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CHAPTER - III

INDO-MUSLIM INVASIONS OF ASSAM AND THEIR IMPACT ON ASSAMESE LANGUAGE

1. Pre-Mughal Invasions:

Assam is a frontier province of Indian territory on the extreme north - east part. It is bounded by Lushai Hills, Hill Tippera and Mymensingh and Rangpur districts of Bengal on the south, Himalayan regions of Bhutan and Tibet on the north, Patkai range and native state of Manipur on the east and the river Karatoya and Coch Bihar, which was once an integral part of ancient Assam, on the west. The geographical limits of the province have been permanently marked out by nature, although its political boundaries have varied from time to time. The great river Brahmaputra always runs through the heart of the province. The most modern name of the province, Assam, is of quite recent origin. In very ancient times Assam was a part of the country known as Pragjyotisa, which was mentioned in the great epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, as well as in some of the principal Puranas¹. Later the name of the province was changed from Pragjyotisa to Kamrupa. Though in classical Sanskrit literature Pragjyotisa and Kamrupa occur side by side, yet Kamrupa is found in the well-known Allahabad inscription of Samudragupta where Kamrupa is mentioned as a frontier territory².

1. A Cultural History of Assam, Vol.1 B.K. Barua, PP. 10. Ghy-1969.
2. Ibid. PP. 13.

The first few Muslim chroniclers like Minhajuddin, Salim, and Idrishi referred to this country as Kamru, Kamrud or Kamwaru, while those of later times preferred to call it Kamrupa, Kamata. But in the chronicles of the still later time we find that the country was mentioned as Koch and Koch Hajo as well as the Ahom Kingdom as Assam. Such use of different names for Kamrupa, by different Muslim chroniclers, is indicative of the various phases of social and political changes, which swayed the country through out the whole of span of near about five centuries. "The kingdom came to be known as Kamrupa during the Puranic times based on the legend that Kamadeva, the God of love, the Indian Cupid, who was destroyed by the fiery glance of Siva returned to life in this country"³. In the seventh century the Chinese pilgrims mention the name of this country as Ka-mo-lu-po and three hundred years before Yuan Chwang, the famous prasasti of Samudra Gupta mentions Kamrupa as the frontier territory of India⁴.

"The Ahom Kingdom to the east of the Manas came to be known as Asam or Assam, after the Ahoms, and the name Kamrupa has, since then, been restricted to the present district between the Manas and the Barnadi"⁵. For the convenience of our study of Assam- Muslim political relations, we deem it essential to treat the events of the Mohammedan invasions, occurring during each of these phases of the change. Between the last epigraphic record of about the middle of the twelfth

3. Corpus Incriptionum Indicarum, Vol.III, PP.14.

4. Ibid.

5. Early History of Kamrupa, K. L. Barua, PP. 9, Gauhati -1966.

century and the regular chronicles of the Ahom rulers about the middle of the thirteenth century, there are some records of the Mohammedan chroniclers to through a little light on the internal condition of Kamrupa otherwise in dark. Here those most remarkable Indo-Muslim invasions will be explained through which the Assamese society was influenced.

A. Invasion of Assam Under Muhammad bin Bakhtyar

The first Muhammedan host to enter the territory of Kamrup was headed by Muhammad bin Bakhtyar in the year 1205 – 1206 A.D.⁶. Ikhtiyaruddin, well known in history by Muhammad bin Bakhtyar Khilji, a Turk of the Khilji tribe, was a desperate military leader under Qutbuddin Aibak, the viceroy under Muhammad Shihabuddin of Ghor, the then Sultan of Delhi. He became Governor of Bihar and established Muslim supremacy in Gauda⁷. After overcoming Lakshman Sena, the last Sena King of Bengal, Bakhtyar planned – it is still a mystery why to invade Tibet, Turkistan and China in the North with a grand army of 10,000 well equipped Cavalry⁸. But the Muhammadan historians have recorded that the Bakhtyar's objective was Tibet, Turkistan or China, beyond the Himalayas. "In the beginning of 13th century, there (Kamrup) ruled a king named Prithu"⁹. According to Edward Gait, "At this time the ruler of Kamrupa bore the title Kameswar, and his western

6. Ibid, PP.136.

7. Gauda was the historic Capital of Bengal during the reign of Muhammad bin Bakhtyar (1203 – 1206 A.D.). He transferred the seat of his Government from Lakhnawati to Gauda. According to Minhaj the seat of government was also removed from Devkot to Gauda in the reign of Sultan Ghiyasuddin Iwaz Khilji.

8. The comprehensive History of Assam, vol II, H.K. Barpujari, pp36, Gauhati, 1992.

9. History of Assam, Debabrata Dutta, pp, 48, Calcutta-1989.

boundary was the Karatoya river”¹⁰. The grave danger of aggressions threatened Kamrupa once again after the several invasions of the Palas and Sena Kings of Bengal. Muhammad marched from Devkot (modern Gangarampur) ten miles south of Dinajpur, towards the end of winter, 1206 A.D.¹¹. He also won over a chief of the local Mech tribes to act as his guide in the expedition. This man having adopted Islamic faith from Muhammad bin Bakhtyar, came to be known as ‘Ali, the Mej. He guided the Muhammedan forces to the city of Burdhankot, situated on the bank of river ‘Barkandi’ or ‘Brahmkadi’¹² in the east of Gauda. From this place ‘Ali, the Mej, took the army along the bank of this river for ten days till it reached a giant stone bridge, which has now been identified as Silsako (Stone bridge) over the river Barnadi in the Assam Valley. According to Tabaqat - i – Nasiri, the Muhammedan army had built a bridge of hewn stone consisting of upwards, of twenty arches¹³. After the army of Islam passed over the bridge, he (Muhammad bin Bakhtyar) installed there, at the head of the bridge, two of his own Amirs – one a Turk slave, other a Khalji, with troops in order to guard it until he returned¹⁴. On the 16th day of the hard journey from the bridge and through defiles and passes among the mountains, the army arrived at an open tract of land inhabited by tribal people in populous villages. There was a strong fort in that place. The invaders immediately restored to acts of plundering the villages. The entire tribal population, therefore,

10. A History of Assam, E. Gait, pp. 36, Gauhati-1984.

11. History of Bengal, Jadu Nath Sarkar, pp.10, Patna-1977.

12. According to Jadu Nath Sarkar, the name of the river is ‘Bagmati’ or ‘Tista’-History of Bengal, PP. 11, J.N.Sarkar, Patna -1977.

13. Tabaqat-I-Nasiri, Minhajuddin Siraj (Eng.tr. by Raverty), pp561-71, London-1881.

14. Ibid, PP. 561 - 71.

joined the native legion in the fort and attacked the Muhammedan army. In the whole day's engagement many of the Muslim soldiers were put to death and nothing was gained¹⁵. Before arrived at on the open tract of land, the Muhammedan troops "advanced through circuitous defils and passes of the lofty northern mountains of Kamrupa via Rangia and Tamulpur for fifteen days"¹⁶. In the evening when Muhammad bin Bakhtyar learned from a captive that the next morning the local army would be reinforced by a well-trained cavalry force from the city of Karampattan, he broke up his camp in the same night and began to retrace his steps. But the Raja of Kamrupa attacked on the Muslim army on the road. A large number of Turks were killed or captured by the native army. Thus, when after suffering from extreme misery and privation during the whole period of fifteen days of their retreat, the forces of Bakhtyar issued out of the mountains and rushed to the head of the bridge, they found to their utter dismay that the middle arch of it was broken off by the natives and that the river was not at all fordable. Consequently hundreds of Turks were carried away to their watery grave by the very strong current of the river. Only Muhammad bin Bakhtyar and a few well mounted men escaped the disaster and reached the western bank of the river where the Koch and Mech people came to their help and it was with their help that Muhammad bin Bakhtyar reached Gauda as a sick and completely discomfited man¹⁷.

15. Ibid, PP. 565 – 69.

16. The Comprehensive history of Assam, Vol. II, H.K. Barpujari, PP. 36, Gauhati – 1992.

17. Tabaqat – I – Nasiri, Minhajuddin Siraj (Eng. tr. By Raverty), PP. 565 – 573, London, 1881.

“An inscription near Guwahati, dated Chaitra 13, 1127 Saka or 27 March, 1206, records the utter rout of the Turushka or Muslim army in Kamarupa. This would imply that Bakhtyar penetrated to the interior of Kamarupa. This, however, seems untenable”¹⁸. The Raja of Kamrupa arrested many of the Muhammedan army. The imprisoned soldiers when sought pardon and shelter, the Raja excused them and made arrangements for their settlements in his kingdom with essential commodities. The Raja called them Gaudia as they had come from Gauda or from the kingdom of Muhammad Shihabuddin Ghori. Since then the Assamese people till today¹⁹ are calling the Muslims as Gaudia. This futile expedition of Muhammad bin Bakhtyar formally marked the beginning of the settlements of the Muslims in Assam²⁰.

B. Invasion of Assam under ‘Ali Mardan’

After the invasion of Muhammad bin Bakhtyar, for about four years no Muhammedan ruler thought of invading Kamrupa. Sultan Alauddin, styled himself as ‘Ali Mardan, was a man of undoubted ability as a soldier who imagined himself the sultan of all within the ken of his inflamed political vision. Before the death of his master Sultan Qutbuddin Aibak in November 1210, ‘Ali Mardan had established his authority in Bengal²¹, ‘Ali Mardan (1210 – 1213 A.D.) made inroad to Kamrupa and eventually seized the reigns of power by great craft and promulgating

18. The Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol. II, H.K. Barpujari, PP. 37, Gauhati – 1992.

19. Ahomar Din, Hiteswar Bar Barua, PP. 38, Pub. 1981.

Also vide Assam Buranji, Guniviram Barua, PP. 15, Guwahati – 1972.

20. The Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol. II, H.K. Barpujari, PP. 37, Gauhati – 1992.

21. History of Bengal, Jadu Nath Sarkar, PP.18 – 19, Patna – 1977.

the Khutba and Sikka of Lakhnawati in his own name²². According to K.R. Qanungo, 'Ali Mardan cowed the Hindu ruler of Kamrupa and Bang (East Bengal), from whom he is said to have received the tributes²³. The Raja of Kamrup extended his authority over it even after he had destroyed the troops of Muhammad bin Bakhtyar. Some tribal chiefs like 'Ali Mej, the guide of Muhammed bin Bakhtyar, a might have been ruling in different parts of the territory as the feudatories of Gauda Sultan. It may, therefore, be surmised that some these chiefs, being the sincere friends of Muhammad bin Bakhtyar, defied the authority of his slayer, 'Ali Mardan Khilji and the latter consequently, had to resort the arms to exact obedience from them. As this territory was still known as a part of Kamrupa Kingdom, the subjugations of the local chiefs by 'Ali Mardan Khilji might have been recorded by some Persian chroniclers as the latter's "Conquest of Kamrupa".

C. Invasion of Assam under Hussamuddin Iwaz

Malik Hussamuddin Iwaz, the leader of Khilji nobles of Gauda, instituted a successful coup against 'Ali Mardan Khilji in 1213 A.D. and continued to rule independently till 1225 A.D. Hussamuddin Iwaz rose to sovereignty by dint of his own valour and sagacity and proved himself as one of the most popular sultans that ever sat on the throne of Gauda²⁴. But when the superior Sultan Iltutmish himself marched (1225 A.D.) against the recalcitrant chief of Gauda, Hussamuddin Iwaz, having realized the gravity of the situation in relation of his own position, submitted

22. Muntakhab al – Tawarikh, A.G. Badauni, Vol. I, PP. 83, Calcutta – 1864.

23. Life of Mirjumla, Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, PP. 20, Delhi – 1979.

And also see History of Bengal, Jadu Nath Sarkar, PP.20, Patna – 1977.

24. History of Bengal, J.N.Sarkar, PP. 21, Patna – 1977.

prudently to 'Iltutmish and paid tributes to him. After 'Iltutmish had withdrawn, Hussamuddin Iwaz again rebelled and occupied the province of Bihar, which 'Iltutmish had left in charge of Malik 'Izzuddin Jani²⁵.

Malik Hussamuddin Iwaz (1213 – 1227 A.D.) better known as Sultan Ghiyasuddin Iwaz – i – Husain Khilji, invaded Kamrupa in 1226 – 27 A.D. during the reign of Prithu or Bartu (as mentioned by Minhajuddin), the Raja of Kamrupa. The Kamrupa Raja gave him permission for preaching Islamic faith among the common masses. The prominent sufi as well as the preacher of Islam Shaikh Jalaluddin Tabrizi, later on became well known as Shah Sultan Ghiyasuddin Awliya, also came to Kamrupa during the invasion of Iwaz. On the other hand Iltutmish who was the emperor of Delhi, sent his son, Nasiruddin to put down the rebellion. As the Sultan of Gauda (Iwaz) had taken all his forces to the Kamrupa campaign, having left his capital denuded of the defenders, the imperial army could easily secure the country. When Iwaz became aware of the event, he hurriedly returned to Gauda from Kamrupa. But it was then too late for him to prepare for a proper defense of his own domain from the imperialists. Even then, he became determined to oust the conqueror, and fought a bloody fight with Nasiruddin who soon overpowered him and killed him²⁶.

It is recorded in chronicles that Hussamuddin Iwaz, in his bid for the conquest of Kamrupa, advanced upstream the Brahmaputra and reached "as far as Sadia"²⁷ in the extreme east. But the Nowgong Gachtal inscription of Vishwa Sundaradeva

25. Tabaqat - i – Nasiri, Minhajuddin Siraj, (Eng. Tr. By Raverty), PP. 594.

26. Ibid, PP. 595.

27. A history of Assam, Edward Gait, PP. 37, Gauhati – 1962.

informs us that the Sultan came up to Guwahati and Nowgong. This inscription was issued in Saka 1149 corresponding to 1226 – 1227 A.D. It is mentionable that the writer of *Tabaqat - i - Nasiri* was not sure “whether part of or all his army returned with him”²⁸. Most probably a big part of his soldiers was left in Kamrupa, who in course of time mingled with the Assamese society.

D. Invasion of Assam under Nasiruddin

After overthrowing Hussamuddin Iwaz, Nasiruddin Mahmud invaded Bengal and ruled over it as Viceroy of ‘Iltutmish, the Sultan of Delhi, for about two years. Then Nasiruddin sought to annex the neighbouring kingdoms and hence he advanced forward to Kamrupa territory through Jalpaiguri. Most probably in 1228 A.D., just one year after the invasion of ‘Iwaz, “he attacked and defeated a Hindu Raja named Bartu or Brithu (Prithu)”²⁹. Though he defeated and attacked the Raja Prithu of Kamrupa, yet he could not annex Kamrupa to Turkish Empire. So he appointed Raja Sandhya as a tributary king on the Kamrupa throne with a promise of annual tribute from him and retired from Kamrupa. It is known that as soon as he returned with the Muhammedan troops to Bengal where he was the governor, the assumed independence. Regarding the Raja Prithu of Kamrupa, Minhajuddin Siraj makes the following reference-

“The accursed Bartu (Britu) beneath whose sword above a hundred and twenty thousand Musalmans had attained martyrdom he (Nasiruddin) overthrew

28. *Tabaqat – I – Nasiri*, Minhaj, (Eng. Tr. By Revert), PP. 594 (Foot note) London – 1881.

29. *Cambridge history of India*, Vol. III, PP-54, Sir Wolseley Haig, Cambridge – 1928.
vassal king is said to have gradually

and sent to Hell; and the refractory infidel, who were in different parts of the country of Awadh, he reduced and overcame and brought a considerable number under obedience”³⁰.

“It is related by Buchanan (the famous historian Buchanan Hamilton) that, according to traditions, when an army of untouchables entered his (Prithu) capital he, for fear of having his purity sullied, threw him into a tank and died”³¹.

E. Invasion of Assam under Ikhtyaruddin Yuzbak

Malik Ikhtyaruddin Yuzbak was a powerful Sultan of exceptional ability. He was the first Shamsi Mamluk who openly assumed sovereign status in Bengal as Sultan Mughis al – Duniya wa al – Din Abdul Muzaffar Yuzbak al – Sultan by 653 A.H. (1255 A.D.). Sultan Mughisuddin, after capturing Lakhnawati, Bihar and Oudh and being confident of his own strength, thought of adding a fourth province, the country of Kamrupa, to his own kingdom. So he started with composure of mind on his fatal expedition for the conquest of Kamrupa at the beginning of 1257 A.D. (655 A.H.)³². Kamrupa, at that time, included the districts of modern Kamrup, Goalpara, Koch – Bihar, Jalpaiguri, Rangpur and some portions of Mymensingh. The Kamrupa king Sandhya, the successor of Prithu, during the middle of 13th century was able to establish a powerful and prosperous kingdom with capital at Kamrupnagar in North Guwahati and his only offence was that he had not paid the annual tribute to the sultan of Bengal. After being free from disturbances in Orissa,

30. *Tabaqat – i – Nasiri*, Mihajuddin Siraj (Eng. Tr. By Raverty), PP. 594 – 95, London – 1881.

31. *Early History of Kamrupa*, K.L. Barua, PP. 149, Guwahati – 1966.

32. *History of Bengal*, Jadu Nath Sarkar, PP. 52, Patna – 1977.

“The Sultan started from Lakhnawati at the beginning of the spring of 655 A.H./1257 A.D. with a strong army, crossed the Karatoya, probably near Ghoraghat, entered Kamrupa along the north bank of the Brahmaputra via Rangamati above Dhubri and reached Guwahati in 1257”³³. The “Rae of Kamrupa”³⁴ on hearing about the strong army of Malik Yuzbak and being unable to resist the invading Muhammedan army, retreated to the hills yielding opportunities for Malik Yuzbak to enjoy, though for a time, the pride of victory, which he celebrated by erecting a mosque on the west of this country. From the account of Minhajuddin it is clear that this invasion of Malik Yuzbak was inspired more by the desire of spreading the Islamic faith and also by the lure for the fabulous treasures kept buried in some parts of this country by Gushtasib, a Persian conqueror rather than more military achievement and territorial expansion. “From the reign of Gushtasib, Shah of Ajam, who had invaded Chin, and had come towards Hindustan by that route (by way of Kamrud)” records Minhajuddin, “twelve hundred hoards of treasure, all sealed, which were (there deposited), and any portion of which wealth and treasures not one of the Raes had availed himself of, the whole fell into the hands of the Musalman troops. The reading of the Khutba, and Friday religious service were instituted in Kamrud, and the signs of the people of Islam appeared there”³⁵.

The Raja of Kamrupa sent confidential messengers several times to Malik Yuzbak saying, “Thou hast subdued this territory, and no Malik of Musalman

33. Tabaqat – i – Nasiri, Mihajuddin Siraj (Eng. Tr. By Raverty), PP. 594 – 95, London – 1881.

34. Mihajuddin always mentions the king of Kamrupa as Rae of Kamrupa.

35. Tabaqat – i – Nasiri, Mihajuddin Siraj (Eng. Tr. By Raverty), PP. 265.

people ever before obtained such success. Now do thou return, and replace me upon the thrown, and I will continue the khutbah unchanged, and the Musalman stamped coins as established”³⁶. Malik Yuzbak rejected the offer of the Raja. At that time Malik had no sufficient stores of grain. When the rainy season came and the river Brahmaputra began to overflow, the Raja of Kamrupa with his subjects opened the water dukes all around Malik Yuzbak and his troops in the night³⁷. So the Muhamedan troops became helpless and near perishing through destitution and they had held discussion together and came to the conclusion that they would retreat. “They accordingly” Minhajuddin mentions, “set out from Kamrud with the intention of proceeding towards Lakhnawati. The route through the plain was flooded with water, and occupied by the Hindus. The Musalmans obtained a guide to bring them out of that country by conducting them towards the skirt of the mountains. After they had preceded some few stages, they got entangled among passes and defiles, and narrow roads, and the Hindus seized both their front and rear. In a narrow place a fight took place in front of the leading rank between two elephants; the force fell into confusion, the Hindus came upon them from every side, and Musalmans and Hindus mingled pell mell together. Suddenly an arrow struck Malik Yuzbak, who was mounted on an elephant, in the breast, and he fell, and was made prisoner; and all his children, family, and dependents, and the whole of his force, were made captive”³⁸. Mihajuddin records the next state of Malik Yuzbak saying: when they carried Malik Yuzbak before the Rae, he made a request

36. Ibid. PP. 266 – 67.

37. Ahomar Din, Hiteswar Barbarua, Footnote, PP. 39, Gauhati – 1981.

38. Tabaqat-i-Nasiri, Mihajuddin Siraj (Eng. Tr. By Raverty), PP. 765–76, London – 1881.

that they would bring his son to him; and, when they brought his son to him, he placed his face to the face of his son, and yielded his soul to God. The Almighty's mercy is upon him!"³⁹. According to Stewart, Malik Yuzbak at last died in that condition in 1256 – 1257 A.D. (656 A.H.)⁴⁰. Three coins minted by Malik Yuzbak at Lakhnawati, in Ramzan 653 A.H., were found at Guwahati in 1880⁴¹.

F. Invasion of Assam under Shamsuddin Firoz Shah

Though the Persian or the indigenous chroniclers had no records for the invasion of Kamrupa by Sultan Shamsuddin Firoz Shah, yet we get the mention of it in some important religious literature. "The Munisul Muridin (compiled in 775/1373 – 74), a Malfuz of Hazrat Ahmad Sharfuddin Yahya Maneri, the famous Firdausi patron saint of Bihar, refers to Ghiasuddin as the hakim or governor of Kamru or Kamrup. That means that Kamrup was conquered not by Ghiasuddin Bahadur as is supposed by Bhattacharyya but by Shamsuddin Firoz who placed it under his son's charge"⁴². The ambitious and vigorous Sultan Ghiasuddin after being the independent ruler of Sonargaon planned to annex Kamrupa and further Brahmaputra valley into his empire. By 1321 – 22 A.D. Sultan Ghiasuddin not only invaded and annexed the Koch – Bihar and Mymensing regions of the Kamata or Kamrupa kingdom but he had also procured allegiance of the local chiefs ruling in south western part of the Brahmaputra Valley up to Nowgong on the east. Thus this

39. Ibid.

40. History of Bengal, Major Chales Stewart, PP. 67, Pub – 1910.

41. Quoted From Early History of Kamrupa, K.L. Barua, PP. 152, Guwahati – 1966.

42. The Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol. II, H.K. Barpujari, PP. 40, Guwahati – 1992.

entire area of the territory of Kamata⁴³ remained under the authority of Ghasiuddin till his death in 1328 A.D. or even there after till the end of the reign of Sultan Fakhruddin.

Sultan Ghasiuddin wrested the territories including Mymensing, Koch Bihar and south western part of the Brahmaputra Valley up to Nowgong, from the possessions of Kamata king Sukarangka, can also be deducted from the fact that, Kamrup, Bahirbund, Eghara Sendur, Patiljaha, Sherpur, which the chief of Kamata gave away to the Ahom king, lay within this territory. In this way Muslim power was rising in west of Bengal and the Ahoms on the east. From the 'Kamrupar Buranji' and 'Baharistan – 1 – Ghaybi' we learn that Sultan Ghasiuddin ruled over the Kamrup region for some time and that the seat of his government was on the Gurudachal Parbat (mountain) in Hajo, on the north bank of the Brahmaputra⁴⁴.

A number of coins issued in 1321 A.D. (712 A.H.) by Sultan Ghasiuddin Bahadur Shah, son of Sultan Shamsuddin Firoz Shah, have been discovered in the Mymensing district of present Bangladesh and in the Koch Bihar region in North Bengal and also in the Rupaibari area in Nowgong in the Assam Valley. Some of these coins show that they were minted at Ghiyaspur in Mymensingh in that very year⁴⁵.

43. According to H.K.Barpujari – Kamrupa Fingdom was reorganized as a new state 'Kamata' (Kamta) by name with Kamatapur as capital. The exact time when the change was made is uncertain. But possibly Sandhya had made it in 13th Century. (The Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol. II, PP. 40 – 41, H.K. Barpujari, GHY – 1992.)

44. Kamrupar Buranji, S.K. Bhuyan, PP. 4, Pub: 1962.

45. Mughal North – Eastern Frontier Policy, S. N. Bhattacharya, PP. 59 (Foot Note) Calcutta – 1929.

G. Invasion of Assam under Sikandar Shah

The founder of Ilyas Shahi dynasty, Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah (Haji Ilyas), became the undisputed independent ruler of Bengal in 1342 – 43 A.D.⁴⁶. Sultan Shamsuddin Ilyas was a strong, ambitious and energetic ruler of Bengal with imperialistic aggressions in different directions. His son Sikandar Shah was also a deserving chief for the throne of Bengal like his father, Ilyas, must have made considerable progress in the conquest and the occupation of the city of Kamrup before his death about Zilqad, 758 A.H., or the end of November 1357⁴⁷ and his work was brought to its final by his son and successor Sikandar (758 – c, Zilqad, 795/November, 1357 to about September – October, 1393). True there is no sufficient literary evidence to supply details, but the fact of occupation of the capital is attested by numismatic evidence, a coin of 795/1357 – 59 issued by Sikandar Shah, evidently to signalize his victory, with the mint name “Chawlistan urf (alias) Kamrup” or “arsat Kamru” (i.e. Kamrup)⁴⁸. Sikandar Shah got the opportunity of invading Kamrupa as the Raja of Kamata – Kamrupa at that time was involved in war with the Ahom King Sukhrangpha.

H. Invasion of Assam under Ruknuddin Barbak

About a hundred years after the invasion of Kamrup by Sikandar Shah, Ruknuddin Barbak Shah (1455 – 76 A.D.) became the Sultan of Bengal and came into conflict with the king of Kamatapur. According to a Persian manuscript, the Risalat – ush – Shuhada, Barbak Shah was defeated by the king of Kamrupa

46. History of Bengal, Jadu Nath Sarma, PP. 103, Patna – 1977.

47. The rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, Richard, M. Eaton, PP. 42, New Delhi- 2000

48. The Comprehensive History of Assam, H.K. Barpujari, PP43, Gauhati – 1992.

(known as Kameshwar at that time) several times and at last Barbak selected a holy man named Ismail Ghazi as his commander. Shah Ismail Ghazi was a Quraishite Arab of Mecca and popular divine, with military talents as his general against “Kameshwar, Raja of Kamrup”⁴⁹. This sufi commander first began invasion in eastern Dinajpur district and after recovering the cis – Karatoya areas he advanced to Kamrupa. As the king of Kamrupa was so very powerful that he had to face a stiff resistance in going forward. The king of Kamrupa himself advanced with his troops and faced the Muhameddan forces under the commandership of Ismail Ghazi near Santosh in the modern district of Dinajpur. The powerful Kamrupa king overpowered the sufi general in the battlefield and the latter was compelled to escape with a few followers. The sufi commander made peace offers which the victor totally rejected. As a result of which warfare was continued and this time, it narrated, Sufi Ismail Ghazi was brought into play his supernatural powers. The Raja of Kamrupa was influenced and over awed so much by the sufi that he not only voluntarily submitted himself to the Muslim commander but also embraced Islamic faith. Sufi Isma‘il Ghazi as a reward of his voluntary submission conferred him the title of “Bara Larwa” (great fighter). Thus the Muslim forces scored a victory and captured Kamrupa kingdom for some time.

I. Invasion of Assam under Allauddin Husain Shah

The Habshi Sultan Allauddin Husain Shah (1493 – 1519 A.D.) of Gauda made the first serious attempt to annex Kamata – Kamrupa permanently. At that time

49. Ibid, PP. 45.

Nilamber was the powerful king of Kamata – Kamrupa at Kamatapur, who built a road from Kamatapur to Ghoraghat while Chaopha Shuhummung (1497 – 1539 A.D.)⁵⁰ was the ruler of Ahom kingdom during whose reign the struggle between the Muhammedans and the Ahoms took place for the first time. The energetic and ambitious Sultan Allauddin Husain Shah, on the otherhand, helped to attack Kamrupa Kingdom by its Brahmin minister Sachipatra, who sought the opportunities to take revenge on the king for the murder of his son who was involved in an intrigue with the queen⁵¹. So Sachipatra invited Allauddin Husain Shah to attack the Nilamber's kingdom. In 1498 A.D. Allauddin Husain Shah led a strong army consisting of 24,000 infantry, cavalry and war flotilla, against Nilambar and attacked Kamatapur which was strongly fortified. Finally the sultan captured the capital as well as entire Kamrup up to Hajo. "After this some localchiefs named Rupnarayan, Ghosal Khan, Mal Kumar, and Lakhshminarayan, who were probably Bhuyans, came and tendered their submission to Allauddin Husain Shah who then returned to Bengal leaving his son, Danial, with a strong force, to hold the conquered country. On his return to Gaur Husain Shah struck coins in 1502 A.D. in which he is mentioned as "Conqueror of Kamru Kamata"⁵². During a short period "Kamrup came to be used as a colony of the Afghans. They drove away the Hindu chieftains and assumed the civil and military administration of the area. To maintain control over the new conquests adequate measures were taken"⁵³. Some authorities hold the view that even after Danial's defeat the

50. Ahom Buranji, Edt. Eng., by G.C. Barua, PP. 54 – 78, Gauhati – 1985.

51. Ahomar Din, Hiteswar Barbarua, PP. 52, Gauhati – 1981.

52. Early History of Kamrupa, K.L. Barua, PP. 174 –75, Gauhati – 1966.

53. The Comprehensive History of Assam, H.K. Barpujari, Vol. II, PP. 47, Gauhati – 1992.

Muhammedans remained in power in western Kamrupa⁵⁴. Sultan Ghiasuddin Aulia, one of the viceroys of Allauddin Husain Shah's son in Hajo, erected a beautiful mosque in Gurudachal Pahar at Hajo. But before its completion Ghiasuddin Aulia died and was buried near it. Allauddin Husain Shah's invasion ultimately created a colony of the Muhammedans that established in the country round about Hajo⁵⁵.

J. Invasion of Assam under Rukun Khan

Rukunuddin Rukun Khan was a wazir and general of Husain Shah⁵⁶ who, with the Muhammedan army, invaded Assam (Kamrupa) in 1527 A.D. Rukun Khan with his troops advanced far into Ahom territory where his troops were attacked and defeated by the Ahoms. At that time Viswa Singha was the powerful king of entire Kamrupa. After hearing the news of defeat of Muslim army, the Bengal Sultan despatched his general Mit Manik with an army of one thousand horses and ten thousand foot for the assistance of Rukun Khan. Then again Rukun Khan advanced by boats up the Brahmaputra while general Mit Manik marched by road and both the Muhammedan troops attacked the forces of Barpatra Gohain⁵⁷. The Muhammedan forces met the Ahoms at Temani where a great battle was fought. The general Mit Manik himself was taken prisoner by the Ahoms while Rukun Khan fled on horse back to Bengal⁵⁸. The Barpatra Gohain pursued the Muhammedan army and captured a large booty including some firearms.

54. Moghul North – East Frontier Policy, S.N. Bhattacharyya, PP. 76 – 77 (Foot note), Calcutta – 1929.

55. Early History of Kamrup, K.L. Barua, PP. 175, Gauhati – 1966.

56. Moghul North – East Frontier Policy, S.N. Bhattacharyya, PP. 86, Calcutta – 1929.

57. Deodhai Assam Buranji, S.K. Bhuyan, PP. 27, 1962.

58. Early History of Kamrup, K.L. Barua, PP. 193, Gauhati – 1966.

K. Invasion of Assam under Turbak

In 1532 A.D., after five years of Rukun Khan's invasion, Turbak with a powerful Muhammedan army invaded Assam reaching the Ahom fort at Singri. The Muhammedan forces proceeded along the bank of Brahmaputra in that expedition and they also used the guns and the cannons in the battle⁵⁹. At first Muhammedan forces became successful. The Ahoms, on the otherhand, lost the lives of 1300 soldiers in the battle. However, in the just next year (1533 A.D.) the Ahoms gained a great naval victory at Duimunisila over the Muhammedan forces. Turbak was assisted with additional Muslim forces by Husain Shah. Another battle was fought near the Bharali river where the Muhammedan forces was defeated and Turbak was slain. Then the Muhammedan troops fled back. But the Ahoms under Barpatra Gohain persued them up to the Karatoya river through the Koch kingdom⁶⁰. Finding the Ahom forces at the doorstep, the Sultan of Bengal made overtures for peace by offering his two beautiful daughters Harmati and Darmati to the Ahom Raja with dowry of five parganahs⁶¹. In this battle many Muhammedan soldiers were captured by the Ahom army.

59. Ibid.

60. Asom Buranji, S.K. Bhyan, PP.26, Gauhati – 1962.

61. The Comprehensive History of Assam, H.K. Barpujari, PP. 59, Gauhati – 1992.

2. Contact of Mughals and Ahoms:

A. Kamrup Annexed to the Mughal Empire, 1613 A.D.

The political relations of Assam with the Mughals began through Koch – Bihar. The annexation of Koch–Bihar by the Mughals ultimately inspired them to annex Kamrup. At that time Raja Parikshit Narayan was the king of Koch–Bihar and Kamrup (Koch–Hajo) also, and his relations with Mughals were not cordial. Shaikh Alauddin Chisty well-known as Islam Khan, the Mughal Viceroy of Bengal (1608 – 13 A.D.) despatched a large army to invade Kamrup under the leadership of Shaikh Kamal and the guidance of Raja Raghunath, while Mukrram Khan was selected as the chief commander of the large Mughal force⁶². At the end of the rains (early November, 1612 A.D.)⁶³ this vast well equipped Mughal force attacked Kamrup. Raja Raghunath guided the force in that unknown jungly land. Raja Parikshit having known about the Mughal attack posted at Salkonah three hundred fully equipped war boats. As soon as the Mughal Imperial fleet arrived at Salkonah on the left bank of river Brahmaputra (December 8, 1612 A.D.)⁶⁴, Raja Parikshit began to attack and offered a stiff resistance. But the Mughal forces defeated Raja's force and seized all their boats and brought them to the imperial officers⁶⁵. In the next morning the Mughal force went ahead by the bank of the river Brahmaputra and cleared jungles from the route. The fleet advanced forward by the Brahmaputra.

62. Baharistan – i – Ghaybi, Mirza Nathan, Vol. I (Eng. Tr., by Dr. M.I. Bora), PP. 222, Gauhati – 1992.

63. The History of Bengal, J.N. Sarkar, PP. 285, Patna – 1973.

64. Ibid.

65. Baharistan – i – Ghaybi, Mirza Nathan, Vol. I (Eng. Tr., by Dr. M.I. Bora), PP. 229, Gauhati – 1992.

Islam Khan sent the reinforcement of one thousand cavalry and one thousand matchlock – men under the command of Shaikh Habibullah to assist Mukkarram Khan and Shaikh Kamal. The Mughal force directly attacked from a two – kos distant encampment failing twice, besieged Dhubri (January, 1613 A.D.). Then the force advanced forward to Gilah and captured it (April, 1613 A.D.). Raja Parikshit, who had so long fought with Mughals for his country, now became very unnerved. So he withdrew from Gilah to Kamrup across the Manah river with his family to his capital Barnagar before the Mughals captured Gilah. The Mughals persued the fugitive Kamrupa king up to Barnagar. Being helpless Raja Parikshit decided to surrender to Islam Khan. The kingdom of Kamrupa or Koch–Kamrup from Karaibari hills in the south west to the Barnadi on th east⁶⁶ was annexed to the Mughal Empire (by end of July, 1613 A.D.).⁶⁷

B. First Round of Ahom–Mughal Conflict

The conquest of Kamrup by the Mughals ultimately made the Mughal kingdom adjacent to Assam. A period of indirect hostility of then Ahom rulers preceded the direct conflict of the Ahoms and the Mughals. Raja Parikshit, we have already mentioned, being defeated at Dhubri and Gilah by the Mughal army, decided to surrender to the Viceroy of Bengal. Accordingly he met Mukarram Khan, the chief commander of Mughal army, to lead him to the viceroy Islam Khan. But when Mukarram Khan with the successful imperial commanders and Raja Parikshit in their return journey reached Bhawal, they heard the news of Islam Khan's death

66. Ibid, PP. 248-53.

67. The History of Bengal, J.N. Sarkar, PP. 287, Patna – 1973.

(21st August, 1613).⁶⁸ Under this circumstance Mukarram Khan sent Raja Parikshit to Jahangir, the emperor of Delhi. Raja Parikshit described his deplorable conditions being humble in front of the emperor and tried to convince him. After listening to his appeal Jahangir mercifully asked him what tax he could pay. Then the foolish king, unknowing of any accounts, accepted to pay twenty crore takas to the then Bengal Viceroy. Jahangir agreed to the proposal of the king Parikshit, and arranged for his return journey to Kamrup with some Muslim personals as security and gave him full confidence of assistance at the time of necessity. When the king arrived at his capital Barnagar, and disclosed his commitment with the Emperor of Delhi, the ministers made him understood how many takas were there in twenty crore. He became very much nervous after being understood of the accounts of twenty crore takas. So he then and there went out for Delhi to meet again the emperor. On the way he died in Patna⁶⁹. On the otherhand, the then Viceroy of Bengal, Qasim Khan, immediately sent a military expedition to invade the Kamrup of Parikshit after knowing the death of Raja Parikshit. At this difficult moment the chief of the ministry became unnerved and unable to take any proper step against the Mughal expedition. So he hastily set out to the Emperor of Delhi to inform regarding the military expedition of Dhaka. At that time Bijit Narayan, the son of the king, was minor aged and Balit Narayan, the younger brother of the king, was in Darrang.⁷⁰ Under the commandership of Saiyid Abu Bakr, the Mughal army easily conquered Kamrup and stayed at Hajo. After a few days the minister of the king Raja Parikshit came back making an agreement with the Emperor of Delhi and

68. The History of Bengal, J.N. Sarkar, PP. 288, Patna – 1977.

69. Ahomar Din, Hiteswar Barbarua, PP. 91, Gauhati – 1981.

70. Ibid.

meeting the viceroy, Qashim Khan, informed him about the agreement. According to the agreement Kamrup was divided into two parts. The first part, from the river Manah to the river Sankos, was allotted for Bijit Narayan and the other part, from the river Manah to the river Dikrai, was allotted for Balit Narayan. The minister of Raja Parikshit developed a mutual friendship with the viccroy and handed over Bijit Narayan to him, and since then a Mughal Nawab used to stay at Rangamati regularly. Bijit Narayan was obliged to pay tax accordingly. Balit Narayan, being afraid of the Mughal army, fled towards Darrang and he became king of the territory of Darrang. He planned to recover Kamrup from the hand of the Mughals and sought the help of the Ahom king, Pratap Simha of Assam. Pratap Simha not only received him cordially and appointed him as his tributary in Darrang as Raja Dharma Narayan but gave him full assurance of cooperation and possible help, adopted defensive measures on his boarder and conducted armed negotiations with the Mughals⁷¹.

After conquering Kamrup, the Mughal force entered into the river upto the Singri and in the north-east of Tezpur into the mouth of the river Bharali. Among the Ahoms and the Mughals, the matters became complicated on the account of commercial and economic objectives of the Mughals particularly. Their intention was to take share in rich natural resources of Assam. The most important resources of that time of Assam were – ivory, agar or aguru wood, musk, bafta tobacco, cereals, pepper etc. The Mughal traders, without facing any obstruction from the Ahoms, were carrying their business with the common people. During their mutual

71. Padshahnamah, Abul Hamid Lahori, Vol. II, PP. 64, 1872.

trade once Saiyid Abu Bakr, the most trust-worthy officer of the Mughal Viceroy of Bengal, sent Ratan Shah, a Mughal trader, to Singri for purchasing aloe wood ⁷² and he also looked after the conditions of the Ahoms during his business at Singri (in Asam). When the Ahom king got the information of the illegal trade of the unauthorized Mughal traders, he despatched the Ahom guard Seng Dhara Neog to look into the wandering of the Mughal traders and to arrest the unauthorized traders. The guard faced Ratan Shah and two other Mughal traders and obstructed them. Two trading boats loaded with cereals and tobacco were forcibly seized by the Ahom official at the mouth of the river Belsiri and two Mughal traders thereof were killed⁷³. Ratan Shah tactfully escaped to Saiyid Abu Bakr, governor of Kamrup, at Hajo and reported to him regarding the attack of the Ahom official and the death of the two Mughal traders at Singri; and the aloe wood seized by the Ahom officials. The Mughals were very much angry with such behaviour of the Ahom officials.

Saiyid Abu Bakr was entrusted with the commandership of military expedition against the Ahoms. That military expedition consisted of a flotilla of 400 war boats, about 12000 cavalry and infantry, 2000 musketeers and 1500 Mansabdars (imperial officers)⁷⁴ among whom Raja Satrajit and Jamal Khan Mankali were the most important officers. The Mughal Viceroy's most trusted officer Abu Bakr selected Bazrapur from where he with his expeditionary force started towards the Brahmaputra on the eve of the rains (1615 A.D.). After crossing the river Manah he arrived at the old capital Bamagar of Kamrup. He next move to

72. The Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol. II, H.K. Barpujari, PP.149, Gauhati – 1992.

73. Purani Asam Buranji, Hem Chandra Goswami, PP. 12, Pub. – 1977

74. The History of Bengal, J.N. Sarkar, PP. 296, Patna – 1977.

Hajo, the new headquarters, and established thanas in the surrounding region. He decided to halt during the rainy season (June – September, 1615 A.D.) at Hajo and reported his activities to the viceroy, Qasim Khan. But Qasim Khan ordered him to remove his camp from Hajo and proceed forward even during the rainy season. Abu Bakr was compelled to proceed forward the village of Kuhnata⁷⁵ situated between the kingdoms of Kamrup and Assam⁷⁶. The Mughal general with his force advanced from Kuhnata and reached Kaliabor by the Kalang and about mid November, 1615, suddenly began the war by a big assault on Kajali, directing a strategic place at the junction of the two rivers Brahmaputra and Kalang. The Ahom defenders met the Mughals at the mouth of Bharali with 3000 war boats and they were evidently surprised at the sudden attack of their enemies and were badly defeated after a short skirmish; and were compelled to retreat, leaving most of their war boats. On the otherhand, the Mughals, having taken advantage of the fog to cross their horses over the river Bharali in boats, suddenly attacked on the enemies and won the battle easily⁷⁷.

On hearing the news of defeat of the defenders, the Ahom king ordered the commanders to make all out efforts to arrest the Mughals. At the junction of the two rivers Dikrai and Brahmaputra they easily established a fort. The defence of Samdhara Fort was also strengthened with an additional large force. The Mughal army advanced upto the Brahmaputra to its junction with Bharali river just opposite the Samdhara Fort; but they failed to cross the Bharali and to attack on the enemies

75. Kuhnata was a frontier town on the Bar Nadi, midway between Srighat and Pandu, probably the same place as modern Kulhati near the Chench hills between Hajo and Kajali (The History of Bengal, J.N. Sarkar, PP. 296, Patna – 1977.)

76. Baharistan-i- Ghaybi, Mirza Nathan (Eng. Tr., by Dr. M.I. Bora), PP. 353, Gauhati-1992.

77. Purani Assam Buranji, H.C. Goswami, PP. 82, Pub. – 1977.

further. So “The Mughals encamped (there) and erected fortifications on its right bank. After a month of inactivity the Mughals captured Ahom stokade on the left bank in a vigorous assault by horsemen transported on boats, killed most defenders including Ratia Deka (son of Barchetia), and even captured Bingsa Patra, a commander. The rest of the Ahom army retreated to Samdhara”⁷⁸.

After being defeated in the first two rounds of battle the Ahom king Pratap Simha strengthened the main three commanders of the Ahom army at Samdhara at a strong reinforcement of 14000 men and ordered to make a very strong attack on the enemies. The Ahom force soon reached the Bharali and captured the stokade of the Mughals at the mouth of the Bharali. They also planned for a very careful nightattack both by land and water, acting on the contrivance of Akhek Gohain⁷⁹. On the otherhand, Abu Bakr encamped opposite to Samdhara. His place of entrenchment was sandy and not at all protected. He did not take the trouble of clearing the jungles around them. He under estimated the strength of the Ahom army and passed his times in negligence and indolence. Moreover, his subordinates were unhappy with his haughty behaviour, arrogance, self conceit, tactlessness and military incompetence, which, according to Baharistan – i – Ghaybi, entranged them and so they did not cooperate with him⁸⁰. As a result of which the Ahom army took the advantage of the weakness of the Mughal position and surrounded their encampment clearing the jungles. A strong Ahom army of 300000 and 700 war elephants attacked on the negligent Mughals surprisingly in the last part of a night about mid of January, 1616 A.D. The Ahom army stormed the fortified Mughal

78. Ibid, PP. 83-84.

79. The Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol. II, H.K.Barpujari, PP. 151, Gauhati-1992.

80. Baharistan-i-Ghaybi, Mirza Nathan (Eng. Tr. by Dr. M.I.Bora), PP. 395-96, Gauhati-1992.

camps, destroyed the Mughal arsenal, captured the artillery and elephants. No Mughal could escape without any fight from the surroundings of the Ahoms. Saiyid Abu Bakr, trying to escape pellmel bare-headed and bare-footed paid the penalty for his negligence and arrogance, by his life, being killed by the Ahom army⁸¹. Most of the Mughal naval officers were wounded and captured by the Ahom navy except Saiyid Masud, Sona Ghazi and Raja Satrajit who escaped in their own boats. Saiyid Hakim and Saiyid Kasu, though they abstained from coming to assist the commander, at the last stage were joined by Allah Khan Dakhini, Jamal Khan Mangli and Lachmi Rajput, coming out from the encampment, and they all fought very boldly, but in vain. They were also killed. In this war the Mughals had to suffer a gigantic loss that, according to Baharistan – i – Ghaybi, about 5000 Mughals were killed, 9000 were made captives, 3000 came out half-dead and kept themselves concealed in the jungles and tried to escape, and about two thousand of the rest were rescued by a relief expedition sent up from Hajo. The Ahoms having obtained such a big victory, took the captives to their king⁸².

C. Second Round of Ahom - Mughal Conflict.

The great disaster of Mughals with the Ahom in 1615 made the Mughal imperial officers of Kamrup compelled to be serious and conscious about the Ahom army and navy. So the Mughals pursued a cautious and defensive policy. They established some imperial thanas in Kamrup and the faithful officers with some

81. Ibid

82. Ibid, pp. 398-99.

additional forces were posted there. Yusuf Barlas was posted at Barnagar with a force of one hundred horsemen and two hundred matchlock-men. Mirza Salih Arghun was posted at Dhamdhama with a great force of two hundred and fifty horsemen and four hundred matchlock-men. Mir Abdur Razzak Shirazi and Seth Hridayram were posted to the thana of Pandu with one hundred horsemen, five hundred matchlock-men and the whole fleet of the zamindars. Shaykh Ibrahim was ordered to observe attentively the revenue and settlement affairs staying within the territory of Kamrup⁸³. On the other hand the Ahom king Pratap Simha set himself to strengthening his kingdom by establishing the forts at strategic points, building embanked roads and requesting and instigating all the neighbouring rajas to take his side against the Mughals⁸⁴.

We have already mentioned that Balit Nrayan was installed as tributary Raja of Darrang with the title of Dharma Narayan by the Ahom King Pratap Simha. Pratap Simha, with a big troop of Ahom army, advanced towards Hajo in November, 1617, accompanied by Raja Dharma Narayan and some other chiefs who made their submission to him as he came forward. With the help of these chiefs Pratap Simha first attacked the Mughals and subdued at Pandu, which he fortified within a short time. The Mughals faced the Ahoms at Agiathuri, but they were defeated and came back to Hajo. At that time Abdus Salam, the governor of Kamrup, used to stay at Hajo, who had no spare force there to face the enemies. So he reported the state affairs to Ibrahim Khan Fath-i-Jang, the then Mughal viceroy of Bengal, and asked to sent reinforcements for help. Within a short time

83. Ibid, PP. 403.

84. The History of Bengal, J.N. Sarkar, PP. 328, Patna – 1973.

Muhiuddin, brother of Abdus Salam, reached with one thousand horse, 1000 matchlock-men and over 200 war boats and war sloops⁸⁵.

In the best Persian chronicles Padshahnamah and Baharistan-i-Ghaybi, it is mentioned that Pratap Simha ordered the Ahom army to occupy the position which they already had left. A few number of brave Mughal horse soldiers pursued some of the hot-headed commanders of Ahom army to Hajo. At that time the Ahom army attacked on Hajo from the front side and the local subjects, under the leadership of Dharma Narayan and Jadu (also called as Chutia or a Kachari), attacked from the back sides. But their attack failed and they were defeated in several wars with the Mughals and were compelled to retreat to Srighat. The Mughals, closely following the Ahoms killed a large number of about 11000 soldiers and wounded more than 10000 who fled away half dead. They also imprisoned the Burha Gohain and captured many ships and guns and 9 elephants⁸⁶. After this disaster, Pratap Simha gathered his scattered forces at Samdhara and beheaded Rung Rung Chetia, Bihua Bora, Galmani and many officers of Saikias and Hazarikas who were responsible for defeat. Three Gohains were also punished for neglecting his order. So he made great change in his army and navy. He handed over the war boats to the Barbaruas and Bar Phukans from the Gohains. The king appointed Mumai Tamuli Bar Barua in Dakkhin Kul and Piksai Chetia Bar Phukan in Uttar Kul. The Gohains were ordered to stay at Samdhara with their subordinates⁸⁷.

85. A history of Assam, Sir E. Gait, PP. 109, Gauhati, 1962.

86. Baharistan-i- Ghaybi, Mirza Nathan (Eng. Tr., by Dr. M.I. Bora), PP. 496 - 97, Gauhati-1992.

87. Ahomar Din, Hiteswar Barbarua, PP. 114, Gauhati – 1981.

In another encounter, the Mughal army was defeated by Dharma Narayan who was assisted by the Ahom force on the south bank of the Brahmaputra. A large number of Mughal army were killed and arrested and the rest fled to Hajo⁸⁸. Dharma Narayan with the many other chiefs again submitted themselves to Pratap Simha.

In such predicament of the both sides negotiations were tried to be made by Lakhmi Narayan, the Raja of Koch Bihar. With the consent of Mughal Viceroy of Dhaka, he sent one Biru Kazi to Pratap Simha to offer his services as mediator. Raja Satrajit, thanadar of Pandu, was no doubt treacherous and his loyalty was always doubtful to the Mughals. He secretly instigated the Ahoms to attack on the Mughals disclosing their secret plans, and he sometimes himself abstained from the payment of the stipulated tribute to the governor. This Satrajit confined Biru Kazi and very unfortunately the news of the effort to open negotiations reached him. He did not intend to be a peace agreement between the Mughals and the Ahoms as he was afraid of his position if it was done. Accordingly he sent his proposal of friendship to Langi Bar Phukan requested to accept him as his friend. He exchanged presents with Pratap Simha and sent his five year old son to pay him homage⁸⁹. The Mughal Viceroy again sent fresh messengers for negotiations. Langi Bar Phukan misguided the king and misrepresented the object of their visit, and accordingly the Mughal messengers, without meeting the Ahom king, were sent back.

The news of mutual understanding and friendship between Langi Bar Phukan and Raja Satrajit reached Pratap Simha after the king being doubtful to them, and he was also informed about the Bar Phukan's duplicity in the matter of

88. Baharistan-i- Ghaybi, Mirza Nathan (Eng. Tr., by Dr. M.I. Bora), PP. 480, Gauhati-1992.

89. A History of Assam, S.E. Gait, PP. 111, Gauhati – 1984.

the messengers from the Mughal Viceroy. Then the king sentenced the Bar Phukan to death and appointed Neog in his place. As a result of whole matter, the war came to an end⁹⁰.

Abdul Hamid Lahori, the author of Padshahnamah, has blamed Raja Satrajit for his conspiracy for breaking down the relations between the Ahoms and the Mughals. The author also describes that Satrajit approached Dharma Narayan on the appointment of Ibrahim Khan as a viceroys of Bengal and instigated him to be benefited by the change of the governor and advised him to expand his boundary so that he could include the south-eastern parganas of Goalpara district. Some other occurrences were also responsible for their friction. The Ahom king gave shelter to the Mughal defaulting fugitive officer Harikesh of Nowmati and refused to give back the fugitive, alleging that the viceroy had similarly given shelter to the fugitive from his kingdom. In the Ahom territory some Mughal subjects were killed illegally whom Pratap Simha disclaimed. Mainly these causes led to a fresh war between the two sides⁹¹.

D. Third Round of Ahom - Mughal Conflict

In the meantime, on the urgent appeal of Abdus Salam, the governor of Kamrup, Ibrahim Khan, the then Viceroy of Bangal, despatched to his help a big reinforcement of 1000 horses, 1000 matchlock-men, 200 war sloops and boats and a large number of ammunition, weapons and money under the leadership of Zainul

90. Ibid.

91. Ibid, PP. 112.

Abidin⁹². But they were compelled to halt at Ghoraghat owing to heavy rains and strong currents on the river Brahmaputra till the close of the rains. Muhammad Salih with a small force only arrived at Hajo and advanced towards Pandu for assistance of Satrajit. The most treacherous Raja Satrajit detained Muhammad Salih out of Pandu area and being pretended to be defeated, surrendered Pandu to the Ahom army towards the end of April, 1636 A.D., and came back to Hajo with his force. The Ahom army being instigated by Satrajit advancing further halted at Agiathuri and set up there two fortified out posts. In the meantime long awaited big reinforcement under Zainul Abidin arrived from Ghoraghat and then it was arranged that Abdus Salam would stay in occupation of Hajo, while Zainul Abidin would drive away the Ahoms as far as Srighat in order to keep them at bay. A war took place where the Ahoms were defeated with the loss of four war ships and a few cannons. The commander of the Ahom troops was shot dead and their outposts were promptly destroyed by the Mughals. After two days they were driven away from Agiathuri by the advancing Mughals and they, crossing the river Brahmaputra, took shelter in Srighat fort, which was also besieged by the Mughals under Zainul Abidin. For three days the Mughals retired to a stockade in a neighbouring hill, but on the arrival of twenty war sloops with additional troops, they renewed the attack on the Ahoms and they were forced to retreat, due to the shortage of ammunition, leaving 10 war boats and 4 transport boats to the Mughals⁹³. As far as the news of retreat reached Pratap Simha, he at once despatched strong reinforcements on land

92. Ibid, PP. 113.

93. Padshahnamah, Abdul Hamid Lahori, Vol. II, PP. 73, 1872.

and water. The arrival of the new reinforcements encouraged the Ahom demoralized army to prepare for a fresh war and once more advanced. This time the Ahoms were favoured by nature. They launched a naval attack on the Mughals at Srighat and destroyed co-operation between the army and the fleet during any attack. But the weak minded governor of Kamrup, Abdus Salam, called back the energetic commanding officer Zainul Abidin from Srighat to Hajo. So Zainul Abidin came back to Hajo, leaving the fleet in charge of Muhammad Salih, Satrajit and Majlis Bayazid at Srighat.⁹⁴

The Ahoms, therefore, exercised the golden opportunity of the absence of the energetic officer commanding at Srighat. The same night the Ahom commanders launched a strong attack with nearly 500 ships and took the Mughal fleet by surprise. According to preplan the traitor Raja Satrajit retired with his fleet to Sualkuchi as soon as the attack began. According to Padshahnamah, this disaster of Mughals took place owing to the treachery of Raja Satrajit, who is accused of having informed the Ahoms of the departure of Zainul Abidin. The Ahom army gained decisive victory over the Mughals. They killed Muhammad Salih and made Majlis Bayazid prisoner. The greater part of the fleet was captured by the victors. This disastrous naval defeat compelled the Mughals to retreat hastily to Sualkhuchi with their remaining ships and the Ahoms, on the other hand, regained their fortifications at Agiathuri⁹⁵.

After a great success at Srighat, Pratap Simha planned to subdue Kamrup

94. Ibid.

95. Ibid, PP. 73 – 76.

from the Mughals. The traitor Raja Satrajit escaped with his ships. The Bar Phukan and Bali Narayan with a large number of Ahom and Kachari troops advanced from Srighat and Pandu towards Hajo. The Ahom army blocked all the ways of provisions and communications with the Mughals at Hajo. The most awaited Mughal reinforcements had reached Hajo till that time. In several battles the Mughals became unsuccessful and Abdus Salam, governor of Kamrup, with his brother as well as considerable portion of his forces was arrested and placed before the Ahom king Pratap Simha, who ordered to expel them from the country. Other leaders were settled at Silpani with land and slaves and the common soldiers were distributed among the Baruas, Phukans and Ahom nobles. But the valiant Zainul Abidin and his handful of followers made a gallant attempt to attack on the enemy, but all of them were killed. The Ahom army gained a great quantity of booty – 200 guns, about 700 horses and 5000 swords and numerous pearls and jewels. All the buildings of bricks constructed by the Mughals were totally destroyed at Hajo⁹⁶. In a great part of the Goalpara district the Mughals were captured by Chandra Narayan, son of Raja Parikshit Narayan, with the assistance of Ahom troops sent by Pratap Simha, and Chandra Narayan established himself at Hatisalah in Karaibari, on the south bank of the river Brahmaputra. Many Mughal zaminders of north bank also submitted themselves to the Ahom army.

96. Ibid, PP. 77.

E. Fourth Round of Ahom – Mughal Conflict.

Towards the end of December, 1636 A.D., the most long – expected reinforcements of 1500 horses, 4000 matchlock-men and large stores of grain, ammunition, weapons and money under the commendation of Mir Zainuddin Ali (brother of Islam Khan, former Viceroy of Bengal) with assistance of Allah Yar Khan, advanced to Dakkhinkul (south bank of Brahmaputra)⁹⁷. The disasters of Mughal army in Kamrup did not dismay him and immediately adopted energetic measures to re-establish Mughal supremacy in lower Assam. He planned to attack first on Chandra Narayan, the master of Karaibari with head-quarters at Hatisalah, and marched against him with the big force. Chandra Narayan, on hearing the news of advancing of the Mughal army, fled without waiting to be attacked to his former head-quarters in Solmari parganah⁹⁸. The Mughals easily re-occupied the south – western frontier of the Dakkhinkul during January-February, 1637 A.D. Then they defeated Mardangi, father in law of Chandra Narayan. All the zamindars on the south bank of the river Brahmaputra themselves, in fact, submitted to the Mughal force. Next, the Mughal army retraced their steps to Dhubri where they captured the traitor Raja Satrajit and some convoy ships. Raja Satrajit was transported to Jahangir Nagar where he was executed for his treachery⁹⁹.

In the meantime the Ahoms gathered a big force including their Koch auxiliaries and they took up strong position at Jogighopa and Hirapur on the

97. The History of Bengal, J.N. Sarkar, PP. 329, Patna – 1973.

98. Ibid, PP. 330.

99. Padshahnamah, Abdul Hamid Lahori, Vol. II, PP. 70 – 77, 1872.

opposite side of Brahmaputra with their fleet being anchored in mid-stream in between the two forts. Several fights took place between the two groups in different places and the Ahoms, being totally defeated, were compelled to retreat. Chandra Narayan was also killed in one of those fights. Then the Mughal army crossing the river Manah, encamped Chandan Kot for the rainy season

The Mughals' next target was Bali Narayan. Accordingly Muhammad Zaman, the Faujdar of Sylhet, was sent with a strong force of cavalry, paiks and matchlock-men to expel the Ahom army from the south bank. The Ahoms losing their stockade on this bank, retired to Srighat and Bali Narayan with his army departed from Barnagar and set up his encampment at jungly and hilly Chotri in north western border of the then Kamrup.

The Mughal army also, recovering Barnagar towards April, 1637 A.D., marched in search of Bali Narayan to Bishnupur and entranced there to await the stop of the rainy season and to arrange their war materials¹⁰⁰. Being alarmed at the news of encampment of the Mughals, Bali Narayan with reinforcement, which brought his strength upto forty thousand soldiers, marched from Chotri to Kalapani opposite the Mughal encampment at Bishnupur and set up entrenchments. He made several preplanned night attacks on the Mughals preventing the transport of all food supplies by means of the Palisades. But no regular fight took place until the close of the rains. As soon as the rain stop Bali Narayan planned to strike a serious blow on the Mughal army before the main Mughal army with the force of Muhammad

100. Ibid, PP. 82

Zaman had arrived at Bishnupur. Bali Narayan with the help of extra reinforcement of 20000 from Pandu, attacked on the Mughals in the night of 30th October, 1637 A.D.¹⁰¹. They forcefully captured two stockades of the Mughals, but in the next morning Muhammad Zaman with his army drove the Ahoms out and took in succession of fifteen important stockades of the Ahoms. With the loss of more than 4000 men including some chiefs as well as a large number of guns and weapons the Ahom army withdrew to Barpeta fort¹⁰². Now the Mughal soldiers united their scattered forces and moved to the south. They launched a heavy three - fold attack on Bali Narayan and his forces. A keen fight on land and water took place, which lasted only about four hours. The Ahom army were totally defeated; several chiefs and soldiers were killed and a few captured. The rest of the Ahom army escaped to Srighat where the king Pratap Simha was encamped with his fleet and Bali Narayan retreated to his territory of Darrang. But the Mughal army following Bali Narayan from hill to hill arrived at last at Singri and they easily occupied Darrang. Bali Narayan, according to some traditions, died of disease along with his two sons and followers. Then the Mughals recovered Hajo and Agiathuri from the Ahoms and advanced towards Srighat. The Ahoms jumped with a combined operation of army and navy on the Mughals; but in vain. During a Mughal artillery operation the Ahom outward fortifications were captured, while the Mughal fleet crushed the Ahom warships. About 500 sloops and 300 guns fell into the hands of the Mughals and Srighat was occupied by the victors. Next, the Kajali fort was

101. The History of Bengal, J.N. Sarkar, PP. 330, Patna – 1973.

102. Padshahnamah, Abdul Hamid Lahori, Vol. II, PP. 84 – 85, 1872.

captured by the Mughals and the Ahom army fled to Kaliabor, which was the rallying point for the Ahom army at that time¹⁰³. On hearing the news on the total defeat of the Ahom armies, the Ahom king Pratap Simha, was so much alert that he fully prepared for flight to the interior of the hills and removed the valuable things from the capital. He killed the Mughal chiefs who were captured in the previous fights, "During the next three months, the Muhammadans consolidated their rule in Kamrup and effected a financial settlement of the country. Mir Nurullah of Harat was appointed thanadar, with his headquarters at Gauhati¹⁰⁴.

Pran Narayan, the Raja of Koch Bihar, with a Mughal force advanced eastwards up to the confluence of the Brahmaputra and the Bharali and encamped at the mouth of the river Bharali in the month of October, 1638 A.D. The Ahom army also encamped on the opposite bank of the river and attempted to teach the Mughals a lesson. But the Ahom frontier governors, finding all the Ahom resources exhausted during the twelve years' unsuccessful war with the Mughals, advised their king to make peace with the Mughals. Later on a treaty was, therefore, negotiated in between the Ahoms and the Mughals early in February, 1639 A.D. Under the treaty the Barnadi, on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, and the Asurar Ali, on the south, were marked as boundary between the Ahom and the Mughal territories¹⁰⁵. The Ahom king recognized Mughal supremacy in Kamrup for the first time and agreed not to attack on the Mughal territory. The Mughal Faujdar also

103. The History of Bengal, J.N. Sarkar, PP. 330 - 331, Patna - 1973.

104. A History of Assam, Sir E. Gait, PP. 118, Gauhati - 1984.

105. The History of Bengal, J.N. Sarkar, PP. 331, Patna - 1973.

acknowledged the independent authority of Ahom king. From this treaty Gauhati totally came under the Mughals and trade and commerce began to establish between the two territories. A revenue settlement was made with the landlords of Kamrup.

F. Invasion of Assam Under Mir Jumla.

The early times of Aurangzeb's reign showed the expansion of the empire in many directions and the first great war of his reign was the invasion of Assam. The Bihar governor Daud Khan first annexed Palama in 1662 A.D., and the conquest of Assam took place in the next. Early in the 16th century a kingdom was founded by a mongloid soldier in Koch Bihar, north of Bengal. Lakshmi Narayan was the third king of this dynasty (c.1584 – 1622) who professed allegiance to the emperor Akbar. From this dynasty a young branch had been installed over its eastern districts or Kamrup, i.e. the country between the rivers Sankosh and Barnadi. The Muslim chroniclers called this territory as Koch-Hajo. In 1612 A.D., taking the advantage of a contest between the two branches, the Mughal army conquered Koch-Hajo and annexed it, but this brought them ultimately into conflict with the Ahoms. These Ahoms were a branch of the Shan race, who had crossed the Patkai range in the 13th century and established a kingdom of their own over the eastern and central Assam. They were the worshippers of the demons, expert in building stockades, playing boats and expert in night attacks against their enemy. They ate beef and fowl and drinking spirituous liquor. Their society was formed on a feudal basis, under a number of official nobles who cultivated their estate by slave labours. Their army consisted entirely of infantry, stiffened with elephants; but during their

wars with Bengal they had learnt the use of firearms¹⁰⁶. In 1657 the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan fell sick, and the Raja of Koch Bihar (Pran Narayan) took the advantage of confusion caused by the wars and Shuja's absence from Bengal with his retired land and naval forces. He sought allies for its liberation among other Koch Chiefs and shaked off Mughal vassalage. He advanced with his forces upto Goalpara. The Faujdar of Kamrup Mir Lutfullah tried to prevent him, but the main portion of his troops had been called back by Suja. Therefore, Pran Narayan's force could easily defeat the Mughal army and made them retreated to Gauhati.

The Ahom king Jayadhwaj Simha, becoming alert, took the advantage of the Mughal dissension and with a strong force advanced towards Gauhati. On hearing the news of arrival of Ahoms the Faujdar Mir Lutfullah Shiraji fled by boat to Dhakka¹⁰⁷. The Ahoms occupied, including Gauhati, the south bank of the river Brahmaputra, while Pran Narayan's army occupied the north bank. Pran Narayan's proposal of partition of Mughal Kamrup and of an Ahom-Koch alliance against the Muhamadans was totally rejected by the Ahoms King Jayadwaj Simha. Then the Ahoms marched against the Koch army, defeated them twice and drove them out across the river Sankosh and occupied Parikshit's Kingdom of Kamrup and also occupied Dhubri from Mirza Jawana. Jayadhwaj Simha took the loyal Koch Prince Jay Narayan under his protection and in about July – August, 1659 A.D., declared him as the king of Kamrup with the capital at Ghila Vijaypur¹⁰⁸. Even the Ahom king refused to allow the Mughals to resort to the local markets and brought many

106. History of Aurangzeb, Vol. III, J.N. Sarkar, PP. 97 – 98, Calcutta – 1928.

107. Ibid, PP. 100 – 101.

108. The Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol. II, H.K. Barpujari, PP. 169, Gauhati – 1992.

Mughal captives to Assam (i.e. present upper Assam), and settled them in different places of his kingdom¹⁰⁹.

After the flight of Shuja from Dhakka, Aurangzeb appointed his general, Mir Jumla, as the governor of Bengal in June, 1660, and ordered to march to Koch Bihar and Assam to Punish the Rajas of those two territories, who had raided and seized Mughal territory in North Bengal and Kamrup during the latest civil war. Leaving Dhakka on 1st November, 1661 with a very strong force of 12000 horses, and 30000 foot, and a vast flotilla of war boats of different kinds numbering at least of 323, Mir Jumla with Dilir Khan entered the Koch capital and captured it without a blow, as the Koch Raja with his officers had vacated it in fright (13th December, 1661 A.D.)¹¹⁰. The Koch Kingdom was annexed to the Mughal empire and in 4th January, 1662, Mir Jumla set out for the invasion of Assam. Mughal army of Mir Jumla had to under unspeakable hardship in making their way through the dense forest and crossing innumerable streams, but the local chiefs shared in all their sufferings. The Ahom army offered a feeble resistance and kept retreating upto the Brahmaputra, so that the imperialists captured the successive forts on the way - Jogighopa, Gauhati, Srighat (Saraighat), Pandu, Beltola, Kajali, Samdhara and Simtagarh. On 3rd March, 1662, Mir Jumla annihilated the enemy's naval power in a naval fight. On 17th March, Mir Jumla entered the deserted Ahom capital Gargaon and took the large number of spoils of 82 elephants, 300000 rupees, 675 pieces of artillery, 1343 camel swivels, 6750 matchlocks, 1200 Ramchangis, 340 mounds

109. The life of Mir Jumla - Dr. J.N. Sarkar, PP. 287 - 288, Delhi - 1979.

Purani Asom Buranji - Hem Chandra Goswami, PP. 115 - 117, Pub. - 1977.

110. The life of Mir Jumla (The General of Aurangzeb), Dr. J.N. Sarkar, PP. 287-288, Delhi - 1979.

of gunpowder, over 1000 odd boats, and 173 stores of paddy¹¹¹. The Ahom king Jayadhvaj Simha (r. 1648 – 1663 A.D.) and his nobles fled far away to Chorai Khorong in Namrup on the outskirts of the Naga hills and Mir Jumla could not to conclude any treaty with the Ahoms. Mughal army used stay at Gargaon, Mathurapur, Gajpur, Dergaon and some other outposts, which they had established soon after their occupation on the Ahom capita¹¹².

During the rainy season, from May to October the whole country flooded and the movement of the soldiers by land became too impossible, the imperial outposts were isolated and Mughal soldiers had to live in Assam in a deplorable state of seize. Due to the lack of proper food thousands of cavalry horses and cattle died. Shihabuddin Muhammad Talish, the Mughal new reporter of Mir Jumla rightly remarked on that condition, - "A similar case had never happened before in the history of Delhi. Here were 12000 horses and numerous infantry locked in for six months, prevented by the rains from continuing operations, yet scarcely attacked by the enemies that surrounded them. Nor did during this time provisions arrive. The Amirs turned that eyes longingly to Delhi and the soldiers yearned for their wives and children"¹¹³. The Ahoms, on 20th May, 1662, took the advantage of the inclemency of the season to cut off communication and supplies, to seize and kill all invaders from the main force and to capture the Mughal army by repeated surprises at Gajpur. All the attacks made by the Ahoms, were finally defeated by the exertion of every man in the garrison¹¹⁴.

111. The History of Bengal, J.N. Sarkar, PP. 347, Patna – 1973.

112. Atan Burha gohain and His Times. S.K. Bhuyan, PP. 26, Guwahati – 1992.

113. Tarikh – e – Ashan, Shihabuddin Talish, PP. 86, Ccutta – 1847.

114. The History of Bengal, J.N. Sarkar, PP. 348, Patna – 1973.

In August of the same year, a terrible epidemic broke out in Mir Jumla's camp at Mathurapur. Fever and flux carried off hundreds of lives daily reducing the army to nearly a quarter of its strength. No suitable diet, medicine and comfort were being supplied to the sick. The whole Assam was infected by that fever and flux. Among the Assamese general people and army as many as 230000 died and dead bodies could not be given any proper burial. The corpses floated on the water of Brahmaputra in thousands and the water of the river, mainly, became so infected that the Mughal army at Lakhau could not use it without boiling¹¹⁵.

Towards the end of October (1662), the land began to be dry and Mir Jumla now resumed the offensive. On the otherhand large quantities of provisions were sent from Lakhau to Gargaon by land and water under escort and on seeing this plenty of food, the joy of the Mughals at Gargaon knew no bound. On the 16th November, Mir Jumla himself set out to drive the Ahoms off and hunted their king out of Namrup. After taking the entrenchments of Baduli Phukan, one of the Ahom commanders, at the north east of Gargaon he arrived at the Dihing (20th November, 1662) where he fell seriously ill and could go only on palanquin. That was the beginning of his fever of which he was to die later on. But he continued to lead the Mughal army. Then he marched eastwards by the way of Salaguri to Tipam. Large number of his armies threatened to enter the pestilential climate of the hills of Namrup to where the Ahom king with some of his nobles having again fled¹¹⁶. There the Ahoms renewed their night attacks on the Mughals, but in vain. Mir Jumla timely sent help to his commanders. To enable Raja Sujan Singh in the

115. The life of Mir Jumla - Dr. J.N. Sarkar, PP. 321 - 322, Delhi - 1979.

116. History of Aurangzib, Vol. III, J.N. Sarkar, PP. 114, Calcutta-1928.

eastern trenches, he despatched his own attendants under Abul Hasan, and Sujjan Singh drove back the Ahoms. While Dilir Khan in the west replaced the Ahoms to Danga Nala. Such Mughal victory so unnerved the Ahom king and his nobles that they gave up their plan of secret night attacks¹¹⁷. Baduli Phukan surrendered himself to the Mughals on the 30th November and Mir Jumla made him the Emperor's viceroy for Eastern Assam. Most of the Ahom nobles followed the path of Baduli Phukan. At that time Raja Jayadhwaj Simha was left helpless and alone in the pestilential hills of Namrup. Baduli Phukan, on the other hand, with three to four thousand local men accompanied the Mughal van in an attempt to kill his former king¹¹⁸. But on the 10th December, Mir Jumla was seized by a severe burning fever and became too weak. Still he persisted the Mughal army in advancing, and he with the whole army reached Tipam on the 18th December, 1662 A.D. But the entire Mughal army refused to enter Chorai Khorong hills of Namrup where the Ahom king was hiding and whose very air was said to be fatal for all forms of life¹¹⁹.

On the Ahom side Atan Buragohain, the prime minister of the Ahom king, himself realized by heart that the continuance of hostilities would be disastrous to all the Ahoms. Raja Jayadhwaj Simha became very nervous and disappointed for the grave situation to the country. He lamented over his critical situation before Atan Burhagohain, saying, - "God, the great dispenser, has deprived me of everything". He also asked his prime minister to procure the withdrawal of the

117. The life of Mir Jumla - Dr. J.N. Sarkar, PP. 321 - 322, New Delhi - 1979.

118. History of Aurangzib, Vol. III, J.N. Sarkar, PP. 114 - 115, Calcutta-1928.

119. Ibid.

Mughal army from Assam by offering them my appropriate compensation and tribute; otherwise, he very sadly declared, he would be compelled to go back to Nara, the ancient homeland of the Ahoms. At that situation Atan Burhagohain tackled the whole situation and consoled the king¹²⁰.

Accordingly the Ahom prime minister proposed the peace proposal to the Mughal general Mir Jumla. On the other side Dilir Khan quieted the Mughal army and at the same time he counselled Mir Jumla to accept the peace proposal. Mir Jumla was also compelled to make the peace treaty with the Ahom king. The Ahom king Jayadhwaj Simha agreed with following terms of the treaty of peace at Ghilajharighat, Tipam on the 23rd January, 1663 (9th Magh, 1584 Saka) ¹²¹.

The terms were as follow:¹²²

1. Raja Jayadhwaj Simha agreed to rule as a vassal king of the emperor, to send an Ahom noble as ambassador with a contingent of paiks to the court of the Mughal Nawab at Gauhati. He would send at once his daughter with worthy dowry and the sons of the Tipam Raja to the Imperial Harem.
2. The king would pay a huge indemnity of 20,000 tolas of gold, 120000 tolar of silver (i.e. ruppees) and 20 dressed elephants for the Emperor (besides 15 and 5 elephants for Mir Jumla and Dilir Khan respectively). Moreover, during the next 12 months he agreed to pay three lakhs of tolas of silver (or 3 lakhs rupees) and 90 elephants in three quarterly installments.

120. Atan Buragohain and His Times, S.K. Bhuyan, PP. 30, Gauhati – 1992.

121. Ibid.

122. (a) The life of Mir Jumla, Dr. J.N. Sarkar, PP. 331 – 332, Delhi-1979.

(b) History of Aurangib, J.N. Sarkar, PP. 115 – 116, Calcutta – 1928

(c) Atan Buragohain and His Times. S.K. Bhuyan, PP. 30, Gauhati–1992.

(d) The History of Bengal, J.N. Sarkar, PP. 349 – 350, Patna – 1973.

(e) Tarikh – e – Asham, Shihabuddin Talish, PP. 138 – 143, Calcutta-1847.

3. Pending the full payment of the indemnity, one son each of the Bura Gohain, the Bar Gohain, the Gar Gaonia Phukan and the Bar Patra Phujkan, the four pillars of the Ahom kingdom, were to be held by the Nawabs as hostages.
4. The Ahom king would pay an annual tribute of 20 elephants in future at Gauhati.
5. There was considerable expansion of the eastern limits of the Mughal empire. All the territory west of the Bharali river on the north bank of the Brahmaputra, and west of Kallangriver on the south, was to be annexed to the Mughal empire. Thus the Mughals would get more than half of the province of Darrang, rich in elephants.
6. The Ahom king would release all the captives carried off from the Mughal dominion in Kamrup and also the imprisoned family (wife and children) of Baduli Phukan whom the Ahom kin had thrown into prison.

On the 5th January, 1663, the Ahom Raja sent his princess Ramani Ghabharu¹²³ (also called Nangchen Gabharu), the hostages, 20,000 tolas of gold, 40,000 tolas of silver and 10 well-trained elephants to the Mughal camp, and the Raja promised to send the balance of 30 elephants before the Mughal army's arrival at Lakhau¹²⁴. After the conclusion of the treaty, Mir Jumla issued the order to his army to return to Bengal on the 10th January, 1663. Mir Jumla himself retreated by palki directly from Tipam to Lakhau, without going to Garhgaon, and arrived at Lakhau on 22nd January. He travelled from Lakhau to Kaliabor by boat and again

123. Atan Buragohain and His Times, S.K. Bhuyan, PP. 31, Ghy – 1992.

124. The life of Mir Jumla - Dr. J.N. Sarkar, PP. 321 - 332, New Delhi – 1979.

by palki from Kaliabor to Kajali Mukh. On 11th February (1663) he reached Pandu and on 28th February reached Baritala where he became more seriously infected by his burning fever. The doctors being helpless suggested a change from Baritala to Khizrpur. On the 31st March, 1663 (Wednesday, 2nd Ramzan, 1073 A.H.) the great noble as well as the great commander in chief of the Mughal army died on board of a boat, 4 miles above Khizrpur¹²⁵. The main body of his force marched down the south bank of Brahmaputra and throughout this long journey through Assam and Kamrup, the Mughals had never to face the Assamese.

The Ahom king sent a letter to the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb through Mir Jumla admitting his act of hostility to the Mughal territories, and reiterating his acceptance of the terms and conditions of the treaty of Ghilajharighat. Aurangzeb also, in reply, sent a letter to the Ahom king with presents, which included a robe¹²⁶.

G. INVASION OF ASSAM UNDER RAJA RAM SINGH

The Mughal continued to hold their acquisitions in that part of Assam, which the treaty of peace had given to them, for four years after the retreat of Mir Jumla. The river Kajali on the south bank of Brahmaputra and the river Bansbari on the north bank of Brahmaputra remain their eastern most boundary till 1667 A.D. The promised war indemnity was paid in full, though it was late. The Emperor and Dilir Khan had the correspondance of very friendly terms with the Ahom king

125 Ibid, PP. 336.

126. Atan Burhagohain and His Times. S.K. Bhuyan, PP. 41, Gauhati – 1992.

and nobles and presents were exchanged between the two royal courts during the first four years after the treaty¹²⁷.

But the vigorous Ahom king Chakradhwaj Simha, against the advice of his nobles, determined for war and made preparations for it by developing his relations secretly with the neighbouring rajas including the Raja of Koch Bihar. Accordingly he renewed the war and recovered his lost territory, and even he occupied Gauhati in the beginning of November, 1667. A large quantities of arms, horses and otherspoils fell into the hands of the Ahoms. The Ahoms imprisoned large numberof Mughals, including several officers, and later the captives were massacred. The Mughal frontier was pushed back to Manas river and Gauhati became the seat of the Ahom Viceroy. At Srighat (saraighat)and Pandu the Ahoms established forts to defend their enemies¹²⁸. Nex season the Mughals marched against the Ahoms under Raja Indraman, an imperial officer, upto Srighat , but the Ahoms pushed them back to Dhubri (Rangamati).

For a period of nine years a continuous desultory took place between the Muhammadans (Mughals) and the Assamese (Ahoms). In December, 1667, on hearing the news of the loss of Gauhati, the Emperor Aurangzeb sent Raja Ram Singh, the son of Raja Jai Singh of Amber, with a large Rajput contingent to recover Mughal Kamrup from the Assamese. But after seven years of desultory and ineffectual war fare (1669 – 1676), Raja Ram Singh was called back to Delhi by the Emperor. Ram Singh himself had not his heart in the work.

127. History of Aurangzib, Vol. J.N. Sarkar, PP. 120, Calcutta – 1928.

128. Ibid. PP. 122.

After Chakradhwaj Simha for about a period of eleven years (1670 – 1681) there were no less than seven kings in Assam, none of whom was active and patriotic. They were all controlled and led by the ambitious and unscrupulous Ahom nobles who fought with each other for supreme power and self-interests. During this period the patriotic feelings of the Assamese people became so weak that many of them deserted to the Muhammadans¹²⁹. An Ahom noble sold Gauhati to the Mughals in February, 1679, only to be recovered by the Ahom king two years later. But when Shaysta Khan became the governor of Bengal, the Ahom king made his peace by offering submission and half a million rupees. In the later century the Mughal army annexed the southern and eastern portions of the kingdom including the districts of Rangpur and western part of Kamrup.

In August, 1681 Gadadhar Simha ascended to the Ahom throne and during his reign the Ahoms became once more able to present a united face against their external enemies. The Ahoms, finally, defeated the Mughal army both in the north bank as well as in the south bank of the river Brahmaputra in 1682. According to Assamese chronicles, the Assamese drove out the Mughal army up to Itakhuli and Rangamati and then to Bengal. Due to the long desultory in the whole Mughal territory of Delhi on the Mughal viceroy of Bengal could not send any help to the hard - pressed Mughals in Gauhati and other places.

129. Ibid, PP. 124.

3. Impact of Pre – Mughals and Mughals on Assamese Language.

We find in every Muslim invasion of Assam and Ahom – Mughal war that when the Muslim soldiers were defeated, a large number of the Muslim soldiers, whether they were Turks, Afghans or Mughals, were made captives in the fight¹³⁰. These captive Muslim soldiers were not, later on, killed, but were engaged in different works and they were settled in the territory. During the expedition of Muhammad bin Bakhtyar to Tibet (1206 A.D.), the Raja of Kamrupa captured a large number of Muslim soldiers whom the Raja settled in his kingdom¹³¹. In 1228 A.D., Nasiruddin of Gauda, after killing the Kamrupa king Prithu, appointed a tributary king on the throne of Kamrupa¹³². From that time Muslims of outside Assam started to come to Assam whether as preachers of Islamic faith or invitees of the local kings. We have already mentioned that Tughril Khan for the first time constructed a mosque at Kamrup Nagar (Present North Gauhati) and introduced the reading of Khutbah and Friday prayer in 1257 A.D.¹³³. Most probably there were settled Muslims in Kamrupa Nagar before Tughril Khan's arrival.

The Assamese people began to use Arabic and Persian words from the 13th century. Hema Saraswati, a court poet of Kamata King Durlabha Narayan (who flourished in the last part of 13th century), first used the Arabic word 'Naphar', which appeared to have been starting point of the flow of Arabic and Persian

130. Medieval Asamese Society, Sarbeswar Rajguru, PP. 46, Nagaon – 1988.

131. A Comprehensive History of Assam. S.L. Barua, PP. 173, New Delhi – 1997.

132. A Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol. II. H.K. Barpujari, PP. 37, Gauhati – 1992.

133. A Comprehensive History of Assam. S.L. Barua, PP. 175, New Delhi – 1997.

words to Assamese¹³⁴.

During the last Khan ruler (15th century), Kamrupa came to be used as a colony of the Afghan Muslims. The Afghans drove away the local Hindu Chieftains and assumed both the civil and military administration of the territory¹³⁵. It is already said that Hussain Shah's invasion of Kamrup (1498 A.D.) ultimately created a colony of the Muslims in the country round about Hajo where they used to live permanently¹³⁶. The Bengal commanders Masu'ndar Ghazi and Sultan Ghiyasuddin Awlia ruled over Kamrupa and Hajo respectively. Sultan Ghiyasuddin came to Kamrupa as a commander with 12,000 horsemen and 13,000 Turkish foot-soldiers and occupied the country around Hajo for few years.

He built a big mosque on the Gurudachal Parbat at Hajo. He is believed to be an Awlia (saint of Allah)¹³⁷. He founded Muslim colonies in ^{Kamrupa.} ~~in~~ ^{He is} apparently identical with the person whose tomb, famous as Poa Makkah, is situated on the same Parbat (hillock) at Hajo and is still being venerated by Assamese Hindus and Muslims. Sultan Ghiyasuddin Awlia is popularly believed among the Assamese people to have been the first Muslim to propagate Islamic faith in the area¹³⁸. The political influence of the Bengal Muslim conquerors of Kamrup survived in Kamrupa long after the withdrawal of their political and military power therefrom. For about 25 years Bengal Sultan Hussain Shah's coins with the inscription "conqueror of Kamru and Kamata" continued to circulate

134. Asamiya Sahityar Ruprekha, Maheswar Neog, PP. 14, Dibrugarh – 1983.

135. A Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol. II. H.K. Barpujari, PP. 47 - 48, Gauhati – 1992.

136. Early History of Kamrup, K.L. Barua, PP. 175, Gauhati – 1966.

137. Baharistan I – Ghaybi, Mirza Nathan (Eng. Tr., by Dr. M.I. Bora), Vol. II, PP. 489, Gauhati – 1992.

138. History of Bengal, J.N. Sarkar, PP. 147, Patna – 1973.

among the people of the area till 1518 A.D.¹³⁹. In the Ahom Mughal war, which took place between Shuhungmung and Turbak (1533 A.D.), many of the Mughal Muslims including Turbak's daughter Sawalai were made captives. The Ahom king engaged them in feeding the elephants, but they proved themselves efficient; then the king engaged them in the paddy cultivation work where they were also proved useless. The king at last allowed them to live with their assignment. These Mughal Muslims, later on, came to be known as Marias in Ahom kingdom and began to live on as artisans of brass-metal work¹⁴⁰.

During the time of Sankardeva (1449 – 1569 A.D.) in Ahom rule, the use of the words of Arabic and Persian became more frequent. The use of wasil (Arabic) baqi (Arabic), forman (Persian), haram (Arabic), haramkhor (Arabic & Persian) etc., in the literature of his time is the sufficient evidence¹⁴¹. Moreover the followers of his Vaishnavite faith, during the time of their pilgrimage in North India, were influenced by the Arabic and Persian words, which were being used among the common people of that area¹⁴². Later on they began to use such words in their day to day talking of Assamese language and gradually these words entered into the Assamese language. The words hamesa, safed, haramzada, saf, jaga, kharab, patsa(Padshah), khankhana, hujur, karamoti, khiyal, bilayat, pakur, toyar, muluk, asbab, roti, palki, hasil etc had been found only in a particular book of history¹⁴².

139. A Comprehensive History of Assam, Vol. II. H.K.Barpujari, PP. 48, Gauhati – 1992.

140. Assam Buranji, Harakanta Barua Sadr Amin, Compiled & Edtd., by S.K. Bhuyan, PP. 28, 1930.

141. Asamiya Sahityar Rupurekha. Maheswar Neog, PP. 15, Dibrugarh-1983.

142. Ibid, PP. 14 – 15.

In 1616 A.D., Mukarram Khan, a Mughal governor, moved the military head – quarters from Khelah to Hajo where several notable Muslims were given estates and 10,000 to 12,000 Muslim soldiers were provided with land in return for their military service¹⁴³. During the year of 1636 A.D., the Ahoms captured the Mughal imperial officers like Majlis Bayazid, Basit Khan and the major part of the Mughal imperial fleet. In 1637 the Mughal Commander Abdus Salam surrendered to the Ahoms. The Ahoms settled the arrested imperial officers at Silpani with land. The common war captives were distributed among the Ahom nobles and officers as slaves¹⁴⁴. The boundary of the Mughal kingdom and the Ahom kingdom was fixed after a treaty was signed in 1639. From that time onwards the Muslims used to settle in Assam permanently. Lastly, in the battle of Saraighat (1681 A.D.) a large number of Mughal soldiers were captured at the hands of the Ahoms who were not killed, but, later on, settled in Assam¹⁴⁵. All such Muslim soldiers always got married with the local Assamese girls and mingled themselves whole – heartedly with the Assamese life and society. The mother tongue of those Turk, Afghan and Mughal soldiers was Persian. As their wives and children were speaking Assamese language, so they, being compelled, gradually began to talk in Assamese language using the Persian and Arabic words with their family members as well as with other Assamese people. The gradual rise of Arabic and Persian words in the Assamese

143. A history of Assam, Sir Edward Gait, PP. 67, Gauhati – 1984.

144. A Comprehensive History of Assam. S.L. Barua, PP. 249, New Delhi – 1997.

145. Ibid, PP. 276.

language is, in fact, another noteworthy and tangible effect of the age-old contact of Assam with the Muhammedans. By the activities and the speaking of assamized Turk, Afghan and Mughal Muslims, the Assamese people began to be influenced.

The Ahoms learnt many things from Muhammedans, specially, the use of firearms and themselves soon became expert in the manufacture of cannons, guns and matchlocks¹⁴⁶. These assamized Turk, Afghan and Mughal Muslims were connected with the medieval Assamese society in all its spheres, except religious matters¹⁴⁷. Some of the Ahom kings invited many Muslim Mughal Khanikars from Mughal kingdom who were settled in Assam and were engaged in the khanikar khel (guild)¹⁴⁸. Though such Mughal khanikars, in course of time, forgot their mother

tongue, Persian, yet they always used Arabic and Persian words in their Assamese speaking, which began to impact the Assamese language¹⁴⁹.

In different times the Ahom kings invited the Mughal artists and Arabic and Persian knowing scholars to dwell in Ahom kingdom and to contribute their valuable skill in the development of Assamese culture. Even in the Ahom royal court the Mughal scholars were appointed to read out and to give the meaning of royal letters, written in Arabic and Persian, received either from the Viceroy of Dhakka or from the Emperor of Delhi. In the field of Assamese literature and music, the Mughal Muslims contributed a lot. In different responsible offices of Ahom kingdom, a good number of Mughal

146. The History of Medieval Assam. N.N. Acharya, PP. 44, Gauhati – 1966.

147. Medieval Assamese Society. Dr. Sarbeswar Rajguru, PP. 144, Nagaon – 1988.

148. Annals of the Delhi Badshahate. Dr. S.K. Bhuyan, PP. 18, Pub. 1947.

149. Medieval Assamese Society, Dr. S. Rajguru, PP. 308, Nagaon – 1988.

Muslims was appointed and they were also entrusted with tasks of political importance. These Mughals mingled themselves with the Assamese people and played their part well in the activities of the Assamese national life¹⁵⁰.

It is believed that the Maria Muslims first introduced the worship of goddess Manasa. The ancient Muslims of some places worshipped the goddess Visahari and they also took part actively in the Ojah-Pali performance¹⁵¹. That is why, most probably, Shihabuddin Muhammad Talish, the news reporter of Mir Jumla, had rightly remarked on the subsequent common Assamese Muslims – “As for the Muslims of Assam who had been made captives in former times and had wanted to marry here, their descendants act exactly in the manner of Assamese people, and have nothing of Islam except the name; their hearts are inclined for more towards mingling with the Assamese than towards association with Muslims. The Muslims who had come here from other Muslim areas, engaged in the performance of prayer and fasting, but were forbidden to proclaim the call to prayer or publicly recite the “word of Allah”¹⁵². Such Muslims whole - heartedly adopted the Assamese language as their mother tongue. A large number of Arabic and Persian words, later on, had penetrated into the Assamese language through these common Muslims.

It is held that the Arabic and Persian words entered into Assamese in large number and a more continuous stream from the 17th century when Ahom – Mughal political contact set in¹⁵³. The words of Arabic and Persian origin are found in the literature

150. Ibid, PP. 47.

151. Ibid, PP. 144.

152. Tarikh – e – Asham, Shihabuddin Talish, PP. 130, Calcutta-1847.

153. Asamiya Sahityar Ruprekha, Dr. M. Neog, PP. 15, Dibrugarh-1983

of the buranjis of the Ahoms, especially in their diplomatic aspects¹⁵⁴. The materials of 'Padshah Buranji', mostly compiled in the 17th century, were primarily written in Assamese language, but they contained many Arabic and Persian words¹⁵⁵. The Dhikirs and Zaris (18th century), about which we will discuss, in detail, in the next chapter, had also a prominent role in contributing a sufficient number of Arabic and Persian words to the Assamese language. The main factors that appear to have played a dominant role, according to Dr. Maheswar Neog, a most prominent scholar of Assamese literature, in promoting the growth of above mentioned elements in the Assamese language, are:

1. Rise of Muslim population in Assam.
2. The travelling of the pilgrims from Assam in North India.
3. Wars and diplomatic relations between the Assamese kings and the Muhammadan rulers.
4. Religious songs like Dhikirs and Zaris, which helped exclusively to the Assamese Muslims.
5. Cultural exchanges in later period of Ahom rule in the country¹⁵⁶.

154. The History of Medieval Assam, N.N. Acharya, Gauhati – 1966.

155. A comprehensive History of Assam, Vol. II. H.K. Barpujari, PP. 7, Gauhati – 1992.

156. Vaishnava Culture, Dr. M. Neog, PP. 298, Gauhati – 1972.