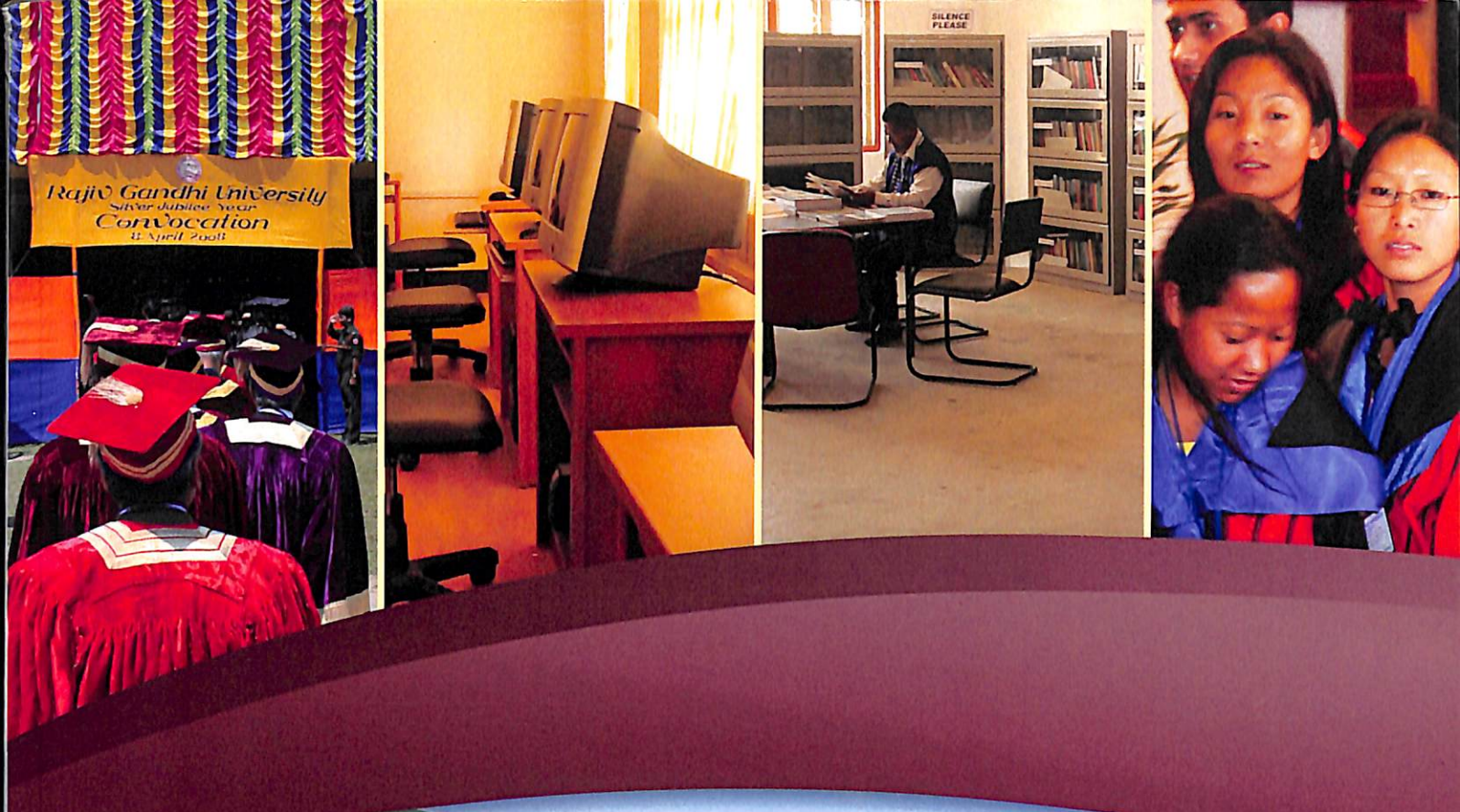




M.A. (History)

FIRST YEAR

MAHIST-403

INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION
Rajiv Gandhi University

www.ide.rgu.ac.in

HISTORY OF NORTH - EAST INDIA (EARLY TIMES — 1947)

HISTORY OF NORTH-EAST INDIA (EARLY TIMES – 1947)

MA [History]
First Year
MAHIST - 403

RAJIV GANDHI UNIVERSITY
Arunachal Pradesh, INDIA - 791 112

BOARD OF STUDIES

1. **Prof. S K Singh** Department of History Rajiv Gandhi University	Chairman
2. **Prof. B. Tripathy** Department of History Rajiv Gandhi University	Member
3. **Prof. S. Dutta (Retd.)** Ward No. 2, Bairagimath, PO: Dibrugarh-786003 Assam,	Member
4. **Prof. (Mrs.) S. Hilaly** Department of History Rajiv Gandhi University	Member
5. **Dr. Ashan Riddi** Director, IDE	Member Secretary

Author: Paulomi M Jindal, Ideas Syndicate

Copyright © Reserved, 2013

All rights reserved. No part of this publication which is material protected by this copyright notice may be reproduced or transmitted or utilized or stored in any form or by any means now known or hereinafter invented, electronic, digital or mechanical, including photocopying, scanning, recording or by any information storage or retrieval system, without prior written permission from the Publisher.

"Information contained in this book has been published by Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd. and has been obtained by its Authors from sources believed to be reliable and are correct to the best of their knowledge. However, IDE—Rajiv Gandhi University, the publishers and its Authors shall be in no event be liable for any errors, omissions or damages arising out of use of this information and specifically disclaim any implied warranties or merchantability or fitness for any particular use"



Vikas® is the registered trademark of Vikas® Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.

VIKAS® PUBLISHING HOUSE PVT LTD
E-28, Sector-8, Noida - 201301 (UP)
Phone: 0120-4078900 • Fax: 0120-4078999
Regd. Office: 7361, Ravindra Mansion, Ram Nagar, New Delhi - 110 055
• Website: www.vikaspublishing.com • Email: helpline@vikaspublishing.com

About the University

Rajiv Gandhi University (formerly Arunachal University) is a premier institution for higher education in the state of Arunachal Pradesh and has completed twenty-five years of its existence. Late Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, laid the foundation stone of the university on 4th February, 1984 at Rono Hills, where the present campus is located.

Ever since its inception, the university has been trying to achieve excellence and fulfill the objectives as envisaged in the University Act. The university received academic recognition under Section 2(f) from the University Grants Commission on 28th March, 1985 and started functioning from 1st April, 1985. It got financial recognition under section 12-B of the UGC on 25th March, 1994. Since then Rajiv Gandhi University, (then Arunachal University) has carved a niche for itself in the educational scenario of the country following its selection as a University with potential for excellence by a high-level expert committee of the University Grants Commission from among universities in India.

The University was converted into a Central University with effect from 9th April, 2007 as per notification of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

The University is located atop Rono Hills on a picturesque tableland of 302 acres overlooking the river Dikrong. It is 6.5 km from the National Highway 52-A and 25 km from Itanagar, the State capital. The campus is linked with the National Highway by the Dikrong bridge.

The teaching and research programmes of the University are designed with a view to play a positive role in the socio-economic and cultural development of the State. The University offers Undergraduate, Post-graduate, M.Phil and Ph.D. programmes. The Department of Education also offers the B.Ed. programme.

There are fifteen colleges affiliated to the University. The University has been extending educational facilities to students from the neighbouring states, particularly Assam. The strength of students in different departments of the University and in affiliated colleges has been steadily increasing.

The faculty members have been actively engaged in research activities with financial support from UGC and other funding agencies. Since inception, a number of proposals on research projects have been sanctioned by various funding agencies to the University. Various departments have organized numerous seminars, workshops and conferences. Many faculty members have participated in national and international conferences and seminars held within the country and abroad. Eminent scholars and distinguished personalities have visited the University and delivered lectures on various disciplines.

The academic year 2000-2001 was a year of consolidation for the University. The switch over from the annual to the semester system took off smoothly and the performance of the students registered a marked improvement. Various syllabi designed by Boards of Post-graduate Studies (BPGS) have been implemented. VSAT facility installed by the ERNET India, New Delhi under the UGC-Infonet program, provides Internet access.

In spite of infrastructural constraints, the University has been maintaining its academic excellence. The University has strictly adhered to the academic calendar, conducted the examinations and declared the results on time. The students from the University have found placements not only in State and Central Government Services, but also in various institutions, industries and organizations. Many students have emerged successful in the National Eligibility Test (NET).

Since inception, the University has made significant progress in teaching, research, innovations in curriculum development and developing infrastructure.

About IDE

The formal system of higher education in our country is facing the problems of access, limitation of seats, lack of facilities and infrastructure. Academicians from various disciplines opine that it is learning which is more important and not the channel of education. The education through distance mode is an alternative mode of imparting instruction to overcome the problems of access, infrastructure and socio-economic barriers. This will meet the demand for qualitative higher education of millions of people who cannot get admission in the regular system and wish to pursue their education. It also helps interested employed and unemployed men and women to continue with their higher education. Distance education is a distinct approach to impart education to learners who remained away in the space and/or time from the teachers and teaching institutions on account of economic, social and other considerations. Our main aim is to provide higher education opportunities to those who are unable to join regular academic and vocational education programmes in the affiliated colleges of the University and make higher education reach to the doorsteps in rural and geographically remote areas of Arunachal Pradesh in particular and North-eastern part of India in general. In 2008, the Centre for Distance Education has been renamed as "Institute of Distance Education (IDE)."

Continuing the endeavor to expand the learning opportunities for distant learners, IDE has introduced Post Graduate Courses in 5 subjects (Education, English, Hindi, History and Political Science) from the Academic Session 2013-14.

The Institute of Distance Education is housed in the Physical Sciences Faculty Building (first floor) next to the University Library. The University campus is 6 kms from NERIST point on National Highway 52A. The University buses ply to NERIST point regularly.

Outstanding Features of Institute of Distance Education:

(i) At Par with Regular Mode

Eligibility requirements, curricular content, mode of examination and the award of degrees are on par with the colleges affiliated to the Rajiv Gandhi University and the Department(s) of the University.

(ii) Self-Instructional Study Material (SISM)

The students are provided SISM prepared by the Institute and approved by Distance Education Council (DEC), New Delhi. This will be provided at the time of admission at the IDE or its Study Centres. SISM is provided only in English except Hindi subject.

(iii) Contact and Counselling Programme (CCP)

The course curriculum of every programme involves counselling in the form of personal contact programme of duration of approximately 7-15 days. The CCP shall not be compulsory for BA. However for professional courses and MA the attendance in CCP will be mandatory.

(iv) Field Training and Project

For professional course(s) there shall be provision of field training and project writing in the concerned subject.

(v) Medium of Instruction and Examination

The medium of instruction and examination will be English for all the subjects except for those subjects where the learners will need to write in the respective languages.

(vi) Subject/Counselling Coordinators

For developing study material, the IDE appoints subject coordinators from within and outside the University. In order to run the PCCP effectively Counselling Coordinators are engaged from the Departments of the University, The Counselling-Coordinators do necessary coordination for involving resource persons in contact and counselling programme and assignment evaluation. The learners can also contact them for clarifying their difficulties in then respective subjects.

SYLLABI-BOOK MAPPING TABLE

History of North-East India (Early Times – 1947)

	Syllabi	Mapping in Book
Unit I	**Sources** a) Literary, b) Archaeological, c) Oral Traditions.	**Unit 1:** Historical Sources **(Pages 3-21)**
Unit II	**Early States in Assam: Varmanas** a) Society b) Economy c) Polity and Religion d) Hiuen-Tsiang's Account of Assam	**Unit 2:** Early States in Assam: Varmanas **(Pages 23-48)**
Unit III	**Early States in Assam: Palas** a) Society b) Polity c) Economy and d) Religion	**Unit 3:** Early States in Assam: The Pala Dynasty **(Pages 49-71)**
Unit IV	**State Formation in Medieval North East** a) Ahom State b) Dimasa State c) Jaintia State d) Manipur State	**Unit 4:** State Formation in Medieval North East **(Pages 73-102)**
Unit V	**Ahom Relations with the Neighbours** a) Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh: Nyishi, Adi, Mishmi, Bhutia, Khampti, Akas b) Other Tribes: Nagas, Khasis, Jayantias, Kacharis	**Unit 5:** Ahom's Relations with Its Neighbours **(Pages 103-125)**
Unit VI	**Decline of the Ahom State and Early Colonial Intervention** a) Moamaria Rebellion b) Captain Welsh's Mission c) Burmese Aggression	**Unit 6:** Decline of the Ahom State and Early Colonial Intervention **(Pages 127-142)**
Unit VII	**Colonial Expansion** a) Annexation of Assam b) Annexation of Khasi Hills c) Annexation of Cachar d) Status of Tripura	**Unit 7:** Colonial Expansion **(Pages 143-159)**
Unit VIII	**Society and Economy in the Hills** a) Nagas b) Mizos c) Garos	**Unit 8:** Society and Economy of the Hills **(Pages 161-179)**
Unit IX	**Freedom Movement** a) 1857 and North East b) National Consciousness c) Peasant Uprisings d) Non-cooperation and Quit India Movement	**Unit 9:** Freedom Movement **(Pages 181-201)**
Unit X	**Impact of British Rule** a) English Education b) System of Governance c) Land Revenue d) Development of Roadways, Waterways and Railways	**Unit 10:** Impact of British Rule **(Pages 203-219)**

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

UNIT 1 HISTORICAL SOURCES 3-21

1.0 Introduction
1.1 Units Objectives
1.2 Sources of History: Literary, Archaeological and Oral Tradition
  1.2.1 Tripura; 1.2.2 Manipur; 1.2.3 Assam
1.3 Summary
1.4 Key Terms
1.5 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
1.6 Questions and Exercises
1.7 Further Reading

UNIT 2 EARLY STATES IN ASSAM: VARMANAS 23-48

2.0 Introduction
2.1 Unit Objectives
2.2 Society in the Time of the Varmanas
2.3 Economy
2.4 Polity and Religion
2.5 Hiuen Tsang's Account of Assam
2.6 Summary
2.7 Key Terms
2.8 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
2.9 Questions and Exercises
2.10 Further Reading

UNIT 3 EARLY STATES IN ASSAM: THE PALA DYNASTY 49-71

3.0 Introduction
3.1 Unit Objectives
3.2 Pala Rulers and North-East India
3.3 Society
3.4 Polity
  3.4.1 Administration
  3.4.2 The Pala Kings of Bengal
3.5 Economy
3.6 Religion
3.7 Summary
3.8 Key Terms
3.9 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
3.10 Questions and Exercises
3.11 Further Reading

UNIT 4 STATE FORMATION IN MEDIEVAL NORTH EAST 73-102

4.0 Introduction
4.1 Unit Objectives
4.2 The State of Ahom

4.2.1 History
4.2.2 Ahom Administration
4.2.3 *Satgharia* Ahom Aristocracy
4.3 The State of Dimasa
4.3.1 Neighboring States
4.4 State of Jaintia
4.5 The State of Manipur
4.5.1 Clan (Salai) System
4.5.2 Judicial System
4.6 Summary
4.7 Key Terms
4.8 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
4.9 Questions and Exercises
4.10 Further Reading

UNIT 5 AHOM'S RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBOURS **103-125**

5.0 Introduction
5.1 Unit Objectives
5.2 Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh
5.2.1 The Akas-Ahom Relations
5.2.2 Ahom's Relations with the Noctes
5.2.3 Ahom's Relations with the Nyishis
5.2.4 Ahom's Relations with the Adis (Abhors) and Mishings (Miris)
5.2.5 Ahom's Relations with the Mishimis
5.2.6 Ahom's Relations with the Khamptis
5.2.7 Ahom's Relations with the Singphos
5.3 Other Tribes
5.3.1 Nagas
5.3.2 Khasis
5.3.3 Jaintias
5.3.4 Kacharis
5.4 Summary
5.5 Key Terms
5.6 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
5.7 Questions and Exercises
5.8 Further Reading

UNIT 6 DECLINE OF THE AHOM STATE AND EARLY COLONIAL INTERVENTION **127-142**

6.0 Introduction
6.1 Unit Objectives
6.2 Moamaria Rebellion
6.3 Captain Welsh's Mission
6.4 Burmese Aggression
6.5 Summary
6.6 Key Terms
6.7 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
6.8 Questions and Exercises
6.9 Further Reading

UNIT 7 COLONIAL EXPANSION **143-159**

7.0 Introduction
7.1 Unit Objectives
7.2 Annexation of Assam
7.2.1 Revolt of Gomdhar Konwar
7.2.2 Administration of David Scott (1824-1831)
7.2.3 Administration of T.C Robertson (1832-1834)
7.2.4 Administration of Captain Jenkins (1834)
7.2.5 Condition of the Province on the Eve of British Occupation and its Effects
7.3 Annexation of Khasi Hills
7.3.1 Annexation of Jaintia Kingdom
7.3.2 Rise and Consolidation of British Power in Khasi Hills
7.3.3 Freedom Movement
7.3.4 Impact of the Movement
7.4 Annexation of Cachar
7.5 Status of Tripura
7.5.1 British Paramountly and the King of Tripura
7.6 Summary
7.7 Key Terms
7.8 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
7.9 Questions and Exercises
7.10 Further Reading

UNIT 8 SOCIETY AND ECONOMY OF THE HILLS **161-179**

8.0 Introduction
8.1 Unit Objectives
8.2 Nagas
8.3 Mizos
8.4 Garos
8.5 Summary
8.6 Key Terms
8.7 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
8.8 Questions and Exercises
8.9 Further Reading

UNIT 9 FREEDOM MOVEMENT **181-201**

9.0 Introduction
9.1 Unit Objectives
9.2 1857 Revolt and the North-East
9.3 National Consciousness
9.4 Peasant Uprisings
9.5 Non-Cooperation and Quit India Movement
9.6 Summary
9.7 Key Terms
9.8 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
9.9 Questions and Exercises
9.10 Further Reading

UNIT 10 IMPACT OF BRITISH RULE

10.0 Introduction
10.1 Unit Objectives
10.2 English Education
10.3 System of Governance
10.4 Land Revenue
10.5 Development of Roadways, Waterways and Railways
10.6 Summary
10.7 Key Terms
10.8 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
10.9 Questions and Exercises
10.10 Further Reading

203-219

INTRODUCTION

NOTES

The North-East is the eastern-most region connected to east India via a narrow corridor squeezed between Nepal and Bangladesh. It consists of the contiguous Seven Sister states—Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura—and the Himalayan state of Sikkim. These states are grouped under the Minstry of Development of North-Eastern Region (MDONER) of the Government of India. Except for the Goalpara region of Assam, the rest were late entrants to political India—the Brahmaputra valley of Assam became a part of British India in 1824, and the hilly regions even later. Due to cultural and historical reasons, parts of North Bengal in West Bengal (districts of Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, and Koch Bihar) are often included in North-East India. Sikkim was recognized as a part of the North-Eastern states in the 1990s.

The states are officially recognized under the North Eastern Council (NEC), constituted in 1971 as the acting agency for the development of the eight states. The North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd (NEDFi) was incorporated on 9 August 1995 and the MDONER was set up in September 2001.

This book – *History of North-East India (Early Times – 1947)* – has been designed keeping in mind the self-instruction mode (SIM) format and follows a simple pattern, wherein each unit of the book begins with the **Introduction** followed by the **Unit Objectives** for the topic. The content is then presented in a simple and easy-to-understand manner, and is interspersed with **Check Your Progress** questions to reinforce the student's understanding of the topic. A list of **Questions and Exercises** is also provided at the end of each unit. The **Summary**, **Key Terms** and **Activity** further act as useful tools for students and are meant for effective recapitulation of the text.

This book is divided into ten units:

Unit 1: Describes different sources dealing with the history of North-East India.

Unit 2: Discusses early states in Assam with special focus on the Varmanas.

Unit 3: Discusses early states in Assam with special emphasis on the Palas.

Unit 4: Covers state formation in medieval North-East India.

Unit 5: Introduces you to Ahom relations with the neighbours.

Unit 6: Discusses the decline of the Ahom state and early colonial expansion.

Unit 7: Familiarizes you with the scenario of colonial expansion.

Unit 8: Explores society and economy in the hills.

Unit 9: Describes the freedom movement in North-East India.

Unit 10: Covers the impact of British rule in North-East India.

UNIT 1 HISTORICAL SOURCES

Structure

1.0 Introduction
1.1 Units Objectives
1.2 Sources of History: Literary, Archaeological and Oral Tradition
1.2.1 Tripura; 1.2.2 Manipur; 1.2.3 Assam
1.3 Summary
1.4 Key Terms
1.5 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
1.6 Questions and Exercises
1.7 Further Reading

NOTES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The term 'sources' refers to a collection of proofs or evidences. Various sources are studied by historians so that they can put together or reconstruct a depiction of the past which is accurate.

In one form, we can categorize sources into primary and secondary where primary sources are those which are given by those who were part of or were viewers of the historical event. Secondary sources are those provided by persons who were neither direct participants nor direct witnesses of events which they have described and so, the secondary sources would record the investigations and study of the primary sources.

Another categorization of sources can be under the heads written, pictorial, oral, and artefacts.

In this unit, we will look at the literary, and archaeological sources and those handed down to us via oral tradition for the reconstruction of the history of Northeast India prior to India's Independence.

Some types of literary sources could be:

- Traveller accounts
- Treaties
- Reports
- Charters
- Court proceedings

Some types of archaeological sources could be:

- Coins
- Cultural evidences
- Edicts
- Inscriptions
- Monuments and sites
- Tools
- Weapons

NOTES

Some types of oral tradition sources could be:

- Folk tales
- Legends
- Ballads
- Songs

1.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the various literary, archaeological and oral sources available for reconstructing the history of Northeast India up to 1994.
- Discuss the historical sources of Tripura
- Interpret the historical origin of Manipur
- Analyse the history of Assam through excavated evidences

1.2 SOURCES OF HISTORY: LITERARY, ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ORAL TRADITION

For our study of the sources for reconstruction of history of Northeast India prior to independence, we will look at the three states that existed during that time: Tripura, Manipur and Assam.

1.2.1 Tripura

Origin and history

The origin of the name of Tripura is still a matter of controversy among historians and researchers. The 'Rajmala' is the royal chronicle of kings of Tripura who reigned for around 5,000 years since the pre-historic era. As per 'Rajmala' the royal house of the Tripura trace their origin to the much honoured 'lunar' dynasty, following the footsteps of their royal Hindu counterparts across India who claim to have originated from the 'lunar' or 'solar' dynasty. According to the 'Rajmala', Tripura's celebrated court chronicle, an ancient king named 'Tripur' ruled over the territorial domain known as 'Tripura' and the name of the kingdom was derived from his name.

Many researchers explain the name 'Tripura' from its etymological origin: the word 'Tripura' is a compound of two separate words, 'tui' (water) + 'pra' (near) which in totality means 'near water'. The geographical location of the state with its close proximity to the vast water resources of eastern Bengal coupled with the generic identity of the state's original inhabitants as 'Tipra' or 'Twipra' apparently justify this explanation of the state's name.

Table 1.1 *General Information on Tripura*

Area	**10,491.69 sqkm**
Capital	Agartala
Altitude	12.80 meters
Population	31,91,168 (Census-2001)
Temperature	Summer: 2 to 36 degree C. Winter: 7 to 27 Degree c.
Clothing	Winter 2 deg. C Min Summer-Cotton. Winter: Woolens
Rainy Season	June to August
Average rainfall	2100 mm per annum
Official Languages	Bengali and Kokborok
Other Languages	English, Hindi, Manipuri. Chakma
International Border	856 **Km.**
Literacy rate	80.42%
Per capita income	₹29,000

The state of Tripura shares common boundaries with the states of Manipur and Assam.

The Vigyan Prasara website of the Government of India says the following about the sources for reconstructing the history of Tripura.

> There is not enough tangible evidence to reconstruct the ancient history of Tripura prior to the rule of the Manikya dynasty. 'Sri Rajmala' is the only source book of the princely regimes of Tripura.... The first part of Sri Rajmala was compiled during the reign of Dharma Manikya in the 15th century. The second part was compiled during the reign of Amar Manikya in the 16th century and the third part during the reign of Govinda Manikya in the 17th century.

Table 1.2 from the site of the Archaeological Survey of India provides the history of the various archaeological excavations conducted in Tripura since 1947.

Table 1.2 *Excavations - Since Independence - Tripura*

Site	Year(s)	Excavated by	Reference
Shyamsundar Tila	1984-85	ASI	IAR 1984-85, pp. 78-79
Thakurani Tila	1984-85	ASI	IAR 1984-85, pp/ 79-80

The Khowai and Haora valleys have revealed fossil wood tools (Figure 1.1) in the Upper Paleolithic layer. More sources of the history of Tripura are ancient religious texts like the Puranas, the edicts dating from the third century BCE.

It does appear that other than the 'Rajmala' there is no document which is authentic enough for using as the base for reconstructing the history of Tripura, while various numismatic and archaeological evidences have been found for reconstructing the history of Tripura over the past five centuries.



Figure 1.1 *Fossil wood tools*

NOTES

Table 1.3 Collection of the Tripura Government Museum

Total No. of collections	:-	1645 nos. a. Coins i. Gold Coins – 8 nos. ii. Silver Coins – 244 nos. iii. Copper Coins – 522 nos b. Sculptures : 79 nos. c. Terracotta : 141 nos. d. Copper inscriptions : 10 nos. e. Stone inscriptions : 09 nos. f. Bronze images : 39 nos. g. Textiles : 102 nos. h. Oil paintings : 58 nos. i. Sketches and drawings : 63 nos. j. Jewellery : 197 nos. and others.
Reference library	:-	Books on art, architecture, archaeology, the anthropology, history and other aspects of the state.
Epigraphical collections	:-	Number of manuscripts – 120 nos.
Language	:-	Sanskrit and Bengali.
Type	:-	Mythological.
Sculpture	:-	Most of the sculptures acquired and displayed so far are from Udaipur, Pilak, Jolaibari and other sites of Tripura. Out of them, the sculptures from Pilak are exquisite collections, depicting mixed culture of both, Hindu and Buddhist pantheon. They are famous for the style and variety of theme. The sculptures are mostly dated back to 9th and 13th AD. Most of the sculptures are made of sand stone and for that the formation of sculpture is very crude in nature. Low relief Dasavatar panels collected from Radhanagar in the vicinity of Agartala date to 18th century AD are the exquisite pieces of sculpture. From these sculpture we get local influence about their formation, style anthropomorphic details.
Terracotta	:-	Most of the terracotta figures collected in this Museum are from Pilak and Amarpur. Some terracotta figures belonging to Bengal School have been contributed by Sri Dinesh Ch. Sen, Historian, are our prized collection. Terracotta's of Pilak symbolizes a unique craftsmanship of t traditions, as prevailed in greater Bengal and the rest having mythological themes, floral designs, animal motifs, etc. Due to poor firing and clay, the quality of the terracottas found in Pilak are not as good as those of Bengal.
Bronze images	:-	Bronze images of Tripura are no less important in moulding technique, theme, variety and unique craftsmanship. Some of the important collections are of miniature Mukhalinga, Avalokitesvara, Tara and Vishnu.
Coins	:-	The most ancient coin of the Tripura ruler so far discovered is that of Maharaja Ratna Manikya (1464 A.D.) the 145th King of the state. The Characteristics of the coins of Tripura. (a) Mostly made of silver and copper, some gold coins are also in the collection. (b) Coronation, pilgrimage, conquest, etc. types of commemorative coins are the general collection. (c) The Queen's name along with King's inscribed on the coin, e.g. depict the legend Sivadurgapada, Srijuta Dharma Manikya Deva, Sri Dharmasila Mahadevi. (d) Iconographic symbol is also found on the coin. (e) The script of the coins is in Bengali and partly Assamese. The language is Sanskrit.
Paintings	:-	Paintings are mostly acquired from the Royal House of Tripura on permanent donation. The paintings mainly belong to the life-size portrait collection of the rulers of the State. There are paintings of non-Indian origin. Some sketch drawings of famous artists like Nandala Gagan Thakur and Dhiren Krishna Deb Ba the most valuable collection of this museum.
Tribal sculpture gallery	:-	Tripura being a land of various ethnic groups, an attempt has been made to depict the culture of the major tribes of Tripura. Some of the unique collections of ornaments, instruments and textiles used by them in different stages of life are shown through models and diorama.
Development of new galleries	:-	The Victoria Memorial Hall, Kolkata, has come forward with a project for the development of a big hall into a photographic gallery on "Hill scapes of India", which is under progress. The Indian Museum, Kolkata, has remodeled a big room for exhibition of the folk & tribal crafts of Tripura. The famous bamboo and cane objects, sculptures on wood carving and ivory are its special attraction.
Photo gallery		**Bronze objects** 1 **Buddha** : Circa 9th-10th Cent A.D. 2 **Siva Parvati** : 9th-10th cent A.D. **Stone objects** 1 **Bhairava** : 12th cent, Sonamura, Tripura 2 **Buddha** : 10th cent, Pilak, Tripura 3 **Uma-Maheswar** : 11th cent, Udaipur, Tripura **Stone plaque (Dashavatara panel)** 1. **Kalki avatar** : 18th cent, Radhanagar, Tripura 2. **Kurmavatar** : 18th cent, Radhanagar, Tripura 3. **Krishna** : 18th cent, Radhanagar, Tripura **Terracotta** 9. **Kinnar** : 18th cent, Pilak, Tripura

NOTES

NOTES

Monuments of archaeological importance in Tripura

Table 1.4 Gauhati Circle, Tripura

Sl. no	Name of monuments/ sites	Location	District
1	Sculptures and rock-cut relief of Unakuti Tirtha, Unakuti Range,	Unakuti Range	North Tripura
2	Ancient Remains, Baxanagar,	Baxanagar	West Tripura
3	Gunavati Group of Temples, Radha Kishorpur,	Radha Kishorpur	South Tripura
4	Temple of Chaturdasa Devata, Radha Kishorpur,	Kishorpur	South Tripura
5	Bhubaneswari Temple, Rajnagar,	Rajnagar	South Tripura
6.	Thakurani Tilla, Paschim Pillak,	Pillak	South Tripura
7.	Ancient Mound called Shyamsundar Ashram Tilla, Baikhora Jolaibari	Baikhora Jolaibari	South Tripura
8.	Ancient Mound known Puja Khola, Paschim Pillak,	Paschim Pillak	South Tripura

Source: Tripura.nic.in

1.2.2 Manipur

The history of the early period of the state was reconstructed from the chronicles of the Ningthouja dynasty along with some literary sources and various clan genealogies. The various annual administrative reports such as the one of 1894-95 also provide valuable information. Documents like the 1470 Agreement between King Kiyamba of Manipur and Khekhomba of Pong in upper Burma, Anglo Manipur Friendship Treaty in 1762, Anglo Manipuri Defense Protocol of 1763, and Treaty of Yandaboo, 1826, between the British government and the Burmese government after the Burmese captured Manipur from 1819 – 1826, which is still remembered as the 'Seven Year Devastation' also provide a great deal of information. The court history or the chronicle of Manipur, *Cheitharon Kumpapa*, is a stirring literary source and provides concrete evidence from 33 CE till Bodhchandra, the last king (1955). According to Saroj N Arambam Parrat in the court chronicles of the kings of Manipur, 'The earlier part of the chronicle is problematic both as regards dating and historicity, though the information it contains is still useful in reconstructing Manipur's early history.'

Ningthourol Lambuba is yet another literary source for the reconstruction of the history of Manipur.

The Manipur State Archives are another source of information about the history of Manipur. The ancient treaties, such as Sakoklamlen, Chinglon Laihui, Nuglon, Kanglei Layat and Kangla Houba also aid in the reconstruction of history, especially in the understanding of the rules for the construction of Kangla. We get information regarding the governance of Manipur during the ancient period from the written constitution 'Loyumba Shinyen'. *Mashin* is another text that provides information about the economic and social history of Manipur. Yet another text of ancient times is *Panthoibi Kongkhul* in which, besides other things, refers to the plantation of varieties of crops and paddy by Nongpok Ningthou and Panthoibi.

NOTES

Manipur being one of the oldest civilizations, the evolution process of the state goes back to the pre-historic period of which evidences have been discovered. Though there have been debates over references to Manipur being there in the Mahabharata, it has been rejected by scholars, even from Manipur.

Table 1.5 from the site of the Archaeological Survey of India provides the history of various archaeological excavations conducted in Manipur since 1947.

Table 1.5 Excavations - Since Independence - Manipur

Site	Year(s)	Excavated by	Reference
Kanchipur	1991-92	Govt. of Manipur	IAR 1991-92, pp 75-76
Khangkhui	1968-69	O. K. Singh	IAR 1968-69, p.20
Sekta	1994-95	Manipur State Archaeology	IAR 1994-95, pp. 58-59

In Manipur, evidence exists of cultures of the Old Stone Age, New Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age. Manipur has hills with rock shelters and caves that would have given shelters to prehistoric men. Though Old Stone Age evidence is only found in the hills, the relics of the New Stone Age can be seen in the valley too. Imphal valley could have experienced the copper-bronze age culture, a significant phase in the history of mankind. The traits of Bronze Age Culture in Manipur seem to have come from Upper Burma and Thailand. Excavations in Manipur after 1970 help to infer that Manipur sites also harboured Hoanbinhian culture. The archaeological linkage of pre-historic culture also existed in Manipur.

Information from various edicts is of prime importance, such as from the edict of Meidingu Naophangba which provides a short account, 115 types, of crimes in ancients Manipur and their related punishments. Then again, Nangshamei Puya and the annual administrative reports of the political agents and the writing of British administrators in Manipur have even contributed some information regarding criminal justice system in the region.

To quote from -History of Manipur – an Independent Kingdom (AD 33-1949):

> 'The intellectual reservoir of manuscripts, which are in the personal custody of the "Maichous" and many of which have been published in modern Meitei enriched the knowledge of a number of human disciplines viz., Administration, Arts and Culture, Astrology, Charms and Mantras, Creation Theories, Dictionaries, Fine Arts, Geography, Geology, Health and Hygiene Genealogy. Poetry, Prediction, Prose, Religious Philosophy, Scripts Supernatural stones, Yek, Salais and miscellaneous aspects (Khelchandra quoted in Sanajaoba op.cit). Few of them in Manpuri title includes Cheitharol Kumbaba, Ningthourol Lumbaba, Numit Kappa, Leithak Leikharon, Chainarol, Panthoibi Khongul, Nungan Pombi Luwaoba, Loyumba Shinyen, Sanamahi Leikal, Mashin, chadda Laihui, Chakpa Khunda Khunthok, Naothingkhong khungthoklon, Poirenton Khunthokpa, Pakhangba Nongkarol, Laishemlon and Sakok Lamlel are some of the outstanding Meitei early scriptures which record the story of human evolution, the myths, legends, pre- and proto-history and the history of the seventy-four kings who ruled the country since AD 33 till the merger of Manipur with the Union of India in 1949 (Sanajaoba op.cit).'

NOTES

List of monuments of national importance in Manipur

Table 1.6 Monuments and Temples of Manipur

SL. No.	Description	Location	District	Image
N-MN-1	Temple of Vishnu	Bishenpur	Bishnupur	
N-MN-2	Uttra sanglen	Imphal	Imphal West	
N-MN-3	Temple at Kangla	Imphal	Imphal West	
N-MN-4	Monument of Bheigyachandra Maharaj	Imphal	Imphal West	
N-MN-5	Kanchi-gate	M.U.Campus,Kanchipur,Imphal	Imphal West	
N-MN-6	it is the monument of 'Paona Brajabashi', one of the national heroes of Manipur.	Khongjom	Thoubal	

1.2.3 Assam

Assam in the Pre-Historic Period

Oldest written record of the relics of Paleolithic culture of Assam is found in A.H. Dhoni's *Pre- history and Proto-history of Eastern India*. In the prehistoric antiquities found in the Garo hills, Dhoni saw a stone tool and classified it as Acheu lean hand-axe. This tool is currently housed in Pitt-Rivers Museum, Oxford. In Garo hills' Ron Gram valley a huge number of tools from this period have been found. These sites were selected for the dig based on their having ready raw material and water needed for the early humans to fashion tools.

NOTES

Mesolithic Age

In the Garo hills' Ron Gram Valley, Mesolithic stone tools were discovered. It seems that handmade pottery was used by the people, who were food gatherers and hunters.

Neolithic Age

Archaeological evidence of the early Neolithic culture were unearthed in the north Cachar, Naga and Garo hills. It can be found all across Assam, but is mostly concentrated in the hill districts. They employed shifting or 'jhum' cultivation of grains like millet and rice, possibly because of floods. They ate fish, goats, deer and other wild animals. They used bark to make clothes. We see an influence of both Southeast Asian and Indian cultures in this region.

Iron Age

No archaeological evidence of the Iron Age has been found in this region.

Megalithic Age

A little earlier than the first millennium is fixed as the time period for the beginning of the Megalithic culture in Assam. It is seen at sites in Karbi and Kamrup hills and along the borders of Garo hills.

Table 1.7 from the site of the Archaeological Survey of India provides the history of various archaeological excavations conducted in Assam since 1947. Figure 1.2 shows the Ambari Archaeological Site, Kamrup, Assam

Table 1.7 Excavations - Since Independence - Assam

Site	Year(s)	Excavated by	Reference
Ambari	1968-69 & 1970-71; 1987-88; 1989-90	Guwahati University; Assam State Archaeology [1989-90] & Deccan College, Pune	IAR 1968-69, pp. 3-4 & 1970-71, p. 4; 1987-88, pp. 8-9; 1988-89, p. 6; 1989-90, pp. 8-9
Dah-Parvatia	1989-90	ASI	IAR 1989-90, p. 10
Daojali-Hading.	1962-63 & 1963-64	Guwahati University	IAR 1962-63, p. 3 & 1963-64, p. 4-5.
Deopani-Than	1962-63	Assam State Archaeology	IAR 1962-63, p. 3.
Devasthan	1984-85	Assam State Archaeology	IAR 1984-85, p. 8.
Gauhati	1974-75	University of Guwahati	IAR 1974-75, p. 7
Jalukbari	1967-68	Guwahati University	IAR 1967-68, p. 8.
Na-nath	1984-85	Assam State Archaeology	IAR 1984-85, p.8.
Paya	1965-66	ASI & Local Govt.	IAR 1965-66, p. 35.
Selbalgiri-2	1967-68	Guwahati University	IAR 1967-68, p. 8.
Shri Shri Suryapahar	1992-93; 1993-94	ASI	IAR 1992-93, pp. 4-5; 1993-94, p. 9



***Figure 1.2** Ambari Archaeological Site, Kamrup, Assam*

Source: Archaeological Survey of India: http://www.asiGauhaticircle.gov.in

NOTES

Sources for ancient Assam

When it comes to literary evidence, there are references to Assam in the Mahabharata. The early contact between the Aryans and Assam has found references in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

There is no chronicle for Assam which is reliable for reconstructing its history. From the medieval period we have the chronicles 'Buranji'. Yet, other types of sources need to be relied on, of which the epigraphic sources are of prime importance.

When we refer to ancient history, let us take a quick look at the types of sources we can use for reconstructing the history of Assam.

Literary sources

The *Puranas* like the *Harivamsa,* and Mahabharata carry legends of the mythical kings Brajadatta, Bhagadatta and Naraka. *Kalika Purana* contained the Naraka legend's latest form of *Harshacharita* written by Bana during the reign of Harshavardhana provides important information regarding the king of Assam Bhaskarvarmana. There are accounts of Hiuen-Tsang the traveller (known to have been in Assam from AD 629—45) and inscriptions of Bhaskarvarmana in which there is mention of Assam. Various tantric works are also sources of information regarding Assam or Kamrupa, like the *Yogini Tantra*. There are also references in Greek historical works to people of Assam (primitive Kirata people). *Tabakat-E-Nasiri* written by Minhujuddin's is a work of prime importance and it refers to Kamrupa as falling on the route taken by Muhammad-I-Bakhtiyar on his expedition against Tibet. Assam is also mentioned in a few Persian and Arabic texts of approximately AD 851.

Sankhyagrihasangraha recounts that Surjya Pahar in Goalpara was a land that worshipped Surya and was also known as the place for 'Jyotish Sastra'.

Mention of ancient Assam can also be found in *Arthasastra* authored by Kautilya.

Writings of Kalidasa and accounts of Periplus also carry important information regarding Assam (Kamrupa).

The *Periplus of the Eastern Sea* talks of Rome and Egypt trading with Assam. Almost all the historians of ancient times refer to Assam as having the best quality of silk. Yet another source of information about Assam is the *Devi Purana*, which was written at the close of the 7th century and start of the 8th Century.

Inscriptions

Assam's oldest epigraphic records are from 15th century AD.

As provided by the literature made available by the government of Assam, below is a chronological list of the epigraphic evidence for Assam.

1. 'Umachal (Kamakhya hill, Kamrup district). Rock inscription of Maharajadhiraja Surendravarman of dynasty of Pushyavarman (Figure 1.3).
2. Nagajari (Sarupather, Golaghat district). Fragmentary stone inscription assigned to the fifth century AD.
3. Bargana (near Doboka, Nogaon district). Rock inscription of Paramabhattaraka Maharajadhiraj Bhutivarman of sixth century AD.
4. Doobi (Barpeta district). Copper-plate originally issued to Bhutivarman and later reissued by Bhaskarvarman.
5. Nidhanpur (Sylhet district, Bangladesh). Copper plate issued to Bhituvarman.
6. Nalanda (Patna district, Bihar). Clay seals of Bhaskaravamana.
7. Silimpur inscription

There are nearly 38 similar inscriptions.'

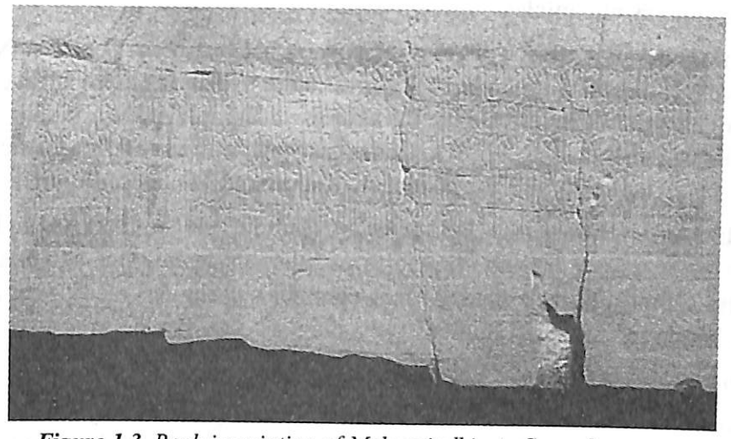


Figure 1.3 *Rock inscription of Maharajadhiraja Surendravarman of dynasty of Pushyavarman*

Coins

Coins with names of early kings of Assam have not been found. Pre-Ahom coins were found at Brahmaputra River's south bank. Coins of the same type have been discovered in Tripura and Bangladesh as well. Recently, in a tea estate close to Tezpur (Dhulapadung Tea Estate) some copper coins were discovered.

Archeological and Monumental Sources

Stone Age artefacts are found in Assam as also a few sculptural and architectural remains of the ancient period. One of the well-known excavation sites is Dah Parvatiya near Tezpur (Figure 1.4).

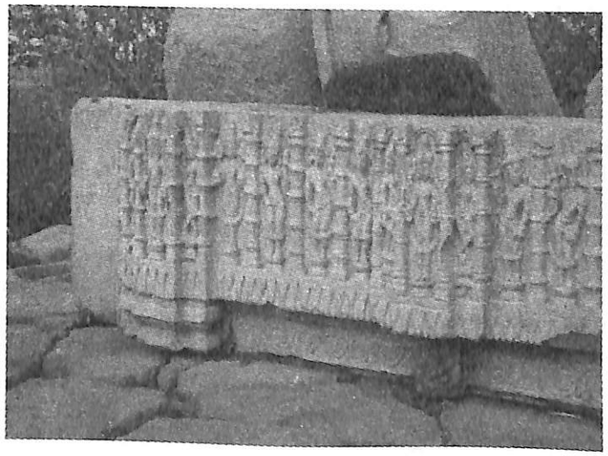


Figure 1.4 *Dah Parvatiya near Tezpur*

The excavation has revealed sculptures and statues that display a keen likeness to the style used during the Gupta period.

NOTES

NOTES

Gauhati's 'Nabagraha' temple of the nine grahas or planets is a living testament of the development of astrology in early times in Assam.

According to the Government of Assam website, the sources of history of the medieval period of Assam from 13th Century AD to 18th Century AD are:

• Contemporary chronicles

The 'Ahom Buranji' is a digest of events of the reigns of the Ahom rulers from Khunlung and Khunlai to Rudra Singha. It is an almost complete and comprehensive account written in the Tai-Ahom script. The 'Purani Assam Buranji' or the 'Buranji' from the earliest times, i.e., Sukapha (1228) to Gadadhar Singa was written in Assamese prose. The 'Sat Sari Assam Buranji' is a collection of seven old Assamese Buranjis.

The 'Ahom Buranji' the 'Purani Assam Buranji', the 'Sat Sari Assam Buranji', regional accounts comprising chronicles of religious institutions and founders of monasteries, family histories and dynastic chronicles. Religious records comprise the Tripura, Jaintia and Kacahari Buranjis.

• Memories and farmans in Persian

Tabaquat-i-Nasiri: Tarikh-i-Firose Shah, by Zia ud din Barani, *Tarikh-i-Feista: Gulshan-i-Ibrahimi*, by Muhammad Oasim, *Akbarnamah* of Sheikh Abdul Fazl, *Muntakhab ut Tawarikkh* by Abdul Quadir of Badaun, *Baharistan-i-Ghaibi* by Alau'ddi Ispahana

• Letters in Assamese

Extremely important sources, at times diplomatic letters, were contained in the Buranjis, for example, in Cachar, Jaintia, Kamrup and Assam. They provide information regarding the period's interstate relations.

• Archeological, numismatic, epigraphic sources

These help to reconstruct the period's political history and to fix dates and names of rulers, the various activities (social, political etc.) and provide information regarding the period's cultural and socio-religious milieu.

• Archaeological evidences

For archaeological evidences, the Government of Assam website has the following to say:

> The Koch and Ahom rulers had to their credit numerous public works: tanks, embankments, roads, forts and temples. The Muslim conquerors also built a few mosques and roads. The most important Koch monuments are in the form of temples. The King of Koch-Hajo had the Vishnu (Haygrib-Madhava) temple built atop the Mani Hillock at Hajo. Ahom rulers like Rudra Singha built the brick city at Rangpur; Pramatta Singha built masonry gateways at Garghgaon and an amphitheatre at Rangpur. The temples tell us about their patronage of Hinduism. The conquering Sultans of Bengal constructed a few mosques during their invasion of Kamrup. The most reputed is 'Poa Mecca', built near Hajo to perpetuate the memory of a Muslim divine, Sultan Ghiyasuddin Aulia, probably in 16th century.

• Geographic and numismatic sources

Coins aid in creating a chronology of the rulers as also fixing their status. We can obtain the date, title and name of rulers from coins. From the legends on the coins it could be possible to know the script, language, as well as the religion the rulers patronize.

NOTES

Here are some of the evidences that have been affixed with the help of coins. 'The Koch coins were known as Narayani, from ending names of the rulers. Ahom coins were called 'Takka'. Jayadhwaj Singha (1648-63) was the first king to introduce coins. Gold coins were issued by Chakradhwaj Singha and Udayaditya Singha. Sir Edward Gait, the eminent historian, refers to Jaintia coins with various Saka dates. Coins of the Sultans of Bengal (from thirteen to sixteenth centuries) who invaded Kamrup have been discovered in different parts of these areas. The provenance of Muhammad bin Tughlaq's coin tends to support the solitary and 300-year late literary evidence of *Alamgimamah* about his undated Kamrup expedition. The next invasion of Kamrup was by the Ilyas Shahi Bengal Sultan; here too, coins constitute the sole evidence.'

• Epigraphic sources

Inscriptions related to matters of Koch Bihar, Kamrupa, and Assam that stress on Assam's relations with Delhi's Sultans were discovered in many areas in the country. Mostly, the Assamese and Sanskrit scripts (Figure 1.5) were used. Persian was used for Mughal inscriptions.

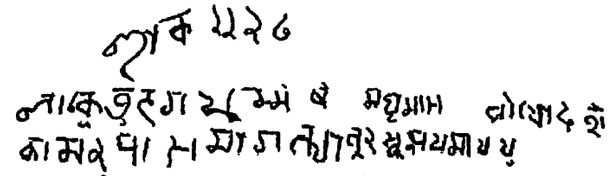


Figure 1.5 Kanai-boroxiboa rock inscription, 1207 CE, shows proto-Assamese script

Just two Koch epigraphs of the 16th century exist; one of 1487 Saka on the Kamakhya temple, and one of 1505 Saka, regarding rebuilding of the Manikut or the Hayagrib temple on Mani hillock at Hajo. The 1362 rock inscription of Gachtal is the earliest Ahom period inscription. Clearly inscribed upon a snake-pillar, the inscription describes the reign of Suhungmung. The 1616 rock inscription of Samdhara Rampart provides information regarding the victory of Pratap Singha, Ahom king. Two Kachari inscriptions exist, which are known. One is at Kachari on a temple which is rock-cut while one provides information regarding making of a place in Khaspur. Highly valuable inscriptions have been found on the canons. These belong to both Ahom kings and Koch rulers as well as to the Mughals. The writing is either Persian or Sanskrit. Assam's oldest discovered canon is of Koches of the 16th century. Inscriptions engraved on buildings of religious importance such as mosques and Dargahs show Muslim influence in the region. Another type of historical and informative record is the copper-plate grants. They can be used to fix the kings' chronology.

• Accounts of foreign travellers

Ralph Fitch, an English traveller, went from Bengal to Koch Bihar. He has described the country. Jesuit Portuguese travellers, Father John Cabral and Father Stephen Canella, in 1626, came to Dacca, Koch Bihar and Kamrup till Pandu. Through their letters we get important information, though meager, regarding relations between the Mughals and Koch.

Latter half of the 17th century has accounts of travellers such as physician Francoise Beemer and the French jeweler Jean Baptize Tavernier regarding that period's battles.

NOTES

• **Reports and records of the East India Company**

The reports sent to the authorities at the Fort William by the military officers of the British regarding Assam are valuable documents for information. Records and reports of this nature range chronologically starting mid-18th century depicting the cultural, socioeconomic and administrative milieu of Assam. Captain Thomas Welsh in the year 1792 was sent to Assam to assist Raja Gourinath. From him there became available plenty of information regarding the commercial, economic and social bearing of Assam during that period including records of, for example roads, buildings traditions etc. Then again David Scott, who was the then Northeast frontier Governor General's Agent made available an English version of an Assamese chronicle from AD 1603 to AD 1822, containing how the Ahom monarchy degenerated and declined. There are also available writings of Sir Edward Gait who has provided earlier work which is rather imperfect but further work is authentic and extremely creditable, so much that he is considered to be 'the father of historical research in Assam'. Gait's *History of Assam* was published in 1906 and was a first of its kind – scientifically written. It was a systematic and comprehensive history of Assam from earliest times, written by performing a comparative utilization of Persian chronicles, the Buranjis and other available materials of historical value.

Temples and Monuments of Assam

Nestled in the Brahmaputra valley this state has Tantrik Shaktism, Shivaism and later Vaishnavism flourishing in its laps. From time to time people from different races, religion and culture have migrated to this place.

The Mohammedan invasions brought Islam into the state. Sikhism flourished here, Buddhist communities have kept the flag of Buddhism flying high. The famous Gurudwara at Dhubri established by the ninth Sikh Guru Teg Bahadur is held in the high veneration by the Sikhs throughout the country.

With the advent of new faith & religion many temples and monuments were built all over Assam. Most of these architectural grandeurs belong to the medieval period and represent the architectural style of the Koch, Kachari and Ahom royal courts. These temples and monuments, spread almost all over Assam, bear silent witness to a glorious past.

Kamakhya temple

The Shakti temple of goddess Kamakhya situated on the top of Nilachal Hills, overlooking river Brahmaputra, is 8 km, away from the railway station of Gauhati.

The greatest shrine of tantric shaktism find mention in the inscription of the Allahabad pillar of Samudragupta. Devotees from all over India converge on this holy place during Ambubachi and Manasha puja.

Nabagraha temple

This temple of nine planets is situated on Chitra Chal Hill in Gauhati. In ancient times, it was said to have been a great centre of study of astronomy and astrology. This is also one of the reasons why Gauhati is referred to as Pragjyotishpur or the city of eastern astrology.

NOTES

Umananda temple

The great Shiva temple situated on the peacock island in the middle of the Brahmaputra in Gauhati attracts devotees from all over the country during 'shiva ratri'. One can visit the temple by crossing the river by country boat plying from Kachari ghat, on the northern banks of the Brahmaputra, where the third Pandava, Arjun, is believed to have watered his horse while undertaking journey during Ashwamedh Yagna.

Basisthashram

Situated in the southernmost rim of Gauhati city on the Sandhyachal hill is a well known holy cum picnic spot, called Basisthashram, after the great Vedic Sage Bashistha, who is said to have lived here. Three rivulets named Sandhya, Lalita and Kanta meet here and flow perennially adding scenic grandeur to the place.

Mahabhairab temple

List an ancient temple where King Bana worshipped Mahabhairab; another incarnation of Lord Shiva.

Madan Kamdev

Madan Kamdev is an enigma, a mystery, a marvel and in the words of Omar Khayam, 'a veil past which I could not see'. Very little is known about the origin of these magnificent archaeological ruins. Written history is almost silent on it, leaving wide room for conjectures and hypothesis.

Kamrupa

The ancient name of Assam, is believed to have derived its name from the legend that love God Kama or Madan, after being turned into ashes by an angry Shiva, was reborn here. One school believes that Madan was reborn and united to Rati on this tiny hillock. The season to visit is from October to May.

Poa-Mecca

There is also a mosque built by Pir Giasuddin Aulia and is held that it has one-fourth sanctity of Mecca and so it is known as Poa-Mecca. It is believed that by offering prayer a faithful gains one-fourth (poa) spiritual enlightenment of what could be gained at Mecca and so is known as Poa-Mecca.

Da-Parbatia

The ruins of the door frame of Da-Parbatia Temple a few kms. from Tezpur town, is perhaps the finest and oldest specimen of sculptural or iconoclastic art in Assam. Its carving has the characteristics of the style of early Gupta School of sculpture. The door-jambs having two goddesses, Ganga and Yamuna, standing below with garlands in their hands in artistic pose and elegance are decorated with beautiful ornamental foliage.

Agnigarh

'Preserving the sweet memory of young lovers', Agnigarh or the rampart, surrounded by fire, is perhaps the most beautiful tourist spots in Tezpur. According to legend, Princess Usha, the only daughter of King Bana, was kept inside the palace which was surrounded

NOTES

by rampart of fire. The present Agnigarh, now only a hillock facing the mighty Brahmaputra, provides the tourist a soul touching panoramic view of both the river and Tezpur town.

ACTIVITY

Visit a museum and list out ten artefacts that belong to Northeast India. Write a note on the significance of each.

Did You Know

- Myers 2000 recognized Northeast India as the seventh most bio-diverse regions in the world.
- Northeast India possesses more than 550 varieties of orchids, which is said to be almost 70 per cent of the total orchid species identified so far.

Check Your Progress

1. What do you understand by the term sources?
2. List three types of literary sources.
3. Mention two types of archaeological sources.
4. List some forms of sources that fall in the category of oral traditions.

1.3 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The term 'sources' refers to a collection of proofs or evidences used to reconstruct a depiction of the past which is accurate.
- In one form, we can categorize sources into primary and secondary sources.
- Another categorization of sources can be under the heads written, pictorial, oral artefacts. Some types of literary sources could be: Traveller accounts, Treaties, Reports, Charters and Court proceedings.
- Types of archaeological sources are: coins, cultural evidences, edicts, inscriptions, monuments and sites, tools and weapons
- Types of oral tradition sources are: Folk tales, legends, ballads, songs
- There is not enough tangible evidence to reconstruct the ancient history of Tripura prior to the rule of the Manikya dynasty. 'Sri Rajmala' is the only source book of the princely regimes of Tripura. Archaeological excavations carried out at various sites reveal a good deal of historical information.

NOTES

1.4 KEY TERMS

- **Ballad:** A poem or song narrating a story in short stanzas.
- **Folk tale:** A story originating in popular culture that is typically passed on by word of mouth.
- **Legend:** A traditional story sometimes popularly regarded as historical but unauthenticated.
- **Numismatics:** The study or collection of coins, paper currency, and medals.
- **Oral tradition:** Cultural material and traditions transmitted orally across generations.

1.5 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The term 'sources' refers to a collection of proofs or evidences. Various sources are studied by historians so that they can put together or reconstruct a depiction of the past which is accurate.
2. Types of literary sources are:
   - Traveller accounts
   - Treaties
   - Reports
3. Two types of archaeological sources are:
   - Coins
   - Cultural evidences
4. Some forms of oral tradition sources are:
   - Folk tales
   - Legends
   - Ballads
   - Songs

1.6 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the various evidences available for reconstructing the history of Tripura.
2. What are the literary sources available for reconstructing the history of Manipur?
3. Evidence of which prehistoric ages has been found in the region of Assam?
4. Which are the various foreign literary sources that provide information regarding Assam?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on what the archaeological sites in Assam reveal.
2. What are the literary sources available for reconstructing the history of ancient Assam?

NOTES

3. Create a list of the various archaeological sites in Assam.
4. List the various types of subjects that were of importance and Tripura.
5. Write a short note on the archaeological sources with regard to the study of Manipur.

1.7 FURTHER READING

Gait, E.A.; *A History of Assam,* BiblioBazaar, US, 2010.

Choudhary, Pratap Chandra; *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.*, Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Assam, Assam, 1966.

Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan; *Social and polity formations in pre-colonial north-east India: the Barak Valley experience*, Haranand Publications in association with Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1991.

Sinha, Surajit; *Tribal Polities and State Systems in Pre-colonial Eastern and North Eastern India*, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 1987.

Chakravarty, I. N., Chakravarty, Lakshmi N.; *Glimpses of the Early History of Arunachal*, Research Department, Arunachal Pradesh Administration, Arunachal Pradesh, 1973.

Barpujari, Heramba Kauta; *Assam in the Days of the Company: 1826 - 1858: a Critical and Comprehensive History of Assam during the Rule of the East-India Company from 1826 - 1858*, North-Eastern Hill University Publications, Assam, 1996

Barpujari, Heramba Kauta; *The Comprehensive history of Assam*, Publication Board, Assam, 1990.

M. Horam; *Naga Polity*, B.R. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1975.

M. Horam; *Social and Cultural Life of Nagas: (the Tangkhul Nagas)*, B.R. Pubishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1977.

Sangkima; Mizos, *Society and Social Change, 1890-1947*, Spectrum Publications, New Delhi, 1992.

Sangkima; *A Modern History Of Mizoram*, Spectrum Publications, New Delhi, 2004

Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan; *The Garos and the English, 1765-1874*, Radiant Publishers, Hyderabad, 1978.

Kar, Parimal Chandra; *Garos in Transition*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1982.

Venuh, N. and Bonita Aleaz; *British Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2005.

Lahiri, Rebati Mohan; *The Annexation of Assam: 1824-1854*, General Printers & Publishers, Mumbai, 1954.

Bhuyan, Suryya Kumar; *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, Lawyer's Book Stall, Assam, 1974.

Elwin, Verrier; *The Nagas in the 19th Century*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1969.

Lahiri, Nayanjot; *Pre-Ahom Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi, 1991.

Birinchi, B.K. and Banikanta Kakati; *Cultural History of Assam*, K. K. Barooah, Assam, 1951.

Basu, Nirmal Kumar; *Assam in the Ahom Age, 1228-1826: Being Politico-economic and Socio-cultural Studies*, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Kolkata, 1970.

Nath, R.M.; *The Background of Assamese Culture*, A. K. Nath, 1948.

Bareh, Hamlet; *The History and Culture of the Khasi People*, Spectrum Publications, Gauhati, 1967.

Chatterjii, S. K.; *The Place of Assam in the History and Civilization of India,* Gauhati University, Gauhati, 1970.

Dani, A. H.; *Prehistory and Protohistory of Eastern India,* Firma L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1960.

Dhavlikar, M. K.; *Bulletin of the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute* 31-32: 137-49, Archaeology of Gauhati, 1973.

NOTES

UNIT 2 EARLY STATES IN ASSAM: VARMANAS

Structure

2.0 Introduction
2.1 Unit Objectives
2.2 Society in the Time of the Varmanas
2.3 Economy
2.4 Polity and Religion
2.5 Hiuen Tsang's Account of Assam
2.6 Summary
2.7 Key Terms
2.8 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
2.9 Questions and Exercises
2.10 Further Reading

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The real political history of ancient Assam begins with the foundation of the Varmana line of kings. The inscriptions of Bhaskaravarman, the greatest king of this dynasty as well as of ancient Assam, Banabhatta's Harshacharita and the accounts of the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang furnish considerable materials relating to the history of the Varmanas. It is learnt from epigraphical sources that Pushyavarman, born in the lineage of Naraka-Bhagaduta, was the founder of the Varmana of Bhauma line of kings. When and how Pushyavarman came to power is not known. He probably took advantage of the political instability of the time, and proclaimed himself king, and to justify his claim, traced his descent from Naraka-Bhagadutta. Pushyavarman was probably a contemporary of Samudragupta. In the Allahabad pillar inscription of this Gupta emperor, the name of Kamrupa, occurs as a frontier kingdom Samalata, whose king owed allegiance to Samudragupta on this own accord. The unnamed king of Kamarupa of this inscription is usually identified with Pushyavarman. If we count the date of Pushyavarman on the basis of the Badaganga epigraph of Bhutivarman (dated 234 Gupta era which corresponds to 553-54 AD), Pushyavarman's reign would fall between AD 355-80. He would and thus, be a contemporary of Samudragupta (320-80 AD).

During the reign of Kalyanavarman, the Davaka or the Kapili valley (comprising possibly the present district of Nagoan, Karbi Anglong and North Cachar area) was absorbed into the empire of Kamarupa. Signaling this victory, he sent a diplomatic mission to China in AD 428. Mahendravarman, grandson of Kalyanavarman, expanded his empire to south-east Bengal upto the sea by shaking off the last vestiges of the Gupta influence in Kamarupa. He was the first king of Assam to perform *Aswamedha yojna* and he did it on two occasions. Mahendravarman's grandson Bhutia Varman was a powerful king. He conquered Pundravardhana (North Bengal) sometime between AD 545-50 and donated lands to more than 200 Brahmanas in the Chandrapuri visaya located within the Pundravardhana bhukti. He might have also extended his sway in the south and the west and brought the outlying regions of Samatata, Sylhet, Tripura and other regions under his control. He has also performed one *Aswamedha* sacrifice.

The glory of Kamarupa suffered a temporary setback during the reign of Bhaskara Varman's father Susthitavarman,who suffered a defeat at the hands of the later Gupta

NOTES

monarch Mahasenagupta and as a result of this defeat lost the possession of Pundravardhana. Bhaskara Varman (AD 650-655), ascending the throne at a time when the reputation of his family was at a low ebb, not only restored it but made Kamarupa a power to be reckoned with whose alliance was welcomed by a monarch of Harsha's (AD 606-648) fame, the last great monarch of ancient north India. By this alliance, Bhaskara not only recovered Pundravardhana but also brought Gauda with its capital Karnasuvarna under his control. It was during the reign of Bhaskara Varman that the great Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang visited Kamarupa in AD 643 and stayed in his capital for nearly two months. The pilgrim speaks highly about the noble qualities of Bhaskara and his prowess. In the religious assemblies held at Prayag and Kanauj by Harsha, Bhaskara was shown special honour in the presence of all the kings assembled there. After the death of Harsha in AD 648, Bhaskara became the supreme lord of eastern India extending his sway as far as Nalanda. He had also brought under his control Sylhet and Tripura, including south-east Bengal. This is testified by Hiuen Tsang who refers to Bhaskara as "King of eastern India" and stated that the rules of Kamarupa had the sea-route to China under their protection.

In this unit, you will learn about the society, economy, polity and religion during the Varmana rule in Assam.

2.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe Assamese society in the time of the Varmanas
- Describe the economy of Assam in the time of the Varmanas
- Describe polity and religion in Assam in the time of the Varmanas
- Discuss Hiuen Tsang's account of Assam

2.2 SOCIETY IN THE TIME OF THE VARMANAS

Genealogy

The genealogy of the Varman dynasty appears most fully in the Dubi and Nidhanpur copper plate inscriptions of the last Varman king, Bhaskar Varman (650-655), where Pushya Varman is named the founder. The Dubi copper plate inscription of Bhaskar Varman asserts that Pushya Varman was born in the family of Naraka, Bhagadatta and Vajradatta (as did the other two Kamarupa dynasties) three thousand years after these mythical ancestors.

Historical documents are contradictory on the ethnicity of this dynasty, with Yuan Chwang, calling Bhaskar Varman a Brahman king who originated with Narayana Deva, while Bhaskar Varman told She-Kia-Fang-Che that his ancestors hailed from China, which according to 'Sylvain' is nothing more than an act of diplomacy. Many scholars including Kamarupa Anusandhan Samiti considers the Varman dynasty as the first Indo-Aryan dynasty in Assam, that was overthrown by Salastambha of Mongoloid origin, who then made himself the king of Kamarupa, whereas others terms the dynasty as Sanskritized non-Aryan tribal rulers.

NOTES

The Varman Dynasty

	Reign	Name
1	350-374	Pushya Varman
2	374-398	Samudra Varman
3	398-422	Bala Varman
4	422-446	Kalyana Varman
5	446-470	Ganapati Varman
6	470-494	Mahendra Varman
7	494-518	Narayana Varman
8	518-542	Bhuti Varman
9	542-566	Chandramukha Varman
10	566-590	Sthita Varman
11	590-595	Susthita Varman
12	595-600	Supratisthita Varman
13	600-650	Bhaskar Varman
14	650-655	Avanti Varman

1. Pushya Varman

Pushya Varman (AD 350–374) the first historical ruler of Assam who established the Varman dynasty in 350 AD and the historical Kamarupa kingdom. He encouraged Vedic culture to flourish in his country. Brahminical influence was widespread during his reign. He maintained cultural, political and diplomatic relationship with other states under Gupta Empire most notably rulers of stature like Samudra Gupta. The son of Pushya Varman was Samudra Varman who married Datta Devi. The name of the queen of his great contemporary Samudra Gupta was also Datta Devi, probably both married in the same family. Though related Samudra Gupta fought with and defeated Bala Varman, son of Samudra Varman, in connection with the performance of the Asvamedha sacrifice. This is recorded in Samudra Gupta's Allahabad Inscription. He had to quell internal dissidence as well as external threats. Just as Samudra Gupta founded an empire which included at last the Indian subcontinent, Samudra Varman extended his power to the Eastern Peninsula the shores of which were washed by the Pacific Ocean.

2. Samudra Varman

Samudra Varman was ruler of Kamarupa kingdom for the period AD 374-398. He was son of Pushya Varman, the founder of Varman Dynasty of Kamarupa. Samudra Varman who was likened to the 5th ocean, in whose kingdom the weak were not oppressed by the strong, who shone like a jewel and who was quick in accepting a duel. Datta-Devi was the name of his queen, she gave birth to Bala Varman whose strength (Bala) and armor (Varma) were never separated and whose soldiers were always forward against his enemies. It is known from the inscriptions of Samudra Gupta that the name of his queen, too, was Datta-Devi, and that he defeated King Bala Varman. It appears from this that Samudragupta and Samudra Varman married in the same family. Thus, Samudragupta was compelled, in spite of this relation, to fight with Bala Varman according to the rules of Asvamedha sacrifice which took place in AD 350-380. So it may be admitted that he lived about this time. Perhaps this invasion of Samudragupta limited the power of the kings of Kamarupa for a time.

NOTES

3. Bala Varman

Bala Varman was successor and son of Samudra Varman who ruled Kamarupa for the period AD 398-422. He was known for great amount of physical strength as reflected in his name and courage. His soldiers are always on front against enemy. Bala Varman's wife's name was Ratnavati who gave birth to Kalyana Varman.

4. Kalyana Varman

Kalyana Varman ruled Kamarupa for the period of AD 422-426. He was married to Gandharvavati and his successor to the throne was named Ganapati Varman.

5. Ganapati Varman

Ganapati Varman ruled Kamarupa for the period AD 446-470. He was married to Yajiiavati and his successor to the throne was named Mahendra Varman.

6. Mahendra Varman

Mahendra Varman ruled Kamarupa for the period AD 470-494. He married Suvrata and had successor to throne named Narayana Varman. It is said that he mastered his self, and worked towards the stability (of the rule) of the world, who, like Janaka (or his father) was well versed in the principles of the philosophy of the (supreme) Self.

7. Narayana Varman

Narayana Varman ruled Kamarupa between AD 494 and 518. He married Devavati and his son was named Bhuti Varman.

8. Bhuti Varman

Bhuti Varman ruled Kamarupa between AD 518 and 542. He married Vijnanavati and his son was named Chandramukha Varman.

9. Chandramukha Varman

Chandramukha Varman ruled for the period AD 542-566. Chandramukha, who was charming, as the name suggests, possessed all the arts as the moon (by the digits), was a dispeller of (all) gloom (as the moon dispels the darkness). He married Bhogavati and had his successor to throne named Sthita Varman.

10. Sthita Varman

Sthita Varman ruled for the period AD 566-590. Sthita Varman, the supporter of the world, has innumerable (sources of) enjoyment. He married Nayanadevi and had his successor to throne named Susthita Varman.

11. Susthita Varman

Susthita Varman ruled for the period AD 590-595. Susthita Varman held the kingdom in his own hand, and was renowned as Sri-Mriganka. His successor was named Supratisthita Varman.

12. Supratisthita Varman

Supratisthita Varman ruled from AD 595 to 600. His younger brother Bhaskar Varman was named his successor.

NOTES

13. Bhaskar Varman

Kumar Bhaskar Varman (AD 600–650) was the last and most illustrious ruler of the Varman dynasty of Kamarupa. He came to power after his brother Supratisthita Varman died, a bachelor. After his death Salasthambha, who established the Mlechchha dynasty, acquired power of Kamarupa.

14. Avanti Varman

Avanti Varman is believed to be the last of the Varman dynasty who ruled Kamarupa briefly after Bhaskar Varman before being overthrown by Salasthambha, the founder of the Mlechchha dynasty. No direct evidence of this kings exists, and the name Avanti Varma is reconstructed from the benedictory verses of a Sanskrit play *Mudrarakshasa* by Vishakhadatta. According to Bargaon grant of Ratnapal, Salasthambha took over the rule of Kamarupa from the descendants of Naraka which, according to K L Barua, occurred after a Mlechchha revolt.

Not much is known about Avanti Varman and his rule but scholars like P.C Choudhury opines that Salasthambha, the founder of Mlechchha dynasty and Avanti Varman is same person. Avanti Varman suppressed the rebellions arose after Bhaskar Varman, but ultimately fell.

Society

Kampura was a place where proto-Monogoloid and proto-Astraliod, Tibeto-Burman and Alpine people lived. Aryan culture started with other racial culture when they shifted to Assam. The kings of Kampura took utmost care to retain the traditional divisions of society, which are, Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras. It is important to note that the concept of 'Varna' lost its importance and the concept of 'Jati' (caste) started gaining importance on birth and heredity. The original concept of Varna vanished and numerous new castes and sub castes emerged mainly due to different type of professions, arts and crafts of different tribes, races and religions.

Around 5th century AD, the influence of the Guptas increased in Assam and as a result a large number of Brahmins migrated to Kampura. The Brahmins who migrated were also gifted lands. The Brahmins were categorized by gotras and Veda-sakhas. Originally, gotras were only seven or eight and they were denoted by *rishis*. The term 'Pravara' is strongly entwined with that of the gotra. Some of the titles were Deva, Sarman and Swamin. The Brahmins had to live a strictly holy and righteous life and have to meticulously follow and practise their 'six fold duties'. The most important duty of a Brahmin was to learn Vedas. Topics such as science and arts were also discussed among them. They were the people who occupied high positions in administrative offices and even occupied some space in the army. This is assumed from Kautilya who is normally quoted as having said that kings of Kampura had armies comprising Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Sudras. Other than Brahmins, the Karana and Kayastha were chiefs and state officials. The kayasthas were in royal cadre and this was recorded from the 9th century. The kayasthas were supposed to be the descendents of 'Nagara' Brahmins. The 'Ganakas' and 'Lekhakas' had their association with the royal court (Durbar). The 'Guanacos' are astrologers and studied *grahas* or planets. The 'Vaidya' had high positions in society. The Kayasthas and Kalitas are assumed to be the purest of the old Hindu people of Assam. Koches are highly populated in Assam next to Kalitas till this day. Some of the other castes are named after their professions such as kaivartas, kumbhakara (potters), tantuvaya (weavers) and nauki (boatmen).

NOTES

Social institutions

The family is the smallest unit of society and marriage is an important celebration and ceremony of the society. As per Hindu shastras there are eight types of marriages:

- **Raksasa**: the bride would be married by force
- **Paisaca**: the bride and the bridegroom secretly elope
- **Gandharva**: secret union by copulation with the consent of the bride and bridegroom
- **Brahma**: the bride and the bride groom get wedded with ceremony
- **Daiva**: the bride is married to a priest
- **Arsa**: wedding is conducted after the bride's father gets a formal gift of oxen from the bridegroom
- **Kaya**: the proposal is made from the bridegroom
- **Asura**: the bride is purchased

Assamese marriages are done following the Vedic rites. Marriage is arranged after pairing the horoscopes 'rahi-joracova'. At times a price is paid by the bride groom. The marriages are conducted for five days. Usually the bridegroom arrives at the house of the bride on the marriage day in a propitious hour in the evening. On the third day of the wedding in the evening the married couple, make a contribution to two demons 'Khoba and Khubuni'. The marriage function concludes with this ceremony.

Chastity and devotion towards their husband were mainly expected qualities of Brahmin women. It is believed that the queens had some powers in matters of the state. As per the inscriptions they were highly pious and cultured women. Queen Jivada, mother of Harjavarmana was the source of highest spiritual force to him. Motherhood was considered the highest aims of married life and at the same time widowhood was the most unwanted and unwarranted calamity of married women and married life. Sati was not practised here. When we take into consideration the various historical records and references, women were usually very beautiful. It was quite common and a custom in Assam that they appointed dancers and courtesans in connection with temple services and these women dedicated their lives in the service of the temple. Such women were known as 'Nati or Daluhangana'. Brahmin women were well educated and skilled in the arts of poetry and rhetoric.

Rice was considered as the staple food of this region. However, early Assamese literature consisted of a lot of descriptions related to a range of hundred different kinds of paddy. The boka dhari is a favourite meal amongst the Assamese people during the celebrations of a festival. It is a variety of rice that is usually eaten uncooked. The hill people use the shifting method of cultivation which is known as jhum. Other than rice, Assamese people cultivate a large variety of fruits. Some of the well-known fruits are mangoes, oranges, plantains, citrons, limes, pineapples, and so on. People used to consume rice, fruits, fish, vegetables, and meat in the early days and they still do. The most favourite dish was *payaasam*. Literature describes more than twenty five to fifty varieties of special dishes were cooked using vegetables, pulses, fish, and meat. Along with the main ingredients, spices like ginger, cumin, pepper, and mustard were also used. Along with the spices, edible herbs such as mulaka, rajaka, vastuka, palanga, nalika, and such herbs were commonly used. The two popular dishes in the region were Pocola and kharika. These were made using young banana plant and bamboo shoots. Sour preparations were made using various fruits such as cakala, tenteli, and Ou. Assam people eat a lot of fish and this is considered as a pre-Aryan custom. This eating habit is assumed to be borrowed from the Mongolian people. Meat such as duck, pigeon, and wild boar were also consumed generally. It is a notable fact that Brahmins and Vaishnavas both eat meat and fish commonly unlike in the other parts of India. Sacrificing animals was believed as a very auspicious ritual.

NOTES

Various sources say that perfumes and cosmetics were used by the Assamese in ancient days. People used to apply scented oil to the body before bath and it is common practice even today. Other than the scented oil, sandal paste was a favourite among those who could afford to buy it. A rich perfume was prepared with 'krsna-guru' oil, which is generally potted in bamboo tubes. Karpura' (camphor) was also used to make perfumes. Musk was one of the common ingredients of cosmetics. Other articles of luxury were garlands, hand fans, and jeweled mirrors mostly used by the women. Combs were made out of ivory, wood, or bamboo. Foot wear were designed with deer hide and wood. Usage of umbrellas gave a regal impression. These umbrellas were used to cover the head of the idols. A different kind of umbrella known as *japi* came into the trend during the Ahom period. Different kinds of japis were designed for kings, queens, princes, nobles and other different categories of people. Amongst the spirituous liquor and intoxicants used in those days, ulluka was one of the renowned alcoholic drinks. Laopini or rice beer is a very commonly produced beverage and it is also offered to the tribal deities. Other common practice was the chewing of tambul or areca-nut both ripe and unripe along with 'paan' (betel-leaf) and 'chun' (lime). Chewing of betel nut is a very widely practised custom and it is also done today. Betel nuts were placed on the pyre of the deceased by the khasis.

Based on the kalika purana, textiles are divided into the following categories: 'karpasa' (cotton), 'kambala' (wool), 'balka' (bark), and 'kasaja' (silk from cocoon). Special classes of weavers were used to weave cotton and it was used broadly by many in Assam. 'Kambala', a very well-known texture of fine wool, was imported from Bhutan and Tibet. Balka is renowned for fibre material and fibre-made fabrics. The fibre taken from the bark was woven into a fabric call the ksauma. It was considered the most significant source of clothing in ancient times. Facts say that ksauma was made out of a fibre called atasi according to Kulluka (15th century A.D). It was a very valuable fabric in the ancient days. Finest ksauma was called dulluka in those days. According to *Arthashastra*, duluka produced in subarnakundya was the best fibre available anywhere because of its radiant colour such as the sun, and its smooth and soft texture such as a gem. It is woven with uniform or mixed texture threads when they are wet. Thus, Assam was considered as the best for duluka and such fibre was the best that must be preserved in the royal treasury even in the fourth century AD

Various kinds of silkworms were used to obtain a particular silk called kasaja. Silk was categorized as:

Wild silk: This kind of silk is obtained from silkworms that feed on plants and trees growing in the forests.

True silk: This kind of silk is obtained from silkworms that feed on mulberry leaves alone.

Wild silk can be further classified as:

- **Eri:** The eri cloth was known for its durability. It was of drab colour, and it was light and warm.
- **Muga:** Many varieties of muga cloth were available such as mejankari muga. This kind of silk was used by the upper class people for their dresses.
- **Pat:** This was another kind of silk available in ancient times.

NOTES

Most common art amongst the people of the hill tribe in Assam was dying both yarn and cloth. Some people from the Naga tribes were experts in this art and they could produce brilliant and radiant colours. The Manipuri are renowned for being very skillful and artistic dyers. Many people practised embroidering on cloth. The dress that the Manipuri use is a very simple single uncut and unstitched dress. The men and women wore different ornaments on different parts of the bodies with various designs.

The kalika puran states that there are forty varieties of such designs. These ornaments are made out of silver and gold. 'Dugdugi', 'Kerua', 'Galpata', 'Angada' and 'Kankana' were some name of ornaments worn by the people. These ornaments are worn by them even today. People wore kundal in the wears, kharu as angles on the wrists, *nupura* and *kinkini* (anklets) which are worn by women. Women adorned a forehead ornament called *tilaka*. This idea of the adornment and the hair arrangement can be found and borrowed from the sculpture of the ancient periods. The simplest and the most common hair arrangements of that time is the variation of the khopa.

People used to play dice and it was the most popular indoor game. Children played a game with sticks that was called *bhanta*. Hunting was one of the commonest past times of the people. They used to go for hunting in groups with spears, bows, and arrows. People used to try catching elephants. This is a very dangerous sport and it has a very interesting history. The people who drive elephants or the mahouts were capable of handling elephants very well. The ahom kings had other recreational activities such as Hawk-fights, elephant-fights, and bullfights. Dancing and music were amongst the best past times and entertainment for the people.

It is very much evident that education was not given significance as it is today. Brahmins were considered to be the learned classes. However, the 'Vyavaharis' (lawyers) and 'Lekhakas' (scribes) were also very well educated.

Education was focused more in the *guru griha* (the house or the ashram of the teacher). Brahmins maintained schools as the place for education; learning Vedas was more important to them and it was taught in Sanskrit. These schools taught Vedas and other Hindu texts. One of the biggest Vaishnavi apostles, Sankardeva, received his education from mahendra kandali at his tole in Assam. This proves that non-Brahmins were also a part of the schools held by Brahmins and they were given equal importance. Assam was considered to be the land of exemplary talent according to the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang. Assam became attractive to the scholars of other countries as education, talent and learning flourished.

Visits of scholars like Sankaracharya (788-820 AD, Nanaka (1649-1538 AD), and Guru Teg Bahadur (17th century) prove that Assam was indeed a very attractive place for its highly skillful people. It is said that Sankaracharya had visited Assam to have discussions with the *sakta* teacher Abhinavagupta. The poets and scholars of the royal court were always encouraged to compose and compile agreements on different subjects. Some of the works of these poets and scholars are as follows:

- Naranarayana translated *Bhagavat Purana* to Sankaradeva.
- Purushothama completed Sanskrit grammar.
- Sridhar prepared the book of astronomy and baluka kayastha which comprised the translation of Lilavati's book on mathematics.

The curriculum of studies comprised the four Vedas, four Upanishads, Puranas, Sastras and other Hindu scriptures and texts.

NOTES

In ancient times jyotisa vedanga was studied widely by many in Assam. Jyotisa vedanga is the science that calculates time by observing the movements of planets and the stars. Ayurveda is the study of medical science and it was also studied extensively. The royal physicians were held at the state medical department of Assam. Along with medical science that involves human beings; veterinary science was also studied to a large extent. Assam had hospitals for all kinds of living creatures like sheep, goat, cats, and birds. Elephantology was an important study concerning analysis of the characteristic diseases of elephants and providing cure and training to them.

Other than the above-mentioned sciences, the following art forms were also a part of study:

Music: Music was studied scientifically, while singing, dancing, and playing instruments was given more importance. Most of the kings maintained the custom of having singing and dancing as the means of entertainment in the court. These songs were composed based on various ragas. Art of developing paintings on the wall and normal painting started developing from 14th century AD Sankaradeva had also painted some of the celestial figures for the China yatra. Earth, bark, leaves, gold, copper, and silver were used as the writing material in those days. The pens used for writing were made up of bamboos, reed, copper, bell-metal, gold, and iron. The ink used in the pen for writing purposes was obtained from a fruit named silikha. Earthworm sap was also used to extract ink. However, it was used to make invisible ink. Amongst all the other art forms, the kings took special interest in Sanskrit literature and *Kalika purana* is one of the notable works of the literature in that time.

Check Your Progress

1. The Brahmins were categorized by _____ and _____.
2. In which form of marriage does the bride marry the priest?
3. What are the three kinds of wild silk?

2.3 ECONOMY

The state's economic life is generally controlled by the following three factors:

- The geography of the landscape
- Climate
- General living pattern of the people

Assam was crumpled by two large rivers, the Brahmaputra and Surma. Rainfall increased the intensity of the impact. Due to the various climatic conditions, people cultivated suitable fruits and vegetables such as banana, coconut, and cotton. Villages in India have been the backbone of any land's economy from ancient times. Agriculture was the main occupation of the villagers. Cultivating rice was their chief employment and it served as a reason for leading compact villages. Compact villages are much easier to manage the defense and other matters. Village is usually called *grama*. Although there were many villages and people mostly lived in villages, the towns were called as pura, nagara, and kataka. Towns were considered as the seats of government and the royal camp or the forts for the kings. Religious and commercial reasons played an

NOTES

important role in the creation of new cities. The importance of the cities rose to significance from the medieval period. Many scriptures say that the cities were well protected. The durjjaya city was surrounded by rampants and a fence. The city of Sonitpura was believed to be protected by flames of fire. The cities have a lot of magnificent buildings. Only the royal palace is one of the most impressive buildings and they were decorated very well during Ratnapala's regime. Other than the royal palace the remaining houses were plastered and whitewashed. The other houses were built of mud or stone.

The inner walls of the buildings were built with impressive forms while the outer walls were covered with sculptures. Often, the civilization endorses its city and it becomes the sole representative. The civilization is built with its inhabitants like artists, philosophers, teachers, priests, nobles, and merchants. The civilization is built with the contribution of religious preceptors and poets. The streets are of considerable width and are bright with radiant colours. The city comprises wealthy trading and industrial lass. Goldsmiths in the city deal with pearls, jewels, rings, and bracelets with precious stones. Merchants in that period developed with a lot of wealth and prosperity in the ancient times. The civilization had public parks too. The towns had a lot of temples. These temples were used for many other purposes along with worship. These were the spaces for the community, where the heads of the village held meetings, celebrated festivals, and organized a lot of performances.

At that time, all the land belonged to the king. The kings were the sole owner of the woods, forest, ferries, mines and everything else. Although there is not much information on the land system and the tenure of ownership, it is known that the kings often gave lands as a gift to Brahmins. Mostly, land was given to the heads of the city or the village temples. Occupations were not chosen but they are considered as hereditary. The ancient tradition of the kingdom was to consider the pious buildings as rent free.

From ancient times, forest lands were considered as no-man's land and all of them in the village held their household rights over the forest. Forests served as burial places, pastures, cremation grounds for the villagers. Slowly, forest property was acquired by the state government. Kampura is said to be Tejpatis very well identified by the ahoms and some of the writers as the malabothrum of Greeks and Romans. It was traded and sent to them from India from early times. Tejpat is an evergreen tree and it has aromatic leaves. Among the large variety of trees, the 'Vata' (ficus indica) and 'Asvattha' (Ficus religiosa) are used for religious purposes.

The most authentic and the best quality of sandal wood are grown in the forests of Assam and they were produced in abundance. The most valuable products of Assam were aloe wood or agaru. It was used as incense and was also used to produce perfumes; it is being used for the same purpose even today.

Other than this, the black pepper and long peppers are two common products of the Assam forest. A large amount of shellac is produced in Assam. It is exported to China and Japan and it is used to manufacture cabinets. It is known to have the best quality in the whole continent. Forest has very beautiful inhabitants like the peacock, kokila, keteki, and so on. Dhanesha is a rare species animal which is seen only in this region.

Assam had a vast range of craftsmen. There were weavers, potters, goldsmiths, spinners, and workers who worked with raw materials such as ivory, bamboo, wood, hide, and cane. Assam silk was well known for its quality and perfection. The Mohammedan historians reckoned that the silk produced in Assam were best in quality,

NOTES

and were excellent. They always thought that the silk produced in Assam were similar to those produced in China. Almost all the renowned scholars of the world have commended Assam silk as the best in quality.

The following three types of silk are found in Assam and are used extensively by everyone: *pat*, *muga*, and *eri*. Assam was known as the land of cocoon rearers at the end period of Ramayana. *Muga* is considered as the golden silk of Assam owing to its incredible and unique beauty. Assam produced considerable amount of cotton. The Assamese women were considered as excellent weavers. They are still retaining their quality of weaving skills in Assam.

Gold washing and jewellery making are considered to be amongst the ancient industries of Assam. Assam's river was found with abundance of gold. According to the inscriptions in Silimpur, it was said that King Jayapal gifted a large amount of gold equivalent to his weight to a learned Brahmin. Even during the Ahom regime, gold washing was practised in an extensive sale and wonderful jewels with intricate designs were crafted. There were other types of craftsmen who made amazing baskets, who worked with wood and paints. There were other kinds of people who worked on elaborate designs in stone carving and made copper plates and so on. The large numbers of various toys, pots, vases evidently show that the people of Assam were involved a lot in craft work using terracotta. The Assamese were also involved in leather work in ancient times.

Assam is well known for its textiles, its forests with very rare trees, and minerals. The resources of Assam were also exported to neighbouring countries such as Tibet, Burma, and China. River transport was used to trade the resources and the products made in Assam.

Economic conditions

The economic life of a state is generally controlled by three factors, viz., the geography of the landscape, the climate and the general living pattern of the people. Assam was furrowed by two large rivers, the Brahmaputra and the Surma. Also there was a huge amount of rainfall. The Assamese people cultivated rice and fruits like banana, coconut, cotton etc. suitable to the climatic conditions. From early times, the villages in India have been the back bone of the land's economy. People lived a rustic life with agriculture as their main occupation. Rice cultivation was their chief employment; this led to the formation of compact villages. Compact villages were convenient for matters of defense also. The usual name for village was 'grama'. Although people lived mainly in villages, cities were known by the common name 'pura', 'kataka' and 'nagara'. They were also the seats of the 'adhikarana' (government), 'skandhavara' (royal camp), or of 'durga' (fort). Religious as well as commercial consideration played an important part in the creation of new cities. The cities rose to importance during the medieval period. From the Grants we note that the capital Durjjaya was surrounded by ramparts and with a fence. The four sides of the city Sonitpura were supposedly protected by huge flames of fire. The cities were extensive and filled with magnificent buildings. The royal palace was an impressive building with well decorated apartment's during Ratnapala's regime. Other houses were plastered and white washed. Houses were either made of stone or mud and were plastered over with lime water. The inner walls were decorated with beautiful forms and on the outer walls, sculptures were artistically laid out. The *Yogini Tantra* gives us a beautiful description of the sacred city 'Apunarbhava' which has since been identified with the modern Hajo that has the temple of Hayagriva Madhava.

NOTES

More often than not, civilization is identified with the city. Within its walls artists and philosophers, teachers and priests, nobles and merchants found shelter. These cities were inhabited by hundreds of well-to-do people, and adorned by religious preceptors and poets. The streets were of considerable width and were gay with brilliant colors. Women of great beauty and courtesans decked profusely with all kinds of adornment and jewels could be seen on the streets. The cities possessed a wealthy trading and industrial class. The goldsmiths' shop attracted people from afar because they were filled with pearls and jewels, rings and bracelets flashing with precious stones. Assamese merchants were full of enterprise and grew in wealth and prosperity during the time. Public parks were also to be found. The towns were adorned with many temples. These served more purposes than worship; and were spaces for the community, where village meetings were held, festivals celebrated, and performances organized.

Check Your Progress

4. The state's economic life is controlled generally by three factors. What are they?
5. _____ is considered as the golden silk of Assam owing to its incredible and unique beauty.
6. Mention two most ancient industries of Assam.

2.4 POLITY AND RELIGION

Assam's history is very much clear from the 4th century AD.

The credit to the account of Assam's history goes to the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang to a large extent. The first authentic information regarding the history of Assam is evident from Bana's *Harsha Charita*. He depicts the king as a Brahmin. It is evident that the copper plates that were found in Assam are related to Kampura. From various researches it proves that it dates back to the 4th to 13th century artefact.

Kampura was ruled by the Varmanas, the Salasthambha, and the Pala dynasties.

The ancient history of Assam starts from the 4th century with the regime of Varman dynasty. The Varman dynasty in Assam was first founded by Pushya Varman. He was considered as the modern-day king resembling king Samudragupta (350–380 AD). He titled himself as Maharajadhiraj. The dynasties capital was Kampura. Mahendra Varman won against the Gupta dynasty and was the first king of Varman dynasty to perform the Aswamedha yagna.

Kumar Bhaskar Varman (AD 594-650) was the most popular and the last king of the Varman dynasty. Kumar Bhaskar Varman was the modern-day king resembling Harsha Vardhana. He was also known as Siladitya and was honored by Harsha Vardhana at a conference held at Kanouj.

NOTES

The following table lists the genealogy of kings:

Name	Date
Pushya Varman	4th century AD
Samudra Varman	
Bala Varman	
Kalyan Varman	5th century AD
Ganapati Varman	
Mahendra Varman	
Narayan Varman	
Mahabhuti Varman	6th century AD
Chandramukha Varman	
Sthita Varman	
Mriganka	
Supratisthita Varman	7th century AD
Bhaskara Varman	

Salasthamba established a new dynasty after Bhaskar Varman as Bhaskar Varman was unmarried and he did not leave any heir behind him. The evidence for Salasthambas rule is notable in the inscriptions on the copper plates of Ratnapala. It is said that 27 kings ruled Kampura between Salasthamba and Brahma Pal. All the kings worshipped Lord Shiva. Harshadeva (AD 725-750) was very well behaved and a much liked king among the other kings of Kampura. The last king Tyaga Sinha (970-990 AD) did not leave any heirs as he was childless.

Following are the kings of the Salasthamba dynasty:

Name	Dated (approximately)
Salasthamba	Middle of 7th century AD
Palaka	Later part of 7h century AD
Kumara	8th century AD
Vajradatta	
Harsa	
Balavarman	
Cakra and Arathi	Did not reign
Pralambha	9th century AD
Harjjara	
Vanamala	
Jayamala	
Balavarmana	10th century AD
Tyagasinha	

The family of Salasthamba became extinct and the kingdom passed to a new line of rulers — the Pala dynasty. It was founded by Brahmapala (AD 990–1010). There is no study or track of information related to Brahmapala. But there is some information regarding his son Ratnapala and it looks like he ruled Kampura around AD 1000. Ratnapala is known as the most and the first powerful monarch of the Pala family and dynasty.

NOTES

Ratnapala later shifted his capital to Durjaya. The Pala dynasty saw its last king in Jayapala (AD 1120-1142).

The Gour dynasty replaced the Pala dynasty which was reigned by Rampala.

Administration

Becoming a king was a familial thing. The coronation of the king was an important function. Apart from the other spiritual reasons for coronation, it is made to offer the king his title legally. Some of the kings took new names after becoming a king. Resigning from the post of a king was not rare. Normally kings resign if they wish to pass on the crown to their children or to spend the remaining life in a spiritual way. The kingdom worked more based on the personal and natural qualities of the ruler. The history provides a lot of evidences on the required personal qualities of a king. Other than the virtuous qualities required, the physical body of the king was also necessary. Some of the qualities of the king were that the king must have a border chest, slim and slender waist, with a thick-set neck and club-like arms. War is the most important sport for all kings. The success in the war and the valour that they showed in the war is the highest aim that any king would want to have. The king has to possess innumerable good qualities. A king must never become angry and he should never use abusive language. A king must always be just and noble. The most important duty of a king is to protect the people of his kingdom look after their needs and well-being.

From the times of Mahendra Varman, the Kampura kingdom had stopped being a small state and started emanating majestic magnitude. The Kampura kingdom grew to what it was only by defeating neighbouring territories, rulers, and heads of the villages in battles. The most important officers of the central administration were the *mahasenapati*, *yuvaraja*, *samantas*, and *amatyas*.

The Vedas, Angas, Dharmasastras, and the Puranas were the basis for justice in the local villages. Revenues were collected from the villages under regular taxes, occasional taxes, commercial taxes, fines, income from state properties, and tribute from feudatories. The administrative heads of the village, like the 'Vasayapati', the 'Nayaka' and the 'Gramika', collected taxes from the village. The head officers of police were called 'Dandika', 'Dandapasika', 'Cauroddharanika'. The documents of the village were written by the lekhakas and they were stored in the registrar's custody.

The defense system and the military setup of this empire were very strong and efficient. Senadhaksha is known as the commander in chief for the army. Assam showed a lot of significance to waterways because of its climatic conditions. Assam used rivers for this communication and trade. The royal navy of Assam was maintained by many kings. Elephants were used for defense in the armies from ancient times. Kampura army had an important division of elephant squadron, as Assam is well known for its well-bred and trained elephants. Elephant was the natural symbol for the Kampuras like the tiger for cholas, bull for the pallavas, and the boar for chalukyas. However, the Kampura army did not show much of significance to its cavalry. This might be because cavalry needed good horses that can survive a battle. However, Assamese people feared horses.

Weapons such as 'asi' (sword), 'parasu' (axe), 'katanga' (spear), 'gada' (mace) as well as the bow and arrow were considered as the main weapons during the war. The kings use a cloth that protects the king's chest. It is known as the bargoan grant. Other significant things used in the battle are the Dhvaja' (flag) and 'Pataka' (banners). It is clear that the Assam kingdom had departments such as civil, judicial, police, revenue, and military properly maintained and civilized.

Kings

NOTES

The form of government prevalent in ancient Assam was monarchy. Kingship was hereditary. The 'abhiseka' (coronation) of the king was an important ceremony. Apart from its mystic value, the rite of coronation conferred upon the king the legal title to his office. The symbol of royalty was an umbrella which was of moon-like whiteness, embellished with the chowries. Some of them took on new names after assuming kingship. Abdication was not rare. Usually a king abdicated for his son and retired to spend his life in pious meditation. The working of a monarchy depended largely on the personal qualities of the sovereign. The epigraphs provide us with numerous references to the personal qualities necessary for kingship. This included the physical body of the king – he needed to be "broad in the chest, slender and slim in the waist, with a thick set neck and club like arms." For almost all kings, war was the important sport and success in war and valour in the battle was the ruler's highest ambition. The king needed to be endowed with innumerable good qualities. He must never get angry, and never use improper words. His deposition must always be noble. He was to be just and righteous. He was the supporter of learning and of the fine arts, and a patron of poets and wise men. The first and foremost duty of the king was to give protection to all of his people and look after their general well-being. The Vedic religion was assiduously practiced by the kings. Numerous references are also available to kings who studded the kingdom with 'white washed temples' and sacrificial courtyards with immolating posts.

Central administration

We have seen that from the time of Mahendra Varman, the Kamrupa kingdom ceased to be a small state and developed imperial dimensions. The empire was built up by defeating in battles, the rulers and chieftains of the neighboring territories. Among the officers of the central administration, the most important were the Samantas, Yuvaraja, Mahasenapati and the Amatyas.

Local administration

The rajya, desa or mandala denoted the kingdom as a whole. It consisted of a series of well-defined administrative units. The biggest division was Bhukti or province. The next unit was visaya or district. Visayapati was the head of a visaya. Justice was administered according to the *Vedas*, the *Angas*, the *Dharmasastras* and the *Puranas*. Revenues were collected under the head of regular taxes, occasional taxes, commercial taxes, fines, income from state properties, and tribute from feudatories. Taxes were collected through administrative heads like the 'Vasayapati', the 'Nayaka' and the 'Gramika'. The chief officers of the police i.e. the judiciary department was 'Dandika', 'Dandapasika', 'Cauroddharanika'. The writers were designated 'Lakhakas', and the documents were kept in the custody of the registrar.

The military organization of the empire was strong and efficient. The commander-in-chief was known as 'Senadhaksa'. Owing to geographical conditions, waterways were of vital importance for Assam. Assam was largely dependent on her rivers for communication. The royal Navy was maintained by many kings. From the epic period, elephants had an important rank in Indian armies. As Assam is noted for its well bred elephants, elephant squadrons naturally formed an important division of the Kamrupa army. As was the tiger to Cholas, the boar to the Calukyas, the bull to the Pallavas, so was the elephant the natural symbol of Kamrupa. On the other hand the Cavalry did not seem to have occupied an important place in the army. This was probably due to want of good horses. 'Muhammad', a writer of the later period

NOTES

noted that cavalry was not in use in Assam. In fact the Assamese were greatly frightened by horses. Writers on 'Nitisastras' attached great importance to the constructions of forts. The geography of Kamrupa accorded an ideal opportunity for the construction of hill-forts. Judging from the locations of the great cities, Pragjyotisha, Harrupesvara and Durjaya, it is clear that the Kamrupa kings understood the necessity of fortifyng the capital as a defensive measure. The chief weapon of war was 'asi' (sword), 'parasu' (axe), 'katanga' (spear), 'gada' (mace) as well as the bow and arrow. The Bargoan Grant refers to the 'cloth which protects the king's broad chest'. The 'Dhvaja' (flag) and 'Pataka' (banners) were also used in the battle fields. It is, therefore, plain that the ancient administration of Assam consisted of civil, judicial, police, revenue, and military departments. The religious institutions were also controlled by the state officials in some way or the other.

Religion

The Brahmins of Assam followed the Vedic religion. Many Brahmins moved from the madhyayadesa to Assam and this migration had a lot of historical and sociological importance. Kings extended their support to the Brahmins and the non-Aryan tribes started converting to Hinduism. The kachari and Koch kings were officially converted to Hinduism. Shaivism was a fully developed religion and it prevailed in Assam for a very long time. Lingam was worshipped as the form of Lord Shiva. Shiva was worshiped in different ways based on the devotees. The kacharis offered swine, buffalos, rams, and goats as sacrifices to worship the gods. This tradition follows even today and the animals are sacrificed in the name of offering as a norm in many temples of Assam.

According to the *Devi Purana*, Durga Devi is worshipped extensively in many forms in various places. The Kamakhya temple was constructed in Kampura. Sikhism was the leading religion in Assam throughout the medieval period. The chief temple of the Sakta cult was constructed in Kamakhya and Kampura was recognized as the focal point of the Sakta cult. Similar to Shaivism, worshipping Vishnu was also present in Assam for a very long time. The Badaganga rock inscription of AD 554 proves that the people of Kampura had worshipped Vishnu for a very long time. For some time, Vaishanvism was not given much of importance. However, during the reign of Pala dynasty under Dharmapala (AD 1200) Vaishnavism was under light again.

People who believed in Vaishnavism worshipped the ten avatars of Vishnu. The avatar of Krishna was a very significant one in the later Vaishnava cult. Krishna's narratives became the main theme of Assamese literature. Other than Krishna, Hayagriva was also a very important avatar for the Assamese people. Hajo has a temple named Hayagriva madhava temple which is visited by the Buddhists from Bhutan, Tibet, Ladakh and southwestern China. Along with the Hayagriva temple at Hajo, all the other temples in the hills at Hajo were given great importance by the Buddhist monks. There is a strong belief amongst the lamas that the Buddha's mahaparinirvana took place in some spot approximately in Hajo. This Hayagriva Madhava temple was built by a Koch king, Raghudevanarayan of Kampura in 1583. The Assamese people believed in the worship of sun in the ancient times and even today in some parts of Assam.

Worshipping the sun and the planets was very intricately connected to the study of astrology. Although the sculptures of Ganesa were found in almost all the temples, people did not create a Ganesa cult separately in Assam.

Shaivism plays an important role and it is considered to be the most prevailing faith in Assam. It is very much evident that the cult of Shiva was much eminent than the other cults in Assam from ancient times. There were several Shaivite temples and various forms of Shiva in the early medieval period. Some of the iconic forms of Shiva are as follows: are the 'urdha-medhra' or the 'urdhva-linga' (phallus erectus), the 'trinetra' (the third eye shown vertically in the center of the forehead) and the 'jatamukuta' (crest of matted hair) with chandrakala or indukala (crescent) on it.

Among the weapons, the trisul was considered the most popular form according to the images found in north India. The images of Shiva also show the 'akshamala' (rosary), the 'damaru' (kettle-drum), mundamala' (garland of skulls), and a tiara of skulls adorning the hair also shows the fierce and violent form of Shiva in a separate way. Sometimes he is shown in same way seated and meditating, while at times he is shown dancing on the mountains. Shiva is also worshipped in various forms in Assam. Some of the following are listed as follows:

Siva

In the Brahmanical system Saivism had been the most dominant faith in Assam. Siva was in most cases worshiped in his phallic form. It is sure that from the earliest times the cult of Siva enjoyed a much greater preeminence over other Brahmanical cults in this territory. There were numerous Saiva temples in Assam during the early medieval period, and innumerable iconic forms of Siva. These are the 'urdha-medhra' or the 'urdhva-linga' (phallus erectus), the 'trinetra' (the third eye shown vertically in the center of the forehead) and the 'jatamukuta' (crest of matted hair) with chandrakala or indukala (crescent) on it. Among the 'ayudhas' (literally: weapons) the 'trisula' (trident) is most prominent, especially from the images found in north India. The other ayudhas like the 'akshamala' (rosary) as lord of meditation, the 'damaru' (kettle-drum) as lord of sound can also be seen. The 'Mundamala' (garland of skulls) and a tiara of skulls adorning the hair also distinguish the fierce form of Siva. Sometimes he is shown seated and sometimes dancing on his mount.

- **Sadasiva:** Depicted as the deity with five faces and ten arms. Fairly known in eastern India.
- **Yoga Murty:** Depicts Shiva as a saint and a scholar par with excellence and one who is constantly engaged in meditation.
- **Gyana-Murty Vyakhana-Murty:** Depicted Shiva as the lord of wisdom and a great teacher.
- **Nritya Murty:** Depicted as Nataraja.
- **Uma-Mahesvara:** Siva is seated with the goddess on his lap and caressing her with one hand.
- **Ardhanarisvara:** Displays half of the body as that of a male and the other half as that of a female showing the specific iconic traits of the goddess.
- **Urga forms:** The bhairava: According to Shiva Purana, Agni Purana. He is said to have assumed this form to cut off the fifth head of Brahma.
- **Aghora:** He is said to have assumed this form to cut off the fifth head of Brahma.

Lakulisa

Lakulisa, the Pasupata teacher, is regarded as the last avatara of Siva. Descriptions of his form may be found in the *Vayu-Purana* and the *Linga-Purana*. Figures of Lakulisa usually appear on Saiva temples, like the temple of Dah-Parvatiya, near Tezpur. This temple was exquisitely decorated and can be traced back to the 5th-6th century.

NOTES

Ganesha

Ganesa had been a popular divinity in the Hindu pantheon. In the developed Puranic mythology he was associated with Siva and Durga, and temples affiliated to either of these great divinities mandatory have representations of this god. His preeminent position is indicated by the fact that in Hindu rituals, the first invocation is always offered to Ganesa. The iconography is described in all the major texts, like *Brihat Samhita* and the *Matsya Purana*. He was described to have a short-statured corpulent body with a distended belly and an elephant head with a simple tusk. He was portrayed as being fond of sweets. In the iconographic representations the god is also seen with a mulaka (radish) in one hand. Seated images of Ganesa were more common. They occur among the rock-carvings at Pandu, Umananda and Urvasi. Independent images of the dancing Ganesa were also not rare in Assam.

Sakti/Devi

The concept of 'Sakti' is said to have originated from various sources: pre-Aryan, non-Aryan, Aryan and aboriginal. The processes in fertility and motherhood and the active and energizing forces involved therein apparently led to the emergence of the concept of a supreme goddess who was considered to be the repository of all energy governing the universe. She is known under various names. The most common name was Durga or Devi. The *Puranas* gave us lists of her names. This divine mother goddess functions for the good of mankind and for the destruction of evil. She manifests herself in innumerable forms in accordance with her functions. Assam was considered to be the land of Sikhism and some scholars were of the view that this territory was the chief diffusion center of Sikhism along with its Tantric aberrations. The iconographic representation of the Devi in Assam was mainly seen in the images showing the goddess in the act of fighting and killing the demon. 'Durga Mahisasura-Mardini' had been represented in Indian art from the early centuries of the Christian era. Some of the different names of Durga can be presented in the following way:

Katyani

This image is fairly common in Assam. In this image the goddess was to stand in her right foot stretched on the back of the lion and left, slightly bent, on that of the buffalo from which issues the asura.

Ugrachanda

The *Agni-Purana* describes a representation of nine Durgas under the collective designation of Nava-Durga. Each of them is shown to be in the act of killing Mahisasura. This Devi was fashioned with eighteen hands, and was the central divinity of the Nava-Durga theme.

Matrikas

It will be relevant here to mention the part that the Saktis of different gods played in the exploits of the Devi in her fight with the danavas. These saktis came to be known later as 'Matrikas'. Among the minor goddesses, we can name Laxmi—the patron deity of wealth and prosperity; Saraswati - the goddess of learning and music; and Manasa - the goddess of snakes.

Vishnu

The iconography of Vishnu had been described in a number of texts like the *Mahabharata* and the *Brihat Samhita*. The special iconography features of the gods were that he was to have the kaustabha jewel on his chest and 'vaijayantimala' hanging down from his shoulder. He was to be adorned with jeweled ornaments. The image, having four hands and standing erect upon a lotus, is the standard iconic pattern of a 'Chaturvimsati-murtayah'. The rock cut figures of Vishnu at Surya-Pahar, Goalpara, seem to belong to the 9th century.

Vibhavas/Avataras

The conception of Vibhavas (evolved forms) or avataras (descended forms) of the Supreme God was a characteristic of Vaishnava theology. The collective representation of the ten avataras may also be seen on various architectural slabs, like those in Cole Park at Tezpur, Moroni in Goalpara district, and at Hajo.

Matsya

In this form, the upper part is human whereas the lower part is that of a fish (matsya). The image has two hands, the right bearing a 'gada' and left a 'chakra'.

Kurma

In this icon, the upper part belongs to a human and the lower is that of a tortoise holding a 'gada' and 'chakra'.

Varaha

Here again, the upper part is of human form while the lower part is a boar standing in 'pratyalidha' to the right. This icon has four hands.

Narasimha

This is by far among the more popular forms with its torso and lower body being that of a human a nd its face that of a lion. It was shown as tearing into the entrails of the demon Hiranyakasipu that lay across the knees of the angry avatar of Vishnu.

Vamana

Vishnu in this form was said to have deceived the demon king Bali and sent him to the nether regions. The god was said to have come to the demon king in the form of a dwarf (vamana) Brahmana and asked him for 'tripada-bhumi' (earth that would be covered by three paces). Bali agreed, and Vamana assumed a colossal form ('Virata-rupa'), covering the three worlds with his three steps. Bali was left with no other option but to be pushed to the nether regions.

Parasuram

Parasurama is considered only an 'avesa-avatara' of Vishnu who temporarily reposed in his person to destroy the kshatriyas as many as twenty-one times in order to cleanse the world of sin as told in the *Gitagovinda*

Raghav Rama

Rama, the son of Dasaratha of the Raghu dynasty, is recognized as the seventh avatara of Vishnu. The story of Rama is well known to all Assamese people as the *Ramayana*.

NOTES

NOTES

Balarama

In Indian mythology, Balarama has a dual personality. He belongs to the category of the four 'vyuhas'. He is also recognized as the eighth avatara of Vishnu.

Buddha

Buddha, the propagator of the heterodox creed of Buddhism, has also been incorporated as the ninth avatar in the traditional list of the ten avataras of Vishnu.

Kalki

Kalki, the last of avataras, is to appear at the end of the present aeon ('Kaliyuga') to purge the world of sin by destroying the 'mlechchhas'. These are the ten avataras of Vishnu that are often the reference points in ancient Hindu iconography of Assam.

Surya

Surya is another principal god of sectarian Hinduism and is considered to be the presiding deity of the Saura sect. From fairly early times in Assam, Surya worship is common: he was worshipped not only for the attainment of desire and wealth, but also for the healing of many ailments.

Miscellaneous Divinity

Among these miscellaneous categories of icons, we find Brahma – the creator of the world; Dikpalas – the guardians of the directions; Indra – the guardian of the east; Varuna – guardian of the west; Yama – of the south; Kubera – of the north; Agni – of the north-east; Isana of the north-east; Vayu – of the north-west; and Nirriti of the south-west. Kamadeva is the representative God of love in Hindu mythology.

Buddhism in Assam was not prominent in Kamrupa, according to Hiuen Tsang. K. L. Barua has referred to two representations of the Buddha, one in stone and the other in terracotta. From these it can be said that Assam indicates the prevalence of Buddhism in this territory. Mahapratisara was one of the goddesses of the 'Pancharaksha' group and descriptions of her form may be found in the *Sadhanamala.* One other Tantrik Buddhist goddess, Chunda was seen to have been represented in a metal image from the Narakasura hoarding.

Relics of the 'Jaina' faith had earlier been unknown in Assam. It was only recently that two rock-cut images with definite Jaina affiliation have been discovered in a cave in Surya-Pahar.

Besides these, there are other forms too. Assamese people worshipped Shiva in various forms in thematic and symbolic ways. Two four-handed images of Shiva along with a four-handed Vishnu in between were found. Shiva can be observed in three different images in the Kamakhya temple. An image of Shiva seated in meditation and another image with a trisul were found in Akasa Ganga. An image of Shiva seated on a bull was present at *mikir ati.*

Other than the iconic forms of Shiva and the ten avatars of Vishnu, Brahma is known as the creator, and the guardians of the world are Indra, who guards the east, Varun guards the west, Yama guards the northeast, Kubera guarding the north, Agni guards the northeast, Isana guards the northeast, Vayu guarding the northeast, and Nirriti was guarding the southwest corner of the world. Assam promises abundance of architectural activity. This is both secular and religious.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

7. Kampura was ruled by the Varmanas, the Salasthambha, and the Pala dynasties. (True/False)
8. The government that was widespread in ancient Assam was _____.
9. Which form of Lord Shiva is depicted as Nataraja?

NOTES

2.5 HIUEN TSANG'S ACCOUNT OF ASSAM

Hiuen Tsang was a well-known 7th century Chinese Buddhist and a pilgrim. His writings on his travel provide very integral and comprehensive information regarding that period. Hiuen Tsang embraced Buddhism when he was only thirteen years old. There was political and social chaos when the Sui dynasty fell. So he moved to Xingdu in Sichuan. He started a journey to search the sacred texts related to Buddhism throughout China. After being to several places in China, he decided to embark on a journey to India. However, he was worried about not being able to complete his search for scriptures completely in China. He began his travel to India via central Asia using the northern trade route through Kucha and he arrived in the northern part of India. His travelogue is named as *Xiyu Ji (Hsi-yu Chi)*, and it provides vast information on the then countries of south and central Asia. Although he came in search of Buddhist scriptures and instructions, he spent 16 years in India obtaining and achieving more than that.

He has recorded the political and social status of the places he visited and this updated and built the history of this region. Hiuen Tsang visited almost all the Buddhist pilgrimage places which were of importance to India. He spent many years learning about Buddhism in Nalanda University.

His visit to Kampura in Assam gave an actual base to reconstruct the history of Assam. Hiuen Tsang in his account described Kumar Bhaskar Varman as the 'The aristocratic King of eastern India'. He was a devotee of Shiva and followed Shaivism, but being a learned king, he accepted Buddhism too. Tsang wrote – 'The frontier of Kamrupa extends about 10000 'Li' (approx. 2720 km) and the capital is around 30 Li'. Although the land has slopes, it's very productive. Local people are mostly involved in cultivation. People cultivate jackfruits and coconuts. These trees are planted very deftly. Dams are erected on rivers or lakes bringing forth the streams, which keep flowing all the year. Hiuen Tsang also provided a detailed account of the climate and people. 'The climate of the region is tropical and wet. People belonging to this place are simple, honest and modest by nature. They are aggressive at times. They have sharp minds and very intelligent. The people are fair in complexion with a copper or yellow tinge. They are short in height and have a flat nose.' About the local language, Hiuen Tsang mentioned that 'The language they speak varies from the language spoken in the central India.' On the religion Tsang reports – 'Noatives of Kamrupa worshipped God and use to offer sacrifices to gratify their revered God. The empire has various temples belonging to various tribes. Although the king himself was a devout Shaivite Brahmin, he was not opposed to the spread of Buddhism.'

Bhaskar Varman's contemporary ally king of whole Northern India, Harshavardhan, was very much impressed by Hiuen Tsang's visit to Kamrupa. Harshvardhan invited Hiuen Tsang from Kampur to Kanouj and honored both Bhaskar Varman and Tsang.

NOTES

Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese pilgrim who visited Kampura during the reign of Bhaskarvarman, recorded that the king was fond of learning, and men of high talents came to his dominion from distant places aspiring after office.

Check Your Progress

10. Name Hiuen Tsang's travelogue.
11. Hiuen Tsang in his account described Kumar Bhaskar Varman as the _____.
12. Who honoured Hiuen Tsang in Kanouj?

2.6 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- Various kinds of silkworms were used to obtain a particular silk called *kasaja*. Silk was categorized as:
  - **Wild silk:** this kind of silk is obtained from silkworms that feed on plants and trees growing in the forests.
  - **True silk:** this kind of silk is obtained from silkworms that feed on mulberry leaves. Wild silk can be further classified as: Eri: The eri cloth was known for its durability. It was of drab color, and it was light and warm. Muga: Many varieties of muga cloth were available such as mejankari muga. This kind of silk was used by the upper class people for their dresses. Pat was another kid of silk available in ancient times.
- Black pepper and long peppers are two common products of the Assam forest. A large amount of shellac is produced in Assam. It is exported to China and Japan and is used to manufacture cabinets. It is renowned that it has the best quality in the whole continent. Forest has very beautiful inhabitants like the peacock, kokila, and keteki. Dhanesha is a rare species animal which is seen only in this region.
- As per Hindu *shastras* there are eight types of marriages. They were **Raksasa**: the bride would be married by force; **Paisaca**: the bride and the bridegroom secretly elope; **Gandharva**: secret union by copulation with the consent of the bride and bridegroom; **Brahma**: the bride and the bride groom get wedded with ceremony; **Daiva**: the bride is married to a priest; **Arsa**: wedding is conducted after the bride's father gets a formal gift of oxen from the bridegroom; **Kaya**: the proposal is made from the bride groom; **Asura**: the bride is purchased
- Rice was considered as the staple food of this region. However, early Assamese literature consisted of a lot of descriptions related to a range of hundred different kinds of paddy. The boka dhari is a favourite meal amongst the Assamese people during the celebrations of a festival. It is a variety of rice that is usually eaten uncooked. The hill people use the shifting method of cultivation which is known as jhum. Other than rice, Assamese people cultivate a large variety of fruits. Some of the well-known fruits are mangoes, oranges, plantains, citrons, limes, and pineapples.
- Based on the kalika purana, textiles are divided into the following categories: 'karpasa' (cotton), 'kambala' (wool), 'balka' (bark), and 'kasaja' (silk from cocoon).

NOTES

- Around 5th century AD, the influence of the Guptas increased in Assam and as a result large number of Brahmins migrated to Kampura, The Brahmins who migrated were also gifted with land as they have to settle themselves and can focus on religious matters. The Brahmins were categorized by gotras and Veda – sakhas. Originally, gotras were only seven or eight and they were denoted by *rishis*. The formation of the term 'Pravara' is strongly entwined with that of the gotra. Some of the titles were Deva, Sarman and Swamin.
- It was quite common and a custom in Assam that they appointed dancers and courtesans in connection with temple services and these women dedicated their lives in the service of the temple. Such women were known as 'Nati or Daluhangana'. Brahmin women were well educated and skilled in the arts of poetry and rhetoric.
- Mulaka, rajaka, vastuka, palanga, nalika, and such herbs were used commonly. The two popular dishes in the region were Pocola and kharika. These were made using young banana plant and bamboo shoots. Sour preparations were made using various fruits such as cakala, tenteli, and Ou. Assam people eat a lot of fish and this is a considered as a pre-Aryan custom. This eating habit is assumed to be borrowed from the Mongolian people. Meat such as duck, pigeon, and wild boar were also consumed generally.
- Shaivism plays an important role and it is considered to the most prevailing faith in Assam. It is very much evident that the cult of Siva was much eminent than the other cults in Assam from ancient times. There were several shaivite temples and various forms of Shiva in the early medieval period. Some of the iconic forms of Shiva are as follows: are the 'urdha-medhra' or the 'urdhva-linga' (phallus erectus), the 'trinetra' (the third eye shown vertically in the center of the forehead) and the 'jatamukuta' (crest of matted hair) with chandrakala or indukala (crescent) on it.
- Normally kings resign if they wish to pass on the crown to their children or to spend the remaining life in a spiritual way. The kingdom worked more based on the personal and natural qualities of the ruler. The history provides a lot of evidences on the required personal qualities of a king. Other than the qualities required mentally, the physical body of the king was also necessary. Some of the qualities of the king were that the king must have a border chest, slim and slender waist, with a thick set neck and club-like arms. War is the most important sport for all the kings. The success in the war and the valour that they showed in the war is the highest aim that any king would want to have.
- Hajo has a temple named Hayagriva Madhavatemple which is visited by the Buddhists from Bhutan, Tibet, Ladakh and southwestern China. Along with the hayagriva temple at hajo, all the other temples in the hills at hajo were given great importance by the Buddhist monks.
- There is a strong belief amongst the lamas that the Buddha's mahaparinirvana took place in some spot approximately in Hajo. This Hayagriva Madhava temple was built by a Koch king, Raghudevanarayan of Kampura in 1583. The Assamese people believed in the worship of sun in the ancient times and even today in some parts of Assam.
- Most of the kings maintained the custom of having singing and dancing as the means of entertainment in the court. These songs were composed based on various ragas. Art of developing paintings on the wall and normal painting started developing from the 14th century AD. Sankaradeva had also painted some of the celestial

figures for the China yatra. Earth, bark, leaves, gold, copper, and silver were used as the writing material in those days. The pens used for writing were made up of bamboos, reed, copper, bell-metal, gold, and iron. The ink used in the pen for writing purposes was obtained from a fruit name as silikha. Earthworm sap was also used to extract ink. However, it was used to make invisible ink.

2.7 KEY TERMS

- **Balka:** Bark
- **Jati:** Caste
- **Kambala:** Wool
- **Karpasa:** Cotton
- **Kasaja:** Silk from cocoon
- **Kumbhakara:** Potters
- **Nauki:** Boatmen
- **Tantuvaya:** Weavers

2.8 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Gotras and Veda-sakhas
2. Daiva
3. Eri, Muga and Pat
4. The geography of the landscape; climate; and general living pattern of the people
5. Muga
6. Gold washing and jewellery making
7. True
8. Kingdoms
9. Nritya Murty
10. *Xiyu Ji (Hsi-yu Chi)*
11. 'The aristocratic King of eastern India'
12. Harshvardhan

2.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Who occupied Kampura earlier?
2. As per Hindu shastras there are eight types of marriages. What are they?
3. What were the disciplines studied in Assam in ancient times?
4. Give examples of ornaments worn by the people of Assam during earlier times.
5. What role does Shaivism play in Assam?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Describe what Assamese society was like during the time of the Varmanas.
2. What was the economy like during the time of the Varmanas?
3. Write a note on: Polity and religion in the time of the Varmanas.
4. How did Hiuen Tsang depict Assam?
5. Discuss the cultural aspect of Assam during the time of the Varmanas.

2.10 FURTHER READING

Gait, E.A.; *A History of Assam,* BiblioBazaar, US, 2010.

Choudhary, Pratap Chandra; *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century AD*, Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Assam, Assam, 1966.

Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan; *Social and polity formations in pre-colonial north-east India: the Barak Valley experience*, Haranand Publications in association with Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1991.

Sinha, Surajit; *Tribal Polities and State Systems in Pre-colonial Eastern and North Eastern India*, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 1987.

Chakravarty, I. N., Chakravarty, Lakshmi N.; *Glimpses of the Early History of Arunachal*, Research Department, Arunachal Pradesh Administration, Arunachal Pradesh, 1973.

Barpujari, Heramba Kauta; *Assam in the Days of the Company: 1826 - 1858: a Critical and Comprehensive History of Assam during the Rule of the East-India Company from 1826 - 1858*, North-Eastern Hill University Publications, Assam, 1996

Barpujari, Heramba Kauta; *The Comprehensive history of Assam*, Publication Board, Assam, 1990.

M. Horam; *Naga Polity*, B.R. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1975.

M. Horam; *Social and Cultural Life of Nagas: (the Tangkhul Nagas)*, B.R. Pubishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1977.

Sangkima; Mizos, *Society and Social Change, 1890-1947*, Spectrum Publications, New Delhi, 1992.

Sangkima; *A Modern History Of Mizoram*, Spectrum Publications, New Delhi, 2004.

Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan; *The Garos and the English, 1765-1874*, Radiant Publishers, Hyderabad, 1978.

Kar, Parimal Chandra; *Garos in Transition*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1982.

Venuh, N. and Bonita Aleaz; *British Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2005.

Lahiri, Rebati Mohan; *The Annexation of Assam: 1824-1854*, General Printers & Publishers, Mumbai, 1954.

Bhuyan, Suryya Kumar; *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, Lawyer's Book Stall, Assam, 1974.

Elwin, Verrier; *The Nagas in the 19th Century*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1969.

NOTES

Lahiri, Nayanjot; *Pre-Ahom Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi, 1991.

Birinchi, B.K. and Banikanta Kakati; *Cultural History of Assam*, K. K. Barooah, Assam, 1951.

Basu, Nirmal Kumar; *Assam in the Ahom Age, 1228-1826: Being Politico-economic and Socio-cultural Studies*, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Kolkata, 1970.

Nath, R.M.; *The Background of Assamese Culture*, A. K. Nath, 1948.

Bareh, Hamlet; *The History and Culture of the Khasi People*, Spectrum Publications, Gauhati, 1967.

Chatterjii, S. K.; *The Place of Assam in the History and Civilization of India*, Gauhati University, Gauhati, 1970.

Dani, A. H.; *Prehistory and Protohistory of Eastern India*, Firma L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1960.

Dhavlikar, M. K.; *Bulletin of the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute* 31-32: 137-49, Archaeology of Gauhati, 1973.

UNIT 3 EARLY STATES IN ASSAM: THE PALA DYNASTY

Structure

3.0 Introduction
3.1 Unit Objectives
3.2 Pala Rulers and North-East India
3.3 Society
3.4 Polity
  3.4.1 Administration
  3.4.2 The Pala Kings of Bengal
3.5 Economy
3.6 Religion
3.7 Summary
3.8 Key Terms
3.9 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
3.10 Questions and Exercises
3.11 Further Reading

3.0 INTRODUCTION

The Pala dynasty (Pal Samrajya) was a powerful ruling dynasty during the classical period of India. The names of the kings in this kingdom ended with Pala which means 'protector'. The Palas ruled Bihar and India from 8th to the 12th century. The Pala dynasty came into existence after the death of Sasanka of Bengal. Bengal faced a lot of chaos and political turmoil after the death of Sasanka who was a rival of Harsha of Kanauj. The founder of Pala dynasty was Gopala, who ruled from AD 750 to 770. Dharmapala was the successor of Gopala, and he ruled from AD 770 to 781. Dharmapala made the Pala's a very strong and dominant power in north India.

The origin and rise of power of the Pala dynasty cannot be stated exactly in any of the Pala records. There are no exact evidences on the origin and ancestry of the Pala. Scholars suggest that the Pala kings were connected to king Rajabhata of the Buddhist Khadga of eastern Bengal. Studies reveal that Gopala was a 'sudra', and the Palas were low-born Kshatriyas. There are various beliefs regarding their origin. Scholars are of the opinion that the Palas were originally descendants of the Bhadra dynasty. Khalimpur Plate of Dharmapala, son of Gopala, states that Gopala was a son of a warrior (Khanditarat) Vapyata and grandson of a highly educated Dayitavishnu.

The Palas came to power and ruled for about four hundred years. The ruling period of the Palas was considered the golden age of Bengal as it witnessed many achievements. Social life prospered during this period, and social conditions were peaceful. The society was dominated by religion, but the status of the Vedic Brahmins declined.

The basis of the Pala dynasty's administration was monarchy. The king or monarch was the center of all power. Kings were accompanied by a prime ministers. The empire was divided into Vuktis or provinces. Furthermore, these Vuktis were divided into Vishaya or divisions and then into districts or mandalas.

NOTES

The Pala period introduced the society to a feudal economy. Agro economy and trade flourished, in addition to these, minerals also played a key role in uplifting the economy of the state.

The Palas followed Buddhism and belonged to the Mahayana Buddhism group. Buddhism and Hinduism were the religions that flourished under the Pala dynasty.

The Palas were excellent in art and sculpture and presented a unique form of Buddhist art. The art and architecture of this period was called the Pala school of sculptural art. The magnificent works of the Pala Empire consisted of Odantpuri Vihar, Vikramshila Vihar and Jagaddal Vihar. Literature under Pala dynasty promoted the proto-Bangla language. The language originated during the reign of the Pala dynasty. The Buddhist texts of the Charyapada were the initial form of Bangla language.

Pala dynasty ruled both Bihar and Bengal from the middle of the 8th century AD. The dynasty ruled the state with eighteen generations of kings. The dynasty gained power in Bengal under the reins of Dharmapala and Devapala

The decline of Pala Empire started after the death of Devapala. Foreign invasions are said to have a strong impact on the fall of the Pala dynasty.

In this unit, you will learn about the society and polity under the Palas, the religious practices followed and the economic activities undertaken.

3.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the social life during the Palas
- Discuss the political situation during the reign of the Palas
- Discuss about the achievement and administration of some of the important Pala kings
- Explain the economy in the times of Palas
- Discuss the religious policy of the Palas

3.2 PALA RULERS AND NORTH EAST INDIA

The title 'Pala' is an abbreviation of the Sanskriti term *Palaka*, which means protector, i.e., a ruler or administrator. It seems that this title was a popular one among the rulers of north eastern India of the time and in imitation of the contemporary Pala kings of Bengal, Brahmapala also assumed that title. Brahmapala's reign may be placed between AD 990 and 1010. Towards the close of rule of the Salastambhas, Pundravardhana passed on to the hands of Bengal's ruler. The western boundary of the Kamrupa kingdom at the time of Brahmapala's accession to the throne was, therefore, again regressed to the river Karatoya. Brahmaputra abdicated the throne in favour of his son Ratnapala.

Ratnapala (AD 1010-40) was a powerful king. He made several land grants. He shifted the capital city of his kingdom of Pragjyotishpur, strongly fortified it and named it Durjaya or Sri Durjaya (impregnable). He defeated a king of Gouda named Rajyapala, which is evident from an inscription belonging to one of his successors, Gopala. Ratnapala appears to have encouraged trade and commerce as well as learning and education.

Ratnapala's son Indrapala (AD 1040-1065) defeated Kalyana Chandra, son of Sri Chandra of Bengal and to mark this victory made land-grants in Pundravardhana to a Brahmana hailing from Sravasthi. Indrapala married Rajyadevi, a Rashtrakuta princess. He was succeeded by his son Gopala (1065-85 AD), who was a man of merit and intelligence. His Grachtal inscription contains important information about his predecessors. During the reign of the next king Harshapala (AD 1085-1095), Jatavarman, king of east Bengal snatched away a part of Pundravardhana, then under the sovereign rule of Kamarupa. However, this was soon recovered by Dharmapala (AD 1095-1120), son and successor of Harshapala. Three inscription belonging to Dharmapala's reign have been found, which speak about his prowess and manifold qualities. He was a great patron of religion and learning and himself a poet. The first eight verses of the Pushpabhadra grant were composed by him. Towards the end of his reign, Dharmapala was conducting his administration from his capital at Kamarupanagar, which can be considered only as an extension of the old city of Pragjyotishpur to North Gauhati.

Jaypala, the son of Dharmapala, who is identified by P.C. Choudhury with Ramchandra mentioned in *Ram Charita* of Sandhyakaranandi, ruled sometime between AD 1120 and 30. During his reign, Kamarupa was attacked by Mayana, the general of Ramapala, the Pala king of Bengal and as a result of the war, the *Kamarupadhipati* lost his possession in North Bengal. The Bengal king placed Tingyadeva as his vassal king in the part. Later when Tingyadeva rebelled, Ramapala's son Kumarapala, who then ruled Gauda, sent Vaidyadeva to suppress him. Vaidyadeva not only suppressed Tingyadev a but also conquered Kamarupa and declared his independence in AD 1138. He assumed the title *Maharajadhiraja Parameswara Paramabhattaraka.*

You will learn about the important Pala rulers of Bengal in **Section 3.4** (Polity during the Palas).

3.3 SOCIETY

The reign of the Palas is referred to as a golden period in the history of Bengal. The Palas ruled for about four hundred years, which can be noted as a rarity in the chronicles of dynastic history. The Palas can be held responsible for all the praise that Bengal achieved during this long period. The Palas are responsible for the foundation of Bengali nationalism, which was apparent from social structure plus life of the people during the Pala period.

By the beginning of the 9th century the Palas had extended their sphere of authority to as far as Kanauj, if not over the whole of north India. The Palas could not hold their administration in northern India for a long period, but the power and strength generated during the early years of Pala rule enabled them to hold on their own against the invasions of the north Indian powers in the 10th and 11th centuries AD.

The Palas had laudable accomplishments in the area of administration. The copperplates found from the times of Palas bear sufficient testimony to their well-organized administration practices. An organized system of administration predominated from village level to the level of central government. The efficient administrative structure of the Palas, acquired from the Gupta Dynasty, brought them a lot of credit though they made the structure more efficient and introduced many new characteristics. The Palas built an effective structure of revenue collection. The lengthy list of state-officials, found on the Pala copper plates, clearly point out that the administration cared for every aspect of public life — from the land routes to ferry

NOTES

NOTES

ghats, river ways, towns and ports, trade and commerce, and law and order in the country. Forest or market management was not left behind as well. The foundation of their long rule was their efficient administrative system.

Despite the fact that the Palas were inclined towards Buddhism, the socio-cultural aspect of life of the Palas maintained the essence of Brahmanism. The *varna* or caste system was not as rigid as it was in its preceding eras but was rooted deeply within the society and the Buddhists had to adapt themselves to it. Though caste system predominated, the orthodox Brahmanical division had experienced a massive change. The domination of the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas did not bear much important in the socio-political life. The Palas kings were Buddhists but the social structure was based on Brahmanical Hinduism. Buddhism earned tremendous patronage from the Pala kings. The Palas respected the Brahmins and their status and apparently had accepted the system of *varna*. They had given higher status to the middle varnas and sudras.

Though the caste system was not so rigid in the Pala period, the people belonging to lower castes were regarded as untouchables. Bhaba-Deva Bhatta in his book described that the Medas, Chandalas, Savaras, and Kapalis were untouchables. They were considered outcasts and lived on the outskirts of the villages. The kshatriyas and the trading class had lost their importance in the society. This happened mainly due to the decline of trade in the 7th century AD. The rigidity in the varna system did not influence the society of Bengal during the Pala age, presumably due to the nonexistence of 'smritis' or the law books in Bengal.

Brahmanical Hinduism gained a lot of popularity during this period due to Vaishnavism and Shakti cult but it had to go through a lot of changes during the Pala period. Puranic themes and legends dominated the religious beliefs of people. The essence of Puranic Hinduism was depicted in the inscription and images of deities in the temples during this period. Vedic gods and Vedic Hinduism had passed into Nirvana during the Pala period. The importance of vedic rituals like yajna and homa had also lost much of its glory.

The lifestyle of the Puranic kings and heroes became widely popular in the Pala period. These included kings like Nala, Sagara, Bali, and Rama. Vishnu became more humanized through the Pala phase which gave rise to the cult of Krishna. Bengalis considered Krishna to be more humane in comparison to Vishnu during this period. Due to the influence of Puranic Hinduism, the concept of Shiva had to face a massive change. Lord Shiva was considered to be a generous and a powerful god who had no material interests and was kind towards his followers. Siddhidata Ganesha came into existence and was worshipped by the merchant communities. People started worshipping goddess Saraswati as the concept of learning developed. Goddesses Lakshmi and Saraswati were considered the wives of Lord Vishnu. Worship of phallus became popular during the Pala period. Images of lord Shiva dancing or 'Nataraja' emerged during the Pala phase indicating the other forms of lord Shiva. The joint vestiges of Shiva- Parvati designated that Shiva had a great impression in the socio-religious life of the era.

Buddhism experienced a massive support under the Palas and Mahayana Buddhism was further remodeled. Tantric practices infiltrated through the Mahayana cultism, which was known as 'Vajrayana'. It was said that protection could be attained by practicing 'Bodhichitta'. Another school of Buddhism, known as 'Sahajayana' flourished during this period. While the Vajrayanists had faith in *mantra tantra*, gods and goddesses were discarded by Sahajayanists. They completely denied the efficacy of worship, sacrifices,

NOTES

rituals, penance and suffering for achieving salvation. According to them, body is a temple, which alone could bring salvation. Thus, both the theory of Vajrayana and Sahajayana affected the socio-religious life of the people during the Pala period.

Apart from Vajrayanas and Sahajayanas, there also formed some other sects, which attained popularity during the Pala phase such as Sahajiya and Nathas cult. According to historians, the *bauls* of Bengal owes its origin from the Sahajiya cult. As the socio-religious codes during the Pala period was widely flexible, different religious sects apart from the Brahmanical Hinduism and Buddhism also prospered.

The public-welfare was the most remarkable aspect of the Pala rule. The Pala rulers were Buddhists, but most of their subjects were Hindus. Dharmapala adopted the policy of toleration for religion as the state policy. He declared that he is 'conversant with the rules of shastras', and he made 'the castes adhere to their proper principles.' This policy was followed by his heirs. The Hindu gods and goddesses and Brahmins received generous patronage from the Pala rulers although they were devoted Buddhists. Brahmins occupied high official posts. Except for one or two, all the Pala copper plate records granted lands to temples of Hindu gods. There is no evidence of any religious disharmony between the Buddhists and the Hindus in society. Religious toleration and mutual coexistence can be recognized as the characteristic of the social life in the Pala period.

This social peace for a long period of time contributed to the developments in different fields. There are examples of welfare activities of Pala rulers. Dharmapala is famous for having constructed a few tanks by spending a few thousand silver coins. Mahipala I had made a place in the hearts of people of Bengal with his welfare activities like establishing towns and digging tanks. Remains of many buildings of the Pala period owe testimony to the welfare activities of the rulers of this dynasty. The tradition of religious harmony and tolerance created in the Pala period was given a sudden jerk during the period of the Senas and the people had to prepare for the acceptance of Islam in the following period. The long Pala period created an atmosphere of convenience and a mixture of Hindu-Buddhist culture which contributed to the formation of the tantrik and sahajiya cults, the legacy of which transformed through the medieval period down to modern age. The legacy of religious-cultural-social union that evolved during the rule of the Palas was a splendid achievement of the period. Buddhism reached Tibet, Sumatra, Java and Malayasia during the Pala reign. The pundits from the Buddhist Viharas of Bengal played a very significant role in the distribution and spread of Buddhism in these countries.

Everyday lifestyle of the Bengalis during the Pala phase points to one of the significant characters of social life. People led a simple life and staple food of the Bengalis included rice, lentil, milk and milk products, jaggery or sugar, fish, meat and rice. People chewed betel leaves mixed with spices after their meals. People devoted their leisure time in different pastimes during the Pala period. The ruling and upper class people were fond of hunting which was livelihood for the lower class people. The inscriptions of Paharpur and Moynamoti depict various hunting expeditions. Chariot racing was a favourite past time of upper class men whereas women were fond of water sports, dancing, singing and gardening. Common people were fond of wrestling and horse racing. There was a class of concubines and temple dancers called *devdasis*. The system of *devdasi* was widely prevalent during the Pala civilization.

Garments worn by the people of the Pala period were simple which showed their belief in a simple lifestyle. Men wore dhoti and *chaddar*. Stitched garments were seldom

NOTES

used for the upper part of the body. Women wore sarees. Women from aristocratic family wore *cholis*. Jimutavahana had sanctioned special dress for festive seasons. Dancing girls wore special decorative garments. Workers and common individuals used to wear a very short dhoti or a short cloth just to cover the waist.

The position of women in society during the Pala period was no way different from the previous periods. According to Vatsayana, the women of Gauda loved luxury. They applied vermilion dots on their foreheads and aromatic sandal powder paste on their body, and flowers in their hair. Women belonging to upper class lived in a lavish style but the women in villages had a simple, unsophisticated life style. Poor women had to participate in domestic duties along with their male partners. Polygamy was practiced widely. Upper class men married lower class women provided they could get good amount of dowry. Widows were highly abhorred in the Pala society, and were compelled to live a life of penance. A woman was expected to be a caring mother, a good and devoted wife and be able to bear the sins done by her husband. The male predominant society diminished the self-respect and freedom of women. On a whole, the Pala period in ancient India witnessed a period of staggering peace and security in their societal life. Caste system was more flexible, and people belonging to diverse caste and creed were given due respect and status. The social life during the Palas made its mark in the history of early India as an era of absolute peace and prosperity. This social union during the Palas added to the prosperity of ancient India in all areas over a long period of time.

Check Your Progress

1. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) The _____found from the times of Palas bear sufficient testimony about their reign.
   (b) _____ adopted the policy of religious toleration.
2. Who was the first king of the Pala dynasty?
3. What religion was followed by the Pala kings?

3.4 POLITY

The Pala dynasty came into existence after the death of Sasanka, and continued to rule the extended regions of Bihar and Bengal for four hundred years—from 8th century to 12th century AD. There was a great political upheaval in Bengal after the death of Sasanka. Bengal faced a lot of chaos and the Palas rescued the region from all such socio-political upheaval. The kingdom was protected from breaking down, and the Palas ensured consolidation of the Empire under their supremacy. The founder of this dynasty was Gopala. He reigned from AD 750-770, and strengthened his position by controlling Bengal. His successor was Dharmapala, who ruled from 770-781 and made the Palas a very strong power in northern India by taking over the once-prestigious throne of Kanauj. Soon after, the Pratiharas of central India started threatening the Palas but did nothing as they faced greater danger from Rashtrakutas of Deccan. The Pala rulers established a significant epoch in the history of ancient India.

However, there are no clear evidences on the origin and early history of Palas. The epigraphic sources and official Pala records does not say much about the caste, origin and early chronicle of the Palas. Since no definite evidence is available, historians have no choice but to depend on indirect evidences, which drop light on the reign of the Palas in Bengal. Therefore there are lots of controversies among the historians on the origin and ancestry of the Palas. From the official records of Palas, it is known that Vapyata was the father of Gopala and Dayita Vishnu was his grandfather. Based on facts provided by the poet Baribhadra, who was a contemporary to king Dharmapala, some scholars propose that the Pala kings were correlated to king Rajabhata of the Buddhist Khadga of east Bengal. Again some scholars opine, taking the evidences from Khalimpur Copper Plate under consideration that the Palas were originally the descendants of the Bhadra Dynasty. Though the initial Palas did not submit themselves to any mythical ancestry, the later Palas declared themselves as descendants of the Sun or 'Surya Kula'. Ghanarama in *Dharma Mangala*, Sandhyakara Nandi in *Rama Charita* and other histories of the Age referred to Samudra Kula, or the 'origin of the Palas from ocean.'

Though there are no convincing evidences about the origin and ancestry of the Palas, yet the historians are of the opinion that the Palas were Kshatriya by caste. Evidences from *Ram Charita* and *Taranatha* confirm this theory. This was further strengthened by their marital relationship with the Kalachuriyas and the Rashtrakutas. Some historians opine that the Palas did not belong to any high caste and described them as 'Dasajivina' or Sudra by occupation in *Arya-manjusri-mula-kalpa*. Depending on this tradition, Abul Fazal, a medieval Muslim writer, described the Palas as 'kayasthas'. Modern scholars are of the opinion that the Palas were staunch Buddhists as per their official records. Copper plates of the Pala kings exhibited a clear indication of their Buddhist affiliation. It is not known if the founder of the Pala dynasty in Bengal was basically of Buddhist origin; there is evidence that the Pala kings had an important position in the world of international Buddhists.

The original homeland or the actual extent of the kingdom of Gopala, the founder of the Palas, cannot be exactly determined but since most historians of the early Pala kings originated from Magadha, the historians assume Magadha to be the original homeland of the Palas. They consequently conquered Bengal and became a part of it.

The century following the death of Sasanka witnessed extreme chaos, political upheavals and foreign invasions. The province was horribly disturbed and lacked peace. After the death of Sasanka, Harshavardhana and the Kamrupa king Bhaskarvarmana had appended Bengal or Gauda. Later a strong Tibetan invasion cleared away the political stability of Bengal. This caused the Bengal to divide into various provincial units. Each one struggled for the mastery of land. The absence of any central authority or Government made the condition anarchic. With Gopala taking over the throne, the anarchy in Bengal ended. The Khalimpur Copper Plate depicts that Gopala was crowned by popular support. To put an end to this lawlessness, Gopala chose the central authority and appeared in the political plot of Bengal. Gopala was a prominent chief and a qualified military general. It is said that Gopala did not possess royal blood as he was not born in a prominent family but it was just on account of his martial and exceptional leadership qualities that he was chosen as the leader. The establishment of peace within Bengal and removing the state of anarchy were the main achievements of Gopala. He became the king of Bengal and sovereignty of the Pala kings was established in the 8th century, which continued uninterrupted till 12th century AD.

NOTES

3.4.1 Administration

The Pala dynasty ruled for four hundred years and expanded their empire far and wide. Their ruling policy led towards matchless growth in the fields of arts and literature. The Palas had an organized administrative system. Welfare of the people was their major concern. The Palas extended their power towards Kanauj in the beginning of the 9th century. Bengal got involved in politics of northern India in the period of the Pala dynasty.

The dynasty followed the monarchical system of administration. The monarch or king was the centre of power. The kings of Pala were given the title of Paramvattaraka, parameshwar or Maharajadhiraja. The Pala Empire was divided into several Vuktis or provinces. These Vuktis were further segmented into Vishaya (divisions) and then into mandala (districts). Other smaller units were Bhaga, Khandala, Avritti, Chaturaka, and Pattaka.

The Palas managed the society from the commonality to the royal court. Their achievements were in all spheres—from the village level to the level of central government was introduced in an exceptionally planned structure. The Palas it is said inherited the administrative structure from the Guptas. Nonetheless, the administrative system of the Palas was more efficiently practiced. The system had an explicit arrangement for revenue collection. The administration cared and took interest in improving the lives of their citizens. During their long period of leadership, the Pala dynasty developed the land routes, ferry ghats, the river ways, towns and ports, trade and commerce, as well as skillfully managed the law and order in their territory. The Pala system of government had a long list of state-officials. The copperplates from the Pala dynasty point out their efficient administrative system. Further, these copper plates give details of the achievement of the administration. The Pala dynasty assigned positions such as Raja, or the (vassal kings) Mahasamanta, Duta (head ambassador), Rajasthaniya (deputy), Mahasandhi-vigrahika (foreign minister), sasthadhikrta (tax collector). Other prominent positions in the royal court were that of the Mahaksapatalika (accountant); the Ksetrapa (head of land use division), Jyesthakayastha (dealing documents) and Pramatr (head of land measurements). The administration also appointed the chief justice or Mahadandanayaka/Dharmadhikara, police forces or the Mahapratihara, secret service or Khola. Agricultural posts were also allotted as Gavadhakshya or head of dairy farms, Chhagadhyakshya or head of goat farms, Meshadyakshya or head of sheep farms, Mahishadyakshya or head of buffalo farms and Nakadhyakshya or aviation ministry. This extensive system of administration and management venerated the power and strength of the Pala reign and allowed them to occupy supremacy in northern India till 10th and 11th centuries AD.

NOTES

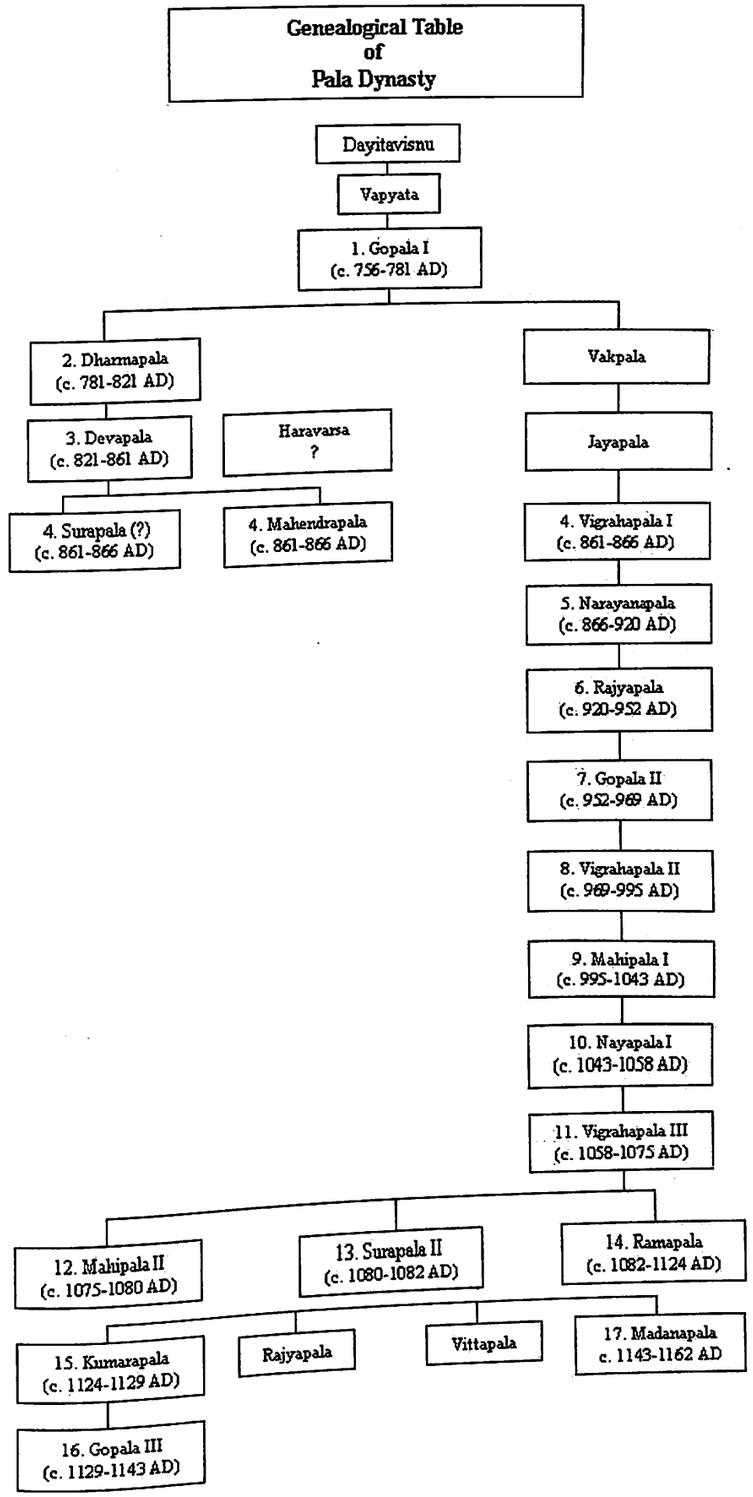


Fig. 3.1 Genealogical Chart of Pala Kings

NOTES

3.4.2 The Pala Kings of Bengal

Bengal gained political importance and military power under the Pala kings. The reigns of Dharmapala and Devapala were the period of ascendancy of the dynasty. The rule of the Pala kings gained stronghold in Bihar and Bengal. Bengal was the center of politics in the north of India under the Pala rule. They not only built their stronghold in Bengal but also spread their territory to a vast extent. Their biggest achievement was said to be in the field of administration. The Pala kings were not just efficient administrators but were also great patrons of art and literature. Education and architecture, under the Palas received huge impetus in north India. The celebrated kings of the Pala dynasty made Bengal as an important center of national politics. Nonetheless, the imperial fabric of the Pala powers started to decline after Devapala. The Pala power revived its lost reputation with the accession of the Mahipala I but the challenging power was doomed to decline under the successors of Mahipala I.

Some of the important kings of the Pala dynasty were:

1. **Gopala**

   Gopala came to power in AD 750 through democratic election in Gaur as per evidence provided by Tibetan scholar Taranatha. A state of anarchy and confusion reigned in Bengal after the death of Sasanka, a famous Gauda ruler. Failing to control the situation, various independent chieftains of Bengal elected a person named Gopala to end the anarchic condition of Bengal. Being a Kshatriya by caste, Gopala proved his valour and capability as a strong leader prior to his election as king. Banga or East Bengal was his original kingdom. He was a devotee of Buddha, but he continued the policy of war and conquest to expand his empire. Gopala was a commanding military general and was marked as a great ruler. In the copper plate inscription of Khalimpur states, Gopala's father Vapyata was a famous military chief of his time and his grandfather Dayita Vishnu is recognized as a learned man. Details of Gopala's career or his military conquests are obscure. Some inscriptions do postulate his rule and many victories are credited to him. However, the Pala records emphasize that Gopala defeated Kamakaris. Though Tarantha refers to his command of Magadha, but this seems to be an uncertainty. It can be said that Gopala was the leader of Bengal province and curbed anarchic elements. He is believed to have established his hold on entire Bengal. His period of reign is believed to have spanned from AD 750 to 770. His main achievement was to bring peace in Bengal by removing the widespread chaos. His stabilization helped his son Dharmapala to extend the empire further. The Pala rulers maintained faith in Buddhism even after Gopala, though they had to battle their rivals to safeguard and lengthen their empire. He had built the famous Buddhist monastery at Otantapura according to Tarantha.

2. **Dharmapala**

   Dharmapala, son of Gopala, was the greatest Pala king that Bengal has witnessed. He made the rule of Pala dynasty significant as far as development of Bengal was concerned.

   Dharmapala's reign was considered as a constant struggle between Pala, Pratihara and Rashtrakuta over the supremacy of North and East India. Major ruling dynasties benefited the absence of a supreme ruler in North India. This created a tripartite strife between Pratiharas of Rajputana and the Malwas, Palas of Bengal and Rashtrakutas of the Deccan. The northern opponent of Dharmapala

NOTES

was Vatsaraja Pratihara of Rajputana and Malwa. While Dharmapala wanted to expand his kingdom to the extreme west, Vatsaraja tried to expand his kingdom in the east, with the intention of occupying the city of Kannauj. Dharmapala probably conquered Magadha and extended his sway beyond Allahabad.

Battles of Dharmapala

The first phase of struggle of Dharmapala started with the battle between him and Vatsaraja, in the region of Doab where Dharmapala was defeated. At the same time, Rashtrakuta king Dhruva defeated Vatsaraja. Dhruva's next target in his campaign in the north was Dharmapala. He marched towards Doab and defeated Dharmapala but was unable to annex this northern empire. When Dhruv left for Deccan, Dharmapala resumed his struggle with the Pratiharas for mastery over north India.

Dhruva returned to the Deccan creating a void in the political scenario of North India and Vatsaraja was already destroyed by the Rashtrakutas earlier. Dharmapala took advantage of this situation and strove for his own ascendancy because of the temporary obscurity of his rivals. The Bhagalpur Copper Plate of Narayana Pala and the Khalimpur Copper Plate of Dharmapala provides facts about the northern victory of Dharmapala. Dharmapala's victory on Kanauj and deposition of the king of Kanauj, Indra Raja was found in the Bhagalpur Copper plates. He stationed his own candidate, Chakrayudh on the throne of Kanauj and in this way Dharmapala assumed sovereignty of Kanauj. Dharmapala also occupied the regions of Kedara, Gokarna and many other Himalayan regions. Dharmapala also held a Durbar at Kanauj in which kings of Matsya, Madra, Bhoja, Kuru, Yadu, Avanti, Yavana, Gandhara and Kira were invited and who gave their submission to Dharmapala as their suzerain.

Conquests of Dharmapala

Dharmapala extended his territory to a larger extent through his conquests. Dharmapala conquered major parts of North India, but he did not rule the whole Empire individually. He had trusted vassals to rule on his account with a degree of autonomy. Sub chiefs of Dharmapala ruled a lengthy stretch of the territory, between the boundaries of Bihar and Punjab. A significant number of kingdoms in Punjab, Malwa, Eastern Rajputana, Berar worked as the vassal states of Dharmapala. The tangible extent of Dharmapala's Empire extended from Bengal in the east to the distant limit of the northwest and conceivably even beyond the Himalayas in north. Dharmapala's empire towards the south included the regions of Malwa and Berar. Due to his enormous conquests in the North, Dharmapala was given the title 'Uttarapatha Swamin'.

This fame and prosperity for Dharampala was short-lived as renewed attack of the Pratiharas challenged his sovereignty. Nagabhatta II initiated the second round of tripartite fight, by attacking Kannauj and crushing Chakrayudh, the subordinate chief of Dharmapala. This event created new conflict between the Pratihara king Nagabhatta II and the Pala king Dharamapala. There was a battle between these two powers in the region of Monghyr, where Dharmapala was defeated. At the same time, Tibetan invasion against the authority of Dharmapala in north India also came into existence. Before Nagabhatta could crush the power of his eastern adversary completely, the Rashtrakutas from south had cut short the triumphant career of Nagabhatta II.

NOTES

Ultimately the Rashtrakuta king, Govinda III, destroyed the Pratiharas and the Pala supremacy. Rashtrakutas withdrew to their original homeland in Deccan, after which Dharmapala revived his power again.

Dharmapala as patron of art

Dharmapala had marked the ancient history of India not just as a mighty conqueror, but also as a great patron of art, architecture, and literature. He was a great patron of Buddhism and propagated Buddhism as the religion of the state. He has instrumental in building the great Vikramsila Vihara in Magadha, the famous monastery of Odantapuri. He also constructed the most celebrated Somapura Vihara. Dharampala also patronized education. A galaxy of scholars flourished during his time. Haribhadra was one among such scholars.

Dharmapala was a Buddhist king but was tolerant towards other religions as well. He equally patronized the Brahmanical shrines and started a policy of religious toleration and correlative existence of several religions, which was one of the remarkable legacies of the Pala rule in Bengal. Dharmapala was a clever diplomat and a good statesman. His efficiency as a statesman is evident from the thriving prosperity, attained by Bengal in his reign.

3. Devapala

Devapala, the successor of King Dharmapala was the third king of the Pala dynasty. The Pratihara kingdom suffered diminution due to Devapala's invasion.

Devapala had encompassed almost all of Northern India. He was a worthy and a competent son. Devapala retained the vast kingdom he had inherited by the policy of blood and iron. He made some additions to the vast Empire of his father Dharmapala, who reigned from 810 to 850 AD. According to the Badal Pillar Inscription, Devapala was the paramount lord of the entire north India, extending from the Himalayas to the Vindhya and from the eastern seas to the western seas. The period of his reign was highlighted with a sequence of military campaigns against adversaries like Pragjyotishas, Huns, Utkalas, Gurjaras and the Dravidians.

As per the Badal Pillar Inscription, Devapala's minister (Brahmin) Darbha Pani and his grandson Kedara Mitra helped in the expansion of Devapala's kingdom. These inscriptions also depict how Darbha Pani used his diplomacy to make Devapala the lord of northern India. Devapala had conquered the Huns, Utkalas and the Gurjaras. He conquered the frontier states and made extended his father's Empire. Devapala had also conquered the powerful tribes Latas and Khasas occupying their kingdoms. Kings of Pragjyotishas and Kamarupa became his vassals in the east. In the south, king of Utkala was routed in a battle, and the region was occupied by Jaya Pala, brother and general of Devapala. The king of Orissa, Siva Kara also became his vassal.

Devapala's imperial vision was not only limited to North and South India. Devapala conquered the Dravidians in South India. He also defeated Sri Vallabha the Pandhya king and an adversary of Devapala. Devapala was patronized education, literature and culture apart from being a famous conqueror. During his rule, Bengal witnessed prosperity in every field. Devapala was a Buddhist and had granted five villages to Buddhist monasteries for promoting Buddhism and for the welfare and comforts of Bhikshus. He initiated construction of numerous temples and monasteries in Magadha. Devapala was very benevolent as an administrator. He was tolerant towards other religions and promoted growth of other religions within his Empire.

During the first half of the 9th century, Devapala was regarded as the most powerful monarch of North India. Devapala kept a steady check on the powers of Pratihara and Rashtrakuta after rounding the Pala Empire in the east (Kamarupa) and southeast (Utkala). He led his forces to Vindhyas in the south and the Indus in the west. He possessed enough power to intervene in the politics of the Tamil Nadu joint confederation against the Pandya King. The king of Sailendra, Balaputradeva of Java and Sumatra sent an envoy to his kingdom by acquiring the grant of five villages to build a monastery in Nalanda. People from various parts of India and even from overseas came to Nalanda University to learn Buddhist literature. Elite scholars had prospered during his reign. Bengal showed an unparalleled progress during his reign.

Devapala's triumphant record was devoid of defeat. Under his dominion, Pala's domination reached its highest mark. However, Devapala's death led to deterioration and disintegration of the Pala dynasty.

4. Mahipala I

Mahipala I reestablished the dynastic rule of Palas in the middle of the eighth century and restored the fallen fabrics of the empire by heroic efforts.

Mahipala's reign is labeled with restoration of the Pala dynasty. The Pala Empire disintegrated into small kingdoms by the end of the 10th century. Bengal, the heart of the Pala Empire lost its glory during the reign of the weak Pala kings after the death of Devapala. Mahipala I retrieved the former glory of the Pala Empire by repelling all the foreign invasions including internal discords. Mahipala initiated recovery programmes in Bengal immediately after ascending the throne. Tippera and Bangarh Inscriptions provide facts about the military conquests. They also state that Mahipala I had recovered western, northern, and parts of eastern Bengal. He overpowered the Kamboja and Chandra tribes, who usurped the Pala territories after the rule of Devapala. Mahipala I was able to recover only the eastern and northern parts of Bengal. The inscription of Bahgaura of Coomilla asserts his hold over the region. Mahipala conquered North Bengal and used it as his entrance to the East Bengal. The Belba Grant attests his hold over the area of Varendri or north Bengal. The Tirumalai Inscription of Rajendra Chola points indirectly to the hold of Mahipala over west Bengal. These inscriptions state that Dandabhukti or Danton in south of Midnapore and the regions adjacent to it were ruled by independent kings who were defeated by him. Therefore, it is believed that Mahipala had reestablished a part of Bengal, except a piece of southern west Bengal, where the Ranasura and Dharmapala ruled.

Epigraphic evidences confirm that Mahipala I ruled entire Bihar. However, South Bihar was inherited by Mahipala I from his father Vigrahapala II and had presumably also conquered north Bihar. The Sarnath inscription depicts that Mahipala I gave orders for the construction of saintly structures in Bihar.

The most important event of Mahipala's reign was the attack on Rajendra Chola in Bengal. The Chola soldiers, led by the general of Rajendra Chola,

NOTES

NOTES

procrastinated for two years, from 1021 to 1023 AD. The Cholas defeated some local kings of Bengal. These kings included Dharmapala of Dandabhukti, Govindachandra of Vangla and Rana Sura of Southern Radha. These local kingdoms were not included in the kingdom of Mahipala I in Bengal. The Chola records suggest that they had conquered the areas of Tandabhutti, Uttiraladha, Vanga Desa and Takkanaladha. The Cholas then waged war against Mahipala in Bengal and usurped the region of Northern Radha. Cholas defeated Mahipala I and compelled other vanquished kings of Bengal to accept their supremacy. Though the hold of Mahipala over Bengal was diminished, northern Bengal and northern Radha still owed loyalty towards Mahipala I. Mahipala saved the Pala kingdom from being completely shattered, and also revived its former glory, magnificence and power of the Dynasty to a great extent. Mahipala I cared for regional and local interests and was accused of indifference towards national causes as he refused to join the Hindu confederation organized by the Punjabi Shahi kings to resist Sultan Mahmud's invasions. Historians have pointed out that it was his inclination towards Buddhism that prevented him from being part of this Hindu confederacy. However Mahipala I was credited to have arrested forces of disintegration within the Pala Empire and for recovering the imperial dream of the Palas by spreading the boundary of his kingdom on all sides.

5. Ramapala

Ramapala is recognized as the last king of the Pala dynasty. He restored the past glory of the Pala ancestry, to a great extent.

The Pala Empire was a Buddhist dynasty ruling the eastern region from Bengal. Pala rule was acknowledged as the golden empire of Bengal. Ramapala was the successor of king Shurapala II. He extended his empire further to Kamarupa, Orissa and North of India after crushing the Varendra revolution. The Ramacharitam recognizes Ramapala as a Kshatriya, succeeded by Kumarapala. As per a tale he died by walking into the sea. Ramapala governed for almost fifty three years. Brothers of Mahipala II, Surapala and Ramapala, escaped to Magadha while revolting against him.

Ramapala's reign can be divided into two stages. One was his conflict against the Kaivarta Kings, and the other was the revival of glory of Pala Dynasty. Ramapala collected support from feudatory chiefs and some kings of Rashtrakuta and chiefs of numerous territories to overpower Bhima, the third Kaivarta ruler of Virendra. The chiefs readily accepted to help the Pala king and sent their armies to fight the Kaivartas. Ramapala, with his army, crossed the northern bank of Ganga in Varendra. A severe battle took place between the two armies where Bhima was defeated. Bhima and his family members were mercilessly executed by Ramapala consequently recovering the ancestral kingdom. After the reconquest of Varendra, Ramapala initiated reconstruction of the houses which were destroyed in the battle. This prompted him to build a new capital city. It was named Ramavati after him. Ramapala espoused a liberal policy of taxation as high taxes were forced on them by the Kaivarta rulers, and regular cultivation of lands was continued under his patronage. Ramapala tried to consolidate his position by restoring the former glory of his family. He did this by giving a scientific figure to his province by conquering the adjoining regions. The feudatory of Radha came under his influence. Hari Varman, the Varman king, surrendered to his supremacy. Ramapala sent an allied chief, Timgyadeva, to conquer the countries in the east. He defeated Dharmapala and occupied Kamarupa. Ramapala despatched an elephant force against the Gahadavalas of Kannauj but Govindachandra, the prince of Gahadavala revolted against them.

During Ramapala's reign, two local kings of Orissa were quarrelling for power. One was backed by Ananta Varman Chodaganga of the Ganga dynasty, and the other was king Somavamsi kesari. Ramapala took up the cause of the latter and put him on the throne after defeating Ananta Varman. Ramapala's success was transitory. His influence did not stand long. Later, Ananta Varman reinstated Karnakesari or his successor on the Utkala throne. A king of the Naka dynasty threatened by the Nagas, sought protection from Ramapala. He is said to have even captured the capital of Naga. Ramapala made an alliance with the Chola king Kullotungo to be able to fight against Chalukyas and Gangas. It did not help him much as Chalukyas invaded parts of Bengal and created trouble for Ramapala.

The Pala Empire was threatened by King Govinda Chandra of Uttar Pradesh. However, Ramapala made matrimonial alliance with him. On the news of the death of Mathanadeva, his maternal uncle, Ramapala committed suicide by drowning himself in the River Ganga near Munger. Ramapala was succeeded by Kumarapala, Gopala III and Madanapala. This was the tragic end of a memorable and remarkable career. His presence of mind, resourcefulness and a wonderful personality are a reason for praise and admiration. He struggled hard to recover his ancestral property. His long life was full of military campaigns, endowed with success. His rule brought an age of peace and prosperity to Bengal. Death of Ramapala led to a terminal decline of the Pala dynasty.

Rulers of the Pala Dynasty

1. Brahmapala (AD 900-920)
2. Ratnapala (AD 920-960)
3. Indrapala (AD 960-990)
4. Gopala (AD 990-1015)
5. Harshapala (AD 1015-1035)
6. Dharmapala (AD 1035-1060)
7. Jayapala (AD 1075-1100).

Brahmapala (AD 900-920) was founder of Pala dynasty of Kamarupa kingdom. He married Kula Devi by whom he had successor to his throne named Ratnapala.

Ratnapala (920-960) married Durlabha. He was succeeded by Indrapala.

Indrapala (960-990) Ratnapala's son, Purandera Pala, predeceased him, and thus the later's son, Indrapala, his grandson became the successor.

Gopala was the successor and son of Indrapala and his queen Rajya Devi, who ruled for the period AD 990-1015.

Harshapala was the son of Gopala and Queen Nayana. He ruled for the period AD 1015-1035.

NOTES

Dharmapala (AD 1035-1060). Harshapala's son, Dharmapala, left three copper plates: (1) Khonamukh Plates (2) Subhankarapataka Grant (3) Pushpabhadra Plates.

Jayapala (AD 1075-1100) was the last ruler of this dynasty.

Check Your Progress

4. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) The historians are of the opinion that the Palas were _____ by caste.
   (b) The Palas had an organized _____ system.
   (c) Dharampala was succeeded by_____.
5. Who defeated Dharampala in the Doab region?
6. What was Dharampala's religious policy?

3.5 ECONOMY

Economic life in the Pala period was marked by simultaneous growth of feudalism and agriculture. The period constituted one of the notable eons in the ancient Indian history. Under the majestic Palas, Bengal experienced a period of social peace and material prosperity. Though there is not much information available on the economic structure during the Pala phase, sources available assert that the Pala period was distinguished by economic and material prosperity. The economy in the Pala period was mainly based on agriculture. Lands were granted to the farmers by the Pala kings. The chief source of income of the common people was from agricultural products of the granted lands. Rice, mango, bamboo, sugarcane, coconut were the main agricultural products produced in the Pala era. During the Palas, production of paddy became an important source of the economy in Bengal. Narayanapala's *Bhagalpur inscription* also refers to the crop of rice and mango, betel nut as the principal agricultural products produced in lands granted by the Pala kings. Salt production also shared an important position in the agricultural economy during the Pala phase.

The Nayapala's *Irda inscription* refers to salt production. South Midnapore or Danton was renowned for the production of salt. North Bengal was famous for producing Pundri sugarcane from which good quality sugar was produced. Fruits like jackfruit, betel nut, date palm, coconut, mango and useful items like bamboo, were also grown. Betel leaf was farmed on a wide scale. Cocoa leaf, cardamom, pepper, and clove were grown and exported to west Asia. High quality cotton was also produced in Bengal. Venetian traveller Marco Polo and Chinese traveller of the 13th century referred to the production of fine quality cotton in Bengal. *Charya Padas* refer to the production of cotton as the important part of the economy of Bengal during the Pala period. Silkworm Cultivation was also very popular in Bengal.

Agriculture was a significant part of the economy during the Pala period. Apart from agriculture, mineral resources also played an influential role in the economy. There were abundant mineral resources during the Palas. There were iron ore deposits in Radha's Jangalkhand, in Bankura and as well as in the Birbhum districts. The use of iron ore was not extensive but the people were familiar with the process of melting ore. Bengal, heart of the Pala Empire, was renowned for providing the double-edged sword from the ore which was in great demand during the Pala period. Copper deposits were

NOTES

observed in the Suvarnarekha valley. Diamond ores were available in the Tippera and Pundravardhana Valleys. Kautilya mentioned this in his accounts. Pearl was also found in the convergence of the Ganges according to Periplus, but not in plenty.

Not only agriculture and mineral resources, Bengal also witnessed prosperity in the field of industry during the Pala period. Most of the industries were agro-based because agricultural products were grown in plenty. Textile industry was highly required during the Pala period. Cotton industry formed the principal industries of Bengal which became the harbour of quality cotton fabrics. Trade of cotton goods with far-off countries, like Arab and China also grew during the Pala dynasty. Besides the production of fine cotton, creation of crude cotton goods for daily use was also produced on a daily basis. Most of the people adopted weaving as a profession in the Pala era. Literary sources of the Pala period recorded that the profession of weaving became a source of living for the common people. Silk industry was very popular in Bengal; it not only owned a domestic market, but a foreign market, as well. Economy during the Pala reign flourished both in inland as well as foreign countries. Bengal was also known for its sugar industry, next to the textile industry. Gur (molasses) and sugar was produced in abundance from the sugarcane industry. Gur still remains as one of the important food article of Bengal. Scholars say that the name 'Gauda' is derived from 'Gur'. In the Pala period, Gur produced in Bengal, was exported to foreign countries like Arabia, Persia and Ceylon. The Portuguese traveller Barbossa, in the 13th century stated that Bengal during the Pala kings was in tremendous competition with Southern India in the export of sugar to foreign countries. Apart from these two major industries, industries like, gold smithy also produced gold and silver ornaments and plates. Black smithy, carpentry, and brass metal industry also played an important part in the industrial economy of the Pala period.

Though trade flourished during the Pala phase, it could not attain the blooming economy like in the Gupta period. The deterioration of standard of trade is evident from the degraded coins of the Pala period. There was scarcity of gold and silver coins which led to the dependence on copper coins. As a result, foreign trade received a great blow during the Palas. Furthermore, the brisk trade from the port of Tamralipta had degenerated after the alteration of the course of river Saraswati. The trade of the Palas declined considerably, with the destruction of the Tamralipta port during 8th century AD. As a result, the economic system became completely dependent on agriculture. Agriculture flourished on a large scale because of the agrarian climate of Bengal, and this agrarian economy resulted in feudalism in the society. Agricultural economy and feudalism had developed concurrently by dominating the peasants ruthlessly. Therefore, the Pala epoch though had observed material and economic prosperity and affluence, yet it mainly benefitted the upper class or the aristocratic society. Common people did not flourish much economically during the Pala regime.

3.6 RELIGION

The Palas followed Mahayana Buddhism. Their popular beliefs created several temples and works of art. After the reign of King Harshavardhana, Buddhism suffered a possibility of extinction, but it became popular again in the period of the Palas. Religion under the Palas was mainly Buddhism and Hinduism. The Palas were devotees of Buddha and also worshipped the idols of Vishnu. Various temples were built during the Pala rule in Bihar, Bengal and Assam. According to history, the famous Hayagriva avatar temple in Assam was built by one of the Pala kings. The Palas were said to have constructed a temple of god Janardana (Krishna-Vishnu) also.

Religion during Palas saw the emergence of Buddhism. The palas favoured Mahayana Buddhism which is one of the significant branches of Buddhism. Apart from India, Buddhism also existed in countries like Tibet, China, Japan, Vietnam, Taiwan and Korea. Mahayana Buddhism had spread to countries like Bhutan, Tibet, Nepal, Myanmar and the Indonesian archipelago, during the Pala rule. Several Buddhist scholars of the Pala empire voyaged from Bengal to the Far-East to propagate Buddhism. Outstanding personalities such as Padmanava, Dansree, Bimalamitra, Shantarakshit, Jinamitra, Sugatasree, Dansheel, Sambhogabajra, Muktimitra, Virachan, Manjughosh and Atish Dipankar Srigyan went to the neighbouring countries to spread Buddhism. The Pala dynasty contributed a lot to the societies of Bihar, Bengal and Assam. Because of this, universities of Vikramshila and Nalanda gained huge popularity and became seats of learning for East Asia. Pala Dynasty supported both Vaishnavism and Saivism. Coins found from the Pala period depict the existence of worshippers of Lord Shiva, Vishnu and as well as Saraswati. Substantial evidences prove that female deities were also worshipped in the Pala dynasty. Several images of goddess of different types were worshipped. Yet, only Hindus practiced the worship of the goddess in the society. The selected region during the Pala dynasty and their long reign produced a mixed atmosphere of Hindu-Buddhist culture. This coexistence resulted in the evolution of the *sahajiya* and *tantrik* cults. The Palas launched a heritage of religious-social-cultural organization, and this can be marked as the magnificent achievement of the period which became an important ingredient of ancient Bengal.

Check Your Progress

7. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) _____ was the main source of economy in the Pala period
   (b) The trade of the Palas declined during the _____ century.
   (c) Palas followed _____.
8. What minerals were found in the Pala region?

Did You Know

The *Sailendra* Empire of *Java*, *Sumatra* and *Malaya* was a colony of the Palas.

ACTIVITY

Find out about 'Pala School of Sculptural Art' from the Internet.

3.7 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The word Pala means 'Protector' in Sanskrit.
- The Palas ruled for about four hundred years, which can be noted as a rarity in the chronicles of dynastic history.
- The Palas are responsible for the foundation of Bengali nationalism, which was apparent from social structure plus life of the people during the Pala period.
- An organized system of administration predominated from village level to the level of central government. The efficient administrative structure of the Palas, acquired from the Gupta Dynasty, brought them a lot of credit though they made the structure more efficient and introduced many new characteristics.
- Despite the fact that the Palas were inclined towards Buddhism, the Socio-cultural aspect of life of the Palas maintained the essence of Brahmanism.
- The *varna* or caste system was not as rigid as it was in its preceding eras but was rooted deeply within the society and Buddhists had to adapt themselves to it.
- The Palas kings were Buddhists but the social structure was based on Brahmanical Hinduism.
- Though the caste system was not so rigid in the Pala period, the people belonging to lower castes were regarded as untouchables.
- Buddhism experienced a massive support under the Palas. Mahayana Buddhism was further remodeled.
- Tantric practices infiltrated through the Mahayana cultism which was known as 'Vajrayana'.
- Apart from Vajrayanas and Sahajayanas, there also formed some other sects, which attained popularity during the Pala phase such as Sahajiya and Nathas cult.
- People led a simple life and staple food of the Bengalis included rice, lentil, milk and milk products, jaggery or sugar, fish, meat and rice.
- Garments worn by the people of the Pala period were simple which showed their belief in a simple lifestyle. Men wore dhoti and *chaddar*. Stitched garments were seldom used for the upper part of the body.
- According to Vatsayana, the women of Gauda loved luxury. They applied vermilion dots on their foreheads and aromatic sandal powder paste on their body, and flowers in their hair.
- A woman was expected to be a caring mother, a good and devoted wife and be able to bear the sins done by her husband. The male predominant society diminished the self-respect and freedom of women.
- The founder of this dynasty was Gopala. He reigned from 750-770, and strengthened his position by controlling Bengal. His successor was Dharmapala, who ruled from 770-781 and made the Palas a very strong power in northern India by taking over the once-prestigious throne of Kanauj.
- The historians are of the opinion that the Palas were Kshatriya by caste. Evidences from *Ram Charita* and *Taranatha* confirm this theory.
- Gopala was a prominent chief and a qualified military general. It is said that Gopala did not possess royal blood as he was not born in a prominent family but it was just on account of his martial and exceptional leadership qualities that he was chosen as the leader.
- The kings of Pala were given the title of Paramvattaraka, parameshwar or Maharajadhiraja.
- The Palas appointed Prime Ministers. The Pala Empire was divided into several Vuktis or Provinces. These Vuktis were further segmented into Vishaya (Divisions)

NOTES

and then into Mandala (Districts). Other smaller units were Bhaga, Khandala, Avritti, Chaturaka, and Pattaka.

- Education and architecture, under the Palas received huge impetus in north India. The celebrated kings of the Pala dynasty made Bengal as an important center of national politics.
- Gopala came to power in 750 AD through democratic election in Gaur as per evidence provided by Tibetan scholar Taranatha.
- Dharmapala's reign was considered as a constant struggle between Pala, Pratihara and Rashtrakuta over the supremacy of North and East India.
- The first phase of struggle of Dharmapala started with the battle between him and Vatsaraja, in the region of Doab where Dharmapala was defeated.
- Dharmapala conquered major parts of North India, but he did not rule the whole Empire individually. He had trusted vassals to rule on his account with a degree of autonomy. Sub chiefs of Dharmapala ruled a lengthy stretch of the territory, between the boundaries of Bihar and Punjab.
- Dharmapala was a Buddhist king but was tolerant towards other religions as well. He equally patronized the Brahmanical shrines and started a policy of religious toleration and correlative existence of several religions, which was one of the remarkable legacies of the Pala rule in Bengal.
- As per the Badal Pillar Inscription, Devapala's minister (Brahmin) Darbha Pani and his grandson Kedara Mitra helped in the expansion of Devapala's kingdom.
- Devapala's imperial vision was not only limited to North and South India. Devapala conquered the Dravidians in South India.
- Devapala was a Buddhist and had granted five villages to Buddhist monasteries for promoting Buddhism and for the welfare and comforts of Bhikshus.
- Devapala's death led to deterioration and disintegration of the Pala dynasty.
- Mahipala's reign is labeled with restoration of the Pala dynasty.
- Mahipala initiated recovery programmes in Bengal immediately after ascending the throne. Tippera and Bangarh Inscriptions provide facts about the military conquests.
- Ramapala is recognized as the last king of the Pala dynasty. He restored the past glory of the Pala ancestry to a great extent.
- Ramapala's reign can be divided into two stages. One was his conflict against the Kaivarta Kings, and the other was the revival of glory of Pala Dynasty.
- Economic life in the Pala period was marked by simultaneous growth of feudalism and agriculture.
- Rice, mango, bamboo, sugarcane, coconut were the main agricultural products produced in the Pala era.
- There was scarcity of gold and silver coins which led to the dependence on copper coins. As a result, foreign trade received a great blow during the Palas.
- The Palas followed Mahayana Buddhism. Their popular beliefs created several temples and works of art.
- Many coins found at the time of Pala period depicted the existence of Shiva, Vishnu and Saraswati worshippers.

3.8 KEY TERMS

- **Dynasty:** A series of members of a family who are distinguished for their ruling, success, wealth, etc.
- **Reign:** The period during which a sovereign occupies the throne.
- **Charyapada:** Collection of oldest verses written in pre modern Bengali.
- **Cult:** A system of religious worship or a group or sect bound together by veneration of the same thing, person, ideal, etc.
- **Copper plate:** Ancient Indian records used to write grants of lands or list of royal lineages.
- **Gauda:** A territory located in Bengal in ancient and medieval times.
- **Feudalism:** A system for structuring society.

3.9 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) Copper plates
   (b) Dharmapala
2. Gopala was the first king of the Pala dynasty.
3. The Palas were Buddhists.
4. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) Kshatriya
   (b) Administrative
   (c) Devpala
5. Vatsaraja defeated Dharampala in the war in the Doab region.
6. Dharmapala was a Buddhist king but was tolerant towards other religions as well. He equally patronized the Brahmanical shrines and started a policy of religious toleration and correlative existence of several religions, which was one of the remarkable legacies of the Pala rule in Bengal.
7. Fill in the blanks.
   (a) Agriculture
   (b) 8th Century
   (c) Mahayana Buddhism
8. Iron-ore was abundantly found in the Pala region.

3.10 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. How did Gopala establish the Pala kingdom?
2. Write a short note on the social conditions of the people during the Palas.
3. Write about the origin of the Palas.

NOTES

4. Describe the administrative system of the Pala.
5. In what ways did the Palas encourage art and education during their reign.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Discuss the condition of women in the times of Palas.
2. Discuss about the battles fought by Dharmapala.
3. Give a detailed account Dharampala's reign.
4. Did the field of Industry prosper in the Pala times? Comment.
5. What was the situation of trade during the Pala regime?

3.11 FURTHER READING

Gait, E.A.; *A History of Assam,* BiblioBazaar, US, 2010.

Choudhary, Pratap Chandra; *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century AD*, Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Assam, Assam, 1966.

Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan; *Social and polity formations in pre-colonial north-east India: the Barak Valley experience*, Haranand Publications in association with Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1991.

Sinha, Surajit; *Tribal Polities and State Systems in Pre-colonial Eastern and North Eastern India*, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 1987.

Chakravarty, I. N., Chakravarty, Lakshmi N.; *Glimpses of the Early History of Arunachal*, Research Department, Arunachal Pradesh Administration, Arunachal Pradesh, 1973.

Barpujari, Heramba Kauta; *Assam in the Days of the Company: 1826 - 1858: a Critical and Comprehensive History of Assam during the Rule of the East-India Company from 1826 - 1858*, North-Eastern Hill University Publications, Assam, 1996

Barpujari, Heramba Kauta; *The Comprehensive history of Assam*, Publication Board, Assam, 1990.

M. Horam; *Naga Polity*, B.R. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1975.

M. Horam; *Social and Cultural Life of Nagas: (the Tangkhul Nagas)*, B.R. Pubishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1977.

Sangkima; Mizos, *Society and Social Change, 1890-1947*, Spectrum Publications, New Delhi, 1992.

Sangkima; *A Modern History Of Mizoram*, Spectrum Publications, New Delhi, 2004.

Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan; *The Garos and the English, 1765-1874*, Radiant Publishers, Hyderabad, 1978.

Kar, Parimal Chandra; *Garos in Transition*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1982.

Venuh, N. and Bonita Aleaz; *British Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2005.

Lahiri, Rebati Mohan; *The Annexation of Assam: 1824-1854*, General Printers & Publishers, Mumbai, 1954.

Bhuyan, Suryya Kumar; *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, Lawyer's Book Stall, Assam, 1974.

Elwin, Verrier; *The Nagas in the 19th Century*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1969.

Lahiri, Nayanjot; *Pre-Ahom Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi, 1991.

Birinchi, B.K. and Banikanta Kakati; *Cultural History of Assam*, K. K. Barooah, Assam, 1951.

Basu, Nirmal Kumar; *Assam in the Ahom Age, 1228-1826: Being Politico-economic and Socio-cultural Studies*, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Kolkata, 1970.

Nath, R.M.; *The Background of Assamese Culture*, A. K. Nath, 1948.

Bareh, Hamlet; *The History and Culture of the Khasi People*, Spectrum Publications, Gauhati, 1967.

Chatterjii, S. K.; *The Place of Assam in the History and Civilization of India,* Gauhati University, Gauhati, 1970.

Dani, A. H.; *Prehistory and Protohistory of Eastern India,* Firma L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1960.

Dhavlikar, M. K.; *Bulletin of the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute* 31-32: 137-49, Archaeology of Gauhati, 1973.

UNIT 4 STATE FORMATION IN MEDIEVAL NORTH EAST

Structure

4.0 Introduction
4.1 Unit Objectives
4.2 The State of Ahom
  4.2.1 History
  4.2.2 Ahom Administration
  4.2.3 *Satgharia* Ahom Aristocracy
4.3 The State of Dimasa
  4.3.1 Neighboring States
4.4 State of Jaintia
4.5 The State of Manipur
  4.5.1 Clan (Salai) System
  4.5.2 Judicial System
4.6 Summary
4.7 Key Terms
4.8 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
4.9 Questions and Exercises
4.10 Further Reading

4.0 INTRODUCTION

State formation is the process of the development of a centralized government structure, in a situation where one does not exist, prior to its development. According to Romesh Buragohain, 'The emergence and growth of a large number of polity formations during the period from the 13th to the 16th century is the key feature of the medieval history of North east India. The social organization of these sedentary as well as segmentary states was dominated by their traditional customs and culture, pristine in its form.

In this unit, we take a look at the processes involved in the formation of the states of Ahom, Dimasa, Jaintia and Manipur.

4.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the formation the state of Ahom
- Discuss the creation of the state of Dimasa
- Describe the formation of the state of Jaintia
- Describe the creation of the State of Manipur

4.2 THE STATE OF AHOM

The Ahom Kingdom is also known as the Kingdom of Assam. It spanned a long 600 years of the history of Assam—from 1228 to 1826. It was situated in the Brahmaputra

valley. It was a sovereign state that successfully warded off even Mughal attempts to expansion. Sukaphaa is credited with having established the Ahom kingdom. He was a Tai prince from Mong Mao. It started with being a Mong in the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra river with its base lying in wet rice cultivation. In the 16th century, there was sudden expansion of the kingdom under Suhungmung. At this point its character changed and it turned multi-ethnic. This created a huge effect on both the social and the political life of the people in the Brahmaputra valley. During the phase of the Moamoria rebellion, the Ahom kingdom got weak and as a result it was plagued by Burmese invasions. In the First Anglo-Burmese War, the Burmese were defeated and had to inter into a treaty with the British. The treaty was known as the Treaty of Yandabo 1826. Under the terms of the treaty, the East India Company got control of the Ahom Kingdom.

4.2.1 History

The Early Ahom state

From the thirteenth to the fifteenth century A.D., Ahoms were busy mainly in consolidating their newly acquired territory and also protecting it from neighbouring powers. However, the reign of Sukhangpha (1293-1332), the fourth Ahom king, saw the first war with the ruler of Kamata kingdom. The reason for the war is not given in the Ahom chronicals, or buranji. It was brought to a close when the Kamata ruler sued for peace by offering a princess, whose name was Rajani. This event indicates the growing strength of the Ahom power. Tao-Kham-thi (1380-89), the seventh king led a successful expedition against the Sutiya king for murdering his brother Sutupha (1369-76) at a regatta. The reign of Sudanghpha (1398-1407), better known as 'Bamuni Konwar' for his birth in the house of a Brahmin at Habung, is important in several respects. It was for the first time that Brahmanical influence had its entry into the Ahom royal palace, the capital was transferred to Charagua near the bank of river Dihing. On the report of some nobles who were dissatisfied with Sudangpha for his subordination to Hindu influence, the Tai rulers of Mong Kwang (Mogaung) sent an expedition to annex the Ahom kingdom. In the battle fought at Kuhiarbari, the invaders were forced to retreat and came to terms in a treaty concluded on the shore of the Nongjang lake in AD 1401. By this treaty the Patkai was fixed as the boundary between Assam, and Mong Sudangpha suppressed a revolt of the Tipamiyas, and he also asserted his sovereignty over the three eastern dependencies, viz., Tipam, Aiton and Khamjang. The reigns of four successive kings: Sujangpha (1407-22), Suphokpha (1439-88), and Supempha (1493-97), covering a period of ninety years were comparatively peaceful, barring a brief war with the Dimasa Kacharis in AD 1490. The bordering Nagas, who made some raids were kept in check.

Expansion of the Ahom kingdom

The real expansion of the Ahom kingdom began with Suhummong (1497-1539), better known as Dihingiya Raja, as he belong to the Dihingiya phoid (clan) of the royal family. By this time the Brahmanical influence grew considerably in the Ahom court so much so that the king is said to have received the Hindu title Swarganarayan, an equivalent of in chao-pha Tai. He transferred his capital to Dihing. A census of population was done during his reign. After a series of armed conflict caused by boundary dispute, the Sutiya king was defeated and killed and his kingdom centering Sadiya was annexed to the Ahom dominion as a province over which a governor, titled Sadiya Khowa Gohain, was placed. He also defeated the Kacharis of the Doyang-Dhansiri Valley and brought their territory under the Ahoms as a province called Marangi and placed a provincial governor titled Marangi Khowa Gohain. This was in 1526. The Kachari royal family moved to Maibong leaving Dimapur. After sometime, on an appeal, the Kachari king at Maibong was given recognition as Thapita-sanchita (established and preserved) by Suhummong. The same king also brought the Bhuyans on the north bank under Ahom control. It was during the reign of Suhummong that the first major invasion of Assam by the Pathan rulers of Bengal occurred. After an initial expedition by Bir Malik and Bar Ujir, the two Bengal generals, Turbuk was commissioned by the Sultan of Bengal. In a major encounter, the Ahom side lost several of their generals and many soldiers. However, in a renewed naval war after sometime, the Ahom side gained superiority leading to the defect and the death of Turbak. A large number of arms, cannons, horses and soldiers were captured by the Ahoms. The defeated army was pushed through Kamrup and Kamata where the people cooperated with the victors.

The ruler of Kamata, Durlabhendra, accepted Ahom protection by offering his daughter. The Ahom army marched westward as far as the Karatoya, the eastern frontier of Bengal, and built a small brick temple on its bank. Thus by 1534, the Ahom army liberated Kamrup and the Kamata king. Suhummong established relation with Manipur and Orissa; and Viswa Singha, the rising Koch chief visited his court and acknowledged his allegiance. By his great zeal and enterprise, Suhummong extended the Ahom dominion from the eastern confine of Sadiya to the Karatoya and successfully failed the invasions of Assam by the Muslim rulers of Bengal. Due to the expansion of the Ahom dominion during his reign, non-Ahom population in the Ahom kingdom greatly increased. The reign of Suklenmong (1539-52) and Sukhampha (1553-1603) were mainly important for Koch expeditions to the Ahom kingdom. The first was conducted by Viswa Singha which, however, did not materialize. The second major invasion was led by king Naranarayan, with his younger brother Sukladhwaj, popularly known as Chilarai, occupied the Ahom capital Garhgaon. However, the Koch army soon returned after a peace treaty. This was the last Koch invasion of the Ahom kingdom.

The period of Ahom-Mughal conflict

The history of the Ahoms during the seventeenth century was mainly the history of the Ahom-Mughal conflict which arose of the imperial ambition of the Mughal emperors to extend their dominions to east beyond Bengal and if possible to seek routes to China and Tibet; at the same time to collect certain articles such as gold dusts, long pepper, elephant teeth, musk, and lack obtained in Assam which were valued greatly by the royalty and nobility in the Mughal courts. The absorption of the Koch kingdom into the Mughal dominions made the Ahom kingdom coterminous. The long reign of Susengpha (1603-41), better known as Pratap Singha, was important in the history of Assam in several respects. The Mughal claim on the Koch territory to the east of Barnadi and the trading adventures of certain Mughal merchants caused conflict and tension along the border leading to the first serious battle with the Mughal army and navy at Bharali near Tezpur in which the enemy side was completely routed. This was in AD 1616. A vivid description of the plight of the Mughal soldiers is given in the *Baharistan-i-Ghayli* by Mirza Nathan, a Mughal general. About 1700 men of the enemy side were killed, double this number were wounded and 9000 men were taken as prisoners. This was followed by a series of campaigns against the Mughals. In 1618, there was another serious battle at Hajo in which the Ahoms lost nearby 4000 boats, and an equal number of men were killed. The war, however, did not stop, but continued with occasional outburst, and the pendulum of victory moved from one side to another in Kamrup. Ultimately, peace was restored by a treaty concluded by Momai Tamuli Barbarua and Allah Yar Khan in 1639 where by the

NOTES

Barnadi on the North and the Asurar Ali on the south were fixed as the boundary between the Ahom and Mughal territories. It did not, however, last for a very long time.

During the early years of Pratap Singha's reign, the Kachari king, who was always considered thapita-sanchita status by the Ahom kings, was bold enough to show his defiance by declining to comply a request for passage of a Jaintia princess through his country. An Ahom army led by Sunder Gohain was badly defeated and the general himself was killed by the Kacharis led by Prince Bhimbal in 1606 AD Soon, however, relation with the Kachari king was restored. Pratap Singha also cultivated good relations with the Jaintia king. Pratap Singha introduced certain reforms in the administration and reorganized the paik. Two very important posts that of the Barbarua and the Barphukan were created; the former was placed as the head of the secretariat and judiciary immediately under the king; the later was placed in charge of lower Assam west of Kaliabor and also head of diplomatic relations with the west. Several other new posts of lesser important were also created. A census of population was undertaken, and the paik system was extended to newly acquired territories. All free adult population were registered as paik for state services. A squad for four paiks constituted the lowest unit called got and twenty such units were commanded by a Bora, one hundred by a Saikia and one thousand by a Hazarika. Departments were usually headed by Phukan, Baruah, Rajkhowa according to their importance. Among other notable works of Pratap Singha included construction of several important roads, bridges, excavation of tanks and ramparts. He also built several towns. The king was liberal and catholic in his religious policy. The short reigns of his two immediate successors Surampha (1641-44) and Suchingpha (1644-48) were not of much importance.

The reign of Sutamla, better known by his Sanskrit title Jayadhwaj Singha (1648-63) was marked by a major invasion of Assam by the Mughal army headed by Mir Jumla, the newly appointed Nawab of Bengal. It was apparently a retaliatory action taken against the occupation of Sarkar Kamrup by the Ahom army by taking advantage of the confusion that ensued following the disposal of Shah Jahan by his son's. The large army of infantry and cavalry supported by a strong navy mostly manned by Europeans chiefly the Portuguese and the Dutch proceeded towards the capital of Assam by overrunning the defenses put up at Hatichala-Baritala, Pancharatan-Jogighopa and Pandu-Saraighat. After the occupation of the fort at Samdhara following a stiff battle and a keenly contested naval victory near Kaliabor on the Brahmaputra, the Mughal army advanced towards the Ahom capital, Garhgaon, Jayadhwaj Singha with his family and close associates evacuated the capital and retreated to Namrup hills close to the Patkai. The Mughal army occupied Garhgaon, and established outposts at several places in Upper Assam ;Mir Jumla himself made his headquarters at Mathurapur. However, when the rainy season started, these outposts had been cut off by flood and became isolated while the Mughal navy with big war boat which remained at Lukhnow could not help them. The Ahom army then started to harass by adopting guerilla method of warfare. Due to disruption of communication, the Mughal army was placed under great hardship; the physical as well as moral condition began to deteriorate. The health of Mir Jumla became worse as he had been suffering from consumption. Under the circumstances, a peace proposal initialed by the Ahom side was ultimately agreed upon.

The treaty of Ghiladharighat at Tipam on the Buri Dihing was drawn up on Jan.9, 1663 by which Jayadhwaj became a tributary of the Mughal Emperor. He agreed to pay a huge war indemnity, the cessation of all territory west of the Bharali on the north bank on the state of 'Dimarua', Beltola west of the Kallong on the south bank of the Brahmaputra. Jaydhwaj Singha's daughter accompanied by the daughter of Tipam Raja was sent to Delhi and the sons of the ministers were sent as hostage with the Mughal till full payment was made. Mir Jumla and his army left Assam. Soon after his return to Bakotha, as Garhgaon, as Garhgaon was despoiled by the Mughals, Jayadhwaj Singha passed away in 1663. He was the first Ahom king to embrace Hinduism by receiving initiation from a Vashnava priest. He made large revenue free land grants with paiks to several Hindu satras (monasteries). One of the notable achievements of Jayadhwaj Singha's reign was the planned settlement of villages in certain tracts of the country. However, Mir Jumla's invasion caused devastation of the economic and social condition of the kingdom. Mir Jumla was accompanied by a news reporter (waqia navis) named Mirza Mahammad Wali, Poetically known as Shihabuddin Talish, who left a very valuable account of Assam, its climate, population, manners and customs, products, and of its capital Garhgaon. A few excerpts may be of interest. 'Although most of the inhabitants of the neighbouring hills pay no tax to the Rajah of Assam, yet they accept his sovereignty and obey some of his commands.' 'From Lakhaugarh to Garhgaon, also, there are roads, houses and farms in the same style and a lofty and wide embanked road has been constructed up to Garhgaon for traffic.' The people of the country are free from certain fatal and loathsome diseases such as leprosy, white leprosy, elephantiasis, cutaneous eruptions, goitre and hydrocele, which prevail in Bengal.' 'It is not the custom here to take any land tax from the cultivators; but in every house one man out of the three has to render service to the Raja.' 'In all the past ages no (foreign) king could lay the hand of conquest on the skirt of this country, and no foreigner could treat it with the foot of invasion.' 'And all the people of his country, not placing their necks in the yoke of any faith, eat whatever they get from the hand of any man, regardless of his caste and undertake any kind of labour.' 'Their language differs entirely from that of all the people of Eastern India.' 'They cast excellent match-locks and bachadar artillery, and show a great skill in this craft. They make first rate gunpowder..' 'The common people bury their dead with some of the property of the deceased, placing the head towards the east and the feat towards the west.' Talish also left a vivid and valuable description of Garhgaon, and the royal palace. Chakradhwaj Singha (1663-70) himself to be a person of indomitable courage and firm determination who refused to put on the gown (siropa) sent by the Mughal court to him as a tributary king.' Death is preferable to a state of subordination to Bangal' he uttered. Preparations for war were soon complete, and Kamrup was again recovered by a strong Ahom navy ,and infantry under the Command of Lachit Barphukan in 1667. The Mughal occupational army was badly mauled. Following this several fortifications had been raised on both banks surrounding Gauhati to protect it against any further attack. Having received the news of Mughal reverse, the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb dispatched a Rajput general Raja Ram Singh, son of Raja Jay Singh of Amber with a large force with order to chastise the 'wicked tribe' (the Ahoms). Ram Singh advanced towards Gauhati by occupying several posts which the Ahoms evacuated for strategic reasons to concentrate at Gauhati. Ram Singh made his camp at Hajo.

The Ahom army under Lachit Barphukan and other generals including Atan Buragohain foiled every attempt of Ram Singh to occupy Gauhati by war and diplomacy and the war dragged on for several years with loss on both sides. In the meantime, Udayaditya ascended the throne in 1669. The Battle of Saraighat fought in 1671 was the last determined attempt of Ram Singh which met ignominious defeat at the hands of the Ahom. The defeated army was pushed back beyond the Manaha river. It may be mentioned that in the war against the Mughals, many of the neighbouring hill people sent their contingents and successfully fought against the invaders. From the death of Ramdhwaj Singha, the successor of Udayaditya Singha, in 1675 to the accession of

NOTES

NOTES

Gadadhar Singha in 1681, there ensured a period of weak and unstable government during which several weak and young kings were placed on the Ahom throne the quickly removed by ministers and high officials for their own selfish gains than for the welfare of the kingdom . By taking advantage of the situation, Laluk Barphukan, the Viceroy of Lower Assam at Gauhati treacherously handed Gauhati over to the Mughals. The first major achievement of Gadadhar Singha (1681-96), who was installed king at Kaliabor by the nobles and officers, was the expulsion of the Mughals from Gauhati and Kamrup by defeating them at the Battle of Itakhuli. They were pursued down to the Manaha, which henceforth became the Ahom-Mughal boundary till 1826. The king then suppressed all conspiracies to weaken the power of the Monarch, and reduced the tribes who created troubles in the border. He also controlled the growing power of the Hindu religious heads, but he was no bigot in his religious policy. Possessing a towering personality, Gadadhar Singha restored the authority of the king, and brought peace and order to the country. Rudra Singh's reign (1696-1714) marks new turning point in the history of Assam. Inherited from his father a strong monarchy and a peaceful kingdom, Rudra Singha now found time and resources to build a new capital at Rangpur near the present town of Sibsagar on the Dikhow by importing artisans and masons, and know-how from Bengal. When the Rajas of Cachar, who was treated by the Ahoms as thapita-sanchita, and Jaintia showed signs of insubordination, they were captured and brought before Rudra Singha and were compelled to acknowledge the sovereignty of the Ahoms. The king had planned to invade Bengal with the support of the rulers and chiefs of the neighbouring states like Tripura, Koch Bihar, Burdwan and Nadia. When all preparations were complete and the vast army assembled at Gauhati for the march, Rudra Singha suddenly fell ill and passed away in that city. The king is known for his liberal policy; he allowed to grow trade with Bengal, and also imported several cultural items like dress, festival, songs, etc., from that country. This resulted in a slow cultural synthesis.

Later Ahom kings

The first half of the eighteenth century was peaceful and the reigns of two kings Siva Singha (1714-44) and Pramatta Singha (1744-51), saw the unprecedented growth of Hindu religious proclivities, and the building of Hindu temples. A great number of endowments of land and man were made for sustaining these. Siva Singha's queen Phuleswari, who acquired great influence over him, even dared to insult Vaishnava mahantas by forcing them to bow down to the Goddess Durga . From this time onwards, the Ahom kings became more attached to Sakta faith which introduced a new element in the social and political life. The traditional Ahom religious institutions fell into negligence ,and the Ahoms who remained stuck to their own religion and customs, became a degraded class. At the same time ,cultural penetration from Berigal continued unabated. The reign of Rajeswar Singha (1751-69), a younger brother of Siva Singha saw the rise of Kirti Chandra Barbarua to power and status. One of the important events of his reign was the dispatch of the Ahom army against the Burmese in Manipur whose legal ruler Jai Singh (known as Bhagya Chandra in Manipur) was driven away by them and who came to Assam through Kachari country. Jai Singh strengthened his relation with Rajeswar Singha by giving his daughter Kuranganayani in marriage to the latter. This followed the policy of his predecessors by making endowment of land and men to religious persons and institutions.

Lakshmi Singha's reign (1769-1780) was disrupted by the revolt of the Moamarias, the followers of the Mayamara Mahanta of orthodox Vaishnava persuasion.

NOTES

Several causes are attributed to the revolt of which one is the physical punishment meted by Kirti Chandra Barbarua to Nahar, the chief of the Morans who came to make annual offer of elephant which was found lean and haggard. Nahar was mortified at this and was looking for support to take revenge on the Barbarua. Already Phuleswari's action had inflamed the situation. The climax was reached when the Moamaria Gossain was abused by the Barbarua for being indifferent to him. The Morans were then ready to fight. They were joined by three exiled Ahom princes. The rebels advanced towards the capital Rangpur and after defeating the royal troops at several engagements they arrived at Rangpur. The king who attempted to flee was pursued and captured, and was put in confinement at the temple of Jaysagar. Ramakanta was declared king and Nahar became the Barbarua. The Morans preserved the entire structure of the Ahom govt. However, after a few months, the Moran rule was overthrown and the insurgents were punished. King Lakshmi Singha was released from captivity and was restored. Like his predecessors, the king made a number of grants of rent free land with men, and built several temples.

Decline and fall of the Ahom kingdom

The Kingdom began to decline from the time of Gaurinath Singha (1780-95). In 1782, the Moamarias insurrection rose again with renewed vigour and increased violence. They advanced to Garhgaon and created panic among the population. The advance was halted and the rebels were treated with severity and many were executed. Such a step aggravated the situation. After a brief pause, the disturbances caused by the Moamarias swept down across the north bank. After defeating the royalists, the Moamarias advanced towards the capital. Assistance was sought from Manipur, Kachari, Jaintia and the chiefs of Rani, Beltola, Luki. Before the help arrived, the rebels occupied Rangpur; Gaurinath Singha with the members of his family sailed downstream, and reaches Nagaon and then to Gauhati. At Rangpur, the Moamarias set up Bharath Singha as king; but the Hatisungi Morans set up Sarbananda as their king of the territory to the east of Dihing and both minted coins in their names. Krishnanarayan of Darrang had also organized a large force and occupied North Gauhati. Purnananda Buragohain shifted the centre of administration of Dichoi, later known as Jorhat, which became the new Ahom capital. Under the circumstances, Gaurinath Singha appealed for help of men and materials to the East India company's authorities through Raush, a salt merchant and Mr. Douglas, Commissioner of Koch Bihar. In response to this, Lord Cornwallis, the Governor General dispatched Captain Thomas Welsh with sepoys who arrived at Goalpara in early November, 1792; and from there, on receiving urgent message from the king moved upstream the Brahmaputra. The meeting between the king and Capt. Welsh took place at Nagarberra on the Brahmaputra. Advancing further, Captain Welsh suppressed the rebellious elements at Gauhati and on the north bank. He also pacified Krishnanarayan, the rebellious prince at Darrang and expelled many of the Burkendazes who assisted him. Sometime later he advanced to Jorhat and then to Rangpur where he defeated the Moamarias, and restored the authority of Gaurinath Singha at Rangpur in 1794.

In the midst of this success, Capt. Welsh was recalled by Sir John Shore, the new Governor General and he left Assam. During his stay in the kingdom, he concluded a commercial treaty in 1793 by which commerce between Assam and Bengal was sought to be put on 'reciprocal basis'. The Report of Capt. Welsh which he submitted to his government in response to certain queries gives certain important information in regard to the system of Ahom govt., trade and commerce, products, etc. Although Gaurinath Singha is depicted by some as cruel and vindictive, he had certain pieces of

NOTES

good work like the abolition of human sacrifice at the Kechaikhati temple at Sadiya. Kamaleswar Singha's reign (1795-1810) witnessed localized revolts at several places in Kamrup which was successfully suppressed, at Sadiya by the Khamtis, Pani Noras, Miris and others, fresh Moamaria insurrection in league with the Daflas. In spite of these, he connected the new capital Jorhat by constructing several new roads like the Na-ali, the Rajabahar Ali, the Mohabandha Ali, the Kamarbandha Ali, etc. and also built a copper-house at Kamakhya. The reign of Chandra Kanta Singha (1810-18) saw the Burmese invasion. Friction between Purnananda Buragohain and Badan Chandra Barphukan and a conspiracy by Satram to overthrow the former led the latter to go to the Burmese capital Amarapura where he pleaded for assistance against the Buragohain . Bodoupaya, who had already had his eyes on Assam, seized the opportunity to send an army of about sixteen thousand men with Badan Chandra to Assam. The Burmese army after defeating the Assamese army at several engagements arrived at Jorhat. Chandra Kanta Singha was retained as king, and Badan Chandra assumed power as minister. The Burmese then retired to their country with large presents. But soon the assassination of Badan Chandra and installation of Purandar Singha by ousting Chandra Kanta Singha, once again brought the Burmese under the command of Ata Mingi to Assam in 1819. On their advance, Purandar and his prime minister Rudinath fled to Gauhati, and Chandra Kanta Singha was once again restored to the throne despite his mutilation of person caused in the meanwhile. After the departure of the Burmese, Chandra Kanta Singha sought to raise a fort at Jaipur against further Burmese invasion. However, a Burmese force sent by their Monarch with presents of ornaments and dress to Chandra Kanta Singha seeing such preparations killed Patalong under whose supervision the fort was raised. Thinking this hostile move on the part of the Burmese army, Chandra Kanta fled to Gauhati and did not come back in spite of Burmese assurance. This was in 1821. The Burmese then set up an Ahom prince, Jogeswar Singha. Chandra Kanta Singha crossed the border and entered Bengal where he tried to collect arms and men to fight the Burmese. At the battle of Mahgarh, Chandra Kanta's army was badly defeated, and he once again entered the British territory.

The period from 1821 to 1824 is called period of Burmese rule. During this period, the Burmese devastated the country and committed atrocities by plunder and killing. The Burmese also threatened the Goalpara frontier of Bengal by demanding the surrender of Assamese refugees including Chandra Kanta Singha, and their supporters who often gave trouble of them across the border. In that time, the border conflict in the East India Company's Chittagong frontier with the Burmese empire took serious turn. Anticipating a threatened invasion of Bengal, the prized possession of the Company in India, Lord Amherst, the Governor General decided to declare war on Myanmar (Burma). War was declared on the 5th of March 1824. This is the First Anglo Burmese War which lasted for nearly two years. Immediately after the declaration of war, the British army entered Goalpara frontier of Assam and after defeating the small Burmese garrisons in Lower Assam, it advanced to Upper Assam. By taking advantage of a dissension among the Burmese commanders, the British occupied Rangpur in 1825 and drove the Burmese and their allies, the Singphos out of Assam. A section of the Burmese army surrendered to the British remained in Assam. Immediately on the occupation of Assam by the British, martial law was declared; David Scott was appointed as civil officer in charge of civil matters, and Col. Richards in charge of the army and the British started their administration. By Article II of the Treaty of peace and friendship which was concluded between the British and the Burmese at Yandabo on 24 February 1826, the Burmese monarch renounced all claims upon and promised to refrain from all interference with, the principality of Assam and its dependencies. As Assam was already occupied

NOTES

by the British during the Anglo-Burmese war, it was kept under British occupation and started introducing British administration.

4.2.2 Ahom Administration

The system of government was partly monarchical and partly aristocratic. The king or Swarga Maharaja as he was called, was the supreme head of the state. All honours, titles, offices, decisions and war-measures emanated from him, but he had to act according to the advice of the five hereditary councilors of state, the Buragohain, the Bargohain, the Barpatra-gohain, the Barbaruah and the Barphukan. The state of Jaintia, Cachar, Khrim and Manipur were in friendly alliance with the Ahom government. The province of Darrang enjoyed complete autonomy in its internal administration, as well as the other vassal states. There were six establishments of princes introduced by Suhummong Dihingia Raja at Charing, Tipam, Tungkhung, Dihing, Samaguri and Namrup. Each of these princes had their own estates and dependents. All of them were entitled Raja and belonged to the royal family which started with Sukapha, the first Ahom king. Subsequently, the title of Charing Raja was reversed for the heir apparent while the title of Tipam Raja and Namrupia Raja were meant for other nearest blood relations of the reigning monarch. Ambition for the throne nurtured by some of these families without any political and military training became the cause of the downfall of Ahom rule in Assam. The Patra-mantries occupied important position in the political administration and enjoyed enormous powers. The Barphukan governed as viceroy or deputy to the king, in the tract between the Brahmaputra and the Kalang in Nagaon, but after extension of the Ahom kingdom in the westward direction he was put in charge of the country from Kaliabor to Goalpara with his headquarters at Gauhati. He had conduct diplomatic relations with Bengal, Bhutan and chieftains of Assam frontiers. Other local governors such as Sadiya Khowa Gohain, Marangi Khowa Gohain, the Solal Gohain and the Kajali Mukhia Gohain, etc., were appointed for the administration of the outlying areas of the country. Besides, there were other position recruited from respectable Ahom families for high posts. Among them, the highest rank was of the Phukan, next in rank were the Baruas. There were twelve Rajkhowas, a number of Khatakis and Dolois. Adult population of Assam was divided into Khels, Khels into Paiks and areas were constituted into Chamuas for revenue administration. It was not the usual practice in Assam to pay the revenue in cash. It was paid through services or paiks etc. The currency of Assam consisted of gold and silver coins. The liberal and practical outlook shaped the religious of the Ahom monarchs. The image of 'Chom-Cheng' which Sukapha had brought with his from his ancestral home was the tutelary deity of the Ahom rulers till the end of their rule. The general success of the Ahoms in their dealings with the hill tribes was admitted by the Mughal chronicler Shihabuddin Talish who accompanied Mir-Jumla's expedition in 1662-63 AD He wrote-'Although most of the inhabitants of the neighbouring hills pay no tax to the Rajah of Assam yet they accept his sovereignty and obey some of his commands.' 87 Regarding the military system of the Ahoms, Ram Singh, the Mughal general had to admit that every Assamese soldiers was an expert in rowing boats, in shooting arrows, in digging trenches and cannons and that he did not such specimen of versatility in any other part of India. This proves that the organization of army under the Ahom rulers was efficient and effective. Law and justice was in action during the Ahom reign. The criminal law was characterized by sternness and comparative harshness. The penalty for rebellion was various forms of capital punishment.

In 1228, the kingdom of Ahom got established with the coming of Chao Lung Siu-Ka-Pha, the first Ahom king, from Mong Mao (now part Peoples Republic of China).

NOTES

He traversed the Patkai mountain range and reached the valley of the Brahmaputra. It appears that Sukaphaa faced no challenge from or had not required to battle with an existing kingdom. He brought under his occupation, the area on the river's south bank, east had the Patkai Mountains, south, the Dikhau River and north, the Burhi Dihing River. Local groups like those of the Marans and Barahi were befriended by him. He set up his capital in Charaideo and set up offices of the Dangaria—Borgohain and Burhagohain. Both the offices got their separate regions of control in 1280s and what check and balance each of the three would have on the others was also clearly laid down. Wet rice cultivation technology was introduced to the people of this region by the Ahoms. Persons ready to fit in with the Ahom polity and life style were welcomed into the fold and this process is referred to as Ahomization. Due to Ahomization, to take an example, the Barahi people became totally subsumed while groups such as Maran and Nagas became Ahoms this significantly raised the number of Ahom. Right up to the 16th century, the Ahomization process remained highly significant as in this period led by Suhungmung the Ahom the kingdom was hugely expanding in territory, taking in regions at the cost of the Kachari and the Sutiya kingdoms.

With the rapid expansion adding large territories to the kingdom, the pace at which Ahomization was occurring was not good enough and in their own kingdom, the Ahoms became a minority. This caused the kingdom's character to change. It turned inclusive and multi-ethnic. The influences of the Hindus which had first been felt at the close of the 14th century under Bamuni Konwar, now took on a significant form. The Assamese language entered the Ahom court and was used alongside the Tai language for a while during the 17th century. Then the Tai language was replaced by Assamese. With the state expanding rapidly, the Borpatrogohain which was a new high office was installed. It was at par with the two high offices installed previously. The two previous offices did have objection to the new one. Marangikowa Gohain and Sadiakhowa Gohain were 2 special offices, set up for overseeing those territories which had been taken from the Kachari and Sutiya kingdoms, respectively. Paik system was employed to organize the kingdom's subjects which formed the militia.

Bengal's Afghan and Turkic rulers attacked the Ahom kingdom but with no success. There was also an occasion when under Ton-Kham Borgohain the invaders were pursued by the Ahoms and they went as far as the Karatoya river, and post this the Ahoms looked upon themselves as being the rightful heir of the erstwhile Kamarupa Kingdom.

The features that are seen in the mature Ahom kingdom were adopted during the period of Pratap Singha. Let us look at some of the changes. There was the reorganizing of the Paik system under the *khel* system which was more professional, and it replaced the *phoid* system which was kinship based. Both Borphukan and Borbarua got set up as also some more small offices. Then on, no other restructuring of a major kind of the state structure took place.

The 17th century saw repeated attacks from the Mughals on the Ahom kingdom. Garhgaon, the Ahom capital, was even occupied by Mughals in 1662, under the leadership of Mir Jumla but were not able to hold on to it. When the Battle of Saraighat, came to a close the Ahoms had come out victorious from the invasion of the Mughals as also managed to further the kingdom's boundary in the west right up to river Manas. Post a short period that was fraught with confusion, the kingdom got itself the last set of kings, the Tungkhungia kings, established by Gadadhar Singha.

Paik system was the basis of the Ahom kingdom. It is a type of corvee labor not Asiatic or feudal. In upper Assam, Ahoms started wet rice cultivation this region had

NOTES

low population density and was mostly marshy. The superior rice cultivation technology and land reclamation by employing irrigation systems, embankments and dykes, the very initial state structure was established by the Ahoms. In the sixteenth century, Suklenmung introduced the first coins. The personal service system that was rampant under the Paik system kept continuing. It was in the 17th century that expansion of the Ahom kingdom le to the inclusion of the de erstwhile Mughal and Koch areas, and with this contact the Ahoms were influenced by their revenue systems and accordingly adapted.

The King (Swargadeo)

The kingdom of Ahom was under the rule of a king who was known as *Swargadeo* (*Chao-Pha* in Ahom language). The king had to be from the line of Sukaphaa, the first Ahom king. Generally, succession was based on primogeniture, though on occasion it was possible for the great Gohains (*Dangaria*) to elect another descendant of Sukaphaa from a different line or even enthroned or depose one.

Dangaria

For support in administration, Sukaphaa had two great Gohains: Borgohain and Burhagohain. They both had independent territories in the period of the 1280s, and were made veritable sovereigns in these territories called *bilat* or *rajya*. Borgohain's territory lay to the west up to the Burai River while that if Burhagohain lay between Sadiya and Gerelua River on the north bank of the Brahmaputra River. Both had complete command over the *paiks* that they controlled. Generally, people from specific families were put on these two administrative positions. The Princes considered to be eligible for becoming Swargadeo would not be in the running for either of these positions and it was also true vice versa. Suhungmung, in the 16th century, had another Gohain created and named Borpatrogohain. The territory of the Borpatrogohain' lay in the middle of the other two other two Gohains.

Royal officers

During his reign, Pratap Singha introduced two offices to be under the king directly. These offices were Borphukan and Borbarua. Borbarua was both the judicial and military head and was in command of the territory lying to the east of Kaliabor which was not commandeered by the *Dangaria*. Unlike the Dangariyas, the Borbarua was allowed to utilize for personal use only that section of the paiks which was under his command while the remaining were at the service of the state of Ahom. The civil and military command over the territory to the west of Kaliabor lay with the Borphukan who also held the position of viceroy of *Swargadeo* in the west.

Patra mantris

The council of ministers or *patra mantris* comprised five positions. Since Supimphaa's time (1492–1497), one *patra mantri* was made the prime minister or *Rajmantri* and was given additional powers as well as 1000 additional paiks of the Jakaichuk village were placed at his service.

Other officials

Judicial and well as military responsibilities rested with both the Borphukan and Borbarua, and both got help from two separate councils (*sora*) of *Phukans*. While Gauhati was the seat of the Borphukan's *sora*, the capital was where the Borbarua's *sora* sat.

NOTES

Baruas was the name given to superintending officers. The highest amongst the officers was of the Phukans. All together, 6 Phukans, each holding a specific responsibility, comprised the council of the Borbarua. The Neog Phukan, Deka Phukan, Dihingia Phukan, Na Phukan, Bhitarual Phukan and the Naubaicha Phukan who was allotted 1000 and took care of the royal boats, all together comprised the council of Phukan. Similarly, even for the Borphukan there existed a council of six subordinate Phukans whom he was obligated to consult regarding every important issue. In this council were two Sutiya Phukans, Nek Phukan, the Dihingia Phukan, Deka Phukan commandeering 4000 *paiks and* Pani Phukan commandeering 6000 *paiks*.

There were twenty or so Baruas. Some of these were:

- Sonadar Barua: chief jeweler and mint master
- Khanikar Barua: chief artificer
- Hati Barua: in charge of elephants
- Ghora Barua: in charge of horses
- Duliya Barua: royal palanquins' in charge
- Chaudang Barua: executions' superintendent
- Bhandari Barua: treasurer
- Bez Barua: Royal family physician

Some other officers were 12 Rajkhowas, various Katakis, Kakatis and Dolais. A Rajkhowa were a territory's governors as well as commanded 3000 *paiks*. A Rajkhowa was a public works supervisor as also an arbitrator for local disputes. A Kataki was an envoy dealing with hill tribes and foreign nations. Kakatis wrote documents that were official while the Dolais were expounders of astrology who also ascertained the most auspicious time and date for important tasks.

Governors

Those of the royal families held rule over certain territories and were addressed as *Raja*.

- *Charing Raja, Swargadeo's* heir apparent, administered the tracts around Joypur on the right bank of river Burhidihing.
- *Tipam Raja* is the second in line.
- *Namrup Raja* is the third in line

Royal families' members who had lower positions got regions known as *mels*, and were addressed as *melkhowa raja* or *meldangia*. Princes who were even lower were *Meldangia gohains* and these numbered 2: *Sarumelia gohain and Majumelia gohain*.

Individual *mels* were provided to the royal ladies. There were 12 such allotments by the time of Rajeshwar Singha. Of the highest importance was the one provided to the chief queen and was known as the *Raidangia mel*.

The forward territories were administered and ruled by forward governors who also were military commanders. Such offices were given to members of families which had the eligibility for being the three great Gohains.

- *Jagiyal Gohain* served under Borbarua, administered Jagi at Nagoan and maintained relations with seven tribal chiefs, called *Sat Raja*.

NOTES

- *Kajalimukhiya Gohain* served under the Borphukan, administered Kajalimukh and maintained relations with Jaintia and Dimarua.
- *Marangi khowa Gohain* administered the regions that were contiguous to the Naga groups west of the Dhansiri river.
- *Sadiya Khowa Gohain* based in Sadiya, administered the regions that were acquired after the conquest of the Sutiya kingdom in 1523.
- *Solal Gohain* administered a great part of Nagaon and a portion of Chariduar after the headquarters of the Borphukan was transferred to Gauhati.

Rajkhowas were lesser governors. Some Rajkhowas were:

- Abhaypur
- Bacha
- Darrang
- Solaguri

Vassals or dependent kings were addressed as *Raja*. Each of these Rajas gave an annual tribute with the exception of the Raja of Rani. It was required of these Rajas to provide paiks and resources as and when required, for example at war time.

- Barduar
- Beltola ruled the tracts southwest of Gauhati, and were the descendants of Gaj Narayan, a grandson of Chilarai of the Koch dynasty
- Darrang Raja ruled over later-day Darrang district, and were the descendants of Sundar Narayan, a great-grandson of Chilarai of the Koch dynasty
- Dimarua
- Luki
- Rani
- Tapakuchi

Paik officials

The Ahom kingdom had huge dependence on the Paik system which was just a corvee labor form. All common subjects fell in the category of *paik*. A group of 4 *paiks* was referred to as a *got*. All through the year from every got one paika was in the king's direct service while the remaining three paikas would take care of his fields besides their own. This Paik system was under the administration of Paik officials.

- Bora had 20 *paiks* under his charge
- Saikia had 100 *paiks* under his charge
- Hazarika had 1000 *paiks* under his charge

Land survey

While hiding in Kamrup prior to his ascent to the throne, Gadadhar Singha made himself fully acquainted with the Mughal's system of land measurement. Immediately on the ending of the war with the Mughals, Gadadhar passed orders to have a system on the same lines introduced all across the kingdom. They had surveyors brought in from Bengal and Koch Behar for implementation of the system. The first implementation happened in Sibsagar from where it was moved quickly on. Despite all the speedy work, the survey got completed only post the death of Gadadhar. The survey of Nowgaon was

NOTES

conducted next and the following settlement was done under the personal supervision of Rudra Singha.

It is said that the method of survey included:

> measuring the four sides of each field with a *nal*, or bamboo pole of 12 feet (3.7 m) length and calculating the area, the unit was the 'lucha' or 144 square feet (13.4 m^2) and 14,400 sq ft (1,340 m^2) is one 'bigha'. Four 'bighas' makes one 'pura'.

Even today in Assam, a similar system of land measurement is followed.

4.2.3 *Satgharia* Ahom Aristocracy

The third Ahom king was Subinphaa (1281–1293). He is responsible for the clear defining of the *Satgharia Ahom* aristocracy or the Ahom of the seven houses. These are the families or *Gohains* of the *Chaophaa*, Burhagohain and Borgohain. He also had specified the 4 priestly lineages—*Deodhai*, *Mohan*, *Bailung* and *Chiring* (the *Gogois*). There existed marital relationships of an exogamous form in these lines. In the later period, there was an increase in the number of lineages probably because of incorporation of other lineages or because of division of the existing ones. While the king had to be from the first family the Borgohain and Burhagohain came from the third and second families. Borphukans, most came from the Sutiya ethnic group and the Borbaruas belonged to the Khamti Chiring Kachari and Moran groups. At a future date, to the *Bailung* group were also added the Mising, Naga and Nara (Mogaung) oracles. The composition of the extended nobility was the non taxpaying spiritual class and landed aristocracy.

The gentry freed from the *khels* was known as *apaikan chamua* and it paid tax in the form of money. The *paikan chamua* comprised literati, artisans, and other skilled persons who performed non-manual work and paid their taxes in the form of their service. Manual labour was performed by the *kanri paik*. At the lowest rung stood *bandi-beti*, *licchous* and other serfs and bondsmen. Some amount of inter class movement was allowed. This is evident from the fact that from the rung of bondsman Momai Tamuli Borbarua climbed up the ranks and under Pratap Singha he was made the first Borbarua.

Check Your Progress

1. The Ahom kingdom spanned a long 600 years of the history of Assam; from _____ to _____.
2. _____ is credited with having established the Ahom Kingdom.
3. Ahoms started _____ in regions with low population density and mostly marshy.
4. The two great Gohains and Sukaphaa were _____ and _____:

4.3 THE STATE OF DIMASA

The Kachari kingdom which in medieval times was known as the Dimasa kingdom was one of Assam's powerful kingdoms. The rulers came from the Dimasa people who themselves were part of the greater Kachari ethnic group. Along with kingdoms like Sutiya and Kamata, the kingdom of the *Dimasa Kachari*, was an example of state formation of the Kachari ethnic groups in Assam during the medieval times post the kingdom of Kamrupa which existed since the ancient period. When the British came, evidence could still be seen of the kingdom of the *Dimasa Kacharis* and from thus

NOTES

arose the district names of Cachar and North Cachar Hills. The name North Cachar Hills was replaced by Dima Hasao district in April 2010.

There is no clarity regarding the *Dimasa Kachari* kingdom's origin. Tradition has it that the Kacharis Dimasas during ancient times, had to leave the kingdom of Kamarupa because the existing political turmoil. While crossing river Brahmaputra some persons from the party got swept down the river. They were then on known as Dimasa (*Dima-basa)*, meaning the sons of the great river Dima.

It has been opined that the Dimasa's initial state formation took place at the region of Sadiya.

Evidence of polity formation of the Dimasa's is seen at Dimapur. The kingdom, by the thirteenth century, had spread right up along river Brahmaputra's southern banks, from river Dikhow to river Kallang, including the Dhansiri valley as also present-day district of Dima Hasao.

The Buranjis say that, the *Dimasa Kachari* settlements on the east of Dhansiri had moved prior to the advance of the Ahoms. While the Kamata Kingdom was to its west that of Sutiya was on the east.

The region between the *Dimasa Kachari* kingdom and the Cutiya kingdom was taken over by the Ahoms which was inhabited by the Matak and Borahi peoples. In 1490, they had their first conflict with the kingdom of Ahom Kingdom where Ahoms were the losers. Peace was sought by the Ahoms and they offered an Ahom princess to the king of the *Dimasa Kachari* king. At this point, the land that lay beyond the Dhansiri , was taken control of by the *Dimasa Kachari*. But the Ahoms were gaining power and the *Dimasa Kacharis* were driven west by them. The Ahoms, in 1526, were defeated by the *Dimasa Kacharis* but in the same year the *Dimasa Kacharis* lost to the Ahoms. Ahoms came right up to Dimapur in 1531. Dimapur, was the *Dimasa Kachari*'s capital or Hirmba kingdom under the cover of cow (Musu). When in 1536 the *Dimasa Kachari* capital was again attacked by the Ahoms it was sacked. The *Dimasa Kacharis* had to leave Dimapur, beating a retreat to south where they set up capital at *Maibang*. The origin dialect of the *Dimasa Kachari* is *Maibang*. 'Mai' means 'paddy' and '*bang*' means plenty or abundance.

In *Maibang*, Brahmin influence fell on the *Dimasa Kacharis* kings. Dersongpha's son changed his name and took the name Nirbhay Narayan, a Hindu name. He even recognized his Brahmin guru as the *Dharmadhi* which then came to be an important state institution. It is believed that, the genealogy of the king got traced to Bhima the Pandava, and Ghatotkacha his son whose mother was Hidimba. This gave the kingdom the name Heramba while its rulers came to be known as Herambeswar.

A council of ministers (*Bhandari* and *Patra*) helped the king perform the duties of the state. The council was headed by *Barbhandari*. - Hinduized/non Hinduized Dimasa's were put on the council and other state offices. Approximately 40 Dimasa people's clans (*Sengphong*) existed and each sent a representative to the royal assembly called *Mel*, a powerful institution that could elect a king. Based on what status the *Sengphong* had, its representatives had their seat in the council hall or *Mel mandap*.

With passage of time, a hierarchy developed in the *Sengphongs* comprising five royal *Sengphongs* even though majority of the kings came from the clan of *Hacengha* (Hasnusa). The ministers of the state received specialized services from some clans and so did other bureaucrats, court writers, store keepers, ambassadors, to name a few. Over course of time, these grew to be professional groups, such as *Nyablasa* (fishermen) and *Songyasa* (king's cooks).

The rule of the *Dimasa Kachari* by 17th century had moved as far as the Cachar plains. There was no direct participation of the people of the plains in the *Dimasa Kachari* king's court. The people of the plains were organized based on *khels*. They were provided justice by the king who also received revenue from them through an official named *Uzir*.

4.3.1 Neighboring States

In 1562, when Durlabh Narayan was the king, the kingdom of the *Dimasa Kacharis* was attacked by Chilarai. The kingdom of the *Dimasa Kacharis* at this point became a Koch kingdom tributary. The Kachari state's resourcefulness is evident from the amount of tribute they paid annually – 60 elephants and 70, 000 gold *mohars*. One tiny settlement of Koch soldiers (later called *Dehans)* had special privileges in the *Dimasa Kachari* Kingdom. Conflict regarding the reign of Dimarua caused a battle with the kingdom of the Jaintia in which the Jaintia king (Dhan Manik) was defeated.

Post Dhan Manik's demise, Jasa Manik was put on the throne by the *Dimasa Kachari* king Satrudaman. It seems that Jasa Manik caused conflict in 1618 between the Ahoms and *Dimasa Kacharis* by manipulation of events.

Satrudaman was the most powerful of all of the *Dimasa Kachari* kings. He ruled over parts of eastern Sylhet, plains of Cachar, Dhansiri valley, North Cachar and Dimarua in Nagaon district. Post his Sylhet conquest, he struck coins in his name.

Khaspur

Khaspur region originally belonged to the kingdom of Tripura. In sixteenth century, the Chilarai took it over. It was under the rule of Chilarai's brother Kamalnarayana who was a tributary ruler. Khaspur gained independence after the Koch's decline. Mid 18th century saw the last Koch ruler die heirless which put the under *Dimasa Kachari* Kingdom's control. with this merger, Khaspur became the *Dimasa Kachari* Kingdom's capital.

Check Your Progress

5. What was the Kachari kingdom called in the medieval times?
6. Where is it said that the Dimasa's initial state formation took place?
7. What is the meaning of *Maibang*?
8. Khaspur originally belonged to which kingdom?

4.4 STATE OF JAINTIA

The first stage of state formation of the Jaintia was the family which would be part of a specific clan. All members who belonged to a clan had a tendency to stick together and be together in a migratory route. The clans and families were responsible for having created the unit of the political society, namely the village or the *Chnong*. All mail members from all families of the village who were 18 and above and had a mustache would together elect a village head or the *U Waheh Chnong*. He handled all matters that were secular in nature. Religious matters were handled by a priest or U Langdoh Chnong elected in the same manner. While both these offices were vested in the same elected head when the first headman was chosen, with increased functions of the political kind, the post of *U Waheh Chnong* was formed.

In the second stage of state formation, there came into being the office of the provincial governor or Doloi. It happened after much time when the Jaintias were well settled.

To quote from *Nongtslang Doloiship: A socio-Political Study of an Administrative Unit in Jaintia Hills of Meghalays* (I S Gassab):

> 'A particular point of time they hit upon the idea of solidarity among the neighbouring Raids having common traditions and clan relations. It was also a period of competition among the various neighbouring Raids having varied traditions and clan relations.....Thus, common relations and clan relations and competitions among different Raids made solidarity movements among the Raids all the more necessary. It was this necessity which brought some Raids to form a federation of Raids into an Elaka, which was an independent political unit.

In its early period, an Elaka resembled a state in as much as there was no outside control at the time of its formation. However, later political developments made an Elaka the second tier of state formation in pre-colonial Jaintia. Hence, at a later stage, it could not be termed either as a sub-state or as an autonomous state with a nominal sovereign called the Doloi, leading over it. Thus, an Elaka was in charge of a political head with the designation of U Doloi or a governor assisted in some Elaka by U Pator or a Lt Governor.

Based on the Elaka's nature, each of the Doloiships would either be an oligarchy or an independent republic. The above mentioned process culminates to the establishing of a Doloi's office in the Jaintia hills.

With the coming into being of the office of a Raj or Syiem, there was established the third and in hierarchy the highest level of administration of power. With the establishing of the Syiem, there came into existence in the Jaintia Hills a three tier system of administration. Till 1835 it remained so till the Syiem's office was abolished.

From the 1858 report of Allen we gather crucial information about Doloi's and their administration:

> The whole of Jaintia Hills was divided into nineteen separate Elakas or districts, fifteen of which are Doloieships (Doloiships); to each or these districts, there is one Doloie (Dolloi), who is the chief village authority. The remaining four Elakas are under the charge of thirteen headmen called Sirdars. Moreover, the responsibility to the Government for (British) for carving on the public business of these fifteen Elakas rests entirely with the Doloies, yet a great part of the work is ordinarily done by village officers of an inferior grade, called Pathors (Pators) and Lungdoes (Lyngdohs). The former are deputies or assistants to the Doloies, but can only hear cases in durbar and act as assistants to the Doloies. In some of the Doloiships, which are extensive and contain several villages, there are two or three Pathors or deputies and the Lungdoes vary in number from one to ten. In the Elakas of Lakadong and Amwai (Amwi) there is no Pathor; the Doloies transact all business activities themselves.

Check Your Progress

9. What happened in the second stage of the formation of Jaintia?
10. What was the role of U Waheh Chnong?
11. What was the second tier of state formation in pre-colonial jaintia?
12. What did the U Doloi head?

NOTES

4.5 THE STATE OF MANIPUR

It appears that much before the period of recorded history, in Manipur there had already evolved a concrete civilization. Royal family of Assam, Tripura and neighbouring Shan lands had matrimonial relations with the kings of early Manipur. Relations of trade existed between Manipur and its neighbours and others like the Greeks, Arabs, the rest of British India, China and Burma. Manipur fell enroute the trade route that led from India to Southeast Asia and China.

This region started to be known as Manipur during King Pamheiba's reign in the beginning of the 18th century (AD 1709–1748).

According to the State of Manipur's Archives, from AD 1733 onwards, Manipur saw the rule of 76 kings. Of the Meiteis, both political power and development stayed linked with the organizing and controlling of available resources in the region of the hills, the full valley as also the central loci of Imphal. At a later stage, the 'Loyumba Shinyen' which was a written constitution was used to govern the Kingdom. In AD 1110, King Loiyumba issued this decree. It has its basis in the conventions and codes of earlier times. Kings who followed King Loiyumba, are responsible for later additions made to the Loyumba Shinyen. Some of these kings were Kiyamba (1467-1508), Khagemba (1597-1652), Garibniwaj (1709-1748), Bhagyachandra (1763-1798) and Chourjit (1803-1813). With these additions the decree became an inclusive code of the duties of the hill tribes and the Kingdom's other communities. Evidence has been unearthed by Oinam Bogeshwar of the existence since AD 429 of a centralized constitutional Government.

Foreign powers, too, recognized the power that Manipur held, of these, the prime was the Shan with the Agreement of 1470 between Manipur's King Kiyamba and Khekhomba of Pong in Upper Burma. The 1762 Anglo Manipur Friendship Treaty came on its tail followed by the 1763 Anglo Manipuri Defense Protocol, and in 1826. Treaty of Yandaboo (between Burma and the British government.

For centuries, the Meiteis have had a distinct territorial and political status. Their culture too is extremely developed, they are extremely literate and have literary tradition which are far advanced coming from 1000s of years back. Even their linguistic tradition is distinct.

Since it is among the oldest civilizations, Manipur's state evolution begins from the pre-historic times as is evident from the objects belonging to the prehistoric culture which have been found here. The hills of Manipur have many rock shelters and caves which must have given the prehistoric men shelter. Across the valley and the hills, evidence can be found of the New Stone Age. It seems that traits of Bronze Age Culture came to Manipur from Upper Burma and Thailand.

4.5.1 Clan (Salai) System

The Meities that exists in the present times got created when there was an amalgamation of the seven allied, close knit though different principalities, which at a time occupied separate regions of Manipur, all independent of the others. confederacy of Meitie comprised the Moirang, Luwang, Khuman, Angom, Chenglei, Khaba-Ngamba and Meities. There were other tribes too like the Heiren Khunju, khende, Chiren, Mangding and Mangang, each one of who over time became part of the above mentioned seven. It has been observed by Gangumei (ibid) there is historical evidence of the existence in Manipur valley of several ethnic lineages and groups such as the Angoms, Luwangs,

NOTES

Mangang (Ningthouja), Khaba, Nganba, Sarangthem, Leisangthem, Chenglei, Haorok Konthu, Manting-Mara, Lela Khongnang, Urok Usai and Lokkha-Lokkhu.

In the period of history, it is observed that there were 7 Meiteis clans and 5 principalities under the rule 5 clan chieftains who were political as well as social heads of the can they ruled. Of these, the foremost was the Kangla Kingdom set up by Pahangba of the Ningthouja dynasty. Others were the Kingdom of Moirang, Khuman principality, Angom principality and the principality of Luwang. The Khaba who had ruled at Kangla and had faced the Pakhangba challenge strongly had been finished off by the Ningthouja dynasty. At the same time, the Nganba had lost all political power. Simultaneously, there existed chiefdoms tans at village levels amongst the Mangangs, the Chakpas, the Heiren Khunjan, the Sarang Leishangthem and the Chengleis. The 7 clans' consolidation was done by Pakhangba with 1 pibas from every clan. The coronation ceremony lasted 5 days at the end of which in different areas of the kingdom he set up villages for ease of administration. Over time with increase in the clan population and economic prosperity, the clans become stronger and even conquered the weaker group. They even became independent of the entire system, even causing frequent disturbance within the Kangla principality. With diplomacy, Pakhangba kept such trouble makers under control through bringing in the clan system.

The seven tribes/principalities over several centuries came under the supremacy of the Meities or the Ningthoujas. Post the assimilation the common name for them all became Meitie. The Lois are considered the most early settlers in Manipur whom the Meiteis subdued by the. At the beginning, those Meiteis who were to be punished were degraded to the Lois community.

A sophisticated Meitei state developed under the leadership of the Ningthouja in pre-colonial times. It was in the valley that the actual state formation happened and only after that did the kings established their control over the hills and further to regions beyond those hills with even foreign nations recognizing the power they wielded.

Meiteis expanded politically and even in the direction of social formation with steady and ongoing absorption ethnic groups, tribes and clans into the fold of the social structure of the Meiteis. *Khaba* was the very first salai to be absorbed. The expansion of the power of the Meitei beyond Kangla made land appropriate for agriculture available to them and even made available more fowl and farm animals. It even got into their fold means of quick boat communication from *Nambul*, *Imphal* and *Iril* rivers, as also the deliberate pattern of settlement directed towards defense in which Kangla was now guarded by hillocks and natural barriers. The inhabitants in the north owned ponies and it was used for sports and pastime of the aristocratic as well as a means of consolidating martial strategies in both defense and offence.

From historical evidence it is seen that Manipur possesses a wide socio-political framework enabling frequent assimilation and integration of tribes into the Meitei fold making the formation of the Meitei formation a process which was ongoing. The boundary of the Meitei kingdom varied depending on the ability of the ruling king.

Nongda Lairen Pakhangba is the first Meitei king and he was crowned in AD 33. At that time *Kangla* was the state's focal centre and capital, whose control was at the root of all religious and political power. From the ancient period right up till 1891, Kangla region remained Manipur's capital. In Kangla were incorporated the land that was adjoining it of the four traditional *Panas* or state divisions, which were *Naharup Ahallup Khapham* and *Laipham,* while Imphal was a distinct administrative unit that included Kangla. Kangla was the symbol of power and had a central architectural

construction of palace, from where the king conducted his public duties. It was constructed with care and was made of materials brought from different parts of the kingdom. It is opined that procuring of material in this manner, such as wooden pillars of different woods from different areas, was done for the purpose of consolidating and integrating the hill and valley people.

Such a pattern of settlement was both effective and singular as Kangla served as the capital of numerous ethnic communities and all of them share their wealth with a sense of responsibility.

The king's coronation took place at the sacred *Kangla*. Ceremony of putting the Meitei king on the throne both politically affirmed his right for obeisance of those he ruled, as well as invoked the ancestral spirits so that they aid in the realm's prosperity and welfare.

In Manipur, there have been various forms of administration - village polity to constitutional monarchy. During a major period it remained feudalism based centralized monarchy with the king being the total authority. It is evident that the Meiteis' political and social development revolved around the dynasty which was ruling. It is observed by Gangumei the reason for the emergence of the state was the 'gradual growth of human civilization with development of economic organization, social order and steady livelihood.' The state was headed by the king and he had all powers of veto. There was a control on the powers of the king to prevent it from becoming autocratic. This was achieved through the *Ninghou Pongba Tara*, *Nine Khunpangthous*, *Sixty four Phandous* and *Clan Pibas*.

Most powerful was the Angom Ningthou and headed 64 Phamdous. The *Maichous* (Pandits) advised him in everything and at all times. The Council of Minister and the King kept a check and control on one another.

Evidence has also been found of elements that were democratic in nature. For example, public opinion which even worked to keep the state and king in check while they used their powers. Even so, if the Angom Ningthou and other members were weak, the King could become autocratic.

It has been opined by Sanajaoba that even their own the king, used auto-limitation and made major decisions, without consulting the *'High lord's* and the *'Pongba Tara'*.

The kingdom was governed by *'Loyumba Shinyen'*, the written constitution. Based on traditional conventions and codes, it was first proclaimed in AD 1110 by Loiyumba and further additions were made to it by future kings, such as Kyamba (1467-1508), Khagemba (1597-1652), Garibniwaz or Pamheiba (1709-1748), Bhagyachandra (1763-1798) and Chourjit (1803-1813). In this text, there are guides for creation of administrative department *(Loishang)*, duties and function of the kings and queens, royal etiquette, titles and decorations awarded to the nobles, administration of justice, keeping of standard time , to name a few.

According to Maichou Oinam Bogeshwor, collaboration between the king and people was the basis of administration of the Meitei expressed as *'Leibanka Nama, Ningthouna Nama'* or 'one part by the people and another by the king'.

Meiteileipak's administration was carried out by ten cabinet ministers (*Pongba* Tara) which were Chonghanba, Pukhangba, Khurai Angouba, Wangkhei Louremba, Hiyangloi, Ahallup Lakpa, Naharus Lakpa, Yaiskul Lakpa, Khwairakpa and Nongthongba. They were above the sixty four high lords who were representatives of the 32 administrative units.

Ningthou Pongba Tara which was the Council of Minister was an extremely important unit of the kingdom's administration. A minister's post was not hereditary but was given to a those considered to be of exceptional ability and also extremely loyalty to the throne.

Of the 64 Phamdous, 10 were picked to be *'Ningthou Pongba Tara'* Thus till King Loyumba (1074 A.D) time, the Council of Minister comprised 10 members. Later this number fell to 9. It rose to 12 in the reign of King Garibniwaz, in which his Chief Queen was included. In King Chandrakiti's reign, the Chief Queen's post got replaced by foreign Minister or *Awa Purel* who was more a military than civil minister. The periods of emergency the Chief Pandit or *Pandit Achouba* became part of the Council of Ministers.

The kingdom was split into two for the purpose of administration: surrounding hills and centrally located valley. The valley's administration was made up of rural and urban administration. The hill areas' administration was made up of that of the hills areas adjoining the valley and hills areas far from the valley.

Under the king, people had to adhere to three types of subject hood: (i) *phamnaiba,* (ii) *lallup,* and (iii) *loipot.* The king's subjects comprised the aristocrats, commoners and vanquished. Based on the relationship's nature every subject was obligated to carry out some obligations towards the king/state. He was the possessor of divine rights and all persons who were politically controlled by him owed him allegiance.

The *phamnaiba* (aristocrats) stood exempt from performing physical labour and had to help the king with daily administration and military affair, based on the job's nature. This position was based on hierarchy. Priests, chiefs and the king's favourites, especially those with martial connection with the royal family got put in high offices, became part of the aristocracy and served the king through services which were 'non-laborious.

The commoners directly under the king's administration and between 16 and 60 years of age provided him labour termed *lallup. Loipot* depicted the king's revenue and administrative control over the subjects who did not fall under the fold of his daily administration, for example the conquered, controlled or defeated. This category comprised nearly all Manipur's hills tribes where the king could extend his military expedition. Pakhangba's rule is significant as during this period he attacked the joint family system through the introduction of *Lallup* which was forced male labour in return for land-use, and he created 4 Pannas or divisions for effective administration plus stationed 400 regular militia at the service of Kangla at all times.

Valley

In the valley, to make the administration more effective, four *Pannas* or administrative divisions were created. The Meitei king was rendered service by them. It is felt that it was in the reign of Pakhangba that the Pannas started. But during the time of the Loyumba, he systematized the country's administrative division through the creation of 6 lups. *Khongchalup, Nongmailup, Angoubalup, Leichol Lakpa Talong Khombalup, Khurailup, Lipphambamlup* and *Khangjeilup.* Possibly this was the base on which the Panna system was later created. To begin with, 4 Pannas were created: *Ahallup* (comprising old men), *Naharup* (comprising Young men), *Laipham* (ancestral are of worship), *Khabam* (Kha-south, mapham-place). At a later stage there was addition of 2: the Lois and Tangkhuls. The Tangkhuls were *Potsangba* (watchman) while the Lois was *Hidakphanba* (those who attend the Hookah or tobacco). At a later stage, the potsangba become potsangbam and were taken into the fold of the Meitei.

NOTES

NOTES

At the head of a panna, was a *Panna Lakpa* and directly under him was the *Lallup Chingba,* serving as a go between for the village men and the officers located in Kangla. Under Lallup Chingba came the *Machahal*, who provided assistance to the Lallup Chingba in meetings the providers of Lallup.

The four principal pannas comprised two departments: *Sanguba* and *Sanglen.* The Sanglen officers took care of king's service and Sanguba officers took care of the queen's services.

In every panna there were many tribes and families. Each tribe and family head would choose from his tribe or family such persons who could provide the king 10 days of service (lallup).

A man was liable to provide Lallup when he was of age to cultivate a part of the land which was age 17. He needed to pay tax to the King for the land in kind. The rotation of the ten day service provided the man thirty days off after each 10 days of service all year round. A person defaulting either provides a substitute or pays a rupee in fine. If a person under 60 is disabled or suffers from permanent illness he is excused from lallup if the authorities are satisfied with his indisposition. 'In the event of an individual wishing to escape his turn of duty, he must either provide a substitute or pay a certain sum, which sum goes to pay for a substitute if required, or the rest of the lallup may agree to do the extra duty receiving the money.' Such money never goes to the Government. The *'Lakpa'* heads a Lallup or class of labourers. This officer holds responsibility for correct imparting of duties by the labourers. The duty of the *Khundin* lallup was to ensure that who were to perform lallup did it well.

The other system used for allocation of work was '*Yumnak Mashin'*. In this system, every household or 'Yumnak' from all 7 salais has its own work or '*Mashin'*. The work performed by a yumnak decided its name. The works were created to cover society's all cultural, religious, political and socioeconomic aspects. In this development is seen the seed of the rise of feudalism in the Meitei Kingdom's political, administrative and social structure.

Hill

Hills were administered in uniformity with the valley. Hill people too performed Lallup. At a later stage, various tribal villages near the valley also got village wise duties. For example, *Kabuis of Wakha* (a village situated some six kilometers east of Kangla), near the foothill of Nongmaiching, were asked to grow *Kaphoi* (Pomegranate).

Those hill regions far from the valley, there was more of indirect administration which was two tiered. On the one hand the people were to provide regular service to their respective *Khullapas* or *Ningthous*. They were directly controlled by him. Though in some tribes, absolute authority rested with the Ningthou or Khullapa, in others it was limited. On the other hand, other than doing duty for the village chief and the village, the hill people had to give the state also their service.

There was no interference from the king in the affairs of the hill villages till the Khullapas or Khunbus or Ningthous maintained peace and provided to state administration.

4.5.2 Judicial System

In societies of the early times, justice administration was looked upon as an affair that was private though at times it was implemented with community help. If a community law got broken, the punishment was meted out in front of the entire community so that

NOTES

others would be deterred from breaking the law. This was truer for customary law. This is the style of administration that was followed in early Manipur. A simple criminal law was prevalent in early Manipur. On receiving a complaint, Dolaipada (police) would go to make an arrest of the accused. As soon as the accused was produced in court, the trial would begin. The accused would be put under questioning or a judgment would b pronounced.

Information about crime and punishment is available from the Royal Edicts of which the most important is Edict of Meidingu Naophangba (429 A.D) which provides information regarding crimes and punishments of ancients Manipur. Information is also available in cheitharol Kumbaba, Manipur's royal chronicle. Even the Nangshamei Puya, the Political Agents' annual administrative reports and the writing of British Administrators in Manipur provide relevant information pertaining to the system of criminal justice.

Prior to the year 1709, Manipur's kings disposed all cases from the Cheirap Court (Highest Court) by consulting 64 phamous. The kings actively participated in the daily imparting of justice. By a reform passed in 1715 in the reign of Garib Niwaz (Pamheiba) with which administration went into the hands of his nobles while the king was now only the highest appellate authority.

Manipur has 4 types of court besides the court of the king *(Kuchu,* the highest court. These 4 courts were: (i) Courts concerning religious matters (ii) Court concerning secular matters (iii) Court for females (iv) Military courts.

Another division of courts was Cheirap Court (like Supreme Court) which held original and appellate jurisdiction and Village court for trying small cases.

Set up in the time of Nongda Lairem Pakahngba (33 A.D-154 A.D), the Kuchu became the highest court with complete state's comprehensive jurisdiction. Here, the hearing was presided over by the king and serious cases were tried by the king and his nobles. Located at Kangla's south western corner it was looked upon as being a sacred place where formal swearing of oaths with other tribes and Yeks and tribes also took place. The administering of the Cheirap court was in the hands of the Angom Ningthou (chief) with the nobles.

Punishment

Imprisonment and death sentence were not conferred upon Brahmins and women. The highest offence was considered to be conspiring against the king and treason and a death sentence was the highest punishment.

It has to be noted that the punishment for a crime did vary depending on who was on the throne. A lenient king could let off offenders easily by banishing those Naga or Loi villages. Mostly murder was punished by death to all involved in the act. Robbery, theft, stealing and such was punished with limb mutilation. Offence of kidnapping and murder was punishable with blinding. Corporal punishment like whipping was meted out for trading in man, beating someone with insufficient reason and general quarrel. Petty offences and assault attracted cane flogging on the shoulder and at times severe beating and exposure in the bazaar was the punishment. *Phaouba* or exposed in the sun was another form of corporal punishment. A common punishment was banishing to the offender to Loi village. Imprisonment was allowed in cases where the offender was to be provided time to modify the law breaking behavior.

Table 4.1 Establishment of Police (Civil and Armed Battalions) in Manipur (AD 33 – 1826)

Sl. No	Civil Police	Year	Reigning King	Armed Battalion
1.	Establishment of Lallup, Patcha Pheida, Panchayat	33	Pakhnagba	
2	Leikai Lakpas and Ningol Lakpas	2nd Century	Khuyai Tompok	
3	Establishment of jail	664	Naothingkhong	
4	Laws Codified	1074-1112	Loyumba	
5	Establishment of 18 police Out posts	1467-1508	Kiyamba	
6	(i) Establishment of Doliapas (Civil Police) (ii) Dolaipabas replaced Loishanglois	1596	Khagemba	
7	(i) Changes in the functioning of Patcha Pheida. (ii) Establishment of Shangkhuba Shanglakpa in charge of Jail and Law and order (iii) Khurailakpa made in charge of Flaw and order of Khurai (iv) Pacha Hanjaba made in charge of Pacha	1709-1740	Garib Niwas	
		1824	Gambhir Singh	Establishment of Manipur Levy (Army)
		1825	Gambhir Singh	Mr. Grant and Pemberton Attached to teach drill and Discipline to Manipur Levy (Army)
		1826	Gambhir Singh	Manipur Levy was changed to State Military Police

Source: Singh Ibomcha (2007)

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

13. During whose reign did Manipur get its name?
14. How many rulers has Manipur been ruled by?
15. What was the clan system in Manipur known as?
16. What was believed to be the reason for getting materials from different regions to build Kangla?

ACTIVITY

Form a group to make a collage of the lifestyle, dressing, food, dance and culture of Assam. Use colourful pictures to make it attractive and appealing.

DID YOU KNOW

The population of Assam is a broad racial intermixture of Mongolian, Indo-Burmese, Indo-Iranian and Aryan origin. The hilly tracks of Assam are mostly inhabited by the tribes of Mongolian origin.

4.6 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- State formation is the process of the development of a centralized government structure in a situation where one did not exist prior to its development.
- Sukaphaa, is credited with having established the Ahom Kingdom. He was a Tai prince from Mong Mao.
- It started with being a Mong in the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra river, with its base lying in a wet rice cultivation area.
- In the 16th century, there was sudden expansion of the kingdom under Suhungmung. At this point its character changed and it turned multi-ethnic.
- In 1228 the kingdom of Ahom got established with the coming of Chao Lung Siu-Ka-Pha, the 1st Ahom king, from Mong Mao (now part of Peoples Republic of China), who traversed the Patkai mountain range and reached the valley of Brahmaputra.
- He brought took under his occupation the area on the river's south bank, the Patkai mountains in the east, the Dikhau river in the south and the Burhi Dihing river in the north.
- He set up his capital in Charaideo and set up offices of the Dangaria—Borgohain and Burhagohain.
- Persons ready to fit in with the Ahom polity and lifestyle were welcomed into the fold and this process is referred to as Ahomization.
- With rapid expansion and addition of large territories to the kingdom, the pace at which Ahomization was occurring was not good enough and in their own kingdom, the Ahoms had become a minority. This caused the kingdom's character to change. It turned inclusive and multi-ethnic.
- Marangikowa Gohain and Sadiakhowa Gohain were two special offices, set up for overseeing those territories, which had been taken from the Kachari and Sutiya kingdoms, respectively.
- The Paik system was employed to organize the kingdom's subjects which formed the militia.
- The features that are seen in the mature Ahom kingdom were adopted during the period of Pratap Singha.

NOTES

- There was the reorganizing of the Paik system under the *khel* system which was more professional, and it replaced the *phoid* system which was kinship based. Both Borphukan and Borbarua got set up as also some more small offices.
- The kingdom of Ahom was under the rule of a king who was known as *Swargadeo* (*Chao-Pha* in the Ahom language). The king had to be from the line of Sukaphaa, the first Ahom king. Generally, succession was based on primogeniture, though on the occasion, it was possible for the great Gohains (*Dangaria*) to elect another descendant of Sukaphaa from a different line or even enthroned or depose one.
- Sukaphaa had two great Gohains to aid him in administration: Burhagohain and the Borgohain.
- During his reign, Pratap Singha introduced two offices to be directly under the king. These offices were Borphukan and Borbarua.
- Patra Mantris was the council of ministers that comprised five positions.
- Judicial and well as military responsibilities rested with both the Borphukan and Borbarua, and both got help from two separate councils (*sora*) of *Phukans*.
- There were twenty or so Baruas, some of these were:
    - o Sonadar Barua: chief jeweler and mint master
    - o Khanikar Barua: chief artificer
    - o Hati Barua: in charge of elephants
    - o Ghora Barua: in charge of horses
    - o Duliya Barua: royal palanquins' in charge
    - o Chaudang Barua: executions' superintendent
    - o Bhandari Barua: treasurer
    - o Bez Barua: Royal family physician
- Some other officers were 12 Rajkhowas, various Katakis, Kakatis and Dolais.
- Those of the royal families held rule over certain territories and were addressed as Raja.
- Royal families' members who had lower positions got regions known as *mels* and were addressed as *melkhowa raja* or *meldangia*.
- Princes who were even lower were *Meldangia gohains* and were *Sarumelia gohain and Majumelia gohain*.
- Individual *mels* were provided to the royal ladies.
- The forward territories were administered and ruled by forward governors, who also were military commanders. Such offices were given to members of families that were eligible to being the three great Gohains.
- Vassals or dependent kings were addressed as *Raja*.
- The Ahom kingdom had huge dependence on the Paik system which was just a corvee labor form.
- Gadadhar Singha made himself fully acquainted with the Mughal's system of land measurement and had it introduced all across the kingdom.
- It has been opined that the Dimasa's initial state formation took place at the region of Sadiya.

NOTES

- Evidence of polity formation of the Dimasa's is seen at Dimapur. The kingdom, by the thirteenth century, had spread right up along river Brahmaputra's southern banks, from river Dikhow to river Kallang, including the Dhansiri valley as also present-day district of Dima Hasao.
- The *Dimasa Kachari* settlements on the east of Dhansiri had moved prior to the advance of the Ahoms. While the Kamata Kingdom was to its west and that of Sutiya was on the east.
- A council of ministers (*Bhandari* and *Patra*) helped the king perform the duties of the state. The council was headed by *Barbhandari*.
- Hindu/non-Hindu Dimasa's were put on the council and other state offices.
- Approximately 40 Dimasa people's clans/*Sengphong* existed and each sent a representative to the royal assembly called *Mel*, a powerful institution that could elect a king.
- Based on what status the *Sengphong* had, its representatives had their seat in the Council hall or *Mel mandap*.
- The ministers of the state received specialized services from some clans and so did other bureaucrats, court writers, store keepers, ambassadors, to name a few. Over the course of time, these grew to be professional groups, such as *Nyablasa* (fishermen) and *Songyasa* (king's cooks).
- By the 17th century, the rule of the *Dimasa Kachari* had moved as far as the Cachar plains. There was no direct participation of the people of the plains in the *Dimasa Kachari* king's court.
- The people of the plains were organized based on *khels*. They were provided justice by the king who also received revenue from them through an official named *Uzir*.
- The formation of the State of Jaintia was a 3 stage process with the king at the head of the hierarchy.
- In the first stage, there were the village headmen, then the provincial governor or Doloi. Then came the Raj or Syiem.
- It appears that much before the period of recorded history, in Manipur there had already evolved a concrete civilization.
- In Manipur, there have been various forms of administration - village polity to constitutional monarchy.
- During most of the period it was a feudalism-based, centralized monarchy with the king being the total authority.
- It is evident that the Meiteis' political and social development revolved around the dynasty which was ruling.
- The state was headed by the king and he had all powers of veto. However, there was control on the powers of the king to prevent it from becoming autocratic. This was achieved through the *Ninghou Pongba Tara*, *Nine Khunpangthous*, *Sixty four Phandous* and *Clan Pibas*.
- The kingdom was governed by *'Loyumba Shinyen'*, the written constitution.
- For Manipur, information about crime and punishment is available from the Royal Edicts of which the most important is the Edict of Meidingu Naophangba (429 A.D) and Cheitharol Kumbaba, Manipur's royal chronicle.

NOTES

- Prior to the year 1709, Manipur's kings disposed all cases from the Cheirap Court (Highest Court) by consulting 64 phamous. The kings actively participated in the daily imparting of justice.
- A reform was passed in 1715, in the reign of Garib Niwaz (Pamheiba) with which the administration went into the hands of his nobles while the king was now only the highest appellate authority.
- Manipur has 4 types of court besides the court of the king *(Kuchu,* the highest court. These 4 courts were: (i) Courts concerning religious matters (ii) Court concerning secular matters (iii) Court for females (iv) Military courts.
- Another division of courts was the Cheirap Court (like Supreme Court), which held original and appellate jurisdiction and village court for trying small cases.
- Set up at the time of Nongda Lairem Pakahngba (33 A.D-154 A.D), the Kuchu became the highest court with complete state's comprehensive jurisdiction.

4.7 KEY TERMS

- **Moamoria rebellion:** The 18th century conflict between the Morans, adherents of the Moamara Sattra, and the Ahom kings
- **Polity:** A form or process of civil government or constitution
- **Borgohain:** The second of the two original counselors in the Ahom kingdom
- **Corvee:** Unpaid labourers (as for the maintenance of roads)
- **Serfs:** An agricultural laborer bound under the feudal system to work on his lord's estate
- **Bondsmen:** A person who stands surety for a bond
- **Borbarua:** One of the five patra mantris (councilors) in the Ahom kingdom, a position created by the Ahom king Pratap Singha
- **Decree:** An official order issued by a legal authority
- **Meiteis:** The majority ethnic group of Manipur, India, who are sometimes referred to as Manipuris

4.8 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. 1228, 1826
2. Sukaphaa
3. wet rice cultivation
4. Borgohain, Burhagohain
5. The Kachari Kingdom was known as the Dimasa Kingdom in medieval times.
6. It has been opined that the Dimasa's initial state formation took place at the region of Sadiya.
7. The origin dialect of the *Dimasa Kachari* is *Maibang*. '*Mai*' means '*Paddy*' and '*bang*' means 'Plenty or abundance'.
8. Khaspur region originally belonged to the kingdom of Tripura.

NOTES

9. In the second stage of state formation, there came into being the office of the provincial governor or Doloi.
10. He handled all matters that were secular in nature.
11. The second tier of state formation in pre-colonial jaintia was Elaka.
12. the U Doloi headed an Elaka
13. This region started to be known as Manipur during King Pamheiba's reign in the beginning of the 18th century (1709 – 48 A.D).
14. Manipur has seen the rule of 76 kings.
15. The clan system in Manipur known as Salai
16. It is opined that procuring of material in this manner, such as wooden pillars of different woods from different areas, was done for the purpose of consolidating and integrating the hill and valley people.

4.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-answer Questions

1. What were the various types of punishments given in medieval state of Manipur?
2. What was the area of the Ahom kingdom?
3. Write a short note on Doloiship.
4. Write a short note on Elaka.

Long-answer Questions

1. Write a detailed note on the judicial setup in the state of Manipur.
2. Explain the three-tier system of administration in the state of Jaintia.

4.10 FURTHER READING

Gait, E.A.; *A History of Assam,* BiblioBazaar, US, 2010.

Choudhary, Pratap Chandra; *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.*, Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Assam, Assam, 1966.

Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan; *Social and polity formations in pre-colonial north-east India: the Barak Valley experience*, Haranand Publications in association with Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1991.

Sinha, Surajit;; *Tribal Polities and State Systems in Pre-colonial Eastern and North Eastern India*, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 1987.

Chakravarty, I. N., Chakravarty, Lakshmi N.; *Glimpses of the Early History of Arunachal*, Research Department, Arunachal Pradesh Administration, Arunachal Pradesh, 1973.

Barpujari, Heramba Kauta; *Assam in the Days of the Company: 1826 - 1858: a Critical and Comprehensive History of Assam during the Rule of the East-India Company from 1826 - 1858*, North-Eastern Hill University Publications, Assam, 1996

NOTES

Barpujari, Heramba Kauta; *The Comprehensive history of Assam*, Publication Board, Assam, 1990.

M. Horam; *Naga Polity*, B.R. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1975.

M. Horam; *Social and Cultural Life of Nagas: (the Tangkhul Nagas)*, B.R. Pubishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1977.

Sangkima; Mizos, *Society and Social Change, 1890-1947*, Spectrum Publications, New Delhi, 1992.

Sangkima; *A Modern History Of Mizoram*, Spectrum Publications, New Delhi, 2004.

Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan; *The Garos and the English, 1765-1874*, Radiant Publishers, Hyderabad, 1978.

Kar, Parimal Chandra; *Garos in Transition*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1982.

Venuh, N. and Bonita Aleaz; *British Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2005.

Lahiri, Rebati Mohan; *The Annexation of Assam: 1824-1854*, General Printers & Publishers, Mumbai, 1954.

Bhuyan, Suryya Kumar; *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, Lawyer's Book Stall, Assam, 1974.

Elwin, Verrier; *The Nagas in the 19th Century*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1969.

Lahiri, Nayanjot; *Pre-Ahom Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi, 1991.

Birinchi, B.K. and Banikanta Kakati; *Cultural History of Assam*, K. K. Barooah, Assam, 1951.

Basu, Nirmal Kumar; *Assam in the Ahom Age, 1228-1826: Being Politico-economic and Socio-cultural Studies*, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Kolkata, 1970.

Nath, R.M.; *The Background of Assamese Culture*, A. K. Nath, 1948.

Bareh, Hamlet; *The History and Culture of the Khasi People*, Spectrum Publications, Gauhati, 1967.

Chatterjii, S. K.; *The Place of Assam in the History and Civilization of India*, Gauhati University, Gauhati, 1970.

Dani, A. H.; *Prehistory and Protohistory of Eastern India*, Firma L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1960.

Dhavlikar, M. K.; *Bulletin of the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute* 31-32: 137-49, Archaeology of Gauhati, 1973.

NOTES

UNIT 5 AHOM'S RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBOURS

Structure

5.0 Introduction
5.1 Unit Objectives
5.2 Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh
  5.2.1 The Akas-Ahom Relations
  5.2.2 Ahom's Relations with the Noctes
  5.2.3 Ahom's Relations with the Nyishis
  5.2.4 Ahom's Relations with the Adis (Abhors) and Mishings (Miris)
  5.2.5 Ahom's Relations with the Mishimis
  5.2.6 Ahom's Relations with the Khamptis
  5.2.7 Ahom's Relations with the Singphos
5.3 Other Tribes
  5.3.1 Nagas
  5.3.2 Khasis
  5.3.3 Jaintias
  5.3.4 Kacharis
5.4 Summary
5.5 Key Terms
5.6 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
5.7 Questions and Exercises
5.8 Further Reading

5.0 INTRODUCTION

The Ahom people had come to the region of Assam and had begun their rule. It was not an easy task as they had to subjugate and keep under control those, who had been residing around those areas prior to their coming. They mostly had cordial relations with every tribe of the region, except with the Jaintias who kept defying them and locking horns with them. Even though the Kacharis were defiant, they were not much of a trouble for the Ahoms.

Let us look at the kind of relations that the Ahoms managed to keep with various tribes of the region.

In the hill-plain relationship during the pre-modern period, 'trade and raid' had been a universal phenomenon. The people living in the hills always needed formal or informal market/ *haat*/ place to exchange their goods with the people of the valleys/ foothills or the plains. The two always depended upon each other for products. This was a mutually accepted practice. In this system, mainly to minimize the language barrier and facilitate trade, some institutions of middlemen and frontier officers were formed. This section of people (Kotakis and others), besides playing an economic role, also played the role of middlemen in the political relations between people living in the hills and those living in the plains. Till technological progress of the two areas reached similar levels, there was, it can be said, a peaceful co-existence. However, with development in social and higher levels of polity formations (in case of Assam the emergence of Ahom kingdom) among the people of the valleys, people living in the hills were suppressed or restricted into the confines of hills. On

NOTES

the other hand, the people living in the hills were always making efforts to retain their previous rights and privileges in the foothills or the plains. The gamut of the relationships between Ahoms and tribals in general and between the Ahoms and the other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, centres around the same. However, it was not always the principle of war or conflict; there are also evidences of policies of conciliation and respect for the rights of the people living in hills by rulers of the valleys. The overall Ahom policy towards their neighbours was based on four well-known principles of the Indian political philosophy, viz., *Sama-dana-danda-bheda*, i.e., establishment of relations of equal status, establishment of subservient suzerainty, by awarding punishments and driving wedges between neighbours.

For a comprehensive view of the topic, a brief overview of literature is important. It will help you to understand the historiography of the same. E. A. Gait's *A History of Assam* (reprint Gauhati, 1997 and first published 1905), though mainly a book on medieval Assam, could devote only a few paragraphs dealing with the relation of the Ahom rulers with the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. A detailed study appeared much later; Lakshmi Devi wrote *Ahom-Tribal Relations (A Political Study)*, (Gauhati, 1968). In addition to these two pioneer works, the *Gazetteers* of the British period and after, have also dealt with the subject. Some modern and contemporary historians too have written on the same, however, not in the form of books. These have mostly been written in the form of articles on certain themes. Amalendu Guha's book *Medieval and Early Colonial Assam: Society, Polity, Economy* (A collection of his papers published earlier in Calcutta, in 1991) is an important book to comprehensively understand the developments of Assam in the period. The textbooks written by D. Pandey, D. Pandey, C. M. Nayak and some other authors provide easy reading of the topic. All these provide a comprehensive picture of the relation of tribes with Ahom rulers. At the outset, it is important to mention that sometimes we witness the bias, either in favour of the people of the hills or the plains or sometimes, the continuance of traditional colonial historiographical approach in these works. This unit is based on these writings.

In the process of foundation and extension of the Ahom kingdom and, especially after extending its control to the northern bank of Brahmaputra, came in direct contact and consequently in conflict with the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. The Noctes were the only exception. While coming to Assam, the Ahoms had already crossed the hills where the Noctes lived and had encountered them in the early years of the 13th century. The tribes such as, the Noctes, Nyishis, Adis, Mishings (Miris), Mishimis, Khamptis, Singhphos, Sherdukpens and others developed relationship with the Ahom rulers.

In this unit, you will learn about the Ahom's relationships with the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, the Jaintias, the Khasis, the Nagas and the Kacharis.

5.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Interpret the policy of the Ahom rulers towards the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh
- Discuss the policy of peace, conciliation and mutual coexistence
- Describe the policy of force used by the Ahoms against the tribes
- Explain the relations of the Ahoms with the Nyishi, Adi, Mishmi, Bhutia, Khampti and Akas tribes of Arunachal Pradesh
- Compare the relations of the Ahoms with the Nagas, Khasis, Jaintias and Kacharis

NOTES

5.2 TRIBES OF ARUNACHAL PRADESH

The Ahom rulers had advanced war weapons (matchlocks and guns), large surplus production and the *paiks* to aggressively pursue their imperial policy. Though the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh had mostly the traditional tribal war weapons (daos, spears, bows and arrows etc), the Ahoms avoided straight military fight against them mainly due to the geographical reasons. The reason behind the same was also the indigenous system of defence mechanism of the villages and the guerrilla and ambuscade mode of warfare of the people of Arunachal Pradesh. Amrendra Kr Thakur in two of his articles has studied this (Rural Technology in Arunachal Pradesh: Interface of Defence and Agrarian Technologies', in Vijay Kumar Thakur and K. K. Mandal eds. *Science, Technology and Medicine in Indian History: Essays in Honour of Dr. D. K. Singh,* Janaki Prakashan, Patna, 2000, pp. 253-74 and 2. 'Fortification and Forts of Arunachal Pradesh' in N. Nagaraju and B. Tripathy (eds.), *Cultural Heritage of Arunachal Pradesh*, Indus Publishing Company, New Delhi, 2006, pp.241-58). On the other hand, a hill campaign was always difficult due to bad communication Narrow paths or tracks over precipices were the only means to reach the hills. In such inhospitable conditions the policy of conciliation was the best choice. The Ahom rulers generally avoided complete subjugation of the tribes. It was very difficult for them to rule over the hill. So they were always cautious in shaping policy towards tribes of the hills. The Ahom policy can be summarized like this: 'Conciliate these tribes by promising to furnish them their necessaries as far as possible. If they indulge in wanton pillages; pursue and capture the miscreants, but never overstep the limits'. Under this policy the Ahom rulers initiated many measures which are described in the following section, in short.

Commercial facility

The Ahom rulers by allowing free commercial activities further facilitated the trade relations with the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. There were the frontier wardens known as *Datiyalia Bisayas* and *Duarias*, who looked after the interest of traders. The Ahom government established several *haat*s (small markets) near the foothills and the *duars* (mountain passes), where the tribes of the hills could come and exchange their commodities with those of the plains. The Sherdukpens could bring silver, woollen cloth, Chinese silk, ponies, gold dust and rock salt to Udalguri and Doimara. They exchanged them with iron, lac, rice, Assam silk, dried fish, buffalo horns etc. The Noctes brought salt, cotton, elephant teeth, etc. to the markets in and around Sibsagar. The Mishmis brought to the Sadiya market the Lama swords, spears and Mismi tita (a medicinal herb). The Adis and the hill Miris exchanged copper, wax, madder (dye), and jim cloth (cotton blanket) for the products of the plains. The Singphos brought ivory, copper and silver. The mutual benefits emerging out of this transaction helped in creating good feelings between the people of hills and plains. The participation of tribes of Arunachal Pradesh in the trade activities has been studied by A. K. Thakur in this article ('Pre-colonial Trade in Arunachal Pradesh: A Reconstruction of Economic History', *Resarun* Vol. XXVII, 2001, pp. 17-27, Journal of the Directorate of Research, Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh, special issue on Golden Jubilee of the Department of Research, Itanagar, 2002).

Payment of Posa

Braj Narain Jha in his article 'Politics of Posa: A Case Study of Pre and Post Independence Scenario in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam' (*Proceedings of the Indian History*

NOTES

Congress, 57th session, Madras, 1996, pp. 446-58) analyses the background of the origin of the Posa, its nature and provides the gamut of historiography related to its nomenclature. The bias in the writings of the British period and even after (especially from the Assam centric history writing) and equating the posa with 'blackmail' have also been critically analysed by Jha. This article situates the problem of Posa comprehensively. The term 'Posa' literally means a collection of subscription for a common purpose. When this term is used to explain the payments made to the tribes of the hills, it represents the subscription which was collected by the villagers in order to meet the customary demands of the hill people. In the official glossary of terms of the British period the term is explained as the 'allowances paid to certain tribes of the hills inhabiting the hills on the northern frontier of Assam bordering Darrang and Lakhimpur, on account to commuted 'black mail', or in consideration of the abandonment by them of their claims with regards to certain duars.' In general, the term posa came to be applied to all payments made to the tribes of the hills by the governments; whether it was in commutation of blackmail, compensation for customary demands of the tribal chiefs of the bordering hills of Arunachal Pradesh. It can neither be compared with 'blackmail' nor 'the *chauth* of Marathas', nor a 'barbarian cupidity'. It was the outcome of a well negotiated policy initiated by the Ahom rulers between the subjects of the plains of Assam (paiks), hill chiefs of Arunachal Pradesh and the Ahom rulers. A triangular relation existed among the Ahom state, the Paiks and the tribal chiefs receiving posa. The recipients of posa paid tribute to the Ahom king and in lieu of that they were granted the right to collect a fixed annual amount of posa from the Paiks of the adjoining foot hill of Assam and also provided their services, sometimes to particular chiefs. For fulfilling these obligations certain remissions in the state demand were given to those paiks. All the payments were made in kinds. Jha rightly concludes '... the nature of posa (was) based on the socio political realities of the contemporary period of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh .... it has often been wrongly interpreted as blackmail.' Knowingly or unknowingly most of the writers of history of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam write the posa system as the blackmail, to meet the need of the hills. Contrary to these approaches S. Dutta in his article 'The Posa System: A Historical Analysis' (S. Dutta and B. Tripathy (eds.), *Sources of the History of Arunachal Pradesh*, Gyan Publishing, New Delhi, 2008, pp. 161-82) and Amrendra Kr Thakur in his article 'Sat Rajas of Arunachal Pradesh: A Study' (in J. B. Bhattacharjee and D. R. Syiemlieh (eds.), *Early States in North East India*, Regency Publications, New Delhi, 2013, pp. 190-211) also provide some other details of the posa system.

The observation of A. Mackenzie (*The North East Frontier of India*, reproduced 1999, Mittal, New Delhi, p.21) is relevant to be mentioned about the nature and system of posa. He writes, 'It is a mistake to suppose that the posa, which, as we shall see, was paid to most of the tribes of the hills bordering on the plains, was an uncertain, ill-defined exaction, depending in amount upon the rapacity of the different hordes who might descend to levy it. It was really a well ascertained revenue payment, on account of which a corresponding remission was made in the State demand upon the ryot satisfying it. It may have had its origin in encroachment, or it may have been based upon customary and primeval rights asserted by the hill men, but it was a distinct feature in the revenue system of the country when the British annexed Assam.'

In this way the posa system originated due to certain exigencies of the time. The Ahom King Pratap Singha gave to it a formal shape. The posa was granted to the Bhutias, the Akas, and Daflas, and the Miris. The Ahom king Gadadhar Singha conciliated the Daflas 'by assigning to them a number of paiks in the duars. They were called Dafla

NOTES

Bahatias, or the serfs of the Daflas. Every ten houses of the Dafla Bahatias used to pay to the Daflas per year on double cloth, one napkin, one *dao*, ten heads of cattle, and four seer of salt. Similarly, each family of Bahatias assigned to the *Hazari khowa,* the Akas used to pay a portion of female dress, one bundle of cotton thread, and one napkin. They also serviced as labourers under Akas.

Consequential to the commutation of Posa to cash by the British, the annual receipts of the various beneficiaries were estimated as follows:

Nyishis (Daflas)	₹1020/-
Bhooteahs (Sherdukpents of Rupa and Shergaon)	₹2526-7/-
Tagee Akas Raja and Kuppachor Akas	₹580/-
Hazaree Khoa Akas	₹88/-
Thebengia Bhooteahs (Bapus of Thembang)	₹145-13.6/-
Tawang Raja	₹5000/-

Grant of land and the origin of the Kotokis

The policy of friendly relation of Ahom rulers with the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh is also reflected through the measure of the grant of fertile land (*Khats*) in the foothills to the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh especially to the Noctes (generally mentioned in the contemporary literature as the Nagas) for cultivation. The Ahom rulers also considered the tribes inhabiting the area south of Sibsagar district of Assam, such as Namchangias (Namsangias), Bardurias, Banferas, Chagnois, Tablungias, Panidurias, etc., as their subjects, and claimed its right to share with the Nagas the produce of the salt manufactured in the Lower hills. In the *Buranjis* it is mentioned that Naga chiefs used to pay tributes to the Ahoms and received grants of Khats and of *bheels* or fishing waters in the plains in lieu of the same. The Naga chiefs were also allotted paiks like the other tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and the Ahom nobility.

The Ahom king Pratap Singha (1603-1641), started the institution of Kotokis in order to regulate his relation with the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and other neighbours. The British found this mechanism useful and continued the same. Pratap Singha highlighted the importance of the Kotokis in these words: 'Kotokis should be like shieldmen. Your words alone constitute your rice and cloth.' The Kotokis who were employed to deal with the tribal were familiar with the customs and dialects of the tribals. The Kotokis were the agents of the Ahom government who conducted political and diplomatic relations with the neighbouring powers. The role of the Kotokis in the Ahom-tribal relation as 'go-between' or of the 'intermediaries' between the Ahom and other powers is a well know fact. It was possible mainly because of they were very intelligent and educated persons and in most of the cases, their capacity to argue and presentation of facts were the decisive factors. The services of the Kotokis were also utilized 'to carry and to explain the letters, orders, and request of the Ahom monarchs to the neighbouring powers'. We have, however, enough evidence to suggest that they also played an important role in determining the terms of agreement between the tribes of Arunachal and Ahom. The Ahom government appointed a number of *Katakis (or Kotokis)* to look after and manage the Khats. The katakis were appointed mainly to maintain a 'the channel of communication between the government and the tribes.' 'They also kept a watch over the movement of the hill people' and 'were paid by a remission of the poll tax.' One important feature of the tribal-Ahom relations was the role played by the Kotokis in promoting and maintaining these relations. Gait clearly writes (p.113), 'In order to stop the acts of oppression

NOTES

latter were wandering for permanent settlement. The Nagas did not welcome the first invaders and gave tough resistance to them. The Ahom king Sukapha terrorized them by adopting brutal method of suppression. Later on the Ahoms conciliated with them (as has been discussed already). Conflict between the Ahoms and the Nagas continued throughout the whole period of the Ahom rule. The main causes of the conflict were the right to use the Naga products and control over the salt wells. The Nagas of Jaypur, Namsang, Paniduria and Barduria lived mainly by manufacturing salt, which they traded in Assam. There were as many as eighty-five salt wells in the lower hills. The Ahom government imposed a nominal tax on the salt brought for sale by the Nagas. Later Ahom rulers (for example Purandar Singha) employed their own men to extract salt from the wells.The basic source of conflict between the Noctes and the Ahom were the salt-springs and wells and according to the Buranjis, the Ahom seized a salt-well in Mohang in 1536, and in due course of time enjoyed either exclusive rights on several such wells or share in the salt produced in them. There are also evidences to suggest that some of the groups of Noctes entered into friendly alliances with the Ahoms. One Bonfera chief named Karangpha entered in close friendly relations with the Ahoms. King Pratap Singha (1603-1641) tried to check the Naga attacks by constructing a rampart called the Naga-garh. But the Naga raids could not be prevented permanently. During the rule of King Gadadhar Singha (1681-1696) the Namsangia Nagas attacked an Ahom salt mine in 1692. They again attacked on a salt mine at Barhat in 1701. King Rudra Singha (1696-1714) subdued them. But there is one instance of 1576 when the Nagas obtained a remarkable victory over the Ahoms, and it was decided that the Nagas would use the salt springs of Longpong during the daytime and the Ahoms at night. Amrendra Kr Thakur in his article 'Salt: Sources and Struggle in Arunachal Pradesh', (*Proceedings of North East India History Association*, 30th session, Nagaon, pp. 124-136) provides a details accounts of the struggle between the Noctes and the Ahoms for the same.

The Ahoms considered the Nagas as a whole of their subjects and they were asked to pay tribute in the form of slaves, elephant teeth, spear shafts, goat's hair and above all these salt. In return, the Ahom government granted lands (*khats*) to the Nagas. The Ahoms had good relations with some of the Nagas. Sometimes the Ahom kings acted against one Naga group on the request of the other Naga group. Thus, in 1665 on the request of the Banfer or Banpara Nagas the Ahom King Chakradhvaj Singha (1663-1670) attacked on the Banchang Nagas, and defeated them. Their houses were destroyed. In fact, the Ahoms had special relationship with the Banferas. In fact, the enmity among the Nagas themselves prevented a united resistance of theirs against the Ahoms. In spite of this, the Nagas could not be subdued permanently and their insurrections occurred throughout the Ahom rule. It may be mentioned here that the Nocte-Ahom relationships were not always based on friction and enmity, but friendship, commercial and cultural intercourse also existed between them. Evidences show that the Namsangia, Borduaria and Paniduaria Noctes traded with the Ahoms for the supply of salt to the plains of Assam. A nominal tax was imposed by the Ahoms on the salt brought from the hills. By the way of trade, the Noctes also developed cultural contacts with the plains of Assam. A section of them came under the influence of Vaishnavism and adopted a very elementary form of Vaishnavism which was rather a compromise between some tenets of this sect and the tribal ways. Ajay Kr Mishra in his article 'Religious Practices of the Noctes of Arunachal: Exposure and Response' (*Proceedings of North East India History Association*, 25th (Silver Jubilee) session, Shillong, 2004, pp. 265-273) provides detailed accounts of impact of the Neo-Vaishnavism and the title given to the Nocte chief as 'Narrottam'.

NOTES

(There is a story that one of the Ahom King Supimpha's wives happened to see a Banfera Naga chief who had come to pay tribute. She praised the beauty of the Naga chief. The king, being unhappy with this, gave away his wife to the Naga chief. She was pregnant that time and subsequently gave birth to a son in the Naga village. King Suhungmung, the Dihingia Raja (1497-1539) became very much impressed to see the boy, named Senglung, who used to come to pay tribute. He also came to know that his mother was already pregnant before Supimha sent her away. Suhungmung patronised Senglung by creating a new post of Barpatra Gohain for him. This post was made equal to those of the Bar Gohain and Burha Gohain).

5.2.3 Ahom's Relations with the Nyishis

The Ahom –Nyishi relations has also been studied in details by Lakshmi Devi (op.cit., pp. 217-234). The Nyishis are mentioned as the Daflas in the contemporary Ahom documents and consequently the British documents as well as the historians of the post-independence period used the same term for the Nyishi. This terminology is, however, not used nowadays. The Nyishis of Arunachal Pradesh are settled mostly in the hills north of Nao Duar (the nine passes) in Darrang and Che-Duar (the six passes) in Lakhimpur. Those who resided on the border of Darrang were known as '*Paschima* or *Western Daflas*', and those on the border of North Lakhimpur were called as the '*Tagin* or *Eastern Daflas*'. On the west, the Akas were their neighbours and on the east lived the Galo, Adis and the Hill Miris. They occupied the territory situated between the Bhorali river on the west and the upper courses of Subansiri river on the east. The Nishis were divided into two broad categories. The eastern members of the tribe living on the borders of Lakhimpur, called themselves Ni-Sing or Nyising and were called Tagin Daflas by the Assamese. In the western branches, settled near the plains and foothills of Darrang, they were called Bag-ni or Bang-ni and the Assamese called them Paschima Daflas.

One important feature of the Nishi tribes was that they were not organized in one or two single groups, but were rather a collection of small clans which were independent of each other, and as such rarely resorted to any combined actions. The number of chiefs who were recognized by the British government for the grant of posa clearly shows this. The total number of such chiefs was 238. The form of government of the Nishis was oligarchical and there were 30 to 40 chiefs in a single clan. The Ahoms came into contact with the Nyishis only after the annexation of the Sutiya territories (1522-23).

We get the first reference of any contact between the Nishis and the Ahoms in the year 1614 during the reign of Pratap Singha in Assam. Provoked by the attack of the Nishis in the plains, the king ordered Lako Borpatra and Bharali Gohain to proceed against the Nishis on the frontier of Darrang. However, this expedition resulted in heavy losses for the Ahoms and a number of soldiers were killed by the Nishis, and the two Ahom officers were compelled to return back. Thus, in the very first contact between the Nishis and the Ahoms, the latter realized the ferocious nature of the former. It was, therefore, thought proper to follow a policy of give and take by the Ahoms and in order to put some check to the raids of the Nishis, Pratap Singha constructed a Dafla-garh (fortification) in the eastern parts of the Tezpur sub-division of Darrang division which was also known as 'Rajgarh.' The Nishis were also granted posa by the Ahoms. A number of Paiks were assigned to the Nishis in the duar areas who became known as Dafla-bahatias or the serfs of the Daflas and an officer known as Dafalaparia Phukan was appointed to look after these men. In the relations with the Ahoms the Nyishis

NOTES

proved to be the most formidable. The Ahom prime minister, Atan Burhagohain's, acceptance that 'it was impossible to capture the Daflas' and 'the Dafla miscreants can be captured only if an elephant can enter into a rat-hole' clearly indicates the strengths of the Nyishis. In 1562, the Nyishis (along with the Koches) invaded the plains. The Ahom king Sukhampha, the Khora Raja (1552-1603) adopted defensive measures by constructing forts and appointing a new officer called Salal Gohain to keep the Daflas and Akas in check. King Pratap Singha had also got constructed a fort called the *Dafla Garh* in Darrang. This step was taken after an utter failure of the Ahom expedition against the Western Daflas in 1614. Pratap Singha even granted '***posa***' to the Nyishis in order to conciliate them. From an account of 13th May, 1825, we know that every year from every ten houses of Dafala-bahatias, the Nishis were entitled to receive one double cloth, one single cloth, one handkerchief, one *dao*, ten heads of horned cattle and four seers of salt. In addition, die Nishis must have received some paddy which is stated by Padmeswar Singh Naobakha Pukan and also by Col. White. Because of this, the paiks were given corresponding concessions in the tax which they paid to Ahoms.

These measures could not stop the Nyishi raids into the Ahom territory. Sutyinpha's (1644-1648) expedition of 1646, and King Sunyatpha's (or Udayaditya Singha, 1670-1672) expedition, (1672) against them could not bring success to the Ahoms. The Nyishis were supported by the Hill Miris in their fight against the Ahoms. King Gadadhar Singha (1681-1696) pacified with the Daflas by placing at their disposal a number of people (known as the Dafla-Bahatia). King Rudra Singha (1696-1714) was also successful in invoking the Nyishis to send their troops in his proposed invasion of Bengal. The Western Daflas, numbering six hundred, came down from the hills north of Darrang to join the Ahom army. But after Rudra Singha's death in 1714, their relationship again turned hostile. King Siva Singha (1714-1744) subdued the Daflas in 1717.

King Rajendra Singha (1751-1769) also tried to prevent the Dafla raids. He got erected forts and put restrictions on Daflas entrance to markets. The Daflas suffered badly due to the ban. At last, their delegation came for agreement. But the Ahom king was not satisfied. He got arrested the members of the delegation. The Daflas retaliated by capturing a number of plains people. After the event both the parties reached to an agreement and released the captives. The Daflas were allowed to levy posa on condition of their refraining from the act of aggression.

On the basis of above discussion we can say that the Nyishis always resisted the Ahom moves of expansion or restricting the Nyishis into the hills. During the initial contacts with the Nishis, the Ahoms realized the ferocious and independent nature of the former and in order to avoid any further complications, Posa was granted to them. Despite this, whenever the Nishis were in need of labourers and other necessaries of life, they simply came down to the plains and collected the dues from the villages. The Assam centric history portrays the Nyishi claim as the loot or plunder. The observation of Muhammad Kasim, a historian during the days of Aurangzeb mentions about the Nyishis is important to be mentioned here: 'The Daflas are extremely independent of the Assam Raja and whenever they find an opportunity, plunder the country contiguous to their mountains.' The introduction of the Posa system, however, was an important measure taken by the Ahom kings to regulate the Ahom-Nyishi relations.

5.2.4 Ahom's Relations with the Adis (Abhors) and Mishings (Miris)

The Adis were known as the Abors in the Ahom and British documents (however now-a-days Adi is popularly used in place of Abor). Now the Galos have separate identity, however earlier know as the Gallongs they were part and parcel of the Adi society,

NOTES

culture and identity. The Adis came into contact with the Ahoms when the Sutiya Kingdom was annexed to the Ahom territory in the year 1523 during the reign of Suhungmung, or Dihingia Raja. With this annexation the Ahom territories were extended up to river Subansiri, which was the homeland of the Adis, then called Abors. The Adis as whole lived in the East and West Siang, eastern border of the Upper Subansiri and the south western part of the Dibang Valley of present Arunachal Pradesh. Both belonged to the same origin, but in the process of migration the latter came down to the plains and settled along the north bank of Brahmaputra (Lakhimpur district of Assam). There had been close relationship between Adis and Mishings (Miris). In fact, the Mishings of the plains were claimed by the Adis as 'their dependents and runaway slaves.' The term 'Miri' in Assamese means go-between and true to this meaning, the Miris acted as such between the Adis and the traders of Assam. The Adis also claimed that all the fish and gold found in the rivers that flowed through their territory belonged to them.

Under the Ahom government, the plain Miris played the role of intermediaries between the Abors and the traders of Assam. There were other branches of Miris who were called the Hill Miris, and settled in the hills to the north of Sisi and Dhemaji (Lakhimpur District). The Ahom government had granted them right to posa similar to the Nyishis, Akas, Monpas and Sherdukpens. But still the Miris raided on the plains in 1655 and again in 1665. Their raid on Sadiya (1683) during the rule of Gadadhar Singha was very violent one. They set fire to the house of the Sadiya Khowa Gohain, destroyed the villages, and killed about two hundred people. However, the on the pressure of the Ahom king they had to submit. In the later period, too, the Miris created problem for the Ahom government especially during the Moamaria rebellion.

The Ahom government did not grant right to posa to the Adis, as it was granted to other tribes. The Adis had a different type of right, that is, they claimed 'absolute sovereignty over the Miris of the plains, and an inalienable right to all the fish and gold found in the Dihong river. The Ahom government had tacitly accepted such claims of the Adis. It had relieved the Miris of all revenue charges for performing services to the Abors. In this way the Ahoms had acknowledged the subjugation of Miris to the Abors.

The Adis had a peaceful relation with the Ahoms, and they were 'never known to commit an act of unprovoked ravage or outrage on the villages of the plains'. Rather, on one occasion the Abors (Padam Clan) rejected the Khampti proposal of combined attack on the Ahoms. The Padams got assistance from the Ahom government. Some of the Abors even came for help of the Ahoms during the Moamaria rebellion.

In recognition of this privilege that was given to them by the Ahoms, the Adis were supposed to pay an annual tribute to the Ahom government. Some historians have maintained that through such agreements, 'Posa' was granted to the Adis but this does not seem to be true. The concessions which were granted to the Adis by the Ahoms were not actually concessions but a mere recognition of the claims of the latter over the Miris. No direct relation worth mention ever existed between the Ahoms and the Adis and the Adis continued to trade with the outside world through the Miris. Likewise the Ahom Buranjis do not give us any clue of Aid-Ahom conflict.

5.2.5 Ahom's Relations with the Mishimis

The Mishings were the immediate neighbour of the Sutiyas and so after the annexation of the Sutiya kingdom, the Ahoms came into contact with the Mishmis. To the east of the

NOTES

Adis across the Dibang river lived various branches of the tribes who were collectively called the Mishmis. The clan, also known as Digaru Mishmis, lived to the west of Digaru river, near the famous Brahmakunda and were constantly in touch with the plains. They also acted as guides to the Hindu pilgrims visiting Brahmakunda. The Mezho lived to the north-east of Du river and traded with Tibet; the Maros lived south of Brahmaputra and their settlements were scattered and mixed up with Khamptis and Singphos. Various groups of Mishmis (such as, the Idus or Chulikata, the Taraon or Digaru and the Kamanor Miju) lived in the hills to the east of the Adis. At present they mostly inhabit in the Lohit, Anjaw and Dibang Valley districts of Arunachal Pradesh. The Ahoms had peaceful relations with the Mishmis. They had not been granted right to posa, but they enjoyed trade facilities. In fact, the Mishmis were keen traders and their contact with the neighbouring countries and the markets in Assam proved catalyst in facilitating the same. They used to come to Sadiya market with the hill produces. They traded mainly in musk, skins of animals, 'Mishmitita', some ivory and few other articles. The policy of non-intervention and better trade opportunities offered by the Ahoms led to the better relations between the Mishmis and the Ahoms.

There are not many references of the Mishmis in the *Buranjis* (the Ahom chronicle). King Sutyinpha (1644-48) got constructed a *Mishmi-garh*' (Rampart) to resist the Mishmi raiders. The only conflict that took place between the Mishmis and the Ahoms was during the reign of Ramdhraj Singha (1673-75), when, in the month of June in 1675, the Mishmis killed four Ahom priests in the Deoghar (temple) in Sadiya. When the Sadiyakhowa Gohain (he was an Ahom officer, who was appointed to guard the Sadiya frontier against the inroads of the tribes) informed the Ahom King of the incident and requested for assistance, the Mishmis, with the help of the Doanias, who are said to be the half-breeds of the Singphos, erected a stockade near a deep sheet of water. The combined strength of the Mishmis and Doaris compelled the Ahom forces to retreat and some Assamese villages were also burnt by the tribal near river Ziri.

The Ahom king then sent fresh reinforcements and also ordered Baraphukan to proceed against the Mishmis. A fort was erected at Tishing and the Ahom forces put up there. A few days later one Chaodang Kataki was sent to ask the Mishmis the reasons for their inroads. Chaodang brought back two hundred Mishmi men with him. Upon inquiry, it was revealed that four Mishmis who had committed the murders were Pude, Mirishang, Bajing and Phakushi. The Baraphukan and Sadiyakhowa Gohain were determined to capture and punish the offenders and the Ahom forces rather frightened the Mishmis who agreed to hand over the guilty. The culprits were subsequently handed over to the Baraphukan by the Mishmis along with some tributes. These culprits were put to death, and thereafter no major raid worth mention was carried out by the Mishmis over the Ahom territory. We have some evidence to show that the Ahoms recognized the possessions of the hills adjacent to the Dibang river by the Mishmis and the Mishmis paid four baskets of poison to the Ahoms as tribute. This fact is reflected in a stone pillar of octagonal shape found on the banks of Deopani river about 7 miles north of Sadiya. The agreement to this effect was signed in 1687 between the Mishmis and the Dihingia Phukan also known as 'Bargohain of Sadiya.' Thus the Ahoms followed a policy of equity and persuasion towards the Mishmis.

The *Sadiya Stone Pillar Inscription* (probably inscribed in about 1687) issued by the Dihingia Bargohain (the Ahom overlord of the Sadiya region) confirms a settlement between the Ahoms and the Mishmis. The Mishmis were asked to pay tribute to the Sadiyakhowa Gohain.

NOTES

5.2.6 Ahom's Relationship with the Khamptis

The Khamptis were probably the nearest kinsmen of the Ahom ruler of Assam and migrated to India from the ancient kingdom of Mung-Mau or Pong in Burma. The Khamptis entered in big numbers the borders of Sadiya in Assam in the middle of the 18th century due to constant wars and confusion in the Mogoung area. Being the close kinsmen of the Ahoms, the Khamptis were allowed to settle on the banks of Tengapani river in 1751 A.D. But the other migrants, particularly the Singhphos (of Burmese stock) ousted the Khamptis from their settlements, so they moved to the Sadiya region. South of Manbhum ranges on the bank of Buri Dihing there were four important Khamti villages. The Noa Dihing forms the west side of this rough square and on this river, were located the other nine Khamti villages. The banks of these rivers were very fertile and known for the settled rice cultivation. The Khamtis were rice cultivators, traders, warriors and good artisans. They used to come to the Sadiya market to buy and sell various articles. They had their small principality. E. R. Leach in his book *The Political System of the Highland Burma* (London, 1959) provides a detailed description of the origin, migration and settlement of the Khamptis in the areas of Arunachal Pradesh.

Things went on peacefully and no confrontation took place between the Khamptis and the Ahoms in the beginning. This peaceful co-existence did not continue for long. The opportunity to fulfill the political ambition of the Khamptis to expand their area of influence in the territories of Assam came only when the Ahom rulers were in trouble due to the Moamaria rebellion (1779-onwards). The Khamptis crossed the river Brahmaputra in 1794, ousted the Sadiyakhowa Gohain, the Ahom Governor of Sadiya, and established their rule over Sadiya with two chiefs namely Burha Raja and Deka Raja. The Ahom king was rather compelled to accept this agreement because of the overall adverse political condition. The Khamptis, however, were not contended with that and during the reign of Kamaleshwar Singha (1795-1811), came further down the plains in 1799 A.D. We have some evidence to suggest that the Khamptis were helped by some other Shan tribes such as Pan, Naras and Phakials and also by the Miris, Mishmis, the Muluks and the Adis. This time, however, the Khamptis were badly defeated by the Ahom army sent by the Prime Minister, Purnananda Burhagohain. The Burha Raja of the Khamptis was captured but was pardoned and re-established by the king. The Khamptis remained quiet for some time but certainly caused trouble to the Ahoms during the Burmese invasion of Assam (1816-1824), because the British found that the entire Sadiya tract was under the control of the Khamptis. Thus we see that the Khamptis took full advantage of their kinship relations when it suited them and forgot it at other times when the Ahoms became weak.

The Ahom Rule was on decline at that time. It seems that the Khamptis, at the time of the Burmese invasions of Assam, regained their hold over Sadiya.

5.2.7 Ahom's Relations with the Singphos

The Singphos, like the Khamptis migrated from the Upper Burma and settled in this part of Arunachal Pradesh. In the south of Manbhum ranges on the bank of Buri Dihing there were six Singpho villages. The Noa Dihing forms the west side of this rough square and on this river, were located the other eighteen Singpho villages. The banks of these rivers were very fertile and known for the settled rice cultivation. The Singphos were loosely organized under two significant chiefs of Bisa Gam and Duffa Gam across the Patkai ranges in Burma. Besides the fertile rice valley and the rich forestland, this

NOTES

area was rich in mineral resources such as coal, lime, iron, silver and petroleum. The indigenous tea-bushes and elephant-catching and trade in ivory tusk and elephants were other attractions of the area. The nearby forest was also abounded in the natural rubber trees, which were tapped and the juice was processed for producing rubber. The Singphos like the Khamptis were the keen traders in slaves; mostly captured from the territories of Assam and traded up to Bhamo or Yunnan province of China.

The engagement of Singphos with the Ahom ruler came during the reign of Kamaleswar Singha (1795-1811) when the Moamaria rebellion was at full swing. The Singphos entered into some understanding with the Moamaria rebels who had been defeated by the Ahoms, and attacked a number of villages in the eastern parts of Assam. They also imported some Burmese troops. When the Ahom king got this news, he sent troops under Deka Phukan. The Singphos, initially, were successful in checking the Ahom advances and also inflicted losses to them; but in a renewed attempt, the Ahoms were able to break the fort of the Singphos. An agreement was arrived at and the Ahom Prime Minister Purnananda Buragohain presented an Ahom girl named Rangili to the Singhphos chief Bichanong. Bichanong presented Rangili to the Burmese king in order to strengthen ties with him. The agreement of the Singphos with the Ahoms did not last long and during the time of the Burmese invasion of Assam, Singhphos like the Khamptis, made a number of attacks on the villages in the plains, carried away a number of slaves, and reduced the population of the village in the eastern parts considerably. About 3000 of the Assamese subjects were recovered from the captivity of the Singphos by Capt Neufville, the first Political Agent of Upper Assam. The problem of slavery abolition and occupation of Singpho land for tea cultivation were the areas of concern between the Singpho-British relation which will be discussed in the following units. The Singphos, thus, took full advantage of the troubled times of the Ahoms, and refused to be ever loyal to them after their appearance in Assam.

Highlights of the tribal-Ahom relations

When the Ahom rule was established in Assam, the tribal of Arunachal continued to follow their policy of trade and raids (extortion and plunder) on the plains of Assam. This policy of the tribal was the result of difficult geographical conditions of the hills, the want of the necessities of life in their areas and the traditional rights of the tribes of the hills upon the plain people of foothills of Assam to collect dues. The Ahom rulers of Assam when could cross the northern bank of the Brahamputra, assumed the responsibility of protecting their subjects from the raids of these tribes. Here it would be worth mentioning that any political or socio-economic relation between the tribal and the Ahoms was, in almost all the cases, initiated by the Ahom government and not by the tribal. Most of the tribes of Arunachal were very independent in nature and never desired any outside interference in their lives unless compelled by their existence at stake.

So far as the Ahoms were concerned, their policy towards the tribal of Arunachal was based on the policy of reconciliation and persuasion; for the occupation of the hill areas of Arunachal was out of question, and the Ahoms never had any desire to interfere with the polity of the tribal. The tribal were hardly influenced by the formative changes taking place in the plains of Assam, and continued to live during the Ahom period as they used to do thousands of years ago.

In order to protect their subjects from the raids of these tribal and also to maintain peace and tranquility in the area, the Ahoms granted the right of Posa to some of the

NOTES

tribes of Arunachal, and certain other concessions were given to the tribes, like the Adis, who were not granted Posa. The Ahom policy towards these tribes of the hills was of conciliation followed by the display of force whenever possible. However, in spite of the Posa and other concessions granted to them, most of the tribes often violated the friendly agreements and raided the villages in the plains. This rather compelled the Ahom government to send some punitive expedition against these tribes resulting in the loss of lives and properties. But, generally speaking, the Ahoms were able to maintain comparative peace and harmony with the tribes of Arunachal and in most of the cases these tribes accepted the Ahom sovereignty in the plains and paid tribute to them in return of the various concessions given by Ahoms.

Check Your Progress

1. What kind of weapons did the Ahom rulers have?
2. How can we summarize the Ahom policy?
3. How was the term, posa generally applied?

5.3 OTHER TRIBES

In this section, you will learn about Ahom's relations with some other important tribes of north-east such as Nagas, Khasis, Jaintias and Kacharis.

5.3.1 Nagas

In the 13th century, when there was the rise of the Kingdom of the Ahoms, a contact between the Ahoms and the Nagas was established. Originally from Burma, the Ahoms entered north-eastern Assam, via, the North Eastern Frontier and the Patkai range. Slowly, they established themselves in the plains of the Brahmputra valley. Sukapha was the first Ahom ruler of Assam and he succeeded in establishing the Ahom paramountcy over the tribes of the hills though he could not introduce Ahom rule amongst them.

It has been opined that the Ahoms were looking for food when they first attacked the Naga villages. Undoubtedly, the Nagas who despised interference in their affairs resisted the Ahom advance, but were not powerful enough to face repeated efforts of the Ahoms. This led to the subjugation of some tribes but whatever rule was established, did not last for long.

The retaliating Nagas even raided territories which were under the control of the Ahom kings. The tribes that the Ahoms subjugated lived near Assam's plains and were: Ao, Lotha, Konyak and Nocte. Despite defeating these tribes, no rule was established by the Ahoms over the Nagas, instead, they were pushed into showing their allegiance through payment of a tribute. A treaty between the Nagas and the Ahoms gave the Nagas an exemption from paying rent for the region meant for the purpose of fishing. The right to *posha*, a kind of tax, was granted to the Naga chief. According to J F Michael, 'Present inhabitants are the remains of the hill regions enlisted by the rajas of Assam and had been given the present lands as their reward of good service.'

The Nagas are of the opinion that though the Ahom rulers entered some Naga territories and compelled the Nagas to pay tribute, they were never under the Ahom rule. The forceful relations were always of a temporary nature. According to Butler, the supremacy of the Ahoms had been accepted by the Nagas, but they had been granted the exercise of freedom as far as their internal affairs were concerned.

NOTES

However, it does seem that compulsion and force was used to keep the Nagas in a relationship with the Ahoms. Lakshmi Devi is of the view that when in the 17th century, Lotha Nagas rebelled against the Ahoms, T C Phukan had severely dealt with them. This led to the Lothas agreeing to be under the Ahom rule

In the beginning of the 18th century, due to various reasons, the Ahom Kingdom had weakened. Taking advantage of this, the subjugated Nagas freed themselves. Following this, they began to raid the Ahom subjects.

The warlike tribes in the interiors never came in contact with the Ahom rulers. The Ahom rulers changed the policy they would follow with frontier tribes based on political exigencies, but more so on the ability of the tribe or the tribal chief. It is known that at the beginning of their rule, the Ahom rulers followed a policy of slow but steady penetration, occasionally attended with revolting cruelties. With a view to terrorizing the tribal people, the Ahoms followed the policy of terrorism and committed atrocities compelling the relatives of the Nagas to eat the flesh of their roasted brethren. This was the reason they did not get the support, faith and cooperation of the Nagas, instead got their enmity. When Nagas were raided by the Ahoms, their houses were burnt down, following which, they submitted and were pardoned and given compensation for the losses inflicted on them. The tribal chiefs were captured and beheaded.

These instances make it clear that there never were peaceful and friendly relations between the Ahoms and the Nagas. In times of declining power, the Ahoms followed a policy of appeasing the tribes of the frontier region. Post Pratap Singha's death, those who succeeded, failed at keeping the tribes subjugated. With decline of the kingdom, the tribes, along with the Nagas rose to take revenge for the excesses committed on them by the Ahoms, when they became powerful.

5.3.2 Khasis

According to the legends, the Khasis were said to be the earliest immigrants who made their way across northern Myanmar to the present location where they established new centre. Linguistically the Khasis represents a unique case of being the isolated austere group, speaking the dialects from the Mon Khmer family of languages which is spoken in the other South-East Asian region.

The tribes in Meghalaya can mainly be classified into three groups Garos, Khasis and Pnars or Jaintias. Garos are believed to be the descendants of Tibeto Burmar race who came down all the way from Tibet to the North-Eastern States while the Khasis and Pnars or Jaintias are the descendants of Proto Austroloid Monkhmer race. While Garos can be located in the Garo hills of Meghalaya, the Khasis are scattered all across the State and are known by different names.

Mainly, the pure Khasis can be sited at the Khasi hills, the Pnars or Jaintias can be located on Jaintia hills. Apart from these, there are many other tribes in Meghalaya. They are Bhois in the north of Meghalaya, Khynriams in the central and Wars in the southern region. They are all a sub-tribes of Khasis and live a lifestyle similar to that of the Khasis.

The term—Khasi is applied to the group of matrilineal and Mon Khmer speaking people who presently inhabit the east and the west Khasi Hills and the Jaintia Hills district of Meghalaya. The term includes Amwis and the Lyngams. Garo is a term used by others to refer to a particular group of people who are mainly concentrated in the

Garo hills. The Garos prefer to be called by *Mande* or *Achik*. The term—Jaintia is a generic term which includes the Pnars/Synteng and other sub groups.

NOTES

Anglo-Khasi War (1829–1833)

U Tirot Sing as a king of the Khasi people in the early 19th century, ruled in Nongkhlaw, which was part of the Khasi Hills convened a Durbar, where he passed orders for the British to evacuate Nongkhlaw. The British, under David Scott who was the agent to the British Governor General for the Northern Territory did not pay any heed to the order. That is how the Khasis attacked the British garrison in Guwahati on two April 1829 and killed two British officers. The British retaliated with a fury and started military operations against U Tirot Sing and other Khasi chiefs were started immediately. Thus began the Anglo-Khasi war during 1829–1833.

Although the Khasis lacked firearms and had only swords, shields, bows and arrows they resorted to guerrilla activity, when they found that it was impossible to engage in open battle against an enemy who could kill from a distance since they were untrained in the British type of warfare. The Anglo Khasi war continued for the next 4 year from 1829.

The might of the British colonial rulers over powered the Khasi's as U Tirot Sing was finally captured by the British and in 1832, the Khasi king was deported to Dhaka, where he died on 17 July 1835. His death anniversary is commemorated every year in Meghalaya.

After the Khasi king surrendered, the British increased their influence over the Jaintia Kingdom, which was finally annexed on 15 March, 1835. The king of Jaintiapur handed over his property in Sylhet and was given a monthly salary of '500.

The British administered the plain areas directly and the hill region indirectly via a system of 15 dolois and 4 sardars, as an agent of the British administrators. The 15 administrators were free to adjudicate on all but the most heinous crimes. Eventually, the British incorporated Meghalaya into Assam in 1835. Later, the British occupied the Garo Hills in 1872.

When Bengal was partitioned on 16 October 1905 by Lord Curzon, Meghalaya became a part of the new province of East Bengal, along with Assam. However, when the partition was reversed in 1912, Meghalaya became a part of the province of Assam.

5.3.3 Jaintias

It was in the beginning of the 17th century that the Ahoms and the Jaiantias first came into contact with each other. At that time, Pratap Singha (1603-1641) was the Ahom king. The Jaintia king, Jasa Manik formed a bond of friendship with King Pratap Singha by offering him two Jaintia princesses in marriage. The friendship was short-lived. With new rulers taking over the thrones of both the Ahoms and the Jaintias, hostility became the common factor. It ended only after AD 1662, when the Ahoms defeated the Mughals and drove them out of Gauhati. Yet, some skirmishes did take place between the Jaintias and the Ahoms even after 1662.

5.3.4 Kacharis

According to the Ahom-Buranji records, 'In ancient time, the heavenly King Sukhapa conquered the Sutiyas, the Kacharis, the Mataks, the Barahis, the Nagas and the

NOTES

Kamateswars. They were allowed to remain as they were on the condition that they offer tributes.'

Even the Purani Assam Buranji carries a similar statement. Chronicles also record that when Sui-Ka-Pha reached the valley of the Brahmaputra, these territories gave him their tributes. To quote, 'After this, the king Sukapha arrived in this country. He got homage and tributes from all.'

From what has been discussed, it would seem that Sukapha kept getting tributes from the Kacharis. The territory of the Kacharis was on River Dikhow's left bank.

The fact that the Kacharis paid tributes to Sukapha is further confirmed through the warning that was given to them by Suteupha (Sukapha's son) to pay tribute of move out of their territory right till Namdang River. The warning could have come, because seeing a new king, the Kacharis deliberately stopped payment of tribute.

The Ahom's were not averse to foul play, when it came to pushing the Kacharis out of the region they occupied. Here is an example to quote from I S Mumtaza Khatun's (Associate Professor, Department of History, University of Gauhati): The nature of the Ahom-Kachari relations can be quoted as follows:

On learning that the Kacharis were highly superstitious and could easily be duped, the Ahoms proposed that this should be decided by a test in which both parties dig separate canals. Whoever could link the canal with the river Dikhow, before daybreak would be considered the owner of the tract. The Kacharis, having agreed to the proposal, the two sides started digging the canals. In their attempt, the Kacharis almost surpassed the Ahoms, who, on learning this, brought some fowls and made the birds to crow as they would do before dawn. The night being a full-moon one, the Kacharis heard the fowls crowing and thought that it was already dawn. Thus, they left the canal incomplete while the Ahoms continued to dig and succeeded in finishing the task before dawn. The Kacharis, admitting defeat, surrendered the territory (till Namdang), to the Ahoms.

It took the Kacharis nearly 200 years to get back at the Ahoms and make them subordinates. They defeated the Ahom King Siu-hen-pha (AD 1488-1493) and forced them to offer a girl to the Kachari king.

Siu-hum-mong, was the ruler of the Ahom's from 1497 to 1539. He was not averse to using any means to establish the old territorial status with the Kachars. Headed by Kan Seng, an army was sent, which used dexterous means to take hold of region till the Dhansiri valley. This success made the Ahoms bold and they set on a path to crush the Kacharis. A battle ensued in 1531, in which, Khunkhara was defeated and the Ahoms put Detchungpha on the Kachari throne. He claimed to be descendent of the original Kacharis. Then, the Kacharis became subordinate to the Ahoms and in every Ahom correspondence, the term thapita was used for them, meaning established.

Some years later, the new Kachari king tried to assert independence and an Ahom army was sent against him that killed his mother and him. Prince Madan was taken to the capital of the Ahoms. Later, when the Kachari nobles made a solicitation to the Ahom king, Madan was put on the Kachari throne. He was renamed Nirbhaya Narayan. He was also given a girl by the Ahoms. Nirdhaya Narayan consented to pay annual tribute to the Ahoms. The Kachari king came to be known as thapita-sanchita which means established and preserved.

The Kachari kings wanted to shake off this title and used the smallest opportunity to free themselves of Ahom authority. Their first opportunity came when after having

NOTES

defeated the Ahoms, the army of the Koch led by Chilarai brought the Kachari kingdom under it. The Kacharis regarded this as the suzerainty of the Ahoms, leaving them forever. Therefore, when some years had gone by, during the reign of Pratap Singha, Sundar Gohain was killed by the Kacharis and they openly declared that they would stop all tribute paying to the Ahom overlords. At the same time, the Kacharis renamed their capital to Kirtipur and their king changed his name from Yasa Narayan to Pratap Narayan.

To quote I S Mumtaza Khatun's The Nature of the Ahom-Kachari Relations,

> Just after the accession of Sui-ram-pha in 1641, to the Ahom throne, after the death of Sui-sen-pha, the Kachari king, Indrabalnarayan, the successor of Bhimbalnarayan, deputed envoys with letters to the new Ahom king. These were sealed with *Singha-sab*, or the seal of independence, instead of the *Phukan sab*, or the seal of subordination, which he was supposed to use.

While one envoy was sent to get the communication again with the Phukan sab, the other was held by the Ahoms.

Another instance, in which the Kacharis tried to gain their independence, was when the Ahoms were under Mughal attack during 1615 to 1619. Bhimbala Narayana, the then Kachari king, in an attempt to assert his position, attacked a village which was part of the kingdom of the Ahoms. He was well aware that at such a time he would face no resistance from the Ahom forces.

Another time, following the invasion of Mir Jumla, envoys were dispatched by Chakradhvaj Singha to the Kachari Kingdom for information regarding Barchetiya, an Ahom officer, who had run off to the kingdom of the Kacharis. To begin with, Barchetiya was not returned by Bidarpa Narayan and he insulted the Ahoms by sending his reply through an envoy. This was not the existing etiquette. The letter was returned to the Kachari King, unaccepted by the Ahom ruler.

There are various such repeated incidents which show that while the Ahoms wanted the Kacharis under their subordination, the Kacharis incessantly strived to remain independent. The Ahoms expected the Kacharis to carry five letters in all diplomatic exchanges, for the king and the ministers. After having broken relations, if the Kacharis wanted to revive them with the Ahoms, they needed to provide five letters for the resumption of good relations. This was resented by the Kacharis. Yet this process was repeated time and again. Whenever the Kacharis did provide the five letters, the Ahoms promptly began to refer to them as thapita-sanchita. This was disliked by the Kacharis and they promptly made a demand for an Ahom girl, which would prove that they were really established, when in fact they knew that providing a girl would show the subordination of the Ahoms.

Though the Kacharis did not like to be called thapita-sanchita, they were only too happy to be such in a situation where the Ahom king was powerful. Also, the Kacharis rejoiced and declared their independence each time that a foreign invasion, like that of the Mughals took place on the Ahoms and they were pushed against the wall. Promptly, when the Ahoms were victorious, the Kacharis would rush to revive good relations.

According to I S Mumtaza Khatun's The Nature of the Ahom-Kachari Relations can be quoted as follows:

> Another point, which comes to our notice, is that the Ahom king himself never took any initiative to establish friendly relations or to revive such relations. In case of extreme necessity, the Ahom monarch sent envoys on behalf of his ministers as in the case of Pratap Singha, who, anticipating the Mughal invasion, sent five people on behalf of his ministers and the governor, to the Kachari court in AD 1615.

ACTIVITY

Talk to some people from the North East living in your locality or working with you. Find out how different is their lifestyle, as compared to yours.

DID YOU KNOW

North East possesses more than 550 varieties of orchids, which is said to be almost 70% of the total species of orchids identified so far.

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

4. How did the Ahoms come to India?
5. When did the Ahoms and the Jaiantias first come in contact with each other?
6. How long did it take for the Kacharis to get back at the Ahoms and make them subordinates?

5.4 SUMMARY

- In this unit, we have studied that the Ahom government adopted a policy of conciliation, as well as a policy of force towards various tribes of the north east.
- The Ahoms did not interfere too much in the affairs of the hills. Rather, they conciliated with the tribes by providing them many types of facilities and privileges.
- The Ahoms led very few expeditions towards the hills, because of many types of problems.
- The Ahoms were more or less successful in their dealings with the tribes of the hills and were able to control the tribes in the confines of the hills of Arunachal Pradesh, except the trade missions, in which they could enter beyond the foothills.
- The Ahoms also applied force against the tribes, whenever the situation demanded.
- The tribes of the hills also utilized the troubled times of the Ahoms, due to foreign invasions or the internal problems and chaos due to the rebellion of the Moamarias.

5.5 KEY TERMS

- ***Haat:*** Place to exchange goods
- ***Sama-dana-danda-bheda:*** The political methodologies prescribed by the scriptures
- **Historiographical:** A body of historical literature
- **Ambuscade:** Attack from an ambush
- **Duars:** The floodplains and foothills of the eastern Himalayas in North-East India around Bhutan. It means 'door' and symbolizes the region forming the gateway to Bhutan from India. This region is divided by the Sankosh river into the Eastern and Western duars. The Western duars is known as the Bengal duars and the Eastern duars the Assam duars.
- **Paik system:** A type of corvee labor system on which the Ahom kingdom of medieval Assam was based
- ***Posa*:** It is tributes paid in kind. In AD 1685, after the defeat of the Miris, Posa was renewed.
- ***Ryot*:** A general economic term used throughout India for peasant cultivators but with variations in different provinces
- ***Khats*:** Fertile land at foothills
- **Lingua franka:** A medium of communication between peoples of different languages
- **Overlord:** A ruler, esp especially. a feudal lord
- **Paramountcy:** The state of being paramount; the highest rank or authority
- **Warlike:** Suggesting war or military life

5.6 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The Ahom rulers had advanced war weapons (matchlocks and guns), large surplus production and the *paiks* to aggressively pursue their imperial policy.
2. The Ahom policy can be summarized like this: 'Conciliate these tribes by promising to furnish them their necessaries as far as possible. If they indulge in wanton pillages; pursue and capture the miscreants, but never overstep the limits'.
3. In general, the term posa came to be applied to all payments made to the tribes of the hills by the Governments; whether it was in commutation of blackmail, compensation for customary demands of the tribal chiefs of the bordering hills of Arunachal Pradesh.
4. Originally from Burma, the Ahoms entered north-eastern Assam, via, the North Eastern Frontier and the Patkai range.
5. It was in the beginning of the 17th century that the Ahoms and the Jaiantias first came into contact with each other.
6. It took the Kacharis nearly 200 years to get back at the Ahoms and make them subordinates.

5.7 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. List the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh.
2. What do you mean by *posa*?
3. What acts reflect the policy of friendly relation of Ahom rulers with the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh?
4. How were the relations between the Ahoms and the Nyishis?
5. What measures were used to stop the Nyishi raids into the Ahom territory?

NOTES

Long-Answer Questions

1. Explain the policy of conciliation of the Ahom rulers.
2. Write a note on the relations between the Akas and the Ahoms.
3. Discuss the policy of subjugation.
4. Summarize the highlights of the relations between the Ahoms and the tribals.

5.8 FURTHER READING

Gait, E.A.; *A History of Assam,* BiblioBazaar, US, 2010.

Choudhary, Pratap Chandra; *The History of Civilization of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.*, Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Assam, Assam, 1966.

Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan; *Social and polity formations in pre-colonial north-east India: the Barak Valley experience*, Haranand Publications in association with Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1991.

Sinha, Surajit; *Tribal Polities and State Systems in Pre-colonial Eastern and North Eastern India*, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 1987.

Chakravarty, I. N., Chakravarty, Lakshmi N.; *Glimpses of the Early History of Arunachal*, Research Department, Arunachal Pradesh Administration, Arunachal Pradesh, 1973.

Barpujari, Heramba Kauta; *Assam in the Days of the Company: 1826 - 1858: a Critical and Comprehensive History of Assam during the Rule of the East-India Company from 1826 - 1858*, North-Eastern Hill University Publications, Assam, 1996

Barpujari, Heramba Kauta; *The Comprehensive history of Assam*, Publication Board, Assam, 1990.

M. Horam; *Naga Polity*, B.R. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1975.

M. Horam; *Social and Cultural Life of Nagas: (the Tangkhul Nagas)*, B.R. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1977.

Sangkima; Mizos, *Society and Social Change, 1890-1947*, Spectrum Publications, New Delhi, 1992.

Sangkima; *A Modern History Of Mizoram*, Spectrum Publications, New Delhi, 2004.

Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan; *The Garos and the English, 1765-1874*, Radiant Publishers, Hyderabad, 1978.

Kar, Parimal Chandra; *Garos in Transition*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1982.

Venuh, N. and Bonita Aleaz; *British Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2005.

Lahiri, Rebati Mohan; *The Annexation of Assam: 1824-1854*, General Printers & Publishers, Mumbai, 1954.

Bhuyan, Suryya Kumar; *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, Lawyer's Book Stall, Assam, 1974.

Elwin, Verrier; *The Nagas in the 19th Century*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1969.

Lahiri, Nayanjot; *Pre-Ahom Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi, 1991.

Birinchi, B.K. and Banikanta Kakati; *Cultural History of Assam*, K. K. Barooah, Assam, 1951.

Basu, Nirmal Kumar; *Assam in the Ahom Age, 1228-1826: Being Politico-economic and Socio-cultural Studies*, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Kolkata, 1970.

Nath, R.M.; *The Background of Assamese Culture*, A. K. Nath, 1948.

Bareh, Hamlet; *The History and Culture of the Khasi People*, Spectrum Publications, Gauhati, 1967.

Chatterjii, S. K.; *The Place of Assam in the History and Civilization of India,* Gauhati University, Gauhati, 1970.

Dani, A. H.; *Prehistory and Protohistory of Eastern India,* Firma L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1960.

Dhavlikar, M. K.; *Bulletin of the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute* 31-32: 137-49, Archaeology of Gauhati, 1973.

NOTES

UNIT 6 DECLINE OF THE AHOM STATE AND EARLY COLONIAL INTERVENTION

Structure

6.0 Introduction
6.1 Unit Objectives
6.2 Moamaria Rebellion
6.3 Captain Welsh's Mission
6.4 Burmese Aggression
6.5 Summary
6.6 Key Terms
6.7 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
6.8 Questions and Exercises
6.9 Further Reading

6.0 INTRODUCTION

The Ahom state began to decline from the time of Gaurinath Singha (1780-1795). In 1782, the Moamarias insurrection rose again with renewed vigour and increased violence. They advanced to Garhgaon and created panic among the population. The advance was halted and the rebels were treated with severity and many were executed. Such a step aggravated the situation. After a brief pause, the disturbances caused by the Moamarias swept down across the north bank. The Moamaria rebellion during the 18th century was a conflict between the Morans, adherents of the Moamara Sattra, and Ahom kings. After defeating the royalists, the Moamarias advanced towards the capital. The Morans are a tribal group of Mongol origin who live in the North East districts of Assam. It is believed they migrated from the Hukong valley of Upper Burma. Assistance was sought from Manipur, Kachari, Jaintia and the chiefs of Rani, Beltola, and Luki. Before the help arrived, the rebels occupied Rangpur; Gaurinath Singha with the members of his family sailed downstream, and reaches Nagaon, and then to Gauhati. At Rangpur, the Moamarias set up Bharath Singha as king; but the Hatisungi Morans set up Sarbananda as their king of the territory to the east of Dihing and both minted coins in their names. Krishnanarayan of Darrang had also organized a large force and occupied north Gauhati. Purnananda Buragohain shifted the centre of administration of Dichoi, later known as Jorhat, which became the new Ahom capital.

Under the circumstances, Gaurinath Singha appealed for help of men and materials to the East India Company's authorities through Raush, a salt merchant and Dauglas, Commissioner of Koch Bihar. In response to this, Lord Cornwallis, the Governor General despatched Captain Thomas Welsh with sepoys who arrived at Goalpara in early November, 1792; and from there, on receiving urgent message from the king moved upstream the Brahmaputra. The meeting between the king and Capt. Welsh took place at Nagarberra on the Brahmaputra. Advancing further, Captain Welsh suppressed the rebellious elements at Gauhati and on the north bank. He also pacified Krishnanarayan, the rebellious prince at Darrang and expelled many of the Burkendazes who assisted

him. Sometime later he advanced to Jorhat, and then to Rangpur where he defeated the Moamarias, and restored the authority of Gaurinath Singha at Rangpur in 1794.

This unit will discuss the Moamaria rebellion in the 18th century, the advent of captain Welsh and the Burmese aggression in the early 19th century.

6.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the phases of Moamaria rebellion from 1769 to 1806
- Interpret the reason behind Captain Welsh's mission
- Discuss the Burmese aggression

6.2 MOAMARIA REBELLION

The Moamoria rebellion occurred from 1769 to 1806. The conflict occurred in the 18th century between the Ahom kings and Morans who were the adherents of the Moamara Sattra. It caused general and extensive disgruntlement amongst the populace against the Ahom king and the nobles. It spanned two periods during which the Ahom kings were bereft of all control over the capital of their kingdom. When they managed to take back their capital, there was nothing but widespread slaughter of the subjects because of which huge areas were bereft of population. It had not been possible to get back his entire kingdom for the Ahom king. Bengmara which was part of the north-east region of the kingdom gained virtual independence from Ahom rule.

The rebellion had greatly weakened the kingdom of the Ahoms. It destroyed approximately half of the population and played havoc with the economy of the kingdom. Thus weakened, the Ahom kingdom became an easy target for invasion and the Burmese invasion followed. The next devastation was the colonization of the region by the British.

Crisis had been brewing in the Ahom Kingdom as the basis of the state, the Paik system was not flexible enough to change and adapt to the changes in society and economy. The leakage of manpower from the Paik system was caused in one way by the rise of the sattra. This led to tension and conflict between the Ahom kingdom and the sattras. The Moamara sattra which had Moran tribes' people as adherents followed the nonconformist Kala-samhati sect that competed against the royalist sattras belonging to other sects. As this sattra grew, the Ahom kingdom also grew more and more uncomfortable. To try to suppress them, the Ahom kingdom resorted to their repression and to insulting the sattra's followers.

As time went by, the guru of the Moamoria compromised with the Ahom rulers. Inspiration was gained by the rebels from the magico-religious cult of night worshipers, which was a mix of Tantricism and tribal fertility rites.

Sattra–Ahom conflict

In the sixteenth century, the Mahapuruxiya Dharma was established by Srimanta Sankardeva. This was a religion which was proselytizing and was one which opened itself to everyone, even the tribesmen and the Muslims. It was a religion which made available such opportunities to the common tribesmen that would help to better them economically and socially. Also, the sattras made available to them a safe escape from the mandatory labour they had to perform under the system of Paik.

The new religion propounded by Sankardeva appeared like a huge threat to the Ahom rulers. When Suklenmung was on the throne, to escape persecution Sankardeva ran off to the Koch kingdom. Pratap Singha, who was a later king, destroyed both the Kuruabahi and the Kalabari sattras setting president for his successors who carried on a similarly oppressive policy. This policy of oppression was changed by Jayadhwaj Singha and the rulers who succeeded him, till Sulikphaa Lora Roja made attempts to accept and live with the sattras. When Gadadhar Singha ascended the throne, he reversed the policy again. He started the persecution of the sattras. Rudra Singha, the son of Gadadhar Singha, made attempts to isolate those who were more of a threat to the Ahom kingdom, these would be the ones who were more liberal and were of the non-Brahmin sattras. He put in all effort to promote the Brahmin sattras. When the failure of his policy became evident to him, he changed course and began to provide saktism with state support. Saktism was the historical and theological *bete noire* of the Mahapuruxiya dharma. He was sure that this policy would curb the influence of the sattras. His new policy caused much greater persecutions. The one which is of greatest significance is the one that occurred in the time of Siba Singha under Bor Roja Phuleshwari Kunwonri. The conflict remained unresolved and came to the front finally in the form of the 18th century Moamoria rebellion which made the Ahom kingdom weak and hollow to such an extent that with the coming of the 19th century it collapsed.

The First Phase

Ahom officials flogged a sattra's leading disciple, Ragh Neog, on the 15th of September 1769. The reason for the flogging was that he had not made available the number of elephants that were required. Ragh Neog, Naharkhora Saikia and his two wives Radha and Rukmini led the Morans, assured the three Ahom princes (the king's (Lakshmi Singha's) brother Mohanmala, and two nephews of the king) that they would help to liberate the area lying to the north of river Burhidihing. And this they did. The Ahom capital was occupied by the rebels on 21st November, 1769. Naharkhora's Ramananda was put on the throne. Lakshmi Singha, the defeated Ahom king, was captured and imprisoned. The defeated king's high officers were executed. Three of the common Morans were made the three great Gohains. Two common Ahoms were made the Gohains at Marangi and Sadiya, a *kanri paik* was made the Borphukan and Ragh Neog became the Borbarua.

There was lack of experience amongst the rebels as far as statecraft was concerned. Due to this missing ingredient, they were unable to bring any kind of new order and in a bid to imitate them, they ended up doing just the same as their erstwhile leaders. Many daughters and wives of noblemen were seized by Ragh Neog and added to his harem. Many of the new rebel officers started imitating and behaving just like the old nobility had done and this caused dissatisfaction to the other rebels. These rebels, under the leadership of Govinda Gaoburha, moved from the capital and entered Sagunmuri. This situation was seized by a few persons of the old nobility who lost no time in putting Ragh to death and took back their capital. This they achieved on 11th April, 1770 aided by Kuranganayani who was an Ahom queen from Manipur. The following purge led to the execution of, amongst others, the Moamara sattradhikar and his son Saptabhuj, Rukmini, Radha, Astabhujdev, Naharkhora and Ramananda the rebel king.

Once the Ahoms had managed to recapture their capital, the rebels under the leadership of Govinda Gaoburha in Sagunmuri made an attempt to again dethrone the king. Even this attempt and movement were characteristic of a popular uprising. Weapons that the rebels mostly employed were clubs and bamboo staffs. The slogan that they

chanted was *praja-oi joroiroa, chekani-oi sopai dhora* ('Ye oppressed subjects, hold your stave close'). The uprising under Govinda Gaoburha's leadership is referred to as chekani *kubua ron* ('The war of the staves'). During the course of one such engagement, the Dhekial Phukan and the Borpatrogohain lost their lives while the Borgohain had a narrow escape. Marching on towards Rangpur, the rebels met forces at Thowra. The forces comprised fighters of the Burhagohain, the new Borpatrogohain, the Borgohain and a detachment cavalry sent by the king of Manipur. The rebels faced a defeat in this encounter. Their leader Govinda Gaoburha was taken captive and put to death.

Several rebels went off into the deep forests and from there, with leadership from men like Lephera, Parmananda and others carried on continuing guerilla warfare. At the very start under the leadership of the Deka-Phukan and the Na-Phukan a royalist force tried to further the cause but met with defeat. A while later, another force now under the leadership of the Borpatrogohain managed to get rid of Parmananda and Lephera. Then on, the Burhagohain followed a systematic obliterating village as also the leaders who remained. In a seize, starvation led to the death of many rebels along with their families. Those who survived were separated and settled at different places. Finally, Nomal, probably the last holdout, was captured and executed. With this, Moamoria rebellion's first phase came to a close.

The Second Phase

Rebels who were armed attacked Garhgaon and Rangpur in April 1783. Though the rebels were driven away, what followed was a month-and-a-half-long continuous slaughter of Morans.

An army of Dafla-Bahatiyas and Moamarias was raised by Harihar Tanti in the year 1786. Auniati sattra had kept a grandson of the late Moamara sattradhikar, Pitambar, in his custody. Pitambar was freed by a contingent of the rebels. In 1788, on 19 January, Rangpur was surrounded by rebels. The king Gaurinath Singha as well as the inhabitants of the capital fled. This region which was captured began to be administered locally. Brahmaputra's north bank was administered by Harihar Tanti, Majuli was under Howha and the Moran tracts from Bengmara (present-day Tinsukia) were under Sarbananda. The position of King was given to Bharat. Regular striking of coins was done in the names of Sarbananda and Bharat. The regrouping attempt made by Purnananda Burhagohain failed and he established himself in Jorhat, the vanguard of the royalist forces. Darrang is where the Ahom nobles set up camp while Nagaon was where the king stayed. The king met with dissensions due to which on 11 June, 1792 he moved to Gauhati.

About 1792, counter attacks started when an attack made by the Manipuri king was warded off by Bharat. In the same year, the East India Company sent 550 fully armed well-trained troops along with Thomas Welsh to help the Ahoms. On 24 November, 1792, facing no resistance they captured Gauhati. Next, on 18 March, 1794, they gave Rangpur to Gaurinath Singha. Thomas Welsh was awarded prize money and on 25 May, 1794 he returned to Bengal. In 1794 itself, Gaurinath Singha passed away in Jorhat. Kamaleswar Singha succeeded him. The suffering of the rebels did not abate under his rule and they suffered further reverses. The experience that they had with the troops of Thomas Welsh and their military display inspired the Ahoms to do away with the *paik*-based militia and establish for themselves a standing army comprising mostly paid Hindustani sepoys.

The fate of the rebels was not too good. In 1796, the rebel Phopai was killed, rebel king Bharat was killed in 1799 while 1800 Sadiya fell to the royalists. In spite of many attempts through 1802 and 1806, Sarbananda held out from Bengmara. Finally, the title of Barsenapati was conferred on him and he was the given the territory of Matak.

So, Moamaria rebellion came to an end managing to nearly finish the Paik system as also create a near-independent Matak tract under the rule of Barsenapati.

Check Your Progress

1. The _____ rebellion occurred from 1769 to 1806.
2. In the sixteenth century the _____ was established by Srimanta Sankardeva.
3. Saktism was the historical and theological *bete noire* of the Mahapuruxiya dharma. (True/False)

6.3 CAPTAIN WELSH'S MISSION

The decline of the Ahom kingdom started with the rule of Gaurinath Singha (1780–95). The rebellion of the Moamarias began again in 1782, this time more violent and more vigorous. The rebels marched to Garhgaon, pushing the population into panic. The rebels' advance was arrested, with the rebels being severely put down and execution of a huge number from amongst them. This just worsened the situation and after giving it a little time, the Moamarias created disturbances across the north bank. The royalists were defeated by the Moamarias and post this victory they headed towards the capital.

The king looked towards Manipur, Kachari, Jaintia and the chiefs of Rani, Beltola, and Luki for help. Before assistance could arrive Rangpur was taken over by the rebels and Gaurinath Singha along with his entire family sailed off to Nagaon, then further to Gauhati. In Rangpur, Bharath Singha was made the king by the Moamarias. Meanwhile, Hatisungi Morans made Sarbananda the king of the region lying east of Dihing. Coins were struck in the names of both the kings. North Gauhati too had been occupied, by Krishnanarayan of Darrang who had done so with the help of a large force.

The administrative centre of Dichoi (Jorhat) was moved by Purnananda Buragohain and at a later stage it was made the new capital of the Ahoms.

This was when an appeal was made by Gaurinath Singha seeking help from the East India Company through Raush, a salt merchant and Dauglas, Commissioner of Koch Bihar for both materials and troops. The Governor General, Lord Cornwallis, responded by sending Captain Thomas Welsh with a troop of trained and armed sepoys. They reached Goalpara at the beginning of November, 1792. Here, they got the king's urgent message. On the Brahmaputra at Nagarberra, a meeting was held between Thomas Welsh and the king.

From there, Captain Welsh moved further and both at Gauhati and on the river's north bank he was able to defeat the rebels. At Darrang, Welsh even succeeded in pacifying the rebelling prince Krishnanarayan, and expelling a number of the Burkendazes who were assisting the prince. After a while, welsh marched to Jorhat, then onwards to Rangpur where post being victorious over the Moamarias, in 1794 he reestablished Gaurinath Singha at Rangpur.

NOTES

While Capt. Welsh was gaining one success after the other, the new Governor General Sir John Shore recalled him. While he had been in Assam, in 1793 itself Welsh had concluded a commercial treaty under whose terms the inter Bengal and Assam commerce was to be on a 'reciprocal basis'. In answering the queries of his government, he presented his answers in The Report of Capt. Welsh. In it he provided vital information pertaining to the Ahom's system of Government, their products, trade and commerce, to name a few. Despite the fact that many people considered Gaurinath Singha to be vindictive and cruel, Welsh says he did a lot of good too; for example, it was he who had human sacrifice abolished at Sadiya's *Kechaikhati* temple.

Let us look at the help that Welsh provided to the Ahom King from a different angle. Towards the close of the 18th century, the East India Company was presented with a lucrative opportunity when trouble started in the Ahom kingdom due to the Moamariya rebellion. It gave them a huge means of surveying and understanding the region.

When King Gaurinath Singha's call for help reached the Company, it initially dithered since it was in the middle of a war on taxation against Tipu Sultan of Mysore. Finally when they managed Siege of Srirangapatnam and treaty signing in 1792, they were free to indulge in other issues.

That very year, they dispatched Bengal Army's Captain Thomas Welsh to aid Gaurinath Singha. He set out with six companies of sepoys, every company had 60 fighting men, and there were small medical corporations under Dr John Peter Wade. The entire unit had just 550.

At the close of November of 1792, this unit had its first military encounter with the local population. Northern Kamrup, inclusive of North Gauhati, had been occupied by Darrang Raja Krishnanarayan. He ignored the various requests the English had made to him to disband his barkandaz army. This led to a battle and post just two engagements, he put down arms, removed the barkandazes from his army, and accepted the Ahom king's vassalage.

Captain Welsh, at the start of 1794, had started to negotiate with upper Assam's Moamariyas. The negotiations were unsuccessful and the atmosphere for an armed encounter brewed. Again, the English gave battle and the militia again lost to the Bengal Army. Reinstating of Gaurinath Singha was accomplished and at the same time the English army was recalled to Bengal.

Why was the Bengal Army invincible?

Philosophy of war

The armies of the East India Company fought in a European style on the infantry front. The Company lacked cavalry units in the true sense for quite some time. The British Army had perfect ones. The armies in India had total reliance on cavalry, and infantry for them was of scarce importance. In this regard, the army of the Ahoms was an exception, being possibly the only one with no cavalry. Assamese were brilliant foot soldiers and expert implementers of guerrilla warfare.

The unit that came to fight the Moamariyas had better leadership and training than the Moamariyas. The weapons that they used were also better. Well drilled, the unit's troops had the doggedness that had been displayed by English armies throughout the world at different theatres of war. They were trained not to flee or break up under any circumstance. They were trained to hold their ground, even in the most adverse

NOTES

situation. To quote Manimugdha Sharma, 'It was this superior will to prevail that probably made all the difference.'

Troops of the Company, in the 1970s itself had short-land pattern. The muskets were easy to load and were of high performance. An expert soldier could fire four rounds in approximately one minute.

On the other hand, when compared with the company units, both leadership and weapons of the Moamariyas were deficient. Moamariyas had no idea of the style of fighting employed by the Europeans. Moamariyas did not possess real firearms except for some obsolete matchlocks. Moamariyas would use anything as a weapon such as bamboo sticks, spears, pick-axes, pikes and swords. The Ahoms did not possess muskets.

When Captain Welsh and team were recalled by Sir John Shore in 1794, they were full of stories about Assam, which aided the Company to interfere in the future affairs of Assam.

In the Gazetteer of India, Assam, Vol 1, it is mentioned that, 'According to Captains Welsh's account, Gauhati was an expansive and populous town at that time. It was situated on both sides of the banks of the Brahmaputra and extended to the neighboring hills. Along the river bank there was a rampart on which mounted 113 guns, including 3 of European manufacture. Another fortification of the town was a large enclosure, surrounded by a brick wall. Rangpur was a largely populated town, spanning about 20 miles. The surrounding country had been very densely cultivated. The nobles held large estates of land, which were tilled by their slaves, but the products were never brought to the market. It was almost impossible to buy grain: it was easier to buy salt or opium. The price of commodities was very cheap. Buffaloes were sold for five rupees.'

Check Your Progress

4. Under which ruler's reign did the Ahom kingdom start declining?
5. Where was human sacrifice abolished?
6. The Assamese were poor foot soldiers and not good implementers of guerrilla warfare. (True/False)

6.4 BURMESE AGGRESSION

To quote from the Government of Assam website, 'The Ahoms ruled Assam uninterruptedly for six hundred years. They established a strong and stable government, gave peace and prosperity and happiness to their subjects and successfully resisted many foreign invasions. But during the closing years of the Ahom rule, on account of the incompetence and inefficiency of the monarchs and mutual rivalry among nobles, the Ahom monarchy fell into decadence. For the Burmese it was a favorable opportunity to interfere in the internal affairs of the Ahom kingdom.'

The period from 1817 to 1826 was the period of Burmese invasion of Assam when the Burmese invaded Assam not once but thrice. For a short period from 1821–1825, the kingdom even fell into the hands of the Burmese and was ruled by them, till the British pushed them out. The Assamese refer to this period as manor din and the Manipuries call it Chahi-Taret Khuntakpa or seven years of devastation. Whatever it may be called, this period is remembered as a time of horror. The 600-year-old Ahom kingdom was in a sorry state and was feeling the pinch of depopulation due to emigrations

NOTES

and depredations. Till now, there had been reluctance on the part of the British to colonize Assam who were in direct contact with a belligerent Burmese occupying force. This led to the First Anglo-Burmese War which further caused annexation by the British of the kingdom of the Ahoms and Burma.

Background

Second half of the 18th century saw a weakening of Assam's Ahom kingdom because of the spate of Moamoria rebellions. Purnananda Burhagohain, the Prime Minister, made serious attempts to bring the region back under Ahom. He managed to put down all rebellion and reestablish royal authority. All the high posts were occupied by his relatives. This could have been done by him for either ensuring that the administration ran smoothly or just to consolidate his own power. Gauhati's governor, Badan Chandra Borphukan, felt anxiety at how Purnananda Burhagohain power was growing. He began with trying to befriend Purnananda Burhagohain. One strategy he chose was to wed Pijou Gabhoru, his daughter, to Urekhanath Dhekial Phukan the son of Purnananda. He also gave a huge dowry of utensils and gold ornaments. His strategy backfired. Purnananda Burhagohain showed displeasure and even suspicion that Badan Chandra Borphukan was making inappropriate use of his office. Badan Chandra Borphukan became angry with Purnananda Burhagohain behaviour and did not refrain from encouraging conspiracy in Jorhat, the capital, for assassinating Purnananda Burhagohain. The conspirators were caught and punished, and Badan Chandra Borphukan's link with them became known. In the meantime, Burhagohain received complaints from the populace of Western Assam, regarding the atrocities that Badan Chandra Borphukan and his two sons, Janmi and Piyoli, were committing. Ultimately, in 1815 CE, action was taken by Purnananda Burhagohain. He dispatched a deputation which had the order for Badan Chandra Borphukan's arrest and for bringing him to Jorhat so that justice could be served. Purnananda Burhagohain's daughter-in-law Pijou Gabhoru (Badan Chandra Borphukan daughter) was quick to dispatch a warning message to her father and Badan Chandra Borphukan made his escape to British-ruled Bengal. Still, in Chilmari in Bengal, he was caught by Burhagohain. Aided by the local Thanedar/Police officer, he again made good his escape and went off to Calcutta. Here he paid a visit on Lord Hastings, the Governor General seeking help for removing Purnananda Burhagohain. His plea was turned down stating that they followed a policy of noninterference in the internal matter of another kingdom. At about the same time, Burmese King Bodawpaya envoy and Badan Chandra Borphukan met in Calcutta. Having heard his story, the envoy took Badan Chandra Borphukan to Burma and got him an appointment with the king.

First Burmese invasion

Badan Chandra Borphukan met the Burmese King Bodawpaya in 1816 and asked for help in putting down Purnananda Burhagohain, his political rival. King Bodawpaya agreed to help and he dispatched with Badan Chandra Borphukan a party under the leadership of a general of Bhamo. They arrived in Assam in January 1817. On 27 March, 1817 the first battle was fought at Ghiladhari. Jama Khan, Hao Bora and Daman Gogoi led the forces of Assam. It was a week-long battle and Purnananda Burhagohain passed away because of natural causes. Chronicles suggest that as a cause of his death the Ahom nobility's ranks became divided. The Assam army was forced to surrender since it was not receiving any reinforcement. Purnananda's son Ruchinath became the Burhagohain, and told the king to leave but the king refused to do so. At this point, Ruchinath began to be suspicious of Chandrakanta Singha having an alliance with Badan Chandra Borphukan, so he headed off to Gauhati without the king when the Burmese army advanced towards

NOTES

the Ahom capital at Jorhat. Chandrakanta Singha, the king, did not leave and when Badan Chandra Borphukan came he was received well by the king and made the Mantri Phukan.

All of 100,000 rupees was given to the Burmese army while appropriate presents were given to the commanders. Hemo Aideo, who was an Ahom prince's daughter, was sent off to the king of Burma with a dowry and 50 elephants. April 1817, the Burmese army went away from Assam. A short while later Badan Chandra was assassinated. Ruchinath marched against Chandrakanta Singha and Purandar Singha was made the king.

Second Burmese invasion

When the news reached Bodawpaya, he dispatched an army that had a strength of 30,000 troops commanded by Kiamingi (Alumingi Borgohain) and in the guidance of Patalang Senapati (Momai Barua). This army was met by an army led by Jaganath Dhekial Phukan on February 15, 1819 at Phulpanisiga, near Janji. The army of the Burmese lost around 300 soldiers, was defeated and retreated a bit. Rather than pursue the defeated army, the Assam army went back to Jorhat, capital of the Ahom kingdom. This caused panic and confusion. Unable to create confidence, Purandar Singha and Ruchinath Burhagohain sailed off to Gauhati, and within the next two days Jorhat was occupied by the Burmese army.

On 9th March 1819, Chandrakanta was reinstated as the king. Next came the executing of all Ahom officials suspected of providing support to Ruchinath Burhagohain. In April 1819, mid-leaving Mingimaha Tilwa in-charge, Kiamingi headed back to Burma. Patalang followed the orders of Tilwa and gave pursuit to Ruchinath; he engaged Ruchinath in battle at Nagaon and succeeded in driving him beyond Assam chokey. Patalang became the Borbarua. On 27 January, 1820 the Burmese contingent headed back home. Chandrakanta Singha displayed gratitude towards Bodawpaya by sending Upama Aideo, a princess, accompanied by attendants and officials.

Chandrakanta later showed a change in attitude towards the Burmese. Patalang, originally a Namrup native, convinced Chandrakanta to get free of the alliance with the Burmese allegiance and also got a fort made in Jaypur (Dighalighat).

Third Burmese invasion

Bagyidaw ascended the throne of Burma in 1819. He took a decision that he would annex Assam. In February 1821, he dispatched Mingimaha Tilwa to Assam. While Chandrakanta Singha made off to Gauhati, Patalang Borbarua was killed. Many Ahom officials were killed by Mingimaha. He even put Punyadhar (Jogeshwar Singha), one of Hemo Aideo brothers, on the throne.

Chandrakanta Singha's response

Gauhati became the camp of Chandrakanta Singha. Without the help of either Purandar Singha or Ruchinath he marched against the Burmese. Not able to put together an army in British territory, Purandar had one raised under Robert Bruce in Bhutan. His raised forces could not stand against Chandrakanta's forces and were dispersed in May 1821. A huge force that Tilwa had deputed in September 1821 moved against Chandrakant. Chandrakant headed back to Assam Chokey and further back to British territories. Chandrakanta managed to raise a force comprising mostly Hindustani and Sikhs soldiers, and in 1821 October he gained back Assam Chokey. In 1821, December he gained back Gauhati. On 15 March, 1822 Chandrakanta put camp near Jorhat, at Mahgarh.

NOTES

When news of the situation in Assam reached Bagyidaw, he dispatched a contingent of 20,000 led by Mingi Maha Bandula. This force, in 1822 April defeated Chandrakanta's forces. Chandrakanta retreated to Gauhati, then to Assam Chokey. In June 1822, at Assam Chokey, Mingimaha Tilwa defeated him. Chandrakanta was forced to retreat to British territory. Post this victory, Mingimaha Tilwa was declared by the Burmese as Assam's Raja. This ended Assam's sovereign Ahom rule.

Burmese rule

Post their Assam Chokey victory over Chandrakanta the Burmese stood opposite the British in Brahmaputra valley. Tilwa's demand was for the British to hand over Chandrakanta, or he would enter British territory to hunt him out. He had approximately 1,000 troops at Gauhati under Bandula and 7,000 at Assam Chokey. Faced with issues of logistics, Bandula headed out of Gauhati, and Tilwa remained there with no more than a 1,000 troops. With this being the situation, the Burmese invited Chandrakanta Singha to return to the throne. Seizing the opportunity, Chandrakanta was quick to abandon his Phukans and Baruas. At Assam Chokey, he surrendered to Tilwa. On arriving at Jorhat, Chandrakanta was imprisoned.

The Anglo-Burmese war had started in 1824. It concluded when a formal treaty was signed between the British and the Burmese: the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826. Under the treaty's terms, to quote from the Government of Assam website, 'the Burmese renounced their rights on Assam as well as the neighboring kingdoms of Cachar, Jaintia and Manipur. The Treaty of Yandaboo also marked the end of the Ahom monarchy and established the British sovereignty in Assam. With this treaty we make the transition from the Medieval to Modern Age in Assam.'

To quote the treaty as made available from:

> C. U. Aitchison, ed. *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads: Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries*. Vol. XII. Calcutta: Government of India Central Publication Branch, 1931, 230-233.

Treaty of Yandaboo, 24 February 1826

Treaty of peace between the Honorable East India Company on the one part, and his Majesty the king of AVA on the other, settled Major-General Sir Archibald Campbell, K.C.B., and K.C.T.S., Commanding the Expedition, and Senior Commissioner in Pegu and AVA; Thomas Campbell Robertson, ESQ., Civil Commissioner in Pegu and AVA; and Henry Ducie Chad, ESQ., Captain, Commanding Britannic Majesty's and the Honorable Company's Naval Force the Irrawaddy River, on the part of the Honorable Company; and by Mengyee-Maha-Men-Kyan-Ten Woongyee, Lord of Laykaing, and Mengyee-Mara-Hlah-Thuo-Hah-Thoo-Atwen-Woon, Lord of the Revenue, on the part of the King of Ava; who have each communicated to the other their full powers, agreed to and executed at Yandaboo in the Kingdom of Ava, on this Twenty-fourth day of February, in the year of Our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Twenty-six, corresponding with the Fourth day of the decrease of the Moon Taboung, in the year One Thousand One Hundred and Eighty-seven Gaudma Era, 1826.

ARTICLE 1

There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the Honorable Company on the one part, and His Majesty the King of Ava on the other.

NOTES

ARTICLE 2

His Majesty the King of Ava renounces all claims upon, and will abstain from all future interference with, the principality of Assam and its dependencies, and also with the contiguous petty States of Cachar and Jyntia. With regard to Munnipoor it is stipulated, that should Ghumbheer Sing desire to return to that country, he shall be recognized by the King of Ava as Rajah thereof.

ARTICLE 3

To prevent all future disputes respecting the boundary line between the two great Nations, the British Government will retain the conquered Provinces of Arracan, including the four divisions of Arracan, Ramree, Cheduba, and Sandoway, and His Majesty the King of Ava cedes all right thereto. The Unnoupectoumien or Arakan Mountains (known in Arakan by the name of the Yeomatoung or Pokhingloung Range) will henceforth form the boundary between the two great Nations on that side. Any doubts regarding the said line of demarcation will be settled by Commissioners appointed by the respective government's fur that purpose, such Commissioners from both powers to be of suitable and corresponding rank.

ARTICLE 4

His Majesty the King of Ava cedes to the British Government the conquered Provinces of Yeh, Tavoy, and Mergui and Tenasserim, with the islands and dependencies thereunto appertaining, taking the Salween River as the line of demarcation on that frontier ; any doubts regarding their boundaries will be settled as specified in the concluding part of Article third.

ARTICLE 5

In proof of the sincere disposition of the Burmese Government to maintain the relations of peace and amity between the Nations, and as part indemnification to the British Government for the expenses of the War, His Majesty the King of Ava agrees to pay the sum of one crore of Rupees.

ARTICLE 6

No person whatever, whether native or foreign, is hereafter to be molested by either party, on account of the part which he may have taken or have been compelled to take in the present war.

ARTICLE 7

In order to cultivate and improve the relations of amity and peace hereby established between the two governments, it is agreed that accredited ministers, retaining an escort or safeguard of fifty men, from each shall reside at the Durbar of the other, who shall be permitted to purchase, or to build a suitable place of residence, of permanent materials; and a Commercial Treaty, upon principles of reciprocal advantage, will be entered into by the two high contracting powers.

ARTICLE 8

All public and private debts contracted by either government, or by the subjects of either government, with the others previous to the war, to be recognized and liquidated upon the same principles of honor and good faith as if hostilities had not taken place between the two Nations, and no advantage shall be taken by either party of the period that may have elapsed since the debts were incurred, or in consequence of the war ; and according to the universal law of Nations, it is further stipulated, that the property of all British

NOTES

subjects who may die in the dominions of His Majesty the King of Ava., shall, in the absence of legal heirs, be placed in the hands of the British Resident or Consul in the said dominions, who will dispose of the same according to the tenor of the British law. In like manner the property of Burmese subjects dying under the same circumstances, in and part of the British dominions, shall be made over to the minister or other authority delegated by His Burmese Majesty to the Supreme Government of India.

ARTICLE 9

The Kink of Ava will abolish all exactions upon British ships or vessels in Burman ports, that are not required from Burmah ships or vessels in British port nor shall ships or vessels, the property of British subjects, whether European or Indian, entering the Rangoon River or other Burman ports, be required to land their guns, or unship their rudders, or to do any other act not required of Burmese ships or vessels in British ports.

ARTICLE 10

The good and faithful Ally of the British Government, His Majesty the King of Siam, having taken a part in the present War, will, to the fullest extent, as far as regards His Majesty and his subjects, be included in the above Treaty.

ARTICLE 11

This Treaty to be ratified by the Burmese authorities competent in the like cases, and the Ratification to be accompanied by all British, whether Europe or Native, American, and other prisoners, who will be delivered over to the British Commissioners ; the British Commissioners on their part engaging that the said Treaty shall be ratified by the Right Honorable the Governor-General in Council ,and the Ratification shall be delivered to His Majesty the King of Ava in four months, or sooner if possible, and all the Burmese prisoners shall, in like manner be delivered over to their own Government as soon as they arrive from Bengal.

Archibald Campbell.

Largeen Meonja,

Woonghee.

T. C. Robertson

Civil Commissioner.

Seal of the Lotoo

Hy. D. Chads,

Captain, Royal Navy.

Shwagum Woon,

Atawoon.

Additional Article

The British Commissioners being most anxiously desirous to manifest the sincerity of their wish for peace, and to make the immediate execution of the fifth Article of this Treaty as little irksome or inconvenient as possible to His Majesty the King of Ava, consent to the following arrangements, with respect to the division of the sum total, as specified in the Article before referred to, into installments, *viz*., upon the payment of twenty-five lacks of Rupees, or one-fourth of the sum total (the other articles of the treaty being executed), the Army will retire to Rangoon. Upon the further payment of a

NOTES

similar sum at that place within one hundred days from this date, with the proviso as above, the Army will evacuate the dominions of His Majesty the King of Ava with the least possible delay, leaving the remaining moiety of the sum total to be paid by equal annual installments in two years, from this Twenty-fourth day of February AD 1826, through the Consul or Resident in Ava or Pegu, on the part of the Honorable the East India Company.

Archibald Campbell.

Largeen Meonja,

Woongee.

T. C. Robertson,

Civil Commissioner.

Seal of the Lotoo

Hy. D. Chads,

Captain, Royal Navy.

Shwwagum Woon,

Atawoon

Ratified by the Governor-General in Council, at Fort William in Bengal, this Eleventh day of April, in the Year of our Lord One Thousand Eight Hundred and Twenty-six.

Amherst.

Combermere.

J. H. Haringon.

W. B. Bayley.

Check Your Progress

7. The period from 1817 to 1826 was the period of _____ invasion of Assam.
8. When did the Anglo-Burmese war come to an end?

ACTIVITY

Write a descriptive essay on the Anglo-Burmese war.

Did You Know

May be primitive but the technologies developed by the Ahoms in the field of metallurgy and architecture are quite notable. The Ahoms created separate clans to develop each field of technology. The Kharghorias were good gun powder makers, the Jawkhorias made nitres, and similarly there were carpenters, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, stone carvers, tailors, etc. The giant size canons were cast iron processing ores in traditional crude methods but it worked. The canons are still rust free even though they are centuries old.

NOTES

6.5 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- Sukaphaa is said to have established the Ahom kingdom.
- Moamoria rebellion rebels stole away the power of the Ahoms.
- 1769 to 1806 was the period of the Moamoria rebellion. It was the conflict that occurred in the 18th century between the Ahom kings and Morans who were the adherents of the Moamara Sattra. The rebellion destroyed approximately a half of the population and played havoc with the economy of the kingdom. Thus weakened, the Ahom kingdom became an easy target for invasion and the Burmese invasion followed.
- Crisis had been brewing in the Ahom Kingdom as the basis of the state, the Paik system was not flexible enough to change and adapt to the changes in society and economy.
- The leakage of manpower from the Paik system was caused in one way by the rise of the sattra which came in conflict with the Ahom kingdom.
- In the sixteenth century the Mahapuruxiya Dharma was established by Srimanta Sankardeva. It made available such opportunities to the common tribesmen, which would help them to better them economically and socially. Also, the sattras made available to them a safe escape from the mandatory labor they had to perform under the system of Paik.
- The Moamaria Rebellion occurred in two phases.
- The decline of the Ahom Kingdom started with the rule of Gaurinath Singha (1780-95). When he was attacked and Rangpur was taken over Gaurinath Singha along with his entire family sailed off to Nagaon, then further to Gauhati.
- Gaurinath Singha sought help from the East India Company through Raush, a salt merchant and Mr. Dauglas, Commissioner of Koch Bihar for both materials and troops. The Governor General, Lord Cornwallis, responded by sending Captain Thomas Welsh with a troop of trained and armed sepoys.
- The period from 1817 to 1826 is the period of Burmese invasion of Assam when the Burmese invaded Assam not once but thrice.
- The Anglo-Burmese war had started in 1824. It concluded when a formal treaty was signed between the British and the Burmese: the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826. Under the treaty's terms, to quote from the Government of Assam website, 'the Burmese renounced their rights on Assam as well as the neighboring kingdoms of Cachar, Jaintia and Manipur. The Treaty of Yandaboo also marked the end of the Ahom monarchy and established the British sovereignty in Assam. With this treaty we make the transition from the Medieval to Modern Age in Assam.'

6.6 KEY TERMS

- **Barkandazes:** Hindustani irregular infantrymen or cavalrymen, who were basically freebooters
- **Disgruntlement:** Dissatisfaction
- **Rebel:** A person who rises in armed resistance against an established government or ruler.

NOTES

6.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Moamoria
2. Mahapuruxiya Dharma
3. True
4. Gaurinath Singha
5. Sadiya's *Kechaikhati* temple
6. False
7. Burmese
8. The Anglo-Burmese war concluded when a formal treaty was signed between the British and the Burmese: the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826.

6.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the first Burmese aggression.
2. In short, describe the terms of the treaty signed between the British and Burmese post the ousting of the Burmese from Assam by the British.
3. Why was Captain Welsh able to gain such success in his mission in Assam?
4. What were the causes of the Moamaria Rebellion?

Long-Answer Questions

1. Describe the Moamaria Rebellion.
2. Discuss Captain Welsh's Mission.
3. Describe the events that led to deploying Captain Welsh's Mission.
4. Discuss the events that led to the Burmese interfering for the first time in the affairs of Assam.

6.9 FURTHER READING

Gait, E.A.; *A History of Assam,* BiblioBazaar, US, 2010.

Choudhary, Pratap Chandra; *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.*, Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Assam, Assam, 1966.

Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan; *Social and polity formations in pre-colonial north-east India: the Barak Valley experience*, Haranand Publications in association with Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1991.

Sinha, Surajit; *Tribal Polities and State Systems in Pre-colonial Eastern and North Eastern India*, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 1987.

Chakravarty, I. N., Chakravarty, Lakshmi N.; *Glimpses of the Early History of Arunachal*, Research Department, Arunachal Pradesh Administration, Arunachal Pradesh, 1973.

NOTES

Barpujari, Heramba Kauta; *Assam in the Days of the Company: 1826 - 1858: a Critical and Comprehensive History of Assam during the Rule of the East-India Company from 1826 - 1858*, North-Eastern Hill University Publications, Assam, 1996

Barpujari, Heramba Kauta; *The Comprehensive history of Assam*, Publication Board, Assam, 1990.

M. Horam; *Naga Polity*, B.R. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1975.

M. Horam; *Social and Cultural Life of Nagas: (the Tangkhul Nagas)*, B.R. Pubishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1977.

Sangkima; Mizos, *Society and Social Change, 1890-1947*, Spectrum Publications, New Delhi, 1992.

Sangkima; *A Modern History Of Mizoram*, Spectrum Publications, New Delhi, 2004.

Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan; *The Garos and the English, 1765-1874*, Radiant Publishers, Hyderabad, 1978.

Kar, Parimal Chandra; *Garos in Transition*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1982.

Venuh, N. and Bonita Aleaz; *British Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2005.

Lahiri, Rebati Mohan; *The Annexation of Assam: 1824-1854*, General Printers & Publishers, Mumbai, 1954.

Bhuyan, Suryya Kumar; *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, Lawyer's Book Stall, Assam, 1974.

Elwin, Verrier; *The Nagas in the 19th Century*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1969.

Lahiri, Nayanjot; *Pre-Ahom Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi, 1991.

Birinchi, B.K. and Banikanta Kakati; *Cultural History of Assam*, K. K. Barooah, Assam, 1951.

Basu, Nirmal Kumar; *Assam in the Ahom Age, 1228-1826: Being Politico-economic and Socio-cultural Studies*, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Kolkata, 1970.

Nath, R.M.; *The Background of Assamese Culture*, A. K. Nath, 1948.

Bareh, Hamlet; *The History and Culture of the Khasi People*, Spectrum Publications, Gauhati, 1967.

Chatterjii, S. K.; *The Place of Assam in the History and Civilization of India*, Gauhati University, Gauhati, 1970.

Dani, A. H.; *Prehistory and Protohistory of Eastern India*, Firma L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1960.

Dhavlikar, M. K.; *Bulletin of the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute* 31-32: 137-49, Archaeology of Gauhati, 1973.

NOTES

UNIT 7 COLONIAL EXPANSION

Structure

7.0 Introduction
7.1 Unit Objectives
7.2 Annexation of Assam
  7.2.1 Revolt of Gomdhar Konwar
  7.2.2 Administration of David Scott (1824-1831)
  7.2.3 Administration of T.C Robertson (1832-1834)
  7.2.4 Administration of Captain Jenkins (1834)
  7.2.5 Condition of the Province on the Eve of British Occupation and its Effects
7.3 Annexation of Khasi Hills
  7.3.1 Annexation of Jaintia Kingdom
  7.3.2 Rise and Consolidation of British Power in Khasi Hills
  7.3.3 Freedom Movement
  7.3.4 Impact of the Movement
7.4 Annexation of Cachar
7.5 Status of Tripura
  7.5.1 British Paramountly and the King of Tripura
7.6 Summary
7.7 Key Terms
7.8 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
7.9 Questions and Exercises
7.10 Further Reading

7.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn about colonial expansion in Assam. The reign of Chandra Kanta Singha (1810-1818) saw the Burmese invasion on Assam. Friction between Purnananda Buragohain and Badan Chandra Barphukan and a conspiracy by Satram to overthrow the former led the latter to go to the Burmese capital Amarapura where he pleaded for assistance against the *Buragohain*. Bodoupaya, who had already had his eyes on Assam, seized the opportunity to send an army of about sixteen thousand men with Badan Chandra to Assam. The Burmese army after defeating the Assamese army at several engagements arrived at Jorhat. Chandra Kanta Singha was retained as king, and Badan Chandra assumed power as minister. The Burmese then retired to their country with large presents. But soon the assassination of Badan Chandra and installation of Purandar Singha by ousting Chandra Kanta Singha, once again brought the Burmese under the command of Ata Mingi to Assam in 1819. On their advance, Purandar and his Prime Minister Rudinath fled to Gauhati, and Chandra Kanta Singha was once again restored to the throne despite his mutilation of person caused in the meanwhile. After the departure of the Burmese, Chandra Kanta Singha sought to raise a fort at Jaipur against further Burmese invasion. However, a Burmese force sent by their Monarch with presents of ornaments and dress to Chandra Kanta Singha seeing such preparations killed Patalong under whose supervision the fort was raised. Thinking this hostile move on the part of the Burmese army, Chandra Kanta fled to Gauhati and did not come back in spite of Burmese assurance. This was in 1821. The Burmese then set up an Ahom prince, Jogeswar Singha. Chandra Kanta Singha crossed the border and entered Bengal where he tried to collect arms and men to fight the Burmese. At the battle of Mahgarh, Chandra Kanta's army was badly defeated, and he once again entered the British territory.

NOTES

The period from 1821 to 1824 is called period of Burmese rule. During this period, the Burmese devastated the country and committed atrocities by plundering and killing. The Burmese also threatened the Goalpara frontier of Bengal by demanding the surrender of Assamese refugees including Chandra Kanta Singha, and their supporters who often gave trouble of them across the border. In that time, the border conflict in the East India Company's Chittagong frontier with the Burmese empire took serious turn. Anticipating a threatened invasion of Bengal, the prized possession of the Company in India, Lord Amherst, the then Governor General, decided to declare war on Myanmar (Burma). War was declared on the 5 March 1824. This was the First Anglo-Burmese War which lasted for nearly two years.

Immediately after the declaration of war, the British army entered Goalpara frontier of Assam and after defeating the small Burmese garrisons in Lower Assam, it advanced to Upper Assam. By taking advantage of a dissension among the Burmese commanders, the British occupied Rangpur in 1825 and drove the Burmese and their allies, the Singphos out of Assam. A section of the Burmese army surrendered to the British remained in Assam.

Immediately on the occupation of Assam by the British, martial law was declared; David Scott was appointed as civil officer in charge of civil matters, and Col. Richards in charge of the army, and the British started their administration.

By Article II of the Treaty of Peace and Friendship which was concluded between the British and the Burmese at Yandaboo on 24 February 1826, the Burmese monarch renounced all claims upon and promised to refrain from all interference with, the principality of Assam and its dependencies. As Assam was already occupied by the British during the Anglo-Burmese war, it was kept under British occupation and started introducing British administration.

7.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Discuss the East India Company's annexation of Assam
- Describe how the British annexed the Khasi hills and consolidated power
- Explain how the kingdom of Cachar fell to the British imperialistic idea
- Interpret how the British allowed the king of Tripura to function independently despite exercising its control

7.2 ANNEXATION OF ASSAM

After occupying Assam, the British divided it into two provinces: Upper Assam and Lower Assam. Kamrup, Nowgang and parts of Darrang, with Gauhati as its headquarters, constituted Lower Assam. Upper Assam comprised the other parts of Darrang, from Biswanath to the river Buridihing with its headquarters at Rangpur.

The Ahom Rule in Assam was terminated after the Treaty of Yandaboo came into action. Lower Assam was brought directly under the British dominion because it bore high revenue income. Upper Assam suffered a lot under the Burmese invasion. People lost their confidence in the Government and the administration collapsed. It became essential for Upper Assam to be under the Governance of the Military. Appointed Senior Commissioner of Lower Assam was David Scott and Colonel Richard was appointed as

NOTES

the Junior Commissioner of Upper Assam. The people of Assam were very happy with the British administration in the beginning. Common people now hoped for peace and prosperity, after suffering a lot during the Burmese invasion. Ruling classes thought that their power and privileges would be secured under the British rule. But this was not to be. The British cared for their own prosperity and their own business. People could now see that the British administration was different. Soon people were not content with the administration.

7.2.1 Revolt of Gomdhar Konwar

The Ahom nobility were dissatisfied with the British as they understood that their rights and privileges were not secure under the administration of the British. Soon, Gomdhar Konwar, the Prince of Ahom and a scion of the royal family, organized a revolt against the British. Time turned out to be favourable, with the Khasis and Singphos also preparing a revolt against the British. Gomdhar was formally enthroned at Bassa. Revolutionary forces advanced towards Mariani, but the British won the battle, led by Lieutenant Rutherford. Gomdhar was arrested and imprisoned.

7.2.2 Administration of David Scott (1824-31)

With improvements in conditions in Upper Assam, Martial law was also lifted in 1828. Now, the entire valley of Brahmaputra came under civil administration. Civil and criminal justice were under David Scott who was appointed as Commissioner. He was the chief of police and also presided over collection of revenue. In simple words, David Scott was given all the charges of the entire valley as a Commissioner. He used all his power in revenue collection, judicial and police administration in the valley. Scott was against the implementation of new rules and tried to retain the old system as much as possible. The 'Paik' and 'Khel' systems were retained in Upper Assam. Barbarua was appointed for collecting tax. The 'Pargana' land system of land division was retained in Lower Assam. A Choudhury was made in-charge of each Pargana to collect taxes. Payments in cash were accepted. Various taxes were imposed on the people of Lower Assam, some of which are: rent tax, professional tax, and stamp duties. The British Police system was followed to maintain law and order. The police system comprised a Daroga, one Jamadar and a number of constables. The post of Barphukan was retained for judicial administration. He took up civil cases. Some Panchayat Courts were also present to solve petty civil cases. Scott had put a lot of effort towards the welfare of Assam. David Scott steered the administration of Assam through the most crucial times of its history.

David Scott did not annex Upper Assam on the basis of economic as well as social view points. He thought that it would become a liability for the British. People were devastated and lost faith in government administration after the Burmese invasion. Scott noticed the hostile mood of Ahom nobles. Gomdhar Konwar's revolt followed by Dhanjay Pealia Bargohain's conspiracy expressed anger against the British. Therefore, Scott recommended restoring monarchy in Upper Assam rather than annexing the British dominion. Accordingly, the prince of Ahom, Purandar Singha, was crowned as the Raja of Upper Assam. The British signed an agreement with the King that: (i) the Raja would pay a sum of ₹50,000 annually as tribute; (ii) the Raja would act according to the advice of the British Political Agent; and (iii) the Raja would be protected against any foreign aggression. The British very tactfully served its purpose to satisfy the nobles momentarily, and then annex Upper Assam in due time because the conditions of the agreement would be impossible to fulfil for Purandar Singha.

NOTES

Purandar Singha was a young man of about 25 years of age. He readily accepted the treaty being imposed on him but was unaware of the difficulties of his new position. There were a lot of political difficulties and his administration was financially crippled from the beginning. Purandar Singha had spent his earlier days in Bengal. Though he was approved by the British, People of Assam and the nobles wanted Chandrakanta Singha as king instead. Common People were unhappy with the new rules introduced by the British government after taking the possession of Assam. Hence, Purandar Singha could not keep up the agreement with the British. Purandar Singha failed to pay the regular yearly revenue to the British starting from the year 1835 because of a rapid fall in revenue. This violation of agreement gave the British ample and legitimate reasons to support their annexation of Assam. Finally, Upper Assam was formally annexed to the British dominion in India in 1838. In other words, the foundation of British rule in Assam was laid.

7.2.3 Administration of T.C Robertson (1832-34)

T.C Robertson was appointed as the Agent to the Governor-General and Commissioner of Assam after Crack Fort, in 1832. He was soon appraised as a man of tact, prudence and sound judgment of the province. With his prejudice against the 'native agency', he realized that the supervision of British officers was a must in Assam. Robertson divided Lower Assam into four districts. An officer called the Principal Assistant led each province. The Principal Assistant acted as a Judge, Magistrate and Collector and was paid a salary of one thousand rupees. He had the authority to decide original civil cases from five hundred to one thousand rupees; he could also hear appeals from Lower Courts. He had the same authority as the Magistrate of Bengal to deal with criminal cases. There were two courts in each district, the munsifs and the panchayat. Original cases from one hundred to five hundred rupees were tried in the munsif's court and appeals were heard from the panchayat court. The panchayat court tried minor cases of up to one hundred rupees. Robertson brought about radical changes in the revenue system. He abolished additional imposts in1832. But tax on land at various rates was imposed on the peasants. Robertson also introduced measures to safeguard and protect the peasants from extortions. Patgiris, Bishayas and Choudhuries were appointed as revenue officers.

7.2.4 Administration of Captain Jenkins (1834)

After T.C. Robertson, Captain Jenkins became the Commissioner. Upper Assam was the last dominion of the Ahom rule in Assam and was annexed to the British territory under his administration in 1838. He created the post of Deputy Commissioner, who was vested with judicial powers, besides his civil duties. He was to act as district and session judge. The Principal Assistant was given new powers to transfer cases to subordinate courts. The munsif's and the panchayat courts continued to function and decide civil cases as before. The number of Thanas was increased to maintain law and order, and protect the lives and property of people. Darogas was given the charge, who was aided by a Jamadar and a few constables. The khel system was abolished in matters of revenue. New taxes like tax on 'barimati' were introduced. Non-rupit land rates were increased. Professional tax on the various professions was the same as in Ahom rule. Meanwhile the discovery and success of tea plantation made it the most important cash crop in Assam. Tea industry was followed by coal and oil industries. Agriculture sector and local economy were no way linked with

NOTES

industrialization in Assam. There was drastic improvement in communication with the other states. Medical care and health facilities were also introduced. One of the most important benefits was modern education of British Rule. A new awakening started in the Brahmaputra Valley from the end of the 19th century.

At the time of Burmese expulsion, the condition of Brahmaputra valley was most deplorable. The civil administration of Assam was entrusted to David Scott during the period of transition. He was given the title of 'Agent of the Governor General for the entire eastern frontier' from Cachar and Sylhet of the south to Sikkim in the north. He was also the Special Civil Commissioner of North-East Rongpur, i.e., Goalpara and the Garo Hills. Mr. Robinson says, 'Hitherto the affairs of the province were conducted on much the same system that prevailed before the conquest. The officer-in charge exercised general superintendence and devoted their attention to fiscal business while the criminal and civil duties were conducted by councils of the Assamese nobility under the name of Panchayat. Each division had two to three such Panchayats of the province. Appeals lay from the court of one Panchayat to the next superior court and ultimately to the court of the Commissioners.'

The executive officers in judicial cases were magistrates as well as judges trying to deal with the accused with the help of the Panchayat but referring all horrendous offences appended with their options to Mr. Scott for his ultimate judgement. The revenue administration was carried out in the same manner as it had existed during the conquest. An improved method of assessing land revenue was introduced by David Scott, but he died in August, 1831 before implementing it. Thus, the history of the state under the British rule started after appointing David Scott. On the eve of the Anglo-Burmese war, that they had no plan of annexing any portion of the Brahmaputra valley and favoured to stay only as conquerors. As a result, the first rebellion broke out. It was started by Assamese nobles against the newly established authority with demand to eliminate the new administrative system of revenue, which diminished many of them to abject poverty.

Occupation of Lower Assam by the British was not viewed as a serious concern by the Khasi Chiefs who held the low hands, generally known as nine-duars north of their hills. The ruler of Khyrem, Barmanik took the initiative in August 1828 down the plains of Dimarua, a few kilometres from Gauhati, seized collections of revenue officers and publicly demanded his independence on the duars. The second revolt broke out the Eastern Assam under the administration of the ex-nobility of Assam. The British Government somehow succeeded to put off their joint rebellion. Nearly all the territories of Brahmaputra Valley and the hilly regions of Jaintia and Cachar were annexed to the company's administration in Assam in the course of two years. Accordingly, David Scott, North-East Frontier, agent to the Governor General, spread suzerainty British over Cachar under an agreement with Raja Govinda Chandra in March, in 1834. In his agreement with Scott, Raja Ram Singha of Jaintia acknowledged the authority of the British Government. Thus, the extension of British dominion into Assam or the North- East Frontier started. People submitted to the inevitable; in actuality, they 'hailed with unbounded joy' their deliverers who rescued them from the cruelty of the Burmese and granted them the most loyal cooperation. Even an archenemy of the British, Maniram Dewan, heavily welcomed the arrival of the English. Scott's policy of satisfying the former official aristocracy proved a miserable failure. And towards the end of 1828, the Ahom, the Khasis, the Singphos as well as the Bhutias in the north were binding on the British subjects.

British administration was imperfect. People demanded a change from the repeated uprising and the administrative confusion of the period. T.C. Robertson was

NOTES

the successor of Scott as the agent of the Governor in 1832. Nevertheless, in 1832, Upper Assam except for the territories of Sadiya and Mattak, was made over to the Ahom prince Purandar Singha, who was a vassal king. In October, 1838, the territory of Purandar Singha was taken over by the British on the advice of Mr.Jenkin, Agent of East India Company, and Assam became a 'nonregulated' province as a whole of the Indian Empire. This was done on the contrary to their earlier assurances with a purely commercial motive. Purandar Singha was humiliated unnecessarily, and it could have been done only with the tacit consent of the rival group of Purandar Singha. The British followed the same tactics in finally annexing Cachar in 1830, and they also annexed Sadiya to British India in 1842. Likewise, Jaintia, which was under the rule of a vassal king, was annexed in 1835 and Manipur was restored to its ruling dynasty. There were eighteen mountain passes along the southern frontier of Bhutan, called Bhutan duars. Highlanders of Bhutan held their sway over this border by means of these passes and established their de facto right over the whole of border territory. As a result of incessant indignities committed by the Bhutias on the British subjects, the British Government appended all the Assam duars in 1841 as the only means of security and peace in this part of the frontier. These duars were the main channels of trade between Tibet and Assam.

Hostilities with the Mishimis originated from a simple incident, when in 1854, French Missionary M. Kich crossed the Mishimi country into Tibet accompanied by his friend N. Bourri. They were murdered by the Mishimis while returning. The Mishimis were crushed in a series of attacks, and the rebels made their submission to the British in 1843. The Lushais committed their first sweep in 1849 and the punitory expedition that followed was so encouraging that they gave no further difficulty till 1858 AD. Meanwhile, T.C. Robertson had felt that mixed activities of a far flung frontier to the provinces was not justified. He realized that for good supervision, there was a necessity of European officers in Assam and on his recommendation, the supreme Government granted its approval for dividing the province into four districts: Kamrup, Goalpara, Darrang and Nagaon in March, 1833; each was assigned a Principal Assistant vested with the authorities of a Collector, Judge and Magistrate. Gauhati remained the headquarters of the province for many years after British occupation of Assam. But the headquarters of the new administration shifted to Shillong after Assam emerged as a separate province under a Chief Commissioner. After the formation of separate districts, boundaries underwent changes in 1833. The Dhansiri River basically formed the boundary in the east, and the district of Sibsagar covered some areas of the existing Karbi Anglong district, North Cachar Hills and also the Naga Hills. In 1853, North Cachar was segregated from a subdivision, and in the next year the region of Tularam was added to the North Cachar subdivision. The Naga Hills and a large part of Karbi Anglong were combined into a separate district during 1867, and the subdivision of North Cachar was abolished, and a considerable area of North Cachar subdivision was assigned to the Deputy Commissioner of Cachar.

The province of Assam was created with a view of relieving Lieutenant Governor of Bengal from a part of his huge administrative responsibility in 1874. The head of this newly created province was titled as the 'Chief Commissioner'. In 1905, Lord Curzon merged the eastern district of Bengal with Assam, but it was reversed in 1912 and Assam was refurbished to its previous territorial position. In 1921, in accordance with the prerequisites of the government of India Act, 1919, Assam was granted the status of a Governor's province.

NOTES

7.2.5 Condition of the Province on the Eve of British Occupation and its Effects

The disputed succession of the British disturbed the peace and tranquility of the province. Anarchy predominated in the later Ahom period resulting in mismanagement in the state. The situation was further intensified by the successive rebellions, the population of Assam dropped down to half of its actual number. The Peasants had to give cultivation and depended mostly on wild roots and plants. They had to face a lot of stress of protracted wars and oppression. The land was stalked by famine and pestilence. Mills's report on Assam stated that it was not to set back the clock as desired by Maniram or the people of the same dreams, but to strengthen the possession of the British and to stiffen their hold over the administration. David Scott had organized the administration to his greatest capacity and introduced British system in widespread outline and spirit with adaptation for indigenous system prevailing at that time. With regard to the general administration of Assam, even justice was vested in the Commissioner of Assam whose headquarters were at Gauhati. To relieve the commissioner as Civil and Sessions, a Deputy Commissioner was posted there in 1939. A Principal Assistant was given the charge of each district. This senior (principal) assistant was assisted by a junior assistant and a sub-Assistant. A deputy Commissioner was redesignated as Judicial Commissioner in 1861; Principal Assistant as Deputy Commissioner; Junior Assistant as Assistant Commissioner and Sub-Assistant as Extra Assistant Commissioner.

There was a separate civil judicial establishment which consisted of one chief Sadar Amin, six Sadar Amins and seventeenth Munsifs. In 1872, separate establishment of Sadar Amin and Munsifs was abolished. The credits working out principals of administration in both Upper and Lower Assam go to David Scott. The British administration in Lower Assam actually began in 1824-1825. There was an increase in the revenue collections in each succeeding year and this must have humiliated the people.

New methods were introduced by the British for revenue administration. Paraganas were placed under Choudhuries in the new system. Choudhuries were given the responsibility for the collection of revenue and administration of justice in small criminal cases in their particular paraganas. The Choudhury had to pay the government revenue for six months in advance before collecting any revenue from the people and therefore, we can say that he acted as a revenue collecting contractor. Revenue was estimated as per the classification of the cultivated area. Besides revenue, the people were subjected to pay Rs.2 as a per capita poll tax. Property of the defaulting tenants was confiscated if they failed to pay. As a result, peasants at times couldn't save their hearth and home. So climbing resentment grew among the Assamese peasants who were in great need of regular rehabilitation for a considerable period of time. The introduction of a new judiciary system by the foreigners also added to the suffering of the people.

A thana (police station), thanedhar (police) or daroga were in charge of protecting lives and properties in the interiors. Thanedhar was given the authority to arrest people whom he suspected, to detain them and even to hold preparatory trial before entrusting them to sadar station. Special lease grants and simple lease grants were introduced under the Chartered Act of 1833. They were to administer revenue administration to encourage tea plantation and the British established a company named 'Assam company'. By 1858, almost the whole erstwhile Lakhimpur and Sibsagar were included with this

NOTES

company for tea plantation and consequently expanded its operation to Cachar. Extension of the tea industry compelled import of labour from outside the state. According to Mill, the number of such immigrants in Assam in 1881 was 3 lakhs which reached over six lakhs by 1901.

Check Your Progress

1. _____ was the headquarters of Lower Assam.
2. Choudhuries were given the responsibility of _____
3. Who annexed Bengal with Assam ?
4. _____ was appointed to collect tax.

7.3 ANNEXATION OF KHASI HILLS

Gaurinath Singha's commercial treaty of with Captain Welsh in 1793 opened the gates for the merchants of Bengal to enter into the province. Avenues of employment in both office and trade caused a steady inflow of the population from the districts of Sylhet, Mymensingh, Dacca and Rangpur to Assam. After it came under the administration of the British, they adopted the same policy as in the other parts of India. In order to supplement the Chartered Act of 1833, the British encouraged the establishment of English schools in Assam as they needed people with the knowledge of English to help run the administration. The people of Assam enjoyed respite after a bitter struggle with the Burmese invaders. Besides, there were very few educated people with the knowledge of English in Assam. In April 1831, the Government of Bengal made Bengali the language of court instead of Persian. The introduction from Bengal not only made the judicial and revenue departments their only preserve, but their services became equally essential to the recently started government schools for death of regional teachers specially to grant instructions in Bengali which had since then been made the medium of instruction in Assam. Eventually, Assamese was prohibited from the courts and schools of Assam in 1839. An English-educated Assamese, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, was appointed as Assistant Commissioner. He saw that peasantry could not be improved to a great extent without the understanding of modern scientific applications. He also believed that a better mode of living which cannot be achieved without Western education. He laid stress on the requirement of increasing the standard of education. He was the first person to raise his voice against the imposition of Bengali as the medium of instruction, and appealed for replacing it with Assamese. However, concrete steps were taken by the Christian missionaries who not only carried on propaganda through Arunodoi but also established a few schools for girls. Rev. Nathan Brown started the first missionary school at Sibsagar in 1840 and followed by the schools set up by Bronson at Nagaon in 1843 and by Mrs. Barkes at Gauhati in 1850. The need for the formation of political association including organization to vent the grievances of people started gradually. The Chartered Act of 1833 was a convenient instrument of the British colonialists who now began spreading out their financial arms to serve the interest of the empire including colonialism. Assam began to suffer from the basic curses of foreign domination as other parts of India did.

7.3.1 Annexation of Jaintia Kingdom

The Jaintia kingdom was located between the Cachar and the Khasi hills. The empire was divided into two parts, the plains and the hills. The Burmese, in 1824, force occupied

NOTES

Cachar and threatened to charge the Jaintias. King Ram Singh was asked to surrender, and the British came forward to protect the king. The Burmese retreated from Jaintia frontier on the arrival of British force. A treaty between the King and the British was signed by which the Raja formally agreed to be a subordinate of the British Government. The disagreement between the Raja and the British rose in connection with the endowment of a border outpost. In 1832, a fresh conflict arose. The Raja of Gobha conquered four British nationals for sacrifice at the shrine of goddess Kali. Shortly after this incident, the British appended the Kingdom of the Jaintias in 1835.

7.3.2 Rise and Consolidation of British Power in Khasi Hills

Garos is a tract of mountain territory inhabited by the Khasis. It is situated between the state of Jaintia and the Hills on the west. There were 30 states in the Khasi hills before the advent of the British. Each state had an elected chief who had a council, without whose sanction no important business could be performed. The British first got acquainted with the Khasis in the year 1765 when the company needed the Dewani of Sylhets from the Mughals. The British became a close neighbour of the Khasis after this takeover, and they soon realized the possibilities of trading with them. Consequently, the British started business with the Khasis in an item like lime, silk, wax, iron, ivory and honey. Shortly, the British came to monopolize trade in lime stone and after the discovery of coal, they started to monopolize trade in coal too. However, this trade had to face disturbances as well. The Khasis often attacked the plains due to the ill-treatment rendered out to the Khasi traders by the traders from the plains.

David Scott was appointed as an Agent to the Governor-General in November 1823, and he was given the responsibility of developing and consolidating companies and also the administration in the North-East frontier. The view displayed by Scott marked the introduction of a new British policy referring to the North-East. At the same time, the British were following a policy of non -intervention with regard to the state of the Khasis. Scott's view was that for a robust solution to the dispute of trade, the British government had to establish a strong control over all the Khasi Chiefs. The Government of Bengal endorsed Scott's views thus heralding a change of policy. Scott realized the needs for maintaining good relations with the Khasis when the need for a postal service across from Sylhet to Gauhati was urgently felt. Scott was also interested in building roads in the region along with a Sentitorium and Cantonment. Militarily, the proposed road would reduce the length of the march from lower Assam to Sylhet. It would also enable the British to keep the Khasi Chiefs under control and fascinated trade and commerce by giving the Khasis easy access to the markets in the plains.

Scott first contracted with Duwan Singh, Syiem of Sohra. He agreed to permit the British to build a road through his territory combining Assam with Sylhet and in return he demanded to get a Zamindari near Pandua. However, Scott got permission from Raja Ram Singh to construct a road through his Hima which connected Jaintiapur with Naogaon and Raha by the Burmese. Scott had now looked for a new route; all he could think of at that time was a road from Bardwar to Sylhet.

Scott resorted to a policy of coercion and negotiation to achieve his objective. He ordered the Khasi traders to close down the markets in plains and declared that he would annex Bardwar which belong to the Syiem of Nongkhlaw, in the plains. At the same time, he also stated that a normal trade relationship would be supported , and Bardwar would continue to be a part of Hima Nongkhlaw provided the Syiem Tirot

NOTES

Singh allowed the East India Company to construct his territory connecting the Surma valley and the Brahmaputra valley.

Further, Scott asked Tirot Singh to get the approval of all the Khasi chiefs to give the company the authority of passage as the road would additionally affect areas beyond the jurisdiction of Nongkhlaw syiem. Consequently, Tirot Singh conveyed an assemblage at Nongkhlaw and all the Khasi's Syiem's were asked to attend the meeting. Scott and his men arrived at Nongkhlaw on 3rd November 1826, Scott was highly pleased by the method of Khasi sitting-at-council by the strict consideration of rules that controlled and governed such sessions. Tirot singh explained the objective of the meet and requested the different declaimers to express their viewpoints on the proposition of the British government. The debate lasted for two days and ended in favour of the proposition. The decision of the assembly was represented in a treaty which was resolved with the British government. Subsequently, as per this treaty the Khasi's accepted to aid the British government in the development of the road, provide men and materials and donate lands for constructing residential quarters. British protection followed as cordially.

The Dimarua which is a few miles from Gauhati was upheld by Khyrim as an appendix from the Ahoms, but a subordinate chief held the actual management responsibilities. He held his appointment from outstanding tribute to Khyrim. David Scott took over Dimarua after the retreat of Burmese and forbade the Syiem of Khyrim from consolidating tribute for the chief. These aroused Syiem Bormanick and developed down to Dimarua to capture the revenue collected by the officer of the East India Company in 1828. He also elected a Basan in that area and vowed to return again the following year to receive the tribute. Scott decided to take action against Khyrim, and he called upon the Jaintia Raja, and other Khasi's Syiems to aid the British against Khyrim. These led to tension among the Khasi Syiems as they realized the imperialist design of the British.

Scott did not keep his promise of reviving Bardwar to Tirot singh. Tirot singh was also displeased with the denial of the company to provide him military support against the Syiem of Rani, Balran singh, against whom Tirot singh together with Bormanick, Syiem of Khyrim had made a collective stand. He told the Company's Revenue Superintendent at Bardwar, 'Mr. Scott made friends with me stating your enemy is the Companies enemy and that he would relinquish the revenue of Bardwar in both money and in paiks. He has not done it and wished to give troops to my enemy.' Tirot singh was now conscious of the danger of the agreement he made with the company for the road construction. Knowing that it would appear upward if he suddenly stopped the construction, he waited for a better opportunity to oppose it without actually breaking the treaty.

Again there was high domination of the military at Nongkhlaw; there they harassed the poor inhabitants and other misdeeds finally led to mistrust and hostility in the hearts of the Khasis. Most of the people were unaware of the road construction, and a few Headmen complained to Tirot Singh that their opinion was overlooked in these important matters. They also understood that the British dominion was trying to take a grip over the hills and a rumour bobbed that the British imposed taxes on the Khasis. All these aspects together brought about a general discontentment and a menace and made the dispute between the Khasis and the British determined. Early in 1829, Tirot Singh made plans to expel foreigners from the country. He did not consider himself bounded by the treaty any longer and pitched his lot with Bormanick and other chiefs against the British. A conference of Khasis Syiems was held at Nongkhlaw, and a decision to drive away the British was taken. The plan was general massacre of all immigrants at Nongkhlaw and the abolition of the companies post. The plan was put into action the following day, the Company was attacked at Nongkhlaw and Burlton Burlton, and Lt. Bedingfeild of the Bengal Artillery along with many of the Company's men were killed. However, Scott who was in Nongkhlaw at the time of conference managed to escape to Sohra and then to Cherra. From Cherra, Scott messaged the authorities at Sylhet and Gauhati and Captain Lister set out for the hills at once.

NOTES

7.3.3 Freedom Movement

The Nongkhlaw incident started off as a widespread movement all over the Khasi hills to set it free from foreign power. Initially, the movement brought unity among the Khasi Syiems in a move to dislodge the British from the land, all disagreements being set aside in the face of an outside threat. Scott underestimated the strength of the Khasis to get united against the company by depriving them of the right to use the Duars in economic transactions. He ignored the growing hostility exhibited by the people against the road construction and the presence of the British in the hills. His refusal to recognize Syiem Bormanick's claim to the Dirmarua and the duty of taxes on him when he sent his men to receive the revenues further antagonized the Khasis. Slowly, other Syiems started realizing the true nature of the company and comprehending the danger to the liberation of their Kingdom, they gave their full backing to Tirot singh. Chiefs among them were the Syiems of Jirang, Myriaw, Rambrai, Mawsynram, Bhowal, Nongpoh, Maharam, Mawieng and other petty units. Messengers were sent to Jaintia hills, Bhutan, the Ahom king Chandrakhanta and to the Singphos to solicit their help to oust the British. The Khasi states which remained neutral were Cherrapunjee, Langrin, Nongspung, Khyriem and Nongstoin. Except for Duwan singh of Cherra, the neutral state remained mute spectators to the conflicts. The military regiments of the company were composed of Sikhs, Manipur, Gorkhas and the Assam corps. From time to time, military contingent were dispatched from Sylhet and Goalpara district.

7.3.4 Impact of the Movement

Khasi society was left with a deep scar after the Khasi war of liberty. The whole political scenario of the Khasis changed after the movement. The unity that emerged among the Khasis was temporary; it could not with withstand the political tactics applied by the British in their thirst for territorial as well as economic expansion. One Khasi Syiem after the other was won over by the British and compelled to sign a treaty of loyalty with the company acknowledging their subservience. That was the reason why statesmen of the status of Tirot singh were put down by the alien force. The movement produced combatants of the caliber of Warmaniae, Lorshon Jarain, Monbhut, Mukin of Mawsmai, Jidor singh who brought out the greatest in Khasi patriotism but none of them could withstand the swords of the enemy.

Erosion of power of the Syiems is another important outcome of the war. Through the treaties of loyalty signed by them with the British authorities, most of them surrendered their political power to the government and enslaved themselves to its supremacy. In the year 1859, the government promulgated Sunnader as a license at the inauguration of the Syiem. Through its provisions, the government could obtain land for military and civil purposes and could transfer free land as well as waste land into government land. The final power of the Sunnader was that he had the authority to remove any Syiem from the office if he was unable to satisfy the authorities. The power of the Syiems was further reduced after independence. He was now dependent on an elected body for the District Council. The movement also touched the economy of the land. The economy of the

NOTES

Khasis suffered a serious setback as a result of the wave economy measures chosen by the British. The Khasis could not restore their economy even after the end of the war, due to the monopolistic grip of the British. The movement had its consequences on the social life of the people. The Khasis came into direct contact with a foreign culture for the first time and were quick to absorb it. When the Missionaries came to the hills to develop Christianity, it could easily have found a large following. Christianity produced with it Western education which quickened the pace of modernization among the Khasis.

Check Your Progress

5. _____ started the first missionary school in Sibsagar.
6. The _____kingdom was located between the Cachar and the Khasi hills.
7. David Scott was appointed Agent to the Governor-General in the year _____.

7.4 ANNEXATION OF CACHAR

Cachar was another native kingdom which was victimized by the imperialist ideas of the British. The kingdom of Cachar was under the rule of two princes who had clearly defined areas of control. Govinda Chandra was the ruling prince in the plains. But after his assassination, the British annexed the province in the year 1832. Tularam ruled the hilly tracts. His territory was annexed after his death in 1854.

Annexation of Naga, Garo and Lushai Hills

The British initially considered leaving the Naga tribe alone. Later on, this policy was rejected, and between 1835 and 1851 about ten military campaigns were sent to the hills. Eventually, in 1866, the British took ownership of the area of Angami Nagas. The British also took possession of other Nagas gradually brought under control of the British. Another hill tribe, the Garos often produced problems in the plains. The British government tried to make the Garos a tributary at first, but the arrangement crashed. After this, in 1869, the British brought the Garos under their control. They formed a separate district. The Southern boundary of the Cachar hill tracts was named the Lushai hills, which was the home of the Kuki tribe. The British took ownership of the Lushai hills. It was placed under the Assam administration in 1898.

Annexation of Khamtis

The Khamtis were a division of the Shan tribes. They settled at Tengapani in Assam in the middle of 18th century. The British Government accepted the Khamti chief, Sadiya Khowa Gohain as the legitimate ruler of the Khamtis. After the death of Sadiya Khowa Gohain, the new Chief had some conflict with the chief of the Muttock country. The British got worried about this and selected a new Sadiya Khowa Gohain: the former was dismissed to Gauhati. The New Chief was stripped of the power of administering revenue together with judicial matters. It appeared as if the Khamtis accepted the new arrangement. But in actuality they were not happy at all. As a consequence, in 1839, led by their Chief, the Khamtis stormed the garrison at Sadiya and killed the British Agent. The British then sent punitive forces to defeat the Khamtis. Ultimately in 1842, both the Sadiya and the Muttock country conjointly came under British territory.

NOTES

Check Your Progress

8. The _____ were a division of the Shan tribes.
9. The kingdom of Cachar was under the rule of two princes who had clearly defined areas of control. (True/False)

7.5 STATUS OF TRIPURA

With the coming of the colonial era the British extended their control over Tripura but granted some independence to the Manikya kings. The royal history of Tripura ended in the year 1947 when monarchy in the state was completely terminated. Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya was the last ruling Manikya king of Tripura and it was after his death that Tripura was acceded to the Union of India. In the year 1949, Tripura became a Union Territory of India and remained so until 1972 when it was made a constituent state of the Indian nation.

Tripura had a feudal antiquity since long. According to the Rajmala, tribal kings ruled Tripura about a hundred years ago for an uninterrupted period of thirteen hundred years. The princely Mathura entered a new era in 1765 after the king of Tripura tendered his alliance to the East India Company. The princely Tripura was referred to as 'Independent India' until it was merged with Union of India.

The territorial pattern of the principality of Tripura in the Hoary past was now covered with obscurity. According to the records, principality of Tripura once consisted of the vast territory stretching from Sylhet and Cachar on the north of Chittagong on the south and it merged with the hills inhabited with the tribes called Mizos in the east. The Karimgunge division was also included in the Tripura Kingdom. The 'Lushai Country' which was on the east of Tripura was also considered by the Tripura Rulers.

The province of Tippera, which remained independent for a long time, was annexed to the Mughal Empire after the Mughal invasion on Tripura. During the Mughal period, the situation in Tippera formed a legacy of British people. According to the Mughal arrangements, only the plain portions of Tippera called 'Chakla-Roshnabad' were attached to the British territory. The Company considered the hilly tracts inhabited by various tribes as some different entity.

It is said that, the Commissioner of Chittagong suggested Lord Aukland that the hilly tracts should be annexed to British territory but was not considered because of the expenses involved. Thus, the hills became 'Independent Tippera.'

The rulers of Tripura failed to protect their territory from the encroachments of the British. In 1822, during demarcation between the 'Hill Tippera' and the British District of Sylhet, Lt Fisher seized a large portion of the hill region. According to Sandy, 'It was an act of robbery committed by the company.'

The king of Tippera was deprived of yet another tract of 850 sq. towards the east after the British undertook Lushai expedition in 1871-1872. The British authority unilaterally drew Tripura's eastern boundary line with British India in 1897.

7.5.1 British Paramountly and the King of Tripura

The British imperialism advanced in India with rapid strides since the time of Lord Wellesley. The British Empire grew astoundingly under the Governance of Lord Dalhousie. According to the records, there was no Treaty signed between the state and

NOTES

Government. The king of Tripura enjoyed a dual role as a subject as well as a Zamindar of the British government and the other as an independent ruler of 'Hill Tippera'. As the thrown of Hill Tippera was automatically given to the zamindar of the Chakla-Roshnabad, the king was given the responsibility.

Even after the assumptions of the Indian government by crown, Indian States were recognized as independent states and were regarded as allies of British Government. A verdict of the Privy Council of Queen Victoria on March 15 1869, called the king of Tripura an Independent Ruler considering the "Hill Tippera".

The absence of a successor to the throne in Tripura gave way to the British authorities to interfere with the politics of the palace. The British took advantage of the anarchical situations and took over the throne. Finally, the Viceroy granted a Sanad to Radhakishore Manikya on June 21, 1904 'settling the questions on succession to the state and its appurtenances.'

Check Your Progress

10. The plain portions of Tippera called _____were attached to the British territory.
11. The King of Tripura enjoyed a dual power as both a zamindar and the _____.

ACTIVITY

Draw a map showing the rule of the British over various areas of Northeast India.

7.6 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The British divided Assam as Lower Assam and Upper Assam.
- Ahom Rule in Assam was terminated after the Treaty of Yandaboo came into action.
- Senior Commissioner of Lower Assam was David Scott.
- Colonel Richard was appointed as the Junior Commissioner of Upper Assam.
- Martial law in Upper Assam was lifted in 1828.
- The old 'Paik' and 'Khel' systems were retained in Upper Assam.
- Upper Assam was formally annexed to the British dominion in India in 1838.
- In October, 1838, territory of Purandar Singha was taken over by the British on the advice of Mr.Jenkin, Agent of East India Company, and Assam became a 'nonregulated' province as a whole of the Indian Empire.
- Choudhuries were given the responsibility for the collection of revenue and administration of justice in small criminal cases in their particular paraganas.
- Assamese was prohibited from the courts and schools of Assam in 1839.
- Anandaram Dhekial Phukan was the first person to raise his voice against the imposition of Bengali as the medium of instruction, and appealed for to replace it with Assamese.

NOTES

- The Khasi war of liberty left a deep scar on Khasi society.
- The Cachar District is located in the Southernmost part of Assam is one of the oldest districts of Assam.
- Tripura had a feudal antiquity of many years.
- Principality of Tripura once consisted of the vast territory stretching from Sylhet and Cachar on the north of Chittagong on the south and it merged with the hills inhabited with the tribes called Mizos in the east.

7.7 KEY TERMS

- **Annexation:** To incorporate (territory) into an existing political unit such as a country, state, county, or city.
- **Nobility:** The group of people belonging to the noble class in a country, esp. those with a hereditary or honorary title.
- **Munsif courts:** Is the court of the lowest order handling matters pertaining to civil
- **Choudhuries:** Chaudhary word derived from the Sanskrit word, Chatur Dhrit, meaning 'One who holds all the four varnas (groups) of society' i.e., respected by all.
- **Treaty:** A formal agreement between two or more states in reference to peace, alliance, commerce, or other international relations.
- **Zamindars:** A landlord required to pay a land tax to the government.

7.8 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Gauhati
2. Paraganas
3. Lord Curzon
4. Barbarua
5. Rev. Nathan Brown
6. Jainitia
7. 1823
8. Khamtis
9. True
10. Chakla Roshnabad
11. Ruler of Hill Tippera

7.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. After occupying Assam, the British divided it into two provinces. What were they?

NOTES

2. When was Ahom rule in Assam terminated?
3. Why were the Ahom nobility dissatisfied with the British?
4. Who were the Khamtis?
5. What do you understand by Bhutan duars?

Long-Answer Questions

1. How did the hostilities with Mishimis start?
2. How did the Nongkhlaw incident start?
3. When did the British consolidate Khasi Hills?
4. Write a brief note on Cachar.
5. Write a short note on the status of Tripura during British rule.

7.10 FURTHER READING

Gait, E.A.; *A History of Assam,* BiblioBazaar, US, 2010.

Choudhary, Pratap Chandra; *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.*, Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Assam, Assam, 1966.

Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan; *Social and polity formations in pre-colonial north-east India: the Barak Valley experience*, Haranand Publications in association with Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1991.

Sinha, Surajit; *Tribal Polities and State Systems in Pre-colonial Eastern and North Eastern India*, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 1987.

Chakravarty, I. N., Chakravarty, Lakshmi N.; *Glimpses of the Early History of Arunachal*, Research Department, Arunachal Pradesh Administration, Arunachal Pradesh, 1973.

Barpujari, Heramba Kauta; *Assam in the Days of the Company: 1826 - 1858: a Critical and Comprehensive History of Assam during the Rule of the East-India Company from 1826 - 1858*, North-Eastern Hill University Publications, Assam, 1996

Barpujari, Heramba Kauta; *The Comprehensive history of Assam*, Publication Board, Assam, 1990.

M. Horam; *Naga Polity*, B.R. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1975.

M. Horam; *Social and Cultural Life of Nagas: (the Tangkhul Nagas)*, B.R. Pubishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1977.

Sangkima; Mizos, *Society and Social Change, 1890-1947*, Spectrum Publications, New Delhi, 1992.

Sangkima; *A Modern History Of Mizoram*, Spectrum Publications, New Delhi, 2004.

Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan; *The Garos and the English, 1765-1874*, Radiant Publishers, Hyderabad, 1978.

Kar, Parimal Chandra; *Garos in Transition*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1982.

Venuh, N. and Bonita Aleaz; *British Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2005.

NOTES

Lahiri, Rebati Mohan; *The Annexation of Assam: 1824-1854*, General Printers & Publishers, Mumbai, 1954.

Bhuyan, Suryya Kumar; *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, Lawyer's Book Stall, Assam, 1974.

Elwin, Verrier; *The Nagas in the 19th Century*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1969.

Lahiri, Nayanjot; *Pre-Ahom Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi, 1991.

Birinchi, B.K. and Banikanta Kakati; *Cultural History of Assam*, K. K. Barooah, Assam, 1951.

Basu, Nirmal Kumar; *Assam in the Ahom Age, 1228-1826: Being Politico-economic and Socio-cultural Studies*, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Kolkata, 1970.

Nath, R.M.; *The Background of Assamese Culture*, A. K. Nath, 1948.

Bareh, Hamlet; *The History and Culture of the Khasi People*, Spectrum Publications, Gauhati, 1967.

Chatterjii, S. K.; *The Place of Assam in the History and Civilization of India,* Gauhati University, Gauhati, 1970.

Dani, A. H.; *Prehistory and Protohistory of Eastern India,* Firma L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1960.

Dhavlikar, M. K.; *Bulletin of the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute* 31-32: 137-49, Archaeology of Gauhati, 1973.

UNIT 8 SOCIETY AND ECONOMY OF THE HILLS

Structure

8.0 Introduction
8.1 Unit Objectives
8.2 Nagas
8.3 Mizos
8.4 Garos
8.5 Summary
8.6 Key Terms
8.7 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
8.8 Questions and Exercises
8.9 Further Reading

8.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn about society and economy of hills of North-East India. Northeast India, considered as one of most culturally diverse regions of the world, is a land inhabited by more than 200 fascinating tribes, including Garo, Khasi, Jaintia, Adi, Nyishi and Bhutia. It is no wonder the region has ever since captured the imaginations of anthropologists from all over the world. The tribes in these states have been a huge topic for research by scholars and research groups. They consider that the tribes have a vast culture and tradition. They have always wanted to research about their life, history, culture, tradition, language, economy, source of living and so on. The tribes that live in these regions are from the Tibeto-Burmese, Proto Austrioloids and Indo Mongloids origin. The traces of their origin are evident from their looks and the traditions they follow. These tribes show a lot of resemblance with the traditions of the neighbouring countries.

Different tribes follow different cultures, languages and traditions. They celebrate different festivals and they had tough times in the history migrating from one place to another. They are so diverse that they have different type of attires and cuisines for each tribe in this region. These people live and earn from the produce they get from the hills and forests.

Origin of the tribes

The tribes that live in these regions are from the Tibeto-Burmese, Proto Austrioloids and Indo Mongloids origin. The traces of their origin are evident from their looks and the traditions they follow. These tribes show a lot of resemblance with the traditions of the neighbouring countries.

Types of tribes in North-East India

Tribes of northeastern India constitute a large part of the tribal community of India. The tribes are scattered all over the states. Arunachal Pradesh alone consists of 25 different tribes. Nagaland consists of 16 tribes. Some of them are:

- Garo
- Khasi

NOTES

- Jaintia
- Adi
- Nyishi
- Angami
- Bhutia
- Kuki
- Rengma
- Bodo
- Deori

8.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the society and economy of the Nagas
- Discuss the society and economy of the Garos
- Describe the society and economy of the Mizos

8.2 NAGAS

Naga people are a mixture of several tribes who settled in the northeastern part of India and northwestern Burma. These tribes have same types of culture and traditions and the major population of this group are from Indian states like Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. The Nagas speak different languages where each language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman language group that is a group of Sino-Tibetan language family including Angami – Pochuri, Ao, Kukish, Sal, Tangkhul and Zeme. These people with different culture, traditions and languages have developed a common language Nagamese creole which is used to communicate between tribes and villages where each have different dialects of language.

Nagaland's official language is English, fluently spoken by major urban population. Nagamese is used by the villagers in different tribal districts. Meitei is the language mainly used by the Nagas of Manipur. There prevail perennial disputes and tensions between the tribal people of Nagaland and Manipur.

As on 2012, Nagaland officially recognized 17 Naga tribes; some more Naga tribes inhabit the adjacent states of Manipur, Assam and Arunachal Pradesh in India and the borders of Burma. Most prominently known Naga tribes are Angami, Ao, Chakhesang, Chang, Khiamniungan, Konyak, Lotha, Pochury, Phom, Poumai, Rongmei, Naga, Rengma, Sangtam, Sema (Sumi), Mao (Memei, Maram Naga, Thangal Naga, Yimchunger, Zeliang, Zeme, Liangmai, Nocte, Pochuri, Tangsa, Tutsa and Wancho.

Nagas used to severe the heads of the enemies and preserved them as trophies before the 19th century.

Culture and organization

Nagas are well-organized tribes by their language and traditions. Their traditions have strong warrior qualities. Their villages are normally situated on the hilltops till the end of 19th century; they used to raid villages on the plains below very frequently. The tribes express variation in their languages and traditions to a certain extent.

Even though they express variations, they have similarities culture which distinguishes them between the adjacent people of other regions. Dress codes, eating habits traditions, and customs are almost similar among the Naga tribes. One difference was their ritual, head hunting which was once common in the tribal warriors of Nagaland and in the midst of Naga tribes in Myanmar. They took the heads of their enemies to establish their power which is not practised now. There are around two million Naga people.

The men's clothes are unique: they wear a conical red headgear decorated with wild boar canine teeth and white-black Hornbill feathers. They use spears with red-black hairs ornamental to the shaft, and the Dao with a broad blade and long handle as weapons.

Other than the cultural contacts with the adjacent Ahoms, the Nagas had no connections with the outside world till the British colonization of the region in the 19th century.

In 1828, Britain attached Assam with the Treaty of Yandabo of 1826. In 1830s, they sent forces and in 1845 the British succeeded in finishing a non-hostile deal with Naga chiefs, who first attacked the neighbouring regions of Assam. The Nagas frequently dishonored the treaty and continued their attacks in Assam.

After the 1830s, British trails to attach the region to India were resisted continually and effectively by guerrilla War from Naga tribes particularly by the Angami Naga Tribe. The British sent military forces and succeeded in constructing a military post in 1851 and create some military bases in the area. In 1878, the Angamis increased their attacks on the British camps. The British reciprocated powerfully, burning several revolutionary villages and devastating the opposition. In due course, the area came under the rule of the British.

Christian missionaries

In the 19th century, protestant Christian missionaries from Britain converted lots of people from Naga tribe which in turn diluted many tribal customs and tradition and spread of English education, this opened the gates of modernity in Naga Hills. The first missionary was said to be started by Rev. Miles Bronson in 1841 in Naga Hills. He stayed for a short period. In 1872, E.W. Clark started the first church in molungkimong (Dekha Haimong village) by working in the midst of Ao people and with the assistance from Mr. Godhula, an Assamese Christian from the 1870s.

As the Tribals adopted Christianity and they created more of 'Naga' uniqueness, a fundamental disappearance from their distinctions basing on their martial tribal villages. As on date, 95 per cent of Nagas identify themselves as Christians, more commonly as Baptist. Naga society has altered remarkably from what has been seen a century ago. Christianity and missionaries have become a powerful force for their alteration in their social and their cultural practices than the government.

The new found educational system and religion disturbed the original pattern of life; they discarded their communal patterns, cultural practices and customary political setup without searching true purposeful alternatives in the adaptation presented by the colonizers.

NOTES

NOTES

Resistance and struggle for identity

The region of Naga Hills had persistent confrontation as they have long been secluded from the outside world. The growth of a spirit of autonomy and sense of general identity are comparatively new concepts amidst Nagas. As of their traditions, they had independent and republic village free from all outside command.

With the availability of modern education and Christian missions, politicization of Naga traditions began. In 1918, a group of literate Nagas from Nagaland formed Naga club and wrote a letter to the Simon Commission 1929 asking that Nagas be included in the renewed system of India.

On 14th August 1947, just one day before Indian Independence, Nagas were the first traditional group from the north east to announce their province an independent state, without belonging to the new nation. Angami Zapu Phizo led the initial faction with Naga National Council (NNC). In the latter days of the British Raj, he held discussions trying to attain an autonomous Naga Nation. In June 1947, a 9 point treaty was signed which promised to bring the Naga tribes into a single political governmental unit and acknowledged the Nagas' right to self-government after ten years. Disputes rose over the explanation of the treaty, and many in the NNC objected the same.

Under Phizo, the NNC declared their independence from the British on 14th August 1947. In May 1951, the NNC claimed that 99 percent of the tribals supported a referendum to break away from India, which was instantaneously discarded by the Government of India in New Delhi. Around 1952, the NNC, collected primarily of Nagaland Nagas, led a guerrilla war movement. India reciprocated by devastating their attempts with their armed forces. Phizo escaped through East Pakistan and went to London. He continued to inspire the independence movement from London till his death in 1990.

Statehood, divisions and ceasefires

In 1960, the Naga People's Convention signed a 16 point treaty with the Indian government by which statehood was given to Nagaland in 1963.

A ceasefire was signed between the NNC and the Indian government. They had six rounds of talks without any real progress. In 1972, a murder attempt was made on the Chief Minister of Nagaland, which ended the talks about independence. In November 1975, a group of Delegates of the NNC signed the Shillong Accord, accepting unconditionally the Indian Constitution and surrender of Arms. The Accord was condemned by Nagas; it started the division among the rebels.

The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) was formed in the 1970s by thuingaleng Muivah, Issac Swu and Khaplang, the NSCN later split into two, when Khaplang started another organization.

In the 1990s, people started killing their own brothers and sisters among the revolutionary groups. Especially in Manipur, both nagas and kukis were involved in ethnic violence. People from both the sides suffered a lot of casualties.

The NSCN (IM) was admitted to the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) of the United Nations on 23rd January in 1993. This gave hope to the people that could bring the Naga cause to the eyes of international attention. The NSCN (IM) agreed to a true with the Indian government in 1997.

The Indian government refuses to legally extend the truce to all the areas inhabited by the Nagas outside of Nagaland. The NSCN thinks that this is the biggest ordeal for

NOTES

bringing in peace. However, the Indian army and the NSCN cadre continued to fight with each other.

Society

The Naga tribes have a very democratic society. The village is very intricately bonded within itself, and it consists of people together with different clans.

The Nagas actually live in villages with an average population. These villages are distinct and they have proper markings for their lands to differentiate with the neighbour villages. Each village has its own language and these villages promote a strong feeling of social unity within the village. Almost all the homes in the village grow pigs to provide meat that requires little care. The people of the village are bonded together because of social, political, economic and ritual connections. Each village has its own identity. However, it does not mean that the village is isolated because its village has its bonding with the other villages. The main bonding of the villages is being eroded because of the acceptance of modern day culture and renovating the civilization. A lot of commercial towns are developing in all the regions in the Naga Hills very quickly. These kinds of changes have brought in drastic changes in the social bonding, lifestyle, and the values of the people in the villages.

Each family in the Naga society is considered as the cell of the society. They are considered as the most basic unit of the society. This society's one of the highest virtues are being monogamous and showing loyalty to the spouse. It is considered to be incest if the marriages are held within the same clan. So getting married within the clan is not permitted. People who got married within the clan where disowned by the villages. When it comes to inheritance, the male offspring can inherit the land and cattle. The eldest son of the family inherits the largest share. This indicates that the Naga society considered itself to be democratic as a pretense to itself.

Naga women have been kept in the highest positions of the society and they have been given the leading roles in the community relationship and the basic household necessities, compared to the women in the other castes of India. The birth of boys is highly valued by the society that has high patriarchal values. Women are expected to be humble and obedient. The role of Naga women is much complex and varied than the boys. They play roles such as wife, mother, child bearer, and grow the children, provide food, and manage household matters. She assists the men with the household income by weaving and selling shawls. Women in Naga society are given a lot of freedom and are highly respected. However, they are not a part of the decision-making process of the clans of the village.

According to the Naga society, the time spent in a man's life in the youth dormitory or the morung is a very important part of education and acculturation. It is called the morung system. The morungs are constructed in front of the village entrance or in a place that is guarded. Girls and boys are sent to their respective gender dormitories at the early stages of their adolescence. The elders visit the morungs and teach them the values of Naga culture, traditions that are passed to all the future generations. These are taught to the young when they spend their time in the morung, using folk music and dance, folk tales and oral tradition, wood carving and weaving. Important announcements, such as notifications for meetings, death of a villager, warnings of expected dangers and so on were made from these morungs by beating the log

NOTES

drums. Due to modernization, the use of time in morungs has been abandoned for their youths.

There used to be a very common practice of headhunting in Naga society. The Naga Hills were called the paradise of headhunters by Ursula Graham Bower. Most of the villages had a skull house. Each man from the village had to contribute to the collection. Contributing a head to the collection was a symbol of courage and valor in Naga society. The men who could not contribute were considered impotent, women, or cows. A man was highly valued by severing the head of the enemy in a battle and bringing it back to home. Headhunting is eradicated by the Naga society after the people in the villages converted to Christianity. Modernization has also contributed to the eradication of headhunting.

The continuous development and modernization of cultures has weakened the ties and the traditional relationship between the elders and the youth. There are several nuclear families detached from the villages and this kind of a trend has been widespread among the Naga people as the interaction with modernized society has increased considerably.

Naga tribes are very good in crafting. They live in houses made of wood and straw. These are decorated and arranged orderly. Each tribe in the village has a unique way of building their huts. All the tribes have the head of buffaloes in the entrance of their house.

Naga people are extremely fond of radiant and vibrant colours. It is very much evident in the clothes that they weave and the headgear for both the genders. The clothing pattern that is used by the Nagas depends upon their tribe and these clothes are woven by their women. They use varieties of embellishments on the clothes to make them attractive. They use intricate jewelry with tusk, claws, glass, shell, stone, teeth, wood, seeds, hair, fiber, metals, and horns.

It is said that these tribes made all the goods that they used on their own. This kind of tradition was there among many tribes. They make their own clothes, hats, rain oats, medicines, and vessels; they have expertise in pottery, wood carving, bead-work, jewelry-making, baskets, and metalwork.

The women in the Naga tribes focused mainly on weaving colourful woolen and cotton shawls. The Naga shawls have a very distinct feature. They are not stitched with a single cloth. They are made up of three clothes that are woven separately and are stitched together. Weaving these shawls is a time-consuming task because of its intricate weaving. It takes a few days to complete one Naga shawl. The men and women wear shawls with different designs. They do not wear the same design shawls. They also wear different designs of wrap around garments which is commonly called mekhela.

Social status of the person who wears a shawl is based on the design of the shawl in many tribes. Some of the most familiar shawls in the Naga tribes are: *Tsungkotepsu* and *Rongsu* of the Ao tribe; *Sutam, Ethasu, Longpensu* of the Lothas; *Supong* of the Sangtams, *Rongkhim* and *Tsungrem Khim* of the Yimchungers; and the Angami *Lohe*. The angami lohe shawls have very thickly embroidered animal motifs.

The Indian Chamber of Commerce has filed an application seeking registration of traditional Naga shawls made in Nagaland with the Geographical Registry of India for geographical indication.

NOTES

The most essential ingredients for the traditional Naga culture are the folk songs and dances. Folk tales and songs are used as the mode to sustain the art of oral tradition. Naga folk songs are used to narrate the history of ancestors and important incidents. They are also romantic songs. Songs that describe the activities done in the form for a particular season are called seasonal songs.

The early western missionaries disagreed with the use of folk songs. They believed that they are associated with the spirit of worship, war and immorality. Slowly, the original music from the Nagas disappeared once the western hymns were translated and introduced to the people of Naga. Folk dances are a combined effort from both the men and women. They are combined and performed in a synchronized manner. These are performed based on the dances. These dances are performed basically at festivals and religious occasions. War dances are also performed in the Naga Hills. However, mostly men perform the war dances as it involves a lot of athletic and martial style. All these dances are accompanied by war songs and war cries from the dancers. The original music is from the instruments that are made of bamboo mouth organs, cup violins, bamboo flutes, trumpets, drums made of cattle skin, and log drums.

Following are the major festivals of Nagaland:

- Sekrenyi: The sekrenyi festival belongs to the Angami tribe. It takes place in Kohima in the month of February.
- Ngada: The Ngada festival is celebrated by the Rengma tribe. It is celebrated mainly in Kohima in the last week of November.
- Chiithuni: The Chiithuni festival is celebrated by Memei trib. It is majorly celebrated in Mao in December and January.
- Nga-Ngai: The Nga-Ngai festival is celebrated by the Zeliang tribe. They celebrate this festival in the last week of December. It is mainly celebrated in Kohima.
- Mimkut: The Mimkut festival is celebrated by the Kuki tribe in the third week of January. It is mainly celebrated in Kohima.
- Tsukhenyi: the Tsukhenyi festival is celebrated by the Chakhesang tribe. They celebrate this festival in the month of March and April. This is mostly celebrated in Peek.
- Nazu: The Nazu festival is celebrated by the Pochury tribe. It is celebrated in the month of July and August. It is also celebrated majorly in Phek.
- Moatsu: The Moatsu festival is celebrated by the Ao tribes. They celebrate this festival in the first week of May. This festival is celebrated majorly in mokokchung.
- Aoleang: The aoleang festival is celebrated by the konyak tribes. It is mostly celebrated in Mon in the first week of April.
- Monyu: The Monyu festival is celebrated by the Phom tribes. It is vastly celebrated in Longleng in the first week of April.
- Miu: The Miu festival is celebrated by the Khiamngan tribe. It is celebrated in the second week of May and is celebrated vastly in Tuensang.
- Naknyu Lem: The Naknyu Lem festival is celebrated vastly by the Chang tribes. They celebrate this festival in the second week of July and it is majorly celebrated in Tuensang.

NOTES

- Metemneo: The Metemneo festival is celebrated mostly by the Vimchunger tribes. It is celebrated in the second week of august. It is celebrated majorly in Tuensang.
- Amongmong: The amongmong festival is celebrated by the sangtam tribes. They celeb rate this festival in the first week of September. It is vastly celebrated in Tuensang.
- Tokhu Emong: The Tokhu Emong festival is celebrated by the Lotha tribes. This festival is celebrated in the first week of November. This festival is celebrated mainly in Wokha.
- Tuluni: The Tuluni festival is celebrated by the Sumi tribes in July. It is mainly celebrated in Zunheboto.

The following are classified as the tribes of Naga Hills:

- Angami
- Ao
- Chakhesang
- Chang
- Khiamniungan or Khiamungan
- Konyak
- Lotha (Kyong)
- Mao (Memei)
- Maram Naga
- Nocte
- Phom
- Pochury
- Poumai
- Rengma
- Sangtam
- Sumi (Sema)
- Tangsa
- Thangal
- Tutsa
- Wancho
- Yimchunger
- Zeliang
- Maring

The Kukis are normally considered as the non-Naga tribes. However, they also live in Nagaland. The Kukis are also considered as the participants in the first memorandum in the history of Nagas which was submitted to the Simon commission in the year 1929. The Nagas have shared good relationship with the Kukis. Conflicts had risen since the 1990s. These conflicts were very much active especially in Manipur. The rise of Naga nationalism from Manipur Nagas has resulted in their trying to expel the Kukis from their area.

NOTES

According to the Wycliffe website, the following tribes are considered as the tribes of the Naga Hills:

1. Pidgin
2. Angami
3. Ao
4. Chang
5. Chokri
6. Chote
7. Inpui
8. Kharam
9. Khezha
10. Khiamniungan
11. Khoibu
12. Konyak
13. Liangmei (Community of Zeliangrong)
14. Lotha
15. Makuri
16. Mao
17. Maram
18. Maring
19. Monsang
20. Moyon
21. Mzieme
22. Nocte
23. Northern Rengma
24. Phom
25. Pochuri
26. Poumei
27. Puimei
28. Purum
29. Rongmei (Community of Zeliangrong)
30. Sangtam
31. Southern Rengma
32. Sumi
33. Thangal
34. Tarao
35. Tase
36. Thangal

NOTES

37. Tutsa
38. Wancho
39. Yimchungru
40. Zeme (Community of Zeliangrong)

The Naga tribes live in Nagaland, Manipur, southern Assam, northern Assam, and Arunachal Pradesh and also in Myanmar. The ethnologues website also has a list of tribes that are considered as Naga tribes. They classify the tribes based on their language that marks the languages based on codes.

Like all the other tribes in the world, the economy of the Naga tribes is also based on the forest they live in. Tribal economy can also be commonly called forest economy. The Nagas developed an economy which gives primary importance to the farming industry and the agriculture of the tribe. Along with the revenue earned from the agriculture they also combined it sustainably with the revenue earned from the extracts of forest produce.

The Naga people clear the forest to cultivate rice and other crops. They also catch fish and collect mushrooms, roots, fruits, and herbs from the forest. In addition to the shifting cultivation, they also developed terraced rice paddies even before the British and the Christian missionaries in the 1830s.

The tribal economy is non-structured, simple, self-sufficient and contained. The community sustains based on the natural environment. The structure of its local economy depends on its availability of natural resources and the population pressure. It also depends upon the level of skills possessed by each individual. It is mostly a combined effort of each and every individual of the community. In addition, there is an industry in every Naga tribe that has their contribution of expertise. For example, pottery, weaving, carvings, blacksmith etc. The land in the society of the Nagas is owned by the village chief of the community or a clan. However, once the plots are given to the individuals, they own the exclusive rights over the land and can do anything they want to do with the land. They can keep the land or sell it as they wish. However, no villager has the right to sell the land to anyone outside the village. Each plot in the village must be owned by the villagers and the owners must be one among the Naga tribes.

Check Your Progress

1. Name five tribes of the Nagas.
2. Social status of the person who wears a shawl is based on the _____in many tribes.
3. The most essential ingredients for the traditional Naga culture are the _____.
4. The full form of UNPO is _____.

8.3 MIZOS

The Mizos were a collection of tribes living together in an area. The most common feature that brings them together is their tribes. The Mizo people were not a collection,

NOTES

but were groups fighting among themselves and migrating from one place to another in search of a place where they can stay permanently. War fare was the cause of the fragmentation of the tribes. In the later stages it became the cause for the conglomeration of these tribes and they all migrated in the Mizo-chin territory.

All the people did not settle in one place. People from the smaller groups did not find a permanent place. There was very less availability of land and so people started fighting over the land for its authority. All the people of Mizo had to shift to another place and search for another place once the victor occupies their place. The increase in the population of chin hills and the association with the warfare had brought in new hope among the sailo lineage of the mizos. When the people of the sailo lineage got power, they brought ways to expand the authority of the political judiciary in their area. They enlarged the claims of the local territories. This was done by expelling the cultural complexity of many people in the Lushai ethnic groups. All the people in the Mizo groups accepted the self-appointed chief for the Mizos. The person appointed as the chief carried chieftainship to the future generations. These were the systematic changes and the revolutionary developments of the period from the 18th century to British rule.

The territories took the form of petty chiefdoms. However, they could not become real chiefdoms because the chiefs were not clear about what should be done to create an administration free of confusion.

Their desire for a good administration was less than being active in having more slaves, booty, and heads. They however had to make a distinguishing factor among themselves and started involving themselves in martial endogamy and marital alliance with politics among themselves.

The main source of production for the Mizo people was the Sweden cultivation. Although the distribution of land was still there, the chiefs never worked for their people or their land.

This kind of primary and basic means of production did not help in maintaining a sustained clear visibility of chiefdom or a state. The Mizos had a lot of complexity involved in the status and role of each individual. These small fights could not bring over much change by involving the chief in righteous work that involves benefits for the people and a better administration.

The Mizos had a community that did not have slave system but had the existence of bawiship. This was marked as slavery but this is done voluntarily. They used to surrender as slaves to the chief for various reasons. Mostly, the poor section women and poor widows used this option. These people were a majority of the bawi supporting people.

The people of Mizo depended mostly on the produce that they got from their land. Generally, they lived from the produce they made from the jhum cultivation. They had a big blow when there is famine in the village. They did not have anything as a back up or a contingency plan to be supported in that period. This kind of situation prevailed even under British administration. The transformation of Mizo society had a big role for the Zawlbuk institution. This place inspired a lot of kids and they learnt a lot from the elders in Zawlbuk. The women were not treated equally and their status was very inferior compared to the men. They made their contribution to improve the economy and the living of the Mizos. Their effort for this cause was as equal as what the men contributed to bring up the economy of the Mizos.

Check Your Progress

5. The most common feature that brings them together is _____.
6. The poor section of women and poor widows used the _____ of slavery.

8.4 GAROS

History says that Garos have been self-sufficient for everything else other than salt. Their stories have long stories of men travelling several kilometres from the hills to the markets in the plain only to buy salt. They had enough fish, shrimps and crabs in their rivers. They consumed smoked fish and also purchased dry fish from the markets. One of the crucial items of the agalmaka ceremony of the jhum cycle is the smoked fish or the dry fish. These are offered to their deity Minima Kiri rokime and are served for the feast. Minima Kiri rokime is the deity who blesses the farmers with paddy and fish. She is known for her arrival with the clouds that give rain from the sea. Saka Misi Saljong is another deity who blesses their farms. The Garos had salt springs now and then they made use of it to some extent. However, animals also used them frequently. The Garos do not have any record to the usage and extraction of black salt.

The Garos travelled from Tibet with their leaders Jappa Jalimpa and Supa Bongeppa. They travelled carrying their tools used for agriculture with yak tails and other valuables. They played musical instruments like tambourine, bells and cymbals during the travel. History says that, the Garos moved from Tibet and travelled to India due to the failure of crops in their home land. The main land that they searched for was a land that was suitable for farming and a place where they can settle down permanently. Garos are known to be migrating from places over a hundred years and they grew tiresome of the idea of shifting to another place. They wanted to shift permanently to a suitable area one and for all. On their way to India, they practised clearing forests and jungles. They also practised jhum cultivation.

They migrated and finally settled in places like Habraghat, Kamrup, Goalpara, Sibsagar districts Itripura ad East Bengal.

The plains of Habraghat belonged to the Garos till 1822. They were not in the control of the zamindars. The Rohmer lands, Piranha, Mechpara, Kalumalupara, Singimari, Karaibari, Putimari, Rohmari lands were controlled by the independent Garo sardars.

According to various authors, Garos owned the territory between the northern latitudes 250 and 260. They owned the perganahs of Habraghats, Mechpara, Kalumalupara, Karaibari, and the Goalpara district completely which is situated between the Brahmaputra and the Garos. To the south, they owned Susung, Sherpur, Durgapur, and the areas of Habraghat, Nalibhari, Shribodi, and Kulmakanda.

History proves that the Garos had started using the techniques of wet cultivation even before the arrival of the British. Some of the lands of the Garo sardars were awarded as lakraj lands in Goalpara district recognizing the settled cultivation. Many other lands in Rangpur and Mymnesingh were also settled as lakraj lands by Udhan Shuk Bahadur. These lands separate documents and maps individually. These lands were given as a favor to the Garo people during Muslim rule in 1825. Sherpur and Parganas were also implicit in these lands.

An author had compiled and listed the Garo territories of Kamrup in the period between 1807 to 1814 as follows: the Rajahs residence at Boghpur was united in Baraduyer and the market place at Kukirya. Independent Garos bought salt from the Rajhat in Jaintya and Laur in the distrust of Srihatta. They used to bring this salt to the market place at Boghpur. The Laur road passes the territory of Koiram. Koiram is a Garo chief. This territory borders on Susangga. Ganeshwar Rajas territory is situated to the west of Koiram. Ganeshwar Raja is the nephew of the Raja of Koroyivari. The other territory Mairapur is situated between Bhokgram and Baraduyar. To the west of Gauhati is Lukiduyar, which borders on the independent Garos. Bengal is close to the Pantan and Bongram territories. To the south of Pantan is Vagaduyar. The *raja* of Bholagram belongs to the Mech community. Mech is a community which has close racial and linguistic affinity to the Garos. All the rajas of Garos paid tribute to the low lands of Assam. The chief Lukiduyar was converted by the Bhramans. Even though he belonged to the Garo family, he received and followed instructions from the Bhramans.

Most of the rajas who had a lot of relations and branched to various places in the southern side of the Brahmaputra belonged to the Garos. The Ahom kings pacified the friendship of the independent mountaineer by offering a free commercial intercourse. They were satisfied with the moderate level of tributes they made.

Hamilton, a famous author, made a study related to the territories that are denied to the Garos, and the cause of head hunting journey of the Garos for the independent mountaineers to the plains.

Very soon, the Bengalese zamindars used the terror of the British arms as their help and made brutal acquisitions on the poor Garos. The armies of the Garos possessed very imperfect kind of bows, swords and spears. The terror created by the zamindar using the name of the company as officer was sufficient to threaten the Garos. Every Garo has faced excessive exaction. Every Garo who goes to the company to exchange commodities, and the chiefs who owned lands that are easily accessible were also treated the same way. This happened in the acquisition of the large space that was acquired between the mountains on one side and the Kalamalupara and Mechpara on the other side. Either they acquired or they were rendered tributary and mere ciphers like the one in Hawaraghat. The zamindars created a lot of violence, but the Garos never went to the British against them.

Garos are known to be independent and they never approached the British people against the violent usurpations from the zamindars. Complaining to the British was the only thing they could do because, British were the sole authority to whom they could complain about their property. After some time, the behaviour of the zamindars towards the Garos needed some serious investigation and some action had to be taken. It happened that the Garos were not given justice and no inquiry took place in favour of the Garos.

With all the support of the British, Bijni zamindar made more acquisitions and encroachment. He extended his boundaries and owned Dilma, Rohamari, Konchikol, Resu by the end of the century. One of the Garos gave a great detail of the circumstances they had to face. A person with a prosperous life, with paddy lands, became deprived of his own land because of the zamindars. From 1900 to 1911, Sonaram R.Sangma led a movement for justice demanding the return of all the encroached lands and Lakraj lands to them. He fought especially for Nazaranah mahals and the Lakhraj lands. However,

NOTES

the Garos did not get any justice from the British raj. The loss of these agricultural lands had a very big impact on the economy of the Garos.

Nengre Mechik, Dire Tira, and Dising Gitel were the people who took an initiative to establish market places once their economy improved. They took the initiative to establish market places in Sengkadik Wakmetom, Matia panchia at Kamrup district. They initiated a marketplace called DimrimBri Palwang A.ding in the folklore. Also, a wealthy chief Munpa Senepa also initiated a market place in Samegaru and Chekjongbra. Folklore says that a trader showed him his rangs or gongs. The rangskal-rangjogi caused dizziness and illness to munepa with his supernatural powers. The chief recovered only when a rooster was given as a sacrificial offering. After that various types of rangs were made with brass and bell metal. The Garos have a very sentimental value to their gongs. Wearing rangs is one of the means to measure the wealth of a man. It denotes the status of the person in the society of Garos. After Munepa died, he was laid in the bed of gongs. This custom is very rare now and nobody follows it anymore. Gongs were also used to be exchanged. Till the recent decades, they were used as a mode to get a loan using the gongs as a mortgage against those loans. Vows and gongs were the mode of loans and exchange during the age of the barter system. Some of the evidence for this kind of loan system is there in the Garo epic poetry Kata doka. The hero is sold as a slave and he is purchased with 12 kines and 12 gongs as per the poem. However, the Kochinasindiya and Nuniya tribes who live in the border of Assam had progressed in the society. Of those who have progressed, some of them trade with salt, slaves, silver while others are artists and they work with brass, iron, and precious metals. While some of them from the achik and abeng tribes trade with the production of their farms as consumer articles. The Garos used the Narayan rupee that was made by the Cooch Behar kings. Later in 1847 when the company also issued coins they were launched in the market, a lot of confusion and suspicion took place among the Garos and the traders.

The Garos used to bring cotton, lac, maynas, plantains, parrots, bananas, melons, chilli, maize, grains, aromatic herbs, and rubber to the market. All these things had a great demand and would go for a higher price in the markets of Bengal and Assam. They also bought falcons, elephants, agar, and *tezpatta* to the market and sold them for a great price. The Garos purchased umbrellas, pottery, bread, cloth, bulls, cocks, sugar, or capons in return.

William Carey could make out the difference between the usages of such articles that were bought from the market. Articles such as pottery, earrings and clothes were previously made by themselves among their clans.

Both the zamindars and the British were more interested in the cotton than any other item that was bought by the Garos. The relationship between the Cossyas and the Garos has always been very cordial. It was noted that people from both Cossyas and Garos visited all the fairs both on Assam side of the hills and in Sylhet. Moreover, the taxes that were levied upon them were very much considerable.

William Carey also described the type of trade that took place in Goalpara. Some of them are as follows:

- 7000 maunds of cotton with seeds which were worth 35000 rupees
- 10000 maunds of stik lac worth 35000 rupees.

The cotton that was bought by the Garos were snow white in colour and they were sold in huge jengges. They were in great demand for manufactures from textiles and quilts. Cotton that was produced and sold by the Garos were so much in demand

NOTES

that millions of ryot made use of this cotton to make clothes, threads, and quilts. Bengali merchants were very much eager to buy the Garo cotton as much as the Garos wanted to sell their cotton for their needs. The Chaudhries levied duties from both the Garos and Bengalis and made as much as harvest as they could.

The speciality of the cotton cultivated in the Garo hills is has an anecdote from the folklore. It is said that Gonga made an ancient gigantic cotton tree fall on the banks of the river Ildek. It is believed that the branches of the tree fell on the A.Beng area. This is believed to be the reason why the A.Bengs produced more cotton than others in the Garo hills.

Garos continued to consume and obtain enough vegetables, grains, and fruits as long as their lands are fertile and the jhum cycle had prolonged. The Garo people developed the best variety of paddy like sarangm mima gcrim.

The jhum field of Garos also saw a lot of other varieties such as millet and maize, arums, beans including soya beans, tapioca, mendu, sesame, ginger, chillies, pumpkins, brinjal, varieties of gourd, lady's finger, mejak which belongs to the mustard family, types of sorrel were cultivated In the jhum field. Other than the vegetables, Garos had a very good collection of fruits also. They had jackfruits, mangoes, tamarinds, angkil, pomela, varieties of citrus fruits such as chinara, matchi, chambil, kampil, atoll, and sokmil. Beer was also brewed from some of the grains such as rice, millet, and a few others. They used to obtain ginger, chillies, and karchi from plaintain trunks. Garos consumed a lot of animal food along with grains. They ate meat such as pork, beef, venison, fish, shrimps, crabs, chickens, tortoise. The Garos hunted deer, barking deer, wild fowl and hogs for food. The wangala festivities last a week in the Garo hills with the food they produce. They consume a lot of rice beer or chu, and they cooked meat and served it to the whole group of people gathered for the festivities. As a part of the celebration, the people of the village throw steamed rice in all the directions in Nokmas house imitating the fall of hailstones. The bulls that were kept for slaughtering were kept in the nokkra or the porch. The people of Garo slaughtered goats, pigs, or fowl in the ceremonies to heal the sick. They sacrifice bulls in the funerals to honour the dead. If a Nokma dies in the village, they used to sacrifice more than fifty bulls.

The Garos also obtained fibre from the kilkra trees which was also used to make strings and ropes. The Garo people made blankets out of the pakkram tree. They used the yarn for weaving with the use of locally produced cotton, and they dyed the woven cloth with the help of vegetable and fruit dyes. These dyes were also used to pain the articles such as wood carvings that were placed in the Nikpante, nokmas house and the memorial post of the dead. They built their houses from the building material that is obtained from the forest. They obtained the timber from the bolsal tree, boldak, bolang, chagro and they used other trees to make posts and beams.

They had bedrooms, kitchen, living room, porch, three varandahs, storeroom, and a toilet that could be used in the night only. They had sheds in their houses for pigs, cows, goats, fowls, etc. The family lived in the *jamadal* when it is the farming season. They do that to stay close to the farm. The *jamadal* is constructed in the jhum field itself. It also has a place for garbage called *kalbong*. They also had a strong watch house on top of a tree and this is also to be out of reach from the animals and birds. They attach a device called wa.kap in the houses constructed in the *jamadal* and the houses built on the trees. These are used to frighten the predators. They used thatching grass for the roof.

NOTES

CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

7. Why do the villagers use wa.kaps in the *jamadal*?
8. The Garo people made blankets out of the _____

ACTIVITY

Prepare a colourful collage portraying various tribes of Northeast India. Mention one unique feature of each of them.

DID YOU KNOW

The original garment of the Mizos is known as puan. They were used by men and women more or less in the same fashion. One has to see them to believe the intricate traditional designs woven by the Mizo women, born weavers who produce what can only be described as art on their looms. The Mizo have held on to certain patterns and mottos that have come down through the ages. These designs have become deep rooted in their tribal consciousness and have become a part of the Mizo heritage. The unique value of Mizo PUAN comes from the personal involvement of the weaver, who with great labour weaves her dreams into each work and weft until every design has a story to tell. These traditional hand woven apparels are of different shades and designs without exquisite play of colour combination and intricate weaving patterns. Some of the common clothing or puan are :

Puanchei: It is by far the most colourful costume and is used by every Mizo lady.

Kawrchei: A distinctive blouse of the ladies

Ngotekherh: This traditional puan is worn round the waist originally it was a men's puan but now it is worn by men and women alike.

Hmar am: Originally this was a small hand woven cloth of handspun cotton and indigo dye.

Cyhna Hno: It is a beautiful embroidered silk puan of the Mara's. It is used by both men and women.

8.5 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The women in the Naga tribes focused mainly on weaving colorful woolen and cotton shawls. The Naga shawls have a very distinct feature. They are not stitched with a single cloth. They are made up of three clothes that are woven separately and they are stitched together. Weaving these shawls is a very time consuming task because of its intricate weaving. It takes a few days to complete one Naga shawl.
- The Naga people clear the forest to cultivate rice and other crops. They also catch fish and collect mushrooms, roots, fruits, herbs from the forest.

NOTES

- The Naga people clear the forest to cultivate rice and other crops. They also catch fishes and collect mushrooms, roots, fruits, herbs from the forest. In addition to the shifting cultivation, they also developed terraced rice paddies even before the British and the Christian missionaries in the 1830s.
- Naga tribes are very good in crafting. They live in houses made of wood and straw. These are decorated and arranged orderly. Each tribe in the village has a unique way of building their huts. All the tribes have the head of buffaloes in the entrance of their house.
- The Kukis are normally considered as the non Naga tribes. However, they also live in Nagaland. The Kukis are also considered as the participants in the first memorandum in the history of Nagas which was submitted to the Simon commission in the year 1929. The Nagas have had good relationship with the Kukis. Conflicts had risen since 1990s. These conflicts were very much active especially in Manipur. Rising Naga nationalism from Manipur Nagas has resulted in their trying to expel the Kukis from their area.
- The Garos used to bring cotton, lac, maynas, plantains, parrots, bananas, melons, chillies, maize, grains, aromatic herbs, and rubber to the market. All these things had a great demand and would go for a higher price in the markets of Bengal and Assam. They also bought falcons, elephants, agar, and *tezpatta* to the market and sold them for a great price. The Garos purchased umbrellas, pottery, bread, cloth, bulls, cocks, sugar, or capons in return.
- Most of the rajas who had a lot of relations and branched to various places in the southern side of the Brahmaputra belonged to the Garos.
- The plains of Habraghat belonged to the Garos till 1822. They were not in the control of the zamindars. The Rohmari lands, Perganah, mechpara, Kalumalupara, Singimari, Karaibari, Putimari, Rohmari lands were controlled by the independent garo sardars.
- The garos travelled from Tibet with their leaders Jappa Jalimpa and Supa Bongeppa. They travelled carrying their tools used for agriculture with yak tails and other valuables. They played musical instruments like tambourine, bells and cymbals during the travel. History says that, the garos moved from Tibet and travelled to India due to the failure of crops in their home land.
- Minima Kiri rokime is the deity who blesses the farmers with paddy and fish. She is known for her arrival with the clouds that give rain from the sea. Saka Misi Saljong is another deity who blesses their farms. The Garos had salt springs now and then they made use of it to some extent.
- With all the support of the British, bijni zamindar made more acquisitions and encroachment. He extended his boundaries and owned Dilma, Rohamari, Konchikol, Resu by the end of the century.
- The Kukis are normally considered as the non Naga tribes. However, they also live in Nagaland. The Kukis are also considered as the participants in the first memorandum in the history of Nagas which was submitted to the Simon commission in the year 1929. The Nagas have had good relationship with the Kukis. Conflicts had risen since 1990s. These conflicts were very much active especially in Manipur. Rising Naga nationalism from Manipur Nagas has resulted in their trying to expel the Kukis from their area.

- The Nagas actually live in villages with an average population. These villages are distinct and they have proper markings for their lands to differentiate with the neighbor villages. Each village has its own language and these villages promote a strong feeling of social unity within the village. Almost all the homes in the village grow pigs to provide meat that requires little care. The people of the village are bonded together because of social, political, economic and ritual connections. Each village has its own identity.
- Nagas are well-organized tribes by their language and traditions. Their traditions have strong warrior qualities. Their villages are normally situated on the hilltops till the end of 19th century; they used to raid villages on the plains below very frequently. The tribes express variation in their languages and traditions to certain extent.
- The Indian government refuses to legally extend the truce to all the areas inhabited by Nagas outside of Nagaland. The NSCN thinks that this is the biggest ordeal for bringing in peace. However, the Indian army and the NSCN cadre continued to fight with each other.
- Garos are known to be independent and they never approached the British people against the violent usurpations from the zamindars. Complaining to the British was the only thing they could do because, British were the sole authority to whom they could complain about their property.

8.6 KEY TERMS

- **NSCN:** Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland is a nationalist extremist group that operates in North-East India
- **Mekhela:** It is a traditional assamese dress worn by women
- **Sekrenyi:** It is a festival of the Angami tribe celebrated in February
- **Morungs:** The traditional Naga bachelor's dormitories

8.7 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. Maram Naga, Nocte, Phom, Pochury, Poumai
2. Design of the shawl
3. Folk dances and Songs
4. Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization
5. Tribalism
6. Bawi system
7. Frighten the predators
8. Pakkram tree

8.8 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Name the varieties of animals that were brought to the market place by the Garos.
2. Write a short note on the society of the Nagas.
3. Write a short note on the five festivals of the Nagas.
4. Write about the cotton growing of the Garos.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Write about the economy of the Nagas.
2. Write about the society of the Garos.
3. What were the main features of the society and economy of the Mizos?

8.9 FURTHER READING

Bareh, H.; *The History and Culture of the Khasi People*, Spectrum Publications, Gauhati, 1967.

Chatterjii, S. K.; *The Place of Assam in the History and Civilization of India,* Gauhati University, Gauhati, 1970.

Dani, A. H.; *Prehistory and Protohistory of Eastern India,* Firma L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1960.

Dhavlikar, M. K.; Archaeology of Gauhati, *Bulletin of the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute,* 1973, 31-32: 137-49.

Gokhale, B. G.; Nagaland-India's sixteenth state, *Asian Survey.* 1*(3)*, pp 36–40, 1961.

Verghese, B. G.; *India's northeast resurgent: Ethnicity, insurgency, governance, development*, Konark Publishers, Delhi, 1996.

UNIT 9 FREEDOM MOVEMENT

NOTES

Structure

9.0 Introduction
9.1 Unit Objectives
9.2 1857 Revolt and the North-East
9.3 National Consciousness
9.4 Peasant Uprisings
9.5 Non-Cooperation and Quit India Movement
9.6 Summary
9.7 Key Terms
9.8 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
9.9 Questions and Exercises
9.10 Further Reading

9.0 INTRODUCTION

India's freedom struggle or the movement for independence was a movement that began even prior to 1857 and continued till India became free in 1947. The movement was mostly peaceful though both unarmed and armed struggle are recorded. The movement also involved many political and social organizations. Various political ideas played a huge role in the movement. For the role that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi performed in the movement, he is referred to as the 'Father of the Nation'.

It was on 3 June, 1947, that Lord Mountbatten, the then Viceroy announced India's partition. India was to be divided into two separate countries: Union of India and Islamic Pakistan.

Post the announcement and during the process of partition hundreds of thousands of persons lost their lives while uncountable others were separated from their loved ones and family. At midnight of 14th August 1947, India became an independent country.

Let us look at the role that North-East India had to play in the struggle for independence from the Company rule and the British Raj.

9.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the uprising in the North-East during 1857
- Discuss the emergence of national consciousness in the North East
- Describe the peasant uprisings in the North East
- Discuss the Non-Cooperation Movement and the Quit India Movement in the North-East

9.2 1857 REVOLT AND THE NORTH-EAST

Mostly, the origins of the uprisings of 1857 have been ascribed to the unrest that took place in Bengal's military establishment and to the outbreak in Meerut in May 1857. North East India was troubled with the rule of the East India Company and was deeply

NOTES

involved in the discontent itself that led to the uprising. It was also involved with the 1857 movement. Regions of the North East, including the hill areas, were involved with other regions of India in the huge reaction that was happening against the rule of the British in India. There is abundant literature for the North East regarding the participation in events of 1857 which help us to reconstruct the role played by this region.

Benudhar Sharma was the first to research and publish the outcomes of the research regarding the involvement of people from the North East in the fight against British rule in 1857. Benudhar Sharma published his findings at the time of the centenary observance of 1857. In his book, *Assam in the Days of the Company*, H. K. Barpujari has provided a rather detailed account of events.

In 1826, the annexation of Assam took place post the ousting of the Burmese and the signing of the treaty of Yandaboo on 24 March 1826. Just a few months prior to signing of the treaty, British occupation in Assam had gone up to Bishwanath in the north at which place they had even stationed an officer. Even though Assam did not rise against the British, it was annexed and post the First Anglo-Burmese War the Ahom state disappeared. The British had provided refuge to two Ahom princes. Prince Chandra Kanta got put on pension and was sent off to Kaliabor. It was supposed that Prince Purandhar Singha had a lot of wealth, so he got no pension and at a later stage the British gave back Upper Assam to him for five years (1833–1838) as part of an experiment and post this period its administration went back to the British. Of the various causes in Assam that led to the events of 1857 one was that the Ahom nobility had been deprived by the British of position, rule and privileges over Assam.

These people were used to leading a certain type of life and were with the new administration forced to make a sudden change in their habits as also participate in other vocations, specifically performing physical labour which was demanding. Neither did they have land nor any significant moveable property. All their requirements were met by the state from the service of the pykes and their dignities and comforts and taken care of by the slaves available in abundance. The effect of British occupation in the form of socioeconomic changes led to suffering and irritation across those homes that had been dependent on being served by others.

The two Ahom princes had been pushed by the British into a sorry state. In 1839, Chandra Kanta passed away and his family was left in a poor financial condition. In a marginally better state, Purandhar Singha asked for a raise in his pension which did not come in time for him to utilize (he died in October 1856). Maniram Dewan took up the case of the nobility and the princes. He had been part of the British administration in his early days and had excelled. But he had many troubles to face. He had to forego the benefits of the mauzas which Purandhar Singha has allowed him, and in his tea garden enterprise he had not got the revenue concessions which were given for the same thing to European investors. Subsequently, Maniram took on the post of Dewan with Purandhar Singha's grandson Kandarpeswar Sinha. The government was petitioned by Maniram both on behalf of disposed nobility and the prince in 1853 when Assam was paid a visit by A. J. M. Mills, Judge, Sadar Dewani Adalat. Mills was of the belief that Maniram played a huge role in instigating people to discontent and was unreliable. At the point when North India was hit by the 1857 uprising, Maniram Dewan was in Calcutta pursuing his struggle to present his and Kandarpeswar's case to the authorities.

Brahmaputra Valley sepoy unrest-related literature is mostly gleaned from archival material and it depicts Maniram Dewan's influence on the prince to uplift the revolt's standard through inciting sepoys at Golaghat, Dibrugarh, Gauhati and Jorhat. The tea

NOTES

planters were scared by the spread of the uprising in Assam and they moved to Gauhati for shelter. In Guwahati, the American Baptist missionaries at Gauhati felt concerned for their safety. When the Chittagong sepoy uprising's news reached Assam, an appeal was made to the government of India by the Chairman of the Assam Company for sending a force of Europeans 'without a moment's delay'. Maniram Dewan's correspondence was intercepted in early September of 1857. Both he and the Raja were implicated in making plans to oust the British rule from the region. In Jorhat, Kandarpeswar got apprehended, in Calcutta the arrest of Maniram Dewan took place while many of his associates were apprehended in Assam. Maniram Dewan was moved to Jorhat where he was tried and sentenced to death on February 26, 1858, and on that very day he and Peali Barua, an associate, were also hanged. Being too young, Kandarpeswar did not face a trial and also because the intercepted correspondence of his Dewan showed that he was not the conspirator but was drawn into it by Maniram.

It has been brought out by Amalendu Guha that the valley's meager uprising had popular support. Assam (Tea) Company's Assamese workers struck work to show that they supported the rebels. In March 1858, it was reported by the company, 'Had an outbreak occurred, there can be no doubt that they would have sided with the rebels,'. January of 1858 saw the labour contractor Madhuram Koch being given a seven-year imprisonment sentence.

A source for the 1857 events is found in the form of a British soldier's diary. His name was George Carter and he was a sergeant in the 2nd Bengal Fusiliers in Ambala. In 1856, he got transferred to the 1st Assam Light Infantry (ALI) and arrived on February 22, 1857 in Dibrugarh. His diary has proven to be a sterling source of information regarding 1857. It was on June 3, 1857 that through the Calcutta Phoenix Extraordinary he got to know of the mutiny breaking out in upper India. The entry he made for June 7 also has the following:

The rebellion as far as I can glean from natives has been foreseen for some years by them in an indiscreet manner: there is a prophecy among them which has been talked of till they believed it would be a true one: namely that after the completion of a hundred years from the time the British took Bengal (viz. 100 years after the Battle of Plassey 23 June 1757) the British in India will expire (Coompnee Ke Raj Murjage).

It is documented by Carter that in Dibrugarh there being any disturbance in June was not a worry. By August 1857 middle, the Commanding Officer of ALI, Lt. Colonel Simon Hannay, considered the taking of 'open precautionary measures'. On August 17, Carter was told by Hannay that in Gauhati agents from northern India were present and were 'trying to arrange a rising amongst our Sepoys in connection with the Assam Raja'. His 19th August entry documents that the mutiny had entered Dibrugarh and Golaghat. Since appropriate measures had been taken, there was no untoward occurrence in Dibrugarh. The measure was augmentation of ALI's position with Gorkha troops called from Sadiya which lies further north. There is a mention in Carter's notings of the military establishments being in utter panic since the artillery there comprised Hindustanis almost exclusively. Plans were created by Colonel Hanney to defend Dibrugarh. Captain Lowther and Captain Holroyd, according to the diary entries, went to Jorhat, the place where the apprehending of Kandarpeswar Singha took place with documents that incriminated and linked him with an uprising intended in Assam. Then, within the battalion, arrests were made. Some names mentioned by Carter are: sepoy Shaikh Muhammad doctor Hadaiat Ali and jamedar Noor Mahammed.

NOTES

Attack at the Barak Valley

The revolt affected the Barak valley and East Bengal as well. In November, people in Chittagong got to know about the uprising in Meerut and the 34th Native Infantry's 300 sepoys who were stationed in the port town rose up in arms. The office of the Collector was looted by them and they decamped with three elephants as well as ₹27,8267, they set the prisoners free and headed to Sylhet via Tripura. Then they went to Cachar and here they were confronted by Sylhet Light Infantry. A battle ensued at Latu in Sylhet Light Infantry's Commandant in which Major Byng lost his life. Captain Stewart, Cachar's Deputy Commissioner, ensured that he was kept updated about the movement of the group in the district and tried to ensure that they would not enter the Lushai hills. The 'mutineers,' as the British called them, were able to get the backing of quite a few princes of Manipuri some of whom since approximately the 1830s had resided in Cachar under the British authorities' watchful eyes. The princes, one being Norindrojeet Sing, had planned to make use of the mutineers for getting into Manipur to usurp the state's government. In the beginning of 1858 January itself, 110 mutineers died in the hands of the Sylhet Light Infantry. Prisoners were also taken, these being 7 children and 12 women who had accompanied the men. Down the month, the number of persons killed rose to 167. Those who were still alive were in a state of anxiousness at all times. By the start of February, if reports are to be believed, the number killed rose to 185.

Information regarding the Barak valleys and Brahmaputra disturbance was heard in the Khasi-Jaintia hills. Approximately 30 years earlier, many Khasi himas (states) had challenged the intent of the British to get a secure position in their hills. This was referred to as the Anglo-Khasi war of 1829-1833. The British did not annex the himas. The chiefs of the himas, Syiems, got forced into signing treaties with the British which put them under political control of the British. At the start of 1835, annexation of the Jaintia took place and the East India Company demanded that the tribute should revert to the status as assigned by the 1824 treaty. The government deputed the Judge of the Board of Revenue, W. J. Allen, in the year 1857, to report on the administration of the Cherra Political Agency and his observation was that 'exaggerated rumours' regarding the British power's collapse had created a certain amount of excitement among the Khasi chiefs. He made explicit mention of the intrigue hatched by Rajendra Singh, Jaintia Raja, with Cherra Syiem for getting back the possession that he had lost. The immediate reaction of the Government was to want to seize Rajendra Singh and move him to Calcutta but they stopped when they were cautioned by Allen that this would raise the importance of the entire incident as also of the Raja. The former Raja, on 15 September, had proposed that he would himself 'proceed to Hindustan with my own troops about 2500 (Cookees, Khasees and Moneepuries) to fight against the enemy of the British Government as I am bound to assist the Government agreeably to the Treaty…. made on the 10th March 1824'. From them he requested for a steamer which would carry the troops and asked that the troops be provided muskets. Rajendra Singh was without an army. Years back when the annexation of his state's plains portion was done, he had given up the position of Syiem. It was suspected by the British that in the milieu of the 1857 situation he was trying to get back his claim over Jaintia. His proposal was rejected by the British Government and consequently Jaintia's former Raja was pushed to live in Sylhet with the authorities keeping an eye on him.

A key cause that led to the feudal and sepoy uprising was the annexation by the British of Indian states before 1857. The Khasi–Jaintias and the Assamese were unhappy with their states' political control and as a result they too were part of the uprising. Like

NOTES

it was all across India, in Assam too the 'disgruntled' aristocracy both fired up the sepoys to rise up and assumed a leadership role even though the uprising did not become as big in Assam as in various other parts of India. The Brahmaputra valley did not have a European regiment and not a single killing of a European officer of the local corps happened. Even then, concern was felt for the safety of the European civil and military administration during the period of the sepoy unrest. In Cachar it was not from the district that the unrest started. When the sepoys actually entered into the district, the descendents of those whose state in 1832 had been annexed did not come forward to wither support or aid the sepoys. On the contrary, the princes of Manipuri sought to gain advantage from the uprising in Cachar. It is to be noted that in the Khasi–Jaintia hills, Barak valley and Brahmaputra valley significant popular support was missing. That is why the British did not find it difficult to control the movement. This is one reason why people do not seem to have much memory of the uprising except for that which has survived in the ballads sung in Cachar. Be it as it may, it cannot be refuted that the events of 1857–58 did affect the region and clearly depicted the resentment which had spread across the region against the colonial rule of the British.

Check Your Progress

1. In which year did the annexation of Assam take place?
2. Post which war did the state of Ahom disappear?
3. When did Chandra Kanta pass away?

9.3 NATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS

It goes without saying that the foremost and direct responsibility for the national consciousness and national movement being born in the country rests on the 1857 uprising. This uprising had pushed the British Indian Government under various kinds of financial strain. They were compelled by 1858–59's deficit in budget to implement new taxes. In 1860, advised by James Wilson the government implemented income-tax and in 1860 this was also implemented in Assam province. New economic forces came into play. New social forces, expressing themselves variously played their parts in the development of conscious national forces. Post 1857, struggle against the foreign government in India continued but the form of struggle changed. The struggle had a transformed intensity which was dependent on how much the consciousness had grown from place to place. In Assam, the *Raijar mels* and *sabhas* were two institutions that were most popular when it came to solving the problem that the indigenous people were confronted with.

In Assam, the earliest popular movement is the Phulguri uprising which was planned to force the Government to take back the much disliked taxation. Despite the failure of this movement it set a precedent and just later similar movements broke out in other parts.

Hopkinson, in 1861, decided that the land tax was to be doubled and the extra revenue would go towards public utility works. His proposal was not approved by the Board of Revenue. Hopkinson made the same proposal in a modified manner in 1865. This time he said that the land revenue must be increased to bring it at par with that of other districts. He even intended that 'house-hold and garden lands' rate be raised. The Government of Bengal approved his proposal. This led to the increase in nearly all districts of 25 per cent to 50 per cent in the rates of non-*rupti* and *rupti* lands.

NOTES

To quote from Gazetteer of India Assam State. Vol-1, 'From early 1869, *mels* were frequently held at Gobindapur, Hadira, and Bajali in Kamrup. A no tax campaign on a vigorous scale was launched by the *ryots* of Rangia and Lachima in the district of Kamrup and Patharughat in Darrang. During the month of December, 1892, people belonging to *Tahsils* of Pati Darrang, Nalbari, Barama, Bajali and also of the five mouzas of upper Borbhag and Sarukhetri in their *mels* resolved not to yield to any sort of Government pressure and excommunicate those who would pay revenue to the Government. The movement started with the looting of the Rangia *bazar.'*

McCabe was compelled by the *ryots'* strong resistance and fear of more trouble to make the security measures stronger. He had meetings of *mels* banned without taking the deputy commissioner's permission. The people were not to be deterred. More serious troubles broke out in Patharughat, and the *ryots* were chased along the Mongaldoi road by a continuously firing police, killing or wounding scores of agitators. I Rangia too firing was resorted to for dispersing a humongous and rebellious crowd gathered to show that they resented the raised revenue. The British named these popular uprisings as 'Assam riots'. These were looked upon as serious and the government's measures to suppress them were also looked upon with seriousness. The Indian Nation's editorial read, 'the burden which now press upon the land in Assam are considerably heavier than on land owned by zamindars in Bengal.' The Amrita Bazar Patrika observed in its editorial that 'in the Deccan the furry of the *ryots* was directed against money lenders, in Bengal against indigo-planters in 1860, in Pabna against Zaminders in Assam, at this movement, it is open rebellion against the Government.'

Though the form of government changed post the Queen's proclamation and direct British rule, the internal administration became worse rather than improve. The introduction of multiple taxes, such as income-tax and stamp duties, caused great concern to *ryots,* which as a result caused the 1861 Phulaguri riot in which was seen the popular discontentment of the tribal peasants towards the steady raising of taxes and the addition of forms of taxation. This movement, by 1893–94, had brought the whole of Assam's rural population in its fold.

The Rising's Impact

The effects of Assam's peasant movement were felt in the imperial legislative in which Rash Bihari Ghosh posed a question regarding the agency of special constables having propriety of realizing land revenue. The pertinent question got vague replies from the authorities. Despite the fact that the risings were not a success, various things were learnt from it. The economic struggle provided a political outlet via the emergence of national consciousness.

Towards the end of 19th century, Western education was spreading and the national patriots found a new awakening. All across the province, *Raijmels* put forward to the government the grievances of the public for consideration. In 1885, the Indian National Congress was born. Prior to the birth of the Indian National Congress, a group of enlightened persons formed the *Ryot sabha* foremost to protest against land revenue enhancement and to put forth the people's other grievances. It was in 1885 that in Assam the Indian National Congress started, yet delegates of the various *sabhas* and *Raijmels* attended its sessions no matter where they were held. The first Assamese who joined in the 1886 second Indian National Congress was Devicharan Baruah.

The British authority compared the *mels* with nihilist organization and lived in their fear. There was a rise in political consciousness and a belief in strength due to the

NOTES

Raij-mels. According to Gazetteer of India Assam State. Vol-1, The '*Ryot-sabha* or *Raijmels* were active in districts like Sibsagar, Nagaon, Darrang, Kamrup and Lakhimpur. The *mels* in Assam played an important role in making the people conscious of the utter helplessness in which they lived under the alien rulers.'

With the new elite's initiative, the *Ryot Sabha* of Tezpur was set up in 1884. In the villages, its base was very wide. Peasants in hundreds paid it small subscriptions. It built the Tezpur Town Hall in 1887, a first in Assam.

In 1885, in Sibsagar the Assam *Desh Hitaishini Sabha* was formed while in 1857 in Nagaon the *Gyan Pradayini Sabha* was formed. Both had the same objective: spreading advanced knowledge among people the *sabhas* were set up under Anandaram Barua and Gunabhiram Barua's supervision.

A landmark event in Assam's political Associations' history was the formation of the *Sarbajanik Sabha* at Jorhat in 1884 by Jagannath Barua. This *sabha* wanted to gradually put an end to poppy cultivation relook at the government's educational policy. Besides stressing that people of the land be employed in large numbers, the *sabha* stressed that their emoluments and service conditions also be bettered. Each *sabha* asked that Assamese be again made the medium of instruction thus widening the scope of education and this was how Assamese literature's 'Jonaki Age' started.

The western impact introduced rationalism in the people's blind faith in age-long conventions, customs and beliefs. Yet people remained orthodox though moving away slowly. A slow change occurred in the attitudes of the sections that were orthodox and even before the new century began, high-caste Hindu students started enrolling in Calcutta's Presidency College, according to the Gazetteer of India Assam State. Vol-1, 'for higher courses in English education though the aim of English education was primarily for the purpose of creating a set of clerks to run Governments offices.'

In 1901, Cotton College was established in Gauhati leading to the increase of higher education. The Jorhat *Sarbajanik Sabha* showed concern about the Government's educational policy.

In Assam, from 1874 to 1905, there was no legislature and people did not get participation in any sort of legislative activity.

Assam was visited by Lord Curzon in March 1990. This gave a sterling chance to the European planting community to put forth their desire to extend their commercial and industrial undertaking in Assam. The Superintendent, Assam Frontier Tea Company Limited, Dibrugarh, J. Alstone, in his welcome address petitioned the Viceroy for improving transportation and communication as also get a survey performed in the hill tracts in the vicinity for mineral resources. He also petitioned for providing Assam a permanent seat in the India Legislative Council.

Between 1874 and 1905, Assam Valley also saw changes in demography. The epidemic that hit the Surma and Brahmaputra Valleys led to agricultural growth retardation in the province, and the fall in the indigenous population was more than neutralized by the influx of immigrants. Approximately 1/4th of Assam proper's population in 1901 comprised non-indigenous persons. This change in population composition adversely affected the economy of the peasants.

The span 1901–1918 was the phase of preparation and growth of political consciousness. In the history of Assam, we look upon 1903 as a crucial year. It was in this year that Assam Association was created by Assam's educated gentry under the leadership of Faizner Ali, Jagannath Barua, Ghanashyam Barua, Manik Chandra Baruahnd

NOTES

and certain others of the All-Assam Political Organization. In Dibrugarh, the inaugural session was presided over by one of the organization's chief promoter, Raja Probhat Chandra Barua of Gauripur, Assam. The session in Dibrugarh in 1917 was presided over by Karmabir Nabin Chandra Bardoloi who elaborated on the Association's requirement remarking, 'organize, knock at the door and you find the door opened.' Both the 1919 Jalianwalla Bagh massacre and the Rowlatt Acts faced popular resentment and this was expressed and stressed by the Association.

The 1918 session of the Association was held in Goalpara in December. It was presided over by T.R. Phookan, who said, 'The Government is bad and bureaucratic. It should be democratic. The English officers and English traders and also section of Indians do not advocate popular Government and Lord Sydenhem and others say that Indians are not fit for self Government. But one cannot learn swimming without plunging in water. If India is not fit for self Government even after a century and half of British rule, who is responsible for this?'

To quote from Gazetteer Of India, Assam State. Vol-1, 'The members of Assam Association later distinguished themselves as leaders of the freedom struggle and introduced an element of extremism into the politics of the Association and replaced it in 1921, by the provincial Congress Organization.'

The focus of the Association in Assam was the province's issues that were of public importance. As the Assam people's mouth piece, it made known their 'needs and grievances, hopes and aspirations.' A tough agitation was put up by the association in response to the imposition by the government of a grazing-tax for the grazing of cattle in Assam's forest reserves. The government's opium policy was a thing that the Association watched closely.

In Assam, in the 19th century, development of nationalism was a process that can be referred to as a two-track process since the population was as much part of the smaller nationalism at the Linguistic regional level as of the bigger all India level nationalism. As the 19th century ended, it was imminent that there would be partition of Bengal. On 16th of October, 1905, the separate province status of Assam also ended. Eastern Bengal and Assam came up as the new composite province whose first lieutenant Governor was Fuller.

In both Surma valley and in Bengal, the anti-partition agitation at this point was going strong. In his speech in 1905 on November 1, member of the Gauhati Municipality Fuller said, 'Eastern Bengal and Assam came into being consisting of an area of 275937.5346 square kilometres and a population of 31 million souls'. Fuller provided the people of Assam the assurance that their privileges would not be affected by the change that was proposed. Both the Jorhat *Sarbajanik Sabha* and the Assam Association held meetings in protest of the undesirable tagging.

In the years that followed, meetings were organized in Dibrugarh, Guwahati, Goalpara, Gauripur and Dhubri to show resentment towards the new province's creation. The belief that the people had in both Swaraj and Swadeshi was augmented by the anti-partition movement. There was complete boycotting of British goods and in various parts of Assam shops were set up to sell *Swadeshi* merchandise.

The anti-partition movement became a popular movement finding its base in national education and *Swadeshi*. The movement was also joined by the Valleys' Muhammedan population. Despite the fact that there was a constant struggle amongst Assam and Bengal on issues of land, employment and language, they were both one when it came to the nationalistic movement for freedom from British rule.

NOTES

Gobinda Lahiri Ambika and Giri Roy Choudhury in 1905 in Gauhati tried to get the local students organized in *Swadeshi* spirit. Some students were ready to take on the job at steamer *ghats* and Railway stations of labourers and whatever they would earn they would send to the common found set up for the cause of *Swadeshi*. Swadeshi had taken such a hold that the use of liver pool salt and beet-sugar was stopped by the Kamakhya *Pandas*. Influenced by Khudiram and Barin Ghose, Tringuna Barua, Ambika Giri Roy Choudhury along with some others turned to a cult of terrorism, though their movement terminated with Ambika Giri Roy Choudhury getting sent in 1907 to Barpeta where he stayed till 1915.

Assam Legislative Council got set up in November 1912. Its Chairman was the Chief Commissioner. It comprised 12 members who were elected and 13 who were nominated. Some leading members were Raja Prabhat Chandra Baruah, Muhammad Saadullah, Radha Binode Das, Padmanath Gohain Baruah, Manik Chandra Baruah and Kamini Kumar Chanda. This council held no control over the province's budget but its criticism by the representatives was allowed. Actually, the budget was nothing but an estimate and departing from it could be done by the government whenever it chose. The council could not take up a programme for nation-building because the financial system was extremely rigid. Radha Govinda Das (Sylhet) and Tarun Ram Phukan found that the Council was futile and tendered their resignation. Protesting against a derogatory remark that was made by the Chairman, Phani Dhar Chaliha who was a representative of the planters resigned. The government's policy for the Local Boards of providing the planters undue representation met with criticism from Padmanath Gohain Baruah who put forth the argument that the interest in the Local Boards that the planters held couldn't be as 'universal' as would be of the native population.

Due to the Morley-Minto reforms the problem of the minorities in India was opened and obviously members of those communities would petition the Council for their special requirements and needs.

The demand of Muhammad Saadullah was that Muslims be given communal representation in Local Boards. This led to a circumscribing of the responsibilities and powers of the legislators.

In 1916, the Assam Student Conference was formed and this was a landmark event. Its 1st session took place in Gauhati under the presidentship of Lakshminath Bezbaruah. This organization produced a cadre of student leaders whose role in the noncooperation and subsequent movements is of significance and importance. The following had all started as student leaders: Padmadhar Chaliha, Hem Chandra Barua, Omeo Kumar Das and Chandranath Sarma.

Assam Association had for a while been asking for making Assam a full provincial. It was thought that in 1918 constitutional reforms this would be implemented. N.C. Bordoloi led a deputation of Assam Association, which was sent to London to put forth the case of Assam to the House of Lords' Selbourne committee. This led to, based on the Government of India Act, 1919, the status of full-fledged governor's province being conferred on Assam.

Slowly, under the influence of the massacre at Jaliwanwalla Bagh, Assam's political pivots were getting pulled towards the call for unity amongst Hindus and Muslims and the call for non-cooperation being made under the Congress banner by Mahatma Gandhi. There was readiness in Assam to move forward to the common goal of freedom with all of India. The movement in Assam was an integral part of India's struggle for freedom as it became part of the new action-oriented all-India political agitation.

NOTES

Check Your Progress

4. What is the foremost cause for the rise of national consciousness during British India?
5. What types of taxes were introduced post 1857?
6. When was the Indian National Congress formulated?

9.4 PEASANT UPRISINGS

Between the years 1763–1856 in India, against the situations existing in various regions of India due to the Company rule, over 40 major rebellions took place and minor rebellions that took place can be counted by the hundreds. Nevertheless, the nature of these rebellions was not national but local, as were the effect that they had. Since the uprisings had their specific local issues and purposes they remained isolated from uprisings in different regions.

First peasant movement in Assam: Phulaguri movement

The British were out to get all the money and material that they could from their Indian colony and with this in mind in Assam they began their rule with an extremely rigorous policy of taxation. They had implemented land revenue and various other taxes that affected every aspect of a person's daily life: tax on tree cutting and cutting of grass in jungles, tax on cattle grazing. They did not overlook any article that was of regular use. Water, jungle wood, bamboo, opium, everything came under their greedy policies. The diverse and high taxations made a certain restlessness seep into the population.

The Nowgaon district residents go to know that there was to be taxation on the betel nut and this causes them tension. On the 17th of September, 1861, in the village of Phulaguri, about 1000 went to petition the District Commissioner. The District Commissioner did not hear them out; instead he had then detained them for a day and imposed a fine on them. A decision was taken by the peasants that the betel tax was not to be paid. For a more widespread mobilization of the sentiment, a Raaiz-Mel (Mass Meetings) of five days was called starting October 15th. The meeting received huge participation which troubled the administration and on the 4th day of the meeting it sent J.B. Singer who was a senior officer to keep the situation under control. J.B. Singer employed firing and *lathi* charge which aggravated the gathered and Lieutenant Singer was attacked and killed.

This was the first time that the British administration had received such a shock in Assam. It has put to death 39 peasants and a number of the leaders had been hanged. The Phulaguri movement became an inspiration for peasants to keep rising against the Administration.

Munda Rebellion (1899-1900): The Munda Rebellion is possibly the most prominent and important uprisings to have occurred post 1857. Unlike other tribes, traditionally the Mundas had specific rights that they enjoyed for being the forest's original clearers. Even before the British had arrived in India, money lenders and merchants had been infringing on their rights.

The British got with them the system of traders and contractors and this quickly put an end to the old system. Indentured labourers were required by the contractors.

NOTES

The Munda Rebellion arose as a result of the oppression of the tribals by both the contractors and the British rulers. Birsa Munda was their foremost leader. He to an extent had missionary education which made him a more aware person. His fellow men were encouraged by him to carry on worshipping the sacred groves as they had always done, a great way to keep the British away from snatching the wastelands away from the tribals. This was what Birsa Munda was standing up for in the face of the British officers and the *mahajans*/moneylenders.

The missionaries, Churches and police stations fell under his attack. Misfortune befell the tribals – they were defeated and in 1900 the captured Birsa Munda passed away in prison. The sacrifice he had given bore fruit. The people got landownership rights to an extent under the Chhotanagpur Tenancy Act of 1908 along with banning tribal bonded labour.

Jaintia and Garo Rebellion (1860-1870s): A road was planned by the British post the 1st Anglo-Burmese War, to connect the Brahmaputra Valley with Sylhet. It was strategically required by them for their troops' movements.

The construction of the road was vehemently opposed by the Garos and the Jaintias. The Jaintias, in 1827, attempted to halt work and quickly there was spread of unrest even into the Garo hills. A number of Garo and Jaintia villages were burnt to the ground by the British who had been alarmed by the unrest. There was a rise in the hostilities post the introduction in the 1860s by the British of Income Tax and House Tax. While the British defeated Pa Togan Sangma the Garo leader, they captured and publically hung U Kiang Nongbah, the Jaintias leader.

9.5 NON-COOPERATION AND QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT

According to Gazetteer of India Assam State. Vol-1, 'Assam had played a significant role in the struggle for freedom though in the earlier stages, her political development was too slow due to want of intellectual contact with the rest of India as a result of backwardness in English education and lack of communication.'

When the noncooperation call was given, Guwahati's Kaliram Barman took back his nomination paper post scrutiny and resignation was tendered by Kumudram Bora, who was in the council as an elected member.

In India's political history, the year 1919 proved to be extremely eventful. In 1920, August 1, the noncooperation movement was launched by Gandhiji. This was the Khilafat movement's direct outcome. There had been a huge response to Khilafat caused by both Muslims and the Hindus. Public meetings and/or *hartals* were observed to respond to the Khilafat movement in North Lakhimpur, Sibsagar Jorhat, Goalpara and Guwahati.

Though in September 1920, Gandhi did not receive support in Calcutta from Nabin Chandra Bordoloi and others they did know where the nation was headed. Bordoloi, on his return to Guwahati, went all out to muster support for the noncooperation movement amongst the Assamese intelligentsia. During 1920 October, there were discussions on the issue of noncooperation across Assam where meetings at the district level were held by the Association: Dibrugarh, Jorhat ,Sibsagar and Nagaon. At the same time, N.C. Bordoloi, C.N. Sarma and Tarunram Phukan travelled through the province in a bid to mobilize public opinion. Due to the initiative of young lawyers, a decision was taken by the Gauhati Bar Association that the visit of the Viceroy would be boycotted by them.

Nearly every Association at the district level decided that it would boycott the elections of the Council and objected to accepting honorary posts, honors and titles from the British Government.

The Students' boycott agitation had the immediate effect of demanding that in the province national colleges and national schools be set up. In February 1921, actually a national school got set up at Bharalumukh, Gauhati within the residence premises of Rohinikumar Choudhury. In other areas in the province, similar schools got established.

The commercial world's equilibrium was disturbed by the First World War's outbreak. Across both valleys of North East India, all necessities and food stuff became scarce leading to economic crimes, such as burglary and theft. In his speech on March 13, 1918, Phanidhar Chaliha implored that the Government take such steps that will diffuse the situation. In 1918, March Assam Valley saw the fixing of salt's retail price through a notification, followed by equal measures in hill districts and the other valley. The entrenched economic problem had fallen upon the plains districts' population's labour section. The Chargola exodus happened when the cause of Cachar district's tea gardens' tea labourers' brutal treatment by European planters was taken up by enraged nationalist leaders. It started with an economic struggle followed by sporadic strikes leading it to mass political action which caused labourers to collectively break out from the system of bonded labour. This happened when incipient class militancy came in contact with the primitive minds that had felt the impact of Mahatma Gandhi. Darrang, Sibsagar and Dibrugarh hosted strikes. In the whole of Assam, the labourers aired their unhappiness with state's food and cloth process being high, inadequate leave facility, workload being excessive and wages being low. The officials were anxious and troubled by extended labour problems.

The pace of the Civil Disobedience movement was kept alive in Assam by Assamese Congress leaders just as it had been proposed by the All-India Congress Committee. It was urged by the Congress Working Committee (CWC) that people need to be ready to calmly face every kind of indignity and hardship and maintain towards the Swaraj cause an unflinching devotion. For Purna Swaraj, people enrolled in huge number as volunteers which added strength to the National Volunteer Corps. In 1921, November 30th, both Bordoloi and Phukan who were Assam Congress's foremost leaders got arrested. Next, arrests of a number of leaders followed. The worst hit as far as arrests and sentencing were concerned were Sylhet, Sibsagar, Guwahati, Golaghat and the sub-division of Tezpur. With the economic depression in the 30s hitting a huge area, the phased Civil Disobedience Movement flowed into being an anti-imperialist mass revolt. The emergent leftist youths breathed fire on capitalism and landlordism as also the British rule.

Land revenue payments were refused to the British agents by the peasants. Government services lost many Government and police official due to resignations. According to the Gazetteer Of India Assam State. Vol-1, 'Saptahik Assamiya, a weekly published from Gauhati was prosecuted for defamation of British officer, for publishing a report on defilement of Sundaridiya Satra at Barpeta by Captain Calvert, in course of his repressive operation. Jails were filled with non-co-operators. The British Government exerted its full strength to repress the participants and to suppress the movement by use of arms, and finally succeeded in qualling the agitation.'

Post the 1922 Uttar Pradesh Choiri Choura riots, Gandhiji said that the movement was to be stopped. His decision was backed by the Congress Working Committee. Then on, the Assam leaders pushed forward constructive programmes such as weaving of *khaddar,* spinning of yarns and temperance work.

The AICC meeting was attended by Omeo Kumar Das in 1922. Here, he talked of Assam's severe repression. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and Dr. Rajendra Prasad visited Assam as a two-member committee to study its political milieu. They were highly impressed by the huge progress that had happened in various parts of Assam as far as the movement was concerned. The people had sacrificed and suffered for the movement and for freedom from the British and this impressed them both. The contribution of Assam was outstanding. Assam's orthodox noncooperators were firm in their pledge to implement programmes that were constructive, due to which the formation of the Swaraja party took place in 1923 within Congress.

Due to this movement, in Assam the British government granted that it would slowly decrease the consumption of opium in Assam. For Assam, this was the greatest success. The next huge success was when the Local Self Government Act was introduced and Assam Municipal Act, 1923 was passed, providing for increased number of elected members as also elected chairman.

The congress as well as the nation was surprised when, in 1923, an election was held to the Legislative Council. For most seats, the Swarajya party put up its candidates and got support from both Khilafat organization and the local Congress. Unopposed, Tarun Ram Phukan got elected to the Indian Legislative Assembly. Of Assam Council's 39 elective seats, just 13 got reelected. Since Swarajya had not attained absolute majority it needed the Independents on its side and had to negotiate with them. So as to attack the government within the council and destroy the constitution, the new council's meeting resolved to establish the Assam Nationalist Party in 1924 just the way it had been done in other parts of the nation. Success was gained with this infiltration policy and in 1924 April the Legislative Council of Assam manages a monthly salary cut for the ministers with salaries falling to ₹1500 from ₹3, 500. Also, on 1925, March 3, the Opium Prohibition Act was passed.

Good times did not last long and in 1924 March the coalition developed a split. The Swarajists were aware that they would not have a majority and in 1925 even though they opposed it, both the Assam Stamp (Amendment) Bill and Assam Court Fees (Amendment) Bill went through. In the end they lost the majority and were advised in 1926 by AICC to stage walkout in all the legislative bodies.

In 1926, from December 28th the 41st session of the Congress took place in Guwahati, under S.Srinivas Iyenger's presidentship. It was attended by responsive cooperators as well as the Swarajist no changers.

Responding to the Civil Disobedience movement call given by Assam's National Congress in 1929 December, on January 26, 1930 there was spontaneous celebration of 'Independence Day'. February of the same year saw the old leaders in the Provincial Congress resigning from their offices. The situation was diffused by Bishnuram Medhi with volunteering to take on presidentship the Congress in Assam. Post Gandhi's Dandi march, in 1930 April, Civil Disobedience Movement was joined by the Assam Congress also.

The nation observed the national week of 'war against salt tax'. The law breaking movement spread through violating the Forest Laws. To quote from the Gazette of India, Assam, Vol1, in Assam, there was boycotting of 'foreign cloths, excisable drugs and the shops selling such goods. Picketing was resorted to. Sri Bishnuram Medhi helped

NOTES

NOTES

by Tyagbir Hemchandra Barua, Dr. Bhubaneswar Barua, Omeo Kr. Das, Sidhinath Sarma, Pitambar Goswami, Gormur Satradhikar, Lakhidhar Sharma and others conducted the movement very successfully. Srimati Chandra Prabha Saikiani and Srimati Durgaprava Barua took up picketing in front of Cotton College Guwahati. The arrest of the national leaders included a spirit of fearlessness amongst the general mass. The authority clamped section 144Cr. P.C. in Nagaon, Tezpur and Dhubri to suppress this popular consciousness. But people from different places participated in the protest demonstration. As a result, police attacked the crowd with lathis and batons in such places.'

The masses in rural regions provided spontaneous support to the movement. Satyagrhis in huge numbers were lathi charged, were variously tortured arrested jailed. In the meantime, students started their protest against the circular sent out by the government for students and guardians to provide an undertaking stay away from politics.

The Nationalists set up public high schools such as the Barpeta Bidyapith and Kamrup Academy.

Till May 1934, the movement continued with majority of leaders such as Nobin Chandra Bordoloi being jailed a second time.

In a bid to retard the movement, the Government implemented post arrest penal action and convicted majority Civil Disobedience movement members. Till 31st March, 1932, in Assam 885 males, 54 females were arrested while 672 males and 42 females were convicted.

From 1930 to 1938, though the leaders of Congress did have differences at times, the organization grew much stronger. According to the Gazette of India, Assam, Vol1, as in a bid to open up fallow waste lands in Assam for cultivation, influxes of landless peasants from East Bengal were being invited to Assam by the then Assam Ministry headed by Sir Md. Saadullah, and because flow of innumerable jobseekers continued to Assam unabated, a section of Assamese nationalists got alarmed and Ambika Giri Roy Choudhury, a staunch nationalist to the core, founded 'Assam Sangrakshini Sobha' and without seceding from the Congress, began to voice through this organization, demands 'for vindication of right of the Assamese people, the children of the soil as against aggression of outsiders.'

One section of the Assam Muslims had great sympathy for those who had come to Assam from East Bengal since most of them too were Muslims. This led to a section of Assam Muslims other than the Assamese Muslims, the old East Bengal Muslims and Hindus not participating in the 1930–32 Civil Disobedience Movement. At a later stage, the Assam *Sangrakshini Sabha* became Assam *Jatiya Mahasabha*. Assam *Sangrakshini Sabha* organized *ryot sabhas* which became the strong holds of Assam at the time of movements of the later stage which the National Congress sponsored, guided by Gandhi.

In Assam's Civil Disobedience a major role was played by Rani Gaidinliu. Against the constituted authorities, she set up a revolt.

The 1933 meetings held by Ryot Association, Assam Association and Assam Provincial Ryot Sanmilan, got conducted in different parts with the agenda being matters of a non-political nature. Civil Disobedience Movement's political side got restarted post communal award declaration. The purna swaraj ideal as a priority issue was pushed aside by the issue of Harijan. Post Poona pact, Assam's Congress leaders took up the cause of removal of untouchability and Harijan upliftment.

NOTES

In keeping with the decision made by Congress regarding reforms under the Government of India Act, 1936, Assam Congress took part in the election of 1937, winning 33 seats of the 108 in the House and becoming the single largest entity in the house. Since at that time the Congress policy was not to accept ministry other groups got together to form a Coalition Ministry with Chief Minister being Sir Saadullah. For the past 15 years, he had been associated with administrative machinery of the British as also the legislature, and was the perfect candidate for the Governor of Assam. To save the humiliation of a no-confidence vote, he had to resign on September 13, 1938, as the Coalition's communal policies put the ministry in an awkward position as they completely neglected to preserve the requirements of 'the children of the soil'.

Post this incident, headed by Gopinath Bordoloi the Congress Coalition Ministry got formed. In the dispute of the Assam Oil Company, it addressed the issue from the side of the labour, which turned the industrial labour pro Congress. However, September 1939 saw the outbreak of WW II, and the ministry in Assam tendered its resignation as Congress did not want to participate in the Oct.–Nov.1939 Imperialistic War. Md. Syed Saadullah on November 17, 1939, formed yet another Coalition Ministry, causing huge problems since he supported the British. In December 1941, the students of Cotton College put up a demonstration in protest of the circular sent out by the government to have students participate in the War Fund Exhibition held at Gauhati Judge Field. The students were lathi charged. Similar lathi charge incidents also occurred in other parts of the nation.

In protest of the atrocities on the students, Rohini Choudhury tendered her resignation. She was part of Syed Saadullah's Coalition Ministry. The ministry too resigned on December 24, 1941. To stand against Congress's *Santi Sena* organization, the Village Defence party was established by the British Government. In the rural areas, the *Santi-Senas* swallowed up the Village Defence parties.

When during 1940 October, the Viceroy refused to give in to the National Government, which was a demand of the Congress, under Gandhiji's leadership there started in Assam an individual *Satyagraha* campaign. Many took part, such as Omeo Kumar Das, Bishnuram Medhi and Gopinath Bordoloi, and were even arrested. Meanwhile, British allies were heading to India. In March 1942, Sir Stafford Cripps came to India and made an offer of Dominion. This was refused by the Congress and instead on August 9, 1942 the Congress took the 'Quit India'. Assam joined in immediately. On 9th August, 1942 itself, arrest was made by the British of many including the following: Lila Barua, Dr. Harekrishna Das, Debeswar Sarma, Bishnuram Medhi. Fakaruddin Ali Ahmed and Md.Tayabullah. Both Sidhinath Sarma and Gopinath Bordoloi at that time had been in Bombay regarding the All-India Congress meeting but as soon as they returned to Assam, the British had the nabbed at Dhubri. Every organization subscribing to funds from the Congress, and even the *Ryot-sabhas*, were now said to be unlawful. Despite all this, the British were unable to curb the clipping pace of the movement.

The action taken by the government on adoption of the Quit India Movement only intensified the people's resolve and acted as a catalyst to the movement. People rose in anti-government mass protests, under local leaders.

According to the Gazetteer Of India Assam State. Vol-1, '*Santi Sena* organisations were set up throughout the State under the leadership of local Congress Socialists. Mahendra Nath Hazarika, Lakshmi Prasad Goswami, Sankar Barua built up an underground resistant movement. A *Mritya Bahini* or death squad was formed in the State under the leadership of Mahendra Nath Hazarika. The party carried out some

NOTES

serious acts of sabotage throughout the State. In Darrang district, Jyoti Prasad Agarwala, Gohon Chandra Goswami went underground and carried out sabotage at various places by organizing *Mrityu Bahini.*'

The government turned violent to suppress the movement. On several occasions the government resorted to firing. Many died in the firing, some of whom were: Khahulis Numali Taleswari and Kanaklata, all teenage girls.

According to the judgement given for the firing at Dhekiajuli the police faced severe structures that could not be relaxed by the High Court on any ground. In Dibrugarh and North Lakhimpur some of those who faced atrocities from the police were Pohor Gogoi, Bhogeswar Chetia and Madhuban Chutia. MoulanaTayebulla began the individual *Satyagraha* movement in Sibsagar. He was Asom Pradesh Congress Committee's President. The 'Quit India Movement' was responded to by the whole of Sibsagar district. Processions everywhere were *lathi* charged. A number of people were arrested and imprisoned or detained.

To quote the Gazetteer Of India Assam State. Vol-1, 'Kushal Konwar, who was believed to be innocent, was however, declared to be guilty of sabotage and awarded capital punishment by the court that tried him. He was hanged in Jorhat Jail in 1943.'

For undermining the movement, the Government resorted to the levying on the people of different district in the Province what they termed collective fines.

People formed village Panchayats in Bajali in Barpeta sub-division, in Nalbari sub-division and in Kamrup district at Bahjani. Also, they drew up Panchayat administration schemes. Rawta Kachari and Madan Barman died in Bajali during police firing. This added fuel to the already flaming hatred that people had towards the repressive bureaucracy.

Food scarcity and mounting prices also added to discontent and people tried paralysing the oppressive Government. The role of most importance as far as the 'Quit India Movement' is concerned was played by the Nagaon district. Approximately 11 km to the east of Nagaon town, in the village of Barhampur, police opened fire on a massive gathering and Thagi Sut, Lakhimi Hazarika, Phuleswari Konwari and many others lost their lives.

For the period of a month, military supplies were terminated and *bazars* and *hats* were shut. Troops were positioned all over the state and even then it was not possible to stop or even lessen the sabotaging by *Santi Senas*.

Azad Hind Fauz organized by Subhas Chandra Bose tried to get India freed in 1943, with help from Japanese and Germans. They entered Assam via Burma. The British Government in India was shocked by this. The Government decided to release Gandhiji in May 1944; he was in jail, and was sick. Gandhiji, in 1945 January, in his last visit to Assam, visited Gauhati with four leaders of Assam. Here, he had mass-prayers performed.

The Quit India Movement was not enough to make the British Government move out of India. The call for a separate Muslim country gathered force due to the 'communal policy undertaken by the pro-Muslim league Saadullah ministry in Assam and the increasing number of mutually apathetic East Bengal Hindu and Muslim immigrants' entry into Assam.' There was a rise of strong communal feeling in Assam with the Muslims of Assam Muslims being in favour of India's partition.

NOTES

Pandit Nehru in December 1945 went on a quick Assam tour and left behind a favourable picture of the congress in the minds of the people. In the elections, this led to the victory of Congress on 50 of the 108 seats. With two of the Independents joining them, the strength rose to 52 and on February 10, 1946, Congress Prime Ministership of Gopinath Bordoloi formed its Ministry.

According to the Gazetteer Of India Assam State. Vol-1, 'The Muslim League went for secret organizational activities to constitute *''Banglo-i-Islam"* comprising Bengal with its hinterland or Assam as envisaged by the Pakistan National Movement since 1940 for the Millat of Islam.'

Cabinet Mission to India arrived with the intention of ironing out the Indian Problem. In May of 1946, the grouping system was initiated by this mission that led to enblock rising of the Assam Provincial Congress against inclusion of Assam in the Grouping system which would have branded it as a majority state. The *Assam Jatiya Mahasabha* also rose up and all through Assam mass agitation was organized by it.

Assam Jatiya Mahasabha obtained from the Bengal Khidirpur Dock a secret document that revealed Maulana Bhasani group from eastern Bengal forming an underground conspiracy for invading Assam via migration of population. At this point, Gopinath Bordoloi and Syed Saadullah on part of Assam took part in the constituted Assembly making sure that the sixth schedule I was incorporated. This helped to set disintegration of population and geographical Assam afoot for future.

Finally, India was split into India and Pakistan. Pakistan gained independence at midnight of 14th August,1947 while India chose midnight of 15th August,1947.

Check Your Progress

7. The pace of the Civil Disobedience movement was kept alive in Assam by _____ leaders.
8. Name two public high schools set up by the Nationalists.

ACTIVITY

Write a report on the current political scenario of Assam. Contrast the situation with that in 1857.

Did You Know

The migration of Bengali Muslim peasants from erstwhile East Bengal began in the 1800s after the British annexed Assam in 1826, with the *Treaty of Yandaboo* after defeating the Burmese in the First Anglo Burmese War. 'Malevolent' colonial policies of the British in Bengal, such as the *Permanent Settlement*, had already wreaked Bengal's economy and pauperized its artisans and peasantry. Severe exploitation under its *zamindari* system added to the woes of the peasantry. In the geographically contiguous province of Assam, population density was low, land was abundant and there was no *zamindari* system. It was just a matter of time before an impoverished and harassed Bengali Muslim peasantry began migrating in a trickle which became a deluge, encouraged by the British.

NOTES

9.6 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- North East India was troubled with the rule of the East India Company and was deeply involved in the discontent itself that led to the uprising and also the 1857 movement.
- In 1826, annexation of Assam took place post the ousting of the Burmese and the signing of the treaty of Yandaboo on 24 March 1826.
- The British had provided refuge to two Ahom princes.
- Of the various causes in Assam that led to the events of 1857 one was the Ahom nobility had been deprived by the British of position, rule and privileges over Assam. All their requirements were met by the state from the service of the pykes and their dignities and comforts and taken care of by the slaves available in abundance.
- Maniram Dewan took up the case of the nobility and the Princes. Maniram took on the post of Dewan with Purandhar Singha's grandson Kandarpeswar Sinha. The government was petitioned by Maniram both on behalf of disposed nobility and the prince in 1853 when Assam was paid a visit by A. J. M. Mills, Judge, Sadar Dewani Adalat.
- Brahmaputra Valley sepoy unrest-related literature is mostly gleaned from archival material and it depicts Maniram Dewan influence on the prince to up the revolt's standard through inciting sepoys at Golaghat, Dibrugarh, Gauhati and Jorhat.
- The tea planters were scared by the spread of the uprising in Assam and they moved to Gauhati for shelter.
- When the Chittagong sepoy uprising's news reached Assam, an appeal was made to the government of India by the Chairman of the Assam Company for sending a force of Europeans 'without a moment's delay'.
- Maniram Dewan correspondence was intercepted in early September of 1857. In Jorhat, Kandarpeswar got apprehended, in Calcutta the arrest of Maniram Dewan took place while many of his associates were apprehended in Assam. Maniram Dewan was moved to Jorhat where he was tried and given the death sentence on February 26, 1858.
- Assam (Tea) Company's Assamese workers struck work to show that they supported the rebels.
- January of 1858 saw the labour contractor Madhuram Koch being given a seven-year imprisonment sentence.
- A source for the 1857 events is found in the form of a British soldier George Carter's diary.
- The revolt affected the Barak valley and East Bengal as well. In November, people in Chittagong got to know about the uprising in Meerut and the 34th Native Infantry's 300 sepoys who were stationed in the port town rose up in arms.
- Information regarding the Barak valleys and Brahmaputra disturbance was heard in the Khasi-Jaintia hills.

NOTES

- A key cause that led to the feudal and sepoy uprising was the annexation by the British of Indian states before 1857.
- It goes without saying that the foremost and direct responsibility for the national consciousness and national movement being born in the country rests on the 1857 uprising.
- In Assam, the earliest popular movement is the Phulaguri uprising which was planned to force the government to take back the much disliked taxation. Despite the failure of this movement it set a precedent and just later similar movements broke out in other parts.
- The span 1901–1918 was the phase of preparation and growth of political consciousness. In the history of Assam, we look upon 1903 as a crucial year. It was in this year that Assam Association was created by Assam's educated gentry under the leadership of Faizner Ali, Jagannath Barua, Ghanashyam Barua, Manik Chandra Baruahnd and certain others of the All-Assam Political Organization.
- As the Assam people's mouth piece, it made known their 'needs and grievances, hopes and aspirations.'
- In Assam, in the 19th century, development of nationalism was a process that can be referred to as a two track process since the population was as much part of the smaller nationalism at the Linguistic regional level as of the bigger all-India-level nationalism.
- Between the years 1763–1856 in India, against the situations existing in various regions of India due to the Company rule over 40 major rebellions took place and minor rebellions that took place can be counted by the hundreds. Nevertheless, the nature of these rebellions was not national but local, as were the effect that they had. Since the uprisings had their specific local issues and purposes they remained isolated from uprisings in different regions.
- The peasant uprisings of note in Assam are Phulaguri movement, Munda Rebellion and the Jaintia and Garo Rebellion.
- According to GAZETTEER OF INDIAASSAM STATE. VOL-1, 'Assam had played a significant role in the struggle for freedom though in the earlier stages, her political development was too slow due to want of intellectual contact with the rest of India as a result of backwardness in English education and lack of communication.'

9.7 KEY TERMS

- **Annexation:** Incorporation by joining or uniting.
- **Musket:** An infantryman's light gun with a long barrel, typically smooth-bored, muzzleloading, and fired from the shoulder.
- **Uprising:** An act of resistance or rebellion; a revolt.

9.8 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. The annexation of Assam took place in 1826.
2. Ahom state disappeared post the First Indo-Burmese War.

NOTES

3. Chandra Kanta passed away in the year 1839.
4. It goes without saying that the foremost and direct responsibility for the national consciousness and national movement being born in the country rests on the 1857 uprising.
5. The introduction of multiple taxes, such as income-tax and stamp duties happened post 1857.
6. In 1885, the Indian National Congress was formulated.
7. Assamese Congress.
8. Barpeta Bidyapith and Kamrup Academy.

9.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. List the names of some personalities of Assam associated with the uprising of 1857.
2. What was the role played by Maniram Dewan in the 1857 uprising?
3. In Assam, why was the development process considered as a two-track process?
4. Name the peasant uprisings that took place in Assam.
5. Mention a key cause that led to the feudal and sepoy uprising.

Long-Answer Questions

1. Write a short note on the Phulaguri movement.
2. Write a note on National Consciousness in Assam.
3. What role did Assam play in the Quit India Movement?
4. Write a short note on the peasant uprisings in Assam.
5. Discuss the scenario of Assam as it was during the year 1857.

9.10 FURTHER READING

Gait, E.A.; *A History of Assam,* BiblioBazaar, US, 2010.

Choudhary, Pratap Chandra; *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.*, Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Assam, Assam, 1966.

Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan; *Social and polity formations in pre-colonial north-east India: the Barak Valley experience*, Haranand Publications in association with Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1991.

Sinha, Surajit; *Tribal Polities and State Systems in Pre-colonial Eastern and North Eastern India*, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 1987.

Chakravarty, I. N., Chakravarty, Lakshmi N.; *Glimpses of the Early History of Arunachal*, Research Department, Arunachal Pradesh Administration, Arunachal Pradesh, 1973.

NOTES

Barpujari, Heramba Kauta; *Assam in the Days of the Company: 1826 - 1858: a Critical and Comprehensive History of Assam during the Rule of the East-India Company from 1826 - 1858*, North-Eastern Hill University Publications, Assam, 1996

Barpujari, Heramba Kauta; *The Comprehensive history of Assam*, Publication Board, Assam, 1990.

M. Horam; *Naga Polity*, B.R. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1975.

M. Horam; *Social and Cultural Life of Nagas: (the Tangkhul Nagas)*, B.R. Pubishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1977.

Sangkima; Mizos, *Society and Social Change, 1890-1947*, Spectrum Publications, New Delhi, 1992.

Sangkima; *A Modern History Of Mizoram*, Spectrum Publications, New Delhi, 2004.

Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan; *The Garos and the English, 1765-1874*, Radiant Publishers, Hyderabad, 1978.

Kar, Parimal Chandra; *Garos in Transition*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1982.

Venuh, N. and Bonita Aleaz; *British Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2005.

Lahiri, Rebati Mohan; *The Annexation of Assam: 1824-1854*, General Printers & Publishers, Mumbai, 1954.

Bhuyan, Suryya Kumar; *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, Lawyer's Book Stall, Assam, 1974.

Elwin, Verrier; *The Nagas in the 19th Century*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1969.

Lahiri, Nayanjot; *Pre-Ahom Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi, 1991.

Birinchi, B.K. and Banikanta Kakati; *Cultural History of Assam*, K. K. Barooah, Assam, 1951.

Basu, Nirmal Kumar; *Assam in the Ahom Age, 1228-1826: Being Politico-economic and Socio-cultural Studies*, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Kolkata, 1970.

Nath, R.M.; *The Background of Assamese Culture*, A. K. Nath, 1948.

Bareh, Hamlet; *The History and Culture of the Khasi People*, Spectrum Publications, Gauhati, 1967.

Chatterjii, S. K.; *The Place of Assam in the History and Civilization of India,* Gauhati University, Gauhati, 1970.

Dani, A. H.; *Prehistory and Protohistory of Eastern India,* Firma L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1960.

Dhavlikar, M. K.; *Bulletin of the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute* 31-32: 137-49, Archaeology of Gauhati, 1973.

UNIT 10 IMPACT OF BRITISH RULE

NOTES

Structure

10.0 Introduction
10.1 Unit Objectives
10.2 English Education
10.3 System of Governance
10.4 Land Revenue
10.5 Development of Roadways, Waterways and Railways
10.6 Summary
10.7 Key Terms
10.8 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
10.9 Questions and Exercises
10.10 Further Reading

10.0 INTRODUCTION

In this unit, you will learn about the impact of British Rule on North-East India. The hills and plains of the region have been occupied by different streams of Mongoloid people who came from the north and the east at different periods well before the onset of colonial rule. It is important to note that in the long centuries before the advent of British rule in the region, there was a high degree of fluidity in the socio-cultural arena so that inter-mingling of various streams of people, including biological admixture, produced diverse social alignments and group identities. The boundaries of the groups were never very rigid. It is this flexibility, characteristic of a frontier tract experiencing considerable population movement from different directions, which provided scope for shifting alliance and identities. Pre-colonial social setting in the region was more fluid and flexible than in the subsequent colonial and post-colonial periods. Thus, various 'tribal' inhabitants of the hills got integrated and often absorbed into the fold of the Hindu peasantry consequent on changing their niche from the hills to the plains. In the plains as Assam, tribal groups such as the *Bodo-Kechari*, *Rebhs, Nech*, *Karbi* and the *Deuri-Chutiya* had thus, for centuries, provided the main source of Hindu population through a process of conversion and subsequent Sanskritization.

The 'tribe' had never been a fixed or static category in those early times and there were many instances of change from tribal to non-tribal status. Contrary to popular notion, the numerous culturally and politically discrete communities of later times lived in a situation of contact and communication with their respective neighbouring populations.

The conditions radically altered during a rather brief period (1826-1947) of British colonial rule. The annexation of Assam by the British (i.e. the East India Company) brought the people of this region into greater and deeper contact with sociopolitical currents then prevailing in the rest of the country. The channels of contact and the levels of communication were further accentuated in the early part of the 20th century. The British set in motion a series of moves in order to establish a degree of political and administrative dominance over the plains as well as the hill people. The British policies and the activities of Christian missionaries who came into the region contributed significantly in creating a freeze effect on the communities and social formations. Colonial rule and missionary activities also contributed significantly in detailing the character and

NOTES

tenor of identity movements among the tribals and non-tribals in the post-Independence period.

The impact of British administration became manifest through various means and measures such as the introduction of Inner Line Regulation in 1873 and the declaration of most of the hill areas as "Excluded Areas" under the provision of Government of India Act of 1935. Most tribal communities of the hills thus remained cut off from social and political developments taking place elsewhere. Mention must also be made of impressive population movements into the region during the British period unleashed by the imperatives of colonial administration and economy. In the context of an organized colonial economy with fairly strict monitoring of exploitable resources, coupled with immigration of diverse groups in a short period of time, the earlier resilience of the regional social system was lost forever. Each community tended to become a rigid social formation and this was to the utmost advantage of the colonial rulers. The accentuation of tribal-non-tribal differences and the formation of rigid social blocks out of indigenous castes and communities as well as recent migrants were important developments in the colonial period.

10.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the purpose and impact of English education in Assam
- Discuss the British system of governance in Assam
- Analyse the purpose and impact of the British land revenue system in Assam
- Discuss the purpose of the development of roadways, waterways and railways in Assam

10.2 ENGLISH EDUCATION

Modern education which is currently prevalent in Assam has its roots in 1826 when there was a setting up of British rule in the territory of Assam. In Assam, for a very long time a system of education which was indigenous to Assam existed. This involved the imparting of formal education at the elementary level in institutions like satras, madrassas, tols and pathsalas which imparted education to Vaisnavites, Muslims, Brahmins and Hindus, respectively.

According to Bose: 'Aim of the English to educate the Indians was either to produce caricatures of European characters who would be willing to accept the Gospel of Christ or to get a regular supply of cheap clerks to serve them in the business organization of the government of India and subsidiary undertakings of the British Subjects.' Then again as shown by Debi 'these indigenous systems were largely replaced by modern education pattern under British company's patronage. With the expansion of British rule in India as a whole, knowledge of English became a historic necessity both for administration and increasing commercial intercourse. Before the charter act of 1833 there was no noticeable progress in the field of education in Assam, but after that both government and missionaries actively took part in educational field'.

NOTES

Today in Assam, education at the school level comprises primary, secondary and higher secondary schools and the system is run and controlled by three separate boards. Post the 20th century proposal to set up local self-government in India, in Assam there was huge a development in the field of education. The 1882 resolution was the first step which emphasized the value of local bodies for primary education's expansion. The resolution of 1882 gave the local board the power to control, manage, establish and aid primary schools. Under it, the Boards got the authority to have general supervision over the lower middle schools too and also provide grant-in-aid to them. The 1913 resolution made the educational policy lay more stress on education at the primary level. Under the Assam local self-government Act of 1915 local bodies are provided a broader base of powers for managing matters pertaining to education at both middle and primary levels. While in Assam the relevant Act got passed in 1926, it could not attain the associated main objectives. Later, there was a change in the policy followed by compulsory primary education Acts being passed across all provinces by 1930.

At this point, imperial grants were released by the government to Assam so that elementary education could be promoted. This led to approximately 6795 primary schools being set up by 1937 where 313,347 pupils gained education. The other system of education, Madrasas and Tols also provided education. In the year 1935, there existed approximately 120 madrasas and 162 tols.

The year 1947, in a bid to fix the problems with the 1926 Act, saw the passing of the Assam primary education Act under which various measures were to be employed to enforce education. Subsequent steps were the Assam Basic Education Act of 1953 and the Assam Elementary Education Act of 1962 and 1968.

In this sense, we can see that the British education system did help to establish a formal system of education. For secondary education, it was the 1882 Hunter Commission and the 1904 and 1913 resolutions that gave it a bigger forward push. In the year 1919, the Sadler Commission proposed that at this level diversified courses be introduced. This commission also was of the view that secondary education improvement is required for any improvement in university education. The repercussion of the Commission's findings and recommendations in 1935 led to setting up of 213 high schools of which 28 were government high schools and various non-aided and aided high schools were imparting education through several courses. Still, in secondary education weakest links existed as revealed by the Zakir Hussain Committee Report of 1937 and Radhakrishanan Commission Report of 1949. For overcoming these problems, multi-propose schools and post-basic education were introduced which would follow the principle of craft-based education. According to Debi, the primary 'aim of these courses is an all round development of the students both as an individual and as a useful member of the society and to provide varied types of courses for students with diversified abilities and interests'.

All across Northeast India, the highest number of institutes for higher education are in Assam. Progress of collegiate education in Assam accrued much later. The Cotton College, followed by Sylhet College, had been set up by 1901. Earl Law College was set up in 1915, Jorhat College, Brindabun College, Edmund's college and St Anthony College were opened in the territory of Assam and they all played major roles in the promotion of higher education in the period prior to 1947. The year 1900 saw the setting up in Dibrugarh of the Berry White Medical School. There was development of education, both technical and industrial, during the period prior to independence through the Tezpur-Balipara railway workshop, Dibrugarh

NOTES

Railway workshop and various other institutes of training. Also, the English medium schools in the state are of supreme quality, as are the colleges for science and arts. Even higher education has expanded phenomenally following the 1913 resolution of Government of India on Indian Education. The latest achievement is the setting up of Guwahati IIT and Central Universities at Silchar and Tezpur.

As opposed to other regions in India, in Assam teacher education was late to start. In 1888–89, the Christian missionaries became the first ones to set up primary teacher training schools. Irish Christian Brothers, in the year 1936, in St Edmound's college set up few training classes for B.T. degree. At Shillong's St Edmund's college training was provided to teachers in-service at secondary level of school education. Later, this was moved to St. Mary's college. In Assam after independence, stemming from the 1954 Basic Education Act, the state set up many Basic Training Centres for the training of in-service teachers of primary schools. Both in-service and pre-service training for teachers of Middle School was introduced in the existing normal Schools. In the 1970s, this was stopped as it was creating trained teachers for whom there were no jobs.

Medium of Instruction

The 1935–1936 report on education in Assam specified that government schools were to use Assamese as the medium (Assam Education Department Report, dated 19th December, 1936, para.1). This was implemented across high schools except for Bengali schools. Gauhati University at the beginning of 1970, decided that starting 1972–73 it would replace English with Assamese as the medium of instruction across colleges affiliated to it. English would remain as an optional unit of instruction. Recommendations made by the Academic Council of Gauhati University in the context of medium of instruction were:

1. Assamese would be the medium of instruction in all colleges under the jurisdiction of Gauhati University.
2. English shall continue as the alternative medium of instruction for need-based courses.
3. Students may write their university examinations either in Assamese or English.
4. The council withdrew the option of answering examination questions in Bengali which were earlier used for some regions.

The British system of education did lay a foundation for the present day formal education system that exists in Assam and which is one of the best across the whole of India. Yet, it cannot be said that British education did not cause any harm or was not detrimental for the people of the state.

H. Srikanth has written about the cause and effect of the British education policy in the North-East in explicit detail in 'Man and Society: A Journal of North East Studies'.

He writes, 'The [British] officers felt that as long as the hill tribes remained backward and uncivilized, it would be difficult for them to make the native tribes accept the changes brought in by colonial rule. Hence, the British officers considered it necessary to civilize and humanize the hill communities through the spread of modern education and Christianity. David Scott, the first Agent for the Governor-General of North Eastern Frontier of Bengal, experimented with his ideas in the Garo Hills by starting a school at Singamaria in 1831 with the help Serampore Baptist Mission.' The Governor-General also wanted Christianity to spread but the East India Company Directors were not for it. 'They were afraid that the religious intervention would provoke the natives to revolt against the colonial rule.'

NOTES

David Scott was succeeded by Major Jenkins who got schools opened and encouraged the spread of both education and Christianity. In 1841 and later, there was also baptizing of several Khasi-Pnars and the Welsh Mission was the first to do so. That which the colonial powers were unable to accomplish with their military prowess was achieved by the spread of Christianity and education by the Missionaries despite all the hardship and hostility that they encountered from the native tribes and the hill people. The suspicious natives even hacked some of the Missionaries to death.

H. Srikanth says, 'Apart from education, the Missionaries offered medical services to the sick, taught the tribal people the value of hard work, personal hygiene and sanitation, and trained the in skills such as agriculture, horticulture, masonry and carpentry. …and encouraged the natives to give up their traditional ways by acquiring attitudes, values and behavior compatible with Christian and modernist values.'

H. Srikanth also says that the Missionaries opposed the colonial authorities on various issues that they disagreed with like their practising slavery in the hills. The Missionaries even , '..learnt the local language of the hill tribes, developed scripts and wrote primers and books in these languages….it should be mentioned that the on the whole the native hill communities of north-east India did not experience the extent of alienation the indigenous had experienced elsewhere following the spread of Christianity.'

Check Your Progress

1. In which year did British rule begin in Assam?
2. In ancient Assam, what were the Hindu institutions of education named?
3. What are the levels of education in Assam in the current age?
4. Who were the first to set up primary teacher training schools in Assam?

10.3 SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE

When the British occupied the region, it was a disturbed region with an existing dispute on disputed succession. It was the period of later Ahoms and was fraught with anarchy and maladministration. Rebellion after rebellion worsened the situation and the Assam province now had a low population, approximately half of the original, due to oppression and protracted wars. The peasants were driven to abandon cultivation and find food in the form of wild plants and roots. Pestilence and famine troubled Assam. As per the Government of Assam, the 'Mills's Report on Assam' stated that, it was not to set the clock back, as desired by Maniram or the people of his thinking, but to consolidate the possession of the British and to tighten their grip over the administration. David Scott organized the administration to his best capacity and introduced British system in general outline and spirit with accommodation for an indigenous system prevalent at that time. Assam's implementation of the justice mechanism as well as the overall general administration became the responsibility of the Commissioner of Assam who was headquartered in Guwahati. The commissioner was relieved of the position of

NOTES

Civil and Sessions Judge in 1936 with the appointment of a Deputy Commissioner in Guwahati. Every district was put under the charge of a Principal (Senior) Assistant who had a Junior and a Sub-Assistant to help him impart his duties. The Deputy Commissioner, in the year 1861, became the Judicial Commissioner. At the same time, the Principal Assistant became the Deputy Commissioner; Junior Assistant became the Assistant Commissioner while the Sub-Assistant became the Extra Assistant Commissioner. A civil judicial establishment was separately set up comprising 17 Munsiffs, 6 Sadar Amins and a Principal Sadar Amin. In the year 1972, separate authorities of Munsiffs and Sadar Amin were abolished. In both lower and upper Assam, the main responsibility was of David Scott for formulating the principles of administration. In lower Assam, it was in 1824–25 that British administration truly started. With each passing year, the collection of revenue went up which must have pushed the people against the wall. A new form of revenue administration was implemented by the British. Under it, the paraganas were put under Choudhuries who in their parganas both collected revenue and administered justice in criminal cases of a petty nature. Choudhuries were no more than revenue collecting contractors since they paid the government six months' advance revenue (prior to having made that collection). The assessment of the revenue was done based on the cultivated area's category. Other than the revenue, people had to pay ₹2/- as per capita poll tax. If a person defaulted on tax payment, the defaulter's property would be confiscated and as a result often the peasants were unable to save their homes. All of this led to a rising resentment among the Assamese peasants who actually required undisturbed rehabilitation. The foreign judiciary system also added to the people's suffering. For the protection of the property and life of people inhabiting remote areas and interiors a police establishment had been set up which comprised a thana under the charge of a daroga or thanadar. Powers had been vested in him for arresting, detaining and even conducting a preliminary trial on anyone found to be suspicious, prior to having them sent to the sadar station. With Chartered Act of 1833 Special lease grants and Fee, there was the introduction of simple lease grants for revenue administration for the encouragement of tea plantation and the British set up a company named Assam Company. Between 1833-58, nearly the whole of Sibsagar and erstwhile Lakhimpur were under this company's tea plantation and then the company extended into Cachar. It became imperative to being in labour from other states to cater to the expanding tea industry. According to Mill, in 1881 the number of such immigrants in Assam was 3 lakhs. In 1901, Assam had 6 lakhs of such migrants. The 1793 Gaurinath Singha and Captain Welsh commercial treaty provided the merchants of Bengal with access to the province's interior. Employment avenues in office and trade led to continuous population inflow to Assam from the districts of Rangpur, Mymensingh, Dacca and Sylhet. Once Assam fell under British administration, the British implemented the same policies here as they had in other regions across India. For the purpose of supplementing the Chartered Act of 1833 in Assam, the British promoted the setting up of English schools to meet their requirement of persons with knowledge of English to aid them in administration. The Assamese people had no clue of what the British were planning and there were not many people in Assam who were English educated. Bengali instead of Persian was made the court language by the Government of Bengal in April 1831 leading to influx of people from Bengal. This further led to the judicial and revenue departments becoming solely their preserve as also their becoming highly sought after as teachers of Bengali in schools with Bengali having been made the medium of instruction in Assam. Then, in 1839 both from Assam courts and from schools Assamese was abolished. An English-educated Assamese, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, was made the Assistant Commissioner. He saw that Western education was essential if the living of peasantry was to be bettered.

NOTES

The need to improve the education standard and not impose Bengali as the medium of instruction was impressed upon by him. He advocated that Assamese be made the medium of instruction in schools. To quote from the Government of Assam's website, 'Concrete steps were, however, taken by the Christian missionaries who not only carried on a propaganda through their mouth piece the Arunodoi but also set up a few schools for girls. The first missionary school was started at Sibsagar by Rev. Nathan Brown and O.T. Cutter in 1840 and this was followed by the schools set up by Bronson at Nagaon (1843) and Mrs. Barkes at Guwahati in 1850. With the spread of Western ideas the need was gradually felt for the formation of political association and organisation to ventilate the grievances of the people. The Chartered Act of 1833 was a handy instrument of the British colonialists who already began spreading out their financial tentacles to serve the interest of the empire and colonialism. Assam began to suffer from the basic evils of foreign domination as other parts of India did.'

All through the 19th Century, the relationship between the people of Assam and the Government was dominated by the issue of collection of revenue. After the 1857 uprising, in 1858 the East India Company's rule ended in India and India was passed on to the British Crown. There was an increase in the land revenue assessment. With the coming of the new government, there was also the imposing of stamp duties and income tax. Huge profits were earned by the government from the salt and opium trade which it conducted in the state. There was resentment among the people of Assam for cash payment of revenues, something they had never done. While we do find some good measures that the British Government had implemented, such as forced labour, abduction of young women and punishment by chopping off nose and ears, we clearly see that their other policies that harmed the populace overshadowed the good ones. In this light, Mills was petitioned by Moniram Dewan in 1853, saying, 'Illustrious Sir, we are just now, as it were, in the belly of a tiger'. The credit or otherwise for the association of Assam with the 1957 uprising goes to Moniram Dewan. He was disillusioned with the British and, as the Government of Assam website puts it, 'he turned a rebel in 1857 when the class interest of a section of the Indian feudal class coincided with the broad national interests against foreign rule. The sepoys of Assam like infantry battalions both at Dibrugarh and Guwahati remained absolutely passive and strictly loyal to the British.' There were stories of the defeat of the British power in various parts of Assam and India and the people of the hills were much enthused by them. While the people were not organized, they were discontented and willing fighters. To counter the existing uprising troubles, the government made security tighter and put Act XIV into force. Many persons were arrested. Many were tried, many executed and the remaining deported. They even arrested Kandarpeswar Singha who was then kept in Alipur as prisoner of state. Next, Moniram was arrested in Calcutta as also were his collaborators, some of them being Shaikh Formud, Bahadur Gaoburah, Marangikhowa Gohain, Mayaram Nazir and Dutiram Baruah. With this, the attempt to oust the British Government from Assam made by Moniram came to an end.

The 1858 proclamation of Queen Victoria got the Company rule to a close and set up a government which would be directly under the British Crown and promised that the native princes' rights would be respected. In Assam's case there was an exception and there was no undoing of the wrong of 1838. According to the Government of Assam website, 'Struggle against expatriation's and for land reforms entered the countryside. The land revenue assessment which had remained unchanged for the last twenty to thirty years was enhanced in 1894 and as such the ryots of different places viz.,Rangia and Lashima in the Kamrup district and the ryots of Patharughat in the Mangaldoi

NOTES

district were the first to react against the enhancement of revenue of land.' For two decades, serious movements took place and both the agrarian outbreaks during the last four decades of the 19th century and the post 1857 renaissance movement added to the growing national movement for attaining freedom from foreign rule.

Check Your Progress

5. Why were the Choudhuries looked upon as contractors?
6. How much poll tax did the people need to pay?
7. What happened if a person defaulted in tax payment?
8. Who became the Assistant Commissioner of Assam in1839?

10.4 LAND REVENUE

According to Ananda Saikia in *The P~itish Land Revenue Policy in Assam in the Early Stages, and its Impact upon the Peasantry (1827-1874)*, during that time, in Assam, approximately 90 per cent of the population was of peasants and British Government relied on land revenue as one of its main sources of income in this region.

When the Burmese were expelled from Assam, Joint Commissionership was established by the East India Company in Assam. Col. Richards became the Commissioner of Upper Assam and David Scott of Lower Assam.

Davis Scott, in terms of the land revenue policy, continued with a modified version of the existing 'Khel' system. For personal service, the Pykes had to pay produce revenue in cash. In Assam, there was levied a poll tax of ₹3.00 per pyke. Hazarikas, Saikias and Borahs who were Ahom government's old pyke officers were vested with the duty to collect revenue in Lower Assam. Earlier records were used as the basis for settlements. In Central as well as Lower Assam, on every pyke there was imposed a ₹2.00 tax, known as 'gadhan' and this entitles them to obtain 3 'puras' of land which was arable. The lands, to begin with, were not transferable or hereditary.

Prior to 1835, a territory newly annexed into Assam got administered directly by the Governor General of India. In the same year, it became part of Bengal presidency and got its own Commissioner who was responsible to the Bengal Government. British occupation Hill regions got reorganized on the basis of districts. In terms of it being a revenue measure, in these regions house tax was imposed on all families. Except for specific areas like some Jaintia Hills' tracts and Garo Hills' submountain regions, there existed no land revenue and assessment was mostly not on land but on house. In Goalpara and Cachar permanent settlement was introduced by the British Government.

The peasants were expected to pay land revenue in cash and this was something they were not used to. Also, there was not much money in circulation. The money was way scarcer than the revenue demand. The position of the exports was also not better than that of the imports. This led to many of the peasants selling their children and themselves as slaves.

During this period, the Ryotwaree system of land settlement ruled the relationship between the cultivators and the government. This system had been experimented in 1792 by Captain Road in Madras and in 1864 it was properly adopted there. It was largely implemented in other states of Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat.

NOTES

The Ryotwaree system makes an agreement between the government and the cultivator who thus becomes the proprietor of the land. To begin with doccenial, it was turned to a 30-year period after which there would be reassessment and re-setting of terms.

The terms on the Ryot were rigorous and the assessment was also more over-assessment than correct assessment. The government owned the land and the Ryot could, therefore, not sell it. They were occupancy tenets with only the right to occupy the land.

In various regions under the British, three types of land tenure systems were under operation:

- Mahalwari and Malguzari system
- Ryotwari system
- Zamindari system

The most preferred system was the Ryotwari system as it could provide direct gains to the government. For the Ryots it was a problem as these revisions of land revenue was done periodically. Often the assessment would be excessive, forcing the cultivators to become wage earners. Also, since the settlements were done on an individual basis, the Ryots could not come together to have their problems settled.

The British abolished slavery in Assam and availed of the services of the free slaves on their tea plantations where they became tenents. This abolition, according to Amalendu Guha, served a three-fold purpose for the British: it weakened the Ahom aristocracy, forced the freed people to seek positions in the tea plantations and turned them into share croppers or wage earners. Since there was shortage of capital, the freed persons could not get a share of the land which was available in abundance.

The land revenue policy of the British regarding religious land property was a continuation of the one followed by the Ahom Government with minimal changes.

Ananda Saikia in *The British Land Revenue Policy in Assam in the Early Stages, and its Impact upon the Peasantry (1827-1874)*, says:

> under the Ahom Government considerable areas of arable land were also assigned as rent free *'Lakhiraj'* in the form of *'debottar'*, *'Dharmottar'* and *'Brahmottar'* grants for the services in the temples and *Satras* and for the support of the individuals attached thereto. The British retained this system with a view to getting support from the *'Satradhikars'* (religious head of the *vaishnavite* monasteries). With the object in view, the Government granted *'Lakhiraj'* (rent free) land and in some cases *'Nisfkhiraj'* (land assessed at half rate than the usual rate of revenue) land to the *'Satradhikaras'* who could produce relevant documents of the previous government in this regard.

He goes on to say:

> By acquiring rent-free land from the government, most of the *Satradhikars* who got rent free land, exploited the poor ryots by offering them land on share-cropping basis and created a *Zamindari* of their own, over their *Vaishnavite* disciple. Thus, the British land settlement system is directly responsible for creating a *Vashnavite Zamindari* class in Assam, although, all states were not included in it.

The Wasteland Rules of 6 March 1838 were framed to make available wasteland at terms that were attractive for the purpose of special cultivation. Benefit of these rules was taken by the British tea companies, and in 1840 the Assam Tea Company and in 1859 the Jorhat Tea Company were set up. In 1861, the system of free simple grants

NOTES

was introduced by the British Government to enable planters to obtain land on terms that were easy from the government. Anyone could pay and take the land but the ryots had not the means to improve the occupied land. Also, the European planters pushed the government to raise the land revenue so that the peasants would be forced to leave their villages in search of work and end up as wage workers on the plantations. All tea plantations took on the form of being zamindari and the workers on the plantations were nothing but serfs.

In Assam, the middlemen of the revenue system were known in the upper level as patgiries, Choudhuries and Mauzadar, and at the lower level as Gaonburas, Mandal Tekalas. Over time, this class also became that of landlords. They gave their land to landless ryots and received half of the land's produce. Till date, this system remains prevalent and is another outcome of the British land revenue system.

It was the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1884 that legalized the land revenue arrangements.

Check Your Progress

9. When the Burmese were expelled from Assam, who became the commissioner of Upper Assam and Lower Assam?
10. What was the land revenue policy implemented by Davis Scott?
11. What was the tax implemented on people of the hills?
12. Who experimented with the Ryotwari system, when and where?

10.5 DEVELOPMENT OF ROADWAYS, WATERWAYS AND RAILWAYS

During the pre-British rule period in Assam, the situation of infrastructure, such as electricity, communication and transportation was extremely poor. The British Government in Assam had the lucrative interest of developing coal mining, petroleum and tea industry and therefore it put in tremendous effort to bring into Assam systems of transportation that were modern. Despite the fact that they were inadequate, whatever progress they managed to make pertaining to transport of various kinds, be it rail, road or river, it was by nature certainly pioneering.

Let us take a look at the various means of transport that the British Government implemented in Assam in the period prior to independence.

Waterways/River transport: In Assam there was a problem of constructing both roadways and railways and so the British rulers in India, from the very start, worked towards the development of waterways for river transport. It was in the year 1847 that a steamer service was started by the East India Company. At a later stage, the Rivers Steam Navigation company and the Indian General Navigation Company were established, both private companies, for providing commercial services of a regular nature to Assam. Sometime later, the two companies came together and the Joint Steamer Companies was created and it was this company that, all through the period that the British were in the state, provided the steamer services. With these services, it became easy for the state to export products that were bulky, such as timber, jute and tea, as also to import other consumer goods. The service came at a rather low cost.

NOTES

Railways: Assam did not have a railway system during pre-British times. As the tea gardens developed and grew in Assam's interior regions, there arose the requirement to have a system of railways which was well developed so that low-cost or rather cheap transport was available for the thriving tea gardens. The British established the Assam Railways and Trading Company in 1881. The very next year saw the inauguration of the first railway line which ran from steamer ghat at Dibrugarh to Jaipur road. Tezpur-Balipara Railway and Jorhat provincial Railway were two other companies that were established in the year 1885. These were set up to explicitly cater to the transportation needs of the tea gardens in Tezpur.

The Assam—Bengal Railway was established in the year 1892 for providing a railway link between Assam and the other states of India. Dhubri got connected all the way with Calcutta in the year 1902 by building in an extension to the Eastern Bengal Railway line. It was during the period 1909-10 that Amingaon got connected to Calcutta via Dhubri. The Assam railway lines grew extensively and rapidly in the period 1896–1933.

Roadways: The cheapest means of transport was developed in Assam with the help of its rivers and this was one reason why in the initial stages the British rulers in Assam paid no heed to the development of roads. It was as late as 1880 that the Government's Public Works Department (P.W.D.) was established for road construction in Assam. Then in the year 1880 local boards were set up to better the roads in the state's rural areas.

It was as early as 1848 that a claim was made by the Assam Company that they had opened as well as repaired public roads which were more than 800 miles in length. The purpose of these roads was to connect the tea plantations with Calcutta for the sole purpose of commerce and trade.

Post World War I, there was realization within the government that there was urgent requirement for better and for this purpose in 1926–27 at the provincial level a Road Board was established. In the year 1927, a new fund named the Tea Rates Road Fund was created which was set up by inflicting added local rates on the tea lands for the purpose of improving the state's roads.

In addition, two funds were established in 1929–30, at the national level to develop roads across British India. These funds were the General Road Development Fund and the Special Reserve Fund. In the period within 1929–30 to 1937–38, ₹21.8 lakh worth of financial assistance from the General Fund and ₹36.9 lakh from the Reserve Fund were sanctioned.

This calculation shows that a very minimal amount of funds were put out for the construction, expansion and maintenance of roads and this led to road transport remaining rather backward in the state of Assam.

Check Your Progress

13. In which year was a steamer service started by the East India Company?
14. Which company was created when Rivers Steam Navigation Company and the Indian General Navigation Company were merged?
15. In which year was the Assam Railways and Trading Company established?
16. In which year was Dhubri connected to Calcutta by railway?

NOTES

ACTIVITY

Draw a comparative analysis of the impact of British Rule in Assam and Bengal.

DID YOU KNOW

In the classical period Assam was called Kamrupa and also Pragjyotisha. In medieval times the Mughals termed it as Asham, and British colonialism transformed it to Assam.

10.6 SUMMARY

In this unit, you have learnt that:

- The modern education which is currently prevalent in Assam has its roots in 1826 when there was a setting up of British rule in the territory of Assam.
- According to Bose: 'The aim of the English to educate the Indians was either to produce caricatures of European characters who would be willing to accept the Gospel of Christ or to get a regular supply of cheap clerks to serve them in the business organization of the government of India and subsidiary undertakings of the British Subjects'.
- Today in Assam the education at school level comprises primary, secondary and higher secondary schools and the system is run and controlled by three separate boards.
- The 1935-36 Report on education in Assam specified that government schools were to use Assamese as the medium (Assam Education Department Report, dated 19th December, 1936, para.1). This was implemented across high schools but for in Bengali schools.
- Gauhati University at the beginning of 1970, decided that starting 1972–73 it would replace English with Assamese as the medium of instruction across colleges affiliated to it. English would remain as an optional unit of instruction.
- Major Jenkins got schools opened and encouraged the spread of both education and Christianity.
- When the British occupied Assam, David Scott organized the administration to his best capacity and introduced British system in general outline and spirit with accommodation for an indigenous system prevalent at that time.
- Assam's implementation of the justice mechanism as well as the overall general administration became the responsibility of the Commissioner of Assam who was headquartered in Guwahati.
- In lower Assam, it was in 1824–25 that British administration truly started. With each passing year, the revenue collections went up which must have pushed the people against the wall.
- The paraganas were put under Choudhuries who in their parganas both collected revenue and administered justice in criminal cases of a petty nature. Choudhuries were no more than revenue collecting contractors since they paid the government six months' advance revenue (prior to having made that collection).

NOTES

- The assessment of the revenue was done based on the cultivated area's category.
- People had to pay ₹2/- as per capita poll tax.
- If a person defaulted on tax payment, the defaulter's property would be confiscated and as a result often the peasants were unable to save their homes.
- All through the 19th Century, the relationship between the people of Assam and the government was dominated by the issue of collection of revenue.
- When the Burmese were expelled from Assam, Joint Commissionership was established by the East India Company in Assam. Col. Richards became the Commissioner of Upper Assam and David Scott of Lower Assam.
- Davis Scott, in terms of the land revenue policy, continued with a modified version of the existing 'Khel' system.
- In terms of it being a revenue measure, in these regions house tax was imposed on all families. Except for specific areas like some Jaintia Hills' tracts and Garo Hills' submountain regions, there existed no land revenue and assessment was mostly not on land but on house.
- The peasants were expected to pay land revenue in cash and this was something they were not used to. Also, there was not much money in circulation. The money was way scarcer than the revenue demand. The position of the exports was also not better than that of the imports. This led to many of the peasants selling their children and themselves as slaves.
- During this period, the Ryotwaree system of land settlement ruled the relationship between the cultivators and the government.
- The terms on the Ryot were rigorous and the assessment was also more over assessment than correct assessment. The government owned the land and the Ryot could, therefore, not sell it. They were occupancy tenets with only the right to occupy the land.
- In the various regions under the British, three types of land tenure systems were under operation:
  - o Mahalwari and Malguzari system
  - o Ryotwaree system
  - o Zamindari system
- The most preferred system was the Ryotwaree system as it could provide direct gains to the government. For the Ryots it was a problem as these revisions of land revenue was done periodically. Often the assessment would be excessive, forcing the cultivators to become wage earners. Also, since the settlements were done on an individual basis, the Ryots could not come together to have their problems settled.
- The British abolished slavery in Assam and availed of the services of the free slaves on their tea plantations where they became tenants.
- This abolition, according to Dr. Amalendu Guha, served a three-fold purpose for the British: it weakened the Ahom aristocracy, forced the freed people to seek positions in the tea plantations and turned them into share croppers or wage earners. Since there was shortage of capital, the freed persons could not get a share of the land which was available in abundance.

NOTES

- The land revenue policy of the British regarding religious land property was a continuation of the one followed by the Ahom Government with minimal changes.
- The Wasteland Rules of 6 March 1838 were framed to make available wasteland at terms that were attractive for the purpose of special cultivation. Benefit of these rules was taken by the British tea companies, and in 1840 and 1859 the Assam Tea Company and the Jorhat Tea Company were set up, respectively.
- The European planters pushed the government to raise the land revenue so that the peasants would be forced to leave their villages in search of work and end up as wage workers on the plantations.
- All tea plantations took on the form of being Zamindari and the workers on the plantations were nothing but serfs.
- It was the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1884 that legalized the land revenue arrangements.
- During the pre-British rule period in Assam, the situation of infrastructure, such as electricity, communication and transportation was extremely poor.
- The British government in Assam had the lucrative interest of developing coal mining, petroleum and tea industry and therefore it put in tremendous effort to bring into Assam modem systems of transportation.
- Despite the fact that they were inadequate, whatever progress they managed to make pertaining to transport of various kinds, be it rail, road or river, was certainly pioneering.
- In Assam there existed a problem of constructing both roadways and railways and so the British rulers in India, from the very start, worked towards the development of waterways for river transport to make it easy for the state to export products that were bulky, such as timber, jute and tea, as also to import other consumer goods.
- As the tea gardens developed and grew in Assam's interior regions, there arose the requirement to have a system of railways which was well developed so that there could be made available low cost or rather cheap transport for the thriving tea gardens.
- The British established the Assam Railways and Trading Company in 1881. The very next year saw the inauguration of the first railway line which ran from steamer ghat at Dibrugarh to Jaipur road.
- Roadways: The cheapest means of transport was developed in Assam with the help of its rivers and this was one reason why in the initial stages the British rulers in Assam paid no heed to the development of roads.
- It was as late as 1880 that the Government's Public Works Department (P.W.D.) of was established for road construction in Assam.
- Assam 1929–30 to 1937–38, ₹21.8 lakh worth of financial assistance from the General Fund and ₹36.9 lakh from the Reserve Fund were sanctioned.

10.7 KEY TERMS

- **Missionaries:** A person sent on a religious mission, esp. one sent to promote Christianity in a foreign country.
- **Pestilence:** A fatal epidemic disease

NOTES

10.8 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

1. 1826
2. Pathsalas
3. Today in Assam the education at school level comprises primary, secondary and higher secondary schools and the system is run and controlled by three separate boards.
4. In 1888–89 the Christian missionaries became the first ones to set up primary teacher training schools.
5. Choudhuries were no more than revenue collecting contractors since they paid the government 6 months' advance revenue (prior to having made that collection).
6. The people had to pay ₹2/- as per capita poll tax.
7. If a person defaulted on tax payment, the defaulter's property would be confiscated.
8. In 1839, an English-educated Assamese, Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, was made the Assistant Commissioner.
9. When the Burmese were expelled from Assam, Joint Commissionership was established by the East India Company in Assam. Col. Richards became the Commissioner of upper Assam and David Scott of lower Assam.
10. Davis Scott, in terms of the land revenue policy, continued with a modified version of the existing 'Khel' system.
11. In terms of it being a revenue measure, in these regions house tax was imposed on all families.
12. The Ryotwaree system was experimented in 1792 by Captain Road in Madras.
13. It was in the year 1847 that a steamer service was started by the East India Company.
14. At a later stage, the Rivers Steam Navigation company and the Indian General Navigation Company were established, both private companies, for providing commercial services of a regular nature to Assam. Sometime later, the two companies came together and the Joint Steamer Companies was created.
15. The British established the Assam Railways and Trading Company in 1881.
16. Dhubri got connected all the way with Calcutta in the year 1902.

10.9 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Short-Answer Questions

1. Explain the impact of the British making Bengali the official language in Assam.
2. Describe the role played by the missionaries in Assam in the context of education.
3. Explain the basic concept of permanent settlement.
4. Write a short note on the development of railways in Assam.

NOTES

Long-Answer Questions

1. Explain the impact of English Education in Assam.
2. Explain the impact of the British system of governance in Assam.
3. Explain the impact of the British Land Revenue system in Assam.
4. Explain the purpose of the development of roadways, waterways and railways in Assam.

10.10 FURTHER READING

Gait, E.A.; *A History of Assam,* BiblioBazaar, US, 2010.

Choudhary, Pratap Chandra; *The History of Civilisation of the People of Assam to the Twelfth Century A.D.*, Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Assam, Assam, 1966.

Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan; *Social and polity formations in pre-colonial north-east India: the Barak Valley experience*, Haranand Publications in association with Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1991.

Sinha, Surajit; *Tribal Polities and State Systems in Pre-colonial Eastern and North Eastern India*, Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, 1987.

Chakravarty, I. N., Chakravarty, Lakshmi N.; *Glimpses of the Early History of Arunachal*, Research Department, Arunachal Pradesh Administration, Arunachal Pradesh, 1973.

Barpujari, Heramba Kauta; *Assam in the Days of the Company: 1826 - 1858: a Critical and Comprehensive History of Assam during the Rule of the East-India Company from 1826 - 1858*, North-Eastern Hill University Publications, Assam, 1996

Barpujari, Heramba Kauta; *The Comprehensive history of Assam*, Publication Board, Assam, 1990.

M. Horam; *Naga Polity*, B.R. Publishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1975.

M. Horam; *Social and Cultural Life of Nagas: (the Tangkhul Nagas)*, B.R. Pubishing Corporation, New Delhi, 1977.

Sangkima; Mizos, *Society and Social Change, 1890-1947*, Spectrum Publications, New Delhi, 1992.

Sangkima; *A Modern History Of Mizoram*, Spectrum Publications, New Delhi, 2004.

Bhattacharjee, Jayanta Bhusan; *The Garos and the English, 1765-1874*, Radiant Publishers, Hyderabad, 1978.

Kar, Parimal Chandra; *Garos in Transition*, Cosmo Publications, New Delhi, 1982.

Venuh, N. and Bonita Aleaz; *British Colonization and Restructuring of Naga Polity*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 2005.

Lahiri, Rebati Mohan; *The Annexation of Assam: 1824-1854*, General Printers & Publishers, Mumbai, 1954.

Bhuyan, Suryya Kumar; *Anglo-Assamese Relations*, Lawyer's Book Stall, Assam, 1974.

Elwin, Verrier; *The Nagas in the 19th Century*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1969.

Lahiri, Nayanjot; *Pre-Ahom Assam*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi, 1991.

Birinchi, B.K. and Banikanta Kakati; *Cultural History of Assam*, K. K. Barooah, Assam, 1951.

Basu, Nirmal Kumar; *Assam in the Ahom Age, 1228-1826: Being Politico-economic and Socio-cultural Studies*, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Kolkata, 1970.

Nath, R.M.; *The Background of Assamese Culture*, A. K. Nath, 1948.

Bareh, Hamlet; *The History and Culture of the Khasi People*, Spectrum Publications, Gauhati, 1967.

Chatterjii, S. K.; *The Place of Assam in the History and Civilization of India,* Gauhati University, Gauhati, 1970.

Dani, A. H.; *Prehistory and Protohistory of Eastern India,* Firma L. Mukhopadhyay, Calcutta, 1960.

Dhavlikar, M. K.; *Bulletin of the Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute* 31-32: 137-49, Archaeology of Gauhati, 1973.

NOTES