronicle of Tripura and the accounts of an European visitor, Peter He Leys (1652), the Tripura-Mughal conflicts prolonged for many years.[96]

Meanwhile, the Mughal authorities had taken counter measures against Parikshitnarayan of Kamrup according to the agreement made with Lakshminarayan. The Rajas of Sushang and Sherpur in Garo-Mymensing border had also in the meantime adopted the vassalage of the Mughals and agreed to extend help in the ensuing campaign against Parikshit.[97] The domain of Parikshit was then extended from the river Sankosh and Brahmaputra in the west to the Bhorali river (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 Mymensing district in the south.[98] Islam Khan despatched a sizeable number of forces against Kamrup under the com-

mand of Abdul-i-wahid. This was easily defeated by Parikshitnarayan (c. A.D. 1612) and the family of Raja Raghunath (Susang) was made captive.[99] In November, A.D. 1612 Islam Khan sent another expedition against Kamrup under Mukarram Khan, with Shaik Kamal as second in command, and Raja Raghunath as the guide. A huge number of imperial officers, including 22 officers of Bihar, and vassal *zamindars*, and Afgan *mansabdars* of Bayizid and Usman, joined the expedition.[100] Mirza Nathan captured Bahirbond and Bhitarband*. The fort of Dhubri was reputed to be the strongest in the entire Koch region, and its seize dragged on for three and a half months. Fateh Khan Salka, the commandant of Dhubri fort, however, out of affection for his son was taken captive, and then surrendered to the Mughals (c. middle of April, A.D. 1613).[101] Raja Parikshit after having lost confidence in himself, gave up further resistance, and became eager for peace. He agreed to acknowledge the imperial overlordship and sought peace with honour towards victors offering them rich presents. He also promised to release Raghunath's family, but the viceroy of Dacca revoked the peace offer, and demanded the surrender of Parikshit's persons as well as of his kingdom. Consequently, the hostilities were resumed.[102] Parikshit also directed his son-in-law, the Dimarua Raja, with his entire fleet of 700 boats, and 50 elephants to seize the imperial post on the Godadhar river; and then to join him in the assault on Dhubri campaign along with his entire land force.[103] The combined assault was partially successful but the sudden demise of Dimarua Raja in the next encounter totally paralysed the Kamrup navy, and had to withdraw abruptly.[104] Raja Parikshit tried to escape and to take shelter under the Ahom monarch but failed to do so and subsequently decided on an almost unconditional surrender. He appealed to the imperial commanders, Mukarram Khan and Shaik Kamal, to spare his life and personal liberty, surrendered all his belongings, his war-elephants, and even his kingdom (c. July, 1613). Kamrup thus lost its short existence as a separate state and was afterwards annexed to the Mughal Empire. Parikshit was taken to Dacca as a war prisoner and

the family of Raja Raghunath was released. The administrative charge of Eastern Kamrup was given temporarily to Lakshminarayan, and Mirza Qasim was directed to occupy the *Thana* of Pandu and then to proceed alone to Jahangirnagar leaving the entire fleet at Pandu under the command of Raja Satrajit.[105]

The occupation of the eastern Koch territory of Kamrup or Koch-Hajo brought the Mughals on the threshold of the Ahoms and the stationing of the powerful fleet at Pandu and Raja Satrajit caused genuine anxiety to the Ahoms about the security of their State from imperial expansionism. The earlier Mughal intervention in Koch politics was also seriously viewed by the Ahom monarchs and could provide the backdrops of Koch-Ahom alliances during the reigns of Raghudev and Parikshit. It is, however, not known from the records whether Parikshit received any material assistance from the Ahoms. Nevertheless, the Mughal occupation of Kamrup left no alternative for the Ahoms but to search for its own security. And opportunity for instituting a buffer state against the Mughals also came through Balinarayan (1615-37) alias Dharmanarayan, the brother of Parikshitnarayan, who fled to Ahom court and sought the protection. Pratap Singha (1603-41), the Ahom monarch, installed Balinarayan (1615-37), as the vassal ruler of Darrang with the territory extending from Bhorali river in the east to Barnadi on the west.[106] Pratap Singha also set himself to strengthening his position by raising a chain of forts at strategic points, building embanked roads (*ali*), and drawing all the neighbouring rulers to his side by war, marriage, friendly alliance, and extension of his protective vassalage over them. His growing power induced most petty chiefs of the area in order to save their estates by voluntarily accepting his overlordship. The expansive force of the Ahoms as it spread west-wards inevitably came into collision with Mughal power in Kamrup.

The matter came to a head when a Muslim trader was murdered near Kaliabar, on suspicion of being a spy and his merchandise looted. Shaik Qasim, the Governor of Bengal, sent an expedition in 1615-16 under Sayed Kakim

and Aba Bakr. This was defeated by the Ahoms at the mouth of river Bhorali and their commanders killed. After this Ahom victory, the Mughals had to fight constantly in order to maintain their hold on the country west of Bar Nadi and with great difficulty they could occupy Hajo town and a few other frontier forts. When Islam Khan Mashhadi arrived as the *Subahadar* of Bengal, Ahom vassal Balinarayan was instigated by Satrajit, the disloyal Mughal *Thanadar* of Pandu, to profit by the administrative disorder caused by the frequent change of Governors, and the latter dislodged the Mughals from the post at Pandu. Fresh reinforcements also failed due to lack of concerted efforts among the imperial commanders.[108]

Satrajit was, however, captured by the Mughals and sent to Dacca, where he was imprisoned and later executed.[109] Abdus Salam, the Mughal *Faujdar,* and a few other imperial officers were then sent as captives to the royal court in 1637. Mir Zain Uddin, a Mughal commander occupied Karaibari on the north bank of Brahmaputra, by driving out its ruler Chandranarayan who had also rebelled against the Mughals.[110] The growing Ahom challenge, particularly at the support of their vassals in Balinarayan of Darrang, and the series of rebellions at the instigation of both in the Khuntaghat region of former Kamrup in modern Goalpara prevailed upon the Mughals to search for a loyal Chief to restore peace in the newly annexed region. The choice fell upon Parikshitnarayan who was then in the Mughal court. He was asked to take the possession of his former state as a vassal under the Mughals, so that his territory could serve as buffer between the Mughals and the Ahoms. While Parikshit was on his way to Kamrup, some high dignitaries of Kamrup, resented at Dacca court against his return. The Raja was accordingly recalled but he committed suicide on his way back to Delhi at Tribeni.[111] Thereupon, Bijitnarayan, a son of Parikshit, was instituted by the Mughals as the Raja of Bijni estate comprising of the Khuntaghat region.[112]

In the meantime, the Ahoms had pushed on to Jogighopa (near Goalpara opposite to Panchratna) and began raising

stockades there, but the Mughal army forced them to retreat to the bank of the river Manas. By October 1637, the Mughals defeated the Ahom forces led by Balinarayan on the Kalapani river near Bishnupur resulting in the death of a huge number of Ahom soldiers and officers. The Mughals also took into possession substantial amount of arms and equipments. This was followed by the conquest of Pandu and Srighat (December 1637). The whole of Koch-Hajo or Kamrup was thus cleared of the Ahoms and the campaign was closed down for a while just after the occupation of the Kajali fort, which lies at the junction of the Kalang river with the Brahmaputra.[113]

To meet this adverse situation, the Ahoms created the post of *Barphukan* with headquarters at Kaliabar (now in Nowgong district) to be in administrative charge of Lower Assam and to conduct diplomatic negotiations with the agents of Mughals.[114] During the next three months the whole district was pacified, and a revenue settlement was made with the landlords, with Gauhati as the headquarters of the governor. Finding all their resources exhausted during twelve years' successful war, the Ahom frontier officers induced their monarch to make peace with the Mughals through Alayar Beg, the successor of Zain-uddin Ali as *Faujdar* in Lower Assam (c. September 1638), whereupon Barnadi in the north and the Ashurar-ali in the south of Brahmaputra were to be fixed as Ahom-Mughal boundary. As a result, considerable good relations were generated between the two parties for quite sometime and hence the period from 1638 to 1658 was virtually free from any major confrontation.[115] As Sir Jadunath Sarkar writes "with the coming of Prince Shuja to Bengal as Viceroy began a long period of peace for this province."[116] As a matter of fact, the Mughals were deeply engaged during this specific period in campaigns towards the north-west frontier, and this was followed by the war of succession among the sons of Shah Jahan and Shuja was himself one of the contenders. The imperial authorities could not persue a policy of expansionism beyond the north-east frontier and their provincial administration in Bengal had broken down with resultant anarchy. Nevertheless, the

Mughals could retain their hold over the conquered territory in Lower Assam and maintained political relations with the frontier states. Prince Shuja, in a letter to Shah Jahan in March 1655, could boast of his administrative success[117] :

> The Zamindars of Morang, Kachar and other places, who had never paid tributes to any of my predecessors, have sent me ambassadors with letters professing loyalty and obedience and some elephants by way of presents. I have promoted cultivation in both the Subahs (i.e. Bengal and Bihar).

In the context of the above letter, it can reasonably be supposed that trail of Mughal expedition towards the north-east frontier during the period of Shuja's *Subahdarship* took place, without which Cachar and other *zamindaris* would not be tributary-cum-vassal states. As known from a Persian chronicle it appears that Prince Shuja had also tried to subdue Tripura. He appointed his son Zainuddin Muhammad as his Deputy in Rajmahal and personally proceeded to Dacca and despatched an expedition against Tripura under his chief minister Jan Bag Khan. The expedition failed to occupy any of the forts of Tripura even after labouring for one year and ultimately had to be withdrawn only when many of the soldiers died due to unfavourable climate.[118] *Rajmala* also claims that Kalyan Manikya (c. 1623-1660) defeated the Mughals.[119] However, from the fact that in the revenue records of Bengal Subah prepared at the time of Sultan Shuja in 1580 *Saka* (A.D. 1658) '*Sarkar* Udaipur' was recorded as a revenue paying area. It is possible that a portion of Tripura was conquered by the Mughals. It is further supposed from the fact that a mosque was constructed at Comilla in the name of Prince Shuja and a village named Suryanagar was gifted to the mosque as its *wakf* property.[120]

Notwithstanding the political turmoils brewed on the illness of Emperor Shah Jahan in 1657, and the absence of Prince Shuja from Bengal was bound to shake the imperial hold over the north-east. During this confusion, Pran-narayan,* Raja of Cooch-Behar, saw an opportunity for throwing off the Mughal yoke as well as for regaining the

territories of his ancestors, east of the Sankosh river which were already lost to the Mughals. He made a series of plundering raids into the Ghoraghat region, carrying off a number of Imperial subjects as captives and declared himself as an independent ruler by stopping paying tribute to the Mughal Emperor[121]. Mir Lutfulla Shiraji, the Mughal *Faujdar* of Kamrup (Koch-Hajo) was compelled to retreat to Gauhati (c.1657) where being hemmed in by the Koches on the one side and the Ahoms on the other, left Gauhati. The Ahoms thereupon took instant possession of Gauhati, Pandu and Saraighat (c.1658-1659) and many war equipments including twenty canons were acquired.[122] Prannarayan (1633-66) also proposed to Jayadhvaj Singh (1648-63), the Ahom monarch for an offensive and defensive alliance against the Mughals and to divide Kamrup mutually. The latter, however, turned down the ensuing proposal possibly because of his own intention to occupy the whole of Kamrup or because of the fact that western Koch family had always been an ally of the enemy of the Ahoms from the west. Prannarayan then advanced to Dhubri and took its possession by defeating the Mughal *Faujdar* of Kamrup[123]. On further advance, he was, however, defeated by the Ahoms and Jayadhvaj Singh followed up his victory by extension of his sway west-ward and established a military station at Hatsila, and then annexed part of the Pargana Karaibari[124]. In fact, the mutual jealousy and antagonism between Jayadhvaj Singh and Prannarayan facilitated the revival of Mughal expansionism under Emperor Aurangzeb[125].

North-East India had thus attracted the notice of the Mughals soon after the consolidation of their position in Bengal *Subah*. The legacy of the raids towards this frontier during the Sultanate period, the situation as prevalent gave incentive to the Mughals. Thus lack of unity among the local monarchs, chieftains and *zamindars* encouraged them further. The division of Koch Kingdom and Afgan confederacy are illustrations in point. The Mughal viceroys of Bengal took every chance to cash the situation for the territorial expansion and military annexation. The annexations of Koch-Hajo and Sylhet, since forming parts of Bengal *Subah*,

placed the two gateway of North-East India under the Mughals where they turned from irresponsible conquerors to serious administrators and introduced several reformist measures with a view to firmly consolidate their position. Besides, establishment of their influence, no matter nominal, over Jayantia, Cachar and Tripura and the hostile relations with the Ahoms served as the prelude to the more serious attempts just to pacify the region during the reign of Aurangzeb[126].

NOTES

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2. *Ibid.*, pp. 115-19.

3. *Census Report on Population*, (ed.), Registrar General, Government of India (1971-72).

4. J.M'cosh, *Topography of Assam*, pp. 3-5.

5. R.K.Mukherjee, *Fundamental Unity of India*, p.93.

6. J.M'cosh, *op.cit.*, p.5.

7. E. Gait, *A History of Assam*, p.7; *(Sir Edward Gait probably confused the yardstick of the then moral standard, as it is not desirable to generalise the concept of moral degradation, keeping in view of the time honoured moral values and forces displayed by the rulers and the ruled of Assam especially before the advent of the Agent of the East India Company.)

8. J.M'cosh, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

9. W. Robinson, *Descriptive Account of Assam*, p. 18.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 23.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

12. J.M'cosh, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

13. B.S.Guha, *Bharater Jati Parichoy, Tr. Racial Elements in the Population*, p.10.

14. E. Gait, op. cit., p. 268, H. Blochmann, *Koch-Bihar, Koch-Hajo and Assam, in the 16th and 17th century according to the Akbarnama, the Padishanama and the Fathiya-i-Ibsiyah*, J.A.S.B., Vol. XLI, 1872, pp. 49-50, 75-84.

15. J.B. Bhattacharjee, "The Genesis and Pattern of British Administration in the Hill Areas of North-East India", *Proceedings, Indian History Congress*, 1975, pp. 675-7.

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19. *Ibid.*, p. 274.

20. Sir J.N. Sarkar, *op. cit.*, pp. 179-81.

21. L. Devi, *Ahom-Tribal Relations*, pp. 271-72.

22. P.R.T Gurdon, *The Khasis*, p. 27.

23. B.R.C., No. 42, letter to Hon'Charles Stuart, President and Member of the Board of Revenue from J. Willes, Collector of Sylhet, *Proceedings of the Board of Revenue*, Dt. 24 th Sept. 1970.

24. M. Martin, *Eastern India*, Vol. V, pp. 161-65; J.B. Bhattacharjee, *The Garos and the English, p. 19.*

25. W. Robinson, *'Notes on the Daflas and the Peculiarity of their Language'*, J.A.S.B, No. 2, 1851, pp. 126-27.

26. A. Mackenzi, *History of the Relations of the Government with Hill Tribes of the North-East Frontier of Bengal*, pp.9-19; H. Blochman, *op. cit.*, pp. 75-84; Assam Buranji, Mss No. 49, D.H.A.S. (Gauhati).

27. S.K. Bhuyan, (ed.), *Jayantia Buranji*, pp. 12-18.

28. J.B. Bhattacharjee, *Cachar Under British Rule in North-East India*, p. 46.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 113-15.

30. *Rajmala*, Education Directorate, Tripura, pp. 60-61.

31. Sir J.N. Sarkar, *History of Aurangzib*, (hereafter Aurangzeb) Vol. III, p. 150.

32. H.K. Barpujari, (ed.), *Political History of Assam*, Vol. 1, p. 2. H. Blochmann, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

33. S.R. Sharma, *Mughal Empire in India*, pp. 1-6.

34. E. Gait, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

35. Sir J.N. Sarkar, *op. cit.*, Vol. III, pp. 153-154.

36. M. Neog, *Aspects of the Heritage of Assam*, pp. 31-39.

37. Transcript No. 94, Vol. V. Part. V, pp. 309. D.H.A.S. Gauhati.

38. Sir J.N. Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

39. *Ibid.*, p, 152.

40. W. Robinson, *A Descriptive Account of Assam*, p.189.

41. *Ibid.*, p. 190.

42. J.A.R.S., Vol. XX (1972-73) pp. 16-23.

43. *Assam Buranji*, Mss. No. 40, Tr. No. 2, D.H.A.S.(Gauhati).

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45. S.K. Chatterji, *The Place of Assam in the History and Civilization of India*, pp. 65-69.

46. E. Gait, *Report of Historical Research in Assam*, p.17, *Assam Buranji*, Mss No. 40, Tr. No. 2, D.H.A.S. (Gauhati).

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49. M.I. Bora, (tr). *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi*. vol. 1, pp. 528-29.

50. K.T. Phukan, *Assam Buranji*, pp. 29-30; *Padishanama*, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-65; H. Blochmann, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

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53. E. Gait, *op. cit.*, p. 301.

54. R.M. Nath, *The Background of Assamese Culture*, p. 73.

55. J.B. Bhattacharjee, *Cachar Under British Rule in North-East India*, p. 6.

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57. S.K. Bhuyan, (ed.), *Kachari Buranji*, p. 23; *Assam Buranji*, MSS No. 40, Tr. No. 2., D.H.A.S., Gauhati.
•In Assam Buranji (K.T. Phukan), it refers one Mangal Raja became protege because of being attacked by Josa Manik, the Jayantia ruler (p. 29).

58. E. Gait, *op. cit.*, p. 314.

59. S.K. Bhuyan, (ed.), *Jayantia Buranji*, p. 11

60. E. Gait, *Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam*, p. 18.

61. H.K. Barua, *Assam Buranji*, p. 42.

62. G.C. Barua, (tr.), *Ahom Buranji*, p. 106.

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70. *Ibid.*, p. 138.

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74. *Rajmala,* Education Directorate, Tripura, pp. 21-22.

75. N.R. Roy Chowdhury, *Tripura hrough Tthe Ages;* pp. 23-24.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

77. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

78. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

79. *Rajmala,* Education Directorate, Tripura, pp. 28-31.

80. N.R. Roychoudhury, *op. cit.*, pp. 27-33.

81. A. Salam, (tr.), *Riyaz-us-Salatin,* pp. 166-67; K.T. Phukan, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.

82. Sir J.N. Sarkar, *History of Bengal,* p. 212.

83. S.K. Bhuyan, (ed.), *Assam Buranji,* p. 47.

84. H. Goswami, (ed.), *Purani Assam Buranji,* pp. 71-72.

85. S.K. Bhuyan, (ed.), *Kamrupar Buranji,* p. 7.

86. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-12.

87. M.I. Bora, (tr.), *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi,* Vol. I, pp. 118, 163-73.
* Raja of Bhusna, who had already submitted to the Mughals and listed in the imperial service.

88. *Baharistan-i-Ghaybi,* Vol. I, pp. 166-67.

89. *Ibid.*. pp. 207-09.

90. *Ibid.*, pp. 208-09.
*Probably modern Haritikar.

91. *Ibid.*, pp. 219-21.

92. *Ibid.*, pp. 324-25.

93. *Ibid.*, pp. 324-27.

94. *Rajmala, op. cit.*, pp. 64-65; N.R. Roy Choudhury, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

95. *Rajmala, op. cit.*, p. 67; *Bharistan-i-Ghaybi,* Vol. II, pp. 627-28.

96. *Bengal Past and Present*, Oct., 1907, pp. 50-52.

97. S.K. Bhuyan, (ed.), *Kamrupar Buranji*, p. 13.

98. *Bharistan-i-Ghaybi, op. cit.*, Vol. I, pp. 222-23.

99. *Ibid.*, pp. 222-23.

100. *Ibid.*,
*Bhitar Band and Bahirbond are two *parganas* of Cooch-Behar State lying on the right bank of the Brahmaputra to the west and south west of Rangpur (Rannal Map No. 5).

101. *Ibid.*, pp. 230-35.

102. *Ibid.*, pp. 240-41.

103. *Ibid.*, pp. 246-47.

104. *Ibid.*, pp. 247-48.

105. A.R. Chowdhury, *op. cit.*, pp. 255-56.

106. *Darrang Raj Vamsabali*, pp. 155-157; S.K. Bhuyan, (ed.); *Assam Buranji*, p. 50; G.C. Barua, (tr.), Ahom Buranji, p. 100.

107. E. Gait; *op. cit.*, p. 110; *Assam Buranji*, Mss No. 60, Tr. No. 82, D.R.A.S. Gauhati.

108. *Assam Buranji*, Mss No. 60, Tr. No. 82, D.H.A.S. (Gauhati); G.C. Barua, *Ahom Buranji.*, pp. 102-03.

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110. S.K. Bhuyan, (ed.), *Assam Buranji*, pp. 56-58.

111. S.K. Bhuyan, (ed.), *Kamrupar Buranji*, pp. 16-18; *Bharistun-i-Ghaybi*, Vol. II, pp. 521-22.

112. A.A. Chowdhury, *op. cit.*, p. 239.

113. S.K. Bhuyan, (ed.), *Assam Buranji*, pp. 59-61.

114. *Ibid*, pp. 61-62.

115. *Ibid.*, pp. 61-63; H. Blochmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-63.

116. Sir J.N. Sarkar, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

117. *Ibid.*, p. 333.

118. N.R. Roychoudhury, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

119. Rajmala, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-74.

120. K.C. Sinha, *Rajmala*, p. 84; N.R. Roychoudhury, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

121. S.N. Bhattacharya, *A History of Mughal North East Frontier Policy*, pp. 298-300; *Assam Buranji*, Mss No. 60 Tr. No. 82, D.H. A.S. (Gauhati).
*For Bhim Narain, Mss have also Pem Narain H. Blochmann. J.A.S.B., 1872, foot-note, p. 63.

122. S.K. Bhuyan, (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 75.

123. S.N. Bhattacharyya, *op. cit.*, p. 302.

124. *Ibid.*, pp. 320-21; H. Blochmann, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

125. A. Salam, *op. cit.*, pp. 212-13; *Assam Buranji*, Mss No. 60 Tr. No. 82. D.H.A.S. (Gauhati).

126. *Alamgirnama*, p. 680; H. Blochmann, *op. cit.*, p. 63; *Assam Buranji*, Mss No. 49, D.H.A.S. (Gauhati).