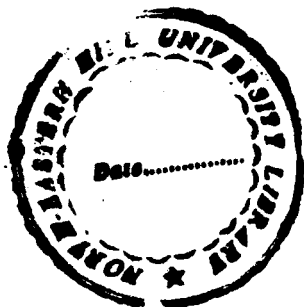


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**PROCEEDINGS OF
NORTH EAST INDIA
HISTORY ASSOCIATION**

**SIXTH SESSION
AGARTALA : 1985**

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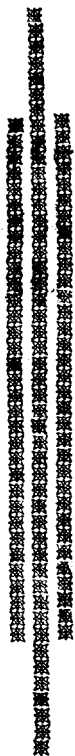
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Preface

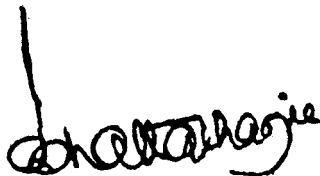
The Sixth Annual Session of the North East India History Association held at the Calcutta University Post-Graduate Centre, Agartala on October 3-5, 1985 was one of our most colourful academic meets in the region, attended by the largest number of delegates. Professor H. L. Gupta, formerly Head of the Department of History, Saugar University presided over the Session, which was inaugurated by Sri Nripen Chakravarty, Chief Minister of Tripura and graced by Dr. B. D. Sharma, Vice-Chancellor, North-Eastern Hill University as the Guest of Honour. Shri Dasarath Deb, Deputy Chief Minister of Tripura also addressed the delegates. Our colleagues, Professor J. B. Ganguly, Director, CUPG Centre, and Dr. Mahadev Chakravarti, Reader & Head, Department of Modern History at the Centre did us great honour as Chairman of the Reception Committee and the Local Secretary of the Session respectively.

We are grateful to the Calcutta University Post-Graduate Centre, Agartala for hosting the Session and warm hospitality offered to the delegates. The administration, members of the teaching faculties and the students' community in the Centre were all involved in the Session. The Centre received generous support from the Government of Tripura. The Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Minister and their cabinet colleagues generously spared time from their schedules to be with the delegates and participate in academic discussions. They entertained the delegates and offered as gifts some publications on Tripura and excellent pieces of indigenous handicrafts as token of love and affection of the people of the State. The Directorate of Information and Culture, Government of Tripura, organised colourful programmes depicting the rich cultural heritage of Tripura. Study tours were organised to the places of historical importance. On the whole, the delegates shall cherish the fond memory of the Session for a long time.

The academic standard of the Session was also very high. We have maintained our tradition of steady growth in membership pattern and the number of papers presented and discussed. Tripura is one of such areas in our region where we do not have enough historical studies. In Agartala Session, we indeed achieved a major breakthrough. Majority of the papers presented there were on Tripura. These shall certainly generate further research. The volume is a collection of sixty two papers, empirical as well as

analytical and interpretative. Some of the papers, particularly by the colleagues in other disciplines, have added to the merit of the volume by fitting well in our scheme of recording the living history.

I am personally thankful to my colleagues Dr. J. P. Singh, Dr. M. S. Sangma, Dr. O. P. Kejariwal and Dr. Gautam Sengupta for the ready help in editing and publishing the volume.



Shillong
The 22 August 1986

(J. B. Bhattacharjee)
General Secretary
North East India History Association

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The Nature of the Ahom-Kachari Relations

I. S. Mumtaza Khatun

It has been mentioned in some chronicles that even before the advent of Siu-ka-pha to the Brahmaputra valley, the Kacharis, the Marans, the Barahis and the Chutiyas paid tributes to Siu-ka-pha, the ruler of Mao-lung.¹ Thus the *Ahom-Buranji* records, "In ancient time, the heavenly king Shukapha conquered the Chutiyas, the Kacharis, the Matakas, the Barahis, the Nagas and one Kamateswar. They were allowed to remain as they were on the condition of offering tributes."² A similar statement is also found in the *Purani Assam Buranji*.³ It is also recorded in the chronicles that on Siu-ka-pha's arrival in the Brahmaputra valley the tributes of those territories had been submitted to him. "After this, the king Shukapha arrived in this country. He got homage and tributes from all."⁴ It, thus, appears that Siu-ka-pha continued to receive tributes from the Kacharis whose territory lay on the left bank of the river Dikhow.

That Siu-ka-pha received tributes from the Kacharis is also supported by the fact that Siu-ka-pha's son and successor, Siu-teu-pha (A. D. 1268-1281) had issued warning to the Kachari either to pay tributes to him or else to relinquish the territory as far as river Namdang.⁵ This suggested that the Kacharis perhaps deliberately neglected the payment of tributes to the new Ahom king. On learning that the Kacharis were highly superstitious and could easily be duped, the Ahoms proposed that this should be decided by a taste in digging two cannals by two parties separately. Whoever could link canal with the river Dikhow before day break would be considered the owner of the tract. The Kacharis having agreed to the proposal, the two sides started digging cannals. In their attempt the Kacharis almost surpassed the Ahoms, who, on learning this, brought some fowls, made the birds to crow as they do before dawn. The night being full moon the Kacharis hearing the fowls crowing thought that it was already dawn left the canal incomplete

while the Ahoms continued to dig and succeeded. The Kacharis admitting defeat, surrendered the territory upto Namdang to the Ahoms.⁶ Two hundred years later during the reign of Siu-hen-pha (A. D. 1488-1493) the Kacharis, after defeating the Ahoms in a battle, compelled them to offer a girl to the Kachari king, thus made, the Ahoms subordinate to the Kacharis.

With the accession of Siu-hum-mong (A. D. 1497-1539) the position changed radically. The Ahoms were now determined to reestablish the old tributary relations with the Kacharis by the use of arms as well as stratagem. For this purpose Siu-hum-mong despatched an army against the Kacharis under Kan-seng who after recovering the lost territory by some dexterous device occupied the territory upto the Dhansiri valley.⁸ Emboldened by this the Ahom again tried to crush the Kachari power that led to a war in A.D. 1531. This time they were successful to such an extent that after defeating Khunkhara, Siu-hum-mong established another prince named Detchung, or Detchungpha, who claimed his descent from original Kachari royal family, on the Kachari throne.¹⁰ Henceforth the Ahoms regarded them as subordinate and started addressing the Kachari king as *thapita* (or established) in all their correspondences.

After a few years Siu-hum-mong despatched another army against the Kachari king, Detchung, who was trying to assert his independence.¹¹ The Ahom army killed the Kachari king with his mother and took away one prince named Madan to the Ahom capital. Soon on the solicitation of the Kachari nobles Madan was installed as king of the Kacharis and named as Nirbhoyarayan.¹² The Ahom king gave him a girl and advised him thus - "If a wild bear is caught eat the flesh only after offering one leg in my name, another in Buragohain's name. One Khu-dang (an officer) with twenty persons will stay in our country at the beginning of the year send information. One section of them will go while another will stay. Send seven horses as annual tributes." Nirbhoyarayan agreed to pay annual tribute to his overlord.¹³ This time, it seems, the Ahoms not only established a prince on the Kachari throne but also preserved him. Thus the Kachari kings became the *thapita-sanchita*, meaning 'established and preserved' of the Ahoms for ever.

The Kachari kings, in the subsequent period, however, represented the title *thapita-sanchita*, and tried to overthrow the Ahom authority and became independent on every slightest

opportunity. The first time when the Koch army under Chilarai, the brother of Naranarayan, after defeating the Ahoms, invaded the Kachari kingdom and brought it under their subordination.¹⁴ This event was interpreted by the Kacharis as virtually an end of the Ahom suzerainty over them. Hence after a few years during the reign of Siu-sen-pha (A. D. 1603-1641), commonly known as Pratap Singha, the Kacharis, after killing Sundar Gohain, the Ahom general, who at that time was encamping at Demera within the Kachari territory to fetch the Jayantiya princess through Satgaon-Teteliguri route, openly defied the Ahom authority and refused to pay tributes, to their former liegeland.¹⁵ The Kachari king, Yasanarayan, took the name Pratapnarayan and changed the name of his capital from Maibong to Kirtipur.

Just after the accession of Siu-ram-pha in 1641 to the Ahom throne after the death of Siu-sen-pha, the Kachari king, Indrabalnarayan, the successor of Bhimbarnarayan, deputed envoys with letters to the new Ahom king sealed with *Singha-sab*, or the seal of independence, instead of the *Phukan sab*, or the seal of subordination which he was supposed to use.¹⁶ It may be relevant to say that the subordinate or the tributary chiefs had to use the *Phukan sab*, or the "seal of subordination" on their letters addressed to their overlord. Any violation of this custom was considered a serious offence and was interpreted as the declaration of independence. One of the two envoys was detained, the other was sent back to come again with the usual seal.¹⁷ During the period of Mughal invasion of the Ahom kingdom under Syed Babakar between 1615-1619, the Kachari king, Bhimbarnarayan, tried to assert his position and attacked one of the villages of the Ahom kingdom knowing fully well that at that stage the Ahom force could not resist them.¹⁸ After the Mir Jumla's invasion of the Ahom kingdom when Chakradhvaj Singha sent envoys to the Kachari kingdom to enquire about the Barchetiya, an Ahom officer, who fled away to the Kachari king, Birdarpanarayan, not only did not return *Barchetiya* but also sent his reply through the visiting Ahom envoys which was contrary to the existing diplomatic etiquettes.¹⁹ The letters were not accepted by the Ahom government and sent back to the Kachari ruler. Taking advantage of the Moamaria rebellion, which crippled the Ahom administrative machinery, the Kacharis did not pay any heed to the demand made in 1795 by the Barbarua on the royal direction for the return of the Ahom subjects, Barmura (Bajay Barmura, Gohain) Moamarias and other refugees,

who during the revolt, fled away to the Kachari kingdom and created troubles in the frontier.²⁰ Another instance of such aggressive attitude is found during the reign of Siu-khran-pha, alias Rudra Singha (A. D. 1696-1714) when the Kachari king²¹ through his envoy, demanded the territory upto Mahang which was initially under their (the Kacharis) possession.²²

The Ahoms, who always considered the Kacharis as their subordinate, demanded that in their diplomatic exchanges they should bring five letters— one for the king, three for the three ministers (the *Buragohain*, the *Bargohain* and the *Barpatragohain*,) and one for the frontier governor. In the early days the frontier governor was the *Barchetiya* at Marangi, but from the reign of Pratap Singha, the *Barbarua* and in later period *Barphukan* acted as the frontier governor in dealing with the Kacharis. Whenever the Kacharis tried, after a break, to revive their relations, the Ahom court always insisted on these five customary formal letters. Thus during the reign of Siu-hum-mong when the Kachari envoys, Demeriya Sadar Doloi sent by the Kachari King, Derchungpha, arrived at the Ahom frontier, he was advised by Kan-seng, the Ahom general, who was acting as the governor of the Dhansiri frontier, to come with formal letters for the resumption of the good relation.²³ There were several more instances of this in the chronicles. During the reign of Siu-ting-pha (A. D. 1644-1648) the Kachari ruler, Birdarpanarayan sent two emissaries through two different routes—one to the *Barchetiya* through the Marangi route under the name of his ministers and the other to the *Barbarua* through the Kapili route.²⁴ As they did not bring the usual five letters on the arrival of the emissaries at the Ahom frontier outposts, on the direction of the Ahom king, the *Barchetiya* detained the Kachari envoy at his court while the other two envoys were sent back with necessary instruction, i.e. to come back with five formal letters.²⁵ The *Barchetiya* released the Kachari envoy only after learning that another Kachari embassy which came to the *Barbarua* brought five letters. During the reign of Siu-tam-la, alias Jayadhvaj Singha (A. D. 1648-1643), the Kachari ruler, Birdarpanarayan, sent his envoys to the *Barphukan* to renew the relations, which had broken off a few years previously.²⁶ Since the envoys did not bring five letters they were instructed to come with formal letters in order to renew the good relations.²⁷ Again during the reign of Rudra Singha, Tamradhvajnarayan, the new Kachari ruler, sent his envoy to the court of the Kaliyabariya Phukan,

requesting him to revive the relations which existed between them (the Ahoms and the Kacharis) but was disrupted a few years ago due to unavoidable reason.²⁸ The Phukan, on the order of Rudra Singha, sent back the envoy instructing him to come again with all formalities to revive the relations between them.

As soon as the Kachari kings sent five formal letters to the Ahom royal court which, in other words, means the acceptance of the subordination, the Ahom kings addressed the Kachari kings as *thapita-sanchita* i. e. "established and preserved, a position which they were unable to refute rather had to accept against their choice. Realizing this position, they, then, invariably demanded for an Ahom girl from their liegeland which symbolized as in the days of king Siu-hum-mong who established Nirbhoyanarayan by offering an Ahom girl, an acceptance of subordination.²⁹ King Pratap Singha when sent his reply to the Kachari king addressing the letter as *thapita-sanchita*, Bimbal asked for an Ahom girl to prove that he was actually established by the Ahom king.³⁰ On receiving the letter sent by the Ahom king Siu-ting-pha, addressing the Kachari ruler as *thapita-sanchita*, the latter immediately demanded an Ahom girl³¹. During the reign of Jayadhvaj Singha, the Kachari ruler asked for an Ahom girl as he was addressed as *thapita-sanchita*.³²

It is an important point to note that though the Kachari rulers resented the *thapita-sanchita* term, they did not hesitate to place themselves in that position when ever they found the Ahoms powerful enough to take up arms against the Kacharis. Whenever a foreign power like the Koches or the Mughals invaded the Ahom kings the Kachari rulers were rather happy to find their liegeland in predicament but whenever the Ahoms emerged victorious or repelled the enemies the Kachari rulers tried to revive their old relations of subordination for the fear being attacked. During the reign of Pratap Singha after the defeat of the Mughals in A. D. 1619, Indrabalnarayan tried to resume his position of subordination to the Ahoms.³³ Again after the final defeat of the Mughals at the battle of Itakhuli in A. D. 1681 during the reign of Gadadhar Singha, the Kachari king, Birdarpanarayan made effort to revive his subordinate relation with the Ahoms.³⁴

From the above discussion it may be concluded that two parallel attitude dominated the Ahom-Kachari relations. One, the Ahoms on their part tried to keep the Kachari rulers under

their subordination. Two, the Kachari rulers were trying to assert their independence whenever any opportunity occurred. Whenever a new king ascended the Ahom throne or any external danger beset the Ahom rulers, the Kacharis did not hesitate to reassert their position. Another point which comes to our notice is that the Ahom king himself never took any initiative to establish friendly relations or to revive such relations. In case of extreme necessity the Ahom monarch sent envoys in the name of his ministers as in the case of Pratap Singha who, anticipating the Mughal invasion, sent five persons in the name of his ministers and the governor to the Kachari court in A. D. 1615.³⁸

Notes & References

1. *Ahom-Buranji* (A-B), tr. ed. G. C. Barua, Calcutta, 1930, pp. 24,43. But following Kasi Nath Tamuli Phukan's *Assam Buranji*, 2nd edition 1906, pp. 8-9, some scholars including P. Gogoi, *The Tai and the Tai Kingdoms*, Gauhati University, 1968, pp. 252-253 state that Siu-ka-pha ruled over Mong-Mit-Kup-ling-dao.
2. op. cit., p. 38.
3. Ed. by H. C. Goswami, Gauhati, 1922, p. 32. Henceforth it will be referred to as PAB.
4. op. cit., p. 38.
5. *Banhgariya Buragohainar Buranji*, incorporated with *Deodhai Asam Buranji* (DAB) ed. by S. K. Bhuyan, Gauhati, 2nd edition, 1962, p. 102 ; *Satsari Asam Buranji* (SAB), ed. by S. K. Bhuyan, Gauhati, 1974, 4th edition, p. 7 ; L. Devi, *Ahom-Tribal Relations*, Gauhati, pp. 78-79.
6. *Ibid*, pp. 102-103 ; *Ibid*, pp. 7-8 ; *Ibid*.
7. *DAB*, op. cit., pp. 14-15 ; *SAB*, pp. 12, 5 ; *A-B*, pp. 52-53 ; *Assam Buranji* (ABSM), ed. by S. K. Bhuyan, Gauhati, 2nd edition, 1960, p. 8 ; L. Devi, op. cit., p. 79-80.
8. *Kachari Buranji* (KB), ed. by S. K. Bhuyan, Gauhati, 2nd edition, 1951, pp. 11-13 ; *ABSM* op. cit., p. 11 ; J. P. Wade, *An Account of Assam*, ed. by Benudhar Sharma, North Lakhimpur, 1927, pp. 62-65 ; L. Devi, op. cit., pp. 80-81.
9. *DAB*, op. cit., pp. 27-28 ; *A-B*, op. cit., pp. 65-66 ; *ABSM*, op. cit., p. 12 ; L. Devi, op. cit., p. 82.
10. *Ibid* ; *Ibid* ; *Ibid* ; *Ibid*.
11. *Ibid* ; op. cit., pp. 35-37 ; *KB*, op. cit., pp. 14-16 ; *A-B*, op. cit. pp. 75-7 ; L. Devi, op. cit., pp. 83-84.
12. *KB*, op. cit., p. 20 ; *PAB*, op. cit., p. 202.

13. *Ibid.*
14. *History of Cooch Behar*, compiled by Khan Chowdhuri Amanalulla Ahmed, Cooch Behar, 1936, p. 112 ; *PAB*, op. cit., p. 66 ; *ABSM*, op. cit., p. 34.
15. *KB*, op. cit., p. 25 ; *ABSM*, op. cit., p. 44.
16. *Ibid* ; p. 33 ; *Ibid*, pp. 65-66 ; *DAB*, op. cit., p. 86.
17. *Ibid*, pp. 34-35 ; *Ibid*, pp. 67-68.
18. *Ibid*, p. 29.
19. *Ibid*, pp. 51-52.
20. *Tungkhungiya Buranji (TUB)*, ed. by S.K. Bhuyan, Gauhati, 2nd edition, 1964, pp. 13 -139.
21. *Ibid*, p. 31. The name of the Kachari king is recorded as Jaysingha.
22. At the advent of Siu-ka-pha to the Brahmaputra valley it was under the Nagas, who took possession of it after defeating the Kacharis, *DAB*, op. cit., pp. 100-101 ; *SAB*, op. cit., p. 6. During the reign of Siu-hum-mong, the Ahoms obtained it. *Assam Buranji*, by Kasi Nath Tamuli Phukan, Calcutta, 1906, p. 20.
23. *KB*, op. cit., pp. 13-14.
24. *Ibid*, p. 34 ; *ABSM*, op. cit., pp. 67-68.
25. *Ibid*, *Ibid*.
26. King Jayadhvaj Singh agreed to offer a girl to the Kachari King, Birdarpanarayan. He therefore asked the Kachari king to come to the frontier to receive the girl. In case it was not possible for him for political reason to leave the capital then he asked him to send either his brother or son to escort her. Birdarpanarayan expressed his inability to comply with the Ahom king's request as both the brother and son were minors. This led to the expulsion of the Kachari envoys from the Ahom court and break off the good relations between them. *KB*, op. cit., pp. 37-38.
27. *KB*, op. cit., pp. 39-40.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 20 ; *PAB*, op. cit., p. 202.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 28 ; *ABSM*, op. cit., p. 48.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 35 ; *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 57.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 26 ; *ABSM*, op. cit., pp. 46-47.