THE NORTH-EAST AND THE MUGHALS

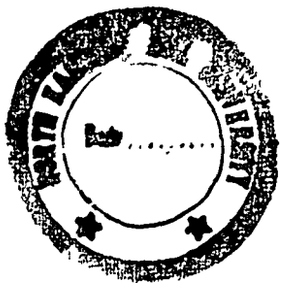
(1661 - 1714 A. D.)

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment
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DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY





TO

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ABSTRACT

North East India consists of five States (viz. Assam, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura)and two Union Territories (viz. Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram) in the Indian Union. Flanked by Bangladesh, Burma, China and Bhutan and connected with the mainland India by the narrow 'Siliguri neck' the region had a predominantly Indo-Mongoloid background. Whereas the hills retained the traditional tribal formations till supersede by the British, the valleys experienced rise and fall of the monarchies in ancient and medieval times. The larger state formations in the neighbouring areas and the mode of production there generated impact for the hills and dales of the region. The extension of the Indo-Aryan settlements in the region has been recorded since earliest times. The political connections with Eastern India was indeed very close during the Varman - Pala - Sena periods and the region was covered in the imperial scheme of Samudra Gupta in ancient time. The Koch, Ahom, Kachari, Jayantia, Manipuri and Tipperah monarchies consolidated their bases in the valley areas of the region atleast since 15th - 16th centuries and such state formations with occasional confronta-ting relations with neighbouring Bengal contributed to the splendid political isolation that the region could maintain inspite of the repeated expansionist endeavours of the Turko-Afgan and early Mughal rulers of Bengal. Nevertheless, the economic intra-dependence of the various peoples inhabiting

the region and its inter-dependence with Bengal had always inspired interaction. Trade served as the instrument of hills-plains contacts within the region and the surplus generated by the region were exchanged with Bengal, Burma, China, Tibet and Bhutan to balance the deficit, either directly or through intermediaries which, on the other hand, provided the condition for socio-cultural assimilation and exchange of ideas, institutions and technologies. Determined attempts that were made during the reigns of Jahangir(1605-27) and Shah Jahan (1627-58) to extend the Mughal imperial hold over the region succeeded in the annexation of Lower Assam and imposition of tributary status on Cooch Behar, Jayantia, Cachar and Tripura, besides Sherpur and Susang in Mymensing.

The accession of Aurangzeb to the Mughal throne was followed by a forward policy in the North East, inspired mainly by the aggressive imperialism of the Emperor and partly, by the fact that during the war of Succession that preceded his reign the dependent monarchies in the region had reasserted themselves and the Ahoms overtured for the recovery of the ceded territory. The refuge taken by Prince Shuja in Aracan (May 1660), where he was reportedly joined by the dethroned ruler of Tripura was an added factor. The Mughal authorities also looked for the promotion of trade and commerce beyond the north-east frontier of their eastern Subah i.e. Bengal. Although death news of Shuja received through the Dutch Factors was a relief to Aurangzeb, but

his expansionist policy involved him in frontier wars in the North East in the same prowess as in western India and the north-west frontier.

Aurangzeb ordered a campaign in November 1661 Mir Jumla, the Governor of Bengal, who succeeded in occupying Cooch Behar and Assam and securing the submission of Dimarua and Darrang. The Raja of Cooch Behar who had fled to Bhutan, ultimately returned to his state and was reinstated on tributary terms. The Ahom monarch Jayadhvaj Singh (1648-63) signed the Treaty of Ghilajorighat in January 1663 according to which the river Manas came to be recognised as the Ahom-Mughal boundary and the Ahom monarch undertook to pay war indemnity, tribute and delivery of hostages.

The death of Mir Jumla (March, 1663) on his way back to Bengal, nevertheless, encouraged the Ahoms to reassert their position. The Ahom monarch also reoccupied Gauhati and commanded the loyalty of the rulers of Dimarua and Darrang An expedition that was despatched under Raja Ram Singh in 1667 failed to pacify the Ahoms as the Mughals were defeated in the battle of Saraighat (March 1671). The failure of the Mughal authorities to reinforce the invading forces due to the preoccupation with Maratha, Sikh and jat rebels and the reorganisation of administration and military structure of the Ahom state under Udayaditya Singh (1669-73) were at the back drop of the Ahom success and the Mughal disaster.

In the trail of Saraighat was noticed a prolonged

period of inaction both on the Mughal and the Ahom sides. The Mughals were locked in encounters with the Marathas for which Aurangzeb had to encamp himself to the Deccan. The Sikhs, Jats and the Rajputs intensify their rebellions forcing the Mughal authorities in costly operations and taxing dearly in men and money. To make matters worse, the imperial officers and the landed gentry in Bengal as well as European merchants based there, took the advantage of the situation to indulge in strifes and conspiracies. Even the Subahdars Fidai Khan (1678) and Prince Muhammad Azam (1678-79) did not leg behind in exhibiting symptoms of disloyalty. In such a crucial situation the Mughals could not obviously, decide to risk another expedition to their distant North-East. The Ahom state, on the other hand, passed through serious internal disorder (1673-81). The conspiracies and political assassinations led to frequent changes of monarchs and high officials. The unscrupulous nobles even established link with Mughal officers in Bengal and an expedition sent under a fugitive Ahom noble even resulted in temporary Mughal occupation of Gauhati.

The administration of Shaista Khan as the governor of Bengal for the second term (1679-88), however, enabled the Mughals to consolidate their position there and this made an impact on the nature of relationship with the rulers in the north-east frontier of the province. The Rajas of Cooch Behar, Jayantia and Tripura reaffirmed their acceptance of the Mughal fealty. The Rajas of Sherpur and Susung had

and Susung had assumed hostile attitude but a policy of non-intervention in their internal affairs succeeded in pacifying them. Aurangzeb also succeeded in installing a Raja in Laur in Khasi frontier, who accepted Islam as his new faith and ruled as a tributary.

The difficulty faced by Aurangzeb towards the end of his career and War of Succession that followed his death offered additional incentives to the north-eastern rulers to throw away allegiance to the Mughals. The Ahom state had, in the meantime re-emerged from its internal problems under the successive stewardship of Gadadhar Singh (1681-96) and Rudra Singh (1696-1714). They succeeded in recovering Gauhati (1682) from the Mughals and rejuvinated the administration and military structure of the state. The rulers of Cooch Behar, Jayantia and Tripura asserted themselves and indulged in raids in Mughal territory. Rudra Singh cashed out of this growing anti-Mughal venom and raised a confederated army with contribution from the rulers and chieftains in the region with the avowed object of invading Mughal Bengal. The challenge of the North-East which was, indeed, provoked by the years of imperialism on the part of the Mughals also came to an end with the death of Rudra Singh in 1714.

The Mughals thereafter did not make any endeavour to expand their territory in the North East. The decline of the empire that set in with the death of Aurangzeb (1707) and the secession of Bengal under Murshid Quli Khan stood decidedly against such a policy. The successor of Rudra Singh

also abandoned the attitude of his predecessor. Consequently, there was no confrontation thereafter. The Mughal imperialism during the period under review (1661-1714), succeeded only in imposing occasional. Suzerainty over the border states and annexing Lower Assam to their rule. Nevertheless, the impact generated by the contact was highly significant in the history of the North East. The Mughal invasions had broken the centuries' isolation of the region. The challenge posed by them had forced the local rulers to reorganise their administration and defence structures, borrowing elements from the invaders themselves. The war-captives became the sources of innovation in various fields. The rulers also encouraged immigration and recruited specialists and technocrats from Bengal to revitalise their army, administration and economy. The indigenous institutions and practices underwent changes. The impact was felt in the fields of religion, culture, language and literature as well. The presence of subjects with diverse faiths in individual states induced secular attitude on the part of the rulers.

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Certified that the subject matter of this thesis is a record of work done by Shri Sushil Chandra Dutta, that the content of this thesis did not form a basis of the award of any previous degree to him, or, to the best of my knowledge, to any body else, and that the thesis had not been submitted by him for any research degree in any other University.

In habit and character Shri Sushil Chandra Dutta is a fit and proper person for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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SHILLONG
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P R E F A C E

The North-Eastern region of India, as it is designated to-day, came into contact with the Mughals eversince the latter rose to power in Bengal during the reign of Akbar. Attempts were made by the successive Mughal emperors, Jahangir (1605-27) and Shah Jahan (1627-58) to extend the 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 indulge in any expansionist endeavours beyond Bengal. To make matters worse, disloyalty and 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 and the Mughals too, thereafter, made no attempt to renew their aggressive frontier policy due mainly to the decaying condition of the 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 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. Mir Jumla's campaign to the death of Rudra Singh. Attempts have been made to throw new lights particularly 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, that 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 to-day, has been visualised as a geographical-historical unit for the purpose of 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 towards 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 in 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 failed 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. 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 cognigence 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 also been consulted and utilised the details of which are appended in the Bibliography towards the end of the volume.

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

(S C DUTTA)

SHILLONG
15 June 1981

CONTENTS

		Page
Supervisor's Certificate	...	ii
Preface	...	iii
Abbreviations	...	viii
Map	...	ix
CHAPTER I		1 - 38
INTRODUCTION: Geographical Sketch, People; Economic Background; Historical Background, Early Mughal Relations.		
CHAPTER II		39 - 63
AURANGZEB AND THE NORTH-EAST FRONTIER: Aurangzeb in making, Mirjumla in Bengal, North Eastern policy, North East and North West		
CHAPTER III		64 -106
EXPEDITION UNDER MIRJUMLA: Motives behind; Assam; Mughal advance; Battle of Koliabar; Fall of Lakhugarh; Occupation of Garhgaon; Mughal difficulties; Administrative measures, Eastern Division; Impact of the Campaign.		
CHAPTER IV		107-142
RAM SINGH's CAMPAIGN: Eastern Scene; Ahom moves; Shaista Khan and the Frontier States; War cry of the Ahoms; Resumption of Gauhati; Mughal reaction; Ram Singh at Rangamati; Barphukan's strategy; Early encounter; Ahom success at Saraighat; Aftermath; Behind the Victory.		

Page

CHAPTER V 143-169

YEARS OF INACTION:

Politics in Ahom Court; Nobles invite the Mughals; Wasteful strifes; Hard Problem of Mughal authority; Western States (Cooch Behar, Bijni, Darrang, Sherpur, Susang; Karaibari); Eastern States (Laur, Jayantia, Cachar, Tripura); Conclusion.

CHAPTER VI 170-236

NORTH EASTERN CHALLENGE:

Problems of Aurangzeb; Ahom recovery of Gauhati; Back to prowess; Mughal dependencies; Ascendancy of Rudra Singh; Towards Confederation; Pacification of Hill neighbours; At Mughal cost; North Eastern Confederacy; End of the Challenge.

CHAPTER VII 237-291

MUGHAL IMPACT ON NORTH-EAST INDIA:

Regional Solidarity; Revitalism, Trade and Commerce; Defence re-orientation; Society and Culture.

CHAPTER VIII 292-300

EPILOGUE

APPENDICES 301-308

A. A NOTE ON GHARGAON IN 1662

B. TREATY OF GHILAJORIGHAT

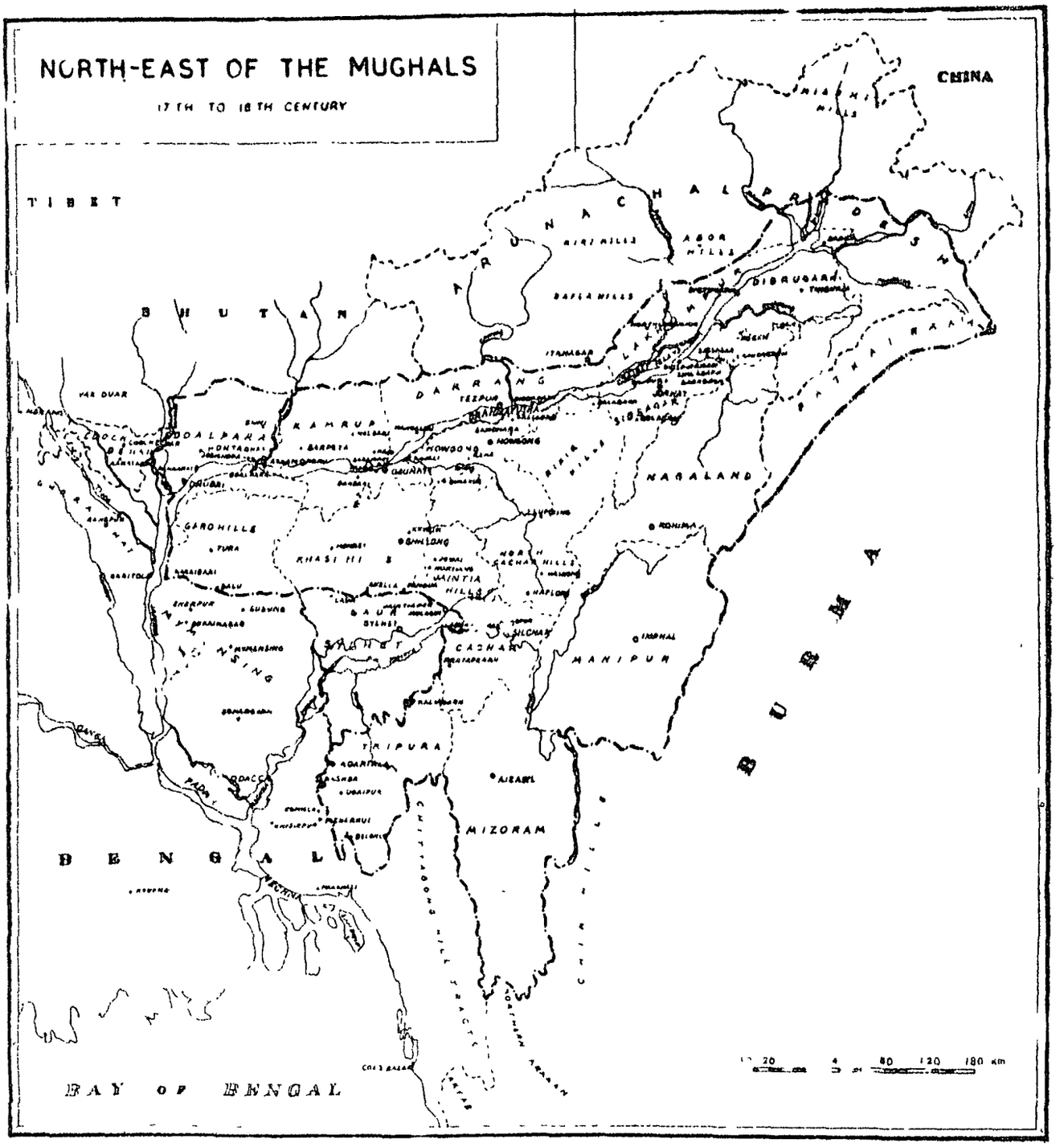
C. INSCRIPTIONS ON CANNON

GLOSSARY 309-314

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY 315-327

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.	...	Kilo metre.
Mss	...	Manuscripts.
Q.R.H.S.	...	Quarterly Review of Historical Studies.


NORTH-EAST OF THE MUGHALS
17TH TO 18TH CENTURY
CHINA
TIBET
BHUTAN
ARUNACHAL PRADESH
DARRANG
KAMRUP
GOALPARA
GARO HILLS
KHASI HILLS
JAINTIA HILLS
NAGA HILLS
NAGALAND
MANIPUR
TRIPURA
MIZORAM
CACHAR
SYLHET
BENGAL
BURMA
BAY OF BENGAL
DIBRUGARH
JORHAT
SIBSAGAR
KOHIMA
IMPHAL
AIZAWL
SILCHAR
0 20 40 80 120 180 km

CHAPTER - I

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 and other situation which affected human life were at the back drop of social formation and historical development. The researches have firmly established that the concepts of geography could affect and mould the political thinking in a fundamental manner. The economic integration, making the areas mutually dependent is also important.[1] In respect of Sea power, there is nothing like a vacuum. However, there is one saving factor in 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 the waves of immigration of the races and people through ages from adjoining South-East Asia and the mainland of India, because of its natural resources, despite hostile climate and geographical barriers and invasions of the imperial forces. No wonder, the imperial Mughals ever since their mastery over

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1. K.M. Panikkar, Geographical factor in Indian History, p.111.
2. Ibid., pp. 115-19.

Bengal and repeated expansionist endeavours to subjugate the region on the immediate north-east of the Subah.

GEOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The geographical concept has 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. The north-eastern region of India to-day consists of five States and two Union Territories, as defined in the constitution of India. The States are Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura and the Union Territories, 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 Kilo metre and a projected population of about 24,099,000 in 1979, as per Census Report of 1971. The area accounts for about 8 per cent of India's total geographical area and nearly 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 and China on the north and north-east and is connected with the mainland by the 'Siliguri neck' in West-Bengal.

The classification of land in the entire north-eastern region is variable because of its peculiar natural hindrances. However, one School of thought says that this region can be classified into five physiographic units like the Assam

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

Himalayas, the Brahmaputra valley, the Shillong plateau, the Barak valley and the South-eastern Hill regions.[4] Again William Robinson divides the land of Assam into three categories, with reference to the level of the waters of the Brahmaputra. With abruptly varying altitude (Agartala 35 metres, Aizawl 1115 metres Impal 78 metres, Pashighat 155 metres Kohima 1450 metres Shillong 1525 metres, Tura 400 metres above Mean Sea Level) the region is gifted with the moonsonwinds which blow in a north-easterly direction. Consequently the whole regions lie exposed to this Cherrapunji (Moushinram) has the prestige of receiving the highest rainfall of over 1125 centimetre 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 hydro-graphical 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, varied topography, earthquakes and natural curser have made most of the rivers capricious and destructive during high floods, which at the same time leave behind rich fertile valleys when receding. Though the country is in all seasons generally swampy and intersected with half-filled channels and stagnant lakes, yet in the dry season

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4. J.M'cosh, Topography of Assam, pp. 3-5.
5. R.K. Mukherjee, Fundamental Unity of India, p.93.

it is susceptible of cultivation, and amply repays any 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 that, 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 was almost 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 of the largest burden could pass by different inosculations out of the one into another 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 as linkline 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 continuance

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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.

loathsome diseases, such as leprosy, white leprosy, elephantiasis, cutaneous eruptions, goitre and hydrocele — which prevail in Bengal."

which generally commence in March, and last about the middle of October. The average annual temperature amounts to 67.2°F, the average of the four hottest months returning at 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 high landers was comparatively stronger than the people living in the valleys. On the whole, the prevailing diseases are fever, bowel complaints, cholera, small pox, 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 dilects;

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9. W. Robinson, Descriptive Account of Assam, p.18.
10. Ibid., p.23.
11. Ibid., p.24.

(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, late comers in Assam.[12]

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

> "amalgamation and its counter actions among the different races and the hill tribes of India resulted a very good effect, because those tribes and sub-tribes taking shelter in the dense forests, have been successfully maintaining the respective tradition and culture; And for this reason, no where in the world such a variety of ethnic groups are found except Indian sub-continent; Human races of India are classified into six-divisions with nine sub-tribes."

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 transcent the political boundaries and bring the whole composite region, despite its certain unavoidable drawbacks, into a single conception with

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

13. B.S. Guha, Bharater Jati Parichoy, p.10.

a common destiny to share with the mainstream of India, which is the 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 rain fall, ardity of the 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 materials and minerals 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 concentration and grouping of dwellings and so led to the formation of villages. This compact form was convenient also 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

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14. E. Gait, op.cit., p. 268; H. Blochmann, Koch Bihar, Koch Hajo and Asam, 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.

region as well as with Bengal and cross-country trade with Bhutan, Tibet, China and Burma enabled the people to exchange their surplus generation 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 relations in ancient Assam.[16] The economic condition of the region was nevertheless believed to be on the whole satisfactory. The tradition current in Assam, in particular acclaims it as a land of abundance. As Sir Judunath Sarkar gives the economy of Assam during pre-Mirjumla invasion,[17]

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

any Aasman ? The same observation is found in S. Tata

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

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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.

16. B.P. Mazumdar, "Epigraphic Records of North India on Endowments to immigrant Brahmanas", Proceedings, Indian History Congress, Hyderabad, 1978, pp.1015-19, Vol. II.

17. Sir J.N. Sarkar, "Assam and the Ahoms in 1660 A.D.", J.B.O.R.S., Vol. 1, 1915, pp. 179-80; H. Blochmann, op.cit., pp. 75-84.

To quote E. Gait,[18]

> "According to Muhammadan historians the people were very skillful in weaving of embroidered with 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-patre, pepper, sulpher 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 etc. 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 interdependent and thus the extensive internal market system used to facilitate the trade

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18. E. Gait, op.cit., p. 272.

19. Ibid., p. 274.

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

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 on the foot-hills, known as Khat or hat, for exchange of goods under certain condition.[21]

The glimpses of life and condition in the hills also suggest the economic interdependence. In the Jaintia Hill, 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 were also resorted to by the Khasi-Jaintia in commercial line. The Mughals had trade contact with Khasi Hills primarily for the supply of lime stone quarries, all the lime stones 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 tributory 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 most of the tribes depended on jhumming. The unit of social organisation was the patrineal family, unlike the Khasis and Garos whose was a matrilineal society. In accordance with the variation in rainfall and gradient of terrain, agriculture in Arunachal Pradesh could be classified into three categories such as permanent or sedantry, shifting or jhum, and mixed type of

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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. 24th Sept. 1790
24. M. Martin, Eastern India, Vol. V, pp. 161-65; J.B. Bhattacharjee, The Garos and the English, p.19.

agriculture, shifting in part and semi-permanent. Throughout Arunachal Pradesh, various tribal group, clans, 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 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 many attempts were made since thirteenth century to expand

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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.

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 decades of the thirteenth century, Sukapha, the founder of the Ahom Kingdom, crossed the Patkais and curbed 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 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. 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 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

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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.

further to the east, the intervention of the Ahoms in the affairs of the rival princes of Cooch-Behar, and the violation by the Ahoms of the 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 Kochi Hajo (c. 1612 A.D.) had a long war with the Ahoms, who had harboured a prince of the deposed dynesty.[35] The leader of the Vaishnava Renaissance in Assam was Sankaradeva (1449-1568); The Sattras played a great role in the social life of the people, and as a social life of the people, and as a social force this institution was greatly strengthened by the acceptance of the Vaishnava 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 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 creative force of the philosophy of Sankardeva as referred to. Above all, by the end

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

35. Sir J.N. Sarker, 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.

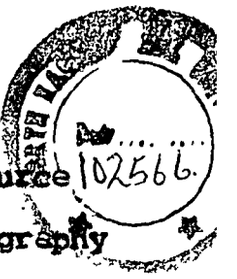
of the sixteenth century the Ahoms became Hinduised, and fifty years later we find their rulers adopting Hindu name.[38] But in the course of their stay in Assam, they began to change under the influence of Indian civilization as well as the Hindu religion. Ahom monarchs had married into the Kamata and 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 which was the order of the day.

Further, "the Ahom king was nominally placed at the head of the constitution. Immediately under him in rank were three great council of State, called Gohains, but whose duty it was to give advice to the king. With them he was expected to consult on the affairs of the Government; nor was he permitted to issue any orders without their approval, or enter into any negotiations without consulting them."[40] But 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 munificent patrons invented for them a geneology accordant with their sacred books.[41] The ritual practices of Ahom worship continued down to the end of their

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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.

rule in the Brahmaputra Valley but with diminishing attraction after the acceptance of 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 elaborated 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 Muhammad Cazim, who also accompanied the Mahamedan army of 1662, when it conquered the 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 that Assam served as a transmitter of Aryan civilization in lands like Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal and Burma and could be considered as the frontier outpost of Indian civilization; And Sankar-deva, the religious saint was truly the medium through whom the spiritual light of Medieval India as a whole shona 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 found by Hem Chandra Goswami in the possession of Babu Surendra Nath Barkakati of North Gauhati. According to him,[46]

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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).
44. G. Barua, (ed), Assam Buranji, p.201; P. Gogoi, The Tai and the Tai kingdom, pp. 391-92.
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.7; Assam Buranji, Mss No. 40, Tr. No. 2, D.H.A.S.(Gauhati).

> "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, Goba, 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 Pargans of Banghadesh). The Daflas, Akas and Bhutias were referred to, the tribute paid by them being noted and the passes by which they descend to the plains described. The eastern part of Gosain Kamalar Ali was 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 by 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 they were called upon by the circumstances to reckon with the challenge of the powerful Mughals who had consolidated their position in Bengal and posed to a carrier of further imperial expansionism in the north-east.

The territory mutually exposed to the Ahoms and that served as a buffer in latter's relation with the Mughals was the Cooch Behar State 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 led ambious campaign 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, Lakshminarayan and Raghu Dev. Thereafter, Lakshminarayan had to enter into an alliance with the Mughals to check the aggression from the eastern Koch kingdom. The Mughals, on the otherhand, on the strength of the alliance in 1578 A.D. treated Cooch Behar as a vessal state but pursued an aggressive polich towards Kamrup.[48] Raghu Dev formed an alliance with Isha Khan of Sonargaon and other Afgan

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47. Ain-i-Akbari, (Jarrett) pp. 190-95; Akbarnama, (Lucknow Edition, III) p. 207, 762-63; H. Blochmann, Op.cit., pp. 52-55.

48. A.C. Roy, History of Bengal, p. 146; M. Waris, Padishanama, pp. 64-65; S.K. Bhuyan (tr) Annals of the Delhi Badshahate, pp. 183-86.

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 vengence of the Mughals. He strengthened his fortification and raised a powerful army and launched attacked on Cooch Behar. The attitude of the Raja resulted in Mughal expedition in 1612 A.D. in which 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 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 state 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 gave rise to discord and ill-will between the two branches; the result became disastrous for both, leading to imperial intervention in

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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.

51. A.A. Chowdhury, Cooch-Beharer Itihas, pp. 141-42.

Koch-politics.[52] The Ahom relations with the Kacharis was no better. The hostility between the two came to confrontation in the early part of the sixteenth century when the Ahom ruler sacked Dimapur and forced the latter to take shelter at the new capital of Maibong in the North-Cachar Hills.[53] Political despatches continued to be interchanged with the Ahom courts, the Kachari Raja 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 persisting on the vassalage of the Kachari Raja.[54] By 1562, the Koch expedition under Chilarai forced almost all the kingdoms of North-East India to acknowledge the Koch suzerainty and agree to pay annual tributes, besides war indemnities and 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

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52. L. Devi, op.cit., pp. 222-24, Padishanama; op.cit., p.64, H. Blochmann, op.cit., pp. 54-59.
53. E. Gait, op.cit., 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.
56. A.A. Chowdhury, op.cit., Vol. 1, p. 237.

in extending their limit to Cachar Valley bordering Sylhet but the Jayantias dominated the political scene. During the seventeenth century, the Ahoms and Kacharis were in conflict with some intervals; the paramount supremacy of the Ahom monarchs was denied by the Kachari rulers.[57]

The Kingdom of Jayantia, which then included the modern Jaintia Hills, Jayantia Parganas in Sylhet and parts of Nowgong in Assam Valley, enjoyed a conspicuous geographical position being bounded by the Ahom and Kachari territories and Bengal. The Rajas of Jayantia clashed with the rulers of Maibong over 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 was fixed as the boundary between Jayantia and Cachar.[59] E. Gait confirms that 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 intercourse between the Ahoms and the Jaintia during the reign of Ahom monarch Pratap Singha (1603-14) was followed by the appointment

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 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.

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 to the southern plains.[64] Then the Garos in the western extremity of the hill-range maintained their own affairs but were under the nominal control of the 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 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 much political relations with the neighbouring States or 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

61. H.K. Barua, Assam Buranji, p. 42.
62. G.C. Barua, (tr) Ahom Buranji, p.106.
63. S.K. Bhuyan, (ed) Assam Buranji, p.34.
64. R.B. Pemberton, Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India, p.230.
65. J.B. Bhattacharjee, The Garos and the English, pp. 18-19.
66. E. Gait, 'History of Assam, pp. 324-25; L. Devi, op.cit., pp. 269-70; J.B. Bhattacharjee, Cachar Under British Rule in North East India, p.15.
67. J. Roy, History of Manipur, p.28.

location on the border of Bengal when the kingdom included a vast area of present Bangladesh, the rulers of Tripura had maintained political relations and even 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 Kamarupa about 1205-06 A.D.,[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.

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68. Rajmala, Education Directorate, Tripura, p.66; Ain-i-Abari, (Jarrett), Vol. II, pp. 130-32.
69. K.L. Barua, Early History of Kamaniupa, p.158.
70. Ibid., p.138.
71. S.K. Bhuyan (tr), Annals of the Delhi Badshahate, pp.1-5.
72. Ain-i-Akbari, (H. Blochmann), p.281; Baharistan-i-Ghaybi, Vol. 1, pp. 109.

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 1505 A.D.[77] The Sonargaon inscription of 1513 A.D. indicates that a portion of Tripura was conquered by Hussain Shah.[78] Another coin of Dhanya Manikya, dated 1513 A.D., describes him as the conqueror of Chittagong. On the authority of Rajmala, the Tripura chronicle it is known

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73. Ain-i-Akbari, (Jarret), II, pp. 194-97; H. "Notes on Akbar Subah", J.R.A.S., 1896, pp. 88-135.
74. Rajmala, Education Directore, Tripura, pp. 21-22.
75. N.R. Roy Choudhury, Tripura through the Ages; pp.23-24.
76. Ibid., p.25.
77. Ibid., p.27.
78. Ibid., p.27.

that Hussain Shah sent an expedition to Tripura in 1514 A.D. and a fierce battle continued till 1518 in which some parts of Tripura were annexed to Bengal.[79] The coins, inscriptions, historical records and chronicles 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 Raghudev 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. Raghudev was defeated, and Isha Khan abruptly made peace with Lakshminarayan and offered submission to the Mughal Emperor.[82] Raghudev 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

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79. Rajmala, Education Directore, 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.

strengthening Kamrup as a buffer state.[84] The death of Raghudev in 1603 A.D., however, could not see the Eastern Koch-Ahom alliance through its maturity.[85] Nevertheless, the son and successor of Raghudev, 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 1609 A.D., 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 letter's campaign against the Kingdom of Parikshitnarayan on the understanding 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 strong hold 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 zaminder of Bukainagar in Mymensing district, and if Usman was to be

84. H. Goswami, (ed) Purani Assam Buranji, pp. 71-72.
85. S.K. Bhuyan, (ed) Kamrupar Buranji, p.7.
86. Ibid., pp. 7-12.

finally crushed, Bayzid must be subdued simultaneously. Two 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 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 collapsed and they begged for peace. Sylhet was formally annexed to Bengal Subah as a Sarkar 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 first came to Sylhet, made it the base of his operations, and with additional officers and men, including Mubarize Khan and twenty two amirs from

87. M.I. Bora (tr), Baharistan-i-Ghaybi, Vol.1, 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.1, pp. 166-67.
89. Ibid., pp. 207-09.

Bihar, proceeded against the Raja of Cachar[90] Satrudaman, alias Pratapnarayan (c.1605-28) was the Dimasa Raja of Maibong in North Cachar Hills, whose territory then extended to Cachar valley and intervened between Sylhet and the Koch State of Khaspur, 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 the present 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 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 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 a area intersecting Cachar and Jayantia who claimed themselves the descendents of the soldiers left in charge of his conquest by Timur, a Mughal adventurer.[92]

Qasim Khan, the new Mughal Viceroy, was gratified at the success of Mubariz Khan and exhorted him to continue his

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90. Ibid., pp. 208-09.
    * Probably modern Haritikar.
91. Ibid., pp. 219-21.
92. Ibid., pp. 324-25.

expedition against Cachar, where the Raja had evidently shaken off his allegiance during the interregnum. Satrudaman offered a strong resistance as he had done before, causing heavy casualty in the imperial camps by his repeated night attacks. But Mubariz Khan's persistence at last bore fruit, and the forts of Pratapgarh was stormed and Asuratekar 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 100,000 rupees in cash, and prayed for exemption from personal attendance at the court. He also sent presents for the Subadar and the Mughal commander. These terms were accepted by Qasim Khan. The sudden death of Mubariz Khan at this critical juncture, however, compelled the Mughals to withdraw to Sylhet, and the Cachar campaign failed to produce any conquest.[93]

The broken morale of the Mughal soldiers in Sylhet was, however, greatly roused when Mukram Khan, the Mughal commander, who had already proved his worth in Kamrup campaigns, was sent to Sylhet and asked to proceed against Tripura, where an earlier raids upon the fort of Kaliagarh was unsuccessful.[94] The expedition in 1618 A.D. was particularly ordered by Jahangir in order to secure a suitable base for military operations against Arakan. Two divisions of the Mughal army under Nurulla

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93. Ibid., pp 324-27.
94. Rajmala, op.cit., pp 64-65; N.R. Roy Choudury, op.cit., p. 36.

Khan and Ispinder Khan entered Tripura from the north-west and western borders. In addition, a naval force was also put into operation. After fierce land and naval confrontation, Josadhar Manikya, the Raja of Tripura, was captured and sent to Delhi 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 account of an European visitor, Peter He Leys (1652) the Tripura-Mughal conflicts were dragged on for many years.[96]

Meanwhile the Mughal authorities had taken 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 offered to help the campaign against Parikshit.[97] The domain of Parikshit 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 large force against Kamrup under the command of Abdul-i-Wahid that was easily defeated by Parikshitnarayan (c. 1612 A.D.) and the family of Raja Raghunath

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95. Rajmala, op.cit., p.67; Baharistan-i-Ghaybi, Vol.11, pp.627-28.
96. Bengal Past and Present, Oct., 1907. pp.50-52.
97. S.K. Bhuyan, (ed), Kamrupar Buranji, p.13.
98. Baharistan-i-Ghaybi, Op.cit., Vol.1, pp. 222-23.

(Susang) was made captives by the latter.[99] In November, 1612 A.D. Islam Khan sent another expedition against Kamrup under Mukarram Khan, with Shaik Kamal as the second in command, and Raja Raghunath as the guide. A large 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 strongest in the entire. Koch region, and its seize dragged on for three months and a half. Fathe Khan Salka, the commandant of Dhubri fort, however, out of affection for his son taken captive, surrendered to the Mughals (c. middle of April, 1613 A.D.[101] Raja Parikshit lost confidence in himself, gave up further resistence, and became eager for peace and agreed to acknowledge the imperial over-lordship, and sought to victors with rich presents. He also promised to release Raghunath's family; but the Viceroy of Dacca rejected the peace offer, and demanded the surrender of Parikshit's persons as well as of his kingdom. Consequently, the hostilities were resumed.[102] Parikshit 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 along

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99. Ibid., pp. 222-23.

100. Ibid.,

*Bhitar Band and Bahirbond are two parggnas 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.

with his entire land force.[103] The combined assault was partially successful but the sudden death of the Dimarua Raja in the next encounter totally paralysed the Kamrup navy, and it hastily withdrew.[104] Raja Parikshit tried to escape and to take shelter under the Ahom monarch but failed and decided on an almost unconditional surrender. He appealed to the imperial commanders, Mukarram Khan and Shaik Kamal, to spare his life and personal liberty, and surrendered all his belongings, his war-elephants, and his kingdom (c. July, 1613). Kamrup thus lost its short existence as a separate state and was annexed to the Mughal Empire. Parikshit was taken to Dacca as prisoner and the family of Raja Raghunath released. The administrative charge of Eastern Kamrup was given temporarily to Lakshminarayan, and Mirza Qasim 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 threshhold 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,

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103. Ibid., pp. 246-47.
104. Ibid., pp. 247-48.
105. A.A. Chowdhury, op.cit., pp. 255-56.

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. An opportunity for instituting a buffer state against the Mughals also came through Balinarayan alias Dharmanaryan, the brother of Parikshitnarayan, who fled to Ahom court and sought the protection. Pratap Singha, the Ahom monarch, installed Balinarayan as the vassal ruler of Darrang with the territory extending from Bhorali river in the east to Barnadi on the west.[106] Pratap Singha set also 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 vassalaga over them. His growing power induced most petty chiefs of the area to save their estates by voluntarily accepting his Overlordship. The expansive force of the Ahoms as it spread westwards 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 being a spy and his merchandise were looted. Shaik Qasim, the Governor of Bengal, sent an expedition in 1615-16 under Sayed Hakim and Aba Bakr. That was defeated by the Ahoms at the month of Bhorali and the commanders killed. After this Ahom victory, the Mughals had

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.H.A.S. (Gauhati).

constantly to fight to maintain their hold on the country west of Bar Nadi and with great difficulty could occupy Hajo town and a few other frontier forts. When Islam Khan Mashhadi arrived as the Subahdar of Bengal, Ahom vassal Balinarayan was instigated by Satrajit, the disloyal Mughal Thanahdar of Pandu, to profit by the administrative disorder due to the frequent change of governors, and the latter dislodged the Mughals from the post at Pandu. Fresh reinforcements also failed due to lack of concert among the imperial commanders.[108] Satrajit was, however, captured by the Mughals and sent to Dacca, where he was imprisoned and afterwards executed.[109] Abdud Salam, the Mughal Fauzdar, and 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

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108. Assam Buranji, Mss No.60, Tr. No. 82, D.H.A.S.(Gauhati); G.C. Barua, Ahom Buranji., pp. 102-03.
109. Assam Buranji, Mss No. 60, Tr. No. 82, D.H.A.S.(Gauhati).
110. S.K. Bhuyan, (ed) Assam Buranji, pp. 56-58.

Ahoms. While Parikshit was on his way to Kamrup, some principal persons of Kamrup represented to Dacca against his return. The Raja was accordingly recalled but he committed suicide on his way to Delhi at Tribeni.[111] Thereupon, Bijitnarayan, a son of Parikshit, was instituted by the Mughals as the Raja of Bijni comprising of the Khuntaghat region.[112]

Meantime, the Ahoms had pushed on to Jogighopa (near Goalpara) and began to raise stockades there. But the Mughal army forced them to retreat to the bank of the Manas river. By October 1637, the Mughals defeated the Ahom forces led by Balinarayan on the Kalapani river near Bishnupur resulting in the death of a large number of Ahom soldiers and officers and the possession of huge quantity of arm equipments. This was followed by the conquest of Pandu and Srighat (Dec. 1637). The whole of Koch-Hajo or Kamrup was thus cleared of the Ahoms and the campaign closed by the occupation of the Kajali fort, at the junction of the Kalang river with the Brahmaputra.[113]

To meet the 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 Mughals.[114] During the next three months the whole district was pacified, a revenue settlement was made with the landlords, and Gauhati chosen as

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111. S.K. Bhuyan, (ed), Kamrupar Buranji, pp. 16-18; Baharistun-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.

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the headquarters of the governor. Finding all their resources exhausted by twelve years' unsuccessful war, the Ahom frontier officers induced their monarch to make peace with the Mughals through Alayar Beg, the successor of Zain-uddin Ali as Fauzdar in Lower Assam (c. Sept. 1638), whereupon Barnadi in the north and the Ashurar-ali in the south of Brahmaputra were fixed as Ahom-Mughal boundary and as a result, considerable good relations prevailed between the two for sometimes and the period from 1638 to 1658 was free from 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 engaged during this period in campaigns towards the north-west frontier, and this was followed by the war of succession among the sons of Saha 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]

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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.

> "The Zamindars of Morang, Kachar and other places, who had never paid tribute 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 this letter, it can 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 had to be withdrawn as many of the soldiers died due to unfavourable climate.[118] Rajmala 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 (1658 A.D.) '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 wakt property.[120]

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118. N.R. Roychoudhury, op.cit., p.40.
119. Rajmala, op.cit., pp. 69-74.
120. K.C. Sinha, Rajmala, p.84; N.R. Roychoudhury, op.cit., p.41.

Notwithstanding, the political turmoils consequent on the illness of Emperor Shahjahan in 1657, and the absence of Prince Shuja from Bengal was bound to shaken the imperial hold over the north-east. During this confusion, Prannarayan,* 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 lost to the Mughals. He made a series of plundering raids into the Ghoraghat region, carrying off a number of Imperial subjects and declared himself as an independent ruler by stopping the 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 he was being hemmed in by the Koches on the one side and the Ahoms on the other, and 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 also proposed to Jayadhvaj Singh, the Ahom monarch for an offensive and defensive alliance against the Mughals and divide Kamrup mutually. The latter, however, rejected the proposal possibly because of his own intention to occupy the whole of Kamrup or because the 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 Fauzdar of Kamrup.[123] On further

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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.

advance, he was, however, defeated by the Ahoms and Jayadhvaj Singh followed up his victory by extension of his sway westward and established a military station at Hatsila, annexed part of the Pargana Karaibari.[124] In fact, the mutual jealousy and antagonism between Joyadhvaj 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 the position in Bengal Subah. The legacy of the raids towards this frontier during the Sultanate gave incentive to the Mughals. Lack of unity among the local monarchs, chieftains and zamindars encouraged them further. The division of Koch kingdom and Afgan confederacy are illustration 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 gate-way of North East India under the Mughals where they turned from irresponsible conquerors to serious administrators and introduced several reformist measures 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 preclude to the more serious attempts to pacify the region during the reign of Aurangzeb.[126]

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

CHAPTER - I.I

AURANGZEB AND THE NORTH-EAST FRONTIER

The ascendancy of Aurangzeb as the Mughal Emperor introduced significant changes in the policy of the Government towards states and territories in the country. An imperialist in his attitude, the Emperor was vindictive towards the rulers who had so long resisted the suzerainty of the Mughals. The internal challenges immediately after his assumption of power, were also no mean. Everywhere, lawlessness caused tumults, the ryots refused to pay the revenue, the zamindars disobeyed the local governors or tried to rob and conquer their rivals. Thus the local rulers, especially in the north-east, violated the frontiers and made inroads into the imperial territory.[1]

During the viceroyship for two terms in Deccan, Aurangzeb virtually trained himself in the art of practical politics as well as diplomatic skill from his association with Mir Jumla, who followed a policy wholly divorced from ethical considerations and mainly guided by exigencies of the given time and circumstances. As such, Aurangzeb's aggressive Deccan policy was rooted in the counsel and co-operation of Mir Jumla, the wazir of Golkonda and then prime Minister of the imperial Mughals. Thus both the officials began to act as a centre of gravity in the imperial politics of Mughals

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1. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Auranzib, Vol.1, 11. p.179;
   F. Bernier, Trevels in the Mogul Empire, pp. 167-68.

who used to formulate their grand strategy in collaboration with each. Jagadish Narayan Sarkar rightly says:

> "Aurangzeb had to rely on Mir Jumla for inducing the Emperor Shah Jahan to approve of an aggressive policy against the Deccan by counteracting the mechinations of Dara, always friendly to the Sultans, and opposed to the Viceroy and the Wazir and who weilded a great influence over the Emperor." [2]

AURANGZEB IN MAKING

Aurangzeb was promoted to the Viceroyship of Deccan in July 1636 and completed the first term in May 1644, with his seat at Aurangabad. "During these eight years he paid four visits to his father in Northern India, leaving some great noble, usually his maternal uncle Shaista Khan, to act for him." [3] Most probably Aurangzeb was intriguing to get a higher position in the imperial seat. But the Emperor Shah Jahan in collaboration with Dara transferred Aurangzeb to Gujrat as Governor. The main intention was to embarass him in controlling that turbulent province.* There he acquired considerable experience of tackling the robber tribes and rebels. The Emperor did not like the long-stay of Aurangzeb at Gujrat. Because the popularity of Aurangzeb could cause menace to the future rise of Dara. Aurangzeb was accordingly transferred to Balk and Badakhsan.[4] In this north-west front Aurangzeb had to face acute hardship in subduing the Uzback tribes. No substantial gains were made; rather it incurred heavy losses. Aurangzeb

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2. J.N. Sarkar, Life of Mir Jumla, p.108; S.K. Bhuyan(tr) Annals of the Delhi Badshatsate, p. 153.
3. Sir J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p.29.
   * From Feb. 1645 to Jan. 1647.
4. Ibid., p.46.

was discredited and naturally the Imperial authority took an opportunity to condemn Aurangzeb in further assignment.

By March 1648 Aurangzeb was posted as Governor of Multan and Sindh and maintained that post upto July, 1652. For the first time, Aurangzeb came in contact with the hostile Afgan and Beluch clans. Aurangzeb was not the man to brook disorder and disobedience. Whatever damages done in the preceding assignment were repaired by the present campaign of Multan and Sindh "Everywhere lawless men and frontier clans felt that they had got a new master (Aurangzeb), who could not be safely defined."[5] As Viceroy he not only displayed administrative capacity but also as successful general. Even in economic matters, he envisaged some plans for the enrichment of Imperial exchequer. But his Qandahar operations in 1649 and 1652 met with failure not because of negligence. Rather the Imperial authority did not grant any power to act in discretion. The last Viceroyship of Aurangzeb was completed in the Deccan where he took real training. Assuch the second vice royalty of Deccan, (1653-1658) was a crucial period in the political career of Aurangzeb. The experiences that acquired were put into operation for mastering the art of political chess-board of the imperial government. Indeed, Mir Jumla came forward to train Aurangzeb to acquire the most coveted imperial throne.[6] Contrary to the intentions of Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb emerged successful in the war of succession

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5. Ibid., p.68.
6. Ibid., p.94.

for the Mughal throne among four brothers. When Agra fort surrendered, Aurangzeb became truly the sovereign, and the whole administrative staff submitted to him. A grand darbar was now held (10th June 1658) in his camp, and captive Shah Jahan presented him a sword named 'Alamgir'. The high grandees and other imperial officers came in troops to the court of Aurangzeb in the hope of pattronage and each received favour suited to his rank.[7] As Murad Baksh, the younger brother of Aurangzeb, was violently preparing a rebellion and was waiting for an opportunity to carry his futile plans, Aurangzeb made him a prisoner at Mathura and thus freed the people from mischief and tumult; the captive was sent to the fort of Delhi under Shaikh Mir.[8]

Dara Shukoh, the eldest son of Shah Jahan and the favourite to be the successor of Emperor, took asylum in Punjab on certain considerations.[9] Firstly, Punjab was the land of militan soldiers. Moreover, from the north-west frontier provinces the services of the hardiest mercenaries could be properly utilised. Secondly, he had past experiences as the viceroy of Punjab. Besides, Lahore fort contained immense wealth and war materials. But Aurangzeb was vigilant in keeping his eagle eyes upon Dara. He took personal initiative in chasing Dara who was camping in different places such as Multan, Sewan, Sindh and then to Gujrat. Meanwhile, Aurangzeb halted at Multan and turned back towards Delhi because an

7. Sir J.N. Sarkar (tr), Maasir-i-Alamgiri, p.3.
8. Ibid., p.4.
9. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Aurangzib, Vol.11, p.275.

alarming situation had been developed in the east by Shuja's invasion which required his presence there, entrusting the campaign to divisional commanders.[10] Dara made an attempt to capture Agra fort from the west while Aurangzeb camping in the Punjab. The battle of Deorai (Ajmir, March 1659) shattered his hopes and he fled to Gujrat and ultimately was made prisoner by Malik Jiwan, an Afgan aide-de-camp of Aurangzeb and brought to Delhi in Aug, 1659. The doomed prince's agent unsuccessfully tried to save his life by running to different mediators.[11] Dara was put to death in the same year and in 1661, his son, Sulaiman Shukoh fell into the clutches of Aurangzeb, who ordered him to be removed to the fortress of Gwalior, where he was killed by poisoned to death.[12] Very poor language

The next rival of Aurangzeb for the Imperial throne was Prince Shuja, the severed son of Shah Jahan who served in the capacity of Viceroy in Bengal Subah for two terms. In 1649 A.D. Prince Shuja was re-appointed for the second term to the Nizamat of Bengal by Shah Jahan.[13] As the Governor of Bengal he was involved in the administration of the north-east frontier of the Mughals and his contention for the throne of Delhi immediately attracted the attention of Aurangzeb to the north-east. When the news of Shah Jahan's illness reached him, Shuja did not fail to register his claim to the Mughal throne. However, he could be satisfied with the pact with Sulaiman

10. Ibid., p.289.
11. Ibid., pp. 337-38.
12. W. Irvine, (tr) Storia Do Mogor, Vol. 1, p.360.
13. A. Salam (tr), Riazu-s-Salatin, p.215.

Shukoh, son of Dara, effected in May 1658 that made him the supreme authority over Bengal, Bihar, Orissa up to the east of Mungir.[14] The news of the reverses faced by Dara and the defecto assumption of power by Aurangzeb prevailed upon him to march towards Delhi. But the struggle between Aurangzeb and Dara had terminated before Shuja's arrival and Aurangzeb already mounted the imperial throne and he could use the entire army of Hindustan against Shuja.[15] In the battle of Khajwa (Jan 1659) Prince Shuja was defeated by Aurangzeb by winning over the general and commanders of Shuja by bribe and temptations. Meanwhile, Aurangzeb's position was strengthened by the arrival of Mir Jumla from Deccan. "Being in constant attendance on the Emperor during the battle, as his right-hand man, he offered him timely advice regarding the tactical moves and instilled hope and courage into his mind during critical moments."[16] Shuja was now forced to take to flight and fortifying the passes of Teliagadi and Sakrigali, he entrenched himself at Rajmahal (Akbarnagar).[17] Aurangzeb, however, returned to Delhi apprehending danger from Jaswant Singh who was reported to have taken his position in favour of captive Shah Jahan. On the eve of his departure, Mir Jumla was provided with a large force to pursue Prince Shuja.[18] Aurangzeb also bestowed special powers and privileges to Mir Jumla probably with two-fold objectives. Firstly,

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14. Sir J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., Vol.11, p.294.
15. A. Salam (tr), op.cit., pp.217-20.
16. J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p.150.
17. A. Salam (tr), op.cit., p.220.
18. W. Irvine (tr), op.cit., Vol.1, p.316; S.K. Bhuyan (tr) Op.cit., pp. 146-47; F. Bernier, op.cit., pp.108-9.

Mir Jumla would explore and utilise all the potential sources that are available in order to end the physical existence of the fugitive Prince Shuja and his legacy. Secondly, Mir Jumla would chalk out a new strategy in order to execute the aggressive policy in the north east frontiers of Bengal. Mir Jumla was also asked to guide Sultan Muhammad, first-born son of Aurangzeb in the campaign, and was given the supreme command to execute the operation.[19] "Reinforcements were soon despatched under Mir Jumla, as joint Commander-in-Chief, raising the pursuing force to 30,000 men."[20] Prince Shuja displayed remarkable feat in respect of courage and war strategy. But due to irony of fate, he had to retreat from place to place. Finally, he bade farewell even to his eastern capital Dacca in May 1660 along with his family and few faithful officials and took shelter in Aracan.[21] This fate of Prince Shuja was occassioned by a multiple of factors. The character and strength of the new Emperor and the efficiency of his deputy, Nawab Mir Jumla, were known to the Chieftains and zamindars in Bengal, most of whom shifted their allegiance to the new administration.[22] The Mughal officers in the province like the Faujadars and Thanadars also desserted Shuja and confirmed their loyalty to the Nawab. Prince Shuja pushed his way to Arakan through south-eastern frontier and this episode brought the eastern kingdom of Tripura into the forefront. Taking

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19. W. Irvine (tr), op.cit., Vol.1, p.316.
20. Sir J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., Vol.11, p.351; H. Blochmann, op.cit., p.351.
21. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Ibid., pp. 376-77.
22. J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., 209.

the advantage of the confusion caused by the War of Succession Raja Kalyanmanikya, who had earlier submitted to Shuja, proclaimed his independence and regained some portions of the western plain that had been ceded to the Mughals.[23] Kalyanmanikya died in 1660 A.D. (Saka 1582), and was succeeded by his son Govindamanikya[24] who was the defecto ruler of the kingdom during the last years of his father's reign and was instrumental in throwing away the Mughal yoke. Prince Shuja, therefore, turned to Nakshatra Roy, the step brother of Govindamanikya, encouraged him to dethrone Govindamanikya and promised him military support. Nakshatra Roy accordingly rebelled against his brother but meanwhile Shuja was dislodged from his authority in Dacca and no help could be accorded to the rebelled prince. And Shuja also could secure no help for shelter from Tripura then ruled by an unfriendly Govindamanikya. The imperial authorities were, however, perhaps under the impression that Shuja had entrenched himself in Tripura or was in league with the rulers of Tripura and Aracan. Aurangzeb, therefore, in a letter addressed to Govindamanikya demanded that the latter should capture Shuja and hand him over to Mir Jumla. To quote the letter:

> "I hope you will capture him and send him carefully under the surveillance of your army officers and thereby oblige me, so that the age-old friendship may continue to exist. Otherwise you will take it for certain that as a result of the stay of that imprudent rash in your territory, our happy relationship will be breached by conflicts. I do believe that things will be done in accordance with my letter."

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23. Tripura District Gazetteers(...)(K.D. Menon(ed)p.87.

24. Rajmala, Education Directorate, Tripura, pp. 76-78.

Meanwhile Shuja had sent his son Sultan Bang to the King of Aracan for help and the latter sent Sultan Bang back to his father with a number of war boats. Commanded by Portuguese subjects up to the Chittagong frontier where the Aracanese frontier met Mughal Bengal.[25] This, however, being unable to reckon with the Mughals and as no help was forthcoming from Tripura, Shah Suja ultimately fled to Aracan with his family and followers.[26] Though the Aracanese King initially promised him help, the difference of opinion crept in between the two, when the King demanded the daughter of the Prince and also the services of his sons and officials. Shuja then planned to proceed to Macca and according to Dutch records ('Dag Register', p.115), he started for Tripura. Nevertheless, he was chased by the Aracanese and killed in the jungles either of Tripura or Chittagong hill tract.[27]

Govindamanikya, Raja of Tripura, on the other hand, incurred the displeasure of Aurangzeb and Mir Jumla having failed to captivise Shah Shuja who had already escaped to Aracan. The rebel claimant to the throne of Tripura, Nakshatra Roy managed to secure the support of the Mughals and possibly with the help of Mir Jumla, as believed by the historians of Tripura,[28] occupied Udaipur and ultimately succeeded in dethroning Govindamanikya. The royal chronicle of Tripura, however, claims that Govindamanikya voluntarily abdicated in favour of

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25. W. Invine (tr), op.cit., Vol. 1, p.350; F. Bernier, op.cit., pp 109-10.
26. 'Dagh Register', by Casteal Batavia, ed. J.A. Van der Chijs, the Hague, pp 105-06 as cited by W. Invine, op.cit., Vol. 1 p.356; F. Bernier, op.cit., pp 109-10.
27. W. Irvine (tr) op.cit., Vol. 1, p 357; F. Bernier, op.cit, p112.
28. N.R.Roy Choudhury, Tripura through the Ages, p. 41.

Nakshatra Roy, although it describes fierce battle between Ramdev, son of Govindamanikya, and Nakshatra Roy.[29] Be that as may be, Nakshatra Roy began his reign as the Raja of Tripura in 1661 A.D., and assumed the name of Chatramanikya as known from his coins,[30] presumably as an ally of the Mughals. Govindamanikya was thus forced to be a fugitive and ultimately obtained asylum in the Aracanese court where, according to some traditions, he met Prince Shuja and the latter presented him a precious sword and a dimond.[31] The allignment, if at all any, between the two fugitive princes could not certainly pose any threat to the Mughals or their ally in Tripura because, as it has already been mentioned, Prince Shuja was killed shortly after. Govindamanikya could, however, stage his come back to Tripura after a few years, but this too not without the blessings of the Mughals, as will be described later on.

Nawab Mir Jumla thus completed the immediate task of clearing his new province from the threat of Shuja and could consolidate his authority in the eastern frontier. The uncertainties, and resultant anxiety, however, prevailed in the Mughal camp as the news of Shuja's death was concealed for some time by his followers who also spread the false news that he had fled into jungle. Aurangzeb could be sure of the death of Shuja only when it was confirmed by the Dutch factors. Moreover, "these uncertainties and expectation came to an end in time

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29. K.C. Sinha, Rajmala, pp 84-92.
30. N.R. Roychoudhury, op.cit., p 42.
31. Ibid., p. 42.

through the evidence of many persons from Arakan, who had been present at the unhappy prince's death."[32] Thus the lust of Mughal throne kindled among the four sons of ill-fated Shah Jahan was terminated making Aurangzeb, the indisputed master of this mighty Empire.

MIR JUMLA IN BENGAL

Mir Jumla consolidated his position as the Governor of Bengal and was destined to supervise north-eastern policy of the Mughals under Aurangzeb. He had also acquired practical knowledge of Bengal and its frontier states while pursuing Prince Shuja for long seventeen months. The action of the new Subahdar makes it clear that while the frontier policy of Shuja was defensive, Mir Jumla's policy was aggressive as well as offensive.[33] The strength of his aggressive attitude was in the highly imperialistic policy of his Emperor. On becoming the Emperor, Aurangzeb reshuffled the policy in respect of appointment of Provincial Governors and other high officials. The reason behind this change was to eliminate the loyalties towards the popular regims of Dara, Shuja and Murad respectively. Obviously, most of the provincial Governors and high officials were replaced by those who had firm faith and loyalty in Aurangzeb's paramountcy, both in the central and provincial levels. The immediate problems of the Emperor seemed to be three-fold in nature. Firstly, the authority in north-east frontiers had to be re-asserted. Secondly, the Deccan problem was mounted by the rise

32. W.Invine, (tr), op.cit., Vol. 1, p 358; F Bernier, op.cit., pp 112-114.

33. F. Bernier, op.cit., p 169.; S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Padshah-Buranji, p 75.

of the Marathas under Shivaji. Thirdly, the Afgan tribes in the north-west frontier were in rebellious State. One of the major administrative changes made by Aurangzeb at his second coronation (July, 1659) was the posting of Shaista Khan to the viceroyalty of the Deccan, in the place of Prince Muazzam. He was specifically directed to suppress Shivaji.[34] Muhammad Amir Khan, son of Mir Jumla, was given the charge to crush the chronic rebellions of north-west frontier provinces reasserting forward frontier policy. North-east frontier was entrusted to Mir Jumla who devoted his full energy to assert imperial prestige as well as to extend the bounds of the empire upto the royal seat of Assam.[35]

NORTH-EASTERN POLICY

Aurangzeb's attitude towards the States on Mughal frontiers was based mainly on the expansion of imperial boundary as well as assertion of Mughal prestige and authority. The application of this policy was directed in the Deccan, the north-west and the north-east with different varitable magnitude depending on geo-political factors. To assess his frontier policy by one scale will be over-simplification of the whole issue, though some elements are common. Aurangzeb could not freely apply his personal discretion in asserting the expanding imperial policy towards the Deccan as well as the north-west frontier during his viceroyship, because of restrictions and interruptions of the Imperial authorities. But the supreme authority of the imperial Mughals, he was now free to design and implement his

34. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Aurangzib, Vol. IV, p 54.
35. S. Talish, Fathiyya-i-ibriyya, Mss No D 72, Asiatic society of Calcutta, pp 8-15.

own scheme. Aurangzeb unearthed his true guide in the intriguing personality of Mir Jumla. As a matter of fact, Aurangzeb's personal political missions and diplomatic schemes were processed and materialised in different phases under the stewardship of this persian general.[36] No wonder, Aurangzeb's expanding frontier policy towards the north-eastern states was solely entrusted to Mir Jumla. However,

> "it was the common belief that Aurangzeb ordered Mir Jumla into Assam that he might be got rid of, dreading that, as he had thrown the kingdom of Gulkandah into confusion, and had known how to arrange for the conquest of Dara and the destruction of Shivaji, he might likewise attempt by his devices to place someone else on the Mogul throne".[37]

Although difference of opinion was occasionally noticed between the Emperor and the Subahdar, there is a reason to believe that Mir Jumla enjoyed the full confidence and support of Aurangzeb.

The appointment of Mir Jumla as Governor of Bengal had some special significance. Only the persons in whom the Emperor had firm faith were selected as Viceroy, subject to the limitations of imperial decrees sponsored by Aurangzeb. Mir Jumla was reputed as a man of lofty integrity, imperial justice and a cherisher of the subjects.[38] Unlike other Governors, he was given special honour and specific responsibilities. The Emperor conferred on him the title of Khan-i-Khanan and Sipah salar; a mansab of 7000 and a belt together with a special bejeweled

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36. W. Irvine, (tr) op.cit., Vol. 1, p 217; F. Bernier, op.cit., p. 169.
37. W. Irvine, (tr), op.cit., Vol. II, p 91; F. Bernier, op.cit., pp 169-71; S.K. Bhuyan (tr), op.cit., pp 153-55.
38. J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 113.

sword.[39]

> "Aurangzeb also asked Mir Jumla to devote himself to the efficient administration of the province by pacifying the cross section of people, chastising the unruly nobles, regulating the artillery, and especially the nawwara (flotilla), securing the safety of traffic on the roads and highways and issuing well calculated regulations concerning various other matters."[40]

The aforesaid directives amply justify the truth that Mir Jumla was vested with supreme authority concerning political, military and economic affairs of Bengal and the adjoining territories.

It is pertinent to note that Aurangzeb had tactically snatched all the material wealth that Mir Jumla had acquired from Karnatak and Golkonda. Now the Emperor's greed turned towards Bengal subah to reap the last fruits from the aged Viceroy. The normal revenue of Bengal province was about four crores, next to Bijapur and Golkand.[41] Since the war of succession, the requisite revenues of Bengal Subah were not deposited in the Imperial exchequer. Consequently Mir Jumla was obliged to exploit all the available sources of revenue and thereby to give economic relief to Aurangzeb's campaigns in the North-West and Deccan fronts. Undoubtedly, Mir Jumla responded to the wishes of the Emperor with all sincerity and never deviated from the task entrusted to him. The Emperor also possibly directed Mir Jumla to carry the banner of Islam in the Hindu Kingdoms of North-east frontier. Because "he was charged with

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39. Sir J.N. Sarkar, (tr)., Maasir-i-Alamgiri, pp 18-19; S.K. Bhuyan (tr) op.cit., pp 151-53.
40. J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 209.
41. W. Irvine (tr) op.cit., Vol. II, pp 388-89; F. Bernier, op.cit., p 437.

the effective chastisement of the rather refractory Zamindars of Assam and of the Meghs, who ill-treated and oppressed the Mussalmans."[42] [For about three years* that he was present in the province for barely a year and a half (May 1660 - Nov 1661) being absent on campaigns in Cooch Behar and Assam from November 1661.] During this short period, he skillfully utilised the military resources of the European powers. He also used the services of English, the Dutch and the Portuguese and their ships in his north-eastern campaigns. He also employed an Englishman, Thomas Pratt, in building boats and making ammunition for river fighting.[43] This proves that the zamindars of Bengal who used to supply war boats and man-power for imperial campaign were inactive and disloyal at this stage. A number of bordering zamindars and tributory Rajas withdrew their necks from the collar of obedience; and not only neglected to send any part of their revenues to the Imperial treasury, but even invaded the provinces.[44]

Meanwhile, the Ahom monarch Jayadhvaj Singh, who was also on the alert to take advantage of the dissensions amongst the Mughals, raised a strong army, threw two bridges over the Kallang river and advanced towards Gauhati. After occupation of Gauhati, the Ahom army marched against the western Koches and after a moderate conflict, defeated them twice and drove them across the Sankosh river.[45] The Ahom monarch extended his plunders and

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42. J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 209.
*(9th May 1660 - 31st March, 1663).
43. W. Irvine (tr), op.cit., Vol. II, p.80.
44. C. Stewart, The History of Bengal, p 287.
45. E. Gait, A History of Assam, p 130; Alamgirnama, pp 679-80.

laid the country waste almost upto the vicinity of Dacca, and carried away with them a number of the inhabitants as slaves which was naturally considered as insult to the Mughal Government.[46] Jayadhwaj Singh tried to keep the Mughal viceroy in good humour. He sent an emissary to Mir Jumla with costly presents and made a gesture for peace. He put the entire blame for the subversion of the Mughal authority in Kamrup on the shoulders of Prannarayan, the Raja of Kooch Behar (c.1633-66), then a Mughal vassal on the plea that he had taken possession of the imperial territory in order to prevent it from falling into the hands of Kooch Behar. As a matter of fact, the Ahom monarch was only gaining time for further aggressions. But this strategy was smelt by Mir Jumla who began necessary preparations for the fresh north-eastern venture.[47]

As Mir Jumla was till then apprehending danger from Aracan where fugitive Shuja had taken shelter. Naturally he was anxious to invade Aracan after the end of the rainy season, and directed Rashid Khan to operate the north-east campaign in the early part of 1661 and to take delivery of Kamrup from the Ahoms.[48] On his approach, the Ahoms abandoned Dhubri, and fell back beyond the Manas river, but he sustained snare and waited for reinforcement before taking possession of the tract which they had abandoned. The Ahom monarch gave severe punishment to the retreated commanders and there appointed Baduli Phukan to be Neog Phukan as well as Commander in Chief.

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46. C. Stewart, op.cit., p 288.
47. E. Gait, op.cit., p 131; Alamgirnama, p 680;
48. H. Blochmann, Koch-Bihar, Koch-Hajo and Assam, in the 16th and 17th century according to the Akbarnama, the Padishnama and Fathiya-i-Ibriya." Vol.XLI, 1872, p 63.

He was particularly ordered to drive out Rashid Khan from the soil of Mughal Kamrup.[49] Mir Jumla was not inclined to forgive the disloyalty of a vassal ruler, Prannarayan of Kooch Behar. So a second war front was operated under the generalship of Raja Sujan Sing, the Rajput Chief, subsequently re-inforced by Mirza Beg Shujai, to Chastise the Koch ruler. Both the Commanders were interrupted by the Ahom and Koch forces respectively.[50] Thereafter, Mir Jumla was compelled to follow an intensive aggressive policy towards this frontier, based on strong military and naval forces. As mentioned earlier, Mir Jumla put more stress on the recruitment of European residents both in the land and naval army. This was imperative necessity as the existing Mughal armies of Bengal were meagre and they had been demoralised and the morale of the general subjects was at its lowest ebb during the period of civil war. Moreover, to contest with the agelong Hindu Kingdoms on the frontier of Bengal, a strong naval force was bound to be formed. So the Mughal Viceroy kept Aracan campaign pending and on the night of 1st November 1661, started from Dacca (Khizirpur) accompanied with Dilir Khan on his historic Assam campaign.[51]

Evidently, the crucial years beginning from January 1659 to November 1661 marked the formative period of Mir Jumla's north-eastern frontier policy. The emperor Aurangzeb was too

49. S.K. Bhuyan, (ed) Kamrupar Buranji, p 62.
50. Ibid., p 75.
51. S.K. Bhuyan, (ed) Assam Buranji, p 77; S. Talish, op.cit., p 11; J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., pp 225-26; F. Bernier, op.cit., pp 171-72.

much engrossed in consolidating his imperial power and prestige just after the closure of the War of Succession and at the same time threatened by the ambitious Rajputs in the north as well as the grave Maratha menace in Deccan. Moreover, the traditional north-west policy of the Mughals was to be pursued with a more vigorous push in view of the rebel and hostile Afgan tribes, knocking alarmingly at the frontiers. So the Emperor had ultimately to take his camp in Kashmir in order to revitalise the conventional frontier policy keeping in view of the maintenance of political equilibrium. Aurangzeb personally guided and supervised the strategies and military operations according to the exigencies of time and situation in the vulnerable frontiers of North-west, the gateway of all the preceding dynastic intruders of India. In view of the above condition, Aurangzeb was not in a position, at the outset, to pay personal attention in the intricate affairs of North-east India but to bank on the ambitious Persian general, who took the unexpected assignment of Viceroy-ship in Bengal by the Imperial degrees of his Sunni Master in May 1660.[52]

Once Aurangzeb was finally confirmed of the death news of exiled Prince Shuja, the Aracan campaign was put under suspension. Most probably, the cause of the revision of imperial policy was on the apprehension that the prolonged stay of the aggrieved Viceroy in the hot bed of Bengal subah might create either political convulsions or radical revolution endangering

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52. Sir J.N. Sarkar (tr), op.cit., pp 18-19.

the stability of Mughal rule. Taking all these unseen factors into consideration, the imperial order was issued to execute the North-eastern campaign on priority basis. However, the astute Viceroy did not leave the seat of Bengal at the outset. Rather Rashid Khan and Raja Sujan Singh were directed and deputed by Mir Jumla to accomplish the directives of the imperial assignment of North-eastern campaign.[53] Mir Jumla, however could not reconcile the ill-motivated and manoevres of the imperial authority. Indeed, he was considered as the main pillar and brain to Aurangzeb specially during the crucial period in between 1656 to 1660 because he had limitless wealth. Now the Shia Viceroy of Bengal completing about seventy summers of his life, could not maintain the equilibrium of discretion when Aurangzeb's imperial authority demanded the oscilating energies of the new Viceroy, defying all canons of ethics.[54] In obedience to the imperial mandate, the aggrieved general-cum-Viceroy had to carry out the duties with mixed feelings. Now Mir Jumla had no substantial quantum of copper of tide-over the tuff and acute problems of the province of Bengal as well as the challenge of the frontier Hindu sovereigns. To consolidate the present incumbancy, it was an imperative necessity to inject and impose his earlier policy of Deccan in the soil of Bengal subah and the frontier Kingdoms. As a matter of fact, Mir's Deccan formulae were not applicable either in Bengal Subah which was already rent with conflicting loyalties or in North-east regions where ethnical

53. A. Salam, op.cit., pp 223-24; Alamgirnama, pp 678-80.
54. W. Irvine, op.cit., Vol. I, p 179.

diversities were too much pronounced to accept any homogeneous paramountcy. However, Mir too like his Sunni Master was lured by the dazzling prospects of acquiring the treasures both from Bengal Subah and unexplored wealth of the entire north-east frontier States. But this wild venture was too much difficult to be accomplished especially in North-east India, as the aspirant was to start from Dacca, where he had stayed only for eighteen months (May 1660 - November 1661).[55]

Further, the political and economic conditions of Bengal Subah was in a fluid state right from the Viceroyalty of Prince Shuja (1639-1657) and this unavoidable wounds were aggravated by the War of Succession. The feudal economic structure of Bengal Subah became stagnent. Corruptions in all phases of the cross-section of life became rampant. The reactionary forces of conflicting loyalties towards Aurangzeb's authority created a vacuum especially in Bengal Subah. The imperial revenues from Bengal were in arrears since 1657. Curiously enough, the contumacious masses alike expressed their gestures of superficial loyalties especially during the period of interregnum following War of Succession. Consequently, the din of rebellion and divisive forces became rife when ex-wazir of Golkonda was seated in the capacity of Viceroy at Dacca (Jahangirnagar).[56] Again, to chastise the age long powerful rulers and Chieftains of North-east India, representing haterogenous nature, it vitally required considerable time factors, substantial finance inadition

55. Ibid., p 317.
56. Ibid., p 319.

to trained men and war materials. As already referred to that the Bengal Subah was on the brink of financial bankruptcy, But the rulers and chieftains were comparatively maintaining political and economic stability than the counterpart of Mughal province. It is because the Mughal-Ahom bilateral treaty of 1639 was more favourably to Mughals especially in trade and as such the Mughal authority pursued a definite policy of non-intervention in North-east India, ensuring the territorial integrity and uninterrupted commercial activities of the frontier rulers. However, the terms of this treaty were put in abeyance since the War of Succession.[57]

In fact, the concerted plan of north-eastern campaign was conceived by the emperor Aurangzeb while it had to be executed by his so long general Mir Jumla, although it was not pre-concerted by the two diplomats. Again the course of actions and modelities of conducting the North-eastern campaign, projected later on altogether different attitude of the Emperor who exercised the imperial authority as the supreme of the Mughal army. But none of the Imperial forces and economic resources were made available to Mir Jumla because of the concentration of lion parts of Mughal corps into other frontiers. Yet the Viceroy was expected to mean his own business by husbanding the stagnant resources on the spot. Indeed, it was a formidable and herculean task involving risks for Mir Jumla who required to collect a sound finance within the time bound limit of eighteen months only before he could launch the historic campaign of North-east India by November 1661 in the

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57. H. Goswami, (ed) Purani Assam Buranji, p 168.

lines of integrated operation.[58] Eventhough, this Viceroy was given solely the independent charge coupled with some prerogative powers in formulating the policy matters of Bengal Subah as well as North-East frontier states, but the Persian statesman started his policy shakily at the initial stage under the adverse conditions as cited earlier. Now, Mir was to be guided only by his own wisdom and experiences what-so-ever, inorder to overcome all the unforeseen problems and hurdles ~~he was to face~~.[59]

Above all, North-east India was to offer Mir Jumla altogether a different terrain, unfamiliar plateau, treacherous weather, turbulent rivers with upward current, streamlets, reverine lands, unfavourable climate etc., about which he must have ascertained the factual reports from the traders, preachers, faujdars, petty officials of the frontier outposes. He also collected the news of stored wealth of the Ahom rulers from microspic number of muslim settlers of Ahom Kingdom. He was also provided with solid informations about the frontier Kingdom from Rashid Khan and Raja Sujan Singh, the two generals of twin operations whom Mir had despatched before for diplomatic transactions as well as raids. To Mir Jumla, it was not viable and practicable to formulate a ready made war plan or to pursue the traditional policy of military campaign which he had been following in the Deccan and northern India. Therefore, the policy concerning north-eastern campaign developed from time to time and with every new turn of events, it had undergone changes before it could take a final shape and his success and failure also varied accordingly to the extent he could master strong his limited resources inorder to execute his policy.[60] To

58. S.K. Bhuyan, (ed) Assam Buranji, p 76.
59. Ibid., p 77.
60. W. Irvine (tr), op.cit., Vol. I, p 92.

understand the predicament which befell him in the North-east India, it is desirable to make brief comparative estimate of Mughal north-east and north-west policy in the light of which the new re-orientation of Mir Jumla's policy can be better appreciated in its formation period referred to.

NORTH EAST AND NORTH WEST

On his accession to the Mughal throne the shrewd Emperor, Aurangzeb was called upon to reckon with the two traditional frontiers of the empire, the north-east and north-west, both to pacify the rebellious conduct of frontier Chiefs and to articulate his policy of imperial expansionism. The use of defensive diplomatic weapon was the common feature in the North-west frontier but this doctrine was not conducive to the rulers and chieftains with heterogenous character in the North-east. Consequently, the policy was oscilating like pendulum from defensive to offensive and vice versa. Again in North-west, the policy was mainly of punitive character and the Mughal authorities had to patch up peace by pensioning of the hostile tribal leaders from time to time, overlooking their depredations. But in the North-east the policy was based on aggrandisement and annexation. The retributary measures of North-west were more or less sustained whereas in north-east these were mere transitory.[61] The Mughal authority used to take the advantage of the inter-tribal jealousy with a view to root out the perpetual source of irritation created by the plundering raids of the rebel Pathans and the political indoctrination continued to

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61. Sir J. N. Sarkar, Aurangzeb, Vol. III, pp 241-47.

be a dominant factor in dealing with the inhabiting tribes; but in the North-east such a policy could not be very meaningful as the rulers and chieftains were backed by sound political organisation. The maintenance of political equilibrium and stable government with sound financial basis, obviously, evoked and excited the jealousy of Mughal authorities. The benevolent monarchy of North-east India, devoid of religious fanaticism, intensified the jealousy of Mughal rulers most of whom were the believer of autocarcy based on religious bigotry. Freed from the traditional Shia-Sunni conflict of the north-west, the Mughal authorities in the North-east had to resort to determined stress and strain in consolidation of the Mohammadans in the Brahmaputra, Surma and Barak valleys. The pan-Islamic policy could be exercised in the foot hills of Tripura, Khasi and Jaintia hills and Garo hills in phased and calculated manner. Nevertheless, the main object of North-east policy was to control and molopolise all the trades and the commercial routes and centres so as to fill up the gap of both provincial exchequer of Bengal Subah and the tottering Imperial treasury with booty and revenues.[62] Contrary to the north-west where political stability and border security were the sole aims. In fact, economic imperialism was put into operation under the coverage of frontier policy in the fertile regions of North-East. Strategic position of the two frontiers was pole asunder in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In fact, the basic problems of the two pulsative and sensitive fronts differed in scope and magnitude.[63]

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62. W. Irvine (tr), op.cit., Vol.II, p 109.
63. F. Bernier, op.cit., p 380; W. Irvine (tr) op.cit., Vol. II, pp 412-13.

The earlier Mughal authorities could not properly visualise these two fronts in proper perspective. Thus on the accession of Aurangzeb, the problems of the above fronts took different turn. This new Emperor also put over-emphasis by megnifying the problems of North-west, and diverting and draining away the best forces of the country upto 1680 A.D. As a result, the Mughal authorities under Aurangzeb also failed to make proper and requisite assessment and importance in the North-east frontier policy. In this frontier, the Mughal authorities continued to handle and analyse the strategic values mere on simple equations. No matter, when the Mughal authorities were in illusion, the European free booters and traders under the coverage of the respective factors exploited the fluid situation and step by step took available advantages on the plea that they would extend their possible assistance in realising the dreams of the Mughals. As the final phase of Mughal's north-west frontier policy began to roll under the stewardship of emperor Aurangzeb, the wheels of fortune turned otherwise.[64] To the Emperor, the strategic value of North-east front was decreasing whereas to the European factors it was in ascending scale. Of course, the Emperor pretended to revitalise the North-eastern frontier policy, though based on the principle of exigency.

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64. F. Bernier, op.cit., p 168.

CHAPTER - III

EXPEDITIONS UNDER MIR JUMLA

The campaign against Cooch Behar and Assam was the first direct imperialist intervention in the affairs of north-east by the Mughals under Aurangzeb.

MOTIVES BEHIND

A number of factors are discernible from the various sources that prompted such an aggressive military campaign. The militant territorial expansionist policy of Aurangzeb was undoubtedly the prime factor.[1] Nevertheless, the European traders and travellers suggested two untold intentions of the Emperor and his Viceroy. Firstly, the expedition was a clever device on the part of Aurangzeb who was anxious to get rid of his most powerful minister-general by engaging him in foreign wars.[2] Secondly, the campaign was the outcome of an inordinate personal ambition of Mir Jumla to secure the base for an invasion upon Burma and China.[3] This could, however, never be the sole reasons for a determined endeavour to subdue the rulers of Assam and Cooch Behar. Although the local sources[4] portray that Mir Jumla had undertaken the expedition without prior sanction of the Emperor, it can not be denied that Jayadhvaj Singh and Prannarayan were guilty of aggressions in the Mughal territory[5]

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1. S.K. Bhuyan(tr) Annals of the Delhi Badshahate, p 151; Sir J.N. Sarkar, Aurangzib, Vol. V, 390; W. Irvine(tr) Storia Do Mogor, Vol. II, pp 60-61; A. Salam, Riyazu-s-Salatin, p 224.
2. W. Irvine (tr) Vol. II, p 91.
3. J.N. Sarkar, The Life of Mir Jumla, p 223.
4. H. Goswami, Purani Asam Buranji, p 92.
5. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Aurangzib, Vol. III, pp 155-56.

and Aurangzeb himself had ordered the expedition.[6] In his farman (June 1660) appointing Mir Jumla as Viceroy of Bengal, Aurangzeb has asked the Nawab to conquer Assam and Aracan.[7] A Dutch record of 10 October 1661, suggests in clear terms that Mir Jumla had been ordered by the Emperor to invade Cooch Behar.[8] The measures designed against Cooch Behar and Assam were undoubtedly retributive and coercive in character. It may be recalled that when Prince Shuja was engaged in the war of succession and later, Mir Jumla preoccupied in hasty chase of Shuja, the Koch and Ahom rulers threw themselves in reclaiming their lost territories in Lower Assam, while Prannarayan took possession of the Goraghat and Khuntaghat region, Jayadhvaj Singh marched against the former and occupied the Mughal territories on both banks of the Brahmaputra.[9] Doubtless, this was too serious an offence on the part of the frontier rulers in gross violation of the existing treaties to be overlooked by an arch imperialist and vindictive despot under Aurangzeb. No wonder, as soon as Mir Jumla established himself in Dacca (Jahangirnagar), the Ahom and Koch rulers tendered their virtual submission and loyalty to the Mughals.[10] This was, however, not considered adequate to impress upon the Mughal authorities to abandon their scheme, which leads to underline the fact of imperial expansionism at the backdrop of Mir Jumla's north-eastern campaign.

Further, commanding the frontier trade controlling the

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6. Ibid.,
7. Ibid.,
8. W. Foster, The English Factories in India, Vol.V, pp 297-8.
9. H. Goswami, op.cit., pp 91-92.
10. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, p 77.

commercial routes and centres was also part of Mir Jumla's task,[11] as he had already set himself in Bengal raising funds by taxing the merchants and land-holders so as to fill up the almost exhausted imperial treasury under specific instructions of Aurangzeb.[12] Above all, as recorded by Mir Jumla's own chronicler, the expedition was "a holy war" prompted by "an ardent passion for realising the captive Muhammedans (prisoners of war), rooting out idolators, lifting up the banner of Islam and destruction of the customs of unbelief and errors."[13]

LOCAL REACTIONS

As desired by Aurangzeb, Mir Jumla's preparations to translate the scheme against Assam and Cooch Behar started eversince he established himself as the Viceroy of Bengal seated at Dacca. Meanwhile, as known from the authorities of Alamgirnama, Jayadhvaj Singh sent an emissary to the Mughal Viceroy stating that he had taken possession of the imperial lands for no other reasons but to keep the Koches out and that he was now prepared to hand them over again to an officer whom the Viceroy might depute for the purpose.[14] Mir Jumla rewarded the Ahom emissary with a Khalat, and Rashid Khan, Sayyid Nasiruddin Khan, Sayyid Salar Khan, Agar Khan and others were ordered to receive back the imperial lands.[15] The Koch ruler also sent representative soliciting the governor's pardon for his disloyalty and open

11. J.B. Tavernier, Travels in India, Vol. II, p 281.
12. W. Foster, op.cit., Vol. V, pp 275-76.
13. S. Talish, Fathiyya-i-Ibriyya, Mss No D72, Asiatic Society, Calcutta, pp 7-8, 18-19.
14. H. Blochmann, "Koch Bihar, Koch Hajo, and Asam, in the 16th and 17th centuries, according to the Akbarnama, the Padishanama, and the Fathiya-i-Ibriya" J.A.S.B. Vol.XLI, 1872, p 63; S.K. Bhuyan, op.cit., p 77.
15. H. Blochmann, Ibid., p 63.

rebellion. Mir Jumla would listen to no excuse and imprisoned the emissary and ordered Raja Sujan Singh,* the Rajput commander to occupy Cooch Behar with an imperial corps and Mirza Beg, one of his own officers, with 1000 horses.[16]

As soon as the Ahoms heard of Rashid Khan, they withdrew from Karaibari and the neighbouring places, and retreated beyond the river Manas (opposite Goalpara).[17] Rashid Khan considered this sudden retreat to be a snare, and on receiving further reinforcement under Sayyid Yusuf, who had been Faujdar of Karaibari during Shuja's government, took the possession of Rangamati.[18] Sujan Singh by this time advanced to Yak-Duar; but finding that Rashid Khan did not press forward, he, too remained where he was, especially as the rains set in, and due to discouraging reports to the governor. Mir Jumla found that matters could no longer be left in the hands of his officers, and on obtaining the necessary order from the imperial court, prepared himself to invade Cooch Behar and Assam. The Ahoms did not remain silent spectators. They made diplomatic tricks by sending emissaries with fourteen tusks, two swords, sixty gold coins and many other presentations, but at the same time reinforced the existing army and navy.[19] Mir Jumla on the other hand, prepared to occupy Gauhati where from Mughal Faujdar, Mir Nathulla, was driven by the Ahoms. He also threatened the cows and the Brahmins along with the inhabitants.[20] Accordingly, Mir Jumla mobilised his army towards Assam. The Ahoms took

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* Alias Suban Singh Bandela.

16. Ibid., pp 63-64.
17. Ibid., p 64.
18. Ibid.,
19. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Kamrupar Buranji, pp 54-56.
20. Ibid., pp 58-59.

possible measures to counteract the imperial forces. Soon a terrible battle began between the Mughals and the Ahoms both on the South and in the north bank of the Brahmaputra and the Ahom army retreated resulting the capture of huge war materials by the Mughals.[21] Mir Jumla with his loyal follower Dilir Khan marched to conquer the new realm. About the strength and initial progress of the expedition the Venetian traveller Niccolao Manucci says:[22]

> "Both were anxious to open to Aurangzeb a door for entering China ... . They left the city of Dhakah together, at the head of forty thousand horsemen, in addition to infantry - these moved by land; and by way of the river he sent a large fleet commanded by Portuguese. These two forces reached, at a distance of one hundred leagues from Dhakah, a small fortress called Aso (Hajo, which, years before this time, the Assamese had taken from the province of Bengal. In a short time Mir Jumla captured that fort."

COOCH BEHAR

Mir Jumla made some administrative arrangements for Bengal before his departure for the Assam expedition and officers were directed to abide by his orders during his absence. Thus the protection of the provincial capital was put in charge of Ihtisham Khan. The financial matters were to be looked upon both by Bhagati Das, the Diwan, and Khwajah Bhagwant Das. Mir Ghazi was appointed Bakshi and court chronicler, and Muhammad Maqim was to command the fleet. Blochmann on the basis of Fathiya-i-Ibriya writes:[23]

> "The Nawab first marched to Baritalah (opposite to Halshila near Pargana Karaibari), the harem and the heavy beggage having been sent via Ghoraghat."

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21. H. Goswami, op.cit, pp 92-95.
22. W. Irvine, (tr) op.cit., Vol.II, p 91; F. Bernier, Travels in the Mogul Empire, pp 171-72.
23. H. Blochmann, op.cit., pp 64-65; S.N. Khan, The Maathir-ul-Umrah, Vol. II, p 197.

There were three approach roads towards the city of Cooch Behar. Two roads were directly connected with the border of the Mughal territory. The third road connected Mughal empire with the Cooch-Behar state via Morang. The first two roads were known as Yak-Duar and Khontaghat (Ghoraghat) respectively. Mir Jumla decided to strike through Yak-Duar route. The second road had many obstacles. It passed near Rangamati and intersected by innumerable small brooks. Another unidentified road that linked Cooch Behar was finally selected by Mir Jumla beyond the calculation of the Raja of Cooch Behar, for intensive march which was surrounded mostly by dense bamboo shrub.[24] Nawab's strategy befolled the Raja of Cooch Behar. Mir Jumla began his war operation by ordering the fleed to anchor in the nearby rivers which flow from Sarkar Ghoraghat into the Brahmaputra. On 12 December 1661, Raja Sujan Singh joined Mir Jumla.[25] Now began the ordeal of the imperial army. The march was tedious and difficult, and the elephants and the footmen had continually to cut the road through the dense jungles. While they reached to the vicinity of Cooch Behar, it was reported that Raja Pran-narayan had fled to Bhutan. Mir Jumla entered the town of Cooch Behar with flying colour and thereafter prayer call was chanted by Cadir Mir Muhammed Calih in the Raja's palace.[26]

Mir Jumla demanded the surrender of Koch Raja who took refuge in the royal court of Bhutan and the latter refused to

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24. Ibid., pp 64-65; S.N. Khan, op.cit., pp 128-99.

25. Ibid.,

26. Ibid., pp 64-66; A.A. Chowdhury, Cooch-Beharer Itihas, p. 265.

comply with the order of the Nawab. But the son of Prannarayan about this time dissociated from his father, and waited on the Nawab, and embraced Islamic creed.[27] Isfandiar Beg, son of the late Alayar Khan was ordered to move towards Morang* in order to arrest Bhabanath Cargi, the wazir of the Koch-ruler. Another party was sent under the command of Farid Khan through another route. After a few days the fugitive wazir with his family were captured by Riza Quli Beg Abakash and placed before the court. Meanwhile, Cooch Behar was annexed to Mughal territory. The name of the said town was changed to Alamgirnagar. Isfandar Beg was duly honoured as well as to officiate as Faujdar of that occupied country till the arrival of Askar Khan, who had been appointed to that office. The Nawab halted at Cooch Behar for sixteen days upto 3 January 1662 and directed the officials to reorganise the political and revenue set-up in the imperial line.[28]

ASSAM

Mir Jumla then left Cooch Behar on 4 January 1662, and marched over Khontaghat into Assam. When the Nawab reached at Rangamati where Rashid Khan joined him.[29] The Zamindars of the district could not be trusted by Mir Jumla, and for carriage and guides he had solely to depend on his own exertions. Dilir Khan, Officer-in-Charge of his van and Mir Murtaza, the Commandant of the imperial artillery were asked to safeguard both the river

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27. Ibid., p 67; A.A. Chowdhury, op.cit., p 267.
* A petty Chieftaincy in the north-western border of Cooch Behar.
28. Ibid., p 68.
29. E. Gait, A History of Assam, p 131; S.N. Khan, op.cit., pp 198-99.

banks and land routes. The numerous streams and thorny jungles caused untold hardships and consequently Mir Jumla's progress was not more than a day.[30] On 20 January 1662, the Mughal army under Mir Jumla took possession of fort Jogighopa, situated opposite Goalpara, which belong to Kamrup. The author of the Fathiyya-i-Ibriyya narrates the structural skill of the fort of Jogighopa as follows;[31]

> "It is a large and high fort on the Brahmaputra. Near it the enemy had dug many holes for the horses to fall into, and pointed bamboo spikes, called panjis were studed in the holes. Behind the holes, for about half a shot's distance, on the even ground, they had made a ditch, near the fort, another one three yards deep. The latter was also full of bamboo-spikes. In this way the Ahoms used to fortify the strategic bases. The Brahmaputra was south of the fort, and in the east a large river, called Manas, flew .. the mountain and joined the Brahmaputra. To the north, the fort was guarded by a ditch, several hillocks and dense jungles. The horse of Mir Jumla's chronicler was lost when it fell into holes."

Indeed, the Ahoms had their specialised art and skill in the mechanism of fortifications made of bamboos and muds.[32]

MUGHAL ADVANCE

The Mughals after occupying the fort of Jogighopa, opposite hill of Pancha Ratna appointed Ataulla, one of the Nawab's men, as Commander of the fort. The Mughal army was divided into two divisions just after crossing the turbulent river Manas by a bridge of boats. Mir Jumla took the charge

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30. H. Blochmann, op.cit., 69; S. Talish, op.cit., pp 18-21; S.N. Khan, op.cit., pp 198-99.

31. Ibid.; S. Talish, op.cit., pp 18-25.

32. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Kamrupar Buranji, pp 61-63; H.Blochmann, op.cit., p 69; S.N. Khan, op.cit., pp 198-99.

of the main army and began to advance along the north bank. Nasiruddin Khan, Yadgar Khan and other Amirs proceeded along the southern bank of the Brahmaputra, while the fleet was maintaining close touch with the usual progress of the land forces. On 4 February 1662, Mir Jumla's army reached the neighbourhood of Gauhati and deputed Rashid Khan to surround Srighat by preventing the enemies from escaping to the north. But before he could reach the appointed station, the Ahom forces fled away out of panic and began their night flight up the river to Kajali. The Ahom army on the south bank of the river were overtaken by a flying force and a good number of them met with death. This set back on the part of Ahoms was due to defection of the army Commanders for granting the rank of Parvatia Phukan to Manthir Bezdoloi (Bhari Barua*. Next day (5 February 1662) the Mughal army reached at Fort Srighat. Haaji Muhammad Baqir of Isfahan, a servant of Nawab, was ordered to clear up the hurdles of the fort with a number of elephants. Mir Jumla entered and inspected the fort and then began his march to Gauhati which was two miles further on the north bank of the Brahmaputra.[33] Mir Jumla quickly recovered Gauhati, the then seat of Mughal Kamrup. Fort Pandu on the other side of the river and opposite to Fort Srighat, was taken without fight. A good number of the retreating forces were killed by the troops under Yadgar Khan Uzbeg. As soon as the news of the fresh sufferings reached Kajali fort, after

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* Possibly, Bar Baruah. X wrong No idea.

33. J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 234; H. Blochmann, op.cit., p.69; E. Gait, op.cit., p 133; S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, p 78.

initial resistence the frightened Ahoms left it and fled to Samdhara fort, at the mouth of the Bharali river.[34] Fort Kajali was about fourteen miles from Fort Pandu and its fall created unthinkable consternation which forced the Ahom monarch to redistribute the army mobilisation in order to combat the further progress of the imperial forces. Mention may be made that the Fort Srighat was bigger and higher than Fort Jogighopa while Fort Pandu was equal to Fort Srighat. Fort Kajali, ~~fourteen miles off from Gauhati fort~~, was no less important in construction and strength. As Blochmann writes:[35] "For Kajli lies near the very same 'Kajliban*', which is mentioned in Hindu books. It is a reserve forest full of elephants."

RESISTENCE

Meanwhile, the victorious General made some new appointments in the conquered territories and exerted tactical pressure for the unconditional surrender of the Ahom monarch. After waiting for two days he resorted to military action. Local Chiefs were asked to submit their allegiance. Thus Makardhvaj+, Raja of Darrang, who was so long a vassal of the Ahom monarch came down and paid respect to Mir Jumla, presented an elephant and in return, received Khilat. He was assured full protection and ordered to assist the current campaign of the imperialists. The Raja of Dimarua, the protected State

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34. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) op.cit., p 78; E. Gait, op.cit., p 133, S.N. Khan, op.cit., pp 198-99.

35. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 70. S.N. Khan, op.cit., pp 198-99.

* For the Kachari Raja it might have been the main source of income by catching elephants and also as military rampart against the neighbouring Rajas.

\+ In Alamgirnama (p 703) it is Makrapanj alias Makrapani. E. Gait says the surrender of Darrang Raja is mentioned only in the Mohammedan chronicles. Again one of the Kachari Rajas was Makardhvaj(c 1695) see p.419.

under the Ahoms also sent his nephew to assist Mir Jumla's contingent. By this time, Muhammad Beg, an assistant to Nawab was appointed as Faujdar of Gauhati on temporary basis and Hasan Beg was posted as Thanadar of Kajali Fort, that situated at the mouth of the Kallang river. From the Ahom side, the following measures were taken. The fort of Samdhara was put in charge of Baduli Phukan, and Charigiam Raja, Bhitarual Gohain, and many others were stationed on the south bank as effective measure by the Ahom monarch.[36] As Blochmann writes, "At a place Bartina*, which lies half way between Gauhati and Samdhara, the whole imperial army crossed in two days the Brahmaputra on boats on the 6th Rajab (15 February 1662)." The fort of Simlagarh was highly protected by the Ahom monarchs as it was the maingateway to the palace of Garhgaon.[37] While the imperial army continuing their march along the south bank to desert the inmates of the Fort Simlagarh, an unexpected natural calamities interrupted the progress. To quote Blochmann,[38]

> "At one of the stages, a tremendous storm took place, during which many ships were upset, large pieces of hail also fell, and many horses threw themselves into the river. The Assamese, thinking that Fort Chamdhurah would be, as it had been in former expeditions, the farthest point of the advance of the imperialists, had strengthened the fortifications of Simlagar, which lies on the other side of the river, opposite to Chamdhurah. On the 11th Rajab (20 February 1662), the army

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36. S.K. Bhuyan (ed), op.cit., p 78.
    * J.N. Sarkar identified it as Burchola and Barcholgaon vide Darrang district Gaz. (p 177).
37. J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 237; S.N. Khan, op.cit., p 200.
38. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 71; S.N. Khan, op.cit., p 200.

> encamped at the foot of Simlahgar, so near the fort that a zamburak ball from the fort passed over the Nawab's tent. Some of the Nawab's men wished to take the fort by climbing up; but as this would have cost much human life, they were ordered not to do so, and a siege was commenced."

The Mughal army started operations to encircle the Fort Simlagarh under the stewardship of Muhammad Beg, imperial Bakhshi. Dilir Khan and Mir Murtaza were in advance, and threw up trenches within gun-shot distance from the fort. The large guns were deployed to them but it was difficult to break the thick walls. Now the attacking column moved forward; commanded by Dilir Khan and succeeded in entering the Fort and Mir Murtaza opened the gate. The defeated Ahom army was chased by Mahammad Beg. Mir Jumla then inspected the fort and was astonished at the skill of fortifications. The fall of Simlagarh fort unnerved the defender of Samdhara fort. Having lost the morale, they too evacuated to avoid further imperial attack.[39]

BATTLE OF KOLIABAR

After the fall of Simlagarh and Samdhara, Mir Jumla encamped at Koliabar where his army also took rest for three days. The Nawab issued some directives on the occupied territories. As time gap administrative arrangements, Sayyid Nasiruddin was made Faujdar of Koliabar and Sayyid Mirza, Sayyid Nisar and Raja Kishan Singh garrisoned the Samdhara fort. However, the captured war materials were taken along.

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39. J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 238. S. Talish, op.cit., pp 28-36; H. Gosami, op.cit., p 95. E. Gait, op.cit., p 134.

Mir Jumla did not allow any torture on the local people. On the contrary, severe punishments were imposed on the marauders during the whole expedition.[40]

While Mir Jumla was advancing upward at some distance from the river, the fleet became isolated and the Ahom army took its full opportunity and made a determined attempt to check the progress of the Mughal navy. To quote Blochmann:[41]

> "It happened that Ibn Hussain for some important reason was away from the fleet with the army, when suddenly, after evening prayer, on the 21st Rajab, for 800 hostile ships attacked the fleet, which had just anchored. Munawwar Khan Zamindar and Ali Beg did their best till more ships came up. The cannonade lasted the whole night, and was heard by the army. The Nawab sent Muhammad Beg (a servant of Yakahtaz Khan) to assist the fleet."

The Ahom armada of 700 or 800 ships under the admiralship of Bargohain terrorised the crews of the imperial boats, anchoring near Kukurakata.[42] The historic naval fight of Koliabar could ruin the cause of the imperial power if there would not be breach of co-ordination between the Ahom fleet and the army.[43]

FALL OF SALAGARH

Mir Jumla advanced up to Salagarh, which the Ahoms evacuated on the approach of the imperial army. The Ahom forces withdrew to the Namrup hills, and trusted to surprises and night attacks. Mir Jumla was approached by some Ahom

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40. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 72; S.K. Khan, op.cit., p 200.
41. Ibid., pp 72-73; S.N. Khan, op.cit., p 200.
42. J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., pp 239-40; S.N. Khan, op.cit., p 200.
43. S. Talish, op.cit., pp 39-40; E. Gait, op.cit., p 135.

Phukans* who came with letters from their monarch (Jayadhvaj Singh) asking for peaceful settlement. But it soon became evident that their objects was to cause delay or a decrease in vigilance, in which hope they were disappointed by the refusal of overtures.[44] Mir Jumla became over optimistic in getting the favour of fortune. But his consideration was cooled down by the traditional guerilla warfare of the Ahom forces. As J.N. Sarkar writes, "Never daring to face the Mughals in an open engagement, they took recourse to guerilla tactics, - organising surprise raids and night attacks, hindering enemy supplies and killing any stray person searching forage or firewood."[45] The forces under the command of the Bar Gohain on the north bank of the Brahmaputra achieved few victories in order to compensate the irreparable losses mainly of Samdhara fort. By this time, the imperial army under Mir Jumla consolidated their strength on the south bank of the Brahmaputra.[46]

FALL OF LAKHUGARH

Mir Jumla triumphantly occupied the rocky fort of Salagarh without any confrontation and began preparations for advancing to Lakhugarh which was twenty seven miles due east of Biswanath, on the north bank of the Brahmaputra near the western point of the Majuli island. The Ahom monarch commissioned all war Commanders of both banks of the Brahmaputra to

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* Called Amirs in Fathiya-i-Ibriyya.

44. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 73; Assam Buranji, Mss No 677, Tr. No. 213, D.H.A.S. Gauhati.

45. J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 241; W. Irvine (tr), Vol. II, p 92.

46. E. Gait, op.cit., p 136; J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., 241.

concentrate the dislocated forces at the fortress of Lakhugarh but the objective was torpeded by few Ahom deserters. The Ahoms now found it really difficult to resist the forces of Mir Jumla and ... seriously thought of making peace.[47] On the other hand, Mir Jumla insisted on a forward policy till the final occupation of the Ahom capital.[48]

Mir Jumla intruded into Lakhugarh in connivance with Ahom deserters by the second week of March 1662 which compelled the Ahom monarch to apply unusual diplomatic wiles through the royal spiritual guide. To describe the situation in the words of H. Blochmann,[49]

> "A Brahmin, an inhabitant of Dewalgaon* and spiritual guide of the Rajah, came to the camp; so did Yalnoli Phukan,+ who brought a pandan, a gold vessel, and two silver jars, 100 gold muhurs, and a submissive letter from the Rajah. But the letter was not deemed sincere, and a reply was sent that the Nawab would soon be in Ghargaon, where alone he would treat with the Rajah."

To make matter worse, the Ahom monarch, Jayadhvaj Singh was duped his father-in-law and officials deserted him.[50] He found no other alternative but to leave the capital. Then the charge of Garhgaon was entrusted to the Bura Gohain and other dependable officials, while the monarch with Bar Barua and Bar Phukan began their backward march to Tipam, halting at Charaideo and Taraist respectively.[51] During the long

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47. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, p 79; S. Talish, op.cit., pp 41-42; H. Goswami, op.cit., p 95; G.C. Barua (tr), Ahom Buranji, p 167.
48. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Auranzib, Vol. III, p 174.
* E. Gait identifies it as Debargaon.
\+ J.N. Sarkar's coining of Tambuli Phukan is relevant(p 242).
49. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 73.
50. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, p 79.
51. Ibid.; G.C. Barua, op.cit., p 168.

haltage for more than a fortnight the Ahom monarch was likely to offer more economic privileges to the frontier Naga Chiefs in order to utilise the militant man power, experienced archers and unparalled guerilla warfare. But the Nagas of the Tipam were discouraged to combat the imperial forces by their Chief who was already in fued with the other Naga Chiefs that lay between the river Doyeng and the Dikhu.[52] The Ahoms were no more strangers to the Nagas after the rule of about five hundred years. There were some minor confrontations on the issue of trading outposts and differences of opinion were pacified by conventional dialogue. However, H. Blochmann interprets saying, "The Rajah had first intended to fly to the Naga Hills, but fear of our army, the Nagas would not afford him an asylum."[53] In the same context, J.N. Sarkar writes, "The Raja of the Nagas now sent envoys to the Mughal General agreeing to help him with men against the Ahoms. The General declined the offer but assured him of Mughal protection in case he did not assist the Ahoms."[54] It is quite reasonable to believe that the Nagas could not abruptly seek the protectorate of the Mughal General without knowing the final victory of the imperial troops, even though this militant tribes were not at all susceptible to Cajolry. To the Mughal, the Nagas though well built, but treacherous.[55] Most probably, the Ahom monarch took the decision duly

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52. G.C. Barua, op.cit., pp 168, 193.
53. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 84.
54. J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 243.
55. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 84.

envisaged by his advisers to advance towards Namrup hills via Balihat because of the detaching attitude of the Rajah of Tipam.[56] He was accompanied by a huge number of his nobles, officials and followers. The Bar Gohain escaped to Tira, east of Garhgaon, and considerable number of officials took refuge in the island Majuli.[57]

OCCUPATION OF GARHGAON

Mir Jumla left Lakhugarh on 12 March 1662, with the help of Ahom deserters on his march to Garhgaon, the Ahom capital, which was sixteen miles from Lakhugarh and could be approached only by travels close the south bank of Dihing. And the Mughal fleet consisting of 323 ships was ordered to remain stationed at Lakhugarh under Ibn Hussain, Jamil Khan, Ali Beg Munawar and others.[58] The Nawab entered Garhgaon on 17 March 1662 and encamped in the eastern wing of the Rajah's deserted palace while Jayadhvaj Singh took shelter in the Namrup hills which was four days' journey from Garhgaon.[59] The magnificient Ahom capital thus fell in the hands of the Mughals. It was indeed an occasion for the Mughals to rejoice over their almost unopposed occupation of the citadel of Ahom prowess.[60] During the peak hours of expedition the imperial General was making hectic measures to transhipp

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56. S.K. Bhuyan (ed), Assam Buranji, p 79; G.C. Barua, op.cit., p 169.

57. E. Gait, op.cit., p 137; J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 243.

58. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Auranzib, Vol. III, p 174; H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 73; W. Irvine (tr) Vol. II, p 92; E. Gait, op.cit., p 137.

59. H. Goswami, op.cit., pp 95-97; E. Gait, op.cit., p 137; H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 75, 85. S.N.Khan, op.cit., p 200.

60. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 84; W. Irvine(tr) op.cit., Vol. II, p 93.

unaccountable booty under the supervision of Mir Murtaza to Dacca. But the Nawab was in horns of dilemma by the curses of monsoon. The nature, however, before long, took the matter into its own hand and the monsoon came to the rescue of the Ahoms.[61] The Ahoms completely uprooted the Mughal Thanadars of Dewalgaon and Gajpur. The other Mughal thanaders, appointed by the Nawab were in a state of uncertainty and panicky. In fact, the tale of Mir's Garhgaon campaign was full of misery and agony like the titanic naval fight of Koliabar.[62]

Due to torrents of rain for three consecutives days and nights, it became impossible and strenuous to live in tents that was about to be submerged. At the outset, the Nawab was inclining to spend the rainy season in Lakhugarh but apprehensive factors compelled him to change the earlier decision. He now resolved to move to Mathurapur, which stood seven miles beyond Chargaon at the foot of a mountain, towards the south-east.[63] As the Nawab was forced by the circumstances to encamp in a place less exposed to rains, he left behind a contingent of his troops in Garhgaon under Mir Murtaza, Farhad Khan and Sayyid Salar Khan.[63]

MUGHAL DIFFICULTIES

The Ahom statesmen might have expected the debacle

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61. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, p 81; W. Irvine(tr) op.cit., Vol. II, p 93.

62. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 86; W. Irvine (tr) op.cit., Vol. II, p 93., F. Bernier, op.cit., p 172.

63. A. Salam, (tr) op.cit., p 225; S.N. Khan, op.cit., p 202.

64. S.K. Bhuyan, (ed) Assam Buranji, p 80; H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 86.; G.C. Barua, Ahom Buranji, pp 175-76, J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 255.

on the part of the invading forces as they knew the character of the season better, and that Jayadhvaj Singh entrenched himself in the Namrup hills was perhaps not without strategic considerations. The advantage of the hardships caused to their adversaries, they were certainly not expected to ignore. As a matter of fact, the continued night attacks of the Ahoms in and around Garhgaon virtually reduced the imperial forces to severe strait and the Nawab was forced to withdraw all thanas. The agony of the imperial forces knew no bound.[65] The Ahom monarch came down to Salaguri, the equidistant from Mathurapur and Garhgaon; the former seat of the kingdom in order to make some new assignments and policy matters. Accordingly, one Baduli Phukan, a royal Brahmin, whose father had risen from a storekeeper to be a noble, was conferred the status of Neog Phukan. This post empowered two portfolios, Prime Minister cum Commander-in-Chief, The Ahom monarch directed to all to obey this royal decree and to assist in captiving the Nawab.[66] The imperial forces withdrew their camp before a collective assault launched by Baduli Phukan and the Bar Gohain to Boorhat, south of Namrup, where of course, the assault of Baduli Phukan met with failure.[67] The next venture of Baduli Phukan in blockading Garhgaon did not yield any success due to the disloyalty of Muhammedan musketeers

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65. W. Irvine (tr) op.cit., Vol. II. p 93; E. Gait, op.cit., p 140.

66. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 88; J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 257; G.C. Barua, op.cit., p 175; Sir J.N. Sarkar, Aurangzib, Vol. III, p 168.

67. J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 257; G.C. Barua, op.cit., pp 175-76.

of Assam, recruited from the village of Chachni and stationed by Mir Murtaza on the north, refused to leave their areas, when threatened by the Ahom army.[68]

The vulnerable position of Garhgaon was partially secured by the arrival of a flotilla with provisions sent by Ibn Hussain under the command of Muhammand Murad from Lakhugarh. Ibn Hussain continued his offensive attack upon the fortified island of Majuli in order to ensure the security of north bank, keeping in touch with all downward links up to Bengal.[69] The reverses of the imperial army caused unspeakable consternation. The whole country was virtually re-occupied by the Ahoms, only Mathurapur and Garhgaon being in the hands of the Imperials. As Jadunath Sarkar writes, "The beleaguered Mughals despaired of returning to Hindustan, and at Delhi - funeral rites were performed for the Assam expeditionary force."[70]

ENCOUNTERS

The hopes of Mathurapur operations were nipped in the bud both by Nawab's stretagic considerations and unthinkable pestilence cum famine, during July 1662. Now Garhgaon once became a rendezvous and to test the trial of strength by the contending armies. Mir Jumla started manoeuvre for coming back to Mathurapur to Garhgaon,[71] by the third week of August

68. J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 258; G.C. Barua, op.cit., p 176.
69. S. Talish, Fathiyya-i-Ibriyya, pp 75-76; J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 255; S.K. Dutta, Assam Buranji, pp 20-21; H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 86.
70. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Aurangzib, Vol. III, p 168; H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 88; J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 256.
71. J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 260; H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 89.

after sending a strong detachment under Farhad Khan and Qarawal Khan towards Lakhugarh to keep the road communication clear for the supplies and to assist Sarandaz Khan in getting Gajpur and then sending reinforcements to the thanas under Mir Nurulla and Muhammad Maqim at Trimohani and Ramdang respectively.[72] Inspite of the protective measures the fighting continued for several days. The Rajput soldiers under Rajah Sujan Singh distinguishing themselves by capturing fourty-one Ahom ships and drove the Rajah of Saring, a protected tribal chief in the southern mountains, who threatened Garhgaon.[73] Farhad Khan sent Muhammad Beg to chastise the villages that were involved in sporadic attacks on the Mughal thanas. He did his job with some Ahom defectors.

PEACE PROPOSALS

Nevertheless, Baduli Phukan, being unexpectedly ill, proposed to send an emissary to Nawab who was about to elude at Garhgaon with his associates. The Nawab's party was honeycombed mainly by the pestilential diseases, converting Mathurapur as if hell and dungeon. The peaceful gestures of Baduli Phukan, asking for cessation of the prolonged hostiles were trickily accepted with specific condition. The Nawab threw his diplomatic net piloted by Khwajah Bhor Mall,* one of the Rajput Chiefs, who cajoled Baduli Phukan. Now onwards, Buduli Phukan became victim to labyrinth and fifth columnist.[74]

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72. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 87; Sir J.N. Sarkar, Auranzib Vol. III, p 169; J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 259, E. Gait, op.cit., pp 138-139.

73. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 89; J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 257.
* In Alamgirnama, it is Puran Mal.

74. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 89; G.C. Barua, op.cit., p 178.

The said Phukan gave a full support to the following conditions of the bilateral peace treaty without the final approval of the Ahom monarch and his subjects. As Blochmann writes on the authority of Fathiya-i-Ibriya,[75]

> "The Mughals must receive five hundred elephants that had still their first teeth; thirty lacs of tolahs of gold and silver as peshkas; a daughter of the Rajah for the harem of His Majesty; a yearly tribute of fifty elephants with their first teeth; and lastly, a promise to cede that portion of Assam over which the Imperialist passed. The Ahom Rajah was to keep Namrup and the whole of the mountainous districts to himself."

The Ahom monarch's refusal of five point humiliating clauses unnerved the machinations of Baduli Phukan as well as the followers of the Imperialist. No sooner the Nawab, the supreme commander with his officers had entered in capital town of Garhgaon,* the Ahoms renewed their frantic attacks on Garhgaon.[76] The Ahoms after devasting the campus decided to crush the Mughal fleet. But the retreat of the Bhitarial Phukan from Dewalgaon to Rangali Chapari in the Majuli island ruined the cause of the Ahoms. The imperial navy under the admiralship of Ibn Hussain displayed unparalleled valur, though with few defectors of Ahom nobility.[77]

In spite of their continued endeavours, the Ahom forces failed to dislodge the Mughals both from Garhgaon and

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75. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 89; J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 260; S.K. Bhuyan, (ed) Assam Buranji, p 81.

* 17th - 18th August 1662.

76. S.K. Bhuyan, (ed) Assam Buranji, p 81.

77. S. Talish, op.cit., pp 120-26; J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p. 264; G.C. Barua, op.cit., p 178; E. Gait, op.cit., p 141; Sir J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., vol. III, pp 173-74.

strategic naval bases. The Mughal forces completely foiled the attempts launched by the Ahoms who even attempted to destroy the capital complex. The occupation army enjoyed special advantage from the fort but the entire might was now concentrated in repairing Garhgaon that made the task formidable for the Ahoms.[78]

As the season heralding the arrival of autumn, Mir Jhumla began his unrest bid in intensifying the offensive attacks upon the Ahoms. Cavalry was thoroughly engaged which frightened the Ahom army and the people.[79] There began a large scale exodus of the Ahom natives. As Judunath Sarkar writes, "The Assamese peasantry, who had returned during the rains, again deserted their fields and huts and betook themselves to the hills across the Brahmaputra with their families and movable property."[80] The cupidity of Nawab was realised by digging out the hidden treasures of the royal grave yards.

The Ahom monarch went to Solagarh and then back to Namrup only after the crushing defeat at the hands of Ibn Hussain.* Then Baduli Phukan revoked the peace proposal for the second time, subject to the withdrawal of the Imperialists. But it was turned by Nawab. Suddenly, Baduli Phukan joined the side of the Mughals along with his three brothers at

78. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 92; S.K. Bhuyan, Kamrupar Buranji, p 63.

79. G.C. Barua, op.cit., p 178; Sir J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., Vol. III, p 175.

80. Sir J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 175.

* Alias Abul Hasan.

Silikhatol.[81] The defection of the Phukans alarmed the Ahom monarch who could not pardon the elusory tricks of plan. Nevertheless, the renegade Phukan now enjoyed the confidence of the Mughal General and was destined to play a crucial role on behalf of the Mughals in Assam. His local experience was an asset, and the Nawab valued his suggestions and advice.

ADMINISTRATIVE MEASURES

Baduli Phukan was appointed as Subedar* covering the area between Garhgaon and Namrup.[82] He gave all secret plans and concrete assistance to Nawab for capturing the Ahom Monarch by a steady march up to Tipam village, the farthest point of Nawab's advice.[83] Thus on his advice Mir Jumla sent a detachment in the first week of December 1662 under Darwesh Beg to Solaguri, where several Phukans and a number of elephants were reported to be available to the Mughals. Baduli Phukan accompanied Darwesh Beg. The Nawab crossed the Dihing but due to his sudden illness, the expedition of Namrup was put in a coma. Baduli Phukan, the deserter was honycombed by the loyal and patriotic Ahom officials.[84] Nevertheless, the Nawab after receiving treatment from Karima of Gilan, a physician, became sanguine to accomplish the stupendous task, in spite of serious illness. On the following day (10 December), he resolved to capture the Ahom

81. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 92; J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 267; Sir J.N. Sarkar, op.cit.,pp 175-76;G.C.Barua,op.cit., pp 183-84.

* J.N. Sarkar mentions Deka Rajah (lit. the junior king) (p 267).

82. Ibid., p 92; S.K.Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji,p 81; G.C. Barua, op.cit., p 185.

83. Sir J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 175.

84. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 93; J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 267; H. Goswami, op.cit., pp 97-98.

monarch camping at Namrup through the puppet Deka Fajah and advanced up to the village Tipam* on 18 December 1662.[85]

Indeed, both the belligerant nations were benumbed by the vacuum caused by the afflictions. The Ahom monarch decided to execute Baduli Phukan and his associates to push up the morale of the country. Now the Nawab had now resources to save this proteges who betrayed the country. The ailing General was perplexed by the downward morale of his army. Lobbying began in both the camps.[86]

Nevertheless, the Ahom monarch insisted on the revocation of the preceding bilateral treaty of 1638 as his countrymen already rejected outright the humiliation clauses of the peace convention recently made by the mechinations of Baduli Phukan and Khawja Bhor Mal. Now Mir Jhumla also could not ignore his acute illness as well as the dissatisfection of his fatigue army.[87] On the other hand, most of the Phukans and other high ranking officials of Ahom monarch wanted to stop the active confrontation for the time being. Thereby they could recoup the loses for further offensive attack upon the forlorn Mughals.[88]

TREATY OF GHILAJORIGHAT

After prolonged dialogues, both party finally came

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88. *Opposite Namrup; But H. Blochmann mentions Batam and also confessed that there was no such name in the available mpp (J.A.S.B. 1872, p 93).

85. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 93; J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 267.

86. G.C. Barua, op.cit., p 185; S.N. Khan, op.cit., p 203; Ibid., p 92, J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 268; Sir J.N.Sarkar, op.cit., pp 176-77.

87. J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 268; S.K. Bhuyan, Mir Jumlas Assam Akraman, pp 85-90.

88. G.C. Barua, op.cit., p 185; S.K.Bhuyan(ed) Kamrupar Buranji,p64.

to the peace table at Ghilajori Ghat on 22 January 1663. Due to the Nawab's serious illness the treaty was mainly violated and signed by Dilir Khan on the modelity suggested by Khawja Bhor Mal.[89] The main terms of the treaty are summarised as follows.

Firstly, the Ahom monarch (Jayadhvaj Singh) & another native Raja (Batamor Tipam) adjoining Namrup hills should send one of their daughters to the Imperial harm. Secondly, as war indemnity, both rulers were asked to pay 20,000 tolas of gold, and 120,000 tolas of silver. Thirdly, fifteen elephants are to be handed over to the Emperor, fifteen to Mir Jumla and five to Dilir Khan. Fourthly, twenty elephants are to be despatched as annual tributes. Fifthly, the sons of the four principal Phukans will remain hostages with Mir Jumla and will be released on the replenishment of the condition that 3,00,000 tolas of silver and 90 elephants to be sent as tribute to Bengal Subah in three four monthly instalments. Sixthly, Sarkar Darrang, Nakti-Rani, Dimarua, Mikir* shall be ceded to the Mughal emperor.[90] Finally, all the Mughal prisoners of war and family of Baduli Phukan should

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89. J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 268; S. K. Bhuyan, Kamrupar Buranji, pp 64-65.

* Some Rengma Nagas are inhabitants vide Blochmann, p 94.

90. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 94; J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 270; Sir J. N. Sarkar, Aurengzeb, vol. III, pp 177-78.

be freed and restored to the Nawab.[91+]

After initial hesitation on the hostage issue, the Ahom monarch and the Raja of Tipam sent their daughters, the stipulated gold and silver, ten elephants and the hostages to the Nawab and promised to thirty elephants more to be delivered at Lakhugarh.[92] Dilir Khan escorted the hostages and Ahom princes meant for Nawab's haram by the first week of January 1663.[93]

The announcement of return march gave unbounded joy to the Mughal forces and 9 January 1663 the sick Nawab went to Trimohani by the help of palanquin where the prisoners and the family of Baduli Phukan arrived.[94] Mir Jumla began his sorrowful return journey straight from Tipam to Trimohani avoiding Garhgaon route, facing unspeakable hardships and

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91. J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 270; E. Gait, op.cit., p 142; S.K. Bhuyan (ed) op.cit., p 85.

+ According to Buranjis it appears that the district of Dakhinkol were neither annexed by the Imperial power nor ceded by the respective Rajas during Mir's expedition or before. According to the terms of the treaty, Bharali river was presumed and supposed to be the boundary between the Mughal empire and Assam in the Utterkol and Kallong river in the Dakhinkol. The Ahom monarch with the full support of his officials and subjects were mortified and adopted delatory tactics in implementing the new boundary line despite promises. In fact, most of the provisions remain uneffected and unfulfilled by the tragic return march of Mughal general. So theoretically the new boundary belonged to Imperial power but in practice it was never actualised, despite many attempts. See S.K. Bhuyan (ed), Kamrupar Buranji, p 67 and Assam Buranj p 85.

92. S. Talish, op.cit., pp 153-156.

93. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Kamrupar Buranji, p 68, Assam Buranji, p 83.

94. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 95.

pressing problems.[95] He also ordered the main part of the army to retreat up to Baritalah along the southern bank of the Brahmaputra, where they should cross the turbulent river.[96]

The Nawab had now resolved to go back at Gauhati for further settlements and implementation of matters concerning finance, administration etc. including retributary expeditions mainly against the native Rajahas of Dimarua, Beltala, Nakti-Rani and lastly the Raja of Cooch-Behar as they recovered their territories denying the Mughal mandate with the exception of the widowed queen of Darrang as Makaradhvaj met with death at Mathurapur on behalf of the imperial army.[97] Meanwhile, Mir Jumla's retreating army were at stand-still and benumbed in the vicinity of mighty Kajali fort due to unprecedented and destructive earthquake, followed by the stormy rains, tremendous lightning and thunder during the first week of February 1663.[98] The Nawab being constantly attended by the imperial doctors including few European physicians in his palanquin journey from Kaliabor acrossing Kallang river by boat, became also victim and compelled to halt for few days there. Moreover, this place belonging to

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95. S. Talish, op.cit., pp 150-57, 161-164; H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 95; J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 275.

96. S. Talish, op.cit., pp 156-57, 161-63, J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 275.

97. J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., pp 230-278; S. Talish, op.cit., pp 168-69, 170-71; H. Blochmann, pp 95-96.

98. S. Talish, op.cit., p 162-65; H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 95; J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., pp 272, 276; Assam Buranji, Mss No. 677, Tr No. 213; Mss No. 95, Tr No. 53, D.H.A.S., (Gauhati); F. Bernier, op.cit., p 173.

Rajah of Dimarua was never traversed by the Imperial forces. This adverse situation was utilised by all the native Rajas including Dimarua whose mother and nephew made only a courtesy visit. However, the widowed queen of Darrang sought outward mercy.[99]

The Nawab left the horrible sight of Kajali and arrived at Pandu by the second week of February 1663 despite his acute illness. He was now making few financial measures and administrative changes by confirming the appointment of Rashid Khan as Faujdar of Kamrup with Gauhati as headquarters in place of Muhammad Beg, the temporary Faujdar. Muhammad Beg was put as Thanadar under Rashid Khan.[100]

The Nawab also received confirmation from the Diwan of Dacca that protected Baduli Phukan was duly granted necessary jagirs in Bengal.[101] Thereafter he arrived at Baritolah and met the Cooch-Behar detachment; and had to abandon the retributary expedition against Raja of Cooch-Behar who had reoccupied his territory during the debacle of Nawab in Upper Assam.[102] As J.N. Sarkar writes, "However, as his condition grew alarmingly worse, he was forced to abandon the idea of invading Kuch Bihar himself and selected Dilir Khan for executing that task with the assistance of Askar Khan and Raja Bahroz".[103] The Nawab was embarked in

99. S. Talish, op.cit., p 164-7; H. Blochmann, op.cit., p95, Assam Buranji, Mss No 677. Tr.No.213,D.H.A(Gauhati); F. Bernier, op.cit., p 173.

100.S. Talish, op.cit., pp 164-67, H. Blochmann, op.cit., pp 95-96, J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 277.

101.S. Talish, op.cit., pp 167-68; H.Blochmann,op.cit.,p.96.

102.J.N. Sarkar,op.cit., p 277; S.Talish, op.cit., pp 166-68; H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 96.

103.J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 278; S. Talish, op.cit.,pp 168-71; H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 96; E. Gait, op.cit., p 143.

a well protected boat escorted by all the available physicians and glided down towards Dacca. But on the way he was succumbed to eternal sleep, just half an hour before sunset, about four miles above Khizrpur* either on 30th or 31st March 1663 (A.H 1073) and the funeral rites were conducted by Dilir Khan and Ihtishman Khan, devoid of courtly honour.[104] Strangely enough his last wishes in the death-bed for carrying his body to Najaf and to be buried in holy ground remained unfulfilled forever.[105] The past and the present generations are still stunned by the non-existence of his burial tomb, despite tendering herculean services for the boastful Master. Unfortunately the Nawab had to met with inglorious death.[106]

Thus an eventful and chequered career came to an end. Indeed it was Mir Jhumla who made the Mughal prowess effectively felt in Cooch Behar and Ahom states. He had completely annexed

*The identification of Khizrpur was not made either in Rennel's Map of the 'Environs of Dacca' in 1778 (Map xii, of the Bengal Atlas) or in Survey Maps. However, Dr. James Wise of Dacca, an eminent scholar of the Local history of Dacca clarifies the place saying "Narainganj, eight miles south-east of Dacca, is in a parganah called Khizrpur. It is bounded by the Dacca river, the Buri Ganga. This situation corresponds with that of the historical Khizrpur, which was on the banks of the Ganges. A tomb, said to be that of one Shaistah Khan's daughters, is called by the Muhammadans of the present day the 'Khizrpur Maqbarah'. It is strange that the tomb of such a great man should not exist." H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 96; According to Assam Buranji by S.K. Bhuyan, Nawab died at Bagribari of Goalpara District (p 35).

104. S. Talish, op.cit., pp 170-71; J.N. Sarkar, op.cit.,pp 273-74; Sir J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 179; E. Gait, op.cit., p 143.

105. F. Bernier, op.cit., p 171, 173, W. Invine (tr)op.cit.,p 94.

106. S. Talish, op.cit., pp 170-72; J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 274; S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Padshah Buranji, p 79; W. Invine (tr) op.cit., p 94.

Cooch Behar and made it directly a part of the Empire. He held the Ahom capital under occupation, compelling the Ahom monarch to take shelter in the rigorous jungle of Namrup hills. The Treaty of Ghilajorighat that he forced on the Ahoms at latter's repeated requests had virtually reduced the Ahom state to the status of a Mughal vassal.[107]

J.N. Sarkar considers the Treaty of Ghilajorighat "Peace with Honour". In fact both the parties, the Mughals and Ahoms, were exhausted by incessant wars. The ailing and aged Mughal general was in horns of dilemma. As J.N. Sarkar argues,

> "weighed down by disease, worried about his sheltered constitution, disconcerted by disaffection in the army, calculating the possible evil effects of rejecting the peace offer, and desirous of releasing all Mussalman prisoners of war, Mir Jumla reluctantly agree to conclude peace."[108]

As a matter of fact, Mir Jhumla was not physically present in the final negotiation as the provisions were dicted by his agents as mentioned earlier. And on the other hand, Jayadhvaj Singh was embarassed by a few defected Phukhans, disloyal war prisoners. So Mir Jumla endeavoured to save his thread of life by offering valuable gifts to the Ahom monarch through the instrumentality of Dilir Khan, superseding Khawja Bhor Mal.[109] Yet the Ahom monarch did not

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107. P. Gogoi, The Tai and the Tai Kingdom, p 423; S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, pp 83-84.

108. J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., pp 268-69.

109. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, pp 83-85; Assam Buranji Mss No 677, Tr. No. 213; Mss No. 49, D.H.A.S.(Gauhati).

leave a stone unturned to reject the coercive provisions of the humiliating Treaty that were practically imposed and dictated by the Mughal authority. In fact, the wars in capital campus of Garhgaon could neither decide the final victors or vanquished. The apparent phrase implied the meaning "Peace with Honour" from the judgement of the Mughal authority. The major provisions of the Treaty were not implemented as the fatigued Nawab moved back to Dacca,[110] and meanwhile the Ahom monarch Jayadhvaj Sing did not survive to see the practical effects of the unholy and revengeful Treaty of Ghilajorighat as he went to eternal sleep on 1585 Saka (November 1663), leaving a lesson to his successors to follow.[111]

It is pertinent to refer that the Aracan expedition under Mir Jumla was not given any priority although the imperial mandate was specific in apprehending the distressed family of fugitive Shuja[112] Mir Jumla defended the expedition of North-east India on priority basis because a part of the Imperial troops were involved in grim struggle against the provinces of Cooch Behar and Assam, and that to march to Aracan, without accomplishing the conquest of the aforesaid two provinces, was virtually opposed to expediency.[113] Evidently, Nawab's campaign in the north-eastern Kingdoms was not merely to infuse Mughal loyalty and fidelity but also motivated by fiscal considerations. The critical analysis of

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110. Assam Buranji, Mss No. 677. Tr. No. 213, D.H.A.S. (Gauhati), P. Gogoi, op.cit., pp 423-24, 431-32.

111. Assam Buranji, Mss No 49, D.H.A.S. (Gauhati); E. Gait, op.cit., p 143; P. Gogoi, op.cit., p 432.

112. A. Salam, op.cit., p 224;

113. Ibid.,

his conspicuous political career of Golkonda, it reveals that all the available opportunities and factors were dramatically utilised and exploited to ensure his brisk trade and commercial activities. As Sarkar writes "Absorbed as Mir Jumla was in his political activities, he never lost sight of commerce, the perennial source of his wealth, prosperity and power".[114] Further, it is reasonable to believe that transference of Provincial headquarter from Rajmohal to Dacca (Jahangirnagar) by Mir Jumla was motivated both by economic greeds and military strategies.

As Mir Jumla possessed uncommon speculation, he would never miss the chance in harbouring the unexplored resources of North-eastern states to compensate his lost treasure of Deccan. As Sarkar writes "The basis of Mir Jumla's economic system in Bengal, as well as in the Karnatak, was monopoly."[115] Indeed North-east part of India during the seventeenth century was practically drew the attention of the Mughals as well as masked European free-booters for her unusual verginity as evident by the narration given by Shihabuddin Talish, the court chronicler of Nawab.[116]

EASTERN DIVISION

As regards the nature of Mir Jumla's relation mainly with Jayantia, Cachar, Tripura, Manipur Kingdoms, the contemporary historical records are shrouded in obscurity, although

114. J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 44.
115. Ibid., p 246.
116. H. Blochmann, op.cit., pp 75-84; J.B. Tavernier, Travels in India, Vol. II, pp 281-82.

stray references are made by the notes left by Mir Jumla's chronicler. According to the available indigenous sources, the Rajas of the aforesaid territories maintained their independent position.[117] It is possible that as Mir Jumla's campaign was directed mainly against the Koch and Ahom rulers, he did not enter into any formal contact with the states in the eastern division of the region. The Nawab had received specific directions from the Emperor to proceed against Assam and Cooch Behar and there was nothing such about Jayantia or Cachar. Again Manipur was not on the border of Bengal, being intersected by Cachar, and the Mughals till than had no formal contact with that hill-locked valley state; while Tripura came into Nawab's purview only on his chase of Prince Shuja. The relations if at all any, during this period with the eastern states were maintained in all probability through the Faujdar of Sylhet at the local levels.

Nevertheless, the erstwhile rivalry of Jayantia with the Ahoms receded for a while during the Mughal campaign, and the Raja of Jayantia sympathised with the Ahom monarch in his difficult time. Jasamanta Roy, the Raja of Jayantia, sent in 1662 two envoys to the Ahom court with a letter expressing sympathy on the invasion of Assam by Mir Jumla and some gifts. But the envoys were captured by Mir Jumla's forces.[118] On hearing of this, Jayadhvaj Singh, the Ahom monarch, wrote to the Raja of Jayantia expressing regret at the capture of

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117. H. Goswami, op.cit., p 101.
118. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Jayantia Buranji, pp 21-22.

of his envoys. He also sent four pieces of silk cloth, eight musked pod, one gathion, two knives and other gifts to the Raja to strengthen the friendship between the two states.[119]

On the request of the Ahom monarch, Manik Singh, the Doloi of Nortiang, arranged the safe conduct of the Ahom envoys with letters and gifts to Jayantiapur.[120] The reciprocal exchange of notes of gratitude were exchanged between the royal courts of Jayantia and Assam to combat their common enemy in the Mughals and to adopt protective measures to upset the aggressive designs of the forces of Mir Jumla.[121] Investingly, this was followed by a series of raids conducted by the Rajas of Jayantia in the Mughal Sarkar of Sylhet.[122] This might have been provoked by capture of the Raja's messenger to Assam and / or to divert the attention of the Mughals from the friendly state of Assam by harassing them in a new frontier. The withdrawal of Mir Jumla from Assam following the signing of the Treaty of Ghilojorighat and the accession of Shaistakhan as the Subedar of Bengal, however, saw an immediate end of raid.[123]

Evidently, the Raja of Cachar gave full support and assistance to the Ahom monarch against the military

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119. Ibid., pp 23-24.
120. Ibid., p 22.
121. Ibid., p 124.
122. Sir J.N. Sarkar, History of Bengal, p 377; S.M. Ali, The History of Jayantia, pp 18-19; S.K. Bhuyan (ed) op.cit., p 36.
123. Sir J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 377; S.M. Ali, op.cit.,p 19.

expedition of Mir Jumla.[124] During Mir Jumla's expedition, Cachar was probably undisturbed for its mighty prowess and intrusion took place both from the north and south-west fronts. ~~As~~ Mir Jumla's chronicler categorically referred to the Kingdom of Cachar, which had now stopped the migration of elephants from his territory and also specifically warned the neighbouring Raja of Dimarua, the then Ahom protectorate, not to catch a single elephant from the bordering Khedas, including the resourceful forest reserve of "Kajali Ban."[125]

Mention may be made that the erstwhile Afgan settlers coming from Sylhet, settling themselves in the adjoining foot hills of the Kingdom of Cachar and Tripura during the early decades of the seventeenth century served as bulwark if not bugbear against the rapid expansion of Mughal hegemony.[126] Nevertheless, the Mughals continued their attack up to the forts of Asuratekar, Pratapgarh and Udaipur and then to withdraw the army after being promised of fealty and tribute. It also appeared that the Mughals were granted some trade facilities by respective Rajas through the river ghats of Barak, Khowang and its tributaries along with the Chowkis of the landed area. This state of relationship was perhaps maintained for sometime.[127]

Gait mentioned of an invasion of Cachar by a detachment of Mir Jumla's expeditionary force.[128] The author

124. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Kachari Buranji, pp 48-49.
125. S. Talish, op.cit., pp 155-60; H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 94.
126. M.I. Bora (tr). Baharistan-i-Ghaybi, Vol.I, p 172.
127. J.B. Bhattacharjee, Cachar under British Rule in North-East India, pp 10-11.; M.I. Bora (tr) op.cit., pp 156-75.
128. E. Gait, op.cit., p 305.

has himself suggested that Satrudaman, the Raja of Cachar, who was said to have been killed during this expedition died atleast fourty years before Mir Jumla's invasion and fought against the forces despatched during the reign of Jahangir.[129] It is, however, possible that there was some minor encounter by Mir Jumla's forces in Assam or under the command of the Faujdar of Sylhet. Such an encounter might have been occassioned by the dispute over elephant trade. Talish[130] and Blochmann[131] suggest the jealousy and friction and that the main cause for it was the total ban imposed by the Raja of Cachar on Kheda in his bordering areas. It is further known from the same authorities that the Mughals were severely aggrieved for losing the prospective trade of elephants but could not take retaliatory actions then due to the circumstances that forced them to withdraw from Assam by hastily making a treaty.

IMPACT OF THE CAMPAIGN

For the first time, the Mughals under Mir Jumla took venture in sending their expedition upto the capital city of the Ahom Kingdom. No other Muhammadan rulers could push their respective campaign into that extremity. Undoubtedly, Mir Jumla's campaign was a remarkable military exploit. But it must be admitted that like all other previous expeditions, both Afgan and Mughals respectively, it was initially successful, but ultimately a failure. Inspite of Mir Jumla's quick march

129. Ibid.,
130. S. Talish, op.cit., pp 155-60.
131. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 94.

from Cooch Behar to the centre of Ahom capital was accomplished within barely two months and a half, yet he could neither crush nor demoralise, both the Koch and Ahom military and naval powers to his expectations.[132] Mir Jumla's diplomatic games created temporary defections among the Ahom nobles and war generals and thereby gained the glory of victory in the ensuing campaign. Very soon, the Mughal army was isolated and blockaded by natural calamities which definitely brought total frustrations both in the Mughal army and navy. Further, the forces of Mir Jumla were unexpectedly harassed and perplexed by the unchallenged night attack and guerilla warefare launched by the Ahom army. Had the defenders hold their own guerilla warefare till the approach of the rainy season, the Mughals, as Talish himself admits, would not have able to capture a single fort.[133]

Mir Jumla created diplomatic pressure by way demanding the restoration of Hatshila, Baritola and Gauhati, but the Phukhans of the Ahom monarch did not budge an inch to the threat of Mughals as the Mughal diplomacy proved to be ineffective.[134] However, in several cases, it was the local inhabitants, who terrified at collective slaughter of the contumacious villagers, willingly handed over several leaders to the Mughals. As Sarkar writes: "Absconding villagers, who had abandoned their inhabitants in pursuance of the Ahom

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132. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Kamrupar Buranji, pp 131-32.
133. S. Talish, op.cit., pp 75-86.
134. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, Introduction XXIII.

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policy of starving the invaders, willingly returned and the Mughals continued to get supplies from them.[135]

Nevertheless, the contention that the Assam war would not become a fulfledged people's war lacked substantial truth. Because the Ahoms and their neighbouring rulers and the ruled took participation against the Mughals, who were their common enemy.[136] Of course few nobility of the Ahom Kingdom betrayed the national cause in certai occasions. Thus Baduli Phukan and his followers brought a tremendous damage to fulfil his selfish design at the cost of the nation as a whole. Even the Muhammadan inhabitants in Assam and more particularly of Garhgaon campus supplied all possible secret information to Mir Jumla and his associates.[137] Above all, Mir's uncommon prudence and organising capability enabled him to rescue the vast Mughal from the total stage of destruction. As Sir J.N. Sarkar writes,[138]

> "Judged as a military exploit, Mir Jumla's invasion of Assam was a success. He overran the country almost to its farthest limits, kept hold of the capital, forced the Raja to make a humiliating treaty, realised a large indemnity, and secured the promise of a large cession of territory and further payments."

In fact, the Mughal losses were not so much from the enemy's sword but from the stroke of pestilence which the Mughals could neither foresee not avert. Though the Ahom monarch suffered from considerable set-backs, yet he did his

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135. J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 281.
136. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Jayantia Buranji; p. 23.
137. S. Talish, op.cit., pp 138-44.
138. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Aurangzib vol. III, p 179.

best to recover the losses so as to deny the acceptance of the provisions of the humiliating treaty in phased manner.[139] The moment Mir Jumla died, all the rulers of North-east India withdraw their loyalties from the Mughal authority. The Raja of Cooch Behar even reoccupied his kingdom while Mir Jumla was in trouble at Garhgaon. As Sarkar observes, 'Mir Jumla's success won at a high cost, and it entailed enormous new acquisitions, the fruits of such sufferings, were lost to the Empire after Mir's death.[140]

Evidently, Mir Jumla's diplomatic games towards north-eastern frontiers could not get proper nourishment due to the limitation of imperial support. Further it proved to be fruitless because of denying the canons of geo-physical conditions of North-eastern India. As such, Mir Jumla's Deccan model formulae did not yield desired gains either in Bengal Subah or in the north-eastern campaign. He could not reach his goal also because of the half-hearted help of the European free booters.[141] The fact is that all military campaigns, either in land or in waters yielded only transitory results if the main strength based mainly on mercinery troops and sailors. Unlike Deccan, Mir Jumla could neither squeeze nor to realise the expected military aids and fiscal benefits from the European factors of Bengal subah whose Home governments were then intensely engrossed in the military campaigns of Europe inorder to crush the Bourbon France under Louis XIV.[142]

139. S.K. Bhuyan, op.cit., pp 85-86.
140. J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 283.
141. W. Foster; op.cit., Vol. VI, pp 275-95.
142. Ibid.,

As S.N. Bhattacharyya writes,[143]

> "The audacious attempt of Mir Jumla to subjugate the proud, independent and powerful kingdom of Assam still in the hey-day of its prosperity, involving untold miseries to its King and the people, led to an inevitable national reaction which affected the future of Mughal Kamrup."

Nevertheless, the Mughal campaign under Mir Jumla was in its essence a barren enterprise. Though the Ahom monarch had some personal defects, yet it could be rectified provided there was unanimity among the council of advisers.[144] There was not at all dearth of strong leader in Ahom Kingdom. Only the administrative fabrics were dislocated by the divisive forces due to the absence of a strong central authority. Otherwise it could marshall and co-ordinate all the sinews of war, inspire and bring out the innate bravery of the people, forging all differences what-so-ever, and enforce strict discipline both in common men and the army.[145] Despite Mir Jumla's unfulfilled mission in Assam, his military carnage left a sad memory to the inhabitants of North-east India.[146]

An indirect impact of Mir Jumla's campaign can under no circumstances be overlooked, was the changing nature of relationship of the Ahoms with their erstwhile rivals in the eastern division of the north-east. The hostility that the Ahom history experienced with two powerful monarchies of Cachar and Jayantia eversince the beginning of their territorial expansionism, receded for the time being. During this period

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143. S.N. Bhattacharyya, History of Mugal North-East Policy, p 355.

144. Assam Buranji, Mss No 606 Tr. No. 203; Mss No 49, D.H.A.S.(Gauhati).

145. Ibid.,

146. S.N. Bhattacharyya, op.cit., p 358; Assam Buranji, Mss No 49, D.H.A.S., (Gauhati).

of Mughal challenge, the Ahom monarchies endeavoured not only to defuse the antagonism but also to pacify them,[147] which yielded considerable fruits. The Raja of Jayantia, for example as it has been mentioned, sent some messengers to the Ahom court conveying sympathy for the Mughal invasion and pledging support and co-operation against the common enemy.[148] The Raja carried his commitment by indulging in raids in the Mughal territory. Similarly, the Raja of Cachar also extended support and assistance to the Ahom monarch,[149] which, as has already been observed, might have been occasioned an unsuccessful invasion of his own territory.

Another, by no means insignificant was the cessation of hostilities and, on the contrary, attempts at increased understanding between the monarchies of Jayantia, Cachar, Manipur and Tripura in the eastern region of the Kingdom. During the first few decades of the seventeenth century, the Rajas of Jayantia and Cachar clashed with each other rather fiercely over the borders, particularly on the issue of the vassalage of Dimarua;[150] whereas during the period when Dimarua passed through the vassalage of the Ahoms and the Mughals, there is no reference of encounter between the two erstwhile hostile neighbours. Similarly, although the period was preceded by encounters between Cachar and Manipur,[151] The states were rendered to perfectly good neighbourly relations

147. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Jayantia Buranji, pp 25-26.
148. Ibid.,
149. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Kachari Buranji, p 47.
150. L. Devi, Ahom-Tribal Relations, p 108.
151. Bijay Pancali., Part I, p 68.

by the situation. Further, matrimonial alliance was effected between the two royal houses about this time.[152] The Raja of Manipur also sent an ambassy to Jayantiapur to prevail upon the ruler of the state not to indulge in any encounter with Cachar. The period also saw no hostility with Tripura either on the part of Manipur or Cachar. On the contrary, Nakshatra Roy, the Raja of Tripura, sent a good-will mission to Manipur.[153] This peaceful good neighbourly relationship among the monarchies in the division might have been an impact of the renewed Mughal challenge at a time when Emperor Aurangzeb had embarked upon a policy of aggressive imperial expansionism and the campaign against Cooch Behar and Assam under Mir Jumla could be a beginning of the onslaught against the entire region.

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152. Ibid., pp 106-07.

153. Ibid., pp 115-16.; N.R. Roy Chaudhury, Tripura Through the Ages, p. 42.

CHAPTER - IV

RAM SINGH'S CAMPAIGN

The death of Mir Jumla on 31 March 1663, left the Mughals in difficult situation in Bengal. The campaigns in the North east had taxed the Imperial treasury in a handsome manner, and the Bengal famine of 1662,[1] had its scorching trails on the administration of the province needing time for the local administration to recoup fully. To make matter worse, the authorities in Delhi could not immediately find a Governor for the eastern Subah. The task was indeed difficult considering the personality and efficiency of Mir Jumla. Shaista Khan, until then commanding the Mughal forces against the Marathas in the Deccan, took over as the Subedar of Bengal in December 1664. During this interregnum period of more than a year, the administration of the province was absolutely looked after by Emperor's nominees, Dilir Khan and Daud Khan respectively, who had to be so much involved in running the normal administration of the extensive province that they had hardly any time to follow up the victory of Mir Jumla in the north-east or even to contribute to the maintenance of the statusquo there.

NORTH-EASTERN SCENE

Meanwhile, the news of the demise of Mir Jumla, the conqueror of Cooch-Behar and Assam, on his return march to

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1. H. Blochmann, "Koch Bihar, Koch Hajo, and Assam, in the 16th and 17th centuries, according to the Akbarnama, the Padishanama, and the Fathiya-i-Ibriya" J.A.S.B. Vol.XLI, 1872, pp 88, 93.

Dacca was indeed a relief to the vanquished rulers in the north-east. The Ahoms, it may be recalled, were to pay huge indemnity according to the Treaty of Ghilajorighat. Chakradhvaj Singh, who succeeded Jayadhvaj Singh on latter's death, as the Ahom monarch in November 1663 conveniently evaded the payment. The Mughal Faujdar of Gauhati, who was exasperated over the delay in the payment of the balance could not do any thing more than pressing for it with growing harshness. The Mughals, however, did not leave their occupied territory in lower and central Assam, and Kajali on the south bank and Basbari on the north bank in modern Nowgong district continued to be the eastern out post till 1667.[2] The Raja of Dimarua, who did not personally visit Mir Jumla on his return journey but had only sent his mother and nephew, did not affirm his allegiance to the Mughals, nor did pay any tribute as demanded by Mir Jumla,[3] and seems to have taken an independent posture. Jasomanta Roy, the Raja of Jayantia, who had, as it has been mentioned already, sympathised with the Ahom monarch during Mir Jumla's invasion and indulged in a series of raids in Mughal Sylhet continued to harass the local authoritie in that Sarkar in the same method.[4] The Raja also sent an envoy to convey his congratulation to Chakradhvaj Singh on latter's accession to the Ahom throne.[5] Chakradhvaj Singh, in return wrote to the Raja of Jayantia expressing gratitude for the sympathy during Mughal invasion. He also sent valuable presents for the Raja and sought his friendship.[6]

2. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Auranzib, Vol. III, p 183.
3. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 96.
4. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Jayantia Buranji, pp 36-37.
5. Ibid., pp 29-30.
6. Ibid., pp 37-38.

The Raja of Jayantia also pledged for the continuation of the friendly relation.[7]

Interestingly enough, the State of Darrang whose Raja Makaradhvajnarayan took the side of the Mughals during Mir Jumla's invasion and died in the battle of Mathurapur at the hands of the Ahoms and where widowed queen, the Regent of the state called on Mir Jumla on his return march to reaffirm the vassal status of Darrang to the Mughals also behaved in a curious manner. Indradaman, new Raja of Darrang also sent congratulatory message to Chakradhvaj Singh on his assumption of the Ahom authority paving apparently the way for the restoration of the friendly relations between the two parted neighbours.[8]

The relations with the erstwhile rival state of Cachar, however, did not improve much. It is evident from the fact that when Chakradhvaj Singh demanded the surrender of Barchetia, an Ahom Officer, who had taken shelter in Cachar deserting his monarch during Mir Jumla's invasion, from Birdarpanarayan, the Raja of Cachar, the latter refused to comply with on the ground that the officer had sought refuge in his territory and it is the duty of the monarch to protect him. Nevertheless, the Raja of Cachar offered to help the Ahom monarch in case there is repetition of the Mughal invasions.[9] A more serious defiance of the Mughal authority was persisted on by its

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7. Ibid., p 36.
8. Assam Buranji Mss No. 44, Tr No. 259, D.H.A.S.(Gauhati).
9. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Kachari Buranji, pp 52-54; Assam Buranji, pp 89-90.

earliest vassal in the north-east, the State of Cooch Behar. Mir Jumla, it may be recalled, totally annexed Cooch Behar and organised it as a Mughal sarkar when Raja Prannarayan was forced to take refuge in Bhutan. But Prannarayan took the advantage of the difficulties of Mir Jumla's forces during the occupation of Garhgaon to recover his territory and set himself as an independent ruler till the arrival of Shaista Khan at Bengal and Cooch Behar had since then thrown away the Mughal suzerainty. The return of Prannarayan to power was in a royal fashion. As soon as he came down from his refuge in the hills, the people of the state gathered round him, killed the Mughal Thanadar of Kanthalbari and forced Isfandiar Beg, the Mughal Subedar of Cooch Behar to evacuate the capital by cutting his supplies. The detachment under Askar Khan retired to Ghoraghat beyond the southern boundary of Cooch Behar, while the troops under Isfandiar joined the retreating army of Mir Jumla in February 1663. All that the Mughals could do was to occupy the Kuch Chakla of Fathepur.[10] Mir Jumla had no time or energy to pacify Prannarayan after the signing of the treaty of Ghilajorighat.

AHOM MOVES

Chakradhvaj Singh, the Ahom monarch, took the advantage of the Mughal indifference towards north-east immediately following the death of Mir Jumla. He had been able to maintain good relations with Jayantia. The attitude

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10. A.A. Chowdhury, Cooch-Beharer Itihas, p 266; Sir J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., Vol. III, pp 191-92; History of Bengal, p 376.

of the Raja of Cachar was also not hostile. The friendly gesture of Raja of Darrang was both surprising and encouraging to the monarch. Chakradhvaj Singh was further emboldened to reassert himself from the Mughal yoke by the independent posture maintained by the Raja of Cooch Behar. It may be recalled that this state had been subsidiary to the Mughals ever since the rise of the Imperial power in Bengal and served as a catalyst to the Mughal manoeuvres in Assam. Now that Cooch Behar had taken a professedly anti-Mughal stand, the Ahom monarch endeavoured to capitalise the situation by establishing diplomatic relations with Cooch Behar. The exchange of letters and messengers professing friendly relations followed during this period between the courts of Cooch Behar and Assam.[11]

Having successfully pacified the rulers of the neighbouring states in the region, Chakradhvaj Singh set himself in revitalising his administration. The morale of the people had been greatly undermined during Mir Jumla's invasion. Most of them had become panicky, or the opportunists entertained secret sympathy with the powerful invaders. For example, Neog Phukan and few others were engaged in a treasonable correspondence with the Mohammadans and there were arrested and put to death. Again most of the officers who had taken shelter in the neighbouring areas returned to their duties.[12] Chakradhvaj Singh contempted immediate

11. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, p 88.
12. G.C. Barua (tr), Ahom Buranji, p 188.

resumption of Mughal hostilities. Further the Ahom monarch had taken a position that threatened the security of the occupied territory of the Mughals in Assam Valley. As a matter of fact, the years immediately following the death of Mir Jumla constitute a remarkable chapter in the Ahom history in as much as they brought their diplomacy, marital ardour and sense of prestige to the highest pitch of efficiency and organisation.[13] Atan Buragohain, the Prime Minister advised the Ahom monarch for preparing the army and to collect a sufficient stock of food provisions and war materials so that hostilities might be continued for a considerable number of years in such an eventuality. The Ahom monarch also nourished the scheme to fall upon the Mughals and to oust them from the occupied territory. Chakradhvaj Singh had already engaged himself in reparing the demaged forts at Samdhara and Patakallang and in restoring his army to a state of efficiency.[14]

SHAISTA KHAN AND FRONTIER STATES

The ascendancy of Shaista Khan as the Viceroy of Bengal in 1664 could partially repair the lost position of the Mughals in the north-east. An experienced and capable administrator and veteran general, the New Nawab was determined to carry to a successful conclusion of the half-done work of Mir Jumla. In March 1664, he reached Rajmahal and announced his plan to conquer Cooch Behar on his way to Dacca. Prannarayan, the Raja of Cooch Behar, was alarmed

13. Ibid., pp 200-202.

14. Ibid.

by the news and considered it prudent to save his kingdom by a final submission to the Mughals. He offered to pay a sum of five lacks and a half in a few instalments as tributes to the Mughal Emperor and as war indemnity to the Nawab. Shaista Khan was then more concerned to subdue the ruler of Aracan who was responsible for inspiring Magh depredations in Lower Bengal. The Nawab, therefore, agreed to the terms offered by Prannarayan and ordered the Mughal army to withdraw from the Kuch frontier when the first instalments were already paid by the Raja. The Cooch Behar state thus once again became vassal to the Mughals. Prannarayan died in 1666 and was succeeded by his son, Modhnarayan, whose accession was followed by a series of internal rebellions and misgovernment in the state that prevented its from raising head against the Mughals for a long time.[15]

The news of Shaista Khan's advance and submission of Cooch Behar terrified Jasamanta Roy, the Raja of Jayantia, who had indulged in a series of raids in the Mughal territory since the time of Mir Jumla. The Raja now sent a letter of submission to the Nawab and offered the best elephants in his possession as tributes through the Faujdar of Sylhet.[16] The frontier states of Jayantia also thus acknowledged the superior authorities of the Mughals, a no mean achievement of Shaista Khan. The next important success of Shaista Khan was the conquest of Chittagong and suppression of the Maghs

15. A.A. Chowdhury, op.cit., pp 171-72; S.N. Bhattacharyya, History of Mughal North-east Frontier Policy, p 311; Sir J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., Vol. III, p 192.

16. S.M. Ali, The History of Jaintia, p 19; S.K. Bhuyan(ed), Jayantia Buranji, p 37; Sir J.N. Sarkar, History of Bengal, p 377.

in the extreme souther eastern portion of Bengal in 1666. Chittagong had for sometime been a bone of contention between the Mughals and the Burmese eversince the Burmese King of Aracan had wrested the districts from the Sultans of Bengal in 1459. The rulers of Aracan had also incurred the vengeance of Aurangzeb by harbouring the fugitive Prince Shah Suja and the dislodged Raja Govindamanikya of Tripura in an apparent scheme of making a common cause against the Mughals. Besides being a strategic base in the waterways of Bengal delta, Chittagong had been the nerve centre of the European mercantile concerns of the various nationalities like the Dutch, Portuguese, French and the English. The commercial rivalry between the European contenders than on a global basis also coloured the area by the settlements of Portuguese adventurers in Aracan and their usurpation of some island tracts in the region. The matter came to head when the island of Sandip was conquered by the Aracanese from a Portuguese usurpar and the Dutch factors solidly entrenched themselves in Arecan politics. The Ruropean settlers and their local converts known as Feringis and the Magh tribal subjects of the ruler of Aracan indulged in frequent raids in Chittagong and adjoining areas causing indignation and harassment to the Mughal frontier administration. An early task of Mir Jumla, it may be recalled, was to lead a campaign against Aracan. But his involvement in Assam and the way his life was cut short, left no opportunity for the Nawab to translate that Imperial Scheme into action. Naturally, it remained

for Shaista Khan as the successor of Mir Jumla to take up the unfinished task of his predecessor, particularly because the Maghs and the Feringis at the behest of the ruler of Aracan, took the full advantage of Mughal involvement in Assam and the Deccan and their considerable indifference towards the south-east frontier to strike terror in the region.[17]

The task was, indeed, difficult as the Aracanese cannons were beyond counting and their war vassels were more numerous (then) the waves of the sea. They also enjoyed the support of the Ruropean defenders particularly the Portuguese and Dilawar Khan, a runway captain of the Mughal navy, who had established himself as the King of Sandip, had assumed an anti-Mughal posture. The circumstances, however, turned the table in favour of the Mughals. A feud broke out between the Magh ruler of Chittagong and the local Portuguese with the result that entire Feringi colony crossed over the Noakhali with their war boats and other weapons and sought refuge from the Mughal commandant there. Shaista Khan won over these Feringis by extending relief and utilised their services in recovering Chittagong. The defected Mughal Chief of Sandip was easily defeated and captured in November 1665. The major naval battle with the Magh rulers of Chittagong occured in January 1666 in which the Feringis led the Mughals, culminating in the Mughal occupation of Chittagong and since then Chittagong was made the seat of Mughal Faujdar.[18]

17. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Aurangzib Vol. III. pp 201-2.
18. Ibid., p 212; W. Irvine, Storia Do Mogor, Vol. II, pp 109-10.

The renewed Mughal attention towards the eastern frontier and their solid entrenchment in Chittagong was bound to cast consequential affect upon the neighbouring principality of Tripura. Nakshatra Roy who, it may be recalled, occupied the throne in 1661 by forcing Govindamanikya to escape to Aracan, could not rule over that State for long. Govindamanikya recovered the throne in 1667, as it is said to be with the help of the King of Aracan. There is controversy among the historians about the manner in which Govindamanikya regained the throne. According to some authorities, he became a ruler for the second time after the death of Chatramanikya, while others suggest that he recaptured the throne by assassinating Nakshatra Roy. Be that as it may, no one has so far disputed the fact of his return to power at the support of the Aracanese ruler. It is not unlikely that this was prompted by the policy of the Aracanese to install an ally on the Mughal frontier after the fall of their vassal Magh ruler in Chittagong. It was but natural therefore, that Govindamanikya was commissioned to oppose the Mughals and in the circumstances, his relation with the latter was bound to be strange. The Raja of Tripura, however, frustrated the hope of Aracanese by his submission to the Mughal authorities. Immediately on his accession to the throne, Govindamanikya made peace with the Mughals by agreeing to give them five elephants annually as tribute. Tripura thus again became tributary to the Mughals. Till his death in 1676, Govindamanikya maintained peaceful relations with the Mughals. The royal chronicle

maintains that he subsequently got permission by the Nawab of Bengal for pilgrimage in Bengal and holy both in the Ganges.[19]

The principality of Cachar that was situated between Tripura and Jayantia, bordering with the Mughal Sarkar in Sylhet does not figure in the Mughal records in this period. It was but natural when Jayantia, Chittagong, and Tripura in a chain brought under the vassalage or occupation by Shaista Khan that Cachar would not escape the notice of the Nawab. It is possible that the nature of relationship entered into at the time of Prince Shuja was respected by the Raja of Cachar and thereby no offence given to the Mughals. The restrictions imposed on the Raja of Cachar by Mir Jumla during his campaign in Assam about the supply of elephants to the Ahoms were also not violated. As it has already been mentioned, the Ahom Cachar relations did not improve even after the retreat of Mir Jumla. As the Raja refused to comply with the request of the Ahom monarch to surrender, the Ahom officer who had taken refuge in Cachar. On the whole, it may be only presumed that Cachar maintained peaceful relations with the Mughals at that time.

Having thus settled his accounts with all the frontier states in the frontier from Cooch Behar to Tripura, Shaista Khan was placed in an advantageous position to insist on the demand for payment of the tributes and balance of the indemnity from the Ahoms. The refusal of the Ahom monarch to comply with the demand and his preparations for war left the only

19. Rajmala, Education Directorate, Tripura, p 80.

course as alternative to the Mughals to launch a new campaign.

WAR CRY OF THE AHOMS

The Ahom monarch made up his mind to fight. His policy was endorsed in a meeting of the high officials of the State. The determination of the monarch is also evident from a statement that he made in the meeting wherein he said: "Death is preferable to a life of subordination to foreigners"[20] The suggestion of the Prime Minister that any dialogue with the Mughals should be avoided and that the relations should be decided on the war path. The Ahom, therefore, did not follow the path of Cooch Behar and Jayantia. The success of Shaista Khan in enlisting the renewed allegiance of Cooch Behar and Jayantia was a prelude to a stronger policy towards Assam. The submission of these two states had virtually isolated the Ahom monarch who had thrown off the allegiance to the Mughals and stopped the payment of tribute as envisaged in the treaty of Ghilojorighat. The reoccupation of Cooch Behar, moreover, cleared for the Mughals their traditional route for Assam campaign. Thus early in 1667 Sayid Firoz Khan, who had succeeded Rashid Khan as Thanadar of Gauhati, sent a strongly worded letter to the Ahom monarch, demanding the payment of the balance of indemnity still outstanding.[21]

The Ahom monarch considered it as an insult and was determined to curb the Mughal audacity. He began his preparations for the war on an extensive scale which continued for two long

20. Assam Buranji, Mss No.44, Tr. No. 259, D.H.A.S.(Gauhati); H. Goswami, Purani Asam Buranji, p 103.

21. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, p 89.

years. He personally looked after the training of the soldiers, and instructed them about the proper method of plying bows and other weapons of war. A Phukan was placed in charge of a contingent of 6,000 soldiers that could spearhead the aggression. When these preparations were completed, the expeditionary forced marched past the monarch in their final manoeuvres, and Chakradhvaj Singh expressed satisfaction at their dash and galantry.[22] The general selected to command the expedition was Lachit, the son of Momai Tamuli Barbarua, the great statesman - warrior of the reign of Pratap Singh. Lachit had given proofs of his gallantry and leadership in the operations against Mir Jumla's troops and in the various offices he had occupied.[23] He was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the army, and was also made Barphukan and placed in charge of the civil administration of Lower Assam. Lachit Barphukan inherited from his father this supreme sense of duty, and the capacity for self-effacement in maintaining the integrity of the State.[24]

After the performance of the religious rites customary to the initiation of a campaign, the Ahom army sailed down the Brahmaputra in two divisions, under the leadership of the Barphukan and other commanders on 20 August 1667. Before the departure of the army from their rendezvous near the capital, the Ahom monarch urged them to win over the Mughals by any

22. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Kamrupar Buranji, p 91.
23. S.K. Bhuyan, Lachit Barphukan and his times, pp 17-25; Assam Buranji, p 91.
24. Ibid.,

means fair or foul.[25] The Ahom army encamped at their base at Kaliabar which was generally the headquarter of the Barphukan when Gauhati was under the Mughals. Early in September, 1667 the Ahom commander Dihingia Phukan succeeded in expelling the Mughals from their garrison at Bahbari. Two leading Mughal Commanders, Lal Bag and Roshan Beg, were captured together with a substantial quantity of war provisions, and then sent up to Garhgaon.[26]

RESUMPTION OF GAUHATI

Proceeding by land and water, the Ahoms directed their attention at storming the Mughal garrisons situated between Kapili and Gauhati; and the forts of Kajali, Sonapur, Panikhaiti and Tatimara soon fell into their hands. Their primary object being the occupation of Gauhati, the Ahoms posted detachments in the eastern precincts of the city on both banks of the river. The Mughals had strongly fortified the towns, and the Ahoms experienced considerable difficulty in their attacks on its several fronts. The Ahoms also succeeded in bringing back the Assamese subjects who had previously been taken as captives by the Mughals during the expedition of Mir Jumla.[27]

The Faujdar, Syed Firoz Khan then sent a message offering his submission to the Ahoms and asking the latter to desist from firing their guns or shooting their arrows.

25. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Kamrupar Buranji, pp 83-84.

26. Assam Buranji, MSS No. 355, D.H.A.S. (Gauhati); S.K. Bhuyan (ed), Kamrupar Buranji, pp 91-92.

27. S.K. Bhuyan (ed), Assam Buranji pp 92-93; H. Goswami, Purani Asam Buranji, pp 104-05; S.K. Bhuyan (ed), Kamrupar Buranji, p 92.

This was done, and the battle came to an end. The Faujdar and his associates were captured and brought up as prisoners. The Ahoms also got possession of the Mughal stores consisting of war provisions, boats, horses, elephants, camals, bullocks, buffalos and a large quantity of gold, silver, brass and copper.[28] As a result of the defeat of the Mughals, the territory extending up to the river Manas, became once more a part of that Ahom Kingdom. The temporary fortifications at Kaliabar were converted into a strong and permanent citadel and fort known as 'Rangali buruz'[29]

Thus within the short space of two months the Ahoms succeeded in recovering their lost possession and along with it their lost prestige and glory. Chakradhavaj Sing then proceeded in person to Biswanath and performed there a colossal sacrifice in the way of thanks giving to the gods for conferring upon him the honour of a victory. The success of the Ahoms in recovering possession of Gauhati and Lower Assam marked an important event in the history of their conflicts with the Mughals. This event was inscribed on a cannon found at Silghat, near Simlagarh Fort of Nowgong District. The inscription refers to the recovery of the weapon by King Chakradhvaj Singh after having destroyed the Mohammedans in battle in Saka 1589.[30]

The reoccupation of Gauhati by the Ahoms was followed

28. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, pp 92-93; S.K. Dutta, Assam Buranji, pp 28-30.
29. Assam Buranji, Mss No 44, Tr. No. 259, D.H.A.S.(Gauhati).
30. E. Gait, Report on the progress of Historical Research in Assam, p 29.

by strenuous preparations on their part for retaining possession of what they had acquired. All the best officers, whether in statesmanship or war, were now stationed at Gauhati. The Commanders deliberated frequently on the plan of defence, and they concluded that the first necessary step was the strengthening of the fortifications of Gauhati, taking advantage of the high hills which skirt round the city on both banks of the river Brahmaputra, so that soldiers and war provisions could be safely accommodated in the area side.[31] The intervening field between one hill and the next was to be linked by a newly constructed earthen rampart. The hills and the ramparts taken together would provide a ring of defence about twenty-five miles in circumference, and the city inside, with the Brahmaputra flowing in the middle, would provide a suitable base from where they could control the operations effectively. Gauhati was finally selected as Assam's war base in view of its superior strategic advantages.[32]

Atan Buragohain was asked by the monarch to erect the necessary fortifications on both banks of the river. The Buragohain employed all the resources at his disposal, and finished the work within an unexpectedly short time. Lachit Barphukan was also summoned to post a contingent of soldiers at each strategic point under the command of an able officer.[33] The Barphukan used to inspect the strong and vulnerable points

31. S.K. Bhuyan, "Mir Jumla and Ram Singh in Assam", J.I.H., Vol. V, 1926, pp 373-79.

32. S.K. Bhuyan, Atan Buragohain and his times, p 63.

33. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, pp 92-93.

in the area on the pretext of hunting on horseback or on foot. The war zone extended from Pandu to Asurar Ali on the south bank, and from Agiathuti to Kurua on the north. Itakhuli Hill, commanding a view of the entire area, was the seat of the General Lachit, while the Buragohain remained in charge of the northern division at his base on the Lathia Parbat.[34] Thus the Ahoms stood ready for launching fresh encounter with the imperialists.

MUGHAL REACTION

The news of the defeat of the Sayed Firuz Khan and the loss of Gauhati, reached Aurangzeb in December, 1667. The emperor at once decided to depute the Rajput general Raja Ram Singh, son of Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Ambar, to lead an expedition against Assam. On 27 December 1667, Ram Sing was sent off with a robe, a horse with gold trappings and a jewelled dagger with pearl strap. Nasir Khan, Keshari Singh Bhurtia (Rathor), Raghunath Singh, Brahmadeo Sisodia and many other nobles and mansabdars were appointed under him.[35] Ram Singh's army consisted of 21 Rajput Chiefs, 4,000 troopers in his own pay, 1,500 gentlemen-troopers and 500 artillery-men; and with rainforcements from Bengal Viceroy, his total army swelled up to 30,000 infantry, 18,000 Turkish cavalry and 15,000 native archers.[36]

Ram Singh was accompanied in his expedition by Rashid Khan who had been in Assam during Mir Jumla's invasion and

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34. Ibid.,
35. Sir J.N. Sarkar, (tr) Maasir-i-Alamgiri, p 43.
36. S.N. Khan, The Maathir-ul-Umrah, Vol. II, p 592.

who had served as Faujdar of Gauhati for four years. It was the practice of Emperor Aurangzeb to depute a Muslim Officer as second-in-command when a Hindu was placed in sole charge of an expedition, specially when the enemy himself was a Hindu It was in pursuance of this policy that Dilir Khan had been sent with Mirza Raja Jai Singh in the war against Shivaji.[37] Ram Singh also met Nawab Shaista Khan, the Viceroy of Bengal Subah at Dacca. Being a close and intimate friend of Mirza Raja Jai Singh, now deceased, the Nawab received Ram Singh very cordially, and offered to help him in all possible ways. He atonce sanctioned a reinforcement of 2,000 soldiers from the Bengal command.[38]

RAM SINGH AT RANGAMATI

In February 1669, Ram Singh arrived at Rangamati, the frontier garrison of Mughal India. The Assamese generals now became more vigilant and circumspect in their preparations for resisting the invading forces. Fresh ramparts were constructed on both banks of the river. Lachit Barphukan's maternal uncle was entrusted with the construction of a rampart on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. Having failed to complete it within the prescribed time he was executed by Lachit Barphukan who declared on the occasion, - "My maternal uncle is not greater than my country."[39] This sterness produced the desired effect upon the army, and averted all possible slackness and delinquency.

37. W. Irvine (tr), Storia Do Mogor, Vol. II, pp 111-12.
38. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Aurangzib, Vol. III, p 187.
39. Assam Buranji, Mss No 44. Tr. No. 259, D.H.A.S.(Gauhati).

BARPHUKAN'S STRATEGY

Vigilance is the prince of freedom, and Ahom spies had followed Ram Singh's army since their departure from Delhi. Then the news of Ram Singh's departure from Dacca was promptly communicated to Ahom general. So the Barphukan, inorder to lure the invaders into the war-zone of Gauhati, surrounded by hills on all sides with forts and garrisons at regular intervals, despatched three Rajkhowas to Manas river to seduce the enemy into the neighbourhood of Gauhati.[40] The Assamese Commanders met at Gauhati and offered their prayer to the temple of Kamakya for success against the invaders. The waters on the north bank of the Brahmaputra were guarded by Pani - Dihingia Rajkhowa, nephew of the Dihingia Phukan, with 80 Char-baches and Buragohain Phukan with 100 char-baches.[41]

In April 1669, Raja Ram Singh pitched his camp at Sualkuchi on the north bank and deployed his soldiers in the outlying villages situated in the immediate vicinity of the Ahom fortifications. His enthusiasm was marred by the arrogant attitude of Rashid Khan, the faujdar of Gauhati. The misunderstanding between the two gave an advantageous position to the Ahom general who tried to gain time inorder to consolidate and perfect his preparations.[42] The Barphukan despatched a messenger to Ram Singh to enquire of the reasons for his coming to Assam, adding that if there was any issue or dispute it could be settled by peaceful negotiations, as

40. S.K. Bhuyan, (ed) Assam Buranji, p 95.
41. Ibid., pp 93-94.
42. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Aurangzib Vol. III, pp 188-89.

war was not the only method for such settlement. In return, Ram Singh demanded the restoration of the limits fixed in 1639, in default of which the Barphukan was asked to give the Rajput Raja 'a fight for an honour'.[43]

EARLY ENCOUNTER

Meanwhile, Rashid Khan from his base at Hajo advanced along the north Brahmaputra Valley and planning to attack the Ahom fort at Sorai or Amingaon. The guns on both sides began to discharge their contents. Ram Singhs nephew was killed by an arrow and a cannon-shot made a breach in the tent of the Rajput general. The battle ended without any decisive result.[44] A friction had developed between Ram Singh and Rashid Khan. The latter, having previously been in independent command at Gauhati, could not brook a subordinate position, and claimed equal rank with Ram Singh. To make matters worse he was suspected of secret correspondence with enemy. "Atlast Ram Singh had to expel Rashid Khan from his camp after cutting his tent ropes."[45] The Ahoms gained a naval battle and driven the Muhammadans from Sualkuchi.

Sporadic engagements accompanied by proposals of peace continued during 1669 and 1670. The Mughals made an attempt to enter Gauhati through Darrang but it was baffled through the timely warning of the Vassal Raja of Rani.[46] In an encounter near Sesa river in the vicinity of Agiathuti,

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43. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, pp 94-95.
44. E. Gait, A History of Assam, pp 159-60.
45. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Aurangzib, Vol. III, pp 188-89.
46. E. Gait, op.cit., p 161.

the Ahoms first obtained a victory over the Mughals but Ram Singh took the field in person and inflicted a crushing defeat upon the Ahoms. At Rangmahal on the north bank, the Ahom forces led by Gohain-Phukan, first encountered a reverse. But the Commanders re-arranged the war bases and compelled the Mughals to withdraw their forces from the attacks without achieving any tangible result.[47]

The Ahoms supplemented these open encounters by guerrilla fighting for which ample facilities were provided by their unobserved camps and garrisons situated in the thick woods and lofty hill-tops. But these guerrilla tactics did not carry the Ahoms very far beyond harassing the enemy. They realised that the enemy must be definitely repulsed and dislodged and expelled from their position, and the prospect of their re-attack completely eliminated. Now onwards the Ahom army avoided open encounters with the enemy.[48] The postponement of a decisive encounter implied some degree of vacillation on the part of the Ahom Commanders. Exaggerated reports of the Barphukan's dilatory methods reached the ears of the Ahom monarch, Chakradhavaj Sing. He threatened the Barphukan and his commanders with dire punishment if they further postponed their offensive operations. The Mughals had then concentrated near Aliabor Hill on the outskirts of a vast plain which launched the Brahmaputra on the one side and the Sesa river on the other.[49]

47. S.K. Bhuyan, Atan Buragohain and his times, p 71.
48. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Kamrupar Buranji, pp 92-93; Assam Buranji, Mss No 44, Tr. No. 259, D.H.A.S.(Gauhati).
49. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, pp 96-97; Kamrupar Buranji, p 93.

Ram Singh now thought that the disaster at Aliabar must have humbled the spirit of the Assamese and he repeated his demand for the evacuation of Gauhati with vehemence and rig rigour. Then conciliatory attempts having failed, the Rajput general now adopted the two other stereotyped methods of overcoming an enemy by way of rupture and gifts. Further Ram Singh tried to bribe the Phukans and Rajkhowas but no such corruption could contaminate the patriotic zeal of the Assamese commanders.[50] No other course was now left to Ram Singh but a definite attack on Gauhati. Ram Singh proposed to enter Gauhati by the breach in the rampart at Andhurarali with a detachment of his cavalry, by carrying his men and horses in boats across the river.[51]

At this critical juncture, Chakradhvaj Singh, the Ahom monarch died in April 1670. His brother Maju Gohain, thenceforth known as Sunyatpha, succeeded him. He assumed the Hindu name Udayaditta Singh and married his deceased brother's wife.[52] The leadership of the new monarch fell far short of the spirited exertions of his patriotic predecessor. The long continuance of hostilities without any decisive result produced some discontent in the Ahom camp. Ram Singh's demands for the restoration of the limits of 1639 received a more encouraging response from the Barphukan and his lieutenants; and the diplomatic negotiations became more cordial than before. Nevertheless, Atan Buragohain, the Prime Minister,

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50. S.K. Bhuyan, (ed) Assam Buranji, pp 96-97.
51. G.C. Barua, Ahom Buranji, pp 203-4.
52. E. Gait, op.cit., p 160.

did not support this change in the attitude of his colleagues.[53]

The dislodgement of the Ahoms from Gauhati, said the Buragohain, might be followed by their expulsion from the capital Garhgaon. Udayaditya Singh confirmed the views of the Buragohain, and directed the commanders to bring the war to a victorious conclusion.[54] Ram Singh's continuous efforts were interrupted on receiving reports of his son's maltreatment at the hands of Emperor Aurangzeb. Lachit Barphukan did not hesitate to give warning to Ram Singh, even though Lachit was attacked by illness.[55]

AHOM SUCCESS AT SARAIGHAT

Lachit Barphukan sent messages from his sick-bed expressing his determination to die on the spot rather than desert his charge. He was removed on his bed to the gate-house from where he observed the fury of the attack made by the Mughals upon his boats and sailors on the waters of the Brahmaputra. On an auspicious moment the plan for counter-attack was completed by Lachit Barphukan and boarded his boat accompanied by six other war-vessels. The naval war fares under Ram Singh suffered immense set-back.[56]

The appearance of Lachit Barphukan filled the hearts of his soldiers with animation and courage. He rushed towards the enemy with his seven boats and was soon joined by Ahom fleet and in the fight that ensued the Mughals could not

53. S.K. Bhuyan, Atan Burgohain and His Times, pp 75-76.
54. Ibid.
55. S.K. Bhuyan (ed), op.cit., pp 100-101.
56. Ibid., p 101.

stand the well-directed attack of the Ahom soldiers.[57] The combat came to an end, and it was decisive victory for the Ahoms. This fierce engagement became one of the most eventful battles known as the battle of Saraighat. The Mughals were chased down to Pandu, and then beyond Assam's western frontier at Manas river and the Ahoms retained their possession of Gauhati and Kamrup.[58]

Lachit Barphukan who was in high fever when he led the attack against the Mughals, died soon after the memorable triumph at Saraighat.[59] Nevertheless, the counsels of Atan Buragohain helped a lot for the success of Barphukan. Atan Buragohain was in complete command on the north bank making a camp at Lathia Hill. The failure of the Mughals to break through the Ahom fortifications on the north bank proved the unique gallantry and organisation as displayed by Atan Buragohain. Even he infused fresh vigour into the wavering hearts of his colleagues and checked their plans and measures whenever he found them to be ill-conceived, and hence detrimental to the best interest of his country. Though both sides were weary of the war, the Buragohain did not allow any concession to the reciprocal dialogues. Consequently during the second half of 1670, there was a lull in the fighting.[60]

AFTERMATH

Raja Ram Singh being frustrated in his attempt to recover the possession of Gauhati retired from the Agiatuti

57. L. Gogoi, Saraighatar Yuddhar Katha, pp 23-28.
58. Ibid.
59. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) op.cit., p 103; S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Kamrupar Buranji, p 97.
60. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Aurangzib Vol.III, p 189; S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Kamrupar Buranji, pp 96-97.

Hills to the Mughal garrison at Rangamati, and waited there up to 1676 for an opportunity to renew the Assam campaign.[61] All Ahom officers remained vigilant in securing the occupied territories from the Mughal authorities. However, Udayaditya had to manage the affairs of the capital with the aid of few inferior latents. The three ministers, the Buragohain, the Barpatra Gohain and the Bargohain, paid occasional visits to Garhgaon, but their temporary intervention could not offer any effective check to the designs and machinations of ambitions and unscrupulous nobles.[62]

Atan Buragohain had thus a duel duty to perform by way of supervising the military affairs at Gauhati and of the civil administration at Garhgaon. His attention was concentrated mainly at Gauhati due to the demise of Lachit Barphukan. The Barphukanship was conferred upon his elder brother Nimati, commonly known as Metakatalia Laluk Sola Barphukan.[63]

The wisdom and foresight of Atan Buragohain came out in the advice he tendered to Udayditya Sing who launched an expedition against the Dafla tribe living in the adjoining hills of North Lakhimpur. The western front of Ahom territory reached upto Hadira, opposite Goalpara. Chandranarayan alias Suryanarayan, son of Mohendranarayan and grandson of Balinarayan was installed as tributory Raja of Darrang and Gandharbanarayan as Raja of Beltola. The Bar Barua and the

61. Sir J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 190.
62. S.K.Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, pp 104-05; H. Goswami Purani Asam Buranji, p 116.
63. S.K.Bhuyan, Atan Buragohain and his times, p 79.

Bar Gohain were entrusted with the arrangements for the defence of Upper Assam.[64]

After March, 1671, Ram Singh was virtually isolated at Rangamati. There he spent his days in the midst of worries and uncertainties. At long last in 1676 he received permission to leave Bengal, and reached the imperial court in June.[65] It may be recalled that the Mughal authorities of Bengal under Shaistakhan did not take active initiative in reviving the strength of Ram Singh in the later stage. Even the imperial government was not timely apprised as done in the case of Mir Jumla's campaign. Evidently the Ahom Monarch could systematically consolidate his available sources of strength despite the defection of few court officials.[66]

Indeed, Udayaditya Singh did not live to reap the fruits of his well-earned victory. He fell a victim to a palace conspiracy set up in the interest of his younger brother and put to death in August 1673. He was murdered by Debera, a Hazarika from Dakhinpat, in collaboration with Saru Gohain, the monarch's brother. Nevertheless, Udayaditya Singh gave unbounded hope and aspiration to the people of Assam by the conquest of Kamrup from the Mughals and the construction of strong fortifications at Gauhati.[67]

The Mughal Viceroy was then Shaista Khan whose age reached about sixtythree. During his two term viceroyalty

64. G.C. Barua, op.cit., pp 214-18.
65. Sir J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., Vol. III, p 190; H.Blochmann, op.cit., p 99.
66. G.C. Barua, op.cit., p 218.
67. Ibid., pp 917-18.

(1664-78 and 1679-88), he could not give any encouraging hope for revigorating the policy matters towards north-east frontier. He came to Jahangirnagar with his five sons, two sons-in-law, Nawab Nurulla Khan, Muhammad Maqim and many other Mansabdars.[68] In youth he had been remarkable for his military capacity and energy, especially in the Deccan campaign of Shah Jahan. But in Bengal he was a tired old man, who left campaigning to his subordinates while he himself spent his days in ease and pleasure amidst his numerous harem.[69]

However, the most memorable work of Shaista Khan in Bengal was the conquest of Chittagong and the breaking of the pirates' nest, which had long terrorised the waterways of the Bengal delta. He was more interested in amassing wealth in various ways.[70] Shaista Khan used to import by ship various commodities like salt, betel nuts and other articles and sold them in Bengal on profitable terms. Besides, he accumulated seventeen crores of rupees by procuring two or three tolas of gold for one gold mohur. He had a trade monopoly putting restriction upon the merchants and traders in the city of Dacca. Most of the European traders were thus debarred from making purchases and sales on their own account.[71]

Shaista Khan virtually established a family ruler in Bengal. Indeed, his sons were gifted with adventuring spirit. Thus Buzurg Ummed Khan became victorious in Chittagong campaign

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68. S.K. Bhuyan (tr) Annals of the Delhi Badshahate, p 167.
69. S.N. Khan, op.cit, Vol. II, p 834; W. Irvine (tr) Storia Do Mogor, Vol. II, p 302.
70. Sir J. N. Sarkar (ed) History of Bengal, p 373; Aurangzib, Vol. III, pp 201-202.
71. S.K. Bhuyan (tr) Annals of the Delhi Badshahati, pp 167-68.

in 1666 and then promoted to Subahdar of Bihar. The next sons Zafar Khan was posted as thanadar of Chittagong; Abu Nasar as the deputy Subahdar of Orissa and Iradat Khan as Faujdar of Cooch Behar respectively. Thus one family ruled all divisions of Bengal, and ruled them worthily.[72] Shaista Khan did not dare to take the risk of Assam campaign in person. Moreover, the Emperor was pre-occupied with the North-western and Deccan problems. Evidently, the Emperor's attention towards the military projects of Bengal Viceroy was not seriously taken. Aurangzeb was bound to be satisfied by the substantial cash amount provided by Shaista Khan.[73]

BEHIND THE VICTORY

The defeat of the Mughals at the battle of Saraighat and their retreat to Rangamati wherefrom Ram Singh actually retired, speak a volume about the strength and vigour of the Ahoms at the time vis-a-vis the weakness of the forces under Ram Singh. This might appear surprising within a few years of an accomplished expedition under Mir Jumla and more so, when Aurangzeb was still the reigning Emperor of Delhi. The reasons are, however, not far to seek.

After the death of Mir Jumla, the Mughal navy decayed in the eastern sector, Shaista Khan's efforts did not yield expected results due to apathetic attitude of the European Factors. A deadlock was created by the imposition of restrictions on the existing trade facilities previously

72. Sir J.N. Sarkar (ed) History of Bengal, p 375.

73. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Kamrupar Buranji, p 99; S.N. Khan, Op.cit., p 835.

enjoyed by the European traders. Consequently, Shaista Khan was deprived of receiving source materials so long controlled by the foreign powers in Bengal.[74]

When the naval strength of Bengal was on decline, the Ahoms began massive preparations of war-boats. The Ahom war boats had certain advantages in comparison with the Mughal boats. The Ahom war-ships were lighter and speedy whereas those of the Mughals were larger and heavier.[75] Further, in the north-eastern part of Bengal, jungly hills, morasses and innumerable brooks rendered the cavalry practically useless. It may be recalled that the Ahom monarch did not encourage the maintenance of cavalry. The trained elephants were used by the Ahoms in major encounters. Like the Maghs and Feringis of Aracan range who traversed the numerous rivers and streams of south-eastern Bengal, the mainstay of the Ahom organisation was the war fleet. Moreover, prolonged rains and almost annual floods in Assam valley made any campaign or transportation of merchandise absolutely impossible without a strong fleet. Above all, "the course and duration of the Ahom - Mughal contests were largely determined by the physical features of the Brahmaputra."[76]

Certain other factors also helped the strong organisation of the Ahom flotilla. In Assam there was abundant raw materials for building war boats of various types. The people living in the river side of the Brahmaputra and its tributaries had a natural skill and bravery in the art of plying boats. The Ahom

74. Sir J.N. Sarkar, (ed), op.cit., p 383.
75. A.C. Roy, A History of Mughal Navy and Naval warfares, p113.
76. Ibid., p 115.

monarchs appointed specialised officials for royal navy. Thus the naubaichia had an allotment of 1000 men for manning the royal boats, while the Nausalia Phukan was entrusted with one thousand carpenters for building and repairing the boats.[77]

The Mughals were severely terrorised and harassed by the guerilla wars waged by the Ahoms as the Marathas in the south. Ram Singh, the General of Aurangzeb remarked that "every Assamese soldier is expert in rowing boats, in shooting arrows, in digging trenches and in wielding guns and cannon. I have not seen such specimens of versatility in any other part of India"[78]. The Ahom army largely consisted of infantry, navy and elephants. But on land the army mainly depended on the paiks. The paik system was the basis not only of the entire socio-political but also of the military organisation as well.[79] Nevertheless, "the military system of the Ahoms derived its efficiency from the maximum utilisation of all the resources of the country - its man power, its economic strength its strategic advantages, the religious sentiments of the people, and even their superstition.[80] With the help of an organisation based on perpetual vigilance and preparedness, and diplomacy of a high order, the Ahoms maintained their sway over the Brahmaputra valley in an almost uninterrupted manner for six hundred years; and successive generals of the

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77. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 81.

78. E. Gait, op.cit., p 253.

79. J.N. Sarkar, "Men and Beasts in Medieval India", J.I.H. Golden Jubilee Vol. 1973, p 467.

80. S.K. Bhuyan, "The Military system of the Ahoms," Pragjyotish Sovenir of All India Oriental Conference, Gauhati, 1965, p 29.

invading forces - Afgan, Mughal and later on the Burmese - expressed their unstinted admiration of the fighting mettle of the Ahoms, their versatility, and their ability to shrink their differences in the face of a national ordeal.[81] A ready militia was always available for quick mobilisation and the paiks took the respective duties under their respective captainship of the Phukans, Rajkhowas, Baruas, Hazarikas, Saikias and Boras. The co-operation of the neighbouring tribes-men greatly helped the war-operations of the Ahoms.[82]

The Ahoms were fearless in facing the situation created by any war. They rather became more active by rendering patriotic services in every phase of administrative and productive aspects of the country. Thus the production of war equipments and food provisions were equally carried on a war-footing. The activities of the dockyards and arsenals became prompt. The surrounding area of the Ahom palace was covered by the factories run by expert smiths who make muskets, canon, swords, spears, arrows. Even the monarch himself supervised the work-shops in addition to the training directives to the new recruits.[83]

The espionage system of Ahoms was though simple but highly efficient and the spies always busied themselves in supplying information about the designs of the neighbours and the resources of the enemy. The Mughal spies had to take more time in collecting news due to communication bottlenecks.

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81. Ibid.,
82. Ibid., p 30.
83. Ibid., p 30-31.

So the Ahoms took advantage of the interval, gained additional time by despatching emissaries to the invading generals under countless pretexts, and thereby prefected their own preparation. Usually the Ahoms preferred the Brahmins in the appointment of emissary who could diplomatically silence the arrogant attitude of the Mughal commanders. The net of suspense mystified the Mughal authorities who were always haunted with dubious hopes in their military operations.[84]

The methods of warfare in north-east India were surely dictated by its unaccustomed topography. The trained cavalry of the Mughals were too much of a match for the Ahoms, and they, therefore, avoided open attacks. The Ahom commanders followed a policy in attacking the enemy camps during the still hours of the night. "Shivaji's success against the Mughals in 1665 encouraged the Ahom monarch Chakradhvaj Sing to speed up his preparations to recover Gauhati."[85] In fact the Ahom soldiers were the masters of a variety of skills which they had acquired as cultivators and householders.

The hillocks in Assam offered ready made sites for fortifications. The hills on both banks of the Brahmaputra were capped with forts which caused wonder even to the Mughals general Mir Jumla. The mountains in the adjoining areas of Gauhati were strongly fortified and limited with each other by chain of ramparts erected in the intervening plains. The trained soldiers were posted in military outposts to guard

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84. Ibid.,

85. Ibid.,

the line of communication. Above all, the military system of the Ahoms was highly organised and it enabled the Ahoms to keep up supremacy over Brahmaputra valley for such a long period. A Muslim historian, Muhammad Kazim, admitted that "the Rajas of Assam had curbed the ambition and checked the conquest of the most victorious princes of Hindustan; the solution of a war against them was baffled the penetration of heroes who have been styled conquerors of the world."[86]

Evidently, the Ahoms were in stronger position in comparison to the Mughals. In addition to the great military tradition and organisation, particularly the navy, as discussed above, the geography itself was to their advantage. The partial success of Mir Jumla in temporary occupation of Assam and forcing a treaty on the Ahom monarch were virtually all undone during Ram Singh's campaign. Chakradhvaj Sing, the Ahom monarch, who ascended the throne almost immediately after Mir Jumla's return to Bengal set himself in reorganising the government and the defence of the Ahom state to recoup its lost vastige. His policy was continued further by his successor Udayaditya Singh. To the fortune of the Ahoms, these two succeeding monarchs were assisted by highly calibred and dedicated statesman and general in the personalities of Atan Buragohain and Lachit Barphukan respectively.[87] The Mughals suffered handsomely due to lack of geographical knowledge of the area and its strange climate. Neither their army was suitable to the conditions in Brahmaputra valley nor

86. Ibid., p 32.
87. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, p 102.

did they receive adequate support and reinforcement from the Imperial government of Aurangzeb, then so busy in the Deccan wars. Unfortunately for Ram Singh, the Mughal general, he was pitted against the zeal and patriotism of valliant Lachit. The navy that decided the battle of Saraighat, as said already, was an weakness of the Mughals more so, they were destined to fight upstream.

An interesting feature in Ram Singh's campaign that created further confusion in the Mughal camps was the way the General was deserted by the Sikh Commander. Raja Ram Singh took the Sikh leader in his Assam campaign. The Sikhs under the guidance of Teg Bahadur became anxious to spread the message of Sikh creed in every part of India, especially in the eastern region. Teg Bahadur also resided for a time at Patna where he rendered his missionary services.[88] Since Teg Bahadur was in the rank of a mercenary Commander, he naturally avoided the compulsory obligations of the Mughal army. Moreover, the Sikh leader was more interested to revive the militant spirit among his followers through the preachings of Guru Nanak unlike Islam. When Teg Bahadur came down to Rangamati, the seat of Mughal garrison, "he meditated on the bank of the Brahmaputra and he is stated to have convinced the heart of the Raja of Kamrup."[89] The Ahom ruler and the neighbouring Rajas were indirectly convined to form a league for the safety of Hindu religion.[90]

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88. J.D. Cunningham, A. History of the Sikhs, p 64.
89. Ibid.,
90. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Aurangzib, Vol. III, pp 312-13.

Most probably, during the idle days of Ram Singh, the message of Teg Bahadur inspired the Local Rajas and Ahom monarch to reassert their kingly spirit. Thereafter, Teg Bahadur left Rangamati in 1675 for his home, leaving a section of his Sikh followers to settle permanently in Assam, without the sanction of imperial order. Evidently, the Emperor Aurangzeb suspected the performance of the soldier priest and put him to death as a rebel in 1675 with great cruelty in the street of Delhi.[91]

That Ram Singh did not receive the support and inspiration require in an imperial campaign in a distant frontier from his own government, stood decidely against him. The Mughal general was forced to withdraw him to Rangamati in the west of Assam. This enabled the Ahoms to regain their lost territories in Lower Assam and consolidate their position firmly. It is curious to note that Ram Singh who withdrew himself in 1671 encamped there till 1676. It is not clearly known while Ram Singh had to remain at Rangamati for a period of five years and during this period, he was neither called back nor asked to renew the Assam campaign. His stay there was limited only to some border clashes with the Ahoms.[92] Some historians believe that Ram Singh was not called back with an avowed object of Imperial punishment for his failure to uphold Mughal interests in Assam.[93] There is no definite information to offer any

91. Sir J.N. Sarkar (tr) Maasir-i-Alamgiri, p 94.
92. G.C. Barua, op.cit., pp 217-18.
93. S.K. Bhuyan, "Mir Jumla and Ram Singh in Assam", J.I.H. Vol. V, 1926, pp 375-79; W. Irvine (tr) Storia Do Mogor, Vol. II, pp 142-43.

scientific analysis of the situation. The hypothesis that logically follows is that the matter can be reviewed in the context of the Deccan war of Aurangzeb. It is possible that the Emperor intended to reinforce the detachments under Ram Singh as soon as the Marathas were subdued. As this did never happen and in 1670s the hostilities of the Marathas attained a serious magnitude against the Mughals, Ram Singh had to be called back abandoning the hope of immediately recapturing the ceded territories from the Ahoms. It may also be assumed that the stay of Ram Singh at Rangamati was not without any purpose. These years of apparent inaction could be utilised by the Mughal general in understanding the frontier and establishing diplomatic contacts with the local chiefs.[94]

A significant achievement of Ram Singh's stay was the continued loyalty of Cooch Behar. The Raja of Cooch Behar, it may be recalled, assumed an independent posture since the war of succession for the Mughal throne during Shah Jahan's illness and forced to submit after the ascendancy of Shaista Khan as the Nawab of Bengal. The disasters suffered by the Mughals in Assam and their difficult time with the Marathas in the south could have inspired the Raja to reassert himself once again. That it did not happen might be considered as no mean result of Ram Singh's presence in the neighbourhood. The zamindars and petty Chieftains of the area like those of Bijni, Koraibari, Susang or Darrang also showed no symptom of rebellion. The relations established with the eastern states of Jayantia and Tripura by Shaista Khan also remained unchanged.

94. G.C. Barua, op.cit., pp 216-17.

CHAPTER - V

YEARS OF INACTION

The withdrawal of Ram Singh, the Rajput general of the Mughals, from Saraighat and his idle stay at Rangamati for couple of years virtually marked the end of Mughal forward policy in Assam. The hope of Aurangzeb about the resumption of campaign could not mature due to the more serious challenges to his imperial strangle hold by the more martial races in the western and north western sentinels of the empire.[1] The years that followed noticed prolonged inaction on the part of the Mughals although several opportunities were presented to them to extend the imperial frontiers by the weaknesses and internal dissensions in the North-eastern states.

The victors of Saraighat, on the other hand, suffered most in this era of chaotic rule caused by weak and incompetent princess, unscrupulous and ambitious ministers and internal corruptions and dissensions. The exemplary success of the Ahoms at Saraighat that had forced the Mughals to withdraw from Gauhati and Kamrup by extending the western boundary of the State proved their prowess and national spirit, but the internal chaos barred their subsequent achievement. Unfortunately for the Ahoms, Lachit Barphukan passed away no sooner had the battle ended and Udayaditya Singh was assasinated in a palace rebellion spearheaded by his younger brother Saru Gohain,

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1. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Aurangzib, Vol. III, p 247; W. Irvine(tr) Storia Do Mogor, Vol. II, pp 189-90.

later Ramadhvaj Singh, in league with a hoarde of unscrupulous nobles headed by one Debera. These disgruntled officials took the advantage of the absence of the stalwarts of the State who had just completed their victory against the Mughals and were encamping at Gauhati to guard the State's vulnerable western frontier against the redoubtable Imperial foes. The Ahom court in the capital of Garhgaon was thus left in the hands of these minor but crazy officials to indulge in ministerial politics for personal gains at a time when the monarchy could play a crucial role in expanding and consolidating its position.[2]

POLITICS IN AHOM COURT

In November 1672, Ramadhvaj Singh formally ascended the throne. The new monarch tried to ease his conscience by instituting expiatory measures in atonement for the sin of fratricide. He appointed Brahmin priests to perform sacrificial rites at Golaparaghat on which occasion he liberally distributed gifts to the other priests and astrologers. He also assembled the Vaisnava devotees and arranged religious recitals which continued uninterrupted for seven days and nights.[3]

Debera alias Lachai, the ring leader of the conspiracy which brought the monarch to the throne, was lifted from the post of Hazarika to Bar Barua.[4] In fact, the 'Kingship' of Ramadhvaj was unstable as it was tainted by fraticide and massacre of innocents. As arranged by Debera, a number of

2. G.C. Barua(tr)Ahom Buranji, p 229; S.K. Bhuyan, (tr) Tungkhungia Buranji, pp 3-4.

3. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, p 106.

4. E. Gait, History of Assam, p 164. S.K. Bhuyan (ed), op.cit., p 106.

influential nobles informed the monarch that Longichang Bar Gohain in league with the disciples of the Mayamara Mahanta, was hatching a plan to kill Ramadhvaj Singh and placed on the throne Moran Gohain who was the son of Udayaditya Singh. Debera, the leader of the reign of terror, also produced witnesses to support the allegations of conspiracy. The tragic fate was shared both by Langichang Bar Gohain and Mora Gohain without any trial.[5]

Ramadhvaj's growing illness combined with the misgiving arising from the tragic end of Langichang Bar Gohain and Mora Gohain promoted him to make timely arrangements for a peaceful succession in the event of his demise. The monarch summoned a meeting of nobles to decide the issue. Some recommended the candidate of King's brothers, other favoured the son of Ramdhvaj Singh and the third group decided to install kalia Gohain, the surviving son of Udayaditya Singh. Though Debera Bar Barua was not invited to take part in the deliberation yet he got the proceedings of the vital summit. He could now realise that his position would be endangered if the last-mentioned succeeded to the throne and determined to ruin the plan of Ramdhvaj Singh.[6]

The monarch, too, decided to kill Debera and engaged Tangachu Phukan to execute the plan. From that moment Debera became extremely careful and hatched a conspiracy in league with the opposition group. He then killed the main officials of the royal court and finally, in March 1675, caused the monarch to be poisoned.[7] The murder of Ramadhvaj Singh was a prelude to

5. Assam Buranji, Mss No 44, Tr. No. 259, D.H.A.S.(Gauhati).
6. Assam Buranji, Mss No 44, Tr No. 259, D.H.A.S. Gauhati; S.K.Bhuyan, op.cit., p 107; E. Gait, op.cit., p 164.
7. S.K.Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, p 107; E.Gait, op.cit., p 165.

the brutalities of Debera which now pursued with undiminished ferocity. The modus operandi adopted by Debara in his campaign of slaughter was as follows: when an official visited the court in connection with his duties, Debera would announce to him that the monarch was offended with him and had therefore asked him to renounce his office and retire to his house. The officer would then be deprived of his retainers and insignias of office. Ratanpuria and Dakhinpatia would then be instructed to escort the dismissed officer to his house. They would in their turn cut the officer into pieces. In this way, Debera caused the destruction of high officials of Garhgaon including the claimants of Tipam and Namrup Raja. Thus the descendants of Ramadhvaj Singh was put to an end.[8]

Debera then placed on the throne a prince of the Samuguria branch of the royal family. The new monarch was known as Suhung Raja. Debera Bar Barbaru now suspected the loyalty of the monarch who was to be assassinated after a reign of only twenty one days.[9] The ill-fated monarch was replaced by one Gobar Raja, alias Gobar Gohain, of the Tungkhungia family. On this occasion too shrewed Debera succeeded. He committed many misdeeds and practically assumed sovereign power ~~as well as the status of the powerful noble of the State~~. He could install any one of his choice as a puppet on the throne and see his end in case of any difference. The new monarch was obviously alarmed at the atrocities of the disgruntled noble and decided to kill him. Gobar Raja, the Ahom monarch, was

8. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) op.cit., p 108.
9. Ibid., pp 108-9.

also thus put to death after reigning for barely a month.[10]

As a number of provincial nobles at Gauhati were sure to disfavour Debera's elevation to the status of a dictator of the state, he hastened the death of a few others. His prominent antagonists were, however, Laluk Sola Barphukan, the Ahom Viceroy at Gauhati and Atan Buragohain, the Prime Minister who continued to encamp at Gauhati as the possibility of fresh invasions of the Mughals had not completely disappeared.[11] The Prime Minister, Atan Buragohain was engaged in repairing the old forts, and in constructing new ones in and around Gauhati. Debera's diabolical activities reached its climax when he despatched emissaries to capture and kill the Barphukan and the Buragohain. However, the officials in Gauhati could smell the evil designs of Debera who wanted to be the dictator on the ruins of monarchy and began their expedition against him.[12]

In this politics of power in the Ahom court only the nobles of low calibre were actually involved as the veterans of the state were preoccupied with the threat from the Mughals. Under no circumstances they could be persuaded to relax their efforts as the threat of a foreign invasion was still looming large due to Raja Ram Singh's continued stay at Rangamati. They had to choose between two alternatives, - the suppression of the disorders at Garhgaon, and adherence to their military responsibilities at Gauhati; and naturally, they opted for the second.[13]

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10. Ibid., p 110.
11. S.K. Bhuyan, Atan Buragohain and his times pp 102-5.
12. S.K. Bhuyan, op.cit., pp 109-10; Assam Buranji, Mss No. 44. Tr. No. 259; D.H.A.S. Gauhati; S.K. Bhuyan, Atan Buragohain and his times, p 105.
13. S.K. Dutta(ed) Assam Buranji, p 37.

Nevertheless, the deterioration in the affairs of Garhgaon concerned them. The stalwarts of anti-Debra confederacy decided to proceed to the seat of Ahom capital to exterminate the reign of terror. Atan Buragohain, the great patriot, launched the campaign to extinguish the excesses of Debera Bar Barua during the early part of 1675 giving full responsibility of state affairs to the army commanders.[14]

With a section of the Ahom force in Gauhati and raising new militias that were offered by the veteran commanders of Saraighat, the Buragohain led the expedition to Garhgaon. Debera realised the futility of resisting the advancing army and tried to prevent their progress by diplomatic overtures. The supporters of Debera were demoralised the moment Gauhati commanders appeared in the vicinity of Garhgaon. The frustrated followers did not fail to foresee the inevitable termination of the reign of terror which was engineered by their master taking advantage of the absence of royal patriots.[15]

Debera Bar Barua, the ring leader of the reign of anarchy was captured and sentenced to death. Gobar Raja who was a puppet in the hands of Debera also met with death sentence.[16] Atan Buragohain thereupon set himself in cleansing the administration by replacing most of the officers who had shared the mis-rule of Debera. Eventually, Laluk Barphukan and other commanders returned to their respective position leaving Atan Buragohain in charge of state affairs.[17]

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14. Ibid., pp 37-38.
15. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, p 110.
16. Ibid.,
17. S.K. Bhuyan, Atan Buragohain and his times, 113.

Arjun Kowar, known as Dihingia Raja, was installed as the monarch. Before installing him, the nobles had themselves appointed a new Bar Barua in place of deceased Debera. The beginning of the reign of Dihingia Raja was smooth and peaceful due to the active services and co-operation of Aban Buragohain. But a section of the officers disliked this combination, as they abhorred the growing power of the Buragohain.[18] As advised by them, Dihingia Raja, with a view to secure the throne for his own sons, killed the princess who descended from Suklenmung, Gargayan Raja. The Buragohain and his colleagues condemned and disapproved this ruthless slaughter. Henceforth, the Dihingia Raja employed spies to keep watch over the political designs of the Buragohain and his associates.[19]

As the Raja's plan to put an end to the life of the Buragohain became known to the Phukans, they decided to ruin the cause of the monarch. Further the Buragohain was persuaded by his loyal colleagues to lead all the available officers in the capital to assassinate the Raja. The failure in an initial attempt forced the Buragohain to retreat to Dergaon where he was joined by the commanders from Gauhati in organising an army. This was followed by an open battle between the forces of the Raja and the Prime Minister in which the latter succeeded in occupying the capital and executing the Raja and his sons.[20]

After this carnage, the Phukans and other nobles again pressed the Buragohain to assume the sovereign power, giving

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18. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, pp 111-12.
19. Ibid., pp 112-13, E. Gait, op.cit., p 166.
20. S.K. Bhuyan, op.cit., p 113; E. Gait, op.cit., p 167.

reasons that his refusal to offer on the previous occasion, after the death of Gobar Raja, had involved his friendly associates in such awful predicaments. But Atan Buragohain refused on the ground that he was not entitled to the throne according to the tradition of the state. On the other hand, he persuaded the nobles to crown Sudaipha, the Raja of Parbatia clan as the monarch.[21]

The assumption of royal throne by Sudaipha, the Parbatia Raja was followed by a partial overhauling of the official personnel which was carried out mainly by the counsels of Atan Buragohain. The relations between Parvatia Raja and Atan Buragohain continued to be cordial for sometime. At latter's instance Mccha Bar Barua, who had become obnoxious to him, was dismissed; but he tried to take revenge upon the Buragohain as well as the monarch. He fled to Gauhati and appraised Laluk Barphukan and his associate officials who agreed to render full assistance to Barbaru's design. The matter came to such a head that when Parvatia Raja summoned the presence of Bar Baru, who was then in league with the Phukans at Gauhati, the officials of Gauhati expressed their denying attitude to the decrees of the royal court of Garhgaon. Obviously there developed two rival groups at Gauhati and Garhgaon, each running counter to the other.[22]

NOBLES INVITE THE MUGHALS

The conduct of the officials in Gauhati needed urgent

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21. S.K. Bhuyan, op.cit., pp 113-14; E. Gait, op.cit., p 167; S.K. Bhuyan, Kamrupar Buranji, p 98.

22. S.K. Bhuyan, Atan Buragohain and his times, p 139; E. Gait, op.cit., pp 167-68; S.K. Bhuyan, Tungkhungia Buranji, p 8.

pacification. But Atan Buragohain was unwilling to sanction military action against Laluk Barphukan for one obvious reason that the Mughals had not totally given up their intentions to recover Lower Assam even though Raja Ram Singh had left the Mughal seat of Rangamati. Now also the imperial Faujdar was indulging in the court politics of the Ahoms by bribing the Phukans at Gauhati.[23] Therefore, his apprehension of a possible attack by the Mughals was not only due to his over-anxiety for security of the state, nor was it invented to serve as a pretext to suspend vigorous measures against Laluk Barphukan. As a matter of fact, Sultan Azamtara, the third son of Emperor Aurangzeb, had demanded Gauhati and Lower Assam while taking the charge of Viceroyship in Bengal.[24] Atan Buragohain's mind was filled with apprehension of a possible invasion by the Mughals before which the Barphukan's refractories faded into insignificance. Between Samdhara and Garhgaon there was no strong fortifications. So the Buragohain constructed a rampart facing the Brahmaputra river from where it would be possible to obstruct the progress of the enemy at a safe distance from the capital. The construction of the rampart proceeded in full swing in the early part of 1678 which was named by the monarch as Chintamonigarh.[25]

On the other hand, Laluk Barphukan began his operations to dislodge Atan Buragohain and his puppet monarchy of Sudaipha. Accordingly, he held secret consultations with his two brothers

23. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, p 115; S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Kamrupar Buranji, p 98.
24. Ibid., p 117.
25. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Kamrupar Buranji, p 99; Assam Buranji, Mss No 44, Tr. No. 59, D.H.A.S. Gauhati; H. Goswami, Purani Assam Buranji, p 119.

who decided to invite their uncle Baduliphukan, then living in the Mughal court of Dacca, to come up to Gauhati duly equipped with the imperial force and thereby cause the extinction of Atan Buragohain from Ahom politics.[26] Laluk began to play a double game. On one hand, he sought the help of Ahom monarch and on the other, he wanted to become the monarch of Assam in connivance with Mughal support. Laluk Barphukan and the members of his league gave their full support for the surrender of Lower Assam to the Mughals, provided Prince Azamtara finally installed Laluk as Ahom monarch on the ruins of the caucus made by the Bargohain.[27]

Evidently, Laluk was tempted like Baduliphukan who during Mir Jumla's invasion betrayed the Ahoms to get the throne. Of course, Baduli was made the monarch of Upper Assam in theory for a very short period but very soon he set out for Bengal with his relatives and dependants along with the retreat march of Mir Jumla. In short, Baduli nourished ~~his~~ the hope that his presence at Dacca as a Mughal protege would be of use in future dealings with the court politics of Assam. It is reasonable to believe that Baduli would come forward in promoting the prolonged design of giving the Ahom crown to Laluk who was his nephew.[28]

About this time Laluk Barphukan sent two messengers to Mansur Khan, Fauzdar of Rangamati along with precious presents. Those couriers were sent up to Dacca with the

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26. S.K. Bhuyan, (ed) Assam Buranji, p 117; E. Gait, op.cit., p 168; G.C. Barua, Ahom Buranji, p 253.

27. G.C. Barua, op.cit., pp 253-54; H. Goswami, op.cit., p 119.

28. G.C. Barua, op.cit., p 254.

recommendation of Mansur Khan for the acceptance of the Barphukan's proposal. The gist of the proposal was that Laluk will make a mock-fight against the Mughal invaders after which he would evacuate Saraighat and Gauhati and then retreat to Kaliabar. The Mughals would meanwhile occupy the deserted garrison of Gauhati where they would not meet with any opposition. In return, Laluk Barphukan will be lifted to Ahom throne after handing over all the enemies to the Imperial forces.[29]

By the end of 1678 Sultan Azamtara, the then Viceroy of Bengal issued orders to Mansur Khan, the Faujdar of Rangamati to proceed to Gauhati and take delivery of the town from Laluk Barphukan as per the preceeding agreement. The Mughal Viceroy formally conveyed the right of Kingship of Assam to Laluk. This message was transacted in June-July 1678. Laluk Barphukan now disclosed the military secrets to Mansur Khan who easily captured Gauhati, accompanied by Ali Akbar, Satmal Dewan and Baduli Phukan.[30]

Mansur Khan had been staying with his force for sometime at Agiathuti outside the western approaches of the Gauhati fortifications. He hesitated to enter into the fortified zone of Gauhati fearing that some trap might be laid by the Ahoms for his destruction. However, the agent of Laluk Barphukan encouraged the Imperial commanders to occupy

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29. S.K. Bhuyan, Kamrupar Buranji, p 100; G.C. Barua, op.cit., 254.

30. S.K. Bhuyan, Assam Buranji, p 117; G.C. Barua, op.cit., p 254.

the city. Meanwhile, Mansur Khan sailed up to Gauhati on 26 February 1679 and became the master of Kamrup being vacated by Laluk Barphukan.[31]

The Mughal reoccupation of Gauhati and Kamrup during the Viceroyship of Sultan Azamtara in Bengal was highly applauded by Emperor Aurangzeb. The Emperor acknowledged this victory by rewarding 1,000 rupees and granted to the prince a pearl necklace of 91 beads worth two lakhs of rupees, and a jewelled turban-end worth a 25,000 rupees.[32]

Laluk Barphukan left Gauhati keeping in view that his uncle Baduliphukan would guide the Mughal troops upto Garhgaon to annihilate the strength of Atan Buragohain. But Baduli changed the course of action after realising the atrocious deeds done by Laluk Barphukan. Having failed to reconcile, Baduli went back to Dacca by boat. Nevertheless, Baduli's gesture could not produce any patriotic change in the day dream of Laluk Barphukan who was crazy for Ahom throne.[33]

WASTEFUL STRIFES

Laluk Barphukan sailed up towards Kaliabar after voluntarily evacuated from Gauhati and pretended to fight against further Mughal advance asking Atan Buragohain to stay at Biswanath and to send up the Phukans to Kaliabar for re-inforcement. But Atan Buragohain could soon smell the evil

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31. Assam Buranji, Mss No 44, Tr. No. 259, D.H.A.S., Gauhati; S.K. Bhuyan, Kamrupar Buranji, p 100.
32. Sir J.N. Sarkar (tr) Maasir-i-Alamgiri, p 107.
33. S.K. Bhuyan; Atan Buragohain and his times, p 159.

intrigues of Laluk and took counter measures to end the life of Laluk.[34] Meanwhile, most of the Phukans that had already marched in Lower Assam were imprisoned by Laluk. very soon a fierce contest ensued between the followers of Laluk and the royalists. In the long run, the troops of the Buragohain met with crushing defeat and the ring leaders of the royalist party were put into prison. Laluk overpowered the authority of Parvatia Raja. He then promoted his adherents and supporters to the key posts of the state.[35]

The disaster of the royalist forces forced Atan Buragohain to leave the camp at Biswanath and took temporary refuge in the Naga Hills. By March 1679 the Buragohain was captured in the house of the Rajkhowa and taken to Kaliabar along with his elder brother, the Nacbaicha Phukan, who had been seized on the way. Parvatia Raja was thereafter captured by the followers of Laluk and put to death.[36]

Laluk also brought in Sulikpha, known as Ratnadhvaj Singh or Lora-Raja and himself became His Majesty's Minister without consulting the other great nobles.[37] His ambition was, however, to get the royal umbrella, ignoring the support and approval of court nobles as well as royal members. As a shrewd politician and overambitious, he tried his utmost to exploit the assurance sounded by Sultan Azamtara. By August 1679, he sent envoys at Dacca to get official recognition as

34. S.K. Bhuyan, Assam Buranji, p 118.
35. S.K. Bhuyan, Atan Buragohain and his times, p 162; G.C. Barua, op.cit., p 259.
36. S.K. Bhuyan, Assam Buranji, p 118; S.K. Bhuyan, Kamrupar Buranji, p 100.
37. E. Gait, op.cit., pp 168-69.

monarch of Ahom Kingdom but Sultan Azamtara by this time left for Mewar to join Aurangzeb who started expedition against Rajputs.[38] Meanwhile, Shaista Khan also took the viceroyship of Bengal for the second term, did not give any cognigence to the appeal of Laluk Barphukan.[39]

Laluk Barphukan, however, became self-styled monarch of Upper Assam in contravention of the monarchical tradition of Ahoms. He also knew that his dream could not see final consummation as long as Atan Buragohain was alive. So he turned his attention to end the life of Atan Buragohain and his brothers. In December 1679 he cruelly murdered the Buragohain and his brothers with the tacit approval of Lora Raja, the puppet monarch.[40]

The throns on the path of the Barphukan to power were, however, still not over. There were the Princess of royal blood scattered over the State, each of whom was a potential material for insurrection. So Laluk Barphukan made a final decision to kill Lora Raja along with other princes.[41] To get rid of the reign of terror inspired by the Barphukan, the disgruntled nobles joined hands with the fugitive princes. Laluk Barphukan was entrapped by the nobles and was then put into prison in November 1680. Shortly after he was given death sentence. The nobles followed it up by the assassination of Lora Raja himself, and installing Gadadhar Singh on the throne who succeeded in restoring peace and stability in the state after a period of prolonged chaos and confusion that

38. Sir J.N. Sarkar, (tr) op.cit., p 113.
39. S.K.Bhuyan(ed)Assam Buranji, p 119.
40. Ibid., 119.
41. Assam Buranji, Mss No 44. Tr. No. 259, DHA.S. Gauhati, S.K.Bhuyan, Atan Buragohain and his times, p 187.

could be dangerous for sovereignty had the Mughals been in a position to capitalise.[42]

HARD PROBLEMS OF MUGHAL AUTHORITY

The Mughals failed to capitalise the weaknesses of the Ahoms due to their own difficulties. The rivalry with the Afgans that had been a serious challenge to the Mughals ever since the first battle of Panipat and seemed to have been crushed by Akbar, raised its ugly head again when Emperor Aurangzeb was preoccupied with the Marathas. The years from 1672 to 1676 Aurangzeb had to reckon with a number of Afgan rebellions in North-western India.[43] On the other hand, Shivaji, the Maratha chief took the full advantage of the withdrawal of a section of the best soldiers of the Mughals who were sent to the North-west frontier. He followed an aggressive policy in order to damage the Mughal authority in western India. Accordingly, he connived with the Afgan rulers of Bijapur and Golkonda and succeeded in the annexation of Karnatic and its dependents by conducting a series of raids in the Mughal territories that continued uninterrupted till the death ~~of Shivaji~~ in 1680.[44]

With the Bijapuri barons whose fiefs lay close to his dominions, Shivaji had, however, to wage war till he wrested Kolhapur, North Kanara and south Kankan from their hands. In the Karnatic division, viz., the Dharwar and Belgaum districts, the contest was still undecided when he died. Nevertheless,

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42. H.D. Phukan, Assam Buranji, pp 37-39; S.K. Bhuyan, (ed), Assam Buranji, p 121.

43. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Aurangzeb, Vol. III, pp 228-31.

44. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Aurangzeb, Vol. IV, pp 242, 246-59.

he welded the scattered Maratha race of the Deccani Kingdoms into a mighty nation. Before the rise of Shivaji, the Marathas were mere hirelings and treated as servants of aliens. Shivaji was the first to challenge Bijapur and Delhi and thus taught his countrymen that it was possible for them to be independent leaders in war.[45]

Emperor Aurangzeb's hurdles were more complicated by the open challenge of the Rajputs and Jats who took the advantage of the situation to revive their traditional hostility with the Mughals. The seizure of Rathor principality of Mewar by Aurangzeb after the death of Jaswant Singh in 1678 was virtually a signal for the Rajput chiefs to indulge in wide-spread rebellions against the Mughals.[46] However, the long bitter struggle between the Mughals and the Rathors (1679-1708) came to end after Aurangzeb's death. Another militant Sikh race became hostile, the moment their religious chief-cum-general was assassinated by Aurangzeb in 1675. Indeed, it was the beginning of the holy war by the Sikhs against the Islamic rule of the Mughals.[47]

In such a situation in which the Mughals were called upon to reckon with determined challenges of the formidable Rajputs, Jats, Sikhs, Marathas and the Afgans in the northern, western and north-western divisions of their empire, Aurangzeb was naturally not expected to be able to give enough attention

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45. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Shivaji and his times, p 389.

46. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Aurangzib, Vol. III, p 326; A. C. Banerjee, Lectures on Rajput history, pp 101-2.

47. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Aurangzib, Vol. III, pp 312-13.

in the eastern Subah of Bengal. Both the imperial authority and Viceroy of Bengal were bound to suspend the policy of territorial expansionism beyond the established limit in North east India. The authorities in Delhi were so much indifferent towards their relations with Assam that the campaign under Ram Singh that had to be abandoned by the Rajput general after the defeat at Saraighat and forced to retire at Rangamati, and where from he was neither reinforced nor called back for a couple of years.[48]

Shaista Khan, the Viceroy of Bengal had to face with numerous problems mainly created by the European factors and few Rajas of the bordering areas. The Viceroy was mainly concerned with revenue reforms to relief the economic strains of Impdrial campaigns. Naturally, the Viceroy of Bengal provoked the nobles and zamindars who not only refused to pay extra taxes but also expressed their disloyalty towards the viceroy.[49] The subahdar had also to overcome the trade conflicts with the European factors, particularly the East India Company, who systematically violated the terms of the existing agreements to augment their commercial interest.[50] Aurangzeb had also his difficulties in finding an efficient Viceroy and able officers and army Commanders for posting in Bengal as because all such efficient and loyal personnel were deployed mainly in the disturbed areas of North-west and Deccan. As a matter of fact, Shaista Khan whose term as the Viceroy of Bengal expired in

48. E. Gait, History of Assam, p 161.

49. Sir J.N. Sarkar (ed) History of Bengal, p 374; S.K. Bhuyan (tr) Annals of the Delhi Badshahati, p 168.

50. Ibid., pp 374-75.

1678 could be replaced by Sultan Azamtara, the third son of Aurangzeb for a short period.[51]

However, Sultan Ajamtara could not properly gauze the situation of Bengal as he stayed at Dacca for less than two years. The Sultan had to be recalled by the Emperor as his loyal services were found essential in the rebellious western front of the empire. Meanwhile, the veteran Shaista Khan was reappointed as the Viceroy of Bengal for the second term in 1680. No wonder, either the Imperial authorities or the Viceroy of Bengal made no serious attempt to repair the damages suffered at the hands of the Ahoms at Saraighat.[52]

Interestingly enough, when the Ahom commanders in Gauhati had to conduct two consecutive expeditions with a sizeable part of their army against the pseudo rulers in Garhgaon, the western frontier of the Ahom state remained practically unprotected. The Mughals too were armless in availing of the unprecedented opportunity. Sultan Azamtara was fully aware of the situation in Assam through Mansur Khan, the Faujdar of Gauhati but his endeavours were limited to the use of some threats to recover Lower Assam.[53] That they could recover Gauhati through Baduliphukan was only due to the treachery of unscrupulous Laluk Barphukan. The reoccupation of Gauhati was more a surrender of the Ahom officials in charge of the area and fell far short of a military conquest. It was only the Faujdar, Mansur Khan who played a certain diplomatic

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51. S.K. Bhuyan, (tr) Annals of the Delhi Badshahate, p 169.
52. Ibid., pp 170-72.
53. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Kamrupar Buranji, pp 100-102.

role in winning over the Ahom officers through dubious means in persuading Dacca to avail of the opportunity to recover Gauhati by despatching a nominal force under Baduli.

WESTERN STATES

The internal situation in Cooch Behar, the western gateway to the North-East was no better than in the Ahom state, although the rulers there also did not leg behind in taking the advantage of the difficulty faced by the Mughal. Modnarayan, the son and successor of Prannarayan ruled virtually as a puppet for fifteen years from 1666 to 1680. The real power in the state was then exercised by Mohinarayan, the uncle of Prannarayan, who held the position of Nazir. The officials in the state indulged in court politics in the same pattern as in the Ahom state resulting in recurrances of civil Wars. The shrewed Nazir, however, survived all such stresses and strain and managed to retain Modnarayan in the throne. The continued stay of Rajput general, Ram Singh in the threshold of the state till 1676 served as a strong restraint on the court against throwing off the Mughal suzerainty but the departure of Mughal general that year from Rangamati virtually removed such pressure. The rebellions attitude of the nobles and zamindars of Bengal during the viceroyalty of Sultan Azamtara encouraged Cooch Behar to stop the payment of tribute to the Mughal since 1676.[54]

The petty state of Bijni that was brought into existence

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54. S.K. Bhuyan (tr) Annals of Delhi Badshahate, pp 171-72. Sir J.N. Sarkar (ed) op.cit., p 376.

by Mughal themselves by liquidating the Eastern Koch state of Kamrup to serve as a buffer against the Ahoms and Darrang, also did not behave upto expectation during these years of strains. The Raja of Bijni followed the suit in organising a confederacy of the local zamindars in a common bid to withdraw the payment of dues to the Mughals and to scrap the stipulated obligations including the Kheda operations no sooner had Ram Singh left Rangamati.[55] The Raja of Bijni was strongly supported in his efforts by the zamindar of Karaibari who was responsible for the supervision of the revenue matters of Sarkar Dakinkol on behalf of the Mughals. The zamindar relaxed his loyalty and fidelity and like the Raja of Bijni and other neighbouring zamindars assumed an independent posture.[56]

The development in the Eastern Koch state of Darrang was indeed interesting. It may be recalled that Darrang was constituted into a vassal state by the Ahom monarch with a prince from the former royal family of Koch-Kamrup, Balinarayan, after the Mughal occupation of that state in 1615 and his successor Makardhvaj, the then Raja of Darrang, abruptly sided with the Mughals during Mir Jumla's Assam campaign. But no sooner had Mir Jumla marched back from Assam, Surjyanarayan alias Indradaman, new Raja of Darrang disowned the overlordship of the Mughals and assumed an independent status. This, however, brought him into confrontation with the Ahoms, the Mughals and the Cooch Behar state. Eversince Raja Ram Singh's departure from Rangamati both the Ahom and Koch authorities exerted

55. S.K. Bhuyan (tr) op.cit., pp 193-95.
56. Ibid., p 195.

heavy pressure on Darrang to reduce the territory to their respective vassalage. Raja Surjyanarayan, on the other hand, successfully resisted all such pressure.[57] The strategic importance of Darrang was significant as it served as buffer state between Mughal Kamrup and Ahom kingdom. Moreover, most of the hill duars for commercial enterprise towards Bhutan Hills and Arunachal Pradesh yielded substantive amount of revenues to the state. The Mughals also conducted profitable Kheda operations into that region.

Nevertheless, Surjyanarayan was not destined to rule over his state for long. He was the unfortunate victim of a trap of Mansur Khan, the Faujdar of Gauhati during the Mughal reoccupation of Gauhati in February 1679. Surjyanarayan was made a captive in the hands of the Mughal forces and was sent to the Imperial court at Delhi in 1680.[58] The Mughals, however, did not succeed in annexing Darrang to their territory due to the same inaction that marred their activities in the frontier during the period. As a result, Indranarayan, the brother of Surjyanarayan could be peacefully installed as the Raja of Darrang as a vassal ruler by Gadadhar Singh, the new Ahom monarch.[59]

Gauhati, as already mentioned could be reoccupied by the Mughals due to the treachery of a section of the Ahom

57. G.C. Barua (tr), op.cit., pp 216-17.

58. H. Blochmann, "Koch Behar, Koch Hajo and Assam in the 16th and 17th centuries, according to the Akbarnama, the Padishanama and the Fathiya-i-Ibriaya", J.A.S.B. Vol.XLI, 1872, p 100; Assam Buranji, Mss No 44, Tr. No. 259, D.H.A.S., Gauhati.

59. Ibid.

officials themselves. As the Mughal forces marched up to Gauhati and even captivised the Raja of Darrang, it is possible that the rulers of Karaibari and Bijni had to reaffirm their allegiance to the Mughals. Although there is no record to probe into such a development, it may be conjectured from the fact that the Imperial forces towards Gauhati and Darrang could proceed only through their territories. The Cooch Behar state had then rebelled against the Mughal, and there is no information either from the Mughal or from the Koch sources to suggest that the Mughals undertook an operation against Cooch Behar or that Gauhati campaign passed through that state. The movement of the Imperial forces from Bengal through Koraibari and Bijni was therefore, the only alternative. The re-establishment of the Mughal base in Gauhati beyond their territories was bound to re-inspire the rulers of Koraibari and Bijni to loyalty. The consolidation of the Ahom authority under Gadadhar Singh might also be an additional factor in pacification of these two chiefs who could survive, as in the past, only with Mughal support as the Ahoms were not unlikely to revive their western pressure.

The rulers of Sherpur and Susang state in Mymensing, bordering Garo Hills were also inspired by the growing spirit of insubordination among the frontier Chiefs and zamindars. Raja Ram Sinha of Susang stopped the payment of tribute to the Mughals and began to fortify his capital possibly with an intention to reckon with the Mughal retaliation. He was, however, taken to Murshidabad as a prisoner and forced to

embrace Islamic faith and marry a Muslim girl. He was actually charged with several offences, of which treason was the highest, but all the charges were withdrawan when he embraced Islam and married a Muhammedan noble's daughter. He was restored in Susang under the name of Abdul Rahaman. Meanwhile, his Hindu wife and her son, Ran Sinha, took refuge in the neighbouring state of Sherpur. The fact that the Raja of Sherpur very generously extended pretecting hospitality to prince Ran Sinha and his mother is perhaps suggestive of the fact that two ruling families in league with each other indulged in underground activities to assert their independent position. The Raja of Sherpur also harassed the ruler of Susang, who of late became a Muslim and a Mughal protege, by occupying a portion of Susung state and converted it into Susung pargana under the rule of Ran Sinha. It should have required a great deal of courage on the part of a Hindu ruler to extend such helping hand to the dislodged Hindu prince of a neighbouring state and interfere in the internal affairs of the state whose ruler was a Muslim convert and enjoyed Imperial support. The attitude of Raja of Sherpur is clearly indicative of his rebellions and determined anti-Mughal stand. The matter could perhaps proceed further had Aurangzeb not interfered at that stage and recognised Ran Sinha as the Raja of Susang. To quote the autobiography of a former Maharaja of Susang:[60]

> "It is very curious to find a fanatic Emperor like Aurangzeb restoring the Raj to a Hindu successor when he could easily have retained the Muhammedan

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60. B.C. Sinha, Changing Times, p 143.

> in power. This fact gives us an insight into the policy of north-east frontier administration followed during this period of Aurangzeb's regime when the Marathas, the Rajputs and the Sikhs had rebelled against the Emperor. Aurangzeb did not like to add one more, by dislodging Ran Sinha who had already become the master of the Susang fort even before his father's death."

That Aurangzeb did not opt for any retaliatory measure against Sherpur in spite of the clear rebellious stand of the Raja and his recognition of Hindu prince in Susang, who was in league with the Raja of Sherpur, was also perhaps due to the same policy of pacification of the chiefs in North-East frontier during the difficult days in the North-west. The rulers of Sherpur and Susang had also their difficulties in snapping the tie completely with the Mughals as they held their authority in the foot hills against the predatory raids of the Garos only at the support of the latter. Further, to the Mughals, they paid only a nominal tribute in kind and enjoyed a semi-independent status wherein their internal affairs were never interfered with by the Mughals.[61] No wonder, as soon as Shaista Khan became the Viceroy for the second time in 1679, in place of Sultan Azamtara, the rulers of both Sherpur and Susang cleared of their dues.[62]

EASTERN STATES

A similar situation had developed in the state of Laur, in Sylhet to the east of Susang, which then included besides the plains territory, a vast tract in Nongstain-Langrin area in the Khasi hills. The ruler of Laur, Govinda Sinha was taken

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61. J.B. Bhattacharjee, The Garos and the English, pp 18-19.
62. Sir J.N. Sarkar (ed) op.cit., p 382.

as prisoner to Delhi under the orders of Aurangzeb and restored after his conversion to Islam under the name of Habib Khan. This, however, led to the division of the State as Jaganathpur and Baniachong ceceded under Hindu branches of the royal family. Nevertheless, Habib Khan and his successors ruled over Laur holding Mughal fief and being responsible for the security of the Mughal frontier from the predatory raids of the Khasis.[63]

The Raja of Jayantia, at this stage, it appears, did not maintain any formal relations with the Mughals and it is possible that he complied with the clauses of the engagements that took place with Shaista Khan in 1664. The Raja had however, serious dispute with the Ahoms over Dimarua which was earlier a vassal state of Jayantia but ran over by the Mughals during Mir Jumla's campaign and thereafter recovered by the Ahoms. The Raja of Jayantia insisted that his suzerainty over Dimarua should be restored, while the Ahom monarch maintained that his forces had captured Dimarua by defeating twenty-two Mughal commanders headed by Sayed Barbakar and held it against Sayed Feroz and other Mughal commanders.[64] As the Ahoms refused to return Dimarua and diplomatic exchanges continued between the two royal capitals over the issue, it is not unlikely that Laxmi Singh, alias Laxmi Narayan, the Raja of Jayantia, could not afford to antagonise the Mughals on the threshold of his state at a time he had no commitment from the Ahoms to comply with his claim.

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63. P.N. Bhattacharya, "Ruins in Laur", J.A.R.S., Vol.IV No. 1, 1936, pp 24-25.

64. Ali, S.M., The History of Jaintia, p 23.

Bir Darpanarayan, the Raja of Cachar also perhaps maintained cordial relationship with the Mughals during this period as there is no mention any where of any hostility. His relation with the Ahoms, it appears, marked no improvement. The Ahom monarch particularly apprehended that the Raja of Cachar was articulating his policy to expand his influence in the internal politics of Jayantia and Dimarua. Bir Darpanarayan was a powerful monarch as it is evidenced from the state of order in the state during his regime. Cachar flourished economically out of the trade relations maintained with the Mughal territory since the time of Mir Jumla.[65] Raja of Cachar neither expanded nor surrendered any part of his territorial jurisdiction.

Similarly, the Raja of Tripura seems to have maintained the terms entered into by Govinda Manikya with Shaista Khan. Ramdev Manikya, who succeeded Govinda Manikya in 1676, had to reckon with a conspiracy hatched by his nephew, Dwarika Thakur with Nasir Muhammad, an Afgan Chief of Sarail to dislodge him. Ramdev Manikya sought the help of Shaista Khan who sent an army that suppressed the rebels. The internal chaos in Tripura could thus be suppressed only with the support of the Mughal Viceroy of Bengal. The Raja of Tripura was thus forced by the circumstances to maintain cordial relationship with the Mughals.[66]

CONCLUSION

The Mughal-North-east relationship eversince the battle

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65. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 95.
66. Rajamala, Education Directorate, Tripura, p 81.

of Saraighat was thus marked by inaction on both sides. The Eastern states of Tripura, Cachar and Jayantia had no reason to conflict with the Mughals. The latter also had no provocation for any retaliatory expedition. Tripura had its own internal problem that was a serious constraint against risking the support of the Mughals as Suzerain authority. The Mughal failure in Assam and the Imperial engagements in the North-west could not encourage Cachar and Jayantia to confront with the Mughals as their relationship with the Ahoms did not improve and the states failed to make a common cause against the Imperialists. The convert ruler of Laur held his authority at the Mughal support and the latter did not interfere in the internal affairs of the Raja and expected nothing from him beyond repelling the raids of the hill-men. Susang and Sherpur were too petty states to offer any significant challenge to the Mughals and the latter never antagonised them by interfering in their internal affairs. Cooch Behar passed through internal strifes and its rivalry with the Ahoms on the claim of Darrang, lost its possibility of capitalising the Mughal difficulty. The Mughals were so involved in the North-west that they could hardly resort to any action against the defaulting Koches and the Ahoms or take advantage of the chaotic situation in these states. The internal chaos in the Ahom state was equally responsible for not being able to push their boundary westward. Rather the Ahoms became victim to Mansur Khan by surrendering Gauhati in February, 1679.

CHAPTER - VI

NORTH-EASTERN CHALLENGE

The accession of Gadadhar Singh to the Ahom throne in 1681 ushered in a new era in the history of the Ahom State. Besides consolidating his position as the ruler of a State, he also took steps to pacify the Chiefs and rulers of the neighbouring territories, thus setting a trend towards a common challenge of the North-East against the Mughals. On the other hand, the reappointment of the veteran and experienced Shaista Khan as the Viceroy of Bengal for the second time witnessed considerable improvement in the internal affairs of Bengal, although eversince the battle of Saraighat the Mughals made no endeavour to renew their north-eastern expansionism due to, first, their involvement in the affairs of the Marathas, Rajputs and Sikhs and, secondly, the decaying condition of their imperial hold that shortly followed. Soon after ascending the throne, the first act of Gadadhar Singh was the stamping out of the possibilities of disloyal manouvres on the part of the nobles. This he did by inflicting exemplary punishments on those who had participated in the mechinations of chaotic regime under unscrupulous Laluk Barphukan, or had exhibited symptoms of rebellious and traitorous disposition.[1]

The Ahom monarch made him more popular in the leading

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1. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, p 122.

circle of the nobles by matrimonial link. It may be recalled that Gadadhar Singh, alias Godapani, who belonged to the Tungkhungia branch of the Ahom royal tradition, enjoyed tremendous support and sympathy of a section of the nobles which ultimately brought him to the power. This section of the nobles championed the cause of Godapani when unscrupulous Lora Raja had made him a prisoner in his bid to exterminate all potential princes of the Ahom royal blood and the State passed through a virtual civil war inspired by the ambition and ruthlessness of Laluk Barphukan. The nobles also entrapped Laluk Barphukan to death and caused the assassination of Lora Raja himself. This section of the nobles that emerged powerful out of the civil war, had enthroned Gadadhar Singh and promised him full support and loyalty. The monarch also succeeded in suppressing the disloyal princes and nobles. The prolonged politics of power in the Ahom Court thus came to an end. The personality and character of the new monarch earned his popularity among the masses.[2] Gadadhar Singh thus found himself in a comfortable position to consolidate his authority. He also made appointments of loyal and able persons to the high offices of the government in his attempt to thoroughly overhaul the administration.[3]

PROBLEMS OF AURANGZEB

The imperial court at Delhi, on the other hand, passed through dissentions. On January 1681, Prince Akbar, the fourth son of Aurangzeb, in his campaign against Rajputs

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2. Ibid.

3. K.N.T. Phukan, Assam Buranji, p 45.

drifted from the policy of the Emperor. He rather united with the Rajput rebels, issued a manifesto deposing his father, and crowned himself as Emperor; and the next day he set out for Ajmer to wrest the Mughal crown from Aurangzeb's brows.[4] However, Prince Akbar was deceived by the Rajputs and his rebellion failed to change the sovereign of Delhi, but it brought expected relief to the Maharanas. The Rajput war was a drawn game, but its material consequences were disastrous to the Maharana's subjects. The loss caused to Aurangzeb by his Rajput policy can not be measured solely by the men and money that he poured on the desert. He had concentrated all his resources against two States of Marwar and Mewar and had failed to achieve success.[5]

Despairing of success in his attempt to conquer the Rana's country, owing to the difficulty of making his way into it, and finding that Prince Akbar found a retreat to the territories of Sambhuji, Aurangzeb became desirous of concluding a peace with the Rana, for which that ruler had several times made overtures. Aurangzeb was now eager to strengthen his position in the Deccan, fearing that Prince Akbar would lose neither time nor the opportunity in making himself formidable with the aid of Sambhuji.[6]

Aurangzeb was already exhausted by the incessant Maratha wars under Shivaji who consolidated his kingdom during

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4. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Aurangzib Vol. III, p 351.
5. W. Irvine, (tr) Storia Do Mogor Vol. II, pp 239-42.
6. Ibid., p 235.

the period from 1670 to 1680. However, on April 1680, Shivaji died of illness putting the Maratha Kingdom into a state of confusion and impediment on the question of succession His eldest son Shambhuji, who mounted the throne, failed to combat the Mughal authority. But Shambhuji's interests did not coincide with rebel prince Akbar who was involved in the secret dialogues with Kavi-Kalash, the primier of Shambhuji.[7]

In the long run, the escape of the rebellious Prince Akbar into Maratha territory obliged Aurangzeb to come down to the Deccan, where he was destined to spend the remaining twenty-seven years of his life. On hearing of Aurangzeb's march to Aurangabad, Shambhuji intensified his plundering expeditions in all possible directions. So the Emperor became desirous of completing his acquisition of the Bijapur Kingdom. He therefore, corresponded with the generals of that realm, sending them large gifts and presents in the hope that they might rebel against their Sultan and come over to his enemy.[8]

The moment Marathas were attacked by the Portugues, there was large scale dissensions among the officers and vassals. Aurangzeb exploited this weakness by bribing the Maratha officials to capture Shambhuji.[9] On the other hand, Shambhuji also like his father, befriended the Qutb-Shah and Adil-Shah, Sultans of Golkonda and Bijapur respectively, whenever it was convenient to co-operate with them against the

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7. Sir J.N. Sarkar, A Op.cit., Vol. IV, pp 337-38.
8. Irvine, W (tr) Vol. II, op.cit., p 243.
9. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Aurangzib, Vol. IV, p 343.

Mughals. But the Maratha ruler failed to divert the Mughals from the Sieges of Bijapur and Golkonda in 1686 and 1687 respectively due to his moral degradation. He was made captive by Muqarrab Khan in February 1689 and put to death.[10]

"Thus, by the end of the year 1689, Aurangzib was the unrivalled lord paramount of Northern India and the Deccan alike. Adil Shah, Qutb Shah, and Rajah Shambhuji had all fallen and their dominions had been annexed to his empire."[11] But this victory was the beginning of end. Lawlessness reappeared in every part of the Empire. The Sultans of Bijapur and Golkonda were hatching plan to defy the Mughal authority. Finally, Emperor's endless campaign against Maratha forts as organised by Rajaram (1689-1700) and his followers, could only wear out the last years of his life from his base at Aurangabad. He returned to Ahmednagar in January 1706, to die a year latter in February 1707.[12]

AHOM RECOVERY OF GAUHATI

Gadadhar Singh, unlike his predecessors, did not fail to take full advantage of the problems faced by Aurangzeb and his suicidal policy of encamping himself in the distant Deccan and western end of his vast empire, employing all the imperial resources there and leaving the eastern frontier completely unprotected and uncared for, at a time when the Ahoms staged a come back to their lost prowess and prestige. He also reorganised the army and navy and ordered the recovery of Gauhati

10. Irvine, W (tr) Vol. II, op.cit., pp 291-92.
11. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Vol. IV, op.cit., p 484.
12. Sir J.N. Sarkar, A Short History of Aurangzib, p 263.

from the Mughals.[13] A conference of the nobles was held at the capital city in March 1682 to discuss the ways and means. The monarch then consulted the astrologers for the final date of the campaign. The astrologer gave the verdict that the monarch was sure to win the victory over the Mughals and enjoy the sovereignty of Kamrup.[14]

On the completion of the preparations, the Ahom army set out for Gauhati in three divisions; Bandar Barphukan and Champa Paniphukan proceeded by water on the Brahmaputra, Sondikoi Neog Phukan of Garhgaon and Khamrak Charingia Phukan by the Kalang river on the south bank, and Hulon Deka Phukan and the Namdangia Phukan by the north bank of the Brahmaputra. On the approach of the Ahom forces the Mughals evacuated their advanced garrisons at Kajali, Panikhaiti and Kurua for fear of being outnumbered and they mobilised their strength based at Itakhuli and Gauhati.[15]

On the other hand, the camp followers of Mansur Khan, the Mughal Faujdar were aggrieved by the unusual delay in getting remuneration and brought the matter to the notice of the Bengal Viceroy. But their representations did not receive helping response. A section of the Mughal soldiers then decided to take revenge by imprisoning the sick Faujdar but he managed to escape from his rebellious troops. The Faujdar tried to pacify the advancing Ahoms through his envoy Sam Singh but his efforts did not yield positive results.[16]

13. Barua, G.C. (tr) Ahom Buranji, p 262.
14. Bhuyan, S.K. (ed) op.cit., p 122.
15. Bhuyan, S.K. Atan Buragohain and his times, pp 222-23, Barua, G.C. (tr) Ahom Buranji, p 263.
16. Bhuyan, S.K. (ed) Assam Buranji, p 122.

The Faujdar, was now forced to resist the organised attack of the Ahoms despite his internal weaknesses. Fierce battle began at Bahbari, Sonapur, Sarania, Jaiduar and other places. The Mughal thanadars of Kajali, Panikhaiti and Kurua retreated to Gauhati having chased by the Ahom commanders. The Mughal army took refuge at Umananda, an island in the Brahmaputra river opposite Gauhati. The place was well protected with arms in order to rescue the main garrison of Itakhuli or Sukreswar Hill near Gauhati. Jayanti Singh, the Mughal commander, had to face the battle of Itakhuli against the Ahoms, and later, he became captive and the Faujdar meanwhile, withdrew from Itakhuli and made his camp to the west of Gauhati.[17] Ali Akbar, another hero of the Mughal troops fought in the battle of Itakhuli by launching the attack upon the Ahom fort of Sarania but he too failed to withstand the onslaughts of the Ahoms and fled to the camp of Mansur Khan. After a haltage of few days, the Faujdar and his associates had to retreat further to Rangamati. The Ahoms chased the Imperial troops up to the river Manas.[18] This river was, thenceforce, accepted as the western boundary of the Ahom State and it was maintained till the occupation of the British. The battle of Itakhuli that took place in September 1682 marked a new era of the Tungkhungia dynasty as Ahom victory dislodged the Mughals once for all from Gauhati after they had been in its occupation for three years and a half, while the Ahoms under Gadadhar Singh succeeded to recover

17. Bhuyan, S.K. (ed) Op.cit., p.123
18. Barua, G.C. (tr) op.cit., p 263; Bhuyan, S.K.(ed) op.cit., p.123, Bhuyan, S.K. (ed) Kamrupar Buranji, p. 103.

their prestigeous western port town.

The battle of Itakhuli and the occupation of Gauhati constitute a landmark in the annals of Ahom-Mughal relations, being the last decisive encounter in a series of clashes, spreading over almost the whole of seventeenth century. The Mughal surrender of territory was accompanied by huge war materials. The Ahoms secured a vast amount of booty, including pearls, gold, silver, copper, brass, lead, elephants, camels, horses, buffaloes, oxen, cannon of all sizes, guns, spears, swords, bows and arrows and war boats.[19] Three cannons are still to be found at Dikom (between Dibrugarh and Tinsukia), one in the Indian Museum and the third outside the residence of the Deputy Commissioner of Lakhimpur, which bear the following inscription : "King Gadadhar Singh having vanquished the Mughals at Gauhati, obtained this weapon in 1604 Saka" (A.D. 1682).[20] Few cannons that were captured are preserved at Assam museum, Gauhati.

BACK TO PROWESS

Although the unfortunate symptoms of disloyalty in a section of the Ahom officials again crept in no sooner the recovery of Gauhati was effected, Gadadhar Singh succeeded in straightening the administrative machinery and defence structure of the society. The personal popularity and support of the more dominant nobles, his patriotism and vision, were the

19. Bhuyan, S.K., (ed) Assam Buranji, p 123; Barua, G.C. (tr) op.cit., 263.

20. Assam Buranji, MSS No. 57, Tr. No. 86, D.H.A.S., Gauhati, E. Gait, History of Assam, p 172.

strength of the monarch. The rebel and disloyal nobles and officials were either dismissed or put to death. The crushing of the conspiracies was followed by radical overhauling of the administration and reshuffle of administrative posts. The key positions were centralised and administration manned by personnel where integrity and fidelity were beyond question.[21] In a short time, Gadadhar Singh achieved the consolidation of the Tungkhungia rule in the Ahom state and brought back the monarchy to its old prowess. He also succeeded in pacifying the hostile neighbours like the Nagas and the Miris through a determined policy of coersion and conciliation.[22]

The monarch drew his inspiration from the spiritual world and set himself also in strengthening the Hindu solidarity by combating the conflicts of orthodoxies. He also made determined efforts to curb the political influence of the religious leaders. The ascendancy of the Satradhikar and Mahantas in court politics was looked upon by him as centre of political distraction. To pull down the edifice of Vaishnava monasticism, the shrewd monarch turned to be a patron of Saktism, although he was not the disciple of any Sakta preceptor. He also looked upon the Sakta spirit as the strength of the society and the state and considered the injunctions of the Gosains as the cause of physical deterioration. Obviously, the monarch commanded the full support of the followers of Saktism who offered support to his scheme of state re-building. The Vaishnava preceptors, on the other

21. G.C. Barua, (tr) Op.cit., pp 266-67; Assam Buranji, MSS No. 57, Tr. No. 86, D.H.A.S., Gauhati.

22. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, p 128.

hand, turned against him but many of them were subjected to torture and their weath was confiscated.[23]

Then according to royal decrees, the dwelling houses of all Hindu Gosains were reduced to ashes. Then the golden image of Dakhinpat was removed and melted, and placed on the turret of the temple at Charaideo as its pitcher. The eye-balls of Ram Gosain of Dakhinpat were extracted for the series of offences that he was charged with, and Auniati Gosain was banished to Sadiya. Most of the religious leaders were removed from their localities and settled in new areas to diminish their social and political influences.[24] The actions of the monarch led to unfortunate destruction of religious centres but succeeded in recovering the administration and politics from the unwanted religious influences. A secular state structure revitalised the traditional potentialities and regained the support of all sections of the subjects, a majority of whom were tribals.

Gadadhar Singh also eleverly patronised a Mughal from Secundrabad, named Muhammad Ali, who belonged to the staff of Mansur Khan and was entrusted with the education of then Faujdar's sons. Immediately after the retreat of the Mughals, Gadadhar Singh extended patronage to this learned Mughal and allowed him to remain at Gauhati enjoying that immunity from suspicion to which a scholar was entitled according to Indian

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23. S.K. Bhuyan (tr) Tungkhungia Buranji, p 29, G.C.Barua, (tr), op.cit., p 270.

24. S.K. Bhuyan (tr) Tungkhungia Buranji, pp 29-30.

tradition. Sandikoi Phukhan, the Ahom Governor of Gauhati, generously patronised him and appreciated his scholarship. The Ahom Governor also seized this opportunity of collecting information about the Mughal Empire by arranging for recording of the narratives of Delhi and other materials that were in his possession.[25]

MUGHAL DEPENDENCIES

The defeat of the Mughals at Itakhuli and restabilisation of the Ahom authority under Gadadhar Singh could not be without some impact in the Mughal dependencies in the North-East viz., Jayantia, Tripura and Cooch Behar. It is interesting to note that in 1682 itself, that the battle of Itakhuli took place, the Raja of Jayantia lost no time in doing away with the old pledges and indulging in a series of raids in the Mughal territory. By November, 1682 Raja Lakshmi Singh alias Lakshmi Narayan extended his raids upto the Sylhet town and burnt down its envirous.[26] The letters exchanged between the royal houses of Jayantia and Assam during this period are clear suggestive of the fact that the reigning monarchs professed friendship and were working on a scheme to resist the Mughals. The raids of the Raja of Jayantia proved so disastrous that Shaista Khan had to send an imperial army under his son Iradat Khan which succeeded in pushing back the Raja's raiders to his own territory.[27]

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25. S.K. Bhuyan (tr) Annals of the Delhi Badshahate, p 212.
26. Sir J.N. Sarkar (ed) History of Bengal, p 377; S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Jayantia Buranji, pp 62-64.
27. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Jayantia Buranji, pp 62-64; S.M. Ali, The History of Jaintia, p 23.

Ratna Manikya II who ascended the throne of Tripura in 1685, also assumed an anti-Mughal posture. Balibhim Narayan who acted as regent during the minority of new Raja, led an expedition in the Mughal territory of Sylhet. He was however, captured by the Mughal forces. On the other hand, Narendra Manikya, a cousin of Ratna Manikya II, who claimed the throne of Tripura, inspired Shaista Khan to send a powerful expedition by promising to the Mughals to present two more elephants and one additional elephant for the governor of Dacca over the prevalent system of annual presentation of two elephants.[28] Shaista Khan, Subehdar of Bengal, accordingly invaded Tripura as a repraisal for the invasion of Sylhet. The encounter that continued for some years ultimately resulted in the installation of Narendra Manikya as the Raja of Tripura in 1693. Ratna Manikya II and his three sons were made prisoners. Champak Roy, another cousin of Ratna Manikya II, however, opposed the reign of Narendra Manikya and succeeded in enlisting the support of the people and the nobles including those who earlier backed Narendra Manikya to power. Narendra Manikya also shortly afterwards, incurred the displeasure of the Mughals, perhaps by violating the agreement. Champak Roy, thereupon, with the help of General Mir Khan defeated Narendra Manikya at the battle of Chandigarh and placed Ratna Manikya II on the throne in 1695 and himself became the virtual ruler.[29]

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28. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Tripura Buranji, p 37.

29. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Tripura Buranji, p 38; N.R. Roy Choudhury, Tripura Through the Ages, pp 44-45; Rajmala, Education Directorate, Tripura, p 83.

Champak Roy, however, ignored the tradition of sending annual presents of elephants to the Mughal courts. The rising power of Champak Roy, however, alarmed Ratna Manikya II who killed Champak Roy and regained the sympathy of the Mughals by appointing his younger brother Chandramoni as a 'hostage' in the court of Murshidabad and renewing the presentation of annual tribute and earning in return Khelat or robe of honour.[30] The attitude of the Raja towards the Mughals, however, did not fail to provoke challenge to his authority from within, that shall be described in a subsequent section.

The decadent state of Cooch Behar also passed through similar developments. Mohendra Narayan who ascended the throne in 1682 was only five years old and therefore, as before the actual administration was carried on by Mahi Narayan and his two sons Jagat Narayan and Jajna Narayan. The tyranny of the trio caused a total disorder in the state and the officers of various chaklas behaved like independent rulers, while some of them conspired with the Mughals.[31] Shaista Khan did not fail to capitalise the situation. Three successive Mughal expeditions of 1685, 1687 and 1693 succeeded in the annexation of a portion of Cooch Behar and clearing the way for the renewal of hostility with Assam. The Raja of Cooch Behar was also terrorised to invade Assam on behalf of the Mughals and agree to pay a tribute of Rupees ten lakhs.[32]

30. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Tripura Buranji, p 40.
31. S.N. Bhattacharyya, A History of Mughal North-East Frontier Policy, pp 312-13.
32. S.K. Bhuyan, Atan Buragohain and his times, p 231.

The Mughal imperialism in Cooch Behar created a condition for the Ahom-Mughal rapprochement. As early as in March 1685, Mahendra Narayan, Raja of Cooch Behar, wrote to Sandikoi Barphukan, informing him of the reported intention of the Mughals to invade Assam, after having first brought Cooch-Behar under their domination. The Raja reiterated his plan of a joint and simultaneous attack on the Mughal territories. Meanwhile, the Mughals had occupied Bahirbond extending from Bagduar, and Mahendra Narayan considered himself incapable of single handed action to dislodge the aggressions. However the Ahom monarch was then engaged in reform spheres and did not feel inclined to accept the proposal of Cooch Behar that caused miseries to the Ahoms in the past. Further, in the same year i.e. 1685, Gadadhar Singh had to face the challenge of the Miris and Nagas.[33] However, the Barphukan wrote a letter to the Koch Raja expressing sorrow at the discomfiture of the latter at the hands of the Mughals. This letter too, unfortunately, could not reach Cooch Behar due to the difficulties caused on the way.[34]

The Mughal expansionism, nevertheless, forced Mahendra Narayan to stand on his own strength and he declared war against the Mughals in 1691. Jajna Narayan was appointed as the Commander-in-Chief of the Koch army. The Raja also received substantial assistance from the ruler of Bhutan.[35] A number of

33. E. Gait, History of Assam, p 172.
34. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Assam Buranji, p 126; S.K. Bhuyan, Atan Buragohain and his times, p 234.
35. A.A. Chowdhuri, Cooch-Beharer Itihas, p 175.

trecherous officers of various Chaklas betrayed the Raja and secured rights over their lands on payment of revenue directed to the Mughal government. A good part of the Cooch Behar State thus passed into the hands of the Mughals. In the midst of the war, Mahendra Narayan passed away in 1693. Rup Narayan, the son and successor of Mahendra Narayan continued to fight with the Mughals.[86]

ASCENDANCY OF RUDRA SINGH

The concept of North-Eastern solidarity and concerted challenge to the Mughals matured further under Rudra Singh, the Ahom monarch, who succeeded his father Gadadhar Singh in 1696 A.D. He was brilliant in his intellect, unrivalled in his political foresight and was endowed by nature with extra-ordinary talents and noble birth. He was a man of passions based on glory and victory. He embodied all the virtues of benevolent despotism. He dazzled the imagination of his neighbouring rulers and chieftains and delighted their eyes by his magnanimous personality. As a military leader his strong determination to take all precautionary measures against the Mughal authorities both at central and provincial level broke down the morale of the Bengal Viceroys. He took full advantage of the internal dissensions in the Mughal province of Bengal during the Viceroyship of Ibrahim Khan (1689-97) as well as Prince Azim-u-din (1697-1712), alias Azim-ush-shan, the grandson of Aurangzeb. Owing to the Emperor's protracted absence from his capital as well as

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36. Ibid., p 179.

engrossed in fighting twelve years in the Deccan, rebellious zamindars specially of Bengal openly defied the Imperial authority.[37] For example, during the Viceroyship of Ibrahim Khan in Bengal, one Shova Singh, the Chief of Cheto-Barda (Midnapur district), rebelled and in alliance with Rahim Khan, the Chief of the Orissa Afgans defeated and slew Raja Krishna Ram, the revenue - farmer of the Burdwan district, and captured its Chief town with the family and property of the Raja. Then they seized the fort and city of Hoogly, and plundered the rich cities of Nadia and Murshidabad, Malda and Rajmahal.[38]

However, Shova Singh was stabbed to death by a daughter of the Raja of Burdwan and the rebels then chose Rahim Khan as their ruler with the title of Rahim Shah. The English, French and Dutch, on the outbreak of the rebellion, obtained permission of the Viceroy to fortify their respective settlements at Calcutta, Chandannagar and Chinsura and the Dutch afterwards helped to wrest Hoogly fort from the bebels. The Emperor dismissed Ibrahim Khan and appointed his own grandson, Prince Azim-usha-shan, in his place. After the arrival of the Prince at Burdwan from Deccan, his minister Khvaja Anwar was trecherously slain at an interview by Rahim Khan, but the rebel leader was killed and his army broke up.[39]

Above all, the Emperor was only hunkering after wealth from Bengal Subah as the imperial treasury in the Deccan expedition was totally exhausted. During the Viceroyship

37. A. Salam, (tr) Riyazu-s-Salatin, pp 229-31.
38. W. Haig & R. Burn (ed), The Cambridge History of India, Vol. IV, p 311.
39. A. Salam (Tr), op.cit., p 241.

of Shaista Khan for two terms, the emperor used to get immense wealth from Bengal at the cost of the masses and classes. Added to this, after 1705 the Marathas under Peshwas became masters of the situation all over the Deccan and even in parts of Central India. The Mughal officers were helplessly reduced to the defensive. A change came over the Maratha tactics with this growth of power; they were no longer, as in Shivaji's and Shambhuji's times, light horsemen who plundered and fled or merely looted unprotected traders and villagers, dispersing at the first report of the Mughal army's approach. On the contrary, as Manucci noticed in 1704, "The Maratha leaders and their troops move in these days with much confidence because they have cowed the Mogul commanders and inspired them with fear. In short, they are equipped and moved about just like the armies of the Moguls. But at the present time they move like conquerors, showing no fear of any Mogul troops."[40]

The growing weakness of Mughal authority was advantageous to the Ahom monarch, Rudra Singh, who had inherited from his father an orderly government and a peaceful state. Consequently, he had the opportunity to formulate new and vigorous plans to elevate his kingdom as one of the first-rate powers in India. However, the rising popularity of Rudra Singh created a jealousy in his younger brother who made an attempt to rebel against him.[41]

~~In the ensued conspirary, the prince acted in concert~~

40. W. Irvine (Tr), Storia Do Mogor, Vol.III, p 480.
41. S.K. Bhuyan (tr) Tungkhungia Buranji, p 32.

In the ensued conspiracy, the prince acted in concert with few high officials who were very much aggrieved by the rule of benevolent despotism. But Damodar Phukan of Mechaghar unveiled the secrets of the conspiracy to Rudra Singh who took drastic actions against the ring of conspirators. However the three Phukans were exempted from capital punishment due to intervention of loyal nobles. But those Phukans were sacked from the responsible offices and sent to their respective home towns. Soon after, the paramount monarch took revenge upon his rebellious brother by extracting his eye-balls.[42]

Indeed, Rudra Singh was the embodiment of enlightened despotism like those in Europe in the eighteenth century as most of the benevolent despots worked for the benefit of the people over whom they ruled. They were fully conscious of their despotic powers, and at the same time conscious of their responsibilities and justice to the subjects. Hence they were not so selfish and oppressive. To them, the government existed for the good of the people. Most of the rulers were sincerely interested to translate the enlightened views into practice. Thus, attempts were made to improve the condition of the country by introducing reforms of common interests in all possible fields. In the long run, the system of 'enlightened despotism' did not prove successful. Nevertheless, the monarchs atleast expressed their gesture in saving the common masses from the grip of rebel feudals and selfish nobility. Rudra Singh, the Ahom monarch was well in advance to cut the root of parasite classes which was banking on the rule of

42. Assam Buranji, MSS No. 44, Tr. No. 259, D.H.A.S.,Gauhati.

weak monarchy.[43]

Obviously, the autocratic rule of Aurangzeb over the Mughal empire generated a reaction on the political condition of North-East frontier which was marching in the path of benevolent monarchy initiated by Rudra Singh. Presumably, he also created a tactical pressure upon the tottering authority of Mughal and thereby brought about the collapse of Pan - Islamic dominion to North East India and China in the next. The deeds of Rudra Singh served as an example and model of 'Enlightened despotism' that began its process in the region under review. In religious field too, a new approach was given by the Ahom monarch by instilling the spirit of Saktism in to conventional Vaishnava sect.[44] He restored the Vaishnava monks to their original Satras, encouraged art, literature and music. Auniati Gosain was specially honoured, as the monarch not only recalled him from exile, but appointed him as spiritual preceptor of the royal court. The persecution of Sudra Medhis also ceased, but Brahmans were forbidden to bend the knee to them, and they were compelled to wear as their distinctive badge like small earthen jars hanging from a string round the neck.[45]

The monarch, however, did not withdraw the patronage that his father-predecessors had extended to the Saktas. In fact, he brought from Bengal one Krishnaram Bhattacharya, a famous Sakta mahant of Nadia, who was given the care of the

43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. Assam Buranji, MSS 49, D.H.A.S.

temple of Kamakya, near the vicinity of Gauhati and became the preceptor of Rudra Singh's son and a large number of Brahmins at the wishes of the monarch. A significant feature of Rudra Singh's policy was the way in which he encouraged increased contacts with Bengal. He imported a large number of artisans from Bengal and established numerous schools for the education of Brahmins. He also sent a large number of Brahmin boys for higher education. He secured the submission of the bordering hill chiefs and encouraged extensive trade with Tibet. He abandoned isolationist policy of his predecessors and encouraged intercourse with other nations. He also sent envoys to the contemporary rulers of other parts of Eastern India and studied their customs with an object to revitalise the system in his own state.[46]

Rudra Singh imported from Cooch Behar an artisan named Ghansyam, under whose supervision numerous brick buildings were erected at Rangpur, close to Sibsagar, and also at Charaideo. When Ghansyam had finished his work, and was on the point of departing, richly rewarded by the monarch, it was accidentally disclosed that he had in his possession a document containing a full account of the country and its inhabitants. It is assumed that his object was to betray the Ahoms to the Muhammadans, and he was arrested and put to death. The monarch also encouraged the foreign costumes in respect of nobles and members of the royalty.[47]

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46. E. Gait, op.cit., pp 186-87.
47. S.K. Bhuyan (tr) op.cit., p 33.

TOWARDS CONFEDERATION

Rudra Singh, thereupon, proceeded to pacify the two monarchies on the immediate borders of Assam, namely, Cachar and Jayantia. During the major part of the seventeenth century, Ahom rulers followed the policy of non-intervention towards these two states as they were confronted with the imperial Mughals. In fact, the traditional rivalry between the Ahoms and the Kacharis was kept in abeyance because of the more formidable challenge from the west. As the Ahoms could consolidated their position during the reign of Gadadhar Singh and Rudra Singh, they had no reason to tolerate the diplomatic overtures made by the Kachari Raja, Tamradhvaja-narayan, who was reluctant to acknowledge the Ahom hegemony. Tamradhvaj sent letters to the Ahom monarch where he assumed the role of an independent sovereign in accordance with the custom of his immediate predecessor.[48] The Kachari Raja also demanded the territories up to Mahang to be surrendered by the Ahoms. This demand provoked Rudra Singh to expel the Kachari ambassador from his court. Gandharba Roy, the Kachari Ambassador was escorted by Ahom official of Gauhati up to the border of Cachar and he relayed the view of Rudra Singh to his monarch.[49]

Meanwhile, Rudra Singh resolved to reduce the Kacharis to submission. The Ahom army was mobilised and Rudra Singh took personal care in organising the army. In November, 1706 the Ahom army set out from Biswanath in two columns. One under the Dihingia Deka Barbarua through the Dhansiri

48. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Kachari Buranji, pp 60-67.
49. Ibid.

route, and the other under Pani Phukan through the Kopili route.[50] The Barbarua's column was intercepted by the Nagas but the Miri soldiers in Ahom army played an important role in defeating the Nagas with their bows and arrows.[51] In the valley below the Nomali hill, the Kacharis made their first stand, but the Ahom troops outnumbered the enemy and the Kacharis were forced to retreat. Ultimately, the Ahom army reached the Kachari capital at Maibong when Tamradhvaj escaped to south Cachar.[52]

Meanwhile, the column under Pani Phukan made its way to Demera, in the Kachari territory where he received the envoy of Dimarua Raja who gave proposal for bilateral peace between the Ahoms and the Kacharis. However, Pani Phukan reached Maibong in February 1707 and joined the Dihingia Deka Bar Barua there. Rudra Singh was informed by a messenger that Maibong which situated on the river Mahur in the North Cachar hills, had come under the complete occupation of the Ahoms but its ruler fled away towards the plains of Cachar in the south. The monarch was disturbed by the fact that there was every possibility of Mughal assistance to the Kachari Raja through the Faujdar of Sarkar Sylhet. Therefore, the Ahom monarch issued a fresh order for the attack upon southern plains of Cachar. Unfortunately, the entire Ahom army became victim to pestilence that occured at Maibong and ~~Dihingia Deka~~ the Bar Barua succumed to death by illness while returning to Demera near the fort Gelemu.[53]

50. Ibid., p 92.
51. Ibid., pp 93-94.
52. Ibid., p 98.
53. Ibid., p 107.

Rudra Singh, who was camping at Roha, was purturbed by the attitude of the Commanders as they refused to undertake southern campaign. In March, 1707 Rudra Singh was compelled by the pressure of the Phukans to abandon the project. On the other hand, the Kachari Raja having failed to obtain military assistance from the Mughal Faujdar of Sylhet moved to Bikrampur wherefrom he contacted the Jayantia Raja for help and shelter.[54]

Raja of Jayantia at that time passed through unfriendly relations with the Ahoms and the Kacharis. Raja Ram Singh of Jayantia thus got an opportunity to establish his authority over the Kacharis. He could also, in process, ensure suzerainty over the chieftaincies of Dimarua, Nelly, Gobha etc.. It is also possible that Ram Singh made contact with the Faujdar of Sylhet for support. His motives could be smelt by Tamradhvaj. As the Ahom forces had in the meantime been withdrawn from North Cachar Hills, Tamradhvaj could inform the Jayantia Raja that help was no longer necessary. Nevertheless, the Jayantia Raja marched to Mulagul, which was situated near Fort Haritikar in the modern district of Cachar, on the plea of friendly meeting at Baleswar. He seized Tamradhvaj and took him off to his capital at Jayantiapur.[55] Several members of the royal family of Cachar were placed in close confinement and the Kachari frontier forts at Bandasil and Ichamati on the northern bank of river Surma were attacked and taken by the Raja of Jayantia. This incident infused a dramatic change

54. Ibid., pp 108-110.
55. Ibid., pp 111-12.

in the situation. A request was made to the Ahom monarch on behalf of the Kachari Raja to intervene. The Bar Phukan and other officials of Gauhati then induced Rudra Singh to take appropriate measures against Jayantia and thereby to fulfil the double purpose of subduing Cachar and Jayantia and other vassal states. Accordingly, Rudra Singh sent ultimatum demanding the unconditional surrender of the captive as well as Jayantia Raja himself. As the Jayantia Raja refused to comply with the demand, an expedition against him was despatched.[56]

The expedition ultimately succeeded in bringing both the Rajas of Jayantia and Cachar to the Ahom court. The moment the captives appeared at the victorious camp at Biswanath, Rudra Singh officially announced the annexation of both the states. Tamradhvaj voluntarily accepted the suzerainty of the Ahom monarch. Accordingly, he was sent to Khaspur duly escorted by Ahom troops. Ram Singh of Jayantia died in illness at Rangpur.[57] Jaynarayan, the son of Ram Singh, was thereupon installed by the Ahom monarch as the vassal ruler of Jayantia. As Tamradhvaj also died shortly after his return to Maibong, his son Suradarpanarayan ascended the throne of Cachar as vassal ruler.[58]

The success of Rudra Singh in imposing Ahom vassalage over Cachar and Jayantia was a significant step towards a North-Eastern confederacy to counteract any possible repetition of the Mughal expansionist policy. These two were only

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56. S.K. Bhuyan (ed), Jayantia Buranji, pp 81-82.
57. Ibid., pp 101-104.
58. Ibid., p 107.

organised monarchy on the eastern and south-eastern borders of the Ahom state and extended upto the Mughal territory in the Surma valley. The Ahoms were for about three centuries in confronting relations with the ruler of these monarchies. Both of them had dependent Chieftaincies in Assam Valley, e.g. Dimarua, Khola, Nelli, Ghoba etc. During the years that the Ahoms were forced to reckon with the Mughal invasions, they were constantly haunted by the fear of possible alignment of these erstwhile rival monarchies with the Mughals. The achievment of Rudra Singh in pacifying the rulers of Cachar and Jayantia brought these states, along with their dependencies, within Ahom sphere of influence. The net work of traditional forts in Cachar and Jayantia on the borders of Bengal was an additional security for the Ahom state. The relationship with Cooch Behar state could not be settled till then, but by this the Ahom state was exposed to the Mughals only by their narrow western front in which the Mughals were actually defeated in a number of encounters. Further, the petty chieftaincies in West Assam, Raniduar, Lukiduar, Bagduar, Beltala, Barduar, Mairapur, Panton, Dimarua, Bholagoan, called Na-duar or nine duars[59] were, in fact, the dependencies of the Ahoms and, as such, could be catalyst to Ahom defence system.

PACIFICATION OF HILL NEIGHBOURS

The success against Cachar and Jayantia was a great impetus for Rudra Singh to extend his policy of pacification towards the Hill-tribes in the northern and north-western

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59. J.B. Bhattacharjee, The Garos and the English, p 86.

boundaries of the State, namely, the Arunachalis, the Bhutanese and the Nagas, in a common perspective of north-eastern solidarity. These tribes lived in a common border with the Ahoms for centuries and there had been an extensive trade relations between the hills and the plains passing through the duars or the passes to each of which a market was generally appended. Nevertheless, most of the tribes were predatory in character and occasionally resorted to raids and plunders in the villages within the Ahom territory.[60] The earlier Ahom monarchs generally endeavoured to reckon with these predatory challenges by force, although not with much success. Pratap Singh, the Ahom monarch (1603-41) viewed this hostile situation as dangerous when he was logged in a prolonged confrontation with the Mughals. He could not risk to allow such hostility to continue in the other frontiers of his state when he was faced with the invading Mughal in the western border. The monarch, therefore, invented a system called posa whereby the Hill-Chiefs in the frontiers were allowed to certain collections from the plains and in return, made responsible for the maintenance of peace and order in the respective borders. The posa system introduced by Pratap Singh had since then formed the net work of the Ahom conciliatory policy towards the trans-Himalayan tribes.[61]

The conciliatory policy had worked well in pacifying the Hill-neighbours during the reign of subsequent Ahom rulers and Rudra Singh could persue it more vigorously as part of his

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60. G. Barua, Assam Buranji, p 80.

61. K.N.T. Phukan, Assam Buranji, p 32, G. Barua, op.cit., p 96.

own scheme. The Miris, who were one of the earliest tribes to enter into Pratam Singh's system, were, by the time Rudra Singh ascended the throne, "submissive and peaceful and continued to be so till the end of Ahom rule in Assam."[62] They were recruited to the Ahom army by Pratap Singh and rendered invaluable services to Rudra Singh during his Cachar and Jayantia campaigns. As a matter of fact, the Miri soldiers were instrumental in subduing the various Naga clans that intercepted the expedition to Cachar.[63] Similarly, the Akas and Daflas, two other border tribes under posa in present Arunachal Pradesh, maintained relationships with the Ahoms, despite occasional hostilities. During Rudra Singh's time, the Akas posed no major problem and the posa system was maintained as usual. A section of the Daflas, however, turned hostile and a large number of bordering tribes represented to the monarch for protection against the Daflas. Rudra Singh immediately despatched an eight thousand men strong army under the command of the Naobaicha Phukan and Nyaya Sodha Phukan to suppress the Daflas. The Dafla chiefs who were summoned to appear before the Phukans confirmed their allegiance to the Ahom monarch and agreed to furnish six hundred Daflas to the Ahom army.[64]

The relations with the Mishmis, another powerful Arunachali tribe, matured by 1687 when the Ahom monarch confirmed them in the possession of their hills in return of

62. L. Devi, Ahom-Tribal Relations, p 165.
63. S.K. Bhuyan, Kachari Buranji, p 97.
64. L. Devi, op.cit., p 179.

the payment of tribute and an Ahom officer called Sadia Bargohain was posted at Sadiya as governor of the area. "The advantages of trade offered by the Ahoms, coupled with the policy of non-interference in the internal administration of the hill tribes and non-annexation of their territories to the Ahom kingdom helped in establishing peaceful relations between the Ahom rulers and the Mishmis."[65] Rudra Singh carried on the policy of his predecessors and ensured the loyalty of the Mishmi chiefs.

The Chiefs of the duars bordering Assam and Bhutan as well as in the extra-Bhutan Bhutanese territory in present Arunachal Pradesh bordering Assam, also were brought under posa system during the time of Pratap Singh. These duars, however, experienced, hostile raids and confrontations during the subsequent periods inspired mainly by the rulers of Bhutan. Nevertheless, these duars played an important role in the trade history of Assam and vice versa as they linked the markets of Assam with those in Bhutan, Tibet and China[66] and the Ahom monarchs had always endeavoured to maintain peace in the area. The hostile situation in this sector came to an end during the reign of Gadadhar Singh (1681-96) who was instrumental in the construction of a string of forts all along the Assam-Bhutanese border through the Raja of Darrang.[67] Rudra Singh inherited this powerful net work of forts. He reinforced the defence structure and succeeded in re-establishing extensive trade contacts with Tibet.[68]

65. Ibid., p 187.
66. L. Devi, op.cit., p 195; W. Robinson, A descriptive Account of Assam, pp 293-94.
67. L. Devi, op.cit., pp 206-07, W. Irvine (tr) Storia Do Mogor, Vol. II, p 413.
68. E. Gait, op.cit., pp 273-74.

The relation with the Nagas had also already taken some definite shape through the arrangements made with the border Chiefs[69] and Rudra Singh had nothing much to alter. Nevertheless, the salt mines in the bordering regions that the Nagas used, generated occasional feuds. In 1701 A.D. a merchant had killed about sixty Nagas at Barhat near Simlagarh who had entered the Ahom fort guarding the salt mine there. In retaliation, the Nagas also killed a large number of persons on the Ahom side.[70] Rudra Singh immediately despatched an army under Basang Phukan to punish the Nagas. The Phukan succeeded in persuading, at the display of force, the Naga chiefs of the area to accompany him to the Ahom court. The chiefs submitted to the Ahom monarch and assured their good conduct in future. Rudra Singh rewarded them and sent them back to their hills and this gesture of the monarch had proved significant in his policy of pacification. As a historian writes, "the policy of persuation employed by Basang Phukan proved to be very successful, for we do not hear of any Naga's raid until the beginning of the 19th century when the Ahom Kingdom had already begun to decline."[71]

Evidently, Rudra Singh could settle the accounts with the otherwise predatory neighbours in the hills without much difficulty. The peaceful situation in these borders were necessary to rebuild the state in the line that the monarch cherished and the solidarity of the states and chieftaincies in the regions could only motivate the people in a common

69. L. Devi, op.cit., pp 34-38.
70. S.K. Bhuyan (tr) Tung Khungia Buranji, p 33.
71. L. Devi, op.cit., p 38.

challenge to the Mughals that he aspired. The ball was set rolling to the end by his father Gadadhar Singh whose strong and rational policies had revitalised the decaying Ahom state. Rudra Singh inherited the system of relations with hill neighbours and he carried it further to ensure their submission and loyalty to strengthen his position. His spectacular success against the redoubtable Kacharis and Jaintias might have been a powerful instrument of securing good behaviour of the hill neighbours. A section of the Nagas and Daflas, who turned hostile for only a short while, had to surrender unconditionally and reaffirm the allegiance and agree to pay tribute only at the display of force. Such conduct of the fiery hill-men can be understood only in terms of the prowess and the prestige that Rudra Singh commanded. The vassalage of Cachar and Jayantia, along with their tributaries, and the pacification of Hill-tribes was a step further towards a confederacy in the North-East that Rudra Singh planned to beat the Mughals in their own territory in Bengal. In this grand scheme, these vassal states and the pacified Hills became the recruiting hinterlands to his confederated army that shall be discussed in a following section.

AT MUGHAL COST

The Ahom monarch could, however, organise the North-East as a potential challenge to the Mughals only by taking full advantage of peculiar situation that the rulers of Delhi were put at by the unscrupulous policies of Aurangzeb. The last ten years of Aurangzeb's life were inexpressibly sad. Politically, he found that his life-long endeavour to govern India justly and strongly had ended in anarchy and disruption

throughout the empire. A sense of loneliness haunted the heart of Aurangzeb in his old age. One by one all older nobles had died. To quote J.N. Sarkar:

> "As the aged monarch looked round his court circle he only found on all sides younger man, timid Sycophants, afraid of responsibility, afraid to tell the truth, and eternally intriguing in a mean spirit of personal greed and mutual jealousy."[72]

The endless wars in which Aurangzeb became involved in 1679 and which were to continue till his death, began very soon to react on the political condition of Northern India. The Emperor left Delhi in 1679 for Rajputana and thence proceeded to the Deccan before the end of 1681. In unvarying succession, Northern India continued to be annually drained of its public money and youthful recruits inorder to fill the void caused by the Deccan wars. Reports of occasional disasters to the imperial arms, of Prince Akbar's rebellion, Shambhuji's daring raids and the hopeless entanglement of the Emperor with Bijapur, Golkonda, the Marathas and Sikhs, reached the bazaars and hamlets of Northern India with unusual exaggeration.[73]

Then in 1685 the Jats raised their heads under two new leaders, Raja Ram and Ram Chehra, the petty chieftains of Sinsani and Soghor, who were the first to train their clansmen in group organisation and open warfare. Added to this, the European traders came into contact with the Mughal authorities throughout the Mughal Empire. William Hedges's mission at Dacca received cold reception from Shaista Khan, the Subahdar.

72. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Aurangzib, Vol. V, p 202.
73. Ibid., pp 237-38.

The local officials at Hugli continued to stop the Company's boats and seize their goods. In vain, Hedges offered large sums of cash money to be excused of the payment of customs. At last, the English traders lost patience with the Mughal government. The Company, therefore, decided to protect itself by force, break with the Indian rulers, and seize and fortify some convenient place on the Indian coast where its trade would be safe from molestation.[74]

Even in Bengal Subah, the rebellion of Shova Singh and Rahim Khan were of far-reaching effects. It bears an evidence of administrative and military bankruptcy of the Imperial government of Bengal. Moreover, the foreign companies in Bengal lost faith in the local government and they obtained permission to defend themselves. This was the beginning of Fort William, Fort D'Orleans and Chinsura Ramparts. These foreign traders never whole-heartedly supported the government either militarily or economically. Under the cloak of neutrality, they refused to take the side of the lawful government except the Dutch, and thereby they indirectly extended their support to the underground activities of the rebels.[75]

The economic drain caused by Aurangzeb's quarter century of warfare in the dreadful Deccan was appaling in its character. The operations of the imperial armies, especially their numerous siezes, led to a total destruction of forests and grass. In addition, the Maratha raiders destroyed whatever they could, feeding their horses on the standing crops, and burning the

74. W. Irvine (tr) Storia Do Mogor, Vol. IV, pp 217-18, Sir J.N. Sarkar, (ed) History of Bengal, p 395.

75. Sir J.N. Sarkar (ed) History of Bengal, p 395.

houses and property too heavy to be removed. When Aurangzeb retired from his last campaign in 1705, the country presented a scene of utter desolation. As Manucci rightly remarked: "Aurangzeb withdrew to himself to the city of Aurangabad in the year 1706, leaving behind him the fields of these provinces devoid of trees and bare of crops, their place being taken by the bones of men and beasts."[76] Thus the Deccan proved to be the grave yard not only of Auranzeb's body but also of his Empire. The Emperor committed a himalayan political blunder in coercing and annexing the two Shia states of the Deccan to the Mughal Empire. Instead of serving as pillars to the Mughal structure, the annexation generated unsurpassable problems to Aurangzeb. As it is found that the states of Bijapur and Golkondathat emerged as prominent, defeating the cause of Bidar, Berar and Ahmednagar, served as a barrier between the Mughal empire and the power of militant Marathas.[77] But by annexing the Adil-Shahi & Qutb-Shahi States, Aurangzeb demolished the aforesaid barrier and brought the Marathas and the Mughals face to face with one another, inviting unthinkable and dreadful tension like the dismemberment of Poland in the eighteenth century that put three powers like Austria, Prussia and Russia in constant confrontation.

The prestige and powers of Bengal Viceroy was in the process of eclipse due to the dominating role of the European traders. In theory, Prince Muhammad Azim-ud-din,* the Emperor's

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76. W. Irvine (tr), op.cit., Vol. IV, pp 237.
77. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Aurangzib, Vol. IV, pp 467-68.
* Later Azim-ush-Shan.

grandson took charge of the government of Bengal in November 1697 and only for three years he had a free hand in Bengal till the assignment of Murshid Quli Khan as Diwan, but thereafter a new force entered the Bengal administration which was destined to drive out the Prince in less than three years and to leave an abiding mark on this subah of Bengal.[78]

This new force was Murshid Quli Khan alias Kar Talab Khan as well as Jafar Khan, brought a new legacy with whom the Nawabi rule in Bengal began its train. He joined in the Bengal administration in 1700 as diwan with intervals of two years (1708-09). He was then given lift to fulfledged Subadarship only from 1717 and continued this covetuous post till his death in 1727, after laying the foundation of an independent provincial dynasty emerged from the cock-pit of Murshidabad. Although he was neither Subahdar nor deputy Subahdar of the province prior to 1713, he could enjoy enormous power and influence from the outset. Obviously, the office of the Viceroy and deputy Viceroy of Bengal from 1700 to 1713 was run under the dictatorship of Murshid Quli Khan till he was conferred deputy Subahdarh in 1713. Some prerogative powers were virtually granted to him by Aurangzeb during the last decade of his reign. Following the tradition of Bengal Viceroys, Murshid Quli Khan succeeded in collecting huge wealth by his unprecedented revenue reforms, the basis of past and fruitful experiment of Deccan and thereby could win the blind support

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78. Assam Buranji, MSS No. 57, Tr. No. 86, D.H.A.S. Gauhati; Sir J.N. Sarkar (ed) History of Bengal pp. 405-07; A Salam, (tr) Riyazu-s-Salatin, p 247.

of Aurangzeb.[79] He could give substantial economic assistance to the hungry Emperor whose resources were at that time reduced to unmanageable position. Even though, Murshid Quli Khan became an eye sore to the leeches of feudal nobility, corrupt and heriditary officials of Bengal, 'Aurangzeb did not pay any heed to the incessant complaints lodged by those pugnacious parasites.' Rather, the Emperor continued to bestow more favours and rewards on the diwan and assured him of his protection against the official clique of Bengal. Evidently, the moral backbone of the so-called officials both in Bengal and also at the central level was paralysed. It may be recalled that right from the second term of Viceroyship of Shaista Khan, no viceroy could lay out any 'forward policy' in respect of North-East India. Rather, the Viceroy of Bengal was crazy for independent attitude denying the usual loyalty and fidelity towards the Imperial government. This tendency of separation was set rolling in Bengal from the time of Murshid Quli Khan.[80]

The emergence of Rudra Singh, the Ahom monarch, as a strong challenger to the Mughals and the way he attained the status of a virtual super-power in the North-East by organising the local rulers and the Chiefs in the region into a cohesive and co-operative group can be understood in the context of the endemic disorder in the declining Mughal State. Articulate and shrewd as he was, Rudra Singh could not be expected to fail to cash out of the chaotic situation that the erstwhile imperialist power pathetically passed through at the time the

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79. A. Salam (tr) op.cit., pp 248-49; Sir J.N. Sarkar (tr) Maasir-i-Alamgiri, p 288.

80. A. Salam (tr) op.cit., pp 251-52.

Ahoms were put back to the zenith of power. The lawlessness in Bengal, like other parts of India, gave him the golden opportunity as he envisaged a plan for forming a strong confederacy in North-East India. It is against this background that the imperial policy of the Tungkhungia rulers could be understood. To translate the idea of confederation into action, as has already been mentioned, Rudra Singh followed a 'forward policy' in respect of Jayantia and Cachar. The subjugation of these two monarchies and pacification of the hill-chiefs on the borders, as discussed earlier, strengthened the hands of the monarch, particularly in his own state, who could thereafter proceed further to bring in terms the rulers of other states in North-East in the direction of a confederated movement against the Mughals.

NORTH EASTERN CONFEDERACY

Rudra Singhis political genius can be fully realised not from the extent of the State he won for himself, nor from the internal development of the country, but from a survey of the conditions amidst which he chalked out the concept of north-eastern confederacy. In other words, he followed a policy of political unification of the entire North East India with three fold aims. Firstly, his contemplation was to promote the heritage of Ahom rule; Secondly, he was keen to keep pace with the cultural heritage of India; and thirdly, he was determined to eliminate the Mughal influence from the nook and corner of North East India. The contents of the diplomatic letters sent to the court of Tripura clearly suggest that he wanted to make every effort to revive the 'Vedic religion'

against the aggressive 'Pan-Islamic' culture of the Mughals. In this connection, the Ahom monarch made a request to mobilise public opinion along with the influential zamindars and nobles of his state on the common cause.[81]

It is possible that Rudra Singh looked upon the confederacy from various other angles as well. The way, as the head of the confederacy, the Ahom monarch ascended as a super-power in the North Eastern region was bound to integrate the region into a loose political structure under the leadership of the Ahoms. This would also tame the fury of the internal challangers to the Tungkhungia rule after the Ahom state had experienced series of domestic conspiracies during the rule of his predecessors. Liberating the north-east from the Mughal influence was no doubt one of his major objectives. But the monarch had actually gone a step further by planning an invasion of Bengal. This was perhaps intended to beat the Mughals in their own territory that would deter them from interfering in the affairs of the North East any more. An interesting feature of his policy was that Rudra Singh sought the support of the Hindu or atleast non-Muslim rulers in this common scheme. It is further more curious to note that he even inspired the Hindu Rajas and Zamindars in the Mughal territory to join this endeavour.[82] This makes abundantly clear his pro-Hindu and anti-Muslim stand.*

Rudra Singh could not reconcile with the subordination

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81. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Tripura Buranji, pp 15-16.
82. S.K. Bhuyan, Atan Buragohain and his times, p 235.

* Dr. S.K. Chatterji, calls Rudra Singh as Shivaji of North East India. See 'The Place of Assam in the history and civilization of India' pp 46-51.

to the Mughal government that was sounded through the diplomatic letters of Murshid Quli Khan. He rather diplomatically continued the outward amity till the execution of the objectives of confederacy. In this respect, he possessed the true master's gift of judging character at sight and choosing the fittest instrument for his lofty design. In fact, the initiative of Rudra Singh fired the imagination of the contemporary rulers and chieftains of the north-east and his name became a spell calling the Ahom race to a new life. Before him, the reigning monarchs and chieftains of the North Eastern region were scattered like atoms and he tried to integrate them in a common platform in the teeth of the opposition of Mughal viceroy and European traders of Bengal Subah.[83] No other medieval Hindu ruler of Eastern India could display such a capacity.

Evidently, Rudra Singh was the first to offer the final strike to both Mughal authorities as well as the politically motivated European traders of Bengal and thus convinced the members of the confederation that they could conduct their own defence, they could protect and promote literature and art, commerce and industry. Above all, he gave instruction and courage to Hindu rulers of Eastern India to rise to the full stature of their growth. Nevertheless, the common slogan was a political one with a religious overtone mingled with it.

It may be recalled that the battle of Itakhuli was a final blow both to the naval and land power of the Mughals and

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83. Ibid.

their eastward expansion was effectively checked. To the Ahoms the fight was life-and-death struggle which called for their best energy. Economic and political subjugation which the Bengal Viceroy had pursued during this period disgusted many of the loyal Rajas and Zamindars. So the short-sighted policy of the Imperial government combined with the corrupt officials of the provincial level especially in Bengal Subah, induced the frontier Rajas and Chiefs to place themselves under the strong leadership of Rudra Singh who voluntarily came forward to consolidate the united league of North-Eastern States.[84]

As mentioned, the main object of the confederated league was to protect the sovereign authority of the frontier regions from the claws of the Mughals and to drive them out from the various outlying strongholds still retained by them in the contour of Bengal Subah, the confederacy combined the allies mainly as a league of hill-states. The basis of the contract was that each State should furnish stipulated land forces to the common pool as they were not able to furnish naval forces and that naval forces and that would be solely shouldered by the royal contingent of the Ahoms. Further, the confederacy of North-East India was a voluntary union of independent allies each having an equal voice in the deliberations of the war council that met from time to time for deliberative purposes.[85]

The confederacy was to be operated as based on

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84. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Tripura Buranji, pp 93-94; G. Barua, Assam Buranji, p 94.

85. S.K. Bhuyan (tr) Tungkhungia Buranji, p 39.

convention and local usage of the respective territories. Since the Ahoms commanded the superiority in naval fleet, Rudra Singh was virtually the dominating personality in the practical workings of the confederacy. The immediate problem before the confederacy was the cupidity of Mughal viceroys after the death of Aurangzeb, still formidable, which might destabilise the Eastern confederacy by capitalising the unscrupulous defectors. Nevertheless, the intrigues of Bengal Viceroy could not minimise the contributions of Rudra Singh, the paramount Ahom monarch and it was his clarion call to rejuvinate the patriotic spirit that dominated the whole affairs of the formation of the confederacy in North-East India.[86]

The first task before the confederacy was the assessment of the contributions to be made by the member-states. Due preparations were made to expel the Mughal garrisons and outposts from the border line of the entire North East. Fortifications both in Assam and Cooch Behar front were specially built. The other tribal chiefs of the bordering areas were well equipped militarily and were directed to keep co-ordination with the deployed fleet of the Ahom navy. The final task of the confederacy was the liberation movement against the tyranny and autocracy of Aurangzeb and his successor.[87]

Further, the Ahom monarch also took adequate measures in checking the designs of proselyticism as followed by the

86. Ibid.
87. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Tripura Buranji, pp 95-96.

Muslim and Christian missionaries under the garb of trading agents. Rudra Singh mobilised the desired intentions of the Hindu rulers by waging crusade against the alien forces, sinking their local and petty grievances and to assert the strength of their age long religion.[88]

Indeed, some of the Hindu potentates and refractory chieftains were also brought under the orbit of Ahom sovereignty by force and they were enlisted as responsible member of confederacy. Many of the principalities were brought to the fold of confederacy through dialogues. Rudra Singh's diplomatic wile generated a fresh consciousness of co-operation among the diversified authorities ruling in the Eastern region. Consequently, Rudra Singh's statesmanship projected timely foresight and farsight. He successfully prepared the ground for emotional integration in order to reach both at political and fiscal frontiers.[89]

The working of the confederacy virtually began with the subjugation of Cachar and Jayantia and the pacification of hill-chiefs each of whom promised to contribute to the confederated army. Rudra Singh then turned towards Tripura, another organised monarchy in the North-East bordering the Mughal territory. It may be recalled that Ratnamanikya II had ascended the throne in 1795 and had to put down his rivals with the help of the Mughals. In the long run, Ratnamanikya II could not reconcile himself with the subordination of the state to the Mughal authority. There were also strong resentment

88. Assam Buranji, MSS No. 57, Tr.No.86, D.H.A.S., Gauhati.
89. Ibid.

in the State of Tripura against the overlordship of the Mughals. It was at this time, Rudra Singh invited the Raja of Tripura to join the confederacy to throw away the Mughal suzerainty once for all.[90]

Anandaram Medhi, was instrumental in Ahom-Tripura rapprochement by explaining the inner objectives of the confederacy. Anandaram, who was on a visit to the Ahom court, was intimately known to Raja Ratnamanikya of Tripura. Rudra Singh offered valuable presents to the musician and asked him to impress upon Ratnamanikya II the influence and power of the Ahom monarch so that the former might be persuaded to seek friendly alliance with the latter. Anandaram succeeded in inducing the Raja of Tripura to be a partner to such an alliance. Needless to say that the "object of Rudra Singh's embassies was to establish friendly relations with Tripura in furtherance of his aim to organise a confederacy of the Hindu rulers against the Mughals."[91] Anandaram did the spade-work and his mission was a prelude to definite alliance between Assam and Tripura in concrete terms. Rudra Singh, thereafter, sent Ratnakandali and Arjundas Bairagi as his diplomatic envoys to the court of Tripura. The envoys were accompanied by Anandaram Medhi and cordially received by Raja Ratnamanikya II sometimes in 1708-09.

The visit of the Ahom envoys was reciprocated by the Tripura court when Ratnamanikya II sent Rameswar Bhattacharjee

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90. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Tripura Buranji, p 4.

91. Ibid., Introduction, pp VIII-XI, S.K. Bhuyan, Studies in Assamese literature, (Analysis of Tripura Buranji), p 137.

Nayalankar and Udaynarayan Biswas as Tripura envoys to the Ahom court in 1710. They reached Rangpur, the Ahom capital, in 1711 and were received by Rudra Singh amidst pomp and ceremony. The return visit of the Tripura envoys was a step further towards the alliance and Rudra Singh decided to send another mission to Tripura.[92]

Ratnakandali and Arjundas, who were once again to lead the second mission to Tripura in November 1711, were entrusted with a secret letter from Rudra Singh soliciting the co-operation of the Raja of Tripura to counteract the hostile attempts of the Mughals against the religion of the Vedas.[93] The Ahom envoys reached in March 1712, at the royal court of Tripura. During their stay there, a court conspiracy was hatched by Ghanashyam Barthakur, the step brother of Ratnamanikya II in connivance with the Mughals who ascended the throne by dislodging Ratnamanikya II. Nevertheless, Ghanashyam Barthakur, who took the title of Mohendramanikya also turned hostile towards the Mughals and began dialogue with the Ahom envoys in July 1712. The envoys were given full assurance of co-operation by the new Raja[94] and thereafter, they returned towards Assam in January 1713.

Mohendramanikya, the Raja of Tripura, also sent an embassy to Assam. The Tripura envoy, Aribhimnarayan, was received at the Ahom court in October 1713, and then he took interview with Rudra Singh on December 1713. The Tripura

92. S.K. Bhuyan, Tripura Buranji, pp 13-15, S.K. Bhuyan, Studies in the literature of Assam, (Analysis of Tripura Buranji) p 139.
93. S.K. Bhuyan, Tripura Buranji, pp 15-16.
94. Ibid., pp 49, 79.

envoy was given leave on April 1714 when he was furnished with letters and presents to Mahendramanikya.[95] The Ahom envoys proceeded on third mission to Tripura in the same year. These diplomatic missions succeeded in establishing cordial relationship between the two states and prepared the ground for a common approach towards the Mughals.

Rudra Singh next turned towards Cooch Behar. Although the hostile relationship prevailed between Cooch Behar and Assam for many years and as a matter of fact, the former had actually been an ally of the Mughals in their campaigns against Assam, it may be recalled, Mahendranarayan, the Raja of Cooch Behar, had proposed combined action against the Mughals in 1693. This in fact was a marked change in the Koch attitude towards Ahom-Koch rapprochement. Although Gadadhar Singh, then Ahom monarch, sent his message of sympathy to the Raja of Cooch Behar, it may be recalled, the messengers could not reach Cooch Behar due to difficulty on the way. Rudra Singh on the other hand, was determined to win over the Raja of Cooch Behar to the cause of confederacy.

An understanding between Assam and Cooch Behar was also made possible by the fact that Rupnarayan, the Raja of Cooch Behar, had assumed a determined anti-Mughal attitude and mobilised all the resources of his state to dislodge the Mughals from the occupied chaklas.[96] The severe fighting that continued for several years forced the Subahdar of Bengal to

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95. Ibid., Introduction p XVII; S.K. Bhuyan, Studies in Literature of Assam, (analysis in Tripura Buranji), pp 152-53.

96. A.A. Chowdhuri, op.cit., pp 179, 271.

withdraw from many of such chaklas. Nevertheless, the border clashes between the Koches and Mughals were in progress when the Ahom monarch extended his hand of friendship towards Rupnarayan. Such a proposal was indeed welcome to Rupnarayan who had to fight for years together, almost single handed, with the Mughal authorities in Bengal. He was, in fact, forced to sign a treaty in 1711 with the Subahdar of Bengal whereby the Raja of Cooch Behar ceded the three chaklas of Fathepur, Gazirhat and Kankina, besides Boda Patgram and Purbabhag and promised to pay tribute for some former Kuch territory in Rangpur.[97] Rupnarayan, nevertheless, continued to strive for the recovery of the lost Chaklas. Determined as he was to resist the Mughal authority, the Raja of Cooch Behar lost no time to respond to the proposal of friendship of the Ahom monarch.

Rudra Singh, on the other hand, succeeded in reviving the diplomatic relations between Assam and Cooch Behar in furtherance of his policy of regional confederacy and the common challenge of the North-East to the Mughals. The Ahom Barphukan at Gauhati, who wrote a letter to Rupnarayan, took the initiative in the dialogue. Rupnarayan, thereafter, wrote to Barphukan that there could be no diplomatic exchanges between the two monarchies for a long time due to the impossible condition of the routes, caused by encamping Mughal garrisons. In his letter, the Raja of Cooch Behar categorically stated

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97. Sir J.N. Sarkar, History of Bengal, p 415.

that there was no such difficulty then and the two states could make a common cause. The letter reached Barphukan when Rudra Singh was camping at Gauhati to make the final preparations to invade Bengal.* Rudra Singh was thus assured of co-operation by the Raja of Cooch Behar in his scheme. The assurance was particularly pertinent in view of the fact that Cooch Behar had been an ally of the Mughals in their former invasions of Assam.

The important monarchies in the North-East namely Cooch Behar, Jayantia, Cachar and Tripura were thus pacified by Rudra Singh and the rulers of these states assured the Ahom monarch of their co-operation in his scheme of a common challenge to the Mughal imperialism. The only other monarchy in the region was Manipur which was politically organised and the ruling race Hindu by religion. Although, the ruling family in Assam had a matrimonial alliance with its counterpart in Manipur during the reign of Suhungmung (1497-1539), the Ahom monarch,[98] there is no mention of Assam-Manipur relations in the chronicles of the either state till in the second half of the eighteenth century.[99] Manipur had however connections, mostly in the war path, with Cachar and Tripura in the fifteenth and sixteenth century.[100] The state had however more intimate connections with China and Burma with which it had common borders.[101] The State had practically no political contact with

* See L. Devi, op.cit., p 249.

98. G.C. Barua, (tr) op.cit., p 77.
99. H.K. Barua, Assam Buranji, pp 74-75; K.N.T. Phukan, op.cit., pp 53-54; S.K. Bhuyan, (tr) Tungkhungia Buranji, pp.52-58; L. Mangisingh and L. Mani Singh (ed) Vijoy Panchali, pp 57-58.
100. L.I.G. Singh, Introduction to Manipur, pp 160-165.
101. R.B. Pemberton, Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India, p 38.

the Mughals as it had no direct boundary with Bengal. Nevertheless, the first Muslim settlement in Manipur as recorded in its chronicle was in 1606 A.D.[102] The descendents of these Muslim settlers are known as 'pangan' which is believed to be a corruption of 'Bangan' or Bengal.[103] The historians of Manipur also suggest that there were some Muslim invasions, obviously from Bengal, around that time.[104] The historical records also clearly suggest that Manipur had extensive trade relations with Bengal through Cachar.[105]

A turning point in the history of Manipur was however, the accession of Pamheiba alias Gharib Niwaz in 1709.[106] His reign saw the promotion of Vaishnava faith in Manipur when Shantidas Adhikari, a Vaishnava missionary from Bengal went to Manipur and became the preceptor of the monarch. Gharib Niwaz proved himself as a dedicated champion of his new faith through all his reformist actions. He also fought with Cachar and Tripura and successfully carried his arms to Ava.[107]

Evidently, Gharib Niwaz had promoted Manipur into a strong monarchy at a time when Rudra Singh engineered his North-Eastern confederacy against the Mughals. Unfortunately, there is no record to suggest whether there was any dialogue

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102. Cheithaarol Kumbaaba, p 22.
103. G. Kabui, "Social and religious movement in Manipur" in S.P. Sen (ed) Social and Religious Movement in 19th and 20th Centuries, p 414.
104. L.I.G. Singh, op.cit., pp 163-64.
105. J.B. Bhattacharjee, Cachar under British Rule in North East India, p 15.
106. L. Mangisingh and L. Mani Singh (ed) Bijoy Panchali, pp 56-58, 64. Pemberton, however, believes that the year of accession was 1714 A.D.See R.B.Pemberton,op.cit,p38.
107. Ibid., (Vijoy Pancali), pp 18, 54-58.

between Rudra Singh and Gharib Niwaz or his prodecessors in the context of the confederacy. The absence of any mention in the chronicles of Assam generally leads one to believe that Manipur had remained outside Rudra Singh's contacts and communications. But it is a difficult position to accept because Rudra Singh looked for Hindu solidarity against 'pan-Islamic' policy of the Mughal rulers and endeavoured to secure the co-operation of all Hindu potentates and chiefs not only in the North-East but also in Bengal which he envisaged to invade. In such a situation, the absence of negotiations with the powerful ruler of a Hindu state within the region is misleading.

Inspite of everything, it is not possible to comment on the nature of understanding, if any, between Rudra Singh and Gharib Niwaz due to complete absence of historical information. A glimpse in to the history of Manipur around the time (1709-1714) shows that Gharib Niwaz was engaged in the task of state - rebuilding after years of confusion and in a series of wars with Burma. It may be conjectured that Gharib Niwaz would not join the confederacy in subordinate status as did the rulers of Cachar and Jayantia. There could of course, be a friendly alliance on terms of equal status as in the case of Tripura or Cooch Behar. But nothing like that probably happened, as there is no reflection in historical records or in the chronicles of either Assam or Manipur. The mere guess work can not be cited to explain a historical phenomena. The historians are also silent about the relations

between Assam and Manipur during the period, particularly in the context of anti-Mughal alliances authored by Rudra Singh.

The only revealing observation of a historian[108] is that the epithet of Gharib Niwaz was given to Pamheiba by the Mughal emperor of Delhi. If that be the case, it can be conjectured that the Mughals rewarded him for not siding with Rudra Singh. It may also happen that the Mughal administrators in Bengal had some understanding with the ruler of Manipur and managed to see that latter did not join the confederacy. It is also doubtful, as some historians[109] observe, whether the title of Gharib Niwaz was actually given by the Mughal emperor. The only certain explanation is that the term Gharib Niwaz belongs to the Persian vocabulary and it means 'kind to the poor'. Its persian origin can not be disputed. As then, "the major portion of Eastern India was still under Muslim domination, percolation of a Persian word ..... into Manipur through the hills and becoming favourite of her powerful King is not at all an impossibility."[110] It is also not at all an impossibility that the Mughal emperor of Delhi or his Subahdar in Bengal, honoured the Raja of Manipur with such a title as a political deal. Nevertheless, the only safe conclusion in the context of the challenge of the North East to the Mughals is that

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108. R.M. Nath, The Background of Assamese Culture, p 91.
109. J. Roy, History of Manipur, p 35.
110. Ibid., p 34.

the involvement of the Raja of Manipur is not known from historical records.

Be that as it may, it is also not known from any source that the monarchs of Assam and Manipur were logged in any confrontation. Such a possibility can not be ruled out at a time when the two states were fast rising into prominence and both aimed at consolidating their respective positions. Rudra Singh and Gharib Niwaz were both ambitious rulers and commanded respect and authority in their states. That the policy of Rudra Singh did not confront with the powerful ruler of Manipur may be considered as a success of his policy of pacification. Moreover, there is no record to suggest that Gharib Niwaz in any way opposed the scheme of Rudra Singh or he made any deal with the Mughals. But not opposing Rudra Singh he might have indirectly encouraged the North-Eastern confederacy against the Mughals.

On the whole, Rudra Singh achieved spectacular success in securing the support and co-operation of the rulers and chiefs in the North-East before launching his expedition against the Mughals in Bengal. He also wanted to obtain the sympathy of the Hindu potentates and chiefs in Bengal itself. With this objective, he despatched envoys to Marang, Bana Bishnupur, Nadiya, Bardwan and Barnagar.[111] He endeavoured to impress upon the rulers of those states that it was necessary to concert measures to annihilate the Mughal power

111. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Tripura Buranji, Introduction IX-X.

which had been destroying the Hindu religion. It is believed that the rulers of these states, who were all vassals of the Mughals, supported the proposal of the Ahom monarch. The princes in Bengal were asked by Rudra Singh to co-operate by not opposing his arms in his attempt to resume the possession of territories upto the river Karatoya. It is also suggested by some records that Rudra Singh wanted to secure free access to the holy water of the Ganges by annexing some territories in Bengal through which the tributaries of the Ganges passed through.

The next task left for Rudra Singh was to translate his plan of invading Bengal into action. There was "no doubt as to the thoroughness of his preparations."[112] As Gait writes, "He proceeded in person to Gauhati and there organised a great army and a powerful fleet, and collected all his available cannon".[113] He was joined there by all the vassal Chiefs and the Raja of Cachar and Jayantia with their quota of soldiers. Ultimately, a 'grand army' was raised with the contributions of the Ahom state and all other partners of the confederacy. The 'grand army' reached a total strength of 400,000. Of this total, the Raja of Cachar contributed 14,000 soldiers, the Raja of Jayantia 10,000, and the Daflas 600. It was planned that the expedition would commence in November 1714, after the autumn harvest to ensure the abundant supply for the army. An advance division of the army was sent down to Kandahar Chokey* to errect the

112. E. Gait, op.cit., p 185.
113. Ibid.

* Also known as Assam Chokey.

encampments for the soldiers of the Ahom monarch and other princes on the bank of Manas.[114]

END OF THE CHALLENGE

The preparations made at Gauhati and Kandahar Chokey showed that the invasion was imminent. Assam, Cooch Behar, Jayantia, Cachar and Tripura had been forced to reckon with Mughal invasions ever since the latter had consolidated its position in Bengal in the sixteenth century. The North East had so long been on the receivers' end and the Mughals in the role of invaders. It was now time for the North East to challenge the Mughals not only in their own frontiers but by marching into the Mughal province of Bengal. Rudra Singh, the Ahom monarch, was the architect of the scheme and leadership of the army and the confederacy were naturally bestowed on him. The 4,00,000 strong army at Gauhati, including its advance division at Kandahar Chokey, was the fruit of his sustained statesmanship. Unfortunately, when the dream of invasion of the Mughal territory was about to be fulfilled, death snatched away Rudra Singh at Gauhati in August 1714.[115]

The death of the architect of the North-Eastern confederacy was the end of the challenge. His sudden death left the 'grand army' without a commander and the North-East

114. S.K. Bhuyan (tr) Tungkhungia Buranji, p 39; S.K.Bhuyan Studies in the literature of Assam, (Analysis of Tripura Buranji), p 153.

115. S.K. Bhuyan (tr) Tungkhungia Buranji, p 40; E. Gait, op.cit., p 185.

without a statesman who could take his position. Siva Singh (1714-44), the son and successor of Rudra Singh, "gave up the projected invasion of Bengal."[116] The development in other states of the region was also not congenial to contemplate a fresh effort to revive the challenge.

The Assamese envoys that were sent by Rudra Singh in April 1714, to Tripura were on their way when the Ahom monarch died at Gauhati. Mahendramanikya, the Raja of Tripura, also died before the envoys reached Tripura. The Assamese envoys were received by the succeeding Raja Dharmamanikya II. The new Raja, however, gave dismission to the envoys with a letter to the Ahom monarch conveying general assurance of friendship.[117] This letter never reached Rudra Singh as he died before the arrival of the envoys. On the other hand, the State of Tripura fell from its glory during the reign of Dharmamanikya II. The Nawab of Bengal was displeased with him for non-payment of tribute. It is not clear whether Dharmamanikya II failed to pay the tribute or he intentionally stopped payment due to the spirit of North-Eastern confederacy. Nevertheless, this invited an invasion from Bengal.[118] Dharmamanikya II fought for long eight months and the Mughal army was forced to retreat. Meanwhile, Jagatram, a member of the royal family, conspired with the Mughal Nazim of Dacca. The Mughal authority deputed Mir Habib to lead an expedition

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116. E. Gait, op.cit., p 187.
117. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Tripura Buranji, p 99.
118. Rajmala, Educational Director, Tripura, p 86.

to Tripura. He received desired assistance from Jagatram and succeeded in capturing the capital town of Tripura. Dharmamanikya II was forced to flee from the State. Jagatram was therefore made the Raja, under the name of Jagatmanikya, on the condition of paying a large portion of revenue to the Nawab of Bengal. As Stewart writes, "The whole country in consequence, quietly submitted; and thus the province of Tipperah which from time immemorial had been an independent kingdom became annexed to the Moghal empire."[119] Under the circumstances, it was not expected of the new government of Tripura either to challenge or resist the Mughal authority.

The year 1714 also witnessed the change of monarchy in Cooch Behar. Rupnarayan (1707-14), the Raja of Cooch Behar who had roused his state against the Mughals after several generations of subordination to the latter and fought with it for many years, died in 1714.[120] He was succeeded by his son and successor Raja Upendranarayan. During his reign (1714-63), the relationship with the Raja of Bhutan was further augmented to challenge the Mughal inroads over few chaklas. Murshid Quli Khan, the acting Nawab of Bengal did not dare to antagonise the Raja of Cooch Behar keeping in view that there was every possibility of loosing the prospective revenues from the captured chaklas. As such, the antagonism between Cooch Behar and the Mughal authority considerably subsided in the viceregal period of Murshid Quli Khan.

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119. C. Stewart, History of Bengal, p 485.
120. A.A. Chowdhury, op.cit., pp 180, 271.

Gharib Niwaz, the Raja of Manipur was then busy in fighting with the Burmese which continued in the first instance upto 1718 and then revived and continued upto 1739. In fact, major part of Gharib Niwaz's reign was spent in fighting with the Burmese. He was however, ultimately successful in conquering some parts of Burma.[121] In the years following 1714, Gharib Niwaz also fought some wars with Tripura and Cachar. As a matter of fact, there was a major confrontation between Tripura and Manipur in 1717 A.D.[122] Gharib Niwaz was therefore, concerned only with border clashes with the neighbouring states. Obviously, he played no role in the scheme designed by Rudra Singh nor took any initiative in the matter after the death of the latter.

Evidently, the death of Rudra Singh proved to be the end of the challenge of the North East to the Mughals. The Ahom monarch who succeeded him abandoned the project. The rulers of Cachar and Jayantia were bound to withdraw their troops as the policy of Siva Singh was not d conducive to the purpose of confederacy. Tripura since then became a permanent Mughal vassal. The Raja of Cachar, Suradarpanarayan was a minor. The state was a vassal of the Ahoms and joined the confederacy in that capacity. Suradarpanarayan, besides being a minor, was a patron of learning and religion.[123] He faced no particular problem from the Mughals and had neither

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121. L.I.G. Singh, op.cit., pp 165-66.
122. Ibid., p 166.
123. J.B. Bhattacharjee, 'Chronology of the Dimacha Rajas of Cachar', Journal of the North East India Council for social Science Research, Vol. II, No. 2, p 5, 1978.

the requisite strength nor the intention or any reason to antagonise the latter. Jayantia had also joined the confederacy in the subordinate capacity. Jainarayan, the Raja of Jayantia (1698-1731), however, had some problems with the Mughal officers in Sylhet around the time. Durlav Das, an amil of Sylhet, made some gifts of land actually belonging to Jayantia. Jainarayan, thereupon, marched with his army and occupied Dhakadakshin, a pargana belonging to Sarkar Sylhet. A Mughal force was then sent from Dacca, under Nausherwan Khan, which succeeded in recovering Dhakadakshin.[124] Meanwhile, the confederacy had already succumbed. Jainarayan, therefore, could not afford to antagonise the Mughals. Finally, like the Raja of Tripura, he too became submissive.[125]

The State of Cooch Behar also played no effective role in activising the confederacy after the death of Rupnarayan.[126] Upendranarayan, the son and successor of Rupnarayan, no doubt, endeavoured to challenge the Mughals and in that matter, he managed to secure the support of his immediate neighbour, the Raja of Bhutan. Had Siva Singh, the son and successor of Rudra Singh, not completely abandoned the project of his father and clung to an isolationist policy of self-defence and domestic consolidation, the spirit that Upendranarayan inherited from his predecessor could be utilised as an asset by the Ahom Monarch. Upendranarayan, the Raja

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124. S.M. Ali, The History of Jaintia, pp 31-39.
125. Sir J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 415.
126. Ibid.

of Cooch Behar, did in fact, fight with the Mughals on the score of proprietory right over some of the chaklas. Nevertheless, the policy of non-intervention carefully followed by Murshid Quli Khan avoided the possibility of confrontation.

The North-Eastern confederacy thus failed to achieve its purpose due to the sudden demise of its architect, Rudra Singh. It was engineered by one man and as a result, its successful execution depended on him. The objective was laudable and the scheme opportune. The architect of the confederacy made a bold venture to eradicate the various fissiparous and divisive tendencies that were endangering the very existence of the Hindu rulers and chieftains in Mughal frontiers. Undoubtedly, the very purpose was to evolve a code to preserve the common economic, military and political interests of the member-states putting a stop to the further expansion of Mughal authorities of Bengal. The military strength of the Ahom army and navy were unexpectedly strengthened with the voluntary contributions of member-states by way of men-power and war equipments. Naturally, the spirit of dynamism was hopefully generated through the different wheels of the confederacy. Rudra Singh made every effort to apprise the situation and sought the advice of the Council of ministers who readily ratified the royal plans of war strategy. The monarch, thereupon stressed the valour of his predecessors and argued that his ancestors by virtue of their prowess and courage, crossed the boundaries of

Rangamati in modern Goalpara district and washed their swords at the river Karatay-Ganga but the historical forces had compelled them to establish a garrison at Gauhati, with the river Manas as their western limit.[127] The monarch, therefore, envisaged to expand his territory by concerted means.

It is indeed, undeniable that the unique sense of unity and co-ordination had been attained at its highest peak due to stimulating spirit of the confederation. In most of the preceding expeditions against the Mughals, the Ahom contingents suffered from the forces of defection owing to feuds among few war generals and potential nobles. But now under the confederacy, both the rulers and the ruled became united, sinking all their local and personal differences. On the other hand, it may be recalled that the declining blaze of the second term Viceroyship of Shaista Khan in Bengal (1680-88) had mellowed into a softer glow in the tedious conflict with the basic interests of the East India Company.[128] No sooner had the dominating viceroy been recalled by the Imperial court than all the forces that he had sternly controlled all the warring elements that struggled for emancipation from the grinding yoke, broke out in irresponsible tumult.

His successor, Ibrahim Khan (1689-97) was exposed as weak Subahdar that became favourable to crazy European Factors to fortify their respective settlements as already

127. S.K. Bhuyan (tr) Tung Khungia Buranji, p 39.

128. Sir J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 385; Sir W. Haigh and R. Burn (ed) The Cambridge History of India, Vol.IV, pp. 308-09; S.N. Khan, The Maathir-ul-Umara, Vol. II, pp 690, 834-35.

mentioned. The Subahdar now being an eyesore, was sacked by the Emperor and appointed his own grandson, Azim-ush-Shan as Viceroy of Bengal. Within the span of few years he too was overshadowed by Murshid Quli Khan's appointment as Diwan in 1700. Both the Viceroy and Diwan were at variance in their respective goal and political objective. The new Dewan was permitted by the imperial government to remove the revenue offices away from the provincial capital to a new place called Murshidabad that soon became the new capital of Bengal.[129]

The last decade of Aurangzeb's reign caused administrative degeneration in an extensive and diversified empire like India. Like Napoleon I after the end of Tilsit, Aurangzeb could bear no contradiction, and his ministers were reduced to the position of clerks. Above all, Aurangzeb quickened the disintegrating forces already in operation in the land. The death of Emperor Aurangzeb in 1707 finally exposed the tottering stage of the Mughal empire. The sharp contest ensued for the throne that killed two of his sons and three of this grandsons in the field. Ultimately, Bahadur Shah I alias Prince Muazzam (1707-12) mounted the imperial throne at the age of sixty-three. He too wanted his residual resources in suppressing the Rajputs, Marathas and Sikhs. His was the last reign that is reminiscent of the glories of the great Mughals. However, his strong inclinations for Shia innovation provoked civil wars, as the

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129. A. Salam (tr) op.cit., p 251.

Sunnis formed the immense majority of the Muslim population in India.[130]

Further, the final campaign against Banda, the Sikh Guru, taxed upon the health of Bahadur Shah I and he met with natural death in February 1712, leaving his work undone. Jahander Shah alias Muiz-ud-din (1712-13) the eldest son of Bahadur Shah, became the undisputed master of the empire of Delhi after fierce contest with his three brothers. Revengeful actions were taken against the leading supporters of his defeated rivals. On his arrival at Delhi from Lahore in June 1712, the news came that Farrukh-Siyer, the second son of Azim-ush-Shan and his deputy in the government of Bengal had marched to Delhi accross Patna for the crown. In the ensuing war of succession, Jahandar Shah was assassinated by the spies of Farrukh-Siyer and ended the administration that was wretched in content. Farrukh-Siyer thereupon, took counter measures to root out the partisans of Jahandar Shah and the proclamation of the emperor was actualised in January 1713, though deposed cruelly in February 1719. All his life, Farrukh-Siyar was determined to crush the Saiyid regime (1712-10) and he organised number of conspiracies to depose of the 'Sayyid Brothers' who were considered as king-makers but the imperial brickerings had a very evil effect on the whole facets of Mughal administration.[131]

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130. C.W. Haigh & R. Burn (ed) The Cambridge History of India, Vol. IV, p 324; W. Invine, Later Mughals, Vol. I, pp 136-40.

131. Ibid., pp 332-33; W. Irvine, Later Mughals, Vol. I, pp. 185-200.

Nevertheless, the episode on the war of succession during 1712 by the stormy march of Farruk-Siyer from the seat of Bengal encouraged the reactionary forces of the province to undo the whole system of government as envisaged by the defacto subehdarship of Murshid Quli Khan. During his Dewanship, Emperor Aurangzeb gave blank cheque unlike Mir Jumla which was capitalised by Murshid Quli Khan in scaling the ladder of Bengal. In fact, almost all the Viceroys were obsessed with tempting wealth and courtly pleasure at the cost of common masses as well as the denial of the code issued by the Imperial authority. Again the very image of the selfish viceroys was overshadowed by the aspiring zeal of the then Dewan, owing to frequent and abrupt transference, of Azim-ush-shan, Farruk-Siyer, Khan-i-Jahan II and Farruk-Kunda Siyer from the seat of Bengal.[132] On the other hand, the Imperial rulers like Bahadur Shah, Jahandar Shah and Farruk-Siyer were challenged and obstructed by the 'Sayid brothers' and the Emperors were helpless and bound to remain as silent spectors to the plight and sufferings of Bengal. Even the high officials were not free from corruptions, and involved in local intrigues ignoring the norms of loyalty towards their temporal authority. This chaotic state of affairs also adversely affected the economic walls of Bengal which was unofficially treated as pawn to the European enterprisers. The grave fiscal crisis also forced the Timurid authorities to waive the rigid trade regulations and statutes

132. A. Salam (tr) op.cit., p 276.

and the European Factors set the ball rolling in laying out western capital with pre-requisite conditions for harvesting the speculative dividend. Evidently, the European entrepreneurs were indirectly entangled in the political chess of Bengal.[133]

The European traders were also conservative to the core in extending concrete assistance to the Viceroys of the time in Bengal. They rather put emphasis to fortify their respective headquarters especially in all port towns so as to enable them for upholding the extra-ordinary trade facilities. Incentive was given to the local recruitments of troops mainly of Afgan and Rajput stocks who were eager to earn the minimum needs from the purse of French and British Factors. The military base of the Europeans was strengthened through their local garrisons by the disgruntled soldiers of the Mughal contingent. Very soon, a considerable portion of corps being frustrated by non-payment of the Mughal government, joined voluntarily the row of European adventurers whose meagre cash coins was considered to be immense relief to ever neglected and uncared wounds of the native army.[134] No wonder, Rudra Singh drew his strength from the weaknesses of the Mughal authorities to organise the North-Eastern confederacy.

The circumstances that helped Rudra Singh, the Ahom monarch, may be summed up as follows:

Firstly, the emerging sense of integrity and national consciousness as generated were the guiding principles of

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133. Sir J.N. Sarkar (ed), op.cit., p 418.
134. Sir J.N. Sarkar (ed), op.cit., pp 396, 403.

of the confederacy, whereas under the later Mughals, the secessionist tendencies mainly of the viceroys of Bengal tempted the European Factors to infringe upon the court politics of the Mughals both at provincial and central levels, pretending false compassion, coaxed and camouflaged under the cloak of fiscal assistance. Secondly, the mirage of few viceroys stood proved when the native traders of Bengal were dislodged mostly by the European traders as they had laid out their projected investment in the main commercial key-points of the province with the concurrence of high-handed viceroys. Now Bengal, like other port towns, also witnessed a pandemonium as the European free-booters geared up their hectic activities as if like octopuses. So the Mughals also began to loose their prolonged influence in the North-Eastern Chokys.[135] Thirdly, like the Marathas, Rajputs, Jats and Sikhs, the members of the North-Eastern confederacy were imbued by the patriotic zeal and traditional chivalry and were determined to clip off the wings of the contumacious viceroys of Bengal that depended so long upon the turbulent jaigirdars and mansabdars. No viceroy during later Mughals could formulate any project either in national or in imperial perspective unlike the benevolent rulers, owing to excessive dependence as parasites upon the feudal bureaucrats whose vicious circles were mere den of corruptions. The demoralised bureaucracy instead of pacifying the cataclysm of the crucial time, paved the way in raising up their tottering castles at the cost of

135. A. Salam (tr) op.cit., pp 251-52.

innocent and groaning ryots and dumb masses which are bound to collapse through the wheels of time. Fourthly, the protagonists of the North-Eastern confederacy timely channelised all the local resources for strengthening their respective fronts and succeeded in attaining the sound economic position in congruity with military side; whereas the Viceroys of Bengal were in constant hitch and tussle with the Diwan and the public exchequer of the province was on the verge of bankruptcy, inviting the European factors who came forward as pawn-brokers in exploiting the fluid position as the future prize. On the other hand, the soldiers posted in the North-West province began to starve, as their salaries for five years fell into arrears. The Imperial government counted on the Bengal revenue that did not reach in time.[136] Fifthly, the Rajput and Sikh rebels under the stewardship of Maharana Amar Singh and Banda, the Sikh Guru, caused irreparable damages to the emperorship of Bahadur Shah. The gospel of Bahadur Shah as earlier mentioned was opposed tooth and nail by the uncompromising Afgan troops who were loyal to Sunni creed. The emperor's prejudice for Shia creed projected and reacted in the body politics of Bengal.[137] This offered an advantageous scope to the leaders of the North-Eastern confederacy to shape their stipulated objective.

Further, Murshid Quli Khan caught hold of the radar to save the would-be wreckage of the provincial ship if not

136. B. Sing Nijjar, "The North-West Frontier under the later Mughals", Q.R.H.S., Vol. XI, 1971-72 No.1, pp 42-43.

137. Sir J.N. Sarkar (ed) op.cit., p 397.

the imperial. As Sarkar writes: "Although Murshid Quli Khan was not officially either subahdar or a deputy subahdar before 1713, his power was indisputable from the outset."[138] The ego of Murshid Quli Khan alias Jafar Khan reached at its peak when Emperor Farruk Siyer granted the offices of the Nizamat and Dewani of the three Subahs of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa to him. Despite his imperial patronage, Mushid Kuli Khan could neither get rid of the pressure of the European Factors nor from the demoralised bureaucrats and prey to temptations and nepotism. He now took the course in appointing his kith and kin to the key posts of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, putting the Viceroys on the horns of a dilemma. He gave special preference to the Hindus in the collection of revenues as because most of the Muslim collectors have conspicuously grabed and squeezed the public revenue.[140] The state of affairs gave a further push to the member-states of the confederacy for augmenting the campaign with vigour.

Evidently, the initiative of Rudra Singh in organising the confederacy and his ambitious scheme to invade Bengal had been inspired by the decaying conditions of the erstwhile imperial invaders. But the scheme failed to produce the desired results due to the death of the architect. It is, however, interesting to note that such a scheme against the Mughals is not reflected in their records. The confederacy as it is known from the local sources aimed at an invasion of Bengal. But it is doubtful whether it was at all known

138. Ibid., p 400.
139. A. Salam (tr), op.cit., p 273.
140. Sir J.N. Sarkar (ed) op.cit., p 409.

to the provincial administrators in Bengal. There seemed to be no reaction on their part. They made no endeavour to resolve their conflicts with the European Factors and the provincial governor even turned to be disloyal to Delhi. He failed to meet his quota of revenue to the central authorities in time. Murshid Quli Khan behaved in a peculiar way, sometimes functioning in the style of an independent ruler. Had the subahdar of Bengal envisaged an attack for the North-East, he must have adopted sufficient defensive measures for the protection of his territory. He would also not antagonise the European factors to avoid confrontation at home when its security was at peril, and particularly, he would maintain good relationship with the central authority to be sure of full support. It is, therefore, possible that the provincial authority in Bengal either did not attach much importance to the confederacy or their espionage system failed to gather particulars about it.

Nevertheless, the indirect results of the scheme of Rudra Singh was not insignificant. He could remodel his state and remove internal differences through his anti-Mughal staunch. Similar was the impact in other states in the region. The rulers and chieftains in the region for the first time came closer in spirit to oppose the common enemy. It is also significant to note that Murshid Quli Khan, who was instrumental in the secession of Bengal from the Mughal state, ultimately followed a policy of non-intervention towards the North-East as he was more concerned with his

own province. The intervention in the affairs of Tripura was due to the initiative of a member of the royal family who was an aspirant for the throne. The Jayantia case was one of border clash and subsided with the resumption of the tract that was occupied earlier by the Raja.

CHAPTER - VII

MUGHAL IMPACT ON NORTH-EAST INDIA

The forward policy of the Mughals beyond the Bengal Subah virtually ended with the withdrawal of the campaign under Raja Ram Singh, while the challenge of the North-East too subsided with the death of Rudra Singh. The Mughals who directly ruled over the largest part of India before the rise of the British power in the country, had made some determined bids to extend their domination over the north-eastern sentinel of India. With the exception of Tripura where they could continue to exercise their indirect authority as the succeeding political power of the Sultanate of Delhi, the mighty Mughals had to satisfy themselves with the annexation of lower Assam and the imposition of tributary status on the state of Cooch Behar. The petty estates on the North-East frontier of Bengal viz., Karaibari, Sherpur, Susang and Bijni etc. had, in fact, a semi-independent status in a system wherein the Rajas (also called Chaudhuries) would pay a nominal tribute to the Mughal faujdar at Rangamati and the imperial authority would never exercise itself in the internal affairs of the State on the specific condition that the estate-holder would repel any lawlessness in Mughal territory by the predatory tribes in the frontier. The earlier attempts that were made to subjugate Cachar and Jayantia were not possibly renewed during the period under review, although Aurangzeb was known for his otherwise die-hard policy

at imperial expansionism. The policy of imperial expansionism and military campaigns that was persistently pursued against the Ahoms also yielded no permanent political results. In the same process, the hopes and aspirations of Rudra Singh (1696-1714), the Ahom monarch, to fight the Mughals in their own territory by invading Bengal also came to a stop by his sudden demise. The unexpected death of Rudra Singh could not offer any inducement to the Mughals to revive their north-eastern campaign as the decaying condition of the Mughals was very much precarious after the demise of Aurangzeb in 1707 A.D.

Nevertheless, the repeated Mughal campaigns in the North-East had left behind some permanent impact on the region. The presence of the Mughal Commanders, their infantry, cavalry and navy could inspire the people in the otherwise isolated region with their life style. It is but a historical process that when the two races come in contact, either in hostile or friendly situation, that the reciprocal exchange of ideas and values would result in composite changes of complex nature. Again when a political system is forced to reckon with the challenges to defend itself, then the innovations to revitalise itself politically and administratively and at the same time, to re-organise as well as re-christen its defence structure would automatically follow. The invaders in most cases, as during the Mughal invasions in Assam, are accompanied by the explorers who in the long run contribute in opening up the country and exposing the areas and avenues of interaction in future. Thereafter, the mobility of the forces would lead to then

introduction of the new lines of communication and discovery of unknown routes that might be used subsequently for the administrative consolidation and commercial purposes in peaceful situations. A careful study of the processes of political, economic and social change in North East India since the second half of the seventeenth century, would make the Mughal impact in the processes crystal clear. It should, however, be noted that the entire volume of Mughal impact did not register itself through military campaigns only. The increased communication with and concerned for the neighbouring Mughal provinces of Bengal made the impact more easier and spontaneous.

REGIONAL SOLIDARITY

The foremost impact of the Mughal campaigns was the growing solidarity amongst the monarchies and tribal formations in North-East India. Ever since the liquidation of the ancient Kamrupa, which enclaved major part of the region with adjoining areas of northern and eastern Bengal, the north-eastern region passed through political disintegration and comparative isolation from the rest of the country. The political connections that the valley of Brahmaputra maintained with Bengal under the Palas and Senas from the eighth to eleventh century A.D. did not last longer. In the twelfth century and onwards, the monarchies and innumerable tribal formations in the region functioned in isolation. The attempts of the Ahoms, since their emergence in Upper Assam during the thirteenth century, at imposing imperial authority on the neighbouring areas infused mutual hostilities, thereby

strengthening isolationist tendencies.[1] The unsuccessful and sporadic attempts of the Sultans of Bengal to extend their territory in the Brahmaputra valley had also the indirect effect of restricting the spontaneous relationship between Assam and Bengal.[2] The Sultanate was successful only in partially pacifying the Raja of Tripura who was obliged to accept their suzerainty in a limited form.[3]

Never before the Mughal challenge, the region as a whole, had a common force to reckon with. At the face of the formidable Mughal menace, the Ahoms had to modify their policy towards the neighbours. Rather, they attempted at inducing their friendship as the hostile and revengeful attitude of the neighbours would be dangerous for their territory at a time when they were engaged in war with the powerful invaders. To begin with, Pratap Singh (1603-41) did not leave any stone unturned to pacify his northern and north-western neighbours like the Bhutias, Monphas, Akas etc. by granting them posa,[4] the system which regulated the nature of trade and relative loyalties. Pratap Singh also carefully avoided direct confrontation with the erstwhile rival monarchies of Cachar and Jayantia.

The regional solidarity in the North East was experienced in a concrete form through the confederacy organised

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1. G. Barua, Assam Buranji, p 70; H. Dhekial Phukan, Assam Buranji, pp 31-32.
2. K.L. Barua, Early History of Kamrupa, pp 158-59.
3. R.C. Majumdar, Bangla Desher Itihas, (Medieval period) pp 79-80, 474; Rajmala, Education Directorate, pp 38-41.
4. L. Devi, Ahom-Tribal Relations, p 195.

under the stewardship of Rudra Singh, the Ahom monarch. He could regulate relationship with the chiefs of the various tribal formations on the immediate borders of the Ahom State. The Rajas of Cachar and Jayantia were so pacified that they not only supported the Ahom ruler's scheme against the common enemy of the region. Even Tripura that had never before any direct relationship with the Ahom State too participated in the confederation and effectively supported the regional scheme. Although Manipur's participation in the confederation is not definitely known, the records suggest the active collaboration and co-operation with Assam a few years later Maomaria unrest rocked the Ahom State and the Manipuris had to face with Burmese invasion.* Rudra Singh's success in enlisting the support of the Raja of Cooch Behar deserves to be commended as spectacular in view of latter's allegiance to the Mughals for many years. The Mughal challenge thus indirectly brought the various states in North East India together and inspired them with a spirit of regional solidarity.

REVITALISM

The States of North East India, big or small, were generally based on crude form of feudalism in which an individual would hold and use land belonging to the ruler. The individual would also render personal service to the

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* For details see E. Gait, A History of Assam, pp 195, 200, 322-23.

government. Further, there was the division of social classes mainly into two strata: the rulers and the ruled. Again the land-holdings would determine the basic structure of the society. So the relationship between the vassal and overlord would be guided by the personal understanding. However, during the period under review, the elemental forces of Mughal rule put a new layer on the social structure. Usually, the Ahom monarchy was centralised. The ruler was at the head of administration, but he was assisted by the three great councillors of State, called Gohains.[5] The position of the monarch varied from ruler to ruler. For example, some monarchs, such as Pratap Singh (1603-41), Gadadhar Singh (1681-96) and Rudra Singh (1696-1714) appeared to have followed their own wishes without much respect for the opinions of their nobles, while some other rulers were mere puppets in the hands of one or other of the greedy ministers. The monarch was the very pivot of the administration and all efforts were made to create a halo of divinity round him with a view to make his person and his commands sacred and inviolable.[6]

The fundamental duty of the monarch was the protection of the people and to safeguard the basic rights in respect of property and belief. The three Gohains or Ministers functioned as the hereditory councillors of the state and served as key cabinet to the Monarch. Their counsels and concurrence were counted on all important matters. They

5. E. Gait, op.cit., p 239.
6. Ibid.

proclaimed the Monarch and could depose him in the instance of incapacity or great delinquency.[7] Next to the Gohains in rank were the Bar Barua and Barphukan. Both the posts were created in the early part of the seventeenth century under the direction of Pratap Singh.[8] This would definitely imply that the re-organisation of Ahom administration was influenced by the Mughal invasion to ensure the territorial integrity of the Ahoms as well as to counteract the militant forces of Mughal administration.

The Bar Barua received the revenues and administered justice in those portions of the eastern provinces from Sadiya to Koliabar. At the outset, the Bar Phukan's authority was confined to the tract between the Kallang and the Brahmaputra in Nowgong. With the gradual expansion of Ahom territory towards the west, the Bar Phukan shifted his seat at Gauhati in order to make effective supervision and control from Koliabar to Assam chowkey of Goalpara. He represented the sovereign as Viceroy over all the provinces to the west of Koliabar. He usually received envoys from the adjoining territories including Bengal.[9]

All foreign envoys had to obtain prior permission from the office of Bar Phukan in order to visit the royal court at Garhgaon. The Bar Phukan was empowered to nominate the lesser Rajas of the adjoining territory. His nomination was always confirmed by the monarch.[10] The Bar Phukan was

7. U.N. Gohain, Assam Under the Ahoms, p 98.
8. G.C. Barua, Ahom Buranji, p 121; U.N. Gohain, op.cit.,p 100.
9. U.N. Gohain, op.cit., pp 101-05.
10. Ibid., p 106.

more or less an autonomous governor in his administered areas. He was assisted by a council of six subordinate Phukans who were provided with fixed quotas of paiks*. Below the rank of Phukans, there was a class of officers known as Baruas of varied categories each of which represented distinct profession and responsibility. Next in rank were twelve Rajkhowas, and a number of Katakis, Kakatis and Dalais.[11]

Usually, the high officials would be recruited from the Ahom community. However, some percentage of positions were occupied both by the non-Ahom natives of the country as well as persons of foreign descent. For example, many war prisoners of the Mughal wars were absorbed in the military and civil administration of the Ahom government. They were granted new ranks of Bora, Saikia, Hazarika along with their Islamic title. Thus the services of the personnel of Mughal Indian origin brought some remarkable changes in Ahom military as well as civil administrative organisation in line of Mughal model. However, all the captured war prisoners were not placed on the same footing as because the personnel belonging to the Mughal nobility were given the scope and avenues corresponding to their earlier status, though not at par with those of the Ahom community. As such, certain features of the Mughal rule were not so common in the Upper part of the Brahmaputra valley as in Lower Assam of

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* An enrolled adult subject of the Ahom government having specific duties to render to the State.

11. E. Gait, op.cit., pp 248-49.

or Cachar valley etc..[12]

The Mughal fashion of administration was mainly infused through the instrumentality of Faujdar and Thanadar, wherever the Mughal occupation lasted for a considerable period, the system of pargana was implemented covering a number of village units. In each pargana certain influential persons were honoured by conferring the title of Chaudhuri, Talukdar, Majumdar, Laskar, Bhuyan and Karoris after giving them certain areas of arable land.[13] They in turn would pay taxes either in cash or kind to the Faujdar or Thanadar in addition to the supply of man-power in war time. In fact, the military services were being mainly rendered by the Jagirdars and big zamindars of both the Uttorkol and Dhakinkol who belonged to the nobility like Mughal Mansabdars.[14] Thus the pargana system under the patronage of Chaudhuri, Talukdar, Laskar and Karoris was beginning to work in the lower part of Brahmaputra valley due to the extension of Mughal hegemony in those areas. Even in the south-eastern part of Jayantia Kingdom and the southern tract of Kachari Kingdom, those organisations of the Mughals were put into operation through different phases basing on the proximity of Sarkar Sylhet. Even in upper and central Assam, the Maujadari system was influenced by the pargana model bringing

12. H. Blochmann, "Koch Behar, Koch-Hajo and Assam in the 16th and 17th centuries, according to the Akbarnama, the Padishanama, and Fathiya-i-ibriya" J.A.S.B. Vol.XLI, 1872, p 99.

13. M.I. Bora, (tr) Baharistan-i-Ghaybi, Vol.I, pp 272-73.

14. Ibid.,; B.R. Grover "Socio-Economic change in the North-East India" - Seminar Paper under Indian Council of Historical Research, held at Shillong, 1977, pp 3-5.

a radical change in the conventional paik and Khel* system.[15]

The guide lines of civil and criminal laws were usually framed by the Hindu Brahmins (priests) of the royal court. The Ahom monarch of the seventeenth century were inclined to give up their native code and laws, and began to adopt the major rules of the Hindu law in administering justice.[16] As there was no practice in maintaining written code, formerly the justice depended mostly on the whims and caprices of the monarch and his subordinate juries. During the reign of Aurangzeb, the character of criminal law was marked by sterness and comparative harshness. It is because the Mughal Emperor tried to translate Islamic code through the counsels of the Qazis or judges of high order.[17] Probably, the Mughal occupation of Kamrup and invasion of Assam contributed to bring about a change in the Ahom judicial system. Firstly, the contemporary Ahom monarchs felt the necessity of severity and cruelty in executing criminal laws in order to counteract the foreign forces as well as to combat the internal insurrection by terroristic principles. Secondly, the delegation of judicial powers to the provincial governor of Gauhati in the line of decentralisation marked its beginning from the time of Mughal invasion of Kamrup. Before that, judiciary of the Ahom court was mainly centralised in the Monarch and Bar Barua.[18] Therefore, the introduction

* Khel is a division or unit of Assamese subjects having to perform specific services to the state, presided over by a Phukan or a Barua and commanded by the usual gradation of officers, viz. Rajkhowas, Hazarikas, Saikias, etc.

15. E. Gait, op.cit., pp 256-56.
16. U.N. Gohain, op.cit., p 143.
17. Sir J.N. Sarkar, Mughal Administration, pp 73-74.
18. U.N. Gohain, op.cit., pp 144-145.

of decentralisation was a new phenomenon released by the pressure of Mughals upon North East India.

Nevertheless, the Mughal organisation was more elaborate than the States of North-East India. The entire structure of Mughal administration consisted of villages, Parganas, Sarkars and Subahs. "All the twenty Indian subahs of the Mughal empire were governed by means of exactly the same administrative machinery with exactly the same procedure and official titles."[19] The immensity of the Mughal Emperor's power could be judged from the fact that he was the head of the Church and the State alike. The central government would issue directives to the provincial government for general administration and policy matters. Each of the provincial divisions had to be provided with courts where justice could be administered. The Sarkar was the sub-division of a Subah (province) and had within it a large number of parganas There would be a Qazi in each pargana to look after the judicial administration. The executive head of the Sarkar was Faujdar. A Qazi also was responsible for judicial administration (both civil and criminal) of the Sarkar and also heard appeals from the Pargana courts.[20]

It would thus appear that in the Mughal administration, the principle of the separation of powers was tacitly followed by the creation of separate personnel under the supervision of Supreme Qazi. But in the case of Ahom government, the officials were given both executive and judicial powers. For

19. Sir J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 161.
20. U.N. Day, The Mughal Government, p 206.

example, the Bar Phukan and Bar Barua were also vested with judicial powers inaddition to other administrative functions. However, appeal could be made to them as well as to the monarch. Nevertheless, the administration of justice under the Ahoms was comparatively liberal.[21]

'This type of Mughal administration with its arrangement, procedure, machinery and even titles, was borrowed by the Hindu states outside the territory directly subject to Muslim rule'.[22] Like Mughal Kamrup, the Kingdoms of Cooch Behar, Jayantia, Cachar and Manipur borrowed some features of Mughal judiciary after making modifications in the traditional Hindu and tribal laws. In Cooch Behar, the Mughal contact ushered in remarkable changes through the frame work of political and administrative re-organisations. Right from 1613 A.D., many feudatory chieftains and zamindars cropped up in Bijni, Sidli, Chirang, Ripu, Guma, Gauripur, Karaibari, Bhulua, Bakla, Bhogna, Sonargaon etc. in the eastern wing of the erstwhile kingdom of Parikshit. They were virtually accepted as the protectorate of the Mughal ruler. Consequently, the deputed Mughal agents in their respective assignments pushed forward the guide lines of Mughal administration to those estate holders. Shaykh Ibrahim Karori was appointed as superviser who sent a periodical report to the Imperial officers.[23] Very soon, the acquired tract was divided and sub-divided under system of Sarkar and pargana. In revenue matters too, the Mughal

21. U.N. Gohain, op.cit., p 144.
22. Sir J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 2.
23. M.I. Bora (tr) op.cit., Vol. I, p 40.

machineries were put into operation. During the stay of Ram Singh at Rangamati, necessary steps were taken to consolidate the new administrative innovations which were operative from the territory of Cooch Behar to Mughal Kamrup.

Most likely, the Mauza system of Assam incorporated certain basic elements of both Afgan and Mughal administration. In no case, this system was indigenous. This system became more viable to the monarchs of Assam in extracting the meaningful resources of land which was not possible under the conventional paik and Khel system. Due to constant warfares, the exchequer of the Ahom court was also on the brink of brankruptcy. At the same time it was of imperative necessity to defend the country from Mughal onslaughts on the one hand and the rebel chieftains on the other. Evidently, the Ahom monarch during the period under review, had to stress in augmenting the quantum of major agricultural resources and this project was materialised by adopting Mauzadari system and at the same time, the state could overcome the time bound financial stringency.[24] Along with it, the paik system could enable the Government to carry out schemes of extensive constructional works throughout the kingdom.[25] The plough tax was mainly realised from the emigrating ryots who cultivate the land belonging to inundated areas. The cultivaters belonging to hill tribes would pay hoe tax.

Notwithstanding, the rulers of Cooch Behar opened new

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24. H. Barua, Assam Buranji, p. 40; G. Barua, Assam Buranji, 90
25. P. Gogoi, The Tai and the Tai Kingdom, p 551.

offices keeping in view the need to meet the unseen problems that cropped up due to the gradual expansion of Mughal hegemony. The policy of isolation on the part of Cooch Behar was broken right from the early part of the seventeenth century. Both the Afgan and Mughal powers brought tactical pressure upon Cooch Behar to accommodate certain structure and organisation of politics. Even though, the Afgans could not make any permanent authority, yet they succeeded in bringing about a change in the conventional polity and economy.[26] But the Mughals did make direct pressure upon the sovereigns of Cooch Behar and succeeded in transforming the whole structure and tone of administration.[27] The style of Mughal administration became prominent since the temporary victory of Mir Jumla over Cooch Behar and thus the synthesis of Afgan and Mughal pattern was accepted both by the victor and the vanquished. This new model of Cooch Behar would resemble that in Sarkar Sylhet, situated in the lower valley of Surma, where too the Afgan and Mughal features were combined together.[28]

The enormous power so long exercised by the rulers of Cooch Behar was abandoned due to the adoption of political legacy of the Mughals. Now the council of ministers began to work as pillars of the monarchical edifice. Diplomatic activities were accelerated to combat the constant threat of the Mughals. Nevertheless, the rulers of Cooch Behar were

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26. A. Salam, (tr) Riyaju-s-Salatin, p 166.
27. A.A. Chowdhury, [illegible] Cooch Behar Itihas, pp 49-50.
28. Ibid., p 265.

facing the challenge of the newly emerged zamindars in its surrounding chaklas. They inspired the Mughals to cripple the status of the rulers and to grant substantial autonomy to the holders of chaklas. They were also in favour of transforming the conventional administration at par with the Imperial model. The double role of the zamindars belonging to different chaklas brought remarkable changes in the arteries of whole administration which could not be avoided by the rulers of Cooch Behar.[29]

Tripura kingdom also introduced some administrative reforms in the line of the Mughal system of administration. The posts of suba, Ujir, Nazir and dewan were borrowed from the Mughals to overcome the new complexity of administration. Further, many more posts were created to revitalise the revenue system. Thus the plains of Tripura and adjoining parts of the capital were divided into several parganas. Each pargana was ruled by an officer known as Chaudhuri. He was assisted by Laskar in controlling the newly acquired areas.[30] Above all, the administration of Tripura during the period under review, was an admixture of Tribal, Hindu and Muslim system of administration.

The tribal Chiefs, however, retained their hold over their respective tribes as before and ruled according to their system. However, the tribal chiefs had to assist the Raja with their men in times of war. Mention may be made that few

29. M.I. Bora, op.cit., Vol. I, pp 296-300.
30. K.C. Sinha, Rajmala, pp 45-50.

hill-tribes patronised the growth of Buddhism centering Harikela and they had exchange of religious views with Burma and Assam.[31] The rulers of Tripura in the later part of the seventeenth century, remodelled the court ceremonies in the line of Mughal court. The personnel of the diplomatic offices were selected on the basis of experience and wisdom.[32] Nevertheless, "the history of the Tipras in the 17th century was one of gradual decay, although the state of Tripura never became a part of the Subah of Bengal."[33]

Kacharis were engaged in tripartite wars with the Ahoms and the Jayantias, throughout the seventeenth century, and at the same time the Mughals tried to extend its hegemony over Cachar. But the kingdom of Cachar could never be brought under the direct rule of the Mughals, although the state was required to pay tributes annually to the Mughal court.[34] But this did not prevent the Mughal impact in the area as it was contiguous to Sylhet Sarkar of Bengal Subah and geographically a natural extension of the Bengal valley and the people in Cachar valley belonged to the same dialect group of Bengali as the people in Sylhet were. Any political, social or religious change or development in Bengal had spontaneously influenced Cachar, particularly in the plain areas. The ruling family of Cachar belonged to the Dimacha tribal group but because of the situation of the royal household in the Barak or

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31. D. Mitra, "Antiquities of Pilak and Jalbari, Tripura," J.A.S. Vol. XVIII, No. 1-4, 1976, pp 73-75.
32. S.K. Bhuyan, Tripura Buranji, pp 41-49.
33. S.K. Chatterji, Kirta-Jana-Krti, p 73.
34. Ibid., p 68.

Cachar valley at Khaspur, surrounded by the Bengali subjects of the Rajas, a socio-linguistic transformation of the ruling clans was very much prominent since the middle of the sixteenth century. Again Cachar was an extension of the Gangetic Bengal and even before the Koch rule, several Bengalee settlements had developed in the plains tract of Cachar as a result of the natural movement of the people towards the east.[35]

Formerly, Tantric Hindus, the royal family and the aristocracy embraced Vaishnavism of the Chaitanya school in the seventeenth century. The Bengali language and calender were used for official work. With the growth of complexity in administration the rulers were bound to re-organise the administrative organisation. Thus the traditional khel was reshuffled in the form of mauza to yield better resources. The central Cachar Division in modern Nowgong district of Assam valley was known as pargana Dharampur, while in the Cachar valley mentions were made in the royal papers as pargana Serispur, pargana Sonapur etc.. The office of mukhtars had to assist the head of mauzas (Mauzadar) in the transaction of land tenure matters. There were various gradation of revenue collectors known as Sezwal, laskar, Bhuyan, Mazumdar etc.. As the volume of State activities increased, the rulers created and classified more upgraded posts known as Barlaskar, Major laskar, Chota laskar, Bar Bhuyan, Majan Bhuyan and Chota Bhuyan etc. corresponding to respective jurisdiction. Thus transformations also corroborate with the copper plate

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35. J.B. Bhattacharjee, Cachar under British Rule in North East India, p. 16.

inscription which mentioned that Raja Kirti Chandra Narayan during seventeenth century appointed one Mohiram Deb Laskar of Borkhola as Ujir (Wazir).[36]

During the reign of Suradarpa Narayan, there was large scale immigration of both Hindus and Muslims who made colonies in the southern part of Kachari Kingdom.[37] The influential new settlers were more inclined to the style of Bengal and the ruler had to satisfy their aspiration by conferring new titles known as Vakeels, Mazumdar, Chaudhuri, Bar Bhandari, Bhandari, Ujir etc.. Simultaneously, the rulers of Cachar began to confer the title of Barua to the noble section of North-Cachar in the style of Ahoms.[38] So the changes that took place in social, economic and political aspects were mainly due to the pressure of migrated population from the Subah of Bengal. Further, the royal court patronised a galaxy of scholars drawn mainly from Bengal who translated ancient scriptures into local language.[39]

The revitalist impact of the Mughals was also spontaneously registered in Jayantia because of its close proximity with the former in the Sarkar of Sylhet. As mentioned already, the Rajas of Jayantia at times used to pay some tributes to the Mughal authority who exerted pressure out of political and economic reasons. Further the Mughal authority did not like Jayantia's allegiance towards Ahom monarch. As a

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36. P.N. Bhattacharya, Heramba Rajyar Dandabidhi, p. 24.
37. U.C. Guha, Cacharer Itibritta, p 97.
38. Ibid., p 98.
39. Ibid., p 81.

result, the Jayantia envoy meant for the Ahom court was kidnapped by the agents of the Mughals.[40] The oscilating attitude of the Jayantia rulers was abandoned, the moment Ahoms re-occupied Gauhati in 1667. It would be reasonable to believe that when the corruptions of the viceroy of Bengal subah weakened the administrative structure, the Raja of Jayantia wanted to get rid of the humiliating pressure of the Imperialists and opted to despatch soldiers to assist the Ahom monarch in the proposed campaign against the Mughals.[41] No wonder, the Mughal system registered its impact on Jayantia and the neighbouring Khasi states.

The mounting pressure of Mughal imperialism had forced the Raja of Jayantia to reorganise the defence structure to reckon with the imperialist challenge. On the other hand, to revitalise the state structure, several reformist innovations were introduced. For the regular administration and increasing the revenue, the land revenue administration underwent changes. The pargana system came to stay along with the traditional ~~the~~ four-fold land systems like Raj land, service lands, puja lands and private lands.[42] The offices like those of Laskar and Bhandari were introduced like Cachar. The changes were inducted in the line of Mughal administration. Raja Ram Singh (1701-08) appointed a Sikdar in each village and one Chauduri over sixteen Sikdars. The major function of the Chauduri was to collect revenue for the Raja, and the Sikdar and Chaudhuri were given judicial powers to decide petty

41. Ibid., pp 48-51.
42. P.R. Gurdon, The Khasis, p 89; S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Jayantia Buranji, pp 164-165.

40. 9

cases.[43] These features were definitely influenced by the style of the counter parts in Mughal Bengal. Further, the Muslim population in the plains division of Jayantia considerably increased during the period and the Raja of Jayantia had to appoint Qazi for the administration of justice among their Muslim subjects. The court ceremonies underwent some changes by liberalising the traditional rules and regulations.

The Khasi Syiems, particularly in the southern hills that bordered with Sarkar Sylhet, appointed Mukhtars for maintaining records and correspondences. The states had a kind of officer called Doloi. The Dolois would serve the Syiem in the capacity of military general as well as to the neighbouring fiefs. During the period under review, the offices of Mukhtar and Doloi were upgraded by conferring more powers and responsibilities. Such transformation was necessitated by the increase of the volume of official transactions with the adjoining Mughal Sarkar of Sylhet. Mention may be made that the term Muktar was of Mughal-Persian origin and it had been an induction through close contact in the Khasi vocabulary. Likewise, the village headmen were known as matabars, Sirdars etc.. The Chiefs in the Shella areas took the title of Wahad-dars which was of Persian origin. These officials were elected for three years each by the people. The three Sirdarship in the Jayantia Hills were elective as in the case of Doloi. Again the meetings and the councils came to be known as Durbar.[44] The western

43. S.M. Ali, The History of Jaintia, p 25.
44. P.R. Gordon, op. cit., pp 75-91.

Khasis remained cling to their tribal religion and their State was known as the State of Khyrim, with its capital at Nongkrem near Shillong. Khyrim and Jayantia all along maintained their separate statehood. The Jaintia Rajas came into prominence in the sixteenth century. As Chatterji writes,

> "The Jaintia ruling house was perhaps fully Hinduised - they were staunch Saktas, and the temple of the Goddess Jayantia, a form of Durga in Jayantapura, the capital of the Jaintias, became famous all over Bengal and a great part of India as one of 51 pithas or sacred Sakta shrines."[45]

Although Manipur had no direct political contact with the Mughals, the trade relations with Bengal that were maintained through Cachar,[46] besides Burma where Islam had already made some influence,[47] acted as the catalyst to such impact. The existing police organisation was renovated by the creation of Kotwal who was the Chief of Police. The initiative in maintaining the royal horses and elephants is known by the new posts of Sagol Hanjaba and Samu Hanjaba. Probably, the Muslim traders volunteered to supply the horses through southern part of Cachar and thereafter the native people picked up the skill in training the horses. The use of fire arms was introduced simultaneously during this period.[48]

In the early decade of the eighteenth century, Gharib Niwaj made intensive orientation in all aspects of a welfare

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45. S.K. Chatterji, op.cit., p 86.
46. J.B. Bhattacharjee, op.cit., p 16.
47. W. Irvine (tr) Storia Do Mogor, Vol. IV, p 244; Sir W. Heigh and Sir R. Burn (ed) The Cambridge History of India, Vol. IV, p 511.
48. J. Roy, History of Manipur, p 161.

state.[49] He also fought the Burmese from 1725 onwards, and on one occasion pushed as far as Ava, the Burmese capital.[50] Muslim traders and artisans from Mughal Bengal began to immigrate into Manipur long before the time of Gharib Niwaj. Even during the reign of Khagemba (1630 - ?), the ambitious predecessor of Gharib Niwaj (Pamheiba) alias Gopal Singha, the Muslim prisoners of war and low caste Hindus were given settlement in Manipur.[51] Probably, the Muslim settlers encouraged the Mullas and Qazis to make spiritual and social relief through itenary camp and on the other hand, the Hindhus were aspiring to get spiritual relief through the preachers of Chaitanya Vaishnavism from Mughal Bengal.

TRADE AND COMMERCE

The major impact of the Mughals on the North-East particularly the areas outside their control, generated through extensive trade with Bengal. The history of Assam's trade connection with Bengal claims antiquity. During our period under review, inspite of occasional hostile political relations, the trade structure was organised at the initiative of the ruling authorities especially between Bengal and Assam. As Bhuyan writes: "Free commercial intercourse with Bengal required governmental protection of the traders of both the countries, and the supervision and control of the frontier officers and collector of duties."[52] The trade link brought

49. L. Mangi Singh and L. Mani Singh (ed) Bijoy Pancali, pp 63-64.
50. S.K. Chatterji, op.cit., p 83.
51. J. Roy, op.cit., p 28.
52. S.K. Bhuyan, Anglo-Assamese Relations, p 49.

the trans-Brahmaputra country closer with canvas of Bengal along with other parts of India. The travel accounts of Tavernier mentioned that

> "Dacca would export ornaments of coral, amber and shell to Assam, Bhutan, Nepal and Siam. People of Bhutan would barter their goods for horses, mules as there was no scope of money economy. Most of the commercial transactions were made mainly by the Armanian merchants." 53

Mention may be made that the commercial treaty concluded by Captain Welsh with Gaurinath Singh in February 1793 was nothing but the confirmation of existing Mughal trade system by deploying Company's troops in the strategic commercial out posts of Assam.[54]

Among the frontier people the Khasis also maintained trade connections with Bengal though its southern borders. Unlike the Garos, the markets were under the control of the Khasi syiems or rulers whose territories extended into Mughal Sylhet of Bengal Subah. Further, the trading profession was carried both by the male and female alike.[55] Jayantiapur the erstwhile capital of Jayantia rulers was the seat of distribution of all merchandise. Another commercial spot was Padua in the Surma Valley, close to the foot hills of of the southern slope of the Khasi highlands. Agricultural products both from Jayantia Kingdom and Khyrim state were carried partly by porters and then by country boats to many river ports. The Khasis were also probably tempted to utilise the river port of Laur that lay in the north-western

53. J.B. Tavernier, Travels in India, Vol. II, p 260.
54. A.C. Banerjee, The Eastern Frontier of British India, pp 401-404.
55. S.K. Bhuyan, Jayantia Buranji, p 186.

part of Sarkar Sylhet. Laur was visited by the traders of northern India too. During seventeenth century, the Mughals put some obligatory duties to the Hindu potentates of Laur for checking occasional inroads of the neighbouring Khasis. Thus one Govinda Chandra served as an influential Mughal agent after embracing Islamic faith. He now took the name of Habib Khan and successfully resisted the Khasis and secured the estate of Laur.[56] The Rajas of Jayantia derived the lion portion of the income from the possession in the plains. The trade with the chain of markets in the Surma Valley was prospective. The entire southern foot hills of Jaintia and Khasi hills and Garo hills were capped with innumerable markets of which Bholaganj, Chatak, Ponatit (Laur), Molagul Jagirpara, Halloghat etc. considered to be prominent. The traders of Khasi-Jaintia hills and Garo-Hills also participated in the transactions both in the occasional fairs (melas) as well as regular markets.[57]

The limestone and iron ore were the principal minerals that the Khasi-Jaintia hills and cotton of Garo hills supplied to the neighbouring areas. The traders in Bengal since the time immemorial imported those profit earning items. The Mughal authorities took active interest in limestone querries and in course of time, assumed the monopoly of lime trade.[58]

56. P.N. Bhattacharya, "Ruins in Laur", J.A.R.S. Vol. IV, No. 1, 1936, pp 25-26.
57. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) op.cit., p 194.
58. Bengal Revenue consultation 24th September 1790 No. 42. cited in B. Datta Ray, "Khasi Hills and Brahmo Samaj Movement," paper presented in the First Session of the North East India History Association, Shillong, 1980.

To begin with, the Mughal authority in Bengal took the lease of Laur (Nongstain-Langrin) hills.[59] While the Mughals held the monopoly of the limestones of the Laur hills, the private traders of Bengal also used to take lease of querries in other parts of the Khasi-Jaintia hills. In course of time, the entire trade was controlled by the Mughal authorities.[60] The Khasi chiefs appointed Bengali Doardars as their agents to deal with the Mughal authorities and traders, while such lease holders employed Bengali labourers for working in the mines.[61] Besides economic impact, such transaction was bound to result in culture exchange. Towards the end of our period, a horde of private traders of different European nationalities - English, Greek, Dutch, Portuguese, French and the Armenians - crowded Sylhet to take advantage of the lucrative trade with Khasi-Jaintia hills.[62] The iron and iron manufacturers of Jaintia and Khasi hills also had a big market in medieval Assam.[63] The merchants of European nationalities as well as Mughal India who were engaged in trade with Khasi-Jaintia hills took the advantage of the market at Jaintiapur for trading with the adjoining territories. Trade in the commodities like wax, ivory and iron manufactures slowly followed. These articles as well as raw silk and wrought silk were produces of Cachar

59. Bengal Judicial Consultation, 12th May 1823, No. 39, cited in P.N. Dutta "Relations of the Khasis and Jaintias with their Southern neighbours till the British intervention," paper presented in the First Session of North East India History Association, Shillong 1980.
60. B. Datta Ray, op.cit.,
61. P.N. Dutta, op.cit.
62. Bengal Revenue Consultation, 16th June 1790, No. 31, as cited in B. Datta Ray, op.cit.
63. A. Guha, "Medieval North East India" (1200-1750), occasional Paper No. 19, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, p 25.

that passed through Jaintia hills and were traded by these Bengal based merchants with the Khasi-Jaintias as intermediaries.[64]

Goalpara on the south bank, and Jogighopa and Rangamati on the north, were the three eastern outposts of Bengal from where its merchants would transact their trade with the frontier officers of Assam. However, the Ahoms were always suspicious of foreign traders and as such no undue privileges were accorded to the trading agents of the Mughals. These trading centres were also visited by the European traders mainly of Portuguese descent.[65] These European traders were actively competing among themselves in the field of manufactures out of the raw materials available in the hinterlands of Bengal. As Bernier writes: "The Dutch have sometimes seven or eight hundred natives employed in their silk factory at Kassem-Bazar, where in like manner, the English and other merchants employ a proportionate number."[66]

A liason officer of the Ahom government, called Duaria Barua was posted at the Assam Choky (Kandahar Choky) which was situated at the mouth of Manas river. He was empowered with special rights and discretionary powers in regulating trade with Bengal Subah. He was to pay fixed rent annually to the treasury of the Ahom government.[67] Mention may be made that in the field of commerce and finance, the

64. Bengal Judicial Proceeding, 17th April 1797 No.28-30, in Datta Ray, op.cit.,
65. B.N. Sen, Prachin Bangla Patra Sankalan, pp 68-69 (Part.I), M. Martin, Eastern India, Vol. III, p 477.
66. F. Bernier, Travels in the Mogul Empire, p 440.
67. M. Martin, Eastern India, Vol. V, pp 660-661; S.K.Bhuyan, Early British Relation with Assam, p 19.

big merchants of Murshidabad of which the house of Jagat Set was most prominent maintained connection with North East India. He migrated from Rajasthan and started his career of fortune. The amount of economic and political control exercised by this commercial house over the affairs of Bengal Subah upto the days of Plassey, created a hurdle to the monopoly trade of the European merchants. Jagat Set was dislodged from the bullion market. Even he had to withdraw his agents from Goalpara, Jogighopa and Kandahar choky in Assam like other parts of India. This suggests the trade link of the business house of Calcutta with the North East during the later Mughal period.[68]

Most of the Nawabs of Bengal beginning with Prince Shuja were involved in private trade. This resulted in corruptions that were brewing in the economic life of the time. The same article came to be taxed twice or thrice ignoring imperial restrictions. Shaista Khan in the capacity of Governor of Bengal tried to abolish the existing trade monopolies along with direct taxes that were imposed on sellers and byers, called abwabs. But the subordinate officials continued to squeeze the common masses by reviving the doctrines of monopoly. The goods were distributed among the merchants at rates 15% to 10% higher than the market rate.[69]

Boat making industry of Bengal Subah depended mostly on the forest woods of North East India. In fact, Assam was

68. A. Salam, Riyaju-s-salatin, p 341.
69. Foster. W. The English Factories in India, Vol. VI, pp 392-95.

famous for its valuable timber used for various purposes. M' Cosh referred 90 (ninety) variety of timbers of Assam of which Jotikori, Korni, Chatyan, Dudkuri, Bhela, Uriam, Borohelock, Aggur, Langchi, Kangtali Chempa etc. yielded fruitful utility.[70] The Ahom government had elaborate system of boat making industry to maintain the standard of fleets. Occasional hostilities did not stop the flow of trade in between Assam and Bengal. As Bhattacharyya writes:

> "In exchange for elephants, tusk, hide of 'Chamari' cow, pepper, musk, Silk cloth, gold, lignumaloes and 'jaluk' and other kinds of aromatic plants to be had in abundance in Assam, the Assamese used to import from the Mughal domain various kinds of winter clothings e.g., 'Lahori', 'Bapta', 'Banat', to protect themselves against the rigorous cold in their hilly habitation".[71]

Another important industry of the Ahom period was gold washing and manufacture of jewellery. Gold was washed from the sand of the Brahmaputra. This profession was carried by a guild known as Sonowal Khel, who paid to the Government a tax at four annas weight or five rupees worth of gold per annum. The state would derive considerable income from this lucrative enterprise.[72] Rudra Singh (1696-1714), the Ahom monarch, adopted deliberate measures to increase the volume of trades, with Mughal Bengal as well as the Himalayan tracts without affecting the political guide lines. As Gait writes:

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70. M'Cosh, Topography of Assam, pp 36-43.

71. S.N. Bhattacharyya, A History of Mughal North-East Frontier Policy, p 289.

72. U.N. Gohain, op.cit., pp 170-73.

> "The trade with Bengal was considerable and the officials who formed the customs revenue paid rupees 90,000 a year to the Bar Phukan of which, however, only 26,000 reached the Royal treasury."[74]

"The Garos served as intermediate links connecting the trade between Assam and the Surma valley. They brought salt from Sylhet and cotton from their own hills."[74] The Garos also had regular trade transactions with the Mughal Faujdar at Rangamati who exercised some political control through the semi-independent or feudatory Rajas. These feudal agents were designated as Zamindars or Chaudhuris with foothold at Susang, Sherpur, Karaibari, Mechmaru, Kalumalupara, Gauripur, Bijni etc.. The principal source of income of those feudal chiefs would extract the lion portion of their income from the hills through piloting trade. In this process they establish as well as administer a string of markets at the mouth of the passes in their respective estates wherein the Garos and the merchants of Mughal Bengal bartered their commodities, keeping a fixed taxes payable to the Zamindars or feudal magnates. The revenue payable by the estate-holders to the Faujdar mostly in kind was assessed only on the basis of the volume of trade. The imports and exports fulfilled the variable needs of the respective states.[75]

As Bhattacharjee writes:

> "A Faujdar was appointed by the Mughal Government with headquarters at Rangamati, for the collection of tribute and maintaining the relations with the estate-holders. The Faujdar, however, on no occasion interfered with the Zamindars or the

74. S.K.Bhuyan, Early British Relations with Assam, p 18.
75. W.W. Hunter, Statistical Account of Assam, Vol.II,p.168.

> Garos and other allied tribes in the frontier. The internal management of the estates was left entirely to the hereditory chiefs who were rather treated as tributaries then as subjects and the estates from Bijni to Susang served as buffer between the Garos and the Mughals."[76]

As noted earlier, Shaista Khan, the viceroy of Bengal miserably failed to check the corruptions both in trade and revenue departments as because the subordinate officials were tempted to increase their personal wealth. Thus Faujdar of Rangamati (Rangpur) would indulge in private trade and make brisk trade in cotton and other forest products with the Chiefs without the notice of revenue assessor of the provincial court. In fact, the mountaineers were economically exploited both by the feudal magnates and the mercantiles class. The Zamindars were well equipped with armed Barkandazes to push the mountaineers in the cradle.[77]

Cachar had trade relations with Mughal Bengal through Sarkar Sylhet, as the main trading route to that port-town passed through Mulagul, a few miles south-east of Jayantiapur. When the capital town was shifted from Maibong to Khaspur during the early decade of the eighteenth century, the volume of trade was augmented through the river routes of Barak valley. The country was commercially important as the traders of Manipur, Mizos (Lushai) and Kukis would barter their respective products through the brokers of Cachar and the main vanue of transaction was Jirighat and Sealtek. As Bhattacharjee writes:

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76. J.B. Bhattacharjee, The Garos and the English, p 19.
77. Ibid., p 20.

> "There was a brisk trade between Sylhet and Manipur through Cachar in wax, ivory, silk and cotton and duties were levied by the Raja on the merchandise at the ghats. In the northern frontier there was extensive trade with Assam and the Nagas. In addition to a number of Choukies in the frontier, Mahung-Dijua was a flourishing area on the Cachar-Assam border."[78]

The whole of Kachari Kingdom was rich in forest products which had good market in Sarkar Sylhet. The most valuable timber called the jarul which was mainly used in boat-building as well as the posts in house-building.[79]

Religious fairs were visited both by the native and Mughal traders. "Sicca Tanka which was the unit of circulation in medieval Bengal, was obviously the common media."[80] As already mentioned, the agrarian structure of Assam underwent some changes by the adoption of Mughal revenue system in a modified way. Obviously this transformation had made indirect impact in some of the hill states as a logical consequence. The Zamindari system in lower Assam began to work in the line of Mughal Bengal. However in Bengal, the Mughal nobility and bureaucracy were combined into one who in turn put pressure upon the merchants and traders.[81] In Assam and its neighbouring hill states, traders were regulated under active state vigilance.

A significant change in the economic system in North-East India during the period under review as mentioned earlier

78. J.B. Bhattacharjee, Cachar under British Rule in North East India, p 204.
79. Ibid., 203.
80. Ibid., p 207.
81. U.N. Day, The Mughal Government, p 199.

was the imposition of the Mughal revenue system in Cooch Behar and in the occupied areas in Assam, the impact of which was transmitted to the region as a whole. As a result, 'profound changes began to take place' due to 'the increasing role of money in economic life'.[82] The Mughal system demanded revenue in cash whereas under the Ahoms the traditional practice was not part militia service by the paiks. Interestingly, the Ahoms also retained the Mughal revenue system in such areas, namely Koch-Hajo, were from they succeeded in pushing back the Mughals subsequently. The relatively affluent section of the Assamese paiks looked forward to the commutation of the service obligation to the state into kind or cash payment and the government was forced to concede to such demands.[83] The collection of land tax from the cultivator was not part of the Ahom revenue system. Shihabuddin Talish, the author of Fathiya-i-Ibriya, who accompanied Mir Jumla during his Assam campaign found that in every house one man out of three had to render service to the state. He considered the revenue system to be liberal. To quote him;

> "If this country were administered like the imperial dominions, it is very likely that forty to forty-five lakhs of rupees would be collected from the revenue paid by the raiyats, the price of elephants caught in the jungles and other sources."[84]

The Mughal attitude is clearly discernible from the observation of aforesaid chronicler. "This way of thinking" as Guha observes "had not left the Ahoms unaffected".[85] This is

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82. op.cit., p 11.
83. Ibid.
84. Quoted in E. Gait, op.cit., p 147.
85. A. Guha, op.cit.,

suggested by the subsequent developments. As Guha writes:

> "Impressed by the Mughal land measurement system, they started a country-wide detailed land survey and almost completed it during the years 1681-1751. In that process, attempts were made to detect taxable wet rice lands held in excess of the prescribed paik allotments and to explore new avenues of taxation, while keeping the militia system basically intact. Surveyors were brought from Koch-Behar and Bengal. Selective commutation of labour service obligations for cash was also in progress. By 1663 pineapple and tobacco, both contributions from the New World, were under cultivation in the region. Both had potentialities as cash crops."[86]

In the long run, land in western Assam acquired saleable value and transactions in the form of sale and purchase commenced.[87] The documents pertaining to A.D. 1667, 1685 and 1723 suggest instances of land purchases.[88] A sanad (1667 A.D) issued by Aurangzeb in favour of two temple priests mentioned the market price of land donated. In 1685, a noble man purchased a plot of land, and in 1723 A.D. nine acres of orchard and rice lands were sold for Rupees twenty five. Although all the transactions occured in western Assam,[89] there created the examples for other regions as well.

Such transactions made the circulation of money indispensable. This also liquidated the traditional barter system. In former times, the rulers in the North Eastern monarchies, no doubt issued coins but such coins played no

86. Ibid, pp 11-12.
87. U. Lekharu (ed) Katha-guru-Charita, pp 87, 142 & 263.
88. S.K. Bhuyan (tr), Annals of the Delhi Badshahate, p 18.
89. A. Guha, op.cit., p 13.

role in the economic life of the masses. The general media of circulation was cowry (conch-shell). There are epigraphic references to the use of cowries.[90] Nevertheless, barter remained as the main form of exchange along with the use of cowries and Bengal coins that infiltrated into the region through trade.[91] The trade link with Bengal, as mentioned already was indeed remote. The region imported salt from Bengal. The elephants's tusk, buffalo horns, rock-salt, iron, cotton, lac, silk etc. were the main products of the region and served as the item of consumer-producer relationship between the isolated groups and villages in the North East. The producers could also generate surplus in respect of some of these items which they exported outside. During the Mughal period, the external trade of the region passed through diversification, particularly with Mughal India, as a result of 'some growth taking place in trade and crafts and some advance made towards monetization and specialization'.[92] In place of the former gold coins issued by the local monarchs, by the middle of the seventeenth century the minting of gold and silver coins, and even use of cowries, was vigorously resorted to. A large number of half, quarter, one-eighth and one-sixteenth rupees coins, issued during the period from the end of the seventeenth to the middle of the eighteenth century, were extensively in circulation throughout the region. There was however, no copper coinage and it is probable that the cowries served

90. Tezpur rock inscription dated C. 829 A.D. J.B.O.R.S. Vol. III, pp 185-92. cited in A. Guha, op.cit, p.
91. A. Guha, op.cit., p 15.
92. Ibid.

its purpose.

> "The rapid increase in money supply from several sources indicated that the demand for media of exchange and trade, both intra-regional and inter-regional, were increasing over the years 1500-1750A.D."[93]

As Manucci also writes:

> "All the collectors of the crown rents are, during the time they are in office, absolute masters of the province made over to them, and can take cognizance of all disputes, whether regarding civil or criminal questions, even matters relating to religion."[94]

The massive participation of the populace in the region is suggested by the fact that some Vaishnava saints of Assam also actively associated in trade.[95] The story of one Kali Charan of Cachar who was a Brahmin by caste but turned to be a wealthy person through trade carried on, besides Bengal and Burma, with other parts of India in the early part of the eighteenth century.[96] Similarly one Bhabananda Kalita, an Assamese enterpriser, growing into a big merchant through trade with Cooch Behar, Garo Hills, Bhutan and Bengal is known from an Assamese source.[97]

As Guha writes:

> "Traders used to form temporary partnership to trade in distant markets with boat-loads of local products and returning with a cargo for sale. On completing the return voyage and sales, the profits were shared and the partnership was dissolved. Commodities

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93. Ibid., p 16.
94. W. Irvine (tr) Storia Do Mogor, Vol. III, p 46.
95. Katha-guru Charita, pp. 65, 142, 241, 349, 492-93.
96. J.B. Bhattacharjee, "Socio-Economic Change in South Assam" paper presented in I.C.H.R. Seminar, Shillong, 1977.
97. Katha-guru-Charita, pp 79-101, 424.

> involved in trading were mustard-seeds; areca-nuts, betel leaves; ornamental umbrellas made of bamboo and takaupat (leaves of a plant of the palm family); knives with ornamental handles; salt; silk, black pepper, elephants' tusks and gold."[98]

The village artisans manufactured earthen wares, variety of bamboo baskets, fishing appliances and containers, cotton and silk clothes and made their living by locally bartering these for salt, oil, rice etc. The numerous weekly and bi-weekly local marts and markets throughout North-East India are known, both from the local and the Mughal sources.[99] These local markets, in course of time, became linked with the markets in Bengal as the local traders 'took their trading boats as far as Dacca or followed an overland trade-route across the Jaintia hills to Sylhet to trade with Bengal in the early seventeenth century'.[100]

The trade relations with the Mughal territory was maintained throughout the period under our review, except when it had to be suspended due to war situation. The diplomatic relations of the Ahom monarchs with the neighbouring States and tribes were motivated by the inclination to encourage free commercial policy in the interest of weal and woe of both the parties.[101] The traders from home and abroad were not given any indulgence as mentioned to involve in the political dialogue of both sides. As Bhuyan writes:

> "The Ahoms were ever-vigilant of the merchants of foreign territories, and never allowed them to settle in Assam lest they, as secret agents of some designing state, created any disruption in the country."[102]

98. A. Guha, op.cit., p 17.
99. Katha-guru-Charit, pp. 65, 82-87, 197; S.K.Bhuyan(ed), Tripura Buranji, pp 21-33, S.K.Bhuyan(ed) Deodhai Asam Buranji, p 121; E.Gait(as quoted) op.cit., p 144.
100. A. Guha, op.cit., p 19.
101. N.K.Basu, Assam in the Ahom Age, p 193.
102. S.K.Bhuyan, Anglo-Assamese Relations, p 50.

The variety of Assam silk called muga had extensive and ready market not only with Bengal but also Coromondal and Malabar coasts in the seventeenth century. As Shihabuddin Talish found that 'Assam gave gold, musk, aloe wood, pepper, spikenard and raw silk in exchange for salt, saltpetre, sulpher etc. at the Ahom-Mughal check-post.'[103]

Mention may be made that some of the European factors were thriving in trade vigorously centering Bengal. Thus the export of the English Company from Bengal increased its value from £34,000 in 1668 to £85,000 in 1675 and this suggest the Bay trade as the most lucrative trade of the Company.[104] Their extension towards North-East direction by establishing factory at Malda in 1681 justify that a new incentive was generated to supply varieties of coarse goods from the adjoining region. It is also learnt from William Hedges's diary that after procuring the parwana in January 1683 from Shaista Khan, the then Viceroy of Bengal, their goods passed "as freely as ever they did formerly"[105] Shaista Khan followed the monopoly of trade as shown by Mir Jumla. He was alleged to be avaricious by the English, having collected 38 crores in 13 years. The English resorted to a policy of force (1686) to redress their grievances, and Fort William was established in 1696.

103. E. Gait, op.cit., p 147; H. Blochmann, "Koch Bihar, Koch Hajo, and Assam, in the 16th and 17th century, according to the Alamgirnama, the Padishanama, and Fathiya-i-Ibriya", J.A.S.B. Vol.XLI. 1872, pp 78-79; S. Talish, Fathiya-i-Ibriya MSS No D/72, pp 36-46.

104. A Chatterjee (Nee Basu), Bengal in the reign of Aurangzib, pp 126, 169, 174.

105. Ibid.

Moreover, the English in Bengal was granted free trade by the farman of emperor Aurangzeb in 1690[106] and their business concentrated at Sutanuti (later known as Calcutta) under the supervision of Job-Charnock. Evidently, 'the growth and development of the English East India Company at this time was one of the more notable forces at work creating a propitious environment for the radical economic advances which occured later in the seventeenth century'.[107] The Dutch also had a flourishing trade in mid-seventies though they were not destined to enjoy their ascendancy for long. Like the Dutch and the English, the French were engaged in Bengal foreign trade from the time of Shaista Khan. As mentioned that the English were trading in Bengal on more favourable terms than the Dutch and French. In 1686 King James II granted the East India Company a fresh charter confirming all its privileges and by 1702 Murshid Quli Khan, the defacto Viceroy of Bengal offered the English freedom of trade as before.[108] 'The same tradition was practised earlier by Ajamtara alias Sultan Muhammad Azim (July 1678 - Oct. 1679) who accepted the sum of 21,000 rupees from the English and granted official order from his own capacity for a free trade, without the payment of any duties.'*

Evidently, the trade activities of North-East India were significantly increased during the period under review.

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106. Sir J.N. Sarkar, History of Bengal, p 386.
107. A. Chatterjee, op.cit., p 185.
108. Sir J.N. Sarkar, op.cit., p 418; Abdul Karim, Murshid Quli Khan and His Times, pp 112-15; A. Salam (tr) op.cit., pp 276-77.

* See C. Stewart, The History of Bengal, p 303.

The 'merchandise trade surplus was generally in favour of Mughal India' and 'salt accounted for an overwhelmingly larger part of the imports into Ahom State'.[109] On the other hand, the trade with Tibet and Bhutan was favourable to the North East as the outstanding balances were settled in gold and silver. These countries supplied mainly woollens, gold dust, horses, yak-tails (chamar), musk and Chinese silks in exchange for lac, dried fish, cotton, rice and iron.[110] The trade could grow more voluminous but the fact that 'there was no organised grain market, nor was there a vertically and horizontally organised chain of intermediaries to intervene in the market',[111] acted as serious limitations as Shihabuddin Talish wrote: "the inhabitants store in their houses one year's supply of food of all kinds, and are under no necessity to buy or sell any eatables".[112] But the things changed under the Mughal impact in the early part of the eighteenth century when the prices of articles like rice, pulses, salt, oil, betel leafs, ginger, black pepper, earthen vassels etc. for purchase by certain temples were mentioned in copper place charter.[113] The information supplied by such charters suggest that the commodities which were not tradeable earlier became

109. A. Guha, op.cit., p 21.
110. M.I. Bora (tr) Baharistan-I-Ghaybi, Vol. II, p 677; F. Hamilton, An Account of Assam, pp 73-74; A. Guha, op.cit., p 21; H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 66; 'Around 1750 the annual salt import from Bengal amounted to 120,000 maunds'. See Gait, p 223. In 1809 the total value of trade with Tibet and Bhutan in a foot hill markets was estimated at Rs.200,000'. See F.Hamilton, pp 73-74.
111. A. Guha, op.cit., p 21.
112. E. Gait, p 153. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 77; S. Talish, op.cit., pp 71-75.
113. M. Neog (ed) Prachya-Sasnavali, pp 45-47, 177-80, 184.

so by that time and that money had assumed a definite role in local economy.

The traditional art and crafts too underwent transformation. In Assam for example, weaving, oil-crushing, rice-pounding, basket making, gold washing, salt manufacturing and such other crafts were carried on largely within the households. All the craftsmen had agriculture as additional occupation and the artisans and fishermen were not delinked from agriculture. Shihabuddin Talish was impressed by the timber palace at Garhgaon and locally built war boats.[114] He also ten to twelve thousand Sonowals were engaged in gold-washing as mentioned earlier. Its process was job-oriented for a greater section of masses. "Each man makes in the average a tola of gold per annum, and hands it to Raja. But the gold is not fine, and sells for 9 or 8 rupees per tola".[115] The different method employed in gold washing involved sufficient amount of labour and skill. The period under review witnessed further technological developments mainly due to the recruitments of artisans from Mughal Bengal. The expert Muslim artisans were recruited from Bengal and Northern India and granted settlement in the Ahom state on the merit of loyalty. Some of the Muslim settlers, who were originally prisoners of [illegible] war, were also good braziers. Many artisans were engaged in the royal Karkhanas while others attended to private orders. As Guha writes:

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114. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 83; E. Gait, op.cit, pp 153-54.
115. H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 78, E. Gait, op.cit., p 146; A. Guha, op.cit., p 24; M. Dewan, "Native account of washing for gold in Assam", J.A.S.B. Vol. VII, 1838, pp 621-28.

"The impact of Mughal India facilitated the introduction of some new crafts like brass casting, tailoring and the manufacture of rose perfumes and granulated sugar."[116]

DEFENCE REORIENTATION

The main military strength of the Ahom army largely consisted of infantry and elephants, besides impregnable navy and requisite cavalry. But on land route, the army mainly depended on the paiks. The paik system was the basis not only of the entire socio-political but also of the military organisation of the Ahoms.[117] All the adult males between the ages sixteen and fifty had to render compulsory service, civil-cum-military. The civil functions included manual labour in different crafts like making arrows, boats, houses, roods embankments and forts etc.. Further, the non-serving paiks formed a standing militia who were also under obligation to render military service as para-military troops during wars and rebellions. The fortification of Gauhati was coupled with the armed retainers.[118] During the period under review, the rulers of the Ahom government perfected the art of constructing impoverished walls and stockades on river banks and in midstream, and constructed bridges of boats across the river Brahmaputra.[119] To reckon with the Mughal challenge, the Ahoms resorted to the construction of forts at all vulnerable points. A number of forts also came up in Cachar, Jayantia and Tripura along the Mughal boundaries.

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116. A. Guha, op.cit, p 25.
117. J.N. Sarkar, "Man and Beasts in Medieval Indian Warfare", J.I.H. 1973, p 467.
118. G. Barua, Assam Buranji, p 84.
119. E. Gait, op.cit., p 252.

As a matter of fact, the region experienced a mushroom growth of forts.

Early Mughal invasions were not so effective in Brahmaputra valley as because the Ahom naval boats had comparative advantages. The Mughal boats were mainly in larger size and heavier in weight. But the war-boats of the Ahoms were lighter and could operate in quick mobility The Ahom bacharis and Kosas were superior than the Mughal boats even in technical skill. The head of the base consisted of on levelled plank while the propo was extremely high curbed with ugly awe-inspiring faces. The Ahom war-boats stood for durability and strength.[120]

The naval battle of Koliabar was the most decisive event in the Assam campaign of Mir Jumla. In the next titanic battle of Saraighat, the Ahom armada brought indescribable disaster to the Mughal fleet. The valour of the Ahom fighters was eulogised by Ram Singh, the Rajput general of Mughal contingent by admitting that the soldiers of Ahom Kingdom were well experienced in rowing boats, in shooting arrows, the digging trenches and in weilding guns and cannon.[121] During the Mughal invasions, a large number of arms and ammunitions of the invaders passed into the hands of the local rulers. Besides using them in the subsequent encounters, these weapons resulted in local innovations. Some of the

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120. A.C. Roy, History of Mughal Navy, p 113.
121. E. Gait, op.cit., p 253; S.K. Bhuyan (ed); Assam Buranji p 96; S.K. Bhuyan (tr) Annals of the pelhi Badshahate, p 13.

captured weapons were later noticed in the region and found their place in local museum.[122] Similarly, the prisoners of war later on served in the local armies and their expertise was used by the local rulers in weapon making and renovating the defence structure.

The 'Holoidari Konwarhs'* were imparted training relating to musketry, cannonry, use of gun powder and ammunitior etc.. In the same process, the loyal Muslims were conferred the title of Holoighoria** along with non-Muslim Kharghoria for rendering their skill in the manufacture of fire arms including new war strategy. The metal of the cannons like copper and bronze were largely used by the Hiloighorias in the Karkhanas of Ahom armoury. Besides, variety of war-swords used both by the Ahom generals and soldiers were designed by those professional persons[123] in the model of Mughal style. The difference of Koch cannons and Ahom canons was greatly removed by the new skill of Hiloighorias in the military production of the Ahoms.[124]

The cannon balls were usually made of granite stone in various dimension. The native people were also given proper training in making better type of poisonous arrows and bows. War shields were mainly made of rhino's skin and soon the production was multiplied at the hands of Hiloighoria as they began the use of metals as substitute materials.[125]

122. E. Gait, "Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam", p 29.
* i.e. the Musketear Princes.
** (Holighar) means Ahom magazine. Hilaighar ?
123. S.K. Bhuyan (tr) Annals of the Delhi Badshahate, p 18.
124. See the letter of Itmadul Huq (Nowgong, Assam), the descendant of an old Assamese family to the Editor, The Assam Tribune, Gauhati 26 August, 1980.
125. Ibid.

The guerrila warfare of the Ahoms, like the Marathas, was indegenous and this tactics unnerved the Mughals. As Sarkar writes:

> "The medieval Indian guerillas, like their modern counterparts, turned the conditions of terrain and climate and their own society against the enemy in order to obstruct him, but they themselves were not deterred by terrain or weather. Rugged or forest country was the most favourable for security and surprise notwithstanding some difficulties in getting supplies and reaching targets. The geographical and social features in Rajputana, Assam, Maharastra, Punjab, Ahmednagar and Bijapur favoured this sort of warfare. The medieval Indian guerrilas used initiative and flexibility by dispersal, concentration and shifting position."[126]

Compare

The Ahoms, as mentioned earlier, could maintain the tactical tradition especially in the guerilla warfare. They would come out both from the forts and bush during night and make surprise attack on the enemy, beseige them, if possible and would retreat if repulse. The troopers, avoiding a pitched battle, concealed themselves here and there, and mustering from different sides, made night attacks on Mughal posts and intercepted the transport of provisions by water from Lakhau to Garhgaon. Mir Jumla was bewildered when the Ahom troops launched successive night assaults on the Ahom capital complex at Garhgaon.[127]

Elephants in North East India were considered indispensible as a fighting machine and as a vehicle for carrying heavy items. They possessed tremendous strength

126. J.N. Sarkar, "Guerilla Warfare in Medieval India", Q.R.H.S. Vol. XIII, 1973-74, p 31.

127. S.K. Bhuyan (ed), Assam Buranji, pp 96-97.

and their appearance was frightful. "This wonderful animal" writes Abul Fazal, "is in bulk and strength like a mountain"; and in courage and ferocity like a lion. It would add materially to the pomp of a king and to the success of a conquer; and was of the greatest use for the army. Shihabuddin Talish, the chronicler of Mir Jumla's Assam campaign narrated that there was 'plenty of spirited and well-proportioned elephants abounding in hills and the adjoining plains.'[128] To quote Sarkar:

> "In short, every army that entered the limits of the country, made its exit from the realm of life; every caravan that set foot on this land, deposited its baggage of residence in the halting place of Death. In former times, whenever any army turned towards this country for raid and conquest, as soon as it reached the frontier, the Ahoms made night-attack on it."[129]

Mention may be made that the Ahom army was swift in mobilisation and could take spontaneous measures in repulsing the Imperial army. The heavy artillery of the Mughals was ineffective in the North-East campaign as it was very strenuous and hazardous to cross the bridges of boats passing innumerable rivers and brooks. Further, infantry was inconsiderable. As Bernier writes:

> "In Bengal, so frequently the seat of war, the number is much greater; and there is no province which can dispense with a military force, more or less numerous, according to its extent and particular situation, the total amount of troops in Hindustan is almost incredible."

In the military system and defence organisation, the forts and fortifications had a special place in medieval times.

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128. S. Talish, op.cit., pp 50-67.
129. Sir J.N. Sarkar, "Assam and the Ahoms in 1660", J.B.O.R.S. Vol. I, 1915, pp 188-89.

The use was almost universal and North East India was not exception to it. Though various types of fortifications evolved under the care of Mughals but they could neither construct not acquire the skill of Ahom fort due to uncommon physical features. Therefore, the Ahoms laid more stress equally on fortification and navy besides guerilla tactics. Major forts of North-East India were made of muds and bamboo spikes, surrounded by a number of deep ditches. Fortifications of the Ahoms, as mentioned earlier, were made abundant only to obstruct the natural passes of the Mughal invaders. Most of the forts built up on the hill tops were great barriers to the Mughals as the 'forts were granite-based like the heart of heroes'.[130] The hills on both banks of the Brahmaputra were lined with a series of forts in order to keep constant vigilance both in the land and river route. Even Mir Jumla was surprised by the mettle of Ahom soldiers who created tuff problems and panick to the imperial troops. The Ahom forts facilitated its garrison to fight the enemy with less stress and strain.[131] The Ahom monarch themselves took initiative not only in the guidance of the war generals but also in supervising the smithes and gunpowder factories during the war emergency.[132]

SOCIETY AND CULTURE

The most noticeable social impact of the various Mughal invasions and the establishment of Mughal rule in the fringes

130. Sir J.N. Sarkar, "Assam and the Ahoms in 1660", J.B.O.R.S., Vol. I, 1915, p 53.
131. S.K. Bhuyan, Studies in the History of Assam, p 148.
132. S.K. Bhuyan, Anglo-Assamese Relations, p 583.

and peripheries of the region was the extension of Muslim settlements and the growth of their population that had, as a matter of fact, started as early as in the thirteenth century but tremendously increased during the period under review.[133] The Muslim settlements in the plains areas of Jayantia, Cachar and Tripura also occured during the period. A section of the Muslims also made their way into Manipur through Cachar. A process of assimilation had begun since then and the descendants of the immigrants in due course became the part of the local population, racially and linguistically. A significant development in the state of Manipur was the advent of the Vaishnava missionary from Bengal and Gauriya Vaishnavism preached by them were embraced not only by the major Manipuris, but also by the Manipuri Kukis and Nagas.[134] Bengali or Chaitanya Vaishnavism came to Manipur through Sylhet from the beginning of the eighteenth century. Though Chaitanya was born at Nadia in 1487, his father's hailed from Sylhet. The religious innovation played an effective role both in synthesising Meithei religion as well as in the process of state formation there.[135]

Another religion introduced during the period was Sikhism. Raja Ram Singh during his Assam campaign in 1669 brought with the ninth Sikh Guru Teg Bahadur and some of his followers besides five Muhammadan pirs Shah Akbar, Shah Begmar,

133. K.L. Barua, "Mirza Nathan's Narrative", J.A.R.S. Vol. V, October 1937, No. 3, pp 71-73.
134. S.K. Chatterji, Kirata-Jana-Krti, p 78.
135. Bijoy Pancali, p 36.

Shah Saran, Shah Sufi and Shah Kamal.[136] These Pirs naturally became instrumental in propagating the philosophy of Islam and in the conversion of some local people in their faith. The followers of Teg Bahadur as already mentioned, who stayed behind, introduced Sikism in Assam. The sizeable Sikh community in Nowgong even to-day claimed their descent from these followers of Teg Bahadur.[137] In Assam to-day one comes across the Assamese Sikhs who are either the descendants of these pioneers whose number could be perpetuated through marriages with the local people or the local converts to Sikism. Like the immigrant Muslims, the Sikhs too were assimilated.

Holding of Lower Assam by the Mughals on three different occasions extending a total period of twenty seven years during seventeenth century, brought positive pressure in transforming the social structure and cultural flow of North East India with various degrees. Possession of wealth was considered to be a ladder to the social ascendancy. The professional classes of majority Hindus and minority Muslims were conferred numerous titles corresponding to different professions and responsibilities and they acted as the bridge between the rich and the poor. The Ahom monarchs and the other Rajas along the boundary of Mughal Bengal could neither check the demographic change nor ignore the forces. The traditional conservatism was liquidated by the Mughal manoeuvres. As Gait writes:

136. S.K. Bhuyan (tr), Annals of the Delhi Badshahate, p 10.
137. M. Purkaystha, "The anatomy of North East", p 13.

> "They were compelled to increase their number by marrying from the non-Ahom families, and by conferring upon them the priveleges and status of the ruling race. These new entrants were thoroughly assimilated with the original Ahoms, and they and their descendants did not suffer any disability to hold high offices and enjoy priveleges to which the older Ahoms were entitled."[138]

The literary works of the period under review mentioned the classification of caste as Brahmans, Kayastha, Vasyas and Sudras. Not only in Assam but throughout India, the Brahmins were held in high esteem and veneration. They lived under the patronage of the Rajas or the zamindars. The Ahom priest called Deodhois were placed in high esteem. The Muslim settlers in North East India would main get their religious guidelines from the well versed Mullas and Qazis. Like Bengal 'the convert Muslims of North East India remained wedded to their time-honoured beliefs, manners and customs and continued to practise them in their daily life and especially in villages.'[139] The Mullas earned their livings from the religious performances such as marriage ceremonies and anciliary rites.[140]

As Shihabuddin Talish writes:

> "As for the Musalmans who had been taken prisoner in former times and had chosen to marry here, their descendants act exactly in the manner of the Assamese, and have nothing of Islam except the name; their hearts are inclined far more towards mingling with the Assamese then towards association with Muslims. The Muhammadans who had come here from Islamic lands engaged in the performance of prayer and fasting, but were forbidden to chant the call to prayer (Ajan) or publicly recite the 'word of God'."[141]

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138. E. Gait, op.cit., p 257.
139. J.N. Sarkar, Islam in Bengal, p 28.
140. A. Karim, Social History of the Muslims in Bengal, p 150.
141. Quoted in E. Gait, op.cit., p 153; H. Blochmann, op.cit., p 83.

Nevertheless, the preponderance of the adherents of Islam in this region started with the thirteenth century and it was successful mainly because the Brahmanical Hinduism of the masses was not yet deeply rooted.[142] In between the two currents, the trail of Muslim invasions and the advent of Sri Sankar-deva (1449-1569), Madavdeva and Sri Chaitanya (1486-1539), the eminent apostles of Vaishnavism generated the breach in ritualism and in Brahmaputra valley the growth of Neo-Vaishnavite cult which had proved the saviour of the poor and played a significant role in the social organisation of North East India in general. Gadadhar Singh, the Ahom monarch, was himself a good lever to the movement.[143]

The Ahom monarchs, during our period of review had to make synthesis of the vital forces of Hinduism by patronising the cult of Saktism, Vaishnavism and Saivism in parallel way. However, monotheistic philosophy of Sankar-deva brought remarkable changes on the notion of caste barrier and of worship through various manifestations of the Deity. As Chatterji writes:

> "He gave to Assam a new disciple of faith in a single Divinity, and helped Assam to break away with a past with its complicated esoteric doctrines and its unmeaning practices, and gave to the people something simple and straight forward divested of all questionable associations or implications."[144]

Nevertheless, like the temporal lords, the spiritual aristocrats in practice would follow the mechanism of feudal domain at the cost of slaves, serfs and other bondsmen. As

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142. S.K. Chatterji, op.cit., p 69.
143. Sir J.N. Sarkar, History of Bengal, pp 222-23; E. Gait, op.cit., p 173.
144. S.K. Chatterji, The place of Assam in the History and Civilization of India, p 71.

Guha writes:

> "It was in the seventeenth century, that the emergent feudal relations became a centralizing force both in the economy as well as in polity. But at their base, the militia continued to retain much of its tribal legacy."[145]

The view, generally held[146] that Islam was spread by the conquerer with the sword in one hand and the Koran in the other was not fully applicable in the whole region of North East India. Islamic proselylization was carried mainly through traders masked (disguised) preachers besides known Pirs and Mullas in order to give spiritual relief to the prisoners of war and few converts. Like Bengal, the Sufis were patronised by the Muslim residents of Assam and could maintain their livings with the land grants made by the Ahom monarchs and few other neighbouring Rajas. Based on the Sufi religious preachings, the Jikir and Jari songs began to make a room in Assamese literature. The Mahammedans were granted some amount of lands for the support of mosques over the tomb of saints.[147]

The education of Assam was mainly imparted through Sanscrit tols usually attached with Satra institution during the period under review. Among the Ahom priests, instruction in Ahom language was regularly imparted. Various branches of knowledge were controlled by the state supervision. Dramatic art underwent radical changes along with its paraphernelia. Thus the variety of 'musical instruments and Mughal dresses

145. A. Guha, op.cit., p 36.
146. W.W. Hunter, Indian Musalmans, pp 140-47.
147. N.K. Basu, op.cit., pp 156, 226 and 267.

like Chapkin, futuai (Arabic futula) etc. were used by the Assamese dancers and stage players in the theatrical performances in the Vaishnavite monasteries.'[148] During the period of Rudra Singh, the educational system was re-organised under the trained Brahmins hired from Bengal and northern part of India. In the same trend, the maktabs attached to the mosques and madrassas were run by Muslim teachers (Maulavis) duly supported by the wealthy citizens and zamindars throughout North-East India. Even the royal costumes of Ahom monarchs and nobles underwent changes especially from the time of Rudra Singh (1696-1714). The Assamese manuscript Hastividyarnava, compiled by Sukumar Barkaith in 1734 A.D. described the wearing of Mughal head-dress that was in vogue at the Ahom court. The study of Mughal customs and war-methods by the Ahom courtiers was not merely a hobby but to acquire the key to success in military operations against the Mughals.[149]

The caretaker of the Muslim dargahs or shrines was usually pirs. The long settlement of immigrant Muslims side by side with the Hindus facilitated the flow of toleration. Visiting the tombs of the deceased Pirs* who had served the cause of the Faith was common practice among the Hindus and Muslims alike. The tombs of Shah Jalal of Sylhet, Panc-Pir of Sonargaon, Pua Macca of Hajo etc. still evoke veneration. Evidently, those dargahs considered to be place of pilgrimage

148. M. Saikia, Assam-Muslim relation and its cultural significance, p 237.

149. S.K. Bhuyan, Annals of the Delhi Badshahate, pp 19-21.

* There is a Muslim shrine at Dhubri, known as Panch-pirar-Darga, where the remains of Shah Akbar, one of the Darvishes who accompanied Ram Singh, are buried; See S.K. Bhuyan, Annals of the Delhi Badshahate, p 231.

and offered respect not only by the Muslims but also by the Hindus of the respective locality. As Sarkar writes:

> "The result of this rapproachement in the domain of faith ultimately created a more tolerant atmosphere which kept the Hindus indifferent to their political destiny. It prepared the ground for the further inroad of Islam into Hindu society, particularly among the lower classes who were moved by the miracles of the Pirs." [150]

A noticeable trend in social relations, ushered in during this period, was the progressive Hindu-Muslim rapproachement and secular attitude gradually assumed by the local rulers. This is all the more pertinent in view of the Hindu overtone in the confederacy inspired by Rudra Singh (1696-1714) whom Chatterji termed as the Shivaji of the North East.[151] Interestingly enough, the process of assimilation was considerable in Assam valley itself where the Ahom rulers adopted a tolerant policy towards Islam and patronised it by making land grants to the Muslim saints.[152] Azan Fakir, the Muslim preacher, who came to Assam towards the end of the seventeenth century, was settled in the state permanently with land grants given by Gadadhar Singh (1682-96).[153] The Zikirs composed by that preacher suggest that he had one hundred twenty disciples and he is believed to have converted some Nagas to Islam.[154] The spirit inspired by Rudra Singh made no change in the situation as the later Ahom monarchs also continued to patronise the Muslims. The Muslim religious pontiffs were attached to the Ahom court. They were appointed

150. J.N. Sarkar, Islam in Bengal, Foot Note pp 30-31.
151. S.K. Chatterji, Kirata-Jana-Krti, p 59.
152. ( ) S.L. Barua, "The Muslim Population in pre-British Assam& their social status and Role in cultural History", Proceedings of Indian History Congress, Hyderabad, 1978, Vol. I, p 575.
153. S.K. Bhuyan (ed) Satsari Assam Buranji, p 149.
154. ( ) S.L. Barua, op.cit., p 572.

to the high posts in the Ahom government and as mentioned already, the Muslims were engaged in important defence matters. During later period, the Ahom monarchs even organised Khel for the Muslim settlers.[155] The liberal attitude of the rulers brought about a close contact between the Hindus and the Muslims. As Barua writes:

> "The Muslims, though a minority community, occupied a significant position in the society of pre-British Assam. A new element in the population of Assam in the early part of this period, they soon got assimilated with the Assamese people, adopting their mode of living, sharing their superstitious and social rites, speaking their language, and accepting this land as their mother-land and contributing towards her development. The wide social outlook of the Ahoms and the teachings of the neo-vaishnavism sponsored by Sri Sankar-deva and his disciple Madhavadeva in the 16th century brought the Hindus and the Muslims in Assam closer to one another. Through the social intercourse with the Muslim settlers, the people of Assam became acquainted with Islamic religion and culture and accepted some elements of Muslim culture."[156]

Similar was the situation in Jaintia, Cachar, Tripura, Manipur, where the Rajas appointed the Muslims to official position and even recruited from them in the armies.[157] In Cachar the Hindus and the Muslims were settled side by side in the same Khel.[158] The Rajas also appointed Qazi, as mentioned earlier for the judicious administration of justice among the Muslim subjects. Jainarayan (1698-1731), the Raja of Jayantia on the request of the prominent Muslims in the state brought a learned Muslim scholar from Hardwar for religious leadership of his Muslim subjects.[159] The Cachar

155. Ibid., p 574.
156. Ibid., p 570.
157. J.B. Bhattacharjee, op.cit., See Foot Note No. 96.
158. J.B. Bhattacharjee, Cachar Under British Rule in North East India, p 75.
159. S.M. Ali, op.cit., p 31.

valley and the adjoining plains areas experienced Hindu-Muslim rapproachement in various fields. Manipur under the stewardship of Pamheiba alias Gharib Niwas, as mentioned earlier, witnessed new orientation in the religious field,[160] to cater to the needs of diversified religious faith including Islam. 'Tipra (Tripura) contribution to the history and culture of Eastern India, particularly East Bengal, has its own unique place'.[161] As the Hindus held the Mokama or dargahs in high reverence and so also the Muslims contributed towards the worship of Sitala and Manasa in Cachar, Sylhet Tripura besides Bengal.

The harmonious relationship between the Hindus and Muslims was no doubt inspired by the tolerant policy of the rulers of the North Eastern States. The close contacts and understanding between the peoples resulted in progressive assimilation of the immigrants of different faiths. The immigrants, as stated already, contributed substantial elements towards the growth of new technology, art and crafts in the region as a whole. In course of time, the loan words crept in local languages and myriad tribal dialects while food and dress habits of the people underwent transformation.

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160. S.K. Chatterji, op.cit., p 83.
161. Ibid., p 75.

CHAPTER - VIII

EPILOGUE

The North East and the Mughals came into contact immediately with latter's ascendancy in Bengal. The predecessors of the Mughals, namely the Turko-Afgan rulers of Bengal had endeavoured to extend their influence in the North East; but without any success with the exception of Tripura which experienced the political manoeuvre in a limited scale and the induction of new elements that crept in the social composition of the plains areas of the region through the process of immigration. The Mughal attempts also initially failed to achieve much. In the beginning of the seventeenth century, there were some organised attempts when Jahangir (1605-1627) despatched an expedition which succeeded in subjugating Koch-Hajo in Lower Assam in the western division of the North East and also gained partial success against Cachar and Tripura, besides crushing the strong hold of Afgan nobles in Sylhet, in the Eastern division of the region. The Cooch Behar state had since become a permanent ally of the Mughals, and the Imperial government ruled in Lower Assam through their officers and Jagirdars. In the years following the expedition of 1613 the Mughal attitude towards the North East was mainly influenced by a desire to promote trade and commerce. The Mughal influences began to panetrate in the region that had a

predominantly tribal background through such connections, while in Lower Assam their rule had directly entrenched itself. Similarly, the Sarkars of Mymensing, Sylhet and Chittagong generated influences for the bordering Garo and Khasi hills and Jayantia, Cachar and Tripura. The administration of Prince Shuja, as the governor of Bengal, claimed the acceptance of tributary status by the Rajas of Jayantia, Cachar and Tripura.

The accession of Aurangzeb (1658-1707) to the Mughal throne at Delhi, with which our study begins, ushered in a new era in the history of Mughal relations with North East India due to the aggressive imperialism of the new Mughal emperor. The appointment of Mir Jumla, a shrewd statesman and a close associate of Aurangzeb during his viceroyalty in Deccan further aggravated the situation. The attitude of the Emperor and his shrewd viceroy in the threshold of the North East was coupled with the desire to secure the surrender of Prince Shuja who was one of the strong contenders to the Mughal throne during the War of Succession that preceeded the accession of Aurangzeb and who was believed to have taken refuge in Arracan. The reports of his projected campaign to capture the throne of Delhi in league with the rulers of Arracan and Tripura were indeed disturbing for the new administration. Mir Jumla was asked by Aurangzeb to enforce the surrender of fugitive Shuja. The news of the death of Shuja received through the Dutch Factors reduced the necessity of the Arracan campaign. But the policy of expansionism

prevailed. Mir Jumla had even in the past taken keen interest in commercial enterprise and now looked forward towards the promotion of trade and commerce in the Eastern frontier of Bengal. Further, the rulers of the former Mughal dependencies in the North East had taken the advantage of the War of Succession to withdraw their allegiance. The immediate task before the Mughal Viceroy of Bengal was to re-pacify these rulers.

In persuance of the forward policy of Aurangzeb, Mir Jumla led the campaign against Cooch Behar and Assam. He succeeded in annexing Cooch Behar temporarily as the ruler of the state fled to adjacent Bhutan fearing the vengeance. The State was however, subsequently restored to its former Raja when the latter reaffirmed the allegiance to the Imperial government and undertook to pay tribute annually. Mir Jumla also secured the submission of the rulers of Dimarua and Darrang, the two petty states in Assam Valley (former was a vassal to Jayantia and the latter to the Ahoms). Mir Jumla also forced his way to Garhgaon, the Ahom capital. Jayadhvaj Singh (1648-63), the Ahom monarch signed the Treaty of Ghilajharighat, accepting the Mughal suzerainty and undertaking to pay war indemnity, tribute and hostage. The river Bharali came to be recognised as the Ahom-Mughal boundary and steps were immediately taken to organise Mughal administration in the occupied areas.

The withdrawal of Mir Jumla however, enabled the Ahom

monarch to scrap the Treaty. The Ahoms under Chakrdhvaj Singh (1663-1669) and Udayadity Singh (1669-73) virtually raised an war cry against the Mughals. They recovered Gauhati and endeavoured to push their boundary westward by liberating the ceded areas. The attitude of the Ahom government produced sharp reaction in the Mughal camp and Shaista Khan, the Viceroy of Bengal insisted on the forward policy. The Imperial government sent a fresh expedition under Raja Ram Singh, the Mughal general. In the historic battle of Saraighat the Mughals met with crushing defeat and Raja Ram Singh had to retreat.

The withdrawal of Ram Singh from Saraighat synchronised the virtual end of the Mughal challenge in the North-East. The authorities in Delhi became so much indifferent towards this frontier that they even failed to recall Ram Singh who encamped himself at Rangamati for about seven years. As a matter of fact, the government of Aurangzeb was then more occupied in the North West where they had to reckon with the challenges offered by the formidable Marathas, Rajputs, Jats, Sikhs and other martial races. The inaction on the part of of the Mughals was therefore, not quite unnatural. Similar inaction was noticed on the part of the Ahoms who failed to capitalise the situation to recover their ceded territories in Lower Assam and even to extend their frontier westward. The Ahom state by the time passed through a series of internal dissensions and rebellions that were inspired by the personal ambition of the Princes of royal blood. The only achievement

of the Mughals was the temporary re-occupation of Gauhati and that was made possible by the ruthlessness of a few members of the Ahom nobility. The impact of the Mughal inaction was also felt in other states of the region where the dependent chiefs became assertive. Shaista Khan, the viceroy of Bengal succeeded in pacifying the Raja of Cooch Behar and the march of his forces to Chittagong prevailed upon the Raja of Jayantia to desist from raiding in the Mughal territory. The internal problem in the state forced the Raja of Tripura to agree to tributary terms as a means to derive stronger authority from the Imperial power. The march of the Mughal forces to Gauhati had the indirect effect of pacifying the chiefs of the petty states in Lower Assam like Bijni and Darrang. The States like Sherpur and Susang in the Mymemsing frontier were also assertive, but the conciliatory policy of the Nawab of Bengal avoided the possibility of any major confrontation. The contender to the authority in Laur, in the Khasi hill border, embraced Islam and enjoyed the blessings of the Imperial government. The Mughals thus did not gain politically much beyond mere allegiance of the insignificant rulers, although they could ensure in the process the security of Bengal at a time when they were forced with more serious challenges in the other wing of the Empire.

The things however, changed with the accession of Gadadhar Singh (1681-1696) to the Ahom throne, who revitalised the administration and succeeded finally in recovering Gauhati.

The task of state re-building was carried further by his successor, Rudra Singh (1696-1714), whose administration experienced improvement of the State in all its departments. A shrewd monarch, he planned not only to resist further encroachment on the part of the Mughals in the region but also ventured to lead a concerted campaign in the Mughal Subah of Bengal. He worked on a scheme for the regional solidarity of the North East by enlisting the support and sympathy of all rulers and chieftains of the stipulated region in his proposed challenge of the North East to the Mughals. As a matter of fact, he succeeded in pacifying the erstwhile monarchs of Jayantia, Cooch Behar and the tribal chiefs on the borders of his state and in assertaining the collaboration of distant Tripura on the extreme eastern end of the region. The Ahom monarch even endeavoured to enlist the sympathy of the Hindu Rajas in Bengal itself. Elaborate preparations were completed for the invasion of Mughal Bengal and a confederate army was raised with contributions from the rulers and chiefs in the region. With the sudden death of Rudra Singh in 1714, with which we close our period, the challenge of the North-East too diluted.

The repeated endeavours of the Mughals to establish their hegemony in the North East had failed to produce the desired result while the attempts of the North Eastern states to push back the Mughals from the fringes of their territories were equally unsuccessful. The North East experienced the major challenges from the Mughals during the period under review. Beyond it, nothing spectacular happened to this

effect. Politically the Mughal influence in the post-1714 period became limited to nominal suzerainty over the minor states on the immediate borders of Bengal to be succeeded in that capacity by the English East India Company ever-since their accession to the Dewani of Bengal in 1765.

Nevertheless, the Mughal contact brought in lasting impact on the society and economy of the North East. Such impact could no doubt be registered spontaneously as the Mughals had emerged as the ruling power in Bengal since the reign of Jahangir (1605-27). Although Akbar the great (1556-1605) by issuing a decree in 1686 enlisted Bengal as one of the eleven Subahs but the order took a quarter of a century to actually enforce the new type of uniform provincial administration. However, the confronting relations and occasional penetration of the Mughal forces deep in the region accelerated the process of change through augmentation and revitalism.

The formidable Mughal challenge left the rulers of the North Eastern States with only option to strengthen their administration through reforms and even borrowing elements and institutions from the system of the invaders themselves to revitalise their bases and to reckon with the invading forces. The defence structures underwent trials and experiments. The innovations in the form of methods and weapons were vigorously resorted to. The benefits of the presence of the prisoners of war from the Imperial camp

were ungrudgingly availed of. Rudra Singh, the Ahom monarch even recruited civil and revenue officers from Mughal Bengal to strengthen his government. Above all, the region as a whole was roused by the Mughal challenge.

The new spirit had enabled Rudra Singh to bring the region together in order to challenge the Mughals. His proposed invasion of Bengal did not come through, but the pulsating spirit as generated by the wheels of confederacy stabilised for a considerable period and yielded lasting effects to posterity. Till the subjugation of the whole region by the British, there was no major confrontation between the Ahoms and their erstwhile rivals, namely Cachar and Jayantia. The later two states too experienced no repetition of the border clashes. Assam and Cachar were sympathetic towards Manipur when that state was invaded by the Burmese in 1760s. The Raja of Manipur also endeavoured to help the Ahom monarch when Assam was disturbed by the Maumaria upsurge.

The period of Mughal invasions experienced the immigration of various racial elements from the Mughal provinces particularly Bengal. The prisoners of war and the Muslim immigrants were settled by the rulers in their respective states. The settlement of the Sikhs introduced a new religion and a new social group. The local rulers also encouraged immigration from neighbouring Bengal and recruited officials and artisans to strengthen the economy and administration. The new comers irrespective of their caste and creed were assimilated in the local society and they were offered positions according to their talents.

The immigrant Hindus and Muslims alike could be integrated in the local aristocracy depending on their capability. The immigrants contributed to the regional economy by reclaiming land and inducting new technology and skill. The trade and commerce with Bengal besides Himalayan frontiers increased voluminously in the subsequent years which did not fail to attract the attention of the East India Company as well as other European merchants who were then anchored in Mughal Bengal.

The process of immigration from Bengal went unabated in later years. The immigrants also contributed towards the development of language and literature. Changes were noticed in the field of religion and culture. The advent of Vaishnava missionaries in Manipur was indeed revolutionary. Even the Neo-Vaishnavism of Assam underwent changes to be adaptable to the social needs of the emergent populace. The rulers of local states were no doubt the champions of their Hindu faith but they did not fail to patronise the religion of their Muslim subjects. The Pirs and Fakirs were respected in the society. The rulers also made provision for the administration of justice among their Muslim subjects according to the law of Holy Koran. The liberal attitude of the Monarchs brought the subjects of various faiths closer and contributed to the process of social assimilation.

APPENDIX - 'A'

A NOTE ON GARHGAON IN 1663*

The town of Ghargaon has four gates build of stone and mortar, the distance of each of which from the palace of the Rajah is three kos. A high and wide al, very strong, has been made for the traffic; and round about the town, instead of fortifications, there are circular bushes of bamboos, about two kos in diameter. But the town is not like other towns, the huts of the inhabitants being within the bamboo bushes near the Al. Each man has his garden or field before his house, so that one side of the field touches the Al, and the other the house. Near the Rajah's palace, to both sides of the Dik'ho River, are large houses. The bazar road is narrow, and is only occupied by pan-sellers. Eatables are not sold as in our markets; but each man keeps in his house stores for a year, and no one either sells or buys. The town looks large, being a cluster of several villages. Round about the palace, an al has been thrown up, the top of which is fortified by a bamboo palisade instead of by walls, and along the sides of it a ditch runs, the depth of which exceeds a man's height. It is always full of water. The circumference is 1 kos, 14 jaribs. Inside are high and spacious chhappars. The Diwankhanah of the Rajah, which is called solang, is one

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* Source: H. Blochmann's abstract from Fathiya-i-Ibriaya, J.A.S.B., Vol. XLI, 1872, pp 83-84.

hundred and twenty cubits in length and thirty wide inside. It has sixty-six pillars, each about four cubits in circumference. The pillars, though so large, are quite smooth, so that at the first glance you take them to be planed. Now though the Asamese understand planing, yet you cannot believe that they did smoothen the pillars in this way. The ornaments and curiosities with which the whole woodwork of the house is filled, defies all description: nowhere in the whole inhabited world, will you find a house equal to it in strength, ornamentation, and pictures. The sides of this palace are embellished by extraordinary wooden trellice work. Inside there are large brass mirrors highly polished, and if the sun shines no one of them, the eyes of the by-standers are perfectly dazzled. Twelve thousand workmen are said to have erected the building in the course of one year. At one end of the hall, rings are fastened on four pillars opposite to each other, each pillar having nine rings. When the Rajah takes his seat in the hall, they put a dais in the middle of these four pillars, and nine canopies of various stuffs are fastened above it to the rings. The Rajahthen sits on the dais below the canopies. The naqqarachis (drummers) strike the drum and the dand. The latter instrument is round and flat, and made of ruin metal, and is struck like a gong. The instrument is used when the audience commences, or when the Rajah issues forth, or the Phukans ride out, or leave for an appointment. Mulla Darwish i Harawi [a poet who accompanied the expedition] says that these dandsmust be the very identical metal plates that are mentioned in theShahnamah; but God knows best. There are other

houses in Chargaon, beautifully adorned, strong, very long and spacious, full of fine mats, which really must be seen. But alas, unless this kingdom be annexed to his Majesty's dominions, not even an infidel could see all these fine things without falling into the misfortunes into which we fell. Beyond the enclosure of this hall there is another house, the dwelling-house of the Rajah. It is a fine and beautiful house. The Phukans have erected dwellings in its neighbourhood. Each Phukan is a son-in-law of the Rajah, and has a beautiful garden and a tank. Indeed, it is a pleasant place. As the soil of the country is very damp, the people do not live on the ground floor, but on the machan, which is the name for a raised floor.

APPENDIX - 'B'

TREATY OF GHILAJORIGHAT, JAN'1663*

Illness forced the Nawab to listen to the proposals of peace. Bhor Mall was again employed to confer with the Phukans, and the following conditions were agreed upon -

1. The Rajahs of Asam and Batam should each send one of their daughters to the imperial harem.

2. Each should pay 20,000 tolahs of gold, and 120,000 tolahs of silver.

3. Fifteen elephants to be sent to the Emperor; fifteen to the Nawab, and five to Dilir Khan.

4. Within the next twelve months 3 lacs tolahs of silver and 90 elephants to be sent as tribute to Bengal, in three four-monthly instalments.

5. Twenty elephants to be furnished annually.

6. The sons of Budh Gosain, Karkas-ha, Bar Gosain, Prabatar, the four principal Phukans of the Rajah, to remain as hostages with the Nawab, till the fulfilment of the conditions in para 4.

7. The following districts to be ceded to his Majesty the Emperor -

A. In the Uttarkol

(a) Sirkar Durang, bounded by Gawahatti on one side, and by the Ali Burari**which passes Fort Chamdhurah, on the other side.

B. In the Dak'hinkol

(a) The district of Nakirani.

(b) The Naga Hills.

(c) Beltali

(d) Dumuriah.

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*Source: H. Blochmann's abstract from Fathiya-i-Yabria, J.A.S.B. Vol. XLI, 1872, pp 93-94.

**Called on the map Bhor-alli, or Bhoreli. It flows near Tezpur and the Kamakhya Temple, Central Asam.

8. All inhabitants of Kamrup kept as prisoners by the Rajah in the hills and in Namrup to be restored; so also the family of Badli Phukan.

The districts of the Dak'hinkol that were ceded, have at no previous time formed part of his Majesty's empire. Nakirani (Deshrani) lies near the Garo Hills.

APPENDIX - 'C'

INSCRIPTIONS ON CANNON*

(1) Cannon found at False Point:

"Cr Cr Svargadeva Fayadhvaja Simha maharajena yavanath.....vakasadya idain jantram praptain Cake-..80**

The king Jayadhvaja Simha, having vanquished the Musalmans at Gauhati, obtained this weapon in Caka...80.

(2) Cannon in the possession of Mr. Wood, a tea planter in Nowgong:

"Cr Cr Svarganarayana deva maharajadhiraja Cakradhvaja Simhena jayalavdhastu samgrame yavananam ksaye punah praptamastramidam bhupayacorihananam dhruvain Caka 1589."

King Cakradhvaja, having again destroyed the Musalmans in battle in Caka 1589, obtained this weapon, which declares his glory as the slayer of his enemies.

(3) The big cannon at Dikom:

"Cr Cr Svarganarayana deva maharajadhiraja Cakradhvaja Simhena jayalavdhastu samgrame yavananam ksaye punah praptamastramidam bhupayacorihananam dhruvam Caka 1590."

King Cakradhvaja, having again destroyed the Musalmans in battle in Caka 1590, obtained this weapon, which declares his glory as the slayer of his enemies.

This cannon bears also the following inscription in Persian:

*Source: E.A. Gait's "Report on the Progress of Historical Research in Assam" Shillong 1897 p 29.

**If this inscription be read along with inscriptions Nos(5) and (6), it is clear that after "Yavanam" the word left undeciphered is "jitva," and that the word vasadya" is really "guvakahatya."

Az babat-i-fath-i-Asham dar ihtimam-i-sayyad Ahmad-al-Husain Arz dada shud Dar sin 1074 Hijri muwafik sin (6)."

This cannon has been placed in charge of Sayyad Ahmad-al-Husain for the purpose of conquering Assam in 1074 Hijri.

(4) Cannon in the dak bungalow compound, Gauhati:

"Cr Cr Svarganarayana deva Saumarecvara Udayaditya Simhasya Cake 1594 Cr Nityananda Coladhara Baruvaye garhova Camuva Kacudalai, Murali, Cidam, Puna, Mathura, Ramdhan, Krisnai ei satota ojha."

The cannon was manufactured by seven ojhas (experts), Camuva Kacudalai, Murali, Cidam, Puna, Mathura, Ramdhan, and Krisnai under orders of Nityananda Coladhara Barua in Caka 1594, during the reign of King Udayaditya Simha.

(5) Cannon in the compound of the Deputy Commissioner, Lakhimpur:

"Cr Cr Svarganarayana deva Saumarecvara Gadadhara simhena yavanain jitva Guvakhat yamidamastram praptam Cake 1604."

King Gadadhara Simha, having vanquished the Musalmans at Gauhati, obtained this weapon in 1604 Caka.

This cannon bears also the following inscription in Persian:

"Sakht Abd-ul-Karim top saz. Wazn 29 (?) mon, 29 ser. Shaikh Fakhr-ud-din."

Manufactured by Abdul Karim, gunmaker. Weight 29 (?) maunds, 29 seers. Shaikh Fakhr-ud-din (probably the engraver).

(6) The small cannon at Dikom:

"Cr Cr Svarganarayana deva Saumarecvara Gadadhara simhena yavanam jitv a Guvaka hatyamidamastram praptam Cake 1604".

King Gadadhara Simha, having vanquished the Musalmans at Gauhati, obtained this weapon in Caka 1604.

The cannon bears another inscription in Persian:

"Dar ihtimam-i-Mir Sayyad Ahmad Darogha Ars dada shud. Sakht Muhammad Zaman top saz. Waki Fahangir."

This cannon has been placed in charge of Mir Sayyad Ahmad Darogha Arz. It was manufactured by Muhammad Zaman, gunmaker, during the reign of Jahangir.

GLOSSARY

Abwab,	a trade tax.
Agor,	a scented wood.
Ajan,	Muslim prayer call.
Ajil,	a Mughal revenue officer.
Alamgirnama,	an official history of the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb.
Ali,	narrow road.
Bachari,	a kind of Ahom fleet.
Bakshi,	Supervisor of certain administrative charges under Mughal.
Barbarua,	Chief Adviser of the Ahom Government in judicial and administrative affairs.
Bar Bhandari,	Chief Officer in charge of royal stores in Jayantia, Prime Minister in Cachar.
Bar Bhuyan,	holder of a large estate in Cachar.
Bargohain,	an Ahom Minister.
Barkandaze,	an armed retainer; mercenary soldier.
Bar Laskar,	revenue collector of a large division in Cachar.
Barpatra Gohain,	one of the Ahom ministers.
Barphukan,	Provincial Viceroy under the Ahoms.
Barua,	a high executive official of the Ahom Government.
Bhandari,	an officer of royal store in Jayantia; a minister in Cachar.
Bhuyan,	an estate-holder under the Raja in Cachar.
Bora,	a kind of Ahom civil cum military officer endowed with twenty paiks.

Brahmin,	the highest caste in Hindu social order.
Buragohain,	Prime Minister in the Ahom monarchy.
Chaitya,	Hindu tomb or shrine.
Chakla,	pargana or territorial division in Cooch Behar.
Chapkin,	a Mughal costume.
Char-bach,	light war boats of the Ahoms.
Chaudhury,	a revenue officer in charge of Pargana or estate.
Chota Bhuyan,	holder of small estate in Cachar.
Chota Laskar,	revenue officer of a small division in Cachar.
Chowkey/Choky,	a transit station, a frontier outpost.
Cowry,	Conch-shell used as medium of exchange.
Dag,	an official record of the Dutch Factors.
Daloi	head of an administrative area in Jaintia Hills.
Dargha,	Muslim shrine, tomb of a Muslim saint.
Deka Phukan,	an Ahom official.
Deodhoi,	Ahom priest.
Dewan,	Chief executive; revenue collector, Governor.
Doardar,	the frontier officer or trade agent of the Khasi chief.
Doloi,	a religious leader in Ahom state, an astrologer.
Duar,	a mountain pass; a region adjoining a hill.
Duaria Barua,	agent of the Ahom Government to regulate Assam-Bengal trade.

Durbar/Darbar,	Court; assembly.
Farman,	an imperial decree.
Fathia-i-Ibriya,	a Persian account of Mir Jumla's Assam campaign by Shihabuddin Talish.
Faujdar,	a revenue officer under the Mughals.
Futuai,	a Mughal garment.
Ghat,	an anchorage on the river bank.
Gohain,	an Ahom officer of rank.
Gohain Phukan,	a chief executive for the supervision of religious ceremonies in the Ahom court.
Gosain,	a religious preceptor or instructor.
Guru,	a Hindu preceptor.
Hastividyarnava,	a treatise on elephantry.
Hat,	a periodical market.
Hazarika,	a military officer of the Ahoms endowed with one hundred paiks.
Holoighoria,	an officer of Ahom military factory or workshop.
Jagir/Jaigir,	a revenue tract; assigned land.
Jagirdar,	a feudal noble who rendered fixed services to the Mughal court.
Jhum,	Shifting cultivation.
Kakati,	Compiler of government records in Assam.
Karkhana,	workshop, factory.
Karori,	Mughal revenue officer.
Kataki,	an Ahom envoy.
Kayastha,	a social caste in Hindu society.
Khan-i-Khanan,	a Mughal title conferred on provincial Viceroys for exceptional merit.
Khan,	an estate assigned by the Ahom monarch to the Naga chief.

Kheda,	elephant hunting; trap for capturing wild elephants.
Khel,	a unit or division of the people of Assam, a revenue division in Cachar.
Khilat,	a gift awarded to foreign dignitories by the Mughal court.
Koran,	the Holy Book of the Islam.
Kosa,	a light boat used by the Ahoms.
Kotwal,	an official in Manipur to supervise the state police organisation.
Laskar,	a revenue collector in Cachar.
Madrassa,	a higher institution of Muslim education.
Mahal,	a territorial unit or division.
Mahant,	an official of the Vaishnava monastery in Assam.
Maharana,	title of the Rajput chief of Udaipur.
Majar Bhuyan,	holder of a medium estate in Cachar.
Majar Laskar,	revenue collector of a medium size estate in Cachar.
Majumdar,	a fiscal officer; an estate holder in Cachar.
Maktab,	a Muslim institution for imparting the lessons of Islam.
Manasa,	a Hindu deity.
Mansab,	assigned land and subsidies granted by the Mughal court.
Mansabdar,	holder of a mansab.
Matabar,	an elder in Khasi Hills.
Maulavi,	a scholar in Islamic faith.
Mauza,	a land division or unit.
Mauzadar,	Officer-in-Charge of a mauza.
Medhi,	a leader of the sudra caste in Assam.
Mela,	a periodical fair.

Muga,	a silk fibre.
Mukhtar,	a revenue officer in charge of a Kheḥ or Raj.
Mulla,	a relegious preceptor of Islamic faith.
Naubachia Phukan,	the admiral of the Ahom armada; the Phukan in charge of boatmen.
Nausalia Phukan,	one of the chief naval officers under the Ahoms.
Nawara,	a Mughal flotilla.
Nazir,	a treasury officer; a cash officer in the court.
Neosali Phukan,	the chief marine engineer of the Ahoms.
Nizamat,	provincial viceroyship under the Mughals.
Paik,	an organised system of personal service in lieu of taxation under Ahom state.
Paltan,	an unit of army in Cachar; platoon of infantry.
Pandan,	a container of betel-nut and pan-leaf.
Pandit,	Sanscrit scholar.
Panji,	bamboo spike.
Pargana,	a revenue division of the Mughals.
Parwana,	an ordinance of Mughal court.
Patra,	an official in Cachar.
Peskas,	a gift offered by the Mughal court.
Phukan,	an Ahom officer endowed with six thousand paiks.
Pir,	a Muslim mendicant.
Posa,	a tribute.
Qazi,	judicial officer of the Muslims.
Quanungo,	a revenue collector.
Rajamala/Rajmala,	official chronicle of Tripura.
Rajkhowa,	an Ahom officer endowed with three thousand paiks.

Ryot,	tenant.
Sadia Bargohain,	a frontier officer of the Ahoms.
Sagol Hanjaba,	a military officer in Manipur.
Saikia,	an Ahom commander of one hundred paiks.
Saiva,	Worshipper of Shiva, the Hindu deity.
Sakta,	worshipper of Sakti or Mother Goddess.
Samu Hanjoba,	officer in charge of horses in Manipur
Sarkar,	a division of a Mughal Subah; a district in the Mughal Empire.
Satra,	an Assamese Vaishnava monastery.
Satradhikar,	a chief priest of a satra.
Sejwal,	a revenue officer; revenue collector in Cachar.
Shia,	one of the sects of Islamic creed.
Sicca-Tanka,	a coin; one fourth of a rupee.
Sikdar,	a revenue officer.
Sirdar,	headman of a village in Khasi and Jaintia hills.
Sitala,	a Hindu deity.
Sonwal,	gold-washer.
Subah,	a Mughal province.
Subahdar,	Viceroy; Governor.
Sudra,	the lower caste; lower ladder of the Hindu society.
Sufi,	a Muslim cult.
Sunni,	one form of Islamic creed.
Syiem,	the chief of a Khasi state.
Zamburak,	the cannon balls.
Zikir,	Devotional song composed by a Muhammadan Fakir in Assam.

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